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Slovenský národopis

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AN ATTEMPT AT ESTABLISHING VALUES STRUCTURE AND VALUES ORIENTATION MEASURING*

(Family table – on the basis of the preparatory materials for the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia)

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The problem of values study is not new to ethnography. Ethnography as a historical science has always felt an urgency to determine historical extent of the studied phenomenon in the given historical period. The demand for technically different mode in approach to values measurement is inherent in the necessity to differentiate inner mechanisms of elementary culture-carrying processes in order to prevent (or as the case may be, to forbid) the dehumanization of human environment. Nevertheless, the dehumanization threat is the reflection of the deculturalization and vice versa. Such a danger usually arises then and there when within historically short periods, under the influence of external factors, rapid fundamental socio-structural changes come about, abolishing thus traditional orientation priorities without providing adequate – in culture already worked out immanent substitutes – models. System of practical culture, though, is often unable – due to shortage of time – to work out new impulses in accordance with the historical ecosphere of cultural being. Thus the danger of new impulses overvaluing, that may lead up to the loss of recognition of the needs of width continuity structure arises, causing also a drop-out of internal mechanisms of cultural balance.

Presented article aims at surveying ethnographic phenomenon – a traditional cultural model – as a complex of values contents and an object of values orientation. I started off from the belief that to recognize the indices of values orientation is only one half of ethnographic truth, because an ethnographer should be able to establish what does a given guideline mean from the point of view

of the necessity of practical culture balance. While attempting to solve the problem I have picked out a simple and – within its basic outlines more or less – universally known object. For a methodological experiment it has an advantage that the material body remains surveyable and controllable from the beginning up till the end of the analyses.¹ The core of the studied data is presented in tables and graphs. This resulted from the very nature of the studied material data base collection, facilitating to approach the set task through searching for modes of values measurement. Thus, the problem of evaluation process is not pertinent here, *but through practical values the coherences of being and prime value of the target object are being searched for.*²

The materialization of the set aim is based on a philosophical category of value, though it is known that there is no universal criterion for the so-called axiologic objectivism. The instruments of evaluations are norms. “A norm is both a prerequisite and a product of evaluation... It is actualized, because inbetween a norm and a value there is functional interdependence... conditionality... and tension. Which aspect of norm will be actualized depends on the potential values. – Confrontation and motion of norms are necessary for humanization of human world, though. – Thus the values of norms may and must be bilaterally compared, they may be measured but never measured off as there exist no absolute valuation criteria.”³

Thus, in spite of the difficulties in defining and measuring values, practical opinion on the existence of certain objectivity in their measurement

and definition is valid. Such an objectivity is for example "evident after the transfer from individual to social evaluation"⁴, "in surveying morality values aided by introducing the category of beam value"⁵, or in cases when the relative value becomes the absolute one, for though it contains the relation to subject, yet it is a universal one."⁶ All these are relations that are somehow interrelated, or in other words, they delimitate above all objects of ethnographic research.

In ethnography, where the suggested base of scientific invariable is the tradition process that keeps in itself the genetic codes of culture – both the essential character and relational being of values as well, may be and de facto are accepted as an ontological fact. – Genetic codes of culture exist as fundamental constituents of cultural continuity; they enter the relative values (elements of changes) and confer upon them part of their essence to the same amount as those new constituents are capable to penetrate culture "beam-like", being in accordance with the new conditions of historically emerging things and approaches of subjective evaluation. In so far as the newly formed (historical) values are capable to clear off individual peculiarities of subjects and the process of life incorporates them in and confer upon them part of the essential culture characteristics – they become integral part of historical form of structures, they become at the same time relative and absolute values. E. g. in the case when in a value of a period table its artistic-craftship value ceases to dominate, becoming thus integral part of furnished room inhabited by a prosperous family. – Presented stratification of the problem-approach to the issue of values and evaluation emerges from the material at our disposal in the presented work; a big domestic dining table from the rural neighbourhood dating back to not so distant past has become means for obtaining information. Its finite value is in the country folk surroundings up to the date actualized also through the ceremonial character imbued thus in a partial way with the arch value of the sacrificial altar; this is a concrete example of the above described characteristics of processual being and cultural value.

There is as yet no universal interpretation of the origin and the development of the archetype of the present day big dining table. Typologically this piece of furniture was known already in antique Rome where one-, two-, three-, and four-legs tables were also recognized (oval tables are documented in rent houses), but they were not

used in the known to us combination with a chair.⁷ There exist also theories accounting various regions of selforigination of table by gradual elevation of the table basis.⁸ Many authors are inclined to support the opinion that the piece of furniture today taken for a table has developed in the region of ancient civilizations of the Near East where the table basis followed the development of an elevated arm-chair – a throne.⁹ In the rest of Europe, then, the table in its finite functional form spread out through the mediation of Rome, Byzantine and early Middle-ages Christian civilization (the furniture of the first Christian churches).¹⁰ The symbol of the Last Supper¹¹ was for example one of the most frequent iconographic cathedral motifs. It seems highly probable that the table was brought to the people with different table manners (e.g. dining on a board while the persons sat on the ground – this is generally ascribed to the old Celts, Germans and Slavs¹²) essentially in a pictured form and only later became domestic in reality. Another way of mediation is documented in many linguistic documents from various European regions, bearing the evidence of Latin or Greek origin of the local name for a big four-edged table. On the break of the millenium the big dining table is used on our territory as well, in the courtier's and surely in monastic neighbourhood. It is supposed not to have a stable place at that time, being folding and portable with a changeable table basis.¹³ Only during the following centuries also on our territory are developing separate dining rooms in the dwellings. In the manor's banquet halls massive dining tables found their permanent implementation. In the folk neighbourhood the long dining table in its folding form with legs.

On our territory the big table had fully developed into its function with a stable place probably only in the Middle-ages urban society¹² that ascribed also judicial meaning to it (discussion by the table) and managed to develop also a new culture of table manners with the adoption of new table utensils that were initially adopted in rich noblemen and patrician households.¹⁵ Historical penetration of big dining table as a stable component of the household furnishings of the individual lower strata of society was related to the availability of the smoke-free floor space and consequently certain material prosperity and culture advance in dwelling. Concerning the culture of feudal village the question of temporal and spacial expansion of a big table has not as yet been satisfactorily solved mainly due to the lack of direct historiographic

material.¹⁶ For the past, the ethnographic problems do not arise from the doubt cast on the presence of a table already in the Middle Ages in the ceremonial sphere of the given culture, but from the relation to its functional values in everyday life.¹⁷ The question reads as follows: when did the table become a stable and universal component of the peasant room furnishings or, as the case may be, until what period was it placed aside when folded and used only for festive occasions.

Though lacking direct evidences for universal validity of the custom of mere festive placement of a table (being already in that century such a universally widespread component of room furnishings that it mostly did not come to the researchers' minds to ask about the opposite reminiscences¹⁹) material gathered about the "farmer's table"²⁰ can also be admitted as an indirect evidence. On the other hand, it would mean that the functional value of "farmer's table" is considered to be a temporary or qualitatively new form of value symbol in the folk culture. Coming back to the issue of dating – if the above described is accepted as plausible – it is necessary, then, to consider the relatively recent generalization of the so-called traditional room table corner. Thus, it means that the beginning of its gradual stabilization goes back to the mid 18th century. – In the 20th century, within the peasant neighbourhood in Slovakia, practically all basic stylistic types of the so-called big room table were recorded; from the Gothic one through the massive Renaissance table up to the recent stylistic types. Well known are also various regional stylistic offshoots, but always with the table basis of small format cca 70 × 80 cm or 80 × 100 cm, respectively. The presented mean size of a table may be related to the urgent necessity of proportionality in furnishings of often the only permanently inhabited room in a peasant house. Its size documents also the habit of eating from one dish only. Bigger tables, with the size of the table basis cca 100 × 110 cm²¹ beside eating from separate table dishes evidently document also the over-all higher degree of accommodation culture. With the increase in floor space since the mid 19th century the number of tables in a house increased, too, evidently due to the fact that a room without a table is not a proper room and that the everyday functions of a traditional room were taken over by a kitchen.

Thus, after the preceding inevitable recapitulations at last we come to the actual material of the

present paper. Total sum of subject data base presented in the paper was created by a set of authentic utterances – different formulations of a norm – actually meaning a rejection of sitting on a table, including also the appraising utterances reasoning the meaning of this rejection. The material was obtained by a public survey sent out in 1979 to the municipal national councils of those regions where the data for the preparation of the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia were gathered from. The survey appeal was repeated twice and altogether more than two-thirds of the letter were received back. Yet, the answers obtained after the latter appeal have not changed substantially the content structure of the former data base because the matter concerned was not the regional condensing or broadening of the network but actually the precision of the previously applied network, instead. The survey, printed on one page only, with several thematically different verification questions concerned organization phenomena of public and family life during the interwar period. *The last question read: Underline: it is permitted – it is not permitted to sit on the table. If the response is negative, specify the reasons.*

In its formulation the question was addressing the present day people. It followed the questions on placement of already cut bread; the method of dividing bread and meat when the family had their meals together. It seems that in its simplicity and classification its chosen position was lucky and provoking, resulting in obtaining 164 active-explanatory answers – see TABLE 1. Many of the answers were multi-argued, i.e. they contained several partial values. Numeral ratios of answers and their meaningful parts – see TABLE 2.

Relations presented here inform only about the way our material was obtained without comprising almost any ethnographic or value correlation. Obtained 273 items of arguments represent a very diverse material. It comprises various formulations of norms rejecting sitting on the table, specifying many diverse values attached somehow to the table. Moreover, individual answers reflect imbalanced degree of personal involvement in the case. Thus, our data base represents material validating notoriously known case that the values seldom conform to the conditions of accountability and equality. French axiologist Edmund Goblot, who in 1927 attempted to apply formal standpoints on the values material, suggested to apply the method of estimation in case the so-called non-economic or all the other values are

TABLE 1

Evaluation of co-operation concerning the following question:

Underline: it is permitted – it is not permitted to sit on the table. If the response is negative, specify the reason.

Quality of co-operation	Question unresponded	With a passive response	With an active response	Total
total number of localities 250	1	15	164	180

TABLE 2

Evaluation of the active responses structure

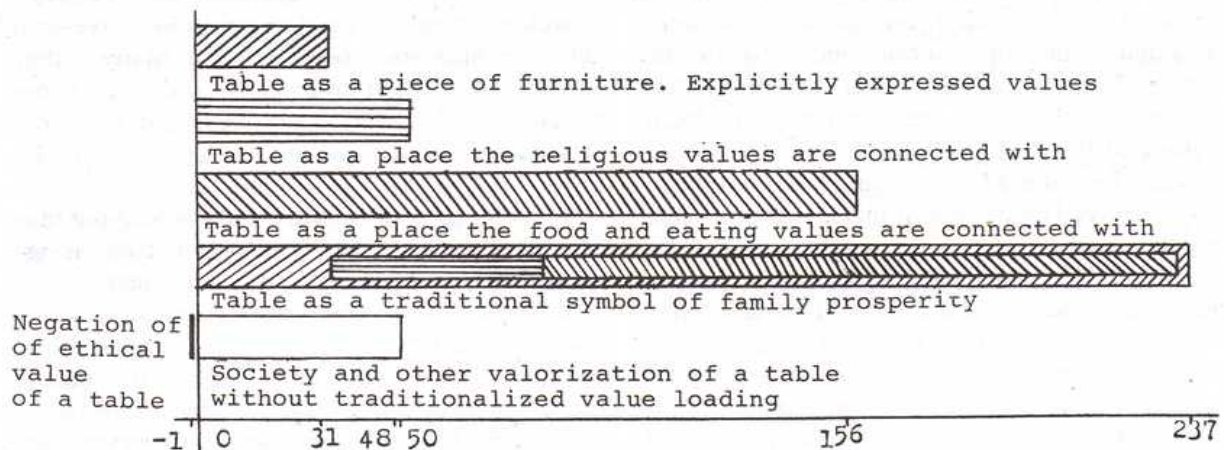
Number of localities	55	77	21	9	1	1	Total number of 164 localities
number of arguments per locality	1	2	3	4	5	6	total number of 273 arguments

TABLE 3

Summary of active response meanings structure

Total number of given meanings	Number of meanings after standardization	Number of meanings after standardization
273	38	9

ETHICAL VALUE OF A TABLE – VECTORS RATIO AND THEIR STRUCTURE

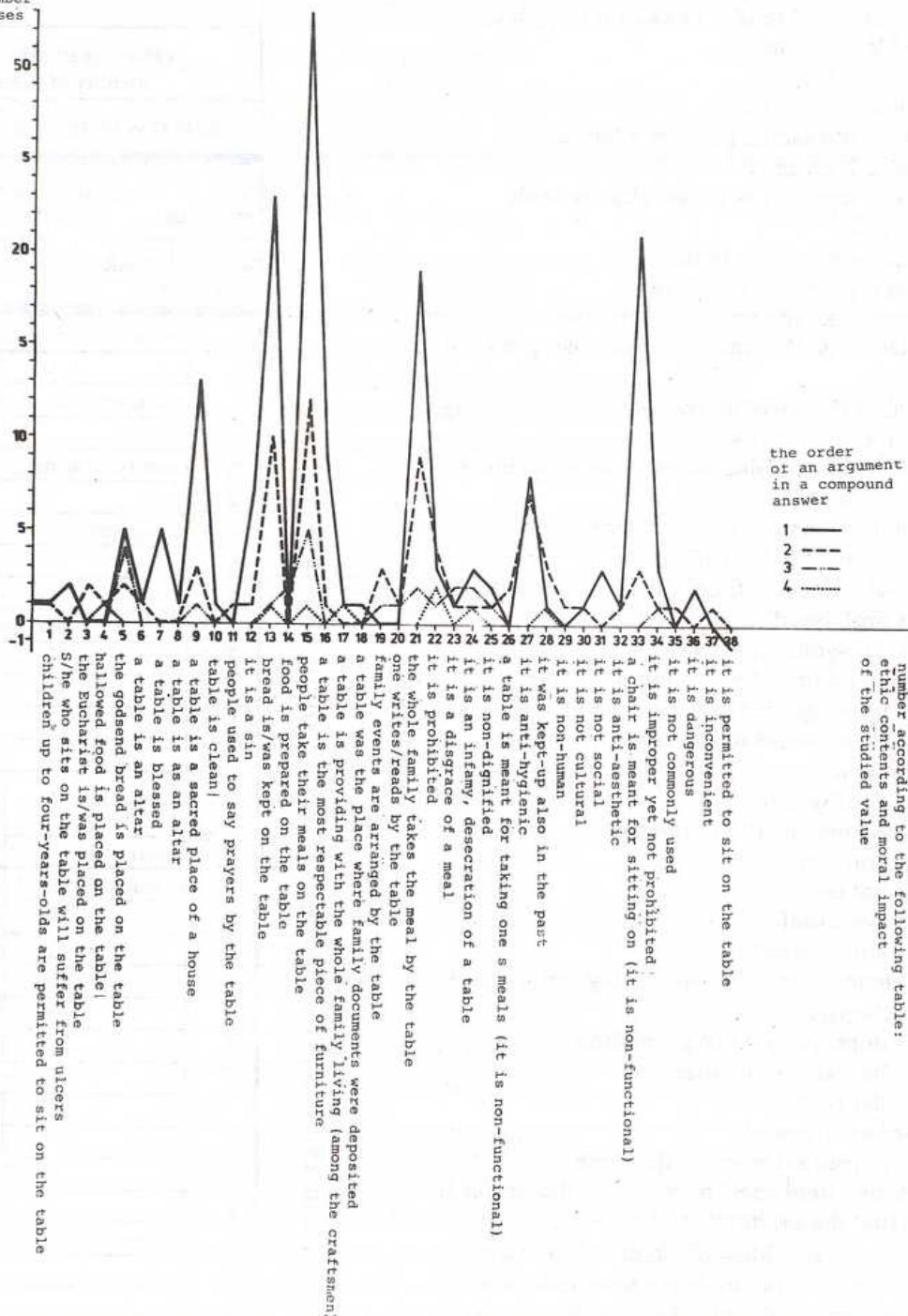


concerned. He claims that the values must be estimated with the help of fictitious units – similarly to yet another measurement – then they will be all the more appropriate the better they suit the conditions of accountability and equality. Quantities may be regarded as equal if they do not allow the given possibilities of comparison to be considered unequal.²²

It appears to be satisfying (similarly to the Goblot's ascertainments confirmed also by our material) that the value does not increase in a direct proportion to the quality of the item, as it is at its peak in a certain optimal amount of items.

If we compare the relations evaluated as "Graph of the orientation degree on individual

value orientation
in the number
of responses



the order
of an argument
in a compound
answer

1 ———
2 - - - -
3
4 - · - ·

types of values of a table -
number according to the following table:
ethic contents and moral impact
of the studied value

- 1 it is permitted to sit on the table
- 2 it is inconvenient
- 3 it is dangerous
- 4 it is not commonly used
- 1 a chair is meant for sitting on (it is non-functional)
- 2 it is anti-aesthetic
- 3 it is not social
- 4 it is not cultural
- 1 it is non-human
- 2 it was kept-up also in the past
- 3 it is anti-hygienic
- 4 a table is meant for taking one's meals (it is non-functional)
- 1 it is non-dignified
- 2 it is an infamy, desecration of a table
- 3 it is a disgrace of a meal
- 4 it is prohibited
- 1 the whole family takes the meal by the table
- 2 one writes/reads by the table
- 3 family events are arranged by the table
- 4 a table was the place where family documents were deposited
- 1 a table is the most respectable piece of furniture (among the craftsmen)
- 2 people take their meals on the table
- 3 food is prepared on the table
- 4 bread is/was kept on the table
- 1 it is a sin
- 2 people used to say prayers by the table
- 3 table is clean!
- 4 a table is a sacred place of a house
- 1 a table is as an altar
- 2 a table is blessed
- 3 a table is an altar
- 4 the godsend bread is placed on the table
- 1 hallowed food is placed on the table!
- 2 the Eucharist is/was placed on the table
- 3 S/he who sits on the table will suffer from ulcers
- 4 children up to four-years-olds are permitted to sit on the table

GRAPH OF THE ORIENTATION DEGREE FOR INDIVIDUAL TYPES OF PARTIAL VALUES OF A TABLE

types of partial values of a table" we come to the conclusion that subjectively arranged composition of multi-reasoned information does not increase the number of qualitative classes of value arguments of the whole unit. On the contrary, even further layers of arguments of compound answers are centralized. Central part at present comprises

- arguments number 5-27 (or, as the case may be 3-27) of the total sum of the following 38 types:
1. children up to four-year-olds are permitted to sit on the table
 2. S/he who sits on the table will suffer from ulcers
 3. the Eucharist is/was placed on the table

4. hallowed food is placed on the table
5. the godsend bread is placed on the table
6. a table is an altar
7. a table is blessed
8. a table is as an altar
9. a table is a sacred place of a house
10. a table is clean
11. people used to say prayers by the table
12. it is a sin
13. bread is/was kept on the table
14. food is prepared on the table
15. people take their meals on the table
16. a table is the most respectable piece of furniture
17. a table is providing the whole family living (among the craftsmen)
18. a table was the place where family documents were deposited
19. family events are arranged by the table
20. one writes/reads by the table
21. the whole family takes the meal by the table
22. it is prohibited
23. it is a disgrace of a meal
24. it is an infamy, desecration of a table
25. it is non-dignified
26. a table is meant for taking one's meals (it is non-functional)
27. it is anti-hygienic
28. it was kept-up also in the past
29. it is non-human
30. it is not cultural
31. it is not social
32. it is anti-aesthetic
33. a chair is meant for sitting on / (it is non-functional)
34. it is improper yet not prohibited
35. it is not commonly used
36. it is dangerous
37. it is inconvenient
38. it is permitted to sit on the table

From the frequency of items in the graph it follows that the orientation of value statements is embodied in the idea of value of a family table. This value in the presented material increases there and then where *a table represents the place of a house/flat where the whole family gets together while performing the most honorable activities*. Mostly food-taking and table manners are considered to be activities of the set type. However, the occurrence of a serious debate and ceremonial feasting is mostly latent in the responses – evidently they are considered to be an occasional position of previous arguments.

Although an equivalent material – say, from

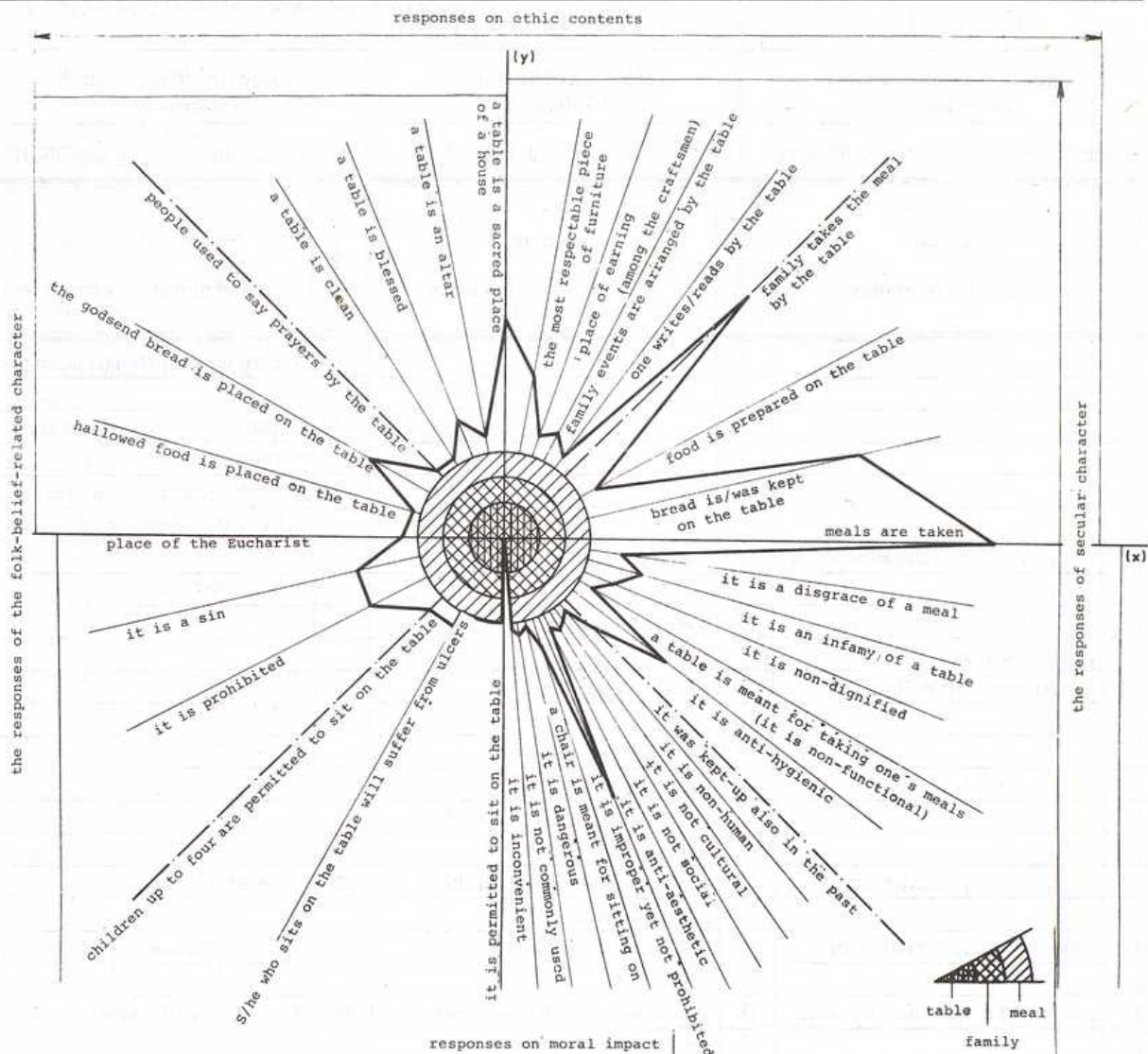
Table 4.

value sign of existential identity of culture		
AWARENESS OF HISTORIC CONTINUITY		
for- mal struc- ture of ethic of a table	it is not permitted to sit on the table because there are the folies of ethic value lowering contents	
responses CENTRIFUGAL to the ethical value of a table as a symbol of essential orientation in traditional culture	open to functional exception	
	statutory openness	
	superstitiousness	
	religiousness	
	ceremoniousness	
	profanation	
	- traditionalized	
	customariness	
	- quasi-subjectivistic	
	traditionality	
	- subjectivistic	
	rationalization	
	profanity negating ethical value	
	- extinction of traditional value	
	responses CENTRIPETAL...	

SCHEME OF STRUCTURE OF ETHIC CONTENTS AND MORAL IMPACT OF VALUE OF TABLE

Principle of social consciousness

value sign of existential minimum		value sign of human cohabitation		value sign of orientation pattern-value	
AWARENESS OF BIOLOGICAL CONTINUITY		AWARENESS OF SOCIAL CONTINUITY		AWARENESS OF CULTURE CONTINUITY	
continual	factual sign of a food item	number of types	contents a sign of honorary place in a dwelling	of answers	behavioral contents a sign of moral commandment
				0	a tailor is permitted to sit on the table ¹⁶
				1	children up to 4 years old are permitted to sit on table
				2	s/he who sits on a table will suffer from ulcers
3	the sacrament of the altar is put on the table	6	a table is an altar		
4	... hallowed food items are put on the table	7	a table is blessed		
5	the godsend gift is placed on the table	8	a table is as an altar		
		9	a table is a sacred place		
		10	a table is clean		
		11	people used to say prayers by the table		
13	bread was kept on the table	16	a table is the most honorable piece of furniture	22	it is prohibited
14	food is prepared on the table	17	the whole family gets nutrition by the table	23	it is a disgrace of a meal
15	people take their meal by table	18	a table is a place where family documents, books of prayers and money were deposited	24	it is an abuse of a table
		19	family events are arranged by the table	25	it is non-dignified
		20	one writes/reads by the table	26	it was kept up also in the past
		21	the whole family take the meals by the table	27	a table is meant for taking one's meal from it
				28	it is non-human
				29	it is not usual
				30	it is not cultural
				31	it is anti-social
				32	it is impolite but not prohibited
				33	it is anti-hygienic
				34	it is non-aesthetic
				35	chairs are meant for sitting on
				36	it is dangerous
				37	it is permitted to sit on a table



VALUE NOD OF A TABLE IN THE PRESENT DAY TRADITIONAL CULTURE

the first quarter of this century is not available at hand, still there exist numerous data (mainly thanks to the data of the archives of Ethnographical Atlas of Slovakia) on different corresponding symbols of a table in that period. Such are e.g. the data on the placement of a table within the space of a house/room – very frequently the only inhabited place. In a room a table was placed into a sacred corner (above it there were pictures of the saints) in front of the windows, opposite a stove. Retreat of the phenomena in temporal relations is presented in the attached map of EAS. Often a loaf of bread placed on the table was a symbol of a farm prosperity for which father – the head of a household was responsible. As in the Slovakia region a table was more often than not rather small and as “the men brought bread to the

family”, “they did the toughest work”, they had the first and foremost right to sit by the table. There existed regions – as documented in yet another map of EAS – where women could have their meals by the table only standing by at most and usually while feeding children who were sitting on a bench or a little table beside the table.²⁴ Only during the festive days the whole family gathered around a table – on such occasions it was wound with an iron chain – a symbol of the family union all the year through (during the Christmas Eve supper). In this context we can claim that the value of a table was concentrated into the leading idea of a farm table or a house table and only occasionally it was applied as a value of a family table. Possibilities for further interpretation of this meaning are referred

to in the part dealing with the history of a table.

The developmental influence that had caused initially economic relief, i.e. separating economic and social sphere of the family, alongside the influence of the overall change of living conditions resulted in the relief of the social relations within a family. They were optimized anew due to democratic coherence forming at the same time a new variant of the leading value of the studied problem – the value of a family table. The transfer in the finite actual evaluation of a table is evident in the presented sum of arguments, though perhaps not exemplary expressive, since it is not contradictory to the previous evaluation but in fact to a certain degree complementary. The former festive principle here turns out to be an everyday one.

What is then the degree of transition of the total value of a table one can take into consideration? And what is actually meant by the overall value of a table? – The reader has not as yet been given the answer to the question where did the number of 38 types of value-oriented arguments applied as the graph quantities arise from. By means of reduction, where the eloquence was not taken into account, because it was especially the source of variability of survey data. On the other hand, among the graph quantities were accepted also sporadic responses representing subjective character of the approach to evaluation; the reason behind was that they seemed to deny the acceptance of traditionalized value. Further abridging of individual “types” is, of course, possible but for the time being the responses were condensed only to a limit corresponding to the demand of documenting the status quo in the transfer of the emphasis in evaluation.

When the standardized statements are transferred on to a beam-graph, a more vivid image on the stratification of the valorizing components of the unit value under study may be reached. The graph is entitled: *Value nod of a table in the present day traditional culture*. Graphical basis of the picture consists of axis coordinates. In the point of intersection there is a planary picture of the fundament of the studied socio-cultural value of a table in the spectral analysis: *O – table – family – meal*. When we take a closer inspection of relations between the graph quantities we come to the conclusion that the given fundamental value components are derived from the acquired evaluating statements. Fundament, thus, becomes both the core of valorizing values and the reflection of the dia-

chrony of the ethic unit. The evaluating statements themselves are transferred on the graph starting not from the O point already, but only from the perimeter of global core, forming thus *the fourth actualized layer of ethic potential of values of a table in a culture under study*. The quantities are identical to the types of the previous graph where it is possible to read the exact number of their occurrence, too. On the axis net they were applied only according to Goblot's recipe, i.e. by estimation. The appropriateness of placement of such and such statement may be disputed, but I believe that the basic value relations were, in spite of lacking the technique, set accurately.

When applying the quantities on the graph I started off from the following account: as having one's meal comprises statutory alongside with social and biological values, it means, that it represents also the presence of quality of existential sacrum.²⁵ The items of this quality do appear in the data base of the other statements, too but their extreme symbolic value is represented by the Eucharist. Because the existential sacrum as an infrastructural component is the elementary representative of the evolutionary development of being within our data base, I decided to apply the above mentioned two qualities as deadline values *on the horizontal axis* of the graph. *The vertical axis* was set by the negation of a table as an ethic value; its upper counterpoint where the maximal evaluation of a table as an item of furniture turns into the most prestigious sacred place of a house, household, family. All the other quantities I strived to articulate into the net in the marginal values of individual coordinates according to the relationship key. In the process of ordering the values on the graph I strived to keep up to a certain outer itemizing system. I distinguished the folk-belief – related responses and the secular ones as well as the ethic-based ones as opposed to the moral-based ones. The diagonal axes should indicate better orientation in thematic subgroups; we may only, good will permitting, consider them to be the markers of *variant blocks* of value statements.

It is true, that the presented process of articulating of axiologic quantities in the beam-graph did not as yet lead to find the way to precise further immanent culturologic dependencies, i.e. relations between a superstitious taboo, religious taboo, moral taboo and an exception. Yet, this picture may be considered to be a graphic elucidation of an idea about structure-forming factors of

value simultaneously with the idea about its sources. *The beam-graph contribution of its own right is that it may be considered at a probe measurement of the penetration of the value under study into a farmers culture of a village during the time of the study.*

Just after the first introduction to the material of the survey it was evident that the individual responses to the question under study (with the exceptions of the subjectivistic character) are of ritual and routine character. They do not stand only by themselves but are complementary and explanatory to one another.²⁶ One may notice that only in co-operation they form a skeleton of something that have later – see TABLE 4 – been labelled *ethical value* of a family table. Individual responses have thus been presented as the *signs of value*. With respect to the signs of value the axiologist Brožík claims that the sign is always conventional because what is the sign depends on customs, traditions; on the other side there is the value that is not conventional in itself.²⁷ What is it like then?

Table 4 presents the answer to the question within the value field relations. The table represents the degree of value structure knowledge in the hierarchy of both practical and theoretical signs that appear to be inevitable for identification and life of value. In approach to the table construction I started off from the already known data base of 38 types of value statements. Their particular character was a good guideline in mapping of spacial and dynamic relations of the axiologic unit under study – *ethic value of a family table*.

Types of value statements were placed into the Table 4 according to partial contents reflected to in their first plan. That draw us closer to the decoding of the analytical key of the value. Factors of the first plan of the key are of the factual-behavioral and formal contents. In the Table they are marked by graphically most expressive framing; in the horizontal level there are factors of factual and behavioral nature and in the vertical level those of formal one. Value signs, i.e. types of value statements are graphically in reverse position to the relevant factors of the key. Factual contents of value quantities (signs) are grouped under two different denotations: *food item sign* and a *sign of honorary place in a dwelling*. Behavioral contents are grouped into a unified denotation: a *sign of moral commandment*. This material presents no information on the performance of the commandment in moral practice even though the practice may be deduced.

Following are the *signs of formal qualities of the pattern value* – a table – presented as typifying factors: a. openness to the functional exception,²⁸ b. statutory openness, c. superstitiousness, d. religiousness, e.1. profanation traditionalized, e.2. profanation pseudosubjectivistic, e.3. profanation subjectivistic f. profanation negating ethic value (extinction of a traditional pattern). The signs of formal qualities may also be framed by the following categories: ceremoniousness, customariness, tradition, rationalization. Formal qualities are reflection of the behavioral contents. Motivation of behavioral contents is encoded in a particular historic presence (both manifested and latent) of factual contents. Their presence in different structural spheres of social consciousness (here: historical, biological, sociological and culturologic continuity) documents the vitality of cultural pattern as orientation guide – priority. Outward performance of the vitality of cultural pattern is presented in as rich as possible rearrangement in strata of formal and content aspects of conventional value signs. It is also analytically presented by means of contextual notices above the second and the third column of the Table. Information gathered from the relations of the fourth column is reflected in the relations within the first column. Here we are – in the form of abstract categories – referred to the *ontologic sphere of cultural and historical continuity that endures only under the pre-requisite of formal and content richness of the life of the values signs, their diachronic layers*. If a value sign may be considered as habitual and traditional, then a tradition is a pattern values continuity shaping up process carried out by particular value signs in a given socio-cultural time-space continuum. It enables us, thus, to refer to different traditions in social, cultural, historical, geographical and other contexts of ethnographic data. In the abundance of signs the emerging moral impact of cultural and historic continuity of traditional value of a table is not reflected only in the social sphere of family life but operates also in the symbolic area of valorization of food items and vice versa. Maximal range of centripetal and centrifugal evaluations gamut is an integral part of ethic wealth of value.

In the graph “Ethic value of a table – vector relations” one may see – in a more practical way compared to Table 4 – the results of cumulated sum of behavioral contents in the traditional valorization process even without it and may compare moral wealth of both tendencies.

The form in which we studied the responses of

the survey (38 types) was particularly profitable for the problem-solving of the presented case-study. Yet, it does not correspond to the ethnographic categorization. "Types" used are too particular – they may form variation blocks but still they are not conform in the least to the current ways of ethnographic phenomena co-ordination, within the framework of which they may be mutually compared. With respect to the described needs, the material of the survey may be reduced into 9 classes, characteristics with the prevailing nature: 1. magic, 2. ecclesiastic, ceremonial and religious, 3. family-ceremonial and folk law, 4. family-boarding, 5. safekeeping – depository, 6. prestigious-working, 7. moral with ethic loading, 8. social without ethic loading, 9. negation of value.

Beside others, already widely used, some new specific terms were applied in the presented classification – i.e. such notions as *ethic* and *moral*. As what matters here are formal classification criteria of quality of further possible data, I will do my best to define these notions verbally. The words "ethic" and "moral" are within the given context terms of syncretic character, its highest degree being in the word "ethic". The word "moral" contains socio-normative modality of "ethic".

It seems evident that the given classes were formed depending on our ethnographic knowledge about functioning of a table in broader cultural and social relations. In occasional effort to place the material of the survey into the traditionalized image of a table – that may get closer to the so-called essence of value – we come to the conclusion that the survey data base, in spite of evident correspondence – is neither in its number nor in its meaning representative. It does not sufficiently comprise up till now still operating in one's consciousness, and most frequently reoccurring in the practice, functions of a table – arguments of its further partial inherited values – that occur mainly in magic, ceremonial and judicial contexts.

– Although the magic taboo is marked out in the data base of the survey, yet it is marked out only as moral taboo – "s/he who sits on the table will suffer from ulcers". We are well aware that a table was customarily used as a magic anti-fire requisite to protect a house.²⁹

Even the protective-prosperity function of a table in connection to the house – family – farm (that is accumulated and in its ultimate position in the ceremonial tradition of table-manner on

Christmas Eve) does not occur as an explicit argument in the acquired data base. Up to this date Christmas is recognized in this country as a family festival (state-acknowledged family festival) so that many of its magic embellishments aimed at tightening the family members may occur also in the form of valorization of a table as a centre of family activities on Christmas Eve.³⁰

A table as a place of welcoming guests does not, equally, occur as an individual argument among the data of the survey. In the studied surroundings only, occasional, honorable guests (e.g. non-resident relatives, persons with especially valued status or aim of a visit, etc.) used to be ushered to the table in the past. Thus, evidently this fact is comprised in those responses underlining the honorability of a piece of furniture itself, that may of course mean that the phenomenon still survives.³¹

– Among the survey data is only latently comprised the customary value of a family table where it serves as a ceremonial requisite of customary judicial acts, e.g. when accepting a newborn into a family (when they placed him/her on the table, under the table, respectively), or when accepting a new bride into the bridegroom's family house and the like. On a considerable spread out of the presented phenomena in the inter-war period one is informed by the data of EAS.

It is explicit, that the existence of certain types of customary component of the ethic value of a table has fully dropped out of the data at hand. It may have happened as well under the influence of the contents of the question presented in the survey. Naturally, on the other hand, we cannot fail to take into account that the zero occurrence of such an argument in the survey is also an evidence of the decline of a customary part of structure-forming arguments of ethic value of a family table. In the studied relations mainly those concerning the acceptance of the new members into a family, into a house. It is already known from the research that the turn in the custom under study happened under the influence of the external circumstances cca after 1960, when a new regulation concerning setting up a place of giving birth to a child solely in the hospital began to be enforced. Since then, roughly, large wedding parties began to be organized in large numbers in the culture centers and since 1970 they were organized in the restaurants as well. From the development aspect the survey, thus, reflects a concrete shift in table value constitution structure. *It documents the*

process of gradual decline of its contents as mainly ceremonial requisite of a household for the benefit of a functional requisite reflecting mutuality of family members sitting by the table. A family table preserves its ethic prestige as could be seen from the Table 4 or from the last graph, only until it remains open to the values of ceremonial contents. Otherwise a big table in its traditional form slips out the furnishings of the household or eventually it is degraded into a working-tool in the kitchen.

In the development of a current town- or housing estate-type of a household, where a family table practically exists only in a kitchen, gradually but steadily one of the traditional stimuli of life – ethic value of a family table – is slipping out or via facti a kitchen becomes a central room in a family life. An offer and demand for the so-called living-room furniture with/without a dining table may serve as an evidence of that fact. According to the inquiries in the Bratislava department store Prior, the ratio of the two above mentioned types of rooms is approximately 1:4 to the detriment of a dining recess; in the data of realized sale and retail, the evident disproportion

is claimed to be even higher and special dining-room furnitures are offered only in a very low number, mainly import.³²

With the retreat of the family table, or with its replacement into a small working space in the kitchen, the orientation sign and functional space of the most honorable place in a family dwelling is evading from the family life. In no case one can consider a lowered small table in a living-room to correspond to the described socio-cultural contexts and to sociological optimum in the well-established table manners. Equally well, neither a small kitchen can provide adequate space for social activities of family members. A thing and a space thus acquire temporary signs, fixing the feelings of improvization.

Translation by
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* The study was written in 1977 and published in periodical *Národopisné informácie*, N° 3, 1984, pp. 108–135 (in Slovak).

NOTES

- 1 The reader may notice that in its material and methodology the presented case-study gets closer to something that may also be called micro-analysis upside down.
- 2 Thus, I am joining the standpoint of M. VÁROSS stating that the values themselves are not solved by sole knowledge of the valuation regularities... to define them the analysis that falls into the sphere of ontology is also necessary... it is the analysis of the evaluated object and research of those components that are usually evaluated within it. VÁROSS, M.: *Úvod do axiológie*. Bratislava 1970, p. 7.
- 3 BROŽÍK, V.: *Hodnoty, normy a projekty sveta*. Bratislava 1969, pp. 67–83.
In science the valuation criteria are set by the philosophic and – methodologic approaches of the researchers. Marxism does not accept absolutization of values and analytically makes accurate that “by its value-aimed approach to reality it studies only one aspect of the actually forming up objective – subjective relations.” ARCHANGEL'SKIJ, L. M.: *Materialisticko-leninská etika*. Bratislava 1976, p. 138. The character of the presented approach was comprehended already by MUKAŘOVSKÝ when he defined the value as a relation between subject and object that is regulated by collective awareness.

- 4 *Problémy estetické hodnoty*. In: *Cestami poetiky a estetiky*. Praha 1971, p. 16. Marxist concept also accepted so-called anthropologic value measurement but provided it with a new sense by “deriving it from the dialectic-materialistic understanding of a human being as a developing naturo-historic material-spiritual social being that creates its reality by itself, at the same time it is being created and formed. It is the absolute criterion due to the substance/fundament of human being and at the same time relative due to the historic character of such humanity”... states KUKLINKOVÁ, T. in the book: *Hľadanie meradiel estetickej hodnoty*. Bratislava 1971, p. 143. See also ARCHANGEL'SKIJ, L. M., o.c., p. 139.
- 5 GOBLOT, E.: *La logique des jugements de valeur*. Paris 1927, in VÁROSS, M.: o.c., p. 92.
- 6 STERN, A.: *La philosophie des valeurs*. Paris 1946, in VÁROSS, M.: o.c., p. 59.
- 7 HEYDE, E.: *Wert. Eine philosophische Grundlegung*. Erfurt 1926; VÁROSS, M.: o.c., p. 67.
- 8 CARCOPINO, J.: *Domy a vnútorné zariadenie*. In: *Antický Rím*. Bratislava 1967, pp. 23–38.
- 9 STRÁNSKÁ, D.: *Skříňkové stoly*. In: *Český lid*, vol. 49 n. 6, 1982, pp. 250–262, who also presents further literature.
- 9 Currently e.g. CSILLÉRY, K.: *A magyar napi*

- lákaskultúra kialakulásának kezdetei. Budapest 1982, p. 245.
- 10 BAGIN, A.: Kresťanská archeológia. Trnava–Bratislava 1977, pp. 51–54.
 - 11 Indirectly points out to the eventual influence of this symbol BEDNÁRIK, R.: Ludový nábytok. Martin 1949, p. 13.
 - 12 NIEDERLE, L.: Život starých Slovanů. vol. I, part 2. p. 878.
 - 13 CSILLÉRY, K.: o.c., p. 247.
 - 14 BEDNÁRIK, R.: o.c., p. 12 also assumes that diverse development of forms of table on our territory started in the Gothic period.
 - 15 RADVÁNSZKY, B. states that table forks were introduced to the king Mathew's house only by Italian Beatrix and in the rich landowners' inventories they began to occur only in the second quarter of the 16th century. Magyar családelet és háztartás. Budapest 1896, p. 342–3.
 - 16 Presented insufficiency did not allow even CSILLÉRY, K. in the already cited current work to take up unilateral standpoint related to the issue.
 - 17 Historically older types of documented village table forms are altogether either a carpenter work that may be incorporated into the construction of a house, or they may be naturist products replacing – as the time went by – due to their age or otherwise damaged original pieces.
 - 18 PLESSINGEROVÁ, A. in the case-study Otázka existence stolu, jeho vývoja a stolování ve slovenských dedinách pod Javorníky. In: Slov. Národop. vol. 19, 1962, p. 227–280 presents relevant example.
 - 19 MORVAY, J. in the book Azsönyok a nagycsaládban. Budapest 1956 presents a story of old people from the villages in the Mátra region dating back to the first half of the 19th century saying that evidently even the adults used to eat from a dish placed on the floor in the middle of the room. According to CSILLÉRY, K.: o.c., p. 254.
 - 20 VALENTOVÁ, V. presents that in the Starý Tekov vicinity a massive table with a drawer was called “a farmer's table”, while a numerously more widespread folding type (since the 1930ies all the more frequently replaced by a four-legs type) had neither the denomination nor the “sacral” prestige of the preceding type of a table. The author supports the opinion of those researchers who claim that a table in the folk milieu was a relatively new piece of furniture. Ludový nábytok z okolia Starého Tekova (The folk furniture from the Starý Tekov region.) Manuscript of doctoral dissertation. Bratislava 1968, pp. 135–153.
 - 21 Data on the size of a table are statistically-based on the fund collection of tables of the Ethnographic Institute SNM in Martin. Actual summary performed in 1971.
 - 22 Subjective method of measurement, as the only plausible at the time being, is supported by the present day axiologists as well. E.g. BROŽÍK, V.: o.c., p. 68.
 - 23 According to the answers of the survey.
 - 24 According to a fellow ethnographer VÁVROVÁ, Z. from Košice, there exist as yet families formerly having lived in villages and only recently moved into cities where during the time when the families had their meals the role of the women was only to serve the meals for the other members of the family. They had their meal only when all the others had finished, obviously only what was left over, apart from the others. Similar information about a young Bratislava citizen formerly coming from rural district, was provided by colleague P. Salner.
 - 25 In the structure of traditional values mainly of ceremonial and customary character there exist a collection of taboo elements, superstition-, religion- or folk-belief-based, respectively. On a certain degree of analytical research it is required to denominate such a group of elements by a universal term. In some humanities, e.g. Polish and Hungarian ethnography for a couple of decades the term *sacrum* is used in this sense. The most general definition of the term is that a *sacrum* is an antithesis to *profanum*. The quality of existential *sacrum* could be denominated also as a quality of a being's sacredness, but such a linguistic form does not keep in the context inevitable *analytic distance*.
 - 26 See the appendix.
 - 27 BROŽÍK, V.: o.c., p. 56.
 - 28 Here I have in mind the one noted in many sources and always at hand exception about a tailor sitting on a table, though the material of the survey forbids to sit on a table even for a tailor.
 - 29 Occasional data from various parts of Slovakia are comprised in the material of EAS. Relevant example as well as further magic – ceremonial customs are presented also by BEDNÁRIK, R.: c.d., p. 13.
 - 30 Absence of this argument in the data base is most likely related to the lack of contexts in the survey; we assume that it is not a sign of overvaluing gifts under the Christmas tree; these gifts were and still should be only an embellishing element of the traditional mutuality of the feast.
 - 31 Material relevant for this point was noticed and published by MJARTAN, M.: “When a strange visitor comes into a house” (s/he who is not a family member), s/he will be ushered into the room. If it is a male, he will be seated by the table. If it is a woman, she will not take a seat by the table but will stand by the stove”. Ludové staviteľstvo. In: Banícka dedina Žakarovce. Bratislava, 1965, p. 223–4. Also VALENTOVÁ, V.: c.d., and others.
 - 32 Information gathered from Ms Magda Purdešová – chief of the Furniture dept. in the department store PRIOR, Bratislava, November 1981.

ПОПЫТКА ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ СТРУКТУРЫ ОЦЕНОК И ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ ЦЕННОСТНЫХ ОРИЕНТАЦИЙ (СЕМЕЙНЫЙ СТОЛ)

Резюме

В своей статье автор делает попытку приблизить решение проблемы идентификации отношений культурного равновесия в практической культуре. Она носит характер методического опыта, в котором посредством частичных ценностей отыскиваются взаимосвязи бытия и главная ценность избранного объекта, а также тенденции к сдвигам и изменениям главной ценности. В качестве посредника исследования служит ценность высокого семейного обеденного стола. Исходные ценностные величины были получены путем анкеты в ответах на вопрос:

„Подчеркните: можно – нельзя сидеть на столе. Если нельзя, то напишите, почему.“

Из 250 разосланных анкет возвратилось 180 ответов, из – которых лишь 164 содержали многослойные ответы. Последние образовали материальную совокупность 263 исходных ценностных величин изучения. После исключения речевой вариативности они были, наконец, редуцированы на 38 – еще весьма конкретных – типов. В работе с этими типами на графиках и в таблице, в абстрагировании относительных связей ценностных величин в графическо-культурологические категории автор видит технико-познавательное содержание своего опыта. На графике I – Степень ориентированности на отдельные типы частных ценностей величин – сравниваются отдельные слои аргументов в зависимости от их последовательности в ответах. Автор обнаружила, что даже дальнейшие слои аргументов в ответах не расширяют диапазона оценки, но присоединяются к части главных ценностей. Из них вытекает, что в современной народной культуре в словацкой деревне стол считается тем местом дома, квартиры, где вся семья собирается для выполнения наиболее почитаемых деятельности; среди них доминирует еда и пиршества. По сравнению с материалом, который относится к периоду I-й структуры, или же I-й половины 20-го века, можно таким образом констатировать сдвиг в общей оценке стола, поскольку там еще доминировало представление крестьянского стола – стола дома, которое в повседневной жизни соединялось прежде всего с денностью мужского престижа и только по праздникам в ней находила место и ценность общности семьи (все в смысле так наз. мифологического плюс). – Ценностный узел стола в современной традиционной культуре – это название лучевого графика (№ 2). Этот рисунок можно считать наглядным приближением представления о структурообразующих факторах ценности и ее источниках. Вкладом составления лу-

чевого графика является и то, что его можно считать сондажем степени проникновения изучаемой ценности в данный культурный слой в период исследования. Таблица 4 представляет ценностное поле в конкретных и абстрактных взаимосвязях. Автор назвала ее: Структура этической ценности и моральное значение ценностей семейного стола. Таблица аналитически описывает и конкретно документирует отношения и предпосылки культурно-исторической формально-содержательной преемственности. Она по-своему отражает закономерности корреляции полного существования-продолжительности-сохранения (эвентуально и) исчезновения явления. – График 3 – Этическая ценность стола – векторные отношения. Он затеян как образное выражение кумулированного сведения бихевиоральных содержаний в традиционном процессе оценки и без него; наглядно сравнивается моральное богатство обеих тенденций.

В последней части статьи автор размышляет над переводом слишком конкретных типов частных ценностей в этнографические классы. Она размышляет о технических и объективных причинах выпадения некоторых частных ценностей стола – в особенности обрядового характера – из материального комплекса анкеты. Обращается внимание на то, что формально-содержательное богатство функций стола в смысле культурно-исторической преемственности является экстраполяцией центростремительных тенденций в жизни семьи, и его заниженная оценка, всплывающая главным образом в новых городских условиях, может означать отражение как раз противоположных тенденций в семейной жизни.

О целях изучения еще можно добавить, что опыт оценки отношений экстраполяции служил автору в качестве сондажа возможности получения косвенных объективизированных аргументов для расширения этнографических представлений об организации семейной жизни в более глубоком прошлом. Результат, приобретенный путем дедукции из изменений оценочных доминант высокого стола, обобщен так, что автор присоединяется к мнению тех исследователей, которые размышляют об относительной молодости этого вида мебели в качестве повседневной обстановки жилища, и приводит середину 18 – середину 19 вв. как период стабилизации стола в повседневной обстановке деревенской комнаты. Однако это означало бы, что предполагаемый патриархализм и это престиж канализировались иной, до сих пор не зарегистрированной, предметной доминантой.

Zusammenfassung

In ihren Beitrag versucht die Autorin der Lösung des Problems der Identifikation von Beziehungen des kulturellen Gleichgewichtes in der praktischen Kultur näher zu kommen. Ihre Abhandlung hat den Charakter eines methodischen Versuchs, in dem mit Hilfe von Teilwerten die Zusammenhänge des Seins und der Leitwert des ausgewählten Objekts gesucht und die Tendenzen der Verschiebung und Veränderung des Leitwertes erforscht werden. Als Vermittler der Forschung dient der Wert des hohen Familienspeisetisches. Die Ausgangswertegrößen wurden mittels einer Enquete gewonnen, in der die Respondenten auf folgende Frage antworten sollten: *Darf man oder darf man nicht auf dem Tisch sitzen. Wenn nicht, schreiben Sie auf, warum man nicht darf.*

Aus 250 befragten Lokalitäten erhielt die Autorin 180 Antworten, von denen 164 mehrschichtige Aussagen enthielten. Diese bildeten das Material für 263 Ausgangswertegrößen der Studie. Nach dem Ausscheiden der sprachlichen Variabilität wurden sie schließlich auf 38 noch immer sehr konkrete Typen reduziert. In der Bearbeitung dieser Typen, in der Abstraktion der Relationen der Wertegrößen zu ethnographisch-kulturwissenschaftlichen Kategorien erblickt die Autorin die technisch-erkenntnismäßige Erfüllung ihres Versuchs.

Im Diagramm Nr. 1 – „Der Grad der Orientiertheit auf einzelne Typen der Teilwerte des Tisches“ vergleicht sie die einzelnen Schichten der Argumente nach ihrer Reihenfolge in den Antworten. Sie konstatiert, daß die Spanne der Bewertung auch durch weitere Schichten von Argumenten in den Antworten nicht erweitert wird; diese weiteren Argumente ordnen sich nur einem Teil der Leitwerte bei. Aus ihnen geht hervor, daß der Tisch heute in der Volkskultur des slowakischen Dorfes für einen Ort im Haus und in der Wohnung gehalten wird, an dem sich die ganze Familie zur Ausführung der würdigsten Handlungen versammelt; unter ihnen dominiert das Essen und die gemeinsame Tafel.

Verglichen mit dem Material, das sich auf den Zeitraum des ersten Viertels, bzw. der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts bezieht, konnte die Autorin eine Verschiebung in der

Gesamtbewertung des Tisches konstatieren, denn im genannten Zeitraum dominierte noch die Vorstellung vom Tisch des Hauswirts, vom Tisch des Hauses. Diese Vorstellung war im täglichen Leben vor allem mit dem Wert des männlichen Prestiges verbunden und nur bei feierlichen Anlässen kam in dieser Vorstellung auch der Wert der Familiengemeinschaft zur Geltung (dies alles im Sinne des sog. mythologischen Plus).

„Werteknotenpunkt des Tisches in der gegenwärtigen traditionellen Kultur“ lautet die Bezeichnung des strahlenförmigen Diagramms Nr. 2. Diese Abbildung kann man für eine Veranschaulichung der Vorstellungen über die strukturbildenden Faktoren des Wertes und seiner Quellen halten. Einen Beitrag des Strahlendiagramms erblicken wir auch darin, daß wir es auch als Sonde betrachten können, mit der die Tiefe des Eindringens der untersuchten Werte in die gegebene Kulturschicht zur Zeit ihrer Erforschung gemessen werden kann.

Die Tabelle Nr. 4 stellt das Wertefeld in konkreten und abstrakten Zusammenhängen dar. Die Autorin benannte sie „Struktur des ethischen Wertes und moralische Reichweite der Werte des Familientisches.“ Die Tabelle beschreibt analytisch und dokumentiert konkret die Beziehungen und Voraussetzungen der kulturhistorischen und formal-inhaltlichen Kontinuität. Auf ihre Weise reflektiert sie die Gesetzmäßigkeit der Korrelationen der vollen Existenz – des Dauerns – der Fortdauer – und eventuell auch des Untergangs der Erscheinung.

Das Diagramm Nr. 3 – „Der ethische Wert des Tisches – vektorförmige Beziehungen“ will eine bildliche Darstellung der kumulierten Ableitung behavioraler Inhalte im traditionellen Bewertungsprozeß und außerhalb dieses Prozesses sein. Das Diagramm zeigt in anschaulicher Weise den Reichtum beider Tendenzen.

Im letzten Teil ihrer Studie erwägt die Autorin eine schriftliche Transmission allzu konkreter Typen von Teilwerten in ethnographische Klassen. Sie überdenkt die technischen und objektiven Ursachen, die den Ausfall mancher

Teilwerte des Tisches, besonders seines zere-
moniellen Charakters, aus dem Materialkom-
plex der Enquete bewirkten. Sie weist darauf
hin, daß der formal-inhaltliche Reichtum der
Funktionen des Tisches im Sinne der kulturhis-
torischen Kontinuität eine Extrapolation der
zentripetalen Tendenzen im Leben der Familie
darstellt. Seine unterbemessene Bewertung, die
besonders in den neuen städtischen Verhältni-
sen aufscheint, könnte ein Reflex der gerade
entgegengesetzten Tendenzen im Familienleben
sein.

Den in der Studie dargelegten Absichten der
Autorin wäre noch hinzuzufügen, daß sie mit
ihrem Versuch einer Auswertung der Bezie-
hungen durch Extrapolation die Möglichkeit
sondierte, indirekte objektivisierte Argumente
für die Verbreitung ethnographischer Vorstel-
lungen über die Organisation des Familienle-

bens in einer früheren als der rezenten Epoche
zu gewinnen. Das Ergebnis, zu dem sie auf
dem Wege der Deduktion aus den Verände-
rungen der Wertedominanten des Tisches ge-
langte, faßt die Autorin so zusammen, daß sie
zur Ansicht jener Autoren hinneigt, die Über-
legungen über das verhältnismäßig kurze Alter
dieses Möbelstücks als eines alltäglichen Be-
standteiles der Wohnungseinrichtung anstellen.
In diesem Sinne führt die Autorin die Zeit von
der Mitte des 18. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahr-
hunderts als Epoche an, in der sich der Tisch
als Möbelstück im Interieur der Dorfstube sta-
bilisierte. Das würde jedoch bedeuten, daß
sein angenommener Patriarchalismus und sein
Prestige sich in einer anderen, bisher noch
nicht evidierten formalen, sachlichen Dominan-
te konstituierte.

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