

Analysis of the "Family House" Culture of The Mosuo Nationality

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Abstract: In recent years, the attention index of space culture in anthropology has continued to rise. As a symbol of space, "Family House" can objectively reflect the essence of culture. At the same time, the concept of "Family House" plays an important role in the Mosuo ethnic group. By studying the "Family House" society of the Mosuo people, this paper finds the surrounding cultural phenomena radiated by this as the core, and deeply explains its unique matriarchal society.

Keywords: "Family House"; Mosuo people; Matriarchal society.

1. Introduction

The Mosuo people are ethnic minorities living in Ninglang County in Yunnan Province and Yanyuan and Muli in Sichuan Province, and are known as the "Kingdom of Girls" by the outside world because of their unique matrilinearchal social system. The Mosuo people in Yunnan are divided into a branch of the Naxi people, but the social structure of the two is completely different. The Naxi people are "Patrilinearchal Society" and the Mosuo people are "Matriarchal Society". Naxi people call themselves "Na Ri", the main activity center is Lijiang area; while Mosuo people call themselves "Na", the main activity center is the area around Lugu Lake, and Yongning Bazi as the core area, engaged in religious and production activities.

Morgan said that: "The clan is a blood group with a common ancestor, distinguished by the name of the clan, and the combination of blood relationship. It has the meaning of "Relatives" and "Fertility", and is the fundamental basis of the ancient society." [1] Influenced by Moore root evolutionary thought, Mosuo is seen as "early human society living fossil and miniature", so the group is always in a state of "Matriarchal Society", and in this state, "Family House" has become the inherent foundation of Mosuo society and important guarantee, affect the Mosuo aspects of life.

2. The Source of the "Family House"

The term "Family House" was first proposed by Levestrus (Claude Levi-Strauss) [2], which is the most basic organizational unit to study family kinship, and there is no economic connection between the members of this unit, and does not belong to an economic community. As the foundation of the maternal clan culture of Mosuo people, "Family" plays a very important role: on the one hand, "Family" makes the lack of economic relations, the independent production and operation mode reduces the conflicts, and maintains the unity, harmony and stability within the family; on the other hand, "Family" implies the cultural connotation of "Respecting Women", which provides the guarantee for the life of Mosuo women, so that they will not be easily abandoned by their born families. If there is no existence of "Family", the Mosuo women will lose their main dependence, leading to the decline of social status, which is inconsistent with the nature of the "Matriarchal Society" of

the Mosuo ethnic group and violates the customs inherited by the past dynasties. However, customs are often the best representative of their national characteristics, lose it, its national nature will fade. Therefore, for the Mosuo people, the "Cottage" guarantees the traditional nature of the nation, and its unique culture has not been banned by foreign culture.

3. The Cultural Phenomenon Caused by the "Family House"

3.1. Residence mode

Most of the traditional wooden houses are built on the mountain and are presented in the model of siheyuan. The house is mainly divided into four parts: the main room, the classics building, the flower building and the livestock shed, in which the main room has only one floor, and the classics building and the flower building each have two floors.

The main room is also known as the "Grandmother's House", which consists of five parts: main room, upper room, lower room, back room and warehouse. Among them, the main room is the place for gathering and discussion, and occupies an important position in the main room. There are two pillars erected in the main room. The one on the right is called "female column" and the one on the left is called "Male Column". The two pillars come from the same tree. The "Female Pillar" is taken from the lower part of the tree, while the "Male Pillar" is taken from the upper part of the tree, meaning "Male from Female" and "Female Source Male Flow". [3] Whenever a boy and a girl reach the age of 13, the adult ceremony is held. Before the ceremony began, the girl and the boy had to feed the family dog, saying, "Dogs can live 60 years old, while people can only live 13 years old. Let's change the age." [4] After the girl stood beside the "Female Column", feet respectively on the bags of pig fat meat and food, by the mother off the gown, short clothes, put on skirt, belt, and the yak tail hair into thick false braid, dish on the head, farewell to young; the boy stood beside the "Male Column", the same feet on pig fat meat and food, and by uncle take off the gown, short, change into trousers, waist linen bag, ushered in adult. The upper room is the living place of my uncle in the home. The lower room is mainly used for stacking livestock feed. The back room is usually used during the funeral period, which is mostly related to sacrifice, while the warehouse mostly stores utensils, grain, etc.

Although the main room is only one floor, it plays a pivotal

position in the whole building of the Mosuo people. It is the residence of the highly prestigious old grandmother, elderly women and minor children in the Mosuo "Family House". It is also the main place for all family members to meet, eat, discuss and offer sacrifices. In the "Grandmother's House", the "Fire Pond" is particularly important, which is mainly divided into "Upper Fire Pond" and "Lower Fire Pond". "Shanghuo Tang" is mostly used for religious ceremonies, where men is the main gathering place for family members. Mosuo people used to the right, left for small, so "Fire" on the right side of the first place is the main, only the highest prestige, the longest women can sit, then by the generation and age, "Fire" on the left side of the first generally by the "Family House" in the elderly uncle, then the same generation and age, and children are designated to sit under the "Fire". There is a square or round stone in the middle of the "Fire Pond" and the hearth, called "Guozhuang Stone", which represents the god of the ancestors. Before each meal, the Mosuo people will place good meals on the stone to offer sacrifices to their ancestors to pray for the protection of the family fire. Therefore, the "Family House Culture" with "Huotang as the Center" is formed. "Huotang" brings closer the connection between the internal members of "Family House", and further confirms and extends the kinship system in "Family House".

The building is the main place for religious sacrificial activities in the "Family House". If there are adult men in the family, they are arranged to live in this building, otherwise the Mosuo men do not have a single house. Before they can only live with their uncles until they start their marriage career. Flower building is a place for both men and women to marry, it has continuity, middle-aged women with children must move out of this building to vacate the adult women in the "Family House" to get married, and each room has a small Fire Pond for women to boil water and tea to receive their partner. Livestock sheds are generally divided into two floors, with several upper compartments, mainly used for stacking feed, while the lower floor is used for livestock.

"The Mosuo people by Lugu Lake regard fire as a symbol of light and prosperity." [5] From the perspective of traditional living mode, fire has become an important layout structure of "Family House". The Mosuo people have formed a "Family House Culture" with the "Family Fire Pond as the Center", and the Fire Pond in each "Family House" is very well burned and never extinguished all the year round. Firepond exists in the "Family House" of the Mosuo people as the common carrier of life and death. When a woman is pregnant, she should move from the flower house to the main house of the lower Fire Pond, and accept the care of her relatives until a new life is born; when the ancestor worship ceremony is held in the "Family House", the site is usually chosen at the upper Fire Pond. It can be said that the continuation of the life of the "Family House" and the emotional sustenance of the "Family House" members to the deceased are all realized through the Fire Pond. Therefore, the "Family House" has witnessed the life of the Mosuo people and is the basis of generations of Mosuo people.

3.2. Home name

The name of the Mosuo people is mainly divided into two parts: one is the "Family Name", the other is my own name, and the "Family Name" is equivalent to the "Surname" of the Han people, which is not only an important symbol of the "Family House", but also the basis for the identity of the

Mosuo people. The "Family Name" was initially called out by people in the same place. When the new home of the Mosuo family was built, the locals would call the family by name, such as LaMu, ZhiMa, etc. Over time, the shouted name became the "Family Name" of the Mosuo family. The sources of the "Family Name" of the Mosuo family are different, with various meanings, mainly depending on the location of the family, such as: Wa E Er (refers to the above), Ru Heng Er (refers to the river); some refer to the parents, mainly depending on the names of the parents; some are related to sacrifice, mainly depends on the names of the ancestors, etc. When locals call each other, they often call them only by name, and when they call a "Family House" by "Family name". In the same "Family House", no matter you are married, inherited or inherit the identity of existence, will erase the original "Family Name", use the current "Family Name". "Family Name", as a representative term of mosuo "Family House", is the product of "Family House" development to a certain period and a certain stage. It emphasizes that the status of the building itself is higher than the people living in it, so that the members can regard all the honor and disgrace of "Family House" as their own duty, and enhance the internal unity. At the same time, the rapid development and evolution of "Family Name" continues until the formation of a local folk custom, which plays a very important role in the stability of Mosuo's "Family House Society".

3.3. Parents

Weber said: " In a group of mainly economic family , governed by an individual determined by the rules of inheritance, this situation is called patriarchal." [6] Every house "must establish a parent system, that is, choose a high prestige, capable adult woman or male to become" Dabu " [7], to host the home matters. Based on the "Family House" there is no so-called economic ties between the members, property is a common form, this denies the inheritance rules, they can only based on the ability and prestige to choose "Dabu", the family "Rule", even if the rule just maintain the bond of family members, but it is in line with the statement "Patriarchal". Influenced by the system of marriage and ideas, with women partner men do not belong to the "Family House", and Mosuo women in the "Family House" status generally high, have greater rights, cause most people think "Dabu" this position is women, but Mosuo people have a saying is "uncle palm etiquette, mother palm wealth", because the "Family House" more lack of men, so my uncle plays a very important role, is the most not to be ignored. Therefore, "Dabu" is not entirely held by women, but by individual ability and prestige. At the same time, as the head of a family, "Dabu" is not restricted by the economy, and the management of "Family House" only stays at the level of maintaining the unity among members, which makes the nature of "Family House" very simple, which is conducive to the stability and consolidation of the development of "Family House". However, a complete "Family House" must need a strong leader to represent the whole family to handle important matters, so the establishment of the parent system is the inevitability of the development of the Mosuo people's "Family House" concept. This system can also be regarded as the "Charm Rule" [8] in a small space, which is judged and recognized by the family insiders through investigation and other ways. It takes "Family House" as the core and reflects a sense of relatives, and the unique "Charm" selected is the

parents of "Family House". Under the "Rule" of parents, the Mosuo people do not want to deviate from the "Family House", but on the basis of the original "Family House", forming a larger "Family House" scale, rarely conceived the idea of separation.

3.4. Marriage

The marriage of the Mosuo people mainly takes three forms: one is marriage, also known as "Ti Ti Se" (In Mosuo, it translates as: walking up and down), which literally means "Walking Marriage", which is the main marriage system of the Mosuo people, without any contract, namely marriage and marriage; and the third is a long-term marriage relationship, namely "Monogamy" system. In fact, the Mosuo society has formed a form of marriage, including marriage, marriage and "Monogamy" system.

A Zhu Marriage: Mosuo people popular the fashion of "men do not marry, women do not marry". When men and women hold a rite of age at the age of thirteen, they can make friends freely with people. At first, the man needs to avoid the date, according to the agreed code to the woman's residence to knock on the door or throw stones at the window of the flower floor, the woman would go downstairs to receive his own note. In this process, even if the family paid attention, the family will not interfere too much. However, the man must leave the woman's home before dawn and return to his own home to work, and can not meet with the woman's family, so there is a "night and morning separation" said. "A man's quest for a wife is not as in civilized society...so marriage is not based on emotion, but on convenience and needs" [9], which is very consistent with the nature of the Mosuo marriage, both men and women are based on the emotional needs and the convenience of the process. Therefore, it is a kind of cohabitation without monopoly and unrecognized kinship relationship system. Both men and women belong to different "Family House", so the dissolution of the relationship is very free.

A Zhu Cohabitation: Influenced by the development of social civilization, some Mosuo people choose to maintain the relationship in the form of marriage or marriage on the basis of establishing the relationship. The fundamental reason is mostly that there are many sisters or brothers in the family. Moving from one "Family House" to another "Family House", the Mosuo people who marry or lose themselves will leave the original "Family House", and their name needs to be changed to the "Family Name" of the current "Family House". Based on the form of marriage between a man and a woman, there is no exclusive cohabitation. "Both men and women are on a voluntary basis to establish a relatively stable marriage relationship, the man has no exclusive right to the woman, the termination of the relationship is also free, after the termination of the relationship, the married woman can return to the original "Family House", and the male will be driven to live in the "Family House".

Monogamy: With the development of a civilized society, the Mosuo people's concept of marriage has also changed, mainly reflected in the emergence of the "Monogamy" system. Based on the marriage of a man and a woman, exclusive cohabitation is the condition, and it is a formal, contractual, obligatory, long-term and effective marriage. This form of marriage is a special form of civilization, and creates a fixed system of kinship. In most "Monogamous" families, male independence is generally strong, which makes women's married life often bound. When women's rights and

interests are damaged, they are eager to terminate the relationship. However, the procedure of terminating this relationship is far more complicated than the termination of short-term relationship. Before ending the relationship between the two sides, the woman needs to get the consent of the mother and family and repay the bride price of the other party. Therefore, whether the smooth termination of the relationship depends entirely depends on whether the woman has a certain economic ability, and this condition is not a huge debt for most poor families. When the gift money cannot be repaid, the mother and family will scold the woman to return to the man's home and continue to maintain a normal relationship.

From the point of the above three kinds of marriage relationship, Mosuo marriage is relying on Mosuo adult man to visit to maintain marriage relationship and continuation of race, is also an informal, no contract, no hierarchy, no obligation of marriage, in this form, men and women both sides belong to different "Family House", does not belong to the same economic community. Therefore, the status of women is higher, and all the children born by both parties are attributed to women, and the conclusion of marriage relationship is more flexible. However, compared with the marriage, women who marry, marry or "Monogamy" are often at a disadvantage. They lose the protection of the natural barrier of "Family", and their rights and interests are often damaged to varying degrees, which is also the reason why Mosuo people tend to prefer short-term marriage in the concept of marriage. At the same time we can also understand the "Family House" in the important role: it not only conforms to the nature of the Mosuo clan society, namely "Female", maintain the maternal kinship stability and development, also provides a fundamental guarantee for women's economy and life, make it not bound by secular, safeguard their basic rights and interests.

3.5. Funeral

The Mosuo people are known for their unique walking marriage system, but in the traditional concept and consciousness of the Mosuo people, the funeral is far more important than the wedding. Since the implementation of the policy of changing the land and returning to the current in the Qing Dynasty, all ethnic minorities in southwest China have implemented "Burial", but the Mosuo people still attach importance to "Cremation" today. They always believe in the cycle of life and death, and that their souls will not die after death, and they will still live in the maternal family with their deceased ancestors. As for the Mosuo people, the most important thing is to die in their own "Family House". Therefore, the freedom of the older people in the family will be bound to a certain extent, and they worry that the elderly will die unexpectedly on the road after going out. Of course, some abnormal deaths, including suicide, illness, accident, etc., are regarded as bad deaths, among which suicide is the worst way of death. For people who die abnormally, they are usually buried hastily outside.

The funeral ceremony of the Mosuo people is very complicated, going through the process of corpse, sacrifice, transcendence, collective condolence, cremation and so on. The day of the funeral, Relatives of the deceased will inform and invite related "Si Ri" (also known as "the same bone" or "the same death") [10] to attend the funeral ceremony, Due to the extremely high importance of funerals, Its economic expenditure is also very huge, All the cost of the funeral is

shared by the entire Si Ri family. At this time, the Mosuo kinship will be well reflected. Throughout the country, the members of the country, often fighting for the highest cost of holding a funeral. On the one hand, to express the close relationship with the bereaved family. On the other hand, it also shows the boast of showing off their "Wealth" and generous hospitality. This often leads to debt situations.

During the process of the funeral, the Mosuo people invite many daba and lamas to host the grand funeral ceremony, and they chant and pray for the dead. The procedures of the funeral ceremony solely responsible for men, women are not involved, women are "Family House" internal blood, the family of maternal offspring, women is the source of life, often associated with fertility, funeral as the bridge of the guide to the death, recently from the death, this practice is to prevent women infected with dead, to interrupt the continuation of the family, and stability in the men in the "Family House" space mainly after room, the back room is used for sacrifice and parking, often associated with death, so the mosuo funeral ceremony, full participation by men.

Wash the body by two or three relatives shed the body of the clothes, first with pine water to wash, male body needs nine bowls of water, female body needs seven bowls of water[11], wash the body of water from the family of the dead to the route or by dabba divination. Secondly, put a gold and silver the size of a grain of rice into the mouth of the dead to pray that the dead should live a rich life and have no worries. Then all the facial features of the dead are blocked with butter to prevent the body from premature decay due to the air infiltration, and the body is tied up with a rope, his hands crossed over the chest, and his knees are bent against the chest, in the shape of a "Fetus". The Mosuo people believe that the body can be returned to the original appearance in the mother, and can be reincarnation. Finally, the bound bodies were put into a white linen bag and buried in the earth hole dug in the back room of the grandmother's house to accept the worship of the relatives. The specific time of the cremation was calculated by Baba divination, and the time of stopping was determined according to the result of divination, some a few days, some several months. During this period, Baba and the lama would chant sutras for the dead, and the whole "Si Ri" family with blood relatives divided their own duties and assumed their own duties, spending a lot of financial and material resources to entertain guests and highlight the grand funeral. Before cremation, a chicken should be tied to the coffin of the deceased. If the deceased is a male, the hen will be tied, and if it is a female, the cock will be tied. The chicken is for the deceased in the long journey back to his homeland, so as to prevent the deceased from feeling lonely. At this time, members of the "Si Ri" family will collectively come to mourn, commonly known as "Mourning", whenever the cries are together, guns will be fired outside the door to express their sorrow and mourning for the deceased, and then the Daba and Lama will read the soul sutra, read the family tree of the deceased family and the name of each checkpoint it needs to go through when returning to the homeland, and "Open the Way" for the deceased. Send the dead to "Abswana." [12] After the soul-sending team arrived at the crematorium, the body was carried out and placed on the cremation platform, so that the next cremation. The cremation platform was built by the young men sent by each family, showing a "Hollow Triangle". After that, Daba lit the fire, recited the scriptures, and prayed for the dead.

It can be seen that the funeral ceremony most valued by the

Mosuo people has always been closely linked with the "Family House". As the "Backbone" of the whole funeral, "Si Ri" covers the whole process of the ceremony and bears the higher funeral expenses, and these actions are just to earn face for the "Family", to improve the prestige of the whole blood family. At the same time, "Abswana", as the home place of the dead, carries the good wishes of the Mosuo people for the dead, hoping that they can live with the deceased ancestors, showing a universal kinship confirmation relationship in the Mosuo society, and the establishment of this kinship is based on the "Family". Secondly, the Mosuo people's view of death regards the "Family House" as the end of life, and the "Fire Pond" inside the "Family House" happens to act as the medium of dialogue between the living and the dead, expressing the yearning of the "Family House" members for the deceased. Therefore, the view of "Family House" creates the funeral culture of Mosuo people, and the funeral culture also reflects the view of "Family House" of Mosuo people.

4. Conclusion

As a unique space, "Cottage" has become a fixed place for the Mosuo people to live, die, and die. The internal layout also reflects the cultural life of the Mosuo people, mainly in: the social connotation of the "Female People" and the traditional virtues of respecting the elders; the existence of the flower; the establishment of the building fully reflects the unique religious culture of the Mosuo people, and they attach great importance to the local religion, the "Fire Pond", implying the family longevity, the arrival of new life and the deceased are often achieved through the "Fire Pond". Because of this, the "Family House" has become the most important foundation of the Mosuo people, and the various cultures of the Mosuo society can flourish and continue. For example, the establishment of "Family Name" and "Parent System"; the evolution of marriage and funeral views. In addition, it is precisely because of the lack of economic ties in the "Family House" itself, which makes the protection of no basic environment to breed in the psychology of interests, which enhances the feelings among the members of the "Family House", so that there is rarely separation, and maintains and continues the stability and development of the "Family House". Therefore, the study of the spatial culture of "Family House" can perceive the profound cultural connotation of the Mosuo society on the whole, and plays an important role in promoting the further research and discussion of this ethnic group.

References

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- [2] A famous French social anthropologist and philosopher, academician of the French Academy of Sciences, the founder of structuralist anthropology, and the main founder of the French structuralist humanities trend.
- [3] Weng Naiqun, "Female Source and Male Flow: On The Social Sex Structure System in the Culture of Sichuan and Yunnan Border", "Ethnic Studies", no. 4, 1996.
- [4] The custom of changing the age mainly stems from a fairy tale of the Mosuo people: in ancient times, people and animals were mixed together, but neither had a fixed life span. Later, the god decided to give the animals a length of life and told humans to live a long life if the call was answered in the middle of the night. The first time the god called a thousand years, he was

received by the alert crane, the second time, the third time, the dog accepted; the last time, he woke up. But humans feel that the life span is too short, so after getting the permission of the god, they change the age with the dog. Therefore, during the rite of passage, the Mosuo people will feed the dogs to express their kindness.

- [5] Yang Fuquan, *Huotang Culture Record*, Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2000, p. 37.
- [6] Max Webb, *Economy and Society (Volume 1)*, the Commercial Press, 2004, p. 257.
- [7] Parents are called "Dabu" in the Mosuo language, mainly by the "house" internal high prestige, strong ability, responsible for the major matters in the home.
- [8] Max Webb, *Economy and Society (Volume 1)*, the Commercial Press, 2004, p. 269.
- [9] Morgan, translated by Yang Dong, Zhang Liyuan, Feng Hanji, *Ancient Society (Volume 1)*, the Commercial Press, 1971, p. 44.
- [10] In the process of migration, the ancestors of the Mosuo people were divided into six "Er", namely: west, Hu, tooth, Russia, cloth, rub, and each "Er" was divided into several "Japanese" ——— mainly linked by the maternal blood as a whole group. Refer to [De] Michel Opitz, [Switzerland] Elizabeth Xu, translated by Liu Yongqing, Luo Hong, *Naxi Mosuo Ethnography*, Yunnan University Press, 2010, p. 95; Ratamith, *Collection of Mosuo Social and Cultural Studies (Vol. 1)*, Yunnan University Press, 2006, p. 40.
- [11] Mosuo people generally believe that men have nine lives, while women only seven.
- [12] The Mosuo people believe that their ancestral origin is located in the northern Abswana, near Shuiluo Township, Muli Tibetan Autonomous County. See Weng Naiqun's "Female Source and Male Flow: On the Structure System of Social Sex in the Japanese Culture from the Symbolism", *"Ethnic Studies"*, No.4,1996.