

# **The Feasibility Study on Building an Eco-compliant Cluster of Branch Disciplines in Ethnology in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region**

## **-- Leading by the Ethnographic Discipline of Inner Mongolia Normal University**

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### **Abstract**

**With the construction of “double world-class”, the development of disciplines has received unprecedented attention from universities. Academic clusters are groups of disciplines that orderly combine related disciplines around a common field in order to meet the needs of social progress, scientific development and talent training. The emergence of academic clusters can break the barriers of disciplines, make talent cultivation out of the “academic circle” of a single discipline, move towards the cross-fertilization of multiple disciplines, obtain disciplinary innovation and breakthrough, and become a new growth point of university discipline construction.**

### **Keywords**

**Eco-compliant Cluster of Branch Disciplines in Ethnology; Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.**

## **1. Introduction**

Building “world-class universities” and “world-class disciplines” is a major strategic plan of the Party Central Committee, and “accelerating the construction of world-class universities and world-class disciplines” is written into the report of the 19th Party Congress, which is a major strategic decision made by the Party Central Committee to accurately grasp the new trend of world development, the new requirements of China's economic and social development and the new changes in the development pattern of higher education in the world. But about how to build a “world-class university” with Chinese characteristics, how to create “world-class disciplines” to meet the needs of socialist social development, we still need to think deeply and theoretical arguments and continue to explore the path of the tremendous project. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is the earliest ethnic autonomous region in China. For a long time, the people of all Minzu groups in the region, under the leadership of the Party Committee of the Autonomous Region, have been consolidating and developing the great situation of Minzu unity, social harmony and border stability in the region. As a basic social science with a long history, ethnology, with ethnicity, ethnic relations, ethnic communities, and ethnic issues as its main research objects, occupies a unique position in the Chinese humanities and social sciences system and has developed into one of the most distinctive professional fields of humanities and social sciences in China. In the new historical period, the discipline of ethnology is bound to have a new development and a new mission to promote social prosperity, economic development and national unity in Inner Mongolia. Such a historical mission cannot be accomplished by the construction of ethnographic disciplines in one university or institute alone, but requires the unity and cooperation of all those who are engaged in ethnographic

education and academic research in the autonomous region. The best choice is to effectively integrate the resources for the development of ethnology disciplines in the autonomous region, and under the guidance of scientific top-level design, to take the path of jointly building an “ecological cluster of ethnology disciplines”.

## **2. The Need to Break Down the Barriers Between Disciplines and Establish "Ecological Clusters"**

Academic specialties are always developing and improving in the development of society. With the increasingly fine division of labor and the increasingly diversified needs of society, the demand for knowledge structure, vocational skills and cultural quality of talents is constantly changing. Universities are also expanding their specialties and opening up various new branches of study to meet the needs of society. This indicates that higher education has emerged from the “ivory tower” to become a subsystem of the larger social system. In addition to scientific research, the function of a university is to serve society and to provide qualified personnel for society. Therefore, the construction of “world-class disciplines” and “first-class undergraduate programs” must follow the logic of social service orientation. And to adapt to the changing needs of economic and social development to build discipline clusters and promote the growth of interdisciplinary and emerging disciplines is the universal law of higher education development in the world today. From the international point of view, those successful “world-class universities” are always able to keep pace with the times, actively adapt to the external needs of economic and social development changes and the internal needs of discipline development, openly and flexibly build “ecological cluster of ethnology disciplines”, constantly consolidate their own characteristics and advantages, and actively develop new talent training models and fields of universities. The construction of “world-class” undergraduate majors in colleges and universities must be based on the division of disciplines, which is an inevitable requirement for the development of college disciplines. But discipline development is not isolated, many disciplines evolve in the process of cross-fertilization, without the support and leadership of other disciplines, discipline development becomes a river without water, a tree without roots. In particular, major scientific research results are inseparable from the process of interdisciplinary and comprehensive research, and the process of interdisciplinary and comprehensive research will produce a large number of marginal disciplines, interdisciplinary disciplines and emerging disciplines.

The construction of academic clusters and the cross-disciplinary development are conducive to enhancing the competitiveness of universities. The construction of disciplinary clusters in universities can create conditions for the joint development of various disciplines and lay a good knowledge base for the development of university research. The construction of “world-class disciplines” and “world-class majors” of the university is not only to create individual superior disciplines, but also to build “ecological discipline clusters” around superior disciplines, break through the barriers and boundaries of existing disciplines, give full play to the overall role of disciplines according to the national strategic needs, social and economic development and world science and technology development trends, and cultivate high-quality talents for the country and society. “categorized” but not “divided”, and that connectivity between disciplines should be maintained, especially among the various disciplines of social sciences, which should support each other and carry out multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary joint research. Just like the University of Chicago, sociological research combined with political science, economics and education to create a new discipline—Urban Sociology. Likewise, the theory and methods of economics have energized the development of the discipline of law, making the economics of law an emerging discipline. As a talent training base, universities cannot meet the demand for comprehensive human resources for social development by

relying on individual strengths alone. In today's world of science and technology development, knowledge update, and talent flow are increasingly fast, a multi-disciplinary, multi-knowledge and comprehensive talent can better adapt to the changing requirements of the times. Therefore, the goal of talent training in universities should be shifted to cultivating talents with high comprehensive quality, broad knowledge and strong independent learning ability, if only cultivated according to a single discipline, the cultivated talents may have a single knowledge structure, narrow adaptability and poor migration adaptability.

The university's disciplines and majors are more like nature, with forests, shrubs and grasslands that grow in harmony and form an organic life form. By the same token, the cultivation of talents in superior disciplines is also inseparable from the support of related disciplines and professions, and the university cannot achieve the goal of "world-class disciplines" and "world-class professions" by just running one or two superior disciplines. The construction of "world-class disciplines" should lead and improve the ecological system of the whole discipline, and continuously promote the development of discipline clusters and the construction of cross-disciplines, which in turn will lead to the improvement of the overall ability of the university's personnel training. Therefore, talent cultivation requires a reasonable ecological cluster of disciplines and an open range of specialties, and a multidisciplinary talent cultivation mechanism needs to be established for joint development. This mechanism should have the function of mutual influence and control occurring between various factors (teachers, students, majors, courses, etc.) within and outside the talent training system. In other words, around the fundamental question of what kind of talents to cultivate and how to cultivate talents, the university needs to form a mechanism for cultivating talents and scientific research with the dominant disciplines as the leading and multidisciplinary coordination in the aspects and links of discipline and major settings, training objectives, curriculum system, faculty, resource integration, management mode, talent training mode, training program, teaching process, etc.

### **3. Analysis of the Development Status and Trend of the Construction of "Eco-compliant Cluster of Branch Disciplines" of domestic ethnology**

In China, the development of many local universities has been at a disadvantage for a long time. The reason for this is that since the reform and opening up, in order to improve the level of higher education in China rapidly within a short period of time, the state chose the strategic layout of concentrating its strengths and giving priority to the development of universities directly under the central government and local famous universities, and included a few key universities in the macro education development plans such as "Project 211" and "Project 985". With the advancement of these "projects", the content of the domestic education system has a clear "Matthew effect", and the limited educational resources are constantly concentrated to these key universities, which are becoming more and more obvious in their disciplinary advantages and rapidly becoming the "disciplinary leaders" of Chinese higher education, possessing unique resources. Many local universities are at a long-term disadvantage because they have not been able to obtain the status of "key" and are losing their development momentum and educational resources. The solidified status of universities and the lack of competition among disciplines have become the new resistance to the development of higher education in the new era, which has aroused the attention and reflection of all walks of life, and the state has also re-examined the layout of the whole higher education system and started to pay attention to the development and discipline construction of local universities. In 2015, the launch of the "double world-class" strategy, which is dedicated to the overall improvement of the quality and level of higher education in China, brought great improvement to the development environment of local universities: the identity barrier of universities was broken,

the national attention to the construction of “world-class” shifted from a few key universities to the whole higher education system, and the investment in the construction of “double world-class” radiated to more universities. The measure of “overall planning and graded support” has enabled local universities to be no longer bound by the hierarchy and to gain equal rights and opportunities for development at the national strategic level. All universities and disciplines with strength and characteristics will have the opportunity to be among the ranks of the “double world-class”. This change in policy orientation has largely stimulated the motivation of local universities to run schools. It has become the main development direction of local universities to fully understand the spirit of national “double world-class” construction, combine with their own characteristics, give full play to their own discipline advantages, and strive for first-class in different levels and types.

The “double world-class” strategic decision, with “Chinese characteristics, world-class” as the core, encourages the differentiated development of different types of universities and different types of disciplines. Therefore, taking the road of specialization in the new period becomes the best choice for local universities to win in the new round of competition. Therefore, the implementation of the characteristic discipline construction strategy of local universities has become inevitable under the new situation. First of all, the starting point of local universities is to serve the local area, so local universities will naturally rely on the characteristics of local economy, local society, local culture and natural environment to gradually form special disciplines that cannot be replaced by other universities in their operation process. Secondly, “world-class universities” are based on “world-class disciplines”, and the “double world-class” strategy is to bring the construction of “world-class disciplines” to the same level of importance as the construction of “world-class universities”. Therefore, local universities that have difficulty in reaching the “world-class” level in the short term can choose to concentrate their strengths in a certain discipline and participate in the competition of “national first-class”. For local universities, the general idea of discipline construction is to highlight “regional characteristics” and “regional advantages”, and find ways to cultivate special disciplines with development potential and high recognition, so as to find highlights and breakthroughs for their own development. Term can choose to concentrate their strengths in a certain discipline and participate in the competition of “national first-class”. For local universities, the general idea of discipline construction is to highlight “regional characteristics” and “regional advantages”, and find ways to cultivate special disciplines with development potential and high recognition, so as to find highlights and breakthroughs for their own development. Therefore, in recent years, the construction of ethnic specialties in local colleges and universities, especially those in ethnic minority regions, has become a top priority for discipline development. Some famous scholars also discussed how to build a “world-class discipline” of ethnology with Chinese characteristics in the new era. At present, the construction of ethnographic specialties in local universities generally faces several problems: First, the disciplinary platform, faculty and disciplinary atmosphere supporting the construction and development of specialties are relatively unsound. Second, the development of ethnographic specialties is held back by the lagging development of related disciplines. Some local colleges and universities blindly pursue the scale effect and seek for big and comprehensive in the setting of discipline categories, which makes the originally limited educational resources more scattered and to a certain extent holds back the development of disciplines with ethnographic characteristics. On the other hand, in order to take the advantage in the construction of “double world-class” disciplines, local universities tend to vigorously develop their key disciplines and neglect the construction of special disciplines which can highlight their academic characteristics, and the development of special disciplines is held back by the development of other key disciplines. Thirdly, local colleges and universities do not have a strong awareness of the development of ecological discipline groups and interdisciplinary crossover and integration, which leads to the characteristic disciplines

being gradually isolated because they are “fighting alone”, and the discipline vision and research direction are gradually stagnant.

#### **4. The Necessity of Building A First-Class "Ecological Discipline Cluster" of Ethnology in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region**

As a key university of the autonomous region serving the needs of economic and social development of ethnic minorities and ethnic regions in the border areas, Inner Mongolia Normal University has played an irreplaceable role in the demonstration of national unity and progress in ethnic regions, economic and social development and reform and opening up, especially in the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics. According to the “Notice on Announcing the List of National and Provincial First-class Undergraduate Programs in 2020” issued by the General Office of the Ministry of Education, 53 majors of 11 universities in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region were recognized as national “world-class undergraduate” programs, including 11 selected majors of Inner Mongolia Normal University. The 11 undergraduate majors selected by Inner Mongolia Normal University are: History, Chinese Language and Literature, Psychology, Economics, Education, Geographical Science, Biological Science, Land Resources Management, Computer Science and Technology, Fine Arts, and Visual Communication Design. Up to now, Inner Mongolia Normal University has 15 majors selected as national “world-class majors” construction points, accounting for 21.43% of the total number of undergraduate majors in the university and 15.63% of the total number of selected majors in the autonomous region. Although the undergraduate program of Ethnology of Inner Mongolia Normal University was approved late and only started to enroll the first batch of undergraduates in September 2019, Ethnology has been rapidly developed in the past three years in terms of discipline construction, faculty, scientific research and talent cultivation because it is a special and advantageous discipline of Inner Mongolia Normal University with the support of university leaders and departments at all levels. Today, the College of Ethnology and Anthropology, with the first-level doctoral degree and nine master's degree, has become one of the star college of Inner Mongolia Normal University in terms of faculty and research strength, and the social influence of the ethnology program is also among the top in Inner Mongolia. Therefore, it is the inevitable choice of Inner Mongolia Normal University to concentrate the advantageous resources of the whole university to make the major of Ethnology a national “world-class major” construction point. Since its establishment in October 2018, the College of Ethnology and Anthropology of the university initially only takes the vigorous development of the discipline of ethnology as its primary task, integrates the faculty strengths of relevant minority history, minority economy, minority languages, ethnic theory and policy and other fields across the university, and also introduces high-level talents in many ways to create a team of talents with ethnology research as the main research direction. However, according to the National Standards for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Programs in General Higher Education Institutions, the major of ethnology is characterized as “combining humanities and social sciences, theory and practice”, as well as “respecting cultural differences and promoting social justice and harmonious development”. The major of ethnology is a comprehensive discipline with ethnology and anthropology as the main subjects, closely linked with history, sociology, political science, archaeology, religion, linguistics, and involving law, economics, literature, art, education, psychology, ecology and many other disciplines. At present, the faculty of the College of Ethnology and Anthropology has more talents with professional background in ethnology and anthropology, and there is no shortage of talents in history, philosophy, sociology, economics, linguistics, and religiology, but there is a scarcity of talents in archaeology, psychology, education, ecology, art, and law. Therefore, in order to accelerate the construction of “world-class discipline” of ethnology in Inner Mongolia Normal

University, we need to make more efforts on building an eco-compliant cluster of branch disciplines in Ethnology .

as a comprehensive normal university, Inner Mongolia Normal University has a wide range of disciplines, especially history, psychology and education, which have been selected as national "world-class majors", and through the construction of "ecologically sound subject cluster" and resource integration, it can provide a good help for the discipline development of ethnology and the construction of "world-class majors". In addition, more than 90% of the universities in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region are concentrated in Hohhot, the capital of the Autonomous Region, especially Inner Mongolia University, which is ranked first in the Autonomous Region, and Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, which is ranked second, and Inner Mongolia Normal University, which is only one way away. In addition, more than 90% of the colleges and universities in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region are concentrated in Hohhot, the capital of the Autonomous Region, especially Inner Mongolia University, which ranks first in the Autonomous Region, and Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, which ranks second in the Autonomous Region, are only one way away from Inner Mongolia Normal University, providing unique and convenient conditions for several colleges and universities to establish "ecological discipline group" of ethnology and promote professional complementation and resource sharing among them.

## **5. Feasibility of Building A First-Class "Ecological Discipline Cluster" of Ethnology in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region**

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is one of the birthplaces of the Chinese nation and an important stage for the life of minority groups in the north of China in ancient times. More than 10 nomadic peoples have lived and flourished in this land, among which Xiongnu, Xianbei, Turkic, Hui-falcon, Wuhuan and Khitan have survived for a long time and had great influence. In the 1920s, people of all ethnic groups in Inner Mongolia area, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, actively participated in the struggle against feudalism and aggression. On May 1, 1947, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government was established in Ulanhot, Xing'an League. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government was renamed the People's Government of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region became the earliest minority autonomous region established in China. According to the statistics of the 7th census, as of November 1, 2020, the resident population of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was 24,049,155, of which 78.74% were Han Chinese, 17.66% were Mongolian, and 3.60% were other ethnic minorities. There are 55 ethnic groups living in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, including Han, Mongolian, Manchu, Hui, Daur, Ewenk, and Oroqen, in addition to the Luoba.

### **5.1. The Development of the Discipline of Ethnology Is the Guarantee for the Good Work of Ethnic Unity in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region**

Inner Mongolia is an important ecological security barrier in the north of China, a political security and stability barrier on the northern border of China, an important agricultural and livestock production base and a major grain-producing province in China, an important energy and strategic resource base in China, an important bridgehead of China's opening to the north, the birthplace of China's regional ethnic autonomy system, a "model autonomous region" of national unity and progress, and an important strategic position in the overall political, economic, social and career development of the country. Today, at the time of the final victory of the national people in the battle against the "New Crown Epidemic", at the time of the "Central Working Conference on Nationalities" and the "Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central

Committee”, and at the important historical period when the people of all Minzu groups in the region are more closely united around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, and are embarking on a new journey of “running for prosperity with one heart and advancing to a new era”, it is of great significance to strengthen the discipline of ethnology in Inner Mongolia. According to the “Implementation Measures for Coordinated Promotion of World-Class Universities and World-Class Disciplines” formulated by the Ministry of Education, the selection criteria of “first-class universities” have special requirements for achievements in social services, which should be “outstanding performance in transforming scientific research results, forming new high-end think tanks with Chinese characteristics and world influence, making outstanding contributions to national and regional economic transformation, industrial upgrading and technological change, serving national security and social public safety, and using new knowledge and theories to understand the world, inherit civilization, popularize science, fund politics and educate people, and serve society with remarkable effectiveness”. With the promotion of the construction of “world-class majors” in ethnology in major universities, the social service function and effectiveness of ethnology will be greatly enhanced, which will make practical contributions to the economic development, national unity, social stability, border stability, cultural heritage, united front, religious harmony and ecological improvement of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

## **5.2. The Rich Ethnic Cultural Resources of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Provide A Boost to the Construction of the Discipline of Ethnology**

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is home to a large number of ethnic groups in northern China and has created a colorful grassland culture. The unique ethnic languages, cultures, customs, and histories make Inner Mongolia a fertile ground for anthropological and ethnographic research resources. In the development of Chinese anthropology and ethnology, Inner Mongolia is not only a major research center of anthropology and ethnology, but also an important practical base for the Chineseization of anthropology theories and ethnology theories, attracting the attention of a large number of experts and scholars at home and abroad. On November 21, 2020, the Annual Conference of Chinese Anthropology and Ethnology was held at Inner Mongolia Normal University. This conference is of far-reaching significance to forge a sense of Chinese ethnic community among the people of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and to enhance the development of the discipline of anthropology and ethnology in institutions of higher learning and research in the Autonomous Region. On March 21, 2021, Inner Mongolia Normal University's “Research Base for Casting the Consciousness of Chinese National Community” was selected as the list of Chinese National Community Research Bases of the National People's Committee, becoming the only unit in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region selected as a Chinese National Community Research Base of the National People's Committee. The “Chinese Ethnic Community Research Base” is a research and innovation platform established by the National People's Committee. It is guided by Xi Jinping's thought of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, enhances the “four consciousnesses”, firmly establishes the “four self-confidences”, achieves the “two safeguards”, focuses on forging the consciousness of the Chinese national community, serves the Party and the State's national work as the main task, and is an important tool to build the discipline system, academic system and discourse system of national studies with Chinese characteristics, Chinese style and Chinese Manner. Inner Mongolia Normal University, as the place of nurturing teachers in ethnic areas, bears the important responsibility of cultivating better people with better people, and has the mission and obligation to play a leading and exemplary role in forging a sense of Chinese national community.

### 5.3. The Ethnographic Research Fields and Directions of Universities in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Are Highly Complementary

The discipline of ethnology in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has started early and achieved fast, and has local characteristics and regional advantages. The College of Ethnology and Sociology of Inner Mongolia University was established in 2007, with three undergraduate majors in ethnology, sociology and social work, and its discipline of ethnology has first-level doctoral and master's degree authorization points. The research platform includes the "Research and Cultivation Base for Forging Chinese National Community Consciousness of the Central United Front Work Department, the Central Propaganda Department, the Ministry of Education, and the State People's Committee, as well as the Ethnic Psychology Laboratory and the Ethnic Museum. The major of Ethnology in the college is already a national "world-class" undergraduate major construction point and an autonomous region level brand major. In terms of curriculum teaching, the School has an excellent course -Ecological Anthropology. Secondly, the Institute of Ethnology of Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences is also famous for its ethnographic research in Inner Mongolia, and is the scientific institution with the longest history of ethnographic research. The Institute has long been devoted to the study of Marxist ethnic theory and the Party's ethnic policy, as well as the study of the three minority groups of Inner Mongolia, the Daur, the Ewenk and the Oroqen. The Institute has a Research Office of Ethnic Theory and Policy and a Research Office of Daur, Ovink and Oroqen, which is the only scientific research institution specializing in the study of Daur, Ovink and Oroqen in China. In addition, the Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences also has the Institute of Philosophy and Religion, the Institute of History, and the Institute of "Belt and Road Initiative", whose research directions and fields are closely related to the study of ethnology. The Department of Ethnology of Inner Mongolia Minzu University is located in the College of Mongolian Studies, which is a key discipline of the National People's Committee. The college has four provincial and ministerial-level research bases, including the "Research Base for the Economy, History and Culture of Eastern Inner Mongolia", "Research Center for the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Horqin", "Research Base for the History, Culture and Social Development of Mongolian People" and "Research Base for the Development and Dissemination of Horqin Culture", and one university-level research center, the "Institute of Horqin Culture", with strong ethnographic research resources. Hohhot Minzu College has a Department of Ethnology, which was established on March 18, 2020, and began enrolling the first class of undergraduate students in Ethnology in September 2018. The Department attaches importance to practical teaching and has extensively established field investigation practice bases in towns, agricultural and pastoral areas, patriotic education bases, museums, etc., which provide favorable conditions for internship and professional practice of ethnology students. By analyzing the current situation of ethnic discipline construction and scientific research in the above universities and research institutes, it is easy to find that the current ethnic discipline construction, scientific research and talent training, and foreign exchange in Inner Mongolia are complementary in all aspects. The establishment of an ecological cluster of ethnology disciplines at the regional level through integrated planning and joint construction is of great significance both for the promotion of ethnic unity and united front work in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and for the effectiveness of the construction of "world-class majors" in each university.

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