
**VEROVANJA IN MITIČNE PREDSTAVE O SMRTI
IN POSMRTNEM ŽIVLJENJU**

***BELIEFS AND MYTHOLOGICAL NOTIONS
OF DEATH AND LIFE AFTER DEATH***

SLAVIC FOLK CONCEPTIONS OF DEATH ACCORDING TO LINGUISTIC DATA

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IZVLEČEK

Slovanski ljudski koncepti smrti glede na lingvistična dejstva

Avtorica navaja nekaj temeljnih idej in semantičnih modelov, ki se kažejo v besednjaku in frazeologiji "o smrti" v slovanskih jezikih.

1. Koncept duše in interpretacija smrti kot "ločitev duše od telesa, njen odhod iz telesa" in podobne izraze je mogoče najti v izrazih (povezanih z umirajočo osebo) kot, na primer, "nekdo ima dušo v svojem nosu" (srbsščina), "v zobeh" (bolgarščina) itd.

2. Eden najpomembnejših konceptov v "besedilu o smrti" je ideja poti, zato smrt opisuje tako veliko glagolov gibanja. Umirajoča oseba tako "gre narazen", "leti", "potuje", "je na poti" itd.

3. Interpretacija smrti kot vrnitve na zemljo, ki je bila element in material za ustvarjenje človeka (primerjaj z Genezo), predstavlja semantično osnovo naslednjih izrazov: "iti v črno zemljo", "iti pod črno zemljo", "biti poročen s črno smrtjo", "jesti zemljo" itd.

4. Naslednja ideja o smrti je koncept konca, sklenitev življenja, izčrpanje virov, življenjskih moči in pripadajočega časa. S tem v zvezi so povezani naslednji izrazi: "priti do konca", "končati se", "biti zunaj let", "pojesti življenje nekoga" itd.

5. Krščanske koncepte smrti kot poti in novo življenje ali novo rojstvo lahko opazimo v izrazih, kot so, na primer, "rešiti se" v bolgarščini, roditi se, "da umreš" itd.

6. Včasih je zunanji simptom umiranja ali specifičnost pogrebne šege uporabljen kot izrazni motiv. Na primer "zaviti z očmi", "dati roke skupaj", "imeti 'kolivo' v ustih" itd.

Ključne besede: umiranje, umrla oseba, duša, pogrebne šege, pot, zemlja, besednjak o smrti

Key words: dying, diseased person, soul, funeral rites, route, earth, vocabulary of death

Comparative poorness of verbal representation of such an important fragment of the traditional world picture as folk concepts of death and the corresponding rituals and everyday behavior has more than once been pointed out by scholars investigating Slavic folk culture. Such poorness is even more evident against the background of the developed terminology and phraseology of the wedding ritual and matrimonial beliefs. It is normally accounted for by the consecration of the theme of death, by the danger of direct nom-

ination of the very phenomenon of death, the deceased, the other world etc. «The vocabulary of death» comprises mostly euphemistic designations and idioms based on non specific vocabulary, nevertheless justified by the whole system of concepts concerning life and death, correlated with the ritual of leave-taking of the deceased, burial and remembrance. To a considerable extent the sphere of the meanings (concepts) elaborated in the vocabulary and phraseology of death coincides in various Slavic languages, which fact, considering their etymological community, allows to reconstruct ancient Slavic beliefs relating to death and, so to say, the whole «text of death».

It seems that the only «specific» area in the Slavic vocabulary of death are the words containing the common Slavic root **mbr-/mer-/mor*, from which the «key words» **sъmbrto* ‘death’ and **mbrěti* ‘to die’ represented in all the Slavic languages are derived. Nevertheless, even these words, as shown by V. V. Ivanov (ИВАНОВ 1987) and V. N. Toporov (ТОПОРОВ 1991), in the Indo-European retrospective turn out to be not void of inner form, i.e. semantically derived and reduced to be primary meaning ‘to disappear’, a corresponding verb (alongside with the meaning ‘to die’) having been registered in ancient Hittite texts. Such semantic development ‘to disappear’ → ‘to die’ is convincingly explained as an ancient euphemism (while opposite direction of semantic development seems unlikely).

Such actual, for the Hittite language, i.e. inner form has, of course, been wholly erased in the Slavic ground and the verb **mbrěti* is undoubtedly non-motivated in Slavic languages. Nevertheless, the ancient semantic model ‘to disappear’ → ‘to die’ with certain semantic filiations like ‘be missing, be lost’ → ‘to die’ (or semantically correlated causative row: ‘to destroy’ → ‘to kill, to put the death’) turns out to be actual also for the Slavic languages and is encountered in a considerable layer of so-called «secondary», i.e. motivated vocabulary of death. I mean such verbs involved in the field of death as **tęreti (se)* ‘to lose, be lost’, **gubiti (se)/ *gъbnoti/*gybati (se)* ‘to destroy, be destroyed’, **propasti/*propadati* ‘to be missing’, **tratiti* ‘to spend’, **konьcati (se)/ *konьciti (se)* and some others, e.g. **gladiti*.

All these verbs with the common main meaning ‘to disappear, to be missing’ or (causative) ‘act so that something /somebody disappears, is missing’ (and their derivatives) may, in various Slavic languages, have the meaning ‘to die /to put to death, to kill’. Being unable to quote here the necessary illustrative material, I would just like to point out that this semantic connection ‘to disappear’ → ‘to die’ is confirmed and supported by the connection between opposite (antonymous) meanings: ‘to find /be found’ and ‘to bear /be born’ (words with the meaning ‘to find /be found’ have in a few Slavic languages the meaning of ‘to bear /be born’, Толстая 1997). Such correlation of words and meanings reflects, characteristically of the Slavic folk culture, the mirroring opposing concept of birth and death, two polar marks of human life (see Толстая 1990). It should be also noted that the verbs nominating burial in the Slavic languages **chorniti*, **chovati*, **pretati* are indirectly connected with the same semantic sphere of «losing~finding». On the one hand, we find antonymous correlation ‘to lose /have lost’ ~ ‘to keep / have kept’ (i.e. ‘not to lose’ / ‘not to have lost’), and on the other hand there is semantic opposition ‘to hide’ ~ ‘to find’.

Such essential, for the folk tradition, category, as a contraposition of good, natural, self death to bad, unnatural death, is also reflected in the vocabulary of death. The very common Slavic word **sъmьrtь* originally used to denote a natural, good, right death (which is expressed by the prefix **sъ-/*su-*, meaning 'good' and 'own'). Unnatural, bad death is denoted by the verbs **gubiti (se)/ *gьbnoti/*gybati (se)* 'to destroy, be destroyed' with the primary meaning 'to bend', and further, possibly, leading to the notion 'crooked', having stable negative connotations and interpreted as 'something wrong, bad, dangerous' (Жуйкова 1998; Толстая 1998).

Let us briefly examine a few more motifs and semantic models reflected in the vocabulary and phraseology of the Slavic languages, being key ones the folk concept of death.

1. Let us begin with the cardinal, for the given sphere, concept of the soul and interpretation of death as separation of soul from the body. According to Serbian beliefs, a living person's soul is «tied» to the body (whence expressions *везана душа*, «tied, i.e. corporal soul»), while after death it frees itself from the body (it is nominated *слободна душа* «free soul»). See Чајкановић 1994.5: 72. This concept interprets death as «separation» of the body from the soul, as the breach of the bond, which bond is sometimes perceived as christening or matrimonial bond, whence the Serbian expressions like *раскрестити човека с душой* «unchristen somebody with the soul», *свјатеник раскреицивае умирајућег с душой* «the priest unchristens the dying person with the soul» (Vukanović 1986: 304).

There exist various notions about the exact location of the soul in the body, as well as about the manner in which it leaves the body in the moment of death. Most frequently it's believed that the soul leaves the body through the mouth (Serbians have a proverb *Душа једна врата има*, (i.e. «there is only one door for the soul»), but it might also be the nose (Serbians say about a dying person *Душа му у носу стоји* «he has his soul standing in his nose», (Чајкановић 1994/2: 62), or *дошла душа у нос* «the soul has come up to the nose»); cf. Serbian folk curse *Душа ти на нос да излазила* (Piroт, Златковић 1989: 32). It might also be the throat (or a hollow on the neck): *дошла душа под грло* «the soul has come up to the throat»; Bulgarians consider the teeth to be the last refuge of the soul before death, so they say about the dying person *носи душата в зьбите си* «he wears his soul in his teeth» or *душата му е до зьбите* «his soul has come up to the teeth» or *държа душата си зад зьбите* «he keeps his soul behind his teeth» (ФРБЕ 1: 285-286).

It might be the eyes: Silesian Poles used to believe that the eyes burst in the moment of death, and that is how the soul comes out of the body (Moszynski 1967: 594; cf. also Чајкановић 1994/5: 108). It may be also the nails: Bulg. *душа и под нокът остая* «the soul holds on but under the nail». Czechs believe it to be the elbow: *mit duši v lokti* «he has his soul in his elbow», Serbians believe it to be the bones: *Дух му се у кости забио* «his spirit has hidden in his bones», *Занекла му се душа у костима* «his soul has been baked in the bones», *Једва носим у костима душу* «I can hardly wear my soul in my bones» (Чајкановић 1994/5: 72). Russians also consider the soul to gradually «run out» of the body, cf. the expression *в чем только душа держится*

«what is there to keep the soul» (though it might also have a different inner meaning, underlining bodily diminution, insufficiency). Russian dial. *Душа коротка стала* «the soul has become short», Ukrainian *душа на одній нитці держиться* «The soul holds on to a thread» (ФСУМ 1: 277) etc.

East-Serbian (from Pirot) curses might also nominate the ribs as the place of souls the departure: *Душа ти на ребро излезла* «your soul has come to your rib» etc. (Златковић 1989: 32). The same texts may have, in accordance with the general «lowered» stylistics of the curses and their characteristic «non-normativity», the motif of the soul's departure through *the anus* (*Душа на дупе да ти излази кад појдеш на онуја свет* - the same), which is in accordance with the folk concept of death of wizards, witches etc.

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Separation of the soul from the body can be interpreted as the action of either the soul itself or the dying person or some other «third» subject. In the former case, the soul, as a rule, «comes out» (the standard expression about death in Polesye: *душа вышла*) or «goes away» (*душа уходит* - about the dying person, Zakarpatye, Sinevir). Moreover, the soul may «fly away» (East-Slavic), «fall down» (Serb. *док му душа не испадне* - Трипковић 1967: 5), «break off» (Тешић 1988: 144-145); cf. also Old-Russian *изрони душу из храбра тела* («Слово о полку Игореве»), Rus. Karel. *душа выпадает* «the soul falls out» about a dying person (СРГК 2: 13). When the dying person is the agent, he «parts with», «separates with» the soul, «bids farewell» to it, «lets out, spews, exhales» the soul, «climbs down the soul» (Vologda dial. *сдобляется с душееньки спуститься* - Брагина 1980), *отдаёт Богу душу* «gives the soul to God». Serbians say about the agony that the person «collect the soul» or «fights with the soul» (agony being interpreted as the fight between the angel and the death, the fight between the angel and the devil for the human soul). See ГЕМБ 49: 163.

«The third» party of the act may be God who takes the soul (Serb. *узме му Бог душу* «God will take his soul»), an Angel or Archangel, a saint sent by God to take the soul out of the person and bring it to heaven, or Death, devil, an evil spirit that «grab» the soul with a scythe, hooks, a knife, a sabre etc. (Byelor. Gomel. *ангал за правым вухам, нечисть за левым, хто з их пераможэ, той душу бярэ*).

Relatives of the dying person take care to, according to a folk expression, *пропустить душу* «let the soul through», while it is leaving the body, therefore unfasten the clothes, open the windows, the doors, the chests, and in the case of a difficult agonizing death they raise up the tie-beam, take to pieces the ceiling or the roof. The expression *сторожить душу* or *караулить душу* «to guard the soul» is connected with the known up to now custom of putting a vessel of the water at the head of dying person's bed and make sure, by the waving of the water, that the soul has left the body.

It is quite often that in similar expressions the word *душа* «the soul» is substituted by *дух* «the spirit»: *дух вышел, дух вон, испустил дух* «the spirit went out, the spirit got out, let the spirit out» etc. Peasants of Vologda region, while throwing some earth onto the coffin, used to say: «*дух вон, слух вон, вид вон*» «the spirit out, hearing out, seeing out».

The spirit, the air, the vapour, in folk concepts, are the substance of the soul, its material embodiment. Though sometimes similar context might echo the Christian

concept of the soul based on the triad body-soul-spirit, in Polesye beliefs, expressions *дух на небо иде, а душа в землю* «The spirit goes to the heaven, and the soul goes to the earth» or *душа, вона шчо, вона никуда не попадае, згниває* «the soul does not get anywhere, it rots» (РА, Rovno region, Glinnoye).

2. The second essential motif of the «the text of death» is the route. The fact that it is not a concept introduced by scholars understanding the ritual of burial as *rite de passage*, but a category inherent in the folk culture itself, is justified by the vocabulary and phraseology connected with the idea of movement and route, widely represented in all the Slavic languages. The verb *ходить* ‘to go’, as well as its derivatives and synonyms, is in the centre of these nominations of death. They say about the dying person that he *отходит* «going off», about the deceased person - *отошел* «went off» (*Вот у нас у соседки мужик отошел, молодой еще был*). Tambov dialects have *уходиться* in the meaning of ‘to be drowned’ (*У нас уходилась одна молоденькая, так ее схоронили*), and *ухожуки* are ‘the drowned ones’; the same dialects present a rare usage of the verbs *улететь, отлететь* «to fly off» in the meaning ‘to die’ (*У меня два мужа улетели; Начал обираться, значит скоро улетит от нас*) (Махрачева 1997); it is possible that similar usage has been affected by common expressions like *душа отлетела, улетела* «the soul has flown off». The verb *убраться* «to be removed» is known in the same meaning: *У меня сын убрался, молодой такой был, 32 года* «My son was removed, he was so young, 32 years old» (Tambov).

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There is another verb noted in Polesye, *бродить* «to wander», denoting the state of the agonizing dying person. The motif of «the water route» is present in Perm dialect expressions *уйти за реку, уйти за Каму, тот берег видать* «to go over the river, to go over the Кама, the other bank can be seen» (about the dying person) (Подюков 1991: 65). The way after death can be directed either upwards (Rus. Arkhangel. *на гору собирается* «is going up the mountain», about the dying person, АОС 9: 82) or downwards (Perm. *уйти книзу* ‘to die’, Подюков 1991: 67).

Eastern Slavs often say about the dying person that he is *собирается в дорогу, дивится на дорогу* «getting ready for the journey, looking at the road» (РА, Brest region, Rubel), *уже на дорозе* «already on the way» (РА, Brest region, Khoromsk), *идет в далекую дорогу* «is leaving on a far journey» (Zakarpate, Sinevir). It was customary in the Vologda region to place the dying person onto the floor along the floor-boards *чтоб ему по путям было* «so that he is on his way». Bulgarians used to name the dying person *пътник* «a traveller» (Вакарелски 1938: 258), and the special loaf of bread baked just after death, was called *пътнина*, and it was believed that, after the ritual breaking up of the loaf, the soul of the deceased «started on its route» (Лозанова 1997: 42). In Polesye, while nailing the coffin, they wished the deceased person «a happy journey». All the Slavic traditions prohibit crying, bewailing, keening during the agony, with the stable motivation: «the dying person ought not to be disturbed on his route».

However, the verbs of the movement are more frequent in full constructions with the designated aim, the ultimate point of the route. This ultimate point is usually defined as «home»: the dying person *собирается до дому, до дому поглядае, идет в*

дорогу до дому «is going to leave for home, looking forward to his home, going on his way home». The inevitability of death is thus alluded to: *да дому тре ици кались* «some time it is necessary to go home», *треба додому уже ити ему* «he has to go home already» (PA Gomel region, Ruchayevka), about the deceased: *пишов до дому* (PA, Rovno region, Svaritsevichi), *уже [пошел] на вечный дом* «already [gone] to the eternal home» (PA, Kiev region, Kopachi).

The aim of the route may also be meeting one's deceased relatives, joining the assembly of ancestors, described in the following expressions: *пошел до дедов, до жонки, до родыны, пошел до своих, до всех своих, пошел до своего рода, до своего дому, уже с небошчиками говорят, з продкамы за руку здороваются* «gone to the grandfathers, to one's wife, to the family, to one's own people, to all one's people, gone to one's kin, to one's home, already talking with the deceased, greeting the ancestors by the hand» (PA, Brest region), *на свой хлеб пошла, на свое местожительство* «gone to eat one's own bread, to one's own place of abode» (Vologda region) etc. An adapted to Christianity variant of such beliefs is reflected in phrases like *отправился к Богу на небеса, на тот свет собрался* «gone to God in heaven, getting ready for the other world».

From time to time, there can be met expressions connected with archaic notions about the vegetable kingdom as the locus of the dead. Thus, an old woman from Ol-tush, a Polesye village, said about herself: *Я худко поеду в гай* «I shall soon go to the grove» (PA, Brest region); in Kaluga dialects there has been registered an expression *собирается в березки* «going to leave to the birches», which means 'close to death'. In Siberian dialects *пойти в березовый (в зеленый) гай* «to go to the birch (green) garden» means 'to die'; Russians in Lithuania say *под березы пора* «it is time to go under the birches»; in Novgorod region *уйти под елку* «to go to the fir-tree» means 'to die' (see Подюков 1991: 71). A Yaroslav phrase *пора на веники* «time to go to the besom» with the same meaning is also interesting (it is connected with the custom of putting besoms into the coffin).

3. The semantic models mentioned above suppose vertical linear movement of the soul - from the dead body up to the heaven above. They are opposed by the phraseology understanding death, so to say, a corporeal point of view, i.e. as the way of the person from the face of the earth into its entrails, as coming back into the element and substance from which the human being has been created (cf. from the Orthodox Christian burial service «*яко земля еси и в землю отыдеши*» «thou art like the earth and into the earth thou shalt go»).

Carpathian Rusyns say *пойти до чорної землі* «go to the black earth» meaning 'to die'; Serbians say *он оде под црну земљу* «he goes under the black earth»; Bulgarian curses: *Чтоб тебѣ взяла черная земля!* «May the black earth take you!»; *Иди ты в черную землю!* «Go into the black earth!» etc. Slovenes say about the deceased person «he has been wed to the black earth» or «he is in the arms of the black earth»; and Greeks say «he has been eaten by the black earth» (see Толстой 1997), cf. Perm. *землю накормить* «to feed the earth» meaning 'to die' (Подюков 1991: 62). Kashubs similarly say «he has long been grinding the earth» (Sychta 6: 221). There is a group of sim-

ilar phrases in the Czech containing the word *hlina*, which in the given case also means 'the earth': «there is already a pile of clay upon him», «he is in the black clay», «he is grinding, puddling the clay», «he has gone to Hlinsk» etc. All these expressions mean 'he is already dead, in the grave' (Zaorálek 1947: 109-110).

Kashubs speak about old age thus: «earth is already coming upon me», «earth is pulling him», «he is growing into the earth» (Sychta 6: 221). It can be heard in Polesye about very old people that they «smell of earth» (PA, Kiev region, Kopachi), or they «getting ready to go into earth» (PA, Brest region). The Perm dialectal expression *до пещу на* «until the sadn» means 'until death'; they say about very old people *песок на глаза сыплется* «sand is pouring onto one's eyes» (Подюков 1991: 67), cf. also Novgorod. *глаза песком засыпать* «to pour sand onto one's eyes»; Arkhang. *пещу на глаза положить* «to put some sand onto one's eyes» (АОС 9: 82) etc.

There exists a widely spread belief, according to which a person should die on the ground, so it was customary in numerous local traditions to take the dying person down from the bed onto the ground or at least onto the floor, especially during an agonizing death. Serbians thought that the dying person should by all means «grab the earth», «seize the earth», for being separated from mother earth, he cannot die.

Eastern Slavs and Russians in particular have an expression *земля не принимает* «the earth won't admit», which represents a very ancient concept concerning good, natural, «one's own» death and – bad, «not one's own», «evil» death. It was forbidden to bury in the earth those who died of unnatural reasons – self-murderers, hanged people, drowned people. Such category of the deceased people and corresponding beliefs and rituals have been thoroughly investigated by D. K. Zelenin (Зеленин 1995), who, using a Northern Russian dialect term called such deceased people *заложные*. According to folk beliefs, every time a *заложный* deceased person is buried in the earth, he is coming back to the ground, which just is that «the earth won't admit»; he is not prone to decay and, by nights, gets out of the grave and harms people. Such beliefs have given origin to a special burying practice: such dead bodies were not buried in the earth, but they were thrown out into deserted places or left on the place of death, heaped up with twigs and branches of trees, brushwood, stones etc. to prevent them from «walking». Serbians thought that «the earth won't admit» great sinners - perjurers, murderers, transgressors of property laws etc. Bodies of such sinners were burnt after their death, and the custom was preserved in some places up to the 20th century (Филиповић 1959).

The corporeal image of death gives origin to nominations of death based on the outward observed symptoms like *очи в гору подошли* «eyes gone up» (Polesye), *глазки встали* «eyes stopped» (Russia); *на леву сторону глаза вывернулись* «eyes turned out to the left» (Arkhangel'sk region, Каспина 1996: 49) cf. the proverb *ложись под образа да выворачивай глаза* («lie down under the icons and turn your eyes out», АОС 9: 82); *ноги протянул* «stretched one's legs» (Russia), *задраць (адкінуць) ногі* (Byelorussia, Юрчанка 1972: 235), Pol. *zadarł gegi* «put one's feet up», SW) etc., as well as characteristic features of the very funeral rites, e.g. *сложить руки* «to fold arms» (*У меня муж рано сложил руки в 31 год* «My husband folded his arms early -

at age of 31», Tambov region, Махрачева 1997); *треба рабиць пака руки складеш* «one has to work until folds one's arms», PA, Gomel region, Ruchayevka), Rus. *под образа лечь (положить)* «to lie/lay down under the icons», Rus. Perm. *пора полотенце готовить, руки на грудь положить, растянуться вдоль лавки* «time to get the towel ready; to put the arms on one's chest; to spread oneself along the bench»; Bulg. «he carries *kolivo* in his mouth» (ФРБЕ 1: 749) etc.

4. The next semantic model of nomination of death stresses the concept of the end, the completion of one's life, of «exhaustiveness» of one's life resources (lot), of the life forces and assigned time. The verbs *конать* and *кончатся* are central in the group; they are used to denote agony and death in all the Slavic languages (let us note that the original semantics of these verbs again brings us back to the concept of «disappearance»; both *кончатся* and *исчезнуть* mean 'to cease to exist'). Beside these verbs, there are synonymous expressions describing various aspects of the «end», e.g. Serb. dial. *пребрину све бриге* «all his cares have been left behind him», or *оставио кашуку* «put his spoon aside» (Теший 1988: 145), Rus. Volog. *отряхнулся от жизни* «shuffled off life»; about old people: *отживает, доживает, чужой век живет* «living through the remainder of one's days; living somebody else's life» (Poles. *чужую жизнь заедает* «eating somebody else's life»), *вышел из годов* «run out of one's years»; *безгодовой* «having no years», cf. about one's death *часуется* «living out the hours». According to folk beliefs, a human being's earthly existence is measured and every violation of one's measure of time (not living long enough up to one's measure or, vice versa, a too long life) is considered to be dangerous for the person as well as for the whole society.

The Christian idea of death as the end of the earthly route and transition to a new eternal life, as a second birth is basic for such nominations of death as Bulg. *спаси се* «saved oneself», *роди се* «was born» (Вакарелски 1939: 10). Russian *dukbobors* «do not call a Christian's extinction - *death*, but a *change* (*изменение*), and so do not say *our brother is dead*, but *our brother has changed*» (evidence of the beginning of the 19th century, Тихонравов 1862: 12 of spec. pagin.).

A few cultural metaphors can be pointed out, being used in the vocabulary of death. Thus, the concept that a man has his counterparts in the world of nature has produced such phrases as *закатилась его звезда* «one's star has set», primarily correlated with the phenomenon of death and connected with the belief that at the moment of one's birth a new star is lighted in the sky, and at the moment of one's death it is extinguished. The same image of life as light and death as darkness is present in Polesye phrases *догорела свечка* «the candle is gone out» (about one's death) and *уже ваша свечка догарывает* «your candle is burning out» (your life is at an end) or in Perm. expression *свеча погасла* «the candle is gone out», i.e. 'death has come' (Подюков 1991: 70). A Serbian expression *посјекло се му дрво* «his tree is felled» is connected with a folk belief, according to which a man has a counterpart in the world of trees, and, if the tree is felled, the man will die.

Among the stable and widely met in the vocabulary of death metaphors is the one describing death as a sleep, according to the Russian proverb «сон смерти свой» (i.e. «sleep and death are closeones»). The image has served as the basis for such well-known

expressions as *уснуть вечным сном* «fall to eternal sleep», *усопший* «the late», *успение* «Assumption» and, moreover, it is being developed as an ordinary picture of sleep, bed, lying in bed etc., cf. Perm. *растянуться подоль лавки, постелить постельку, еловым одеялом укрыться* «to stretch oneself along the bench, to make one's bed, to cover oneself with fir blanket» meaning 'to die' etc. (Подюков 1991: 70).

The presented examples of phraseology and vocabulary concerning death, should they be taken outside the ritual context and the context of beliefs, might be interpreted as ordinary linguistic metaphors, euphemistic substitutions of the verb *умирать* (*умереть*) 'to die', produced by the taboo on the direct nomination of death and the process of dying; however, the very character of such substitutional nomination brings out the deep roots of such «secondary» vocabulary of death in the cultural concepts, its direct connection with the beliefs and ritual practice, its cultural foundation and semantic depth.

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