Local Self-Government, Education, and Healthcare in the Telavi Mazra in 1918-1921

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Abstract: *The article examines the villages of the Telavi district during the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921). Particular attention is given to the analysis of administrative, social, educational, healthcare, agrarian, and infrastructural processes carried out by local self-governments. Based on archival documents and other primary sources, the study analyzes the formation of small territorial units, the administrative apparatus of the district and local authorities, and its reorganization processes. The research demonstrates that the main goal of the district authorities' activity was to ensure the maximum involvement of the population in the work of local self-governance.*

The article pays special attention to the education system. The analysis of archival documents shows that in the villages of the Telavi district, in order to improve the quality of education, additional teachers were assigned to schools, new schools were opened, and the educational network was gradually expanded.

Attention is also given to changes in the healthcare sector: a medical-sanitary network was established, rural hospitals were created, the inpatient and outpatient services were implemented, and the poor people were provided with medicines through pharmacies.

The study also reflects agrarian reforms in the Telavi district villages: an agronomic department was established to oversee harvests, redistribute land, and promote the development of agriculture. District authorities also supervised the planning and organization of rural settlements.

During the same period, the local police were reorganized under the supervision of the territorial units. This reorganization reduced serious crimes in the villages and ensured the maintenance of public order.

The findings confirm that the measures implemented in the villages during the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia contributed to strengthening local self-government, promoting active participation of the population in governance, advancing socio-economic processes, adapting education and healthcare to the needs of the population, supporting agrarian activities, and reinforcing law and order.

Key words: *Telavi Mazra, Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921), Local Self-government, Administrative Reforms, Education and Healthcare*

The brief existence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921) left a significant mark on the country's state, administrative, and social development. The analysis of these years is particularly interesting from a regional perspective, as it clearly shows the new government's attempt to establish an effective system of local self-government based on democratic principles and to address socio-economic challenges.

In this context, our research focused on the Telavi Mazra. During the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the establishment of local communal self-governing units, so-called "Eroba" aimed to ensure broad participation of the population in governance and to address local needs on site. This article represents a reworked and article-adapted version of the corresponding chapter from a collectively published study by the authors. Parts of this study are based on the authors' previous collective research, which has been reworked, expanded, and analytically reinterpreted for an international academic audience (Simashvili et al., 2025).

During the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921), numerous changes were implemented in the Telavi Mazra. First and foremost, these concerned the administrative structure of the Mazra. Mazra-level Eroba were created, along with smaller communal Eroba, i.e., the lowest-level units of self-government.

In the Telavi Mazra, a total of 13 small Eroba units called Eroba (communities) - were formed (Sakartvelos Respublika, 1919). Elections for community Eroba in the Telavi Mazra took place in 1919. According to archival materials, the centers of the village self-governing unit - Eroba in the Telavi Mazra in 1919 were: Dzveli Gavazi, Akhali Gavazi, Kvareli, Shilda, Eniseli, Pshaveli, Ruispiri, Zemo Khodasheni, Kurdgelauri, Tsinandali, Akura, Vachnadziani, and Uriatubani. The Akhali Gavazi community Eroba included the villages of Chikaani and Kuchatani; the Eroba of Pshaveli included Artana, Nafareuli, Saniore, Laliskuri, Lechuri, Argokhi, Babaneuri, Maghraani, and Lapankuri; the Eniseli Eroba included Gremi, Sabue, Almati, Aghdgoma, Nakalakevi, Shakriani, and so on (CACG, 1921, 331:2).

Archival materials from 1918-1921 clearly reflect the socio-political processes that were taking place in village-level units during this period and highlight the priorities of their activities. The main focus of the Eroba administrations was the improvement of the social and material conditions of the population. At the same time, particular attention was given to organizing village infrastructure, including road rehabilitation, construction of water supply systems, and the development of education.

The content of documents preserved in the Telavi Mazra Eroba archives, dated 1919, confirms that the community Eroba of the villages actively cooperated with the Mazra-level Eroba and gradually improved local infrastructure. From the time of their establishment, one of the main tasks of the village-level *Eroba* administrations was the repair of roads and the provision of drinking water, which had been largely neglected under the previous authorities.

Archival materials emphasize that as a result of the work carried out by the community Eroba, the condition of roads improved significantly in almost all villages of the Mazra. With the support of the Mazra-level Eroba, several communities also began to renovate water supply systems and lay new pipelines. Although Kakheti, including the Telavi Mazra, is naturally rich in water sources, many villages had previously experienced water shortages, and the active efforts of the village-level units produced significant results. Very soon, the majority of villages managed to resolve water supply problems (CACG, 1921, 331:2).

One of the significant reforms implemented in the Telavi Mazra was the reorganization of the administrative apparatus. After the formation of the village-level Eroba, important institutional changes affected the local law enforcement bodies responsible for maintaining order.

According to archival documents, from the summer of 1919, the Telavi Mazra Eroba administration divided the Mazra's administration into two main parts. The first part, under the leadership of the head of the local militia, was responsible for criminal cases and combating robbery. This structure included 25 militiamen as a central reserve, while at the Mazra level, four district militia units operated, each consisting of ten militiamen. The militiamen were stationed in the following villages of the Telavi Mazra: Ikalto, Napareuli, Kvareli, and Tsinandali (CACG, 1921, 331:23,24).

After the establishment of the village-level Eroba, the part of the militia stationed in the villages came under the authority of the local community Eroba, which played a significant role in improving the criminogenic situation in rural areas. Archival materials emphasize that as a result, the rate of serious crimes decreased in the Mazra, which had been common during the period when the militia was directly controlled by the central Mazra authorities (CACG, 1921, 331:2).

One document discussing this matter notes that "*this change clearly demonstrated to the population the difference between the old administrative system and the new principles of governance established under the Democratic Republic*" (CACG, 1921, 331:7).

Archival documents also provide specific data on the personnel serving at militia posts in the village-level Eroba. In 1919, the following militiamen were stationed at the militia post in the village of Tsinandali: Giorgi Bakuradze, Ioseb Grdzlishvili, Zakro Datunashvili, Aleksandre Kiknadze, Platon Kopaliani, Ilia Lapauri, Aleksandre Merkviladze, Ioseb Okhanashvili, and Saba Chumburidze (CACG, 1921, 331:23,24).

At the Nafareuli post served: Gigo Chikvaidze, Davit Saghinashvili, Giorgi Vakelashvili, Philipe Kurdgelaidze, Sandro Sesiashvili, and Gigo Kolelishvili. In the Ikalto community Eroba local militia, the post head was Markoz Dzagoshvili, and ordinary militiamen were: Naskida Aivazashvili, Dimitri Bagauri, Ekvtime Bagauri, Zakro Berdzenishvili, Firuz Kokabadze, Nikoloz Naneishvili, Zakro Suluashvili, and Ivane Khugashvili (CACG, 1921, 331:23).

Regarding the Ruispiri community, according to 1920 data, the militiamen were Levan Khanjaliashvili, Ivane Berdzenishvili, and Oruj Mamed-Oghli, among others (CACG, 1921, 205:17).

The Telavi Mazra also had a commissariat, which included district commissioners: in Tsinandali, the commissioner was Kalatozishvili; in Ikalto, Abashidze; in Kvareli, Chkheidze; and in Nafareuli, Natroshvili (CACG, 1921, 331:25).

An important area of activity for the Telavi Mazra Eroba was the protection of public health. According to archival materials, a medical-sanitary network was established in the Mazra in 1919-1920, within which five sub-district medical posts operated in the villages. Three of these posts were equipped with hospitals with beds, while at two posts, due to the lack of appropriate buildings, stationary services could not be provided temporarily. In addition, two mobile medical posts were operational. The Mazra-level Eroba planned to open pharmacies in the villages where poor residents could receive medications free of charge. The central medicine depot supplied the community medical institutions with the necessary drugs and equipment, and medical assistance was primarily provided free of charge, including home visits (CACG, 1921, 331:3).

Archival materials under the title *"Medical-Sanitary Organization in the Mazra"* also state that the Mazra was divided into six medical districts: Ikalto medical district - 2,543 households and 13,210 people; Pshaveli - 2,219 households and 11,096 people; Vachnadziani - 4,166 households and 20,854 people; Eniseli - 1,891 households and 9,452 people; Kvareli - 858 households and 4,289 people; Dzveli Gavazi - 1,500 households and 7,486 people (CACG, 1921, 331:3,4).

According to another document, there were six district hospitals and three mobile medical posts in the Telavi Mazra. For example, a hospital was located in the center of the Ikalto community, in the village of Ikalto, where doctors and midwives (including elderly women) worked (CACG, 1921, 205:21). Hospitals also operated in other villages: Kvareli, Eniseli, Dzveli Gavazi, Vachnadziani, and Zemo Khodasheni. In these locations, midwives (elderly women) served alongside doctors (CACG, 1921, 331:23).

Archival documents show that village-level units also provided significant support to local schools (CACG, 1921, 331:2).

In 1919, 32 schools were functioning in the Telavi Mazra, including: "9 former parish schools, 2 former princely schools, 1 Satskhenisi school of the Ministry, 1 newly opened school in the village of Khorkheli, 1 literacy society school in Shilda, and 18 former Ministry of Education schools" (CACG, 1921, 331:24).

According to materials from 1920 concerning public schools in the Telavi Mazra, under the

title "*Information on Primary Schools in the Telavi Mazra, 1919/1920*", teachers in the primary schools located in the centers of the Mazra's communities included: In the village of Vachnadziani: Tamar Maqashvili, Ekaterine Rostomashvili, and Sopio Khandamashvili; In the village of Shashiasheni: Mariam Dighmelishvili, Nino Tumanishvili; In the village of Tsinandali: Sopio Chiaureli, Salome Chakhnashvili, Elene Kiknavelidze-Savaneli, Elene Gochelashvili-Savaneli; In the village of Ikalto: Sopio Makashvili, Ivliane Museridze; In the village of Vardisubani: Marta Bakradze, Elene Mtvarelishvili, and others. It is noteworthy that in 1920, 78 teachers were working in schools across the villages of the Telavi Mazra, the vast majority of whom 56 were women (CACG, 1921, 208:6).

A letter sent on January 12, 1920, from the Telavi Mazra Eroba to the Minister of Education of the Democratic Republic of Georgia shows that the number of schools had increased over the past year (CACG, 1921, 208:2).

For the 1920-1921 school year, the Telavi Mazra again planned to open new primary schools and increase the number of teachers in existing schools: six new schools were to be opened, and an additional 71 teachers were to be appointed to existing schools. According to a plan developed by the Telavi Mazra Eroba, the opening of three higher primary schools in the Mazra was also envisaged (CACG, 1921, 208:2).

To address agricultural issues, in January 1919, an Agronomic Department was established in the Telavi Mazra, consisting of an agronomist, a viticulturist, and specialists in winemaking and horticulture: Agronomist G. Sakvarelidze; instructors G. Mtvarelishvili, K. Cholokashvili, N. Shakarashvili, and others (CACG, 1921, 331:17). The Agronomic Department divided the Telavi Mazra into districts and assisted the population during the harvest with appropriate tools and equipment (CACG, 1921, 331:24). In addition, land distribution among the population began, along with the clearing of parts of forest and shrubland to increase the area of arable land, as well as the implementation of other similar measures (CACG, 1921, 330:3).

According to a report by Konstantine Sekhniashvili, a member of the Telavi Mazra Eroba administration, the Mazra administration had a Land Department, which carried out agrarian reform and established agrarian commissions. These commissions were created in the centers of the village-level Eroba. The commission of the Ikalto district prepared a settlement plan for the inhabitants of the village of Atskuri; the Kurdgelauri commission began the distribution of lands, and so on (CACG, 1921, 331:35).

A clearer picture of the activities of the Agrarian Commission of the Telavi Mazra Eroba administration is provided by the example of the village of Tsinandali in the Telavi Mazra. As the sources indicate, Giorgi Abkhazava, an instructor of the Tsinandali electoral commission, was tasked with organizing a meeting at which the members of the land-distribution agrarian commission were to be elected (CACG, 1921, 330:2). On May 25, 1919, a village assembly was held in Tsinandali under the leadership of N. Ramishvili, head of the Land Department of the Telavi Mazra Eroba administration, during which the members of the local agrarian commission were publicly elected (CACG, 1921, 330:3). These individuals were entrusted with the distribution of land in the village and the implementation of the agrarian reform.

Information about the composition of the Tsinandali Agrarian Commission is provided by a document recording the decision of the village assembly, which states: *"On May 4, 1919, a public meeting was convened in Tsinandali, at which the precinct agrarian commission was unanimously elected. Its members were Sandro Lazariashvili, Levan Datukishvili, Saba Megutnishvili, Zakro Shermazanashvili, Levan Chotalishvili, and Datia Elizbarashvili"* (CACG, 1921, 330:4).

A village assembly was also held in Lower Khodasheni on May 4, 1919. According to the document: *"a public meeting was convened in the village of Lower Khodasheni, at which an agrarian commission was elected, consisting of Sandro Kukunashvili and Iago Modebadze"* (CACG, 1921, 330:5).

During the same period, a joint assembly of the inhabitants of the villages of Kondoli and Toghniani was convened, at which a local agrarian commission was elected and tasked with the

distribution of land (CACG, 1921, 330:6) Similar assemblies were held in other villages of the Telavi Mazra, including Akura, Kisiskhevi, and others. Notably, the minutes of the village assemblies were accompanied by the signatures of those in attendance, with the number of signatures ranging from 100 to 200 individuals (CACG, 1921, 330:23-34). The archival documentation clearly demonstrates that the process of land distribution in the Telavi Mazra was conducted in a largely democratic manner.

Thus, the analysis of archival materials indicates that during the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, local self-government institutions such as **community Eroba** were established and functioned effectively in the Telavi Mazra. The rural population was directly involved in the discussion and resolution of administrative, social, and infrastructure-related issues. At the same time, the development of education and healthcare, the adaptation of agricultural activities to the needs of the population, and the maintenance of public order were being addressed. The analysis of the archival materials examined here confirms that the state policies of the Democratic Republic of Georgia were implemented effectively at the village level in the Telavi Mazra.

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ადგილობრივი თვითმმართველობა, განათლება და ჯანდაცვა თელავის მაზრაში 1918-1921 წლებში

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აბსტრაქტი

სტატიაში გაანალიზებულია თელავის მაზრის სოფლები საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკის პერიოდში (1918-1921). განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება გამახვილებულია სათემო თვითმმართველობის მიერ გატარებულ ადმინისტრაციული, სოციალური, განათლების, ჯანდაცვის, აგრარული და ინფრასტრუქტურული პროცესების ანალიზზე. საარქივო დოკუმენტების საფუძველზე, მიმოხილულია სათემო თვითმმართველობის წვრილი საეროზო ერთეულების ფორმირების და სამაზრო და სასოფლო ერობების ადმინისტრაციული აპარატის რეორგანიზაციის პროცესი. კვლევა აჩვენებს, რომ სამაზრო ერობის საქმიანობის მიზანი იყო, უზრუნველყო მოსახლეობის მაქსიმალური ჩართულობა

ადგილობრივი თვითმმართველობის საქმიანობაში.

სტატიაში განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება ეთმობა განათლების სისტემას. საარქივო მასალების ანალიზით დგინდება, რომ თელავის მაზრის სოფლებში განათლების ხარისხის გაუმჯობესების მიზნით იხსნებოდა ახალი სკოლები, სკოლებს ემატებოდა მასწავლებლები, მასწავლებელთა უმრავლესობას კი წარმოადგენდნენ ქალი მასწავლებლები.

ყურადღება ასევე გამახვილებულია მაზრაში ჯანდაცვის სფეროში განხორციელებულ ცვლილებებზე, საექიმო-სანიტარული ქსელის ჩამოყალიბებაზე, სოფლად საავადმყოფოების დაარსებაზე, სტაციონარული და საფერშლო მომსახურების შექმნაზე, ღარიბი მოსახლეობისათვის უფასო მედიკამენტების მიწოდებაზე აფთიაქების მეშვეობით.

კვლევაში ასახულია თელავის მაზრის სოფლებში მიმდინარე აგრარული რეფორმა - თელავის მაზრაში იქმნება აგრონომიული განყოფილება, რომელიც უზრუნველყოფდა მოსავლის აღებას, მიწების გადანაწილებასა და სოფლის მეურნეობის განვითარებას.

ამავე პერიოდში განხორციელდა მაზრის მილიციის რეორგანიზაცია. მილიციონერების გარკვეული ნაწილი სოფლად საეროზო თემების დაქვემდებარებაში გადავიდა, რის შედეგად სოფლად მძიმე დანაშაულების რაოდენობა შემცირდა.

ამრიგად, საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკის პერიოდში სოფლად განხორციელებული ღონისძიებები ხელს უწყობდა ადგილობრივი თვითმმართველობის გაძლიერებას, სოციალურ-ეკონომიკური პროცესების განვითარებას, განათლებისა და ჯანდაცვის სისტემების მოსახლეობის საჭიროებებზე მორგებას, აგრარული საქმიანობის გაუმჯობესებას და მართლწესრიგის განმტკიცებას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: *თელავის მაზრა, საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკა (1918–1921), ადგილობრივი თვითმმართველობა, ადმინისტრაციული რეფორმები, განათლება და ჯანდაცვა*