Death and Modernization

Abstract:

Modernization is a useful concept in history of death. Yet it must be used wisely, respecting individual people's thoughts and aspirations. Death rituals are central to people's understanding of social order, so it is not plausible they would have changed without general consensus on the matter. Why did people want to becom e m odernized and abandon old custom s? Urbanization, secularization and m edicalization did not only grasp people from their roots but gave new opportunities and ideas on good life –and good death. New social classes – the bourgeoisie and the working classes – sought answers to new questions on respectability and decency. The change from traditional to m odern and finally neo-modern death – to use Tony Walter's periodizations – was gradual and included numerous individual choices. Individualism is typical of neo-m odern death, but it is always present in rituals in times of social change.

Keywords: *death, society, m edicalization, m odernization.*