

## THE UNDERGROUND WORLD OF THE RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES: THE IMAGERY, SEMANTICS OF GIFTS TO THE HERO

*The article examines the imagery of the fairy-tale underworld according to materials from East Slavic fairy tales, mainly based on a plot type SUS (CYC) No. 301A, B (Three Underground Kingdoms), its first part (before the secondary fall of the hero). The author analyzes semantically significant details in the motifs of the hero's descent into the underworld and passage through it to the central locus, marked by the golden palace. Examples of fairytale images of the underworld, similar to the earthly world, are given, and the question is raised about the ideological origins of such an analogy. The earlier semantics of the entire plot (preceding the explicit marriage semantics) is revealed based on a comparative analysis of the "gifts" of the underground princess and the character himself. The author suggests that at least two chronological layers overlap to form this plot.*

**Keywords:** *the underworld, underground princess, miracle waters, gift-egg, serpent-giver, underground light/fire*

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**For citation:** Denisova, I. M. 2024. The Underground World of the Russian Fairy Tales: The Imagery, Semantics of Gifts to the Hero. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)* 2: 207–227.

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