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From "Eternal Heaven" to "Nomadic Rationality": An Ecophilosophical Interpretation of Traditional Mongolian Ecological Thought

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Abstract: "Eternal Heaven" is a foundational concept in traditional Mongolian thought and a key entry point for understanding the cosmic order, the order of life, and the order of conduct in nomadic society. Existing studies have primarily approached this concept from the perspectives of religious belief, ethnic culture, and ecological wisdom, yet they have not fully explained how "Eternal Heaven" can be brought into the broader ecophilosophical discussion of "ecological rationality." Drawing on foundational texts such as *The Secret History of the Mongols*, comprehensive studies of Tengri belief, extensive scholarship on the Mongolian ecological outlook, and key theoretical writings in contemporary ecological philosophy, this article argues that "Eternal Heaven" is not merely an object of religious worship. Rather, it functions as a sophisticated conceptual structure generated within the unique historical experience of steppe nomadism. It takes profound reverence for Heaven and Earth as its fundamental spiritual premise, continuous adaptation to natural environmental rhythms as its primary cognitive mode, and moderate resource use together with dynamic ecological balance as its guiding principles of conduct. On this theoretical basis, the article proposes the novel concept of "nomadic rationality" in order to systematically summarize the distinct form of rationality embedded in traditional Mongolian ecological thought. This unique form of rationality effectively unites deep cosmological grounding, pragmatic everyday wisdom, and strong normative force, offering valuable insights for modern environmental ethics and sustainable development paradigms.

Keywords: eternal heaven; ecological philosophy; ecological rationality; nomadic rationality; mongolian thought

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1. Introduction

Against the background of a deepening contemporary ecological crisis, the question of how to excavate intellectual resources from different civilizational traditions that can support theoretical innovation in ecological philosophy has become a major issue in philosophical research. Compared with the view of nature in industrial civilization, which is grounded in a subject-object division, the Mongolian nomadic tradition is more deeply embedded in the steppe ecosystem, and a strong homology exists among its concepts, institutions, and subsistence practices. For this reason, "Eternal Heaven" in traditional Mongolian thought should not be treated only as an object of religious history or folklore [1]. It should also be reinterpreted within the broader framework of nomadic lifeworlds and ecological order.

Existing scholarship has already laid an important foundation for this task [2]. Relevant studies have shown how "Eternal Heaven" gradually rose from being one celestial deity among many to becoming the supreme deity in Mongolian religious culture, and they have identified *The Secret History of the Mongols* as a major historical source

for understanding Mongolian religious thought and Tengri belief. Other studies, from the perspective of ecological philosophy, summarize Mongolian nomadic culture by emphasizing the organic wholeness of the human-nature relationship and by treating such practices as seasonal rotational grazing and adaptation to pasture rhythms as concrete manifestations of ecological wisdom. Further scholarship has argued that nature worship, concern for life, and the nomadic mode of subsistence together form the deep intellectual basis of the Mongolian ecological outlook. Studies of ancient Mongolian ecological protection have shown that the protection of grasslands, forests, water sources, wildlife, and herds was not a loose set of experiences, but had already taken shape in codes, customs, and taboos. At the level of ecological philosophy, discussions of ecological rationality remind us that ecological reason is not a mere extension of instrumental rationality, but must take wholeness, internal relatedness, symbiosis, and contextual concreteness as its principles. Research on ecosophy further provides a philosophical point of reference for overcoming anthropocentrism and reconstructing the human-nature relationship at the ontological level.

Yet an important theoretical link remains insufficiently developed. On the one hand, studies of traditional Mongolian ecological thought often stay at the descriptive level of "ecological wisdom," "reverence for nature," or "grassland culture." On the other hand, "ecological rationality" in ecological philosophy often lacks concrete support from the lived experience and conceptual world of nomadic civilization. This article seeks to establish a conceptual bridge between these two domains [1]. It first interprets "Eternal Heaven" as the conceptual point of origin and ordering principle through which nomadic society understood the world. It then uses ecological rationality in ecological philosophy as a point of reference to clarify the logic of wholeness, restraint, and symbiosis implicit in this concept. Finally, on that basis, it proposes the concept of "nomadic rationality" so as to summarize the specific form of rationality jointly generated in the Mongolian nomadic tradition by cosmological belief, ecological knowledge, and normative practice.

This article addresses three core questions [3]. First, why can "Eternal Heaven" move beyond the category of ordinary religious belief and become available for ecophilosophical interpretation? Second, which conceptual and practical forms within the Mongolian nomadic tradition correspond internally to ecological rationality? Third, how can "nomadic rationality" be established as an original concept and enter discussions of ecological philosophy and China's autonomous knowledge system? To answer these questions, the article combines textual interpretation, conceptual analysis, and ecophilosophical exposition, and unfolds its argument through three dimensions: the conceptual formation of "Eternal Heaven" and nomadic ecological order, the implications of the idea of "Eternal Heaven" for ecological rationality, and the conceptual construction from "Eternal Heaven" to "nomadic rationality."

2. The Conceptual Formation of "eternal Heaven" and Mongolian Nomadic Ecological Order

2.1. "Eternal Heaven" as the Conceptual Point of Origin for Understanding the Nomadic World

To elevate "Eternal Heaven" into a concept that can enter ecophilosophical discussion, it must first be shown that it is not an external abstraction later scholars derived from religious phenomena, but an indigenous mode of world-understanding embedded in Mongolian historical narrative and political language. Relevant studies point out that The Secret History of the Mongols is not only a monumental document of linguistic, social, and historical significance, but also a key source for understanding ancient Mongolian religious thought and belief [3]. Its narrative structure, which begins with Heaven and returns to Heaven, shows that "Tengri" is not an incidental term, but a fundamental concept running through the historical narrative. This means that "Eternal Heaven" is, first of all, a worldview. It provides Mongolian society with a basic framework for understanding ethnic origins, authority, war, destiny, and the relationship between human beings and Heaven and Earth.

At the level of conceptual form, the importance of "Eternal Heaven" lies not merely in its reference to a personalized deity, but in the fact that "Heaven" here is endowed with eternity, supremacy, and order-generating force. Relevant studies indicate that adding a qualifier denoting eternity before "Tengri" signifies that its divine status has risen from the level of ordinary celestial experience to that of a supreme divinity characterized by beginninglessness and endlessness [3]. If early nature worship expressed reverence for particular natural forces, then the formation of "Eternal Heaven" marked the emergence of a higher-order conceptual structure capable of unifying sky, destiny, order, and legitimacy. This was not a purely theological abstraction removed from experience, but a comprehensive expression of the "Heaven-Earth-human-livestock" relationship under the conditions of steppe existence.

At the level of documentary language, expressions such as "by the power of Eternal Heaven" deserve special attention [4]. Relevant research shows that such expressions recur in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, in the letters of khans, and in political documents of the Mongol Empire, indicating that "Eternal Heaven" had become not merely an object of belief, but a foundational source of political legitimacy and efficacy in action. The point, however, is not only political. At a deeper level, the fact that major action had to be justified through "the power of Eternal Heaven" indicates that Mongolian society did not understand the acting subject as a completely self-sufficient center of power. Rather, action was always situated within a larger order. Human action could acquire legitimacy only under the authorization, empowerment, or restraint of Heaven. In this sense, "Eternal Heaven" constituted the conceptual point of origin through which Mongolian nomadic society understood the world.

The reason this conceptual point of origin emerged in Mongolian nomadic society lies fundamentally in the ecological conditions of steppe subsistence. Nomadic society confronted unstable precipitation, fluctuating pasture, severe seasonal extremes, and recurrent disasters, so that human existence remained highly sensitive to natural rhythms [5]. Under such conditions, the world did not appear as a static object open to arbitrary reconstruction. It appeared, instead, as an integral reality endowed with prior order and transcendent force. The resulting concept of "Heaven" therefore carried a dual function: it was at once a cognitive response to environmental uncertainty and a spiritual anchorage for the fragility of life. In other words, the formation of "Eternal Heaven" was less the product of abstract theology than the expression of a world-consciousness generated through long-term ecological adaptation.

2.2. The Belief in "eternal Heaven" and the Ordering of the Human-Nature Relationship

The significance of "Eternal Heaven" lies not only in its provision of an ultimate explanation of the world, but also in its organization of the human-nature relationship into an ordered relation marked by boundaries, rhythms, and taboos. Studies have shown that throughout its formation and evolution, nomadic culture consistently emphasized the organic wholeness of the human-nature relationship and shaped its ecological choices through adaptation to nature. This suggests that steppe nomadism did not establish a social order outside nature, but organized collective life within natural rhythms. The relation between human beings and nature was therefore not one of absolute opposition, but one of mutual dependence within a shared community of life [6].

This order is first manifested in reverence for Heaven, Earth, and the natural world. Studies point out that nature worship is an important intellectual source of the Mongolian ecological outlook, and that it is not merely a residue of primitive religion but a significant cultural mechanism for regulating the human-nature relationship. In the nomadic world, Heaven, Earth, fire, water, mountains, and rivers are not neutral background entities [7]. They are understood as beings endowed with vitality, sacredness, and inviolability. Human conduct is therefore brought under a consciousness of limits that may not be transgressed. Because Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things are endowed with sacred order, human action must embody caution, restraint, and protection.

This order is further concretized in the relationship between human beings and the grassland ecosystem. The statement that "nomadism means seasonal rotational grazing" reveals that the traditional Mongolian mode of subsistence was not merely a matter of moving with water and grass, but an institutionalized practice of dynamic allocation organized around pasture recovery cycles, livestock needs, and seasonal variation. The logic of rotational grazing was not short-term extraction, but the maintenance of a relatively stable regenerative relation among grasslands, livestock, and human groups through mobility, dispersal, and rhythmic use. From this perspective, "pasturing in accordance with Heaven" was not an abstract moral slogan, but a rational arrangement grounded in ecological rhythms. In this way, "Eternal Heaven" was transformed from a cosmological belief into an ordering principle embedded in the nomadic mode of production.

More importantly, the order constituted by "Eternal Heaven" was not static, but dynamically balanced. The grassland ecosystem is marked by uncertainty and non-equilibrium, and any simple linear logic of possession may lead to disastrous consequences. Under such conditions, stability in the human-nature relationship cannot be achieved through fixed control, but only through continuous adjustment, flexible adaptation, and the maintenance of resilience. The resulting conception of order is therefore not mechanical order, but living order; not static order, but processual order; not one-way control, but mutual constraint and mutual accomplishment. This is precisely why "Eternal Heaven" can be interpreted as a resource for ecological philosophy: what it protects is not merely religious obedience, but ecological moderation and harmony.

2.3. The Ecological Normative Function of the Idea of "eternal Heaven" in Nomadic Life

Whether an idea can truly constitute social order depends on whether it is externalized into a stable normative system. From this perspective, the significance of "Eternal Heaven" lies not only at the level of spiritual belief, but in the enduring normative force it exerted over nomadic life [6]. Relevant studies indicate that in the course of long historical experience, ancient Mongolian society gradually formed a wide range of codes, customs, and taboos for protecting grasslands, forests, wildlife, water resources, and herds, and that these together constituted a historical mechanism of ecological protection. Ecological protection, in other words, was not a modern imported issue, but was already deeply embedded in the order of traditional life.

At the practical level, this normative function first appears in the establishment of limits on resource use. The grassland is not a "resource bank" open to unlimited extraction, but a living field that must be used according to season, place, and regenerative capacity [8]. Rotational grazing itself is a form of boundary-consciousness. By combining temporal and spatial limits, it restricts continuous use of any single pasture, prevents grassland degradation, and sustains ecological circulation. At the same time, the use of water sources, fire, mountains and forests, and wildlife was often accompanied by strict taboos. Relevant studies show that ancient Mongolian society imposed clear restrictions on acts such as polluting water, hunting in certain seasons, or arbitrarily destroying habitats. The deeper foundation of these norms lies precisely in the fact that nature was not understood as a pure object, but was placed within the sacred order governed by Heaven.

Second, this normative function appears in the restraint imposed on pastoral behavior. Restraint is not merely negative self-denial, but a form of wisdom concerning appropriateness and measure. Steppe subsistence does not pursue unlimited numerical increase, but emphasizes the attainment of sustainable balance among environmental carrying capacity, livestock reproduction, and household survival [6]. This sense of balance is, in essence, an early form of ecological rationality: it requires subjects to take account of environmental feedback, regenerative cycles, and long-term consequences before acting. Research on ecological rationality has pointed out that genuine ecological reason must move beyond narrow goal-driven rationality and turn toward wholeness, internal relatedness, and symbiosis. Viewed in this light, the restraining norms shaped by

"Eternal Heaven" in the Mongolian nomadic tradition are a historical expression of such ecological rationality.

Third, this normative function also manifests itself in communitarian ethics. "Eternal Heaven" does not constrain only individuals; through sacrifices, taboos, oaths, and tribal customs, it also constructs collective standards of conduct. Because nomadic life depends heavily on group cooperation, any violation of ecological boundaries can spread into a risk borne by the community as a whole [6]. Ecological norms are therefore not merely private virtues, but part of public order. By endowing nature with sacred significance, "Eternal Heaven" internalizes ecological boundaries as practical self-consciousness among members of the group; through customs and legal codes, it stabilizes this self-consciousness into social constraint. In this way, traditional Mongolian ecological thought forms a complete chain linking ideas, institutions, and conduct.

3. The Implications of the Idea of "eternal Heaven" for Ecological Rationality

3.1. From Reverence for Nature to the Principle of Wholeness

The reason "Eternal Heaven" can be incorporated into the field of ecological philosophy lies not in its religious coloring as such, but in the holistic worldview implicit behind it, a worldview distinct from the logic of subject-object dualism. Relevant studies identify "the principle of organicity and internal relatedness" and "the principle of wholeness" as important components of ecological rationality, reminding us that whether a body of thought possesses ecophilosophical significance depends not on whether it uses modern terminology, but on whether it acknowledges the interconnectedness of existence and the constraints of wholeness. Judged by this standard, what "Eternal Heaven" expresses is not a one-way relation between deity and believer, but an overall consciousness that unifies Heaven and Earth, the community, history, production, and action within a single order [9].

In the Mongolian nomadic tradition, "Heaven" is not a purely transcendent existence, but remains bound together with earth, grass, livestock, and human beings within an interdependent network of life. Relevant studies show that "Eternal Heaven" in Mongolian culture possesses supreme divinity while also remaining continuously connected with politics, society, and everyday life. In other words, the sacredness of Heaven does not remove it from life; it functions precisely by permeating life. Its philosophical significance lies here: the world is understood as a whole that may not be arbitrarily divided, and any destruction of one of its links may rebound upon the total order. This is highly consistent with ecological philosophy's critique of viewing nature as an atomized object.

Research on ecosophy likewise helps us rethink this point. In the perspective of deep ecology, the human being is not a sovereign standing outside nature, but one existent within a larger community of life [3]. Mature rationality does not endlessly expand capacities for domination, but reaches a higher level of co-being by redefining the place of the self. Viewed from this angle, "Eternal Heaven" contains a premodern yet by no means primitive intuition of wholeness: human beings must situate themselves within Heaven, Earth, and the community of life, rather than disassembling the world into objects of unlimited control. This intuition of wholeness makes "Eternal Heaven" not merely a theological concept, but an ecological worldview with ontological implications.

It should be emphasized that wholeness here does not mean the elimination of difference, but rather ordered relatedness among differences. Nomadic society knew well that human beings, livestock, grasslands, and seasons are not identical [10]. Yet precisely because they differ, they must be coordinated through adaptation and adjustment into a sustainable whole of life. Wholeness is not abstract uniformity, but rhythmic coordination among differences. This understanding helps correct oversimplified interpretations of "revering Heaven": its core does not lie in blind worship, but in acknowledging that the world possesses an overall structure prior to individual will, and in reshaping principles of action accordingly.

3.2. *From Compliance with Rhythms to the Principle of Restraint and Symbiosis*

If the principle of wholeness answers the question "What is the world?", then the principle of restraint and symbiosis answers the question "How should human beings act?" Ecological rationality in ecological philosophy is not satisfied with merely pointing out the interrelatedness of humans and nature; it requires that, at the level of action, human beings form practical norms that restrain excessive appropriation and seek symbiotic balance. Relevant studies emphasize that ecological rationality cannot remain at the level of abstract value declaration, but must be implemented in symbiotic interaction, concrete situations, and self-cultivation [11]. This point aligns closely with the Mongolian nomadic tradition, as nomadic subsistence has never been organized by the principle of maximizing possession, but by the aim of sustaining life within an uncertain environment.

Seasonal rotational grazing is the institutional form that most clearly embodies this logic. Research characterizes it as an ecological choice in accord with nature, and the importance of this judgment lies in the fact that it transforms "following nature" from moral rhetoric into rational practice. The "reason" of rotational grazing is not simply migration, but a spatiotemporal capacity for allocation based on long-term understanding of pasture regeneration, livestock habits, seasonal winds and temperatures, and the distribution of water and grass. Its essence is a wisdom of "not going too far": not allowing a single pasture to bear continuous pressure, not removing livestock from the environments most suitable for them, and not separating household subsistence from ecological boundaries. Such a way of life is itself an institutionalized expression of the principle of restraint.

Research on Mongolian knowledge of resource and environmental protection further confirms this from the perspective of knowledge structure. Studies indicate that steppe pastoralists formed rich local knowledge of resource and environmental protection through long-term production and daily life, and that this knowledge was not merely a collection of experiential fragments, but possessed a multidimensional structure and composite functions. It included not only knowledge of climate, pasture, livestock disease, and migration routes, but also judgments concerning risk, boundaries, and seasonality. In other words, nomadic "adaptation" was not passive adjustment, but a form of practical rationality capable of preserving resilience and balance under conditions of uncertainty.

Seen more deeply, restraint becomes possible because the nomadic tradition understands "interest" differently from modern logics of expansion. In the steppe ecosystem, short-term predation often results in long-term loss. Conduct that truly accords with the interests of survival is therefore restrained conduct. What appears here is not anti-rationality, but a higher form of rationality: one that evaluates immediate gain within long-term regenerative relations. The resulting logic of symbiosis is not an abstract exhortation to "care for nature," but an acknowledgment that the continuation of human life itself depends on the healthy functioning of the natural whole. It is here that the idea of "Eternal Heaven" may be interpreted as a practical form of ecological rationality.

3.3. *From Conceptual Symbol to Practical Rationality*

It is not enough merely to point out that "Eternal Heaven" contains wholeness and restraint; one must also explain how it becomes practical rationality. Practical rationality does not simply mean that human beings possess an abstract inferential capacity. Rather, it refers to a form of rationality capable of organizing action, allocating resources, regulating risk, and generating communal norms within concrete situations. The distinctive value of traditional Mongolian ecological thought lies in the fact that it did not confine rationality to conceptual calculation detached from the lifeworld, but developed it within a continuum linking ideas, experience, and institutions.

In this sense, "Eternal Heaven" is not a symbolic system detached from life, but the common point of departure for production, subsistence, and normativity. On the one hand, it provides a standard of legitimacy for action, enabling people to maintain a consciousness of limits when using nature. On the other hand, through customs, legal

codes, and communitarian ethics, it stabilizes this consciousness of limits into operational rules. Relevant studies that sort out various customs and taboos of environmental protection show that traditional Mongolian ecological thought did not remain at the level of merely "knowing that nature matters," but embedded its ideas into concrete modes of resource use. This is precisely the mark of practical rationality: an idea becomes genuine rationality only when it can be translated into a repeatable logic of action.

At the same time, this practical rationality is not pure empiricism. Mere accumulation of experience may explain why certain methods are useful, but it cannot adequately explain why these methods can acquire lasting legitimacy and communal recognition. "Eternal Heaven," however, provides precisely this higher-order integrative function [12]. It makes ecological boundaries not only technical matters, but also matters of value; not only empirical judgments, but also judgments of order. Analyses of the composite functions of resource and environmental protection knowledge show that local ecological knowledge possesses cognitive, adaptive, normative, and cultural-transmission dimensions simultaneously. This makes clear that ecological wisdom in the Mongolian nomadic tradition was not an optional empirical accessory, but was organized and supported by a more fundamental worldview.

Therefore, if ecological rationality is the theoretical expression in ecological philosophy of a reasonable human-nature relationship, then what "Eternal Heaven" represents is a form of practical rationality that had already taken shape historically and was already operating in nomadic society [13]. It does not speak in modern disciplinary terminology, yet it binds cosmology, subsistence, and behavioral norms together in a much tighter way. It is precisely in this respect that "Eternal Heaven" possesses the theoretical conditions for being transformed into "nomadic rationality."

4. The Conceptual Construction from "eternal Heaven" to "nomadic Rationality"

4.1. The Proposal of "nomadic Rationality" and Its Connotation

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, it is necessary to propose the concept of "nomadic rationality." The purpose of introducing this concept is not to replace "ecological wisdom" or "grassland culture" with a new term, but to summarize more accurately those rational factors in traditional Mongolian ecological thought that have been jointly validated by historical experience, conceptual systems, and normative practices. The use of "ecological wisdom" alone easily encourages an understanding of such content as merely experiential or intuitive cultural features; the use of "religious belief" alone, by contrast, easily obscures its organizational function in real life. "Nomadic rationality," by comparison, more clearly highlights the fact that within steppe nomadic civilization there existed a stable logic of action organized around reverence for Heaven and Earth, cognition of rhythms, moderate use, and dynamic balance.

Accordingly, this article defines "nomadic rationality" as a form of ecological rationality generated within steppe nomadic life practice, taking reverence for Heaven and Earth as its spiritual premise, adaptation to natural rhythms as its cognitive mode, moderate use and dynamic balance as its principles of conduct, and the maintenance of the symbiotic order linking humans, livestock, and grasslands as its value goal. This definition contains four dimensions. First, it emphasizes that this rationality is generated within life practice, which means that the concept is not externally imposed, but extracted from within nomadic civilization itself. Second, it stresses the unity of spiritual premise and cognitive mode, indicating that rationality is never purely technical judgment, but is always embedded in a worldview. Third, it emphasizes principles of conduct, which means that rationality must be embodied in repeatable institutions and practices. Fourth, it emphasizes value goal, indicating that this form of rationality ultimately aims at sustaining a symbiotic order rather than maximizing efficiency in a one-dimensional sense.

The concept of "nomadic rationality" is possible also because traditional Mongolian ecological knowledge did not exist in scattered isolation. Research on the structure of resource and environmental protection knowledge shows that the ecological knowledge

accumulated by steppe pastoralists is systematic and composite, and thus sufficient to support conceptual extraction [5]. Philosophical interpretations of the ecological wisdom of Mongolian nomadic culture provide the mediating bridge through which cultural experience can be transformed into philosophical expression. Combined with discussions of rationality in terms of wholeness, relatedness, and symbiosis, it becomes clear that "nomadic rationality" is not an arbitrary designation, but a concept distilled at the intersection of historical materials and philosophical logic.

More importantly, "nomadic rationality" does not romanticize nomadic experience, still less does it elevate every traditional practice into rationality [4]. What it emphasizes is that, under specific ecological conditions, the Mongolian nomadic tradition formed a concept-institution-action structure capable of dealing effectively with environmental uncertainty, resource boundaries, and the continuity of communal life. This structure was not perfect, nor does it imply that it can be unconditionally transplanted into modern society. Yet it does provide a form of rationality different from the logic of industrial expansion. In this sense, the proposal of "nomadic rationality" is both a conceptualization of traditional Mongolian ecological thought and an expansion of the concept of rationality itself.

4.2. The Structural Features and Intellectual Grounds of "nomadic Rationality"

If "nomadic rationality" is to possess academic persuasiveness, it must present a clear internal structure. Taking the foregoing materials together, its internal structure may be summarized in terms of at least five interrelated elements.

First, reverence for Heaven and Earth as a spiritual premise. Without this, "nomadic rationality" would degenerate into a mere technique of adaptation [3, 5]. Relevant studies, together with materials from *The Secret History of the Mongols*, show that the importance of "Eternal Heaven" lies precisely in the fact that it provides human action with a scale of order transcending individual desire. This scale keeps human beings aware that nature is not an infinitely disposable object, but an encompassing whole that precedes, surrounds, and constrains them.

Second, a cognitive mode of attunement to rhythms [8]. Interpretations of seasonal rotational grazing indicate that the central knowledge of nomadic society is not abstract knowledge for dominating nature, but knowledge for identifying environmental change, grasping regenerative cycles, and adapting to spatial differences. This is a rhythmic mode of cognition, concerned not with forcibly transforming nature, but with understanding change in nature and choosing appropriate action within it.

Third, a survival wisdom of dynamic adaptation. The non-equilibrium character of the grassland ecosystem determines that the rationality of survival must be resilient. Research on local ecological knowledge demonstrates that pastoral knowledge was not a static set of rules, but a system of capacities continuously adjusted under conditions of risk. Accordingly, one of the core characteristics of "nomadic rationality" is that it grounds stability in dynamic adjustment rather than in rigid control.

Fourth, restraint in use as a principle of conduct. Research on systems of legal codes, customs, and taboos shows that traditional nomadic society possessed a clear awareness of limits on resource use. This restraint is not a passive concession, but an active grasp of the logic of long-term survival. In structural terms, it means that subjects are able to weigh immediate benefits within the horizon of overall consequences.

Fifth, symbiotic balance as a value goal. Whether one considers the idea of "Eternal Heaven," seasonal rotational grazing, local knowledge, or ecological taboos, all ultimately point toward maintaining the ongoing relationship among humans, livestock, and grasslands. This goal is not an abstract rhetoric of "harmony," but the basic condition for the continuation of a community of life. Discussions of ecosophy remind us that the elevation of rationality lies not in the unlimited enhancement of capacities for domination, but in the transformation of modes of existence from confrontation to co-being. From this point of view, "nomadic rationality" is a form of rationality oriented toward co-being.

Composed of these five elements, "nomadic rationality" possesses both intellectual grounds and experiential foundations. Its intellectual grounds derive from the cosmological order furnished by "Eternal Heaven," while its experiential basis derives from the ecological knowledge and institutional arrangements formed over the long course of nomadic subsistence. The two are mutually embedded, making this concept neither a purely empirical description nor an abstract designation detached from materials, but a middle-level concept capable of moving across conceptual history, social history, and ecological philosophy.

4.3. The Theoretical Value and Contemporary Significance of "nomadic Rationality"

The theoretical value of proposing "nomadic rationality" can be explained on multiple levels.

It provides a higher-order conceptual framework for traditional Mongolian ecological thought. While existing scholarship has explored concepts such as "Eternal Heaven," nature worship, ecological wisdom, and grassland customs in depth, these ideas often remain fragmented. By centering on "nomadic rationality," cosmology, norms, knowledge, and subsistence can be integrated into a cohesive theoretical structure, preventing traditional Mongolian ecological thought from being reduced to a collection of cultural symbols.

It enriches ecological philosophy by incorporating theoretical insights from nomadic civilization [1, 10]. Ecological philosophy often begins with the crisis experiences of industrial society, resulting in concepts that are heavily critical of modernity. In contrast, "nomadic rationality" offers an alternative perspective: it demonstrates that a rational framework based on boundaries, rhythms, and symbiosis existed within premodern subsistence systems. This highlights that ecological rationality is not solely a product of modern reflection but also a historical outcome of long-term practices within specific civilizational traditions.

It introduces an original concept rooted in frontier ethnic culture for the development of China's autonomous discourse in ecological philosophy. Current efforts to build China's independent philosophical knowledge system increasingly emphasize deriving concepts from indigenous intellectual traditions rather than merely applying pre-existing categories to local contexts. "Nomadic rationality" exemplifies this methodological approach, as it is neither a direct translation of Western ecological rationality nor a simple rebranding of ecological wisdom. Instead, it emerges from the internal experiences and conceptual frameworks of Mongolian nomadic civilization, elevating frontier ethnic culture from supplementary material to a significant source of theoretical innovation.

The contemporary relevance of "nomadic rationality" should not be interpreted as a call to return to traditional lifestyles. Modern society's technological advancements, population density, resource structures, and governance systems have undergone fundamental changes, making the direct transplantation of traditional nomadic practices impractical. However, the concept remains valuable as an intellectual resource. Its holistic vision, rhythm awareness, boundary-consciousness, symbiotic orientation, and self-restraint logic offer significant insights in addressing ecological crises, resource depletion, and the transformation of development models [9].

5. Conclusion

The central conclusion of this article is that "Eternal Heaven" should not be confined to the status of a divine concept in religious history but should be understood as the foundational world-consciousness of Heaven and Earth, life, order, and the limits of action in Mongolian nomadic society. In The Secret History of the Mongols and related political language, it appears as a source-like conceptual point of origin; in nomadic subsistence and steppe life, it manifests as compliance with natural rhythms, restraint in resource use, and the maintenance of communal order; and at the philosophical level, it embodies the ecological logic of wholeness, relatedness, symbiosis, and practical orientation. On this basis, the article proposes the concept of "nomadic rationality" to

summarize the form of rationality jointly generated in traditional Mongolian ecological thought by cosmological belief, ecological knowledge, and normative practice.

The proposal of "nomadic rationality" also implies a revision of the concept of rationality itself from the standpoint of steppe civilization: rationality does not necessarily mean conquest, calculation, and expansion; it may also take the form of reverence, moderation, adjustment, and symbiosis. For ecological philosophy, this concept helps transform ethnic-cultural resources into philosophical resources with genuine theoretical depth. For autonomous discourse in ecological philosophy, it offers a possible path for extracting original concepts from frontier ethnic traditions. Future research still needs to undertake closer cross-verification at the levels of Mongolian-language literature, ritual texts, customary law, and steppe social history, so that the conceptual structure, historical layers, and comparative-philosophical significance of "nomadic rationality" may be developed more fully.

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