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The body of the deceased as a site of sacred-profane negotiation in Kashubian death rituals

Abstract. Kashubian rituals around the deceased acquire a magical character, where the sacred is ubiquitous and intertwines seamlessly with the profane. Kashubian culture represents primal magic, many activities around the deceased are symbolic; talking to the body while washing it, singing, observing the deceased, equipping them with various objects, is aimed at successfully transferring them to the world of the sacred. This displacement has always been associated with the tension and horror that characterize the ritual. The purpose of this article is to show the rites of passage and traditional symbolic activities aimed at a smooth transition of the body status of the deceased, from the profane to the sacred, and their ephemeral and ambivalent character. Moreover, the cases of ineffective or interrupted rituals will be pointed out. The above issue will be discussed in the context of symbolic actions over the body, which are to lead to the sphere of the sacred, an effective transition from the separation phase, through suspension, to the aggregation phase.

Keywords: Kashubs, death rites, profane, sacred, deceased.

The world's mortuary customs have many variations, however the motives for engaging in them could be similar. Some of the actions taken over a dead body may be understood as rites, others as gestures. They are stylized and convey certain social meaning and very often aim to protect survivors from the dead (Grime, 2000, p. 219). Death is always the end of an individual life, however it is also the heart of the society's formation through rites of passage and beliefs (Walter, 2008, pp. 317, 326). The basis for the sociology of death is provided by Emile Durkheim's research, as many of the aboriginal rites discussed by him are funeral rites. According to his

studies in *The Elementary Forms of the Religions Life* (1995), death and religion consequently gather people together, influencing significantly their collective identity. In Durkheim's theory of the collective emergence of the sacred, rituals are primarily ways of periodic self-assertion of a social group. The sacred is a hypostasis of the communal strength of a social group, and ritual is a symbolic expression of values that bind members of a group together (1995, p. 371).

Religion and culture remain in a permanent dynamic interaction. We cannot talk about Christianity in isolation from place and time. Folk religiosity or folk Catholicism of Kashubians manifests itself as a symbiosis of everyday life with the Catholic religion (Perszon, 2015, p. 10–20). Religion in contact with culture, in the Kashubian context as elsewhere, creates its own unique cultural system (Geertz, 1993), combining "traditional" with "spiritual". Religious people distinguish two worlds into higher values and lower values describing it as a phenomena of duality; the sacred and the profane. However, the notion of the term sacral is much wider than *religious* itself. The sacred or the process of sacralization allows mourners to find a stable point in the midst of chaos, caused by death (Eliade, 1959).

Holiness represents group interests, such as unity. Defining the phenomenon of the sacred exceeds cognitive abilities. "The first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of the profane" (Eliade, 1959, p. 10). People, under the influence of religious practices, may pass any object or character from the profane sphere to the sacred. Human beings instinctively protect what is holy from manifestations of the profane. Nevertheless, the status of the sacred is acquired through certain actions and experiences, as it is not an inborn trait. Therefore, the sacred might be experienced as an elusive and unrecognizable mystery, causing the mix of intuitive attraction and fear. Thus, profane-sacred negotiation is very dynamic and fluid.

The manifestation of the sacred can be any object, including the body of the deceased. "Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of *manifestatum* of the sacred, we have proposed the term *hierophany*"(Eliade, 1959, p.11). It might be understood as the process of transforming objects (or dead bodies) and situations into holiness, by the means of symbols, artefacts, rites and joint gestures:

> By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. A sacred stone remains a stone; (...) nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality (...) for those who have a religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. (Eliade, 1959, p. 12)

Recognition of the deceased's body as an integral part of the natural world, something that passes, just like everything that lives, is part of the folk form of religious sanctification of matter. The system of sacralisation in any society consists inter alia of special practical action, rites, and ceremonies The sacred, is the opposite of something demonic and impure – the secular. However, the dynamic of sacred-profane is dialectic. Sacral does not exist without secular. Profane literally means "before the doors" (Zhukovsky & Pivovarov, 2014, p. 1216–17). In a spatial conceptualization,

the sacred is a temple itself, its interior, and profane is outside of the sacred space, exterior to the temple.

The body of the deceased can be also treated as a site of sacred-profane negotiation. In Kashubian death rites, the body undergoes various symbolic treatments to imbue it with a fundamentally sacral quality. When the *rites de passage* are carried out successfully, the dead body becomes sacred; if the mourners fail, the body can turn into a demonic tool. However, the effectiveness of the transition is fleeting and defies clear structural rules. It is a specific model of sacralization of everyday life/objects manifested when someone dies. People's piety is characterized by subordinating a series of events to the profane sphere, offering a more transcendent dimension.

The aim of the paper is to reflect on sacred-profane negotiation, its elusive and dynamic character, on the example of Kashubian death rites and folk beliefs. The process of transforming an object into holiness is presented as an elusive attempt to negotiate meanings. The main object of negotiation is the body, however the actors (mourners), characterised by their symbolic gestures, certain actions and used artefacts in reference to the deceased, also experience a transition.

Rites de passage

The classic theories of Arnold van Gennep (1960) or Victor Turner (1966, 1977) illuminate death rites and show them in the context of tribal society. Van Gennep defined *rites de passage* as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (Turner, 1966, p. 94). The change that occurs in the perception of the body of the deceased is very dynamic, but nevertheless follows a certain protocol and patterns of the rite of passage. The status of the body changes from the moment of agony, through the very moment of death, waiting for the funeral and finally burial:

> All rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from both. During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation) the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-a-vis others of a clearly defined and 'structural' type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions. (Turner, 1966, p. 94–95)

Turner, based on the theories of van Gennep, shows the ritual as a dialectical process. In the process of maintaining social order, he pays special attention to the middle, liminal phase. It is characterized as a suspension between two worlds, a temporary nature that favours the emergence of an unstructured community. In this phase, a „social drama" takes place. These are the special activities, saturated

with symbolism and similar to theatre or folklore, and therefore the mourners are called actors in regard to their participation in the unfolding social drama. Yet beyond the innate performative nature, the mourners act on the body of the dead in its transition to the sacred – thus they are called actors as a description of the character of their participation. The mourners-as-actors assume the responsibility of strict observation of these rituals, navigating the *moribund* (a person approaching death) through the negotiation of the profane and the sacred.

"Sacred death" as separation

The dynamic negotiation between profane and sacred begins when death of a person is anticipated. In the past, *moribund* undergone a publicly performed transformation or literally psychomachia, a sort of battle between god and evil where the soul is considered the prize of the victor. Dying on his deathbed, he fights this spiritual battle between good and evil. His body, still alive, is a hostage to the soul in combat. Negotiation begins already in this phase – both the *moribund* and the actors are experiencing the process of sacralization, almost touching the Absolute. This was the case of the traditional Kashubian image of *ars bene moriendi* (the art of dying). In the past, *moribunds* were dying at home, surrounded by their closest relatives. For both the *moribund* and community, already anticipating death, contemplating one's end, seeing the moment of death as a victory and as a way to fulfil human's fate or a failure, defeat over the mortal body is experienced to be a moment full of anxiety. The mourners are there at the deathbed to glorify the transition and prevent the *moribund's* dispiritedness. When death approaches, the actors are there to send the spirit on its way to the sacral, with gestures like lighting candles and opening the windows.

In *Western Attitudes towards Death*, Philip Ariés emphasises the role of *ars moriendi*. The dying person, in the past, had been the primary actor, presiding over their own deathbed scene saturated with ritualized social drama. Ariés claims that mostly in rural areas, the deathbed scene was a moment of dynamic community engagement with the impending death. The deathbed scene was a public moment to witness the *moribund* straddling livingness and death. For the mourners, this was a chance for spiritual growth as deathbed utterance, before XX century was given a special credence (Ariés, 1989). Assisting the dying person might be also classified as "sacred duty" (Firth, 1996, p. 103). Ariés' understanding of *ars moriendi* can be expanded to include a practical sacred quality:

> The first type of good death has much in common with both Ariés' medieval 'tame death' and Bloch and Parry's (1982) descriptions of good death. This is the ancient representation of death as a source of regeneration, in which a good death results in the rebirth of the dead person. I have called this the sacred good death. This kind of good death is commonly associated with the deathbed scene. It is a familiar image: family and clergy in attendance at the bedside, while the dying person says his or her farewells with a display of resignation and dignity. (Bradbury, 1996, pp. 87, 88)

In this context, the "sacred good death" was a public event, in which the central position and a leading role was given to *moribund*, surrounded by participants contributing to the sacral quality of both the moment and the *moribund*. The presence of mourners raised the importance of the event of someone's death. The dying could assume the role of a teacher in the *ars bene moriendi*. The role of the mourner, then, has that of the learner woven into it as an essential quality.

Sacralization requires worshipers, symbols, and ritual repetitions. The dying person, surrounded by the audience, could publicly separate himself from the living. Nowadays, the moment of separation from society may take place long before any immediacy of death, such as someone who is removed from their home and resides in a hospital for an extended period of time. A dying person is subjected to social separation (*rites de separation*); the definition of that dying phase is dynamic, and the classifications of approaching death broaden to call for an earlier removal of the dying from the everyday world of the living. Avoidance of the dying or dead body is grounded within the western theory of civilising process, and the medicalisation of death emphasises the implementation of these processes. Death and the treatment of the corpse were relegated to the professional sphere, operated by medics, clerics and funeral staff. This transition of death from the public, community sphere to the professional interferes with the transmission of knowledge and beliefs of death in private and public discourse, and obstructs the process of sacralization (Walter, 2008, p. 324). In the Kashubian context, separation does not mean physical removal from the community; it is a distinction between living and transitioning made by the dying and the community in shared physical space.

In contrast, in many rural communities as in Kashubian communities, the moribund historically died at home, surrounded by family and relatives. This was essential for fulfilling the Kashubian a*rtes bene moriend* – good death. Lorenz (1934) describes the thanatical behaviour of the Kashubian people in great detail. The approaching death drew people from the countryside, particularly women, to the *moribund's* deathbed. The dying person held a blessed candle in his hand while the visitors prayed. The sacralization process, unobstructed by the separation of the dying from the community, is defined by the worshipers' presence and their carrying out of the required symbols, gestures, and ritual repetitions.There was a clear distinction in the performances of the dying and of the witnesses; "sacred duty" belonged to the community, whereas "sacred death" belonged to the *moribund*. The theatre of sacralisation gains momentum in the phase after separation – the marginal.

Margin/liminality and Kashubian *Pustô Noc*

Exclusion from the community occurred in Kashubian context only at the time of death. The marginal phase, suspension, is the span between death and the funeral, when, according to folk beliefs, the soul stays with the body and observes the performance of death rituals by the living (Perszon, 1999). The subject of the rite – the deceased – will forever remain in the marginal state, according to van Gennep, if the

rites de passage are not thoroughly and accurately performed (1977, pp. 218–219). In this phase, between and betwixt, the dead generates tension and is considered dangerous (Burszta, 1998, p. 106). The profane-sacred negotiation is full of tension and attention. The protocol of the ritual is strictly observed, all so that the body of the deceased does not pose a threat, but successively undergoes a process of sanctification so eventually the spirit is sent to the supernatural world.

According to Grime (2000, p. 220) preparing the corpse for life after death, through practices like dressing the dead or providing them with equipment, is a form of denying death's finality. In Kashubian practice, this was an essential component of the liminal phase, transitioning the dead to a more-true and sacred state of death. Turner refers to this stage as liminal (2005, p. 40). The body of the deceased is surrounded with sacred objects, displayed in the center of the room, blessed with holy water, observed by the mourners. Objects together with certain actions taken, aim to sacralise the body itself. The sacred, in this context, might also be defined as a mediator connecting the opposites of natural and supernatural, people and gods, heaven and earth, visible and invisible (Zhukovsky & Pivovarov, 2014, p. 1217).

The performance of ritual by the community at this point has both a role in the deceased's and the community's negotiation of the sacred and the profane. After death, windows were opened, mirrors were covered, and the clock was stopped. The deceased's eyelids were closed and the body was sprinkled with holy water (Perszon, 2015, p. 159–161). The sponge used during washing, the water, as well as the behaviour and speech of the person preparing the body were imbued with meaning. The sponge, as a selected object, is sacralised to some extent. In the past, it would have been used by the local whispers to treat shingles. The person washing the body, recognizes the potential danger of the dead and speaks to the body to relieve their own fear, asking the dead to give an arm, a leg, to undergo hygienic procedures. Every action had to be done respectfully and calmly, since the spirit of the deceased was believed observing the behaviour of the mourners-as-actors.

The Kashubian *Pustô Noc*, a vigil filled with prayer and singing, which takes place on the eve of the funeral ceremony in the presence of the dead body, exemplifies this transitional phase. When the body is purified and well-dressed, it is placed in the coffin. Lorenz (1934) mentions what artefacts were used to "equip" the deceased. Kashubians in German Pomerania gave the deceased a songbook, a coin, and a favourite personal object of the deceased, such as a snuffbox, pet hair and domestic fowl feathers (p. 71). The coffin was displayed in the centre of the room, candles lit on either side of the coffin. Families were making altars in their homes in honour of their deceased loved ones. The altars were decorated with flowers, candles, holy symbols such as pictures with saints or a cross. The mourners would leave a special space for the soul of the deceased, between the head of the casket and the altar. The space between was small enough for no one to pass through. The soul standing there should be able to observe the arriving mourners in peace. Liminal time in Kashubian rite de passage is celebrated during *Pustô Noc*. It was a time to pray for the deceased while singing and saying the rosary together. During all-night vigil:

> The coffin stands open in the middle of the room, and those gathered sit around it all night, singing pious songs and saying prayers during the breaks. The deceased's family treat the company to bread and coffee, or beer and vodka if they are wealthier. During the *Pustô Noc*, the company not only sings songs and prays. The most superstitious among the peers watch the deceased out of the corner of their eye to check if the face has changed, particularly if it has become ruddy in colour. (Łęgowski, 1892, pp. 52–53)

All the gestures made during *Pustô Noc*, for instance putting the corpse on display, making good-bye gestures such as kissing the dead, touching or even allowing the sign of decay to be witnessed, is a form of dramatizing death's finality. The sacred is revealed through pious behaviour of the mourners. Sanctification, as a symbol of sacralisation, turns ordinary procedures into transcendental meanings (Zhukovsky & Pivovarov, 2014, p. 1218). Liminality is a „moment in and out of time" (Turner, 1966, p. 96) with covered mirrors and frozen clock. The soul is suspended between the worlds, between the phase of separation and the phase of aggregation. Turner calls it "a symbolic milieu that represents both a grave and a womb" (1966, p. 96). The behaviour of the mourning community was regulated by this state. The central position of the coffin displayed in the room reinforces the attempt of sacralisation. The dead man's soul required silence, turned off radios and twilight. The liminal phase is a powerful, but also dangerous and magical period. It is often linked to invisibility, to darkness or to the wilderness (Turner, 1966, p. 97), in other words, a time of probation whether the previously performed gestures and rituals were effective.

Transition or sacralisation appears not only in the context of the dead body, but also is noticeable in a structure of the community, which, influenced by the liminal stage, becomes an anti-structure, experiencing the *communitas* values. Turner claims that this magical and sacred feature of a social group:

> Emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders. I prefer the Latin term 'communitas' to 'community' to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an 'area of common living'. This 'sacred' component is acquired by the incumbents of positions during the rites de passage, through which they changed positions. (1966, pp. 96–97)

Turner's communitas was supposed to protect the mourners from the syndrome of "complicated grief". The marginal phase has a lot of emotional charge, suspended between the dynamic but ambiguous act of transition between the profane and the sacred, community and communitas, respect and fear. In Kashubian mourning tradition the spirit comes back to the body and stays there until the funeral, when the priest throws on the coffin a handful of soil. The liminal phase is completed with this gesture, the spirit is released to the world of the dead.

Reaggregation

The living members of the community owe the deceased a worthy burial to facilitate his transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead. The rituals related to death are - on the one hand - honouring the deceased, enabling him to wander into the afterlife in a dignified way; on the other hand, they are an important event for the living to prevent them from being „infected by death" (Perszon, 2015, pp. 159–161):

> Kashubians (...) say goodbye to the removal of the corpse from the house by the domestic animals and bees with the Holy Cross, so that they do not run away (...) the bench on which the coffin was standing falls over to spend the ghost. The whole village usually accompanies the deceased, singers follow the coffin, singing mourning songs. (Lorenz, 1934, p. 72)

Reversing the customary order (*contraria facere*) was a symbolic acknowledgment that death had introduced disorder and chaos to this house and to the whole community, thus regulatory functions of rituals had to be applied (Kurowska-Susdorf, 2019, p. 118). The funeral procession is formed and the mourners proceed to the cemetery. The closure, (*rites de aggregation*) occurs when the body is buried. The soul may finally leave the body as the coffin is covered with a handful of earth.

The rite of passage, ending with the aggregation phase included the feast for the living, but offered by the deceased. Folk beliefs forbade showing excessive regret, as this would prevent the deceased from gaining peace. Since ancient times, the funeral feast was not only to honour the deceased, but also calm the living, thus it was an important moment of socialization, and a form of compensation for the participation in the funeral (Di Nola, 2000, pp. 171–172). According to Van Gennep, co-catering (funeral banquet) and gifts have the same purpose – solidarity. The feast would protect the deceased from being excluded from the collective and individual memory. „To accept a gift from someone means to be associated with him" (Gennep, 1977, p. 40). Thus, taking part in a consolation feast is socially expected, as it is seen as a last opportunity to strengthen the bond between the mourners and the deceased. The central arrangement of the coffin during *Pustô Noc* finds its counterpart in the central arrangement of the table during the consolation feast. If *Pustô Noc* was held at the deceased's house, the table was often placed in the same place where the coffin had stood earlier during the vigil (Bonowska, 1999, p. 73). The consumption of food and drink as a part of a ritual, is related to psychosocial benefits such as social bonding. Eating and drinking after the funeral was to reawaken the will of the mourners to live. Moreover, centralization strengthens the sacralisation process. The community of the living must regain strength to continue to act and to survive.

Rites of passage and various body treatments emphasise the notion that there is a continuing bond between the deceased and the mourners. Certain gestures done between the moment of death and the funeral aim to encourage the soul to leave the body. Releasing the spirit, so that nothing keeps it on the earth, is the final act which determines the successful aggregation. Actions, such as waking up the animals, pouring the water (previously used for corpse washing) outside the farm, preventing

too intense weeping, turning over the stools on which the coffin was displayed are to emphasise that mourners are urged to accept life without the deceased. For life, in Kashubian culture, is perceived as primordial sanctity. The last stage of aggregation, where the sacred is already confirmed, changes the status of the deceased from "the dead person" into "of blessed memory/sainted" (*świętej pamięci*). However, as stated before, the sacred needs to be confirmed regularly by different symbols, gestures and rites. Commemorating beloved ones may be led by erecting monuments, displaying photographs, setting up gravestones, lighting candles, visiting cemeteries or attending commemoration rites or praying to ancestors (Grime, 2000, p. 220).

Kashubian funeral rites were to provide the deceased with a place among the dead, but also a worthy place in the memory of the living. The community of mourners, after the funeral, reveals the mirrors and sets the clock back in motion. The ritual is done. "The passenger" has arrived at "the temple". Negotiation of the profane-sacred has been completed?

Disturbances in sacred-profane negotiations

Kashubian folk beliefs indicate the existence of vampires, called *ópi* or *wieszczi*. *Ópi* is a vampire, who was born with two teeth, whereas wieszczi is a vampire born with a membrane on the head. They may become harmful for others after their death (Sychta, 1969, p. 143). If the body exhibits certain qualities of livingness or if it turns red, the community is charged with taking extra precautions to protect both it and themselves. During *Pustô Noc*, it was necessary to observe the deceased carefully, as, according to Kashubian beliefs, a body that is limp or slow to cool are potential signs that the dead would rise from the grave. In order to protect the community from the harmful effects of the *ópi* or *wieszczi*, it was necessary to „secure" or „equip" the corpse. Sychta (1969) described certain preventative actions, such as turning over the corpse in the coffin during the procession to the cemetery so that it would not find its way home, or putting a cross made of aspen or candle wax under the deceased's armpits. To prevent the deceased from rising from their coffin, the mourners would sprinkle poppy seeds in the coffin, place a prayer from the prayer book without the word "amen" to force the soul of the dead to repeat it endlessly or, if necessary, tie the corpse in a tangled fishing net. There are also folktales about drinking a drop of the dead's blood to protect oneself from the ópi curse. Sychta warned that the neglect of specific procedures required to sanctify the body of the deceased could consequently cause the deaths of others. In such a case, drastic measures had to be taken. At midnight, it was necessary to go to the cemetery, decapitate the corpse in one blow, and place the head between its legs so that the *ópi* would not find it (1969, p. 331). In 1913, there was a trial that brought to light the case of Kashubian beliefs in the destructive power of a body not adequately treated during the funeral rituals. The process of sacralising the body was not properly completed, which, according to folk beliefs, resulted in subsequent deaths in the community:

> The Case of Dettlaff's Mother, 1913
> Puck, Pomerania Province
> Gdańsk. Dreadful Superstition before the Court
>
> Some time ago, we reported on a terrible superstition carried out illicitly on Midsummer Night in Puck cemetery. The case was brought before the criminal court in Gdańsk on Tuesday. In the dock were the workers Jan Dettlaff and Jan Formela from Połchowo, and Antoni and Bernard Mudlaff from Puck. This is what occurred: In October 1910, Jan Dettlaff's mother died and was buried at the cemetery in Puck. Subsequently, four of Dettlaff's brothers and two sisters died, apparently of consumption. The wife of one of his brothers also died, one married sister had consumption, and another sister also fell ill. Dettlaff's father was told that his wife's death was causing the demise of others, so to prevent any further victims, he should dig up her grave between 12 and 1 o'clock on Midsummer Night, cut her head off with a spade, and place it between her feet. Despite believing in this foolish nonsense, his father had no desire to do it himself, so he persuaded the two Mudlaffs from Puck to do it, promising to pay them 100 marks, which they never received. On the night of 23 June, Jan Dettlaff, his brother-in-law Formela, and the two Mudlaffs set off for the cemetery and dug up the grave. Bernard Mudlaff chopped off the corpse's head with a spade, placed it between her feet, and then the grave was filled in sloppily. Assuming that the accused had acted out of ignorance and a lack of education, the court gave them rather mild punishments: Bernard Mudlaff was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment, and the other defendants to one month each. (Górnoślązak, 1913, p. 6)

The paradoxical convergence of the body not decomposing after death applies to both vampires and saints. The same features that we find in the sacred can also be realized in the profane sphere. Both the „unsanctified" body with demonic properties, and the „holy" one, could have the same characteristics. An example that contrasts the case of Dettlaff's mother may be the XVII century case of Anna Omiecińska, a nun in the Bridgettines' Order. After dying at age 21, her body did not show any signs of decomposition. Appropriate treatments were performed on the corpse; her coffin was tarred and some holy water of Saint Ignatius was poured inside, but with no effect. The Cult of Anna flourished thanks to the Jesuit priest Paweł Giżycki, to whom she appeared in a dream and asked to remove the water from her coffin (Kozak, 2021, pp. 143–150). An interesting example would also be Saint Teresa of Avila, who died in 1582. Her body was exhumed many times, and each time found incorrupt, firm and sweet smelling. In these cases, the absence of decomposition was perceived as a sacred quality rather than a dangerous or demonic one (catholicismpure.wordpress.com). While the integration of popular Catholic belief into Kashubian death customs requires its own paper, the difference in perception of characteristics of the dead exhibits the array of understandings inscribed in the treatment of the dead and the disruption of traditional beliefs.

The issue of the elusive disruption of rituals in the non-obvious transition of the profane to the sacred is reflected in the perception of the body as demonic or holy. Why did certain gestures, artefacts, or prayers, inconsistently produce the intended effect? Why did one body gain the status of a saint and another not? How

could features, such as the absence of the appearance of decomposition, hold dual meanings – a marker of vampirism in some cases and of sacredness in others?

Summary

While funeral rituals in Kashubia are an act of respect toward the dead, they function primarily to free the community from the stigma of death and from the danger of returning the dead to the realm of the living (Bonowska, 1998, p. 72). However, negotiation of the profane-sacred is fleeting and dynamic at the same time. This dichotomy is imbued with uncertainty and fluidity. It is not subject to an obvious, tangible structure; contrary, the sacred and the profane elude clear categories of description. In Kashubian funeral rituals, the body of the deceased is treated as a subject, it is at the center of the activities of the mourners' community, subjected to sacralization in many ways. Primary regulatory functions of rituals such as regulation of emotions and social connection also correspond with Durkheim's theory that the sacred represents the prior interest of the group– unity. The gestures and rituals over a deceased aimed at his successful transition to the world of the sacred as well as strengthening social bonds, introducing a social group into a state of communitas. However, rite de passage means not only linear movement from the state of the profane towards the sacred, but also back again, to the profane. Therefore, the process of negotiation is full of tension and expectation. Magic, religion, and rituals provide a collective attempt to bridge the gap between the profane and the sacred. An effective passage from the separation phase, through suspension to the aggregation phase. is dependent on the subjective process of multilayered negotiation. As the provided cases show, the applied traditional and religious treatments do not guarantee the successful, linear transformation of the deceased from the profane to the sacred.

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