# ENTERPRISE ANTHROPOLOGY: THE FOURTH EVOLUTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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*Enterprise Anthropology is very different from other sub-disciplines of anthropology (such as Urban Anthropology, Medical Anthropology and so on), which use theories and methodologies of anthropology to research other fields (for example, urban, medicine and so on), but do not develop a new paradigm. Enterprise Anthropology has been integrated into an international discipline, which has formed its own new paradigm. It takes "Social-economic Transformation" theory as its new fundamental theory, and changes its paradigm from an old one into a new one. It has broken through the anthropological academic tradition of small-society and community studies, and attempts to analyze economic-social phenomena from the view of a macro-social-structure; it has broken through the fossilized "traditional-modern" dichotomy, and uses a continuous spectrum; and it has made a breakthrough in the anthropological tradition of grassroots, and tries to combine both "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches together. As a result, it was called the fourth evolution of anthropology: a new research paradigm has been formed, its research category has been extended and deepened, its subject name has been unified, its academic activities and achievements have become international, and systematically established the innovative knowledge of anthropology. Enterprise anthropology has not only set up a bridge between China and the West, but has also brought about a discipline transformation of anthropology or broken through partly in anthropology both in China and in the world. In recent years, China and some regions of Asia have become the new engine of world anthropology because of their fast economic growth.*

**Keywords**: enterprise anthropology, anthropology, the fourth evolution

Anthropology is a science to reveal the rule of human development. It has formed various sub-disciplines to specifically examine different aspects of human society in its development process, for instance, urban anthropology, enterprise anthropology, anthropology of religion, anthropology of art, political anthropology, anthropology of law, medical anthropology, sports anthropology, etc. These sub-disciplines (such as anthropology of religion, development anthropology, medical anthropology and education anthropology) usually use anthropological theory and method to investigate specific issues or topics (such as religion, development, medicine, educations, etc.). They didn't change the original study paradigm or form a new one, but only use it as auxiliary knowledge or a method of exploring certain areas. Enterprise anthropology is therefore different from these sub-disciplines, for it has formed its own new study paradigm (Zhang 2015a), and become an international frontal subject in modern global anthropological studies (Zhang 2014a).

Tracing its development, we all know that the first revolution in anthropology was to study "primitive peoples", which represents its establishment as an independent discipline; the second revolution was to study peasant society, and it shows the study had started its journey towards the exploration of modern societies; the third revolution is to study urban society, which indicates that we have arrived at the study of modern urban society (Zhang 2004); since 1989 I have taken part in the third revolution of anthropology, urban anthropology, which originated in the West during the early 1970s (Kemper 2007), incorporating continuous exploration by Chinese, and other, scholars. And the exploration of various enterprises in modern societies could be the fourth revolution. Why is that? Since 2009, I have been leading my colleagues in carrying out the fourth revolution (enterprise anthropology) in China. Up to now, within all the basic aspects of the disciplinary construction, such as subject term, research target, research method, academic achievement, and academic communication, enterprise anthropological study had become a relatively complete creative academic system in China (Zhang 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d).

## The Expansion and Deepening of the Study Paradigm, Globalization of the Academic Activities and Achievements

If we claim enterprise anthropology as the fourth revolution of anthropological study, then the subjective foundation should be the extensive empirical study of the various types of enterprises. The

academic tradition of social studies of anthropology principally focuses on the simple society and simple social organizations. As a complex economic organization, enterprise cannot easily be studied by using traditional anthropology (Baba 1986, 2006; Jordan 2002, 2011). Anthropologists therefore usually analyze family or family firms because of their traditional academic advantages. Since 1950, many anthropologists have pointed out that the success of overseas Chinese enterprises is due to the emphasis on family or kinship links, based on the English anthropologist Maurice Freedman's family or kinship theory (Freedman 1965, 1966). For instance, the American scholar G. William Skinner has conducted comparison studies of the economic-development differences between Indonesian Chinese enterprises and Thai Chinese enterprises in Southeast Asia (Skinner 1960); the Chinese scholar David Y.H. Wu has studied Papua New Guinea-Chinese enterprises in the South Pacific (Wu 1982); the American scholar Ellen Oxfeld Basu has investigated Chinese leather dealers in a suburb of the Indian city of Kolkata, and published a series of articles (Basu 1985,1991,1991,1992), and in her work *Blood, Sweat and Mahjong: Family and Enterprise in an Overseas Chinese Community*, she thoroughly analyzed the transformation and interrelationships of the family structure and three-generation business organization of Chinese enterprises (Basu 2013). In recent decades, enterprise anthropology has made a breakthrough from the traditional family enterprise study model, and has conducted investigations of various types of enterprises such as township enterprises, state-owned enterprises, transnational corporations, private enterprises, old brands, etc. The anthropological research target has been expanded from simple organizations to various types of enterprise (Czarniawska-Joerges 1989). Enterprise anthropology research deals with many major issues in realistic economic social life, such as the suddenly-rising new force of the township enterprise (Ma, Liu and Qiu 2000); the social costs of state-owned enterprise operational management (Li and Zhang 2000); the localization of transnational cooperation in China (Zhang 2003); the birth and growth of private enterprise (Zhang and Chen 2002; Zhang 2012); the successor to private enterprise (Chen 2015); and the modern transformation of old brands,[1] etc. To a great extent it therefore enriches and develops anthropological research content, paradigms and

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[1] Enterprise Anthropology's focus on the old brand has established a national research team in sixteen provinces and cities in China (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Guangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Chongqing, Yunnan, Liaoning, Jilin, Shandong, Fujian, Hebei, etc.), relying on the scholars of local Social Sciences Institutes and the support of old brand associations. There have been fruitful academic achievements after five years' continuous investigation.

topics. The study of the various types of modern enterprise organizations is, so to speak, like an injection of fresh blood into the discipline. It not only deepens the ability of multi-disciplinary research and academic dialogue between anthropology and enterprise management science, marketing, applied economics and environmental sciences, but also strengthens the explanatory ability of modern complex organizations. It is very necessary for us to promote anthropology as a modern science. Enterprise anthropology's exploration of modern enterprises is no doubt the fourth revolution of the traditional anthropology paradigm (in terms of research content, scope and topics).

In recent years, enterprise anthropology study has formed an international network; the researchers are from all five continents, and the research targets are related to twenty-six countries and areas. Firstly, there are a series of regular or irregular international or domestic meetings; a more normative academic communication mechanism has been formed. Secondly, for a new discipline, its academic achievements are fruitful—there have been over ten books, and tens of papers and articles, published in Chinese and English (Zhang 2015d, 2015e, 2015f). In brief, enterprise anthropology is very highly internationalized, therefore the fourth revolution of anthropology triggered by the discipline matters not only in Chinese academic circles, but also everywhere else.

## The Creation of Study Paradigm and the Promotion of Academic Theory

*Paradigm* is a core conception of a discipline (Kuhn 1962). If one claims that there are four revolutions, does enterprise anthropology trigger the paradigm transformation of anthropological study? Indeed, this academic revolution has a very solid theory and methodology foundation. It shows in three aspects, as follows.

First, holism: from simple organization to complex modern enterprise. In academic circles, holism is a widely acknowledged method or perspective, which is unique and commonly used in anthropological study. American anthropologists and business management scholars had jointly proposed the "Human Relation Theory" to explore the internal and external relations of enterprise, attributed to the birth and growth of industrial anthropology and organizational anthropology (Whyte 1948, 1951; Keesing, Hammond and McAllister 1955; Keesing and Hammond 1957; Britan and Cohen 1980). For quite a long time in the study of former socialist countries (e.g. China, the former Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe) by Western humanities and sociology scholars, there were two major paradigms: totalitarianism and

modernism. Since 1980, owing to the large-scale economic and social change of the former socialist countries, these two paradigms have become feeble. The recognized research paradigms of economics and political science are "Government" and "Market": the two hands promoting the resource allocation and economic social development. The former is a visible hand, and the latter an invisible one. Early in 1992, Li Peilin creatively proposed "another invisible hand" theory (or "social structure transformation" theory) (Li 1992). He claimed that "another invisible hand" not only dramatically influences the reform of the economic system and readjustment of industrial structure as a resource-allocation approach, but also promotes the entire social development. The "social structure transformation" theory is a big step forward in anthropological classic holism. It breaks through the small-scale research tradition, allows a macroscopic height, recognizes various modern organizations and enterprises through the entire social structure, and analyzes the social factors and resource-allocation mechanism which influence economic development. Under the guidance of "the other invisible hand" theory, I have for years been doing fieldwork and exploration of the Chinese social economic structure transformation, and have put forward a pair of new concepts: the "Umbrella Society" (Zhang 2014b, 2016) and the "Beehive Society" (Zhang 2015f). The former analyzes government-led resource-allocation and economic social development (and especially investigates the patron-client relationship between government and enterprise, and its effects on resource allocation), and the latter analyzes the common people's grass-roots resource-allocation approach and its dissemination to the entire economic and social development. In general, enterprise anthropology introduces "social structure transformation" theory as a new theoretical foundation, and realizes paradigm change from enterprise case-studies to exploration of enterprise-intrinsic motivation and social-structure factors through a holistic perspective of market and social-structure transformation.

Second, dimension: from dualism to pluralism. Dualism or dichotomy is a basic and common analytical framework of social or humanity sciences study. Li Peilin doesn't approve of the dichotomy study. He proposed the "continuous spectrum" theory, which is totally different from the "traditional-modern" model (Li 2002). The Chinese scholars Chen Guoben and Zhang Qie also consider that urban migration is not a new topic, but it will be very novel and academically valuable if we can link migration study to the spirit of enterprise. After years of hard work, these migrants progress from being small retailers to businessmen, industrialists, and entrepreneurs in cities far away from their hometown. We can see that

these migrants break the original economic social structures, and create new ones in urban cities (Chen and Zhang 1996). Under the influence of the above-mentioned perspectives, my urban migration study has also transcended the dichotomy of "opposition-assimilation". Drawing lessons from "coexist" and "connection" research models, I promoted the "coexist-connection" model and pointed out four tradition-related "economic culture types" formed by Chinese-minority immigrants in four cities (Zhang 2010). We therefore consider national enterprise as a major economic and social organization foundation for the construction of ethnic social economic structures by minority migrants. Without the basis of social economic structural entities, there will be no standing ground of economic social life for new urban migrants (Zhang 2014c).

Third, perspective: the combination of "top-down" and "bottom-up". The anthropological perspective is also "bottom-up", with the constant sympathy of vulnerable groups and minority people, and some anthropologists even consider themselves as minority-interest spokesmen. Anthropologists very rarely use an official or governmental perspective, so the "top-down" analysis is not common. How can we combine the government's commonly used "top-down" approach with anthropology's commonly-used "bottom-up" perspective? It is a tough issue that hasn't yet been solved by anthropology. In recent years, regarding the relationship between the new life of old brands, the reform and revival of old high streets, and the new vitality of urban development, I have published an article using "top-down" and "bottom-up" (Zhang 2015a, 2015b) perspectives which have raised the concern of governments, academic circles, and entrepreneurs and the media.

In general, thanks to the tireless efforts of scholars, the "social structure transformation" theory has been recognized as one of the major theories of enterprise anthropology. It has raised anthropological theory to a new level. To break through the rigid "traditional-modern" dichotomy, we are trying to use the "continuous spectrum" perspective to explore the combination of "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches which will lead to the dramatic progress of anthropological investigation of modern enterprise and economic social transformations.

## Enterprise Anthropology: the Right and Proper Forth Revolution of Anthropology

A discipline's title is most basic and fundamental. Enterprise anthropology was born in 1930, and the main force is distributed in the US, China and Japan. It has gone through five stages, and has accordingly had

five names in the past ninety years: industrial anthropology (Warner & Low 1947; Gamst 1980; Holzberg & Giovannini 1981; Applebaum 1981, 1984), organization anthropology (Richardson & Walker 1948; Whyte 1948, 1951; Britan & Cohen 1980), Business Anthropology (Baba 1986; Jordan 2002), administration anthropology (Nakamaki & Sedgwick 2013), and enterprise anthropology (Zhang 2014a). The five names currently exist simultaneously, and were chosen by scholars according to their study interests. I consider them with different meanings, and representing five stages of anthropological study of enterprises (Zhang 2015a). Specifically, from the very birth of enterprise anthropology, anthropology was only an auxiliary subject, participating in the Hawthorne Experiment, along with management science, and psychology, and was called "industrial anthropology". As an auxiliary subject, anthropology, being subordinate, doesn't assume an independent academic task. Without a new study paradigm, there can be no real anthropological revolution, although it contributed to anthropological investigations of enterprise. After that, there were three development stages (organization anthropology, business anthropology, administration anthropology, etc.). Despite the changes of names there was neither a creative study paradigm nor a pioneering study category of the discipline system. It always plays a supporting role to economics and management science. In 2009, after ninety years of exploration and accumulation, enterprise anthropology finally achieved the great cause of discipline integration. During the Sixteenth World Congress of the IUAES (the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences) from 27 July 2009 to 31 July 2009, scholars, mainly Chinese, along with others from more than ten countries and areas (more than sixty people in total), held a grand "Rite of Passage" for enterprise anthropology, which included three big events: to confirm "enterprise anthropology" as a uniform name for the discipline; to set up an "International Commission on Enterprise Anthropology" under the IUAES as a global academic organization; and to convene "The First International Enterprise Anthropology Forum" as a major communication platform. Enterprise anthropology therefore not only achieved academic integration, but also established its status as a discipline in international academic circles (Zhang 2009). It is not merely a uniformity of name, but it achieved the unity between "form" and "essence" after a study paradigm transformation over its ninety years of evolution. The fourth revolution didn't suddenly occur—after the four development stages (industrial anthropology, organization anthropology, business anthropology and administration anthropology), it gradually formed its study paradigm and innovative study category. Enterprise anthropology became a global

frontier discipline, attributable to its departure of auxiliary status as its predecessors (industrial anthropology, organization anthropology) or partners (business anthropology, administration anthropology). In Chinese anthropological circles, there are numerous essays or books on business anthropology, administration anthropology, industrial anthropology or organization anthropology, the contents of which are either non-Chinese, or merely take other academic's ideas, and do not even mention the fourth revolution of anthropology. It is exactly because enterprise anthropology has formed its own creative disciplinary system with regard to title, category, methodology and achievements, that we claim that enterprise anthropology is the right and proper fourth revolution of anthropology.

## The Significance of the Fourth Revolution of Anthropology in Asia and China

In the past thirty years, there have been few updates or renewals in anthropological theory. Firstly, the thriving Chinese anthropological scene doesn't really mean a flourishing situation (there are all manner of conferences in colleges—but it is not really academic progress, rather a reheating of the leftovers): our expectation of Chinese anthropology's taking off is only a fantasy, which cannot occur under these circumstances. Secondly, a local breakthrough of anthropology could possibly happen in certain areas, such as in intangible cultural heritage, ethnic tourism, ethnic holidays, urban migration, or enterprise organization, for there are still large academic areas left undeveloped. Thirdly, as the fourth revolution of anthropology, why did enterprise anthropology occur in China and Asia? Due to the rise of Four Asian Tigers (South Korea, Singapore, Chinese Taiwan, and Chinese Hong Kong), various types of enterprise emerged in China, as an emerging economy. China has experienced dramatic economic social transformation (such as large-scale urbanization, industrialization, and marketization, etc.) (Zhang 2015c), which requires extensive investigation of markets and enterprises. Enterprise anthropology emerged at that time. The local breakthrough can be seen as a growth of anthropology. Fourthly, the main scholars of the former three revolutions that occurred in the West are different from the fourth one. This time, the main scholars are Chinese, and the academic supporters are scholars from Asian countries. In a sense, the rise of enterprise anthropology not only triggered the fourth revolution, but also represents a local breakthrough and transformation in China and Asia. By contrast, traditional Western anthropology's advantage has declined substantially. Looking to the future, whether on the Chinese or

global academic stage, enterprise anthropology promoted by Chinese and Asian scholars has great potential.

In the 180 years since the First Opium War (1839–42), Chinese scholars have been used to looking up to the West. This servile attitude to foreign ideas still persists in Chinese academic circles. Western scholars look down on our non-western anthropology, because we don't have our own scientific theory or thoughts, and our studies only offer raw material for their studies (Freedman 1963). But established and led by Chinese scholars, enterprise anthropology is the fruit of six generations of effort by Chinese anthropologists. The academic achievements are: first, triggering the fourth revolution of anthropology; second, representing an end to Chinese anthropologists following in the steps of Western scholars; third, leading Chinese anthropologists to the frontier of global anthropology; and fourth, occupying or dominating a commanding elevation on the international academic stage by Chinese as non-western scholars.

Both tragic narrations about under-developed ethnic groups and cynical reveals of realistic problems are not real academic targets of Chinese anthropological studies. Chinese anthropologists should build up theoretical confidence (don't be proud of worshipping Westerners; don't be proud of parroting ides). Facing the whole economic social transformation and various types of enterprise, I think that Chinese anthropologists should propose local practical anthropological theories based on Chinese local fieldwork and academic thinking. I hope that this article will break the ice and evoke the scholars of the post-1970s and 80s generations, and finally achieve our goal of advancing Chinese local theory and schools of thought which can also contribute to global anthropology.

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