

FAMILY NETWORKING IN THE CZECH COUNTRYSIDE: THE FUNERAL CEREMONY AS A FACTOR IN PRESERVING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CZECH COUNTRYSIDE

MARTINA HUPKOVÁ

Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science,
Charles University in Prague,
Albertov 6, CZ-12843 Prague, Czechia
E-mail: martina.hupkova@seznam.cz

Abstract: This paper presents the funeral ceremony as one of the factors helping to preserve networks and relationships among families in the countryside. The development of family relationships in the countryside is discussed on the basis of an analysis of attendance at funeral ceremonies in model areas of the Czech countryside. The precise forms assumed by funeral ceremonies (church funeral vs. civil funeral, funeral without ceremony, attendance, associated traditions) differ in relation to culture on the state, regional and local levels as well. The differentiation to forms of funeral ceremony and burial processes depends on a number of factors, of which the main ones are religiosity rate and community size at regional level and tradition at local level. In the Czech regions, mainly in the countryside, the extraordinary attendance at funeral ceremonies is typical. Attendance at a funeral ceremony via a representative of the family is considered a social duty. This tradition of family get-togethers for funeral ceremonies has been maintained from generation to generation. Through it families that may now be scattered are able to keep together the network of relationships of inhabitants in countryside.

Key words: network, family, burial, necrogeography, countryside, Czechia

INTRODUCTION

Like that in other countries, the Czech countryside differs in many important respects from the town (Chromý in Heřmanová and Chromý *et al.* 2009). From a physiographic point of view, differences stem from the method of land management, as determined by different types of development and different development strategies. Further differences manifest themselves in the culture of the inhabitants, which is adapted to life-style and the collective rhythm of life (for the Prague city region lifestyle, see Doležalová

and Ouředníček in Ouředníček *et al.* 2006). The differentiation of the sociocultural environment in Czechia in general (not merely the differences between town and countryside) can be monitored using the example of such varied cultural elements as education, religiosity, electoral behavior, identity, ethnic structure, countrymanship, etc. (Heřmanová and Chromý *et al.* 2009). The present article in turn dwells on the issue of method of burial as yet a further element to regional culture (Hupková 2009), and one that helps in the study of impact on the way relationships develop within a broader

family, as well as between families, in the Czech countryside. Emphasis is laid in particular on the analysis of rituals connected with the funeral ceremony, which though obviously representing a tragic and adverse event, is nevertheless something that results in members of a family and persons otherwise connected meeting up. The funeral ceremony, and the period of preparation for it, may be regarded as a certain type of event allowing (in particular in the Czech countryside) for people related or close to one another in some other way to meet up.

As different cultures assign different weights to rituals, so a funeral ceremony may be deemed to be of varying importance to and in different cultures (compare the USA and Madagascar in the respective preferences they show for celebration and ritual with respect to events such as marriage and the funeral—Kottak 1999, 2007). There are cultures for whom neither the method of burial nor the ceremony attached to a funeral are of any particular importance. Thus, for example, where Hare Krishna followers are concerned, (the process of) dying is much more important than the circumstances of burial, since the dead body is regarded as a mere shell from which the soul has already departed and lives on (Nešporová 2004).

This article aims to analyze the effect funeral ceremonies have on the relationships between families in the Czech countryside. The analysis in question is based on a comparison of the results of qualitative research in and within two model territories (micro-regions) in Czechia. In view of the fact that a sample of just two model territories was indeed involved, the conclusions arrived at and presented here cannot be (and have not been meant by the author to be) regarded as generally accepted, but should only be seen as indicative of certain trends, patterns or conflicts. The analysis took place in two different territories, with a view to the general character of the examined phenomenon being examined, along with differences between the model territories. The model territory also consists of a particular core and background, which is to say that there are

multiple settlements of different hierarchical level here, to ensure that results might also be compared within the model territory, in particular in towns versus villages. In all of this, the fundamental question I have been seeking to answer is: Do funeral ceremonies (and all related acts) consolidate the family network, i.e. the mutual interaction of families inhabiting the Czech countryside?

According to Nakonečný (2000), there are three types of interpersonal interaction, namely cooperation, competition and conflict. Cooperation forms the basis, not only of legal systems, but also of human biology, as well as economic systems (Kasíková 2007). Networks rank among the soft factors of regional development (Rumpel *et al.* 2008, Blažek and Uhlíř 2002). According to Granovetter (2005), such networks affecting economic behavior stem from a broader concept of social networks based on interpersonal relationships. The healthy interpersonal relationships and communication that are of the utmost importance in personal life and professional career should be based on functioning family communication (for the situation within the family forming the model for further human behavior see Čáp and Mareš 2001, Matoušek 1997).

THEORETICAL BASES

It is no easy task to understand the nature of the actual funeral ceremony (entrenched as it is in local, regional and national traditions, and serving to summarize and reflect the preferences and values of individuals). There is furthermore a necessity to examine the topic from the viewpoint of several different disciplines, such as anthropology, thanatology, sociology, history, psychology, archeology, religionistics, theology, legislation, etc. The geographical approach may enhance the knowledge achieved by such “classical” disciplines dealing with burials in a manner specified in the following subchapter. The impact of a funeral ceremony on the development of relationships between families will be examined in particular by

means of field research, the theoretical basis of which (in particular the definition of the terms family, family development and family resilience) is drawn from the fields of psychology, education, sociology, psychotherapy, ethnohistory and geography.

NECROGEOGRAPHY

The perception of death, manner of dealing with death (i.e. burial method, rituals and traditions associated with burial, funeral ceremony, etc.), cemetery form and legislative and economic context underpinning burial are among the phenomena that vary in space and time and reflect the culture of inhabitants practising a certain "method of dealing with death", as opposed to some other method. The world's geography deals with the issue of death to a lesser extent, while Czech geography basically fails to deal with it at all. Yet the contribution of geography should entail an exploration of spatial relations, as well as regional differentiation analysis and the application of concepts from the so-called new cultural geography that lay emphasis on research into identity, sense of place and heritage. Cemeteries form part of the cultural landscape (Francaviglia 1971), being important from the viewpoint of documenting the past, and capable of being regarded as one element to regional heritage.

Necrogeographical studies either deal with the possibilities (theory, methodology, benefits) offered by necrogeographical research (Price 1966, Kong 1999), or else they serve in the presentation of detailed field studies only taking in more limited territory (Christopher 1995, Francaviglia 1971, Boulware 2008). In both cases, however, the authors deal only with cemetery premises, and thus in essence omit other aspects of death which are also differentiated territorially and reflective of human culture. In my view, necrogeography should be applied whenever such aspects are being dealt with, because long-term social and political development plays a great role in necrogeographical research. On the one hand, Teather (1999) discusses the method of burial as a deter-

mining factor underpinning cemetery form, while on the other she endeavors to explain the high cremation rate in Hong Kong. She explains the shift from inhumation to cremation in relation to political and social influences. The turn for cremation in Hong Kong came along around 1960 and resulted from colonial influences. Teather also focuses on cultural aspects related to the method of burial. While a traditional method of burial (in regard to architecture and the forms of graves) reflects the Confucian culture, not the newly-built columbariums (see also Teather 1998).

The aspect of politics in necrogeography is also dealt with by Christopher (1995). Within the premises of the cemetery in Port Elizabeth, he finds manifestations of the racial segregation legitimized by law in South Africa (1948–1991). The role of politics, in this case in creating a burial culture, is emphasized by Bentzen and Schee (2002), who explain how the social democratic tradition in Scandinavian countries created a specific burial culture. The local burial culture reflects social democratic principles such as the equality principle, such that differences in the method of burial among different social groups are insignificant.

At present, Czechia occupies a specific position in the world, and especially in Europe, where methods of burial are concerned (the highest cremation rate in Europe, at 79.9%), see Fig. 1. Czechia is also unique in the world for its low rate of religiosity in the population (32.2%), as well as marked regional differentiation (Havlíček and Hupková 2008).

Extreme values as regards the two phenomena are indicative of a connection which was demonstrated in the work of Hupková (2008). On the basis of an analysis of the way burial method relates to socioeconomic characteristics of world states, it indeed proved possible to demonstrate that religion is the factor having the most significant effect on the method of burial at national level (quantitative analysis was carried out using a sample of 30 countries), but also at regional and local level (on the basis of qualitative

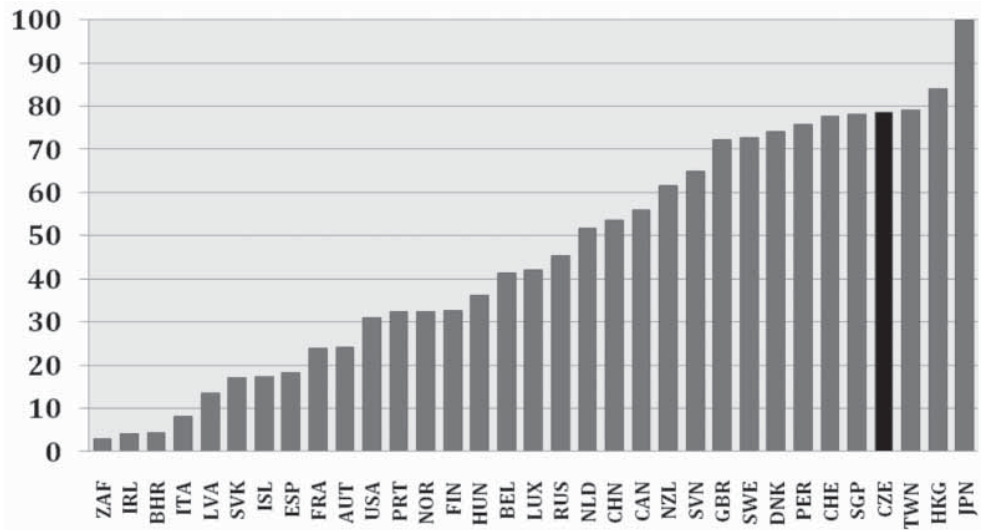


Figure 1. Cremation rate in 2004 (%)

research using Czechia as an example). In addition to religion, other factors also determine the method of dealing with death on each hierarchical level. In the following summary, each hierarchy level has been assigned a differentiation factor which is reflected in differences to the fundamental character of the method by which death is dealt with on that particular level:

1. Europe: religion in the sense of religiosity rate and type of religion is the main differentiation factor, while another factor entails the political character both present and past (the effect of communism);

2. Czechia: religion (religiosity rate) is the main differentiation factor where the method of dealing with death is concerned, though another factor concerns the role played by cities (there is no differentiation based on a municipality's size overall, only a separate effect due to large urban areas);

3. regions of Czechia: the main differentiation factor within the regions of Czechia entails tradition in particular (which may, but need not, correspond to the religious situation). Tradition appears to be the most significant differentiation factor on the

local level. Other factors involve religion and town size.

The above findings indicate that towns and rural communities are of a different nature when it comes to the method of dealing with death, and thus also show different forms of funeral ceremony due to a repetitive town-size factor. A significant difference between town and countryside is visible in the proportions of funerals without ceremony and uncollected funeral urns (urns not collected after cremation and left in the crematorium). The occurrence of such a phenomenon in Czechia as a whole is very high, at 1/3 (Hupková 2008).

According to psychologists, a funeral ceremony plays an important role in an individual's dealing with a death. In literature, we can find quite a number reasons for a high incidence of funerals without ceremony. According to the psychologist Klimeš, the funeral as a dignified way of saying goodbye is dwindling, because death is a suppressed phenomenon which it is better not to think about (Cihelka 2007). Such a phenomenon may also be attributed to either to the economic advantageousness of funerals not involving ceremony or else

to the greater intimacy of this kind of event. The reason may also lie in a reaction to the showy funerals characteristic of the communist era (Malinová 2002). The significance of a funeral ceremony for the surviving relatives is also discussed by Leňová Burešová (2007), who states that a funeral ceremony is important, not only for the chance it gives to say goodbye to the deceased, but also because goodbye can be said to a previous conception of the world, with a new conception of life and one's new role in it being taken on board.

The funeral ceremony is one of the so-called transition rituals. Thus, some events in the human life cycle, such as birth, marriage, parenthood or death are often recorded in ritual fashion by reference to a specific ceremony. Even the term itself indicates the recording of a transition from one life-stage to another. According to Genep (1997), transition rituals can be divided into separation rituals (separation from the original group), boundary rituals (overcoming a threshold through ritual) and incorporation rituals (incorporation into a new group). Funeral ceremonies comprise, not only separation rituals, but also both other forms of ritual (the whole funeral ritual consists of several components). The "boundary" form emerges in the event by which surviving relatives are segregated from common life, while the "accepting" form emerges during funeral feasts or wakes, during which the bond between the surviving relatives undergoes consolidation.

According to Kroeber (1927), burial is associated with that part of human behavior responsible for biological or primary human needs. Such a form of behavior is not subject to any rules. Kroeber assumes that the method of burial is in the nature of a custom (the mechanization of an activity through frequent repetition, without any initiation by will or mind), or rather a fashion (a set of customs, mores, habits and life forms determined by the varying moods and styles of the time), just as are style of dress or etiquette. According to him, the method of burial is subject to relatively marked separa-

tion from the rest of the culture, mainly due to its extraordinary effect on human emotions.

FAMILY STUDY

The definition of a family differs depending on the general development of society because the function of a family develops in concert with both society in general and society's subcultures (Laszloffy 2002). Further, the meaning of the term 'family' mutates in the historical context, being mainly influenced by demographic changes in society (Coontz 2000). In addition, the defining and studying of families is circumscribed by the overall development of science. Indeed, different branches have different definitions for the concept of family in response to both the subject and object of study. While psychology tends to examine the internal aspects of a family by analyzing how it affects an individual, sociology regards family as a basic element and studies its interactions with other units and the external environment. Ethnography and anthropology in turn examine the rituals engaged in by families, *inter alia* paying close attention to rituals related to death (Daly 2003).

According to Lévi-Strauss (2000), a family is in essence a permanent and societally-approved bond between a man, a woman, and their children. The term 'societally approved' is what differentiates between the way in which various cultures define a family. While definitions that focus on function emphasize the upbringing of children, evolutionary biology and psychology regard the family as an instrument operating in support of effective reproduction, which is to say as an instrument of human beings' survival strategy (Bakalář 2002). The relationship between a mother and her child is considered to have a primary function. The relationship between the father and the mother is deemed secondary and considered to have a protective function. According to Možný (1999), a family is a fundamental building block that is affected by higher-level units (community, region and nation), with which it interacts more than it itself affects such

entities. The environment therefore exerts an influence on the actual form a family assumes. Možný (2002) considers the family an indivisible unit that retains its permanence as society changes.

Family relations between people come into being either through the establishment of a family bond (marriage), or by descent (Vodáková *et al.* 2000). At the present time, the term 'family' is chiefly understood as the nuclear family (the terms 'family' and 'nuclear family' are thus synonymous; a phenomenon for instance reflecting the general disappearance of the traditional function of grandparents). We are thus dealing with a married couple of parents with at least one child, though this does not have to be the case in all cultures (Kottak 2007). Further, differentiation based on marriage does not reflect the current trends describing society's development. According to a study conducted by Levine and Trost (1992), marriage by itself does not establish a family because broader relations come into play as regards the creation of the image of a family. Every person perceives a family in a different manner, and every person has a different perception of his or her own family and other families.

The response of a family to a traumatic situation, such as the death of a family member, forms a part of Walsh's family resiliency theory (Walsh 2002), which studies the stability of family and, at the same time, the flexibility of its development and response to changes. The basic processes in the family resiliency concept are belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes (see also Sobotková 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework of problems set the methodological direction of the study set out here. Assumptions based on a knowledge of the general geographical conditions in Czechia combined with factors determining the fundamental burial customs to indicate the expected impact of both hori-

zontal and vertical geographical position on the phenomenon under study. Qualitative research methods (in particular field investigation and controlled interviews in two model territories) have been selected as of key importance here. Furthermore, the model microregions have not been selected at random (Fig. 2).

The microregions in question differ markedly, not only from the point of view of position, physiogeographical environment and socioeconomic character, but also as regards historical development. Both microregions are rural ones with only smaller centers of c. 10,000 inhabitants (any references to towns in the model territory are thus references to settlements of more than 5,000 inhabitants). Significant factors underpinning the selection of the research area entailed, not only the author's knowledge of such areas, but also (in particular) a significant difference in religiosity affecting the method of burial. Would religiosity also affect family participation at funeral ceremonies?

Sušice microregion is situated in Bohemia at the foothills of the Šumava. Indeed, the examined microregion extends into part of Šumava National Park. This is a territory situated at the border of the natural frontier between the use of the Czech and German languages, and thus inevitably reflects the past expulsion of Sudeten Germans, and thus also an anticipated weaker relationship with the territory on the part of new inhabitants. The religiosity rate in this microregion is low—at around 35%. Due to the discontinuity in population of the microregion, broken bonds within families can be expected. The territory has also been inhabited by newcomers, mention needing to be made here of the soldiers and families thereof assigned to military units or training grounds in the area (e.g. at Dobrá Voda). For strategic military reasons, soldiers came to the Sušice region in particular, as well as to Western Bohemia (then Czechoslovakia) in general, from various parts of the republic. It was nevertheless a relatively common phenomenon for those concerned to be Slovak

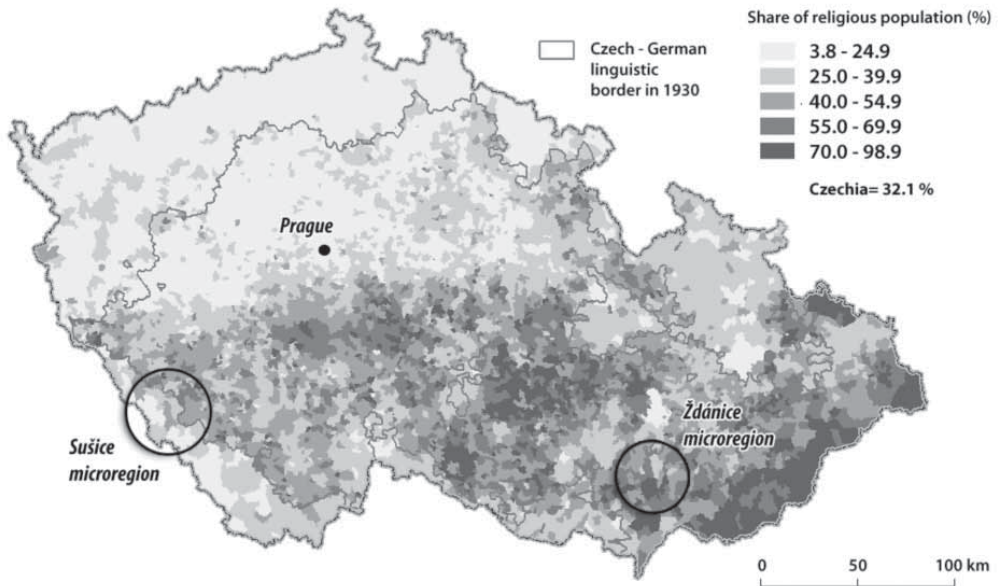


Figure 2. Share of religious population by municipalities in Czechia, 2001 and model microregions
Data source: Czech Statistical Office 2001

nationals. There was therefore an expectation that such people's contacts with their families would be to a certain extent limited.

Ždánice microregion is in turn situated in Moravia, and is a traditionally religious region with a religiosity rate reaching 55%. This is an agricultural microregion with a stable population and a stable socioeconomic base set against the broader background of Brno. Rural communities are of larger size than in the Sušice microregion (such a phenomenon is now generally evident between Czechia and Moravia), for physiogeographical reasons in particular. The rugged low-mountain relief in Šumava naturally prevented development of larger communities as compared to in the fertile country of the Ždánice microregion, with its friendly terrain for population and agricultural activity. Thus, in brief, the Sušice microregion can be regarded as a low-mountain region in which conditions for life are not especially ideal, though there is considerable attractiveness to tourists with discon-

tinued development. The Ždánice microregion can be designated a microregion with favorable conditions for life in general and for agricultural activity in particular. The generalized functions of the two microregions indicate that the Ždánice microregion is ideal, thanks to its agricultural function, for a long-term multi-generational population, and therefore for a higher anticipated level of communication, cooperation and meetings of family network members.

The qualitative research engaged in consisted of two parts. It comprised field research including examination of the territory and in particular determination of the role religion and rituals play in communal life (visits to cemeteries and sacred buildings). This part of the research also included short interviews with local citizens selected at random. The second part of the qualitative research entailed the conducting of controlled interviews with key persons in a given area. With a view to the role of religion within the said territory being characterized, a controlled

interview was run with a territorial religious representative (parish priest), a representative of the local government (chairman or vice-chairman of the parish council) and a funeral service owner. For the cardinal topic, i.e. family relationships and the effect of funeral ceremonies on the maintenance of the family network, citizens of each microregion who wished to remain anonymous with regard to the delicacy of the whole topic were asked. Emphasis was laid on ensuring that respondents included older natives of retirement age who had “experience” of funerals, not only within their own family, but also involving other close persons such as fellow-workers, friends, neighbors, etc. and also capable of providing information on the form of funerals in other families within the microregion. The interview with citizens comprised three parts. First and foremost, respondents were asked for their own definition of family, ancestry, family relations and reasons for meetings with persons in a family relationship. The second phase entailed ascertainment of specific funeral ceremony rituals, with the emphasis being placed on the participation of family members in individual acts. In the third phase, the main topic at interview were respondents’ personal views of family consolidation by way of funeral ceremonies.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES AND THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN MODEL TERRITORIES

The following paragraphs first describe the basic ascertained differences in the method of burial between and within the model territories, with a view to the character of burial practices in Czechia being introduced. Particular emphasis is laid on phenomena linked with the family and its participation in the funeral ceremony—i.e. analysis is carried out with respect to participation at funerals, funerals without ceremony and the care of graves. Prior to the actual assessment of funeral ceremonies as acts wherein family interactions are taking place, attention

is paid to the settlement of persons within families and ancestries in the country and in towns.

BASIC DIFFERENCES TO THE FUNERAL CEREMONIES HELD IN THE MODEL TERRITORIES

The field research demonstrates great differences between the model territories when it comes to methods of dealing with death, i.e. also the form of funeral ceremonies. These relate in particular to religious differences between the individual model territories. The most fundamental difference concerns the different cremation rates in the two model territories (i.e. the proportion of all funerals that involve cremation). While in the Ždánice microregion, the cremation rate is below 25%, in the Sušice microregion it already stands at 85%. The above figures imply the form of funeral ceremony whereas cremation in a majority of cases indicates a civil (secular) funeral and inhumation (i.e. interment) indicates a church funeral. For the overall picture, it can be recalled that the proportion of people being cremated in the largest cities in Czechia such as Prague, Brno and Pilsen reaches 90%.

The Sušice microregion displays significant urban-rural differences where funerals are concerned. Cremation is primarily used in towns, while inhumation takes place to a greater extent in the country (often with a church ceremony, even in this not-very-religious region). In the Ždánice microregion, the differences between communities of different sizes are negligible. Funerals without ceremonies are a specialty of large cities, in line with their greater degree of anonymity. In the countryside, funerals are commonly attended by whole villages (representatives of each family), whereas in towns neighbors do not know each other. Haškovcová states that people prefer funerals without ceremony for economic motives (Haškovcová 2007). The research discovered a new trend in line with which the proportion of funerals without ceremony is also growing currently in smaller towns such as Sušice (12,000 inhabitants). Just as there is a growing propor-

tion of funerals without ceremony, so there is also an increasing number of urns going uncollected.

The form assumed by cemeteries also differs from one model territory to another. In the cemeteries in the Ždánice microregion, graves are oriented in the east-west direction only. Such a position of the body and grave is maintained in the Christian tradition because the arrival of Jesus Christ on the last day and resurrection were expected from the east (Unger 2002). Crossed arms of the deceased also represent a typical Christian symbol in the grave. In the Sušice microregion, one can find graves oriented in various directions. Cemeteries in regions that are strong religiously are also distinguished by a large proportion of family graves, a high level of tidiness and maintenance of the graves and a large number of religious symbols on them. Large number of religious symbols on new graves are particularly non-traditional.

A funeral is regarded as a “social duty” but, one that is perceived highly negatively in some cases in urban areas, unlike in the countryside. The funeral ceremony itself is naturally a negative event (fact) but, according to respondents, a funeral ceremony is perceived negatively with regard to both the real and hypothetical conflicts it represents. By way of example, I mention inheritance disputes which are regarded, also according to Le Play (1857–1885), as a significant type of family conflict, as well as the anonymity of secular funerals in town (e.g. with funeral service employees as pall bearers) which may be regarded by some participants as an example of insufficient respect being shown for the deceased.

THE FAMILY AT FUNERAL CEREMONIES

As part of the survey, respondents were questioned on their personal definition of the family. In contrast to the nuclear family concept, which should be dominant in today's individualized society, according to Kottak (2007) and Singly (2008), it was the broader family notion that the respondents participating in the study under

review tended to subscribe to. Thus, wider family relations are still maintained in rural parts of the Czech Republic, albeit not to the same extent as in the past. According to the respondents, the relatively lively broader family relations stem mainly from the rural tradition and the personal and work lifestyle. However, as a person's age increases, interactions with relatives decline considerably, coming to be limited to important events, such as weddings, round anniversaries and memorial services.

While the average price of a funeral in Czechia as a whole is said to be CZK 13,000 (EUR 520), the average (and modal) price in the Ždánice microregion is around CZK 20,000 (EUR 800). No funeral can manage without flowers, musicians and a funeral feast. In most cases, a funeral is attended by almost all community inhabitants, a funeral being regarded as a major event at which family, friends and acquaintances gather together. In some villages in the Ždánice microregion, the average number of participants at a funeral is 500. For a family, it is inconceivable that a funeral be arranged without ceremony. According to Charvát (2008), people in Moravia are very concerned before a funeral about what happens to their relatives (where they are to be placed, or possibly where they will be cremated). The customs and traditions pertaining to a funeral have been preserved here through to the present day. Pall bearers are exclusively family members. Indeed, in some villages there is even a still-upheld custom that a family member should dig the grave for the deceased! It is also nothing unusual for the body of the deceased to stay at home after the funeral. The family's interest in the deceased and active participation in funeral ceremonies probably represent the greatest differences in how death is dealt with in rural as opposed to urban areas, and in Moravia and Bohemia as a whole. The difference reflect a greater role for the family and greater significance of family values in the countryside as opposed to the town, and in Moravia (Ždánice microregion) as opposed to Bohemia (Sušice microregion).

The Žďánice microregion also shows an emphasis on the individuality and personality of the deceased, in contrast with the anonymity of town funerals (see above) which takes effect e.g. in the form of death notice (the text and form of a death notice reflects the personality of the deceased, his or her occupation, hobbies, etc.). The level of attendance at funeral ceremonies in Moravia is several times greater than that in Bohemia. The attendance of relatives at the funeral is simply “mandatory”. In the funeral of neighbors or citizens of the same village, there is an unwritten rule that such a funeral is attended by at least one representative of each family. The countryside shows an emphasis on the way a family is perceived by other citizens of the village. The close watch kept on the family contrasts with the relative anonymity of the town or city, a phenomenon which is also reflected in, for example, the way graves are cared for. The interviews with the inhabitants imply that such a family perception in the village is an important factor underpinning care for a grave. *“If I didn’t go there [to the grave—author’s note] at least once a week, what would people think of me?”* With regard to “sufficient” participation in the form of one family member’s presence at a funeral, it can be presumed that families in the countryside may maintain mutual interactions for the next several generations from the generation of friendly individuals. The above considerations further indicate that people in the countryside are increasingly perceived (both mutually and with respect to others) as part of the family which results from the physical prerequisites of a village (size, common infrastructure, common premises), whereas it is likely that a majority of village inhabitants know the family of a particular individual. Lapka and Gottlieb (2000) confirm such a fact on the basis of a sociological study of peasants’ environmental awareness, further stating that peasants are transcendently entrenched at two levels—towards the past, through the mentioned family entrenchment (referring to family values, experiences and successes), and towards the

future, through entrenchment involving faith in God.

A FUNERAL AS A FACTOR CEMENTING THE FAMILY NETWORK?

Generally, joint meetings of families within the family relationship are becoming less intensive. This results from the general development of society (changes in lifestyle and life values), in the context of which the development of the phenomenon under review seems to be natural. The research confirmed that in the countryside (in settlements with less than 3,000 inhabitants), the funeral ceremony is an event during which a cementing of families takes place. The same was not confirmed for towns and cities. There are differences between model microregions arising from social and historical developments. The Sušice microregion (in communities with more than 5,000 inhabitants) was affected by the settlement discontinuity factor which resulted in additional settlement of the border region by new inhabitants having less strong an attachment to the soil, landscape and cultural heritage (Spurný, ed. 2006). In view of the fact that the new inhabitants came from remote parts of the Czechia, the broader family is separated by greater distances that have been resulting in a lower intensity of contacts, albeit one to some extent overcome as technological progress has continued, with broad coverage by the networks of mobile phone operators, internet expansion and the “domestication” of on-line communication applications, etc. Greater “circulation” of inhabitants of the Sušice microregion also results from the not very good structure of the economic base, and from the job opportunities that are a visible cause of the migration of young college-educated inhabitants seeking jobs in large cities. Due to the larger distances between persons in family relationship in this microregion, a funeral or funeral ceremony could be one of the factors causing the interaction between them to be maintained.

The basic difference in the influence funeral ceremonies exert on family-network development in the different model territo-

ries lies in the finding that funeral ceremonies in the Sušice microregion help “maintain” the family network, whereas those in the Ždánice microregion result in a “deepening” of family relationships, and thus in a consolidation of the family network. In the Ždánice microregion, funeral ceremonies entail, not only the actual ceremony, but also other follow-up events such as a wake and visits to relatives. Some time after the funeral ceremony, contacts are also re-established on All Souls’ Day (whereupon the deceased are remembered on November 2 each year). At this time, relatives visit graves of the deceased and honor their memory, e.g. by laying flowers on graves. The occasion is also associated with visits to relatives. A funeral ceremony may thus facilitate the initiation of further meetings of relatives, as graves are attended to on or in advance of All Souls’ Day, and as the anniversaries of the deaths or births of the deceased are marked. Active contacts of families (in particular involving a common lunch or visit to a grave) are manifested in both model territories, but much more significantly so in the Ždánice microregion.

However, the intensity of family meetings convened to commemorate the deceased is in general declining. This dwindling and reduction of physical contacts and bonds with relatives, places of birth, ancestral homes, etc., is changing, as is even the method of burial. In connection with this interruption of bonds between family members, there is an increase in the number of cases of ash dispersal and pouring (where ash is dispersed or poured into a hole in the enclosed cemetery area without an actual tomb). Such a form of burial requires no costs other than the arrangement of the grave place, and is suitable in a case in which “*there is nobody to take care of*” the grave.

CONCLUSION

A funeral ceremony is an act in the course of which interpersonal relationships and family networks can be expanded. That is to

say that such a ceremony is distinguished by a greater number of “participants” as compared with other meetings and ceremonies, due to its lower financial intensity. In the case of weddings, birthday celebrations and anniversaries, the invitation for the given ceremony is markedly selective due to the higher associated costs. A funeral is therefore an opportunity for meeting among people who would otherwise have no opportunity to meet (distant relatives, fellow-workers, neighbors, friends of the deceased). It thus results not only in a maintaining and deepening of family relationships, but also, in particular, in a cementing of rural communities (with less than 3,000 inhabitants), i.e. meetings of village citizens and a strengthening of neighbor relationships (if not relationships, at least communication and solidarity). This can include higher interactions, not only within a particular community, but also between communities where there are cases of representatives of neighboring villages coming to attend a funeral. The establishment of a family network is represented schematically in Fig. 3, wherein the deceased is a member of both the family network and a certain community (the model rural communities cannot be regarded as mere “bedroom” villages like large-town suburbia, see Ouředníček 2008, and therefore a community means a settlement-place of residence). The funeral ceremony constitutes an interaction of: 1. strangers, 2. close relatives, 3. distant relatives (which represents rather a manifestation of roots, ancestors and the family line), and 4. people living within a single community.

It appears that settlement discontinuity affects the phenomenon reviewed considerably. The embedding of inhabitants is greater in the Ždánice microregion model territory, and this is also manifested in the selection of place of burial. Even though the inhabitants of this microregion also migrate towards larger towns (e.g. Brno), we can see that some of the inhabitants in question “ask for” a burial in their native community, e.g. in family graves. There is still therefore a permanent bond between the person

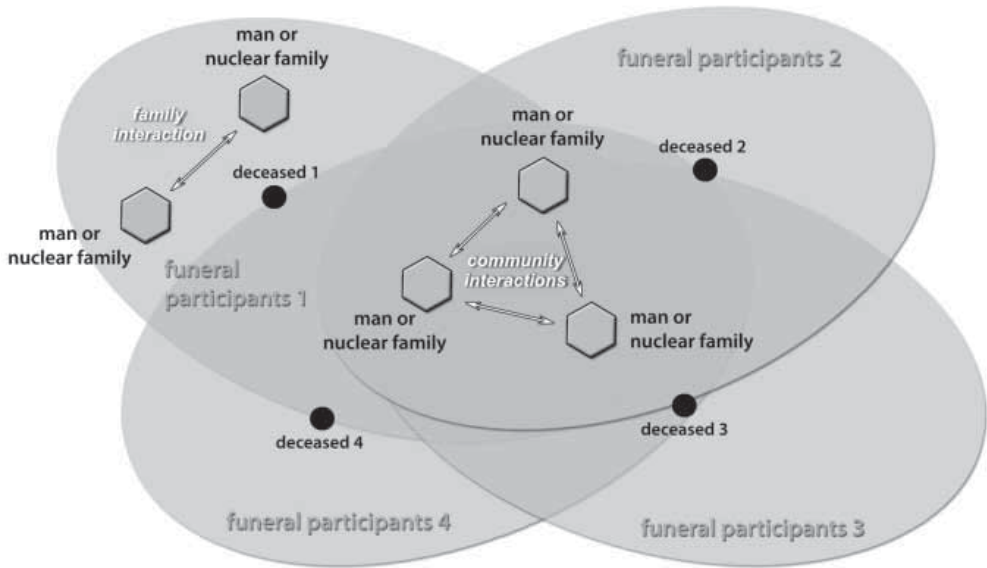


Figure 3. Establishment of family network

involved and his or her birthplace, the place in which he/she grew up, and the place associated with the presence of family and friends (as is also demonstrated by the above mentioned greater significance of family in the Moravian model territory). The union of rural inhabitants with their place of residence and surrounding countryside has roots in the type of countryside management, i.e. agriculture. For peasants, agriculture means not only working activity and livelihood, but also an attachment to and responsibility for soil, forests and waters, as well as the crosses and chapels present in open country (Lapka and Gottlieb 2000).

This study does not aspire to the advancement of any generally accepted conclusions. It is rather a partial work presenting a “new” or rather neglected, taboo topic, not only in geography, but also in other sciences. The article extends greatly into geography, sociology and psychology—something that is desirable as regards the scope of the topic. The study introduces differences in the influence funeral ceremonies exert on family networks in two rural model territories, and the results show the fundamental differ-

ences existing in respect of such phenomena with regard (and searching for the context) to both horizontal and vertical geographical position.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper reflects the findings of research sponsored by a financial grant, project VaV MMR ČR. No. WD-01-07-1, “Regional differentiation of rural municipalities in Czechia: Disparities and developmental opportunities” and GA AV: No. IAA701110701, “Differentiation of changes of religious landscape in Czechia during the period of transformation”. The author would like to thank the sponsors for their financial support.

REFERENCES

- Bakalář, E. (2002), *Průvodce otčovstvím, aneb, Bez otce se nedá (dobře) žít* [Paternity guide or one can't live (well) without a father], Praha, Vyšehrad.

- Bentzen, J. and Schee, H. (2002), *Skandinávie: Skandinávské pohřebnictví* [Scandinavia: Scandinavian funeral services], Unpublished paper on Venia Conference, Brno.
- Blažek, J. and Uhlíř, D. (2002), *Teorie regionálního rozvoje* [Regional development theories], Praha, Karolinum.
- Boulware, B. L. (2008): *The Deathscape of St. Paul: historic cemeteries as cultural landscapes*, Master's Thesis. Oregon State University, The College of Liberal Arts, Department of Anthropology, USA.
- Charvát, R. (2008), Owner of a funeral services company (Charvát, Klobouky u Brna), Interview conducted 17 July 2008, Klobouky u Brna.
- Christopher, A. J. (1995), Segregation and cemeteries in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. *The Geographical Journal*, 161: 38–46.
- Chromý, P. (2009), *Kultura a prostor* [Culture and space], in Heřmanová, E. and Chromý, P. et al., *Kulturní geografie a geografie kultury* [Cultural regions and cultural geography], Praha, ASPI.
- Cihelka, M. (2007). *Marný útek před smrtí* [Futile escape before death], available at <<http://www.umirani.cz/index.php?lang=cs&cmd=page&id=36&item=59>>.
- Coontz, S. (2000), Historical perspectives on family studies, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62: 283–297.
- Czech Statistical Office (2001), available at <www.czso.cz>.
- Čáp, J. and Mareš J. (2001), *Psychologie pro učitele* [Psychology for teachers], Praha, Portál.
- Daly, K. (2003), Family theory versus the theories families live by, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65: 771–784.
- Doležalová, G. and Ouředníček, M. (2006), *Životní styl obyvatelstva v suburbánní zóně Prahy* [Citizens' lifestyles in the suburban zone of Prague], in Ouředníček, M. (ed.), *Sociální geografie pražského městského regionu* [Social geography of the Prague urban region], Praha, Univerzita Karlova v Praze.
- Francaviglia, R. V. (1971), The Cemetery as an evolving cultural landscape, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 61: 501–509.
- Genep, A. (1997), *Přechodové rituály: systematické studium rituálů* [Transition rituals: a systematic study of rituals], Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny.
- Granovetter, M. (2005), The Impact of social structure on economic outcomes, *Journal of Economic perspectives* 19: 33–50.
- Haškovcová, H. (2007), *Thanatologie. Nauka o umírání a smrti* [Thanatology. The theory of dying and death], Praha, Galén.
- Havlíček, T. and Hupková, M. (2008), Religious landscape in Czechia: new structures and trends, *Geografie-Sborník ČGS*, 113: 302–319.
- Heřmanová, E. and Chromý, P. et al. (2009), *Kulturní geografie a geografie kultury* [Cultural regions and cultural geography], Praha, ASPI.
- Hupková, M. (2008), *Nekrogeografický výzkum Česka: základní charakter a územní diferenciacce nekrogeografických aspektů v Česku s důrazem na jejich vztah k náboženství* [Necrogeographical research in Czechia: basic character and spatial differentiation of necrogeographical aspects in Czechia with an emphasis on their relationship to religion], Unpublished Master's. Thesis, Prague, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science.
- Kasíková, H. (2007), *Kooperativní učení a vyučování* [Cooperative teaching and pedagogy], Praha, Karolinum.
- Kong, L. (1999), Cemeteries and columbaria, memorials and mausoleums: narrative and interpretation in the study of deathscapes in geography, *Australian Geographical Studies*, 37: 1–10.
- Kottak, C. P. (1999), The new ecological anthropology, *American Anthropologist*, 101: 23–35.
- Kottak, C. P. (2007), *Introducción a la antropología cultural*, Madrid, McGraw-Hill.
- Kroeber, A. L. (1927), Disposal of the Dead, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 29: 308–315.
- Lapka M. and Gottlieb, M. (2000), *Rolník a krajina: Kapitoly ze života soukromých rolníků* [Farmer and landscape: Chapters from farmers' private lives], Praha, SLON.
- Laszloffy, T. A. (2002), Rethinking family development theory: teaching with the systemic family development (SFD) Model, *Family Relations*, 51: 206–214.

- Leňová Burešová, E. (2007), *Pohřební rituály a ceremoniály—jejich psychologický význam pro pozůstalé* [Funeral rituals and ceremonies—their psychological significance for those left behind], Unpublished Master's. Thesis, Masaryk University, Faculty of Social Studies.
- Le Play, F. (1857–1885), *Dělníci dvou světů* [Laborers of two worlds], in Možný, I. (1999), *Sociologie rodiny* [Sociology of family], Praha, SLON.
- Lévi-Strausse, C. (2000), *Myšlení přírodních národů* [Thinking of natural nations], Podlesí, Dauphin.
- Levin, I. and Trost, J. (1992), Understanding the concept of family, *Family Relations*, 41: 348–351.
- Malinová, L. (2002), *Kultura a smrt: Kulturně antropologická studie prostředí smrti a umírání* [Culture and death: a cultural-anthropological study of death and the dying milieu], Unpublished Master's Thesis, Hradec Králové, University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Education.
- Matoušek, O. (1997), *Rodina jako instituce a vztahová síť* [Family as an institution and relationship network], Praha, SLON.
- Možný, I. (2002), *Česká společnost* [Czech society], Praha, Portál.
- Možný, I. (1999), *Sociologie rodiny* [Sociology of the family], Praha, SLON.
- Nakonečný, M. (2000), *Sociální psychologie* [Social psychology], Praha, Academia.
- Nešporová, O. (2004), *Současná náboženská reflexe smrti. Katolíci, protestanti, svědkové Jehovovi a oddaní Kršny ve vztahu ke smrti a posmrtné existenci* [Present religious reflection on death: Catholics, Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses and Hare Krishna in relation to death and afterlife existence], Unpublished Master's Thesis, Prague, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Humanities.
- Ouředníček, M. et al. (2008), *Suburbanizace.cz* [Suburbanization.cz], Praha, Univerzita Karlova v Praze.
- Price, L. W. (1966), Some results and implications of a cemetery study, *The Professional Geographer*, 18: 201–207.
- Rumpel, P. et al. (2008), *Měkké faktory regionálního rozvoje* [Soft factors behind regional development], Ostrava, Ostravská univerzita v Ostravě.
- Singly, F. (ed.) (2001), *Etre soi parmi les autres* [Alone among others], Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Sobotková, I. (2007), *Psychologie rodiny* [Psychology of the family], Praha, Portál.
- Spurný, M. (ed.) (2006), *Proměny sudetské krajiny* [Changes in the Sudeten landscape], Domažlice, Antikomplex, o.s.
- Teather, E. K. (1999), High-Rise homes for the ancestors: Cremation in Hong Kong, *Geographical Review*, 89: 409–430.
- Teather, E. K. (1998), Themes from complex landscapes: Chinese Cemeteries and Columbaria in urban Hong Kong, *Australian Geographical Studies*, 36: 21–36.
- Unger, J. (2002), *Pohřební ritus a zacházení s těly zemřelých v českých zemích* [Funeral rituals and the treatment of the dead in the Czech lands], in Malina, J. (ed.), *Panoráma biologické a sociokulturní antropologie: Modulové učební texty pro studenty antropologie a "příbuzných" oboru* [A panorama of biological and socio-cultural anthropology: module texts for students of anthropology and related branches], 9, Brno, Nadace Universitas Masarykiana.
- Vodáková, A., Vodáková, O. and Soukup, V. (2000), *Sociální a kulturní antropologie* [Social and cultural anthropology], Praha, Portál.
- Walsh, F. (2002), A Family resilience framework: Innovative Practice Applications, *Family Relations*, 51: 130–137.

Paper first received: July 2010

In final form: December 2010