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FUNERAL RITES OF THE KARAKALPAKS IN THE SAMARKAND REGION (SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH — EARLY 21ST CENTURY)

This article focuses on the funeral rites of the ethnic group of Karakalpaks living in the Bulungur and Dzhabay districts of the Samarkand region. It provides information on their beliefs regarding the soul and spirit, the cessation of breathing and the soul leaving the body of the deceased in the form of a bird or fly. It also covers the practice of leaving the deceased in the house for one night and loud mourning. The author also emphasizes that, unlike the rest of the region's population, Karakalpaks do not employ professional washers, such as “засол” or “нокчу.” Instead, according to the ancient Turkic tradition of “сүөк уüecu” (literally ‘owners of bones’), close relatives wash the body of the deceased themselves. Describing the ritual of “ðäýpe” (fidiya), which persists in modern Karakalpak funeral rites, the author emphasizes its clear connections to animism, fetishism, and totemism. Field research revealed that horses were part of funeral rites until the end of the last century, while religious and mythological beliefs about them as a means of transporting the deceased to paradise, particularly in their localized form, can still be seen today. The funeral tradition of the Samarkand Karakalpaks, as well as that of other regional groups, clearly demonstrates the fusion of archaic beliefs with Muslim customs.

Keywords: *Karakalpaks, soul and spirit, burial traditions, funeral rites, archaic rituals*

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