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## Section 2. Philology and linguistics

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### **THE SLAVIC MYTHICAL CREATURE “КИКИМОРА” (LINGUO-CULTURAL OBSERVATIONS)**

Every mythological character is included in the whole sphere of people's rituals, beliefs and everyday life and presented in a specific relation with language and culture. The actuality and practical application of our scientific research are determined both by the existing in modern linguistics and the increased interest in the manifestations of the national-distinctive mentality in language and by the aspiration of scientists to reconstruct how in ancient times, the human consciousness reflected the objective reality.

The first criterion when analysing a given mythical creature is related to its habitat area, i.e., placing the creature in one of the two main groups – aquatic and chthonic. We must clarify that such a distinction is relatively conditional due to the ambivalence of mythical creatures and their specific abilities for metamorphosis and mobility in space. A mythical creature that is assigned to one of the two groups identified by us will be further examined through the prism of indicators: name, habitat (specification of whether it is a forest, lake, river, or home), functions, time of appearance, symbolism in appearance and similar beings. We have paid particular attention to the analysis of phraseological units because of their importance in studying mythical creatures. Naturally, the relationship between language and mythology is most clearly manifested in the peculiar core of a given language, i.e. its lexical-phraseological fund. People use phraseological units to store and transmit cultural information. The main *aim* of our paper is the complex analysis of the mythical Slavic creature – кикимора (English: kikumora) and its comparison in the context of the Bulgarian, Czech and

Russian languages. It is necessary to examine this creature through the lens of anthropocentrism, placing the human being at the centre of the second part of our study. Even though mythological characters do not have a direct connection with humanity, we believe they all have some relationship with him. First, this connection is based on fear, belief, or gratitude for the creature's deeds as part of the creature's image. The place with a direct and undeniable relationship with the individual is his home (irrespective of its type and shape – house, igloo, yurt, castle, hut, etc.). Considering everything we have discussed; we can classify Slavic mythical creatures as follows:

1) Creatures that inhabit the space outside the home – meadows, meadows, mountains, lakes, rivers, etc. Such are the nymphs, fairies, mermaids;

2) Creatures that inhabit the home and are connected to it, to the daily life and life of the person – the house spirits, the kikimora and the банник (creature, which lives in the bathroom), etc.;

3) “Wanderers” – unclean forces (Diseases);

4) Spirits and demons – they are somehow related to the wanderers, but most often, they do not stay in the person's home, either visiting him or settling in most cases after a series of specific events – sudden death, provoking a deity, etc. (examples are: кучодойман, анчутка (types of evil spirits)).

So, in Slavic mythology, the mythical creature known as a kikimora (in Russian: кикимора) inhabits homes. As a result of our observations, it can be concluded that this character is unique to Russian folk culture and does not exist in Bulgarian or Czech cultures. In Czech, this creature is simply a variety of the house spirit, and in Bulgarian, it is the same. According to the interpretive dictionaries, to confirm the introduction of the image to Bulgarian lands, there is information from the interpretive dictionaries where it is mentioned that the lexeme comes from the Russian language with the meaning of *нощно привидение, домашен дух, таласъм, а в съвременния български език се разбира като стара, грозна или изобищо противна жена* (Translation in English: *a night apparition, a house spirit, a goblin, and in the modern Bulgarian language it is understood as an old, ugly or generally disgusting woman*)<sup>1</sup>. The Bulgarian

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<sup>1</sup> Andreychin L., Georgiev L., Ilchev St., Lekov Iv. Balgarski talkoven rechnik. – Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 2009.

language contains several phraseological units that include kikimora components, despite the circumstances mentioned above:

1) (ти) си кикимора (meaning in Bulgarian: противен, отблъскващ човек (най-вече за жена) – literal translation in English: nasty, repulsive person (especially for a woman). English equivalent: spy.

2) кикимора (meaning in Bulgarian: улиčníца, лека жена или подмолна хитра жена) – literal translation in English: harlot, light woman, or sneaky woman with cunning. English equivalent: agent; vile.

3) грозна като кикимора (meaning in Bulgarian: използва се за много грозна, противна на външен вид жена) – literal translation in English: used for a hideous, nasty-looking woman. English equivalent: as ugly as a toad, as ugly as a wild boar, as ugly as sin, etc.

The name kikimora has a complex and composite structure. The second component, "mora" (мора), is believed to be derived from the word "mor" (мор), found at the base of the terms moria (мория, моря – *meaning in English: exhaust, kill*), with another root vowel in Mara (Мара) – meaning: death, die. A variant of Mara (mara) can be found in the dialects and other European and Slavic languages with various meanings, including a nighttime disease, a nightmare, an evil spirit, or a witch who can turn into a bird or an animal.

The first component remains problematic, often associated with the Proto-Slavic verb \*kykati (shout, scream) or with the noun \*kyka (female nightcap; feather; lark in birds). Some find a connection with the Balto-Slavic kik/kyk/kuk (hunchback, writhing), from which the Lithuanian kaukas (farmer, gnome) most likely arose; the Russian kika (Leshiy who lives in a bathhouse). In Bulgarian, there is a lexeme кика (A more extended lock of hair falling over the forehead that is usually combed back), and in Old Bulgarian kyka is a hair, fibre, thread, hair, fur, but also a verb with the meaning kikutya (I laugh obscenely loud) and the derivative kikot (a loud indecent laugh)<sup>1</sup>. Variants of these words are also found in other Slavic languages.

Taking a closer look at the first component of the name, let us examine all the possible meanings in detail. It will become apparent that they are entirely consistent with the description of the mythical creature

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<sup>1</sup> Barbolova Z. Entsiklopedia na personazhite v balgarskata mitologia. – Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 2010.

кикимора (transliteration: kikimora): a short, wrinkled, shrivelled ugly old woman (sometimes a long-haired girl or woman) with a large head, long arms, short legs, bulging eyes, hairy paws, horns, tail, and body covered with feathers or hair; she lives hidden in the home and sometimes giggles from the corner.

It is entirely following the contrasting dualistic spirit of the Slavic faith that the kikimora can be both – kind and helpful and, at the same time, rude and harmful to the people, as everything depends on the behaviour of the people who live in the house.

Considering that the kikimora is a character characteristic of Russian folk culture, it is surprising that our research has identified only one phraseological expression in Russian that contains a kikimora component, namely – кикимора, which refers to a woman who has a funny, ridiculous appearance.

It can be concluded that the kikimora is a variety of the house spirit under the habitat criterion. An argument for this statement can be found in the fact that in the Czech language, there is the word “kikimora”, which refers to a kind of house spirit.

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### **References:**

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