

Paika Rebellion

July 14, 2020

Recently the President of India laid the foundation stone to the memorial being built in memory of the Paika rebellion (1817), a 200-year-old armed revolt against the British East India Company in Odisha.

What is Paika rebellion?

It was an armed rebellion against the British East India Company's rule in Odisha in 1817.

In 1817, some 400 Kondhs, who belonged to the state of Ghumsur, banded together to revolt against the British. Bakshi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mohapatra Bharamarbar Rai, the highest-ranking military general of King of Khorda Mukund Dev II, led the Paikas to join the uprising.

The Paika Rebellion is one among the peasant rebellions

Causes of the rebellion

The Paika rebellion had several social, economic and political reasons.

The Paikas were alienated by the British regime, who took over the hereditary rent-free lands granted to them after the conquest of Khurda.

They were also subjected to extortion and oppression at the hands of the company government and its servants.

The extortionist land revenue policy of the company affected the peasants and the zamindars alike.

The company also abolished the system of cowrie currency that had existed in Odisha prior to its conquest and required that taxes be paid in silver. This caused much popular hardship and discontent.

Effects

In May 1817, the British posted judges to Khurda to sentence

the captured rebels.

The rebels were awarded sentences of death, transportation and long-term imprisonment.

Between 1818 and 1826, the company's forces undertook combing operations in the jungles of Khurda to capture and put to death rebels who had managed to escape.

In these operations, numerous Paikas were killed.

Their leader, Jagabandhu, surrendered to the British in 1825 and lived as their prisoner in Cuttack until 1829, when he died

Key points about Paikas

The Paikas were the traditional militia of Odisha

Paikas had been recruited since the 16th century by kings in Odisha from a variety of social groups to render martial services in return for rent-free land (nish-kar jagirs) and titles.

They served as warriors and were charged with policing functions during peacetime.

The Paikas were organised into three ranks distinguished by their occupation and the weapons they wielded. These were

The Paharis- the bearers of shields and the khanda sword

The Banuas -who led distant expeditions and used matchlocks and

The Dhenkiyas – archers who also performed different duties in Odisha armies