

Religious traditions of the Eastern Udmurt in a transformed situation

Eva Toulouze (INALCO, Paris & University of Tartu) & Ranus Sadikov (Ufaa)

The Eastern Udmurt are the descendants of people who migrated in the 16th-18th centuries on Bashkir regions, eastwards from their original territories. The migration was due to multiple causes, but today's generation reminds only one, the attempt to flee from Evangelisation. And history proves that they were able to carry on until our days many of the traditions of their ancestors. Emphasising their religious distinctness from the Christianised Udmurt, they call themselves "true Udmurt", *чын удмуртъёс*. They live in villages in the north-western districts of the Republic of Bashkortostan and in the south of the Perm kray in the Russian Federation.

The religion of the Eastern Udmurt, being of an agrarian character, fully corresponded to their peasant way of life. It functioned fully until the 1930s, when traditional rural culture was disrupted and religion was persecuted. But even in Soviet times, many rituals and customs continued to live, even in a clandestine way. What suffered more was collective ritual life, the collective ceremonies. The beginning of the 1990-s witnessed an active process of revitalisation of the ancient religion of the Eastern Udmurt in modern forms. According to many modern Udmurts' understandings, the preservation of their ancestors' religion in one of the conditions for survival in the increasingly globalised world. Many rural Eastern Udmurt still believe in the sacred character of the rituals, and for some, especially for the intelligentsia, the traditions of older religion are seen as their cultural and ethnic heritage.

We may distinguish different levels and categories in the contemporary rituals of the Eastern Udmurt.

Rituals and customs of worshipping deities:

- Family calendar sacrificial ceremonies and occasional ceremonies
- Clan calendar sacrificial ceremonies and occasional ceremonies
- Village and intervillage calendar sacrificial ceremonies and occasional ceremonies
- General calendar sacrificial ceremonies

Traditions of worshipping ancestors and the dead

- Family occasional funeral and commemorative rites
- Clan calendar commemorative rites

Spirit propitiation rituals

- Private magical rituals.

All of them may also be categorised into relicts existing only in some locations, and generally widespread rituals, taking into account that some have not lost continuity and others have been object of reconstruction.

Bibliography:

Minniyakhmetova Tatyana 2000. *Kalendarnye obryady zakamskikh udmurtov*. Izhevsk: UIIYAL UrO RAN.

Sadikov Ranus. 2010. *Traditsionnaya religiya zakamsikh udmurtov (istoriya i sovremennost')*. Ufa: Pervaya tipografiya, 2019. 320 c.

Anisimov Nikolai. 2017. *“Dialog mirov” v matritse kommunikativnogo povedeniya udmurtov*. Dissertationes Folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis. Tartu: University of Tartu Press.

Toulouze, Eva; Niglas, Liivo (2024). Collective rituals of the Eastern Udmurt: The example of the Tatyshly district in Bashkortostan. Tartu: EKM Teaduskirjastus.