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STATUSES AND FUNCTIONS OF FUNERAL RITE PARTICIPANTS

Summary

The study of changes in social status and the definition of their functions is carried out using the structure of the cycle of funeral rites, which includes prologue, preparation for burial, funeral at home, burial in the cemetery and funeral repast. According to the transition theory, the participants of the rites change their social statuses in the result of ritual actions. In the process of studying, the researcher suggests that such a change of statuses could occur in each of the five funeral rites. Upon more detailed examination, it is established that the transitions occur in the culminating episodes of the rites.

However, the identification of moments that are significant and essential for further actions, compared to others, leads to agree that there are only three transitions and they take place in the prologue, where the dying person receives the status of the dead; in burial in the cemetery – the dead becomes the buried; during the funeral repast, when the buried person acquires the status of the deceased. The culminating episodes of these rites are the departure of the soul in the prologue, the “sealing” of the grave by the priest during the burial in the cemetery and the feasting of the elders in the courtyard of the deceased.

At the same time, profane statuses are the initial status of the dead and the final status of the deceased. The status of the dying person for ritual action is important only if the person actually dies; if this does not happen, all subsequent rituals lose all meaning. The task of the funeral cycle is to turn the dead into the deceased. But the only way to perform it can be ritual actions and the transition from initial to final profane status through the sacred status of the buried, which can exist only within the rite due to the afterlife, which interferes with reality during the ritual actions of the funeral cycle of rites.

In addition to the main object of funeral ceremonies, other participants change their statuses: as a result of the death of a family member, the wife becomes a widow, the husband – a widower, and the children – orphans. The transformation also takes place with the objects involved in the rites: a wooden box when the body is placed in it turns into the coffin, and the pit in the cemetery becomes a tomb when the coffin is lowered into it and covered with soil.

Key words: *Ukrainian rituals, family rituals, funeral rite, rites of passage, structural and functional method.*