

Study on the Ecological Emotions in Mongolian Desert Folk Songs

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Abstract: *Inner Mongolia is the largest and most diverse ecological functional area in northern China. Mongolian folk songs often express gratitude for nature, praise nature, reflect on life, promote ecological balance, and highlight the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature. This paper analyzes 553 folk songs from the collection Five Hundred Mongolian Folk Songs, focusing on the "ecological emotions" embodied in the desert folk songs that hold a significant position in Mongolian folk music. The study explores the mechanisms of these ecological emotions, their practical significance, and the role of Mongolian folk songs in ecological protection, emphasizing the contemporary relevance of the ecological culture reflected in these songs.*

Keywords: *Mongolian Folk Songs, Desert Folk Songs, Desert Ecology, Ecological Emotions, Ecological Education*

Introduction

Mongolian folk songs are collectively created by the Mongolian people over generations during their long-term life and production practices. These songs authentically reflect the life conditions of the Mongolian people, showcasing the wisdom of the working masses. Due to their long-standing nomadic lifestyle, the vast grasslands, continuous mountains, ancient forests, and desert oases have all served as their nomadic habitats. Thus, different tribes have produced folk songs with distinct artistic features and themes related to the grasslands, deserts, forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, and oases. Among these, desert folk songs stand out in form, ecological description, and ecological emotion, expressing the Mongolian people's deep affection for the desert as their beloved homeland, cherished native land, and cradle of life. This contrasts with the impressions and emotions associated with deserts in many other cultures.

In the desert environment, the love and reverence for nature may be even stronger. Due to the unique and fragile nature of the desert, respect for and awareness of the need to protect nature are heightened. These emotions are fully reflected in Mongolian folk songs, demonstrating the Mongolian people's concern for and love of the desert ecosystem. Some songs describe the important roles of unique desert species, such as camels and poplar trees, and reflect the resilience and perseverance of people facing the challenges and hardships of desert life. The study of ecological emotions in Mongolian folk songs, especially desert ecological emotions, is a highly meaningful topic. Through in-depth analysis and research of Mongolian folk songs, we can better understand the relationship and emotions between the Mongolian people and the desert environment and further promote and enhance these cultural

expressions.^[1]

1 Research Status

Mongolian folk songs have long received widespread attention and recognition from music theorists, composers, music educators, performers, and literary scholars. The research on Mongolian folk songs in China has developed unprecedentedly. Internationally, studies on Mongolian folk songs are mainly concentrated in Europe, Japan, and Mongolia.

1.1 Folk Song Research

Finnish linguist Gustaf John Ramstedt (1873-1950) recorded 32 Mongolian folk songs in Urga (now Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia) during a scientific expedition in November 1909. These are the earliest and most complete Mongolian music recordings discovered to date.

Renowned Russian Mongolist A. M. Pozdnev (1851-1920) conducted multiple field investigations on Khalkha, Oirat, and Buryat folk songs in Mongolian regions in the 19th century.

Danish explorer, Mongolist, and folk song researcher Henning Haslund Christensen (1896-1948) made several expeditions to China and Mongolia in his youth, collecting a large number of Mongolian folk songs.

Around 1907, Japanese scholar Kimiko Toriyi collected some Mongolian folk songs in Inner Mongolia and wrote *Observations of Mongolia Through Folklore*. In 1977, Japanese scholar Ryuutarou Hattori's book *Mongolian Folk Songs* discussed Mongolian folk songs and covered some long-tune melodies.

Mongolian scholar P. Horlo's *On Mongolian Folk Poetry* was published in traditional Mongolian script by the Inner Mongolia Education Press in 1939. In 1987, Z. Chaolu's *Song of Thirteen Steeds* was published by the Ulaanbaatar National Publishing House, focusing on folk songs from western Mongolia.

In China, works such as Lobsangchoidan's *Overview of Mongolian Customs*, Buhheshig's *Bingyin* magazine, and musicians An Bo, Xu Zhi, and Hulcha's *Selection of Eastern Mongolian Folk Songs* have been published. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, nearly 20 collections, including *Mongolian Folk Songs* and *Five Hundred Mongolian Folk Songs*, have been published, documenting Mongolian folk songs. Ulanjie has made significant research achievements in the areas of music history, morphology, and comparative studies of melodies. Between 1980 and 2000, Lü Hongjiu edited and published over 30 research papers on Mongolian folk songs, significantly advancing the field. Mantu from an aesthetic perspective studied Mongolian long tunes. Geriletu's research on singing techniques has been recognized by music theorists. Renowned singer Lasurong wrote biographical works about Mongolian long-tune singers.^[2]

2 Research on Mongolian Ecological Literature

Increasingly, sociologists and literary scholars have begun to question and reflect on the environmental development model of "develop first, protect later" and "destroy first, restore later." In the 19th century, American writer Henry David Thoreau keenly observed this issue and published *Walden*, advocating the idea that humans and nature are one. He believed that living in nature should be tranquil,

peaceful, and pleasant, a state achievable through closeness and harmony with nature. In the 1960s, American ecologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, making "ecological literature" a specialized term that spread throughout Europe, America, and worldwide.

In China, there has been profound reflection on the current state of the ecological environment, with a growing body of ecological literature. Influenced by their traditional culture, Mongolian writers have developed a spontaneous awareness of ecology. This, combined with the influence of foreign ecological thought trends and the ecological crisis on the grasslands, has strengthened the ecological protection awareness of the people and stimulated the creation of ecological literature. The popular song *Chillenge Song* depicts the ancient Mongolian Plateau's harmonious ecological environment, while classical Mongolian epics like *Jangar* and *Gesar* praise and depict their homeland. Mongolian ecological literature began to gain popularity in the 1980s and continues to thrive. In Inner Mongolia, notable ecological novels include Uzhertu's *The Stag with Seven Antlers*, Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem*, and Guo Xuebo's *Silver Fox*. The prose of Bao Erji Yuanye, known for its strong ecological awareness, is also worthy of study. Ba Suhe explored the origins and evolution of ecological themes in Mongolian literary traditions, elucidating their inherent characteristics and the cultural roots underpinning their development.^[3]

3 Desert Ecological Depictions in Mongolian Folk Songs

Mongolian folk songs, with their vast array of themes, often express gratitude towards nature, praise for natural beauty, reflections on life, the importance of maintaining ecological balance, and harmonious coexistence with the grasslands. The development history of Mongolian folk songs encompasses the preparation stage of ecological culture in ancient folk songs, which included content about nature, and also reflects the decline in ecological culture due to land reclamation. The characteristics of these songs are rooted in the nomadic economy, possess transformative significance, exhibit tendencies towards ecocentrism, and are marked by simplicity and primitiveness. The ecological culture depicted in Mongolian folk songs holds practical significance. It underscores the importance of respecting and following the laws of nature and the development rules of ecological culture in social production activities. It also suggests that the ecological culture in Mongolian folk songs bridges the gap between humans and nature, contributing to solving ecological issues.^[4]

Defying natural laws results in consequences, and only by adhering to the principles of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature can humanity thrive. This simple ecological philosophy is reflected in the ecological worldview, manifesting in ancient cultural practices such as reverence for the sky and earth, and rituals for mountains, water, and other sacred elements.

To delve into the ecological implications, functions, and emotional expressions of Mongolian folk songs, these songs can be classified based on their origins, popularity, and described landscapes into categories such as grassland folk songs, desert folk songs, plateau folk songs, and forest folk songs. Using the collection *Five Hundred Mongolian Folk Songs* as the analysis material, the author statistically categorized the songs into six major regions: Chahar, Urat, Ordos, Horqin-Bairin, Buryat-Bargu, Oirat, and Alashan. Among these, 46 songs feature desert themes, accounting for 8.31% of the total.

Textual Statistical Analysis of "Five Hundred Mongolian Folk Songs"

Region	Total Songs	Ecological Songs	Percentage
Chahar-Durvud	105	8	7.61%

Urat	71	3	4.22%
Ordos	91	22	24.17%
Horqin-Bairin	110	4	3.63%
Buryat-Bargu	86	3	3.48%
Alashan-Oirat	90	6	6.66%
Total	553	46	8.31%

"Folk songs are the foundation of aesthetics, the harbor of emotions, and the guidelines for behavior. The future ultimately belongs to the younger generation. Folk songs are like the ocean, vast and boundless; one can traverse but never exhaust it. Therefore, in the face of folk songs, there are only learners, not true experts. Ecology is timeless, life is endless, and living never stops. By analyzing the 46 desert ecological folk songs from the collection Five Hundred Mongolian Folk Songs, we can observe the following: 1. Ordos has the highest number of ecological songs, accounting for 24.17%, which might also indicate the extent of desertification in Ordos. 2. In some revered songs and those from tribes like Bargu-Buryat, desert ecological songs are significantly fewer."^[5]

3 Desert Ecological Depictions in Mongolian Folk Songs

Mongolian desert folk songs, as an essential part of Mongolian folk music, showcase the survival wisdom of the Mongolian people in desert environments, reflecting a profound ecological awareness and emotional depth. These songs embody the deep understanding and respect that the Mongolian people have developed for the desert environment through their long-standing nomadic lifestyle. Recognizing the importance and fragility of the desert ecosystem, Mongolian folk songs express reverence and care for the desert. For example, the Chahar-Durvud folk song "Marshland" includes the following lines in its second verse: "The frolicking sheep and calves on the sandy ground, remind me of my father and mother's teachings." Here, the singer reminisces about their childhood home, thinking of their parents and recalling scenes of herding sheep and calves, while also remembering their parents' earnest teachings. Similarly, the Chahar-Durvud folk song "The Little Yellow Horse that Knows the Way" includes the third verse: "The camels and livestock eat saxaul and camel thorn, my brother and sister-in-law taught me the nuances of life." A girl married far away expresses her longing for her homeland, parents, and relatives.

In the Ordos folk song "High Ridge," the singer describes, "On the high sandy ridge, the mist swirls around. Growing up, my daughter is to marry far away. The eagle soars over the Yellow River, the black steed runs on the vast road." The singer uses the expansive and magnificent springtime desert to praise its beauty, while also depicting life on the banks of the Yellow River, expressing a deep love for their homeland.^[6]

Mongolian desert folk songs vividly and intricately depict the desert environment. Singers use rich imagination and unique artistic techniques to incorporate natural elements such as landscapes, climate, flora, and fauna into their songs, allowing listeners to feel the desert's unique charm and vitality. For example, in the Bairin folk song "Bungling Mountains," the singer describes the continuous mountains, the silver-white desert, the vast pastures shrouded in mist, the trees in the mountains, and the migrating geese in the autumn sky, expressing a longing for their homeland. The song lyrics, "The silver-white hills are my hometown, making me yearn day and night; the continuous mountains and silver desert are my mother's birthplace, my beloved homeland," reflect the ancient Mongolian belief in the "golden mountains and silver mountains" and an emotional connection to the "clear waters and green mountains."

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