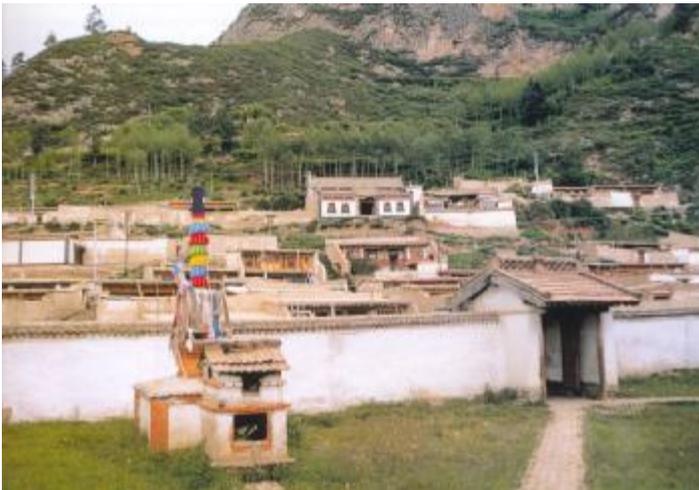


The Tu Ethnic Group

The Tus view rainbow as the mascot. The rainbow is up in the sky, connecting the heaven and the earth, as the shape of the Chinese character “土” (which sounds Tu and means earth) . The rainbow is the colorful vapor of water. Hence the Tu is called “the people of rainbow” and the Tu ethnic area is known as the hometown of rainbow.



The population and the environment



Numbering 2 421 198 in total, the Tus concentrated mainly in the Huzhu Tu Autonomous County in Qinghai Province, and also in the counties of Minhe and Datong. Others scattered in Tongren, Ledu, Menyuan, Sunan, Yongdeng, Jishishan and the Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu Province.

The Tus in Qinghai Province also live in compact communities in the Yellow River area and Huangshui Valley, which are

favorable places for agriculture, herding and forestry because of the abundant resources and diverse climates. For a long time, the Tu people, industrious, intelligent and simple, are mainly engaged in agricultural and at the same time stockbreeding, forestry and horticulture. They exploited the land with the Hans, the Tibetans, the Huis and the Mongols.

The ethnic origin and the ethnic appellation

The Tus evolved from the Tughun people in ancient times and their ancestors are a part of the Xianbei people in eastern Liaoning. During the 4th century, they migrated to Gansu and Qinghai and set up the regime named Tughun. Tughun was defeated by Tufan in the 7th century and many Tughun people moved to the Yellow River, Huangshui River and Datonghe River areas and make the main part of the Tu ancestors. During 13th Century in the Yuna Dynasty, they absorbed members of the Mongolian.

The Tus call themselves “Tukun”, “Turen”, “Tuhujia” and etc. Some also claim to be “Mongguer” (Mongolians) or “Chahan Mongguer” (White Mongolian). The Hui and Han call them “Turen”, “Tumin”, while Tibetan calls them “Huoer”. The appellation “Turen” first appeared in the Chinese historical materials in 13th Century. After the foundation the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chinese government adopted Tu as their formal ethnic appellation.

The language and the script

The language of the Tu people belongs to the Mongolian branch of the Altaic language family. Within the Mongolian language, it is much closer to the language of the Dongxiang and Bonan ethnic minorities. The Tu people have no written alphabet, was created.



The resident characteristics—The courtyard and the temples of the combined style of the Han and the Tibetan

Every Tu family has its own courtyard. The walls of the courtyard, high and solid, are made of clods and painted with white mud. And four white round stones are placed on the four corners of the walls. The courtyard gate is well designed and all the wooden parts are

carved with patterns of birds, animals and flowers. There is a mast erected in the round trough of the courtyard that is surrounded by wooden or brick houses. In the recent years, brick houses are increasing.

The “Aobao” in near mountainous is the notable symbol of the Tu villages. Some “Jiada’er” made of five color-cloth were hung on the Aobao. A temple with red walls and blue tiles usually stands on the top of the Tu village and is surrounded by green trees. The Tu craftsmen make all the carpentry, paint, decoration, sculpture, drawing and embroidery and this shapes the unique style of the Tu temples.

The costume characteristics—The rainbow sleeve and the Tuhunniuda

Men and women alike wear shirts with delicately designed and embroidered collars and shoes. The Tu men like to wear small collared shirt, with a green waistband and square embroidered cloth on the chest. Women’s jackets have sleeves made up of cloth in the five colors of the rainbow: red, yellow, green, blue and violet, so the Tu women are called “people wearing rainbow sleeves”. The Tu women also have colorful waistband with various embroidered patterns on both ends of the waistband.

The headwear of the Tus is strikingly unique. Young men usually wear fat brim hat, with the back brim upright and the front brim extended. Women headwear, called “Niuda”, has different forms, such as, saddle, dustpan head, trifurcate, phoenix. The most valuable one is “Tuhunniuda”, which is rare nowadays. According to Weishu (an ancient Chinese History Book), the Tuguhun women used to use golden flowers as their ornaments and made shells or pearls decorate their braids as much as possible.



The dietetic habit—The thousand-layer moon cake and the Halihai

Qingke, wheat and white potato build up the staple food of the Tu people. Their flour food includes steamed bread, cake and noodle. In dragon boat festival, they make thousand layers moon cake to worship moon. The moon cake is about a plate big and sandwich colorful flavors and all kinds of flower models. When the moon cake is cooked, the cracks of the cake are like a blooming flower. There is another hot cake named “Tahuri”, which is made of wheat and baked in the

stove, crisp and delicious. Halihai is also a table delicious. To make Tahuri, first they will boil Qingke wheat and caster leaf powder, and add some flavoring such as green onion. Then wrap it with deep fried thin pancake.

They are also fond of drinking milk-tea, meat eaten with hands and noodles fried in butter. They enjoy drinking and every family brew a kind of Qingke wine called “Mingzhan”. It is the tradition to tie a pinch of wool on the wine bottle when they toast to guests. These customs reveals the previous nomadic tradition to tie a pinch of wool on the wine bottle when they toast to guests. These customs reveals the previous nomadic tradition.

The wedding characteristics—Teasing the “nashijin”

The marriage of the Tus usually experience following procedures: inviting the matchmaker, engagement, sending the gifts, receiving the bride, sending the bride, wedding and acknowledgement dinner. When a guy falls in love with a girl, he will ask the matchmaker to bring Hada, two bottles of wine and steamed bread to propose. If the girl agrees, she will put Qingke and wheat into the bottle and tie a pinch of white wool on the bottle; otherwise she will return the gift.

The wedding procedure is interesting and alive, with all kinds of dances and signings. When “Nashijin” (the guy who welcome the bride) comes to the door of the bride’s home, girls will close the door and antistrophic with the guy. After Nashijin begs many times, they will let him come in and rain him after he steps into the door and tease him. So only those who have the gift of gab can be competent for Nashijin.



The festival customs —The Nadun festival and the flowers

Spring Festival and Nadun Festival are the grandest holidays of the Tus. They hold many activities, such as greeting god and pay a New Year call for elders, during Spring Festival. The Nadun Festival is held every summer after cropping wheat. It lasts nearly two month, from

July the thirteenth to early September and is said to be the longest lasting carnival in the world. Throughout the festival, the Tus celebrate good harvests, and all the villagers enjoy themselves by singing and dancing.

Folk songs of the Tus come into tow categories, Jiaqu and Yequ. Usually performed at home, Jiaqu includes tribute songs, songs of questions and answers and wedding songs. Yequ is also called “Flowers” or “Juvenile” and most of them are love songs. The Flower songs have very wide range of

phonology and the rhythm rises and falls greatly. The last tone usually lasts long, so leave people continuous and deep impression. Tu dances are bold and straightforward, and include "Anzhao dance", "Wedding dance", "Huishou dance" and "Mask dance". The mask dances "Killing general" and "zhuangjiaqi" reveal the heroism of the Tu ancestors.

The religions—Tibetan Buddhism

Most of the Tus practice Tibetan Buddhism. The previous religion was shaman. During the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the early Ming Dynasty, Tibetan Buddhism spread to the Tu areas and developed very fast, especially the Gelu school of Tibetan Buddhism and there are many temples of Gelu School. On the other hand, the Tus still keep some tradition of Shaman.