

German Toponyms in Georgia

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Abstract

Toponyms contain essential historical and geographical information. When quantitative and qualitative data are included in the study of toponyms, geodatabases are very convenient. Georgia is one of the noblest countries, where over a long history, various national minorities left their mark, which was also reflected in toponyms. Based on the importance of toponyms, we started creating geodatabases, where spatial and statistical data are collected. The article discusses new toponyms and their changes in relation to the latest migration processes in the history of Georgia. These toponyms are German settlements in Georgia. More than 200 years have passed since the creation of the first German settlement in the country. Within the research framework, a database was created where alphanumeric and population census data of different periods are included. Finally, the data is displayed on a digital online map, where all available data can be viewed.

Keywords: Swabians, settlements, toponym, Georgia

Introduction

One of the key issues of Georgia's onomastic research is the toponymic study of settlements in different parts of Georgia, their identification, and systematisation. A toponym is generally assigned to a place based on some characteristic feature. It reflects the characteristics or historical processes characteristic of the geographical area. For example, the Turkish, Arabic, or Persian words present in the names of places in Georgia mostly point to the migration processes carried out in those places. A toponym is a kind of source, building material for a historian, especially in historical geography. Over time, the local name of one or another geographical area changes. At the same time, this or that settlement disappears or joins different geographical units. Various factors influence these processes. Therefore, their research and systematisation of the toponymy of local regions are of great importance. As we have already mentioned, toponymy is a kind of source in the study of the history of this or that country. The study of toponyms in the conditions of a specific area helps us to determine demographic processes, migrations, which ethnic groups alternate in a specific territorial area, what changes this brings to place names, etc. [1]. Based on the importance of toponyms, a project was developed that provides for the creation of a database of toponyms on the territory of Georgia. As a rule, the emergence of new toponyms is caused by historical events and related migration processes. Accordingly, the initial stage of the project also includes such a recent event and its consequences. This is the migration of Germans to Georgia and the spatial-temporal changes of toponyms related to them. The use of GIS in historical research is becoming increasingly popular, especially when it comes to quantitative and qualitative data [2, 3].

Georgian-German relations have a long history; they date back to the 14th century. There were frequent trips of German explorers to Georgia: in 1396–1417, Shitberger; then, at epochal intervals, Steder, Guldenstedt, Rheinegs, Klaprot, Eichwald, Wagner, Hackthausen, and others [4]. In 1918, Germany played a big role in the declaration of Georgia's independence, and one of its inspirers was Otto Hermann von Losov, a high-ranking German military official in the Ottoman German headquarters during the First World War. For a correct understanding of recent history, the study of German settlements is of great importance [5].

Methods and Materials

The research aimed to determine the settlements of Germans living on the territory of Georgia at different times and through retrospect mapping [6]. The study of the settlements and architecture of the Germans was fully implemented in 2015–2017 [5], which was dedicated to celebrating the 200th anniversary. The primary data sources were scientific papers published on this topic, historical maps, and population census data conducted in different years. Based on the mentioned data, a database was created in ArcMap 10.8.

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Results and Discussion

The first wave of Germans in Georgia was recorded in 1817. In 1817, 531 German families entered the territory of the Russian Empire, 31 families (118 people) of them settled in the territory of Georgia. The mentioned migrants, e.g., German separatists, entered the empire as refugees, which mostly meant religious orientation [7]. In his monograph, demographer Vazha Lortkipanidze names 181 people who came here from Württemberg in the flow of 1817 [8].

The above-mentioned flow of German colonists arrived in Tbilisi on September 21, 1817, and settled in a place pre-selected by the government—in the outskirts of Sartichala, which they called the newly founded colony Marienfeld [6]. The settlement was named in honour of Queen Maria Feodorovna. She was the mother of Emperor Alexander I and the sister of the King of Württemberg [9]. During the rule of Russian Emperor Alexander, the First (1801–1825), the desire to colonise the conquered territories was particularly aroused. All this was favourable not only from an economic point of view but also for political interests. The balance of different ethnic groups in the local population would not allow their national interests to develop. According to official documents, the leader of the Germans is considered to be General Yermolov at that time [9].

The process of migration that started in 1817 continued in 1818; during this period, 494 families of Germans gradually settled in Georgia (a total of 2023 people). They settled in Sartichala, specifically in Tbilisi, in the villages of Kukia and Didube. The second wave in Kvemo Kartli—in Asureti and Bolnisi. According to the censuses of 1865, the number of Germans reached 6114; in 1897, the number reached 9405; and in 1939, the number increased to 20.5 thousand. As we can see, the number of Germans in different parts of Georgia is increasing day by day. The last demographic census in Georgia was conducted in 2014, according to which about 650 Germans are registered as permanent residents in Georgia. The decrease in the number of Germans in Georgia was caused by major world political changes, which we will touch on in more detail below [8].

In some existing publications about the German colonists, the authors indicate a different date for their settlement in the territory of Georgia; For example, the German traveller August Haxthausen, who visited these colonies in 1843, names the year 1818 [10], as well as Grigol Zardalishvili [11]. In our opinion, in this case, it is the most reliable. It is a document traced by Siboshvili, and the arrival of German colonists to Georgia should have started in 1817. In 2017, the 200th anniversary of Georgian-German relations was also celebrated in Georgia [12].

The main reason for the arrival of the first flow of German colonists was religious. August Hauxthausen writes: "The German colonies in Transcaucasia, as far as I have heard, are the new constructions of the Swabians, mostly Wüttembergians, who came here since 1818 because they felt deeply offended by religious beliefs and injustice in their homeland. Then, along with other innovations, a new book of hymns was introduced, which the peasantry considered non-dogmatic, watered down, and obscene. The people did not want to be corrupted by the strong, faithful faith expressed in the church hymns, so they decided to emigrate. The Russian government allocated them land in the Odessa area. But this did not bring benefits, and, at their own request, the majority went to Transcaucasia". As can be seen from other sources, the reason for the migration of Germans was the religious factor. In their religious activities, the Russian local authorities in the Caucasus did not interfere at all, and the newly established colonies had complete independence in this matter [10].

The colonists who settled in the territory of Tbilisi brought crops unknown to the local population, such as potatoes. Along with potatoes, other vegetables were also grown in abundance by new settlers, according to Haukshausen, they became the main suppliers of vegetables for the population of Tbilisi. Haukshausen can't hide his surprise that the people of Tbilisi don't want to plant and harvest their favourite potatoes themselves, they have been buying potatoes and other vegetables from Germans for many years [10]. The German newcomers, although they brought many innovations to Tbilisi, both in agriculture and technology, but they actively assimilated the achievements of the local population, for example, they threshed wheat and all kinds of grains in general like Georgians with a threshing wheel. Also, the Germans actively assimilated the traditions of local viticulture and winemaking, they planted Georgian grape varieties and produced high-quality wine with special technologies, which was highly demanded and valued in the Georgian market. Saperavi and Rkatsiteli were especially abundantly cultivated. In the 50s, new colonists brought European grape varieties: Muscat, Madeira, Isabella, etc. It should also be noted that the Germans obtained a completely new grape variety "Kashmi Saperavi"

through grafting and selection of different varieties of grapes, which is still cultivated in Georgia and the wine made from it was very popular even before. The developed technologies of the Germans, their hard work greatly attracted the Georgian princes, there were frequent cases when the princes asked the Germans to settle in their estates, but the said offer was decisively refused by the Germans, they did not want to leave their compact settlements [13]. It is also worth noting that all the needs of the colonists were provided on the spot, starting from the mills and ending with the medical field. For example, let's take the division of labour in one of the German colonies: field worker - 258, soap maker - 1, shepherd - 2, potter - 3, weaver - 30, basket-maker - 1, vintner - 42, saltpetre maker - 1, cooper - 10, needle maker - 2, Shoemaker - 26, knacker - 2, Butcher - 9, Beer brewer - 3, tailor - 26, bricklayer - 16, baker - 4, Blacksmith - 9, Locksmith - 2, glazier - 1, Hatter - 1, broadcloth-worker - 3, carpenter - 8, builder - 12, saddler - 1, bookbinder - 3, land surveyor - 2, nail maker - 1, watchmaker - 1, teacher - 4, gunsmith - 2, wood-turner - 1, sock maker - 6, cart maker - 3, glover - 1, miller - 1 and others [5]. In many cases, the products of the above-mentioned handicraft branches were also sold.

In the end, a total of 23 German settlements were established on the territory of Georgia (table 1).

Table 1. German settlements in Georgia

	German Settlement	Year [14]	Municipality (current day)	Settlement name (current day)
1	Marienfeld	1817	Gardabani	Sartichala
2	Neu-Tiflis	1818	Tbilisi ²	
3	Alexandersdorf	1818	Tbilisi ³	
4	Katharinenfeld	1818		Bolnisi
5	Elisabethtal	1818	Tetritskaro	Asureti
6	Petersdorf	1819	Gardabani	Sartichala
7	Freudental ⁴	1848	Gardabani	Sartichala
8	Alexandershilf	1857	Tsalka	Trialeti
9	Gnadengerg	1884		Sokhumi
10	Neudorf	1884		Sokhumi
11	Lindau	1884		Sokhumi
12	Blumental	1892	Tsalka	Kavta
13	Traubenberg	1908	Marneuli	Tamarisi
14	Georgstal	1910	Mtskheta	Dzveli Kanda
15	Waldheim	1911	Dmanisi	Ipnari
16	Marnaul	1914	Marneuli	Marneuli
17	Wiesendorf	Till 1914	Tetritskaro	Marabda
18	Steinfeld	Till 1914	Tetritskaro	Kotishi
19	Grüntal	Till 1914	Gardabani	Ruisbolo
20	Traubental	Till 1914	Gardabani	Ambartapa
21	Hoffnungstal	Till 1914	Gardabani	Akhalsheni
22	Rosental	?	Mtskheta	Vardisubani
23	Neu-Botanika	1956	Gardabani	Botanika

At the beginning of the Second World War, the Germans living in Georgia were deported to Kazakhstan at the request of the Soviet government based on political considerations. After the end of the war, only a small part of them returned. Most of them went back to Germany.

As for the toponyms, taking into account the historical background described above, it is clear that the political narrative prevails in the names of the settlements, for example, Marienfeld, Alexandersdorf, Katharinenfeld, Elisabethtal, and Petersdorf. Alexandershilf, in direct translation, means built with the help of Alexander. The listed toponyms are selected in honour of the representatives of the German and

² Streets nearby Aghmashenebeli ave.

³ Current day Didube district (Agladze, Tskaltubo and Samtredia Streets [5])

⁴ Freudental was founded in 1842 near Abastumani, which was moved to Marienfeld and Petersdorf in 1848 [5]

Russian imperial houses. In light of the help that the new settlers received, their decision to name the new settlements is quite understandable. In addition to the political content, the migrants also chose names that reflect the landscape features of the place. For example, Traubenberg, which means grape mountain, or Traubental, which means grape field, this indicates that there would be many vineyards in these places. The peculiarities of the terrain are reflected in the following toponyms: Wiesendorf, which means meadow; Steinfeld, which means stony field; and Grüntal, which means green field.



Figure 1. Example of the dashboard app

In German toponyms, there is a name copied directly from the first place of residence of the migrants, for example, Lindau. The small town of the same name is located in the southwest of Bavaria.

As can be seen from Table 1, today these settlements have completely different names, although the modern name of Rosental, Vardisubani, means District of Roses in direct translation from Georgian.

ArcGIS dashboard⁵ was created (fig.1) based on the processing of existing materials (articles, maps, census data). The dashboard is easy and convenient to use, and the instructions for its use are provided on the dashboard.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of written and cartographic sources, it was established that there were 23 German settlements on the territory of Georgia. The oldest of them (Marienfeld) was founded in 1817, and the newest (Neu-Botanika) in 1956. As part of our research, a geodatabase was created in ArcMap that includes spatial and alphanumeric data about German settlements. Detailed information about German settlements can be obtained from the interactive map created on the basis of the mentioned database. Analysing the content of the map, we find that the short history of the German community in Georgia was not easy. Settlements were often renamed for political reasons and disappeared altogether in the 1940s. It is a happy fact that the population of Georgia respects this part of history, and the remains of former German settlements are today declared cultural heritage.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' contribution

M.T. designed the study. V.K. designed the framework and analysed the data. All authors discussed the results and contributed the final manuscript.

⁵ <https://gis.mepa.gov.ge/portal/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/e25655f609394cf0b2d31217e0b53323>

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Gvantsa Tsitsagi for her help with the translation from German.

Appendix A

1. ArcGIS Dashboards enables users to convey information by presenting location-based analytics using intuitive and interactive data visualizations on a single screen.

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