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# CONFLICT ABOUT FOOD? FOOD HABITS IN BI-CULTURAL MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES

*Love goes through the stomach.*
(German proverb)

Marriages between people with different cultural or ethnic backgrounds are by no means a novelty of our age of globalization. Commerce and seafaring just as much as slavery, wars, and colonization, but above all emigration and migration movements have for centuries united innumerable men and women of different countries and cultures, either voluntarily or forcibly, in marriages and in families. Compared to the size of the total populations, though, such bi-cultural marriages were rare. It is only in our time of rapidly increased culture contact, of mass tourism and of studying abroad, of almost unlimited work migration and of millions of refugees that bi-cultural or bi-national marriages[1] have become a mass phenomenon. In the West European industrialized countries the proportion of such marriages has already reached between 15 and 20%, with a rising tendency[2].

The focus of my paper will be on the question how everyday life is managed in these marriages and families. In view of the fact that the management of everyday life between cultures confronts every bi-

[1]In this paper I use the terms 'bi-cultural' and 'bi-national' synonymously because the fine distinction between them is not relevant for the topic of this paper.

[2]In 2001 there were 389.591 marriages in Germany. Out of these couples 317.496=81,5% (2000: 82,5%) were German-German and 72.095 =18,5% (2000: 17,5%) involved foreigners; the latter group shows this composition: wife German/husband non-German 34,9% and husband German/wife non-German 49,2% (in 15,8% of the cases both partners were non-German). German men most often married women from Asia (14%), Poland (11%), the CIS (9%), while German women most often married men from Turkey (16%), Italy (12%), the U.S. (7%), Austria (7%), and Africa (7%).

cultural marriage with specific problems, the question of the everyday practices and strategies of handling cultural differences and thus of the 'functioning' of bi-cultural marriages and families gains increasingly in importance. It may certainly be that these everyday problems and practices appear rather trivial to the outsider; most people who live in such bi-cultural marriages, however, take these problems quite seriously, because they can be decisive for the success or failure of a marriage.

One of the basic everyday problems for each family, both mono and bi-cultural, is certainly *food*, as food fulfils one of the basic needs of all humans and is, in addition, highly habitual and loaded with values and meanings. For the individual the daily food in the family is a fundamental experience. Dieter Claessens (1979: 130) has pointed out that for the infant the cultural formation of emotions begins with the tasting of food in the family. This process is also triggered by experiences that have to do with the 'tasting' of the world around the small child. " 'Having taste' means to be emotionally integrated into a culture," Claessens writes (1979: 130). The taste of food and also the smells that accompany the preparation of food create deeply ingrained taste preferences and food habits, in which the entire "spice complex" has very high relevance. Taste and food habits as formations of early childhood are therefore not merely individual phenomena, but are rooted in the cultural system, where they are ascribed specific values (Tolksdorf 1976, 2001) and can carry symbolic and identifying meanings. It is certainly no coincidence that "typical" dishes play a large role in national stereotypes worldwide (see Roth 2001). For the individual certain dishes can be emotionally charged with extreme positive or negative meanings, a fact that is often revealed by strong memories of "culinary experiences" even decades later (Hartmann 1994). "Favorite dishes" of our childhood just as much as "disgusting dishes" keep their strong affective meaning for many years, often for life. This "conservatism of taste" or "culinary conservatism" has been noted by many researchers (Tolksdorf 1976: 69), above all among emigrants who often stick to their familiar and habitual dishes over several generations (see Levenstein 1997, Bönisch-Brednich 2002).

"Emigrants and refugees have at all times and at the most different places experienced," notes Pandey (1988: 167), "that many things in their new environment do not 'taste'. The attempt to regain one's emotional integrity through the taste of familiar dishes has been observed in many groups of migrants."

The "culinary conservatism" is, however, countered by the lust for new and unknown things, a desire which has over the last decades become tangible above all in the popularity of ethnic restaurants — from the pizzeria, the Balkan grill and McDonald's to the Sushi bar and the Thai restaurant. This contradiction between *conservatism* and *innovation* can best be solved with the help of the fundamental distinction introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1965), the distinction between the *endo cuisine* and the *exo cuisine*: While the exo cuisine of ceremonial meals, official dinners, public food, and eating out in restaurants is more innovative, flexible, and open to alien and exotic food, the everyday food of the endo kitchen at home is more conservative and opens up only slowly to culinary innovations and foreign influences.

The great importance of food for the conduct of everyday life is focused and even heightened in the *family meal* whose high significance for the entire family life results not only from its basic function of food supply, but also from its social and communicative functions: it is at the family meal that the family constitutes itself most clearly as a group, talks most intensely and exchanges a lot of information, and it is also at the family meal where table manners and rituals, values and norms are passed on, above all to the children at the table (Jeggle 1988). The family meal is probably the most important locale of enculturation and socialization.

It goes without saying that different tastes and food habits, table manners and rituals, values and norms come together in *every* young marriage, and that every young couple has to form a common 'family style' by way of mutual adaptation and compromise. If the couples come from different social or regional backgrounds, they will already face larger problems in establishing a common 'family style'. It is often the husband who wants his wife to cook the way his mother used

to cook. The proverb "Love goes through the stomach" does not only express this desire for familiar food, but also focuses on the fundamental meaning of culinary adaptation for the success of a marriage.

It seems that the individual, social, and regional differences can be bridged more easily when both partners belong to the same or a similar culinary tradition. This closeness appears to be given also in cases when both partners have grown up in the same or similar culinary system, for example that of the "Balkan kitchen" (see Burkhart 1991), or come from neighbor countries. This closeness is absent, however, in all marriages whose partners grew up in totally different culinary systems. In the inner space of these marriages and families, i.e., in the space of their "own four walls" and unquestioned and emotionally charged habits and preferences, two *endo cuisines* meet each other — and at that directly, every day, and permanently. "Thus the culture specific food habits, the ideas of how to furnish an apartment and how to manage the daily housework constitute specific challenges," writes Claudia Gómez Tutor (1994: 122), and she points out that "with regard to food there are differences not only <...> in the preferred dishes which are often influenced by religious taboos and incompatibilities <...>, but that also the time, the place or the form in which the meals are taken can vary. In most cases one of the partners must give up its familiar frame." In other words: there are countless little everyday irritations in the intimate sphere of the family, which can heap up considerable fuel for conflict: It is *one* thing to eat out in an Indian or Ethiopian restaurant from time to time, and quite another matter to adjust to everyday life and food with an Indian or Ethiopian marriage partner.

Due to the simple fact that food is the fulfillment of a basic need, it is a daily encounter which no one in a bi-cultural family can escape in the long run. Like in every intercultural encounter one's own unquestioned "normality" loses validity, and a new way of management of everyday life has to be negotiated. But because the daily food — beyond serving basic needs — is highly loaded with values, emotions, and identities it is not at all striking that this

negotiating is a process which is complicated and in most cases quite emotional. Depending on individual and socio-cultural factors it can be easier or more difficult, but it is always complex — and it can be decisive for the success of the marriage, because in all bi-cultural marriages and families "food and nourishment are <...> a central area of conflict" (Beer 1996: 201, Scheibler 1992: 95).

Different demands and expectations can crop up in all spheres relevant for everyday food (cf. Tolksdorf 1976: 74ff.), beginning with the kind and quality of the foodstuff itself, where the partners can have different ideas of what constitutes edible food and what is taboo, what is tasty and what fits together, whether fresh or processed produce should be prepared, where to shop and what constitutes a "real meal"; the question if a cold or a warm evening meal is adequate[3], can cause as much conflict as the question of what techniques of preparing the meal should be used. Filipino women in Europe, for example, prepare "fish <...> in hot oil which produces — by German tastes — a terrible smell which will not disappear from the apartment for days even if you let in fresh air. In many such families the question is, how, and when dried fish shall be cooked turns out to become *the* crucial conflict" (Beer 1996: 202). No less conflict laden is the technique of eating or those of table manners: Do we eat with forks and knives, with chop sticks or with our hands? What way of handling fork and knife prevails in a French-American family? Are the children at the family table trained to learn the techniques and behaviors of both cultures or are they socialized in only one culture? Here one can observe very different, in most cases mixed practices. While, for example, in an Indian-German family the traditional Indian separation of the sexes has been given up, "eating with the hand has partly <...> been maintained by the Indian fathers and is occasionally imitated by the wife and the children — but generally in German-Indian households cutlery has its fixed place" (Pandey 1988: 166f.).

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[3]In a German-Japanese family, for instance, "the German 'Abendbrot' is looked at <...> as something rather pitiful" (Johanus 1999: 53).

Culturally defined — and thus diverse — is also the use of *time* and *space* for taking food as well as the *social* dimension. In most countries and cultures the kitchen itself is considered to be "female territory", but in the places of daily eating there can be considerable variation which must be accommodated in a bi-cultural marriage. Is it common to have food in the kitchen or in the dining-room, or is it common to eat out very often? And what about inviting guests? Are they invited into one's home or to a restaurant? Does one invite surprise guests to simply join the table? Reports of Southeast Europeans give expression to their amazement at having been sent away at spontaneous visits because the family "has guests and there are not enough chairs." It is precisely the question who is invited for dinner and what is being served which often produces conflicts in bi-cultural marriages and families. The same is true for the question when and how often food is taken. Do we have breakfast in the morning? Are there fixed times for meals, for example "exactly 7 o'clock in the evening" or "roughly between 9 and 10 o'clock"? And of course the question of how much time is spent on a meal can be answered in very different — and conflict provoking — ways (Scheibler 1992: 95).

Some husbands consider their wives' insistence on their familiar food as a serious problem (Beer 1996: 201) and many bi-cultural marriages fail simply because the husband cannot stand what his wife cooks for him. Daily quarrels about food can generate permanent conflicts, and divorces because of incompatible tastes and food habits are by no means rare (Beer 1996: 201; Heine-Wiedenmann & Ackermann 1992: 132). The inability to eat alien food, even the disgust with it can have psychosomatic consequences and even cause acute illness.

However, such grave and negative consequences are not the rule. In the reality of bi-cultural families there predominate more or less successful processes of mutual adaptation and negotiation which often involve a high degree of creativity and ability to find compromises even in sensitive areas. The way in which these complex processes of negotiating a 'family style' actually evolve in concrete families

depends, as experience shows[4], on a whole series of factors and conditions working in opposite directions.

The conditions which shape the actual culinary behaviors in bi-cultural marriages and families and which largely determine the degree of consent or conflict can be related directly to the ethnological dimensions of space, society, time, and culture:

1. In the *spatial dimension,* the actual place of residence of the marriage partners or the family is a most important factor. If it is the home country of one of the partners, he or she will certainly have an advantage (due to the normative power of the factual reality) which becomes apparent for example in the availability of foodstuffs and the furnishing of the household, particularly the kitchen. This advantage is further amplified by the influence of the children (see below). On the other hand, this advantage is in many cases reduced by the growing number of ethnic food stores, particularly in big cities. If the place of residence of the family is a third country, the negotiating of food supply and food behaviors can be either more complicated or it can facilitate the finding of a "third way" and thus reduce conflicts.

2. There can be no doubt that the *social dimension* has a very strong impact on actual culinary behaviors. In the first place the size of the ethnic group of the foreign marriage partner and the density of his or her group contacts and social inclusion into this group can be a decisive factor. A strong inclusion into the ethnic group is often combined with the insistence on familiar food, while social distance to the group makes the adjustment to local food habits easier. Of even greater importance, though, appears to be the *gender* and the corresponding *gender roles,* particularly the socio-culturally determined distribution of roles in the sphere of kitchen, cooking, and food supply. The observations of Barbara Waldis (1998: 139) that "in the Maghreb countries boys are not trained to do housework," and that

[4] The following analysis is based on the little extant research literature mostly on the German-speaking countries, on students' papers at the Institut für Volkskunde/European Ethnology at Munich University, and on the author's personal experience in a bi-cultural marriage. The validity of the findings certainly extends beyond the investigated bi-cultural relationships.

"women do not tolerate men in the kitchen because it is considered female territory," may be a little extreme, but one can assume that in most countries of the world the care for the daily food is in the hands of women. On the other hand, however, the inability or unwillingness of the wife to prepare the food according to the taste of her husband can be an important reason for him to learn to cook and to prepare his own familiar food for himself (or even the family), as Heidemarie Pandey (1988: 165) observed among Indian husbands married in Germany: "The men can often cook very well, although in India this is not part of the male role. Only abroad there arises the need to learn to cook, and by experimenting they try to come as close as possible to the familiar taste of food." Ghanese men in Europe also learn to cook their habitual food themselves (Englert 1995: 138); some German men living on the Philippines "have begun to cook their own meals, to smoke ham and to make pickled cucumbers, etc." (Beer 1996: 201); and a Frenchman married to a Polish woman and living in Munich often takes to cooking himself in order to cook French style.

The social *prestige* of the respective culture or kitchen is another important factor. Outi Tuomi-Nikula (1996: 226) observed that the insistence of Finnish women in Germany on Finnish eating culture is usually "supported by the German husbands, because the 'Finnish flair' in the house is appreciated by the social environment as positive and <...> enhancing the status." In the same way, the Italian (Steiner 1999: 115), Japanese (Johanus 1999: 53f.) or French cuisines (cf. Scheibler 1992: 96) are highly valued.

Another factor is the *social class* which is, however, rarely addressed in studies of bi-cultural families. It is to be assumed, though, that in higher social classes, particularly among educated urban professionals, the willingness to try unknown and new food is stronger than among the lower social classes and among villagers. Barbara Waldis (1998: 200f.) noted in Tunisia that those Swiss wives cook for their husband exclusively Tunisian food who "live out in the villages or in lowly urban quarters. The supply on the local markets as well as their financial resources determine their daily diet, because European products are not available everywhere and are expensive."

Middle class women, on the other hand, switch between both cuisines. One can add that intellectuals in Western Europe and North America often take pride not only in their exotic marriage partners but also in their "exotic cuisine."

The most significant factor, however, is the combination of *gender* and *place of residence*. A woman living in her home country with a foreign husband has a double advantage, while a woman married into another country usually has to subordinate to local conditions much more. In this latter case the influence of the husband and his family and the entire social environment prevails because, as the example of the Swiss women in Tunisia demonstrates, they can exert a strong pressure on the wife to conform. It may be true that in these families "the culinary culture <...> is strongly influenced by the Swiss wives, because they do the housekeeping," but "the conflict arises with the mother-in-law about the kitchen, and the Swiss women have to negotiate what place they will grant their mother-in-law in their own kitchen" (Waldis 1998: 199f.). The entire family of the husband mixes in heavily, and restrictions are also due to the limited supply of Western food in the country.

*Children* play a vital role for the food habits of all families. As a consequence of their early integration into kindergarten, school, and friendship groups, and because of their desire not to differ from their peers, their influence in the family is usually in the direction of the local culture. "When a couple has children, their wishes — which usually equal the preferences of German children — often determine what is eaten in the family," notes Beer (1996: 200), and Pandey (1988: 166) observed in German-Indian families: "Not always do the children share the preference of their parents for Indian food. In a case in which they were all day taken care of by their grandmother, because both parents went to work, they preferred European food." In some families the children began to like Indian food only much later in life. In German-Japanese families, on the other hand, "all children were at an early stage of their development introduced to Japanese food. Among the favorite dishes of the questioned children there was 'Sushi' (raw fish on rice), 'Udon' (noodle soup), 'Ramen' (noodles)

and curry rice" (Johanus 1999: 53). In any case it has to be noted for all bi-cultural families that the children grow up with specific — and usually mixed — tastes and smells.

3. The *cultural dimension* of food has no doubt great relevance, due to the fact that "between need (hunger) and its fulfillment (eating and drinking) man has placed the entire cultural system of the cuisine" (Tolksdorf 1976: 67). The "cultural system of the cuisine", the culinary tradition can carry very different values in different societies and can be rooted more or less deeply in society. Its significance in regions such as North and Central Europe or North America is relatively lower than, for example, in countries such as France, Italy or China. On the Philippines, food appears to have an even greater cultural and social significance, as Beer (1996: 199f.) notes: "Food is considered a focal aspect of family life. <...> Joint meals are one of the most important occasions for communication. <...> The status and the prestige of a family depend <...> upon the fact how many different courses are cooked, particularly at festive occasions like the *fiesta* or when there are guests. Therefore it is not surprising that the joint meals are highly valued in the (bi-cultural) marriages." Pandey made similar observations for India and Waldis for Tunisia, whereas Englert (1995: 138) quotes a woman married to a Ghanese saying, "in Ghana food is eaten to fill up, and not because of its good taste." The strength of their own culinary tradition prevents Indian and Filipino as well as French partners from adapting to the kitchen of their country of residence. "The men rarely develop a taste for the traditional German food," Pandey was told by her informants (1988: 165), and "most ... interviewed Filipino wives seldom cook German dishes" (Beer 1996: 200), while in German-Ghanese marriages "everyone has come to like the cuisine of the other country" (Englert 1995: 138).

As noted earlier, the *closeness* or *distance* of the culinary systems also plays an important role. Marriages between partners from very different culinary traditions cause more fundamental problems than those within the same culinary paradigm, for example within the Balkan Peninsula or Scandinavia, or those between Czechs, Poles, Germans, and Austrians. Very often, however, the "narcissism of the

small differences" (noted by Sigmund Freud) can be very disturbing: small differences in the preparation of the same dishes or in table manners can be perceived as major differences and cause serious conflicts in bi-cultural marriages. "The Czech national dish is roast pork with *Knödel* (dumpling) and sauerkraut, in Bavaria too, but the color of the dumplings is different and they also taste differently," Libuše Volbrachtová (1988: 212) quotes a Czech author.

The significance of food in a cultural system is particularly emphasized whenever there are explicit, mostly religious food prescriptions and *taboos*. Such prescriptions which exist, for example, in the Islamic, Jewish or Indian cultures exert a strong influence on bi-cultural marriages and families insofar as they often force the other partner to change his or her food habits considerably. "In India, a large part of the population is vegetarian because of religious traditions," writes Pandey (1988: 165); in some cases "families eat meat, but only the kinds of meat common in India — poultry and lamb as well as fish, but no beef or pork" (Ibid.: 166). The high ritual and social significance of food in India is strongly based on the concept of ritual purity and impurity. "Tradition therefore has exact codes of behavior for *what* must be eaten, *how* it must be eaten, and *with whom* one should eat <...> The member of one's own caste is different from other persons in that you can eat together with him or her" (Ibid.). It goes without saying that with such concepts of social exclusion the coexistence in a bi-cultural marriage or other social contacts (for example at invitations) are subject to very specific strains.

Particularly in a foreign environment, food is closely connected with the personal and cultural identity, especially in the case of a strong culinary tradition with many rules and regulations. Food can easily become a symbol for, even an *ersatz* for the home country (cf. Köstlin 1991). In this way, "for the Filipino women food is an important symbol of ethnic belonging. It therefore acquires great significance" (Beer 1996: 202). Native dishes and foodstuffs are often elevated beyond their original meaning; they may even become objects of nostalgia, like for example dried fish for the Filipino migrants (Beer 1996: 201). For Germans living on the Philippines, on

the other hand, "the dark bread, which is nothing special back home, <...> becomes a delicacy"; the high relevance of dark bread for Germans living in England or New Zealand is confirmed by other authors such as Kockel (2002: 250f.) and Bönisch-Brednich (2002: 349 — 353). The acceptance or eating of such victuals can become a test for the acceptance of one's own culture by the marriage partner.

4. The *time dimension*, i.e., cultural change is of lesser importance. The general culinary conservatism often becomes, as we have seen, even stronger in the situation of migration, particularly with marriage partners from a very different culinary tradition. In spite of this there certainly is adaptive change in the food habits, but it often remains unnoticed by the persons concerned. The duration of the stay as well as the age at the time of entry, however, do not seem to have an adaptive influence on the food habits; on the contrary, it is often to be observed that the orientation towards the familiar food of childhood often grows with the number of years abroad.

In each marriage or family there arises the necessity, as we have seen, to create a 'family style' out of the different preferences in taste and food habits, a style which usually influences the entire everyday life of all family members for long periods of time or even for life. The extant studies as well as personal experience show that bi-cultural families adopt very different strategies to manage the cultural differences in everyday life and to reduce, avoid or resolve conflicts, in relation to that mentioned above, socio-cultural or individual factors. Although there is a large variety of practices and strategies in bi-cultural families, there are some "arrangements" which can be encountered more frequently. They span from complete culinary segregation to the complete culinary integration of one partner:

- In the case of *segregation*, each partner prepares his or her own food and considers the food ways of the marriage partner unacceptable and incompatible with his or her own tastes. Most Filipino women rarely cook German dishes, some of them cook German dishes for their husband and children and Filipino dishes for themselves (Beer 1996: 200), and many husbands even learn to cook so that they do not have to eat their wives' dishes. The rejection of the partner's cuisine

can — for a husband — lead to other forms of escapism, for example to regular or occasional visits to his mother (in case she lives close by), or to restaurants and canteens. In addition to segregated eating as the strongest form of segregation, there is the separate cooking of meals, with each partner cooking his/her familiar dishes. Thus, several German-Indian "couples <...> have developed a form of labor division according to which the husband cooks Indian and his wife German dishes" (Pandey 1988: 165).

• The opposite case is the complete or far-reaching *predominance* of the food of one partner, either voluntarily or forcibly. In the first case one can rightfully speak of a voluntary "culinary border crossing" of the partner, mostly the husband who does not insist on his familiar food and takes a liking to the food his wife prepares; from time to time, however, there can crop up a yearning for the familiar dishes of childhood. The more common case is the strict enforcement of one culinary tradition by one marriage partner, often the husband who insists unconditionally on his traditional food, or the children insist on the food which they know from their friends' families.

• The most common form in bi-cultural families appears to be the negotiation of *compromises* which do justice to both sides. The solutions which are found are quite variegated and creative; particularly frequent is the switching between the two cuisines. In German-Ghanese families "all couples said that they cook dishes from both countries and each of them likes the partner's cuisine <...> in all couples there dominate alternative arrangements in which each nationality has room for expression" (Englert 1995: 138). Among German-Indian couples there are also many creative arrangements; the cooking often alternates (Pandey 1988: 165). For the Swiss women in Tunisia being able "to cook Tunisian dishes <...> leads to increased contact with the mother-in-law or the sisters-in-law and can be a code which furthers the acceptance of the European daughter-in-law or sister-in-law <...> Most women <...> alternate between Tunisian and Swiss dishes" (Waldis 1998: 200). Other families regularly alternate between both cuisines. This can be done with the daily meals: in some German-French families, for example, the evening meal is German

("because it is simpler and more practical") and the lunch is French (Scheibler 1992: 96). The choice of the cuisine can also be determined by the weekdays or the weekend: in a German-English family, for instance, the English dinner is always taken with the children on the weekend (Ibid.). Very often, however, the choice of the cuisine is determined by the occasion: on the national or religious holidays and feast days of the partners the respective traditional dishes are prepared, and it is interesting to note that the foreign partners usually cook them in a more traditional form than in their countries of origin. When guests are invited, the dishes are often chosen in accordance with the composition and the tastes of the guests: "If several Filipino women or German-Filipino couples come together, the hosts will cook *pansit, sinigang, adobo* or other Philippine dishes" (Beer 1996: 200). In some German-French families the "typical French food" is reserved for "special occasions such as feasts, celebrations, and invitations" (Scheibler 1992: 96f.). The dishes of the foreign marriage partner thus achieve an elevated meaning that transcends the ordinary workday and often has ritual and highly emotional implications; they can even become "soul food" which replaces the faraway home country.

• In most families there develop — consciously or less consciously — forms of mutual adaptation, of mixing, and *hybridisation* of food and food habits. Elements of the foreign food mix into the local cuisine, such as individual foodstuffs, spices or techniques of cooking; or the family develops mixed table manners and rituals. Many German-Indian families combine "Indian and German cuisine in creative ways" (Pandey 1988: 165) or add Indian spices to German dishes. Many couples emphasize that they have chosen "the best of both countries." Quite often couples or individuals would bring back specific foodstuffs from trips to the other country (see Scheibler 1992: 96). Never, though, are the forms that develop in bi-national families a simple sum of both culinary cultures; what develops is in almost all cases a *third*, specific hybrid cuisine which combines elements of both cultures in individual ways. There are very few spheres of everyday life in which this hybridization can be achieved so easily and elegantly as in the realm of food.

• Another solution of the culinary problem in bi-cultural marriages and families is, finally, the choice of a "*third cuisine.*" This solution offers the advantage that none of the partners can enforce his or her food habits or tastes. This strategy of conflict avoidance is all the more easy when the couple or family live in a third country, but it can also be observed in cases when they live in the country of one partner. A popular solution in such cases is the choice of an "international" cuisine. Pandey (1998: 165) has encountered this approach in German-Indian families, Englert (1995) in German-Ghanese families; it has also been observed that in French-Polish marriages the choice is often "international cuisine."

In trying to summarize our findings, we can say that the ever growing number of bi-cultural marriages and families, caught in the space between their respective "culinary conservatism" and the present unifying forces of the "world cuisine" (Goody 1997) and the global supply of foodstuffs, are forced to develop and maintain in their daily lives practices of everyday coexistence. Because food is a highly value laden and emotional sphere which is rooted deeply in the individual, it is not surprising that in many bi-cultural families it becomes the focus and cause of conflict. The question what is served on the table very often becomes a test of power in a marriage; and "love goes through the stomach" also insofar as the appreciation or rejection of the partner's food is often interpreted as appreciation or rejection of his or her country, culture, and identity. The question whether "rice or potatoes are served on the table thus becomes a possible cause of quarrel," and for Filipino women the harmless question addressed to the guest "Do you also eat *tuyô* [dried fish]?" becomes the litmus test of the acceptance of their culture (Beer 1996: 202).

The practices and strategies of "culinary coexistence" which develop in bi-cultural marriages and families, ranging from segregation, the predominance of one cuisine, the mixing and hybridization of both cuisines to the escape into a third cuisine, correspond to some extent to the practices of inter-ethnic and inter-religious coexistence which were common in the historical

multinational empires (Roth 1999) and in other parts of the world. In our world that is more and more transformed by globalization and culture contact, they become fundamental practices of everyday life management for more and more individuals.

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