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**Village and city. Some remarks on Pitirim Sorokin's search in
the context of the modern komi culture**

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The paper covers the main issues of Pitirim Sorokin's search in the context of the modern Komi culture. Sorokin's sociological ideas and conceptions were formed at the time when there was great interest to the Komi ethnography. His memories of childhood and youth spent in Komi were reflected in his autobiographical novel "A Long Journey».

The project is devoted to studying the traditional Komi village space and traditional way of life, and is based on the scientist's ethnographical and sociological works, describing the sociology of the village. In Sorokin's works the "chaos" of the city is contrasted to the "cosmos" of the village.

In addition, the authors describe the present state of the Komi and North-Russian village which can be called "chaotic" Destroyed temples, social and economic degradation, hard drinking are the characteristic features of the modern Komi village. Having lost "the village cosmos" the European North-East of Russia has not yet created "the city cosmos". The future development of culture, social and economic life of the Republic will depend on whether this marginal state is preserved or overcome.

Keywords: Sociological ideas, mythological space, symbolic topography, ritual actions, traditional belief

Данная работа освещает основные проблемы исследования Питирима Сорокина в контексте современной Коми культуры. Социологические идеи и концепции Сорокина формировались в период, когда существовал большой интерес к Коми этнографии. Мемуары ученого о детстве и юности в Коми крае нашли свое отражение в его автобиографическом романе «Долгий путь».

Исследование посвящается изучению традиционного образа жизни и Коми деревни и основывается на этнографических и социологических работах знаменитого ученого, где описывается социология деревни. В работах Питирима Сорокина «хаос» города противопоставляется «системе» деревни.

Кроме того, авторы описывают современное состояние деревни в Коми и на русском севере, которое можно назвать «хаотичным». Разрушенные храмы, социальная и экономическая деградация, пьянство являются характерными чертами Коми деревни. Потеряв «деревенскую систему», европейский северо-восток России еще не создал свою «городскую систему». Будущее развитие культурной, социальной и экономической жизни в республике будет зависеть от того, будет ли сохранено или преодолено это пограничное состояние.

Ключевые слова: Социологические идеи, мифологическое пространство, символическая топография, ритуальные действия, традиционная вера

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In the history of science of the 20th century the name of the prominent Russian American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin (1889 -1968) takes an important place. He wrote such fundamental investigations as "The System of Sociology", "The Social and Cultural Dynamics"

P. Sorokin was born in the Komi village Turja. In 1922 the scientist was deported from the country. In 1930 at the Harvard University he organized the first Faculty of Sociology in the USA. In 1964 Sorokin was elected the President of the American Sociological Association.

Sorokin's sociological ideas and conceptions were formed at the time when there was great interest to the Komi ethnography. His memories of childhood and youth spent in Komi were reflected in his autobiographical novel "A Long Journey" In the first chapter of the book he wrote: "In every village the church rose above all other buildings. Its bell tower with blue domes was the highest building in the village and its whitestone walls with the green roof could be seen from a long distance. Near the church there were public buildings, schools, the house for village gatherings, the library"

At the time of Sorokoin's youth not only the centre of the village but the whole territory of the village presented an organized, ordered "microcosmos" The dwelling itself correlated with the vertical line, household buildings, saunas, wells, chapels, crosses and worshipped medicinal springs were given a special emotional and religious sense.

The symbol of house is closely connected with the point of view that considers a house and every living space as general (house - settlement neighbourhood) as a cosmic substance. From this cosmological viewpoint every house appears to be a part of cosmos - settlement and, at the same time, to embody a mythological space [1].

This cosmological hypothesis may demonstrate that both in the Russian and Komi languages such notions as "a house" and "a coffin" have one and the same expression, for both of them correspondingly ("горт" - Коми, "домовина" - Russian).

House means Man and Cosmos. This is clearly expressed in the ideas of Death and Birth. There is a typical Komi tradition to believe that when the man (house owner) dies, his house dies as

well. This tradition is sure to suppose that every man builds his own house by himself, as his own cosmic space. Moreover, every new house is supposed to be an everlasting renewal of the ancestor's house; so, it is to be built on the place of the previous old house. At least, some old parts of the ancestor's house are to be used for building a new house. This serves to express a kin symbol and to establish close links with the former generation.

At the same time, every settlement {as a complex of houses} is cosmos, too. In other words, a settlement is a socium realized through symbolic topography. That is why, the harmony of a settlement is the symbol of the world order, established by ancestors [8, 79-93].

The principal role belongs to symbols, which result in laws and traditions, according to which single houses are arranged to make a unit (settlement). So, new-built houses were to be in the line with the already existing ones. They were built along rivers, and later along tracks (a track expresses the same symbol as a river),

A river connects this (existing) world with mythological space of the forefathers; that is why, every house (a symbol of cosmos) faces this symbolic water-way. This is the law, but in everyday life an insurmountable barrier existed between this world and the other (future) one. It caused certain bans for building houses in some places of the settlement. It was considered evil to build houses on the places of former wells, gates of the other houses or tracks, for such places were symbols for boundary. The places, mentioned above, gave the opportunity for the evil spirits to penetrate into the house. It was in these houses that evil spirits would appear later. In general, such beliefs show the dependence of a House on the favour of ancestors (the contacts were made by a sorcerer).

The process of building houses was accompanied with the offerings to the ancestors, such as grains or wool. They served to bring prosperity and well-being to the future house-cosmos. Since every house is "the universe", it should connect all the worlds together. So, when the first row of a house had been built, a tree was planted in the front corner of it, which was a symbol of "a growing house"

Particular characteristics of the inner space of a house were marked by such places of the interior as the front (red) corner, a stove, a threshold and other locations. They were symbols for boundaries. In mythology these details were shown in such opposite

notions as inner/outer, male/female, which later developed into ritual practice [1].

It has been mentioned above that in funeral ritual cycles there is a folklore correlation of house and man (house owner), both prove to be identified with cosmos.

According to the cosmic classification of a living space, the lower part of the world space is represented by a cellar of the house. It was here that the Komi people had buried their dead as the legend ran. Because of it, the soil, taken from the cellar was the symbol of the native house (settlement, native place). This soil protected a person on his long journey [2, 20-24].

In general, this idea (a cellar is the burial place of ancestors) contains mythological belief into a victim that better gives rise to "the universe" So, when there is a dead body in the house, the latter is opened to the future world [4, 58].

The analysis of the building rituals demonstrates that some details of the house interior are identical with the World Tree. This tree may be compared with the idea of "the world way", or "the world river" and finally, with the idea of "the world heart" (the symbol of the beginning of the world) [8, 88-93],

Such places are represented in the house by the front (red) corner and by the ceiling beam. It is worth noticing the fact, that both of them are metaphorically identified with the house (cosmos). It is not coincidental then that the dead is placed into the front (red) corner before being washed. It is from here that his soul starts the way to the sacred centre, where his ancestors have already abided.

The ceiling beam is no less important in defining the place for the dead in the house, as well as for the living during the mourning nights.

It has already been said that, when the dead was in the house, the latter became the world turned from upside to down. The actions showing this symbolic position are of a dual character; on the one hand, they serve to mark the intrusion of the other world into the house and to protect it against this intrusion, on the other hand. They are: the actions of cleaning the floor (after the dead has been carried out), of turning over the furniture and of carrying the dead out of the house through the back porch. In some extent, the back porch plays the classifying role in defining "the boundaries" of the symbolic house space. The same role is played by the front porch. It was here that death had been announced to the neighborhood through lamenting.

The last farewell took place here as well. So, the porch becomes the symbol for the world threshold. Symbolic crossing of the boundary between two worlds (that form cosmos in mythological concepts) was duplicated in funeral rituals through the stops at the edge of the settlement and at the cemetery gates.

House expresses no less symbolic topography in wedding rituals, where the opposition of relatives/strangers is correlated with the opposition of inner/outer. This is clearly seen in the ritual, when match-makers show the aim of the visit by making noise in the corridor, by staying on the threshold and not crossing the beam [3]. All these actions mark out the boundary zone. Some of the bride's actions and that of her relatives also serve to express the symbolic topography of the house. Performing her ritual cry, the bride is sitting on the bench between two windows. Her mother is in the "women's part" of the house.

This symbolic correlation of inner/outer is also expressed through some particular ritual actions. For instance, it is on the porch at the closed door, that the fiance is standing; he is trying to guess the riddles.

It should be also noted that the bride cannot enter the fiance's house by a usual way. Just as the dead is carried out of the house through the back porch, the bride enters the home of her husband in the same way.

So, the actions of the bride and the fiance, the match-makers and others are correlated with the symbolic characteristics of the environment. The correlation of all wedding rituals with the location of the house interior is connected with the mythological action of creating the world. Therefore, a lot of wedding ritual rules have their counterparts in the funeral rites.

Such correlations of the wedding rituals and the house itself with the mythological pattern of the world is clearly seen in the role of the house locations, corresponding to the vertical structure of the world.

First of all, we can see here again the functions of the front (red) corner and the beam of the house. They remind us The World Tree, which roots are in the realm of shadows, and the crown is in the heaven. The front (red) corner is traditional place for the bride and the fiance, or for their ritual representatives (in the case the former are absent). The beam is usual place for making marriage contracts - there the bride and the fiance get the parent's bless. In

addition, the beam is the place, connecting the ancestors with the gods, that is why the beam passes their favour to the bride [3,15].

Similar significance is given to the house cellar. The bride hides here, when the fiance's friends have arrived. Moreover, the cellar is the 'place for the fiance's mother, when the bride's girlfriends have come. Such actions were the symbols of the principal contents of the wedding rituals, that are getting the bride from the ancestors' realm and place her to the people's world, Due to these parameters, all wedding rituals have close links with the fairy-tales.

It is very important, that the mythological opposition of relatives/strangers is duplicated in the opposition of top/bottom. Thus, some rituals, aimed to get prosperity, are connected with the upper part of the house (the ridge of the roof as well).

The wedding rituals connected with the horizontal and vertical interior of the house become identical with the cosmos. Through the ancestors' favour the wedding becomes legitimated by the society (socium).

It is necessary to point out, that the folk traditions regard to the birth, which took place inside the house, negatively. So, this fact may be considered only on the base of circumstantial evidence, connected with the living cycle.

Such negative treatment of the birth place inside of the house can be identified with the traditional belief, that a baby (especially the new-born one) is the representative of the other world. The birth was allowed to take place only on the threshold of the house, the boundary symbol.

The place for the baby in the house is also correlated with notable locations of the interior. The belief that the baby represents the world of ancestors (moreover, he is the rebirthed ancestor) demands that the baby's cradle should be attached to the beam.

This belief is indirectly manifested in the magic medicine, connected with the stove - the most important location in the house.

The world outlook, which correlated with the semantics of traditional village space and traditional way of life, greatly influenced the scientist's ethnographical and sociological ideas. One of his biggest works was devoted to the sociology of the village. In Sorokin's works the "chaos" of the city is contrasted to the "cosmos" of the village.

The present state of the Komi and North-Russian village may be called "chaotic". Destroyed temples, social and economic

degradation, hard drinking are the characteristic features of the modern Komi village.

In the last decades tendencies to urbanization are noticeable in the Komi Republic. Nevertheless, Syktyvkar, Ukhta, Vorkuta, Inta and Pechora can not be called "cities" in the absolute meaning of this word, in spite of their big population.

The lack of correspondence with the city is disposed in architectural look of the cities as well as in people's consciousness and the way of life led by them.

Having lost "the village cosmos" the European North-East of Russia has not yet created "the city cosmos" The future development of culture, social and economic life of the Republic will to a great extent depend on whether this marginal state is preserved or overcome.

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