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CONTINUITY AND REVITALISATION IN SACRIFICIAL RITUALS BY THE EASTERN UDMURT

PART I. THE COLLECTIVE SACRIFICIAL RITUALS BY THE BASHKORTOSTAN UDMURT: ROOTED IN TRADITION

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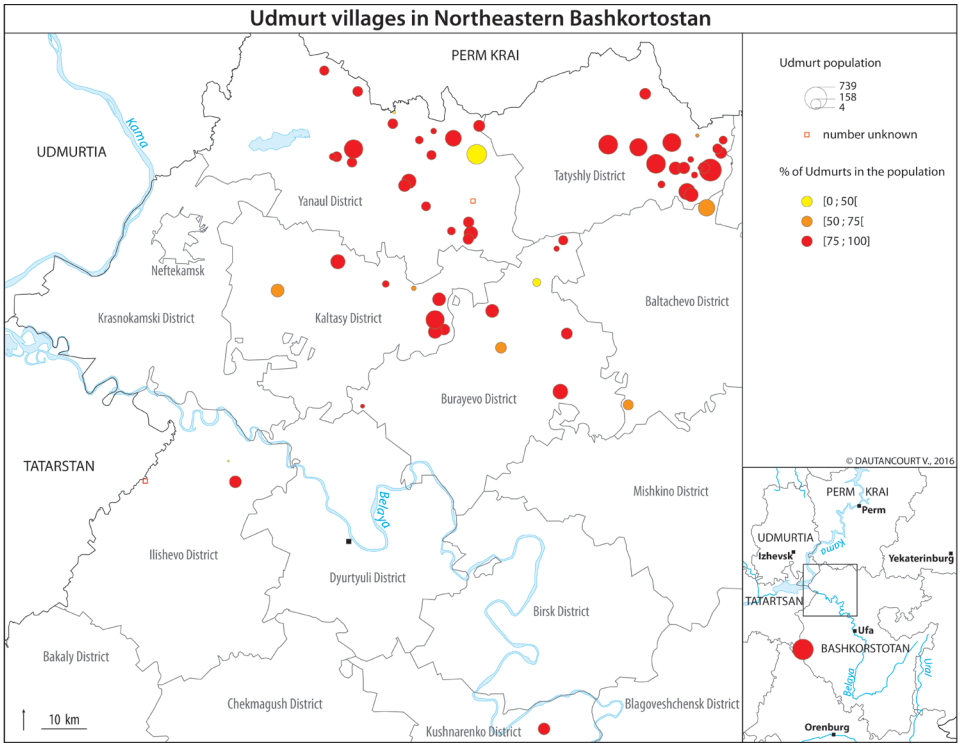
Abstract: This article focuses on a marginal Udmurt group living in Bashkortostan, which has retained, in a Muslim environment, its original Udmurt religious practice. In some places, in spite of decades of anti-religious Soviet policy, the Udmurt were able to pursue their traditional rituals, thus warranting full continuity of their practice. In other places, the tradition was discontinued for some longer or briefer periods. But everywhere there has been a revival at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. The aim of this article, which is based on the authors' fieldwork in one district, is to examine

these processes and analyse them. In the first instalment, we introduce the geographic, cultural and mostly historic context explaining the resilience of the Udmurt religious practice. We show how much was retained and how in some villages full continuity of religious practice was achieved.

Keywords: agrarian religion, anti-religious policy, diaspora, religious practice, sacrificial ceremonies, sacrificial priests, Udmurt, village community

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the spiritual world of the formerly atheist state faced a spiritual turmoil. Old and new religions occupied the public space and sought for support. Besides all the institutional churches, Russia's "ethnic religions" also started to find a new voice. These religions, called in the Russian tradition "pagan" (Rus. *язычество*), had also been persecuted during the Soviet times, and in some places had survived more or less in secrecy. They started to express themselves anew and to look for a place in the new context. The aim of this article is to analyse the ongoing processes. In the ethnic group we are working on there is clearly a religious revival at the turn of the twenty-first century, which is peculiar and complex. We attempt to unravel its proceedings



and to interpret its peculiarities in a wider context. In the first instalment, we present the region researched and the situation of religious practice in the villages at the beginning of the revitalisation process.

The Udmurt we study, who live in the north-western districts of the Republic of Bashkortostan and in the south of Perm district and are called Eastern Udmurt[1], have retained their ancestral religion more than any others.

Throughout history, they have faced permanent attempts of evangelisation and Islamisation, which started in the sixteenth century and continued until the nineteenth century, but have still kept their religious practices, even opposing the Orthodox Udmurt, and calling themselves "true" Udmurt (Udm. *чын удмортъёс*). Nowadays, they explain their migration to the Bashkir lands with their desire to preserve their original religion (Yagafova et al. 2010: 104–108).[2]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, most aspects of life among the Eastern Udmurt were tied to rituals. The social basis of the Udmurt ethnic religion was the rural community, in which the respect for norms and rituals was the condition for the prosperity of agricultural work and overall welfare. The Soviet years brought significant changes also to this field: collectivisation disrupted the rural community and the state implemented its antireligious policy, which limited the possibilities of practising one's religion actively and openly. The collective ritual activity as a basic element of social practice was diminished, although the private sphere, within the patrilineal clan, resisted more firmly (Sadikov 2011: 21, 42–43). The upholding of the collective sacrificial rites depended very much on the personal initiative of the sacrificial priests, the *vös'as'* (Udm. *вöсясь*).

In the 1990s, with the transformation of the socio-political situation in the country, a revival started in the religious traditions of the Eastern Udmurt. Different factors influenced this process of revival, as, for example, the original level of preservation through transmission by the elders as well as the activity of the sacrificial priests, of the local authorities, and of the community itself. The heterogeneity of the process explains the complexity of the subject: there is a whole range of different situations, from total continuity to real revival. We shall illustrate our reflection with the case of the collective sacrificial ceremonies[3] (Toulouze & Niglas 2014) of the Eastern Udmurt living in the Tatyshly district of Bashkortostan, for the different situations are all represented in the sample; moreover, in this region, the collective ceremonies form an entire cycle, actually even two, in spring and in late autumn; and it is also the place where the authors have mainly carried out their fieldwork.[4] We will also reflect on the consequences of the ongoing revival and discuss, in our conclusion, whether it leads to major institutionalisation or centralisation, like what happened with the Mari ethnic religion in Mari El.

For this study, we have primarily drawn on our fieldwork. Indeed, we have almost no written materials to work on as no researcher has visited this region at the time when Udmurt religion in the Bashkir area was not yet a target of major institutional interference, i.e., until the second decade of the twentieth century. While Russian, Hungarian[5] and Finnish[6] scholars visited the Eastern Udmurt from the end of the nineteenth century, none happened to gather materials in this particular area. In order to document the more distant past, we rely on oral information given by elderly people, born mostly between 1910 and the beginning of the 1930s, who had personally witnessed the ritual practices of earlier periods or heard about it from their parents. However, we also rely on the work of two Udmurt scholars. Eastern Udmurt ethnographer Tatiana Minniyakhmetova published the results of her fieldwork, carried out at a time when there were more elderly informants who remembered the pre-Soviet period and thus she provides precious data about the past (Minniyakhmetova 2000). Ranus Sadikov, one of the co-authors of this article, has also been doing fieldwork in this region since 1995, focussing on long-term changes and thus providing a valuable insight into diachronic processes. Researchers from Udmurtia have occasionally been exploring different aspects of the Udmurt culture in the eastern groups. Some of them have carried out fieldwork, such as dialectologist Valentin (Valey) Kel'makov, who collected samples in the Tatyshly district (Kel'makov 1974), among which interesting information about religion may be found; ethnologist Vladimir Vladykin, who wrote a major overview of the Udmurt religion (1994), as well as linguist Mikhail Atamanov and ethnographer Lyudmila Khristolyubova, who worked in close cooperation with Tatiana Minniyakhmetova. Still, their research only occasionally focuses on the Eastern Udmurt *per se* and its primary aim is to reflect on the Udmurt culture or religion as a whole. Our goal is somewhat different[7]: we do not intend with this article to state general characteristics of the Udmurt, but to analyse the present situation of religious practice by the Tatyshly Udmurt, what is happening today and what represents a change in relation to the previous situation.

In this paper we mainly explore the ongoing processes as we draw on our observations as a team since 2013. We have systematically attended sacrificial ceremonies both in the late spring and the late autumn cycles, documenting them thoroughly, and we have been in the field every year, sometimes twice or more a year. Our team is multi-ethnic, multilingual, and interdisciplinary: part of the team comes from the Institute for Ethnological Studies at the Ufa Federal Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Ranus Sadikov), the others are affiliated to Estonian institutions, the University of Tartu (Eva Toulouze, Liivo Niglas, Laur Vallikivi), and the Estonian Literary Museum (Nikolai Anisimov); among the authors, there are two Udmurts – one from the neighbour-

ing district of Buraevo in Bashkortostan and one from Southern Udmurtia, two Estonians, and a French researcher; there are three anthropologists, one folklorist (Anisimov) and one ethnographer (Sadikov, as defined in the Russian research tradition). When our Udmurt colleagues participate, most of the communication during fieldwork[8] takes place in Udmurt and is carried out by them; the non-Russian scholars have relied on Russian (though especially older people are not fully fluent in it). Our fieldwork has been based on participant observation (living in the villages and participating in the life of our hosts, meeting their kin and neighbours, but also attending ceremonies, participating in them and visiting sacred places), as well as interviews (with the organisers of the ceremonies, the sacrificial priests as well as ordinary members of the communities). We have also widely used audio-visual methods, such as video recording, audio recording, and photography. Visual methods allow us, on the one hand, to document, and to fix important ethnographic data, recording directly ritual activities and the oral texts that accompany them. Moreover, the camera also records conversations and remarks from the participants; they may comment on or discuss the event, which provides valuable insights for research, but they may also exchange casual remarks about other everyday life issues that are relevant for them and for village life. The camera also allows suggesting dimensions of the ritual experience, which is more difficult to transmit through other media – the sensory aspect (Niglas 2016). On another level, we can edit the recorded video material, and prepare audio-visual descriptions of each ceremony, which we leave to the religious specialists of different villages and to the local Udmurt cultural centre, providing the local people with means to pass on, if they are willing to, their own tradition.

Firstly, we will shortly discuss the notions of continuity and revival among the Bashkortostan Udmurt, and clarify this somewhat confusing issue from the perspective of different scholarly traditions.

CONTINUITY AND REVIVAL: A PROBLEMATIC ISSUE AMONG THE BASHKORTOSTAN UDMURT

As mentioned previously, there has been some field research done on the Eastern Udmurt earlier, which gives us valuable insights into the situation at the beginning of the twentieth century: particularly precious is Uno Holmberg's [Harva] *Permalaisten uskonto* (The Religion of the Permians) in Finnish (1914–1915), which is a synthesis of the available data just before the borders were closed and fieldwork became impossible for foreigners. Except for Hungarian scholars Gábor Bereczki and László Vikár, who nevertheless concentrated on

singing culture, no fieldwork was carried out in later years until the fall of the Soviet Union. Even Russian scholars, who had access, did almost no research on religion in the region. After 1990, fieldwork has become possible, and some researchers have focused on Udmurt religion – Finnish scholar Anna Leena Siikala and Estonian scholar Aado Lintrop (Lintrop 2003; Siikala & Ulyashev 2011).[9] Most of these researchers have been working in Udmurtia, but not in the diaspora, i.e., not in the regions where Udmurt religion has been and still is most vigorous. Aado Lintrop has been working in Varkled-Bodya (near the border of Udmurtia in Tatarstan), an isolated village that has preserved a rich non-Christian religious tradition. But here we deal with a whole region, in which Christianity is practically absent, and this creates particular conditions, quite different from the other cases. Therefore, their material and conclusions are either quite or slightly different from ours, so we will discuss them in comparison to them.

Russian ethnography takes, as a starting point, the period in which "traditional" (e.g. agrarian) culture is supposed to have reached its peak in the early twentieth century, just before the decline that took place after the Bolshevik Revolution. One way for us would be to compare the contemporary phenomena to what we know of this earlier period previous to the external and disrupting interferences. However, this is a tricky approach for two reasons: firstly, as mentioned above, we have no reliable data about the pre-Soviet period in this region; secondly, there have been some significant changes in-between, which deserve to be taken into account. Another way could be to start from a later point, the period just before the awakening of the 1990s, and to examine what had been retained from the earlier tradition (as much as we know about it), as well as analyse what the newest initiatives have brought forth. In our view, the second approach is more promising, because, on the one hand, it allows to follow what has happened in roughly one century, and thus to take into account the different local ways to tackle the pressures from the state as well as the different levels of continuity the local communities have been able to retain.

The issue of continuity and revival is particularly interesting if we take into account, as a comparison point, the situation in the south of Udmurtia, where coercive and thorough evangelisation took place, which made part of the population to migrate eastward. Over there, Christianity had reached almost everywhere, and most of the Udmurt had no choice left than to integrate the Russian Orthodox Church into their daily lives. This does not mean that they abandoned their own ethnic religion, but they gradually absorbed elements of Christianity that became important in their identity, while retaining practices from their original traditions, which were adapted and changed in different proportions depending on the place and on the families. While only one village –

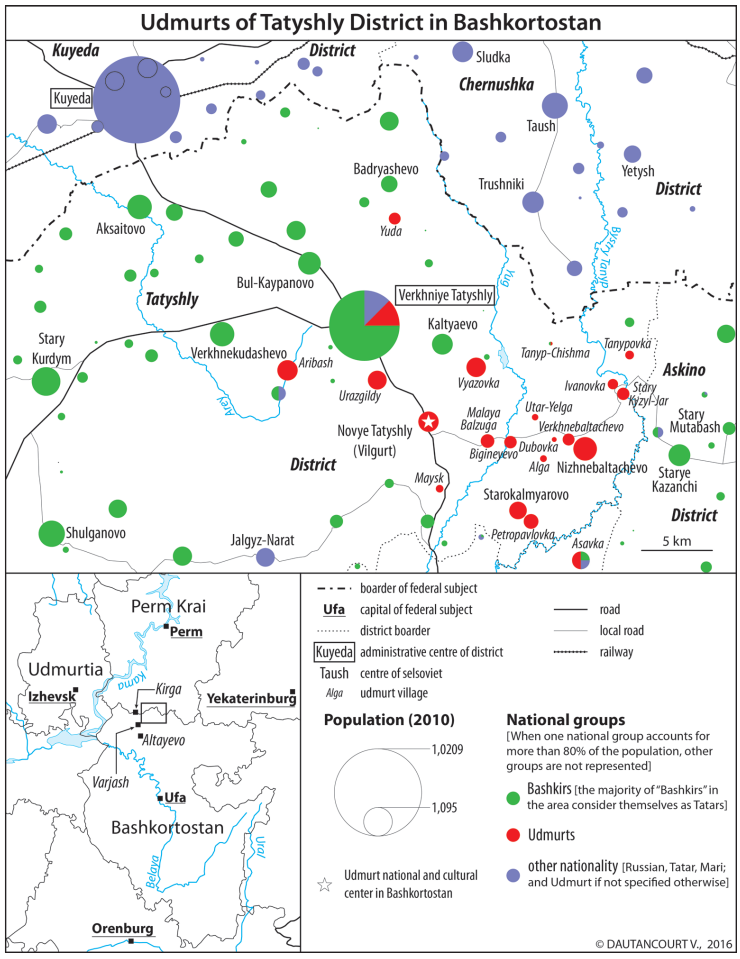
Kuzebaevo in the Alnashi district (see Siikala & Ulyashev 2011) – has been able to avoid Christianisation until the last decades,[10] the remains of the "former worldview" are widely part of folk Orthodoxy in all parts of Udmurtia. Therefore, it is particularly enlightening to study religious practices in the regions where Christianisation did not reach Udmurt villages, and where, as we argue, the surrounding Islam shielded the Udmurt from the state-supported forceful influences. This is the case both for one village (Varkled-Bodya) in the territory of Tatarstan and for Bashkortostan.

It is highly significant that one of the places where ritual continuity has been indeed achieved, the village of Varkled Bodya, is located a few kilometres from the Udmurt territory, in the Tatar district of Agryz. It has been thoroughly studied by Estonian scholar Aado Lintrop (Lintrop 2003)[11]; so instead we chose to concentrate on more remote regions, in Bashkortostan. In the Tatyshly district of north-western Bashkortostan, there are several places where no interruption at all has occurred in the collective ceremonies. The more remote and difficult to access the villages were, and the further away from the Communist Party officials (not all of them were hostile though), the easier it was to avoid interference, although this explanation does not suffice to explain everything. In other places, for different reasons, there was an interruption at some point: for example, it happened that an old sacrificial priest died and did not always pass on his skills to others.

In the late period of the Soviet Union and in the first post-Soviet years, the antireligious pressure subsided and an interest for spiritual matters emerged. Where ceremonies had been performed secretly, they were now held openly, with wider and wider attendance; where they had disappeared, they reappeared. This is the process we are going to study in more detail within the limits of this two-part article, while occasionally referring to what is supposed to be a more ancient state of the tradition.

THE TATYSHLY UDMURT: A BRIEF HISTORY

According to the 2010 all-Russia census, there were 5399 Udmurt in this district out of some 20,000 in Bashkortostan, which represents 21.5 % of the whole Udmurt population (Natsionalnyy 2013: 35). These Udmurt represent a particular ethno-territorial sub-group of the Eastern Udmurt, called the Tatyshly or Higher Tanyp Udmurt (from the name of the River Bystryy Tanyp, Udm. *Танып*), which emerged at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries and had their peculiarities in their ethnic culture and dialect. This is the region we have investigated. The histories of particular



villages are longer or shorter: many of them have lasted for several hundred years.[12] Thus these villages have all experienced the Soviet anti-religious policy and it may be interesting to follow the extent of the preservation of the ethnic religious practices in relation to the age of the settlement.

What is directly relevant to our subject is that the Tatyshly Udmurt are divided into two clearly distinct religious groups, which are called, according to their position in regard to the River Yug (Udm. *Ӟык*), the right and the left bank group. Each organise their own collective ceremonies called *mör vös*[13]: the right bank group organises it in the village of Novye Tatyshly (in Udmurt Vil'gurt, and that is how it will be mentioned hereafter), and the left bank in the village of Alga. The Udmurt themselves, on both banks, call their own group "(the ones) living on this bank of the Yug (Udm. *Ӟык тапалъёс*) and the other

one "(the ones) living on the other bank of the Yug" (Udm. *Ӟык тупалъёс*).[14] The inhabitants of Aribash, however, differ from the others: their origins are connected with the Tanyp sub-group of the Eastern Udmurt, although today they are part of the right bank group of the Udmurt.[15] We will now concentrate on the collective ceremonies of both groups, while occasionally emphasising the differences between them. These ceremonies are sacrificial events in which whole villages or groups of villages gather in order to pray to Inmar, the main god of the Udmurt, to ask for health and fertility for people and livestock, and a good harvest, as well as rain in times of drought. In this overview chapter, we will mention the historical data available, in order to give our contemporary observations some historical depth.

THE CEREMONIES OF THE TATYSHLY UDMURT

We shall here concentrate on the cycles of collective sacrificial ceremonies. There were other ceremonies more or less restricted to the private sphere, which means that they were performed within the group of the patrilineal kin; some of them are still performed.[16] There are also occasional rituals connected with events in personal lives. We only mention these other rituals to show the richness and diversity of the religious life of the Tatyshly Udmurt, while, as said before, we shall concentrate on the cycles of collective sacrificial ceremonies.

Both cycles, in late spring and in late autumn, must be concluded before the solstices, and were, in the origins, as far as we know, quite symmetrical. In spring, each village organises the village ceremony, in Udmurt *gurten vös'* (Udm. *гурт(эн) вӧсь*). A while later in the Yug right bank group (also known as the Vil'gurt group) the "ceremony of three villages" *kuin gurt vös'* (Udm. *куинь гурт вӧсь*) took place, which was attended by people from Urazgildy (Udm. Vukogurt, as we shall call it hereafter), Vil'gurt, Malaya Balzyuga and Maysk (in the Soviet period the latter was inhabited by people coming from Vil'gurt and had no distinct identity in ritual activities). On the left bank of the Yug, in the so-called "Alga group", there was and there still is an intermediate ceremony, called *Bagysh*[17] *vös'* (Udm. *Багыш вӧсь*). This part of the cycle has been the least stable, as we shall observe hereafter. The last ceremony to be held is the *mör vös'* (Udm. *мӧр вӧсь*), in which the ten villages of the right bank of the Yug gather: Aribash, Yuda, Vyazovka, Vukogurt, Malaya Balzyuga, Maysk, Utar-El'ga, Verkhniye and Nizhniye Tatyshly as well as Vil'gurt. The villages on the left bank have also their collective *mör vös'* that gathers nine villages: Bigineyevo, Tanypovka, Kyzylyar, Verkhne- and Nizhnebaltachevo, Starokalmiyarovo, Petropavlovka, Alga, Dubovka. In both collective ceremonies,

the place has been changed throughout the years. All these ceremonies were organised in the period in which the rye was in flower (Udm. *ӟег сюрелакы*).

At the end of autumn also winter village ceremonies (Udm. *тол гурт вӧсь* or simply *тол вӧсь*) and winter collective ceremonies (*тол мӧр вӧсь*) were held before the winter solstice. The villages on the left bank also have the winter *Bagysh vös'*.

So this is the basic cycle of the ceremonies including entire villages and groups of villages of the Tatyshly district. We shall now comment upon the changes that were brought about in the Soviet period,[18] still before the wave of revitalisation of the 1990s began, and in consequence of which the cycle lost some of its symmetry.

We may add that since 2008, for the Tatyshly Udmurt as well as for the other Eastern Udmurt, the cycle is concluded after the solstice by a general ceremony attended in principle by all the villages of the region. It is called *Elen vös'* (*Элен вӧсь*) and it is a good example of real revitalisation, for it was held for the last time in the 1920s, and the memory of it was lost almost everywhere, except in the three villages where it was held (Sadikov 2010).

CHANGES IN THE SOVIET PERIOD

Changes induced by the Soviet period were of different nature and scale. Some were just consequences of the developments in agricultural techniques. For example, the rotation of the fields was abandoned. This influenced directly the praying in the spring cycle: the villages had three sacred places, the use of which was also rotating according to the direction in which the given year's rye field was. So while in former times there were three sacred places, only one remained active.

But other changes were more concretely connected with Soviet policies towards religion. During the Soviet period, it was not allowed to organise these large scale ceremonies openly, for they were seen as threatening the collective wealth due to slaughtering livestock and "wasting" working time. Thus, the sacrifice of bigger animals (oxen, horses) was discontinued, for these animals were considered as state-owned. The party and other Soviet institution's functionaries led an active fight in order to eradicate "religious vestiges". Older informants report countless cases when "bosses" popped up at the ceremonial places when the porridge was ready, and knocked over cauldrons, so that the gathered people could only go back home empty-handed. We heard these stories practically in all villages and from different informants (for example: Flyura Nurieva, Nazip Sadriev (Balzyuga); Garifulla Garifanov (Nizhnebaltachevo);

Irina Minljaskarova (Starokalmiyarovo); Salim Shakirov (Vil'gurt) etc.). Usually, the persons who committed these deeds are said to have been "punished" later and died in non-natural ways. The sacrificial priests were summoned by the police for questioning, and they were subjected to explanatory speeches and to more or less harsh punishing measures. Nevertheless, most of them attempted, if only secretly, to keep organising all kinds of ceremonies.

The pressure of secrecy had consequences. If earlier the sacrificial ceremonies encompassing several villages were held by the biggest villages, they now held them in tiny villages, far from the administrative and kolkhoz centres. The dimensions also decreased; the ceremonies were mainly attended by elderly people. On the left bank, the *mör vös'* was initially held in Starokalmiyarovo, on top of a hill. In the 1960s, because of persecutions, the ceremony was transferred to a lower place. However, in 1978 the new place was flooded due to building a dam, and the villages gathered for sacrificial ceremonies not far from the small and remote village of Alga.[19] The place for ceremonies was also changed in the right bank group: before 1930 it was held in Verkhniye Tatyshly, close to the source of the River Tatyshly. When the Tatyshly district was founded in 1935, and the village became its centre, the place changed and the ceremonies started to be held in a field between Verkhniye Tatyshly and Vukogurt. Afterwards it was transferred to Vil'gurt in a gully close to the shore of the River Bolshaya Balzyuga (Udm. *Писмень*), where it was more difficult to notice that people had gathered.[20] In many villages, former places were abandoned and replaced by more discreet locations, where people's gatherings would not attract any undesired attention. Malaya Balzyuga is, from this point of view, a good example: the sacred grove used for the ordinary village ceremonies was visible from the main road running through the village. After a disrupting interference from the party officials, Nazip Sadriev, the sacrificial priest of Balzyuga, decided to move the sacred place just less than fifty metres further, but to a lower place closer to the spring, which was not visible from the road.

Some more changes took place. The atheist upbringing of the younger generations had some consequences, and it was hard for sacrificial priests to find successors to whom pass on their skills and knowledge. The few active sacrificial priests carried a big burden on their shoulders. This led to some adjustments, the aim of which was to ease their task. Thus, one of the most authoritative *vös'as'* of the Tatyshly district, Nazip Sadriev, who was one of our main informers, initiated some changes: among the most radical ones was to leave out of the ritual calendar the ceremony conducted by the three villages on the right bank. Several reasons explain this choice: on the one hand, the priest himself was getting older and older; on the other hand, as he explained himself, the expenses of buying a ewe for this ceremony were becoming unbearable for the

community, which in the same period had to buy a lamb for the village ceremony and one for the 10 villages' *mör vös'*. There were also changes in the proceedings of the ritual, and we shall dwell on them further on.

In the second part of the article in the next issue of the journal we will comment on the transformations of the post-Soviet period and of recent years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

[1] Or Trans-Kama Udmurt; in Russian 'закамские удмурты', in Udmurt 'камсьӧр удмуртъёс'.

[2] However, the reasons for leaving their original villages, the territory of which is now part of the Republic of Udmurtia, were manifold (and comparable to those that led the Mari to the same kind of migration; see Yamurzina 2013: 113–116). The Mari also are still there, outnumbering five times the Udmurt in Bashkortostan.

[3] We shall not here detail the proceedings of the ceremonies. Eva Toulouze and Liivo Niglas have published an ethnography about it, which gives the necessary details (see Toulouze & Niglas 2014).

[4] Since 2013 the authors have made common fieldwork in the framework of the projects DFLKU14509, PUT590, and PUT712 of the Estonian Science Foundation, as well as the Institut Universitaire de France.

[5] Bernát Munkácsi visited the Birsk uyezd, now Yanaul district, in 1885 (see Sadikov & Minniyakhmetova 2012).

[6] We refer to Yrjö Wichmann (1894), Axel Heikel (1884) and Uno Holmberg [Harva] (1911), who carried out fieldwork among the Eastern Udmurt in the Birsk uyezd; we also refer to Heikel and Wichmann's fieldwork in the Kaltasy and Yanaul districts as well as Holmberg's [Harva] observations in the Osin uyezd (now Kueda district, in the Perm Krai).

[7] For example, the fencing of ritual sites is not unheard of: in different regions of the area inhabited by the Udmurt, and in a certain period in history sacred places may indeed have been fenced.

[8] We have been working in the field as follows: in 2011, a pilot one-day visit by Ranus Sadikov and Eva Toulouze; June 2013 Eva Toulouze, Liivo Niglas, and Ranus Sadikov; December 2013 Eva Toulouze and Liivo Niglas; June 2014 Eva Toulouze, Liivo Niglas, and Laur Vallikivi; June 2015 Eva Toulouze and Ranus Sadikov; November 2015 Eva Toulouze, Liivo Niglas, and Ranus Sadikov; June 2016 Eva Toulouze, Nikolai Anisimov, and Ranus Sadikov; December 2016 Eva Toulouze, Liivo Niglas, Nikolai Anisimov, and Ranus Sadikov; June 2017 Eva Toulouze, Laur Vallikivi, Nikolai Anisimov, and Ranus Sadikov; October 2017 Eva Toulouze, Liivo Niglas, and Nikolai Anisimov; April 2018 Eva Toulouze and Laur Vallikivi; June 2018 Eva Toulouze and Ranus Sadikov.

[9] As well as German scholar Sonja Luehrmann (2011) on Mari religion, more precisely on atheism in Mari El.

[10] Over recent decades there have been some baptisms, both into the Orthodox Church and into Protestant denominations, but this has not significantly affected the identity of the larger group.

[11] In English: Lintrop 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008.

[12] The first data are from 1670, referring to the villages of Baltachevo and Kalmiyarovo, while Tetysh village (today Verkhniye Tatyshly) is mentioned in 1703 (Asfandiyarov 1994: 35–38). Other villages are mentioned in 1723: Starokalmiyarovo, Nizhnebaltachevo, Bigineyevo, Staryy Kyzylyar (RGADA 1723). Other villages were formed in the following decades and centuries: Aribash (1743), Nizhniye Tatyshly (1768), Urazgildy (beginning of the nineteenth century), Novye Tatyshly (1849), Malaya Balzyuga (1878), Yuda (1896), Vyazovka (1922), Tanypovka (1924), Mayskiy (1924), Alga (1927), etc. (Zaydullin & Zaydullin 1999).

[13] It is one of the ceremonies of the spring and autumn cycles.

[14] R. Sadikov's fieldwork materials 2003, Vil'gurt village, Tatyshly district, Khabrislam Khabibyanov, born in 1933.

[15] According to elderly informants, the right bank collective ceremonies were also attended by the Udmurt of Chikashevo (today Tatarskiye Chikashi in the Kuyeda district, Perm Krai). Fieldwork materials 2016, Nazip Sadriev, born in 1930 (Malaya Balzyuga). R. Sadikov visited the Tatyshly Udmurt in 1997, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2010.

[16] This is the case of the so-called Great Day (Udm. *Быдӟынал*), the starting of the New Year, which coincides with the Orthodox Easter (Minniyakhmetova 2000: 22). Other ceremonies took place in the clan's sacred building, the *kuala*, which practically does not exist anymore, except in some rare places, like *kualae pyron* (Udm. *куалае пырон*) around Pentecost, in which birch branches were put on the sacred shelf and the old ones were burnt (fieldwork materials of R. Sadikov from 2000: Shabrika Garibzanova, born in Vil'gurt in 1902) and from 2009: Farkhana Badredtinova, born in Kyzylyar in 1928). Another family ceremony was the autumn prayer (Udm. *сӥзьыл куриськон*), after the harvesting season. Fieldwork materials of Ranus Sadikov from 2000, Maysk, Tatyshly district of the Bashkortostan Republic; Anastasiya Samysheva, born in 1924;

fieldwork materials of Ranus Sadikov from 2009, Kyzylyar; Farkhana Badredtinova, born in 1928.

[17] The capital initial letter is explained by the interpretation of this word: it is supposed to be the name of the owner of the field where the ceremony was held.

[18] At least on the basis of the material we have been able to gather. The only source we have is the memories of older people, and what we are going to present is not the result of direct observation or archival data, but of human remembrance. There may have been other changes nobody ever mentioned; the event recalled may have been remembered in different ways by different witnesses. So our following chapter cannot be taken as a positivist description of what happened, but as a synthesis of what we were able to collect.

[19] Fieldwork materials of Ranus Sadikov from 2000, Starokalmiyarovo, Tatyshly district of the Bashkortostan Republic; Boris Kostin, born in 1939.

[20] Fieldwork materials of Ranus Sadikov from 2003, Novye Tatyshly, Tatyshly district of the Bashkortostan Republic; Salim Shakirov, born in 1938.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

RGADA 1723 = Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents, fund 350, list 2, folder 3790. Knigi perepisnye iasachnykh krest'ian i bobylei (mari, udmurty, tatary, chuvashi, mordva) Osinskoi, Kazanskoi, Nogaiskoi i Sibirskoi dorog Ufimskogo uezda. [The Census Books of the Yasak Peasants and Landless Peasants (Mari, Udmurt, Tatar, Chuvash, Mordva) of Osinsk, Kazan, Nogai and Siberian Roads of the Ufim Uyezd.]

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