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# SMRT IN SODBA ŽIVIH V PAPUANOVOGVINEJSKI SKUPNOSTI\*

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**Ključne besede:** umiranje, sodba mrtvih, smrt kot kazen, Ambonwari (Sepik, Papua Nova Gvineja)

## Uvod

Že dolgo je tega, kar so ljudje odkrili moč posmrtnih obredov in spoznali, da smrt ni le problem, pač pa je hkrati priložnost tako za poglobljanje družbenih, kulturnih in političnih sporazumov kot tudi za spodbijanje obstoječega reda s strani tistih, ki imajo drugačne poglede in interese (Taylor 1989: 149). Kot analitiki se ne bi smeli osredotočiti zgolj na neka navidezno stalna pravila ali navade in proučevati, kako jih ljudje kršijo ali spreminjajo; naša naloga naj bi bila predvsem pokazati, kako *normalni* dogodki – prepiri, pretepi, kraje, prešuštvo, smrt, in tako naprej – oblikujejo, preoblikujejo in celo izumljajo pravila, ki jih morajo potem ljudje stalno preučevati in premlevati v ustvarjanju in poustvarjanju svojega življenjskega sveta.

Ta članek govori o smrti in sodbi – tako o sodbi mrtvih kot o sodbi živih. Človekov pogled na svet je odvisen od kulture, iz katere izhaja, zgodovinskega obdobja, posameznega kraja in tiste konkretne skupnosti, s katero se kot analitiki ukvarjamo. V starem Egiptu (in kasneje v krščanstvu, v katerega so prodrle tako židovske kot egipčanske eshatologije) so na primer, sodili posameznikovo *moralo* (v egipčanskem podzemlju so posameznikovo srce dajali na tehtnico in ga primerjali s peresom) ali *dejanja* (Budge 1967[1895]). V Egiptu je moral pokojnik nagovoriti 42 božanstev in v posebnem monologu – kot je na primer tisti iz *Anijevega papiroso* – ovreči vsa svoja pregrešna dejanja. Po drugi strani pa je člo-

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\* Terensko delo v vasi Ambonwari sem opravljal v letih 1990 - 1992 in 1997, skupaj dvajset mesecev. Del tega članka sem predstavil na mednarodnem simpoziju "Etnološki in antropološki vidiki proučevanja smrti", ki je potekal med 5. in 8. novembrom 1998 v Ljubljani; celoten članek sem 23. novembra istega leta odpredaval na etnološkem inštitutu heidelberške univerze. Zahvaljujem se Bobu Tonkinsonu za njegove pripombe in predloge, ki so prispevali k izboljšanju prvotne različice tega članka. Članek je bil najprej napisan v angleščini. Pri slovenski verziji se nisem trudil za dobeseden prevod, pač pa sem svojo angleško različico, ne da bi kaj dodal ali odzvel, preprosto poslovenil.

vekova **prava vera tista**, ki so jo sodili in jo še vedno sodijo v islamu in zoroastrianizmu (Brandon 1967: 145, 148, 155). Še več, obstajata dve vrsti posmrtnih sodbe, ena takoj po smrti in druga v trenutku pričakovanega konca sveta, ki sta značilni za mnoge svetovne religije, kot so zoroastrizem, islam in krščanstvo.

V vasi Ambonwari, ki se nahaja v provinci Vzhodni Sepik v Papui Novi Gvineji, ljudje sobivajo z duhovi. Ker Ambonwarijci ne prisegajo na nobeno vrhovno božanstvo – če za trenutek pozabimo na stalen proces pokristjanjenja – jim le-to ne more soditi. Zato mrtev objokujejo kar sami in jih le redko sodijo. Prav tako pa, kot trdi Mimica za Iqwayce, “tam ni smrti kot take, tam je le nešteto pogosto naključnih načinov umiranja, postajanja mrtev in biti po smrti” (1996:216). Ljudje se lahko zavedajo svojega lastnega umiranja in lahko žive svoja življenja v pričakovanju svoje lastne smrti. “Toda v nasprotju z navadami v zahodnih urbanih kulturah, v življenjskem svetu Iqwaycev smrti niti ne izkusijo niti si je ne zamišljajo kot radikalno tuj dogodek . . . Smrt ni bitje, ki preži na ljudi in jih iztrga iz življenja. Pač pa so ljudje tisti, ki sami sebe *živijo v svoji smrti skozi svoja lastna dejanja ali skozi dejanja nekoga drugega*” (ibid.:215, 216; moj poudarek). Umiranje med Iqwayci kakor tudi med Ambonwarijci je način bivanja; umiranje je družbena dejavnost ali medosebna izkušnja. Tako kot življenje, katerega neločljiv del sta tudi umiranje in smrt. Smrt je za posameznika in za njegovo bližnje okolje kazen in treba je najti tiste, ki so za smrt odgovorni. Po ustrezni kompenzaciji in obnovitvi odnosov se ponovno vzpostavi navidezna – pa čeprav iluzorna – harmonija. Kasneje bom v članku predstavil nekatere zadeve, ki se nanašajo na ambonwarijsko razumevanje njihovega umirajočega načina bivanja in sodbe tistih, ki jih spoznajo – po pravici ali po krivici –, da so krivi za bolezen in smrt njihovih bližnjih sorodnikov. Da pa bi lahko ambonwarijsko kozmologijo vsaj malo primerjali z večjimi svetovnimi religijami, bom najprej preletel tista kulturna okolja, pri katerih se predstava o posmrtni sodbi že dolgo pojavlja. Splošno je uveljavljeno mnenje, da najbolj zgodnje pričanje o ideji o posmrtni sodbi prihaja iz Egipta. Ta zamisel – ki združuje etiko z eshatologijo – “predstavlja končno overovitev tradicionalne etike Zahodne družbe” (Brandon 1967: ix).

## Sodni prizor v starem Egiptu

Že davno je, kar so Egipčani sonce poimenovali Ra – kot vidno predstavo boga, kateremu so darovali in žrtvovali. Ko se je v trenutkih stvaritve sveta Ra pojavil, se je čas začel. Šele mnogo kasneje se je pri Egipčanih “pojavi moralna zamisel o soncu, ki je odsevala zmago pravice nad krivico in resnice nad lažjo” (ibid.:cxi). Če to povemo z drugimi besedami, lahko ugotovimo, da vse kaže na to, da podobe srečnega posmrtnega življenja izvirajo iz piramidnih tekstov in da je “doktrina kaznovanja zlobnih in nemoralnih, vključno s sodbo, ki nastopi po smrti, produkt razvoja, ki je značilen za kasnejše obdobje” (Budge 1967:evi). O sodbi in o tistih, ki jim ni uspelo zagotoviti življenja blaženosti z bogovi, piramidni teksti ne povedo nič.

Tebansko različico Knjige mrtvih (oziroma *pert em hru*, kar so prevedli v “prikazano v luči” ali “prihajanje iz dneva”) so napisali na papirusu v hieroglifih okoli leta 1500 pred našim štetjem. Starejše oblike Knjige mrtvih pa so Egipčani uporabljali že

od leta 4500 p.n.š. Tekst je razglasil vstajenje duhovnega telesa od mrtvih in nesmrtnost duše. “Vsako poglavje in molitev iz te različice naj bi človek izgovoril v drugem svetu, kjer so pravilno izrečene besede omogočile pokojniku, da je premagal vse nasprotnike in dosegel življenje dovršene duše, ki je bivala v duhovnem telesu na domu blaženih” (ibid.:xxx). V stopetindvajsetem poglavju Knjige mrtvih pokojnemu povedo tiste besede, ki naj bi jih izrekel ob prihodu v Maatijevo dvorano oziroma v sodno dvorano – dvorano dvojne pravice in resnice, kjer pokojnika očistijo – tam naj bi se srečal z bogom in tam naj bi stehali njegovo srce ter ga v prisotnosti dvainštiridesetih velikih božanstev ločili od njegovih pregreh (ibid.:xi, xxx, xli, cxix).<sup>1</sup> V starem Nebsenijevem papirusu se teža srca primerja kar s pokojnikom, medtem ko je v Anijevem papirusu na eni strani srce, na drugi pa pero, simbol Resnice in Zakona, simbol boginje Maat (ibid.:261).<sup>2</sup> Prisotni bogovi naj bi bili “vodiči in zaščitniki ter darovalci življenja in sreče pokojnim v novem življenju” (ibid.:cxxviii). Hkrati pa je očitno, da so Egipčani že od nekdanj verjeli v obstoj drugih sil, ki so nasprotovala mrtvemu, in ki jih na mnogih mestih v knjigi imenujejo njegovi “sovražniki”.

Pokojnike so poistovetili z Ozirisom, to je s soncem, ki je zašlo na zahodu in se je potem ponovno vzpelo na vzhodu. Na enak način so polagali mrtve v njihove grobove na zahodnem bregu Nila. Potem ko so šli skozi sodno dvorano, so pot nadaljevali proti vzhodu in tam pričeli s svojim novim bivanjem (ibid.:247 f.n. 2). Vlogo boga mrtvih Ozirisa so določili mnogo prej kot pa so napisali piramidne tekste, ki jih poznamo danes. V kasnejšem obdobju pa je prišlo do spremembe: Egipčani so Ozirisu pričeli pripisovati tiste značilnosti in kvalitete, ki so jih v zgodnjih dinastijah pripisovali Raju ali Ra-Tmuju (ibid.:cxiii). Oziris je postal simbol večnega bivanja in nesmrtnosti. Postal je bog mrtvih in bog živih. Na tega “gospoda večnosti” so se pokojni obrnili in ga prosili, naj njihova telesa reši pred razpadom (ibid.). Tovrstna “doktrina nesmrtnosti . . . se ni spremenila najmanj štiri tisoč let” (ibid.:cxiv).

## Kršćanstvo

Če pogledamo v Staro zavezo, vidimo, da sama smrt izvira iz sodbe in kaznovanja. V rajskem vrtu človek še ne pozna ne smrti ne nesmrtnosti; izbira lahko med sadeži z drevesa življenja in tistimi z drevesa znanja. Ker ga kača zavede, si izbere drevo znanja – drevo smrti (Choron 1963: 82). V Stari zavezi ni rešitve pred smrtjo – vsakdo umre. Drugega in drugačnega življenja ni. Ljudje lahko najdejo kvazi-nesmrtnost zgolj skozi svoje otroke. Šele v Novi zavezi prično verniki govoriti o zmagi nad smrtjo, ki naj bi jo dosegli v času poslednjega sodnega dne, ko naj bi se odprli grobovi in ko naj bi vsakdo stopil pred Božjega sina, da bi ga ta sodil. Ne smemo spregledati pomembnega dejstva,

<sup>1</sup> Boginja Maat je bila Rajeva hčerka. Maat je pomenilo odkrit, resničen, “zaresen”, pristen, pošten, pokončen, pravi, neomajen (Budge 1967:cxix). V resnici naj bi obstajali dve boginji Maat, ena naj bi bila posebljanje fizičnega zakona, druga moralne pravičnosti.

<sup>2</sup> Egipčani niso imeli srca le za bistven telesni organ, pač pa tudi za središče zavesti, za “boga”, ki naj bi bil v vsaki osebi. Ljudje so se bali dveh stvari: da jim je lahko srce odvzeto ter da lahko deluje kot neodvisna priča proti njim na sodnih procesih po smrti (Brandon 1967:37, 38-39).

da gre pri tem za vstajenje telesa, in ne za nesmrtnost duše; duša je namreč poganski koncept, in ne krščanski (ibid.:84).

Zdi se, da v zgodnjih letih krščanstva niti sodba niti prekletstvo posameznika nista obstajala, prav tako pa ni bilo individualne odgovornosti. Vsi mrtvi, ki so pripadali Cerkvi, naj bi spali vse do trenutka Kristusove velike vrnitve ob koncu sveta, ko naj bi se – v nasprotju s tistimi, ki niso bili člani Cerkve – prebudili v raj.

V enajstem in dvanajstem stoletju so drobna prilagajanja počasi spreminjala človekov pogled na svet, vključno z njihovimi izkušnjami in navadami. Človekova razmišljanja in navade so se počasi odmikale od kolektivne predstave o človekovi usodi, od sprejemanja smrti z ravno pravšnjo količino dostojanstva in brez kakršnekoli misli o njenem povečevanju ali možnosti, da ji človek pobegne, ter od tiste socializacije, ki ni ločevala človeka od narave. Nov poudarek na individualnosti vsake osebe je pomenil, da je – čeprav je bila smrt kolektiven obred, ker ji pač nihče ne more pobegniti –, sodba postala svojstvena vsakemu posamezniku. Vsakogar naj bi sodili, posamezne duše naj bi dali na tehtnico, dobra in slaba dela ločili med sabo ter na koncu ločili še pravične od prekletih. “Varnost kolektivnega obreda” se je soočila z “bojaznijo pred osebnim zasliševanjem” (Aries 1974:37). Poslednjo sodbo ob koncu sveta je zamenjal zaključni test ob koncu vsakega posameznega življenja. V trenutku smrti naj bi se – to mišljenje se je v štirinajstem in petnajstem stoletju le počasi prikradlo v zavest – celotno življenje kot preblisk pojavilo pred očmi umirajočega (ibid.:38). Individualizacija smrti je s seboj prinesla še druge posledice: zanimanje za fizično razpadanje, posebljanje grobov in – tako kot v starem Rimu nekaj stoletij prej – ponoven pojav pogrebnih napisov. “Od zgodnjega srednjega veka je zahodni človek pričel gledati sam nase skozi svojo lastno smrt: odkril je *la mort de soi*, svojo lastno smrt” in kasneje, v začetku osemnajstega stoletja, “*la mort de toi*, smrt druge osebe” (Aries 1974:52, 56).

## Budizem

V hindujski in budistični konceptualizaciji človekove eksistence sodbe nimajo za zadnje dejanje po smrti, temveč jo vidijo kot nenehen proces skozi nešteta življenja, nekatera že minula in druga še v prihajanju (Brandon 1967: x, 165). Življenje je bilo za Budo čisto trpljenje; zaradi reinkarnacije so bili rojstvo, bolezen, smrt in ponovno rojstvo – v bistvu prav vse – samo trpljenje. Zato je Buda pogledal vase, da bi našel pot, na kateri bi spoznal način, ki bi mu omogočil, da preseže oboje: tako življenje kot tudi smrt. Našel je pot, in ko je premagal svoja hrepenenja, poželenja in lakomnosti, svoja sovraštva, pohotnosti in ljubosumja, je postal razsvetljen. Medtem ko Kristus obljublja rojstvo, ki mu smrt ne bo več sledila, pa Buda obljublja tisto smrt, po kateri ne bo več ponovnega rojstva niti ponovne smrti (Landberg 1966:198). Tako v hinduizmu kot v budizmu je zakon *karme* tisti, ki določa “usodo posameznika po smrti za obdobje pred njegovo inkarnacijo ter hkrati povzroči to inkarnacijo in pogojuje njeno obliko” (Brandon 1967:175). Budizem, v nasprotju s krščanstvom, ne stremi k nesmrtnosti, temveč išče poti, da bi jo presegel.

<i>Hinduizem, budizem</i>	<i>Judaizem, Egipt, krščanstvo, islam, zoroastrizem</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– življenje se ponavlja na tem svetu, neskončen niz življenj</li> <li>– končno razsvetljenje – <i>nirvana</i></li> <li>– ni božanstva ali najvišjega boga, temveč neoseben proces – <i>karma</i></li> <li>– sodba je stalen proces; stalne reinkarnacije</li> <li>– čas in življenje sta zamišljena ciklično</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– življenje je enkratno, v tem svetu se ne ponavlja</li> <li>– končna sodba, ki ji sledi večna posmrtna eksistenca</li> <li>– posameznika sodi vrhovno božanstvo, bog</li> <li>– sodba ob smrti in poslednja sodba</li> <li>– čas in življenje sta zamišljena linearno</li> </ul>

Morda je najbolje, če si glavne razlike med hindujsko-budističnimi pogledi in tistimi, ki prevladujejo pri drugih religijah, pogledamo kar na tabeli.

Seveda obstaja več različnih budističnih tradicij. Medtem ko na primer mnogi teravada budisti iz Šri Lanke in Indokine verujejo v “takojšnje ponovno rojstvo” po smrti, vajrayana budisti, še posebej tisti, ki živijo v Tibetu in pa v odmaknjenem himalajskem Ladakhu, svojim umirajočim in umrlim berejo navodila (opisana v *Tibetanski knjigi mrtvih*, Evans-Wentz 1960[1927]) in jih vodijo skozi vmesno obdobje, ki ga imenujejo *bardö* (prehodno stanje). To obdobje med smrtjo in ponovnim rojstvom traja tja do devetinsitrideset dni (Gielen 1997:75). Medtem ko teravada budisti poudarjajo, da je odrešitev odvisna predvsem od osebnih nepopustljivih poskusov, duhovnih navad in mnogih let meditacije, tibetanski budisti in tisti iz Ladakha (vajrayana budizem) poudarja ceremonije in iniciacijske obrede) zagovarjajo mnenje, da so molitve ljubljenih in pa spretno vodstvo njihovega lame enako pomembni (ibid.:90). Po drugi strani pa pripadniki nekaterih sekt v vzhodni Aziji verjamejo, da človekove zadnje misli pred smrtjo določijo njegovo nadaljnjo usodo. Če se ljudje v trenutku smrti popolnoma zaupajo Budi Amitabi, se bodo ponovno rodili v zahodnem raju ne glede na njihove pregrehe za časa življenja (ibid.).

Pomembno je, da so sodni prizori v egipčanski knjigi mrtvih podobni tovrstnim prizorom v Tibetanski knjigi mrtvih. Kralj resnice Dharma-Raja (ki ga teravada budisti kličejo Yama-Raja), ki nastopa kot kralj in sodnik mrtvih v tibetanski različici, se ujema z Ozirisom v egipčanski (Evans-Wentz 1960:35). V obeh razlagah poznajo simbolično tehtanje. Pred Dharmo-Rajo se beli kamenčki merijo s črnimi – belo predstavlja dobra in črno slaba dejanja. “V egipčanski sodni sceni nastopa opičjeglavi Thoth (redkeje štorkljeglavi), bog modrosti, ki nadzira tehtanje; v tibetanski sodni sceni nastopa opičjeglavi Shinje; v obeh prizorih najdemo poroto božanstev, od katerih imajo eni živalske in drugi človeške glave” (ibid.:36). Spočetniki zla morajo trpeti *karmične* posledice v peklenškem svetu očiščenja. Tipične kazni – od katerih pa nobena ne traja večno – so prikazane na samostanski poslikavi tibetanskega sodnega prizora, ki ima kljub temu, da je bila narejena leta 1919, svoj izvor v starih freskah (v tako imenovanem “kolesu življenja”), ki so jih našli v templjih na tem območju.

Za mnoge svetovne kulture in družbe majhnega obsega velja, da duhovi tistih pokojnikov, ki so nedavno umrli, še naprej komunicirajo z živimi in se vmešavajo v njihova življenja. Odnos med umrlimi in živimi je nenehen proces, ki je izredno pomemben za ohranitev reda in morale v določeni družbi. Primer iz vasi Ambonwari iz province Vzhodni Sepik na Papui Novi Gvineji, kjer sem opravljal dolgoletno terensko delo, nam to nazorno pokaže.

## Smrt v Ambonwariju – študija primera

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Ambonwari je največja karawarijsko govoreča vasica v provinci Vzhodni Sepik na Papui Novi Gvineji. Ambonwarijska kultura si z drugimi sepiškimi kulturami, kot so na primer Iatmul, Chambri in Yimas, deli mnoge skupne elemente. Karawarijsčina je jezik, ki pripada družini spodnjega Sepika; ta je del večje skupine tako imenovanih papuanskih jezikov (Foley 1986). V vasi je dvanajst totemskih klanov in petintrideset patri-linearne rodov. Način bivanja je patri-virilokalen. Največ smrti v vasi nastopi zaradi malarije in uvoženih bolezni dihalnih poti: tuberkuloze, pljučnice, influence. Čeprav je v vasi bolnišnična postaja in čeprav bolni včasih obiščejo bolnici v Angoramu in Wewaku, se ljudje v veliki meri zanašajo na zdravljenja dveh vaških zdravilcev, ki si s sovaščani delita skupno razumevanje sveta in kozmologijo.

Smrt pri Ambonwarijcih ne pomeni konec bivanja; raje pomeni nov način bivanja, medtem ko sama bit ostane nespremenjena, ena in ista. To je tisti način bivanja, kjer nekdo še naprej potrebuje sorodnike, hrano, bivališče, oblačila, okrasje, hiše moskih, predmete, ki jih uporablja, in tako naprej. Podobno je razmišljal Ernst Cassirer, ko je govoril o začetkih človekove kulture. Zapisal je, da je smrtnost tista, ki jo je treba dokazati, in ne nesmrtnost (1965[1955]:37).

V nadaljevanju bom predstavil primer bolezni in smrti osebe, ki mi je bila v Ambonwariju najbližja: mojega "brata" iz rodu Kumbranggawimari iz klana Rajske ptice. Novica o njegovi smrti avgusta 1998 me je močno pretresla.

Bil je večer prvega avgusta 1997. Z mojim vaškim "bratom" Tonijem Simiwarijo Andiyapijem, njegovim približno 18 let starim sinom Jackom Makanom, Jackovim prijateljem Terrencom in mojim prijateljem Julianom Kapyamarijem smo sedeli v moji novi koči, ki jo je v času moje petletne odsotnosti zgradil (iz dobro ohranjenih stebrov, lubja in listov, ki so ostali od moje predhodne hiše) in uporabljal Jack. Sproščeno smo se spominjali tistega obdobja, ko sem bil zadnjič v vasi, in razglabljali o tem, kaj vse se je od takrat zgodilo. Nenadoma je v kočo priletel majhen netopir. Zaletel se je v Tonija in hitro, kot je prišel, izginil skozi odprtino pod streho. Pogovarjali smo se do enajstih, potem pa odšli spat. S Tonijem sva odšla v njegovo družinsko hišo, Julian je odšel v svojo, Jack in Terrence pa sta ostala v moji. Tonijeva žena je spala z otroki – vključno s hčerama, ki sta imeli vsaka svojega dojenčka – ob zadnji hišni steni, midva s Tonijem pa sva imela najini mreži proti komarjem razpeti ob vhodu. Komaj sem zaprl oči, ko sem zaslišal najprej čudno pokašljevanje, potem pa še počasno, votlo tuljenje, ki je prihajalo iz gozda z južne strani vasi. Nekaj trenutkov kasneje se je podobno tuljenje zaslišalo še na drugi strani vasi. Ker tovrstnega glasu še nikdar nisem slišal, sem vprašal

Tonija, kaj je to. Najprej ni odgovoril, po kratki tišini pa je vendarle tiho dejal: "To so velike kače, udavi. Jutri ti bom povedal, kaj vse to pomeni". Vedel sem, da je bilo to slabo znamenje, pokazatelj, da lahko nekdo umre. Nismo še dobro zaspali, ko me je prebudilo Tonijevo stokanje. Sklonjen je sedel ob ognju. Vsakih pet minut je zapustil kočo. Vsakokrat se je vrnil šibkejši in bolj zaskrbljen. Povedal mi je, da ima neustavljivo diarejo. Bil je prepričan, da izgublja kri. Šel sem za njim, da bi se sam prepričal o resnosti njegove bolezni, a nisem odkril ničesar. Toni je govoril o netopirju – slabem duhu –, ki ga je zadel, o dveh udavih – slabih duhovih, ki naj bi se pogovarjali o njem – in veliki možnosti, da bo umrl. Čeprav je sedel tako blizu ognja, da si je skoraj opeknel noge, se je še vedno tresel. Zgodaj zjutraj sem ga odnesel v hišo moških. Ponovno sem pregledal njegovo tekoče blato in videl, da gre iz njega sama voda. O krvi ni bilo ne duha ne sluha. Ob zori je prišel vaški zdravilec Tobija in iz Tonijevega telesa izvlekel dve ptičji koščici. Šele po mojem vztrajnem nagovarjanju je vaški bolničar prinesel tablete proti diareji. Toni je legel in zaspal.

Sedeli smo okoli ognja v hiši moških in razglabljali o tem, zakaj je Toni nenadoma zbolel. Nekateri možje so mislili, da bi morali urediti prepir s sosednjimi Imanmerijci in jim vrniti motor, ki so jim ga po prepiru sneli s čolna in ga skrili v svoji vasi. Tobija je videl glavni razlog za Tonijevo bolezen v dogodkih iz preteklih dni, ko je Tony pretepel ženo in hčerke. Elias pa mi je naštel še druge vzroke, ki naj bi bili po njegovem odločilni za Tonijevo bolezen: čeprav Toni ni mogel podedovati vloge "očeta svojega klana", pa se je po mnenju mnogih ves čas obnašal, kot da mu ta vloga pripada. Gospodaril je celo z motorjem, ki je v resnici pripadal celotnemu klanu. Elias je dodal, da ima Toni na grbi mnoge pregrehe, med drugim tudi to, da nobena izmed njegovih hčera ni poročena, čeprav sta obe pred kratkim rodili. To pa seveda ni bilo združljivo z vaško moralno in je naletelo na obrekovanja. Nekateri vaščani so menili, da Toni še vedno objokuje smrt svojega najmlajšega sina, ki naj bi ga sedaj vabil k sebi v svet duhov. Možje iz klana Rajske ptice so postali jezni na Konggunyapana, glavnega duha-krokodila, češ da Tonija slabo varuje. Glavni razlog za Tonijevo bolezen – vsaj večina ljudi je tako mislila – pa je bilo prešuštvo, ki so ga nedolgo tega odkrili med Tonijem in Rito, Avgustovo ženo. Ta odnos sta ljubimca skrivala več desetletij, o njem pa se je razvedelo šele pred nedavnim, ko je Rita resno zbolela. Ker se je ustrašila, da bo umrla, je svoje prešuštvo priznala. Novica o tem prepovedanem odnosu je vas zadela kot bomba.

Devetnajstega avgusta 1998 je Toni Simiwaria Andiyapi nenadoma umrl. To se je zgodilo le nekaj dni pred tem, ko sta vas obiskala dva moja slovenska znanca. Čeprav ne vem, kaj so v vasi govorili po Tonijevi smrti, in čeprav ne vem, ali so opravili posmrtno divinacijo, si lahko predstavljam opravljanje, ki je sledilo njegovi smrti, in vse tiste vzroke, ki so se vaščanom zdeli kar najbolj verjetni. Nekatere najpomembnejše sem omenil že prej.

Glavni pokazatelj bolezni v vasi Ambonwari je sprememba v človekovih vsakdanjih navadah, v tem, da njegov ali njen *kay* (način, običaj, navada) ni tak, kot bi moral biti. Oseba diha drugače kot običajno, njena koža je bodisi mrzla bodisi vroča, tak človek več časa spi in ne opravlja svojih vsakdanjih dejavnosti. Ljudje pravijo, da je taka oseba bolna, da je "skupaj z boleznijo" (*min mari ngandikin*), da jo "bolezen drži" (*min*

*mari yan sarinyan*). Tako kot mnogi drugi jeziki tudi karawarijščina nima glagola “imeti”. Z držanjem in “uporabo” osebe postaneta bolezen in oseba eno, delita si isti *kay*, isto bit, isto telo (glej Telban 1998 a, b). Da bi se mu stanje izboljšalo, mora bolnik odstraniti (odrezati) bolezen kot del njegove biti. Le na ta način si bo oseba povrnila svoj predhodni *kay* (način življenja). Da pa bi to dosegel, ni dovolj le jemanje zdravil (ljudje pravijo, da že niso bili resno bolni, če so ta delovala), temveč je treba pogledati v preteklost in obravnavati tista dejanja in tiste vzroke, ki so krivi za bolezen. Ljudje pravijo, da so zdravljenja v zdravstvenih centrih in bolnišnicah sicer učinkovita, žal pa ne morejo pomagati Ambonwarijcem takrat, ko je bolezen najhujša, ko imajo tako imenovano “tradicionalno bolezen” (bolezen, katere vir so njihove šege), ker zdravniki v bolnišnicah ne delijo z njimi njihove kozmologije, njihovega življenjskega sveta, ki ga napolnjujejo tako živi kot mrtvi. Šele tedaj, ko se s spoznanjem vzrokov in krivcev ter s kompenzacijo tistih, ki so bili oškodovani, razrešijo pretekli prekrški, ima bolni možnost, da se bo njegov *kay* povrnil v normalno stanje in da bo bolezen izginila.

Pri obredih zdravljenja poskuša zdravilec najti vzroke bolezni (tako da se pogovarja z duhovi in z najbližjimi sorodniki) in odstraniti tiste predmete (kosti, školjke, kamne, žblje), ki predstavljajo utelešenje bolezni. Zdravilec poskuša povrniti bolnikov *kay* v predhodno, zdravo stanje. Ker pa *kay* vsakega posameznika vključuje različne skupinske *kay*-e in *kay*-e raznih posameznikov, s katerimi je bolni pogosto v stiku, postane bolezen kolektivni problem (določene družine, rodu ali klana), ki vključuje pretekle in sedanje odnose, vključno tiste z njihovimi najbližjimi duhovi. Kar je najbolj očitno pri teh zdravilčevih dejanjih, je, da ga postavijo v vlogo začasnega vmesnega člana med živimi in pa tistimi duhovi, ki so z živimi že bili v neki povezavi. Da bi nekdo postal zdravilec, mora biti sposoben priti v stik ne le z duhovi umrlih, temveč tudi s klanskimi duhovi-krokodili, duhovi-bobni in drugimi duhovi divjine, ki pripadajo bolnikovemu klanu ali pa žive na njegovi zemlji. Duhovi nadzorujejo zdravilčeva dejanja in ga vodijo na njegovih zdravilnih poteh. Vaškega zdravilca Tobija sem večkrat povprašal o tem, kako lahko sliši glasove duhov. Odgovoril je: “Ravno tako kot sedaj tebe. Ti mi govoriš in jaz te slišim. Duh mi govori naravnost v uho in jaz ga slišim.” Še vedno radoveden sem ga vprašal, če ni bolj res, da se glas duha preprosto pojavi v njegovi glavi? Odgovoril je:

“Ne. Glas pride naravnost v moje uho. Ko žvečim ingver, se mi oči obrnejo in moja ušesa se zablokirajo. Ne morem več razumeti, kaj govore ljudje okoli mene. Slišim le še duhove. Tako vsakemu rečem: “Bodi že tiho. Rad bi slišal, kaj mi hočejo duhovi povedati. Zakaj so jezni?” Njihov odgovor bo prišel naravnost v moje uho. Prisotnim povem, da vsi ti odgovori niso nastali v moji glavi, temveč da sem slišal glas duha. Tako bom zvedel, kateri je glavni razlog za slabo počutje bolnega in o tem povprašal otrokovega očeta, ali pa moža, katerega žena je bolna, ali pa njo, če je njen mož bolan. Povedal jim bom, kaj duhovi hočejo, kdaj in kako lahko poravnajo “dolgove”. Če me ne poslušajo, lahko bolni umre.”

Tisti, ki so grešili, se morajo “odrezati” od dejavnosti, ki je bolezen povzročila. To naredi s plačilom kompenzacije tistemu, ki so ga prizadeli, z osamitvijo, z umivanjem, z darovanjem hrane duhovom v hiši moških in tako naprej. Ambonwarijci pogosto pou-



darjajo, da morajo pravilno paziti na svojo kožo in pravilno opravljati svoja dela. Iz dosedanjih spoznanj lahko potegnemo nekaj sklepov. Zdravega človeka odlikujejo tako vidno zdrava koža kot njegova dejanja, ki so običajna tako zanj kot za druge; nasprotno pa bolnega človeka spoznamo po nezdravi koži in neobičajni dejavnosti, vključno s pasivnostjo. Zatorej se zdravilec v zdravilnem obredu posveti trem bistvenim stvarem: prvič, ekstrakciji sprva nevidnih kamnov, školjk, zob, kosti in trnov izpod nezdrave kože; drugič, povrnitvi *kay*-a v predhodno stanje tako, da odkrije prekrške, ki so bolezen povzročili; in tretjič, ureditvi odnosa med živimi in tistimi duhovi (družinskimi, rodovnimi, klanskimi), ki si z bolnikom delijo kolektivno identiteto.

## Razumevanje ambonwarijskih pogledov na umiranje in smrt

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V nadaljevanju bom orisal štiri pomembne vidike, ki pripomorejo k boljšemu razumevanju ambonwarijskih pogledov na umiranje in smrt: a) poistovetenje smrti z boleznijo in starostjo (vsaka od njih je proces, v katerem duhovi nastopajo kot sodniki živih); b) telo je treba razumeti skozi njegove navade, ki ga povezujejo z drugimi telesi; c) smrt zadeva skupnost; d) bit-k-moji-smrti naj bi bila značilna za krščanski zahodni svet, medtem ko je bit-k-skupnemu-začetku ilustrativna za ambonwarijsko kozmologijo.

Najprej, približevanje smrti moramo razumeti v smislu približevanja starosti ali stanja "biti bolan". Smrt ali umiranje v Ambonwariju je prej neka trajajoča pozicija kot pa dogodek ali trenutek (cf. Hertz 1960[1909]:28; Rivers 1912:405). Zaradi tega moramo smrt v Ambonwariju razumeti kot proces, v katerem naj bi "paznik" umrlega (*angndar kwanar*) prevzel novo breztelesno obliko duha, ki bi ga lahko še bolje okarakterizirali, če bi ga označili za brezmesnega in brezkožnega ("same kosti") duha (*wundumbunar*, če je moški in *wunduma*, če je ženska), ki ostane "povezan" s svojimi živečimi sorodniki. Vse, kar duh stori, vpliva na ljudi in vse, kar naredijo ljudje, duha bodisi zadovolji ali pa razjezi. Duhovi nedavno umrlih – običajno so to moški, najpogosteje pokojni oče ali brat – vidijo tudi najbolj prikrita dogodka, varujejo rodovne, klanske in vaške zakone in moralo ter kaznujejo krivce, njihove partnerje in otroke. Vaški duhovi ne ustvarjajo zakonov, temveč sodijo. Zakon so ustvarili in sprejeli živi za žive. Toda duhovi – v kozmologiji Ambonwarijcev – so vedno prisotni kot tisti sodniki in izvrševalci, ki uveljavljajo zakon in moralo, ki temeljita na modrosti starcev in vaških prednikov. Mrtvi, vključno s tistimi, ki so živi, a zelo stari, postanejo sodniki in prezgodnja smrt postane kazen.

Drugič, če hočemo razumeti ambonwarijska stališča o smrti, moramo razumeti njihova stališča o telesu. Ambonwarijci razumejo svoje telo, za katerega nimajo besede v svojem jeziku, skozi njegovi dve vidni značilnosti: kožo in dejavnostjo. Telo je določeno s *kay*-em (načinom delovanja) in je podaljšano na predmete, ki jih človek uporablja pri posameznih dejavnostih (Telban 1998a:58). Na primer "veslo in oseba postaneta eno v smislu *kay*-a, načinu veslanja kanuja" (ibid.:59). Na kratko bi lahko rekli, da obstaja tesna povezava med živečim telesom neke osebe (in ne le vidno kožo) in hrano, ki jo ta oseba zaužije, predmeti, ki jih uporablja, navadami in načini, na katere opravlja določene dejavnosti, ljudmi, s katerimi komunicira in se jih dotika, ter načini, na kate-

re so ti kontakti realizirani. Ker je način, na katerega se določeno dejanje izvede, zelo pomemben, je treba upoštevati vpliv enega na drugega. Ta konceptualizacija sveta priskrbi okvir za različne tabuje; na primer, moški ne gre zjutraj na lov, če je noč pred tem spal s svojo ženo (ibid.:60). Ustrezno vzporednico lahko potegnemo s fenomenologijo Jeana-Paula Sartra, ki je dejal: "Telo je celota pomembnih odnosov do sveta" (1956:452; glej tudi Telban 1998a:67 op.3).

Tretjič, smrt v Ambonwariju in z njo povezana sodba tistih, ki so odgovorni zanjo, vključno s pokojnikom, je stvar skupnosti, in zadeva družino, rod, klan in vas. Smrt ni nekaj, kar bi zadevalo zdravnike ali bolnišnico, ne glede na to, da nekdo v njej umre. Ne gre za vprašanje biomedicinskega vzroka in z njim povezane utemeljitve: influenza, pljučnica, malarija, tuberkuloza, meningitis, in tako naprej. Raje se postavlja staro vprašanje: "Zakaj on ali ona?", "Zakaj jaz?"; postavlja se vprašanje "Kako živimo?", "Kaj smo storili narobe?", "Čigavi načini (čigave slabe navade) so povzročili, da je nekdo umrl?" Gre za vprašanja "načina vasi" (*imnggan kay*), "načina starcev/prednikov" (*kupambn kay*) in mnogih *kay*-ev (načinov, navad, običajev, zakonov) posameznih vaščanov (Telban 1998 a,b). Ker se *kay* (navade, načini) vsakega posameznika prepleta z različnimi kolektivnimi *kay*-i (navade, načini), postaneta bolezen in smrt tudi kolektivni zadevi (gospodinjstva in rodu, na primer), ki vključujeta pretekle, sedanje in celo predvidene in pričakovane prihodnje odnose, tudi tiste, ki jih imajo s svojimi domačimi duhovi (Telban 1998a:61).

Četrtyč, bit-k-(moji ali tvoji)-smrti ima v krščanstvu svoj izvor v linearni konceptualizaciji sveta in poudarku na individuumu. Bit-k-(skupnemu)-začetku v Ambonwariju ima svoj izvor v ciklični oziroma regenerativni konceptualizaciji sveta s poudarkom na kozmogoniji pri vseh pomembnejših obredih in v spoznanju, da je vsak individuum družbeno povezan in odvisen od drugih.

Ker smrt znotraj ambonwarijskega pogleda na svet ni trenuten pojav, ampak proces, v katerem gre za stalno interakcijo med živimi in mrtvimi, ker "telo" ni nikdar telo osamljenega posameznika, temveč je podaljšano in prepletano z drugimi sorodnimi "telesi", ker smrt v Ambonwariju vedno zadeva skupnost in ni *nikoli* zasebna zadeva, je iskanje in sodba tistih, ki so odgovorni za človekovo bolezen in smrt, prav tako trajajoče in spreminjajoče se stanje skupnosti in ni nikdar trenutna, zasebna zadeva.

Kljub temu da smrt zadeva celotno skupnost, pa je hkrati edinstven proces v *kay*-u (bit, eksistenca) vsakega posameznika. Tako kot človek ne postane zavedajoča se ambonwarijska oseba zgolj z rojstvom, temveč mora najprej skozi otroštvo, pa potem skozi iniciacijo, pa poroko, pa starševstvo, da postane taka oseba, prav tako človek zgolj s smrtjo in prečkanjem "mostu" na breg mrtvih ne postane kar avtomatično del prednikov. Skozi otroštvo je oseba le podaljšek svojih staršev in se le postopoma oblikuje v individualno družbeno bitje (Telban 1997, 1998 a,b). Na podoben način pokojnik še vedno obstaja, vendar pa zgolj kot podaljšek živih. Le postopoma se ti umrli posamezniki pridružijo antropomorfnim masi ambonwarijskih prednikov. Prav tako kot mora otrok pretrgati vez s svojimi starši (a še vedno ostane njihov otrok), morajo mrtvi pretrgati svoje vezi z živimi (in *vice versa*) in hkrati z njimi ohraniti tesen kozmološki stik.

Med vaškimi prepiri ali tedaj, ko se Ambonwarijci prerekajo z ljudmi iz drugih vasi, človek pogosto sliši moške, ki radi povedo, da jih umiranje ne skrbi, ker vedo, da jih bodo njihovi bratje, očetje in mamini bratje maščevali. Zdi se, da sta celovitost in bogastvo mreže družbenih odnosov – preteklih, sedanjih in tistih, ki jih pričakujejo v prihodnosti – tista, ki ne ustvarjata le posameznikovega življenja, temveč tudi njegovo smrt. Ljudi, ki nimajo veliko sorodnikov, in tiste, katerih rodovi nimajo moških potomcev, bolj skrbi osamljenost v življenju in smrti kot pa sama smrt.

Tako kot mnogi drugi so tudi Ambonwarijci prepričani, da potem ko oseba umre, njen ali njegov duh ohrani njeno ali njegovo osebnost. Posamezniki se ne skrčijo v ničnost. Še več, pokojnim ni treba dokazovati svoje nedolžnosti ali priznati pregrešna dejanja. Čisto mirno lahko še naprej ostanejo zlobni in slabi. Nihče jih ne bo sodil, še posebej ne v smislu kakršnekoli poslednje sodbe, ki bi jim določila, kako bodo preživeli preostanek svoje eksistence. Poleg tega pa, kot pravijo Ambonwarijci, človek ne more kar tako zamenjati svoje kože. Če je nekdo slab, še ne pomeni, da njegova slabost ni uporabna in da je drugi vaščani ne občudujejo. Človekova slabost je na koncu lahko celo dobra (glej Harrison 1993:120-1). Zakaj bi pokojnika sploh sodili, ko pa ne more poplačati – v dobrinah in denarju – tistih, ki jih je prizadel? Ambonwarijci so dovolj sociocentrični in egocentrični, da sodijo živim, ki so sposobni svoje prekršitve tudi poplačati. Na ta način se družbeni in moralni red vedno na novo ustvarja.

Laži, opravljanje in kraje so stalno na dnevnem redu in nihče se jim ne more izogniti. Zato takrat, ko nekoga kljub nedolžnosti obsodijo, nihče – razen seveda najbližjih sorodnikov obtoženega – ne meni, da so mu storili grozno krivico. Ljudje sploh ne vidijo, da je oseba nedolžna. Pravijo, da je obtoženi v preteklosti storil druga krivična dejanja. Ker pa takrat niso imeli dokazov niti niso sklicali vaškega sodišča, je obtoženi pobegnul kazni. Ne glede na človekovo nedolžnost, njegova preteklost – in sploh ne do godek, zaradi katerega mu sodijo – mnogim upraviči trenutno kaznovanje. Nihče ne misli, da bi se ljudje morali strinjati glede grešnikove krivde. Ko je človek bolan, ali še slabše, ko umre, ljudje špekulirajo o možnih vzrokih. Pogosto se zgodi, da imajo različne skupine in različni segmenti ambonwarijske skupnosti tudi različne poglede na človekovo krivdo in vzroke za bolezen ali smrt. Trenutni sporazum lahko za nekaj časa potlači vse te različne resnice, ki pa potem ponovno privrejo na dan kot možni vzroki pri novih prepirih, boleznih in smrtih. Končna resnica je redko ena sama.

## Sklep: špekulacija o modernizaciji

V dosedanjem razglabljanju lahko opazimo občutne razlike med krščanstvom in ambonwarijsko kozmologijo: prvič, Ambonwarijci menijo, da niso samo njihove lastne zablode in pregrehe tiste, ki jim lahko škodijo, pač pa je lahko nekdo drug tisti krivec, ki s svojim dejanjem prizadene nedolžnega sorodnika, pogosto otroka, ter povzroči njegovo bolezen ali smrt; drugič, tisti Ambonwarijci, ki so resno bolni, in tisti, ki umirajo, običajno priznajo svoje grehe, pa ne zato, da bi bili rešeni v posmrtnem življenju, temveč zato, da bi bili – skupaj s svojimi partnerji in otroki – rešeni v tem življenju. Z drugimi besedami, njihovo priznanje in njihova pripravljenost, da kompenzirajo vse tiste, ki so jim storili

krivico, kaže na njihovo željo po preživetju. Njihovi sodniki so njihovi družabniki, ljudje in duhovi (duhovi umrlih in pomembni rodovni, klanski in vaški duhovi), in ne neko višje božanstvo. Vsaka smrt – zaradi spremljajočih priznanj, divinacije in sodbe – reorganizira družbene odnose med živimi. Namen vsega tega ni, da bi umrlemu priskrbeli boljše mesto v nekem “drugem svetu”, pač pa, da bi obnovili – za nekatere na boljše, za druge na slabše – življenjske razmere tistih, ki preživijo, ter zagotovili, da ne bo še kdo od sorodnikov umrl. V ambonwarijski kozmologiji ni posmrtnih sodbe dobrih in slabih dejanj, v njej ni raja niti pekla, ni pričakovanja poslednje sodbe niti odrešitve. Celotna ambonwarijska kozmologija, ne glede na vse spremembe, ki se stalno dogajajo, temelji na želji po ohranitvi “ambonwarijskosti”, tako v smislu “načina vasi” kot tudi “načina starcev/prednikov”. Koncept bit-k-skupnemu-začetku, ki ga najbolj očitno prepoznamo v kozmogonskem karakterju iniciacijskih obredov, prežema ambonwarijsko kozmologijo, v kateri življenje in smrt sobivata kot dva načina iste eksistence.

Ali je te poglede res mogoče tako jasno razmejiti, kot sem jih predstavil? Krščanstvo na sepiškem območju obstaja več kot sto let, tako da nihče ne bi bil presenečen, če bi nekakšna mešanica ambonwarijske kozmologije in papuanovogvinejske različice ene od glavnih verskih usmeritev ubrala neko svojo smer. Med mojim zadnjim bivanjem v vasi med julijem in septembrom 1997 so me vaščani pogosto spraševali o možnostih konca sveta, o vsemogočih govoricah in različnih prerokih ter o prerokem letu 2000. Pred nekaj leti so Ambonwarijci zgradili novo cerkev, večjo in bolj spektakularno od njihove zadnje glavne hiše moških, Yanbonman. Neke vrste karizmatično glosarično krščanstvo je zajelo vas – ne pa drugih karawarijskih vasi – in danes je v njej precej takih, ki slišijo glas Boga in v transu podobnem stanju govore v čudnih, nerazumljivih jezikih.<sup>3</sup> In potem so tu še drugi, moški in ženske, ki trdijo, da jih razumejo in prevajajo njihov čudni jezik v karawarijščino in melanezijski tok pisin.

Ker vsakdo ve, kako so se tako imenovani kargo kultu pojavili in ponovno pojavljali v Novi Gvineji in Melaneziji od konca prejšnjega stoletja, si lahko le predstavljamo, kako zlahka bi Ambonwarijci združili svoje lastne “tradicionalne” poglede s *svojo* različico krščanstva. Na ta način bi lahko misel, ki jo vodi bit-k-skupnemu-začetku, zamenjala misel, v kateri bi prevladovala bit-k-skupnemu-koncu/smrti, kar za Ambonwarijce niti ne bi bil tako neznan pojem. Njihova mitologija namreč govori o peščici preživelih iz dveh nekdanjih vasic, ki sta nekoč ležali nedaleč stran po reki navzgor. Vasi sta bili popolnoma uničeni, ker je neki mož prelomil več resnih tabujev in ženskam in otrokom izdal skrivnosti iz hiše moških. Peščico preživelih so Ambonwarijci sprejeli medse in ti so kasneje oblikovali zadnja dva ambonwarijska klana. Zgodbe o skupni preteklosti pa niso nikdar pozabili. V takih in podobnih primerih ni samo sodba živih tista, ki je prisotna v ambonwarijski kozmologiji, pač pa se njihov pogled na svet že spogleduje s predstavo o sodbi umrlih, še bolj pa z idejo o poslednji sodbi, ki lahko Ambonwarijce v prihajajočih letih še bolj obsede.

<sup>3</sup> V izvrstnem globalnem pregledu milenarističnih gibanj ter bojazni in upanj, ki spremljajo apokaliptična pričakovanja skozi zgodovino zahodne družbe, Thompson pravi: “Sodobni pentekostalizem, katerega pripadniki izkusijo ekstatični krst duha, ki ga pogosto spremlja govorjenje v različnih jezikih, je gonilna sila pri osupljivem napredovanju protestantizma v Latinski Ameriki in Tretjem svetu . . . Karizmatiki . . . verjamejo, da so *karizmata* – darila svetega duha, podeljena učencem ob Pentekostu, kot na primer govorjenje v različnih jezikih – dostopna modernemu človeku” (Thompson 1997: 122, 143).

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# DEATH AND THE JUDGEMENT OF THE LIVING IN A PAPUA NEW GUINEAN COMMUNITY\*

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Borut Telban

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**Key Words:** *dying, judgement of the dead, dead as punishment, Ambonwari (Sepik, Papua New Guinea)*

## Introduction

Humans have long since discovered the power of death rituals and the fact that death is not only a problem, but also an opportunity and an occasion – both for furthering social, cultural, and political arrangements and for the existent order to be contested by all those with differing perspectives and interests (Taylor 1989:149). As analysts, we should not focus simply on some apparently permanent rules or practices and examine how they are transgressed or changed; rather, our task is to show how *normal* events – disputes, fights, stealing, adultery, death, and so on – construct, reconstruct and even invent the rules which have to be continually negotiated in the production of the on-going life-world.

This paper is about death and judgement – judgement either of the dead or of the living. A people's view depends on culture, a period in their history, a particular place and a specific community with which we, as analysts, are dealing. In old Egypt (and later in Christianity, which both Jewish and Egyptian eschatologies penetrated), for example, it was an individual whose **morality** (weighing one's heart against a feather in Egyptian underworld, for instance) or **deeds** were judged (Budge 1967[1895]). In Egypt, after a person had died he or she had to address 42 gods and in a special monologue – such as the one from *The papyrus of Ani*, for instance – refute all his or her possible wrongdoings. On the other hand, it was a person's **correct faith** that was and

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\* Fieldwork in Ambonwari village was done in 1990 - 1992, and 1997, totalling twenty months. Part of this paper was presented at the International Symposium "The Ethnological and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Death" held in Ljubljana, 5th - 8th November 1998, and the whole article was read on 23rd November at the Institut für Ethnologie, University of Heidelberg. I thank Bob Tonkinson for his helpful comments and suggestions regarding the improvement of the initial version of this paper.

still is judged in Islam and Zoroastrianism (Brandon 1967:145, 148, 155). Moreover, there are two forms of *post-mortem* judgement, the one immediately after death and the other at the anticipated end of the world, which characterize many world religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Islam, and Christianity.

In Ambonwari (East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea) where people and spirits coexist, and where there is no supreme diety – if we ignore for a while an ongoing process of Christianization – those who die are mourned but seldom judged. Also, as Mimica has argued for the Iqwaye, “there is no death as such, but only a myriad of often contingent ways of dying, of becoming dead and of being after death” (1996:216). People can be conscious of their own dying and can live their lives in expectation of their own death. “But unlike the situation in Western urban cultures, death in the Iqwaye life-world is neither experienced nor ideologized as a radically alien event . . . Death is not an entity that preys upon people and snatches them from life. Rather, it is humans who *live themselves into their deaths through their own or somebody else’s actions*” (ibid.:215,216; italics mine). Dying among the Iqwaye as well as among the Ambonwari is a mode of life; it is a social activity, an intersubjective experience, just as life itself, of which both dying and death are an inseparable part. Death is a punishment, of an individual and of a particular section of a community, and those responsible should be found out, and after a proper compensation and restoration of relationships, a seeming – though illusory – harmony is restored. Later in the article I will present several matters pertaining to Ambonwari understanding of their dying mode of existence and their judgement of those who are found – rightly or wrongly – to be responsible for sickness and death, either of themselves or of their close relatives. But first of all, for the comparative reasons, I am going to outline how the notion of a post-mortem judgement is present in some of the world’s most important religions. It is considered that the earliest evidence of the idea that judgement awaited people after death is found in Egypt. This notion of post-mortem judgement – joining ethics with eschatology – “constitutes the ultimate authentication of the traditional ethic of Western society” (Brandon 1967:ix).

## The Judgement Scene in Ancient Egypt

Already in a remote antiquity the Egyptians gave the name Ra to the sun, as a visible representation of God to whom offerings and sacrifices were made. With Ra’s appearance at the creation, time began. It was only later that the Egyptians “invented the moral conception of the sun, representing the victory of right over wrong and of truth over falsehood” (ibid.:cxi). In other words, it seems that the images of a happy life after death had their origin in the pyramid texts, and that “the doctrine of punishment of the wicked and of the judgement which took place after death is a development characteristic of a later period” (Budge 1967:cvi). Of judgement and of those who failed to secure a life of beatitude with the gods, the pyramid texts say nothing.

A Theban version of the Book of the Dead (or *pert em hru* which has been translated as “manifested in the light” or “coming forth from the day”) was written on papyrus in hieroglyphics about 1500 B.C., though early forms of the Book of the Dead have

been in use among the Egyptians from about 4500 B.C. The text proclaimed the resurrection of a spiritual body and the immortality of the soul. “Every chapter and prayer of this version was to be said in the next world, where the words, properly uttered, enabled the deceased to overcome every foe and to attain to the life of the perfected soul which dwelt in a spiritual body in the abode of the blessed” (ibid.:xxx). In Chapter CXXV of the Book of the Dead, the deceased is told the words which should be uttered when arriving at the Hall of Maati or the Hall of Judgement – the hall of double right and truth where a deceased person is purged – where one will see God and where one’s heart will be weighed in a balance separating him or her from his or her sins, in the presence of the forty two great gods (ibid.:xi, xxx, xli, cxix).<sup>1</sup> In the ancient Nebseni papyrus the heart is weighed against the dead man himself, while in the Ani papyrus, the heart is weighed against a feather, the symbol of the Truth and the Law, Maat (ibid.:261).<sup>2</sup> The present gods were “the guides and protectors and givers of life and happiness to the deceased in the new life”, but, “from the earliest times it is clear that the Egyptians imagined the existence of other powers who offered opposition to the dead, and who are called in many places his ‘enemies’” (ibid.:cxxviii).

The deceased were identified with Osiris, that is, with the sun which has set in the west and then rises again in the east. In a same way, the dead are laid in their tombs on the western bank of the Nile. After they go through the Hall of Judgement, they proceed to the east and begin a new existence (ibid.:247 f.n.2). Osiris, the god of the dead, was fully defined long before the known versions of the pyramid texts were written. In a later period, however, a change occurred: the Egyptians began to attribute to him those characteristics and qualities which were in early dynasties regarded as belonging to Ra or to Ra-Tmu (ibid.:cxiii). Osiris became a symbol of eternal existence and immortality. He became the god of the dead and the god of the living. To this “lord of eternity . . . the deceased appealed to make his flesh to germinate and to save his body from decay” (ibid.). This “doctrine of immortality . . . had remained unchanged for at least four thousand years” (ibid.:cxiv).

## Christianity

If we examine the Old Testament we see that death itself has its origin in judgement and punishment. In the Garden of Eden man appears to be created neither mortal nor immortal; he was given the choice between the fruits of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge. Misled by the serpent, he chose the tree of knowledge – the tree of death (Choron 1963:82). In the Old Testament there is no escape from death, everyone dies, and there is no other life. People can find a quasi-immortality only through their

<sup>1</sup> Maat, a very ancient goddess, was the daughter of Ra. Maat meant straight, right, true, real, genuine, upright, righteous, just, steadfast (Budge 1967:cxix). There are actually two Maat goddesses, one of whom is perhaps the personification of physical law, the other of moral rectitude.

<sup>2</sup> Egyptians considered the heart not simply a vital organ of the body but a centre of conscience, “the god” which is in every person. People feared both that it might be taken away from them and that it might act as an independent witness against them at their trials after death (Brandon 1967:37, 38-39).



children. It is the New Testament where believers claim victory over death on the Last Day of Judgement, when the graves will be opened and everyone will stand before the Son of God and be judged. We should not overlook an important fact, that “[i]t is the resurrection of the body, and not the immortality of the soul; this latter is not Christian, but pagan” (ibid.:84).

During the early years of Christianity, no judgement or condemnation of an individual seemed to exist, there was no individual responsibility. All dead who belonged to the Church went to sleep until the day of the Christ’s great return at the end of the world when they – in contrast to those who were not the members of the Church – would awaken in Paradise.

In the eleventh and twelve centuries, subtle modifications gradually altered people’s worldview – their experiences and practices – away from a collective notion of destiny, acceptance of death with just the proper amount of solemnity and no thought of escaping it or glorifying it, and from socialization which did not separate man from nature. A new emphasis on the individuality of each person meant that though death – because no one could escape it – was a collective rite, the judgement became peculiar to each individual. Everyone was going to be judged, the individual souls would be placed on the scale, good and bad deeds separated, and finally, the just and the damned would be separated. “The security of a collective rite” became confronted with “the anxiety of a personal interrogation” (Aries 1974:37). The Last Judgement at the end of the World was displaced by the final test, the judgement at the end of each life, to the precise moment of death, when – apparently, this notion took root slowly throughout fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – “each person’s entire life flashed before his eyes at the moment of death” (ibid.:38). The consequences of the individualization of death had other important implications: an interest in physical decomposition, the personalization of tombs, and – as in Ancient Rome many centuries earlier – the reappearance of funeral inscriptions. “Since the Early Middle Ages Western man has come to see himself in his own death: he has discovered *la mort de soi*, one’s own death” and later, beginning with the eighteenth century, “*la mort de toi*, the death of the other person” (Aries 1974:52, 56).

## Buddhism

In Hindu and Buddhist conceptualizations of human existence, judgement has not been seen as a final act following death but rather as an unceasing process through countless lives, some past and others to come (Brandon 1967: x, 165). For Buddha, life was pure suffering; because of reincarnation birth, illness, death, and rebirth – in fact, everything – was suffering. He looked within himself to find a path which would show him how to overcome both life and death. He found the path and by overcoming his longings, cravings and greediness, his hate, lust and jealousy, he became enlightened. While “Christ promises a birth which shall be followed by no death . . . Buddha promises a death which shall be followed by no birth and thus by no further death” (Landsberg 1966:198). Both in Hinduism and Buddhism the law of *karma* determines “the

fate of the individual after death for the period before his next incarnation, and it also causes that incarnation and conditions its form” (Brandon 1967:175). In Buddhism, as opposed to Christianity, the aim is not to gain immortality, but to transcend it. It is probably best to make use of a chart to show the main differences between Hindu-Buddhist views and those of some other religions.

*Hinduism, Buddhism*

- life is repeated in this world, infinite series of lives
- final enlightenment – *nirvana*
- no deity or supreme God, but impersonal process – *karma*
- judgement is a continuous process; continuous reincarnations
- time and life are seen as cyclical

*Judaism, Egypt, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism*

- life is unique, it is not to be repeated in this world
- final judgement followed by eternal post-mortem existence
- judgement of an individual by a supreme deity, God
- judgement at death and the Final Judgement
- time and life are seen as linear

There are several different traditions of Buddhism. While many Theravada Buddhists of Sri Lanka and Indochina, for example, believe in ‘instant rebirth’ after death, Vajrayana Buddhists, especially those living in Tibet and the remote Himalyan corner of Ladakh, have to read the instructions to the dying and the dead (described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Evans-Wentz 1960[1927]) and guide them through an intermediate *bardö* period (transitional state) lasting up to forty-nine days between death and rebirth (Gielen 1997:75). While Theravada Buddhists emphasize that salvation depends above all on the person’s own relentless efforts, spiritual practice and many years of meditation, Tibetan Buddhists and those from Ladakh – Vajrayana Buddhism emphasizes rituals and initiation rites – argue that the prayers of loved ones and the skilful guiding hand of their lama are of equal importance (ibid.:90). Some sects of East Asia, on the other hand, believe that a person’s last thoughts before his or her death determine his or her future fate. If at the moment of death people fully confide themselves to the Buddha Amitabha, they will be reborn in the Western Paradise regardless of their sins during their lives (ibid.).

It is significant that the judgement scenes in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* are very much alike. In the Tibetan version, Dharma-Raja, the king of truth (whom the Theravadists call Yama-Raja) as the king and judge of the dead, corresponds to Osiris in the Egyptian version (Evans-Wentz 1960:35). In both versions there is the symbolic weighing. Before Dharma-Raja white pebbles are weighed against black pebbles, symbolizing good and bad deeds. “In the Egyptian Judgement Scene it is the ape-headed (less commonly the ibis-headed) Thoth, god of wisdom, who supervises the weighing; in the Tibetan Judgement scene it is the monkey-headed Shinje; and in both scenes there is the jury of deities looking on, some animal-headed, some human-headed” (ibid.:36). The evil-doers have to suffer *karmic* consequences in the hell-world of purgation. Typical punishments – none of which are ever-

lasting – are depicted on the monastic painting of the Tibetan Judgement Scene, which though made in the year 1919 has its origin in the old frescoes (within the so called Wheel of Life) found in the temples in the area.

In many small scale cultures and societies around the world the spirits of the dead, especially shortly after the death, continue to communicate and interfere with the living. The relationship between the dead and the living is a continuous process, extremely important for the preservation of law and morality of a particular community. I will continue with a case study from Ambonwari village, Papua New Guinea, where I have conducted extensive fieldwork.

## **Death in Ambonwari – A Case Study**

Ambonwari is the largest Karawari speaking village in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. Ambonwari culture shares many elements in common with other Sepik cultures, such as Iatmul, Chambri, and Yimas. The Karawari language belongs to the Lower Sepik Family, part of a larger group of Papuan languages (Foley 1986). There are 12 totemic clans and 35 patrilineages. Residence is patri-virilocal. Introduced respiratory diseases – tuberculosis, pneumonia, influenza – along with malaria, take a heavy toll of Ambonwari people. Though there is an Aid Post in the village and though people sometimes visit hospitals in Angoram and Wewak, they continue to seek treatment from the two village healers, who reflect people’s understanding of their world – that is, their cosmology – and their well-being.

Death for the Ambonwari is not the end of a being; it is the beginning of a new mode of being while the being itself is one and undifferentiated; it is a similar mode of being where one still needs relatives, food, shelter, clothing, decorations, men’s houses, things to use, and so on. As Cassirer argued for the beginnings of human culture, “it is not immortality, but mortality that must here be ‘proved’” (1965[1955]:37).

Below I present a case study of sickness and death, of someone who has been for many years person to whom I was closest in Ambonwari village: my “brother” from the Kumbranggawimari lineage of the Bird of Paradise clan. News of his death in August 1998 came as a great shock to me.

It was nightfall on the first of August 1997. My village “brother” Tony Simiwaria Andiyapi, his about 18 years old son Jack Makan, Jack’s friend Terrence, my friend Julian Kapyamari and I were all sitting in my new house, which during my five years absence had been built (from still very solid material of my old house) and used by Jack. Relaxed, we talked about common memories and of what had happened during my years away from the village. At one point, a flying fox suddenly flew into the house, hit Tony, and as fast as it had entered, disappeared through the opening in the roof. We talked till eleven o’clock and then went to bed, Tony and I into his family house, Julian to his, while Jack and Terrence remained in mine. Tony’s wife slept with their children – including her two daughters with their own children – at the back of the house, while Tony’s and my mosquito nets were next to the door. I hardly closed my eyes when a strange coughing noise followed by slow, dull howling spread through the night from

314 one side of the village. A few moments later, a similar howling came from the other side. Because I had never before heard this kind of a sound, I asked Tony what it was. He didn't answer immediately, but after a short period of silence he said quietly: "These are large snakes, boas. I'll tell you tomorrow the meaning of it." I knew that it was a bad omen, indicating that someone might die. We had not been asleep long when hearing Tony moaning next to the fire, I woke up. Every five minutes, he left the house, only to return weaker and more concerned. He explained to me about his diarrhoea. He thought that he was losing blood. I followed him to check his stool but could not find anything. He talked about the flying fox – a bad spirit – hitting him, about two boa snakes – bad spirits talking to each other about him – and the strong possibility that he

was going to die. Though he sat very close to the fire, he was still shivering and nearly burned his legs. Early in the morning I carried him to the men's house. Again, I checked his excrement and saw that there was no blood, just water. Tobias, a village healer, arrived at dawn and extracted two bird's bones from his body. After I insisted, an aid post orderly brought some tablets for diarrhoea. Tony lay down and fell asleep.

We were all sitting around the fire in a men's house discussing why this sickness befell Tony. Some men said that they should have settled a dispute with neighbouring Imanmeri and given them back an outboard motor which was now kept in Ambonwari but was not theirs. Tobias said that Tony had beaten up his daughters and wife, so now the punishment came on him. Elias told me that there were other reasons for Tony's sickness: Tony was not the "father of the clan", less so the "father of the village", yet he behaved as one. He even kept the clan's outboard motor all the time. Elias said that Tony's wrongdoings were many. Another reason, Elias said, lay in the marriage situation of his two daughters at that time. Both were single but had a baby. This was – along with accompanying embarrassment and gossip – not what fathers expected from their daughters. Some villagers remarked that Tony was still mourning the death of his youngest son, who was now calling him to join him in the world of ghosts. The men from the Bird of Paradise clan became angry with Konggunyapan, the main spirit-crocodile of their clan, cursing him for not protecting Tony. The main cause for Tony's sickness – at least the majority of people thought so – was an adultery, discovered not long before between Tony and Rita, the wife of August. This relationship was kept secret for many decades, but became public when Rita became seriously sick. Afraid of dying, she had confessed her adulterous relationship, which shocked the whole village like a bomb.

On 19th August 1998 Tony Simiwaria Andiyapi, the closest person to me in the whole village, suddenly died, just a few days before two Slovenian friends of mine visited the village. Though I do not know what the villagers thought about the cause of his death, and though I do not know if they performed divination, I can imagine all the gossip that arose and how the villagers would have discussed all possible causes, some of which I enumerated earlier in this story.

The main sign that someone is sick is that her or his *kay* (way of doing things, manner, habit) is not as it should be. A person's breathing is different from usual, their skin is hot or cold, she or he sleeps more, or does not perform their usual activities. People say

that a person is “with sickness” (*min mari ngandikin*), that is, she or he “has sickness” (in Karawari language as in many other languages there is no verb “to have”). Sickness “has taken hold of a person” (*min mari yan sarinyan*). By holding and “using” a person, the sickness and person become one; they share the same body/being (see Telban 1998 a, b). To get better, a person has to remove (cut off) sickness as a part of the body/being. Only in this way will she or he rehabilitate their previous *kay*. But to cure the sickness one cannot just take medicines (if tablets, pills and so on work, people say that they were not really sick); it is necessary to look at one’s past and address those issues which caused the sickness. People say that those healing practices that are part of medical treatment in Hospitals and Health Centres are powerful. They cannot, however, help Ambonwari people when they are seriously sick, that is, when they have so-called “custom sickness”, because medical doctors do not share and so cannot address the Ambonwari life-world of the living and spirits. Only by addressing the causes, the alleged wrongdoings, can the *kay* of a sick person return to normal and the sickness be cured.

In healing ceremonies, the specialist tries to find the cause (so that he speaks with closest relatives and spirits) and remove the objects (bones, shells, stones, nails) that are the embodiment of sickness. A healer tries to restore the *kay* to its previous condition. As *kay* of an individual incorporates different collective *kay*, the sickness also becomes the concern of a collective, such as a household or lineage which incorporates past and present relationships, including those with their own familiar spirits. What is apparent from the practices of the healers is that they are able to perform an intermediary role, creating a temporary link between people and spirits. To become a healer, one has to come in contact not only with spirits of the dead, but also with bush spirits, in particular those of the patient’s own clan (such as spirit-crocodiles and spirit-slit-drums) and land. The spirits supervise the healers’ practices and guide them on their healing paths. I asked one of the healers, Tobias, how he could hear the voice of the spirit. He answered: “Just in the same way as you are talking to me now and I can hear you. The spirit talks into my ear and I hear him.” Still curious, I asked him whether in fact the voice simply occurs in his head? He answered:

“No. The voice comes straight into my ears. When I chew ginger, my eyes turn around and my ears become blocked. I am unable to understand what people around me say. I hear only spirits. So I say to everyone: “Shut up, I want to hear what they have to say. Why are they angry?” Their answer will come straight into my ear. I tell those around that I did not get these answers inside my own head but that I have heard the voice of the spirit. So I would know the cause and would ask a child’s father, or a husband if his wife is sick, or her, if her husband is sick. I would tell them when the spirit had asked for matters to be settled and tell them how this can be done. If they do not listen, the sick person can die.”

The wrongdoers then have to “cut themselves off” from the practice which caused the sickness by following procedures such as payment of compensation, seclusion, washing, food presentation, and so on. Ambonwari people often say that they have to look after their skin properly and accurately perform their acts. In regard to sickness we can make some common observations: a healthy person is defined by visible healthy

skin and her or his habitual activity; a sick person is defined by unhealthy skin and aberrant activity. Thus, a healing ritual is concerned with the extraction of invisible stones, shells, teeth, bones and thorns from beneath the unhealthy skin, the restitution of *kay* by identifying the cause of sickness in wrongdoings, and finally by addressing the spirits of the household, lineage or clan who share collective identity with the sick person.

## Understanding Ambonwari Attitudes towards Dying and Death

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In what follows I outline four important issues that contribute to a better understanding of Ambonwari attitudes towards death: a) the equation of death with sickness and old age, each of them seen as a process, with spirits as judges of the living; b) body perceived through habits that associates it with other bodies; c) death as a community affair; d) being-towards-(my)-death as distinctive of a Christian Western World while being-towards-(collective)-beginning is illustrative of Ambonwari cosmology.

First, approaching death should be understood in terms of approaching old age, or being sick. Death or dying in Ambonwari is a state, a condition, rather than an event or an instant (cf. Hertz 1960[1909]:28; Rivers 1912:405). Therefore, we should see death in Ambonwari as a process in which a dead person's "watchman" *angndar kawanar* has to take a new form of a disembodied, or better fleshless and skinless (i.e. "bones only") spirit – *wundumbunar* if male and *wunduma* if female – who remains "connected" to his living relatives. What he does affects them, and what they do makes him either angry or pleased. The spirits of the recently dead – usually male, that is, a deceased father or brother – see even the most hidden affairs, protect lineage, clan and village morality and law, and punish wrongdoers, their spouses and their children. The village spirits are not the law, they are the judges. The law is the one made by the living for the living. But spirits – in the cosmology of Ambonwari people – are always there as those judges and executors who enforce the law and village morality based on the wisdom of the elders and the ancestors. The dead, including those who are very old, become judges and a premature death becomes punishment.

Second, if we want to understand Ambonwari's views about death we have to understand their views about the body. For the Ambonwari, their human body, for which they do not have a vernacular word, is perceived through its visible skin and its activity. "It is defined by *kay* (the way of doing things) and extended to the things that are used in particular activities" (Telban 1998a:58). For example "A paddle and a person become one in terms of *kay*, the way of paddling a canoe" (ibid.:59). In short, one could say that there is a close connection between a person's living body – not just the visible skin – and the food one eats, the things one uses, his or her habits, the ways one performs his or her activities, the people one communicates with and touches, and the ways these contacts are effected. One has to consider the impact of one upon the other, since the manner in which a particular practice is done is very important. This conceptualization of the world supplies a framework for different taboos; for example, a man does not hunt the morning after he

has slept with his wife (ibid.:60). An appropriate parallel here is provided by the phenomenology of Jean-Paul Sartre, who said: “The body is the totality of meaningful relations to the world” (1956:452; see also Telban 1998a:67 e.n.3).

Third, death in Ambonwari – and the related judgement of those responsible, including the deceased – is community business, that is, an affair of a family, a lineage, a clan and a village. It is not a matter of medical doctors or a hospital, regardless of a person dying in one. It is not a question of biomedical cause and related justification: influenza, pneumonia, malaria, tuberculosis, meningitis, and so on. It is the old question “why him or her”, “why me”; it is the question “how do we live”, “what did we do wrong”, “whose ways of doing things – that is, whose bad habits – made someone die”. It is the question of *imnggan kay* (“the way of the village”), *kupambn kay* (“the way of the elders/ancestors”) and the many *kay* (way, manner, habit, custom, law) of village individuals (Telban 1998 a, b). As *kay* (habits, ways) of an individual incorporates different collective *kay* (habits, ways), a sickness and death also become a collective issue (of household or lineage, for example) that incorporates past, present, and even anticipated future relationships, including those with their own familiar spirits (Telban 1998a:61).

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Fourth, being-towards-(my or your)-death in Christianity has its source in a linear conceptualization of the world and an emphasis on the individual, while being-towards-(collective)-beginning in Ambonwari has its source in a cyclical conceptualization of the world with the emphasis on cosmogony in all important rituals and the recognition of the individual as socially dependent.

Because death in Ambonwari worldview is not an instantaneous occurrence but a process in which there is a continual interaction between the living and the dead, because “body” is never the body of an isolated individual but always extended to and spread over other closely related “bodies”, because death in Ambonwari is always a community business and *never* a private affair, the search for and judgement of those responsible for someone’s sickness and death are also community business and never a private affair.

Though a matter of a community, death is at the same time also seen as a unique process in everyone’s *kay* (being, existence). Just as one is not simply born into a conscious Ambonwari person, but has to go through childhood, then initiation, then marriage, then parenthood, to become one, so one does not simply die and traverse the bridge into the world of the ancestors. Throughout one’s childhood, a person exists as an extension of his or her parents and only gradually as an individual social being (Telban 1997, 1998 a, b). When a person dies, he or she, likewise, still exists but only as an extension of the living. Only gradually do these deceased individuals join the anthropomorphic mass of Ambonwari ancestors. Just like a child has to sever the bond with its parents (but still remains their child), so the dead have to sever their bonds with the living (and *vice versa*), while at the same time still preserving a close cosmological contact with them.

During village disputes, or when the Ambonwari quarrel with people from other villages, one often hears men saying that they do not worry about dying as they are well aware that their brothers, fathers and mother’s brothers will revenge them. It seems

that it is the wholeness and the richness of the network of social relationships – past, present, and those anticipated in the future – which constitutes not only the life of an individual but also his or her death. Those who do not have many relatives and those whose lineages have no male descendants are more concerned with loneliness in both life and death than with their own death as such.

318 The Ambonwari, like many others, hold the conviction that after a person dies their ghost retains her or his personality. Individuals are not reduced to nothingness. Moreover, the deceased do not need to prove their innocence or admit their wrongs. They can still be nasty and bad. No one is going to judge them, less so in terms of any kind of final judgement that would then determine how the rest of their existence would be spent. Besides, as the Ambonwari say, one cannot change her or his skin just like that. Also, being bad does not mean that badness is not useful and admired by other villagers, and therefore, in some sense, even good (see Harrison 1993:120-1). Why would the deceased be judged at all when they cannot repay – in goods and money – those they wronged? The Ambonwari are sociocentric and egocentric enough to judge the living, who can then repay their wrongdoings. In such a way, the social and moral order is always established anew.

Lies, gossip and stealing are daily matters, something engaged in almost by everyone. Therefore, when in a particular case someone is innocent but nevertheless accused, people – not of course that person's closest relatives – do not view the whole thing as a terrible injustice. They do not even see the person as being innocent. They say that there were other wrongs done in the past by the accused but because at the same time they had been unable to prove them, or because there had been no village court, he or she escaped the punishment. Now, regardless of one's innocence, the past – not necessarily a particular event that has just happened – justifies, for some, the present punishment. No one thinks that people should agree about someone's wrongs. When a person is sick, or worse, when he or she dies, people speculate about the causes. It often happens that different groups in the village, and different segments of Ambonwari community, hold different views about someone's guilt and the causes for someone's sickness or death. A temporary agreement can suppress these different truths for some time, simply to recover them again as possibilities in the event of subsequent disputes, illnesses or deaths. The final truth is seldom one.

## **Conclusion: Speculation on Modernization**

We can discern here some significant differences between Christianity and Ambonwari cosmology: first, in Ambonwari it is not only people's own wrongs which can harm them but someone else's wrongs can inflict sickness and death on otherwise innocent relative, often a child; and secondly, in Ambonwari cosmology those who are severely sick and dying, and their closest relatives, confess their wrongs not to be saved in an afterlife but to be – they, their spouses and their children – saved in this life. That is, their confession and their willingness to compensate all those who were wronged show their will to survive. Their judges are their consociates, people and spirits (ghosts



and important lineage, clan and village spirits) and not some supreme deity. Every death – because of accompanying confessions, divination, and judgement – serves to reorganize social relationships among the living. The purpose of all this is not to secure a better place for a dead person in any kind of “other world”, but to reconstruct – for better or worse (for some) – the living conditions of those who stay alive and to ensure that no other close relative will die. In Ambonwari cosmology, there is no post-mortem judgement of good and bad deeds, no heaven and no hell, no anticipation of the Last Judgement, and no salvation. The entire Ambonwari cosmology, regardless of all the changes constantly taking place, is based on a will to preserve Ambonwari-ness, both as “the way of the village” and as “the way of the elders/ancestors”. The concept of being-towards-(collective)-beginning, most obviously recognized in the cosmogonical character of their initiation rituals, pervades Ambonwari cosmology in which life and death coexist as two modes of the same existence.

Are these views, however, as clear cut as I have presented them? Christianity has been in the Sepik Region for over 100 years, so no one would be surprised if the blending of Ambonwari’s cosmology with the Papua New Guinean version of one of the major religious orientations took a specific direction. People often asked me, especially during my last stay in the village between July and September 1997, about the possibility of the end of the world, about all the rumours and all different prophets, and about the prophetic year 2000. Ambonwari had just a few years ago built a new church, larger and more spectacular than their last major men’s house Yanbonman. A kind of charismatic glossalalia Christianity has swept the village – but not the other Karawari villages – and today there are many who hear voice of God and in a trance-like state speak in strange, unintelligible tongues.<sup>4</sup> And then, there are a few others, male and female, who claim to understand them and translate their weird language into Karawari and Tok Pisin.

As everyone is aware of how so-called cargo cults have appeared and reappeared throughout New Guinea and Melanesia since the end of the last century, one can imagine how easy it would be for Ambonwari to merge their own “traditional” views with *their* version of Christianity. In such a way, being-towards-(collective)-beginning orientation could become replaced by being-towards-(collective)-end/death, which for Ambonwari would not be an unfamiliar notion. Their mythology refers to a handful of survivors from two upriver villages that had been totally destroyed because one man broke several serious taboos by revealing the secrets of the men’s house to women and children. Those few who survived were accepted and accommodated by Ambonwari and later formed the last two clans in the village. Yet the story of their past was never forgotten. In this and other similar cases not only the judgement of the living but the judgement of the dead and the Final Judgement could become the prevailing obsessions of the Ambonwari people in the years to come.

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<sup>3</sup> In a superb global survey of millenarian beliefs, and fears and hopes accompanying apocalyptic expectations throughout the history of Western society, Thompson writes: “Modern Pentecostalism, whose adherents experience an ecstatic Spirit baptism often accompanied by speaking in tongues, is the driving force behind the stunning advance of Protestantism in Latin America and the Third World . . . Charismatics . . . believe that *charismata* – the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed on the disciples at Pentecost, such as speaking in tongues – are accessible to modern man” (Thompson 1997: 122, 143).

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#### BESEDA O AVTORJU

Borut Telban, dr., docent, je znanstveni sodelavec na ZRC SAZU. Po 38 mesecih antropoloških raziskav na Papui Novi Gvineji je leta 1994 doktoriral na Australian National University v Canberri. V letih 1995-1996 je kot štipendist Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland raziskovalno delal na Univerzi v Manchestru. Njegovo najpomembnejše delo je *Dancing through Time: A Sepik Cosmology*, Oxford University Press, 1998.

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