

Ancient Historical and Etymological Issues of Geographical Names Related to the Mountains in Ajara and Shavsheti

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This paper presents geographical names of the places, which represent the characteristics of natural and geographical features of a specific region. Toponymy represents significant theoretical and practical value for research in various fields of science: Archaeology, Ethnography, Geography, History, Linguistics, etc. Toponyms are addressed and used as valuable source of the past, especially when there are no other evidences. The main concept of the paper is to reveal and analyze the toponyms from the perspective of two different fields: linguistics and archaeology. Such correlated study is motivated to explore the research objects from the interdisciplinary points of view. This research investigates geographical names related to the mountains, defining the characteristics of the geographical area and critically discussing previously conducted investigations related to some of them. Along with the linguistic analysis of the toponyms, new considerations on the motivation of naming the given oronyms are discussed using appropriate extra linguistic methods. © 2024 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

oronym, hydronym, toponymy, archaeology, etiology

Toponymy of any territory is multi-layered, which means that it is created at different times by different peoples. In order to reconstruct the oldest layer, it is necessary to study toponyms both synchronically and diachronically. The present paper is not our first attempt of such interdisciplinary research. It is directed towards the investigation and identification of old toponyms of particular places related to archaeological complexes (for interdisciplinary research, see: N.Akhvlediani, M.Puturidze

[1]). The present work is a continuation of this study, extending beyond the geographical scope of Ajara region to the present-day territory of Turkiye encompassing historical Shavsheti as well.

We present the geographical name of a place connected with the mountain, located within the Khelvachauri municipality, namely an old toponym that is somewhat north-northeast of Batumi, about ten kilometers away, in the gorge of the Korolistkali river, which hosts the old settlement and

community (including several villages: Kapreshumi, Chelta, Salibauri, Tsinsvla, Tsikareuli, Masauri, Korolistavi, Chinala, Agara). This toponym is known as “Ortabatumi”, which has long attracted scholars’ interest. “As in specialist literature, so in the popular consciousness, the toponym ‘Ortabatumi’ is a toponym of Turkish origin. Therefore, this name was changed several years ago and is now known under the name “Chaisubani” (tea village), wrote I. Sikharulidze in 1959 [2]. Another researcher, Prof. Az. Akhvlediani based on a detailed study of the local topography, as well as similar names of places in Georgia’s geographic nomenclature, concluded that the toponym “Ortabatumi” is composed of the numeral “ori” and the geographical name “Batumi,” where “t” (or-t-a) is the plural of two (numeral) and also, the sign of declension with added emphatic vowel “a”) [3]. Prof. M. Paghava also considers “Ortabatumi” as a composed name, but he does not agree with its derivation from the Turkish language and suggests that “Ortabatumi”, considering its geographical location, is impossible to be the middle part of Batumi [4].

We also think that the derivation of the toponym “Ortabatumi” is not connected with Turkish language. The second part of this composition, ‘Batumi’, is the subject of separate discussion. In any case, we know that the town and the Korolistskali river were named Batumi since Antiquity [5], and the name Ortabatumi is fixed in the gorge of Korolistskali and the remains of the ancient settlement were revealed at the mouth of the same river [6]. In our opinion, the toponym “Ortabatumi” is a toponym of composite formation, but it is not a two-component name, but a three-component one, where the first component - “Or-/Or-” is precisely a numerical name, but it is combined with the common noun “mountain”, so in this case, the consonant “m” in the toponym is omitted, which is characteristic for the dialectal pronunciation of the Ajarian dialect. Based on the broader extra linguistic research context, we

suppose that the motivation to name the mentioned toponym, which is also supported by the information provided by local informants, indeed, represents a place located among the mountains, which, on the one hand, represents the mount of “Mtirala” and, on the other hand, designates the mountain of “Skurda”. Accordingly, the etymology of the toponym “Ortabatumi”, as well as the motivation of its naming, we consider is as follows: it represents a toponym between two mountains - “Or[m]tabatumi” (cf.: “Tsepta”, - “Tsep [m]ta”, “Tseptis Mta”, “Otolta” - “Otol[m]ta”, same is “Satlelis Mta”).

The compositional oronym associated with the common noun of mountain is also confirmed in Shavsheti, namely, “Tsephta”. The 71-year-old inhabitant of Shavsheti, Shamsedin Gunesh, Kadir’s son recalls: “... This place is good, but it drizzles and is cold up there”. Another inhabitant of Shavsheti, 72-year-old Jebrael, son of Mustafa, Beqiroqli (Bara) converses: “... this is our Ustamis, the old name is Eski Kale, now we call it Tsephta. Tsephta is high, when it snows, it is thaws and drips on Tsephta and that is why it was called Tsephta” (materials recorded by the author in 2013 during a folkloric-dialectological and ethnographic expedition in Shavsheti-Klarjeti). The first part of this composition is “Tseph”. In terms of phonetic correspondence, we have: Tsephta // Tsiphta, while the second part is: “ta”. With the inclusion of sound, the obtained “Tsipkha” in the Svan lexicon is defined as drip “am zau tsipk des meshqedi” – “this year there was no drop of rain”, Tsipkhara – drizzling (of rain) [7]. In the Lexicon of Lechkhumian dialect, M. Alavidze describes Tsipkha as a wooden drinking vessel [8]. As to the etiology of Tsephta // Tsiphta, this mountain, in the form of saddle, reminds a vessel, cf. Elbrus saddle pass, also toponym “unagira” (saddle in Georgian) on the western part of the mountain Iashtkhva [9], while the second part of the composition “ta” is a shortened version of the common noun ([m]ta. Thus, the final form is Tsep-ta // Tsip-ta, presu-

mably, it should be Tsep-Mta, in other words the mountain of Tsephta (cf.: Otolta).

There is another toponym associated to the mountain preserved in Ajara. This is a hydronym “Otolta”, which is the right tributary of the river Tchvanistskali between the villages Tsivadzebi and Takidzebi in Shuakhevi municipality. According to the oral information of local informants Mikheil Beridze and Alexandre Tsivadze, the former name of the village Takidzebi was “Otolta”. In 2010 this information was also confirmed by 94-year-old resident of the village Valerian Kartsivadze. Today the old toponym of this village is not used by the local population [10]. Nowadays, only the hydronym “Otolta” is survived. However, in the 16th century historical documents, such as the Ottoman’s “Large and Short Registry of Descriptions of Ajara Liva” [11], the toponym “Otalta” is mentioned in the same geographic location, as both the name of a village and a rabat (fortress). Concerning the fortress, its remains are visible to this day and have also been studied archaeologically.

The hydronym “Otolta”, according to our assumption, should be considered as a compositional formation. Its root is “tol”: in Megrelian: “tol-ua – tla (in Georgian” (to cut), “otolari” means “sharpener” [12]. The second part of the composition should be Georgian – “Mta” (mountain), and in dialects it should be “ta”. Such dialectal forms are frequently encountered in Ajara, for example: “taz'e mivalt...” [“We are going to the mountain”], “tidan tsamoveli...” [“We came down from the mountain”], “tis balakhebs agrovebda” [“collected mountain herbs”] and so on.

Zan (Megrelian-Chan) hydronym “Otolta” attested in Ajara, corresponds to the Georgian toponym “Satleli”, confirmed today on the territory of present-day Turkiye, in the historical Shavsheti region, in the form of “Satleli Mount” and “Satleli river”. The “Satleli river” flows into the river Imerkhevi or river Paparati and forms a major Shavsheti river. In this region, among the signi-

ficant fortresses should be mentioned “Satleli's tsikhe” (Satleli fortress). “Satleli's tsikhe” and “Satleli church” in Shavsheti were the residence of the Khimshishvili family [13]. The local inhabitant of Shavsheti, Shamsedin Gunesh, Kadir's son, recalls: “Earlier there were not houses here... a guest came and the host asked someone nearby to bring a knife to peel something but it was misunderstood for a whetstone and so it was called “satleli’ (sharpener). Such story about this toponym indicates that it is apparently associated with stone-cutting and the nearby allocated quarry of construction material. Similar legend exists in connection with the toponym “Otolta” as well. On Gomi mountain, one of the informants (Enver Beridze) shared such a legend: during the reign of King Tamar, while building the Dandalo arched bridge, the builders couldn't find appropriate stones in the nearby area, finally they carried soft stones from the Otolto village (now Takidzebi village) from hand to hand.

In this regard, special attention requires the information provided by the prominent scholar and traveler Giorgi Kazbegi in his work “Three Months in Turkish Georgia”, in which he discusses the construction materials of the magnificent church of Tbeti. G. Kazbegi writes: “In the outskirts of the village, the stone of this kind cannot be found, hence attention is to be drawn to the popular legend that the entire construction material was prepared about 20 km away from the village. The builders transferred the stones from hand to hand standing in one line from the quarry to the construction place of the church. Similar information I have heard about other significant constructions in Turkish part of Georgia as well” – notes the author [14:79]. There are similar legends about the transfer of construction stones from hand to hand associated with many famous buildings of King Tamar's epoch, mentions the researcher Tinatin Shioshvili. One of them is a legend associated with the construction of Khirkhati fortress in Ajara. At the end of the story, the informant proudly mentioned

“... from the ravine to the mountain the builders carried the stones from hand to hand. King Tamar had so many people” [15]. The legend of the same cycle is attested by the scholar Ramaz Khalvashi in Shavsheti, in the village Ustamisi in 2005 (informant Eub Altun): “they say that the stones were carried from hand to hand to the fortress...” [Paghava M. et al., 2011, *ibid.*]. During the period of the country's political, social, economic and cultural development, the construction and renovation of many churches, monasteries, fortresses, towers, and bridges must have been demanded the great number of construction materials (stones), which is also reflected in the toponymy.

In the vicinity of the village Chvana (modern Takidzebi), at the confluence of the river Chvanistskali and its right tributary Otolta, on the top of the mountain the remains of a fortress walls, dating back to the 11th-13th centuries, were excavated. This fortress represented one of the main strongholds of the defensive system of the Acharistskali gorge. According to the excavator, the walls were built with local materials (stones), among them there are well-preserved stone blocks [16], which suggests the existence of a stone quarry near the village, which, as it seems, was also used by the neighboring regions' inhabitants, as indicated in the legend related to the construction of the above mentioned Dandalo bridge.

The geographical name “Otolta” is also of a special interest for scholars. Specifically, in our opinion, it is a compositional name of Zan and Georgian names. There are many Zan toponyms attested in the highlands of Ajara. For example, among the toponyms of the Shuakhevi municipality, there are Zan toponyms: Dudi – the cropland, the Baratauli village; Olughi – the pasture area, the Shubani village; Ochopo – the cropland, the Tsaablana village; Olangare – the forest, the Gomarduli village; Korechi – the pasture, the

Oladauri village and many others. We think that the Zanisms represented by toponyms in the highlands of Ajara are not the accidental occurrences. According to the archaeological evidences, the Acharistskali gorge was one of the important centers of the Colchian culture, which is attested by numerous finds of hoards with bronze axes and other components of Colchian culture (among them there are remarkable examples of artistic handicrafts – the bronze items decorated with engraved stylized animal images and geometric ornaments). It should be noted that the evidence of Colchian axes is also found on the territory of Otolta. According to the scholars, the influence of the Colchian culture was far spread on the territory of Southern Georgia through Acharistskali gorge [17].

Consequently, the geographical toponyms of places related to the mountain – “Ortabatumi”, “Tsept'a” and “Otol't'a” – analyzed in the article, are composite toponyms (oronyms). Through the exploration of the examples provided above, in all three cases, we encounter linguistic features characteristic of the Ajarian dialect, namely the phenomenon of the loss of consonant “m”. In the second or third part of the composite, “ta” is the shortened form of the common name “mta” (mountain), for example, “Or[m]tabatumi” becomes “Ortabatumi”, “Tsep[m]ta” becomes “Tsept'a” and “Otol[m]ta” becomes “Otol't'a”.

In this work, we presented our attempt to explain the history and etymology of some geographical names related to mountains in the territory of Ajara and Shavshet-Imerkhevi. During the research, we used rich folklore-dialectological and ethnographic material recorded by us during the expeditions, discussed the historical area, archaeological evidences and historical-etymological analysis based on the method of comparative research.

ენათმეცნიერება

მთასთან დაკავშირებული გეოგრაფიული სახელების უძველესი ისტორიისა და ეტიმოლოგიის საკითხისათვის აჭარასა და შავშეთში

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ა. არაბულის მიერ)

ნაშრომში განხილულია ადგილის გეოგრაფიული სახელწოდებები, რომლებიც ასახავს კონკრეტული რეგიონის ბუნებრივი და გეოგრაფიული პირობების თავისებურებებს. ტოპონიმია უაღრესად დიდ თეორიულ და პრაქტიკულ ღირებულებას წარმოადგენს მეცნიერების სხვადასხვა სფეროების: არქეოლოგიის, ეთნოგრაფიის, გეოგრაფიის, ისტორიის, ენის ისტორიისა თუ სხვა დარგების კვლევა-ძიებისთვის. ტოპონიმებს მკვლევრები მიმართავენ და იყენებენ, როგორც წარსულის ფასდაუდებელ მოწმეს, რომელთა შესახებ წერილობითი ან სხვა სახის მონაცემები არ მოგვეპოვება. ნაშრომის მთავარი იდეა არის საკვლევი ობიექტების წარმოჩენა და გაანალიზება ორი განსხვავებული თვალთახედვით: ლინგვისტიკისა და არქეოლოგიის ერთობლივი კვლევის ჭრილში. ამგვარი ურთიერთმიმართებითი შესწავლა მოტივირებულია მისი ინტერდისციპლინური კუთხით გაშუქების მცდელობით. ნაშრომში წარმოდგენილია მთასთან დაკავშირებული გეოგრაფიული სახელწოდებები, მოცემულია გეოგრაფიული არეალის დახასიათება, კრიტიკულადაა განხილული ზოგიერთი მათგანის შესახებ აქამდე არსებული სამეცნიერო გამოკვლევები. ამასთანავე, ტოპონიმების ლინგვისტურ ანალიზთან ერთად, სათანადო ექსტრალინგვისტური მეთოდის გამოყენებით, გამოთქმულია მოსაზრებები ორონიმთა სახელდების მოტივაციასთან დაკავშირებით.

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