

Galikhanov as their leader. A self-invited delegation of sacrificial priests from Izhevsk attended, among them Al'bert Razin<sup>29</sup>.

## The dress codes of the ceremonies

There was historically a dress code for participants as well as for priests at the collective ceremonies. At least the photographs we have from the end of the 19th century (Sadikov, Mäkelä 2009) show that at a collective ceremony all the attendants were dressed in white. True enough, the photos are from another location, but it is not too far from Tatyshly district. They are from the Kaltasy district, and their author is the Finnish ethnographer Yrjö Wichmann. Yet they confirm what earlier literature asserts. Unfortunately, there was no extensive investigation into Tatyshly district before the end of the 20th century.

As the prayers were addressed to the “White God”, the people were all supposed to dress in white and indeed, in everybody’s wardrobe there was an item of holy day dress that answered this aim, a piece of homespun called *short-derem*. There were *short-derems* for males as well as for females. Of course, and regretfully, we have no such visual evidence for the period in between. We know that on the one hand home spinning progressively disappeared from being the sole or even one of the ways of providing clothing. Thus, the existing *short-derems* from the beginning of the 1960s are the last. Moreover, they also disappeared with the demise of their owners, for people used them as mortuary clothes. Thus, at the beginning of the 21st century, there were only a few samples still used by their owners. Indeed, the old women who owned one used when attending ceremonies (FWM 2016<sup>30</sup>). So did the very rare priests who had one. The *short-derem* was an ankle-length overcoat in whitish homespun material, with thin vertical stripes and girt with a kind of belt. This belt could also be homespun, as in Udmurtia, but usually in the region under study the sacrificial priests girt themselves with a long, embroidered towel patterned in red or, more rarely, blue<sup>31</sup>. This belt was and still is a central emblematic element of the sacrificial priest’s costume.

<sup>29</sup> Who would become unhappily famous some months later, in September 2019, for committing self-immolation in the centre of Izhevsk as an act of protest against the language policy of the Russian federal government.

<sup>30</sup> At Nizhnebaltachevo *gurt vös'* we saw ourselves how the elder Anfissa Bamieva wore one, 03/06/2016.

<sup>31</sup> Vladik Khuzimardanov uses a belt with blue patterns, Alga 14/06/2013, etc.

But what were *short-derems* replaced with? For sacrificial priests, the most important aspect of this costume was its colour. Thus, the sacrificial priests used ordinary white medical smocks to replace the older costume. Undoubtedly these lacked solemnity, but were symbolically right.

The 21st century brought a renewal and a diversification of the sacrificial priest's costume. In Tatyshly district some individuals still use the traditional *short-derem*: old Nazip Sadriev owns one and dresses in it when attending a ceremony, and the Vyazovka priest Filarit Shaymardanov has one he uses with pride. He even proposed that he would give it to our group, but we preferred to have him use it for its original purpose. Until 2013 all the other priests in the district used medical smocks, and for many this is still the case as we write this text, in 2021. However, already at the 2013 winter ceremonies, the Alga group priests wore a similar smock made of commercial fabric, slightly resembling the *short-derem* material, with much wider vertical stripes. It appeared that the Demen cooperative had bought the fabric and financed the making of the smocks, and a good quantity of them so that all the sacrificial priests of the Alga group would have a particular costume for the collective ceremonies.

Meanwhile, the priests praying in the Vilgurt group go on using their medical smocks, although Fridman has received as a gift from friends a *short-derem* made of commercial material but quite similar to the original one, and in other districts priests have started to add to the smocks decorative elements in red or green that reference Udmurt patterns. The idea behind them is to give a more joyful appearance to the sacrificial priest's character than that transmitted by the traditional austere costume.

As far as the lay participants are concerned, we may only acknowledge the facts, as information was particularly scarce during the 20th century. It is clear that the obligation to be garbed in white ceased to be taken into account in this intermediate period. Only elder women remember it, and the last survivors are not here for long; neither will their *short-derem* survive their demise. The ordinary ceremonial garb for women was for a long time Udmurt traditional dress, with bright colours, if possible light ones. This was certainly so in 2013. However, in the following years we have witnessed this choice dwindle: in 2021 most women wear ordinary Western-style ceremonious costume or a suit, only some rare individuals, older women as a rule, still wear Udmurt traditional dress.

Another compulsory element in the dress code is the obligation to have heads covered, both for men and women. This is interesting, for Wichmann's photos show us that in 1895 the men had no headgear, or just did not wear it, while the women wore scarves. Atamanov confirms that this was the rule for a long time (Atamanov 2020: 139, 153). For women, the rule still

applies and they usually wear a headscarf, even if the rest of their clothes have nothing to do with Udmurt dress. For men the rule is just the reverse compared with the past, i.e. they must cover their heads. Men wear whatever they have, usually light caps, white, beige or grey. Black headgear is not recommended, although it can be seen sometimes. Today the sacrificial priest wears the same kind of headgear. But there is still the memory of older times, when the sacrificial priest wore a hat wrapped in a white towel. The elder attendants, as the abovementioned Vyazovka priest, still wear it (FWM 2017), and Nazip Sadriev showed us how to wrap the towel around a hat (FWM 2017).

Among other rules connected with dressing there are some taboos and the participants in locations where the sacrificial priests are active do not ignore them. Beyond the needs of having the head covered, it is important that arms and legs should also be covered. If some young boy comes in shorts, he is immediately sent home to dress correctly, and neither are short sleeves admitted. When Ranus, having forgotten this rule, arrived to attend the ceremony in short sleeves, the Aribash priest's wife commented that it is important to have your arms are covered at the beginning of the ceremony, and provided a jacket for him. This reminded us of an observation from the spring commemoration of the dead in Petropavlovka (FWM 2019<sup>32</sup>): when the commemoration started and everybody sat at the table, all the women put on jackets and cardigans; we were told that the dead would not see us if our skin was totally uncovered. It also reminds us of the rule followed by the *bölyak* patrilineal kinship group in Varkled Bod'a during the *vös'nerge* ritual (for more details see Toulouze & Anisimov 2020b).

Finally, we must add that respect for these rules is of the utmost importance to the Eastern Udmurt and especially for the sacrificial priests, who often complain that today people do not know how to behave. They endeavour to instruct the population in different ways. At *Elen vös'*, Anatoliy Galikhanov always addresses the audience at the end of the prayer, explaining the rules. He also has a page on the social network vkontakte<sup>33</sup> and he often posts instructions explaining what should be done in certain circumstances and how ritual behaviours have to be followed. The information about how to behave in ritual contexts is also published regularly in the regional Udmurt newspaper *Oshmes* (Toulouze & Anisimov 2020), one

<sup>32</sup> Spring commemoration (Udm: тулыс кисьтон), attended by Eva Toulouze and Nikolai Anisimov, 07/05/2019.

<sup>33</sup> See: <https://vk.com/id82757120>. Vkontakte is a kind of Russian equivalent of Facebook.

of the most active writers on the subject being Liliya Garaeva, the Aribash sacrificial priest's wife (Garaeva 2020: 2).

## The proceedings of the collective ceremonies

In Tatyshly district, the proceedings of the ceremonies are on the one hand quite similar on a general level, and on the other hand can also be considerably different in detail from one village to another.

We shall firstly comment on the most elaborated ceremonies in the places where continuity has been ensured, and then show in which manner they have been simplified in places where revitalisation later took place, for example where there was an interruption in the performance of these ceremonies. Indeed, this approach relies on the idea that the more complex rituals are the older ones and that in subsequent evolutions and changes some features have been lost, a hypothesis that is confirmed by the data. We know that in some villages there has been full continuity of the ceremonies, at least since the 1940s. In Bal'zuga, Nazip Sadriev had perpetuated and transmitted the rules of the ceremonies of his youth.

Although there are some differences in the process of a ceremony depending on at what level it takes place, the overall structure and the nature of the activities remain the same within a specific tradition. While at the village level there is usually one priest praying and one animal slaughtered, then at the village group and at the regional levels the number of priests depends on how many villages participate and how many animals have been brought for sacrifice. The general rule is that the number of priests must correspond to the number of ewes. Usually fewer helpers and common people participate at the village ceremony than at the ceremony involving a number of villages.

What follows is a description of different phases of the typical process of collective ceremonies. We try to highlight the common features of ritual activities across Tatyshly district as well as the main differences in various traditions of conducting the ceremonies, both within the district and outside of it.

### The preparation

The preparation requires many different simultaneous tasks that are quite similar everywhere.