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## **“Deaf Wedding”: The Time in the Beliefs and Ritual Practices of the Female Folk Healers / Wizards**

The subject of interest of the present article is time in the traditional Balkan cultures, with special emphasis on Macedonian female folk healers i.e. the time when they perform their ritual practices. The ritual practices of treatment, whether it is about collective curing practices, when the entire rural community is threatened, mostly due to an epidemic, or it is an individual in question, usually is performed at night, or in the so-called "deaf time", or "no time", "dead hours" – that is, the time around midnight or the twilight after the setting of the sun; at moonlight (under the influence of the lunar phases); before sunrise, etc., which can be related to the liminal periods during this period of a day and night. On the basis of symbolic and semantic analysis, the present article tries to make a link between the symbolic representations of the time with the day and the night, further to those of the Sun and the Moon, which are connected with the interpretation of the this-worldly and the otherworldly.

*Key words:* “deaf wedding”, time, ritual practices, female folk healers, this world, that world, plague’s shirt / cloth, twins.

### **„Глува свадба“: време у веровањима и ритуалним радњама жена видара / бајалица**

Текст говори о појму времена у традиционалним балканским културама, са посебним освртом на македонску традиционалну културу, односно на ритуалне радње које изводе жене *народни видари/бајалице*. Ритуалне радње лечења, без разлике да ли је реч о колективним радњама, када је довођена у опасност цела сеоска заједница, најчешће ради неке епидемије, или је у питању појединац, у највећем броју случајева изводиле су се: ноћу или у тзв. „глуво доба“, „ниједно време“, тј. у поноћ, увече пре заласка сунца, на месечини (утицај су имале и фазе месеца) или пре свитања. Ритуалне радње су се изводиле у тачно одређеним сегментима времена у току дана и ноћи. Ти периоди времена предстаљају одређену врсту границе. У тексту се настоји на бази симболичко-семантичке анализе повезати симболичка схватања о времену са онима која се тичу дана и ноћи, затим са онима о Сунцу и Месецу, као и са схватањима о „овоземаљском“ и „оностраном“.

*Кључне речи:* „глува свадба“, време, ритуалне радње, жене *видари/бајалице*, овоземаљско, онострано, чумино платно/кошуља, близанци.

Time in the traditional Balkan cultures had a significant impact on different segments of their lives. Accordingly, there are a number of beliefs about the day and night as time indications. The views of the Sun and Moon, the beliefs about the days of the week, can be further transmitted to the seasons, are also added to the them (see: Risteski 2005, 318-333; 343-394). These time indicators are prevalent also in the oral narrative literature, especially in those about their genesis, which speaks of a general procedure for structuring social time (see e.g. in: Cepenkov 1989, 7, 9; Penušiski 1980, 303-308; Kovačev 1914, 29-30, 45-46 55; Majzner 1934, 152; Petreska 2001, 103-116).

## The concept of time in the folk culture

Time was the subject of many studies.<sup>1</sup> For instance, for Durkheim, time is one of the categories that were born in religion and come from religion, and it is the product of the religious thinking; or what the category of time expresses is a time common for the group, so to speak, social time (Durkheim 1998, 21-23). Durkheim's theses are in concordance with his more general theory of the social determination of concepts, that the existence of time for us, the human beings, is only driven by the fact that we are social beings. Durkheim's theoretical views, along with van Genep's well known discussions about death and rebirth in his *Rites of Passage* influenced E. Leach, who discussed the two aspects of timeness, based on two completely different modes of existence: time as repeated category (the seasons, for example), and time as a non changeable duration (death of an individual). Through amalgamation of the two religious views, Leach agrees that immutability, *nonrepetitiveness* is assimilated in the repetition, which denies the end with dead, and expectation of rebirth. Death has been incorporated in the predicted year cycle and reproduction of social life. In this way discontinuity is coupled with cyclicity, and death becomes a process that is necessary for the continuity of life. The most important for Leach is that despite the fact that many analyzes take as basic the two conceptualizations of time, cyclical (typical mainly for the traditional, small societies) and linear (mostly typical of urban, industrial societies), there is a different understanding of time (Leach 1961, 126, cited according: Telban 1999, 91)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Civjan 1982, 117-123; Civjan 1982a, 68-71; Risteski, 2005; for the compressed and stretched time, see: Tolstaja 2003, 104-119; 7th Conference of the SIEF held in 2001 in Budapest, Hungary, was dedicated to *Times, Places, Passages*. Ethnological Approaches in the New Millennium, Plenary papers, Abstracts, Budapest, 2001; for the time in urban and traditional environments, see: Telban, 1999: 87-104; and the listed literature there; for the aspects of time in folklore, see: *Vreme, vakat, zeman. Asekti vremena u folklore. Zbornik radova*, Beograd, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> E. Leach further elaborates on this view in a very complex point of view of zigzag, there-here, up-down, alternative time in the sequences of oscillations between the conflicting opposites: night and day, winter and summer, dry and wet, old and young, life and death. This view was somewhat criticized by R. Barnes, who has agreed that the collective representation of time in pre-technical or traditional societies have not to be viewed as a zigzag alternative; the concept of cyclicity can be more understood in its holistic, non-geometric, periodical meaning and as non-cumulative repetitions (Barnes 1974; see also: Gell 1992, 33-34; cited according to: Telban 1999, 91).

The constant repetition of time in nature – daily, weekly, monthly, annually, led the man probably very long ago to think about its cyclical flow. Day and night is the most basic natural unit of structuring the time, based on the natural movement of Earth around its *imagined axis*. In the folk culture of the Macedonians, and other Slavic peoples, the understanding of the concept of day and night is based on the constant interchanging, as two complementary phenomena that are inextricably linked with the activities of the Sun, on one side, and the Moon and Stars, on the other, but this opposition can be further transmitted to the seasons too. Therefore, we can see that in the traditional culture of the Macedonians, and in the traditional cultures of other Balkan peoples, there is the category of cyclical time, but we can also talk about alternative periods of time, or even of Burns' reflections on its holistic, non-geometric, periodical significance, and in terms of non-cumulative repetitions. I would say that this suits best the periods of the healing practices of the traditional healers. The general idea of this concept is that in the traditional cultures, the time is given a positive and negative meaning: it can be good or bad, clean and unclean, dangerous and beneficial. On the other side, this day and night period can be split into several segments, e.g.: morning before sunrise, dawn, the very moment when the Sun appears, evening before sunset, sundown, night, midnight, by moonlight (often when the Moon decreases), when the stars appear in the sky, etc... (Usačeva 1988, 88-92; Risteski 2005 318-335). The time serves as a key regulator of all practical and ritual activities of people and is one of the main tools for organizing the world and structuring the human life (Tolstaja 2003, 104).

## Time in the beliefs and ritual practices of folk healers

According to the time, the day and night period was an important segment in the folk treatments of diseases. Although in the folk treatment – healing, an important part is the text or spoken formulas, here a greater emphasis will be given to the time periods during the performance of ritual practices. Whether the ritual healing practices are performed when the whole village community was at risk, mostly due to infectious diseases, or it was about some individual cases, these time periods of performance of the ritual practices were crucial. The cases when the whole rural community was endangered mostly because of illness, for example, the plague, can be considered as collective healing practices. One of them was connected with weaving of the so-called “plague's cloth” (“tschumino platno”) or making a so-called “plague wedding” (“tschumina svadba”), “deaf wedding” or “dead wedding”. The procedure consisted of the following:

Three widows, at an ungodly (witching) hour of the night will be spinning cotton. When they are done with it, they will start to go around the village, naked like a newborn child. They will go naked with the spinned thread, one from one side, and the other from the other side of the village, and will meet in the middle of it... Then they will take the thread with them, and will weave it on a loom. This is how the cloth will be woven. It is called plague's cloth, made in the middle of the village. They'll divide it among themselves, in small parts, for each member of their

families, in order to carry it like an amulet. Everyone has to wear it all live long... They will spin and weave it on Sunday, and then they will share it. It is called "plague's cloth".<sup>3</sup>

Variants of weaving "plague's cloth", besides cotton, but of flax and hemp are met much more. For example, weaving during the *witching hours of the night* by the fire was accompanied by the magic formula: *"As these things burn, so let the plague burn too. Let burn its eyes, its hair!"* Sometimes two widows and a girl were making a "plague's" or "barren" wedding. They took the disease to a wedding in another village, in another field or transported it over water, with ritual bread, wooden drink bottle, meal, and all that was obligatory accompanied by playing of a bagpipe. Then all of them returned home in complete silence, one by one, and the widows came back last, leaving the meal and wooden bottle on the spot where they thought the disease would run out of their village.<sup>4</sup> The motif of inviting to a wedding in another village is quite widespread with the action of driving away the vampires. Bread and wine were regularly brought in this occasion. The action of inviting was accompanied by music, playing music instruments, dancing, and while dancing the vampire was brought to a river or to another village where the vampire was being left and it was believed that he will not come back (Spirovska i Vražinovski 1988, 18, 42-47). The magic formula "(Go) into the forest, into the waters, into the mountains – your access is forbidden here!" could be spoken even when the widows were going around the village. In these cases an important category is the border of the village and the border area, which were understood as close and nearby, unlike the area of another village that was understood as distant area and therefore the disease was transmitted there. In some variants, the widows went to the crossroads and buried several pieces of thread of the plague's cloth, and when they returned to the middle of the village, they gave each family few threads of the cloth, whose members had to keep them as an amulet for protection from the plague (Vražinovski 1995, 63; Vražinovski 2000, 434-436). Plague's cloth or plague's shirts, woven from hemp or flax, were known in other places too, for instance in Kosovo and Metohia, where two sisters with names, which are associated with standing, duration, e.g. Stoya and Stoyanka, had to spin, weave and sew one such shirt during one night (Tolstaja 2003, 106), in Serbia (Radenković 1982, 214).

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<sup>3</sup> Archives of the Institute of Folklore in Skopje (further: AIF), tape number 1898, recorded from C. KJ., 89 years of age, from the village of Bistritsa, near Veles, by Angel Andreev Kjulafkovski, in the village of Stari Grad, near Veles in 1972.

<sup>4</sup> AIF, tape no. 1898, recorded from V. P., 49 years of age, from the village of Martoltsi, near Veles, by Angel Andreev Kjulafkovski, in the village of Martoltsi, near Veles in 1972. Stefan Verkovich also saw waving a "plague's cloth" in a day. He says that girls and boys gathered after the sun-set. The unmarried boys did the loom and the girls while spinning were circling around the village three times. In order to do the weaving they were gathered in a house and after the cloth was done, an old widow would do an opening in the middle of the cloth through which she would put her head and let the cloth fall under her feet. This procedure was done three times, by the ones that didn't want to catch the plagues. During the ceremony talking was not allowed. Then the cloth was divided into pieces, and everyone took a piece and sewed it on their hat (Verković 1985, 96).

Beside weaving of "plague's cloth" and making a "plague's infertile wedding", quite widespread was the way of plowing around the village, that was done three times by twin brothers and black twin oxen, that were not talking while working. Plowing the village three times was done in one night. The process of plowing is not surprising, because the Balkan cultures were predominantly agrarian, and plowing almost everywhere in these cultures was a holy act and was understood as an act of fertilization of the fields (Chevalier i Gheerbrant, 1983, s.v. oranje, 458-459). As a sacrifice by the plowing around the village, they carried two black cocks – "twins", which were slaughtered and buried in the plowed furrow.<sup>5</sup> That way the plague could not cross the furrow (Verković 1985, 96; Vražinovski 1995, 63). In Christianized forms of beliefs associated with the plague and the protection from it, the cult of the saint Haralambos (St. Haralambos) has to be mentioned, which was fairly widespread in Macedonia. It is believed that he kept the plague tied and so protected the people from it. This saint is known among the people as the commander of the plague (Vražinovski 2000, 436). In Christianized form could also be mentioned an example of the archival material from the Institute of Folklore, where it is stated that the village was *ploughed* by twin oxen and a ploughman twin orphan. From that day on, rams were sacrificed for the holidays St. Athanasius and St. Paraskeva. The person who gives the information says that three priests baptized water on crossings and roads. On that occasion people gathered, but they did not sing, only the priests, who sang prayer songs<sup>6</sup>.

There is another variant of expulsion of the plague, recorded recently. People crawled under the root of a walnut tree, on which they put a shirt of a woman who had a bastard. Once crawled under the root, they were given ritual bread. This bread was kneaded with wormwood (*artemisia*) by three widows at "no time" (exactly at 12 hours, at midnight), and it was baked outside the house, in the woods. And they were saying: "Whoever bites from the bitter, will not catch the plague." The reason why was used a shirt from a woman who had a bastard (illegitimate child whom father was unknown) is associated with the condition of such a woman and child within the rural social community. As the "bastard's" father is unknown, so the disease and everything that is bad has to go to an unknown place.<sup>7</sup> The walnut tree symbolizes mystery, which like its kernel is hidden in the shell. It is a symbol of divination, fertility, strength and patience (Vražinovski 2000, 309), but it is at same time a symbol of the otherworldly, hence the beliefs that one who will fall asleep under a walnut tree, will faint or get headache. It is also believed that one

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<sup>5</sup> In Serbia, the ways of plowing the village, found in "deaf time", from two persons of the same names, which names are associated with standing, duration, e.g. Stoyan. They should retrieve living fire, or the livestock were passing despite living fire, which was held of the brother and sister naked (without clothes). Then, they returned in the different way, which would mean again that it was done making symbolic circumvent on the village (see: Bratić 1993, 124-132; Kovačević 2001, 105-119).

<sup>6</sup> AIF, tape no. 1986, recorded from T. P. D., 92 years of age, from the village of Omorani, near Veles, by Angel Andreev Kjulafkovski, in the same village in 1972.

<sup>7</sup> AIF, tape no. 3753 and 3755, recorded from O. S., born in 1936, in the village of Stantsi, near Kriva Palanka, by Yelena Cvetanovska in 2000.

should not plant a walnut tree, because when he grows up and his neck reaches the thickness of the tree, would die. The connection of the walnut with the "other world" is particularly evident in the crawling under the walnut tree root, and in a number of cases it happened on the shores of a small river or a stream. This can also be connected with the rebirth, because crawling through holes, in dark places and re-exiting, reminds the other world, that is, the female principle, the fertile principle, which is further reinforced by the fact that it often took place by some creek or stream, which can be linked with the mother's womb. Similar ritual practices with crawling under walnut tree root were encountered elsewhere in Macedonia, where in some places was practiced the ritual of twins "marking" the participants ("querents") with ember (Vražinovski 2000, 309-310; Kuper 1985, s.v. orah, 119; Chevalier i Gheerbrant, 1983, s.v. orah, 458).

The night is also the time to perform magical healing practices for individual cases. For example, if the children of a family "do not last", or die, the healers used to go in the *witching hours* to a foreign field, to the boundary between two villages, sit on a stone and sew a shirt for the child.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes for accomplishment of the magical healings the periods of the day and night were significant; e.g. early before dawn, before sun, in the evening, after sunset (Radenković 1982, 8), and a significant factor was the moon too, as well as the moon phases. The moon as a celestial body, which in the folk beliefs is associated with the after world and areas of death, and is opposed to the sun as a source of light, warmth and life (Tolstoj 1995, III, s.v. luna, lunnoe vremy, 143-150). The sun usually represents the male, and the moon symbolizes the female principle, although in the Slavic symbolism they can mutually exchange the sex (Kuper 1986, s.v. Mesec, 104-106; Chevalier i Gheerbrant 1983, s.v. Sunce, 655-659; Kulišić 1979, 115). This is brilliantly suggested by the materials according to which some South Slavic peoples address to the Moon as a grandfather, little grandfather, grandpa, etc. (Kulišić 1973, 163). If we take into consideration the fact that the sun is a symbol of life, and therefore a symbol of "this world", then this symbolism of the sun and the moon as representatives of "this" and the other world ("afterlife") is well illustrated by an example from Homolje (Serbia); namely, when the children of a mother are dying, the magic practice to prevent this consists in the following: the newborn child is taken to a courtyard, then it was swayed three times eastward, while its mother asked three times: "Do you love the Sun, or the Moon?" And every time she answers: the "Sun", which means that the mother symbolically chooses life instead of death (Janković 1951, 104). About the connection of the moon with demonic creatures speaks relatively enough a recorded field material: "fairies capture from the moon."<sup>9</sup> The Old Slavonic name for the Moon is Luna, and the same word in some Russian dialects means death, whilst the verb derived from this root means to perish, to die (Janković 1951, 105)<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, the Moon can be divided into lunar phases. It

<sup>8</sup> AIF, tape no. 3722.

<sup>9</sup> From my own field research, recorded from V. C., in the village of Polchishte, in 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Citation according to: E. Berneker, *Slavisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch Neidelberg*, see Luna).

happens mostly during the period of its birth to full moon. In the course of the night, with the appearance of the moon, it was addressed to with requests for health, while the period of treatment of illness occurred during the reduction of the moon, with hope that the disappearance of the moon will also make the disease to disappear<sup>11</sup> (Usačeva 1988, 189-190). In this context, one can mention the healing of a child by the moon. The medicine woman would carry the child out, she would take it in her arms and throwing it several times toward the moon would say: "Here you are, Moon, what you gave us, and give us what you took from us" (Cepenkov 1972, 278).

In all the above-mentioned examples, no matter whether it is about collective or individual healing practices, we can speak of compressing or thickening of the time. According to S. Tolstoya, the major forms of magical activities are presented throughout compression and thickening of the time, and in contrast to that, across the forms of stretching or postponement of the time (Tolstaja 2003, 104). Fabrication of objects in a day, known under the term *one-day objects*, had been found by D. K. Zelenin in 1911. In Russia and Belarus, these objects were made for magical purposes (primarily as protection against nightmare, pestilence, epidemics and natural disasters), by performing a special ritual in the course of one day (from sunrise to sunset). Some objects could be also produced or built: like linen, shirt, wooden cross, church, and rarely other items. Production of woven objects are encountered in several Slavic countries, but some additional requirements and conditions were necessary: old women, "clean women", usually widows; weaving of linen; giving woven cloth as a *donation* for the *church*; doing a circle around the village etc. Together with the cloth, crosses were made, e.g. the Russian crosses against cholera, or crosses against the hail among southern Slavs. In eastern Serbia, in the region near the town of Pirot, as soon as people found out that there will be war, nine old women gathered at midnight and till dawn, in complete silence, they wove cloth and made of it a shirt, through which should pass all those who were going to war. It should, according to the folk beliefs, protect them from death (Tolstaja 2003, 104-106). For all these ritual artifacts and buildings is characteristic their holiness and magical strength, which they are gained with thanks to the fullness and completeness of the whole technological process and to the time concentrativeness or time "thickness" of the ritual (Tolstaja 2003, 108). On the other hand, stretched time highlights the durability or the longevity of the activities and the time. This is represented in the funeral rites, in the famous thesis of D. Bandić, where the deceased, one year after their death are finally moving into the world of the dead ancestors – protectors (Bandić 1990, 103-120). It is also represented in the wearing of some of the wedding clothes at the time when the bride was already a young woman, and calling her "bride" in her husband's house until the end of her life, in some

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<sup>11</sup> In Macedonia the cure of illness was done in dawn; the participants in the process of treatment faced the East, drew a circle with a knife on the chest of the patient, uttering the words: "Moon, Moon, *aba* (the name of the disease) is boasting that it has put here *dalak* (the name of another disease), in the chest, and it will eat you, your ears and horns. You can fight it, Moon, and eat Vane's (the name of the ill person) *aba* and *dalak* in his chest. The rite was performed in the last quarter of the moon (Usačeva 1988, 189-190).

regions in Macedonia, which would associate with the desire for longevity for the situation that she is in.

In all these examples the thickening of the time is observable during the night, usually in around midnight, known by the people as "*witching hour*", "no time", or "evil time". The night with its darkness is the time of action of demonic creatures, or of the otherworldly, when they most often appear. To the "otherworldly" belong the diseases too, which in the traditional cultures were imagined as a creation of the magical activities, caused again by individuals who were able to enter into contact with it. The day and the night are simultaneous with the light and the dark, which in turn is synchronous with the alternation of "this" and "other" world (Petreska 2001, 106-107). After all, if the supernatural beings need "absence" of society, how would they develop their dark activity, if not in the night, as a period created for sleep, an excellent opportunity for them (Bratić 1993, 13). Their appearance at night clearly expresses the structuring of the social time. But the performance of ritual practices throughout the night: making magical circle with a thread for weaving a plague's cloth, or plowing around the village with twin black oxen and twin brothers, all that expresses a symbolic fight against the night. By marking the symbolic section of the space, making symbolic circumvent,<sup>12</sup> plowing around the village, the community cuts the space already taken with its practical activities (Bratić 1993, 125-127). In fact, with a collective activity, the community in periods of crisis tries to annihilate the dark period of social inactivity. "Deaf time", the time around midnight can be seen as return to the primitive time, in which from the Chaos begins the creation of the new day, the rebirth of the new Sun (Risteski 2005, 332). It's no coincidence that many healing rituals are performed at this time, which should imply the creation of new life. The spinning and the weaving of the cloth can also be connected to the re-creation, with the fertile principle, which in many European mythologies and folklore is entrusted to female supernatural beings. It is enough to recall on the female demons of fate "narechnici", "sugjenici", who spun the thread of life. Spinning is associated with women, and manifests women's productivity; that is, they are the suppliers of the thread of life and suppliers of clothes—one of the earliest marks of civilization distinguishing man from the animals (Zipes 1993, 50-53; Petreska 2006, 225). The spinning and the spinning products, in the European believes corelated with the passage from the other to this world (Mencej 2013, 60). The thread is making the connection between the two worlds. This connection in the European folklore is presented as a bridge as thin as a thread (Mencej 2013, 45-47), in South Slavic folklore, the souls of the dead cross the bridge as thin as a hair's breadth. To this can be added tying the thread or the parts of clothing to certain plants that are connected to the "otherworldly" in the healing rituals (Schubert 1984, 143-146; Petreska 2008a, 39-40).

The community (whether rural or familial, when it is about healing of individuals) has, however, to realize again the collective activity with a person, which in a way is in contact with the otherworldly. In this sense we can point out the heal-

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<sup>12</sup> The making of magical circles for expulsion of the supernatural beings was characteristic for the European traditions (Mencej 2013, 185-190).



ers / medicine men or witch doctors, which are the senders, but also the receivers of the message, and at the same time they are mediators between the ill and the supernatural forces (Vražinovski 1989, 83). We see this link with the supernatural in the fact that the ritual practices are habitually carried out at night; mainly they are done by elderly women, who have fulfilled their statutory roles in life, and the next expected step is the completion of their earthly life; or these doers are widows, which status being without their husbands, because they are deceased, enables them get into contact with the other world. The people who can drive away vampires "vampir-dzii" – the son of a vampire and a woman, where diversity is seen with the unknown father; people with mental retardation; were named "stigmatized people"; the age, the pale face, the white hair; the people born on Saturday can be connected to the otherworld (Spirovska i Vražinovski 1988, 18, 47; Cepenkova, 1972, 114). The contact with the "otherworldly" can be perceived by the healing against the "evil eye", ritual practice known as "barley in the eye", when the *female witch-doctor* with the sick person goes out at night, makes a vicious circle, with the elbow of the right hand she makes circles three times around the diseased eye, and then pronounces for herself the magic formula and blows above her left shoulder.<sup>13</sup> In this case the relationship with the "otherworldly" or the "otherness", despite the carrying out of the ritual practice at night, can be observed in the usage of the elbow. This time it is about bifurcation (separation), for the joints, although they connect, they can be also considered as places from where something forks, branches, changes sense, and should be understood as "division, branching" from the common "root" (Bjeletić 1999, 60; see also: Petreska 2012, 135), which would mean separation of the disease from the human and sending it to the "otherworldly". The female witch-doctor, with her blowing over the left shoulder, reinforces her relationship with the "otherworldly", because the left side is associated with the evil, unfavorable, negative – the female side.<sup>14</sup> Because of the communication with the impure force that goes in the same paradigm as the left, the female witch-doctor usually operates with her left hand (Radenković 1996, 23; Krsteva 1987, 111). In this context have to be mentioned some magical practices performed beside a mill that grinds to the left (the millstone turns to the left, and rejects the water to the left), the magical objects found in the house are also thrown into a left whirlpool (a place where the water in the river turns from the left to the right) (Radenković 1996, 70; Cepenkova 1972, 292; Marinov 1914, 151; Arnaudov 1930, 41). The accomplishment of the ritual in silence is also associated with the otherness, exactly as in the magical formulas of healings: the disease is usually sent to the mountains, to other people's places, more often where there are no audible signs of human community (Radenković 1996, 53, 75; Fabijanović 1989, 71-73; Petreska 2008, 140-142). Sending

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<sup>13</sup> From my own field research in 2015.

<sup>14</sup> About the right and left symbols see: (Ivanov 1979, 393-394; Ivanov 1980, 48-50; Petreska 2002, 340; Tolstoj 1979, 407-409). What is important for Nikita and Svetlana Tolstoy, is that the opposition right-left side in many instances lose relevance, and both can be connected either with positive, or negative sense either. Therefore, they consider that a more complex hypothesis for the symbolism of the right and left side has to be set, which will undoubtedly depend on the interoperability of the symbolic meanings of versatile elements and levels.

away the plague or disease, and also the vampire by music, making “plague’s wedding”, “inviting the vampire to the wedding”, its transportation over water or taking it to a foreign piece of land, on crossroads, is places associated with the unknown. In relation to the unknown, music instruments such as bagpipes can also be mentioned, the bagpipes were played during the wedding and driving away the vampires or the plague. The bagpipes in older times were made of goatskin and later they were made of sheepskin. It is known that in the folk beliefs the goat is a demonic animal and because of that the bagpipes are also a demonic instrument (Džimrevski 1996, 26). Weaving the cloth on Sunday (“on Sunday it will be spun, on Sunday it will be woven all night long”) clearly indicates that the making of the plague’s cloth was on Saturday, on the eve of Sunday. Saturday is also linked with the negative principle, and is related to “the other world”, and is often called the Day of the Dead). According to the folk beliefs, vampires were also destroyed on Saturday, because it was considered as a day of the dead. Similar were the beliefs about people born on Saturday, which are also believed to be able to see the deceased, and they could communicate on that day with the supernatural / the other world and do not catch epidemic diseases (Tolstoj i Radenković 2001, s.v. subota, 517). People born on Saturday could see vampires, so the destruction of the vampires was entrusted to them.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the next day is Sunday, which personifies the female deity, and in many cases as favorable days for healing are considered Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, personifying this deity, although there are practices that are performed on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (Radenković 1982, 8). In Christianized form, these days can be linked with the Christian female saints St. Sunday, Virgin and St. Paraskeva, which carry heavenly, chthonic, but also this-worldly characteristics,<sup>16</sup> that bind them with the healing capabilities, and in folk incantations we can very often hear the names of Mary, St. Paraskeva and St. Sunday. In this context, I must mention that in many instances the female witch-doctor had acquired her ability for healing (or charming) by dreaming of the Christian saints – St. Sunday, St. Paraskeva and Virgin, who demanded from her to help the people by giving them fairy water (Petreska 2015, 162). To the relationship with “the other world”, directs the fabrication of plague’s linen cloth, which is related to the outer world. The flax as a plant dies, then it is reborn, transforming itself through a complex of cultural activities into a product of culture and it takes the role of mediator between the human world and the world of demons (Tolstoj 1995, III, 91-96; Radenković 1982a, 215).

In cases when the ousting of the disease, usually epidemics, is done by plowing with twin brothers and twin oxen, which sometimes had to be black, this can also be linked to the ‘other’ life. The respect for and the fear from the twins had existed in all primal religions, and the sources about the fear of twins lead to the prehistoric past of man (Ivanov 1980, 51). In the folk imagination, the twins carry the same fate, the embodiment of duality associated with negative semantics of the

<sup>15</sup> AIF, tape no. 3549, recorded from P.J.R., born in 1922 in the village of Makresh, near Kumanovo, lives in the village of Zubovtse, near Kumanovo, by Vesna Petreska in 1996 in Zubovtse.

<sup>16</sup> The triple structures are also particularly important for the cultural history of Proto-Indo-European peoples. (See more: Belaj 2007, 35, 386-389).

number two (Tolstoj 1995, II, 21-25). The negative mythological essence of the twins is clearly expressed in the belief that they are the result of conception in the eve of the All Soul's Days, i.e. those days when it is not allowed intimate relationship of the spouses. Diverse beliefs about the twins occur in other Slavic regions, e.g. Polesye in Ukraine, also in Bulgaria, etc., according to which some are related to the positive, and other to the negative principle. The male principle - twins ploughmen, twin oxen – is particularly important for the Balkan, Serbian-Bulgarian-Macedonian traditions, which is probably tied to the ancient and Byzantine tradition (Tolstoj i Radenković 2001, 30-31; Tolstoj 1995, I, 191-193). The black color of the oxen makes this link more firm with the "other world", because its main characteristic is that it has no ambivalence and it is always associated with the darkness and the earth. From the other side, in the folk traditions of the Slavic peoples the ox is an animal for drawing, it is a pure animal, and in the folk representations the twin black ox had a special magical power (Tolstoj 1995, I, 409). To this can be added the sacrifice of a black rooster or black twin roosters. The reason for this lies in the ambivalent properties of the rooster – one time it is a good being – it is responding only when that is expected of it, and other time it is a demonic creature, when it is responding when that is not expected of it (see: Bandić 1991, 40-44; Bratić 1993, 32-42). On the other hand its semantics of "birth, fertility, fullness" is very much present and expressed especially in the wedding customs/rituals (Loma 1990, 140). Therefore its sacrifice can be interpreted as a beginning of a new life with the birth of the new day.

## Conclusion

Based on the above-stated, it can be concluded that the time periods, had a significant impact on the magical treatment. It is obvious that the successful healing of an illness is determined by the chthonic traits, in terms of time; i.e. the night, which means absence of sunshine and light, as well as specific behavior of the participants in the healing, which has a mythical character (in some cases it is in opposition with the normal social behavior, so it can be called "anti-behavior", or *anti-social behavior* (Radenković 1982, 9). Considering the diseases as a result of the influence of the supernatural forces, it is quite understandable why the healings are performed in periods that are related to the world of the supernatural or the world of the dead – in order to be in closer contact with them. The healings as a specific kind of magical practices, in most cases are aimed at resolving the conflict between the social (cultural sphere) and *anti-social* (the impure force, the demonic) (Radenković 1982, 26). The symbolic and semantic analysis of the time periods, especially the night, and its particular periods, during which are carried out the healings, has shown that they can be linked with the Sun and the Moon, and they are followed by the representations of the this-worldly and the otherworldly. The this-worldly is always related to the period of time in which acts the social community, while the otherworldly is clearly expressed in the periods when are performed magical ritual practices, in liminal periods, at night, which is the time when various supernatural creatures are active. The places where the "destruction" of the disease or the supernatural creature is done, are considered to be unconquered by men, therefore the rit-

ual activities are aimed at restoring the demonic creatures in their spaces. On the other side, the healeresses, the witch-doctresses, through which is realized the contact with the otherworldly, can be said that they are in touch with it (these are older women, non-procreative, widowed). Also the paraphernalia they use are in relation with the otherworldly. This means that the main characteristics of the time periods when the most healing practices are being done, is their uncertainty, ambivalence and danger to the people. The performance of the appropriate ritual-magical procedures in the periods of the otherworldly, death, supernatural, periods of chaos, periods when the re-creation should begin i.e. the creation of the day, can be understood as the beginning of a new life, life without pain i.e. healthy person.

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