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## Summary

## Садржај

<i>Lada Stevanović</i> , Human or Superhuman: the Concept of Hero in Ancient Greek Religion and/in Politics.....	7
<i>Лада Стевановић</i> , Човек или натчовек: концепт хероја у античкој грчкој религији и/или политици.....	21
<i>Aleksandra Pavićević</i> , Time With or Without Death. Researching Death in Serbian Ethnology during the Second Half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century.....	23
<i>Александра Павићевић</i> , Време без смрти. Проучавање смрти у српској етнологији током друге половине 20. века.....	34
<i>Ljiljana Gavrilović</i> , Museums and Geographies of (National) Power.....	37
<i>Љиљана Гавриловић</i> , Музеји и географије (националне) моћи.....	51
<i>Srđan Radović</i> , From Center to Periphery and Vice Versa: The Politics of Toponyms in the Transitional Capital.....	53
<i>Срђан Радовић</i> , Од центра до периферије, и обратно: политика топонима у транзицијској престоници.....	73
<i>Milina Ivanović-Barišić</i> , Holiday Text Message Well-wishing.....	75
<i>Милина Ивановић-Барушић</i> , Празничне SMS честитке.....	97
<i>Ivan Đorđević</i> , Historical Tradition in Serbian Genre Literature.....	99
<i>Иван Ђорђевић</i> , Историјска традиција у домаћој жанровској књижевности.....	114
<i>Marijana Mitrović</i> , Serbia – from Miki and Kupinovo to Europe: Public Performance and the Social Role of Celebrity.....	117
<i>Маријана Митровић</i> , Србија од Микија и Купиново(м) до Европе: јавни наступи и друштвена улога медијске звезде.....	131
<i>Sanja Zlatanović</i> , Power of Categorization: Natives and Incomers in South-eastern Kosovo.....	133
<i>Сања Златановић</i> , Моћ категоризације: староседеоци и досељеници југоисточног Косова.....	146
<i>Gordana Blagojević</i> , Recent Turkish Migrants in Serbia and the Role of the Serbian-Turkish Friendship Association.....	149
<i>Гордана Благојевић</i> , Новији турски мигранти у Србији и улога Друштва српско-турског пријатељства.....	156
<i>Jelena Čvorović</i> , Impact of Paternal Investment Among Women in Sandzak...	159
<i>Јелена Чворовић</i> , Утицај очинског улагања у кћерке: случај жена у Санцаку.....	170

<i>Milica Bakić-Hayden</i> , Two Methods of Contemplation: Yoga and Hesychast Prayer. An Exercise in Comparative Religion.....	171
<i>Милица Бакић-Хајден</i> , Два метода контемплације: јога и исихастичка молитва. Оглед из упоредне религије.....	182

### Прикази

<i>Иван Ђорђевић</i> , Мирослава Малешевић, <i>Женско</i> .....	185
<i>Сања Златановић</i> , Saša Nedeljković, <i>Čast, krv i suze: ogledi iz antropologije etniciteta i nacionalizma</i> .....	187

### Хроника

Предавања одржана у оквиру Трибине Етнографског института САНУ 2008. године.....	191
<i>Драгана Радојичић</i> , Архивска истраживања и њихов значај за етнологију.....	191
<i>Љупчо С. Ристески</i> , Теренски рад међу непостојећим људима. Етнографија друштвено маргинализованих група.....	192
<i>Љиљана Гавриловић</i> , О успоменама, херојима и путовањима. Клод Леви-Строс на терену.....	192
<i>Мирко Благојевић</i> , Колико има православних верника данас? О социолошким критеријумима религиозности.....	193
<i>Милина Ивановић-Баришић</i> , Реч на отварању изложбе <i>Зооморфни орнамент у традиционалној култури умадије</i> .....	194
<i>Милина Ивановић-Баришић</i> , Реч на отварању изложбе <i>Производи абацијског заната</i> .....	195

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## **Time With or Without Death\***

### **Researching Death in Serbian Ethnology during the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Topics of ethnological research, as well as scientific discourse in general, often represent the mirror of social reality. This paper researches the ways in which dealing with death and current ethnological approaches in Serbian ethnology during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reflect the *Zeitgeist*. The intensity and the quality of interests for this important anthropological theme varied during the researched period, wherefore it is possible to differentiate two types of works and authors: those who write about funeral rituals, and those who "read" them. From 1980s until nowadays there are three subgroups of contributions to this theme that reflect critical moments of the contemporary Serbian history. The issues raised in this paper are the following: The way in which state/society regards death, the way in which it structures death, the way in which it gives meaning to death, as well as the usage of death for political purpose and the constant effort of civilization to repress it into oblivion.

#### *Key words:*

death, ethnology, religion, politics, authors

The reasons for choosing this theme are numerous. Concerning the fact that I have been already researching death for some time, I wanted to get familiar with all relevant ethnological/anthropological studies that are dealing with death in different ways. The second reason has to do with my personal feeling that it is time some systematization of the results in the discipline was made, which would make

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easier the efforts for developing a strategy for ethno/anthropological researches in our country. The last but not the least impulse for such analytical intersection has been the following question: did and in which way anthropological themes during the last fifty years reflect social and cultural reality, i.e. was the anthropological discourse about death only an immediate reflection of the cultural climate, or did anthropologists succeed in analyzing it from scientific distance? I am aware that the last question is very complex and I do not have the illusion that I am able to offer some definite answers at this moment. However, I hope that this analysis will be at least modest contribution to the further syntheses and evaluations of achievements in the frame of Serbian ethnology/anthropology.

Concerning immense ethnological literature that was written during the relevant period, I have decided to limit and focus only on the most important publications: Bulletin of Ethnographic Institute (further GEI), Bulletin of Ethnographic Museum (further GEM), Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology (further EAP), Ethnological Volumes (further ES) and Ethnological Review (further EP), as well as on monographs and some texts of the authors from Serbia who are unavoidable when one researches death.<sup>1</sup>

It is very known and elaborated fact that the modern time brought the attitude towards death, which differs a lot from the one of the former epochs. From the phenomenon that in traditional society used to go “hand in hand” with its antipode – life, representing thus inseparable part of its all crucial and everyday manifestations, death in industrial era has become more and more suppressed towards the margins of reality, in the sphere of private, tacit, uncontrolled and unrecognized. Professionalization of the work related to death and the dead, propagating and popularization of cremation, building fences and hiding graveyards, as well as moving ill people and those who are dying far from the eyes of *world*, represent just details of the process, which, it is possible to say, has culminated during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Anticipated by Aldous Huxley’s visionary book *Brave new world*, persecution of death in this “cosmic era” turned into prohibition of its mentioning, even into prohibition of public mourning the dead.<sup>3</sup> Trends in Serbia, at least when it goes about dead, did not differ a lot from the global ones. However, it is important to notice that the cults related to death – if we compare this to the other customs from the life cycle – went through the least changes, at least formally. Reasons for this should be searched for in the complex phenomenon of death as eternal secret and inspiration of religious and magic way of thinking, as well as in the fact

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<sup>1</sup> Here I refer to following books: I. Čolović, *Književnost na groblju*, Beograd, 1983; Слободан Зечевић, *Култ мртвих код Срба*, Beograd 1982; Dušan Bandić, *Carstvo zemaljsko i carstvo nebesko*, Beograd, 1990; Бојан Јовановић, *Српска књига мртвих*, Beograd 1992; Ibid, *Тајна лапота*, Beograd 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Luj-Vensan Toma, *Antropologija smrti I*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1980, 25. I. Čolović, *Književnost*, 102-104; Смиља Марјановић-Душанић, *Смрт и светост*, in: Приватни живот у српским земљама средњег века, Beograd, 2004, 586; А. Павићевић, „Друштво Огањ за спаљивање мртваца у Београду“ *Развој, идеје и симболи*, ГЕИ САНУ LIV, Beograd 2006, 289-303.

<sup>3</sup> Oldos Haksli, *Vrli novi svet*, Beograd 1967; I. Čolović, see: Џефри Горер, *Порнографија смрти*, Градац 124/125, Beograd 28-31.



that atheistic ideology used to be primary anti-Christian and anti-Church, while the rituals of pagan character were not perceived as ideologically too dangerous. This was beneficial for survival of complete complex of traditional funeral rituals all up to nowadays. Probably this is the reason for relatively great number of papers about death, which are, (concerning already mentioned trends), contrary to expectations, published in ethnological publications from the researched period.<sup>4</sup> However, another question imposes and that is – what does it mean to write about death? Namely, the fact is that ethnology of this period was above all a “science about rituals”. Those rituals are always more or less related to the system of beliefs, ideas and behavior, that is called traditional religion. Therefore, the result is that it is difficult to find any paper or work that, at least indirectly, does not deal with death. Religious-magic view of the world that used to pervade everyday life in traditional society meant also constant contact with *beyond*, so the studies about e.g. rituals of baptizing or wedding, may also be considered as studies about death. I have solved this methodological problem thanks to L.V. Toma who understands the whole culture as a way in which society controls, structures, imagines, and finally forgets death. So, also those modern approaches in Serbian ethnology, by which the authors tried to escape the cliché of “research about rituals”, were inspired by death. However, although attractive and precious for further reflection, this concept about anthropology as anthropo-thanatology, does not seem to me appropriate and practical for answering questions that I raised in the beginning. That is why I have analyzed only those works that directly and explicitly deal with death, or at least touch on it. One analytical review requires triage of works according to defined criteria. The most common differentiation of authors/works makes distinction between those that write about funeral rituals, and those who “read” them. The first group of authors is the most numerous, while their approach, although it belongs to the mentioned *traditional* concept of ethnology, is not completely abandoned today. However, the majority of these works was written until the 1980s. Rituals related to death appear here as a kind of exotica that challenges rationalism of the modern time, while the authors of these works leave the impression of people who are not personally interested in the theme of death. The main characteristic of these contributions is descriptivism that is meritorious for creating valuable ethnographic thesaurus. In anthropological sense, these contributions are almost completely irrelevant. The other group of authors consists of those who try to *unzip* the symbolism of death, to interpret it and to find out its messages, sense and meaning in the world of the living. In my opinion, one may say, without exaggeration, that in this regarded period, only one author was completely devoted to such efforts, only one author was focused on dealing with basic anthropological questions initiated by the phenomenon of death. It is Ivan Čolović. However, between mentioned extremes, appear also nuances.

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<sup>4</sup> I considered about seventy different papers and books. Citing all in the form of reference would be too ample for this text, so I will mention all titles in the complete bibliography of ethnological works with the theme of death that I am preparing. Such bibliography of works published until 1970 was prepared by Ljubomir Andrejić in GEM 34, 1971, so new bibliography will refer to the period after 1970.

As “nuancing” begins practically during the 1980s, it is also possible to divide works about death on those that were written from the 1950s till the 1980s, and those that were published during the last two decades of the last millennium. In this period, from 1952, when the first number of GEI was published, until 1976, nine papers about death were published. In the following six publications/years, which means until 1983, this theme was completely omitted from the pages of the Bulletin. Concerning GEM, since 1957 until 1981, fourteen contributions were devoted to the *last journey* of human life. The only thing that one may notice as a difference between those publications probably has to do with the strategy of scientific-research work that existed in these institutions. Namely, the texts in GEM were usually part of monographic researches of certain regions, that referred to all segments of social life, including funeral rituals. Papers in GEI deal with certain phenomenon related to death, while funeral rituals of some regions are published independently, and not as a part of wider monographic totality.<sup>5</sup> Descriptions of graveyards, graves, monuments and different fine arts motives appear in seven works (four in GEI and three in GEM). Due to the lack of effort to regard these materialized *echoes of death* in a wider ethnological or anthropological context, they might be described as archeological or art history contributions.

Researches of death in both publications are based on more or less same structure, which means that they refer to description of behavior (and more rarely, believes) of the community on the occasion of death. Descriptions usually start with aremark about preparation for death that used to begin while the person was still alive. Then follow enumeration of omens of death, announcement of death it, preparation of the corpse, rules of behaving in the procession, funeral, funeral feast, commemoration and All Souls Day. None of these papers includes either ethn-explication, or an effort of the author to explain certain acts, nor to relate them to the wider context. Rituals are represented as a petrified form that existed like that from the time immemorial, and that will always be such. The lack of creativity of the authors from this period might be explained by certain parameters of their work. Very important factor here might be the age and origin of the authors: they were born in the society more similar to the one that they wrote about, than to the one they belonged as ethnologists. Maybe this was the reason why they were not able to make necessary analytical distance towards the object of their research. This is of course only assumption. The main reason for the problem mentioned should be searched for in the combination of socio-political climate and the corresponding attitude towards tradition, death and religion (these two themes were always automatically related), and in the mentioned concept of ethnology of the period. According to this, every social phenomenon was treated more or less the same – as a part of folk “tradition” that should be written down and thus saved from oblivion. And while transformation was “allowed” for some other segments of social reality, death

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<sup>5</sup> In the year of 1978 in the first volume of Ethnological Volumes, two papers dealing with death were published. In style they did not differ a lot from those mentioned above: Tomislav Živković, *Običaj darovanja o sahranama u okolini Semderevske Palanke i nekim drugim krajevima Donje Šumadije*, ES I, Beograd, 1978, 168-175; Slobodan Zečević, *Grejanje pokojnika*, ES I, Beograd, 1978, 109-113.

was presented as independent cultural complex that resists all civilization streams.<sup>6</sup> Formally, death (in the rural communities) is such even today. However it is clear that under the veil of petrified forms exist essentially changed attitudes towards the *last journey*. Indication of this change gave Ivan Čolović as early as 1974, in the text *Introduction to the reading of newspaper obituaries* (*Увод у анализу новинских читуља*).<sup>7</sup> The text was published in the journal *Kultura*, and in a certain way it was an announcement of the change of ethno-anthropological discourse about death.

From the papers that appeared in this period, it is necessary to single out one by Dušan Bandić, published in 1975 in GEI.<sup>8</sup> This work suggested a new methodological and structural approach treating religious phenomena, which would later single out his author as one of the most significant and most quoted researchers of traditional religion.

However, as it is already said, 1980s, or more exactly 1980 was a turning point in historical, cultural, social and probably every other sense. The death of Josip Broz Tito marked the beginning of long-term transition in the region of Yugoslavia of the time. More or less indirectly the beginning of this process might be recognized in the changes of the scientific discourse, although I think that changes were caused also by the appearance of more complex anthropological perception in the worldwide context, although all innovations came to us with certain delay.

It is interesting, especially in the context of anthropo-thanatological researches that the event of death was the one that opened the “the doors of perception”, as if the death of “the immortal one” permitted to think about death again, and thus enabled its re-encounter with *life*. Thus, the return to religion, as it is often called the reactualization of religious views of the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was not only the result of economic and social crisis and wars, but probably, above all, the need to find again the answer to the suppressed questions.

Five years after its publishing in Paris, in 1980, the huge study “Anthropology of Death” by Louis-Vincent Thomas was published in our country. A year later, in 1981, Yugoslav reading auditorium were able to get familiar with the work “Man and Death” by another French anthropologist – Edgar Morin.<sup>9</sup> These immense studies offered detailed, multidisciplinary researches of the phenomenon of death, its biological, psychological, sociological, historical and philosophical dimensions. Considering different ways of death and dying, as well as their metaphors, comparing modern and “primitive” societies and the perception of man as a “creature-for-death” and of human culture as a creation essentially determined by “remembering”

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<sup>6</sup> Милка Јовановић, *Рад Етнографског института САНУ на проучавању савремених промена у народној култури*, ГЕИ САНУ XXII, Београд 1974, 143-151.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Čolović, *Ibid*, *Uvod u analizu novinskih tužbalica*, *Kultura* 25, Београд 1974, 168-178.

<sup>8</sup> Душан Бандић, *Трагови табуа у самртном ритуалу Срба*, ГЕИ САНУ XXIII (1974), Београд 1975, 95-116.

<sup>9</sup> Luj-Vensan Тома, *Antropologija smrti* I-II, Prosveta, Београд, 1980; Edgar Moren, *Čovek i smrt*, Bigz, Београд 1981.

of this necessity<sup>10</sup> represent even today the inspiration and call for “reading” death as an eloquent fact about life. Here, however, should be mentioned, that basic Marxist and biological determination towards life that pervade both monographs, lead both authors to the final negation of reality of metaphysical dimension of death and in a certain way of death itself.<sup>11</sup> But, all this does not reduce the importance of these capital works.

Although the direct influence of thanatological views of the world was recognizable in the work of Ivan Čolović, the reviews of “Anthropology of Death” published in 1982 and 1983 in GEM and GEI, together with a frequent quoting of Thomas and Morin by ethnologists who were writing about death, signify the initiation of Serbian ethnology into the “new” world of symbols and signs.<sup>12</sup>

In the period between 1980 and 2006, forty five papers devoted to death were published in ethnological journals. This number was duplicated comparing to the former period, probably because of the increased number of journals and periodicals that started to be published (Ethnological Volumes, Ethnological Review, Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology), but certainly because of increased interest of the authors in this topic. Furthermore, six monographs partly or completely related to the research of death were published in that period.<sup>13</sup> First of all, I would like to mention the study by Dušan Bandić about taboo in Serbian traditional culture, which includes very interesting chapter about taboo and regulations related to death.<sup>14</sup> As it has already been said, Bandić was above all the researcher of traditional religion and his greatest merit was that he defined religious system marked with this term, pointing, among other things, to the layers of the believes of different origin. His theoretical and methodological approach was also original and important mostly because it emphasized the multidimensional aspect of the investigated phenomena, but also, I dear to say, it was determined, and therefore limited anthropological range of his conclusions in advance. Namely, Bandić's perception of traditional religion and the complex of beliefs and rituals related to death was diachronical, regarding them only as a phase of religious believes of our people.<sup>15</sup> Insisting on the difference between pagan and Christian elements in the frame of taboo-regulations related to death, as well as on the dominant functionalist interpretation of their role<sup>16</sup> (which can not be refuted, but this does not exhaust all contents and meanings of culture), prevented this prolific author from entering more profoundly into anthropological dimensions of the meaning of death, not so much on

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<sup>10</sup> Toma, I, 23; Moren, 15, 29.

<sup>11</sup> Moren, 369, 387; Toma II, 368-370.

<sup>12</sup> Љиљана Гавриловић, *Луис Венсан Тома, Антропологија смрти I-II, Београд, 1980*, review in GEM 46, Београд, 1982, 204-206; Инес Прица, *Луис Венсан Тома, Антропологија смрти I-II, Београд 1980*, review in GEI САНУ XXXII, Београд 1983, 128.

<sup>13</sup> These monographs were mentioned in the footnote no. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Dušan Bandić, *Tabu propisi vezani za smrt*, u: *Tabu u tradicionalnoj kulturi Srba*, 105-210.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 159, 162.

social level, but primarily on the level of individual. But, it might be that this was a conscious decision to avoid this question.

In my opinion, the main contribution of Dušan Bandić to the research of death in Serbian ethnology is the *concept of afterlife dying*, which he patented in the paper with the same title, published in *Ethnological Review* in 1983.<sup>17</sup> This concept is described as the process of separation and liberation of the dead from the connections with the living, but also – and this is more important – as the process by which social community regulates its attitude towards the particular deceased and towards the ancestors through the rituals in which fear from the dead and fear of death gradually become replaced by “peaceful coexistence “of the living and the dead, through the memory and respect of first towards the latter. This text is also published as a part of the study “Kingdom of Earth and Kingdom of Haven“ („Carstvo zemaljsko i carstvo nebesko“) in 1990. I will write more about this book further in the text.

“Serbian Cult of the Dead” („Kult mrtvih kod Srba“) is a book by Slobodan Zečević, published in 1982, and it certainly represents one of the unavoidable monographs devoted to the research about death in our region.<sup>18</sup> The importance of this book is that it brought to the *intellectual market* a book that represents a very detailed synthesis of Serbian traditional customs and beliefs about death. Pointing out the constants elements of the dead cult, which, in the author's opinion had not been essentially changed by the influence of Christianity, might represent an interesting starting point for contemporary research of the relations between religion and death.

It was in the same year, that the paper by Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić was published in the eighteenth volume of *Ethnological Review*. In this paper, on the example of funeral ritual, the author has pointed at the variable structure of the rite of passage and the methodological deductions that the usage of the suggested Terens Turner's “geometric-matrix-model” might offer.<sup>19</sup> And although, this model introduced *vertical dimension* of the structure of ritual reality, the conclusions of this text remained on the level of horizontal functionalist-structural interpretation of the phenomenon of death.

The importance of the contribution to the research of death that gave Ivan Čolović is evident from the mere fact that his name in this paper has already been mentioned several times. His book “Literature on the graveyard” („Књижевност на гробљу“) represents the most conclusive and, in anthropological sense, most important research of the phenomenon of death.<sup>20</sup> The analyzed epitaphs from the tombstones of six graveyards in Belgrade and three suburban graveyards, and their comparison with traditional lamentation, were not for Čolović only a discovery of an interesting genre of *wild literature*, nor did he use them as a means for pointing

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<sup>17</sup> Dušan Bandić, *Koncept posmrtnog umiranja u religiji Srba*, EP 19, Beograd 1983, 39-47.

<sup>18</sup> Слoбoдaн Зeчeвић, *Кyлт мртвих код Срба*, Београд 1982.

<sup>19</sup> Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić, *Pogrebni ritual u svetlu obreda prelaza*, EP 18, Beograd 1982, 41-51.

<sup>20</sup> Ivan Čolović, *Književnost*.

out the change/constant of human behavior towards death. This work primarily indicated the possibilities of “reading” numerous manifestations of this relationship and discovering the essential relation between life and death, crucial for understanding human society.

This book alongside with Čolović's previous books and the *Zeitgeist*, has initiated a series of topics in the field of ethnological/anthropological research of death. In the same year, when “Literature on the Graveyard” was published, another important paper appeared, written by Dunja Rihtman. It dealt with ethnological researches of the city in which she also mentions research of the newspaper obituaries<sup>21</sup>. Two years later, also in EP, Zorica Rajković wrote about legends related to tombstones of the victims of car accidents.<sup>22</sup> In the year of 1985 one whole part section of ES was dedicated to the topic of “Culture and Death”, and apart from papers that were dealing with traditional, although not so well known, costumes related to death, there were also those written in the “new” style. Here I refer to the results of the research of the socio-emphatic functions of tombstones in villages near Belgrade, conveyed by Ivan Kovačević and also to an interesting, but very short work about perception of death by polled Belgrade citizens, by Sofija Radonić.<sup>23</sup> To this group belongs also a paper by Edit Petrović, published in ES in 1987, about funeral rituals among atheists. The elaboration of this topic at the time when atheism was still predominant might have made easier the interpretation of the process of revitalization of religious believes that happened during 1990s.<sup>24</sup> However, this was never done.

As it is obvious, the focus during the mentioned period, from the beginning of 1980s until 1990s, was on the journals ES and EP. In the period from 1982 until 1988 fifteen papers were published. GEM in the same period, published five papers dealing with death, but their content did not differ from those that were published in the previous period. In the period from 1983-1990, GEI published also five texts – two in the ethnographic context – by Dušan Bandić and Nevena Čurčić. Bandić researched the symbolism of mirror, while Nevena Čurčić wrote survey paper about religious as well as different theoretical concepts of interpretation of death.<sup>25</sup>

The “circle” was symbolically closed by the same author who had initiated it, by Ivan Čolović with the text about transformation of newspaper obituaries, pub-

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<sup>21</sup> In 1988 the same author published monograph „Етнологија наше свакодневице“, and devoted complete chapter to the research of newspaper obituaries. See: Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, *Etnologija naše svakodnevice*, Zagreb 1988.

<sup>22</sup> Dunja Rihtman, *Etnološka i folkloristička istraživanja grada*, EP 19, Beograd, 1983, 17-24; Zorica Rajković, *Obilježavanje mesta smrti u predajama*, EP 20-21, Beograd 1985, 11-24.

<sup>23</sup> Ivan Kovačević, *Socijalno-emfatička funkcija monumentalnih grobnica*, ES VI, Beograd 1985, 81-87; Sofija Radonić, *Pristp smrti*, ES VI, Beograd 1985, 73-79.

<sup>24</sup> Edit Petrović, *Posmrtni običaji kod ateista*, ES VIII, Beograd 1987, 179-186.

<sup>25</sup> Душан Бандић, *Огледало – капија звезда*, ГЕИ САНУ XXXIII, Београд 1984, 9-20; Невена Ћурчић, *Религијски концепт смрти и неке могућности његовог тумачења*, ГЕИ САНУ XXXVI, Београд 1988, 139-153.

lished in ES in 1988.<sup>26</sup> One could not say that there were no interesting and innovative texts during 1990s, but the number of those significantly decreased, while ethnological research of death returned to the safe port of *anthropological inambition*. I would like to mention here one more text, published in 1989 – not because I consider it particularly relevant for research on death, but because it seems to me that its appearance was the announcement and the mirror of the new attitude of society towards this life necessity. It is a contribution by Živko Mikić in which he deals with anthropological details (it is about physical anthropology) of identification of body remains of Montenegrin king Nikola I, queen Milena and princesses Ksenija and Vera.<sup>27</sup> Identification was performed just before their remains were carried to Montenegro. From today's point of view, and from the point of view of that time, this text seems like an overture for "forensic era" in which digging out the dead has become a part of everyday life – the one of the film, media, politics or war.

However, new social trends and events were announced by, who else than, Ivan Čolović with his text about death of Ljuba Zemunac published in GEI and Dušan Bandić with his monograph "Kingdom of Earth and Kingdom of Heaven".<sup>28</sup> Alongside with the sound of the "war trumpets" these two authors lead us to the time of actualization of new/old myths and heroes, who were intensively used in political marketing, in the following period. Both studies reveal in a certain way the elements of new way in which the society does the "organizing" and "making sense" of death, "allowing" antiheroes and heroes to *die for us*, giving legitimacy to the collective cathartic lament. In relation to this question an interesting text by Đurđica Petrović, was published in GEM in 1995 in which she pointed out the influence of important social/state institutions on the formation and suggestion of desirable forms of mourning the dead, as well as the desirable attitude to the moment of meeting of the individual and the collective with the *beyond*.<sup>29</sup> Text by Lada Stevanović, published in this GEI confirms that these kinds of interventions are not exclusively characteristic of the modern society, existing, in different ways since the distant past.<sup>30</sup>

But, let us return to *Kingdom* by Bandić. Defining the symbolism of Kosovo oath as a certain "national thanatology", in the mentioned monograph Bandić opened the question of the relation nation/religion/death, which is today, after evident rehabilitation of death as phenomenon of political manipulation, more than rel-

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<sup>26</sup> Ivan Čolović, *Preobražaj novinske tužbalice*, ES IX, Beograd 1988, 59-64.

<sup>27</sup> Živko Mikić, *Nekoliko reči o identifikaciji crnogorskog kralja Nikole I Petrovića Njegoša, kraljice Milene i princeza Ksenije i Vjere*, EAP 5, Beograd 1989, 7-13.

<sup>28</sup> Иван Чоловић, *Смрт Љубе Земунца или парадокс о заштитнику*, ГЕИ САНУ XXXIX, Београд 1990, 61-71.

<sup>29</sup> Ђурђица Петровић, *Афектне активности у средњовековном погребном ритуалу на централном Балкану*, ГЕМ 58-59, Београд 1995, 111-124.

<sup>30</sup> Lada Stevanović, *Human or Superhuman: the concept of hero in ancient Greek Religion and/in Politics*, ГЕИ LVI, Београд 2008.

evant.<sup>31</sup> I think that this work of Bandić is particularly important because of his implicit negation of evolutionist views, and interpretation of religious language as system complementary to the language of science. Those two languages according to Bandić “supplement one another...Each represents a cultural answer to the needs that its *par* might not fulfill”.<sup>32</sup> This knowledge (and confession) should be one of the basic perceptions and starting points of further anthropological researches of death, and the society in general.

Discovering of specific language of *political thanatology* is characteristic also for the text by Ivan Kovačević, published in 1996 in which he marks the grave (it is about the grave of Josip Broz Tito in the House of Flowers) as a *political place* (*locus politicus*), trying to explain the increasing importance of the grave in Serbian politics.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, the author did not elaborate this interesting theme, so the importance of this contribution is more in setting up the questions than in giving conclusions.

In this analytical review, it is obligatory to mention work by Bojan Jovanović “Serbian Book of the Dead” (“Srpska knjiga mrtvih”) (1992) and “Secret of Lapot” (Tajna lapota) (1999), above all because of specific esthetic quality that these syntheses bring.<sup>34</sup> Namely, these two monographs were written in extremely beautiful literary-philosophical style that is appropriate for symbolic meaning of this, more or less, familiar reading. Particular importance of “Secret of Lapot” represents the effort of the author to request ion scientific dogma about killing old people, pointing out the symbolic dimension of this, unconfirmed legend.

In the year of 1997, the editorial board of the journal Gradac published the thematic number devoted to death. However, there are no ethnological contributions in this journal. In the year of 2004, the whole volume of Codes of Slovenian culture was devoted to this topic. The authors were linguists and ethnologists, but what surprises us most is the lack of creativity in choosing topics and methodological framework as well as the effort to regard the issue in the current context.<sup>35</sup>

In the beginning of the new millennium when ethnologist/anthropologists seriously and in great number became “obsessed” by constructivism and political anthropology, the interest in the private sphere is more and more a theme of historians who are revealing its inexhaustible sources of possibilities for interpretation of social reality in diachronic perspective. I do not claim that social history did not exist before, but such an interest has practically become a trend in the contemporary researches. This is testified also by the edition “History of private life” that first consisted of five volumes of translated French editions (2000-2004), appearing af-

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<sup>31</sup> Dušan Bandić, *Carstvo zemaljsko i carstvo nebesko*, in: *Carstvo zemaljsko i carstvo nebesko*, 31-42, 40.

<sup>32</sup> Dušan Bandić, *Komunikacijski koncept religije*, in: *Carstvo zemaljsko i carstvo nebesko*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Иван Ковачевић, *Гроб, политика, магија*, in: *Семиологија ритуала III, политика*, Београд 2001, 51-56.

<sup>34</sup> Бојан Јовановић, *Српска књига мртвих*; *Ibid*, *Тajна лaпoтa*.

<sup>35</sup> *Gradac*, sv 124/125, Београд, 1997; *Кoдoви словенских култура*, св 9, Београд, 2004.



terwards as History of Private Life in Serbia in four volumes (2004-2007). In these publications, mostly historians are dealing with death, and only two contributions were written by ethnologist.<sup>36</sup>

The intensity of the interest for death as well as the quality of the research of this phenomenon was oscillating during the focused period. The influence of the global and local social and state ideas and processes was mirrored also in the field of anthropological discourse. Critical situations for the society and certain researchers were reinforcing impulses for interest in death from time to time. However, this interest was constantly in inverse proportion with the increasing fear from the unknown. The closeness of war, as Morin concluded, brought some kind of weakening of the fear and one might explain the richness and diversity of ethnological production between 1980s and 1990s also by that.<sup>37</sup> The war situation and the disintegration of the country apparently suggested the strategy of “admitting” only “certain” and “big” heroic deaths, so individual frustrations caused by the restriction of potentially destructive and above all uncontrolled intimate and private mourning the dead (human/own, fate in general) were replaced by intensive mythologization of events of national history and participation in the collective pain on the “exclusive” funerals such as the one of Željko Ražnatović, Zoran Đinđić, Slobodana Miloševića, Nenada Bogdanovića. In the pauses between deaths of important people, catharsis was provided by mass city religious processions and transfers of remains of the dead from one place to another.

I believe that science, as a specific worldview appeared from the need to answer the basic question of human existence in time and *eternity*. Anthropology as a science about human should be, by definition, occupied by this issue to the largest extent. Or it should, at least be based on the basic knowledge that human culture is conditioned by unavoidable human fate, both in its confirmation and negation through different types of oblivion. Having this in mind, *memory of death* would be, at least, partially, *tamed*, and further research would be directed towards demystification and deconstruction of individual and social attitude to the end of *this world* existence.

But, in the end, we will face again unavoidable *wall of secrets, or dead end*. However, to think about it in advance might make us more calm and at least more prepared for meeting the eternity.

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<sup>36</sup> Александра Павићевић, *Огњено сахрањивање, Рана историја модерног спаљивања мртвих*, Приватни живот код Срба у деветнаестом веку, ed. Ана Столић и Ненад Махуљевић, Клио Београд, 2006, 984-999; Александра Павићевић, *Последња тајна, Приватни живот у Србији у 20. веку*, ур. Милан Ристовић, Клио, Београд 2007, 912-923.

<sup>37</sup> Moren, 45.

**Александра Павићевић**

## **ВРЕМЕ (БЕЗ) СМРТИ**

**Проучавање смрти у српској етнологији  
током друге половине 20. века**

*Кључне речи:*

смрт, етнологија, религија,  
политика, аутори

Текст доноси аналитички приказ етнолошких радова који су током друге половине 20. века били мање или више директно посвећени проучавању смрти. Фокусирао сам се на етнолошке часописе: ГЕИ, ГЕМ, ЕП, ЕС и ЕАП, као и на поједине текстове и монографске студије, које сматрам незаобилазним када је у питању наведена тема.

Позната је чињеница да је модерно доба, донело однос према смрти умногоме различит од онога који је карактерисао раније епохе. Од појаве која је у традиционалном друштвеном миљеу ишла „руку под руку“ са својим антиподом – животом, представљајући нераздвојни део свих његових, како преломних, тако и свакодневних манифестација, смрт је у индустријској ери све више потискивана ка маргинама стварности, у сферу приватног, прећутаног, неконтролисаног и непризнатог. Професионализација послова у вези са смрћу, пропагирање и омасовљење кремације, ограђивање и *сакривање* гробаља, а затим и болесника и самртника од очију *света*, само су детаљи процеса који је, може се рећи, кулминирао током друге половине 20. века. Трендови у Србији, по овом питању, нису много одступали од оних на глобалном нивоу. Ипак, мора се приметити да су овде култови везани за смрт, у односу на друге обичаје животног циклуса, барем формално, најмање подлегли променама. Разлози овоме леже свакако у комплексности самог феномена смрти као вечите тајне и надахнућа религијско-магијског начина размишљања, али и у чињеници да је атеистичка идеологија била примарно антихришћанска и антицрквена, док обреде паганског карактера није доживљавала као идеолошки превише опасне. Ово је погодновало опстанку читавог комплекса традиционалних посмртних ритуала све до данашњих дана. Вероватно се у томе налази и објашњење релативно великог броја радова о смрти, који су, (с обзиром на претходно поменуте трендове) супротно очекивањима, објављени у етнолошким часописима у проучаваном периоду.

Интезитет интересовања за смрт, као и квалитет проучавања овог феномена осцилирао је током фокусираног периода. Утицај глобалних и локалних друштвених и државних идеја и процеса огледао се и на пољу антрополошког дискурса, тако да је у раду издвојено три етапе писања о смрти у модерној српској етнологији/антропологији, које, на специфичан начин говоре и о времену у коме су настале.