



## COLONIAL POLICY OF RUSSIA AND SAMACHABLO

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**Abstract:** The political history of Samachablo (Didi Liakhvi Gorge) is closely related to the fight of the representatives of the Georgian Royal House and the feudal aristocracy against the Russian authorities that had become active since 1802. Although several members of the clan of the Machabeli feudal lords were in the service of the Russian government, their overall attitude was sharply anti-Russian. The Machabels took an active position in the actions against Russia's colonial policy and fought in support of members of the Kartli-Kakheti Royal House. The rebellious Georgian princes tried to form a united front against the Russians. In the pursuit of the common goal of the Caucasians, they also relied on the support of the Ossetians, which were loyal to the Royal House. Georgian historical sources have retained a lot of information on the active relations of the Georgian kings with the Ossetians living in the North Caucasus, which often fought side by side with the Georgians during the invasions of foreign enemies. The Emperor's Court of Russia exerted a political pressure on the small nations in the Caucasus region. Ossetians also could not escape the Russian aggression. The German traveller Güldenstädt narrates of the Ossetian population's confrontation with Russian troops that often resulted in casualties on the part of the Ossetians. The support from Ossetians for Georgia occupied by Russia soon became evident. Vakhtang Batonishvili, who rebelled in 1802, was actively assisted by Ossetians from Tagauri, because of which, Russian General Tuchkov imposed economic sanctions on the Ossetians. This meant that the Ossetians were prevented from importing grains from the lowland. This was, of course, a major blow to the Ossetians living in the mountains. In 1804, Governor-General Tsitsianov also tried to block the road for the Ossetians from Tagauri in order to prevent them from connecting further to Georgia. Russia had become a common enemy for the peoples living in the Caucasus. Therefore, the representatives of the Court of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti tried to take mutual efforts against Russia. Georgian princes placed special hopes on the Ossetians, which were their historical allies.

**Keywords:** Samachablo, Russian empire, Colonial policy, Georgia, Ossetians

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### 1. Introduction

The political history of Samachablo (Greater Liakhvi Valley) is closely related to the fight of the representatives of the Georgian Royal House and the feudal aristocracy against the Russian authorities that had become active since 1802. Although several members of the clan of the Machabeli feudal lords were in the service of the Russian government, their overall attitude was sharply anti-Russian. The Machabels took an active position in the actions against Russia's colonial policy and fought in support of members of the Kartli-Kakheti Royal House (Sosiashvili, 2016). The rebellious Georgian princes tried to form a united front against the Russians. In the pursuit of the common goal of the Caucasians, they also relied on the support of the Ossetians, which were loyal to the Royal House. Georgian historical sources have retained a lot of information on the active relations of the Georgian kings with the Ossetians living in the North Caucasus, which often fought side by side with the Georgians during the invasions of foreign enemies.

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### 2. Method

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



the old archival documents, using the content analysis method, we try to highlight the then relations of Samchablo geographical area and the Russian empire to shed the light on these important historical matters.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Russia had become a common enemy for the peoples living in the Caucasus. Therefore, the representatives of the Court of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti tried to take mutual efforts against Russia. Georgian princes placed special hopes on the Ossetians, which were their historical allies. This is confirmed by Parnaoz Batonishvili's address to the Ossetians living in the North Caucasus. In a letter dated 1800, Parnaoz, the son of Erekle asked the "Kurtauli Ossetians", together with the "Tagauri", to block the way for the Russians: "Greetings with brotherly love from the King of Georgia Parnaoz-dear Kurtaulians. You are well aware that from ancient times, our and your ancestors belonged to each other and hold each other with brotherly love and were as fathers and children. Now we continue the same way and our family will be your family. We will approve your ancestors' revenue book and those of you who have not mercy from the Khan, will have it even more. Now you are expected to be involved in the troops and assist the people of Tagauri and block the roads to prevent Russians from entering the area. And we will assist you in the way you wish. Thank God we came here to Stepantsminda and intend to go to the town from where our brother Alexander will come with the army of the Kizilbash. We rely on your loyalty and bravery. Keep us informed about your affairs. In September, we will stay in the town and when, by the grace of God, we finish our affairs here, we will come and princes of Kakheti will come to us. All people of Georgia have stepped back. By the grace of God, the situation is good and now it is your turn" (Sosiashvili, 2011).

The crossing, the blockage of which representatives of the Bagrationi Royal House asked the Tagauri and Kurta Ossetians, presumably, must be the beginning of the Georgian Military Road. It is noteworthy that in the last quarter of the 18th century, this section of the Military Road was controlled by the Tagauri Ossetians together with Georgians. This fact is also confirmed by the information from the German traveller Johann Anton Güldenstädt that shows that the Ossetians kept watch over the bridges on the Terek River together with Khevsurs (Sosiashvili, 2007).

#### 3.1. Foreign and internal scientific Sources about Russian Policy towards Samachablo

According to Güldenstädt, this section of the road could be crossed only after paying the Ossetians some reward (Sosiashvili, 2007). As the German traveller narrates: "They (Ossetians implied - G.S.) gave many troubles to the Russian troops on the line, although they lived far from them, but used to attack and kill, directly on the Terek line, the passengers coming from and to Georgia, when, from time to time, they attempted to tame them.

They recognized Russian supremacy and patronage and used to give hostages; and when the latter used to escape or die, and, therefore, were no longer afraid of the latest punishment, they would immediately become hostile." (Sosiashvili, 2007).

Such attitude of Ossetians towards Russians was not accidental. Russian soldiers and district police officers treated them with special cruelty (Sukhitashvili, 2008). All of this encouraged Ossetians to fight against the Russian aggressors. As soon as the anti-Russian movement started, representatives of the Machabel feudal family promised their support for Yulon and Parnaoz Batonishvili. Together with the Machabels, also other princes of Kartli disobeyed the pro-Russian David, the son of George. Due to this, on December 20, 1800, the heir of George XII, David Batonishvili sent a special letter to the representatives of the feudal aristocracy of Kartli-Kakheti and summoned them to the royal court. Davit Batonishvili's letter was also sent to the Machabels. The document stated the following:

"1) To Otar Amilakhvrov, all Amilakhvrovs, Machabels, Avalovs, Palavandovs, Favlenovs and all others - concerning the fact that King George, while he was still alive, appointed him King. Therefore, he orders everyone to appear before him as soon as they receives this information, and if any of them delays, will be punished by the Imperial troops. December 20, 1800 ...

6) Louis (meaning Luarsab Machabeli- GS) Machabeli-Milakhvari should appear immediately - December 20 ... " (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 295, N 354).

#### 3.2. Relations of the Russian Empire with Georgian Noblemen

Davit Batonishvili, who was close to the Russian authorities, confiscated the lands in Shida Kartli and Aragvi Gorge from the rival- Yulon, the son of Erekle and handed them over to his supporter Elizbar Machabel, including: "15 households from Giunovs" (meaning the family of Giunashvilis, who lived in the village of Plavismani - G.S.) clan, also 15 households of the inhabitants of Ditsi (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 295, N 354). David Batonishvili, who was distinguished by his loyalty, also honoured Zaza Machabeli for his good deeds. He gave him two families in the village of Kekhvi (the document refers to Kekhvi as the property of the Queen. it is known that Queen Darejan owned Tskhinvali. Apparently, the spouse of Erekle II also had estates in Kekhvi) (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 303, N 368). According to the data compiled by Enokhin, the district chief of police, Zaza Machabeli, as of April 2, 1803, owned one household in the village of Achabeti and three households of peasants held by the treasury in Kekhvi. The explanatory note of the district chief of police of Gori Mazra Enokhin dated 1803 includes the list of the lands confiscated from Yulon, the son of Erekle. Zaza Machabeli referred to as Mouravi (regional governor) of Kekhvi in the document was given 1 household living in Achabeti from the property owned by the rebel prince (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 74, N 121).

The Russian authorities initially also trusted David Machabeli, one of the representatives of the Machabeli nobility. A report to Major-General Lazarev, drafted by Lieutenant-Colonel Simonov on June 29, 1801, stated that David Machabeli had shown special courage in the clash between the Russian unit and Georgian militants against the Lezhgin unit arriving from Türkiye (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 649, N 908).

As noted above, the Machabels were involved in the anti-Russian movement from the very first days. As early as February 18, 1801, Shermazan and Elizbar Eristavi notified General Lazarev with a letter that Luarsab and Datua Machabeli had relations with Parnaoz and Yulon Batonishvili, who had rebelled against the Russians (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 243, N 908). In 1802, the Russian government considered arresting the Machabels along with other rebellious nobles of Kartli and Kakheti (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 3, N 1). Georgian princes received special support from Luarsab and Datua Machabeli. Luarsab was with his family in Imereti together with Prince Yulon Batonishvili, and Datua accompanied Parnaoz. The rebellious princes Yulon, Alexander and Parnaoz Batonishvili were supported by many members of the aristocracy (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 293, N 229). Yulon and Parnaoz Batonishvili seem to have heavily relied on the feudal house of the Machabels. This is confirmed by the letter of August 17, 1802, which they sent to David Machabel: "Brilliant Prince Machabeli, Minister David! Sons of the King of Georgia Yulon and Parnavaz greet you with love and respect; Of course, you are aware that the whole of Kakheti and Kiziki swore an oath of loyalty until the last breath. We received their letter. Their people visited us. Now you will have respect and loyalty for us. You do as you promised. In addition, please send us quickly one man whom you trust, let us know about local affairs and your full opinion as well. Believe us, we will do as you consider it appropriate." (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 250, N 249).

Despite much resistance, Luarsab Machabel was loyal to the rebellious princes to the end. The letter sent by Vice-Colonel Simonovich to Major-General Lazarev on June 21, 1802, reads as follows: "I learnt from Imereti that King Solomon and Prince Kaikhosro Tsereteli marched on Dadiani and the princes Yulon and Pharaoh were in a lot of trouble, because they failed to give fully the provisioning promised to them and previously appointed by King Solomon. In addition, the Georgians who went to Imereti together with him, were dispersed. Only Prince Luarsab Machabeli and several servants stayed there." (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 246, N 236).

Zaza Machabeli, mentioned above, who is referred to as Mouravi of Kekhvi and Achabeti during the reign of George XII (he held the title of Minbashi-Asistavi) (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 195, N 157), collaborated with the Russian government. This is confirmed by the report of Major-General Lazarev to Knorring, dated March 15, 1801. The document reads as follows: "Prince Machabeli (Zaza Machabeli is implied- G.S.) informed me orally that the

princes in Imereti do not give their consent to leave for Russia. This is confirmed by a letter sent by the King of Imereti to the Crown Prince that he handed to me and is attached to the above report. His Excellency writes that despite his many attempts to convince the princes of the necessity to travel to Russia, they disagree and are adamant on the matter. According to Prince Machabeli (Zaza Machabeli is implied- G.S.), Prince Alexander is waiting for the nobleman Zakaria sent by him to Baba-Khan, who is detained by us and is under protection." (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 244, N 230).

A letter from Lieutenant Colonel Simonovich dated August 18, 1802, that is addressed to Major-General Lazarev, states that the below listed spies arriving from Imereti, who were captured by Zaza Machabeli near Kurta: Simon Gobashvili (the document miswrites the surname, presumably, it must be Gabashvili) and Pavle Baseshvili (presumably, it must be Basishvili) brought letters from Yulon and Parnaoz Batonishvili to Zaza, Elizbar, David and Levan Machabelis. Zaza Machabeli notified the government of all of this. The report of Simonovich addressing Lazarev was accompanied by letters sent by princes in Imereti and interrogation materials of spies (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 249, N 244).

The rebellious princes intended to move from Imereti, in particular, the village of Chali to Kartli. Accompanied by 100 people, they arrived to the village of Gomareti, but changed their mind and went to Kartli. They seem to have received information on the movement of Russian troops from their supporters. The Russian government were informed about the attempt of Parnaoz and Yulon Batonishvili to depart from Imereti by the Palavandishvilis (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 249, N 244). The rebellious princes used to send letters to the princes in Kartli asking for help. Such a message sent by them (sent by Yulon Batonishvili and his chief falconer Malkhaz Andronikashvili) was handed over by Mikheil Eristavi to Major-General Tuchkov. According to a report dated August 12, 1802 that was sent by General Lazarev to the Governor-General Knorring, similar letters were also sent to other princes of Kartli. The letters of the princes were disseminated by Malkhaz Andronikashvili, Piran Cherkezishvili and Luarsab Machabeli. At that time, Malkhaz Andronikashvili and Luarsab Machabeli were in the village of Sveri in the Greater Liakhvi Valley, while Piran Cherkezishvili was in the Little Liakhvi Valley, in particular, in Kulbiti. Major-General Tuchkov ordered the arrest of all of three princes. To fortify the Little Liakhvi Valley, the Russians sent an additional 50 grenadiers to the village of Beloti. Luarsab Machabeli from the Machabel feudal house was especially active against the Russian authorities (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 244, N 249). He was connecting Yulon and Parnaoz Batonishvili to Georgian noblemen. The letter dated December 25, 1802 that was sent by Vice-Colonel Simonovich to Major-General Lazarev states:

"...In order to incite rebellion and unrest in Kartli, princes Yulon and Parnaoz came with troops from Imereti and

crossed the border of Kartli and tried to win over the noblemen through letters and plenipotentiary ambassadors- Luarsab Machabeli and Piran Cherkezov..." Simonovich's report list the measures taken by the Russian military personnel, who were supported by some part of Kartli noblemen, including battalion commander Zaza Machabeli (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 251, N 247). By the commission of Russian officials, Zaza Machabeli was holding negotiations with Parnaoz and Yulon Batonishvili in Imereti. This is confirmed by a letter dated March 16, 1801 from Major-General Lazarev to the Governor-General Knorring: „ ... Prince Machabeli (Zaza Machabeli is implied), whom I sent to them with letters, told me that he met the princes in the village of Chala, a day's drive from Kutaisi, in a barrack-like place where some 300 people were present. For keep them, 2 pood of wheat and 8 jugs of wine per household are ordered." (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 333, N 426).

The report dated February 1, 1801 that was submitted by the Governor-General Carl Knorring to the Russian Emperor, lists the princes who recognized Prince Yulon Erekle as the heir to the Georgian throne. The list includes Luarsab Machabeli (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 323, N 404). As found from the letter dated May 10, 1802 that was sent by the Eristavi of Ksani to the Governor-General Carl Knorring, Luarsab Machabel was wounded in the attack that took place near Karagaji and that ended with the victory of the rebellious princes (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 501, N 598). Russian high-ranking officials periodically received information on the movement of the princes in Imereti from the local agents, which were instilled in the local population. This is confirmed by the letter of Vice-Colonel Simonovich to Major-General Tuchkov. A document dated July 15, 1802, shows that the noblemen in western Georgia were planning to attack Russian military units with an army of the Imeretians and Lezghins gathered in Racha. Russian military officials were informed by Ossetian Kecho Jioshvili living in the village of Gupta. Simonovich's letter states that Elizbar Machabeli had his subordinates in Racha. A Russian lieutenant colonel sent to him his trusted man, wrote a letter to Elizbar Machabel and instructed him to clarify the situation. In his report, Simonovich informed Major-General Tuchkov that the Machabels were not trustworthy because they had not provided information to the Russian military officer. In addition, Revaz Machabeli was observed to have relations with the Georgian noblemen who were close to the rebellious princes: Firana Cherkezishvili, Avtandil Purtseladze and Estate Gedevanishvili (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 501, N 598).

The government feared that the Ossetians living in Samachablo would also be supported by Pharnaoz and Yulon Batonishvili, who were fighting against the Russian rule.

In the first years of the 19th century, the Ossetians living in the Greater Liakhvi Valley expressed anti-Russian sentiments (ACAC, 1866: v. I, p. 571, N 742). They collaborated with the rebellious princes. On May 31,

1804, Pavle Tsitsianov, the Governor-General Shanshe Eristavi gave a special task to the leader of the noblemen of Gori Mazra: "... The letters sent by the prince in Imereti may cause unrest among the Ossetians of Kartli, for the avoidance of which we offer you to be especially careful; anyway, you are obliged to keep calm in the Mazra entrusted to you by the common decision of the nobility." In order to succeed in this work, once you receive this (the letter is implied- G.S.), it is better to travel to the Greater Liakhvi Valley and take with you the princes Revaz and Zaza Machabeli. According to my instructions, they (the Machabels-G.S.) are obliged to pay attention to them (Ossetians-G.S.)" (Mgebrishvili, 2019). Pavle Tsitsianov addressed a similar letter to Revaz Machabeli: "You, as well as Prince Zaza Machabeli, have sufficient influence there (the Ossetian settlements in the upper reaches of the Greater Liakhvi valley are implied - G.S.) and it would be good for you to be there. I am sure that the friendship between you and the nobles Eristavis will bring more success to the business ... because of the work you have done, I will petition you to be nominated for an award to His Imperial Majesty." (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 553, N 1076).

As can be seen from a report written on July 14, 1804 by Governor-General Tsitsyanov to Count Kochubei, Yulon and Parnaoz, who were fighting against the Russians, intended to invade the Little Liakhvi Valley. Tsitsianov instructed the Ksani Eristavi and Machabeli to avoid unrest among the local population and ordered their arrest in the case of entry of the princes (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 134, N 220).

Very soon, Russian authorities arrested supporters of Yulon Batonishvili. As found from their testimonies (Solomon Amirejibi, Teodos Khirseli, Giorgi Poponidze, Glakho Avalov, Giorgi Saakadze, Armenian Karganov and Galez Gainov from Dagestan), Luarsab Machabeli had a particularly close relationship with Yulon, the son of Erekle.

The princes also tried to win over Zaza Machabeli, who was in the service of the Russians. Zaza had to transfer them to the mountainous part of the Greater Liakhvi Valley (where Ossetians lived). One of the princes would stay here, and the other would arrive in the Aragvi gorge. Based on the preliminarily received message, the princes at the Kartli-Imereti crossroads expected to receive assistance from Zaza Machabeli, but disappointed, they returned to Kutaisi (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 130-132, N 217). According to the testimonies of Solomon Amirejibi, Aznaur Karumidze and Molozanov, who were supporters of the rebellious princes arrested by the Russians in July 1804, the Machabels sent an Ossetian unit to assist Yulon and Pharnaoz in western Georgia, whose movement on the road was blocked by Gori commandant Reich. On June 24, 1804, Junior Captain Novatsky captured Yulon Batonishvili in Imereti, 40 km from the Kartli border (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 134, N 221).

On September 11, 1804, Parnaoz Batonishvili sent a letter to the Machabels and Palavandishvilis. As

mentioned in the text, the messenger would have informed the addressees in detail about the request of Parnaoz, the son of Erekle. Pharnaoz and Yulon held intensive negotiations with the nobles living in Kartli through Malkhaz Andronikashvili. Andronikashvili's representative Simon Andreev met with the nobleman Shalva Zhuruli, who had to inform the rebels about the situation in the Little Liakhvi Valley and ensure the connection of the princes with the rebel Ossetians living in the Greater Liakhvi Valley. Simon Andreev also had to meet Iase Machabeli, the son of Bezhan Amilakhvari and Erasti Gedevanishvili, but he could not do it. He was arrested by Elizbar Eristavi (Sosiashvili, 2019).

The authorities many times attempted to negotiate with Luarsabh Machabel, the supporter of the rebelled princes. As it turns out, State Counsellor Litvinov arrived in western Georgia to meet with rebel leaders. Luarsabh Machabeli hid from Kutaisi. Tsitsyanov asked Litvinov to take with him a special notification (card) to hand over to Luarsabh Machabel. The state counsellor asked Luarsabh's brother to help him find the brother, who would also be of some service for him (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 385, N 771). Litvinov's report states that the issue of Luarsabh Machabeli's deportation to Russia was discussed. However, the author of the letter mentions resolution N 17, according to which his deportation was not allowed at that moment. He hoped to meet with Luarsabh Machabel and to hand over to him Tsitsyanov's notification, or to leave the document sent by the Governor-General to his wife (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 386, N 771). The letter dated 23 February 1805 that was sent to Tarasov, the State Counsellor by Governor-General Tsitsianov states that after the defeat of the 1804 rebellion, Luarsabh Machabeli voluntarily appeared for interrogation wife (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 336, N 675). Luarsabh no longer seemed to consider continuing the fight appropriate.

Despite the temporary neutralization of the Machabels, the Greater Liakhvi Valley still remained for the Russians as a place fraught with war.

Russian officials were particularly opposed by the Ossetians living in the mountainous part of Samachablo. Priest Alex Petriev (Petriashvili)'s letter addressed to the Governor-General Pavle Tsitsianov gives interesting information about this. The document, dated September 10, 1804, states that the Russian army that came out of Roki and 70 recruits of Begtabegov were attacked by Ossetians (some Ossetians were supporters of the Machabels, who were in the service of the Russian government). The Machabels and Begtabegovs rushed to their aid. As it turns out, the Ossetians besieged the Russian unit. The letter states that Prince Machabeli (Zaza Machabeli must be implied) gathered subordinate Ossetians to assist part of the unit and rescued the besieged. (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 553, N 1078). Finally, on August 29, 1804, the rebel Ossetians signed a receipt on behalf of the priest Alex Petriev and Prince Begtabegov: "On August 29, 1804, we, the inhabitants of Java,

Mskhlebi and Gupta, as well as those will bring hostages and underwrite the above, sign a receipt concerning the promise we give to the priest Alex Petriev and Prince Ivan Begtabegov: 1) We will be faithful in the service of all-merciful King, we will not create any obstacles on the way and will escort the passengers to the place as peacefully as possible; 2) We will not cause any harm to the Georgian population by thieving and robbery; 3) We will oppose those who did not hand over the hostages and punish them together with you; 4) If the person who is not a party to this agreement commits any crime, we will oppose him and inform you about it and if we break our promises, you may declare us as traitors and make us atone by punishing our hostages. We declare Zaza and Baadur Machabeli as warrantors of our receipt. At the same time, the responsibility for the hostages, if they escape, rests with them (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 554, N 1080). Receipts with similar content were signed by the rebel: Ossetians from Koshki, Khvtsi, Krozhi, Jiri and Zavdi (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 554, N 1080). On October 17, 1804, Priest Alex Petriev (Petriashvili) wrote to Prince Volkonsky that the Ossetians had transferred hostages to the authorities as a token of cessation of the rebellion. From the villages belonging to Zaza and Baadur Machabeli: from Koshkebi-1, from Java-2, from Gvartsevi-2, from Mskhlebi-2, from Gubti-1, from the villages belonging to Revaz and Evsev Machabelis: From Khvtsi-1, from Zavdi-1, from Jiri-1, from Krozhi-1. The hostage escaped from this last village. Instead of him, Prince Revaz Machabeli as a warrantor sent his son to Tskhinvali as a guarantor, who is currently with the nobleman Simon Kvantchakhadze. The 11 hostages were under the supervision of Junior Captain Nowitzki's 9th Regiment in Tskhinvali (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 554, N 1080). Alex Petriev informed Volkonsky the following: "I owe it to your Excellency to say that the hostages of Koshki and Khvtsi deserve to be punished for the failure of their villages to comply with the terms of the receipt. The inhabitants of Koshki, together with the Ossetians, attacked the Rishkin regiment of Don Cossacks, while the population of Khvtsi allowed the Ossetians in their own village to disperse the people of Prince Begtabegov, whereas the prince himself avoided the danger by fleeing (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 554, N 1080).

Despite taking the receipt and toughening surveillance over the Ossetians living in the mountainous part of Samachablo, the protests against the Russian government still continued. According to Bagrat Batonishvili, Pavle Tsitsianov made a decision to punish the rebel Ossetians living in the upper reaches of the Greater Liakhvi Valley: "Then, Tsitsianov marched to the place of Samachablo Ossetians, because at that time of unrest, he took three regiments of Kazakhs on the Caucasus line to the vicegerent of Tbilisi, Mikirtum Sulgunov. Having seeing this, the Ossetians were upset with the opening of the road and entry of troops; they gathered and captured all of them. Tsitsyanov, who went there, released them. But the Ossetians intended to

capture them, because of which thebesiege started. Tsitsyanov, having seeing this and understanding that he could do nothing, turned his back to Tiflis in 1805." (Batonishvili, 1941).

The Russian government accused Revaz Machabel of inciting the Ossetians. This is confirmed by Tsitsyanov's letter to the latter dated May 4, 1805: "You are aware of my attitude towards you and I think it is impossible to forget everything. Currently, I am notified that the Ossetians subordinated to you are starting again to disturb the population of Kartli. They burnt 7 barns in the village of Shilda, started shooting at the local population so that the latter could not cry for help from the military unit in Tskhinvali. You, as their owner and subordinate to the great state of Russia, did not use the rights granted and you not only failed to stop the acts of the Ossetians, but even more- you are supporting them. Go and continue relations with them. Informing you about all of this, I would like to let you know in advance that unless you manage to hold back the Ossetians within the limits of public interest, you will be deported to Siberia as their leader (ACAC, 1868: v. II, p. 556, N 1086).

The fact that Revaz Machabeli was inciting his peasants against the Russian authorities, can be seen from a letter dated 1808 that was sent by Count Gudovich to Colonel Akhverdov. It is clear from the letter that in the Greater Liakhvi Valley, the uprising against the authorities was suppressed by the military units. The instigators of the uprising were Revaz Machabeli and his brother Dimitri. Akhverdov was instructed by the Governor-General to bring the Machabels first to Gori and then to Tbilisi. He was also in charge of bringing the rebel leaders, elders of Kekhvi and Kemert elders: Otar Gherkenashvili, Tamaz Kasradze, Sesia Kaulashvili and Gogia Mitroev (probably it should be written as Metreveli) to Tbilisi (ACAC, 1869: v. III, p. 218, N 393).

After the arrest of Yulon Batonishvili, Parnaoz and Levan, the son Yulon tried to fortify themselves in Samachablo, but for fear of the Ossetians allied with the Russians, they could not stay long in the Greater Liakhvi Valley. Bagrat Batonishvili narrates of this fact: "After that, the sons of the King came to the vicinity of Surami. They were thinking that Georgian princes would arrive there, but they did not. They decided to cross Mtkvari River, go to Firkuli-Khan in Fabmak, but could not do it because the river was overflowed. Then, they went to Ossetians in Samachablo, but they could stand long there because of the fear of Ossetians, as the latter were in strong alliance with Russians." (Batonishvili, 1941; Sosiashvili, 2002). Parnaoz and Levan, the son of Yulon went to Alexander, the son of Erekle in Bambaki. Alexander Batonishvili used to send letters to the mountainous region of Kartli-Kakheti and urged the people of Kartli-Kakheti to revolt (Orjonikidze, 1999). Alexander also sent such a letter to the inhabitants of the Java Valley (ACAC, 1874: v. VI, p. 126).

In 1810, an uprising against Tsarism broke out in Samachablo that was led by Levan, the son of Yulon. By

the initiative of Levan's uncle, Alexander Batonishvili, he entered the Greater Liakhvi Valley via Akhaltsikhe, Imereti and Racha. In a letter dated August 16, 1809, Alexander Batonishvili wrote to Levan: "Uncle Alexander, I ask God to meet you happily and peacefully. By the grace of God, all our desired deeds have been done by the Kizilbashi. Famous Commander-in-Chief Usain Khan came to Akhalkalaki with a large treasury and the one hundred thousand men, which are distinguished in Erani. Yesterday, on Monday we have gathered ... In these three days, he is coming to you with a large army and treasury and himself comes to Tsalka ... I am coming and it would be beneficial for us if you send urgently some honourable princes" (Orjonikidze, 1999).

As can be found from the report dated September 11, 1809 that Major-General Akhverdov sent to Governor-General Tormasov, Alexander Batonishvili was planning to invade Kartli. The Lezhgins arriving in Akhaltsikhe, the Pasha of Atskuri and the Ossetians living in the mountainous part of Shida Kartli were considered as his allies and supporting force. Alexander Batonishvili was also supported by the Machabels, however, as stated in the letter of the Russian military: "After meeting with Davit Tarkhanov in Tskhinvali, the Machabels and Kherkheulidze temporarily postponed the implementation of their intentions." (ACAC, 1870: v. IV, p. 600, N 78).

Arriving in the Greater Liakhvi Valley, Levan Batonishvili called on the local princes to fight against the Russians. He promised the people of Samachablo to assist Alexander Batonishvili (ACAC, 1874: v. VI, p. 78). Levan managed to win over the Machabels. He was also supported by the Ossetians, who were disturbed by the violence of the Eristavis of Ksani. Alexander Batonishvili and Levan, the son of Yulon seemed to hold confidential correspondence with the Machabels. It is clear from a letter sent by Major-General Akhverdov to Governor-General Tormasov that in the villages of the Greater Liakhvi Valley populated by Ossetians, Iase and Baadur Machabeli were preparing fortresses for the uprising. They supplied them with wine and bread. The Ossetians subordinated to them bought 30 cattle to meet Alexander Batonishvili. Akhverdov sent his representative to the Machabels and passed a written message instructing not to support the uprising (ACAC, 1870: v. IV, p. 126, N 190). According to Bagrat Batonishvili: "And in the year 1810, the Imeretians promised to King Solomon, who was in Akhaltsikhe and invited him to arrive in Imereti and conquer it. Having heard this, King Solomon went via Akhaltsikhe and arrived in Imereti. Then, all of the Imeretians joined, blocked the road and stood firm. Then, the King's son Alexander sent his nephew Leon to Ossetia, Samachablo via Akhaltsikhe, so that he fight against the Russians together with the Ossetians. Leon, who went there, was accepted by the Ossetians and gathered with him." (Batonishvili, 1941).

The government tried to negotiate with Levan Batonishvili, as well as to win over the Ossetians living in

Samachablo. The letter dated 18 September 1810 that was sent by General Tormasov to Major-General Akhverdov stated that the authorities had tried to reconcile Levan Batonishvili. At the same time, the Ossetians subordinated to the Machabels were asked, sometimes with the threat of punishment and sometimes with promises, to hand over the son of Yulon, who had taken refuge in the Greater Liakhvi Valley, to the authorities (ACAC, 1870: v. IV, p. 136, N 214).

The Russian authorities had received secret information on the rebellious Batonishvili from their agents. The first serious clash with Russian troops took place near Tskhinvali. Levan Batonishvili lost 80 men and first took refuge in the Fortress in Mskhlebi (Tsozniashvili, 1986), then moved to Java. The Russians captured the Machabels supporting Levan (ACAC, 1874: v. VI, p. 112). Their land was transferred to the state. The Russians set fire to the villages of the Ossetians supporting the rebellious Batonishvili (ACAC, 1870: v. IV, p. 469, N 652), as confirmed by a letter sent by Governor-General Tormasov to the Russian Minister of War on December 16, 1810 (ACAC, 1870: v. IV, p. 469, N 652). The authorities again tried to negotiate with Levan Batonishvili and sent to him his caregiver deacon Ioane Kartvelishvili (Well-known Georgian bibliophile Ioane Kartvelishvili descended from the village of Pkhvenisi in the Greater Liakhvi Valley. He later became Yulon Batonishvili's educator and a bibliophile at the Royal Court. For some time, he stayed at Yulon Batonishvili's residence in the village of Beloti (Little Liakhvi Valley). The village of Beloti was considered to be one of the important centers of Georgian culture. See. G. Sosiashvili, *The Activity of Ioane Kartvelishvili and the Village of Beloti*, Dzebiani, Tb., 2007, pp. 63-69; Ioane Kartvelishvili, *Memoirs*, study text compiled, edited and enclosed with notes by Avt. Ioseliani, Tb., 1952, p. 81; L. Menabde, *Centers of Old Georgian Culture*, Tb., 1992, p. 53.), but to no avail. To punish the rebels, Colonel Stahl sent troops into the Greater Liakhvi Valley, but the forces supporting Batonishvili severely defeated the Russian units. Shortly afterwards, Colonel Stahl marched to Samachablo with reinforced forces. Levan Batonishvili had to hide in Nari (ACAC, 1874: v. VI, p. 123). The authorities allocated two thousand roubles to bribe the Ossetians from Nari and seize Levan Batonishvili. Finally, a decision on the extradition of Levan was taken by Rajaba, the Ossetian elder of Nari. He deceitfully took with him Batonishvili to the village Mskhlebi; however, Levan rescued himself by fleeing. Tormasov informed Shanshe, the Eristavi of Ksani about this: "Levan, brought by Rajaba to Nari gorge, managed to hide. He was on foot; the people accompanying him were arrested. All of this is the fault of the Ossetians from Nari. Therefore, we order you to punish them ..." (ACAC, 1874: v. VI, p. 924). Levan, who left Nari, intended to go to Akhaltsikhe through the Borjomi gorge in order to meet Alexander Batonishvili there. However, on the way to Gogia's Fortress, Levan, the son Yulon was killed by Lezghin robbers because of

booty while he was asleep. The raiders from Dagestani presented his severed head and weapons to the Pasha of Akhaltsikhe (Pasha of Akhaltsikhe crucified the Lezghins who murdered the prince who was fighting against the Russians. In Dagestan, after hearing this news of this news, the families of Levan's murderers were not forgiven by the locals for "shedding blood" of the Bagrationi royal house and they were "completely cut off." Bagrat Batonishvili, *A New Tale*, pp. 117-118.) (Berdzenishvili, 1983).

The Russian authorities treated brutally the Machabels participating in the uprising. According to David Batonishvili: "Afterwards (following the uprising-G.S.), the Russians captured Machabeli Luarsab and Baadur Bortishvili. They sent Machabeli Luarsab to Russia as a prisoner and Baadur died in prison in Tbilisi. And they seized their personal serf and land and transferred to the state as Javakhishvili and Tarkhnishvili." (Batonishvili, 1941). The order of Governor-General Markiz Pauluch dated October 12, 1811, states that the court discussed the issue relating to the trial of Georgian princes: Edisher Bagrationi, Ioram Tarkhanov (Tarkhnishvili), Estate Javakhov (Javakhishvili), Luarsab, Bardzim, Teimuraz, Revaz, Dimitri and Zurab Machabeli. The first of them, together with three opponents, was convicted of fleeing abroad and committing other offences, while the others were convicted of treason and connection to Prince Levan. Edisher Bagrationi, Ioram Tarkhnishvili, Estate Javakhishvili and Zurab Machabeli were assigned to military service. Under proper oversight, they were temporarily transferred to Vladikavkaz, where they would be kept at the disposal of Major-General Delpozzo. From here, Luarsab Machabeli was exiled to the Town of Kostroma. Luarsab's family was allowed to live in Tbilisi "under the state oversight and the care of benevolent relatives." Bardzi, Teimuraz, Revaz and Dimitri Machabeli, suspected of treason, were allowed to live in Tbilisi under strict state oversight (ACAC, 1873: v. V, p. 99, N 65).

It is noteworthy that during the uprising of Levan Batonishvili, one of the representatives of the Machabeli family (whose name is not mentioned in the documents) used to show loyalty to the Russian authorities. This is confirmed by Tormasov's letter dated 5 August 1810 to Major-General Akhverdov. The document states that all of the Machabeli families, except for one family, were supporting the rebellious prince Levan. The letter states that it was necessary to take care of the safety of the Machabeli family showing loyalty for the Russian authorities, as well as to encourage it. Tormasov demanded the transfer of the lands of the disobedient Machabeli to the treasury (ACAC, 1870: v. IV, p. 463, N 640).

Despite the defeat of Levan Batonishvili's uprising, the struggle of the Georgian royal family and the nobility against the Russian colonial policy still continued. Supported by a large part of the Georgian aristocracy, Grigol Batonishvili tried to get back the royal throne.

Simon Machabeli was also part of the group of Grigol's allies. In 1813, in support of Grigol Batonishvili, he tried to entice the villages on the right bank of the Mtkvari to revolt; however, Major-General Stahl arrested him (ACAC, 1873: v. V, p. 7, N 97). Alexander Batonishvili planned to form a united Caucasian coalition in the fight against the Russian government, hoping for the support of loyal Ossetians. This is confirmed by the letters sent by Alexander, the son of Erekle to the Ossetians in 1813. One of the letters, dated March 30, 1813, states:

"A letter of the King's son Alexander to Mirzabeg Tumatishvili and Dudav Masurishvili. King's son Alexander's greets you, Mirzabeg Tumatishvili and Dudav Masurishvili, with brotherly love. We know you will then ask about our situation. By the grace of God, we live peacefully. Now you are well aware that the Russians overthrew our family and if they treated us in such a manner, one can imagine the manner in which they will treat the family that stands lower than ours. You are a clever man, so you must consider well, what will bring their settlement in this country either you or us. And now, by the mercy of God, we are at work and are making arrangements and you too will have to sacrifice yourself and your family for us and our family. You have to give the Chimiteli Kurtauls a hostage and make peace with each other. We will give your hostage to them and you will have to sacrifice for the sake of our family and for our sake. No refusal will be accepted and then, you can benefit from us the way you like it and make our family serve you forever. You and they must be united and go where is the enemy of our family or your family and when we are done with it, then, you and we will live in peace and our family will be your own house and we will always keep the door of our house open for you. Now you are well informed about what to do with respect to the affair in March" (Sosiashvili, 2011).

The second card from Alexander Batonishvili sent to the Ossetians dates back to the same year: "Letter of the King's son Alexander written to Masurishvili Keleksan and Dudar on April 1, 1813:

King's son Alexander sends his regards with brotherly love to you, Masurishvili Keleksan and Dudar. Recently, I wrote a message regarding hostages and now I want to say that you have to give hostages to the Kurtauls and Kists for our sake. You have been diligent in this matter by the mercy of God. Then, our family will be yours. Whatever you do now for us, will be the deed that will be remembered forever. Now, you must act loyally and diligently as we rely on you so as to be in peace with each other and visit each other and by the mercy of God, your and our affairs will both succeed. Your brother and cousin will tell you some more from us. April A.D." (Sosiashvili, 2011).

In the early 1930s, the Machabels continued fighting actively to restore the statehood of the country. A proof of this is their involvement in the 1832 plot (Bendianishvili, 1980; Grdzeldze, 1993). In this large-scale anti-Russian act organized by the Georgian feudal

aristocracy, David, Simon and Ivan Machabeli participated.

David Machabeli, the son of Bardzimi was born in 1814 in Tamarasheni. The father of the future poet, Bardzimi Machabeli was an influential prince in the Greater Liakhvi Valley. David received his primary education in the family and then continued his studies at the Tbilisi Gymnasium. In the gymnasium, Nikoloz Baratashvili and Mikheil Tumanishvili became friends with the future poet. The creative talent of David Machabeli soon became known to the general public (Makharadze, 1982). One of David Machabel's poems "Snow", which was also known among the conspirators, was very popular at that time. Solomon Dodashvili wrote in his testimony: "I read poems and other works written in Georgian by the student Machabeli. I asked those princes (the princes participating in the plot are implied- G.S.) to try to collect sufficient funds to send him to university. They all agreed with me." (Gozalishvili, 1935).

His memory about Davit Machabeli was also shared by one of the participants of the plot, Dimitri Kipiani: "In early December or late November, in a word, in the first week of the fast of December, Avtandilashvili (one of the conspirators Zaal Avtandilashvili is implied, - G.S.), is having dinner, to which are invited Alexander and Vakhtang Orbeliani, Giorgi Eristavi, me, son-in-law of Avtandilashvili- Gamazov and some high school student certain Davit Machabeli, a high school student." (Kipiani, 1990). According to the second testimony of Solomon Dodashvili, David Machabeli's works were read out by the conspirators gathered at his apartment. This meeting was attended by Alexander and Vakhtang Orbeliani, Iase and Elizbar Eristavi, the Guards warrant officer Giorgi Eristavi, Prince Iase Palavandishvili, Anton Abkhazi and Solomon Dodashvili. Asked by the investigative group to narrate the content of Davit Machabeli's works, Solomon Dodashvili answered: "The works contain a comparison of the customs of old times. It presents a short history of Georgian literature. It also contains a poem called "Snow", "I did not notice anything suspicious in them." (Gozalishvili, 1935). After the defeat of the plot, David Machabeli as a minor was not subject to prosecution. The poet studying at the high school once served in the civil service and later took up military service and even received the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was awarded St. Stanislav's order. After the death of his father, Bardzim Machabeli returned from Tbilisi to his native village- Tamarasheni and started farming. From 1839, the poet lived in Tamarasheni (Tsverava and Katamadze, 2018).

His friend Ioseb Eliozishvili characterized David as follows: "He was as generous as a nobleman can be. He was lavish with giving charity to widows and orphans, clergy, the poor and the needy. He himself would suffer for the help of the needy and would comfort them with sweet words and gifts. At the same time, he was gentle, God-loving. He used to pray long from the morning to the evening." (Tsiskari, 1873). David's wife was Elisabeth,

the daughter of Imeretian Prince Svimon Tsereteli with whom he had the son Absalom. The list of nobles of Kartli-Kakheti drafted in the 1840s refers to Second Lieutenant Davit Machabeli, the son of Bardzimi and members of his family: wife Elizabeth, son Absalom, also wife of Bardzim Machabel, Marine- mother of David (Chumburidze, 2005). Absalom, the son of David was baptized on October 14, 1838 in the church of St. John Chrysostom in Chikhi. David's wife and children lived in Kutaisi. Elisabeth Tsereteli owned a two-storey residential house on Baghdati Street in Kutaisi, which she hired out for 5600 roubles to Dutu Pagava, the son of Khakhu living in the village of Bandza (Senaki Mazra). Later, the house of Elisabeth Tsereteli was purchased by Grigol Dadiani, the son of Levan (Tsverava and Katamadze, 2018).

In 1873, David Machabeli was killed by robbers at his home in his native village of Tamarasheni. The robbers set fire to David's house (Makharadze, 1873). Neighbours smashed doors and windows and entered the house. The body of the poet mutilated by a dagger was in the flames. David's wife Elizabeth was accused of killing him, as if she had bribed David's cook and had the husband kill. After the death of her husband, Elizabeth, with her son Absalom, arrived in Tamarashen and settled in the ancestral place of David (Berdzenishvili, 1983). David's son Absalom was a famous person. He married Dariko, the daughter of Grigol Eristavi (his wife's grandfather was Senator Giorgi Eristavi). Absalom had close relations with such prominent representatives of the Georgian society as Ivane Kereselidze, Akaki Tsereteli and Anton Purtseladze. Absalom wrote poems and collaborated with the magazine "Tsiskari". Before settling in Tamarasheni in 1861, Absalom participated in the play "Divorce" staged by the initiative of Giorgi Ghoghoberidze in Kutaisi. Absalom Machabeli played the role of Bardzimi (Tsverava and Katamadze, 2018).

An active member of the 1832 plot was Svimon Machabeli (Chelidze, 1968). He had a close relationship with Alexander Orbeliani, Elizbar Eristavi, Solomon Dodashvili, Mamuka Orbeliani and other persons. At one time, Svimon Machabeli served in the Russian army. In his testimony to the investigative group, he stated: "I served in militia in Ossetia in 1836. It was all due to my diligence and as a proof, I hold certificates. "I served with General Reinkav in the Ossetian expedition and captures Ossetians and presented to him." (Gozalishvili, 1932). By the Reinkavi expedition, Svimon Machabeli means a military operation led by General Renenkamp in the mountain villages of the Great Liakhvi Valley to punish the Ossetians, who rebelled against the Russian authorities in 1830 (Togoshvili and Tskhovrebov, 1962; Lordkipanidze, 1994). Svimon Machabeli, a participant of the plot, was responsible for bringing Ossetian troops against the Russian authorities. Initially, Svimon Machabeli used to deny his participation in the plot, but the investigation found that he was aware of the plot from the very beginning (Gozalishvili, 1970). The active

participation of Svimon Machabeli in the plot was confirmed by Iase Palavandishvili (Gozalishvili, 1976), a person who betrayed the plot. After the defeat of the conspiracy, Svimon Machabeli was put in Avlabari prison together with Giorgi Eristavi, Solomon Dodashvili and Grigol Orbeliani (Leonidze, 1924). As known, the government divided the plotters into ten categories and sentenced each of them to the appropriate punishment (Uturashvili, 1991). As found from the message that was sent by the Minister of War, Count Chernishov to the Governor-General Rosen, Svimon Machabeli was subject only to strict oversight (ACAC, 1881: v. VIII, p. 412, N 282). In the list of nobles of Kartli-Kakheti drafted in 1840, Simon Machabeli, the son of Parsadan is included together with his family members. The list mentions his sons: George, Iase and Alexander, George's wife Natalia and their son Vasili (Chumburidze, 2005). The son of Giorgi Machabeli mentioned here was Ivan Machabeli, the publicist, public figure and peerless translator of Shakespeare's works into Georgian and Vasil Machabeli's son was the famous politician Giorgi Machabeli, who continued to work in the United States after the Soviet occupation of independent Georgia (Daushvili and Janelidze, 2019).

Ivane Machabeli also participated in the plot. In our opinion, he is the Ivane Machabeli, the son of Mikheil referred to in the 1856 list of the nobles of Kartli-Kakheti, who had brothers Nicholas, Ilia, Evstati and Constantine. Of these, Ilia Machabel had the rank of warrant officer (Chumburidze, 2005). Russian authorities confiscated the estate from Ivane Machabeli (Gozalishvili, 1976) that, presumably, served as the reason for his involvement in the 1832 plot. The testimony of Ivane Machabeli interrogated by the investigation commission, states the following: "Last year, in the summer of 1831, I was in Tbilissi (Georgia) to take care of my business. Once, when I was on my way to the market, I met Prince Elizbar Eristavi and the Second-Lieutenant Alexander Vakhtangich Orbelianov at the court, in front of the shops of the King's daughter Tekle. First, they interrogated me and he was told that we were going to cause unrest and what I would say. I did not answer and said that we could not do it. Then, from there, Elizbar went to the governor's chancellery and Orbelianov went to the court. I thought they were trying me, they told me it jokingly. I went on my personal business to the watch-maker and after that, I did not discuss this issue either with him or anyone else.". The facts mentioned in the testimony were also confirmed by Elizbar Eristavi in a conversation with the investigative group. The court seems to have considered Ivane Machabeli a passive participant of the plot and subjected him only to oversight (Gozalishvili, 1976).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Although the Machabels were fighting persistently against the Russian colonial policy, a little later, several members of their family entered the military service of the Empire, including Major-General David Machabeli,

Colonel Alexander Machabeli, the son of Simon as well as the Junior Captain Joanne Jagori Machabeli, the son of Jagor. The Junior Captain Machabeli participated in the military operations undertaken by the Russian authorities against Imam Shamil. A secret report dated 1846 that was sent by Prince Bebutov to Mikhail Vorontsov and a letter dated the same year that was sent by Chernyshev to Vorontsov describe one of the episodes of a Russian military expedition against Shamil, which narrates of the lodgement of the village of Kutishi on October 15. The letters state that during the military operation, along with other officers, the Junior Captain Machabeli showed courage and proved his loyalty to the throne of the Tsar of Russia (ACAC, 1885: v. X, p. 432, N 393, 398). Machabeli's name is not mentioned in the documents. Maybe, he was the junior captain Dimitry, the son of David mentioned in the list of nobles of Kartli-Kakheti in 1840 (Chumburidze, 2005), or Officer Anempodist Machabeli, the son of Ivan which worked in the first half of the 19th century (Javakhishvili, 2003). Out of the Machabels, who were in the military service of the Russian Empire, the list of the nobility of Kartli-Kakheti of 1840 mentions the following: Junior Captain Dimitri, the son of David and Warrant Officers Grigol, the son of Revaz and Zurab, the son of Hector (Chumburidze, 2005).

**Author Contributions**

The percentage of the author contributions is present below. The author reviewed and approved final version of the manuscript.

	G.S.
C	100
D	100
S	100
DCP	100
DAI	100
L	100
W	100
CR	100
SR	100
PM	100
FA	100

C=Concept, D= design, S= supervision, DCP= data collection and/or processing, DAI= data analysis and/or interpretation, L= literature search, W= writing, CR= critical review, SR= submission and revision, PM= project management, FA= funding acquisition.

**Conflict of Interest**

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Consideration**

Ethics committee approval was not required for this study because of there was no study on animals or humans.

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