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Behind the Scenes

The Mari Teacher's Wardrobe in Central Russia

Abstract

In this article, I analyse teacher's attire as a political phenomenon in the context of the Mari people, a Finno-Ugric minority living in Central Russia. The material for this study is based on observations and interviews made by the author during 1987–2019 in different places of the Mari region. The Mari teacher's dress code, a dark dress with a white collar, is usually considered self-evident, but as I argue in this article, in the Soviet Union, and in Russia at the post-socialist time, the Mari female teacher's dress served two practices. Firstly, clothing represented position and agency of power, the socialist ideal, and later the political trend of the majority. Secondly, clothing represented traditional, everyday Mari life.

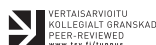
Keywords: dress codes, folk costume, identity, Mari, Soviet and Post-Soviet period, tacit knowledge

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Introduction

What to wear at work? In this article, I discuss the question by analysing teacher's attire as a political phenomenon in the context of the Mari people, a Finno-Ugric minority living in Central Russia. The teacher's dress code, a dark dress with a white collar, is usually considered self-evident, but as I argue in this article, in the Soviet Union, and in Russia at the post-socialist time, the Mari female teacher's dress served two practices. Firstly, clothing represented position and agency of power, the socialist ideal, and later the political trend of the majority. Secondly, clothing represented traditional, everyday Mari life.

Representatives of the Mari people (total population 550,000) live in the Republic of Mari El, (formerly the Mari Autonomous Region, 1920–1926, and the Mari ASSR, 1936–1990) and in the neighbouring republics of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Udmurtia, and the Ural region. The material for this study is based on observations and interviews made by the author during 1987–2019 in different places of the Mari region.¹ As part of my field work, I interviewed villagers about their everyday routines, especially their dressing practices. In the Mari villages, it was often the teacher of the Mari language who advised us on finding informants because she or he knew who follows the traditional way of life.

Usually, the first meeting with the teacher took place in the school building, and for this encounter she or he was dressed in fashion attire. In this article, fashion dress means urban dress or Russian dress (*Rusla vurgem*) produced by the fashion industry. The folk dress, which can be characterised as the Mari everyday dress or feast dress, is used in the countryside and called Mari dress (*Mari vurgem*) in the Mari language. It represents the opposite of the fashion dress. (Lehtinen 1999, 8–11, 20–26; Lehtinen 2017, 45–49; Lehtinen 2009, 164.) According to Gilles Lipovetsky's (1994, 105, 117) categorisation, the Mari dress may be called a *living dress* or *antifashion*.

The female teacher's formal attire (fashion dress) was a skirt with a blouse and sweater, and in winter, completed with a woollen shawl. However, when the same teacher was interviewed as an informant, she was a different person, dressed in the traditional way or in a dress embroidered with Mari motifs. This surprised me. Why dress in a different way? Their responses reflected a reference to order: "The teacher always wears fashion attire."

1 My research trips were usually organised by the National Museum of Mari El Republic or by the Research Institute of the Mari El Republic and supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.



Image 1. Group of Hill Mari teachers wearing the fashionable dress in the 1950s.
Photo by German Yuadarov / Izmail Efimov.

In this article, I analyse the wardrobe of four teachers, considering the problem on a more general level using visual material, class photos, and the perspectives of women's magazines in the Mari language. I ask, were images of women designed to be role models? How did the teacher find a solution to keep the balance between the macro- and micropolitical world, between the collective and private life? Was it a question of some local solution in this context? From the point of view of the teachers, I also discuss the collections of costumes in the school museums, because it was the teachers who put together the school museum's collections. Often the collection began with the teacher's formal attire, as a memory of past, as a symbol of cultural heritage.

Theoretical frame

The theoretical frame follows Michel de Certeau's theory of everyday life in a macro- and micropolitical environment. (Certeau 1998, 145.) The discourse of public and private spheres is relevant studying the role of woman in Soviet Russia and in the post-socialist time. I agree with Judy Attfield that the body is constituted within social relations, and that a person can only establish their individual identity through interrelations with others. Class, gender, age, and sexuality are all inscribed on the body (Attfield 2000, 238). The body is an individual and subjective thing. (Certeau 1998, 146.) Through detailed everyday

routines and clothing practices, I obtained answers about how women relate to the body, even though the subject was very delicate and intimate. I hypothesised that in the Mari countryside, teachers' clothes represented professional life, at the collective level, and was presumably a political act.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, teachers' professional position shapes their habitus in relation to physical appearance. (1980, 174–175.) Erving Goffman (1959) considered the position of the individual as a theatrical performance. Goffman argues that when an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or her they already know. (Goffman 1959, 13.) The communication between people is comparable to a performance. A person must act so that (s)he intentionally or unintentionally expresses himself/herself, and the others will in turn have to be *impressed* in some way by him/her. (Goffman 1959, 14.) In school, the position of the teacher is the same. When the teacher appears before others, e.g., colleagues or students, (s)he understands that first impressions are important. The teacher believes in the part (s)he is playing. The professional appearance is a part of a depersonalization process and sustained control. (Goffman 1959, 14–15, 67.)

In her everyday life, behind the scenes, the Mari teacher changed her public attire into other kind of clothing, and simultaneously, she also changed her identity. At home, in the private place, the daily activities of teacher were cooking, housecleaning, caring for clothes, education of own children, and in the countryside husbandry and gardening. As the keepers of their own cultural practices, teachers were often experts of traditional norms and values. For them, the folk costume was a link with the past, with parents and ancestors. Many of them also had a Mari-style burial costume. This conceptionally incoherent dualism was observable through the teachers' attire in different circumstances.

The Mari, a minority in Russia

Russia has always been thought as a melting pot of peoples, even the regions west of the Urals are inhabited by more than 100 different nationalities. The Mari, along with others who speak Uralic-languages in Russia are minorities in their homeland, the Republic of Mari El. Their language separates them from their neighbours. The Mari Autonomous Region was founded in 1920 and re-established in 1936 as the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. After the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1990, the Mari Republic was established as a part of the Russian Federation. The constitution (1995) declared that Russian and Mari are the state languages of the republic. During the period of Governor Leonid Markelov (2001–2017), the status of the Mari language changed: in 2001 the education law was abrogated, and the compulsory teaching of the Mari language was revised, becoming an elective language the students could choose. (Zamyatin 2014, 234–235.)

Eric Hobsbawm has stated that in addition to language and religion, shared history is formed by the criteria of one national identity. (Hobsbawm 1983, 14.) The Mari have their own history and for the first time a book depicting their past was published in 1999 in both the Mari and Russian languages. (Ivanov & Sanukov 1999.)

Geographically, the Mari are divided into three groups. The Hill Mari live in the hilly south bank of the Volga, while the Meadow Mari inhabit the meadow areas of the river's the north bank. The third group consists of those Mari who moved to East, especially to the former Ufa and Perm Governments in the 16th century.

The folk dress is one of the nation's symbols, and perhaps it is the most visible one. The picture they give to an outsider is a model approved by the society. One of the most important missions of this model is to present primarily the national, but also the local identity. The folk dress named Yoshkar-Ola functions as a symbol of Mari identity, and it is used everywhere in the Mari region. It was designed in 1930s based on the Meadow Mari folk dress which consisted of a white dress and apron decorated with flower embroidery and lace. The folk costume represents the different local types, and at the same time different local identities. The Hill Mari have their own official language and folk dress. Today, it consists of a white blouse, a white skirt and an apron of white cotton fabric and satin in pastel colours. The embroidery made with a running stitch in pastel colours is situated on the collar, and sleeves. The apron is embroidered with flower-shaped motifs, with lace on the hem. The Eastern Mari wear a dress made of coloured cotton fabric with flower embroidery. The colour white is used only in rituals, funerals, weddings, and sacrificial feasts. In the past, the dress included many jewels of silver coins and pearls, although today the coins are imitations.

From the museum collections to the field

I have conducted fieldwork among Mari people since 1981. Aim of the fieldwork was to gain new information and material on Mari culture for the Finno-Ugric collections of the National Museum of Finland where I have worked since 1975². The collections of Finno-Ugric peoples in the National museum of Finland have a long history. First expeditions to Siberia were made in the 1840s. The Finno-Ugric peoples of Volga region, the Mari, Mordvinian and Udmurt, have been an object of particular interest to Finnish ethnographers till the Russian Revolution 1917. After the Revolution, during the Soviet period, field work among the Finno-Ugric peoples became mostly impossible until 1991 when the borders opened.

2 I retired in 2014.

As I started my work in the National Museum of Finland, the existing museum artefacts in the museum's collections represented the situation before the Revolution. The collections of Finnish scholars are very well documented and followed with the field diaries, but the artefacts are dumb as they do not answer for the questions about the symbolic meaning or the context of use. (Baudrilard 1968, 105; Aurasmaa 2002, 41–44). In 1981, I had the possibility to make a trip to live among the Mari for five weeks. I worked mostly in the National Museum of the Mari Republic with the keeper of clothing collection. At my request, the director of the Mari Scientific Institute, Ivan Galkin, organized some trips to the Hill Mari village of Esanovo and the Meadow Mari village of Sernur where I held interviews about the Mari traditional costume. In 1984, I spent the month of June in the Mari Republic and visited the home village of Mari teacher and collector Timofey Yevseyev in the village of Az'yal. During these field trips I tried to speak Mari and created confidential contacts with Mari colleagues.

In autumn 1987, the nature of my field work changed decisively. With the help of Professor Rail Kuzeyev I worked in the Mari villages of Bashkortostan for two months. There, I had the opportunity to work with Bashkirian L. I. Nagayeva who studied dance and Tatar F. F. Fatykhova who focused on Mari ritual practices. We lived with the villagers who invited us to their homes where they observed the costume practices, offering much information on their everyday lives. In the politically uncertain period (1990), my field work concentrated on the Mari sartorial practices in Paran'ga. There, I worked with Mari ethnologist Tamara Molotova. Then in 1991, I worked in different villages in Bashkortostan with Mari activist Lidiya Yarmingina.

After the Soviet period, the Russian borders opened without needing special permission, making field work in the countryside much easier. I had dreamed of comparing the Mari collections obtained at the beginning of the 20th century to the recent costume practices, so I studied Mari folk clothing, its traditional forms, and the re-invented and renewed forms, as well as aspects of everyday life, including feasts and festivals as part of the Mari cultural heritage. My field work followed the footsteps of Finnish ethnographers and Mari collector Timofey Yevseyev to the Mari villages of Udmurtia, Perm and the Sverdlovsk region in 1994, 1995, 1996, and to Bashkortostan in 1997 and 1998.

In 2001, a field work project began with Professor Helena Ruotsala of the University of Turku, students at the universities of Helsinki and Turku, and ethnographer Tamara Molotova of the Mari Scientific Institute. The field work took place in the village of Uncho in the Mari Republic. The aim of the project concentrated on the modernization process of the Mari woman and involved observations and interviews. Our trips were in summertime, and we returned to the same village in 2002, 2003 and 2004. We created close contacts with the

villagers. My part in the project involved completing my data collection in spring 2006. Thereafter I made short trips to the village in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2019.

By the proposition of the National Museum of Mari Republic field works were undertaken to research the everyday life of the Mari in the summers 2009, 2013 and 2015. In Bashkortostan, in the districts of Nizhniy-Novgorod and in Tatarstan we made some trips, making interviews, and collecting artefacts for the museum. I have had a chance to make observations about the dresses of the village of Choray (Russian Churayevo) in Bashkortostan during the years 1987, 1991, 1996, 1997 and again in 1998. I was interested about the changing of dress culture and returned in this village in June 2019. This last trip was organized by Lyudmila Yamurzina, Mari ethnologist who lives in Estonia.

In addition, I travelled among the Mari in 1990, 1993, 1997 as a president of M. A. Castrén Society, and met many Mari cultural persons, usually teachers of mother tongue. I talked about the importance of preserving and development of Mari culture, the using of the Mari language in museum encountering, in the everyday life.

Outsider in the field

My research interest focuses on material culture, but first and foremost I am interested in the person or woman wearing the Mari costume and jewellery, not in the making of these items. Using Clifford Geertz's *thick description* approach, I tried to study the symbolic meaning of the Mari culture, from the objects to the social context. (Geertz, 1973, 7, 12, 14.) How can an outsider evaluate and follow the culture of others? How to interpret the foreign culture, how to make contact with the informants? In the field, I was an outsider. I knew that my knowledge was slight, and for me the informant represented an expert of Mari culture, a source of information, a woman's life. I described the passing event which existed in the current moment. (Geertz 1973, 19.)

The languages of the conversations were Mari and Russian. In the 1990s, I worked in the Mari villages of Bashkortostan and my questions concerned the jewellery which included expensive silver coins. I spoke Mari in these interviews because the informants mostly 60–70-year-old women, some of whom did not speak Russian. After that, my goal changed, i.e., the transformation of costume, the modernization process and everyday life concerned all ages, so the interviews were held more in Russian. The interviews concentrated on the clothing in different forms, different contexts and different ages. Observing how the women contemplated about where they kept their costumes, in a chest or in a cupboard, and how they presented their own costumes and those of their relatives was, for me, a true encounter. The costumes opened up lives, a micro historical memory and a discussion. Following Geertz's methods, I observed sartorial practices and

recorded them carefully. (Geertz 1973, 20.) In the early stages of my research, I documented costumes by photographing them, and since the beginning 2000 by filming them on video camera. Living in a Mari family I learned the lifestyle, behaviour, everyday life practices, and participated in family feasts and rituals.

I was welcomed as a woman and a mother of three children regardless of my different nationality. My interest in dresses was not always understood, because during Soviet rule most people sneered at and made fun of the Mari-dresses. Women told me about their costumes and during these conversations, they also told me about their worldviews and attitudes towards life in general. The dresses prompted different kinds of stories, even grisly stories at times. The women told the person behind the camera about the dangers of “eyeing” people in the village; people put pins on the cleavage of their clothing to ward it off. Being accepted did not mean I integrated with them. As a researcher, I studied the people and made observations without adopting the point of view of the people I was researching.

The four women teachers whose wardrobe I analyse in this article are Anastasiya, Elvira, Tatyana and Tamara. Anastasiya is the oldest one of them. I interviewed her in 1995 as she was 50–60 years old. Other informants are younger, they were interviewed between 2006 and 2015 as they were 40 to 60 years old. In order to protect the privacy of my informants, I refer to them here by their first name. **Anastasiya**³ lives in Mari-Vozzhay, a small village in the Grakhovo district in the Republic of Udmurtia. **Elvira**⁴ lives in the village of Shorunzha (in Mari Uncho), Morki district, Republic of Mari El. She was born in the village of Chavaynur. Her father was educated as a bookkeeper, and he became the director of the collective farm. He advised Elvira to learn bookkeeping. At the same time, there was a teacher from the teacher training college in the city of Orshanka working in Elvira’s school. She suggested that Elvira become a teacher, and so she did. She graduated in 1980 as a primary school teacher, and after that, she moved to Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of the Mari El, for postgraduate studies. She first worked in a school in the village of Shlan’ in 1984. The school had 24 pupils. After that, she moved to the village of Shorunzha, and took the post of maths teacher. She married in 1985 and has three children.

Tatyana⁵ lives in the village of Sosnovka (in Mari Püñcheryal), Mishkino district, Republic of Bashkortostan. Sosnovka’s school has 68 students and 14 teachers. Tatyana finished the teacher education college in Blagoveshchensk in

3 Anastasiya was interviewed on June 14, 1995 during a field work conducted with Tamara Molotova, Mari ethnologist from the Mari Research Institute, Yoshkar-Ola.

4 Elvira was interviewed June 25, 2006 during a field work conducted by the author.

5 Tatyana was interviewed during a field work in August 14–16, 2009 conducted with Mari ethnologists Anastasiya Ayguzina and Dmitriy Baydimirov from the National Museum of the Republic of Mari El, Yoshkar-Ola.



Image 2. Anastasiya in a festive dress which includes a homespun dress, apron, embroidered headdress and large chest jewellery with silver coins. Photo by Ildikó Lehtinen. Finnish Heritage Agency, Picture collections SUK 1113:74.

1974–1978, and since 1980, I she has worked in the village as a teacher. **Tamara**⁶ lives in the village of Ulis'yal (in Mari Ĵlys'jal), Republic of Tatarstan. She is from Mari Turek, a village on the border of the Mari Republic.

6 Tamara was interviewed during a field work in June 8–9, 2015 conducted with Anastasiya Ayguzina and Dmitriy Baydimirov from the National Museum of the Republic of Mari El, and Tamara Molotova from the Mari Research Institute, Yoshkar-Ola

I also use interviews of *Rosa* and *Alexandra* as research material. Rosa's (1937) father was a teacher, and she married a maths teacher in 1959. Alexandra, a French teacher (1931) began teaching in Shorunzha school in 1952.

Returning to my work in the museum, I taped discussions, diary, organized the photos and the artefacts for the collections of the National Museum. After the trips I contacted with my informants, sending photos and letters, calling, and organizing the following trips. The methodological problem concerned the analyse and the interpretation. (Geertz 1973, 23.) I tried to verify my interpretations returning to the same village years over years.

The educational context

The parents were members of the Komsomol and were devoted to the new Soviet regime. This was very common for people from poor families; they welcomed the communist regime. My mother especially welcomed it because at that time it was very rare for a girl to be able to get an education.... She often told me it was only thanks to the Soviet regime that she had the opportunity to study in higher education. I was raised in a typical Soviet family. My mother worked so my grandmother looked after me. (Ilic 2013, 15.)

According to Finnish historian Sirkka Laihiala-Kankainen, the role of education has been of great importance in building a new socialist state and shaping the politically desired ideal of Homo Sovieticus. (Laihiala-Kankainen 2000, 76.) In Soviet times, the position of a teacher and the social status of the profession became stronger. Education was considered a key element of social reconstruction. Before the Revolution, the illiteracy rate was high, and the majority of women (88%) lacked basic writing and reading skills. (Denisova 2010, 46.) The Soviet Decree of 1925 made elementary education universal, and the main challenge was finding a sufficient number of teachers. During Soviet rule, new schools, new teaching, and a new religion to replace the old one were imposed on peasant youth.

The case of Lyudmila Mikhaylovna Alekseyeva (1927) reflected the Party's effort to recruit future teachers from among workers and peasants. Since the early Soviet period, the same process began in the Mari Autonomous Region. The main endeavour of the Bolshevik policy was to eliminate illiteracy. From 1923, the rural schools, which were closed during the Civil War, opened, and in the period between 1927 and 1932 the number of schools doubled. (Apakayev 1993, 95.) The Communist Party offered special treatment to the non-Russian minorities, and under the policy of indigenization, *korenizatsiya*, and established educational and cultural institutions. (Petronne 2000, 10; Hoffmann 2003, 166; Lallukka 2003, 174–175; Zamyatin 2016, 224.) The school programme

was based on the local Mari language. (Apakayev 1993, 97; Ivanov & Sanukov 1999, 127.) One of the first attempts to guide educators in the new ideology is in *Туныктыммо паша. Туныктыммо пашам виктарыишэ журнал* [Teaching work. Teaching methods scientific magazine], a magazine in the Mari language for teachers published 1927–1930. The magazine established the major elements of socialist education. The articles provided advice on ideological programmes for schools, how to organize education in rural schools, and represented the new everyday life (Russian *byt* [life, everyday life], Mari *u ilysh* [new life, everyday life]). In 1929, I. E. Romanov addressed the Mari women and defined in detail the meaning of the new everyday life, women's equality, and women's rights. (Romanov 1929, 48–49.)

The main challenge in spreading the ideology was in finding enough qualified teachers as we have stated earlier. This resulted in the opening of teacher training colleges, beginning in 1930, for Mari students from the peasant worker background in Kazan', Yoshkar-Ola, Sernur, Kozmod'emyansk and Kokshamary. (Andreyanov 1993, 122; Lallukka 2003, 176.) In 1931, the Mari Pedagogical Institute for higher education and teacher training in Mari was established in the capital of the Mari Autonomous Region. In 1932, the teacher training college produced 241 teachers, 163 of which were of Mari origin. By 1935, the number of graduates was 483. (Andreyanov 1993, 126.) In eastern Mari, teacher training schools in Birsik and Krasnokamsk, and later in Blagoveshchensk, were established for those living in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan. (Lallukka 2003, 177.)

At the same time, in the late 1930s, masses of people, former kulaks and “anti-Soviet elements” were incarcerated or executed. (Hoffmann 2003, 174–175.) Direct action occurred against the Mari scholars, local patriots, and indigenous intelligentsia. (Lallukka 2003, 193; Zamyatin 2016, 224; Toulouze 2017, 162.) In the Mari Autonomous Region, the Communist Party purges gained momentum in 1935 and 1936. These operations were called *chistki*, ‘cleansings’ and affected cultural life and educational institutions. From 1937 to 1938, many of the teachers from the teacher training college in Yoshkar-Ola were arrested for political reasons, suspected of being enemies of the people or of engaging in espionage. (Andreyanov 1993, 127; Sanukov 1993, 78–79; Lallukka 2003, 193.) The terror was fatal for the Mari intelligentsia. Nearly all Mari writers and others in the cultural sector were shot. The number of people arrested and killed in the Mari Autonomous Region/Mari ASSR climbed to about 15,000. (Sanukov 1996, 34; Lallukka 2003, 193; Sanukov 2010, 165.)

After the Second World War, in 1948, the education programme began again. It was decided in the Mari Republic to improve education in the countryside. (Rybalka 2002, 116.) The language of education in the elementary school was still Mari until 1958. As the status of the Russian language and literature in-

creased, the Mari Pedagogical Institute in Yoshkar-Ola established a department in 1953 for students who wanted to become Russian language teachers. (Rybal-ka 2002, 140–141.) New schools, training schools, clubs and cultural centres were established to integrate Mari into teaching. However, by the 1958 educational reform changed the compulsory teaching to free choice of language learning, teaching the Mari language was stopped and retained only in some rural schools. (Zamyatin 2018, 263.) Then, in the 1990s, the Mari language, alongside Russian, was given official language status in Mari El in the republic's constitution. (Khainolainen et al. 2020.) Since the 1990s, new opportunities have expanded the use of Mari in education and the public sphere. As a result, the Ministry of Education and the Mari Republic published a magazine for teachers, *Туньктышо / Учитель* [Teacher].

Recently, Daria Khainolainen, Yulia Nesterova, Elena Semenova and Konstantin Zamyatin followed the education of minority languages in Russia. In 2001, the department for nationality affairs within the Mari El Ministry of Education and responsible for minority language programmes was closed. At the same time, following the federal government policy on minority languages, schools were granted the choice of whether to include the Mari language in curricular as a subject, 'mother tongue', or incorporate it as a language of instruction. Some schools considered this political development as an opportunity to reduce the number of teaching staff for financial reasons and replace Mari lessons with English lessons or other subjects and provide all instruction exclusively in Russian. (Khainolainen et al. 2020; Zamyatin 2016, 222–227; Vedernikova 2018, 237.) The status of the Mari language changed as time went on. The role of teacher still emphasised education without religion or national traits. Therefore, the teachers' position is subordinate to the stereotypes and ideals created in the public mind.

Clothing in the Soviet ideology

Communism / is not only/ on the land / at the plant in the sweat / it is also at home/ at the table / in the relation / in the family/ in everyday life. (Vladimir Mayakovsky)⁷

One of the first goals of Soviet ideology was to influence the everyday lives of people. Everyday life meant private life, i.e., the family, home, chil-

7 Field 2007, 13. Translated by Deborah A. Field; "In this excerpt from his 1925 poem 'Drag Forth the Future!', translated here by me for the first time into English, Mayakovsky makes explicitly clear that, for him, communism is inseparable from all aspects of daily life. "Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Выволакивайте будущее!* 1925. Carrick 2016, 92.

dren, social network and working life. (Fitzpatrick, 1999: 2–3; Certeau 1998, 145–148; Buchli 1999, 23–27; Field 2007, 12–14; Attwood 2010, 26–27; Leбина 2016, 225.) Sheila Fitzpatrick notes that, “Socialist realism was a Stalinist mentality, not just an artistic style. Ordinary citizens also developed the ability to see things as they were becoming and ought to be, rather than as they were.” (Fitzpatrick, 1999, 9.) The collectivization of agriculture was the first step for the modernization and rapid industrialization of the country. This radical reform drastically changed the lives of peasantry, its culture and way of life. Priests were arrested, prosperous peasant farmers named *kulak*⁸ were deported, and private peasant households enforced into collective farms *kolkhozes*. (Fitzpatrick 1999, 227.) One of my interviewees, Tatyana told how her family’s experiences of the collectivization: The school building where she currently teaches belonged to her uncle who was declared a kulak. He was arrested, and the family left the house without anything and lived with the help of relatives. Everything was given to “poor” families. Her daughter (Tatyana’s mother-in-law) “told me that she found some things that belonged to her in a ‘poor’ house. It was a chest full of pillows and cloths. The housekeeper did not return it. She said to her, ‘If you marry my son, I will return the chest to you.’ It happened!” (Tatyana’s interview)

Shortages of foodstuffs, of footwear and of clothing challenged the inventiveness and ingenuity of women’s everyday life, in particular. The economic and politic decisions of the Communist Party influenced the everyday life. Sheila Fitzpatrick compares the macro-culture of the Soviet Union with a closed institution with strict order and its own law, with two opposing communities: them and us. (Fitzpatrick 1999, 227.) On the private level, this resulted in two models of behaviour. One of them was an ideological macro-culture which had adopted mainstream culture, where the publicly accepted self was the actor. It was a representation of the self-image saturated by the public image and demanding approval. Then there was the micro-culture which was present within the framework of the mainstream culture and in which the individual had a real private life. (Fitzpatrick 1999, 13; Attwood 2010, 7–11.) Is it necessary, however, to demarcate cultures and sub-cultures? Can we draw a line between macro- and micro-culture? Does everyday life correspond to the private life, or does it influence both micro- and macro-culture through private and public space? Michel de Certeau pointed out that the private place meant

8 A peasant wealthy enough to own a farm and hire labour. During the forced collectivization process in the 1930s the wealthiest peasant, kulaks of first category were sentenced to death. Kulaks of the second category were exiled to underdeveloped regions of the Soviet Union to be educator by labour”. Denisova 2010, 6–7.

the familial microcosmos contra the collective place which meant a place for political investment. (Certeau 1998, 147).

A new political art—poster art—reflected the ideals of the new culture. Karen Petrone emphasises that the body of the individual played a central role in Soviet art and propaganda until 1937. The public appearance of young Russian men and women in shorts and tank tops symbolized the modification of traditional rural attitudes about the body (Petrone 2000, 34). The new Stalinist elite and Soviet citizens adopted the notion of the woman as the primary organizer of domestic life. According to Victoria E. Bonnell, “Political art projected a rural world in which the *krest’ianka baba* [peasant woman], together with traditional peasant customs and attitudes, no longer had any place.” (1997, 110.) Peasant women and men practically disappeared from political representations in the first half of the 1930s. Instead, it was the “youthful and enthusiastic *kolkhoznitsa* [collective farm woman] building socialism” who epitomized the new order. The women’s magazines *Krestyanka* and *Rabotnitsa* published a new ideal, the working woman and the peasant, as symbols of the new era. (Waters 1991, 241, 243; Lynn 1996, 43; Minayeva 2015, 204–212.)⁹

The life of Soviet women became the focus of propaganda. In the new shops opened in the cities, the propaganda focused on women’s hands as hygienic and beautiful. The women’s magazines, *Rabotnitsa* [Working woman] and *Krestyanka* [Peasant woman], emphasised that women had the opportunity to use their beauty. (Gurova 2008, 60.) The hygiene of the body was represented in public discourse, in the clubs, in the dormitories and the canteens. Those active in the Communist Party read papers on “how to clean without a bath” and “how often to change underclothes”. In 1928, they held “Russian week for hygiene,” and in 1928–29, they held meetings about individual cleanliness. (Lebina 2014, 97–98.) Neat clothing received special emphasis in Soviet cultural work. The Commissar of Health, Nikolay Semashko, claimed in the guide, *The Art of Dressing*, that clothes must be clean and neat. (Strizhenova 1972, 108; Hoffmann 2003, 19; Buchli 1999, 58; Bartlett 2010, 47; Lebina 2016, 153–157.)

The ideal attire of the New Women defined by the 1927 magazine *Art to dressing*¹⁰ was a simple but beautiful dress. The peasant women’s homespun

9 On a poster from the 1920s on fighting prostitution, a young, simply dressed proletarian woman with a red handkerchief on her head, with her left arm raised, and holding a red signal light in her right hand, stops an overdressed and overly made-up woman in a clingy evening dress with a large, trimmed hat covered in feathers, red painted cheeks, and a cigarette hanging from her crimson lips, who symbolises prostitution itself. On the poster, fashion attire and makeup are identified as a serious threat to the social body. (Bartlett 2010, 34.)

10 Искусство одеваться, 1928–1929.



Image 3. Hill Mari teacher in typical modest dress in 1950s. Photo by German Yuadarov / Izmail Efimov.

dresses were regarded as dirty, even reactionary and nationalist. (Strizhenova 1972, 12; Hoffmann 2003, 20; Gurova 2008, 55.) The women workers had an obligation to get to the countryside and set the backward peasantry on the right path. (Attwood 1999, 73.)

The Stalinist relationship toward clothing followed this division and moved in two separate directions. In 1919, Nadezhda Lamanova authored “Organizational Plan for a Workshop of Contemporary Costume”, which outlined the primary goals of post-revolutionary design. This work, among several other writings by revolutionary designers, helped to define the Soviet fashion industry and provided an ideological basis for their designs. Lamanova emphasized the importance of utility, simplicity, and practicality in clothing design. She stated that designers should focus on studying “ways of simplifying clothes, making simplicity the characteristic of the working-man’s clothes in contrast to the clothes of the bourgeoisie”. (Strizhenova 1972, 38–56; Olmsted 2015.) At the symbolical level, Stalinism produced an ideal attire and positioned it in its newly emerging mass culture, which actively invented a mythical version of Stalinist society. The first consumers of this ideal Stalinist attire were the shock workers, or Stakhanovites. (Bartlett 2010, 66; Lebina 2016, 139–142.) In 1935 the first *Дом моделей* [house of design] opened in Moscow to design

simple day dresses for mass production, but these dresses never entered the everyday life of ordinary women. (Bartlett 2010, 72.)

In the Khrushchev period, moderation was the key concept in the new stylistic synthesis of modesty and prettiness. The primary expression of socialist fashion was good taste. Pretty dresses were presented in women's magazines as the ideal. (Bartlett 2019, 202.) During this period, Soviet designers endeavoured to create clothing that was simple, practical, feminine, and elegant as a contrast to the perceived excesses of Western fashion design. In 1967, the designer and fashion theorist T. Strizhenova wrote: "Simplicity and comfort in everyday dress has become the main principle of the Soviet art of clothing design". (Olmsted 2015, 16.) On the base of the women's magazines *Rabotnitsa* and *Krest'yanka*, Olga Vainshtein examined the "typical" Soviet women's wear. During the period from the 1960s to perestroika the Soviet fashion was characterised with epithets "comfortable", "understated", "practical" and "severe" (Vainshtein 1996, 70). The simple black skirt was considered as an obligatory item in the wardrobe of every Russian woman for public sphere. The working uniform in the home was the comfortable *khalat* 'housecoat' which historically served as morning dress. (Vainshtein 1996, 84.)

The teacher's profession, morality and dress code

"My colleague reminded me of three components; the Russian teacher is dressed by the status code, she is a superb performer, and she doesn't sit at the table, in this case she lost her authority. Maybe it is the basic elements of Russian education."¹¹ Sari Pöyhönen, scholar of language education policy and other researchers of the Finnish and Russian education pointed out that the most visible symbol of the Russian teacher is correct but elegant clothing. (Pöyhönen 2006, 39; Turunen & Harčenkova 1999, 238.)

Russian historians Alexander A. Fedorov, Yelena Y. Ilaltdinova and Svetlana V. Frolova claimed that the Russian teacher model integrates many cultural elements belonging to different historical and political paradigms. (2019, 129–130.) In the countryside, teachers belonged to the rural intelligentsia. The intelligentsia were a specific group of people that came to connote a constellation of values, a self-sacrificing group of people that struggled for the good of everyone and acted as the conscience of the entire country. The ways the intelligentsia defined itself was in opposition with the *meshchanstvo* [middleclass, including urban lower class as tradesmen, craftsmen]. (Field 2007, 15.) During the Soviet period, the position of the teacher was contradictory. Field raised the question of the teacher's role; is the teacher intelligentsia or *meshchanstvo*? (Fitzpatrick 1994, 227–230; Field 2007,

11 Translation by Ildikó Lehtinen.

15.) Russian teacher Galina Petrovna (1928) stated that teachers belonged to the social stratum of the so-called 'intelligentsia losers'. (Ilic 2013, 24.) For the local Party officials, teachers were key in combating the illiteracy problem, which was regarded as the Party's main programme. In the late 1920s, only half of all students in pedagogical colleges were children of workers or peasants. The rural teachers did not participate in the agitation campaigns to promote collectivization; they even protested the dekulakization. At the same time, the teachers had other challenges, i.e., opposition from some of the students' parents. During harvesting time, the parents needed their children's contribution and refused to let them to go to school. (Fitzpatrick 1994, 230–231.)

After the Second World War, education emerged at the top of the Party's agenda, and various governmental programmes seemed to emphasise recruitment of more teachers to work in the countryside. The local administration supported the teachers' way of life, and granted special loans for houses, and the collective farms usually helped teachers work their plots. (Fitzpatrick 1994, 230–232; Denisova 2010, 48.) The attitude of parents changed completely; teachers were respected and even admired. The complaints of parents concerned the insufficient number of teachers and the quality of instruction.

The position and evaluation of teachers have changed in different political and social situations. Communist morality retained the notion of a private sphere, while at the same time demanding strict social and political control over it. (Field 2007, 18.) The teacher, and other professionals, such as workmen and peasants, kept the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism (last in 1961). The values in the Code included humane relations and mutual respect between people, honesty and truthfulness, moral purity, simplicity, and modesty in social and personal life, mutual respect in the family and concern for the upbringing of children (Field 2007, 9).

Dress code was a strict part of teachers' moral standards. In the beginning of the Soviet era, educator Anton Makarenko was one of the first to adopt the ideas of the new pedagogy. (Aransky & Piskunov 1965, 7.) He actively joined in the campaign for reshaping the old school into the Soviet school of the working people and applied many new methods in practice. In *Public Education*, Makarenko summarised his experiences and wanted to popularise the method of the best Soviet educational establishments. In his opinion, the teacher's primary task was to give moral education. The physical appearance of teachers mattered, and Makarenko described it as a performance.



Image 4. School photo in the village of Mikryakovo in 1950s. The girls dressed the typical local folk dress, in the mid the female teacher in fashion outfit. Photo by German Yuadarov / Izmail Efimov.

I am a quite different person of course, when I'm speaking with you, but when I am with children, I have to put on a bit more cheer, use more humour and smile more, not ingratiatingly or anything like that, but just smile a pleasant and sufficiently imaginative smile. I must not simply prevail over the collective, I must be a member of it with pleasure to give. I must impress them aesthetically, and so I never once appeared before my pupils in an unbelted blouse or boots needed a shine. I, too, had to shine, to the best of my ability, of course. I, too, must be as cheerful as the collective. I never permitted myself to wear a melancholy expression. I had trained myself never to let the children see that I was worried by something or was unwell. (Makarenko 1965, 149–150.)

Makarenko went on to say,

If a teacher was dressed untidily, I did not let him start lessons. And so we got used to wearing our best clothes to school. I, too, wore the best suit I had. We looked dandified. (Makarenko 1965, 152.)

According to the idea of Goffman (1959), teachers' physical appearance represented the profession, the performance in the school before the students. Teachers belonging to the professional group, as described by Makarenko (1965), are part of a performance and the teachers' attire is representative of that performance. Soviet and Russian teachers were used to physical appearance as a characteristic of performance, as a characteristic of evaluation. As mentioned above, Makarenko emphasised that clothing should be fashionable. What did that mean in Soviet times?

Dress of the rural Mari teacher

Ideals of soviet dress were not met at the practical level. The centralized industry produced basic, badly made clothing from low-quality fabric. Nataliya Lebina (2016) emphasised that in the early years of Soviet Union many workers and students were dressed very poorly. Until the 1930s, it was common for women in the countryside to dress their families, from head to foot. Collectivization also influenced clothing. Local craftsmen, such as tailors, frieze-makers and wool-carders, disappeared. The homemade dress classified as "dirty" and as a reactionary symbol, which factory-made clothing began to replace. (Strizhenova 1972, 14–16; Fitzpatrick 1994, 216.) The clothing fashion that was sought was not defined. Ideological agitators dressed in a style that included a tight-fitting blouse, a military-type narrow skirt, sometimes a narrow dress, a leather belt, and a quilted jacket. (Strizhenova 1973, 20–26; Bartlett 2010, 91; Zhuravlëv & Gronov 2013, 76, 77, 89; Lebina 2016, 129.)

In teachers dress, Makarenko's ideal attire and the Soviet fashion in Moscow and Leningrad were an utopistic phenomenon for rural teachers. In the countryside, women dressed as they did in the past. Nataliya Belova (2015) analysed teachers' everyday life based on material collected in the Kostroma district. She concluded that in the beginning of the 1920s, teachers dressed like their students in the traditional way, i.e., in a local peasant dress with shoes made of strips of birchbark and headscarves. The memoirs of the period 1920–1940 described the teacher in a modest, dark, and grey coloured dress. (Belova 2015, 150–151). After the Second World War, in the 1950s, teachers wore a white blouse and dark skirt with a woollen jacket. The Teachers Etiquette Standard of 1963 introduced the modest outfit for teachers. The young women followed the standard, but they also began to read and copy the fashion in women's magazines. The local dressmakers sewed fashion attire, and many teachers owned some skirts and some blouses instead of one outfit. (Belova 2015, 155, 162.)



Image 5. “Behind the school. My aunt gave me a beautiful ribbon as a gift. But I didn’t have any shoes. My father’s sister told me that there was a photographer at the school, and I ran to the school, barefoot. The photographer saw me and saw my feet, and he smiled. I didn’t speak Russian. I was without shoes, but I had a beautiful ribbon! The photo shows my older sister Antonina (1950) and my father’s two sisters, Lisa (1928) and Izvoka (1926). All in a folk dress, and my sister had a Mari belt with a bobble (*chokan ýshtë*). And, see, the frills are sewn with decorative stitches.” 1966. Photo by Dmitri Baydimirov 2009.

Like the Russian teachers in the Kostroma district, the rural Mari teachers most likely dressed in the traditional local homespun dress. In 1930, the newspaper *Mariy Yal* [Mari Countryside] presented schoolgirls during a gymnastics lesson. All the girls wore the folk costume.¹² However, in 1936, the magazine

12 *Марий Эл: рүдö марий крестйан газет, Йошкар-Ола* [Mariy Yal: republican political newspaper in the Mari language, Yoshkar Ola] 1930, 18(7):7.

Mariy Kommuna [Mari Commune] showed a new look: the pupils dressed in shorts and T-shirt, a pioneer scarf around their neck.¹³ It was propaganda about hygiene related to the folk costume. The newspapers, *U Viy* [New Force], and *Mari El* [Mari Land], turned to the Mari women to transform the Mari folk costume into a renewed style. Covering the head and feet was forbidden by the health care authorities (Lehtinen 1999, 72). The women's magazine, *Mari Ýdramash* [Mari Woman], in the Mari language was printed in 1932–1936 with the idea of promoting a new everyday life and fashionable attire. The pictures represented Mari working women in the traditional outfit and some women without the traditional headdress. The new generation of teachers had hope for the new everyday life and for the new ideology proposed by Anton Makarenko. A conference of Mari teachers took place in the city of Urzhum in 1933, and a photograph taken there showed the new look. All the teachers, young women, and men were dressed fashion attire. The female teachers represented the rational outfit with white blouse and dark jacket which was comparable with the men's suit. (Petrushin 2010, 25.)

After the Second World War, the situation changed. In the Mari countryside, the folk costume remained the local type of attire. The teachers were paid salaries more regularly, and they began to express high morality and the same political ideology as the administrative staff. Some school photographs taken in the 1950s–60s emphasised the dual function of clothing. The village students in Mari Sholker wore the local white, embroidered folk costume, birch-bark shoes and scarves. The female teacher, Praskov'ya Gavrilovna, is dressed in a dark jacket. (Volkov 2006, 46–48; see also Yevseyev 2017, and German Yuadarov's photos.)

Folk attire gradually became an expression of private life, thus moving into the sphere of the home where it was anchored. At work, whether on the collective farm or in forest work, women would dress, above all, warmly and according to the weather, with a thick quilted coat to represent this. During the 1950s, when light industries were still lacking, women once again began to use the handloom. Collective farm workers would dress in urban cloth, while the Communist Party's political activist had factory-made clothing envied by others. In the cities and villages, this would be a *khalat* open at the front. (Vainshtein 1996, 67, 84–87.)

The change is described by Anastasiya as follows: “My grandmother wore a [traditional] headdress all time; she didn't appear without it. Mother used the headdress only for feasts. For the everyday, she would wear a scarf or kerchief.”

13 Мари́й Коммуна, Йошкар-Ола [*Mariy Kommuna*: republican newspaper Mari ASSR, Yoshkar Ola] 1936, 4(5):4.

Tatyana narrated that previously, in the school, “I had a Mari dress (*tuvyr*) and apron (*ondzylan*). After 1976, or maybe earlier, uniforms became obligatory.”

Teacher at school, a Mari at home

At the school, I'm a teacher, so I wear urban attire. But I have many folk costumes. I know Mari songs and dances and the villagers usually invite me to participate in celebrations of marriage. I'm on the side of the bridegroom, and I sing Mari bridal songs. During the wedding, the Mari folk costume is worn. (Tatyana)

As I came to interview Nina (1956), a teacher of the Mari language, she was working in the garden. “In the middle of August, the old moon retreats, and it is a time for major housecleaning. The walls will be scrubbed white; the top of the oven washed, and the carpets and curtains all washed.” She was wearing a *khalat*, and she returned the house to change her attire. When she returned, she had a very modern outfit: a white blouse with trousers made with soft cotton in white. We drank some tea, ate soup with bread, and Nina explained that the family is full of teachers; her husband and two sons are teachers, and her father and mother, too. Nina wanted to introduce us to some women who are keepers of traditions. We were all ready to go, but then Nina said, “I have to change my outfit. By Mari values, teachers' do not wear trousers. They must wear a dress or skirt with a blouse.” After that, Nina appeared in a summer dress with big yellow flowers on black. In two hours, she had changed her outfit three times. She mentioned the teachers' dress code; not only does it work in school, but in everyday life, too. (Field diary, Babayev, 18 August 2009.)

Mari teachers followed the precepts of their professional role in their activities. In the village of Shorunzha, many informants remembered the attitude of teachers concerning the Mari religion. In the 1950s, the villagers organized a sacrificial feast in the forest. There were some 200 participants waiting for the sacrificial food. When the sacrificial ritual was over, some teachers came and turned over the pots full of the sacrificial food, the porridge. The Mari priest Kazantsev knew that the same teachers had sacrificial porridge at home, but the act was part of the teachers' ideological conviction. (Field diaries 20 May 2004; 22 April 2006; 27 May 2006; see also Volkov 2006, 33.) Tatyana memorized that it was forbidden for the teacher to participate in holy prayers or sacrificial feasts. “We knew that they took place in the village, but we disapproved of it all the time. It was theatre, because at home the rector honoured the ancestors and organized family celebrations. At present, we celebrate the Mari holy day which is Friday.” (Tatyana)



Image 6. A teacher in class in June 2009. Photo by Ildikó Lehtinen.



Image 7. A mother and daughter, both teachers. The mother is wearing a festive dress inherited from her mother and grandmother, and the young daughter is dressed in urban attire. Photo by Ildikó Lehtinen 2013.

The Mari teachers led this dual life very faithfully. As professionals, they wore fashion attire, but in their private life they dressed by free choice. However, they followed society's norms strictly. The physical appearance of the

Mari teacher was the same in different groups in the Mari region. Elvira represented Mari El, Anastasiya Udmurtia's Mari diaspora, Tamara Tatarstan's diaspora and Tatyana Bashkortostan's minority group. Rosa's (1937) father was a teacher, and she remembered that he forbid her to wear the traditional costume and her mother to wear the traditional headdress. "The teacher was a model of life, and the wife of the teacher had to behave accordingly."

Rosa's husband (who she married in 1959) dressed in urban fashion and so Rosa had to wear urban attire, i.e., a skirt, blouse, even the Russian-style *sarafan* skirt and a *vatnik*, a quilted cotton wool jacket. (Interview 5. Shorunzha, 18 August 2003, 60–70-years.) Rosa's husband said, "It is reactionary to dress in the traditional way." (Interview 6. Shorunzha, 6 August 2003.) Aleksandra, a French teacher (1931), dressed in urban attire after her studies in Yoshkar-Ola and began teaching in Shorunzha school in 1952. She had some traditional dresses from her mother, but she donated all of them to the National Museum of Mari El. (Interview 7. Shorunzha, 15 August 2003.)

Tatyana narrated that when she studied, she wore the Mari attire. "It was common. When I became a teacher, the Mari folk dress was forbidden. We were only allowed to wear fashion attire. It was written in the rules that teachers wear urban attire." At home, however:

We kept the Mari norms. My mother (mother-in-law) abided by them very strictly. It was forbidden to be barefoot and without headdress. It was a sin if the father (-in-law) saw my feet or hair. I remember one time when I was brushing my hair, and the father entered the room. I ran out and got a kerchief, but it was too late. Father was angry, and he insisted that I had to offer him some drink. (Tatyana)

Tatyana explained that after getting married she lived with her husband in the house of the parents-in-law for ten years until they built their own house. "It was hard. My mother-in-law knew the Mari norms and I worked at home all the time. - - She was still the head of the house."

Teachers' physical appearance was and still is very dominant in the profession. The experiences in the region of the Mari language were the same, i.e., teachers wear the standard attire. A good example of this is a phrase proclaimed by students of a Mari teacher, Taysiya Ivanovna Aleksandrova (1909–1992): "Then she came to class, short, in a blue outfit." (Takaya 2019) The blue outfit includes a dark skirt, blouse and blue jacket, perhaps the teachers' most common attire. It is "modest, but stylish". The dress code was detailed, but the main point was to reflect modesty, stylish attire which reflects the aesthetic taste of the Soviet period. The same principles apply to modern-day Russia.



Image 8. A school photo from the Eastern Mari village of Sosnovka, Bashkortostan, in 1958. The girls are wearing a local homespun dress with an apron and a headscarf. In the middle, the female teacher is without headdress and is wearing a sweater. Elizaveta Shaymulakova's private album. Photo by Ildikó Lehtinen 2009.

According to Goffman, a representative of the teaching profession has the right to wear modest attire which does not carry a symbol of status (1959, 128). The Soviet woman was a worker and a mother, and her clothing reflected these roles. The teacher represented the intelligentsia, though the circumstances of the rural teacher were analogues with the peasant, with the *kolkhoz*'s workers. The challenges and demands were high. The status of teachers is specific, i.e., they are educators, and they work with children. In the eyes of students, the teacher represents power, the ideology of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. As professionals, teachers must dress according to the Standard Code. Their outfit can be pretty, but it must also be modest. Jeans and trousers are permitted only at home, not in the street.

The traditional Mari costume or attire with Mari embroidery motifs is worn for feasts, festivals, and weddings. During these festivities, teachers represent the keepers of tradition. Festivals, sacrificial feasts, and weddings represent a performance, and the teacher belongs to the group of participants. According to Stuart Hall, it is a question of changing identity where the Mari ethnic identity becomes dominant. (Hall 1992, 280.) Often, teachers participate in

an amateur singing or folklore group. Teachers play an active role in organizing local folklore days and feasts. In 1991 a teacher in the village of Shorunzha organized a fashion event called *What is in grandmother's chest?* (*kovan shondykysho payrem*). Oftentimes, the teachers order a festive Mari costume from the local dressmaker or from a fashion shop in a city like Yoshkar-Ola or Kazan'.

The teachers' wardrobes preserve the attire of the past— jewellery from their grandmothers or embroidered dresses from their mothers. Anastasiya, Rosa and the other teachers keep these dresses, but not for use. Tamara has donated a collection of richly embroidered dresses from her home village to her school's museum. Tamara is from Mari Turek, a village on the border of the Mari Republic and the dresses are "my heritage from my mother". Tamara wears the local costume which contains an embroidered dress, a coat, an apron, and the headdress, *shymaksh*. The dress is made from homespun hemp cloth, and the embroidery is sewn with wool yarn. It belonged to her grandmother. The coat is a new one, made from white cotton and decorated with lace from synthetic fibre. The apron is made of red silk, decorated with lace. Tamara had jewels inherited from her mother and grandmother. The brooch, the necklace, and the belt with metallic buttons and coins of 20 copecks represented her mother's heritage from the 1920–1930s. The headdresses exhibit the Mari handicraft at its best. The embroidery is made with woollen yarn in a running stitch and stem stitch. The necklace with silver coins and cowrie shells belonged to her grandmother. Tamara wears the dress only at weddings or during the official Mari festival of flowers, *Peledesh Payrem*. For this celebration, she acquired a new chest ornament with aluminium coins which are cheaper than her heirloom. Where is the Peledesh Payrem? In the school? "Never! It's in the city of Yoshkar-Ola, or in some Mari village in Tatarstan."

The Mari teachers appreciate their ancestors' handicraft, and they want to preserve it for the future. The Mari costume is the symbol of Mari identity, and it is a part of the Mari cultural heritage. According to the teachers, the Mari cultural heritage signifies the culture of the past, like a museum which preserves culture for the future. The majority of the teachers of the Mari language set up a museum in a school classroom and donated for that purpose their mother's or grandmother's dresses and jewellery.

Clothing as a political phenomenon

How can clothing be considered a political phenomenon in the Mari case? In practice, the teacher had a dual societal role: a professional and mother/wife. The Mari teachers' public life reflected their professional role, and they only showed their Mari identity when they participated in their traditional customs. The position of the Mari culture, including the folk costume, could be

comparable to the position of the Mari language. The Mari folk costume is self-evident; all Mari women know how the folk costume should look. Almost every informant answered, “I have a Mari folk costume, because I am Mari.” I saw Mari folk costumes at different events, festivals, and sacred and family feasts. The dress code demands a written or an oral system. In the Mari village, clothing is a material experience. The villagers can choose different ways of dressing; there are no limits to the types of clothing items. Rosa preserved her Mari costume, sewn in the 1950s, and began to wear it after the Soviet period, since 1992. The teachers’ interviews show that in everyday life, behind the scenes, they changed attire and at the same time, they changed their identity. The teachers know the Mari cultural heritage, the traditional costume, the customs, the religion, and in their private life, the teachers represent the Mari traditional culture. All the teachers have some traditional costume, and they know exactly how and why to wear it.

When I met Anastasya, for example, at her home for the first time, she was dressed the Mari way, and she had a Mari headdress, *shenga shovycho*, on. “I put on the headdress for you; it belongs to the Mari traditional dress,” she explained. The garden of her house looks like a museum of handicraft where it is possible to follow the making of the cloth from beginning to end. Anastasya showed me her skills: First, she broke up the hemp bale in a big wooden mortar with a wooden pestle (*shuar*). After that, she scutched the impurities from the raw material (*tole*). She demonstrated the scutching with a wooden knife (*katok*) or comb (*shondash*). She showed carding and spinning, and she wound the yarn onto the warp. “Unfortunately, the loom is in the storage. I only weave during the winter. Do you want to set up the loom?” Our answer was negative. Then she showed some shoes made from birchbark and some footwraps. “The cloth for footwraps was woven to a size of 36 cm, and it needed to be treated with a rolling pin and a wooden knife.”

I sewed the red dress for myself, but the white one I made for the performance at the school. I made the Yoshkar-Ola motif using a pattern. It’s also for feasts. For the performances in the school, I have made a man’s shirt and coat (*armak*) and a girl’s dress that has a *dzhelen* coat made with black homespun wool cloth and a coloured belt. It is a Mari coat I loaned to a friend in Yoshkar-Ola.

Why so many dresses? “There are many feasts and festivals in the village, and in Yoshkar-Ola, too. People ask me all the time for Mari dresses for performances. I also give them to the school, to students and to my friends from the Republic of Mari El. What about your dress? “When people invite me to a wedding, as a guest like married Mari woman (*sūan vate*), I sit on the bridegroom’s side and sing wedding songs. The

wedding woman wears the traditional Mari costume, absolutely— the dress, the apron and the coat with belt, the Mari headdress, a large, flowered scarf, and a large jewel with coins. My jewel, *kugu shyesh pidysh*, is an old one. It is sewn with silver coins and comes from the period of Catherine the Great.”

What do you wear in the school? “Urban attire, absolutely. It is the usual way.”

Anastasiya clearly represents the traditional Mari culture, the Mari language, and the Mari folk costume. As a schoolteacher, she follows the school norms. She wears fashion attire, and the pupils wear the school uniform. What does fashion attire mean? “It is urban attire, i.e., a blouse with skirt and dark jacket. In summer, it is a floral print dress with a cardigan.” Anastasiya’s son (1960) is a teacher, too. He supports the Mari culture and makes jewels for young girls. The pattern is traditional, but the material is new; he uses wood from the apple tree.¹⁴

Elvira wore urban attire in the school. For the school celebration, she has a festive dress with Mari embroidery. Elvira points out that it is only for celebrations, not for teaching. She is enthusiastic about the Mari culture, language, and customs, including the Mari embroidery and Mari dresses. Three years ago, Elvira initiated a festival for the children at the beginning of June. The festival was a show for folk costumes. The schoolchildren were dressed in their folk costumes, the teachers and the young housewives’ dresses were decorated with Mari embroidery. Some older women wore the traditional Mari costume.

The teachers feel the Mari costume is aesthetically attractive, but to wear it at the workplace would be almost unthinkable. It has been banned, it has been seen as reflecting nationalism, it could be interpreted as reactionary. These ways of thinking are remnants of the past, the memory of Stalin’s politics. It is better to keep to the Standard Code and to divide life into two parts, the collective part which involves the teaching profession, and the private life at home and in everyday life. The Standard Code suggests a status, a position, a social place, and refers to professional competences and institutional authority. (Goffman 1959, 81.)

The interviews reveal that Mari rural teachers followed and still follow the dress code conscientiously and strictly. The Mari teachers emphasised the demands of their position as teachers as well as the opinion of the society. Perhaps it is about some other principle, as well?

Politicizing of the teacher’s attire

After the establishment of the Soviet Union, two different lifestyles evolved among the peoples living side by side. The Russian, or rather the urban mixed

14 Anastasiya died 16 March 2018.

culture started influencing the traditional values. Traditional values were also dramatically questioned by the creation of the Soviet utopia. The dominant culture included two different components: a culture of urban labourers and a fiction-culture based on the new ideology. As a result, a divergent micro-culture was born: an everyday-culture and a charade-like Mari culture, which was mostly perverted by the Russian culture.

Teachers dressed according to socialist morality, the socialist taste, which meant being modest and pretty. Following the theory of Goffman (1959), it was the teachers' appearance which generated respect. Teachers were placed in a position *extraordinaire* between fashion attire and the local peasant dress. They belonged to the local social group, but at the same time, they belonged to their own professional group. As professionals, they dressed according to the Teacher's Standards, and it reflected their position as a teacher between the collective and the private.

The teachers pointed the reality of two different places, the place for work and the other for private life. According to this duality, the clothing represented the body in a protected place (Certeau 1998, 146), at home, differs from the fashion dress, used in public place, in the school. The position of the dress, named urban, city or Russian was and still stable in the school practices, and the teachers accept it as work uniform. The private life contains two different kinds of dress. The domestic uniform of Soviet and now Russian women, the *khalat* which is a simple dress made of cotton fabric, open and buttoned in the front. It is the outfit for everyday practices, cooking, cleaning, works in the garden and in the cowshed. The other is the folk dress or ethnic dress for the religious events and festivals, family feasts.

In my hypothesis, the politicizing of the teachers' attire would be the result of the concept of some unwritten, oral system, or tacit knowledge. The Mari historian Ksenofont Sanukov argued that Mari consciousness missed one generation as result of the Great Terror. The memory of the ethnic terror preserved and influenced the attitude of the Mari teachers. The education policy of the minority language changed, and they took to abandoning their own culture. Forbidding the folk costume may refer to the concept of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, as defined by Michael Polanyi (1958), is the skills, ideas and experiences that people have but are not codified and may not necessarily be easily expressed. Marjut Pohjalainen studied tacit knowledge as a changing process. She studied workers of a paper mill and a library through observations and interviews. She pointed out that tacit knowledge comprises ideas, mental images and memories. In the working world, it includes knowledge-based experiences, professional status and professional data. (Pohjalainen 2012; 2016, 4–5) Therefore, tacit knowledge is the information we acquired

from our parents or grandparents, not through our profession. Pohjalainen states that not only is there knowledge that cannot be adequately articulated by verbal means, but also that all knowledge is rooted in tacit knowledge.

The Standard Code describes in detail the dress code which is formal for all teachers. The Mari teachers understand the dress code as a symbol of the profession and of morality. Wearing the folk costume, a teacher represents his/her national identity, which is awkward. Rosa knows that it is not proper for a teacher to use the folk costume, but it is not banned in the Standard Code. The opinions of Anastasiya, Elvira, Tatyana and Tamara were based on their experiences and information from their parents. Their opinions probably depicted their memories of the fate of teachers in the 1930s, which affected all Mari inhabitants, all intelligentsia. During the Soviet period, the purges were never mentioned, but they were revealed by the historian Ksenofont Sanukov in the post-Soviet period, in 1991. (Sanukov 1991.) The teachers were consciously avid about the folk costume as a symbol of national identity. Both the Soviet and the Russian ideologies approve of the folk costume as an exotic cultural artifact, as signifying people's friendship, as folklore, but not as signifying national identity.

In the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, teachers represent authority, knowledge, and morality. The Russian model of a teacher integrates many cultural elements belonging to different historical and political paradigms. In the later 1930s, during the Soviet period, most teachers were the children of workers and peasants, the poor (*bednoty*). According to Anton Makarenko, teachers and their outer appearance represented authority. Morality was reflected in the cloths, which was woven, representing good taste. The problem of eliminating illiteracy was a typical phenomenon in the Russian countryside, including the Mari region. Regarding Mari, it was the short period of indigenization when the language of education was Mari, and education was an integral part of the new Mari consciousness. The Mari agrarian people participated in the education in the frame of the new ideology of the Communist Party. Mari teachers followed the guidelines of the Soviet officials. Living in the countryside, the teachers wore the local folk costume. The women's magazine *Mari Y'dramash*, slowly spread the model of the worker women.

The position of the teacher was contradictory. Teachers symbolized the new Soviet ideology, but at the same time the teacher of local origin opposed the kulakization process. In the 1930s, the attitude of parents concerning teachers was one of respect but also resistance. The early Soviet period included two contradictory processes: the development of national culture in the frame of the indigenization and the Great Terror targeting the Mari intelligentsia and the majority of Mari teachers.

After the Second World War, the rural teacher represented official power. The Standard Code prescribed detailed requirements for teachers as professionals and even dictated their outer appearance. Teachers represented high morality, and their physical appearance had to follow good taste as described by the ideology. The Mari teachers' attire differed from the local traditional costume. Teachers wore urban attire when working. Teachers represented the depersonalized person, as described by Edvin Goffman, and they had an official role in the execution of education. Teachers lived a dual life: their professional life, and their everyday life. In their everyday lives, at home or out in the shops, they wore urban attire. However, during Mari feasts and festivals, organized by department officials, or during wedding ceremonies, teachers dressed in the local festive attire. Festivals and weddings were places where the role of the teacher was the keeper of tradition and participant of the group. The folk costume was the national costume, the symbol of Mari identity which carried with it the tragic memory of the Great Terror, a phenomenon of tacit knowledge.

And what about the 2000s? Teachers as professionals still preserve the professional look, wearing a skirt, a blouse, or a dress in good taste. Trousers and jeans may only be used at home. For festivities, teachers may wear a dress with traditional embroidered Mari motives.

In Russia, the teacher's appearance symbolises high morality and reflects good taste. It is the symbol of the profession. Why politicize the teachers' attire? In the Russian countryside, many inhabitants dress in fashion attire; the local traditional attire represents only the past. In the Mari countryside, the local attire meant being active and the teachers forbid it in practice, perhaps remembering the tragedy of the Great Terror. Little by little, teachers' physical appearance became to signify professional competency. Mari teachers understood society's demands and acted according to the norms. Clothing was, and still is, a part of the teachers' status, of performance, of professional identity. It created a double life for the teachers: the professional life as teacher and the everyday life as mother and housewife. This contradiction is reflected in attitudes and physical appearance, too.

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Interview 2. June 25, 2006, village of Shorunzha (Uncho), geographical coordinates 56°27'41"N 49°30'25" E, Morki district, Republic of Mari El, Female, 40–50-years.

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Interview 4. June 8.–9., 2015, village of Ulis'yal, geographical coordinates 56°33'16" N 50°16'20" E, Baltasinskiy district, Republic of Tatarstan, Female, 50–60-years.

Interview 5. August 18, 2003, village of Shorunzha, Morki district, Republic of Mari El, Female, 60–70-years.

Interview 6. August 6, 2003, village of Shorunzha, Morki district, Republic of Mari El, Female, 60–70-years.

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Translation of Russian and Mari characters follows the Library of Congress, excepting proper noun of Vladimir Mayakovsky, the Russian poet.