

SPATIAL DIFFERENTIATION OF NECROGEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS IN CZECHIA: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND FEATURES IN THE LANDSCAPE

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Abstract: *The interdisciplinary article analyzes the spatial differentiation in the manner, in which Czech society has dealt with death, as well as its causes, consequences and features in the landscape. The subject of death has become taboo in Czech society, and yet, especially, the manner of caring for deceased people is a sign of a society's culture. Necrogeographical aspects – the manner, in which people deal with death and forms of cemeteries – reflect culture at different levels: state, region and local. Spatial differentiation of necrogeographical aspects within Czechia is analyzed via field surveys of model regions. Points of interaction between religion and method of burial are searched for in the article, because of the presumed influence of religion on the manner, in which people deal with death. The article focuses on an analysis of regional differences in Czechia, in terms of the manner, in which people treat the deceased (the phenomenon of cremation) and cemeteries. Cemeteries form a part of the landscape and are places of great significance, reflecting the culture of citizens living in a specific time and place (regional culture).*

Key words: *necrogeography, religion, differentiation, regional culture, Czechia*

1. INTRODUCTION

Death is inseparably connected to life and yet this topic continues to be suppressed by society (tabooism of death). As late as halfway through the 20th century, there were practically no scientific studies concerning death. By the end of the 20th century, scientific circles and even the general population began again to discuss death. In Czechia, however, tabooism of death, due to the suppression of spirituality as part of Marxist ideology, is for the most part still practised today (Nešporová 2004). The perception of death, manner of burial and the form of cemetery are all manifestations that differ in space and time and which reflect the culture of a population, practising a certain “method of dealing with death”. The topic of death and burial rituals, as a subject of scientific research, is primarily studied in sociology and anthropology (Dethlefsen, Deetz 1966, Gorman, DiBlasi 1981, Kroeber 1927), but also in archaeology, scientific studies of religion and other disciplines. World geography studies this topic to a lesser degree as part of so-called necrogeography (Francaviglia 1971, Hartig, Dunn 1998, Christopher 1995, Kniffen 1967), while Czech geography, for the most part, ignores it (Chromý, Kuldová 2006). Geography's contribution should focus on searching for spatial relationships, in analysing regional differentiation

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and in applying the concepts of the so-called new cultural geography, which emphasises research on identity, sense of place and heritage. Cemeteries as well as manner of burial have a significant sacred (spiritual) side (Nešporová 2004, Heller, Mrázek 2004), which means that concepts from geography of religion should also be considered in studying cemeteries.

Necrogeography, therefore, is a discipline of human geography, which explores the spatial differentiation (and reasons for spatial differentiation) of manifestations relating with death and how these necrogeographical aspects (manner of dealing with death and cemeteries) and their expressions in the landscape (cemeteries, crematoria, columbaria, etc.) reflect human culture. Necrogeography draws significantly on cultural geography and geography of religion and can be considered to be their sub-discipline. It also draws on the ideas of historical geography and other geographical (settlement geography, planning, regional development) as well as non-geographical (scientific and applied) disciplines. Necrogeography is characterised by interdisciplinary research (Hupková 2008).

The objective of this article is to analyse the basic differentiation of necrogeographical aspects in Czechia, on the basis of comparisons concerning three model territories. This analysis contributes both to the description of regional culture and to the description of the general geographical organization of Czech society. Clarifying the reasons behind the assumption of a high level of differentiation in necrogeographical aspects also forms a significant part of the article. In light of the significant influence of religion on burial practices, contact fields between religion and burial, which indicate the connections between the two manifestations, are described. The most significant factor, which influences burial practices at the national level, is religion. Does the factor of religion also express itself at lower scale levels: regional, micro-regional or local? Do other significant factors exist at these lower levels, which influence the observed phenomenon? What characteristics do the necrogeographical aspects have in the various model territories and what fundamental differences can be found among the territories and within them? And how do these differences reflect the culture of the respective local populations?

2. ASSUMPTIONS CONCERNING THE EXISTENCE OF DIFFERENCES – CONTACT FIELDS BETWEEN RELIGION AND BURIAL PRACTICES

The assumption that differences exist within Czechia in terms of the characteristics of burial practices is based upon knowledge of the connectivity between religion and burial practices. These contact fields between religion and burial practices, which have served as the foundation for necrogeographical analysis at a micro-regional level, are described in the following paragraphs.

2.1 High cremation rate in Czechia

Czechia stands out as being home to an unusually high cremation rate. As portrayed in fig. 1, Czechia, with a cremation rate of 79 %, ranks among the highest countries, such as Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, in a hypothetical cremation ranking; while the cremation rate in Slovakia, Czechia's closest neighbour, reaches a mere 17 %. Czechia's

position at the top of this ranking¹ is significant, primarily due to the fact that it ranks among Asian countries, for which cremation has been typical (or commonplace) throughout their historical development. Beginning in the 9th century, in-ground burial, connected with the burial of Jesus Christ, was typical in Czechia and throughout Europe. Inhumation corresponded with religion – with Christianity. Czechia is one of the most secularized countries² in the world. At present, 32.1 % of Czechia's residents claim membership in a religious denomination (Havlíček 2005). During the 20th century, the level of religiosity in the country decreased by more than 65 %. In its European context, the remarkably significant position of both of these phenomena (cremation and secularization) in Czechia provides a basis for assumptions concerning the conditions of both manifestations as well as their mutual connectedness.

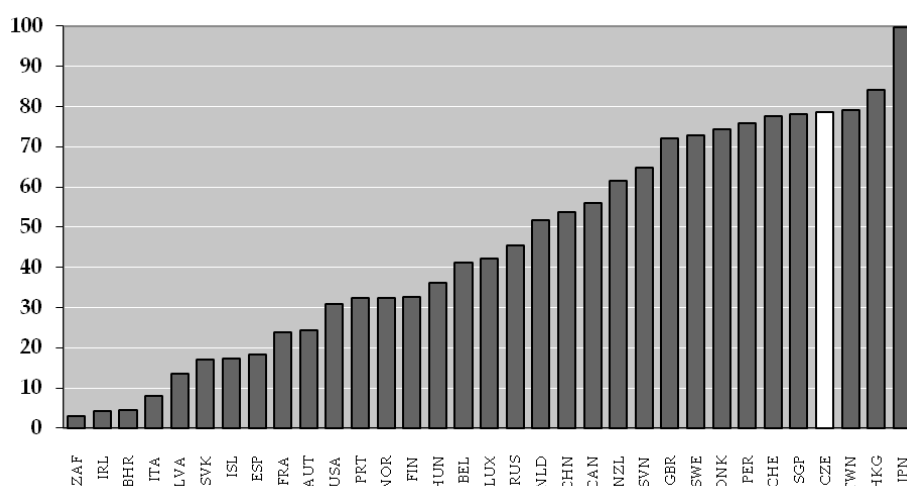


Fig. 1: Cremation rate in selected countries world in 2004

*Source: author's creation, source of data concerning the cremation rate:
Davies & Mates 2005*

Czechia is the most secularized country in Europe, according to nearly all indicators of religiosity – portion of believers, orthodoxy rate and attendance at worship services (Lužný, Navrátilová 2001). According to Lužný and Navrátilová, three primary factors contributed to secularization trends in Czech society. These are:

- 1) The anti-Catholic attitude of Czechia's general public (from Hussitism to national revival and resistance to the Hapsburg empire to Communist atheism)

1 These are countries, for which the Cremation Society of Great Britain (CSGB) keeps records.

2 Park (1994) conceives secularization primarily in three ways: a) the elimination of religious faith (increasing separation of church and state), b) the unimportance or rejection of religious ideas (a decline in interest in religious traditions as well as in the familiarity with and respect for church representatives) and c) the process of thoughts and actions becoming more worldly, leading to the ultimate end of interest in religious ideas.

- 2) Secularization tendencies prescribed by the structural differentiation of modern society
- 3) Atheist propaganda from the communist regime

Throughout its history, Czechia has been influenced by many religious directions – as early as the 9th century, Czechia could be considered a Catholic land. During the 15th century, the protestant movement began to develop in the region and by the 16th century Protestantism dominated. The Czech lands were subject to re-Catholicization, beginning halfway through the 17th century. The era of communist dictatorship as well as the expulsion of German, and primarily Catholic, residents from Czechia's border regions also played significant roles (Havlíček 2006).

At the beginning of a new millennium, the Czech religious scene is characterized by secularization and a large degree of religious heterogeneity. While the numbers adherents to large churches are decreasing, the number of members of small religious groups and churches are growing. With large churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, a decrease of $\frac{1}{4}$ up to $\frac{1}{2}$ of adherents in Czechia can be observed between 1991 and 2001. Progressively developing churches include smaller Christian societies (Brethren Assemblies, Moravian Church, Baptists), Jehovah's Witnesses, the Orthodox Church (due to the immigration of Russians and Ukrainians) and others. Although Czech society is home to a high degree of secularization, increasing interest in occultism and other alternative forms of spirituality are evident (Hamplová 2000). The Czech religious scene is becoming continuously more diversified (Havlíček, Hupková 2008).

It can be supposed that previous historical developments, in much the same manner in which they proved fundamental to the development secularization in Czechia, also created conditions that promoted Czechia's high cremation rate.

Figure 2 depicts the development of the cremation rate in Czechia along with developments in the level of religiosity, as a means of showing how these two manifestations interact with one another. Unfortunately, data on the level of religiosity are only available for six years – 1910, 1921, 1931, 1950, 1991 and 2001 (Population and housing census – ČSÚ 2007). It is evident from the graph that with a decreasing level of religiosity (increasing secularization), the cremation rate increases. The shapes of both variable relationships make it clear that the development of both manifestations is analogous in opposite directions. The data are slightly skewed by the existence of a joint, Czech-Slovak state.

It is clear that growth in the cremation rate began with the legalization of cremation (1918) and the completion of the first crematorium (1917). Prior to the beginning of World War I, the cremation rate grew slowly but consistently (on average, 0.3 % per year). During World War II, a distinct increase in the cremation rate occurred that was evidently connected with burning the bodies of dead soldiers and Jews. Cremations during World War II, however, were not accurately recorded and, as result, it is necessary to use the associated

quantitative data only for rough estimates. After the end of World War II, the cremation rate increased at a quicker tempo, than previous to the war (on average, 1.5 % annually). This development can be explained by the increased availability of cremation (by the end of World War II, there were 13 crematoria in the country) and by the establishment of new societal-political conditions in Czechoslovakia. The new political climate supported cremation and, at the same time, took a negative stance towards religion. In 1948, the ratio of believers in the population fell significantly, with the beginning of persecution of believers (Daněk, Štěpánek 1992).

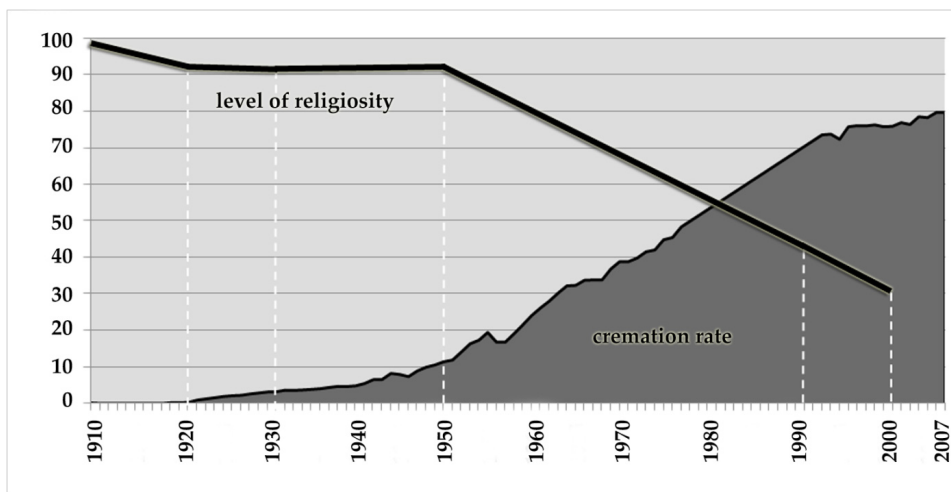


Fig. 2: Developments in the cremation rate and the level of religiosity in Czechia, 1910–2006

Source: author's creation, source of data concerning the cremation rate:

Davies & Mates 2005, source of data on the level of religiosity: ČSÚ 2007

Missing data: cremation rate for 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1989 – these data were calculated as the linear average of previous and subsequent values

2.2 Burial as an indication of religion

Cemeteries, as the object of study for necrogeography, certainly have a spiritual side. To a certain degree, religion itself even influences the manner, in which people deal with death. The practices of burial rites are derived from notions about existence after death, wherein such notions arise from a person's faith (Nešporová 2004). According to Malinowsky (1948 in Nešporová 2004), death is the most important source of religion.

While Czechia clearly is exceptional with its low level of religiosity, it is important to distinguish between traditional religiosity, small and dynamically expanding churches and the development of alternative spirituality. According to Hamplová, alternative spirituality (occultism) is not a trivial thing; in other words, its influence on the manner, in which people deal with death, should also not be considered negligible. Hamplová also points out that the "level of religiosity" indicator is not appropriate for expressing the religious faith of Czechia's inhabitants, because some believers claim membership in a religion as a

historical or cultural tradition and by no means due to the fact that they uphold or adhere to its religious dogma. Nešpor has also weighed in concerning the distinction between the terms “believer” and “atheist”. He claims that some people refer to themselves as being “without religion”, when in reality they are merely trying to emphasize that they do not belong to any particular church (Nešpor 2004). While I am aware of the problems associated with strictly defining the terms “believer” and “atheist” in various censuses, due to the absence of other data sources, information regarding level of religiosity shall be utilized in this study as it can be gleaned from statistical surveys.

In certain religions, such as, for instance, Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism³, cremation has been established as the primary (sole) manner of carrying out funeral rites (Davies, Mates 2005). In Indo-European nations, burning was considered the primary manner of parting with the deceased. Burning was seen as the most effective method for “cleansing” the dead body and preventing the dead from returning. This practice was at variance with Christianity, which gave preference to burial in the ground. In-ground burial, as a customary practice, expanded into Czechia, to replace burning, at approximately the same time as Christianity (Unger 2002). Christianity and Islam prefer burial in the ground (Heller, Mrázek 2004), while other religions do not specify a method for burial. The method of burial is not important at all in certain religions, such as, for instance, the Hare Krishna Movement, in which dying itself (as a process) is much more important than the method of burial. The body is only a container of sorts and the soul lives on after death (Nešporová 2004).

Religious faith does not merely predetermine the manner of burial, the manner for dealing with death in general (the significance of burial, mourning, cemeteries) also arises out of religious beliefs. As Nešporová indicates in her master’s thesis, differences exist even within Christianity – Catholics view a funeral as a way of bidding farewell to a deceased person, while for Protestants a funeral is important in helping the survivors to cope with death (Nešporová 2004). The portion of burials held without a funeral ceremony and the portion of unclaimed urns (urns not claimed and left in a crematorium, after cremation) is very high in Czechia. The portion of burials without a funeral ceremony is estimated at 1/3. In neighbouring Germany, this portion has been estimated to be 5%. However, according to psychologists, the funeral plays an important role in helping people cope with death. Several reasons to explain the high number of burials without a funeral ceremony can be found in the literature. According to psychologist Klimeš, the funeral as a dignified farewell is disappearing due to the fact that death is a relegated phenomenon, which people would rather not think about (Cihelka 2007). In addition, we can attribute this manifestation either to the economic advantages of burial without a funeral ceremony or to its greater intimacy. Another reason could even be a negative reaction to the ostentatious funerals of the communist era (Malinová 2002).

3 Hindus practice cremation, followed by throwing the deceased’s ashes into the sacred Ganges River. Adherents to Hinduism, who live outside India, hope that their ashes will be transported to the Ganges and thrown in (Nešporová 2004) or they have their ashes thrown into another river, near their place of residence (Davies & Mates 2005).

2.3 Dependence of the cremation rate on socio-economic characteristics of the world's countries

Religion is a fundamental differentiating factor in terms of necrogeographical aspects at the global level. In a statistical analysis of 35 world countries, a significant relationship was confirmed to exist between the manner of burial and the level and type of religiosity.

Factors, which impact the manner of burial were discovered through a statistical analysis of the cremation rate's dependence on socio-economic characteristics and data concerning religion for various countries throughout the world (the number of countries, for which the analysis was carried out = 35). The analysis confirmed the existence of a relationship, in which the cremation rate was dependant on the following characteristics: a) socio-economic data: area, population, population density, GDP (per capita, PPP in USD), the HDI index, life expectancy, level of urbanization, portion of the population older than 65 years of age, illiteracy rate; and b) data concerning religion – portion of the population which were adherents to: no denomination, any church, Christianity, Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, indigenous religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions, Shintoism, Bahai, other. For each of these data, its correlation with the cremation rate was calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Analysis confirmed that the cremation rate is dependent on religious faith. This dependent relationship exists not only for the level of religiosity, but also for the type of religiosity. The type of religion that is practiced in a country, along with its views on death and burial, is of primary importance. Fig. 3 displays the results of the analysis, and schematically lists the dependence of the cremation rate on various religions. The table also includes specific notes concerning funeral practices of the religions. It is evident from fig. 3 that, in general, the cremation rate exhibits a negative correlation with western religions (Christianity and Judaism) and a positive correlation with eastern religions. Protestantism, which views, and has viewed, cremation as a customary method for human burial, forms an exception to this claim.

Believers in Czechia are characterized by a high degree of spatial differentiation. In fig. 4 (below), the portion of believers in the total population is shown at the municipality level in Czechia, wherein a clear gradient of increasing religiosity can be seen to follow a northeast to southwest direction. In terms of religiosity, Czechia can be roughly divided into an atheist north and a religious south, while it is also possible to observe increasing levels of religiosity from west to east. The impact of the former Czech-German language border can also be discerned, wherein the Sudetenland is more secularized. The size of a municipality also plays a role. Larger cities exhibit a lower level of religiosity than do smaller municipalities and villages. In light of these significant differences in religiosity in Czechia, I also expect significant differences to exist in funeral/burial practices.

Fig. 3: Dependence of the cremation rate on religion

	Religion type	Dependence of cremation rate	Specific notes concerning funeral practices
1	Christianity	—*	Support for inhumation, like Jesus, resurrection of the body
2	<i>Catholic</i>	—	Support for inhumation, like Jesus, resurrection of the body
3	<i>Protestant</i>	+	It is not important, burial is a less-important ordinance, in practice: support for cremation
4	<i>Orthodox</i>	—	Support for inhumation, like Jesus, resurrection of the body
5	Islam	o	Support for inhumation, placing the body, in a shroud, into the ground
6	Judaism	—	Support for inhumation, emphasis on the observance of all rituals (a dead body is considered to be contaminating)
7	Indigenous religions	+	Depends on the exact type of religion
8	Hinduism	+	Support for cremation, then throwing the ashes into a sacred river = connected with a “saint”, resurrection of the soul, which is considered an independent entity
9	Buddhism	+**	Support for cremation, like Buddha
10	Chinese religion	+	Depends on the exact type of religion, emphasis on the observance of rituals – belief in the immortality of the soul necessitates exact manners for dealing with the body
11	Shintoism	+***	Support for cremation, burial according to Buddhist tradition

Source: author's calculations, $N = 35$

Note: dependence of the cremation rate on religion is: + positive, - negative, o neutral;
the existence of significant correlations: *with a value of -0.555 at the 0.01 level; ** with a value of 0.429 at the 0.05 level; *** with a value of 0.376 at the 0.05 level.

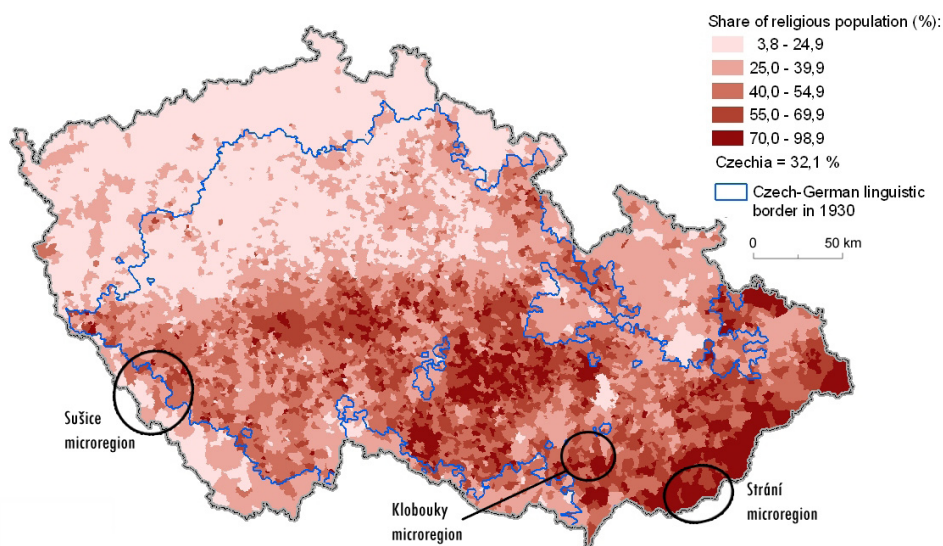


Fig. 4: Level of religiosity in Czechia's municipalities highlighting the model territories
Zdroj: Havlíček, Hupková 2008

3. DIFFERENTIATION OF NECROGEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS IN MODEL REGIONS

3.1 Methods

The differentiation of necrogeographical aspects in Czechia is studied through the comparison of findings from model areas (micro-regions) as well as from comparisons of the findings within each model area (seeking differences at the local level).

Field research was conducted in July 2008 and consisted of a number of segments. The research included a comprehensive survey of each area and of sacral objects in the area, along with interviews with residents. Its objective was to discover as much as possible about the role of religion in each area. In addition, cemeteries were visited and photo-documented to enable comparisons to be made between them. The definitive portion of this field research proved to be directed interviews with persons, who are somehow involved in funeral and burial services. These key persons include Adámek (owner of a funeral service company in Sušice), Charvát (owner of a funeral service company in Klobouky u Brna) and, for Strání microregion, Martinka (Priest of the Roman Catholic parish in Nivnice) and Blaha (deputy mayor of Korytná Municipality). The purpose of visits to funeral service providers was not merely to conduct an interview, but also to visit the funeral institute.

The model territories were selected in such a way as to ensure that they were completely different, in terms of religiosity, from one another. This was done so that the influence of

religion on the manner, in which people deal with the deceased, could be explored. Sušice microregion (NUTS III Plzeň, NUTS IV Klatovy) is the first model territory; Klobouky microregion (NUTS III Southern Moravia, NUTS IV Břeclav) is the second and the third is Strání microregion (NUTS III Zlín, NUTS IV Uherské Hradiště) – fig. 4. All three model territories are rural in nature.

Sušice microregion is an area that lies along the former Czech-German language border. As such, it can be expected to be subject to the impacts of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, which include a weaker relationship to the area and to its cemeteries. The level of religiosity is low in this area – approximately 35 %. Klobouky microregion is a traditionally religious region, its level of religiosity reaches 55 %. Strání microregion represents the Moravian-Slovak border, where levels of religiosity are highest for all of Czechia. The level of religiosity in Strání microregion is a very high 85 %. I expect that in areas with the highest levels of religiosity, religion will have a greater impact on the manner, in which people deal with death.

3.2 Evaluation of necrogeographical aspects in the model territories

In terms of the manner of burial, the model territories are quite different and these differences proportionately correspond with the level of religiosity. In Sušice microregion the cremation rate is roughly 65 % (Blatná Crematorium), in Klobouky microregion it is only 25 % (Hustopeče Crematorium) and in Strání microregion the number of cremations drop to 0 % (during the past five years, there are only 3 cremations on record). In each of the model territories, inhumations consist primarily of church funerals while cremations account for the majority of secular funerals. According to the individuals surveyed, no significant changes concerning the manner of burial have occurred, over the past ten years; rates for cremation and inhumation have remained stable.

Differences can be found even within the various micro-regions. These are primarily differences between cities and village municipalities. Cremation is more common in cities, while inhumation is more common in villages, which corresponds with the level of religiosity of municipalities. In the largest cities, such as Prague, Brno and Plzeň, the cremation rate can reach values of up to 90 %. High percentages of burials without a funeral ceremony are also found in the largest cities. This particular manifestation (the portion of burials without a funeral ceremony) also exhibits an east-west gradient; however, Prague is home to the highest percent of burials without a funeral ceremony. In Plzeň the portion of burials without a funeral ceremony is 80 % (Adámek 2008), while in Brno it is only 50 % (Charvát 2008). Burials without funeral ceremonies are a specialty of large cities, due to higher levels of anonymity in large cities. In rural areas it is common for the entire village (a representative from each family) to take part in a funeral; whereas, in cities, neighbours often do not know one another. Haškovcová points out that people prefer burials without a funeral ceremony due to economic reasons (Haškovcová 2007). At present, the portion of burials without a funeral ceremony is increasing even in smaller cities, such as Sušice (12 000 inhabitants) for instance. Along with the increasing portion of burials without a funeral ceremony, the number of unclaimed urns is also rising.

According to both of the interviewed owners of funeral service companies, financial burden does not impact the selection of a manner of burial. Prices of cremation and inhumation in Sušice fluctuate at similar levels. Cremation costs 2 800 CZK, while inhumation costs 3 000 CZK. In Klobouky microregion, the price for cremation is actually higher than the price for inhumation. This is due to the distance of the crematorium as well as the price of cremation in the nearest crematorium in Hustopeče. Because the cremation rate is lower in Moravia than in Bohemia, the price of cremation in Moravian crematoria is higher to ensure that crematoria remain profitable.

As of yet, cancellation of the funeral benefit (5 000 CZK), with the introduction of Act No. 261/2007 Coll. (effective 1. 1. 2008), has not had any impact on burial practices in the model territories. Neither the number of burials without a funeral ceremony nor the number of cremations has increased. According to Adámek (Adámek 2008), anyone who desires to have a burial with a funeral ceremony acts in accordance with their wishes, with or without help from a government benefit. It becomes evident, therefore, from the field research that financial matters do not play a significant role in burial practices. Differences in the manner of burial in the model territories are caused by non-economic factors, of which religion is the primary factor.

As stated previously, significant differences also exist, within the model territories themselves, in terms of the ways people deal with death. In Sušice microregion, the primary differentiating factor is a municipality's size. Rural municipalities are traditionally home to a higher level of religiosity and, correspondingly, such municipalities also exhibit a higher inhumation rate than cities. It is also customary in small municipalities for many people from the village to participate in a funeral (it is a social event). For this reason larger funerals are held, often with a church ceremony. Strání microregion is quite homogenous in this regard, because cremation is practically nonexistent. Nearly all burials are church burials and traditions, connected with death, are observed and maintained in the region. According to the deputy mayor of Korytná Municipality (Blaha 2008), a large revival of religious traditions – coming after twenty or thirty years of decline – occurred in this area, about five years ago. It is tradition for the entire municipality to gather on the evening before a burial to pray together for the deceased. A procession from the church to the cemetery follows. Another custom from the past, in which the family keeps the body of the deceased in their home, where they pray for him/her, until the funeral, is also, remarkably, still practiced here. According to Martinka (Martinka 2008), however, the question remains as to whether people in the area really believe in God or whether the religious culture in this region is based more in traditions than in convictions. Regular meeting with one another at the church is simply part of life in the area.

I recorded the highest level of heterogeneity for a model territory, in terms of the ways people deal with death, in Klobouky microregion. Significant differences exist in the manner of burial among the various municipalities of the micro-region. However, these differences and the reasons behind them make it possible to transcend local characteristics and factors, which impact the manner of burial. One of the factors is the existence of a church in the municipality. If a municipality does not have a church and has a funeral hall,

it is likely that the number of civil burials and cremations will be higher. In Morkůvky Municipality, the cremation rate is 95 %, even though it is only three kilometres from Klobouky u Brna, where the cremation rate is only 25 %. If a municipality has a church, but does not have a funeral hall, it can be expected that the number of church funerals and in-ground burials will dominate. From the remarks of Charvát (Charvát 2008), it is evident that even the political persuasions of municipal representatives and a municipality itself influence the manner of burial.

Although the average price of a burial, calculated for Czechia as a whole, is listed as 13 000 CZK, in the Klobouky model territory the average (and majority) price of burial is approximately 20 000 CZK. None of the burials in this area can be held, without flowers, musicians or a funeral feast. In most cases, nearly all of the residents of the municipality participate and the funeral is considered a big event, where family, friends and acquaintances gather (in Šitbořice and Dolní Bojanovice, 500 people participate in an average funeral service). It would be unthinkable for a family to conduct a burial without a funeral ceremony. According to Charvát (Charvát 2008), people in Moravia take great interest in what will be done with their loved ones, previous to burial (where they will be buried, or in other cases where they will be cremated). Customs and traditions, associated with burial, have been observed and retained until modern times. Only family members may serve as pallbearers and, in some villages, there is even a custom observed, in which a family member kicks the deceased's grave. The family's concern for the deceased and active participation in funeral ceremonies is clearly the greatest difference between rural areas and cities, in terms of the manner of dealing with death. This difference arises out of the greater role of the family and the increased significance of family values in rural areas than in cities as well as in Moravia as compared to Bohemia.

Interviews with involved individuals provided practical information for further necrogeographical research. Evaluation of the cremation rate in Czechia's regions, based on the share of cremations performed in the various crematoria from the total number of cremations performed in Czechia, is subject to a significant drawback. According to Charvát (Charvát 2008), certain crematoria, which have a lower number of cremations and whose capacity remains underutilized, set lower prices for mass cremations, involving a large number of dead bodies. Due to the financial advantages of such services, dead bodies are transported by truck, sometimes across the entire republic, to a distant crematorium (e.g. from Ústí nad Labem or from Znojmo to Tábor). Another problem arises in interpreting the symbolism in cemeteries over time – family graves tend to reduce the value of such analyses. The personalities of the owners and employees of funeral service companies and their approach also play a significant role in burial practices in the model territories.

The form and appearance of cemeteries in the model territories differ. In my opinion, cemeteries in Moravia have more of an organized and regular structure (ensured, in part, due to observance of the east-west positioning of graves), are in a better state of repair and are better cared-for and maintained. I also observed more care for gravesites, in Moravia, as well as more frequent occurrence of non-traditional types of headstones and statues in cemeteries. An increased frequency of divers inscriptions and photographs on headstones

is also noticeable in Moravia. According to the assumptions indicated above, Moravian cemeteries also exhibit more religious symbols, even though their number is decreasing.

4. CONCLUSION

The field research has confirmed the existence of great differences in the manner, in which people deal with death, in the model territories. These differences correspond, primarily, with religious differences between the various model territories. Even though it was only implemented in three model territories, findings from the field research indicate, approximately, how differentiation in the manner, in which people deal with death, in Czechia, is expressed. Again, the role of religion emerges as a decisive factor. With differing levels of religiosity, additional differences in necrogeographical aspects were discovered in the model territories. With an increasing level of religiosity:

- I. the portion of church funerals increases
- II. the portion of burials without a funeral ceremony decreases
- III. the portion of unclaimed urns decreases
- IV. burial participation increases
- V. survivors' interest in the deceased increases
- VI. traditions connected with death are maintained to a greater degree.

The large city factor is another decisive factor (differentiation does not arise on the basis of municipality size, in general, rather it is only the large cities that stand out). Yet another factor, which significantly impacts the manner, in which people deal with death at a local level, also becomes apparent. This factor is tradition⁴. Field research, especially the directed interviews with owners of funeral service companies, proved itself as a suitable method for necrogeographical research.

As early as the end of the 19th century, Czechia became involved in issues connected with the promotion and legalization of cremation. In particular, the high level of activity of Czech associations supporting cremation deserves credit, in my opinion, for the first impulse in the development of cremation in the country. The second impulse, supporting the increasing cremation rate in Czechia, came from the totalitarian communist regime. After 1 000 years of inhumation and merely 90 years since the legalization of cremation, cremation has become the dominant method of burial in Czech society. Since 1993, the cremation rate in Czechia has grown slightly if at all; it appears to be stagnating. In the future, I expect that the cremation rate will increase slightly until it stops changing altogether. The final maximum values that it will reach remain a question. It will clearly depend on future developments to Czech society as a whole – primarily on the future role of religion and traditions. The secularization of death is moving forward along with the secularization of society. In the 20th century, the secularization of death is manifest in the disappearance of rituals connected with death and in the prevalence of more intimate and family burials.

4 Tradition from the Latin "*traditio*" = to hand down or transfer, it means passing on language, opinions, forms of believing, feeling and acting, morals, establishments and social organizations from generation to generation. A tradition is something that represents both a custom and heritage for an individual (tradition = social custom and social heritage) (Ottův slovník naučný 1909)

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directed interviews

- Mgr. Petr Martinka – Priest in the Nivnice Roman Catholic Parish.
interview conducted 1.7.2008, Nivnice
- Josef Blaha – deputy mayor of Korytná Municipality.
interview conducted 1.7.2008, Korytná
- Miroslav Adámek – owner of a funeral services company (Sušice).
interview conducted 10.7.2008, Sušice
- Radim Charvát – owner of a funeral services company (Charvát, Klobouky u Brna).
interview conducted 17.7.2008, Klobouky u Brna