




Linguistic-Historical Study of the Toponym Ureki

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Abstract

In this paper, we present a linguistic analysis of a toponym using a historical comparative method. We provide our interpretation of the toponym "Ureki" based on historical data. People have been interested in toponyms—place names and their origins—since ancient times. The majority of geographical objects did not have official names. People named them according to their natural characteristics, which played a significant role in their daily activities and livelihoods. Different categories of scholars, such as linguists, historians, geographers, ethnographers, and others, study toponyms of interest. The toponymy of any country reflects soil, water, plants, animals, birds, or any living or nonliving nature, organic or inorganic natural resources, or traces of the inhabitants of that area. A toponym is a geographical name of a place, a word taken from the linguistic material of the collective that created it, and usually contains information about the named object. The toponym is passed down from generation to generation, from era to era, and continues for thousands of years. In this interdisciplinary research, we aim to advance academic studies further by providing an etymological analysis of a toponym. In the article, we analyse a specific toponym, "Ureki," located in the northeastern part of Batumi, on the Black Sea coast, within the Ozurgeti municipality

Keywords: toponym, linguistics, etymology, ethno-linguistics

Introduction

It is known that the study of toponymy is one of the important opportunities to understand the historical life of a certain territory whenever people have lived there. Researchers from a variety of scientific fields (linguists, historians, geographers, ethnographers, etc.) will be interested in studying toponyms. First, in interdisciplinary studies in the last century, the academician Iv. Javakhishvili added that "...the researcher of toponymy should first of all take into account the specific circumstances of the location and property of this or that place and be surprised..." ([Javakhishvili, 1950](#)). Toponyms are not simply labels that identify certain points of space but rather portals of social change, history, and the use and perception of the environment; as such, they contain facts, reflect hidden landscapes, and have political power and significance ([Reszegi, 2020](#)). Toponymy is a branch of onomastics that studies the meaning and structure of geographical names (village, city, river, etc.) and their geographical distribution. Toponymy refers to a geographical object in objective reality. Most of the time, the reason for choosing this or that toponym specifies what it means ([Akhvlediani, 2009](#)).

Methods and Materials

Starting from the objectives of the research, we will first establish a connection with the given toponym and its significance in the context of scientific literature and languages or dialects. Critically, we will analyse existing scientific perspectives. In the process of searching, we will generalise the most specific and concrete knowledge with scientific literature data. Through scientifically grounded research with the opportunity for interpretation, we aim to minimise errors and extract relevant findings. While working on the article, we will focus on historical comparisons, descriptions, and analytical methods. The name "Kolcheti" was first mentioned by the ancient Greek historian Hesiod and the poet Pindar and later by the Greek geographer Strabo in the 8th century BC.

It is noteworthy that the first mention of Kolchis closely aligns with the historical context of the kingdom's foundation, specifically with the reign of King Aeëtes. Ancient scholars often refer to it as "Aia" in connection with the realm of Queen Medea. It is essential to note that the first appellation of Kolchis corresponds accurately to the official name of the state's ruler: "Kulcha || Kolchi." The old name "Kolcha" is derived from "Kulcha," and this toponym has its origins in this region. According to the wisdom of the scholars, the first name of a state should be established when the name "Kolchidi" did not yet exist, and at that time, someone else might have referred to this area with different names (such as "Gaia," "Aia": land, country).

Results

A toponym is a "living heritage" that preserves traces of ancient local culture. In addition to location information, it contains a whole range of identifying information. With the development of critical studies of place names, it has become clear that they can gain knowledge not only about natural factors, such as ethnopedology (the natural science of soils and landscapes) and plant coverage but also about

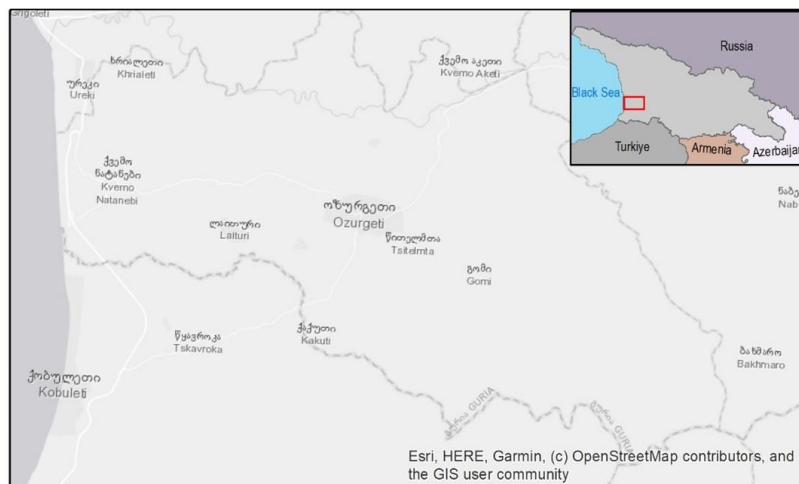


Figure 1. Study area-Ureki

anthropological factors. A place name can also be an indicator of historical situations—what a particular place was like in the past.

Ureki is a township and sea resort in Ozurgeti municipality (Fig. 1). It is located on the coast of the Black Sea, 4 m above sea level, and 24 km from Ozurgeti. It is bordered from the north and south by the confluences of the Sefa and Supsi Rivers, and from the east, it is surrounded by Tsvermaghala Mountain.



Figure 2. Artefact from study area

There is an opinion that Urek means a wooded, inaccessible place where hunters have difficulty hunting. The microtoponym in mountainous Samegrelo, "Na-ek-ura," confirms the definition of Urek as a deep, impassable place. Archaeological investigations confirm that the coastal areas of Urek, i.e.,

"Nazurgebi," have been settlements since ancient times. It is known that bronze objects were found at different times at the mouth of the Supsi River, which is named after the treasure of Urek. There is a difference of opinion in dating: BC, AD XVIII, BC, XVII century (Koridze, 1965; Ramishvili, 1974), the first half of the II millennium BC (O. Japaridze), BC XV, BC, XIV century (T. Mikeladze). The hoarding of Middle Bronze Age weapons, which contained direct prototypes of Colchi axes, is notable. tools with signs of early bronze axes (axes with slats, axes, etc.), early hoes, etc. Different types of Colchian axes were also found in Urek and BC (XVI-XIV centuries). (Part of it is preserved in the St. Petersburg Museum of Ethnography and Anthropology; the main part is kept in the State Museum of Georgia named after S. Janashia; and a small part is kept in the Ozurgeti Historical Museum.) The hoard is important in terms of the origin and typological evolution of the Kolkhir bronze period (Tent, 2015).

In 1942, items from the Black Sea coast near Diuni were found, suggesting the presence of cultural relics of the same age as those of the 3rd and 4th centuries. These finds include pottery, animal bone fragments, and jewellery (Fig. 2). The Ureki are characterised by a remarkable archaeological and cultural layer that dates to the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century. The main discoveries, except for silver hoard and Byzantine coins from the same time period, are related to the late antique style. The cultural layer found on the Black Sea coast in 1948 included various types of early mediaeval materials, including Georgian, Colchian, polychrome, and Hellenistic ceramic items. In 1948, silver hoards with the following characteristics were discovered in Ureki: a silver torque, a necklace, a brooch, two hairpins, and other items. That same year, the same museum received early mediaeval Colchian jewellery and a rare necklace. There is also evidence that early mediaeval Colchian rings and beads were discovered near Ureki.

In 1944, the discovery of magnetite began. German prisoners of war living in the Urek region mined magnetite for the Rostavi metallurgical complex. Among these German prisoners was a certain Eriks Anders, a scientist. He discovered that Urek's magnetite had a beneficial effect on human health, and this knowledge led to the liberation of the local population from certain diseases. A magnetic field of natural origin, an important geological feature, can be observed on the Ureki Peninsula.

In 1946, he found himself in Urek, BC. Treasures of the VIII-VII centuries (bronze Kolkhur axe, satevari, blade, segmented weapon, wormwood and absinthe, zod, and clay tolcha), which are also preserved in the State Museum of Georgia named after S. Janashia in 1949, 50 km long, were built from Kobuleti to Poti in the Guria maritime strip. Long Bichvinti pine grove (Ushveridze, 1986). It has been established and is no longer in dispute that Ureki ceramics contain an excess amount of magnetite, which indicates their local production. The existence of cultural layers from ancient times can also be observed. The intensity of the settlement can be explained by the presence of excess magnetite in the coastal sands.

There is an opinion that Urek means a wooded, inaccessible place where hunters have difficulty hunting. A microtoponym in mountainous Samegrelo, "Na-ek-ura," confirms the definition of Urek as a deep, impassable place. Archaeological investigations confirm that the Ureki coastline, or the "backbone" region, has been inhabited since ancient times. In one of his articles, Chikobava recognised it as a place name in Georgian science. St. Senaki (in the last century, a toponym was recorded near the city of Tskhakaya: O-reke-sh-i-, Sarekisi" (Chikobava, 1942) in the Maghrul-Georgian dictionary of P. Charaya].

The name Ureki, "Sareki" (gathering place), was a general name in the past, and it was called "Nadirtmosarek" (a gathering place for animals). Therefore, for example, the toponym of the former Makhinjauri village council (in the territory of present-day Batumi) has been confirmed: "Sarekelai" (the information is kept in the personal archive of Az. Akhvlediani), which probably meant hunting. The name "Sareki" for hunters is also located near Sachkheri (Gogatishvili, 1968), and this name seems to refer to that place. It is known that until the second half of the last century, there were impassable dense forests around Batumi, in which there were always many games. Here, in these forests, hunting was not so rare, the organiser of which, of course, would be some nobleman, in whose hunting estate there would be plenty of baziern, marekni, and others. The duty of the latter (Marekni) was to call the game in a certain area. The best hunting grounds were the places where Marekni rarely visited. The current Urek was considered such a place then. The same toponym is confirmed by the names of the Guria villages. Sarekela: Pasture Khulo, Mr. S., in the village of Furtio. "Sarekelai" is a rural district in Kortok (Shuakhevi mn.). cf. :sa - mkrev - el - a" - forest, village of Ghurta (Shuaakh, mn.). "Sa-re - ki" is a forest and a rocky place in Kidzinidze (a municipality) (Kamadadze, 1992). Sarekela, derg (dish), is a dish in Adjara in which butter is made from dairy products [11]. In this toponym, the root "rek" is isolated. It is not foreign to Georgian languages. Megr. Reku: Reku means ringing (Charaya, 1997),

and "u" is prefixed in the toponym. In Rachuli, ringing a nut means hitting a nut with a stick (Kobakhidze, 1987). "Sareki" is found in Kizikur with two meanings: 1. Sarek: a latan tied to the hands in front of the wheels of the cart so that the buffaloes tied to the head of the cart can hold the cart while going uphill. At the same time, the cart's eye does not fall on Gava's legs, and 2. Sarek is a place from which those called to hunt at this time called the game Sakhundari, that is, Samkvdev (N. Saba) (Menteshashvili, 1943). In Tushur, Sarekelakh is Sarekela, which is reflected in the stone of the mill by Khvimir grains (Khubutia, 1969).

In Ureki, located in the Ozurgeti municipality, the term 'ureki mareki' is used. 'Ureki mareki' refers to the distribution of land, specifically the allocation of land to beneficiaries through the process of land redistribution. In Ureki, the local government is aware of this term. It is worth noting that 'ureki mareki' involves the regulated allocation of land to individuals, and discussions about such regulations have been heard from representatives of the Guria population. However, it is emphasised that in Ureki, a place characterised by such distinct land, the process of land redistribution may not be feasible, except in cases related to 'ureki mareki' (Dzneladze, 2011). 'Sareki' is the designated area where the allocation of land can take place, and where it cannot occur, it is Ureki.

The wisdom of local residents regarding their knowledge of the environment or other types of information is crucial to the development of future generations (see the article "The toponym 'Batumi – Etymology'", where it is discussed how the name of a lost plant was preserved in folk etymology- (Akhvlediani, 2023), as it prevents the loss of cultural knowledge that contributes to the cultural heritage of society. In the course of generations, the neglect of unique earth wisdom is regrettable, as it can lead to the disappearance of cultural knowledge. In the progression of societies, the neglect of indigenous knowledge can result in ignorance of the intricacies of the land and the principles of sustainable development, as seen through the eyes of the Earth's maps and environmental planning.

Conclusion

Periodically, many things may disappear, change the relief landscape, or become extinct with the animals, birds, plants, or human tribes living there, but the geographical names of the places can tell us a lot about the earlier world. Regarding toponyms, two main questions are asked: "Why was it named?" and "How was it named?" The answer to the first question lies in the extralinguistic field and concerns the problems of motivation. The answer to the second question belongs to the linguistic field and provides for the determination of the linguistic means of nomination. According to our observations, we can consider the landscape and geographical list of the place "Ureki."

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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