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Mythological Characters of the Domestic Space in Russian Folk Beliefs: Lexicographic and Ethnographic Aspects*

Russian mythological characters relating to the domestic space are described on the basis of folkloric, ethnographic, and lexicographic sources. The integration of evidence has revealed transformations undergone by views of male and female spirits (the domovoy and kikimora, respectively), allowing us to compare local beliefs and stories featuring them in urban and rural areas of Russia, and to reconstruct common Russian ideas of home spirits with reference to the notion of linguistic and cultural literacy. The results demonstrate that the idea of domovoy is quite popular even among urban dwellers, generally matching traditional Russian beliefs. The domovoy is believed to be a home and family patron, either invisible or small and shaggy, an old man or a cat, supposed to be entertained with food and invited when moving to a new home. Unlike the image of the domovoy, that of the kikimora has undergone substantial changes. Modern urban residents view the kikimora mostly as an untidy, ugly woman, sometimes called kikimora bolotnaya, the second word being an adjective of boloto ('bog'), thus turning her into a forest rather than a domestic spirit. The idea of the kikimora as a home spirit is still held by villagers, who view her either as an undead being or as a bewitched item (doll). Domestic mythical characters, then, have changed without losing their topicality.

Keywords: *Russian mythology, lexicography, cultural literacy, folk beliefs, domovoy, kikimora, traditional culture.*

Introduction

In the worldview of the Russians, the house was not just a dwelling place for people, but also the place where mythological characters resided. Ethnographic and folkloric sources of the 19th–first half of the 20th century mention characters associated with the

spaces of the house and yard. These characters differed in their locations, functions, and attitudes toward people, and included the *domovoy* ('house dwellers'), *kikimora*, *dvorovoy* ('yard dwellers'), *ovinnik* ('barn dwellers'), *gumennik* ('barnyard dwellers'), and *bannik* ('bathhouse dwellers'). There were also female modifications of home characters: *domovikha*, *susedka*, *ovinnitsa*, *bannitsa* (*obderikha*), etc. Some of them (*domovoy*, *kikimora*, *bannik*) have remained the popular subjects of oral non-fairytales and ethnographic materials of the late

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20th–early 21st century; others (*ovinnik*, *gumennik*) have lost their relevance owing to the disappearance of their “habitation areas”.

In this article, we will discuss two mythological characters of the domestic space, the *domovoy* and *kikimora*. This choice is justified, firstly, by their wide popularity among the urban population and in oral non-fairytale prose; secondly, by the functional and attitudinal opposition of these characters. The study is based on the following sources: field materials (hereafter—FMA)*, which are the results of a questionnaire survey**, as well as ordinary dictionaries and dictionaries of linguistic culture. In the lexicographic description of *domovoy* and *kikimora*, it would be advisable to consider: a) their definition as mythological characters, b) the description of the image (external appearance, typical actions, and attitude toward people), and c) the use of this unit for describing a person. This sequence makes it possible to form a sufficiently complete notion of the *domovoy* and *kikimora* as mythological characters, and to trace the development of their images in the diachronic aspect.

The concept of linguistic and cultural literacy is based on the idea of E.D. Hirsch concerning accountability and accessibility of cultural knowledge (1988). It may be formulated as follows: there exists a certain amount of linguo-cultural knowledge, available for the carriers of a certain linguistic culture, needed for communication, and thus for research by the representatives of other cultures and in some cases by those of their own linguistic culture.

The interdisciplinary approach for the study makes it possible to identify a complete picture of the contemporary notions about home spirits among the inhabitants of Russia, and to offer effective lexicographic interpretation of these units in terms of communication.

Domovoy

According to the materials of ethnography and folklore, the *domovoy* is a home spirit, generic ancestor, who protects the house, people, and cattle from possible misfortunes, thieves, witchcraft, and evil spirits. It was believed that “without the *domovoy*, there is no life in the house; the

house is not a house, but an empty space if there is no domovoy; without the keeper it is bad for the people to live in the house, and the cattle do not live” (FMA, Novgorod Region, Novosibirsk Region, and Omsk Region). It was customary to gain the favor of the home spirit giving him food, so he would be kind to house dwellers and contribute to proliferation of wealth and offspring of cattle (for more details on the *domovoy* in the traditional Russian beliefs, see (Dal, 2008: 166–197; Maksimov, 1903: 31–50; Pomerantseva, 1975: 93–117; Vlasova, 1998: 139–159; Vinogradova, 2000: 271–288; Levkievskaya, 2000: 276–317; Krinichnaya, 2004: 26–245)).

The Russian folk tradition knew many types of home spirits: *domovoy*, *khozyain* (‘keeper of the house’), *dedushka* (‘old man’), *susedko* (‘neighbor’), *kormilets* (‘provider’), *bolshak*, *domovik*, *domozhil*, *domozhir*, *dobrozhil*, *domosedushko*, *zhikhar*, *zhitel*, *izbnoy*, *lizun*, *gnetok*, *sysoy*, *batanushko*, etc. (Dal, 2008: 166; Cherepanova, 1983: 25, 58; Vlasova, 1998: 134, 139, 306). According to our own data, the urban residents most often called him “*domovoy*” or “*domashniy khozyain*” (‘home keeper’). The name *susedko* was common among the Russians living in the Urals, in the Tyumen Region, in the Altai, and in Eastern Siberia; in other regions of Western Siberia (Novosibirsk Region, Omsk Region) and in European Russia (Leningrad Region, Novgorod Region, and Pskov Region), he is usually called “*khozyain*” or “*domovoy*”. In rural areas, older people often tried to avoid the word “*domovoy*” referring to the spirit in a figurative manner: *on* (‘he’), *sam* (‘he himself’), *khozyain* (‘keeper’), or *dedushka* (‘old man’). “*He lives with us behind the stove; he would jump out of there. Small, shaggy, we could not really see him well; he jumped out and immediately ran back*” (FMA, Omsk Region).

The *domovoy* was believed to have an anthropomorphic (small man, short shaggy man, gray-haired old man, or the double of the home owner) or zoomorphic (cat, mouse, snake, rooster, dog, weasel, or bear) form. He could have rudimentary phytomorphic features (the veiled image of a tree: wood stump, broom, coniferous branch “*matka/matoshnik*” were understood as emanations of the *domovoy*) or fire features (red shirt or hat, “fiery eyes”, his localization in the chimney behind the stove, blue light as an attribute of the *domovoy*) (Krinichnaya, 2004: 119–139). However, most frequently, this home spirit remained invisible, and his presence in the house was manifested by sounds. If for no apparent reason doors would bang, dishes would clink, the wind would howl in the chimney, or things would get lost and then suddenly found, people said that the *domovoy* was up to mischief. Being hairy and bearded were the common features of the *domovoy*. Since hair in folk beliefs was conceptualized as a concentration of life and magical power, the hairiness of the home spirit was considered to be a pledge of prosperity

*These materials were collected by O.V. Golubkova in the Novosibirsk Region, Omsk Region, Tyumen Region (the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug–Yugra, the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug), Leningrad Region, Pskov Region, Novgorod Region, Vologda Region, Kirov Region, and the Altai Territory from 1999–2015.

**A survey of the residents of Novosibirsk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Omsk, Tomsk, Barnaul, and other cities, conducted in 2015 by O.K. Ansimova and O.V. Golubkova for identifying beliefs concerning the mythological characters among urban residents.

and wealth. The meaning of hairiness of the *domovoy* was clearly manifested in yuletide fortunetelling, which was widely practiced in various regions of Russia.

In rural areas (both in Siberia and in European Russia), the *domovoy* was considered a protector of the house and yard together with people and domestic animals. He might dwell in several locations: behind the stove, in the chimney, or in the *pechurka* (small niche in the stove wall), under the *golbets* (low box near the Russian stove which contained the passageway to the basement), under the floor, in the attic, in the cattle shed, or in the woodshed. At the same time, the informants always spoke about the same character—the home keeper whose traces they would find in various parts of the house and yard. In our field research, we could not find any division of household spirits into specifically house spirits and yard spirits. Bath spirits (*bannik*, *obderikha*), which were described as the most dangerous and malicious, were assigned to a separate category. Since the localization of these spirits was associated with village steam baths, they were not relevant for urban residents.

The home keeper has been universally described as a good spirit, defender, and patron, which corresponded to the notion of the *domovoy* as a generic ancestor. “If *susedko* liked someone, he would braid his hair. He would entangle hair, so you couldn’t comb it, and you shouldn’t cut it, or else he might get offended” (FMA, the Altai Territory).

A special role of the *domovoy* was his ability to predict human fate and possibly influence it in some way. It was believed that the *domovoy* appeared (let himself be seen or touched) on the eve of an important event in a person’s life. The *domovoy* might show his presence before a wedding, “At night, a shaggy bear fell on me and started to suffocate me. This was a *domovoy* who was driving me out of the house. I soon got married” (FMA, Novosibirsk Region); before moving to a new home, the dwellers were reminded not to forget to invite him, “You should surely invite him to a new house, otherwise he will not go, but will remain [where he was]. Only the *kikimora* comes without an invitation” (FMA, Novgorod Region). People believed that the *domovoy* cried foretelling the death of someone from the household; he knocked on the window or clinked dishes on the eve of the death of relatives. Thus, by predicting events and influencing the fate of the family members, the *domovoy* revealed himself as a restless soul of a deceased relative or ancestor (for more details, see (Golubkova, 2009: 21–260)). In the common Russian tradition, the corners in the house, the stove, the basement, or the threshold were in some way related to burial, be it a construction sacrifice or an ancestor, which went back to totemic characters; the *domovoy* was the embodiment of an ancestor’s soul which became the soul of the house and the family (Krinichnaya, 2004: 150–155, 175). “When grandfather died, the *domovoy* bothered us for forty days.

Something rattled in the kitchen, pots fell, the root cellar collapsed” (FMA, Novosibirsk Region). “*The domovoy is the main person in the house. You need to honor him like your parents. When I prepare commemoration of my parents, I also put out food for the domovoy*” (FMA, Pskov Region).

According to field data and the results of the survey, the most common zoomorphic outlook of the *domovoy* was the image of the cat: “*The keeper turns into a cat and walks around the house at night; I have seen this many times*” (FMA, Omsk Region). In the traditional Russian culture, cats were one of the most sacralized animals of the domestic space. Just like an icon, cats were not bought but received in exchange (Balov, 1891: 218); it was considered a sin to kill a cat (Afanasiev, 1865: 647–651). Identification of the home spirit with a cat was apparently caused by the fact that the cat, just like the *domovoy*, seemed to be the image of a reborn soul, a kind of emanation of the ancestor (for more details, see (Golubkova, 2009: 189–196)).

It was a habit to invite the *domovoy* when moving to a new house. His “transport” was usually a broom, a bag, old felt boot or slipper (an equivalent replacement of the bast shoe). “*On the day of the move you need to take a new broom and sweep all the corners, saying, ‘Our keeper, father, come with us to live in the new house’. In the new house, you need to put the broom behind the stove with its head up, and this broom should be no longer used for sweeping*” (FMA, Novosibirsk Region). The ritual with a broom was obviously an echo of a sacrifice, one of the purposes of which was the expulsion of the “evil” (outsiders’, other people’s) *domovoy*, when a rooster was sacrificed and its blood was put on a broom which was then used to sweep all the corners of the house and yard. The broom dipped in the sacrificial blood was perceived as a strengthened and renewed emanation of the *domovoy*, which enabled it to drive away the stray “evil” *domovoy* (Krinichnaya, 2004: 124). People would often let a cat (sometimes a rooster) first enter a new house, and then the owner of the house would enter with an icon, followed by his wife carrying attributes symbolizing the *domovoy* or fulfilling the role of his “transport” (broom, bag, or slipper). It was believed that the *domovoy* could move into a new house riding on a cat (FMA, Vologda Region, Omsk Region). A cat or rooster was assigned the same role of the sacrifice, but in a bloodless way, since it was thought that the first one to enter new house would soon die (FMA, Kirov Region, the Altai Territory), and, accordingly, would become the embodiment of the soul of the house, its mythical keeper—the *domovoy*.

As it is known, a culture is not capable of self-organizing, thus the identification of its units is only possible by means of language, which acts in this case, like people say, as “the mirror of culture”. For considering the lexicographic description of the unit of *domovoy*, we

should turn to regular dictionaries and dictionaries of linguistic culture, which form the common cultural space and are capable of acting as such a “mirror”.

Information about *domovoy* from the dictionary of V.I. Dal is a cultural comment on the entry of “House”. It contains a fairly large list of the *domovoy*'s names and typical actions: “*domovik, dedushka, posten, lizun, domozhil, khozyain, zhirovik, nezhit...*, *susedko, batanushka*; the spirit-protector and offender of the house; he bangs and romps at nights, makes mischief, suffocates a sleeping person as a joke; strokes with his shaggy hand for good luck, and so on. He particularly plays tricks in the stables; turns the mane of a favorite horse into a mat of hair...” (Dal, 1880: 466–467). The entry mentions the ambivalent attitude of the *domovoy* toward people, offers a kind of “classification” of *domovoy*s according to their habitation areas, and points to their relationship with other home and forest spirits. It is indicated that “one may see a *domovoy* at night on Easter Sunday in the barn; he is shaggy, but you cannot remember anything else besides this feature; he wipes out your memory” (Ibid.: 466).

In other dictionaries, the entries about *domovoy* are minimal in scope and information, “according to popular beliefs, it is a supernatural creature that lives in each house” (Tolkovi slovar..., 1935: 762); “in the Slavic mythology, a fantastic creature that dwells in the house; the evil or good spirit of the house” (Ozhegov, Shvedova, 1994: 177); “good or evil spirit living, according to superstitious beliefs, in the house” (Efremova, 2000: 217); “according to superstitious beliefs of Slavic and some other peoples, a good or evil spirit living in the house” (Slovar..., 1985: Vol. 1, p. 427). These dictionaries do not provide the description of the *domovoy*'s appearance, his typical actions, and attitudes toward people, which causes some surprise since as a home spirit the *domovoy* is the closest and the best known character to people, including urban residents. The dictionaries do not describe situations when people start to remember the *domovoy*, for example, when the owner of the house cannot find a certain thing.

In the linguistic and cultural dictionary, “The Russian Cultural Space” (“Russkoye kulturnoye prostranstvo”), the entries of *domovoy* and *kikimora* are included into the section “precedent names” (Brileva et al., 2004: 187–188, 207–208). This seems a little weird, since they do not possess the main feature of a precedent name (“the existence of the nation-wide invariant of the perception of the phenomenon which the name indicates”; it includes: 1) differential features of the corresponding phenomenon; 2) attributes, that is, all which in people’s consciousness is associated with this phenomenon, yet is not necessary, although sufficient, for its signification; 3) evaluation, that is, one of the points on the “good–bad” axis (Ibid.: 26)). In addition, this section of the dictionary predominantly contains the names of fairytale characters and the names

of fairytale attributes (for example, *magic wand, the golden key, the Snow Queen*, and so on). This proximity hinders the perception of the *domovoy* and *kikimora* as mythological, and not fairytale, characters.

The dictionary of linguistic regional geography “Russia” (“Rossiya”) has no entries of “Domovoy” and “Kikimora”, although according to the authors, the basis for including a certain linguistic entry into the dictionary was the presence of an ethnic and cultural background for the entry (“some set of additional information and associations connected with ethnic history and culture, and known to all Russians” (Rossiya..., 2007: IV)), which means that the entries of *domovoy* and *kikimora*, in our opinion, should have been included in the dictionary.

The beliefs associated with the *domovoy* are still relevant today. They have not lost their importance both among rural and urban residents. Many times we have observed expressions of belief in *domovoy*s that were manifested in the setting up “*domovoy* corners” by urban residents in their apartments: they would leave food (bread, milk, or sweets) and toys (a jar with buttons, beads, and other small shiny objects) for the home spirit in some secluded place, or put a broom into the corner (FMA, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Tomsk, Barnaul, St. Petersburg, Novgorod, Pskov, and Kirov). Urban residents would also assign unusual noises in their homes or an unexpected loss of things to the tricks of the *domovoy* (FMA). The survey showed a good awareness of the *domovoy*, which mostly corresponded to the traditional beliefs of the Russian about this home spirit, on the part of urban residents.

Kikimora

According to the materials of ethnography and folklore, the *kikimora* is a mythological character in female guise, living or appearing in the house, in the yard, sometimes in the bathhouse, barn, empty buildings, or taverns (Zelenin, 1995: 60; Maksimov, 1903: 62–69; Cherepanova, 1983: 125). The name *kikimora* could refer to characters or objects, which we divided into four groups: 1) house/yard *kikimora*; 2) forest/bog *kikimora*; 3) a doll made of rags or wood chips (sometimes using blood or objects which were in contact with a dead body) for magical purposes (to induce phantoms in the house, to afflict “harm” on a person); 4) an object (a bottleneck, a rattle of wood chips, etc.) which stove-setters or carpenters, dissatisfied with the payment for their work, might hide in the chimney or in the wall of the house to take revenge on the house owners (the wind would make an unpleasant noise in the house blowing through that object, “howl”, frightening house inhabitants). As opposed to the first three groups, the last group was not related to mythological beliefs and magic. In this study, we are primarily interested in the

character of house/yard and forest/bog *kikimoras* (the first and second group).

The home *kikimora* was sometimes considered to be the wife of a *domovoy* (Dal, 2008: 406; Maksimov, 1903: 62–63; Vlasova, 1998: 221), but according to the predominant beliefs they were opposite spirits warring between each other. The *kikimora* appeared as small, ugly, crooked, slovenly woman; an ugly dwarf; dancing doll; girl; woman in white or black clothes, or wearing a red shirt; sometimes people saw her naked; she could turn into a cat, dog, duck, hare, or piglet, but most often she remained invisible (Dal, 2008: 404–421; Zinoviev, 1987: 85–96). Unlike the *domovoy*, the home *kikimora* was endowed with malicious qualities: she would frighten people, rattle, knock, break dishes, spoil bread, tear and entangle handiwork, pluck chickens, or chase horses. Some features of both spirits were the same: they both made noise, stamped, clinked dishes, howled, or cried; could predict the future upon appearing on the eve of important changes in the life of the household; turned into a male or female cat; chased horses, tormented cattle which they did not like; lived in the same places (behind the stove, near the chimney, in the basement, in the attic, in the barn or chicken coop). The permanent feature of the *kikimora* was her connection with spinning: she could finish spinning for the housewife, but would often entangle, tear, soil, or burn fiber which was left for the night without a blessing (Cherepanova, 1983: 124). This feature is reflected in the phraseological body of the Russian language, in proverbs and sayings, such as “Sleep, girl, the *kikimora* will spin for you”, “You will never get a shirt from a *kikimora*” (Dal, 1881: 107). The concept of the spinning *kikimora*, mostly popular in the Russian North, was also known in Siberia, and is recorded in our field materials, “*I looked inside the bathhouse, and there was a kikimora sitting and beating hemp*” (FMA, Novosibirsk Region). A survey conducted among urban dwellers did not reveal such beliefs.

According to folk beliefs of the Russians, the *kikimora* and *domovoy* had different natures. The former was considered an evil spirit, while the latter was not. The origin of the *kikimora* was often associated with dead unbaptized infants (stillborn or miscarried) (Afanasiev, 1868: 113; Zinoviev, 1987: 85), that is, unlike the *domovoy* (ancestor-spirit), the *kikimora* belonged to the category of “*zalozhnye*” dead people [people who died an unnatural or premature death] (Zelenin, 1995: 51, 60), among whom deceased unbaptized children were the most troublesome and harmful spirits. “*Infants who did not have time to live in the world, especially the unbaptized, would become evil spirits. Their souls are not accepted in the other world. They do harm and scare people. If a kikimora starts to live in the house, there is only annoyance from her; you can't expect any good things because this is an evil spirit, an unbaptized soul*” (FMA, the Altai Territory).

Kikimoras usually appeared at night, but it was also believed that they only appeared at Yuletide (Cherepanova, 1983: 124). One of the elements of Yuletide mummer's play in the Russian North was representation of a *kikimora*, “Old women would come for a gathering at Yuletide dressed up as *shishimoras*—they would put on *shobolki* [‘torn clothes’ – O.C.] and holding a long pointed stick they would sit down on the upper bunk, their legs dangling from the beams, and would spin in this position... Girls would laugh at the *shishimora*, grab her legs, and she would beat them with a stick” (Ibid.: 124–125). According to our field data (recollections of informants corresponding to the 1950s), in a number of places in Western Siberia, people would dress up as *kikimoras* during the Yuletide mummer's play and on Cheesefare Week. Women would wear old clothes (“tatters”), smear their faces with soot, and tousle their hair, creating a slovenly appearance. *Kikimora*-guisers would go caroling with other carnival characters. They carried wool or flax, spindles, and hemp combs; when entering the house, they acted as if they were spinning fiber. “*On the old New Year's Eve, elderly women would go around in rags, with unkempt hair, their faces smeared with soot. They would walk in a crowd around the village, sing bawdy songs, and even sometimes swear. Because of this, they were called kikimoras. On Cheesefare Week, they would dress up as demons, kikimoras. 'Kikimoras' would carry flax in their hands and comb it, would spin threads. Old people said that this needed to be done; good flax would grow because of this*” (FMA, Novosibirsk Region). Thus, the beliefs about the *kikimora* as a home spirit related to handiwork and being capable of influencing the flax harvest, survived in some Siberian villages at least until the mid-20th century.

Let us turn to the dictionary description of the unit of *kikimora*. In the dictionary of Dal, *kikimora* is defined as “a type of *domovoy* that spins at night; during the day, he sits invisible behind the stove, and plays tricks at night with a spindle, spinning wheel, *voroba*, and *viyushka*”, but with the clarification that “there is also *lesnaya kikimora* in Siberia”. This dictionary entry gives an example of using this unit in speech, “with reproach: homebody, loner, invisible person who always stays at home working, especially someone who spins very diligently. *You will never get a shirt from a kikimora, although he spins*”. There is also some practical information in the entry: “So a *kikimora* would not steal the chickens, people would hang the broken neck of a pitcher or a stone with a natural through hole above the roost on bast fiber” (Dal, 1881: 107). We should point to the fact that *kikimora* here was used both in the feminine and masculine forms.

In the “Dictionary of the Russian Language” (“*Tolkovyi slovar russkogo yazyka*”) edited by D.N. Ushakov, the meaning of *kikimora* is given in a somewhat different manner: “1. Evil spirit in

female guise. 2. A person having a ridiculous or funny outlook; ridiculously dressed. 3. A gloomy, unsociable, unpleasant person (colloquial, disapproving). *To strut like a kikimora, not saying a word*” (1935: 1354). The mythological meaning is minimized in the entry, while the possible use in respect to a person is expanded. In the “Dictionary of the Russian Language” by S.I. Ozhegov and N.Y. Shvedova, the entry of *kikimora* includes a list of her possible habitation areas, “small invisible being living behind the stove, in the woods, or in a bog. *Bolotnaya* (bog) and *lesnaya* (forest) *kikimora*”. Note that the Dictionary edited by Ushakov recorded the use of the word *kikimora* as abusive and disapproving in relation to a person, whereas in these applications it acquires a humorous tone, of course without losing its negative connotation, “*figurative, masc., and fem.* About a person who has a funny, ridiculous outlook (colloquial, jesting)” (Ozhegov, Shvedova, 1994: 274). The entry “Kikimora” in the “New Dictionary of the Russian Language” (“Novyi slovar russkogo yazyka”) by T.F. Efremova (2000: 504) repeats the entry from the Dictionary of Ozhegov and Shvedova with the difference that only “a woman with the funny, ridiculous outlook” can be called a “*kikimora*” (cf. Ozhegov: “*masc. and fem.*”). In the Small Academic Dictionary (“Maliy akademicheskyy slovar”) edited by A.P. Evgenieva, *kikimora* is “according to superstitious beliefs, an evil spirit in the female guise”; the colloquial use of this unit is marked as abusive: “About an ugly or badly dressed woman” (Slovar..., 1985: Vol. 2, p. 48).

The majority of the respondents believed that *kikimora* was the abusive, scornful name of a shaggy, slovenly, unpleasant (both in terms of appearance and behavior, moral qualities) woman. At the same time, many respondents mentioned the features of a *kikimora*, typical of her traditional perception (small facial features, squeaky voice; plucks chickens). Thus, the name and characteristics of this mythological character, which has lost some of its relevance, have been preserved in the Russian language and culture.

Field materials from the turn of the 20th–21st centuries reflect a tendency towards the “transformation” of the *kikimora* from the character of domestic space into a bog spirit. According to our research, most senior informants, the representatives of the older generation, preserved memories about home *kikimoras*. The younger generations (of the 1940–1950s and subsequent years of birth) considered the *kikimora* a forest or bog spirit, sometimes, the wife of *leshiy* (forest spirit) or bog demon, but more often they spoke about the *kikimora* as an independent character—a malicious female spirit that lived in a bog or forest. Urban residents also associated the *kikimora* with the bog and forest (only two respondents called it a harmful home being and the wife of the *domovoy*). We should note that beliefs about forest or bog *kikimoras* were known in the 19th century (Dal,

1881: 107); getting rid of home *kikimora*, people would chase her into the forest (Dal, 2008: 414; Maksimov, 1903: 67–68). Thus, the localization of the *kikimora* outside of the domestic space can be associated with the archetypal perception of this polysemantic character: the evil spirit is expelled outside of the cultural realm.

Possible lexicographic interpretations of the units of *domovoy* and *kikimora*

The above dictionary entries demonstrate the imagery of *kikimora* and *domovoy* (external appearance, typical actions, attitude toward people), as well as the use of the unit of *kikimora* for describing a person. However, according to the type of dictionaries, these entries only represent abbreviated information from specialized mythological dictionaries and do not reflect the contemporary understanding of these characters by native speakers. In this respect, the dictionaries of linguistic culture also do not fully reach the goal relevant for contemporary lexicography: to not only promote the study of language and culture, but also to direct the user of the dictionary to communication.

We consider it useful to offer a lexicographic interpretation from the constructed dictionary of linguistic and cultural literacy, as a new method for recording lexicographic ethnographic information. Every dictionary entry reflects the ordinary meanings most relevant for the native speakers, as well as a set of notions associated with these linguistic units (for more details on this concept and on the development of macro- and microstructure of the dictionary, see (Ansimova, 2014)). An entry consists of the following sections: 1. Header unit; 2. Ordinary meaning, most relevant for the Russians (★); 3. Use in speech (☺); 4. Widespread associations (✳); 5. Minimal reference information (👉); 6. Additional information (✔); 7. Illustration (on the linguistic regional geographic visual clarity, see (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 169–185)). The first five sections are the main ones.

Let us turn to practical lexicography and demonstrate how the units of *domovoy* and *kikimora* can be semanticized in the dictionary of linguistic and cultural literacy. We conducted a questionnaire survey to determine: a) the most relevant ordinary meanings of the offered units, b) the most common associations among the carriers of Russian linguistic culture related to these units, c) those components of the meaning of these units, which are typically used in speech, and d) situational characteristics of their use. Our stated goal defined the specific structure of the questionnaire and the principles of surveying. For characterizing the respondents, we had to define the scope of the survey: 1) persons for whom the language of the questionnaire was the mother tongue; 2) urban residents (for minimizing the impact of dialects);

3) broad geographical coverage of respondents; and 4) students of all fields from universities in Russia at the age of 17–25 as the main part of respondents (Karaulov, 2010: 53).

The survey involved 317 people from different Russian cities: Novosibirsk (37 %), Moscow (22 %), St. Petersburg (17 %), Tomsk (11 %), Omsk (6 %), Barnaul (5 %), Tyumen (1 %), and Salekhard (1 %). The informants included university students from various departments (21 %), representatives of various occupations with higher education (53 %), representatives of different fields of work with specialized secondary education (19 %), and retired citizens (7 %). In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to answer questions concerning the possible associations, understanding, and use of the units of *domovoy* and *kikimora*. Upon analyzing the responses, we have found which information about these units the native speakers need to know and, thus, which information should be included in the dictionary. Based on ethnographic materials and results of the questionnaire survey, we compiled dictionary entries which reflect the contemporary understanding of *domovoy* and *kikimora* by the Russians.

Domovoy

★ Benevolent home spirit, keeper of the house. He lives behind the stove or in a dark corner. Appears in the form of a small man, small old man or a cat; may be invisible, makes sounds: stomping, knocking, or howling. He is friends with the cat; cats see the *domovoy*. The “keeper” is offered bread, milk, sugar, or sweets; when moving to a new home, he is invited to follow. The *domovoy* likes the home neat, and helps cleanly, hardworking owners. If the home is messy and dirty, and household members quarrel with each other, the *domovoy* becomes angry; he knocks and breaks dishes. “Out of mischief” the *domovoy* can hide a certain thing, but returns it when he has played enough. The rambunctious home spirit can be occupied with toys or “a gift” of several buttons or beads—he likes to go through small shiny objects.

© *The domovoy rustled behind the stove. The domovoy is howling. The domovoy hid it* (said about a thing that cannot be found). *Domovoy, domovoy, play a little and give it back!* (said while searching for a missing item). *Domovoy, calm down my child* (putting to sleep a child who cannot calm down after too much playing). *Wash all corners of your home and the domovoy will like you.*

❖ Home, stove, dark corner, broom, good, helper, hairy little man, bearded old man, soft, fluffy, in the ashes, cat, *domovyonok* (‘little domovoy’) *Kuzya* (cartoon character).

👉 In Russian mythology, the keeper of the house. Generic ancestor, the patron of the family and domestic animals; protects the house, people, and cattle from

possible misfortunes, thieves, witchcraft, and evil spirits. May appear under a different guise: as a small shaggy man, small white-haired old man, cat, snake, bear, mouse, or weasel, but more often remains invisible; the presence of the *domovoy* is discerned by a sound: he stomps, slams doors, clinks dishes, howls into the chimney, laughs, or cries. He falls on sleeping people and suffocates them. The appearance of the *domovoy* predicts a significant event in the life of the family—birth, marriage, death, fire, or move. He lives behind the stove, in the attic, basement, yard, or in the stable. It was customary to give treats to the *domovoy* so he would be favorable to the dwellers of the house, guard the home, and look after the cattle. When the family moved to a new home, the *domovoy* was invited to move with them so the new home would not remain “empty” and vulnerable to evil spirits. The “keeper” of the home knows the fate of each family member and can predict it; he is addressed during fortunetelling. The *domovoy* is not usually considered an evil spirit.

✓ When a *domovoy* shows himself to a person or falls on a person in sleep, he tries to tell him about significant events in the life of the family forthcoming in the nearest future. One can ask a *domovoy*, “For better or worse?”, and the spirit will definitely answer.

✓ When moving to a new home, people invite the *domovoy*. They sweep the corners with a broom, saying, “Keeper of the home, let’s go with us to a new home to live”. *Domovoy* moves to a new residence in a bag together with a broom or old shoe (slipper). It was also believed that the cat, which would be the first being to enter a new home, could be his “transport”.

✓ At Yuletide, girls would tell fortunes about their future bridegrooms. They would guess: if a *domovoy* strokes with a hairy hand, she will marry a rich man; if the *domovoy* strokes with a bare hand, she will marry a poor person; if he pinches, the husband will be quarrelsome and mean.

Kikimora

★ A malicious spirit living in the forest or bog. Fairytale character. The wife of the *domovoy* or *leshiy*. Ugly, slovenly dressed woman. A dirty, scruffy slob. Elderly short woman with small features and squeaky voice. Scary, evil; does bad things to people. The parents would scare children by the *kikimora*, so children would not go into the woods.

© *A bog kikimora. Dreadful like a kikimora. Kikimora from overseas* (woman pretentiously dressed, unpleasant, behaving provocatively). *You are a nasty kikimora, that’s what you are! Do not go away, the kikimora will carry you away into the woods* (scaring children). *The kikimora will tickle you to death. The kikimora plucked the chickens.*

❖ Bog, quagmire, forest; doing harm to homes, scaring, squeaking, playing dirty tricks; scary, spiteful,

untidy, ugly woman with uncombed hair, with green hair, a girl with heavy makeup.

In Russian mythology, a home personage appearing in the form of a little nimble ugly women or girl, mostly malicious. She lives behind the stove, near the chimney, in the attic, basement, or in the chicken house. She may turn into a cat, dog, piglet, duck, or other animal. At nights, she makes noise, rustles or knocks, frightening the residents of the house. She loves to spin, knit, and crochet, but at the same time she spoils the handiwork and tears the threads left for the night without a blessing. She plucks chickens, chases horses, and shears sheep. The *kikimora* could be “let” into the house by sorcerers or offended builders setting a doll made using magic, in a hidden place. Once the *kikimora* appeared in the house, she would start bothering the residents (it would become frightening to stay in the house; everything would break and get spoiled; people would get sick or even die), and people tried to get rid of her. The origin of the *kikimora* was associated with restless souls of those infants who died unbaptized (or toothless), who customarily were buried under the threshold of the house or in the yard.

Kikimoras could also be of the forest or bog type. Getting rid of home *kikimora*, people would chase her into the woods.

✓ In addition to the mythological character and a doll made by a sorcerer, “*kikimora*” was the name of an object (bottleneck, birch bark rattle) which carpenters or potters, offended by the owners, could set into the wall of the house or into the chimney. This object (*kikimora*) enhanced the sounds of the wind, and it seemed that someone was rustling, howling, or groaning in the house.

✓ Protective charms were used against *kikimoras*, such as juniper, fern, adderstone (a stone with a naturally formed hole, which was also called “one-eyed *kikimora*”).

✓ At Yuletide in the Russian North, old women would represent *kikimoras*. They would dress in rags, climb on the stove, and spin, loudly knocking with spinning wheels and spindles. The girls would grab the “*kikimora*’s” legs, and she would beat them with a stick. In some Siberian villages, on the eve of the old New Year and on Cheesefare Week, people would walk in costumed processions which included women dressed like *kikimoras*. They acted as if they were pulling flax and spinning wool or flax; they might sing obscene songs.

Conclusions

Upon analyzing the folkloric, ethnographic, and lexicographic sources, we have identified a number of differences in the beliefs about mythological characters of the domestic space current among the urban and rural residents, found some specific regional features, and traced the dynamics in the development of these

mythological images. Using the examples of the entries of “*domovoy*” and “*kikimora*”, we have proposed a lexicographic interpretation, employed in the constructed dictionary of linguistic and cultural literacy, as a new method for lexicographic recording of ethnographic information.

The results of the empirical studies (FMA of 1999–2015 and the survey of 2015) have shown that in various regions of Russia, the image of *domovoy* was well-known and popular among the respondents of different ages and social groups. The contemporary beliefs about the *domovoy* mostly corresponded to the traditional beliefs of the Russian people. We observed that urban people showed relatively high awareness of this home spirit. The *domovoy* was considered a benevolent helper and protector of home and family; he was perceived as invisible or appearing in the form of a small shaggy (hairy) man, small old man, or cat. The majority of respondents knew the customs of leaving a treat or “toys” for the *domovoy* and inviting him to a new home; many respondents practiced these customs themselves. The appearance of this home spirit was often regarded as a prediction of an important event in the life of the family. According to our field data, in some places, people still preserved the beliefs about the *domovoy* as the soul of the deceased ancestor; the survey among the urban dwellers did not reveal such beliefs.

Unlike the *domovoy*, the image of the *kikimora* has undergone significant changes. For the surveyed urban residents, she was primarily a shaggy ugly woman who could be called “*kikimora bolotnaya*”. As a result, the *kikimora* was most often perceived as a forest or bog spirit, not as a home spirit. Rural residents preserved the notion of home *kikimora*, the spinning spirit and a being which was the cause of noise, anxiety, and trouble in the house; women would dress up like *kikimoras* during the Yuletide and Cheesefare Week mummies’ plays.

Thus, the mythical characters of the domestic space have not lost their relevance. Beliefs about them are known both to urban and rural residents in different regions of Russia and are one of the components in the traditional culture of the Russians. Therefore, they should be described in a dictionary from the perspective of everyday meanings, most relevant for the native speakers, and the perspective of a set of notions associated with these linguistic units.

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