perhaps we have spoken the prayer in the wrong order, we have no book". Several times, during the prayer as well as at the end, the priest asks God to receive the prayer with favour. He also asks God to receive with favour what the people have not asked for, but what they desire: God reads in the mind of each what their wishes are. All comes from God, what he gives is "his" warm rain, "his" happiness, as very clearly expressed by the frequent use of personal suffixes. Within this framework, there are two kinds of demands. On the one hand, the keyword is "give", which is expressed in a very varied number of expressions both grammatically and lexically. The other keyword is "protect", from natural catastrophes (rain, wind), fire, disease, bad people and bad things. The natural catastrophes too come from God: "his" fires, "his" winds. The bad people are generally those who are able to curse in Udmurt: those who threaten to "eat you, to drink you, to take you". This is an obvious reference to the art of witchcraft, which feeds on the energy of its victims.

We present these texts in three languages, Udmurt, Russian and English. For the time being, we present the Udmurt texts in the empiric transcription the sacrificial priests rely upon, and not a scientific dialectological transcription, which we shall attempt to produce later. This transcription is a mix of Udmurt literary language and dialectal features, but does not attempt to be completely precise in the presentation of all peculiarities. The priests themselves know exactly how to pronounce each word, for they preach in their own dialect. The English translation attempts to give a precise account of the Udmurt text.

The films

Filmmaking has been an important component of the fieldwork from the very beginning of our research on the Eastern Udmurt. Most of the filmmaking has concentrated on public prayer ceremonies. Liivo has been the main filmmaker in the research team, but others – Ranus, Nikolai, Laur and Eva – have also greatly contributed to the audio-visual documentation of ritual life. Even Denis Kornilov, a film director from Udmurtia, joined the team twice to help with filming. In addition to the prayer ceremonies, the team also recorded rituals in more intimate contexts in Tatyshly district and elsewhere. We believe that recording public ceremonies and other rituals is justified for several reasons.

First, these ceremonies have a high cultural value that should be shown to the world. Usually, worldviews not associated with world religions are marginalised, even ignored, especially in Orthodox Russia. Even most of the

Udmurt living in Udmurtia who were converted to Orthodox Christianity a long time ago have little knowledge of the animistic tradition that has survived in the diaspora. By filming ritual practices in Tatyshly district, we wanted to contribute to the wider acknowledgement of the existence of animistic ceremonies among the Eastern Udmurt. We believe that film as a popular medium is better suited for this task than scholarly text.

The second reason we wanted to use a video camera in the fieldwork was to facilitate the sharing of the research results with our informants and research partners. Our aim was to record collective ceremonies for the local communities themselves, so that they could use these recordings for their own benefit – as cultural documents, as testimonies to the history of each village, as guides for the training of their priests, etc. This is why, after each ceremony recorded in summer 2013, Liivo and Ranus edited a rough cut of the film from the recorded video material and distributed it on DVD or as a film file to the priests. On the one hand, we felt obliged to give something back to the communities while on the other hand we wanted to show the draft versions of the films to the priests to document their reaction, both to elicite new information on the ceremony as well as to ensure that everything was represented correctly and satisfactorily.

The third reason to use filmmaking as a research tool in our ethnographic fieldwork was our interest in the experiential aspects of the ceremonial activities. For us, the transmission of the sensorial dimension of ritual activity is important as it helps the viewer to reflect on the corporeal and emotional experience of the people conducting and attending the ceremony. The sensorial aspect of filmmaking helps the spectator to catch the atmosphere of the ceremony and what it means to be physically engaged in ritual practices, be it porridge making, sheep skinning or kneeling and praying. The audiovisual image has the potential not only to convey visual information of the recorded activity, but also to bring forward its aural and even tacit qualities (see Pink 2006; MacDougall 1998, 2006).

Our aim was to record the ritual events as accurately as possible, as they occurred with all the intensity, spontaneity and unpredictability that characterises an event involving many people and a number of parallel activities. To achieve this, we opted for the observational approach to filmmaking. This means that certain choices had to be made, both in the way of filming and in the process of editing.

We decided from the very beginning to document the Udmurt religious ceremonies without doing formal interviews and without directing participants' behaviour, for example by asking them to re-enact their actions for the camera. It was also crucial to keep the film crew to a minimum. Usually there was only one person involved in the filmmaking during the

ceremonies. From the professional point of view, it would have been better to use another person to record the sound, but we decided to prefer the spontaneity of action, both the participants' and filmmaker's, over quality of sound. Recording sound for film requires specific skills and equipment, and this would have meant inviting to our research team a film professional who has a little or no experience of ethnographic fieldwork. Fortunately, modern audio technology – our on camera microphone with windshield in combination with a wireless clip-on microphone – allowed us to capture decent quality sound even with Liivo filming alone.

As matter of fact, Liivo Niglas, who has so far shot most of the team's films on prayer ceremonies, always prefers to film alone, even when working on properly funded documentary projects. He is usually the director, the cameraman and the sound recordist, as well as one of the editors of the film. Working alone gives him the necessary freedom to make the right decisions while observing ongoing, often unpredictable events with a video camera. His objective is to observe the spontaneous action of the film's characters, including their reactions to the presence of the camera. The other researchers–filmmakers in our team work in the same way.

Our way of filmmaking is based on observation but does not exclude participation. Although interviewing people on camera during the ceremony is usually avoided, spontaneous, verbal as well as non-verbal, engagement with film subjects has been an important feature of the filming process: it not only helps the filmmaker to stay physically close to the subjects, but also invites them to be active participants in the creation of the filmic representation. This filmmaking approach has much in common with our main fieldwork method, that of participant observation.

Our aim was not to achieve objective and/or cinematographically perfect descriptions of reality but to facilitate an emotionally and sensorially engaged meeting between filmmaker (and thus audience) and film subjects. Instead of filming from a distance, trying to capture every single detail in an impersonal and detached way, we stayed close to the subject and relied on our subjective interpretation of the filmed reality. The closeness to the people and subjective dimension of the filming is also manifested in the style of the camera's use. In order to follow the film subjects closely we prefer to film with light hand-held cameras because the use of heavy cameras and tripods makes implementation of spontaneous decisions clumsy.

The principles of observational cinema were also followed in the editing. To respect the temporal and spatial aspects of the filmed events, long takes and few cuts were preferred in the editing process. In addition, interviews, voice-over commentary and music scores were avoided to encourage the audience to form their own ideas and interpretations and provide them

with the impression of witnessing first-hand the experiences of the subjects. The observational approach offers the viewer an opportunity to look at the lived experience of others. It tries to capture the sense of the rhythms of everyday life in a specific physical and social environment and film subjects' relationships with other people and material objects; it enables the viewers to hear native spoken language with all its intonation, inflection, and accents. This kind of filmmaking does not pretend that the camera is not there, it does not hide the presence and the influence of the filmmakers; on the contrary, the catalytic role of the camera on human behaviour can be considered as one of the cornerstones of observational cinema (see MacDougall 1998, 2006; Young 1975; Henley 2004).

The choice of the observational approach gave rise to certain challenges. As the camera was almost always next to the sacrificial priest, it was impossible to cover all the ritual activities with the same accuracy. Observing the main action, the cinematographer risks missing parallel activities that take place elsewhere at the same time. For example, the throwing of the blood into the fire by the men who slaughtered the sheep was often not properly documented as the camera was filming the praying priest(s) at that moment. This could have been avoided if we had filmed the ritual from a distance, but then we would have missed the facial expressions and other signs of the experiential state of the priest reading the prayer.

Our biggest challenge in filming was the lack of language skills. In order to achieve our goal to document the ceremony as a lived experience, we tried to follow ordinary conversations and small talk (greetings, enquiries about health, jokes, etc.) because this spontaneous verbal communication often reveals important issues and peoples' values and attitudes. As Liivo does not understand Udmurt, he filmed participants' verbal exchanges for long enough that we could include some of it in the final film after Ranus had made a translation. The aim was not so much to provide more information about the process and meanings of the ceremony, it was more important to help viewers see the ceremony as a social event where new relationships are formed and old ones reinforced, where the social capital of individuals is acquired and where the social unity of the village is maintained. It also shows that the ceremony is a place to pass ritual knowledge to the next generations and to negotiate concepts of proper sacral behaviour. By including the longer conversations as well as small talk in the film, we aim to provide viewers with the social context of the ceremony and demonstrate that the sacrificial ritual is as much about the living people and the mundane as it is about the gods and the sacred.

This book is linked to DVD links, leading to four films. The four films represent the annual cycle of collective ceremonies of the Vil'gurt group. The

ceremonies were recorded between 2013 and 2017 and were released as a DVD set in 2019 (Niglas 2019). All the films are connected by the character of Fridman Kabip'anov, the young priest from the village of Malaya Bal'zuga,

In the first film, we see Fridman conducting a village ceremony (*gurt vös'*) in Malaya Bal'zuga in 2014. He is still a young unexperienced priest: he reads his prayers from a paper and relies heavily on the advice of his helpers and his predecessor Nazip Sadriev. The second film documents the joint prayer ceremony (*mör vös*) in Vil'gurt in 2013. Fridman organises the collection of grain from the villagers in Bal'zuga and buys a ewe in order to take it to Vilgurt as the contribution from his village. In the ceremony, Fridman serves as a helper, the main priest being Rais Rafikov, who leads the ceremony with authority gained through experience and his charismatic personality. The third film, on *Elen vös',* was also recorded in 2013. It shows Rais, Fridman, Salim Shakirov and others bying a ewe, getting cauldrons in Vil'gurt and driving to Kirga, where the joint ceremony of the Eastern Udmurt is taking place. Again, Rais is giving orders to Fridman and others on cooking the porridge. Nevertheless, Salim is the one who joins other priests to say prayers in front of a large crowd. The leader of the ceremony is Anatoliy Galikhanov, from Altaevo, who controls the pace of the ceremony, gives his blessing to people who have come from different corners of the Udmurt diaspora, gives an interview to a television crew from Moscow, etc. The final film of the series, shot two years later, is about the winter joint ceremony (*tol mör vös*) in Vil'gurt. We see Rais and Salim in charge of the ceremony, but this time Fridman acts as an experienced priest, participating in ritual activities with confidence and saying his prayers from memory.

We have filmed many more prayer ceremonies and other rituals since 2013, but at the first stage of editing we decided to limit ourselves to these four films. Editing is hard work, especially when the editor, as in Liivo's case, does not understand the language. Luckily, our Udmurt collaborators are becoming more and more experienced in filmmaking and our hope is that very soon they will take over the making of the team's films, including those that have already been shot but are waiting editing.

Conclusion

Tatyshly district is certainly today the centre of the Bashkortostan Udmurt, for more than one reason. Certainly, the strength of the Demen kolkhoz and its charismatic leader Rinat Galyamshin have led to the building in Novye Tatyshly of facilities that have helped to turn the village into a kind of small Udmurt capital in Bashkortostan. It is the place where the National Cultural