

ILIA CHAVCHAVADZE'S VILLAGE STUDIES AND THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUALITY OF GEORGIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

We can consider the work of the Georgian thinker and writer Iliia Chavchavadze - "Life and the Law" as one of the first works in village studies. Iliia make deep comparative analysis. It is expressed in fundamental differentiation between Georgian and Russian mode of production. Thanks to Iliia Cavchavadze's essential analysis, it is ascertained that Georgian mode of production has in bases private property but Russian mode of production - communal ownership. According to Chavchavadze, village society in Russia is established on different base than in Georgia.

Keywords: Village studies, Individuality, Ownership, Private property

Introduction

The village as social microcosmos and peasant household are the object of deep research of sociologists, anthropologists and ethnographers. The village life style and type of economy includes many factors that presents itself as mental, cultural and economic components and forms one whole social cosmos. The latter is a condition of mental rhythm for country life style. This mental rhythm provides an understanding of private property, freedom and individuality which express themselves in national cultures, and in some way give rise to the relationship model for the whole world. Therefore, the interest in village is caused by the fact that the style of village economy is the major condition for the essential reproduction of human life and culture. This interest is conditioned by set of interests; special attention is paid to particularity of coexistence of village life (living together). From this set of reasons particular mode of production takes special place that is conditioned by work on the land. The peculiar form of organization of work - household economy also belongs to these reasons.¹¹⁴ From this perspective, the work of the famous Georgian thinker and writer Iliia Chavchavadze - "Life and the Law" is flagged under our attention. We can consider this writing as one of the first works in village studies. This work in its essence is many-sided but we want to pay attention to the problem of individuality and commonality.

Despite the fact that Iliia Chavchavadze did not develop general theory of village sociology, in any way his work forms classical criteria of village studies; insofar as he considers: 1. Social structure of village population; 2. common style of peasant production; 3. Life style of village population; 4. The work in - agriculture, style of labor organizing and management of production; 5. The level of life village population and principle of household economy. We will also mention the fact that when Iliia Chavchavadze worked on this work, not only village studies but also sociology was at birth. Moreover, Iliia Chavchavadze bases his point of view on reflection of leading European economists and sociologists such as John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, John Ramsey McCulloch, Émile Louis Victor de Laveleye and so

¹¹⁴ Thomas W., Znaniecki F. The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: A Classic Work in Immigration History. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1927. Turner D. Peasant Economy as Social Category // Great Stranger/ Ed. T. Shanin. Moscow: Progress, 1992.

on.¹¹⁵ Worthwhile to mention that classical works in village sociology is based on experience and generalization of particular national communities village's style of life.¹¹⁶ Ilia pays attention to informal social-economic structure of village and essentially describes social life style of Georgian village. It should be noted that Ilia Chavchavadze based the study object on the structure of everyday life of Georgian villages. For this reason Ilia Chavchavadze's research is methodologically rigorous and presents many worthwhile social facts of village life.¹¹⁷

Unchanged model for describing the traditional society has always been a village community. We meet it in different civilizations which are often regarded as proof of a universal model of social development of the world. But we cannot unite lifestyle of peasant communities of different societies in one form. For explaining the way of life of peasant communities, Ilia uses the comparativistic methodology. The lifestyle of peasant communities of different European cultures such as Scotland, France, Italy, Russia and Georgia is taken as the object of analysis. In all cases the lifestyle of the peasant communities is determined as community. Moreover, essential parameters of that lifestyle of peasant communities do not coincide. So, we have three different social institutions which cannot be placed in a common definition. According to Ilya Chavchavadze, both in Europe as well as in Georgia's economy peasant communities were based on the principle of individualism. But in Russia, it was based on the collectivist tradition. This form of the peasant economy was based on the implementation of collectivist economic activity and all the efforts of its dissolution were unsuccessful and were always reconstructed in a new form. The principle of equalization (from the Russian word *uravnilovka*) was unknown to both - European and Georgian peasant economy. This phenomenon was characteristic only to Russian peasant economy. This phenomenon implied periodic exchange of the land between peasant communities.¹¹⁸

Hence, Ilia Chavchavadze makes very interesting conclusions that concern individualistic and collectivistic mode of production. His research was related to the question of land purchase which was very urgent after abolishing of serfdom in Russian Empire. This problem was also related to the legislation that was established by Russian Empire. Properly, this legislation demanded from peasants guarantee from community at the time of purchasing land. According to Ilia Chavchavadze, this legislation was in contradiction with Georgian peasant traditional mode of production. "It is in contradiction with Georgian peasants' style of thrift, economical condition and structure. In Russia, it has its own justification. In Russia, there is common ownership of the land (in Russian - *Мирское*) and hence, they have common obligation. We can say neither good nor bad about common ownership, but we will say only one thing - common guarantee does not have place where common ownership does not exist".¹¹⁹ Hence, if in Russian peasant wished to buy land, the whole community should

¹¹⁵ Ilia Chavchavadze. *Life and Law. Selected Works in 5 volumes. Vol. IV.* Tbilisi, 198, pp. 305, 309.

¹¹⁶ For instance, research of the Chinese researcher Fei Syatun. Syatun F. *Chinese Village from the Ethnographer's Point of View.* Moscow, 1989.

¹¹⁷ Modern researcher, Theodor Shanin, who works on informal structure of village society, called his research method reflexive peasant studies. Our reference is conditioned by the fact that Ilia's effort generally coincides with the problem of sociology of village. Shanin Th. *Reflexive Peasant Studies and Russian Village.* // *Reflexive Peasant Studies.* Moscow, 2002.

¹¹⁸ Even at the beginning of XX century exchange of the land between community peasants was widely spread. It is known that Stolypin's reform for dissolution collectivistic mode of production between community peasants was unsuccessful. Despite the state support collectivist mode of production of community peasant be turned into private ownership of the economy, only a small number of peasants left the community. Most of them are back in the economic "world" of the peasant community. Later, collectivistic mode of production created in agricultural sector in the Soviet Union essentially was reconstruction of the traditional form of Russian peasant community.

¹¹⁹ Ilia Chavchavadze. *Life and Law. Selected Works in 5 volumes. Vol. IV.* Tbilisi, 198, p. 319.

be in guarantee.

Ilia bases his point of view on the analysis of the well known Belgian economist Émile Louis Victor de Laveleye and mentions that common guarantee is possible only in case when it follows from common ownership. While Georgian mode of production or land ownership and structure of economy was based on household economy or family economy, its essence was family ownership and not common ownership. For this reason, a general guarantee in Georgia was only the status of the obligation and the rights that had Russian peasants but not Georgian peasants.¹²⁰

Ilia makes deep comparative analysis. It is expressed in fundamental differentiation between Georgian and Russian mode of production. Thanks to Ilia Chavchavadze's essential analysis, it is ascertained that Georgian mode of production has in bases private property, but Russian mode of production - communal ownership. According to Chavchavadze, village society in Russia is established on different base than in Georgia. In Russia, peasants do not own land by hereditary. Land in common ownership in Russia means that nobody has it in permanent ownership. For this reason Russia has two kinds of ownership: in one side peasants possess land in common ownership and on the other side aristocracy possess land in private property.¹²¹ But in Georgia, ownership of the land was only private property and there was no difference between peasants and aristocracy. In Georgia, despite ranking (peasants and aristocracy), ownership of private property was hereditary and in permanent Ownership.¹²² With all ensuing consequences Ilia makes essential conclusions. Insofar as Georgian mode of production was based on private property and individualistic style of life, it had homogeneous attitude to the institution of ownership and private property. In Georgian legislative tradition, relationship with private property institution does not focus on rank differentiation. The rank division in case of ownership came from Russia. The rank division principle essentially complicated development of the self-government at village level as in whole Georgia. By Russian imperial legislation, aristocracy and peasantry were divided and they participated in self-government structure with different status. Insofar as traditionally all rank had homogeneous principle to the private property and land ownership in Georgian society, this principle was equalizing their Rights status. Thus, it was not understandable why different ranks will participate in self government institutions by different status. According to Ilia, in Georgian language there was no word having the exactly same meaning as Russian word -“сословие”- rank. If the nation does not have the term signifying rank division, it means that they do not have such practice. By Georgian tradition, despite rank, every person was responsible in front of King and all of them were equal in this responsibility.¹²³

Conclusion

The analysis made by Ilia Chavchavadze begins with the analysis of village structure and ends with consideration of political freedom of personality. Ilia's effort is directed to show fundamental difference between Russian and Georgian style of life and to show Georgian anthropological meaning and understanding roots of freedom in Georgian society in this light. In this context, Ilia considers freedom in the political aspect of the present which illuminates legal policy areas directly related to freedom of the individual (e.g. change in position of an individual in the space of state-political and legal relations, the changing nature of state influence on personality formation of the legal activity of an individual as a prerequisite for the implementation of its freedom; proclamation value of an individual, his/her rights and freedoms, and others) and indirectly affecting the freedom of an individual

¹²⁰ ibid

¹²¹ ibid, p. 335.

¹²² ibid, p. 337.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 338.

(e.g. the formation of the rule of law, the formation of civil society, improving the law and its application to individual liberty, etc.).

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