Abstract

The subject of this dissertation is funeral rites in the Murasaki Shikibu’s novel, *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*). The analysis of the text seeks to explore the author's depiction of the end of life, the afterlife, communication with spirits or souls of dead and to summarize the notes and descriptions of the proceedings of funeral rituals including 'before burial' and memorial ceremonies. The purpose of this dissertation is to create an overview of funeral rituals and ideas of death described in the text of *Genji Monogatari*. *The Tale of Genji* is considered a document which reflects contemporary thinking and can therefore be relied on for a study of funeral and memorial rituals. The main method used to develop the topic is a detailed analysis of theoretical, practical and aesthetic aspects of death described in the *Genji Monogatari* novel. The ideas of the Heian Court about death and the afterlife were mainly affecting the cult of ancestors, Shinto, Taoism, Buddhism and Shamanism, which also participated in the creation of the funeral cult. Ideas of the afterlife were also very diverse. The world of the living and the world of the dead, in the concept of old Japanese, were not strictly divided and spirits had access to all spheres of life. Communication with spirits of the living and the souls of the dead have an important place during the period in question. Ceremonies of temporary burial (*Mogari*) were common in Japan. It was believed that the soul can return to the body after some time. Once the body was deposited in a coffin, preparations for the funeral itself could begin. The coffin with the body of the deceased was carried into the mountains, where it was burned. Participants of the funeral went through the rituals of purification in a river and approached the mourning rites. The time of mourning was determined by the social status of the bereaved person. Mourning colors were shades of light gray and dark grey to black. After the end of the mourning period, the dark colors of clothing and other articles (such as screens, curtains, carriages) became lighter. The Heian period is considered as the heyday of Japanese culture and aestheticism. Therefore, it is important to become familiar with the aesthetic category of mono no aware ("the pathos of things") and also with contemporary allegories of death and the transition into the afterlife.

*Key words*: Japan, rituals, Genji monogatari, death, burial, funeral, mourning, mono no aware, mogari, afterlife, japanese literature, japanese culture, japanese aestheticism