Abstract of doctoral dissertation

The doctoral dissertation entitled: The Image of Family Life in Polish and British Traditional Folklore consists of two main parts. Each of them is divided into three chapters. The introductory chapter contains methodological assumptions based on semiotic-structural analysis and comparative ethnology. It also includes description of sources, most of which are old texts of folk songs (17th- 20th century) from different regions of Poland and the British Isles (England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales).

Part one: Members of the family community: a personological analysis is a comparative analysis persons that a traditional family consists of: models of active figures. These are: the man, the woman, the child and the old person. They play specific roles in the family and, as the conducted research reveals, they seem to be very similar, or even identical in both the examined cultural areas. In most cases they are active figures, performing specific activities determined by their social and gender roles. However, they sometimes function as props. This happens in family and yearly (agrarian) rites and concerns especially children and the elderly.

In the second part of the dissertation : External determinants of family life: topological analysis the places were discussed, where a traditional village family functions in both examined cultural areas. They were presented as circles – zones of activity based on the models of active figures. It was aimed at demonstrating that certain figures usually did not exceed the sphere of their activity determined by their sex and social role connected with it.

And thus, in the „home circle" women in principle dealt with preparing meals, sewing and taking care of babies and small children, whereas men repaired everything around the house and did some carpentry. The elderly and the children – depending on their sex- helped with the works done by the husband or the wife.

In the second, slightly wider circle of activity – the farm- works performed by the active figures were also determined by their gender and social role. The man – the farmer- dealt with what was the sense of the peasant life – agriculture. This put him in predominant position –that of the breadwinner, upon whom the fate of the family depended. That is why he made all the significant decisions, influencing the lives of those who shared the house with him. The farmer also took care of the horses, as the horse was his most important „working tool " – the helper that could not be replaced.

However, certain spheres of activity on the farm belonged exclusively to the housewife. She dealt with the pigs, the poultry and the cows, as well as growing the garden plants. The flower garden was usually entrusted to her daughters- marriageable girls, because blooming plants were associated with virginity and the beauty of girls. This is reflected in numerous love and wedding songs from both the examined cultural areas.

Children and the elderly – just like within the house – were used to help with some petty works. Small children kept an eye on the grazing geese, older ones took care of the cattle on pastures. That is why they were called " shepherdesses" and „shepherds". The elderly also did some minor works around the farm.

The last of the main chapters is devoted to the places of particular acting figures in the life of a village community. Here, again, it is visible how the sex of a person determines their position in the community. In both the examined folk cultures the man was seen as the dominating figure. Certain areas of activity were designed for him only, as were certain places, inaccessible or rarely accessible to women (an inn (a pub), an office). In the third chapter of the second part of the dissertation the key role of bonds between neighbours and common experiencing of the most important rites in human life (rites de passage). The community character of village life was a common feature of both the examined cultural areas.

In the concluding chapter an intention of conducting further research concerning mutual connections between the contemporary forms of family rites in both the examined cultural areas, as well as the need to extend the analysis of the image of family life in the traditional folklore of the examined *ethnoi* by the extended description of the rites of passage.

The final part of the dissertation contains bibliography, the annex with illustrations, as well as the list of illustrations.

Key words: family, folklore, models of active figures, circles of activity

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