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OBJECTIFIED VALUES AT UDMURT PRAYERS

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ABSTRACT
Ritual objects and belongings are still used today at Udmurt prayer rituals that have sacrifices. We would even go so far as to say that carrying out ceremonies without them is unthinkable. Depending on their function they can be defined in several groups: ritual utensils and dishes, ritual clothing, priestly attributes, sacrificial items, donation items/offerings. Currently, there is both the preservation of traditional items and the emergence of new ones to fulfil known ritual purposes. In some cases, when creating new items, one can discern the imitation of traditional forms and materials. The article examines the objects in connection with a definite ritual, looking at the essence of their utility and sacredness, their role in maintaining historical memory, and the composition and purpose of the ritual objects. The article then goes on to analyse the reasons for the modification of these objects.

KEYWORDS: Udmurt • traditional religion • sacrifice • ritual objects • dishes • clothes • offerings

INTRODUCTION

The Udmurt are a Finno-Ugric people who have settled in the European Sub Urals, in the interfluve of the Kama River and its right tributary the Vyatka River. In confessional terms, the majority of the modern Udmurt are followers of Orthodox Christianity, and persist in the culture of many pre-Christian beliefs and rituals, which in general suggests that they have so-called dual faith, or Orthodox–heathen syncretism

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(Pimenov 1993: 248). At the same time, there are also significant groups of the Udmurt population that have not even undergone formal Christianisation and whose ethnocultural characteristics are still determined by adherence to ethnic religion, the attraction to which is manifested primarily through ritual practice. In this regard the collective prayers *kuris'kon*, and sacrifices *vös'* / *vös'yas'kon*, play a significant role in the spiritual life of unbaptised Udmurt, forming the basis of the traditional cult. According to the social principle, the prayer rituals are subdivided into family, patronymic, tribal (clan), communal (village), intercommunal (district), and regional unifications. Many of these rituals are still conducted in most of the Udmurt villages of the north-western region of Bashkortostan, in some Udmurt villages in the Kuyeda district of Perm Krai, in the village of Kuzebayevo in the Alnash district of Udmurtia and in the village of Varkled-Bod'ya in the Agryz district of Tatarstan, where heathen Udmurt live.[1] In Soviet period, the organisation and conduct of prayers and sacrifices was prohibited, although despite this in some of these local groups the tradition of performing rituals was not interrupted, they just became less massive and in most cases were carried out in an illegal form. In the majority of the Udmurt 'pagan' villages, public religious rituals were revived in the post-Soviet decades in the course of actively revitalising their traditional religion (Sadikov and Toulouze 2017: 98).

Each rite has attributes corresponding definitely to it which are used in the preparation and performance of the rite itself (Khristolyubova 1991: 170–171). Ritual objects had similar properties that played a significant role in the past, and to some extent they retain these functions today. According to their composition and purpose, these artificial material objects and belongings can be divided into several categories: ritual dishes and utensils, working tools, ritual clothes, priestly attributes, donated items/offerings.

The article examines the composition and functions of some material objects (things) that are associated with rituals, prayers, and sacrifices and were used in those religious ceremonies among the Udmurt. These things are a kind of ritual language, a special form of interaction and a condition for communication with sacred space; they are constantly in "close contact with other discourses and modes of thought" (Valk 2017: 111). First of all, the authors strive to pay detailed attention to the personal points of view of the people under examination and the degree of their involvement in the studied religious tradition, which can be traced through their attitude and perception of these ritual things.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For decades, the authors of this study carried out field research in the above-mentioned regions and settlements; in addition, they were directly involved in numerous rituals as natives of the Trans-Kama group of Udmurt. This means that primarily awareness from the life experience of the authors is used, along with their collected empirical ethnographic materials. Considering that "ethnographic writing turns out to be cognitively detached from the field in the process of academic endeavour" (Leete 2020: iii), and recognising they should not pay special attention to the personal point of view, the authors tried to take into account the opinions of the bearers of culture.

The religious traditions of the studied groups of Udmurt have been and are under the close scrutiny of Russian, Udmurt and foreign researchers and have been studied many times over the course of several centuries (for example, Wichmann 1894; Holmberg 1914; Khristolyubova 1991; Vladykin 1994; Vladykina 1998; 2018; Minniyakhmetova 2000; 2003; Sadikov 2001; 2008; 2019; Shutova 2001; 2018; Chernykh 2002; Lintrop 2003; Siikala and Ulyashev 2011; Hafeez 2015; Nuriyeva 2018; Toulouze and Anisimov 2020). Referring to the works of predecessors and colleagues and their approaches to the consideration of ritual attributes, the authors of the article offer their own vision and perception of these objects, taking into account the opinion of those who perform the rituals.

In recent decades, new models of studying the phenomena of ethnic culture have been developed. There is a change in research models and in methodological attitude, a tendency towards interdisciplinarity, while the object of research is often the inner meaning of cultural manifestations. The article takes into account the classical, and the latest, approaches in ethnology, folklore, ethnolinguistics, history and archaeology, which study the internal and external factors that influence the formation of a ritual complex with original references to their cultural and historical background.

The authors adhered to the principle expressed by the well-known ethnologist Sergey Tokarev (1970: 3): "A material thing cannot be of interest to an ethnographer outside of its social existence, outside of its relationship to a person, the one who created it and the one who uses it." In this sense, the considered material embodiment of the ritual and ritual activities of the Udmurt vividly characterises their traditional worldview, its evolution and its current state.

The article also takes into account the theoretical approaches and the semiotic school in ethnology. According to Al'bert Bayburin (1989: 70–71), the significance and value of things in archaic and traditional cultures was significantly higher than the modern one:

> things were 'involved' not only in practical terms, but were also actively used in the play of meanings along with other elements of culture, and were used not only for their intended purpose but also as signs of social relations, when entering a semiotic system (for example, a ritual), they function as signs, and when they fall out of the system they function as things.

Things have one or other semiotic status (low or high), those of them that are included in the 'spiritual culture' have the highest position in this scale. Some items (masks, amulets, jewellery), originally made for extra utilitarian purposes, in fact are "not things, but signs because their materiality, utilitarianism tends to zero while the symbolism is expressed as much as possible" (ibid.: 73). The semiotic status of things is most clearly manifested in ritual. As noted by Andrey Toporkov (1989: 90), all objects depending on their semiotic status can be divided into three groups: first "utilitarian objects that are minimally used in rituals and have no independent symbolic meaning"; secondly "utilitarian objects used in a number of ritual actions and having one or more symbolic meanings"; and thirdly "ritual objects, i.e., items made during the ritual or specifically for use in it". Thus, in the ritual

> one and the same thing is used either purely utilitarian (as an auxiliary inventory), or as a ritual symbol with more or less definite semantics (it can change from case

to case); finally, under certain circumstances a thing can turn into a group of ritual objects that do not have utilitarian functions at all (ibid.: 90).

Ritual objects perform a communicative function being mediators between a person/people and otherworldly forces and between past and present. These provisions are vividly confirmed in the materials of the proposed article.

According to the Udmurt ethnologist L'yudmila Khristolyubova (1991), household items of a utilitarian purpose included in the ritual action acquire a symbolic meaning. They indicate the content of the rite and unite the totality of its participants; they are attributes of the characters and protect and purify the performer, serving as a background and decoration for the performance of rituals. The same object in different rites can have different meanings. The information contained in the ritual object is read in the context of the rite but in most cases the performers do not seek to reveal the meaning of the actions performed, "for them it was enough to realize that the ancestors did this, that it was so customary (i.e., it was customary to do so)" (ibid.: 171). Such a reference directly suggests that what is acceptable is exactly what is considered to have originated in the past and continues now.

The semantics of things and objects in the context of Udmurt rituals was studied in detail in the doctoral thesis by Pavel Orlov (1999). Some aspects of this problem were considered by Nadezhda Shutova (2001: 147–200), Ranus Sadikov (2018), and others.

The article examines the material of the traditional Udmurt society of the past defined as such by representative sources of the late 19th century and up to the 1930s when traditions began to collapse under the pressure of the atheistic policy of the Soviet state. Subsequent periods are marked with certain dates, and modernity means the last decades of the post-Soviet period.

DATA ANALYSIS

Ritual objects are a necessity when organising and conducting rituals. At first glance they seem to be an ordinary tool but when viewed more closely they turn out not to be an ordinary object, with many of them playing significant roles in spiritual life in general, although comprehending their meaning is not an easy task.

When clarifying the composition and functions of handmade objects used in collective heathen Udmurt prayer and sacrifice rituals it is also necessary to take into account the circumstance of the place where they were held since for ritual actions of different significance and social level there are definite categories of sanctuary and sacred site. Udmurt ritual practice developed in such a way that sacrifices for the highest deities were performed in special sacred places called *vös'yas'kon inty* / *vös'yas'konti* or *kuris'kon inty* / *kuris'konti* – 'place of sacrifice' or 'place of prayer/praying'. According to Uno Holmberg (Harva 1911: 25), the Eastern Udmurt, living in Ufa and Perm provinces, call their holy places *aibat inti* or *taza inti* – a good, healthy, clean place. The heathen Udmurt held several prayers a year, each prayer having its own specific place. They were usually not fenced off but every villager knew about the sacred status of such places. The villagers kept them clean and did not desecrate them, neither did they chop down the trees growing there or break their branches. Unlike the sacred groves of *keremet* or *lud*

they were not considered dangerous: "*Alama inty övöl so*" (FM R. S. 2016) ('This is not a bad place' means that this is not a dangerous place). In each village, there were three places to hold *busy vös'* field prayers as all arable land was divided into three wedges depending on crop rotation (winter, spring, fallow). The place of prayer was a small, unploughed area at the edge of a field. Some prayers, such as the *uram vös'* street prayer, usually performed in winter, were held on the territory of the village. For common village prayers, i.e., the great sacrificial prayer *badzhym vös'* or the *gurten vös'* village sacrificial prayer, a separate sacred site was fenced off. Sacrifices were made there both in summer and in winter. If the settlements represented the centres of the religious community, *mer* / *mör*, i.e., the communities of related villages, then the regional prayers were also held in the sanctuaries of these villages. *El'en vös'* regional prayer sacrifices were held in the sanctuaries of the villages of Kirga of the Osinsk uyezd, Staryy Varyazh and Altayevo in the Birsk uyezd. Such sanctuaries of a high social level were usually fenced off. (Sadikov 2019: 62–66, 242–244)

The most sacred objects, fires and altars, were in the centre of the sacred site. The number of sacrificial fires depended on the number of sacrifices offered to different deities. As a rule, the meat of the offer was cooked on one fire intended for a definite deity. In some cases, the number of bonfires depended on the number of villages whose residents participated in the prayer. The number of altars varied depending on the type of offering sacrificed to different gods. The sacrificial gifts intended for the supreme god Inmar and other heavenly deities were burned at the fireplace or were placed on the *vyle mychon* ('lifting upward, setting up, laying up') – a special adaptation made from branches in the form of a bird's nest, or the gifts were hung in trees. The blood, head, legs and entrails of the animal intended as a sacrifice to the god of the earth Mu-Kylchin were buried in the ground. As a general rule, the place under the tree was seen as an altar. If there were no trees at the sacred place then the organisers of the prayer brought a small felled tree (birch, spruce) from the forest and stuck it into the ground in front of the fires. Under the tree(s), not far from the fires, the offerings of individual families (bread, butter) were piled in wooden cups wrapped in towels; there was also a sacrificial table with ritual accessories.

Another sacred object at sacrificial sites was a crossbar made of a young spruce or birch trunk mounted on supports from the same trunks. This crossbar was installed in front of the so-called heathen priests[2] so that during prayer they could turn towards or away from it. According to Holmberg's field records, such sacrificial structures were made from spruce trunks in winter and from birch in summer (Harva 1911: 139). The butt of the crossbar always turned in the direction the priest was looking, i.e., southward. Sometimes a small tree was tied to the front trunk, called *vyle mychon n'ör* (a rod for ascending/lifting upward). Next to it, on a towel, the meat was piled up for the *vyle mychon*. When sacrificing for the Mu-Kylchin no such structures were made. At the end of the prayers the crossbeams and their supports were burned in the fireplace (Harva 1911: 139–140). Today, this object is rarely found at prayers. This crossbar probably acted as a symbol of the 'heavenly gates'. This is also supported by the fact that it was strictly forbidden to pass under this crossbar or to be behind it when praying. According to Bogayevskiy (1890: 132), a sacred fire was lit under this crossbeam which served only as an altar, and food was not prepared on it.

Veneration of the wrathful deity *lud* was carried out in the sacred grove. Initially, these were fenced wood areas with mixed trees; due to deforestation over time they became open areas in a field or meadow with islets with woody vegetation. Inside the fences were a sacred hearth with stones and a table. During summer prayers the table was created from birch twigs and branches and covered with birch leaves. During winter prayers, the table was created from branches of coniferous trees and covered with needles. A white tablecloth was spread over the leaves and needles in summer and winter. Only the priest and his assistants had the right to enter the fenced area. In the sacred groves of some villages, there were small log huts with a double-pitched roof called *lud kuala*. The trees growing there were endowed with a sacred character and it was forbidden to cut or break the branches. Prayers at the *lud* were, as a rule, of a tribal (clan) character. Thus, the prayer places were sacralised, became taboo areas, and were considered very dangerous. (Sadikov 2019: 78– 81)

The veneration place of the *voshshud*'s patron spirits was a small log building with a gabled double-pitched roof. This sanctuary, or *kuala*, was without a ceiling or windows and the floor was earthen. The central place in these sanctuaries was occupied by an open stone hearth with a cauldron hanging above it. A sacrificial shelf was located on the wall opposite the entrance door, and there was a table and benches. The *kuala* was either family or tribal-patrimonial and was the location for the relevant prayer sacrifices. (Ibid.: 92–93)

Many rites for the veneration of family and patronymic deities were carried out at home in front of the honorary corner *töroshor* / *törosereg*. There was a special place for prayer in the courtyard that was set aside and where the family did not usually go. As Holmberg (Harva 1911: 25) noted, in the courtyard "everyone has a holy place 'vösyas'kon' or 'taza inty' (women are not allowed to enter or walk around it). Usually, such a place is next to the fence."

The hearth stones play an important symbolic role in the sanctuaries. As a rule, when the place of the sanctuary was changed the stones from the hearth and some ashes were transferred to the new place. As Shutova (2017: 115) says,

> the study of stones at medieval sanctuaries revealed that they could perform numerous functions, being a reliable foundation for a cult site or hearth outlining the boundaries or outlines a sacred site. A mound or a separate large stone played the role of sacred centre or symbol of a revered deity. A slab of limestone or sandstone served as an altar, and individual stone objects and their fragments were used as vows or sacrificial offerings to deities and spirits living in sacred places.

When the integrity of the sanctuary was destroyed the stones became its markers. For example, when the buildings of the *kuala* were destroyed, the rituals were arranged next to the stones of the hearth or foundation with the belief that the rite is performed in the sanctuary *kuala* (Votskaya Oshya village in the Yanaul district of Bashkortostan). The Udmurt of the Tatyshly district of Bashkortostan have preserved legends saying that when they moved to the Bashkir lands, where they still live, their ancestors took stones with them from the former ancestral sanctuaries.

The trees growing in the sacred places are among the special sacred objects of these sanctuaries; under the trees, bonfires were kindled and bread brought by participants in the prayer ceremonies was placed the. 'Upwardly lifted' parts of the sacrifice for the

heavenly deities were placed in the branches, and under the protection of the boughs gifts for the underground deities were buried. The branches of sacred trees were used for ritual purposes. Trees growing on the sanctuaries were protected from non-ritual use: they could not be cut down or branches broken and any fallen twigs or branches were used to kindle sacrificial fires at the rituals.

Dishes and Utensils

For a long time, the established order of events and activities at the prayer rituals required both the necessary material and object equipment and the provision of the ceremony. Today, one of the conditions for the performance of the rite includes dishes, both ordinary household and specific, corresponding only to the fulfilment of the rite. Many different types of utensil are used for the preparation of ritual food, bringing and storing water and making the sacrificial products. To perform these procedures, and especially for cooking, a fire-resistant utensil is needed. It is difficult to indicate a specific date for the appearance of metal utensils in the Udmurt regions.

> In the Middle Ages, metal dishes were an exceptional phenomenon here. The thousand-year-old traditions of making bronze items among the peoples inhabiting these lands did not extend to dishes and utensils. These were made of clay, wood, birch bark, bast, leather, but not metal. (Rudenko 2000: 4)

Over time, cast iron products spread among the local population in this area and gained a firm hold. According to archaeologists, cast-iron utensils spread here in the second half of the 19th century, probably until that time copper or silver cauldrons were used by the Udmurt (Pimenov 1993: 162; Shutova 2001: 186–187).

So, at the Udmurt sacrificial rituals, the most significant thing in the category of ritual utensils was the cast iron pot, *purty*, which was intended for cooking meat and porridge, and still serves the same purpose today. The number of cauldrons used in the rite usually depended on the number of sacrificial animals or villages participating in the prayer. This is evidenced by the records of researchers who attended Udmurt rites. In 1884, the Finnish ethnographer Aksel Heikel visited the place of the *vös'yas'kon inty* sacrifice in the village of Bol'shoy Kachak, Birsk district, Ufa province. Heikel pointed out in his descriptions that he found five fireplaces located in a row with short wooden stakes stuck on both sides of each hearth; alongside there were long poles that served as a crossbar to hang pots (Heikel 1884b: 85). In 1894, another Finnish researcher Yrjö Wichmann (1894: 11–12) was present at the *mer vös'* prayer in the same village:

> Four villages took part in the feast but there were five priests because there are two priests in this big village. There were also five sacrificial animals in the fenced area. There were five cauldrons [located] in a row, in pairs, a fathom between each. One cauldron and one priest for each sacrificial animal.

In 1911 during an expedition to the Perm and Ufa provinces, Holmberg visited several Udmurt sacrifices noting that at the village sacrifice the meat of the sacrificial animal was cooked in several cauldrons:

> it is necessary to observe the rule according to which the most important organs of the sacrificial animal – the heart, liver, a piece of the lungs, the first rib on the right side, etc. – should be cooked in a separate cauldron, because they are the most valuable part of the sacrifice. According to his own data, the meat of the sacrifice dedicated to the deity of the earth, Mu-Kylchin, was cooked separately and was not mixed with offerings for the heavenly deities. (Harva 1911: 28)

All the rest of the meat is cooked separately, in one or several cauldrons depending on the size of the animal (Perevozchikov 1928: 94). We also learn from other sources that the cauldrons were installed on trestles or trivets (Yakovlev 1903: 186; 1915: 262). Judging by some photographs by Holmberg (1914: 144) the cauldrons were also placed on stones set into a shallow depression.[3] Next to each hearth with a cauldron, an indispensable attribute of Udmurt sacrifices was installed – a construction of felled young birch trunks (in summer) and spruce (in winter) on top of which the same trunk was placed as a crossbar (Wichmann 1894: 12; Harva 1911: 139). As Wichmann (1894: 12) notes, during the prayer the priests stand "each in front of his cauldron; the kneeling assistants bow behind those cauldrons […]; behind them, outside of the fenced site in the long rows are (sitting and bowing) men on their knees, behind them are their wives."

At present, one village community may have several cauldrons for performing sacrifices depending on the number of inhabitants; cauldrons have a volume of 20 litres or more. In some settlements, ancient cauldrons are still used which were protected and passed on from generation to generation by the priests of the village for the ritual needs of the inhabitants. If necessary, they buy new cauldrons in hardware stores at the expense of money collected from the villagers for religious needs. During large intercommunal sacrifices, where representatives of several settlements flock, participants bring cauldrons from their villages. To cover the cooked porridge in cauldrons lids are used knocked down from wooden planks with a handle *purty kapkas'*.

The tradition of the separate preparation of sacrificial meat is still preserved. During the village prayers of a small community, the meat of the sacrificial animal is cooked in two cauldrons: in the first one – the meat of the right side of the carcass, the head and internal organs, in the second one – the meat of the left side of the carcass. If it is not possible to boil the meat separately then all the meat is cooked in one pot but the pieces of meat of the right side are marked by tying them with bast or twine. In the same way, meat is sorted out at intercommunal and regional sacrifices. In the village of Novyye Tatyshly, Tatyshly district of Bashkortostan, the meat of a black sheep sacrificed for the deity of the earth is boiled in a separate cauldron; until it is ready the priest carefully observes that the helpers do not accidentally mix such meat with the meat of the sacrifices to the heavenly deities. For the rite of promising a sacrifice *siz'is'kon* if it is carried out immediately before the beginning of the sacrifice, a separate small cauldron is also used in which flour jelly or porridge is cooked on a separate fire (village of Asavka, Baltachevo district of Bashkortostan).

In order to maintain the fire while preparing sacrificial food, in most cases the cauldrons are set on iron supports, *purty pukton* / *kuk*, made by local blacksmiths. These are in the form of iron hoops in the diameter of the cauldron with three, less often four, legs. The cauldrons are handled in a particular way, being washed with water using bast sponges before cooking the sacrificial food. After the porridge is served, the empty caul-

drons are thoroughly cleaned and washed again and laid on their side with the top of the cauldron *purty um* turned towards the south. In Tatyshly district, salt is poured into the cauldron first, then spring water is poured in. The cauldron is removed from the fire using wooden push poles threaded through wire loops fixed in the ears, *purty pel'*, of the cauldron. The priests performing ritual actions bypass the cauldrons exclusively moving in the direction of the sun, or *shundyya*, i.e., sunwise, clockwise. During prayer, they stand in front of the fires and the cauldrons (that is, on the south or southeast side of the cauldrons or in which direction they turn to pray); the helpers and others praying stand behind the cauldrons.

The handling of this significant ritual object was not always only respectful. In the Soviet years especially since the 1950s, sacrificial cauldrons became the subject of attacks from representatives of the atheist state, usually the leaders of the party cells of collective farms – secretaries of party organisations, the so called *partorg*s. Aware of the Udmurt performance of religious rituals with sacrifices they came to the sacrificial places when the ritual food had already been cooked and overturned cauldrons full of porridge. Many informants recall such events,[4] and they are reflected in the novel *The Mountain of the Winds* (Valishin 2004: 49).

A fundamental position was also occupied by the cauldron in the *kuala* family and clan sanctuaries when it was placed over the hearth secured to a beam with a wooden hook or hung on a chain, where it was then kept. In the surviving modern *kuala* (in the villages of Kuzebayevo, Varkled-Bod'ya), a cauldron is also required and it is kept as described, in a hanging state.

Thus, at the sacrifice the cauldron unites all participants: the village or clan community cooked the meat of the jointly purchased offering in a common cauldron, along with porridge from cereals collected from all houses, which was served to all participants in the prayer. In other traditions, the cauldron also had a symbolic meaning. For example, at the Khanty sacrifices, "Everyone sat around the cauldron and ate meat, whoever wanted what, ate it" (Nady 2011: 121).

During prayers, other types of utensil also perform significant functions. In the past, wooden containers played a prominent role with both raw and boiled meat being put in them: "The boiled meat is taken out and placed in a large wooden bowls" (Perevozchikov 1928: 156). As Holmberg notes, the cooked meat is cut into small pieces and then placed on a long narrow wooden trough. During common prayer the priest's assistants repeatedly raise these troughs with meat up in their hands. (Lalluka et al. 2014: 96) According to Wichmann (1894: 6, 19, 46), in the village of Bol'shoy Kachak the meat was lifted in a basket which was held on a stick by two assistants while a prayer was read. The trough was also used to collect bones once people had eaten. In the village of Bayshady, Burayevo district, after the prayer ceremonies and the eating of the ritual meal, the bones were collected in one box and taken to a place called *Ly kel'yan* (lit. 'sending off the bones'). The bones were buried there under the *kyrvon kyz* ('sacrificial spruce'). (Minniyakhmetova 2000: 53) Wooden dishes were also used to collect sacrificial money: "Donations in the form of small coins were collected in wooden plates" (Yakovlev 1915: 262).

Currently, any purchased tin or enamel trough or basin are used to hold boiled meat. At the sacrifices in Tatyshly district, during the recitation of the priest's prayer the priest's assistants, *partchas'*, (who skin the sacrificed animal and butcher its carcass) put the bowls of meat on the table and hold on to them with their hands.

Photo 1. The priest's assistants hold their hands to dishes with the meat of sacrificial animals at the district мör vös' *prayer. Novye Tatyshly village, Tatyshly district, Bashkortostan. 2013. Photo by Sadikov.*

Among the utensils and dishes used at the sacrifices the priestly bowls, *vös'yas'kon tus'ty*, stand apart. In the past, during the recitation of the prayer the priests held the bowls in their hands on a towel in front of them. Depending on the stage of the prayer they put bread or pancakes, pieces of meat or porridge into the bowls and poured broth into them: "The priest takes a bowl of pancakes in his hands on a white towel and goes around the fire three times then faces southward" (Harva 1911: 89). "From time to time he bows touching the ground with a cup of sacrificial meat and shouts 'amen'" (Wichmann 1894: 13). The priestly bowls were not allowed to be held with bare hands, they were always picked up with towels. An interesting observation in this regard among the Tatyshly Udmurt was made by Tat'yana Kryukova (1973: 90–91): "They had special ritual mittens knitted of white wool with a honeycomb pattern which the priests used to hold the bowls during sacrifices in the sacred grove". Thus, these bowls acted as a link with the transcendental world in order to protect the otherworldly forces from the 'worldly'; to protect the priests themselves they tried to avoid direct contact with the bowl when it held sacrificial offerings.

Sacrificial gifts for the supreme deities were also exhibited in a wooden bowl:

> After several prayers that included bowing to the ground, the priest places a bowl of meat with considerable reverence on a shelf made of spruce branches in the form of a crow's nest in a tree near to the sacrifice, or he places it on a trivet stake on

which the cauldron hangs. This bowl remains there until the end of the sacrifice. (Yakovlev 1915: 262)

While performing the *vyle mychon* ritual action pieces of meat from the upper joint of the front right limb, the first three right ribs, pieces of the heart, liver, lungs, and head were placed in the bowl. According to Holmberg, the priests used ancient carved bowls which were used only for prayers (Lallukka et al. 2014: 90).

As in former times, also today, when addressing the deities the priests hold a bowl with sacrificial offerings like bread, meat or porridge in their hands on a towel with branches. According to traditional custom, during summer prayers one birch branch is placed on a towel, in winter prayers one spruce branch is used. In the village of Nizhnebaltachevo, in Tatyshly district, pieces of meat from the right shank, lower jaw, three right front ribs, pieces of lungs, liver, stomach, kidneys, pancreas, and udder are put into a bowl for the prayer with meat. While holding the prayer bowl the priests move only from left to right, i.e., according to clockwise movement. Currently, they mainly use modern enamelled or plastic bowls, only in rare cases are homemade wooden bowls in use. For example, such bowls, *tus'ty*, are at the disposal of the priests of the village of Varkled-Bod'ya, Agryz district in the Republic of Tatarstan. In the same village, ordinary participants in prayers also use such ritual bowls: they bring food in them and consume sacrificial porridge and meat from them. There are both old slotted samples and later ones carved on a carpentry machine. Many of them are marked with generic signs *pus*. They are passed down from generation to generation and are used only for ritual purposes. There are also the special ritual cups, *s'umyk*. Similar wooden dishes are also stored in the Great *kuala* – *Bydzhym kuala*. These are used by priests when carrying out ancestral sacrifices. Priestly utensils are similarly preserved in the ancestral/clan *kuala* in the village of Kuzebayevo, Alnash district, Udmurt Republic (Shutova 2001: 52).

The blood of a sacrificial animal or bird was of essential importance since "the gods got only blood from the sacrifices" (Smirnov 1890: 228), so special handling was required. Wooden bowls were used to collect the blood of the sacrificial animals; "when the priest finishes the prayer he takes the bowl of blood, shakes it over the fire and pours the blood through a birch branch into the fire several times" (Harva 1911: 90). To pour blood into the fire – an action called *tylan* – a wooden spoon, *pu pun'y*, was used: "the second oldest priest, 'tylas', takes a small part of the blood in a spoon and after the animal dies, he pours it into a blazing fire" while saying a prayer (Yakovlev 1915: 262).

A special role in the rituals was also assigned to ladles, *koby*. These were used to pour water over the sacrificial animal before slaughtering it: "several scoops of clean cold water are poured onto the animal and a small amount of water is poured into its ear" (Yakovlev 1915: 262). To distribute the ready-made food from the cauldron ladles were also used, each with its own sign, *pus*, provided exclusively for this purpose. Another type of utensil in the form of a colander with large pores (*pas'o koby*) which is still used to take out boiled meat and filter meat broth.

Photo 2. Distributing porridge in the dishes of prayer participants. Asavka village, Baltachevo district, Bashkortostan. 2016. Photo by Sadikov.

For storing and transporting food and water before preparing ritual food metal, enamelled and plastic basins, cans, buckets and large deep bowls are used. The bucket is used to bring the sacred water *tyr vu*, that is spring water, scooped up first on the day of the ritual and brought by the priest; this water is also poured into the cleaned cauldron first. Bones are collected in a bucket and are distributed after cutting the meat to the participants of the prayer to nibble on.

A spoon called a *pun'y*, or a wood spoon called *pu pun'y*, is used to pour blood into the fire after the slaughtered animal dies. Today, metal spoons called *kort pun'y* are in common use, but in some villages, they use wooden spoons made in the traditional way. A priest pours the broth with a spoon and spreads the porridge over the fire. Moreover, each action is performed three times. According to older informants, a wooden spoon should be used for this purpose. According to ancient ideas, touching an offer with an object of the profane world – a metal product – is unacceptable for fear of desacralising the offering. This belief is clearly demonstrated by the example of the Khanty material, which showed it was forbidden to touch the sacrificial meat with metal spoons and forks, wooden ones had to be used (Nagy 2011: 146).

Public sacrificial utensils in the past, as Holmberg notes, were used only for ritual purposes (Harva 1911: 47). Today, they also try to adhere to this rule. In former times, priests and their assistants brought dishes and utensils to the place of sacrifice on carts (ibid.: 42); currently, for transportation they mainly use cars, wheeled tractors, walk-

behind tractors and only in rare cases continue to use animal-drawn transport. As a rule, the ritual utensils are kept at home by the priest; if there are several priests in a big village then the utensils are kept by the elder of them. Among the Udmurt of Tatyshly district, the utensils are kept at home by the prayers' organizers, *vös' kuz'o*, whose responsibilities include organisational and economic management of publicly held religious ceremonies. The utensils can be kept by the *vös' korka ut'is'*, i.e., the keepers of the sanctuary placed on the sacred site.

Observations indicate that recently utensils and tools for preparing prayer food are generally modern and manufactured in an industrial way. Among them there are also old home-made samples. For example, in the village of Bayshady, Burayevo district, Republic of Bashkortostan, an old wooden scoop with a tribal sign is used to scoop porridge.

It should also be noted that there are *tus'ty-pun'y* brought by the participants of the prayer in use as dishes, which are kept separate from the priestly ones. In the past, people brought bread and wooden bowls with them for use in the prayer ceremonies as well as spoons for each person who came to the ceremony, all wrapped in one bundle. Moreover, the dishes were not empty: "everyone carries in his or her hand a bowl filled with buckwheat or oatmeal" (Lallukka et al. 2014: 96). At present, the ritual participants bring with them enamel or plastic bowls and plates, and metal spoons, which do not stand out from everyday kitchen utensils. Only the elderly in some families can use wooden spoons for food, which are kept as ritual spoons. They no longer bring cereals with them because they collect them the day before from home or buy it in a shop. After the completion of the prayer the participants take the prayer porridge and meat home in the bowls, and to the homes of those who could not take part in the ritual.

The category of things under consideration also includes the *vorshud* boxes stored on the shelves of the clan *kuala*, which is an obligatory attribute of veneration of the *voshshud* clan. At the end of the 19th century, among the Udmurt of the Osinsk uyezd of Perm province, Nikolay Tezyakov (1896: 5) saw on the shelf in the *kuala* "a basket, in it the things necessary for sacrifices". Holmberg's field notes say that in one of the *kuala* in the village of Kaymashabash, Birsk uyezd, birch bark and wooden boxes were kept on the altar shelf, in the first one there was salt, in the second butter. The birch bark was old, according to Tezyakov, expressing respect for the heritage of the forefathers. He also says that "The boxes on the shelf are called '*kuala voz'mas*'" (Harva 1911: 137–138), i.e., 'guard/guardian of the *kuala*'. According to Tezyakov, in the sanctuary "sacrificial objects are usually kept in a cupboard: a wooden cup from which beer or *kumyshka*[5] is poured into the fire" (Sadikov and Khafiz 2010: 20). According to field records, in 2000 in the village of Varkled-Bod'ya, in the great sanctuary Bydzhym *kuala*, priests brought samogon moonshine in bottles, a quarter or half a litre which they put on the table (ERA: CD–0667–23). In the village of Bayshady, Burayevo district, the *vorshud* shelf where ritual dishes with offerings were kept is remembered as a *mudor*;[6] according to Nikolay Rychkov (1770: 159), even in the 18th century among the Udmurt of the Ufa province the shelf with ritual objects and tree branches was called "Modor or the god-guardian of our houses".

The ritual process also represents the implementation of various work that contributes to the maintenance and performance of religious procedures. To perform any action, there are necessary instruments and belongings designed specifically for each action. One of the main tools for sacrifice is a knife, or *purt*, with which to slaughter the offering. As a rule, those who slaughter the animal partially use *sugym vandon purt* knives, used when slaughtering livestock. They are kept in a leather sheath and are used only for slaughtering and butchering carcasses. Among them there are old designs with wooden handles.

There are special sticks with forks at the ends called *tyl suran* to turn coals in the fires; pushing the embers with a foot is strictly prohibited. Homemade wooden stirrers, *pory* or *suran*, are always available. When skinning sheep carcasses a wooden crossbar on a rope called an *oshon* is used to hang them. These utensils are all stored in buildings at the sacred places or stacked on tree branches at the sacred sites.

In the village of Novyye Tatyshly, Tatyshly district, ancient forged hooks called *kort kongrok* are used to remove pieces of meat from the cauldron. According to the priests, they were made specifically for sacrificial rituals in ancient times.

An axe, *tir*, acquires a special semantic meaning during the performance of certain rituals, while in modern sacrifices it is mainly used for its utilitarian purpose. The assistants at the prayer chop wood for the sacrificial fire. In the past, axes were used to delineate the perimeter of the sacred place in order to protect it from evil forces. According to Tezyakov (1896: 8), at the end of the 19th century at the winter sacrifice in Osinskiy uyezd, a priest prayed with an axe and a piece of bast in his hands asking "not to allow the shaitan and sorcerers to reach the sacrifice and not let them desecrate the holy sacrifice." Holding an axe and bast in his hands he walked around the fire three times with the sacrificial animal, then handed the axe and the bast to the assistant. The assistant cut off small pieces from the bast and threw them into the fire and then laid the rest of the bast on the ground and cut it, the axe remaining stuck in the ground (ibid.). According to the narratives by the informants, even the presence of an axe at a sacred place is already a talismanic protector of the sacred site. From the archive sources we learn, in the village of Varkled-Bod'ya, that the great *kuala* sanctuary was built from logs cut by axe (not sawn) (ERA: CD–0667–28).

With an axe, *tir*, or a shovel, *kortkuy* / *kortki*, the priests dig holes to drain the blood of the slaughtered animals and to bury sacrificial gifts to the deity of the earth. The ground at the fireplace is dug to lay out stones and place cauldrons using a shovel.

Bast ropes, *gozy*, stood out as significant because the sacrificial animals were led to the sanctuary by rope and before slaughter were tied to trees or special stakes. According to Holmberg, the priests used new, especially twisted, bast rope intended for one-time use for this purpose (Harva 1911: 86; Lallukka et al. 2014: 90). The limbs of the animals were also tied with ropes during slaughter and the bones remaining during the sacrifice and after the meat was eaten were tied up and placed into trees with ropes: "All the bones were tied with one bast rope and with the help of two poles they were hung on a tree for bones, in which there were already many" (Wichmann 1894: 7); "The bones were then carefully collected, tied up with sponge ropes and hung on trees on which they hang until the ropes rot" (Tezyakov 1896: 9). Today the priests mainly use factory

ropes or twine. The tradition of hanging the sacrificed animal bones in a tree during public sacrifices has already been lost.

In some villages, when sacrificing, the location of the fires and sacred trees was the central part of the sacred place, which was fenced off with ropes on stakes. A similar temporary rope fence was observed by Aksel Heikel (1884a: 11) in the village of Bol'shoy Kachak, Birsk uyezd. Currently, this old tradition is preserved in the villages of Kasiyarovo and Mamady, Burayevo district, and the village of Kizganbashevo, Baltachevo district, Bashkortostan.

Ritual Clothing

Traditionally, both priests and ordinary participants carefully prepared for the prayers. Ritual clothes were washed before participation, then washed and put in a chest until the next time they were required. The priests wore a white caftan, *shortderem*, girded with wide belts called *kyskertton* or *kushak*. They put on a white felt hat *yshl'yapa* wrapped in a white towel on their heads, and new bast shoes, *kut*, on their feet (Wichmann 1894: 6; Holmberg 1914: 143). Heikel (1884a: 11) reports that only priests in white clothes, white socks and bast shoes can enter the fenced-in sanctuary, but not in boots. Judging by the photographs by Wichmann in 1894, all Trans-Kama Udmurt went to the prayer rituals in such clothes, i.e., it was not only a special priestly form (Museoviraston kuva-arkisto: 48; 49; 52). According to Tezyakov (1896: 7), for winter prayers they wore white half caftan *dukes* made from homespun cloth. Holmberg also talks about white ritual clothing many times, noting that all Udmurt who come to prayers are dressed in white (Harva 1911: 69). According to Holmberg, at the sacrifice "Everyone is dressed in clean, festive clothes. Silver coins and bright ribbons shine in the sunshine" (Lallukka et al. 2014: 96). Thus, women also wore their breast ornaments when participating in the prayers. According to Ivan Yakovlev (1903: 186) "Votyaks come to the sacrifices in a special white national costume and in bast shoes; whoever comes in boots is immediately expelled." Konstantin Yakovlev (1915: 264) notes that "All are dressed in the best clothes, the men are mostly in white"; this comment testifies to the beginning of the destruction of the tradition of dressing only in white clothes. This is evidenced by the photographs by Holmberg in 1911 (published in Holmberg 1914: 127, 139, 144, 183) in which some of the worshipers are depicted in black caftans. Informants also report that in the past they used to wear white shirts called *vös' derem* and – in addition to the priests – the white *shortderem* for prayers, while women walked with silver jewellery. During winter prayers, winter clothes were worn over the usual prayer clothes with the winter clothes removed while praying. The main requirement for prayer clothes was cleanliness (Chernykh 2020: 364). Gradually, when homespun clothing was abandoned and caftans began to be perceived as priestly vestments. At present, there are only a small number of old specimens of *shortderem* left, mainly held by the priests. The disappearance of caftans was facilitated by the fact that they were included in a set of funeral clothes, i.e., elderly people who had *shortderem* in their wardrobe requested that they be buried in them so they would appear in the next world in Udmurt clothes. *Shortderem* were sewn from white homespun fabric with small black stripes. They were in the so-called Turkic cut and consisted of two front and two rear panels connected

at the shoulders; additional wedges were inserted in the lower parts of the panel joint. (Chernykh 2020: 299; 303)

The revival of public prayers contributed to a new demand for ritual caftans, although since homespun had not been preserved in sufficient quantities, they were replaced with ordinary white household and medical robes or gowns. The robe used for rituals is no longer used in any other capacity. Instead of belts they are usually girded with towels; ordinary factory hats made of light fabrics are worn.

In 2013, ritual clothes were sewn from white fabric to some extent reminiscent of those for ancient *shortderem* for the priests of one of the groups of Udmurt of Tatyshly district. Rassvet, the local agricultural enterprise, allocated money for the purchase of fabric and tailoring. Something similar is observed in other places where the Trans-Kama Udmurt live. For example, for the Udmurt priests of Kuyeda district in Perm Krai, local activists sewed ritual caftans of light yellow with a decorated border along the hem, collar, and sleeves. Anatoliy Galikhanov, one of the active priests, organiser and conductor of the prayer common to all Trans-Kama Udmurt the *elen vös'*, a resident of the village of Altayevo in Burayevo district of Bashkortostan, ordered a white caftan decorated with a stylised applique imitating Udmurt embroidery from the atelier in the town of Yanaul. In some settlements, for example, in the village of Asavka, Baltachevo district, Bashkortostan, the priests began to wear ordinary jackets instead of the *shortderem*, although while praying they gird themselves with towels which give them a sacred status. This practice is also preserved in the village of Varkled-Bod'ya in the Agryz district of Tatarstan, and in the village of Kuzebayevo in the Alnash district of Udmurtia where the priests use ancient belts for their rituals.

Today, ordinary prayer participants come in festive clothes, with some women in national costume. A head covering is compulsory: men wear hats, women are in headscarves. Elderly Udmurt observing tradition try to attend prayers in light-coloured clothes. Violation of the ritual dress code causes criticism from the elderly Udmurt: "Previously if someone came to prayer in bad clothes, he was expelled, for example in work clothes. Nowadays young people even wear shorts, it's impossible." (FM R. S. 2017a)

The tradition of wearing white prayer clothes was apparently characteristic only of the Trans-Kama Udmurt. For example, in the Bugul'ma district of the Samara province at the turn of the 20th century, Udmurt priests wore ordinary grey caftans called *puris' dukes* and grey felt hats girded with wide belts called *puto* for collective sacrifices (FM R. S. 2004; 2006). There are also no reports of white prayer clothes among other groups of heathen Udmurt.

An important component of ritual clothing is male headwear. Sources from the turn of the 20th century note that during prayers the priests and other participants in the ritual always wear hats, usually white felted hats and skullcaps. The priests also wrapped their hats with white canvas (Wichmann 1894: 6). While saying the prayers and bowing participants probably took off their hats and put them next to them. This is evidenced by photographs by Wichmann (Museoviraston kuva-arkisto: 48; 52) and by the notes by Tezyakov (1896: 8), which say that at the prayer "the Votyaks were reverently on their knees without hats and bowed low with each 'omen'." This custom is very close to the Chuvash tradition according to which they put their hats on the ground while kneeling to pray and touch them with their foreheads (Salmin 2016: 560). The custom of tak-

Photo 3. Priest's assistants belted with towels. In front of the cauldrons, there are buckets of sacred water called tyr vu. *Starokalmiyarovo village, Tatyshly district, Bashkortostan. 2019. Photo by Sadikov.*

ing off hats during direct prayer is now observed among the Tatyshly Udmurt, whose priests take off their hats and kneel down while praying with offered coins or *zhuges'*. Another interesting action with caps was noted by us in the village of Shavyady, Baltachevo district. According to informants, when saying a prayer the priests put a hat under their arm. This is also typical of the Chuvashs (Salmin 2016: 559). It is interesting to note that at home, during a meal with prayer food brought from the sacrifice, men put on hats and women wear headscarves, and people put some kind of outer garment with sleeves over their shoulders.

Among the Udmurt of Tatyshly district men's ritual mittens were knitted from white wool with a pattern in the form of a honeycomb. They were worn at prayers in the sacred grove, *lud*, since holding the bowl with sacrificial gifts with bare hands was prohibited (Kryukova 1973: 89–91), a custom that persists today (see above).

Textile Materials

The polysemantic nature of towels and tablecloths is well known, as well as their polyfunctionality. A towel, or *bamkyshet*, is an irreplaceable accessory for a priest during the prayer: while saying prayers he holds a bowl of porridge on a towel in his hands. In

the village of Kasiyarovo, Burayevo district, during sacrifices in the *keremet*, they used *keremet kyshet* – a white canvas towel with a coin fixed to it. It was kept in the house by the priest of the sanctuary but was could not be kept by priests who were single. Many modern priests have special prayer towels, although there are no strict rules when choosing them and any ordinary-coloured towels bought in a shop can be used. Sources from the turn of the 20th century unanimously note that for these purposes the priests used only white towels (Tezyakov 1896: 7; Lallukka et al. 2014: 90). Those who come to pray also come with cups and loaves of bread wrapped in a white towel.

> In the village of Asavka, Baltachevo district, at the site of the sacrifice, a crossbar made of a freshly cut pole is placed on two trees where towels are hung, among which there are also ancient samples. They are usually kept by the priest. Birch branches are laid out under the structure and on those branches a tablecloth is laid with bowls of bread placed on top. (Minniyakhmetova 2000: 54)

The same towels used during summer prayers are also hung during the winter prayers held inside domestic houses. Apparently, this is an archaic custom outdated in other settlements of the Trans-Kama Udmurt. In other local traditions, during public prayers in the sanctuary *kuala*, trees and the fence were hung with towels (Orlov 1999: 160). Among the studied group of Udmurt, the written sources do not mention the custom of hanging specially stored towels. According to Holmberg, a wooden hook hung from tree trunks on such structures where a towel was hung (Harva 1911: 85). He also mentions towels with red stripes hanging from branches that were used as hand driers. Now the priests and their assistants dry their hands with ordinary towels.

In addition to the priestly towels there was probably another ritual towel. Holmberg wrote that there was a rag hanging on the counter near the fire that the slaughterers wiped their bloody hands with and which was burned at the end of the prayer (Lallukka et al. 2014: 90). A relic of this tradition was preserved among the Udmurt of Tatyshly district. The owners of the sacrificial animal give the slaughterers a towel that serves to wipe their hands when killing and skinning the sacrificial animal; at the end of the sacrifice, this towel is also burned.

Tablecloths also play a significant role in sacrifices. During the sacrifices and ritual ceremony, a white tablecloth (or towel) was laid on the sacrificial shelves and tables in the *kuala*, where the bowls with food and loaves of bread brought by the participants of the prayer were placed. When the ceremony took place in the *lud* that same procedures were observed and the same paraphernalia used. (Harva 1911: 9; 45; 95) In the same way, a section of the ploughed field was covered with a white canvas or tablecloth during the prayer at the ceremony to mark the first sowing (Tezyakov 1896: 4). Currently, the custom of laying sacrificial offerings on a tablecloth is not preserved everywhere. In the village of Asavka, Baltachevo district, during prayers, instead of a white tablecloth an oilcloth is spread over the birch branches which are laid on the ground under a crossbar with towels. People who come to prayer put their bowls and bread on it. When the ritual meal is ready the priest's assistants put ready-made porridge and pieces of meat into these bowls. The tradition of laying bowls and loaves of bread on a tablecloth spread over the branches is also preserved among the Kuzebayevo and Varkled-Bod'ya heathen Udmurt. It is remarkable to note that in the State Museum of the History of Religions in St Petersburg, among other ritual items, tablecloths used

in sacrifices acquired in 1941 in the Udmurt Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic are kept. Some samples have burnt areas indicating their use in the sacrifices (Mutina 2019: 389).

Yakovlev (1903: 187) reports that the priests collect donations (small coins) in the "white scarf", and afterwards they pray with this scarf in their hands. Currently, such a custom is not observed, apparently the use of scarves when collecting donated money can be considered a relic.

Priestly and Ritual Attributes

The southern heathen Udmurt of Alnash and Agryz districts used rings as priestly attributes which were passed from one priest to another. In the village of Kuzebayevo, the priest of the tribal *kuala* wore a special ring with a soldered silver royal coin with an eagle (Shutova 2001: 53; 171). In the village of Varkled-Bod'ya, the priests of the sacred grove and *kuala* also had rings called *vös' zundes*. In one of the houses in the village, during an ethnographic expedition in 2016, we managed to see a similar attribute. It was a yellow metal ring with a rectangular insert of coloured stone (carnelian). Unfortunately, the tradition of the priests wearing ritual rings in the village has now been lost.

Tree branches used in sacrifices can also be referred to as ritual attributes. The tree branches were laid out on the ground or on a table, and a tablecloth was laid over the branches where the sacrificial offerings were laid. The priests laid a towel on the ground and placed tree branches on top, then placed the bowls on top of this; they then poured water over the sacrificial animals and then poured the animals' blood into the fire; at the end of the sacrifice, the fireplaces are symbolically swept with the branches. A *vyle mychon*, a stand for sacrificial offerings installed on a tree, is made with the branches. Tree branches were stuck around the site of the ceremony.

On rare occasions, at sacrifices in the *lud*, according to Holmberg, candles were lit: "They put one candle in the corner of the vyle mychon erection," (Harva 1911: 96). For this purpose homemade wax candles were used.

Donation Items/Offerings

Carrying out any prayer or sacrifice involves the ceremony of presenting sacrificial gifts to deities and spirits who are the souls of the dead. In addition to offered animals and products, material objects can also be used as offerings. The heathen Udmurt use coins and textiles for this purpose. As Yakovlev (1915: 262) notes:

> While the meat is being cooked, the eldest priest collects donations from the worshipers. They usually donate a little, a kopeck, two; a few give 10, 15 kopecks each. The money is gathered on a plate. When all donations that could be received have been collected the priest prays with money in his hands and asks the gods to fulfil the wishes of the contributors. The donations themselves go to the benefit of the clergy, "who do not receive any other payment".

Yakovlev (1903: 187–188), above, indicates that the priest collected donations in a white

scarf, after that "standing in front of the fire in front of the fir tree, he begins the *kuryny* with the scarf in his hands, that is, he prays for those who submitted money." Tezyakov (1896: 8–9) describes the collection of donations during the winter prayers as follows: "Each Votyak approaching the sacrificial place wiped his hands with snow then took out some copper coin from his purse and handed it to the priest with a half-kaftan and knelt in the ranks of the worshipers." According to Tezyakov, these donations are used to pay for the sacrificial animals, and the remaining surplus is distributed to the poor (ibid.: 9).

Currently, each participant in the prayer brings small coins as donations, *zhuges' / l'yugez'*, usually according to the number of family members. But paper banknotes can also be brought. Coins as well as paper banknotes are washed in water, wiped with a towel specially prepared for this purpose and served to the priest, or put in a special dish holding the coins or banknotes on a cloth (handkerchief, sleeve, hem, etc.) because to do this with bare hands is forbidden. In the village of Kasiyarovo, coins are collected in a handkerchief or towel held by a priest. In Tatyshly district, the priests pray with the donated money at the final recitation of prayers asking the gods to increase the money. Moreover, the priests, unlike at other stages, are on their knees and bareheaded. The priests divide the *zhuges'* between themselves and the assistants and use them, for example, to buy alcoholic treats after completing the ceremony. Traditionally, it is believed that it is necessary to donate silver coins, *azves' kon'y*; today people try to use coins made of white metal.

Photo 4. A priest collects kon'don zhuges', *sacrificial coins. Kasiyarovo village, Burayevo district, Bashkortostan. 2019. Photo by Sadikov.*

In addition to using coins as *zhuges'*, i.e., donations to priests, in some cases the coins are treated as donated to deities. So, for example, in the villages of Kasiyarovo Burayevo and Kizganbashevo, in Baltachevo district, coins were inserted into the hollows of trees as a sacrifice to the spirit of the sacred grove, *keremet kuz'yo*. After the old trees with hollows fell down, they began in both villages to put coins in holes in the ground. At the *keremet* sanctuary in the village of Bayshady, Burayevo district, silver coins, *zhuges'* for the spirit of the sacred site, were also placed in a hole in the ground and buried there (FM T. M. 1991).

A coin is stuck or placed on a loaf of bread for prayer. As Holmberg mentions, a coin is placed eagle up on the prayer bread (Harva 1911: 148). At present, the Udmurt of Tatyshly district stick one five or ten rouble coin on the bread and the priest prays with this bread. Both the bread and the coin are given by the owners of the sacrificial animal.

Photo 5. Loaves of bread, with coins and birch branches on a towel at the summer district sacrifice. Novye Tatyshly village, Tatyshly district, Bashkortostan. 2013. Photo by Sadikov.

Like coins, woven goods are sacrificed to the gods as well as to the priests. In the village of Kuzebayevo, young women donate head towels to the *kuala* sanctuary when they take part in the patrimonial prayer for the first time. They are hung on poles along the walls of the sanctuary where they remain (Shutova 2001: 51). During the village prayer in the village of Asavka, towels are brought as gifts and hung on a special crossbar made

from a birch trunk. Old towels are also hung there; those are the remains of the gifts of previous generations. The priests and helpers share new gifts between themselves.

The Tatyshly Udmurt hang donated towels and scarves (sometimes other textiles and knitwear, for example, socks) on special crossbars or stretched ropes. In the villages of Tatyshly district, priests say a short prayer for the health and well-being of the donor and his or her family when accepting them as a gift. All gifts received are distributed to the priests and their assistants. In the village of Bol'shoy Kachak, in Kaltasy district, donated textiles are used as prizes for participants in competitions that are held after the sacrifice.

In the villages of Kasiyarovo and Mamady in Burayevo district, and Kizganbashevo in Baltachevo district, sacrificial kerchiefs and towels are tied to birch branches in the sanctuary where they continue to hang until they are completely decayed, or they are burned during the next sacrifice. This is believed to be a sacrifice to the spirit of the sacred grove.

CONCLUSIONS

The examples given show that in this sphere of culture the preservation of traditions, the use of wooden utensils and old homespun clothes, and the emergence of innovation takes place, for example the use of white household robes, modern industrial utensils, tools, etc. Moreover, in some positions one can see the imitation of traditional forms, although the material used for manufacture is industrial. Women's clothing is a bright and colourful festive outfit with all kinds of ornaments, both traditional forms and purchased items. The devices for preparing sacrificial food and tools for the slaughter of sacrificial animals can be both ancient and modern. Many of the tools and means are everyday things but their inclusion in the ritual action changes their symbolism and thus the functions they perform become sacred.

The reasons for the preservation of old objects and the appearance of new ones are very specific and clear, and this is often emphasised in the stories of the informants. First of all, the long-term prohibitions on organisation of religious events during the Soviet period led to the disappearance of many old so-called sacred things, used only at certain religious events: for example due to the gradual disappearance of the functions of the *kuala*, objects no longer used were stored in barns and closets along with other household items; with the death of the old generation of family members, these items were of no importance to subsequent generations, and it became more convenient and practical to replace their use in the household with more convenient factory products. Thus, old wooden objects simply ceased to exist. Similarly, the production of new clothing for participation in religious ceremonies ceased during the Soviet period, only a few kept this clothing in old chests, although in recent decades it has regained its former status. With a new wave of revival of religious ceremonies in the post-Soviet period, there was a need to make clothes for priests and their assistants as well as for ordinary participants. The old self-made materials were no longer available, so people began to resort to a new method of making them from factory fabrics, matching colour and material with old samples. Many women's vintage jewellery is indeed ancestral jewellery. While in the past such luxurious jewellery was not customarily worn in its entirety to religious

events, today it is worn by women as decoration from the past with a hint of nostalgia. But the whole complex of women's clothing is less consistent with the old model and is distinguished by brightness and multiple colours, which was not customary in the past at religious events. Both the adornments and costumes of the women play the role of ethnic marker rather than directly revealing their attitude to a religious rite; the same outfits are also used at other festive gatherings, concerts and festivals, as well as to family and tribal celebrations such as weddings. The dishes are mainly modern, purchased ones. The plates and spoons brought by the participants are ordinary everyday utensils, although they are first cleaned and washed specially for ritual purpose. Such utensils will not be used for feeding livestock, especially cats and dogs, nor will this dish be placed on the floor or in any other place that is considered unclean.

Today, the surviving traditional ritual objects are used for the same purposes and needs for which they were provided. Such items are kept by the priests and are not used until the next ceremony. The participants present at the ceremony willingly draw the attention of the researchers to those household items that have been preserved from past times, and try to say something about those items.

It would not be fair to say that all participants understand the essential significance of the rituals deeply and meaningfully. However, adults say that they go to prayer (*vös'e / kuris'kyny mynon*) or to pray (*kuris'kyny*), while among children, the concept of going to eat porridge (*zhuk s'iyny mynon*) is common. But judging by people's stories, it is clear that the ceremony and joint prayer is turned to the future and should contribute to the positive development of everyone and everything; belief in such a miraculous outcome inspires the participants and contributes to them maintaining their ritual culture. Nevertheless, such seemingly unimportant remarks indicate close contact with other discourses and modes of thought, as mentioned above.

The ritual notes described represent some kind of historical memory or a re-presentation of the past in such a context. Here we clearly see how new everyday things have adapted to old beliefs and how this phenomenon no longer presents constraint and discomfort either for the leaders of religious and ritual practice or for the participants. Perhaps the development process would have taken other forms if the preservation of old objects had been higher and quantitatively much more: the predominance of traditional objects would have dictated that the participants adhere to old objects and to the continued manufacture of objects in ancient styles.

These circumstances are important in modern Udmurt culture, while their ancient parallels illustrate the traditional importance of points of view within local boundaries and their importance for building and maintaining collective identity.

NOTES

1 According to the All-Russian Population Census of 2010, there were 21,477 Udmurts in the Republic of Bashkortostan, including in Baltachevo 488; Burayevo 1,071; Ilishevo 215; Kaltasy 2,616; Kushnarenkovo 241; Tatyshly 5,399; Yanaul districts 6,765 (Census 2013: 29–36), and in Kuyeda district of Perm Krai 4,695 (Chernykh 2020: 15). According to this census, 589 people lived in the village of Kuzebayevo in Alnash district of the Udmurt Republic, 374 people lived in the village of Varkled-Bod'ya in Agryz district of the Republic of Tatarstan (see Kuzebayevo and Varkled-Bod'ya on *Rodnaya Vyatka* website).

2 A priest performs many functions at Udmurt prayer and sacrifice rituals: he is the organiser and manager of the ceremony, the sacrificer, the person saying the prayers and supplicant to the gods and spirits for the well-being of all. In the Udmurt language there are two terms for priest: *vös'yas'* from the word *vös'yany* 'to sacrifice', and *kuris'kis'* from the word *kuryny* 'to ask'/'beg'.

3 According to Adiya M. Minniyakhmetova (born in 1935), to install the cauldron they made a long narrow depression in the ground. In the middle it was deeper, where stones were piled on both sides in order to put the cauldron on them. Firewood was fed into the fire beneath the cauldron from the ends of the depression. The depression allowed the wind go through and the fire burned easily (FM T. M. 2021).

4 For example, "I moved here to live in 1966, that year the local collective farm D'unys chairman, an Udmurt from Sekash, overturned cauldrons of porridge during the sacrifice. The communists did not allow prayer. After this incident, he drowned in the Chikashevskiy pond." (FM R. S. 2018); "In the 1970s, the collective farm party organiser Cherenkov came with 2 or 3 people and turned over the cauldrons. You do not work, he said." (FM R. S. 2017b); "In the 1970s, Klara Kashapova, the party organiser of the collective farm, came to prayers and overturned the cauldrons. Then, when she fell ill, she gave money for the sacrifice." (FM R. S. 1997)

5 An alcoholic beverage.

6 Cups with butter and honey were placed on the *mudor* shelf during prayers (FM T. M. 1991).

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FM R. S. 1997 = village of Mozhga, Yanaul district of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Galim Galyakhmetov, born in 1929.

FM R. S. 2004 = village of Pokrovskiy-Urustamak, Bavly district of the Republic of Tatarstan, Anna Bezenova, born in 1921.

FM R. S. 2006 = village of Ud-Tashly, Bavly district of the Republic of Tatarstan, Semen Romanov, born in 1953.

FM R. S. 2016 = village of Malaya Bal'zuga, Tatyshly district of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Nazip Sadriev, born in 1930.

FM R. S. 2017a = village of Kasiyarovo, Burayevo district of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Adnafiya Daulatshina, born in 1935.

FM R. S. 2017b = village of Starokalmiyarovo, Tatyshly district of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Katira Farkhutdinova, born in 1932.

FM R. S. 2018 = village of Kalmiyary, Kuyeda district, Perm krai, Saniya Tuktasheva, born in 1947.

FM T. M. 1991 = village of Bayshady, Burayevo district of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Minzifa Fayurshina, born in 1929.

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