



Shi Zhengyi on Basic Theoretical Issues of Ethnologic Economics

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to introduce Professor Shi Zhengyi's early theoretical views and contributions to ethnologic economics to the international academic community. China's ethnic minorities live in the western regions, and their economic and social development for a long time has been far behind that of the eastern and central areas where the Han majority live. Professor Shi Zhengyi proposed in March 1979 that China needed to establish and develop ethnologic economics. It is a particular branch of economics in China with solid Chinese characteristics. Ethnologic economics, starting from the status and role of ethnic factors in economic activities, studies the economic changes and economic relations of ethnic groups or ethnic regions. The ethnologic economy has the characteristics of duality and diversity, which is the starting point of the study of national economics. Ethnologic economics has adapted to the national conditions of China's multi-ethnic country and the needs of China's modernization drive. It has the dual disciplinary attribution of Ethnology and economics. It is hoped that the international academic community will be interested in ethnologic economics. It is also hoped that they can apply the research results of Chinese ethnologic economists to promote societies in other countries similar to China's ethnic minority areas' economic development.

Keywords : Ethnologic Economics, Ethnic Minorities, Ethnic Minority Areas, Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

China is a large united, multi-ethnic country with 55 ethnic minorities in addition to the Han majority. Due to historical and natural reasons, most of China's ethnic minorities live in the western regions. Their economic and social development for a long time has been far behind that of the eastern and central regions where the Han majority people live (Tian, 2021). Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, significant achievements have been made in the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas in China under the strong support of the central government. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go compared with the developed areas in the east (Li, 2004). Professor Shi Zhengyi proposed at the National Economic Science Eight-year Planning Conference in Beijing in March 1979 that China needed to establish and develop ethnologic economics because of China's actual national conditions and the current economic and social development situation in minority areas (Dong, 2006).

Ethnologic economics is a particular branch of economics in China, so it has strong Chinese characteristics. At the end of the 1970s and earlier 1980s, in Chinese academic circles,

especially in the intellectual process of ethnic economics, scholars believed that the economics of ethnic minorities is an essential part of Chinese economics. They thought that when studying ethnologic economics, it is necessary to take Chinese economics as the basis and premise. They further believed doing so would allow them to reveal the originality of the economy of ethnic minorities in an in-depth and systematic way. They argued that only in this way can China promote the economic development of ethnic minorities and China's economy (Liu, 2009). Therefore, Professor Shi Zhengyi and his colleagues conducted a series of theoretical studies on the creation and development of ethnologic economics and published some high-level academic articles (Ye, 2004).

This paper aims to introduce Professor Shi Zhengyi's early theoretical views and contributions to ethnic economics to the international academic circle. It should be pointed out that all the contents of this paper are from The Collection of Shi Zhengyi, published by Professor Shi Zhengyi in 2001. The author only systematically sorted out, translated and edited Professor Shi's theoretical exposition. Therefore, all the academic contributions of this paper are attributed to Professor Shi Zhengyi. Of course, the author must be responsible for the mistakes in the article. Professor Shi Zhengyi stresses that ethnologic economics is a new discipline. It occupies a particular position in ethnology and has become the main content of ethnic research. At the same time, it also occupies a prominent role in economics. As such, it has become a particular field in economic analysis. Therefore, studying ethnologic economics in China is critical (Shi, 2001:495).

THE RESEARCH OBJECT OF ETHNOLOGIC ECONOMICS

Ethnologic economics has a relatively short history. As an independent discipline initially established in earlier 1980s, it is still in its infancy. This fact mainly reflects how the Chinese academic circle's understanding of the research object of ethnologic economics has developed. Regarding its research object, researchers have proposed several different explanations or definitions:

1. Some scholars believe that, in simple terms, the research object of ethnologic economics is the economic issues of ethnic groups. These scholars believe that, broadly, ethnologic economics studies the economic problems of a specific ethnic group or some ethnic groups. It examines economic issues from the perspective of ethnology, or, in other words, it studies ethnic issues from the economic outlook. Its research object covers ethnological economic problems in both foreign countries and China. In a narrow sense, the research object of ethnologic economics is the economic issues of ethnic minorities in China. It includes multiple aspects. The economic issues of an ethnic group can be its unique research object, and so can the economic issues of an ethnic area where several ethnic minorities live. In addition, the economic issues of all ethnic minorities can also be its comprehensive research object (Shi, 1980).
2. Some researchers argue that ethnologic economics is a discipline that studies ethnologic economic issues. It is integrated with ethnology and economics and uses these two disciplines' basic principles and techniques. The ethnologic economy looks at the society and economy of ethnic minorities. It is to discover the particular laws of the ethnologic economy (Dong, 1983).
3. Some people hold that the determination of the research object and tasks of China's economics of ethnic minorities should be based on China's established socialist system

and its existing production relations. It should study the elimination of de facto inequalities among ethnic groups. Its task should be to reveal the laws of this issue. In this way, its research object and tasks have actual scientific content. There is a clear line between this discipline and political economics. Simultaneously, it is not unreasonably confused with ethnology. It has an organic connection to policy issues, thus avoiding the situation of all-encompassing policy research (Shi, 1983).

4. Some researchers believe the ethnic minority economy is a social science. In the field of social phenomena, it examines the socio-economic phenomenon of the ethnologic economy and its contradictions. It studies the contradictions of China's ethnologic economy and its characteristics and laws in social and economic development. Therefore, it does not explore the natural aspects of the ethnologic economy but the social aspects. In other words, it studies the ethnologic economy's social production modes (mainly production relations) and reveals its characteristics, structures and laws (Huang, 1983).
5. Some scholars believe that the economy of ethnic minorities studies the living conditions of ethnic minorities and the characteristics of the economic life of ethnic minorities. It examines the living habits of ethnic minorities and the influence of cultural traditions and cultural levels on their economic life (including production, distribution, exchange and consumption). The economy of ethnic minorities is inseparable from the economy of ethnic minority areas. However, they are different concepts. The economy of ethnic minorities studies economic issues from the perspective of ethnology rather than from the perspective of regions. Since they are other concepts, we should also examine the relationship between the economy of ethnic minorities and the economy of ethnic minority areas (Yu, 1983).

These five definitions are the initial views put forward by the first group of Chinese scholars engaged in the research of ethnologic economics in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They reflect the researchers' understanding of the research object of ethnologic economics at that time. The above views have some things in common. They all emphasize the importance of studying the ethnologic economy in China, and they all advocate the creation of a new discipline. However, there are also significant differences. There are several different proposals regarding the name of the domain. Some suggest it be named ethnologic economics. Others suggest it be called China's economics of ethnic minorities, the economy of ethnic minorities, or the economy of ethnic minority areas.

There are also different views on the scope of the study. Scholars who advocate naming this ethnologic discipline economics maintain that it should study the economic issues of ethnic groups and ethnic minority areas in China and those of other countries. While the discipline is named China's economics of ethnic minorities, the economy of ethnic minorities and the economy of ethnic minority areas, the research scope is only on the economic issues of China's ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas. The former can be called ethnologic economics in a broad sense, and the latter can be called ethnologic economics in a narrow sense.

In addition, there are significant differences between the above views regarding the research object. Some ideas only emphasize the relations of production. Unlike political economics, only the social production relations of the ethnic minorities are studied in this discipline, while the production relations of the Han nationality are not included. Another view is that

the research object cannot be limited to production relations. This view holds that all aspects of the ethnologic economy should be studied. The object's definition should be the ethnologic economy or the economic issue of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas. This definition covers all aspects of the production relations and all aspects of the productive forces in the ethnologic economy.

It also covers various marginal issues directly related to the ethnologic economy. These issues include ecological environment, resource development, population, talent cultivation, technological economy, frontier economy, national trade economy, etc. The former view can be referred to as the narrow view, while the latter can be referred to as the broad view. With the development of the research on the ethnologic economy, new research achievements have been continuously made. Many of these works deal with the issue of the research object of this discipline. Here are some examples:

(1) In September 1985, the Minzu University of China Press published *Introduction to China's Ethnic Minority Economy*. It is China's first monograph on issues of the ethnologic economy. (2) In November 1987, the Ethnic Publishing House published *Ethnologic economics and the Four Modernizations in Ethnic Minority Areas*. (3) In July 1989, Ningxia People's Publishing House published *Introduction to China's Ethnic Minority Economy*. (4) In January 1990, Fudan University Press published *Development Economics of Ethnic Groups*. (5) In April 1990, Guangxi Nationality Publishing House published *Ethnologic economics*. (6) In December 1990, the Minzu University of China Press published *New Theories on China's Ethnic Minority Economy*. (7) In October 1991, Guizhou Ethnic Publishing House published *Development Economics of Ethnic Groups in Western China*. (8) In June 1993, Ethnic Publishing House published *Introduction to Ethnologic economics*. (9) In December 1993, China Economic Publishing House published *Contemporary Chinese Economic Dictionary - Volume of Ethnic Minority Economy*. (10) In September 1994, Yunnan People's Publishing House published *Ethnologic economics*.

In terms of nature and scope, in the above ten books, the research objects and definitions of ethnologic economics are still within the scope of the five views mentioned above. The titles of these books are different, including Ethnologic economics, Development Economics of Ethnic Groups, Introduction to Ethnic Minority Economics, etc. The differences are mainly in terms of expression, interpretation, focus and guiding ideology, rather than in the definition and scope of the research object. However, their research does not go beyond the economic issues of China's ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas within the scope of ethnologic economics in the narrow sense mentioned above. It reflects the need for the economic development of China's ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas at the current stage. At the same time, it also reflects a historical fact that China's ethnologic economics is still in the creation process (Shi, 2001:495-499).

RESEARCH METHODS OF ETHNOLOGIC ECONOMICS

For the research of any discipline, once the tasks are determined, the most important thing is to find suitable methods. Otherwise, it will be rather challenging to complete the research tasks. In addition to coming up with functions, we must also find ways to achieve them. Our mission is to cross the river, but without bridges or boats, we cannot cross the river. If the problem of bridges or vessels is not solved, crossing the river is nothing but empty talk.

Without finding methods, tasks will remain nonsense (Mao, 1967). Different disciplines have different jobs, so other forms are required. For example, physics requires experimentation, chemistry requires decomposition, mathematics requires computation, sociology requires investigation, and economics requires abstract analysis.

However, no matter what methods are used in what discipline to study what problems, the research subject depends on the researchers themselves. Due to differences in status, conditions, experience, and levels, their ways of thinking differ. Due to different ways of thinking, the research results and manifestations will differ, even if the same research method is used to study the same problem. Therefore, the most important thing for researchers is to have scientific ways of thinking. For theoretical researchers, they must have scientific ways of visionary thinking because the ways of thinking play a guiding role.

Ethnologic economics is a branch discipline of General Ethnology. Therefore, its research methods can also be divided into three levels. In General Ethnology, we have split research methods into three groups. The first layer is the guiding method, the most fundamental guiding principle or guiding ideology, or the researcher's theoretical thinking method. The second level is the basic methods, that is, the primary methods adopted in a discipline or the methods most commonly used by researchers with the characteristics of this discipline. The third level is the specific methods, that is, the specific methods adopted according to the actual situation of the research tasks. These methods usually absorb unique interdisciplinary and commonly used traditional methods (Shi, 1992). In the study of ethnologic economics, the practices at the above three levels are all applicable. However, according to the actual development of ethnologic economics, the following methods must be emphasized.

Firstly, scientific methods of theoretical thinking. Theoretical thinking refers to rational thought in academic research or the thinking methods in the form of theories. The scientific methods of thinking refer to the materialistic and dialectical ways. An ethnologic economics fellow needs scientific thinking methods to analyze and solve problems from the historical materialism perspective. In this case, he can't conduct scientific research on various issues of the ethnologic economy. Nowadays, researchers in ethnology and economics tend to conduct excessive, exaggerated, one-sided, and isolated research. They tend to reason a phenomenon or a problem to an absolute degree. Still, they cannot find, analyze, judge, and reason from the wholeness, globosity, correlation and variability to draw scientific conclusions. It is a dangerous tendency. Therefore, it is necessary and urgent to study and cultivate scientific methods of theoretical thinking for ethnologic economics.

Secondly, in-depth field investigation. Seeking truth from facts is the essence of Marxism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory. It is also the most fundamental research method in all social sciences, including ethnologic economics. Whether studying the economic issues of ethnic minorities in China or the economic problems of ethnic groups in other countries and regions, ethnologic economics must always adhere to the principle of seeking truth from facts. It must carry out in-depth field investigation as much as possible or conduct research based on the existing investigation materials. It is unacceptable to play the game of number derivation divorced from reality scraping things together and guessing subjectively. It is wrong to radically promote something in a one-size-fits-all manner just after obtaining a

specific material from a particular region. We must realize that the research object of ethnologic economics is the economic issues of different ethnic groups or ethnic areas. That means there are differences and huge gaps between them. Unbalanced economic and social development is a common phenomenon. One-size-fits-all and absolutism approaches are divorced from reality, so they cannot help us study problems from the ground up. Therefore, ethnologic economics requires researchers to conduct in-depth investigation and research in ethnic areas and insist on specific analysis of specific issues.

Thirdly, an appropriate application of scientific abstraction. The essence of ethnology economy determines that economic interests are the final content of ethnic issues, and ethnic relations are the main form of economic matters. Therefore, appropriate scientific abstraction must be carried out when revealing the nature of ethnic and economic issues. Marx once said that we could neither use microscopes nor chemical reagents when analyzing economic forms. We must replace both with the power of abstraction (Marx, 1965). As a branch of economics, ethnologic economics requires the application of inference. But as a branch of ethnology, ethnologic economics does not equal general theoretical economics. Its main feature is that research must be directly applied to the needs of real life. Therefore, using the abstraction method must be based on its characteristics. Marx's pure and high abstraction when analyzing the economic form of classical capitalism in *Das Kapital* cannot be applied to ethnologic economics. In ethnologic economics, researchers can only conduct moderate conceptions according to the specific situation of the research objects. Also, in achieving such abstraction, the researchers must firmly grasp the particular manifestation of ethnic groups and their interrelationships. Without it, it would not be an abstract method of ethnologic economics.

What is moderate abstraction? When studying the methodology of David Ricardo, a master of classical political economy, Marx criticized David for excessive abstraction at times and insufficient abstraction at other times. The so-called moderate conception means avoiding the problem of extreme abstraction and vague abstraction. According to the intrinsic nature of the specific research objects, researchers should carry out different levels of scientific abstraction that meet the objective requirements. It is because there is a significant imbalance in the economic development of various ethnic groups and ethnic minority regions in China. The differences in production relations are enormous, as are the differences in developing productive forces. Multiple aspects of the superstructure (such as politics, law, culture, education, religion, psychology, folklore, etc.) also vary widely. Languages and writings are also different. Therefore, these are not only directly related to ethnic groups and ethnic issues but also closely related to the development of the ethnologic economy. Accordingly, in the research of ethnologic economics, researchers can only conduct moderate abstraction for specific research objects.

Fourthly, materialist historical narrative. The historical record refers to the narration or description of the research objects in the order of time and space. This method is primarily used in historical disciplines, such as annals, historical records, development history, etc. It is a method commonly used in both ethnology and economics. However, scholars may have different worldviews, outlooks on life, and values so they may apply the same method differently. When they use the historical narrative method, their arrangement of time-space sequences may differ or even have essential differences.

An example is the historical narrative method applied by the historical school in ethnology and the historical school in economics. It is fundamentally different from the historical materialist method of Marxism. They can even be regarded as two fundamentally opposing methods. In the study of ethnologic economics, we should naturally adhere to the methodology of historical materialism and oppose the idealist view of history. We must scientifically narrate the history of economic development and the history of economic thoughts of each ethnic group. We also need to scientifically and historically convey the economic development of various ethnic minority regions and the economic relations between ethnic groups. When studying real issues of ethnologic economy, whether, in vertical or horizontal comparison, researchers must adhere to the Marxist historical narrative method and cannot adopt historical idealism methods.

Fifthly, analysis of relevant group interests. Before the reform and opening up, all scientific research emphasized the method of class analysis, and ethnology and economics were no exception. Now, researchers seem to have gone to the other extreme. Even if they do not oppose the method of class analysis, at least it is rarely used in scientific research. We must realize that human society in the real world is far from reaching the point of the Great Harmony World. Differences between different classes exist in each national organization, and there are other classes in the society of all countries. The distinction between workers and peasants is far from being eliminated. Slavery and inequality are widely seen in the most developed countries and peoples. Exploiters and exploiting groups are not yet destroyed.

As far as China is concerned, due to the establishment of the basic socialist system, all kinds of old-fashioned exploiting classes have been eliminated. Significant changes have occurred in the social structure, and many new phenomena, relationships, factors and systems have emerged inside and outside the various ethnic groups. They are constantly arising, forming, developing and changing. Therefore, class analysis is necessary and effective as a method of analyzing and understanding problems. Therefore, although we cannot lose the Marxist class analysis method in scientific research, we cannot continue to apply the traditional class analysis method blindly and repeat the mistakes we made in the ultra-left era. We need most today to develop the Marxist strategy of class analysis in practice in light of changed circumstances and materials.

We should create a new analysis method that conforms to objective reality and the Marxist scientific methodology's spirit. We believe that this method is called group interest analysis. In all ethnic societies, different interest groups exist every day. Therefore, a specific analysis of them with the core of interest is necessary. In the primary stage of socialism, there are enterprises and institutions with various economic components of ownership. There is a mixture of different systems of privilege, a combination of a country and multiple designs, numerous forms of a system, etc. These complexities exist in the economic entities of all ethnic groups and ethnic minority areas. Therefore, in addition to the part directly belonging to the national interest, group interests and demands also exist widely. We must conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of this group's interests. At this stage, this type of analysis has important practical significance for poverty alleviation in the ethnologic economy. It is also significant for narrowing regional disparities, promoting national development and achieving shared prosperity (Shi, 2001:499-503).

THE CATEGORIES OF ETHNOLOGIC ECONOMICS

In general, each discipline uses a set of concepts and categories. They can be divided into several types: (1) concepts and categories familiar to many disciplines; (2) concepts and categories common to several disciplines; (3) concepts and categories unique or original to one discipline. They can also be divided into (1) concepts, and categories of traditional idioms; (2) newly proposed concepts and categories; (3) concepts and categories introduced from other disciplines or from abroad. From another perspective, they can also be divided into (1) the starting concepts and categories of the theoretical system of disciplines; (2) the core concepts and categories in this theoretical system; (3) the concepts and categories that play an intermediary role in the system, and the ending concepts and categories of the system. Concepts and categories in ethnologic economics can also be divided in different ways. But since it is a new discipline in its infancy, it is immature. This immaturity is first reflected in that the concepts and categories it uses are incomplete, and the definitions are not yet specific. Therefore, in this article, we can only list some concepts or categories that people at present commonly use:

1. A national economy is an intersecting or compound concept and category formed by combining two independent ideas of nation and economy. In China, it originally referred to developing the national economy of the newly independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. For example, in his speech at a banquet held by the Indonesian ambassador to China on October 2, 1957, Zhou Enlai said that the Indonesian people were also advancing along the road of developing an independent national economy. On August 16, 1958, at the state banquet in Sihanoukville, Zhou En said: "The nation-states that have just got rid of colonial rule are eager to establish their independent national economies. They no longer want imperialist countries to continue plundering and controlling their economic lifeline." He mentioned several times that independent nation-states should develop their national economies. It is a concept different from the national or social economy of developed capitalist countries. It is also distinguishable from ethnic minority economies in multi-ethnic countries. Compared with the former, it emphasized the nation and compared with the latter, it highlights the state. So, within this limit, it is a unique concept or category. In the late 1970s, China entered a new era of modernization. To meet the needs of helping all ethnic groups to develop their economies and move towards shared prosperity, we proposed the creation of ethnologic economics. Since then, the concept and category of the ethnologic economy have been introduced to study the economic development of China's ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas. By the mid-1990s, the concept and category of ethnology economy had become a common term with multiple meanings (different forms of economies of other ethnic groups).
2. Mao Zedong first proposed the concept of an ethnic minority economy. In 1954, in the *Draft of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, Mao Zedong mentioned the concept of the characteristics of ethnic minority economy (Mao, 1977). Later, in *The Debate on Agricultural Cooperation and the Current Class Struggle*, Mao Zedong expressed that the economy of ethnic minorities is an integral part of the national economy (Mao, 1977). It can be seen that the ethnic minority economy refers to the social production and economic life of ethnic minorities within a multi-ethnic country. It

refers specifically to the economy of ethnic minorities. Its content is pervasive, and it is most frequently used.

3. The economy of ethnic minority areas can generally be interpreted as the economy of ethnic minority settlements in multi-ethnic countries. In China, the concept refers to the economy of locations where ethnic minorities live or ethnic autonomous regions. It differs from the economy of common areas because it has ethnologic characteristics. In China, specific terms such as ethnic minority areas, ethnic inhabited areas and animal husbandry areas appeared earlier and are widely used. But the practice of taking the economy of ethnic areas or the economy of ethnic minority areas as a specific concept or category happened after the study of ethnic economics began. In this regard, the most prominent sign is the *Research on the Economic Development of the Ethnic Minority Areas of Western China* published during the Seventh Five-Year Plan. It is the first monograph to comprehensively and systematically study the economy of ethnic minority areas.
4. Ethnic trade economy can be the commercial activities or commercial economy of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas in multi-ethnic countries. In China, it refers to the commercial activities or economy of ethnic minorities and ethnic neighborhoods. Initially, the concept evolved from the PLA's trade-in frontier regions. It was initially referred to as ethnic minority trade or trade-in ethnic minority areas. The term ethnic trade was included in a document issued by the Ministry of Trade of the Central People's Government in 1951. It can thus be seen that ethnic exchange, as an independent concept or category, appeared earlier than the ethnologic economy. With the later development, frontier trade entered various national businesses and led to a series of related secondary concepts and categories. These secondary concepts and types include ethnic trade task forces, ethnic goods stores, ethnic trade companies, ethnic item production bases, ethnic material exchange conferences, ethnic trade economics, etc.
5. Ethnic finance involves the finance of ethnic autonomous local governments or the finance of ethnic minority areas. Mao Zedong proposed studying the economic management and financial systems in ethnic minority areas in his famous report *On the Ten Major Relationships* (Mao, 1956). Since then, ethnic finance has become a familiar concept or category in the study of ethnologic economics. Moreover, like ethnic trade, it led to a series of related secondary images or classes, such as ethnic mobility funds, ethnic special subsidies, etc.

The purpose of listing the above concepts or categories is to show that: as an independent discipline, the study of the ethnologic economy has formed and is constantly forming a series of concepts and classes unique to this discipline. What needs to be emphasized is that, since ethnologic economics is a newly created discipline, with the continuous development of the economy of various ethnic groups and ethnic regions and the constant deepening of ethnic economics research, new categories will inevitably appear continuously. Introduced and borrowed terminology will continue to increase, and the system and structure of concepts and categories will become increasingly complete. Some concepts or categories that did not originally belong to this discipline will also be incorporated into its research system or even become its central concepts or categories. The disparity in the economic development of ethnic minority areas has become a significant subject in the research of ethnologic economics. In other words, the fact that difference and its widening have become one of the

most frequently used concepts in ethnologic economics research is a prime example (Shi, 2001:503-506).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNOLOGIC ECONOMICS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

Ethnologic economics is an interdisciplinary or intermediary discipline. Therefore, it has direct and close links with many disciplines. It can also be considered a marginal discipline. The National Catalogue of Disciplines divides disciplines into ten categories, including more than 80 first-level disciplines and more than 500 second-level disciplines. Ethnologic economics is included in the legal ethnic domains, and it is a second-level discipline with a serial number of 3. Therefore, it has a direct connection with various branch disciplines of ethnology.

The first is its relationship with the discipline of ethnic theory. The ethnic theory is a secondary subject of ethnology. Its full name is Marxist Ethnic Theory and Ethnic Policies. It was called Ethnic Issues and Ethnic Policies and is sometimes referred to as Theoretical Ethnology. In the 1950s, Ethnic Theory and Ethnic Policies became one of the five political theory courses in ethnic colleges and universities across the country. And it has long been the theoretical basis for guiding China's ethnic work. As an independent discipline, it is a fundamental academic discipline of Marxist ethnology. It explains the basic principles of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory on ethnic and ethnic issues and the ethnic policies formulated by the Chinese Communist Party and the state. Therefore, it has a guiding role for ethnologic economics and is one of the theoretical foundations and guidelines.

The second is its relationship with the disciplines of economics, mainly its association with political economics. The main content of ethnologic economics research is the economic issues of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas. Therefore, Marxist theory, especially the basic principles of political economy, is one of its essential theoretical bases. Many research methods, including abstraction, are widely used in ethnologic economics. This is the connection and commonality between them. Of course, there are also differences. For example, regarding research objects, political economics mainly studies the general laws governing the production and exchange of material means of subsistence in human society.

In contrast, ethnologic economics does not study general social production relations. Instead, it explores specific ethnologic economic issues. In terms of the research scope, on the one hand, political economics studies all economic forms in human society, while ethnologic economics only studies the specific social and economic relations of various ethnic groups after their emergence. The former has a broader scope. On the other hand, political economics research is mainly limited to production relations. At the same time, ethnologic economics also studies many issues in developing productive forces when studying the production relations of various ethnic groups. It even has to learn the problems involving the superstructure. In this sense, the former is narrower in its scope. From the application point of view, the issues explored in ethnologic economics are closer to those studied in specific economic disciplines (such as Industrial Economics, Agricultural Economics, Animal Husbandry Economics, Forestry Economics, Fiscal Economics, Managerial Economics, etc.). Of

course, their research purposes, perspectives, and categories are different, each having its functions and characteristics.

It has a close relationship with anthropology and sociology, especially a close relationship with cultural anthropology. Over the years, there have been different views on the relationship between ethnology, sociology, and anthropology (mainly cultural anthropology, excluding physical anthropology). Some people think they are the same discipline, with different names in different countries. It is termed sociology in the U.K. but cultural anthropology in America. In Germany and Russia, scholars term it ethnology but sociology and ethnology in France. They argue that China's ethnology is similar to sociology in western countries and is the cultural anthropology in America. They even proposed transforming and replacing China's ethnology with America's cultural anthropology. Others argue that sociology and ethnology are not the same disciplines but two relatively separate disciplines. But they consider ethnology and cultural anthropology to be the same or similar disciplines. These views have their reasons.

Different views are also inevitable and common in developing disciplines and international academic exchanges. We agree with the *National Catalogue of Disciplines*. It regards ethnology, sociology, and anthropology as three different disciplines and the first two disciplines as first-level ones. But we do not agree to consider anthropology as a secondary discipline of sociology. According to the development of fields in China, anthropology will indeed develop into a first-level discipline because it has already become a discipline cluster containing several sub-disciplines in some countries. China provides favorable conditions for the development of this discipline.

Most importantly, China's population is almost one-fifth of the world's total, making it a significant part of humanity. China's social and cultural development has a long history without interruption. These conditions are most favorable for the development of characteristic anthropology. After clarifying the above issues, it is easy to understand the relationship between ethnologic economics and these disciplines. As a branch of ethnology, it is closely related to sociology and anthropology. When studying issues about the ethnologic economy, researchers need to use the materials provided by these two disciplines. In addition, it also needs to borrow and absorb some of its effective methods and theories.

Fourth, ethnologic economics has extensive connections with other disciplines such as history (economic history), geography (economic geography), and religious studies (temple economy). They are mainly complementary (Shi, 2001:507-509).

THE CREATION OF ETHNOLOGIC ECONOMICS

Looking back on history is to explore the future better. Compared with many other disciplines, the history of ethnologic economics is short. As we all know, philosophy has been developing for more than 3,000 years of discipline development, economics has a history of more than 300 years, and ethnology, sociology and anthropology have a development history of more than 100 years. As an independent discipline, China's ethnologic economics has only been developing for 20 years since its creation. It is still in the early stages of discipline creation. So,

we are not discussing the natural development history of the discipline here. It is to be created in the future. We can only provide some snippets at the creating stage.

1978 was a turning point in China's development. Based on summarizing historical experience, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed to shift the work center of the entire Party and the whole country to economic development. In this context, it began implementing the great reform strategy and opening up. The new period, new situations and new requirements have brought new opportunities for ethnic work. When the Third Plenary Session of the Central Committee was held, the State Ethnic Committee held the first Theoretical Seminar on Ethnic Issues. The fundamental tone of the seminar was to criticize the Gang of Four's ultra-left crimes in ethnic work.

One of the papers submitted to the seminar was titled *Ethnic Issues and Four Modernizations*. This paper comprehensively discussed the ethnic issues in the socialist period and their dialectical relationship with the four modernizations. It was the earliest academic work linking the solution of ethnic problems with the development of the economy and the realization of the four modernizations (Shi, 1987). On the 30th anniversary of National Day in 1979, an academic seminar was held at the Central University for Nationalities. At that seminar, the proposal to create the discipline of national economics was made for the first time. After the workshop, a team was organized to write this discipline's first textbook, *Introduction to the Economy of China's Ethnic Minorities*. After that, based on trial lectures and revisions, a seminar on teaching materials was held in October 1980.

At this meeting, the Preparatory Committee of the China Association for the Research on Ethnic Minority Economy was established. It was supported by Yang Jingren, Yang Dongsheng, Hu Jiabin, and Liu Sanyuan, the prominent leaders of the National Ethnic Committee, as well as Yu Guangyuan, an economist, Deng Liqun, a theoretician, Song Tao, an economist, Ya Hanzhang, an ethnic theorist, and Zong Qun, an expert of ethnic work, etc. In 1981, the founding conference of the association was held. The director of the preparatory committee and the association's first president were the highly respected Zhang Yangwu.

The leading members of the association are representatives who are enthusiastic about studying national economic issues. The leading scholars include Shi Zhengyi, Huang Wanlun, Dong Zijian, Shi Zheng, Bayin Menghe, Fei Huaixin, Pan Wen, Xu Jingjun, Zhang Kewu, Li Wenchao, Li Zhuqing, Bai Zhensheng, Na Ri, Li Fuchun, Zhang Jitao, Yang Jingchu, Zhao Suqin, Kuang Haolin, etc. At the same time, with the approval of the party group of the State Ethnic Committee and the support of relevant leaders, China's first ethnic economic research institution, the Minority Economics Research Institute of the Central University for Nationalities, was established. Since then, under the guidance of the Four Purposes and Two Directions policy, the Association and the Institute have actively carried out teaching and research.

Many academic achievements were published, many high-level professional talents have been cultivated, and they have had extensive influence at home and abroad. As an independent

discipline, ethnologic economics officially entered its creation stage. From the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, the creation of ethnologic economics went through several periods:

The first period was the pioneering period, from 1979 to 1985. During this period, the following things were done: (1) Disciplinary teams were organized. The research teams were mainly expanded through establishing institutions for the research on ethnic minority economy in ethnic areas. For example, Yunnan, Guizhou, Gansu, Xinjiang, Sichuan and other provinces and regions, Hulunbuir, Yanbian, Dehong, Phoenix and other prefectures and counties, have established ethnic and economic research institutions, gathering full-time and part-time talents of the ethnologic economy. (2) Field investigations have been widely carried out. Under the guidance of the spirit of the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party, strategies and plans for economic development in ethnic minority areas were discussed and formulated. (3) Internal journals were founded, thus gathering research materials and grasping the situation in various regions. Research papers were written, and collections of articles were published. For example, *Research on Economic Issues of China's Ethnic Minorities* (collection of documents) was published, and many investigations and research reports were published in Yunnan, Guangxi, Hunan, Guizhou and Sichuan. (4) According to the requirements of the general policy and tasks of the Communist Party of China and the state, the national research association holds an academic seminar on the central topic every year. At the same time, seminars combined with actual local conditions have also been widely organized nationwide. (5) Since 1982, the first batches of postgraduate students in this discipline were enrolled. In addition, various forms of professional training courses and junior college courses for ethnologic economics have also been held in batches. In this way, many high-level talents in this discipline have been cultivated. (6) In addition to the *Introduction*, two representative works reflect the achievements made in this period. One is *Ethnologic economics and the Four Modernizations in Ethnic Minority Areas*, written by Shi Zhengyi (published by the Ethnic Publishing House). The other is *Research on Commodity Economy in China's Ethnic Minority Areas*, written by Li Fuchun (published by Ethnic Publishing House).

The second period was the advance period, from 1986 to 1990. During this period, the following things were done:

1. According to the country's Seventh Five-Year Plan requirements, the researchers undertook a national critical research project, namely the research on the economic development of ethnic minority areas in China. The strength of this discipline in the country was organized. More than 200 people directly participated in the field research, and 28 books were published. Representative achievements include *Research on the Economic Development of Ethnic Minority Areas in Western China*, *Strategic Conception before Taking Off*, *Seeking Equal Development Opportunities*, *History of Ethnic Minority Economy in Modern China*, and *Exploration of Economic System Reform in Ethnic Minority Areas*. Monographs on the development strategies of the ethnologic economy in the five autonomous regions were also published. The academic achievements made during this period were the greatest.
2. Various forms of academic seminars and academic exchange activities were widely carried out. Both national and local research societies were very active. Several workshops on reform, opening up, and development of ethnic minority areas were held, and hundreds of papers were published. In 1990, a commendation conference for

outstanding achievements in the research of ethnologic economics was born in Huangshan, Anhui. At this conference, a total of 54 achievements were awarded.

3. Graduate students continued to be enrolled, and junior college classes continued to be held, thus expanding the training of professional talents in the field of ethnologic economy.
4. In 1987, the original *Research on Economic Development of China's Ethnic Minorities* (12 volumes had been published) and *China Minority Economic Research Newsletter* (48 issues had been published) was replaced by *Ethnologic Economics* regularly published (quarterly).
5. During this period, six collections of papers titled *Research on Ethnologic economics* were also published. They gathered significant research achievements in discipline construction and theoretical development. Essential articles by Yu Guangyuan on the economy of ethnic minorities and the economy of ethnic minority areas were also included in these collections.
6. During this period, theoretical research focused on deepening the structural reform in ethnic minority areas and expanding the opening of border areas. Disparities and equilibrium issues in ethnologic economic development were highlighted. Scholars had a lively discussion on the development disparity between the eastern and western regions and the widening trend of the difference. Some scholars stressed that the disparity issue could not be exaggerated in isolation without considering stability. They believed that we needed to look at both ethnic factors, economic and historical factors and that long-term exploration was needed.

The third period is the deepening period, from 1991 to 1995. Work was done mainly in the following aspects:

1. According to the requirements of the Eighth Five-Year Plan. The researchers undertook a national critical research project, namely the research on developing the market economy in China's ethnic minority areas. Due to limited funds, the backbone research force was concentrated. The researchers focused on five issues in studying and implementing Deng Xiaoping's theory on market issues. These five issues are the road to a market economy for ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas, the theory and practice of market economy in ethnic minority areas, the issue of border trade, the issue of shared prosperity, and from the development economics of the West to the ethnologic economics of China. Five monographs were published and received well by relevant parties based on extensive and in-depth research.
2. This discipline reached a new height in theoretical research. The publication of the two books marked the further deepening of the academic exploration of this discipline. These two books are: *An Exploration on the Development Strategies of China's Ethnic Minorities and Ethnic Minority Areas in the 1990s*, edited by Zhao Yannian and *Contemporary Chinese Economic Lexicon - Volume of Ethnic Minority Economy* consulted by Shi Zhengyi and Huang Wanlun and edited by Chen Hong and Ha Jingxiong. The former summarized the research achievements on developing the ethnologic economy since the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. The latter was a collection of research achievements in ethnologic economics.
3. Since the 1990s, *China's Ethnologic Economy* (annual statistical data) jointly compiled by the Economic Department of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission and the

Statistics Department of the National Bureau of Statistics was published. It reflected the systematization of statistics in the research of ethnologic economics. It provided a convenient way to comprehensively and systematically analyze and study the economic development of ethnic minority areas.

4. During this period, gratifying achievements were also made in fundamental theoretical research. The publication of the four books marked that this discipline had deepened its exploration of its academic system. These four books are *The Ethnology Development Economics*, edited by Gao Yanhong (1990), *Ethnologic economics*, edited by Tong Hao (1990), *Ethnologic economics*, edited by Chen Qingde (1994), and the *Introduction to Ethnologic economics*, published in 1993. The first book emphasized development. The second book focused on concrete narratives. The third book proposed Western anthropology as a fundamental premise for the study of ethnologic economics. In addition, it is also believed that Western anthropology has significantly contributed to the construction of ethnologic economics (Chen, 1994). The last book further deepened the application of scientific Marxist methods of theoretical thinking in ethnologic economics.
5. Regarding talent training, the number of postgraduate students enrolled during this period expanded. At the same time, we began to enroll international students. Most notably, in 1994, with the approval of the State Education Commission, doctoral students in ethnologic economics began to be registered. Since then, talent training has been raised to the highest level.

The fourth period began in 1996 and is expected to end in 2000. Through the efforts of all parties, the following things were done:

1. The State Education Commission approved a national critical research project, that is, to accelerate the development and narrow the disparities. This research program is ongoing, and an interim results report has been published.
2. With the State Education Commission's approval, this discipline began recruiting in-service personnel to study for a master's degree in 1996. The first batch of over 40 students is cadres above the division level of the Education Committee of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and the prominent leaders of Tianyang County in Baise. They have already begun to have classes. This measure is a new exploration of this discipline to serve the modernization of ethnic minority areas. In particular, a postdoctoral student was admitted to the mobile research station.
3. We are organizing the compilation of a set of teaching materials for postgraduates majoring in ethnologic economics. We expect it further to improve this discipline's theoretical structure and system. Given this, we refer to this period as the perfecting period.

These are the main work and important achievements during the creation stage of ethnologic economics. They clearly show that this new discipline is fully rooted in the fertile soil of China's ethnic societies. It is a new discipline with distinctive ethnic characteristics of China. Moreover, they strongly demonstrated that, as Western scholars, Chinese scholars are also capable of creating new domains suiting the development needs of their own country. The practice has proved that this new discipline has strong vitality and broad prospects for

development. It emerged in China in the 20th century and will surely gain its position worldwide in the 21st century (Shi, 2001:509-514).

CONCLUSION

Ethnologic economics is a unique branch of economics in China, with strong Chinese characteristics. Ethnologic economics, starting from the status and role of ethnic factors in economic activities, studies the economic changes and economic relations of ethnic groups or ethnic regions. The ethnologic economy has the characteristics of duality and diversity, which is the starting point of the study of national economics. Ethnologic economics has adapted to the national conditions of China's multi-ethnic country and the needs of China's modernization drive. It has the dual disciplinary attribution of Ethnology and economics. Moreover, ethnologic economics is closely linked to many related disciplines. Therefore, when studying this discipline, scholars must learn the theories and methods of related fields and not adopt an isolated approach to thinking.

Professor Shi Zhengyi is the principal founder of Chinese national economics. In the 20 years, from the late 1970s to the 1990s, he made significant contributions to the establishment and development of ethnology. He made a comprehensive study of Ethnologic economics from the perspectives of theoretical origins and research methods. He pointed out that China's overall economic and social development is inseparable from the accelerated economic and social development in ethnic minority areas. This article presents Professor Shi Zhengyi's early research on the theoretical issues of ethnologic economics. It is hoped that the international academic community will be interested in ethnologic economics. It is also hoped that they can apply the research results of Chinese ethnologic economists to promote economic development in other countries similar to China's ethnic minority areas. Especially the counterparts in economic anthropology and development economics should do so.

In short, ethnologic economics, founded by Chinese scholars, has made outstanding achievements in discipline theory construction, academic achievements accumulation and professional personnel training. The irreplaceable disciplinary status and distinctive applied characteristics show the development prospect of ethnologic economics. Although ethnologic economics has achieved remarkable results after years of development in China, its disciplinary position is still unstable. The reasons are the imperfect construction of the discipline system, the non-standard research methods, and the different research horizons. We believe that to make the discipline deeply rooted and prosperous and obtain more significant development. We must re-understand it from the profession's macro, micro and survival basis, pay attention to the combination with reality, and strive to serve the truth. At present, China's ethnic economists should seek to explore the basic social structure in ethnic areas, transform the rural economic system in ethnic regions, establish a model of ethnic and economic development, and look for a practical new path to developing an ethnic economy.

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