

Short Reports

CULTURAL SENSE OF A COSTUME
“MEMORY” IN TAILORING
OF MORDOVIAN SHIRT

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Urgency of problem, related to interpreting cultural sense of Erzi and Mokshi traditional costume is defined by unresolved question in the area of Mordovian culture genesis. In research of this problem system and informational-semiotic approach play the main part. Difference in tailoring basic element of shoulder clothes of Mordva, Mokshi, and Erzi underlines genetic variety of the formed culture and binary nature of Mordovian ethnos.

While studying traditional clothing it is impossible to neglect special features of its tailoring – one of basic signs in specificity of material and spiritual culture of an ethnos. Traditional Mordovian costume is the most complicated phenomenon of culture that counts about 16 local variants that correspond to subethnical difference of nation. Tailoring of Mordovian clothing attracted attention of such scientists as N.I. Gagen-Torn, B.A. Kufitin, K.I. Kozlova, V.L. Sychev, O.A. Sukhareva, N.P. Lobacheva, and others [1–6]. Studying semantic of the costume leads us to comprehending it as a certain language of ethnoculture, special sign system of transferring meanings that exceed limits of usual concept [7, 8, 10].

Difference in tailoring shirt, a basic element of Moksha and Erzi complex of clothing, touches upon the foundation of Mordovian culture. Erzyan shirt differs not only from Moksha type, but also from shirts of other By-Volga nations in principles of forming collar, sleeves, hem: two panels of linen, bent across and tailored between each other, formed the foundation of shirt with four stiches, placed in the middle of chest and back, and two – on its sides. The shirt had unsewn gap (approximately 30 cm) that formed cone-shaped cut. The origin of Erzyan tailoring is related to population of agricultural type, and this fact reflects semantic of labour activity [4, p. 9]. Tailoring of Mokshan shirt, made of 4 linen plates with locating a whole plate in the middle of chest and back and making a whole for head in place of connection between two cloths refers to the second subtype of Volzhskiy-Finnish tunic-like type that is also typical for Mariya, Chuvash, Udmurtian shirts as well as shirts, worn by women in Southern-Russian districts of Tula, Ryazan, Penza,

Oryol, Tambov, and Voronezh regions. The prototype of such tailoring is unopen clothing, made of thick felt with a cut for head, that remains one of basic clothing element in Arab world [1, p. 10]. Mokshan type of tailoring demonstrates relation between culture of Mordva-Mokshi and ancient traditions of steppe nomad world [8, p. 137-138]. It can be considered as a materialized sign of cultural community of Middle By-Volga nations – Finno-Ugric, Turk, and Slavyan.

Thus, tailoring of a clothing element is a sign that broadcasts multidimensional information on past and present in culture of an ethnos, underlines genetic variety of the formed culture. Participation of tribes that inhabited neighboring territories, as well as foreign-ethnos elements in initial stage of formatting an ethnos culture is obvious. This fact demonstrates complex and multidimensional nature of Mordovian culture that finds a vivid display in *binary character* of Mordovian ethnos. The most valuable, from the position of society, fragments of memory are preserved in ritual [9, p. 135–139; 11, p. 117–122].

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