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## BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POLISH AND CHINESE FOOD CULTURE

### Introduction

Polish and Chinese cuisine is one of many beautiful flowers in the cultural gardens of both countries. The following article concentrates on existing differences between Polish and Chinese food culture and excavates some cultural, sociological and even spiritual values hidden under tradition of preparing food and drinks.

### The concept of eating

During five thousand years of Chinese civilization Chinese food culture has experienced very turbulent history.

According to Chinese tradition, in ancient times (about 50.000 years ago) a man named Suireshi for the first time invented the method to make fire by friction of a stick and by using a flint. From that time the ancient Chinese people have entered the era of cooked food. The Chinese cuisine history has begun. After the Shennongs<sup>1</sup> discovery of the technique of producing pottery, the Chinese for the first time started using utensils and vessels. Fermented food became real. In times of Yellow Emperor<sup>2</sup> first stoves made people use the method of rapid cooking, which is a great progress in the history of Chinese cuisine. In the period of Zhou and Qin dynasty the diet based on cereals and vegetables was established. The intensive development of trading along the Silk Road during the Han dynasty brought many different new kinds of vegetables and fruits from the West. Han dynasty period was actually a new era in Chinese cuisine. The Western Han Dynasty king of Huainan—Liu An has invented tofu, known as a cheese of the East, which has

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<sup>1</sup> Shennong (神农), whose name literally means “Divine Farmer” was a legendary ruler of China and culture hero. Shennong has been thought to have taught the ancient Chinese not only their practices of agriculture, but also the use of herbal drugs.

<sup>2</sup> The Yellow Emperor or Huangdi, is one of the legendary Chinese sovereigns and culture heroes. According to the tradition Huangdi reigned from 2697 to 2597 or 2698 to 2598 BC.

made enormous changes in Chinese people's diet. In the golden age of the Tang and Song dynasty the food culture has reached its highest level. In Northern Song period China's first cookbook has been written. In times of Ming and Qing dynasty, under the influence of Mongolians, Manchus and other ethnic minorities, food culture in China once again has achieved its supreme quality. The best example from that times is the traditional feast of 108 different dishes during 6 meals in 3 days.

Such a powerful history of food culture created an unique diet concept, that affects Chinese society to these days.

In The Book of Rites Confucius says: “**飲食男女，人之大欲存焉。**” which means “Food, drinks, men and women are great human desires.” He also says: “**食色性也。**” that means that eating and sex are inseparable parts of human nature. The Chinese also have a saying “Food means heaven for people”. It means that food is the most important thing in people's life.

The examples given above can prove the significance of food culture in China. For thousands of years, no matter what Chinese people did, eating was indispensable, it could have been even a solution for many kinds of problems. We can even say that traditional concept of eating has affected few thousand years of history.

In comparison, food in Poland or in other parts of Europe is not that important. People tend to pay more attention to practical and physical functions of eating. It seems that food is perceived firstly as nutrients necessary for human body to conduct all regular life activities. Lin Yujia, a Chinese great writer said: “Unlike Chinese, Westerners, British and American see eating as an injection of a biological fuel for human body-machine. As long as food ensures that the machine can work on its regular terms, as long as the body stays healthy and strong enough to resist bacteria and the attacks of diseases, other aspects are insignificant.”

Most Poles I have met indeed confirm this point of view. The general attitude of Poles is that food is not the most important thing in life. So what to eat, how to eat, when to eat, where to eat are not as significant matters as in China. This feature of character is marked even more strongly in Poland than in other European countries. For example, according to my research, Polish families are not able to eat dinner together every day, the dinner time is not fixed and what is the most unthinkable thing for the Chinese, many schools and companies do not give their students and workers at least one-hour break for lunch. Needless to say that a lunch does not have a fixed time either. In China people eat **午饭** which means “a noon meal” and it is very clear for everybody when it is supposed to be eaten.

In China prohibiting large gatherings in the streets, parades, strikes and then enforcing this ban is easy, however trying to restrict people to eat at fixed hours seems to be impossible thing to do.

## Taste and nutrition

From ancient times Chinese cuisine have very clear evaluation criteria of the quality of dishes. These criteria are: color, smell, taste and shape. The most attention is paid to the taste because it is regarded as a soul of a dish. “The harmony of the taste. The whole Chinese cooking art is based on blending the variety of tastes together. Even though the Chinese admit that the natural juices of ingredients are the most important, in comparison to people from the west, they are definitely the masters of putting different tastes together.”

Chinese people use all five flavors. Sour, sweet, bitter, spicy and salty give them the opportunity to fully express their craftsmanship and artistry in putting them together. From eating to maintain the basic functions of human body, Chinese have brought food to a higher level. It became an enjoyment of life. Apparently, in this case there is a huge difference in understanding of the art of cooking between the Chinese and the Poles.

Because of tireless seeking of a perfect taste, the map of flavors has been formed in China. According to this pattern the South is sweet, the North is salty, the East is spicy and the West is sour. On these basis different styles of cooking have taken shape. Cantonese, Sichuan, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Hunan and Anhui cuisines represent eight great styles of preparing food in China. Cantonese cuisine emphasizes the original taste of products. In Sichuan most dishes are spicy and numbing (Sichuanese peppercorn). Shandong food is particularly fresh and salty, while Jiangsu dishes tend to be sweet with a distinct flavor of Yellow wine. In Zhejiang the fresh and Yellow wine taste is enriched with the flavor of lard. The Fujian cuisine is dominated by sweet and sour dishes with addition of spicy chili. Dishes from Hunan are famous for its piquancy, while dishes from Anhui tend to be very salty. Apart from eight most well-known cooking styles there are more famed cuisines like North-East style, Beijing style or halal cuisine and many more.

Most of Poles and other Europeans see food mainly as nourishment. Eating is a way to provide nutrients for the body and the enjoyment does not occupy such an important place in the eating process. That is why Poles do not chase excessively the taste of food and the so called 口感 – “feeling in mouth”. In Europe the practical part of eating seems to be the most important.

The described above difference determines a distinct attitude towards food and a big difference in terms of spending money and time on food. Chinese people always eat three meals a day in a relatively fixed time. Besides those three meals, they generally do not have a habit of eating snacks, having a cup of tea or coffee during working hours.

The Chinese eat breakfast around 6.30–7.00 am, lunch around 12.00–01.30 pm, dinner around 7.00 pm. Normally at dinner everybody can finally relax and enjoy

spending time together, so dinner usually takes more than one hour, sometimes even two or three hours. Dinner in general is a social event that is celebrated together with family, friends or colleagues.

When it comes to money spent on food, Chinese can be truly or even exaggeratedly generous. As far as the food ends in their stomachs, it is worth any sum of money. One of my Polish friends, who works as a Chinese interpreter, went to China with a Polish delegation of 5 people in 2010. In the first evening Chinese hosts threw a polite dinner party in a restaurant. While paying the bill, my friend noticed that the meal cost 40.000 RBM which is about 20.000 zł. My friend told me that such an incredible sum of money would have never been spent in Poland.

## Food products

The Chinese as a nation are definitely good at eating. No matter if these are refined dainties from the distant lands or the most ordinary cereals, or even insects and reptiles, on Chinese table, they can all become a delicacy. The vast territory of China from the South to the North and from the West to the East stretches for more than 5200 km. The coastline is about 18.000 km long. Various climates and terrain conditions have created very rich natural resources. This abundance of a land brought Chinese taste buds the joy of endless number of ingredients. Matteo Ricci said: "The north and south of the country has a vast number of things in the field, so you can rest assured by this assertion: no other place in the world within the scope of a single country can be found, where there are so many species of flora and fauna." Traditionally rice is a staple of diet in southern China, while the most common grain in the North is wheat. However, nowadays this difference is gradually decreasing. In China almost all rice grains are milled and processed into white rice. In some places in the South people use white rice to make flour and continue to process it into rice noodles. Wheat is also milled and made into white flour. Chinese use flour to make *mantou*, which is a kind of steamed bun, noodles or pasta, pancakes, dumplings or steamed bread-like filled bun called *baozi*.

Polish people are used to eat mainly potatoes and wheat but they also consume other cereals. Even though people from the west part of Poland eat slightly more potatoes than others, there is no clear difference between the South and the North or the East and the West of a country. Wheat, barley, rye, oat and buckwheat are processed into bread, pasta, noodles, dumplings and steamed buns or cooked and eaten in the unprocessed form.

There is also a difference between the perception of staple and non-staple food. For Chinese there is a well-defined distinction – products made of rice and flour are definitely staple food, everything else, like meat, eggs and vegetables, are not. A com-

plete meal consists of both kinds of products. For the Polish those boundaries are rather vague. It is worth mentioning that in China potatoes are nothing but vegetable, while in Poland it is one of main staple food. So, if a Chinese goes to a Polish restaurant and has a plate of potatoes with pork, he will probably consider this meal to be incomplete, because no staple food means no meal. In comparison almost every Pole would be satisfied, cause this combination is one of the most typical Polish meals you can get.

There is much wider choice of vegetables and fruits in China than in Poland. It was not always like that. Before Western Han Dynasty period (the third century AD) the variety of edible plants in China was rather limited. The opening of a trade route called "Silk Road" to Asia, Europe and Africa not only yielded the prosperity of commerce but also a cultural exchange between Western and Eastern civilizations for an unprecedented scale. In the exchange of large exports of silk to West Asia, Europe and Africa, a great number of new fruits and vegetables were introduced to China. Carrots, pepper, fava bean, spinach, cucumbers, tomatoes, grapes, pomegranates, walnuts etc. arrived do China in caravans of the Silk Road merchants. Now Chinese diet includes 4813 species of vegetables, far more than Polish.

Poland, due to the impact of geographical location and weather conditions, offers much lower diversity of vegetables, reportedly only about 50 species. Nowadays, thanks to improvement of transport, the Poles can eat much more kinds of imported vegetables, but the number of species that can be planted in Poland is still very small. The most common vegetables in Poland are carrots, onions, cabbage and tomatoes.

Probably for this reason the average consumption of vegetables is much bigger in China than in Poland. In contrast, average Pole eat much more meat than average Chinese. Another theory that explains this phenomenon uses a race argument. It is said that most of Chinese or even Asian people have a set of 28 teeth which makes them closer to herbivorous animals, while Polish people, as the representatives of the Europeans, have 30 teeth and belong to carnivorous animals. Perhaps it explains why the Chinese people like vegetables so much, while Poles like to eat meat. Of course this is only a theory that is not well verified yet.

China's meat resources are also quite abundant. Chinese people mainly consume pork, chicken, beef and lamb. Pork is the most common and one of the cheapest kind of meat. Chicken is also very popular among Chinese people but because of a widespread use of chemical feed, people generally feel that eating too much poultry can be harming for their health. Chinese are fond of eating beef, but in such a large agricultural country, cattle is an important labor force in rural areas. That is why in China cattle is rather used for agricultural production, than enjoyed as a delicious dish. Lamb is the favorite kind of meat in China, especially in winter. People love to eat roast lamb and mutton or cut the meat into slices and cook it in a hotpot. Mutton is not only delicious, according to Chinese people it is also very nourishing.

Poles rarely eat mutton, which I suppose is related to Polish tradition. Pork, poultry and beef are consumed in a great amount.

There is another big difference in meat issue. Poles prefer the big pieces of good quality, pure meat without bones. They generally do not like most of offal, like for example pig's and chicken's feet. On the contrary, Chinese people prefer meat with tendons to pure meat. For example Chinese would choose chicken wings rather than chicken breast or pig's ribs and feet rather than steak. Chinese are fond of pig's ears, tongue or even cheeks and nose. The most expensive parts of meat in China, are used as a dog food in Poland.

The reason of such a huge difference between the two nations on the one hand lies in five-thousand-years history of Chinese cuisine including the periods of the most luxurious diet in Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasty era, and on the other hand in a still vivid memory of hunger. Especially in the last century, every single edible part of animal or plant was considered to be a delicacy.

This complex blend of wealth and poverty in the long-term practice, made Chinese people develop the unique eating habits and dietary needs, creating an unprecedented food culture, the cooking techniques, later developed into a unique art.

Moreover, the extreme Chinese passion for the rare and hard to get dainties is influencing cuisine from ancient times. The yearn for sea cucumbers, ginseng, bird's nest, abalones, bear's paws, shark's fin and other precious ingredients hides many cultural characteristics such as the pursuit of health and longevity or flaunting of money and high social status, etc. Even if those are faults, thanks to them the huge market of luxurious food products has been created.

Seafood is very common on Chinese table. China has a very long coastline and the sea offers a large variety of food what contributes an enormous production. At the same time the inland waters are also rich in fish resources. In 2009 an average Chinese ate 22 kg of fish, shrimps, shellfish or crabs a year. In contrast, seawater and freshwater in Poland is not that abundant and the diversity of seafood is much smaller. An average Pole eats 11–12 kg of fish per year. Most of the fish eaten in Poland is frozen, canned or processed in a different way, while the fish eaten by Chinese is mainly fresh. It is worth mentioning that people in China are really fond of other seafood like shellfish, shrimps and crabs. It is definitely considered to be better than meat. In the contrary it seems that Poles do not have the habit of eating seafood and are not eager to change it.

## Cooking techniques

Because of a tireless pursuit of the perfect taste, from centuries Chinese chefs had to spend sleepless nights trying to invent new cooking methods, to attain the uniqueness of the flavor, to satisfy the insatiable appetite of diners.

The common cooking techniques include pan frying, deep frying, cooking, stewing, steaming, boiling, baking, *peng* and *basi* technique and the most popular stir frying. There is a great difference in the idea of preparing food in Poland and China. Traditionally Chinese people are unfamiliar with the concept of preparing a whole animal for consumption. The animals or large pieces of meat are always cut into small pieces, then boiled, fried or stewed. One reason of doing it is to save energy, because the food cut into small pieces can be cooked in much shorter time. The second reason is to prepare dishes that can be easily eaten with chopsticks.

Pan frying in Chinese cuisine means to fry food on the European flat-bottom pan in a small amount of oil. The products are supposed to be often turned, until both sides are browned and crispy. It is very similar to Polish frying method. The Chinese often fry fish, dumplings or eggs. It should be noted that the Chinese-style fried eggs are fried on both sides and must be cut before eating, unlike Polish omelet or fried egg with a liquid yolk.

Frying in Chinese Wok (usually made of cast iron, which easily conducts the heat) is the most commonly used technique. The onions, ginger, garlic, star anise, Sichuanese pepper and other condiments are put into hot oil in the bottom of the wok. The next step is putting meat chopped into slices or threads. After adding soy sauce, cooking wine or vinegar, we can start the stir frying. When the meat is ready, the chopped vegetables can be put and stir fried. The salt is added in the end. The fried dish should be put on plates and eaten immediately. This method is very common because it is simple, time and money-saving. The difficulty lies in the ability of controlling the heat and the fire. It definitely requires to use a gas, coal or firewood stove with a strong flame. The electrical stove is too slow and it is impossible to achieve the desired effect. As far as I am concerned Poles generally do not use this method.

Deep frying is the process of putting chopped (often marinated) food into deep boiling oil and frying it till it is ready to eat. Deep frying can be also a one step of a more complicated preparing process. Most commonly seen deep fried snacks in China are dough twists and breadsticks. However meat, fish and vegetables can be fried in deep oil as well. In Poland this method is also widely used, for example deep fried fish, chicken or French fries are one of the Poles' favorites. It seems that it is one of the tastes that Polish and Chinese can share.

First few steps of stewing in China are the same as stir frying, only after adding vegetables a certain amount of water is poured in to the pot. After a relatively long stewing the blend of a soup, meat and vegetables is ready to eat. Stewing is suitable for larger pieces of fish, meat, potatoes or other vegetables. Stewing is also widely used in Poland. It even seems to be the most common cooking method. For example one of the most famous Polish dishes – bigos is stewed.

Steaming is also one of the favorite cooking method in China. It's advantage is that the nutrients of the food are not lost during the process. It also does not produce so much oily soot as stir frying. Whether it is in a Chinese restaurant, or

in ordinary household, steaming is widely used. In practice, firstly a certain amount of water should be put into a special steamer. Then the steaming part of the pot should be placed on top of it. The food is steamed in the steaming part under the cover until it is ready to eat. The Chinese often steam dumplings, buns, filled buns, fish, pork and so on. In Poland this method is rarely used and rather associated with healthy but not necessarily tasty food.

## Drinks

There is one drink in China that is seen everywhere – the tea. Especially in the South the tea is indispensable. It is relevant that the South of China is a place of origin of this well-known drink. The Southerners have a very sophisticated tea ritual and elaborated tea utensils that all together is called “The Tea Ceremony”.

In China there are many species of tealeaves and many different processing methods. Some of them can be even called a handicraft art. During the long-term experience the Chinese have mastered the techniques of producing non-fermented, semi-fermented and fermented tea. In the traditional sense there are six different kinds of tea: red tea, green tea, white tea, oolong tea, yellow tea and black tea. Apart from them there are also not less famous flowering tea and the tea in bricks.

According to historical records, the world’s oldest tea was produced in China, then spread to India, Europe and other places. The tea in China was originally used as medicine. In the Song Dynasty, tea was already in vogue and become a daily drink. In Ming and Qing dynasty periods the tea culture have reached the peak. Currently, the tea in China is still an extremely popular social drink. Its relevance in China is equivalent of the relevance of coffee in Poland. The Poles enjoy drinking tea, but their knowledge and understanding of the tea culture is the same as Chinese understanding of coffee culture, very superficial. Some young Chinese drink coffee, but since there is no coffee culture, in many cases this is only an attempt to be fashionable.

## Soy and milk

It is inevitable to compare soy and milk. These two seemingly unrelated products, in fact are playing an extremely similar and important role in the diet of the two nations. “Soy is a legume rich in protein, native of China, where it has been planted for over five thousand years. It has the highest nutritional value among other species of beans. As a natural food, it contains plenty of unsaturated fatty acids, microelements, vitamins and high quality proteins, what puts soybeans on the top list of the



most nutrient plants ever. Soybeans are processed in order to produce a variety of soy products, which are recommended for people with hypertension, atherosclerosis, heart diseases and other cardiovascular patients. Soy is rich in protein and contains all amino acids, it is particularly rich in lysine and that is why it is also known as the king of beans, meat grown in the field, or green milk. “

Because of the special conditions and habits in China, people do not drink milk. It is replaced by all kinds of food made of soybean, such as the most common tofu or dried tofu, bean curd, dried bean curd, bean sprouts etc. As these nutritious products have low prices, it has become one of favorite food on the Chinese table.

Poles has been drinking milk for ages. Eating cheese and other dairy products is a necessary tradition in order to absorb various indispensable nutrients. It is a very important component of a Polish diet.

Soy and milk are still playing an irreplaceable role in the lives of the Chinese and the Poles, they provide people the essential nutrients.

## Table Manners

In China, Confucianism have deep impact on every person, it was a fact in ancient times and it is a fact in today's highly developed information society. “Rites, justice, honesty, shame” are the core idea of Confucianism, where the concept of “rites” is the most essential one. As early as two thousand years ago, the Chinese sages have formulated an extremely complex dining etiquette written in “The Book of Rites”. “The Book of Rites” says: “共食不饱，共饭不择手。毋搏饭，毋放饭，毋流歌，毋咤食，毋啮骨，毋反鱼肉，毋投与狗骨，毋固获，毋扬饭。饭黍毋以箸，毋捉羹，毋刺齿。” which means more less: “When you eat together with others, observe if others have also eaten their fill, check if your own hands are clean, do not eat with hands, do not put back the rice that left in your bowl into the pot, do not drink a mouthful of soup, do not smack your lips while eating, do not pick bones, do not put bitten fish back into the plate, do not throw bones to the dog, do not pass the plates with food to others. Do not stir the rice when it is hot, do not drink soup anxiously, do not pick your teeth.” Those ancient norms of perfect table manners show how Chinese food culture has developed. However, due to the change of times, especially the experience of the Mao Zedong's era, all the so-called “confucianisms” and other old traditions were completely smashed. Although the ancient table manners are being reconstructed, the modern etiquette is still far from old Chinese rites.

Nowadays Chinese people used to round-table dining. People are seated in a special order, the most respected guest seats in the opposite of the door. A predetermined number of dishes is served, usually it is four, six, eight or ten. Of course

nowadays there is much bigger choice of dishes for the banquet. After the host and the guests are seated, the host commands to serve food. First cold dishes are served. When four dishes are on the table, the host can propose a toast and make a speech. Next hot dishes are served. During the meeting the host and the guests propose toasts frequently. A dinner is an occasion to talk about family matters or business or just to tell jokes and have a good time. The last dish is the fruit platter. Serving it means that the dinner comes to an end. The host raises his glass for the last time and proposes so-called "closing toast". Contemporary educated Chinese people know that burping, picking ones mouth and teeth, loud slurping while eating is inappropriate. As long as the food and the alcohol are enough, the host and the guests will be thoroughly satisfied with the meal.

It is worth mentioning that such frequent toasts during the dinner are considered to be polite in China. Every guest is supposed to propose a toast to his superior, what in effect leads to constant drinking during the dinner. In fact it is a bad habit which often makes people very uncomfortable.

Polish tables are rectangular. A dinner often begins from a bowl of soup, then hot and cold dishes are served. The number of dishes does not matter. A sweet dessert is served in the end. Although proposing toasts is very common in Poland, in my opinion it is not as frequent as in China. At least it does not create a pressure of being polite towards superiors and drinking much more than one would like to drink.

Both nations use spoons to eat soup. As far as other dishes are concerned, Chinese use chopsticks while Poles use forks and knives.

## Eating and religion

As I said already, Confucianism cannot be a religion. However, the impact of Buddhism and Taoism ideas on Chinese diet is undeniable.

The Buddhism originated in India then, during the Han dynasty period, spread to China. Later it has developed into Rishu, Zen, Tantric Buddhism and other Buddhist systems with Chinese characteristics. All Buddhist schools have one unchangeable rule: "You cannot eat meat". Therefore, in modern China Buddhists monks and ordinary believers do not eat meat or even eggs. Buddhism influenced these people and made them become vegetarians. In addition, there are some Buddhist sects, where eating after noon is forbidden or only one meal a day is acceptable. Of course, the percentage of Buddhists in the 1.3 billion nation (according to official reports barely 200 000 people) is trivially small and they are unlikely to affect the Chinese eating habits.

The influence of Taoism on Chinese diet is more obvious and complex. Taoism originated in China in third century AD as an indigenous religion. The core idea of

the system is the immortality. Even though it seems very unscientific from a western point of view, it has guided Chinese people to a healthy life style by eating right and doing a lot of physical exercises. Taoist yin and yang doctrine also stands for reducing amount of meat in the meal, eating warm food as long as it is possible, do not drink alcohol excessively, doing appropriate exercises after eating etc.

The Taoist idea of tonic diet is particularly worth mentioning. Taoism claims that the human body is like a machine in which the parts, that are not working right, need to be repaired. Eating tonic food repairs human body. Chinese people eat tonic food when they are particularly weak or at risk of getting sick, for example when the season is changing or after women has given a birth to a child.

The tonic can be a food or a drug, but Chinese medicine is such a vast subject that it is impossible to focus on traditional drugs in this article. Eating a proper tonic food depending on a particular situation and conditions is a Taoist way to physical health. Southerners are used to drink nourishing soups, while northerners prefer direct consumption of highly nutritious products. For instance northerners believe that women in childbed should drink chicken soup or that during cold winter, in order to stay warm, people should eat stewed dog meat and drink dog meat soup.

In some cases an uncontrolled eating of tonic food can become an obsession. Some Chinese people devour mindlessly the amount of tonic food that is far beyond the actual needs of the body. For example they eat bird's nests, ginseng or sea cucumbers every day. What is more, there is another extreme absurd that appears in modern China. It calls 以形补形 which means "shape to shape". People who believe in it would eat any part of an animal's body which is not functioning right in their own body. So for example, a heart of a pig would heal a heart disease, a liver of a cow or goat would solve a liver problem, blindness or weak sight should be cured by eating pig's eyes etc. It is not hard to predict that such method does not bring satisfying results.

However, the idea of tonic food in its reasonable sense, make Chinese more attentive to their health. They take good care about their own body and try not to get sick. When a small problem appears, they react immediately.

Eating habits and religion in Poland is closely related. For example, people do not eat meat on Fridays and they restrict eating it before important festivals, such as Christmas or Easter. According to the tradition meat especially cannot appear at the Christmas Eve dinner and it is replaced by fish. However the idea of not considering fish as a kind of meat seems to be very strange for Chinese people. It is said that the Poles abstain from food or meat for 40 days before Easter in order to commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus. People want to reduce the pleasure and share the suffering with their God. The Polish have a lot of respect for bread since the bread is the incarnation of Jesus. You will not see any piece of bread casually thrown on the road in Poland.

## Sociological aspect of eating

Food plays an important role in Chinese people's lives. It is definitely not only a way to sustain vital functions, but there is also a significant sociological aspect of it. For Chinese people eating is their destiny and they have to face it in the minute they are born. A birth of a child, first month of a newborn, one hundred days of a baby must be all celebrated by a festive meal together. Going to college, wedding and ones again a birth of a baby must be accompanied by extraordinary food too. According to the tradition also sixtieth, seventieth, eightieth, ninetieth and hundredth birthday should be decently celebrated on a banquet. A dinner party should be also thrown because of moving to another place or because of death of relatives.

There is something very typical in China. The business is done at the table. Sometimes a good meal and a bottle of a nice wine is enough to make a deal. On the contrary, talking about business in the office with empty stomachs has a minimal chance for success. Another examples are finding a job, seeing a doctor or going to the university. Even though seemingly those problems are unrelated to eating, they can be all solved by a sumptuous dinner. This method is used in whole China and that is why both rural and urban areas are filled with restaurants and a food fragrance is everywhere.

Even the Chinese language is full of expressions related to eating:

吃不消 – “cannot digest” which means somebody cannot accept some facts or some new information

吃软饭 – “to eat soft rice” is said about a man who lives on woman's money

吃惊 – “to eat a surprise” means to be surprised, astonished.

吃透 – “to eat thoroughly” means to understand something thoroughly.

吃香 – “to relish” means to be very popular (about a person).

These unique idioms and proverbs accompany Chinese people for their whole life.

In contrast, the Poles do not seem to consider food and meals as a serious way of solving everyday-life problems. Normally you cannot see the crowds of people standing in a queue in front of a upscale restaurants. What often happens in China.

However, there is quite a lot of idioms and proverbs related to eating in Polish language. For example:

„Jadłoby się, chciałoby się jeść kogoś łyżkami” – to be willing to eat somebody with spoons, means to consider somebody to be extremely cute.

„Jeść kogoś, coś oczami, wzrokiem” – to eat somebody with one's eyes, mostly expresses asexual desire while looking at somebody.

„Jeść z jednej miski” – to eat from one bowl, means to be best friends or to know somebody very well.

It seems that despite the great distance between Poland and China, some cultural phenomena remains universal.

## Conclusion

The Chinese people and the Poles both eat calories and nutrients necessary to maintain the life activities. Although there are a lot of differences in our eating habits, they are not an obstacle for a cultural exchange. On the contrary, it can give us an inspiration to learn from each other through those differences and make a contribution to the human civilization.

### STRESZCZENIE

#### KRÓTKA ANALIZA RÓŻNIC MIĘDZY POLSKĄ A CHIŃSKĄ KULTURĄ ŻYWIENIA

Zarówno Polska, jak i Chiny mają długą historię oraz wspaniałe tradycje. Jeśli z bogactwa zwyczajów obu państw uczynilibyśmy ogród, tradycyjna kuchnia byłaby jednym z jego najpiękniejszych kwiatów. Jednak ze względu na różnicę w warunkach geograficznych i klimatycznych, odmienny przebieg dziejów, a także swoiste zwyczaje kultura jedzenia w obydwu krajach skrajnie się różni.

Dlaczego Chińczycy jedzą psie mięso? Dlaczego Polacy nie jedzą posiłku w południe? Powyższy artykuł wyjaśnia podobne kwestie. Krótka analiza obejmuje historię oraz sposób postrzegania kuchni w obydwu krajach, dobór składników potraw, techniki kulinarne, dietę w odniesieniu do zdrowia oraz jej aspekt religijny. To treściwe porównanie pozwala Chińczykom i Polakom nawiązać nić porozumienia nie tylko na płaszczyźnie kultury jedzenia, ale również w sferze duchowej, co zdaniem autora pogłębi wzajemne zrozumienie między dwoma tak odległymi narodami.

### 提要

#### 中波饮食文化差异探略

中国和波兰都具有悠久的历史 and 灿烂的文化，饮食文化是两国文化苑囿里浓墨重彩的一笔。但由于历史、地域、生活习惯以及气候等方面的原因，两国在饮食习惯上存在着巨大差异。为什么中国人吃狗肉？为什么波兰人不吃午饭？本论文将就诸如此类问题，对中波两国在饮食文化历史、饮食观念、食材选用、烹调方法、饮食与营养、饮食与宗教等诸方面的差异展开探究，以此来发掘两国人民在饮食文化，以及精神世界深处那些可以交融交流的可贵的闪光点，并希望借此来促进中波两国人民未来在经济、政治、文化等领域的全方位交流。