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**ЭТНОЛОГИЯ, АНТРОПОЛОГИЯ**



**ETHNOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Wurigemule<sup>1</sup>, Pengsike Wuerhong<sup>2</sup>**

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**RESEARCH ON THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF ILI VALLEY  
IN CHINA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ETHNIC INTERACTION  
COMMUNICATION AND INTERPARTICIPATION**

**Abstract:** Over the course of thousands of years of history, the 56 ethnic groups of China have gradually formed a new socialist ethnic relationship of equality, unity, cooperation and mutual assistance through frequent and close interactions and communications, resulting in interdependence and interparticipation. Thus condensing into a pluralistic and unified Chinese nation community. This article is based on the case study method of anthropological fieldwork, through in-depth research on the mutual embeddedness and shared culture in the ethnic interaction communication and interparticipation in Xinjiang and the Ili Valley where multi-ethnic groups live together. The author believes that: in the process of ethnic inter-embedding, spatial inter-embeddedness is the foundation, livelihood inter-embeddedness is the core, and cultural inter-embeddedness is the focus. Because of this, the various ethnic groups in Ili Valley have formed the result of interparticipation and symbiosis of diversity based on the mutually embedded physical space, common historical homeland, same economic production, and mutually influencing culture. This is the underlying reason for the cultural diversity of the Ili Valley.

**Keywords:** ethnic Interaction Communication and Interparticipation, Ili Valley, Cultural Diversity

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**Қытайдың Ілі өзені алабындағы мәдени әралуандылығын  
этникалық алмасу және интеграция тұрғысынан зерттеу**

**Аңдатпа:** Мыңдаған жылдар бойы Қытайдың 56 ұлты жиі және тығыз қарым-қатынастар мен алмасулар арқылы бір-біріне сүйеніп, бірігіп, бірте-бірте теңдік, бірлік, ынтымақтастық және өзара көмек көрсетудің жаңа социалистік этникалық қатынасын қалыптастырды. Осылайша, плюралистік және біртұтас Қытай ұлттық қауымдастығы қалыптасты. Бұл мақалада антропологиялық далалық зерттеу әдістеріне сүйене отырып, Шыңжаң мен Ілі өзені алабындағы көп ұлтты топтар бірге тұратын этникалық өзара әрекеттестік пен интеграцияның ендірілген және ортақ мәдени аспектілері терең зерттеледі. Автор этникалық араласу процесінде кеңістіктік араласу – іргетас, күнкөрістің араласуы – өзегі, мәдени араласуы – басты назарда деп есептейді. Осыған байланысты Қытайдың Ілі өзені алабындағы түрлі этностар өздерінің бірге өмір сүретін кеңістігі, тарихтағы ортақ Отаны, бір экономикалық өндірісі және бір-бірімен өзара әрекеттесетін мәдениеті арқылы бүгінгі интеграция мен плюралистік симбиоздың нәтижесін қалыптастырды. Ілі өзені алабындағы мәдени әртүрліліктің негізгі себебі де осында.

**Түйін сөздер:** этникалық алмасу және интеграция, Ілі өзені аңғары, мәдени әртүрлілік.

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## Introduction

Ethnic interaction communication interparticipation and cultural diversity of Xinjiang in China.

Ethnic interaction communication and interparticipation. “Intermixed and integrated living has shortened the spatial distance between people of all ethnic groups. In their lives, everyone is subtly influenced by the culture of other ethnic groups, understands each other, is influenced by what they have heard, and is eclectic, and gradually achieves cultural integration and symbiosis, that is, cultural interembedding.” (Ma Zhongcai:2021) In the long history of Xinjiang, ethnic groups have co-located with each other, tolerated, influenced and integrated with each other, showing a state of development of harmonious coexistence and pluralistic integration.

Unique regional characteristics. The Ili Valley is located in the northwest of China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and is administratively defined as the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture. Xinjiang has a vast territory, unique topography, interspersed with mountains and basins, and the basins are surrounded by high mountains, commonly known as “three mountains sandwiched by two basins”. The three mountains refer to the Altai Mountains in the north, the Kunlun Mountains in the south, and

the Tianshan Mountains in the middle. Xinjiang is divided into two parts in the middle of the Tianshan Mountains, the Tarim Basin in the south and the Junggar Basin in the north, commonly known as the south of the Tianshan

Mountains for southern Xinjiang and the north of the Tianshan Mountains for northern Xinjiang. Due to the huge differences in topography and landform, Xinjiang also shows regional differences and characteristics in climate, altitude, natural resources and other aspects, there is “wear fur jacket in the morning, wear yarn in the afternoon, eat watermelon around the fire”.

Diverse regional culture. As an important hub of cultural communications between the East and the West along the ancient Silk Road, Xinjiang has not only been a place where many ethnic groups live since ancient times, but also a place where different civilizations, cultures and religions gather. In 1981, Ji Xianlin, a famous Chinese master of Orientalism and linguist, pointed out in his book *A Study of Xinjiang and Comparative Literature* that “there are only four cultural systems in the world with a long history, vast territory, self-contained system and far-reaching influence: China, India, Islam, Europe and America, there is nothing else, and there is only one place where these four systems converge, and that is Xinjiang in China (Ji Xianlin:1982).



Figure 1 –Topographic map of Xinjiang (quoted from the Internet)

*The communication and interparticipation of farming civilization and nomadic civilization.* The interaction between the agrarian people in the Central Plains and the nomadic people in the northern steppe was the main external factor affecting the evolution of the ethnic pattern in the Western regions, and eventually changed the local ethnic and cultural landscape. (Wang Xin:2023) It can be said that thousands of years ago, Xinjiang had exchanges and integration of agricultural civilization and nomadic civilization. During China's third archaeological survey in 2016, two complete horse skulls and bronzes dating from 3,900 to 3,600 years ago were unearthed at the southern site of Alao Mountain in Xinjiang, which is of great significance to the study of cultural exchanges between the East and the West, and the integration of farming civilization and nomadic civilization. Such cultural communication and interparticipation laid the prehistoric foundation for the later formation of the Silk Road. In addition, according to historical data, the Central Plains, which represented the farming culture, and the Western Regions, which represented the nomadic civilization, had communicated such as sending ambassadors, princesses and relatives, and two-way migration as early as the Western Han Dynasty of China, and they learned from each other in this process, speeding up the process of ethnic interparticipation.

*Rich languages.* There are more than 30 languages used in Xinjiang in history, including Hun, Tocharian, Turkic, Sogdian, Uighur, ancient Chinese Persian, Tubo, Mongolian, Manchu, and Chinese, which belong to Sino-Tibetan, Altaic, Indo-European, and Semitic languages. At the same time, there were 28 languages in Xinjiang's history, including Chinese, Tocharian, Khotanese, Turkic, Sogdian, Persian, Chagatai, Khitan, Uighur Mongolian, Tote, Manchu and so on. These diverse and rich languages are reflected in the place names of various ethnic languages in Xinjiang. For example, the ancient Setian place names "Shache" and "Khotan", the ancient Sogdian place name "Shule", the Tocharian place name "Qiuci", the Sanskrit place name "Yanqi", the Turkic place name "Aksu" (white water), "Bai Cheng" (rich), Mongolian place name "Bortala" (grey grassland), "Bayingol" (rich river), "Narat" (place with sun) and so on. According to statistics, among the place names of Bole City in Xinjiang, there are 611 Mongolian names(84%); Kazakh names 55(7.6%); 47 Chinese names(6.5%); 9 Uighur names(1.2%); 5 lingual names (0.7%). These names reflect the history and present situation of multi-ethnic migration and co-

living in Xinjiang, and also show the multi-ethnic cultural characteristics of Xinjiang.

*Various religions coexist in harmony.* The diversity and interparticipation of religious culture is an important feature of Xinjiang regional culture. Before the introduction of Islam in the 10th century, Xinjiang practiced most of the world's major religions or folk beliefs, including Zoroastrianism, shamanism, Buddhism (both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism), Manichaeism, Nestorianism, and Taoism. Today, these religious or folk beliefs have left archaeological remains in Xinjiang, as well as in the cultures of various ethnic groups. The introduction of Islam has had a significant impact on the development of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. The Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, Tajik, Kirgiz, Uzbek, Tatar and other traditional ethnic groups in Xinjiang believe in Islam and celebrate the most solemn festivals of the year, such as the Eid al-Adha Festival and the Eid al-Adha Festival.

### Research methods

This article mainly uses anthropological fieldwork methods and literature research methods, and on this basis, analyzes and summarizes relevant theories. First of all, fieldwork is the most important research method in the disciplines of anthropology and ethnology. This article is a mini-multi-ethnography about the Ili River Valley. In addition to participant observation, there are also a variety of different field investigation methods such as structured in-depth interviews, unstructured interviews, and collection of folk oral materials. Secondly, in order to verify the development history and cultural diversity of the multi-ethnic groups in the Ili Valley, this article consults and refers to necessary historical documents. Finally, the author takes the theory of ethnic Interaction Interparticipation and inter-embeddedness as the main logical line, takes the Kazakhs, Mongolians, Uyghurs and other ethnic groups lived in the Ili Valley as the research objects, showing the ethnic Interaction Communication and Interparticipation of multi-ethnic groups in Xinjiang, and providing a basis for The theory of ethnic Interaction Interparticipation and inter-embeddedness a realistic basis.

### Discussion: Cultural Diversity in the Ili Valley

Ili is named after the cross-border river Ili River, the earliest seen in Chinese "The History of former Han Dynasty", known as Iie, Yili and other names,



and named Ili during the Qianlong of Qing Dynasty of China. The Ili River basin had its early inhabitants in the Neolithic Age, and is generally considered to have been a nomadic area of the Setsu people in the Pre-Qin period, Wusun land in the Han

Dynasty, under the control of the Western Regions, and the fief of the Chagatai Khan in the Yuan Dynasty. It was also an important habitat for the Huns, Rouran, Turkic, Uighur, Khitan, Junggar and other nomadic tribes, whose rise and fall had a profound impact on the course of Chinese, Central Asian and even world history.



**Figure 2** – The wedding ceremony of a Han Dynasty princess marrying King Wusun performed by the local Kazakh in Narati Grassland Scenic Spot, Xinyuan County, Yili (Photo by the author, June 2022)

According to the 7th China National Census in 2021, there are 47 ethnic groups living in the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, 13 of which are ethnic groups from Xinjiang. Ethnic minorities account for 64% of the population, of which the largest populations are Kazakh (25.5%), Uigur (15.9%), Hui (8.3%), Mongolian (1.69%), Xibe (0.83%). Through long-term cultural interaction communication and inter-participation, the multi-ethnic groups in Yili have formed a multi-dimensional, unique and colorful ethnic culture.

#### 1. “Eating Together”

Food, as the most basic premise of human life, not only meets the needs of human survival, but also contains rich cultural information. Food space has strong local attributes and is an important symbol to distinguish regional food culture and characteristics(

Wang Rui:2020). People in different regions have different eating habits, and through the “mirror” of food, local social and cultural characteristics can be reflected.

Specifically, the Ili Valley is mainly home to the Oirat Mongolian and Kazakh nomadic herders who like dairy products and meat; The Uyghurs, who are mainly engaged in farming and commerce, like to eat “lagman”, barbecue and various teas from flower ; Russians are good at making bread, cheese, pickled cucumbers, and beetroot soup; Xibe’s flatbreads and noodles; The favorite soup noodle slices, a kind of soup dumpling called “ququer”, mutton steamed buns, and beef ramen of Hui; Rice, glutinous rice, steamed buns, stir-fried vegetables made by Han people, etc. The food culture of the various ethnic groups in Ili is a diverse and rich cultural phenomenon. It reflects the adaptation and adjustment of the people of all ethnic groups in Ili to the natural and social environment, and also reflects the respect and tolerance of the people of Ili for different cultures.

Although the above-mentioned foods are specialties of various ethnic groups, it does not mean that they are unique to a certain ethnic group. On the contrary, they have become a regional symbol and symbol for the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

**“Naan”, a favorite dry food of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang.** Different ethnic groups in Xinjiang also have different ways of making Naan. For example, the Uyghur people make large and thin Naan, especially the Kuqa Naan is the most famous. At the same time, according to the main raw material, there are dozens of varieties such as Pi Ya Zi (onion) naan, sesame naan, rose naan, spicy naan, oil naan, Gosh naan (meat naan), raisin naan, dried fruit naan, and so on; Kazakhs and Mongolians also use naan pits made of bricks and clay pots to bake naan. The raw materials and production methods are similar to those of the Uyghurs, but the shape is small and thick, easy to carry, and It is not easy to dry out; For herdsmen who often move from farm to farm, there are other easier ways to bake naan, such as: “Hazan Naan”, which is baked in a pot over warm fire; “Tapan Naan”, a It is baked in a flat-bottomed iron pan; with the popularity of household appliances, “electric oven naan” has also become a time-saving and labor-saving preparation method. It can be seen that the same food, combined with the different living and production methods of various ethnic groups, has different production forms and rich varieties.



**Figure 3** – Pasta and dairy products on the dining table of Mongolian families in Nilek County (photo by the author in June 2023)

### **Milk tea of the Oirat Mongolian people in Ili.**

The Oirat Mongolian milk tea in the Ili Valley is different from the Mongolian milk tea in Inner Mongolia and Mongolia – it is not brewed, but “dried out”. The specific preparation steps are: add appropriate amounts of salt, milk, and brewed thicker brick tea into a tea bowl, then add boiling water. The milk tea “mixed” in this way not only requires a very skilled mastery of the proportion of salt, milk and tea, but the most important thing is a very special water boiling tool – “samor”. The name “samor” comes from the Russian word “Самовар” (oneself – to boil), so this vessel itself may also come from



**Figure 4** – Samor from the Qing Dynasty displayed in the Xinjiang Museum(quoted from the Internet)

Russia. The principle of Samor is that charcoal is added to the central chimney, and its heat boils the water in the peripheral tank and keeps it warm, ensuring that you can drink scalding boiling water for a long period of time. Therefore, the last step of the above preparation method is to connect the boiling water from the spout switch at the front bottom of the samor. During the process, the salt, milk and tea leaves in the bowl are fully stirred, so that the bowl of milk tea is completed.

**Smoked horse sausage and hand-caught “Naren” of Kazakhs.** The history of human domestication of horses can be traced back to about 5,500 years ago. During this long history, horses have made great contributions to human development. At the same time, horses, as herbivorous livestock, have been an important source of meat and milk for nomads since ancient times. Smoked horse sausage is one of the special delicacies of Ili. It is a smoked product made by the Kazakh people in the custom of “slaughtering winter meat(preparing the meat of a whole cow or a whole horse for winter)” for hundreds of years in order to better and longer preserve the food for the winter. Meat and horse intestines. Smoked horse intestines, called “Kaz” in Kazakh, are made by cutting the horse ribs and meat into strips, marinating them with salt and seasonings, filling them with washed horse intestines about 1 meter long, tying them tightly at both ends, and then Smoke it by pine branches and leaves. Due to the uniqueness of this production method and the attraction of the special taste of horse meat itself, smoked horse intestine has gradually become one of the favorite foods of Han, Uyghur and other ethnic groups.

When Genghis Khan expanded the territory of the Mongol Empire with the help of his cavalry army, horses were not only the best tools for transportation, transportation, combat, and hunting, but also became the source of spiritual power for the Mongolians. Therefore, Mongolians in many areas have the custom of not eating horse meat. However, the Mongolians in the Ili Valley have lived together with the local Kazakhs for hundreds of years and are influenced by them. Some people eat horse meat and use Kazakh smokers or enemas in the process of preserving and processing meat. food preparation methods.

In addition, there is a kind of pasta that is eaten with boiled meat – “Naren”, which is also a special food of Ili. The method of making Naren is no different from daily noodles, except that the width, size, and shape of the noodles vary slightly from



region to region. Some are noodles with a diameter of about 5 centimeters (called Bes Parmakh in Kazakh), and some are The “belt noodles” about 3-5 centimeters can also be ordinary long noodles. After these noodles are cooked in the soup pot where the meat is cooked, they are taken out and placed on a large plate. Then pour the soup made from onions, tomatoes and other vegetables over the noodles to season it and serve it to the table. The host will then use the cooked meat to Cut it with a knife and serve it to family members or guests to eat the meat together with noodles. In traditional nomadic life, Naren is eaten with hands, so it is also called Hand-caught Naren. The way of eating Naren with boiled meat is a unique food of the Mongolians in the Ili Valley that distinguishes them from Mongolians in other areas. It can be seen that this is influenced by the food culture of other ethnic groups such as the Kazakhs.



**Figure 5** – Smoked dried meat in the homes of Kazakh herdsmen in the Ili Valley(photo by the author in September 2019)

## 2. The “talent” of multilingualism

Communication and Interparticipation of language are important dimensions of local social and cultural embeddedness. The spatial environment in which multi-ethnic groups live together has also contributed to the ability of ethnic minorities in the Ili Valley to master multiple languages, and they are often called “talented with languages”.

Judging from the history of multi-ethnic interaction and interparticipation, language, as a communication tool, has played a very important role in various stages. Especially after Zhang Qian’s mission to the Western Regions connected

the communication channels between the Central Plains and the Western Regions, various cultures such as the Central Plains Han culture, the Western Regions culture, and the Persian culture converged and collided with each other, laying the foundation for today’s multi-ethnic culture in Xinjiang. By the Mongol and Yuan Dynasties, Mongolian, Uyghur, Turkic, Persian, Arabic, and Chagatai script were all in use in today’s Xinjiang region. Typical period of coexistence. This is a typical period in the history of the Western Regions when multiple cultures coexisted. It is precisely because of this history of multi-ethnic exchanges and integration that the languages of various ethnic groups in the Ili Valley today have the following mutually inclusive features:

### **A large number of Chinese loanwords.**

As the common spoken and written language of the national government, the learning and use of Chinese language and characters has gradually had a profound impact on the languages of other ethnic groups in Xinjiang. On the other hand, Xinjiang Chinese has also absorbed vocabulary from various local ethnic groups. According to statistics by some scholars, there are as many as 300 Uyghur loanwords in the southern Xinjiang Chinese dialect. Some loanwords not only exist in spoken language, but many have also entered literature. in the works. (Ouyang Wei: 2010)

**A large number of Russian loanwords.** Since the second half of the 19th century, Tsarist Russia crossed the Kazakh grassland and occupied the Ili region of China, setting up primary and secondary schools in the Ili Valley, Tacheng and other areas. Through this strong and rapid cultural import, and over the next hundred years, Russians continued to move into the Ili region through war escapes, resettlement of military dependents, business, and education. As a result, the Russians today have become an important member of the 56 ethnic groups in China. . In the process of such cultural contact, the Russian language had a great impact on the local ethnic languages, and today there are a large number of Russian loanwords in the languages of various ethnic groups in the Ili Valley.

Russian loanwords are common to the Mongolian, Kazakh, and Uyghur languages in the Ili Valley, and have changed in their respective pronunciations. For example, transportation nouns: mashin (car), avtobus (bus), kombain (harvester), poyez (train), belet (ticket), etc.; educational nouns: gezet (newspaper), zhurnal (magazine), gramatika (grammar), aptor (author), etc.; department or position nouns: sot (court), zavot (factory), shopor

(driver), sestira (nurse), clothing nouns: shavk (hat), shark (scarf), kalash (galoshes), etc.; daily necessities nouns: chashka (cup), parashok (washing powder), shotka (brush), termes (thermos), etc.; food and vegetable nouns: kartyshka (potatoes), pamadyr (tomatoes), etc.

**Vocabulary shared by Altaic languages.** The Turkic branch and the Mongolian branch belong to the Altaic language family, so there are

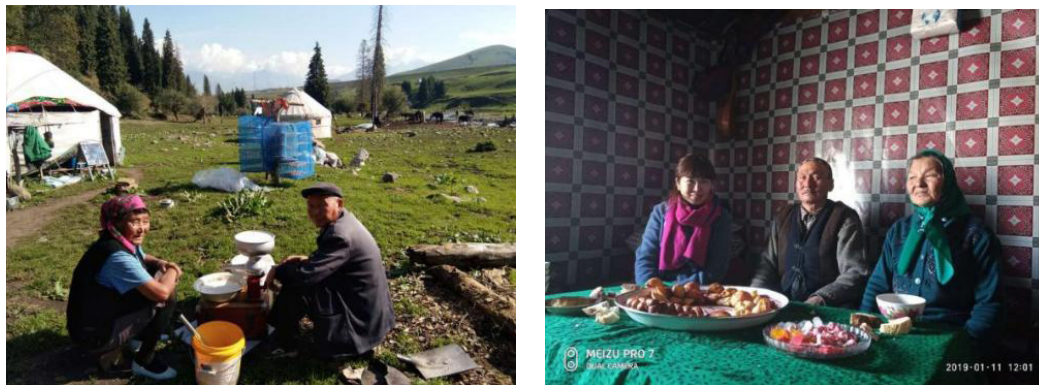
some identical words in Mongolian, Kazakh, and Uyghur. Some of these words are borrowed from Mongolian, some are borrowed from Turkic, and some are borrowed from Arabic and Persian. It is not possible to verify them one by one, but it is enough to prove that at a certain period in history, these ethnic groups must have had a certain degree of language contact and cultural communication.

**Table 1** – Examples of similar words in Mongolian, Kazakh and Uyghur

In Chinese	In Mongolian	In Kazakh	In Uyghur
Brother	aqa	aga	aka
relatives by marriage	quda	kuda	
uncle	nayaču	nagaashi	
hunter	angčĭn	angchi	auchi
forever	möngke	mang	mengu
sky	tengri	tenger	
hat	malayai	malakhai	
well	qudduy	kudukh	kudukh
eagle	bürküđ	burkud	burkud
look	qara	karau	kara
cigarette	tamaqi	tamaka	tamaka
liquor	ariqi	arakh	arakh
container	saba	saba	
net	toor	tor	tor
yellow	šira	sar	serik
black	qara	kar	kar
blue	köke	kok	kok
Mud	balčiy	balshyk	
long rope	aryam□i	arkhan	argamj
bridle	noytu	nokta	noxta
lasso	čalma	salma	salma
imprint	tamaya	tanba	tamga
barn	qoruya	khora	khotan
fence	qašiya	khasha	
ladderladder	šatu		xota
Grape	ü□üm	uzim	uzum
ice	mösü	muz	muz

**3. Clothing culture with regional characteristics.** As far as lifestyle clothing is concerned, the Oirat Mongolians and Kazakhs in

the Ili Valley show convergence, with only some slight differences in individual details and color preferences.



**Figure 6** – Mongolian herdsmen (left) and Kazakh herdsmen (right) in Nilke, Ili(photo by the author)

The similarity in clothing between the Kazakhs and Mongolians in the Ili Valley can be summarized in the following aspects: First, the waistcoat. Because the weather in the Ili Valley has a large temperature difference between morning and evening, the most common clothing worn by Mongolian herdsmen and Kazakh herdsmen are various types of waistcoats, including animal fur, cotton lining, wool knitting and so on. The waistcoat can be worn on a dress, a sweater, or under clothes to keep the belly warm without hindering housework. The second is headscarves and hats. Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kirgiz women who believe in Islam in the Ili Valley, especially married women, all wear headscarves; Oirat Mongolian women also wear different headscarves during wedding ceremonies, housework, and when going out. Therefore, various square scarves and silk scarves are the most common souvenirs among ethnic minority women in the Ili Valley. Men mostly wear hats, especially Oirat men's hats, which are usually short-tongued cotton and linen with a brim (the second man from the left in Figure 3-25). The third is skirts. Ethnic minority women in the Ili Valley love skirts very much, especially the Kazakhs and Uyghurs. It can be said that skirts are their most daily attire. In terms of classification, there are dresses and skirts, and the texture is thicker. Interestingly, the skirts of Kazakh and Uyghur women can be worn on trousers instead of just with tighter leggings or pantyhose. They are even worn on outer trousers as decoration. Fourth is footwear. There are also similar ways of layering, such as the “klasha” mentioned above, which are

mostly made by Uyghur leatherworkers. Inside are thin-soled soft leather boots called “maisi”, which are worn as floor socks at home. They are warm and durable. If it is dirty, put on custom-made shallow overshoes made of the same leather or beef tendon material when going out.



**Figure 7** – A little Kazakh girl on the spring pasture in Nraat Town, Xinyuan County, Ili (photo by the author in June 2021)

### 3. Customs and taboos

Each ethnic group has formed many customary etiquette and taboos passed down from generation to generation in its own long history and culture.



The Kazakhs and Oirat Mongols in the Ili Valley have influenced and penetrated each other during hundreds of years of cultural contact, forming similar customs and taboos.

#### **Home decoration and dining table etiquette.**

Kazakhs are very good at wood carving, embroidery, leather processing, etc., and the furnishings in herders' homes are exquisite and beautiful. Wood carving products are closely related to folk applied arts made of felt, tapestry, embroidery and other elements, and are an important part of yurt decoration, living utensil decoration and art decoration. Among them, wood carving products are closely connected with folk applied arts made of felt, tapestry, embroidery and other elements, and are an important part of yurt decoration, living utensil decoration and art decoration. Leather is used to sew coats, shoes, belts, horse gear, dairy storage bags and portable daily necessities. Mongolian homes in Ili, Tacheng, and Altay areas also have many exquisite carved wooden boxes and embroidery products. Even in modern settlements or buildings, ethnic minority people still spread exquisite carpets and colorful tapestries, and use gorgeous fabrics to make many cushions, which are placed on the Kang around the long dining table in the middle.



**Figure 8** – Mongolian herdsmen's winter pasture house in Nilke County, Ili(photo by the author in June 2021)

It can be said that the large bed (called Kang in Chinese) that occupies two-thirds of the entire guest room and the rich table manners are one of the remarkable characteristic cultures of the Kazakhs and Mongolians in the Ili Valley. Their Kang is different from the Nuan Kang in the Northeast. In order to block the moisture of the grass and

accommodate the bedroom function of the whole family, they are usually made of local materials using wooden piles and wooden planks. Not only does it have the functions of moisture isolation, ventilation, and preventing snakes and insects, the bottom of the kang can also store debris. The table manners placed on such a big Kang by the ethnic minorities in the Ili Valley are of more research significance. Especially during holidays and when distinguished guests visit, the table is filled with a dazzling array of snacks, dairy products, candies, dried fruits, jams, etc., and will be arranged according to milk tea, stir-fry dishes, meat dishes, pasta, drinks, toasts, souvenirs, etc. Treating guests in different orders is a common local way of entertaining guests. To a certain extent, the tableware on the dining table and the types of food served to guests symbolize the economic strength and status of the family, which is similar to a cultural significance similar to a "potlatch" (Franz Boas: 1897).



**Figure 9** – Handmade products of Mongolian herdsmen in Nilke County, Ili: the upper left is a candy and dried fruit storage bag, the upper right is a tea bag, the lower left is a salt bag, and the lower right is a chopstick storage bag (dowry in 1979, photo by the author in June 2021 moon)

In terms of hospitality etiquette, attention is paid to details such as the posture and sequence of the host pouring tea and handing bowls, as well as the different parts of beef and sheep prepared for different guests. In addition, from the perspective of



life etiquette, Kazakh and Mongolian elders usually treat their daughters with their husbands for the first time after they get married, or when their newborns come to their homes for the first time after they are born. The ritual of gift giving. Among them, there is a ceremony to “identify” (give) a cow, horse, or sheep to a newborn, that is, give a foal, a calf, or a lamb as a gift. This is a very traditional custom. Even if the owner does not have livestock, he will use cash, gold and silver instead.

#### **Division of labor between men and women.**

Judging from the traditional division of labor between men and women in herder families, in Kazakh and Mongolian families, milking, making milk, making tea and cooking, and taking care of housework are all women’s jobs, while they go out to take care of cattle and sheep, and shear sheep, , buying and selling livestock, etc. are all men’s jobs. In terms of spatial arrangement in the house, the construction of seating space, women’s space, and men’s space has led to the custom of men and women sitting separately. It is even more obvious when there are seniority and status divisions such as father-in-law and daughter-in-law, son-in-law and aunt-in-law. This is also reflected in the modern wedding banquets of the Kazakhs and Mongolians in the Ili Valley: even in weddings held in hotels, men and women usually sit separately on the left and right sides. Even if a family attends a wedding banquet, the male host will sit Men’s table, while the hostess sat at the women’s table.

**Livestock and ecosystem aspects.** As nomadic peoples, the local knowledge systems of the Kazakhs and Mongolians are consistent. For the Mongols and Kazakhs, sky, earth, grassland, water, and animals are the most precious existences. In addition, they also respect food and fire. For the nomads living on the grassland, many animals are the “masters” of the grassland. Some animals may make them avoid them in fear, while some animals are regarded as beliefs (totem worship). For example, for the Mongols and Kazakhs, even though wolves exist as evil enemies that eat sheep, due to their important role in maintaining the ecological balance of the grassland, there is still a saying that wolves cannot be killed, and even wolf teeth, bones, etc. It is worn on the body or above the baby’s cradle to ward off evil spirits. In addition, pregnant, thin and nursing animals cannot be hunted, otherwise they will be punished for lack of mercy. For example, the Kazakh folk saying “If you hurt a frog, black spots will appear on your face” and Oirat Mongolian elders say, “Those who steal sparrow eggs will have pockmarks on their faces.”

Mongolians, Kazakhs, and Uyghurs all believe that water is pure and sacred, so there are many taboos about water.: cannot pollute water sources; cannot pour garbage or spit into lakes, rivers, and canals; cannot wash hands feet, wash clothes, defecate in running water, etc. Elders usually say: “Pee in water, and your face will be covered with abscesses.” In daily life, cannot throw water after washing hands, and cannot splash water on others. It is especially taboo to splash water in the direction of others when they enter or go out. This is a very taboo behavior and a great disrespect for others.



**Figure 10** – Kazakh herders milk horses in the summer pasture in Xinyuan County, Ili(photo by the author in September 2019)

In Xinjiang, where many ethnic groups live together, while inheriting their own traditional culture, customs, and taboos, each ethnic group is also constantly accumulating experience, learning from each other, transforming taboos into beliefs, world views, and living habits, and continuing to influence each other. It is also a continuation of cultural embeddedness.

#### **Conclusion**

The “interembeddedness” in ethnic interembeddedness theory of China is put forward as a specific way to strengthen ethnic interaction communication and interparticipation. Firstly, it is the spatial distance at the material level that provides the prerequisite for communication for “mutual embeddedness”, and the long-term communication history at the temporal level is the condition for communication; Secondly, the intersecting economic

production methods and mutually influencing cultures promote cultural mutuality; Thirdly, interparticipation refers to mutual recognition, tolerance and acceptance of deep psychological consciousness, that is, “the people-to-people connection is the foundation for the consciousness of the Chinese nation’s community” (NarinBilig, 2020)

In this article, the people of various ethnic groups in the Ili Valley live in a common historical

homeland. Through long-term cultural contact and communication, they influence and absorb each other, forming a cultural sharing and mutual embedding in food, language, clothing, customs and taboos. This cultural interembedding and the cultural and psychological community formed by various ethnic groups through interaction communication and interparticipation are prerequisites for and promote each other.

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