

Anthropology of tourism: practical and theoretical development in China



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Abstract

This paper examines the origins, developments and new trends of anthropology of tourism in China through a comparison between China and the West. Chinese anthropologists have, since the end of the last century, begun to introduce Western academic achievements and tried to conduct domestic research. In the process of development into a big and great power in tourism, Chinese researchers have intensively absorbed new concepts and new theories from abroad, studied local cases in China's context, and carry out China-West dialogues in various aspects. Anthropology of tourism in China has seen many breakthroughs in terms of topics, theories, disciplines and methods, contributing its own experiences and new theories to the development of anthropology of tourism worldwide.

Keywords Anthropology of tourism · Localization · Innovation · Comparison between China and the West

Anthropology of tourism in China originated from the systematic introduction of Western research results, but it is by no means a fully Westernized outcome. In the past four decades, researchers have devoted themselves to building a local disciplinary system, and put forward a stream of new research topics, new theories and new

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methods that break new grounds. Taking the development of tourism as a clue, this paper reviews the progress of research in anthropology of tourism in China since its inception, and explains the causes of differences between Chinese and Western research at this stage through the comparison of social development situations. It aims to help more people understand the current situation and academic contributions of anthropology of tourism in China, provide local experiences and theories to the world, and promote the development of anthropology as a discipline, as well as the international academic exchanges.

The origins of anthropology of tourism in China

Anthropology of tourism in China began in the late 1980s, which is closely related to the development of domestic modern tourism. In 1985, with the reform of the economic system and the policy of opening up to the outside world, the power of tourism outreach and visa notification was further delegated to the local levels. While the number of travel agencies soared to 1573 in 1988 (Du 2003), inbound tourists increased rapidly, and tourism truly became an economic sector with a certain scale. In 1990, the government issued an instruction to “allow Chinese citizens to visit overseas relatives and travel abroad.” Four years later, outbound travel for private reasons reached 1.6423 million person-times. Domestic tourism exceeded 500 million person-times at the same time, suggesting that the domestic tourism market began to take shape.¹ The comprehensive rectification of the tourism order further standardized and stimulated the healthy development of tourism. In 1998, China’s foreign exchange earnings from tourism jumped to 7th in the world from 41st in 1978. China has grown into a world-renowned global tourist destination and source country with rich resources, broad market and huge potential. China’s tourism has represented an important industry in the national economy and a new force on the international tourism arena.

Against such macro background, researchers in anthropology and tourism drove the development and transition of tourism research in their respective fields as forerunners in anthropology of tourism in China. Ethnologists were the first to pay attention to the phenomena and existing problems of tourism. China’s ethnic regions are rich in natural and cultural tourism resources. Ethnic minority areas such as Yunnan, Tibet and Guangxi have attracted a large number of international tourists. Cultural inheritance and unity, economic development and common prosperity of ethnic regions as the major issues of national governance are precisely important tasks after the reconstruction of anthropology in China. Therefore, tourism can serve as a natural medium for development-oriented ethnographic studies in anthropology (Zhu 2017b). Some scholars realized earlier that the high economic benefits of tourism have a catalytic role in meeting people’s needs and expanding social employment and hence, proposed to actively develop “ethnic tourism commodities” (Jia 1987). Huang Huikun called on

¹ The data is collected from the China Tourism Statistical Yearbook released over the years.

cultural anthropologists to get involved in the development of tourism resources (Huang 1995). Pan Shengzhi published “Ethnology of Tourism”, which comprehensively examined the relationship between tourism and ethnicity from the perspective of anthropology. The 1999 *Kunming Conference on Anthropology, Tourism and Chinese Society* and its proceedings also inspired the study of tourism in the anthropological community (Yang et al. 2001; Xu 2000). Many scholars advocated “protective development of tourism” (Ma 2000) in consideration of the negative impact of tourism on the traditional culture of host nations (Ma 2002, 2003). There were also studies that criticize tourism of probably depriving hosts of reasonable wishes for modernization (Liu 2001).

In the meantime, tourism scholars proactively absorbed the viewpoints, concepts and methods of anthropology. From 1996 to 1997, Baojia Shen published four serial articles in the *Tourism Tribune*—“International Tourism Research Progress”, which gave a comprehensive introduction to sociology, anthropology, and methods and methodology of tourism research in developing countries, spurring the transition of tourism research to social sciences. Tourism academic circles begun to recognize the complex social, cultural and ecological impacts of tourism (Guo 2001; Yang and Wang 2000). Researchers with backgrounds in economics, management and even natural sciences also, consciously or unconsciously, carried out research on tourism, culture, host-guest relation, or adopted ethnographic methods. Nevertheless, relevant research in this period was fragmented and spontaneous (Zong 2001b).

The systematic study and promotion of anthropology of tourism as a discipline is attributed to Prof. Jigang Bao with a background in geography and Prof. Zhaorong Peng with a background in anthropology. During his study visit to Canada in 1995, Bao got acquainted with famous tourism anthropologists such as Valene Smith, and came into contact with Peter Murphy and his book *Tourism: A Community Approach*. After returning to China, he further recognized the importance and urgency of research on community-based tourism in the fieldwork of tourism development in Longji Terraced Fields. In 2001, based on the Research Center for Tourism Development and Planning of Sun Yat-sen University, Bao enrolled Jiuxia Sun, then a master of anthropology, as the first doctoral student in tourism management in China, and enrolled in 2003, the first postdoctoral student with an anthropological background. Under his inspections, five master’s theses, four doctoral dissertations and one post-doctoral report (Sun 2009) were completed using the relevant theories and methods of anthropology and sociology. Zhaorong Peng studied under the tutelage of famous tourism anthropologist Prof. Nelson Graburn from 2003 to 2004 at the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley. During this period, he finished the first Chinese-authored book *Tourism Anthropology* that comprehensively introduced the knowledge pedigree and classic cases of Western anthropology of tourism. After returning to China, Zhaorong Peng led the establishment of the Tourism Anthropology Research Center under the Department of Anthropology and Ethnology of Xiamen University, with Nelson Graburn serving as the consultant. Yunnan University and other colleges and universities also followed to enroll postgraduate and doctoral students in anthropology of tourism. Since then, institutions for undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral training and full-time research in anthropology of tourism have been initially established.

Compared with the western studies originated in the context of colonialism and post colonialism, anthropology of tourism in China rose rapidly with the fast development of tourism. Guided by the state's policy of promoting the development of ethnic areas, anthropologists consciously entered the "field of tourism" and sought effective ways for the development of ethnic areas and cultural protection and utilization, laying a solid foundation for deepening research and practice in tourism-driven rural revitalization by scholars in recent years. In addition, tourism scholars played a very active role and gradually became one of the leading forces in the construction of anthropology of tourism. This means that domestic research in anthropology of tourism is inseparable from the dual attention to tourism as a social phenomenon and an economic industry.

Systematic introduction of Western results and local examination by Chinese studies

In its infancy around the twenty-first century, anthropology of tourism in China made headway to varying degrees in research content, theoretical progress and domestic application. In terms of research content, Chinese anthropologists systematically translated and introduced the factual cases, theoretical perspectives and research methods of Western anthropology of tourism, so the expression of academic concepts and research norms were increasingly internationalized at this stage. In terms of theoretical progress, Chinese scholars paid more attention to emerging international concepts and theoretical explanations. In particular, research on cultural impact of tourism increased significantly. Academic theories and achievements that explored the nature of tourism, such as tourism performance, cultural commercialization, and authenticity, were successively introduced to China (Adler 1990; Shiner 1999). In terms of domestic application, anthropologists and tourism researchers began to extensively discuss various social and cultural issues associated with domestic tourism development. In a word, the outstanding achievements of this period made better use of mature Western theories and anthropological methods.

Extensive translation of foreign research results

In this period, the earliest translations of anthropology of tourism were formed, owing to the efforts of anthropologists and ethnologists. There were also thematic reviews of the progress of Western research, or comprehensive overviews of the development of the discipline. For example, as early as 2001, Zong analyzed and commented on the schools and research progress of Western anthropology of tourism (Zong 2001a, b) and during her postdoctoral research, she translated the book *Anthropology of Tourism* authored by Dennison Nash, the pioneer of American anthropology of tourism. In 2007–2008, *A Collection of Translations in Anthropology of Tourism* co-edited by Zhaorong Peng and Nelson Graburn was published. At the same time, Xiaoping Zhang published the Chinese translation of Dean

MacCannell's *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, and completed the Chinese translation of Valene Smith's *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*.

The translation and introduction of these foreign classic works in anthropology of tourism provide a theoretical reference for the initial development of the discipline in China, and offer a knowledge reserve for Chinese tourism scholars to quickly get engaged in anthropological research. Such results of translation and re-creation pave the foundation for the localizing anthropology of tourism in the early stage. Of course, China's related research and disciplinary understanding still lagged behind over a period of time, compared with a large number of academic achievements in the West.

Introduction of new concepts and theories to expand the field of tourism research

Researchers began to follow closely and introduce from abroad the mature viewpoints, concepts and theories in anthropology of tourism. First, Chinese cultural anthropologists got actively involved in discussion on the disciplinary characteristics, core issues and research perspectives of anthropology of tourism. Drawing on the disciplinary definition of anthropology by scholars such as Valene Smith, they pointed out that the biggest difference between anthropology and other disciplines in the field of tourism is that it adopts "a holistic, cross-cultural and comparative perspective" (Richter and Smith 2012). The social and cultural impact of tourism on the local area (Huang 2005) received the earliest attention, such as the influence of tourism on changes in traditional culture such as local language (Dai and Bao 1996) and ethnic festivals (Sun 2003). The diversification and complexity of such impact was gradually revealed (Liu 1998; Li 2005) by critically looking into the economic development of tourist destinations from the perspective of cultural protection of hosts. Recognizing Dennison Nash's point of view that tourism involves an encounter between different cultures and leads to social transformation (Nash 1981), Chinese scholars emphasized the cultural attributes of tourism activities, and regarded tourism activities as an aggregate of cultural phenomena in which the subjects, objects and media of tourism interact with each other (Xu 2005).

There was a growing debate on whether the impact of tourism on culture is "positive or negative". With the development of tourism and discipline, realistic expressions were increasingly filled with critical viewpoints such as "ethnic culture is endowed with economic value, becomes a tradable commodity and a key object in tourism development". The theory of commodification of culture was applied into relevant empirical research (Zhang 2006). However, influenced by China's policies of developing western China and the realistic demands of the development of ethnic areas, especially after the concept of existential authenticity put forward by Professor Wang was widely recognized (Wang 1999), the researchers found that tourism development is not only a necessary way for the economic development of the destination, but also the appeal of the host. Furthermore, they fully drew on concepts or viewpoints such as staged reality (Yang 2006) and authenticity (Li and Zhang 2005; Chen 2005)—tourists prefer "staged attractions" (MacCannell 1973), and proposed

cultural performance in the front stage, which is conducive to protecting the real life of hosts backstage from destruction (Van den Berghe and Keyes 1984). They tried to look into the staged performance and the commodification of culture of tourist destinations from a more comprehensive perspective. For example, “traditional and historical culture” may not be good or authentic. In addition, Zhang and Zhao also systematically explained the theory of tourism as ritual (Zhang and Huang 2000; Zhang 2003a), but most of the early papers cited or commented on the theory, with slightly inadequate development and innovation of the theory (Zhao 2007).

The related Western academic achievements, especially major theoretical concepts, introduced around the twenty-first century to China, have greatly expanded the research fields of tourism anthropology and become the core topics of domestic tourism anthropology thereafter. The selective introduction of topics according to national and local conditions not only reflects the initiative of domestic scholars to “domesticate” texts during translation and citation, but also embodies the orientation of developmentalism, implying the basic judgment that culture is subordinate to economic development.

Localization of research practice and the attempt of dialogue between China and the West

Chinese anthropologists of tourism hold a dialectical view, apply critically and selectively Western viewpoints and theories, and conduct dialogues with Western theories on the basis of localization exploration. This is reflected in the discussion about the influence of tourism on the changes of ethnic culture. In the early twenty-first century, China’s tourism industry entered a stage of comprehensive development. Chinese Scholars came to realize that the dual nature of the impact of tourism on social and cultural changes in ethnic areas and tourist destinations is the essential attribute of tourism. It is necessary to go beyond the binary thinking (positive/negative) of some Western scholars (Tian 2003) and explore development-oriented solutions to the contradiction between ethnic cultural protection and tourism development based on China’s basic national conditions. On the one hand, the protection of ethnic culture requires a lot of funds, so the commodification of culture is not necessarily bad (Zhao 2003) as it offers an optional path for the sustainable development of traditional culture and tourism (Huang 2004; Lin and Huang 2003). On the other hand, the commodification of culture may be the active behavior of hosts to market themselves and convert cultural and social relations into capital, noting that the strong initiative of community residents is a realistic feature of China (Zhang et al. 2009). In the debate on staged performance and its binary opposition of authenticity and false, many local cases have proved that “it is impossible for any tourist destination to present all its original culture” (Zhang 2003b). Staged performance is beneficial to the zoning protection of spatial and spiritual qualities of traditional villages and towns (Lu and Lu 2007), while the conventional power of ethnic minorities dominates the real life backstage (Zheng 2008).

The rise of rural community-based tourism also means that we should “regard the community as an industry that sells products”. Government departments, researchers

and planners are required to consider the construction of tourism destinations from a community perspective, and improve the efficiency of tourism flows by optimizing community structure with the engagement of community residents, so as to harmonize and optimize economic, environmental and social benefits (Tang 1998). Chinese rural communities have different characteristics from foreign counterparts in terms of government administration, land system, social network, farmers' demands and traditional concepts. In view of this, research on domestic community-based tourism needs to go deep into tourism communities from the very beginning to explore the theoretical frameworks and effective models for community participation with Chinese characteristics. As a representative work, "*Community-based Tourism and Community Participation in Anthropology of Tourism*" (Sun 2009) sets a precedent for localized research on community participation in tourism. This book summarizes the basic characteristics of Chinese community participation in tourism development, analyzes farmers' enthusiasm, conflicts and their causes, and ways to improve community participation. Finally it compares Chinese and Western community participation.

Evidently, at this stage, domestic scholars introduced and studied Western classic works, theoretical viewpoints and academic achievements in anthropology of tourism, and conducted a series of in-depth studies on tourism phenomena and social problems from the perspective of cultural relativism, which fully combined the fieldwork methods of anthropology with China's national conditions and social developments, in an attempt to construct a localized theoretic system. However, most of the studies were not academically normative enough and were dominated by one-sided subjective judgments and overview-style overall introductions. There were few really solid field research and case studies as the research content focused on the cultural changes of ethnic minorities and the cultural influences of tourism (Zhou 2014; Sun and Ma 2009). Issues such as early commodification of culture and authenticity (Jin and Graburn 2014) were rarely covered. In addition, anthropologists and sociologists were early to introduce Western writings and theories. With the development of tourism and the transition of anthropology and sociology of tourism, tourism scholars joined in anthropological research in connection with the realistic contexts and development demands of tourism development, community participation and cultural change on the basis of existing achievements. This strengthened research forces and promoted dialogues between tourism and anthropology, between theory and reality and between China and the West. In general, the anthropology of tourism in China made considerable progress, but there were still many problems, mainly manifested as poor indigestion of imported research results and insufficient local original academic theories (Sun 2007). It is still necessary to pursue theoretical improvement based on the reality of China.

New trends in anthropology of tourism in China over the past 10 years

Over the last decade or so, China has undergone historic changes in economic development, institutional reform, livelihood improvement, technological progress and international dialogue, creating a complex and diverse pattern of real life. While

tourism is changing rapidly amid the transformation of consumption, research topics in anthropology of tourism become more diversified and specialized. Researchers recognize that tourism and culture are not isolated activities, but are deeply embedded in the political background and economic structure at home and abroad. The single-influence and dualistic-thinking framework is no longer applicable, and a diverse, dynamic and comprehensive research system is urgently needed. Anthropology of tourism as a discipline must go beyond the conventional research perspectives and existing research conclusions. It is necessary to gravitate to the entire cultural ecosystem from cultural elements. It is also appropriate to shift from the overall macro description to the special attention and continuous characterization of some hosts, so as to break through the limitations of conventional mindset through more detailed analysis, more diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary theories. As a result, many new perspectives, new achievements and new methods have emerged in anthropology of tourism during this period.

Extension and development of conventional core topics in anthropology of tourism

In order to adapt to the rapidly changing real situation in China, tourism anthropologists use new theories and viewpoints to interpret conventional topics from an open research perspective, taking into account specific development models and cultural evolution paths.

Destruction or protection: a dialectical reflection on the influence of tourism on culture

Cultural protection departments, academia and industrial circles used to attribute the disappearance or deterioration of traditional culture to the commercialization of tourism. In recent years, Chinese scholars have realized that, even without tourism, traditional culture is faced with various threats in the realistic context of hollow villages, discontinued cultural inheritance, and invasion of globalization and modernization. Traditional Chinese villages are declining at an alarming rate and even dying out (Feng 2013). Research into ethnic tourism destinations such as Xishuangbanna, Qiandongnan and Lijiang found that it is the commercialization and capitalization of culture brought by tourism that provides space for the development of traditional culture, as well as the driving force to sustain traditional culture (Zhang 2014). To a certain extent, such commercialization and capitalization safeguards the traditional characteristics and cultural reproduction of such communities (Guang and Zhang 2010) while promoting their economic development. External attention can boost villagers' sense of pride and willingness to carry forward traditional culture (Sun and Wu 2015). At the same time, Chinese hosts in tourist destinations are not passive or complacent cultural vulnerable groups. In Yubeng Village, a typical ethnic tourism village, local knowledge such as folk beliefs can alleviate the contradiction between tourism development and protection of natural environment (Liu et al. 2021). Villagers can conform to the trends of the times and justify themselves to

reconstruct local habits and local knowledge by giving full play to their subjective initiative (Jiang 2010; Ran and Tian 2015). They can adapt themselves to changes brought by tourism and even profit from proactively reconstructing, diverting and generalizing the “physical” connotations of tourism commodities (Li 2018). The latest research also focused on “people” and “social relations”. Tourism development may change the way villagers establish social relations with the outside world, but it does not necessarily change the social relations among members of these communities (Su and Sun 2017). The networks of relationships by industry, geography and blood are intertwined in the tourism field and play an important role in shaping the industrial structure (Sun and Li 2018). These social networks continue to be adjusted in the power game between the government, the capital, community elites and residents (Xu et al. 2018). In addition, with the development of urban tourism and the urbanization of ethnic areas, the theme of tourism and cultural change can also be extended from primitive tribes and ethnic villages to urban studies. In short, with the strong nexus between reality and theory, domestic scholars have gradually turned to reality based on typical case studies, different research perspectives and applied theories: They used to be stuck in the one-sided view on the “economic benefits” and “cultural destruction” of tourism, or only theoretically built an analytical framework that tourism is conducive to cultural inheritance, but now, they work to find feasible pathways and models for promoting cultural protection through tourism development. It is possible that tourism development changes the connotations of local culture, divides community identity and triggers conflicts. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in most cases, presentation in the “front stage” such as performances and cultural product sales promotes the inheritance of ethnic culture in many ways. When research gravitates from the West to the East and adopts the perspective of “internal cultural holders”, it will find that living culture and thought have strong vitality in healing the “sense of separation between tradition and modernity”.

From single to complex: new viewpoints of gender and host-guest interaction research

The influence of tourism on gender relations and family power structure and the interaction between hosts and tourists have been two traditional research fields in anthropology of tourism. Early gender studies in China mainly used cases from ethnic minorities or remote and impoverished areas, and emphasized the positive benefits of tourism on women, such as awakening of gender awareness, rising family status and increasing income. In recent years, scholars have found that tourism can promote gender equality in the family (Long 2018; Liao 2018), but involve women in a wider range of unequal gender relations (Liao and Sun 2015). Li Xiaoyun et al., pointed out that economic empowerment cannot truly improve the status of women, and may cause problems of “spillover of poverty reduction” and “alienation of empowerment” (Li et al. 2019). If not the only source of income, tourism will not arouse the strong enthusiasm of women under multiple pressure of labor (Wu et al. 2022). Research on host-guest interaction also yields increasingly rich results. Early studies still discussed the relationship or conflict between tourists and hosts under the framework of host-guest binary opposition. The latest viewpoints attempt

to break through such framework out of two considerations: There are boundaries between groups within hosts as communities are not homogeneous (Sun and Zhang 2015); Hosts and guests are not decisively opposed, and under some circumstances, the roles are blurred or even reversed. In reality, there is also mutual cultural adaptation between hosts and guests, most evidently in transnational marriages spurred by tourism (Zhang and Sun 2016). With the incorporation of tourism into the central topics of anthropology, researchers are required to further analyze the originally relatively closed, microscopic and fixed “fields” into the rapidly developing mobile society. Single influence, dualistic thinking and absolute expressions all have great limitation, due to the multiple possibilities and chaotic complexity brought by strong correlations between tourism development and political environment, economic level and technological progress.

From mechanical application to theoretical dialogue: new findings on ritual and liminal experience

Liminal experience is an important topic in tourism experience research. In early twenty-first century, on the basis of Van Gennep’s theory of rites of passage, Nelson Graburn considered “tourism as a special ritual” and proposed the syllogism of tourism—“secular-sacred-secular” journey, which connects tourism and ritual theory to the greatest extent in terms of the structure, nature, experience and mode of tourism (Graburn 2004). Yet, the analytical framework and theoretical system need to be further improved due to the late emergence of the theory of tourism as ritual and liminal experience in tourism. Domestic scholars get actively involved in construction of this theory, trying to carry out theoretical dialogue and theoretical development by interpreting the liminal experience of tourists as a rite of passage based on festivals. In the context of tourism, collective festival rituals have changed from closed to semi-open or fully open ritual space. Studies examined the specific performance of liminal experience of tourists, revealing the role of tourism as a lubricant in the routine operation of the world (Ma 2010) in these dimensions: collective carnival rituals, releasing and venting troubles and pressures in daily life, transcending and inverting behavioral norms, self-renewing roles, and entering into equal, real and harmonious relationship with tourists during the event. However, these studies focused on the experience of tourists only, and paid little attention to the quasi-liminal experience of local residents and tourism practitioners. Subsequently, domestic scholars have expanded their research from tourists to local residents and tourism practitioners. Studies probed into the relationship between the daily life and the quasi-liminal experience of actors in the water-splashing festival in the Xishuangbanna Dai Nationality Garden, and the characteristics and motivations of the quasi-liminal experience (Sun and Li 2016), and used the theory of body symbolism to interpret the development and change of ritual space for *songzhaizi*, paying attention to the “body presence” of actors in local rituals (Sun and Li 2016). These studies have sparked extensive discussions through in-depth dialogue with the liminality theory in anthropology. A new topic in frontier theoretical critical research is whether tourism can be regarded as a rite of passage (Tian and Sa 2015). The

discussion on liminal experience and tourism ritual fully embodies the critical reflection of researchers on academic norms, theoretical innovations and analytical methods in the last decade, as well as the transition from mechanical application to critical application, and further to theoretical breakthrough towards new theories.

From the whole to the individual: shift of research perspectives to community participation and community governance

Community participation is one of the hotspots of anthropological research on tourism in China. Earlier studies generally took ethnic groups as a whole, and discussed topics such as comprehensive community governance, obstacles to community participation in tourism development, and impact of community participation on local economic, social, and cultural protection. Through the concept and practice of encouraging local people to participate in tourism development, these studies aim to promote the development of tourism communities and the upgrading of community governance, which reflects the people-oriented research principle. Over the past five years, researchers have focused on special subjects from an individual perspective. For example, from the perspective of elite individuals, community elites will leverage their own influence to organize and guide residents to actively participate in community-based tourism under the premise of government supervision and enterprise engagement (Wang 2009). Among them, female tourism elites, influenced by traditional gender concepts, often play roles with female characteristics such as cultural guardians and caregivers, so they are unlikely to become governance elites (Chu et al. 2016). From the perspective of personal transformation, there are studies summarizing the growth paths and community roles of different “new village elites” in the field of ethnic tourism (Sun and A 2020). There are two reasons behind the shift to an individual perspective for research on community participation and community governance: i) Community residents are divided in ideological, economic and cultural terms with the rise and development of tourism amid overall community changes, so taking the community as a whole is not conducive to improving the level of community participation and community governance in practice; ii) Scholars have realized the difficulty and complexity of empowerment in practice after years of research and planning practice. Noting the potential problem of delegating power (Weng and Peng 2011; Wang 2018), coupled with the diversification of inflow business operators and the changes in policies, they have to pay attention to the social structure and power relations of communities. Community elites, who often assume multiple roles such as entrepreneurial demonstration, community integration, cultural dissemination and external liaison, can serve as intermediaries for researchers to better understand community developments, current issues and governance breakthroughs. Of course, it will be possible to explore community governance and rural revitalization from a holistic perspective based on increasing abundance of individual research, and then to promote the sustainable development of tourism communities with a cycle of holistic-individual-holistic research (Chen 2021).

Breakthroughs and interdisciplinary integration of new topics in anthropology of tourism

Tourism development and rural revitalization

In recent years, China has successively proposed a raft of development strategies such as *the building of a new countryside*, *new urbanization*, rural revitalization and poverty alleviation. Rural tourism, which thrusts development, has become a realistic demand and major scientific topic of China's new-type urbanization and rural economic and social development (Huang et al. 2015). The anthropology of tourism should also give more attention to the countryside, in response to the major issues of national governance and the needs of rural tourism development. On the one hand, by virtue of small pollution, low energy consumption and high environmental requirements, tourism offers a pathway of sustainable development that harmonizes rural industrial transformation and ecological protection (Chen 2019). On the other hand, rural tourism is regarded as an important force in promoting rural governance transformation, talent introduction and cultural inheritance (Guo et al. 2021; Li 2021; Wang N 2019, Wang X 2019). The anthropology of tourism has played a role in providing theoretical guidance and inspiring thinking on solutions to practical problems, mainly reflected in such research topics as rural poverty alleviation and governance (Li et al. 2018; Wang 2020), population mobility (Wang and Sun 2021), cultural protection (Liang et al. 2015; Liu 2014), and restoration and reconstruction of nostalgic memory (Chen 2020). The inherent logic and practical pathway of rural revitalization driven by tourism has gradually become clear in extensive research and discussion (Sun et al. 2020a; Zhang and Shu 2018).

Since this topic of "tourism development and rural revitalization" is relatively new, in the future, we should give full play to the disciplinary role of the anthropology of tourism when studying the existing topics of rural tourism development, social structure of villages, cultural inheritance and changes and social governance. Anthropological research methods, because of their thorough understanding and solid field data, can give deeper insights into the real problems and local farmers' demands. This is the reason why the methods are also drawn on by many researchers in geography, management and economics for rural tourism research, which means that rural tourism will be a key field of multidisciplinary focus and integration.

Tourism society and mobility

In the context of globalization, tourism is a "form of mobility" (Sheller and Urry 2004) that is loose, moving, and short-term, and relationship formed by interaction of people in tourism is also temporary or performative (Peng 2012). The introduction of the mobility paradigm into anthropology has a revolutionary effect on the interpretation of its basic concepts. For example, topics such as identification, place and identity need to be rethought from the perspective of mobility (Sun et al. 2016), creating new opportunities for close integration of tourism and anthropology. Anthropologists of tourism mainly study tourism mobility in four aspects: people, relationship, culture and place. Studies suggested that "places" are often realized in

mobility (Li 2017). In road travel, node space as a settlement system also produces a mobile person-place relationship with the help of special host-guest interaction scenes (Wang N 2019, Wang X 2019). In addition to the moving and settlement of tourists, tourism migrants with different motivations and behavioral representations have also become a typical research object. For example, Wang (2015) examined the migration process of local identity of consumption through the cross-border flow of food culture (Wang 2015). Sun and other scholars discussed the social integration and social adaptation of tourism migrant workers and consumption-oriented tourism migrants and the influencing factors (Sun and Huang 2016; Sun et al. 2020b). In general, mobility challenges static objective reality, as well as traditional ethnographic research paradigms and cultural perceptions (Gan and Lu 2013). From the tourism point of view, mobility is the link between sociology and geography that continues to break these binary oppositions: travel/work, sacred/secular, presence/absence, host/guest and place/person (Zhu et al. 2017a).

Fields of multidisciplinary research

In social science research, tourism is one of the most extensive fields involving various disciplines, theoretical horizons and research pathways (Zhang and Kebaer 2012). This mixed and intertwined pattern has prompted the continuous interdisciplinary collaboration, integration and mutual learning between anthropology of tourism and philosophy, sociology, management, folklore, geography and heritage studies, giving rise to fields of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research. This is mainly reflected in efforts in two directions: i) In the context of booming tourism industry, other disciplines need to learn from anthropology. For example, rural research is a conventional topic of concern for anthropologists and an important field of knowledge production. Yet, as mentioned earlier, researchers in economics, management and geography have also used ethnographic methods in research; ii) Anthropologists of tourism continue to expand their research fields beyond disciplinary boundaries by adopting multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives and practical events. The most notable example is the critical thinking and research on heritage in this discipline. Thanks to anthropological research on power, discourse, memory and identity, anthropologists of tourism have gradually realized that the concept, classification and protection system of heritage have experienced a “theoretical travel” since the beginning of the spread of Western learning to the East. Many policies typically copy Western conceptual frameworks without reflection (Li 2012). The heritage movement is essentially a means of political expression by the state to turn heritage into public resources (Peng 2008). Therefore, scholars have made breakthroughs on the topic of heritage and authenticity. The wedding performance at Naxi Wedding Culture Yard in Lijiang reflects the dynamic process that the initiative to “authenticate” individual interacts with the reality through physical practice (Zhu 2015). This further strengthens the concept and connotation of “performed authenticity”. In short, research topics and hotspots in anthropology of tourism are increasingly enriched, exhibiting a trend of loose, diverse, ambiguous and mixed development. As to reason, the interaction of tourism and anthropology, both as interdisciplinary, multi-themed research fields, is likely to form a more complex and

diverse set. The complexity and diversity of disciplinary backgrounds of tourism scholars also determines the involvement of multidisciplinary perspectives. This can also be seen from the discipline setting of colleges and departments. Chinese tourism is currently a secondary discipline of business administration. In various academies and universities, tourism colleges/departments are highly interdisciplinary and often subordinated to business schools, schools of economics and management, schools of history and culture and schools of geography. Therefore, in consideration of disciplinary boundaries and scholar identity, it is even more necessary to “focus on research questions rather than be confined to disciplines”.

Cross-application of multidisciplinary approaches

With the continued advance of science and technology such as the Internet and artificial intelligence, methods in anthropology of tourism become more diverse through interdisciplinary integration and exchanges. On the one hand, ethnographical research methods are constantly innovating. Methods such as auto-ethnography, multi-sited ethnography, network ethnography, subjective ethnography and sensory ethnography create possibilities for developing new tourism research themes. For example, auto-ethnography and mobile ethnography have been used to explore the relationship between mobility and placemaking in tourism (Wang et al. 2020). On the other hand, the research methods of other disciplines also overcome disciplinary barriers and boundaries and extend to the anthropology of tourism. Hybrid methods that combine grounded theory, qualitative field data and quantitative analysis have been gradually accepted for constructing theoretical concepts and analysis indicators (Wang and Sun 2018; Ding et al. 2019). Social network analysis in management and sociology has also been applied to tourism research (Shi and Sun 2016). In the future, methods such as econometric analysis (economics), psychological experiment and big data research may be introduced to anthropological research of tourism.

Platform construction and financial support for anthropology of tourism

Over the past decade, academic conferences of anthropology, ethnology and tourism have paid more attention to anthropologic topics in tourism. Organizations dedicated to promoting the development of ethnic tourism and rural tourism have been successively established, and many international and domestic academic conferences on tourism anthropology and related topics have been held on large scales. In 2009, the Leisure Agriculture and Rural Tourism Branch of the China Tourism Association was established. In 2010, the Committee of Ethnic Tourism was set up under the China Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Science and held the First China Ethnic Tourism Research Forum. It has since then promoted theoretical research, publicity, education and academic exchanges of ethnic tourism in an organized manner. The committee is responsible for organizing and holding ethnic tourism research forums and compiling the proceedings titled China Ethnic Tourism Studies. To date, 11 consecutive forums have been held (with the 11th China Ethnic Tourism

Forum successfully held in October 2021, Guilin). In 2017 and 2018, the Second and Third International Rural Tourism Conference took place in Huzhou and in 2020, the National Leisure Agriculture and Rural Tourism Conference opened in Beijing. These conferences demonstrate China's strength in anthropology of tourism and greatly boost the consciousness and self-confidence of researchers. Universities and research centers have also spontaneously organized many academic conferences, lectures, forums and salons on related topics. For example, in 2011, Sun Yat-Sen University hosted an academic symposium and published a collection of essays on "Tourism from the Perspective of Anthropology and Sociology". In 2017, it presented a series of "Interdisciplinary Lectures on Tourism", where scholars such as Guoqing Ma, Zhiwei Liu, Nelson Graburn, Jafar Jafary were invited to give lectures on anthropology and tourism-related topics. In 2018, the International Symposium on Rural Tourism and the 5th Tourism Summit was held in Guangzhou during the Advanced Seminar on Anthropology. A number of scholars including Nelson Graburn, Sabine Marschall from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), Megumi Doshita from the School of Global Studies at Tama University (Japan), Zhaorong Peng, Jigang Bao, Ning Wang, Yanjun Xie, and Shangyi Zhou delivered keynote speeches. In 2020, an academic salon on the theme of poverty alleviation through tourism and rural revitalization was held. The smooth development of academic conferences and forums and the establishment of relevant organizations have effectively spurred research development and knowledge dissemination of anthropology of tourism in China, and facilitated exchanges between anthropologists of tourism at home and abroad and exchanges across disciplines.

Under the support of national policies, funding for various development projects and research topics has been further increased. Since 2010, a number of government departments in China have successively launched programs to establish national demonstration counties for leisure agriculture and rural tourism, traditional Chinese villages, Chinese characteristic minorities villages, and national-level tourism and leisure blocks, and provide financial and policy support to selected villages, towns and blocks. Financial support under such programs is of great benefit to the development of community-based tourism in China. In terms of funding for scientific research, the National Social Science Foundation of China has significantly scaled up grants for anthropologic and sociologic research of tourism under sociology and research on ethnic issues (formerly ethnology). It has endorsed 37 tourism-related projects in sociology since 2002, of which 25 were established from 2016 to 2020, accounting for around 68%. Meanwhile, it has supported 99 tourism-related projects in research on ethnic issues, of which 77% were established from 2009 to the present, and 28% from 2015 to the present. Among them, the "Study on Rural Tourism and Farmers' Income Increase in Southwest Ethnic Minority Areas" (11AMZ008) is a key project in the category of "Research on Ethnic Issues" in 2011 the "Study on Protection and Utilization of Traditional Minority Villages in Southwest China" (15ZDB118) is a major project of both 2015 and 2017 (rolling funding); and the "Cultural and tourism development and urban-rural integration in rural revitalization research" (21AH016) is a key project in arts of the National Social Science Foundation of China in 2021. Compared with sociological and ethnic studies, there are fewer funded projects on topics related to anthropology of tourism in the category "management". In addition,

the National Natural Science Foundation of China has gradually increased funding for related fields in recent years. Researchers mainly apply for projects under the division of geography and management sciences. The doctoral and postdoctoral fellows under the supervision of the author have received grants for 15 projects from the National Natural Science Foundation of China since 2015.

In response to the call of the policies of rural revitalization and poverty alleviation, some scholars have placed academic achievements and advanced planning in social reality for testing, and applied the scientific experiences and rules summarized to the specific practice of poverty alleviation and rural revitalization in China. With the support of national scientific research project funds, planning project funds and corporate or social funds, they carry out the social experiments of tourism-driven poverty alleviation and rural revitalization in the countryside. Among them, the Azheke Plan led by Jigang Bao offers a Chinese solution to global poverty alleviation through tourism by exploring scientific pathways. Jiuxia Sun carried out the action plan for rural revitalization and the rural experiment in Tibetan areas. Besides, Qingzhong Sun from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of China Agricultural University conducted a rural education experiment in Chuanzhong, Henan Province, calling for the establishment of a community college in Chuanzhong. Huilin Lu from the Department of Sociology of Peking University implemented an action plan for rural revitalization in Wanjian Village, a traditional Chinese village in Qianshan, Anhui Province. From the disciplinary perspectives of anthropology and sociology, the latter two scholars did not consider tourism in the action plan at the very beginning, but they have gradually recognized the role of tourism in rural revitalization and sustainable development based on practical experience and interdisciplinary exchanges. Huilin Lu also gave an interdisciplinary speech on “Sociology and the Southern Anhui Pilot of Protection of Traditional Chinese Villages” in the 2021 Annual General Meeting Forum of “Tourism Tribune”. It can be seen that with strong state funding support, anthropology of tourism in China has undergone cyclic, periodic test in theory and practice, and will embrace closer interdisciplinary collaboration in future research.

Comparative analysis of recent anthropologic studies of tourism in China and the West

Current differences in anthropologic studies of tourism between China and the West

“Gaps” is the key word if we discuss the differences between Chinese and Western anthropology of tourism at the initial stage of the discipline in China. However, over the past decade, on the basis of extensive study of relevant Western theories and achievements, Chinese anthropologists of tourism have continuously explored breakthroughs in the localization of this discipline in combination with Chinese context and practice, proposed new topics and new viewpoints with Chinese characteristics, and even took the lead in using new methods. At the current stage, there are several differences between domestic and foreign research in anthropology of tourism:

First, in terms of discipline development speed, research on “tourists” in Western anthropology of tourism sees slightly slow progress (Roberts and Andrews 2013), especially research on intermediaries between hosts and tourists, that is, tourism practitioners. Second, in the selection of research topics and cases, the topics discussed in Western anthropology of so far still focus on commodification and cultural adaptation. Through “investigation into changes brought by Western tourism to certain societies or sub-societies on the periphery” (Nash et al. 2004), studies examined socio-economic inequalities and disparities caused by international tourism, mainly from the perspective of host-guest binary opposition. Third, in terms of research methods, scholars generally advocate the return of traditional anthropological methods. They emphasize that anthropology has a unique methodological contribution to tourism research. Meanwhile, it is believed that methods such as case studies, in-depth interviews and participatory observations have been widely used in other disciplines (Xiao and Smith 2006). As a result, many tourism studies have unconsciously applied anthropological methods, but in a less normative manner, and proposed no profound academic concepts (Merinero-Rodriguez and Pulido-Fernandez 2016). Fourth, in terms of disciplinary orientation, Western scholars uphold that the anthropology of tourism is currently not a consistent sub-discipline, but only tourism research with the intervention or penetration of anthropology (Leite 2009). Some scholars argued that this view is too one-sided and pessimistic, ignoring the spillover effect of anthropology on tourism research on topics such as power relations, cultural ecology, social interaction, identity and collective memory, social consciousness, and identity construction under the gaze (Nogues-Pedregal 2019). It is the research perspectives and theoretical framework of anthropology that enable tourism academia to realize the obvious existence of the relationship between knowledge production and power in tourism (Tribe et al. 2016). However, it is undeniable that Western anthropology of tourism finds more difficulty in explaining “emerging phenomena” such as mobility, and in gaining more support in the discipline of tourism dominated by economics and management. Kaaristo once called on tourism scholars to pay attention to new phenomena in tourism and adjust research strategies appropriately (Kaaristo 2018).

Noting the progress and predicament of Western research, the common problems of Chinese and Western research can be identified. Due to utilitarian indicators such as “published papers”, tourism research is deficient in the normative use of anthropological methods, theoretical innovation and contribution, discipline system building, and research on tourism contribution to anthropology (Sun 2019). Nevertheless, in terms of development speed, research fields, research hotspots and research methods, domestic research shows a tendency to catch up with Western research during the same period.

Reasons for current differences in anthropologic studies of tourism between China and the West

As concluded by Western scholars, “the specific sociological changes in tourism research are closely related to broad social and political trends” (Cohen and Cohen 2012). Therefore, the fundamental reasons for differences in anthropology of

tourism between China and the West during this period are analyzed in two dimensions: trend and policy guidance in China's social reality.

Discipline development driven by strong market demand and technological advance

Since the twenty-first century, the rapid development of Chinese society has exerted a great impact on the entire social science research. First of all, China has already become the world's largest country of outbound tourism, the largest country of domestic tourism and the third largest country of inbound tourism. Such huge tourism market has attracted the attention of various disciplines. At the same time, the operating mileage of China's high-speed railways reached 37,900 km as of the end of 2020, nearly doubled over the past 5 years, which enhances the "mobility autonomy" of citizens. This is exactly the real-world context that the young anthropology of tourism in China can quickly respond and introduce the mobility paradigm. Second, the evolving underlying technology continues chemical reactions with China's tourism industry. New media and new technologies have broken new grounds in the new era. Social media and mobile payment technologies such as Online Travel Agents, Douyin, Kuaishou and WeChat are rapidly developing and stay in the forefront of the world. According to statistics, the total users and total monthly active users of WeChat and Weibo in China numbered 1.2 billion and 520 million in 2020 respectively, while the users of Douyin and Xiaohongshu reached 400 million and 300 million respectively. The total monthly user hours of short videos in the whole network exceeded 40 billion hours in January 2021. Online technology has profoundly changed the host-guest relation and interaction mode. Digital marketing technology, artificial intelligence and 5G technology have also forced anthropologists of tourism to keep up with technological trends and use new methods and means in data collection, so as not to fall behind "research objects". Traditional anthropologists may be able to avoid the "chase" of modern technology in relatively closed "primitive communities", but tourism research must progress together with iterative tourism products and tourism industrial system that are constantly updated and upgraded. Of course, we must always be alert to utilitarianism-oriented development of disciplines.

Different research contexts due to historical backgrounds and national realities

Western anthropology emerged against the historical background of peaking colonial rule and world war. In today's post-colonial context, Western countries still occupy a dominant position in tourism development of the southern hemisphere and tourism activities of the eastern hemisphere. Therefore, regardless of practical activities or academic studies, Western anthropology is often limited to the logical starting point and ending point of orientalism, and has made considerable progress in topics such as host-guest opposition, power and discourse, cultural identity and identity construction, as well as critical research.

It must be emphasized that the ethnic distinction and identity within the Chinese nation gradually presents a development pattern of diversity-in-unity in the long historical development. The course of modernization in China is also

different from other countries (Fei 1989). Therefore, tourism development and tourism activities in China's ethnic areas do not have a strong "rule-slavery" hue, nor are they the "internal orientalism" as Western researchers think. On the contrary, the economic, social and cultural levels of ethnic minority areas have been improved under the guidance of basic systems and policies such as regional ethnic autonomy, development of western China, common prosperity and rural revitalization. Tourism community development and tourism anthropology conform to the principles of protection, harmony and common development. In addition, the property rights of Chinese residents in land and housing, especially those in rural areas, are strictly protected by the land system and property law with Chinese characteristics. Coupled with strong bonds in traditional rural "relationship-based society", the residents of tourism communities have the ability, capital and confidence to actively participate in/withdraw from tourism development and always have a certain right to speak. As mentioned earlier, the "back stage" of community-based tourism in China has strong autonomy, and conducts the reflection and adjustment of self-identity under the gaze of tourists, which fully demonstrates the national consciousness and cultural self-confidence. In order to change their development opportunities or seek commercial interests, hosts actively cater to the market and the capital in the "front stage", and carry out "self-oriental" construction in tourism marketing and tourism performance (Cai et al. 2018) that typically presents "performed authenticity" (Wei et al. 2015).

Conclusions

The anthropology of tourism in China is jointly driven by anthropologists and tourism scholars against the backdrop of the emergence and rise of modern tourism. The introduction of relatively mature Western theoretical framework, research methods and academic achievements has played an important role in the formation and rapid development of this discipline in China. Therefore, focus in the infancy of the discipline was systematic introduction of Western works and core concepts. At the same time, researchers began to discuss various social and cultural issues in the domestic development of tourism, and tried to localize research with the help of anthropological viewpoints and fieldwork methods in combination with the Chinese context. Over the past decade, anthropology of tourism in China has integrated modernity, mobility, subjectivity and locality in interdisciplinary research, with attention cast to the fate of the human community in the context of globalization. Upholding cultural diversity, it has pushed forward the development of conventional core issues, and taken the lead in applying new methods and studying new topics beyond disciplinary bottlenecks and boundaries under the new social context. This is attributed to China's social and political environment such as huge tourism market, world-leading technological advance, national policy guidance and financial support.

China is making sustainable development true in the economic and technological fields, in which strong institutional leadership and policy guidance play an obviously prominent role. On the road of development from a big power to a great

power in tourism, anthropologists of tourism should, with stronger discipline self-confidence and self-consciousness, continue to innovate and grow locally while absorbing knowledge of the international academic community and multidisciplinary source, so that Chinese experiences and Chinese theories can make greater contributions to the discipline construction and academic research for anthropology of tourism worldwide.

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