

Theoretical exploration of Chinese anthropology and ethnology: the road to construct the Chinese School



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Received: 10 August 2022 / Accepted: 30 August 2022 / Published online: 26 September 2022
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Abstract

This paper starts with the four factors that affect Chinese anthropology and ethnology: the Soviet school of ethnology, Marxist ethnology, Western anthropological and ethnological theories, and Chinese experience and theory (government policies and scholar explorations). Based on the influence of foreign theories and the theoretical exploration of local efforts, this paper points out the transformations in Chinese anthropology and ethnology and its research characteristics in different periods. Since the reform and opening up in 1978, Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies have seen the constant expansion of study fields, increasing diversity of study contents, and the introduction of foreign theories and the exploration in Chinese theories in each stage. This shows that China has gradually explored the theoretical research course suitable for its own. The development course and transformations of Chinese anthropological and ethnological theories can be divided into the following three stages: the introduction of foreign theories and reconstruction of Chinese anthropology and ethnology (1978 to 1990), the orientation of Chinese issues and the verification of foreign theories (1990 to 2000), and the establishment of the Chinese School and its increasing international influence (since 2000).

Keywords Anthropology · Ethnology · The Chinese school · Foreign theory · Theoretical exploration

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Abbreviations

CUAES China Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences

IUAES International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences

Introduction

At present, China is in the midst of a huge economic and social structural transformation. A series of phenomena and issues that are different from those of the western society have emerged. In this context, it is difficult to truly and effectively address the challenges brought about by China's urbanization, modernization, and industrialization by borrowing the traditional anthropological and ethnological theories and methods from abroad. Therefore, we believe that Chinese anthropology and ethnology is bound to undergo an all-round exploration and transformation with the changing times to adapt to the development needs of the reform and opening up and of China as a unified multi-ethnic country.

Currently, scholars have conducted overview and thematic studies on the historical evolution and theoretical explorations of Chinese anthropology and ethnology.¹ Jianmin Wang et al. reviewed and described the history of Chinese anthropology and ethnology by stage in a panoramic way. They believed that the main characteristics of Chinese anthropology and ethnology in the first half of the twentieth century (1903–1949) were focused on ethnic equality, documentation, and multidisciplinary integrated research (Wang et al. 1997); in the second of the twentieth century (1950–1997), Chinese anthropology and ethnology experienced disciplinary adjustments, shifts in research directions, ups and downs of Soviet ethnological influence, setbacks under political movements, and revivals since the reform and opening up. They also pointed out that Chinese anthropology and ethnology began to open up and transform academically (Wang et al. 1997). Shengmin Yang discussed the 60-year history of Chinese anthropology and ethnology (1949–2010) from different aspects such as field survey, basic theory and methodological research, applied and countermeasure research, the Hans and ethnic minorities, cross-border ethnic groups and overseas ethnographic research, and anthropological research in Hong Kong and Chinese Taiwan (Yang and Hu 2013); and further divided the Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies after reform and opening up into three stages: the old China era, the early New China, and the new period since reform and opening up (Yang 2009). Shuhua Song summarized the development course of Chinese anthropology and ethnology from the second half of

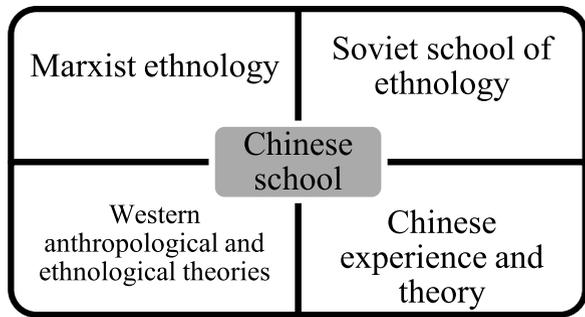
¹ In China, the disciplinary relationship between anthropology and ethnology can be summarized into three points: (1) The “same one” means that two disciplines are actually the same discipline, regardless of their names; (2) The “different one” means that both have their own academic origins and research fields; (3) The “combined use one” emphasizes the coexistence of the two disciplines. In view of the complex relationship and multiple names of anthropology and ethnology in Chinese and international academic circles, this paper adopts the method of using “anthropology and ethnology” together for analysis, and sometimes the two terms can be used interchangeably. However, it should be noted that in some special periods, for example, in the 1960s, China's “ethnic studies” gradually replaced “ethnology” as a subject research name, and it would be called according to the situation at that time.

the twentieth century (1949-1999) to modern times, pointing out that in the course of development of west areas and the modernization of ethnic minority areas in China, the Chineseization of anthropological and ethnological studies would inevitably be further developed and improved, and it would also make greater contributions to the development of the world anthropology and ethnology (Song and Manduertu 2004). Jijiao Zhang elaborates on the 70-year history of Chinese anthropology and ethnology since the founding of the People's Republic of China from both domestic and international dimensions. He argues that Chinese anthropology has developed greatly in many aspects, including the establishment of institutions, degree setting and talent training, academic groups and conferences (domestic and international), and popular topics, and has gradually become a discipline with Chinese characteristics different from the West (Zhang and Wu 2021). Xingliang He pointed out that in the past 30 years of reform and opening up, Chinese anthropology and ethnology had made remarkable achievements, with a disciplinary system of Chinese characteristics initially established, fruitful achievements in scientific researches and many theoretical and methodological achievements made, remarkable results of field surveys achieved, and international academic exchanges continuously expanded; he also discussed disciplines development and some major theoretical and practical issues, such as disciplines development, social forms, marriage and family, ethnic groups, modernization of ethnic areas, preservation of cultural diversity, and nonphysical cultural heritage; however, the disciplinary system was still immature and needed to be further improved, and the scientific nature of field surveys and the level of scientific research still needed to be further improved (He 2008). Ming He believed that the epistemological turn of anthropology and ethnology needed to be promoted in order to realize the restructuring of the knowledge system of Chinese anthropology and ethnology (He 2019). In addition, some scholars systematically introduced foreign ethnic theories and pointed out the theories and methods that should be available for Chinese studies (Song and Bai 1998). From the studies on Chinese anthropology and ethnology, it can be seen that since the beginning of its studies in China, it had always been a diligent pursuit of scholars to localize disciplines and create a Chinese School, and Chinese anthropology and ethnology had achieved remarkable results in various aspects such as theoretical construction. However, how to truly achieve localized theoretical innovation and build a Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology with global significance in an era without the leadership of masters and with complex social issues remained an issue for communities to consider (Zhang 2019). Starting with various factors that affect Chinese ethnological studies, this paper attempts to explore the theoretical explorations in Chinese anthropology and ethnology by stage to show the academic achievements of Chinese anthropology and ethnology in different historical periods.

Research methods

This paper systematically sorts out the theoretical and research exploration in Chinese anthropology and ethnology that have emerged during the century-long development since its introduction from the West in the 1920s through the literature research method. As shown in Fig. 1, this paper starts with the four factors that

Fig. 1 Four factors forming the Chinese school of anthropology and ethnology



affect Chinese anthropology and ethnology: Marxist ethnology, the Soviet school of ethnology, Western anthropological and ethnological theories, and Chinese experience and theory (government policies and scholar explorations). This paper mainly focuses on the expanding fields of anthropology and ethnology and the increasingly diverse research contents since the reform and opening up, in particular, the introduction of foreign theories and theoretical innovation at each stage, showing that China is gradually exploring theoretical research that suits the reality of its national development. In addition, based on foreign theories and the domestic development, as well as the research characteristics and theoretical explorations, this paper divides Chinese anthropology and ethnology into three stages: the introduction of foreign theories and reconstruction of Chinese anthropology and ethnology (1978 to 1990), the orientation of Chinese issues and the verification of foreign theories (1990 to 2000), and the establishment of the Chinese School and its increasing international influence (since 2000). On this basis, this paper summarizes the theoretical explorations in Chinese anthropology and ethnology by stage and explores the changes in and the development of the disciplinary theories. By combining synchronicity and diachronism analyses, this paper provides a relatively comprehensive picture of the road to construct the Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology.

Results and discussion

Chinese anthropology and ethnology before the reform and opening up

The publication of Fu Yan's translation of *Evolution and Ethics* in 1898 initiated a new style of studies for the age; later, Yuanpei Cai defined the "ethnology" discipline for the first time in his essay entitled *On Ethnology*. Chinese scholars began to carry out anthropological and ethnological studies independently by carrying out planned field surveys by batch and region. A large number of Western anthropological and ethnological theories were translated into Chinese. Although Chinese anthropology and ethnology was introduced from the West, unlike Western anthropological and ethnological studies which began with an understanding of foreign nations (often colonies or semi-colonies) other than their own countries, Chinese researchers began with focusing on researching Chinese people. With the emergence of modern world consciousness, the

Chinese anthropological and ethnological community also launched reflections on the integration of Marxist theoretical attributes with real issues and the application of Western theories in China, among others. After the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937, Chinese anthropology and ethnology focused mainly on the issues on China's frontier minorities (i.e., "frontier political studies" at that time). In terms of Chinese anthropology and ethnology in this period alone, the nascent Chinese anthropology and ethnology was mainly carried out under the guidance of Western theories. Foreign theoretical studies were used to engage in micro and macro Chinese studies, with a focus on ethnography of Chinese minorities. Meanwhile, Chinese anthropology and ethnology was also influenced by Marxist ethnology. However, both the "Southern" and "Northern"² schools formed at that time began to explore the localization of Chinese anthropology and ethnology, striving to establish a Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology with its own characteristics.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese anthropology and ethnology was based on the "Marxist Ethnology" and "Soviet school of ethnology" in terms of disciplinary division, theoretical application, research contents, and other aspects, and the theoretical studies on anthropology and ethnology during this period mainly focused on the "history of primitive society," "economic and cultural types," "ethnic concepts and definitions," and "ethnic identification" (Yang and Hu 2013). In the 1960s, "ethnic studies" gradually replaced "anthropology" and "ethnology", and the Chinese ethnic studies became part of the "Soviet model," demarcating them from what was then called the "Western bourgeois ethnology." In view of the reality of China as a multi-ethnic state, China also conducted two large-scale ethnic surveys—the "ethnic identification"³ and the "history survey of ethnic minority societies"⁴—to investigate China's ethnic minorities by using Marxism and Soviet ethnic theories. Among others, the former Soviet ethnic theory orientation stood out. At the same time, under the guidance of Soviet ethnic policy and theory, during this period, Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists studied and introduced the knowledge of world nationalities and histories, and participated in the compilation of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin materials on ethnic issues and the translation of country histories and the history of Russian-Chinese relations.

During the 10-year Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, "ethnic studies" were declared as "revisionist ethnology" (Zhang and Wu 2021), so ethnic studies were almost at a complete standstill, and Western anthropological and ethnological

² According to the different theoretical schools and research methods of ethnology at that time, China's anthropological and ethnological studies could be roughly divided into Southern and Northern schools. For example, Wenzao Wu, the representative of the Northern school at that time, proposed the establishment of the "Chinese school" of anthropology as early as the 1930s, and began to explore localization by introducing Western theories, advocating field surveys with Chinese experience, or otherwise.

³ Since 1950, research teams organized by the central and Chinese ethnic affairs agencies have identified the names of more than 400 ethnic groups proposed nationwide, with a total of 55 ethnic minorities determined.

⁴ Since 1956, in order to investigate the basic situation of China's ethnic minorities and research China's ethnic issues, the Central People's Government has sent several ethnic visiting groups and ethnic work inspection teams with the participation of scholars and professionals to start the first major survey of the social history of ethnic minorities.

theories and Soviet ethnic studies had no ground for survival in China, not to mention the construction of the Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology.

In short, from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the reform and opening up in 1978, Chinese anthropology and ethnology were less influenced by the West, and the influence of Marxist ethnology and Soviet ethnology on China increased, which then became the standard for Chinese anthropology and ethnology. Meanwhile, the call for the Chinesization of anthropology and ethnology and the establishment of the Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology had always existed, and Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists had made great efforts to this end, advocating the integration of Marxist ethnology and Soviet ethnology with the specific conditions of China, and raising issues on the consistency with the practice at that time.⁵ Although due to the constraints of various subjective and objective factors such as the social environment at that time, the theories and concepts such as the history of social development and the definition of nations advocated by Marxist ethnology and the Soviet ethnology need to be reflected and improved with the development of history. However, these issues raised by early scholars, as well as the collected ethnic survey data, all showed new understandings of the Sinicization of anthropology and ethnology to varying degrees, thus accumulating some research academic experience and theoretical methods.

Chinese anthropology and ethnology since the reform and opening up

Over the past 40 years of reform and opening up, Chinese anthropology and ethnology has been influenced by foreign theories on the one hand, and on the other hand, Chinese scholars have been reflecting on Western and former Soviet ethnological theories, striving to establish the Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology in the international community. According to the foreign influence and discipline construction in different periods, the major transformations of Chinese anthropology and ethnology can be divided into the following three stages: the introduction of foreign theories and reconstruction of Chinese anthropology and ethnology (1978 to 1990), the orientation of Chinese issues and the verification of foreign theories (1990 to 2000), and the establishment of the Chinese School and its increasing international influence (since 2000).

The introduction of foreign theories and reconstruction of Chinese anthropology and ethnology (1978 to 1990)

In 1978, the then Premier of the State Council pointed out in the Report on the Work of the Government that ethnological and other studies should be actively conducted

⁵ For example, considering China's national conditions and the extremely uneven socio-economic development of China's ethnic minorities, rather than simply copy Stalin's definition of ethnicity in the specific work of ethnic identification, Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists applied it flexibly in close combination with the actual situation of each Chinese ethnic group, and adhered to the principle of combining ethnic characteristics, ethnic wishes, and historical basis with proximity identification.

(Hua 2006). This directive marked the final recognition of Chinese anthropology and ethnology at the national level after a decade of stagnation. In 1979, the National Ethnic Studies Planning Conference was held, followed by the establishment of the China Association for Ethnic Studies, and the reconstruction of other relevant research institutions and departments of higher education.⁶ While Chinese anthropology and ethnology was being actively reconstructed, China, who had been disconnected from Western anthropological and ethnological communities for many years, also began to translate and introduce some classical works on anthropology and ethnology and introduced foreign theories in a more holistic and systematic manner. During this period, the theory of Chinese anthropology and ethnology was still greatly influenced by Marxist ethnology and Soviet Union model, which was mainly reflected in two aspects.

Firstly, studies on social forms. During this period, Chinese scholars discussed the works of Friedrich Engels and L.H. Morgan, and social forms became a hot issue in Chinese ethnic studies. (1) Regarding the staging of primitive society, Morgan and Engels put forward “stages of cultural evolution” and “stages of prehistoric culture” (Marx and Engels 2012), respectively. Former Soviet scholars put forward a two-stage method, and Chinese scholars put forward a three-stage method (Lin 1978; Yang 1980; Chen 1983). In addition, some scholars proposed a four-stage method (Shi 1981), five-stage method (Qiu and Li 1984), etc. Some scholars discussed the beginning of primitive society, the patrilineal system, and the matrilineal system. (2) On the discussion of parental slavery, Zhiji Luo et al., taking Ximeng Wa Ethnic Group as an example, pointed out that parental slavery was a slavery form before the formation of the slave society (Luo and Tian 1980). Zhaolin Song also considered that parental slavery was the eve of the formation of the class society (Song 1984). Manduertu believed that parental slavery tended to be divided into slavery and serfdom (Manduertu. 1983). (3) The studies on slavery were mainly focused on the Yi ethnic group in Liangshan, Sichuan Province. There were three theories: slavery (Hu 2007), feudalism, and the slavery-to-feudalism transition theory in the academic community. Other scholars divided the hierarchy of the Liangshan Yi slave society into more than 30 levels, the fundamental purpose of which was to protect the interests of a minority of slaveholders (Du 1978). (4) Of the studies on feudal serfdom, more studies were related to Tibetan and Dai ethnic groups, etc. Some scholars believed that Tibetan lordship estates could be divided into four types and Tibetan ethnic group was therefore a typical feudal society under the rule of serfdom and theocracy (Liu 1983). Yao Ma pointed out from the perspective of nomenclature that the Dai ethnic group before the democratic reform was a feudal lord society (Ma 1988). However, some scholars believed that in the Tang and Song Dynasties, the Xishuangbanna Dai ethnic group had entered the feudal serfdom (Hu 1983). Others argued that the Dai ethnic group did not entered slavery, a stage of development, but directly transited to feudal society (Cao 1986). Zhaolin Song et al.

⁶ For details of the history of discipline reconstruction, see: Jijiao Zhang and Yue Wu. 2021. “新中国人类学的发展”, 载于新中国民族学与人类学研究70年 (Seventy Years of Ethnological and Anthropological Studies in New China: The Development of Anthropology in New China). Edited by Yanzhong Wang. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 100–140.

had systematically outlined the courses including the formation and development of, and transition to the class society (Song et al. 1983).

Secondly, studies on the history of marriage and family and kinship systems.

(1) Morgan and Engels believed that a consanguine family was the first relationship in human history of marriage and family. Some scholars accepted this issue, and field surveys and historical data related to ethnic minorities proved the existence of consanguine families. Some scholars disagreed, pointing out that consanguine families did not exist in history and that the ethnic group marriage between neighboring clans was the first organization in the history of human marriage and family (Cai 1983). Some scholars believed that consanguine marriage did exist while consanguine families did not exist (Yang 1982). Some scholars even argued that some of the conclusions of the Morgan's model deviated from the facts (Tong 1988). (2) Morgan divided kinship systems into two categories: the classificatory kinship system and the descriptive kinship system. Some Chinese scholars believed that the principle of kinship division by Morgan was basically correct (Huang 1981). However, some scholars proposed that the original form of kinship systems was not the classificatory kinship system, but monophyletic kinship system (Yan and Song 1980). Xingliang He considered that the oldest kinship system was the three-class kinship system divided by the elderly, the middle-aged, young children (He 1982). In addition to discussing the basic theory of marriage and family and kinship systems, Chinese ethnologists also studied the marriage and family of some Chinese ethnic minorities, further enriching the theory of marriage and family of ethnic studies. For example, the Azhu Marriage in Naxi ethnic group in Yongning retained many group marriage remnants and gradually began to transition to monogamous marriage (Zhan et al. 1979). Some scholars cited the Naxi kinship system as an example, arguing that matrilineal kinship was a universal form of organization that was older than dyadic marriage (Song and Yan 1982).

Chinese anthropology and ethnology scholars applied the above-mentioned Marxist theory to the study of ethnic minorities, and made critical reflections on them and put forward some suggestions for revision. At the same time, based on the field surveys and data related to Chinese ethnic minorities, they further put forward some local theories, which was the first step towards the establishment of the Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology. Their efforts were mainly reflected in two aspects.

Firstly, various academic achievements resulting from the first ethnic survey and subsequent studies. China began the first major social and historical survey of ethnic minorities from 1956 in order to figure out the basic situation of China's ethnic minorities, and compiled a *Five Series of Books on Ethnic Issues*⁷ on the basis of such survey in 1979. Thereafter, Chinese scholars conducted a number of field surveys and studies to fill in the gaps, such as the surveys of Lhoba and Sherpa peoples,

⁷ The title *Five Series of Books on Ethnic Issues* compiled by the National Ethnic Affairs Commission is the general name of *China's Ethnic Minorities*, *Series of Brief Histories of China's Ethnic Minorities*, *Series of Chinese Minority Language Compendiums*, *Series of Overview of China's Ethnic Minority Autonomous Localities*, and *Series of Social and Historical Investigation Materials on China's Ethnic Minorities*.

etc. in Tibet by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences from 1976, and the comprehensive multidisciplinary expedition organized by the Southwestern Chinese Nationalities Society in 1982 (Meng 1989). These field surveys and the ethnographies published afterwards provided not only basic materials for Chinese studies but also local support for the construction of the Chinese School, on which basis many scholars sought out a clue from a chaotic situation and put forward a theoretical overview of Chinese anthropology and ethnology.

Secondly, the theories and methods of Chinese anthropology and ethnology proposed by Chinese scholars. Xiaotong Fei proposed the “Tibetan–Yi corridor” (Fei 1980), pointing out that it, together with the “Northwest corridor” and “Nanling corridor”, had a significant impact on the multi-ethnic relations in Chinese history. These ethnic corridors implied the importance of regional macro-integrated studies. Such anthropological and ethnological theories also include the typology of cultural zones (Su and Yin 1981) and the semilunar cultural transmission belt in the borderlands (Tong 1986). Gelek refuted the “foreign origin of Tibetan ethnic group” and proposed that Tibetan ethnic group originated from the fusion of three primitive ethnic systems (Gelek 1988). All these theories had, to varying degrees, restored China’s multi-ethnic development history, and highlighted the pluralistic direction of the Chinese nation since ancient times. Later, Xiaotong Fei proposed the “diversity in unity of the Chinese nation” (Fei 1989), which marked the formation of a new ethnological theory system which was later extended to the “multi-level theory of national identity self-awareness.” The concept of ethnic regions and the theory of the diversity in unity of the Chinese nation proposed outlined the relationship and pulse of the Chinese nation from a macro, comprehensive, and holistic perspective after taking into account diversity and unity, as well as the dynamic connections between the regions. In addition, Xiaotong Fei also proposed a “type comparison method,” whereby in the study on Chinese society, one should find a specific specimen and observe its cyclical flow, just like dissecting a sparrow to know its physiological structure, and use it as a starting point to group together those that were the same and similar, and distinguish them from those that were different and distant, so that a type comparison study could be conducted when different types or models emerged. Thus, through the study on a single sample point, we could have an understanding from one point to many points, from many points to a surface, and finally from the particular to the general and from parts to nearly the entirety (Fei and Zhang 1990). Meanwhile, with the rise of ethnoarchaeology, some scholars believed that this new discipline opened up a new path for the studies on primitive culture (Liang and Zhang 1983). However, some scholars believed that this was just a research method (Ding and Xu 1989).

In the decade following the reform and opening up, taking advantage of the “cultural boom” in the 1980s, Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists translated and introduced a large number of foreign classical theories,⁸ and the western theories and methods came to China again. However, under the influence of early traditions

⁸ Since this paper is limited in space and it is not the focus of this paper, the authors will not enumerate these translations here.

at this time, the Soviet School and Marxist ethnology still played the role of theoretical guidance to a large extent, but while borrowing foreign theories to carry out local restoration and reconstruction, China also reflected on its theoretical concepts and criticism, and conducted on-the-spot investigations on the development of ethnic minorities in China. At the same time, in order to respond to new issues that arise in social development, especially those requiring treatment and solution by anthropology and ethnology with a holistic view, the discipline and some hot issues in society combined with each other to form various sub-disciplines, such as urban anthropology, economic anthropology, and political anthropology. The emergence of various sub-disciplines in the 1980s demonstrated the urgent need for Chinese scholars to understand China's specific conditions and solve China's real issues. Although all the sub-disciplines were basically at the preliminary stage of development, their gradual emergence had played a certain role in promoting the recovery of all fields of Chinese anthropology and ethnology and catching up with the pace of development of world academic circle in a comprehensive manner. This stage was also the first step towards the construction of the Chinese School. Some anthropologists and ethnologists proposed localized theories in response to the historical situation of China's multi-ethnic development. The use of historical methods in studies was emphasized, and the "complementary" anthropological and ethnological studies completed, and theoretical explorations gradually began.

The orientation of Chinese issues and the verification of foreign theories (1990 to 2000)

In 1991, Soviet Union dissolved, and Soviet ethnology suffered a crisis. During this period, the influence of Soviet Union theories on Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies significantly weakened, while the influence of European and American anthropological and ethnological theories on China deepened. The increasing modernization process brought about a series of social issues, so Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies in this period focused more on the modern development of all ethnic groups to solve the complicated social issues and contradictions. Therefore, the Chinese issues orientation became more prominent and challenged Western anthropological and ethnological theories to different degrees.

Firstly, the wave of Western anthropological and ethnological theories affected Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies. Since the 1990s, a large number of European and American works related anthropological and ethnological studies were systematically translated into Chinese. The dynamic situation and results of anthropological and ethnological studies in Western academia brought Chinese studies closer to the international study frontier. Especially after the end of the "Cold War," there was an obvious trend that there were more and more ethnic issues within a multi-ethnic state which were more and more serious. In order to solve ethnic issues, countries around the world have developed different ethnic policy models and related theories since the twentieth century, which have eased ethnic conflicts to a certain extent. However, since the 1990s, it has been found that there are theoretical and practical issues and controversies in these methods and theories. As a result, the adoption of different methods with multidisciplinary participation from

different perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of ethnic issues and to propose new ideas and new responses to ethnic issues has become a common concern in the post-Cold War academic communities at home and abroad. Xihu Ruan discussed the characteristics and development trends of national relations in different regions of the Cold War world, which, as he believed, were manifested in multi-cultural coexistence and mutual influence (acculturation), and interspersed with regional national struggles (Ruan 1993). Shiyuan Hao compared the three waves of nationalism in the twentieth century (Hao 1996). Conflicts and identity between a nation and ethnic groups are an important issue for multi-ethnic states. Western ethnic groups and ethnic group identity emerged in the 1950s and became the theoretical object of discussions by Chinese scholars in the 1990s. Theoretical paradigms such as culture theory, origin theory, instrumental theory, scenario selection theory, and construction theory emerged in domestic and foreign academic circles (Liu 2019a, b). The Norwegian anthropologist F. Barth proposed “ethnic boundaries,” believing that part of the basis for ethnic identity was self-identification and ascription and that cultural similarities and differences were taken into account in the definition of ethnic boundaries (Barth 1969). American anthropologist S. Harrell reflected on the similarities and differences between “ethnic group” and “nation” through surveys of Yi communities, arguing that the former had different cultural differences, while the latter was a political group divided according to the definition of nation by Stalin; ethnic boundaries were defined more by the external relations of an ethnic group with other ethnic groups (Harrell 2000). Also at the end of the twentieth century, American scholar Benedict Anderson proposed a new concept to explain and explore the origin and spread of nation and nationalism—the “imagined communities” (Anderson 2016). These Western anthropological ethnic concepts and various doctrines of ethnic construction provided a new theoretical system for Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies, as well as a comparative reference system for the analysis of various ethnic groups and ethnic relations in China. Chinese scholars proposed localized testimonies to these theories. Anmin Li, Jifang Ma, et al. systematically introduced the theory of cultural acculturation put forward by American anthropologist M. J. Herskovits (Li 1988; Ma 1994), and Xihu Ruan applied it to overseas Chinese studies (Ruan 1990). The great and little traditions put forward by American anthropologist R. Redfield also gave scholars new enlightenment (Wang 1998). Meanwhile, a Chinese scholar put forward “cultural self-awareness,” arguing that one should carry out a cultural comparison with other nations on the basis of understanding the Chinese culture (Fei 1997); and incorporated Western theories into the study scope of Chinese anthropology and ethnology.

Secondly, the orientation of Chinese issues of anthropology and ethnology was outstanding in view of contemporary urbanization and modernization. Since the reform and opening up, cultural transition and modernization of ethnic areas have become an important project of Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies in order to keep up with the times. Kongshao Zhuang proposed various Chinese social structures in China based on the clues of two rural families in Fujian Province; and pointed out that with the transformation of ethnological study objects from traditional structures to modern structures, theories in anthropological and ethnological studies should also be transformed (Zhuang 2000). In 1986, the Chinese Association

of Ethnology held a discussion on the theme of “urgent projects facing ethnology” and confirmed that modernizing ethnic areas and solving new issues such as cultural transitions were the main research directions today (Qiu 1990). Several symposiums were held around this topic and concluded that while focusing on traditional projects, anthropological and ethnological studies should also strengthen theoretical and applied studies, create the Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology, and focus on solving practical issues. Therefore, another ethnic survey was launched in 1998 and provided a practical basis for solving ethnic issues and ethnic work under the new situation (Li 1998). Some scholars studied the modernization of ethnic minorities from an economic perspective (Guo 1991), and discussed how to achieve sustainable and modernized economic and social development in ethnic minority areas such as the northwest and the southwest; other scholars studied modernization from the perspective of culture and cultural transitions and discussed the issues facing the lifestyles of various ethnic groups in the changing times nowadays (Qu 1995); studying the contradictions between traditional culture and contemporary development was also an important theoretical point, which in turn led to the adaptation of traditional culture to Chinese social development (Gong and Qi 1994). In addition, this period also saw the launch of studies on China’s mountain ethnic groups, from various aspects including economics, ethnology, anthropology, geography, biology, and poverty alleviation of mountain ethnic groups (Li and Yang 1992). The ethnoarchaeology and ethnography analogy analysis method become a research hotspot. For example, Guanxuan Rong et al. systematically introduced the issues related to the theory and practice of ethnoarchaeology (Rong and Qiao 1992). Visual anthropology had also been gradually introduced to China. Scholars were reflecting on the theories of the discipline, in order to capture the changing world while rescuing the dying one, and thus deepen the theories related to visual anthropology (Liu 1996).

Thirdly, while focusing on the modernization of ethnic minorities, scholars also pointed out the importance of strengthening historical research and proposed the sub-discipline of historical anthropology and ethnology. According to Song Shuhua, historical ethnology was often associated with archaeology, and ethnic groups and their cultures in different periods of history were mainly studied based on historical ethnography (Song 1999).

Fourthly, anthropological and ethnological studies, which were dominated by ethnic minorities, had gradually been reversed, and great progress had been made in studies on Han people. In 1987, the First Symposium on Han people was held. It focused on the significance, scope, tasks, and other topics of the studies on Han people, which opened a new page in the studies of Han people in China (Xu 1987). Several meetings were held in respect of studies on Han people. Some scholars argued the formation of Han people from the perspective of anthropology and ethnology, and believed that as early as the Qin and Han dynasties, Han people had been formed as a stable community (Wang 1982). Other scholars believed that an ethnic group was the product of the rising period of capitalism, so Han people should be generated after 1840. There was also a view that Han people was gradually formed during the budding capitalism (Chen 1991). As for the origin and development of Han people, there were theories such as the diversity theory (Xu 1992) and the multi-ethnic fusion theory (Li and Zhang

1998). Jieshun Xu put forward the “snowball” theory, believing that the formation of Han people was a snowball-like product which would become bigger and bigger as it rolled (Xu 1999). The migration of Han people and its relationships with other ethnic groups were also hot study topics of scholars. Some scholars believed that Han people in Yunnan was not indigenous, but migrated to Yunnan from the inland in three periods (Cang 1997). The migration of Han people to Hainan Island had also began since the Western Han dynasty (Hu 1999). The migrations of Han people into Guizhou Province since the Qin and Han dynasties were divided into five major concentrated migrations (Gu 1994). Han people in Fujian Province also migrated from Central Plains and later migrated to Chinese Taiwan and overseas (Xin 1994). In addition, there were studies on the relationships between Han people and ethnic minorities (Qin 1998), customs (Xie 1994), “family structured” society (Ma 1993), and Han people such as Hakka Chinese and Southern Fujian Chinese (Song and Manduertu 2004). Through various aspects of studies on Han people, one can further see how the Chinese nation moved from diversity to unity, and the unity and cooperation among Chinese various ethnic groups.

Fifthly, the rise of the urban school of Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies. The “primitive society” was the earliest object of studies in early anthropology and ethnology, so rural societies and ethnic minorities became the main objects of Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies. But in the 1990s, a large number of migrant workers moved to cities, resulting in the gradual rise of China’s urbanization rate, and meanwhile, due to the influence of Western urban studies, the “urban school” of anthropological and ethnological studies rose. The first International Conference on Urban Anthropology was held at the end of 1989, which was an opportunity for Chinese urban anthropological studies (Tan 1990). Daming Zhou believed that acculturation, urban communities, multiculturalism, cross-culturalism, population movement, etc. can be the focus of urban studies in China to realize the applied research of urban anthropology in China (Zhou 1991). However, we also needed to introduce western concepts of urban studies, such as the scenario analysis method and the analytic network process proposed by British scholars, and analyze and study urban-rural relations and state-local relations in the context of China’s rapid urbanization (Ruan and Zhang 1994). In this period, urban anthropology was in its initial stage. Scholars turned their visions to social issues in China’s urbanization process and strengthened applied research while mostly borrowing relevant foreign theories to conduct research, thus embarking on the development path of combining internationalization and localization.

In this period, the pace of urbanization and modernization accelerated, and a series of social issues emerged. How to solve these issues became the main focus of Chinese anthropology and ethnology. During this period, the influence of Soviet ethnology on China weakened, and although Marxism still played the role of theoretical guidance, Western anthropological and ethnological theories became the main reference objects for Chinese research. However, as compared with the previous period, on the one hand, the introduction of Western anthropological and ethnological theories was more systematic, and the Marxist ethnology also had a considerable level of Chineseization; on the other hand, when applying and reflecting on Western theory,

more scholars turned to the studies of Chinese ethnic issues and social issues, and the orientation of Chinese issues became more prominent, and Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies gradually transformed from traditional studies to contemporary studies.

The establishment of the Chinese School and its increasing international influence (since 2000)

In the twenty-first century, Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies accelerated the pace of theoretical innovation and disciplinary development, and the status of the discipline was improved. Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies at this stage were emphasized at home and exerted increasing influence abroad.

Firstly, the reflections and cultural criticism advocated by postmodernism and anthropology and ethnology generated discussions internationally. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Western anthropological and ethnological communities began to criticize the methodologies and epistemologies of traditional ethnography, resulting in the formation of the thought of postmodernism. A large number of academic theories emerged during this period. For example, Edward W. Said's reflections on colonial rule argued that the so-called East was that imagined by the West (Said 1999). Clifford Geertz proposed "thick description," which means going deep beneath its surface to uncover a framework of symbolic meaning at the most down-to-earth (Geertz 2008). The experimental ethnography proposed by George E. Marcus proposes a change in the traditional way of writing ethnography by reflecting on the representation of foreign cultures and by using the conception of personhood—a convenient token for concerns with representing culturally variable experiences of reality, including the grounds of human capabilities and actions, ideas about the self, and the expression of emotions (Marcus and Fischer 1999). However, in terms of the current state of studies, the thought of postmodernism in Chinese anthropology and ethnology was mainly diffused in historical, anthropological, and sociological studies on the recovery of people's memories and daily life in traditional societies, and there was no clear-cut and obvious form yet, so some scholars said that the current thought of postmodernism did not have much influence on China (Wang 2003a, b). For example, Jun Jing discussed the process of shaping folk memories by "political events" and their dominant influence on folk memories (Jing 2013). At the same time, other scholars criticized the use of the thought of postmodernism in China. For example, Jijiao Zhang pointed out that it was not possible to blindly apply postmodernism in anthropology and ethnology, as it did not necessarily fit the Chinese reality, and that we must develop our own studies with Chinese characteristics (Zhang 2015).

Secondly, as far as domestic studies were concerned, some new issues arising in social development gradually gained attention. Among others, what was closely related to anthropology and ethnology was the "Comprehensive Survey of Economic and Social Development in Ethnic Minority Areas in China in the Early 21st Century Project Launched" organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Za and Sun 2013). It was also a contemporary summary study on various new phenomena emerging in the process of China's development. By the end of the project

in 2018, the final research results covered various aspects such as research monographs, special reports, and research papers (Wang 2015). During the ethnic surveys and other field surveys, visual anthropology was further developed. Scholars went to various places to do shooting. While a number of important results were obtained, some scholars also raised the issues on applied research in visual anthropology. For example, useful applied research attempts were made in cultural transitions, education, tourism, regional economic development, and other aspects.

Thirdly, studies on multi-ethnic groups in the world were strengthened, and two major sections were formed: “comprehensive basic theoretical studies” and “studies on country-specific ethnic issues and ethnic policies.” In the field of world anthropological and ethnological studies, it had been the purpose of its construction and development: “based on China and from a global vision: provide theoretical reference and case support for Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies” (Liu 2019a, b). Xihu Ruan outlined ten major characteristics of world ethnic relations in the second half of the twentieth century: the acceleration of the independence process of colonized peoples and nations; a boom of searching for roots arising from the victory of the American Civil Rights Movement; the increasingly strengthened role of national factors due to the rise of national awareness; intensified conflicts in ethnic relations due to the combination of religious and ethnic factors; the failure of the policy of national assimilation represented by the “melting pot” of the American nation and the theory of the “Soviet nation;” equal emphasis on multiculturalism and national awareness; gradual formation of ethnic groups by overseas Chinese immigrants in their respective countries; South Africa’s apartheid collapsed; the trend of self-governance by aboriginal people; and the precedence of “multi-ethnic state” over “nation-state” (Ruan 2004). In recent years, Chinese scholars have reflected on and redefined classical theories and concepts of nationalism, such as nation, in a sense denying the traditional homogeneity requirements for “minzu.” For example, at the 2005 Central Conference on Ethnic Affairs, a new definition of ethnic group (minzu) was made. That is, an ethnic group is composed of six factors: a stable community of people formed at a certain historical stage; common characteristics in historical origin, mode of production, language, culture, customs, psychological identity, and other aspects; religion plays an important role in its formation and development.⁹ Scholars also criticized and reflected on early Chinese ethnic policies and anthropological and ethnological studies. For example, Rong Ma believed that the crux of current ethnic issues in China was the inappropriate ethnic education, which emphasized the 56 ethnic groups rather than the unified “Chinese nation.” He proposed to “depoliticize” ethnic issues, that is, to “culturalize” them, emphasizing the ethnic identity of the unified “Chinese nation” rather than the political identity of all ethnic groups (Ma 2004a, b). In addition, the debate between nation and ethnic group has become a hot topic in academic circles. There are four main points of view: negativism, that is, the use of the term “ethnic group” is opposed, or ethnic group is deemed as nation; eclecticism, which recognizes the specific academic

⁹ Source: Writing Group of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission. 2005. 中央民族工作会议精神学习辅导读本 (The Study Guide for the Guiding Principles of the Central Conference on Ethnic Affairs). Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House, 10-11.

value of ethnic group, but opposes “pan-ethnicity” and “bringing the principle;” supportive theory is that the ethnic group is deemed to be more suitable for the actuality of studies on China’s ethnic issues; reflectionism, which argues that the concept of “ethnic group” is underpinned by the hegemony of Western discourse that pervades the world, a global dialogue that is doomed to inequality from the start (Wang 2005). Objectively speaking, the conceptual debate between “ethnic group” and “nation” has in essence affected the foundation of China’s framework of traditional ethnic theories, and has even involved re-reflections on China’s ethnic policies system and anthropological and ethnological studies discourse system. In terms of theoretical studies, Lun Zhu summarized the theories of inter-ethnic politics in multi-ethnic states and proposed a new concept of “ethno-national jointnomy,” which refers to a political structure, an operating mechanism, and tools jointly created by all ethnic groups and aimed at the realization of a republican goal, oriented to balanced development of rights and interests, and with positive interaction among ethnic groups as the core, under the premise of national unity (Zhu 2012). Other scholars proposed “the ideological flaws of the classical theory of nationalism,” arguing that the classical “nation-state” theory of “one people, one nation, one state” was actually built based on the political movement and mutual compromise of relatively strong people, with little or no consideration for the existence of relatively weak peoples, and was a multi-ethnic (ethnic group) state formed with the strong people as the cohesive core (Zhu 2000). In this regard, Lun Zhu pointed out that when such theory or ideal was put into practice, the civic loyalty required by a nation-state was often breached (Zhu 2002). Jijiao Zhang pointed out that ethnic theories should be viewed from a different perspective, a top-down perspective of “state-nation,” to address the relationship between the two in the allocation of rights and resources (Zhang 2015). On the basis of theoretical studies and studies on the current situation of country-specific nations, Chinese scholars published a series of research results, which provided foreign countries with experience and inspiration in China’s dealing with ethnic affairs and improving ethnic policies, and promoted the development of the disciplines of Chinese anthropology, ethnology and ethnopolitics.

Fourthly, theories of Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies were becoming increasingly innovative, and the Chinese School had gradually taken shape. In this period, theoretical innovations in Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies were mainly manifested in four aspects.

The first was reflections and localized studies on the Western anthropological and ethnic theories that were disseminated in the first two decades of the reform and opening up. For example, the concepts and theories put forward by Mr. Xiaotong Fei in his early days have been innovated and developed, and the Tibetan–Yi corridor is summarized as an “ethnic corridor,” which refers to a certain nation or ethnic group that has migrated or flowed outward along a certain natural environment (such as rivers or mountains) for a long time, thus preserving the numerous historical and cultural deposits of the nation or ethnic group in this corridor. The Hexi Corridor and the Tibetan–Yi corridor are also examples (Li 2005). “Differential Mode of Association” from Rural to Urban Version expands its scope of studies to include complex and dynamic urban network relations, and thus explores the changing social relations in Chinese urban society with greater flexibility and validity

in interpretation (Zhang 2004). Cultural self-awareness was upgraded to cultural self-confidence. Scholars explored how to reflect on, compare, and look forward to culture in a rational and scientific manner in the context of globalization, to view one's own culture correctly, to treat others' cultures correctly, to fully understand the unique advantages and development prospects of one's own culture, and to further strengthen cultural beliefs and cultural pursuits (Yun 2010). Jian Qiao further summarized Xiaotong Fei's related research as the "historical functional theory," which adds factors of ephemeral and vertical analysis, namely historical factors, to the traditional functionalism that emphasizes co-occurrence and flat analysis. This is a functional theory that has undergone a localized transformation with historical factors integrated, so that it has a new historical face (Qiao 2007).

The second was to propose theories and methods in various emerging sub-disciplines and sub-fields, such as research theories in visual anthropology (Wang 2008a, b); ethnoecological studies on today's environmental issues (Ren 2004); medical anthropological studies under a social cultural approach (Zhang 2009); "three-colored market theory" in religious anthropology: legal red market, illegal black market, gray market that is neither legal nor illegal or either legal or illegal (Yang 2006); the theory of religious culture types, which refers to a cultural complex with certain salient characteristics formed in the process of continuous integration between the social culture (including native belief practices) of an ethnic group that has accepted a foreign religious belief and such religious belief (Wang 2009); the concept of "new urban migrants" proposed by Daiming Zhou in his urban research focuses on migration as a way of social development and the reconstruction of an urban society caused by migration, and the final picture of urban social reconstruction is a society of urban-rural harmony (Zhou and Yang 2014). In terms of national psychology, Jing Li proposed a "field experiment method" (Li 2018). Ke Jiang et al. initially developed the theory of "experimental nation psychology" to construct a specialized and interdisciplinary psychological experiment system (Jiang and Zhang 2015). Lin Shi and Qingde Chen published respective monographs that systematically studied the basic theoretical system, disciplinary scope, and disciplinary orientation of economic anthropology (Shi 2002; Chen et al. 2012). Qian Tian proposed a new direction for regional studies in China—"watershed anthropology," which focuses on watersheds, a cluster of natural-social complexes with human-land-water interactions centered on rivers (Tian 2018). Xing Teng outlined the Western paradigm of educational anthropology, and proposed "multicultural integrated education" to replace the "integrative education model," advocating that education in one multi-ethnic state should assume not only the function of transmitting the cultural achievements of the main ethnic group in a nation, but also the function of transmitting the excellent traditional cultures of ethnic minorities of the nation (Teng 2009). Rong Ma summed up the theory of universal ethnic groups (Ma 2004a, b). Jijiao Zhang proposed a four-level analysis approach of enterprise anthropology to profoundly dissect corporate perspectives and methods from macro, meso, and micro levels (Zhang 2016a, b).

The third was problem-oriented studies in combination with national development. After the development of west areas was put forward, scholars studied how to develop ethnic education policies in the context of the development of west areas (Wang 2003a,

b). Other scholars proposed the development of a “characteristic economy” for the ethnic groups in the western region (Li and Zhang 2001); and proposed to boost the development of western ethnic minorities through the construction of ethnic ecological museums (Du 2001). Other scholars studied cross-border ethnic groups along the Belt and Road. Guoqing Ma put forward inter-regional social systems to interpret national policies such as the Belt and Road initiative (Ma 2016). Overseas ethnography had been developed gradually. Scholars believed that overseas ethnography contributed to a kind of knowledge construction in China (Gao 2010); especially in the globalized world, people, events, and resources flowing around the world should be examined from a fluid perspective (Zhou and Gong 2018), so as to build a theory of anthropological and ethnological studies with Chinese characteristics and strengthen in-depth academic dialogues with international academic communities. As influenced by the international communities, overseas ethnography is flourishing gradually, and overseas studies are increasingly expanding. In the early years, Chinese overseas ethnography accounted for a relatively small proportion of all anthropological and ethnological studies, and systematic research results, such as *America and Americans*, emerged until the period of the Republic of China (1912-1949) (Fei 1985). After the reform and opening up, due to the influence of anthropological and ethnological studies in developed countries, overseas studies in China gradually flourished and started to become one of the hot issues of research today. In practice, since Bingzhong Gao started to support and guide students to do ethnography overseas in 2002, many universities and colleges in China had also started to send scholars to conduct overseas ethnography practice around the world. The regions of overseas ethnography practice can be classified as follows: firstly, overseas ethnographical studies in neighboring countries such as Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, India, Malaysia, and Japan; secondly, studies on overseas ethnography of cross-border ethnic groups around China-Laos, China-Vietnam, and China-Myanmar borders; thirdly, studies on overseas ethnography of Western developed countries. However, apart from *Australian Ethnography*, *Canadian Ethnography*, etc. by Xihu Ruan, there were few practices in this area (Fang and Zhang 2021). In general, regions for China’s overseas ethnographical studies were relatively concentrated, and themes of studies were basically the interpretation and understanding of the localization of Chinese societies, and there was still a lot of room for expansion.

The fourth was theoretical explorations summarized by Chinese scholars. Shengmin Yang called for using multidisciplinary theories and approaches and strengthening issue orientation were important ways to achieve theoretical innovation and progress in anthropology and ethnology (Yang 2016). Mingming Wang put forward the theory of “Three Circles,” namely rural communities, ethnic minority communities, and overseas communities (Wang 2008a, b). Jian Qiao proposed “marginalized society” to describe the general underclass (Qiao 2002). Xudong Zhao analyzed the breakthrough of WeChat ethnography for the transformation of anthropological culture (Zhao 2017). Jijiao Zhang put forward the neoclassical “structural–functional theory” (Zhang and Zhang 2018) in the studies on urban transformation and cultural heritage, and also put forward the concepts of “umbrella society” (Zhang 2014) and “beehive society” (Zhang 2018) for observation of China’s social-economic transformation.

Fifthly, with the holding of a large number of international conferences, the international influence of Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies has been

strengthened, and overseas ethnographic studies have been launched. In July 2000, an Interim meeting of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences was held in Beijing. Xiaotong Fei put forward the idea of “harmony in diversity” in his keynote speech, which was widely recognized by scholars (Wang 2000). In July 2009, the 16th World Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences was held in Kunming (Zhang 2016a, b). At the closing ceremony, the *Kunming Declaration* was drafted by the China Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (CASES) according to the academic consensus reached during the summit, and approved smoothly, which marked a consensus on some hot issues reached by scholars at home and abroad.

The first 20 years of the twenty-first century is a period in which the pursuit of theoretical exploration in Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies and construction of the Chinese School was increasingly intensified. In the third major ethnic minority survey, two tendencies of problem orientation and theoretical orientation stood out, and Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies were more closely integrated with a series of national policies and practical development, showing the need to serve the people and social development. With the improvement of internationalization, the study of Chinese anthropology and ethnology, which integrates Marxist ethnology, Soviet ethnology, and Western anthropological and ethnological theories, has also made great strides in the international arena. Chinese anthropology and ethnography are also entering the world academic arena by participating in domestic and international conferences and holding international symposia, drawing relevant concepts from Chinese empirical research and enriching the theories of Chinese and world academic research.

Conclusion: the road to construct the Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology

In the process of economic and social restructuring, scholars also explored the Sini-cization of theories of Western studies and the innovation in Chinese theories. They put forward new Chinese concepts and theories in respect of different social issues that we were faced with in different times (Zhou 2019). As shown in Fig. 2, before the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chinese anthropological and ethnological studies mainly relied on the Western school and applied Western anthropological and ethnological theories to Chinese studies. In the 30 years after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chinese anthropology and ethnology research pursued Soviet ethnology, guided by the Marxist ethnology, and mainly studied social forms and stages of social development, economic and cultural types, ethnic concepts and definitions, etc., and has successively carried out ethnic identification and ethnic minority social and historical investigations, practicing the theoretical assumption of “direct transition”. In the first decade since the reform and opening up in 1978, Chinese anthropology and ethnology mainly learnt from Soviet Union, which mainly focused on the classification of marriage and family history, social forms, history of marriage and family, etc. Meanwhile, Chinese anthropology and ethnology also put forward theoretical innovations such as the pattern of

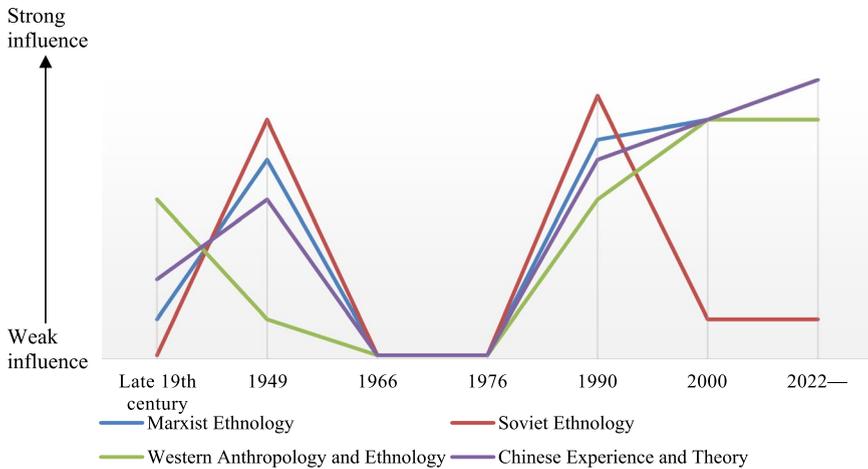


Fig. 2 Diagram of the forces influencing anthropological and ethnological research in China in different periods

diversity in unity of the Chinese nation and the Tibetan–Yi corridor. In the second decade, as mainly influenced by the West, concepts such as ethnic groups and acculturation became hot topics for scholars to discuss, and cultural transitions and modernization in ethnic areas were new theoretical exploration. The first two decades of the twenty-first century witnessed critical reflections on Western postmodernism and other theoretical trends, deepening of Chinese empirical studies and theoretical explorations, and the emergence of various new sub-disciplines and methodologies. Chinese anthropology and ethnology gradually formed Chinese characteristics in academic research, and the Chinese School of anthropological and ethnological studies was taking shape.

Shengmin Yang pointed out that the Chinese anthropology and ethnology had initially formed Chinese characteristics, that is, Chinese scholars conducted comprehensive multidisciplinary studies by combining theories with practice; however, the real Chinese School of anthropological and ethnological studies still needed to sum up new theories and methods in practice and in social issue solution (Yang 2012). Although the Chinese School of anthropological and ethnological studies is not yet fully mature, it begins to emerge; especially in the current criticism of Western thought of postmodernism, when Chinese anthropology and ethnology researchers can see the limitations of Western anthropology and ethnology, it is the right time for us to establish the Chinese School upon reflections on foreign theories.

Due to the influence of Western anthropological and ethnological studies, Chinese own experience and theory are also impacting traditional Chinese anthropology and ethnology. The Chinese School of anthropology and ethnology has gradually taken shape with localized characteristics. Firstly, because of the different national conditions, Chinese anthropology and ethnology, unlike Western anthropology, mainly focuses on Chinese people. Secondly, the importance of Marxist theory and the tradition of Soviet studies is very prominent. Thirdly, history

and anthropology and ethnology are combined. From the Southern and Northern schools in the early anthropological and ethnological studies to several stages of development after the reform and opening up, it has always been an important feature to use historiography and historical literature for anthropological and ethnological studies. Fourthly, traditional theories of international anthropology and ethnology communities are impacted, and theories of western anthropological and ethnological studies are reflected on. Anthropology and ethnology have been introduced into China for just more than a century, so there is a gap with the West in theoretical explorations and other aspects. However, since the reform and opening up, with the deepening and expansion of Chinese anthropology and ethnology, the Chinese anthropology and ethnology community has also put forward innovative theories in various aspects, which have impacted the theories of Western anthropology and ethnology. Fifthly, the urban school of anthropological and ethnological studies and the rural school keep pace with each other. Sub-disciplines have been established successively. The “primitive society” of anthropological and ethnological studies is gradually expanding to “urban society,” and the research fields are further expanded. With the development of disciplines, more and more sub-disciplines of anthropological and ethnological studies are emerging. Interdisciplinary research has become an important feature of Chinese anthropological and ethnological research. Moreover, different disciplinary research theories have been put forward.

Acknowledgements Not applicable.

Authors' contributions Dr. Yue Wu conducts the research and writing. Dr. Jijiao Zhang is a major contributor in writing and research plan. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials Not applicable.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate Not applicable.

Consent for publication Not applicable.

Competing interests We have no competing interests.

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