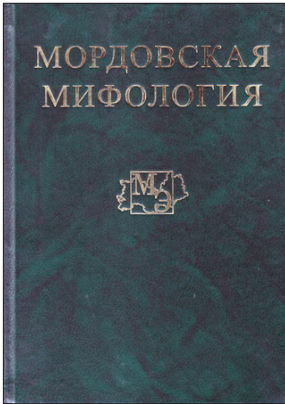


## MILESTONE IN THE STUDY OF MORDVINIAN MYTHOLOGY



***Mordovskaia mifologija. Entsiklopediia I. A-K. Saransk: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut gumanitarnykh nauk pri Pravitel'stve Respubliki Mordoviia. 2013. 484 pp. In Russian.***

In 2013, the first volume (484 pp.) of the encyclopaedia of Mordvinian mythology covering references A to K was published in Saransk. This volume published by the Mordvinian Institute for the Humanities is the third academic treatment of mythology that has come out during the past three decades. This number is impressive, and even larger nations cannot compete with it, not to mention middle-sized or small ethnic groups. The number of the Mordvins (Moksha, Erzya, Shoksha) in the Republic of Mordovia is 331,000 people, and along with the diaspora compatriots it amounts to over a million. The preparation of mythology volumes started with the Finno-Ugric joint project *Mythologia Uralica* (Hoppál 2011), which has, one way or another, influenced all the participants, including the works of T. Deviatkina, N. Mokshin and N. Yurchenkova, who partook in the first meeting in Joensuu, Finland.

The earlier editions represented the views of one author, who also wrote the introduction and articles for the mythology dictionary (Deviatkina 1998; Mokshin 2004). Tatiana Deviatkina's volume is based on poetic and religious folklore, descriptions of rituals, and ethnographic printed word. The articles present terminology in Erzian and Mokshan, and their regional peculiarities. Mythology treatment by a Mokshan researcher is presented in Mokshan, Russian, English, Arabic and French. Nikolai Mokshin's approach is more centred on ethnography/ethnology; yet, publication in Russian also guarantees a wider readership.

The new edition is the most voluminous of the three, a complex reference book. Under the editorship of V. Yurchenkov and I. Zubov, the authors have compiled a collection of encyclopaedic articles covering different fields of concepts, types of folklore, religion, ritual phenomena, and mythology. The encyclopaedia differs from the former ones by its general philosophical foundation. The principles of the approach have been formulated by V. Yurchenkov and N. Yurchenkova (2013: 6–16), who point to mythology as an entirety that influences culture and is in a dialogue with it. Accordingly, the introduction discusses mythology as a worldview, and ritual practices related to it, which are expressed in different mediums. Mythology is also characterised as a source of creation and science, its reflection in different arts and its impact on creative handwriting. Relationships between mythology and science discuss collection, publication and research, identifying different tendencies (descriptive, reconstructive and detailed analyses period).

Entries cover a wide range of notions: general concepts of morals, ethics and religion (e.g. *good and evil, wealth*), ethnography (e.g. *house, sauna*), rituals, and folklore. The articles dwell upon the calendar system and holidays, deities and demonology, as well as concepts of mythology (e.g. *tree of life, tree of death*). Under family rituals the authors discuss cases that have received little attention so far, including relationships between mythology and customs related to children. The last entry covers rituals and beliefs associated with the first bath of the newborn, taking into sauna, putting into the cradle,

up to the rituals related to cutting hair and uniting the community. Children's folklore and their role in rituals have been emphasised in several articles, for instance, cross-references to calendar rituals. This is a nice innovation, especially considering the fact that in the past one hundred years part of the rituals have had a symbolic connection to children, been oriented on them or constitute a part of children's folklore.

The subject thesaurus is based on symbolism in the religious system and culture. As the thesaurus itself will be published in the next volume, I can only share my general impression that articles have been presented for symbolic items, plants, animals, persons, temporal and calendrical phenomena, significant topographical centres, as well as (ritual) acts and practices. Information directly related to mythological creatures and myths is presented as part of a major whole.

The authors also show interest in filtering out invariable messages and connecting different code systems (cf. Tolstoi & Tolstaia 2013). The treatment of rituals in a religious context (one of the special features of the volume) is inherent in Russian folkloristics and associated with long-term theoretical tradition (V. Propp 1963; Baiburin 1983; Tolstoi 2013; etc.).

A considerable number of articles introduce the activity of folklore collectors and researchers. The volume presents biographies, fields of interests and research areas, followed by bibliography with more important researches. In the case of collectors, the collection areas and recorded species have been specified. The articles written in this key provide information about the person's contribution to cultural processes, which is often multifaceted. For instance, ethnomusicologist Nikolai Boiarkin (b. 1947) has, in addition to his widely known research, composed music based on folklore; he is also a conductor and active member of specialty organisations, as well as participant in the activity of scientific organisations.

Viktor Danilov (1942–2002) spent most of his adult life in Estonia, collecting Mordvinian folklore, performing folksongs, introducing and advocating folk culture. The article dwells upon the folklore he collected, his participation in the folk ensemble *Hellero*, and other facts about him.

A voluminous series of articles discusses the relationships between professional arts and myths. In addition to the review article on fine arts and myths, the encyclopaedia presents individual articles on ethno-artists, including wood sculptors, depictees of ethno-futuristic mythical world, etc.

The articles in the encyclopaedia are illustrated with historic documentary photographs, which with their narratives and details constitute a great complement to subject articles. In addition, the volume includes numerous samples of various art styles, in some cases even several reproductions per article. The illustrative side is powerful and leaves the impression of an art album or a visual overview with different styles, schools and typical techniques.

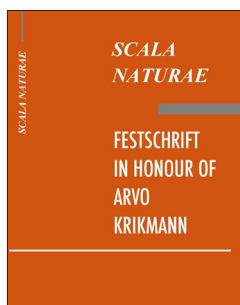
The complex whole covering different topics in alphabetical order is convenient for the user. It is not a bad idea to include the articles of scientific and cultural-historic importance (folklorists, folklore collectors, artists engaged in ethno-art, etc.) in the main part of the dictionary, considering how lazy the readers of today are. The volume provides an overview of mythology and religion, the role of Mordvinian researchers and artists in the process of culture creation, as well as the reflection of myths in the works of art and culture. The work done to present mythology and religion is remarkable, and the reader is looking forward to the next volume.

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## PUBLICATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF ARVO KRIKMANN'S 75TH JUBILEE



*Scala naturae: Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann*. Compiled and edited by Anneli Baran, Liisi Laineste, Piret Voolaid. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2014. 442 pp.

The volume in English, dedicated to academician Arvo Krikmann, includes writings from his long-term colleagues from Europe and outside (North America, Australia), for whom he has been a good colleague, supervisor and tutor.

The contributions from 29 authors result from the academic encounters with the work published by the jubilarian during his long-term career. The collection starts with shorter tributes,

but especially noteworthy is Wolfgang Mieder's selection of his cordial correspondence with the jubilarian from the years 1993–2013. All the longer research articles can be categorised under two main topics – short forms of folklore (mainly proverbs) and humour – and they represent varied methodological approaches to the main subjects.

The publication of the collection was supported by the institutional research grant IUT22-5 and the Cultural Endowment of Estonia.