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Transformation of the Traditional Food Culture of Rural Residents in Yakutia: Reduction in Natural Food Consumption

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It is known that in rural areas people are closer to the land, nature, more and directly interacts with it, engaging in agriculture, cattle breeding, gathering, hunting and fishing. These activities are an additional help in natural food “procurement”. However, on the one hand, urbanized life styles are widespread, which cannot but affect rural residents. On the other hand, the intensity of the rhythm of life, the legal limitation of the timing and types of hunting and fishing, the increase in the diversity of hobbies, occupations, interests of the countrymen themselves cannot but affect the reduction in the number of those who cannot abandon the traditional occupation of their ancestors. All this affects the tastes of the rural residents who get involved in the consumption of food products, which are processed on an industrial scale.

Keywords: cattle breeding, vegetable gardening, hunting, fishing, gathering, food, gifts, traditional occupations, subsidiary farms, healthy eating.

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Introduction

The consumption of fresh natural food without various additives during their processing on an industrial scale becomes a problem for modern people, especially for the townspeople. It is clear that quality standards are being developed for long-term storage of food products, improving their taste and rendering them marketable. Today,

researchers are talking about food security, the delivery of food products, food markets, etc. (Darbasov, Baisheva et al., 2017).

All this cannot but affect the taste buds of people, and hence the habituation of their olfactory and taste buds to processed food. However, the countrymen directly “interact with the land and nature” engaged in farming,

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cattle breeding, gathering, hunting and fishing. Products of such types of activities are for them an additional help in natural food “procurement”.

At the same time, on the one hand, legal and tax regulation by the state of traditional types of countrymen’s occupations cannot but affect the reduction in the number of those who do not abandon the traditional occupation of their ancestors. On the other hand, the intensity of the rhythm of life, the increase in the variety of hobbies, the interests of the rural residents themselves, as well as the influence of public opinion and the media, replicating information about “harmful” and “useful” food, correct the taste preferences of the countrymen.

We used a selective method to survey the percentage of natural products in the culture of everyday diet and the ideas about the proper diet of the countrymen – a survey of residents of rural settlements in Mirninsky, Namsky, Oimyakonsky, Suntarsky, Tomponsky and Ust-Aldansky districts, with the exception of Mirny town, where students who came from rural settlements were interviewed. The survey was conducted in July-August 2017 on a quota sample (n = 870), based on the structure of the population by the remoteness of the respondents’ living quarters from the district centres. It should be noted that the other features may not coincide with the structure of the general population. Taking into account such features as sex and age was not expected, since the questions of the

questionnaire concerned such a phenomenon as the daily food culture of the whole family of respondents.

Although quota sampling is the most common among non-random sampling types and competes in accuracy with probabilistic types, interviewers select for interviewing those who are most available to fill quotas. Accessibility also refers to the “coverage” of settlements, i.e. the possibilities of going to one or another populated area (Table 1). Therefore, in the sample, proportions of only one indicated feature (places of residence) were observed, but the quantitative characteristics of the remaining features may not coincide with the structure of the general population.

Apparently, the dominance of women in the sample is justified by the fact that, in matters of everyday nutrition, traditionally the northern woman in the status of a hostess, a mother, a wife or a daughter-in-law performed the main role in the issues of nutrition, cooking, foodstuffs, its distribution among members of the family, etc.

Regarding the distribution of age categories in the sample, a cohort of students was interviewed in Mirny who come mainly from rural areas to continue their education at Mirny Polytechnic Institute, NEFU’s branch (see Table 2).

As we can see from Table 2, in the age structure of the sample from Mirninsky district in general, as it was noted above, the 18-24 years old students are predominating.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by sex in the sample by districts, in %

Sex	Total	District (ulus)					
		Mirninsky	Namsky	Oimyakonsky	Suntarsky	Tomponsky	Ust-Aldansky
	870	216 people	200 people	98 people	258 people	54 people	44 people
Male	33.3	63.4	14.5	40.8	17.1	50.0	29.5
Female	65.4	34.7	84.5	57.1	81.8	50.0	70.5
No answer	1.3	1.9	1.0	2.0	1.2	-	-

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by age in the sample by districts, in %

Age, years old	Total	District (ulus)					
		Mirninsky	Namsky	Oimyakonsky	Suntarsky	Tomponsky	Ust-Aldansky
18-19	17.1	58.3	1.5	12.2	0.4	13.0	-
20-24	14.3	34.7	8.5	8.2	7.8	5.6	2.3
25-29	9.4	2.8	7.5	18.4	11.6	13.0	13.6
30-34	10.9	0.9	19.0	8.2	14.7	9.3	9.1
35-39	11.3	0.5	15.5	13.3	15.5	13.0	13.6
40-44	9.8	0.5	15.5	10.2	13.6	9.3	6.8
45-49	7.5	0.9	15.0	6.1	6.2	9.3	13.6
50-55	8.3	0.5	10.5	7.1	12.0	7.4	18.2
56-59	5.1	-	2.5	6.1	8.5	9.3	13.6
60-64	3.3	0.9	2.5	5.1	4.7	7.4	2.3
65-70	1.4	-	1.5	2.0	1.9	-	4.5
70 and more	1.1	-	0.5	2.0	1.6	3.7	2.3
No answer	0.6	-	-	1.0	1.6	-	-

In terms of nationalities, sakha (82.5 %) are predominating in the sample; Russians (3.8 %); small-numbered peoples of the North (10.6 %); representatives of other nationalities (1.1 %); no answer (2.0 %).

Detailed large-scale survey of rural residents on the determined problem was held in the region for the first time.

Assessment of the level of natural food “procurement” by the respondents

It is known that the family can get natural products from their farm, hunting, fishing and gathering. To identify the extent to which the respondents are still involved in these types of occupations, the relevant questions were asked.

Through the analysis of the data from various sources T.G. Evdokimova has determined that two thirds of the countrymen are involved in private farming. At the same time, the low-income group of the countrymen who have private farms was smaller, then the groups of countrymen with medium- and high-income (63.6 %, 67.9 % and 76.6 % correspondingly).

T.G. Evdokimova considers, that “high income is not always a consequence of private farming, while low-income groups of population have very limited options of improving their income this way” (Smysly sel’skoi zhizni..., 2016: 66).

As can be seen from the data given above, most rural residents have private farms, though official statistics determines that there is an overall tendency to their reduction (see Table 3).

Judging by the respondents’ answers, most of their families breed livestock in the Namsky and Ust-Aldansky districts, almost every third respondent selected this option. It is understandable, given that these districts “specialize” in agriculture. In general, the data obtained reflect the objective division of the traditional occupations of the population, depending on the natural and climatic conditions in the regions. Therefore, in the Tomponsky and Oimyakonsky districts reindeer breeding is more common, and in the rest the residents are engaged in breeding of cattle and droving horse breeding (Fig. 1). Although, in the Oimyakonsky Ulus, as the respondents admit, they breed cattle and horses in their subsidiary private farms. In 2001,

Table 3. Private farms owned by the respondents, in %

Option	Total	District (ulus)					
		Mirninsky	Namsky	Oimyakonsky	Suntarsky	Tomponsky	Ust-Aldansky
	870	216 people	200 people	98 people	258 people	54 people	44 people
Yes	71.3	68.1	79.5	59.2	77.1	48.1	70.5
No	28.7	31.9	20.5	40.8	22.9	51.9	29.5

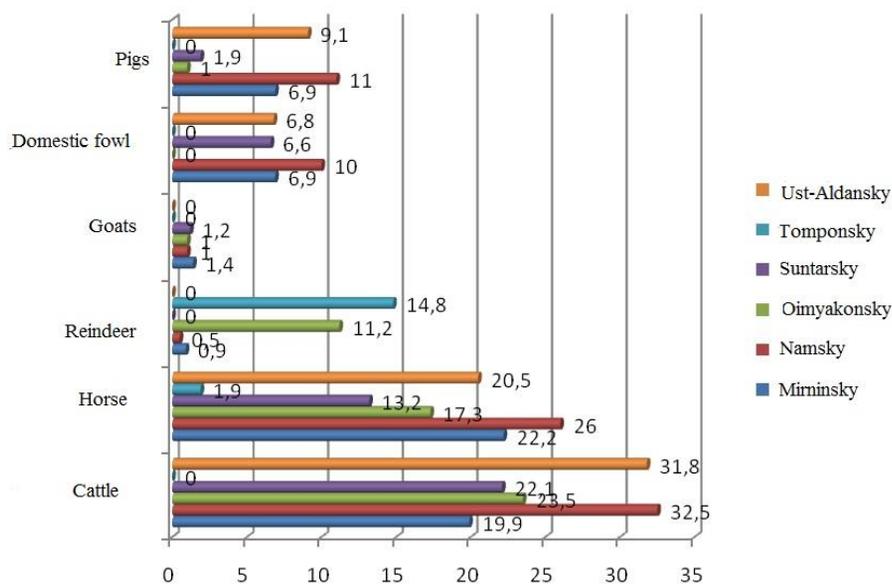


Fig. 1. Livestock breeding by the respondents, in %

local researches made estimations of the average daily intake of proteins, fats and carbohydrates for the members of 1,554 families, taking into account their age, sex and ethnicity in eight districts. As follows from their data, the average daily intake of proteins, fats and carbohydrates was higher among the indigenous population than among the non-indigenous population (Ivanov, Shadrina et al., 2005).

Let us consider the level of prevalence of agriculture in subsidiary private farms of the respondents (see Fig. 2). It is noteworthy that the respondents who live in unfavourable for agriculture Oimyakonsky and Tomponsky districts find opportunities for growing root crops and greenhouse crops, and even potatoes.

Proceeding from the obtained data, it can be assumed that fresh natural foodstuffs come to the table of countrymen from the subsidiary farms. According to the respondents' acknowledgment, in the general group of respondents subsidiary farming completely provides them with meat (35.5%), milk (21.7%), potatoes and vegetables (54.6% and 51.0% respectively).

It is known that hunting, fishing and gathering are another kind of traditional farming, as far as the surveyed countrymen are still involved in these activities (see Table 4). As can be seen from the obtained data, despite the legal restrictions and timing of these activities, almost every second respondent replied that members of their families are engaged in hunting and fishing,

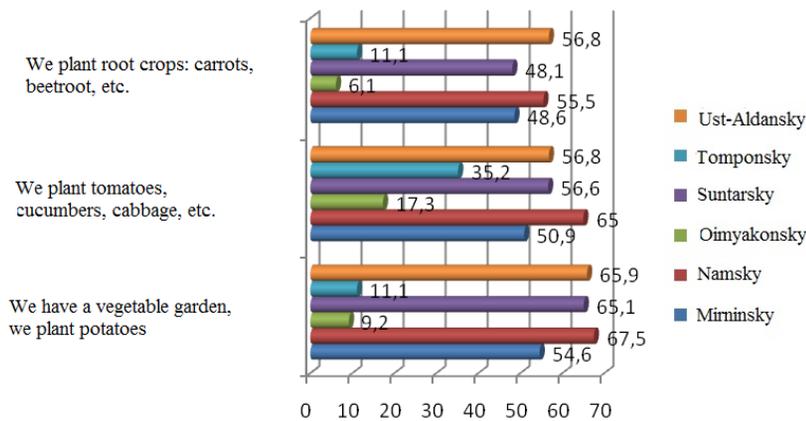


Fig. 2. Vegetable gardening in the private farming of the respondents, in %

Table 4. Members of the respondents' families engaged in hunting and fishing, in %

Members of my family are engaged in	Total	District (ulus)					
		Mirninsky	Namsky	Oimyakonsky	Suntarsky	Tomponsky	Ust-Aldnsky
Hunting	56.3	61.1	44.0	76.5	51.6	81.5	40.9
Fishing	55.6	59.7	49.0	51.0	53.1	83.3	56.8
Gathering (wild berries, green onion, mushrooms)	67.8	69.4	76.0	28.6	74.4	79.6	56.8
No one is engaged in such activities	11.6	12.5	13.0	9.2	12.0	3.7	13.6

it is clear that in most cases these activities are performed by men. Women are mainly engaged in gathering with their children.

However, this does not mean that the family fully provides itself with such products as reindeer and fish, which are the basic part of the diet, for example, in the Oleneksky ulus (Krivoshapkin, Sivtseva et al., 2015).

The main factor in the inadequate nutrition of the population, of course, is the level of material prosperity of the family. In the crisis conditions, families have to redistribute the family budget to buy the most needed items and, first of all, food (Kapustina, 2016).

In addition to the fact that the “benefits” from these types of activities go to the table of the respondents, they contribute to the preservation of the traditional culture of

interaction with nature, the performance of certain rites during hunting, fishing, giving their close acquaintances products that they have obtained, because they perceive them as “nature gifts”. This is evidenced by the answers to the question, what the family of respondents do with the obtained products. Thus, more than half of the surveyed countrymen (57.4 %) noted that “some part they consume themselves, and another part goes to relatives and friends”. According to the traditions of hospitality that have formed throughout several centuries, the Yakuts can also make gifts to neighbours and acquaintances (Matveeva, 2016).

Moreover, among the respondents there are countrymen, who turned to “market relations” (15.4 %). They chose the answer “we neither distribute, nor consume ourselves/sell”.

Understanding of healthy eating by the respondents

When developing standards for proper diet, nutritionists start from the idea of forming the foundations of the culture of health. There is a number of research institutions, for example, “Federal Research Centre of Nutrition and Biotechnology”, which is the oldest in the academic environment, the Institute of Nutrition of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, research is carried out by individual creative groups, thematic scientific events are held, the results of which are widely replicated in the media.

For example, the Institute of Age Physiology of the Russian Academy of Education developed a programme of the foundations of the healthy lifestyle, which since 1999 has been introduced in Russian schools in the form of an educational project entitled “A Conversation on Healthy

Eating”, in which 56 regions of the country participated in 2016 (Makeyeva, 2016).

Such information cannot but influence the opinion of the population about healthy eating. As can be seen from the data given in Table 5, the majority of the surveyed northerners are not ready to give up fats of animal origin, because it was noted by local researchers that the physiology of the northern person’s metabolism itself is predisposed to them (Krivoshapkin, Sivtseva et al., 2015).

Of course, the modern schedule of eating is quite diverse, among rural residents there is also a common mode, for example, when not the whole family can gather at the dinner table. Judging by the data obtained, usually a little more than a third of the respondents (36.1 %) gather together at the dinner table, some members of the families of the countrymen interviewed dine at work (22.6 %) and almost the same proportion

Table 5. Understanding of healthy eating by the respondents, in %

Healthy eating means:	Total	District (ulus)					
		Mirninsky	Namsky	Oimyakonsky	Suntarsky	Tomponsky	Ust-Aldansky
Three meals a day, lunch and dinner should include hot dishes	47.6	54.2	39.5	70.4	40.7	44.4	45.5
Refusal to eat animal fats, butter, smoked products, etc.	16.7	11.1	19.5	26.5	15.1	20.4	13.6
Eating more vegetables, fruits, refusal to eat sweets and salty products	40.8	41.2	49.0	36.7	41.1	18.5	36.4
Refusal to eat dry food, Doshirak, potato crisps, etc.	37.1	42.6	42.0	31.6	31.8	37.0	31.8
Refusal to eat fast food, etc.	24.6	28.7	28.0	10.2	26.4	7.4	31.8
Separate nutrition	11.7	13.9	14.5	8.2	10.9	9.3	4.5
Balanced diet, eating “small portions of everything, not refusing any products	27.2	25.0	34.0	11.2	31.4	18.5	29.5
Eating what the organism demands, i.e. “listen to your body”	13.3	11.6	14.5	9.2	15.9	11.1	13.6
Other	0.1	0.5	-	-	-	-	-
No answer	3.4	2.8	3.0	2.0	4.3	-	11.4

Table 6. Assessment by respondents of their own eating practice, in %

Assessment	Total	District (ulus)					
		Mirninsky	Namsky	Oimyakonsky	Suntarsky	Tomponsky	Ust-Aldansky
Yes, I eat a healthy diet	24.6	23.6	15.5	53.1	16.3	55.6	18.2
I not always stick to the standards of healthy eating, but generally yes	50.9	53.2	55.5	32.7	53.1	40.7	59.1
No, I eat an unhealthy diet. I would love to, but I don't have such an opportunity	22.2	21.8	27.0	12.2	26.7	1.9	22.7
Did not answer	2.3	1.4	2.0	2.0	3.9	1.9	-

of respondents “as it happens, sometimes we have dinner together, sometimes somebody eats earlier, somebody later” (20.5 %).

In modern conditions of the intensive rhythm of life, adherence to special diets, separate meals, apparently, have not found wide distribution among respondents, though the situation is saved by semi-finished products, fast foods, etc., notwithstanding mixed feelings in this regard. However, it is not only the rhythm of life that compels us to consume semi-finished products or fast food, but also the factor that the prices for them are not comparable to natural food that not everyone can afford (Smirnova, 2017).

Let us see if understanding of healthy eating corresponds to the way the respondents eat in their everyday life (see Table 6).

Therefore, most respondents consider that they eat a healthy diet, though the residents of the Namsky and Suntarsky uluses turned out to be more critical.

Conclusion

There are products “produced and obtained” by family members of respondents in rural areas, and this indicates that they mainly eat

fresh natural products. Though, depending on the season of the year, due to objective reasons connected with natural and climatic conditions. Unfortunately, the obtained data cannot be compared with the previous period, while such data is unavailable;

There is a tendency to eat lunch not at home, which brings the respondents-countrymen closer to improvisation with their cooking and tasting experience, symbolic involvement into global world, standardization, etc.

Symbolic inclusion into global standards, unification of “medicalization” (taking into account ideas about physiological norm) of eating practices affects the opinion of the northerners regarding healthy eating. Though it is obvious that the northerners need more high-calorie food, especially in winter.

Apparently, it cannot be said that radical transformations take place in the structure of nutrition practices, diet and eating habits. In any case, the pace of change is not so rapid in rural areas, than in urban conditions. This pace can be influenced by the material standard of living of the population, the level of development of public catering infrastructure, entrepreneurial initiatives, etc.

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Трансформация традиционной культуры питания сельских жителей Якутии: снижение потребления натуральных продуктов

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Известно, что в сельской местности население находится ближе к земле, природе, больше и непосредственно взаимодействует с ними, занимаясь земледелием, скотоводством, собирательством, охотой и рыбалкой. Эти виды занятий являются дополнительным подспорьем в «добыче» натуральных продуктов питания. Однако, с одной стороны, массово распространя-

ются урбанизированные стили жизни, которые не могут не влиять также на сельчан. С другой – интенсивность ритма жизни, правовое ограничение сроков и видов охоты и рыбалки, увеличение разнообразия увлечений, занятий, интересов самих сельчан не могут не сказаться на сокращении числа тех, кто не расстается с традиционным занятием своих предков. Все это сказывается и на вкусах сельчан, которые приобщаются к потреблению продуктов питания, перерабатываемых в промышленных масштабах.

Ключевые слова: скотоводство, огородничество, охота, рыбалка, собирательство, продукты питания, гостинцы, традиционные занятия, подсобное хозяйство, правильное питание.

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Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология.
