

## Ksani Gorge as part of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region and the Protest of the Population

ქსანის ხეობა, როგორც სამხრეთ ოსეთის ავტონომიური ოლქის ნაწილი და მოსახლეობის პროტესტი

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### Abstract

The article examines the process of incorporating the Ksani Gorge into the South Ossetian Autonomous Region during the Soviet period and analyzes the protest of the local population against this decision. The study explores the historical background of the Ossetian issue in Georgia from the nineteenth century onward, focusing on Russian imperial and later Bolshevik policies aimed at creating administrative and political units based on ethnic divisions. Special attention is devoted to the establishment of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region in 1922 and the inclusion of historically Georgian territories, including the Ksani Gorge, within its borders.

The paper highlights the resistance expressed by the Georgian population of the Ksani, Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Prone gorges, who repeatedly appealed to Soviet authorities against their incorporation into the autonomous region. The article demonstrates that both Georgian and part of the Ossetian population opposed the administrative changes imposed by the Soviet government. Using archival documents, official decrees, protest protocols, and contemporary press materials, the research analyzes the political motivations behind the creation of the autonomous region and its long-term consequences for Georgian-Ossetian relations.

The study also discusses the demographic, cultural, and political transformations that occurred in the region during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, including the renaming of Georgian settlements, the displacement of the indigenous Georgian population after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, and the ongoing process of occupation and cultural erasure in the Ksani Gorge.

**Keywords:** Ksani Gorge; South Ossetian Autonomous Region; Georgian-Ossetian Relations; Population Protest.

გიორგი სოსიაშვილი

ისტორიის დოქტორი, გორის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის პროფესორი

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## აბსტრაქტი

ნაშრომში განხილულია საბჭოთა პერიოდში ქსნის ხეობის სამხრეთ ოსეთის ავტონომიური ოლქის შემადგენლობაში მოქცევის პროცესი და აღნიშნული გადაწყვეტილების წინააღმდეგ ადგილობრივი მოსახლეობის პროტესტი. კვლევა მიმოიხილავს საქართველოში „ოსური საკითხის“ ისტორიულ ფონს XIX საუკუნიდან, განსაკუთრებული ყურადღებით რუსეთის იმპერიული და შემდგომ ბოლშევიკური პოლიტიკისადმი, რომელიც ეთნიკური ნიშნით ადმინისტრაციული ერთეულების შექმნას ისახავდა მიზნად. განსაკუთრებული აქცენტი კეთდება 1922 წელს სამხრეთ ოსეთის ავტონომიური ოლქის ჩამოყალიბებასა და ისტორიული ქართული ტერიტორიების, მათ შორის ქსნის ხეობის, მის შემადგენლობაში ძალდატანებით შეყვანაზე. ნაშრომში ნაჩვენებია ქსნის, დიდი და პატარა ლიახვისა და ფრონის ხეობების ქართული მოსახლეობის წინააღმდეგობა, რომლებიც არაერთხელ მიმართავდნენ საბჭოთა ხელისუფლებას ავტონომიურ ერთეულში მათი მოქცევის წინააღმდეგ. კვლევა ცხადყოფს, რომ საბჭოთა ხელისუფლების მიერ განხორციელებულ ადმინისტრაციულ ცვლილებებს აპროტესტებდა არა მხოლოდ ქართული, არამედ ოსური მოსახლეობის ნაწილიც. საარქივო დოკუმენტების, ოფიციალური დადგენილებების, საპროტესტო ოქმებისა და პერიოდული პრესის მასალების საფუძველზე გაანალიზებულია ავტონომიური ოლქის შექმნის პოლიტიკური მოტივები და მისი გრძელვადიანი შედეგები ქართულ-ოსურ ურთიერთობებზე. სტატიაში ასევე განხილულია საბჭოთა და პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდში რეგიონში განვითარებული დემოგრაფიული, კულტურული და პოლიტიკური ცვლილებები, მათ შორის ქართული სოფლების გადარქმევა, 2008 წლის რუსეთ-საქართველოს ომის შემდეგ ადგილობრივი ქართული მოსახლეობის იძულებითი გადაადგილება და ქსნის ხეობაში მიმდინარე ოკუპაციისა და კულტურული კვალის წაშლის პროცესი.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ქსნის ხეობა; სამხრეთ ოსეთის ავტონომიური ოლქი; ქართულ-ოსური ურთიერთობები; მოსახლეობის პროტესტი.

## Introduction

The issue of the creation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region and the incorporation of historically Georgian territories into its administrative boundaries remains one of the most important and controversial topics in the modern history of Georgia. The process was closely connected to the imperial and later Soviet nationalities policy, which aimed to establish political and administrative control over strategically important regions of the Caucasus through ethnic territorialization and the manipulation of local identities.

The Ksani Gorge, a historical part of Shida Kartli and one of the oldest Georgian cultural and political regions, became part of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region in 1922 as a result of Soviet administrative reforms. This decision was not based on the will of the local population. On the contrary, archival materials and official documents demonstrate that the Georgian population of the Ksani Gorge, as well as residents of the Didi and Patara Liakhvi and Prone gorges, actively protested against incorporation into the newly established autonomous unit. Meetings, collective appeals, protest protocols, and petitions sent to Soviet authorities reflected widespread dissatisfaction among the indigenous population.

The formation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region was preceded by complex political processes that began during the late Russian imperial period and intensified after the collapse of the Russian Empire and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918. The Bolshevik occupation of Georgia in 1921 created favorable conditions for separatist forces and enabled the implementation of Soviet policies aimed at restructuring the political map of Georgia along ethnic lines.

This article examines the historical circumstances surrounding the inclusion of the Ksani Gorge in the South Ossetian Autonomous Region and analyzes the protest movement of the local population against this decision. Based on archival documents, official decrees, periodical press materials, and contemporary scholarly literature, the study explores the political motivations behind the creation of the autonomous region, the reactions of the local communities, and the long-term consequences of these processes for Georgian-Ossetian relations and the historical development of the region.

## Methods

The current research is mainly based on research methods tested in historical and political sciences: empirical analysis, comparative-historical method, causal-comparative analysis, synthesis, abstraction, content analysis, and system analysis.

## Results

The research demonstrates that the incorporation of the Ksani Gorge into the South Ossetian Autonomous Region in 1922 was not a natural historical or demographic process, but rather a politically motivated decision implemented within the framework of Soviet nationalities policy. The archival materials analyzed in the study confirm that the establishment of the autonomous region was preceded by long-term imperial and Bolshevik efforts aimed at restructuring the administrative map of Georgia according to ethnic principles.

The study revealed that the local Georgian population strongly opposed the inclusion of their historical territories in the newly established autonomous entity. Numerous protest protocols, collective appeals, and official letters sent to Soviet authorities from the Ksani, Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Prone gorges clearly demonstrate widespread dissatisfaction among the indigenous residents. The protests emphasized not only historical and cultural ties with the Georgian state, but also practical administrative and economic difficulties caused by subordination to Tskhinvali.

The research also showed that resistance to the administrative changes was not limited exclusively to the Georgian population. Certain groups within the Ossetian community also expressed dissatisfaction with the policies of the so-called Ossetian Revolutionary Committee and preferred coexistence within the traditional administrative framework together with Georgians. These facts indicate that the process of establishing the autonomous region was largely driven by political interests from the Soviet center rather than by the genuine will of the local population.

The analysis of Soviet administrative documents further demonstrates that the creation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region ignored geographical, economic, and social realities. Even representatives of the Soviet administration acknowledged that the territories united within the autonomous region lacked internal cohesion and were economically connected to different Georgian regions. Nevertheless, despite internal objections and local resistance, the Soviet authorities finalized the establishment of the autonomous region under Kremlin directives. The study additionally highlights the long-term consequences of these policies. The artificial administrative division contributed significantly to the deepening of Georgian-Ossetian tensions throughout the twentieth century and laid the foundation for later separatist movements and conflicts. The situation worsened after the collapse of the Soviet Union and especially following the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, which resulted in the displacement of the indigenous Georgian population from the Ksani Gorge and the ongoing process of occupation, demographic transformation, destruction of cultural heritage, and alteration of historical toponyms.

Thus, the research confirms that the creation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region and the incorporation of the Ksani Gorge into its borders represented a politically imposed process that contradicted the interests and expressed will of a significant part of the local population and had lasting consequences for the historical and political development of the region.

## Discussion

At the beginning of the 19th century, after the abolition of the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom, the Russian government began to systematically implement an imperial policy aimed at integrating various parts of Georgia into the Russian space and completely assimilating the people living there. The interests of the imperial court included the creation of military-political enclaves in the Caucasus, which began with the formation of separate administrative units for the mountaineers living in Georgia, as well as for the Ossetians who had settled in the mountainous belt of Shida Kartli from the North Caucasus. In 1843, on the instructions of the Military Minister of the Russian Empire, Chernyshev, the Governor-General of Georgia created two administrative units for the population living in the mountainous regions of Eastern Georgia, which had previously been included in the Gori, Tbilisi and Telavi provinces: the Tush-Pshav-Khevsureti and Ossetian okrugs (Gvasalia: p. 100). The Ossetian district included the mountain and Mokhevy people living near the Georgian Military Road. In September 1842, Golovin visited the Ossetian district, the center of which was Kvesheti. (Ibid) It seemed that it was inconvenient to manage the Ossetian-populated Java, Maghran-Dvaleti, and Nar-Mamisoni regions in the upper reaches of the Didi Liakhvi Gorge from Kvesheti, so a mountain district was created for the population living along the military road. In 1843, the Ossetian district was divided into three districts: Java, Patara

Liakhvi, and Nar. The heads of the Ossetian and Tush-Pshav-Khevsureti districts were subordinated to the head of the mountain district by special instructions. The Ardon Gorge (Dvaleti) was also included in the Ossetian district, and its center was Java. On April 3, 1858, the left wing of the Caucasian Line was created, which included the Ossetian Military District in the North Caucasus. (Ibid) This administrative unit was soon assigned the Nari district of the Ossetian District due to its proximity to Vladikavkaz, thereby removing the historical Dvaleti, an integral part of its territory, from the territory of Georgia. The Ossetians who settled in Georgia gradually developed a desire to declare the territories they occupied as their historical homeland, which over time took the form of a separatist movement. This is clearly confirmed by the events that took place in December 1917 (Toidze, 1991: p. 15). On December 15-17, 1917, the Second Congress of Delegates of South Ossetia, held in Tskhinvali, elected the South Ossetian National Council. The Georgian National Council cooperated with the South Ossetian National Council, however, Ossetian separatists provoked confrontation (Ibid, p.23). As L. Toidze writes: "Social, national and separatist motives were intertwined here." On March 19, 1918, Ossetian gangs committed a horrific tragedy in Tskhinvali. They killed representatives of the Georgian delegation that had come to negotiate, and also brutally attacked the local civilian population (Ibid, pp. 25-26). In March 1918, the Georgian People's Guard neutralised the Ossetian separatists. (Ibid, p.28). It is noteworthy that the National Guard units that entered to protect the rebel Ossetians only fought against the leaders of the uprising and did not harm the civilian population, as confirmed by the telegram sent by the commander of the National Guard, V. Jugheli, to the Transcaucasian government on March 23, 1918 (Vadachkoria, 2020: p. 23). As it turns out, on March 22 at 3 o'clock, the Guard units liberated Tskhinvali and its environs. The rebels fled in the direction of Java: "On March 22, at 3 o'clock, the Red Guards captured Tskhinvali and its environs. Before entering the city, the enemy fled, gathering in the Java gorge and the Vanat region. We spent the whole day capturing three villages and clearing them of the rebels. The guardsmen attacked the rebels along a 6-verse wide area with artillery. Our artillery avoided shelling the villages and fired at the opponents who had come out of the villages" (Mgebrishvili, 2019, pp. 210-212). The Ossetian uprisings against the Georgian state, incited by the Bolsheviks, continued in the following months. In June 1918, the Ossetians living in the Sachkhere region organized another uprising, which was supported by the Georgian Bolsheviks. The rebels were led by Isak Kharebov. The main goal of the armed Ossetians was to capture Sachkhere and Chiatura, then to cut the railway and attack Kutaisi.

On June 27, the Ossetians took Sachkhere. This uprising was not only an uprising of the Ossetians living in Sachkhere and its surroundings, but also of Ossetians living in the communities of Kudaro, Kemulti, Zvets, Kornisi, and Okami. At the same time, the Ossetians also began to rise in the Dusheti region and on June 19, they took Dusheti, where they proclaimed Soviet power on June 26. It took the Georgian government a month to neutralise the rebels. In 1919-1920, a number of correspondences were published in the Georgian periodical press, which concerned the raids of the Ossetian bandits and their oppression of the local population. It seems that the attacks of the marauding Ossetians affected their fellow peaceful villagers no less. Ossetians living in Tbilisi condemned the uprisings organized by Ossetian separatists incited by the Bolsheviks. This is confirmed by the report of V. Gagloev, who spoke at the workers' meeting on February 26, 1919 (Toidze, 1991, p. 30). The Ossetians of Tbilisi expressed their desire to live in a free democratic Georgia. Despite the calls of their compatriots, the speeches of the Ossetian separatists did not stop, Bolshevik Russia stood behind them. Such a speech took place on October 23, 1919 in the Roki district, which was neutralized by the authorities of the Democratic

Republic of Georgia. However, the separatist movement continued, incited by the Kremlin. It was precisely at the instigation of the Bolsheviks that on May 8, 1920, the Ossetians proclaimed Soviet power in the Roki district (Toidze, 1991, p. 36). The order of the South Ossetian Revolutionary Committee of June 8, 1920, stated that the territory of South Ossetia was subordinate to the local Revolutionary Committee. They expressed their readiness to join Soviet Russia (Menteshashvili, 1996, p. 285). The anti-state speeches of the Ossetian separatists were met with a harsh response from the Democratic Republic of Georgia. The National Guard, led by V. Jugeli, neutralized the centers of the uprising (Stalin, 1949, p. 19).

In order to intensify the thirst for independence, the ideologists of the Bolshevik Party perpetuated the myth of how ethnic minorities living in the Democratic Republic of Georgia were oppressed. This is evident in the article published by one of the leaders of the communists, I. Stalin, in the newspaper "Pravda" on February 10, 1921: "On the next tasks of the party in the national question. Theses for the X Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), approved by the Central Committee of the party. One of the leaders of the Communist Party accused the independent Republic of Georgia of oppressing Ossetians, Abkhazians, and Armenians (Stalin, 1949, p. 103). We can clearly see how ethnic minorities were "oppressed" in democratic Georgia from the legislative regulations developed by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. As early as June 15, 1918, in the declaration published at the session, we read: "The government considers it its duty to implement the provision recognized in the Act of Independence of Georgia, according to which citizens of national minorities residing in the territory of Georgia will be granted the same political, civil, and national-cultural rights as Georgian citizens themselves" (Khetsuriani, 2011, p. 17). In September 1918, the law "On the Representatives of National Minorities in the National Council of Georgia" allocated 26 seats in the country's legislative body for ethnic minorities. Of these, 2 were for Ossetians (Popiashvili, 2017, p. 114).

According to the law "On the State Language of Georgia" of October 1, 1918, the Georgian language had the status of the state language. All proceedings and debates in the National Council of Georgia were to be held in Georgian. As for ethnic minorities, their language rights were regulated by a separate law. On October 15, 1918, the law "On the Use of Language" was adopted, which introduced an amendment to the Rules of Procedure of Parliament and determined the conditions for the use of ethnic minority languages (Popiashvili, 2017, p. 114). Representatives of national minorities who were members of Parliament who did not know the Georgian language could deliver a speech in their native language, which at least one member of Parliament knew (Constituent Assembly of Georgia, 2019, pp. 106-108). The speech had to be translated into Georgian if at least 15 deputies demanded it. The law "On the Use of Language in Local Self-Government Bodies" adopted on January 14, 1919, granted even greater rights to ethnic minorities. According to this law, within the framework of self-government, if an ethnic minority constituted more than half of the residents, proceedings and deliberations for them had to be conducted in both the state and their native languages (Ibid). It is noteworthy that the rights of national minorities (including Ossetian citizens) declared in the very first regulations of the Democratic Republic of Georgia were given an even stronger foundation by the Constituent Assembly elected in 1919, where several citizens of our country belonging to national minorities from four

political forces obtained deputy mandates, including two Ossetian citizens: Giorgi Gagloev and Aleksandr Parniev (Ibid).

The Constitution adopted in 1921 granted great rights to ethnic minorities living in Georgia. Chapter 14 of this supreme document of the democratic republic deals with this issue. (Constitution of Georgia, 1921: pp. 36-37). The Constitution paid special attention to the education and culture of national minorities. There were 80 Armenian, 60 Russian, and 31 Azerbaijani schools in Georgia. These institutions were mainly financed from the state budget. A German Real Gymnasium was founded in Tbilisi, and the foundation was laid for primary education in the Abkhazian, Ossetian, and other languages. For example, primary Ossetian schools were opened at the expense of the state in the Racha, Shorapani, Gori, and Dusheti regions. At the end of 1918, an Ossetian gymnasium was founded in Tskhinvali, which was financed by the Ministry of Education (Janelidze, p. 21). As of January 1921, there were 48 Ossetian schools on the territory of Georgia (Vadachkoria, 2020, p. 142). The first Constitution of Georgia clearly shows that the vision of the highest authorities of the Democratic Republic was oriented towards the linguistic and cultural rights of various ethnic minorities living on the territory of the country, which was clearly reflected in the main document of the state structure. The annexation of the independent Democratic Republic of Georgia on February 25, 1921 finally opened the door for Ossetian separatists, whose goal was to separate from Georgia. It should be noted that as early as the beginning of 1918, the “South Ossetian” National Council developed a project on the administrative ethnic self-government of “South Ossetia”, which was submitted to the Transcaucasian Commissariat on January 10 of the same year. As Sh. Vadachkoria notes: “The necessity of creating a separate, separate, secular, and special administrative entity for “South Ossetia” was categorically stated in this document. Unlike other documents, this project outwardly created a disguised background for the demand for secular self-government. In reality, it demanded the creation and legalization of a separate administrative, secular entity of “South Ossetia” based on territorial principles, on the basis of the division of the territories of the four secessionist entities, on national grounds” (Ibid, p. 105). According to the draft of January 10, 1918, the administrative-national unit of “South Ossetia” was to include the Racha district (villages of the Chasavlis community), the Shorapani district (villages of the Chikhi community: Tedeleti, Jalabeti, Khakheti), the Gori district (villages included in the communities of the villages of Kornisi, Tsunari, Avlevi, Tamaresheni, Java, Chasavlis, Kemulti, Roki, Zemo Khevi, Ortevi, Beloti, Mereti, Mejvriskhevi, and Zhovdari), along with the city of Tskhinvali. From Dusheti district (villages included in the communities of Kobi, Rekhuli, Monastra, Akhagori, Kvemo Chali, Kheltubani). A total of 4 districts, one city, 22 village communities and 3 villages (Ibid. p. 273). The Georgian government was indeed considering the creation of a separate territorial unit for Ossetians living in the mountainous strip of Shida Kartli. A Java district was to be formed for Ossetians, which was to include village communities from various districts. Among them: a) from Shorapani district - villages of the Chikhi community: Tedeleti, Jalabeti, Khakheti; b) from Racha district - Chasavali village community; c) from Gori district - the communities of Roki, Kemulti and Java of the “Northern Ossetia” district; d) from Tskhinvali district - the village communities of Ortevi, Kornisi and Tsunari (Ibid. p. 112). An interdepartmental commission established by government decree worked diligently on this issue. However, on October 23, 1919, another Ossetian uprising in the Roki district disrupted the work of the commission and the issue of creating the Java region was also suspended (Ibid. p. 124). After the occupation of the First Republic of independent Georgia by Bolshevik Russia, the Ossetian separatists had a favourable moment. The South Ossetian Revcom, established by the resolution of the Georgian Revcom, began to harass the villages in the mountainous region of Shida

Kartli. This is confirmed by a document dated May 1921: “A statement submitted to the Georgian government on the illegal actions of Ossetians in Georgian villages.”

Where we read: “In the villages of Vanati, Beloti, Satskheneti and Atsriskhevi there was a revolutionary committee from Tskhinvali, which belonged to the Tskhinvali revolutionary committee. Since these villages are Georgian villages, (Ibid. p. 458) the Ossetian revolutionary committee sent militia to these villages and announced its orientation. So, these villagers say, if we remain in their hands, then we will flee here. And so it happened, part of the population fled and went to lowlands” (Ibid. pp. 448-449). The Ossetians attacked and robbed the population of several villages in the Didi Liakhvi gorge, including: Georgians living in Sveri, Dzartsemi and Kemerti (Ibid. pp. 448-449). Soon, the idea of creating the South Ossetian Soviet Socialist Republic was outlined by the resolution adopted at the joint session of the South Ossetian Revolutionary Committee and Party Committee on September 6-8, 1921. According to the project adopted by the “South Ossetian” Revolutionary Committee and Party Committee on September 6-8, 1921, the “South Ossetian” Soviet Socialist Republic was to include the Chasaveli rural community from the Racha district, the villages of Grusheli, Zemo Kvazha, Kvemo Kvazha; from the Shorapani district (villages of Tedeleti, Jalabeti, Khakheti, Vakhnisi, Tsoi and others). From the Gori region (Tskhinvali community and the village of Okona); Veli (formerly Dirbi) community and the following villages: Kordi, Badaani, Veli, Buguzaant district, Kvatetri, Balaant district, Gvirgina, Tselisi and others; Tamarasheni, Tsunari, Kornisi, Java, Kemulti, Roki, Ortevi communities (the villages included in the mentioned communities are not named); Beloti (formerly Ditsi) community and the villages included here: Eredvi, Frisi and others; Mereti (formerly Satikhari) community and the villages included here: Chari, Dmenisi, Snekvi, Khelchua, Satikhari and others; Kvemo Chali community and the villages included here: Orchosani, Abrevi and others. Mejvriskhevi community (villages are not named); Kheltubani community and the villages included here: Bogebei, Gudiant Kari, Metesmani, Gduleti, Guchant Kari, Parekhiskhevi, Bichat Kari, Kedi, Tsinagora, Zemo Bogebei and others. Lekhuri, Monastra and Akhgori communities from Dusheti region (villages included in the specified communities are not named) (Ibid. p. 278). Gremiskhevi community and the village of Jvarisubani and others included here. Zemo Mtiuleti community and the villages included here: Gudi, Arkhoti, Sokurti-Zhau, Ulakhvazi, Urmi village, Ganisi and others. Villages included in the Kobi-Truso district (not named). It is worth noting that the so-called The issue of separating South Ossetia into a separate administrative unit was submitted for study to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs B. Kvirkvelia, who addressed the Georgian Revolutionary Committee with a special report on this matter. The author of the report considered the separation of South Ossetia from the Gori region into a separate unit impossible, taking into account geographical and economic factors: “South Ossetia, as a whole geographical unit, does not exist. There are only separate districts populated by Ossetians, which have no relationship with each other. Neither geographically nor economically. Each of these districts represents an inseparable organic part in various geographical and economic provisions. These districts are separated from each other by impassable mountains, and at the same time, each of them has a completely free outlet only in the forest. They are cut off from each other for several months of the year, and each of them is economically dependent on the field to which it is geographically connected.” (Ibid: p. 482) B. According to Kvirkvelia's report, Ossetians who settled in Georgia: "They live in the following regions: 1) In the Gori district - in the village of Kekhwamdi in the Didi Liakhvi gorge, and from this village to the south there are villages inhabited only by Georgians, where the number of Ossetians does not exceed 15% of the population.

2). In the small Liakhvi gorge, the village of Vanatamdi; several Georgian villages are located north of Vanati: Beloti, Ori Khoshura, Satskhene, Atsriskhevi and others. 3). At the headwaters of the Prone River in the Kornisi and Tsunari districts, where the Ossetian population does not exceed 88% of the population (Vadachkoria, 2020, p. 482). 4). In the Dusheti district - at the headwaters of the Aragvi and Ksani rivers. 5). In the Racha district, at the headwaters of the Jejora River.”(Ibid). Despite such a content of the report of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the issue of the creation of an autonomous unit of South Ossetia was ultimately to be decided by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, the Revolutionary Committee of the Georgian SSR and the Central Committee of the RCP(b). (Toidze, 1991, p. 67). The above-mentioned resolution adopted at the joint session of September 6-8, 1921, was forwarded by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Georgian SSR to the Revolutionary Committee of the Georgian SSR on September 27 of the same year, which in turn forwarded the issue to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia for consideration on October 10, 1921. However, the Bolshevik leaders of the republic found it difficult to draw a final conclusion on this issue. This harmful decision on self-determination for South Ossetia was made by the Presidium of the Central Committee of the RCP(b). On October 31, 1921, it was the Presidium that issued a resolution on the creation of South Ossetia, not a Soviet Socialist Republic, but an autonomous region. According to the above-mentioned resolution, the Georgian Revolutionary Committee, together with representatives of South Ossetia, was to delimit the borders of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region.(Ibid). By the resolution of the Bureau, on November 17, 1921, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, based on the report of A. Jatiev and M. Orakhelashvili, declared Tskhinvali the center of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. On November 23, 1921, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia approved the composition of the commission that was to determine the borders of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. The Presidium proposed to the Georgian Revolutionary Committee to include Kakabadze, Shoti and Gagloev in this commission (Ibid, p. 68). Elerdov was also included in the commission. There was only one Georgian in the working group (Vadachkoria, 2020, p. 201). The commission began its work on December 5, 1921. Kirill Kakabadze was elected chairman of the commission, and Sergo Gagloev was elected secretary (Ibid, p. 68). The declaration of Tskhinvali as the center of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, as well as the transfer of Georgian villages to the region, was followed by a sharp protest from the Georgian population living in the Big and Small Liakhvi, as well as the Ksani and Prone gorges (Sosiashvili, pp. 144-158) The special commission submitted a report to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Georgian SSR, which shows that the population living in the villages surrounding Tskhinvali was indignant at the inclusion in the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast. They sent special letters to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, demanding to be placed in the Gori district (Toidze, 1991, pp. 75-77). Meetings were held in the villages, where appeals signed by the population were drawn up and sent to the government of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. (Ibid). It is noteworthy that a part of the Ossetians living in the mountainous region of Shida Kartli also protested the transfer of the so-called Ossetian Revkom. (Ibid). This is confirmed by a letter dated March 21, 1922, sent by the Department of Internal Affairs of the Gori Regional Executive Committee to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Georgian SSR: "There are many examples of Ossetians in various regions expressing a desire to be removed from the Ossetian Revolutionary Committee, because they want to live together with Georgians..." (Ibid., p. 77.). Representatives of the villages of the Patara Liakhvi Gorge also addressed letters of protest to the Soviet government. The Tskhinvali Revolutionary Committee, sensing the mood of the local Georgians,

asked the leadership of the republic to temporarily suspend the issue of transferring Tskhinvali and Georgian villages to the South Ossetian Autonomous Region (ibid, p. 76). The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs also had the same opinion. He appealed to the Georgian SSR Revkom with a request to discuss the administrative unit of South Ossetia later, until relations between Georgians and Ossetians were regulated (Ibid). At the beginning of 1922, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of Georgia was handed over the resolution of the General Assembly of Georgians, Armenians and Jews living in Tskhinvali, who demanded to remain within the historical borders of Tskhinvali and its district. (Ibid). Similar protocols of protest meetings were sent to the authorities: from Nedlati, Khundisubani, Bindara, Tighva, Alabari, Zemo and Kvemo Okona (Ibid, pp. 76-77). The commission, headed by K. Kakabadze, was supposed to discuss the issue of transferring historical Georgian villages to South Ossetia in a dialogue format in consultation with local residents, but the work of the commission was of a formal nature. Despite the population's demands, the commission did not hand over the resolution of the revolution to them. The population demanded the appointment of a new commission, as well as the relocation of the Ossetian Revolutionary Committee to S. Java. About twenty villages sent a letter of protest to the Soviet government (ibid, p. 75).

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia briefly subordinated Tskhinvali and its surrounding Georgian villages to the Gori District Revolutionary Committee, but considered Tskhinvali to be the administrative center of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast. (ibid, p. 75). The government's compromise was temporary. On April 20, 1922, the Kremlin officially formalized the creation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast. (Ibid: p. 80) Paradoxically, a few days before the creation of the "South Ossetian" Autonomous Oblast, an entry "On the Creation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast" appeared in the Constitution of the Georgian Soviet Republic (March 2, 1922). The Georgian Revolutionary Committee sent the prepared draft decree to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs on March 20 of the same year and assigned it to finalize its editing. This issue was handled by the head of the administrative units department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, Gr. G. Gvelesiani, who presented the government with a conclusion based on a fairly in-depth study, according to which "the autonomous unit of South Ossetia included only 7 rural communities in the mountainous zone north of the Gori region (Roki, Tsunari, Kornisi, Java, Kemulta, Ortevi, Beloti) (Vadachkoria, 2020, pp. 229-237). The conclusion of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs indicated that, due to the dissatisfaction among the Georgian population, the Tskhinvali region would be subordinated to the authorities of the Gori region until the local residents themselves decided. Tskhinvali would become the center of the new autonomous formation after the local population expressed a desire to join the autonomous unit. However, the situation soon changed, and through the efforts of the RSDLP Central Bureau and the leaders of the Georgian Communist Party, a group called the "National-Uncolonists" was removed from the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party. The leader of the victorious group in the struggle for power, S. Ordzhonikidze further pushed for the creation of the "South Ossetian" autonomous region within the borders that were demanded by the representatives of the South Ossetian Revolutionary Committee and the Party Committee as early as September 6-8, 1921 (with a slight adjustment of the eastern border) (Ibid, pp. 231-237). On April 20, 1922, a decree (#2) was issued "On the Organization of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region of the All-Georgian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets and the Council of People's Commissars of Georgia", which was also signed by the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Georgian Soviets F. Makharadze, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Georgian Socialist Soviet Republic S. Kavtaradze and the Secretary of the Supreme Committee T. Kalandadze

(Ibid, p. 84.). Ancient Georgian villages were forcibly incorporated into the artificially created South Ossetian Autonomous Region. The decree describes the geographical line that separated the Georgian villages included in the autonomous region from the rest of the territory. One section of the “border” of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region extended from the Patara Liakhvi Gorge in the direction of the Ksani Gorge. Above the village of Odzisi, it crossed the Ksani River and turned the historical Georgian villages north of it into the borders of the autonomous region. The decree reads: “It will include the village of Eredva; it will cross the Otreva River above the village of Plavismani and the rivers of Adzura and Mejuda, the village of Adzvi and Mejvriskhevi a little above; continues northeast of the villages of Kirbali and Bershueti; crosses the Tartla River below the village of Tsinkari, the right tributary of the Lekhuri River above the village of Khurvaleti, bypasses a group of villages: Orchoshan, Abrevi and others, crosses the Lekhuri River north of the villages of Sakorintlo and Odzisi; crosses the Ksan River above the village of Odzisi and adjoins the Ifniani Ridge; d) East: the coastline from the Ifniani Ridge turns north and crosses Khnartsvi, passes west of the line of the village of Mikeliantkari, Irmi Village and other villages; It will go around the middle slopes of the 6409 height to the north, cross the latter a little east of the church ruins; then continue north along the ridge along the course of the Alevi River to the east of this river; it will cross Chartala Mountain at an altitude of 8283, the Sapersheti and Takhti Mountains, continue along the line of the mid-water dividing ridge between the Aragvi River and its tributaries; it will cross the heights: Kurkut, Munjukh and Lomis Pass near the ruins of the monastery and head to the Jamuri Pass; it will cross the right tributaries of the Aragvi River - west of Ganisi, Ereti and other villages; it will continue northwest along the upper reaches of the Aragvi River; It will turn west, cross the Lazg-Tsiti mountain and head along the watershed ridge between the tributaries of the Tergi and Didi Liakhvi rivers, cross the heights of 12117, 11333 and 12572 and reach the Vailk-Parsi mountain. " (Ibid., p. 82.) Thus, the historical Ksani gorge was made part of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region (Vadachkoria, 2020, pp. 249-250.)

After the creation of the autonomous region, attacks by Ossetian robbers on Georgian villages that were artificially assigned to the region became very frequent. Often, information was artificially spread that counter-revolutionary forces had gathered in some villages so that the Ossetians could raid and rob the local population (Vadachkoria, 2020, p. 176). Ossetian gangs were active in the Ksani Gorge. As it is clear from the documents, a 15-man armed detachment of Jatin Kokoev was active in the villages surrounding Akhagori, which, after robbing and looting the villages in and around Tskhinvali, moved to the Dusheti district. The leader of the gang dismissed the local officials appointed by the Georgian Revolutionary Committee and declared the Lekhuri, Monasteri and Ksani valleys to be part of the territory of North Ossetia. (Ibid., p. 116-117.) The authorities ordered the liquidation of the gang and its leader, although as Sh. Vadachkoria indicates, the authorities most likely transferred the bandit squad together with the leader to the North Caucasus. The creation of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region aggravated the situation of the local Georgian population. The indigenous residents of historical Georgian villages protested the government's decision. Based on the protest letters of the population, the Presidium of the All-Georgian Soviet Central Executive Committee on December 16, 1922, under the auspices of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Georgian SSR A. A report card from Gegechkori was sent, where we read: "Having also reviewed the report of the special commission under the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, substantiated by factual material, and considering it necessary to put an end to all disagreements and conflicts between the two neighboring nations once and for all, arising on territorial grounds, and to establish peaceful relations and cooperation between them, I intercede before the Presidium of the All-Georgian Soviet Central Executive Committee, so

that only a principled decision can be made so far - to revise Decree No. 2." (L. Toidze, 1991: pp. 85) As for the detailed clarification of the issue of what changes will be made to this decree, this should be entrusted to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, which should be instructed to consider the issue in a special commission with the participation of a representative of South Ossetia. The report sent by the Commissar of Internal Affairs to the Praesidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic was accompanied by the protocols of the residents of the Georgian villages, including the protest meetings of the residents of Tighvi, Okoni, Sunisi, Nabakvevi, Tkis Ubani, Shindari, Nedlati, Ali-Bari, Akhalsheni and Khundisubani. A similar protest existed in the villages of the Patara Liakhvi gorge. In a protocol dated August 23 (Ibid). The residents of the village of Chareb (Patara Liakhvi Gorge) protested against joining the newly created autonomous region. (Ibid). Representatives of the Georgian villages in the Racha district expressed their protest. (Ibid, pp.85-86). The residents of the village of Dzileti appealed to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs with a similar content on July 5, 1922 (Ibid). On October 21 of the same year, the Ksani community (Dusheti district) (Ibid, pp.85-86). Also appealed to the authorities with a protest. In the protest letter of the residents of the Ksani Gorge, we read: "Having learned that the Ksani community is being transferred to South Ossetia, we consider this absolutely impossible: a) Tskhinvali is more than 50 versts away from our community, and traveling this distance is impossible due to complaints or various matters, because it requires the worker to wait at least 3-4 days to go and return, which would be disastrous to travel there, while Dusheti is 18 versts away from us... No matter how difficult it is, we cannot travel to Tskhinvali, and many injustices and our hardships will remain incomprehensible to the government. It is also very important that we have close relations with the neighbouring villages, which are located towards Dushegi, due to land and other matters, and to resolve matters with them, we have to go to Dushegi and experience many difficulties and inconveniences... Thus, the Georgian population of the Gori region persistently and categorically demands the same thing, more than once, - at different times, in different ways (in writing or in person through a deputation). It expresses the same desire four times - not to subordinate it to the Ossetian authorities." (Ibid., p. 87.) Despite the great resistance of the population, the Ksani Gorge, as well as a large part of Shida Kartli (the Big and Small Liakhvi Gorges, as well as the Prone Gorge) were included in the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. Even more paradoxical was the fact that a dozen years after the creation of the district, the Soviet government renamed the historical centre of the Ksani principality, Akhalgori, which had been the residence of Georgians since ancient times, and called it Leningori in honour of the leader of the proletariat.

The Soviet Union collapsed, the names given to cities and towns as a sign of appreciation for the ideologists of the Communist Party in Soviet reality became a thing of the past and were forgotten. It is surprising that the name of the ideological leader of the Bolsheviks, V. Lenin, survived only in the so-called Republic of South Ossetia. The old Georgian Akhalgori in the occupied Ksani Gorge is still called Leningrad today. According to the official population census conducted by the de facto authorities of the so-called South Ossetia in 2015, the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region was divided into four districts. These are: Tskhinvali, Leningradori (Akhalgori), Znauri (Kornisi) and Java. The historical Akhalgori and the Georgian villages of the Ksani Gorge were attributed to the Leningradori district by the leadership of the de facto Republic of South Ossetia. As of 2015, the renamed, occupied Ksani Gorge had a population of 4,209 (2,044 males and 2,165 females), of which 1,033 people (453 males and 580 females) lived in Akhalgori. The Akhalgori (Leningory) district of the self-proclaimed republic includes several rural centers, including Boli (with the following villages:

Zemo Boli, Kantsela, Bazuati, Ereda, Ikoti, Morberdata, Kvemo Boli, Patkurdzhini, Adarsikhi, Nopgaz, Bezhanta, Akhmaji), Amdzarini (with the following villages: Amdzarini, Abrevi, Monastir, Orchosani, Ghduleti, Jukatikau, Ragikau, Pskhlebi), Karchokhi (the description has been changed and Karchokhi is written as Kartsukhhi instead of Karchokhi) (with the following villages: Balata, Pavliata, Tinikata, Chorokhokhi, Tsiptaurita, Eloita, Karelta, Kenkata, Midelata, Lotiani), Gduisi (with the following villages: Korinta, Gdu, Aleu, Kurta, Tsirkol, Jeguata, Khidikusi, Gru, Gezevreti), Razdakhani (with the following villages: Razdakhani, Salbieri, Dalkau, Juglauani, Tijita), Largvisi (with the following villages: Largvisi, Dorelta, Tskhavati, Kharbali), Dadianeti (with the following villages: Martiata, Dadianeti, Chetita, Basharta, Paskau, Tsikhtikau, Makharieti, Tokhta, Zodekhi, Siukata), Zakkori (with the following villages: Zakkori, Tsoldi, Armazi, Tsubeni, Antonikau, Tsiri). As we can see, many villages in the Ksani Gorge, where Georgians lived before the August 2008 war, were renamed by the leaders of the Republic of South Ossetia. Tinikaant Kars, Tinikata were called, Pavliaant Kars-Pavliata, Ales-Aleu, Kenkaant Kars-Kenkata, Midelaans-Midelata and others. During the August 2008 war, the indigenous Georgian population of the historic Ksani Gorge became displaced as a result of the actions of the Russian occupation military regular army. The erasure of Georgian traces from the territories occupied by the occupiers and the leadership of the de facto South Ossetian so-called Republic in their service did not end with the expulsion of the population alone. An onomastic assault is underway, renaming of villages and settlements. Many Georgian villages have been razed to the ground. Cultural heritage sites are being destroyed. In order to remove the deserted and ruined Georgian villages from the territory of Georgia, an occupation line was drawn with the efforts of the Kremlin. The so-called creeping occupation continues to this day, and the abduction of civilians from villages along the so-called dividing line. The abducted people are being taken to the Tskhinvali detention center. In many cases, we are witnessing fatal consequences. A clear example of this is the abduction and transfer of Archil Tatumashvili to Tskhinvali in 2018, which ended in his brutal torture and death. We believe that the current situation in Georgia, the occupied territories, the trampling of human rights, the destruction of the homes of the indigenous population in dozens of Georgian villages, should be a matter of concern for the modern civilized world.

## Conclusion

The study of the incorporation of the Ksani Gorge into the South Ossetian Autonomous Region demonstrates that the process was largely shaped by the political interests of the Soviet regime and not by the free will of the local population. The creation of the autonomous region represented a continuation of the imperial and Bolshevik policy of administrative restructuring in the Caucasus based on ethnic and political considerations.

The archival documents, protest protocols, and official correspondence analyzed in the research clearly reveal that the Georgian population of the Ksani Gorge, as well as residents of the Didi and Patara Liakhvi and Prone gorges, actively opposed inclusion in the newly established autonomous unit. Their resistance reflected both historical attachment to the Georgian state and concern over the social, economic, and administrative consequences of the imposed reforms. The research also demonstrates that part of the Ossetian population shared dissatisfaction with the policies implemented by the revolutionary authorities.

The establishment of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region ignored the geographical, historical, and economic realities of the region. Despite objections expressed by local communities and even by certain Soviet officials, the Kremlin finalized the creation of the autonomous entity and incorporated historically Georgian territories within its borders. This decision significantly influenced the future development of Georgian-Ossetian relations and contributed to the emergence of long-term political and ethnic tensions.

The consequences of these processes became especially evident after the collapse of the Soviet Union and during the conflicts of the post-Soviet period. The occupation of the Ksani Gorge after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the displacement of the indigenous Georgian population, the renaming of villages, and the destruction of cultural heritage sites demonstrate the continuing impact of the policies initiated during the Soviet era.

Therefore, the history of the Ksani Gorge and the protest of its population against incorporation into the South Ossetian Autonomous Region should be understood not only as a regional historical issue, but also as an important example of how politically motivated administrative decisions can influence ethnic relations, historical memory, and regional stability for generations.

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