

The Ecological and Cultural Bases of Nutrition and Dietary Habits of Iranian Kurds: A Case Study of Bukan

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ABSTRACT Food is considered as one of the common instinctive needs of both animals and human beings. In fact, in anthropological perspective, human food is affected and determined by cultural characteristics and traits. In this respect, each culture depends upon its cultural contexts and traits develop particular rules and regulations whose recognition provides a better understanding of their culture. In anthropology, this task is followed mainly by ethnographic method. The aim of this paper is to explore the dietary habits and nutrition among Iranian Kurds, in so doing; it employs the cultural ecology approach as theoretical perspective and ethnographic fieldwork as research strategy. The study was conducted in the west Azerbaijan province of Iran, Bukan Township. The findings demonstrate that the dietary materials of Kurdish people of Bukan are collected mainly from their surrounding environment; while presenting a wide range of traditional food in this Kurdish community, the findings also indicate that the ecological and cultural properties shape the food and nutrition pattern in an interrelated way.

INTRODUCTION

Human's need for food is considered to be a part of his biological inheritance. But, the definition of food, its ways of consumption, and diet observances are essentially determined by cultural conditions and contexts. For human, eating food is not merely a simple biological action, but food and its obligations are mainly affected by several factors such as population, social traditions, religious beliefs, social positions, gender role and aesthetics, among others (Ferraro 1998; Bailey et al. 2002; Ember et al. 2002; Scupin et al. 2004).

To survive as a living species, human beings need food, although each society has different food styles and dietary patterns. In this respect, it can be seen that even dietary habits of rural inhabitants are different from those of urban dwellers. Different groups possess different kinds of food according to their environmental, cultural and social contexts. Anthropologists' interest toward the subject of food could be traced to the holistic approach of this discipline (Harris 1975; Ferraro 1998; Watson and Caldwell 2005).

Through his entire life, human has attempted to improve his quality of food. Also, it is known that the delicacy aspect of food, quality, social status, and cultural identity of people are dependent on their food. In this research, an

attempt has been made to study the processes involved in production, transplantation, preparation and alteration in food consumption, and also the role of food in exchanging symbolic patterns and dietary habits. It is known that in a prolonged period, these food patterns and its habits can influence human health in the region. Moreover, different socio-economic and surrounding environmental resources can determine food selection and methods of its utilization. The kinds of food can also affect mans' behavior in such a manner that acceptance of new types of foods and its exchange among groups is accompanied by other new habits and behaviors. Though food constitutes the most universal area of human life in all societies, each society has its own special kinds of food. Therefore, the effect upon food and dietary habits by factors such as religion, national rites, material environment, social class, gender or even particular periodic cycles of life can be observed (Ember et al. 2002; Scupin et al. 2004).

Nowadays, because of the expansion of communications, no experience is considered to be unique. So a variety of foods are increasingly consuming day by day and many of these new foods are transplantation from other places. This is why food translocations bring along cultural change as well.

This article explores the Kurdish dietary habits

on anthropological perspective in the Bukan Township located in northwestern of Iran. Also, this study could be placed in the area of food anthropology as food analysis could be understood in a cultural framework. Therefore, food is not only to secure biological needs but its cultural aspect is also important because it is the culture that determines food consumption types, dietary habits and underlies its taste and value and underlying environmental, religious-cultural status of the people.

Purposes and Justifications of Research

Iran possesses a multi-ethnic system and climatic variations in which each ethnic group, according to ecological and particular cultural conditions, has different kinds of food. This situation brings about a necessity and justification for the study of the cultural aspect of food and nutrition. So, the cultural ecology theory is employed as theoretical orientation of this research. Accordingly, the people's situation, environment, resources and available technology for exploitation of these resources in interaction with other cultural aspects are being studied.

Identification and exploration of food culture characteristics is necessary regarding to diet therapy, food testing and beliefs about food and understanding the food changes that have occurred in the last few decades. There are some particular food pattern traits that make this community distinct from other communities.

Another reason that makes this study praiseworthy is that it is believed to be the first study in this context conducted by anthropological approach. The aim of this research is to recognize dietary habits and environmental and cultural factors that determine different food consumption patterns. Another remarkable point of this research is its inquiry about how this community of people differentiate themselves from other ethnic groups by these habits in addition, different symbolic meanings and morals, ritual and religious criteria about food are not ignored in this research.

Area and People

Iran is located in Middle East. It is historically a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. There are a diverse variety of ethnic and religious groups. The major groups are Persians, Turks,

Kurds, Lore's and Balouches. These groups culturally and racially have some distinctive characteristics that make them different from one another. Majority of Iranian population are Muslims. Religious minorities in Iran compose 2-3% of the total country's population. The estimated total population of Iran is 70 million people, with land area of 1648000 square kilometers. This country is subdivided into thirty provinces. Among the diverse groups of Iran, The Kurds are one of those who possess their particular culture. Iranian Kurdish community inhabit five provinces: Elam, Kerman shah, Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan and North khorasan. There is no accurate data on Kurdish population of Iran. The estimated population of Iranian Kurds is around six million (Iran 2006 Census). The Bukan Township that is a subject of this research is located in West Azerbaijan province. This province covers an area of 39487 square kilometers, with an estimated population of 3015361 peoples. The capital city of the province is Uremia city. The climate of the province is largely influenced by the rainy winds of the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean. Cold northern winds affect the province during winter and cause heavy snow. West Azerbaijan province, encompassing vast and fertile plains, high mountains, enjoying moderate and healthy weather, rivers with high volume of water, vineyards, orchards, luxuriant forest and rangelands, mountain outskirts with wonderful flora, magnificent wild life and shores around the uremia lack with different recreational facilities. A land with wonderful flora during spring and the summer covered with tulip, poppy, narcissus and hyacinth.

The bulk of the population of this province is Kurds and Turks. There are also three small religious and ethnic minorities who are native to the province: Assyrians, Armenians (Christians), and Jews. Both Kurds and Turks follow Islam, but Azerbaijan Kurds are Sunni branch of Islam and Turks being Shiite.

The Azerbaijan province is divided into fourteen towns, Bukan, is one of these fourteen towns of west Azerbaijan province. Bukan is the fourth most populous town of the province, with an estimated population of 204000 peoples and its distance from province capital is 226 kilometers. 71% of this town population is settled in urban area, while 29% live in the rural area (Iran 2006 Census). This town is almost a homogenous community.

Theoretical Consideration

The theoretical approach used for this research is cultural ecology perspective which is one of the important approaches in contemporary anthropology. In this perspective, the main emphasis is inclined to the thoughts of J. Steward and Roy Rappaport. Steward puts emphasis on cultural adaptation with environmental circumstances, that is, evolution of cultural system via environmental comparison (Harris 2001; Kottak 2002; McGee et al. 2004).

Steward argued that culture develops in a number of separate patterns which are dependent on environmental circumstances. But Rappaport stressed the importance of understanding and recognizing such aspects as the nature of interpretation, role of beliefs and environmental percepts, which are molded by a set of capacities and abilities that exists in an ecological system in order to secure a particular population. This capacity varies according to technological changes in each society. To describe cultural stability, Rappaport borrowed the concept of feedback from cybernetics. In his work named "Pigs for the ancestors in New Guinea Kaiko Cult", Rappaport considers pig sacrifice as a feedback mechanism because it regulates the ecological relation between pigs and humans in the form of surplus food (Bailey et al. 2002; McGee et al. 2004). Rappaport critiques functionalism as a kind of holistic functional explanation that does not generally show causes, but only interrelations among parts within a system.

Rappaport, following the cultural-ecology model, tried to show that the religion, at least among those he studied, is articulated with and has profound effect upon the natural world (1967). He treats humans simply as organisms within the ecosystem.

METHODOLOGY

This study has employed the ethnographic fieldwork which is mainly referred to as a major strategy in anthropological exploration (Sanjek 1990; Fetterman 1998; Hamersley et al. 1997; Kutsche 1998). The paper relied mainly on primary data that were collected through field-work enterprise. Data are related to food production, nutrition, dietary habits, changes in dietary habits, ecological and cultural context of production and consumption. For the present study the data

collected from Bukan Township and six sample villages located in township area. The sample villages have been selected randomly. Purposes and justifications for selection of this method is that, ethnography, as the "intensive, first-hand observation- eye witnessing of human behavior" Peltó (1978), provide a check on research strategies that rely on self-reporting. Ethnographic methods immerse the investigator in the real drama of social life, they offer an excellent approach to recovery both emic and etic data on peoples' behavior and thoughts. The techniques of data collection were participant observation, in-depth interviews conducted with key informants (18 informants), and 300 random interviews with ordinary people. Most field-workers since Malinowski's time have emphasized the great importance of participant observation as a vital field-work technique. Most discussions of this aspect of field work emphasize the practical, observation advantages, immersion in the activities of local people is also essential for achieving a satisfactory role as marginal native. Through participation in activities, researchers wanted to be insiders. Researchers of this paper participated actively in the daily rounds of work the people they studied. The research process lasted for seven months during 2006 and 2007. After data collection, the findings were classified based on the main questions and analyzed through conventional ethnographic analysis; the findings, then, were referring to the theoretical approach used in the research.

FINDINGS

In following section, the findings are presented based on two different types of discussions; the first part focuses on the eco-cultural base of food and nutrition and the second one discusses the food as culturally defined phenomena. The findings are treated in relation to the ecological and cultural context of production and consumption.

Eco-cultural Base of Food and Nutrition

Because the role of ecological factors in this study is very important, sub - factors of ecology such as climate, flora, fauna and soil fertility in the field setting are considered. In the following section, the eco - cultural base of food and nutrition among the Bukan people is discussed.

The climate of the Bukan Township is cold in winter and relatively hot in summer. The spring season coincides with growth; it is also considered to be very important in the socio-economic livelihood of the people because animal husbandry is also one of their important occupations. Even their main national festival, *Nourooz* [New Year], which is celebrated on the first day of spring, coincides with the beginning of animal husbandry and agricultural activities. Summer season is the time for harvesting, storing, and exporting of agricultural products. Autumn is the time for rest and tranquility because animal and agricultural products are sold out. Marriage ceremonies usually take place in this season. At present, agriculture constitutes the most important mechanism of earning a livelihood and securing the primary dietary needs of these people. There are two methods of cultivation in that region: Irrigation farming which nearly comprises one-third of their cultivable lands, and dry farming which comprises two-thirds of their land use. The major agricultural products of this region are wheat, barley, beans, alfalfa and sugar beet. Most agricultural implements are in form of traditional equipments. Of course, the tendency toward new agricultural machinery can be seen. The lack of mechanized agricultural machinery caused *Aesh* [Fallow] cultivation. Animals such as cows, horses and donkeys are utilized for agricultural purposes. Usually, among the products, wheat cultivation is of prime importance because it constitutes staple food for people. Barley comes next because it is used for domesticated animals. Besides these agricultural products, the role of horticultural products is also significant, for example, apples, grapes and apricots.

Animal husbandry, pastoralist and hunting occupations are second important source after agricultural economy. Even a few decades ago animal husbandry was the major pillar of economic system of Bukans' Kurdish people. It should be admitted that Pastoral nomad's as a technique of adaptation to environment is still very popular in this community. Animal hunting is usually done in winter and summer. Of course, hunting is not followed for the purpose of economic profitability, but as a fanciful sport, it is more dominant. The animals hunted are partridge, rabbit, wild goat, wild duck and different kinds of fish. Because of aridity and conversion of pasturelands to agricultural lands, animal husbandry lost its

significance in comparison to agriculture. Now, this area possesses nearly 300,000 sheep and goats, 80,000 cows, 4,500 domestic birds and 2,200 beehives. The animal products are ghee, dried whey and honey and body parts like bowels, intestine, viscera and guts.

In the traditional animal husbandry pattern of Bukan Township, each household was supposed to have its own shepherd; the job was assigned to young males. But today, because of cattle shortage, the previous pattern does not exist anymore. Instead, a new pattern has developed, that is, some households combine their herds and employ a man to herd the cattle in the countryside for grazing [in summer and spring]. This new pattern is similar to the work of the cowherd locally called "Gavan", which previously was very common in this region. Whereas in the case of the cowherd pattern, each household had to pay his share based on crop, but in the new pattern the crop system is replaced by cash payment.

Another source contributing to the people's dietary and medicinal needs is the local flora. The mountainous ecological condition of the region provides possibilities for a variety of plants. The following flora sources play an essential role in the life of Iranian Kurds: wild alfalfa goats-thorn, acanthus, spinach, mushroom, water germander, ornithogalum and rumex sectatus. These plants and fungi all grow in the spring season. In the past, they constituted the main sources of the people's diet in Bukan, but today, the use of these floras have replaced by industrial and medicinal applications, and has found economic and export aspects.

Besides the above sources, meat is seen as one of the main sources in community diet as the animal husbandry has a long history in the

Table 1: Dietary sources

Local name of food	Material sources
Non [Bread]	Flour + ghee + spices
Macheane	[Beans] grass pea + ghee + onion + spices
Niskeana	[Lentils] Lentils + onion + ghee + spices
Savar	Milled wheat + water + ghee
Berush soup	Milled wheat + ghee + onion + spices
Terkhena	Yogurt + ghee
Kheder Zendok	Juice of germinating wheat + flour
Danola	Soaked wheat + water + salt
Bodravdry	wheat + milled corn +yogurt +onion

community. Consumption of flesh also has a high status among other foods, though the range of consumption is limited owing to its cost. The main sources of flesh are: cows, sheep, goats, rabbits, hens, cocks, partridge, turkeys and geese. The traditional method of food preparation was frying. Then, it was salted and stored in flowerpots called “*Koopa*”. This method of storage is called “*Qavorma*”. Actually, this way of storage is not frequent today. Another remarkable point is that until two decades ago, meats were considered to be luxury foods and were served only on occasions such as festivals, feasts and marriage ceremonies. But today, because of people’s knowledge and economic growth, the range of consumption of this food has increased.

As one of the major sources constituting a stable food of Kurdish people, bread is consumed with all other kinds of meals. Traditionally, the bread was prepared in each home in different types. But today, it is baked by professional persons in bakeries called “*Nanavakhaneh*”. The significance of bread is so great that it is considered as holy food. Different types of bread in this society include “*Nan-Lavash*” (prepared from wheat flour), “*Non- Arzan*” (prepared from millet) and “*Kollana*” made from vegetable, onion, ghee, and wheat flour and “*Kolera-Naska*” (prepared from sugar, ghee, milk and yogurt).

In addition to bread, beverages are the sources affected by ecological and environmental factors in that community. After water, yogurt forms the most common beverage of this people. It is quite frequent and widely drunk because of the animal husbandry business and environmental conditions. Traditionally, yogurt was stored in a large leather bottle made of goat skin, locally called “*Duodena*”. It was hung from the balcony of the house. To keep it cold during the day time, water was poured over it. It is used with meals and also when thirsty. To enhance and retain its taste for longer periods, the leaf of rose flower is added to it. Black tea is another popular

beverage that is served before and after meals and even for hospitality purposes.

Dairy and its products form another main source of diet in this community. It is found in abundance. The major dairy products are milk, curds, yogurt, butter, ghee, whey, and cheeses in different varieties such as “*lorak*”, “*sheraj*” “*panere salk*”, “*panere koupa*”, and “*panere pest*”. The type, quality and the method of preparation of dairy products are different among ethnic groups of Iran. This is the reason why these products bear the name of the community, for example, “*panere – kurdi*” (Kurdish Cheese), “*kashki kurdi*” (Kurdish Yougurt) and “*rone-kurdi*” (Kurdish Ghee).

Food and Nutrition as Culturally Defined Phenomena

Not only does diet has a biological aspect, but it is also a cultural phenomenon. Though food consumption primarily was to survive and to prevent starvation, its role as a cultural phenomenon during the preparation and consumption is significant, especially in case of vowed and food offerings, which are found in all human societies. The kinds of foods, number of meals, time and place of eating food are all culturally ordered and learnable. That is why it varies from culture to culture (Kottak 2004; Miller 2004).

In Bukan community, hot and cold properties of diet depend on the personal character as well as on the climatic conditions in which he survives. Energetic and hot foods are used in cold seasons, for example, spices, dates, different kinds of meat, sweets and soups. But during the warm season, foods such as dairy, milk, curds, melon, yogurt, and cucumber are used because they are culturally defined as “cold”. The local population thus strives for a hot-cold balance to protect their health.

Food and diet therapy has a long history in Bukan. It also has roots in environmental

Table 2: Food and diet therapy

Type of food	Composition materials	Type of therapy
Barbasel	poulet meat + curds	Diarrhea and heatstroke
Siero-mast	garlic + curds	Diarrhea and heat stroke
Giaspandar	wild rue + woman’s milk	Eye diseases
Jatear juice(Thymus)	Thymus juice	Headache
Ronass(Rubia humifissum)	madder + ghee	Wounds
Gomasilka	conch + sugar + heat	Wounds

circumstances. The abundance of different variety of flora and fauna species in the region and also the lacuna of medicinal facilities and practitioners in this field promoted the present situation.

In all societies, the body of a human being needs to adapt with different meals. As there are different socio-cultural, economic and environmental conditions, the number and kind of meals are also different. In this area, food programs depend on seasonal variations. During the active agricultural season, laborers eat five times daily, but during other seasons, the number of meal times decreases to thrice daily.

Also particular kind of diets for certain occasions can be found in every society. In Bukan community, particular diets are prepared during occasions such as harvesting season, local, national and religious festivals and in marriages. Traditionally, the food preparation was the task of women, but nowadays, professional cooks are employed for this job. In mourning rites also, a special diet is prepared. For this ceremony, guests and visitors participate in the mourning for three days and continuously attend the mosque and pray. Usually, to reduce the economic pressure on the deceased's immediate family, neighbors and other relatives of the deceased person serve food at the mosque. In religious festivals, such as "*Qurban*" [sacrifice], "*Movlood*" [Prophet Mohammad's birth day], and "*Ramadhan*" [End of Fasting Month], according to their financial ability, people of this community sacrifice animals such as cows, sheep and goats. The sacrificed animal's meat is then distributed equally between all households. Another occasion that is coincident with the end of agricultural harvesting is called "*Sarberaneh*" For this occasion too, an animal is sacrificed and a party is held.

Another remarkable point and related to diet therapy, is a special food given to a woman for a week after delivery just to recover from the energy lost during the pregnant period. This special food, called *Mivaniei-e*, is prepared out of sugar, egg yolks, ghee, and wheat flour. Only a parturient is allowed to eat this food. The gender of infant is believed to be characterized according to the kind of craving for a particular type of diet [Magirani] that the woman has during pregnancy.

Because of the socio-cultural and the ecological conditions of this region, the people had to adopt and to practice food storage techniques, such as salting, frying, drying and burying. Now,

these techniques are about to vanish and are being replaced by refrigeration.

Bukan people customarily observe certain rules and regulations during commensally. A tablecloth or "*Soufreh*", which traditionally was made from animal skin, but nowadays changed to plastic, is spread on the ground at the time of serving. Then the food materials are arranged over it by women and youngsters. The observance of this rule requires the household head to sit at the head; then the rest of family members, based on age [elderly] and sex [male], to sit next to the household head. This hierarchy is strongly observed among traditional and illiterate families. The quality and quantity of the food served also depend on this hierarchy. Women and children receive less quantity and worse quality food. Nowadays this pattern is observed to be slowly vanishing.

In this society there are several food taboos, for example, a parturient is not allowed to eat cold nature type of foods, because they believe these types of food are not able to compensate the lost energy of parturient. Another popular food taboo occurs annually for one month, that is, from 6th July to 6th August. In this period, called "*Mendare Mong*" [taboo month], meat diet is prohibited. They claim that because in this period temperature reaches its highest point, animals suffer from diseases. Of course, if a person does not observe this taboo, no sanction is assigned him.

DISCUSSION

Tell me what you are eating, and then I can tell who you are, Savarin (1994). People select their diet from food items available around them.

The collected data show that ecological factors such as natural resources, climate and soil are the basic criteria that affect diet. In this society, collecting wild resources such as flora is performed to secure a part of daily food. Actually, the conversion of non-cultivated lands to cultivated lands caused changes in the diet of the people. Because of shortage of animal resources, these people are more dependent on flora resources than on animal resources. In this region, each season provides for particular type of diet that is proportional to ecological and cultural situation, that is, flora gathering is usually during the spring season. Food gathering begins when animal husbandry and agriculture activities have not yet started. Food-gathering resulted in

improvement and diversity of diets. Actually, in this society, all sources of diets whether animal, agricultural or gathering resources depend on the natural conditions mainly (annual rainfall). The main sources of diet in spring season are gathered flora, in summer cultivated fruits and vegetables, and in autumn and winter fleshy diets (domestic animals and hunted animals). Agriculture initially played an important role as a source of diet not only in the exchange of goods, but mainly because of internal consumption. Since 1990s, as a result of modernization and development in the agricultural sector and economic growth, there has been a simultaneous disturbance in the region's ecosystem equilibrium, particularly water table reduction and the emergence of cash crops cultivation to replace traditional crop production.

Different cultural factors such as religion, means of production, and socioeconomic conditions resulted in either development of different dietary habits or giving up these habits. Diets are even considered as signs of ethnic groups (Goode 1992). As known, commensally among the people create a kind of solidarity and identity ascertainments. Levi-Strauss believed that our meals consist of certain foods not so "good to eat and good to think" (1970) but Marvin Harris' alternative with respect to what is "good to eat" (1985) looks for the reason why are human food habits so diverse?

The coincidence of the subject of food and ethnic identities can be observed on local food products such as cheese, ghee, and yogurt, which have "*Kurdi*" [Kurdish] suffixes, for example, "*Panere-Kurdi*" [Kurdish Cheese].

In this society, diet also has affected gender identity. So far, this community has been strongly androcratic; women find their personal identity in the confines of the kitchen not in sewing, child rearing, etc. Women's control over food made them decision-makers about dietary materials and goods. Until a few decades ago, these people were a self-sufficient community and most of their dietary materials were prepared from flora and other agricultural products available around them. But the trend in socio-cultural change has followed the world economic system and has thus turned toward a tendency of commercialization. As a result of these changes, the diet of these people has also changed.

The data of this research also show that the role of religious rites have effects on diet; for example, in religious occasions such as

"*Qurban*", "*Moulood*", and "*Ramadhan*", animals such as cows, sheep and goat are slaughtered and their meat is distributed equally between households. Therefore, on religious occasions most of diets are prepared from meat, as flesh are only served on these occasions because it is considered as luxury food.

As Rappaport declared, the nature of survival of group adaptation in providing a strategy for good diet is that group needs should be considered, not individual needs. This is the reason why this strategy is observed in religious occasions. That is, the distribution of meat in equal amount among households demonstrates a kind of egalitarianism among the group.

Another notable religious rite occurs during mourning ceremonies. When a person dies, neighbors and relatives render assistance by providing food for the guests in sympathy with the deceased's family.

In this society, diet is not only considered as a good for eating purposes, but also its role as a common good is important. Commensally satisfies the need for interaction with others in a social unit and enforces social links (Sobal and Nelson 2003).

"Commensally is a concept to explain eating diet with others, but it also reflects structures and forms of social morphology" (Grignon 2001).

Diverse dietary patterns help to define the boundaries between classes, ethnicity, religion, age, and gender groups. Commensally units are uniform groups that eat with each other in certain times and places. Family is the most fundamental unit of commensally in this society. "There are two approaches to commensally interpretations, one emphasizes on cultural values and the other upon structural individualism" (Sobal and Nelson 2003). For the present study, the cultural value approach was employed as a basic factor of commensally. So far this society has been an agricultural one and also possesses an androcratic social system. Therefore, commensally is also different in different meals. For example, during agricultural and animal husbandry activities, no commensally is observed during breakfast time. Because early in the morning, men perform jobs out of the home, children go to school and women do their activities. At lunchtime the commensally is also light. But during dinner, it is strongly observed. Actually, it is during periods of non-activity that commensally is better observed.

The role of diet in religious beliefs and cultural

interactions is complex and diverse. The people of the studied community are Muslims. They strictly follow food taboos according to Islamic law. Islam divided the diets into two types: a) "Halal Foods" (Culturally edible) and "Haram Foods" (Taboos). An individual who does not observe these rules faces sanctions, for example, a mature person without medical obligation (illness) is not allowed to avoid fasting.

Research findings also demonstrate that new imported foods brought about changes in behavioral patterns of peoples' diet. Improvement in the economic situation, the development of technology and mass media growth provided a condition for food pattern changes. The changes of dietary patterns resulted in more dependence on national and international food products. Daily consumption of seasonal fruits, vegetable, and new types of foods such as macaroni, salami and rice, brought along with them new equipments and new habits. The customary sitting around "Soufreh" hierarchy has also been subjected to changes. First of all it diminished the authority of males and of the head of household and also provided a condition for mixed food eating of both sexes.

CONCLUSIONS

For man, eating is not merely a simple biological act. Diet and its status are affected by factors such as population, social traditions, religious beliefs and social class. Different ethnic groups, according to their ecological circumstances, possess different diets; every society has its own particular diet. Results of this research show that until a few decades ago, because of economic poverty, the people of this community obtained their main diet from sources such as flora, vegetables and dairy products, though animal protein resources were available to them. Only on special occasions such as festivals did they have the opportunity to eat flesh. Economic growth and improvements in technology and the mass media in recent years have changed the type and quality of their diets, which in turn, resulted in changes in eating habits. Different patterns of diet and local foods have given these people a particular identity that differentiates them from other neighboring communities. In occasions such as religious ceremonies, these people consumed foods that are different from their daily food intake. The acceptance of new food types

has thus resulted in new food behaviors, diminished hierarchical authority within the family and provided both sexes commensally occasions.

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