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THE ROLE OF WINE IN TRANSITION CEREMONIES AND CERTAIN HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Abstract: Viniculture is one the most developed branches of agriculture in the Middles Ages on the territory of Vojvodina, and grapevine is one of the oldest agricultural crops. Wine, a drink that is a product of cultivation of grapevine, and a spiritual beverage of divine provenance, has a varied use: it is used in everyday and special occasions, to celebrate the patron saint's day and important events in the family, and it is indispensable in Christian customs and church rituals. In this paper, we consider the knowledge and data obtained through ethnological researches concerning the role of wine in certain Christian customs and transition ceremonies in a human life cycle. Customs related to childbirth, marriage and funerals are the most important transition ceremonies in a human life cycle, along with the celebrations of many Christian holidays in which wine is used without exception. While observing the customs that are part of those ceremonies, we may notice many very different matters concentrated in them. That is mostly a result of many intertwinings and syncretisms of customs. With time, mostly due to modern views and notions, some elements are forgotten, and some are re-established, but with a different meaning. Even today, in various religious systems it is considered that deities and demons, as well as higher forces, can be propitiated and won over with both blood and bloodless sacrifices. We may say that wine has a dual role: it represents libation, but also a substitute for blood, and blood sacrifice. In terms of mythology, grapevine is a sacred tree and a symbol of immortality, and wine – the beverage of gods – of youth and eternal life.

Keywords: wine, viniculture, customs, transition ceremonies, holidays.

1. Introduction

Grapevine is one of the oldest agricultural crops, as numerous fossil remains confirm. The oldest fossil remains come from the American continent, and they are dated to younger Mesozoic. Synchronous finds in Europe come from Italy and France, and the finding geographically closest to our territory is that in the vicinity of Radoboj in Croatia. Somewhat younger finds, from the Quaternary, were found near Kakanj in Bosnia, and the youngest ones were found in Vinča, near Belgrade, which are

about 7 million years old.[1]

Science has not yet given a precise answer to the question as to when and where the noble grapes appeared for the first time. There are several opinions on the subject, but the one that is perhaps closest to the scientific truth is that cultivation of grapes began at first between the Black and the Caspian Sea, from where it spread eastwards to India, southwards to Palestine and Egypt, and through the southern areas of Russia, all the way to the Balkans.[2] A significant, or perhaps even the most important role in the spread and development of grapevine cultivation belongs to the Phoenicians and the Greek. It is believed that around 1000 BC Greek merchants and colonists brought the grapevine to the Apennine Peninsula, and around 600 BC to the territory of modern France as well. Pre-Roman population of these areas quickly mastered the skills of grape cultivation and turning grapes into wine. The Romans took on those solid bases and perfected them, thus reaching a high point in viniculture and wine production.[3]

Wine was so valued and so favourite a drink in every milieu, bringing solid profits and contributing to the development of commerce, that vineyards were planted in every place with favourable conditions for grapevine cultivation. Even though it seemed hardly possible, such a sudden development of vine growing in the Roman period lead to hyperproduction, which endangered wine production in Italy itself. Because of this, emperor Domitian (81−96) forbade that finer grape species be grown in provinces. This prohibition was withdrawn by emperor Probus (276−282).[4] Since that period, vine growing developed without obstacles in all places and it continues to hold a significant spot in economies of many countries even today.

It was ascertained that the Balkanic autochthon population grew and cultivated grapevine in the older Iron Age (around 1000 BC). It is considered that the Thracians brought it from Asia Minor into western and southern regions, and that the technology related to viniculture and wine making was founded on Greco-Roman bases. Since 385 BC, Greek colonists brought it from Sicily to Adriatic islands, and from there it spread rapidly on the coast and the hinterland. The already mentioned Roman emperor Probus is given credit for expanding vine growing in Podunavlje, from Fruška gora to the region of Negotin.

2. Viniculture on the territory of Vojvodina in Middle Ages

Vine growing was one of the more developed branches of agriculture in the territory of Vojvodina in Middles Ages. The arable land covered with grapevine was called, same as today, *vinograd* (виноград), or *лозиɩε*, *гроздїε*.[5] Natural suitability of the soil in different periods of time would induce people to undertake certain agricultural activities and to take advantage of the riches which this geographic area provided. One of those

[1] Maslovarić 1990: 5.
[2] *Ibid*. 6.
[3] *Ibid*. 6-7
[4] Popović 1988: 198.
[5] Sindik 1999: 80.

riches of the soil from these areas was transferred "from ground to glass" by the people ever since the Roman period.

We do not have reliable data on viniculture in the early period of the Middle Ages, apart from scarce archaeological finds of tools. The slower development of vine growing between the 12th and the 14th century favoured the import of wine from Dubrovnik and Kotor,[6] while its expansion from the 14th century onward certainly lead to wine being exported from our region.[7] Turkish conquests interrupted the development in certain areas, and merely slowed it down for a period in others.[8] One of the reasons for this occurrence was the Islamic religion, which forbade alcohol consumption. However, the Turks were not the only factor that lead to the decline of vine growing. Numerous wars and battles fought in these areas also contributed, as well as massive migrations those wars caused. Sometimes the climate also affected it, and in later periods several types of pests also brought ruin on vineyards.

To the north of the Sava and the Danube, in today's territory of Vojvodina, aside from grain growing, and regardless of a somewhat harsher climate, there were favourable conditions for the development of vine growing. That part of Srem around Fruška gora has always been especially suitable for growing grapes. Data related to the medieval period, both archaeological and historical, are extremely sparse. We know that king Matthias Corvinus' librarian, who travelled through Srem in the first part of the 15th century, drank wine from Srem, and had a complimentary opinion on its taste, which certainly indicates an already considerate knowledge on the growing and processing of this noble crop.[9] According to the information gathered so far, the cultivation of grapevine in Subotičko-horgoška peščara dates back to the 13th century. We have the inventory of properties owned by the Greek monastery of Saint Demetrius of Sava and a document from 1211 which mention the cellars of Prince David near Bački Monoštor and Apatin, while two charters from a later period, from 1462 and 1502, mention the existence of vineyards. One mentions a gift from king Matthias to his mother, which included the villages of Bajmok, Čantavir, Pačir and all their properties, while the other lists assets of the city of Subotica in Čongrad County, with all the properties and vineyards pledged by prince John Corvinus.[10] The slopes of the mountains of Vršac were also decidedly favourable for growing grapes.[11] Evliya Çelebi, who visited Vršac in 1560 and 1564, also confirmed that it was a very rich county, having written that on the eastern side of Vršac, all the way to the very fort on the hill, there were fertile vineyards.[12] After the Turkish conquest of Banat in 1552, the same fate befell those vineyards as the ones in other regions in our lands.

A notable, yet slower development of vine growing during the 14th century could not provide the necessary quantities of wine needed for the tables of medieval rulers and princes, so wine was imported from Dubrovnik and Kotor, where viniculture had already

[6] Blagojević 1973: 134; Dinić-Knežević 1966: 63−65.
[7] Maslovarić 1990: 8-9.
[8] *Ibid*. 10-11.
[9] Latinović, Trifunović 2001, 7-8.
[10] Sándor 1976: 568-588.
[11] Jovanović 1996, 3.
[12] Čelebi 1967: 536.

reached an enviable level.[13] In the second half of the same century, a significant progress was made in this branch of agriculture. New vineyards were planted, old ones expanded, with an ever growing intensity in the following period.[14] Such expansion of vine growing lead to an augmented wine production and, certainly, to export of this product from these areas.[15]

Vineyard cultivation was a significantly harder and time-consuming work than grain cultivation. Soil preparation, grape planting, hoeing, pruning, tying, cutting off, picking, all these actions required that a certain number of people had been enlisted as well, most of all farmers, who had obligations towards the ruler, princes and nobility and monastery properties. Preserved in medieval charters, we have valuable data on those obligation and sanctions in cases when those obligations were not fulfilled.[16]

Tools used for working in vineyards are mostly known from archives and from archaeological excavations at medieval sites. They were found in settlements, but necropoles as well, due to the custom of burying the dead with grave offerings that often included their tools. From archaeological collections of museums in the territory of Vojvodina, we have a smaller number of finds that were defined as tools used for vine growing. For digging and hoeing grapevine, spades, pickaxes, hoes and two-pronged hoes were used, and for pruning – pruning knives, but regular knives as well. They come from several sites: Grad-Sapaja, Crvenka, Ašanj region, Jaša Tomić, Dobrica, Bač, Hajdukovo and site 41 in Sremska Mitrovica.[17] Tools used in the complex process of vine cultivation, their characteristics, functions, modes of utilisation and typology were discussed in other papers in which we dealt with this topic.[18]

3. Wine in different customs

Wine, the drink that is the product of vine growing and a spiritual beverage of divine provenance, has various uses: it is used in everyday and special occasions, to celebrate the patron saint's day and important events in the family, and it is irreplaceable in Christian customs and religious ceremonies. We will be discussing the knowledge and data obtained through ethnological researches concerning the role of wine in certain Christian holidays and transition ceremonies in a human life cycle.

The use of wine in rituals originates from ancient times. Grapevine and wine represent symbols of life and salvation.[19] Therefore, the use of wine is still present in the cult of the dead in all Indo-European peoples and in Christmas rituals, since Christmas is a holiday associated with ancestors. Wine, as a replacement for blood, is also used in the cult of the dead. It is customary to leave it next to the deceased, and sometimes to bury it with them. Wine is poured onto the deceased, as well as the place where the grave will be

[13] Dinić-Knežević 1966: 63-65.
[14] Blagojević 1973: 137.
[15] Maslovarić 1990: 8-9.
[16] Blagojević 1973: 141; Ivić, Grković 1976: 15; Radojčić 1955: 15-28.
[17] Brmbolić 2000: 19-20, 23-25, 27-29; Stanojev 1996: 90-95.
[18] Manojlović-Nikolić 2006: 87-94; *Id*. 2009: 5-17.
[19] Bosić 1996: 198-204; Čajkanović 1973: 198-204.

dug and the grave itself. During the reception after the funeral, wine is spilled beneath the table or onto the ground and laid aside by the cresset. On Christmas eve it is left on the table for the dead, toasts with wine are held for Christmas, patron saint's day, wedding, and they are offered to the supreme divine being firstly, and then to ancestors. During Kermesses, wine is offered as a sacrifice to the sacred tree – to the *zapis*. It is left in the place chosen for house construction, and the host of the new house pours the wine through the chimney. Along with these and a series of other customs, wine is also used in traditional medicine.[20]

3. 1. Wine in transition ceremonies

Rituals related to childbirth, matrimony and burials are the most important transition ceremonies in a human life cycle. While observing those customs that represent the obligatory part of those rituals, we may notice that very different matters are present. They are usually the result of different intertwinings and syncretisms of customs. With time, usually due to modern views and notions, some elements are forgotten, and some are re-established, but with a different meaning. Even today, in various religious systems it is considered that deities and demons, and higher forces, can be propitiated and won over with both blood and bloodless sacrifices. We may say that wine has a dual role: it represents libation, but also a substitute for blood, and blood sacrifice. The ritual use of wine in customs related to childbirth, marriage and death is very important.[21] It isn't seldom that brandy is used instead of wine, having the same meaning in cult sense.

Childbirth represents a new beginning in a life cycle. Labour always brings concern into a household, especially so in the past, when this event was accompanied by superstitions and quackery, but also bad hygiene conditions. The first protective action was the ritual bathing of the woman who gave birth, and then the child, with holy water brought from church.[22] In some places, it was customary to pour some wine into the holy water, and, if the newborn was a boy, to bathe him in wine. Drinking and toasting with wine or brandy followed this important event, which was not the custom if a female child was born. After bathing, the first meal followed – putting the first food into child's mouth, but the child was often first given some wine, and some wine was given to him/her again before being laid to bed. One of the customs was that the woman who gave birth made a *povojnica*. Near Banatski Heri, and similarly in other regions, *povojnica* consists of: flat round bread (*pogača*), salt, onion, baked chicken, cake and a bottle of wine.[23] There was a whole series of other customs. According to popular belief, the fate of a child was determined by his first three nights. The key role was that of the Fates (*suđenice*). During those nights, three glasses of wine were served on the table set for them, along with food. This custom was to be obeyed, or else the Fates could become enraged, deciding to give the child bad destiny.[24] Another ritual was the first haircut, or the sponsorship of the first

[20] Kulišić 1970a: 70
[21] Reljić 1991: 221.
[22] *Ibid*.
[23] Dimitrijević 1958: 235.
[24] Reljić 1991: 222.

haircut, to which godparents and guests were invited with a flask of wine. This custom is almost forgotten, but some of its elements are kept in customs related to baptism.[25]

Wedding is the next important event in a human life cycle and also one of the greatest ritual ceremonies. Essentially, the goal of marriage is to ensure and regulate an important function of life, the procreation of offspring.[26] Wedding is preceded by a proposal, engagement and long preparations, and guests are invited to the wedding with a decorated flask. The flask is filled with wine and richly decorated with flowers and towels. Many amulets are put on it, so as to divert evil spells. Wine is drank from the flask, showing that the invitation to the wedding has been accepted, and it is not seldom that even those people holding a grudge use this moment to make peace via the flask. Even the children, if they are to take part in the wedding, are obliged to have at least a lick of wine. It was customary for every guest to add his own wine to the flask, approximately the amount they drank, so that it would be full all the time. Let us also mention that the flask was gifted, but that a curse could be put on it, same as on the bride.[27]

Special attention should be given too many toasts, usually made with wine, that are given at certain moments during the wedding ceremony. On this occasion, we will mention only few of them. There is a custom, recorded in 1845 in Srem, in a Serbian community, that the head of the wedding guests, after raising a toast to the newlyweds, should drink up a glass of wine and then smash it against the door, and in the mountain area on the slopes of Fruška Gora until recently there was a custom that the head of the guests would break three glasses against the door of the wooden house into which he had previously lead the newlyweds.[28] The custom of breaking the glass after toasting is very old. This fact is confirmed by Serbian church rules from the 14th century that, along with many others, contain the prohibition of breaking the glass that the newlyweds took the communion from.[29] Those rules, however, were not always followed even by church officials, as we can learn from the visit of bishop Partenije Pavlović to the monasteries of Fruška gora in 1753. According to that report, the bishop, at a dinner, raised the first glass to the glory of God, Holy Mother of God and Holy prince Lazar, the second one to the health of emperor Franz I and empress Maria Theresa, and the third one to the health of all the clergy and people, and after each toast he smashed his glass. In the end, he raised his fourth glass to his archbishop and metropolitan bishop from Karlovci, and smashed that glass as well.[30]

Many customs are linked to the moment when a bride leaves her family house as well. For example, in mountain areas on the slopes of Fruška gora, before guests leave, the father of the bride toasts to his son-in-law with a glass of wine into which he puts money, and the son-in-law has to drink it bottoms up; the rest of the bride's family then does the same. In southern Banat, the groom, before going towards the bride's house, smashes three glasses of wine against the door so that he would – as it is believed – break the spells

[25] *Ibid*. 223.
[26] Zečević 1968: 163.
[27] *Ibid*.
[28] Škarić 1939: 106.
[29] Solovjev 1934: 37.
[30] Ruvarac 1903: 71, 72.

that await him down the road.[31] The bride enters the groom's house guided by her mother-in-law, who gives her two breads to put under her armpits (in some places she also puts a horse collar on the bride's head), and puts two bottles of wine in her hands; in other places, the newlyweds carry the wine together, spilling it in front of them and walking on its trace.[32]

The essence and goal of every marriage was, most importantly, to secure male heirs. The most widely spread and most important magical act performed by the newlyweds themselves during the wedding ritual was eating and drinking together. It was considered to secure the fertility of spouses, so therefore they ate from the same plate, with one piece of bread, and drank wine from only one glass. According to beliefs of many peoples, the duty of every man, one that determined his fate, was to ensure the continuation of his lineage. However, only those who left a son were considered to be blessed. Otherwise, their ancestors lost the posthumous gift that belonged to them, and they themselves were destined to roam the earth after death as restless spirits and to perish in hell.[33] Securing a male heir was every man's holy duty, so it is natural that a series of magical actions was undertaken in an attempt to augment the fertility of spouses.

Death is, in a certain sense, the ending of a person's life cycle and a very sad event. Special care was taken that the preparation of the deceased and the funeral itself would go as tradition and established customs required so that the deceased's soul would rest in peace. Numerous and various beliefs and rituals accompanied this last action in a human life cycle. Wine was obligatory in posthumous rituals. It was customary that wine would be poured over the body of the deceased before burial, as well as the grave, and/or the funeral pit. It was believed, and this belief remains even today, that in the "other" world there was great thirst, so it was necessary that the deceased was provided, among other things, with water for the journey to the eternal world of the dead. After the funeral, during commemorations held after certain periods of time, and for holiday, water was left for the deceased in a bowl, or a glass, next to the cross. It was customary to leave what the deceased loved the most in his lifetime on their grave: wine or brandy, and the same goes for food. People taking part in the funeral and commemorations, along with food, as a contribution, always bring a bottle of wine as well.[34]

3.2. Wine and Christian holidays

Not only is wine being used in transition rituals in a human life cycle, but it is also present in many holidays that are honoured and celebrated by the Christian church. Christmas Eve, Transfiguration of Jesus, Beheading of St. John the Baptist and the Triumph of the Cross are some of those holidays in which, among other things, the use of wine is obligatory.

In all our regions, on **Christmas Eve** the host would set on fire one or more Yule

[31] Škarić 1939: 106; Reljić 1991: 226.
[32] Reljić 1991: 226, 227.
[33] Đorđević 1958: 451.
[34] Reljić 1991: 229.

logs (*badnjak*). Yule logs used to be cut from the tree that was most common in a certain area (turkey oak, oak or beech). Today, Yule log is almost always cut from an oak tree. Many national customs are linked to Yule log and Christmas Eve. Yule logs are cut with special attention and a series of customs which show that the Log is honoured as the spirit of the trees, sometimes as a deity himself, from which help is expected and whom fertility, happiness and progress depend on. As the vegetation demon that brings fertility, Yule log is given a sacrifice in fruit while it is brought inside – wheat and other cereal seeds (and in some cases even bread is used) are poured over the person who carries it in, with wine being spilt on him from a pitcher. Many archaic agricultural elements involving Yule log in our customs indicate that Pan-Slavic notions about the spirit of the trees are most probably the continuation of autochthonic traditions of farmers from Mediterranean areas, intertwined with antique influences.[35]

On the day before Christmas preparations are made for the Christmas Eve or for Christmas Day. Main ritual customs are performed on the Christmas Eve, which is partly consecrated to the cult of the deceased, and partly to demon cult, and, finally, to one higher deity. Along with the food, drink was the obligatory part of the Christmas Eve supper. Usually only wine was drank, but in some places brandy was served as well. In customs, wine had a more prominent role than brandy.[36] The Christmas Eve supper is given mostly to honour the dead, and therefore the meals prepared and eaten have a decidedly chthonic character. Beans, honey, fish, and walnuts were laid on the table without exception, and wine, representing the substitute for blood, is also an indubitable part of the cult of the dead, same as wheat. In essence, Christmas Eve has the same character as All Souls Day, and the same as Roman *Larentalia*.[37] Celts celebrated a holiday at the beginning of November which marks the coming of winter, and rituals were performed to aid the forces of light in their combat against the forces of death and darkness, linked to the celebration of the day of the dead, in Christianity – All Souls Day.[38]

One of the customs is the ritual breaking and eating of the cake which is a symbolic representation of crops. The breaking of the cake is preceded by wine being spilled over it and drank, and in some places the first piece of bread is intended for God, same as the first glass of wine. Cattle and poultry were sprinkled with wine on Christmas morning, and in some villages people washed their faces with wine, so as to be healthy and rosy, and it was also used to put out the Christmas candle.[39]

The Transfiguration of Jesus represents the time boundary between summer and winter (it is celebrated on the 19th of August according to the Gregorian calendar) in traditional beliefs. On that day it is customary to eat grapes, and there's a firm belief that grapes should not be eaten before the Transfiguration. Even today, in many villages of Fruška Gora people gather in vineyards on the eve of the Transfiguration, where they celebrate and frolic with great bonfires being lit, and the young spend the entire night

[35] Kulišić 1970b: 14-15.
[36] Bosić 1996: 101.
[37] Kulišić 1970c: 15.
[38] Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Srejović 1992: 484.
[39] Bosić 1996: 101.

there.[40] Customs analogous to this one can be found in vine growing districts of Bulgaria.[41]

The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, or the day of Saint John the Beheaded (the 11th of September according to the Gregorian calendar) is a holiday celebrated with a series of customs related to grapes. One of them is the custom of eating grapes on that day and, among other thing, to have it taken to church to be consecrated. In Srem, for example, only white grapes are eaten, because black grapes and other red fruit and vegetables are in the colour of blood, i. e. the colour which represents the blood of the murdered saint. On that day, grapes are taken to the graves of the faithful departed. It is customary in certain villages of Banat and Srem to spend the eve of the Beheading in the vineyard, where dinner is made and grapes eaten.[42]

The Triumph of the Cross is celebrated on the 27th of September according to the Gregorian calendar. One of the customs related to this day consists of eating grapes and taking them to church to be consecrated.[43]

* * *

In various beliefs, even today, it is considered that deities and demons, as well as higher forces, can be propitiated and won over with both blood and bloodless sacrifices. Sacrifices take a prominent spot in religious customs. They can be in blood (when people, animals, or birds are sacrificed), bloodless (fruit, clothes, money, and bread) and libation (wine, brandy, milk, and oil).[44] Wine has a double role: it represents libation, but also a substitute for blood and blood sacrifice.

The use of wine in customs related to human life cycle and in certain holidays we mentioned suggests that it has, most prominently, the role of an intermediary between a family and its ancestors. Customary rituals are used to summon the souls of ancestors so that they would meet and accept a new member of the family – a child or a daughter-in-law. The most common way of summoning them is an invitation to eat and drink, where ritual meals prevail, cult bread, and most prominently − wine. The fertility of newlyweds, i.e. the securing of progeny is considered to be a gift from God, and wine, on such occasions, in the same way as in other cases, should establish the contact with home deities and ancestors. When it comes to communions, wine that is drank from a glass, or a graal, given as a sacrifice to the deity, replaces the blood of God and instils a spiritual and life strength.[45]

According to mythology, the first cultivators of nature were Dionysus in Greek, Bacchus in Roman, Kurent in Slovenian and Saint Sava in Serbian traditions, and they are the ones who taught people how to make wine. Getting drunk from wine enabled men to be possessed by divine forces, i.e. physical drunkenness lead to spiritual drunkenness. In the cult of Dionysus the mystery of life after death is strongly represented, as well as the

[40] *Ibid*. 373.
[41] Markova 1978: 238.
[42] Bosić 1996: 375.
[43] *Ibid*. 381.
[44] Petrović 1970: 122.
[45] Kuper 1986: 184.

mystery of rebirth, in which grapevine and wine have an important symbolic role. Grapevine is interpreted the same way in the symbolic system of Christianity, in which it represents a sacred tree and a symbol of immortality, and wine – the beverage of youth and eternal life. In Christian mythology, according to biblical lore, wine is identified as the blood of Christ, thus symbolizing immortality, joy and life.[46] In the Gospels, grapevine is the symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven, and its fruit is Eucharist – a prayer, thankfulness given before bread and wine are consecrated during the communion.[47]

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УЛОГА ВИНА У ОБРЕДИМА ПРЕЛАЗА И У ОБИЧАЈИМА О НЕКИМ ПРАЗНИЦИМА

Резиме

Вино, пиће које је продукт гајења винове лозе и духовни напитак божанског порекла има разнолику употребу: користи се у свакодневним и свечаним приликама, код обележавања крсне славе и важних породичних догађаја, а неизоставно је у хришћанским обичајима и црквеном богослужењу. У тексту разматрамо сазнања и податке етнолошких истраживања која се тичу обичаја у вези са вином о појединим хришћанским празницима и у обредима прелаза у животном циклусу човека. Обичаји у вези са рођењем детета, склапањем брака и сахраном покојника најзначајнији су обреди прелаза у човековом животном циклусу, као и поштовање многобројних хришћанских празника у којима је употреба вина обавезна. У праћењу обичаја који су део тих обреда, примећујемо да су концентрисани многи веома различити садржаји. Најчешће су резултат разноликих прожимања и сажимања обичаја. Временом, углавном због савремених погледа и схватања, неки су елементи заборављени, неки поново увођени, али са другачијим значењем.

Рођење детета представља нови почетак, док је свадба следећи важан догађај у животном циклусу човека и уједно једна од највећих обичајних свечаности. Суштински, циљ брака је да обезбеди и регулише важну функцију у животу човека, продужење потомства. Смрт је, у извесном смислу, завршетак животног циклуса човека и веома тужан догађај. Да би душа покојника имала мира нарочито се водило рачуна да припрема покојника и сама сахрана протекне у складу са традицијом и утврђеним обичајима. Многобројна и разноврсна веровања и ритуали пратили су овај чин, а употреба вина је била неизоставна.

Обичаји о појединим празницима које поштује и слави хришћанска црква и народ на овим просторима су веома разнолики. Бадње вече, Преображење Господње, Усековање главе св. Јована Крститеља и Воздвижење часног крста, неки су од празника о којима се спроводи низ радњи. Суштински, Бадње вече има карактер задушница, као и римске Ларенталије (*Larentalia*). Код Келта је почетком новембра прослављан празник који обележава долазак зиме, а ритуалним радњама су се потпомагале силе светлости у борби са снагама смрти и таме што је повезано са празником мртвих, у хришћанству задушницама.

У разним веровањима и данас се сматра да се божанства и демони, као и више силе, могу умилостивити и придобити приношењем жртви. Жртве могу да буду крвне, када се жртвују људи, животиње, птице, бескрвне у плодовима, одећи, новцу, хлебу и течне –

либација, у пићу као што је вино, ракија, млеко, уље. Вино има двојаку улогу: представља течну, али као замена за крв и крвну жртву.

Коришћење вина у обичајима из животног човековог циклуса и о појединим празницима указује, пре свега, на његову улогу као посредника између укућана и њихових предака. Обичајне радње које се спроводе окупљају душе предака, а најраширенији начин окупљања је позив на јело и пиће, где доминирају обредна јела, култни хлебови, а пре свега вино.

По митологији, први култиватори природе су Дионис код Грка, Бахус код Римљана, Курент код Словенаца и Свети Сава код Срба који уче људе како да справљају вино. У Дионисовом култу изражена је тајна живота после смрти, мистерија поновног рађања, у коме лоза и вино имају значајну симболичну улогу. Винова лоза се исто тумачи и у симболици хришћанства, представља свето дрво и симбол бесмртности, а вино пиће богова, младости и вечног живота. У хришћанској митологији, по библијском предању, вино је изједначено са Христовом крвљу, симболизујући тако бесмртност, радост и живот.

Кључне речи: вино, виноградарство, царина, свечаности, празници.

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