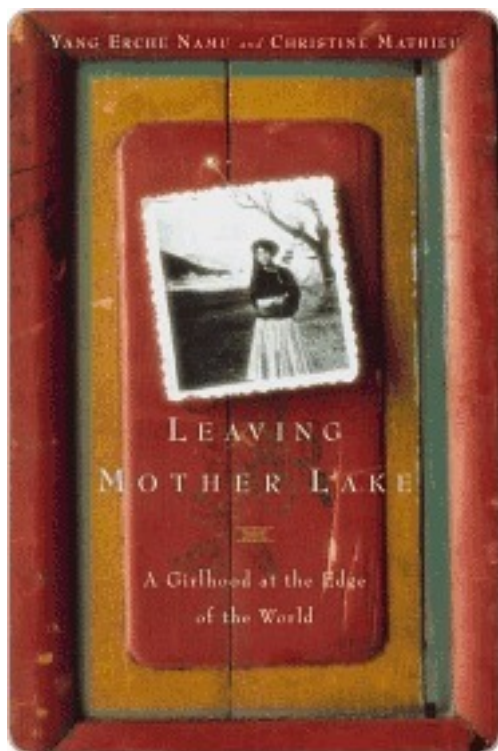

Yang Erche Namu

Leaving Mother Lake: A Girlhood at the Edge of the World



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Description

This remarkable memoir transports us to the remote reaches of the Himalayas, to a place the Chinese call 'the country of daughters,' to the home of the Moso, a society in which women rule men. According to local tradition, marriage is considered a foreign practice; property is passed from mother to daughter; a matriarch oversees each family's customs, rituals, and economies. In this culture a young girl enjoys extraordinary freedoms-but the impulsive, restless Namu is driven to leave her mother's house, to venture out into the larger world, defying the tradition that holds Moso culture together. LEAVING MOTHER LAKE is a book filled with drama, strangeness, and beauty. Yet for all the exoticism, Namu's story is a universal tale of mothers and daughters-the battles that drive them apart and the love that brings them back together.

Insightful reviews

Dannie: This is the most interesting culture I have ever heard about! The Moso are a Chinese minority near the Sichuan / Yunnan provinces border who have a matrilineal society, where property is handed down through female lines. There is no marriage, but men go to visit their lovers at their house and then leave in the morning. If a woman wants to end the relationship, she hangs his pack near the front gate as a message. Children are raised in the mother's house with their uncles as the male presence.

This is a story of a girl who grew up in a remote village but dreamed of exploring the world beyond.

The Chinese don't officially recognize the Moso people, they group them in with the nearby Naxi (aka Nahki), where women do have a strong role in society, but the Naxi have a completely different language, religion, and customs.

On my recent trip to China, we were close to this area, but did not make it to Lake Lugu, where this story takes place. Makes me want to go back. Read this book!

Kristianne: Perhaps matriarchy is not what we expect, one of Mathieu's professors points out. What we call matriarchal culture is usually more accurately matrilineal culture, which is neither inherently matriarchal nor egalitarian. He thinks the difference lies mainly in that patrilineal societies accept the domination of women by their fathers and husbands and in matrilineal society they are bullied by uncles and brothers.

This problematization of viewing the Moso people's seemingly female-driven culture through a feminist lens was indistinctly referenced in the leadership role the family men and local Lamas played in the funeral of Namu's grandmother. It was more directly addressed in Namu's descriptions of menstruation shame, the isolated experience of childbirth and the Moso's male-dominated public presence, wherein the culture is represented solely by men through trade and travel.

Living so closely to the bridal abduction rituals and other obvious male dominant practices of the Yi culture helps highlight a Moso feminism that allows a woman to control household politics, take and refuse lovers and have uncontested custody of her children. Namu's own sense of agency, which gives her confidence to go out alone into the world, belies a level of egalitarianism, either of the culture at large or of her mother's own particular headstrong leadership. Of course, even her mother's instruction is culturally conditioned as evidenced in her

determination for Namu follow her model of women's roles. The younger woman feels trapped by this expected role, elucidated in her mother's declaration: "You're a woman, you belong in the house, to the village. Your power is in the house. Your duty is to keep the house, to be polite to old people and to serve food to the men."

Namu instead pursues her own unorthodox ambition and succeeds at her dream. It seems evident, though not explicitly acknowledged that she would have been unable to follow through with her plan had it not been for her mother having paved the way already.

Mom: A fascinating memoir of a girl growing up in a matrilineal society in a remote part of China. The cultural context was intriguing -- children live in their mother's house their entire lives, there is no marriage, women take a series of lovers, in most cases children grow up without fathers (but with loving uncles in the home), women control the household while men deal with the larger world through trading and traveling.

While the cultural stuff was interesting, the author was very hard to connect with. She is wildly temperamental, self-centered, and explosive. Whether her tales are true or not is questionable. The writing was bland, probably because it was mostly written by her anthropologist co-writer. I have to wonder what members of Moso society think of her and of the fame she has brought to their community.

Pamela: an enticing account of a little-known minority of Western China--a matrilineal society that doesn't think in marriage and keeps a strong, family-based society rather than a marriage-based one. I loved Namu's trip from distant mountains to Shanghai. I additionally hugely suggest that individuals learn the afterword, as Christine Matheiu explains additional how the folk of the Moso tradition dwell and work. a great read.

Jessica: i cannot say whatever overwhelmingly damaging or optimistic approximately this book. As a collaborative biography, it does a very good task of creating the narrator plausible and life like - it isn't too demanding to appreciate her motivations and frustrations, yet regardless of being a powerful and fascinating person, she's no longer very likeable. I by no means criticize books for a nasty major character, and that i imagine this is often truly a energy of Leaving mom Lake, because it may simply have made Namu a heroine. However, whatever approximately this booklet stored me at a moderate distance from it the complete time i used to be examining it, and that i do not know what that was. Still, worth reading, as a biography, a coming-of-age story, and a glance at an strange culture.

Becky: existence within the Moso tradition of China is special during this appealing memoir. With assistance from a PhD student, Namu brings to lifestyles a scenic mountain village close to Tibet. From her delivery to a rebellious woman, via years with a silent uncle elevating yaks, and her coming of age 'skirt' ceremony, the writer grows in a single of the final matriarchal societies identified to man.

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