

Yuan Bolan *

Huang Li **

Historical Investigation of A Multi-ethnic Embedded Village in China

Abstract

The article systematically analyzes the representation and forming conditions of the harmonious relationship between the multi-ethnic groups in a village of China. This research will also analyze the formation process of the multi-ethnic interbedded patterns, probes into the formation mechanism of the social structure and community environment of the ethnic interbedded communities, and sums up the practical experience of the interbedded ethnic groups. It is an effort to understand and bring forth the multi-ethnic construction in China.

Key Words: Multi-ethnic Mutual Embedding; Historical Construction; Reflection

I. Introduction

Embeddedness, originally a technical term for structural engineering, describes the interlocking and interdependence of different parts to form a new whole. Subsequently, the term was gradually applied in the field of social sciences. In 2014, the central government of China proposed to promote the establishment of an embedded social structure and community environment for all ethnic groups. It marks a great change in the thoughts of China ethnic groups: the focus of ethnic relations construction has shifted from economic construction to social construction.

Taking Fengshu Uygur and Hui Township in Taoyuan County, Hunan Province as a case study, this paper reviews the evolution history of ethnic inter-embeddedness pattern, investigates the interbedding situation of politics, economy, culture, marriage and family of all ethnic groups of the village, and summarizes the experience of the construction of multi-ethnic interbedded community, and also provides a reference for the construction of multi-ethnic embedded social structure and social environment.

II. Representation of the Harmonious Relationship in Fengshu Township.

Fengshu Uygur and Hui Township, in Taoyuan County, Hunan Province, (hereinafter referred to as Fengshu Township) is located in the eastern part of Taoyuan County, Hunan Province, convenient transportation, 15 kilometers from

* *Yuan Bolan, Department of History, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan; Assistant Professor, Department of the Minorities, China Three Gorges University, Yichang, Hubei 443002, China.*

** *Dr. Huang Li, Professor, Department of Marxism, China Three Gorges University, Yichang, Hubei 443002, China.*

the county seat, 18 kilometers from Changde City, under the jurisdiction of 13 villages, 9005 households, more than 32000 people. Fengshu Township is a multi-ethnic village, with more than 20,000 Han nationality, 9209 of minorities. The most populous minority ethnic group is the Uygur and the number of Uygur is 7883 in this village. Hui is the second ethnic group, which has 1316 members and a small number of Tujia and Miao villagers. The ethnic relations in Fengshu Township is harmonious, and is embedded in many aspects, such as the living patterns, the customs, the culture and the geographical identity. This village was won the national honorary title of *"model collective of national unity and progress"* in 2014.

Mutually Embedded Living Patterns

Raymond Finn, a British anthropologist, said: "starting from the spatial position, we can study the living place of relatives which make us understand the relationship between relatives."¹Then, the study of ethnic residence (inter-ethnic living pattern) from the spatial position can also help us to understand the relationship between ethnic groups. The inter-ethnic living pattern is the distribution and combination of the residents of all ethnic groups in the multi-ethnic society. The living pattern is an important factor that affects the contact opportunities of the members of all ethnic groups."specific inter-ethnic living patterns can not only reflect the current situation of inter-ethnic relations, but also shape the future of inter-ethnic relations."²

Fengshu Township which is known as Uygur's "second hometown", is the largest Uygur place of residence except Xinjiang. The Uygur villagers have lived here for more than six hundred years. According to the records of Uygur genealogy, in 1368 A.D, the ancestor of Fengshu Uygur, was ordered to lead army to quell the uprising of minorities in northwest Hunan, and his descendants settled in Fengshu Township. The Hui people in Fengshu Township were also the descendant of the military immigrants of the same period, and later settled here. Tujia, Miao villagers are mainly settled here for work, marriage and other reasons in recent years. The villagers of all ethnic groups are distributed in the 13 administrative villages of this township. Weihui New Village is the administrative village with the most concentrated minority population in the township. It has 17 villagers undefined groups, 621 households, with a total population of 2375, including 1377 Uighurs, accounting for 17.47 percent of the Uygur population, 215 Hui people, and 16.34 percent of the Hui population in the township. Overall pattern of living, Fengshu Township has realized multi-ethnic mutual embedding.

In the state of mutual embedding, there is also a small agglomeration in Fengshu Township. The living pattern of this small agglomeration embodies the characteristics of Chinese traditional rural family living in a compact community, that is, the big family's living pattern affects the spatial relationship of traditional villages. In Fengshu Township, the family and ethnic coupling, the family name of the villagers is not only the label of family identity, but also the label of ethnic identity. The villagers surnamed Jian are Uygur, the villagers surnamed Xue, Huang, and Ma are Hui, and the villagers surnamed Tong, Zhuang villagers are Han. From names of place, we can also research the geographical and spatial distribution of various ethnic groups in Fengshu Township. For example,

Jianjiaqiao once mainly inhabited by Uygur villagers, Huangjiaqiao and Xuejiazui once mainly inhabited by Hui villagers, Tongjiahu and Zhuangjiaqiao once mainly inhabited by Han villagers. The distribution of indigenous people reflects the spatial distribution of ethnic groups. However, the edge of ethnic space is becoming more and more vague, showing the characteristics of ethnic inter-embeddedness. In the field investigation, we found that a large number of villagers flowed in or out of the villages freely, and in these natural villages named after surnames, the surnames of villagers have undergone great changes, same to spatial distribution of ethnic groups. Place name used to reflect the spatial distribution of families and ethnic groups, but now they are more of historical mapping.

Mutually Embedded Customs

Customs are common behavior patterns observed by people in specific social and areas, including ethnic habits, holiday, traditional etiquette and so on. Customs are stable and are portrays of the social life of the groups to which the members of the society belong. Customs, especially religious festivals, reflect a ethnic's way of life, religious beliefs and historical traditions, so the degree of acceptance of other ethnic festivals represents the degree of recognition of other ethnic culture in a certain sense.

Lesser Bairam, Corban and Maulid al-Nabi are important religious holidays of Muslim, and also the main customs of Muslim. During these three festivals, Uygur and Hui Muslim villagers in Fengshu Township gather in mosques and celebrate the festivals. According to the master of Fengshu Mosque, many people donate to mosques, including some Han villagers. The most important festival in the village is the Spring Festival, which is celebrated by the villagers of all ethnic groups. During the Spring Festival, whether the Han or the Uygur, the Hui, each family paste the antithetical couplet, hang lantern and have family reunion dinner. The villagers visit relatives and friends.

Whether daily life or important festivals, these originally belong to an ethnic group's lifestyle, now we can see the figure of villagers of all ethnic groups. The villagers of Han respect the customs of minorities, and the minority villagers are also integrated into the way of life of Han. Celebrating festival together and sharing cultural fruits promote the communication and exchange among multiethnic villagers, and promote the harmonious relations, and ethnic groups are interbedded in customs.

Mutually Embedded Economic Life

More than 600 years ago, the ancestors of Uygur and Hui in Fengshu Township were military immigrants. During the replacement of the dynasty, their status was changed from the soldiers to farmers. The way of livelihood also changed, they learned agricultural technology from the surrounding Han villagers and engaged in agricultural production. In the process of learning, inter-ethnic exchanges and cooperation have been strengthened. Traditional agricultural production emphasizes timing, geographical location and cooperation. In daily production, villagers of all ethnic groups have formed a relationship of mutual assistance and cooperation.

In modern agricultural production, the villagers of all ethnic groups in Fengshu Township form the development mode of "enterprise + basement + cooperative + peasant household", through the cooperatives to ensure the planting benefit. Aquaculture is an important industry in Fengshu Township, and it is also the traditional industry of local Uyghur and Hui. In order to break through the bottleneck of aquaculture industry development, villagers of all ethnic groups through the combination of technology and funds to achieve large-scale management. Learning from each other, and win-win cooperation have penetrated into the daily production of villagers of all ethnic groups. Uyghur, Hui and Han villagers have formed an economic dependence derived from life and production needs.

Mutually Embedded Marriages and Families

The rate of interracial intermarriage has always been a sensitive index to measure the social distance between ethnic groups, the intensity of group identity, population heterogeneity and social integration. Milton Gordon, an American sociologist, put forward seven variables to measure ethnic group integration in *Assimilation in American Life*, and interracial marriage rate is one of the important variables to measure ethnic group integration. Ma Rong, a Chinese scholar, believes: "Interethnic intermarriage is the most important index to measure ethnic relations, and intermarriage between ethnic groups is a very important aspect to measure the degree of ethnic interrelationship and deep integration."³ "when the intermarriage rate between two ethnic groups reaches more than 10 percent, it can be judged that the integration between the two ethnic groups has reached a certain degree and the relationship is relatively harmonious."⁴

Chinese Uighur have the custom of interethnic marriage, marriage is generally concluded within their own ethnic group, so the rate of inter-ethnic intermarriage is always low.⁵ According to the census data of China, Uighur has the lowest rate of interethnic marriage in China. Compared with the data of the fifth and sixth censuses of China, the intermarriage rate of Uighur decreased from 1.05% to 0.53%, which was still the lowest among ethnic minorities with Han nationality, the number of intermarried ethnic groups decreased from 47 to 41, and the intermarriage rate with Han nationality decreased from 0.62% to 0.24%. This is the overall situation of Uighur, however the marital status in Fengshu Township is completely different. There is no intermarriage among Uyghurs in Fengshu Township. Because the Uyghur in the township is a family, the Uyghur villagers here adhere to the custom of "the same surname does not marry". The marriage history of Uyghur nationality in Fengshu Township is an inter-ethnic marriage history.

Hui in Fengshu Township is composed of several families, such as Xue family, Huang family and Ma family. The intermarriage circle is generally consistent with Uyghur, but the choice is wider. Several Hui families provide conditions for intra-marriage. However, the size of Hui population in the township is small and cannot meet the needs of intra-marriage, so Uyghur has become the main marriage object. There are two reasons, first, Uyghur in Fengshu Township was always recognized as Hui before 1952, so the intermarriage between local Hui and Jian was not considered to be interracial marriage. Second, Muslims tend to marry within

religion, so even after Jian had been identified as a Uighur in 1956, Hui villagers were still willing to intermarry Jian.

In Ming Dynasty, the rate of marriage between Hui and Uygur in Fengshu Township was between 7.89% and 28.95%, and the rate of intermarriage with non-Muslims (mainly Han nationality) was between 71.05% and 92.11%." "In Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, the rate of marriage between the Hui and Uygur in Fengshu Township was between 55.56% and 72.22%, and the rate of intermarriage with non-Muslims was between 27.28% and 44.44%." "From 1949 to 1996, the rate of marriage between Hui and Uygur in Fengshu Township was between 45.38% and 62.15%, and the rate of intermarriage with non-Muslims (mainly Han) was between 37.85% to 54.62%."⁶

The direct result of interracial marriage is the formation of multi-ethnic families. In Fengshu Township, inter-ethnic marriage is norm, the family numbers of a single ethnic are rare. There are families which members are all Han in the village, but no family which members are belong to one minority. Family members in the village generally come from three ethnic groups: Uygur, Hui and Han. With regard to interracial intermarriage, the villagers of various ethnic groups in Fengshu Township have their own attitude: Uygur insist on extra ethnic marriage, t Hui tend to interracial marriage, and Han accept inter-ethnic marriage. Interracial marriage deepens inter-ethnic exchanges and cooperation, and realizes the mutual embedding of fate. This kind of marriage and family is not only the result of ethnic inter-embedding, but also the factor to promote ethnic inter-embedding.

Mutually Embedded Regional Identity

The identity of multi-ethnic country is the core of the social structure, and the regional identity is the sub-core of the social structure. National identity focuses on political significance, regional identity on the cultural and social level, the two levels are different, national identity is higher than regional identity, but the essence of regional identity belongs to national identity.

The local Uygur and Hui ethnic groups have always maintained a strong identity with the country. For hundreds of years, local political stability, social harmony, there has never happened political insurrection, or divided state behavior. Uygur and Hui in Fengshu Township are full of heroes who defend country, such as Jian Bashi who sacrificed for the stability of the southwest of China, Jian Ruyan died in Opium combustion in Humen, and more than 100 Uighur and Hui volunteers fighting against the United States and aiding the DPRK.

The Chinese people are attached to their hometown, and have a strong local complex, and the "double hometown view" is an important feature of the regional identity of immigrants. Immigrants often regard their ancestors or their own place of growth as "first hometown", and the place of migration is "second hometown", but not all places of migration can become "second hometown". The degree of localization of immigrants affects the identity of the place of migration. Fengshu Township is known as the "second hometown" of Uygur. It is the regional identity of the Uygur in Fengshu Township. According to Jian family's genealogy, there were family members who had returned to Xinjiang. This was a large-scale return migration, which took place in Ming dynasty. Since then, the ethnic group took

root in Hunan, realized localization, and did not return again. To regard the place of residence as the hometown is the recognition and acceptance of the emigrants to the place of inflow. The emigrants think of themselves as the master of the land, live and work in peace, and contentment with the aborigines, and build a better home together.

III. Conditions of the Pattern of Multi-ethnic Intercalation in Fengshu Township.

Good location Advantage

Natural resources, geographical location, transportation and culture are the main contents of regional location advantages, and they are also important factors affecting human migration and settlement. Rich natural resources, convenient transportation, can provide good material conditions for human production and life. Social interaction and information dissemination channels are smooth, so residents have many opportunities to contact with the outside world, and have strong ability to accept new things, and have an open cultural mentality. Westmark believed that "traditional isolated state, as well as people's antipathy towards people who differ from them in customs, manners and language, can easily lead to criticism of intermarriage and even orders to ban it."⁷ Therefore, geographical location will also have an impact on residents' views on marriage.

Changde is a famous hometown of fish and rice in the south of the Yangtze River. It makes the local residents have a strong inclusiveness and the ability to accept and integrate different culture. Fengshu Township has convenient transportation and unobstructed information. In the middle and late Ming Dynasty, the Uygur and Hui ancestors of Fengshu Township settled here, and abundant natural resources provided enough means of livelihood for the new immigrants.

Uygur and Hui in Fengshu Township interlaced with the surrounding Han villagers in the form of scattered and mixed distribution, frequently communicated with each other in daily production and life, promoted understanding, learned from each other, eliminated cultural prejudice, and formed a regional culture of integration and symbiosis.

Harmonious History of Local Ethnic Relations

"The relationship between ethnic groups today has evolved through a historical process"⁸The ethnic relations in the history of a region have a great influence on the future trend of ethnic relations. There was no military confrontation between the Uygur and Hui ancestors in Fengshu Township and indigenous inhabitants. According to the characteristics of the military system of Ming Dynasty, "A soldier is a soldier in wartime, and is a farmer in his spare time", the immigrants often worked together with the local people.

According to local records, when Uygur and Hui ancestors settled in Fengshu Township, the indigenous inhabitants were few. So the arrival of new immigrants did not pose a threat to the aborigines, and avoided that "immigrants are likely to be seen as interloper by local communities who will produce rejection psychology."⁹

Appropriate Size of the Ethnic Population

The objective existence of multi-ethnic groups is the basic condition for the formation of multi-ethnic groups, and the scale of ethnic population affects the depth and breadth of mutual embedding. When the ethnic minority population reaches a certain scale, the mutual embedding of multi-ethnic groups is of typical significance. Under the condition of self-sufficient small peasant economy in traditional society, when the population scale of an ethnic group is appropriate, the communication between ethnic groups can meet the needs of ethnic development, then the communication between ethnic groups occurs less; when the scale of ethnic population is small and the needs of ethnic development cannot be met within the ethnic, the frequency of communication between ethnic groups increases. From the historical point of view, the size of population is related to the development of an ethnic. From the needs of reality, the size of population not only affects the pattern of inter-ethnic residence, but also affects the opportunity of inter-ethnic communication and inter-ethnic marriage. Peter Brau once pointed out: "the greater the difference in the size of the two groups, the greater the inconsistency in their rate of intergroup communication with each other."¹⁰

According to the research of many scholars, in Mongolian and Yuan dynasties, there were many famous Uyghur people moved into the Central Plains of China, and lived with Han people for a long time, and no reflux. These groups were integrated into the Chinese nation. According to Huang Li's research, each Uyghur and Hui ancestors in Fengshu Township had a population of 300. Although the population scale was small, but it still maintained a certain scale, forming a stable group, the frequency of inter-ethnic exchanges was high, and the custom of interracial intermarriage had been maintained all the time. While the ethnic population is supplemented, the relationship with other ethnic groups around is becoming closer and closer.

Pluralistic Social Support System

Social support is an important resource for migrant groups, which is related to the stability and development of them. The social support of Uyghur and Hui ancestors in Fengshu Township mainly came from three aspects: one was the formal support of the government, the other was the quasi-formal support of the community, and the third was the family support. With the joint support of a variety of forces, the group had been localized and integrated into the local society.

During the feudal dynasty in China, farmers were strictly prohibited from moving freely. In the early Ming Dynasty, the central government repeatedly ordered a ban on the movement of people.

As the military immigrants of feudal dynasty, there are two kinds of government support, one is the legitimacy of mobility, the other is the support of production and living materials. According to the Ming Dynasty military system, every soldier has a house, a field, and a fixed monthly grain which were supplied by government. The Uyghur and Hui ancestors in Fengshu Township were military immigrants of Ming Dynasty. Their flow was not only reasonable and legal, but also had a strong color of state will. Official support from the state helped the Uighur and Hui ancestors in Fengshu Township lay the political and economic foundation for settlement.

According to Ming Dynasty Military System, Soldiers lived in military camp which was a community. Soldiers were economically self-sufficient and politically privileged. They were an independent community with complete functions. The community can provide quasi-formal support including means of production, social resources, identity and so on. Military identity is an important resource, including land, imperial examination, clan and ethnic identity, etc. Uygur and Hui ancestors in Fengshu Township gradually realized localization by strengthening community support and powerful group strength.

Family members accompanied the army was an important feature of the Ming dynasty military system. This policy not only solved the problem of the source of soldiers, but also met the needs of the family reunion of the commissioned officers. The support from the family played an important role in stabilizing the military mind and promoting the stability of the migrant groups.

The government policy supported the legitimacy of the migration of the floating population, provided the migrant with the production and life data, and solved the problem of the survival and development of the migrant; The community support system solved the problem of identity of migrants; Family support met the needs of migrants for family reunion. In the multi-level and omni-directional support system such as government, community, family and so on, the willingness of migrants to stay and the stability of groups were enhanced.

IV. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The construction process of multi-ethnic social structure and community environment is the process of ethnic minority floating population living and working in place of influx. The construction process of multi-ethnic intercalation pattern in Fengshu Township is the process of localization of ethnic migrants. The study on the construction of multi-ethnic intercalation pattern in Fengshu Township can provide enlightenment for China to construct the social structure and community environment in which all ethnic groups are embedded each other.

Guiding the Scientific Distribution of Migrant Ethnic

The direction of floating population in China is mainly from the west to the east, from the countryside to the city. And the floating population of ethnic groups are concentrated in developed areas. "Most of the floating population of ethnic groups flow to the southeast coastal areas." "The proportion of the floating population flows to the southern provinces is 75.5%, and the proportion to the north is 24.5%." "Guangdong and Zhejiang are still the preferred areas for ethnic minorities to emigrate."¹¹ The government should consider urban capacity, and guide the rational distribution of the floating population of ethnic groups, so as to avoid the emergence of social problems caused by the excessive concentration of homogeneous population distribution.

Promoting the Socialization of the Floating Population of Ethnic Groups

The government should strengthen the continuous socialization of the mobile minorities, assist the mobile minorities to continue to learn cultural knowledge, values, adapt to new environment and the new social role, especially strengthen the socialization of professional skills, acquire production skills and vocational

skills, and lay a good foundation for the career of the migrant persons of ethnic minorities. To improve the ability of minority floating population to participate in the great division of labor in modern society, to complete the de-tradition of livelihood mode, to realize the diversification of livelihood mode, to integrate into modern society, and to realize the mutual embedding of social structure.

Promoting the Familiarization of the Floating Population of Minorities.

Family reunion can bring family companionship, which is of great significance to family stability and social stability. The trend of family migration is increasing, but the willingness of minority floating population is not high, which is mainly due to the high cost. Family members face many difficulties in housing, education, employment, medical treatment and so on. The existing system and public service system in China have made some policy arrangements in view of these difficulties of the floating population, but the policy focuses mainly on the individual needs, and does not take into account the overall needs of the family. The policy-making departments should face up to the actual needs of the family reunion of ethnic groups, and improve the family welfare policy system of the floating population of ethnic groups. The floating population of ethnic groups should be brought into the scope of equalizing urban public services, providing services such as child support, youth development and support for the elderly.

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