

The Mongolian Minority in China

Guanhui GAO

Ph.D candidate

Research scholarship by CSC (China Scholarship Council)



In department of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science Rice University

The region of China that I would like to highlight as an important place to visit is Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in North China, as the people are rich with cultural history and beauty. The Mongolian is a legendary Minority, which have had a tremendous impact on historical process in Asia and Europe. The Mongolians have a population of around 5.81 million, mostly living in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in North China. In the 13th century, Genghis Khan unified tribes by force and diplomacy, and used the Mongol's horseback expertise to conquer an empire spanning from China to Eastern Europe, Afterwards, his grandson named Kublai established the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), when the Chinese territory reached its summit and the cultural communication had improved a great deal.

The Mongolian minority has its own Altaic-based language. A written language was created in the 13th Century, and Mongolian scholars have written texts on history, language, literature, medicine, astronomy, and



weapons. The main religion is Lama Buddhism. The Mongolians have been known as "a people of music and poetry." Their singing, sonorous, bold, passionate and unconstrained, is the true reflection of the temperament of the Mongolian people. Mongolian dances are known far and wide. Horse-head fiddle is a musical instrument favorite with the Mongolians. It provides fine accompaniment to solos with its low and deep, broad and melodious sounds.

The Mongolians' nomadic way of life determined their diet, which mainly consists of meat, milk and other dairy products. This included mutton, beef and goat, as well as milk and other dairy products from cattle and goats. On occasion horse meat was eaten, but this was generally only at religious ceremonies and during festivals, as the horse enjoys a near-sacred status among the Mongols. Mongolian traditionally roasts meat over an open and bake their bread in special ovens. Today, the diet of the Mongolians has been expanded to include vegetables as well as pasta and rice. Milk remains a staple in the Mongolian diet, however. It is also made into yoghurt, milk wine (fermented milk, the most prized of which is fermented mare's milk, which can be further fermented into a frothy, beer-like drink), milk tofu (a process involving coagulated, fermented milk, where the dry parts are separated and form into a stiff, tofu-like texture) and milk tea (crush the boiling brick tea or a few minutes, then slowly add milk while stirring). The Chinese hot pot boasts a history of more than 1000 years, while actually often called "Mongolian hot pot". In the 13th century, Mongol warriors had been known to cook with their helmets, which they used to boil food, but due to the complexity and specialization of the utensils and the method of eating it, in order to save time in the war, they invented the hot pot cooking, which is much convenient for Mongol warriors eating quickly and keeping move or fighting.

Mongolian costume is generally red, yellow or dark blue in color. A red or green waistband, Knee-high felt boots are a type of common footwear. Mongolians, men and women, wear cone-shaped hats in winter; they also like to wear silk or cloth turbans. Girls wear their hair parted in the middle, embellished with two large beads and agate, coral and green jade ornaments.



The Mongolians are warm-hearted and straightforward. They greet everyone they meet during their travels even they do not know each other. When visitors go to a Mongolian's home, they will be treated very well by being given wine. They admire fire and water so guests should not dry their feet or boots on the stove, nor should they wash or bathe in the river, as it is holy and clean in their eyes. In the Mongolian culture, colors are significant. At a Mongolian funeral, red and white should be avoided, whereas during their festivals, black and yellow should not be used.

Hada, a Tibetan word, is a strip of silk used as a greeting gift among both Tibetans and Mongolians. Mongolian Hada is generally white or light blue in



color. When one is lucky enough to be presented a Hada, one should grasp it gently in both hands while bowing slightly, and the presenter will also bow in return. The giving and receiving of Hada, including the act of bowing to each other, is an outward sign of mutual respect.

Naadam means "entertainment" in the mind of the typical Mongolian. The Festival almost is held during late August each year, when the harvest season reaches culmination. It can last 3 to 10 days, depending on the scale of the event, and people of any ethnic group or religious belief can participate in the games. The Naadam Festival of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is Mongolians' most magnificent yearly entertainment event in China, wrestling, horse racing, and archery, with cultural exhibits even songs and dance entertainment. Mongolians grow up on horsebacks and horses thus play an important part in their life. Every Mongolian loves to prove his worth by showing good horsemanship and archery as well as wrestling.



Naadam Festival



Horse race



Archery



Wrestling

All this has brought tremendous changes to the life of the Mongolian people. In the old days, the majority of them lived in hunger, being deprived of the essential means of life such as an old yurt. Today some Mongolians have become urban dwellers, most still live in the countryside. Many engage in animal husbandry, while others are farmers, they have well-furnished yurt and also many new houses with paned windows have been built in the Mongolian settlements. The Mongolians are living on vast grasslands; therefore, stockbreeding played a major role in their development, together with agriculture, handicrafts, and other processing industries.



As one of Mongolian minority, I am proud of personalities and culture, and I have a responsibility to promote Mongolian culture, and let people all over the world to know this outstanding minority. We are very glad to welcome people around the world to enjoying your happy time in Mongolia.



My brother and I

