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GEORGIAN TOPONYMS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS (1944 - 1957)

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Abstract. *It is paradoxical, but Georgia is among the few countries that repeatedly lost territories, whether due to objective circumstances or other reasons, during the dawn of modern civilization. First, in the early 1920s, under the Treaty of May 7, 1920, the ineffective government of independent Georgia was compelled to cede the Sochi District (Sochi-Tuapse District), which had historically been part of northwestern Georgia—Abkhazia. Tsarist Russia had begun partitioning these territories in the late 19th century, initially establishing a military-administrative border along the Mzimta River. On February 25, 1904, the Russian authorities pushed this border further south, detaching the Gagra region from Georgia. A partial restoration of historical justice occurred on October 30, 1917, when the Transcaucasian Committee, chaired by Akaki Chkhenkeli, annulled the 1904 resolution and returned the Gagra District to the Sokhumi Region—Abkhazia (Menteshashvili).*

Thus, between 1919 and 1921, "in exchange" for the loss of historical Georgian lands—Sochi District, Saingilo, Lore Region, Artvini, and Artani Districts—Georgia's territory expanded by 74.4 thousand square kilometers by 1944, though its population decreased by 26,000 due to Moscow's "adventurous" policies. However, it was evident that Georgia would not be able to retain these territories for long, and this proved true. In 1955, the Klukhori District was transferred to the RSFSR, and later, by the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on January 9, 1957, the Chechen and Ingush peoples were rehabilitated, and their statehood was restored. As a result, the Akhalkhevi District was abolished and, along with other territories, returned to the North Caucasian autonomies of the RSFSR. The Georgian-Russian border reverted to its pre-March 7, 1944, configuration.

KeyWords: *Georgia, Abkhazia, Toponyms, History*

Due to various reasons, only a small part of at some time great Georgia has survived. This small country of the Caucasus, which has been fighting for the preservation of its identity throughout its existence, is still being disputed with over the homeland on which it has lived for thousands of years - say nothing about the unspeakable efforts of our ancestors in the early, middle or later centuries to preserve the unity of the country. It is a paradox, but Georgia belongs to the small number of those countries that lost territories one after another due to objective or other "circumstances" at the dawn of modern civilization. First, at the beginning of the 20s of XX century (Treaty of May 7, 1920), the inept government of independent Georgia was forced to cede Sochi District (Sochi-Tuapse District), which since ancient times was part of the northwestern part of Georgia - Abkhazia. The tsar's

Russia began dividing the mentioned territories at the end of XIX century, when it drew the military administrative border at Mzimta, and on February 25, 1904, the Russian authorities moved this border further south and separated the Gagra Region from Georgia. Historical justice was partially restored on October 30, 1917, when the meeting of the Transcaucasian Committee, chaired by Akaki Chkhenkeli, canceled the 1904 resolution and returned Gagra District to Sokhumi Region - Abkhazia (Menteshashvili).

The removal of Saingilo was particularly painful for our country. Saingilo, which consists of Kakhi, Zakatala and Belakani Districts, represented the northeastern part of Hereti since ancient times; It was inhabited by kindred tribes of Georgians - Hers. In IV-V centuries, the close neighborhood of Hereti and Georgians, as well as the migration of Georgians to Hereti, led to their Georgianization and cultural-political fusion with Georgians. Since XI century, the territory of Hereti has been within the boundaries of Kakheti. From XV century, the name "Hereti" disappears in historical sources and it is completely merged with Kakheti. Political changes in the kingdom of Kakheti (constant attacks by outside forces, the time of Lezgian raids ...) in XVII-XVIII centuries led to the economic and political decline of this region. The physical destruction of the Georgian population, migration, the invasion of the Tsakhurs, Avars from the north, caused the extinction of the region. The remaining Georgians were forcibly converted to Islam. All of the above said this ancient Georgian territory gradually alienated from the motherland. Today's term "Saingilo" was established in XIX century. A Georgian man converted to Islam was called "Yangil" in Turkish, which meant "newly converted" ("newly converted to Islam"). Since 1921, Saingilo was transferred to the state of Azerbaijan for "political considerations" and it is still part of it. Also, within a short period of time, the Artvini and Artaani Districts, which were annexed by the Bolsheviks, and the Lore District, included in the jurisdiction of Georgia, passed into the hands of the neighboring countries. ¹(Nachqebia).

As a result of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war, Russia unilaterally

¹ Documents of the Foreign Policy of the Caucasus and Georgia. Tfilisi, 1919.

recognized the indigenous Georgian territories - de facto Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia as independent states; Despite the recognition and support of the territorial integrity of Georgia by the international community, the perspective remains very vague and thought-provoking. Modern and probably future generations will need a lot of effort for territorial "rehabilitation".

Despite the above, in the middle of XX century, for subjective or objective reasons, the territory of Georgia expanded significantly². The growth of the country's territory took place mainly on the northern border of Georgia; In particular, Georgia joined:

1) the territories located beyond the Western Caucasus, to the north of Svaneti, in the upper reaches of the Teberda and Kuban rivers (part of present Karachay-Cherkessia);

2) the lands beyond the Caucasus range, in the upper reaches of the Arghun and Asa rivers (part of present Ingushetia);

3) Itum-Kale District (part of present Chechnya);

The mentioned territories became part of Georgia due to well-known events. In particular, at the end of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet authorities accused Karachais, Kabardians, Balkars, Chechens, and Ingush people of collaborating with the German fascists, treasoning, denouncing honest Soviet citizens before the Germans, showing the ways to the German troops coming to the Transcaucasia, and destructive acting against the state after the expulsion of the fascists from this area. Therefore, on October 12, 1944, an order signed by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR M. Kalinin and Presidium Secretary A. Gorkin was issued, which reads: *"In connection with the fact that during the occupation of the Autonomous District of Karachay by the Germans, many residents of Karachay acted as traitors, joined the squads organized by the Germans to fight against the Soviet government, denounced honest Soviet citizens before the Germans, accompanied them and showed the way on passes to the German troops going to Transcaucasia, and after the expulsion of the fascists, they obstruct and oppose the*

² M. Nachqebia. Ethnolinguistic Terms of the Georgians. Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 147-148.

measures taken by the Soviet authorities, hide bandits and agents of the Germans, assist them, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR determines:

1. All Karachay's people who live in the territory of the District, should be deported to other regions of the USSR, and the Karachay Autonomous District should be abolished.

2. Due to the liquidation of the Karachay Autonomous District... the Ushkulan District of the former Karachay Autonomous District, as well as part of the Mikoyan District, should be transferred to the Georgian SSR, and a new administrative unit should be created in the mentioned territory - Klukhori District, the center - the city of Mikoyan-Shakhari, the name of the mentioned city should be changed and be called Klukhori." Karachay Autonomous District was cancelled. Due to the liquidation, the Ushkulan District of the former District, a part of Mikoyan District was transferred to the Georgian SSR; A new administrative-territorial unit - **Klukhori District** was created in the mentioned territory, and the capital city was named **Klukhori**.

In different regions of the Soviet Union, the Balkars were evicted from their places of residence for the same reasons, and not only the lands of the Autonomous Republic of Kabardino-Balkartia, but also the name of their places of residence were shortened and renamed Kabardo ASSR. Part of the territory: the southwestern part of the Elbrussky and Nagorni Regions were joined to the Zemo (Upper) Svaneti Region of the Georgian SSR.

On the instructions of the Kremlin, in newly created regions more than five thousand Georgians were settled, mainly Svans and Rachians, who, unlike Ossetians and Russians, magnanimously gave back the houses to the rehabilitated Caucasian brothers and even helped them to arrange their lives. Grateful local people still fondly remember this fact.

Chechnya-Ingushetia ASSR was also abolished. However, before that, let's recall the pre-history: the policy of ceding the territories of Georgia took place on a larger scale since the beginning of the Bolshevik era. In addition to the territories mentioned above, in the 20s of the last century they ceded some territory in the

Chechnya-Ingushetia sector of the Georgia-Russia border. In particular, in 1925, based on the request of the leadership of the Chechnya Autonomous Region, the official Tbilisi easily ceded the villages located in Tianeti Mazra, in the Arghun gorge inhabited by the Kists - Jarego, Teretego, Melzesti, Tsekaro, Sakhano, etc. Thus, the border between the RSFSR and Georgia was drawn in a few kilometers from the village Shatili.³ In 1928, the government of Georgia made concessions again and satisfied the request of the Chechen Jaregoans for the transfer of additional mowing lands, which was approved by the Presidium of CEC (Central Executive Committee) on August 20, 1928. As a result, the Alako mountain area became part of Chechnya. But the Shatilians were not satisfied with the loss of their moving lands and pastures, and the matter even came to a skirmish. Dusheti Raikom (District Committee) was forced to appeal to the central government to revise the 1928 decree; However, the prolonged correspondence between Moscow, Tbilisi and Grozny was interrupted by the war between the Soviet Union and Germany.

On March 7, 1944, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR urgently solved the problem. By this decree, Chechen and Ingush peoples were deported to distant provinces for the same reasons as other North Caucasian peoples. Grozny District was created on a certain part of the canceled Chechnya-Ingushetia territory, and the rest of the territory was distributed between North Ossetia, Dagestan and Georgia. Georgia joined: Itum-Kale District with existing borders, western part of Sharoi District, south-eastern part of Galanchezh, Galashki and Prigorodni Districts. According to new redistribution, the southeastern part of Gizeldon District of the Ossetian ASSR was included in Georgia. Under this new redistribution, the country naturally returned the villages with mountains, forests, pastures, mowing lands... which had been transferred to the RSFSR (to Chechnya-Ingush) in 1927-1928.

The largest part of the joined territories was established in the form of **Akhalkhevi District**, which was abolished later in the early 50s and joined Dusheti District; As for the Gizeldon District of North Ossetia and southern part of Prigorodni

³ S. Kiladze. News. "Asaval-Dasavali," 2008, #47.

District of Chechnya-Ingushetia, they were united in Kazbegi District.

Thus, in 1919-1921, “instead of” the loss of historical Georgian lands - Sochi District, Saingilo, Lore Region, Artvini and Artani Districts, as a result of Moscow's "adventurous" policy, the population of Georgia decreased by 26 thousand by 1944, and the territory was increased by 74.4 thousand square km; However, one can easily understand that Georgia would not be able to keep these territories for a long time, and it happened: in 1955, the territory of Klukhori District was transferred to the RSFSR, and later, by the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR on January 9, 1957, the Chechen and Ingush peoples were rehabilitated and their statehood was restored, on the basis of which the Akhalkhevi District was abolished and together with other territories returned to the North Caucasian autonomies of the RSFSR. The Georgian-Russian border returned to the situation that existed before March 7, 1944.

Such is the brief history of the lands which were significantly expanded the borders of Georgia within ten years.

Naturally, the geographical names of the territories of the North Caucasus, united as part of Georgia, were massively changed. The "national policy" of the Kremlin, like that of tsarism, was based on the mass renaming of already introduced and established toponyms to achieve specific goals, which often became the reason for provoking conflicts between different ethnic groups. Artificial creation of new Georgian toponyms in the joined territories can serve as an example of this.

On non-Georgian territory, Karachayian, Chechen, Ingushian, Kabardian, Balkarian toponyms were replaced by Georgian geographical names, which proceeded in several directions:

a) Local toponyms were replaced by names of a communist-ideological nature, with which the government tried to propagate to the population the superiority of the socialist system in all directions. A similar process was carried out throughout the country. These are: **Shroma, Akhalsheni, Mzisa, Akhalsopeli, Ganaxleba, Shukura.**

b) The emigration of the North Caucasian peoples took place during the Second

World War; That was why the government paid special attention to raising the patriotic, fighting spirit among the population, which was served by geographical names together with the media. This explains why Zemo (Upper) Baksan was renamed **Bukhaidze** - the hero of the Soviet Union, Captain Bukhaidze, who died in Balkaria..

c) Since the exiled ethnic groups were declared traitors, even their mention was forbidden. Due to this the toponyms of the Caucasian communists fighting for the establishment of the Soviet government were also renamed. Namely: the name of the village **Baidaev** was changed to **Tamariani**..

d) There are also non-ideologicalized names, but in this case their characteristics are the geographical features of the named place itself: **Shuamta, Mtisdziri, Khidiskari, Dariali, Tergula, Magaro, Qubanisi**... ⁴

Information on the change of toponyms carried out outside the current borders of Georgia is recorded only in the 1949 directory of the "Administrative-Territorial Division of the Georgia SSR". Georgian toponyms are not mentioned in subsequent editions, which is due to their leaving from the borders of Georgia in the 50s of XX century.

In 1943, on the territories of Ushkulan District and part of Mikoyan District of the Karachay Autonomous District, there was created **Klukhori District** the centre of which Mikoyan-Shakhar was renamed **Klukhori**. In the 21st volume of the "Great Soviet Encyclopedia" we read: *"Клухори (б. Микоян-Шахар) - город, центр Клухорского района Грузинского ССР. Расположение на р. Кубани при впадении в нее р. Теберди на выс. 879 м над ур. моря, на Военно-Сухумской дороге, в 65 км к Ю. от ж.-д. станции Баталпашиинск и в 88 км к С. от Клухорского перевала. Founded in 1926-1927... Имеются (1953) русская и грузинская средние школы"*. ⁵ ("Klukhori (former Mikoyan-Shakhar) is a city, the center of the Klukhorsky District of the Georgian SSR. It is located on the Kuban River at the confluence of the Teberdi River at an altitude of 879 m above sea level,

⁴ Administrative-territorial division of the Georgian SSR by September 1, 1949. Tbilisi, 1949.

⁵ Great Soviet Encyclopedia. Vol. 21, Moscow (in Russian), 1953.

on the Military-Sokhumi road, 65 km south of the Batalpashinsky railway station and 88 km north of the Klukhorsky pass. Founded in 1926-1927... There are (1953) Russian and Georgian secondary schools.")

In 1944, the village of Kamenomosti (former Tashkepiuri) was renamed **Akhalsheni**, Khurzik - **Zedvake**, Uchkulaniauli - **Madniskhevi**, Kvemoteberda (formerly Sinti) - **Mzisa**, Zemoteberda - **Teberda**, Kartjurti - **Mtisdziri**...

In 1947, the village Jalziki was renamed **Akhalsopeli**, Jingir – **Bari**, Magaro - **Yalbuzi**>**Magaro**, Klukhori - **Madniskhevi**>**Kubanisi**, Kamenemost - **Shertula**, Dauti - **Shuamta**, Birliki – **Shukura**, Lastochka>**Melnychnaya**>**Khidiskari**...

On the residential area of the Karachays joined to the Upper Svaneti region in 1944: Kubanisi - **Ganaxleba**, Bidaevi - **Tamariani**, Gagishi - **Yalbuzi**, Tegenekeli - **Pichvnari**, Zemobaksani - **Bukhaidze**...

Gizeldon District of North Ossetia and the southern part of Prigorodny of Chechnya-Ingushetia were joined to Kazbegi District, where the following toponyms were changed (in 1944): Armkhi* - **Akhalsopeli**, Hameta - **Ganakhleba**, DzheyraKh - **Dariali**, Armkhisi (resort) – **Dariali** (resort), Portaukhikhutori - **Tamariani**, Kvemoozma - **Tergula**, Veinakhi - **Mtisdziri**, Zemoozma - **Shroma**...

***Note:** Armkhi, the same DzheyraKh, is the largest settlement in the Armkh, i.e. DzheyraKh gorge. The name of the gorge is mainly DzheyraKh, which is related to the Arab commander **Jarrah**, who passed through the narrows of Dariali Gorge in 725 and invaded Alanya. Armkhi was named this gorge according to the Armkhi river!; Ingush tourist guides published in Russian often refer to this river by its Georgian name - **Kistetistsqali**. Here is located the Christian temple - Tkhabaerdi, which was built in XII century with stone slabs brought from Georgia. Also in the river Asa valley there are located Elbierdi and Targimi temples on the walls of which Georgian inscriptions and frescoes are preserved.

According to the decree of March 21, 1944, the name of Itum-Kale** District of Chechnya-Ingushetia was changed to **Akhalkhevi District**, and the center of Itum-Kale District, the village Itum-Kale was named **Akhalkhevi**. Itum-Kale is located in the narrow gorge of Arghuni river and historically controlled the entrance and exit

of this gorge. This part is rich in architectural monuments, burial complexes of XVII-XVIII centuries.

****Note:** For decades, the names of countries, nations, languages, etc. we transferred from Russian, which often caused inaccuracies. An example of this is the geographical names ending with "kala": Makhach**kala**, Itum-**Kale**... which is the Russian form. **Kala** (is Persian, means "fortress") is the same word that we have in the name of the prison in Tbilisi - Nari-**kala**; Russians do not have " □" and they transfer this sound of other languages with "k". But since Georgian alphabet allows and we have solved this issue, in such cases we should write " □" and not "k".

After Stalin's death, during the Georgian hater N. Khrushchev's era, the preservation of these territories was impossible, and even in 1957, they were transferred to the Russian Federation; Georgian toponyms also changed en masse; However, Georgian names are still presented in a more or less modified form, which is reflected in the guides published in Russian.

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