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Within this paper, I would like to look at how pollution, both metaphorical and literal, is acting as a device for claiming legitimacy and seizing control of the tourism industry in the Lugu Lake region of Southwest China. Government officials at various levels, as well as locals who are surreptitiously in competition with each other use discussions of cultural, social, spiritual pollution to justify their various claims about who should have control over decisions and incomes produced by the lake's tourism industry. My interest in this springs from long-term research in this area, and a recent struggle catalyzed by a June 2004 CCTV expose which focused on the pollution and prostitution resulting from tourism in this area. To contextualize a discussion of the politics of pollution at Lugu Lake, I begin with an overview of the development of tourism at the lake and representations of the Mosuo.

Lugu Lake, in North West Yunnan Province, receives tens of thousands of tourists annually, most going to the small village of Luoshui. Luoshui economy is almost completely driven by tourism, and this tourism is driven by an urban Chinese desire to encounter the Mosuo.¹ The desires of urban Chinese tourists for nostalgia, exploration, and personal liberation lead them to Yunnan's treasure trove of exotic locales and peoples, and to the Mosuo.² This much-discussed ethnic minority has received national and international attention because, according to state categorizations and media accounts, the Mosuo are "matriarchal" and traditional sexual relations (referred to as *zouhun* in Mandarin, *sese* in Mosuo) were outside of marriages. Journalists, novelists, and travel agencies have enhanced these descriptions and lure tourists into the long and rather uncomfortable trip to Lugu Lake. Chinese tourists come by the busloads to see Mosuo

culture, to experience a “land where women rule” and, for some, to give zouhun a try. Residents of Luoshui daily engage with the commodification of their culture, and must continually face and reshape constructions of Mosuo identity made by outsiders.

The Mosuo have a population of approximately 40,000, live in the foothills of Tibet, and speak a Tibeto-Burman language. Mosuo territory straddles the border of Yunnan and Sichuan Provinces, including Ninglang, Muli, Yanyuan and Yanbian counties¹, and Lugu Lake is one of the primary environmental features associated with the Mosuo. Luoshui itself has an official resident population of 70+ households, with approximately 500 villagers.

In Ninglang County, Luoshui has grown into the premier site for visiting the Mosuo, and, until the past four years, Luoshui was virtually the only village that had been successfully restructured to accommodate tourism. Over 90% of the tourists entering the area stay in Luoshui, while smaller groups now sometimes stay at Lige and other lake villages, as well as the Wenquan hot springs further into Yongning. Currently, the township has plans to develop several non-lake villages for tourism. Tourism at Luoshui has developed in both structured and unstructured ways, and this growth has occurred with and sometimes against village, county, and higher levels of control.

The Lugu Lake region is now a well-known travel destination to middle and upper classes in Yunnan and Sichuan, as well as much of urban China. Tourists come year round, and during holiday times thousands of tourists descend on the village within several days. Tourism began to greatly expand in this area in the mid 1990's. According to workers at the ticket gates, in 1997, approximately 60,000 visitors purchased tickets, and 2002 ticket sales were over 80,000, in 2004 well over 100,000. According to Village Council members and gatekeepers (interviews 1999, 2002, 2004), at least 90% of these tens of thousands of tourists to Luoshui are domestic tourists, including those from Hong Kong.

My first visit to Luoshui was as a tourist in April 1993. Since then I have conducted a year of field research there (1998-1999), and returned to the area over half a dozen times, most recently in July 2005.

Tourism Development at Lugu Lake

Luoshui village leaders from the 1980's estimate that at most the village then received a few hundred tourists a year. In 1988, the country began selling admission tickets to the area. In 1990, Lugu Lake was officially opened to tourism; in 1992, to foreign tourists. On my first visit to the lake in April 1993, there appeared to be three private guesthouses in Baohusuo area. A walk into Luoshui showed a sleepy little agricultural village, with not guesthouses, stores, or restaurants visible. At the time, my Chinese acquaintances in Chengdu were almost completely unaware of the Mosuo, or of the lake as a travel destination. The lake is now well known to the middle and upper classes in Yunnan and Sichuan, as well as much of urban China. Tourism began to greatly expand in this area in the mid-1990s. According to workers at the ticket gates, in 1997 approximately 60,000 visitors purchase tickets and in 2004 well over 200,000 (Lijiang Lugu Lake Provincial Tourism Zone Management Committee). At least 90% of these tens of thousands of tourists to Luoshui are domestic (including tourists from Hong Kong).

Land redistribution and reforms arrived in Yongning Township in 1982, and for the next several years young men continued to drift out of Luoshui in search of work. Initial tourists in the 1980's were often government connected, rather than adventure travelers, and tourism development first started around the government environmental protection station, the *Baohu Suo*, which lies approximately 1 kilometer before the village. In 1988, the county began selling admission tickets to the area, and it was not until 1989 that larger numbers of tourists started to

come. In 1990, Lugu Lake was officially opened to tourism, and in 1992 officially opened to foreign tourists.

On my first visit to the lake in April 1993, there appeared to be three private guesthouses in the Baohu Suo area, as well as two or three small restaurants attached to the guesthouses. Boat rentals and evening song and dance gatherings occurred if there was enough interest. A walk into Luoshui showed a sleepy little agricultural village, with no apparent guesthouses, stores, or restaurants. The Village Head (*cunzhang*) had begun hosting guests in his household in 1992 (the first guesthouse in the village), but the physical aspects of the village had not yet changed, although there were several small construction sites in process. On that first visit, no one approached me at all as I wandered through the village - not to sell objects or entertainment of any kind, not to invite me in to their fire or engage in conversation. Older women wore traditional Mosuo costume in subdued colors.

On my return to the lake in 1997, there was a marked difference in the ambiance of the village. Large guesthouses with decorative gates and signs had sprung up throughout the village, and an entire strip of guesthouses along the lake replaced the quiet shore lined with old trees. Sex workers and escorts in Mosuo costume strolled in the village and along the lake. The Village Head and Village Committee had organized collectivized teams to deliver tourist activities, with set boat and horse ride prices, and there were scheduled regular evening performances with a set entrance fee. In response to the inundation of tourists that began in 1996, the entire village worked to professionalize tourism in efforts to accommodate the staggering numbers of outside visitors. This growing professionalization of the tourist industry and development of the village was readily apparent during my fieldwork in 1998-1999, and return visits since. The county soon intervened and changed some of this, moving the red light district to a government area a kilometer away, and razing several bars immediately at the edge of the lake. But the village at the

lake continued to develop, as did the red light district. By 2002, there were several competing photo exhibits on Mosuo culture, and a large, private Mosuo cultural center had been built that hosted the village's evening song and dance shows. In 2004, an outsider opened a three star hotel in the village which sent locals scurrying to provide the same. The stress from waste water and sewage that began in 1997 was much exacerbated. By June 2004, CCTV's exposés on pollution and prostitution at Luoshui brought national attention to growing problems in Mosuo territory and a team of cadres to design and enforce plans for appropriate growth and development.

Contestations at the Lake

In the mid-1990s, when tourism was just developing and becoming a force for economic change, the country and village governments generally found themselves in opposition on matters concerning Luoshui's tourism. Zoning and the character of the village have been continual sites of struggle at Luoshui since 1997. At that time, the country and district tourism boards drew up plans for the village to develop and yet retain an "authentic" character; these plans designated the Baohusuo area as a commercial zone, restricted the size of guesthouses in the village, and prohibited development in sections of the village. In accordance with these plans, the country government forced villagers to remove the red light district to the Baohusuo area while razing some of the bars recently built by villagers in areas deemed too close to the lakeside. Only a year later villagers had begun to flout the development guidelines while some villagers looked to the country government for help in enforcing zoning rules others resented the attempts of the county to manage space and to profit from the natural resources.

In 2002, the primary concern of most villagers was local well-connected families and attempts by the country to control tourism in Luoshui. But by 2004, CCTV's exposes on pollution and prostitution in Luoshui brought national attention to Mosuo territory. The

autonomy of the village was under grave threat following the arrival of district and provincial cadres. These cadres responded to the negative reports on tourism in Luoshui by construction a new plan of development for the village and mobilizing local officials to enforce costly and unpopular regulations. One of the outcomes of this intervention was shifting control of the area away from Ninglang County to the larger Lijiang government, and this included the resources brought in by the ticket gate. The new Lijiang Lugu Lake Provincial Tourism Zone Management Committee surfaced to implement changes. This method of controlling moral chaos (and now environmental chaos as well) harkens back to early attempts to reform the Mosuo.

State controls and Mosuo culture

In Luoshui, while the tensions of creating or holding a Mosuo identity are enacted on a stage built by tourism, the foundations of this stage lie in decades of Maoist rhetoric. During the 1950's and 1960's, state work teams described the Mosuo as a people in which "children do not know their fathers" (Yunnan minzu diaocha dui 1964:1). This has become a common theme of contemporary Han popular discourse on the Mosuo. Mosuo women had (and still have) the freedom to choose and leave lovers. In pre-liberation Yongning, long-distance traders and merchants were also part of Mosuo women's pool of potential lovers. Also troubling to early PRC cadres and researchers was the condition of Mosuo men - they did not control the households they lived in, but lived in "their mothers' houses".

As Suzanne Knodel points out, the strongly patriarchal Chinese, seeing matrimonial order as one of the foundations of society, must have been "uneasy" with the system in Yongning (Knodel 1998: 51). The recommendations of early work teams and communist ethnographers framed state policies aimed at helping the Mosuo "evolve" socially and economically, "evolve" out of their primitive sexual relations and household structures (Cai 2000: 385-395) and

encouraging the Mosuo to have male-headed nuclear households. Also supporting reform, state health workers described the area as overrun with venereal disease because of the licentious behavior of the people (personal communication, Sydney White).

Early PRC state ethnographers researching the Yongning area concluded that Mosuo social structure was a remnant of the first stages of human social evolution. Despite their agriculture and a feudal society, they were categorized as primitive matriarchy and have been labeled “living fossils” (Yan 1982). Maoist policies to restructure social order in this area were framed as helping the area evolve. Current tourism development discussions are often similarly framed, but with the new twist of an attention to cultural preservation, which is somehow not seen as contradictory.

In negotiating tourist desires, Luoshui residents present to outsiders different “faces”, which incorporate key concerns with gender, sexuality, family, and cultural continuity and show ambivalence toward representations of Mosuo as sexually available and matriarchal. Sexual titillation abounds in very obvious, staged ways but has been counteracted for tourists showing concern by a sober performed backstage view of the Mosuo household and family values. Thus within the tourist arena, the potent issues of sexuality and gender are often contained and controlled within the package of the Mosuo family.

During the years of my visiting Luoshui, however, the emphasis on titillation has, generally, increased. Sex work and the red light district have grown together with the increasing tourist market, with some locals in the late 1990’s feeling that prostitution was necessary at any tourist site. In later years, prostitution had become firmly established, and local men’s increased income allowed them to regularly frequent brothels also. By 2002, local women began complaining of local men, as well as tourists, frequenting them. Massage parlors and “spas” had crept into the area, and hotels offered love baths with escorts. This lasted up to my most recent

visits (the summers of 2004 and 2005), when the area was under the sobering effect of investigation and government crackdown. Brothels and public displays of sex work had stopped as cadres flooded the area, and locals worried about impending regulations to move back from the lake the large guesthouses which represented the bulk of a family's income, and were often built financed by heavy loans.

During the summer of 2004, immediately following the expose, public sale of sex was effectually halted, and the red light district seemed "closed". Some of the sex workers, who are virtually all migrants from other areas and include Mosuo and Han women, remained in the area – I can only surmise for more discreet work than the open sale that had been the practice before. By the summer of 2005, some of the "*gewu ting*" – song and dance halls - had reopened, as well as some massage parlors.

Managing the lake and the people

Several important developments occurred with the growth of tourism in Luoshui. In 1993 and 1994, more households began to take in guests, and construct larger accommodations for them. Two collectivized teams formed to deliver boat rides, horse rides, and an evening performance to visitors. According to residents, the Village Head at the time organized the teams so that there would be no ugly competition over these earnings. From 1993 to the present, all households, Mosuo, Pumi, and Han, contribute one member to participate in one of the two teams and all income from the activities is split equally between team members. At the 1995 Qing Ming Festival, there were too many guests for beds in Luoshui, and construction of more and larger quarters took off. By 1998, the first four-storied guesthouse was under construction, in 1999 there were over 3000 beds available for tourists in a village of 500 residents, and by 2004 locals rushed to provide tourists with regularized hotels with individual bathrooms and showers,

and development continued apace.

Outsiders from Ninglang and Yongning had begun doing business in Luoshui in the early 1990's. Their small buses and taxis were the first transport for hire into the area, and as tourism development quickened they rented the shops and restaurants that formed the first floor and external face of many of the guesthouses. Vendors from Ninglang and Lijiang began to move in and introduce different cuisine as well as products for tourist consumption. Luoshui villagers who could not find money to develop guesthouses looked to "joint-ventures" with Chinese from outside the area. One household allowed an entrepreneur from Harbin to build a guesthouse on their site. He had a ten-year use of the guesthouse, after which it would belong to the Mosuo household. Leasing to, or in some cases marrying, outsiders who provide initial capital has become a method for some residents in Luoshui and Lige to join in tourism development. By 2002, a woman from Shanghai had opened a distillery for *sulima*, a traditional Mosuo liquor, which doubled as a brothel in the evening. Fujianese had opened camera repair shops and other businesses. By the summer of 2004, an outsider, under the cover of a local family, had opened the 3-star hotel that shifted the dynamics of development at Luoshui and set off a wave of changes as local-owned guesthouses rushed to compete.

Although negative about some of the outside business people (one local commented that "They say once Fujian people move in, then things will go bad very quickly"), up until 2002, villagers were managing to keep control over much of the tourist development occurring immediately within Luoshui. They still owned the guesthouses and land, and outsiders had only been able to set up business if they collaborated with a resident household. While the *sulima* distillery and other "joint" businesses were a sign of change, the large hotel seemed to open wider possibilities for development and government intervention. In 2002, most villagers were more concerned about local tensions and conflicts, especially the increasing power of several well-

connected families and attempts by the county to control tourism at Luoshui. By 2004 the autonomy of the village was called gravely into question with the arrival district and provincial cadres. These cadres responded to the negative reports on tourism at Luoshui by constructing a new plan of development for the village and mobilizing local officials to enforce costly and unpopular regulations.

“Maintaining” Mosuo Identity

PRC ethnographers, state agents, and now the tourist industry stress to the Mosuo how important preservation of their "matriarchal" culture is, and how very interesting their sexual relations are. Anxieties about Mosuo culture, cultural change and cultural preservation, are present within the current framework of encounters between insiders and outsiders. When Mosuo at Luoshui discuss issues of cultural preservation, topics will often include material culture, but the key aspects of Mosuo behavior to outsiders – zouhun and family – are also central concerns of Luoshui Mosuo and Pumi themselves. Through the gendered dynamics of tourist interactions, the Mosuo at Luoshui present their culture, their families, and gendered roles within them in particular ways. These exaggerated romanticizations of Mosuo sexuality and family life affect the ways Luoshui villagers imagine preservation of Mosuo culture.

Pollution, Preservation, Protection and Politics

During my several-week visit in 2004, villagers were wary of discussing the recent events with me. They feared a government halt to tourism. They feared being forced to take out enormous loans to tear down and rebuild their guesthouses further back from the lake. They feared orders to reduce the size of their guesthouses, or stop their businesses. Officials at the lake, in their discussions with me, mixed together the issues of environmental pollution and

cultural preservation. (Ironically, no one referred to “cultural pollution”, a term from the 1980’s, for that would have implied that the Han were polluting the minorities). Purity of the lake’s water and purity of the people’s culture seemed bound together discursively, cultural as well as moral purity. The local population, in their discreet conversations with me, seemed caught between several levels of cynicism, some directed at various levels of government (the county being the most clearly disliked), and some directed at tourism development in their area, and the inevitability of its trajectory.

One of the more vocal people against government interventions was a Taiwanese guesthouse operator in Lige who had financed building a guesthouse right on the edge of the lake and was being forced to move it. He was trying to use media to gain sympathy for his case, and using the image of poverty and need for development to help preserve the area. He also felt that as an outsider he was targeted to be sacrificed, while officials said that his construction was so flagrantly in violation of regulations that he deserved to be targeted first. Both sides used pollution and preservation within their arguments and strategies. I found this theme repeated by others, and that pollution, for the government, was acting as an effective tool in taking control of the tourist area as well as some of the enterprises.

On my return in the summer of 2005, some noticeable changes had occurred. The beivies of cadres were gone, replaced by a district level management office. The residents seemed less anxious about their future and being forced to relocate their guesthouses. Prostitution had not vanished, but taken a slightly different form. Constant, though, was the discursive use of pollution and protection as strategic leverage for claiming legitimacy in control.

Conclusion:

Who is polluting Lugu Lake, the answer seems obvious, and yet is complex because it includes nearly everyone associated with it.

- The tourist whose sewage and waste water from showers they must have flows into the lake, whose desires for sex have given rise to a flourishing sex market, whose desires for fantasy and nostalgia make them parade into Luoshui homes to partake into the backstage and imagined authenticity, whose cash like their sewage is flowing into and changing this area and whose modern alterity give rise to desires among the locals.
- The migrants whose bodies have changed this community physically in the rampant construction that is altering the village, economically in the rapid growth of commercialism of the site, and changed the sexual landscape of the area through rapid development of the sex work industry. These migrants bring in everything from camera repair shops to pan-Yunnan souvenir shops, to massage parlors and brothers.
- The locals whose desire is to leave poverty behind have ultimately shaped this community and brought the tourists in to continually parade into their houses. They have established the bars and the brothels which they now frequent themselves and whose increased incomes create social change in both positive and negative directions.
- The government whose policies and enforcing agencies encourage tourism as well as prostitution and whose lower levels have made an enormous amounts of money from both of these without feeding resources back into infrastructure development. Their actions to “protect” the lake often ring hollow as they have repeatedly used the lake as income generation, with very little thought to the health of the lake or the people around it, or to developing sustainable measures like waste treatment.

– As well as, obviously, the voyeurs and representers, the performers, media and tourism agencies. While wealthy Mosuo seem polluted and the migrants who stream in to work at the lake pure, both are simply making their way in their modern world. While the media has focused on a growing mountain of trash hidden in a ravine, locals have their own stories of pollution. The stories go back to the government deforestation of the 1960's (now blamed on ignorant locals) and misguided attempts to stock the lake and create industry along it in the 1970's. Locals can talk about a lake polluted with county enterprises of non-native fish killing off local fish populations, of a county industry dumping in the lake and making them sick, and now of tourism sewage polluting it so badly that if you swim in it your skin turns black.

Other Mosuo, outside of Loushui, have stories of those at Luoshui so polluted with greed that they are no longer Mosuo. meanwhile women at L laugh cynically at how their men only want outside women and the Luishui Village Head says bitterly that, "Mosuo culture is already dead from tourism." Waste fluids and bodily fluids, fluid cash seem to be flowing through and into Lugu Lake and as well as through and into representations of Mosuo. The question, then, ultimately who is polluting Lugu Lake, but rather who is going to, wants to, clean it up?
