



A Brief Discussion on the Inheritance and Change of Manchu Food Culture

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Abstract. The Manchu and their ancestors have been living in the landscape of northeast China for a long time, and the unique geographic environment and way of life have given birth to the distinctive characteristics of the traditional Manchu food culture, which has become a part of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. With the close interaction between the Manchu and the Han, the inheritance and change of the Manchu food culture has become a mirror of ethnic integration. It has not only inherited the core of its own excellent ethnic culture but also continued to innovate and develop in its exchanges with other ethnic groups.

Keywords: Manchu; Food Culture; Inheritance; Change

1 Introduction

The Manchu is one of the oldest and most populous ethnic groups in China, and it can be traced back as far as 7,000 years ago to the Sushen period. The Manchu and their ancestors, Mohe and Jurchen, once founded several dynasties in Chinese history, such as the Bohai and Jin Dynasties, and are an important part of the Chinese nation. The Manchu is the sixth largest ethnic group in China, and the national census of the Manchu numbered 10.42 million in 2020 [1]. Currently, the Manchu people are mainly distributed in northeast and north China, mainly living in dispersed groups, with Liaoning having the largest Manchu population, and a considerable number of dispersed populations in 31 provinces, cities, and autonomous regions all over China. The profound cultural heritage and endless ethnic inheritance have made the ethnic culture of the Manchu still brilliant today. We cannot only feel the cultural deposits of the Manchu through the forms of ethnic literature such as the Manchu oral text, but also explore the process of their ethnic history and culture in the Manchu food culture. The Manchu food culture can become a mirror for us to understand the process of integration of the Manchu with other ethnic groups in the course of history so that we can conjure up the whole thing by seeing a part of it.

2 Long History of Manchu Food Culture

The Manchu food culture has a long historical origin and a complex formation process. First, the traditional way of life of the Manchu ancestors had an important influence on the Manchu food culture. There are many records in ancient literature about the food culture of Manchu ancestors, such as the Yilou and Wuji communities. The Book of Later Han · Dong Yi Biographies records: "Yilou, the country of ancient Sushen... There were five cereals and flax... They like to raise pigs, eat pork, and wear clothes made of pigskin. In winter, they apply lard to their bodies, with a few inches thick, to protect them from the wind and cold [2]." It can be seen that during the Eastern Han Dynasty, the Manchu ancestors already liked to eat cereal crops and pork in meat. The Book of Jin · Dong Yi Biographies also recorded the customs of Sushen or Yilou: "There are no cows or sheep, but many pigs are raised to eat their meat [3]." The Book of Tang · Beidi Biographies records Heishui Mohe: "They raise pigs, and the rich keep hundreds of them and eat their meat [4]." It can be seen that the Wuji people in the North and South Dynasties and the Mohe people in the Sui and Tang Dynasties inherited the custom of eating both meat and cereals and preferring pork from the Yilou people, and formed a stable food culture, which also laid the mainstream food culture of later generations of Manchu. Then the Jurchen people were more closely related to the Manchu. Volume 20 of A Chronicle of Three Song Emperors' Dealings with the Northern Neighbor records: "When the Jurchen people drink, meat dishes are not served together with wine, and after drinking, they are served with porridge, rice and other staple foods [5]." It is not difficult to find that at that time, when the Jurchen people drank, the staple food was often separated, and never supplemented with dishes, their bold style of drinking obviously affected the eating style of Manchu. The Annals of Liaodong during the years of Jiajing in the Ming Dynasty records the custom of Jianzhou Jurchens: "At each party, each person holds a glass of arrack, which is commonly known as arrack. They sit on the ground and spend their days singing and drinking. They have little anger and just shoot arrows [6]." It can be seen that the Manchu people in the Ming Dynasty must-have wine for banquets and hospitality before entering Shanhaiguan. Through the above literature, we believe that the food traditions of the ancestors have had a profound influence on the food culture of the later generations of Manchu, and the long history of Manchu has allowed the inheritance of their food culture to continue to the present day.

Second, the Manchu became the ruling ethnic group after entering Shanhaiguan, which accelerated the integration with other ethnic groups. The Manchu-Han Banquet is a typical example of the integration of the food culture of the Manchu and Han. This integration is reflected in the staple food, dishes, pastries, and other aspects. For the staple food, take sachima as an example, the Manchu people in the Qing Dynasty, Fuqa Dunchong, said in his Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking: "Sachima is a kind of Manchu pastry, which is made of rock candy, cream, and wheat flour, shaped like glutinous rice, baked in the grey wood oven, and cut into squares, with a sweet flavor. Furonggao is the same as sachima, but there is brown sugar in the flour, as colorful as hibiscus [7]." Sachima has become a popular food and is loved by all

Chinese people. However, its name and practice still retain Manchu characteristics. This shows that the traditional Manchu food has become popular throughout China in the process of integration with the Han. There is also a kind of candied hawthorn in the traditional Manchu food, which is often recorded as "Wenpu" in Chinese. It was once brought to the capital and became a distinctive kind of preserved fruit in the capital. Nowadays, we can still see this kind of preserved fruit in Beijing, and the word "Wenpu" on the canned hawthorn produced by some manufacturers. Therefore, the Manchu food culture after entering Shanhaiguan had an important influence on the Han food culture and is still in the process of integration.

3 Contemporary Inheritance of Manchu Food Culture

It can be seen from the above that several changes in the food culture of the Manchu history have shown rapid changes in the food culture as they improved their way of life and social organization in the course of the social process. In the course of its long history, the Manchu food culture has also continued to create and develop. Especially after the Manchu entered the Central Plains, a new chapter of Manchu-Han integration was opened. But some food still retains the Manchu characteristics, sachima is a typical representative.

Sachima, also known as shacima and selima. According to the Yuzhi Zengding Qingwenjian, previous generations called sachima "sugar wrapping" and recorded its production process: "xanyan halu be malanggv imenggi de carufi uyan matan xatan ucufi oboho malanggv sindafi weilembi [8]." It can be translated as: it is made of wheat flour strips that are fried in sesame oil and then coated with sugar and dotted with washed sesame seeds. The book also includes it in the third category of pastries in the food section. In Manchu, "sacimbi" means "cut", because the production of sachima needs to go through the process of cutting and piling, the Manchu people at that time removed the verb affix "mbi" in the verb "sacimbi" that means "cut", and replaced it with the noun affix "ma", so it became "sacima". In Manchu, the same type of food also includes giogiyen efen (dumplings) and saksan (dough tart). Thus, the name "sachima" or "shacima" is derived from the Manchu language and is a genuine Manchu snack that has survived to the present day.

According to the Overview of Unofficial History in the Qing Dynasty, "The Manchu people like wheaten food, but not rice, and there are many kinds of them, fried, steamed, or stir-fried, or made with sugar, or with pepper, or made in the shape of dragons, butterflies, and flowers [9]." It shows that the previous Manchu people loved wheaten food. In the wheaten food, they especially loved sticky food and sweet food. For example, the sticky corn in the sticky food, and pastry made of sticky corn; or the fried chop rice cake, pea cake, and sachima in the sweet food. Although there was not much documentation of the specific production process of sachima, we can still explore its process through a small number of words, such as the record of local chronicles during the Guangxu period of the Qing Dynasty, "Selima is a Lama snack, steamed with flour, preserved fruit, sugar, and lard, and it tastes good [10]." "Selima" is obviously a phonetic translation of "sachima". From the above literature, it can be

seen that sachima was already a popular snack during the Qing Dynasty. In some unofficial literature, such as Mr. Wang Shixiang's *Pastry Shop* and *Sachima* also records the production process of sachima, "Sachima is made of eggs, oil, and flour, finely cut, deep fried, and then stirred with caramel and honey, so it is called 'sugar dipping' [11]."

On the other hand, the wide spread of sachima is also noteworthy. Sachima used to be a specialty of the Manchu before entering Shanhaiguan. Still, as the Manchu gradually expanded their political and military goals, they tried to draw in the Han people, and they began to have frequent exchanges with the Han people in terms of culture, which was reflected even more in food. According to the *Manwen Laodang*, "Han's minor officials and civilians can enter the houses of the princes and ministers, attend the same banquet, and get hospitality [12]." It can be seen that the Han people have been guests of the Manchu. In the process of "attending the same banquet", the food culture of Manchu and Han has been integrated into the collision. We have reason to assume that sachima has gradually flowed from the northern region to the whole China with the Manchu entered Shanhaiguan. In the process of spreading, affected by local food traditions, sachima in each place is different in terms of taste, texture, and other aspects. But its stable name "sachima" has been handed down to the present day, which proves their homology, and reflects the strong vitality of the traditional Manchu food culture.

It is also worth mentioning that there is a very interesting story in the process of sachima spreading to the Han area. It is said that there was a Manchu general surnamed Sa in the Qing Dynasty, who loved sweets and ordered the cook to make different sweets. But the cook could not think of any other form and finally made something unattractive under urging. The cook thought he was going to lose his job this time, so he blamed the general in his mind: this general who loves to ride horses is really hateful! Kill him, kill him! But unexpectedly, the general liked it, so he assigned someone to ask the cook what the pastry was called. The cook kept thinking *Shaqima* (kill the horse rider) in his mind, so the man who was sent over there thought the pastry was called *Saqima*. When he told General Sa, he was delighted. This is the origin of *Shaqima*, but now it is called "sachima". Through this story, it is not difficult to see that sachima, the food name transliterated from the Manchu, was not recognized by the Han people upon first entering the Han areas. As we can imagine, it is difficult for the Han people to explain the word "sachima" in Chinese, and the story of "*Shaqima*" provides a reasonable explanation for the name of this food in Chinese. In the process of the integration of Manchu and Han food culture, the Han people tended to use words that were easier to be understood in their own language to explain the foreign food "sachima". As a result, the folklore of "*Shaqima*" has been widely spread in Han areas, which in turn has led to greater acceptance of this food by the Han people.

With the modernization of society, the dietary habits of Chinese people have changed dramatically in recent decades. People have generally shifted from the pursuit of "eating fully" to "eating well". "Sachima" is generally "far from people's attention", so how to inherit the traditional food in the present day is an urgent topic. Surprisingly, the production process of "sachima" is also innovating with the times.

People are committed to taking the taste and nutritional value of sachima to a higher level and have developed a kind of modern low-calorie and high-nutrition barley sachima. It is made of barley flour, high-gluten flour, eggs, and other raw materials through the process of mixing, dough rising, pressing, cutting, deep-frying, and other processes. Barley sachima melts in the mouth and has a unique barley flavor and special nutritional value. Along with the progress of modern food production technology, sugar-free coarse grains have been applied to the sachima. Technicians crush coarse grains such as corn, oats, and millet, and mix them with wheat flour to make sugar-free sachima, which can not only improve the organizational status of the product and enhance the nutritional value, but also increase the intake of coarse grains and promote nutritional balance. Sugar-free coarse-grain sachima has a full form, fluffy texture, and sweet and delicate taste, with obvious corn flavor, wheat flavor, and egg flavor [13]. In addition to the new varieties of barley and sugar-free coarse grains, new flavors with the addition of buckwheat, pumpkin, dried mulberry, and other auxiliary materials have appeared. The above new products under modern technology are the extension of the original "sachima" of the Manchu. However, it is also worth noting that the innovation of "sachima" only focuses on the addition of new food materials, and there is no major change in its shape and taste, which is an important reason why it is still recognized as a traditional food. Sachima has become a famous snack in Beijing and even in the whole China from a food belonging only to the Manchu people, and it is loved by people everywhere. In this article, the historical development of sachima is traced, and it can be seen that it deserves to be a typical case of the inheritance of Manchu food culture to the present day.

4 Changes in Manchu Food Culture Over Times

Corresponding to the case of sachima inheriting the traditional Manchu food culture, we can also see the changes in the traditional Manchu food. The Manchu have a long historical and cultural heritage, but their culture has also changed with the development of society, which is especially evident in their food culture. In the process of ethnic integration, many cultural characteristics that belonged to a single ethnic group were gradually shared by multiple ethnic groups. We can see from the above that the ancestors of the Manchu had a stable dietary structure in ancient times, which was closely related to the geographical environment in which they lived. When this geographical environment no longer belonged exclusively to the Manchu, the corresponding dietary habits were also shared by multiple ethnic groups.

Taking hot pot as an example, the Manchu people have a long history of eating hot pots. During the Jurchen period, when hunting and picnicking, food was often cooked in clay pots over campfires, and they burned, added, and ate, which was the earliest form of hot pot for the Manchu or northeasterners. There is also a saying that the origin of the hot pot in the northeast is in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Nurhachi brought the dietary habits of making pheasant pots, plain boiled pork pots, and game pots with campfire-burning clay pots to the Central Plains. These dietary characteristics correspond to the dietary characteristics of the early northeastern

region. During the Qianlong period, the court refined the approach to making hot pot: pigeon eggs, shark fins, and sea cucumbers became popular in the capital (now Beijing) because of their fresh flavor and ease of preparation, making them a common food for all the people of the capital. In other words, the hot pot has undergone changes since the Qing Dynasty and the later period, and is not unique to the Manchu, but is a shared culture that blends with many ethnic groups along with the regional attributes. Someone once said about the diet of the soldiers in the Manchu Eight Banners battalion, "Instant-boiled mutton was also their favorite food". At that time, there were not only Manchu people in the Eight Banners but probably also Han people. This shows that it was the custom of all the Banner people to eat hot pot, like a family meal. In other words, the hot pot after entering the capital was very different from the previous one in terms of food category. Therefore, we can judge that the hot pot was initially a dietary method created by Manchu ancestors living in the Northeast to protect themselves from the cold, which was determined by the regional environment, not exclusively belonging to the Manchu.

In addition, perhaps due to the fact that languages cannot be exactly corresponded to, the food name also changes in the course of historical changes. Take the wild strawberry as an example, it is a kind of wild fruit that is popular among the Manchu. There is a record in the *Work on Heilongjiang*, "Ilhamuk grows in the mountains of Heilongjiang, with red color, sweet and sour taste, as big as beans, can be picked and eaten, melt after the entering the mouth, and soon turn into juice after placing in the jar. In Manchu, the flower is *ilha*, and water is *muk*, so it means juicy flower in Chinese, also known as *Gaoli fruit*." There is a story in the Qing Dynasty: In the early years of the Qing Dynasty, there were two young people who loved each other. The man was a brave soldier, and once when he was walking towards the battlefield, the woman escorted him all the way. The woman picked wild strawberries from the roadside and gave them to the man, while singing the *Ilhamuk Song*, "Holding *Ilhamuk* in my hands, giving them to *Baturu*; eat it as food when you are hungry, and take it as water when you are thirsty; the fresh fruit does not last long, but sweeten you heart after eating it; if you ask me what I want, I also want *Ilhamuk*." Wild strawberries are as red as flowers and as juicy as water, and they do indeed fit the characteristics of the "*Ilhamuk*" in the literature. However, even though the ballad was widely spread, it was impossible to avoid the fact that the name "*Ilhamuk*" did not conform to the terminology used by the Han people in the later period, so that no conclusion has been reached on the variety of the fruit "*Ilhamuk*". It can be seen that the presence of a large number of Han people in the Qing Dynasty also allowed part of the Manchu food culture to integrate with that of the Han, which shows the strong characteristics of the Han culture. In the change of Manchu food culture, it is difficult for Manchu food culture to retain its own cultural characteristics when integrating with larger ethnic groups, and the names, ingredients, and practices of food are all influenced by other cultures, which contributes to the change of traditional Manchu food culture.

Therefore, it is not difficult to conclude that a part of ethnic culture is generated and developed by the ethnic group itself for a period, but it also spreads among many ethnic groups as a result of geographical changes. It tends to retain the cultural

characteristics of a certain ethnic group, such as "sachima", which not only carries the Manchu name but also retains the cultural characteristics of the Manchu food in the process of spreading. Nowadays, although the food process has changed considerably, the overall appearance of the food has been preserved. Another part of ethnic culture may be shared by multiple ethnic groups under the influence of language, region, and other reasons, especially food culture, which is greatly influenced by the regional environment. For example, the hot pot and Ilhamuk of the Manchu ancestors were introduced to Beijing from the Northeast and became a multi-ethnic culture. Any ethnic group inhabiting the area enjoys this food culture.

5 Conclusion

Inheritance and change are the key reasons why Chinese culture is still alive and new today. In the process of inheritance, culture retains its long history and contains traditional wisdom. Culture also adapts to the development of the times in the process of change, giving rise to modern innovations. Food culture has been the most important cultural factor in people's life since the birth of mankind, which tells the history and accumulation of a nation. This paper takes the Manchu food culture as an example, in its inheritance we feel the traditional charm of Manchu culture, in its change we experience the trend of the integration and development of ethnic culture, which provides a real and meaningful perspective for us to observe the ethnic culture today.

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