

## Original Article

### Ujjainias's resistance to Mughal's in 17th Century Bihar.

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**Abstract**

*The 17th century has the status of transition period in Bihar when two formidable power, such as Mughals and Afghans were vying for supremacy in Bihar. Especially eastern Bihar. Eastern Bihar was significant for both powers since it was situated in Mid-way between Bengal and northern gangetic land comprising the subah of Allahabad and Awadh. This area was also significant from the point of view of military labour market. Baksaria soldiers were famous as musketeers and matchlock bearers the support of Ujjainia chieftains was important for Mughals in their battle against shershah suri the struggle for supremacy which did start in the 16th century, also continued in the 16th century.*

*In this article an attempt has been made to narrate this saga of resistance of Ujjainia chieftain to the Mughals.*

**Keyword:** Afghans, Mughals, Eastern Bihar, Shershah suri, Baksaria soldiers Military Labour Market.

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The ensuing period, after the death of Akbar, was a period of instability in Bihar. Mukutmani, the contemporary ujjania chieftain, quietly left the Mughal court and returned to Shahabad. He was not an able administrator. Local Officials took advantage of his inability and stopped paying rent. The cheros, also reared their heads, under the leadership of Hukum Chandra. He captured a large chunk of territory, held by ujjainias. Mukutmani now was unable to suppress the rebellious cheros. Finally, Mukutmani was forced to stepdown in favour of his distant nephew Mukutmani.<sup>1</sup> Narayan Sahi was energetic ruler and was keen to end the chaos, which was prevailing in the ujjania territory. It was his inner desire to unite the fighting clans of ujjania family. It was his political acumen and administrative ability, which enabled him to rule the territory for 34 years.<sup>2</sup> Narayan Sahi had earned the Wrath of Mughals, by his act of killing a Mughal agent. After this act of defiance, he was looking for opportunity to woo the Mughal rulers. In order to win the support of mughals, he enrolled in the Mughal contingent, under the assumed name of Zavar.<sup>3</sup> In course of time, he rose in the official hierarchy and became a favorite of the ruler, Jehangir. In the shahabad, in his prolonged absence, anarchy prevailed.<sup>4</sup> Some people installed a minor Son of Mukutmani on the throne<sup>5</sup>. In Jagdishpur, the family of Devsahi, became self-proclaimed rulers of ujjainia. Similarly, another branch of family, located at Dawan, asserted their claim to be the ruler of ujjainia. In Dalpatpur, the family of Dalpat Sahi, staked their claim to power. The cheros also did take advantage of the situation.<sup>6</sup> When the news reached the Mughal Court, Jhangir sent Zarar, an inhabitant of sahabad, to suppress the rebellion in Shahabad. He started off Shahabad with 500 infantry and 500 Cavalry.<sup>7</sup> This was the same period, when Raja Man Singh had been sent to Bihar as governor, with a contingent of 20,000 soldiers. When the news spread, that the Narayan Mal, was proceeding towards Shahabad, all warring ujjainias, assembled on the banks of Karamnasa to welcome him, in view of his ability and prowess.<sup>8</sup> Under the able leadership of Narayan Mal, the ujjainias were spruced up to take the might of defiant cheros. Fierce battle ensued. In this close fought battle, Narayan Mal exhibited his military skills and succeeded in defeating them.<sup>9</sup> This defeat of cheros, enhanced the position of Narayan Mal as an able ruler. He rose rapidly in the bureaucratic hierarchy. In order to endear himself to other members of ujjainia families, he lavishly granted land grants and villages.<sup>10</sup>



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In view of rising popularity of Narayan Mall, other ujjainia family became jealous of Narayan Mall's popularity. They forged a coalition and in the ensuing fight, killed him. After the departure of Narayan Mall from political scene, relationship between mughals and cheros became strained again. He was succeeded by his brother, pratap Mall, instead of his son. It was argued that pratap mall or Rudrapratap, by virtue of his experience and talent, was better suited to the throne. The reign of Pratap Mall was again full of ups and down in it's relation with the Mughal governor of Bihar and the Mughal Central authority. A group of Muslim fanatics, threatened Rudra pratap that they would proceed to destroy the Shiva temple at Brahampur and the temple of Chaturbhuj Devi, near Jagdishpur. Pratap dev marched to Brahampur. In the ensuing battle, the followers of fanatic muslims were Slaughtered. Heduped them into a trick and killed them.<sup>11</sup> Shahjahan ascended the throne after this incident. He honoured his Successor, by conferring upon him a contingent of 500 in infantry and 1000 horses.<sup>12</sup> Pratap Mall, decided to leave Jagdishpur and set up his capital at Bhojpur. He built here a number of buildings. Nauratan Bhawan and the fort of Bhojpur were shining examples of construction work during his reign.<sup>13</sup> The expenses incurred in constructing the buildings, emptied the Coffer of the estate. Pratap Mall did not pay the revenue to the royal treasury for three years. Heremained unconcerned with the adminitiration of the estate. He built an imposing building called "Navratan palace" in bhojpur.<sup>14</sup> Raja Rudra pratap deva served emperor Shahjahan for nearly a decade. He did help Shahjahan, when he was prince Khurram, with a contingent of ujjainia Soldiers. The governor or Nazim of Bihar, Abdullah Khan, was not happy with the rebellious tendencies of Rudra pratap deva.<sup>15</sup> When his Qanungo, wrote about his incompetence and maladministration, the Governor of Bihar, immediately sent a force against him. Pratap Mal was arrested, taken to Patna and executed after some time.<sup>16</sup> The queen committed suicide and Nauratan Bhawan was razed to the ground. Nemat Khan was appointed as royal officer to look after the administration of the Estate. For the first time, the leader of the Ujjainias, had lost the Status of an independent chieftain. The Nazim of Bihar, was so much annoyed with the rebellious attitude of ujjainias that he was not willing to restore them to their former position.<sup>17</sup> Kakolat Shahi was asked to leave Shahabad and his property in Basudhar was confiscated. A Campaign to oust him was started by Kakolat Sahi and other ujjania families. They Killed the Mughal Amaldar.<sup>18</sup> Although the ujjainias were united outwardly, there were strong undercurrentof differences among them. Many of them did not want Amar Singh, the son of Narayan Mal, to become the chief. However, Amar Singh, called a meeting of ujjainias in A.D 1648, in Bahadurpur, and requested them to support his case.<sup>19</sup> In 1648, after a lapse of nearly 12 years, Amar Singh, got back the control of his ancestral estate on the basis of a firman, issued by Shah Jahan. He sent his younger brother, Prabal Singh to the Mughal court to obtain another confirmatory fireman.<sup>20</sup> Amar Singh was challenged by Kakolat Sahi, but he was subdued by Amar Singh. Eventually, both agreed that the fratricidal war should be ended and Amar Singh was allowed to exercise adminititative right denied to him earlier.<sup>21</sup> Amar Singh moved his Capital to Mathila, located 20 KM, South west of Dumraon. He recalled the members of the Kayastha Caste, who were the principal employees of the Estate. the also won the affection of other sections of the society, such as Kurmis, Koeris, vaishyas and Muslims. He also tried to promote agriculture, by constructing irrigation channels and bunds.<sup>22</sup> A representative of estate, known as vakil, was appointed to the court of the governor in patna. He lent this armed contingent to the Mughal state whenever it's services were required. Amar Singh, tried to give a broad base to his rule, to ensure wide social support. He died in 1665 and was succeeded by Rudra Singh. The new chief, continued the conciliatory policies, pursued by Amar Singh.<sup>23</sup> Amar Singh was succeeded by his son, Rudra Singh, but his succession was contested by his uncle. Prabal Singh.<sup>24</sup>Unlike his father, Rudra Singh was not granted the usual mansab of 1000 zat title of Raja by Aurangzeb.<sup>25</sup>Prabal Singh, left for Delhi, where he was arrested and converted to islam. He died in 1672.In the first 17 years of his chieftainship, (1665-81), Rudra Singh remained loyal to the Mughal government and helped the Mughal Nazim of Bihar.<sup>26</sup>Rudra Singh's relations with the Mughal court, did not proceed on even keel. A major irritant was the policy of Shahista Khan, the governor of Bihar, who imposed Jazia on hindus. This united all the ujjainias, who considered it, as grossly unfair and humiliating. kunwardhir, a nephew of Rudra Singh, raised the banner of revolt against this policy of religions discrimination.As Soon as Rudra Singh rose in rebellion, all the favours, enjoyed by him, were withdrawn. Safi Khan, led an expedition against him, the Nazim of Bihar, in that period. Mathila was raised to ground.The alliance between Rudra Singh and Kuar Dhir was considered dangerous for the Mughal Interest in Bihar. The Mughal governor, Azam and his successor Saif Khan, tried to wean away Rudra Pratap from Kuar Dhir.<sup>27</sup> Saif Khan was successful in bringing about reconciliation between Rudra Singh and the Mughal governor. Rudra Singh agreed to kneel down for his acts of defiance and also agreed to pay a sum of Rupees one lakh and thirty thousand as compensation for the losses, suffered by the Mughal government.<sup>28</sup> Aurangzeb, now decided to confer the mansab and the title of "Raja" to Rudra Singh. The Ujjainia Mughal alliance inturiated Kunwar dhir and a new civil war ensued.Now Rudra Singh, shifted his capital to Buxar. He was now given several rights such as right to policing, to try criminal cases, the right to collect land revenus, on behalf of Mughal State. He was given a mansab rank in the, imperial bureaucracy.<sup>31</sup>For meeting the expenses of the contingent, he has given an additional Jagir. This certainly added to his prestige.Kunwar Dhir, the arch enemy of the Mughals, was thoroughly disillusioned at the turn of events, Enraged at this faithlessness of Rudra Singh, he attacked and took under his possession, a village, named Holo konwari, new Bettiah. Nanda Shahi, the ousted Zamindar of the village, requested the Bihar Nazim, to help him, in the recovery of the lost Zamindari. Consequently, the Raja Rudra Singh, was deputed to face the ujjania rebel. Kunwar dhir has been

defeated in the fight with Rudra Singh. He fled to Gorakhpur.<sup>32</sup> The help of Rudra Singh, was also sought by Mughal Nazim, in Several campaigns against recalcitrant Zamindars of Manjhi and Narhan. Kuar Dhir built a small but strong fort at Barhaj in the dense Jungle of Gorakhpur. The increased power of Rudra Singh, was insatiable to Kunwar Dhir.<sup>33</sup> Rudrapratap Singh was childless. Kunwar dhir persuaded him to marry the younger sister of his wife. After wedding was performed, both Rudrapratap Singh and Kunwar dhir were returning to Buxar by boat. Kunwardhir conspired with a servant to add poison to betel leaf. This was the saga of Ujjainia's resistance to the mughals in the 17th Century Bihar.

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