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# Soviet Toponymy: The History and the Present

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## To cite this article:

Davit Sartania, Dali Nikolaishvili, Avtandil Ujmajuridze. Soviet Toponymy: The History and the Present. *Earth Sciences*. Special Issue: New Challenge for Geography: Landscape Dimensions of Sustainable Development. Vol. 6, No. 5-1, 2017, pp. 49-55.

doi: 10.11648/j.earth.s.2017060501.17

**Received:** June 16, 2017; **Accepted:** June 19, 2017; **Published:** July 17, 2017

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**Abstract:** The article identifies the scales of the Soviet toponymy (macro-toponyms and toponyms as such) in Georgia and some geographical peculiarities of their territorial distribution. The study was undertaken in several stages: (1) identification and analysis of the general list of Soviet toponyms (according to the geographical background, naming circumstances and date of origination), (2) identification of the scales of Sovietization for different Regions of the country and territorial peculiarities, (3) development of the classification of Soviet toponyms, and (4) mapping the Soviet toponyms. A number of sources were used to achieve these goals, including territorial-administrative organization, general population census, cartographic sources, toponymic studies, etc. The study revealed that the process of “Sovietization” of the toponyms developed in several directions: by giving the names of memorial names to administrative units and settlements (regions, cities, settlements and villages); by giving the ideological Soviet names to the geographical objects; by partially changing the toponyms (by translating or adding epithets); by forming new objects of the Soviet revival and naming them.

**Keywords:** Soviet Toponyms, Sovietization, Georgia

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## 1. Introduction

A toponym is one of the most important monuments of history and culture typical to various geographical environment, historical period, state unit or civilization. Consequently, toponyms describe the geographical, political, social-economic and demographic conditions, historical moment and traditional, ethnographic, religious and lexical properties of certain people.

The process of giving geographical names to objects is logical, has historical reasons and is called forth by the need for inventing new names in the first instance [1]. In addition, toponyms, by preserving the “pictures of the past”, often make it possible to restore them retrospectively. It is due to the ability of “remembering” such various pieces of information that the study of the geographical names is important in many respects. As a toponym is a part of a vocabulary, it is subject to the laws of linguistics and makes it possible to restore linguistic elements survived from old

languages, e.g. old word, old grammatical form, common and proper nouns, etc. what is so important in linguistics. In addition, toponyms can be used to identify the level of substrate of the linguistic elements of other peoples on the specific territory or in a specific ethnos, e.g. a Georgian substrate in the geographical names of the North Caucasus, Southwest Asia and Asia Minor. The study of the degree of the Soviet substrate in Georgian toponymy is of no less interest.

The study of the geographical names is important to study countries historically. A toponym is often “a carrier” of a historical fact and shows the old areas of population settlements, directions of the migration currents and geopolitical situation. The domination of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Armenian and Russian words among Georgian toponyms evidences the migration of these people to our country. On the other hand, we see Georgian names on the territories of other countries (Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia) informing us about the migration currents

and areas of old settlements.

The study of toponyms is very important in a geographical respect as well, as they often describe the natural conditions, distribution of certain species of flora and fauna, existence of natural conditions, kinds of the territorial use, history of settlements and their economic activity, demographic situation, population migration in the certain period of the past, etc.

It is due to the above-mentioned circumstances that the study of the geographical names is particularly important for such disciplines, as linguistics, history, political science, demography, ethnography, geography, etc.

The territory of Georgia and its borders, as well as the political situation changed for centuries, and large proportion of the population used to resettle and the national and confessional structure of the population also changed. Alongside with these factors, the toponyms also changed and developed. Therefore, the study of all these processes, identification of the language, traditions and principal traits of history of the peoples, who ever lived on the territory of our country is very important. The newcomers used to bring new geographical names with them, while the old names got lost. It is true that old names disappeared as the new elements of the epoch appeared, but existed alongside with the new names for quite long what can be surely “explained by the conservative nature” of the toponyms. While the newer geographical names are easy to explain, it is quite difficult and sometimes, impossible to explain old toponyms. With the lapse of time, the base of toponyms also changed a lot. Sometimes, it is changed to such an extent that it is impossible to restore its originality.

The toponymy of Georgia is studied in a number of aspects. However, it is natural that there is a big gap in the study of the soviet toponyms. There are some works considering this issue in a general respect or in respect of micro-toponyms of different regions.

The goal of the Study is to identify the scales of the Soviet toponymy (macro-toponyms and toponyms as such) in Georgia and some geographical peculiarities of their territorial distribution.

The study was undertaken in several stages:

- (1) Identification and analysis of the general list of Soviet toponyms (according to the geographical background, naming circumstances and date of origination);
- (2) Identification of the scales of Sovietization for different regions of the country and territorial peculiarities;
- (3) Development of the classification of Soviet toponyms, and
- (4) Mapping Soviet toponyms.

## 2. Methods and Initial Data

The study of toponyms needs a versatile analysis. So, various methods were used in the course of our study, but the principal methods were historical analysis and retrospective mapping. The latter were based on the study of the origination and transformation of toponyms from the XX

century to date on the background of the political processes in the former Soviet Union, including Georgia.

In this respect, the orthographic dictionaries of Georgia [2], population census data [3], collections of administrative-territorial division [4; 5], resolutions about the changing the geographical names made in the Soviet period [6; 7; 8; 9] and later [10] were used.

One of the methods used for the analysis of toponyms was cartographic research implying the analysis of the maps made in the old Verst system (so called “Verst Maps”) [11] at the times of the Russian Empire and maps published during the Soviet period. The study was also based on different scientific works [12; 13; 14; 15; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23].

## 3. Research Object

Most of the Georgian toponyms are old (originated in the early or middle centuries) and have survived in their original forms [24]. A certain part of the toponyms are either new, or have been transformed. Most of the Soviet toponyms are new having originated in the XX century on the background of big political and economic changes in the country.

It is known that the changes of the geographical names are most common during dramatic political changes, and the Soviet era can be considered as such an event. Besides, never before in Georgia the names were changed in the scales like it was the case during the Soviet period.

Macro-toponyms and toponyms themselves are the names of bigger geographical objects. However, big size is not understood in its direct sense, but often, social and historical importance counts. Soviet names were applied to almost all kinds of toponyms; however, micro-toponyms were not included in our study. Micro-toponyms denote smaller geographical objects, such as pastures, fields, cornfields, gullies, gorges, springs, districts, streets, etc. [19; 22]. The study did not cover the toponymy of the city of Tbilisi, either, as this is considered city choronyms, or micro-toponyms. The study of micro-toponyms is quite difficult and time-consuming, as there are hundreds or thousands of old and new micro-toponyms in every settled area. Consequently, it is impossible to tell even a rough number of micro-toponyms found all over Georgia. A basic change of micro-toponyms is associated with the population dislocations, changing owners and type of land designation, etc.

The Sovietization affected almost all kinds of toponyms: oronyms, hydronyms, oikonoms, choronyms, as well as macro- and micro-toponyms and toponyms themselves. Our study did not cover micro-toponyms, i.e. toponyms denoting small geographical objects.

## 4. Main Results

### 4.1. General Traits of the Sovietization and DeSovietization of the Georgian Toponyms

In the near past of our country, in the Soviet period, the names of a number of Georgian toponyms changed. Some

old names are still remembered, while others have disappeared. There are also toponyms found only in the historical documents, newspaper publications or old maps. Therefore, their thorough study is important.

Geographical names are a nation's heritage. However, in the Soviet era, this circumstance was often ignored, as everything was subject to the single Union policy developed by the state serving the purpose of consolidating the military and economic systems, escaping from "the cursed past" and totally ignoring historical-cultural values.

The process of naming the geographical objects was also subject to the ideologizing, and consequently, the natural process of naming was ignored. The artificial process of naming the geographical objects did not consider any peculiarities of the environment, history, societal being or culture, and the names associated with Christianity, dedicated Georgian kings, princes or vicariates were not given to the geographical objects. As G. Khoranauli notes, the Soviet era was marked by the dechristianization of people's names [22]. The same is true with geographical names. This period can be assessed as the process of dechristianization and Sovietization resulting in the abolition of everything old and their replacement with new things.

There are more than 4500 villages, tens of cities and

settlements, more than 26 thousand rivers, about 860 lakes, about 700 glaciers, over 40 water reservoirs, hundreds of thousands of mountains, peaks and other geographical objects in Georgia. It is impossible to tell their exact number and not all of them have names. There are many unnamed mountains, lakes and rivers on the map of Georgia.

It is true that in the Soviet period, many toponyms had their names changed, but the transformation is still minor, as the specific weight of the Soviet toponyms in the total number of the geographical names of Georgia is little, equaling 400 as per our estimates (macro-toponyms and toponyms as such are meant). It is clear that most of these toponyms are oikonyms (Figure 1). Consequently, the oronyms and hydronyms with the coloration of the Soviet Union are few. Here are some examples: Boris Dzneldze (peak on Shani Ridge in Kazbegi Municipality), Pioneris Tba (*Pioneer's Lake*) (present-day Nuris Tba (*Nuri Lake*) in Khelvachauri Municipality), Shromiskhevi (*Gorge of Labor*) rivers: the right tributary of the river Alazani in Gurjaani Municipality and the left tributary of the river Alazani in Lagodekhi Municipality), Japaridzis Tba (*Japaridze's Lake*) (at present, Kochebis Tba (*Kochebi Lake*) in Dedoplistkaro Municipality), etc. [25].

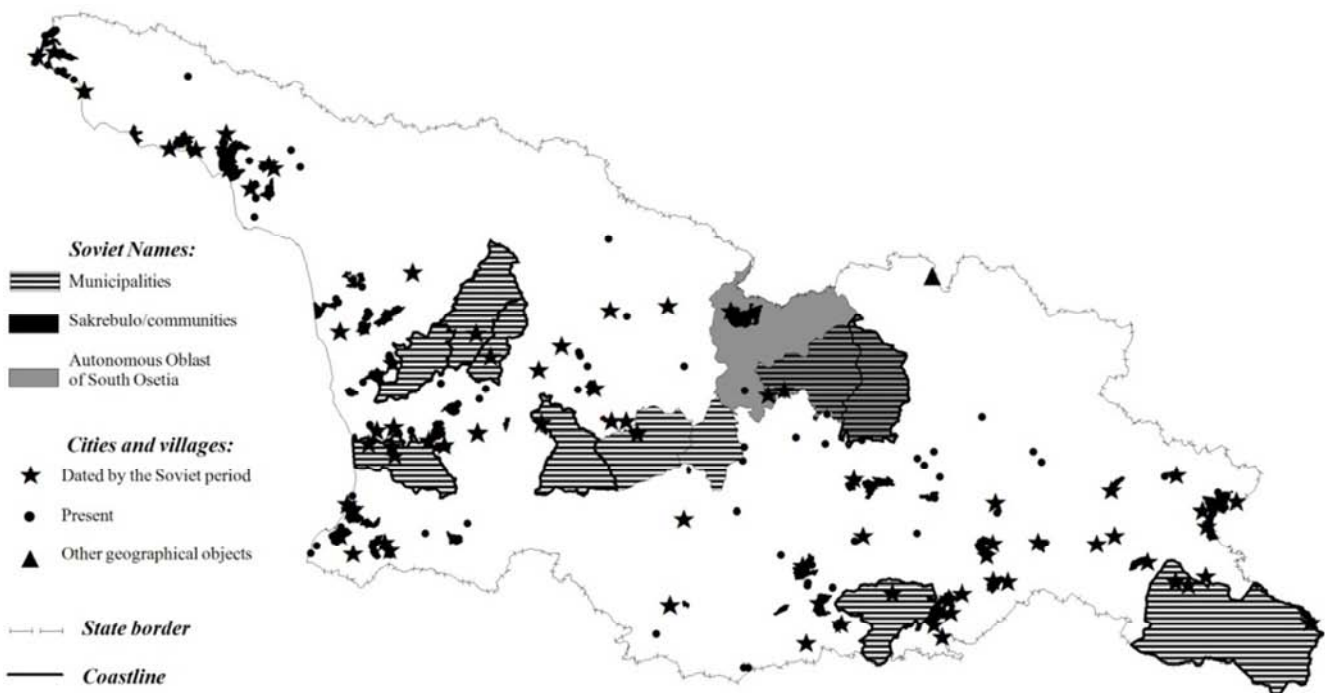


Figure 1. Soviet toponyms in Georgia.

The map plotted by using GIS-technologies allowed us to identify the area occupied by the Soviet toponyms (excluding micro-toponyms) on the territory of Georgia. Clearly, mostly choronyms are meant here, with their area possible to estimate. Consequently, one can talk about so called "sovietized area" making approximately 15% of the territory of Georgia. We think that this is quite a high indicator evidencing high level of "Sovietization" of the Soviet toponyms in Georgia. Most of the territory remained "non-

sovietized", but at some locations, the same area was given a Soviet name at different levels of an Autonomous Oblast – Region – Village. Let us consider this case on the example of Shida Kartli: (1) South Osetia (former Autonomous Oblast); (2) Znauri Region (later, Kornisi Region, presently a part of Kareli Municipality), and (3) Settlement Znauri (the original name was Okona, Settlement Kornisi at present). Such naming can be referred to as a multi-level Soviet nomination. By considering micro-toponyms, such a "multi-level" nature

will further increase [25].

However, on the other hand, in respect of the number of toponyms, the specific weight of the Soviet toponyms in the total number is insignificant, and this is logical, as no matter how much important political processes take place, it is impossible to rename thousands of toponyms in 70 or even more years.

In the 1990s, the process of “DeSovietization” of the names appeared in the Soviet period started in the post-Soviet countries. Some toponyms regained their original names, but others remained “in captivity”.

The substitution of the new toponyms for the old ones in the Soviet period had a pure ideological purpose – the people had to forget the historical meaning of old toponyms and get used to the new ones instead. This is how the following toponyms appeared: Oktomberi (*October*) – former village Zinobiani in Kvareli region; Ganakhleba (*Renovation*) – villages in Gali, Gulripshi, Dmanisi, Chokhatauri, Khelvachauri and Khulo regions; Ganatleba (*Education*) – village in Lagodekhi region; Gantiadi (*Dawn*) – former village of Khunduka in Keda region; Shromiskari (*Gate of Labor*) – former village of Upalkari in Senaki region; Tsitelsopeli (*Red Village*) – former village of Khatissopeli in Bolnisi region; Tsitelsopeli (*Red Village*) – former village of Ivantsminda in Sachkhere region; Shavsopeli (Black Village) in Kareli region;

Tsiteltskaro (*Red Spring*) – former villages of Natlismtsemeli in Gori and Dedoplistskaro regions; Natsreani in Dedoplistskaro region; Tsitelkhevi (*Red Gorge*) – former village of Mirontsminda (*Saint Chrism*) in Kharagauli region, etc.

It is true that the process of naming with Soviet toponyms is based on one common model, the Soviet ideologizing, but if looking carefully, it becomes clear that naming of the above-listed objects has different trends. Below are the major aspects of naming the Soviet toponyms.

I. Naming the administrative units and settlements (regions, cities, settlements and villages) with memorial names. This process was based on the tendency of giving the objects the names of Bolshevik leaders, heads of the state and Communist Party and Soviet military men. This process was characterized by the following trend: the names of Georgian figures were given to larger settlements (and their subordinate regions), while the names of non-Georgian were given mostly to villages and small settlements. Consequently, there are two geographical groups identified:

*Toponyms given the names of Georgian revolutionists, Party leaders or Soviet figures born in some or other settlement.* Such toponyms are the names of the following cities and regions: Gegechkhori, Makharadze, Orjonikidze, Staliniri, Tskhakaia, Tsulukidze. It is natural that the names of the revolutionists and Soviet figures would have been given to the cities and regions where their native villages were found in the vicinity and not their native villages themselves. For instance, Philippe Makharadze was born in village Pashari (Kariskuri, a village in Ozurgeti Municipality

at present), Sergo Orjonikidze was born in village Ghoresha (Kharagauli Municipality), Misha Tskhakaia was born in village Khuntsi (Senaki Municipality), Ioseb Jughashvili was born in the city of Gori (the old name of Tskhinvali region was Staliniri).

*The toponyms named after the famous Bolsheviks and revolutionists of the Soviet Union, heroes and Party and military figures of the Soviet Union.* Mostly, such naming was limited to villages. The examples are: Atarbegovka (after Giorgi Aterbagov), Budionovka (Mikhail Budionov), Voroshilovka (Clement Voroshilov), Kalinino (Mikhail Kalinin), Kirov, Kirovisi, Kirovka (Sergei Kirov), Molotovo (Vyacheslav Molotov), Zhdanovka (Andrei Zhdanov), Shahumyani (Stepan Shahumyan), Chapaevka (Vasil Chapaev), etc.

Surely there were exceptions related to the figures of special ranks. The most famous exception was Leningori, the name given to the city of Akhagori and its subordinate region in 1934. This was quite a logical decision by that time, as Lenin was the first Chief of the revolutionary battle and Soviet Union.

Toponyms associated with Lenin’s name were quite common in Georgia. As E. Murzaev notes, the toponyms of Lenin were associated with his pseudonym (Lenin), surname (Ulyanov) or patronymic (Ilia) [26]. As for Georgia, here the toponyms were associated only with Lenin’s pseudonym or surname: Zeda Ulyanovka (an old name of village Sachino in Kobuleti Municipality), Leninisi (old name of village Kvishiani in Gardabani Municipality), Lenino (old name of village Ipnari in Dmanisi Municipality and village Satave in Sokhumi Municipality), Leninovka (old name of village Choeti in Dedoplistskaro Municipality), Ulyanovka (village in Marneuli Municipality), Ulyanovka (old name of village Iliatsminda in Dedoplistskaro Municipality), etc.

There is also another kind of exception when the names of less famous Georgian revolutionists were given to villages. The examples are: Japaridze (presently, village Samreklo in Dedoplistskaro Municipality), city of Zestaponi in 1920s’ (it was called Jugheli at that time). The same is true with settlement Leselidze, which was named after a Georgian figure and Bolnisi city (Luxemburg in 1921-1943).

II. Naming the geographical objects with Soviet ideological words. This process had much larger scales and had a propagandistic shade. Naturally, the changing political process would lead to the changes in toponyms, and there is nothing negative in this fact on the face of it. However, new opposed everything old and everything Georgian, considering old things as something outdated and retarded hampering the progress and inspiring discrimination. Particularly harsh was the battle against the feudal lords’ names and surnames and religious toponyms, and they were replaced by the toponyms demonstrating the Soviet ideology and general happiness, such as Gantiadi (Dawn), October, Shroma (Labor), Tsodna (Knowledge), etc. (Table 1).

Table 1. Renaming of some religious toponyms in the Soviet period.

Old Georgian toponyms and their English translation		Soviet toponyms and their English translation		Municipality they belong at present
Ivantsminda	Queen's spring	Tsiteltskaro	Red spring	Dedoplistskaro
Iliatsminda	Saint Ivan	Tsitelsopeli	Red village	Sachkhere
Matskhovari	Saint Ilia	Ulyanovka		Signagi
Matskhovriskari	Savior	Oktomberi	October	Terjola
Mirontsminda	Savior's Gate	Ganatlebiskari	Gate of Education	Abasha
Mirontsminda	Saint Chrism	Tsitelkhevi	Red Gorge	Kharagauli
Mikhelgabriel	Saint Chrism	Tsodna	Knowledge	Lagodekhi
Natlismtsemeli	Michael and Gabriel (two archangels)	Shroma	Labor	Ozurgeti
Natlismtsemeli	Baptist	Tsiteltskaro	Red Spring	Gori
Patara Sameba	Baptist	Tsiteltskaro	Red Spring	Dedoplistskaro
Upalkari	Small Trinity	Patara Gantiadi	Little Dawn	Zestaponi
Khatissopeli	God's Gate	Shromiskari	Labor Gate	Senaki
Jvarisa	Icon's Village	Tsitelsopeli	Red Village	Bolnisi
Jvartsma	Cross' Lot	Shroma	Labor	Ambrolauri

Common are old Georgian toponyms with word "Red" as their base. Such names are usually associated with the physical-geographical conditions of the place, e.g. its constituent rocks giving red color to the soil, water, etc. Such toponym are Tsiteli Khidi (Red Bridge) across the river Khrami, Tskaltsitela (Red Water), the right tributary of the river Kvirila, etc. Toponyms of Turkish origin are also associated with the red color, e.g. Kizilajlo (village in Dmanisi Municipality), Kizilkilisa (villages in Dmanisi and Tsalka Municipalities and river, the right tributary of the river Ktsia), etc. It is clear that all these names were originated before the Sovietization and have nothing in common with the Soviet toponyms. However, there are names having word Red in their base as a Soviet symbol. These toponyms are: Tsiteltskaro, Tsitelkhevi, Krasnogorski, Krasnoe probably justifying the process of "Reddening" of the toponyms best of all.

Among the toponyms originated by using the Soviet ideological words, we can identify two groups:

*The toponyms with a Party or Revolutionary essence or demostarting the Soviet ideals:* Komsomolskoye, Krasnogorskiy, Oktiabrskoye, Oktomberi (October), Pirveli Maisi (The First of May), Tsitelvarsklavi (Red Star), Tsitelopeli (Red Village), Tsiteltskaro (Red Spring), Tsitelkhevi (Red Gorge), etc.

*Toponyms denoting Soviet ideology and glorification:* Akhalsopeli (New Village), Akhalsheni (New Settlement), Ganakhleba (Renovation), Gantiadi (Dawn), Vesiolovka (Place of Merry), Tavisupleba (Freedom), Kavshiri (Union), Mziseuli (Sunny), Mnatobi (Luminary), Sabchota Chai (Soviet Tea), Salkhino (Place of Merry), Sikharuli (Merriment), Shroma (Labor), Shromisubani (Labor District), Chaisubani (Tea Region), Tsitrusovani (Place with Citrus), Tsodniskari (Gate of Knowledge), Tsinsvla (Advancement), etc.

III. Partial changes in toponyms. Such toponyms are much more in number:

*Translated toponyms:* Vesiolovka (Salkhino), Tavisupleba (Svoboda (Freedom for Russian), Kultubani (Kultuchastok (Cultural District for Russian), Orehovo (Kakliani, Place with Nuts for Georgian), Sakartvelos Kheoba (Gruzinskoye

Usheliye (Georgian Gorge for Russian), Serebryanoye (Vertskhliani, Place with Silver for Georgian), Sikharuli (Otradnoe, Merriment for Russian), Kholodnaya Rechka (Tsitvtskaro, Cold Spring for Georgian), etc. Such toponyms are most common in Abkhazeti.

*Toponyms originated by adding epithets.* This was how village Besleti became Tsiteli Besleti (Red Besleti) (Sokhumi Municipality), Sabatlo became Tsiteli Sabatlo (Red Sabatlo) (Dedoplistskaro Municipality), etc. Epithets (such as first, second, upper, middle, etc.) were also used to indicate the division of a village into parts or origination of a new settlement. As it seems, the binary opposition, or double opposition of toponyms typical to the process of geographical naming was also typical to the Soviet era. Toponym "South Osetia" existing as an Autonomous Oblast in 1922-1990 on the territory of Shida Kartli, on the slope of the Central Caucasioni (with the area of 3.8 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, administrative center at Tskhinvali) must be attributed to this group as well. It may be said that this is a classical example of incorrect naming of an administrative choronym clearly showing the purpose of the Soviet politics. Toponym "South Osetia, which was created artificially and established legally in 1922, renamed as "North Osetia" later, in 1924 (on the territory of Russia adjacent to so called South Osetia) inspired a wish to restore fictitious Osetian state and precedents of the separatist movement.

*The names of villages given the names of nearby villages also originated by adding epithets.* This mainly served the purpose of uniting those villages as one collective farm or Soviet farm. For example, village Patara Toneti of Tetrtskaro Municipality (former Dvalta) was given a new name of Toneti (the name of a bigger village located nearby) in the first days of the Soviet power [27]. The bigger village is now called Didi Toneti. Such geographical names called repeated toponyms by E. Murzaev [26] can be considered as a process intrinsic to this period;

*The names indicative of new settlements,* such as Akhalsopeli, Akhalsheni and Akhalubani (Akhali is New for Georgian). For example, village Dzondziri (Senaki Municipality) in 1930s, villages Khipisa (Gudauta

Municipality) and Naidorpi (Sokhumi Municipality) in 1943 and village Avge (Khelvachauri Municipality) were renamed as Akhalsopeli. However, it should be noted that villages of the same name existed on the maps of Georgia long before the origination of the USSR. Village Akhalsopeli in Ambrolauri region has had this name since the XVIII century [28] and village with the same name in Kvareli Municipality has had this name since 1852 [16].

*Abbreviated toponyms were also typical to the Soviet period*, but were not as common with macro-toponyms or toponyms themselves. Abbreviated toponyms are: Zahesi, the name coming from the hydropower station built in Zemo Avchala (in former Mtskheta settlement, at present a district of Tbilisi), etc.

IV. Origination of new objects of soviet revival and their naming. Such objects are: water reservoirs, hydropower plants, melioration systems, new industrial objects, workers' settlements, etc. These objects were mostly given "Soviet" names demonstrating the process of Soviet revival and its glory. For example, workers' settlements as Alazani Water Pumping Station (Dedoplistskaro Municipality), Gumathesi (Tskaltubo Municipality), Zahesi (in Tbilisi), etc. Besides, quite often, they were the objects named after the revolutionists, Soviet figures or leaders. Almost all collective farms and soviet farms in Georgia were named after them.

#### 4.2. Some Peculiarities of the Territorial Distribution of Soviet Toponyms

Not all parts of Georgia are "loaded" with the soviet toponyms to the same extent. Clearly, more intense changes were seen in the lowland of Georgia with high population density since the ancient times, and revolutionary activity was also more intense here. As for the high mountainous regions, mostly the "original" toponyms are maintained there. Such is the state of affairs in Racha-Lechkhumi, mountainous regions of Georgia, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Svaneti. This indicator is also low in Javakheti. In present-day Akhaltsikhe and Ninotsminda Municipalities, where Russian toponyms and those dated back by tsarism period were introduced as early as in the XIX century (Bogdanovka, Gorelovka, Epremovka, Rodionovka, Tambovka, etc.) were less subject to the "Sovietization". We think that the "Sovietization" of toponyms was hampered by the fact that the existence of non-Georgian, mostly Russian toponymy was somehow associated with the Soviet, rather than pure Georgian toponyms. However, it also should be noted that since the XIX century, the Russian toponymy has partly changed. This change affected mainly the toponyms associated with the names of the Romanoff's, King's family members and Generals of the Russian Army [25].

The territorial difference between the naming of Soviet toponyms is not limited to that between the lowland and mountains, but between the different regions of Georgia, as well. Such state of affairs cannot be considered as contemplated in advance. It reflects the concrete societal state existing in those regions. With this indicator, Apkhazeti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti are obvious leaders. In Apkhazeti,

the Soviet toponymization, i.e. the process of making common Soviet names toponyms was intense in 1948-1951. For this time, one settlement council, 24 village councils and 122 settled areas had their names changed [29].

The above-given analysis of naming with Soviet toponyms in different regions of Georgia gives a general picture of territorial distribution, showing how many toponyms have their names changed in different regions of our country. To be more precise, we identified the specific weight of the "Sovietized" settled area in the total number of the settled areas of the given region (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Regions of Georgia according to the specific weight of the "Sovietized" toponyms.

Specific weight of the "Sovietized" toponyms, %	Regions of Georgia
High, > 10	Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria, Apkhazeti
Average, 5-10	Imereti
Low, 2-5	Shida Kartli, Racha-Lechkhumi
Very low, < 2	Samtskhe-Javakheti, mountainous regions of East Georgia, Svaneti

With such "Sovietized" toponyms, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Guria are obvious leaders with their specific weight of over 14%. This is really an impressive figure and no doubt indicates the intense ideological operation of the "Soviet machine".

## 5. Conclusions

Most of the Georgian toponyms are old and have survived in their original form. However, in the XIX-XX centuries, many toponyms have changed. One of the major changes occurred in the Soviet period. In this period, an artificial nomination of toponyms took place and as a result, many old Georgian toponyms had their names artificially. Memorial names and names describing the Soviet glory and ideology are very common among them. Besides, the process of Soviet toponimization meaning conversion of the common "Soviet" names into toponyms. Such names are: Ganatleba (*Education*), Oktomberi (*October*), Shroma (*Labor*), Tsodna (*Knowledge*), Tsitrusovani (*Place with Citrus*), etc.

The Sovietization of toponyms occurred in several directions:

- By using memorial names by naming the administrative units and settlements (regions, cities and towns, settlements and villages);
- By naming the geographical objects with Soviet ideological words;
- By partial changing of toponyms (translating, adding epithets);
- By originating the new objects of the Soviet revival and naming them.

As already mentioned, the "Sovietization" of toponyms was used all over the territory of Georgia. It is less intense in high-mountainous area and retain the original toponymy more or less. The specific weight of the "Sovietized" toponyms is particularly high in Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli,

Guria and Apkhazeti.

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