



RESEARCH CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

Proceedings of the International Symposium on
Islamic Civilisation in South Asia

Dhaka, 16-18 November 2008

Istanbul 2013



OIC | Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
IRCICA | Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture

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**PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON
ISLAMIC CIVILISATION IN SOUTH ASIA: DHAKA, 16-18 NOVEMBER 2008**

SOURCES AND STUDIES ON THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION SERIES | 29
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ISBN 978-92-9063-260-3

CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

International Symposium on Islamic civilisation in South Asia (2008: Dhaka, Bangladesh)
Proceedings of the International Symposium on Islamic civilisation in South Asia: Dhaka, 16-18
November 2008 /edited by Halit Eren.- İstanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture,
2013.
227 p.: col. ill., plans; 24 cm.- (Sources and studies on the history of Islamic civilisation; no. 29)
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-92-9063-260-3
1. South Asia--History--Congresses. 2. Civilisation, Islamic-- South Asia--Congresses. I. Eren, Halit,
1953- II. Title. III. Series.
954--dc22

Orthography, punctuation, methods of emphasis of texts and references were kept as adopted by each auteur.

EDITOR | Dr. Halit Eren

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY | Zeynep Durukal, Cengiz Tomar

BOOK DESIGN | Muhammed Nur Anbarlı muhammednur@gmail.com

PRINTING AND BINDING | BİRMAT MATBAACILIK LTD. ŞTİ.
100 YIL MATBAACILAR SİTESİ 1 CAD NO 131
BAĞCILAR / İSTANBUL
TEL: +90 212 629 05 59 - 60

The War of Independence 1857 and the North-West Frontier: The Struggle of Mujahidin Against the British

Altaf Qadir*

The uprising of 1857 in India has been under discussion since a very long time in academia. The British term it a “mutiny” but the studies conducted by the Indians present it as a “War of Independence”.¹ The War of Independence 1857 is one of the most important events in the history of the subcontinent during the nineteenth century. It changed the very fabric of Indian society and the nature of English rule in India.² Though it started as a revolt, it spread to all communities and sections of the population. People from all walks of life participated in the war against the English.³

The outbreak started in Meerut on 10 May 1857.⁴ The rebels marched towards Delhi and proclaimed Bahadur Shah Zafar, the then ruler of Delhi, as their leader.⁵ The outbreak turned into a War of Independence, which shows that it was a planned attempt for the liberation of the country from the foreign yoke. Princes of regional states also joined and offered tough resistance to the English authorities in their respective centers. The list of these freedom fighters include Khan Bahadur of Rohailkhand, Begum Hazrat Mahal of Lukhnow, Maulvi Ahmadullah of Awadh, Beni Madhi Singh of Lucknow, Kunwar Singh of Bihar, Nana Sahib of Kanpur, Tatyta Tope and Rani Jhansi of Budelkhand,⁶

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¹ For a detailed study of the war one may consult Syed Moinul Haq, *The Great Revolution of 1857*, Karachi, 1957, Surendra Nath Sen, *1857*, Delhi: 1958, *A History of the Freedom Movement*, Karachi, 1960; vol. II.

² Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of the Indian Revolt 1857-1870*, Delhi 1990, p. vii. The British Parliament decided to rule India directly after the turmoil of 1857.

³ Syed Moinul Haq, *Ideological Basis of Pakistan* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1982) pp. 40-41. (Henceforth Haq, *Ideological Basis*).

⁴ *The Cambridge History of Islam* (ed. P. M. Holt), Cambridge 1970, vol. II, p. 80 (hereafter Holt, *Cambridge History*).

⁵ Haq, *Ideological Basis*, p. 46. For a detailed discussion on the condition of Delhi during the upheaval one may consult William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857*, Bloomsbury 2006.

⁶ Holt, *The Cambridge History*, vol. II, p. 80.

Mahmud Khan of Bijnor and Tafadhul Hussain of Farrukhabad.⁷

The English forces faced stiff resistance at Delhi, Rohailkhand and Awadh, where the revolutionaries fought with full strength and created serious difficulties for the English army. Bakhat Khan defended Delhi for quite a long time but at last his forces surrendered owing to inferior planning, strategy and equipment.⁸ Besides the rulers of different states and their soldiers, people from different strata including farmers, landlords, Ulama and Mashaikh also joined this great upheaval and caused difficulties for the English. Some of the Ulama living at various places in the North-West Frontier of India also joined the war and offered tough resistance to the English forces. A segment of these religious people were known as the Mujahidin or Hindustani Mujahidin and their movement was called the Mujahidin Movement. However, in official circles they were known as *Wahabis* or Hindustani Fanatics.⁹

Background of the Mujahidin Movement

The Mujahidin movement was launched by Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Barieli in the third decade of the 19th century. Born on 27 November 1785 at Rai Barieli, he joined the army of Nawab Ameer Khan of Tonk after acquiring a religious education and served there for seven years.¹⁰ He started a reform movement and some time later decided to wage Jihad, but then proceeded to Hijaz and upon his return from the Hajj in 1823 restarted his attempts to purge Muslim society of the then prevalent voices in his native town and its vicinity. As he had already decided to launch Jihad against the Sikhs, who were then ruling the Punjab, in 1826, after performing the Hajj, he migrated to the North West Frontier. There were several reasons for the choice of the North-West Frontier for the Jihad, including the geographical location, the freedom-loving character of its inhabitants and, most probably, the newly formed Sikh government, which was not yet firmly established in the North-West Frontier region. The Frontier chiefs and common people welcomed him and joined him but later on, due to his policies, he was compelled to leave Peshawar valley for Kashmir. However, he was defeated and killed by the Sikh force at Balakot on 5 May 1831.¹¹

⁷ Haq, *The Ideological Basis*, p. 46.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Chamarkand Colony, S. No. 271, Tribal Area Research Cell, NWFP Provincial Archives Peshawar, p. 34.

¹⁰ Mujahideen, 1939, S. No. 408. B. No. 27, Special Branch Police List- I, N. W. F. P. Provincial Archives, Peshawar, p. 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

The Mujahidin's Activities after the Death of Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi

Some of those who escaped the massacre settled in Tukhtaband¹² and later, with the assistance of Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sithana¹³, established a colony at Sithana on the right bank of the Indus, nearly opposite Tarbela, which was inhabited by the Uthmanzai tribe.¹⁴ The Mujahidin tried to persuade the local people to join the Jihad for the liberation of the country from the foreign yoke, a task which was never accomplished in accordance with their expectations. However, some of the local religious figures and chiefs like Akhund of Swat, Ghazan Khan of Dir, Faizullah Khan of Bajaur, the Haji of Kunhar and some mountain tribes assisted them at times against foreign rule. The Mujahidin had established a secret correspondence with their fellow-workers in the plains who supported them in men and material.¹⁵

The Mujahidin at Sittana were well organized under the leadership of Wilayat Ali. They were drilled and trained regularly for warfare. After the death of Wilayat Ali in 1852 his younger brother Maulvi Inayat Ali was selected Amir of the Mujahidin.¹⁶ The first serious clash between the Mujahidin and the English took place in 1852-53¹⁷ when the Mujahidin joined the Hasanzais in their attack on the fortress of Kotla in the jurisdiction of the Khan of Amb, an English ally.¹⁸ The Mujahidin thought they might be able to get the support of the locals by joining the tribesmen against their enemy and thus stir them up against the foreign rule. The combined force of Hassanzais and Mujahidin took up positions in the north. When they arrived at Kotla, the stronghold of the Khan of Amb, they attacked the fortress from the north-west.¹⁹ On 6 January 1853, Mr. Abbot, an English officer, arrived with a huge army and advanced to help the ruler of

¹² Sayyid Mir Badshah Bukhari, *Tehreek-i-Mujahidin: Jang-i-Balakat Kay Bad* (in Urdu), Peshawar 1992, p. 31.

¹³ Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sithana, who was made ruler of Hazara and later Buner and Swat in 1850 and fought gallantly against the Sikhs at Pir Sabaq in 1823. Muhammad Shafi Sabi, *Tazkira-i-Sarfarooshan-i-Suba Sarhad* (in Urdu), Peshawar, n. d., pp. 100-103. Sayyid Akbar Shah helped Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi and was regarded as a model Mujahidin. He did a lot for the Mujahidin cause during and after the life-time of Sayyid Ahmad. The latter put great trust in him and was consulted in all important matters. He was also in charge of the funds, coming from various parts of India. Haq, *Ideological Basis of Pakistan*, p. 46.

¹⁴ S. John Henry, *Cavalry Surgeon*, ed. A. Mckenzie Annand, London 1971, p. 272.

¹⁵ A. Aziz, *Discovery of Pakistan*, Lahore 1964, pp. 289-90.

¹⁶ *A History of Freedom Movement*, Karachi 1960, vol. I, II, p. 149.

¹⁷ Freeland Abbott, *Islam and Pakistan*, New York 1968, pp. 100-101.

¹⁸ H. L. Nevill, *Campaigns on the North West Frontier* (reprint.), Lahore 1977, p. 26 (henceforth Nevill, *Campaigns on the North West*).

¹⁹ Ghulam Rasool Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin* (in Urdu), Lahore, 1956), p. 235 (hereafter Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*).

Amb. The combined force of the Hassanzais and Mujahidin could not stand for long against the well organized army and advanced weaponry of their opponents and withdrew from Kotla.²⁰ Some prominent figures like Karam Ali of Dinapur and Sher Khan Tanuli along with 30 others were killed during the battle.²¹

Mangal Thana: The new Center of the Mujahidin

After their defeat at Kotla, the Mujahidin went in search of a safer place. After wandering in Buner and Swat for quite a long time, during which they also tried to persuade Abdul Ghaffur, popularly known as Akhund of Swat, to stir up the tribesmen against the English but to no avail. Akhund may have feared the growing power of the Mujahidin, a potential threat to his own prestige. In the meanwhile, Inayat Ali received an invitation to settle at Mangal Thana from Sayyid Abbas, chief of the area and a model Mujahidin. Thereupon Maulvi Inayat Ali changed his center to Mangal Thana, but Maulvi Yahya Ali was left as *Amir* of the old center at Sithana.²²

The Mujahidin had limited centers from which to attack English interests at their old centre as the area was mostly under the local chiefs, but with their change of centre they had the opportunity of attacking the English territory directly. At the new centre, they were successful in raising the Yusafzai of Swabi and Mardan against the English. It was during this time that the Mujahidin infiltrated into the ranks of the English army.²³ O’Kinealy referred to their activities in the following words: “He (Enayat Ali) strove to organize his followers and fire them with a hatred of the English *Kafirs*. The crescentaders were drilled daily, sometimes twice a day and, on parade, were taught songs extolling the glories of *Jihad* and on Friday there were sermons exhorting them to wait patiently *until the time appointed for the subjugation of British India arrived*.”²⁴

Inayat Ali’s efforts proved effective on both fronts. The preaching of Mujahidin and his letters had a great effect on the soldiers, and the latter joined the Mujahidin at the outbreak of the war in May 1857.²⁵ The Muja and the

²⁰ Nevill, *Campaigns on the North West*, p. 26.

²¹ Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 286.

²² Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, Islamabad 1968, vol. II, pp. 182-183 (hereafter Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*)

²³ Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, pp. 288-89.

²⁴ Ahmad Hassan Dani, *Peshawar: The Historic City of the Frontier*, Lahore 2002), p. 183 (hereafter Dani, *Peshawar*)

²⁵ Jehanzeb Khalil, *Mujahidin Movement in Malakand and Mohmand Agencies 1900-1940*, ed. M. Y. Effendi, Peshawar 2000, p. 47.

local chiefs accepted the leadership of Maulvi Inayat Ali. In this connection the Mubarak Khel tribe was the first to accept him as their chief in December 1855, followed by Mubariz Khan of Chinglai in June 1856. The people of Totalai rejected Inayat Ali's demand to recognize him as their chief and hence were attacked by the Mujahadin, but the attack was unsuccessful.²⁶

The War and the Mujahidin

The Mujahidin faced a serious problem at the outbreak of the war as their paragon and ruler of Swat Sayyid Akbar Shah died on 11 May 1857, the day the first news of the great upheaval of 1857 reached Peshawar.²⁷ Sir Herbert Edwards remarks, "It might naturally have been expected that the Badshah of Swat would have been at the head of all mischief when the troubles of 1857 overtook us. It is a remarkable fact, however, that he died on the 11th of May, the very day that the first news of the Mutiny reached Peshawar, so that Swat itself was simultaneously plunged into civil war and entirely pre-occupied with its own affairs."²⁸

As mentioned earlier, the Mujahidin were urging the Muslim sepoys of the English army to join them against the foreign yoke. The 55 Native Infantry revolted against the English upon the outbreak of the war. These sepoys fled in various directions before they could be disarmed by the authorities. Some of them were able to arrive at Swat, where they were welcomed by Sayyid Mubarak Shah, the elder son and successor of Sayyid Akbar Shah. But soon the new king of Swat and these sepoys were expelled by the Swatis.²⁹ Mubarak Shah came to Sithana, his native area, and joined Maulvi Inayat Ali in an attack on the fort at Mardan commanding the entire Yusufzai plain.³⁰

Mubariz Khan of Chinglai asked the Mujahidin to join forces with him against the English troops encamped at Shiekh Jana and Nawa Kalai. In a night attack, the combined forces of the Mujahadin and Mubariz Khan took the English officers by surprise and captured Sheikh Jana.³¹ Both sides suffered

²⁶ Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 290.

²⁷ Muhammad Shafi Sabir, *Tazkiar-i-Sarfaroshan-i-Suba Sarhad*, Peshawar, n. d.), pp. 106-07 (henceforth Sabir, *Tazkira*).

²⁸ Captain T. J. C. Plowden, *Report on the Leading Persons and State of Factions in Swat* (Simla, 1932), Peshawar, p. 10.

²⁹ H. W. Bellew, *A General Report on the Yusufzais* (reprint), (Lahore 2001), p. 97 (hereafter, *A General Report*)

³⁰ *Ibid.* also Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 184.

³¹ Dani, *Peshawar*, pp. 184-85.

major casualties as the English lost some of its ablest officers and Mujahadin leaders such as Mujib-ur-Rahman, Hafiz Pir Muhammad, Munshi Mohsinullah, Qazi Din Muhammad, Noor Khan and Haji Abd-ur-Rahman were killed. Next they targeted the English camp at Shawa and Nawa Kalai, in which some Hindus also joined the Mujahidin. However, the people of Nawa Kalai resisted the Mujahidin. The attacks of the Mujahidin caused major losses to the English force stationed there.³² To save the border from further disturbance and to drive the Mujahidin out of the villages, Major Vaughan commanded his force, which had arrived at the site on 2 July 1857, to attack the Mujahidin. The latter offered stiff resistance but was no match for the well-equipped and well-organized English army and was easily defeated. The villages of Sheikh Jana and Shawa were re-occupied and burnt by the English forces.³³ They also killed Mir Baz Khan, leader of the tribesmen and cousin of Muqarrab Khan of Panjtar.³⁴

Attack on Naranji

Maulvi Inayat Ali, leader of the Mujahidin and the tribes who had taken up arms against the English, next targeted Naranji, a border village, surrounded by hills. The rebellious sepoys of the 55th Native Infantry, Sayyid Mubarak Shah along with his followers joined the tribesmen sent by the Muqarrab Khan of Panjtar in taking an active part in the attack.³⁵ The village was attacked under the personal command of Maulvi Inayat Ali after adequate preparations and was easily occupied due to the active support of its inhabitants.³⁶ In retaliation, the English forces marched from Mardan on 8 July 1857, arrived at Salim Khan and moved towards Naranji at night but could not arrive there until 21 July.³⁷ The occupation of Naranji proved difficult for the English force as the inhabitants, numbering 400, opposed them. Their difficulties were increased by the location as the village was situated on the upper portion of the hill and they were not acquainted with the track that led there. The English force, however, under Captain James, occupied and destroyed the lower portion of Naranji on 21 July.³⁸ An eyewitness, Colonel H. C. Wylly, described the situation in these words:

³² Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 296.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Gazetteer of the Peshawar District 1897-98*, Lahore 1989, p. 85 (henceforth *Gazetteer 1897-98*).

³⁵ Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 185.

³⁶ Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 297.

³⁷ Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 185.

³⁸ *Gazetteer of Peshawar*, p. 85.

"When Maulvi Enayat Ali started his Jihad, he was accompanied by 650 Mujahidin. The position of the village was very strong, and in the days of Sikh rule it had more than once been unsuccessfully attacked, but under cover of the fire of the mountain guns, it was now speedily taken and destroyed.

The enemy suffered very severe losses and the retreat, which was now undertaken, was quite unopposed. Our casualties were five killed and twenty one wounded. The chief object of the operation, the capture of the maulvi, had not, however, been attained; while the enemy was being daily reinforced by men from Bunair, Chumla and Swat."³⁹

After the withdrawal of the English forces from the area the Mujahidin received reinforcements from the Buner and returned to Naranji. The chiefs of the Buner and Swat promised more assistance in the hour of need.⁴⁰ In order to crush the Mujahidin completely and strengthen their own position the English made another attack upon Naranji. Major Vaughan and Captain James, with a force of 1400 men, advanced towards the village on 3 August 1857 and attacked it from three sides. Major Vaughan himself held a strategic position in the lower portion of the village.⁴¹ The Mujahidin resisted stubbornly but due to their lower numbers and weak weaponry could not hold their position for long in face of the well-equipped and well-organized army and therefore withdrew from the village, taking away their cattle and valuables.⁴² Captain James reported that the whole of Naranji was razed with the help of elephants and not a single nook and corner was left intact.⁴³ The three Mujahidin arrested were later hanged in public by the English.⁴⁴

Migration of Mujahidin to different areas

After their defeat at Naranji, the Mujahidin, led by Maulvi Inayat Ali, wandered around in Buner and at last settled in Chinglai, a village in the Chamla valley. He needed some time to reorganize his force for the next encounter against the English but in the meanwhile he learnt of an English attack on Khudukhel territory. Unable to face the latter, he proceeded towards Chanai, a secure place in Amazai, the Gadoon area.⁴⁵ The attitude of the tribal chiefs changed toward

³⁹ H. C. Wyllie, *From Black Mountains to Waziristan* (Lahore 2003), pp. 58-59. (henceforth Wyllie, *Black Mountains to Waziristan*)

⁴⁰ Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 186.

⁴¹ Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 297.

⁴² Haq, *The Great Revolution of 1857*, p. 287.

⁴³ *Gazetteer of Peshawar*, p. 85.

⁴⁴ Neville, *Campaigns on the North West Frontier*, p. 85.

⁴⁵ Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 299.

the Mujahidin after their defeat at Naranji.⁴⁶ In November 1857 the former also killed some Mujahidin in order to please the English. Sayyid Mian Gull killed three Mujahidin, who were on their way to Mangal Thana. Likewise, an incident was also recorded concerning Sayyid Abbas, the chief of Mangal Thana, who had once invited the Mujahidin to settle in his area.⁴⁷

The war year was critical time for the Mujahidin. Their communications with their collaborators in India were cut off. The transmission of funds from various parts of India was greatly affected as the most important route for boats along the Indus was closed.⁴⁸ It has been reported that during this time a messenger named Ameera succeeded in carrying the funds but another named Jamala carrying Rs 600/- was arrested near Zaida, a village to the North-West of the Indus in the present Swabi district of the North-West Frontier Province. Some of their other messengers like Abdul Hay, Attaullah and Hassan Ali were arrested some time later and were sent to Sialkot. Moreover, some of their prominent men, like Ahmadullah Shah, Muhammad Hussain and Maulvi Wahiz-ul-Haq were put in protective custody. At this critical juncture, some of Maulvi Inayat Ali's companions like Qadir Baksh, Allah Baksh, Shamsheer Khan and Munshi Abdul Haq left him and went to Sithana, Lahore and Swat respectively. Only Nasir Muhammad, Shariatullah, Abdul Ghafur Kalan and Abdul Ghafur Khurud remained with him.⁴⁹

The Mujahidin nevertheless took heart and a bold night attack under the leadership of Shariatullah was made upon the English camp near Sheikh Jana and Naranji in October 1857⁵⁰ with the assistance of the inhabitants of Khudukhel, Shiekh Jana and Naranji. The attack was successful as a large number of the English soldiers were killed and a huge amount of booty fell into their hands⁵¹ and the assistance commissioner of Yusufzai area, Lieutenant Home just managed to escape.⁵²

46 Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, p. 187.

47 Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 299.

48 Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, p. 187.

49 Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, pp. 300-301.

50 Neville, *Campaign on the North West Frontier*, p. 41.

51 Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 305.

52 Bellew, *A General Report on the Yusufzais*, p. 97.

Destruction of Chinglai, Panjtar and Mangal Thana

The attack on the English camp at Sheikh Jana was the last active offensive undertaken by Inayat Ali as he died at the end of March 1858. It was a really hard time in this critical situation. Maulvi Nasarullah was chosen the new leader of the Mujahidin.⁵³ On 22 April 1858, a huge army consisting of 4,877 soldiers was dispatched under Sir Sydney Cotton against the Khudu Khel and other tribes.⁵⁴ The Army was divided into two major columns led by Lieutenant Colonel Renny and Major Alban. Each column was further divided into a further three columns.⁵⁵ The English force crossed Daran Pass (Sher Dara) on the night of 26 April and Chinglai and then Panjtar were occupied and destroyed without much resistance. The forces then moved towards Salim Khan.⁵⁶ The Mujahidin retreated after a severe defeat despite their gallant fighting as the tribesmen deserted them.⁵⁷

After the destruction of Chinglai and Panjtar, two important Mujahidin bases, Sir Sydney Cotton marched towards Mangal Thana, another stronghold of the Mujahidin, situated on the southern slope of the Mahaban (Mahabanr) hill. It consisted of two villages, the lower one inhabited by the Mujahidin while the upper viiage was well fortified and contained houses belonging to prominent figures of the movement such as Maulvi Inayat Ali, Sayyid Abbas and the late Sayyid Akbar Shah.⁵⁸ Sir Sydney Cotton divided his army into three columns: the first was stationed at Salim Khan, the second at Panjtar and the third Column proceeded towards Mangal Thana.⁵⁹ The village was completely razed after its occupation on 29 April 1858 and the English troops returned to Salim Khan.⁶⁰

The Expedition of Kaya and Kabal

The English had decided to destroy all the bases of the Mujahidin situated close to English territory. Before attacking Sithana, the last stronghold of the Mujahidin, the British planned an expedition against Kaya and Kabal situated

53 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

54 Allah Bakhsh Yusafi, *Yusafzai Afghan*, Lahore 1968, p. 535.

55 Wylly, *From Black Mountains to Waziristan*, p. 60.

56 Neville, *Campaign on the North West Frontier*, p. 41.

57 Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 190.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

59 Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 307.

60 Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, p. 190.

between the Indus and Topi, a village in the present Swabi district of the North-West Frontier Province inhabited by the Yusufzai tribe who had made a great contribution to the struggle of the Mujahidin against the English.⁶¹ The English extorted a promise from the Uthmanzai tribe not to assist the Mujahidin during the expedition.⁶² Finally, on 30 April 1858 a battle was fought between the English and the Mujahidin at Kaya and Kabal. The Mujahidin were completely routed despite their bravery. They suffered major casualties in the battle, including the loss of Umar Shah, grandson of Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sithana. In order to destroy the power of the Mujahidin the English forces proceeded towards Sithana, the last stronghold of the Mujahidin after the destruction of Kaya and Kabal.⁶³

One should mention that the tribesmen, especially the Uthmanzai, had turned against the Sayyids of Sithana and the Mujahidin on the eve of Cotton's attack.⁶⁴ The combined forces of Sir Sydney Cotton and Major Becher moved against Sithana on 4 May 1858, crossing the Indus and advancing from the south.⁶⁵ The levies of Jahandad Khan, English ally and ruler of Amb, took up their position on the northern hills.⁶⁶ In the meantime Mubarak Shah, having been informed by the local people, left Sithana along with his family and moved to Malka, a village on the northern slopes of the Mahan (Mahabannr) hills. The resistance at Sithana would now be offered by forty Mujahidin and twenty Jaduns under the command of Ikramullah.⁶⁷ This small force gathered in the upper portion of Sithana known as *Shah Noor ki Lari*. The result of the battle was obvious to the Mujahidin but they continued to fight vigorously.⁶⁸

The English sources admired these religious zealots in their own way. It has been reported that most of the Mujahidin, who were clothed in white with a few wearing velvet cloaks, offered the toughest resistance to the enemy in their punitive expeditions.⁶⁹ The Mujahidin refused to leave the field and fought to

61 *Ibid.*

62 Wylly, *From the Black Mountains to Waziristan*, p. 63.

63 Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 191.

64 The tribes were forced by Edwards, the then commissioner of Peshawar, not to assist the Mujahidin against the English. Moreover, the Uthmanzais had nurtured a long enmity in their minds due to the tithes collected by Sayyid Akbar Shah and Sayyid Umar Shah as a sign of their political overlordship and also to meet the expenditure of the Mujahidin centers at Sithana. Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 191.

65 Neville, *Campaign on the North West Frontier*, p. 41.

66 Fida Hussain, *Tareekh-i-Tanawal* (in Urdu), (Rawalpindi 1992), p. 216.

67 Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, p. 192.

68 Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 313.

69 Neville, *Campaign on the North West Frontier*, p. 41.

their last man. Most of them, including their leader Ikramullah, Jamadar Allah Bakhsh, Naimatullah and about 30 Mujahidin remained fighting in the field.⁷⁰ Sithana was completely destroyed under the feet of elephants. All the houses were demolished and the fortification was blown up with gunpowder. Even the trees were cut down and the area inhabited by the Mujahidin was reduced to ashes.⁷¹ Before leaving Sithana, the English extorted an agreement from the Jaduns and Uthmanzai not to let the Mujahidin settle in Sithana or anywhere in their area.⁷²

The Mujahidin were now invited to Malka by the Sayyids of the village, a branch of the Sithana Sayyids.⁷³ This village is situated on the Northern side of the Mahaban (Mahabanr) hills, 40 miles away from the old fort of Attock.⁷⁴ They organized themselves under their new leaders Nasarullah and Muhammad Taqi at Malka, and continued raids on British possessions. The supply of funds was resumed with the release of Maulvi Ahmadullah and Maqsood Ali who were arrested during the turmoil of 1857. On his arrival in Peshawar after his release Maqsood Ali made an arrangement for the collection of funds and volunteers and joined the Mujahidin in 1860.⁷⁵ Though the Mujahidin gained strength in the next few years the British authorities launched the most famous campaign against the Mujahidin known as Ambela Campaign in 1863. The sole objective of the andcampaign was to root out the Mujahidin once and for all as the latter formed a potential threat to the political interests of the latter.⁷⁶ However, the struggle that had started with the outbreak of the War of Independence ended with the destruction of Sithana in May 1858.

The struggle of the Mujahidin during the War of Independence belies the assumption that the Mujahidin fought only against the Sikhs and offered no opposition to the British. It is commonly believed that the local population treated the Mujahidin as aliens and opposed them. Though at times the Mujahidin were opposed by the Pukhtuns due to the strict interpretation of *Sharia* by the former, a thorough study of the subject reveals that the Mujahidin

⁷⁰ Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 313. Also Wylly, *From the Black Mountains to Waziristan*, p. 63. They were buried in *Shah Noor ki Lari*. Their graves, along with the then existing village of Sithana, were submerged under the waters of the Tarbela Dam.

⁷¹ Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, pp. 192-193. Also Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, p. 313.

⁷² Henry, *Cavalry Surgeon*, p. 272.

⁷³ Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, p. 193.

⁷⁴ Colonel John Adye, *Sitana: A Mountain Campaign on the Border of Afghanistan in 1863* (reprint) Uckfield, 2004, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Bellew, *A General Report on the Yusufzais*, p. 99.

⁷⁶ Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 194.

remained in the Pukhtun area for more than a century due to the support of the latter in men and material.

The Mujahidin fought against the Sikhs and English alike. They aimed at the establishment of Islamic rule throughout India. Their failure is attributed to many causes: namely; they were not trained in modern methods of warfare. They lacked the tactical and leadership skills to lead and organize small groups of the religious zealots and failed to gain the active support of all the tribes inhabiting the North-West Frontier. The outbreak of the war in India made all means of communication unsafe and as a result they were unable to receive supplies from India in men and material. Last but not least, their dream of a true Islamic rule or the re-establishment of Muslim dominance was not supported by Hindus and other religious communities. India, after all, was not a country with a single Muslim community but a huge geographical entity comprising many nationalities and followers of different religions. They were, moreover, due to their uncompromising attitude towards the followers of other schools of thought, supported only by a small portion of the Muslims, while official propaganda also played a part in this.