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Vocabulary of Chinese Origin in the Language of Russian Residents of Harbin in the First Half of the 20th Century

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the article is to study the functioning of lexical units of Chinese origin in the speech of representatives of the Far Eastern emigration. The language of everyday communication is the first to respond to socio-cultural, ethnocultural, ethno-religious processes occurring in society. At present, when the culture of Far Eastern emigration in its close interaction with Chinese culture has become a fact of history, the reconstruction of the processes of intercultural communication between Russians and Chinese in Harbin causes great difficulties. This explains the relevance of studying the Chinese influence on the language of Russian emigrants who found refuge in Harbin in the first half of the 20th century. The novelty of the work is due to the lack of comprehensive studies dealing with Chinese borrowings in the everyday language of ordinary Harbin residents. An appeal to the memories and oral histories of Harbin residents allows us to trace how lexemes borrowed from the Chinese language and continuing to live in the linguistic consciousness of people who grew up in Harbin. The methodology of this article is based on historical-cultural, functional, linguocultural, and lexical-semantic approaches, as well as interviewing. The work uses materials from the authors' field research among Harbin residents. Based on the results of the study, the authors conclude that although most Russians living in Harbin in the first half of the 20th century did not speak Chinese, Chinese borrowings were a constant part of their lives. This is especially true for various lacunae related to everyday realities, cooking, traditional culture, *etc.* Harbin residents organically assimilated such lexical units and preserved them in their speech for decades—even outside China. Of course, this testifies to close ethnocultural contacts between Russians and Chinese in Manchuria.

Keywords: Harbin; Russian; Chinese; Chinese Eastern Railway; Lexical borrowings; Sinicisms; Memoirs; Oral histories

1. Introduction

After the signing of a mutually beneficial agreement between Russia and China (1896) on the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway on the territory of the former Manchuria in 1898, the construction of the city of Harbin began.

From central Russia and Inland China, migrants were flocking to these rich lands—in search of a better life, escaping poverty and persecution by the authorities, hoping to earn a fortune and simply out of an adventurous desire to discover new and unknown things. Initially, the Harbin population was formed by Russian engineers, military personnel, railway workers and their families, the peasant population, Chinese workers, peasants and local Manchu taiga dwellers who spoke Chinese.

The border region [1] shapes the mentality of the population of this region, with a predominance of ethnic characteristics that determine the cultural traditions of different peoples. Construction along the road and in the city itself was organized with close cooperation between the Russians and the Chinese. And Harbin was initially being developed as a settlement where Russians and Chinese lived on the basis of good neighborliness and mutual understanding. Russian and Chinese temples were being built in the city. Russian and Chinese theaters and cinemas were operating. Russian and Chinese newspapers and magazines were published.

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After 1917, thousands of Russian refugees fled revolutionary upheavals in Northeast China. The socio-cultural composition of refugees was very diverse –former military personnel, engineers, teachers, doctors, office workers, entrepreneurs, and peasants. By 1920, the city's population was about 200 thousand Russian and Russian-speaking residents—emigrants from the Russian Empire [2]. Unsurprisingly, in Harbin, Russian became the language of interethnic communication.

According to historical data, the Chinese population of Harbin had been growing since the early 1920s, and by 1935–40s reached 660 thousand people. [2]. Chinese reality plays an important role in the lives of former Russian citizens, Chinese Eastern Railway construction workers, and members of their families. The farther from the city center, the more often Russians and Chinese found themselves neighbors in a residential area. The descendants of emigrants and their children still remember how they celebrated Russian and Chinese holidays with the Chinese (Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Moon Festival), the Chinese veneration of the Russian Nicholas the Pleasant, and the love of Nicholas the Pleasant himself for the Chinese. Russian-Chinese marriages were occurring everywhere in Harbin. Many of them were equals in love—Harbin was democratic enough for this. But among these stories there are also stories about young Russian dowerless girls and rich Chinese. It must be said that the majority of the Russian population was generally not prosperous, and Chinese shopkeepers often sold food to their housewives on credit.

And during the years of the Japanese occupation, the Chinese and Russians tried to stick together: the enterprising Chinese saved the Russians from hunger—they brought handfuls of rice under the floor to their houses, later the Russians helped the Chinese, hiding them from persecution under pain of death and providing medical care to the wounded or beaten. Obviously, both the Russians and the Chinese awaited liberation from the hated Japanese with the same feeling.

The spoken language of Harbin was Russian. The Chinese residents of the city, thanks to their adaptability and entrepreneurial spirit, learned the Russian language at the conversational and written level very quickly, many Chinese children studied in Russian schools. With such close interethnic contacts, Russians did not feel a great need to learn Chinese. Part of the reason for this was the difficulty of "Chinese literacy" and the lack of a developed system for teaching the Chinese language.

However, despite the Russian population's practical lack of knowledge of the Chinese language in everyday life, the vocabulary of Chinese origin ("Sinicisms"[1]) was organically woven into the everyday life of Russian Harbin residents and residents along the Chinese Eastern Railway. It included the toponymy of this unique region, the names of city streets and individual areas, designations of rare specimens of flora and fauna, names of elements of traditional Chinese clothing, rare Chinese and Manchu foods, definitions of exotic customs and holidays, *etc.*

In a special way, Chinese loanwords determined the specificity of the language of Russian prose literature of Harbin, starting from the first decades of the 20th century. During these years, the first examples of literary ethnography of Russian writers of Manchuria appeared, many of whom combined research and literary experience in their activities (for example, N.A. Baikov)[2].

The penetration of the Chinese language into Russian speech and the everyday life of Harbin residents reflected the complex interethnic, interreligious and sociocultural processes taking place on the territory of the Far Eastern frontier and shaping the special conditions of the Russian-Chinese world.

All "Sinicisms" discussed in the article are lexemes borrowed into the Russian language by means of transliteration or transcribing, most of them relate to the everyday sphere ("everydayisms", "culinaryisms", *etc.*). We focus on selected linguistic units because we deal, for the most part, with memoir prose, which is not literally a genre of fiction but claims to have some degree of historicity.

The texts that were the material for our research describe situations from the life of ordinary inhabitants of Harbin at the beginning of the twentieth century—Russians and Chinese- and the experience of their interaction, existence side by side, mutual assistance, and mutual influence.

In contrast to literary texts (even if we are talking about artistic reflection of ethnographic realities), in the descriptions of everyday realities in the memoirs of Harbin residents (including N.N. Laletina (Nikolaeva)), whose memoirs we turn to in the framework of this article) One can rarely find complexly constructed means of figurative expression and figures of speech, the play of images and words. Though in the texts of Harbin writers related to literary ethnography, examples of crippled borrowings, Russian-language nominations of Chinese realities, *etc.*, are found (see, for example, the dissertation of Li Jiabao [3]), then in memoir sources, xenonyms are represented precisely by Chinese borrowings.

As a rule, the Chinese words we consider were sufficiently mastered and assimilated by the Russian language in its Harbin (largely pidginized) version. The exception, perhaps, is religious vocabulary, which was in use mainly among a part of the population of Harbin that belonged to intellectual circles.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology of this article is based on historical-cultural, functional, linguocultural, and lexical-semantic approaches, as well as interviewing. The work uses materials from the authors' field research among Harbin residents.

Materials and sources of research: memoirs and autobiographical narratives of Russian emigrants (E.P. Taskina (1994), N.I. Ilyina (1985), N.N. Laletina (2016; 2019), *etc.*), collected as a result field research oral stories of Russian and Chinese residents of Harbin in the first half of the 20th century (V.G. Melikhova, N.N. Laletina, V.N. Pan and others), works of fiction by emigrant writers (N.A. Baykov, P.V. Shkurkin, V. Mart, M.V. Shcherbakov, B.M. Yulsky, *etc.*); research by Russian and Chinese scientists addressing the language of the Far Eastern countries (Jiang Xuehua and others). Empirical materials were collected during field research by A.A. Zabiyako (1992–1993), A.A. Zabiyako, A.P. Zabiyako (1999–2024) in Harbin, Heihe, Hailar, Beijing (China), Blagoveshchensk, St. Petersburg, Moscow (Russia), Riga (Latvia), Brisbane (Australia). Respondents: Chinese, Russians, descendants of Russian-Chinese marriages—carriers of vocabulary traditional for the linguacultural environment of Harbin. All respondents were born before 1950 and lived in Harbin for a long time. Field materials are stored in the archive of the Center for the Study of Far Eastern Emigration, Amur State University (https://emigrant.amursu.ru, accessed on 12 January 2025).

Degree of Study of the Problem

The history of the formation of the Russian enclave along the Chinese Eastern Railway line in Harbin has been studied in detail by N.E. Ablova [2]. It is represented in the Chinese socio-political paradigm by the works of Shi Fang [4], Li Chuanxun [5] and others. The history of the development of the North-East by the Han population is reflected in the works of Chinese philosophers, sociologists, and historians, such as Xin Zhifeng [6], *etc.*

The problems of ethnic identification of Russians and Chinese in the conditions of the Far Eastern border (frontier) are studied basing on the works of A.P. Zabiyako [7], A.A. Zabiyako [8], O.E. Tsmykal [9] explored the features of the mentality of the Far Eastern frontier and its projection onto the religious, political, and everyday life of Russian residents of Harbin.

The study of the urban text of culture as a container of spiritual and material meanings was carried out in the works of Yu.M. Lotman [10], V.N. Toporov [11], Fu Xinghuan [12], Sun Meizi [13], with the derivation of the category "Harbin text" developed in the works of A.A. Zabiyako [14], Ju Kunyi [15].

The study of the categories "view of the world", "image of the world", "model of the world" is reflected in the works of Yu.D. Apresyan [16], O.E. Baksansky [17], G.A. Brutyan [18], A.Ya. Gurevich [19], L.G. Zolotykh [20] and others.

Ethnic identity from the point of view of psychology has been studied in the works of T.G. Stefanenko [21]. The authors correlated the specifics of the ethnic consciousness of Russians and Chinese with the works of S.V. Lurie [22]; Ma Rong [23]; A.P. Zabiyako [7,8,24].

The vocabulary of Chinese origin and the general features of its functioning in the Russian language were studied by Li Siqi [25]. The linguo-didactic potential of the vocabulary of Chinese origin as material for the study of phonetic and grammatical transformations of borrowings in the Russian language from the point of view of the receiving linguistic culture [26] becomes the object of study by O.A. Poletaeva and V.S. Kremenevskaya.

The problem of the functioning of "Sinicisms" in the language of the Russian diaspora based on the material of memoir prose (the first half of the 20th century) is addressed in her dissertation and publications by Jiang Xuehua [27], who presented almost 200 lexemes of different thematic levels for analysis.

The approach of N.S. Milyanchuk to the study of linguistic means of representing Chinese culture, Chinese consciousness in the texts of writers from the Far Eastern countries seems to be very productive [28].

The authors of this study addressed the explication of images of Russian perception of the Chinese in the front-line territories through nominations of Chinese origin (ethno-folisms) [25].

However, despite the various areas of research, the problem of the existence of "Sinicisms" in language practice and in general in the linguistic culture of Russian residents of Harbin seems to have been studied only partially. Neither the memoir prose created by representatives of the intellectual elite, nor the literary texts of Harbin writers can fully present the role of Chinese vocabulary in shaping the worldview of the average Harbin resident living side by side with the Chinese.

The novelty of the research is determined by an integrated approach to the available sources of a memoir, literary-ethnographic, journalistic nature, based on oral texts reflecting the oral speech of memories, epistolaries of Harbin residents and residents of border areas (N.N. Laletina, V.N. Pan, *etc.*). The study of the everyday use of Chinese-origin vocabulary by Russian Harbin residents through the prism of the sociocultural, ethnocultural and ethno-religious realities of life in Harbin as a city on the territory of the Far Eastern border is the uniqueness of the study.

In this work, we will not pay attention to exoticisms that have already become familiar (typhoon, ginseng, *etc.*), as well as pidginized vocabulary. Pidgin is an important area of language contacts, reflecting the interaction of languages and cultures. In Harbin in the first half of the 20th century there existed a specific Russian-Chinese kind of pidgin. However, its study remains beyond the goals and objectives of our research, since it relates to grammar, phonetics and syntax, *i.e.*, linguistics. The goals of our anthropological research include, first of all, the study of vocabulary reflecting the ethnocultural contacts of ethnic groups. As stated earlier, by "Sinicisms" we understand all lexemes of Chinese origin, borrowed by the Russian linguistic culture of Harbin residents in an undistorted grammatical form and thematically related to the cultural and everyday sphere of life [3,25] of Russian-Chinese Harbin.

Of particular importance for the study is the lexical-semantic reconstruction of some Chinese words, which concentrate the ethnocultural context of Harbin life and the specifics of Harbin Russian-Chinese existence into their semantic space.

3. The Discussion of the Results

The study of active Chinese vocabulary in the linguistic culture of Russian-speaking Harbin residents allows us to identify approximately 100 words. They make up groups of toponyms (oikonyms, hydronyms, urbanonyms, horonyms) [29], "culinaryisms", "everydayisms", social vocabulary, and religious vocabulary, which reflect the main areas of Russian-Chinese interethnic contacts and those realities of life that did not have a Russian name, representing the gaps.

Supplementary Materials Map of Harbin (1930s).

From the moment the first rail was laid on the Chinese Eastern Railway line, the life of an ordinary Russian person took place in close proximity to Chinese reality. The Russians did not come to empty lands in Northern Manchuria, and did not become pioneering topographers. Many mountains and passes, rivers and lakes, marshy plains already had their names given by the local population, mainly Tungus-Manchu. However, the active penetration of Han migrants as a result of the powerful "Breakthrough to Guangdong" [30] into the North-Eastern lands, the voluntary Sinicization of the population [31] led to the active development of these spaces by the Chinese animal hunters, ginseng farmers, and peasants, respectively—their naming. The first to record this were Russian researchers, naturalists, ethnographers, and topographers who went to Manchuria on behalf of the Russian government, in the texts of N.A. Baykov, P.V. Shkurkin (since 1903), there are Chinese oikonyms denoting mountain passes and ridges (Chang Bai Shan, Laoling), hydronyms (Suifunhe, Hailinghe, Lalinghe), oikonyms (Han Daohezi, Hailing, Erdandazi, Ashihe), *etc.* [32]. In addition, it was N.A. Baikov introduced into the Russian language the semi-mythological Chinese concept "Shuhai"—Forest Sea—as a naturalistic designation for the taiga [33]. These words, which primarily perform a nominative function, indicate the organic assimilation by the Russian consciousness of geographical concepts of Chinese origin.

It is known that the construction of Harbin and the villages and towns adjacent to the road line was carried out according to the principle of regular development, an example of which was the plan of St. Petersburg. Therefore, the central streets of the city had unified Russian names [34–37]. However, next to the Russian part of the city, a purely Chinese district appeared, under the jurisdiction of the Chinese administration, the Fujiadian (傅家店) district [38]. This urbanonym in the minds of Russian residents had a semantic connotation of taboo: the area was known not only for the traditional Chinese theater [39], but also for its brothels and opium smokehouses (tayangwa-nami 大烟馆). Despite the fact that Russian inhabitants tried to avoid this area, in the vocabulary of the especially "enlightened" and sophisticated, the purely Chinese names for the most "hot spots"—San-die-ge (三道街) remained firmly fixed, a street with drug dens and the sixteenth street (十六道街)—where the "fun houses" were located, including Russian ones (noted from N.N. Nikolaeva).

Later, in the 1930s, under Manchukuo (满洲国), the Chinese name of another region, Pingfang (平房), acquired a significant meaning in the minds of Russian Harbin residents. Here, on the territory of a former Chinese village, the Japanese occupiers set up a laboratory for conducting experiments with bacteriological and chemical weapons, the so-called Unit 731.

The most common in the language of Russian Harbin residents is the lexical group of Chinese words, denoting the so-called "culinaryisms" and "everydayisms". Despite the passing of years, these words evoke warm memories of former emigrants. Chinese north-eastern cuisine has historically developed at the intersection of various culinary traditions—actually Han, absorbing the characteristics of different regions, Manchu, Korean, and Mongolian. It was also necessary to remember that Harbin was built on the site of a cheap hanshin (汗酒) factory, or rather, several wineries.

Of course, the daily diet of Chinese workers and peasants did not consist of exotic dishes—a cup of shumiza (秫米子) made from kaoliang (高粱) and, at best, tofu sauce (豆腐). As the Russians, who themselves ate meat only on

holidays, recall, the poor Chinese could very rarely afford it: “Such a poor fellow rides on his old bicycle, holds the steering wheel with one hand, and in the other hand he holds a kuoi-tzu (筷子) with 2 liang (两) of meat. Do you know how much this is? About two hundred grams! And there are 10 mouths waiting for him at home! So he will cut these 2 liang (两) thinly and fry them with bai cai (白菜), and there is only a smell!” (Noted from N.N. Laletina).

Despite the fact that Russian citizens were very conservative in their gastronomic preferences, and the restaurant industry was aimed at European standards (Gamsa, 2011), a poor life contributed to an interest in simple and affordable Chinese food (“chifang” (吃饭)), which can be tasted right on the street, in city taverns. The lexical range of “culinaryisms” familiar to Harbin residents reproduces a simple menu of similar meals: “fentyouza” (粉条丝), “bai cai” (白菜), “mantou” (馒头), “baozi” (包子), fried “tu-yaza” (豆芽), “taping-zi” (大饼子), seasoned with “ta-dian” (大酱)—and flavored with sips of “han-na” (汗酒), warmed in “tahushka” (大壶). The culture of seasonal vegetables brought by the Han Chinese to the Northeast was also reflected in the vocabulary of Russian inhabitants—“bai cai” (白菜) (Chinese cabbage), “bo cai” (菠菜) (spinach), “chin cai” (芹菜) (celery).

Of course, the language situation analyzed in this case may have other interpretations, since there may be different variants of transcription of such “Sinicisms” as, for example, “fentyouza” (the source could be “fentiaozi” (粉条子), not “fentiaosi (粉条丝)). The authors admit that the interpretation of this word may be different, since we are dealing with the living element of speech, in which phonetics is subject to the influence of situational factors of a linguistic or extralinguistic nature.

Born in Harbin and spent their childhood there, the “Russian Chinese” fondly remember the peddlers of “tang-hula” (糖葫芦) and the “mooncakes”—“yue-bin” (月饼) with fried bean oil, which they consider to be tastier than everything they could afford years later when living prosperously already. One of the authors of this article discovered the art of hand-making these mooncakes in Harbin in 1992. Living today in different countries—Australia, Latvia, Russia, Kazakhstan—former Harbin residents deftly master the skills of preparing everyday Chinese cuisine. At gatherings of local Harbin residents (老乡), these culinary skills became a symbol of appreciation for their Chinese past and Chinese friends (see Table 1).

Table 1. Culinarisms.

№	Word	Meaning	Transcription	Translation	Comments, Examples
1	gaolian (гаолян)	a coarse grain crop, formerly the food of the poor; an excellent raw material for the production of medicinal vodka	gāoliang	高粱	"The family's existence is meager. They eat cereals, only gaoliang and shumiza (xiao miza), they don't eat rice, it is taken away on pain of death by the occupiers—the Japanese—for the soldiers of their army" [40].
2	toufu (тофу)	soybean curd (tu-fa, tu-fu in Russian usage)	dòufu	豆腐	"This was especially clearly in the forties of the war, when many of the products of Russian townspeople were no longer available in the city's stores. Chinese shops and bazaars helped out, abounding in herbs, vegetables, and fish from the Songhua River, which was then available in large quantities. <...> soy protein tofu was common among Russian residents as well" [40]. "Early in the morning, the seller appeared, <…> and walked away from her steam, tuffs (tofu), he sang drawly: toufu-toufu, going around everything courtyards" [41].
3	fentyouza (фынтёуза фыньтёза фынтёза)	soy (or rice, potato) noodles	fěntiáosī	粉条丝	"A very interesting place near the Ostrovskys' house was a small factory of tu-fu, soy sauce, fentyouza – transparent noodles, and soybean sprouts tuyazi" [41].
4	chifan (чифан)	food, dish	chīfàn	吃饭	"What could be better than a dining room under the sky?! Though there are no napkins or bread. But a polite cook, maybe named Van Will serve you Chinese chifan in bowls" [40].
5	chumiza/shumiza, (чумиза)	cereal like millet, but smaller;	shúmǐzi	秫米子	See gaoliang "After the end of the war, all the wooden fences and benches were burned down, and the square turned into an impromptu market where flour, cotton wool and other scarce items were sold at fabulous prices" [40].
6	bai cai (бай-цай)	white vegetable, food, literally—cabbage	báicài	白菜	"Such a poor fellow rides on his old bicycle, holds the steering wheel with one hand—and in the other hand he holds a kuoi-tzu (筷子) with 2 liang (两) of meat. <…> So he will cut these 2 liang (两) thinly and fry them with bai cai (白菜), and there is only a smell!" [41].
7	mantou (маньтоу)	steamed bun	míntou	馒头	"Very tempting, there were Chinese mantou, especially if inside them you found brown raw sugar…" [41].
8	pouzi (поуцзы)	steamed buns with meat filling	bāozi	包子	-

9	tapingza (тапинцза)	corn flatbread; pancake, flatbread made from corn flour or shumiza	dàbǐngzi	大饼子	“They [the animals in the zoo] were fed by visitors, whatever one could give, apple cores, pieces of tapinza (corn flatbread)” [41].
10	tadyan (та-дян)	fermented soybean paste	Dàjiàng	大酱	“And in the vestibule, the Chinese woman placed a large clay vat in which soybean mash fermented for the preparation of “tadyan-madyan,” simply a spicy soybean paste” [41].
11	tuyaza (туяза)	sprouted cereal, sprouts; sprouted beans	dòuyá	豆芽	“…next to our home, there was a small factory where tofu (soy cottage cheese) and fentyouza (soy viziga) were prepared in bad and unsanitary conditions, soy sprouts *tuyaza* were sprouted there” [41].
12	hanshin (хан-шин (distorted—hana))	fusel vodka hanshin, hana—from (han jiu, lit.: ‘sweaty vodka’), “the name is due to the fact that vodka is made through distillation, during which the liquid is heated, evaporates, and steam turns into drops that flow down like sweat” (Milyanchuk, Li Jiabao, 2021)	hànjiǔ	汗酒	“This whole set simple of products was mixed with the smell of smoking candles, heated in a *takhushka* (*ta hu*—a tin funnel-shaped and widened vessel) of hana—fusel vodka, or, as the Russian residents affectionately called it, “Annushka.” [41].
13	cai (цай)	dish, food, vegetable	cài	菜	“The summer market made one marvel at the abundance of vegetables laid out in mountains, berries and all sorts of greens, so loved by the Chinese—*pai cai*—long tender cabbage, *bo cai*— spinach, *chin cai*—celery” [41].
14	tanghula (танхула)	candied fruits on a stick, berries and fruits in sugar caramel on a stick (hawthorn, apples, tangerine slices, strawberries, *etc.*)	tánghúlu	糖葫芦	“In the meantime, we were at an age when we really wanted sticky candies, tanghula, roasted nuts and all sorts of sweets, like baklava and trigoni on Strelkovaya Street at the kiosk!” [41].
15	yuebin (юе-бин)	yuebing, mooncake (sweet-filled cookie, traditional Mid-Autumn Festival treat)	yuèbǐng	月饼	“Yuebin cookies are still sold everywhere today. But then they were real. This cookie is sickly sweet and so fatty that the wrapper used to get oily. On top, there is marzipan powder and a hieroglyph with a red spot” [41].

Observing the structure of the "Chinese world" in Harbin, ordinary Russian residents assimilated those linguistic realities that corresponded to their basic mental attitudes about the social structure of life. Today's reproduction of them in memoirs and conversations testifies to the close ethnosocial contacts between Russians and Chinese. A common name for the Chinese (peddlers, shopkeepers, "kulies" (苦力), ready for any low-paid work, greengrocers, *etc.*) was the ethnofolism "hodya" (among Russians, sounding with familiar intonations like "hodka"). At the same time, the Russians were well aware that the Chinese called them "maozi", "laomaozi" (老毛子) [42] —this is evidenced not only by the oral stories of Harbin residents, but also by literary and ethnographic texts [8].

It is characteristic that the Russians defined the inhabitants of the taiga expanses, gold miners, fur trappers and ginseng growers with the concept of "manza". The functioning of "Sinicisms" denoting social concepts reflects little-studied aspects of Chinese reality—in particular, the presence among the Chinese themselves of rich merchants, popularly called contemptuously "ta-tuza»" ("ta-tuzi") (大肚子)—pot-bellied, fat-bellied ones. However, the flour from the San Ho-shin mill ("Sankhoshinovsky flour") is still remembered by former Harbin residents—Russian mothers used it to prepare the most delicious Siberian dumplings for the holidays, and then Chinese "tiaozi" (jiaozi 饺子).

A special part of life in Harbin was the so-called "yorgi" (游丐)—Chinese beggars living in the areas around numerous Orthodox churches in huge numbers. Just as the practical and enterprising Chinese learned to comply with Russian festive culture, making the necessary attributes for each religious holiday, so they felt Russian compassion and pity towards the orphaned and wretched. Attention to "yorgi" and the fact that this word had been stored in language opens up new faces in ethnocultural contacts between Russians and Chinese.

Hong-huzi (红胡子) is another "Sinicism", borrowed word, that captured the features of the ethnosocial reality of Harbin and the Chinese Eastern Railway line. All Harbin residents remember about the hong-huzi—red-bearded robbers: both Russians and Chinese, and in general, residents of the North-East. In the summer, gangs of these bandits dissolved in the impassable Manchurian taiga, and in the winter they settled in "winter quarters" in Chinese neighborhoods... With the word "huzi" (胡子), elderly Chinese women still scold their naughty grandchildren today. In the first half of the 20th century, this word caused horror among the civilian population—that is how the "redbeards" treated them, regardless of ethnicity and social affiliation! [43] (see Table 2).

Table 2. Everydayisms.

№	Word	Meaning	Transcription	Translation	Comments, Examples
1	yorgi (ёрги)	beggar (Harbin); synonyms: (1) 行乞 —wander and beg, engage in begging; (2) farewell, beggar (Large Chinese-Russian Dictionary Online); currently used rarely, found only in some dictionaries. According to Chinese scholars, the word dates back to the Tang era.	yóu gài	游丐	"The richest Northeast, Manchuria, was purposefully and constantly plundered by the alien "masters". Hungry, naked and barefoot yorgi (beggars), often morphine addicts, the Japanese picked them up and took them to an unknown direction, supposedly for treatment. Later, when liberation from their slavery came, it turned out that outside the city, in the deepest secrecy, experiments with bacteriological weapons were carried out on living people using brutal methods. It was "Unit 731"—a death factory" [40]. "There were different cases: then a Japanese officer chopped off a hand of the Russian driver who drove him and dared ask for money for his work with a saber, then in broad daylight on the Pier Japanese soldiers beat "yorgi" to death as he tried to beg for alms, there were persistent rumors that the Japanese almost openly vaccinated cholera in the summer to the population and immediately tried to treat" [41].
2	kuli, coolie (кули)	without a specific job, but ready for any	kǔlì (англ. coolie) (1) coolie, laborer, porter; (2) spare no effort in work, strain yourself in hard work	苦力	"Here are water carriers and coolies earning odd jobs, and ragpickers wandering through the courtyards of the Russian towns of Samanny and Korpusny, fortunately, the city is close, nearby" [40].
3	kunia (куня)	a girl	Gūniang	姑娘	"...My rickshaw driver, a Chinese man, is very concerned: A "kunia" or a "syoza"! Are you lucky madam? I said a "kunia"—he was very upset, But he stretched his mouth into a polite smile. Lyudmila Tonkikh (Dobrolyubova)" [40].
4	latro (латро)	an old man	lǎotóu	老头	no example; we can assume that there was a typo in the source text and the Sinicism could have sounded like "lator (латор—老头儿).
5	lomoza (ломоуза)	rude: a hairy one, hairy (northeastern dialect, Russian person); lǎo máozi: lit. long-haired (nickname of Russians in Harbin in the 30–40 s of the XX century) (Large Chinese-Russian dictionary online, https://bkrs.info/slovo.php?ch=%E8%80%81%E6%AF%9B%E5%AD%90, accessed on 14	lǎomáozi	老毛子	"It was not the first time for them to communicate with the "lomouzi" (lomoza—a shaggy hat, that was the name of the Cossacks), the border was nearby, they walked with smuggling to Russian settlements. Grandma Maria, when the conversation turned to "lomouza", heard from the Cossacks about the so called Boxer Rebellion, which occurred in 1900—the year when the rebels were drowned in the Amur. <…> Cossacks who wore hats became

		December 2024)			“lomouza”! [41]
6	losyan (лосян)	(distorted “louxiang”, Chinese)—a fellow countryman	lǎoxiāng	老乡	“Hello, dear losyans—Zhenya and Faina! It was with great joy that I received your letter, congratulations and newspaper! God is with us!!!” (from a letter from S. Suvorov) [40]
7	cёza syoza	a boy	xiǎozi	小子	See “kunya”
8	ta-tuza (та-туза)	a big belly (the so-called fat-bellied rich merchants) one; (1) belly; abdomen (2) to be pregnant (abdominal); pregnant (3) eater; food lover; (4) dialect: fat-bellied, fat-bag, world-eater (for example, about a landowner) (Large Chinese-Russian dictionary online, https://bkrs.info/slovo.php?ch=%E5%A4%A7%E8%82%9A%E5%AD%90, accessed 14 December 2024).	dà dùzi	大肚子	“Brooms are not a very popular product, but “chasing dust” is very prestigious, especially in rich stores and among the ta-tuza merchants!.” [40].
9	hodya, hod’ka (ходя, ходька)	the Chinese (in conversation) who passes by	dǎhuǒjì	打伙计	“And here, right opposite our former Commercial School, is a shop at the Green Bazaar! So she fed us, preparing us a bun with cream for recess, for which we, buying it from the hod’ka-shopkeeper, were grateful to him and fate!” [41]. 打伙计– dǎhuǒjì, dahodya, “你看这个打伙计，扯气不扯气。”原注：“ 陕北方言称男女恋爱为打伙计”—Look at this guy, offended or not. North Shaanxi Dialect comes from the northern region of Shaanxi Province. Here’s the meaning is: making love between a guy and a girl (鲁迅艺术文学院. 陕北民歌选, 1950 年 3 月)
10	hun-huza hunhuzi (хун-хуза, хунхузы)	red beard (literally translated), robber, wore a red mask on half of the face	hónghúzi	红胡子	“When the stored food was eaten and almost nothing was left, the hunhuzi came, hunting for robberies. They took the warm clothes of the unfortunates, in return left soybeans for the horses, the refugees also ate steamed beans from the same boiler. At first hunhuzi didn’t take the horses; they had no need for them in the mountains when they raided Chinese mountain villages, but by the end of the winter they came for the horses too” [41]. “Do you know why “hunhuzi”? Do you know the word “hunhuzi”? These are Chinese robbers. Why are they called “hunhuzi”? So, tell me! The Chinese themselves do not know anything. I know. Because before there was a gun. Yes? Fire. There was a traffic jam. They

closed it with a cork to prevent the bullet from falling out. To avoid losing the cork, they tied a red rag. And he, that means, before shooting, he put the cork in his mouth. It turned out hunhuzi—“red beard” (from N.N. Zaika, born in Harbin, 1939; Australia, Sydney, August 29, 2019. Collection: Ju Kunyi, A. Ivachev).

The ethnocultural tolerance of the residents of Harbin towards representatives of foreign cultures extended not only to a careful and respectful attitude towards "foreign gods" but also to an interest in knowledge and the creative strengthening of foreign temples. Thus, for the construction of Kun-miao (Confucian Temple) (孔廟庙) and Tzu-ly-si (极乐寺) (Taoist Temple), representatives of the Russian community donated their capital [44]. Russian ethnographers working in the society for the Study of the Manchurian Region published popular science articles in "Rubezh" and "Ray of Asia" in order to educate the Russian population and ethno-religious education. And the Chinese, in turn, fully respected the Russian lamatai—St. Nicholas Church and, as it is known, for many years defended the miraculous image of St. Nicholas the Pleasant [45] (see Table 3).

Table 3. Loan words used to designate places of worship and religious objects.

№	Word	Meaning	Transcription	Translation	Comments, Examples
1	kunmiao (Кунмяо)	Confucian Temple	kǒngmiào	孔廟	"The Wenmiao—'Temple of Literature', in honor of Confucius, also called *Kunmiao* (Temple of Confucius), is much less visited" [44].
2	ламатай lamatai	Probably from lǎomáo, lǎomáozi	lǎomáo (Beijing dialect)—foreigner; táng—temple	老毛堂	""Lusiki people love talava, hadi lamatai!", which meant: "Russians love grass, go to church!"" [46].
3	цзылысы zilisi	-	Jílèsì	极乐寺	"Among the Buddhist temples of Harbin, the first place in size and amenities is occupied by zilisi ("Heavenly Kumirny"). A large monastery was formed at the temple, known, like the temple itself, far beyond the borders of the region" [44].

4. Conclusions

Although most of Harbin's Russian population in the first half of the 20th century did not speak Chinese, Chinese words were a natural part of its daily life. Such "Sinicisms" included toponyms, names of plants and animals characteristic of the Manchurian land, names of various gaps, including elements of traditional Chinese clothing, Chinese and Manchu dishes, customs, holidays, *etc.* The people of Harbin adopted such lexemes as an organic part of the language (this especially applies to "everydayisms" and "culinarisms"; Chinese loan words used to designate places of worship and religious objects were less common).

It can be summarized that, finding themselves in a foreign cultural environment and every day faced with the realities of Chinese culture, ordinary Russian residents of Harbin, first of all, assimilated those foreign language units that were associated with basic life needs and attitudes. It is interesting that representatives of the Harbin community, who have long dispersed around the world, still reproduce the Chinese words they once adopted (primarily, of course, this applies to non-equivalent vocabulary). On this basis, we can conclude that there were close contacts between Russians and Chinese on the territory of Manchuria in the first half of the twentieth century.

Supplementary Materials

The following supporting information can be found at: https://www.sciepublish.com/article/pii/656, Map of Harbin (1930s).

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: A.P.Z., A.A.Z.; Methodology: A.P.Z., A.A.Z., Formal Analysis: A.P.Z., A.A.Z., O.E.T.; Investigation: A.P.Z., A.A.Z., O.E.T.; Data Curation: A.A.Z.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation: A.P.Z., A.A.Z., O.E.T.; Writing—Review & Editing: A.P.Z., A.A.Z., O.E.T.; Supervision: A.P.Z.; Project Administration: A.P.Z.; Funding Acquisition: A.P.Z.

Ethics Statement

The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of the Amur State University (protocol 5, 24 April 2025).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained verbally before participation. The consent was audio-recorded in the presence of an independent witness.

Data Availability Statement

Research data are stored in the archive of the Center for the Study of Far Eastern Emigration, Amur State University and can be available on reasonable request from the corresponding author due to privacy restrictions.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Footnotes

1. In this article, “Sinicism” are understood as xenonyms (the results of secondary verbalization of specific cultural elements as “elements of foreign language (“external”) cultures” [3]; “words reflecting a different, foreign culture” [3] of Chinese origin, *i.e.*, lexical units representing elements of Chinese culture and borrowed from the Chinese language into Russian by the method of transliteration (often mixed with transcription), which prevailed among the Russian diaspora in Harbin. We rely on the works of Li Jiabao and N.S. Milyanchuk, who, in accordance with the definition from the Dictionary of Linguistic Terms, understand as “Sinicism” “words that are the result of direct borrowing from the Chinese language, “included in the new language system while maintaining its basic sound features”” [3].
2. Baikov Nikolai Apollonovich (November 29, 1872, Kyiv—March 6, 1956, Brisbane, Australia)—member of the Society of Russian Orientalists, author of articles in the “Monitor of Asia” and “Monitor of Manchuria”, naturalist and writer.

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