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**Ulyana MOVNA**

*PhD hab. (History), Leading Researcher of the Institute of Ethnology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 15 Svobody Avenue, Lviv, Ukraine, postal code 79000 (movlana@ukr.net)*

**ORCID:** 0000-0002-9763-2455

**Olexandr KUKHARENKO**

*PhD (Philology), postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Ethnology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 15 Svobody Avenue, Lviv, Ukraine, postal code 79000 (art-red@ukr.net)*

**ORCID:** 0000-0001-5421-1004

**Уляна МОВНА**

*докторка історичних наук, старша дослідниця, провідна наукова співробітниця, Інститут народознавства Національної академії наук України, проспект Свободи, 15, м. Львів, Україна, індекс 79000 (movlana@ukr.net)*

**Олександр КУХАРЕНКО**

*кандидат філологічних наук, Інститут народознавства Національної академії наук України, проспект Свободи, 15, м. Львів, Україна, індекс 79000 (art-red@ukr.net)*

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**DEFINITION OF UNIVERSAL RITUAL STRUCTURE  
ON THE EXAMPLE OF UKRAINIAN FAMILY RITUALS**

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the article is an attempt to create a structure of an averaged and universal rite, which would be suitable, if not for all, then for the majority of ritual actions. **Research Methodology.** The method of structural and functional analysis has been used, which according to the authors, contains a significant potential for further research, in particular, of the Ukrainian folk rituals. **The scientific novelty** consists in the fact that after A. van Gennep, K. Levi-Stros, M. Eliade and their followers, no successful attempts to create an effective ritual structure have been made. **Conclusions.** Unlike dramatic action, for which all elements of the composition are important, ritual action is completely satisfied only with the climax. At the same time, for the ritual, it is the climax episode that is original and unique. All other episodes into which the ritual action is divided are auxiliary and they are combined into seven groups according to the nature of the action: 1) invitations (i), 2) visits (v) and returns (r), 3) creation of a ritual attribute (a), 4) agreements (ag), 5) veneration of sacred actions, elements, objects (s), 6) blessings and gifts (b), 7) feasts and festivities (f). Having examined in detail and compared nine family rituals from the wedding, funeral, and childbirth cycles, we obtained enough schemes to determine a universal ritual structure that would be acceptable for most traditional ritual actions:  $i+v+[s+a+ag+b+C(c)+f]+r$ .*

*It should be noted that the ritual, at least a family one, always begins with invitations and the arrival of the participants to the place of its holding. It ends with the return to their own homes. The other six elements, such as honouring the sacred, creating a ritual attribute, agreements, blessings,*

feasting, and culmination, may change their order and location, but they are, in most cases, present in each specific ritual. If we apply the same procedure to other rituals that make up the three mentioned family cycles, we will obtain, if not the same, then very close results. And this once again proves the right to the existence of a universal ritual structure determined as a result of this study.

**Key words:** ritual, structure, structural and functional method, Ukrainian family rituals.

## ВИЗНАЧЕННЯ УНІВЕРСАЛЬНОЇ РИТУАЛЬНОЇ СТРУКТУРИ НА ПРИКЛАДІ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ РОДИННИХ ОБРЯДІВ

**Анотація.** Метою статті є спроба створити структуру усередненого й універсального обряду, яка підходила б, якщо не для всіх, то для більшості ритуальних дійств. **Методи дослідження.** Використано метод структурно-функціонального аналізу, що, на думку авторів, містить значний потенціал для подальших досліджень, зокрема, української народної обрядовості. **Наукова новизна** полягає у тому, що після А. ван Геннепа, К. Леві-Строса, М. Еліаде та їхніх послідовників не з'явилися наскільки ж успішні спроби створити дієву структуру обряду.

**Висновки.** На відміну від драматичної дії, для якої важливі всі елементи композиції, дія обрядова цілком задовольняється лише кульмінацією. При цьому для обряду саме кульмінаційний епізод є оригінальним і неповторним. Усі інші епізоди, на які розподіляється обрядова дія, – допоміжні й за характером дії об'єднуються у сім груп: 1) запросини (з), 2) приходи й повернення (п), 3) створення обрядового атрибуту (а), 4) домовленості (д), 5) пошанування сакральних дій, стихій, предметів (с), 6) благословення й обдарування (б), 7) гостини й гуляння (г). Детально розглянувши й порівнявши між собою дев'ять родинних обрядів із весільного, поховального й родильного циклів, ми отримали достатньо схем для того, щоб визначити універсальну ритуальну структуру, що буде прийнятна для більшості традиційних обрядових дій:  $z+n_1+[c+a+d+b+K(k)+z]+n$ .

Доцільно зазначити, що обряд, принаймні родинний, завжди починається із запрошень і приходу учасників до місця його проведення. Закінчується – поверненням до власних осель. Інші шість елементів, такі як пошанування сакрального, створення обрядового атрибуту, домовленості, благословення, гостини й кульмінація, можуть змінювати свою черговість і розташування, але вони, в більшості випадків, присутні в кожному конкретному обряді. Якщо таку саму процедуру вжити до інших обрядів, що складають три вказані родинні цикли, отримаємо, якщо не ті самі, то занадто близькі до зазначених результати. А це зайвий раз доводить право на існування універсальної ритуальної структури, встановленої у результаті цього дослідження.

**Ключові слова:** обрядовість, структура, структурно-функціональний метод, українські родинні обряди.

**Problem Statement.** Structural and functional research analysis, which reached its peak of popularity in the 1950s and 1960s, remains quite promising today. The proof of the above mentioned statement should be the study in which we will try to determine the universal ritual structure of the Ukrainian family rites. In this case the authors are not original, since the search of the most effective, harmonious and logical structure of the ritual and its construction has been carried out by a significant number of researchers – ethnologists, anthropologists, cultural scholars. But only some of them managed to get close to certain results in this direction. Owing to their studies, the scientific community received the doctrine of rites of transition, a structural and functional method for studying rituals and myths, and a new idea of the concept of a mythological worldview.

**Review of Recent Research and Publications.** The reception of ritual action and its structure were studied by Arnold van Gennep, Claude Levi-Stros, and Mircea Eliade. It should be noted that this research focuses on this narrowly defined direction based on the studies of the indicated scholars.

Arnold van Gennep saw the transition of the main character of the ritual from a certain social status to a qualitatively different one as the basis of the ritual structure. Among the

mass of ritual forms of various peoples, he managed to find a certain regularity, namely, structure. In a separate group, the scholar singled out the rituals of the predominantly family cycle, which accompany birth, childhood, reaching a social maturity, engagement, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, joining religious communities, funerals (Maierchuk, 2011, p. 38).

In the section devoted to the classification of rites, Arnold van Gennep identifies several groups into which they are divided. Moreover, these groups are antagonistic and dual: rites are sympathetic and contagious, positive and negative, direct and indirect, animistic and dynamic. For practical understanding, the author gives the following examples: when a pregnant woman observes the taboo of not eating mulberries so that it does not affect the newborn, she performs a dynamic contagious direct negative rite; if a sailor brings a model of a ship as a gift to the Virgin Mary, so as not to perish at sea, this is an animistic sympathetic mediated positive rite (Gennep, 1999, p. 14). The researcher believes that when the classification of the mechanisms of a ritual activity is sufficiently developed, the meaning of the sequence of ceremonies that make up a particular rite becomes available. Arnold van Gennep suggested a scheme of transition rituals consisting of preliminal (separation), liminal (transition) and postliminal (aggregation) rites, which perform the functions of exclusion, intermission and inclusion in a certain social group (Gennep, 1999, p. 15).

Instead, Mircea Eliade believed that any ritual – calendar, labour, family – reflects the process of creating our world, when the transition from Chaos to the stage of Order took place (Eliade, 2001, p. 45). At the same time, dual criteria are also indicated: Chaos – Cosmos, which generate opposition and the emergence of conflict as the main driving force for the possibility of conducting a rite. Other dual pairs are associated with this pair of oppositions, such as, for example, everyday – ritual, secular – sacred, centre – periphery, death – rebirth (Eliade, 1958, p. 106). “In the details of his own conscious behaviour, a primitive archaic human being does not know an action that has not been performed and experienced before by someone else, and not a human being. What a human being does it has been already done. His life is a continuous repetition of actions discovered by others” (Eliade, 1949, p. 29), – wrote the scholar in his programmatic study “The Myth of Eternal Return”, published in 1949. Therefore, any ritual, any rite has its own sacred model or its own archetype (Eliade, 1949, p. 40).

Claude Lévi-Stros, connecting ritual with mythology, divided it into two systems – a system of names and a system of attitudes. Thus, he asserted a given structure of ritual, in which the rite is divided into separate elements. Each element of this structure, according to the researcher, has a clearly defined action, meaning and nature, which makes it possible to understand the meaning inherent in the ritual action (Levi-Stros, 1958, p. 44).

The main goal that Claude Levi-Stros set himself was to show that all the various phenomena of society and culture, including rituals, are modifications of some initial single model. That is why, all rituals must be strictly systematized, classified, and the connections between them must be revealed, demonstrating their relationship to each other or to the initial model (Levi-Stros, 1962, p. 68).

The three researchers mentioned above used their own, different from others, methods and approaches. The only thing that united their aspirations was the attempt to create a single methodology for interpreting the meaning of a ritual action, in order to later, by breaking down each rite into elements, decipher the information embedded in it (Kukharenko, Diedkov, Vysheslavskiy, Mozulenko, Taran, 2024, p. 102).

The purpose of this study is to make an attempt at creating a structure of an averaged and universal rite that would be suitable, if not for all, then for the majority of ritual actions. Let

us turn to those researchers and their teachings who, in our opinion, are of direct importance for the objectives in this study.

Research Results. Studying the Ukrainian folk rituals of the family cycle, the authors of the study came to the conclusion that the entire ritual action is easily declassified into components. Here, it would be appropriate to compare the research of an ethnologist with the activities of either a writer or a director of a theatre or cinema, when a dramatic action is divided into pieces and tasks are determined for its characters (Stanislavskij, 1951, pp. 166–169). The relevance consists in the fact that dramatic action and ritual action unfold similarly, often analogously, according to the same laws. However, if for the director's division the composition with all its components (exposition, plot, development of the action, climax and denouement) is important, then for the ethnologist it is enough to determine only the climax – the highest point of tension in the development of the conflict (Guzhva, 2012, p. 207).

When each of the cycles of wedding, funeral, and childbirth rituals was declassified into components called episodes, it turned out that only the culminating moments were original for the ritual action. For example, for the wedding rite of engagement, a girl presented towels to matchmakers and a handkerchief to a young man, for the funeral rite at the cemetery, the priest “sealed” the deceased's grave, and for the childbirth rite, a woman gave birth to a baby. All other episodes, except for the climax, are auxiliary and are divided into seven groups by the nature of the action: 1) invitations (i), 2) visits (v) and returns (r), 3) creation of a ritual attribute (a), 4) agreements (ag), 5) veneration of sacred actions, elements, objects (s), 6) blessings and gifts (b), 7) feasts and festivities (f). The eighth group, or two – the eighth and ninth – groups, are two types of climaxes: Culmination episodes in which a transition to a new status occurs (C), and culminations where such a transition is not foreseen (c).

When a young man asks his fellow villagers to marry him off to a girl – this is *an invitation*, when a bride and her friends eat a branch during the torochyn – this is *the creation of a ritual attribute*. If during a funeral a priest conducts a great service near the body of the deceased – this is *the veneration of sacred actions*, elements, objects; the participants of the funeral return to the homestead of the deceased for a memorial dinner, and after it they go home – *visits and returns*. In the soil under the tyn (hedge), placenta is buried and the water is poured out after the baptism of a baby and also the water is poured after a woman in labour took a bath – *an agreement* between representatives of the real world and the afterlife; the godparents bring the baby bread, bagels and kryzhmo – *blessings and gifts*; a festive dinner after the baptism – *feasts and festivities*. However, the ability to declassify the rituals into episodes and combine them into groups does not give the right to speak of the structure of the ritual as complete and finished.

For the concept of forming a ritual structure, the dual and ambivalent concepts of the origin of the conflict are of great importance – the real world and the afterlife. There are many other oppositions, but they are secondary in comparison with the above mentioned. Thus, for the wedding cycle of rituals, such concepts are: a male – a female, a young man – a maiden, a groom – a bride, a young man – a young woman, a husband – a wife. For the funeral: life – death, alive – dead, a house – a coffin, a dwelling – a grave. The ambivalent concepts of the birth cycle include: defilement – purification, a pregnant woman – a woman in labour, a newborn – a baptized, fellow villagers – godparents. But all these concepts, upon detailed consideration, will boil down to the fact that one of each pair will necessarily relate to the real world, and the other – the afterlife.

This statement requires further explanation. The rite, as a means of transition for the main characters from one status to another, becomes possible through interaction with the

afterlife (Movna, 2023, p. 33). The afterlife is another invisible world that is the antipode, i.e. the complete opposite of a real life, where deceased ancestors, supernatural beings, and demonological characters live, from there newborn babies come to reality, and the dead go there after death. Two worlds – reality and the afterlife – are separated and isolated from each other. However, at certain times, on the eve of the greatest holidays – Easter and Christmas – there is an interaction between these worlds. On the eve of the Holy Supper, deceased ancestors come to the house of their descendants (Voropai, 1958, p. 53–54), and on the night from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday, all the dead from the cemetery go to church for a prayer service (Kylymnyk, 1962, p. 66).

Moreover, without the influence of the afterlife on reality, it is impossible to achieve the goal of any rite: the deceased cannot become the deceased, the newborn cannot become a full-fledged person, and a young boy and a young girl cannot have the status of a husband and wife (Yastremska, 2021, pp. 188–190). This influence is called sacralization – the consecration of reality with the energy of the afterlife. It is the connection with the afterlife, ritual actions and ritual statuses that make it possible to carry out the intended and fully conduct the rite (Movna, 2025, p. 168). Regarding statuses, it should be noted that a young man and a young woman cannot immediately become spouses; they must enter the ceremony, be sanctified by the energy of the afterlife, accept the statuses of first a young boy and a young girl, then the groom and the bride, and only after that become full-fledged spouses and leave the ceremony. Thus, the statuses of a young man and a young woman, a husband and a wife belong to reality, while a groom and a bride exist only within the ceremony. Everything mentioned regarding reality and the afterlife is the legacy of a collective idea of the universe, which determines certain actions within the framework of certain ceremonies.

Now let us return to the episodes distributed by the nature of the action in order to suggest a universal and clearly constructed structure of the rite. It is quite logical that the rite should begin with the visit of its participants to the place of ritual actions, and end with the return of each to their own home. Therefore, the first stage or episode should be the visit, and the last – the return. However, logic is not always useful when it comes to a purely scientific approach to research. Any logical, at first glance, thoughts and conclusions should be proven or refuted. Especially when you keep in mind that the object of study is folk rituals, and among the nature of the actions of the episodes there is such a thing as invitations. Therefore, invitations should precede the arrival of the participants to the place of the ceremony. Thus, in the wedding cycle, a groom invites fellow villagers to be the elders, parents of a bride and a groom invite the bread-making women (korovai and cones), a bride and a groom themselves invite guests to the wedding. In the funeral cycle, the relatives of a dying person invite a priest and women. In the birth cycle, a father of a newborn invites close people to become godparents. And only after this procedure do the elders, breadmakers, wedding guests, a priest and women come to a dying person, godparents to parents of a newborn to go to church for the christening. Based on this, *invitations* should be put in the first place, *visit* – in the second place, and *return* – in the last place.

In the wedding ritual cycle of the so-called full rites, i.e. rites of transition, during which the main characters change their own statuses, there are three – engagement, wedding and pantry. Similarly, we have three rites in the funeral cycle – departure of the soul, burial in the cemetery, memorial dinner, and the maternity cycle – childbirth, naming, christening. However, we will study not only those rites where a transition is made, but also the others in which there is no such transition.

The matchmaking ritual (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 56–65), like most traditional rituals, begins with *invitations* – a young man invites respectable villagers to ask a girl to marry him. The matchmakers come to a young man’s estate, and then to a girl’s house – *the visits* (*v*). A young man hands the matchmakers bread and sticks – *honouring sacred actions, elements, and objects*. The matchmakers’ performance of the traditional matchmaking ritual – *creating a ritual attribute*. The fact that the parents and a girl agree to the engagement is nothing more than a *culmination*. However, it is a simple *culmination* (*c*), since after it neither a young man nor a girl changes the status. But such a climax should be also considered as *an agreement* (*ag*), since it is precisely the agreements that both parties reach in this episode. There is no *blessing* (*b*) yet, but there is a feast during which the hosts treat the elders and neighbours who are invited “for the first drink”. The return to one’s own home occurs when the engagement is postponed to another date, and not immediately after the matchmaking. Let’s depict this rite schematically and obtain the following formula, where *v* – visit, *r* – return, and all other symbols are defined above:

$$i+v+s+a+c(ag)+f+r$$

A much more complete rite of the wedding cycle from the point of view of the transition to new statuses of the main characters is the engagement (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 65–95). A young man, if he stayed at home and did not go with the elders, and his parents are informed that a girl is engaged. This is nothing more than *an invitation*, since after the announcement, a young man with his friends, the father with his mother, and a girl’s friends gather and go to the house of a girl’s parents – *visits* (*v*). A girl gives the matchmakers towels, and the young man – a handkerchief. This is the *Culmination* of the *transition* (*C*), because after such a ritual action, the young man becomes the groom, and the girl becomes the bride. However, this episode also has another purpose: by giving the elders towels, she honours *the sacred*, (*s*) and by tying a handkerchief on the groom’s hand, she creates a *ritual attribute* (*a*). The parents *bless* (*b*) a bride and a groom with bread, using icons. Representatives of the two camps – a groom and a bride – arrange negotiations about the dowry, wine, the terms of the wedding and the wedding – *agreements* (*ag*). Treating guests and celebrating – *a feast* (*f*). The guests *return* home in the evening, and the groom – in the morning. The scheme of the engagement ceremony looks as follows:

$$i+v+C(a+s)+b+ag+f+r$$

Let us consider another rite of transition from the wedding cycle, called “komora” (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 434–455). It does not have an episode of *invitation*, since the bride with her friends and the groom with their friends had already invited the villagers to the wedding on the eve of this rite. Therefore, the invitation took place and it must be noted. The guests responded in the same way and came, in this particular case – to the house of the groom’s parents. In addition to the guests, the groom pays for the bride and comes back to his house with the bride. All this is the *visit* of the participants of the ceremony to the place of its holding. The parents *bless* the newlyweds. The couple is led to the komora (a pantry) – these are certain old agreements that cannot be violated under any circumstances. The act of defloration is an episode of *the Culmination of the transition* (*C*), because after this the newlyweds are already considered a husband and a wife. Presenting proof of chastity – *creating a ritual attribute* (*a*). With the attribute and under the guidance of a friend, the husband’s guests go to the wife’s parents and walk around the table three times, showing respect or disrespect for the father and mother depending on whether their daughter turned out to be chaste or not – *honouring the sacred* (*s*). The parents treat the guests to some foog – *a feast* (*f*). Schematically, the rite can be described as follows:

***i+v+b+ag+C+a+s+f+r***

As for the rituals of the wedding cycle, they are quite similar in terms of the nature of the action in episodes with other family rituals. The rite of departure of the soul or death (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 698–699) from the funeral cycle begins with *agreements*, when a dying person, feeling the approach of death, informs his family about it. In this way, he agrees that the family members will do everything as it should be. And indeed, they invite a priest, relatives, neighbours, women – *an invitation (i)*. The invited people gather at the dying manor – *a visit (v)*. The dying person is given a trumpet in his hands, and the others present – simple candles (*creating a ritual attribute (a)*). The priest performs the sacrament of communion of the dying person – this episode is both *a veneration of the sacred (s)* and *a blessing (b)*. The person over whom the ritual is performed dies, i.e., changes his status from dying to dead – *the Culmination of the transition (C)*. After the ceremony, its participants return to their own homes – *a return (r)*. Schematically, the ceremony of the soul’s departure looks like this:

***(ag)+i+v+a+s(b)+C+r***

“Home funeral” is a conventional name for a rite that is held on the day of the burial and ends with the villagers escorting the deceased to the cemetery (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 706–709). *The invitation (i)* took place the day before, when relatives turned to the priest, cooks, carpenters, and diggers. Other villagers were invited immediately after the death, when the groom rang the bell for the soul of the deceased. For invitations, such a time frame is quite acceptable. The invitees gather to make a coffin, to prepare dinner, to dig a hole in the cemetery; other attendees appear later, but all of this is a visit. The priest conducts a “great” service near the body of the deceased – *honouring the sacred (s)*. Close relatives place the body in the coffin and carry it out of the house – *creating a ritual attribute (a)*. Before the coffin is taken out, it is knocked on the threshold or doorposts, the house is strewn with rye, the deceased’s bed is taken out to the yard, and an axe is placed in its place – all these are *arrangements (ar)*. A towel and bread and salt are placed on the lid of the coffin – *a blessing (b)*. The villagers accompany the body of the deceased to the cemetery – *the climax (c)*. Along the way, an elderly woman distributes cakes and bagels to those present – *a feast (f)*. *The return (r)* should take place when the participants from the cemetery come to the estate of the buried person for a memorial dinner, which is why *the return* is included in brackets in the diagram. The scheme looks like this:

***i+v+s+a+ar+b+c+f+(r)***

The next rite is burial in the cemetery (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 709–710). The *invitation (i)* has already taken place earlier, so we mark it at the beginning. We mark *the arrival* from the house to the cemetery as (*ar*). The priest conducts a “small” service near the dug pit – *veneration of the sacred (s)*. After the farewell, the towel and bread and salt are given to the church priest – *a blessing (b)*. The diggers hammer in the coffin and lower it into the pit on rolls of cloth – *the creation of a ritual attribute (a)*. There are no clearly expressed *agreements (ag)*, but if desired, they can be found in the farewell to the deceased, and in throwing three handfuls of earth into the pit. The priest “seals” the grave – this action is *the culmination (c)*, moreover – *the Culmination of the transition (C)*, since after this the deceased changes status to the buried. The participants of the ceremony return to the estate of the buried for a memorial dinner – *the return (r)*. *The feast* should take place after *the return*, so we take it in brackets. The scheme of the ceremony is the following:

***i+ar +s+b+ag+a+C+r+(f)***

The last rite from the funeral cycle that we will analyze is the memorial dinner (Chubynskij, 1877, p. 710). *Invitation* to dinner takes place at the cemetery after the burial. As noted, such a time period is quite acceptable for invitations. *A visit* to dinner is the return of the invited participants of the ceremony to the estate of the buried person. They wash their hands outside the yard so that the smell of earth from the cemetery does not get into the yard and into the house – *an agreement*. In addition to traditional dishes on the memorial table – kutia or kanu. The preparation of such food is the creation of a ritual attribute, and the use of three spoons before dinner is a way of *honouring the sacred*. The priest says a prayer, *blessing* the dishes. *The feast* is held by eating food and raising a glass of horilka to the participants of the memorial dinner by a representative of the deceased's relatives. *The Culmination of the transition* should be marked by the arrival of the elders, who are being hosted outside. But these are not simple feasts, since the arrival of the elders is nothing more than another change in the status of the deceased from buried to deceased. After the memorial dinner, the participants in the ceremony go home – *a return*. Schematically, the memorial dinner is depicted as follows:

***i+v+ag+a+s+b+f+C+r***

Let us also consider the cycle of birth rituals and begin with childbirth (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 2–6). A pregnant woman sends for a baba (a midwife) – *an invitation*. The midwife comes to the house of the future mother in labour – *a visit*. The midwife bows 30 times, reads a prayer, washes the pregnant woman, gives her holy water to drink, fumigates her with a potion, and places a bottle of borshch on the window – all this is *a veneration of the sacred*. We can also assume that the actions of the midwife include *a blessing* for the pregnant woman to give birth to a baby (Serdiuk, 2021, pp. 28–29). *The culmination of the transition* is the birth of a child, after which the woman receives the status of a woman in labour, the baba – a midwife, and the baby becomes a born one. Tying the navel and cutting the umbilical cord, wrapping the baby in a shroud, the first baptism and drying are nothing more than *the creation of a ritual attribute*. The fact that the afterbirth is buried on the border and the water is poured out after the baptism of the mother and child should be considered as *agreements* between representatives of reality and the afterlife. The descriptions of the birth rite say nothing about the midwife's *visit* and her *return* home, but these episodes must also be present. As a result, we get the following scheme:

***i+v+s+b+C+a+ag+f+r***

And the last rite of this cycle is the christening (Chubynskij, 1877, pp. 8–13), which is supposed to finally put everything in its place. The father *invites* fellow villagers to be godparents. The fellow villagers agree and *visit* the newborn's homestead. They present the baby with bread, bagels, and a sacrum – *blessing*. The midwife bathes the baby, wraps it in a shirt, and prepares a knot for the unclean – *creating an attribute*. The future godfather throws the knot over his shoulder at the crossroads: "You, the devil, here is the fee!" – *agreements*. *The Culmination of the transition* is the episode where the priest performs the sacrament of baptism, after which the baby acquires the status of a full-fledged child. After returning from the church, the midwife swaddles the child and puts it in the cradle – *honouring the sacred*. Traditional *feasts* and the *return* of participants and guests – should also be:

***i+v+b+a+ag+C+s+f+r***

**Conclusion.** Unlike dramatic action, for which all elements of the composition are important, ritual action is completely satisfied only with the climax. At the same time, for

the ritual, it is the climax episode that is original and unique. All other episodes into which the ritual action is divided are auxiliary and they are combined into seven groups according to the nature of the action: 1) invitations (i), 2) visits (v) and returns (r), 3) creation of a ritual attribute (a), 4) agreements (ag), 5) veneration of sacred actions, elements, objects (s), 6) blessings and gifts (b), 7) feasts and festivities (f).

Having examined in detail and compared nine family rituals from the wedding, funeral, and childbirth cycles, we obtained enough schemes to determine a universal ritual structure that would be acceptable for most traditional ritual actions:

$$i+v+[s+a+ag+b+C(c)+ff+r$$

It should be noted that the ritual, at least a family one, always begins with invitations and the arrival of the participants to the place of its holding. It ends with the return to their own homes. The other six elements, such as honouring the sacred, creating a ritual attribute, agreements, blessings, feasting, and culmination, may change their order and location, but they are, in most cases, present in each specific ritual.

If we apply the same procedure to other rituals that make up the three mentioned family cycles, we will obtain, if not the same, then very close results. And this once again proves the right to the existence of a universal ritual structure determined as a result of this study.

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