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## METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH OF DEATH

*Abstract:* Starting from the fact that ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology are empirical sciences that try to reach knowledge through field work, this article will analyze the basic elements of contemporary field research. The main accent of the article is put upon the methodological approach during field research, referring to the social dimension of death and its communicational function through graves, family memorials and tombs, above all in the city of Skopje, which means that in many cases my field was located close to me, even close to my home. During the research direct observations and participations in different ritual activities are taken in account, the so-called insider attitude of the researcher.

*Key words:* ethnology, socio-cultural anthropology, field research, social dimension of death, communication function, tombs.

Starting from the fact that I will analyze few “new” or “old-new” ritual behaviors of the contemporary Macedonian family, and having in mind that ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology are empirical sciences that try to reach knowledge through field work, this article will analyze the basic elements of contemporary field research.<sup>1</sup> I refer to contemporary family, which means that I research the present. The main focus will be put on contemporary urban every-day life, if one takes into account that in the period after the war, i.e. in the socialistic period, the migrations village-city were developed, which resulted with a number of migrations towards the city, especially to Skopje, which was a consequence of industrialization and modernization and turning the villagers into working class (Ацески 1996: 40–41; Петреска 2008: 17–18). This means that the field was very close, even spatially close to my home, which was different from recent researches, which dealt with village environments, while the research was done through interviews with the informants, although sometimes there was also a direct

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<sup>1</sup> On contemporary field research see: В Петреска, Етнографија на современиот семеен живот во македонското семејство. Традициски и нови културни модели во обредноста и семејниот живот. Институт за фолклор „Марко Цепенков“, Посебни изданија, кн. 70, Скопје, 2008, с. 7–13; В. Петреска, Категориите близина и дистанца: Етнoлошко-антрополошко истражување на народната култура. Институт за фолклор „Марко Цепенков“, Посебни изданија, кн. 72, Скопје, 2008а, с. 5–12.

participant observation. Such trends in the British social anthropology and American cultural anthropology started in the 80'ties of the 20th century, when these anthropologists left the “exotic, far-away fields” and oriented themselves towards “anthropology at home”. In European ethnologies this transfer of the field of interest is perceived in time and space (see more: Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 73–106; Беновска-Събкова 2001: 21–22; Segalen 2002: 16, 19; Čapo Žmegač, Gulin Zrnić, Pavel Šantek 2006: 29).

In all of the elements that constitute research at home, where the insider status as a methodological procedure could be defined as a situation where the researcher is a part of the society and the culture which he or she analyses, the researcher shares some basic knowledge, feelings of belonging and emotions with the researched subjects: in many cases the field is constructed by “lasting personal co-participation in certain types of social groups, activities and relations”; when it is a matter of a continuous stay at the field, when the researched topic is at the same time a topic taken from the private and every-day life of the researcher, one can talk also about the autobiographical in ethnology (Čapo Žmegač, Gulin Zrnić, Pavel Šantek 2006: 30–34), or one can use the term auto-anthropology, where the space where the research takes place is the immediate surrounding, and in a social context it is a research where the researcher and the researched group share the premises of the social life that support anthropological research. Thus, it is a matter of a definition of auto-anthropology in a contextual sense, where one's own becomes a category of knowledge. It should not be thought that the plurality and the heterogeneity of one's own culture and society are abolished in such cases, but that a mutual knowledge fund is being emphasized, a sum of concepts or experiences that are shared by the informant and the researcher in the frames of the anthropological project (Gulin Zrnić 2006: 80–81). This is also emphasized by Geertz, that cultural analysis by itself cannot be complete, and that its aim is not exclusively to establish a coherent image of the community (nor that this is a measure of the validity of cultural analysis), while Clifford and Marcus formulate the same concept as “multiple meanings”, “partial truths” or “contradictory truths” (Гирц 2007: 28–29; Čapo Žmegač, Gulin Zrnić, Pavel Šantek 2006: 34<sup>2</sup>).

Contemporary research of the urban culture during the 80'ties of the 20th century showed that one cannot speak of absolute objectivity (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 207). Justification is found in the fact that the contemporary urban every-day life can hardly be investigated using the method of a deep ethnological research. Surely there are differences between researching a rural and an urban context. In a village context contacts are usually more direct, communication is verbal, people talk freely during different festivities, about different life events etc., in comparison to the urban context where one can

<sup>2</sup> Quoted according to: Clifford, James & Marcus, George eds. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

feel the isolation and the loneliness of the city inhabitants. However, even when doing research in a village setting there are sensitive topics, when the researcher needs more time to obtain the trust of the informant (for example topics that consider the intimate life of the person and the family). Thus, when urban environments are considered, a research of the culture of smaller groups is recommended, where people interact between each other, they know each other etc., and at first glance seem culturally or in a civilizational way homogenized in the vast urban agglomerates or in urbanized villages (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 44–45). During the research one should take into account the direct observation and participation in different ritual activities or so called insider approach of the researcher. Although there are opinions that in this case the issue of privacy of certain observations can be questioned, I personally find that we should not avoid direct observations that take place in any occasion and to tremble if the question of privacy of our observation would be posed. Sometimes things seem so “every-day” that we forget to retell them; or very often, during an interview with a certain informant, he says, for example, that he does not practice any rituals, neither related to a certain holiday, nor to a family event, while soon after we see the same informant practicing a number of rituals. In the same relations with the “private observations”, or with the “subjective” ones, would be the classical, field ethnological or folkloristic research, when we receive one type of answer when the voice recorder is on and another when it is off. I have experienced a number of such situations when researching family relations or the honesty of the bride (Перепека 2009: 146–147). How to scientifically interpret in such situations? Does it mean that I should not take into account the additional information that were not recorded so that I would not get a “private observation”, or to avoid noting family conflicts, and create an idyllic image characteristic for ethnological research in the past, which in fact never existed? Let us remind ourselves of the stationary research of, for example, Malinowski, Margareth Mead, the research of Joseph Obrembski in Macedonia, when, living together with local population, they conducted field research based upon dialogs, conversations, but also direct observations and participation in different ritual activities and taking one’s own notes.

Contemporary research insists that phenomena should not be investigated as “hibernated” historical phenomena, but that they should be analyzed in the context of the present. This is how we turn towards their function, which is not only a simple differentiation of established facts, but also includes attitudes and ways of behavior, even needs and wishes. In short, the subjects (phenomena) should not be analyzed in their supposed aesthetic autonomy (as “beautiful” things or processes) or in a historical context, separated from reality (as relicts of previous forms), but in the light of their function. If the function is put into the center, then the different attitudes towards the subjects become more important than the subjects themselves.

The conclusion is that the “folk world” cannot be isolated from the rest of reality, no matter where it is located. There are surely ways of behavior, attitudes and objects that are more or less typical for the lower strata, but even they are not autonomous or isolated from the cultural forms characteristic for the higher strata, from science etc. (Bauzinger 2002: 231, 244–246).

During my researches regarding the rituals related to death, I used as a source the archive materials of the Institute of Folklore “Marko Cepenkov” in Skopje, and a special accent was put upon the direct perceptions and observations (this was especially present during the research of graveyards), made during my participation in different rituals. The fact that the focus was put upon my direct observations and perceptions of different rituals is a result of the fact that death is for most people a sensitive topic. I think that all researchers that have dealt with this topic would agree on this. The same was visible during the research in both village and urban settings. If one talks about death, informants try to promptly conclude the conversation, or to keep their answers short, very often with a simple “yes” or “no”, and after a while, to cancel the conversation – “enough of that”. The researches showed that if one starts immediately to talk about this topic, the research is never fruitful. Thus, the most common methodological procedure was to conduct an interview on the so called “beautiful” topics, and then slowly approach the moment when life fades.

In relation to this maybe we could mention the historical interpretation of different opinions on death of Norbert Elias, which stems from his theory on the civilizational progress. Elias proves that, during history, all basic human concepts have changed, together with the attitude towards life and the understanding of death. The control of emotions, according to this author, is a product of great importance for Western civilization, and it has developed so much that, among other things, it represses feelings related to death and death itself, it pushes them into the deepest intimacy, thus strenghtening even more the discomfort and the fear related to death. These are related to the taboos which in previous periods were related to gender (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 182).

Such deliberations on the crisis of death, death as a taboo in the 20th century, that took the place of the sexuality taboo, which is also described as “pornography of death” (Geoffry Gorer), the ban of its expression in public, the obligation to suffer alone and in secrecy, that strenghtens the trauma caused by loosing a dear person (Phillippe Aries), can be found in the works of many other authors (Čolović 1986: 137–138). Elias relates the contemporary attitude of man towards death to the contemporary personality structure, whose important elements are making life longer, pushing death further and further in our lives, which results with the fear of death being pushed forward as well. Also, the characteristic of developed Western societies that has influenced the understanding of death is the understanding of life itself. The

way we imagine our own life is the same with the way in which we think about our own and other people's death, says Elias, adding that starting from the Renaissance an individualistic model was being developed at the West. We, today, do not fear of death itself. We fear long term sickness, lack of strenght, a senseless life. The sense of life is determening the sense of death. Sense according to him is a social category, and it can be interpreted if one analyses man in the totality with his surroundings. It is in vain to look for the sense of human life separately from the meaning of his life among the people that surround him. Contemporary loneliness and the secret of death stem from the sense that it is ascribed to contemporary life. We die alone since all of our lives we tried to live alone. We die alone also because we think that we are alone and that ou rlife lost sense (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 181–183). This is the direction also of other researches, i.e. that the main sources for denying death are the overemphasized individualism, the domination of science and technology, as well as the hegemony of civilization that is based upon gain and profit (Bordi 1992:13). These attitudes cannot be completely accepted on our territory, since tradition speaks through the post–mortem rituals, as well as through the obituaries. Recent researches in some of the South–Slavic countries, for example in Serbia, show that the cults related to death, compared to other life cycle customs, have changed the least, at least on the formal level. The reasons for this are found in the complexity of the very phenomenon of death, as an eternal secret, as well as in the influence of the religious–magical way of thinking, but also in the fact that the atheistic ideology was primarily anti–Christian and anti–Church ideology, so that the rituals that had pagan features were not interpreted as ideologically dangerous. This was good for the survival of a whole complex of traditional post–mortem rituals upon this day (Pavićević 2008: 24–25). However, there are opinions that sometimes one feels a certain confusion in front of death, insecurity during expressing and obtaining condolences at a funeral, and during a visit to a grave, lack of self–confidence related to the announcement of death, the signs of greeving etc. On one side there is a resistance towards traditional pagan and Christian post–mortem rituals, on the other side the psychological and social need to give the necessary attention to death and to the dead is not loosing strenght, the need to talk or to do something special in relation to them (Čolović 1986: 138).

In certain contemporary researches that deal with the topic of death, there is a distinction made between the opinions on death or the idea of death in different periods, for example in socialistic times and afterwards. In them the authors analyze death, the funeral and the commemoration of public figures, for example in Serbia the phenomenon of death, i.e. the images of death created by the media, mostly the printed ones (Павићевић 2009: 223–238; Павићевић 2010: 39–55; Павићевић 2009а: 47–60), as well as the connection between politics and death (Ковачевић 2001: 51–55).

In the following part I will discuss the methodological approach towards investigating the social dimension of death and its communication function. Important indicators of the social dimension of death and its communication function were contemporary rituals related to death and mourning (the family relations and their changes, the gathering of contemporary families in case of someone's death, the funeral procedure, the costs of the funeral, the erection of a monument and the maintenance of the grave site, the signs of mourning etc.). The social dimension of death in contemporary rituals is clearly marked through the connection of the families, the broad kinship ties and their current functioning, neighborhood relations and neighborhood assistance. This supports Durkeim's analysis of death in Australian society, published in the '30ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that common misfortune has an equal effect as a common happy event: it highlights the feeling of common affiliation, that helps the individuals to seek each other and to get closer. Also, the society conducts moral pressure upon members of the group. The individual, who is strongly attached to the society to which he belongs, feels morally obliged to participate into the common grief and festivities; to be disinterested would mean breaking the ties that connect him to the community, this would mean to give up the group and to self-quit (Дюркем 1998: 472–473). In fact, the rituals speak about collective integrity, about the community being confirmed. When the social feeling is painfully repressed, it reacts with more strength than usual: one never values family so much than at times when facing difficulties... The group feels that the forces progressively come back to it, and starts to hope again, to live, to exit sorrow, thanks to itself (Дюркем 1998: 475). Surely, a tightly related kinship group, that among other things is also an economic organisation (as it was the case with the village communities), would feel more intensively the loss of one of its members, than some professional group, or a neighborhood where the individual participated with just a part of his life. However, no matter the force of social ties, human community will react to the loss of each of its members in a way that will support its existence and common activity (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 119). In this sense we can talk about group unity and the preservation of the group identity. Still, in relation to the latter we can turn to the term of Bandić, on the gradual separation of the diseased from the sphere of living to the sphere of dead, as well as the gradual separation of the living from the diseased, that he analyzes in the context of memorial days (Bandić 1983: 39–47). In this sense one can say that the biggest group unity and preservation of identity of the group is shown during the very funeral, and partly at the 40 days memorial. During the six months and the annual memorial it goes down to the smaller circle of kinship ties, which means that the ones with whom the diseased was in the most direct contact are the ones that have trouble separating from him more than the others, and this is the group for which the diseased turns into a predecessor. In relation to the group

identity we can also talk about two types of identities, for example affiliation towards the kinship group, identity of friends, identity of collegial or working group. The affiliation of the diseased towards a number of identities is surely connected to his social status in the community. If the diseased had a low social status in the community or in the society, then the identity of the kinship group and probably the identity of the neighborhood group was present. If it comes to a diseased that had a high social position in the community or society, then his affiliation towards a higher number of identities is more probable. This can be related to the processes of commemorating and remembering. In fact, the techniques of commemoration are mainly related to death of public and authority figures, as well as to events that enable connecting with political concepts and ideas, while remembering belongs to common people and their inheritors (Павићевић 2009: 224).

If one of the features of contemporary culture is the reduced rituality, contemporary rituality related to death seems to transgress this rule. Urban rituality related to death is quite emphasized. Here we can note different cultural traditions that stem from different territories of Macedonia (since the social, economical and political changes after the Second World War influenced the growth of cities), as well as the spiritual mentality of people that support such attitudes. Culture, and people as its carriers, are changing slowly and in a difficult way. Also, the funeral in a big city cannot be a social event in the same way as in the village community, but we cannot state that the funeral has lost these features. It is sufficient to be present at least on one funeral, and to note, even in a form of a graphic, the kinship and social ties, and to see how much rituality is present, which unfortunately I had a chance to see during such events related to the death of my closest and closely related relatives. The thing that is apparent after the 90'ties of the 20th century, i.e. during the period after the fall of socialism, is the open turn towards religiosity and rituality related to death. We cannot state that even before that period there was no rituality whatsoever, a fact that has already been noted by other authors (see above: Pavićević 2008: 24–25; Rajković 1988; Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 119), but still in the latest period we witness an open turn towards religion and rituality. A proof for this is the establishment of the Pentecost Friday for public holiday. The turn towards religion, as the recurrence of the religious views is often called, was not only our feature, but one could say that it too global dimensions in the 20th century. It was not only a result of the economic and social crisis and wars but most probably, above all, was a need to find again the answers of the repressed questions (Pavićević 2008: 27), in our case the questions related to the secret of death.

The social dimension of death and its communicative function could be noted at the very moment of death, during the funeral, but also during the

memorials<sup>3</sup> that take place after it. An indicator of the social side and the communicative function of death could be the building of family tombs, or just graves, that we will analyze further in the text. On one side consumerist mentality is obvious, and on the other side there is the gravesite that has to be bought, and whose prize is very high. In the same line with the consumerist spirit there are different tombs and monuments offered, whose price varies depending on the marble color, the manufacture of the monument etc. However, a family tombstone is not just an expression of consumerism. It can be also a proof of the stabilization of the city family in the new place, a confirmation of the identity of the living, who believes that they will be buried at the same place when they die, who in fact have obtained the right of citizenship. The emergence of noble tombstones and graves, but in a much richer form, was famous, for example, in Germany by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the city family was established. It seems that this phase of family development cannot be avoided by any society. The demographic change and mobility of population, together with the processes of transformation of the village, more or less patriarchal family into an urban one, always contains the emergence of a family tomb (Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 163).

In relation to the grave or the family tomb, as a feature of contemporary culture one can also analyze the gravesite monuments. Although in traditional culture there was a custom of marking the grave with a visible sign, no matter if this was a monument or a stone plate over the grave (Филиповић 1939: 471), which depended on the economic situation but still, in our every-day culture, it seems that there is no single family that does not think of erecting a grave monument for some of its diseased members. An illustration for this is the city cemetery Butel in Skopje, which has been constructed according to a plan. The cemetery of Drachevo (Skopje settlement) holds a tradition for covering the graves with aluminium awning, probably due to the traditional notion that existed in this part of Macedonia – “so that the diseased would be in the shadow” (Филиповић 1939: 402). Most often, tombstones are erected or they are being completed (if there was a previous monument erected on an old tomb) up to one year from death. The interpretation of this phenomenon can be found in ethnological literature and

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<sup>3</sup> Commemorations, that are followed by traditional memorial days (funeral, the first morning, 7 or 9 days, 40 days, half a year and a year, while sometimes there are memorial days marked after 1,5 year, 2 years, 2,5 years and 3 years), today are announced in local newspapers, but in this article we would not talk about this topic since they have been covered in neighboring countries, while we have given a small contribution before related to the Macedonian territory (see: Rihtman-Auguštin 1978: 117–175; Rihtman-Auguštin 1988: 116–167; Rihtman-Auguštin 1988a: 310–325; Čolović 1986: 95–139; Петреска 2008: 140–147; Петреска 2008b: 411–418).

they mainly refer to old beliefs of tying up the diseased person's soul, i.e. the belief that the soul transfers itself into the tombstone (as it was previously the case with the tree trunk), which has to be done during the first year after death; at this point, according to folk belief, human body decomposes itself, and the soul goes out of the reach of living, and cannot be kept any more (Павловић 1957: 642–648; Јовановић 1992: 118–119). However, it is clear that the monuments are currently not erected only due to these reasons, but also as a “sign of respect and attention towards the diseased, as some kind of obligation”. The erection of the tombstone after one year from the death is respected today, probably due to inertia and without an awareness of a previous significance of this deadline. Besides the interpretation that the tombstones and other monuments originate exclusively from the ancient animistic beliefs (the tombstone as a location of the soul and object of sustaining the cult), one should emphasize that the monuments dedicated to the diseased obviously have, and always had another function, a communicative one, based upon the human need to address other people, to visibly express its attitude towards the diseased one, to announce a number of data on the dead person, but also to speak about itself (Rajković 1988: 61). Tombstones, memorial plates, crosses and flower wreaths located at the graves serve to express respect towards the diseased ones, but they are also mediators in the communication between people. They are already a human convention, accepted as signs of death (Rajković 1988: 63).

Tombstones can perform their communication function in a non-verbal way, through symbols and images – and in a verbal way – in a written form. Most frequent symbols on the tombstones are the cross, engraved at the very gravesite, or a wooden cross, a photograph, but other signs can be found as well.

- The cross is a symbol of Christianity, it refers to religious affiliation, but it also has a wider meaning as a sign of death. The same symbolical meaning (death) was valid for the cross even before Christianity, but in Christianity it symbolizes the death of Jesus, and more than that: all basic dogmas among which Christ's sacrifice and the victory over death (Rajković 1988: 64).
- The sign of death for the Muslim communities in Macedonia is the crescent moon.
- At certain grave sites one can notice a five-pointed star, which is an ideological sign, that these graves are from the socialistic period, whose diseased belonged to the Socialistic party.
- Photographs or faces of the diseased portrayed in different techniques, present the dead person. It is a rule to choose a more ‘representative’ photographs, that represent the persons according to an established, desired model: serious and well dressed (a jacket and a tie). This solemn tone do not stem only from the wish to make the diseased

more beautiful, but also from the respect towards death. However, photographs or drawings could also reflect the profession of the diseased or a certain hobby, for example a truck on the tomb says that the diseased was a truck driver, or a ball (football), most often presented on children's graves, could say that the hobby of the diseased child or teenager was playing football or some other sport.

One can also notice cemetery monuments that step out of the established design, although those are not tombstones designed as houses as in some other Balkan countries (for example Serbia). Such a monument expresses much more than its verbal message. It speaks about the economic power of those who have erected it, their relation towards the diseased and towards death in general, the relation towards the wider community, it speaks about the relations in the family, so one can draw some conclusions from it regarding the hidden motifs that initiated the erection of such a memorial (Rajković 1988: 67). In any case, most of these monument have been erected for younger diseased persons. This can be related to the traditional notion that if younge people die one should cry and grive more, which highlights the social dimension, that not all life phases of a person have been fullfied, for example when a young girl or a boy dies, or a young parent, one should cry his heart out, since they were still young, the diseased parent has left orphans, i.e. the parent did not succed to provide future for his own kids, did not fullfil his parental duty<sup>4</sup> (see Органдиева 1968: 87–88; Цепенков 1980, I: 205–222, 227–234, 238–245, 247–255, 257–281).

Verbal ways of communication include the written signs on the monuments, as well as the ephitaphs. Researches done in other South–Slavic areas (for example in Croatia) on the signs of the monuments (especially those saying who is erecting them) show that they resemble the newspaper obituaries and have obviously been tailored according to their example (Rajković 1988: 74). Written signs usually include the name and surname of the diseased, the year of birth, year of death, and often who is erecting the monument, while some monuments do not include this information. The ones who sign the obituaries are usually members of the widder kinship group, but there are also colleagues or neighbours (Петрепка 2008, 2008a), while the messages on the monuments are signed by the closest family members (for example the children of the parents that are diseased, the wife or the husband and the shildren, or the family in general). Quite often, when it comes to a family tomb, if one of the spouses is dead, the other is also noted, with a photograph, year of birth and a blank space for the year of death. This can be related with traditional notions that after the death spouses meet in the other

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<sup>4</sup> This situation is well described by M. Cepenkov, who says: “When a young boy or girl die, people would be hysterical, they would make loud noises with their hands, they would tear their hair off. Loud cries and screams would be heard when such diseased are being buried” (Cepenkov 1980, I: 222).

world, which causes putting on for example bridal's clothes for the wife, so that her husband could recognize her, or putting on some other sign for recognition. In Serbia when the husband dies, his wife or some other member of the family enters the grave and rubs it with a part of the clothes, which is interpreted as a belief that going to the other world is not possible without company (Микитенко 2010: 187).

Certain monuments contain epitaphs. According to the marvelous study of I. Cholovic on epitaphs at the Belgrade cemeteries, their language contains three layers: the first includes remains from the tradition of grieving, formulae in which there is the echo of the ancient rhythm of oral grieving over the dead; the second layer belongs to a new language of death, whose basis are such functional styles of language as the "administrative" and the "political" as well as the "journalistic" language, which enter the epitaphs mediated by their closely related newspaper obituaries; the third layer is based upon different types of literature, i.e. poetic language, no matter if it comes to texts or sequences written according to a literature key, or if it is a matter of transferring and quoting ready parts of literature works (Čolović 1986: 91–93). The research of the Skopje cemetery showed that there are epitaphs that are similar to the grieving tradition, where there is a differentiation between this and the other world, expressed through the binar oppositions: with a door/without a door, with a window/without a window, visible/invisible<sup>5</sup>, according to Cholovic – the first layer, as well as epitaphs that are based upon literature – the third layer. We can mention the following lament: "Son, we have made you a new house//there is no window, no door//I cannot see you with my eyes//you cannot see me with yours//We came to your house//Get up so that you can see us//Get up to greet us" – from Mariovo (Ристески 1999: 81), and from the region of Bregalnica river: "Father, father, this is a heavy house//No door, no window//You cannot see your children//There is no house to come to" (Малинов 2001: 56)<sup>6</sup>, as well as one epitaph: "Thank you//for coming//sorry//that I did not//gree you" (Петреска 2008: 162). Epitaph with a literature expresion: "Unforgettable//Until the last moment of your life you had hope and trust in us, the people, science and your best friend, the book.

<sup>5</sup> The border between the two worlds – this and that, through the binary oppositions: with a door/without a door, with a window/without a window, visible/invisible, lightness/darkness, inhabited/deserted, being able to great/not being able to great, where the first element of the opposition is related to this world, and the second with the other world, is contained in the lamenting tradition of other Balkan people as well. See for example: Микитенко 2010: 87, 256–257, 317–319, 361–362, where there are examples of Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian and Monte Negrian lament tradition.

<sup>6</sup> Laments of the type house without a door, without a window, a deserted house can be found with M. Сепенков: "A deserted house for eternity//with no window and no door" (Цепенков 1980, I: 241).

Memories of you will always be fresh, in spite of the fact that everything that we and that you wanted is gone” (Петрепка 2008: 162, 163).

According to Cholovic “literature at the cemeteries has another global function: to be a sign of the special situation of the grieving ones, who are beyond themselves since they are outside their language” (Čolović 1986: 94); but “the epitaph functions also as a sign of standing out, prestige among members of a community, as a noble act or, one can freely say, as a fashion, that has a lot of followers” (Čolović 1986: 21). In any case, the epitaphs portrait the diseased in the best light possible, almost idealised. This is not only due to the Latin expression that one should talk most positive about the diseased, but it also stems from respect towards death and the deepest feelings of the ones that have been hit by the loss. The epitaphs describe a general, ideal personage of the diseased, who is dear, beloved, unforgettable, responsible, well-mannered, who has given happiness, joy and pride to his closest friends and family and whom, due to his values, they will remember entirely (Rajković 1988: 83).

The research on rituality in relation to death in the city (above all in Skopje), which is mainly based upon field research, where the method of observation and direct participation, or the insider approach, have shown that we can talk about an urban-rural rituality, starting from the way the city population has grown. Thus, in the research concerning attitudes toward death and rituality related to death in the city, we can see the different cultural traditions, that come from different areas of Macedonia, and the spiritual structure of people that propagate such attitudes and that put the ritual into practice. And culture, as well as people which are its carriers, change very slowly and in a difficult manner. This means that rituality related to death (that is a result of the very attitude towards death) is one of the most inert areas of human existence, whose change presupposes a so called “long duration”, where even the education level is not a primary element for practicing certain traditional rituals. I agree completely with D. Rihtman-Augustin (1988: 164), that it is not possible to put someone very close in a grave, someone with whom we shared the good and the bad times, being at peace with the fact that he simply does not exist any more, without parting from him in a way, no matter if we believe the afterlife or if we believe that life is final and without any return.

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