

# Cultural Comparison between China and Mongolia under the Global Development Initiative

Bayasakh.J, Shanshan Tian

National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar 999097, Mongolia.

---

**Abstract:** China and Mongolia, with rich historical ties, share three main cultural dimensions: nomadic, agricultural, and trade cultures. Nomadic culture in Mongolia, rooted in the plateau, reflects resilience shaped by harsh environments and close ties to animal husbandry. China's agricultural culture, stemming from river basins, shapes a delicate and introverted character with intensive production methods. The coexistence of nomadic and agricultural cultures fosters communication through exchange and conflict, contributing to human civilization. This rich cultural backdrop adds historical depth to the intricate and complex interactions between China and Mongolia.

**Keywords:** Nomadic Culture; Agricultural Culture; Cultural Exchange and Conflict; Cultural Comparison; Cultural Inclusivity

---

## 1. Introduction

The "Global Development Initiative," rooted in China's unique path, introduces fresh perspectives to the global knowledge system, offering "Chinese thinking" and "Chinese wisdom." This initiative holds great relevance for cultural development between Mongolia and China, given their historical ties and aligned development goals. China's initiatives like the "Belt and Road" provide a practical platform for a shared human destiny and civilizational exchange. <sup>[1]</sup> Sino-Mongolian relations lay a strategic foundation for comprehensive cultural exchange. Both nations' nomadic and agrarian cultures address global challenges, drawing from ancient wisdom. Amid unprecedented global transformations, the collaboration on initiatives like "Belt and Road" fosters mutual development, addressing contemporary questions. Mongolia and China, through joint initiatives, contribute to a brighter future for human society, navigating the complexities of our times.

## 2. Similarities and Differences in the Development of Nomadic and Agricultural Civilizations

### 2.1 Similarities in the Understanding of Seasons

Nomadic and agricultural cultures share similarities in their understanding of seasons, particularly emphasizing the significance of spring. In China, there is an ancient saying, "A year's plan starts with spring," highlighting the importance of spring for both agricultural and nomadic societies. For agricultural civilizations, spring is the busiest season, focusing on activities like spring planting, summer sowing, autumn harvest, and winter storage. This period is crucial for the growth of crops, as agricultural communities work diligently to prepare for a bountiful harvest. Similarly, for nomadic cultures, spring holds profound meaning as it is the season when cattle and sheep reproduce. Despite the grasslands not reaching optimal quality and the animals being relatively lean, nomadic people consume stored winter meat during spring, prioritizing water retention and typically consuming dairy products and cured meat in the summer. In the autumn, agricultural civilizations celebrate the harvest season, gathering abundant grains for the winter. Nomadic cultures, on the other hand, focus on fattening their livestock in preparation for winter meat storage. These similarities reflect the sensitivity and adaptability of both cultures to natural cycles to meet the needs of their respective ways of life.

### 2.2 Cultural Differences

Nomadic and agricultural cultures, exemplified by Mongolia and Han Chinese, differ in geography, history, and culture. Mongolia's nomadic culture, rooted in the Xingu period, spans 2200 years, focusing on grassland tribes' dynamics. In contrast, Han Chinese agricultural heritage, originating 3400 years ago, has evolved through the Yin and Shang periods. Totems reveal distinctions: Chinese symbols like the dragon signify power, while Mongolian totems, including the grey wolf, reflect ecological respect. Production methods diverge, with Mongolians practicing nomadic herding, relying on water and grass, while Chinese agriculture employs various farming techniques. Literary

differences showcase Confucian classics in Chinese culture and heroic Mongolian epics. Attire and diet vary, with Mongolians prioritizing practicality in loose robes and a diet of noodles, meat, and dairy, while the Chinese emphasize culinary form using chopsticks.

### **2.3 Differences in Thinking Habits**

Due to China's geographically enclosed mainland environment, Chinese thinking tends to be locally oriented, adept at summarizing the experiences of predecessors, and often draws inspiration from history. This inward-focused thinking contributes to a Chinese character inclined towards stability and tranquillity, with a limited curiosity for novel concepts and a lack of interest in the unknown. In contrast, Mongolians, situated on the Mongolian Plateau and influenced by nomadic warrior culture, lean towards conquering and embracing more adventurous endeavours. Chinese tend to contemplate issues on a higher level, emphasizing abstract thinking and profound reflections across various aspects of life. Conversely, Mongolians prioritize logical and rational thinking, exploring the material world to uncover the root causes of problems.

### **2.4 Economic System Differences**

China's traditional economy is marked by a natural, self-sufficient economic system that nurtures a population characterized by docility. This agricultural politeness fosters an emphasis on ethical values, a pursuit of harmony and stability, and a commitment to the principles of "harmony is precious, patience is noble." The Chinese, influenced by their historical agricultural practices, tend to prioritize a conservative approach, and have a limited curiosity towards new and unknown phenomena. In stark contrast, Mongolian nomadic culture's politeness, originating from the vast landscapes of the Mongolian Plateau, imparts a robust spirit of struggle and a heightened legal consciousness. Mongolians advocate principles such as independence, freedom, and equality. Their focus leans more towards practicality, starting with a deep exploration of the material world, and they exhibit a strong sense of utilitarianism. This divergence in cultural values shapes the mindset of the Mongolian people, encouraging a more adventurous and exploratory approach to life compared to the Chinese emphasis on stability and tradition.

### **2.5 Cultural Concept Differences**

Mongolian thinking places a greater emphasis on rationality, stressing fundamental changes through logical thinking. They prioritize material life, actively explore and experience the outside world. Conversely, Chinese people tend to be less open and adventurous. In Mongolian nomadic culture, there's a greater emphasis on reshaping the world to fit human needs, focusing on practical material life.

### **2.6 Educational and Cultural Differences**

Chinese education, deeply influenced by feudal Confucian culture, places a high value on learning primarily for obtaining diplomas, with strict adherence to rules, an emphasis on rote memorization, and a rigid academic atmosphere. In contrast, Mongolian education diverges from this approach, placing a greater emphasis on individual abilities and requiring fewer diploma-centric prerequisites. Mongolians foster an environment that encourages innovation and critical thinking, prioritizing practical skills over mere theoretical knowledge. Additionally, they promote the expression of opinions and actively encourage students to learn foreign languages, fostering a more interactive and engaging educational experience. This cultural distinction reflects a broader perspective on education, with Mongolian practices emphasizing adaptability and a holistic approach to skill development.

### **2.7 Differences in Traditional Attire and Cuisine:**

Traditional Mongolian robes, known for their width and versatility, serve as excellent attire for year-round outdoor activities. These robes also double as ideal blankets, providing comfort during outdoor sleep. The expansive design of the robes reflects the nomadic lifestyle of the Mongolian people, allowing for ease of movement and adaptability to varying weather conditions. When it comes to traditional Mongolian cuisine, the emphasis is on simplicity and practicality. Noodles, meat, dairy, and tea are staple components, reflecting the nomadic herding culture. The practical nature of Mongolian food aligns with the demands of their lifestyle, where nomads need nourishing and ener-

gy-rich meals to sustain their active and challenging way of life. In contrast, Chinese dietary practices place a significant emphasis on formality. The Chinese culture values the presentation and symbolism of food, with specific etiquettes governing meals. The emphasis on formality in Chinese dining reflects the cultural significance attached to meals and the importance of social harmony.

### **3. Mutual Fusion and Inevitability of Agricultural and Nomadic Civilizations**

In resource-rich and accessible environments, civilizations emerge and endure. Agricultural cultures, characterized by peace and independence, thrive on self-sufficiency. The close bond between farmers and their fields reflects a pursuit of “expanding time rather than space.” Nomadic civilizations inject new energy, leading to historical conflicts and exchanges. Agricultural civilizations absorb new traits from nomadic cultures, either adapting peacefully or engaging in war to restore balance. Historical interactions with ethnic minorities shape the interdependence between agricultural and nomadic civilizations. Kublai Khan’s military power subdued the Song Dynasty, deepening cultural divides. Today, reflecting on the love and hatred between nomadic and agricultural civilizations, we recognize the importance of nomadic culture in the global village. The “Global Development Initiative,” rooted in China’s experience, enriches global knowledge and fosters cultural exchange with Mongolia. Initiatives like the “Belt and Road” and global development serve as the basis for Sino-Mongolian relations, laying the groundwork for extensive and deeper development. Post-pandemic, cultural exchange will deepen, contributing to a shared future and collective development.

### **4. Conclusion**

The “Global Development Initiative,” rooted in China’s experiences, reshapes the global landscape in knowledge, relationships, and systems. It offers the world the “Chinese approach” and “Chinese wisdom,” creating broad prospects for cultural development between Mongolia and China. Post-pandemic, cultural exchange will deepen, driven by a shared historical foundation. China’s initiatives, including the “Belt and Road,” global development, and global security, form the basis for a shared future and enhanced Sino-Mongolian relations. Both countries contribute strategic approaches to global challenges, drawing from nomadic and agrarian cultures. China and Mongolia, nourished by ancient wisdom, provide international public goods, embodying shared human values. In the context of complex human relationships, environmental dynamics, and geopolitical shifts, emerging nations rise swiftly, technological revolutions intensify, and global governance faces mismatches. Through initiatives like the “Belt and Road,” China and Mongolia collaboratively contribute to a brighter future for humanity.

### **References**

- [1] Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”, Simon & Schuster, US, 1998, p. 239.
- [2] Felipe Fernando-Armesto, “Civilization: Culture, Ambition, and the Great Game between Man and Nature”, UK, Free Press, Reprint (June 1, 2002), p. 74.
- [3] Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”, Simon & Schuster, US, 1998, p. 272.