

Call for papers to the issue of **Slovak Ethnology/Slovenský národopis, volume 75, number 4**, on the topic **Between the Living and the Dead: Ethnological Perspectives on Communication with the Dead**

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Guest editors:

**Emese Ilyefalvi** (DOI: [0000-0001-6677-5843](https://doi.org/0000-0001-6677-5843))

Department of Folkloristics, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University & Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Petra Hamer** (DOI: [0009-0002-8255-8632](https://doi.org/0009-0002-8255-8632))

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Michal Uhrin** (DOI: [0000-0002-8062-5785](https://doi.org/0000-0002-8062-5785))

Department of Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava and Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

## **Between the Living and the Dead: Ethnological Perspectives on Communication with the Dead**

Contrary to pre-modern European societies and many contemporary non-Western societies, where the dead were considered members of the community and remained significantly involved in people's everyday lives, the dominant Western ontology nowadays does not integrate communication and exchange between the living and the dead. However, as a bulk of quantitative and qualitative research attests, for some people in contemporary Western societies, social interactions do not necessarily cease after death but are merely transformed. The dead continue to be involved in the lives of individuals and communities, affecting our thoughts, emotions, values, behaviour, and social relations (Hesz, 2025; Mencej, 2024, 2025; Walter 2019; Klass & Steffen, 2018; Maddrell 2013; Maddrell & Sidaway, 2010).

The aim of this issue of Slovenský národopis/Slovak Ethnology is to examine the different types of interaction between the living and the dead, broadly defined and encompassing both intentional and unintentional communication with the spirits of the dead, both familiar dead and impersonal ghosts, through both collective and private practices. The interactions can consist of communication through dreams and other altered states of consciousness, visions, interactions through mediums or with the help of various other practitioners, ‘legend trips’ and tourism to haunted places, practices of ‘summoning the dead’, various after-death and memorialisation practices, online communication with spirits, and so forth (Bužeková, 2024; Ivník, 2025; Kiliánová, 2010). Whereas in the past the way of communicating with the dead was primarily prescribed by tradition, religion and/or the state, today individuals are free to engage in their practices without having to adhere to prescribed methods; in the fragmented and networked society of privatised death, they may not even have a community to share their practices with (Bergen, 2019; Bužeková, 2025; Heelas, 1996).

### **Scope and focus**

We invite folklorists, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, thanatologists, scholars of bereavement and media studies, as well as researchers from related disciplines concerned with death and the dead in contemporary society, to submit their contributions. Submissions may draw on diverse sources, including ethnographic, archival, digital, and media materials.

### **We are particularly interested in contributions addressing (but not limited to) the following themes:**

- Intentional and unintentional communication with the dead
- Motivations behind communication with the dead (emotional, moral, spiritual, or experiential).
- Maintenance or transformation of personal relationships with deceased
- Social and political functions of these practices, including status, group identity, and power dynamics.
- The role of honouring, commemorating, or seeking guidance and forgiveness from the dead.
- Continuity, decline, or transformation of traditional practices related to the dead.
- Emergence of new forms of interacting with or relating to the dead.
- Importance of material objects and specific places in mediating these interactions.
- Effects of communication with the dead on the everyday lives and social worlds of the living.

## **Affiliation to a project**

This special issue is the outcome of the ERC project The Roles of the Agency of the Dead in the Lives of Individuals in Contemporary Society (ERC project DEAGENCY, № 101095729) funded by the European Union.

Contributors are kindly requested to submit their abstracts and keywords directly through the editorial system of Slovak Ethnology

(<https://journals.savba.sk/index.php/slovenskynarodopis/about/submit>) no later than **28 February 2026**.

The final manuscripts are expected **no later than 30 June 2026** through the same editorial system.

The manuscripts should not exceed 6,250 words or 45,000 characters, including spaces, notes, and references, and should follow the journal's guidelines for authors accessible (HERE). The issue will be published at the end of 2026.