

Research on Ecological Culture in Mongolian Folk Songs from the Hetao Region

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Abstract: Mongolian folk songs are deeply rooted in the vastness of the grasslands and the rhythm of nature. The lyrics reflect a profound reverence and love for the ecological environment, demonstrating a strong awareness of ecology and environmental protection. Especially in the Hetao region, Mongolian culture along the Yellow River's bend showcases a rich and diverse uniqueness, forming a distinctive cultural phenomenon in this area. By deeply analyzing Mongolian folk songs from the Hetao region, this study, through the combined perspectives of literature, linguistics, ethnology, history, and ecology, discusses the ecological values and educational significance of the harmonious relationship between humans and nature as embedded in these songs.

Keywords: Hetao region; Mongolian folk songs; ecological civilization education; specific implementation methods

Introduction

The titles of Mongolian folk songs often carry symbolic meanings. Through this symbolic language, Mongolian people convey their reverence and gratitude for nature. The use of metaphors and personification in the lyrics not only enriches the artistic expression of the songs but also strengthens the expression of ecological awareness. The characteristics of the song creation reflect the deep understanding and love Mongolian people have for the ecological environment. In today's context of ecological civilization education, the value of Mongolian folk songs has become even more prominent. These songs are not just artistic expressions but also vital carriers of ecological civilization education. Through Mongolian folk songs, people can gain a deeper understanding of ecological civilization, enhance their awareness of environmental protection, and promote the concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

1. Analysis of Ecological Culture in Mongolian Folk Songs from the Hetao Region

1.1 Integration of Ecological Culture in Mongolian Folk Songs from the Hetao Region

The report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China elevated ecological civilization and green development to a prominent position within the nation's overall development strategy. Ecological civilization construction, along with economic, political, cultural, and social development, forms the comprehensive framework of the "Five-in-One" layout of China's modernization efforts^[1]. Nomadism is the primary means of production and survival for the Mongolian people, and the Mongolian people of the ten banners in the Hetao region, situated along the Yellow River, have created a nomadic ecological culture based on the interdependence of livestock and the grasslands. Nomadic culture has, to a certain extent, influenced the ecological content of Mongolian folk songs, reflecting themes such as gratitude to nature, praise for the harmony of nature, understanding of life, protection of the grassland's ecological balance, and the idea of harmonious coexistence with the grasslands. The content of Mongolian folk songs in the Hetao region includes rivers, springs, mountains, grass, trees, birds, beasts, livestock, and the four seasons, all of which demonstrate ecological awareness.

1.2 Themes Related to Rivers and Springs

Water is a crucial element in the ecological folk songs of the Mongolian people. Due to the geographic location and natural environment, the Hetao region often experiences droughts, cold waves, strong winds, and sandstorms. The region is bordered by four deserts: the Tengger Desert and the Ulan Buh Desert to the west, and the Kubuqi Desert and the Maowusu Desert along the southern bank. This creates an environment where water is an indispensable and precious resource, a theme clearly reflected in local Mongolian folk songs. Rivers and springs, as vital sources of daily water, are frequently mentioned. For example, in the Urat folk song *The Spring on the Sandy Grassland* and the Mongolian folk song *Silver Spring*, the springs are depicted as gushing from the mountains, clear and sweet, nourishing life on the grasslands and sustaining all living things.

In the Urat folk song *The Spring on the Sandy Grassland*, the lyrics praise the spring water that flows across the grassland, symbolizing the offering of wine to gentle and kind guests, continuing the feast. The song highlights the significance of the majestic horses from the mountains, expressing the appreciation for the horses' role in nomadic life. In Mongolian folk songs from the Hetao region, rivers and springs are often associated with positive meanings such as life, hope, purity, and kindness. Through the praise of water and springs, the Mongolian people express their reverence and gratitude for nature, emphasizing the idea of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. This relationship reflects the deep understanding and love Mongolian people have for nature, as well as their close connection with the natural environment.

1.3 Themes Related to Mountains and Vegetation

The lyrics of Mongolian folk songs not only reflect the traditional culture of biological sand fixation but also reveal the Mongolian ancestors' long-standing mastery of ecological principles based on the characteristics of the landscape^[2]. The Mongolian people of the Hetao region live in an environment surrounded by the Yinshan Mountains to the north and large deserts to the west, where vast grasslands provide the resources necessary for survival. As a result, they hold a deep sense of gratitude for mountains and vegetation. This gratitude is vividly expressed in Urat folk songs. For example, in *Baiyan Khanga* (literally meaning "Fertile and Beautiful Khanga"), the lyrics sing of the beauty and abundance of the Khanga region, a recurring theme in Mongolian folk songs, emphasizing the region's rich biodiversity and the close relationship between the people and nature.

1.4 Themes Related to Animals and Plants

Mongolian folk songs are important carriers of ecological ethics, playing a key role in traditional ecological culture due to the ecological nature of the nomadic economy^[3]. The Mongolian people's respect for animals and plants, as depicted in their folk songs, stems from their close relationship with the grassland ecology and a deep understanding of life. Mongolian folk songs not only showcase artistic beauty but also convey respect for animals and plants. The songs often depict and praise the characteristics and habits of animals and plants, emphasizing their importance to life on the grasslands.

For example, the well-known Urat folk song *Hongyan* (meaning "Swan Goose") features images of pure white swan geese playing in the reeds, symbolizing the welcoming of esteemed guests. Swan geese hold an important role in Mongolian culture, representing the arrival of spring and the passing of harsh winters. The protection of swan geese, now a Class II protected species in China, further reflects the Mongolian people's respect for nature.

1.5 Themes Related to Horses

Horses have always played a vital role in Mongolian nomadic life, serving as both essential tools for transportation and cultural symbols. In Mongolian folk songs, horses are frequently praised, representing loyalty, courage, and freedom. Horses are often depicted alongside heroes, highlighting their significance in Mongolian culture. For instance, in the song *The Banquet Song*, horses are celebrated alongside brave warriors, further underscoring the importance of horses in Mongolian life.

In conclusion, the Mongolian folk songs of the Hetao region demonstrate a deep respect for nature and the animals and plants that inhabit it. These songs reflect the Mongolian people's understanding of the interdependence between life and nature, their reverence for life, and their gratitude for the environment's bountiful gifts. This cultural tradition enriches Mongolian folk songs and preserves the

spiritual heritage of the Mongolian people for future generations.

2. Revelations of Ecological Civilization Education from Mongolian Folk Songs

Ecological civilization education is an essential requirement for achieving harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. It is also a global endeavor that concerns the welfare of all humanity and has become a vital research topic in global education^[4]. Mongolian folk songs from the Hetao region are the crystallization of Mongolian wisdom and play a significant role in ecological civilization education. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the purpose of preserving these songs, the need to protect their ecological functions, and the importance of changing people's environmental awareness by integrating these elements into education.

2.1 Understanding the Purpose of Preservation

Mongolian folk songs convey the voice of history, preserving the classical art of ancient humanity. They depict harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, reflecting the harmony of the shared human destiny, which contributes positive energy to the continuity of human existence. Recognizing this at a high level and executing it accordingly is key, as it transcends both ethnicity and time. Regarding the relationship between cultural inheritance and innovation, President Xi Jinping emphasized, "We must explore the ideological concepts, humanistic spirit, and moral norms of China's excellent traditional culture, integrate artistic creativity with Chinese cultural values, and combine the Chinese aesthetic spirit with contemporary aesthetic pursuits to invigorate Chinese culture. Mere preservation without progress is not inheritance, and creating something out of thin air without cultural roots cannot be considered innovation. We must balance inheritance and innovation, learning from the past without rigidly adhering to it, and breaking norms without violating fundamental principles, allowing excellent traditional Chinese culture to become a vital source of cultural innovation." Inheriting the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation is an important current task and a key measure for protecting national culture.

2.2 Understanding the Ecological Protection Function

The recognition of folk songs should extend beyond mere performance in singing and dancing. Instead, they serve as psychological, holistic health tools, pointing to energy aspects and serving different societal purposes, such as mental health and well-being. Folk songs are more than cultural inheritance; they are part of a redemptive process that fosters ecological awareness and environmental stewardship.

2.3 Changing People's Environmental Awareness

Mongolian folk songs embody a high degree of environmental awareness, acute recognition of environmental issues, and an elevated environmental ethic. Their methods of expression—subtle, metaphorical, projective, advisory, and nurturing—convey important environmental messages.

Mongolian folk songs offer significant revelations for ecological civilization education in several aspects:

2.3.1 Respect for Nature and Ecology

Mongolian folk songs often express reverence and care for nature and ecology. Through song and storytelling, they cultivate ecological consciousness and guide people to focus on and protect the natural environment. These songs, filled with respect and admiration for nature, emphasize the importance of respecting, adapting to, and protecting nature, fostering environmental awareness and action.

2.3.2 Promoting the Vast Spirit of Nomadic Culture

As a representative of nomadic culture, Mongolian folk songs pass on the Mongolian people's wisdom and understanding of nature through singing about the hardships and beauty of nomadic life. In ecological civilization education, the wisdom and experience of nomadic culture can be borrowed to promote the concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, advancing sustainable development.

2.3.3 Emphasizing Emotional Communication

Mongolian folk songs enhance emotional communication between people through song and emotional expression. In ecological civilization education, it is equally important to emphasize emotional connection by guiding people to appreciate and experience the beauty of nature, sparking environmental emotions and actions.

2.3.4 Innovative Development Models

As modernization and globalization progress, Mongolian nomadic culture faces significant challenges and opportunities. Ecological civilization education should also focus on the importance of innovation by exploring new environmental protection technologies and models, promoting ecological protection and sustainable development.

As an essential part of Mongolian culture, folk songs help preserve and pass on the history, culture, and traditions of the Mongolian people. This contributes significantly to maintaining the cultural diversity and uniqueness of Mongolian heritage. Additionally, Mongolian folk songs, as a unique cultural landscape, attract tourists, promoting ecological tourism and facilitating the preservation and transmission of Mongolian culture.

In conclusion, the ecological protection function of Mongolian folk songs is multifaceted. They are not only an art form but also a cultural and ecological resource. By enhancing the protection and inheritance of Mongolian folk songs, we can promote the preservation and development of Mongolian culture, contribute to social harmony and stability, and provide strong support for the growth of ecological tourism. As a unique cultural and ecological resource, Mongolian folk songs offer critical insights for ecological civilization education. Strengthening the research and inheritance of Mongolian folk songs allows us to better understand and protect the natural environment, advancing the progress of ecological civilization construction.

Summary

The ecological culture within Mongolian folk songs mainly reflects the nomadic ecological culture, centered on the Mongolian people's understanding of the relationship between herders and the grasslands. This differs from the agricultural ecological culture represented in some ancient Chinese texts and the forest ecological culture present in the customs of southern ethnic minorities. Ecological culture varies due to differences in living environments, economic models, and cultural characteristics. As a multi-ethnic country, China has a rich cultural heritage created by various ethnic groups, including ecological culture. In current ecological theory research and ecological construction practices, it is important to focus on the diversity of ecological cultures.

The ecological culture in Mongolian folk songs was created by the general public of herders through their production practices. In a sense, it reflects human initiative. Ecological culture is a culture cultivated by people through their practical lives, fostering harmonious coexistence with nature. In contemporary environmental protection efforts, there is often a top-down approach, from government to the public, lacking the spontaneous behavior of the masses. The ecological culture in Mongolian folk songs demonstrates that environmental efforts require a strong public foundation, and the initiative and creativity of the people must be fully utilized.

The ecological culture in Mongolian folk songs is an integral part of nomadic ecological culture. It originates from nomadic life and, in turn, plays a role in maintaining it, illustrating that ecological culture is an organic system. It must not only be based on ecological economics but also sustained through spiritual culture. Therefore, environmental protection should be understood from a systemic perspective, with efforts made across all aspects of society.

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