

2. Paika Rebellion (1817)

Prelims: History of Modern India

Prelims Tag: History of Modern India, Paika Rebellion

Mains: GS-I- Modern Indian History from about the Middle of the Eighteenth Century until the Present - Significant Events, Personalities, Issues

Mains Tag: History of Modern India, Paika Rebellion

Why in News?

- ▶▶ On September 27-28, President Ram Nath Kovind will visit Odisha's Khorda district to lay the foundation of a memorial dedicated to the 1817 Paika Rebellion.
- ▶▶ Paika memorial is a project planned and proposed by the central government.

Paika Rebellion of Odisha (1817):

- ▶▶ 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.
- ▶▶ After entering Odisha in 1803, the British introduced new revenue settlements, due to which many Odia proprietors ended up losing their lands to absentee Bengali landlords.
- ▶▶ Changes in the currency and revenue systems meant the Odias had to pay taxes in silver, which was more expensive for them, and resulted in their further marginalisation and oppression.
- ▶▶ 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.
- ▶▶ During the course of the rebellion, government buildings in Banapur were set on fire, policemen and British officials were killed, and the treasury was looted.
- ▶▶ The uprising lasted for a few months but was eventually crushed by the better-equipped and trained forces of the East India Company.
- ▶▶ Bakshi escaped to the jungles, and ultimately surrendered in 1825 under negotiated terms.

Nationalist Movement or A Peasant Rebellion?

- ▶▶ The Paika Rebellion is one among the peasant rebellions that took place in India when the British East India Company was expanding its military enterprise.

- ▶▶ Because these uprisings violently clashed with European colonialists and missionaries on many occasions, their resistance is sometimes seen as the first expression of resistance against colonial rule — and therefore considered to be “nationalist” in nature.

Why Is the Rebellion Being Remembered Now?

- ▶▶ In April 2017, to mark the 200th anniversary of the Paika Rebellion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi honoured descendants from 16 families that were associated with the uprising.
- ▶▶ In July 2017, the Odisha government decided to formally ask the Centre to declare the rebellion as the “first war of independence in Indian history”. On this, then Culture Minister Ashok Chandra Panda had said, “In the real sense, the rebellion of Khorda in 1817 is the first well organised rebellion against the British.”
- ▶▶ In May 2018, after a review of school textbooks, the NCERT introduced a page on the Paika rebellion in the Class-8 history textbook. In December 2018, Prime Minister Modi released a stamp and a coin to commemorate the rebellion.

