

## CHUVASH ‘PAGANISM’ AT THE TURN OF THE 21ST CENTURY: TRADITIONAL RITUALS IN THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICE OF VOLGA-URALS CHUVASH GROUPS

EKATERINA IAGAFOVA

Professor, Head of the Chair

Philosophy, History and the Theory of World Culture  
Samara State University of Social Sciences and Education  
Maxim Gorky str., 59, Samara, 443099, Russia  
e-mail: yagafova@pgsga.ru

VALERIJA BONDAREVA

Associate Professor, Head of International Office  
Samara State University of Social Sciences and Education  
Maxim Gorky str., 65/67, Samara, 443099, Russia  
e-mail: bondareva@pgsga.ru

### ABSTRACT

Traditional rituals formed the basis of ethnic Chuvash culture, and are still relevant in today’s festive and ritual culture, primarily among Chuvash ‘pagan’ ethno-religious groups. Today among the unbaptised Chuvash there is, with varying degrees of preservation, a set of ideas about the spirits of nature and the patron deity of different fields of life, practice of ritual prayer and sacrifice, and festive culture. The focus of ritual practice is the cult of the Supreme God Tura (Tură) and the ancestors, who during the calendar year appear in a single complex and in strict sequence. Traditional rituals play an essential role in the funeral and memorial rites and customs of the Chuvash. Thus, ‘pagan’ elements are characteristic not only of the unbaptised Chuvash, but also of some local groups of Christians and Muslims, for example ritual mourning of the dead, weekly commemoration on Thursday evenings until the ritual of ‘seeing off the soul’, ritual singing, sacrificing and ‘feeding’ souls of the dead on remembrance days, and other rituals and their elements. These ‘pagan’ elements in the culture of the Orthodox Chuvash and Chuvash Muslims living in ethnically mixed villages with Russians, Mordovians and Tatars both constitute the basis of their ethnic and cultural identity as Chuvash and contribute to the preservation of their ethnicity. Chuvash ‘paganism’, despite centuries of influence from Russian Orthodox and Muslim Tatar traditions, has a moderating influence over contemporary modernisation and is an element in religious practices of Chuvash confessional communities that is an important resource for the formation and development of ethnic and cultural identity.

**KEYWORDS:** Chuvash • paganism • traditional rituals • religious practices • the Urals–Volga region • ethno-confessional groups • ceremonies

## INTRODUCTION

Chuvash 'paganism' is a layer of traditional belief and practice adopted by the Chuvash, one of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Russia, who mainly live in the Volga and Urals regions. According to the 2010 census (Dianov 2012: 72), the population was 1.4 million, about 1.3 million of whom live in the Volga–Urals region. Traditional rituals formed the basis of Chuvash ethnic culture, and are still relevant in the festive and ritual events of different ethno-confessional groups, primarily the Chuvash 'pagans'. Chuvash 'paganism' historically covered all areas of the Urals–Volga region, but by the beginning of the 21st century it had noticeably narrowed, and the number of unbaptised Chuvash decreased from 17,800 (beginning of the 20th century) to about 5,000; about 1,000 of whom live in the Samara Trans-Volga region while more than 3,400 live in the Trans-Kama regions of the Republic of Tatarstan. The remaining local groups of unbaptised Chuvash are located in the Republic of Bashkortostan (more than 500 people), the Ulyanovsk region and Chuvashia. Today this area covers more than 40 villages. (Iagafova 2007: 100)

In academic literature of the 20th century the traditional Chuvash religion was most commonly called paganism. The authors had a mixed and often negative attitude to this term due to the fact that it was associated with the socio-political context that accompanied the introduction of this term in scientific literature.<sup>1</sup> The Orthodox church and its missionaries fought against traditional religions, and hence against any ethnic foundation for the peoples' culture, calling the unbaptised peoples of Russia 'pagans'. Refusing to be baptised, the Chuvash defended their right to religious and ethnic identity, both of which were fixed in the self-designation of the group – *chăn chăvash*, 'true Chuvash'.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that the self-designation of the unbaptised ethno-confessional groups the Mari (*chimari* – 'pure Mari') and the Udmurt had a similar connotation (Iagafova 2010: 72; Nikitina 2016: 42).

The most acceptable term with which to designate this ethno-confessional group is, in our opinion, the descriptive term 'unbaptised Chuvash', while 'traditional faith', 'traditional ritualism' or 'ethnic religion' are best used to characterise their religious views and rituals. At the same time, we admit the possibility of using the terms 'pagan' and 'paganism' when analysing the current religious situation among the Chuvash, but in quotation marks, thereby showing that we are talking about conventionality, rather than adopting a position of solidarity with militant Christian missionaries.

The Chuvash system of religious beliefs and cult practices is fairly well studied in the work of Petr Denisov (1959), Georgiy Kudryashov (1974), Anton Salmin (1990; 1993; 1994; 1999; 2004; 2007), Gyula Mészáros (2000), and Ekaterina Iagafova (2007). However, the question of the transformation of this system in the processes of modernisation at the turn of the 21st century is not studied well enough (Iagafova 2011; 2015; 2017), and given the ever-changing situation it has been rarely considered in recent research.

This paper presents material on traditional religious practices in different local groups of Chuvash, including not only 'pagans' themselves, but also Orthodox Chuvash and Muslim Chuvash. The research is based on field materials collected by the authors in villages occupied by Chuvash 'pagans', as well as Chuvash Christians and Muslims in different areas of the Urals–Volga region between 1996 and 2015.

## TRADITIONAL RITUALS AMONG UNBAPTISED CHUVASH IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Today, traditional rituality is found mainly among unbaptized Chuvash. With varying degrees of preservation they have a complex of ideas about nature spirits (the earth, water, wind, fire) and patron deities of different spheres of life (Pihampar, Kepe, etc.),<sup>3</sup> ritual practices of prayer (the village-wide *Uchuk* prayer; *Chükleme*, the prayer of thanks for the harvest, the rain inducing *Sumär chük* ritual) and sacrifice (*chük*, *khyvni*)<sup>4</sup> as well as festive culture. Ritual practice focuses on the cult of the Supreme God Tură and ancestors who appear in a single complex and strictly defined sequence throughout the calendar year. Rituals in honour of other spirits (patrons of hearth and home *Kil-yysh pätti* or a barn *Karta pätti*) took the second place.

The transformation process in the 20th century primarily affected religious beliefs, displacing many spirits and minor deities, some of the functions of which were transferred to Tură in a monotheistic evolution of his image, as noted by Kudryashov (1978: 43–44) regarding the evolution of ‘paganism’ among the Orthodox Chuvash. Ritual practice also underwent change due to the reduction of ritual cycles and a change in their timing.

Reduction of the ‘pagan’ cult and ‘monotheisation’ of its dogma were largely due to the influence of Christianity, which the unbaptised Chuvash learnt through direct contact with Orthodox tribesmen. At the same time, the influence of other trends in Christianity, in particular Protestantism, among the Chuvash, unlike other peoples of the Ural–Volga region, was minimal (Baptism spread in a few local groups of Chuvash) and did not entail large-scale changes in dogma and cult. Since the 1920s, prohibitions against marriage between Chuvash Christians and ‘pagans’, which were strictly observed in the past, gradually lifted (RSAAA 350: 2454, 3351, 3353; FM: Iagafova 1996–2005). This was initially observed in areas where the two confessional groups were neighbours. The emergence of bi-confessional families and kinship relations between communities raised the question of religious priority in society. ‘Pagan’ and Christian communities also united when celebrating some village-wide holidays, such as *Uyav*, summer dances and games (SA CSIH, III-429). Social, political and economic reforms of Soviet society in the second half of the 1920s and early 1930s (collectivisation in villages, urbanisation of the population, the policy of aggressive atheism) took a huge toll on ‘paganism’, as well as on traditional culture as a whole, by disrupting its social basis, i.e. the agricultural community. In most places, *Uchuk*, the village-wide prayers, began to disappear from Orthodox practices at that time; among the unbaptised Chuvash *Uchuk* were held less often or were replaced by the *Sumär chük* prayer for rain (FM: Iagafova 1996–2015).

Transformation processes of the first half of the 20th century were aggravated by the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945), the consequences of which, on the one hand, resulted in the resuscitation of some ‘pagan’ customs (for example, the ritual of ploughing round a village) even among the Orthodox Chuvash, while, on the other hand, leading to a change in the very form of the ‘pagan’ religious community; more precisely, it led to these communities coping better with their isolation because of the worldview breakthrough throughout Soviet society during the post-war period. A striking indicator of the permeability of ‘paganism’ was the anthroponymy of the unbaptised Chuvash, which meant, according to linguist Nikolay Yegorov (1986: 93), that ‘pagan’ names were

preserved up to the 1940s, and Russian names actively introduced only post-war. This conclusion is confirmed by our field data from Bashkiria (FM: Iagafova 2002a; 2003a; 2003b; 2004b). The war years became critical in the function of traditional rituality. In most of the villages under study, the practice of public prayers, *Uchuk*, or the ritual of 'driving out spirits', *Sěren*, disappeared during this period.

The rituals associated with the family and family-related groups, a significant social unit within Chuvash society, turned out to be more stable. These include marriage rituality, rituals of the Easter cycle, memorial rituals in the Semitsky Trinity and autumn cycles, as well as funeral and commemorative rituals. The other group of robust rituals is less connected with their religious origin but is rather a part of the festive culture. New Year fortune telling (*Şěně sul/Nartukan* and others), pancake week riding around the village (*Şăvarni*), spring and summer youth games and round dances (*Văyă/Uyav*) successfully fitted into the concept of 'folk culture' in the Soviet period. In addition, partly thanks to the support of the folklore movement and partly to the participation of young people, these rituals have safely survived, although slightly changed and with varying degrees of preservation in different regions. Between the 1920s and early 1980s these rituals were significant phenomena of Chuvash village life.

Most traditional ceremonies in the 20th century were associated with Chuvash born in the first decades of the century and who died between the 1970 and 1990s. This generation managed to assimilate the basics of ritualism from their fathers and grandfathers and adhered to them throughout their lives. When they disappeared, prayers to the spirits of the courtyard, home, etc., were forgotten.

In recent decades, ritual practice has been subject to transformation due to a reduction in the observation of ritual cycles and changes in their timing. The biggest loss in the last quarter of the 20th century was prayers for the new bread, *Chúkleme*, and the practice of guest visiting and serving beer, *Kalām pätti*. Both rituals are associated with the family-kin group, which also underwent some changes during this period. Mass migration from the village to the city ruined the social basis of not only the community, but also of the family and related groups, which split into two parts, rural and urban, with different vital interests and rhythms, lifestyles and upbringing for the younger generation. These changes were difficult, and sometimes next to impossible, to introduce into the existing ritual of guest-visiting or prayer, and the participation of people from urban centres required a coordination of interests, for example postponing the ritual to the weekends so that people could visit from cities (*Şiměk*). The *Chúkleme* ritual was deliberately discontinued by the older generation (born 1910–1920s). Before they died, parents refused to pass on this tradition to their sons and daughters-in-law because they felt they would not observe it, which would bring great misfortune to their kin. In addition, guest visits also disappeared during *Munkun*, 'Chuvash Easter', mainly because of a catastrophic reduction in the number of relatives in the village, from an average of 15–20, to 3–5 over the past 40 years (FM: Iagafova 2000; 2014a; 2014b).

The most significant ritual practices in the life of a rural community, such as, for example, *Uchuk*, have also been subject to transformation. The perception of the *Uchuk* prayer as a sacred action is preserved in those villages where this ritual tradition was not interrupted in the Soviet period and survived until the 21st century without significant change, such as in Staroye Afon'kino village in Shentalinskiy district, Samara region and in Yultimirovka village, Bakalinsky district of the Republic of Bashkortostan

(FM: Iagafova 2001; 2003b). In both cases, *Uchuk* continues to be a local custom, relevant to the Chuvash of these and neighbouring villages. Here visits of rare guests – the Tatars, the Kryashens or the Orthodox Chuvash from neighbouring villages – do not change the usual ceremony. Moreover, residents are deeply convinced of the positive affect of the ritual on all those present, regardless of ethnicity, for example, the Tatars from Akhmanovo village often sacrifice sheep while praying for the health of their family members in Yultimirovka village (FM: Iagafova 2003b).

However, the decrease in the congregation in recent years has led to a further reduction in the performance of the ritual. In Staroye Afon'kino blood sacrifice is performed irregularly, and is often replaced by porridge, while prayer meetings are held by two or three elderly women. At the same time, the residents themselves do not see any violation of the norm in such changes and consider this form of the ritual to be acceptable (FM: Iagafova 2015).

In recent years, other trends have emerged in the organisation of the *Uchuk* ritual in Staroye Surkino village, Al'met'yevskiy District, Republic of Tatarstan. The village ceremony was turned into a republican cultural event called the Tatarstan Trans-Kama Chuvash Open Festival *Uchuk*, which resulted in an in-village confrontation between supporters of the traditional ritual and the festival rite. Similar tendencies towards festivalisation were also observed in the organisation of *Akatuy* and *Uyav*, which changed from rural festivals into regional and national-level events (FM: Iagafova 2010; 2014c). Nevertheless, despite significant changes in the form and content of traditional rituals, Chuvash 'paganism' remains an important religious practice among various Chuvash confessional groups.

#### 'PAGANISM' IN THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICE OF BAPTISED CHUVASH

'Paganism' is represented in the religious practices of the Orthodox Chuvash, primarily in Chuvash villages of the Trans-Kama region (Republic of Tatarstan) and in the Trans-Urals area (Republic of Bashkortostan). In this respect the Chuvash living in the Republic of Bashkortostan are of great interest (FM: Iagafova 2002a; 2003a; 2003b; 2004b). From the point of view of the characteristics of religious ideas and rituals, most of the officially Orthodox Chuvash of this region are in fact 'pagans'. Orthodoxy is manifested in the external attributes of the religion: icon cases and icons in the house, periodic visits to church by some believers, crosses in cemeteries, the ritual of crossing oneself, and finally, Christian self-identity. The basis of both ideological and ritual parts of their religiosity is Chuvash 'paganism'. 'Pagan' traditions are manifest in the ritual calendar of the Chuvash, for example the Easter (*Munkun*), Semitsky and Trinity (*Şimĕk*, *Troytsă*, *Akatuy*, *Uchuk*, *Sumăr chiük*), and autumn (*Kĕr sari*,<sup>5</sup> *Chükleme*) cycles.

Traditional rituals play a significant role in the formation of Chuvash funeral and memorial customs. Thus, 'pagan' elements, such as ritual mourning of the dead (*sas kălarŋi*),<sup>6</sup> weekly commemoration on Thursday evenings up to the 'seeing off of the soul' ceremony (*pumilke*), ritual singing (*yupa yurri*), sacrifice (*khyvni*), 'feeding' souls of the dead during commemorations and other rituals and their elements are characteristic not only of the unbaptised Chuvash, but also of some local groups of Christians

as well. As a ritual food, just as in case of the unbaptised Chuvash, there are pancakes, meat from sacrificial animals (chicken or rooster, ram), beer (*săra*). These pagan elements in the culture of the Orthodox Chuvash living in ethnically mixed villages with Russians and Mordovians serve the basis of their ethnocultural identity as Chuvash, and contribute to the preservation of their ethnicity.

The stability of rituals is determined by the degree of their significance and intimacy to the performers. Of course, priority is given to funeral and memorial rituals, which, even among baptised Chuvash, differ very little from those of 'pagans'. The local Chuvash are aware of the incompatibility of some customs with Christian norms, but consider them to be their own and do not intend to refuse them. "If the custom is not followed, we will have difficulties," they say. "Therefore, we follow and follow. For the sake of the livestock, for the sake of family, we will always follow!" (FM: Iagafova 2004b) This probably explains the preservation of the *Chúkleme sári* and *Kilesh pätti* rituals in the Chuvash villages of the Pribel basin in Bashkiria.

Nevertheless, some changes occurred even in these rituals in the last decades of the 20th century. Thus, the rise of religiosity in Russian society resulted in an increase in Chuvash ritual activity. For example, relatives from towns and regional centres came to the village for *Şimĕk*, so in many villages the day of commemoration was shifted from Thursday to Saturday or Sunday. Similarly, the *khyoni* commemoration of the ancestors has been postponed from the second day of the Easter week (or Monday with the Orthodox) to Tuesday of the next week. (This can partly be explained by the influence of Christianity as a commemoration day, which coincided with *Radonitsa*.)<sup>7</sup>

#### PAGAN-MUSLIM AND MUSLIM-PAGAN SYNCRETISM

Ritual practices of 'pagan' origin are also found in a few Muslim Chuvash communities in different areas of the Volga-Urals region (mainly in the Republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, and in Samara Region). The synthesis of 'paganism' and Islam has led to formation of 'pagan'-Muslim and Muslim-'pagan' types of polysyncretic religiosity.

'Pagan'-Muslim syncretism is characterised by an evident predominance of traditional elements in religious practice. To a great extent 'pagan' rituals are represented among the descendants of the Muslim Chuvash, or those who returned to traditional beliefs in the 20th century and retained their ethno-confessional self-identity, i.e. *chan chăvash* ('true Chuvash'), or partially converted to Christianity by the end of the century. These are small groups in villages in Miyakinskiy and Sharanskiy districts, Republic of Bashkortostan; in the villages of Staroye Afon'kino in Shentalinskiy district, Rysaykino and Staroye Gan'kino villages in Pokhivistnevskiy district of Samara region; and in Alekseyevka village in Bavlinskiy district and Novoye Il'movo village in Cheremshanskiy district of the Republic of Tatarstan (FM: Iagafova 1996; 2003a; 2004a; 2004b; 2005). During the 20th century rituals continued, for example celebration of the end of spring ploughing (*Sapantuy*), the *Uchuk* summer public prayer, the prayer of thanks for the new harvest (*Chúkleme*), commemoration of the ancestors during the year (*Şimĕk*, *Kĕr/Avtan sári*), etc. In modern culture, 'pagan' elements are manifested to a greater extent in funeral and memorial rituals. For example, in the sacrifice of *khyoni*; 'seeing off' the soul; making graves and a small memorial table and a chair for the food; traditions of

weekly Thursday commemoration (*ernekas*) for up to 40 days; the *pumilke* or *Şurta aine*<sup>8</sup> commemoration ceremony on the 40th day (by candlelight) with mourning for the dead (*sas kälarni*) and a plentiful meal; as well as the custom of annual commemoration in spring on *Munkun*, in summer on *Şimëk*, and in autumn. Muslim ritual practice (*Uraza* (fasting), food prohibitions, daily prayers, the memorial ritual of *Şuraşma*, etc.) was supported by the generation born before the 1930s.

To a lesser extent, 'pagan' traditions were found among the Chuvash according to ethnicity (language, culture, ethnic identity), but among Muslims according to religious identity. Several such communities (3–5 families) live in the villages of Staroye Surkino in Al'met'yevskiy district of the Republic of Tatarstan, Ilingino settlement (originating from Staroye Gan'kino) in Pokhvistnevskiy district of Samara region, Zirikly village in Bizhbulyakskiy district of Bashkiria, as well as in the above mentioned villages of Alekseyevka, Rysaykino, Staroye Afon'kino (FM: Iagafova 1996; 2002a; 2004a). 'Pagans', who made up the majority of the population, actually 'swallowed' Muslims, who, however, managed to preserve their ethno-confession as Tatar (*tutara tukhnä*, which literary means 'originated from the Tatars') and some Islamic traditions, mainly in funeral and commemoration rituals, such as setting up their own cemetery, installing a gravestone with a crescent in the head, inviting a mullah or Tatars for commemorations, refusing the commemoration cry of *yupa yurri*. At the same time, they bury the dead in clothes and a coffin, as 'pagans' do, commemorate them on Thursdays until the ritual of setting the pillar, and perform the ritual of *khyoni*. Muslims still perform rituals of the calendar cycle (*Munkun*, *Şimëk* and *Kër säri*) with 'pagans', while often celebrating Trinity with Christians. *Namaz* and fasting were observed in the 20th century by the older generation, but they are neglected by the current generation, who practice *Uraza-bairam* and *Kurban-bairam* only as a memorial ritual. Some families continue to celebrate Friday. 'Pagan' and even some Christian elements (for example, celebration of the Annunciation, Easter and Trinity) were preserved in this group because in the second half of the 20th century Chuvash Christian and Russian villages joined a marriage circle of the above-mentioned villages which led to a transformation of religious belief and loyal attitudes to Orthodoxy (FM: Iagafova 2002a; 2004a).

In some cases, the Chuvash perceived Tatar ethnic identity as parallel to Islam, although they retained the Chuvash language and kept some elements of Chuvash culture in everyday life as well as in rituals. Traditional elements in this Muslim-'pagan' type of religiosity appeared in the 20th century in marriage rituals, the ritual calendar and funeral customs. Alongside *Uraza-bairam*, *Kurban-bairam*, *Şuraşma*, *namaz* the customs of New Year's fortune telling, pancake week riding, the Easter cycle, youth games, 'pagan' prayers and annual memorial rituals were integrated into the ritual calendar. Such religiosity was observed, for example, in Artem'yevka village in Abdulinskiy district of Orenburg region, in Ibryaykino village in Bizhbulyakskiy district, Bashkiria – i.e. in villages that had long-term, constant and active contact with Muslim Tatars (FM: Iagafova 2002b; 2004b). Syncretism is clearly visible in the funeral rituality of the residents of Ibryaykino village, practiced in the 20th century. They buried the dead in clothes and a coffin (sometimes without it), or in a shroud and pit with a lining that was covered with boards; they invited the mullahs to commemorate the dead on the third, seventh, 40th and 51st days, and half yearly up to three years, as well as on every Thursday evening until the 40th day, and in spring on the second day of the Easter week, in summer on Semik and in autumn at the end of October.

Thus, with the evident dominance of Islamic features there is still a significant layer of 'paganism' as cultural heritage and as a result of the influence of the surrounding Chuvash population.

## CONCLUSION

Chuvash 'paganism' as a historical and cultural phenomenon at the turn of the 21st century, considered in the context of socio-political processes of this period, demonstrates inevitable transformation of traditional belief under the influence of Russian Orthodox and Tatar Muslim traditions, changes in the socio-economic basis of society, and the moderating effect of the processes of modernisation. Oriented towards a rural agricultural and cattle-breeding way of life, the Chuvash faith could not withstand the pressure of urbanisation, industrial change, collectivisation and ideological propaganda (from first atheism, then Orthodoxy).

At the same time, 'paganism' remains an important element in religious practice of Chuvash confessional communities, an important resource for the formation and development of ethnic and cultural identity.

## NOTES

1 For example, outstanding Soviet ethnographer Sergey A. Tokarev (1964: 24) categorically denounced uncritical use of the word 'paganism' in relation to traditional beliefs and cults. Ethnographer Georgiy Matveyev (1999: 169) considers the use of this term "inaccurate from scientific point of view". Chuvash ethnologist of religion Anton Salmin (1999: 245) agrees with him, considering the most appropriate variant of the name to be 'folk religion' or 'folk beliefs', being a loan-translation of the English term 'folk religion'.

2 It should be recognised that the unbaptised Chuvash are familiar with the terms 'paganism' and 'pagans' thanks to scientific and popular literature; however, they mainly have a neutral attitude towards these terms.

3 Pihampar – the deity of the Chuvash 'pagan' pantheon, the patron saint of cattle, also protects people and livestock from wild animals; Kepe – the goddess of the Chuvash pantheon who determines people's fate, the wife of the main God Tură, a medium between gods and people.

4 *Chúik* – a prayer with a sacrifice to the deities in Chuvash rituals; *khyoni* – ritual 'feeding' of ancestors during a commemoration ritual.

5 *Kěr sari* – 'autumn beer', an annual autumn commemoration of the ancestors; another name for the ceremony is *Avtan sari* – 'cock beer'. Both names are associated with the main sacrificial gifts to the ancestors, beer and cock meat.

6 *Sas kälarni* – 'voice extraction', mourning the deceased.

7 *Radonitsa* – the day to commemorate the ancestors in the cemetery held by the Orthodox on the Tuesday after Easter week.

8 *Şurta aine* – the name of the ritual is associated with the custom of lighting one large candle (about one metre long) 'under' which the participants gather; the ceremony lasts until the candle burns out.

## SOURCES

- FM: Iagafova 1996 = Samara region, Pokhivistnevskiy district (Rysaykino, Staroye Gan'kino village).
- FM: Iagafova 2000 = Samara region, Shentalinskiy district (Staroye Afon'kino village).
- FM: Iagafova 2001 = Samara region, Shentalinskiy district (Staroye Afon'kino village).
- FM: Iagafova 2002a = Republic of Bashkortostan, Bizhbulyakskiy district (Zirikly village).
- FM: Iagafova 2002b = Orenburg region, Abdulinskiy district (Artem'yevka village).
- FM: Iagafova 2003a = Republic of Bashkortostan, Sharanskiy district (Borisovka settlement).
- FM: Iagafova 2003b = Republic of Bashkortostan, Bakalinskiy district (Yultimirovka village).
- FM: Iagafova 2004a = Republic of Tatarstan, Bavlinskiy district (Alekseyevka village).
- FM: Iagafova 2004b = Republic of Bashkortostan, Bizhbulyakskiy district (Ibryaykino village); Miyakinskiy district (Dubrovka settlement).
- FM: Iagafova 2005 = Republic of Tatarstan, Cheremshanskiy district (Novoye Il'movo village).
- FM: Iagafova 2010 = Republic of Tatarstan, Al'met'yevskiy district (Staroye Surkino village).
- FM: Iagafova 2014a = Samara Region, Pokhivistnevskiy district (Rysaykino, Staroye Gan'kino village).
- FM: Iagafova 2014b = Republic of Tatarstan, Cheremshanskiy district (Novoye Il'movo village).
- FM: Iagafova 2014c = Republic of Tatarstan, Al'met'yevskiy district (Staroye Surkino village).
- FM: Iagafova 2015 = Samara region, Shentalinskiy district (Staroye Afon'kino village).
- RSAAA = Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, Moscow
- RSAAA, fund 350: cases 2454, 3351, 3353.
- SA CSIH = Scientific Archive of the Chuvash State Institute of Humanities
- SA CSIH, fund III, case 429.

## REFERENCES

- Denisov, Petr V. 1959. *Religioznyye verovaniya chuvash*. Cheboksary: Chuvashskoye gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo. [Денисов, Петр В. 1959. *Религиозные верования чуваш*. Чебоксары: Чувашское государственное издательство.]
- Dianov, Maksim A., ed. 2012. *Sotsial'no-demograficheskiy portret Rossii: Po itogam Vserossiyskoy perepisi naseleniya 2010 goda*. Moskva: Statistika Rossii. [Дианов, Максим А., ред. 2012. *Социально-демографический портрет России: По итогам Всероссийской переписи населения 2010 года*. Москва: Статистика России.]
- Iagafova, Ekaterina A. 2007. *Chuvashskoye "yazychestvo" v XVIII – nachale XXI v*. Samara: Povolzhskaya gosudarstvennaya sotsial'no-gumanitarnaya akademiya. [Ягаfoва, Екатерина А. 2007. *Чувашское «язычество» в XVIII – начале XXI в*. Самара: Поволжская государственная социально-гуманитарная академия.]
- Iagafova, Ekaterina A., ed. 2010. *Etnokonfessional'nyye men'shinstva narodov Uralo-Povolzh'ya*. Samara: Povolzhskaya gosudarstvennaya sotsial'no-gumanitarnaya akademiya. [Ягаfoва, Екатерина А., ред. 2010. *Этноконфессиональные меньшинства народов Урало-Поволжья*. Самара: Поволжская государственная социально-гуманитарная академия.]
- Iagafova, Ekaterina A. 2011. = Yagafova, Ekaterina A. 2011. L'islam dans la culture des Tchouvaches au début du XXI siècle Le syncrétisme religieux dans les rituels des musulmans tchouvaches. – *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 42 (2): 113–135. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4074/S0338059911002063>.
- Iagafova, Ekaterina A. 2015. Religioznyye praktiki etnokonfessional'nykh grupp chuvashhey. – *Etnograficheskoye obozreniye* 5: 3–18. [Ягаfoва, Екатерина А. 2015. Религиозные практики этноконфессиональных групп чувашей. – *Этнографическое обозрение* 5: 3–18.]

- Iagafova, Ekaterina A. 2017. Kěr sãri – “osenneye pivo” v traditsionnoy i sovremennoy prazdnichno-obryadovoy kul'ture chuvashhey. – *Etnograficheskoye obozreniye* 3: 154–166. [Ягафова, Екатерина А. 2017. Кєр сãри – «осеннее пиво» в традиционной и современной празднично-обрядовой культуре чувашей. – *Этнографическое обозрение* 3: 154–166.]
- Kudryashov, Georgiy Ye. 1974. *Dinamika polisinkreticheskoy religioznosti*. Cheboksary: Chuvashskoye knizhnoye izdatel'stvo. [Кудряшов, Георгий Е. 1974. *Динамика полисинкретической религиозности*. Чебоксары: Чувашское книжное издательство.]
- Kudryashov, Georgiy Ye. 1978. Etnospetsifika obydennoy religioznosti. – *Problemy religioznogo sinkretizma i razvitiya ateizma v Chuvashskoy ASSR. Trudy CHNII*. Cheboksary: NII pri Sovete ministrov Chuvashskoy Respubliki: 30–46. [Кудряшов, Георгий Е. 1978. Этноспецифика обыденной религиозности. – *Проблемы религиозного синкретизма и развития атеизма в Чувашской АССР. Труды ЧНИИ*. Чебоксары: НИИ при Совете министров Чувашской Республики: 30–46.]
- Nikitina, Galina A. 2016. Zakamskiye udmurty: obshcheye i osobennoye. – *Finno-ugorskiy mir* 2: 42–50. [Никитина, Галина А. 2016. Закамские удмурты: общее и особенное. – *Финно-угорский мир* 2: 42–50.]
- Matveyev, Georgiy B. 1999. Ob etnichnosti i etnicheskikh tsennostyakh material'noy, dukhovnoy i sotsionormativnoy kul'tury. – *Problemy natsional'nogo v razvitiya chuvashskogo naroda*. Cheboksary: Chuvashskiy gosudarstvennyy institut gumanitarnykh nauk, 161–172. [Матвеев, Георгий Б. 1999. Об этничности и этнических ценностях материальной, духовной и соционормативной культуры. – *Проблемы национального в развитии чувашского народа*. Чебоксары: Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук, 161–172.]
- Mészáros, Gyula. 2000 = Mesarosh, D'yula. 2000. *Pamyatniki staroy chuvashskoy very*. Cheboksary: Chuvashskiy gosudarstvennyy institut gumanitarnykh nauk. [Месарош, Дьюла. 2000. *Памятники старой чувашской веры*. Чебоксары: Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук.]
- Salmin, Anton K. 1990. *Dukhi trebuyut zherto: Sistema traditsionnykh obryadov chuvashhey*. Cheboksary: NII pri Sovete ministrov Chuvashskoy Respubliki. [Салмин, Антон К. 1990. *Духи требуют жертв: Система традиционных обрядов чувашей*. Чебоксары: НИИ при Совете министров Чувашской Республики.]
- Salmin, Anton K. 1993. *Religiozno-obryadovaya sistema chuvashhey*. Cheboksary: NII pri Sovete ministrov Chuvashskoy Respubliki. [Салмин, Антон К. 1993. *Религиозно-обрядовая система чувашей*. Чебоксары: НИИ при Совете министров Чувашской Республики.]
- Salmin, Anton K. 1994. *Narodnaya obryadnost' chuvashhey*. Cheboksary: Chuvashskiy gosudarstvennyy institut gumanitarnykh nauk. [Салмин, Антон К. 1994. *Народная обрядность чувашей*. Чебоксары: Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук.]
- Salmin, Anton K. 1999. Fol'k-religiya chuvashhey. – *Problemy natsional'nogo v razvitiya chuvashskogo naroda*. Cheboksary: Chuvashskiy gosudarstvennyy institut gumanitarnykh nauk, 235–247. [Салмин, Антон К. 1999. Фольк-религия чувашей. – *Проблемы национального в развитии чувашского народа*. Чебоксары: Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук, 235–247.]
- Salmin, Anton K. 2004. *Sistema verovaniy chuvashhey*. Cheboksary: Chuvashskiy gosudarstvennyy institut gumanitarnykh nauk. [Салмин, Антон К. 2004. *Система верований чувашей*. Чебоксары: Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук.]
- Salmin, Anton K. 2007. *Sistema religii chuvashhey*. Sankt-Peterburg: Nauka. [Салмин, Антон К. 2007. *Система религии чувашей*. Санкт-Петербург: Наука.]
- Tokarev, Sergey A. 1964. *Ranniye formy religii i ikh razvitiye*. Moskva: Nauka. [Токарев, Сергей А. 1964. *Ранние формы религии и их развитие*. Москва: Наука.]
- Yegorov, Nikolay I. 1986. Zhenskiye imena nizovykh chuvashhey-yazychnikov. – *Kul'tura i byt nizovykh chuvashhey*. Cheboksary: NII pri Sovete ministrov Chuvashskoy Respubliki, 88–104. [Егоров, Николай И. 1986. Женские имена низовых чувашей-язычников. – *Культура и быт низовых чувашей*. Чебоксары: НИИ при Совете министров Чувашской Республики, 88–104.]