



Selected English Papers by the School of  
Tourism Management of Sun Yat-sen University

# Tourism and Hospitality Research in China

— ( Volume 1 ) —



Edited by BAO Jigang



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# Preface

Tourism research in China has received increasing attention in the domestic and international academic communities through publications in Chinese and English. Although reviews on such publications have given scholars outside China a general overview of the research of tourism in China, they cannot do justice to the work by mainland scholars, which appeared in various journals over a period of time. Furthermore, less was done to showcase the work from one research team of a given university.

The present collection of papers by the faculty members and research students of the School of Tourism Management (STM), Sun Yat-sen University, intends to fill in the gap. The collection selects from 126 papers published in more than 20 international journals from 2008 to 2017 in the areas of tourism, hospitality, sports and leisure by the faculty members and research students of STM, a leading and fast developing tourism and hospitality institution in China.

The criteria for selecting the 46 papers are: 1) All papers have been published in the six leading tourism and hospitality journals, namely *Annals of Tourism Research*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Tourism Management*; 2) All papers related to tourism, hospitality, sports and leisure that appeared in top non-tourism journals are included, *Progress in Human Geography* being one example; 3) When a faculty member has not published in the above journals, one of his/her publications in a referred journal is included, for instance, *Journal of China Tourism Research*.

Papers in the collection were published no later than the end of February, 2017. Papers published online are not included due to copyright issues.

The collection consists of five parts. The first part is on research progress, philosophical and conceptual issues in tourism. The second part is on residents' perceptions of and attitudes towards tourism development. The third part focuses on sustainable tourism and destination development. The fourth part is on tourist behaviours and destination marketing. The fifth part is on hospitality and event research.

I take this opportunity to thank the Commissioning Editor Mr Yanxu Sun and his team for their support, understanding and patience throughout the editing and preparation process. I am very grateful for the funding from Sun Yat-sen University and the institutional support from STM. My gratitude also goes to the colleagues who helped at various stages. In addition, I would also like to thank the original journals and publishers for granting the reuse permissions of the respective papers.

Finally, I am especially grateful for Dr Ganghua Chen for his work in contacting authors, publishers, and editing manuscripts, and for Professor Honggang Xu for her help in obtaining copyrights. This book would not have come into being without their effort and expertise.

BAO Jigang

April, 2017

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# **Part One**

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## **Research Progress, Philosophical and Conceptual Issues in Tourism**



# Tourism geography in China, 1978-2008: whence, what and whither? <sup>①</sup>

*Jigang Bao\*, Laurence J. C. Ma*

## Abstract

Tourism geography did not exist in China before 1978. Since its birth shortly after the 1978 reforms, it has been growing rapidly. After a brief period of growth with strong interests in theoretical issues, the field over the last two decades has been dominated by applied work. This is attributable to the rise of tourism as an important source of national and local income which demands better planning of tourism resources, and to the neoliberalization of the educational system at the university level. Topics of theoretical inquiry are suggested for the development of a more balanced tourism geography in China.

## 1. Introduction

China's 1978 policy to reform her economic system and to open to the outside world (*gaige kaifang*) has brought dramatic changes to almost all sectors of the nation's economy and society, including the revival of pre-revolutionary social science disciplines and the emergence of new subdisciplinary branches in sociology, anthropology and human geography. From the 1949 revolution to the 1978 reforms, geography in China was under the influence of the former Soviet Union, dominated by physical specializations. Economic geography, the only visible branch of geography outside of physical geography and cartography, occupied a decidedly secondary position (Liu and Lu, 2002).

During the period from 1949 to 1976, China's rigid socialist ideology and tightly controlled centrally planned economy left little room for the existence of human geography. Under the strong influence of the former Soviet Union, geography was essentially an applied academic enterprise dominated by such physical branches as geomorphology, climatology, pedology, hydrology and the geography of vegetation (Wu, et al, 1984). With the exception of economic geography which was seen as germane to the national agenda of socialist economic construction, human geography was

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<sup>①</sup> This paper was originally published as: Bao, J., & Ma, L. J. (2010). Tourism geography in China, 1978–2008: Whence, what and whither? *Progress in Human Geography*, 35(1), 3–20.

at best viewed as irrelevant to socialist economic development and hence ignored. During periods of ultra-leftist political movements, human geography was even labeled “pseudo-science” serving the needs of foreign imperialists. Urban, political, social and tourism geographies were nonexistent and historical geography was visibly marginalized. The sole mission of all branches of geography mandated by the state was to engage in highly practical and empirical studies to support the nation’s planned socialist economic construction (Ma and Noble, 1979).

In this paper, we trace the emergence of tourism geography as a new subdiscipline in China in the reform era, analyzing its evolution and critically assessing its strengths and weaknesses covering its 30-year history since 1978. Although a number of books and numerous articles on Chinese tourism geography have been published in the West (for books see, for example, Lew and Yu, 1995; Lew, Yu and Zhang, 2003; Oakes, 1997 and 1998), the field has not been critically reviewed outside of China. Bao’s (2002) analysis of doctoral dissertations on China’s tourism geography completed in China is quite brief, and Zhang’s (2003) and Zhang and Lew’s (1997) descriptive accounts of tourism research in China are not specifically focused on tourism geography. Given that China is one of the top five countries in terms of international tourist arrivals (54.7 million in 2007) and international tourism receipts (\$41.9 billion in 2007)(UNWTO, 2008), that a great deal of research has been done by Chinese tourism geographers, and that the field has just passed its thirtieth year of history, we feel that a comprehensive review of its developmental trends and a critical assessment of the issues facing Chinese tourism geographers is in order.

Our analysis will focus on the research output in the Chinese language contributed by tourism geographers residing in China. We limit our analysis to this body of localized knowledge because it is highly comprehensive in coverage that effectively reflects the status of the field of Chinese tourism geography and because it is the most influential body of knowledge that shapes the thought patterns of Chinese geography students. It should be noted that this corpus of knowledge, although in Chinese, has been influenced by Western literature as a limited number of Chinese geographers are able to read English and some English books have been translated into Chinese, including the influential volume by Mathieson and Wall (1982). It should be noted that a small number of Chinese tourism geographers have served as visiting scholars in Western countries and a small but increasing number of Chinese students have earned or are studying for advanced degrees in Western universities, and they have published papers in Western journals either independently or in collaboration with their Western mentors (e.g., Yang and Wall, 2008; Huang, Wall and Mitchell, 2007). We do not include such papers for analysis as their impact on tourism geography in China is largely indirect because of language barrier. However, when Western authors’ papers appear in Chinese journals, they are included (e.g., Xu, Zhang, Wall, Cao and Zhang, 2009).

In this paper, we aim at achieving three related goals through three different analytical lenses. First, we provide a bird’s-eye view of the terrain of tourism geography in China, highlighting its origin and major directions of development as revealed in a large body of periodical literature contributed by more than a thousand geographers in China in the last three decades.<sup>1</sup> Second,

through critical self-reflexivity, we focus on the major question of the (lack of) relationship between practical/empirical work and academic research in Chinese tourism geography, addressing how post-reform neoliberal institutional environment at the national as well as local levels have powerfully affected the work of tourism geographers in China. Third, in the last section of the paper before the conclusion, against the backdrop of the impact of changing institutional environment and academic neoliberalism that have rendered tourism geography in China something less than a full-fledged academic subdiscipline of geography, we will offer some ideas for research which might provide some counterweights that could perhaps help render China's tourism geography a more balanced branch of its human geography.

Being a voice from the distant margin of the "mainstream" geography which is said to have been dominated by "hegemonic" Anglo-American perspectives (Gutiérrez and López-Nieva, 2001; Yeung, 2001; Yeung and Lin, 2003), we hope the findings of the paper will help non-Chinese readers better understand the nature of tourism geography in a large and rapidly growing global economy and, at the same time, in some small ways contribute to the future growth of Chinese tourism geography.<sup>2</sup> Our analytical position echoes a recent voice from China which calls for bridging the research gaps between Western "mainstream" and Chinese economic geographies and which urges scholars to recognize the importance of contextualized research (Liu, 2009). This paper will show that whereas the work by Chinese tourism geographers has always been contextualized, overemphasis on solving practical problems of tourism has rendered Chinese tourism geography an excessively applied field of study. Despite the infusion of Western scholarship into Chinese tourism geography, few studies by Chinese tourism geographers have been able to play a role in bridging the gaps of mutual understanding between Western and Chinese tourism geographies, a goal, we argue, can best be reached at the levels of theories, concepts and ideas through a more balanced restructuring of scholarship in China's tourism geography.

The paper will highlight the main characteristics of tourism geography knowledge produced in China. Its significance goes beyond Chinese tourism geography as some of the issues identified are also found in varying degrees in other branches of human geography and in other social science disciplines in China. In addition, the findings have broad implications for human geography outside of China as it addresses how institutional and neoliberalized financial forces have strongly shaped the process of knowledge production as well as determined the very nature of such knowledge. As we will show, the academic outcome of knowledge production in Chinese tourism geography is less than satisfactory, and it begs the question as to what can or should be done to bring about some improvement.

## **2. The birth of tourism geography**

A variety of genres of literary and descriptive accounts of regions and places in China and abroad abounds in China's long history. Travel and geographic writings can be found in official dynastic histories, travel diaries, random literary notes and essays (*biji*) by scholars, and in poems,



odes and ditties produced by historians, scholar-officials, local gentries, religious emissaries and other types of literati. Whereas a large corpus of travel-related literature known generally as *youji* (literally, tour records) has long existed, tourism as a serious branch of scholarship and a type of profit-generating economic activity did not emerge in China until the 1978 reforms.

During the first three decades of socialism in China when the key concern of socialist central planning was what has been characterized as “Big Push Industrialization” centering on the production of heavy industrial goods (Naughton, 2007), tourism as an economic activity was never a part of the national economy. Indeed, it was never even officially recognized as a meaningful activity. One possible explanation for its lack of recognition is that it was part of the tertiary sector which in the socialist mindset was officially deemed “non-productive” incapable of generating capital to support socialist industrialization. However, escorted tours were occasionally provided by the state as a political and diplomatic tool used to show hospitality to privileged foreign visitors who were friendly to China and to overseas Chinese dignitaries who had political and economic influence in China and abroad (Xiao, 2006).

Tourism as an officially sanctioned economic activity and a clearly recognized body of knowledge emerged in China shortly after the 1978 reforms which aimed at the creation of a “socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics.” Since then, the speed, scope and depth of China’s economic and social transformations have been extremely rapid, profoundly affecting all sectors of the economy and society, including the emergence of tourism as a major strategy for national and regional economic development and a new form of scholarship in the social sciences and management (Wen and Tisdell, 2001; Xu, 1999; Lew and Yu, 1995). Under the strong leadership of Deng Xiaoping who opened China’s doors to the outside world and spearheaded the growth of China’s market economy, tourism was quickly embraced by leaders of all administrative echelons throughout the nation as an “industry without chimneys” capable of earning handsome income for the nation. In a series of wide-ranging talks to government officials and industrial and business leaders in 1978-79, Deng repeatedly provided detailed instructions for the development of tourism as an important growth strategy and as a showcase of reforms (Xiao, 2006).

Once the green light for tourism was turned on by China’s top leadership, tourism planning and research quickly took off at the national and local levels, rapidly creating a new form of economic landscape and a new source of national and local income and leading to the emergence of a new branch of knowledge in the disciplines of geography and management. In the last two decades or so, tourism has become a major source of income for almost all Chinese provinces. As the ability to generate income has been a key criterion in the evaluation of local leaders’ performance which affects their career future, tourism has been promoted earnestly and zealously throughout China. Consequently, China in the last three decades has witnessed a remarkable rush for the development of tourist sites to meet the capital needs of local governments and to satisfy the growing demand of foreign and domestic tourists. Meanwhile, the planning and development of tourist sites required the participation of a large number of scholars and planners. It was under such economic and political