

UDC 929 Nedelkov, Ljupco J.(093.3)

In memoriam



### **Ljupco J. Nedelkov (1964-2012)**

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, University St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje

Our colleague Ljupco Nedelkov died on the 17th of July 2012. He did not manage to win over his illness, besides the big desire for life, which at times seemed so strong that we thought that he was completely ignoring it and all its proportion. Speaking and writing about death, most of us knew that in this relation towards death there is something universally human, ontological. When a person faces death, this is not easy, neither on an individual nor at the collective level. This becomes even more apparent when the idea of death is opposing the idea of life, of separation with our family and friends. It has to be admitted that today's contemporary medical and social concepts that deal with these difficult and complex issues, are weak and inefficient in finding ways to fight diseases and death. Being far away from the traditional concepts of dying, we, humans, are left wandering for our own souls and bodies, in order to understand what is happening to us, while the absence of a concept leaves us with few options.

Our colleague Ljupco Nedelkov was born in Kavadarci, in 1964, but he lived in Skopje since his youth. He was one of those who accepted life as being of special value, while its pleasures were of particular importance to him. As a boy he was left without a father, and even though he tried to compensate this fact with resolution and decisiveness, for him it was a heavy burden that presented itself only in moments of intimate conversations with some of us.

After high school graduation, in 1983/4 he enrolled studies of ethnology at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, where he graduated in 1989.

During the crucial period of renewal of the ethnological studies as 4-year studies, in May 1990 he assumed the position of a Collaborator at the Department ('Zavod') of Ethnology at the Institute of Geography. He assisted in teaching courses on general ethnology, ethnology of non-European people, ethnology of Balkan non-Slavic people and ethnology of South Slavs.

Almost at the same time he enrolled post-graduate studies of ethnology at the Philosophical faculty in Belgrade. That was the time when I already studied as an undergraduate at the same Department, and it was then that I met Ljupco for the first time. He arrived in Belgrade to pass exams for the post-graduate studies, while I became acquainted with the academic situation of the ethnological studies in Skopje. We talked walking through the streets of Belgrade or in some of the *bon vivants'* Belgrade restaurants. I learned from my colleague Nedelkov about the problems that they faced during the organization of the studies, the human resource problems, but most of all we discussed the lack of a contemporary theoretical and methodological basis of the studies at that time. Under the mentorship of Prof. Gjurgjica Petrovic he submitted his MA thesis titled: "Folk Costume of the Vlachs and Sarakachans in Macedonia", which as a topic at that time presented an uncharted field. In this study he connected two specific fields of research, one related to the folk costume, and the second related to ethnography of the Vlach community and of the Sarakachans in Macedonia and at the Balkans. More precisely, the study examines traditional forms of the folk costume and its development among the Farsheriot Vlachs, Karaguni Vlachs and of Meglen Vlachs. Also, the folk costume of the Sarakachani in Macedonia is covered.

In 1996 Ljupco Nedelkov successfully defended his MA at the University in Belgrade. After fulfilling the formal preconditions, he became Assistant at the Institute of Geography – Department of Ethnology in 1997.

The next year he submitted a topic for his PhD, titled: "Rituals of passage from the life cycle of Macedonians in Tikvesh", under the mentorship of Prof. Aneta Svetieva. After the successful defense, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2012 he obtained the title PhD of ethnology.

In 2004 he was elected Assistant Professor at the Department of Ethnology at the Institute of geography, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in Skopje.

His PhD is a detailed study dedicated to the totality of human life, from his birth until death, examined through the theoretical prism of the *rites de passage*, a well-known and widely used methodology in global terms at that time.

The study is structured in three main blocks: birth, wedding and death. The theoretical analysis at its basis is realized upon rich field material collected in Tikvesh during long-term empirical research.

The first part is dedicated to the analysis of the religious, mythological and ritual aspects of birth. The author, based upon folklore and ethnographic materials defined the basic phases of the three-part structure of the rituals of passage: separation, marginality and aggregation, as well as the most important status features of the participants in the every-day and in the ritual activities.

In his analysis the author came to the conclusion that during birth, the ritual subjects find themselves in continuous movement from one condition to another, changing their status. The passages can be followed at social but also at spatial level. For the future mother the passage at social level flows between the oppositional categories of not

being pregnant>pregnant>the one who is giving birth>the one who has recently given birth>ritually clean woman. For the baby the passage is between these categories: non-existent>fetus>baby with no social status>baby with new status. The passage in spatial terms has the following structure: for the woman, pregnancy is a movement from the social space towards ritual space, in which the act of giving birth is being conducted, thus she goes to the room where she stays during the 'leunka' stage (immediately after giving birth), that implies a magical isolation; for the baby the passage could be presented through the oppositions: inside>outside, tight>wide, dark>light, this world>that world or in short, the passage from the underworld to the world of living.

The second part of the analysis is dedicated to the wedding: the author registered the general characteristic of the triadic structure, emphasizing that the change of status does not refer only to the main participants in the ritual – the groom and the bride, but that it implies to all members of their families, as well as the members of the village community.

The analysis established that the ritual structures related to the wedding show a certain level of overlapping, initiated by the dynamical character of the ritual acts. Thus, the ritual structure of marginally starts with ritual acts of separation, while the ritual structure aggregation implies ritual acts with marginal positioning. For the groom, the ritual acts of separation have a temporary character, while ritual acts of aggregation are marginalized and with a symbolic character. For the bride, on the other side, separation is lasting, one-way and irreversible, and it is thus compared to the ritual movement in the frames of the burial ritual complex – the elements of aggregation start even in the marginal ritual phase. The passages that take place in the ritual structure of the wedding are presented at the social, spatial and temporary level.

The third part is dedicated to research of death, through a triadic structure of rites de passage, where Nedelkov has established the general and the specific elements.

The ritual structure 'death', also presents transitory time. Through the actualization of the isolation rules of the ritual subject from his/her current profane environment the ritual structure of death commences. The establishment of the new social balance marks the final point of ritual structure of death. Ritual phases of separation, marginality and aggregation are similar as the ritual structure of birth. Separation is the shortest time dimension and has its own individual position, while the marginal phase and the aggregation are overlapping and are equal in duration. Thus, the level of separation and the holly time reach their maximum that implies presence of a holly reality in which the passage between the oppositions alive: dead is taking place. The aggregation of the dead in the world of the dead presents also the aggregation of the living in the world of the living.

As a professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Ljupco Nedelkov held courses on Ethnology of Asia, Anthropology of Religion, Cultural Management, Field Ethnology III, Ethnology of the Vlachs in Macedonia, Ethnology of Albanians in Macedonia, Ethnology of China, Ethnology of Tourism. At the post-graduate studies he taught Ethnology of Macedonia, Applied Anthropology and anthropology of tourism, Anthropology of Alternative Tourism, Anthropology of Civil Cultural Activism etc.

He was a member of Commissions for evaluation and defense of diploma works, MA and PhD thesis. During his relatively short career he participated at a number of local and international conferences.

During his work as an educator and researcher he left works and students that will remember him and will mention him as a colleague and friend, that has implemented a number of activities at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. We often mention his deeds and his name, as well as his family, where he left a new generation that will continue remembering him and his work.

Ljupco S. Risteski