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**CULTURAL INTERACTION AND CULTURAL CONSERVATISM**

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*Abstract*

Cultural change affected by migration within the conceptual framework of acculturation is considered. Acculturation in ethnic cuisine is a phenomenon that does not receive much attention in cross-cultural studies. Acculturation as an interaction of cultures and its consequences on individuals, groups (such as families) and communities (ethnic groups) have been focal points of investigation. The cultural aspect of acculturation that is the ensuing changes that affect ethnic cultures due to their interaction in Yugra, Russia. The present project examines the consequences of culture interaction, the various models of acculturation, and the effects of acculturation in ethnic cuisine on individuals, families, and ethnic groups inhabiting Yugra which is very diverse in ethnic background, cultures, and languages, etc. The methods applied are observation, a questionnaire and an interview. The focal groups (individuals from ethnic groups) were interviewed at random. The culinary culture of Yugra ethnic groups is multilevel. We track in the project observable cultural traits in cuisine that can be adopted or transferred through interaction with other ethnic groups. This process is affected by acculturation orientation. Acculturation may include adopting more overt customs and traits related to ethnic cuisine from other cultures. The information about cultural conservatism and cultural change in cuisine has become available via the research. Research shows that the integration is preferable as well as the most adaptive strategy with ethnic groups. Assimilation and separation can be viewed as transitional strategies. Separation as a less adaptive strategy can be demonstrated by individuals.

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## 1. Introduction

Acculturation orientations as a result of extensive migration affect the evolution of a multicultural society. Contacts into which ethnic groups come with each other bring about changes that affect ethnic cultures due to this interaction. Observable cultural traits can be adopted or transferred through cultural interaction with other ethnic groups depending on acculturation orientations: assimilation, integration, segregation, or marginalization. Thus, the process and the result of acculturation is an important factor in ethnically and culturally heterogeneous society.

Through intercultural interaction ethnic identity is revealed and clearly manifested. In terms of inclusion in another culture, a person, on the one hand, seeks the possibility to preserve his cultural identity, and, on the other, borrows products of a new culture, achieving, to a great extent, the compatibility with foreign environment. This is the essence of acculturation as a bilateral process.

Ethnic cuisine is an integral part of everyday and festive life, and the most important element of ethnic culture that determines ethnic identity. In the course of interaction with a new culture culinary habits may also be partially or even completely transformed.

## 2. Problem Statement

Acculturation as a phenomenon is described in the works on anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Recent studies consider many aspects of acculturation, for example, from the point of view of cross-cultural psychology (Demes & Geeraert, 2014), the acculturation of different ethnic groups (Lepshokova & Lebedeva, 2016; Vasiliev & Lyubichankovsky, 2018), social markers of acculturation (Leong, 2014), acculturation in interfaith interaction (Nasonov, 2016), legal acculturation (Sokolskaya, 2015). Numerous articles are devoted to the study of migrants and immigrants acculturation (for example, Berry & Hou, 2016), but, to a lesser extent, it is covered in the aspect of intercultural communication.

The increased processes of globalization and migration at various levels have recently aroused the interest of specialists in issues of cultural change, of the so-called cultural evolution, as a result of mutual cultural contacts of representatives of different ethnic communities (Scanlon, 2010; Creanza, Kolodny, & Feldman, 2017; Erten, van den Berg, & Weissing, 2018).

## 3. Research Questions

The article discusses the cultural changes occurring in ethnocultural groups as a result of the development of migration processes in society; an attempt is made to identify trends in cultural conservatism and changes in the culture of the peoples inhabiting multi-ethnic Yugra region.

The project aims at identifying those features that have been transformed or were borrowed during the cultural interaction of ethnocultural groups, depending on the direction (dominant strategy) of acculturation processes.

As Scanlon (2010) points out, national cuisine acculturation is the process by which members of an ethnocultural group adapt their cuisines to their social, cultural, and material situations. In his works, the author examines the influence of the Mexican national cuisine on the food preferences of the dominant American society.

Padilla emphasizes that it is precisely as a result of the cultures interaction that acculturation occurs (“Without contact, there is no acculturation; so this condition is centrally important” Padilla, 1980, p. 11), at the same time, according to many authors, the process affects the level of an individual, group (family), or ethnic community on the whole (Berry, 2003; 2006; Castro, 2003; Padilla, 1980).

Speaking of cultural influence, many researchers refer to such concepts as a linear model (one-dimensional), which represents the assimilation of a culture, and a two-dimensional / multidimensional model, which indicates more complex processes of the mutual influence of interacting cultures (Castro, 2003; Berry, 2006). To understand how and why acculturation occurs, the concepts of “cultural distance” and “cultural conservatism” should be introduced. The term “cultural distance” refers to cultural differences and, accordingly, emphasizes that the interaction of culturally distant ethnic groups is less subject to cultural changes compared to ethnic communities whose cultural differences are less noticeable. The degree of “cultural conservatism” is determined by the tendency of the ethnic group to conserve their cultural identity and culture (Erten, van den Berg, & Weissing, 2018). Depending on the orientation of the ethnic group - to preserve their own culture or to develop interaction with other cultures - J. Berry distinguishes four different acculturation strategies. A high degree of cultural conservatism can either result in integration or in separation, while a low degree of cultural conservatism can result in assimilation or marginalization (Berry, 1997).

The consideration of the tendencies of different peoples from the point of view of the national cuisine acculturation makes it necessary to address factors that allow us to evaluate (“measure”) the results of the acculturation process. To such factors Vincent Parrillo (2008, p.17) relates the participation (involvement) of the ethnocultural group in events conducted together with other communities. The author points out that preserving food preferences can slow down the processes of cultural adaptation.

The researchers attempt to identify universal approaches to studying constantly changing tastes of people, trying to find out what affects a particular choice. The specificity of changes in the national nutrition elements in the new cultural conditions were considered by several researches (Makhmutov, Faizullina, 2014; Marushkina, 2014; Zhumaniyazova & Matkarimova, 2014 and others).

Despite the fact that the area of traditional nutrition is one of the most stable spheres of culture, interpenetration and mutual influence of national culinary traditions are especially active under the conditions of close contact of peoples with each other. In this respect, the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra is one of the peculiar regions, since polyethnicity and intertwining of cultures is an important feature of the area, which historically is the homeland for Khanty, Mansi, and partly Nenets peoples. The representatives of more than 120 nationalities live here. According to the 2010 census (“Population of KhMAO-Ugra”, 2017), Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Azeris, Belorussians, and Khanty predominate in the national composition of the district population.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to establish and describe the facts of cultural elements transformation in the process of acculturation of the peoples inhabiting the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra, in the sphere of national culinary traditions interaction. The article presents the general

results of an empirical study of the national gastronomic traditions of the region, carried out by the authors in 2017-2018.

## 5. Research Methods

The study is characterized by a selective nature and relies on the materials obtained empirically by using the methods of primary information gathering - questioning and standardized thematic interviewing (survey) the representatives of the peoples currently living in the district.

We conducted the survey in the form of oral interviews, written questionnaires, and in the form of an online survey, information about which, together with a link to it, was published in various urban communities and groups on VKontakte social network. 650 respondents, the representatives of different nationalities, took part in the survey. As a result of collecting empirical material, we received over 500 questionnaires and a total of 40 hours interviews. The obtained research material allows us to draw conclusions, both on general and specific cases of acculturation phenomena in the food culture of migrants.

The theoretical model became the basis for the comprehension of the research material, according to which the analysis of the everyday food preparation techniques of the peoples of the district assumes that food is considered to be a fact of a food culture. Following this idea, several aspects were distinguished: the social context, the content of food, the definition of ethnic patterns.

The social context and social organization of nutrition are associated with defining the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, with attitude towards food in various contexts, as well as, familiarizing with the circumstances of cooking in different conditions and the distribution of social roles. The composition of the main ingredients, the rules for the products selection, the principles of their processing and combination, the content of the necessary raw materials and operations with them – all this reveal the content of food preparation techniques of peoples belonging to a particular nationality.

The process of defining the ethnic patterns is based on the gastronomic reflection of the respondents, determining the degree of self-identification of a respondent with a particular food culture. It helps the informants to clarify the ideas about their own national food (everyday, festive, ceremonial), to know the techniques of its preparation, compatibility of products, names of dishes, traditions of consumption.

## 6. Findings

Being an element of material culture, food becomes a distinctive feature and an important part of the national identity of people living in a polyethnic region. As we know, in the process of incorporation into a different culture there is an inevitable change in the conditions of the usage of food traditions, evolution, disappearance of traditional gastronomic elements, or addition of the new ones.

Based on the idea of acculturation and its obligatory condition - the interaction of cultures during which they change - this article addresses the issue of transformation evidence of elements belonging to national food cultures. Concretization of nutrition changes is of great importance for increasing awareness

of cultural diversity and the specific nature of the general food culture of the polyethnic region - the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug - Yugra.

In order to prove or deny facts of the influence on the traditional food of other cultures, the following questions were included in the questionnaire: What new dishes / drinks have you started to prepare after moving to the district? What dishes / drinks have appeared/disappeared on/from the holiday menu after moving to the district? What dishes / drinks have you adopted from other nationalities?

The analysis of the collected materials showed that in the modern nutrition system of the indigenous peoples of Yugra (Khanty and Mansi) ethnic food traditions are preserved both in everyday life and in a festive ceremonial context. Fish and meat occupy the most important place, which can easily be explained by the specific natural resources of the region and the economic activities of the peoples. Stability in food culture, adherence to national gastronomic traditions had a direct impact on the food preferences of the newcomers.

According to the answers of the survey participants, we can conclude that the obvious transformational processes affect the sphere of preferences in choosing the ingredients, available in the region, for cooking main courses. There is a tendency among representatives of all nationalities to cook fish dishes, such as ukha (fish soup), pies from pike, sterlet, muksun; fish rasstegai (open-topped pastry); heh (raw fish dish), and pike cutlets; dishes from sterlet, nelma; baked crucian or bream with filling; pike in batter; cutlets, dumplings, manti with fish. Representatives of the peoples of Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, whose cuisine is traditionally “meat”, tend to refuse to eat meat dishes choosing fish instead, when there is such an option, for example, «... love northern fish raw (salted) and in pies, I like to bake sterlet in the oven, I really liked salted muksun, but northern fish (muksun, nelma, sterlet) has become rare, so it went into the category of delicacy» (Khoptyanaya, born in 1974 Khmel'nitsk, Ukraine, now lives in the town of Raduzhnyi).

When describing fish dishes, most of the respondents, as a rule, characterize them as “local / northern / dishes of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug”, without linking the cooking method with the food traditions of the indigenous population of Khanty and Mansi. An exception is the dish that the respondents call pike “in Ostyak” or pike “in Khanty” way.

The traditions of raw food dieting (frozen fish and meat) being a characteristic of indigenous peoples, are accepted by other groups of the population living in the district. “Stroganina” and “malosolka” made of muksun is considered as a delicacy and an essential attribute of any holiday dinner (65% of respondents).

Gathering and using wild crops is a traditional activity of the Khanty and Mansi people, which was adopted by many peoples living in the district. The respondents do not consider local game, berries, mushrooms, and nuts as something alien to their food traditions, ranking them as facts of gastronomic everyday life. For example, at present, the population widely uses local berries (bird-cherry, cloudberry, blueberry, red and black currant, cranberry) to make pies, dumplings, and drinks (cranberry juice, stewed fruit from a mixture of different berries). A respondent of Tatar nationality reports, “Here I learned how to make the lingonberry open pie as we did not know about lingonberries. ... We bring lingonberries as gifts to the “big land”, we invite guests and bake the lingonberry pie, presenting it as “our local Surgut pie”. (N. Shaymardanova, born in 1961, Republic of Tatarstan, now lives in Surgut]. Representatives of

all nationalities note that dishes with mushrooms appeared in their daily and festive meal: mushroom pies and potatoes; potatoes with mushrooms, mushroom soup, lazy mushroom dumplings from potato dough (Ukrainians), stew with mushrooms, mushroom shangi. At the same time, many respondents associate the dishes with mushrooms with Russian food tradition.

Russian and other ethnic groups, comparing with the indigenous peoples, are unlikely to use water fowl and upland fowl. Very few respondents note that after moving to the district they began to prepare game meat dishes (ex. duck dishes).

An important transformational indicator that was found in the analysis of respondents' answers to the question of what has change in their cooking routine after moving to the district is the fact of deliberate replacement of certain cooking ingredients, previously considered traditional. For instance, representatives of Kyrgyzstan, Bashkiria, Tatarstan use venison or horse meat instead of beef for the preparation of pilaf or beshbarmak. The analysis of the material gathered in the polyethnic village (mainly Mansi, Komi and Russians) showed that all respondents prefer reindeer meat in the frozen form which is considered the traditional food of the Komi reindeer herders. They say it's a delicacy, especially the deer's liver and heart: "If we are expecting guests, we have frozen liver, this is our, so to say, a delicacy" , "(raw) liver, heart is a delicacy, for holidays". It should be noted that no other meat in such a form is consumed by the villagers.

Representatives of the Mari national community also noted the replacement of the traditional gastronomic component (goose) with reindeer meat in Easter cake recipe. Ukrainians use legs of a deer instead of pork legs for cooking aspic (holodes).

A noticeable sign that influences the content of food culture of certain ethnic groups is the change of status (modality) of dishes. Dishes that previously had a ritual significance lose their modality and become attributes of a festive table, or everyday life dishes: for example, the transition of such a Caucasian dish as shashlyk (shish kebab) from ritual to festive category. And due to the availability of traditional cuisine in the national restaurants of the cities, this dish also becomes an attribute of everyday life. Traditional ritual dish of Mari cuisine – pancakes – nowadays appear on the table, according to Mari respondents, not only during prayers, wedding and memorial rites, but also as a pleasant family weekend tradition.

Indicators of changes in the food culture of the newcomers, repeatedly confirmed by the respondents' answers, are evidence of imitations of dishes of various peoples that have received the greatest distribution due to the intensification of intercultural contacts. 87% of respondents present evidence of borrowing food traditions. The most frequent facts are the adoption of dishes of the dominant ethnic group - Russian cuisine. A notable feature of Russian gastronomic culture is the tendency to consume liquid dishes - soups of various types. According to respondents' answers, borscht, hodgepodge, cabbage soup, pickle soup, okroshka, and fish soup are part of the diet and demonstrate popularity among many ethnic groups as a daily meal. Attitudes to salads with mayonnaise, are not unequivocal among the adopting population, however, almost every survey participant notes that its modern festive table does not do without the traditional Olivier salad (Russian Potato Salad).

All respondents noted that they have home-made pickled tomatoes and cucumbers, compotes, lecho, jams, sauerkraut, canned vegetable salads on their diet, as, by analogy with the Russian food tradition, they bring diversity to daily meals.

“Caucasian dishes”, including khachapuri, dolma, afar, lula-kebab, khinkali, and kebabs gradually become part of the nutrition system of the district residents. In its turn, representatives of the peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia notice that their daily diet has expanded due to the dishes made of potatoes and chicken.

The analysis of the empirical material made it possible to reveal an interesting fact: some respondents cannot self-identify with a certain national cuisine. The group of respondents experiencing such difficulties, as a rule, consists of the so-called “mixed marriage”, when the spouses belong to different nationalities and are in conditions of enhanced cultural interaction. “We have the situation when national cuisines of different nations are mixed: basically, the wife cooks everything that she wants, and our national dishes are cooked only for holidays,” points out the survey participant, and confirms with this answer the tendency to naturally mild intertwining the food traditions of different nationalities.

In some cases, the answers of the respondents demonstrate situations when there is no distinct border when assigning dishes to a specific national cuisine: Ukrainians, whose cultural and food constants have much in common with those of Russians, do not draw clear lines when identifying their own dishes and Russian dishes, naming a number of absolutely identical components. The dishes of the peoples of the Caucasus are united by the similarity of ingredients and cooking techniques, which is the reason for referring them to the generalized abstract notion, “Caucasian cuisine”.

In this study, based on the respondents' answers, it is possible to identify some characteristics of acculturation strategies, make assumptions about the selected semantic elements and designate one or another model of behavior in the field of interaction with another food culture as a trend containing relatively stable differential features.

The following acculturation trends are clearly seen among the representatives of the peoples of Yugra:

1) there is a tendency to assimilation among 28% of respondents, “we stopped cooking national dishes all together”, “have switched to Russian cuisine”, i.e. there is a loss of the former ethnic identity and identification with a new culture occurs; one of the reasons is the decline in contacts with the ethnic group, “I cook universal dishes for holidays, I don’t celebrate our national holidays here, because I live with people who are not of my nationality”;

2) the majority of respondents (58%) show a tendency towards integration, in which an individual seeks to preserve the main elements of the national cuisine, but at the same time accepts elements of a new culture. Based on the results of the survey, we can distinguish 3 groups of people: those who mainly prepare dishes of national cuisine (“basically, we cook traditional dishes for us, but dishes from other nationalities are added”); those whose national dishes are not the main ration (“now we prepare national dishes less often, but we try to preserve traditions”; “new local dishes were added, but dishes of our cuisine are kept on the festive table or on weekends”); those who combine elements of many cultures: “we have a multinational table: we prepare both Russian, and Ingush, and Avar dishes” (husband is Avar, wife is Ingush). One of the respondents say: “Considering all the factors of everyday life, the change of

environment, of course, a person's life changes, but traditions remain the same, and I also try to respect them, to teach my children, no matter where they live, not to forget the traditions of the people of which they are representatives. At the same time, to respect the traditions and way of life of the peoples with whom they live and communicate" (Z.Kh. Tatrieva, born in 1972, The Republic of Ingushetia, now lives in Shapsha village, Khanty-Mansiysk District);

3) 14% of respondents show the tendency to separation, they are against changes in the diet and composition of traditional dishes, "after moving to the district, nothing has changed and I don't want to change anything, we eat only traditional dishes"; "even after moving we continue to eat home-made bread", "my national cuisine is vast and I don't want anything else on my table"; "My wife cooks only national dishes, I should not eat anything universal".

## 7. Conclusion

As a result of a survey among representatives of various nationalities of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug - Yugra, taking into account the above aspects, it was found that food culture of each people is multidimensional and includes components that form certain levels. The first level, the most stable and permanent, is associated with the disclosure of ethnic identity and most clearly conveys the authenticity of the cuisine of a certain nationality. The second level of food culture is characterized by combination of food tastes, habits, the mixing of food traditions of various nationalities, by the spirit of innovation and improvisation, as well as simple imitation. The third level is associated with standardization and unification in food culture, namely, the situation when there is a rejection of the traditional standards of national cuisines in favor of products that satisfy consumers everywhere. Passion for fast food is observed among representatives of all nationalities, especially the younger generation.

Under the conditions of incorporation into another culture, representatives of the peoples of Yugra strive to preserve their cultural identity, but, at the same time, borrow products of a new culture, while achieving, to a greater or lesser extent, compatibility with a foreign environment.

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