

FROM SUICIDE OF REVOLUTIONARY TO SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION WITH THE WORLD OF THE DEAD (Death in the Modern Chuvash Identity)

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Abstract. The author analyses the central images of death or *vilëm* in modern Chuvash intellectual discourse. It is presumed that modern Chuvash intellectual situation began to form after 1917, and the poet Şeşpël Mişşi became the founding father of modern Chuvash identity and reformer of Chuvash language. Şeşpël Mişşi was one of the intellectual leaders of Chuvash nationalism, but the general political situation and the uncertainty of post-revolution Russia actualised numerous images of death in his texts. Şeşpël Mişşi combined motives of death with ideas of future Chuvash world, world of Chuvash language, world of Chuvash labour illuminated by rays of Chuvash sun. Early suicide of the author inspired Chuvash intellectuals to mythologise his image. Chuvash writers of the Soviet period continued to invent and imagine the death as one of the central elements in Chuvash intellectual discourse. Boris Cheendykov, the modern Chuvash author, is one of writers who continue traditions, proposed by Şeşpël Mişşi. Boris Cheendykov, combining problem of death and existence, actualised the problems of identity and its development in the post-national world. The images of death and motifs of symbolic communication between the world of the living and the world of the dead continue to be among the central problems in modern Chuvash intellectual discourse.

Keywords: identity, Chuvashia, death, symbolic communication, invention of tradition, utopia.

ОТ СУИЦИДА РЕВОЛЮЦИОНЕРА К СИМВОЛИЧЕСКОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ С МИРОМ МЕРТВЫХ (смерть в современной чувашской идентичности)

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Аннотация. Проанализированы образы смерти (*вилӓм*) в современном чувашском интеллектуальном дискурсе. Высказано предположение, что современная чувашская интеллектуальная ситуация начала формироваться после 1917 г. и поэт Сеспель Мишши стал отцом-основателем современной чувашской идентичности и реформатором чувашского литературного языка. Сеспель Мишши был одним из интеллектуальных лидеров чувашского национализма, но общая политическая обстановка постреволюционной России и неуверенность автора актуализировали многочисленные образы смерти в его текстах. Сеспель Мишши сочетал мотивы смерти с идеями особого чувашского мира будущего, мира чувашского языка и чувашского труда, озаренного лучами чувашского солнца. Раннее самоубийство автора вдохновило чувашских интеллектуалов мифологизировать его образ. Чувашские писатели советского периода продолжали изобретать и воображать смерть в качестве одного из центральных элементов чувашского интеллектуального дискурса. Борис Чиндыков, современный чувашский автор, является одним из продолжателей традиции, предложенной Сеспель Мишши, сочетая проблемы смерти и существования, актуализируя вопросы развития идентичности в постнациональном мире. Образы и мотивы смерти и символической коммуникации между миром живых и миром мертвых продолжают оставаться в числе центральных в современном чувашском интеллектуальном дискурсе.

Ключевые слова: идентичность, Чувашия, смерть, символическая коммуникация, изобретение традиции, утопия.

Formulation of the problem. The images of death belong to the universal in any national culture. The relationships of intellectuals with the problem of death were very controversial [Durkheim, 1951; Ariès, 1974; Pickering and Walford, 2000; Uzule, Zelče, 2014]. Chuvash identity is not an exception from this universal rule and historical logic. The two central figures of the early modern Chuvash identity, Şeşpël Mişşi and Pärtta Këştentinë, died too early, and these historical facts led to the actualisation of the special psychological trauma and complexes in Chuvash identity. Problems death in Chuvash identity and symbolic communication of the living and the dead belong to not well-studied topics. The number of publications, where problems of Chuvash images of death and collective representations about the death among Chuvash intellectuals, is too small [Kirchanov, 2015; Kärçansen Makşämë, 2015]. The images of death in Chuvash identity for several decades were ignored because it was not possible to integrate them into the canon of socialist realism. The short period of National Revival in the post-Soviet Chuvashia also did not inspire academic analysis of the death's images because intellectuals preferred to actualise other dimensions in identity which represented the vitality of Chuvash nation. Political regimes of Nikolai Fiodorov and Mihail Ignat'ev preferred to imagine Chuvash nationalism and alternative practices intellectual and cultural strategies as a threat to political stability. The problems of death in this ideological situation were politically and culturally uncomfortable and inappropriate for intellectual discourse that emerged in Chuvashia. The author of the article will focus on the role of death in Chuvash identity. The aim of the article is the analysis of representations of death in the texts of Chuvash intellectuals. The article has the following tasks: analysis of Şeşpël Mişşi's role as the founding father of modernist canon Chuvash poetry in the actualisation of images of death; analysis of the practices of his posthumous glorification and the study of post-modernist perceptions of death in Chuvash identity that would be impossible without a radical aesthetic revolution inspired by Şeşpël Mişşi.

This article continues earlier works of the author and substantially revises some of their statements. The author of this article tries to consider the images and motifs of death as modern constructs and invented traditions in the context of the Chuvash identity. The theory of the invention of tradition proposed in 1983 by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger [The Invention of Tradition, 1983] is among the most influential in Nationalism Studies. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger suggested and proved those formally ancient political traditions and other cultural practices, which perceived as archaic by society, ere recently constructs and inventions of the nationalist era. The author presumes that the images of death are also among invented traditions of Chuvash intellectuals who nationalised and modernised the archaic collective representations about the death in the 20th century. The author also insists that Şeşpël Mişşi actualised the dual functions of the poet in his poetic mission: on the one hand, he became the creator of newly invented traditions of modern, revolutionary and ideologically marked death as the suicide; on the other hand, Chuvash intellectuals of post-Şeşpël era nationalised his image and transformed it into one more invented tradition.

How Şeşpël Mişşi invented death as a part of the national myth. Şeşpël Mişşi poetic heritage is characterised by considerable controversies. The nationalism ideas were combined in his texts with pessimism and frustration, beliefs in the future were and crossed and intertwined with the nation future development uncertainty and personal existential crisis and longing. The motifs and images of death were frequent in Şeşpël Mişşi texts. The narratives of death in poetry of Şeşpël Mişşi are presented in several forms and dimensions: the premonition and expectation of lyrical hero's death [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2006, p. 64], Christian images of death and martyrdom [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2012, p. 46], death and dying of the tortured and oppressed Chuvash nation [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2006, p. 52], traditional images of death characteristic for archaic peasant communities dependent on nature and famine threat [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2012, p. 63], and death as the highest form of existential loneliness and solitude [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2006, p. 32].

Şeşpël Mişşi in this context acted not only as a modernist, but also as a writer, who promoted a national modernism, national futurism and believed that values of the nation, identity and nationalism were among universal categories that will continue to exist and develop in future. The ideal model of national futurum existence, Şeşpël Mişşi wrote in his texts about, was based on the dominant role of Chuvash language in the imagined and invented Chuvash future. The lyrical hero in Şeşpël Mişşi texts breaks radically with archaic heritage, refused from traditional past and outdated versions and forms of identity. Instead of it new Chuvash hero proposes new and modern, contemporary and futuristic identity based on wide masses. The images of death, mortality narratives in Şeşpël Mişşi texts were not just a sphere of the exclusive dominance of only death as the central image.

The death in Şeşpël Mişşi modernist poetics was actualised in futuristic dimension and assisted to emergence and development of new identity forms. Şeşpël Mişşi established conditions for transformation of formally past orientated death narratives into future based poetical constructions. Şeşpël Mişşi transformed the moment of death in the future triumph moment when creator hero, the hero of the revolutionary futuristic future became the central figure of this new idealised and imagined world. The institutionalisation of futurum through/in the past in Şeşpël Mişşi texts actualised universality and suicide inevitability: the poem "Çăvaş poetne Ahaa asănsa" was written in March 1921, and a year later Şeşpël Mişşi committed suicide.

The various forms of symbolic self-crucifixion were characteristic and widely spread in Şeşpël Mişşi texts, when his lyrical hero faced with the harsh reality of revolutionary Russia where political elites sacrificed national groups in the civil war and famine. The lyrical hero of Şeşpël Mişşi was forced to change and adapt to new conditions. The hero of this type did not completely broke with still influential illusions and hopes of lyrical past and romantic era, but this hero was closer to sacrifice his own interests for Chuvash revolution glory and future Chuvash world than romantic heroes in love from Pärtta Këştentinë poetry. These Şeşpël Mişşi heroes crucified themselves on the revolution cross for the construction of modern Chuvash nation and assisted to promotion of modernist discourse in Chuvash intellectual tradition where in the 1920s modernism was the sphere of futurism domination and its allegorical synonymous.

The motives of death in Şeşpĕl Mişşi poetry were combined with attempts to adopt and promote futuristic narrative, based on true belief in the future, and active political work for development and construction of Chuvash world for the new Chuvash nation in Chuvash future. Şeşpĕl Mişşi in 1920 wrote in his diary about 'ineffable, bad feelings" and his self-perception as "irritable and wanton creature" who unsuccessfully struggled with "ten-years disease that completely destroyed body" [Sespeľ, 2012, p. 144]. Şeşpĕl Mişşi comes to absolutely pessimistic conclusion that he "would be on the eve of death soon". In spite of these pessimistic narratives dominance Şeşpĕl Mişşi stated that "he wants to work with renewed vigor... wants to live ... and wants immortality" [Sespeľ, 2012, p. 146]. Some months later in October 1921 Şeşpĕl Mişşi optimism fell in crisis and the poet experienced severe frustration and was depressed: "...it is difficult to live... I feel terrible loneliness... I lost heart... the end of my existence will be terrible... [Sespeľ, 2012, p. 150]. By the December of 1921 general tone of Şeşpĕl Mişşi letters was the same: "today and tomorrow look at me by their hungry eyes... there is no spring, no sun, no spring ..." [Sespeľ, 2012, p. 151].

The genesis of depression, on the one hand, stimulated feelings of frustration, inability to integrate ideals of the poet in the revolutionary world, by the 1921 recognised and understood by Şeşpĕl Mişşi not as Chuvash, but as radically other, alien to the Chuvash ideals and incompatible with the project of Chuvash future. On the other hand, Şeşpĕl Mişşi understood death in futuristic context imagined and invented part of a poetic landscape. Şeşpĕl Mişşi resigned with the death inevitability in the context of its important symbolic role in the process of imagination, mental mapping of the new Chuvash space, its integration into the context of the Chuvash language and Chuvash identity. The tragic death of the revolutionary poet in the poetic Şeşpĕl Mişşi narrative becomes redemptive and salvation victim in the construction of a new world in Chuvash future. "The road... the corpses are on the roads... the dead bones are in outskirts" ("Şulsem... Şulsem şinçe vilesem // Ukălçasem pañçe vil şămsem" [Şeşpĕl Mişşi, 2006, p. 114]) co-existed in a poetic Şeşpĕl Mişşi discourse with new heroes called by the poet to move forward from revolutionary reality to new world of Chuvash future: "...build carved bridge... build bridge... if I fall exhausted... You will go by Your iron legs on my heart... Go... break my neck" [Şeşpĕl Mişşi, 2006, p. 114].

These death images had not the pessimistic character in Şeşpĕl Mişşi texts. They were invented for the promotion of unique Chuvash form of early futuristic poetics based on reflection about gradual and inevitable old culture dying and its progressive replacement by the new culture of Chuvash future. Şeşpĕl Mişşi also combined images of death with images of a new world that was born in the throes of revolution and death of old archaic culture. Şeşpĕl Mişşi in this situation inevitably declared, that "it is no time for sentimentality, era of warm songs is in the past... come in the future... come to the sun... Today is the time for death [Şeşpĕl Mişşi, 2006, p. 116].

Şeşpĕl Mişşi poetry was too contradictory, it combined and mixed diametrically opposed ideas and sentiments. Şeşpĕl Mişşi was a poet who gained in Chuvash literature a reputation of "Chuvash Maiakovskii" [Vladimirov, 1982, p. 238–240], but he was also able

to “passionately cry about how he loved nation he belonged to” [Humma Şemenë, 1923]. Atner Huzangaj, commenting on Şeşpël Mişşi biography, presumes that “Şeşpël Mişşi more than other Chuvash poets in the most personalised way realised himself in self-crucifixion on the communistic cross. In the fire of his struggles, agonizing in his love, in his sacrificial nationalism, he went to a Christian feat as a rebel, as a theomachist who projected himself into the future” [Huzangaj, 1999; 2012].

The author’s allegation that Şeşpël Mişşi became the founding father of the concept of death in Chuvash identity does not mean that the few precursors of the poet were not interested in this problem. The keenness and obsession of Şeşpël Mişşi in the death had nothing in common with ideas of other Chuvash intellectuals because it had a systematic character. The poet relocated the motives of the death from traditional culture to modernising identity. Şeşpël Mişşi imagined archaic traditional collective and disordered representations and ideas about death, transforming them into the tradition in the constructivist understanding. Şeşpël Mişşi in this intellectual situation transformed romantic poetic images of death in the invented national tradition. Şeşpël Mişşi also prescribed servilist roles to this tradition in the ideological context of new revolutionary myth about Chuvash nation as the victims of its hostile neighbours.

How Şeşpël Mişşi forced Chuvash peasants to face death, or contradictions of non-symbolic communication. Şeşpël Mişşi in his short story “Children of the Forest” (“Värman açisem” [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2016]) fixed situation of gradually dying and fading of traditional Chuvash society because it was not able to face the challenges of modern time and to compete with them. The society described by Şeşpël Mişşi was the traditional community in a state of systemic crisis of identity. An old Uhille, one of the central heroes of this story, was a figure who described this crisis from the traditional point of view. An old Uhille mechanically and automatically captured visual signs and symptoms of the crisis of old cultural tradition, he and his generation belonged to. An old Uhille intuitively did not agree with changes of modern time: “What is this era... we can not forget customs of their ancestors... in the old days when the new moon was born, I was going to an old oak... but now people come to it only once or twice a year” [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2016, p. 9].

The attempts of old Uhille to revive old customs and pagan traditions (“... it is necessary to go to the great oak, bring the victim, and ask cleansing...” [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2016, p. 10]) led only to misunderstandings and with his relatives and stricture from their side. Another factor that assisted to crisis and disintegration of traditional values system became Russian influence and impact on Chuvash territorially isolated communities. Migur, Chuvash who lived among Russians, brings strange news in Chuvash village that “Russians build an iron road and carts without horses will go down this road” [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2016, p. 10]. The railroad as a strange symbol of another Russian world becomes the very attractive source of income for Chuvash peasants and pushed them out of their traditional native Chuvash landscape. Ten of Chuvash peasants in Şeşpël Mişşi story “Children of the Forest”, Syuhebi, Migur, Tyakka, Tımba, Şeşpël, Timkka, Şingırç, Makka, Syuldır, agreed to become a member of marketing cooperative and also planned to participate in building of a railway, but the history of their participation in this capitalistic

transformation of Russian landscape will not be a story of capitalistic success, but it will be a story of losses, sacrifices, and privations of the traditional community that was thrown into the vortex of social, economic and cultural transformations. Therefore “ten riders” were simultaneously unhappy Apostles of coming social Revival and riders of also coming, not religious, but mainly national, social and economic Apocalypse.

The new world, Chuvash peasants left their lost in the woods village for, was Russian world, which met them very unfriendly. The forest of Şeşpël Mişşi was imagined as a haven of traditional society. It is noteworthy that the outer worlds and landscapes in Russian world of Şeşpël Mişşi suppressed and destroyed values of freedom. The Forest on the contrary to urbanised social realities frees human beings: the forest of Şeşpël Mişşi symbolises a return to national sources and traditions. Worlds of forest and non-forest, city, and non-city in texts of Şeşpël Mişşi collided because developed in different coordinate systems in the contexts of barbarism and civilisation. City in the literary imagination of Şeşpël Mişşi was not synonymous for the embodiment of progress, order, and civilisation, but the forest was not a bastion of barbarism and savagery. Şeşpël Mişşi in his texts conferred the mission forest as a way from modern society to salvation. The dichotomy of “progress/tradition” and “civilisation/barbarism” gets new interpretations and reinterpretations in texts of Şeşpël Mişşi.

Russians refused to accept Chuvash peasants as equal partners, and the most of Russians treated them with disdain and prejudice. The first Russian, who was met by them, was a boatman: he called one of Chuvash “Chuvash sock” and “mangy dog”. The first meeting of the “children of the forest” with Russian people of the city led to Chuvash peasants were beaten and threatened by Russians who frightened them by prison, and finally seized two horses. The temporary stay in Russian world made Chuvash peasants to disappoint in it: the train caused wild panic among them; hard physical work quickly humbled them; Russian attitude to them as “damned kids” made them run away; Şangırç, who could not swim, was drowned by Russians from other cooperative; Şeşpël and Syuhebi were killed by Russians. The first one was killed by competitors from other cooperative, the second one was shot when he crossed the river, trying to escape to his native village. The civilisation and culture in the context of Şeşpël Mişşi's prose are presented by Russians and Chuvash. Timkka and Syuldir were the only Chuvash peasants who were unable to kill Other, but they could come back to their village and preserve their culture as identity and identity as culture, despite the fact that their return was not a happy one: a trip to Russian world turned out a string of victims, sufferings, and privations, and the holy oak, that stood for centuries near the village, fell symbolizing the imminent and inevitable fall of the old world. The final story of traveling in Russian world, told by Timkka, sounds like a martyrology: “Şingırç was by Russians dragged and drowned in the river, Şeşpël was hit by them that his spirit came out, Pakkala, Tyakka, Timba, and Makka were killed by Russians from rifle, Syuhebi was shot with horse in Sura” [Şeşpël Mişşi, 2016, p. 15].

Şeşpël Mişşi was not inclined to idealise Russian world as a universal civilisation, and in this intellectual context, it was very difficult to determine who or what symbolised for him

barbarism and civilisation: Chuvash went in Russian world as “children” and barbarians from imagined forest, but their barbarism in reality was more humane and fair in the context of the threat of Russian urbanised world which was psychologically and mentally subordinated solely to profit.

How Şeşpël Mişši became more than alive after his suicide, or the invention of tradition.

Şeşpël Mişši after his death became in the focus of numerous debates between Chuvash intellectuals and Moscow censors and curators. Chuvash national intellectuals won in this ideological confrontation and their efforts to proclaim Şeşpël Mişši as formal and also the informal founding father of the modern nation and Chuvash national future assisted to the glorification of the poet and its national canonisation and mental mapping in the imagining pantheon of fathers of the nation. Şeşpël Mişši confidently went down in Chuvash literature history as the first poet of ideas and simultaneously ideological poet because his historical precursors were able to express and develop predominantly traditional ideas and sentiments in romantic lyric poetry which was suitable for individual consumption in archaic and classical culture of the 19th century, but they also were completely inapplicable and unacceptable for new culture of politicised masses and mass political ideologies. Şeşpël Mişši was the poet of ideas who was not understood by his contemporaries, but mythologised by Chuvash intellectual of the late 20th and the early 21st centuries.

The poetic narrative of Şeşpël Mişši was deeply immersed in world of mortality. The death in its various forms and dimensions appeared in texts of the poet as one of the central system characters. The poetic narrative at the same time was also modernist, nationalist and futuristic. The motifs and images of death became an inevitable consequence of the temporary compromise between Şeşpël Mişši as the Chuvash nationalist with the Soviet regime. The inability to implement Chuvash national project in the short chronological term stimulated simultaneously actualisation of the death motives and also assisted to the formation of poetic, political and ideological modernist Chuvash canon. The modernity concept in early Chuvash modernism had predominantly futuristic connotations and widely expressed in images of the distant future, when the world finally will become Chuvash world as the ideal form and version of Chuvash national dream.

The cultural paradigm proposed by Şeşpël Mişši for Chuvash national project development greatly influenced on subsequent and further generations of Chuvash nationalists and intellectuals who were forced to act as unwittingly classic heroes of “fin de siècle” era. The situation and status of “fin de siècle” in Chuvash cultural coordinates system was not limited by strict and rigid chronological bindings and constraints. Chuvash culture and literature figures in the 1980s and 2010s lived in “fin de siècle” epoch and in this trans-cultural and trans-temporality situation they voluntarily or forcibly reflected on their status of timelessness that significantly affected on transformations and developments of Chuvash identity. Chuvash futuristic project initiated by Şeşpël Mişši was unfinished and this incompleteness determined the main vectors of Chuvash identity development in the situation of simultaneous continuity and discontinuity coexistence in the 20th century. Chuvash historical time was not imagined, invented and realised in forms and limits that

suits Chuvash intellectuals. Chuvash intellectual figures realised that Chuvash culture developed in the system of past indefinite, “uncertain” and “incomplete” tenses. This characteristic feature of intellectual discourse forced Chuvash writers to idealise the past while they were focusing in Chuvash future. Chuvash futurism was constantly rotated into the past as universal and unattainable dimension of idealised and desirable Chuvash future.

Şeşpël Mişşi tried to propose a new image of the future city as the internal element of coming Chuvash and urbanised landscape. This idea had the really revolutionary character for the 1918 when Şeşpël Mişşi wrote “Pirën văy”. Şeşpël Mişşi in this context acted as a classical myth-maker and a poet who proposed principally new national political myth. This myth was based on utopian elements but the concept of Şeşpël Mişşi was modernistic and futuristic at the same time because the poet, unlike earlier Chuvash poets, did not appeal to traditional folk culture universality, but he popularised radical and decisive break with old traditionalism. The political dimension of Chuvash national political organisation (Chuvash government, Chuvash ministries, Chuvash State etc.) was imagined by Şeşpël Mişşi as the basis for the subsequent implementation of Chuvash national future project.

The text of “Pirën văy” is interesting in the context of utopian and anti-utopian self-consciousness actualisation. On the one hand, Şeşpël Mişşi was not able to break finally with national revolutionary romantic futurism. Şeşpël Mişşi wrote about the needs to develop and promote political levels and forms of Chuvash national project because he believed that Chuvash government will be a positive factor in the future Chuvash history. The figure of Şeşpël Mişşi in this context got symbolic but extremely important dimension: the poet became a founder of Chuvash national history as an independent history. Şeşpël Mişşi was directly involved in the process of its institutionalisation. The text of “Pirën văy” was based on actualisation of Chuvash futuristic future project components in the form of utopia and dystopia. Şeşpël Mişşi simultaneously tried to actualise potentials of three different genres including science fiction, utopia and dystopia. Fantastic components of the text were relevant to the actual situation of the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s because the majority of the poet’s wildest dreams were not realised.

Analyzing modernistic and futuristic images and motifs in Şeşpël Mişşi poetry in utopian and dystopian contexts we will face with genre definitions problems. Which genre Şeşpël Mişşi texts did belong to? Where can we locate his texts which were fulfilled with faith in future of Chuvash nation and Chuvash language? Where can we mentally map the later verses of Şeşpël Mişşi when they lost optimistic connotations? Şeşpël Mişşi poetry developed cyclically. The dichotomy of simultaneous of utopia and dystopia coexistence was characteristic for poetic texts of Şeşpël Mişşi. Some texts of Şeşpël Mişşi actualised utopian narratives. We can propose that Şeşpël Mişşi was among the first authors in Chuvash literature who created his texts in the genre of utopia, but its historical contemporaries and successors did not understand this fact. The critics, on the one hand, preferred in Şeşpël Mişşi texts from this logical line to see predominantly exaggerated feelings of love for Chuvash motherland and Chuvash language or expressions of

bourgeois nationalism. On the other hand, these texts can be understood in the context of the Chuvash utopian discourse. Chuvash national narratives of futurum, Chuvash world and Chuvash language future in the forms of "Chuvash tomorrow", "A New Day", or "solar future" formed the basis for utopian discourse.

Chuvash intellectuals in the early 1920s did not have time to realise the danger of new society they created and built under the banner of communism. Utopia as a genre was very convenient as form of literature for this society. Therefore Şeşpël Mişşi texts, where he sang new plowed land of new day or wrote about the unprecedented power and strength of Chuvash language, became utopian works in positive sense because they were based on the belief in the strength of nation and in the political and ideological correctness of Chuvash National futurum project, but the dominance of social and national futuristic optimism assisted to gradual erosion and transformation of utopia in Şeşpël Mişşi into dystopia. Antiutopian motives in Şeşpël Mişşi poetry had predominantly political roots, reasons and backgrounds. If utopia stimulated the desire to realise project of Chuvash National futurum, dystopia was actualised in the contest of impossibility of a real implementation of Şeşpël Mişşi brave and futuristic nationalist dreams and aspirations.

The representatives of nationally orientated Chuvash intelligentsia in the beginning of the 1920s realised and understood that Soviet government concessions were temporary and had tactical character, and Chuvash national project of independent development with a strong future prospects of Chuvash nation existence were not among real priorities of Soviet political elites. The contradictions between Chuvash nationalists and predominantly Russian Communists stimulated simultaneously the rise of Russian nationalism and actualised also antiutopian sentiments, disappointments and dissuasions in communist political project among national intellectual communities. Şeşpël Mişşi suicide in this context was unfortunately inevitable, but it was also historically logical. Suicide was predetermined by earlier cultural and intellectual trajectories of Şeşpël Mişşi as the creator and founder of modern Chuvash literature.

The suicide put Şeşpël Mişşi into one logical imagined line with tragic heroes of European and American utopias and dystopias of the 20th century in spite fact that their authors did not have any, even the most general ideas about Şeşpël Mişşi personality. Analyzing Şeşpël Mişşi symbolic role in modern history of Chuvash literature we have to remember that he sanctioned and legitimised transformations which finally transformed him in one of Soviet utopia elements and Soviet utopian project in its national Chuvash version. The poetical legacy of Şeşpël Mişşi after his death until the Soviet project collapse was imagined and invented as factors and forms of legitimation and justification of Soviet cultural and political experiment in Chuvash Republic and Soviet utopia in its national dimension.

The canonised image of Şeşpël Mişşi, who in his texts proposed foundations for subsequent development of utopia and dystopia, was among central elements of Soviet political system and Soviet utopian consciousness and imagination. Şeşpël Mişşi was

actually founder of utopia and dystopia genres in Chuvash literature, but he was also the only representative of these genres in the 20th century Chuvash poetry and prose. None of numerous Chuvash writers in post-Şeşpël Soviet period and in contemporary post-Soviet literature dared to write in genre of utopia and dystopia or social and political science fiction as its compromise forms. Contemporary and indirect intellectual heirs of Şeşpël Mişşi prefer to map and localise their perfect and universal bases of national futurum in the past and historical experience of their ancestors. A history becomes a universal utopia for modern nationalists. A history is also a universal and inevitable dystopia for them because it divides and fragments intellectual community. The utopian and dystopian battles of modern Chuvash intellectuals do not occur in the imagined ideal fiction worlds. The historiographical debates about national history became the universal factor that legitimises Chuvash national futurum.

How death became a national myth, or death as invented tradition. Chuvash literature in the 20th century developed as the simultaneous coexistence and interactions of two mutually exclusive tendencies of continuity and discontinuity. The poetry of Şeşpël Mişşi, one the one hand, could be idealised, mythologised, politicised, ideologised, and recognised as the starting point for the development of Chuvash Soviet literature in its ideological understanding or modern tradition in its more free post-Soviet perception. On the other hand, despite the apologetics and idealisation of the first modern Chuvash poet his immediate successors, poetic and ideological heirs were not able willingly, freely, and openly to combine the social and national narratives and also propose images of Chuvash national future. Political repressions in the second half of the 1930s substantially and significantly weaken and undermined cultural and intellectual potentialities of Chuvash intelligentsia.

Soviet national policy in general was reduced to complete and coherent Sovietisation of intellectual landscapes in the autonomous republics, where ideological and cultural dictates of Moscow dominated and method of socialist realism was recognised as universal paradigm for development of literature. Communist elites of the Soviet Union failed in the Soviet republics, but they gained revenge in the interior regions where they could significantly limit possibilities for cultural and intellectual maneuvers for national intellectual communities including Chuvash in the autonomous republics of the RSFSR. The policy of cultural and ideological unification, initiated by Moscow, on the one hand, did not allow some literary genres arising and developing in national literatures of the autonomous republics. On the other hand, Moscow's ideological curators actually institutionalised cultural failures in development of Chuvash literature. Şeşpël Mişşi could be imagined as the first Chuvash modernist and futurist, the first utopia and dystopia author in Chuvash literature, but it is too difficult to find his successors and heirs among Chuvash writers of the 20th century. The history of Chuvash literature in canon of socialist realism can be imagined as a failure between poetical experimentations of Şeşpël Mişşi and cultural activities of Chuvash writers who belonged to generation that came to literature in the 1980s.

This is extremely difficult task to find utopian and dystopian elements in Chuvash literature of the second half of the 20th century. Boris Cheendykov is among outstanding

figures in a history of contemporary Chuvash literature, but utopian and dystopian motives never were among central in his texts. Some elements of utopian or anti-utopian self-consciousness can be mapped and localised in one of the most controversial works of Boris Cheendykov "Häysene häysem vēleresshēn surāhsem" ("Sheep who want death") [Cheendykov, 2009; Cheendykov, 2012]. The story can not be defined as utopian in classical definition. The text is full of numerous motifs of traditional culture and the pagan perception of world and reality. The image of death is one of the central in the story: "It was winter and it was cold. My wife died in one of clear, frosty nights, and I was alone. I occasionally go to a big club in the village centre... I was playing cards, I smoked a lot, sometimes drunk, but women were not attractive for me. I went up to the attic at midnight and head bowed, sat next to the dead body of my beloved, and sometimes I kissed her. She, of course, was only a corpse, but her hair for some reason, seemed to me still alive. I looked at her for a long time..." [Cheendykov, 2009, p. 15].

"Häysene häysem vēleresshēn surāhsem" is not classic utopia or dystopia because the actions take place not in an ideal imagined world of the future, but the plot is localised and mapped in Chuvash agrarian and rural periphery without any concrete and determined historical origins and roots. The imagined world of the central hero of this story is lost in time, or still exists on the border between times, spaces and epoch. The cemetery is imagined as one of the emblematic places of memory in "Häysene häysem vēleresshēn surāhsem" text: "I soon tired of such life, and I wrapped the body on the couple veil... I harnessed it by an old, lame mare and went to the ancient cemetery where long ago no one was buried... At night I stumbled home, wept, and buried my head in the pillow, and forgotten in a dream" [Cheendykov, 2009, p. 16].

The text of "Häysene häysem vēleresshēn surāhsem" is multi-faceted, multi-level and extremely controversial. Allegorical descriptions of necrophilia are not invented as a biological act, but they are imagined as the intellectual form of Chuvash community existence in the situation of an identity crisis. The scenes of necrophilia in this story represent attempts to return to ethnic and traditional roots, to archaic culture, desire to give up our time, to break with traditions of contemporary consumerism. Therefore, the central character chooses a strategy based on a compromise with an old faith as a natural and inevitable form of religion. This identity choice helped anonymous and unnamed hero of "Häysene häysem vēleresshēn surāhsem" to understand and realise that "sometimes sheep kill themselves. The sheep, who want to die. The sheep, who do not understand what it is – just lie down and die... these sheep are incredibly fond of white light, and their souls have a similarity of the human soul" [Cheendykov, 2009, p. 19].

Boris Cheendykov as postmodernist renounces rigid and fixed localisation of applicable heroes in space and time. The imagined world of Boris Cheendykov develops as timeless and spaceless, as the world-phantom, imagined multiple worlds, worlds without clear boundaries, as world-frontier. The boundaries between death and life, between being and non-being, between existence and non-existence, between paganism and Christianity in prose of Boris Cheendykov are imagined, invented, mapped, and localised on the mental maps of identity as a vague, fuzzy and blurred. Therefore, utopian elements and dystopian

motifs in Boris Cheendykov texts with the same probability could take place anywhere and anywhen – in the past, present or future.

Preliminary conclusions. Dead Şeşpël Mişşi in the Soviet version of Chuvash identity became simultaneously universal, inevitable and extremely convenient figure for mythologisation, indoctrination and imagination as one of the founders of modern Chuvash literature. Şeşpël Mişşi as an important figure in the historical memory and nationalist imagination became a literary standard slowly, and his texts were not always perceived as ideologically correct samples for later Chuvash poets. The image of Şeşpël Mişşi was imagined, invented, censored, and integrated into the new ideological canon.

These ideological difficulties had simultaneously literary and political backgrounds and rooted in socialist realism as the only possible, acceptable, correct method. The figure of Şeşpël Mişşi despite revolutionary zeal and biography that was formally correct from a political viewpoint was not well integratable into the Soviet ideological canon. The ideas of the most Şeşpël Mişşi's texts were almost alien for Soviet ideological canon. Chuvash Soviet writers could write about the revolution, but it could be only socialist and not Chuvash national; they wrote about a new world, but this new world was predominantly Soviet and non-Chuvash; they wrote about the future, but these descriptions were not futuristic because future was bound to be communist and non-Chuvash.

Soviet Chuvash intellectuals consciously limited themselves by ideologically verified barriers and obstacles. The theme of death, extremely spread in texts of Şeşpël Mişşi, became ideologically undesirable and unacceptable, but Chuvash Soviet writers were the same people, and people tend to die. Therefore, the death presented in Chuvash version of socialist realism, but Chuvash authors in this situation acted within the boundaries of the ideological canon. They marginalised suicide and lengthy meditations on the death and completely eliminated these ideas from official discourse.

The heroes of Chuvash socialist realism took part in communist construction, they strengthened and developed socialist society, but they died after the dirty machinations of the class enemy only. The death became undesirable and politically reprehensible for Soviet heroes, and they in some texts, like medieval saints, escaped death, but this almost miraculous salvation became a well-deserved reward for builders of communism for their loyalty and party vigilance.

Apathy, frustration and depression gradually weakened this communist idealism and Boris Cheendykov deconstructed hard and strict connotations between utopia and dystopia in abstract futurum. The utopian prose of Boris Cheendykov can be imagined as a prose of reverse direction, and this structural feature is characteristic for Chuvash identity in general because Chuvash intellectuals in the 20th century faced with significant challenges of self-imagination and invention of national identity.

These difficulties from purely hypothetical viewpoint could encourage the development of Chuvash literature in science fiction, utopia, and dystopia genres, but this scenario of

Chuvash identity transformations was not realised. The attempts to develop a science-fiction genre in Chuvash literature took place during the Soviet period, but Chuvash prose fiction writers were too much wrapped up and dressed in the formal and ceremonial robes of socialist realism that looked like a restless prisoned patient in a straitjacket. The national, folkloric and ethnographic apparels, that were extracted by Chuvash nationalism minded intellectuals into the God's light from the dusty storerooms of Chuvash identity in the post-Soviet period, squeezed and strangled science fiction fast and successfully as it socialist realism did in heydays of its dynamic development.

These non-optimistic assumptions reinforce bad prognosis that the patient known as formalised Chuvash science fiction will die soon. The utopian and anti-utopian trends in Chuvash national and cultural identity in the 20th century were subjected to coercive and violent deconstruction, marginalisation and displacement beyond the cultural and intellectual space. Therefore, any attempts of Chuvash identity and nationalism historians and Chuvash intellectuals imagine, invent, mentally map, and re-actualise national identity by themselves in future concept will only attempt to reconstruct the elements and trends of utopian and dystopian self-consciousness in Chuvash identity.

Acknowledgement. The author is grateful to Boris Cheendykov for numerous books in Chuvash which inspired me to read again in the language of forgotten ancestors. The author is also grateful to Master of Economics Olesia Gorte and Dr. Alexander Boldyrihin (Voronezh State University) who agreed to become the first readers of this text. These brave people read my English text, painfully making their way through too long Chuvash quotations. They revised too bookish English of the author with true courage and determination. The author is grateful to them that they kept my archaic British English spelling. The author thanks their attempts to turn his text into a more readable, understandable... and English.

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