Dying, Death and Funeral Ceremonies of Austrian Aristocracy in the 19th Century Habsburg Monarchy (an Example of the Schwarzenberg Family)

Abstract:

Having followed suggestion of some historians specializing in the field of death (P. Ariès, M. Vovelle, J. McManners, P. Jalland, D. Cressy etc.), incentives of cultural (A. van Gennep, V. Turner) symbolic (C. Geertz) anthropology and methodological impulses of historical anthropology, this study deals with the topic of dying and death in the milieu of high aristocracy of the Habsburg Monarchy during the whole of the 19th century. Using an example of the Schwarzenberg family, which represented one of the most prominent members of Austrian aristocracy, the author describes and interprets a transitional ritual of death within the noble family. Having studied Schwarzenberg's written estates concerning the death of lords, princesses, young princes and children, the paper focuses on the course of last illnesses in context of the history of medicine, perceiving the dead body and its display, mourning conduct and ceremony, and building new imposing burial places. In this entry, the author attempts to reconstruct the form of dying and death in aristocratic milieu and its changes or constancy, the relative relationship between public and private dimension of death, but also how the way of dying and burying could influence the process of preserving the family tradition and constituting the collective memory, despite some more general tendencies of secularization and modernization of dying in the 19th century.

Keywords: *history of death, Habsburg Monarchy, funeral, aristocracy.*