Fire, Life, Death and the Power of the Ironsmith Expressed in two Groups of Narratives: ATU 330a, ATU 753

Abstract:

In the workshop of an ironsmith, the forge is the consecrated space for burning the row metal that, hereby, got new hypostases of existence. Here stays one of the sources of the power assigned to the iron worker, both by the others (as beneficiaries of his work) and by himself, as a creator who handle a non-domestic fire. The paper concerns the conflict between God and the ironsmith regarding the authority upon life and death, authority expressed by the gesture of throwing a human being into the forge fire. The episode, which combines the gestures of burning, shaping, giving rise to death and/or to resurrection, appears in a group of narratives – folktales, hagiographic legends, apocrypha, etc. – attested in the European (including Romanian) and Asian preindustrial repertory.

Keywords: *ironsmith, oral narratives, death, metamorphosis.*