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Rebellion of Raja Chait Singh of Banaras

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Abstract

The rebellion of Chait Singh, the Raja of Banaras in August, 1781 affected the peace and tranquility of Bihar. At that time company's government in India, were at war with the French, the Dutch, the Marathas and Haider Ali ¹. The occupation of the English in these wars probably encouraged the Zamindars of Bihar to espouse the case of Chait Singh. Bihar was seized with panic in August, 1781, when a number of zamindars rose in revolt at the clarion call of chait singh , the Raja of Banaras . At the outbreak of chait Singh's rebellion, many Zamindars of Bihar raised the banner of revolt in support of Chait Singh and began to collect men in order to harass the English. The Banaras trouble spread a regular conflagration in Bihar, or to be more precise in the districts between Allahabad and Monghyr ².

Keywords: Ujjainia rajputs were sincerely attached to raja of banaras pitamber singh

Introduction

Reza Quli Khan, formerly the amil of Sasaram was at times with Raja Chait Singh, many of the inhabitants of that district and particularly the Ujjainia Rajputs were sincerely attached to Raja of Banaras Pitamber Singh, a relative of the Raja of Tikari, was intimately connected with chait Singh and the dependents of Pitamber Singh were remarkably good soldiers ^[3]. Buniyad Singh of chainpur (who afterwards became a Muslim) with a hundred and fifty horses and five hundred armed sepoy was on his way to Ramnagar to join Reza Quli Khan ^[4]. Fateh sahi of Husepur had also started his activities in saran ^[5]. Narayan Singh of Pawai and Iqbal Ali Khan of Narhat Samai also supported the case of Chait Singh and gave trouble to the English. Major Issac Easton commanding the English army at Buxar was informed by Halwon, the Naib of Arrah that Raja Rup Narayan Singh had driven off his poen and collected a force of 1600 match lockman in a village named julderpur. Rup Narayan Singh was inciting people to stop the payment of revenue and to rise against the English. Eaton further reported that disaffection prevailed in and around Buxer ^[6] and more particularly in the pargana of serinagh where people were assembling so as to make themselves as formidable as situation would demand. Eaton also reported that the two brothers Dhir Singh and Bir Singh on the orders of Chait Singh had collected a body of four of five thousand match lock man at the fort of Seringah. The two brothers and kilodar of seringah have been asked by chait singh to reduce the fort of Buxar in order to establish his government in the country ^[7]. When Eaton come to know of these things he asked the amils Amar Singh and Audan Singh to explain the appearance of hostility, but they sent an evasive reply. Considering his contingent numerically weak to meet any eventuality eaton wrote to Graeme the collector of Saran to supply him with more sepoy ^[8]. The supporter of chait Singh also harassed the English by cutting all communications between patna and Banaras. J.L. Ross Revenue chief of patna wrote to the council in Calcutta that "since the revolt of Rajan chait singh on the 16th instant every communication by Dawk has been cut-off from hence by Banaras and so well has he concerted measures that we can obtain no intelligence what so ever from that quarter" ^[9] Ross informed the Calcutta council that he (Rose) had received intelligence from boatmen and other natives that the banks of the river Ganges through chait Singh country were linked with armed men who "attacked" upon all boats indiscriminately, some English had a hair breath horror escaps and some of them got shelter at Buxar ^[10].

The difficulties in sending or receiving communication from Banaras were also experienced by Major Moses crawfurd who commanded 28th Regiment of sepoy at Dildar Nagar. He wrote "the roads on all quarters are stopped and harcarahs (peon) going between this and Ram Nagar can only travel in the night and conceal themselves in the day and even they are

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sometimes obliged to show a light pair of heels for their escape. It is uncertain whether this will reach you as it must pass through a very large jungle which is filled with a crowd of rascals who make a point of intercepting our correspondence as much as they can". Captain Nokes, commanding the Battalion in Major Crawford's regiment at Buxar while on his march to Banaras, wrote to Captain Houkesly Hall at Dinapore that the country lying between the karmnasa and Banaras was linked with troops and it was not possible for a detachment of less than four battalions and a few guns to move in the way of Banaras.¹² An officer of Captain Maxwell's battalion when marched from Burragaong to join Major Crawford at Buxar wrote that Crawford's battalion would have to encounter many difficulties in joining the English army at Banaras. It was because he had received intelligence that Buchut Roy, at the head of 2000 horsemen, 4000 peons and six companies of sepoys with four guns were ready to oppose his passage on the river. It was also reported that Bullub Ram was ready to assist Buchut Ray at Gazipur with 2000 horsemen, 4000 or 5000 peons and two guns, Mir Sherif Ali, the amil of Balia had 4000 horsemen, two companies of sepoys 2500 peons with him and he was ready to march to intercept the advance of Crawford beyond the karmnasa¹³. When Pophem's regiment started from Mirjapur in order to join Warren Hastings they were intercepted in a narrow street and indiscriminately butchered. Captain Mayaffee of the artillery was furiously assaulted and his head was struck off. Captain Mayaffee's head was shown to the town as a trophy. This gentleman had also the company of French men that Sir Eyre Coote brought from Madras, a hundred strong who were also miserably hacked to pieces, only fourteen of them having escaped to Chunar. Five other artillery officers were killed and wounded with Captain Mayaffee and to complete the misfortune Captain Maxwell and his battalion were in great danger, as parties of men were lying in wait to intercept his passage at the Chats of the Gogra. The letter further stated that "a number of Dandies (rower) of the government fleet, who had arrived that day gave an account of several of their brethren being lied together and chucked in the river and drowned and others cut pieces"¹⁴ N. Middleton, Resident at the court of Asaf-Ud-daula reported to the Fort William authorities about the disturbed condition of Oudh and Bihar during the rebellion of Chait Singh. He wrote that the rebellion of Chait Singh was a part of a larger and more extensive plan which was by the good fortune of your (W. Hastings) arrival prematurely brought forward before all the parties to it were united and properly prepared for action"¹⁵. The murder of the English soldier was arranged with promptness, for Major Crawford, Commanding the 28th Regiment of Sepoys, writing from camp Dildarnagar started, "I have just sent off a party to burn one of their villages in this neighborhood, in terror to the rest. We have plenty of provisions of all sorts and commonly get them for the trouble of taking from deserted villages or of those who are disaffected to us, which village we always burn."¹⁶ Col. Hannay wrote, that the whole country on the east side of the Gogra was in arms and rebellion¹⁷. On receiving the intelligence of the disaffection of some of the Zamindars of Bihar from Charles Graeme, the collector of Saran, Ross, the revenue chief of Patna took stern measures to control the situation. He informed Graeme that he had given. "The necessary order to Major Hardy to seize

and take up every person against whom we can obtain the least suspicion of being disaffected to the company's interest and have his day taken into custody. Hussain Ali Caun, the renter of Arwal and Masowrah, who, from certain intelligence has been employed as an emissary by Chait Singh, in the city, making himself busy in propagating our late misfortunes, the other necessary measures have been respecting those persons whom you suspect. "Ross also asked Kalyan Singh, the Roy- Royan of subah Bihar to instruct all his Zamindars dependents to assist the company's government against the insurgents."¹⁸ For maintaining peace and tranquility in Bihar, General Stibbert requested the Fort William authorities to send one more regiment of sepoys from Behrampur to Dinapur.¹⁹ Accordingly, the Calcutta council ordered the march of one regiment of sepoys from Behrampur²⁰. Detachment of company's troops were soon posted at different places. Bikramajit Singh, the Raja of Dumaraon sent 500 march lock men to assist Moses Crawford. He also sent his brother Dustandaman Singh and Bhoop Narayan Singh, the Zamindar of Jagadishpur with hundred men to assist Major Isaac Eaton, commanding at Buxar²¹. Major James Crawford was at Dildarnagar with an army to intercept Chait Singh's forces advancing from Ram - Nagar²². Major James Crawford moved in August from Chatara towards Dildarnagar in order to join the forces of Moses Crawford. Fateh Narayan Singh the son of Chhatrapati Singh²³ the Raja of Deo Munga joined James Crawford with three hundred retainers on his arrival at Sherghati, James Crawford was asked by the Governor General to take post in the vicinity of Bajigarh in order to intercept Chait Singh's troops advancing from Ram Nagar²⁴. One of Moses Crawford's officers wrote to Boyle Alexander, Deputy Paymaster to the country garrison for his camp at Zamania on 15th September, 1781, "we are now advanced beyond Zamania where we wait for Major James Crawford, several parties of the Raja have been stationed at the different villages, but upon our approach have left their posts and run off. At the place where we were the day before we arrived, there were 400 camels of the Raja, but they were all gone before we got here, very unlucky for us"²⁵.

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