



## 1812-1813 ANTI-RUSSIAN REBELLION IN KAKHETI

**Iakob Gogebashvili**

Telavi State University, Associate Professor Madona Kebabze

**Mzia Maisuradze,**

Doctor of History, Mentor Teacher of History at LEPL Telavi N:5 Public School

**Eka Kobiashvili,**

Doctor of History, Teacher of History and Civic Education at LEPL Telavi N:6 Public School



**Abstract:** In 1812 the first anti-Russian units were formed in Tianeti and Akhmeta. On February 2, all kinds of communications between Telavi and Signaghi were ceased. On the same day, rebels led by Simon Beburishvili and Ivane Makashvili took control of Telavi. The Russian garrison, headed by Commandant Shmatov, could hardly be fortified at Telavi Fortress, and the troops sent by General Portniagin to Telavi couldn't do anything to the city. Almost half of these detachments were killed in the fight against the rebels. The rest could hardly pave their way and get to the castle where nearly 300 Russian soldiers besieged by Kakhეთians, almost doomed to die, were completely torn away from the outer world for 32 days.

On February 5-7, rebels captured Signaghi, besieged Kodalo Fortress, and defeated the Kabardo Regiment located in Bodbebiskevi. The people's army destroyed Russian military units in Anaga, Kakabeti and Manavi; In fact, after these battles no Russian troops were left in Kakheti.

### 1. Historiography, Reasons, Goals and Nature of the Rebellion

The valuable documentary materials about Kakheti Rebellion are offered in IV and V volumes of the Archeographic Commission of the Caucasus, the work of Russian military historian Potto – "Establishing Russians' Ownership in the Caucasus". Potto's work - "The History of the Nizhegorod Dragoon Regiment within Georgia (1809-1812)" illustrates well the ruthless struggle that Russians have set in Georgia, namely against the population of Kakheti and Mountainous Kakheti. The works of: David Batonishvili, Alexandre Chavchavadze, Alexandre Proneli, A. Kikvidze, N. Berdzenishvili, O. Markova, Chudinov, Sh. Khantadze, N. Javakhishvili and others give information about Kakheti Rebellion. The rebellion had many reasons: socio-economic, political, the desire to restore the infringed national pride, etc. Leaders of the rebellion tried to give the movement started in Kakheti the nationwide and Caucasian scale.

### 2. Start and Progress of Kakhეთian Rebellion

In 1812 the first anti-Russian units were formed in Tianeti and Akhmeta. On February 2, all kinds of communications between Telavi and Signaghi were ceased. On the same day,

rebels led by Simon Beburishvili and Ivane Makashvili took control of Telavi. The Russian garrison, headed by Commandant Shmatov, could hardly be fortified at Telavi Fortress, and the troops sent by General Portniagin to Telavi couldn't do anything to the city. Almost half of these detachments were killed in the fight against the rebels. The rest could hardly pave their way and get to the castle where nearly 300 Russian soldiers besieged by Kakhetians, almost doomed to die, were completely torn away from the outer world for 32 days.

On February 5-7, rebels captured Signaghi, besieged Kodalo Fortress, and defeated the Kabardo Regiment located in Bodbebiskevi. The people's army destroyed Russian military units in Anaga, Kakabeti and Manavi; In fact, after these battles no Russian troops were left in Kakheti.

The fire of uprising broke out in Khevi, Dusheti and Pasanauri, and the rebels blocked the Georgian Military Highway. The official Russian documents retell that Georgians showed terrible brutality, killed many Russian officers and soldiers, but the same documents can't hide the reasons which brought Georgian population to this action; the inhuman actions of Russian soldiers followed a strong excitement of people. High Commissioner of the Caucasus Marquis Paulucci, being concerned reported the Emperor that this "riot" was headed by Georgian princes. He noted that the rebels intended to involve in anti-national action not only Georgians but also the population of Dagestan, Shirvan and Shakki.

The rebels first of all took Dusheti and Ananuri (February 9, 1812). All layers of the population were involved in the uprising, among them Prince Otar Kobulashvili was the most active person. By his initiative, the rebels invited from Kartli Prince Grigol Ioane (Batonishvili), and declared him as the king. As Niko Javakhishvili notes, in Kakhetian churches "Grigol was referred to as the legal king."

Paulucci was able to concentrate Russian military forces; as well as, part of Georgian princes also supported him. One of the decisive battles took place near village Chumlaki on March 1-2, 1812. Georgians fought selflessly in this battle but lost the battle and Grigol Batonishvili was captured. The first stage of the rebellion ended. Paulucci severely punished part of the rebels who were captured by Russians; but at the same time he addressed the Emperor to take into consideration the demands of the population... In reality, the government has made minor changes. Instead of the 'captain-ispravniks' (*heads of the district police*), it re-established 'Samouravo' (manager's office), and the courts were granted the right to run their work using the old Georgian law. The authorities were convinced that the population was "calmed", but in reality it was not true. Marquis Paulucci intended to go to St. Petersburg and was quick to investigate the reasons for the uprising in details in order to present the report to the Emperor personally. On March 13, 1812, the commission appointed by him collected a number of materials, which included the protest reports of the population, showing the brutality of Russian policy in Georgia.

The New Chief General-Lieutenant Nikoloz Tevdore Rtischev arrived in Tbilisi in April 1812. The situation again became tense in Georgia, when in June, 1812, Napoleon I broke into Russian boundaries. In September, 1812, Alexandre Batonishvili returned from Persia and urged the population of Kakheti and Mountainous regions of Eastern Georgia to drive the Russians out of Georgia completely. The population of Eastern Georgia (Kakheti, Pshavi, Khevsureti, Aragvi and Dariali Gorges, and a small part of Kartli) quickly responded to his appeal. Additional army also arrived from Dagestan.

The regular army started from the North Caucasus managed to open the blocked Georgian Military Highway and threatened the rebels from the north. Alexandre Batonishvili was obliged to leave the partisan battles and start the critical struggle. On October 10, the drastic battle between the supporters of Alexandre Batonishvili and the Russian army took place near village Shilda. The tense fighting lasted seven hours and the Russian army headed by Dimitri Orbeliani defeated the rebels. Dimitri Orbeliani, having won the battle against Georgians ruined Shilda and Sabue, considering them to be the villages supporting the



"enemy". In the same period, Russians defeated Persians who intended to invade Tbilisi: the attacks took place near village Chalaubani (November 1, 1812) and Manavi (November 26). In these battles Dagestanians also helped Alexandre (5000 men). Alexandre, retreated from Shilda, moved to village Sabue. According to the Caucasian Acts and Captain Anosov's words, village Shilda was completely destroyed (burnt) by the Russian Army. Pasanauri, Kaishauri and Dusheti roads were controlled by Major Nicholski and Colonel Pechorski. General Major Simonovich, come from Imereti, headed the Tbilisi garrison instead of Dimitri Orbeliani, who went to Kakheti.

Soon the number of rebels has decreased. Dimitri Orbeliani won the battle again and tried his best to capture Alexandre Batonishvili. According to Orbeliani's order, some of the participants of the uprising were hanged on the spot. He promised the rebelled noblemen that if they turned away from Alexandre Batonishvili, they would get full amnesty. Indeed, many princes believed him and stopped fighting. And, Dimitri Orbeliani arrested them and sent them to Governor Rtischev to punish them.

### **3. Battle in Khevsureti**

Alexandre Batonishvili managed to escape and was fortified in Shatili. In June, Russians were able to take Shatili, although they used artillery and killed 700 Khevsurs and destroyed 20 villages in Khevsureti. The battles in Khevsureti are highlighted in details in Potto's Nizhegorod Regiment History, which is fully reviewed in this paragraph of the thesis.

### **4. Reasons of Defeating Kakheti Rebellion and the Consequences**

Kakheti rebellion was defeated like the previous anti-Russian uprisings. The rebellion had its leaders and they were not involved in the battle with "feudal interests", but, primarily, by the national ones. The conqueror itself was a military feudal Empire, and it was obvious, people preferred obeying their own king rather than being in slavery and obedience to the Empire, as their king would better understand and protect their national traditions and spirituality. It was just due to this reason that the participants of the rebellion have chosen Grigol Batonishvili, Erekle's successor, as their King. The reasons of the defeat of the uprising were: lack of common plan of rebellion, collaborationism and national nihilism, spontaneous actions of the Georgian forces against the Russian regular army, genuine and ruthless, unequal war against Georgian patriots, which is well illustrated in the description of the war in Russian military literature.

The Imperial Court punished Kakhetian rebels in an exemplary way. Their estates were transferred either to the treasury, or given to the unfaithful Georgians. Nevertheless, the Kakheti Rebellion showed the great desire and selflessness of Georgian people to protect national interests. It became an example of disobedience to imperial forces and selfless struggle for Georgia's future generations.

### **References:**

1. Documents 1999, - Documents for the history of the Kakheti uprising of 1812 (prepared for publication by Professor Shota Khantadze). Tbilisi. Tbilisi University Publishing House.
2. Petrov, A. (1886). War of Russia with Turkey 1806-1813, (T..2) : SPB.
3. Bendianishvili, Al. (1980), National Issue in Georgia, 1801-1921, Tbilisi: Science.
4. Kikvidze, Ab. (1941). Peasant uprising in Kakheti in 1812. : Tbilisi.
5. Fronell, Al. (1907). Uprising of Kakheti in 1812 : Tbilissi.
6. Kortua, N. (1964). Georgia in the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812 ("From the history of the military community of the Russian and Georgian peoples") : Tbilisi.