



KOTULPUR: A REMINISCENCE OF QUTLU KHAN LOHANI

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ABSTRACT

Qutlu Khan Lohani, an Afghan ruler of Bengal was defeated in Mughal age because of its geographical location, Kotulpur is surrounded by the river 'Amodor' and this place is known by the name of this Kotlu Khan or Qutlu Khan Lohani. Kotulpur is located at 23°00'45" N 87°35'37" E / 23.0125°N 87.59361°E / 23.0125; 87.59361 presently under Bankura District of West Bengal in India.

Introduction

Sulaiman Karrani appointed Lodi Khan and Qutlu Khan Lohani as governors of Orissa and Puri respectively. Though northern India and parts of southern India were ruled by the Muslim rulers (Akbar), they had not yet been able to conquer Orissa. In 1568 Sulaiman Karrani sent his son Bayazid Khan Karrani and the famous general Kala Pahar against the last Oriya Gajapati king Mukunda Deva. After a few major battles against the Oriyas, and aided by civil war elsewhere in Orissa, Sulaiman was able to bring the entire area under his rule. On account of Kalapahad's conversion, Rudranarayan broke Bhurishrestha's traditional alliance with the Sultanate of Gaur. Sulaiman Karrani died in 1572. After the demise of Sulaiman Karrani, Daud Khan Karrani persuaded Rudranarayan for help against the Mughals, but in vain.

On 12th July 1576, the battle of Raj Mahal commenced between the Mughals and the Afghans. Junaid and Kalapahad were in charge of the left and right wings of Daud's army respectively. Daud Khan led from the centre while Qutlu Khan was at the forefront. In the course of the battle

Junaid was killed by a cannon ball which demoralized the soldiers and they scattered and fled. Kalapahad and Qutlu Khan managed to escape capture but Daud Khan's horse got stuck in the swamps and he was imprisoned by the Mughals. Daud Khan was considered as a constant source of political turbulence by the Mughals and hence following his capture, he was immediately executed.

After the fall of the Karrani power in 1576, Bengal was under the Mughal rule. But the establishment of effective rule took some time. On 19th December, 1578, Khan-i-jahan died and Muzaffar Khan became the governor of Bengal. Akbar's brother Mirza Hakim declared himself independent in Kabul, and Muzaffar Khan was defeated by rebels sympathetic to him, and Bengal and Bihar was declared to be his. He sent a subedar (governor) to Bengal, but lots of Afghans took control of parts of Bengal and all of Orissa. In April 1582, Akbar sent Khan-i-Azam as the Subedar of Bengal, who won partial victory; but parts of the region remained under Masum Kabuli and Isha Khan, even under the next Subedar Shahbaz Khan. The jealousy between Khan Azam and Shahbaz Khan delayed the recovery of Bengal for the Mughals.

After Daud Khan Karrani, the last Karrani Sultan of Bengal, Qutlu Khan once again approached Rudranarayan for help, but he refused. After this, Qutlu Khan decided to attack Bhurishrestha. But intimidated by the might of Bhurishrestha's army and navy, he decided to attack the kingdom from the west. In June, 1584, Qutlu Khan of Northern Orissa, revolted and took over parts of Bengal and advanced up to Burdwan, occupied Orissa. But he was defeated near Burdwan and surrendered to Mughals and left for Orissa to rule as tributary chief of Mughals. Taking the advantage of liberality of the treaty, Qutlu Khan Lohani occupied some territories of the Mughals and drove away the Mughal Fauzdars from this place. In 1588, Man Singh was appointed as the Governor of Bihar.

In 1590, Qutlu Khan Lohani, an Afghan ruler of Bengal declared himself independent and assumed the title of "Qutlu Shah". Raja Man Singh started an expedition against him. When the news reached Akbar that the Pathan forces were marching towards Bengal. Maharaja Man Singh of Amber was assigned the duty of checking the advent of Pathans into Bengal area by the Mughal emperor Akbar. Jagat Singh, young son of Man Singh was sent on this mission. Akbar dispatched an army of 5000 cavalry under the leadership of Jagat Singh. He sent emissaries to the courts of Bhurishrestha and Bishnupur inviting an alliance. Qutlu Khan first tried to intimidate the Garh-nayak of Mandaran and win him to his side. When he failed, he attacked the

fort. Jagat Singh, who had arrived in Jehanabad, attacked Kotlu Khan from the west. The troops of Bishnupur attacked from the north and the soldiers of Bhurishrestha attacked from the east. The war was between the Mughals, Rajputs and Pathans.

Conclusion

Qutlu Khan Lohani, Daud's general, was immortalized in Bankim Chandra's novel "Durgeshnandini". At Kotulpur a watch tower was established to keep an eye on the territory, but at present there is a market of vegetables. The important river in this area is "Amodor" (not Damodar). It is originated from a fountain at Knuchiakol. Garh Mandaran (a nearby place, now in Hooghly district and the capital of the then king of this region) and Kotulpur are surrounded by this river. In a war Qutlu Khan was defeated in Mughal age because of its geographical location. In the battle, the commander of the Garh Mandaran and Kotlu Khan were killed. This Kotulpur is known by the name of this Qutlu Khan Lohani.

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