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The First Anti-British Resistance in North-East India and the Jaintia Tribe of Meghalaya, 1774

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Abstract

The hill tribe Jaintia, belonging to the present North-East Indian state of Meghalaya, raised the First Two Anti-British Resistances (ABRS) in North-East India (NEI) during 1774 and 1781-82. Based on guerrilla war art, their first resistance was the stubborn one. Despite that, they lost and the army of the British East India Company (EIC) won over the field on the strength of the sophisticated arms and ammunition. The colonial Britishers snatched most of the movable properties of the hilly land with brutality, and finally, they subjugated the Synteng kingdom (the Jaintia call themselves Synteng). The cause of conflict between the two was rooted in the unjustified and whimsical denial of the tariff to be paid by the British merchants to the Jaintia king for using the Surma river for a commercial purpose. In it, the Jaintia land was tried to be defended by Chatra Singh, the Jaintia king with his subjects. On the contrary, the British army was commanded by Captain (controversially a Major) Edward Elliker. Elliker, with triumphant pride, stayed at the Jaintia capital Jaintiapur from March 29 to June 12, 1774. Thus, Chatra Singh, the Jaintia king admitted the “subdued” position which has been termed by the British officers with the pride of a “gift”.

It is noteworthy that this paper of ours is the first one in which the Jaintia ABR of 1774 has been termed with the status of First Anti-British Resistance in North-East India.

Key Words: Jaintia, Anti-British, Resistance, Colonial attack.

Introduction and Background

It is still difficult, without debate, to locate the state and place wherein and in which year the *First Anti-British Resistance (ABR)* in North-East India (NEI) occurred. The cause

behind its roots is in two North-East Indian (NEIN) states—Tripura and Meghalaya. Both the states bear testimonies claiming each of them raised the First ABR in NEI. In the case of Tripura, it may be recalled that among the eight states of NEI, Tripura is the first state