
THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN THE FOLK CULTURE OF MACEDONIANS

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IZVLEČEK

Koncept smrti v makedonski ljudski kulturi

To proučevanje bo dopolnilo vedenje o smrti v ljudski kulturi. Smrt člana skupnosti pomeni nevarnost in krizo za družino in širšo socialno in obredno skupnost – vas. Je tudi vzrok dejanskih in temeljnih sprememb v družinski strukturi in v odnosih vaše skupnosti, zato lahko katastrofalno vpliva na njuno integriteto. V tem primeru smo obravnavali smrt kot najpomembnejši vzrok za prekinitev obstoječe harmonije in strukture odnosov v svetu. Obredne dejavnosti dajejo možnost realizacije novega kozmosa ali pa uveljavitev novih odnosov. Če upoštevamo, da smrt in umiranje ne pomenita le biološkega konca živih dejavnosti za tradicionalno skupnost, temveč sta tudi kulturna fenomena, nam analiza obeh ne omogoča le ugotavljanja in odkrivanja individualne psihologije, temveč še mnogo pomembnejših socialnih, religioznih in mitičnih vsebin, ki so bistveni segmenti strukture legendarnega koncepta sveta v tradicionalnih strukturah.

Ključne besede: posmrtno šege, Makedonija, ljudska kultura, ljudske uprizoritve in verovanja o smrti in umiranju, “sumljiva umrla oseba”, “nečista umrla oseba”, “čista umrla oseba”

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The exceptionally rich empirical materials of the traditional cultures, especially those from the Balkans, indicate existence of a constructed system which presents a model of the World on which all variations and ways of people's behaviour have been based. For the researchers of these, the so-called, folk-traditional cultures, a primary task is to discover that conception, which is a unique possibility for its adequate understanding and interpretation of human activities connected with its mythic past, its religious idea and its ritual activities. Human activities consist of permanent repetition of mythic archetypes, which have in their basis always brought the myth about the prime creation of the World.¹ Living space, according to the traditional understanding of the

¹ Mirča Elijade, *Sveto i profano*, Književna zajednica Novog Sada, Novi Sad, 1986, 66. M. Elijade, *Mitovi za večnoto završene: Arhetipi i povtorenie*, Hristo Botev, Sofija 1994, 48.

conception, has been the centre of the Cosmos. Traditional views of Macedonians about the conception of the World indicate presentations of three cosmic worlds: “our” world settled by human beings, called “The Middle Land”; beyond the “our” world lies “The Upper Land” and below “our” “The Under Land”.²

According to that tradition, people’s World is an archetype or projection of God’s World and the World of Deities. Everything that happens in the Middle Land presents only a projection or pattern of the World of Deities, and all people’s activities are a projection of deities’ activities. Human activities in “our” World present the eternal aspires through the ritual repetition of archetype beginnings to simulate the primordial act of the World creation.

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According to the folk tradition, these three Worlds have been arranged vertically and divided among themselves by strong boundaries. Characteristics of the Upper and the Under Land are very similar and, very often, mutually connected, making an eternal circle in the Cosmos.

The Structure of the Mythic World and Possibilities for its Disturbing

According to the mythic rules of the World’s arrangement in the traditional culture, everything functions very good up to the moment when, for some reasons the World order and the patterns of all forms of behaviour are disturbed. Generally, this happens when some factors, in the frame of social and ritual community, cause a situation which leads to replacement or elimination of the established boundaries among the mythic Worlds, putting that way the whole social community in a very dangerous situation. In such a situation, the community reacts immediately, organising intensive magic and ritual activities in order to restore the World, its harmony and to mark again the boundaries among the Worlds.

Death - the Appearance of the Chaos

According to traditional beliefs, the process of existence is eternal but every alive being is subjected to the process of dying. The process of dying is comprehended as a moment or a process of transformation of energy and its transferring from one to the other cosmic world. According to the people’s beliefs, the energy - the essence - the soul is never lost, but it passes over into other levels. People’s “leaving” from the world of the alive has been considered as the most frightful and, at the same time, the most important act for the community of the alive, because death of a member of the community means irreparable loss - his leaving into the other World.

² Ljupčo S. Risteski, *Posmrtni obredni kompleks u tradicijskoj kulturi Marijova*, Belgrade University, 1997 (manuscript).

This means that death has been the most important cause of Cosmos disturbance. Death causes radical changes into the structure of cosmic organisation, making a state of Chaos in the relations of the community, which can reflect catastrophically on its future integrity and development. In that sense, the social and ritual community takes on very rich and complex magic and ritual activities in order to restore the harmony. From an aspect of the Macedonian folk, there are more polysignificant comprehensions of death as a demonic being, or it is imagined as a state or more precisely, as a phase in which the essential principle - the soul - finally leaves the human body.

Death and Diseases as Demonic Beings

Death and its numerous variants - diseases, according to the folk beliefs, are the basic causes of the soul leaving the human body. There are many ideas about death as a demonic being, which is very “thirsty” for people’s life. The most frequent are presentations in which death has been presented as “a woman, a black woman” or metamorphosed as the demonic being, disease: plague (chuma) - as a woman with her chthonic attributes: distaff (furka), her deadly voice, her note book and presentations of demonic beings: fairy (samovila), (senishte), fever (treska) etc.³

*... my dear sister, very bad disease caught you,
(milna sestra shto loshi bolki te vatija)*

or

*five years, my brother, with disease you were fighting...
(pet godini, brate so bolka se boreshe)⁴ ...*

In Christian forms of beliefs and folk genres as stories, legends etc. - St. Archangel Michael has a role of guide of people’s souls.

Death as a Particular State or Phase of Final Soul Separation from the Human Body

An important part of the survived information recorded during our field research point out to the people’s idea about death as a dream, a great, long and eternal dream. These kinds of presentations of death, according to the opinions of many ethnologists, are related to the traditional understanding of sleeping, or more precisely, the process of dreaming as a situation very close to death and very dangerous for living people. While the body of the sleeper is resting, his soul in dream, remains active and liberates itself moving out of the human body.

³ *Narodna demonologija na Makedoncite*, T. Vražinovski, collaborators V. Karadžoski, L. Risteski, L. Simoska, MM-ISK, Skopje-Prilep 1996, 53-55.

⁴ Archive of Institute of Old Slavic Culture - Prilep (AIOSC), Inv. No. K - 56/1996. Inform. Petkana Rimcheva, born in 1943 in the village of Vitolishta, region of Mariovo. Recorded on February 17, 1996 in the village of Vitolishta, Mariovo.

But, duration of this free movement is limited, because the prolonged soul wandering can be very dangerous and causes death.

According to the above mentioned information, the numerous prohibitions and system of taboos connected with the sleeping people and their surrounding become very clear. The soul can wander somewhere without coming back, failing to find the body in which it has been settled or to find some other body or other subject. Dreaming is a state in which human body stays quiet, with apparently low intensity of the signs of life, with liberated soul in a process of movement, causing a situation in which the body is very close to death. Comparing these situations, people connect actual dying with a state of sleeping, but sleeping as a kind of eternal and great dream from which nobody has ever awoke.

The Process of Cosmisation of the Chaos

Community as an autonomous entity has a tendency, in a shortest possible time, to eliminate the cases of destruction, to protect the rest of its members and to reestablish the previous relations and harmony.

1. Rituals for Liberation of the Community from the Dead Member

In the case of death, the most important task of the community is to neutralize the effects of the dead person or to minimize them as much as possible. This can be achieved by a complete isolation of the dead person and of those who had direct contacts with him. People who have an intermediary contact with the dead person, always take many preventive actions which do not allow expansion of death. They visit the dead person with garlic on the hands and ancles with a piece of stone or some thorn in their mouths, defending themselves and other members of the community. Considering that this kind of isolation can not be effective for a long period, the community buries the dead person.

2. The Magic Separation of Good from Bad and Protection from Danger

The status of a dead person in the community, especially to the moment of his burial, has a variety of meanings and implicates many activities which clearly determine relations of the alive to the dead person of the community. At the beginning, the most important thing is to set clear boundaries between the contaminated zone in which the dead person lived and is still present, and the space of the alive. After that, the community starts with the process of separation of two very important principles: good and bad, life and death, fruitfulness and sterility.

Everything that was used in the funeral ceremony, or found in the surrounding of a dead person is contaminated and dangerous for the alive. Because of that, all requisites containing the magic infection ought to be separated and thrown out of the reach of the alive. Mostly, these requisites have been buried together with the dead person or they pass through a range of lustrative phases in order to bring them into a normal situation for everyday use. This approach can be noticed through all the ritual activities:

separation of the clothes of the dead person; water in which the dead person “was bathed”, his comb, razor, measure for his grave, etc. Biers on which the dead person was carried to the cemetery are either buried or left near the grave, marked as something which can not be returned back into the community.

The rope with which the deceased was buried was at first thrown on the ground in order to neutralise its magic effects, and even after “it had been dragged by legs along the ground”, some members of the house-hold would have taken it. Objects with a great importance for life and existence of the community must be separated completely and never be put in use among the alive. (The sickle put over the stomach of the dead person and used in the rituals of magic cutting, was never again used by the community in its original purpose: as a basic tool in harvest.) Some things, tools and parts from the deceased, however, are left among the alive, to be used for the aims of black magic (kerchiefs with which the mouth, arms or legs were tied; ritual small breads through which someone could be seen, etc.)

There are many ritual activities for further protection from the dead. “*The dead water*” in which the dead person was bathed, is poured out on places where the alive can not make a direct contact with it. Water from jugs in the whole village must be poured out, too, and replaced by fresh water. In these ritual actions, people must be very careful not to disturb the purity of water. For this reason, all woman from the village go to the water source together, being afraid to meet the others who go to the water after them, and who might intercept and contaminate the fresh water again.

The most important separations between life and death, between good and bad, are realised at home, before the burial of the dead person. These ritual activities of separation are usually carried out by the so called “mesaria” (a woman who is the most important ritual actor during the funeral ceremony and after). In these moments, she stands in the space signed as “domestic”, near the “breads”, and because of that all her activities are aimed to protect the fruitful power of the bread, the grain, and the live stock. In that occasion, “the mesaria” kneads the ritual breads called “bulinja”, which should sign the new boundaries at the level of fruitfulness between the two opposite categories: life and death.

In kneading the ritual breads on the dead person’s right hand, the first bread symbolises the principle of death, the evil and “mesaria” puts it into the dead person’s armpit. The other bread remains at home as a symbol of the principle of bread fertility and welfare of the house. In order to preserve the welfare of the house, from the breads devoted for the funeral ceremony, “mesaria” takes one bread back to the house and one “is sent” to the shepherds and live stock. Once the breads were taken out of the house, there is a ritual prohibition for their returning into the house since they are considered as possible agents of death. Cutting the linen by which the dead was covered, “the mesaria” leaves a part of it tied on the right “leg” of the box for kneading bread, in order to preserve the fruitful power of the dead and transmit it to the household. In a case the fire was burning in the moment when somebody died, people take care of it not to extinguish it, it is a symbol of life and welfare. In the same time, the relatives of the dead take care that noone of the visitors takes the fire for himself.

When the people come back from the funeral, they use different roads, believing that the dead's soul or his mortal influence does not know how to come back to the living. In some cases, people cross the river, connotating passing into the space of the alive. After coming back, the participants of the funeral procession pass across the water and fire. After funeral ceremony, the participants come back in the house of the deceased, passing through a process of individual lustration prevents from the eventual magic infection of death. They lustrate themselves by washing and throwing embers on their hands.

During the funeral ceremony, close relatives of the dead person remain under some green and fruitful tree in the cemetery, preserving the life and fertility. That place, the housewife ungirding her apron or the belt, takes the alive members of her family under her magic protection. The ritual activities, however, show that not every object connected with the deceased has the meaning of danger and harmfulness. The deceased person who was, until recently, alive member of the community, especially if he was known as a good host, keeps his characteristics even after death. The positive and good attributes have a special importance for the community of alive. Because of that, the community makes efforts to keep and use these attributes for itself.

3. The Black Hen in the Grave

If two persons of the same family die in a short period, the traditional community takes another very important magic and ritual activity. Believing that the two died persons will draw the third person, during the funeral of the second one people bury black hen - "let it be the third". People believe that this action will influence the establishing of the magic completeness of number - three. Actions related to the selection and killing or, more exactly, suffocating the hen, point out to the archaic motive of sacrificing to the cause of death or as an act of calling deities - protectors of the community, to show mercy on them. The hen should be black or dark coloured and should not be slaughtered but suffocated, covered in some vessel.

In traditional conception of the community, a decisive importance has the categorical separation of deceased persons according to their features: "pure", "suspicious" and "impure deceased person".⁵ It's according to these ideas that the whole ritual and magic activity of the community was structured. The community ritual and social activities have always been directed to making a successful and complete distance from the dead person, separating his good values from the bad ones, and his sending off into the community of dead ancestors wherefrom he can successfully and fruitfully act upon the community of living persons. Only the category "pure deceased person" (persons who passed through a complete ritual complex and were successfully included into the community of dead), has a great importance for the community. It can only be achieved if the community completed the whole ritual complex needed by the "dead person in passing", or by "the suspicious deceased person" and provided all necessities for their transfer into the category of

⁵ Valentina Vaseva, Zadušnicata kato obredna dejavnost, *Etnografski problemi na narodnata duhovna kultura*, tom 3, Sofija 1994, 154-155.

“pure deceased person”. And the opposite, “the suspicious deceased person” becomes “impure deceased person”, very harmful for the community.

All community's efforts have been directed to preserve the complete integrity of the dead person and to prevent some bad ghosts or evil spirit to settle in its body. These demonic beings can make the dead person very harmful for the community and stop his final passing into the World of death. Then, there are many situations which permanently cause Chaos, destruction and disturbing of the harmonic relations in the Nature. In such situation “the suspicious dead person” appears dead person whose soul has been metamorphosed in the evil spirit, permanently staying among the living and doing many harmful actions to them. According to the above mentioned, we shall precise which categories of dead persons can become “suspicious” or “impure dead persons”:

- Dead persons predisposed by boring to become vampires and karakondozols.
- Dead persons with undefined social status: bachelors, maidens and unnamed new born child.
- Dead persons who died and were buried out of the usual patterns of ritual behaviour.

After somebody's death, the community undertakes a lot of magic and ritual activities that, at first, should prevent the “suspicious deceased person” to pass successfully into “impure deceased person”. The most important protective measures against becoming a vampire are: keeping the animals not to jump across the dead body; watching that something not given across the deceased and complete realisation of the ritual process.

In some regions of Macedonia, in Mariovo, for example, the most important protection against becoming a vampire is the so called “*magic hacking of the dead person*” (*zasekuvanje*). After the body of the dead person would be dressed, the most important ritual actor - “mesaria” - would realise the magic hatching. Through the ritual threading, the “mesaria” hits beside the dead person's head and legs from right to the left with a sickle or an axe, pronouncing the magic formula with a very strong symbolic meaning: “Prefer thou an outlaw or a cut? Go thee with health.” (“Odmēt sakash ali odsek sakash. Odi mi so zdravje”)⁶ or “Go after God and Virgin Mary and not after Satan and Satanes” (“Da odish po Boga i Bogorodica, a ne po Soton i Satonica”).⁷

If the community considers that there are some possibilities for the dead person to become a vampire (if he was very sinful or if he died “unseen” - nobody saw him at the moment of dying), than people stab in his left foot hawthorn or mostly they prick him with a needle into the stomach (navel), believing that the bad influences of these spirits were finally neutralised. In some villages in the region of Mariovo, they use real hacking with knife on the breast or at part of the body near the heart. There are numerous folk narrations referring to vampires, and to the difficulties about their excluding from the community. Namely, in spite of preventive measures, it happens very often, somebody that becomes a vampire and moves continuously among the living, especially in the house where he lived before. His coming back to his own household was

⁶ AIOSC, Inv. No. K - 52/1995. Inform. Kata Shipinkaroska, born in 1919 in the village of Gradeshnica, region of Mariovo. Recorded on September 29, 1995 in the village of Gradeshnica, Mariovo.

⁷ AIOSC, Inv. No. K - 40/1995. Inform. Velika Koleska, born in 1923 in the village of Veprchani, region of Mariovo. Recorded on September 13, 1995 in Prilep.

mostly very harmful: he broke the vessels, poured out the water, threw the food on the floor, let the animals out of the stables, etc.

Many events were narrated in which the vampire continued his sexual contacts with his wife, and as a result of these contacts a very unusual child was born, well known in the tradition of Macedonians as *a vampire or vampire's son*. Vampire's son possesses special features which enables the community to use him as the most important destroyer of vampires. "Carrying the vampire to another place" - has been the widespread magic measure for the community protection. This ritual action means "carrying the vampire" out of the actual or symbolic boundaries of the village. It was practiced, very often to carry the vampire across the water (river) or across the village landmark with an aim not to come back.

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Very often, people carry the vampire, lying to him that they will go to the wedding in the neighbouring village, taking with them some wine and bread. After crossing the village border or river, people leave the wine and bread somewhere, saying to the vampire that he must stay and wait there because they must go back to the village. People believe that vampire can not come back alone across the river or the village border. The more reliable way of exterminating the vampire is the act of his ritual killing. Ritual killing of the vampire is done only by the above mentioned vampire's son, because he is the only one who can see the vampire and kill him. On the place where the vampire was killed, blood - "blood - as a meatmold" usually appears, threaten after that with hot water "not to become alive again".

The dead new-born infants, unbaptised persons, unmarried and suicide persons belong to the category of "suspicious deceased persons". If the community does not undertake all the necessary ritual and magic activities, members of this category have all prerequisites to become "impure deceased persons", and after the phase of unsuccessful passing into the community of dead ancestors, they would stay among the living persons in a form of various demonic beings: *navi*, *fares (samovili)*. Staying in the world of living creatures, this category of "suspicious deceased person" and the demonic beings referring to this category, permanently, disturb the harmony or bring closer the boundaries between the two opposite Worlds. Thereby, people's community becomes marginal and because of that there are many folk beliefs about their harmful effects but also about various modes for neutralisation of their influences.

Navi are mythic demonic beings originating from the unbaptized dead new-born child. They do not succeed to pass the phase of "suspicious deceased person" and become "impure spirits" attacking women who have just given birth in the first 40 days of parturition. Because of these harmful influences, the community organises fictive baptising of the child while it is ill or after its dead. Traditional common law does not allow the new-born children to stay nameless for a longer period. This period symbolises a lack of their personal identity, as well as their ritual not belonging to the community. Only after baptising they become members of the community, having full rights, being therefore harmless for the living persons. Many times, the act of baptising is not enough. As "unconfirmed" members of the community, their bodies are often buried in places called "unknown graves". Realising this kind of ritual action, the community, attempts to erase the child's nonconfirmed identity protecting thereby it's living members.

The category of socially unconfirmed and uncompleted unmarried persons belongs to the category of “suspicious deceased person”, too. Because of its lack of social differentiation and completeness, the community attempts to make symbolic and ritual establishment of their social integrity organising a special ritual called posthumous wedding or eternal wedding,⁸ in order to satisfy preliminary conditions, so that the “new dead person” could successfully overcome the phase of passing.

“... When I went into (the other World), I saw a girl and a boy staying in front of the door (of the World of the death).

I asked them:

- ‘Why were you staying there alone?’

- ‘Because we had done our death by ourselves. And because of that, they did not allow us to went into. We were staying here...’

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(“... Ama koa vlegu (vo Onoj svet - na son. Zab. Lj. R.) jas, edno chupe i edno mashko promeneti stoja na vratata (pred vlezot na svetot na mrtvite. Zab. Lj.R.) I jas mu vela:

- ‘Oti vie taka sami stojte?’

- ‘Oti nie sami si napravjme smrt. Ne né pushtajat dva vlezime. Ovde si sedime nije. Si stoeme.’”⁹

It is believed that drowned persons have devoted themselves to the devil and their souls wonder among the living causing damages to the community. According to the folk beliefs, drowned persons possess the power of water and the power of the hail. “*The hail comes back with the drowned’s soul. It comes back with him*”. (*Gradot, ko tche vrne so umreniot se vratcha. So toj shto se udavil. Se vratcha so umreniot*).¹⁰ Because of that, an old woman or a man, with knife in the hands, threaten all drowned persons from the village, to change the direction of the hail clouds.

“... to the high mountains and dense forests,

where the axe does not cut,

where the sickle does not reap,

where the threshing floor does not stretch...”

(“... visoki planini, gusti gori,

kaj sho sekira ne sechi,

kaj sho srp ne zhnje,

kaj sho gumno ne e rastureno...”¹¹

⁸ V. Garnizov, *Smrt = svatba*. Balgarskija folklor v slavjanskata i balkanskata kulturna tradicija, t. 8, BAN, Sofija 1991, 248; M. Barjaktarović, *Posmrtna ili naknadna svadba*, Glasnik Cetinjskog Muzeja, t. V, Cetinje 1972, 263-272.

⁹ AIO SC, Inv. No. K - 41/1995. Inform. Menka Mitreska, born in 1924 in the village of Dunje, region of Mariovo. In 1949 she got married in the village of Chanishte and since 1970 she has lived in Prilep. Recorded on November 13, 1995 in Prilep.

¹⁰ AIO SC, Inv. No. K - 50/1995. Inform. Velika Mitreska, born in 1934 in the village of Bzovitch, region of Mariovo. In 1955 she got married in the village of Chanishte. Recorded on November 28, 1995 in the village of Chanishte, Mariovo.

¹¹ AIO SC, Inv. No. K - 50/1995. Inform. Velika Mitreska, born in 1934 in the village of Bzovitch, region of Mariovo. In 1955 she got married in the village of Chanishte. Recorded on September 28, 1995 in the village of Chanishte, Mariovo.

In the same time, the soul of the drowned person appears as a very useful mediator with the water (especially the rain), in a case of rainless period. Then, maidens from the village take a stone from the drowner's grave and throw it down into some well or spring calling therewith the rain to fall. This means that drowned persons have a function of bearers of mythic water and fertility. In that sense, the essence of the rituals carried out through the posthumous complex, reflects the people's efforts:

- to ensure complete elimination of the effects of dead person;
- supply all necessary conditions for undisturbed and final passing of the "new dead person" into the World of the death. This process lasts through a period of one-year intensive ritual activities;

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- to ensure final entering and including the new dead person into the other, eternal, community of dead ancestors, structured according to the system of relationships.

Rituals for Providing successful Passing into the World of the Death

The community of alive, permanently and cyclically, tries to support dead persons in the World of the Death. According to the folk idea, there are mutual relations between these Worlds, and the community of living expects support by the community of its dead ancestors.

In the frames of this folk concept of death, when somebody dies, the community attempts to "become free" of the dead person, but, in the same time, to provide him with all necessities for successful passing into the other world, the world of dead ancestors.

In that sense, the posthumous ritual complex presents a mechanism of symbolic regulation among the systems and their mutual relations. According to the principles of folk tradition, the community takes an intensive ritual activity in a period of one year with an aim to "lead" the dead person in the World of the Death. After this period, the intensity of ritual activities decreases and the community starts with cyclic and permanent providing of all necessities for the dead ancestors. The community supposes that the deceased person has been successfully adapted into the community of death.

Revision of the Process of Cosmisation of the World

After the period of three, five, seven or nine years from the inhumation, in some regions of Macedonia, the community organises ritual "exhumation" of the graves until the first decades of the 20th century. In the wider Balkans region, this custom has been well known among the people as "repeated inhumation", or "digging the graves". In ethnological studies, this custom is known as "repeated or double digging of the graves".¹²

¹² Kuzman A. Šapkarev, *Izbrani dela, : Običaji, obredi, nosii*, tom 4, Misa, Skopje, 1976, 96, 101-102; T. Đorđević, *Naš narodni život : Nekoliki samrtni običaji u Južnih Slovena*, tom 4, Prosveta, Beograd, 1984, 244-246; T. Đorđević, *Dvostruko sahranjivanje*, Glasnik Skopskog Naučnog Društva, knj. III, Odeljenje društvenih nauka 1, Skoplje,

Having in mind the basic ideas of the traditional culture of Macedonians, the process of exhumation of the graves had a very important meaning in the establishing the “real” situation of the process of passing of a dead person into the community of the death. Because of this, we shall analyse the ritual exhumation and repeated inhumation as a revision act of the process of the world cosmisation. The ritual community wants to follow the process of passing and to revise the possible “deviations” of the “suspicious dead persons”. The process of passing ought to be under the community’s supervision.

Revisions of the process of cosmisation are often very concrete. The “control” exhumation is done in order to be sure about the real situation of the dead person. There are numerous beliefs about the success in the process of passing into the community of dead ancestors. It is believed that this success would be greater if the deceased person “comes to light again” or “see the sunlight once again”. Many times, in the graves of persons died of tuberculosis, people used to bury a bottle of red wine which was used when some of the close relatives got ill with same disease. However, this wine could be used only if the community was sure that the process of passing into the World of Death had been completed successfully.

After exhumation, the ritual actors make an actual revision of the state of a dead person, checking his body, the colour of his bones, etc. If the bones kept their white colour, social and ritual community is satisfied, believing that it succeeded to organise the ritual cycle completely, overcoming the dangerous period of “suspicious deceased person”. Sometimes, however, the revisions after digging of the graves show that the process of passing of the dead person into the community of ancestors does not always follow the custom rules. It happens that some of the dead persons “become alive” or “become a vampire”. In these cases, the community repeats the ritual complex, trying to find the basic causes for prolonging the suspicious period for death. We mentioned numerous exhumations and repeated inhumations in order to destroy the vampires or similar demonic beings.

Finishing this presentation, we can conclude that comprehension of Death as a cultural and anthropological phenomenon on the basis of empirical materials of traditional cultures, enables us to understand the whole ritual complex, ideas and beliefs related to death. Discovering the structure, contents, functions and meanings of this phenomenon in the traditional cultures we will be able to comprehend the wider mythic concept of cosmic arrangement and its functioning.

1928, 347-348; M. Barjaktarović, *Dvostruko sahranjivanje*, Glasnik Zemaljakog Muzeja u Sarajevu, n.s. Etnologija, tom XXIX, Sarajevo, 1974; M. Jovanović, *Ponovo ili dvostruko sahranjivanje*, Glasnik Etnografskog Instituta, IX - X, (1960-1961), SANU, Beograd, 1961, 212-218; B. Jovanović, *Srpska knjiga mrtvih : Tanatologike I*, Gradina, Niš 1992, 193-194; C. Lozanova, *Običajati “votro pogrebenie” u Bälgarite – sädärzanie i funkcii*, Bälgarska Etnografija, Godina II, Kniga 3, BAN, Sofija, 1991, 52-57.

BESEDA O AVTORJU

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