
THE PEASANTRY IN THE HISTORIOSOPHICAL NARRATION

The peasantry is an important milestone in civilizations formation, ensuring food security, developing economies, and preserving cultural traditions. Despite globalization, urbanization, and technological progress, the peasantry remains an important element of the modern world, but faces numerous challenges: economic marginalization, environmental crises, loss of autonomy due to integration into global markets, and the growing influence of agribusiness.

Contemporary studies of the peasantry cover a wide range of topics: from the historical contribution of peasants to revolutionary processes to their struggle for environmental sustainability and food sovereignty. However, the question remains open in scholarly discussions: how to combine a multidimensional approach to the study of the peasantry, which takes into account historical, social, cultural, and economic aspects, with an analysis of the challenges and prospects of this class in the modern world?

The importance of the problem is stipulated by the need to understand the peasantry not only as a socio-economic category, but also as a cultural and political actor capable of influencing global processes. This approach to understanding the peasantry allows us to better understand the dynamics of social change, local responses to global challenges, and the role of traditional practices in ensuring sustainable development.

R. Pipes¹, R. Redfield, S. Kornovenko², O. Mykhailiuk³, K. Ivangorodskiy⁴, Y. Prysiazhniuk⁵, A. Zayarniuk⁶ and other researchers have studied certain aspects of the topic we have raised.

The objective of the analysis is to analyze the key scientific approaches to the study of the peasantry as a multifaceted social, economic and cultural phenomenon, and to determine its role in historical transformations, globalization processes and the modern world. The study reveals the main theoretical concepts proposed by the classics of peasant studies and modern scholars, which allow us to understand the evolution of the peasantry, its adaptation to changing conditions, preservation of autonomy and importance for social development.

The peasantry is one of the oldest and most important phenomena that has played a key role in the formation of civilizations, economic systems and cultural traditions. In different epochs, its study acquired new meaning, because it not only provided for the basic needs of mankind, but also became a driving force for social, political and economic change.

In the second half of the twentieth century, scholars focused on the study of the peasantry. Two peasant studies journals, 'Peasant

¹ Пайпс Р. Русская революция [пер. М. Д. Тименчик]. Москва : РОССПЭН, 1994. Ч. 1. 398 с.; Пайпс Р. Русская революция [пер. Н. И. Кигай]. Москва : РОССПЭН, 1994. Ч. 2. 584 с.

² Корновенко С., Герасименко О. Селянин-бунтар. Селянська революція в Україні 1902–1917 рр. Черкаси : Чабаненко Ю. А., 2017. С. 4–7, 32–38, 62, 141–144 та ін.

³ Михайлюк О. Селянство України в перші десятиліття ХХ ст.: Соціокультурні процеси : монографія. Дніпропетровськ : Вид-во «Інновація», 2007. 456 с.

⁴ Івангородський К. Селянство Полудневої Київщини в XVI – середині XVII ст. (Студії з етносоціальної історії). Черкаси, 2006. 144 с. С. 5–19.

⁵ Присяжнюк Ю. Українське селянство Наддніпрянської України: соціоментальна історія другої половини XIX – початку ХХ ст. Черкаси, 2007. 640 с.

⁶ Зярянук А. «Селянство» як категорія соціально-історичного аналізу (на прикладі Східної Галичини XIX ст.). *Україна: культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність*. 15/2006–2007. С. 543–553.

Studies’⁷ and ‘Journal of Peasant Studies’⁸, began to be published. ‘Peasant Studies’ had been published since the 1970s, presenting key discussions on the peasantry. The journal has covered the role of the peasantry in political, economic, and social change; analyzed peasant revolutions, resistance movements, and agrarian reforms; and highlighted historical and regional studies of peasant communities. This collection laid the foundation for a systematic analysis of the peasantry as a social class, integrating economic, cultural, and historical aspects. Among the authors of the publication are Eric R. Wolf, Theodore Shanin, and James Scott.

Civilization model

The founder of the civilization approach is the German philosopher Oswald Spengler. His concept of the cyclical nature of civilizations and the “decline” of Europe influenced the analysis of traditional communities, including the peasantry. Spengler viewed the peasantry as the basis of traditional cultures and civilizations, embodying the cyclical nature of historical development. In his work “The Twilight of Europe,”⁷ he described the peasantry as a symbol of “blood and soil,” an integral part of culture. The peasantry, according to Spengler, is a carrier of “organic life” opposed to the urban “mechanics” of civilization. In his conception, peasants are the bearers of traditional values and cyclical time, which reflects the natural rhythm of life: “The peasant remains close to the land, his life revolves around natural rhythms. His work and faith form the foundation of culture, which, in turn, ensures the stability of civilization.”⁸

According to O. Spengler, significant changes begin with agriculture and agriculture itself “turns a person into a peasant:

⁷ Spengler, O. *The Decline of the West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. 510 p. URL: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/72344>

⁸ Ibid.

a person puts down roots in the soil he cultivates”⁹. The scientist saw a separate symbolism in the occupation of a peasant: the connection of the human soul with “Mother Earth,” harvest and death, child and a seed¹⁰. For O. Spengler, a peasant house is also a symbol of settledness. The author compared it to a plant that has taken root and calls it “property in the most sacred sense”¹¹. For O. Spengler, the peasantry is nature and society, it is not artificial¹². The scientist considered the peasantry to be an element of nature and growth, which has remained unchanged for centuries with its way of life¹³.

The socio-historical model

The socio-historical approach is represented by Theodore Shanin. He studied the social adaptation of peasants during periods of transformation, in particular in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, etc. The scientist understood the peasantry as a socio-historical phenomenon that evolves in interaction with political and economic systems. In his research, T. Shanin combined historical, sociological, and economic analysis. He interpreted the peasantry as an “inconvenient class”. He justified his position by the fact that it balances between traditional society and the requirements of modernization. He emphasized the autonomy of peasant farms and their ability to adapt: “Peasants act as a social class that combines traditional ways of production with new social challenges. They retain their autonomy, but are forced to adapt to new economic structures.”¹⁴

⁹ Шпенглер О. Закат Европы. Очерки морфологии мировой истории. Т. 2 : Всемирно-исторические перспективы. Москва, 1998. 606 с. С. 91.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Шпенглер О. Закат Европы. Очерки морфологии мировой истории. Т. 2 : Всемирно-исторические перспективы. Москва, 1998. С. 346.

¹³ Ibid. С. 347.

¹⁴ Shanin, T. *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972. 360 p. URL: https://www.academia.edu/105758902/The_Awkward_Class_a_foundation_for_peasant_studies

The researcher identified four general features that give the peasantry a qualitative certainty:

- 1) family farming;
- 2) farming on land;
- 3) specific rural culture;
- 4) very low status in systems of social domination.

T. Shanin also included marginal (borderline) groups, including agricultural workers, in the peasantry. In particular, “peasant workers” are members of various agricultural cooperatives, family groups engaged in non-agricultural labor in the countryside, peasants living outside the village and usually in the suburbs of large cities, and even farmers.¹⁵

The revolutionary model

Eric R. Wolf, an Austrian anthropologist and political anthropologist who emigrated to the United States, is a representative of the revolutionary approach. His works reflect the role of peasants in revolutions and historical transformations. He analyzed the peasantry as a driving force of revolutions and social change in the global context, and also considered it in interaction with economic and political structures.

In his work “The Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century,” Eric R. Wolf examined the participation of peasants in the revolutions of the twentieth century (China, Cuba, and Mexico), emphasizing their role in social and political change. He explains in detail the participation of peasants in revolutions and reveals how their desire for land and justice becomes a driver of social change: “Peasant revolutions are not just a struggle for land, but a protest against a system that deprives them of control over their own lives.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Шанін Т. Селянство: окреслення соціологічного питання. URL: https://uamoderna.com/images/archiv/17/9_UM_17_NebestorDumka_Shanin.pdf

¹⁶ Wolf, E. R. Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. 356 p. URL: https://archive.org/details/PeasantWarsOfTheTwentiethCentury?utm_source=chatgpt.com

In his work *The Peasants*, Erich R. Wolf portrayed peasants as a “semi-integrated” group that balances between autonomy and dependence on the broader social and economic system. The scholar examined various approaches to the study of the peasantry, the origins of peasant communities, major agricultural adaptations, social organizations, aspects of religion and ideology, peasant movements, and the interaction of peasants with markets and other social groups.

The complexity of peasant life, their dependence on market conditions, and the constant need to balance external demands with internal needs were emphasized by the scientist in the following way: “Peasant farms function in a similar way. Of course, peasants are aware of the price of labor and goods on the market – their economic and social survival depends on it...”; ‘the eternal problem of the peasantry is to balance the demands of the outside world with the needs of the peasants themselves...’.¹⁷

Eric R. Wolf¹⁸ defined social structural “types” of peasants depending on their right to land and emphasized that the life of a peasant is determined not only by his or her internal needs, but exists within a larger system. Therefore, the efforts to meet the needs of the peasantry in each society are different. The author believed that only when the peasantry integrates into society and becomes a part of the social and political life of the state can we talk about the peasantry.

Moral-economic model

The representative of the moral-economic approach can be considered the American James Scott – a political scientist

¹⁷ Wolf, Eric R. *Peasants*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966. 181 p. URL: https://monoskop.org/images/9/9b/Wolf_R_Eric_Peasants_1966.pdf

¹⁸ Wolf, Eric R. *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. https://archive.org/details/PeasantWarsOfTheTwentiethCentury?utm_source=chatgpt.com

and anthropologist, who is known for his analysis of peasant resistance and state intervention in agrarian communities. His research is focused on East Asia, in particular on Southeast Asia. He is the author of the concept of the "moral economy" of peasants, with which he explained their struggle for survival and resistance to unfair economic exploitation.

In the work 'The Moral Economy of Peasants', which is based on field research in rural communities of Southeast Asia, archival sources and sociological analysis, the scientist developed the concept of the "moral economy" of peasants, where their actions are motivated by the desire to survive and restore justice in economic relations: "For peasants, not only material profits are important, but also the preservation of morality, which guarantees them a minimum level of survival."¹⁹ J. Scott used the term "moral economy" to describe the traditional norms and values that regulate economic relations in peasant communities. These norms are based on the principles of justice, mutual assistance, and ensuring a minimum level of survival for each member of the community: "Peasants are oriented towards survival and risk-taking, which determines their resistance to any changes that threaten their stability."²⁰

J. Scott analyzed how the violation of the "moral economy" due to capitalist reforms, colonial interventions, or other social changes causes social tension. For example, the imposition of a money economy, the loss of traditional means of survival (for example, the right to access land or water). According to J. Scott, peasant revolts are a reaction to a threat to living standards and traditions, rather than a struggle for new ideals. He calls such actions

¹⁹ Scott, J. C. The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976. 247 p. URL: <https://dokumen.pub/the-moral-economy-of-the-peasant-rebellion-and-subsistence-in-southeast-asia-9780300185553.html>

²⁰ Ibid.

“conservative” in their essence. The work “The Moral Economy of Peasants” is important for understanding social conflicts in peasant societies.

Another work by J. Scott “Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance”²¹ is a fundamental work on the study of social resistance. The scientist has clarified the hidden, everyday forms of peasant resistance against oppression. He noted that peasants in conditions of social inequality, poverty and pressure from the elites or the state resort to hidden forms of resistance that are not always obvious to outside observers: “Peasant resistance does not necessarily have to be collective or openly declared to be effective. The “weapons of the weak” are often inconspicuous and at first glance, insignificant forms of protest.”²²

He singled out the following “everyday” methods of resistance: sabotage (deliberately slowing down work, reducing productivity), non-compliance with orders (formal submission without actual execution), rumors and sarcasm (creating an atmosphere of social condemnation for the oppressors), passive resistance (hiding the harvest, evading taxes or requisitions), economic resistance (barter transactions, smuggling, avoiding official economic channels).

Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance²³, is based on field research in the Malaysian countryside. The scientist collected data on social tensions, relations between peasants and landowners, as well as the ways in which oppressed groups defended their interests.

Cindy Mintz is also considered a representative of the moral-economic approach. The researcher from the USA found out how the global economy affected traditional agrarian communities.

²¹ Scott, J. C. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. 389 p. URL: <https://archive.org/details/weapons-of-the-weak-everyday-forms-of-peasant-resistance/page/n51/mode/2up>

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

In the work “Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History”, the scientist revealed how the plantation economy, dependent on the labor of peasants, integrated them into the global economy: “The peasants who grew sugar cane were integrated into the global economic chain, but their social status remained at the level of semi-serf dependence”²⁴.

S. Mintz’s book is a classic of scientific thought, combining historical, anthropological and sociological approaches to the analysis of the impact of colonialism and the global economy on societies. It explores the role of sugar in shaping modern history, in particular in the context of colonial empires, the plantation economy and changes in consumer practices. The scientist substantiated the destructive impact of the plantation economy on peasant communities. Plantations replaced traditional forms of management, creating a dependence on monocultural production. This led to poverty, food shortages and social instability. S. Mintz traced the shift in the social significance of sugar from a luxury item for the elite to a mass product, made possible by the exploitation of labor in the colonies: “The democratization of sugar consumption in Europe was made possible by the dehumanization of labor in the colonies.”²⁵

In his opinion, sugar as a product initiated the globalization of food products. Its consumption in Europe changed the structure of nutrition, contributed to the development of capitalism and the creation of modern consumer culture. The scientist also emphasized the moral and social consequences of colonial production, in particular, the destruction of local cultures, traditions and the autonomy of communities, so he can be considered a supporter of the moral-economic approach.

²⁴ Mintz, S. W. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. 274 p. URL: https://z-lib.gs/book/713962/3edd80/sweetness-and-power.html?dsource=recommend&utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁵ Ibid.

The focus of S. Mintz's research attention was also the peasantry itself²⁶. He noted "the fact ... that the peasantry nowhere forms a homogeneous mass or cluster, but is always and everywhere typically characterized by internal differentiation in many directions." The scientist pointed to "the need for definitions of the peasantry and peasant societies of the middle level – definitions that are somewhere in the middle between real peasant societies 'on the ground', so to speak, and the broadest level of definition sufficient to describe all of them." These definitions or typologies should be consistent with peasant classes, etc.

The economic model

Jan Dauwe van der Plugh, a contemporary scholar from the Netherlands, can be considered a representative of the economic approach to the study of peasantry. In his works, the scholar focuses on the study of modern peasant farms, their struggle for autonomy and sustainability in the globalized world, and the preservation of sustainable economic practices in the context of globalization.

The work "The New Peasantry: The Struggle for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Age of Empire and Globalization" is based on comparative research in different regions of the world: Its author has proposed a new understanding of the peasantry that goes beyond the traditional notion and focuses on its adaptation, autonomy, and sustainable development. The scholar developed the concept of the "new peasantry," arguing that despite urbanization and globalization, the peasantry is not disappearing. On the contrary, a "new peasantry" is emerging in many regions of the world, characterized by a search for autonomy, sustainable development, and resistance to agrarian capitalism. The new peasantry combines traditional agricultural practices with innovations such as organic

²⁶ Mintz, S. W. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. 274 p. URL: https://z-lib.gs/book/713962/3edd80/sweetness-and-power.html?dsource=recommend&utm_source=chatgpt.com

farming: “The new peasantry is a counter-movement against the dominance of global capitalism in agriculture, offering alternative ways of producing food and sustaining rural life.”²⁷ The scientist described the peasantry as a dual phenomenon: as an economic class dependent on land and local resources and as a political actor fighting for autonomy and preservation of traditional farming.

Globalization, according to Jan Douwe van der Plugh, has created conditions for farmers to become more dependent on global markets, agribusiness and financial institutions. However, it has also sparked a resistance movement where farmers are choosing strategies of self-organization, rebuilding local economies, and forming alternatives to global models. The central theme of the researcher’s work is the peasants’ struggle for autonomy-the ability to control their own resources, make independent decisions, and refuse imposed production models: “Autonomy is not just independence, but the creation of sustainable alternatives to exploitative systems.”²⁸ The “new peasantry” is based on the principles of sustainable development, including ecological farming, local production, and biodiversity conservation.

Interesting are the reflections on the concepts of “peasant” and “peasantry” by Jan Douwe van der Plugh.²⁹ The scientist identified the main features of “peasant conditions”: minimal monetary expenditures, cooperative relations, and the struggle for autonomy, calling them the main ones for all countries seeking to develop

²⁷ van der Ploeg, J. D. *The New Peasantries: Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Era of Empire and Globalization*. London: Earthscan, 2008. 320 p. URL: https://www.academia.edu/18229214/Van_der_Ploeg_Jan_Douwe_The_New_Peasantries_Struggles_for_Autonomy_and_Sustainability_in_an_Era_of_Empire_and_Globalization?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jan Douwe Van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries: Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Era of Empire and Globalization* (London: Earthscan, 2008). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259687848_The_New_Peasantries_Struggles_for_Autonomy_and_Sustainability_in_an_Era_of_Empire_and_Globalization_-_By_Jan_Douwe_van_der_Ploeg

in complex socio-economic relations. Jan Douwe van der Plugh considers the peasantry to be “ubiquitous,” meaning that the peasantry makes up two-fifths of humanity and is larger today than in any historical period.

The sociocultural model

The French scholar Pierre Bourdieu is a representative of the sociocultural approach in his studies of the peasantry. He studied peasant communities through the prism of the concept of habitus, symbolic capital, and social structures. The researcher was not a “peasant scientist” in the narrow sense; his studies revealed the socio-cultural mechanisms operating in rural communities. He studied peasant communities in Algeria, which became the basis for his analysis of social structures.

He found that the Algerian peasantry was based on traditional forms of agriculture. He described how the colonial regime destroyed these economic structures through the expropriation of land and the introduction of a capitalist economy. Peasant communities had a well-defined hierarchy, where tradition, religion, and patriarchal ties played a key role. They ensured stability and preservation of order.

P. Bourdieu emphasized that the peasants’ connection with the land is not only economic but also cultural, and therefore its destruction was traumatic for the peasants’ identity. According to the scholar, peasants played a leading role in the struggle for Algerian independence. He explained that their indignation was caused not only by material losses but also by the humiliation of their dignity and traditions. Thanks to their organization and common interests, the peasants became the main social base for the National Liberation Front. Their participation in the revolution reflected the struggle to restore the lost social order.

P. Bourdieu used the concept of habitus to explain the behavior of peasants. Habitus is shaped by cultural, economic, and social context. The Algerian peasantry was characterized by a deep

attachment to traditions and land, resistance to changes imposed from the outside, including colonial reforms, and the reproduction of traditional values even in difficult conditions of migration or revolution.³⁰

The scholar also drew attention to the psychological trauma experienced by the Algerian peasantry due to the loss of autonomy and colonial violence. These traumas affected their social behavior and attitudes toward modernization.

Marcel Mauss is a representative of the socio-cultural approach to the study of the peasantry. The French researcher studied the cultural aspects of gift and exchange in peasant communities, which influenced his understanding of their social relations. In his work "The Gift: Forms and Reasons of Exchange in Archaic Societies, he analyzed the phenomenon of gift as a social and economic mechanism in societies. The scholar noted that gifting in primitive societies is not a purely altruistic act, but includes three interrelated duties: the duty to give (gifting is a way to establish and maintain social ties), the duty to accept (refusal to accept a gift means breaking off relations or demonstrating disrespect), the duty to return (returning a gift ensures balance in relations and maintains equilibrium in society). M. Mauss cited examples from Polynesian and Melanesian cultures where gifts have a special spiritual meaning. In the Polynesian tradition, for example, a gift carries a part of the soul of the giver ('hau'), and this creates an obligation for the recipient.³¹ A gift is not just a material object, but a symbol of connection between people, which confirms social structures and interaction.

³⁰ Bourdieu, P. *The Algerians*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962. 160 p. URL: https://monoskop.org/images/3/3d/Bourdieu_Pierre_The_Algerians_1962.pdf

³¹ Mauss, M. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Routledge, 1990. 200 p. URL: https://files.libcom.org/files/Mauss%20-%20The%20Gift.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

He has also studied practices such as the 'Potlatch' system among the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America. 'Potlatch' is a ceremonial exchange where large gifts or even the destruction of valuables demonstrate status and power.³² This system shows that the economy of archaic societies was built on the principles of symbolic exchange rather than on market mechanisms.

M. Mauss noted that the economy of archaic societies is a "total social factual system" in which economic exchange is integrated into religion, morality, politics, and law. Giving in such societies serves as the basis of social solidarity, as exchange contributes to the formation of interdependencies.

He drew interesting conclusions about the importance of gift for understanding modern economic and social systems. He believed that even in capitalist societies, there are remnants of gift exchange (e.g., charity, informal exchanges, gifts) that emphasize the social nature of human relations. Mauss's generalizations can be integrated into the study of peasant communities, as gift exchange is an important element of social life in many traditional agrarian societies. In the peasant context, gift-giving strengthens ties between families, provides social assistance (e.g., grain or livestock exchange), and shapes moral interaction. Gift-giving rituals, such as at weddings or holidays, serve as a means of maintaining social solidarity and transmitting cultural traditions.

The anti-globalization model

A representative of the anti-globalization approach to the study of the peasantry is the contemporary Colombian scholar Arturo Escobar, who has studied the impact of globalization on the peasantry, environmental sustainability and development

³² Mauss, M. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Routledge, 1990. 200 p. URL: https://files.libcom.org/files/Mauss%20-%20The%20Gift.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

in Latin America and has identified the interconnectedness of the peasantry, the environment and economic development. In his work “Facing Development: The Making and Breaking of the Third World” he offered a critical analysis of the concept of development and its impact on the countries of the Global South.³³

The researcher argued that after World War II, development became the main discourse by which the West defined and controlled the countries of the Global South. The concept of the “Third World” emerged as part of this discourse, presenting entire regions as “backward” and “problematic”. Development was presented as a technical and neutral process, but in reality, it became the main mechanism that justified Western intervention in the economic, social and political systems of the Global South.

A. Escobar emphasized that the Western model of development is based on the ideas of progress, industrialization and capitalism, ignoring alternative approaches to life and economy that exist in different cultures. Under the guise of aid to the Third World, a system was created that cemented their dependence on the West through debt, transnational corporations, and control over natural resources. Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and UN agencies became key players in spreading the development discourse. They set standards for “normal” development that were often inadequate for local contexts. A scholar who analyzed how development projects imposed standardized approaches that often destroyed traditional ways of life and led to environmental and social crises. Development policies directed resources to urbanization and industrialization, ignoring the needs of rural communities, leading to the marginalization of the peasantry and the destruction of their economic autonomy. The pace of development did not take into account the cultural specifics

³³ Escobar, A. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. 290 p. URL: <https://archive.org/details/encounteringdeve00esco/page/274/mode/2up>

of the regions, which led to cultural uniformity and the loss of traditional knowledge.

A. Escobar called for rejecting the dominant development discourse and turning to local alternatives based on the knowledge and practices of the communities themselves. He proposed a model in which communities have autonomy in choosing their own development paths. An important element of alternative development is preserving the natural environment and taking into account environmental constraints.

For the researcher, rural communities are centers of resistance to colonial and postcolonial forms of domination. Traditional peasant life is an example of an alternative to the capitalist system. Peasants often possess deep ecological and social knowledge that is key to sustainable development. This knowledge, however, is ignored within the traditional development discourse. Rural communities offer models of social organization based on cooperation, solidarity, and mutual support that can serve as a model for modern approaches to development.

Mark Edelman is a representative of the anti-globalization approach. A contemporary American anthropologist, researcher of peasant movements and their struggle against economic globalization, he paid close attention to the study of the concept of “peasantry”. The scholar revealed that “peasantry” appeared at the turn of the Middle Ages and the Modern era in English to refer to the rural poor, rural residents, serfs, agricultural workers, or “common” people. The use of the verb “to peasant” in that period meant “someone like a peasant is subjugated,” i.e., “the peasantry is subjugated.” However, the earliest forms of “peasant” date back to the sixth century (French, Castilian, Catalan, Occitan, etc.) and were used to refer to rural residents, regardless of whether they were engaged in agriculture or not. The scholar considered the English word “peasant” and the French word “paysan” to be synonymous: “red neck”, ”ignorant”, ”stupid”, ”rude.” In Germany in the thirteenth

century, “peasant” meant “villain, hooligan, devil, robber, burglar, and plunderer.”³⁴

The work “Peasants Against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica” is one of the key studies of contemporary peasant movements. In it, the author focused on the role of peasant communities in the fight against globalization, especially through social movements such as ‘La Via Campesina’. M. Edelman emphasized that peasants are trying not only to preserve their economic rights, but also to protect cultural values and food security in the face of increasing globalization: “In the face of globalization, rural social movements have become key actors in defending peasants’ rights to land and food sovereignty”; ‘Peasant movements resist not only economic marginalization, but also the cultural unification that globalization imposes on rural communities’.³⁵

In “Peasant Politics in the XXI century,” the scholar analyzes the current political challenges faced by peasant movements around the world. He examines the impact of global economic changes on peasant communities and their struggle to preserve their rights and resources. The work emphasizes the importance of peasants’ participation in global forums and coalitions, such as ‘La Via Campesina’, to protect their rights: “The peasant question in the XXI century is deeply linked to issues of land rights, climate change, and food sovereignty, which are increasingly threatened by global capital.”³⁶

‘La Via Campesina’, founded in 1993 and uniting 81 countries, positions its activities as an international movement that coordinates

³⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/WGPLeasants/MarcEdelman.pdf>

³⁵ Edelman, Marc. *Peasants Against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. 368 p. URL: https://archive.org/details/peasantsagainstg0000edel?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³⁶ Edelman, Marc. *Peasant Politics of the Twenty-First Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023. 280 p. URL: <https://academic.oup.com/cornell-scholarship-online/book/56783?login=false>

peasant organizations of small and large producers, agricultural workers, etc. from Asia, Africa, America and Europe, among whose tasks is, in particular, the struggle for peasants' rights³⁷. M. Edelman considers the organization's activities productive: "La Via Campesina is a global response to the economic and environmental crises that threaten the livelihoods of farmers around the world."³⁸ In addition, the organization also works in the methodological direction: in 2009, 'La Via Campesina' developed a definition in the Declaration of the Rights of Peasants of the concept of "peasant" – "a man or woman of the earth who has a direct and special relationship with the land and nature through production, food and/or other agricultural products"³⁹.

Thus, the approaches and concepts to the study of the peasantry that we have analyzed allow us to conclude that the peasantry is the foundation of agrarian societies and largely determines their development. Regardless of the approach, research topic, origin of the scholar, or era, classical theorists such as O. Spengler and M. Moss, or modern researchers such as Jan Douwe van der Ploug, M. Edelman, considered the peasantry as an integral part of human evolution. Most concepts emphasize the ability of peasants to adapt to changing conditions, whether economic, political, social, or environmental. For example, James Scott analyzed the daily forms of resistance that allow peasants to maintain autonomy, Jan Douwe van der Plough emphasized modern practices of sustainable farming, and Oswald Spengler emphasized the traditional resilience of peasantry in the cycles of civilizations.

All scholars treat the peasantry as an element integrated into broader economic, political, and social systems. For example, Wolf

³⁷ <https://viacampesina.org/en/>

³⁸ Edelman, Marc. *Peasant Politics of the Twenty-First Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023. 280 p. URL: <https://academic.oup.com/cornell-scholarship-online/book/56783?login=false>

³⁹ <https://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2011/03/Declaration-of-rights-of-peasants-2009.pdf>

and Edelman emphasized the role of peasants in revolutions and globalization, Theodore Shanin analyzed the peasantry as an “uncomfortable class” balancing between local autonomy and dependence on the state, and Cindy Mintz focused on the economic integration of peasants into global markets.

Scholars’ concepts often emphasize the tension between peasants’ desire to maintain autonomy and the influence of external forces (state, market, colonialism, etc.). James Scott and Theodore Shanin showed the resistance of peasants to these forces. Bourdieu and Moss emphasized the cultural mechanisms of community support. Many concepts view the peasantry as an active participant in historical transformations. For example, the role of peasants in revolutions was discussed by Wolf, peasant movements in the context of globalization by Edelman, and the role of the peasantry as a driver of social change by Theodore Shanin.

All of these concepts show that the peasantry is not only an economic class, but also a socio-cultural phenomenon that requires a multifaceted analysis. All scholars share the understanding that the peasantry is an integral part of human history and modernity. Its role in social transformations and interaction with global structures make the peasantry an important object of study for analyzing both the past and the future.

Information about the authors:

Yulia Pasichna,

PhD (History), Head of the Research Department,
Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy,
Cherkasy, Ukraine

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7357-7623>

e-mail: pasichna_yulia@ukr.net