

# **The Fusion of Tradition and Modernity: The Development Challenges of Villages in China's Ethnic Areas from The Perspective of Cultural Philosophy**

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**Abstract:** China's diverse cultural landscape encompasses a multitude of communities each with unique traditions and challenges in preserving their cultural heritage. Our study aimed to explore the variations in cultural preservation experiences across different ethnic groups, such as Han and several minority communities. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected through a survey administered to members of different ethnic groups. Qualitative data was gathered through textual analysis. The findings showed that the Han ethnic group has emphasis on cultural values and expression. Minority groups such as Uyghurs, Mongols, and Tibetans had limited emphasis on cultural values. Although all communities demonstrate resilience through strategies like reviving traditional practices, adapting to modern contexts, and promoting cultural awareness.

**Keywords:** Cultural preservation, China, Diversity, Minority Communities, Resilience, Challenges, Opportunities, Resources, Adaptation.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Chinese villages constitute the basic organisation structure of the rural population. These villages are usually composed of local divisions encompassing neighbourhoods and communities with defined boundaries and designated heads. In the millennium (2000), the densely populated villages of China were considered to have more than 100 persons per square km with more than 500 million individuals in more than 20% of China's total land area (Ellis, 2004; Esherick & Rankin, 1990). Urban villages are defined as spontaneous villages that are naturally formed in urban centres and does not have administrative divisions. In contrast, rural type of villages consists of the administrative villages (pinyin), a hamlet, Gacha, Ranch and ethnic villages (village committees). These villages include Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Hebei and others (Ellis, 2004).

According to Gustafsson & Ding (2009) the significance of protecting and preserving traditional Chinese villages should be interpreted based on the concept and reality of constant urbanisation that has occurred in China since 1978. Prior to 1980, the rate of urbanisation in China was less than 20% and it was unnecessary to emphasize the significance of preserving villages while most of the country's land were rural villages. In 1982, there were issuance of the "Regulations on Land Exploration for National Construction Works" that advocated for the demolition and movement of suburban villages that were viewed as paving the way for modernity and urbanisation (Kuai, 2016). The enactment of these regulations in 1982 led to the disappearance of traditional villages due the rapid urbanisation. The People's Republic of China has officially recognised the *Hahn* majority and other 55 different minorities (Gustafsson & Ding, 2009). These ethnic minorities have their distinct languages and people belonging to a particular minority have a shared and common history that forms a fundamental component of their identity and religious beliefs. The inner Mongolia is the outstanding autonomous regions with a minority of 21% and representatives at the county level. Several policies and the implementation of rural heritage preservation measures came at later stages after urbanisation had taken full effect and significant economic development had been achieved in the last 30 years. Therefore, there are significant challenges in protecting the Chinese traditional villages; however, due to the constant economic growth and social development, the strategies and concepts geared towards rural heritage have evolved based on different phases from 1978-1996, 1997-2007, and 2008-present (Zhou et al., 2019). In 1997 to 2007, certain villages were identified as cultural relics despite the consistent growth in urbanisation by up to 45% in 10 years (Zhou et al., 2019). According to Zhou et al. (2019), in 2008 to present the rates of rural heritage were significantly improved even as urbanisation increased to 60% post 2008. In 2006, a list of the Chinese Intangible Cultural heritage was provided to the public in a bid to encourage craftsmanship and folk activities that were declining in the country life. Oakes (2013) suggested that in the last 3 decades, several traditional villages have utilised resources derived from these heritage sites to encourage rural tourism and alleviate poverty. The philosophy of ethnic minority gained traction in the People's Republic of China from 1980s and forms a significant peripheral and marginal component of modern Chinese thoughts and cultural philosophy. According to Guo (2018), there have been several philosophical publications on the philosophy of minority in China and have been published in low level regional and specific journals without emphasis on

the large field of comparative philosophy. The status of “ethnic minority philosophy” remains unexplored and is thought to be linked with national identity, social and political realities. Based on demographical composition, mainland China is a “multiethnic state” consisting of the Han who accounts for 91.5% of the total population based on the 2010 census and other 55 official ethnic minorities or rather “nationalities” that achieved status based on “ethnic classifications” in the 1950s (Jones, 1985; Mullaney, 2011; Zang, 2015, p. 16). Several advocates and champions of ethnic minority philosophy in China have proposed that it is still under development and represents a state of *tabula rasa*. Also, it does not offer the view that it reflects institutional and political state of affairs, but it offers an analytically separation and analysis of the nature of philosophy, national identity, society and religion (Tong, 1997, p. 2; Xiao et al., 1992, p. 1). Chinese philosophers have always been concerned about the application of philosophy to the aspects of culture. Cultural heritage and social contexts and most debates around these ideas were considered to be political and thus did not assume the concepts of speculative thought (Makeham, 2012; Steineck & Weber, 2018). The basis of existence or absence of Chinese metaphysics is enhanced by the latency and explicit political and national ideas (Weber, 2013). Thus, we can deduce that the interactions with Western philosophy, Japanese culture, military and economic power in the later stages of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) was a significant process in the adjustment and adaptation to a new epistemological order. In the classical formulation of Joseph Levenson, we can propose that it was not only based on vocabulary but a complete transformation of the Chinese intellectual and sociopolitical languages (Levenson, 1968, p. 157). Modern Chinese philosophy is mainly dominated by the products of interactions between traditional ideas of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, and the influence of Western philosophy. According to Makeham (2021), Confucianism has been widely adopted as closely associated with the Chinese culture. Therefore, the “West” has been observed as a reference point for interlocution and comparison during the reinvention of Chinese philosophy and traditions (Jin, 2020). In comparison to the West based on the sub-disciplines of philosophy and intellectual history, China has paid minimal attention and focus to their “proximate others” (Smith, 2004). In the context of our study, “proximate others” refers to ethnic minorities in China that do not form part of the Han peoples of China; for example, the Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongols, Hui, Manchus, Miao and Tujia. OuYang (2012) proposed that it is difficult to emancipate Chinese thoughts from the dominant cultural influence derived from the West leading to a

rejection of the idea of “philosophy” by reconverting from the western concept of “Other” to the Chinese “Self” because the West has often ignored the hybrid and internal multiplicity of Chinese culture. China's philosophical landscape has traditionally focused on Han community leaving the rich intellectual heritage of its diverse ethnic groups largely unexplored. In the early 1980s, the "minority philosophy" discipline emerged, aiming to diversify this perspective. However, its development has been marked by tensions between inclusivity and political objectives, hierarchical framing, and oversimplifications of minority cultures. Our study seeks to examine the relationship between minority philosophies and the development challenges of villages in China's ethnic areas.

## 2. METHODS

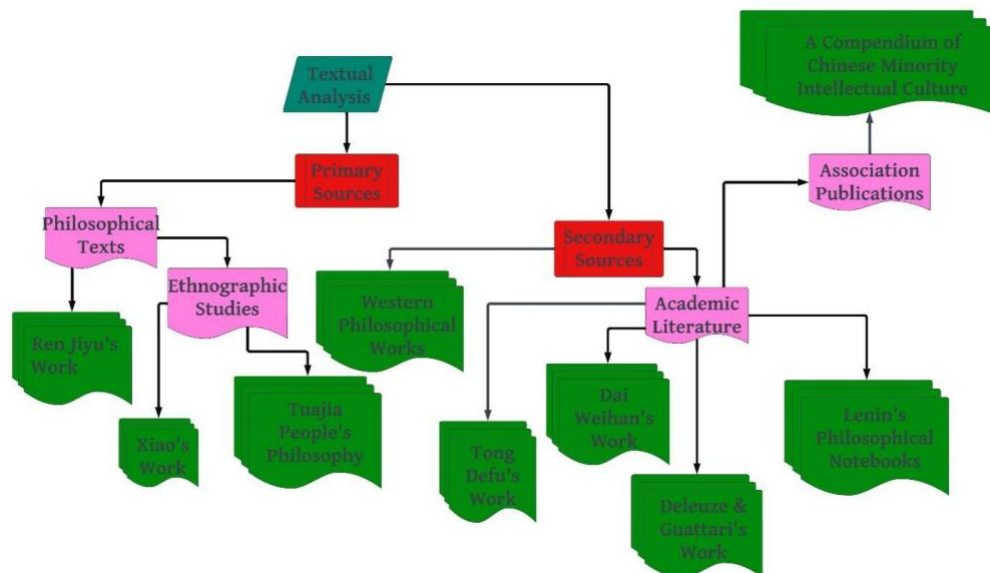
### 2.1 Study Design

A mixed methods research approach was selected to combine qualitative and quantitative aspects. Qualitative data was conducted through in-depth textual analysis of a diverse range of primary and secondary sources. This includes philosophical texts, historical documents, ethnographic studies, and other relevant materials in relevant minority languages and translated versions. In contrast, quantitative data was collected through a survey. A comparative analysis was performed between the philosophical traditions of the diverse ethnic groups.

### 2.2 Textual Analysis

Our analysis involved primary sources of information such as philosophical texts and ethnographic studies (See Figure 1). In philosophical texts, we delved into the works of scholars within specific minority groups. For instance, we closely analysed Ren Jiyu's (1916-2009) seminal work, *History of the Development of Chinese Philosophy*, to uncover his insights on the unique philosophical contributions of China's ethnic minorities. In ethnographic studies, we examined Xiao (2009)'s *A Comprehensive History of Tuajia Minority Philosophy* immersing ourselves in the lived experiences and philosophical perspectives of the Tuajia people. Also, we examined the works published by the Secondary sources of information involved the western philosophical works related to Chinese culture and academic literature (See Figure 1). In academic literature, we focused and critically assessed scholarly works of Tong Defu's *An Outline of Chinese Minority Philosophies* and Dai Weihai's *Philosophical Researches*, drawing upon

their established knowledge and diverse interpretations of various minority philosophies. *A Thousand Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari provided a theoretical framework for analysing the non-linear, rhizomatic nature of thought, particularly relevant for exploring alternative philosophical expressions beyond dominant paradigms. Lenin's "*Philosophical Notebooks*" a collection of notes provided a comparative perspective through which we examined the development of philosophical thought across diverse cultural contexts, including potential connections between minority philosophies and broader social and political movements. Lastly, publications from the "Association for the Study of the History of the Philosophies and Social Thought of China's Ethnic Minorities", such as "*A Compendium of Chinese Minority Intellectual Culture*" were analysed for critical insights into the historical development, key figures, and central themes within various minority philosophies.



**Figure 1:** An Illustration flowchart of the steps involved in Textual Analysis

### 2.3 Survey

Our survey was administered to representative samples of various ethnic communities in China, including the Uyghurs, Mongols, Tibetans, Manchus, Tujia, Hui, and Miao. Participants were recruited through culturally appropriate channels ensuring informed consent and anonymity throughout the process. The survey instrument consisted of several sections, each focusing on specific themes aligned with cultural philosophy principles such as Identity and Belonging, Cultural Preservation and Transmission, Relationship with Nature and Environment, Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding, and the Impact of Social and Political

Factors.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was triangulated with the qualitative data from the textual analysis to understand cultural perspectives of Uyghurs, Mongols, Tibetans, Manchus, Tujia, Hui, and Miao. The quantitative data collected through the survey was analysed using appropriate statistical methods such as descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and correlations to identify trends, patterns, and potential relationships between different variables.

## 3. RESULTS

Harmony with nature emerged as a prominent theme among ethnic groups exemplified by emphasis on land stewardship, respect for spirits, and cyclical understandings of time. This contrasted with the hierarchical relationship with nature observed in other groups such as philosophical tradition where concepts like filial piety often took precedence. Another key distinction manifested in communitarianism was prioritizing family, village, and shared values (See Table 1).

Table 1: Key Themes in the Ethnic Minority Philosophies.

| Theme                 | Description   | Examples from Ethnic Groups   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Harmony with Nature   | Living in balance with the natural world                | Emphasis on land stewardship, respect for spirits, cyclical nature of time and Confucian emphasis on filial piety, hierarchical relationship with nature. |
| Communitarianism      | Strong sense of collective identity and responsibility  | Importance of family, village, and shared values and focus on individual achievement, emphasis on family within broader society                           |
| Oral Traditions       | Knowledge transmission through storytelling and rituals | Importance of elders, myths, and legends, & emphasis on written texts, historical records, and scholarly traditions                                       |
| Religious Integration | Intertwining of philosophical and religious beliefs     | Influence of Buddhism, Islam & Shamanism<br>Confucianism and Daoism as separate traditions, influence on religious practices                              |

In Table 1, oral traditions played a critical role in knowledge transmission for numerous minority groups evident in the importance placed on elders,

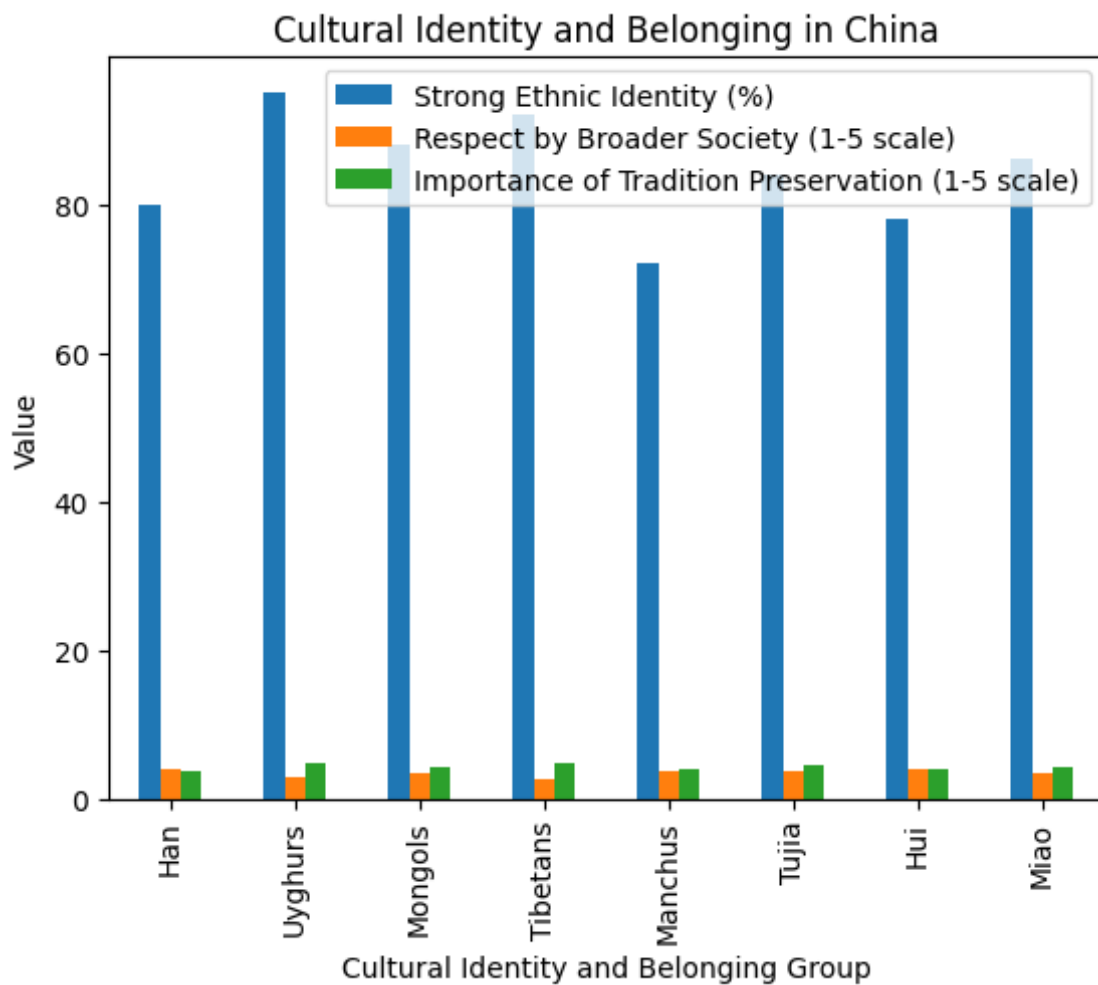
myths, and legends. Finally, religious integration interweaving philosophical and religious beliefs was observed in certain communities such as Tibetans, Mongols, and Uyghurs, influenced by Buddhism, Islam, and Shamanism, respectively. Moreover, Confucianism and Daoism remained distinct traditions within the community's philosophical landscape, although exerting some influence on religious practices.

Table 2: Key Concepts and Themes between Ethnic Minorities

| Ethnicity | Key Concepts   | Themes   |
|-----------|--|--|
| Han       | Ren (仁) - Benevolence, Li (礼) - Ritual,<br>Zhong (忠) - Loyalty, Xiao (孝) - Filial Piety                            | Harmony, Social Order,<br>Confucian Values                       |
| Uyghurs   | Wälilik (ولايلىك) - Sainthood, Ishq (ئىشق) -<br>Love, Baraka (بىركە) - Divine Blessing                             | Mysticism, Sufism,<br>Identity and<br>Community                  |
| Mongols   | Tengrism (Тэнгризм) - Worship of Sky<br>God, Nom (Ном) - Law and Tradition,<br>Zasag (Засар) - Power and Authority | Traditional Lifestyle,<br>Ecological Balance,<br>Communal Values |
| Tibetans  | Lha (ལྷ) - Deity, Karma (ཀར་མཁན) - Cause and<br>Effect, Samsara (སངས་རྒྱལ) - Cycle of Rebirth                      | Buddhism,<br>Reincarnation, Spiritual<br>Liberation              |
| Manchus   | Ama (མ་) - Mother, Nikan (ᠨᠢᠭᠠᠨ) - Kinship,<br>Daicing (ᠳᠠᠵᠢᠩ) - Qing Dynasty                                      | Filial Piety, Manchu<br>Identity, Historical<br>Legacy           |
| Tujia     | Weisi (透思) - Ancestral Spirits, Nengzhang<br>(能匠) - Craftsmanship, Baxiong (摆手熊) -<br>Bear Dance                   | Animism, Ancestor<br>Veneration, Folk<br>Traditions              |
| Hui       | Tawhid (توحيد) - Oneness of God, Sunnah<br>(سنة) - Prophetic Tradition, Ummah (أمة) -<br>Muslim Community          | Islam, Religious<br>Identity, Integration in<br>China            |

In Table 2, the Han community prominently revolved around notions of social harmony, order, and Confucian values, underscored by key concepts like Ren (benevolence), Li (ritual), Zhong (loyalty), and Xiao (filial piety). In contrast, the Uyghurs emphasized themes of mysticism, Sufism, and identity/community, drawing upon concepts like Wälilik (sainthood), Ishq (love), and Baraka (divine blessing). The Mongols, shaped by their traditional lifestyle and ecological consciousness, explored themes of communal values and ecological balance, with key concepts like Tengrism (worship of the sky god), Nom (law/tradition), and Zasag (power/authority). Tibetan philosophy centered on themes of Buddhism, reincarnation, and spiritual liberation, reflected in concepts like Lha (deity), Karma (cause & effect), and Samsara (cycle of rebirth). The Manchus

navigated themes of filial piety, Manchu identity, and historical legacy, exemplified by concepts like Ama (mother), Nikan (kinship), and Daicing (Qing Dynasty). The Tujia expressed themes of animism, ancestor veneration, and folk traditions through concepts like Weisi (ancestral spirits), Nengzhang (craftsmanship), and Baxiong (bear dance). Finally, the Hui explored themes of Islam, religious identity, and integration within China, drawing upon concepts like Tawhid (oneness of God), Sunnah (prophetic tradition), and Ummah (Muslim community). In Figure 2, Han community emphasized on shared cultural heritage and historical continuity. In contrast, the Uyghurs and Tibetans emphasized their distinct language, religion, and traditions. Other communities such as Mongols emphasized cultural identity through shared livestock while the Tujia focused on their ancestral worship and connection to mountains. Religious identity plays a crucial role for several groups with the Hui focused on Islamic faith.



**Figure 2:** Cultural Identity and Belonging between Ethnic communities.

The Han ideal emphasizing harmony, filial piety, and centralized



authority fosters a focus on deference and social order. The Mongols historically adhered to leadership and a livestock/farming existence, creating a distinct political dynamic (See Table 3).

Table 3: Views on Social and Political Order

| Group    | Ideal Society                                       | Relationship with Authority  |
|----------|---|--|
| Han      | Harmony, filial piety, strong central leadership    | Submission to authority, emphasis on social order                      |
| Uyghurs  | Community-based leadership, religious autonomy      | Not in agreement with the central viewpoint.                           |
| Mongols  | Traditional leadership, farming/livestock lifestyle | Historical autonomy, complex relationship with Chinese rule            |
| Tibetans | Theocratic leadership, Buddhist principles          | Not in agreement with the central viewpoint.                           |
| Manchus  | Clan-based social structure, warrior traditions     | Historical rulers of China, integration into Han society               |
| Tujia    | Communal living, respect for elders                 | Decentralized leadership, adaptation to local conditions               |
| Hui      | Islamic law, community leadership                   | Balancing religious identity with national citizenship                 |
| Miao     | Diverse social structures, matrilineal traditions   | Adapting to changing political landscape, preserving cultural identity |

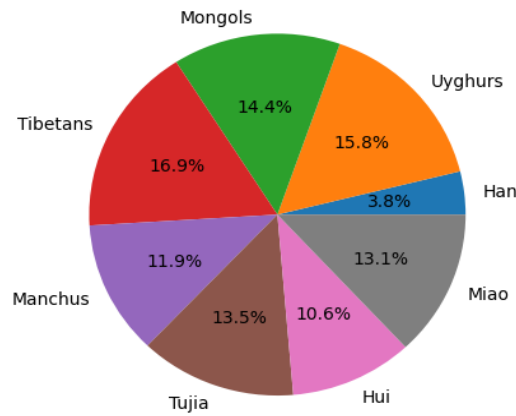
In Table 3, Manchus who were once rulers have navigated integration into Han society while retaining elements of their clan-based structure and warrior traditions. The Tujia prioritize communal living and respect for elders, favouring decentralized leadership adapted to local conditions. Balancing Islamic law and community leadership with national citizenship defines the ideal social order for the Hui. Finally, the Miao navigate diverse social structures and matrilineal traditions, adapting to the changing political landscape while preserving their unique cultural identity.

In figure 3, our survey revealed varying challenges in cultural preservation across groups. While minorities like Uyghurs (16.9%), Tibetans (15.8%), and Mongols (14.4%) faced significant hurdles, the Han community reported considerably fewer challenges (3.8%). Other minority groups like Manchus (13.5%), Tujia (13.1%), Hui (10.6%), and Miao (11.9%) faced moderate challenges, highlighting the diverse experiences of different communities in safeguarding their cultural heritage.

In Figure 4, examining resources available for cultural preservation, the Han community enjoyed a relatively high rating of 4.1 on a 5-point scale. However, significant gaps existed among minority groups. Uyghurs (2.8), Mongols (3.5), Tibetans (2.2), and Miao (3.3) reported limited resources.

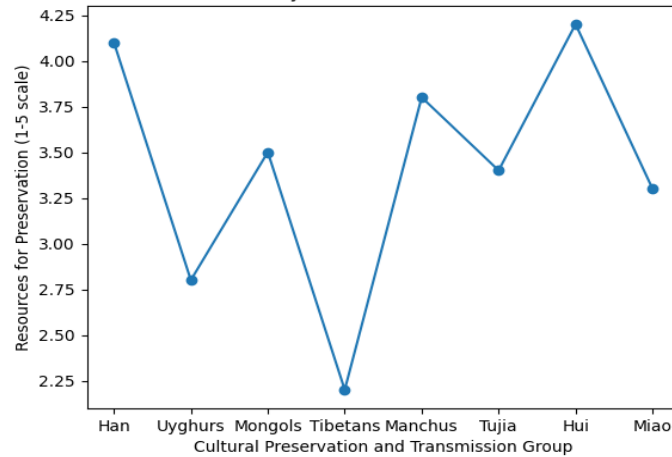
While Manchus (3.8) and Tujia (3.4) fared slightly better.

Experienced Challenges by Cultural Preservation and Transmission Group



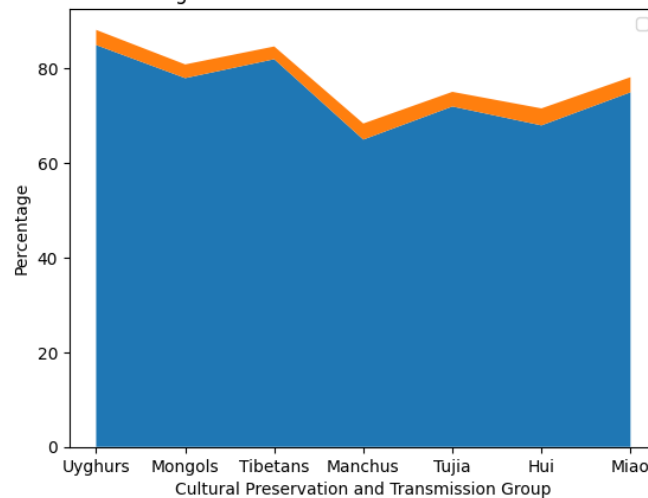
**Figure 3:** The challenges experienced by cultural preservation and transmission in the Han community and other minority groups.

Resources for Preservation by Cultural Preservation and Transmission Group



**Figure 4:** The availability of resources for the preservation of cultural heritage and transmission in Han and other ethnic minorities.

Challenges in Cultural Preservation and Transmission



**Figure 5:** A comparative analysis of the challenges experienced in cultural preservation and transmission.

In Figure 5, across China's diverse landscape challenges in cultural transmission plague many communities. The Uyghurs (85%) and Mongols (78%) reported the highest rates of difficulty, followed closely by Tibetans (82%). While other groups like the Manchus (65%), Tujia (72%), Hui (68%), and Miao (75%) faced lower percentages.

#### 4. Discussion

Our analysis showed differences experiences in cultural preservation across China's diverse communities. The Han emphasized on cultural values and expression. Others highlighted limited resources, while other groups faced complexities arising from modernization, and urbanization. We found a spirit of cultural resilience permeates all communities. Reviving traditional languages, adapting to modern contexts, and promoting ecological awareness are common strategies employed by various groups.

According to Zhou et al. (2019), in 2008 to present the rates of rural heritage were significantly improved even as urbanisation increased to 60% post 2008. In 2006, a list of the Chinese Intangible Cultural heritage was provided to the public in a bid to encourage craftsmanship and folk activities that were declining in the country life. Oakes (2013) suggested that in the last 3 decades, several traditional villages have utilised resources derived from these heritage sites to encourage rural tourism and alleviate poverty. The basic ideological reasons for including minority traditions into the discipline of philosophy was evidenced in the writings of Lenin, in his "*Philosophical Notebooks*", he postulated that philosophy constituted the whole field of knowledge (Lenin, 1915), thus, it should not be restricted to the academic and philosophical treatises. The expansion of the semantic field of philosophy was critical in evoking the comparative discussions and debates around Chinese and Western Philosophy (Xiao, 2012, p. 166). In the arguments of Li Bing, he suggests that similar to the Chinese thoughts, an examination of the minority philosophies was fundamentally restricted by the lack of criticality in adopting the modern epistemic views that limits accessibility to the minority thoughts and ends up distorting and fragmenting its information (Li, 2004; Li & Wu, 2002). Our analysis were aligned with Ru & Chen (2002, p. 127), the formal discussions and research into minority philosophy commenced with a meeting of the National Program for Philosophy and Social Sciences in Ji'nan in 1979. Several scholars agreed on the insufficient research into the philosophical

traditions of Chinese ethnic groups. Guo (2018, p. 393) suggested that ethnic minority philosophy had not existed or been used prior to 1979. Therefore, caution was taken during research to only include members of the minority groups with a focus on the retrieval, compilation and editing of textual and oral materials that were philosophically relevant (Guo, 2018, p. 397-400). In the early 1980s there were specific associations and groups devoted to the study of ethnic groups in northern and southern China and were later merged in 1992 to form the “Association for the Study of the History of the Philosophies and Social Thought of China’s Ethnic Minorities” that has over 500 members and published “*A History of Chinese Minority Philosophies*” involving 24 distinct minority ethnic groups and their philosophies (Xiao et al., 1992). The philosophical histories of these minority ethnic groups were continuously studied throughout the 1990s and 2000s the recent publications such as the works of Xiao (2009) “*A Comprehensive History of Tuajia Minority Philosophy*”. In a recent study by Wu Xiongwu involving eighty scholars drawn from forty distinct ethnic backgrounds and was closed in 2017 with a huge publication of 4 volumes and more than 3.8 million Chinese characters. Similarly, a project by the Association for the Study of the History of the Philosophies and Social Thought of China’s Ethnic Minorities was published in 2004 “*A Compendium of Chinese Minority Intellectual Culture*”. A fundamental aspect of the “ethnic minority philosophies” was constituting the history of Chinese philosophy that had almost excluded them and focused on the Han community in China. The Han community is often viewed as comprehensive and inclusive. The emergence of the ethnic minority philosophies has significantly increased national awareness, strengthened national unity and streamlined ethnic tensions. According to Dai Weihuan (Dai, 1985, p. 74-75), in his works on “*Philosophical Researches*”, he highlighted that analysis of minority philosophy cannot be carried out in a disintegrated manner however, it should deviate from the current pressing needs of the society. Therefore, minority philosophy should strive to provide a “correct analysis and evaluation” while improving the strength of the great unity of the Chinese nation. Dai emphasizes the significance of research into minority philosophy as the basis for unity and act like a centripetal force in protecting and safeguarding itself from the use of history in negating the present moments. Thus, in aligning with Dai’s thoughts, we propose that understanding the hybridicity and multiplicity in Chinese philosophical past should not be a basis for compromising and undermining the national unity of the nation. Our analysis was aligned with previous scholars (Wu, 2006, p. 1-4; Cui, 2018, p. 17) who have suggested

that Chinese philosophy must call for inclusivity as the basis for understanding political and ideologies distinct to the post-evolutionary period. In his works on *An Outline of Chinese Minority Philosophies*, Tong Defu who is a member of the Mongol ethnic group proposes that the history of Chinese philosophy as an organic whole constitutes natural unity of the ethnic minority philosophies and not as an aggregate of these philosophies. Moreover, the philosophy of a particular ethnic group forms a significant part of Chinese philosophy, thus, if the history of Chinese philosophy was to be devoid of a single nationality's philosophy, then it remains incomplete and incomprehensive. In contrast, if the isolation of any nationality's philosophy from the integral whole of Chinese philosophy, then it would be devoid of systematicity (Tong, 1997, p. 26). According to Tong (1997, p. 26) it is important to observe the inclusion of minority philosophy into the history of Chinese philosophy. However, this inclusion serves to bolster, complete and diversify the historical perspective of Chinese philosophy, it is the aspect of completion that forms the ultimate impact of understanding that Chinese minority philosophy cannot be isolated or excluded. We suggest that the relationship between plurality, multiplicity and unity associated with this nature of inclusion is dependent on hierarchies. It implies that then integrated whole of the Chinese history and its philosophy serves to improve itself by incorporating the elements of multiplicity that is ontological based on unity. Therefore, it is correct to propose that Chinese philosophy is a pre-issued and self-sufficient unity that is preceded upon the inclusion of minority philosophies. Minority philosophers such as Zhang Shibao have argued based on the hermeneutical perspectives that some degree of allowance can be provided to the interpretation of "China through China" based on philosophy, he rejects this lopsided idea and states that it is not applicable to the Chinese minority philosophy and there is no basis for interpreting Chinese minorities on their terms and conditions (Zhang, 2011, p. 93-95). Moreover, there exists clarity on the hierarchical relationship between multiplicity and unity which is viewed as a direct reflection of the patterns in which the ethnic minorities and Han community are observed. Thus, it is through numerical basis that the political distinction between majority and minority can be analysed. In *A Thousand Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, they propose that the opposition between majority and minority is not based on quantitative terms because majority implies a constant form of content or expression based on the standard measures of evaluation. Majority is seen twice in the constant and in the variable from which the constant is derived. Thus, it assumes a form of domination and

power (Deleuze & Felix, 1987, p. 105). Anthropologists such as Fei Xiaotong (1910-2005) have postulated that China is a structure of unity within diversity and his views have been interpreted on the basis of minority philosophy and relationship with the Han Chinese. In 1988, Fei Xiaotong proposed that it was obvious that the Han were the ultimate “nucleus” of this structure of unity within the diversity forming the constant while the ethnic minorities constitute the variables (Xiaotong, 1988, p. 168-185). Similarly, philosophers such as Li Zehou held strong views and positioned himself within the Chinese majority traditions and the cultural psychological components of the Han were seen to form an organic totality based on the features of mutual balance, self-regulation and self-development formed an organic totality and displayed ability to reject external disruptions or negative influences (Li, 1985, p. 31). According to Xiao (1995), several champions of the ethnic minority philosophy constantly reminded their audience about the Han community due to their higher stages of social and intellectual development compared to the minorities. Xiao Wanyuan (1991, p. 5) suggests that several “fraternal ethnic groups” in China are found at the low stages of history in the modern China. In contrast, Tong Defu in his works *Outline* propose that there is a sufficient number of ethnic minorities that are still working towards the minimum threshold of a primitive society (Tong, 1997, p. 26). Our study proposes that the presence of these arguments in both the Han community and the ethnic minorities is a clear indication that the ethnic minorities must pronounce themselves and articulate their cultural, ethnic and philosophical views while referring to the Han community as the defined standard of measure (centre of power) and development of civilisation. In 1982, Tong Defu and Wu Dexi emphasized that the theoretical systems of philosophy were contingent on specific social developments, for example, the emergence of classes within the society and the divisions of manual and mental labour. In line with these arguments, ethnic minorities in China can be categorised using primitive forms of social existence (Wu & Tong, 1982, p. 57). This is consistent with the name of the “Association for the Study of the History of the Philosophies and Social Thought of China’s Ethnic Minorities” and the difference between general categories of social thought, intellectual history and philosophy (Zhang, 2011, p. 93). Thus, from the perspectives of Wu and Tong, the “backwardness” of several Chinese minority populations and what they perceived as absence of structurally coherent and logically developed systems of thought in the minorities should not prompt us to decline the existence of minority philosophies. Marxist historians such as Zhang

Dainian (1909-2004) observed that the issue of minority philosophies could be understood from the perspective of an absent “name” from which a historically recognised and determined “actuality” is obtained. Therefore, minority philosophy already existed in the phenomena of different religious texts, myths about legends, proverbs, aphorisms, songs, dances, customs, and material culture and was only required to be brought onto the light in a systematic manner by ensuring that complete utilisation of conceptual tools of modernity are achieved. Thus, our reasoning is consistent with the Confucian *Analects* in suggesting that it is not a systematic treatise of philosophy and can be viewed as relevance to philosophy and thus the philosophy of minority traditions should be based on the name “philosophy”. Our study propose that the hierarchical nature of the minority traditions should be reconsidered philosophical and investigated. One of the basic assumptions is that the discipline of minority philosophy emerged due to the “backwardness” of most minority ethnic groups, their philosophical thoughts would be based on archaic and primordial forms of philosophy and proto-philosophical thoughts (Guo, 2018, p. 405-409). Hence, the basic idea was that studies into minority philosophy can be used as a template for “primitive consciousness” (Xiao, 1991; Tong, 1995). Marxists philosophers such as Ren Jiyu (1916-2009) in his *History of the Development of Chinese Philosophy 中国哲学发展史* from 1983 drew upon the archaeological evidences and ancient writings to perform anthropological examinations of Chinese minority populations based on development psychology and primate cognition (Ren, 1983, p. 41-77). Similar to the concepts and ideas of Ren Jiyu, first generational minority philosophers worked within the concepts of the historical materialism and alluded that “primitive consciousness” was a reflection of the relationship between objective existence and primitive human beings (Tong, 1995, p. 5). Thus, we can argue that these philosophers assumed that Chinese ethnic minorities were regarded as objects of anthropological inquiry that was similar to some forms of social existence that did not exist at the end of historical progress and emergence of civilisation.

## 5. Conclusion

Our exploration into the cultural landscapes of China has revealed a multifaceted and dynamic connection of experiences in cultural preservation. We found a spirit of cultural resilience among all communities. From reviving traditional languages and adapting practices

to promoting ecological awareness and reclaiming historical heritage, communities across China demonstrate unwavering commitment to safeguarding their unique identities. Additionally, further research is needed to delve deeper into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by individual communities, allowing for tailored interventions and ensuring the continued flourishing of China's rich cultural heritage.

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