

From Economic Anthropology to Business Anthropology: The Development in China*

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ABSTRACT It has been only 70 years since economic anthropology was first introduced into China, and the study of rural socio-economic model was the major focus of the field in the early days. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the government had organized a series of large-scale economic and social surveys in the minority regions to promote comprehensive social and economic development of ethnic minority regions, which also built a solid foundation for the development of economic anthropology in China. It was in the late 1970s that the scholars formally started to localize economic anthropology, marked by the research on the development of western regions in China and the recognition of minority economics as a formal subject in economics. During the process of localization, Chinese economic anthropologists made a rational rethinking on the modernization process and claimed that the economic interests of minorities are relatively independent. They further refined and developed their views into a theory called "inter-phase operation", which is a significant contribution to the localization of economic anthropology and its theoretical development in China.

INTRODUCTION

Economic anthropology studies various economic life and economic systems of the human society and their evolutions. It is a sub-discipline of anthropology, bridging anthropology and economics. It studies human economic behaviors, but not in the same way as economics does. Economic anthropology covers a wide range of topics, including descriptions of people's production, trade, distribution and consumption behaviors, and studies how they are organized and operated. It also reshapes theories to reflect the context of the social system and the forces that affect economic operations. In other words, economic anthropology is a subject that studies human economic systems and behaviors based on anthropology and ethnography. It is an interdisciplinary subject based on

the joint studies of two disciplines, that is, economics and anthropology (Xu 2010).

Through fieldwork visits and ethnography, economic anthropologists attempt to explain the economic concepts using a unique discipline theory. In a broad sense, anthropologists aim to find the nature of social organizations from individuals to general public levels. Since the beginning of the 19th century, economic anthropology has mainly provided theoretical support for the economic expansion of western, developed countries. It discusses the form existence of "primitive economics" to verify the principle that the world's economic order must serve to solidify the western industrial society. With the development of economic anthropology, its scope of application becomes wider and wider. So far, the scope of economic anthropological study has extended to all aspects of social and economic activities of human beings. There is a strong interest in the origination and evolution of economic anthropology as human society continues to progress and improve but not reaches its final perfect form (Hann and Hart 2011).

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On the whole, anthropology in China is at its developing stage. As a sub-discipline of anthropology, economic anthropology in China is still at the initial stages of development. However, the real social and economic development in China, particularly the status of social and economic development in ethnic minority regions of western China, not only require theoretical guidance of anthropological research, but also create the opportunities to develop the economic anthropology with Chinese characteristics.

This paper comprehensively describes and analyzes the development of economic anthropology in China, briefly presents the rise of business anthropology in China, and shortly mentions the recommendations, limitations, and future studies of Chinese economic anthropology.

Promotion and Development of Economic Anthropology in China

The Development of Economic Anthropology

The development of economic anthropology had three stages. During the first stage (1870s-1940s), most anthropologists studied whether the economic behaviors of “primitives” were driven by their pursuit of efficiency, and whether the principles of western economics were applicable (whether they were “rational behaviors”). At first, anthropologists collected a wealth of historical information about the theory of evolution. After World War I, field studies gained popularity. Anthropologists attempted to apply the findings in the “primitive” society in the more general mainstream economies, which ultimately failed due to anthropologists’ misunderstanding of the preconditions for economists’ cognition (Shi 2002).

During the second stage (1950s-1960s), at the culmination of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, governments around the world announced their decisions to expand public services while keeping a strong control in the financial markets. The fast development of the world economy ignited a fierce debate among economic anthropologists. The scope of economists’ world economy studies was expanded to the agricultural economies of all countries at a time of tribe shrinkage. The formalism advocates believed that the concepts and tools of mainstream economies were more applicable to the world economy under a larger scope

of study, while the materialism advocates were more inclined to the methodologies of systematization. The so-called “systematization” referred to the condition where the objective market was no longer the determinant of social and economic development, and economy was integrated with social systems involving families, governments and religions.

The third stage of economic anthropology came in the turning point period of the 1970s. Specifically, it is further divided into three decades of globalization, respectively representing the formations of three theories of economic anthropology: “critical theory”, “cultural alternation” and “hard science”. Among them, the “hard science” theory distinguished itself especially when it was cast against the background of the “new institutional economy”. This period witnessed the hard efforts of anthropologists, who tried to define holistically the scope of human economic organizations by studying a large number of theoretical concepts and making wider researches. In this process, they were more inclined to traditional theories and methodologies of ethnography based on participant observations.

Now the timing is mature for anthropologists to further study the world economy as a whole – it is the fourth and a brand new stage for the development of economic anthropology. This will help to refresh the mindset of economists when they study the economic development of the human society. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the core issue of the world economy was whether the form of market economy, which allowed the North Atlantic social entities to take the lead in the world economy, conformed to the principle of universal validity. The debate about similarities and differences, to some extent, limited the development of economic anthropology. However, anthropologists did not stop studying on the mind and behaviors of residents in different regions. By regarding Wall Street, a highly developed market economy, as a small community of hunters, economic anthropologists make it workable to measure Wall Street’s impact on finance using western economic models. However, it is not that persuasive when it comes to analyzing the behaviors in a non-market economy using a rational market model (Tian and Luo 2013).

Early Application and Promotion of Economic Anthropology in China

In the early stage of the development of economic anthropology, China was a relatively minor and marginal subject for western mainstream scholars (Shi 2002). Nevertheless, in the vast trove of economic anthropology literature, researchers are still able to find the early research reports on China's socio-economic development. The renowned American social anthropologist Daniel Harrison Kulp (DH Kulp) published a book in 1925 named *Country Life in South China: the Sociology of Familism*. Though it is not a book on economic anthropology, it comprehensively describes the life of a village in South China in an ethnographic style, with detailed records of the village's economic and social structures as well as the lives of the villagers. There are also detailed economy-related observations and interviews, as well as in-depth analyses. As far as we know, this has been the first anthropological work on China's rural economy (Daniel 2011).

In his work published in 1938 named *Peasant Life in China: A Field Study of Country life in the Yangtze Valley*, China's pioneer anthropologist, Fei Xiaotong (1938) explored China's grassroots social structure and social change using examples of consumption, production, distribution, and exchange activities of the peasants in a small village in Yangtze Valley. It is an excellent economic anthropology research report in which he attempted to further conclude macro-social changes and possible responses. Based on his in-depth analysis on economic anthropology and ethnography, Fei (1938) pointed out that China's traditional economic structure was not purely an agriculture-based economy, but a blended agro-industry-based local economy. Until 1986, this book was translated into Chinese and published in China. It represents anthropologists' new attempt to study local instead of foreign subjects, economic life instead of primitive culture (Fei 2001).

Later, Fei and his assistant did a joint research project on Chinese rural economic anthropology, and published a book, *Earthbound China: a Study of Rural Economy in Yunnan*, in London in 1949. The research had a significant impact among the western academics. Based on his deep knowledge in anthropology, Fei (1949) described and analyzed in details the socio-economic status of three Yunnan villages before the founding

of New China, and he further raised a strategic thinking that industrialization was the only way to lift China's rural economy out of economic stagnation. It is another masterpiece that localizes economic anthropology in China (Shi 2002). U.S. economic anthropologist William Skinner was one of the first western economic anthropologists to study China. In the mid-1960s, he published an ethnographic study report in *Asian Studies Quarterly*. In that report, he introduced and analyzed the function and status of the traditional rural markets in China, investigated the evolution of China's rural markets, and comprehensively described and analyzed the rural market system reform after the foundation of New China and the relevant government policy issues. He was the first non-Chinese scholar to engage in Chinese economic anthropology research (Shi 2002).

A long period of time afterwards, no local scholars or western scholars had done any research on China's economic anthropology. Except some anthropologists and ethnologists from Hong Kong and Taiwan, not many Chinese scholars are familiar with economic anthropology. At that time, scholars from Hong Kong and Taiwan were not concerned with China's existing economic and social problems, but basic economic anthropological theories. For example, in a paper published by Xu Guangzheng in 1974, "On Economic Anthropology", he focused on defining the research scope of economic anthropology, which he believed would include traditional economic research, economic growth, community development, as well as the relationship between economics and economic anthropology (Shi 2002).

Recent Development of Economic Anthropology in China

Since China's reform and opening up in the 1980s, Chinese society had undergone tremendous changes, and the academic community was no exception. People started to pay attention to certain disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, which had been neglected for a long time. At the same time, Chinese scholars translated and introduced a large number of western academic works. For example, they translated American anthropologist A. Allen's work on "economic anthropology" and published it on the *World Ethno-National Studies*. It was one of the early-

er Chinese literatures on economic anthropology in the 1980s (Allen 1985). The Institute of Sociology and Anthropology of Peking University had undoubtedly played a leading role in promoting the localization of economic anthropology. In 1995, it organized a high-level seminar named Social-Cultural Anthropology, during which the Taiwanese scholar Dr. Jiang Bin delivered a keynote speech on “economic anthropology” to introduce to his counterparts in Mainland China the key viewpoints and arguments of two schools of economic anthropology, that is, realism and formalism. In 1996, Wang Yanxiang, a PhD holder in ethnic economics from the Central University for Nationalities published papers on *National Economy* and *Journal of the Central University for Nationalities*, to introduce the development of the western economic anthropology and to explore the similarity and differences between China’s ethnic economics and economic anthropology. In 1997, Wang Mingming from Peking University wrote a book named *Social Anthropology and China Research* to introduce the economy anthropology research on China’s rural areas by the US scholar G. William Skinner. In the same year, the book *Economic Anthropology* written by the renowned Japanese economic anthropologist Shinichiro Kurimoto was translated into Chinese and officially published in China. The book is the first comprehensive introduction to the disciplinary development, areas of research, and academic genres of economic anthropology known to Chinese academics (Shi 2002).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, theoretical innovation and vision expansion of economic anthropology have attracted many scholars and thus led to breakthrough in the development of China’s economic anthropology. Its distinctive signs are firstly, a team of professionals replaced some individuals to conduct the research on economic anthropology, and secondly two books, both titled *Economic Anthropology*, were successively published in 2001 and 2002. Professor Chen Qingde from Yunnan University wrote one of these two books and published it in the People’s Publishing House. Dr. Shi Lin from the Central University for Nationalities, based on her doctoral thesis, wrote the other book and published it in the Publication House of the Central University for Nationalities. The publication of the two books represents that Central University for Nationalities and Yunnan University had

established two teams of solid researchers on China’s economic anthropological studies. The accuracy of this view is still open to debate, but it is an undeniable fact that the two universities have successively trained a large number of economic anthropology students and published numerous papers on economic anthropology (Tian and Luo 2013).

In addition, there are some works appearing in the form of ethnography, which could be classified as economic anthropology research works although they do not carry the name of “economic anthropology”. Through his observation of the ethnography of a village in North China (Yan 1996), Yan Yunxiang (1996) re-studied the “mutual benefiting payment” of the three exchange systems under Polanyi’s social integration model. According to the research, Yan (1996) pointed out that China’s gift-giving etiquette represents some complex social relations, such as human feelings and the Chinese concept of face, and reflected the social hierarchical structures, contrary to the traditional principle of reciprocity. By interpreting the meaning of wealth implied by a village’s means of livelihood, market trade and religious rituals through an ethnographic perspective, Luo Hongguang (2000) demonstrated that economy was not independent from the entire social system and was associated with religion, consciousness, and cosmology.

At the same time, Yunnan University recruits masters and PhD students of economic anthropology under the name of “Chinese Ethnic Economics”, while the Central University for Nationalities enrolls masters and PhD students of economic anthropology under the name of “Anthropology”. In addition, some other research institutions have begun to focus their research on economic anthropology. For example, Shanghai University offers Master and PhD programs on economic anthropology, and Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Jilin University recruits students in economic anthropology. Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has begun to recruit PhD students of economic anthropology since 2007.

On the other hand, a number of universities and research institutions across China have started to offer economic anthropology-related courses in their curriculum. At the same time, more and more scholars engaged in the study of ethnic economy have shifted their focus to economic anthropology, trying to interpret the is-

sues on the economic development of the Chinese ethnic minorities from the point of view of economic anthropology. In addition, many anthropology researchers have begun to regard economic anthropology as the direction of their own research. At the same time, economic anthropology has become an essential chapter in the newly published anthropology textbooks, such as *Social Anthropology* written by Zhu Bingxiang in 2004, *Cultural Anthropology* by Sun Qiuyun, *Anthropology* by Zhuang Kongshao, *Cultural Anthropology* by Tian Zhaoyuan in 2006, and the revised version of *An Introduction to Anthropology* by Zhou Daming in 2007. All of these books have touched the topic of economic anthropology to some extent (Fan 2009).

Localization Path, China Western Development and Ethnic Economics

China Western Development and Western Development Research Center

In the 1980s, guided by the basic theory of development economics, a group of young scholars did an in-depth research on issues related to the economic and social development in China's western region. They proposed a strategy guiding thought of the western China development, which is still prospective even until now. Theories on economic anthropology once made certain contributions to development economics, and represented a prominent feature of the contemporary economic anthropology. It is from this perspective that the researchers bring into the research of these western China scholars as part of China's economic anthropology study.

Since 1980, Communist Party of China and state leaders have constantly regarded the domestic "East-West Dialogue" as the global "North-South Dialogue" and put forward shifting its strategic focus on national economy to the Northwest region. Throughout China, a group of young scholars volunteered to form research groups to study Western China. They first founded the Western China and Ethnic Region Development Research Group (referred to as the "Western Group"), and later formed the Western China Development Research Center (referred to as the "Western Center"). Western China mainly refers to 11 provinces and regions including Shanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, Yun-

nan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet. Western China has approximately 30% of China's total population and 70% of its land. In May 1984, Guo Fansheng from Inner Mongolia Party Committee Policy Research Office delivered a speech at New Technology Revolution and Social Development Seminar, said that the New Technology Revolution had provided less-developed countries and regions an opportunity for great-leap-forward development. The underdeveloped regions in China could make use of their rich natural resources and bring in international capital, technology, and talents to achieve this goal. They should not be passively waiting for technology transferred from the Eastern and Central regions. In June 1984, *World Economic Herald* published a paper named Economically Backward Regions Can Achieve Great-Leap-Forward Development, which made a huge impact among the public (Liu 2010).

Meanwhile, some scholars of the central ministries and commissions shifted their focus to the western minority regions. The theory books and research reports were published by them, such as *Investigation Report on Guizhou Rural Villages*, *Turning Tibet from a Receiver into a Donor*, and *Poverty on Fertile Land - Study on China's Underdeveloped Regions' Economics*, attracted lots of public attention. In August 1985, the relevant ministries and commissions and local governments in Western China jointly held the Seminar on Economic Development in Western China. The seminar turned out to be a fruitful event during which some scholars put forward the view that regional and industrial sally ports must be accurately selected to push forward economic and social development of ethnic minority regions (Tian et al. 1986). After that, some young scholars concerned about issues in Western China formed the Western Group and did a lot of in-depth investigations and studies. In December 1987, more than 80 delegates from nine provinces in Eastern and Western China participated in the "Development Issues - East-West Middle-aged and Young Scholar Dialogue" in Guiyang. In 1988, the Western China Development Research Center was established and at the beginning of 1988, the Center cooperated with Xinjiang Communist Party Policy Research Office to design a test site for the comprehensive research of reform and opening-up in Western China and some ethnic regions. The most important outcome of this research is to reach a

consensus that China must open up to the western areas, and Xinjiang is the first test ground (Liu 2010).

Delegates from the Western Center and Xinjiang formed a joint delegation to observe and study six countries in West Asia, and wrote a research report named *Western China Must Open Up to the West*, which attracted the attention of China's top state and party leaders. More research reports came up in the summer and fall of 1988 based on collective discussion, and were collected in the book *Western China: New Resolutions of Development, Reform, and Opening-up*. In March 1989, the Western Center organized another session of "Development Issues - East and West China Scholars' Dialogue", at which they proposed to include the opening-up of Western China as part of the national strategy. They also proposed to implement a trade-based, industrial linkage, implementation by step, and development promotion strategy, and establish experimental free trade zones in southern Xinjiang and Dehong, Yunnan. The scheme was to gradually establish similar zones across Western China if the experimental ones proved to be a success. In April 1989, key members of the Western Center led an inspection team to Yunnan to investigate and demonstrate the feasibility of establishing a special open zone in Dehong and the related policy reforms. As a result, a complete set of opening-up and structural reform plan was formulated, which envisages two routes for the opening-up of Western China to the Indian Ocean regions – one is to Pakistan via Xinjiang and another one is to Burma via Yunnan (Liu 2010).

During the meantime, According to Tian and Luo (2013), scholars from the Western Center published a large number of influential academic research reports, such as "Reform Property Ownership and Improve Market Mechanism" by Tian Guang, Deng Chao and Lin Ling (*Investment Research* Issue No. 11 1988), "Reflection on Routes and Models: Research on the Development of Rural Enterprises in Western China" by Guo and Tian (*Development Research* Issue No. 3 1989), "Weakening and Convergence of Dual Economy: Making the Best Choice in the 2nd Round of Economic Development in Anning County in Yunnan" by Feng Wanping and Tian (*Opening Up* Issue No.1 1989), "Regional Promotion: Exploring China's Opening Up Strategy and Model" by Guo and Tian (*Thinking* Issue

No. 6 1989), "Development-Oriented Investment Choice: Policy Research on Currency Credit of Local Enterprises in Western China" by Guo, Tian, Pan Zhaodong et al. (*Investment Research* Issue No.11 1988), "Out of the Plight of Binary Separation: the Industrialization and Urbanization of Anning County in Yunnan" by Tian (*Thinking* Issue No.4 1988) and "Rethinking on the Reform and Opening-Up of Ethnic Regions in Western China" by Guo and Tian (*Development Research* Issue No.6, 1987).

Development and Contributions of Ethnic Economics

Based on the fact that China is a unified multi-ethnicity country and the prevailing economic and social underdevelopment of ethnic minority areas compared to the Han regions, some of China's local economists began to establish the ethnic economics discipline in late 1970s and compiled a signature textbook *Introduction to the Economics of Chinese Minority Regions*, which represented its official separation from economics and ethnology. In March 1973, at the Beijing National Economic Science 8-Year Plan Conference, ethnic economics was formally identified as the 27th sub-discipline of economics. The creation of ethnic economics is based on the national condition needs of a unified multi-ethnicity country to balance the regional development of all ethnic groups. It is a new discipline to study the minorities groups and to accelerate the economic development in ethnic regions. From the very beginning, it aimed to study and solve the real problems of the economic development of ethnic minority areas. Its unique theories, methodologies, perspectives, and its focus on some high-level and urgent issues make it possible to make a positive contribution to reviving China's ethnic economic situations (Li and Na 1998).

The development of ethnic economics falls into four phases (Wang 1998). During the start-up phase (1979-1985), theorists did an extensive and in-depth survey of economic development in ethnic minority areas and accumulated a comprehensive set of information. *Ethnic Economics and the Four Modernizations in the Ethnic Minority Regions* by Shi Zhengyi and *Research on the Commodity Economy of China's Ethnic Minority Regions* by Li Fuchun are the key theoretical writings in that period. During the early development phase (1986-1990), theorists main-

ly focused on the priority needs of the economic development in China and ethnic regions. A large number of theoretical and forward-looking books came out. The most representative works include *Research on Economic Development of Western China Ethnic Minority Regions* (Shi), *Selection and Development: Thoughts on the Revitalization of China's Less Developed Regions* (Tian Guang, Han Guoliang, etc.), *Strategic Vision Before Economic Taking-Off* (Cao Zhenghai and Ma Biao), *Opening-Up and Economic Development of Western China Ethnic Minority Regions* (Tian), *Seeking Equal Opportunities for Development* (Long Yuanwei), *Contemporary History of Chinese Ethnic Minority Economy* (Kuang Haolin), and *Thoughts on the Economic Reform of Ethnic Minority Regions* (Zhang Xietang), etc.

During the mature development phase (1991-1995), the number of theoretical writings increased dramatically. The most representative works include *Contemporary China Database - Chapter on Ethnic Minority Economy* (edited by Chen Hong and Ha Jingxiong), *Development Strategy of China's Ethnic Minorities and Ethnic Minority Regions in the 1990s* (edited by Zhao Yanniang), *Ethnic Development Economics* (edited by Gao Yanhong), *Ethnic Economics* (edited by Tong Hao), *Introduction to Ethnic Economics* (Shi Zhengyi), and *Ethnic Economics* (Chen Qingde), etc. In addition to empirical research methods, the scholars also used standardized research methods to conduct theory research.

During the post-mature phase (1996-2000), great achievements were made in theoretical development. One distinctive feature was that the theoretical research transited gradually from the general level to some specific areas, such as narrowing the economic development gap between the ethnic regions and the developed eastern coastal regions, anti-poverty, border opening-up, as well as overseas ethnic Chinese economy. In addition to the published masterpiece of *Ethnic Economics* (edited by Shi Zhengyi) and other works, some of the dissertations written by the ethnic economics-majoring PhD and master degree students also had significant breakthrough in theories and policy strategies.

Based on the four-stage development concluded by Wang Yanxiang, the researchers referred to the post-2001 ethnic economics development as the new millennium stage. During this period, the ethnic economics has developed into

an important field of research on economics of China. Scholars have published numerous academic works and many PhD and master degree students written their dissertations on economic anthropology. All these have helped to expand the research scope of ethnic economics of contemporary China. For example, in her master degree dissertation, Ma Dongmei researched on Niyah of the *Hui* nationality using the economic anthropology perspective. "The Economic and Ecological Anthropology and the Study of Consumer Culture" written by Richard Wilk in 2005, "The Local Art Market in Florence, Italy - A Case Study of Economic Anthropology" by Stuart Plattner, and "Mexican Local Government Decision-Making in the Initial Stage of Industrialization - Economic Anthropology Case Study" written by Judith E. Martin in 2006 are translated and published on the journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities. These papers have provided new perspectives and methodologies for the research of China's economic anthropology (Fan 2009).

Meanwhile, China's economic policy-making departments are more reliant on the research of ethnic economics. *Ethnic Economics* is recognized by the Ministry of Education as a core theory course for undergraduate students majored in ethnology. On discipline construction, ethnic economics discipline has attached great importance to professional education so as to effectively train all levels of ethnic economics talent. So far, more than 30 higher-education institutions, including the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Graduate School, Central University for Nationalities, and Lanzhou University have offered ethnic economics courses to undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and post-doctoral students. During his 50 years of teaching and research career, Professor Shi Zhengyi, one of the early pioneers to study Ethnic Economics in China, published a large number of influential academic works as well as hundreds of important academic papers, and trained more than 340 master's degree and nearly 90 PhD students in the ethnic region.

Convergence between Ethnic Economics and Economic Anthropology

Broadly speaking, based on specific needs, the research subject of ethnic economics could be the economic problems of any ethnic group

in the world; it could be the economic problems of one specific ethnic minority group and it could also be the economic problems of a number of ethnicities. In a narrow sense, the study subject of ethnic economics refers specifically to the economic problems of the ethnic minorities groups in China. It could be the economic problems of a specific ethnicity group. It could be the economic problems of an ethnic minority region (including several ethnic minority groups). In addition, it could be a comprehensive study of the economic problems of all ethnic minority groups. Since 1980s, the ethnic economics scholars have done in-depth researches on a series of topics. The topics are as follows: the gap between Eastern and Western China, the economic gap between different ethnic groups, the sustainable development of ethnic minority regions, the strategy accelerated development, the development of western China economy, the human resource development of Western China, the opening of borders and cross-border trade, the ecology in Western China, the urbanization of ethnic regions and rural economy. Their researches have made recognized theoretical achievements, and formed discipline system info with innovation methodologies in practice (Li 1998).

In fact, from the very beginning, scholars have different views and statements on the nature of the ethnic economics. The key views are concluded as below.

First, ethnic economics emphasize on the relationship between ethnic issues and economic issues. Its research focus is on the intersection between ethnicity and economics. It has features of marginality, cross-disciplinary and intermediary discipline. Scholars with this view focus primarily on the study of ethnic and economic issues.

Second, another feature of ethnic economics is duality. It takes both ethnic factors and economic factors into consideration. Ethnic economics serves as an intermediary between ethnology and economics and is an interdisciplinary study of both ethnic and economic issues. It can also be interpreted as the study of the interactions between ethnic and economic factors and its impact on human society. Scholars who hold this view are trying hard to provide an in-depth interpretation of ethnic economics from different perspectives (Shi 2001).

Third, ethnic economics is the study of the particularity and common rules related to the

economics, economic growth and economic development of a national group or a single ethnicity in a multi-ethnicity country. This is a narrow understanding of the nature of ethnic economics. In addition, some scholars believe that the term of ethnic economics is not an accurate interpretation, because it contains some overlapping with regional economics. However, the researchers shall notice that ethnic economics mainly focuses on the research of the intersections between ethnicity and economics, while regional economics mainly focuses on the relationship between regions and economics. There is a clear distinction between the two disciplines (Li 2004).

Wang Yanxiang (1998) has pointed out that the difference between anthropology and ethnic economics is much greater than the similarities. The problems they try to solve and the roles they play are very different and their research methodologies are very different as well. Therefore, they could not replace each other in completing their respective tasks. The researchers believe that they shall adopt a historical perspective to evaluate Wang Yanxiang's analysis and conclusions. As a PhD in ethnic economics, he deserves the researchers' understanding and appreciation to attach higher importance to ethnic economics. However, the researchers must also pointed out that the two disciplines learn from each other in their development in China's academic world, and now their research objects and contents are becoming more and more similar, and the research methods experience convergence. Therefore, the researchers believe the combination of the two disciplines, which would lead to economic anthropology with Chinese characteristics, is inevitable. In China, the development of economic anthropology with Chinese characteristics must be based on the research of ethnic economics.

As early as 1993, Chen Qingde published a paper and claimed that the theory of economic anthropology was developed from the theories of ethnic economics. Chen (1993) also pointed out the similarities between the two disciplines. Compared with the previous researches, the key feature of the contemporary economic anthropology research in China is that it is no longer a simple interpretation of the foreign anthropology studies. It now has integrated more understandings and perspectives of the Chinese scholars. This is very important for the develop-

ment of the discipline. Therefore, the researchers can foresee the great potential of economic anthropology development in China. The development of Western economic anthropology evolved from the interpretation of the economic history of the primitive ethnicities to the research on the contemporary social and economic life. The evolution from the ethnic economics history to the new broad doctrine represents the process that economic anthropology is trying to move towards greater openness.

Contemporary economic anthropology studies a broad category of topics, including primitive community, rural society and contemporary life, and its research subjects include production mode, exchange system, goods consumption, economic systems, gender, ecology, regional development, discipline theoretical explorations, and many other aspects. When economic anthropology was first introduced to China, scholars purely focused on theoretical introduction. Now, they have diversified their research scope, including theoretical introduction, culture and economy, exchange system, and rural societies (Fan 2009).

Problems with the economic development of China's ethnic minority regions, such as those encountered in the China Western Development, have become a major conundrum the researchers are faced with nowadays. As the traditional economics development theories failed to provide a desirable solution, the research on economic anthropology and ethnic economics focusing on a different perspective will most probably provide valuable and meaningful solutions. Fan Xiaoqing (2009) once made it clear that ethnic economics research should be included in the economic anthropology studies and she pointed out the similarities and convergence between China's economic anthropology and ethnic economics. As both disciplines focus on the economy of China's ethnic minority regions, they are closely linked (Fan 2009). The discussions on the relationship between economic anthropology and ethnic economics have attracted the attention of the scholars from both disciplines. As early as 1987, Weng Qianlin wrote papers in which he said ethnic economics scholars should learn from the theories from the emerging disciplines in the West, such as development economics and economic anthropology, to promote the joint development of theory and practices of ethnic economics.

In the book *Economic Anthropology*, Shi Lin pointed out that the localization of economic anthropology in China must rely on the research of local ethnic economics, emphasizing the urgency of their integration and mutual learning. In 2003, LV Junbiao wrote a paper to summarize the present situation of China's economic anthropology and the problems it faced. He said the integration of the two disciplines was a pressing task of China's economic anthropology – the integration of the traditional thinking and modern theories of the two disciplines could lead to a leapfrog development of the theories (Lv 2003).

Theoretical Contributions of Economic Anthropology Localization in China

Reflection on Economic Anthropology and Modernization

Reflection on the modernization under the perspective of economic anthropology is one of the greatest contributions that our local scholars have made to the development of the theories of the economic anthropology (Chen 2000). The advocate of the theory, Chen Qingde (2000), thinks that social change is an important topic for human beings to understand themselves. The survey of human beings and life is constrained by framework of the modern society. When it inevitably encountered the so-called “modernization”, the researchers cannot regard some comments with fundamental flaws as the premise and accept them all. Moreover, the researchers cannot believe all these popular concepts or knowledge are reasonable. On the contrary, the researchers should face up to the fact that human knowledge is incomplete, and thus the researchers should be critical. “Modernization” is a concept with very vague meaning boundary. It not only gives the researchers the lessons from the last several centuries of social development, but also helps with setting a standard.

Chen Qingde (2004) believes that modern society has created the economy that is separated and independent from other entities. Because of its independence, the forces that drive economic development are taking the dominant position. In other words, the economy has dominated the society. It caused the conflicts between economic function conditions composed of market factors and cultural integration as well as the conflicts between economy and the similarity of

symbolic view of the world and the code of conduct. The overall practical reasoning of modern society has changed many features of human life, and these changes are not all positive. For example, it has a large degree dominated the material world, separated man from the nature on the surface, and encouraged hedonism and moral decay, and so on. Therefore, the critique of the development of modern society, exemplified as the protection of natural resources, ecological imbalance, and environmental reconstruction, could not be fully addressed to economics-related issues. Its significance is not limited to the problem of the depletion of natural resources. To a deeper degree, it is a reflection and questioning of the cognitive model in the modern society.

Chen Qingde (2004) also noted that the reality progress of modern society is full of oppression and inequality. This is one of major driving forces provoking a profound reflection on modern society and modernization. Modernization focuses primarily on the economic development, and this determines the core of economics studies. Kuznets's *Modern Economic Growth* (1966), Lewis' *Economic Growth Theory* (2003) and Rostow's *Industrialization Take-off Theory* (1960) and all sorts of most influential modernization models are all based on the experience of the West since the 18th century. They all used the natural development of industrialization to understand the Third World, and they all aim to apply these growth models to non-Western societies. They are confined by "pure economic" theories, and limited their understanding of "modernization" as technology-driven economy, and therefore, they generally ignored what this concept implies – the hegemony of Western power and knowledge framework. Reflection on the concept of "modernization", fundamentally speaking, is to turn the focus on technology-oriented economics to culture-orientation economics.

In short, in Chen Qingde's view, the concept of "modernization" is created during the unbalanced exchange process of different forms of powers and exists in this exchange process. Regardless of how hard the researchers tried to escape from the "Western-centric" shadow, or at least the European cultural hegemony, the presence of "Western-centric" is an undeniable truth, and its influence is growing. Under the domination of Western hegemony, modern civilization

is established as a unique model of civilization, which sets itself against tradition. That is to say, it stands against all other previous or traditional cultures. The modernity is against the differences of traditional culture in region and sign. It spreads from the West and imposes itself (as a homogenous unity) on the world. The concept of modernization implies its view of Western social structure as a stagnant or corrupted structure that hinders the development of sustained economic growth. It also terms modern economic growth as a fundamental change in economic, social, political, and cultural structures. When the development of the developing Third World follows the concept of modernization target, they are destined to be disappointed.

The efforts made by Chen Qingde to localize economic anthropology are self-evident. His contributions go into many sectors. Initially, Professor Chen focused on introducing the discipline into China; later on, he focused on the research on cultural economics and published a large number of related works. From the perspective of economic anthropology, he analyzed the cultural capital and developed the discipline to a new direction (Chen 2004). The book *Economic Anthropology* published by Chen in 2001 is the first economic anthropology book written by a Chinese scholar. It not only provided a comprehensive and systematic introduction to the basic principles and history of the development of economic anthropology in the West, but also thoroughly explored the impact of Marxism on economic anthropology. In addition, it also discussed the relationship between nations and nationalism in the process of economic and social relations. In this book, Chen discussed the scope and content of economic anthropology, which included trade, monetary and economic systems, economic model, ethnicity and resources conflicts, as well as the similarities and differences between national development and regional development. It clearly reflects the author's academic background, and readers can feel the influence of the Marxist doctrine and ethnic economics. In this economic anthropology book, which has a strong flavor of Marxism and Chinese characteristics, Professor Chen not only provided a brief introduction to the theories and development of the Western economic anthropology, he also focused on people's understanding of economic anthropology. The book is also

a very good reference for economic anthropology theories.

Relative Independence of Ethnic Economic Benefit

If the reflection theory of “modernization” in the Perspective of Economic Anthropology is one of the greatest contributions made by the researchers’ local scholars to the development of the theory of economic anthropology, then the theory of relative independence about the ethnic economy marks another contribution made by local scholars under the legal framework to the economic and anthropological theory (Li 2003). The advocate of the theory of Li (2003) pointed out that the interests of the national economy are the sum of various economic resources, conditions, and opportunities that are indispensable to the survival and development of the nation’s economic resources, and they carry a relative independence. This relative independence is manifested in two aspects: Firstly, the ethnic economic benefit is objective in terms of the subject, history, and the present status; Secondly, the objective content of the ethnic economic interests has focused implications on the interest structure intervened by the subject units of a country, autonomous regions, and ethnic groups. In the modern society, especially the unified multi-ethnic country like China, the diversification of the economic interests requires the function of the law that not only considers the interests of the national economy, but also those of different groups and individuals comprising distinctive ethnic groups. The perception of recognizing the existence of the national economic interests and the individual economic interests, while neglecting that of collective communities, is wrong.

According to Li (2003), the objectivity of ethnic economic resides in the following aspects: First, the nation is one of the important subjects that make up the human society. As long as the nation exists, there are the economic interests on which the nation’s survival relies, as the economic benefits (the object) and the nation (the subject) are indivisible. Second, the ethnic economic interests are in the shape of either national economic benefits or the interests of different ethnic groups within a country. The objectivity of the multi-ethnic national economic interests reflects the historical reality that carries the dia-

lectical relationship among various ethnical groups formed on the basis of different geographical conditions and economic/cultural types. Third, the reality of co-existence of multiple ethnic groups in China determines the diversity of various ethnical economic benefits. In China, the diversity of the national economy interests is based on the dual structure characterized by differences of economic interests between the Han living area and the minority ethnic groups. The objectivity of the ethnic economic interests requires a state to give full consideration to the reality of the ethnical economic interests, and undertake allocation of the ethnic economic interests using fair and effective legal mechanisms.

In a unified multi-ethnic country like China, the national interests are the common interests of the different entities. It is mainly manifested as “the common interests and fundamental interests of the majority of the people under the leadership of the working class” (Sun 1995). The common interests, appearing as the “universal interests”, reflect on one hand the interactive relationship of the various stakeholders in China’s society, and on the other hand the fairness and justice of the socialist legal system. In addition, with the establishment and development of the socialist market economy, all entities, including all ethnicities, will gradually realize their economic interests under the guidance of social justice. “The Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference”, which was released on 29 September, 1949, states that regional ethnic autonomy should be implemented in all ethnic minority regions (The United Front Work Department of CPC Central Committee 1991). Since then, the system of regional ethnic autonomy was established in China and economic autonomy is an important element of regional ethnic autonomy. The law should protect economic interest, which is the key subject of economic autonomy.

Li Zhengrong (2003) points out that an ethnic group is composed of several members who may not live together in a designated region. Due to some historical or realistic reasons, they are often scattered across the country. Take the *Hui* nationality for example, in spite of its primary settlement areas, some of them still live scattered across the country. Their ethnic economic interests are not just part of the economic interests of these autonomous regions, but are mainly repre-

sented by the economic interests of people who share the same religion, such as production, sales, trade, and management of *halal* food. The legal system should and have affirmed the legality of such economic interests. Moreover, appropriate legislation should protect the legality. In addition, the settlement regions by the ethnic minorities traditionally locate along the borders where geographical conditions and ecological environment are subpar, productivity is low and economic development is lagged behind. From the perspective of the ethnicities and regions, their economic interests are the same, that is, they should receive the same economic benefits enjoyed by their Han peers as well as people from other regions. In this sense, ethnic economic interests and the economic interests of non-minority regions are relative. The gap reflects the deficiencies of the ethnic economic law in the legislative, executive, judicial, and enforcement aspects. The way to achieve ethnic economic interests protected by legal systems and infrastructure is a necessary proposition.

Although Li's (2003) research focuses on a legal perspective, the more important contribution of the research is to acknowledge the economic benefits of China's ethnic minorities. His research shows that the economic interests of the ethnic groups are rather independent. Therefore, government entities managing economy should not just acknowledge their economic interest but also protect them with a sound legislative system. Protecting the economic interests of the ethnic minorities is also a key topic under the promotion of economic development in ethnic regions. It should be covered by economic anthropology and ethnic economics, but unfortunately, neither of them does such a research (Visser and Kalb 2010). Therefore, Li's research has largely made up this discrepancy, and has undoubtedly made a great contribution to the basic theory of economic anthropology. His research has promoted the localization of economic anthropology in China.

Economic Anthropology and Inter-phase Operation Principle

Tingshuo's (1995) contribution to the theories related to economic anthropology localization should be widely recognized. Yang has been engaged in teaching and research in economic anthropology and ethnic economics for a long

time. His core search subjects include ecological anthropology, ethnic history and ecological history. He is a well-known economic anthropologist and an ethnologist in China, and he has published and written many books, which played an irreplaceable role in promoting the development of China's economic anthropology and ethnology. In particular, he has played a significant role in pushing forward the development of China's ecological anthropology. Professor Yang's contribution to economic anthropology is primarily embodied in the book *Inter-phase Operation Principle - the Theory and Practices of Cross-ethnic Economic Activity*, published by Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House in 1995.

The researchers believe that *Inter-phase Operation Principle - the Theory and Practices of Cross-ethnic Economic Activity* is a masterpiece on the localization of economic anthropology. Its theoretical contributions and guidance on real-life work should not be underestimated. Based on extensive field researches and literature, Yang (1995) provided answers for the currently essential social and economic issues. The issues are as follows: What are the non-economic factors that influence the social and economic development of Western ethnic regions? What are their history and historical causes? What is the evaluation of their impact on the regional economic development? How can the researchers find the tipping point among the non-economic factors? And how can the researchers avoid and overcome the adverse effects on economic development?

The most prominent feature of *Inter-phase Operation Principle* is that it carefully coined the term "inter-phase". "Inter" represented that various ethnic groups had their own histories – their historical interactions with neighboring ethnicities, politic and legal systems, and more importantly, its transformation and utilization of surrounding environment. That is why he termed the social and natural characteristics of the ethnic culture as "phase". This is in line with the classical Chinese philosophy and is also consistent with the concept of modern natural science. Therefore, the term "inter-phase" embodies philosophy and disciplines integration and is much better than the expression "inter-ethnic" (Yang 1995).

The introduction to *Inter-phase Operation Principle* is based on full understanding and absorption of domestic and international cultur-

al anthropology, economic anthropology, economics, and other cutting-edge theories. It not only enriched academic theories, but also pushed the development of the discipline to a new peak. It contributed to the “localization” of the related disciplines. *Inter-phase Operating Principle* is based on the field research on many ethnic groups in Guizhou and a large volume of field data and historical documents. It proposed that theoretical analysis is thus based on the present situation of Guizhou as well as historical data. As a result, the proposed policy proposals are farsighted, feasible and credible. The advent of this book helped to provide new theories, practices, and reference blueprint to guide the socio-economic construction in Guizhou, as well as other ethnic regions in Western China and areas in the world similar to Guizhou (Tian 2014a).

The Rise of Business Anthropology in China

With the promotion and development of economic anthropology, business anthropology in China has been introduced by Chinese scholars. Business anthropology, as a subfield of applied anthropology, applies anthropological theories and methods in exploring and solving problems in the real business world. It studies how to improve business efficiency and work processes by observing how people perform in their workplace. It can help business people to understand the culture of an organization by studying group behavior. It helps managers dealing with issues of organizational change due to the merge of companies. Business anthropologists can provide suggestions on marketing strategies by studying consumer behavior. They can help in product design by discovering what consumers want and assist multinational corporations understand the cultures of the many countries in which they operate in the trend of globalization and diversity that has involved the business world (Jordan 2010).

China has undergone tremendous economic and social change since it launched economic reform in the late 1970s. It gradually abandoned its closed centralized economic planning system and bringing China into a world market-oriented economy. Today, after over thirty years of development, China has become a locomotive in the world economy and a manufacture base of consumer goods in the world. Measured on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis that adjusts

for price differences, China in 2012 stood as the second-largest economy in the world after the US (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). China’s products can be seen in all corners of the world and Chinese businesspersons are now going out of China to do business in all continents of the world.

However, China lacks in-depth research on globalized market, business organization, and cultural factors of other countries. Chinese businesspersons have faced many problems in foreign countries. Their products were even confiscated or burned down in some countries, bringing tremendous loss to Chinese companies. Inside China, the transition to market economy has affected business strategies across a wide range of industries in order to meet international market needs. Chinese business leaders now realize that to better market their products and services internationally, they must have a better understanding of the international market environments from a cross-cultural perspective (Paliwoda and Ryans 2008; Yu et al. 2006).

It is at this critical period in China’s economic development that business anthropology, as a subfield of anthropology, was introduced and promoted in Chinese universities. Since 2005, Tian Guang, a business anthropologist trained in USA, has run seminars on business anthropology at Peking University, the Central University for Nationalities, Fudan University, among many others. He visited Business School of Shantou University in 2011 and later was appointed as a foreign expert professor to offer business anthropology courses to both graduate and undergraduate students at the school. In May 2012, Tian Guang and Zhou Daming edited a textbook of *Business Anthropology*, which was published by Ningxia People’s Publishing House. On May 17, 2012, the Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangdong, one of the most prestigious universities in China, held the first international conference on business anthropology in China. At the same time, *Minzu* University and *Renmin* University of China, another two most prestigious universities, jointly hosted a conference on business anthropology in Beijing. Well-known European and American business anthropologists, such as Marietta Baba, Allen Batteau, Dominique Desjeux, Ann Jordan, Timothy Malefyt, Alfons van Marrewijk, Maryann McCabe, Brain Moeran, Patricia Sunderland, among many others, attended the conferences.

It was at these two conferences, some Chinese scholars pointed out that in the near future many companies would have to set up a new senior management position together with other senior executives, which can be entitled Chief Anthropologist, to give advice and suggestions for the long-term development of the company. The Chief Anthropologist could be the best candidate for promoting harmony among the internal staffs of the company in order to improve the working efficiency of employees (Wu 2012; Zhong and Liu 2012). The two conferences were widely reported by the mainstream public media in China. Their influence is far reaching.

Since then, lectures on business anthropology have been given in universities across China. Shantou University is offering business anthropology training to its students enrolled in Business School. Yunnan University is going to have a graduate program in business anthropology starts from September, 2013. Sun Yat-Sen University, North Minzu University, South-Central Minzu University, Ningxia University, Jishou University, Yunan Financial and Economic University, among some others, have planned to offer business anthropology courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. At the same time, more and more research projects, papers, and books related to business anthropology are coming out in China (Tian 2014b).

In September 2012, two groups of applied anthropologists ran two sessions at the national conference of anthropology in Lanzhou, Gansu Province. The East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai planned to host the international conference on applications of anthropology in business on May 18-20, 2013; following the conference, the College of History and Culture at Jishou University planned to run a senior level international forum of applied anthropologists, among them many are business anthropologists, on May 21-22, 2013. All these events stated above show that business anthropology has a bright future in China and will soon boom in China as an academic discipline as China's social and economic development continues at a fast speed.

CONCLUSION

This paper describes the promotion and development of economic anthropology in China. Early economic anthropology researches fo-

cused primarily on the study of Chinese rural economic model, but not many professional books were available. After the founding of New China, the Chinese government, in order to promote the comprehensive social and economic development of ethnic minority regions, organized a large-scale economic and social survey on the ethnic minority regions of China, which laid a solid foundation for the development of economic anthropology in China. The creations of the ethnic economics and the large-scale research on China Western Development have significantly contributed to the localization of economic anthropology in China. In the localization process, China's economic anthropology scholars based on the current situation in China and followed the Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. They proposed that the ethnic economic interests were relative independent and they did a rational reflection on the modernization process through different perspectives. They proposed *Inter-phase Operation Principle*, which contributed to the localization of economic anthropology.

In conclusion, anthropology in China is still at its development stage. As a sub-discipline, economic anthropology is still at the initial stages of development in China. Nevertheless, in reality, China's economic and social development, especially in ethnic minority regions in Western China, needs the theoretical guidance of some disciplines, including economic anthropology. At the same time, it has provided opportunities to develop economic anthropology with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, it is very important for the Chinese economic anthropologists to learn and receive the Western economic anthropology theories and methodologies according to the reality of Chinese society in the process of continuously innovating and developing economic anthropology theories and methods with Chinese characteristics, so that it can better serve the need of building a moderately prosperous society planned by the Chinese leadership.

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