

Migration, Identities and Cultural Change: History and Present Situation of the Santa people in Xinjiang, China*

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Abstract:

Since the Qing dynasty, Santa people have been migrating to Xinjiang, and have subsequently become an important group there, both in terms of population and influence. This paper deals with the history of the four Santa immigration waves and the present situation of their ethnic, religious, and local identities. A deeper study of the cultural changes they have experienced follows, focusing on changes in language, traditional diets, marriages and religious beliefs. Finally, an analysis of the social transformations Santa communities have experienced is included, including views on the critical catalyst for Santa's migrating to Xinjiang, the influence of the weakening of ethnic and cultural identities of them, ideas for the cultural changes in Santa communities of Xinjiang, and the further development of Santas in the future.

Key Words: Santa, Dongxiang, Xinjiang, Migration, Identity, Cultural change

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Dongxiang, or Santa¹, are one of the fifty-five ethnic minorities of the PRC. According to scholars, the main body of Santa the Huihui Semuren² group from central Asia and the Middle East are the ancestors of the modern-day Santa, and Santa migration to China is directly connected to the conquest of central Asia by Genghis Khan in the 13th century. After the war, the Huihui Semuren migrated to the modern-day Dongxiang areas of Gansu. By the beginning of the Ming dynasty, the Santa had become a unique ethnic group. Of course, the Huihui Semuren are not the only ancestor of the Santa. Their heritage also includes Mongolian, Han, and other ethnic groups (DZGB, 1986:15~18).

Santa had a population of 621 500 in 2010, according to the census, and the majority of them were living in the arid and mountainous Dongxiang area of Hezhou (Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu province), others are mainly living in many other cities of Gansu, and Qinghai, Ningxia, especially in Xinjiang where the number of Santa now has taken over ten percent of the total Santa population. The official data of the first census in 1953 show there were no any Santas in Xinjiang, but the second census in 1964 indicated that the number of Santa in Xinjiang had reached 8 379, and soon the number of them increased to 40 436 in 1982, 56 690 in 1990, and 55 841 in 2000. However, It is estimated by the local people that the number of Santa in Xinjiang has been close to 100 000, which is much more than the official statistics, as mainly caused by three factors: firstly, a large number of Santas in Xinjiang were registered as Hui; secondly, many of them still didn't register their permanent residence there; thirdly, it should be due to the great inaccuracy of the census of China.

Now, Santa has become the seventh larger ethnic group in Xinjiang in population. The majority (75%) of Santa in Xinjiang live in YiLi area, especially in YiNing county and HuoCheng county there, and the others distribute respectively in TaCheng area (9.8%), ChangJi prefecture (7%), Aletai area (3%), Boertala prefecture (2.8%), Bayinguoleng prefecture (1.9%), and also in many other places in small amount.

The population natural growth rate of Santa in Xinjiang is quite high before the 1980s, attributing not only to the relatively higher birth rate (five children a family on average) and lower death rate, but also to a large number of immigrants from Gansu in different periods since the Qing dynasty. Of course, the situation has been greatly restrained by the family planning policy and household registering system now.

¹ Dongxiang is the official name given by the Chinese government in the 1950s, actually Santa is their self-designation.

² Semuren is the name given by Chinese in the Yuan dynasty to those who came from the central Asia or middle east, among them those who practiced an Islam faith were called Huihui semuren or Huihui.

2. MIGRATING TO XINJIANG

The earliest immigration wave of Santa to Xinjiang was during the Qing dynasty. Although there are no any records in historical literatures about this, we can get clear clue from fieldwork. Some Santa people now living in the village of Middle-Abulash in the town of Yuqunweng of YiNing county call themselves ‘local people’, because they have lived there about six or seven generations till now, and they still remember that their ancestors came to Xinjiang along with the troop of Bai Yanhu, a famous leader of Hui from ShanXi province, who revolted against the reign of the Qing government during the 1860s and went western to Xinjiang, then to Russia after defeated by the government army. Many Santa joined them and some of them stayed in Xinjiang and then moved to YiLi area soon, and became residents there from then on.

Another immigration wave in evidence came during the early 1930s, when Xinjiang was in great chaos which was caused by the antagonizing of the Uyghur people with the decayed Jin-Shuren government. Then, Ma Zhongying, the famous Hui warlord of Hezhou, accepted the invitation for help of the Uyghur leaders, and marched to Xinjiang. There were many Santas in his troop, and some of them then inhabited Xinjiang. Now some Santas in ChangJi area of Xinjiang announced that they came there just that period.

The above two waves of Santa immigrants are not too large in amount, which merely reaches 0.5% of the total Santa population in Xinjiang according to my field work, due to the badly inconvenient traffic condition of that time and the great distance between the two places, but they are of great importance in the history of Santa’s migrating to Xinjiang, not only because they became models to the succeeding ones, but they showed us many different points in culture and identity, as we will mention later.

The following Santa wave to migrate to Xinjiang was after the establishment of the PRC, mainly from 1958 to 1962, when the Chinese people suffered from a three-year-lasting famine. The Dongxiang area where the Santa people live is an arid and mountainous place. There are not any irrigating facilities and the growth of crops totally depends on rain. So when the great famine came, thousands of Santas had no way to live there. However, at that time, the economic situation of Xinjiang was much better than many other provinces of China. Just as the local people often say, “at least, you could be satiated with corns there”, migrating to Xinjiang seemed to be a favorable choice to Santas. In addition to this reason, the frequent political movements during this period had put great fear into the hearts of many people, especially the former landlords, so they managed to flee from Dongxiang, and Xinjiang was their main destination. What’s more, the completion of the railways between Gansu and Xinjiang in the 1960s made great convenience to Santas to migrate to Xinjiang in large scales.

The most recent Santa immigrants in a large scale to Xinjiang, came after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and lasted ten years, when in China, all rural markets were closed,

all family sidelines were illegal, the farms and pasturelands were managed in militarized patterns, people were agitated to “cut the tail of the capitalism” in all walks of life and the whole country were in chaos. So did in barren Dongxiang area, the life of Santa deteriorated badly. Then, again, many Santa had to move to Xinjiang.

Of course, among the above four immigration waves, there were still fragmentary immigrants coming to Xinjiang at short intervals. From the last significant wave till now the Santas in Gansu still have been coming to Xinjiang, but most of them come just as floating population to make money there, not as immigrants any more, due to the higher costs of migration today, to the greatly improved living conditions in Dongxiang area, and then to the stable political situation of China.

Different groups and individuals had different characteristics in their migrating. To Santa immigrants in Xinjiang, we can observe the following ones.

Firstly, Santas, generally, have their own migrating pattern. When they decided to migrate to another place, they would let one or two individuals go first. If the place was suitable enough for them to live, the forerunners would take their families there first, and when they settled down there much stably, they then would take their relatives, their clans and even the whole village to the new place or around. Thus, one person brought ten, ten brought hundred, hundred brought thousand, a chain reaction of migration happened. This migrating pattern of Santas much connects with their tradition of attaching great importance to kinship.

Secondly, the political situation of the society is the critical catalyst to the immigration of Santas. Generally, we may attribute the reasons of migration to economic factors, and 95% of the Santas we interviewed in Xinjiang also believed they migrated to Xinjiang just because they had met with a rarely seen natural calamity. But actually, that is just the shadow of the facts. We can see these four immigration waves of Santas to Xinjiang all happened during the wars or when the society was getting into political chaos. Some statistics also show that the incidence rate of natural calamities in Gansu is in sustained increasing, and even 40.0% of the province suffered from natural calamities during 1990-1994, much more serious than that in 1958-1962, however, seldom spontaneous emigrations occurred in Dongxiang area during these periods. Dongxiang is really very bad in natural conditions, but the people there don't have to bond themselves greatly to it when the society is in a stable political condition, as they can go out to earn money in nearby cities or serve in the catering lines. Only when the political situation has deteriorated to cut off these hopeful ways around, would they have to face the constraint of the nature and then the left solution is to migrate. So we know that the immigrations of Santas are not connected too much with natural calamities, but with the political situation of the whole country.

Thirdly, all of the Santa immigrants to Xinjiang are spontaneous. Although there were official immigrants in large scales to Xinjiang as labors for the ongoing constructions there in the earlier period of the PRC, All of the Santa immigrants to Xinjiang were spontaneous, most of

them migrated to Xinjiang without a definite destination, without any organizations, and accepted the arrangement of the local government, but they also devoted themselves to the construction of Xinjiang. Even most of them haven't been back to Dongxiang any more.

Today, the Santas have gone into the diversified society and finished the transition from a immigrants community to a 'local' community, not only from the living styles, but also from the local identity.

3. IDENTITIES OF SANTA IN XINJIANG

Identity is always constituted within the process of representation (Hall, 1990:222). Then there can be different identities as ethnic identity, religious identity and local identity etc. Nowadays, the majority of Santa in Xinjiang has been there over thirty years and they have established their own communities amongst those of other ethnic groups such as Han, Hui, Kazak, Uyghur and Mongolian. One does not have to reside long in the Santa communities to notice that their social interactions with other ethnic groups are quite frequent. All of these have made something changed in their identities.

3.1 Ethnic identity

In modern scholarship, ethnic group is usually seen as negotiated and socially constructed. But in the PRC, the boundaries of ethnic groups are officially defined by the government, however, this can be much different in the subjective perception of the people. Santas are officially named Dongxiang since the 1950s after the name of the place they inhabited. However, the majority of Santas just take 'Dongxiang' as a geographical name rather than an appellation of the ethnic group, especially amongst those Santas who migrated to Xinjiang before the establishment of the PRC, as can be seen clearly from the following dialogue from my fieldwork in the village of Middle-Abulash in the town of Yuqunweng of YiNing county:

Q: Are you a Dongxiang ?

A1: Yes, I am. (Those migrated from Dongxiang)

A2: No, I'm from Guanghe (Hezheng, Linxia...). (Those migrated from other places)

A3: No, I'm the local. (Those born in Xinjiang)

Obviously, some of them denied that they were Dongxiang, because they took the term 'Dongxiang' as a geographical one. Only after making a further explanation to distinguish the differences between the geographical and ethnical senses of 'Dongxiang', would they all accept that they were Dongxiang. If you ask Santas in Xinjiang to which ethnic group they belong, there will be half of them declaring that they are Hui, and in fact, many of Santas in Xinjiang officially registered as Hui. So an old Santa in Huocheng county said, 'many of the villages here are called Hui villages, actually, maybe 60% of the villagers are Santas.' This happened not because Santas in Xinjiang believed they had no distinctions with the ethnic group of Hui,

but because they defined Hui as a word having the same meaning with Santa, which means Muslim. So this appellation is used not only on themselves, but also on the other muslim ethnic groups such as Hui, Bao'an and Salar around them. Although the Turkish-speaking muslims in Xinjiang will not be called *Santa* directly by the Santas, they don't have an idea that a member of the Turkish-speaking muslims is not a Santa. So we may conclude that the extension of 'Santa' is still uncertain in Santa language and it isn't the ethnonym that could make a clear distinction between them and other ethnic groups. Actually, there is a word that used by Santas in Xinjiang to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups, which can hardly be noticed without careful and long term observation, that is *Manikun*, means our people, especially used in circumstances that need to distinguish Santa from Hui. So we know, although the ethnic identity of Santa seems to be very weak, they themselves know exactly about their ethnic boundaries with others. The following statement may express something about their ethnic identity:

We will never allow our daughter to find a non-muslim husband, but we will accept anyone that she chose as long as he is a Santa, regardless of a Hui, Uyghur or Kazak. Of course, if she finds a Manikun(means a member of our nationality), it will be much better, because it is really a proud matter in our community. (63, dweller of Huiyuan town, Huocheng, 5/8/2009)

Nowadays, the ethnic identity of the Santa has become more and more different, some have very strong identity to Santa and some are quite weak, and even there is much confusion has arose amongst the younger generations of Santas in Xinjiang along with the cultural changes. The following two representatives interviewed could describe the situation:

A: We are Santa, that is different from Hui, and we should never forget our Santa origin. I have six children and they all can use our language, and I also ask my daughters-in law to study our language if they can't. I will let all my offspring know clearly that they are Santa, not anybody else. (68, villager of Laocheng, Huiyuan, 4/2/2010)

B: Sometimes I'm also confused: who am I? I can speak the language of Uyghur, but I'm not a Uyghur, I can speak Chinese, but I'm neither a Han, nor a Hui, I know that clearly. I believe I'm a Santa, however, I can't speak our language and know almost nothing about our culture. If I go out with my Hui friends, I will tell anyone asks that I'm Hui. When I'm together with other 'real' Santas, I will declare I'm also Santa, but sometimes I feel alienated when they speak Santa language. Then, who am I? (22, the villager of Yushu, Huiyuan, 2/2/2010)

The two interviewees are in different ethnic identity status. The former is old and has a strong ethnic identity. He wants to strengthen the identity of all members of his family. While the ethnic identity of the young man has conflicted with the reality, he psychologically wants to be accepted as a Santa, but he is much nearer to Hui culturally, then confusion in ethnic identity

has happened. According to my observation, this confusion will spread among the younger generations of Santa in Xinjiang more extensively and will maybe quite embarrass the ethnic identity of Santas in Xinjiang.

3.2 Religious identity

The Santa people take a firm Islamic faith. So, when they migrate to a new place, the first important thing is to build or find a proper mosque and then make their houses around it. Thus, a new Santa community which is usually called Jamaat by Chinese Muslims comes into being. And the mosque then acts a very important role in the everyday life of Santa and also becomes a window for us to understand the religious identity of Santas in Xinjiang.

There are several denominations among the Muslim of the PRC, almost all of them can be found among Santas and even some originate among the Santa. But the most influential ones among Santas are Yihewani, Beizhuang and Humen. (DZDB, 1996:130) They have different views in many aspects of religious principles and will inevitably make frictions one another if they are in the same mosque, so one may easily find that there are usually more than one mosque in a village. Each mosque has its firm advocators. For example, the village of Upper-Abulash in the town of Yuqunweng of YiNing county is a Santa gathered village, there are only 221 households totally, but they have 10 mosques in the village: two for Yihewani, two for Humen, two for Zheherenye, two for Hui from Shanxi, one for Beizhuang and one for Uyghur. Except the mosques for Hui from Shanxi and Uyghur, Santas take half of the advocators of the other mosques, but none of them are purely for Santas.

The religious identity of Santas in Xinjiang are actually much stronger than their ethnic identity. It can be clearly reflected from the name lists for invitation when they celebrate Mawlid or chant na'at and nashid, only those who belong to a same denomination will be invited, regardless of the ethnic groups they belong and the places they come from. And there are seldom pure Santa mosques in Xinjiang, so all of the Santa Akhunds use Chinese when they preach every Friday.

However, the separation of mosques doesn't mean they are hostile to each other, generally, it is just for the convenience of them to hold their own ritual respectively. Most of them can get on well with one another, especially among those Sufi Menhuans (sect). I met with a funeral of a follower of Humen by chance when I was in my fieldwork in Upper-Abulash, all of the Muslim villagers attended it. After some polite declines with each other, the ritual of funeral was led by the Akhund of Beizhuang in the end.

Sometimes conflicts will arise because of the different religious identity, especially between Yihewani and Sufi Menhuans, for Yihewani declared that some views of the Sufi Menhuans were incompatible with true Islam. Occasionally, this conflict may result to the separation of a family or breaking off of relatives. The following statements of my interviewees can be much visual:

A: *I'm Yihewani, and one of my daughters has been married to a Humen. Last year they wanted to convert my daughter into Humen, and asked her to visit their Gongbei (tomb of saint). I'm very angry about that, and what's the most important is that my daughter wasn't willing to do that. After several resultless consultations, my daughter divorced. I must find spouses in the same denomination for my rest children. (62, villager of Xinhui, Yuqunweng, 6/8/2009)*

B: *I'm Beizhuang, and my daughter was married to a Yihewani, and we got on well each other all the time till last year when my daughter passed away because of leukemia. My daughter wished to bury as a Beizhuang before she went, but they considered that my daughter was a member of their family and wanted to bury my daughter with their ritual, then something bad (conflict) happened. And we had no any contacts from then on. (53, villager of Yushu, Huiyuan, 2/1/2010)*

We can see from above that the religious identity of Santas is so strong that it has influenced the marriage of them and they concern much about the denomination rather than ethnicity. If it were not for the religious disagreement, they might have been still in harmony.

3.3 Local identity

The descendants of the Santas migrated to Xinjiang before the establishment of the PRC now call themselves 'Lao Xinjiang Ren', which means the long Xinjiang-located people, and even has the meaning of host of the local lands. They have behaved a structural amnesia to their originated places in Gansu, and are trying to establish a new collective memory among them. Different from this, many of the first generations migrated to Xinjiang after the 1950s still often remember their days in Dongxiang or around, dreaming that they could go back and bury there in the end. To them, only that is their genuine hometown, and they have a weak local identity to Xinjiang. But now the old local identity of them are dying out with them gradually and taken place by that of the younger generations whose local identity is quite different from them. The majority of the younger ones have strong local identity and they believe they are born as local Xinjiang people and not immigrants from other places any longer. The following statement can help us understand it:

Xinjiang is my birthplace, of course, it is my hometown. My father is from Dongxiang, but I have never been there and even don't know where Dongxiang is. When somebody asks about my original hometown, I will say I'm 'Lao Xinjiang Ren'. It isn't a fabricated fact that we are the hosts of the place, because all of farmlands you see now are blocked with elm trees when our elder generations came. And they cultivated the places into farmlands. Can't I say we're the host of the local place? (28, villager of Yushu, Huiyuan, 2/3/2009)

The local identity of the descendants of the Santa immigrants strengthened mainly because the following four reasons according to my research. Firstly, the younger generations have got used to the life styles of Xinjiang in all aspects, so they don't feel any strange to the society and want

to be the host of the society; Secondly, the majority of them are born in Xinjiang and seldom having been back to their original hometown, so they hardly have any ideas about it; Thirdly, there are many prejudiced views about the immigrants from the inner parts of China among the long-located Xinjiang people, and they are often labeled as 'lazy', 'cunning', 'trustless' and so on, so the younger generations of the Santa immigrants don't want to be regarded as that, so they begin to strengthen their local identity; Fourthly, the Santas have devoted themselves too much to the early opening up and developing of Xinjiang indeed, so they have accumulated very deep feeling to the local place.

To sum up, the identity of Santas have changed greatly and performed new characteristics in all aspects, and become more and more different from those still in Dongxiang. So we can say great cultural changes have happened to the Santas in Xinjiang.

4. CULTURAL CHANGES IN SANTA COMMUNITIES OF XINJIANG

There are fifty four officially recognized ethnic minorities (except JiNuo) of China living in Xinjiang now, and most of them are gathering up on the oases in a high density, which enable them to make frequent communications one another, and then become a diversified social and cultural background in Xinjiang. However, there are only five types of prevailing cultures, that is, the culture of Han, Uyghur, Kazak, Mongolian and Hui, and the cultures of other ethnic groups are basically in a subordinate condition, influenced by one or several of these five in different extent, so does that of Santas in Xinjiang.

Nowadays, the majority of Santa in Xinjiang have established their own communities among those of other ethnic groups such as Han, Hui, Kazak, Uyghur and Mongolian. One does not have to reside long in the Santa community to notice that their social interactions with other ethnic groups are quite frequent, especially with Hui. In essence, the frequent and friendly social interactions with other ethnic groups provide Santas in Xinjiang enough social resources to live well. But on the other hand, the society and culture of Santa have been much influenced by those of other ethnic groups around them, social and cultural changes undoubtedly have happened in their communities, and the changes happen mainly in the pattern of acculturation, which refers to taking on material and nonmaterial attributes from another culture as a result of prolonged face-to-face contact (Vago, 2005:95).

Actually, Dongxiang is a much closed area and the ethno structure is quite simplex, so the Santas there seldom contact with other ethnic groups, thereby, they have preserved their culture integrated hundreds of years. When they migrate to Xinjiang, a more opened society, they still retain their traditional cultural heritage in the earlier years, and even some of them attempt to preserve all of the traditional values and culture and transmit them to their children. However, the younger generations interact more frequently with their friends of other ethnic groups and are exposed daily to the multi-cultural environment, then, without any force or pressure for compliance by the other ethnic groups, a voluntary acculturation has spread inevitably in the Santa communities. The younger generations of Santas in Xinjiang now receive modern

education at schools, and interact more frequently than their parents or grandparents with members of other ethnic groups in everyday life, and more and more of them become strangers to their native cultures. This can be seen clearly from the using of language, traditional diets, marriages, religious belief, and so on.

4.1 Changes in language

Language is looked as a most important factor in the culture of a group, and the language situation of them reflects the forward prospects of their culture. Santas speak an ancient Mongolian language that belongs to the Altaic language family. The majority of them can speak it very well. It is the language in common use in Dongxiang, and seldom other languages except Chinese can be used here. Even a number of Santas still can't speak Chinese, especially old women. Different from Dongxiang, the situations of language in Xinjiang Santa communities are more diversified.

Xinjiang is a multi-culture converged place, so when Santas came here, they had to interact with other ethnic groups and study their languages for better communication. So now many Santas in Xinjiang can use several languages, even some of them are quite proficient in them. Of course, the other ethnic groups that live together with Santas in Xinjiang are different in different places, so the culture of Santas in Xinjiang received different influences and appeared an apparent diversification. For instance, Santas in YiLi area mainly live with Han, Hui and Uyghur, so many of them can speak Chinese, Uyghur language and Kazak language; and those in Boertala live mainly with Hui and Mongolian, so they can use Chinese and Mongolian. But it must be made clear that not all of them can use all of the languages, the ability of using these languages are different to individuals of different age stages. As indicated in Table 1, the language ability of the younger, especially those under 25, has been greatly weakened, about half of them only can speak Chinese. While the middle-aged ones have much strong language ability.

Table 1. The languages spoken by Santas in different age groups

language age	S	C	S+C	S+C+U/K/O	C+ U/K/O
~ 60	.05	.00	.67	.28	.00
59~46	.00	.08	.44	.44	.04
45~36	.00	.18	.43	.32	.07
35~26	.00	.34	.38	.17	.11
25~16	.00	.45	.30	.20	.05
15~	.00	.55	.27	.09	.09

This table is made according to the data from a sample of 145 individuals from my fieldwork in Yili area in Aug, 2006.

Note: S=Santa language, C=Chinese, U/K/O=Uyghur or Kazak or other languages.

Also, something has happened in the using of their native language now, the Santas in Xinjiang have separated into five states in terms of the ability to use their native language: there are

those who can use the language fluently, those who can use in partial fluency, those who are able to listen but unable or unwilling to speak, those who can only understand a few words and expressions and those who are totally stranger to the language. We can see from the following table (table 2) that the native language ability of the younger generations is gradually weakening down, and the Santa language faces an imminent danger now.

Table 2. The Santa language using states of Santas in different age stages

state age	Fluent	Partially fluent	Listening only	Knowing a little	Knowing nothing
~ 60	1.0	.00	.00	.00	.00
59~46	.88	.12	.00	.00	.00
45~36	.53	.36	.11	.00	.00
35~26	.31	.35	.14	.17	.03
25~16	.25	.10	.15	.45	.05
15~	.18	.32	.14	.27	.09

This table is made according to the data from a sample of 97 individuals who can speak Santa language from my fieldwork in Yili area in Aug, 2006.

4.2 Changes in traditional culture

The traditional culture of Santas in Xinjiang has also been much changed by the influence of other ethnic groups, especially the traditional diet. It is well-known to many people that the Santa will cut a halalled chicken into 13 pieces and distribute the different pieces to the proper guests according to their age or position or rank or importance, and the rear tip of the chicken must be eaten by the most honorable guest. However, the majority of Santas in Xinjiang now don't eat chicken in their traditional way any longer, they will cut the chicken into small pieces and everybody can eat freely. A housewife talked about this as following:

We now don't defer to our traditional way of having chicken, because many people here don't know about our manners, as often makes some unhappy trifles. And sometimes somebody may be angered by wrongly distributing of the pieces, so we now often eat 'DaPanJi', a famous dish in Xinjiang, which is made by small pieces of chicken, then without position, without rank, everybody can eat equally. Only when some relatives come from our original hometown or we invite a native Akhund to our home, will we treat them in the traditional way.
(45, villager of Yushu, Huiyuan, 2/5/2009)

Many other traditional foods, such as Lashigha and Zhongbula, a kind of sliced noodle in sour soup and a kind of big steamed bread respectively, seldom can be found on the dinner table of Santas in Xinjiang. This change can be seen more clearly from the difference between the everyday menus of Santas in Xinjiang and Dongxiang.

Menu of Santas in Xinjiang: milk, tea with milk, Nang (a kind of baked bread of Uyghur and Kazak), steamed bread, stir-fry, Zhuafan (stewed rice together with

meat and carrots), saute noodle, Latiaozi (pulled noodle with stir-fry on it), Tangfan (flat pieces of food made from flour with soup) and so on.

Menu of Santas in Dongxiang: tea, baked cake, potato (cooked, baked, sauted and any other kinds), Lashigha, Qihua Budam (rhombus pieces of food made from flour with soup).

The above are the everyday menus of ordinary people of the Santas of the two places, and the menu of Xinjiang is more diversified and richer than that of Dongxiang. And the signs of influence from other cultures are quite obvious.

4.3 Changes in marriage

Santas are actually making much of endogamy, they would rather become related by marriage with a Santa than one from other ethnic groups. So you can find that many Santas in Xinjiang in the same village are almost all in relationship by marriage, and even some chaos have occurred in the kinship terminology. For example, a young man got married with a girl, whose elder sister was just the wife of the boy's uncle, then he was puzzled what kinship terminology he should use. But now there are not enough native resources for them to choose, then they turn to other ethnic groups with the same religion, especially Hui. There are fifteen Santa boys who have married in the recent five years (before 2007) in the village of Baitan, Shawan county of Tacheng area. Among them, ten have taken Hui as wife, one Uyghur and one Han, only the other three are Santas. Hui has taken a percentage of over 65% in their marriage and it still has the trend of increasing up.

The marriages of Santas in Xinjiang now have more orientated to the modernizing society. The traditional marriage of Santa youth is totally arranged by their parents, many of them got married even without once meeting. Now in Xinjiang they can be in love freely and their parents only give them some advice. The traditional trousseaus from the girl for marriage are house furnishings or utensils, and it has generally changed into a tractor in recent years, for they believe a tractor can help them acquire wealth and is much more useful than any other things.

4.4 Changes in religion

The Santas are considered pure and firm in their faith, and their religious educations in the mosques are regarded as the best, and the majority of them are very devout. Then there goes a famous version: *Santa Akhunds distribute throughout the country*. However, things have greatly changed in Xinjiang.

We can see more and more young Santas in Xinjiang have learned smoking and drinking which are forbidden in Islamic doctrine, and go far away from mosques. Many of them know very little about Islam, and some even don't know how to pray. The following table (table 3) can tell us much more about the situations.

Table 3. Religious situation of Santas in different age groups

question age	Attend prayer?			Practice fasting?			Read Qur'an?			Know about the doctrine?		
	C	AI	O	C	AI	O	C	AI	O	CL	PA	IN
~ 60	.59	.29	.12	1.0	.00	.00	.53	.35	.12	.88	.12	.00
59~46	.50	.29	.21	1.0	.00	.00	.36	.28	.36	.79	.21	.00
45~36	.36	.28	.36	.82	.09	.09	.18	.27	.55	.73	.18	.09
35~26	.10	.20	.70	.60	.30	.10	.20	.20	.60	.70	.20	.10
25~16	.11	.22	.67	.56	.33	.11	.11	.11	.78	.45	.45	.10
15~	.00	.14	.86	.29	.42	.29	.00	.14	.86	.29	.29	.42

This table is made according to the data of an investigation to 68 Santa individuals who attended the Friday prayer in the Yihewani mosque of the village of Yushu, 8/4/2006. Note: C =continuously, AI =at intervals, O =occasionally, CL=clearly, PA=partially, IN=indistinctly)

We can see from the table that the number of those who practice their faith (praying, fasting and so on) is decreasing obviously with the ranging down of the age. This situation mainly related to the following factors. Firstly, the younger generations have been exposed daily to the media, and are more easier to be influenced by some negative information sent by them and have gradually lost the interest in religious affairs; Secondly, many people are busy in making money since the 1980s and have neglected the religious education to their children; Thirdly, the religious policy in Xinjiang is implemented much more strictly, and the juveniles under eighteen years old are not permitted to attend the traditional mosque education, so they don't have enough chance to study religious knowledge.

The government now also set great influences on the religious culture change. It is not enough for a man who has a high level in religious knowledge to be an Akhund, only when he attends an examination and gets the certificate for Akhund, can he become a genuine Akhund. And the Akhunds can not impose any extra expenses on the followers, they receive certain number of wages from the government. So many related traditions of religion have changed.

To sum up, great cultural changes have happened since the arrival of Santas to Xinjiang, not only in the aspects we have mentioned above, but in all of faces of the Santa culture. The changes are coming so rapidly that they haven't got ready for them, and their culture is facing danger now.

5. CONCLUSION REMARKS

In conclusion, I summarize the findings from my study to the migration, identities and cultural changes of Santas in Xinjiang, and I don't intend to establish any big theories in this field, but

only to offer some ideas on Santas in Xinjiang, which may be useful to the further development of them in some ways.

A. The Santa communities have been shifted from an immigrants composed society to a localized one, as can be seen from the following points: firstly, the relationship between the members of a patriarchal clan which are very powerful in Dongxiang, has been weakened and replaced by the modern neighborhood; secondly, they have got well with the local life styles and established their new social relations; thirdly, they have had much strong local identity and the cultural changes have made them close to other ethnic groups; fourthly, they have played a very important role in the construction of Xinjiang and become an indispensable group there. So an immigrants composed society is transitional, it will become a localized one sooner or later.

B. Different from other immigrants, political situation of the whole society is critical to the migrating of Santas to Xinjiang in large scale. Although Dongxiang is in bad natural environment, Santas can't be confined by it if the political situation is stable. Only when the society become involved in political chaos as the Cultural Revolution, will they be bound to the natural environment and turn to migrate.

C. The migration of Santas can't be only understood as the movement of people, it is also an exchange of cultural flow of knowledge, capital, ideas and so on. The immigrants are the carriers of their culture. So when Santas came to Xinjiang, they brought different language, diets, social structures, ideas and knowledge, which have much benefited the cultural diversification of Xinjiang.

D. The weakening of ethnic and cultural identities of Santas in Xinjiang has accelerated the cultural changes of them. The weakening of the ethnic and cultural identities of the younger generations have made them more far away from their culture, it goes without saying to protect their traditional culture.

E. The culture of Santas in Xinjiang is facing an imminent danger of assimilation by other cultures. We can see from above analyzing that much of the culture of Santas has managed to preserve till now, mainly because of the elder ones. It is hard to say that the Santa culture can still be preserved when all of the elders have passed away later.

F. Migration and cultural changes are recombination of the social resources and have stimulated the development of Santas to some extent. Although the culture of Santa immigrants has changed greatly, it is undeniable that they have received more opportunities for development economically and educationally from migration and cultural changes, and have lived much better. So now the question is not to resist the changes, but is how to lead the changes more rationally and correctly for the benefits of Santas in the future.

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APPENDIX

Chinese characters

Aletai 阿勒泰
Bai Yanhu 白彦虎
Bayinguoleng 巴音郭楞
Beizhuang 北庄
Boertala 博尔塔拉
Changji 昌吉
Dongxiang 东乡
Gansu 甘肃
Hezhou 河州
Huiyuan 惠远
Humen 胡门
HuoCheng 霍城
Jin Shuren 金树仁
Lao Xinjiang Ren 老新疆人
Linxia 临夏
Ma Zhongying 马仲英
Menhuan 门宦
Semuren 色目人
Shawan 沙湾
TaCheng 塔城
Xinjiang 新疆
Yihewani 伊赫瓦尼
YiLi 伊犁
YiNing 伊宁
Yuqunweng 榆群翁