

## Some Aspects of Economic Ideas in Shota Rustaveli's "The Knight in the Panther Skin"

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**ABSTRACT.** Georgia is an ancient country that made historical contribution to the development of the world civilization, including the development of economic thinking. In the early 1990s the country regained independence and began building the market economy. It was clear that the country would follow the European course and establish good relationship with the neighboring countries. However, the favorable geo-economic location and rich natural resources of the country are not properly used. Migration of a large quantity of labor force greatly reduced the number of local population. Economy of the country cannot yet achieve the desired level and no middle class is formed, while the income of majority of population is very low. Despite the considerable foreign aid, the country remains import-dependent. The tendency of scattering of the human resources is unfavorable and dangerous for the country. But the country has the history of three-centennial history, where so many fine things were created the nation can be proud of (ancient writing, Christianity, etc.). The internationally well-known poem of Shota Rustaveli "The Knight in the Panther Skin" was written in Georgia in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The economic viewpoints expressed in the poem are ahead of the economic thinking of the epoch. The studies show that "The Knight in the Panther Skin" contains genius economic ideas of that time, such as the idea of liberating the representatives of low classes from feudal constraints with the right of property ownership. The mercantilist ideas were clearly expressed centuries before the formation of the doctrine. According to the poem the manufacture and its products are considered as important wealth playing a major role both within the country and in international trade; anything (goods, property) is considered valueless and worthless unless it is in use, i.e. it is no use to own any property unless it brings additional profit; trade markets and centers are very important for wider development of foreign trade. Shota Rustaveli understands that although there is less focus on manufacture compared to trade, the scales of trade would not expand without manufacture, therefore, great focus is on such products as precious stones (diamonds, agate, ruby etc.), precious metals (gold, silver), precious clothes, fabrics and others. Trade and big merchants play a special role in the country and in foreign economic relations, therefore it is in the interests of the state to protect and encourage them. Also, it is necessary to follow the trade rules and preliminary study the market price conjuncture ("marketing"). Foreign trade is the main source of profit and loss. It is also noted in the poem that in the process of making a fortune it is necessary to comply with ethics. It is of utmost importance conscientiously to follow the principles of free competition. The great property owner should be generous and merciful thereby gaining supporters even among the opponents. Charity is very important in social solidarity and the labor is a significant factor in creation of products and wealth. All these ideas were expressed in The Knight in the Panther Skin centuries before the heated discussions on these issues began in economic science, which continues to date. Shota Rustaveli mentions number of economic terms such as goods, item, profit, losses, cashier, judge, rivalry (competition, A. S.), gain, treasury, ownership, etc., which are still topical today. © 2018 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

**Key words:** Shota Rustaveli, The Knight in the Panther Skin, mercantilism, foreign trade

Georgia is a small ancient country with three-centennial history of statehood, which made a significant contribution to the development of the world civilization in different areas. Over the years, it was under the regime of the Soviet system and in the early 1990s, regained its independence and started a path of building the market economy in conditions of great shortage of financial resources [1-4]. The country chose the European course of development and the policy of establishing friendly relationship with neighboring countries. The favorable geo-economic location of the country and its natural resources are not yet properly used. The violation of the territorial integrity of the country and acute political problems made majority of the local labor force go abroad to find a job. As a result, the number of local population declined sharply. It will be impossible to stop such tendency in the coming years unless the local resources are employed [5-8].

Despite the reforms carried out in post-Soviet Georgia the national economy is still far from the desired level. The local resources are not employed, the new jobs are not created, the income of the mass population is miserably small, and no middle class is formed. Despite the large foreign subsidies, the country still depends on import, foreign debt and the major population cannot handle the bank loans. On the other hand, in its human and general resources Georgia is historically known as a great country. As far back as the feudal era, when Georgia was one of the strongest countries, the immortal poem of great Shota Rustaveli "The Knight in the Panther Skin" was created [9-10].

In the present paper we consider some economic views from Shota Rustaveli's immortal poetry that we believe will attract attention of the wide circles of specialists. It should be noted that the academician V. Chantladze and other scholars devoted some interesting works to the research of different aspects of the given problem [11-15].

"The Knight in the Panther Skin" created in days of King Tamar (1189/65 - 1210/1213) by her treasurer (Minister of Finances) Shota Rustaveli (1160/65-1210/1213) shows high level of economic thinking. Being the grand vizier at the court of King Tamar (about 1160-1213), Shota Rustaveli was also responsible for taking care of the Jvari Monastery (Georgian monument) in Jerusalem, where most likely he spent his last years and where he was buried.

Let us recall Aristotle's genius idea about liberation of slaves. In his "will" Aristotle connected liberation of slaves with the change of the tools of production that would take long [12-21]. It was the period of the slave-owning system and Aristotle with such an approach got ahead of the epoch over the centuries.

In the epoch of the early medieval feudalism, Shota Rustaveli as if echoes the above-mentioned opinion of Aristotle raising the genius idea of freedom even higher.

Shota Rustaveli developed his idea on liberation of the lower classes in feudal Georgia of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (the serfdom was abolished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) that already meant the demand of modernization of feudal relationships. The author of the genius poem (like Aristotle) advocated unconditional liberation of the lower classes (the word "slave" implies subordinates - "the serfs") with the right of property ownership (granted) rather than conditional. We consider that "The Testament of Avtandil" given in the poem confirms this idea [9]:

811 "I have, as you know, countless possessions, possessions weighed by none.

Give the treasure to the poor; tell the slaves their bonds have been undone."

Furthermore, in his poem Shota Rustaveli considers some concepts of market economy such as trade permit, purchase, sale, price, profit, loss, property accumulation etc. He eloquently describes the rules of trade and the market prices existing in the town of Gulansharo (actually playing the role of the "International Trade Center") [9]:

1072 "Tell me everything in detail," said Avtandil to that man.

Which goods are dearer? What goods are bought cheaply? . . ."

According to the rules of entering the market the foreign merchants had to show their goods to the senior merchant Usen to get the trade permit to sell them. After receiving the permit, the big foreign merchants could trade during New Year days except the Nowruz holidays, the Farsi New Year [9; 11]:

1075 "Great merchants find our city helps them to be profitable men.

They buy and sell. They gain and lose, and the rich get richer again.

The poorer get richer in a month and gather goods. No wonder then

The penniless in less than a year are wealthy beyond all ken."

In the feudal states of that time not everyone had the positive attitude towards big trade. However, "The Knight in the Panther Skin" contains several arguments in favor to trade [9]:

1077 "When merchants arrive, they see Usen and give him gifts at his ease.

They show him what they have, otherwise their unpacking will he freeze."

Apparently, those were the merchants from other countries, who granted precious things to the royal treasury to obtain a permit for free trading in the country.

In "The Knight in the Panther Skin" the principles of free trade are appreciated such as free movement of goods and protection of big merchants. The state established the rules of trade and protected the safety of merchants. It was not occasional that Avtandil helped the merchants from Baghdadi in their fight against the pirates (for free) [12-13; 19]. He told them [9]:

1048 "You merchants are timid; you're also unskilled in war, as I know,

So they won't slay you with arrows from afar, behind the doors go."

Avtandil defeated the pirates severely in the battle, and the survivors asked him not to kill them promising to serve him [9]:

1053 "... "Slay us not, by your faith, with the rest of our crew!"

Those he slew not. Whatever survived his wounds, he would just subdue."

After defeating the pirates Avtandil refused to receive the great offering from the merchants. He said that he did not need it as he had a lot of wealth himself [9]:

1063 "What could I do with gifts? My horse and I must unencumbered stay."

1064 "As much treasure as I want comes to me from my travel and wars.

Countless priceless exotic treasure – what use could I make of yours?"

According to Shota Rustaveli, the king should be generous and merciful especially when he has great income. Generosity and charity can gain supporters even among the adversaries. Any goods or property is useless and worthless unless it is in use, i.e. it is no use to own any property unless it brings additional profit [9; 11-13; 19]:

51 "Whenever food are offered, accept them – don't refuse.

What you give to others, you will keep; whatever you don't – you'll lose."

For Shota Rustaveli, moral behavior is most important. A man who is "a coward is no better" than a woman. Moral norms are the main thing in gaining the wealth [9;12-13;19]:

807 "A coward is no better than a weaving woman – he is base!

The best gain is a respected name, and time can't erase!"

Shota Rustaveli understands that charity is very important and useful for social solidarity. Furthermore, he appreciates the charity activity carried out at the expense of one's own property. In this regard, Tinatin revealed remarkable generosity upon taking the throne [9]:

55 "She ordered them: "Go now and open up my vaults full of treasure.

You, Stable Master, lead in all my horses, such is my pleasure."

They brought everything she said, and she gave to all without measure,  
The soldiers were sweeping up riches like pirates at their leisure.”

The episode of hunting described in the poem can be regarded as an interesting example of free bona fide competition between the King and Avtandil. The competition must reveal the winner who has the better result. After hunting the king ordered the companions to tell the truth about who was the better hunter, i.e., to announce the winner in the competition based on the arguments. The “slaves” promised the King to tell the truth [9]:

83 “The two of you in the course of the hunt have killed a hundred score.  
As many as you have killed today, Avtandil killed twenty more.  
every animal Avtandil aimed at lies dead or at death’s door.  
But picking your arrows out of the dirt was a usual chore.”

From the above said it also follows that the productivity and quality are the most important elements for winning the free competition: the king was told the truth that he was beaten by Avtandil, who had hunted more beasts killing them right away.

The worthy man, the labor force is the “wealth and treasure” for the country and it should be the obligation (“duty”) of the country to create a decent living conditions for the worthy people [9]:

152 “He was meant to be the treasure of the world, its most joyous sight,  
His mind was always on Tinatin, she for whom his love burned bright.”

As far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Shota Rustaveli realized that no wealth could be earned without labour [9], i.e. labour is one of the main factors of production [9]:

167 “No one gets a pearl for free, simply because he’s seen it revealed.  
A treacherous mam should be pierced with a lane, and thus made to yield.”

Consequently, labour was an important factor for creation of production and wealth long before the heated discussions on this issue began in economic literature.

Thus, in “The Knight in the Panther Skin” number of genius economic ideas were expressed, which in most cases preceded the thinking of the epoch, namely:

- 1) The idea of liberation of the representatives of low classes from feudal constraints with the right of property ownership is suggested;
- 2) Mercantilist ideas are clearly expressed centuries before the formation of the doctrine;
- 3) Industrial products are considered to be an important wealth that plays a major role both in domestic and international trade;
- 4) Any goods or property are considered useless and worthless unless it is in use, i.e. it is no use to own any property unless it brings additional profit;
- 5) Foreign trade markets or centers are considered to be very important for the development of foreign trade;
- 6) The author understands that although manufacture attracts less attention compared to trade, the scales of trade would not expand without manufacture. Consequently, the focus is on such products as precious stones (diamonds, agate, ruby etc.), precious metals (gold, silver), precious clothes, fabrics and others.
- 7) Trade and big merchants are assigned a special role in the country and in foreign economic relations, therefore the state must protect and encourage them;
- 8) The trade rules and preliminary study of the market price conjuncture (“marketing”) are considered to be necessary;
- 9) Foreign trade is considered to be the main source of profit and loss;

- 10) In the process of making a fortune it is necessary to comply with ethics;
  - 11) Utmost importance is given to the principles of free competition;
  - 12) Productivity and quality are the most important elements in free competition;
  - 13) The owner of great fortune should be generous and merciful for gaining supporters even among the opponents;
  - 14) Charity has an important role in social solidarity;
  - 15) Labor is considered to be an important factor in creation of production and wealth.
- All these ideas were expressed in "The Knight in the Panther Skin" centuries before the heated discussions on these issues began in economic science, which continues to date.

## ეკონომიკა

# ეკონომიკური შეხედულებების ზოგიერთი ასპექტი შოთა რუსთაველის „ვეფხისტყაოსანში“

## ა. სილაგაძე

*აკადემიის წევრი, ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი, ეკონომიკისა და ბიზნესის ფაკულტეტი, თბილისი, საქართველო*

საქართველო უძველესი ქვეყანაა, რომელმაც ისტორიული წვლილი შეიტანა მსოფლიო ცივილიზაციის, მათ შორის, ეკონომიკური აზროვნების განვითარებაში. 1990-იანი წლების დასაწყისში ქვეყანამ აღიდგინა დამოუკიდებლობა და დაადგა საბაზრო ეკონომიკის მშენებლობის გზას; მკაფიოდ გამოიკვეთა ევროპული ვექტორი და კეთილმეზობლური ურთიერთობების დამყარების სურვილი უახლოეს მეზობელ ქვეყნებთან. ქვეყნის ხელსაყრელი გეოეკონომიკური მდებარეობა, მდიდარი ბუნებრივი რესურსები ჯერ კიდევ სათანადოდ გამოყენებული არ არის. ქვეყნის ფარგლებს გარეთ სამუშაო ძალის დიდი რაოდენობით გადინებამ, მკვეთრად შეამცირა ადგილობრივი მოსახლეობის რაოდენობა. ეკონომიკამ ჯერჯერობით სასურველ მასშტაბებს ვერ მიაღწია, ვერ ჩამოყალიბდა საშუალო ფენა, დაბალია მოსახლეობის ფართო მასების შემოსავლების დონე. მიუხედავად მნიშვნელოვანი საგარეო დახმარებებისა, ქვეყანა მაინც დიდწილად იმპორტდამოკიდებულად რჩება. ჰუმანური რესურსების დაქსაქსვის ტენდენცია ქვეყნისათვის არასასურველი და სახიფათოა. მითუმეტეს, რომ სამიათასწლოვანი სახელმწიფოებრივობის მქონე ქვეყანაში ბევრი რამ (დამწერლობა, უძველესი ქრისტიანობა...) შეიქმნა, რომლითაც ერს ნამდვილად შეუძლია იამაყოს. საქართველოში შეიქმნა მსოფლიოში საყოველთაოდ აღიარებული შოთა რუსთაველის უკვდავი „ვეფხისტყაოსანი“. იგი ეკონომიკური აზროვნებითაც წინ უსწრებს თავის ეპოქას.

კვლევის შედეგად მიღებული დასკვნის მიხედვით, „ვეფხისტყაოსანში“ გამოკვეთილია იმ დროისათვის გენიალური ეკონომიკური იდეები, კერძოდ: ფეოდალური მარწუხებიდან დაბალი ფენის წარმომადგენლების განთავისუფლების იდეა საკუთარი ქონების ფლობის

უფლებით; მკაფიოდ გამოკვეთილია მერკანტილისტური იდეები ამ დოქტრინის ჩამოყალიბებამდე საუკუნეებით ადრე; მრეწველობის პროდუქცია მნიშვნელოვანი სიმდიდრეა, რომელიც დიდ როლს ასრულებს, როგორც ქვეყნის შიგნით, ასევე საერთაშორისო ვაჭრობაში; ნივთი (საქონელი, ქონება) გამოყენების გარეშე, უსარგებლო და არაფრის მომტანია, ანუ, თუ ქონებას დამატებით სარგებელი არ მოაქვს - მისი ფლობა უსარგებლოა; საგარეო ვაჭრობის ფართოდ განვითარებისათვის უმნიშვნელოვანესია საგარეო ვაჭრობის ბაზრები-ცენტრები; მრეწველობას, ვაჭრობასთან შედარებით, ნაკლები ყურადღება ეთმობა, მაგრამ ავტორს კარგად ესმის ისიც, რომ მრეწველური ნაწარმის გარეშე, ვაჭრობის მასშტაბები ვერ გაფართოვდებოდა. აქედან გამომდინარე, ბუნებრივია ის მნიშვნელოვანი ყურადღება ისეთი ხელოსნურ-მრეწველური ნაწარმის წარმოების მიმართ, როგორცაა: ძვირფასი ქვები (ალმასი, გიშერი, ზადახში...), ძვირფასი ლითონები (ოქრო, ვერცხლი...), ძვირფასი ტანსაცმელი - ქსოვილები და სხვ.; ვაჭრობა და მსხვილი ვაჭრები განსაკუთრებულ როლს ასრულებენ ქვეყანაში და საგარეო-ეკონომიკურ ურთიერთობებში, რის გამოც სახელმწიფომ ისინი უნდა დაიცვას და წაახალისოს; აუცილებელია ვაჭრობის წესების დაცვა და ბაზრის ფასების კონიუნქტურის წინასწარი შესწავლა („მარკეტინგი“); საგარეო ვაჭრობა მოგება-წაგების მთავარი წყაროა; სიმდიდრის მოპოვების პროცესში აუცილებელია ზნეობრივი ნორმების დაცვა; უაღრესად მნიშვნელოვანია თავისუფალი კონკურენციის პრინციპების კეთილსინდისიერად დაცვა; დიდი ქონების მფლობელი უნდა იყოს გულუხვი და მოწყალე, რასაც შეუძლია მოწინააღმდეგის მომხრობა; საკუთარი ქონებით განხორციელებული ქველმოქმედება სოციალური სოლიდარობის მნიშვნელოვანი მიმართულებაა; პროდუქტის, სიმდიდრის შემქმნელი მნიშვნელოვანი ფაქტორია შრომა და ეს ხდება საუკუნეებით ადრე, ვიდრე ამ საკითხზე ცხარე დისკუსიები დაიწყებოდა ეკონომიკურ მეცნიერებაში, რომელიც გრძელდება დღემდე; შემოთავაზებულია ბევრი ეკონომიკური ტერმინი (საქონელი, ნივთი, მოგება, წაგება, მოლარე, მოსამართლე, ცილობა-ქიშობა (კონკურენცია - ა.ს.), მოხვეჭა, საჭურჭლე, ფლობა ....), რომელთაც აქტუალობა დღემდე არ დაუკარგავთ.

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