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Tourism in Lugu Hu: Helpful or Harmful? Examining the Impact of Tourism on Lugu Lake's People and Environment

Introduction

Is tourism a boon or burden to the land and the people that it impacts? This question has plagued academics for ages. On the one hand, tourism brings not only definite economic growth for the local people, but also motivation for preservation of the local landscape. On the other hand, the arrival of tourists also ironically brings definite cultural and environmental transformations to the very people and land that visitors travel so far to see and experience.

My research examines the complexities of tourism and its impact on the environment and people of Lugu Lake, Yunnan. By surveying social and environmental conditions of various Moso villages around the lake at different stages of development, I analyze how tourism affects Lugu Lake as a whole. With the use of participant observation and both formal and informal interviews with both locals, foreign residents, I have been able to obtain a better understanding of local landscape, oral history, and diverse impressions of tourism in the area. From these methods, I found tourism have to a nuanced influence on the environment of Lugu Lake; while the growth in tourism has also increased pollution and general ecological degradation, the influx of visitors has improved knowledge of environmental protection. The impact of tourism people and culture of the region is likewise mixed, with visitors bringing increased financial prosperity and standard of living, but also a degradation

of traditional Moso cultural practices and a sense of community. Thus, sustainable development is in call for the future preservation of Lugu Lake's people and place.

Lugu Lake

Lugu Lake is a freshwater plateau lake that is perched 2,680 kilometers in the interior of the Xiaoliang Mountains which border northwestern Yunnan and southwestern Sichuan (Zhang, 3). The lake is 50 square kilometers in surface area, with an average depth of 45 meters and lowest depth of 94 meters (Ibid, 4). In the vicinity of the lake are two major wetland areas: Caohai and Zhudi. Despite the increase in pollution in the lake from tourism development in the recent decades, Lugu Lake still maintains remarkable clarity, with a visibility depth of 12 meters (Ibid, 5). The lake is visited by 65 different types of birds and boasts four major types of fish, nearly 40 different types of aquatic plants (EPA, 11/11/07).

Also known as "Mother Lake" to the Moso, the topography of Lugu Lake and its surrounding mountainous landscape truly resembles a woman lying on her back while embracing the lake to her side. This woman is Gemu Goddess, the legendary mother of all Moso people. The four islands and one peninsula that lie in the lake are said to be the pearls that she scattered from her hair as she lay down to guard the lake for her children (Zhang, 12).

Moso People and Culture

Lugu Lake is considered the sacred homeland of the Moso people. The Moso,

also referred to as the Na, have a population of approximately 30,000, most of which is concentrated in the regions bordering Sichuan and Yunnan (Blumenfield, 487). Officially classified as subgroup of the Naxi ethnic minority, the Moso speak a language related to both Naxi and Tibetan (Shen et al., 35). The unique culture and traditions of the Moso people is one of the primary reasons that tourists visit Lugu Lake.

Religion plays a major role in Moso culture. For the past four hundred years, Tibetan Buddhism has dominated the Moso religious scene (Cao, 11/10/07). Tibetan Buddhism permeates into almost all aspects of Moso life, from the presence of stupas in every Moso village, to the necessary invitation of lamas for rituals of birth and death, to the practice of daily prayer and incense offerings made three times a day to bodhisattva Avalokiteshwra at the upper altar that is present in all traditional Moso homes (Ibid, 11/10/07).

In comparison to Tibetan Buddhism, Daba, the native religion of the Moso, is practiced on a much smaller scale, and is on the decline. Similar to Naxi Dongba, Daba is an animistic religion derived from the Tibetan Bon tradition, which holds that all things have spirits and should be respected (Ibid, 11/10/07). Daba religion also puts great emphasis on the importance of harmony, especially within the family. As Daba priests traditionally have no written texts or house of worship and knowledge of scriptures can only be passed down within the maternal family, it is no surprise that there are only two major Daba priests left in the Lugu Lake area (Ibid, 11/10/07). Despite the fact that the practice of Daba is currently threatened, the influence of

Daba thought and practice is still reflected in many aspects of Moso life. For example, before Moso people eat or drink, they must first make an offering of a portion of their food or drink to their ancestors at the lower altar, and then Zambala, the fire god and symbol of family harmony, at the fire place below the altar.

The Moso's matrilineal tradition has caused Lugu Lake to be known as "nuer guo" or "Girl's Kingdom." Advertisements for travel to Lugu Lake tout the area as place "where woman rule and men and women never get married (Zhang, 3)." Although it is true that the women are the heads of Moso households and women and men usually practice "walking marriage" instead of getting formally married, these practices are less a sign of Moso matriarchy and sexual promiscuity as is implied in tourist literature, than it is a remnant of Daba emphasis on equality and harmony in the home (Cao, 11/10/07). While Moso men may help in herding and fishing and the occasional butchering and construction, Moso women are the primary labor force, cooking, cleaning, farming, collecting firewood and water daily. In comparison, thus, Moso men have much more freedom and leisure than Moso women. This difference, however, is recognized in the Moso community and for their hard work Moso women are given due respect and power to control the family's property and finances (Ibid, 11/10/07).

The Moso practice of "walking marriage" or *sese* in Moso, is perhaps the most advertised and exoticized aspect of Moso culture. Traditionally, most Moso men and women don't get formally married or cohabit but instead practice institutional sexual unions where men visit women every night and return to their maternal homes

during the day (Ibid, 11/10/07). The couple have no obligation to stay in relationship and are free to initiate and terminate relationships as pleased. Children born from walking marriages are cared for by their mothers and their extended maternal family. In this way, Moso people are given the freedom of choice in love, while maintaining a strong and stable family unit that is not disturbed by division from marriage.

Tourism in Lugu Lake

Visitors are usually attracted to Lugu Lake because of its unique culture and scenery. Tourism in Lugu Lake thus revolves around experiencing these two aspects of the area. With the most visitors and longest history of development in the area, a survey of tourism in the village of Daluoshui allows one to gain an understanding of tourist practices in the region, many of which are being emulated in other villages around the lake.

Daluoshui lies in the southwestern region of the lake on the Yunnan side. It is the first village that one arrives at coming from the renowned tourist destination of Lijiang in Yunnan. As about two-thirds of all tourists to Lugu Lake come from Lijiang, Daluoshui has become the main tourist destination in the area, with approximately fifty hotels in the village which range in price from about 20 to 180 RMB a night. Many of these hotels are situated next to the recently built stone road that now borders the lake. Along with these hotels are numerous shops, cafes and bars. At Daluoshui's pier, tourists may hire Moso people in traditional dress to row them to any destination on the lake in traditional Moso "pig trough" boats. Prices for this ranging from 20 to 100 RMB per person depending on the distance travelled. At night, visitors

encouraged to attend a *gehuowanhui* or traditional Moso song and dance celebration. Although these celebrations used to be held only during major holidays, now they take place every night for tourists to experience. The price to attend the “lower-class” dance celebration which is outdoors is 38 rmb, while the price to attend the “higher-class” indoor celebration/performance is 98 rmb.

Environmental Impact of Tourism

The relationship between tourism and environmental preservation in Lugu Lake over the last twenty years can be compared to a U curve, with overall environmental health being high before tourism, and dropping rapidly with the tourism boom in the late 1990s, but regaining strength in the last few years with the increase in environmental campaigns. This environmental evolution, however, has many nuances, for while the increase in tourists has increased water and air pollution and general ecological degradation, the influx of visitors from the outside has improved knowledge and methods of environmental protection.

Garbage and Sewage

With tourists numbering in the hundreds and thousands during the day, tourism has brought significant increase in garbage to the region, much of it non-biodegradable plastics in the form of food wrappers and drink containers. The increase in garbage combined with the fact that many of them tend to visitors litter, has lead to some of this trash ending up in the lake. In addition, the increase in tourists has also increased the sewage load in the area. Although sewage used to be discharged into the lake without much of an effect on the water quality, the dramatic increase in

population from tourism has made this practice a threat to the health of the lake (Yang, 11/11/07). According the mayor of Daluoshui, the excess of waste waters and garbage in lake is the reason why locals no longer use the lake water for drinking and cooking.

Road building

With the increase in tourism comes the increase in road building to allow better access to the area. As Lugu Lake is surrounded by mountains, the explosion of mountainsides to make way for roads has led to many landslides in the area, especially during the summer rainy season, which destroys forest habitats down-slope (Yang, 11/24/07). In disturbing the original forest, such road-building indirectly increases nutrient run-off into the lake which leads to greater organic pollution in the water.

In order to better serve tourists, almost all of which arrive in cars and tour buses, villages such as Daluoshui and neighboring Lige have chosen to pave their dirt roads. The natural gravel and sand beaches of the villages have now been covered in cobblestone to make more room for cars and wooden piers which extend into the water have been added. According to the Tourism Bureau of Lugu Lake, the cobblestone was added so to mimic the traditional, old-world feel that has made the ancient town of Lijiang so popular. Environmentally, however, the increase in more impermeable surfaces means that wastes such as car fuels will no longer be able to percolate and filter through the ground before it reaches groundwater or the lake, but instead will be washed directly into the lake with rain.

Wildlife

The wildlife of and around Lugu Lake has also been noticeably altered by tourism. Red-beaked seagulls, which are not native to the region and are an indicator of organic water pollution, now flock in great numbers to the lake, especially around Daluoshui where there is the most tourist activity. Locals also state that there has been an increase in seaweed and algae in the water, both of which also indicate the presence of organic pollution, perhaps from increased sewage or increased run-off of fertilizer from local farmland into the water (Yang, 11/11/07).

Despite the increase in algae, Lugu Lake's fish pollution has been on the decline. While the current daily catch of fishermen usually amounts to 1 or 2 jin, fishermen in Xiaoluoshui and Daluoshui that were surveyed stated that catches used to be much higher just before tourism started, catching about 7 or 8 jin in a day. A boat rower in Daluoshui stated: "When I was a child about 15 years ago, fish were in such great number that I would stand on the shore of the beach and still be able to catch fish with my bare hands. When I went swimming in the lake, I would kick fish all the time! Now that is not possible." The fishermen point to both pollution and over-fishing in order to meet the demands of new restaurants in which cater to tourists as reasons for the recent decline in fish population.

The impact of tourism on wildlife can also be seen on Tusi Island, just a half an hour boat ride away from Daluoshui. Tusi Island is also known as Snake Island because of its large snake population (Yang, 12/1/07). Locals warned that the snakes on the island were many and have bitten tourists in the past (Ibid, 12/1/07). Although I visited the island three times, no snakes were seen. Upon questioning the caretaker of

the temple on the island, he stated that due to construction, path building and the high level of foot traffic on the island, there are now very little snakes on Snake Island.

Reforestation Campaign

Despite the environmental degradation that has been brought by tourism to Lugu Lake, the increase in tourism to the region has also brought incentive to preserve the original beauty of the landscape so as to attract more visitors.

In the 1990s when tourism began to increase rapidly in the region, the local government ordered the discontinuation of lumbering, chopping of firewood, clearing of forests in over 5,000 square kilometers of mountains immediately surrounding to the lake so to allow the mountains to return to a more aesthetically pleasing green state (EPA, 11/11/07). In addition, reforestation efforts were started, engaging schoolchildren in the region to actively plant trees to speed up the greening efforts (Ibid, 11/11/07). These efforts to re-green the mountains have been very successful as in the Yunnan portion of Lugu Lake where the forest restoration campaign was started earlier and more strictly implemented the mountains are all lush and green. Even in the Sichuan area where reforestation efforts began later and not implemented in all areas around the lake, residents informally surveyed stated that the mountains are much greener than before. As trees work to absorb nutrients and water and help to retain and hold soil on the mountains, reforestation leads to decreased landslides and nutrient run-off into the lake. This has led to improvements in lake water quality as water from higher ground is now able to more slowly filter through soil before it

reaches the lake (Ibid, 11/11/07).

Not surprisingly, this mandate to stop cutting trees was met by resistance from many locals. Farmers had for ages cleared forests and used the rich soil to cultivate buckwheat (Ibid, 11/11/07). While women are still allowed to collect dried and dead wood from surrounding forests, they are now forced to travel to mountains three to five hours away to collect larger pieces of firewood (Ibid, 11/11/07). As fire in the hearth is not only used for cooking and heat, but is also a sacred symbol of family and is never put out, many Moso people initially saw the rule as a strike to Moso culture. Now, many locals state that for the sake of environmental protection and attracting more tourists to the area, their sacrifice has been worth it (Ibid, 11/11/07). In addition, the Nature Conservancy has implemented a biogas stove program in select villages in the mountains around Lugu Lake, teaching locals how to turning compost into heat for cooking and other practical purposes (Ibid, 11/11/07).

Ecological Restoration Campaign

In addition to the deforestation ban, wildlife restoration campaigns have also been carried out in order to preserve and restore native species of plants and animals. For example, in Daluoshui, fishing is currently prohibited in order to allow fish populations to rebound from over-fishing in the past decade (Yang, 11/11/07). In Caohai, a tourist destination in the Sichuan region of Lugu Lake which is famous for its wetlands, water buffalo and pig grazing in the wetland area cut most of the grasses short and significantly decreased the migratory bird population in the area (Li, 11/16/07). In order to restore the grasses and the bird populations, grazing has not

been allowed in the wetland area for the past ten years. The environmental bureau reports that the number of bird species in Caohai has increased from fifty four to sixty two over the past ten years.

Garbage and Sewage Management Campaign

In the early 2000s the local government of Lugu Lake launched a wide-spread anti-littering and garbage management campaign which is still in the progress today (EPA, 11/11/07). In the most popular tourist areas such as Daluoshui, Lige and Tusi Island and Liwubu Island, signs are posted every few meters reminding visitors in both Chinese and English, to protect the environment and not to litter. In these popular locations, large garbage and recycling bins are also placed. According to a shop owner in Daluoshui, these signs and garbage bins were only a few weeks old, a sign that this may still be a project in process. Sanitation workers can also be seen on the streets of more populated and visited villages, sweeping and collecting garbage. This year the government has begun work on constructing a garbage disposal landfill for the villages of Daluoshui, Lige and Yongning (EPA, 11/11/07). Unfortunately, my own survey of the landfill site revealed that it was within 100 meters from Zhudi lake, a wetland lake that is known for its great number of migratory birds. The close proximity of the landfill from the lake means a very high risk of toxic waste waters from the landfill seeping into the lake in the future, posing a great hazard for both the wildlife of the lake and farmers who use the lake water to irrigate their land.

One of the largest scale environmental campaigns taken in order to maintain water quality was the government mandate in 2006 to move all residential buildings

in Lugu Lake at least 80 meters away from the shore (Yang, 11/11/07). Before this law was instituted, the shore of the lake was lined with homes. Such close proximity to the lake allowed locals easy access to the lake water for drinking, cooking and washing. However, with the increase in tourists, most of whom also wanted to live along the lake, it was noticed that large amounts of garbage and sewage would escape into the lake (Ibid, 11/11/07). In instituting this 80 meters distance from shore, sewage and other waste waters from cooking and cleaning is allowed to more slowly filter into the lake. Moving people away from the lake also made garbage less likely to be dumped into the water.

To deal with the increased sewage load due to tourism, the local government has also started construction on a sewage drainage pipe system in major tourist villages such as Daluoshui, Lige and Caohai (EPA, 11/11/07). The sewage pipes lead to a sewage treatment plant behind the villages. By diverting sewage inland, organic nutrient-rich waste which would otherwise end up as pollution in the lake is now being treated. In smaller villages where sewage treatment facilities are still not available, individuals and institutions have taken it upon themselves to build their own septic tanks to treat their waste water. At the Dazui elementary school a simple but effective septic system has been set up that utilizes sewage treatment technology from Taiwan. This septic system takes waste from the school, treats it with organic chemicals, after which the water is safe to use as fertilizer in the organic farm that is next to the elementary school (Xie, 11/18/07). The effectiveness of this system has caused it to be copied and used in other small villages nearby such as Xiaoluoshui.

In addition to government sponsored environmental campaigns, tourism has also led to the spread of concepts and methods of environmental conservation through means of education by example. According to the mayor of Lige, seeing and interacting with tourists has impacted how locals themselves think and act. For example, seeing that many of the tourists would not throw their garbage on the road, but instead carry it with them until they found a place to dispose of it, made many locals like herself think twice about littering.

The Dazui elementary school and adjoining organic farm has also been an example of environmental preservation and both passive and active environmental education for the past two years since its inception. Both of these projects are a part of a larger a poverty alleviation and environmental preservation program set up by a Taiwanese tourist named Mr. Li who came to Lugu Lake in 2004 and fell in love the people and environment of Dazui village. The school has a public shower room which has hot water provided by a solar water heater. The director of the elementary school stated that all villagers are encouraged to shower at their facilities as a part of their public health campaign to improve personal hygiene in the area. In addition to teaching elementary school students during the daytime, the school also has weekly adult classes in the evening for literacy training and for organic farming methods (Ibid, 11/18/07). At the time of interview, the director of the elementary school, told me that he was in the midst of teaching the farmers of Dazui the importance of planting cover crops to increase nitrogen content in the soil for next planting and for erosion control after all crops are harvested in the fall, all of which would lower the need for chemical

fertilizers come spring when planting begins again. Such an example of environmental education on a large scale can be directly traced back to the increase in tourism to Lugu Lake.

Social Impact of Tourism

As my main form of data collection was through both formal and informal interviews with the village residents, many of my findings reflect the impact of tourism on the people and culture of Lugu Lake. Similar to the environmental impacts, these social impacts of tourism are also complex, revealing positive, negative and nuanced findings; for although the tourist industry has caused the improvement of standard of living and infrastructure in the region, the rise in visitors has also degraded many traditional Moso cultural practices and virtues.

Standard of Living

As increasing numbers of tourists come to visit, stay and consume in Lugu Lake, the economic condition of the lake's villages have also grown. Economic prosperity is the most mentioned impact of tourism in all interviews. With more money, people have been able to eat better. Of the older people I spoke with in Daluoshui, Caohai and Xiaoluoshui, all of them mentioned the diversity and richness of food now compared with just twenty, fifteen years earlier. The primary foods that were eaten were corn meal and potatoes (Cao, 11/10/07). The joke that most people use to describe the condition is that Moso people ate *tudou* for breakfast, *malingshu* for lunch and *yangyu* for dinner- all three words which mean potato in Chinese (Ache, 11/25/07). Although pork is a staple food in the Moso diet now, just two decades ago

pork was a delicacy and was only to only be eaten on holidays (Cao, 11/10/07). When it was eaten, the meat was roasted most carefully over the fire so as to not allow any of the oil to fall to waste in the flames (Ibid, 11/11/07). Now, with increased income from tourism, people say that they eat much better and are thus much happier (Ahmi, 11/26/07).

Infrastructure

With increased tourism, electricity was soon installed in all the villages. Most villages received electricity between five to ten years ago. With electricity, many daily chores have been made easier for both women and men. Many Moso homes now use electric rice cookers while rice used to be cooked over the fire and required constant attention and repositioning to prevent it from burning. With electricity, construction and other wood work has become much less grueling, allowing homes and furniture to be built in less than half the time than it used to take (Yang, 11/25/07).

With the free-time that many people are now afforded, electricity, also gives locals access to entertainment and information in the form of televisions and computers. Virtually all homes have televisions and when the sun sets, most people gather inside the grandmother's room, which is also the main living area, to sit by the fireplace and watch television. Television watching not only provides relaxation, but also information about the outside world. Sure enough, many people I spoke with were well versed in current events and upon learning my American citizenship, would often question me about my opinion of the role of the United States in international affairs.

Tourism has also led to the increase and improvement of roads in the area so to allow visitors easier access to the lake. Despite the ecological impact of roads discussed earlier, these roads have brought considerable benefit to the people who live in Lugu Lake. For one, transportation is much more convenient now and the new roads have allowed many people are now able to travel outside of the Lugu Lake region for the first time. Roads have also allowed for the easy transport of goods into the region, allowing locals more access to food, conveniences and technology that were not available before.

With more money and new roads, many Moso people are finding it easier to access traditional festivals and events than ever before. In randomly surveying other participants of the once a year temple festival at Zhamei Temple in Yongning, I found that participation at the festival has been increasing every year for the past decade or more. This year about 300 to 400 visitors came to watch the festivities and performances at the temple. One man from the village of Lapo that I spoke to stated that this year was the first time he has had the chance to attend the festival because it used to be too difficult to travel to Yongning from his village. Now, with paved roads and cars, it is both much more comfortable and convenient to travel.

In addition to improving infrastructure, tourism has also helped finance the rebuilding and revival of cultural and religious relics in Lugu Lake. Tusi Temple and Liwubi Temple were both destroyed in Cultural Revolution of the 1970s (Yang, 11/11/07). Both sacred to the Moso people, the temples were rebuilt and restored in 2000 primarily with the funds and labor of the citizens of Daluoshui and assistance

from the local government (Ibid, 11/11/07). These restored temples are now major tourist attractions which bring income to locals who help row tourists to and from Tusi Island and Liwubi Island.

Education

One of the major contributions of tourism to the region is the improvement of formal education. Many of the new schools in the region, such as Dazui elementary, Xiaoluoshui elementary, Daluoshui elementary and Zhudi elementary, were established or refurbished with the funds and leadership of former tourists to Lugu Lake. These schools, also known as “schools of love” or “schools of hope” are free of cost and school books and materials at these institutions are also often free, especially for students from poorer families (Xie, 11/18/07).

In addition to attracting philanthropists who fund schools, tourism has also attracted many teachers to teach in Lugu Lake. At Dazui Elementary, only two of the seven teachers are local to the area, while the other five teachers either came to the area as tourists, or applied to teach at the school in hopes to also tour and experience the area in their spare time (Ibid, 11/18/07). A teacher at Xiaoluoshui Elementary told me that she first came to the village of Xiaoluoshui as a tourist from Henan in 2006 and loved the people and the area so much that she has stayed there ever since teaching at the school. The principal of Xiaoluoshui Elementary stated that the addition of a second teacher was most helpful for both the management of the school and the education of the students as he used to be the only teacher for all the students of the school.

Increased financial means from tourism allowed for many Moso families to afford the loss of labor and cost of school supplies, boarding and tuition for sending their children to school. Although the nationwide policy to make primary education free has definitely helped many families to send their children to school, the scarcity of schools in the Lugu Lake means that many students must dorm and pay boarding fees, which are often very expensive for most families (Shi, 11/17/07). In addition, high schools and colleges still require tuition. With more schools, more money and more teachers in the community, teachers say that virtually all children are now able to attend and complete elementary school, as compared to less than half just two decades ago (Ibid, 11/17/07). Currently, half of these students go onto high school and even a few are able to attend college (Ma, 11/25/07).

Han influence

Many interviewees pointed to the “*han hua*,” or sinicization of Moso people as a major social change caused by tourism. With increased formal education, all of which is conducted in Mandarin Chinese, many children speak Mandarin as well as or better than their native Moso language (Cao, 11/10/07). As schools in the area all utilize material from the national curriculum which boast stories of families with one mother and one father, Moso children often made to feel that their way of life is very unusual (Blumenfield, 490). In addition, exposure to Han culture through television, internet and interactions with tourists has made many Moso people, particularly of the younger generation, take on Han practices such as dressing in Han clothing or singing Han songs. All of these factors have contributed to the assimilation of Moso people

into Han culture.

In addition to the influence of Han culture on the daily lives of Moso people, Han tourism has also brought and institutionalized Han conceptions (or misconceptions) of the Moso to the area. The increase in Han tourists, many of whom only know of Lugu Lake as the advertised “Girl’s Kingdom” and “Land of Walking Marriages” has led to substantial number of tourists coming in hopes to find a “free love utopia” where they may experience a walking marriage themselves (Blumenfield, 492). For these disappointed tourists who come to realize that most Moso are unwilling to oblige in fulfilling their fantasies, red light districts have begun to appear in many of the villages, including Dazui, Daluoshui, Caohai and Wenquan (Ibid, 492). Brothels in these regions are often disguised as bars or hotels. Although most Moso insist that it is only outsiders who are involved in the prostitution industry, the fact that many of the bars and hotels in the red light districts are owned by locals indicates otherwise (Ibid, 492).

The increase in tourism to Lugu Lake has also caused many Han people to come to Lugu Lake to set up businesses such as guesthouses or cafes. Although locals report that many of the Han who come are respectful of the Moso community and their traditions, there are also inevitably some Han business owners who come to conduct business with only an eye on profit and with little regard for local people and their traditions. One case in point would be the construction of the cable car system on Gemu Mountain in Nisai village by a Han developer from Sichuan. According to the shopkeeper of a store across from the cable car station, many locals had expressed

disbelief and anger at the developer's idea to build such an "eyesore of a structure" on the holiest mountain in Lugu Lake. Conflict also arose with horse herders who had been for decades bringing tourists up the mountain by horse and would be put out of business by the installation of the cable cars. Despite these conflicts, the local Tourism Bureau allowed for the cable car system to begin construction in 2005.

Although the presence of the cable car system now attracts hundreds of visitors to the small village each day, the shopkeeper insisted that he is not pleased with the way that the mountain and the cave is being presented to these visitors. In particular, he stated that he was not pleased with the building of a Gemu Goddess Temple next to the mouth of the cave. For while tour guides on the mountain (half of which are non-native employees of the development company from Sichuan) claim that the temple has existed there for centuries, locals like the shopkeeper insist that the cave had been their only temple and the Gemu Goddess Temple was just built earlier this year to attract Han visitors. Although the Gemu Goddess Temple claimed to be a Tibetan Buddhist temple, a visit to the temple revealed distinctly Han Buddhist styled interior, with no murals on the wall as is traditional in Tibetan Buddhist temple design. On the altar in the front was a Chinese styled statue of Kuanyin. The interior was sparse with the exception of an entire wall and counter being devoted to the sale of religious paraphernalia. The monks in the temple stated that they were Han monks from Sichuan and have no training in Tibetan Buddhism, which explained the playing of a recording of Tibetan prayers for visitors who enter. In informally surveying five locals in Nisai, all said that they did not and would not enter this temple. This

situation in Nisai reveals an example of the type of conflict that occurs when foreigner investors come to profit from tourism in an area without regard for the local people and culture.

“Change of Heart” and Loss of Community

Perhaps most the most surprising mentioned change that has taken place amongst the Moso people due to tourism is what people called “a changed heart,” saying that “*women xin bianle*” “Our hearts have changed”. All locals, no matter if they were in more or less popular tourist regions stated that this mental shift was one most noticeable impacts of tourism. This “change of heart” takes many forms. One type is the yearning to move to the outside world and leave the home. As the owner of a guesthouse in Xiaoluoshui stated, “Moso people used to be closed off to the outside world before tourism, now that it is opened and people see glimpses of the outside, people are tempted to go out.” Many young Moso have left to go to bigger cities, many working as dancers in bars and minority parks in cities such as Lijiang, Shenzhen and Beijing (Yang, 11/25/07). Nearly every single family I interviewed has at least one or more family members who have left to find employment outside of Lugu Lake. This exodus of people from Lugu Lake has left many families much smaller and scattered than before. For the many young Moso who choose to work outside, the practice of walking marriage has become less practical, leading to more people choosing to break with Moso tradition and get married, starting households headed by only one mother and one father (Cao, 11/10/07).

The most common sort of “change of heart” that was mentioned amongst

interviewers was the loss of naivete and generosity that used to exist amongst the Moso before tourism began to develop in the region. The following story, told by a boat rower from Daluoshui, encapsulates this change quite well: “Ten years ago when a foreign backpacker came by to ask for a place to live, we warmly welcomed him to stay for three days, feeding him everything we had, even killing him a chicken, not expecting anything in return. When he left, he gave my mother some money but my mom had never seen money before so she asked him ‘Is this fuel for the fire?’ Now, even if you wanted to just eat a meal with us we would ask you to pay.” In describing his childhood fifteen years ago, the boat rower recounted “When I was young, life was simple and I was happy even if we were poor. When the sun came up, I would fish and when the sun came down I would rest. I had no worries. Now, everything is about money and I have to work hard rowing for tourists all day. But even now that I have money, but I don’t feel happy.”

Locals point to the commercialization of Lugu Lake by tourism as the main reason for the loss of a sense of sharing and community that was so valued by the Mosos. According to the director of the Moso Folk Customs Museum, wealth used to be shared by all in the maternal extended family and the community. However, with the onset of tourism and increase in businesses, people have begun to compete and fight over who can get more customers and more money. Tourism’s commodification of the Moso people and their lifestyle has made the local people more prone to think about and pursue money (Cao, 11/10/07).

A comparison of tourism practices in developed villages such as Daluoshui and

Lige, with tourism practices in the less developed village of Xiaoluoshui reflect the impact that tourism has on the attitudes of people. In Daluoshui and Lige, hotels that I stayed at asked for a 100 RMB deposit before I stayed to ensure that I would not leave without payment. In addition, eating in both villages also required payment, even if one was to eat at a local person's home with their family. In Xiaoluoshui, not only did the owner of the guesthouse not ask for a deposit, but asked me to pay whatever I could wish or could afford. Since there are no restaurants in Xiaoluoshui, all of my meals were eaten with different families at their homes and none of the families asked for or would accept any payment for the food. In addition, as I conducted my research during November, which is the month in which Moso people slaughter their pigs, it was observed that families in Lige and Daluoshui tended to only invite close friends and members of their extended family for the subsequent feast, while in Xiaoluoshui, all members of the community including all the students and teachers of the village school and all visitors present in the village during the day, were invited to attend the celebration. The difference between the actions and attitudes of Moso people towards tourists and other members of their community in more tourism impacted areas as compared to those in less tourism impacted areas, illustrates the degradation of the sense of community harmony that had been the foundation of Moso traditions and culture.

The Future of Lugu Lake

Lugu Lake is developing and transforming at a rapid pace. A tourist from Guangxi who had visited Lugu Lake just five months before I did, stated that she was

shocked by the amount of changes the place had undergone when she returned. In just a matter of months, Daluoshui had replaced their sand beaches with wooden piers and stone roads and added many new shops and restaurants to the strip along the water (Bai, 11/28/07).

My informal interview with workers in the Tourism Bureau of Lugu Lake revealed that many more changes are in store for Lugu Lake in the near future. For example, in the farming village of Zhudi, a government sponsored development company is planning to fill in a portion of the wetland area and build a golf course on filled-in wetland and the current village farmland. The village is currently in the process of being renamed “*Nuerguo Zhen*” or “Girl’s Kingdom Town.” Under this new identity, the tourism bureau hopes to refashion and market the village as a resort center to attract wealthier tourists (Yu, 11/27/07). According to one young woman who is native to Zhudi, some villagers are worried about where they would be able to farm once their land has been converted into lawns for tourists. Although the tourism bureau reassures the villagers that the resort center will provide plenty of jobs and income for all villagers, locals are still skeptical. One wonders if the implementation of such a plan that ignores local lifestyle and ecology of the area may be linked to the fact that the majority of the employees in the Tourism Bureau and the government development company are neither Moso nor native to Lugu Lake (Yu, 11/27/07).

Although the prospect of such culturally and environmentally destructive plans for the region cast a shadow on sustainable development in Lugu Lake, there is still hope that lies in the many local individuals who are working to preserve their

communities and their landscape. In Daluoshui, for example, rapid changes to the environment and culture of the village led Daluoshui native Cao Hong Hua to establish the Moso Folk Customs Museum, which educates both visitors and locals about all aspects of Moso culture that he identified as disappearing. From traditional Moso art, textiles and architecture, to farming tools and hunting equipment, Mr. Cao has collected specimens of all to both showcase and demonstrate at the museum. As a documentary film maker and photographer, Mr. Cao has also created a large library of videos, photos and films that he has recorded of the changes that have taken place in the landscape and culture of Lugu Lake in the past decade. Many of the videos record oral histories told by elderly Moso in the village, while others document Daba rituals and traditional Moso ceremonies. In recording all aspects of Moso culture, Mr. Cao stated that he hopes to do his part in preserving this fast fading knowledge so that Moso people may revive these traditions in the future if they choose.

Other Moso locals are also taking initiative in working to preserve their culture and environment while improving their community. In Xiaoluoshui, Yang Binma, the owner of Brother's Under Gemu guesthouse has organized students from Xiaoluoshui elementary to collect litter on the beach every week. Currently, he is working on installing large garbage bins through out the village to encourage proper garbage disposal. With the help of the director of Dazui Elementary, he has also implemented a septic system in his backyard that turns septic wastes into fertilizer for his farm. In addition to working towards environmental sustainability, Mr. Yang has also put great effort in improving the social conditions of Moso communities. With the money he

has earned from his guesthouse and his knowledge as a carpenter, Mr. Yang has built an elementary school in the impoverished Moso village of Qiansuo, which formally had no village schoolhouse. In his own village, Mr. Yang's next project is the establishment of a simple lakeside park for the elderly, where they may dance, sing, weave and play their musical instruments, benefiting both the elderly people's health and the preservation of traditional Moso music and art.

Conclusion

Tourism is both a boon and a burden to the people and environment of Lugu Lake. Visitors have brought great economic growth and environmental knowledge to the region, but also substantial cultural and ecological degradation. In order to preserve and improve the lives and landscape of Lugu Lake in the long term, it will be necessary to empower local people who have an understanding and invested interest in the needs of their people and land. Only in this way will we be able to improve the economy while maintain environmental and ethnic integrity.

Appendix

A. Subjective Account

This independent study was filled with both challenges and rewards. Having never travelled alone before, one of the greatest challenges I faced initially was loneliness. Luckily, I had anticipated this and brought a journal and a spiritual book to keep me company. Academically, more preliminary research on the location and topic

would have been helpful in formatting my interviews and receiving all the information I needed from my informants at once. Scientific equipment would have also helped in more accurately evaluating the water quality of the lake.

Fortunately, the rewards of the independent study far outweigh the frustrations. I was very lucky to have come into contact with many warm-hearted people throughout my trip who have helped me greatly in my research. Yang Zhashi, the fisherman who lives in a plastic bag shack by the lake in Daluoshui, brought me fishing, provided an immense amount of connections to me and even invited me to live in his home in Mukua for a week, where I learned a great deal about traditional Moso culture and household rituals. Cao Hong Hua, the Director of the Moso Folk Customs Museum, was extremely helpful and patient with my questions and research, allowing me to view many of the videos and documentaries that he had made.

Insights that I would offer to future students hoping to do research in Lugu Lake would be to not spend too long in Daluoshui if you want to understand traditional Moso culture and life- there are many other smaller villages, such as Xiaoluoshui, where you will better experience this. Enthusiasm to learn and participate is also really helpful in gaining acceptance amongst your informants and your community. I noticed that many people warmed up to me when I greeted them in Moso and expressed interest in learning more Moso language. Volunteering to assist in everyday tasks is also helpful- I know that my willingness to get dirty and help stuff pig sausage at a pig slaughtering certainly amused many villagers and seemed to make them more friendly and open to me.

B. Route Itinerary

Lijiang to Daluoshui- bus, 8 hours, 60 RMB

Daluoshui to Mukua- fisherman's boat, 2 hours, free

Mukua to Dazui to Xiaoluoshui- acquaintance's motor-tricycle, 1 hour, free

Xiaoluoshui to Nisai- hiking, 45 minutes, free

Xiaoluoshui to Lige- minivan, 30 minutes, 15 RMB

Xiaoluoshui to Zuosuo- friend's car, 30 minutes, free

Xiaoluosui to Caohai- minivan, 40 minutes, 20 RMB

Lige to Yongning- minivan, 1 hour, 10 RMB

Lige to Wenquan- minivan, 1 hour 30 minutes, 15 RMB

Lige to Tusi Island- boat, 1 hour 30 minutes, 30 RMB

Lige to Lijiang- minivan, 7 hours, 50 RMB

Lijiang to Kunming- overnight bus, 8 hours, 160 RMB

C. Possible ISP topics

Indigenous Knowledge of Moso Women and its Impact on Forestry in Lugu Lake

Examining Gender Roles in Lugu Lake

Environmental Education in Lugu Lake

Dabaism in Lugu Lake

Resources

People:

Cao Hong Hua, Project advisor. Director of Moso Folk Customs Museum November

10, 2007.

Ache Songnongduzhi, son of owner of Ache Zuoma Jia guesthouse in Xiaoluoshui
November 25, 2007.

Ahma, resident of Lige November 27, 2007.

Ahmi, shopowner of in Daoluoshui November 13, 2007.

Bai Ting, repeat tourist to Lugu Lake from Guangxi. November 28, 2007.

Erchenamu, Mayor of Lige. November 24, 2007.

Employees of Environmental Protection Agency for Lugu Lake. November 11, 2007.

Li Zhizhi, mayor of Caohai. November 16, 2007.

Ma laoshi, principal of Xiaoluoshui Elementary November 25, 2007.

Nisai sudao workers November 27, 2007.

Shi laoshi, teacher at Mukua Elementary November 16, 2007.

Xiao Xiao, Nisai shop owner November 27, 2007.

Xie Hua Tao, Director of Dazui Elementary School November 18, 2007.

Yang Binma, owner of Brother's Under Gemu guesthouse in Xiaoluoshui November
25, 2007.

Yang Kuan, teacher at Xiaoluoshui Elementary November 25, 2007.

Yang Wenchang, owner of Daoshang Renjia guesthouse in Lige. November 27, 2007.

Yang Zhashi, fisherman from Mukua working in Daluoshui. November 10, 2007.

Yu Fantong, employee of Tourism Bureau of Lugu Lake. November 27, 2007.

Yang Xiansheng, Mayor of Daluoshui. November 10, 2007.

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