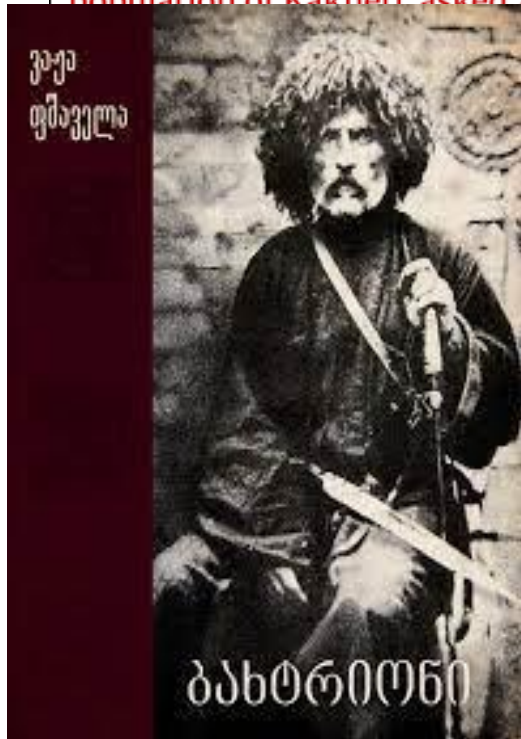




Bakhtioni Uprising

Georgians' discontent was building up day by day. The neighboring Persians from Pasheti, Pshavi and Khevsureti started preparations for a rebellious attack. As it is preserved in Georgian folk poetry, this attack was led by a public hero Zezva Gaprindauli. The oppressors' offensive behaviour towards the Khutsesi (priest) at Easter became the immediate motive for the uprising. Insulted mass population of Kakheti asked Zaal



XIII century was full of hardships for Georgia. In addition to being split in two parts by Iran and Ottoman Empire, Leki tribe and Ottomans kidnapped and sold Georgians for slavery. That is when Shah- Abbas II decided to fully destroy the region of Kakheti, replacing the native population of Kakheti with Turkic nomads.

Furious and enraged Shah Abbas wouldn't definitely forgive Georgia for this uprising. He commanded King of Kartli Vakhtang (Shah- Navaz) three heroes to be sent to him . Shah Abbas had them delivered to the tribes that the insurgents had massacred earlier. They were tortured and put to death. As for Zezva Gaprindauli, he and his co- fighters went on fighting against Qizilbash forces causing a lot of damage to them. Unfortunately there is no historic evidence of what happened to this public hero , but Georgian people dedicated a lot of songs and poems to him immortalizing his name.

25 000 Turkic families were supposed to be settled in Georgia simultaneously taking over the best lands to cultivate them .

In 1659, at Alaverdoba (a holiday) Georgian forces having said a prayer and being divided into two parts attacked Turkoman fortresses at Bakhtioni and Alaverdi since most of their forces was located there. This surprise battle took place at night. Most of the Qizilbash guardians were slaughtered, but some of them managed to escape running towards Alaverdi Fortress which meanwhile had surrendered and guardians from it themselves were heading to Bakhtioni seeking shelter. These runaways came across each other in the field of Alavani, the very place they were brutally vanquished and massacred by Georgians. This spot is still called ' Gatskvetila' (slaughtering place).

The battle of Bakhtioni and the heroism revealed here inspired well-known Georgian writers Vazha-Pshavela to compose his epic poem 'Bakhtioni' and Akaki Tsereteli write a novel – 'Bashi- Achuki' about it.

**During this period
fortress of strategic
importance –
Bakhtrioni was built.
This fortress enabled
Turkomans to control
the road leading from
Kakheti mountains
down to the valleys
and defend Turkic
people transplanted
near the left bank of
the river Alazani from
attacks of highlanders**

*Georgian highlanders from Tusheti, Khevsureti and Pshavi
also joined the rebellion under the leadership of Zezva
Gaprindauli, Nadira Khosharauli and Pshavi Gogolauri.*