

Leaders of Georgian Romanticism in the European Literary Social Thinking

Eka Vardoshvili

Faculty of Humanities

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

1 Ilia Chavchavadze Ave., 0179 Tbilisi

Georgia

e-mail: eka.vardoshvili@tsu.ge

Abstract The foundations of Georgian Romanticism created the national literary tradition, shaped up the socio-political situation in Georgia at the beginning of the 19th century and linked them to the European literary and philosophical thinking. In European literary-public thinking, Leist was the first, who gave us the analysis of the creations of three Georgian leading Romanticists represented by Chavchavadze, Orbeliani, and Baratashvili. In the letters Leist speaks about individuality of Georgian Romanticists, determines why they are leading poets of their epoch. Leist relates artistic achievements of Georgian leading Romanticists to entry of European civilization into Georgia. Generally, Leist paid much attention to the works of Georgian leader writers, Romanists as well as Realists, studied their literary works, during over than 40 years he made Georgian culture popular in European countries. Assessments of Leist do not lose their actuality today and stand out for their originality. In addition, they exactly describe socio-political situation in Georgia and details of public life. This paper analyses the role and the impact of the leaders of Georgian Romanticism in the European literary social thinking.

Keywords: *leadership, national rebirth, Romanticism, literature, Georgia*

1 Introduction

Leaders of Georgian Romanticism found many relevant reflections in the European literary social thinking. For example, Brosset, Leist and Marjory and Wardrops made a special contribution in popularization of Georgian culture in the 19th century and scientific study in European countries. In 1821, in Paris, a “Société Asiatique” was established, which was dedicated to study of Asia. Brosset as an active member of the society was interested in the issues of Kartvelology. Relationship of Brosset with Bagrationi in exile is confirmed from 1830, and from 1831 he is a real member of this society. Brosset considered Bagrationi as his teacher, he provided great assistance to the French scientist working on the issues of Kartvelology. From 1830 till 1840 Bagrationi has written more than 40 scientific letters on the issues of Georgian language and literature, history of Georgia addressed to the French scientist (Vardoshvili 2015).

Moreover, Brosset was interested in writings of Georgian leading Romanticist Chavchavadze, which was purchased by Royal Library of France in 1834. It was a translation from French into Georgian of “Alzira” by Voltaire. “Brosset read it and notified Franc Society with the help of “Société Asiatique” that Georgian poet translated the French tragedy closely to the original text” (Dodashvili 1962).

In 1882 Wardrop published the work “Georgian Kingdom”, “in which Georgian literature was discussed together with the history of Georgia. He also introduced “A Book of Wisdom and Lies” by Orbeliani to English-speaking society” (Lashkaradze 1988). It is noteworthy that Wardrop translated “The Hermit” and “Letters of a Traveler” into English, also Georgian folk fairy tales, “Life of Saint Nino” and “The Knight in Panther’s skin”. “Wardrop selected those works, which play a great role in determination of Georgian paradigmatic facial image, introduction of renaissance and formation of national consciousness” (Vardoshvili 2018). In European literary-public thinking, Leist was the first, who gave us the analysis of the creations of three Georgian leading Romanticists: Chavchavadze, Orbeliani, and Baratashvili.

The aim of this paper is to concretely discuss Leist’s evaluations of three Georgian leading Romanticists, to pay attention how they comply with the thinking of Georgian and after period European scholars and scientists. This issue is less studied in Georgian as well as European literature and thence requires more attention.

2. Leist and Georgia

A famous German writer Leist was particularly interested in history, especially in the events of the 1880s. In 1877-1878, during Russo-Turkish War, "his attention was drawn by correspondences sent from the South Front and published in European establishments, the author of which was publicist Niko Nikoladze" (Revishvili 1969, p. 36).

Leist decided to get to know Georgia closely. He establishes connection with the representatives of Georgian intellectuals. In addition, he begins to study the works of Brosset and Saint-Martin. The second significant factor which helped Leist to get interested in Georgia, was his personal acquaintance with German poet Von Bodenstedt in 1881, who advised Leist to personally visit Georgia.

On January 24, 1882 Leist writes to Tsereteli: "I am a servant of literary word, write in German and Polish. I would like to establish intellectual relations between these two nations and your fellow countrymen" (Leist 1983, p. 291). Leist himself determined his role in the dialogue between the cultures. Since 1880 he started publishing German and Polish newspapers.

Leist visited Georgia upon invitation of Chavchavadze for the first time in 1884 and for the second time – in 1885. In 1884 he published his first book about Georgia – "Georgien, Natur, Sitten und Bewohner" in Leipzig. In 1887 the almanac of Leist "Georgian poets" was published in Europe, to which Bodenstedt responded with his letter. "Two stories have been written on the life of Imereti – "Ketevani" and "Varo" – Leist published in 1887" (Revishvili 1969, 42 p.). "In 1889 "The Knight in the panther's skin" translated as a blank verse was translated in Leipzig (Taktakishvili-Urushadze 1965).

Since 1892 Leist lived most of his time in Georgia. However, he often visits Europe, where he publishes his works about Georgia. In 1903 Leist publishes complete translation of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" in Dresden. In 1906 he founded German newspaper "Kaukasische Post" and "German-Georgian cultural society". "Heart of Georgia" of Leist is especially significant. Famous public figure Sakhokia wrote in 1927 in his work "People of our century", when Leist deceased: "Arthur Leist left us an interesting book as a legacy "Heart of Georgia", in which the author expressed his own sincere feeling of love. This is a collection of his memories about Georgia and Georgians, Georgian writers and Georgian literature. The whole book leaves an impression of correspondence between the lovers on the readers, where the young man is Leist and the young lady – Georgia. The book is translated by us, the first part was published in 1923, and the second – in 1927" (Sakhokia 1969).

It is noteworthy, that he also wrote in Georgian and published his works, such as: "Beauty of Georgia", "Georgian women", "My memories about Georgia", "Vazha-Pshavela". In the newspaper "Iveria" he published extensive letters about European literature. More than 40 years Leist has studied Georgian cultural inheritance, made it popular in European countries. In his works he tried to show European origin of Georgian culture.

He especially paid attention to the works of Georgian leader writers, Romanists as well as Realists, their literary thinking, because "Common tendencies can be reflected in the literary process of different peoples independently or under influence which have common values" (Vardoshvili 2019). He was admired especially by the works of the Realist writers –Chavchavadze, Tsereteli and Vazha-Pshavela, from Old Georgian Literature – the work of Rustaveli "The Knight in the Panther's Skin". Georgian society always mentions the name of Leist with deep respect.

3. Georgian leading Romanticists as seen by Leist

European and Georgian Romanticism have common theoretical foundations. Literary values of Goethe and Shelley became basis of not only European but also Georgian Romanticism. Thus, the foundations of Georgian Romanticism are the national literary tradition, the socio-political situation in Georgia at the beginning of the 19th century, which conditioned its deep nationality and European literary-philosophical thinking.

In 1827 in the conversations with Goethe was the first to acknowledge the existence of the world literature: "It is time for the era of the world literature, and everybody must endeavor to accelerate this epoch" (Goethe 1988). Thus, Goethe laid foundation for the issue of globalization and cultural integration in the world literary processes and acknowledged that common tendencies may be characteristic for literatures of various nations.

It is interesting what Byron writes about Goethe in the introduction of his tragedy "Sardanapalus": "To the illustrious Goethe a stranger presumes to offer the homage of a literary vassal to his liege lord, the first of existing writers, who has created the literature of his own country, and illustrated that of Europe, the unworthy production which the author ventures to inscribe to him is entitled Sardanapalus" (Byron 1960). Hence, Byron determines Goethe's as well as his place and significance in the united European literary process.

How the Georgian leading Romanticists are involved in common European processes and what conditioned Leist's interest towards them, "Letters on Georgian Literature" of Chavchavadze allows us to answer this question, in which he reviews the works of Georgian leading Romanticists in Georgian literature of the 19th century from the scientific viewpoint for the first, assesses their merits in history of development of

Georgian literature. Evaluations of Chavchavadze are the basis for attitude of Georgian, as well as European writers and scientists of the subsequent period towards the works of Chavchavadze, Orbeliani and Baratashvili.

From the beginning of 19th century Georgian writer's and public figure's interest in Russian and European cultures starts to grow.

The literature of 19th century is getting rich by translated works, what itself supports its involvement in the dialogue of cultures. Chavchavadze is the first Georgian leader Romanticist. He knew well Georgian, Russian, French, German, Persian and Turkish languages. Knowledge of these languages allowed him to get familiar with the best works of the world literature in original language and to translate them. Tendencies of Eastern and Western cultures are combined in his literary works. In his literary heritage, we meet translations from European literature. He translated Voltaire's, Rousseau's, Corneille's, Racine's Hugo's, La Fontaine's poetic creations, which were a kind of source of his creative works.

Leist writes less about European tendencies in the works of Chavchavadze in his literary works, however, he mentions once: "The first among them was Alexander Chavchavadze, an anacreontic, who was infected by Byronism and therefore got astray with his muse. He, who could have become a mediocre Georgian hafiz, fell into sensual softening and wrote longing songs that breathe less sincere feelings and even less male strength" (UNDP 2015).

Generally, the next assignment of literary relations is taking into consideration of parallel motives, by which we can clarify some sources of the national literature.

According to evaluation of Realist writer Chavchavadze, in his poetry "we hear so-called civil grief" (Chavchavadze 1991, p. 531). In the works of Orbeliani, patriotism is fundamental according to evaluation of Chavchavadze. About Baratashvili Chavchavadze notes that "Baratashvili often came up with a thought about universal issue, the answer to which he sought not only in his heart, but in the heart of all humanity" (Chavchavadze 1991, p. 536). Ilia was the first to relate poetic genie of Baratashvili to Byron's.

Between the poetry of Baratashvili and world Romanticists there is an idea-artistic relation. Scholar Revishvili notes that "Leist finds some similarity between physical appearance and the inner spirit world of Baratashvili and "British" – Byron. Both deny the existing reality, for they couldn't put up with its vicious sides" (Revishvili 1977, 220 p.).

Leist mentioned the influence of Byron on Baratashvili: "Byronism had taught him nothing more than pain, but he didn't feel the pain powerful enough to express it vigorously. There is also much oriental exuberance adhered to him, and if he compares the darkness of the night with the darkness of his lover's curls or the snowy shine of her bosom with the sheen of lightning, such peculiarities must appear highly unpoetic to the European". (UNDP 2015)

In his work "Georgien. Natur, Sitten und Bewohner" Leist writes: "More serious is the Byronism of his contemporary Nikolaus Baratashvili, who seemed to understand the world pain. He was the first Georgian poet to penetrate the mental world of the European West and to echo Child Harold's misanthropic lamentation in the literature of his fatherland" (UNDP 2015).

It is also noteworthy that the works of Byron in European became a kind of gold standard compared to all prominent romanticists of his time and determined the quality of their creations.

In the letter "Georgians of the 19th century" Leist speaks about individuality of Georgian Romanticists, determines, why they are leading poets of their epoch.

For the first he speaks about the Georgian leading Romanticist Chavchavadze: "Alexandre Chavchavadze was a typical child of his time, the first Georgian poet of the 19th century. In his childhood he was sent to Petersburg, where he was raised almost in French style. In spite of this a Georgian of the 18th century still lived in him. Almost all of his poems express old Georgian viewpoint (Leist 1983, p. 143). It seems that Leist knew well life and works of Chavchavadze and he continues: "In the first half of the 19th century there were not many public figures standing out for their remarkable talent, Baratashvili together with Chavchavadze took care of the native literature. As for the essence of the poetry of two poets, the first – Chavchavadze is a true child of his time, the second – Baratashvili is ahead of the first half of the 19th century" (Leist 1983, p. 144). As we have seen, Leist gives high evaluation to the poetry of Baratashvili, because he thinks that the poet is ahead of his time with the essence and the world view of his poetry.

In the same letter Leist writes about Vakhtang and Orbelianis as well, "the works of these two poets played a great role, together with Baratashvili they proved to the world that great strength is buried in Georgian folk (Leist 1983, p. 145).

Leist relates artistic achievements of Georgian leading Romanticists to entry of European civilization into Georgia and notes that "entry of European civilization into Georgia brought not only material but also moral breakthrough" (Leist 1983, 150 p.). In his letter Leist discusses the issues of socio-political situation and public life in Georgia. He evaluates entry of European civilization as a positive event.

Leist starts the letter "Georgian literature" by talking about Georgia. He notes that not many people know the past of this nation in the West, do not pay due attention to development of its culture, in addition, its history

could not be properly described in the world history, “however, these people splendidly fulfilled their mission before the mankind” (Leist 1983, p. 176).

In the same letter he writes on issues of the origin of Georgian language, history of old Georgian literature. Leist tries to comprehend Georgian literary process of the 19th century as a whole. “Georgian literature, on the one hand, describes life, on the other hand, one feels incompatibility; in some places fragments of European mental activity and sometimes even fascination with private subjects of authors are observed” (Leist 1983, p. 189).

Leist appreciated personality of Orbeliani and also mentioned: In all, Orbeliani was still a Georgian of the patriarchal era and although he sometimes admonishes his countrymen to make progress, he does so with paternal gentleness and never takes bitter reproaches. The struggle was strange to him in this regard and he was still attached to the traditional. His almost entirely lyrical poems are distinguished by a sublime, pictorial language and rare intensiveness” (UNDP 2015).

Leist considers as the top priority of the works of Baratashvili that he is the first poet, who introduced Byronism into Georgian Literature. “Baratashvili as the only poet, who can be considered as a true representative of Byronism in Georgian literature” (UNDP 2015) mentioned Leist.

In the mentioned letter Leist writes mostly about Orbeliani from the leaders of Georgian Romanticism and as Chavchavadze notes, that he strongly loved the history of his homeland, “the poet dedicated a lot of verses to his homeland with deep respect and incomparable love. But this poetry is not originated on the basis of Georgians’ new life, which was born by getting acquainted with new ideas of Europe” (Leist 1983, p. 191).

We should also mention that the scholars of the following researches revealed that literary-thinking traditions and facial forms from Europe are characteristic for the works of Chavchavadze, as well as Orbeliani. Leist’s evaluations about Georgian leading Romanticist Baratashvili is accurate.

After Leist, Sherry discusses the works of Georgian leading Romanticists in his work “Grounded history of the world literature”. In his essay “Georgian literature” published in 1906 Finck relates the works of Baratashvili to Byron’s works. In his “History of the world literature” Pauser “repeats the provisions by Leist and Franz; according to this provision the creative works by Baratashvili are under influence of Byron’s works” (Revishvili 1977, p. 221).

In the Post-Soviet space it is especially topical to discuss Georgian-European cultural relations. Nowadays, a great deal of work is being done to prove that Georgian culture with its essence is an integral part of European culture and always attracted the attention of European scholars and scientists.

4. Conclusions

Overall, one can see that there has always been an interest in Georgian literature among European writers and thinkers. A famous German writer, Leist, was the first foreign researcher who in his writings analyzed the works of leading Georgian Romanticists.

In the books about Georgia published abroad Leist tries to introduce thinking of representatives of Georgian Romanticist School to European society; to indicate their relation to European Literature. In this regard he especially makes an accent on the poetry of Baratashvili.

Assessments of Leist do not lose their actuality today and stand out for their originality. In addition, they exactly describe socio-political situation in Georgia and details of public life. In his letters, Leist exactly determines the priorities of Georgian leading Romanticists, which mainly comply with scientific thinking of Georgian as well as European researchers of the next period.

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