

## THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE CHUVASH FUNERAL RITES

*Based on a wide range of archival, published sources, field materials and literature, the article examines the mythological essence and semantics of the funeral customs and rituals of the Volga-Ural Chuvash in historical retrospect, revealing their local features and variations. Funeral traditions are the most conservative, archaic and relatively stable components of family rituals and sacred components of spiritual culture. However, the Chuvash funeral rites have not been previously studied from the mythological perspective. Under the influence of neighboring and historically contacting ethnic groups and their cultures, traditional beliefs and world religions (primarily Christianity), Chuvash funeral customs and rituals have been transformed and syncretized for many centuries, but they managed to preserve their ancient mythological features. This allows specialists to understand the archaic worldview of the Chuvash and their ancestors, to identify religious stratifications, and to trace the evolution of the studied ritual. In memorial practices, the juxtaposition of life and death, the living and the deceased, the earth and the other world is clearly expressed. The main mythological semantics of these rituals is to facilitate the resettlement of the souls of the dead to the afterlife (to the heavenly kingdom) and to ensure their safe posthumous existence; to prevent the return of the dead to the house; to protect the living from the negative effects of the deceased, as well as from evil spirits.*

**Keywords:** *mythology, Chuvash, funeral customs and rituals, the deceased, death*

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