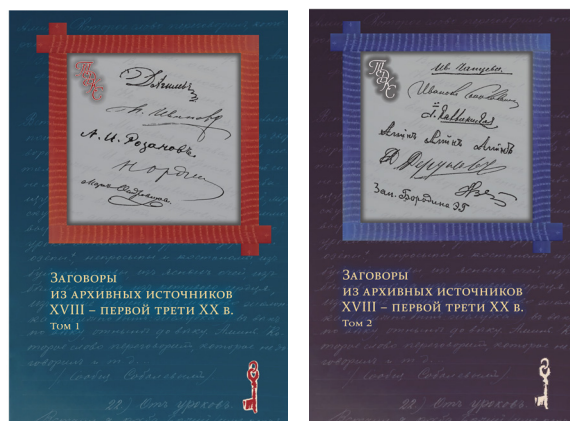


THE LONGUE DURÉE AND CLOSE READING

In 2023 and 2024, the academic publishing house *Indrik* released two significant collections of charms:



Charms from Archival Sources (18th Century – First Third of the 20th Century), Moscow: Indrik. *Vol. 1*, compiled by Tatiana A. Agapkina, 2023; *Vol. 2*, compiled by Alexandra B. Ippolitova and Andrey L. Toporkov, 2024.

This two-volume publication contains approximately 860 texts preserved in the archives of the Russian Geographical Society and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Most manuscripts date to the second half of the nineteenth century, although earlier and later sources are also represented. The scholarly apparatus includes introductory articles to both sections, contextual notes for individual manuscripts, commentaries, a functional index of charms, an index of proper names (including place names), and a bibliography. The second volume of the edition publishes more than 500 texts from 30 sources preserved in five archives located in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Saratov: the Manuscript Department of the Russian State Library; the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art; the Folklore Archive and Manuscript Department of the Institute of Russian Literature (*Pushkin House*), Russian Academy of Sciences; the St. Petersburg branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences; and the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts of the V. A. Artisevich Zonal Scientific Library at Saratov National Research State University named after N. G. Chernyshevsky.

The volumes continue a series of publications devoted to the magical folklore of East Slavic peoples, initiated more than twenty years ago by Indrik Publishers within the framework of *Traditional Spiritual Culture of the Slavs*, subseries *Text Publications*. Previous volumes include:

Forbidden Reading in Russia of the 17th–18th Centuries
(eds. A. L. Toporkov, A. A. Turilov. Moscow, 2002);

Polesian Charms (Recorded in the 1970s–1990s) (comp., text preparation and notes by T. A. Agapkina, E. E. Levkievskaya, A. L. Toporkov. Moscow, 2003);

Russian Charms from Manuscript Sources of the 17th – First Half of the 19th Century (comp., text preparation, articles and commentary by A. L. Toporkov. Moscow, 2010).

In the first volume we found slightly fewer than 400 Ukrainian ones. Although only five Ukrainian manuscripts are represented, two of them are extensive. Geographically, the published materials include Russian charms from the different provinces of European part of Russia, from the multiethnic areas, and the Don Cossack Region. Chronologically, the collection spans from the late eighteenth century to 1915, with the majority of manuscripts dating from the mid- to late nineteenth century.

From a genre perspective, the materials in this volume comprise charms in the traditional sense, non-canonical prayers, fragments of canonical prayers and psalms, as well as a certain number of incantations and magical formulas. The book includes both handwritten collections of charms and prayers and compilations assembled by individual collectors. Since the primary aim of the edition was to publish charms—that is, texts of verbal magic—many manuscripts appear only in part, as fragments.

The introductory sections provide an overview of expeditions conducted in the early twentieth century and during the socially and politically complex 1930s, as well as information about individual collectors—their origins, professions, and other relevant biographical details.

Particular emphasis is placed on the commentaries, which characterize the collections and summarize the motifs found in the charms and their structural sequence. They identify, for example, the presence of a closing formula where applicable, indicate prior publications of the text, reference biblical motifs, and specify editions in which a given motif has been discussed in greater detail. The references are linked to the scholarly tradition associated with the study of charms and mythol-

ogy, including works by researchers emerging from the Nikita Tolstoy school (S. Tolstaya, E. Levkievskaya, L. Vinogradova, T. Agapkina among others).

I present here two examples of commentary added to the texts, illustrating the depth of work undertaken on each individual text to highlight all its distinctive details, and draw attention to the similarities in other publications. It also highlights the textological changes introduced by earlier editors of the texts.

Charm against bleeding in cases of cuts and lacerations (Agapkina 2023:28)

1. By the sea, beneath an oak, there is a tomb; upon it a maiden sews and charms the wound (VZMFU¹: 27–28, B1);
2. It is not [name] who charms, but Christ with the Mother of God and the apostles (legitimizing formula) (VLZ: 235 ff.);
3. Formula of negation of illness: *The duck has no milk (therefore, the wound has no blood)* (VLZ: 190–192);
4. Closing formula (*a lock in the sea, a key in the mouth*) (VLZ: 242–244);
5. Let the wound be strengthened and the blood cease to flow (VZMFU: 24, A1). Published in: Maikov, No. 142. Possibly, Maikov replaced *men', mnya* with *kamen', kamnya*.
Seventy apostles – followers of Jesus Christ, chosen in addition to the twelve apostles and preaching His teaching (Luke 10:1–2).

Charm against bleeding (Agapkina 2023:28)

1. Someone walked across the Jordan;
2. Let the blood not drip (cf. references to the Jordan in charms against bleeding: VZMFU: 26, A7); on this motif see: VLZ: 339–344; Agapkina, Toporkov 2007.

Textological aspects and the editorial approach is clearly defined: the aim was to make the texts accessible to a wider readership, using contemporary standard orthography as the basis, while preserving distinctive features. *We did not set ourselves specific paleographic or linguistic tasks and sought to make the book accessible to the non-specialist reader. Orthography and punctuation have been partially adapted to modern norms. Capital letters are used largely according to*

contemporary rules.[--], etc. Language has been corrected as sparingly as possible, in accordance with the conventions of many philological academic traditions.

The commentaries already indicate that earlier collections have undergone textological analysis. It is important to note the special role played by several organizations and individuals during the centuries. The Russian Geographical Society (Royal Society), The Department Ethnography of the Russian Geographical Society, founded in 1845, had the program for collection ethnographic information from different corners of Russian empire (1848), later the program dedicated folk superstitions and beliefs South Russia (1866). Invaluable information on the religion, customs, and folklore of Siberian indigenous peoples was provided by political opponents, many of whom later became prominent scholars, such as W. Bogoraz, a leading researcher of Chukchi culture and language, but also Russian travelers and geographers.

For years the existence of the Russian Geographical Society there are also made descriptions of the Archive ethnographic handwriting data. The most detailed became description of Dmitri Zelenin, who published inventories materials from provinces European Russia and published in three-volumes from 36 provinces – from Arkhangelsk to Saratov. Dmitry Konstantinovich Zelenin (1878–1956) was a linguist and ethnographer, born in an Udmurt village near Sarapul, where his father was a parish clerk. He attended the Vyatka seminary and the Dorpat (Tartu) University. Dmitiri Zelenin payed attention on individual side of folk belief, especially close and interesting to him were family and calendar rites, apotropaic rituals, mythological ideas about trees, birds, legends, nature, ecology, living space.

Charms are also found in chronicles, including Finnic thunder charms recorded in runes. In addition, charms appear in birch-bark books that were widespread in the Novgorod region, although most of these books served primarily as everyday business records and contracts. They demonstrate how people communicated in the earliest Russian writing in the city of Great Novgorod in northwestern Russia.

European societies, where writing and history have occupied a prominent position for centuries through the centuries, desperately need the help of historians to investigate the past beyond the immediate memory of the people the ethnographers and folklorists can question in their present fieldwork, for instance, through interviews. The *longue durée* then offers the possibility to make some hypotheses on the past of some contemporary cultural practices.

The consolidation of sources has made it possible to systematize archival materials and present the genre-diverse texts they contain. This provides an excellent basis for studying individual charm types, their symbolism, language, and other features, as well as for applying close reading techniques. Through the consolidation, analysis, and publication of materials, A. Toporkov and T. Agapkina have established a foundation that enables the resolution of complex problems and opens new perspectives for examining charms both as texts and as performances.

NOTES

¹ VZMFU – ВЗМФУ – Восточнославянские заговоры: Материалы к функциональному указателю сюжетов и мотивов. Аннотированная библиография / авторы-составители Т.А. Агапкина, А.Л. Топорков (*East Slavic Charms: Materials for a Functional Index of Plots and Motifs. Annotated Bibliography*, compiled by T. A. Agapkina and A. L. Toporkov). Moscow, 2014. <https://www.academia.edu/9334877/1>;

VLZ – ВЛЗ – Агапкина Т.А. Восточнославянские лечебные заговоры в сравнительном освещении: Сюжетика и образ мира (Agapkina, T. A. *East Slavic Healing Charms in Comparative Perspective: Plot Structure and Worldview*). Moscow, 2010. <https://www.academia.edu/27006701/>

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