Rethinking of Some Issues Regarding Ethnic Tourism under Modern Linguistic Environment

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Abstract: The issue of ethnic tourism presently has officially entered the vision as well as the linguistic environment of the authoritative tourism research institutes in China. Regardless of plentiful highlighted unsatisfactory issues in ethnic tourism development, overall however appropriately developed and effectively controlled ethnic tourism will be beneficial to the protection of traditional cultures. The paper believes ethnic tourism should be recognized and it is neither considerate nor objective to totally repudiate ethnic tourism positive effects in ethnic regions simply because of some issues occurred. This paper proposes author's own views countering some important issues in ethnic tourism studies.
Key words: ethnic tourism; authenticity; positive effect

INTRODUCTION

The "Commercialization" introduced by tourism has caused ethnic cultural heritage "Tradition decay", which generates widespread incitement in general public. The radical trend of ethnic tourism development and the growing ethnic culture protection enthusiasm cause increasingly evident conflicts between tourism development and cultural protection, and the discussion and disputes regarding ethnic culture protection and tourism development have thereby caught people's more and more attention.

In view of China's tourism development practice, there are indeed plenty of highlighted issues, for instance there is severe tendency to cater tourism consumers in ethnic tourism regions, "Performance-dominating" demonstrating method has been taken in tourism development, and some ethnic cultures have been demonstrated through vulgar or superficial approaches, causing the crisis of ethnic culture commercialization. Western scholars once described this phenomenon as "Culture without depth" and "Disney" and McDonald's tourisms, believed if things go like these, it could lead to the gradual

exhaustion of cultural symbols themselves in terms of aesthetics and spiritual needs as well, and community residents also lose cultural creation motivations, and the ultimate result will cause ethnic culture to be assimilated, or disappear. Most western anthropologists once believed that tourists' entering to ethnic communities mean a soft of cultural colonization, and tourism development totally exerts negative effects on ethnic community cultures. With constant in-depth study however the attitude of mainstream western anthropologists has changed to believing "Tourism is a kind of acculturation and development pattern". Yet sociologists and economists conclude from their studies "Positive perspective in general".[3] This is the process to gradually recognize that tourism exerts the effects of "Associated" instead of "Causal" relation to society and cultures, and it meanwhile makes more people treat the effects of tourism on society and cultures from "Value neutrality" point of view, so as to objectively analyze these effects and implement related culture protection strategy. The author believes that ethnic tourism development deserves to be recognized, and it is neither considerate nor objective to totally repudiate ethnic tourism's positive effects in ethnic regions simply because of some issues occurred. Indeed, we need a proactive forward-looking vision and have certain judgement on passive impacts from destinations, and proactively protect and develop. It however needs to avoid exaggerating the passive impacts of tourism on ethnic cultures. Overall, appropriately developed and effectively controlled ethnic tourism will be beneficial to the protection of traditional cultures. I talk about some of my own points of view countering some key issues in ethnic tourism study in the following.

1. THE ISSUE OF ETHNIC TOURISM IN MODERN LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT CAN NOT BE IGNORED

We by no means ignore the issue of ethnic tourism in modern linguistic environment while discussing ethnic cultural tourism development. Under the strong shock of global information age, even if there are no tourists to enter certain ethnic regions, the modernization process there as well can not be avoided. Modernization is the inevitable existing pattern of traditional cultures, and thereby there is no issue of taking or rejecting modernization at all. It is both impossible and unnecessary to protect ethnic traditional cultures by means of "totally retaining their original tastes and flavors". It is well known that tourism occurs in the "Contact areas" between local society and modern society. In social intersection the all cultures from various places experience a continuous recreation process through a spread and blending process. The one-sided viewpoint that considers tourism as the "Executioner" causing ethnic cultures from changes to death is not objective. There are plenty of reasons generating ethnic culture variations, and some of ethnic cultures even had varied before tourism appeared and tourism is not supposed to be the "Scapegoat". What we concern is whether protect ethnic cultures as rare tourism resources or let ethnic cultures lose their original significance to self-fit in so as to achieve modernization?

Author believes that it is both incorrect and unachievable to regard a local traditional culture as a certain pure and static matter and as well isolate it from current world system. Current China's tourism industry development trend is entering a new round of strong growing period, and stepping to the largest domestic tourism market worldwide. We currently propose the goal to let GDP per capita in 2020 be four times as much as that in 2000. What does this mean to tourism development? This will be the unprecedented opportunity of tourism development. GDP per capita in China reached $856 in 2000, and predictively reaches $3500 in 2020. Based on the practice from advanced tourism countries, when GDP per capita of a country reaches the amount between $3000 and $3500, the country will enter the explosive tourism-spending growth period. Under such modern linguistic environment, the rapid public tourism growth will inevitably influence the tourism development in ethnic regions, and the fact can not be avoided.

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[3] YANG Zhenzhi. (2006). Front State, Curtain, and Back Stage – The Exploration on the New Mode of Ethnic Cultures Protection and Tourism Development. *Ethno-National Studies, (2),* 39－46

2. THE ISSUE OF RESEARCHERS' STANDPOINTS

The first voice is from tourism sector: Promote ideas of "win-win"[4] and "Get both at the same time"[5]and advocate "Sound interactive development"[6] between cultural heritage protection and cultural tourism utilization. And the second one is from cultural circle: Some heritage damage phenomena caused by tourism are shocking, and the angry voice from heritage protection aspect is: "Tourism is the number one killer of culture"[7]. The first voice is gentle and fair and seeks the wayout for tourism to get out of the trouble in its development, and it is primarily based on tourism. The second one comes with deep hatred and resentment, expressing the worry about the damages and destruction suffered by cultural heritage, and it is mainly from cultural heritage point of view. These two types of voices reflect the difference from different focusing points, and refract there is "opposition" between heritage protection and tourism development in positioning sense. For this issue, as early as 1980s, Yu Guangyuan, while discussing tourism belongs to economy or culture in academic circles, once said: Tourism is both a culture cause with strong economic characteristics and an economic cause with strong cultural characteristics. Afterwards, Sun Shangqing, when organizing the study on China tourism economy development strategy, proposed: tourism belongs to economic-cultural industry when growing into a certain stage and will be cultural-economic industry when developing into the mature stage.

In view of study standpoint, author's opinions are: to a large extent, ethnic culture protection rather refracts scholars' values instead of from the ethnic traditional culture itself, and it examines the issue of ethnic entity from their own visions. As the outsiders of modern society, scholars, based on their lifestyle comparison and the love on the cultures from other lands and nationalities insist that traditional heritage can not be changed, and this point sometimes even comes from their own needs rather what community residents want. Ethnic culture does not just meet the needs of others and outsiders, it first is supposed to belong to the local community of its own. Scholars' studies and criticisms need to take the self-section of local nationality as the top priority and respect these insiders' wishes, and thereby can not put their own words into the insiders' mouths, and as well make the selections of developing or non-developing as well as changing or non-changing on insiders' behalf. The scholars sometimes play a judge role, make conclusion on the life of study object from their own points of view, and replace the insiders to select. As a matter of fact community residents however have the right to select their own lifestyles and cultures. As for various nationalities, the more we let them develop and participate, the more they will select the traditions belong to their own. Otherwise, due to propaganda and separation there will be more loss and fragmentation in traditions, nationalities even get more helpless and confused on their own positions and prospects.

3. THE ISSUE OF HOW TO DEFINE TOURISM AUTHENTICITY

As long as talking about the effects of modernization power on ethnic traditional cultures, it is inevitably to talk about the issue of culture authenticity. Some scholars believe that ethnic traditions and ethnic cultures

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[4] WEI Xiaoan, Dou Qun, and Peng Decheng. (2002). Can Tourism and Heritage Protection Reach "Win-Win"? *China Tourism News,* 2002, 12, 11; 2002, 12, 18.
Yuan Yisan and Xiao Jianli. (2003). Seek for the "Win-Win" Road in Heritage Protection and Tourism Development. *Urban Planning, (6).*
[5] ZHANG Duo and WANG Wei. World Heritage: Can Protection and Tourism Development Reach "Win-Win".
Xinhuanet Beijing Channel Planning /news3.xinhuanet.com/focus/2004-07/04/cont … 23K 2004-7-4
[6] SONG Weihong. The Sound Interactive Development between Cultural Heritage Protection and Cultural Tourism Utilization. Museum Research, 2006 (3).
[7] "Tourism Is the Number Killer of Cultures". Beijing People's Art Center
www.bjqyg.com/09new_web/xgxw_Detail.asp?n ... 68K 2007-6-6 - . Shan Sanya. National and Folk Cultures Are
Human Spiritual Vegetation . Guangming Daily 2004, 4, 11 .

showed in cultural demo points are not authentic, and they are at most the ″Performance stage authenticity″ after decorating and processing. All people normally believe that tourists seek for culture authenticity and folklore highlights folk-custom inheritance and patterns and both of them hope to demonstrate or reveal the current primary living modes of local residents, instead of the current state showed for tourists and others only. In other word, this opinion regarding authenticity is: only historical existence is authentic folk-custom and only the culture consistent with social mode is authentic. How to treat the authenticity issue in ethnic tourism after all? The author believes that what the most important in the discussion of tourism authenticity is the authentic level of tourists′ experience instead of sightseeing spots and true situations in sightseeing areas. Although there is an existing issue regarding ″Performance stage authenticity″, tourists are aware to a large extent. We can not demand tourists to conduct complete and in-depth understanding on what thy visit like the field investigations from anthropologists. Some critics may say tourists′ understanding on hosts′ society has been misled by ″Middleman″, causing the understanding on ″Partial authenticity″ actually. Yet partial authenticity is not social authenticity and something it is the cutoff of social authenticity. All of these however can not impede the authentic feelings of tourists in tourism activities, yet these feelings can not be replaced by any rational analysis.

Foreign scholars Edward • Bond believes that there is no significant difference between original "Tradition" and reproduced "Tradition", and any intention to keep authenticity is meaningless. Since first the factors such as tourists' tourism motivations, psychology, value orientations, aesthetic ideas, and education levels as well as age and gander are vastly different. For experts and scholars, culture can only be authentic by fully retaining its original characteristics. For most of regular tourists however cultural authenticity depends on their experience as well as the tourism feelings they hope to get. Most of tourists will not seek deeper authenticity. And what the most tourists seek is a type of relative authenticity, or the difference level of the culture they experience from tourism and their original living environment. Tourism is supposed to bring tourists a kind of authentic experience rather authentic noumenon. Second, culture is dynamically changing, and authenticity is therefore relative to time. Ethnic traditional cultures do not freeze all the time and they are rather a dynamic, flowing, and open system. They used to be brand new when created in the history, and therefore must change with history growth. Since traditional cultures do not mean advanced cultures and excellent cultures, and plenty of them are the product of old age and they own have certain defects and can not fit in modernization growth. Something old and backward is unnecessarily authentic yet something modern and advanced is unnecessarily untrue. The view to stress on ethnic culture purity one-side is not consistent with cultural development law.

Plentiful experienced tourists laugh at such performance stage authenticity, sometimes however this type of creation of recreation opportunities may turn into the foundation of culture revitalization, and will own their spontaneous authenticity over the time and as well can be reused by their creators. As for tourism authenticity, plenty of scholars once proposed their own unique opinions such as the front stage and back stage theory form US social anthropologist MacCannell, the new mode of "Front stage, curtain, and back stage" for ethnic cultural protection and tourism development proposed by Chinese tourism planning expert Yang Zhenzhi, and the view of "Cultural Firewall" from Tourism Planning Center of Peking University. Yet scholar Van·Den·Berg discovered that local residents who turn into the main body of tourism during tourism contacts might clearly find that their cultural heritage parts favored by tourists not only can be demonstrated in various non-authentic modes in front stage to meet tourisms' needs, but also can be regrouped into the back stage and become the symbol of clear, authentic ethnic identity to perform culture reproduction, culture restructuring, culture renaissance, and culture offset, which are closely associated. Or tourism promotes and introduces various cultural production activities, yet the generation of these cultures then further drives tourism development and promotes tourism development.

4. THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF COMMUNITY TOURISM-PARTICIPATION TO IMPROVE ETHNIC CULTURE IDENTITY RECOGNITION

In the process of community participation in ethnic tourism, it needs to respect community-self selection, and believe that the communities are able to protect their own cultures and community tradition own strong

vitality. People heavily depend on tradition and their trust on tradition is beyond doubt. Only imposing a new culture, a religion, or change in economic life to a certain group with a strong force, can it successfully make radical changes in its culture; however tourism does not belong to this category of forced changes, it rather is community self-selection. Community tourism participation expands traditional ethnic culture living space. With the improved ethnic culture-identity recognition mentality, we can not obliterate its positive effects on ethnic culture protection.

Bass stressed that "Ethnic group" identity is gained from "Self-recognition" or "Other-recognition" in social interaction, instead of being created through analyzers' creation on their own. Community participation brings community residents more opportunities to contact "Others", and they acknowledge the values of their own culture through comparing with others, generate a strong sense of ethnic cultural identity, intensify the self ethnic identity consciousness, and improve mutual affinity and cohesion. In the process of tourism development, it is fairly important to pay attention to improving the values of host ethnic groups' self identity; and it as well needs to understand why tourists come here one after another and take this part as an internal motivation to self inherit traditional cultures. Only in this way, can it insert ethnic traditional culture protection into the market economy development link, cultivate self-preservation and self-recreation functions of ethnic traditional cultures, make ordinary people gain constant motivation of inheriting and protecting ethnic cultures, strengthen the self-confidence on their own ethnic cultures, and improve their capabilities of self learning and passing on, protecting, and developing ethnic cultures.

Ethnic tourism is a space to re-interpret local and ethnic cultures, and it creates cross-culture communication filed, in which various forces get involved and complicated phenomena such as mutual consultations and action, frequent interaction, seeing and being seen, appreciating and being appreciated, and decorating and being decorated thereby occur. Foreign scholars have noticed: tourism encourages ethnic groups to arouse their internal memories, and it even derives various new meanings from existing relations. Just as Mac Cannell proposed that tourism makes ethnic characteristics be restored and preserved and as well re-creates their details. In other word, in addition to showing present customs, tourism can as well restore already-faded or to be faded customs, and create new customs.

Indeed, plenty of investigation data has showed that the sense of culture identity of residents in ethnic tourism regions has gradually improved under tourists' attentions. In terms of the meaning of identity, here refers to the statements and actions and psychological performance of some people have certain associations with a place and thereby consciously classify them into the place. The Dragon Ridge Terrace scenic spot in Guangxi province for instance, aiming at attracting tourists and promoting itself, a movement to intensify local culture recreation has been broadly promoted in tourism demos. Since a number of forgotten "Traditions" can be activated by coincidental factors, and tourism development can be used as the "Coincidental factors" to make many forgotten and disappeared traditional customs revive in tourism development process. Plenty of disappeared folk dances re-spread in folk circles. Although their direct purposes are to participate tourism and make money; they objectively play the role to restore and maintain traditions.

Ethnic groups in tourism development will not deliberately ask the authenticity of new folk customs, they rather focus more on the values of ethnic cultures. Driven by interests they start consciously taking new customs. They therefore will accept the sense of ethnic belonging and as well sense of ethnic identity introduced by the new customs, and ethnic identity gets even clearer. The tourism development of ethnic cultures promotes them to proactively review and study their own cultures and as well correct and rebuild cultural value orientation, this certainly might need a fitting-in process. Community residents in the contact with tourists have clear acknowledgement on their own culture, and community culture changes from "Natural existing" state into "Conscious" state. They then start using tourists' vision to treat the scenes used to be bland for them, and gradually realize the importance to retain landscape for community future development. People start realizing the importance of cultural protection and environmental protection, although this protection awareness is not strong enough and also the understanding on protection meanings is in low-level, the protection awareness starts growing after all. Residents have low culture protection consciousness in the places with no tourism development, architectural forms for instance. What needs to point out is when tourism brings interests to culture main body they can then realize the values of their own culture.

5. BEFORE EVERYTHING: STRENGTHEN THE MOVE OF LEGISLATION TO PROTECT

Ethnic cultural protection and development is a hard issue worldwide. If it intends to protect ethnic cultures for the tourism development and goals based on cultural and economic background, author believes that legislation to protect is vitally important, particularly the property legislation on ethnic cultural tourism resources. The property of ethnic regional tourism resources in China has not been clarified all the time, disadvantaged groups of villages and villagers often fail to gain the property interest protection they deserve in the process of tourism development and resource transfer, and therefore they quickly lose inner motivations on resource protections. Thereby, property clarification is the premise to ensure residents′ participation and benefits, and benefit stimulus can also arouse villagers′ sense of responsibility for tourism resource protection. In this aspect, we can refer some overseas successful cases such as legalization process of the protections on Indians′ culture in America, which provides valuable experience and inspiration for us to formulate relevant laws and impose legalized planning and management by integrating China's national conditions. We meanwhile need to summarize the lessons in handling the relation between ethnic cultural protection and tourism development in China in order to seek out a new method.

CONCLUSIONS

Globalization sweeping and the local ethnic traditional culture renaissance are two co-existing and as well interactive cultural trends in current China, which are collectively reflected in ethnic tourism. Plentiful changes in ethnic regions are mostly not caused by tourism industry, and they are the common response under the greater background of modernization and globalization instead. Culture creation and reproduction is a phenomenon existing everywhere. Cultural changes are thereby inevitable and inevitable happening regardless of active changes or passive changes. Any ethnic culture meanwhile owns a strong compatibility, and tradition unnecessarily suffers a crushing defeat in the competing game between modernization and tradition. International attentions stand for the power of globalization; yet local identity recognitions mean that cultural main body rethinks self cultures, under the shock from strong external power, to inspire the enthusiasms of culture protections and contend against globalization. Scholars′ truly valuable contributions perhaps lie in guiding tourism communities to perform conscious cultural changes, directing ethnic regional residents to conduct in-depth participation, and improving their emotional culture and resource protection consciousness into rational awareness so as to seek out an method to cause the least ethnic culture and ecology damage through education and guidance.

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