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The food culture of the Siberian peoples: a reference model

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The characteristics of the food culture of the peoples living in the geographically isolated Siberia and its neighboring areas are closely associated with its mostly hostile habitat, interpreted in the light of their shamanic system of beliefs which for millennia has guided the behaviour of their everyday life (Hoppál, 2000, p. 49).

Siberian shamanism is a veritable “grammar of mind and body” (Pentikäinen, 1998, pp. 49-58), which is reflected in every code of culture, including diet. According to this vision of the world, reality has a dual aspect, the visible and the invisible: every being in the world and every phenomenon of nature has an animated “force”, an energy, which is the so-called “double”, subjected to repeated metamorphoses, in endless continuity. From this it follows that the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms are regarded as differentiated only from the point of view of external appearance, because their components are equipped with an invisible “double”, having a more or less great force, which, in many respects, unites them. In particular, many animals are believed to have superior qualities to those of man. It is sufficient to think, in this regard, of the ability of birds to fly or of the exceptional sight and hearing of bears. Because, according to animistic concepts, man’s relationship with food and drink is one of the energies of plants and animals, the energy of food and beverages, conceived as a “soul”, arouses special consideration and respect.

Shamanism is perfectly suited to the primary needs of populations accustomed to living in close dependence on nature: in order to safeguard their need for sustenance, they can not afford to damage it in any way. Indeed, they must preserve the balance of forces in their habitat, and to do this, they must try to know more and more about the secrets of nature.

This aspect of shamanism would be sufficient to disprove the prejudices of those who, with a wrong view that has ancient roots,¹ sometimes still now consider it a set of

¹ It is sufficient to think, for example, of the fantastic “myths” about distant and monstrous peoples of the collection *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (circa 230-240 AD), widely read in the Middle Ages, by the Roman writer Gaius Julius Solinus, who, in turn, went back to the *Naturalis Historia* (77 AD) of Pliny the Elder’s and the *De chorographia* (44 AD) of Pomponius Mela, the oldest Latin geography which has come down to us. Not even the Finno-Ugric and Siberian peoples were immune from this process of

beliefs which are “primitive” in the negative sense of the term, rather than in the correct sense of the “original”. In fact, shamanic traditions are part of a system of beliefs deeply motivated from the point of view of intellectual elaboration. They remind us, among other things, of the teachings of the philosophers and writers of the ancient classical world: in particular, the need to know nature in order to live in accordance with it, constantly supported by the Siberian peoples, is a notion which was strongly advocated, for example, by the Stoics and Cicero, who in *De legibus* came to consider the supreme good “naturam sequi et eius quasi lege vivere” (I, 21, 56) (“to follow nature and live as if by its law”).

In shamanism the close connection between ethics and cosmology is evident and is still present in our day in Siberia, where, now as before, animism applied to nature determines an enviable respect for the environment. Industrialized societies show a great interest in this shamanic “eco-animism” (Hoppál, 2002, p. 28), which is of great relevance, and, among other things, influences the relationship between man and his diet.

The ancient origin of the still sustainable Siberian food culture is attested by scholarly research on the prehistory and more distant history of the Uralic peoples.

During the proto-Uralic era (lasting up to the fourth millennium BC), the ancestors of the Finno-Ugrians and Samoyeds, who were still living together, practising fishing, especially in the summer, and hunting all year round, ate what was produced by forests and waterways, as can be deduced from linguistic factors (Corradi Musi, 1980, p. 2). Hungarian and Finnish words dating back to that ancient time bear witness to this; among them there are, for example: Hungarian *nyúl* “hare”, *róka* “fox”, *lúd* “goose”, *fogoly* “partridge”, *nyíl* “bow”, *hal* “fish”, *fürt* “cluster” and *hagyma* “bulb”; Finnish *orava* “squirrel” and *onki* “hook”. The following words also are related with the diet of that era: Hungarian *főz* “to cook” and Finnish *tuli* “fire” (Hajdú, 1992, pp. 258-259).

During the proto-Finno-Ugric era, which began when the forefathers of the Samoyeds were separated from those of the Finno-Ugrians, which allegedly lasted until 2500 BC, their diet was still based on hunting, fishing and the gathering of the wild products of the earth. For example, originally proto-Finno-Ugric terms are: Hungarian *méz* “honey” and archaic Hungarian *lé* “soup”. The word *vaj*, which in current Hungarian means “butter”, meant the “fat” obtained by boiling fish, as in archaic Hungarian (Hajdú, 1992,

denigration. The missionaries, traders and travelers who over the centuries ventured among them devalued their customs, not with a real awareness, but following the precepts of their society and related political and religious institutions.

p. 259). The names of pets as yet did not exist, with the exception of the Finnish *uuhi* “sheep” (Hajdú, 1992, pp. 259-260). Shamanic animism was already widely shared by the peoples of Siberia. The following items date back to that era: Finnish *noita* “shaman”, Hungarian *lélek* “soul” and *révül* “to go into a trance”, a verb which could also be of proto-Uralic origin (Hajdú, 1992, p. 260).

Agriculture began to be practised rather later, probably during the third millennium BC: words of proto-Uralic or proto-Finno-Ugric origin were not found in its terminology (Hajdú, 1992, p. 260). With the development of agriculture and livestock, cultivated cereals, new types of meat including beef and cheese and butter were introduced into the diet. But these two activities did not change the original character of the diet to a considerable extent.

Even today, the Siberian peoples continue to eat local vegetable and animal products. They cultivate small plots of land and raise animals on a small scale, without the use of chemical substances, fertilizers or chemical feeds which the industrialized world abuses. The seasonal collection of products is an important event for every family and village, and is experienced by everyone with joyful participation, in order to give thanks to the productive forces of the earth.

Their cuisine is not very elaborate and is very natural: the key ingredients are made from local aromatic herbs. Generally, their bread and desserts, made with barley, oats, rye, and, more rarely, wheat flour, do not contain yeast. The methods of conservation of meat and fish consist in a simple process of salting and drying or smoking (in special rooms, which remind us of *savupirrti* “smoky room” of Finnish tradition). In ritual festivities shamanic symbolism of food and traditional drinks is still evident.

The traditional diet, deeply rooted in the culture of the peoples of Siberia, is a precious testimony of their origins and the deep sense of belonging to their land understood as “alma mater”. In this regard, it is interesting to note that even in the cuisine of peoples who speak a Finno-Ugric language who had long moved away from the Urals and had settled in Europe, such as Hungarians, Finns and Estonians, despite the influence of the different foreign neighboring peoples, there is a certain predilection for traditional food, although not always with the due awareness. Even today, fillet of reindeer in Finland is considered a delicacy. In Hungary game is still appreciated and is a popular food even among the ethnic groups of Hungarian language of Transylvania (they cook here, for example, according to several traditional ways, such as hare in the *székelyi* manner).

Although the Hungarians no longer live in their original land, they continue in the Carpathian Basin to give priority to typical natural products of the soil, such as strong and sweet chili, the famous paprika.

There are still also in Europe some Finno-Ugric ethnic groups which in their ritual festivities cook traditional foods and distribute food to the participants according to the ancient mode. For example, as I have personally seen, on the occasion of ritual dances in honour of the sun, the Setu of Estonia consume traditional meals with the collective participation of the villagers, who receive their portion from the oldest person in the community.

However, among the Finno-Ugric peoples of today the desire for a return to their origins is felt. Not surprisingly, in Finland the so-called Paleolithic diet, which includes the seasonal foods of hunters, fishers and gatherers is acquiring success. The foods recommended by the diet are: fish, meat, such as aquatic birds, eggs, vegetables (including turnips, mushrooms, seeds, nettles), and berries. Neither sugary foods nor foods containing gluten and lactose are included in the diet. We know, however, that the latter two substances were present in Paleolithic nutrition. Paleolithic man, although he did not practise agriculture, could collect a greater variety of plants, including wild cereals, with which probably he made soups and various types of flour, as was the case in other areas of Eurasia (Revedin, 2013). In addition, he drank the milk of wild animals. This nostalgia for their origins on the part of the Finno-Ugric peoples is also felt in the artistic, literary and philosophical fields. It is enough to think, for example, of ethno-futurism, particularly affirmed not only in Finland and Estonia, but also among the Maris (or Cheremis) of the central Volga and the Udmurts (or Votyaks) of the areas between the basins of the Kama and Vyatka. Among some artists of post-Soviet Russia a particular interest in the ethnographic data of Siberian peoples is also evident: this is inherited from the early twentieth century avant-garde and is combined with the recovery of tradition as an expression of cultural identity.²

Returning to the Siberian shamanic belief, the consumption of food and drink is often accompanied by gestures and ritual prayers. This is because food is considered “sacred” in the etymological and ambivalent sense of the term, that is holy and cursed at the same time: it nourishes man, but deprives the animal and vegetal world of its goods. On the one hand, man appreciates and values the energy that he acquires through food, which is

² For more details, see: Timergazeev – Vishnyakova, 2009; Bowlt – Mislér – Petrova, 2013.

metamorphosed into as much energy for himself, on the other hand, he is careful not to cause an imbalance in nature and not to offend the spirit protecting the species to which what he is eating belongs. It is this respect for nature spirits, taught by his fathers, which determines respect for nature and its products.

Before each meal, the populations of Siberia pay homage to Mother Earth, so that she does not tire of giving them the necessary support, and also to the guardian spirits of the food which they are going to enjoy, in order that they may continue to be well-disposed towards them. These spirits are called “Lords” of the animals or vegetables responsible for the conservation of each species. Many animals are considered totem; for this reason, the consumption of their meat requires a special ritual and observance of specific taboos. This is the case, for example, of the bear,³ reindeer,⁴ birds or fish.⁵

In the pre-Christian era there was a mythology of the Forest, well represented in the depictions of bears, elks and aquatic birds, drawn by ancient artists on the rocks of the Urals and Karelia, and in the prehistoric depictions of elk heads incised on mammoth tusks or wood, and of heads of aquatic birds incised on the handles of knives and wooden spoons (Limerov, 2007, p. 29 and p. 178, fig. 1). In this regard, the medieval metal plaques which represent the mythical ancestors of the Komi,⁶ called *Ćud'*, with zoomorphic forms (Limerov, 2007, pp. 29-37), attesting to the belief in the descent of man from animal totems (Limerov, 2007, pp. 178, 180, 184, figs. 2, 3, 6, 7, 12), are very interesting.

The head of the totemic animal is rigorously tabooed, because, like that of the human being, it is considered the seat of the “double” which will be reincarnated: it is

³ The Ob-Ugric bear songs well reflect the importance attached to this totem; see, in this regard, Munkácsi, 1893; Kannisto, 1958. According to the ancient myths, the bear, the son of the “God of Heaven”, became an ancestor of man, having descended to earth from the constellation Ursa Major (Corradi Musi, 2008, pp. 29-30), which, viewed from a certain angle, seems to reproduce the shape of a bear without a head (Pentikäinen, 2007, p. 40). As the rituals of the Ob-Ugric bear festivities show, according to their beliefs, the spirit of the killed bear returned to its origins in the sky to be reincarnated on earth in a continuous cycle (Pentikäinen, 2007, p. 38).

⁴ Even the reindeer is, like the bear, set in a mythological connection with the sky, specifically with the constellations of Perseus and Cassiopeia (Pentikäinen, 2007, p. 41). Totemism of the cervids made its mark in the origin myth of the Hungarians, that of the miraculous stag which led the two hunters Hunor and Magor, ancestors of the Magyars, to their new homeland (Corradi Musi, 2008, pp. 32-33).

⁵ Totemism of birds is well explained in the shamanic beliefs according to which the souls of the dead assume the features of birds to travel the Milky Way, named “Way of Birds”, and reach the afterlife, where they wait, on the “tree of world”, the moment for their reincarnation. According to the tradition of the Voguls (Ob-Ugric population), the soul is transformed first into a bird, then into a fish to cross over the water which separates the world of the living from that of the dead (Corradi Musi, 2008, pp. 33 - 34). According to the legends connected with the imagination of fishermen, the souls of the dead are metamorphosed into fish, in order to swim along the “river of the world” to the afterlife.

⁶ The Komi (or Zyrians) inhabit the areas of the rivers Vychegda, Mezen' and Pechora.

traditionally placed on a separate plate and touching it is forbidden. Often, it is adorned with red ribbons/wires placed near red colored food, with auspicious value for rebirth.⁷

With rare exceptions,⁸ it is forbidden to eat horse meat: the taboo stems from the maximum respect for this legendary animal which in the past was the most frequent means of transport and a totemic guide in the movements across the steppes, symbolically associated with the sun (especially if it was white in color).

All drinks, from milk to tea or brandy, are placed in a symbolic relationship with water, the primary element of regeneration. In this regard, the myth of the source of the “water of life”, located at the foot of the “world tree”, which according to the Buryats and Yakuts⁹ was even able to raise the dead (Heissig, 1982, p. 304), is significant. The favourite drink is beer, which was once prepared in the bathroom (for the Finns, the *sauna*),¹⁰ using malt, rye, barley and even turnips, and of course hops, a plant with magical properties, which enhances the sacredness of the drink, well emphasized, for example, in the Finnish *Vanha Kalevala* (Old *Kalevala*). In the song on the origin of beer (XIII, vv. 91-347), in the first edition of the epic poem (published in 1835), the search for the missing component for its fermentation reveals a vision of the world “that involves the sacred forces of the heaven, the forest and the afterlife” (Loikala, 2013, p. 74): Osmotar finds this component with the help of animals (squirrel, fox, marten) (Loikala, 2013, pp. 74-80).

The fact that the traditional diet is considered to be closely related to the cultural identity of the clan has an explicit confirmation in the ancient Eurasian belief according to which to eat the food of a foreigner amounted to becoming a member of his community. For this reason it was forbidden to eat the food intended for the deceased (Corradi Musi, 2008, p. 99).

The meal is still deemed an important and “magic” moment, in which food and drink are divided among family members, without any waste.

The hearth on which the food is cooked is sacred and tabooed, because men need to preserve the goodwill of the feminine spirit of fire, so that it continues to give them its

⁷ In the lands of the central Volga, for example, Mordvinians, who speak a Finno-Ugric language, for Christmas dinner, made a soup with pork, but the head, cooked separately, was placed on a large plate, with a dyed red egg and red wires for a beard (Barna, 1879, p. 45).

⁸ The Cheremis, for example, eat horse meat and consider it as the favourite meat of the gods.

⁹ Yakuts, speaking a Turkic language, live in North Eastern Siberia and Buryats, speaking an Altaic language, live in the territory between Lake Baikal and the Mongolian border.

¹⁰ It was in the bathroom, the sacredness of which is related to the symbolic value of water as a source of life, that, in the past on the marriage day, brides were dressed, childbirth took place, illnesses were cured and the dead commemorated.

heavenly power of creation. Its location is connected with the center of the world, where the mythical archetypal tree, the element of union of the three parts of the universe (heaven, earth, underworld), stands. It is no coincidence that the worship of ancestors is practised, usually, near the hearth, which is also a symbol of family unity (in some cases opposed to the forest, kingdom of animals and spirits).

Food and drink manifest their sacred significance especially in ritual offerings or sacrifices to the gods or the spirits of the ancestors, made by single families or entire communities, with the presence or absence of the shaman. The elder of the family or clan or the shaman directs these ceremonies which take place in a sacred site, the microcosmic projection of the center of the world, and require the presence of purifying water and living fire, “vehicles” of passage into the “other”-world.

Even among the Chermis, who from the tenth or eleventh century AD abandoned the practice of real shamanism because of external influences (first of all that of the Chuvash, speaking a Turkic language), the exercise of a type of paganism, in the Latin sense of *paganus*, i.e. of the country, remained active. This favoured, as a way of effective and direct communication with the spirits of the “other”-reality, the offering ceremonies typical of shamanic rituals. I was able to verify the survival of this connection by attending, in the Morki region, a ritual offering of food, on top of the “High Mountain” (*K'uksh'nut*), to the homonymous god. The first *kart*¹¹ in the nation, aided by another *kart*, led the ceremony. The food, purified with water, was cooked in two typical pans on two living fires in the middle of a “sacred grove”, emblem of the center of the world. The ceremony was concluded with a visit by the participants to the sacred spring just below them. The reference to original shamanic conceptions was very evident, among other things, in the choice of the place and in the symbolism of the elements used, i.e. water and fire, which, as in the shamanic context, are thought to facilitate contact with the divine invisible forces.

If people still offer their food and drinks to the gods, it means that food and beverages are deemed worthy of the gods, as a genuine product of nature and its energies, which man does not adulterate. And this is a lesson for the so-called advanced societies, which are in the throes of serious problems caused by the sophistication of food and drinks, which does not spare even fruits and vegetables. I am reminded, in this regard, of the significant photographic series “Time slowed down” by Nino Migliori (Bologna,

¹¹ The *kart*, although like the shaman, an experienced professional in sacred tradition and able to put himself in touch with the spirits, is considered different from the shaman because he never resorts to the techniques of ecstasy and his attention is mainly directed to the earth instead of the sky.

1926-), one of the great masters of Italian photography, with “portraits” of fruits and vegetables encased in glass jars, to demonstrate how nature with its colours may be the most valuable form of art to be guarded with the greatest care.

In the shamanic area, the beneficial properties of some basic elements of nutrition found clear expression in the therapies of alternative medicine. The “natural” drugs have an extraordinary energetic potential, assigned to them by their guardian spirits, with whom the native healers know how to communicate to ask during ritual seances for necessary information for the case to be treated.

The giving to the sick of tonic or medicinal plants, including herbs and cereals, is frequent; it is done in several ways: from inhalation to oral ingestion, from application through massage to the use in bath water of the juice of leaves.

Every people has its favourite healing plants.¹² The medicines of animal origin are also widely used;¹³ many memories of these are still preserved in the tradition of the Finno-Ugrians situated in Europe.¹⁴ In cases of serious illness the help of the shaman, “one who knows” par excellence, is necessary; illuminated by the spirits, he is able to find the appropriate therapy to achieve healing.¹⁵

The healing systems of medicine men confirm the strong magic link between health and the energies of the body, which are imagined as spirits of plants and animals. On their drums the archetypal tree (*axis mundi*), or rows of trees and sacred animals, with a “double” which helps to cure diseases, are frequently drawn. Even the helping spirits of shamans are zoomorphic: these are totemic animals or animals which had a fundamental role in the myths of creation or myths of another kind.

¹² For example, according to the ancient tradition of the Tungus Even, speaking an Altaic language, settled in Eastern Siberia, infusions of fern (*oir*) are toning medicines, while the poplar buds (*sul*) are used as painkillers for diseases of the stomach and liver (Alekseev, 1998, p. 191). According to the beliefs of the Mordvinians millet, which, due to its ease of reproduction, enjoys the sympathy of the mother goddess *Ańge-pat’aj*, has strong healing powers.

¹³ In the magic medicine of Even, for example, the outer parts of the horns of young reindeers, cooked on the fire, are an excellent reconstituent remedy (Alekseev, 1998, p. 191). The horns are symbolically associated with rebirth for their annual molting, which generally occurs in males, and for their branched form which correlates these with the “cosmic tree”, on which the sun perpetually shines.

¹⁴ Lappish (or Sami) popular beliefs attribute to frogs, tabooed animals about which it is forbidden to be ironic (Turi, 1991, pp. 137-139), the ability to heal sore throat and skin irritation. The connection of the frog with the conception of *renovatio* is due to the change in shape which it undergoes in its development to become adult. Significant, in this regard, is the fact that in Lapland the shaman helped his trance by hammering on the anvil a bronze snake and frog (Corradi Musi, 1997, pp. 60-61). According to Finnish-Karelian and Sami traditions, parts of the body of the dead bear which retain the “strength” (*väki*) of this animal have exceptional healing powers (Pentikäinen, 2007, p. 121); for example, its claws contrast the pain of childbirth and the skin on the palms of its feet, heated and pressed, serve as an alleviation, to be applied on the afflicted parts of the human body.

¹⁵ It is no coincidence that in the popular tradition of the Finns he is called *tietäjä* “wise-magician” instead of *noita* “shaman”.

On certain occasions the shaman, going into a trance, uses the so-called “power plants”. Archaeological finds show that in Eurasia, as early as the Paleolithic period, to induce trance these plants, so-called “entheogenic” (= “which give birth to the divine within” a person) (Hoffman – Ruck, 2004, pp. 111, 113), were used. With regard to Siberia, where shamans still resort to the ingestion of *Amanita muscaria*,¹⁶ we have linguistic evidence of inebriation by this fungus which dates back to ancient times, at least 7000 years ago (Wasson – Kramrisch – Ott – Ruck, 1986). The *Amanita muscaria* is used by the shaman as a “teacher plant”, enabling him to learn in trance inaccessible, extraordinary and telepathic information. It is reputed by the shaman to be the most powerful medicine, elevated to the level of a sacred panacea.¹⁷ Without doubt, the shamans with their traditional and alternative medicine can solve various conditions of disease which more rigorous scientific methods of medicine do not heal.¹⁸ For this reason, where the practice of shamanism is still in use, doctors do not hesitate to seek the assistance of shamans.

In the shamanic context, therefore, the products of nutrition are considered able not only to maintain health in man, but also to gratify the gods and heal the sick, thanks to their properties of regeneration which are of paramount importance. The rituals linked with their use have a significant metaphorical value: they help man, conscious of being a creature of energy, to keep strong the commitment made to nature, i.e. to respect its energies.

Instead, man who lives in industrialized societies, despite the calls of scientists, inexorably impoverishes the energy on earth and in the cosmos, because he does not pay due attention to its irreplaceable function. Likewise, he does not care to safeguard and develop within himself his energetic potential and, without realizing it, disperses it, breaking it down and channeling it into daily routines, which inhibit any possibility of growth (Borgatti, 2013, p. 199).

¹⁶ Even the gods were inebriated by this fungus, as is apparent, inter alia, by a song which the Voguls (Finno-Ugric people) addressed to the psychopompos *Mir-susnē-hum* “World-Surveyor-Man”: cf. Sadovszky – Hoppál, 1995, p. 39.

¹⁷ In this respect, the *Amanita muscaria* recalls the soma of the Vedic religion, the plant with inebriating juice, with origins dating back to the Indo-Iranian period, called *amryta*, i.e. the “drink of immortality” (cf. *Rig-Veda*, VIII, 48. 3; Rozwadowski – Koško, 2002, pp. 55-60) or the “herb of immortality” of Mesopotamia, or even the Chinese *ling chih*, the “mushroom of immortality” (Hoffman – Ruck, 2004, p. 116).

¹⁸ This is the case, for example, of those problems and disorders not diagnosed, which often accompany a state of disease, the persistence of which does not allow complete healing (Maskarinec, 2004, pp. 137-142).

In societies of shamanic culture man does not feel at the center of the universe, but considers himself as one of the many animated beings of the cosmos. As a consequence, he has respect for plants, animals, objects, foods, and so on, which he regards not as his inferiors but as his equals (Borgatti, 2013, p. 197). His conception of history as an expression of the continuous flow, in a horizontal direction, of the original culture in constant renewal (Corradi Musi, 2007, p. 11), brings him to honour the ancestors who preceded him and think of future generations. His flexible worldview, which bases its coherence on the complementarity of oppositions (Hoppál, 2002, p. 27), is a unitary vision of energetic collectivity, which can not but cause him to live in a perspective of sustainability, also with regard to his nutrition.

His food culture, consciously based on genuine traditional products, today can be a useful reference model for those who live in industrialized societies eating too sophisticated foods which have lost their energetic potential. If it is true that people living in Siberia are motivated by the need to enhance the products of nature which allow them to survive, it is equally true that man at the global level is now put in serious problems by environmental pollution, and has an extreme need to recover as soon as possible the proper respect for nature and its products. The philosophy of life inherent in the shamanic system of beliefs, widely shared today in Siberia also by young people, may suggest to those who live in so-called advanced societies ethical behaviour now more than ever necessary to protect the environment, food products and consequently human health.

Unfortunately, the globalized food trade, hand in hand with uncontrolled industrialization, is fundamentally based on profit, mostly obtained through the adulteration of food and beverages, and not the protection of the taste/flavour of traditional food products.

By now, in industrialized societies man, for health reasons, feels the need for a return to the traditional food culture of his homeland, and, possibly, also that of other peoples. In fact, the biodiversity which determines various types of nutrition is a rich source of development for the energetic potential of man, which globalized trade can easily help to know and appreciate. It would be necessary to indicate on the packaging of typical products on sale, to ensure their authenticity, not only the company which has subjected them to specific treatments, but also the origin of their constituent elements. In this way, the spread of traditional foods would assume the character of a comprehensive cultural operation, stimulating curiosity towards producing countries, their uses and customs. At

the same time, the enhancement of traditional cuisine would become a solid source of development for today's food trade.

On the other hand, as shamanism teaches, knowledge of the phenomena and the elements of nature, including food and beverages, means knowing their origins.

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