

## THE ELOUSI PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA AND CHINA

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**Summary.** In the paper, descendants of cross-ethnic marriages between Russian women and Han Chinese men are observed by the author as two solid and mutually related communities. One is nowadays residing in Australia as a diaspora; the other is in the People's Republic of China where the forebears of the first group resided. The author used the method of participant observation during his fieldwork in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China (2017) where he became acquainted with the origins of the Australian "Chinese-Russian" diaspora; he did not conduct research in Xinjiang where Chinese Russians also reside. The author's perspective "starts from Australia", whose capital Sydney is one of the most multiethnic and multicultural cities in the world. He suggests a special term to denote these communities — "Eluosi" (in Pinyin transcription from the Chinese 俄罗斯族), which means "Russian", but with a special connotation. Local people in Australia mistake the diaspora under consideration as "Chinese", whereas its members emphasise Russian aspects when constructing their identity. The author has tried to distinguish these features in spheres which involve issues of ethnic self-identity. He has questioned members of the diaspora from 2008 onwards. His method of fieldwork is participant observation, which has included volunteer activity within the diaspora in Sydney for several years. Among the main features of Eluosi identity are the language spoken by members of the community. Understanding this language must take into account the linguistic situation in China as the land of the diaspora's origin and the influence of Orthodox Christianity, especially in the celebration of Orthodox Easter. The author also considers other outstanding features of material culture relevant to construction of the ethnic self-identity, especially female clothing, as well as house decorations. These are observed both for the Australian diaspora and for the land of their origin, that is, in PRC Inner Mongolia. The author's approach belongs to the discipline of cultural anthropology and his research is focused on cross-ethnic couples, youth love and courtship, marriages and everyday circumstances within nuclear families. He has interviewed his respondents touching upon fragile and intimate issues of couples' relationships during dramatic periods of social history in China and in Russian Transbaikalia of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and emigration to China. Due to issues of privacy compliances, no personal information is disclosed. In sum, the author concludes that Eluosi cultural transmission is female, the elusive heritage of "Grannies and mothers", although still conscious of the fathers' origin as Han Chinese.

**Key words:** Australia, China, Russian and Chinese Metis.

### ISSUES OF DEFINITION

Within the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Australia and the city of Sydney there are members the *Eluosi* community, descendants of Russian women and

Chinese men. These people may be mistaken as "Chinese" by outsiders. Without dealing with issues of race and physical anthropology, I can't help admitting that the appearance of average member of the Eluosi diaspora



Eluosi daughters of the second generation and their Han Chinese father

really leaves an ambiguous impression, despite certain anthropological differences which distinguish Eluosi from other Chinese people. These involve the construction of self-identity (and widespread expectations concerning the typical appearance of Russian migrants), which could not be ignored due to the important value of White settlers of Australian for national identity. People who know them, including the author, who had acted as a volunteer among them, call them simply Chinese Russians.

China born Russians estimate their diaspora population as several thousand. They migrated to Australia from the People's Republic of China in the late 1950s — 1960s [Kanevskaya 2008, 129–131]. Descendants of cross-ethnic marriages between Russian women and Chinese men arrived two decades later. In China they (Eluosi ethnic minority according to official Chinese designation) still constitutes one of 56 officially recognised ethnic groups and includes 15,631 persons according to the census of 2010 [National minorities]. “Ethnic Russians” reside primarily in two separate locations. One is situated near the Chinese-Russian border within the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in the Erguna city of the Hulun-Buir aimak. In Russian this area has been called Trekhrechie, which means “the confluence of three rivers”. The other territory with a dense population of ethnic Russians, Eluosi, is situated in the North-West of China in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

In contemporary Russian and English, as well as in contemporary Australian and Russian ethnography, there is no exact name or term for these people. Some scholars, such as Vladimir L. Klyaus from the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who has spent more than a decade studying the culture of this ethnic group in Inner Mongolia, and Andrey P. Zabiyako from Amur State University [Zabiyako 2016], interpret this Chinese minority group as “Russian and Chinese Metis”. Researchers from Transbaikalia, the land of origin of the Cossacks who emigrated to China, Alexei G. Yankov and Alexander P. Tarasov [Tarasov 2012; Yankov, Tarasov 2012], prefer the term “Russians of Trekhrechie” or “ethnic Russians” in PRC. Other contemporary Russian researchers usually adhere to the terms mentioned above. In Australia, as far as I know, this unique ethnic group has not

yet attracted any academic interest. Chinese materials use the term “Russian nationality”, which is a calque of the Chinese concept of “Eluosi zu”; in the Chinese language and ethnographic scholarship, the concepts of “Eluosi ren” and “E guo ren” mean “Russian”. “Eluosi zu” means “Russian by ethnicity”; it implies people who live in China, have Russian roots and are part of the Chinese nation, *Zhonghua minzu*, holding Chinese citizenship.

In my opinion, the term “Russian nationality” and its derivatives are insufficient to reflect the relevant characteristics of this ethnic group; it is merely a mistake by translators from Chinese. In this article, as well as in my other papers I refer to the ethnic group as the “Eluosi”, because it more accurately reflects contemporary issues of self-identity within descendants of mixed marriages between Russian women and Chinese men (although it may also include a very few “pure-blooded” Russians who reside in China). In general, when discussing mixed-ethnic marriages between Russian women and Chinese men, we imply two ethnic groups: Russians and Han Chinese, the main ethnic group in China. Despite this, many sources, including my own respondents, state that there were also marriages between representatives of different Russian ethnic groups (Ukrainians, Tatars) and Chinese ones (Mongolians, Dungans, Koreans, Evenks) [Klyaus 2016].

My argument for the need of a separate name for the given ethnic group is based on my observations of the Eluosi — descendants of mixed marriages between Russians and Han Chinese residing in the area of Erguna, also known as Trekhrechie in Russian historiography; in the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia; and especially in the city of

Sydney in Australia, where the biggest Eluosi community outside the PRC resides. In Sydney, natives from the Xinjiang and the Inner Mongolia groups of Chinese Russians and their descendants form two different groups within the Eluosi diaspora.

The current situation of the Eluosi residing in the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region of the PRC, opposite Inner Mongolia, where I have done field work, is not discussed in this paper.

It is possible that the position of the Chinese scholars towards this group of Eluosi and issues of its cultural heritage, language, and other issues of identity may differ from the situation I myself have observed and which has been recorded by Russian researchers in Inner Mongolia.

As far as the Eluosi diaspora in Sydney, descendants from Inner Mongolia and those from Xinjiang constitute separate groups with different linguistic situations (described below). Both groups do not seem to come into contact with each other often as both of them are sure that they are “not the same” culturally, although they do admit their connection as blood relatives. However, there is another thing uniting the Eluosi from Xinjiang with those from Inner Mongolia. Like the rest of the Chinese community in Sydney, they celebrate Chinese festivals that they had observed since childhood and are active members of the Chinese community. Middle aged Eluosi, in other words, those who migrated to Australia as children 30–35 years ago, speak Chinese at a good level, although many cannot read and write in Chinese. Young people who were born in Australia are losing their knowledge of Chinese, and now not only parents, but also grandparents, have to communicate in English more often than in Chinese. In general, such intergenerational communication, according to my data, cannot be considered very effective. The young and old generation have difficulty understanding one another, which leads to complications or even the impossibility of passing cultural skills and history on to the young generation. The knowledge acquired by the older Eluosi is in danger of dying with them. Mature and school-aged Eluosi are brought together only during certain Orthodox events or rituals such as: weddings, funerals, occasional prayer outings with grandma to church during Easter or Christmas.

## **REASONS FOR USING THE PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION METHOD AND PERSONAL FIELD WORK. IMPRESSIONS FROM INNER MONGOLIA**

The starting point of my last trip to Inner Mongolia in 2017 was a village located a few kilometres away from the Russian border and about a 1.5 hour drive from the town of Erguna (previously known as Labudalin, Labdarin in Russian spelling), an administrative center of the city with the same name. The decision I made to start from one of the villages near Labdarin was taken on the advice from the agent of a small private media company who made tourist clips for the Chinese internet-market, who told me that a concentration of Eluosi was more likely to be found in smaller villages than in Erguna-Labudalin, as I had previously thought. Thus, I traveled by bus to Manzhouli — Erguna and settled in the first family inn I saw. The inn was located on the province-level highway from Manzhouli to the Eluosi populated townships. The woman who owned the family inn made a small lapse when she delayed in registering my foreign passport immediately on arrival which was required by the authorities in this Chinese border zone. Residents from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, i.e., Uyghurs, also had to be registered upon arrival. I left my luggage in a fairly comfortable room with all the amenities such as internet and a television that did not work and went out onto the central street. Passing by a police station a police officer appeared right behind me and spoke to me in Chinese because he probably mistook me for a native from Xinjiang. Upon my return to the inn, I encountered another policeman and also had to explain my situation to him. Convinced by the impeccable state of my documents, the policeman left the inn. This vivid event, although insignificant, inspired me to choose the method of participant observation for my data collection from local Eluosi, travelling as an ordinary tourist armed with video and photo equipment. After all, “the ethnographer must do as others do, live as others, eat, work and experience the same daily patterns as others” [Madden 2010, 16].

## **FORMATION OF THE ELUOSI MINORITY DUE TO CROSS-ETHNIC MARRIAGES**

I’m going to argue that from the perspective of cultural anthropology, cross-ethnic

marriages<sup>1</sup> constituted the basis for the emergence and formation of the Eluosi minority in China. Russian natives were usually the brides. The roots of this phenomenon can be found in the history. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the Chinese Eastern Railway was built, through which the Russian Crown attempted to fulfil the idea of creating *Zhelrossija*, “Yellow Russia” in the Manchurian lands, which failed. Interaction between Russians and Chinese entered a new stage: Chinese men found themselves in the Russian Empire in search of work, whereas the Russians arrived in Manchuria with plans to stay “for good” and lived side to side with the Chinese. Personal relationships sprang up between representatives of both peoples, which were eventually tied by marriage. In the early stage of Russian-Chinese interaction it can be assumed that cross-ethnic marriages were not frequent. In the Russian Empire legislation forbade marriage between persons belonging to different religious denominations. Even romantic relationships did not seem likely due to ethnic stereotypes: Great-Russian rejection and denial of non-Orthodox minorities and Qing-Chinese fear of foreigners and the feeling of Chinese superiority over “foreign devils”, *yang guizi*, and in particular over *laomaози*, Russians [Antokolskaya 2002].

Remnants of such a historical attitude still appear in interviews with the ethnic Russians of Trekhrechie who moved to Sydney in the 1960s. I’ve often asked questions about inter-gender relationships in Trekhrechie connected to ethnic origin, but my respondents often avoided answering my questions of that type. A male Russian native of the village Shang-Kuli confessed that he was attracted to the Chinese girls from his village, however when “...they came to the social club to dance, the Russian guys were not favored among them and normally nothing further came out of just dancing”. Although they coexisted peacefully, such intimations suggest the lack of great attraction between representatives of the two peoples. This is also evidenced by dismissive nicknames, such as “*khodya*” and “*fazan*” (literally a species of game bird), used by Russians about Chinese, “*laomaози*” used by

Chinese about Russians, and “*ermaози*”, literally, “half-blood”, used in relation to the Eluosi. These pejoratives emerged in both Tsarist Russia and the Qing Empire.

Both Russian and Chinese scholars acknowledge that the Socialist Revolution of 1917, followed by the Civil War and its consequences of disruption and famine, were among the reasons for the mass emergence of Russian-Chinese couples. Less is said about abolishing the ecclesiastical laws in Russia, which undoubtedly provided Chinese men in Russia with equal rights and made it easier for them to marry local women. It is not an exaggeration to say that all known couples adhered to the same pattern: it was Chinese men who wooed and married Russian women. A vibrant family legend about a red silk garment as a gift for a soon-to-be bride was recorded in Erguna [Klyaus 2016]. A native of Enhe village in the Erguna municipality told how his Chinese ancestor travelled a long distance by horseback from a Russian town to the Chinese border to buy a red silk dress which his Russian sweetheart requested. In July of 2017 I met with Anatoly Zhang Jingfu, a composer, native of Xinjiang and an Eluosi of the third generation. He writes his own poems and music for his songs, which have a bright ethnic coloring in which Russian, Uyghur, Kazakh and Han motives intertwine. One of his songs is called *Yi ba hong sha qun*, “a light red dress which can fit into a fist” and is the perfect reflection of a legend recorded in Inner Mongolia. Zhang Jingfu heard this story from the Eluosi people in Xinjiang. Whether this story is a family legend or whether it circulated throughout the entire ethnos is impossible to determine. In relation to the legend, the desire for economic prosperity can be seen as one of the main reasons for marriages between Russian women and Chinese men in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After the formation of the PRC, especially during the years of the Cultural Revolution and its ten-year aftermath, the demographic and political situation played a major role in the marriages of Russian women of Trekhrechie as well as the first and second generation Eluosi women. Toward the mid-1960s, there were very few ethnic Russians left in China

<sup>1</sup> Deliberate usage of the “cross-ethnic” term indicates for me a conceptual difference between discourse on race issues possible in American scholarship or public discourse when applied to mixed marriages and, on the contrary, an approach to multi-ethnic and mixed family level relations adhered both by Russian and Chinese scholars.

and this made difficult if not impossible to “find a pure-blooded Russian man” for the few Russian and Eluosi girls of marriageable age.

In a way, as regards the territory of its origin near the Chinese-Russian border, the Eluosi community has emerged simultaneously from two different diasporas: Chinese in Russia and Russians in China: Chinese visiting workers in Russia in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and peasants and Cossacks who settled in China during early decades of the same century. But marriages were always carried out between Chinese (mainly Han) men and Russian women. It should be noted that the role of Russian women in the formation of the Eluosi as a unique ethnic group is very important and is worthy of independent study.

### VALUES AND GENDER ISSUES RELATED TO CHINESE-RUSSIAN CROSS-ETHNIC MARRIAGES

The majority of both Russian and Chinese sources include stereotypical descriptions of easy-going and hardworking Chinese men who offered their hand and heart to their Russian loves, easily converted to Orthodoxy, accepted new customs without forgetting their own, and learned Russian as much as they could. It was perhaps their willingness to conform that encouraged Russian women to marry them.

During my conversations with Eluosi men in Sydney and even during my trips to Erguna I dared to ask my respondents a question on a rather touchy matter, namely: “Was your mother / grandmother happy with her marriage to your Chinese father / grandfather?” Many respondents didn’t admit to happiness in their answers, but stressed other reasons. As an example here is an interview I conducted in Chinese with a 67-year-old Sydney Eluosi woman who spouse was Han Chinese (the English translation is my own): “*My parents argued all their lives. My mum was a half-blood, and my father was a Han Chinese. Once in 1970, when I was 19, I took my mum’s side. My father took the night pot and threw it at me. I then told my father that I would no longer stay in this house. I went to live with my friend and after a while married the first Han man who asked me to marry him. I fancied a half-blood guy, he was one of us, like me, but he did not pay attention to me. It was also much safer to marry a Han because at the time everyone was scared of discrimination against the half-blooded*”.

Another respondent confessed that she married a Han Chinese who was a government worker. Her family suffered a great deal during the Cultural Revolution and she “did not want to see history repeat itself” and tried to avoid risks. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, at least during the time of writing, I was unable to speak to the older members of the Eluosi community. However, according to the stories of my participants who are now 55–70 years old, their mothers who married Han Chinese suitors were more often miserable than happy, but they “lived for the sake of <their> children”. All of what has been said does not apply to those families where both parents were (are) Eluosi or have at least one Russian parent. The delicate subject of “happiness within the family life of Eluosi people” is not raised either by Russian or Chinese scholars. It can be assumed that the Eluosi are afraid that a marriage with a Han Chinese or member of another ethnic group would be unhappy. Happy marriages are expected between “one’s own people”, members of the Eluosi community. One of my respondents in Enhe said: “*It would be much better to be with one of our own*” (Eluosi). Separation between “us and them”, “our own and theirs” can be seen in many respondents’ evaluations. In this case, “our own” are the Eluosi people — the descendants of mixed marriages, they are neither singularly Russian nor Han-Chinese. Additionally, it should be noted that many, if not most of my respondents, both from Erguna and Sydney, wish to see their children marry either an Eluosi or Russian. However they understand that the “*times are not like before*” and that “*it’s hard to find one of our own people*”.

### THE MAINTENANCE OF MOTHERS’ HERITAGE: CLOTHING ISSUES AND THE FORFEIT OF PATRONYMICS

A distinct outward feature of the Eluosi, especially of the women, is their way of dressing. The traditional female Han costume consisted of a jacket and pants; the head is not covered. This traditional costume has essentially remained the same up to this day. When communicating with the Eluosi, the first thing one may notice is that both in Erguna and very often in Sydney older women wear skirts or dresses, which is not typical for elderly or middle-age Han Chinese. Han elderly women usually wear pants, jackets or shirts. In Sydney some elderly Eluosi women

who are natives of rural Inner Mongolia wear headscarves (natives from Xinjiang don't wear them). According to Chinese statistics, most of the Xinjiang Eluosi have always resided in urban areas and usually all urban dwellers, not to mention their younger descendants, tend not to wear headscarves. Many women of the older generation of Eluosi who survived the Cultural Revolution stress these features of attire with great pride. They state that as soon as the prohibition laws were eliminated, they returned to their traditional costumes — skirts and dresses and “*have not taken off <their> Russian skirts since then*”. Through this difference in everyday clothing the Eluosi seem to oppose themselves to their “fathers’ culture” and follow the traditions of their “mothers’ culture”. This only applies to older women; men of all ages and the younger generation of Eluosi do not follow any traditional ways of dressing.

Nearly all outward signs marking traditional ways are currently disappearing as the Australian “melting pot” has assimilated non-Anglo cultures. As I have shown in the documentary *In Between* [Rakhmanov 2015], although they try to identify themselves as “*Russian-Chinese*”, young Australian Eluosi are first of all Australians and then Chinese, and already no longer Russian. The homes of older generation Eluosi in Sydney illustrate the main features of typical Russian homes of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century: rugs on the walls with pictures of swans; pyramids of pillows stacked on the beds; tear-off calendars; black and white photographs of family members on the walls; and a television set covered with a silk cloth to protect it from the dust. It seems that Australian Eluosi of older generations were able to preserve features of Russian material culture in their homes even better than the families I visited in Erguna. Chinese culture prevails in the homes of the Erguna Eluosi despite the fact that the homes were built in a Russian manner and style; I noticed the stereotypical Russian pyramid of pillows in only one family. Usually, the beds there are made in the standard Chinese Han way: the blanket is folded into a square and put on the headboard, followed by a rectangular pillow put on top. The bed sheet is usually left as is, without being covered by a blanket.

Personal naming conventions within the Eluosi ethnic group is no less interesting. Russian names generally consist the three parts: the first or given name, the patronymic,

and the last or family name. The patronymic consists of the official (full) given name of a person's father with a suffix added to it. This suffix means “son of” or “daughter of”. Thus the patronymic takes a different form for men than for women. The men's suffixes always are *-ovich* or *-evich*, while for a woman they are *-ovna* or *-evna*. In everyday life, most of Eluosi follow the common Russian rules and use a shortened form of the first name, a diminutive that connotes more familiarity. The Eluosi living in China register births under Chinese names and so only Han names appear in their official documents. On the contrary, most of those Eluosi who found themselves in Australia, with the receipt of new IDs often changed their names to Russian: the unofficial Russian first name given to them at birth and the Russian surname of their mother or grandmother, depending on the generation. One of my respondents from the village Dragotsenka, now Sanhe, in Trekhrechie, changed his official Chinese name straight upon arrival in Hong Kong on route to Australia. His father, one of the few Eluosi that I have recorded was a “pure-blooded Russian”, a native of Russia, and his mother was an Eluosi of the first generation born in China. His family was one of the first families from Trekhrechie who moved to Australia, in December 1978, to reunite with his father's brothers.

I've only observed a few bilingual Eluosi in Erguna who understand the concept of the patronymic (*fu chen* in Chinese, *otchestvo* in Russian). The majority of Eluosi in Sydney do not use their patronymics either and have a very vague understanding of their importance in the traditional and official Russian conventions of address. Probably this is because that the majority of Eluosi fathers were not of Russian descent, but were Han or Mongols, Evenks or Hui Chinese. Even if they called themselves by their Russian names, these names were not noted in official documents and therefore had no official status.

This does not only apply to the Eluosi residing in Sydney, but also to those who live in Erguna. Not all Eluosi know or make a distinction between full Russian names and their diminutive forms. Therefore, in Australia one may come across names such as Kesha (diminutive of Innokentii) Zhang and Anya (the diminutive of Anna). A “Valentina” may not even know that she is also “Valya” and Gosha does not even notice the obvious connection of his name with “George” (Georgii).

Moreover, these names are often written in Latin letters (in English) with the wrong spelling. According to my fieldwork findings in Sydney, the Xinjiang Eluosi have a better understanding of the structure of the Russian name than the descendants of those from Inner Mongolia. Perhaps this can be explained by the higher level of primary education among the elderly Eluosi from Xinjiang, who had been urban residents. However, despite this, the majority of those from Erguna as well as Australian Eluosi go by their Russian names in informal social gatherings, even if their names are not officially documented. I believe this indicates a connection with matriarchal culture and contrasts with paternal Han culture.

On the other hand, the formation of the Eluosi minority occurred during dramatic historical events, i.e., war, revolution, and the subsequent political repressions that led to complete isolation from the culture of their mothers. Interviewed Eluosi themselves not only talk with pride and warmth about their grandmothers who faced many years of suffering to survive, but that also highlight the special qualities of their grandfathers: they spoke Russian very well, were jacks of all trades, worked in the mines, kept cattle, and so on. In the oral narrative about a red silk garment ([Klyaus 2016], Zhang Jingfu) mentioned above, the main character is portrayed as a brave lad with no flaws. The Erguna Eluosi acknowledge their ethnic uniqueness and differences from other Chinese ethnic groups, although, unlike other Chinese minorities, they consider themselves part of the Han ethnos. Many of them do not know where their mothers or grandmothers came from, but are sure that their grandfather was from either the province of Shandong or Hebei. Therefore, the Eluosi should not be seen as the descendants of Russians who embody certain cultural or religious traditions of Russian ethnicity, but rather, they should be seen as the result of the merger of two cultures, two religious traditions — Orthodoxy and traditional Chinese folk beliefs. They should be seen as the carriers of the unique hybrid culture of *metis*, as they consider themselves, a cross-ethnic character.

With some exclusions, similar observations apply to the Sydney Eluosi. But the Sydney Eluosi are not heterogeneous in their geographical origin.

Judging by my questionnaires, the Eluosi in Inner Mongolia tend to have more interest in Orthodoxy and go to Western Sydney-based Orthodox church more often. Traits of the neighboring Turkic peoples can be seen within the culture of the Xinjiang Eluosi in Sydney, as they lived back to back with Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyzes and others in China. The Xinjiang Eluosi cuisine is an interesting combination of Russian, Turkic and Han Chinese culinary traditions.

#### **DIFFERENCES IN THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION OF THE ELUOSI IN SYDNEY AND IN THE PRC**

Only a few of the particular features of the Eluosi language situation in Sydney and Trekhrechie will be touched upon in the current article. In the past, the Russian language was widespread in Trekhrechie-Erguna and the children of cross-ethnic marriages were raised “soaking in” two cultures; they went to Russian and then Soviet schools. Today, for the majority of Eluosi in both Erguna and Sydney, Russian does not appear to be the dominant language. Even in Inner Mongolia Russian is not taught in schools and only the elders still speak it consistently in everyday life. Both the Russian and Chinese language spoken by the Eluosi contain specific forms. Some bilingual Eluosi may reproduce Russian grammatical and stylistic norms when speaking Chinese, which probably makes their speech “foreign to the ear” to Chinese people. One may even hear some Russian words mixed into the Chinese of those who speak only a little bit of Russian. This Russian linguistic interference turns out to be a distinct feature for the construction of Eluosi identity. Chinese grammatical and stylistic features can also be noticed in the Russian spoken by the Eluosi, to some extent a colloquial Eluosi Russian. A fluent Russian speaking Eluosi may begin a thought in Russian but be unable to continue, and with a wave of the hand transition into a mixture of both Chinese and Russian. Because I speak both languages, I often came across such situations when I spoke with natives of Enhe, Shiwei and other villages of Erguna. During my field trip around Erguna, I was mainly able to verify the accuracy of the information noted by Tarasov and Yankov [Yankov, Tarasov 2012]: the elders were able to speak Russian, some of the them at a fluent or even native level.

According to Klyaus, only 100–150 Eluosi residing in the region are able to speak fluent Russian [Klyaus 2015]. Therefore it can be assumed that there are even fewer of those who can converse in Russian at an advanced level. I was able to observe how some elder bilinguals speak Russian among themselves. Many middle-aged Eluosi who were born or grew up during the Cultural Revolution understand colloquial Russian quite well, but prefer to speak Chinese. The majority of young people have no knowledge of Russian and do not even understand it. It should be noted that, despite the fact that the Chinese government, especially in recent years, has paid a lot of attention to the culture and economics of the Eluosi, it has completely ignored the linguistic component. More than four decades ago Soviet schools were closed and the Eluosi were left unable to receive education in their mother tongue. From 1992, Russian has ceased being taught as a foreign language in all of the villages of Inner Mongolia. However, the government in Heilongjiang province has been attempting to revive the almost dead Manchu language. Mongolian has been flourishing in Inner Mongolia and I have met many Mongols who speak Chinese with a strong Mongolian accent. In the provinces of Jilin and Liaoning, the Korean language has also been receiving great support from the government. It is possible that Russian is the only still existing language in an autonomous region whose development is not receiving any support from the Chinese authorities at all. All of the Eluosi that I've spoken to genuinely regret the situation as they have come to understand that a language has no chances of survival if it is not supported by the government. In October 2017 I found out that the Eluosi community in the city of Yakeshi of the Hulun-Buir aimak appealed to the local people's government to assist with organising language courses. These classes commenced in autumn 2017 and were taught by Han lecturers from the Hulun-Buir University. It is difficult to say why the government has turned a blind eye on what is currently happening to one of the traditional languages of the Eluosi.

Some Chinese official sources, such as [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn) [Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Zhongyang Zhengfu] or [china.com.cn](http://china.com.cn) [Zhongguo Wang], regard Eluosi families as bilingual, however the situation in reality is far more negative, because only a few elder

members of the Eluosi community can be considered bilingual. The situation regarding the linguistic situation has been described recently in the book *Nei Menggu Eluosizu, the Russian Nationality in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region* [Zhang Xiaobin 2015, 93–102], but the writers do not try to explain why the use of the language has been declining.

For historical reasons, many older-generation Eluosi who live in contemporary Erguna and Sydney have poor knowledge of written Chinese. They read and write with difficulty. On many occasions, I have seen Chinese words being written in Russian letters in a simple way: a mixture of the Palladius system for transcribing Chinese characters, based on Russian letters, and phonetically (“writing the way it sounds”). One who does not know both languages and their transliteration will most likely be unable to make sense of such written texts.

Among the Sydney Eluosi English serves as the spoken language of the young generation. However, even the English spoken by the young Eluosi includes words of such semantic spheres as kinship (*dyadya* “uncle”, *tyotya* “aunt”, *babushka* “grandmother”) and certain items of Russian cuisine (*kotletki* “rissoles”, *khleb* “bread”). They indicate the kind of relationship the speakers have with Russian culture. Some dishes on the holiday tables of the Sydney Eluosi of the elder generation are borrowed from Russian cuisine. It is thus still possible to observe the interesting combination of cultures that the Eluosi in Sydney have preserved.

As far as it concerns the Sydney Eluosi, there appears a definite though not quite significant difference in their Chinese speech (they speak different Putonghua dialects of the standard Mandarin Chinese). The level of knowledge of Russian differs significantly: more Xinjiang Eluosi are literate in Russian whereas those from Inner Mongolia have no knowledge of written Russian at all.

#### ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY AND THE CELEBRATION OF EASTER

The Eluosi people of Sydney as well in Erguna enjoy celebrating Russian Orthodox holidays. Without going into much detail, I have noticed that neither Erguna nor Sydney Eluosi celebrate Orthodox Christmas, but Eluosi Sydney-siders accept Catholic Christmas as part of their festive season: they send each other WeChat messages and gather together for meals. The Orthodox “Paskha”, or





Bilingual Eluosi mother and daughter

Easter, remains probably the main *ethnic-specific* celebration for the Eluosi in both areas. This is when the baking of *kulich* pastry, the gathering of the entire extended family for a meal during which on dinner tables next to Chinese dishes one will find the essential Russian *kotletky* with potatoes, rissole and mashed potatoes, and preserved cucumbers (gherkins). Despite the fact that in Australia, fresh vegetables are available all year round, many Eluosi still adhere to their traditions and continue to preserve and pickle vegetables. In Erguna, the celebration of Easter is supported by the local government and is widely observed in the villages. According to some, the celebration of Easter appears to be more of a cultural festival rather than a religious celebration [Zhang Xiaobin 2013]. As I was told in Erguna, Easter was always celebrated even in the 1970s and 1980s and included traditional folk festivities and family feasts. Except for painting eggs as a part of the religious ritual, I have not seen any mention of mass visits to the church or the practice of religious rituals at home during Easter, although the older generation may continue to perform certain rituals [Klyaus 2015]. In recent years, communal feasts have been organised within the villages at “*the expense of the treasury*”, i.e. the local government. Trips with transportation to neighboring villages provided by the village government have been organised to take part in their festivities. Observing the attitude of the Eluosi toward religion, some parallels can be drawn within the history of the development of Christianity in Korea, where it represented the response of traditional Korean culture to Japanese aggression that aimed at the systematic destruction of all things Korean and the forcing of Japanese culture onto Koreans. Having been based on the “Protestant ethic”,

Christianity acted as a unifying factor in Korean resistance to the Japanese and “became perceived as not only a religion of progress, but also as the national Korean religion and an important component of the anti-colonial protest ideology” [Lankov 2006]. The generation of Eluosi whose youth took place in the 1940s — 1960s, before the Russians left China, grew up around the Orthodox cultural traditions inherited from their mothers. As we know, despite certain cultural differences, Chinese fathers did not oppose or resist their children’s inheritance of Orthodoxy from their Russian mothers, but often even declared themselves Orthodox and were baptised. Whether this was noticed or not by the Chinese fathers, Orthodoxy naturally blended with the Chinese traditions they upheld. During the mid-1960s, after the prohibition of religious rituals, the destruction of churches and the confiscation and burning of ritual objects that had been passed down from generation to generation, from mothers to daughters, Orthodoxy, as well as the language and other elements of the Russian traditional culture, became forbidden; the delicate threads which connected the people to their mothers’ culture were severed. According to stories I’ve heard, many were afraid of being severely punished and therefore hid all icons and religious objects but still continued to pray furtively. The children of the 1960s and 1970s grew up without a traditional church education. Following the easing of religious persecution by the atheistic government in the 1980s and the gradual resurrection of Han folk traditions, the current state of Orthodox Christianity in Erguna may be described as follows. A single Orthodox church stands in Labudalin; the number of older parishioners is small, because the young have no interest in religion due to receiving an atheist education; yet certain religious practices are approved by officials. All this has led to the fact that the majority of Erguna Eluosi consider themselves as Orthodox without knowing much about the religion itself. Orthodoxy became a “common accepted part of Eluosi identity” and is often mentioned by guidebooks and ethnographical information on the area. During my conversations with former party and government workers and members of the “Society for the Study of Russian Ethnicity in the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia”, I was told that by society and the government accept that the Eluosi people visit church,

hold christenings and celebrate festivals such as Easter. During my last trip, I gradually noticed that Orthodoxy is approved as the “official religion” of the Eluosi and supported by the Chinese government as long as it stays at a level that does not come into conflict with the Constitution of the PRC. The Labudalin Church and a small chapel in the village of Enhe do not function fully, perhaps because of the cautious attitude of the officials, according to the Chinese proverb that “one never rushes if one has knowledge of the time”. Such prudence is believed to guarantee the unity of the *Zhonghua minzu*, the Chinese nation. Under the supervision and influence of contemporary Chinese legislation and the educational system, Orthodoxy affiliation seems to be mostly formal. Attempts by Russian scholars to find evidence of genuine religious connection with Orthodoxy mainly concern the elderly Eluosi of Inner Mongolia. The younger generation has little and shallow knowledge of Orthodoxy. I suppose that such confessional affiliation among the Eluosi of Inner Mongolia and in particular of Erguna indicates that this minority group is neither Russian-Chinese nor Chinese-Russian. For me it proves that the Eluosi both in Inner Mongolia and in Sydney constitute a solid and unique ethnic group and that their uniqueness lies in their cultural, religious, linguistic, anthropological present and past.

### SINGING AMONG THE ELUOSI

The fact that the Eluosi love to sing, which is often promoted in Chinese information booklets about the group, is not an exaggeration. They sing very often and it should be acknowledged that they not only sing very well, but also in a very interesting manner: they sing “mum’s (mama’s) songs” — the songs that they inherited from before the 1960s and managed not to forget entirely. From the mid-1960s onwards, cultural exchange between the USSR and PRC ceased, so that popular Soviet songs of the time no longer travelled to the borderline villages and cities where the Eluosi lived, and old songs were slowly becoming forgotten. The development of singing culture came to a halt, as if a door had been closed. Eluosi popular art and culture no longer had the opportunity to develop alongside the *mother culture*. “Frozen in time”, they had to preserve grains of the old culture here and there, and even today they continue to reconstruct what their mothers

and grandmothers once sang. In Enhe you may more often hear old songs being sung than in Sydney. Many of them are not well known or have not yet been recorded by scholars, for example, V. Klyaus discovered a song hitherto unknown to him that I recorded in a video clip during my last field trip to Trekhrechie. Many songs sung by the Eluosi have “different lyrics” from known versions. They are able to sing such well-known songs as “The Cossack Walked Home”, “The Ural Hawthorn Tree”, “The Noisy Reed” and “Am I To Blame?” in both Russian and Chinese. They also sing Mongolian, Uyghur and Kazakh songs. The Eluosi of Erguna and Sydney are great admirers of the Russian *garmon’* and always invite an accordionist to their parties; with the musical accompaniment they sing whatever they like without even knowing the lyrics. Internet communication allows the Sydney Eluosi to use Chinese sources and to experience contemporary Russian pop music as well as to rediscover old Soviet songs that were familiar to them during their childhood. This can be observed through a WeChat group (Chinese phone application), which I’ve set up for research purposes. About 150 Eluosi who live in Sydney are members of the group. The art of singing is one of the most crucial links which connect the older generation of Eluosi people to their former homeland and the language of their Russian ancestors. Their children who are younger than fifty years old and who have grown up in Australia do not seem to feel the same interest.

### CONCLUSIONS

I’d like to summarise my observations of the Eluosi both in Erguna and in Sydney. Preservation of the unique culture of this minority is possible under two circumstances which seem mutually contradictory. The first crucial factor is support from the government. Local officials in Erguna, under the guidelines of the central government, supports the economic, cultural and spiritual development and maintenance of Eluosi identity (with a few exceptions, their language being one of them). Due to the good relationship between the governments of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, the majority of Eluosi people in Erguna are able to visit Russia or maintain contact with their relatives in their historical homeland. Many Eluosi are engaged in cross-border trade. The Eluosi culture of Erguna is in the process of revival and

development, which without a doubt connects them more closely to the bigger Han Chinese ethnos. However, this does not mean that the Eluosi will disappear from the demographical map of China. Often in such situations, people begin to develop an instinct of self-protection and, possibly, even cultural self-isolation. This is exactly what happened to the Eluosi of Trekhrechie-Sanhe in the 1960s — 1970s. During that time they were pushed to acknowledge their differences, something they continue to live with to this day.

As far as this concerns the Eluosi of Sydney, everything has happened and continues to happen in a completely opposite way. Australia is considered to be one of the most democratic and liberal countries in the world, which is indicated by freedom of speech, individuality and creed. At first glance, this would seem to mean that Australia is a fertile political and cultural ground for the preservation of small ethnic groups. The Australian government repeatedly announces the triumph of “a multicultural way of life in the country, also known as “multiculturalism” (SBS channel 2017) [United, strong, successful]. However, many Australian scholars like Hassan Hage have doubts about the Australian version of multiculturalism and simply see it as a “white core with an ethnically homogenous periphery” [Stratton 1998]. The white racial core appears to be the main determining factor in the Australian “melting pot” in which the second generation of Eluosi who have lived here since the end of the 1970s have been *brewing* and *melting*. My study of the Eluosi people of Australia will continue; there are still many unrevealed subjects and unheard voices of ethnographical and cultural interest. However, it is obvious that the younger generation of Australian Eluosi are Australians, who just possess Russian or Chinese names. The blend of Russian and Chinese traditions that make up Eluosi culture continues to exist and take on new forms in

Chinese Erguna, whereas it is dissipating in democratic and multicultural Australia. The Eluosi who settled in Australia more than 30 years ago found themselves in an environment which was completely new to them, with a foreign language and an unknown culture. Gradually, those who came to Australia at a mature age learned some English. Today it is necessary for them to communicate with their grandchildren and to orient themselves during supermarket shopping or communicating with neighbor using English. The new life and the new society did not exert direct pressure on the culture and language of Eluosi. Instead, it brought new challenges: for the sake of well-being, one must learn English and accept local traditions, which, according to Australian scholars, are based on the “white” Anglo-Saxon ways. However, the Eluosi have discovered that the knowledge of Chinese assisted them greatly, since Chinese became the second most widely spoken language in the country, after English. Their knowledge of Chinese is necessary within the Australian Chinese community. Russian, on the other hand, is rarely spoken among the Eluosi of Sydney — only when the elderly make contact with the local Russian migrant community. When answering the question “What does Russia mean to you?”, most Eluosi people reply with a similar answer: “We feel somewhat close to Russia; we would like to visit and take a look at the country. However, we fear the unknown and unfamiliar”. Many of the Eluosi have relatives in Russia who returned to the Soviet Union fifty years ago due to the Cultural Revolution in China. However, as communication links were broken off, for many it has been hard to find relatives and restore relations. But as one lady of Eluosi descent said to me: “*Life in Australia is good. Australia has given me many things and opportunities. Russia doesn't really interest me right now, however I would return to China in a heartbeat*” [Rakhmanov 2015].

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# ЭЛОСЫ В АВСТРАЛИИ И КИТАЕ

ЕВГЕНИЙ АРДИНАТОВИЧ СИНГАТУЛИН

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**Аннотация.** Наверное, не будет преувеличением сказать, что австралийский город Сидней — один из самых многонациональных и поликультурных городов мира. Среди всего этнического и культурного разнообразия современной Австралии, и Сиднея в частности, представители народа элосов — потомки русских женщин и китайских мужчин, на первый взгляд, мало отличаются внешне от китайцев. Однако человек наблюдательный сразу заметит их антропологическую несхожесть с китайцами, иные этнические черты в их лицах. Интересно, что в современном русском языке, в том числе в научном дискурсе, нет устоявшегося названия этого народа. Некоторые ученые, в частности В. Кляус, уже более десяти лет исследующий жизнь этой этнической группы в китайском Приаргунье, и А. Забияко называют их русско-китайскими метисами. Забайкальские исследователи А. Янков и А. Тарасов используют наравне термины «русские Трехречья» и «этнические русские». Другие современные исследователи используют те же наименования. В китайских переведенных на русский язык материалах употребляется неудачный с точки зрения норм русского языка термин «русская национальность», что является калькой с китайского «элосы цзу». В этнографической литературе на китайском языке выражения «элосы жэнь», «эго жэнь» значат «русский, россиянин». «Элосы цзу» — русский по национальности, именно так называют представителей народа, проживающего в Китае, имеющего русские корни и являющегося частью китайского этноса — «чжунхуа миньцзу».

Итак, осмелимся отнести наименования «русская национальность», «русская народность» к ошибкам переводчиков и предлагаем к обсуждению введение в современную науку наименования «элосы» (от кит. «русский, Россия», из монг. «орос» с тем же значением) как более соответствующее самоидентичности потомков от смешанных браков между русскими женщинами и китайцами, а также теперь уже весьма малочисленных русских, оставшихся в КНР. Говоря о смешанных браках русских женщин и китайцев, мы подразумеваем два этноса — собственно русских и ханьцев, основной этнической группы в Китае. Наша аргументация необходима введения отдельного наименования для данной этнической группы построена на наблюдениях за жизнью элосов в китайском Приаргунье — Трехречье (Автономный район Внутренняя Монголия, КНР), а также в Сиднее (Австралия), где проживает, видимо, наиболее многочисленная их община за пределами КНР. Сиднейскую общину элосов, в свою очередь, можно разделить на две группы — синьцзянскую и внутреннемонгольскую. В данной статье речь идет о культуре второй из них.

В исследовании кратко рассмотрена история формирования данной этнической группы на территории Китая, проблема непростых межэтнических отношений и причины возникновения смешанных браков. Трудолюбие, покладистый характер, а главное — уступчивость китайцев в вопросах культуры, религии, языка, очевидно, были причинами того, что русские девушки вступали с ними в брак. Однако в представлениях элосов брак с ханьцем или представителем другого этноса Китая, как правило, не счастливый, а счастливы те, кто выходят «за своих».

Уделено внимание традиционному женскому костюму элосов, который носят представительницы старшего поколения, следуя традициям «материнской» культуры. Анализируется не менее интересная ситуация с именами личными элосов. Большинство из тех, кто оказался в Австралии, с получением новых документов поменяли свои имена на русские: неофициальное русское имя, данное при рождении, и русскую фамилию их мамы или бабушки. При этом не все элосы делают различия между полными русскими именами и их уменьшительно-ласкательными формами.

В статье анализируются некоторые особенности языковой ситуации в данных регионах. В настоящее время для большинства элосов русский язык в Трехречье и Сиднее не является основным: он не преподается в школах и в семьях на нем говорят лишь старики. Иногда двуязычные элосы могут перенести грамматические или стилистические нормы русского языка на китайский, употребить русскую лексику в китайской речи. Влияние же китайского языка

на русский куда более заметно. Государство, в последние годы уделяя внимание культуре и экономике элосов, к сожалению, игнорирует языковой вопрос. При этом многие элосы старшего поколения, проживающие в Трехречье и Сиднее, плохо владеют и письменным китайским языком, записывая китайские слова русскими буквами лишь одним им понятным способом. В английском языке молодого поколения сиднейских элосов еще присутствуют *dyada*, *tyotyua*, *babushka*, *kotletki* и другие слова, указывающие на тонкую связь с русской культурой.

Обращено внимание на то, что в интерьере домов и кухне сиднейских элосов старшего поколения можно заметить много деталей традиционного русского быта второй половины XX в., русская основа здесь сохранилась лучше, чем в Трехречье.

Исследуется вопрос о том, как элосы и в Сиднее, и в Трехречье чтут русские церковные праздники, при этом не вдаваясь в подробности христианских ритуалов. Как известно, китайские отцы не только не противились наследованию православия детьми от русских жен, но зачастую и сами крестились. Всё это «замешивалось» на традиционных китайских верованиях. Попытки российских исследователей найти глубокую веру, знание обрядов и желание их практиковать не могут дать больших результатов: элосы Трехречья — не русские китайцы или китайские русские, это особый этнос, сложившийся в ходе общения двух диаспоральных групп. Роль женщины в формировании этой уникальной этнической группы важна и достойна отдельного исследования. Думается, элосы должны быть признаны результатом диффузии двух культур, двух традиций.

Отмечается, что сиднейские элосы неоднородны по своему географическому происхождению. Выходцы из Внутренней Монголии не владеют письменным русским языком, однако более религиозны, чем синьцзянские элосы. Но и те и другие вместе с остальной китайской общиной Сиднея отмечают китайские праздники, хорошо владеют китайским языком. Молодежь теряет китайский язык, говорит по-английски, старое и молодое поколение плохо понимают друг друга, а следовательно, и возникает трудность передачи культурных навыков молодым.

Речь в статье идет и о певческой культуре этого народа, которая уже перестала развиваться. У элосов Трехречья чаще, чем у сиднейских, можно услышать традиционные русские песни. Элосы и Трехречья и Сиднея — большие любители русской гармошки. Песня — это еще одно из тех хрупких культурных звеньев, которое соединяет людей старшего поколения с исторической родиной и языком предков.

Сохранение культуры народа возможно при двух, казалось бы, противоречащих друг другу обстоятельствах: это поддержка государства и, как ни парадоксально, притеснения национальных языка и культуры — часто в такой ситуации у народа вырабатывается инстинкт самосохранения и, возможно, культурной самоизоляции. Так произошло и с данным этносом в Трехречье.

В Сиднее всё происходило и происходит по-другому. Казалось бы, в демократической Австралии создана благодатная почва для сохранения культур малых народов. Однако австралийские интеллектуалы видят мультикультурализм по-австралийски не иначе как с «белой сердцевиной и этнически неоднородной периферией» — в этом «плавильном котле» варится уже второе поколение элосов, проживающих здесь с конца 1970-х гг. Австралийские элосы молодого поколения — это уже австралийцы с русскими или китайскими фамилиями и именами. На вопрос, чем для них является Россия, они не могут дать однозначного ответа: чувствуют какое-то родство, хотелось бы и съездить, посмотреть, но страшно, ибо там много непонятного. Получается, что Китай, который они покинули из-за страха повторения ужасов культурной революции, им всё же роднее.

**Ключевые слова:** Австралия, Китай, китайско-русские метисы.

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