

The Change of the Custom of Offering Aobao in Alxa Mongolia China

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Abstract

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Keywords

Alxa; Aobao sacrifice; Inheritance; Transition.

1. Introduction

Alxa League is located in the westernmost part of Inner Mongolia China, bordering Mongolia in the north. Its geographical location limits its full communication with Han culture and maintains relatively complete Mongolian traditional customs. The Alxa Mongols are mainly composed of the Peshute Mongols and the Turchote Mongols. In the 25th year of Kangxi Dynasty, the Heshuote people migrated from the northern foot of Tianshan Mountain in Xinjiang to the Alxa Left Banner area, bringing Tibetan Buddhism with them and establishing 37 temples represented by "eight monasteries", which made Tibetan Buddhism exert a profound influence on the Alxa Left Banner area. Sacrificial aobao replaced shamanic sacrificial mountain and river buildings and became the most important sacrificial rites. And lamas chanting sutras and praying for blessings became the core of the ritual. The Turkic Mongol group, originally herding in the Volga River valley, moved to the Ejin River valley during the reign of Emperor Qianlong. This Turkic Mongol group also believed in Tibetan Buddhism, but the number was smaller, only about 2,000. Moreover, the Halaha Mongols in Ejin area retained many shamanic traditions, and Tibetan Buddhism did not spread widely in Ejin area. In addition, the anti-Qing Hui army entered the Alashan area during the reign of Guangxu, and after the Hui army launched an uprising in the reign of Tongzhi of the Qing Dynasty invaded Mongolia, the temples became the main targets of their attacks. When the attack on Dingyuan Camp failed, they turned their main forces to Ejin. The Hui army burned a large number of sutras and files, destroyed Buddha statues and killed lamas in Ejin area. The "Hui rebellion" lasting for eight years brought great disasters to Ejin. Until 1941, the total population of Ejin was only 251 households (1,002 people), so the number of Buddhist temples in Ejin Banner was much smaller than that in Zuo Banner, and the number of Aobao was also very small. The ritual and worship ceremonies of Aobao were slightly different from those of the Heshuote people.[1] In the process of in-depth communication, the differences between the sacrificial activities of

Aobao in different regions became smaller and smaller until they blended and converged, and the sacrificial activities of Aobao became the most solemn and widely involved in the scope of Alxa League. Among the many Aobao sacrificial activities, Talbak Aobao in the South Temple of Alashan League and Bayan Bamboo Bur Aobao are the most extensive and largest Aobao in which the masses participate in the sacrifice. The reason is that the South Temple is dedicated to the sixth Dalai Lama, "Chaokeqin Dogan", "Shenit Dogan", "Huanglou Temple" and other pagoda spirits, gathered very precious Buddha images, Buddhist scriptures, but also gathered proficient in the two religious concepts of Buddhism, monk Dafa, the South Temple has two living Buddhas, one is the reincarnation of the sixth Dalai Lama, called Gegen. The other is the reincarnation of King Disi of Tibet, called Lamas Tan. This makes religious people from far and near earnestly yearn for the holy land of the South Temple. With the changes of The Times and social environment, the sacrificial activities of Aobao gradually evolved into national cultural activities. Many changes took place in the sacrificial time of Aobao, the materials used in the construction and maintenance of Aobao, the sacrificial ceremonies and participation mechanisms.

2. Changes of the main sacrificial ceremony of Aobao

In traditional Aobao sacrifices, "red sacrifices" are often used, that is, sheep, horses and other livestock are sacrificed. Some tribes also use human beings as sacrifices. One month before the Aobao sacrifice, each tribe had to choose a leader who could offer sacrifices on behalf of the tribe during the ritual. This leader might be the leader of the tribe or a leader chosen from among the common people. Before the sacrifice, the lama had to find a spring near Aobao and chant the three swords for seven days by the spring. There is more than one sutra to be chanted, except for the Kangjur Sutra, which is fixed to be chanted, the others are not fixed. In the past, the scriptures to be chanted by the lamas during the Aobao ceremony had to be agreed with the prince in advance. Not only the herdsmen's wish for a fertile pasture, but also the royal palace's wish for local development were taken into account in determining the text to be chanted. On the day of offering sacrifices to Aobao, the worshippers must dress up, prepare their own articles such as hada and milk wine, bring stones and branches from their own pasture, and climb Mount Aobao from the southwest direction. When they arrive at Aobao, they generally turn clockwise (clockwise) around Aobao from west to east. After kowtowing before the incense table in front of Aobao, they will add the stones they brought to Aobao and decorate him with the five-color hada and prayer flags. The herdsmen need to train the lambs with marked ears into a bunch, and tie them to the wooden frame with a rope together with other livestock. Then, on the sacrifice table in front of Ao Bao, the whole sheep (to be served in a large plate), and the food offered by the herdsmen such as mutton, milk skin, cheese, butter, kumi, salt and tea are placed on both sides. After this preparation, the sacrifice begins. At the beginning of the sacrifice, the head man, on behalf of the tribe, offered the animals, cut off their heads, and sprinkled the blood on them. The lama faces west and blows the white conch. The drumming begins as soon as the conch sound stops. After the drumming is finished, the lamas begin to recite the purification mantra, so that these foods become holy, the lamas begin to set off the incense leaves and simmer the mulberry trees. At this time, the drums and cymbals are loud, the trumpets are blowing, and the Dharma bells are ringing. The worshippers, regardless of the monks and lay people, are spread out on the ground, praying for "good weather, sudden increase of five animals, no disaster or disease, and good luck". Then they would spread the kumi wine or cow, sheep and camel's milk on Aobao, and recite the "Aobao Ritual Words". At this time, all the people involved in the activity of offering Aobao began to circle around Aobao, sprinkling milk and wine on Aobao, and then offering Hada and holding Buddha lanterns. At the same time, a black steed should be taken, its child's mane (that is, the mane that has never been cut) tied with five-color silk, and it should be circled around the fire to make it holy. Finally,

people lift Hada, food and other things in their hands, shout "Hului Hului", and hold a ceremony like inviting blessings, so that the sacrifice will end. So everyone went back to the tent at the foot of the mountain to eat the wine and meat offered to Aobao, called "Aobao's mouth blessing". Before eating, a certain part of the main sacrificial sheep (fat tail, front leg or backbone, etc.) should be offered to the Lord of Ao Bao (that is, the main sacrificial man of the descendants of the builder of Ao Bao), so that everyone can drink and eat meat and enjoy entertainment. The flag is generally equipped with a big pot named "Manjin Tao Gao (originally the lama's tea pot)", which can cook the meat of three cows at a time and everyone can eat it, which is a SAN blessing. Today, the "Red sacrifice" no longer exists, and the sacrificial ceremony has been simplified. Nowadays, as the groups participating in Aobao sacrifice are tourists for tourism purposes, and many tourists do not have faith in Aobao, many sacrificial links will distinguish between donors and tourists, and only donors can hang prayer flags, offer offerings and light butter lamps. Most people no longer bring stones from their homes, but pick one up at the foot of the mountain where they worship Aobao, and can also choose any path on the way up. Before offering offerings to Aobao, lamas do not have to chant sutras by the spring for seven days. Generally, they can start the offerings after chanting sutras for three days. Aobao had already been repaired by the staff who organized the sacrifice before the people arrived. Compared with the past, the procedures of the present ceremony are much simplified, but the main links are still preserved. At present, the alms first hang prayer flags to pay tribute, and then simmer the mulberry, after simmering the mulberry, lamas recite the sutras, and simmer the mulberry again after the chanting. Then they enter the formal sacrificial link, the lama recites the scriptures, and after reciting, the alms-givers salute to Aobao. Most of them only bow, that is, put their hands together, raise them over their heads, bow and put them back on their chests, and a few people still continue the ritual of kneeling. Then the lamas lead the alms to begin the prayer ceremony. The scriptures recited at this time are not fixed, but they are all themed on praying for good fortune and avoiding evil. The ceremony ends when the paper Longda is thrown into the air after three clockwise circles of Aobao. After the ceremony, the lama shares the offerings with others, but the main parts of the offerings such as the heads of cattle and sheep, and golden bottles of milk are left behind.

In general, with the progress of society and the development of economy, the sacrificial ceremonies in Alxa League are becoming more and more simplified, and generally show the characteristics of modernization and openness. However, the main links of Aobao sacrifice have been completely preserved, and only some habits in individual links have been simplified, such as saying that live sheep are no longer offered, and Western dignity is not particularly emphasized in the sacrificial process. Now take the sacrificial process of Nuoyan Aobao as an example (see appendix) to draw a map in order to intuitively understand the changes of sacrificial customs in present-day Aobao.

3. The material, quantity and sacrificial time changes of Aobao

In terms of the materials of Aobao, the materials of Aobao in Alxa are generally original stone, and the polished stone is also used in the temple of Aobao. The custom of offering Aobao to the Mongols in Alxa originated from Genghis Khan. In 1226, Genghis Khan set out from the Taola River of Khalkha Mongolia to conquer the Western Xia Dynasty. He slaughtered a three-year-old stallion on the Alatenbushi Mountain and placed it on a huge square stone plate to offer sacrifices to heaven. The local Mongols continued this ritual and sacrificed Genghis Khan to the earth. The huge stone used to place the offerings was called the "Golden Plate of Genghis Khan", and the stone was piled next to it in the shape of a mountain, which is the Alatenbushiao Bao of the present right banner of Alashan, Alatenzhaokumu. The reason why Aobao is shaped like a mountain comes from the worship of the Mongolian people to the mountains. The Mongolian

grassland is flat and vast, and the mountains are more majestic on the grassland. The primitive herdsmen believe that the tall and majestic mountains must have the road to heaven. Therefore, the traditional Aobao materials are mostly stones, in the shape of mountains, with a wooden pole inserted in the center of the stone and prayer flags hung on the wooden pole. The reason why some aobao use polished stone is to more closely resemble the regular mountain shape in shape. The size of aobao varies, and the height of the large aobao can reach four meters. As a large area of Alxa is covered by desert, Aobao is also stacked high on the beach with a wooden pole in the middle for hanging prayer flags.

The number of Aobao has also varied greatly in the past and present. In the past, there were many kinds of aobao, such as Aobao for marking the changes of rivers, Aobao for marking routes, Aobao for war battles, Aobao for gods and sacrifices, and Aobao for temples, herdsmen, Gebagaobao and sumu Aobao. And it is divided into two kinds: deities Aobao and ordinary Aobao. Aobao for sacrifice is mostly built by the royal palace or sumu, or Bagh official, road signs Aobao is mostly built by the herdsmen, used as a sign of nomadic territory. With the changes of The Times, the number of gods Aobao has been greatly reduced, and now most of them are ordinary Aobao. In terms of the total number of aobao, it is also significantly reduced than in the past. At present, there are 167 public Aobao in Alxa League, among which the larger ones are Jiji Aobao, Bayan Dmanpur Aobao, Bayan Wendur Aobao, Alaxia Aobao, Gezil Aobao, Mandura Aobao and Shireburdu Aobao.[2]

In terms of sacrificial time, in the past, the sacrificial time of Aobao was mostly set in the May and June of the lunar calendar every year, and some Aobao would wait until autumn to offer sacrifices. The sacrificial time of Sumu Aobao was determined by the condition of pasture greening. If the pasture greening was early, the sacrificial time would be early. The sacrificial time of large gods Aobao is fixed and will not change. For example, the sacrificial time of Bayinda Buer Aobao, located in the south Temple of Alashan Left Banner, is the third day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar every year. With the economic development and ecological degradation, most Mongolians in Alxa region no longer rely on grazing for a living. There are fewer and fewer herdsmen simply engaged in animal husbandry, and people's dependence on grassland is also greatly reduced. Whether grassland is green or not is no longer the focus of herdsmen's life. Nowadays, the time of offering sacrifices to small sumu Aobao or family aobao often depends on the free time of most people. The traditional fixed time for offering sacrifices to large aobao deities has always been used.

4. The participation mechanism of sacrificial Aobao changes

4.1. Changes of participating groups

In the past, herdsmen only participated in the Aobao sacrifice activities of their tribe, and other Aobao did not participate in the sacrifice. And in the large gods Aobao sacrifices, no matter the princes, nobles or herdsmen must all participate. Before the 1990s, limited by economic conditions and the natural environment, there was only one Aobao within 100 kilometers. Herdsmen were only allowed to participate in the Aobao sacrifice once a year. After the 1990s, the economy of Alxa League developed rapidly, and many Gacha with economic strength established their own characteristics and representative Aobao. Gacha chief encouraged the herdsmen to participate in the worship of Gacha Aobao in addition to the worship of gods Aobao, in order to express their love for their hometown. In addition, many families with good economic conditions and more family members set up private clan Aobao. This kind of family Aobao does not accept outsiders to participate in the sacrifice. From then on, the herdsmen were allowed to offer two Aobao sacrifices per year. Today, with convenient transportation and rich life, herdsmen or urban residents can participate in Aobao sacrifice activities at will, but only one Aobao sacrifice of the same level can be attended. The number of participants in large-

scale Aobao sacrificial activities has increased significantly compared with the past. Up to a hundred people can go to Aobao to meet.

In terms of the composition of the participating groups, they are no longer mere Lamaism believers. With the development of social economy, tourism has spread rapidly to the remote northwest Alxa region. More and more tourists come to Alxa, expecting to experience the Mongolian style of Pegatron. As the grandest religious activity of the Peshuote Mongols, Zaiao Bao attracts a large number of tourists. In addition, the Han residents of Alxa area often participate in the festival. Generally speaking, compared with the past, the participating groups of the festival Aobao in Alxa area show two obvious characteristics, one is a large increase in the number of people, and the other is the diversity of the participating groups.

4.2. The change of the purpose of participation

Aobao in the hearts of the Mongols, is the place where the gods live. So to worship Aobao is to worship gods. To worship Aobao as the medium, in order to obtain the blessing of the gods. The nomadic life of traditional herdsmen has a strong dependence on the natural ecology, and in the herdsmen's mind, it is the gods who can control the natural environment. The purpose of the herdsmen participating in the offering of Aobao is to express their reverence for the gods, which is oriented by religious belief, so as to seek that the gods will bring people a better natural environment. While the traditional nomadic life is gradually turning to modernization, the purpose of participating in Aobao sacrifices is also changing. Nowadays, the purpose of participating in Aobao sacrifices can be divided into two categories. One is that the purpose is no longer to pray for abundant water and grass, but to integrate more modern aspirations, such as praying for study and career. The second is that they do not have any demands on Aobao, but only express their worship and respect for the gods. In addition, with the complexity and diversification of the participating groups of the festival Aobao, the festival Aobao is no longer simply motivated by religious motives and purposes. For participants who do not believe in Tibetan Buddhism, it is more like a recreational activity.

4.3. Changes in the way of participating in worship

In the past, people needed to kneel down at least three times to worship Aobao, emphasizing throwing themselves to the ground and worshipping nine times. First, on the way to participate in the worship of Aobao, people needed to kneel all the way up the mountain. The second is to kowtow to the front of Aobao at the table where the offerings are offered. Third, when the lamas blew conch during the sacrifice, they should face Aobao and throw themselves to the ground, three times, and nine times. Nowadays, few people kneel all the way up the mountain, and most people choose to drive or walk up the mountain. When offering offerings, most people put their hands together and bow in salute. Whether or not to bow during the sacrifice depends on individual choice. Those who choose to bow forward and stay close to Aobao, while those who do not bow back and avoid. In addition, after offering sacrifices to Aobao, people in the past usually chose to go down the mountain quickly, set up tents before dark, and wait for the arrival of Aobao Day. But now, people will sing and dance around Aobao or in the open space near Aobao immediately to express the joy of getting together for the ceremony. It is worth mentioning that there are obvious differences between the Alashan Left Banner, the forehead Banner and the Right Banner area in the artistic performances of Aobao Naeri, and this difference has continued from ancient times to today. Aobao Nairi in Alashan Left Banner area, the unique "Tatagar" style long tune of the Mongolian people of Heshuo Te, the melody is changeable and graceful, and it is an essential program of Aobao Nairi. Aobao Nairi in the Eh and Right Banner area focuses on the performance of the Turtetian style of the long tune, which emphasizes "broadness", consonance and echo, and has a chorus after each song.

5. Aobao's contemporary social function

The Mongolian people through the annual ritual of the bag, will their wishes to heaven to listen to, pray for eternal life heaven rain, blessing, grace sentient beings, so it also contains the deep meaning of offering to heaven, offering to the earth. For the Alxa League area, the sixth month of the lunar calendar is the time for all things to recover. At this time, the requirement of rain becomes more and more important. After a long winter, the adult camel cattle sheep and cattle are very thin, the newborn young animals are also in urgent need of new grass and nourishment, and for those who have spent the winter, overcome the cold of the wild animals, the heaven dew, moistening the field, is also what they hope and pray. Therefore, the herders held aobao sacrifices at this time, not only on behalf of human beings, but also on behalf of countless lives on the grassland. The value of the sacrifice is not only confined to the placement and sustenance of the herdsman's religious feelings, but also to convey a harmonious and good order in which the ecological environment and social development complement each other. Nowadays, the sacrificial activities of Aobao are no longer a simple religious sacrificial ceremony. In the integration of modernization, the sacrificial activities of Aobao show its unique cultural charm and value. As a part of modern social culture, Aobao's social functions are mainly manifested in the following points:

5.1. The function of cultural inheritance

"Every nation has its own unique culture." "Every culture has dignity and values that must be respected and upheld". "Every nation has the right and duty to develop its culture." [3]Ao Bao is the Mongolian people's faith and spiritual destination. Alxa borders Gansu to the west and Ningxia to the east. The Hui and Khan cultures have been deeply spread here. In the process of cultural exchanges with Hui, Khan and other ethnic groups, it is necessary not only to accept foreign cultures with an inclusive attitude, but also to maintain the independence and particularity of Mongolian culture. In the face of social economic development and cultural transformation, the continuation and inheritance of traditional culture is difficult and necessary. Aobao culture is rich in connotation, and the process of offering sacrifices to Aobao is the process of cultural inheritance. In the process of inheriting Aobao culture, it also influences and shapes the carrier of cultural inheritance generation after generation, which leaves a deep imprint of Alxa Mongolian culture.

5.2. The function of social communication

From the tribal point of view, the Peshuote and Tuloute Mongols are different in character, customs and other aspects. Aobao, as the common carrier of the belief of the Mongolians of all tribes, gathered the Mongolians of all tribes together through sacrificial activities to enhance their feelings and promote the integration of the life styles of all tribes, thus strengthening the communication and exchange between the different tribes. In addition, the Mongols were not the only ones who participated in Aobao sacrifice in Alxa. The convenient transportation and social communication promoted more and more Hui and Han people in the local and surrounding areas to participate in the sacrificial activities in Aobao. With the development of The Times, Aobao has increasingly become an important link and bridge to broaden the social contact surface of local Mongolians and enhance the communication and understanding among different ethnic groups.

5.3. The function of norms of behavior

Monica Wilson defines ritual as the part that has the force of law, primarily as an ancient institution. [4]In a sense, the taboos and norms embodied in the process of ritual aobao are a kind of behavior norm system originally from the grassland. The thought of harmony advocated by Daiaobao plays a special guiding role in the concrete social construction. It is worth noting

that compared with the rigid social system, the religious norms of behavior represented by Aobao are more able to break through the limitations of time and space, establish a kind of good value orientation, and play a subtle role in the norms of People's Daily behavior. Generally speaking, as the carrier of national and religious beliefs, Aobao pursues moral cultivation, respect for nature, moderate feelings for the world, compassion without dispute or little dispute, care for people and kindness to life, patience and humility in dealing with the relationship between oneself and others and other ethical norms, which all play a guiding and normative role in people's behavior.

6. Conclusion

Offering aobao is not only a spiritual pursuit with faith as the core, but also a social entity with fixed place and widely accepted by people. In the process of social and economic development, religious issues and ethnic issues often have special political sensitivity. However, the ritual aobao is no longer a religious sacrifice in the traditional sense, but is more regarded as an open social activity. No matter the Mongolian people, or other nationalities can participate in the activities of offering sacrifices to Aobao. On the one hand, this kind of open Aobao sacrifice makes all Mongolian people living in Alxa area believe in piety, and their life style and customs are closely related to religion. The resulting religious feelings and national feelings are inseparable. On the other hand, it promoted the sense of Mongolian identity among the Han and Hui ethnic groups living in the Alxa League region. With the integration of more and more Han people into the life of the Mongolian people, it has a profound impact on the cultural life of the Mongolian people. Many Mongolians have changed to Chinese names and Chinese surnames, such as the Kalkha in Alxa to Han or what is their surname; The Tuertang clan took Tao as their surname. Offering sacrifices to Aobao as a bond deepened the feelings among ethnic groups, enhanced national cohesion and centripetal force, and greatly promoted the stability and prosperity of local society.

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