



The Tartar Ethnic Group

In the Tartar customs and traditional culture, ram is a symbol of thriving fertility and prosperity. Ever since the old times, the Tartars have had great respects for the white forehead ram as kind of custom. They regard it as the symbol of happiness, luckiness, purity, fraternity and the source of strength.

The environment and population

The Tartars have a population of 4 890, and they are distributed mainly over the cities of Aletai, Changji, Yili, Urumchi, Tacheng and other places in Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

Most of the Tartars live in the towns and engage in commercial activities, while the others in stock raising, agriculture and handicraft industries. Daquan Tartar Autonomous Township is the only township for the Tartar in the territory of Xinjiang. They live nearby the Baiyang riverbank, the juncture of Jimusa'er County, and make a living by stock farming.

The origin and history

The Tartars are mainly and gradually formed by aborigine tribes living in the Volga riverbank, Baojia'er and Qinchu people who use Turki language, Tartars and Mongolians who followed Badu, the grandson of Genghis Khan to battle westwards. From the beginning of the 19th century, some of the Tartars have gradually moved from the middle reaches of Volga River to the territory of the Xinjiang autonomous region in China, and they formed their own way of living. The Chinese Tartars are their very descendants.

The ethnic appellation and the language

"Tartar" is used in the Tungus language, which has been translated into "Datan" "Tartar" "Dada" and so on in the history. "Tartar" in Chinese ancient books is also one of other names of "Tartar".

The Tartars have their own language and characters. Their language belongs to Turki group of the Alatai family, and their character is a kind of alphabetic writing based on the Arabic letters. Nowadays the Tartars have been generally using the Uygur and Kazak languages because of their scattering living in the two ethnic areas.

The residence and transportation ——abode house with flat roof and trough carriage

The Tartars living in towns mostly inhabit in A-shaped abode houses or house with flat roof and thick walls. They also build the individual courtyard with a gate and an enclosing wall. Each household is installed with a double-leaf door caved with beautiful designs and a

side door on both sides. Flowers and trees are planted in their courtyards, which look luxuriant and smell fragrant. They build small lanes, long corridors, kitchens, bathrooms, warehouses, restrooms, livestock sheds, vegetable cellars and so on. The Tartars have special ways of preserving foods. Every family digs a deep ditch, which is built by laying bricks or stones around, and installed with a removable wood lid on the top. In winter they put in ice and snow. In summer, they lay up the perishable foods, and this kind of storage is called “Pazi” . The Tartars pay much attention to hygiene. They have spring-cleaning almost every week, that’s why you can see their houses are always clean and orderly. Inside every house, there is a fireplace for warming in winters. On the wall typically hangs a tapestry, while on the floor lies a carpet, and the door curtain and window curtain are embroidered with different patterns and laces. The Tartars usually live in the wood houses, when the place they live in is full of forestry. The Tartars in pastoral areas usually live in tents nearby the water and grass.

The traditional transportation ways are the trough carts, the carriages with six sticks, the quadricycle and the sledges, while modern transportation means is employed to facilitate their movements nowadays.

The costumes and ornaments — — small embroidered cap and long folded hem skirt

The Tartar men like to wear a small cap embroidered in white and black, white shirts with embroiders in the neckband, the wristband and the chest, and black waistcoat or ling black shirts and black trousers. The colors of black and white strike a sharp contrast, nevertheless, a harmonious arrangement at the same time. The Tartar women like to wear a small cap studded with pearls, while the young ladies and elderly women wear a scarf and various kinds of colored cloth frilling skirts, leather shoes or leather boots. The Tartar ladies commonly used such ornaments as earrings, bracelets, rings and necklaces. In recent years great changes have taken place in Tartar’s dressing, especially young people’s clothes, by and by they come to wear suits and fashionable dresses.



The dietetic customs——Delicious baked cakes and honey beverage

The Tartar’s traditional diet mainly includes rice with meat soup, baked cakes, fried and steamed stuffed buns, deep fried cakes and crackers, sauces, beverages and so on. During festivals or occasions for treating guests, besides “zhuafan” , a meal that is done with hands instead of tools, there are still another two special foods, one of which is “Gubaidi’ai” . The first step is to dry and clean the rice under the sun, then cover it with cream or cheese, sun-dried sweetened apricots and currants, and bake it in a fireplace. Another is “Yitebailixi” , a cake that is mainly made of pumpkins with rice and meat on it. These two kinds of cakes are crisp outside and spongy inside, which are the Tartar’s unique delicious foods.

The Tartars like to eat foods that are made of milk. The milk tea is an indispensable drink



in their daily lives and a treat to their guests. In addition to it, the “ke'eroxima” that is fermented with honey, and the “kesaile” that is brewed with wild grapes are also the Tartars’ favorites.

The kinds of food that the Tartars abstain from are basically the same as the Muslim's. They stress on

eating etiquettes, usually the elders are on the seat of honor, the younger on the seat of common. If there are too many people in a family, they often set up another table for women and children. They wash hands before and after each meal, and then they eat with hands, chopsticks or spoons. When they are eating, they are not allowed to take off their hats or speak aloud.

The educational achievements——the best education

The Tartars pay much attention to their education. From the beginning of late 19th century and early 20th century, the Tartar clerics opened Tartar schools in Yining, Dihua and other places. Their subjects include Chinese, math, science, geography and a few religious courses. They enroll not only the Tartars students, but also students from other ethnic groups. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Tartar education has developed rapidly. At present, among people aged six and above, 14.3% of them have received vocational education and above, and this rate ranks first among all the 56 ethnic groups in China.

The festivals and recreations—— “the Saban Festival ” and “Jumping Walk Contest”

The major Tartar religious festivals are Rozi Heyt, Corban and so on, they celebrate the festivals much the same as other Muslims.

The Saban Festival is one of their traditional festivals. They celebrate it on a certain day between spring sowing and summer harvest in the hope of receiving blessing of the future harvest and happy life. “Saban” is a plowing tool of the Tartars’, so it is also called “Plough Head Festival”.

During the festivals, especially in the Saban festival, they will hold all kinds of activities, such as entertainment shows, wrestling, tug-of-war, and race with gunny sacking, long jump, pole climbing and so on. The Tartars’ favorite activity is the “Jumping Walk”. Every contestant has to race with a spoon in his mouth, and also an egg in the spoon,



sometimes with a small sandbag banding on their legs. During the process, the egg is not allowed to fall off from the spoon, and whoever reaches the finishing line first is the winner.

The religion——Islam

The Tartars believe in Islam. They are deeply influenced by Islam in terms of their life and culture. The Tartar Moslems have to hold religious activities according to a certain time and process. A mosque or religious spot is usually set up in the compact community, but in mountain areas or pastoral areas where there are no mosques, the Tartar Moslems observe their services at home or in the wilderness.