

ILIA CHAVCHAVADZE AND THE EMERGENCE OF GEORGIAN NATIONAL DISCOURSE*

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the history of the emergence of the discourse of Georgian nationalism and the idea of the Georgian nation. The author offers an alternative view of the reasons for the emergence of Georgian nationalism and identifies the main topics of the Georgian national narrative.

Ilia Chavchavadze, a poet, a writer, a publicist and a public figure, is considered the spiritual father of the nation in Georgia. He is one of the key figures in the Georgian historical pantheon because he outlined the main ethnic markers of Georgian identity. He and his circle, the group of intellectuals known as Tergdaleulebi, mark the beginning of the history of Georgian nationalism. This makes him an indisputable authority for all those who call themselves Georgian patriots.

Keywords: Georgia, Ilia Chavchavadze, Mtkvardaleulebi, Tergdaleulebi, Pirveli Dasi, feudalism, nationalism, traditionalism, colonialism, capitalism.

Nationalism became one of the backgrounds of modernisation. Kartvelian nationalism has been one of the key factors driving change in Georgia. It continues to play a relevant role in various spheres of life of Georgian society - political, cultural and scientific. Problems of the genesis and intellectual history of Georgian nationalism occupy a separate place in Caucasian studies today. The study of the origins of Georgian nationalism, as well as its ideological roots, remains among the priority and urgent scientific tasks.

In the 1860s, the magazines *Tsiskari* (The Dawn) and *Sakartvelos Moambe* (The Herald of Georgia) were engaged in heated ideological debates on Georgian language and literature, and essentially on social and political issues. In the course of that discussion, the Kartvelian intellectual establishment was divided into conditionally competing groups. The conservatives, who came to be known as the "fathers"/*mamebi*, merged into one of them. Their social sentiments, however, were not set out as a coherent political theory. A political expert from Tbilisi writes that the older "generation did not leave any systematised ideological heritage and in this regard, we cannot compare Prince Grigol Orbeliani or any of the "fathers" with Joseph de Mestre and Chateaubriand" [18]. The emergence of the Georgian national discourse was fuelled by the class interests of the feudal lords, who had entered the epoch of modernity and were in a deep economic decline. It is this circum-

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stance that the conservative *Mtkvardaleulebi* (those who drank water of the Mtkvari/Kura River) movement had chosen as the cornerstone for the attempted consolidation of the noble elements. They acted as public "adherents of medieval Georgia with its pomp and pageantry" [29: 53]. The "fathers" dreamed of restoring ancient virtues of Georgian society, when allegedly simple morals reigned: a kind monarch ensured the prosperity of his subjects, and the church catered for high moral values. "The last offspring of medieval feudalism, - writes a witness to the events, - gives direction, tone to all affairs of national life" [10: 16]. Thus, the quite liberal idea of the Westernisation of Georgia, in the views of the nobility's educated community, was, alas, intricately intertwined with the pathological glorification of their country's feudal past.

From the *Mtkvardaleulebi* generation, born of the aristocratic fronda and forged by the anti-Russian conspiracy of 1832, an outwardly "Westernised" intelligentsia, gradually but inexorably took over the initiative. From this emerged the modernisers, nicknamed "sons"/*shvilebi*. They initiated a new tendency which was joined by Georgian youth educated in Russia and which was called *Tergdaleulebi* (those who drank water of the Terek River). They returned to their native land with a dream of the national revival of Georgia. An unquestionable authority for those who lived with this hope was Prince Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907). A broadly educated intellectual, he tried to creatively rethink the concepts of Western thinkers (Ernest Renan and others) for the benefit of his country. From the German philosophers (J. G. Fichte and others), for example, he took over the experience of the Romantic tradition. For him, their theories were just a form, which he filled with his own content. His formula "Georgian heart and European clothes" [40: 26] became the cornerstone, the core of the *Tergdaleulebi* viewpoint on the Westernisation of Georgia. Thus, Chavchavadze called for borrowing only external forms from the West, as the westernisation of the country was not possible without the weakening of paternalist structures.

Poet Akaki Tsereteli, educator Jakob Gogebashvili and, later, writers Prince Kazbegi and Vazha-Pshavela (Luka Razikashvili) stood closest to him in their outlook. Chavchavadze, along with his ideological supporters, formed a movement *Pirveli Dasi*/First group which gave a new and powerful impetus to Georgian patriotism. They defended the code of Georgian identity - *Kartveloba* - in every possible way in the face of threats of Russification.

If the *Mtkvardaleulebi* were bitterly longing for the distant past only, the *Tergdaleulebi* generation tried more to compose literature about the real problems of their time [35: 218]. At the same time, the *Pirveli Dasi* literati were united in their anticipation of the catastrophe that bourgeois civilisation seemed to be bringing to their homeland. They promoted an ideal of "heroic realism" that was hostile to mercantile consciousness. They dreamed of overthrowing the vulgar, squalid, bourgeois culture of the merchants and reviving a stern community of brave, valiant warriors.

The quintessence of the *Tergdaleulebi* doctrine is perhaps contained in the corporatist theory of the "Common Action Ground", i.e. the commonality of ethnic interests of all social groups of the Georgian people [29: 12]. They stood firmly on the point of defending common national values: Georgian identity, language and culture. The *Mtkvardaleulebi* were in full solidarity with them on this issue.

A peculiarity of the Kartvelian revival was that the main carrier of ideas of restoration of ethnic statehood was the local aristocracy. This was due to the weakness of the Georgian bourgeoisie and the historically established vanguard role of the nobility. Georgian aristocracy belonged only to the hereditary nobility - the "nobility of the sword", which, as experience has shown, mentally boycotted the environment of merchants living according to the laws of "power of money" and not "power of the land". It should be recalled that the heroic "high" romanticism in the work of Ilia Chavchavadze, which extolled the love of an exploit, was the antithesis of merchant "low" mercantilism. "Where there is profit, - he spoke of merchants with undisguised disdain, - there is the merchant's homeland" [24: 152]. There was no phenomenon in Georgia similar to the English "gentry" or the French "nobility of the mantle", who were recruited from the "third estate" at the beginning of the new age and well adapted to bourgeois relations. Even after the abolition of serfdom, the Georgians continued to live in the system of coordinates of feudal society, with its hierarchy of vertical relations. Indeed, as a contemporary of the *Tergdaleulebi* reports, "the Georgian people are distinguished by the medieval type of their social structure" [10: 11]. A powerful national bourgeoisie had not developed in Georgia, which was usually the product of anti-feudal revolutions.

Expert Gia Nodia writes that the 1832 conspiracy, which was an episode of aristocratic nationalism, was not further developed. In the 1860s Ilia Chavchavadze had to create Georgian nationalism on a new basis [7: 21]. His social programme was based on the desire to preserve Georgia as an agrarian community [37: 133]. He considered the complete abolition of estates and nobility land ownership premature [24: 106]. This eventually led him into the conservative camp. He was characterised by agrarian romanticism - a desire to remove the sphere of land relations from the influence of market mechanisms.

Ilia Chavchavadze argued that colonialism and capitalism had destroyed the social idyll that had existed in feudal Georgia. He and his followers tried to prove that prior to the Russian domination serfdom was paternalistic care of a peasantry and not slavery. "Such an opinion, - writes the researcher of the issue, - was a gross distortion of history. One must assume that Georgian writers of the nobility were ashamed to admit the existence of the vile system on which their own well-being was based. <...> Therefore, these gentile writers idealised old Georgia and even denied the existence of serfdom in it" [14: 13, 97].

Furthermore, Chavchavadze called for the reconciliation of the estates within his ethnos and cherished the illusory dream of a union of "sword and ploughshare" [24: 149; 33: 37]. This was in fact very similar to the corporatist theory. In this way, the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi* wanted to avoid an acute social struggle in his

country. However, the emancipation of peasants without land, while retaining feudal duties based on land dependence, laid the groundwork for an irreconcilable conflict between them and the landlords.

The *Tergdaleulebi*, however, made an invaluable contribution to the consolidation of the ethno-cultural identity of the Kartvelians. Moreover, they initiated the process of ethno-political construction of the Georgian nation [15: 20]. Their concept of nationalism emanated from the ideas of the German Romantics and was based on the primordialist model. The process, however, developed at the expense of the internal assimilation of the autochthonous peoples - Mingrelians and Svans, as well as some traditional Georgian population groups (Armenians, Ossetians, Jews, Greeks, Kistebts and others) who had assimilated the Kartvelian language. In addition, there was an urgent need to make Georgian Muslims, who then had a very different identity from their Christian compatriots, part of a single nation.

Among the Kartvelians, a strong regional (or sub-ethnic) identity has long contributed to their ethnographic isolation. They lacked a collective identity. For example, the Gurians "did not have a concept of a single Georgian nation. Georgia for them was Kartli and Georgians were Kartlians, sometimes Kakhetians" [9: 7]. In short, ethnicity did not matter to them when people of feudal formations simply did not ask to which ethnos they belonged. In addition, the pre-modern era was generally characterised by the predominance of religious identity over ethnic identity.

The process of consolidation of the Georgian ethno-confessional community into a full-fledged nation was hindered in every way by the discriminatory regime of religious policy introduced by official St. Petersburg. The problem was deprivation of autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church and the destruction of its monopoly of education, which of course was a heavy blow to the ethnic identity of Georgians. For this reason, the Kartvelian clergy temporarily lost the ability to form and retransmit the cultural code of their people. The consequence of this was a decline in the importance of Orthodoxy as an identity marker.

As a reminder, Muslim Georgians were a distinct community. Their identity had a distinctive character, which limited their communication in the Kartvelian environment. These barriers gradually began to break down due to the secularization of culture of the feudal elite, which led to the formation of national intelligentsia. In this context, it seems no coincidence that the sequence of parts of the famous triad formulated by Chavchavadze - "Fatherland, Language, Faith" - the main markers of contemporary Georgian self-awareness became consistent.

"By putting "Language" ahead of "Faith", - writes expert Gia Nodia, - Chavchavadze secularised Georgian nationalism by likening it to linguistic nationalism, opening it up to Georgian Muslims and representatives of other confessions, but he also reserved the possibility of appealing to medieval tradition" [7: 22]. This nationalism acted as a mechanism for constructing the internal solidarity of the young Kartvelian intelligentsia.

For the Kartvelian traditionalists, who placed the main emphasis on the idea of a common language (*Ena*) and homeland (*Mamuli*), it was not the Orthodox faith but the native language - Kartuli - that determined nationality. This enabled the establishment of an ethno-cultural channel of communication with their Islamised compatriots. Moreover, Chavchavadze raised love for his native country to the level of faith (*Sartsmunoeba*), thus actually establishing a new civic cult [2: 112]. Although the *Tergdaleulebi* advocated the creation of a secular nation, they continued to regard Orthodoxy as one of the important factors of intra-ethnic solidarity. In addition, Christianity symbolised Georgia's glorious past. After all, the struggle for their faith at the same time was always the struggle for their language among the Kartvelians. It has also not been forgotten and integrated by the efforts of the *Tergdaleulebi* into Kartvelian national narrative [34: 90]. It should be emphasised that Chavchavadze paid particular attention to Christian beliefs. He based his views on the Martyrological paradigm. He called Orthodoxy his true faith and zealously defended its positions. Christianity, writes Chavchavadze, "was a sign of belonging to the Georgian people. <...> By Christian faith we preserved our land, our language, our identity, our national face" [5: 53].

Moreover, Chavchavadze saw the new form as an embodiment of traditional Georgian values. He placed particular emphasis on the deeds of the ancestors, similar to the Russian *pochvenniks*, who emphasised a return to native roots. "Neither the commonality of language, - he reasoned, - nor that of faith and family kinship does create as strong a sense of belonging together, as the unity of history" [44: 56].

In this sense, the aphorism that "nations are made by historians" is true. Without the continuity built by them, linking dozens of generations into a single whole, neither national memory nor national identity would have been possible. Of course, a special role was given here to the processes of creating a canonical historical narrative. As the eminent British historian put it, "the past is what creates the nation" [27: 332]. In his works Chavchavadze turned to the historical past of his homeland, reviving its most heroic pages in order to awaken a sense of patriotic pride in his fellow countrymen. However, the only living tradition that he inherited from his ancestors was firmly tied to feudal culture.

Chavchavadze said that "there are Kartlians, Kakhetians, Gurians, Mingrels, but <...> there is no Georgian as a representative of a single nation" [15: 88]. Thus, in order to achieve decolonization, it was clearly necessary to forge a fully-fledged Georgian political nation from the Kartvelian feudal ethnos. This project formulated by the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi*, however, initially had an important flaw. In his construction the Kartvelians remained a medieval "ethnos", for he did not intend to transform them into a fully-fledged bourgeois "demos", a mobile community of the Western type. Of course, this then raises the question of how the nobility and the plebs would integrate with one another. Without bourgeois Westernisation, this would obviously be impossible. In addition, writes a researcher, "Chavchavadze clearly defined ethno-cultural boundaries of Georgian identity and the Kartvelian

ethnos. It was only possible to be Georgian by birth" [42: 62]. Thus, he called for solidarity among his fellow tribesmen on the basis of his primordialist sentiments, as he remained a conservative romantic in the depths of his worldview.

The epistolary tradition in the modern era formed a new core of Kartvelian identity. Here "literary activity has gone hand in hand with the political movement, and the chief writers are also the leaders of Georgian Nationalism" [38: 68]. They, however, possessed a traditionalist worldview built on mythologemes, where they portrayed Georgia's feudal past in a very rosy light. An eyewitness reports that Georgian "literature quite vividly expresses the national feeling, mainly in the form of idealisation of the past, longing for the lost, lamentation of the miserable reality, etc" [26: 484]. Literature played a special role in those conditions, writes the Russian researcher, when Georgian authors could not yet cultivate nationalism in political life [11: 15]. The noble intelligentsia (Prince Grigol Orbeliani and others) called for a return to old customs, a revival of medieval chivalric traditions and the glorification in a romantic spirit of concepts and values such as "fatherland", "class" and "native land". As a result, they dreamed of reconstructing the contemporary social reality according to the model of an ideal past imagined by them.

Historical memory, thanks to the efforts of noble intellectuals, acted as a powerful consolidating factor. "Almost everything, - writes a publicist living in Tbilisi, - that Georgians consider fine is intrinsically linked to the era of feudal monarchy" [17]. A well-known expert has quite correctly identified that a characteristic feature of Georgian political thought has been the "medieval interpretation" of the entire political trend in Georgia's new history [19: 158]. It undoubtedly has at its core the feudal paradigm, passed on by the baton to subsequent generations of Georgian intellectuals by their noble predecessors. It was in these circles that a very specific, local "feudal nationalism" [10: 48, 49, 56] began to be assiduously cultivated, as defined by an eyewitness of the era.

"It should be taken into account, - reports the Tbilisi-based publicist, - that Georgian nationalism, despite its rich history, is poorly researched - there are few programmatic documents. Their place is usually taken by a mishmash of scathing quotations and archaic preconceptions. Georgian leaders drew their ideas about the phenomenon of the nation from Western sources, which predictably led to a toss-up between ethnic and civic nationalism" [16]. Indeed, in the legacy of the *Tergdaleulebi* there is extensive publicism rich in pathetic rhetoric, but we do not see any comprehensively developed socio-political concepts of their own. In the opinion of their contemporaries, "the views of the Georgian nationalists remain extremely vague" [21: 54].

Nationalism, according to the Swiss author, is an unavoidable effect accompanying any modernisation [1: 15]. It is important to remember that in Europe it grew out of the anti-feudal revolutions, the rejection of class society and hereditary aristocracy by the bourgeoisie [13: 196]. By contrast, Georgian nationalism emerged in an aristocratic environment on the basis of rejection of capitalism and liberalism. It is noteworthy that the genesis of nationalism in Georgia was aimed at social re-

venge of the nobility and was not connected with the emancipation of the plebeian majority. It was a purely "noble nationalism", the instigator of which was Ilia Chavchavadze [36]. After all, he "served the nobility with his talent and knowledge" [14: 98]. Another Georgian author, however, attributes him to preaching integral nationalism [41: 45]. According to a local political scientist, it is ethnic in nature, based on language and religion [39: 80]. Thus, the triad "Fatherland, Language, Faith" has become a formula for Georgian nationalism, and the figure of Ilia Chavchavadze himself has become its embodiment [40: 30]. He publicly justified the legitimacy of the autocephaly of the Kartvelian clergy, abolished by the Russian authorities. In recognition of these merits, the Georgian Orthodox Church canonised him under the name Saint Ilia the Righteous [5: 54]. His ideas are now interpreted within the framework of religious nationalism, and the existing secular cult is gradually being enriched with details inherent in the cult of traditional Orthodox saints.

Chavchavadze never clearly articulated or publicly raised the issue of the need to restore his Georgian statehood. It was only in 1906 that he spoke cautiously in the press in favour of Georgian self-government [31: 263]. At the same time, institutional nationalism in Europe was hardening before his eyes when dependent ethnic groups were given significant opportunities for their consolidation. The tensions over the status of languages undoubtedly played a role as a catalyst for political mobilization. The mother tongue and its position became a significant social resource. The theorists of nationalism attached no less importance to the issue of ethno-cultural solidarity than to the struggle for other ideological resources. Therefore, "Ilia Chavchavadze's nationalism, - according to the Georgian author, - was a cultural nationalism. It did not emphasise political goals" [30: 38]. His ideas nevertheless played a powerful detonator role in the growth of the Kartvelian liberation movement.

Ilia Chavchavadze, who attempted to formulate a definition of Georgians as a nation, helped the Kartvelian community to realise the costs of colonial dependence in his writings. He formulated his political credo in the short story *The Letters of the Traveler* (1861), with the refrain being "before we belonged to ourselves" [44], which was in fact a call for the restoration of the country's sovereignty. However, opposition to foreign domination in the view of the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi* was to unfold not as a political but as a cultural confrontation.

Spiritual followers of Chavchavadze long hesitated to put forward the slogan of secession of Georgia from the Romanov Empire. In the beginning they were extremely timid in their political ambitions. The *Tergdaleulebi* had to look back at the official authorities, fear of persecution, use of Aesopian language and so on. They waited for an opportune moment, but until then their agenda was limited to the task of preserving their ethno-cultural identity and their native language. However, a modern expert, while mentioning the importance of these figures in the history of their people, writes with certainty that "Ilia Chavchavadze led the national liberation movement in Georgia from the 60s of the XIX century, which gradually, but

consistently led Georgians to the path of struggle for the restoration of statehood and national independence" [23: 229]. It should be recalled that Chavchavadze is declared in Georgia as a kind of "founding father of the nation" [6: 85]. After all, he made a significant contribution to the formation of a new Georgian identity by putting forward the idea of the consolidation of the Kartvelians into a nation. He was also the first to formulate the basic concepts of Kartvelian nationalism.

It should be recalled that at one time there was no tangible liberal current in the Georgian political palette. Its development was hindered by the visible absence of a bourgeois class and the traditional forms of life of the bulk of the population.

An expert from Tbilisi writes: "he can be called the father of Georgian liberalism just as much as the father of Georgian nationalism" [18]. It is difficult for us to agree with the assertion that Chavchavadze was allegedly a liberal. All the more so as his concept of national revival was by no means linked to the doctrine of liberalism, the core of which is the preaching of freedom of commodity-money relations. After all, it is well known that the leader of the *Pirveli dasi* was sharply critical and negative of capitalism [33: 37]. The evidence is perhaps his categorical rejection of the market conversion of feudal property and its redistribution by free sale.

In addition, writes the Georgian author, "in I. Chavchavadze's writings, we find a denunciatory critique of capitalist society" [24: 38]. Moreover, in the pages of his newspaper *Iveria*, Chavchavadze gave prominence to those commentators who tried to prove that not only did capitalism not exist in Georgia, but that it never would [25: 17]. The leader of the *Pirveli Dasi* himself, demonstrating his attitude towards merchants, referred to them as "weasels" and the capital belonging to them as "evil money" [4: 362]. The idea of reconciling the interests of the nobility with those of the bourgeoisie was strongly opposed by him. He realised that these interests were incompatible and that the victory of the bourgeoisie would ultimately lead to the loss of all the hereditary privileges of the nobility.

As the Kartvelian aristocrats found themselves squeezed between the Russian bureaucracy and Armenian compradors, the nobility of the *Tergdaleulebi* feverishly sought ways to overcome this fatal tendency for their class. An American expert writes: "after the early period of radicalism, I. Chavchavadze became a conservative liberal by the 1880s" [33: 37]. It is not difficult to see that we are facing a counter-versus two paradigms: Enlightenment liberalism on the one hand, and romantic conservatism on the other. Moreover, he is looking for answers to the challenges of time in tradition. "We only need, - writes the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi*, - to turn to the former customs and they will tell us the right path" [8: 63]. It would be more accurate to state that the national revival was now conceived not as a simple return to old values, but as their radical renewal. His "dynamic conservatism" implied continuity from the past, not a return to it. "From our ancestors, we inherited the three sacred treasures: Fatherland, Language, and Faith. If we do not even take good care of them, what kind of men are we, what will we be able to say to our heirs?" [43: 27; 12: 24]. It is clear that Chavchavadze appears in this passage as

a traditionalist, who saw in the new form the embodiment of familiar Georgian values.

Thus, the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi* and his comrades-in-arms move to the position of feudal traditionalism. Their works "are saturated with idealisation of old morals" [14: 93]. They were building a sentimental abstraction, the aim of which was not to imagine a future life, but to call for the resurrection of the romanticised past. The social essence of the sum of their views is the consistent and talented response of the nobility to the prospects of bourgeois development. "Before the enemy raided <...> ruined us, stole, - Chavchavadze complained irritably, - now Armenian merchants ruin us even more. Before we met the enemy <...> and sometimes even defeated them. But how will you defeat a merchant?" [45]. In his eyes, it was a value conflict between the commercial mentality of the merchants and the heroic culture of the aristocratic knights.

The welfare of the Georgian aristocracy was traditionally linked to the land, which for many of them was their only source of income. The nobility, who did not understand or did not want to realise the true causes of their decline, instead craved a simple and powerful explanation for the sudden collapse of their traditional way of life. This was soon found by replicating the myth of the insidious shenanigans of the Armenian bourgeoisie. An eyewitness recalled: "the main inspirers of the anti-Armenian and sometimes Armenophobic campaign were prominent representatives of Georgian literature, such as Prince I. Chavchavadze, Prince Ak. Tsereteli and others. This campaign was purely of noble origin" [26: 519]. From the point of view of aristocrats, their ruin was the work of cunning foreigners who allegedly abused Georgian hospitality and used it for selfish ends. This thesis was thoroughly polished and laid out in the famous programmatic pamphlet "Armenian Scientists and Scream Stones" [28]. In this work, saturated with bright and catchy phrases, Iliia Chavchavadze did not rely on verified facts, but rather on his natural eloquence, thus compensating for the total lack of intelligible arguments [3].

The ideas defining the consciousness of the second generation of Georgian intellectuals were, among other things, products of Western origin. They sought ideological constructs suitable for themselves in the European intellectual environment. In his rejection of capitalism, Chavchavadze predictably resorted to arguments of agrarian romanticism. "History, - he writes, - has only the people who stand firmly on [their] land and plough on it" [24: 150]. As a result, the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi* intuitively felt a connection to the traditionalist theory of "blood and soil" before it was formulated by German philosopher Oswald Spengler. The essence of this doctrine was the relationship between "blood", ethnicity, and "soil", the homeland that gives one's people sustenance.

Iliia Chavchavadze tried to combine the conservative views of his nobility with the demands of modernity, as he realised that an unconditional return to the former feudal orders of the Middle Ages in the conditions of modern civilisation was impossible. As a result, he became a link between the old feudal aristocracy and the young nobility, representing both elite groups. In other words, Chavchavadze was

looking for and had found (by the 1880s) an acceptable *modus vivendi* between the nostalgia of the conservatives ("fathers") and the reformism of the traditionalists ("sons"). The core of this idea was the formula he proposed: "A new Georgia should only be born out of the old" [40: 25]. In contrasting the heroic past with the dreary present, he chose traditionalism as synonymous with anti-capitalism. This problem became part of the ideological baggage of the Georgian so-called *pochvenniks*, who gave it a nationalist character.

A number of his works are written in the genre of classical romanticism, idealising the past and condemning modernity. He writes: "The Georgian name, Georgian customs and order has been desecrated! In the old days everything was our way" [45]. This call to old times is nothing less than his protest against foreign rule. In addition, it was the "nostalgic nationalism" of the Georgian nobility, of which Ilia Chavchavadze was the main speaker [37: 132]. Thus, the sentiments of the local traditionalists were broadly cited by conservative romantics.

Although the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi* sought to give the Georgian tradition a more modern character, he was an organic part of the local nobility. Social conservatism, feudal particularism and pronounced xenophobia dominated there. Chavchavadze, reports the Georgian author, "failed to avoid idealising the past. He has tried to connect his new ideas with ancient Georgia, with its "golden age". He praises the past and directly speaks of the need to restore "the old times" [24: 143]. Chavchavadze, however, realised that in the drastically changed circumstances a full return to the previous paradigm of conservatism had become impossible. Expert G. Nodia correctly noted that in the new paradigm constructed by Chavchavadze "there was a reconstruction of the medieval past on the basis of the Georgian national project of the new time" [7: 22]. This trend reflected his transit towards mature national-conservatism.

The European author concluded that Ilia Chavchavadze was committed to "reformist conservative politics" [32: 303]. His views, in our opinion, resemble in many ways the Georgian analogue of the ideas of the Russian *Slavophiles*, with their eternal search for a "third way". Indeed, he "believed in the uniqueness of Georgia's development and considered it completely different from the development of European countries" [24: 131]. As a consequence, he entered into sharp ideological disputes with the adherents of Westernisation, liberals and radical democrats, and then with the *Narodniks*, the worst enemies of the nobility's landed estates [22: 231]. In his vision, it was of course necessary to take into account the previous historical inertia when modernising his native country and to avoid a capitalist transformation in Georgia.

The speeches of Chavchavadze and his comrades-in-arms resonated widely and prompted many sympathisers of the *Tergdaleulebi* plans to engage in political activities. Yet Chavchavadze was an implacable opponent of the bourgeois order. He did not, however, slip into the marginal position of a retrograde. He believed that the main efforts should be focused on the cultural revival of the Georgian people. To a large extent his distinctive position in the liberation movement was due to

his outstanding personal qualities and talent as a great writer. The combination of pessimism towards the surrounding world with a belief in its better future, criticism in the spirit of modern age traditionalism and recognition of the right to individual freedom, create the worldview phenomenon of Chavchavadze. Thus, the leader of the *Pirveli Dasi* was the first to chart a vector pointing the way for Kartveli traditionalists and to formulate their unspoken manifesto, a response of Georgian *pochvenniks*/traditionalists to the challenges of colonialism and capitalism.

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**ԻԼՅԱ ՃԱՎՃԱՎԱԶԵՆ ԵՎ ՎՐԱՑԱԿԱՆ ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ
ԽՈՍՈՒՅԹԻ ԿԱՅԱՑՈՒՄԸ**

Բենիամին Մաիլյան

Բանալի բառեր՝ Վրաստան, Իլյա Ճավճավաձե, մտկվարդալեուլերի, թերգդալեուլերի, Պիրվելի դասի, ավատատիրություն, ազգայնականություն, ավանդապաշտություն, գաղութատիրություն, կապիտալիզմ:

Հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել վրաց ազգայնականության խոսույթի առաջացման պատմությունը և վրաց ազգի գաղափարը: Հեղինակն այլընտրանքային տեսակետ է առաջարկում վրացական ազգայնականության առաջացման պատճառների վերաբերյալ և մատնանշում է վրացական ազգային պատումի հիմնական թեմաները:

Իլյա Ճավճավաձեն՝ բանաստեղծ, գրող, հրապարակախոս և հասարակական գործիչ, Վրաստանում համարվում է ազգի հոգևոր հայրը: Նա վրացական պատմական պանթեոնի առանցքային դեմքերից է: Նրանից և նրա շրջապատից՝ մտավորականների մի խմբից, որը հայտնի է որպես «թերգդալեուլերի», սկսվում է վրացական ազգայնականության պատմությունը: Սա դարձնում է նրան անվիճելի հեղինակություն բոլոր նրանց համար, ովքեր իրենց անվանում են Վրաստանի հայրենասերներ: