

The Role of Animals in Conceptions about Death and the Afterlife in Croatian Ethnographic Material

The paper is devoted to beliefs about animals found in Croatian ethnographic material, with particular emphasis on the role of animals in concepts connected with death and the afterlife. Animals and animalistic conceptions were present in all segments of folk life. The aim of this work is to emphasise the relationship of humans and animals which does not refer only to the everyday life they shared together, but also to their relationship in the future beyond mortal existence. For the purposes of this article, eight monographs about particular places, having their place in earlier Croatian ethnographic material from the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, were analysed: Josip Lovretić's *Otok*, Kata Jančerov's *Trebarjevo*, Vladimir Ardalić's *Bukovica*, Father Frane Ivanišević's *Poljica*, Vatroslav Rožić's *Prigorje*, Josip Kotarski's *Lobor*, Luka Lukić's *Varoš* and Milan Lang's *Samobor*. In the animalistic conceptions mentioned in this paper, animals most frequently appear as heralds of impending death, are connected with the incarnation of a dead person, and are offered as sacrificial animals, while the soul of the deceased can take an animal form. Selected examples from rich and complex ethnographic material highlighted the need for further research of both published and unpublished (archive manuscripts and field work data) ethnographic material which would provide new data and broaden our knowledge about the discussed theme.

Key words: animalistic notions, ethnographic material, death and the afterlife