



ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF GEORGIA ACCORDING TO THE “MAP OF THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA” OF 1922 BY IVANE JAVAKHISHVILI

History

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ABSTRACT

The administrative and territorial division of Georgia changed for all its history; however, following the political circumstances, the major changes were seen in the XIX-XX centuries. The present work aims at providing a general analysis of the administrative division of the country according to the “Map of the Republic of Georgia” published in 1922 by Ivane Javakhishvili. There are 5 border types plotted on the map: (1) old borders of the Republic of Georgia, (2) new borders of the Republic of Georgia, (3) borders of the Autonomous Republics of Georgia, (4) old Uyezd borders, and (5) new Uyezd borders. The difference between the territories with old and new borders, i.e. the territorial loss of Georgia after 1921 made 19 thousand square kilometers, i.e. almost ¼ of the total present-day territory of Georgia. The study revealed the territorial changes of Georgia before and after its Sovietization, identified the peculiarities of spatial distribution of the territorial-administrative units of Georgia and distribution of the objects of the map within these units.

KEYWORDS

Administrative Division, Georgia, Ivane Javakhishvili.

Introduction

Administrative and territorial division is an intra-territorial division of the state based on which the local self-governance is executed. The main essence of such a division is the efficient management and command of the country; however, the isolation of the territorial units has not only political significance. Rather, they are the result of considering many such factors, as natural, economic, ethnic, etc. Consequently, the study of the administrative and territorial division in a historical view is either directly, or indirectly interwoven with all the above-mentioned issues.

The study of the administrative division in different historical epochs is a very important scientific problem, which will be of a certain help for different branch specialists in the fields of history, historical geography, toponymy, ethnology, political sciences, etc. Consequently, the study of the administrative and territorial division of Georgia in the historical view is very important and topical.

The administrative and territorial division of Georgia changed for all its history; however, following the political circumstances, particularly great changes were seen in the XIX-XX centuries. To date, this issue has not been studied by any independent researcher. The present work is an attempt to fill this gap by analysing one concrete source.

Study Area

The principal basis of the study is the “Map of the Republic of Georgia” published in 1922 by Ivane Javakhishvili [Javakhishvili, 1922]. The map allows identifying not only the structure of the administrative division of the country, but also the localization of the historical objects, historical transformations of the state and administrative borders, toponymic transformations and many others. Besides the map, the documents regarding the administrative division and general population censuses are used.

The above-mentioned map is of a wall format and consists 4 color pages, with the total size of 129 X 99 cm (the size of each page is 50 X 60 cm). The map is topographical. It shows both natural (including the forest cover) and man-made features.

The map has not been studied to date. For 70 years (1921-1991), due to the established political situation in Georgia, the map was less accessible not only to the wide layers of the society, but to the scientific

circles as well. There are only 2 copies of the map preserved at the National Archives of Georgia.

The map was compiled by Evsevi Baramidze, under the editorship of Ivane Javakhishvili and was published by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). This was the agency, which controlled and censored the publication of different works in that period. The map was compiled by the Department of Military Topography evidenced by the inscription on it (Litographical agency mapping, Military Staff Division). In 1921-1990, Georgia was a Soviet Socialist Republic. As a result, the publications of that period: the monographs, text-books, periodicals and maps, commonly refer to it as “The Georgian SSR” (Soviet Socialist Republic). Consequently, the name of the country on then-time map without word “Soviet” raises certain questions – how could the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs overlook such a fact? Perhaps, the map was compiled earlier, before 1921, and its name was mechanically taken for the publication in 1922? Or perhaps, we must put the main unanswered question – maybe, it was Ivane Javakhishvili's bold step and a kind of masked protest against the Sovietization of Georgia? [Sartania, Nikolaishvili et al., 2016, p. 35].

The map shows the old and new state borders. Neither on this map, nor in any of his other works, did Ivane Javakhishvili specify what he meant under the old border. In our opinion, this must be the border before 1921, in particular, the territory limited with the old border Georgia lost after the Sovietization.

Main Results

General principles of the historical changes of the administrative and territorial division. For the whole history, the administrative and territorial division of Georgia used to change on a permanent basis as a result of two major factors: physical-geographical and political.

Despite the small area of Georgia, the country has diversified natural conditions. High, average and low mountains, upland regions and plateaus at different altitudes, plains and lowlands, mountain depressions and dissected and fractured deep gorges are all found on the territory of the country. Owing to such circumstances, the relations between the people in different regions of the country were possible through the passes, what was somewhat limited in winter time. Such many-centuries-old setting have influenced the economic and cultural diversity of the country. As a result, mostly small communities were formed on the territory of Georgia.

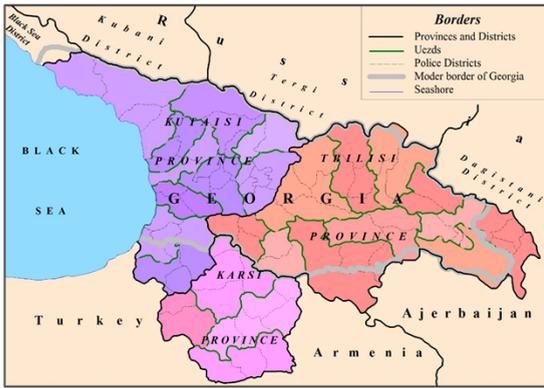


Fig. 1. Georgia in Russian Empire at the end of the XIX c. (Source: Atlas of Georgia, 1964)

However, on the other hand, it was the natural diversity of the country having become the major reason for the consolidation of the country. In Ivane Javakhishvili's view, *"The Georgian tribes (Tubals, Mosohs and Kolkhis) having found themselves in such different natural conditions adapted themselves easily to the territories occupied by them and the different conditions did not cause their disintegration or isolation, but on the contrary, supported their consolidation"* [Sartania, Nikolaishvili et al., 2016, p. 22].

I. Javakhishvili wrote: *"Owing to such different agricultural and botanical areas, the communities did not and could not have everything needed by their members. The dwellers of the mountainous areas could not have their own wine or fruit, while the lowlanders must have envied the highlanders for the bulk of wheat and vegetables"* [Javakhishvili, 1996], and the scientist thus concluded: *"Thus, the lowlanders and highlanders needed one another: they could not live without one another"*.

As for the political factor resulting in the intra-territorial division of the country, it was associated with the existing political and social-economic surroundings in the country and beyond its borders, in its nearest geopolitical area. For instance, there were military-administrative units, the flagships (*"Sadrosho"*), in the medieval East. Their primary designation was military, as an army from each flagship, marked by its own banner, formed one military-tactical unit on the battlefields and was subordinate to one commander (*"Sardali"*). Therefore, in this period, the administrative-territorial changes were primarily caused by military factors.

In the XIX century and at the beginning of the XX century, Georgia was a part of the Russian Empire. As a result, the old administrative division of the country (kingdoms and principedoms, communities) was abolished and a new system was introduced, typical to then-time Russian Empire: provinces/districts, Uyezds (*"Mazra"*), police areas and rural communities. At the end of the XIX century, the territory of Georgia was made up of 3 large administrative units: Tiflis and Kutaisi Provinces (*"Gubernia"*) and Kars District (*"Olki"*) (Fig. 1). Each province was headed by a governor, with the heads of Uyezds and chiefs of police areas subordinate to them. The provinces covered large areas. The pattern of their intra-administrative division was also different (Table 1).

Table 2. Administrative units of Georgia at the end of the XIX century

| Province/ District | Number of: | | Number of police areas | | |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|---|--|------|
| | Uyezds | Police areas | Within the limits of contemporary Georgia | Beyond the borders of contemporary Georgia | Both |
| Tiflis | 10 | 34 | 25 | 5 | 4 |
| Kutaisi | 10 | 34 | 31 | 0 | 3 |
| Kars | 4 | 14 | 0 | 14 | 0 |

In the times of the Russian Empire, the political and administrative changes were made for more than once. For example, in 1849, Yerevan, Nakhchivan and Aleksandropol (except Akhalkalaki district) Uyezds were isolated from Tiflis Province and Yerevan Province was formed on their basis. However, the newly established territory of these administrative units did not consider any physical-geographical

or historical factors. Iv. Javakhishvili wrote: *"The natural conditions of Akhalkalaki naturally contradict the idea of its appending to its neighbouring provinces, as the mountain systems being snowy and impassable for 7 to 8 months a year have their impact on the economic activity of the local people"*. As a result, he concluded: *"This region could have economic links only with Georgia"*, but he names not only land cultivation, cattle-breeding or sheep-breeding as a proof, but applies to a number of historical sources and confirms that *"it was always the case in the past"* [Javakhishvili, 1919; 1996].

1918-1921 saw major political changes: Georgia restored its independence. However, the administrative division of the country did not change much in this short period what was logical. It is true that the province and district division was abolished in this period and was substituted by rural communities, but these changes were made in terms of names and the territories and borders of the old administrative units almost remained unchanged. Clearly, by this, we do not mean the changes of the political borders of the country what was naturally followed by the changes of the administrative borders. For instance, by virtue of additional Agreement of May 12, 1920 to Moscow Agreement of May 7, 1920, the whole territory of Zakatala was rendered to Azerbaijan SSR.

On February 21, 1921, the Democratic Government of Georgia adopted a new Constitution, which envisaged (XI Article) the changes of the administrative division of the country, in particular: autonomous governing power was given to Apkhazeti (Sokhumi District), Moslem Georgia (Batumi area) and Zakatala (Zakatala District). However, these changes could not be realized, as the Soviet power was established in the country (on February 25, 1921).

The administrative and territorial division of Georgia in 1920-1930. After Georgia was occupied and forcedly Sovietized (on February 25, 1921), a question of new administrative division of the country was put on the agenda. The new government critically assessed the old system and considered that it totally failed to consider the wholeness of economic-cultural, living or national aspects [Administrative division of the Georgian SSR..., 1930, p. 1]. We will agree with this view partially. Some of the peripheral regions of Georgia, which was then a part of the Russian Empire, where ethnic and religious minorities lived, were isolated as independent administrative units, the districts. Kars District was one of them, which was given the status of a province, not a district, due to this feature. The reason for this was the settlement of the representatives of different ethnic groups and religions on this territory during three centuries. Local indigenous Georgians lived on this territory as well, some of whom adopted a different confession. This definitely means that the existence of Kars District owed to the national-religious structure of the population only.

As for the economic and cultural-domestic homogeneity, in some cases of isolating the administrative-territorial units, this principle was observed, but was not other times. For instance, drawing the borders of the Uyezds along the orographic barriers led to their physical-geographical isolation on the one hand and to the economic and cultural homogeneity within a single administrative unit on the other hand. The best example is Likhi Range, as an important orographic barrier with its altitude of over 2000 m above sea level, while the lowest pass on it is located a bit higher than 900 m above sea level. Likhi Range isolated two provinces: Tiflis and Kutaisi. For governing, this was an absolutely natural approach. However, on the other hand, isolation of Kars District as an independent unit was absolutely inadequate, moreover, with the status of a district, as totally disregarded the social-cultural properties of the region.

At one of the congresses held in 1921, three directions to use in the administrative and territorial division were identified:

- (1) *"New territorial demarcation of the Republic of Georgia and establishing new borders with the neighbouring countries"*;
- (2) *"Establishing new administrative-territorial units based on the main nationality"*;
- (3) *"Examination of the administrative and territorial division of the Republic in view of approaching the local authorities to people masses and by considering the economic interests"*.

Since the 1920s, by fighting against everything old from the times of the Russian tsarism, the Soviet ideology became increasingly stronger and was rooted violently. The new administrative and territorial

division became one of the supports of this ideology. The literary sources of that time contain ideas suggesting that the basis for the new administrative division was an attempt to bring the organization of the people's economy and the administrative government together as much as possible. However, these were words only with the purpose of further consolidation of the Soviet power. Another important feature: the principle of national demarcation, which, at a single glance, was different from the old principle common in the Russian Empire, did not show any change in the conceptual approach. In other words, the names of individual administrative-territorial units, areas and territorial appropriation of the settled areas changed, but the approach and principles were the same old ones.

By the decision of the Revolution Committee of Georgia, on April 21, 1921, a new territorial unit "region" was introduced, which survived to January 1, 1922, when these regional units were replaced by communities again; however, later the "regions" were restored [Zukhbaia, 1973].

In the same period, some Uyezds were abolished and the areas of the administrative units were expanded. For example, Tianeti Uyezd was abolished and its territories were distributed among its neighbouring Uyezds: Tiflis, Dusheti and Telavi; later, Telavi and Signagi Uyezds united into Kakheti Uyezd and so on. On the other hand, the number of lower-ranking administrative units – the rural councils – increased. In 1924, instead of 572 rural councils ("Sabcho"), there were 633 of them formed in Georgia [Administrative division of the Georgian SSR..., 1930, p. II]. They pretended to make all of these arrangements for the sake of bringing the government and people closer. Clearly, this is an absolutely incomprehensible context. Bringing the government close to the people meant only the total control over the people!

Thus, the wish of the Soviet power to reach a complex homogeneity (of natural conditions, agricultural potential, industrial and economic relations, life and culture) within the limits of a single administrative-territorial unit turned out to be a utopia, and the primary hampering factor was the diversified natural conditions of the country and unique traditional culture of the individual regions of the country.

Administrative-territorial units according to the "Map of the Republic of Georgia" of 1922 by Ivane Javakhishvili. The study map shows 5 border types: (1) old borders of the Republic of Georgia, (2) new borders of the Republic of Georgia, (3) borders of the Autonomous Republics of Georgia, (4) old Uyezd borders, and (5) new Uyezd borders.

The old borders show the territory of Georgia before the Sovietization and the new borders show it after the Sovietization suggesting the territorial loss of 19 thousand km² since 1921 what makes almost ¼ of the total present-day territory of Georgia.

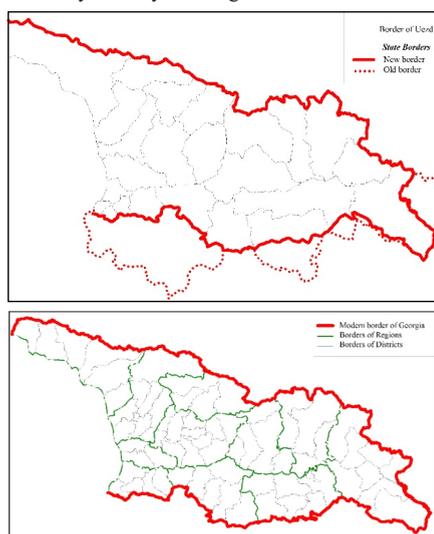


Fig. 2. Administrative division of Georgia in 1922 and today

The political-administrative border plotted on the map shows the situation not earlier than 1922 what is evidenced by the following facts [Sartania, Nikolaishvili, et al., 2016]:

- (1) The map shows the borders of "The Autonomous District of South Osetia" what was unreal before 1922. As it is known, this autonomous unit was formed by the effort of the Bolshevik power of Russia and Georgia on April 20, 1922. Later its autonomy was revoked on 1990.
- (2) The map does not show Zakatala region (Saingilo) as an independent unit. This region was a part of Georgia in 1918-1921 and remained beyond the borders of Georgia after the Sovietization.

The following units are plotted on the study map: 3 au-tonomous units (Aphkazeti, Kobuleti and South Osetia) and 22 Uyezds (Fig. 2).

The area of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia is 8042 km². There are no Uyezd borders shown on its territory; however, 2 centers of the Uyezd (Ochamchire and Gudauti) and capital of the Autonomous Republic (Sok-hu-mi) are plotted. The area of the Autonomous unit of Ajara is 2781 km². It incorporates 5 Uyezds: Khulo, Kobuleti, Keda, Ajaristkali and "Batomi" (Batumi) city. The area of the Autonomous District of South Osetia with its old Uyezd border is 2307 km². Later, some changes were made and some territories of Imereti, Ra-cha and Dusheti were made a part of South Osetia (capi-tal: Tsk-hin-vali) making its area 4021 km² showing an almost two-fold increase.

Thus, in the XIX and XX centuries, the administrative division of Georgia changed a lot. The number of the administrative units of the Russian Empire (Uyezds) within the limits of present-day Georgia was more than 60, while in the first years of Sovietization, when the Uyezds made into regions, this number fell to 24. Under the new administrative system introduced in the 1960s, the number of administrative units (regions) increased again and in this respect, it is similar to the model used in the times of the Russian Empire, however, clearly, with different territories and borders, administrative centers and toponyms. And finally, it should be mentioned that out of the maps created on the ordain of Ivane Javakhishvili, "The Map of the Botanical-Agronomic Areas of Georgia Based on Old Sources" [Javakhishvili, 1930] is particularly note-worthy too.

Iv. Javakhishvili explains the economic links established on the historical territory of Georgia long ago and having led to the political unity of the country. He showed the kind of economic tradition we had in the past and the most important points of this tradition to consider for the future. At the same time, he described how much the economy of different corners of Georgia depended on one another and explained why every centimetre of this land was vitally important. All this not only clearly proved the economic fundamentals of the consolidation of the Georgian nation, but also accurately specified the political borders of the space of existence of this nation [Sartania, Nikolaishvili, 2017].

Conclusion

The study identified the territorial changes of Georgia before and after the Sovietization. This means identify-ing the changes of both, the borders and administrative and territorial division of the country and its territorial loss. The peculiarities of spatial distribution of the territorial-administrative units of Georgia and distribution of the map objects plotted within these units were also identified.

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