

## **Sustainable Development of Eco-Cultural Tourism in Remote Regions: Lessons Learned from Southwest China**

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*This paper first reviews major theories, approaches and trends in development anthropology related to eco-cultural tourism. Then, it discusses the development process of Mosuo ethnic eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake in Southwest China since the 1980s and applies theories and approaches of development anthropology to interpret this process. After commenting on the achievements made in this development process, the paper points out problems Mosuo eco-cultural tourism is facing in community participation, empowerment and stakeholder participation, and lessons learned for sustainable development of eco-cultural tourism.*

Development anthropology is the study of development problems, such as poverty, environmental degradation, and hunger and the application of anthropological knowledge to solve those problems. It clearly emerged as a subfield in applied anthropology in the 1970s (Little, 2005). But the word “develop” first appeared in English language in the 17th century. In the 18th century, it was used in biology, referring to human mental development. In the 19th century, it became a keyword in classic evolution doctrine in social sciences, especially used to explain process of economic change resulting from industrialization and market economy. This usage has become popular in the 20th century (Yang, 2007). Since the World War II, the definition of “development” has four implications (Crewe & Harrison, 1989):

1. Classic evolutionary thought that regards development as process of evolution, i.e., from “traditional” to “modern”;
2. Technology progress as a key and moving forces of development;
3. The expansion of market economy and training of rational economic men;
4. Traditional cultures as both obstacles and targets of development.

In the 1950s and 1960s, many development projects launched by international institutions or the U.S. Agency for International Development, such as Truman’s Point Four Program, took it for granted that capital assistance and transfer of the Western technology to developing countries would increase their economic growth and promote social development from “traditional” to “modern.” With the aid from the West, construction of infrastructure, Western-style industrialization and agriculture farms, Western education systems were set up in many developing countries, but the results were not as satisfactory as expected. In fact, the

development programs created many social, economic, and cultural problems in developing countries that they had never met before, including inflation, unfair distribution of wealth, a widening gap between the rich and poor, and cultural conflicts (Yang, 2007).

In the 1970s, international development programs took some new directions. Development projects were launched in the areas of urban infrastructure, such as transportation in and out of cities; social programs such as health, education, medical care and housing; and rural development. It was then accepted that development should be suitable to local resources and technology level. In the 1980s, the concept of sustainable development came forth and was practiced widely. Natural environment became a concern in development planning. In the 1990s, women and development became a focus of concern, and development programs now directly involved the poorest population in developing countries. In the 2000s, private enterprises and market reform were supported by development programs (Yang, 2007). Today, as outlined by the United Nations (1999) and widely accepted by people, development programs should pay attention to rural development, employment and increase of income, women's roles and demands in development, sustainable development that emphasizes avoiding economic growth at the cost of ecological environment, and finally the complete participation of the poorest population in rural areas in the development process.

The practice of development programs has undergone many changes since the end of the World War II, as does the definition of development. Nobel-prize-winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen defined development's aim as "expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy," rather than being simply a process to increase individuals' wealth (Sen, 1999). Anthropologist Riall Nolan defined development as attempts to improve conditions of life for people with a focus on raising standards of living, building local capacity, and encouraging local participation and decision-making (Nolan, 2002). Common grounds of definitions of "development" today include improvement, empowerment, participation, and sustainability.

## **DEVELOPMENT ANTHROPOLOGY AND ECO-CULTURAL TOURISM**

In the 1970s, many development programs launched in Third World countries after World War II were evaluated. It was found that original objectives of many programs not just failed, but they had also created many new problems. New directions of development programs were set up. Development agencies, such as The United States Agency for International Development, and The United Nations Development Program, started to pay attention to the socio-cultural factors of the countries they worked in. They turned to anthropologists and put anthropologists to work on development programs so as to use their anthropological knowledge. Certain events in the mid-1970s helped to establish development anthropology as a subfield, including: 1) US government's legislation after the Vietnam War that mandated the separation of any intelligence activities from official international development assistance; 2) the Sahelian drought and famine of the early 1970s which involved many anthropologists becoming involved in the humanitarian efforts for their expertise for this part of the world; 3) the initiation of new policies at large development agencies in the 1970s, such as USAID's New Directions that emphasized rural development and the UNDP's "basic human" approach, open to anthropological input; 4) the initiation of social soundness analysis requirements at some large development organizations to study potential impacts of development projects on different social groups (women, poor, minority groups, etc); 5) the establishment in the 1970s of the Institute for Development Anthropology (IDA) in the USA, Britain's Overseas Development Institute(ODI), the Centre for

Development Research in Denmark, and the Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer in France, that began to employ anthropologists; 6) articles and books published that highlighted development anthropology (Little, 2005).

Since its establishment as a subfield, development anthropology has grown with the increase of international development projects. Those development projects involve housing, health, education, agriculture, tourism, environmental protection, employment, politics and power, poverty alleviation, food security, and many other aspects of human life. This has provided a huge stage for development anthropology to act on. Development is taken as a cultural, economic, and political process, and development anthropology has become a bridge that connects culture and development when a “traditional” society is being transformed into a “modern” society. It aims to solve social, political, and economic problems that development projects encounter due to cultural differences. It explores how to increase the efficiency of development projects by using local cultures or resources. The work of development anthropology today shows the following trends: 1) A continuing diffidence on the part of anthropologists working in the development field; 2) an increasingly focused sense of anthropological contribution defined in terms of what anthropologists say about culture and social relations; 3) opposition to the marginalization of indigenous people and their knowledge; 4) a keen interest in bottom-up solutions and in mechanism of empowerment; 5) cynicism about the aims and practices of development; 6) the emergence of critical views of development and the development process; 7) the advocacy by some of alternative ways of doing both development and anthropology (Grillo, 1997).

In theory and method, anthropologists have been strongly influenced by economists and other social scientists in their study of development and underdevelopment. For example, dependency theory that highlights how peripheral communities can easily be exploited by international capital (the core) and that local development can only be achieved by eliminating market relations with the global capitalist system; modernization theory insisting that western science and technology and education can change non-western countries and promote their social and economic developments; Marxist theory claiming small groups of capitalist elites have captured most benefits from development; populist-inspired theories privileging local knowledge and practice and programs based on them. During the past two decades, anthropological study of intra-household relations and common property systems has been used as guidelines in development programs in agriculture, nutrition, and food aid (Little, 2005). In practice, development anthropology emphasizes the combination of theory and method with practice. Participation and empowerment, two concepts often used by development anthropologists, have both theoretical and methodological implications.

The development of tourism has always been the focus of study in development anthropology because tourism has emerged as the world’s largest industry after World War II and has become one of the most important means that many developing countries take to alleviate poverty and to develop economy. In the 1970s, a major theme in the development anthropology’s study of tourism was the socio-cultural impact of tourism on developing countries. In the 1980s, the themes were impacts of tourism on developed countries, cultural adaptation to the development of tourism, socio-cultural construction, and environment protection of host countries. Since the 1990s, the sustainable development of tourism and socio-cultural change caused by tourism have been major themes of study in development anthropology (Peng, 2008).

When evaluating the impacts of mass tourism on social and cultural structures of a society, anthropologists tend to look at negative impacts of tourism. They and other social scientists have

challenged the hypothesis that tourism would bring in economic benefits, claiming that it is economists who take “tourism as the best development strategy”(Stronza, 2001). As early as in the 1970s, social scientists came to believe that tourism was not the good medicine to solve economic problems in Third World countries (de Kadt, 1979). They found that tourism brings about new social problems, such as sex tourism (Pettman, 1997; Opperman, 1998), interruption of agricultural production so that local communities now depend on the outside world for food (Oliver-Smith, 1989; Mansperger, 1995), negative impacts of tourism on local environment (Olsen, 1997; Honey, 1999), transfer of profits to developed countries by private enterprises involved in tourism (Crick, 1989), increasing social stratification in local communities (Stronza, 2001), and dissatisfaction of more and more people with tourism due to the disappearance of traditional cultures because of tourism (Erisman, 1983). Tourism was even depicted as a way of imperialism (Nash, 1996), a vanguard of neo-colonialism (Nash, 1989), and “global fascism”(MacCannell, 1999).

In recent years, many anthropologists and other social scientists favor or support the development of cultural tourism or ecotourism as an alternative to mass tourism. They believe that though these two ways of tourism have created some problems, they are relatively less destructive and more sustainable. Cultural tourism emphasizes the use of cultural factors to attract tourists. These factors can be material, such as museums, historical sites, traditional architecture, and handicrafts. They can also be non-material, such as religious activities, art shows, and traditional festivals. Cultural tourism attracts tourists to experience and explore ways of life, social customs and religion, cultural heritage, and other cultural implications of the people they are not familiar with. Cultural tourism is becoming increasingly associated with the ways of life of so-called “exotic” and “primitive” cultures, alluring people to visit before “the wake of global monoculture engulfs these ‘traditional’ societies” (MacDonald, 2004). According to a UNESCO report, cultural tourism “has positive economic and social impact, it establishes and reinforces identity, it helps build image, it helps preserve the cultural and historical heritage, with culture as an instrument it facilitates harmony and understanding among people, it supports culture and helps renew tourism.” (MacDonald, 2004) However, some scholars point out that cultural tourism cannot solve all the problems of mass tourism. Many of negative impacts of mass tourism also appear in communities that develop cultural tourism.

Ecotourism is defined by The International Ecotourism Society as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” (Wood, 2002). What attracts people to these areas are cultural, biological, and environmental diversities. Hence, ecotourism is not only for leisure, but it inspires tourists to understand and appreciate the ecological system of host communities and their cultures. Conservation and development are the themes of ecotourism. Ideal ecotourism is small scale and locally owned. Ecotourism is considered as a strategy that fosters the development of local economy and protection of local natural resources.

Most of these host communities of eco-cultural tourism are located in undeveloped, remote, and poor rural areas. In these communities, natural environment resources or cultural resources alone usually cannot support sustainable tourism. The coordinated development of both cultural tourism and ecotourism can bring income and opportunities to local communities. Mosuo Eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake in Yunnan, China is such a type of tourism.

Development anthropology insists that the development of eco-cultural tourism should not exploit local people (Burnie, 1994). The success of eco-cultural tourism depends on its acceptance by local communities and their participation in its development. The cooperation

between local people, managers, and ‘specialists’ such as anthropologists and ecologists is the principle of eco-cultural tourism. Mutual respect and communication is the basis of this cooperation (Wallace and Russell, 2004). Some scholars suggest the adaptation of community integration approach in the development of tourism, which has three critical parameters: community awareness, community unity, and power or control relationships (both within and external to the community) (Mitchell and Reid, 2001). This approach highlights collective community participation and protection of the benefits of the majority people in the community. In a word, development anthropologists believe that sustainability and local participation are extremely important for the long term future of eco-cultural tourism.

## **DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF MOSUO ETHNIC ECO-CULTURAL TOURISM AT LUGU LAKE IN CHINA**

Lugu Lake is located on the border of Yunnan and Sichuan provinces in the South-West of China. It covers an area of 50.4 square kilometers and has an average depth of 45 meters. Its elevation is 2690 meters above sea level. It is surrounded by mountains. The lake, the mountains, and forests together create a beautiful scenic view. The lake is well known as “the last uncontaminated land” in southwest China. It is also well known both in and out of China as the land of Mosuo people, who are “matriarchal” and have a unique marriage custom (referred to as *zouhun* in Mandarin, *sese* in Mosuo, and walking marriage in English). Journalists, novelists, and travel agencies have enhanced the descriptions of Mosuo unique culture, luring tourists to Lugu Lake to experience a “land where women rule” and in some cases to try *zouhun* (Walsh, 2005).

Luoshui, the site of this study, is a natural village sitting by the lake, 200 kilometers away from Lijiang City, 75 kilometers away from Ninglang county seat, and 21 kilometers away from Yongning Town. The village has two parts: upper and lower village, divided by the highway that runs through the village. At the end of 2009, Luoshui had 78 households and a population of 570 with 270 Mosuo, 220 Pumi and 80 Han people. The village has a territory of 1430 hectares, but it has only 77.8 hectare cultivation land. The major crops are corn and potato. The yields are quite low due to the high elevation (2700 meters from the sea level), poor soil quality, and lack of good irrigation system (Yue, 2003). People were quite poor before tourists came in.

When tourists started to come to Luoshui Village at the end of the 1980s, the villagers knew nothing about tourism. In Mosuo community, when guests come to their home, they should entertain the guests with the best food they have and provide them beds to sleep. It is against their cultural values to charge guests for those services. When the government encouraged them to do tourism business, they did not understand how tourism could make money (Su, 2008). The first hotel was built in 1989 by the family of the director of the county tourism bureau. It had only 20 beds then. For the first year, the family made a profit of 40,000 yuan. It astonished the whole village. Other families in the village started to build hotels, and the tourism at Lugu Lake took off. Luoshui Village took the lead and set up a model that other Mosuo villages around the lake followed in the following 20 years. From then till today, the tourism at Luoshui Village has gone through two development stages.

Stage One (from 1989 to 2004). This is the stage during which the villagers developed tourism themselves. The local government reported that in 1990, Lugu Lake officially opened for domestic tourists, and in 1992, it opened for foreign tourists. The number of visitors gradually increased each year. However, there was no regulation of this new business market there. The development fell into chaos. Quarrels and even fights often occurred between families in the

village. Tourists sometimes were “overcharged.” 1991 to 1993 were the years when the conflicts were the worst (Su, 2008). In order to control the competition, Luoshui village collectivized boating, horse riding, and evening dance performances. A boating team and a horse riding team were set up. Every household in the village contributed one member to join each team. The two teams shifted their work once a week. The boating team was also put in charge of the evening performance. All the income that each team made was evenly divided among all the team members. This mode of collectivization was copied by other villages along Lugu Lake that started tourism later.

In the spring of 1995, the number of tourists surpassed the number of the beds the hotels in the village had. This enticed villagers to build larger hotels. In 1998, the first four-storey high hotel was built. By the end of 1999, the village had over 50 hotels with more than 1300 beds. In 2004, villagers from the upper village built hotels by the lake close to the lower village. By 2005, the village had the capacity of 3500 beds (Walsh, 2005). Today, according to the data we collected in May, 2010, the village has 74 hotels open for business.

With the rapid increase of hotels at Luoshui Village, problems arose. More and more hotels were built very close to the lake, discharging dirty water into the lake, causing water pollution. Sex service under the name of “*zouhun*” (walking marriage) started to flourish. This trend not only affected the environment, but also traditional cultural tradition. The sustainable development of tourism was also hurt. On June 5, 2004, the problems of management and prostitution were exposed by a program shown on China’s Central Television. As a result, the government stepped into the tourism industry there by sending a work team into the village to regulate the tourism industry at Luoshui village.

Stage Two (from 2004 to today). This is the stage where government has taken control of the development. On October 27, 2004, the Yunnan provincial government held a meeting at Luoshui on conservation. At the meeting, the government made a decision to start the construction of “eight grand projects” to treat the environment of Lugu lake, all of which should be completed in 3 years. On February 24, 2006, the provincial government held a meeting in Lijiang to plan tourism development in Northwest Yunnan. The meeting came to a decision that “great efforts will be made to build Lugu Lake into a tourism attraction site well known both at home and abroad for its rich culture, beautiful natural scenery, good ecological environment, and distinguished features.” The meeting approved the launch of a number of big projects that intended to improve the tourism infrastructure and images of tourism products, including roads and bridges, a tourism town, and an airport. On January 3, 2008, the Lijiang City Council passed a strategic decision to “launch a decisive battle at Lugu Lake”(Su, 2008).

Early in 2005, the project of constructing a road around the lake, the program of Lige model village of ethnic cultural and ecological tourism, the design of a comprehensive development plan of Lugu Lake, the project to restore Luoshui as Mosuo folk culture display village, the project of a sewage system at the tourism areas, the construction of a refuse dump site, the engineering project of plateau lake pollution control technology, and restoration project of the ecological system along the lake side were started one after another. On January 24, 2008, the Lijiang City government held a celebration meeting at Lugu Lake, symbolizing that the eight grand projects were completed (Su, 2008).

As compared with the development at the first stage, the government sponsored- development had the features of “grand tourism, big industry, great outlook, large-scale conservation, big plan, great courage, famous brand, marketing with great efforts, high spirited atmosphere, huge investment, big development, great thoughts” (Su, 2008). The total investment from 2005 to

2008 was 80 million yuan. 16 hectare of farmland were expropriated. The infrastructure at the scenic spots and the appearance of the village have been improved greatly, resulting in noticeable social and economic benefits. In 2003, Lugu Lake had 250,000 visitors, generating 5.2 million yuan income from entrance ticket sale alone and 75 million yuan of total tourism income. In 2007, Lugu Lake had 500,000 tourists, 15 million yuan from selling entrance tickets, and 180 million yuan of total tourism income (Su, 2008).

After over twenty years of development, the tourism facilities at Luoshui have been improved. The major tourist activities are boating, horse riding, dancing, and visiting Mosuo families. Tourism regulations and guidelines have been issued and perfected. Besides those regulations issued by Lijiang Provincial-Level Tourism Management Committee, Luoshui Village now has "Rules and Regulations for Luoshui Village and Villagers Pledges," "Agreement of Luoshui Tourism Hotel Association against Completion by Inappropriate Means", and "Charter of Lugu Lake Tourism Hotel Association." These rules and regulations clearly state that all villagers are obliged to protect Mosuo matrilineal culture and beautiful mountains and waters, to correctly handle the relationship between farming and tourism, and that sale of cultivated land is strictly forbidden, and lease of those land needs to be approved by the village. There are other specific regulations on tourist service, hotel price, and safety to avoid vicious competition that had occurred in the 1990s.

At present, tourism has become the backbone industry at Luoshui Village. Its economy is now completely driven by tourism. Tourism has been blended with its social life. Mosuo culture has become a trademark to solicit and entertain tourists. All households in the village participate in tourism activities. This ensures a fair participation (Li and Luo, 2003). Luoshui has 570 local residents and over 700 nonresidents working or doing business there. Tourism has linked them together. In our interviews with villagers, they openly talked about the economic benefits that tourism brought them. Mosuo people admitted that the development of tourism had some negative impacts on their traditional cultures, such as influence of individualism among the young people, which has endangered the matrilineal large family system.

From our open-ended interviews on eco-cultural tourism, we found that local residents fully understood the importance of the natural landscape of Lugu Lake and Mosuo traditional culture to tourism. They knew how to entertain tourists and to satisfy tourists' demands. They paid great attention to the village sanitation and ecological protection of Lugu Lake. The set-up of Mosuo Museum and Lugu Lake Mosuo Culture Research Association shows that the local Mosuo people had realized the importance and urgency to protect Mosuo culture and pass it down to their children. Mosuo culture is inclusive and flexible. The increasing influence of Tibetan Buddhism and consumption culture of tourists on Mosuo culture has made Mosuo elites realize the key to sustainable development of eco-cultural tourism is to protect Mosuo traditional culture and to protect the natural ecological environment of Lugu Lake. During our stay at the village in the spring of 2009, there was a forest fire in the mountain at the back of the village. We observed that almost all adult villagers at home rushed to the fire site and put out the fire before it expanded.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

When we look at the development of eco-cultural tourism at Luoshui Village on Lugu Lake in Yunnan, we see that the government has played a critical role in its development. Governments at provincial, city, county and township levels and government offices stationed at Lugu Lake

(such as Lijiang Lugu Lake Provincial-Level Tourism Management Committee, Lijiang Lugu Lake Tourism Development Limited Corporation) are all involved in the management of the eco-cultural tourism. Governments at various levels held several on-spot meetings at Lugu Lake to solve all sorts of management issues and problems. Eight environment renovation projects were completed to protect the natural environment there. To protect Mosuo culture, Lugu Lake Mosuo Cultural Research Association, and Mosuo Museum were set up, research literature was compiled and special issue of research result was published. The government office in charge of tourism in Lugu Lake has put out a propaganda slogan: "We should protect the natural ecological and cultural resources that the development of tourism at Lugu Lake depends on in the same way as we protect our eyes" (Yu, 2008). Local economy benefits greatly from tourism trade (such as stores selling tourism products, family hotels, restaurants, tea and coffee houses), and tourist recreational activities (such as horse riding, boating and dancing and singing performance). The local living standard has been greatly improved.

The development of eco-cultural tourism at Luoshui Village has gone through two stages as we discussed above: local resident sponsored development and government sponsored development. During the first stage, the local residents initially watched and then enthusiastically participated in the development of eco-cultural tourism. They started many tourism programs that fit local conditions, such as horse riding, boating, visiting Mosuo family, and Mosuo folk dance and singing. They welcomed outsiders to come to rent stores and even hotels, or to open up other business. During the second stage, the government first focused on programs that were intended to improve local capacity, especially infrastructure, such as roads, sewage system. At the same time, the government used all means to advertise the Mosuo eco-cultural tourism, to build the image of "Kingdom of Mosuo Women at Lugu Lake," to romanticize Mosuo matriarchy culture in order to attract tourists to come, and to advocate higher-level tourism at Lugu Lake (e.g., using investors' fund to build a vocation village on a peninsula with luxurious hotels). After completing the eight big projects mentioned earlier, the government is now going all out on three major projects: an airport, highway reconstruction that will shorten the travel time from Lijiang to Lugu Lake from approximately 8 hours to 3 to 4 hours, and the construction of a new town named Lugu Lake Mosuo Women's Kingdom's Tourism Town.

In our study, local residents often told us that the eco-cultural tourism at Luoshui Village has made great progress in the past decade. It has also promoted the development of agriculture, stock raising, traditional handicraft, and other industries in the village and neighboring villages. It has almost all the "ingredients" that a successful community development requires, which include enthusiasm, ownership, local leadership, collaboration, resources, experimentation, allies, communication and networks, and diversity (Cavaye, 2010). However, if we look at it from the development anthropology perspectives, we see the following major limitations.

### **Concept of Development**

Development anthropology emphasizes that the goal of development is to help people living in poor areas to alleviate poverty and improve living standards, not to take away their resources like colonialists, though with good intention (Escobar, 1991). Some scholars criticized the model of economic development advocated by the West since the World War II. They pointed out that it embodies classic evolutionary thought, regarding development as process of evolution (i.e., from "traditional" to "modern" society), and it takes traditional cultures as obstacles and targets of development (Crewe and Harrison, 1989). It marginalizes and looks down upon local residents, their traditional culture and knowledge. Development anthropology advocates the



bottom-up participation development model, encourages the study of indigenous knowledge in the field of development, and emphasizes that development should be appropriate to local resources and technology level (Yang, 2007). The strategies now adopted by the government on the development of eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake in Yunnan follow the top-down development model, which is based on “large-scale tourism, big enterprises, and grand plan.” Local knowledge, especially those related to local ecology, environment and biodiversity, are not taken seriously. Classic evolution thought is still popular among many government officials and economists, who believe that the development sponsored by the government can push “backward,” “primitive” society into “modern” society. Local people are not treated as equal partners in development.

### **Community Participation**

In the debate on sustainable tourism, it is increasingly being recognized that local people should be included and involved in the tourism development process and that their participation is important to make tourism sustainable and responsible (Ypeij and Zorn, 2007). Community participation does not simply refer to local people participating in tourist activities or being offered jobs. As early as in 1985, anthropologist Peter Murphy pointed out in his book *Tourism: A Community Approach*, that tourism is a community industry. This industry sells the community as resources, and the process affects everybody’s life in the community, so local residents have the right to participate in the process of planning and decision making related to tourism development. Their ideas and attitudes should be taken into the planning process so as to reduce their antipathy to the plan, to avoid conflicts, and to put the plan into practice successfully (Murphy, 1985). The grand development plan of eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake was sponsored by the government. The decision making process was from top to bottom without adequate participation of local people. In our study, we found that local people did not see impacts of Lugu Lake Mosuo Women’s Kingdom’s Tourism Town (which will be completed in 2-3 years with hotels, shops, restaurants, bars and other recreational facilities) on their society, their economy, and their culture. They are not prepared for the coming competition. They have a feeling of resentment against the construction of a vocation village on Yinhu Peninsula, but they can do nothing about it.

### **Empowerment**

Empowerment is both an important theory and approach in anthropological study of development. “How to handle empowerment in development controls the trend of development anthropology research” (Yang, 2007). Empowerment is closely associated with community participation. Real practice of community participation should have 5 characteristics: inclusive and transparent decision-making process, high number of participating citizens, high degree of meaningful local participation, equitable and efficient process, and high local ownership and management in the community-based tourism sector (Mitchell, 2003). Participation without veto power is meaningless. The development plan of eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake was sponsored by the government and drafted by experts. It did not specify how to empower local residents to participate in tourism planning and management. Insufficient meaningful local participation might endanger the sustainable development of eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake, or at least diminish the goal of development advocated by anthropologists.

## **Stakeholders**

Eco-culture tourism development is a complex operational process that involves many stakeholders. The stakeholder theory is a management theory started in Europe and North America in 1960s. Its core concepts are: the development of any corporation depends on involvement or participation of all stakeholders, and a corporation should seek the overall benefits of all stakeholders, not just benefits of some major player (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). In the 1990s, some scholars introduced the stakeholder theory into tourism and applied it in the study of tourism planning and management (Wang, Lin and Shen, 2007). Stakeholders in tourism are defined as government organizations and non-government organizations at tourism starting and destination places, developers of tourism, corporations related to tourism, employees working in tourism corporations, residents of tourism sites, tourism media, and tourists, etc. (Cao, 2007). The uniqueness of the eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake is the lake and Mosuo culture. Mosuo people and other ethnic groups living on the shore of the lake, as stakeholders, should share the benefits of the development. The government policy and measures taken related to tourism development should be transparent so that local residents can see that their interests are protected. In our study, we learned that since 1990s, due to economic interest, numerous conflicts have occurred between the local community and Lugu Lake Tourism Management Committee, a government management agency.

To conclude, we fully recognize the great achievement made in the eco-cultural tourism development at Luoshui in the past 20 year, but some problems still exist in its development. The advantages of the government sponsored eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake are the improvement in infrastructure, the protection of ecological environment, large investment, and high speed of development. The role of the government in building local capacity is essential for the successful development of eco-cultural tourism in remote areas. The lessons learned from this development model in Southwest China include lack of real meaningful efficient community participation in tourism planning and management, and of the community's control of its own resources. This will affect the sustainable development of eco-cultural tourism at Lugu Lake. We believe that community integration approach can be used to arouse local people's enthusiasm in participating in tourism development, to protect their interests, and to increase the power to deal with government and development agencies for a better share of the profits; whereas stakeholder theory and approach can be used by government to coordinate interests of all stakeholders, especially the majorities for sustainable development.

## **ENDNOTE**

This paper is the initial phase achievement of projects funded by Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (RG009-D-08) and Chinese National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science (08XMZ027).

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