Lithuanian funeral rites: from tradition to modernity

Abstract:

This paper presents a detail analysis of Lithuanian funeral rites (end of 19th – 21st century) in the context of rites de passage. The work is based on field investigation materials gathered by the author in all ethnic regions of Lithuania. By analyzing this narrative folklore and ethnographic material, the author attempts to find answers to some questions: What are the differences between the traditional and post-modern society funeral rites? What are the new forms of funeral rituals in the 21st century? What are the new commemoration forms in post-modern Lithuanian society? In Lithuanian traditional funeral rites a special collective role was ascribed to village community. This institution helped a dying person to prepare himself for his death, performed lavation, sang lamentations, and played an important role of mediator between the sphere of this world and the world of the dead. Nowadays Lithuanian funeral rites become more individual and anonymous. Today's death culture operates on different levels, includes details from various times, beliefs and cultures. For the past two decades the funeral rites had undergone transition for different reasons: globalization and industrialization process, changes in religious practices, increased secular observances, immigration and migration process, and a shift from modern to post-modern funeral rites.

Keywords: *Lithuanian funeral rites, tradition, modernity.*