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A BRIEF MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF BURIAL RITES AND OF RELATION TO DEATH ON THE BASIS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES IN BOHEMIA

ABSTRACT — *One of the basic conditions of successful study of the development of the relation of man to death is an approach as complex as possible. It is necessary to follow in the archaeological sources all manifestations related to death i.e. not only graves and burial grounds, but also documents of human sacrifices, cannibalism and other manipulation with the dead body or with its parts. Correct inclusion of the testimony of archaeological sources into concrete historical context requires first abstraction from contemporary social standards connected with death. It requires also thorough orientation in the problem of the history of religion and philosophy, in the sphere of ethnography of extra-European pre-industrial societies, and last but not least also in local ethnography.*

The results of a study conceived in this way should be the evaluation of the relation of man to death in general as a specific irrational part of the relation of man to nature. Man assumed two basic attitudes to death from the very beginning: a passive and an active one. Passive attitude meant to drive the death off, to cheat it, or to appease it. Active attitude tried to make use of those dying of natural death, or of sacrificed individuals to the benefit of the living. A basic change in the attitude to death was brought about by Christianity. Instead of trying to cheat the death it cheated man by glorifying death, as an admission to a better existence. An active approach to death was withheld from man by the doctrine about Christ's sacrifice redeeming all believers. The natural fear of death and the efforts to limit its effects on the living, however, has never been wiped out completely. Christianity only incited the coming into existence of new forms of some older tendencies.

KEY WORDS: *Development of the relation of man to death — Methodology — Method — Model.*

INTRODUCTION

The basic impulse for this paper arose from the study of funeral finds from Late Eneolithic (Buchvaldek 1967, Havel 1978, Matoušek 1982, 1987a) and from a study of post-Mesolithic use of caves in Central Europe (Matoušek 1987b), markedly expressing the development of man's relation to death. The results of the above publications were completed by information from the latest synthesis of the Czech prehistory (Pleiner et al. 1978) and other synoptical publications.

STARTING POINTS

Prior to starting the study of any phenomenon from the sphere of relations of the historical societies to the reality of death, we shall explain certain methodological and methodical aspects, at least in four domains.

An analysis of the present idea of death. The natural, and often subconscious derivation of categories of a living culture, perceived and accepted by the scholar in his contemporary social environment (e.g. Hroch et al. 1985, 273, Neustupný 1986) were

frequent sources of mistakes and errors in the past. The problem of dying and of death is dispelled and ousted by modern societies to the margin of social conscience. The fear of death is overcome by pretended ignorance of the fact that human life is finite, but also by indifference to handicapped, to people suffering from grave illnesses, to dying people, and by maximally limiting the customs and rites connected with dying and death (Anonym 1981, Frolec 1982). All this is of course tragical self-deception, and in its consequence death causes bigger fear than at any time in the past. Social standards and conventions following from this situation influence also the scholars studying the past and are binding for them. For these reasons the study of funeral sources is often reduced to mere statistical enumeration of the observed phenomena and on their basis arise only judgements of very general character, such as "ritual burial ... suggests that they believed in after-life" (Pleiner et al. c.d., 44), or "the adding of grave goods (vessels, ornaments) seems to document the belief in the continuation of life after death" (ib. 226). Sometimes prehistoric societies are believed to have been acting according to the social code of the present society, e.g. secondary interferences with graves are regarded as looting according to the contemporary moral code (Stuchlík 1988) and considered an amoral and antisocial phenomenon (Podborský 1988, 78).

Ethnographical information from the milieu of extra-European pre-industrial societies. On using analogies from these milieus for the explanation of archaeological sources to the European prehistory we have to abstract from the historically conditioned phenomena and to negate in this way consciously one of the basic principles of studying the development of the society (Neustupný 1986, 545). In an effort to respect this principle we have to be rather critical to the above analogies, which in its consequence means that ethnographical research presents only sections from a relatively endless number of variants of forms of the respective social phenomenon. The archaeologist thus acquires for the interpretation of the relicts of a certain historically conditioned phenomenon a series of often completely contradictory examples from incommensurable social environments (to our topic see e.g. Holý 1956, Ucko 1969, Kandert 1982). Of course there also exist publications exceeding the form of those enumerating various examples. Anyhow, the search for some rules of general validity, regardless of time and territorial limitations in the mechanism of social processes, is in spite of its attractive character basically ahistorical (compare e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1966, 162, Binford 1971).

Theory of the history of religion, history of philosophy. If we compare the frequency of the use of the above sphere of ethnography by the archaeologists, with the frequency of the use of the conclusions from the theory of religion and from the history of philosophy, we find considerable differences. Striking is the low level of mutual information between archaeologists, philosophers, and historians of religion, resulting in schematic approaches to the achievements of the other branch, sometimes leading to errors and

inaccuracies (one of the most palpable examples from the Czechoslovak production are the proceedings on the origins of religion in the light of archaeological sources — Kliský 1979). The causes of this situation should be seen namely in the different systems of the means of research used by the respective scientific branches: in the use of various theories, principles, notions, methods and language. For these reasons an archaeologist will better get along with an ethnographer than with a philosopher. But if the archaeologist tries to break this communication barrier, he will appear in a world where the phenomena he is studying — in our case burial rites, are followed within the framework of broader systems of imaginations and practices connected with death, which again form part of historically conditioned mythological, religious and philosophical systems. The ideas and practices connected with the phenomenon of death appear here as a reflection of the respective conception of life and death, while emphasis is always on life, not on death. The sense of these systems and practices has been to define the optimum way of existence of the society (at the mythological stage) and later also of the individual.

Ethnographic knowledge from local milieu. The mass of knowledge from the local ethnography and folklore are reflected by archaeology even less than the history of religion and the history of philosophy. Relations between the above scientific branches would without doubt deserve a more profound analysis, which cannot be done in this paper. Briefly, the lack of confidence from archaeology (but not from ethnography — Frolec 1984) can be again derived from different research systems, and also from the fact that the ethnographer and the folklorist take their information mainly from the period of the recent centuries, i.e. from the period called "recent" by the archaeologist, with a slightly pejorative tinge. But archaeologists should bear in mind that one of the basic features of folk culture is strong adhesion to traditions, and that the folk culture of the rural societies of the 18th–19th centuries grew from a material basis that had not changed substantially since the period of prehistoric farmers. We can therefore rightly expect that the folk culture of the New Age has preserved very ancient elements — and what is of special importance — elements of local traditions. From the viewpoint of our topic it is very important that the ethnographer follows the rites and customs linked with death "in all their social, legal, religious, ethical and other aspects" (Navrátilová 1981, 13). Popular rites and customs are comprehended as syncretic formations, and as such they are in fact residues of the mythological world.

Basic problems. It follows from the above remarks that archaeological funeral materials should be studied in their broadest possible connections, and for their interpretation we cannot use standards and categories valid in the contemporary society. We should therefore seek answers at least to the following questions:

— what is a burial?

- under what historical conditions is arising this phenomenon?
- what are the basic trends of its development?
- what needs of man and of the society are being satisfied by rites and customs connected with death?

Brief model of the development of the relation of man to death. If we imagine living material to be, with some overstatement, a biological machine, then its programme is life, and we may speak of biological imperative. Any menace to this programme provokes defence reactions in organisms, and it becomes also a source of fear in man. In the process of socialization the latter acts as an impulse for the development of more complex social phenomena and relations (Vondráček, Holub 1968, 91, 113). So that to have the feeling of fear, we must be conscious of our limited existence. Animals, including the highest primates do not fear death, and if they meet with the fact of death, they do not pay attention to it, or they show something like amazement, wonder or sorrow (biologists, of course refute the application of human psychological interpretation to the behaviour of animals) over the change in the state of their companion (Schaller 1969, van Lawick-Goodall 1976, Fossey 1988).

The problem of determining the moment since when man or his animal predecessor became aware of its or his own existence, or the moment of transition from biological to psychosocial forms of the movement of matter, the beginning of the process of anthropogenesis, is extremely complicated (Leonovičová, Novák 1982, 210 and others). For us there is an important presumption, that "the first emotion contributing to strengthening the social relations in the human society coming into being was probably fear" ... "fear of predatory animals, and of various natural phenomena, completely uncontrollable on the level of the period" (ibid. 225). We cannot say with certainty whether fear of death had some social echo already in the first hominids in the Early Palaeolithic. The important thing is that we see this phenomenon for the first time in a rather convincing form in the Middle Palaeolithic, at the time when appear the first documents of an important breakthrough in the development of human culture: specialization in hunting, construction of shelters, development of the technology of stone tools, workshops specializing in the manufacture of stone tools, the first manifestations of creative arts. Besides finds specified as individual burials we find also material reflections of phenomena that later, in the Upper Palaeolithic and in the Mesolithic, became more frequent: with mass burials of several individuals, with practices of burying separately the individual parts of human bodies, namely of skulls (comprehensively Valoch 1982, mentioning also other literature).

The period of hunting-gathering economy was the period of forming, and of the outset of the development of mythological concept of the world. In consequence of the low standard of production and consequently also low standard of knowledge, man was perhaps able to recognize and describe the entire

objective reality surrounding him, but was incapable of abstract thinking (Nahodil, Robek 1961, 162, Cassirer 1977, 106). His ideas and his conception of the world and life were formed by a conglomeration of individual items, whose relations and causes, as well as the consequences of these relations remained unrecognized. The world thus appeared to be a large association of life. This conception of world negates death. Death is a random phenomenon, natural death escaped the imagination of man (Cassirer 1977, 161). He tried to contravene death by maximally isolating the corpse, the artifacts that had been in touch with the deceased, and also with his relatives from the society of living. The corpse was simply disposed off (sometimes quite rudely), dumped outside the settlement, e.g. in the woods, thrown into water or burned at the fireplace. His shelter was destroyed, so were also his implements of daily use, or together with the corpse they were removed from the settlement — in this act we can see the roots of a phenomenon that later found its expression in burial gifts (Nahodil, Robek 1961, 174, 407). Some Upper Palaeolithic finds are probably documents of this type of treating the deceased (Pleiner et al. 1978, 151, Klíma 1987). Ethnography, namely extra-European ethnography documents on countless examples of certain limitations or banning the kindred during a certain period following the death; they were not allowed to speak, to touch food, they had to go around specially dressed, in special make-up, etc. The primary form of reaction to death has been its magic elimination from the society of the living, and death could have been driven off, dispelled or reconciled through the deceased.

In connection with finds of isolated remains, sometimes carrying traces of violent interference we should briefly mention also problems of cannibalism, which are often estimated — and we should bear this fact in mind — from the viewpoint of contemporary social standards. Ethnography has worked out the following theories on the reasons for eating human flesh:

- a) reasons of altruistic character (from fear of leaving parts of flesh on the bones lest evil forces should gnaw the bones of the deceased, causing him further suffering);
- b) the need of maintaining biological contacts with the deceased (i.e. relatives were obliged to eat from his flesh);
- c) the need to acquire in this way some of the properties of the deceased and to identify oneself with him;
- d) cannibalism in the proper sense of the word, following from the shortage of proteins in the food (I am very indebted for this information to A. Navrátilová).

The transition from hunting-gathering economy to farming and animal breeding brought about important transformations and enriched the life of society with new elements. The rhythm of life of the people connected up to that time with the rhythm of life of the surrounding world, whose run continued without substantial interference by man, was since then subordinated to the biological cycles

of the growth of cultural crops and to the breeding of domesticated animals, whose existence was the result of purposive human activities. The basic changes in the economy are the results of significant changes in the concept of the world, in comprehending the world — man had been forced to develop an abstract idea concerning the vegetation cycles of plants, and breeding cycles of animals, and hence failed only a step to realizing the concept of the life cycle, of the man himself. Death, up to that point a random and unwelcome intruder, has found its logical place in the world. By concluding one life cycle, it became at the same time a necessary precondition for originating new life. Very characteristic of the farming societies is therefore the cult of the fertile power of the soil, and the cults of dying and resurrecting gods (Abdusamedov 1984, 297).

But so far the above theoretical premises have not been visibly reflected by the archaeological sources. On the very contrary, burial grounds or burial sites in the sense proper for the younger period of prehistory, i.e. places with a larger number of inhumations, appear in Europe already in the Mesolithic (Pleiner et al. 1978, 155). But we cannot regard it as a phenomenon of general character, decisively not in Central Europe. The same holds for the Neolithic, although in this period the relative frequency of graves and burial sites is higher (Pleiner et al. 1978, 184—185). The reasons are of course in the relatively low standard of the Neolithic economy (Pleiner c.d., 185 and others). The roots of matriarchal clan society seem to reach back to the Mesolithic. Neolithic crop farming and animal breeding still had not caused any revolutionary changes in the life of the society, it perhaps showed the first signs of the forthcoming differentiated patriarchal society of the Eneolithic (Neústupný 1960).

The line following the use of the death of the members of the community continues also in the Neolithic, as documented by finds of isolated skulls and other skeletal parts, sometimes with traces of violence (summed up by Kunkel 1955, Geschwinde 1988). Theoretically we may presume also the existence of ritual practice connected with vegetation cycles, perhaps combined even with human sacrifices (Frazer 1977, 440 and others). The above suggested problems of burials and burial sites, however, require the use of caution against any type of simplification.

More crucial changes occurred in the development of burial rites only with the development of patriarchal society in the Eneolithic. The large and evidently not too differentiated matriarchal clans disintegrated into small, clear-cut patriarchal communities (families) headed by men. This situation is well reflected by the end of the period of large Mesolithic and Neolithic burial sites, replaced by small cemeteries, characterized by unique burials with extraordinary outfit (Neústupný 1960, 120 and others, Pleinerová 1980, Pleiner c.d. 243, 251, 253). In the Late Eneolithic, at burial sites of the cultures with corded ware and bell beaker pottery we do not see such marked differences in the riches of the grave goods of the individual burials. More characteristic is the great variability in the ways of

situating the bodies and grave goods (Buchvaldek 1967, Havel 1978). It seems that we have to do with reflections of efforts to characterize individually the social character of each individual, and hence we may conclude that we have to do with the maximum development of the patriarchal family, in which every individual had its firmly determined and uninterchangeable place. The death (equally as the birth, coming of age, marriage) meant changes in family relations, and also changes between the family and wider community to which the family belonged. Those changes were symbolically confirmed with rites and acquired legal character (Navrátilová 1985). "Customs and rites linked with death thus provided for the exclusion of the individual from society in all his social, legal, religious, ethical and other respects. They aimed at the central purpose of the funeral rite — to secure the definite exclusion of the dead from the community, to prevent his return, and at the same time to confirm once again the identity of the deceased with the community and his or her appurtenance to it" (Navrátilová 1981, 13). On the other side the burial ritual might have served as a symbolic expression of the identity of the society as a whole (Matoušek 1987a).

Besides buried bodies we have also a number of other ways of disposing of the deceased (Pleiner c.d., 244, Geschwinde 1988).

Eneolithic was regarded in the older literature as a transition period. On following the development of the relation to death, especially the burial rites, the above definition (transition period) would better fit the Older Bronze Age. In the Únětice Culture we find on one side still group burial sites, at the beginning also with small differences in the riches of grave goods. On the other side, characteristic of the Únětice burial grounds is the fact that the deceased were put in the ground practically in a uniform way, and we see a gradual trend to levelling and formalization of funeral rites (Matoušek 1982). A novel feature are the mass burials forming 13 % — 20 % of the graves at the burial sites, sometimes with secondary interference interpreted as looting. In the younger period of the Únětice culture the social differentiation becomes more perceptible. Relatively often appear human bodies, or their parts, buried outside the burial site (Pleiner c.d. 324, 337, 339, 350, 367—371).

All the above trends are further strengthened and become more profound in the development of the society from Middle Bronze Age to older La Tène. Characteristic is also the trend to differentiating between various social layers by using different burial rites (Pleiner c.d. 422—429, 486—487, 530, Koutecký 1968, Slabina 1978, Bouzek, Koutecký 1980, Kytlicová 1988). We can see a development starting at the Eneolithic burial sites of the patriarchal families. It seems that all or most deceased were buried at these sites. It seems that the burial rites of all deceased reflected intensively their social position, their sex, age, circumstances of death and the significance of their death for the society. This development ends at the burial sites of the principalities (or kingdoms) of the Hallstatt and of the older La Tène periods.

Here we can see already the abysmal contrast between the graves of the members of the narrow immensely rich ruling section of the society on one side, and the subordinated popular sections on the other (in general the disintegration of the clan society Pleiner 1979, Bouzek 1985, 1988). Within particular social groups further continues the custom to emphasize the individual characteristics of the deceased during the burial rites. But this trend, of basic importance in full flourish of the patriarchal clan society becomes secondary meaning in the period of its decomposition. The value of death, or rather of the life of man in that period already differed in various people, in contrast to Late Eneolithic (when it was at least approximately equal). And if we comprehend burial rites and customs as providing protection and securing the identity of the society of surviving (Navrátilová 1981), then the picture of burial sites of the disintegrating clan society may be interpreted, as symbolized by the members of the ruling section and by their protectors, while life (and for that matter also death) of a member of the subordinated section was of little importance for the society.

In this connection the logical question is, from what social layer came the people whose skeletal remains are found at numerous places of sacrifice of the Bronze Age and of the La Tène period (Bouzek, Koutecký 1980, Geschwinde 1988, Hrala, Sedláček, Vávra 1988, Jelínek 1988). It is probable that the sacrificed persons may have come from the ranks of prisoners, criminals, but also from the ranks of innocent people of the lower strata, but there were without doubt also representatives of the ruling class, responsible for the destiny of the society. The selection of the concrete person for the human sacrifice evidently depended on what was the sense of the sacrifice (general survey by Bouzek, Koutecký 1980, 418—420).

The evaluation of funeral documents from the following La Tène period in Bohemia is a rather complicated task. Perhaps it reflects the uneven development of the society in Bohemia, when the evidently traditional patriarchal society was dying away, and in western and southern Bohemia began a qualitatively higher form of social organization, whose remains in north-western and central Bohemia are the flat Celtic burial sites (Pleiner et al. 1978, 413—421, 590). But it would not be enough to evaluate the finds linked with death in the La Tène period only with regard to the previous development, but also with regard to the following epoch.

The flat Celtic burial sites are interpreted as cemeteries of the patriarchal society, in which continued, the process of gradual differentiation (Waldhauser 1987). The absence of graves from the period of Celtic oppida, i.e. from the time when the Celtic society apparently reached the stage of organized state (Pleiner 1979) may be explained by the introduction of uniform burial rite, obligatory for all members of the society. The fact that archaeological methods have so far not resulted in finding any traces of such a rite is far from being so important as the fact that a uniform ritual could have been introduced

(or decreed) only in a state-organized society. The other manifestation of the relation to death — human sacrifice, continued also under this situation, and had not been affected by the trend to uniformity (Pleiner et al. 1978, 662, Pleiner 1979, 59).

After the end of the developed civilization of the Celtic oppida, the general character of the information documents on funerals, concerning the cemeteries and burial sites of the Roman period and of the period of the Great Migration may be characterized as a return to the situation before the Celtic occupation of the country (Pleiner et al. 1978, 740—41, 758, 762, Rybová 1980). From this viewpoint the social development of the period of Celtic occupation of Bohemia can be characterized as a reversible development (to the problem of reversibility and irreversibility of social processes see Christozvonov 1969), as presumed also by J. Waldhauser on the basis of his archaeological studies (1978, 66).

A reflection of the final form of the society can be observed at the Bohemian burial sites as late as in the Early Middle Ages. Funeral finds show that the influence of state administration in the process of forming the Czech state penetrated rather slowly to the sphere of social superstructure (Turek 1982, 34—35, 104—105, 162—163, Beránová 1988, 248 to 265). There are many documents illustrating that the state administration and its ideology failed to wipe out completely certain pre-Christian elements of relation to death. Besides archaeological documents we have also numerous written sources, compare e.g. the well-known anti-pagan measures taken by the Přemyslide ruling princes of Bohemia Břetislav I. and Břetislav II, in the 11th century (Turek, c.d., 213). From the viewpoint of archaeological research this problem was recently dealt with also by Z. Smetánka (1988). Quite interesting is also the description of burial rites following the death of Emperor Charles IV, combined with a number of rather costly symbolic sacrifices, culminating by the sacrifice of a knight in full armour and horse, the sacrifices offered by Wenceslas IV and by other men, and at the end the sacrifice by the Empress dowager (Spěváček 1979, 480—483).

CONCLUSIONS

We finish our survey with the Early Middle Ages, in spite of the fact that from the viewpoint of the study of general development trends it would be necessary to bring it to the present days. But let us return to some of the questions stated at the very beginning, in the introductory part.

What is a burial? First it is necessary to realize that contemporary scholars use the notion burial, death etc. in a sense in which they have been fixed to the contemporary social conscience. They cannot use them in another way and they cannot find any notions in their respective idioms. At most they can coin some substitute expressions of descriptive character, composed of contemporary notions, connected with their concrete contemporary contents.

Attempts to describe prehistoric social phenomena with contemporary language will always fail, at least to a certain extent.

The substantive "burial", "grave" and derived forms in most Indo-European languages come from the verb that means to rake, paw, dig, gru (Anglo-Saxon grafan, Gothic graban, German graben, Teutonic + graban — past tense + grob, Russian grob, Czech hrob), and also their derivatives. But also "bury" from Anglo-Saxon hyrgan, byrgan = hide in the ground, bury (Holub, Lyr 1967, 198, 381). In their primordial meaning these notions designate only inhumation and activities connected with it. Other words used for burial (the Czech žehnat — give a person one's blessing with the sign of cross) are later derivations, often euphemisms (Žák, 1931, 83). In view of the above linguistic explanation the notion burial at present means only one of the two basic manifestations of the relation of man/society to death. Burial contains an element of passive relation to death — through mediation of the dead, death is excluded from the community of the living, it is "excommunicated". But it has also an active element — the dead, if regular and positive relations are maintained with him, protects the living and helps them. The grave, respectively burial site is a venue of regular and important meetings of the living and dead. With the development of abstract thinking we may presume that these come-togethers, respectively communications were not always limited to burial sites (Murko 1947, Václavík 1959).

Under what historical conditions does the above phenomenon (i.e. the communication between living and dead) arise? Here we do not speak of the burial only, but also of a very expressive and active component of the relation to death, i.e. intentional, "premier-plan" use of the death to the benefit of the living. Indices of both basic trends can be recognized already in the period of hunting gathering economies, at the latest from the Middle Palaeolithic onwards. Their origin is connected with the awareness of one's own existence and of its limited character. Man took measures against the effects of unknown external influences by eliminating the indices of death from his surroundings, but at the same time through magic practices he tried to make use of the new knowledge to his own benefit. Manifestations of the relation to death should be therefore comprehended as further documents of active approach to objective reality, and are in direct contradiction to the thesis that prehistoric man lived in constant fear of the surrounding world.

Which are the basic development trends of this phenomenon? The initial form of manifestations of conscious relation to death is in the area of conjectures. Hypothetically we may presume that the primary manifestation was more of a passive character: the dead body arose fear and people fled from its proximity, or removed it from the society of the living. Only the further development of knowledge resulted in the conclusion that there were certain chances of influencing the run of the world through magic means. Probably in that period arose the idea that manipulation with the remains of the dead may

bring profit to the living, they may acquire his faculties, his strength and abilities by eating his flesh, or by interfering with his body in another way, or that they may stop the negative activities of the deceased, the deceased buried at a certain site may render protection to an object, territory, etc. Most of the so-called Palaeolithic "burials" and documents of "cannibalism" are evidently material remains of this type of behaviour. The fact that we see various ways of treating the dead indicate that at least from the Middle Palaeolithic there is a well perceptible differentiation according to the position of dead and their deeds during their lifetime, but also according to the character of their death, treated by the surviving through certain magic relation.

Changes in customs and rituals connected with death occurred with the appearance of the matriarchal clan society in the Mesolithic. The foundation of large burial grounds, with relatively constant and uniform burial rites may be regarded as a reflection of forming relatively stable and firmly organized societies with relatively developed degree of collective social conscience. The archaeological finds do not reveal directly changes in the Mesolithic economy, as compared with the Upper Palaeolithic preceding it. However, higher forms of conscience may have arisen only on the basis of higher forms of the social practice. Therefore it seems correct to hold that hunting-gathering economy was characteristic of the Mesolithic period.

The basic change of the economic system in the Neolithic — to our surprise — is not reflected by the funeral finds. In comparison with the Mesolithic we see rather quantitative, not qualitative changes. We can therefore say that the Neolithic first prepared the conditions for new quality in social development (E. and J. Neustupný 1960). In the Neolithic, however, it is possible to presume the existence of a cyclic relation to dead, and thus also the first cyclically repeated human sacrifices made to the benefit of the society as a whole.

The dramatic development of productive forces in the Eneolithic fundamentally stimulated the development of human culture in general, as illustrated also by funeral finds. With the decreasing dependence on natural forces increased the importance of social forces. The disintegration of the large matriarchal entities to small markedly differentiated and hierarchized patriarchal communities was followed by a rapid increase of the importance of the individual, having his firm and uninterchangeable place in the structure of relations of the respective social unit. The death of the individual for this society did not mean only a threat to life in general or a confirmation of cyclic consonance with nature. It was first of all an interference with the social relations. The funeral ritual was in this situation part and parcel of a wider meaning for the reintroduction of the social order.

During the following three thousand years — with the exception of the "intermezzo" of the Celtic occupation — the burial grounds in Bohemia reflected the process of disintegration of the patriarchal clan society. First melted away the identity of the individual and of the clan in higher social limits, and on

the ruins of point-blank, firm, but simple clan relations between superior and subordinated social groups and layers a multilayered appears structure. The main emphasis of the burial rite shifts more and more to symbolizing the pertinence to a social group, and less and less to characterizing the individual being buried; the latter observes its validity only within the framework of narrow (family, clan) communities. In this situation the death of any individual cannot menace society as a whole — with the exception of the death of the ruler, high priests or other important personalities. The more powerful were these individuals in their lifetime, the more significant had to be the burial rite, safeguarding the further existence of the society, following the death of these individuals.

The rather conspicuous increase in the number of human sacrifices at the beginning of the Bronze Age in some European countries, continuing also in our era, suggests the existence of links between the drop of the importance of a simple individual and of the importance of simple basic human relations on one side, and the trend to secure and safeguard the welfare of the society through human sacrifices, on the other.

The above interpretation of the relation of man to death within the framework of the development of the patriarchal society may be compared by the reader with the interpretation of the relation of man to death as presented by E. Neustupný (1967, 66). In Neustupný's view one should link changes in funeral rites, and in general changes in relation to death at the end of the Eneolithic with the transition from the natural division of labour to social division of labour.

Only Christian religion has brought along a basically new element into the conception of death with the doctrine of posthumous retribution or retaliation and of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ's sacrifice. According to this new teaching it did not appertain to man to weigh the acts of people who died in the natural way and to provide for the blessing of the society through human sacrifice, all things belonging to supranatural powers. Man hitherto deprived of autodetermination in the social sense, was deprived of the right to decide also of his biological existence in the Christianized feudal states. Of course we are fully aware of the higher moral appeal contained in the Christian dogmatics and do not want to degrade or debase it with the above negative judgement; anyhow it is quite questionable to what degree have been those higher values accepted and understood by the concrete individuals. The new concept of death as the beginning of the road to eternal blessedness had turned upside down the hitherto doctrines of existence or non-existence. But Christianity has never managed to suppress fully the natural clinging to life and resistance to death, only the forms of these manifestations have changed during the time.

What is the purpose of the rites and customs linked with death? The basic purpose of rites and customs connected with death was to secure welfare for the society. Death basically negating life repre-

sented the highest possible menace to both the individual and society. As it became more obvious that death, in contrast to other influences of the external world, continued resisting all practical efforts of man, grew the role of irrational means in conflict with this natural power. In the historical process we can follow the development from various attempts at deceiving death to the benefit of life, to deceiving man in the form of glorifying death. Rites and customs connected with death in this sense may be understood as a special form of relation between man and nature.

Supplement. The purpose of this paper has been to try to find out some basic general development trends of the relation of man to the fact of death. There was no place for analysing the individual concrete aspects of the phenomenon, as they appear in archaeological documents. However, these partial problems would deserve special complex analysis, with special regards to the respective historical conditions. The problems of relations between cremation and skeletal burials, grave goods, secondary interfering with graves, the problems of human sacrifices and places of sacrifices, relations between places of sacrifices and burial sites, but also the woman — death relation still wait for a profound analysis, freed from the prejudices of the present period. Only through consequent study of all aspects of the phenomenon in their historical connection we can penetrate to the very substance of the funeral finds and make them accessible as a full-value source for the study of the development of the society and culture as a whole.

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