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THE BIRTH RITUAL OF TIKVES MACEDONIANS

Abstract: The most important moment in the life of any married couple is the birth of their child. Consequently, the entire ritual is supported by a comprehensive ritual-religious system which is set up in order to carry out a gradual, secure and successful transition from the world one comes from to the world one enters. The evidence collected in all the Tikves settlements has been used to establish an ideal model of the *ritual of birth*, which pinpoints the specific elements that make up the ethnic identity of the Tikves Macedonians along with the already established traditional system of child birth rituals on the broader territory of Macedonia.

Key words: pregnancy, birth, *leunstvo* (nursing), ritual activities, magic activities, elements of the categories Nature, Man, Culture, transition, new status, new social balance.

1. Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a critical period of time in the life cycle of any woman. It begins with several uncommon reactions: *lateness of period, nausea, lethargy, vertigo* etc. This moment in effect signifies the woman's change of status from *profane to pious*. The new status is implicitly reflected in popular terminology as well: *pregnant, heavy with child, expecting*, or, perhaps, *blessed*; the last term implicates Christianity and underlines the blessed, sought after and holy position of the woman. However, the new position also clearly refers to certain ambivalent features: on the one hand the joy and happiness caused by the arrival of new family member, while on the other hand the fear of the unknown, *impure* and *dangerous* which may result from the new status of the woman. It is the source of the numerous *rules* which are designed to regulate the interrelations between the pregnant woman on the one hand and the members of the family and the community on the other, which in turn leads to the establishment of new boundaries in space and time in the newly created situation.

According to popular belief, the pregnant woman was also exposed to the negative and dangerous actions caused by *supernatural forces* that could endanger her newly acquired status. To that effect, a large number of regulations were in force in order to ensure the woman's partial or complete segregation and protection from the *impure* and *dangerous*. The sources and hosts of the impure included: *space, time, animals, plants, emotions, forbidden actions, people with special (marginal) status* etc.

The pregnancy of a woman changed the semiotic code of *space and time*. So, for example, a pregnant woman was forbidden to move in certain areas which, according to popular mythology, housed *supernatural forces*. These included: *the threshing floor, the crossroads, the eaves, the boundaries, the graveyards and the holy water*. The bans were more severe at night and especially between 12 at midnight and the first cock crows, a period known as *gluvo doba* (the deaf period). Since in that period *the impure forces* ceaselessly reigned the social space of the living, it was realistically possible to get in contact with them, which was dangerous and unwelcome. The house threshold was also

banned. As a housing of ancestor spirits, the threshold is a *holy, impure and dangerous* place. The danger comes from the possibility for a swap of categories on the *down-up* axis. In that sense, any pregnant woman who gets in contact with the *threshold* would be exposed to the danger of immediate contact with the chthonic; she was in danger of giving birth to a stillborn child.

There also were distinct rules governing the indirect or direct contact between the woman and certain animals. The forbidden animals which were implicitly signifying the *impure and dangerous* were: *the snake, the lizard, the black cat, the donkey, the hen, the rabbit, the dog* etc. The bans were a result of the popular belief that is directly linked to homeopathic magic (the similar = similar): the child may be born and have the features of the said animals: **snake** and **lizard** - *the child may be born with marks over his/her body; the skin on his/her face might peel like snake's skin; the child shall be cold as a snake* (Inf. no. 1); **black cat** - *birth shall be difficult; the child would miaow like a cat in his/her sleep* (Inf. no. 2); **donkey** - *the child shall have donkey's ears and teeth, and shall be stubborn as a donkey* etc; **chicken** - *the child would squawk like a slaughtered hen* (Inf. no 3).

Certain animals become active at night, especially in the period of new moon. So, for example, in this period the **rabbits** start their interplay in the weak and indistinct moonlight; **dogs** and **wolves** howl and thus establish a direct link with the *supernatural* which is directly affected by the *lunar*. Therefore, by touching these animals directly or indirectly the woman is in potential danger of touching the representatives of *the other world* who can in effect endanger her newly acquired status.

The pregnant woman was also forbidden to touch certain plants. This included: *the dogrose and the chestnut*. Fairies used to gather round dogroses. That is why our informant says: "*Oni tamu pravat lulka*" (They are rocking the pram there) (Inf. no. 4). According to popular belief, witches were meeting under chestnuts and so pregnant women were forbidden to go under those trees. However, bearing in mind this tree's chthonic character, we may conclude that the ban is a result of the danger posed by the *chthonic forces*.

The adverse emotions triggered by fear and anxiety could have a negative impact on the pregnant woman and her child. The woman was not allowed to be near a place on fire (the child may have red marks on its body); she was not supposed to go out during atmospheric discharges (thunder, lightning) so that she doesn't get upset; she had to shield herself from strong winds "so they don't swallow her up", because according to popular belief wind is caused by *the supernatural forces*.

Some negative results could be caused by the pregnant woman herself. She was not supposed to steal; the stolen object would then enchant the child: "*The pregnant woman must not steal anything: grapes, pears, plums; otherwise the child shall be marked*" (Inf. no. 5). She was also forbidden to laugh at people with inherent disabilities or special needs: "*The similar or same may befell her from the hands of God.*" She was not allowed to look at the fire when it was being put out in the fireplace. Popular belief says that extinguishing the fire equals ending her child's life. That is why it was forbidden for the pregnant woman to visit a deceased person or go at a funeral, since the child may be stillborn or pale like a dead man.

The given examples clearly show that every contact between the pregnant woman and certain representations within the categories of Nature, Human and Culture can have

the same or similar consequences. If the child was stillborn or with certain abnormalities, it was believed that the woman was not adhering to the appropriate rules and she was held responsible.

2. Birth

The crucial moment in the *birth ritual* is the process of separation of the *rodilka* (a woman about to or who has just given birth) and baby. Most of the unfortunate cases when either the *rodilka* or the newly born suffered were believed to have been caused by the *impure forces* they were in touch with directly or indirectly; or, perhaps, they were a result of the inconsistently performed rituals-magic that were supposed to ensure a safe and painless birth. In that sense, birth was complemented by a series of ritual-magical activities and rules.

The moment she felt pain, the *rodilka* would withdraw to a special room, hidden from the public, where the act of birth was carried out in complete secrecy. Tihomir Gjorgjevic thinks that the basic function of this ritual was to protect the *rodilka* from the "enchantment" of "the bad eyes" (T. Gjorgjevic, 1983:93). However, this belief is inferior to the structural determination of the birth giving ritual in general, since the ritual isolation is essential in the transition of the ritual subjects (*rodilka*-child) from one to another status (Bojan Jovanovic, 1993:73).

Therefore, the act of birth in most of the cases was performed in *the cellar, the stable, barn* or in another economic facility (Inf. no. 6). If the pregnant woman got labor pain while on the road or in the field where she was carrying out her duties until the last stages of pregnancy, she would move aside, hide behind some natural obstacle, and would give birth on her own. However, such actions (giving birth with no assistance) very often ended in death, either of the *rodilka* or the newborn. This is what our informant said about this risky situation: "*There was this woman who gave birth on her own, and when we went to see her she was dead and her child was at the doorstep*" (Inf. no 7). That is why an older and more experienced woman, called village *babica* (village midwives with no proper medical training), would assist during birth. Their assistance was instrumental, especially in the cases of mothers who were having their first child, since as a result of their confusion, fear or insufficient experience they could risk their or their life or the life of the newborn.

The *babica* would immediately start performing ritual-magical activities in order to make that process easier. So, for example, the *rodilka* would be made to hop and move about in order to make the separation easier (Inf. no. 8); a blanket would be wrapped around her waist - *to make her warmer* (Inf. no. 9); she would be made to kneel over a bowl of hot water - *to open up more easily* (Inf. no. 10); she would be told to blow in a bottle or a lock of her hair would be put in her mouth - *in order to make her vomit* (Inf. no 11). This increased the pressure necessary to make the separation easier. A number of ritual-magical activities were practiced besides these physical activities. So, for example, the *rodilka* would be sprinkled with water, or water would be poured on her breasts accompanied by magical chants: "*May the birth flow easily like this water*" (Inf. no 12). For that purpose, they would pour water on the door handle while the *rodilka* would kneel over the threshold and drink the water, or the *rodilka* would be given water through a sieve (Inf. no 6). Egg was also used in stimulation by magic: an egg was dropped under

the shirt of the *rodilka* three times accompanied by the chant: "*Deliver your child as easy as the hen lays her eggs*" (Inf. no. 13). For the same purpose, a weaving pole (*sovalka, frlacka, cevkarka, tkajacka*) was laid under the shirt of the *rodilka*. Another necessary act of magic was to untie all knots around the body of the *rodilka* (Inf. no. 14). One of the oldest acts of magic used during birth was untying all knots and undoing all buttons. These activities were performed because it was believed that closeness symbolically provoked negative magic acts. That is why, Frazer underlines, the knots had to be untied during birth (J. Frazer, 1992:305). According to imitative magic, knots represented realistic obstacles which made birth more difficult. The hair of the *rodilka* was undone for the same reasons.

According to the popular Tikves tradition, women used to give birth while kneeling or standing, and the newborn was supposed to touch the ground the moment it left his/her mother's womb (Inf. no 6, 11). This act is linked to the symbolism of Earth as a general cultural-anthropologic category. In some local variations, during birth the child was supposed to fall in hay or in a *kopan* - a hollowed out wooden bowl used for feeding the cattle; an act of magic which, aided by agricultural symbols, brings the newborn in touch with Nature. Later on these rituals were secularized, so during birth the child was left to fall in a bowl, in bed or the *babica* simply caught him/her in her hands.

After the act of separation, the *babica* would cut the umbilical cord. Ritual-magical activities followed; around the point which measured three fingers a woolen thread or a lock of the hair of the *rodilka* was tied; another three fingers were measured and the cord was cut (Inf. no. 6). In the past, the cord was cut by using stones. That is why our informant says: "*The umbilical cord is hit by two stones and thus torn*" (Inf. no. 3). In the areas where agriculture was prevalent, the umbilical cord was cut using a scythe (Inf. no. 15), and if sheep-raising was dominant the umbilical cord was cut with *krklozi* (sheep shears) (Inf. no. 15). After the physical separation, the child would be laid in the manger for a while (Inf. no. 16).

Since it was highly valued, the umbilical cord was stored in a secret location. It was believed that it possesses magic power and that using it may be fatal to the newborn.

Special care was taken not to leave the remainders of the birth (the blood) in places which could be in contact with the impure forces: *the threshing floor, the boundary, the threshold* etc. These places symbolize impure magic which, according to the principle of the *contiguous*, would affect the newborn. That is why the blood and the linen had to be buried in a blessed and pure part of the earth, or under a tree which was young and fruitful. It was believed that in that way the child would advance and grow like the tree.

3. *Leunstvo*

The *leunka* (nursing mother) and the newborn were partially isolated until the fortieth day - in a special ritual room, they were hidden from the public and fully shielded against any touch with *the carriers of the impure and dangerous: dusk, navi* (goblins) **and uroci** (evil spells). This was an attempt to establish new boundaries in space which would demarcate the categories *my own : somebody else's*.

Dusk, the carrier of *the impure*, was considered especially dangerous for the newborn. It was believed that in that period *the demonic forces* were becoming active.

That is why people made sure they had finished all the activities related to the *rodilka* and the newborn before dusk.

The newborn's diapers had to be collected before dusk. If for any reason the diapers came in direct or indirect contact with dusk, then according to the principle of *suggested* the diapers were lustrated with the following ritual: *they placed them above fire and dispelled dusk by using the light*. The interior of the place in which the ritual was performed was lighted: *there was a petroleum lamp in the room, or twigs were set on fire* (Inf. no. 17). If the *leunka* left the room in the night, then she would carry *a kindling on fire, matches, tinder* or any other objects which immediately refer to the codified function of light and fire.

According to popular belief, *the supernatural creatures* called *navi* posed a grave danger for the *rodilka* and the newborn in this critical 40 day period. According to the Tikves Macedonian national mythology, *the navi are invisible* and are not clearly represented in iconography. Since they are incorporeal and invisible, their presence could be seen in their deeds. The *leunka* would feel *spasms, headaches, suffocation, she would lose consciousness, her milk supply would run out; she would get fever, or, god forbid, they could cause sudden death of the nursing mother or the newborn* (Inf. no. 2).

There were different preventive and protective rituals: *live coals would be placed on the door threshold, a cross would be written, garlic or basil would be hung on the door, an axe would be placed, red thread would be wound* (Inf. no. 18); in that way, a *boundary of fire* would be created between the ritual, consecrated space of the nursing mother and newborn and the space where the impure forces could roam freely. Protective measures were taken in the interior as well: *things which give off unpleasant smell were set on fire, garlic and basil were laid; tongs, broom, a wooden stake, black cloth and other sharp object were placed next to the newborn* in order to guard the newborn from these *demonic* and quite *dangerous forces* (Inf. no. 16).

Unlike dusk and the *navi*, which belong to the other, *ontological world*, the *uroci* are caused by direct influence of *evil, uroklivi eyes* (i.e. eyes which cause evil spells). The belief in the magical power of the human gaze is universal. Not everyone had this ability. The people who had the ability to commune with the representatives of *the other world* were believed to have *uroklivi eyes*. Such people usually had *blue eyes, or were povrateni* (stopped sucking their mother's milk and then started again) or *envious; people whose heart was evil and spiteful* etc. (Inf. no. 16, 19, 20).

If an evil spell was cast, there were many symptoms: *fever, rash, incessant cry of the newborn, green line around the eyelids, eyelashes stuck together, vomit, constant yawning* etc. (Inf. no. 3).

This belief's magical-animistic content entails taking adequate measures for protection against *uroklivi eyes*. The best protection was achieved when the people undergoing the ritual were kept away from the ones believed to be capable of casting *uroci* on them and thus endanger their health, psychological and physical integrity as well as their future existence. There were different kinds of preventive measures. **Marks** were used: *a coal and tar mark was drawn on the face of the newborn*. Different **ritual objects** were attached: *the following objects were placed on the child's hat - a mole's leg, a bumblebee's egg, a rabbit's tail, a golden coin, a cross, beads, glass trinkets, ornamental horseshoes* etc. (Inf. no. 5, 21, 22). He/she was protected by **ritual dirtiness**: *the newborn was spat on, its first feces or blood was applied on the baby* (Inf. no. 6). **Magic**

spells would be uttered, so for example, if somebody looked at, wondered or praised the child, they would have to chant "*Masala, da te serat kokoskite*" (*By jingo, let the hens shit on you*) etc. (Inf. no. 19). Another way to counterbalance the magic effect of the *urok* was to chant: "*Koj te uroci kur mu u oci*" (*May they go to hell if they cast you a spell*) (Inf. no. 19). Another way to protect somebody from *urok* was to sit on the place where the person who was believed to have *uroklivi* eyes had sat before and say: "*Da mu puknat ocite*" (*may his eyes burst*). **Amulets** were made: *a ring and basil stitched in a rag, a hawthorn stake, garlic-ember-altan (gold coin)* etc.

Despite the formidable arsenal of protective means, the *urok* very often achieved its goal. For that reason, activities for counteracting and removing this state were taken. The enchantment was traditionally healed by magic. It was healed by people who were considered to possess certain powers. Such people were: *bajacki* (sorceresses), the *khoja*, the *dervish* etc. In order to counteract the enchantment, they usually *incensed the people they were healing, sprinkled them with consecrated water, they did baenje with salt while chanting magic spells* etc. So *baenje* is a specific type of verbal communication which was used to establish contact with the *impure forces* found in the body of the person under the effect of the *urok* in order to remove the *mana* from his body and establish a new social balance.

Until the fortieth day, the *rodilka* and the newborn are in a new status position, *neither here nor there, they are marginal*. Their new status is also defined by separate terminology: *leunka-leunce* (a child which is nursed). The introduction of the status mother-child from the status *leunka-leunce* triggered the activation of a complete system of ritual-magical and religious activities in order to transform their marginal status into a new, acceptable social status: mother - child.

As a result, the rules with a marked aggregatory aspect are enforced. Those are: *the first bath, the mala molitva* (a church ritual during which the *rodilka* and the newborn are purified with sanctified water), *the breastfeeding of the newborn, establishment of his/her character, the baptizing, the golema molitva* (a ritual organized on the fortieth day of the birth, when the *rodilka* and the newborn go to church for the first time and attend a prayer) *and the povojnica (presents for the newborn)*.

The bathing immediately after birth is the first, mandatory and important ritual, both for the child and the *rodilka*. According to Arnold van Genep, the ritual bath as a measure of hygiene has the role to purify, so it might be classified under the ritual category *separation*; at the same time, it is a ritual for *aggregation* bearing in mind that the people undergoing rituals move between the two categories: **ritually impure > ritually pure** (Arnold van Genep, 1960:52).

The ritual impurity of the people undergoing rituals is caused mostly by the blood at birth. *Impure blood* attracts *impure forces*; it must be removed from the *rodilka* and the baby. Consequently, the newborn is constantly bathed in the course of 40 days in order to maintain his/her "ritual purity", which in turn is a prerequisite for the future procedures for acquiring a new status.

The magic performed during the ritual bathing openly boost its aggregatory role. To that effect, different ritual objects were laid in the tub where the newborn was bathed: *eggs, salt, a green twig, a small stake, a coin, a ring, a comb, a key, wheat produce* etc. After the ritual birth, the grandma would raise the child above the fire three times and utter the magical chant: "*Kaj so e dobro Bog dobro da ti dade - kaj so e loso otnot da go*

izgore" (If it's good, let God be good to you - if it's bad, they shall burn in flames) (Inf. no. 6).

The *mala molitva* is a church ritual for purifying the *rodilka* and the newborn by using *sanctified water*. After the child was born, one of the family would go to church to get a *molitva*. The *molitva* was carried in a bottle which was always closed with basin. Until the fortieth day, the *molitva* would be poured in the newborn's bathing water, and the *rodilka* would drink it and spray it on her breasts in order to keep her milk ritually pure. After the end of this period, the rest of the *molitva* was poured out in running water (Inf. no. 6).

For the newborn, the first breastfeed is in fact ritual transition in the diet. Until his/her birth, the food was provided by the umbilical cord. After birth, the newborn becomes a suckling.

According to tradition, the newborn had to be breastfed by another woman (*doilka* - a woman who breastfeeds). She would sit on the threshold of the outside door and breastfeed the child (Inf. no. 23). As of that moment, the *doilka* would become mother by milk to the newborn. Since it was believed that the newborn may magically inherit the character of the *doilka*, great attention was given to making sure that the *doilka* was both physically and mentally fit. This ritual symbolically underlined the acceptance of the newborn by a certain woman from the community, which was a traditional action for aggregation.

After the third day, the newborn's mother would start to breastfeed it. This was supplemented by a number of ritual-magical actions. For example, the mother had to breastfeed her child with her right breast through a golden ring, and the mother-in-law would sieve yeast, bread, sugar etc. over her head. During the ritual beginning of the breastfeeding, the magical activities symbolically initiated the cultural verification of the newborn in the process of introduction into the community.

The ritual *zaluluvanje* (rocking the baby in a pram) of the baby would happen on the third night. Ritual food was prepared, including *pogaca* (a traditional pie), beans, boiled maize, *serbet* (boiled sugar), raisins etc. The newborn was dressed in new clothes and wrapped in his/her father's shirt (white, old-fashioned), where ritual objects were placed: book, pencil, scissors etc., and the grandmother would utter magical chants, hoping to initiate the child's future job, so that it's educated, literate, a good craftsman etc. The *zaluluvanje* was carried out near the fireplace or besides a bowl with live coal. The ritual *zaluluvanje* near the fire or its equivalent, the coal, openly boosts the aggregatory role of this ritual. Tradition says that the fireplace is sacred and holy; a symbol of the family and the kin which is closely related to the domestic gods, and in that sense also to the cult of the precessors. During the ritual *zaluluvanje* the child was left on the ground three times; this ritual can be deciphered by using the semiotics of the carriers of coded information which contain the number *three and Earth*.

According to tradition, at the third night the three *narecnici* (oracles) in order to determine the child's future. The *narecnici* were imagined to be three women dressed in black. It was believed that great power was vested in these creatures. They would come during the *gluvo doba*, when everybody was asleep, and would determine the newborn's life code (his/her *sudbina* - *k'smet* (both words mean destiny)). The *narecnici* would finish at the second cock crow and then leave. Their prophecy was final and unchangeable. That's the origin of the proverb which can be heard very often: "*Od*

pisania nema kurtulija. So e pisano taka i ke bide" (There's no running away from what's written. It will happen like it was written) (Inf. no. 27). The oldest *narecnica* had the main say and her prophecy was final and unchangeable.

According to Veselin Cajkanovic, these mythological creatures were the spirits of the predecessors, who, in their way, stressed their care for the newborn family member (V. Cajkanovic, 1926). This possibility is supported by the fact that the ritual was performed during the *third night*, and not during the *third day*. The representation of the ancestors' spirits by the code *narecnici* refers to the female principle in this ritual, which confirms the ritual acceptance in the community (V. Stojacevic, 1979:165).

The baptism is a church ritual which is used to carry out a religious verification of the newborn, or more precisely it is an act which introduces the newborn to the religious community circle. According to religious thought, the ritual *baptism* establishes a parallel link between Adam and Christ. "Christening," claims Tertulijan, "gives man the features of God." According to Cyril, "christening is not merely an act of purification; it is also an antitype of Christ's hermitage" (M. Eljajade, 1986:126).

As of this moment, the *godfather and godmother* as *spiritual parents* become very valuable and intrinsic parts of the newborn's life. They are the key players in all moments of crisis (*birth, wedding, death*); if the children christened by a *godfather* suffered untimely death, then the *godfather* was to blame and according to the guidelines for what was *allowed - suggested* he had to be changed. Otherwise, it was forbidden to offend, disdain, swear at *the godfather and godmother*, or to stop the Godfathership as an institution with no reason (Inf. no. 21).

Until christening, the child was called Puce. After the christening, the child was given its own name. According to Arnold van Genep, one of the key aggregatory features is giving somebody their name (A. Genep, 1960:62). This ritual introduced the newborn to the circle of the living, or more precisely to the circle of the community, as a fully-fledged member. According to Jean Cazaneuve, getting a name means existing as a human being (J. Cazaneuve, 1986:106).

According to tradition, if the newborn was male he would be given the name of his grandfather according to his father's family name, while if it's a woman she would be given the name of her grandmother, also according to her father's family name, whose names in turn used to belong to some of their ancestors.

The children were also named after certain saints and holidays: *Iko - Ilinka* (St. Elia); *Bogdan - Boga* (*Bogorodica* (the Virgin Mary)); *Gjoko - Gjurgja* (St. George); *Spaso - Spasa* (*Spasovden* (Ascension Day)); *Mitre - Mitra* (St. Dimitrija's Day); *Todor - Todorka* (*Todorica* (St. Todor's Day)) etc. Such names were given because of the belief in the intrinsic connection between the name and the marked features of the objects and living things, which could result in a positive "enchantment" of the person who gets the name by the person whose name was used, so that the desired effect is achieved by giving that name.

After he returned from church, the godfather would carry the newborn in the manger (Inf. no. 13), which symbolically emphasized the ritual birth of the new community member. After taking the baby, the mother would kiss the godfather's hand, give him a ring and ask him about the name. The godfather would then tell the name and chant: "*You gave us a small gypsy - we give you a small kjaur* (a Turkish derogatory term for 'Christian')".

The rituals which take place in the newborn's home are spurred by the anxiousness of the family about the psychological, physical and material life of their new member. So, for example, the godfather would roll the child on the table with leftovers three times before he would feed the newborn for the first time (Inf. no. 14). The people there would chip in with some money - so that the child is rich. The money was collected in the newborn's hat. The tablecloth was taken and left aside for three days. On the third day, they would shake the carpet, soak it in water and wring it out, and the water squeezed out in the process would be used to water a fruitful tree (Inf. no. 19).

Before leaving the house, the participants would wash hands and lob metal coins in a bowl with consecrated water. This water was then used to wash the newborn to prevent *uroci* from being cast on it. This part of the ritual ends the baptizing ritual.

The *golema molitva* to the *leunka* is like the baptizing to the newborn. This prayer shows the *public phase* in the introduction in the social environment, when the people on whom rituals were performed appeared in front of the fellow villagers so that the latter could notice their new status (V. Stojancevic, 1979:167). Namely, the *leunka* would bathe on the 40th day, then she would put on *clean clothes* and, hand in hand with the grandmother and grandfather, would go straight to church for the *golema molitva*.

The moment the priest finished reading the prayer for the good health of the *rodilka*, she was religiously accepted by religion in the religiously pure community. The *golema molitva* marks the end of her *marginal status* and the transition to the ritually pure women.

The ritual visits paid to the homes of neighbors and relatives on the way back from church confirmed the acceptance of the new status of the *rodilka* and the newborn. So, for example, after returning from church, the mother and the child first had to visit another house. The housewives of that house would give to the baby some *sugar, flour and eggs*: *sugar* - so that the child is sweet; *flour* - so that the child is not hungry and an *egg* so that the child's diapers stay clean. The housewives placed these gifts in the baby's diapers. They had to be used for food. The tour ended when she visited her parent's home with her child, where she would stay for a week (Inf. no. 11).

According to the rules for what was *suggested*, on the 40th day of the birth of the child the *rodilka* and the newborn would welcome *female members* of the broader community for the first time in public. Then they were given presents (socks, shirts) and food products (ritual food). The newborn was also given money. After this question the informants would say: "*Mu pustat pari i vikat! Da si kupis bratce-sestrice*" (They give him money and shout! Buy yourself a brother or sister) (Inf. no. 22). The *povojnica* was supposed to be brought in the morning, and according to the homeopathic magic principle (similar=similar), the child was expected to grow as the day grew.

In that sense, the ritual *povojnica* clearly showed that the community had symbolically accepted the newborn. In fact, the *povojnica* implies that the individual has not yet been *introduced in the community*, which stressed his marginal position as a hindrance for his socialization and a precondition for a successful human communication (P. Vlahovic, 1995:77).

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