

History & Philology

A Historical Atlas of Georgia

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ABSTRACT. In 2003 the I. Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia published “A Historical Atlas of Georgia” that had been prepared by the staff of the Department of Historical Geography of the Institute. It comprises 67 historical maps representing the political picture of the country from most ancient times to the present day.

The publication of the Historical Atlas is the result of scholarly work and intensive research carried on for many years in the field of historical geography. © 2007 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: Georgia, Historical Atlas, historical geography.

In 2003 the I. Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia published “A Historical Atlas of Georgia” that had been prepared in the 80s of the last century by the staff of the Department of Historical Geography. Unfortunately, due to various objective reasons the Atlas was never published in the 80s and the more so in the 90s either. Eventually, in 2003 the work was published owing to the financial support of the Academy of Sciences. The authors have certainly taken into consideration the results of the scholarly research of recent years.

“A Historical Atlas of Georgia” comprises 67 historical maps. This publication is not an ordinary historical atlas usually containing maps reflecting the country’s political situations characteristic of this or that epoch supplemented by brief historical commentaries. “A Historical Atlas of Georgia” is a complete documentary publication. It is supplied with explanatory notes, which on the basis of all the original sources and in some cases on the basis of special literature essentially substantiate the political picture of the country presented in each map. The Atlas with appropriate argumentation reflects the process of the political changes of the territory of the Georgian State from most ancient times to the present day.

It goes without saying that the publication of the present Historical Atlas of Georgia is the result of scholarly work and intensive research for many years in the field of historical geography, in particular. As a matter of fact, historical-geographical research in Georgia began in the 11th century, when Leonti Mroveli, well-known bishop and historian, formulated his historical-ethnological conception concerning Georgia and the whole Caucasus. This conception predominated in Georgia during the Middle Ages. Even Vakhushti Bagrationi, an outstanding representative of the historical science of the 18th century, who raised the historiography of feudal Georgia to the level of his contemporary Europe, could not avoid the influence of the conception of Leonti Mroveli.

It is quite obvious that historical-geographical research was going on in the 19th century as well (P. Ioseliani, M. Brosset, D. Bakradze) and also in the first half of the 20th century (E. Takaishvili, N. Marr, I. Javakhishvili, S. Kakabadze, S. Kaukhchishvili, L. Muskhelishvili) [1].

All this scholarly heritage and the accumulated material required that Georgia’s historical geography be studied with particular attention and regularity, which meant that the following issue was placed on the agenda instituting historical geography as an independent



branch of the historical science. This significant event is connected with the name of Academician N. Berdzenishvili who theoretically proved the necessity of this decision in special articles [2]. Thus, at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia the Historical Geography Department was established (1956), whose staff of young scholars began intensive work on the problems of Georgia's historical geography. The above staff published seven volumes of "A Collection of Historical Geography of Georgia" (1960-1989).

The subject of the study of historical geography is the territory as historical category. Certain territory has always been true attribute of the society. While the society develops, the territory changes its physical-geographical character, space and economic potential and vice versa. Thus, these two phenomena are interconnected and this or that territory in the process of historical evolution changes its space and character.

The subject of the study of historical geography is a definite territorial unit characteristic of this or that stage of social evolution from the viewpoint of its (territory) permanent transformation.

In order to achieve this goal the research was oriented in two directions: 1) Georgian and non-Georgian written sources, documentary material and other historical sources (e.g. numismatic, archaeological) were stud-

ied; 2) Intensive field research was carried out in order to survey and register all the monuments of material culture for their further chronological classification, macro and micro-toponymic, epigraphic and appropriate folklore material was collected.

True historical-geographical picture of the territory at various stages of social development can be presented only after the whole thoroughly selected and chronologically classified material is plotted on separate maps, taking into consideration historical-economical and historical-ethnic geographical.

The historical-geographical study embraces all the periods of Georgia's history since the most ancient times to the 19th century including. The present condition of the sources makes it possible to present a more complete picture of the issues of political geography. In particular, the territories of the Kingdoms of Kartli (Iberia), Egrisi (Lazica) and the territory of Medieval Georgia were studied. The boundaries of the 12th-13th centuries of Georgian feudal monarchy were also studied in detail [3]. Works of generalizing character devoted to the problems of historical geography of the country's separate regions [4] and the issues of historical geography of feudal and pre-feudal epochs of the whole Georgia were created [5].

Separate papers are devoted to the identification of the remnants of ancient cities, fortresses or other locations [6]; the administrative-political structure of histori-

cal Georgia is being studied [7], namely, the ancient territorial units called “Khevi” [8].

Special scholarly papers and monographs are devoted to the issues of medieval historical provinces determining not only their ethnographic and administrative boundaries in different chronological periods, but also defining an approximate number of settlements, feudal fortresses and ecclesiastic centers. Macro- and microtoponymy have been registered in detail [9].

One of the most significant problems is the historical-geographical aspect of the history of ancient fortresses and cities. From this standpoint were studied the regularities of their origin, development and disintegration [10]. In this connection the merchant routes of old and medieval Georgia have been studied [11].

Finally, it is noteworthy that the sphere of the study of Georgia’s historical-geographical problems includes the 19th century. The corresponding themes of this period embrace the issues of the genesis and evolution of the Russian administrative and political system [12], etc.

A targeted study and research have made it possible to observe the general process of the country’s historical-geographical changes throughout millennia. It

enabled us to restore the social evolution of society and associated with it evolution of territorial structure since ancient times to the Middle Ages. On the basis of historical development of the Georgian nation there was worked out historical-geographical periodization beginning from the small ancient, primitive-communal territorial units “gora” up to larger settlements “Khevi” (territorial and economic unities of ancient “goras”), and from Khevi (corresponding to the period of the so-called “military democracy” or “chiefdom” and early class society) to feudal lands (“Kueqana” – country), that from the viewpoint of social evolution are characteristic of developed feudal relations [13].

Hence, on the basis of historical-geographical study of the Georgian territory general methodological conclusion can be made that the immanent historical-geographical changes of this or that country are fully adequate to the process of its social and economic development.

As the result of the intensive academic research mentioned above it has become possible to create “A Historical Atlas of Georgia”. At present its English variant is ready for publication and I hope it will be published in the nearest future.

ისტორია და ფილოლოგია

საქართველოს ისტორიის ატლასი

დავით მუსხელიშვილი

აკადემიის წევრი, ი.ჯავახიშვილის ისტორიისა და ეთნოლოგიის ინსტიტუტი

2003 წელს საქართველოს მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის ი.ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის ისტორიისა და ეთნოლოგიის ინსტიტუტმა გამოსცა „საქართველოს ისტორიის ატლასი“, რომელიც მომზადდა ინსტიტუტის ისტორიული გეოგრაფიის განყოფილების თანამშრომელთა მიერ. ატლასი შეიცავს 67 ისტორიულ რუკას, რომელზეც ასახულია საქართველოს პოლიტიკური ვითარება უძველესი ხანიდან დღევანდლამდე და, აგრეთვე, „განმარტებით ტექსტს“, რომელშიც ისტორიულ პირველწყაროთა საფუძველზე დასაბუთებულია ამა თუ იმ რუკაზე წარმოდგენილი პოლიტიკური სიტუაცია.

გამოცემას წინ უძღოდა მრავალწლიანი ინტენსიური სამეცნიერო კვლევა-ძიება საქართველოს ისტორიული გეოგრაფიის დარგში. წინამდებარე წერილში წარმოდგენილია ის ძირითადი მეცნიერული ბაზისი, რომლის საფუძველზეც შეიქმნა „საქართველოს ისტორიის ატლასი“.

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