

**Traditional Ways of Natural Disaster Prevention:
Magical and Religious practices of the Russian Peasants in Siberia
(Late 19-th - Early 20-th Centuries)**

Abstract

The paper deals with traditional ways of natural disaster prevention practiced by the Russian peasants in Siberia. According to the author, the adoption of new, innovative techniques and transition to rational methods of husbandry were hampered by many prejudices and superstitions common to the peasant society of the period. Natural maladies and catastrophes were consequences, in traditional peasants' view, for committing sins and breaking social norms and taboos. For this reason, great importance was attached to the precise following of various religious and magical rules and rituals to ensure a good harvest. In the article on the basis of archival and published data equally with long-term author's field work materials various methods for rainmaking, ceasing of drought, protecting crops from thunderstorm, hail and other calamities are examined. Special attention to traditional remedies against mass epidemics and epizootics is paid. It is shown that so-called *obydennye* (i.e. made in one day) shirts were used by Siberian peasants as a special method for getting rid of human and livestock plague until 1930-s.

The analysis of the material has made it possible to conclude, that traditional principles of interaction with the environment provided for constant dialog, where nature existed not only as an object to act upon but also as an active and equal participant in the communication. Traditional peasants' mentality has viewed natural disasters as temporary recurrence of chaos, that demanded immediate correction. Ritual method of returning to stability was achieved through performance of actions that represented "original creation", namely an entire technological cycle in one of the spheres of human activities (like repeating, for example, all technological steps in the making of an *obydennaya* shirt in one day). Mythological symbolism of spinning, weaving and sewing therefore was the best representation of bringing order from chaos and ritual purification of the world. The research has also shown that long-standing tendency of Siberian peasants to rely on magical and religious practices came not only because of poverty and lack of economic means. Regular celebrations of holidays and repetition of agrarian rituals were in fact mechanisms of psychological substitution that helped eliminate the sense of absolute and total dependence on weather patterns and create an illusion of being able to influence natural processes.

Introduction

In Russian village, according to the modern researches, traditional peasant culture has persisted until the mid 1930-s when massive *collectivization* (establishing of collective farms) efforts took place throughout the Soviet Union [Vlasova, 1991, 131]. It is known that traditional peasant culture is characterized by deeply respectful and careful attitude towards land and at the same time by extreme conservatism. Land is viewed as one of the major elemental forces of the Creation, the symbol of fertility, an ancestress and the provider of all living things [Belova, Vinogradova, Toporkov, 1999, 315]. Close link between peasants and their land, reflected in traditions and rituals of agricultural calendar, sometimes took the form of mythical worship: among the Old Believers of Baikal region in the 19-th century, for instance, there was an actual cult of *zemlepoklontsi* (earth-worshippers) [Bolonev, Baiborodin, 2002, 44, 47]. It is not coincidental therefore, that during the crucial period between planting and harvesting in Russia as a whole, and in Siberia in particular, peasants were performing the special “rolling on earth” rituals which symbolized the exchange of life force with the field [Lyubimova, 2004, 165, 200]. At the beginning of the 20-th century G.S. Vinogradov had repeatedly observed that when the spring plowing was finished, the boys would hold the horses and the plowmen would roll three times on the ground saying: “Earth, earth, give us bread, give us our strength back!” (ARGS, D. 59, № 17, P. 43). The harvesting was also accompanied by similar actions. The reapers would roll and do somersaults on the ground, saying “Earth, earth, give me my strength back for the pistil, for the batter, for the spindle, for the crooked flapper!” [Bolonev, Mel’nikov, 1981, 264].

At once, however, the concept of *the power of land*, introduced into the public discourse in the 1880-s, began to acquire not only the positive community-unifying meaning, but also the negative one, signifying slow modernization in agriculture and limited introduction of new technology and machinery. Gleb Uspensky, writer close to the populist *narodnik* movement, said the following about the peasants’ total dependence on the rye field: “he is an indentured servant

to... the blade of grass” [1956, 119, 177]. Therefore, the metaphor “the power of land” defined, according to A. G. Vishnevsky, Russian traditional agricultural society and the psychological characteristics of its members: communal (as opposed to self) orientation, low social mobility, distrust of innovation, and strong belief in tradition [1998, 19].

Long-standing reliance on the traditional magical and religious practices by the Siberian peasants is commonly explained in the literature by their lack of resources and opportunities for acquiring new agricultural technology. Impoverished by the land reform of 1861, the peasants held on to the traditions of their forefathers not only because lack of understanding of the benefits of innovation but also due to poverty and the lack of land in their possession [Danilova, 1998, 168]. V. A. Zverev adds that the success of a household largely depended on the amount of capital, the number of workers and animals and the access to high-quality seeds [1986, 80]. Without minimizing social and economic factors, let us determine the psychological reasons behind the consistent performance of religious and magical rituals in the rural communities during the agricultural holidays and natural disasters.

Particular Qualities of Siberian Rural Society

In general, as noted by the contemporaries, the agrarian culture of Russian peasants in Siberia was defined by its extreme conservatism [Minenko, 1991, 64]. For instance, parish clerk F. V. Busolin in 1851 writes in his “Notes on Agriculture in Tyumen’ County” about peasants’ “rude suspicion” of everything new, which he considered to be a major character flaw and attributed to the lack of education. The usual peasant answer to the statements about the benefits of innovation and technology was, according to the “Notes”, that “domestic calf is better than a foreign cow”. Peasants, as a rule, did not strive for innovation; moreover, anything, that could be considered labor-saving, was frowned upon. The Old Believers, who moved to Siberia to avoid religious persecution, went even further in their rejection of technology, considering its use to be actually sinful: since “the man must earn

his daily bread by the sweat of his brow”, then anything that will reduce the amount of physical labor in agriculture will “make people unworthy of receiving waters from heaven” (ARGS, D. 61, № 9, PP. 1-3; Tobolskaya Province). It is worth noting, that this interpretation of the Bible has caused the Old Believers to reject the use of modern technology entirely.

The adoption of new, innovative techniques in agriculture was hampered by many prejudices and superstitions common to the peasant society of the period. Deep fatalism, represented by the phrase “everything happens according to the will of God” has touched every aspect of peasants’ lives. There was a common belief, for example, that it was useless to sort the seeds since “it is God who decides which seed will sprout and which will die” [Zubrilin, 1924]. Similar attitudes existed towards the birth and death of a child: “if God giveth life than so it shall be, but if He sends death, than no matter what you do, it can not be avoided” [Charushin, 1914, 594]. According to A. G. Vishnevsky, in the late 19-th century in Russia, one third of the children died before reaching one year of age and only a half reached the age of 20 [2008, 133].

The Role of Priesthood

At the same time, peasants paid great attention to the precise following of various religious and magical rules and rituals. Throughout Russia in general, and in Siberia in particular, priests were visiting the households on the second and third days of the Passover to bless the seeds [Zobnin, 1894; 42, Makarenko 1913, 159]. To improve the chances of the seeds’ sprouting, peasants were using items with strongly marked Christian and reproductive symbolism. G. S. Vinogradov writes: “women would put eggshells into the seed baskets, crumbs from Passover bread, church candles, Easter eggs, communion bread, some would also add a caul, if a child was born in it - all of the items were scattered or sprinkled across the planted field (ARGS, D. 59, № 17, P. 34), [Bolonev, Baiborodin, 2002, 48].

Clergy has of course played an important role in the agrarian rituals at the end of 19-th - beginning of 20-th century. M. M. Gromyko notes that along with

many other functions of the community, existed the one she calls *ethical-religious function*, manifested when the community together with clergy insured “the good for the fields” [1986, 117-118]. Assuming the role of an intermediary between the community and God, the priests have in many instances replaced the traditional performers of rituals. For instance, in many localities, the Christmas and Easter house-to-house visits by priests have totally replaced the traditional well-wishing visits by the village males [Lyubimova, 2004, 95]. In similar way, the mentioned earlier “rolling on the ground” ritual has also changed. Previously, according to T. A. Bernshtam, during the sprouting of rye, young and pregnant women would roll on the field, which symbolized the total fusion with nature and earth, stimulating reproductive processes, and exchanging life force [1988, 150]. “Christianization” of this ritual manifested in replacing of young women with a priest. In Orlovskaya Province, for example, there was a tradition of *rolling holly father on the greens* (winter crops). The harvest after such an action was considered to be “much better”; this days, however, the “holy father turned against it” - lamented the peasants [Gromyko, 1986, 119].

Church processions and outside prayers took place throughout the maturation of the crops. Priests would bless “the seeds of all breeds for the most bountiful harvest” before the beginning of fieldwork (ARGS, D. 57, № 3, P. 51; Yeniseiskaya Province). During the draughts, harvest failures, “unusual and untimely cold spells”, disease, murrain, or fires, prayers with sanctifying of waters were conducted in the fields and pastures (ARGS, D. 61, № 2, P. 2; Tomskaya Province). Church processions would not be cancelled even in the absence of natural disasters and when nothing could potentially threaten the crop. Harvest time would be accompanied by prayers for “the happy ending of the summer agricultural work” and feast for which “rams were slaughtered and baked” (ARGS, D. 55, № 59, P. 3; Tobolskaya Province). Among the most respected and beloved icons among the peasants was *Sporitel'nitsa Hlebov* (The Virgin of the Harvest) who “helped people in their labors to acquire the daily bread”. The prayers beside the image of the Mother of God sitting in the clouds, spreading out her hands

above the field of reaped rye (**Fig. 1**), were conducted predominantly during the draughts.



Fig. 1. *Sporitel'nitsa Hlebov* (The Virgin of the Harvest).
The end of XIX - early XX centuries (by: [Siberian icon. Album.
Omsk: Irtysh-92, 1999, P.76, № 37]).

The Weather Factor

Weather was extremely important to a peasant: “our bread grows in the sky” - said people in Akmolinskaya Province in the 1890-s [Zverev, 1986, 70, 77] to underline both the actual great dependence of their livelihoods on forces of nature and perceived dependence of weather on their actions. Natural phenomena like rain, hail, storms, and snow, which determined the future of the harvest, were viewed as God’s gifts or wrath manifested according to peoples’ behavior. According to the material gathered by prince V. N. Tenishev’s Anthropological Burro in the late 1800-s, peasants in the Central and Northern Russia believed that rain was stored in the skies in giant water tanks and hail and snow in the wheat sacks, and that

angels in charge opened or closed holes in the firmament to enable or prevent precipitation [Bernshtam, 2002, 257].

Siberia is considered to be a zone of risky agriculture and its extreme weather conditions: long, cold winters, frequent draughts and floods, early cold spells in the end of summer and late cold spells at the end of spring, along with epidemics and epizootics, which tended to occur in the summer- the period of most intensive farm labor - all of these factors have contributed to the formation of the whole system of magical and religious remedies to prevent and combat natural disasters.

The Reasons for Natural Disaster and the Folk Calendar

Natural maladies and catastrophes were consequences, in traditional peasants' view, for committing sins and breaking social norms and taboos. The most common reason for natural disasters was believed to be failure to refrain from work on certain sacred days, the so-called *thunderstorm holidays*, the main one of which was the Day of St. Elijah the Vociferous (July 20-th, old style). Siberian peasants believed that torrential rains, floods, and draughts were caused by his will. A. A. Makarenko, who has characterized peasant mentality as a "mixture of religious feeling, vaguely understood Christian morality, prejudices and superstitions", writes that "a common Siberian peasant would never dare to reap or throw hay on Elijah's Friday or the Day of St. Elijah in order to not anger God or be condemned by his neighbors" [1913, 14]. D. K. Zelenin also notes on the consequences of violating the social norms: "a married woman with uncovered head, according to folk beliefs, angers God and can cause crop failure, famine, and disease" (SPB RASA, F. 841, № 223, P. 5).

Various Methods of Combating Natural Disasters

Religious methods, such as prayers and church processions for rainmaking, according to many sources, were among the most commonly used in the attempt to end draught and other catastrophes. According to M. Serebrennikov, in case of

draughts, fires, crop failures, and epidemics, the peasants were conducting prayers with holy water in the fields and pastures together with processions with icons around the village (ARGS, D. 62, № 2, P. 2; Tomskaya Province). Archival records are completely concurred by personal testimonies: according to E. L. Permina (born 1910), “during the draught everybody who could, the old and the young, would carry icons and go with holy father in to the fields to pray to God” (AFM, 1989, Zudovo, Bolotnisky District, Novosibirsk Region). The prayers could take place in the woods, by the river, beside the well, or in the pasture; similar measures were taken in case pestilence [Lyubimova, 1997, 72-78]. Baikal Old Believers, in similar conditions, would ritually walk to the wooden crosses erected on the hills surrounding the village. The desired result would be achieved through directly addressing the higher powers, in this case Christian saints, to some of whom the prayers went to stop the draught, to some, to stop the torrential rain. Compare: “Father Elijah, wet our fields!” and “Mikola, the Miracle Maker, stop, quiet the storm!”. The performers themselves were deeply convinced in the effectiveness of their efforts: “the priest hasn’t stopped prayin’ but it’s already rainin’; by the evening, see, there’s clouds, but mournin’ it’s a thunderstorm” etc. (AFM, 1999, from A. P. Chistyakova, born 1916, Desyatnikovo, Targabataisky District, Republic of Buryatia).

Remedies against thunderstorm and hail are characterized but almost total absence of Christian symbolism. In order to stop a thunderstorm or hail, according to Siberian peasants’ beliefs, one had to through an item having something to do with a Russian stove (a flap, an oven fork, bread scoop, etc.) from the porch into the yard. According to the author’s field research, this method was commonly used throughout Siberia. As A. A. Korshennikova reports (born 1905): “the hail cloud is still on its way, but the good wife is ready: she’s throwing into the yard the poker, the flap or the oven broom, and the hail...stops” (AFM, 2000, Manzherok, Maiminsky District, Republic of Altai). Sometimes, much less frequently, an icon of the Burning Bush was used for the same purpose. As we can see, all remedies against hail and thunderstorms are related to the element of fire, when “magical

fire weapons are used to combat the heavenly waters” [Tolstaya, Tolstoy, 1982, 59].

Making of a shirt in one day as a remedy against a mass epidemic is one of the most archaic rituals of protection of people or livestock. Sometime ago the author had a chance to read an account of the cholera epidemic that took place in 1892 in the villages along the river Ob, which was described by local folklorist P. F. Pirozhkov (1908-1979). It is worth noting that 1892 was considered to be a “cholera year” throughout Russia. D. K. Zelenin writes, for instance, that the Catholic Belarusians in Vilenskaya Province were weaving protective cloths to keep away the decease during the cholera year [1994, 195]. According to V. A. Zverev, in Tomskaya Province 7 towns and 345 villages were suffered by cholera between July and December of 1892 [1995, 147]. Among the most affected by the decease areas were the villages of Suzun, Mylnikovo, Malyshivo, Chiruha, and Taradanovo in Barnaul County. The epidemic has spread lightning-quick: “Nazarka Koltachihin of Mylnikovo returned home from the city of Tomsk and brought back with him terrible decease - cholera. By the nightfall he couldn’t walk, by the sunrise he was dead. And it started, people were carrying to the cemetery... corpses. When the deaths reached a hundred, panic began: visitors from other towns and villages have dropped everything and ran back home, carrying the decease with them. In Suzun there was a hospital and an experienced doctor, but in spite of this, the cholera wildfire had spread to other communities” (Pirozhkov, P.1). (P. F. Pirozhkov’s typescript *Obydennaya Rubaha* (i.e. a shirt made in one day) is presently kept in Suzun Museum of Local History in Novosibirsk Region). Because of the professional and timely actions of Suzun doctor, I. Kazarinov, the consequences of the epidemic were much lighter there than in neighboring Mylnikovo, where out of 870 people, 100 (or 11%) had died, compared to only 24 deaths out of population of 3,717 (less than 1%) in Suzun [Kazarinov, 1894, 174-178].

The only island of safety in the “sea of plague” was, according to P. F. Pirozhkov’s essay, the village of Zorino. There, during the gathering at the elder’s

house, local sorcerer Ivan Gavrilovich Sotnikov had convinced the villagers to make a shirt in one day to prevent cholera from entering the village. Also it was decided to block off all the entrances and exits to the village and to burn cow manure throughout the perimeter. The locals respected Sotnikov for “having a good head on his shoulders” and possessing secret magical knowledge. He was quite insistent on making a shirt, for which all the work: from the processing of flax, to the very last stitch had to be completed in one day. In other words, before spinning, weaving and sewing, the linen fibers had to be rumped, scutched, and combed out in less than a day (Pirozhkov, P. 2).

It is well known that in times of social crisis the role of traditional (“archetypal”) motives grows at the expense of a rational explanation [Yerohina, 2010, 8]. P. F. Pirozhkov describes quite well the atmosphere of emotional high and labor cohesion during the ritual: “the women tried to outdo each other, the fibers were flying from the scutcher, the iron brush was making a jingling noise, and immediately the tow would reach the hands of spinners, the spindles were whistling, someone brought an empty warp, ready to accept the yarn, and more people were carrying parts of the loom - by the nightfall, to the bewilderment of the kids, completed shirt was hung, like a scarecrow, on the pole in front of the gates to the pasture” (Piroshkov, P. 2).

In the texts on cultural anthropology, there are several references to making of various *obydennye* items for the protection from different natural disasters; however this is the first detailed description of the ritual based on Siberian material. It also has to be noted, that the credibility of P. F. Pirozhkov’s text had come into question. First, the author of the essay was not an eyewitness to the events; he had reconstructed them based on interviews of the locals. Second, P. F. Piroshkov’s essay can be classified as anthropological fiction, and this genre, as we know, allows for a certain degree of exaggeration, which can inadvertently lead to distortion. Therefore, in order to check the accuracy of the text, in the summer of 2000 anthropological research expedition was sent into the villages mentioned by P. F. Piroshkov. The material gathered during the expedition not only fully confirmed

the information found in the text, but also found the evidence of the described ritual occurring as late as 1930-s, and some of its elements being performed as late as 1960-s.

Anna Timofeevna Sotnikova (born in 1917, maiden name Nemchinova) has reported that all men in her husband's clan were considered to be sorcerers. She remembers Ivan Gavrilovich Sotnikov, by that time already blind, who was the father of her father-in-law, Luka Ivanovich. Both of them, according to her, were "strong witchers" and could, for instance, cause it to rain inside the house during a wedding.

On the subject of making of an *obydennaya* shirt, Anna Timofeevna says the following: "a long time ago, before any collective farms, there was a strong typhoid in the village and many people had died. Then it was decided in one day to spin, weave and sew a shirt - they called it the *obydennaya shirt, obydyonka*" (AFM, 2000; Zorino, Suzunsky District Novosibirsk Region). Her testimony is confirmed by Yevdokiya Mihailovna Nekrasova of Zorino (born in 1921 and currently living in Taradanovo). According to Ye. M. Nekrasova, "in 1931 there was an epidemic of typhoid; ten women gathered together and began to crush, spin, and weave the linen; completed shirt was hung on the pole, a sick person had to put it on and run around the village, for it was believed, that by doing so they shall be surely cured" (AFM, 2000; Taradanovo, Suzunsky District, Novosibirsk Region). So the idea was to "fool the disease with a gift, giving it clothes instead of a live person" [Fursova, 1992, 52].

Plowing a magic circle around the village was another method of protection against an epidemic. P. F. Pirozhkov also mentions that besides manufacturing an *obydennaya* shirt the villagers of Zorino, also on I. G. Sotnikov's advice, decided to "fortify the village with (magic) fence" by plowing a circle around it - that is a well-known in cultural anthropology ritual of *opahivanie*. A young lad and a girl, both "of pure and pious nature" were hitched to a plough and had to pull it around the village, creating a magical barrier for the disease. A variation of this ritual, "plowing of the river", although not typical for Siberia, was

recorded in the village of Chemscoe of Toguchinsky District in Novosibirsk Region: according to eyewitness V. N. Kreneva (born in 1916): “during the drought, women and girls would get a plough and walk with it up and down the river and a thunderstorm would soon follow” (AFM, 1989).

In a different form, a ritual of magic circle of protection has existed in Siberia as late as 1960-s. Ye. M. Nekrasova states that during 1963 foot-and-mouth disease epizootic, the locals would drive around the village in the trucks and “through bunches of burning hay” in an effort to stop the malady (AFM, 2000; Taradanovo, Suzunsky District, Novosibirsk Region).

Cholera hunt. Among other measures to prevent the “plague” peasants of upper Ob area were practicing what is called “cholera hunt”: at night around the villages shots were fired - men were hunting cholera, which according to them, took a form of an old scary woman carrying empty buckets [Zverev, 1995, 149].

Remedies against death in a war, another social malady affecting entire communities, included mentioned earlier *daily shirts* and other sacred items made in less than a day. Serbians had a ritual where all the men going to war had to squeeze through the shirt manufactured in one night by the women of the village. As soon as news of the war came, nine old women, in complete silence, would weave and sew a shirt, that all drafted into the army men had to try on; this was supposed to protect from death on the battlefield [Tolstaya, 1995, 281]. Also, during World War II, *obydennye* hand towels were made en masse in Western Russia and Belarus [Lobachevskaya, 2005, 16-17].

The Witches

The fact that most of the performers of the mentioned rituals were women can be interpreted as pointing not only to feminine variation of the rejuvenation and purification of the world but also to the “women’s especial responsibility for natural disasters” [Baiburin, 1993, 150]. In the late 19-th century there were several attempted lynchings of women suspected of being witches. A clerk for special tasks V. Parshin writes that in Nerchinsk County of Irkutskaya Province

“the peasants had almost drowned an old woman”; “the witch” responsible in their minds for an unusual drought (ARGS, D. 59, № 3, PP. 124-126). Another example comes from Oyash Parish of Tomskaya Province, where in 1892 “there was an old woman, who could, they said, turn into a magpie, fly to a house where pregnant woman lived, and steal a baby out of the womb; it happened so often, that the villagers decided to burn her; they had even prepared frame for the bonfire” (CFAS, F. 81, № 36, PP. 11-12). What is described here is most likely *vesheetsa* - female demonic character whose main attribute was the ability to turn into a magpie and “take unborn calves from cows and unborn babies from women”. Any married woman of any age, it was believed, could become *vesheetsa*; however, only “particularly malignant” old women were likely to become one. In Tobolskaya Province, in the late 19-th century in each village people could point to a particular woman and say with total confidence that she could turn into *vesheetsa* using demonic powers [Lyubimova, 2010, 335-346].

Conclusion

Ritual making of *obydennye* items has attracted researches’ attention for a long time. At first, the psychological need to create a sacred item in one day was puzzling; in 1911 however, D. K. Zelenin, who based his analysis on Western Russian and Belarus material, concluded that the magical qualities of such items came from their “perfect purity”, resulting from the method of making: at no time had the *obydennye* objects a chance to come in contact with impure demonic beings. In other words, during the process of production, the *obydennye* items have never left “live human hands” and the underworld, therefore had no power over it [1994, 204-205]. Also, having an object totally completed in an unusually short period of time, has granted it additional sacral powers [Tolstaya, 1995, 282].

During his study of the *obydennye* objects, A. K. Baiburin had noticed that along with the requirement to be totally completed within a certain time frame, some objects and processes existed that required to be ritually incomplete for duration of a certain time. For example, a custom to leave a house unfinished for

seven days during its construction or to leave a small patch of the field unharvested - adherence to these rules could, it was believed, determine the livelihood of a community. Therefore, temporary **incompleteness** of an object symbolizes the balance in the universe, stability and permanence of Creation, continuation of life, eternity and immortality - all of the things determining the existence of the community not only in the present, but, more importantly, in the future. On the contrary, the *obydennye* items made to combat epidemics, epizootics, and draughts had to be ritually finished; therefore, the quality of **completeness** is associated with the distraction of all the negative phenomena that caused the imbalance in the Universe [1983, 92-93].

The analysis of the material has also made it possible to conclude, that traditional principles of interaction with the environment provided for constant dialog, where nature existed not only as an object to act upon but also as an active and equal participant in the communication.

Russian peasants' mentality, which persisted until the beginning of the 20-th century, traditional to a great degree, has viewed natural disasters as temporary recurrence of chaos, that demanded immediate correction. In traditional society, according to well known M. Eliade's works, ritual method of returning to stability was achieved through performance of actions that represented "original creation" [1998, 216, etc.], namely an entire technological cycle in one of the spheres of human activities (like repeating, for example, all the technological steps in the making of an *obydennaya* shirt). Mythological symbolism of spinning, weaving and sewing therefore was the best representation of bringing order from chaos and ritual purification of the world.

The research has also shown that long-standing tendency of Siberian peasants to rely on magical and religious practices came not only because of poverty and lack of economic means. Regular celebrations of holidays and repetition of agrarian rituals were in fact mechanisms of psychological substitution that helped eliminate the sense of absolute and total dependence on weather patterns and create an illusion of being able to influence natural processes. It is

clearly seen in the rituals of occasional type, which goals are concrete and distinct: causing the rain, ending the draught, protecting the crop from hail, ending the plague of people and livestock.

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Abbreviations

ARGS - Archive of Russian Geographic Society

SPB-RASA - St. Petersburg Branch of Russian Academy of Science Archive

CFAS AT - Center for fund archival storage of the Altai Territory

AFM - Author's field work materials

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