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THE INFLUENCE OF ROMAN PAGAN RITES IN THE CONTEMPORARY FUNERARY RITES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract: *Even after 18 centuries of Christianity on the Balkans, the pagan rites go hand in hand with Christian Orthodox rites in the contemporary funerary rites of the Republic of Macedonia. Does this mean that the contemporary orthodox funerary rites make us Christians or pagans? It would seem it makes us neither.*

A careful historical analysis speaks that the modern burial rites (apart from the sermons) are just a result of the society's need for a healthy environment and dignified last farewell with the deceased one, honouring or disregarding his (mis)deeds during his lifetime. It also allows for human emotions and the complete and vain nature of humans. Simply put, burial rites evolved through the centuries because of new beliefs, ideas and superstitions.

Key words: Macedonia, Roman funerary rites, pagan rites, paganism in practice, Orthodox funerary

Contemporary burials in Macedonia are still performed by following a set of unwritten rules, folklore customs taught by one generation to the following one. Differences in funerary rites are not only dictated by geographic and historical circumstances, but also by the wishes of the individual and their families, as well as their means. In many cases, the whole wider family does not follow the same funerary rites. Therefore, this work sees funerary rites as a unit, not taking in regard the individual preferences and differences in the funerary practices in the Republic of Macedonia.

General popular belief today is that after death, the soul of the deceased one goes somewhere in the sky, from where it sees and protects its loved ones. If the soul has any (bodily) need, the living will learn it by the frequent discharge of objects from the hands of the earth, which is a sign that "the earth wants something." In this case, people visit the graves of their loved ones and for their souls they burn candles and bring them food or sweets, cigarettes and certain liquids, such as juice

or coffee. The wider acceptance of the belief is that if the deceased soul wants to send a message to the living, they will come to them in a dream, after which without speaking, and only "with a picture" through their clothes, movement or the environment they transmitted certain message or warning. If, however, the deceased one communicates with the living through a speech, it is regarded as the ultimate evil in the announcement, often interpreted as death for the living or for the close ones.

Nowadays, when the death of a beloved one is expected, the most intimate family is gathered around the sickbed, offering their emotional support and succor, easing the one suffering into a tranquil departure of his soul.

After the departure, the closest family and friends are in great pain and disbelief, crying and lamenting their permanent separation from a beloved one. In most situations the family kisses the face of the deceased one for one last time saying "goodbye". The body is denuded of the clothing they wore when they died, bathed and dressed in new formal clothing and shoes. The wooden coffin in which he or she would be buried is also purchased. The space in the home is then re-organised to allow for easy circulation of a greater number of people. The largest room in the house will serve for the vigil, where the body will be displayed in its coffin, with the back of the head turned to the west and the face to the east. The interior of the coffin would always be padded with a blanket, a traditional fleece duvet or any type of cloth. A large bowl full of flour would be placed near the head and one of the family members would light a large church candle in the centre. Following the lighting of the candles, the whole family garbs themselves in black clothes or in the darkest-coloured clothes they own if they do not own any black garments. The deceased is then gifted with their favourite smaller possessions, but as well as with a smaller sum of money, usually coins. The deceased is usually gifted with their jewellery, if they owned more than one piece; they are gifted with their favourite one. After the gifting, the door of the house is held open for everyone who wishes to take part of the vigil.

The home of the deceased one is open to everyone who wants to say their last farewell and pay their respect, usually by sharing a short story of a common memory. Everyone brings fresh flowers in an even number. The flowers are left near the coffin and everyone approaches for a last kiss on the face or hand, as well as to add their candle to the ones already burning. Crying is quite common and family members and friends start with a loud mourning, lamenting the deceased one and his/her bad fortune. If there are no family members to do the mourning, hired mourners come to the scene. Usually women, three in number and always garbed in black, their task is to lament and cry in very loud and dramatic fashion, while crying the deceased one's name out as to wake them up.

After the mourning, the body of the deceased one spends the night in a quiet and tranquil atmosphere at home, as the burial is held on the second day. After sundown, their face will be covered with the piece of cloth left in the coffin for this purpose. Only the closest family members and the most intimate friends participate in the vigil and they are being served refreshment from time to time by the other family members.

After sunrise, the funeral shroud is taken down and the face is washed with wine. In preparation for the ritual led by the priest, bowls of wine and water are prepared. After the service, the coffin is taken out by four male family members, taking care to be always taken out feet first, never head first. A member of the wider family would concrete the home with the holy water left from the service and sprinkle some of the same water on the floor and sweep it with a broom.

The coffin is then displayed open at the chapel of the church, usually an adjointly built for this purpose. This gave an opportunity for family and friends who did not attend the vigil to say their last farewell. Upon this visitation, the custom demands for black or dark clothing and fresh flowers. In the eastern parts of modern-day Macedonia, there is the custom to bring branches of evergreen trees with the flowers. The flowers/evergreens are left on the coffin and mourners kiss the face or the hands of the departed for the last time. The priest then continues with the second half of the sermon in the chapel. The family then organises the procession that will take the coffin to the location of the burial. The very same pallbearers who took the coffin from the home to the chapel now take the coffin to a cart, which would be decorated with some of the flowers; the rest of the mourners gather the left-over flowers and join the procession.

The procession always follows a traditional order. It is led by a cross-bearer, a person who carries a wooden cross, with the name of the deceased and the date of birth and death. He or she is followed by a person carrying a framed portrait of the deceased, followed by a person carrying a bowl of sweetened boiled grains and then, by a brass instrument band followed by a percussion instrument which sets the rhythm for the music. They are followed by the flower-bearers, the cart with the coffin and the closest members of the family. All the participants of the procession are mandatorily given a gift before the procession started, usually a piece of cloth: a towel or a kerchief.

The route taken by the procession is with intention to form a small circle around the cemeteries, avoiding the most direct and short path that can be taken from the chapel to the location of the grave. During the procession, the priest continues with the sermon, while the band plays solemn music at intervals or a loud dynamic melody. It was most the practices of the past and in more rural environs to employ hired mourners, who usually either went beforehand or behind the cart carrying

the coffin. These funerary rites are not strictly defined either by laws of the country or religion. Therefore, a funeral could vary from a small, closest-family and friend affair to a grandiose event following every possible custom and tradition. The difference between two stems from the financial situation of the family, but also from a personal preference to distance themselves from others, usually by eschewing traditions seen as belonging to more common people.

After the arrival to the location of the burial, the closest family members place the coffin near to an already excavated pit which would be the grave. The rest of the procession encircles them. The priest here finishes the sermon which is in accordance to Orthodox Christianity and covers the face of deceased one with the cloth and closes the coffin for the first and the last time. The coffin is then lowered into the ground and the funeral reaches the emotional crescendo, followed with the loudest lamentation and crying. Everyone present grabs three pinches of dirt and throws them onto the coffin, then washes their hands and eats a bit of food, a drink and a spoonful of the traditional sweetened boiled grain, in honour of the deceased. A small portion of the drink and the food is poured on the ground, as a gift for the departed soul. The rest of the soil is put in the grave and the wooden cross is put over the place of the head. At the very end, all the flowers are placed on the fresh grave. Although nowadays no one pays attention to the colour and type of flowers, tradition called for red, white or purple flowers, sometimes combined with yellow or blue flowers.

A lunch prepared in advance is then served to the mourners. In certain parts of modern-day Macedonia, especially in the northern parts, the lunch served is always a lent one, while in the rest of the country normal foodstuffs are served, unless the funeral happens to be on a lent day according to Orthodoxy.¹ In more urban surroundings, usually lunch is served either in the home of the deceased one or in a restaurant within walking distance of the cemeteries; in rural areas, lunch is always served around the grave. The lunch ends all rituals and after it, all present depart for their homes.

The family displays the portrait of the deceased one, on a prominent place in the home, usually the one carried during the procession. In some regions of the country, especially in the village of Botun in the Debarca region (south/western Macedonia), an old tradition to step on a ember is preserved after coming home from a burial, which was then throw behind the right shoulder.

The mourning period will continue in the home of the deceased one for the next forty days. The closest family will still wear mourning clothes, every mirror,

¹ Lent food usually does not include meat of any kind (apart for fish), eggs or dairy products. On Wednesdays and Fridays, usually only lent food is eaten by more strict adherents to Orthodoxy.

glass and reflective surface in the house will be covered; the solemn atmosphere will be upheld by avoiding laughter and music, sometimes even using electronic devices, such as television. The closest members will visit the grave every day for the first forty days, lighting candles and thuribles with frankincense; usually the candles which were left unburned from the bowl of flour put near the head during the vigil. The large candle must be light in such fashion that will last for forty days. In some regions, such as the vicinity of the city of Prilep, during the daily visits water is poured over the grave.

On the fortieth day of death, the closest ones to the deceased, organize a Panihida („mention“) for the deceased, on which the Orthodox priest performs religious service. The attendants on Panihida carry flowers and sweets and the family of the deceased serves them with diverse food and beverages for the soul of the deceased. A part of the food and drink the attendants poured or thrown it to the ground or over the grave. The deceased one gets his own dish with food and drink that is left over the grave.

In addition, for the soul of the deceased is given a "kurban" or a blood sacrifice. The sacrifice must be a lamb or in less common cases, roasted lamb and pig. The lamb, previously killed and roasted, is shared among those present to consume it over the grave. The deceased one gets his own piece that is left over the grave. The kurban is sacrificed only once from three possible dates, on the fortieth day, half a year or one year after the death of the deceased, depending on which first of these three days religiously is permitted a meat.

During the calendar year, the grave of the deceased one can be visited on every day, apart on the days which are the holiest of Christian holidays. During such visitations, family and friends bring fresh flowers, light a candle and bring little gifts of "earthly delights" such as favourite foodstuffs and drinks and cigars. The rule of thumb is that the grave is always visited during several important dates, such as the birthday and the anniversary of death and during the official religious holidays as All Saints days, the second day of Easter and during the two holidays which are known as "zadušnica" (=for the soul) in Macedonian Orthodox Christianity; the date varies and it is determined by the Church, but always mindful that it is a Saturday.

Apart from the Orthodox Christian celebration of the All Saints day, the folklore belief is that this is a day when the souls of the departed come out of their graves and visit their closest kin and friends, but sans any malicious intentions. Therefore, the closest persons of the departed one visit the graves during the day, light candles and bring fresh flowers and food. During the visitation, food is exchanged with the persons visiting the near most graves, mentioning the names of the departed and mentioning that the food is exchanged in their honour. This is a replacement for the traditional feast given in the memory of the deceased. In many regions of the

country, the tradition demands that on the first All Saints Day, day after death, the family brings a “bardak” decorated with branches of walnut or cherry trees.² The “bardak” is left near the grave for good.³ Some parts of the county still practice an interesting custom: the closest kin visits the grave on the midnight of All Saints day, encircle the grave with light candles and cover it with freshly cut branches of walnut tree.⁴ This ritual was meant to wake the soul and guide it out from the grave, as well as helping it to find its way back after the holidays has ended. Some food and drinks are consumed on the spot, but not shared with other people beyond the participants in the ritual.

The “zadušnica” holidays are the only true religious holidays when the souls of the dead are venerated. A sermon is given by the priest, food is exchanged and consumed near the grave and the grave is decorated with fresh flowers and light candles.

The same rituals are observed during the second day of Easter, when the dead are also gifted with red-coloured eggs. The symbolic of the egg is the beginning of new life, which corresponds perfectly with the belief of the immortal soul of the departed ones.

Each settled place has its own cemeteries. In the rural areas, these cemeteries are to be found on the outskirts of the villages. In the larger urban centres, cemeteries could be found incorporated within the city’s parameters; the reason is that these cemeteries started as one planned for the outskirts, but as the cities grew, they got absorbed with the city proper. A lot for individual burials would be both some time ago and planned as a location for several burials of the members of one family. Therefore, when the first burial is done, the lot usually receives permanent construction of low walls, pavement and tombstone, to which the names of additionally departed members of the family would be added.

² Bardak is ceramic jug, usually used for fetching water from a communal village fountain or well. One of the handles is hollow connected to the main body and has a small spigot, so one can drink water directly from the jug. This type of vessels could still be found in use in Macedonian villages.

³ The folklore belief is that the soul is thirsty after leaving the grave and the water in the jug will refresh them. The rule of thumb also holds that any item or object used during the burial or used as a gift to the deceased one are for their personal use only and they are not to be taken back home and used by the leaving, as they are “unclean” or that they “can bring bad fortune to the home.” Therefore, these items, whole or deliberately broken are always placed around the grave.

⁴ A clear circle is marked with candles, making the grave clearly visible for the soul to leave it, but more important to find it back. The walnut tree has its own folk tales, usually heralding a warning not to fall asleep under a walnut tree, as it would make one drunk and unable to wake up. The Orthodox Christian interpretation on the meaning of the walnut is that the branches are alike the flames usually found on icon rendering of the Pentecost-All Saints day. Fragments of walnuts, cores, shells and husks are common finds in the Roman burials of the second century in the Republic of Macedonia.

There is a long tradition of decorating the graves, usually with flowers. Nowadays, artificial flowers made of plastic are a common choice due to their durability in outdoor conditions. A dying tradition today is to plant flowers directly on the soil of the grave. There are no rules regarding the type of flowers and colours chosen. Nonetheless, flowers with white and red blossoms are quite common, though in some regions, such as the vicinity of the city of Prilep, only the iris plant is chosen to be planted on the grave. This flower has a distinct purple or indigo blue colour.⁵

Paganism in contemporary practice

With a detailed parallel between the beliefs of the Roman period more than 2,000 years ago, the official Orthodox religious practices and today's burial traditions reveals on the surface, a numerous crucial differences which stem from the drastically different religious beliefs are reflected in burial rites.

Let's start with the general belief. The people in Antiquity believed in the Underworld, the place where the souls of the departed ones spend their eternity in accordance to their good or bad deeds while alive. The gods lived in the heavens.⁶ The official teaching of Orthodox Christianity is that the soul finds its eternal rest in the Heavenly Kingdom, in the proximity of its Creator.⁷ The fate of the soul in the Heavenly Kingdom depends on the deeds done by its body while still alive and the level of repentance. One of the common beliefs that both the pagans and the Christians share is the wish of the common person in this cruel world that everyone will get what they deserve, if not in the world of the living, then in the afterlife. This belief encouraged people to be compassionate and helpful to each other, but foremost, to be humble in front of their god(s). Today, the understanding of the afterlife is heavily influenced by cinematography and literature, therefore, depicting souls destined either for the Underground or for the Heavens: the righteous souls are honoured in Heavens, whilst the wicked ones pay for their misdeeds with perpetual suffering and torture in Hell.

The main difference between pagan and Christian ideologies is the stances they have on the influence of the world of the dead over the world of the living and vice versa. The people of antiquity, as some modern people, believed that the living and the dead influence each other.⁸ The departed ones take care of their living descendants, while the living care for the wellbeing of the departed souls by gifting them. However, Christian teaching clearly holds that the living and the dead do not influ-

⁵ The plant in question is *Iris Germanica*. The Macedonian name for the flower is "perunika/перуника," named after the supreme Slavic deity, the god Perun, to whom this flower was dedicated.

⁶ W. Hansen, 2005, 180-182.

⁷ Bible, Psalm 64, 4.

⁸ M. Pasco-Pranger, 2006, 283.

ence each other in any way, as the living cannot satisfy any of the needs a departed soul could have. The needs of a departed soul are to be met only by God in His Heavenly Kingdom, as mortals cannot replace or surpass Him. Therefore, a departed soul returns to its Maker, in the ideal Kingdom in which souls have no other need but to be close to God.

Therefore, the “major clash” is the custom to bury the body in formal clothing, the gifts (objects) that are left in the grave and gifting the soul with coins to use in the afterlife. The official teaching of Orthodox Christianity, the souls in the Heavenly Kingdom have no earthly needs, as they return to it in the way they were born, without anything. Fancy clothing is only a way creates hierarchy among people; nonetheless, their souls were all equal in the Heavenly Kingdom. Today, same as in the Roman period, the deceased one was buried in their best piece of clothing. The rich of the Roman past were buried in their luxurious gowns decorated with gold thread, silk or furs; nowadays formal gowns and suits are used to give the deceased ones an air of luxury. The gifts left for the soul surely stem from the ancient belief that everything the soul was gifted will be used in the afterlife⁹, belief which is in sharp contrast with Orthodox teaching because no gift can replace the “divine care”.

Nonetheless, the most evident remnant of the pagan past is the gifting of the dead with metal coins to take into the afterlife.¹⁰ This is a continuation of the belief that the soul will endure hardship on their journey to the underworld. According to ancient belief the soul was to use these coins to pay for its passage that is to facilitate its arrival in the underworld. In this context, one could say that gifting the bodies of Christians with metal coins steers the soul towards the pagan Underworld, instead to its rightful place in the Christian Heavenly Kingdom.

Today, same as in Roman times, the mourning clothing is either black or as drab as possible.¹¹ Black or drab clothing is to be associated with the darkness of the Underworld, a place where light does not penetrate. Christians observe earthly death as an event of great ceremony and reason to rejoice for the final achievement of the goal for which the soul was born and created. Therefore, this process in Christianity indicate the bodily (temporal) to the spiritual (eternal) existence of the soul in the Heavenly Kingdom, and therefore they should wear white or bright clothes.¹²

⁹ M. Deufert, 2002, 127.

¹⁰ J.M.C. Toynbee, 1996, 53.

¹¹ G.G. Ramsay, 1869, 144.

¹² The white color in Orthodoxy is the color of innocence (purity), joy, holiness and Bliss. The white (bright) color is obligatory for all the priests in every “joyous” religious ceremony like Easter, but also in all of the frescoes that illustrate the same. For remembrance, by Orthodox custom all deceased lie on a white sheet who besides the purity of the soul, should symbolize the ceremonial act.

The practice of spraying the home with water, which does not get consecrated by the priest before the body is taken out, represents ritual cleansing of the home from the pollution of death that still lingers in the home and might harm the living. This custom has been practiced since Roman times and it is a pagan custom that is still ongoing in Roman times.¹³ Completely identical is the custom to step on an ember after returning from the funeral, both customs represent the Roman purification of the house with fire and water.¹⁴ Both elements are chosen for their practical implementation in removing impurities: the water to wash away and carry away filth and the fire as ultimate destroyer of disease and pestilence.

The forming of the procession which will take the deceased one to their last resting place was unchanged for thousands of years.¹⁵ In it, only the bearer of the cross who walks first and the member carrying the bowl with sweetened boiled grain, who follows the person carrying the portrait of the departed one, is adapted from Orthodox Christianity. Orthodox Christian teaching does not approve of many contemporary customs (elements), such as: carrying the image of the departed one, the band whose music interrupts the sermon of the priest, the loud mourning and lamentation of the women, the gifting of cloth and taking a longer route through the cemeteries, instead of the direct one. This is a remnant of the Roman way of saying goodbye, that is, the last farewell between the deceased one with his city and the world of the living.

The Roman rite of having each member of the procession to throw earth onto the body after it was laid in the grave is preserved to modern times, thus each member of the procession ritually buries the body.

Another pagan rite that was preserved is the custom of having a luncheon given to the ones attending the burial, akin a funeral feast. In the Roman period, this funeral feast had the purpose to mollify the gods and bring forth wellbeing for the soul in the underworld.¹⁶ As this custom is completely different from the official Christian teaching on the journey and the needs of the soul of the deceased, so it never took root in Christianity.

After the return in their homes, the beavered family would put the portrait of the deceased one in a visible place, same as the death mask would have been displayed in Roman times.¹⁷ Sorrow would reign in the home. Sadness is not completely acceptable to Orthodox Christianity, because of the Christian "joy" for finally merging the departed soul with its Maker.

¹³ I. Davisii, 1824, 322.

¹⁴ M. V. Flacci, 1826, 84.

¹⁵ J. M. C. Toynbee, 1996, 48-51.

¹⁶ Ibid, 50-51.

¹⁷ H. Rackham, 1961, 264-265.

The funerary rite as a whole, both in Roman and modern times, depends directly and solely on the financial wellbeing of the family of the deceased one. Conversely to the Christian teachings on modesty even in death, the access to means, both in Roman and modern times, made all the difference to the level of luxury displayed during a funeral. Therefore, every deceased one is buried in a way the family could afford, beginning with the coffin, clothing, gifted items, the procession, foodstuffs served etc. Another display of wealth is the construction of the tomb and its permanent decorations, such as building a fence around a group of family graves, monumental gravestones and paving the grave with luxurious materials. All these displays of social hierarchy are typical for the people of the Roman, pagan past, while Christianity on the other hand, unifies both rich and poor in practicing humility and modesty, sans the need for luxury and display, as everyone is the same in the eyes of God.

Both the Roman pagans and Christians honoured the ninth day after the burial. In the pagan days, this day was for a religious ceremony of gifting the deceased one with a libation, usually poured wine which symbolized the new life, new blood, that is, the resurrection of the deceased one.¹⁸ In Orthodox Christianity, a religious ceremony honours the final departure of the soul and its entrance in the afterworld. The rite includes pouring of wine on the grave, as well as pouring some wine over a bowl of sweetened boiled grains. This ritual is undoubtedly even older than the Roman period and remains to this day thanks to the Orthodox Church which accepted it in its ritual rituals.

The fortieth day of the death is also honoured in Orthodox Christianity, as the day when the soul finishes its journey to the afterlife. A funeral feast/lunch is also given on this day, with a portion dedicated to the deceased one. This is also one of three days on which the deceased one could be honoured with a blood/live sacrifice, traditionally called "kurban." Namely, during the Roman times people believed that only the sacrifice of a pig truly "transformed" the grave pit into a grave (an eternal home to the deceased one), while wether (a castrated ram) was sacrificed to the household deity Lar in order to satisfy him and keep the family from future calamities.¹⁹ Undoubtedly, today this "sacrifice" is the largest Christian sin that directly teases into the most basic principles of Christianity, but also in the acts of Christ as the last "blood sacrifice" of humanity for our human sins.

The gifting of flowers is the only element of a burial rite that suffered no changes from Roman to modern times. The rule of thumb is that one always brings fresh flowers to a burial or to any visit of the grave site.²⁰ Flowers always accompanied

¹⁸ A.V. Symonds, 1906, 244.

¹⁹ J. M. C. Toynbee, 1996, 51.

²⁰ Ibid, 62.

the deceased one on his last journey from his home to his last resting place and probably were the only beautiful and colourful element in a solemn ceremony; hence as the only spot of brightness it became a mandatory element. This custom also has Roman roots. In celebrating the Roman festivals of Rosaria and Violaria, people in antiquity celebrated the arrival of spring, the resurrection of nature and symbolically, the resurrection of the departed soul. These festivals, named after the periods when the roses and the violets were in bloom, became a symbol for the period when the graves of the loved ones were visited, bringing fresh blossoms of these two flowers of strong and warm colours. Their celebration was such a common thing that the Orthodox Christian days of “zadušnica” are always commemorated in the same spring period and they have not specific date, same as the ancient holidays. The belief that the flowers will divine the wellbeing of the departed soul was so strong that even today, when the original meaning is lost; flowers are still planted on graves (which also has aesthetic value). This is the reason why flowers are placed inside the grave pit, not only on top of the grave. The sole choice of planting only irises in some regions, whose Slavic name takes after a supreme medieval pagan deity, only confirms the deeply religious meaning of the flower, as the goal of the soul is to become one with its (supreme) God.

A Christianization of a region did not mean complete conversion to the faith of every member of the communities. This was especially true in regions where low literacy, language barriers and the modest means of the local church made it even more difficult to give and follow sermons and read the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, many of the new converts practiced the same religious rites as always, but now dedicated to a new god. Other factors, such as wars and invasions, did not allow for a wholesome spread of new teachings. Therefore, in due time the official Church was forced to assimilate a great portion of older traditions and to find a way to explain them in Christian light. Thus, the whole pagan rite of burial from the moment of death to the burying of the deceased one in his last resting place, as well as later veneration was accepted. Nonetheless, much of the adopted rites were completely contradictory to Christian teaching and invent different interpretations of the original meaning.

One can argue that even after 18 centuries of Christianity on the Balkans, the pagan rites go hand in hand with Christian Orthodox rites. Does this mean that the modern funerary rites make us Christians or pagans? It would seem it makes us neither.

A careful historical analysis speaks that the modern burial rites (apart from the sermons) are just a result of the society's need for a healthy environment and dignified last farewell with the deceased one, honouring or disregarding his (mis)deeds during his lifetime. It also allows for human emotions and the complete and vain

nature of humans. Simply put, burial rites evolved through the centuries because of new beliefs, ideas and superstitions.

Also, it is in human nature to refuse that death is indeed the end. Therefore, each religion offers some version of "life after death." One can say that this belief in the afterlife is the only common denominator of all religion, irrelevant to the name, shape and way the worship their god(s/goddesses).

Јане КЛЕКОВСКИ

ВЛИЈАНИЕТО НА РИМСКИТЕ ПАГАНСКИ ОБИЧАИ ВО СОВРЕМЕНИТЕ ФУНЕРАРНИ ОБИЧАИ ВО РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА

Резиме

Посмртните, односно погребните обичаи на еден народ, претставуваат дел од неговата културна традиција, иако на нив првично се гледа како на традиционални верски ритуали. Но, што ако тие отстапуваат или се спротивни на официјалното православно учење. Тогаш кое е нивното потекло и значење и зошто и до ден-денешен сè уште ги практикуваме? Дали тие нас нè прават традиционалисти, пагани или нешто друго?

Овој труд, на едно место ги наведува и анализира сите погребни ритуали уште од времето на Римската Империја на овие простори, официјалното учење на Православната црква и денешните традиционалните погребни обичаи кои се практикуваат во државата. На исто место детално се обработени сите општи верувања за постумниот живот низ вековите наназад, праткуваните погребни обичаи, фунерарните процесии и постфунерарните обичаи. Од времето на Римската Империја, овој труд ги анализира само погребните обичаи за инхумираните покојници како единствен начин на погребување официјално прифатен од Православната црква и воедно единствен денешен начин на погребување во Р. Македонија.

За крај, во последниот дел се компарираат сите заеднички верувања низ вековите, од паганското историско минато до денешната православна (христијанска) сегашност, барајќи одговор за потеклото и причините на денешните погребни обичаи, практика и празници, но и дали истите се во согласност со официјалното православно учење. Дали „паганската“ практика е сè уште жива рамо до рамо со православните обичаи, дали денешните погребни традиции нè прават „пагани“ или христијани и зошто и кои паганските обичаи сè уште се практикуваат? Истовремено текстот посебно анализира и се задржува на одредени погребни елементи, како на пример цвеќето, враќајќи им го забораеното изворното значење, но и како ретката убавина во сивилото на ваквите тажни животни настани.

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