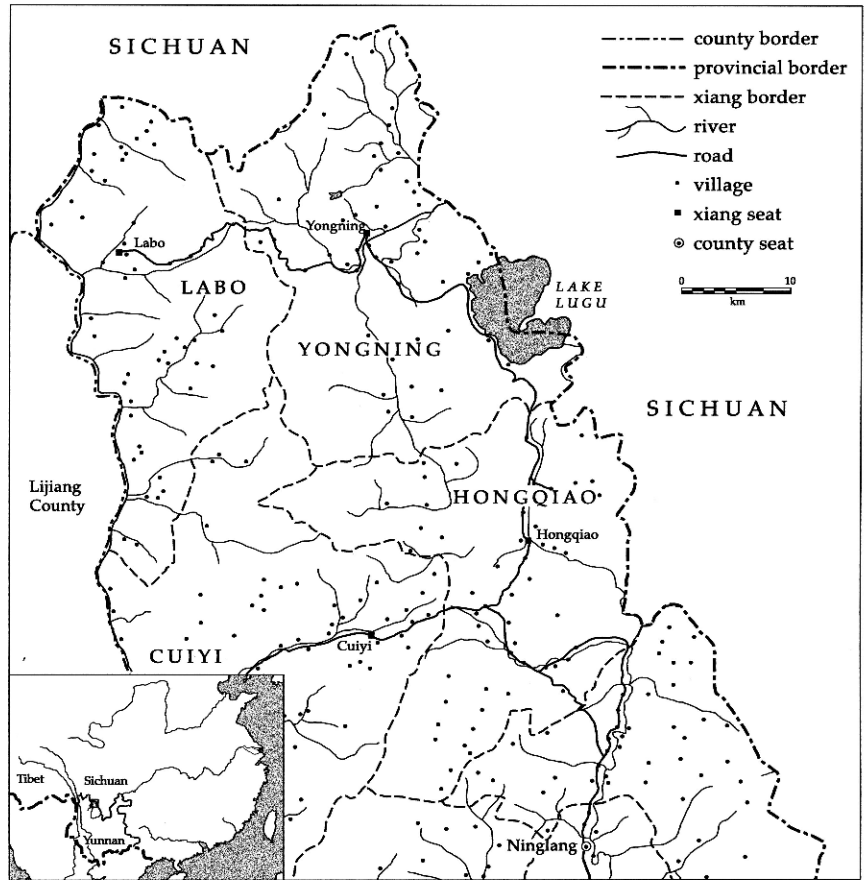


## *Introduction*

We have a very special case on our hands. It is special not just in the sense that every culture is unique in its own right and different from others in one way or another. Rather, it is special in the unequivocal sense that its patterns of fundamental social institutions, such as institutionalized sexual union, household organization, and kinship system, had been literally unknown to anthropologists before it appeared on the anthropological horizon just a few decades ago. It is also one of the very rare societies in which women are recognized as culturally superior to men. Moreover, because of its unique cultural norms, this society has had low fertility and mortality rates since premodern times—a pattern conventionally associated with modernization. With features like these, this case is bound not only to expand the limits of our knowledge but also to force us to rewrite many basic concepts in our textbooks.

Our case is the Moso, an ethnic minority group who live on the highland around the upper reaches of the Jinsha River in Southwest China. The Moso have a population of about forty thousand, mainly distributed in Ninglang County of Yunnan Province and Yanyuan, Muli, and Yanbian Counties in Sichuan Province (*NLYZZZXZBJWYH* 1993). Those who live in Ninglang County are mostly concentrated in what are now Yongning and Labo *xiang* (rural townships), or what I call the greater Yongning area (see Map 2).<sup>1</sup>

The cultural center of the Moso is situated at Yongning proper, a basin of 41.23 square kilometers at an elevation of 2,650 meters, surrounded by mountains up to 4,332 meters above sea level. The Yongning basin was ethnically homogeneous until the early decades of the twentieth century. At present, however, it is the home of eleven ethnic groups. In spite of the change, the Moso is still by far the dominant group in this area. According to the government annual survey, by December 31, 2006, the Moso in Yongning and Labo numbered 11,278,<sup>2</sup> accounting for 36.53 percent<sup>3</sup> of the total population of 30,870.<sup>4</sup> Next to the basin is Lake Lugu, a plateau lake of 48.45 square kilometers straddling the Yunnan-Sichuan border. Rivers crisscross the basin area.



MAP 2. Northern Ningling County, Yunnan Province, showing *xiang* boundaries, villages, and major roads.

The microclimate is conducive to farming, and the Moso have long-established irrigation, agriculture, and fishing techniques. Crops in recent decades include rice, corn, wheat, potatoes, highland barley, buckwheat, oats, barnyard millet, and a variety of beans and vegetables. Animal husbandry, the ancestral means of subsistence, has become an insignificant sideline.

Naru, the Moso language, belongs to the Yi branch of the Tibeto-Burman subfamily of the Sino-Tibetan family (He and Jiang 1985). It is a spoken language with no written form. The Moso have their own religion, the Ddaba religion, which is a combination of nature worship, spirit worship, and ancestral worship. Despite the persistent presence of the Ddaba religion, the spiritual life of the Moso has been strongly influenced by Tibetan Buddhism (Shih 1998).

The most conspicuous feature of Moso culture is a visiting system called *tisese*, literally “walking back and forth.” A hefty majority of Moso adults practice *tisese* instead of marriage to fulfill their needs for procreation and sexual gratification. As the term suggests, the relationship normally does not involve cohabitation. The common practice is for the two partners to work and eat in their respective matrilineal households. The man visits the woman, stays with her overnight, and goes back to his household the next morning. The only prerequisite is a mutual agreement between the man and the woman to allow sexual access to each other.

No ceremony, social recognition, or exchange of gifts is required to initiate or end a *tisese* relationship. Although it is not unusual for the man to help the woman’s household in agricultural busy seasons, it is not required that he do so. In principle, the relationship does not affect the partners’ socioeconomic status and does not commit them to an exclusive or enduring union. Children born to such a union belong to the household in which they were born, usually the mother’s. Under no circumstances is a child considered illegitimate.

Although duolocal residence is a defining characteristic of *tisese*, it is not an inviolable principle. Under particular circumstances, contingent on interpersonal dynamics and compositions of the households, uxorilocal, virilocal, or neolocal residence can also take place. Cohabiting residence may imply or result in a more lasting relationship, but it signifies neither commitment nor duties and obligations. The moved-in partner can leave at his or her free will.

As it carries no binding force whatsoever, *tisese* is not a legal institution in any sense. Although traditional Moso society (prior to the 1956 Democratic Reform) was stratified into three ranks, *tisese* was virtually status-blind from the vantage point of either gender. That is, not only might men of higher ranks have relations with women of lower ranks, but women of higher ranks, including any of the chief’s female relatives, might also have long-term or short-term *tisese* relationships with men of lower ranks. Either a man or a woman could initiate a relationship with a higher-ranking member of the opposite gender. My household survey shows that this status-blind practice in traditional Moso society was the norm rather than an exception.

As both cause and effect of *tisese*, most Moso live in grand households without conjugal units. Such a grand household usually consists of three to four generations of matrilineal blood relatives. In the household of any particular individual (“ego”), members would include: mother’s mother and her siblings; mother and her siblings as well as children of mother’s mother’s sisters; ego and ego’s siblings as well as mother’s sisters’ children; and children of the female members of ego’s generation. In a typical Moso household, female adult members receive their male visitors at home,

while male members go out to visit their female partners. The household economy is managed and supervised by the household head, who can be either a woman or a man. Property is collectively inherited and owned by all members of the household.

In traditional Moso ideology, women are considered superior to men and situated at the center of their culture. Even though the Moso have been under the strong influence of the Tibetan and Han Chinese for centuries, this superior-female conception is still visible in many aspects of life.

In the collective memory of the Moso, *tise* has been their way of life since time immemorial. It is the pivot of Moso culture: it provides the premise and foundation of the cultural values that give meaning to the life of the Moso, and it is the ultimate ethnic marker that sets the Moso apart from other cultures. Because of its distinctive features, however, *tise* has often been the subject of ideological adversity from the larger society.

From the perspectives of the dominant ideologies in China, first patriarchal Confucianism and then evolutionary communism, *tise* has been either “immoral” or “primitive”—something that needs to be corrected or civilized. In 1956, through a procedure known as the Democratic Reform, the rule of the Yongning chief’s family that had lasted for over six hundred years came to an end. The Moso area was fully incorporated into the Chinese communist system. Since then, Moso society has undoubtedly witnessed more changes than it had for thousands of years.

During the two decades marked by the 1956 Democratic Reform and the end of the Cultural Revolution in China (1966–76), the Moso were subjected to incessant brainwashing with the communist “progressive ideology.” The assault on *tise* culminated in the 1975–76 One-Wife-One-Husband Movement, in which draconian measures were taken to force sexual partners to live under one roof. As a result, up to mid-1976, 424 couples in the Yongning area were forced into registered marriage (Shih 2000).

With the end of the Cultural Revolution, Moso society entered another new era. The abolishment of the people’s commune system made the household once again the primary social unit in daily life and in agriculture production. The economic reform also opened doors for tourism and a wide array of other social and cultural exchanges with the rest of the world. The Moso began to have access to television service in the late 1980s. During my 1997 field trip, I found that the Moso youths had a much more intimate knowledge about the Chicago Bulls and Michael Jordan than I did. In the summer of 2000, I watched transmitting towers for cellular phones being erected in Yongning.

Today’s Moso people are no longer strangers to consumer goods from Shanghai and Hong Kong. The external impact on Moso culture in the

last two decades of the twentieth century was not as coercive and catastrophic as it was during the previous two decades. The effect, however, has been all the more profound. As the Moso become more familiar with ways of living and thinking in other parts of the world, their traditions are eroding quietly and rapidly. This time around, however, changes are taking place without resistance from within.

Culture change among the Moso in the past half-century is intriguing by itself and will be the topic of my next book. The aim of this book is to offer a comprehensive ethnography of the Moso traditions with sexual union and family life at their center. In addition to the sociocultural conditions of the past two decades, this book also covers the Moso social institutions, cultural norms, idioms, beliefs, legends, and behavioral customs that existed long before the watershed of 1956 and have continued with modifications up to this day.

Due to the complexity of cultural reality, a note on the usage of tense in English throughout this book is in order. The focus of this book is on the Moso traditions. As suggested above, however, many norms, beliefs, and customs have continued into the present time to variable degrees and with variable vitality. Those surviving elements of the traditions exist among the increasingly overwhelming flood of ways of thinking and behavior diffused from the outside. Change is constantly taking place in subtle ways. In many cases, it is impossible to accurately pin down the time frame of a particular cultural element.

For example, according to the Moso maxim *ge so chang, mu so chang*, literally meaning “three ascending generations, three descending generations,” one’s personhood is incomplete unless that person can faithfully serve three elder generations and raise three younger generations. In the traditional times, as testified by my informants, everyone closely followed this maxim. In the twenty-first century, however, with unprecedented interaction with the larger society, while many people still uphold this value dearly, many others, mostly younger people, would pay little heed to this maxim or even have never heard of it. In this case, shall we say “The Moso believe that . . .” or “The Moso used to believe that . . .”? Either way would be right and wrong. Likewise, in the old days women were invariably preferred for the position of *ddabu*, or head of household. In recent decades, however, due to the changing political-economic conditions, many households are headed by men, while many others are still headed by women. In this case, shall we say “Women are preferred for the position of *ddabu*” or “Women were preferred for the position of *ddabu*”? We can always add sentences or even paragraphs to clarify each case. But that would enormously lengthen the text, at the cost of the smooth flow of ideas, with little gain. Examples like these are too many to be enumerated.

For these reasons, the time frame of the events in the ethnographic description is unavoidably ambiguous. The difficult choice among present, past, and perfect tenses is largely based on my vague feeling about the prevalence of the phenomenon being described. I would like to particularly point out that past tense in this book may not always suggest its normal meaning—namely, the expressed action (or state of being) happened (or existed) in the past and finished before the present. Rather, oftentimes it is used on the basis that the ethnographic observation was made prior to this writing, and no assumption is made about whether the description is still valid in the present. On the other hand, present and present perfect tenses are mostly used in accordance with the usual grammatical rules.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will recount the intellectual pedigree and theoretical relevance of Moso studies, my accidental entry into anthropology and the Moso case, my experiences and methods of fieldwork, and the roadmap of this book.

The first anthropological engagement with the Moso began in the early 1960s when three groups of Chinese ethnologists carried out government-sponsored large-scale surveys of the Moso community. The project, part of a nationwide investigation on the history and social conditions of ethnic minorities in China, aimed to produce information as a basis for policymaking. However, when the ethnologists found that most Moso did not practice marriage and most households did not have conjugal units, they were thrilled over the revelation: they had finally found a missing link in the Marxist theory of social evolution. In their 1983 book, Yan and Song explain:

It is commonly accepted by archeologists and historians that clan used to be a unit of production and daily life during the early stages of matrilineal clan. Clan members shared life when they were alive and shared a graveyard after death. How did people in this period organize their production and arrange their daily life? How did they forge marital relationships? Neither archeological sites nor historical records provide concrete evidence. One has to resort to ethnology. In the past, the grand family, also known as the matrilineal family commune, of the American Indians was usually taken as the typical pattern of matrilineal clan. However, such communes practiced "pairing marriage," in which men married out. In addition to matrilineal clan members, the commune included husbands of female members. Therefore, American Indians obviously did not follow the pattern of the early or middle stages of matrilineal clan, in which consanguinity was the only bond. Rather, they illustrated the late stage of matrilineal clan. A typical matrilineal clan should be both an exogamous consanguineous group and an economic unit of common production and daily life. Also, its pattern of marriage would not be pairing marriage, but clan group marriage. However, to prove such a point, new evidence from ethnology was needed.

Now new evidence has finally been found! The matrilineal group of the Yongning Naxi<sup>5</sup> can be seen as the epitome of early-stage matrilineal. It is both a matrilineal consanguineous organization and a unit of production and daily life. It is a remnant of the continued fission of matrilineal. Having entered class society a long time ago, this group has been getting smaller and smaller and is now only the size of a big family. Its composition, however, still retains the structural characteristics of the matrilineal; that is, it comprises matrilineal offspring of an apical ancestress and excludes sexual partners of both male and female members. Production and daily life, descent and property inheritance, education of children, burial of the dead—each contains residuals of the customs of the matrilineal. (Yan and Song 1983, 3–4)

For the Chinese in the 1960s, the tremendous significance of the first anthropological engagement with the Moso went far beyond the concern of academia. It was considered a piece of crucial living evidence to reinforce the validity of the Marxist grand theory of social evolution. To demonstrate the depth of this drama, I have traced the theoretical pedigree all the way back to its original sources.

One hundred years before anthropologists became aware of the Moso, two competing theories about the evolution of the human family were published in Europe during the same year. From his study of the ancient law of the Romans, Slavs, and Northern Indians, Sir Henry Maine deduced in his book *Ancient Law* ([1861] 1864) that the patriarchal family was the fundamental and universal unit of human society. His idea was not new but was instead a summary of thoughts about patriarchy that permeated the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Coward 1983). Countering Maine's argument, Johann J. Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* ([1861] 1948) offered a detailed scrutiny of the available theories and provided data from societies in which the descent system and family organization were diametrically opposed to those that Maine described. As a result of his research, Bachofen deduced a universal stage of matriarchy preceding that of patriarchy on the evolutionary ladder of human history. The leading Victorian evolutionary theorists, including Lewis H. Morgan and Friedrich Engels, agreed with Bachofen's major hypothesis, though they differed as to how the stage of matrilineality developed and how it was superseded by patrilineality (Schneider 1961a; Divale 1984).

In *Ancient Society* ([1877] 1963), Morgan laid out five stages of evolution that he thought the family in all human societies would undergo. Each form was associated with a particular pattern of marriage. The first stage, or the consanguine family, was "founded upon the intermarriage of brothers and sisters, own and collateral, in a group" (Morgan [1877] 1963, 393). The second stage, or the Punaluan family, was "founded upon the intermarriage of several sisters, own and collateral, with each other's

husbands, in a group; the joint husbands not being necessarily kinsmen of each other. Also, on the intermarriage of several brothers, own and collateral, with each other's wives, in a group; these wives not being necessarily kin to each other, although often the case in both instances. In each case the group of men were conjointly married to the group of women" (ibid., 393–94). The third stage, or the syndyasmian or pairing family, was "founded upon marriage between single pairs, but without an exclusive cohabitation. The marriage continued during the pleasure of the parties" (ibid., 394). The fourth stage, or the patriarchal family, was "founded upon the marriage of one man with several wives; followed, in general, by the seclusion of the wives" (ibid., 394). And finally, the fifth stage, or the monogamian family, was "founded upon marriage between single pairs, with an exclusive cohabitation" (ibid., 394).

Karl Marx endorsed Morgan's theory. The five stages of family-marriage echoed his own grand theory about the development of human society; that is, all human societies would undergo five stages of social evolution, from primitive society through slave society, feudal society, capitalist society, and eventually to the highest stage of communist society. Marx took detailed notes and jotted down lengthy comments on *Ancient Society*. He was planning to elaborate the topic in a book of his own. However, Marx died before he had a chance to realize this plan. His long-time comrade and supporter, Friedrich Engels, picked up his unfinished work. The result was the highly influential book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* ([1884] 1954). Based on Marx's notes and comments as well as historical materialism, for which he shared credit with Marx, Engels expounded in this book that the family was an unnatural institution that was devised to privatize wealth and human relationships, contrary to the natural conditions of animals and early humans. He pointed out that the family was a historical phenomenon; that is, it was created when the force of production was developed to a certain level and would eventually disappear, together with other institutions such as marriage and the state, when the force of production was infinitely developed. Between the commencement and demise of the family, Engels reaffirmed the evolutionary stages proposed by Morgan (Engels [1884] 1954).

By the 1960s, in China as well as in the Soviet Union and other communist countries, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* was taken as a cornerstone of historiography and the definitive guideline for ethnology. However, a sore point for proponents of both Engels and Morgan was that not every evolutionary stage in their theoretical framework was supported with hard evidence. Without such evidence, the grand theory was at best a product of brilliant speculation. It was against this background that Chinese ethnologists came across the "rather primi-



tive form of marriage” (Zhan et al. 1980, 2) among the Moso. In China in those years, there was no such thing as apolitical social science. Everything in the so-called superstructure was unabashedly ideological or political. The Moso case and its interpretation were no exception. They became the greatest contribution that ethnology could make to the grand theory of Marxism.

Interestingly enough, about the same time that the Chinese ethnologists stumbled across their greatest finding, halfway around the globe the intellectual development that originated from Maine’s and Bachofen’s seminal works reached a totally different conclusion. Bachofen’s notion that a matriarchal system was a universal step on the evolutionary ladder of human history had never been supported by factual evidence. On the contrary, ethnographic reports from different parts of the world repeatedly demonstrated that matriliney and patriliney are not different evolutionary stages but rather cultural options that have coexisted throughout history. Subsequent research also rejected Bachofen’s idea about women’s authority over men as a characteristic of matriliney. In an article on the maternal uncle in South Africa, Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown proposed that in patrilineal societies the father and father’s descent group represent authority, while in matrilineal societies authority is vested in the maternal uncle (1924). Radcliffe-Brown’s views were advanced by Audrey I. Richards. In her famous article on family structure among the Central Bantu, Richards pointed out that matrilineal systems are not, as Bachofen suggested, simple mirror images of patrilineal systems, because they are similar in one fundamental respect: in both systems men have authority over women and children (1950).

Inspired by Richards, a galaxy of anthropologists met at Harvard University in the summer of 1954, trying to bring the anthropological analysis of matrilineal systems up to the level of patrilineal systems. The results came out in 1961 in an edited volume, *Matrilineal Kinship* (Schneider and Gough 1961), which became an influential classic on matriliney for Western scholars. With ethnographic data from different parts of the world, contributors to *Matrilineal Kinship* reaffirmed and further systematized Richards’ theory. Meanwhile, Bachofen’s contention was categorically rejected. David M. Schneider, a co-editor of the book, declares: “the generalized authority of women over men, imagined by Bachofen, was never observed in known matrilineal societies, but only recorded in legends and myths” (Schneider 1961a, viii). He further concludes that the role of women as women is defined as that of having responsibility for the care of children and the role of men as men is defined as that of having authority over women and children (Schneider 1961b, 6).

Schneider also refines Richards’ argument as follows:

Despite the fact that the elements are the same, there are certain very obvious differences between matrilineal and patrilineal descent groups. Perhaps the first and most profound is that in patrilineal descent groups the line of authority and the line of descent both run through men. That is, both authority and group placement are male functions. In matrilineal descent groups, on the other hand, although the line of authority also runs through men, group placement runs through the line of women. The lines of authority and group placement are thus coordinate in males in patrilineal descent groups, but separated between males and females in matrilineal descent groups. (Schneider 1961b, 7)

Isolated behind the “bamboo curtain,” the pioneers in Moso studies were unaware of the theoretical developments in the West. Even if the knowledge had been available, the political climate made it impossible to take any “bourgeois ideology” into serious account. As Yan and Song (1983) suggest, these researchers could only think and analyze within the theoretical framework set by Engels and, remotely, Morgan.

Initial reports of the three groups of Chinese ethnologists were released in 1966 and 1967, during the Cultural Revolution, under anonymous collective authorship for inner circulation. Follow-up fieldwork was conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s. The final results were eventually published in three volumes in the mid-1980s under a collective editorship called “Editorial Team of Yunnan Province” (YNSBJZ 1986, 1987, 1988). Each volume comes with a different title and covers different parts of the greater Yongning area. All share the central themes of “matrilineal system” and “form of the family.” Some reports also cover social structure and land ownership around the early 1950s. Shortly before the publication of the three volumes, two monographs by some of the same ethnologists were published in 1980 and 1983 respectively (Zhan et al. 1980; Yan and Song 1983).

Throughout their works, the ethnologists recorded thorough studies of the research problems as defined at that time. Although the methodology was quite unsophisticated by Western standards, these publications are extremely rich in ethnographic data. Unfortunately, misguided by the outdated theory, the authors presented *tisese* as “*azhu hunyin*” or “*zou hun*”<sup>6</sup> and as “characteristic of the early stage of pairing marriage” (Zhan et al. 1980, 2–51; Yan and Song 1983, 265). According to Zhan and his colleagues, “this form of marriage is a rather primitive form of marriage retained among the minority nationalities in our country before Liberation. It includes several cases of consanguineous marriage and group marriage, as well as vestiges of matrilineal commune. But at the same time, it is slowly developing toward monogamy” (Zhan et al. 1980, 2). Similarly, an article published in English by Yan Ruxian, a major scholar in Moso studies, is bluntly titled “A Living Fossil of the Family” (Yan 1982).

Their trailblazing contributions notwithstanding, these publications, particularly the two books (Zhan et al. 1980; Yan and Song 1983) that reached a much wider audience, had disastrous repercussions for the Moso and Moso studies alike. They catapulted this unknown small ethnic group in the remote high mountains of the Southwest frontier into star status in the ethnic landscape of China. Very quickly the Moso caught the curiosity and imagination of the general public. Writers, researchers, tabloid reporters, filmmakers, and tourists swarmed to the Moso area to observe with their own eyes what a “primitive matriarchal society”<sup>7</sup> or “living fossil” really looks like. In early 1988, I saw a young man from Sichuan anguishing in the courtyard of the local government; his expensive camera with a telephoto zoom lens had been forfeited when, from behind a towering rock, he photographed the naked bathers in a roofless hot spring in northern Yongning. Quite a few visitors published grotesquely concocted “travel journals,” depicting their imagined romantic encounters with beautiful and passionate Moso women. Unceasing harassments like these did not just disturb the peaceful life of the Moso; they severely, profoundly hurt the Moso’s ethnic dignity and pride.

When the ethnologists first arrived in the 1960s, local people were remarkably open and cooperative. They had no idea what implications their practices had for the researchers. Instead, they were very glad and proud that the scholars from Beijing were interested in their way of life. When they found out that the visitors considered them “primitive” and “exotic,” they felt betrayed and insulted. As a result, all outside researchers became suspect in the eyes of the Moso, particularly to those who had exposure to the larger society and read and spoke Chinese. At points throughout this book, I will relate my personal encounters with the vehement resentment of the local people.

My entry into anthropology and the fascinating field of Moso studies was entirely fortuitous. In my junior year as a history major at Yunnan University, I learned from a Voice of America (VOA) radio broadcast that the U.S. International Communications Agency had deposited American higher-education brochures in seven Chinese provincial libraries; Chinese students were welcome to consult the materials and apply directly to their chosen schools. Yunnan Provincial Library happened to be one of the seven libraries. Excited and inspired by those materials, I decided to give it a shot.

While I was preparing my applications, a classmate loaned me an introductory cultural anthropology textbook and encouraged me to pursue my advanced degree in anthropology instead of history. I had always been fascinated by the cultural diversity in Yunnan, home to twenty-six officially recognized ethnic groups, and the newly discovered discipline

seemed exciting. I decided to include both anthropology and history in my list of target programs. Far beyond my expectations, I was accepted and offered full fellowships by all four American programs, two in anthropology and two in history, to which I had applied. I chose to study anthropology under Arthur P. Wolf and G. William Skinner at Stanford University.

In 1983, there were hardly any books related to anthropology in China. Among the very few, the two books on the Moso mentioned earlier (Zhan et al. 1980; Yan and Song 1983) were outstanding because of their intriguing content and also because they were competing with each other on the same topics about the same group and were published only three years apart. I brought both books to Stanford, and they turned out to be decisive in my career.

Influenced by Skinner and Wolf, I was interested in anthropological demography, or demographical anthropology, as Skinner used to call it. During graduate school, a report by the Chinese People's University in Beijing caught my attention. According to this paper, during a period of twenty-five years from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, while the population of the Lahu increased fourfold, that of the Wa showed negative growth. I knew that the Wa and Lahu were ethnic minorities living in western Yunnan, on the border with Burma (now officially Myanmar), and that the two groups differed, among other things, in family systems. Associating the numbers in that report with my vague knowledge about the two groups, I theorized that the stark contrast in the trajectories of population growth might be caused by the different descent systems and patterns of household organization.

In the summer of 1985, under the auspices of the Center for East Asian Studies at Stanford, I conducted fieldwork on that topic. The result, alas, was completely disillusioning. It turned out that the stark contrast in the numbers I read had nothing to do with family systems. Rather, the numbers for the negative growth of the Wa were unrepresentative statistics caused by politics. The Wa lived right on the border and many of them had relatives living on the other side. During the frequent political campaigns in the Mao era, many of them temporarily left their homes and walked across the border to avoid draconian policies. When surveys were taken, they were not there to be counted. But they would return after the cyclical political pressure waned.

Despite the disappointing results of my fieldwork, my interest in descent systems and patterns of household organization endured. Back at Stanford, I had written a paper, using ethnographic data from the two books on the Moso (Zhan et al. 1980; Yan and Song 1983) to challenge the concept of universal male authority over female. Wolf and Harumi Befu encouraged me to devote my endeavors to the Moso instead of the Lahu and Wa. Thus began my serious work in Moso studies.