

TARIEL PUTKARADZE, IA VASHAKIDZE

MAIN ASPECTS OF ILIA CHAVCHAVADZE'S CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE

By violating agreements between the Russian Empire and the Georgian principalities, and by applying armed forces in 1801-1839, Russia carried out the complete annexation of Georgia. From 1840, after introducing the institution of Viceroy to the Tsar, the Russian Empire established civil rule in Georgia. For the purpose of linguistic-ethnic disintegration of the Georgian people, since 1860s the clerks of the Empire have actively started, on the one hand, identifying one part of the Georgians as non-Georgians, and, on the other hand, declaring the dialects of the Georgian language (Megrelian, Svan, etc.) as independent languages, and commenced the translation of Gospels into these new "languages". At the same time, the Caucasian administration of the Russian Empire has banned the Georgian language from all spheres such as liturgy, literature, science and schools of all levels.

Contrary to the imperial politics, since 1860s Saint Ilia the Righteous and his followers actively commenced the fight in order to defend the vital interests of the Georgian nation. Ilia wrote:

"We, the Georgian people, have inherited three divine gifts from our ancestors: our motherland, our language and our faith. If we fail to protect these gifts, what merit will we have as men? How would we face our descendants?"

Two main objectives of Georgians were emphasized by the initiative of Saint Ilia the Righteous:

1. Education in the Georgian language /for this purpose, the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians was established/;
2. Highlighting the historical role of the Georgian language as a mother language for Georgians, and the revival of historical function of the Georgian literary language.

Ilia Chavchavadze's language concept, in particular, could be discussed in two main directions:

1. a mother language as a defining factor of individual's identity and that of the integrity of a given society (nation, ethnic group);
2. a place of western European languages within the education system.

Ilia discusses the mother language in terms of different aspects; the paper deals with the following:

- a) Georgian language – a defining factor of integration of the Georgians;
- b) Georgian language – a phenomenon reflecting ethnic and cultural history of the Georgians;
- c) Georgian language – a language of Georgian education, culture and office work;
- d) Georgian language – a language of Georgian liturgy;
- e) the so-called three styles and the standard Georgian language with common norms;
- f) Georgian language – a language of science and a basis for elaboration of terminology.

Ilia Chavchavadze's concept of language aimed at defending the vital interests of the Georgian nation as well as the Georgian language from Russian Empire. Ilia's ideas are still significant since there is a tendency to substitute the English language for the centuries-old Georgian.