

Witchcraft, sorcery and hand wringing in the life of Siberian peasants: on the materials of historical sources of the nineteenth century

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Witchcraft, sorcery and hand wringing in the lives of Siberian peasants: on the materials of historical sources of the nineteenth century

In the nineteenth century, the Orthodox Church, authorities, investigative bodies and courts officially recognized the possibility of such phenomena as witchcraft, witcheries, hand wringing, sorcery and shamanism. This is confirmed by numerous reports, eyewitness accounts, messages, investigations and trials materials.

Penalties for such “acts”, appointed by the courts, were often rather mild (church repentance, offertory, lashes, etc.). More severe measures were prescribed much more rarely (expulsion from a settlement, prison, etc.). The reason for this state of affairs was the complexity of proving that any manifestations of the “sufferer” were caused precisely by witchcraft or witcheries.

It is shown that there were some peculiarities in the attitude towards the witchcraft among the population of the Siberian region. It is established that snakes and frogs, which were very common in the Siberian region, became the main attribute and material used in witchcraft, sorcery and witcheries. Herbs characteristic of the flora of the Siberian region were also used in the rituals.

It is confirmed that witchcraft in the Siberian region was less common than in other regions of the country. This “mystery” was most often practiced by women and much less often by men.

Key words: Siberia, witchcraft, sorcery, hand wringing, shamanism, reports, messages, investigations, courts, traditions, superstitions, incantations, rituals, ceremonials.

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the Orthodox Church, authorities, investigative bodies and courts officially recognized such phenomena as witchcraft, witcheries, hand wringing, sorcery and shamanism. This was confirmed by numerous reports, eyewitness accounts, messages, investigations and trials materials.

However, their manifestation in some regions of the country had its own specific features. In connection with this, it is interesting to study the phenomenon of witchcraft and the appeal of peasants to “otherworldly forces” on the basis of an analysis of historical sources of the century before last.

Materials and methods

The research was carried out on the basis of an analysis of historical sources of the nineteenth century, which covered various information about witchcraft, sorcery and hand wringing as phenomena in the people’s life of the peasants of the Siberian region.

As the research methods, their following set was used: the method of content analysis, with the help of which the content of the texts of the historical documents of the nineteenth century was investigated and analyzed, as well as books and periodicals published in this period which affected the range of issues of interest to us; historical method, thanks to which it was possible to reveal the features of the world outlook, folk traditions, attitudes towards witchcraft and sorcery adopted among the peasant population of Siberia in the century before last; a systematic approach, with the help of which the systematization of revealed historical facts and events was carried out.

Discussion

A significant information layer about witchcraft, sorcery and hand wringing as phenomena in the public life of the region is reflected on the pages of books and collections published in the century before last, fully or partially devoted to this topic.¹

In addition, in the printed press of the nineteenth century, articles and essays on those or other questions about the “supernatural” and people seen in carrying out any rituals were occasionally placed.²

In addition to the listed historical sources, when preparation of the paper, the papers of the early twentieth century, as well as those of historians of the Soviet and post-Soviet space were examined, touching on the traditions and superstitions adopted among the population of the Russian Empire.³

It should be noted that in the existing papers questions about witchcraft, sorcery and other “supernatural” phenomena, were revealed as a rule, more often in a generalized form, without taking into account the specifics of the Siberian region. In addition, in the most papers, the

¹ VORONTSOV, N.K. *Shamanism and ceremonies of the Siberia people*. Tomsk, 1896; KOSTROV, N.A. *Legal customs of old peasants of Tomsk province*. Tomsk, 1876; MAIKOV, L. *Great Russian sorceries*. St. Petersburg, 1869; *The national life of the Great North*. St. Petersburg, 1898; PONAMAREV, A. *Review of the people’s life, traditions and superstitions of the population of the Siberian region*. St. Petersburg, 1896; ROSTOVSKY, S. *Testimonies and stories about witchcraft and sorcerers*. St. Petersburg, 1883; *Russian people. Its ceremonies, rituals, legendary, superstitions and poetry* / Collected by M. Zabylin. M., 1880.

² BARSOV, E. Essays on the People’s worldview and wife. In: *Ancient and New Russia*. No. 11, 1876, pp. 213-232; *Tomsk Province Gazette*. 1858. No. 4. p. 3.

³ KGAEVSKY, G.N. (1901) About sorcery in Western Siberia (essay). In: *Dorozhnik on Siberia and Asian Russia*. Tomsk. Book 4 (March), 1901, pp. 72-78; BULGAROVA, B.A. – VAZEROVA, A.G. – OCHIROV, O.R. *Religious Culture in the Caucasus: Pagan Temples and Traditions*. In: *Bylye Gody*. 44(2), 2017, pp. 420-427; AZADOVSKY, M.K. *History of Russian folkloristics*. Vol. 1. Moscow, 1958; ERMACHKOV, I.A. – KOROLEVA, L.A. – SVECHNIKOVA, N.V. *The Sanitary-epidemiological State of the Russian Troops in the Caucasus in 1797–1801*. In: *Bylye Gody*. 44(2), 2017, pp. 428-437; ARNAUTOVA, Yu.E. *Sorcerers and saints*. St. Petersburg, 2004.

authors did not prioritize the analysis of historical sources - that is, documents and materials published in the nineteenth century.

It should be also noted the absence of monographic papers on the phenomenon of sorcery and witchcraft in the Siberian region in the 19th century, based on historical sources of the indicated time period. At the same time, it was the view of contemporaries of the era when peasants believed in the evil eye, witchcraft and witcheries, and authorities took such things seriously enough, is the most interesting from the point of view of scientific and historical discourse. Based on the above mentioned, we believe that the stated topic is very relevant.

Results

When disclosing the research topic, the materials of the trials on witchcraft were considered as priority sources; reports of archbishops and other representatives of the clergy, addressed to the Holy Government Synod, witnessed facts of hand wringing and “insanity” or about “acts of unworthy pretenders in this matter”; other messages of officials about these phenomena seen in the villages and other settlements of the Siberian region; written testimonies of eyewitnesses who caught the suspects in witchcraft and performance of certain rituals; materials of investigations and trials.

Despite the fact that the authorities officially recognized the possibility of witchcraft and sorcery “treatment,” nevertheless, by the nineteenth century, many began to treat these phenomena with a certain amount of skepticism, especially those among doctors.⁴ The punishments imposed by the courts for such a “craft”, even in cases where the accused fully admitted their guilt, were often mild – unlike the earlier time periods, when “convicted” in witchcraft were often sentenced to death or long prison terms.⁵

Nevertheless, interest in the otherworldly forces and the entire supernatural among the illiterate or semi-literate peasant population of Russia in the century before last was still quite high. As it was noted by E. Barsov in one of the popular periodicals of the nineteenth century, wizards and witchdoctors, sorcerers and witches were the main leaders and solvers in the family affairs of the people until now.⁶

According to a number of researchers of the phenomenon of witchcraft, who lived in the period under consideration, peasants’ beliefs about the strength and properties of magical rituals had some differences in different regions of the Russian Empire. For example, when telling about the Siberian region, the Russian ethnographer and historian N.A. Kostrov made the remark that the peasant was not so superstitious here as a peasant of many other settlements of the “Great Russian provinces”⁷. In another of his papers, published in 1876, among other information about Siberia, it is also pointed out that wizards and witchdoctors were very rare here.⁸

⁴ Shakespeare’s dramas or modern psychiatry. In: *Znanie*. 1876. No.10. pp. 24.

⁵ Judicial definition of the Kobrin petty bourgeois Apollonia Pavlovichova about witchcraft. 1709. In: *Acts of the Vilna Archeographic Commission: Volume XVI. Acts of the Brest City Court, acts of the Brest District Court, acts of Brest Magderburg, acts of Kobrin Magderburg, acts of Kamenets Magderburg*. Vilna: Publishing House of the Provincial Government, 1872. p. 580; Cop death sentence for witchcraft. December 7. 1622. In: *Acts of the Vilna Archeographic Commission: Volume XVIII. Acts of the Cop courts*. Vilna: Publishing House of Sytin Printing House, 1891. pp. 325-326.

⁶ BARSOV, E., ref. 2, pp. 213-214.

⁷ KOSTROV, N.A. *Sorcery and witcheries between peasants of Tomsk province (From the personal library of I. Tyshnov)*. St. Petersburg, 1880, pp. 1-2.

⁸ KOSTROV, N.A., ref. 1, pp. 95-96.

Nevertheless, despite the relatively small presence of witchcraft in the Siberian region, such cases were still known to the public. Predominantly, these facts from the life of the Siberian population became publicized because of their consideration by the courts and bodies which carried out the investigation. Many events of this kind were recorded in documents placed in the then functioning Tomsk province archive, as well as in publications on the pages of the Siberian press.

An analysis of the historical sources of the nineteenth century made it possible to establish that frogs and snakes were most often used in the settlements of the Siberian region for witch rituals and procedures for sorcery treatment. Frogs and snakes in those places were very common as it was noted in the editions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹ Moreover, it was presumably for this very reason that many settlements of the Tomsk province acquired the corresponding names: Zmeev, Zmeinka, Zmeinogorsk, Zmeinskaya, Zmeinogorsky mine, etc.¹⁰

Characteristic rituals with frogs and snakes were described in detail in a number of published sources of the XIX century. For example, in one of them it was narrated that in 1815 the peasant Praskovia Plotnikova was caught by several witnesses when she put a living young snake in an empty bottle. During interrogation and investigation she reported that she had done this with the purpose of witchery on the peasant Karmin, at the request of his wife Fedosya. For this ritual it was necessary to catch a young snake, with known words to put him in a bottle, pour kvass, give this kvass to brew, and then water the person, on which the witchery was done. Physician Golovin, invited to investigate this case, concluded that the described infusion itself was very harmful to health.

However, due to the fact that no one was injured, as Plotnikova did not manage to finish her plan to the end, the court ruled to punish her with birch, while allowing her to stay at his permanent place of residence.¹¹

In addition to the description of stories, when with the help of frogs and snakes some witch ceremonies were performed, also in the historical sources of the nineteenth century, the facts of their extirpation from the body of people were often mentioned. These events, as a rule, peasants directly associated with witchcraft and witcheries. For example, in one of the books of the nineteenth century it was told about the story of the incident occurred in 1820, when the Kuznetsk governor of town informed the Tomsk governor that on June 7 of the given year the petty bourgeois Avdotya Pyrsikova vomited from the larynx with blood a frog of the average size, of the yellow-blue color, striped. On this fact a special investigation was conducted. As a suspect, made the witchry, Avdotya named her daughter-in-law, with whom she had recently quarreled.¹²

In addition to the daughters-in-law, among the persons suspected of witchcraft and witchery, most often neighbors were who had bad reputation in the villages, marriage wreckers (mistresses of married men), or, on the contrary, jealous wives accusing other women of loving connections with their husband. In addition, often on the black business were fortunate

⁹ PALLAS, P.S. *Travel to different provinces of the Russian State*. Part two. The second book. St. Petersburg: Publishing house of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1876, pp. 241-242.

¹⁰ *Lists of populated areas of the Russian Empire compiled and published by the Central Statistical Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs*: Vol. 60. Tomsk Province: a list of inhabited places according to 1859. St. Petersburg, 1868.

¹¹ KOSTROV, N.A., ref. 7, pp. 2.

¹² KOSTROV, N.A., ref. 1, p. 98.

girlfriends suspected, as well as mothers-in-law, in a quarrel with one of the young women.¹³

It is interesting that in some historical sources, among the suspects, unscrupulous debtors were also pointed out who did not give up the debt in time, or refused altogether to do this in the future, as well as their immediate family.¹⁴

Among the physical manifestations of the alleged witchery, in addition to the outbreaks from the body of snakes and frogs, in court and investigative materials, there were such signs as weakness, inexplicable longing, sadness of the “sufferer”, withdrawal, convulsions, convulsions, shouting out names of witches, cases of clairvoyance, when demoniacs or hand wringers began to predict or guess certain events that they could not possibly have known in advance (for example, call out information about people in the crowd or present on sessions of healing or procedures of exorcism).¹⁵

For example, in one of the sources published in the XIX century, a case was described when, in 1826, a peasant wife, Marfa Nechunayeva, who lived in the village of Krutikhina of Bulinskaya volost of the Kolyvan District, happened to visit the village of Verkh-Sustinskaya and the peasant Savelia Oschepkov, whom at that time, his old friend Aristarkh Prishvitsin came.

Aristarkh was very drunk, tried to compliment and kiss the women present. Marfa did not want to be kissed, resisted, and complained. However, Prishvitsin kissed the woman violently and then abruptly blew into her face. After this, according to Marfa, she felt unbearable sadness and sorrow. Critical mental state lasted about ten weeks. Then, according to eyewitnesses, Marfa came to the final insanity and began to say that inside she had a young man reserved and fixed, and that young man cannot be released, and he was put by Prishvitsin at the request of the girl Avdotya Chernavina.

Marfa's husband, seeing the critical condition of the wife, reported all the volost authority, adding that he suspects Aristarkh Prishvitsyn and Avdotya Chernavina on witchery who were angry with his wife for the fact that her father gave once to Marfa's father 10 rubles loan, which father did not give back. The local government made a decision to testify Marfa. On this procedure, Prishvitsyn and Chernavina were invited and suspected. Previously they were well hidden in the room.

However, despite these measures, Marfa immediately started shouting out the names of her abusers: “*The villain Prishvitsyn and Dunka are here; they put a young man without life in my.*” As it was noted in the investigation materials, Marfa could not know about the presence of these people when examination.¹⁶

It can be stated that in the stories depicted in the historical sources of the nineteenth century, as physical manifestations of witcheries and witchcraft (apart from those listed above), it was often mentioned not just the “suffering” but the screams “in different voices”, the throwing by them for no apparent reason furniture, utensils and other items and first of all, in coming

¹³ ANTONOVICH, V. Witchcraft. In: *Proceedings of the ethnographic statistical expedition to the Western Russian Territory*. St. Petersburg. Vol. 1, 1872, pp. 26-31.

¹⁴ ROSTOVSKY, S., ref. 1, pp. 44-46.

¹⁵ ROSTOVSKY, S., ref. 1, pp. 53-55.

¹⁶ KOSTROV, N.A., ref. 7, pp. 8-9.

people and priests, pain in the heart, palpitation, rolling on the floor and ground, etc.¹⁷

One such case, according to eyewitnesses, occurred in 1825 in the village Menshchikova of the Kainsky district, when the peasants Menshchikova, Borodikhina and Molodkova began to shout at different voices, echoing that they were witched by the peasant women Parysheva, Mezentseva and Katusova, and calling them in hand wringing as “mothers”. However, doctor Lazarev, who conducted the examination, came to the conclusion that the patients were poisoned by something from “astringents”¹⁸.

Another incident occurred in 1842 in the village Ust-Tandovaya. Kazan volost government reported to the Kainsky territorial court that the rural community of this village accuses the peasant Lukerya Malysheva of “witchery to women and girls” and in this connection asks about her relocation to another place. When an investigator arrived in the village of Ust-Tandovaya, a third of the women “maleficated” by Malysheva appeared before him, who reported that their illness began with a strong hiccup, then they felt the pain of the heart, finally they cried and became unconscious. Further in the testimony of women it was noted that these attacks were especially aggravated when smoking incense or tobacco, as well as reading the Gospel or church singing¹⁹.

In addition to cases when investigative bodies and courts recognized the facts of witchcraft, historical documents also referred to cases of feigned insanity or hand wringing. For example, in a report dated June 15 of the year 1840, compiled by the Archbishop of Perm and Verkhoturys Arkady and addressed to the Holy Synod of the Government, it was noted that “feignedly suffering” among the raging occurred more rarely. As the archbishop explained in his report, selfish reasons sometimes encouraged the women to play such an ugly role. Among them, he singled out the following options. Sometimes a wife was beautiful and a husband was ugly or strict, but he was a good master and hardworking. A wife was not used to doing things, loved a cheerful and idle life and was not used to pray. Here were home disagreements, and the unclean spirit came immediately. The unclean spirit, under the assurance of the gullible, did not tolerate expressions, and then the phenomena of the raging were renewed often, with every quarrel between the husband and wife. But this kind of sufferers were only a few.²⁰

In historical sources of the nineteenth century, touching on the questions of the “supernatural”, it was told, among other things, about the work of healers who tried with their knowledge and skills to treat people who asked them for help. A frequent case of contact with healers was the abortion of a pregnant woman. The latter, in turn, were carried out under unhygienic conditions by unqualified people, often with a fatal case.²¹

¹⁷ Message of the Kaluga Civil Governor N.M. Smirnov to Minister of the Interior, L.A. Perovskiy. In: *Russian Archive: History of the Fatherland in Testimonies and Documents of the 18th-20th Centuries: Almanac*. M.: Studio TRITE: Russian Archive, 2001. Vol. XI. pp. 195-196; ARNAUTOVA, Yu.E. *Sorcerers and saints*. St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 37-49; Arkady, Archbishop. *From the report of Arkady Archbishop of Perm and Verkhoturysky to the Holy Government Synod*. In: *Russian Archive: History of the Fatherland in the Testimonies and Documents of the 18th - 20th Centuries: Almanac*. M.: Studio TRITE: Russian Archive, 2001. Vol. XI. pp. 190-191.

¹⁸ KOSTROV, N.A., ref. 7, p. 12.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Arkady, Archbishop. *From the report of Arkady Archbishop of Perm and Verkhoturysky to the Holy Government Synod*. In: *Russian Archive: History of the Fatherland in the Testimonies and Documents of the 18th - 20th Centuries: Almanac*. M.: Studio TRITE: Russian Archive, 2001. Vol. XI. pp. 190-195.

²¹ USTINOVA, O.V. Infanticide and abortion as a social phenomenon of the late 19th - early 20th century. In: *Bylye Gody*. 45(3), 2017, pp. 1003-1009.

It is interesting to note that the healers, whose goals (in comparison with the goals of sorcerers) were nobler, also used in their sessions all the same frogs and snakes. For example, the skin dropped by a snake was often used by Siberian healers as a proved remedy against febrile affection. After preliminarily reading a special magic spell, it was recommended to be worn wired into something with herself (hidden from the views of unauthorized persons).²²

At the same time in one of the issues of the "Tomsk Province Gazette" it was reported that among the commoners there are healers who pretend to be people who know how to talk about body parts stung by snakes.²³ In some book editions of the century before last, specific magic spells for such rituals were published. For clarity, let us quote the text of one of them: "*A snake-viper, the head-beaddress! Crawl to the north side of the rowan bush; sit on the holy tree - on the rowan bush; go to the sea-ocean; there is a Latin-stone on the sea-ocean; there is a serpent's sting on this stone; it does not say, does not hurt, and does not swell; it also would not burn, would not hurt and would not swell the stung place of such person (name).*"²⁴

Thus, according to popular beliefs it was believed that a place stung snake by a snake can be "spoken", after which the pain and swelling should passed off by itself.²⁵

It is also interesting that the frog's body was often used by healers as an ingredient for making tincture against drinking-binge. For these purposes, a live frog was placed into a container with wine and put it for a day in a warm place. After the frog was taken out, and the infusion obtained in this way was allowed to drink to a patient who abused alcohol. However, in order to let the tincture act, an indispensable condition must be observed, namely, the patient should not know what exactly he drinks, assuming initially that he uses ordinary wine.

According to some eyewitnesses present at such "treatment", after using the tincture the patient had an affect of nausea, he opened his eyes wide, and it got so bad that it discouraged him for many months and even years, all his further desire to consume any alcoholic drinks.²⁶

In historical sources of the nineteenth century, considering the phenomenon of witchcraft, human blood, hair, nails and even some parts of the body were often referred to as "materials" used for various rituals.

For example, one of the books of the last century tells of a case in which a peasant woman, observing frequent "bitterness", "anger" and the cooling of feelings on the part of her husband, the farmer Potapov, who ceased to fulfill marital duties towards her, decided to use the ritual of "inherent", using for this purpose the blood from the "monthly purifications" as the main ingredient.

However, the husband, who known from relatives who caught the "practiced sorcery" unawares, that during some time he was regularly fed with blood from the "monthly cleansings" of his wife, not only did not "soften" and did not like her with love, but and, as reported in the source, "severely beat his wife in the stomach with his fist."²⁷

A similar case is described in another published historical source of the nineteenth century, where it was reported with reference to the materials of the investigative authorities and the court that in 1812 a peasant from the Verkhne-Omsk volost of the Kainky district, Darya

²² GULYAEV, S.I. Ethnographic essays of Southern Siberia. In: *Library for reading*. Vol. 90. St. Petersburg, 1848, pp. 45-54.

²³ *Tomsk Province Gazette*. 1858. No. 4. p. 3.

²⁴ MAIKOV, L., ref. 1, pp. 37-38.

²⁵ PONAMAREV, A., ref. 1, pp. 63-68.

²⁶ ROSTOVSKY, S., ref. 1, p. 31.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 63-65.

Karganova, was caught by her family preparing some kind of drug in the shell of a chicken egg. When asked what she was doing, Daria explained that she was preparing the mixture of her “monthly cleansings” in order to give this compound to the food of her whole family, so that she would not pursue her, but love. Daria also reported the same during the investigation, adding that the composition of the “monthly cleansings” she was cooking on the advice of her lover, peasant Leonty Pomeltsev, whom she had met for many years. Pomeltsev did not admit anything, except that once Darya really invited him to spend the night with him, and he went to see her, but her father-in-law saw him and immediately drove him out of the yard.

The Kainsky district court decided following after examined the circumstances of the case. Darya Kalganova should be punished with whips, and if her husband did not desire to live with her, she should be sent to the Irkutsk province to settle. The peasant Pomeltsev as if not confessing and uncovered anything, was free from all punishment. At the same time, the Criminal Court sentenced Darya Kalganov to punishment with 50 blows of lashes and a deportation to the settlement, and Leonty Pomeltsev to survive under a territorial municipality in a rural prison on bread and water for two weeks for coming to her to spend the night and while he had a wife and children.²⁸

Thus, the examples cited show that women used their blood to bring about the disposition of people of the opposite sex to add it to food and drinks served to the table of men of interest to them.

In addition to the use of blood for rituals of “inherent” other ingredients were often used. They were often added to infusions and decoctions along with blood. So, for example, I. Sherr, a well-known historian of literature and a publicist, in one of his papers mentioned that whores used for their monthly cleansing, male seed, milk, sweat, urine, saliva, hair, umbilical cord, the brain of a tadpole, etc. to attract men.²⁹ The scientist points out that the decoctions and drinks prepared of these ingredients either from boiled blood, testicles of rabbits, liver of a pigeon were meant to arouse love in the person who drank them.³⁰

In addition to ingredients of biological origin, the published materials also mentioned cases in which magic spells and spells for love were read for salt, bread and water. One of such rituals was described in detail in the book of I.E. Zabelin.³¹ There are also descriptions of cases when the sorcerers were trying to treat their “patients” with the sounds of a shamanic tambourine, fumigation with special powders from Siberian herbs and uttering the shamanic spells. It was said, as a rule, about rituals of “aliens” living in the territory of Siberia.³²

In the sources of the nineteenth century, stories were also published in which people who assumed that they were damaged by witchery methods of witchcraft “against them” could not be clarified. Nevertheless, doctors ascertained the fact of some particular disease, “nervous” disease or physical deviation.

So, for example, in documents of the Tomsk district court the following curious case was fixed. As follows from the materials, in 1810 the peasant of Tomsk district from the village of Turuntayeva Ivan Alkov married a peasant daughter Anne Bedrina. With it, he lived together

²⁸ KOSTROV, N.A., ref. 7, p. 5.

²⁹ SHERR, I. *History of Civilization of Germany* / Trans. from the German language of A. Nevedomsky and D. Pisarev: Reprint edition of 1868-1869. St. Petersburg: Alpharet, 2016, p. 385.

³⁰ *Ibidem.* p. 386.

³¹ ZABELIN, I.E. *Home life of Russian queens in the XVI and XVII centuries.* Moscow: Printing house Grachev and the Company, 1869, pp. 354-360.

³² VORONTSOV, N.K. *Shamanism and ceremonies of the Siberia people.* Tomsk, 1896, p. 26.

for about a year and a half. Once after another new moon she felt a sharp pain in her stomach, from which her mother and her husband's sister tried to treat her with decoctions and ointments. After which the pain even went away, but Anna told her husband that she had become a man and, moreover, had already managed to find herself a mistress in the person of the peasant wife, Marya Alkova. She was told that this, most likely, happened to her from witchery and witchcraft, while she categorically refused to continue living with her lawful husband.

In connection with these indications, the investigation began. The investigation did not established suspected on witchcraft people. However, the Medical Board conducted an examination that showed that Anna Alkova (before her marriage - Bedrin) was a hermaphrodite. Marya Alkova refused Anna's version that they are mistresses. The Tomsk District Court resolved this case in the following way: Anna Alkova, who admitted to living together with a woman, was made to pass for church repentance, and Marya Alkova, who was not convicted of anything and not confessed, was released from court. The peasant Ivan Alkov was allowed to ask for a divorce with his wife because of her special sex. Both a criminal and a civil court agreed with this decision³³.

Despite the fact that official authorities, investigative bodies and courts allowed the possibility of witchcraft and witcheries (as it was evidenced by numerous of investigations and trials in relevant cases), representatives of the medical community were very skeptical about such phenomena among the peasants. Doctors often could prove that in one or another case, originally accepted by peasants for witchcraft, there were a poisoning, a nervous illness or some other disease or physical deviation. On this account, scientific articles were written, published in the nineteenth century³⁴.

Conclusion

Thus, it follows from the historical sources of the nineteenth century that the rituals of witchcraft were most often made with the help of any ingredients of biological origin (snake and frog bodies, chicken eggs, blood, hair, nails) or salt, water and bread. In addition, in a number of cases, sorcerers and shamans used tambourines, other instruments or hand-held devices for extracting sounds as well as smoking pipes, censers for fumigation and Siberian grasses.

On the basis of an analysis of historical sources, it can be concluded that witchcraft and witchery in settlements in Siberia were predominantly occupied by women. There were much fewer witnesses and mentions about men sorcerers from among the Russian peasants in the historical sources of the nineteenth century. The exception is shamanism, which was more typical of non-Russians men in Siberia.

³³ KOSTROV, N.A., ref. 7, p. 16.

³⁴ Shakespeare's dramas..., ref. 4, pp. 24-27

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