

RECONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF MEENAS

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LOKESH BHARTI

**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES,
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067 INDIA**

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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067

CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES,
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the present dissertation on “RECONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF MEENAS” : being submitted by **LOKESH BHARTI** is worthy of consideration for the award of **M.Phil degree** of Jawaharlal Nehru University. This is her own work and has not been published or presented for the award of any degree of this university or any other university.

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Madhwan. K. Palat
(Chairperson)

Prof. Dilbagh Singh
(Supervisor)

Date : 5.01.98

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(LOKESH BHARTI)

ABBREVIATIONS

CEHI	:	Cambridge Economic History of India
DDH	:	Daftar Diwan Huzuri
HS	:	Historical Section
IESHR	:	Indian Economic and Social History Review
IHR	:	Indian Historical Review
JR	:	Jaipur Records
PIHC	:	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
RSAB	:	Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner
VS	:	Vikram Samvat

INTRODUCTION

I

"The tribes, says K.S. Singh, are one of the best studied communities of India. They have their rich oral tradition as many 449 tribal communities have an ethnographic account. Our data show that there has been continuity in their oral tradition which are being recreated." But tribal studies in the colonial times was more of ethnographical work. Though it is believed that enmass study has been done on tribes but one can see that the early interest in the tribal study of western India is not equivalent to the tribal studies does on the rest of the country by British administrators.

"Meenas" are the largest tribe of Rajasthan and the fourth largest tribe of the country. For the first time Meenas became the sole subject, in the paper of Kaviraj Shyamal Das in late Nineteenth Century i.e. in 1886. There is no historical work so far being done on them. All information which one gets to know about this largest tribe is from various ethnographic accounts. The British ethnographic and anthropological accounts also include the Meenas alongwith other tribes castes and clans.

The best examples of these are administrative report of Forbes Watson (1868); archaeological report of A.C.L. Carlleyle (1871-73); Settlement report of J.D. La Touch

(1875); anthropological report of M.A. Sherring (1881), Horatio Bickerstaffe-Rowney (1882), Ibbetson (1883), Crooke (1890), Russel Hiralal (1916), Powlet (1916); Police report of Kennedy (1885); Assessment Report of MFO Dyer (1897-98); Army recruiting officers report of B.L.Cole (1923), Tod's, "Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan" Vol.I,II and Kaviraj Shyamal Das: "Vir Vinod" and his article on "The Meena Tribes of Jaipur" published in 1886 fall in the category of early historical accounts of the Meenas".

These reports briefly deal with the origin, inhabitation, occupation, appearance, customs, traditions and division of the Meena tribe into various sub-divisions and 'gots' or cowpen. Criminal image of the Meenas, and the efforts of British government to rehabilitate them so as to make them avoid these criminal activities are also found in their reports.

Jadunath Sarkar, Harnath Singh Dundlod, Rawat Saraswat and Muni Magan Sagar have dealt with political history of the Meenas in the context of their subjugation by the Rajputs. They have relied upon bardic accounts which are not entirely reliable.

In the gazetteers and other official reports. Meenas are referred to as agriculturists. They were also in the state service as village watchman and guards of the state treasury. The colonial accounts of late Nineteenth century brand them as criminals, dacoits, highway robbers. No attempt has been made so far to examine voracity of the notion of criminal tribes.

Recent works on the tribes by K.S. Singh, R.S.Mann and S.H.M.Rizvi are basically an anthropological research. These works take into account contemporary condition of Meena tribe with little reference to their historical past. K.S.Singh deals with various subdivisions of Meenas, family structure, occupation, beliefs rites, rituals and ceremonies. He believes, that inspite of the continuity of Meena tradition, they have been exposed to sanskritisation, as evidenced in many elements of their ideology and perception", also their religious practices.

S.H.M.Rizvi has done micro level studies of 3 villages Malwas which was the 1st settlements of Meenas after surrendering the Amer fort to the Rajputs during 11th Century. This village falls under Pachwara Pal. The second locale being selected from Talhati Pal in Swaimadhampur district. Village Manpura lies in the midst of Ranthambore and regrouped village. The third locale of study was selected from Mewadat Pal in Udaipur District. The Village Tiddi which was formed by few Meenas who in search of a congenial political climate migrated from Pachwara Pal during the repressive movement launched by Rajput Chiefs with the concurrence of British political agent. In his comparative studies he has brought out the fact, that Meenas were grouped into clusters or population groups which were themselves structured, organized with definite forms. Although according to his work, this form may change with time but it has a continuity. This he has proved by doing micro-level research of the cultural and demogenetical traits of Meenas.

II

Deeply set in the minds of historians of all hues is the association of medieval Rajasthan with the Rajputs. This is so deeply set that one tends to neglect history of pre-Rajput ruling tribes of Rajasthan such as the Meenas, Meds and Bhils. Unfortunately, the contours of these pre-Rajput political elites are but dimly illuminated for us we can look for them through folk tales and folklore or bardic accounts written under the patronage of Rajput Chiefs. But it is worth attempting to work back on the basis of rich information contained in the 17th and 18th centuries documentation pertaining to Eastern Rajasthan on the Meena.

In the sources pertaining to medieval Rajasthan the Meenas are depicted as erstwhile rulers who were subsequently subjugated by the Rajputs of Kachhawa and Hada Chauhans Clans in south Eastern Rajasthan. The 19th Century British reports branded them as criminals, thieves and robbers.

During the 14th and 15th century the Meena chiefs lost their position of pre-eminence as rulers and sank to the position of petty land holders and cultivators. If we go by the 19th century colonial perspective on rural crime and criminal tribes and castes, the Meenas suffered a further set back to their position as they were by and large referred to as vagabonds.

We are led to believe by the colonial writers that transformation of the Meenas from that of ruler to criminals occurred during a span of 300 years. However, no explanation has so far been given to analyse the nature and the pace of this transition and to examine historical validity of this notion.

It is true that there is not much historical evidence available on the position of Meena prior to the 16th century though stray references are available in Rajasthani Khyat sources.

Fortunately rich haul of archival documents have survived. These documents pertain to Eastern Rajasthan and cover 17th and 18th centuries. These documents furnish information on several aspects of rural society and administration including policing. These records depict Meenas as village headmen, dominant peasant caste and petty officials in the Rajput state. The information on the nature of their interaction with other caste groups and sections of the rural society is also available.

Rajasthani 'Khyat' sources throw some light on the subjugation of the ruling Meenas chiefs who are referred to as 'Bhumiyas' and Chaurasiyas (Owner of 84 villages). They also provide information on the process of incorporation of the 'aristocracy' levelled down by the Rajputs into the newly emerged Rajput clan state system. But these accounts hardly offer any information on the political organisation of the Meenas and the

socio-economic structure of the territory falling under their rule.

In the agrarian records pertaining to the 17th century the Meenas are depicted as Patels and headman of several villages, there are also numerous reference to their being the pioneer colonizer of the villages. They are also referred to as numerically dominant landowners and agriculturists. The Meenas cultivations are catagorised as Raiyati along with the Jats, Malis, Gujars and Ahirs. There are also instances of their social interaction with the Rajput resident of the village on the occasion of Holi and Dussehra festivals, the Rajputs being invited for feast by the Meenas.

The position that they occupied in the rural society brought them in conflict with other dominant castes and groups particularly the Rajputs, Brahamins and the Jats. These conflicts pertain to various land rights such as ownership of Pateli right; ownership of wells and agricultural land; internal management of the village. The Meenas were also involved in the cases that are perceived by the state as crimes and offences. But the key point of inquiry is that whether it is possible to single out the Meenas as the offenders or were there other individual and representatives of social groups who also figured as guilty.

The fact which needs to be reconciled is that how the Meenas were appointed by the state as Chaukayats and Vadhdars of the Villages if they were criminals robbers and thieves? What is the historical basis of the Meenas being projected as criminals. The

evidence pertaining to crime in the rural society contains numerous instances of the involvement of members of different communities such as Rajput, Brahamins Mahajans and members of lower social order. The projection of the Meenas as criminals does not hold good at least upto the end of the eighteenth century.

Although there is a recent tendency in historical studies of crime to reject the essentialism that, in particular emerges strongly in colonial writings. It is true that English explanations of crime arose from the then prevalent theories of enthology and evolutionism. One school of scholars persists in a hydraulic explanation of crime (hardship pressure explosion) . The idea of crime as a consequence of being both poor and primitive (tribal) and as constituting a hereditary essence is implicit here. Nonetheless, there is a need for a parallel, alternative explanation of crime based on hard historical data. Although medieval Rajasthani Khyats throw some light on the phenomena, deeper explanation can be had from the rich archival records pertaining to the 17th and 18th centuries.

This work attempts to analyse the position of the Meenas of Rajasthan from historical perspective. In order to place our discussion in perspective an attempt has been made to construct political history of the Meenas and how did the Rajput hegemony was established over the Meena Chief. What was the relationship between the erstwhile aristocracy and the new rulers? Attempts made by the Rajputs to foster their interests in

the territory acquired from the Meenas and inroad made into the status of the Meena as autonomous chiefs and bhumias are questions that the work will enquire into.

To what extent could the Rajput rulers compromise with dispossessed Meenas and to what extent did they fail to do so? The incorporation of the Meenas into the Rajput state system is apparent as it brought in its wake the participation of the erstwhile Meena Chief in the coronation ceremony, appointments of the Meenas as guards of the royal treasury, as village headmen, chaukayat, Vadhdar, Halkara and Khoji. The entire process of the reconciliation of the Meenas by the Rajput rulers will be discussed (Chapter I).

Although concerned specifically with the Meenas, this work attempts to analyse the position of the Meenas in the rural society both in terms of caste and class structure of the rural society, pattern of landholding and distribution of key agricultural assets among cultivators belonging to different social strata. It is not so that the position of Meenas as members of village aristocracy and a dominant peasant caste will be examined in isolation but the aim is to place them in the heterogeneous social structure of the village society and in the context of the varying layers of authority system in the rural society (chapter II).

This work also attempts to analyse the position of the Meenas as state officials and functionaries and their place in the politico-administrative structure of state agencies with

particular reference to their appointment as guards of the royal treasury and state treasuries at pargana headquarters. In this context we shall also examine their role in the rural policing as Chaukayats and Khojis (spies).

Lastly, an attempt has been made to describe and explain the incidence of principal types of rural crimes in Eastern Rajasthan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The basic aim is to assess the nineteenth century colonial perception of crime and the whole notion of criminal tribes and caste in historical perspective. Empirical evidence alone, relating to how different communities figure in actual cases of crime can throw light on this issue. What was perceived as crime from the perspective of contemporary society and the state, what is the range of offences committed which are perceived as crime and who were the punished? The evidence presented to give answer to these questions comes from documents preserved at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

The work is largely based on archival records preserved at Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner. The following categories of documents have been consulted: The Arhsattas, muzmil, muazana, kalan and muzana khurd, dastur-ul-al-amal dastur, yaddashti, chithis, Amber records, and arzdashts.

A brief note on the nature of information contained in each category of the documents is given below:

Arhsattas Muzmil

The arhsattas are ledgers of receipt and disbursements maintained on a pargana wise basis, providing all revenue information to the Diwan's office regarding the condition of the pargana such as the number of villages, classification of villages, village held in jagir, name of the jagirdar, inam, bhom, and khalisa, the total assessment for the pargana, the baqaya, realization in the current year under various heads of revenue, sanctioned expenditure and the baqi, etc.

For the present study, I have analysed information given under the revenue head Siwai Jamabandi which represented a number of taxes levied by the state in addition to land revenue and other agricultural and non-agricultural taxes. Siwai Jamabandi also include fines inflicted on the culprits under the head hasil farohi. Farohi accounts are quite interesting as they indicate the type of crimes, offences, violation of customary practices committed in the rural society, social groups involved, how they were viewed by the state and the rural society nature of punishment inflicted upon the culprits and caste or class determinants of penalty imposed on communication in the form of cash fine termed takrisana or gunehgari.

I have consulted Arhasttas pertaining to parganas which formed part of the territory held by the Kachhawa chiefs of Amber in his watan and tankawah jagir from the

Mughals in his capacity as an imperial manasabadars. Technically parganas held in tankwah jagir formed the confirmation of imperial rules and regulations governing assignments of tankwah jagir and its administration.

Muazana Records

Muazana records were compiled in the early 19th century on the basis of information given in the various categories of records such as arhsatta, awarijah, jamabandi, khasra, dastur ul amal and chithis etc. The muazana records were prepared pargana wise and contain detailed information regarding individual villages in the pargana. The information contains items like area statistics, changes in boundry, if any, revenue yield under different heads specified separately for the kharif and the rabi if the village was in khalisa, and the tan of the village and the name of the assignee in case the village was assigned in jagir. Although the information contained in the muazana records is by and large corroborative, still they help us in determining the nature of the village settlement in terms of its boundaries, name and caste of the colonizer, extent of land use, etc.

Dastur ul amal va amal dastur

Dastur al amal va amal dastur are a body of rules and regulations for the guidance

of revenue officials. They were also prepared for the pargana by the Chaudhari and the Qanungo. They furnish us with information on the customary revenue practices of the pargana. These documents are very crucial for determining the magnitude of land revenue and other rural cesses, differentiation in the rate of revenue. Dastur ul amal va amal dastur were issued from time to time, particularly at the time of the accession of a new ruler. However, a caution may be made while using the information given in the dastur ul amals. The revenue rates mentioned in these documents can be compared with those given in the arhsattas as they represent the actual rates in force at that particular time. The information given in the dastur ul amal is extremely useful in calculating the burden of agricultural taxes on cultivators belonging to different castes including Meenas.

Yaddashtis

The yaddashtis (memoranda) were prepared by hereditary village officials (the patel and the patwari) and State officials. They record the agrarian condition of a particular village or of a pargana in a particular year, providing details of the number of ploughs and bullocks held by each peasant in each village as also the extent of the area under cultivation in each pargana and in each village within the pargana. The details in the yaddashtis extend to such minute information as to cover the number of wells in a pargana and in each village further specifying the number of masonry, non-masonry wells and those equipped with a wooden scoops, actual state of cultivation in the kharif and the

to the social structure of a village and management of its affairs. Unfortunately, these documents have not survived in large number and are of fragmentary nature. As such they cannot be used for a time series analysis. In spite of these limitations, the yaddashtis are extremely useful in forming an estimate regarding the relative numerical strength of different categories of the cultivators, caste of each cultivator distribution of such assets as ploughs and bullocks among individual peasants, land man ratio in a particular village or pargana, the size of average land holding among peasants etc. An idea regarding the degree of economic stratification among the peasants can also be formed on the basis of these documents. Some of the yaddashti documents throw light on the agrarian administrative practices of the day and on the pattern of village settlement.

Chithis

The Chithis (letters) were written by the diwan of Jaipur state to the administrative officials of the parganas viz. the amil, the amin and the faujdar. However, in the majority of cases the chithis are addressed to the amil. Chithis as primary sources of information are invaluable in details and variety of information which ranges from that on the working of the jagirdari : zamindari system, pargana and the village administration, structure and functioning of the village society, general agrarian condition of the pargana, actual working of the land revenue system at the village and the pargana levels, rural disputes,

the method of arbitration and adjudication to information on the structure and organization of trade, commercial practices, the position and role of the mercantile community and the rural urban interaction. The attitude of the state towards different social groups is also reflected in the chithis.

The Chithis are available for all the parganas which were under the control of the Jaipur Raja. These documents roughly commence from 1690 onwards and continued beyond 1800. However, there is a disproportionately large number of chithis available for the period 1710 onwards and more especially for the period 1730-1800.

The chithis can be classified into two categories on the basis of the nature of information contained therein. The chithis belonging to the first category contain orders of the state regarding appointments of various administrative and military positions, which the amil was instructed to implement and general and specific instructions to the pargana officials concerning the administrative and agrarian affairs of the pargana.

The second category of chithis pertain to rural disputes between different constituents of rural society. Each chithi contains the substance of the complaint received by the diwan, followed by his instructions on the matter, thereby giving an insight into the nature of the complaint, the character of the contending parties and the method of grievance redressal. The information contained in these chithis enable us to grasp more fully the nature of inter-relationship between different segments of the rural society, the

nature of contradictions inherent within the rural hierarchical frame work and the position, rights and role of different sections of the rural society. Thus it is possible to construct a reliable picture of the structure and functioning of the rural society on the basis of the Chithis.

Although the chithis are invaluable in the detail and variety of their information, they too suffer from certain limitations. Firstly, in some cases the background information on the origin of a dispute is not explicit making it difficult to grasp the complexities of the case or to analyse it in terms of the power structure within the village.

Secondly, we have no means of crosschecking whether the instructions issued by the diwan to the amil were in fact implemented. A large number of complaints were repeated in subsequent documents and referred back to the amil for action.

Thirdly, often the state instructed the amils to refer the disputes to the village panchayat and other locally constituted bodies for arbitration. Considering the importance assigned to these bodies in resolving local disputes, it is very likely that a large number of disputes must have been settled by them without reference to the higher authorities. As no records of the proceedings of the panchayat and other bodies are available, we are dependent on a mere fraction of the actual number of cases which were officially reported.

Despite these limitations, however, the importance of chithis as a primary source material cannot be under-estimated. The wealth and variety of information on every aspect of rural life, the nature or rights and the socio-economic relationship between different groups of the rural society, local variations in the customary practices is extremely useful to reconstruct a fairly reliable and inter-related picture of the rural society in all its complexity. The trends in the economy emerging from the analysis of the statistical data contained in other documents and certain anomalies of situations can be explained with the help of information available in the chithis.

Amber records

The amber records are a collection of miscellaneous letters in the forms of undertakings (likh-tangs), parwana (letter from higher officer to the Diwan of the Jaipur state). These letters contain rich information about the routine functioning of the administration as also about various administrative authorities at the village and the pargana levels. A large number of letters reflect the political and economic dimensions of the local administration. Many letters in the corpus of Amber records also record political developments that were taking place in a pargana. This information underlines the political context of social and economic changes during the period under study. The amber records are available in a complete series covering the entire period of study.

Arzdashts

The arzdashts were written by the amils and other officials appointed by the Amber rulers in the parganas held by them in tankhwahs jagir and ijara from the Mughals posted at the pargana. These are addressed to the Amber ruler. The Arzdashts contain a wide range of information the political, social and economic conditions of the parganas. They also carry the Raja's directives to his officials for their implementation. Arzdashtas offer valuable information on the nature of rural discontentment, caste and clan alignment and realignment between the zamindar class and their relations with the subordinate peasant groups such as the Meos, Meenas, Jats, Gujars and Ahirs.

In addition to archival records the work has drawn upon published Rajasthani khayat sources, records of the National Archives of India, and published reports in English.

Muhta Nainsi was a contemporary of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur in the seventeenth century. His khayat had been first published in 1962 and edited by B.P. Sakaria. Nainsi's khayat is published in three volumes covering the period from 8th to 17th century approximately. Nainsi's khayat is partly based on heresay and partly on historical evidence. His khayat mainly discussed the political activities of the Rajput elites and formation of Rajput clan states in Rajasthan. Nainsi's information about the subjugation of the Meenas, Bhils and Meds by the Rajputs is extremely useful.

CHAPTER I

THE MEENA CHIEFS AND THE FORMATION OF THE RAJPUT STATES

According to the traditional accounts based on folktales and folklores, the Meena's were the oldest inhabitants of Rajasthan. The country which they ruled was known as 'Meendesh' which comprised of south-eastern part of Rajasthan. The word Meendesh was derived from Meenas who inhabited and ruled this area. Though the derivation of the term Meena itself is obscure but it is generally believed that it means 'fish'.¹

'Meendesh' according to the traditional accounts of the Meenas consisted of twelve territorial units called "bara pals". All the twelve pals correspond to the south-eastern part of Rajasthan comprising modern districts of Alwar, Jaipur, Bharatpur, Sawai Madhopur, Tonk, Kota, Bundi, Bhilwara, Udaipur, Chittor and Banswara. Meendesh or the twelve pals touched the boundaries of Haryana in the north and Madhya Pradesh in the east. The meaning of 'pal' as derived from the traditional accounts of the Meenas themselves is a territorial unit with definite geographical and topographical boundaries. G.H.Ojha defines

1. See R.S.Mann, N.N.Vyas, "Indian Tribes in Transition", Jaipur - 1980, p.102
R.V.Russel, R.B.Hiralal "Anthropological Publication", Netherlands - 1968, p.236
William Crooke, "An Ethnographical hand book for North West Provinces and Oudh", Allahabad -1890, p.120

the 'pal' of the Bhils as a collection of few households generally scattered at a distance. According to S.L.Doshi, who has done extensive research on the Bhils, "a cluster of settlements with total affinity of cultural traits' in the forest interior is known as 'pal'". Thus the pals, are scattered settlements, having more or less identical surroundings. These comprise of several kindred huts and cover a large area divided into a number of villages. Therefore, the 'pal' is essentially a contiguous geographical unit, a hilly region or a valley where the huts stand on small knolls extending over several miles. Besides its geographical base, 'pal' definitely denotes a culture and a distinct mode of living.

Col.Tod defines 'pal' as sub-division of the community of any of the aboriginal mountain races. The differences between the 'pals' are based mainly on dialect, mode of dressing and personal adornment. The Meenas believe that they are the oldest inhabitants of twelve 'pals' which cover the south eastern part of Rajasthan. The Meena pal is defined as the territorial unit of the relatively autonomous, self governing community. Its legitimacy is derived from custom and consent and it is characterized by close ties of kinship and direct hierarchies exist within the pal. This perhaps explains their numerical strength in Jaipur, Sawai Madhopur, Alwar and Udaipur districts. The fact that they were one of the numerically dominant peasant caste is also borne out from the documentary evidence pertaining to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The major concentration of Meena's is found in Panchwara pal which include the

Mughal parganas^{of} Gijgarh, Suner, Salawad, Toda Bhim, Liwali, Behror and Lalsot in Eastern Rajasthan. The dialect spoken here is 'Pachwari', an offshoot of the Rajasthani Khadi Boli.² Col.Tod observes the 'original pure and unmixed race of Meena's were styled Pachwaras'.³ The Meenas living in the Pachwara pal are considered to be the original settlers of the area. Saraswat holds the opinion that Panchwara Meenas are the original descendants of those Meenas who once ruled the kingdom of Amber. . He also states that the name Pachwara was given to the 'Pal' because there were five 'got' of Meenas living since time immemorial. Other Meenas living in this 'Pal' are migrant from neighbouring 'pal'.

The question that thus arises is, as to how the Meena chief's ruling this tract of Rajasthan were deprived of their authority as the rulers by the migrant Rajput clan. We do not have any contemporary historical account of the nature of conflict between them and the methods by which Meena chiefs were subjugated by the Rajputs. Later historical accounts, particularly Rajasthani Khayats throw light on the processes of the formation of Rajput clan states and the manner in which the Rajputs got better of the Meena Chiefs. In Rajasthani Khayat sources which were written by Rajput bards or courtiers, the Meena

². S.H.M. Rizvi - Meena The Ruling Tribe of Rajasthan, Delhi - 1987, p.10

³. See Horatio Bickerstafee Roweny, "The Wild Tribes of India", Delhi 1882 p. 51. Jadunath Sarkar, "History of Jaipur", ed. Raghubir Singh,Hyderabad, 1984, p.23.

eighty four villages).⁴ The Khayats were written on the orders of the king himself or by the bards to please the ruling clan. Hence these accounts are highly biased in favour of the ruling Rajput Clan as they highlight the military and cultural superiority of the Rajputs over the Meenas Chiefs who are branded as tyrants. The episodes which depict the conflict between Meenas and Rajput Chiefs make it explicit that the Rajputs were not prepared to treat the Meena Chiefs as socially equal. They displayed a contempt for the life style of the Meenas, The prevalent value system among the Rajputs was that, no moral limit could be set to pursue their 'dharma' i.e. to acquire land. According to these accounts quite often the Rajputs adopted dubious means to overthrow the Meena chiefs. Nainsy himself gives various versions of folktales to highlight how Hara Chauhan took over Bundi. He included Khayat of the Kachhwas of Amber in his collection of Vats and Khayats. However, it is quite surprising that he omits information on the nature and process of conquest of Dhundhar Territory by Kachhawa Rajputs from Meenas. However, Nainsy has given three different versions of Hara Deva's conflict with the Meena Chief who was ruling over Bundi, his elimination and subjugation of his Meena followers by Hara Deva who founded the Hara

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⁴. "Mahnot Nainsi-ri-khyat", Vol.I ed. 'Acharya Jin Vijay Muni, pp.97-108, Jodhpur - 1960.

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Chauhan dynasty of Bundi. Nainsy's narratives are based on folktales.⁵

As per Nainsy's first version of Hara Chauhan capturing Bundi from the 'Osara' gotra of Meenas, Hara Deva, a Rajput belonging to Chauhan clan had to leave his ancestral place Bhainsrodgarh due to unfavourable circumstances and he settled down at Bundi which happened to be a stronghold of Meenas. The Meena Chief wanted to marry the daughter of a Brahman resident of Bundi. The Brahman had objections to the marriage but the Meenas were insistent on the alliance. The Brahman therefore went to his patron "(Yajman) - Hara Deva". On the advise of his Yajman, the Brahman began negotiation with the Meena Chief regarding his proposal of marrying the Brahman's daughter. After showing some reluctance, the Brahman gave his approval to the marriage and fixed the marriage date. He also told the Meenas that he would perform the marriage ceremony according to his own customs and rituals and that his Yajman Hara Deva would also attend the marriage.

Hara Deva constructed a big wooden and grass hut 'Janwasa' where the marriage party was to be accommodated. It was surrounded by explosives, covered by grass. On the occasion of the marriage, Hara Deva treated the Meenas with alcoholic drinks excessive consumption of which led to most of the Meenas becoming unconscious. Hara

⁵. Ibid. pp.97-101.

Deva then treacherously slained all the Meenas who were lying in an unconscious state and those who were inside the Janwasa surrounded with explosives were burnt alive. Also the other Meenas who did not accompany the marriage procession were slained too.

Thus, Hara Deva treacherously killed the Meena Chief and usurped Bundi. Few Meenas who survived the massacre, ran away from Bundi, and came to be known as "Bundele Meenas".

The second version of the traditional account given by Nainsy runs as follows: Hara Deva left Bundi and started living at Bhainsrodgarh as he did not have any money. The Rana whose daughter Arasi was married to Hara Deva asked Deva why he was living at Bhainsrodgarh. Deva told the Rana that he had to leave Bundi as that tract of land was ruled by the Meenas. He asked the Rana for help, in his endeavour to capture Bundi from the Meenas. Rana provided him with as many soldiers as Deva had asked for. With the help of Rana's soldiers, Hara Deva attacked the Meenas of Bundi in the night, slaughtering them and later became the master of Bundi. He visited the darbar of Rana to inform him about his success against the Meenas and sought for further military help from the Rana for nearly four months so that he could consolidate his authority and subjugate the Meenas in the villages adjacent to Bundi. He succeeded in eliminating the remaining Meena Thakurs. According to the third version mentioned by Nainsy in his

Khayat, Harroj Dod, who was ruling over the Meenas of Bundi was a tyrant. He was harrassing the Meenas by spoiling their cultivated land, plundering their villages and taking "Nalbandi" tax.

The ruler of Mandu wanted Hara Deva who used to live in Bhainsrod to gift away his horse to him. Since Hara Deva was unwilling to part away with his horse, he left Bhainsrodgarh to escape the wrath of the Sultan of Mandu and came to live with Meenas of Bundi. Hara Deva used to visit a dancer named Dodi living in Bundi. She was a fortune teller, and predicted that he (Hara Deva) would one day rule over the land.

The Meenas complained to Hara Deva about Harraj Dod and his atrocities. Hara Deva promised to help the Meenas against Harraj Dod and free them from his tyranny. In return the Meenas promised Hara Dava half of the land.

Hara Deva confronted Harraj near a canal, where the two men talked out. Harraj, who was much impressed with Hara Deva's courage assured him that henceforth he would not indulge in terrorizing Meenas and also promised not to come back to Bundi. After some time, Hara Deva decided to get his daughter married to Harraj, which was objected to, by the Meena Thakur who was desirous of having matrimonial relations with the Rajputs. Hara Deva responded to the demand of the Meena Thakur by agreeing to marry his daughter to him. Hara Deva invited the Meenas on the pretext of performing the

marriage ceremony of his daughter with the Meena Thakur. With the help of Harraj's relatives he treacherously killed all the Meenas who had accompanied the Thakur as part of the marriage procession. Col. Tod has given somewhat different version of the episode. He mentions Rao Gango Khichi (instead of Harraj mentioned by Nainsy) as the person from whose depredation Deva freed the Meena's and later took over Bundi and there is no reference to Meena Thakur's desire of marrying Hara Deva's daughter.

In the myths included in Nainsy's *Khayat* the eventual defeat of the Meena Chief is explained not by any intrinsic weakness of the Meenas such as tactics, their being inferior warriors or lack of unity, it is instead attributed to the cleverness of the Rajputs who could trick the unsuspecting Meenas on one pretext or the other.

M.L.Sharma commenting on the subjugation of the Meena's of Bundi by Hara Deva writes that this treachery could have been a reflection of the strategy adopted by Rajputs since they took over Kota from Bhils and Sirohi from Meenas in a similar way. He however objects to the reference to the use of explosives because gun powder was first used in 1527 in the battle between Babur and Maharaja Sanga. Therefore, the use of explosive by Hara Deva could not have been possible.⁶

6. M.L.Sharma, Jaipur Rajya Ka Itihas, Jaipur 1969, p.51.

The information available in the modern account about the subjugation of Meenas of the territory of Amber by the Rajputs belonging to Kachhawa Clan is based upon Col.Tod's Annals of Amber.⁷

Tod viewed the origin of Kachhawa state of Amber as a case of simple usurpation. But it would be contrary to precedent if this event was untinged with romance. As the episode, while it does not violate probability, illustrates the condition of the aboriginal tribes, we do not exclude the tradition. On the death of Sora Singh, a prince of Nurwar, his brother usurped the government, depriving the infant Dhola Rai, of his inheritance. His mother clothing herself in mean apparel, put the infant in a basket which she placed on her head, and travelled westward until she reached the town of Khogong (within 5 miles of the modern Jaipoor), then inhabited by the Meenas. Dhola Rai's mother who was distressed with hunger and fatigue placed the basket on the ground and while plucking some wild berries observed that a hooded snake was guarding the basket. Her shrieks (emanated out of fear) attracted the attention of a passer by Brahaman. He consoled her not to be afraid of the sight but she should rejoice since this incident indicates of a bright future for the infant. But the mother of the child who later founded the kingdom of Amber, did not rejoice with the thought of impending hunger and life full of struggle. The Brahman showed her the way to reach Khogong where according to him,

⁷ J.Tod., "Annal and Antiquities of Rajasthan" Vol.II, ed., William Crooke, Reutledge and Kogan Paul Limited, London, 1950, p.p.279-283. Also see, Rawat Sarastwat, "Meena Itihas" Jaipur 1968, p.p.126-160. Fateh Singh Champavat, "A Brief history of Jaipur", Jaipur 1899, p.p.6-11.

she would receive all that she desired. Khogong, encircled with hills was ruled by a Meena Chieftain. The mother sought employment through the help of a slave woman. One day she was ordered to cook dinner which was served to the Chieftain Ralunsi. The Meena Chief when partook found it to be very delicious and after enquiry found the illustrious status of the woman and her child. He adopted her as his sister and Dhole Rai (the child) as his nephew. When the boy attained the age of fourteen years he was sent to Delhi with the tribute of Khogong to attend the royal court instead of Meena chief. The young Kachhawa remained there for six years and conceived the idea of usurping his benefactor's authority. He consulted the Meena 'Dhadi' (bard) about the means through which he could achieve his goal. The Meena 'dhadi' suggested to him to take advantage of the festival of Diwali, when the Meenas customarily perform the ablutions enmasse in a tank. Dhola Rai accompanied with a few of his Rajput colleagues, took possession of Khogong after a fierce battle in which Meenas were taken by surprise. Later, Dhole Rai did not spare even the treacherous Meena 'dhadi'. Soon after, he confronted with a Rajput Chief who ruled Deosah (Dauza) and lived in a castle there. Dhole Rai demanded in marriage the daughter of Deosah Chief who refused with the plea that as Dhole Rai and he belong to 'Suryavansh' ancestry, till the separation of hundred generations the marriage would be considered illegal. But constant persuasion by Dhola Rai bore fruits. As the Chief did not have any male issue he accepted Dhole Rai as his son-in-law and transferred his power and authority to him. Thus, with this additional means at his disposal Dhola, attempted to subjugate Rao Natoo a Meena Chief (of Siera

got) who was ruling Manch. Dhole Rai defeated the chief and transferred his capital from Khogong to Manch which was renamed as 'Ramgarh' in the honour of his great ancestor.

Dhola subsequently married Maroni the daughter of the prince of Ajmer. Once he was returning along with Maroni after visiting the shrine of 'Jumrali Mata', the entire force consisting of about eleven thousand Meenas of the region assembled to oppose his passage through their country. Dhole's contingent met the Meena force but he was killed and his followers fled along with Maroni, who later gave birth to his child named "Kankul".

According to 'Kapaddware' Khayat⁸ Dhole Rai, in his battle with the Meenas of Manch was wounded by 'RaoMedha' son of the Chief of Manch, 'RaoNatto'. Thereafter, he fainted in the battle field where he was blessed by 'Jamvay Mata' his Kuldevi who inspired him to attack ^{the} Meenas Dhola Rai being inspired took the Meenas by surprise when they were celebrating their victory over Rajputs and were drinking. Dhola Rai emerged victorious in the battle that followed. After that Dhola Rai got a temple constructed of 'Jamvay Mata' in that battle field. He later, took over 'Khoh' from Chanda Meena, Getore from Geta Meena and Jhotwara from Jhota Meena.⁹

⁸. Quoted from, Raghvendra Singh Manohar, "Rajasthan Ke Khangarot Kacchawaon Ka Itihas", Jaipur, 1987, p.3

⁹ Also see M.L.Sharma, op.cit. p.58.

Kankul, the son of Dhola Rai conquered the country of Dhundhar from the Meenas. His son Medul Rao conquered Amber from the 'Susawat Meena'. Amber was then the residence of the Meena Chief 'Bhatto' who had the title of 'Rao' and was the head of the Meena Confederation. Kankul is also credited to have subdued 'Nandla Meenas' and added the district of Getoor-Ghati in his territory. His successor Hoonodeo continued offensive against the Meenas. He was succeeded by Rao Kuntal who extended his control over all the populace living in the hills around his capital. When he decided to marry the daughter of a Chauhan prince of Bhutwar, his Meena subjects collected from all quarters and demanded that in case he went beyond the borders of his principality he must leave behind the 'pataka' (standards) and 'nakaras' (drums), the symbols of Meena sovereignty in their custody.

According to Meena Itihas, the Meenas launched a mass agitation and presented a charter of eight demands to the ruler. The demands were as follows:

1. Immediate return of the symbols of ancient Meena Kingdom such as 'nakara', 'pataka', 'chhari', 'palki', 'chhatra', 'chamas', and choota kirni'.
2. The chieftain should not be passed on to anyone without seeking the concurrence of the Meenas.
3. The army, treasury, armoury and accounts of income and expenditure of state should remain with Meenas.
4. The recruitment in the various regiments should be exclusively restricted to Meenas.

5. The award and confiscation of land grants should be made with the concurrence of the Meenas. Further the appointment of servants belonging to castes other than Meenas may be discontinued.
6. Meena should not be subjected to pay any tax to the state.
7. The forced labour from the Meena agriculturists should be discontinued.
8. The custom of Meenas to adorn their ankle with gold band should be restored.¹⁰

The above demands were not accepted in totality by Rao Kuntal, which resulted in the fresh outbreak of violence and insurgent activities on the part of Meenas. Consequently, the smaller states ruled by Meena chiefs such as Amanet, Meenpur, Amarpur, Barodpatan, Ganipur, Khandar etc. were taken over by the Rajput ruler who made a new capital after merging all these smaller states and named it Kuntalgarh.¹¹ After his death his son Rao Pujani became the successor. He agreed to certain demands of Meenas and made friendship pacts with the remaining of the Meena Chiefs. This was a timely act of diplomacy by Rao Pujani as he was facing the threat of possible attack by the Turk invaders who were approaching nearby Amet. Therefore, the ruler, decided to pursue a conciliatory policy towards the Meenas.

Thus the process of the formation of Rajput clan states in Rajasthan involved the dispossession of several erstwhile ruling Meena Chiefs by the Rajputs. Methods involving

¹⁰. See S.H.M. Rizvi, _____ op.cit., pp 27-28.

¹¹. Ibid. p. 28

treachery had been used by the Rajputs to defeat the Meena rulers of Dhundhar and Bundi. This was later overwritten by the mythology of chivalric-heroic Rajput tradition embellished by Charan and Bhats who were the writers of Khayats.

Col.Tod writes that even so late as Raja Bharmal Meenas had retained or regained great power, to the mortification of their Rajput superiors. One of these last bastions of the Meena Chiefs was at the ancient city of Nain¹², destroyed by Bharmal with the approval and active support of his Mogul connections. An old folk tale thus records the power of the Meena chief's of Nain:

Bawan kot, chappan darwaja,
Meena mard, Nain ka raja,
Vado raj Nain ko bhago,
Jab bhus-hi men Vamto mago.

That is, 'There were fifty-two strongholds, and fifty six gates belonging to the manly Meena, the Raja of Nain, whose sovereignty of Nain was extinct, when even chaff (Bhus) he took a share.'¹³

¹². Col.Tod, "Annal and Antiquities...", op.cit. p . 283.

¹³. A.C.L. Carlleyle, "Anchaeological Report of Eastern Rajputana", 1871-72 p. 113.

The struggle for power between the Kachhawa Rajputs and the Meena Chiefs between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries had resulted in the loss of political power and autonomy of the later. From a former ruling group the Meena Chiefs were now reduced to the position of mere bhomias or zamindars.

The penetration of the Kachhawa Rajputs into the areas dominated by the Meena bhomiyas altered the caste composition of 'bhom' rights in Eastern Rajasthan. There was a significant decline in the zamindari rights of the Meenas and a corresponding increase in the zamindari possession of the Kachhawa clans which eroded caste affiliations between the zamindars and the peasants. The extent to which the zamindars possession of the Meena had declined by the end of the 16th Century is evident from Abul Fazl's account of the caste of zamindars in sarkars Bayunwan and Alwar.¹⁴

14. Ain-i-Akbari, ed. Colonel H.S. Jarret, Vol. II Third Edition 1978 pp 200-203.

SARKAR OF BAYANWAN

	Bighas Biswas	Revenue D.	Suyurghal D.	Cavalary	Infantry	Elephants	Castes
Khand Bajrah (the lesser)	1,602	68,470	-	10	200	-	Meena, Gujar
Kherihat	24,313	112,079	-	-	300	-	Meena, Gujar

SARKAR OF ALWAR

	Bighas Biswas	Revenue D.	Suyurghal D.	Cavalary	Infantry	Elephants	Castes
Kiyarh	307	600,400	-	100	1000	-	Meena

Nonetheless, the Meenas were able to retain authority at subordinate level as patels or village headmen. The growing involvement of the Meenas in extending the agricultural base of the territories of Eastern Rajasthan also facilitated their appointment as patels by the Rajput rulers. As patels, they wielded considerable authority in the rural society in terms of agrarian administration and financial control of the village. Their powers, position and rights as the holders of Pateli rights shall be dealt with in the subsequent chapter. The other source of strength of the Meenas in the village society was their numerical superiority coupled with ownership of substantial agricultural land which made them one of the dominant peasant castes in Eastern Rajasthan. They constituted the largest single caste group among the peasantry that included Jat, Gujar, Ahirs and Meos.¹⁵

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Meena zamindars were further marginalized with the growing power of the Kachawa Rajputs in eastern Rajasthan who had the tacit support of the Mughal imperial authority.

Substantial changes were taking place in the economic and social position of all categories of zamindars during the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century. While some of them were enlarging their zamindaris, others were being depressed into

¹⁵. This is evident from the Arzdashta and Chithis documents.

the ranks of ordinary peasants. Majority of zamindars by now were Rajputs of various clans but most of them came from the Kachhwa clan. The Jats, Gujars, Meenas belonging to the middle castes were also concentrated in some parganas¹⁶. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Watan (hereditary dominion) of the rulers of Amber was confined to three parganas i.e. Amber, Baswa (Bahatri) and Deosah.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Amber rulers made systematic efforts to expand their watan territory. Inevitably, this was done at the expense of the smaller zamindars with the help of Mughal darbar. This was resisted by the other castes zamindars who existed in the areas, Meenas also being one of them. Not only did Meenas alone arose against the authority of Amber but also joined other zamindars who revolted against the Amber house. When the uprising of Jat Zamindars was at its peak from 1683-1727, they expelled the revenue officials of the imperial jagirdars and established their military control over most of the pargana of Chaklas, Mathura and Mewat. The Jat, the Narukas and the Kilanot bhomias formed a zamindar front against the Mughal Jagirdar of the region, the Amber Raja being one of their chief targets. They conquered pargana, Bahatri, which formed one of the watan paraganas of the Kachhawa. In successive military victories they were promptly joined by the Meenas, Gujars and Gojhas zamindars

¹⁶ R.P.Rana, "Agrarian revolts in Nothern India during late 17th and 18th Century", pp.303,307,334 (The Indian Economic and Social History Review) Vol.XVIII, No.3 and 4.

in the parganas of Bayana, Hindon, Machilpur, Bhusawad and Gudhala.¹⁷ R.P.Rana on the basis of Arzdashts and the Amber records, lists the revolts of various zamindars during this period with the help of peasantry, which further helped to destroy the waning Mughal power in the region.

LOCALES OF THE ZAMINDAR UPRISINGS

Caste/Clan of the Zamindars	Period of the Uprisings	Total Years of Revolt	Parganas in which the Uprisings took place/Affected by the Uprisings
Meenas	1692 to 1698	6	Bhuda, Bayana, Hindon, Bhusawad and Machilpur

Note: This table has been prepared on the basis of the Arzdashts and the Amber records.

However, the Meenas could not derive any benefit out of their participation in these revolts. Their political subordination to the Kachawas continued as before. They lacked both the garhis and resources to prolong their struggle against the state. The Kachhawa zamindars embarked on a deliberate policy of hetrogenifying the caste composition of the villages. Jat, Gujars, Ahirs and Mali's were encouraged to settle in the Meena dominated villages in order to disrupt their caste solidarity. The multi caste villages witnessed frequent inter-caste conflicts between dominant land owning castes in which the Meenas were also involved. There are several instances recorded in the

¹⁷. Ibid. p. 308

documents in which the Meena Patel and raiyat had clashed with the Jats, Gujars and Rajput residents of the same village.

During the entire Mughal period, the Meenas remained dominant peasant caste in eastern Rajasthan both in terms of numerical strength and ownership of land. In the British reports too, the Meena are acknowledged as dominant peasant caste in Eastern part of Rajasthan.

F. Stewart, a British traveller writes that only a small proportion of the peasants in Rajputana are actually Rajputs. The majority of those in Jaipur state and Haroti are Meenas¹⁸. M.A. Sherring also mentions that the Meena agriculturists of Karauli are a quiet and orderly people. For the last four hundred years the Meenas have been the village chief and most important cultivators in the Karauli state. The state of Dholpur, according to Sherring, has more than 10,000 Meenas who are proprietors of thirteen villages, and cultivators of nearly twenty thousand acres of land. They are very old inhabitants of Bari and Baseri and are most excellent zamindars and cultivators.¹⁹

The position of the Meenas after the loss of political power is not only to be inferred from their status as patels and peasant proprietors in the rural society, but one

¹⁸. See Jadunath Sarkar, The History ... op.cit. p .13

¹⁹. M.A. Sheering, p .78

should see the nature of their incorporation into the new political order, the kind of services and responsibilities they were given. The involvement of the Meena in one of the important rituals concerning the sovereignty, i.e. "placing Tilak",²⁰ on the forehead of the Kachhawa ruler who was being coronated, by the blood of the toe of Meena, was a part of the process of legitimization of Rajput rule in that area. The Meenas were also inducted in the state services as Chaukayats, Vadhdar's (watchman of village boundary), jagirdars and guards of the treasury. Thakur Fateh Singh Champavat, late Prime Minister of Jeypore State in his account of early history of the Kachhawas of Amber, stated "Meenas being powerful, often revolted. The Kachhawa ruler at last considered it advisable for the sake of peace, to grant them favourable terms. He gave them some villages and promised to give them help when needed. The treasury and town of Amber were now put under their sole watch and guard. Since this time down to the present Meenas are by right the guards of the treasury. As a proof of Meena guards commitment to his responsibility it was reported that a Meena chaukidar struck the head of his son on a suspicion of dishonesty in regard to his charge".²¹

One can also see a broad distinction between the occupation of Meenas, (which followed this difference in occupation) after their political subjugation. The Meenas who were attached to agriculture were later on designated as zamindar Meenas, whereas ones

²⁰. See Russell Hiralal. op.cit. p.237. Crook op.cit. p.119 Sherring op.cit. p.79

²¹. Fateh Singh Champavat, op.cit. p.10.

who were incorporated into state services as Chaukats etc. were known as Chaukidar Meenas. In due course of time, original settlers and migrant Meenas were referred to as 'Puranabasi', and 'Nayabasi' respectively.²² Meenas who came under the impact of religious reformist movement and abstained from eating the flesh of cow and buffalo were known as 'Ujle Meena'. The others who continued with their old diet pattern were known as 'Maila Meena'.²³

'Geholt Meena' or 'Ujle Meena' are concentrated in the region of Dhundhar which they ruled earlier. 'Maila Meena' according to the popular belief established marital alliances with neighbouring Jats, Gujars and Rajputs.

A branch of the Meena known as 'Parihar Meena' was the progeny of Rajput Meena alliance. The origin of 'Parihar Meena' is traced to the year 1451 when Parihar Rajput, Suraj Mal married a woman belonging to Meena community. They later on established socio-cultural links with Meenas of Dhundad.²⁴

Tod, observed that the 'asli' or unmixed Dosarra stock of Meenas is now exceedingly rare while the mixed races spread over all the hilly and intricate region of central and western India, boast of their descent at the expense of legitimacy.²⁵

22. K.S.Singh, "The Scheduled Tribes", Oxford-1993, p.p.273-274.

23. Ibid. p.274. Also see, M.Kennedy, "The Criminal Classes in India", (Foreign Tribes who visit the Bombay Presidency) Bombay - 1885, p.p.207-218.

24. "Mardumshumari Raj Marwad", Marwar Ki Koma Ka Hal, Vol.III, Jodhpur 1884, p.128.

25. Col.Tod. "Annal... op.cit. Vol.II, pg.283.

The marriage between Meenas and Rajputs resulted into the formation of Rawat Meena found in Ajmer Merwara. The Chamaria Meenas are concentrated in neighbouring Agra (U.P.) where they have adopted the skill and expertise in making juti (embroidered sandals and shoes worn by Rajasthani people). The Bhil Meena is a bridge population between the two great tribes of north and south Rajasthan. They are concentrated in Ajmer (Merwara) and a few are found in Mewar and Bagad regions (Dungarpur and Banswar) The Adu Meena, belonging to 'Ushahara' clan are considered to be pure unmixed Meena. Dhedhia Meena found in Godwad and Jhaleva region are beef eaters, Suratval Meenas are formed out of marriage between Meena men and women of those caste which are considered to be ritually unclean by Meenas lastly, Chauthia Meenas found in villages of Mewar are those who still collect a definite amount of cash or kind from the village and in lieu of this guard their person and property.²⁶

The above classification and spread of various categories of Meenas reflect their gradual geographical spread, dispersal and cohabit with neighbouring groups. It also shows their adoption of specific occupation in due course of time, which in turn gave rise to new gotts according to their occupation.

Thus, one see the gradual social stratification amongst the Meena population in

26. Mardumshumari Raj Marwad... op.cit. Vol.III p .122, . Also see K.S.Singh, The Scheduled... op.cit. p .774.

South Eastern Rajasthan. This process was accelerated after their subjugation by the Rajputs which deprived them of political authority. Their settlement pattern in the beginning was of different nature. As has been mentioned earlier, that the Meenas resided in the twelve 'pals' which are identified as traditional Meena habitats. The establishment of these 'pals' by particular group of Meenas have a history of its own.

Though the nature of geographical spread of the Meenas in the subsequent years changed according to the changing circumstances. They still reside in the area which they had occupied as a dominant caste prior to their political subjugation. Even after the Kachhawas took over their territory treacherously as mentioned by Col Tod, they were incorporated into the newly emerged polity as they were given important services to be rendered to the state. Also they retained their zamindari and pateli rights.

The loss of political authority and significant decline in the number of zamindari/bhom villages held by the Meenas reduced them to the position of patels and middle and low level peasant proprietor (paltis). They were equated with the intermediate cultivators called the raiyati who paid revenue by a different schedule of land revenue rates and also had to bear the entire burden of the common villages expences.

CHAPTER II

THE MEENAS IN THE RURAL SOCIETY

THE GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

I

Climatic complexities of Rajasthan are well known. The Aravali Range, divides the region diagonally into two natural divisions; the climate, rainfall, agricultural conditions, natural vegetation of one belt differing markedly from the other. To the west and north-west, covering three fifths of the total area and comprising the whole of Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Shekhawati region of Jaipur and most of Jodhpur are the arid plains and ever shifting sand - dunes (dhora or teeba), collectively bearing the term 'Maroosthali' or 'Region of Death'.¹ On the east and south are the forests and semi arid plains of black loam trenched by the running streams of Mewar, Jaipur and Hadoti region.²

In both these arid and semi arid regions, the ecological balance between man and environment is intrinsically precarious and the crops that are able to flourish in favourable years of high rainfall, wither in the intervening period when precipitation is scant. The climate itself is not a constant factor. Long term shifts as well as short term variations

¹. J.Tod., 'Annals op.cit.p.234.

². Famine Report of Rajputana. 1870, p.42

in climate and rainfall, ruin crops and dry up pasturage, creating situations of scarcity and famine. Water here is the almost limiting factor for crop production, as the supply of water by natural precipitation is meagre and sporadic, even while the climatically induced requirement for water is highly incessant. However, it is not simply the amount of rainfall and its regularity but its effectiveness in terms of soil moisture available for plant use that makes the difference in altering the balance with the environment. Irrigation thus by necessity, becomes the primary concern for crop production in both areas.³

Despite this similarity, there are important variations in the quantity and nature of rainfall, the extent to which irrigation can ameliorate the environmental stress in both areas. It is important to mention here, that semi arid areas in general allow for the continuous occupancy of areas.⁴ Their environmental balance thus, to a certain extent, is more delicate than that of fully arid areas, which in contrast, are distinguished by an unequal pattern of spotty population. An idea of this can be had if one sees the population density of the region. On an average, Rajputana as recorded in 1891, is said to have supported 76 persons to a sq.mile; nearly 35 in sandy plains of the west, 79 in more fertile but broken and forest clad country of the south and 165 in well watered

³. M.Shafi, & Raza M., ed., 'Dryland Agriculture in India', Jaipur, 1987.

⁴. Y.Mundlak & Singer, F., ed., Arid Zone Development Potentialities and Problems, Cambridge, 1977.

eastern division.⁵ Within the states also the density varied considerably. In Jodhpur, it was 100 per square mile infertile south east and 10 in desert west; in Jaipur, 332 in north east and 92 in the Shekhawati desert in south west.⁶

Also in an arid region the scanty rainfall, non perennial streams, low water table and poor natural vegetation makes pastoralism an important component of the economy. The adaptations and survival strategies here thus would differ from a region more reliant on rain-supported agriculture, which by virtue of keeping the cultivator tied to the land and crops increased the scale and extent of his misery.

Eastern Rajasthan, comprising the present day districts of Jaipur, Alwar, Sawai Madhopur and Bharatpur forms a different ecological niche, different in temperature, soil pattern, rainfall and irrigation facilities from the dry western zone. The semi aridity of the region makes it also a problem zone with extremes of temperature and uncertain rainfall. Water is again the main limiting factor, making the rain dependent farming and a fluctuating one. From the point of view of famine and its frequency, the eastern half is better protected as unlike western Rajasthan rainfall is heavier and more regular here, different variation of soil are found, from light sand of the west to the richest alluvial

⁵. H.B.Abbot, Census of India, 1891, Vol.XXVI, Rajputana, Part-I, Calcutta 1892. Jaisalmer in the extreme west had the density of only seven persons per square mile, while its every hundred square miles of patch had only two villages.

⁶. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, Rajputna, Calcutta, 1908, pp.28-29.

loam with extensive tracts of black mould, producing excellent crops of wheat and barley without artificial irrigation. Also water is nearer the surface, numerous wells, rivers and streams exist and a two crop economy is the rule rather than an exception.⁷ This very fertility of the soil and capacity to grow diverse crops, which made the economy far more reliant on agriculture, resulted also in its more precarious balance with the environment. The same harvest failure which in western Rajasthan could result in the peasant's increased dependence on pastoral activities, spelt a different and in most cases an intense crisis for the raiyat here.

Coming to the details, the region is well irrigated by River 'Banas', which is a perennial river. Numerous other rivers like Banganga, Mashi, Orel, Gambhiri, Dhol, Bandi, Khari, Mitha, Sabi, Sota, Ruparel and Chuharsidh also exist, although they are all seasonal. The region also receives sufficient rainfall, ranging between 50 and 100 cm. annually (most of it in July-August and about 10 to 20 percent of it during winter), although this is of an erratic nature.⁸ The effect on crops, of failure of these rains is a scarcity in harvest outrun, often in proportions to the extent and duration of failure of rains.⁹ The position is often intensified by the prevalence of strong dry south west winds, which blow here with great force during the critical months of sowing, causing the

⁷. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Rajputana, Calcutta 1908, p.42.

⁸. R.L.Singh, 'A Regional Geography', Reprint, Varanasi, 1987, p.528.

⁹. Rajputana Gazetteer Vol.II, Calcutta, 1879, p.61.

crops to ruin. Thus, from pargana Aamer (Amber) in 1705 A.D., Purohit Harsaram reported that from Sawan Vadi 7 to Sawan Sudi 1, there were very less rains in the pargana and along with it strong winds blew, because of which no ploughing was done and production of grains fell severely.¹⁰

Similarly in Qasba Chatsu, it was reported, that some rains had fallen on Sawan Sudi 11, due to which Moth etc. was grown. After this however, there were no rains and strong winds hardened the land, causing a great unhappiness and sadness among people.¹¹

— Not only were rains important to the agricultural economy of eastern Rajasthan for the kharif crop but also for tasks of future cultivation. It was noted by Purohit Harnam in 1686 A.D., that on Asad Sudi 1 some rain had fallen in the parganas but only for cultivation and it was only six days later that rains necessary to fill up the ponds fell. The details of water, after the rains in each pond were stated as, Sahda, 7 1/2 gaz, Bhagwat Sagar 8 1/2 gaz, Bandh malsagar 3 3/4 gaz and Kundolav 1 3/4 gaz.¹² Similarly, it was reported from qasba Aamer in 1718 A.D., that only when it had rained continuously for fifteen days in July, thus filling up all the ponds of the qasba, did the

¹⁰. Arzdasht, Sawan Sudi 3, V.S. 1762/1705, JRHS, RSAB

¹¹ Arzdasht, Bhadva Vadi 7, V.S. 1774/1717, Descriptive List of Jaipur Arzdashts (Rajasthani), V.S. 1762/1775/1705-1718, A.D., RSAB..

¹². Arzdasht. Asad Sudi 9. V.S. 1747/1690. JR: H.S.; RSAB.

Raiyat who had deserted the village earlier, felt hopeful to come back and resume cultivation.¹³

The winter crops of wheat, barely, tobacco, indigo were also dependent on rainfall in the appropriate months of November-December.¹⁴ However, all these rabi crops require either constant irrigation or one of the best natural soils. Eastern Rajasthan has a diverse variety of alluvial soils, varying both in texture, from clayey loam (chiknot), sandy loam (matiyat), to sandy (bhur) and in tints, from pale brown, yellowish brown to dark brown.¹⁵ Thus unlike western Rajasthan, the fertile soils and their variety made best of irrigation possible here.

It is true that loamy soil is less adapted to scantiness of local rainfall than the sandy soil. Since less moisture is required for the germination and growth of plants in sandy soil, a crop of some sort grows here in scanty rainfall also which in heavier soils remain unsown. This can be an advantage enjoyed by desert west over its eastern half. It is important however, to bear in mind that with a fair supply of moisture loamy soils

¹³. Arzdasht, Sawan Sudi 5, V.S.1775/1718 A.D., J.R., H.S., RSAB.

¹⁴ A Popular saying best expresses this timely requirements of rains for the winter crop. According to it, if it rained in Agahan (Mangsir), the yield was exceptionally good, in Poos, it was one and quarter time, but if it rained in Falgun, houses had to bear loss. S.L.Srivastava, Folk Culture and Oral Tradition: S.L.Srivastava, "Folk Culture and Oral Tradition: A Comparative Study of Regions in Rajasthan and Eastern U.P.", New Delhi, 1974, p.230..

¹⁵. R.L.Singh, A Regional Geography, p.528.

produce crops far superior to those in the sandy soils, which can produce only the low value bajra and moth. Also, owing to the greater evaporation from light soils, frequent falls of rain are required to renew its supply of moisture than in the case of loamy ones. In the latter case, irrigation can bring the most advantageous results. An estimate puts the yield of unirrigated land as only one third of the irrigated area.¹⁶

To a great extent, the advantage of irrigation in the region was due to a fairly high water table, ranging from thirty to forty feet in the core area. Due to this easy access, devices like dhenkli (wooden scoop) and charas (large leather bag pulled by oxen) were used to draw well water. The well water itself had several variations, ranging from one having the best combination of alkalis and acids, to the meetha variety with little salts and from salty water (producing good results in favourable rains) to the oily (telia) and over salty soils (bajar telia).

How much of these sources were tapped to have a good irrigation network in different parganas is difficult to say. For, apart from local variations in soil fertility and water surface, other significant aspects like the resources of the area, the local initiative to develop these, and the overall state interest made a crucial difference. For example, till the time the Kachh^a ruler of Amber (later Sawai jaipur), was mainly an imperial jagirdar (broadly speaking till the end of seventeenth century) his short term interest in

¹⁶. Famine Enquiries Commission, Rajputana, 1879,p.3.

the jagir did not lead him to pursue any long term development policies. Towards the middle of the seventeenth century one sees a marked change in the agrarian economy of the region as a result of the development of irrigation facilities and so on.

What is of significance for us is that irrigation in our region not only made possible a greater yield from the same plot of land, it also leads to an extension of the cultivated area. Whereas in western Rajasthan, only a very limited region (in Bikaner, this being only one third of the total area) was under plough, here it varied between 30 to 80 percent of the total measured land in different parganas. In 1666, it was estimated as 60 percent in pargana Chatsu, 79 percent in pargana Malarna, and 53 percent in pargana Nanwai.¹⁷

This facility thus resulted in the region having a multiple crop economy. As many as thirty-seven crops of kharif were grown in most areas, including not only bajra, jawar, moth, urad, mung but cotton, sugarcane, opium, tobacco, til and as many as 18 crops of rabi were sown, including barley, wheat, gram, oil seeds, opium etc.¹⁸ By this approximation the total number of crops including both food and cash cultivated within the year ranged from forty-five to fifty-five. Increasing production of cash crops and

¹⁷. Dilbagh Singh, State Landlords and peasant's (Rajasthan in the eighteen century) Delhi, 1990....', p.54.

¹⁸. Imperial Gazatteer of India, Rajputana, 1908, p.61.

superior food crops created conditions for the growth of small urban centres and rural trade centres which facilitated rural-urban linkages in terms of exchange of commodities. The growth of developed agricultural economy was closely linked to considerable investment in agricultural production.

However, the very factor of environmental conditions favouring the growth of a developed agricultural economy if investment could be made here, made it much more vulnerable to climatic fluctuations and extremes. In context of a semi arid environment, where such uncertainties were a regular feature, agriculture despite its significance and premium became a gamble, so that a single harvest failure could result in a subsistence crisis.

The impact of bad harvest on the raiyat would have been greater here due to delicate balance between production consumption and surplus extraction. Since pursuance of agriculture demanded possession of some capital inputs, the raiyat's dependence on agencies like money lender, both rural and town based would have been greater even in normal years. Lean years would thus have increased this dependence resulting in acute indebtedness and impoverishment which quite often forced the raiyat to migrate to towns for survival.

The raiyat in times of scarcities and famines had mostly to try out many survival

strategies. Decision to leave his plot of land when it came often was not an easy one. However, we will have to here distinguish land owing cultivators from migrant cultivators with often no assets of their own.

Thus at a broader level we can argue for a strong relationship between the nature of climate and the forms of rural urban settlements, nature and pace of economic development and the pattern of relationship between different segments of the rural society and the survival strategies of each group.

It is in this context that we shall examine the position of Meenas who were principal agriculturists in Eastern Rajasthan. The role played by the Meenas in the colonization of new villages by appropriating cultivable wastes and fallow lands which was available in abundance, digging up new wells contributed appreciably to the expansion and improvement of cultivation in Eastern Rajasthan. Involvement of ^{the} Meenas in the process of agrarian settlements consolidated their position in the power structure and authority system at the village level. The pateli rights in large number of villages were held by the Meenas by virtue of their being numerically dominant peasant caste and as a result of the involvement of its resourceful members in the foundation of new villages.

II

THE RURAL SOCIETY

In a predominantly agrarian society, all social groups were linked to the land and its product. The state functioned in the context of a large economy which included a reciprocal relationship between rural areas and urban centres and between economic producers and consumers. It was essential for the state to ensure continuity in agricultural production through by regulated access to land and through the redistribution of the agrarian surplus. This involved an interaction between four constituent elements of rural society: the landed elites and the agents of the state; the commercial intermediaries who financed both the state and the agrarian producers; the rural elite who played a vital role in organising village production; and finally, the agricultural producers of peasants. We shall begin with a brief description of the institutionalised means of access to rural resources through the system of rights to the surplus produce. The focus of the following discussion will be on the nature of land tenures and peasant stratification.

NATURE OF LAND CONTROL

Access to land was regulated in eastern Rajasthan through a system of hierarchical and concurrent rights. The right to hereditary occupancy and cultivation of land, on the one hand, and the political control over land, on the other, had become separated. Political

control was expressed as a right to a share in the surplus produce of the land and was held complementary to (but not exclusive of) the subordinate right of hereditary occupancy of the cultivator. Thus, unlike Awadh, where Fox has argued that traditional power was derived from the corporate ownership of land by the dominant Rajput lineages, in Rajasthan the basis of political organisation was derived from the shared right to the produce of the land by the ruling clan and those linked to the latter by service and allegiance.¹⁹ This right was, however, differentiated both politically and economically. This right was, however, differentiated both politically and economically. The differential access to resources is reflected in the social hierarchy within the ruling class as well as the rural society as such. The authority system within the ruling Kachhawa clan consisted of the raja as the premier Rajput in the realm, followed by the "thikanedars" and various tribute-paying or "peshkashi zamindars", "jagirdars", "bhomias", the cultivating or "gharuhala" Rajputs. The other level of authority at local level was represented by the "patels and choudharies who by and large belonged to middle castes. Political authority and the distribution of resources was based upon two interlocking systems: one based on kinship and military merit and the other on fiscal cum administrative consideration. The interaction between these two systems for the redistribution of the agrarian surplus forms the basis of the historical background to an understanding of the relationship between the apex political authority and various holders of landed rights.

¹⁹. For a discussion of Fox's theory and the alternative basis of traditional power in Rajasthan, see H. Stern *Territory, Caste and Kingship in Rajasthan*, in R.J. Fox ed., *'Realm and Region in Traditional India'*, pp.52-77.

The Meenas were one of the dominant peasant castes in Eastern Rajasthan both in terms of numerical strength as well as owners of substantial land. In order to assess the position of the Meenas in the rural society it is necessary to discuss the caste and class structure of village society and explanation of the various terms used to describe the sections of village society in our region. In the documents examined, a primary distinction is made between cultivators, collectively termed "haljotas", and non-cultivating artisans and menials who are termed as nani poni and "kamins".²⁰ Cultivator may be further divided into village residents, referred to as "gavetis", and non-residents or "pahis". Gavetis were broadly categorised into privileged taxpayers or rural elites, the "gharuhalas", who were granted concessionary rates of revenue payment and the "raiya" or "palti" who paid the standard tax.

The privileged taxpayers comprised of agriculturists who belonged to the upper caste such as Brahmans, Rajputs, Kayasthas, and Mahajans, as well as the zamindar and hereditary village officials, the "chaudhuri", "qanungo", "patel" and "patwari". The latter were generally not members of the upper castes and their privileged tenure was in

²⁰. The various categories and terms used in our records have been discussed by Dilbagh Singh in his thesis and in a number of articles. As my evidence supports most of his discussions, I shall only elaborate upon those aspects where I have fresh evidence or where I disagree with his interpretation. See Dilbagh Singh, "Caste and the Structure of Village Society in Eastern Rajasthan during the Eighteenth Century", Indian Historical Review, Vol.II No.2 (1976), pp.299-311; idem, "Tenants, Sharecroppers and Agricultural Labourers in Eighteenth Century Eastern Rajasthan", Studies in History, Vol.I, No.1 (1979), pp.31-43; idem, "Revenue Administration", pp.1-73.

recognition of their status as holders of superior agrarian rights.²¹ These sections of the rural elite were granted concessionary rates of revenue payment on their gharuhala cultivation as well as a complete or partial exemption from contributing to the common fiscal pool of the village from which the additional taxes of the state and the expenses of the village were met.²² Moreover, the pioneer colonizer of many agricultural settlements, a large number of families belonging to the Meenas had been exercising pateli rights in the villages. Even in multi caste villages, the Meenas in majority of the cases enjoyed numerical superiority as village residents. Their numerical strength coupled with ownership of substantial agricultural land facilitated the appointment of leading Meena families to the privileged office of the patel. The defining features of gharuhala tenure of the Meena patels were the use of personal ploughs and family labour to till the land and the payment of revenue at concessional rates.²³ This definition seems to be consistent with the state's objective to limit the size of gharuhala holdings of the patels because of the reduction in revenue that an expansion in gharuhala holdings entailed. The stipulation regarding the use of family labour to till the land was a major constraint on the secular expansion of acreage under gharuhala cultivation. The official position in this

²¹. In many Chithi documents the patels' castes are mentioned. They were members of the agriculturist castes such as Meena, Jat, Ahir, and Gujar. Occasionally, Brahmans are also mentioned as patels - in qasba Chatsu, see for example, Yaddashti Hal Bail, pargana Chatsu, 1723.

²². See S.P. Gupta, 'Agrarian systems of Eastern Rajasthan' C-1650-1750, Delhi, 1986.

²³. Dilbagh Singh, "Caste and Structure of Village Society", p.303.

regard was that land cultivated by non-family labour was not reckoned as "gharujot" and concessionary rates of taxation could not be claimed on such cultivation.²⁴ Dilbagh Singh has asserted that the gharuhalas did not differ from the paltis in the nature of their land rights and that like paltis, gharuhalas could be "maliks" or proprietors as well as tenants.²⁵ In both situations they paid revenue at concessionary rate.

However, there is evidence to show that the right to concessional revenue terms on gharuhala land of the patels could be claimed even when the tenure holders employed "halis" or ploughmen to till the land.²⁶ Patels including the Meenas hired "majurs" or agricultural labourers to cultivate gharuhala land in pargana Phagi in 1723 and that this did not affect the gharuhalas entitlement to concessionary. The hypothesis regarding the exclusive use of family labour on patel gharuhala holdings appears untenable on another account. A single Pateli family's gharuhala holdings were occasionally dispersed over more than one village making it impossible to cultivate these holdings solely with family

²⁴. Ibid.

²⁵. Proprietor or malik has been used to denote the specific form of land right that could be inherited, sold or mortgaged conditional to the regular payment of land revenue.

²⁶. Chithi dt. Pos sudi 7 VS 1835/AD 1778, pargana Sawai Jaipur; Chitti dt. Sawan sudi 1 VS 1808/AD 1751, pargana Tonk. In these documents the zamindars employed halis to till their gharuhala land.

labour.²⁷ For example, the Meena Patel family of a village in pargana Hindaun had its gharuhala holdings spread over two villages in the pargana.²⁸ It appears reasonable therefore to infer that family labour could not have been the only form of labour on gharuhala holdings in all cases and that the use of family labour cannot be seen as an essential element of gharuhala tenure. However, there is evidence to indicate that if gharuhala holdings of the patels were cultivated by tenants, then the lower tax rates applicable to gharuhala cultivation were withdrawn.²⁹

In view of these observations gharuhala tenure of the patels can best be described as the privileged tenure extended to the rural elite on the cultivation of land for which they provided the necessary inputs of ploughs, bullocks and seeds and retained the option of supplementing or replacing family labour with wage labour. The limitations to the increase in the gharuhala holding would then rest on the availability of labour and capital to sustain such an expansion and the institutional limits imposed by the state.

The other category of agriculturists, comprising the majority of the village residents, were the raiyati or paltis. The paltis or the unprivileged cultivators were taxed

²⁷. Chithi dt. Chait sudi 7 VS 1815/AD 1758, Chakravati Shri Harhariji and Sah Shri Gulanchandji Chithi dt.sudi 2 VS 1835/AD 1778, Sah Shri Raichandji.

²⁸. R.P.Rana, "Agrarian Revolts in Northn India", pp.287-326.

²⁹. Chithi dt.Asad sudi 14 VS 1809/AD 1752, pargana Pinayan Chithi dt. Pos vadi 2 VS 1784/AD 1728, pargana Dausa.

at higher rates than the gharuhalas and all the additional cesses and communal expenses of the village were met by them. The paltis consisted of peasants belonging to the intermediate agricultural castes such as the Jats, Gujars, Malis, Ahirs and Meenas. The term palti was used to describe both proprietors with the right to sell or mortgage their holding, as well as those peasants cultivating the personal lands of the revenue grantees and zamindars over which they had no more than hereditary occupancy right. It is quite obvious from the documents that majority of the Meena paltis were the owners of their land holdings. In a land surplus economy that was subject to frequent droughts and the loss of cattle, the feature that distinguished the paltis from the agricultural labourers was the possession of oxen. In the records enumerating the number of asamis or taxpayers owing oxen or plough-teams, called yaddashti hal bail, there are numerous references to erstwhile Meena Palti proprietors who sunk to the position of tenants and labourers, such as majurs, halis and "naukars". Those who had acquired bullocks during the current year and begun to cultivate independently were again reckoned as paltis.³⁰

It is apparent from the foregoing discussion that in the village society the Meenas were equated with the middle caste cultivators and enjoyed a higher social status as compared to the artisans in the social hierarchy of the village society,

³⁰. Hazari Asami wa Bail Dehai Khalisa, pargana Mauzabad, fasl Kharif. VS 1723/AD 1666.

of a variety of social groups. The question arises as to what extent the social strata in terms of caste corresponded to the economic status of each group. In a region where the extent of cultivation and land-holding were closely related to the numbers of bullocks or plough teams, data showing the distribution of bullock-ownership could be used as a proxy for determining the nature of economic differentiation. In an earlier study, Satish Chandra showed that the majority of peasants belonged to the 'middle peasant' category owning two to four bullocks per head.³¹ The number of peasants owning just one bullock, were classified as 'poor' and constituted about twenty to thirty percent of the population enumerated as asami^{or} tax payers. While the number of asamis with more than four bullocks was variable, fluctuating between less than one percent to over nine percent in different paragnas.³² It is possible to extend the important findings of this study by correlating economic differentiation with social status in terms of caste and official position in the village. The significance of such an exercise lies in the attempt to assess whether the favourable tax treatment of the socially superior strata of rural society was reflected systematically in the differential ownership of a key production resource. The results of a sample study of the distribution of bullocks among the most numerous castes resident in the qasba and four large villages of pargana Chatsu are shown in Table 1.

³¹. Satish Chandra, Institutional Factors, pp.83-98.

³². An examination of the yaddashti documents reveals that the majority of villages in the region had a multi-caste composition - a feature observable in the villages of contemporary Jaipur district as well of K.L.Sharma, The Changing Rural Stratification System : A comparative study of six villages in Rajasthan, pp.41-44.

The figures under oxen per head in the table show that although the upper caste asamis owned more bullocks on an average than the unprivileged castes, the disparity in ownership was not acute. The only group which appears to have control over draught power that was significantly higher than average were the village officials, notably the patels.³³ Conversely, the Malis have the lowest average ownership ratio in each of the five units analysed. The average ownership ratio in the case of the Meena's is comparable with the Brahmans, Nagori and the Jats. The distribution of oxen across various categories shown in the table appears to bear a remarkable approximation to a normal distribution. The majority of the asamis of every caste including Meenas are clustered within the 'middle peasant' category owning two to four bullocks each.

Clearly, we would need a wider range of information on aspects such as agricultural investment and output to permit inferences to be drawn regarding the relative economic status of various caste groups. But the absence of a sharp differentiation in the ownership of a vital production resource does bring into question formulations that assume a systematic correspondence between caste hierarchies and economic strata. Our evidence suggests that while the majority of the upper caste agriculturists appear to be no better off than the ordinary peasants, of the few prosperous cultivators besides the village headmen who owned more than five bullocks each, most were from the higher castes. Thus

³³. S.P.Gupta comes to a similar conclusion based on data from pargana Mauzabad. See, idem, 'Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan', pp.131-133

although caste membership cannot be seen as an automatic proxy for economic status, the fiscal and other concessions accorded to the upper castes and the village officials meant that prosperous agriculturists were generally members of this privileged section of village society.

The analysis of the variation in bullock ownership between individual cultivators indicates a stratified village society. The absence of extreme inequalities in the distribution of resources amongst the Meena palti's is quite evident.

Harbans Mukhia has characterised the agrarian economy of medieval north India as a 'free peasant who cultivated their family farms with the help of their family's labour and resources.'³⁴ This definition applies to the Meena who were proprietor paltis. As individual peasants, they enjoyed economic freedom in the choice of cropping pattern, within the universal constraints of the regional ecology and the specific allocation of family labour. Mukhia's characterisation however, does not allow for the various ways in which the economic freedom of action of the peasant was constrained. In a recent work, Frank Perlin has argued that though we have noted above that by and large the Meena palti's were self-sufficient, self-regulatory and self-reproducing autonomous

³⁴. Harbans Mukhiya, "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?" Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol.8, No.3 (1981); idem, "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society", Journal of Peasant Studies Special Issue on "Feudalism and Non-European Societies", eds. T.Byres and Harbans Mukhia, vol.12, nos. 2&3 (1985), pp.242-247.

peasant categories and that these official categories conceal the sub-tenurial grid of share cropping, hired labour and temporary leases. Evidence from other regions of north India corroborates Perlin's argument and shows that the lack of adequate resources resulted in various forms of agrarian dependence.

However, evidence from our sources also shows that the lack of adequate resources reduced a section of the Meena palti's to the position of share croppers, hired labourers and temporary leases.

Agricultural labourers represented the most extreme form of agrarian dependence. The little that our sources tell us of them suggests that the halis, majurs and naukars could begin cultivating as independent cultivators or asamis once they had acquired their own oxen or a plough team.³⁵ Cattle were particularly vulnerable to the periodic recurrence of drought in this region. The distress caused by famine and the consequent lack of resources provides one of explanation of the process whereby peasants were reduced to the status of agricultural labourers.³⁶

While agricultural labourers were toally dependent upon their employers for their

³⁵ Hazari Assami wa Bail, pargana Mauzabad, VS 1723/AD 1666.

³⁶ Chithi dt. Chait vadi 7 VS 1822/AD 1765, pargana Niwai Chithi dt. Phagun vadi 3 VS 1818/AD 1761, pargana Hindaun.

subsistence, poor peasants also supplemented their income through casual labour for which they received wages or "majuri".³⁷ This feature may perhaps have been seasonal because some paltis were unable to farm their land in the rabi season since they lacked irrigation facilities. Such paid seasonal labour to supplement income was clearly different from the labour services rendered by the kamins for which they received a customary share of the agricultural product.³⁸ Sharecropping or "sanjha" contracts can also be seen as a form of securing labour where the landlords closely supervised and controlled production by regulating the provision of agricultural inputs.³⁹

While the lack of physical resources such as adequate draught power or irrigation forced peasants into relations of dependence, the widespread prevalence of peasant indebtedness must also have severely reduced the autonomy of the peasant in crucial spheres such as cropping decisions. Intervention in the peasant's labour process on his own land may have been indirectly exercised through the manipulation of the terms of debt repayment. In one instance we find that the moneylender demanded repayment of grain advances made to a Meena palti at the commencement of the sowing season in form

³⁷. Dilbagh Singh, "Tenants, Sharecroppers and Agricultural Labourers During the 18 Century in Eastern Rajasthan" p.39; S.P.Gupta, Agrarian System of "Eastern Rajasthan", p.130.

³⁸. Chithi dt. Maghshri sudi 1 VS 1784/AD 1727, pargana Bahatri.

³⁹. Dilbagh Singh, Tenants, Sharecroppers and Agricultural Labourers . p.38.

of raw cotton after the harvest.⁴⁰

In view of the various forms of inter-dependence that existed in rural society, it would be more appropriate to view the individual cultivating family units as part of a complex production system as the control over local capital in the hands of commercial and landed elites meant that the principal unit of organisation of the agrarian production system were the mahajans, patels and other rich riyayatis. The latter provided the necessary facilities for production in exchange for labour. Intrinsic to the system of production was moneylending which also affected the Meena paltis.

The agriculturists needs and demand for credit can be attributed to their revenue obligations, to the seasonal demand for consumption and seed loans, to finance investment in wells and cattle and the need to provide for social ceremonies such as marriages or bereavements. Our evidence shows, however, that loans were generally seed and consumptions loans. There are also instances in our documents of loan taken to finance the rehabilitation of villages by the patels. There is evidence that rich riyayatis began acquiring the land of palti proprietors through the mechanism of mortgage. A large number of Meena paltis were also obliged to mortgage their holdings in order to secure agricultural and consumption loans.

⁴⁰. Chithi dt. Phagun sudi 13 VS 1790/AD 1733, Pargana Malpura. A similar practice in 17th century Gujarat has been noted by Irfan Habib in "Usury in Medieval India", Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. VI (1964), p.395.

The sources of commercial credit contracted during the second half of the eighteenth century due to frequent droughts and political instability. At this juncture when the provision of tagai loans by the state was crucial to the recovery of production in the region. The inability of the state to provide adequate resources for agricultural recovery during or after the series of drought years from 1754 to 1756 appears to have had two interrelated consequences. On the one hand there is evidence that rich agriculturists began acquiring the land of palti-proprietors through the mechanism of mortgage, and on the other, that in order to make funds available to the impoverished peasantry the state was forced to give the bohras first claim to the agricultural product and finally, to resort to revenue farming.

Mortgage of land was not a new feature of the second half of the eighteenth century as is apparent from the instances of land mortgage that are referred to in the documents from the earlier period.⁴¹ However, in the second half of the eighteenth century the increasing incidence of conflicts between the privileged gharuhala cultivators and the paltis consequent to mortgage and sale transactions of land began to involve arbitration by the state as there was no adequate mechanism for their resolution in the village. Tiwari Roop Ram who had advanced cash and seed loan to Maya Ram, Jagan

⁴¹. Chithi dt.Kartik vadi 14 VS 1789/AD 1732, pargana Niwai Chithi dt. Mah sudi 2 V.S. 1789/AD 1732, pargana Chatsu Chithi dt. Phagun vadi 7 VS 1789/AD 1741, pargana Gazi ka Thana etc., Also ef. Jadunath Sarkar, "The Revenue Regulations of Aurangzib". Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, N.S., Vol.II, 1906. p.230.

Nath and many other Meena paltis belonging to the village Madhusoodanpura had to seek arbitration of the state to take possession of lands and wells mortgaged by the Meena.⁴² The distinguishing feature of the mortgage of land in second half of the eighteenth century was that a substantial number of paltis including the Meena lost their status as independent cultivators. Collective representation made by the paltis of qasbas Phagi, Ajabgarh, Tonk, Chatsu and Pahari uniformly allege that their land had been acquired by the gharuhala cultivators through mortgage and that they (paltis) were impoverished as a consequence. The extent of decline in the number of independent peasants was significant in qasba Phagi the number of paltis had been reduced from 700 in 1753 to 28 in 1764, in qasba Pahari from 300 to 50 in 1760, while in qasba Chatsu, 175 of the 300 fields belonging to the paltis had been acquired by a mahajan.⁴³ The decline in their number may in part have been due to increased mortality and migration during the famine years, but as they themselves claim in their petitions to the diwan, a significant number had been forced to pledge their lands as collateral for loans acquired out during this period.

Evidence from the second half of the eighteenth century also indicates that the mortgagor continued to till the land and paid "bhara" on unirrigated land or 'nalvat' on irrigated land. These terms appear to have been used interchangeably to denote rent paid by the tenant, who in the majority of instances was the original proprietor, as well as

⁴². Chithi to the amil pargana chatsu dt. Falgun sudi, 10 V.S. 1808/1751.

⁴³. Ibid.

interest payments to the mortgagee on loans secured against the land of the owner-cultivator. A levy termed nalvat was paid to the state in addition to the revenue payments for the use of state-owned wells. The term nalvat has been used in the sense of interest payment in a document recording the dispute between a Brahman bohra and Ramdas Meena of mauza Kikrod in pargana Antela Pragpur.⁴⁴ The use of the term nalvat in the sense of interest payments is evident in the complaint made by the paltis of qasba Phagi.⁴⁵ The dispute arose because the bohra-mortgagee demanded that the paltis pay him the agreed proportion of the produce in respect of nalvat before the appropriation of the revenue in kind by the state.⁴⁶ The paltis complained that this mode of levy left them with a smaller fraction of the produce and the diwan confirmed that the bohra's payment was to be deducted from the peasants' share after the division of the grain between the state and the paltis.⁴⁷ The fact that the paltis were liable for revenue payments to the state with respect to the land mortgaged indicates that they continued to be regarded as the owners of the land.⁴⁸

⁴⁴. Chithi dt. Baisakh vadi 14 VS 1792/AD 1745, pargana Antela Pragpur.

⁴⁵. Chithi dt. Jesht sudi 2 VS 1821/AD 1764, pargana Phagi Chithi dt. Kartik sudi 11 VS 1811/AD 1754, pargana Niwai.

⁴⁶. Chithi dt. Jesht sudi 2 VS 1821/AD 1764, pargana Phagi.

⁴⁷. Ibid.

⁴⁸. See Jadunath Sarkar, Revenue Regulations of Aurangzib, (trans.) Aurengzeb's Farman to Muhammad Hashim (1669), p.230.

As discussed, our evidence on the latter half of the eighteenth century indicates that the paltis were losing title to land through the mechanism of mortgage. This is reflected in their frequent references to the reductions in raiyati-held land and official concern at the simultaneous extension of land held under privileged gharuhala tenure.⁴⁹ Such a trend implied a reduction in state revenue as the gharuhalas were entitled to concessionary rates of taxation. The Jaipur administration however forbade the conversion of raiyati land into gharuhala land.⁵⁰ However, this did not imply that the state considered the acquisition of palti land through the mechanism of mortgage an illegitimate activity requiring the restitution of proprietary rights to the paltis through its intervention. On the contrary, the ruling of the amil in the case of default on interest repayments, recommended for closure and the transfer of land ownership to the mortgagee.⁵¹ What the state insisted upon was that the tax code on such land remained unaltered so that its revenues were not affected. The problem with such a position was that it was difficult to implement. The impoverished tenants, probably dependent upon the gharuhala for agricultural implements or seed, would be indistinguishable from wage labourers or

⁴⁹. Chithi dt. Kartik sudi 14 VS 1808/AD 1751, pargana Tonk Chithi dt. Maghshri vadi 14 VS 1808/AD 1751, pargana Tonk Also see Dilbagh Singh, "Caste and Structure", pp.309-310 for similar evidence from the late 1750s and 1760s.

⁵⁰. The Mughal revenue manuals of the seventeenth century similarly prohibit the conversion of raiyati land into the khudkasht category. Irfan Habib, Agrarian System, in Mughal India Bombay 1963, p.114.

⁵¹. Chithi dt. Kartik vadi 14 VS 1789/AD 1732, pargana Niwai; Chithi dt. Baisakh sudi 5 VS 1796/AD 1739, pargana Tonk, Chithi dt. Chait sudi 4 VS 1784/AD 1727, pargana Jaitpura.

majurs specially when the latter also received a share of the produce for their labour or cultivated small plots of their own. The employment of wage labourers to cultivate gharuhala land was an accepted practice which did not lead to the withdrawal of rights to concessionary revenue payments. The ambiguity in the official directives forced the state to accept the expansion in gharuhala holdings provided such a transgression had the sanction of time. The date for such ratification was, however, arbitrarily fixed varying from 2 to 10 years prior to the receipt of the complaint.⁵²

On the basis of the partial land fragmentary view that we obtain from our evidence, it is difficult to conclude that land was being concentrated to an appreciable degree in the region as a whole especially in a situation of land abundance. On the other hand, the type of land that was being mortgaged indicates that in a period of recession and poor harvests, the rural elite added to their assets through the accumulation of land which had been improved by capital investment. Our evidence, however, does suggest that the depletion in the resources of the paltis following the frequent famines resulted in an increase in the numbers of dependent peasants.

In a period of a prolonged crisis in production and famine, only those peasants who could secure loans against productive or advantageously located land were able to obtain credit. The contraction in credit in such periods meant that the state had to provide

⁵². The number of years specified in different cases were 2 to 4, 7,9 and 10.

for rural relief and recovery through tagai loans and absorb the risks of default on these loans in return for the longer-term objective of ensuring a stable flow of revenue to the state. The documents of the mid-1750s and early 1760s which relate to the provision of tagai loans reflect the inability of the state to provide adequate resources in this period. In practically every instance, the state was compelled to guarantee the money lent by the bohras to the peasant by debiting these as tagai loans and empowering the bohras to recover them with interest at the time of the harvest.⁵³ This reflects the inability of the state to provide adequate resources which forced the needy peasants to turn to the bohra who advanced loans at an exorbitant rate of interest-there by ruining the small peasants who were unable to repay the loan. The widespread phenomenon of peasant indebtedness led to on growing dependence of the Meena paltis on the richer section for the material support. Chithis pertaining to villages populated by Meena raiyat explicitly bring this fact to focus.

53. Dilbagh Singh cites the evidence of 13 documents from this period of which in 11 instances the state borrowed money from the bohra. See Dilbagh Singh, "Role of Mahajans in the Rural Economy of Eastern Rajasthan during the 18 Century", *Social Scientist* May 1974 pp.21-22,26.

Table 1: Distribution of Bullock Ownership by Caste Categories

% Distribution of Oxen

	Asamis Nos.	Oxen Nos.	Oxen per Head	1	2-4	>4	Total
Qasba Chatsu	200	422	2.1	30.5	64.5	5.0	100.0
Brahman	51	115	2.3	23.5	72.6	3.9	100.0
Nagori	14	35	2.5	28.6	57.1	14.3	100.0
Mali	70	123	1.8	40.0	58.6	1.4	100.0
Teli	28	51	1.8	46.4	53.6	0.0	100.0
Mauza Chandlai	165	502	3.0	12.0	72.3	15.7	100.0
Patel	9	78	8.7	0.0	11.1	88.9	100.0
Brahman	84	235	2.8	9.5	79.8	10.7	100.0
Jat	33	93	2.8	15.2	66.7	18.2	100.0
Mali	10	22	2.2	10.0	90.0	0.0	100.0
Mauza Kothkavda	154	376	2.4	18.2	74.0	7.8	100.0
Patel	12	41	3.4	0.0	75.0	25.0	100.0
Sah (baniya)	14	48	3.4	0.0	78.6	21.4	100.0
Pande Brahman	27	53	2.0	33.3	66.7	0.0	100.0
Jat	22	50	2.3	18.2	77.3	4.5	100.0
Mali	14	27	1.9	28.6	71.4	0.0	100.0
Mauza Datwas	78	193	2.5	20.5	69.2	10.3	100.0
Patel/Patwari	6	30	5.0	0.0	33.3	66.7	100.0
Mali	17	30	1.8	29.4	70.6	0.0	100.0
Gujar	13	25	1.9	23.1	76.9	0.0	100.0
Teli	9	18	2.0	44.4	55.6	0.0	100.0
Mauza Bikarya Buzurg	34	81	2.4	29.4	64.7	5.9	100.0
Meena	20	47	2.4	20.0	80.0	0.0	100.0
Mali	7	10	1.4	57.1	42.9	0.0	100.0

Source: Yaddashti Hal Bail Jubani Patel Patwari, pargana Chatsu, VS 1723/AD 1666.

Note: The figures alongside the name of each of the five units (village or qasba) show the aggregate numbers and the percentage distribution of the total population within the unit. The caste groups which comprised the majority of the residents in each unit have then been selected for further analysis.

CHAPTER III

THE MEENAS IN THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

For fiscal and administrative purposes the state of Jaipur was divided into a number of parganas. The pargana was a revenue as well as a territorial unit comprising villages, the number of which varied from 22 to over 1200. Those parganas which comprised about 1000 villages or more were further subdivided into tappas. The number of villages in a tappa varied from 50 to 200. The lowest administrative unit was the village which is referred to as a mauza and a gaon. The size of the villages in a pargana or tappa also varied, ranging from 300 bighas to over 15000 bighas.

The local administration of the pargana as well as at the village level, was geared mainly to the task of facilitating the assessment and collection of revenue and for maintaining law and order. To achieve these goals, the administrative structure of the pargana consisted of two distinct elements. Firstly, there were full-fledged officials of the state who were in overall-charge of the pargana with different jurisdictions. They were assisted by subordinate staff. Secondly, there were the permanent local officials who owed their position partly to birth and partly to appointment by the state. The local elements were assimilated in such a way that they became an integral part of the local administrative machinery of the state, and helped in its normal functioning at distinct levels, i.e., the

pargana as well as the village. The services of the local hereditary officials were not confined to the assessment and collection of revenue; they were also partly responsible for maintaining law and order within the territories under their jurisdiction. They also arbitrated and adjudicated disputes concerning the social and economic life of the rural population.

For the overall supervision of the pargana administration two different categories of officials were appointed by the state: the amil, the amin and the tappadar were appointed primarily to look after the land revenue administration, whereas the faujdar, the thanadar and the kotwal were to maintain law and order.

In order to maintain law and order the Faujdar of the pargana had to ensure protection of the village and qasba boundaries, uninterrupted and safe passage to travellers and traders, prevention of crimes such as theft, robbery, violence, rape, adultery and murder. It was also his responsibility to apprehend culprits, recover the stolen goods and punish the culprit. The faujdar was assisted by the thanadar and kot wal who were posted in the tappa and qasba respectively.

Prevention of crime, investigation of criminal cases and arrest of culprits necessitated access to information and involvement of certain local elements who had acquired traditional skill to act as detectives or khojis and those who could perform the task of guarding village boundaries and market places in the qasba (the vadhdar and chaukayat).

In order to exchange information the service of the messengers cum runner or halkara were also requisitioned. The Meenas were regarded as the most skillful persons to discharge the functions of khoji, chaukayat, vadhdar and Halkara.

THE MEENA CHAUKAYAT

In pre-colonial Rajasthan rural policing was the responsibility of two agencies. At the pargana level the faujdar who was assisted by thanadar was solely responsible for the preservation of law and order, prevention of crime such as theft, robbery, violence, murder, destruction of property, rape and adultery. He was also required to take all necessary measures to prevent the occurrences of such crimes, apprehend criminals and punish them in accordance with the seriousness of crime. he was also expected to regulate entry of undesirable elements in the towns and villages. In case of theft or robbery the faujdar had to produce the culprit and recover the stolen or looted property failing which he was to make good the loss so as to compensate the victim.

The village level policing was the responsibility of the Meena chaukayat. His principal duties were to keep an eye on strangers passing through the village, detect thefts and recover stolen property. The number of chaukayat could be one or two depending on the size of a village. The chaukayat's direct responsibility was to the thanadar. He was fined if he harboured a thief or murderer and failed to produce him for punishment. Threat

of fines and chaukayat's intimate knowledge of every household, his resource position etc. were invaluable aids to the prevention and detection of rural crime.

The chaukayat was a state appointee and received his emoluments in the form of jagir lands. In the qasba the chākayat was responsible for the safety of markets, roads and waste lands associated with it.¹ If the chaukayat failed to recover stolen property, he was fined to the extent of the value of the lost item. Mohan Meena the chaukayat of village Jhirana in pargana Chatsu was fined Rs.21/-. In ~~pargana Chatsu~~ as he suppressed the information regarding the theft of sugar belonging to the Banjaras and also failed to produce the culprit.² Malu Meena, one of the Chaukayats appointed in qasba chatsu absconded from his post as he was held responsible for the theft committed in the village adjacent to the qasba. The state made good the loss of stolen item by confiscating property and personal belongings of the chaukayat. His belongings were sold for Rs.31.37.³ Meena Chaukayat of qasba Niwai was fined Rs.51/- as he refuted Sahja Mahajan's complaint regarding theft committed in his house. The chaukayat was asked to prove his truthfulness by undergoing ordeal. However, he failed to establish his stand.⁴

¹. Chithi to the Amil Pargana Bahatri dt Asoj Sudi, V.S. 1818/1761.

². Arhsatta Pargana Chatsu V.S. 1780/1713 A.D.

³. Arhsatta pargana Chatsu V.S. 1817/1760 A.D.

⁴. Arhsatta Pargana Niwai V.S. 1827/1770 A.D.

At times the chaukayats used their expertise for criminal gain. They were punished by the state for their direct involvement in thefts or for conniving with the thieves. Khushhal Meena Chaukayat of village Mahesra in pargana Dausa was fined Rs.41 as he was found guilty of having stolen a buffalo belonging to Shobha Ram Tiwari.⁵ Similarly Roopa Meena Chaukayat of the village Titara in pargana chatsu was fined Rs.83 as he collaborated with the thieves who committed theft in the house of Gopi Jat, the resident of village Karhera Khurd.⁶

The Meena Chaukayats were also punished by the state on charge of dereliction of duty. This can be seen from the instance of Dunga Meena Chaukayat of the village Bhojyadhand who did not care to investigate the case of theft that was committed in the house of the patwari of village Titara. He was fined Rs.51/-.⁷

In some cases a group of Chaukayats was placed under the charge of a head chaukayat Meena designated as Rao Ka Meena. All irksome police duties in the pargana headquarters which also included guarding the pargana treasury and its safe escorting to the capital town. This group of Meena were also entrusted with the responsibility to watch and

⁵ Arhsatta Pargana Dausa V.S. 1816/1759 A.D.

⁶ Arhsatta Pargana Chatsu V.S. 1771/1714 A.D.

⁷ Ibid.

guard the gateway of the royal palace. Rao Ka Meena and his subordinate chaukayats were assigned jagir lands in lieu of cash salary.⁸

THE MEENA KHOJI

Considering the fact that cases of thefts were common in the rural society and the recovery of the stolen items was the responsibility of the state appointed officials the state requisitioned the service of Meena detectives termed 'Khojis' who knew the modus operandi of thieves and had acquired expertise in following thieves and recovering the stolen goods. The most common cases of theft were lifting of cattles, particularly oxen and stealing from the camps of the banjaras or itinerant traders carrying cotton, sugar, grains and other goods on the backs of their cattles. Kushla Meena Khoji visited village Raholi in order to investigate theft of buffalo belonging to Gangaram Patel of the village Anandpur. Ultimately he succeeded in recovering buffalo in village vihavani of pargana Tonk.⁹ Parsa Meena, the thief was also arrested. Pitha Meena Khoji was deputed to recover the stolen goods belonging to Shobha and other banjaras who were encamping in village Paruani. He traced this case of theft to the thieves of village Vichi in pargana Chatsu.¹⁰

⁸ Chithi to the Amil Pargana Bahatri.

⁹ Arhsatta Parana Chatsu V.S. 1781/1724 A.D.

¹⁰ Ibid.

THE MEENA VADHDAR

The Meena were also appointed by the state as Vadhdars whose sole responsibility was to act as the guard of the village boundaries and protector of standing crops. In lieu of this service the vadhdar was allotted some bighas of cultivable waste land lying in the village. Such land grants were termed as Vadh. The Vadhdar was given the right to cultivate land and appropriate for himself the produce of Vadh land. He was not required to pay and tax to the state. The land granted in Vadh was conditional upon the performance of regular service and the Vadhdar could not claim hereditary or proprietary right over land granted in Vadh. The Vadh granted could be confiscated, curtailed or transferred at any time by the state.¹¹

It is also evident from the documents that the Meenas also worked as post carriers and messengers for the Amber rulers, local jagirdars and the pargana and village officials.¹²

¹¹. Chithi to the Amil Pargana Chatsu dt. Kativadi 6 V.S. 1771/1720 A.D.; Pargana Dausa Phalgun Sudi 3, V.s. 1807/1750, Pargand Malarna dt. Posh Sudi 2, V.S. 1801/1744 A.D.

¹². Chithi to the Amil Pargana Sawai Jaipur dt. Vaisakha Vadi 5, V.S. 1803/1746, Pargana Bahatri dt. Magishri Sudi 7 V.S.1784/1727 A.D.

Thus it is clearly evident that the Meena were co-opted into the Rajput state system in varying capacities. They served as guards of treasury, village and qasba chaukayat, khoji or spies and halkara.

THE MEENA JAGIRDARS

The State employed a large number of servants who could be paid their salary in cash or kind. However a majority of the civil and military servants of state received their tankhwah (salary) in the form of revenue assignments and the bulk of the state territory consisted of villages assigned in tankhwah jagirs. The jagir lands were assigned on different terms and conditions.

The jagir assignment was made through a sanad specifying the terms and conditions of the assignments and the obligations of the assignees. The sanads can be divided into two categories -

- a. Sanadi tankhwah jagir ke or jagir in lieu of service and
- b. Sanadi jagir ghar baithan ki or jagir without any service obligations.

Tankhwah jagir was assigned in lieu of both civil and military services and was conditional on the performance of the service.¹³ It was subject to resumption at the will of the state. It could be transferred, curtailed or extended at any time by the ruler. In the majority of cases, however, the resumption of tankhwah jagir did not take place.

The majority of the jagirdars were Rajputs who rendered military service to the state. The Kachhawa Rajputs who belonged to the ruling clan constituted largest group among this category of the jagirdars. The assignees who held tankhwah jagir on the condition of rendering military services were required to maintain a fixed number of horses, pyadas and musketeers. However, civil servants of the state who represented authority of various levels and received their salary in the form of jagir, belonged to such castes as Khatri, Brahman, Mahajan and Meenas etc.¹⁴. The revenue of eighteen villages in pargana Sawai Jaipur was assigned in Tankhwah jagir to the Meenas who were employed by the state as chaukayat and khoji. Entire revenue of village Dhundh was assigned to Nathu, Aas and sixty other Meena Chaukayat.¹⁵

The jagir assignments were subject to periodical verifications and confirmation by the office of the Diwan huzuri. It was the duty of the jagirdar to come to the office of the diwan to

¹³. Yaddashti Mauzudati Siyaha Jagirdar Nathawat and Naruka; Chithi dt. K.M.Asarh Vadi 13, V.S. 1823/1766, D.D.H., J.R.RSAB.

¹⁴. Arhsatta pargana Sawai Jaipur V.S. 1813/1756.

¹⁵. Arhsattas pargana Sawai Jaipur V.S. 1807/1750, 1813/1756, 1817/1760 and 1824/1767.

establish his claim by producing the required number of branded horses, musketeers etc.¹⁶ In case the diwan huzuri was satisfied, the sanad of the assignee was confirmed.

The tankwah jagir was subject to resumption at any time at the will of the state. Sometimes the jagir assignments were subject to temporary resumptions due to the jagirdar's failure to produce the renewed sanad. Such jagir resumptions were kept in a separate category and were termed as khalisa sanadi talab.¹⁷ Generally the resumption took place in those cases where the jagirdar failed to discharge his obligations properly and defying¹⁸ the orders of the darbar¹⁹ and refraining from the service of the huzuri.²⁰

NATURE AND CONDITIONS OF THE JAGIR ASSIGNMENTS

The jagir assignments were made under certain specific conditions. The performance of service on the part of the assignees was a prerequisite. Theoretically, hereditary rights to the

¹⁶. Yaddashti Mauzadati Siyah Jagirdaar Naruka, D.D.H.

¹⁷. Arhsattas pargana Chatsu for the year of V.S. 1808/1751, 1809/1752, 1817/1760, 1823/1766, 1828/1771, H.S.

¹⁸. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Jayeshtha Vadi 8, V.S. 1812/1755. Chithis to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M.Asarh Vadi 3, V.S. 1819/1762; dt. K.M.Bhadon Sudi 15, V.S. 1816/1759, D.D.H.

¹⁹. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Vaisakh Vadi 2, V.S. 1808/1751, D.D.H.

²⁰. Amber Records, Chithi from Bakshi Rai Bahadur Sahaj Singh to the Amils pargana Fagi, dt. K.M.Sawan Vadi 10, V.S. 1830/1773, H.S.

assignments were not vested with the jagirdars. The state reserved its rights to resume it at any time.

The jagirdar was entitled to collect revenue from the raiya in his jagir on the basis of customary rates, so long as he remained in the service.²¹ In other words, what was granted to a jagirdar was the right to collect the state share of the revenue and to appropriate it as long as he held the assignment. The sanad carrying the order of the assignment clearly contained the terms and conditions on which the assignment was made.

In the sanads the period of assignment was not mentioned. The amils were instructed not to demand the sanad from the jagirdars every year.²² However, the patels of the assigned villages were instructed not to permit the assignees to collect the hasil until they produce the sanad garar vakai.²³ From this it could be assumed that the sanad for jagir had to be renewed

²¹. Chithi to the Amil pargana Paota, dt. K.M.Vaisakh Sudi 15, V.S. 1821/1764. Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M.Sawan Vadi 1, V.S. 1820/1763. Chithi to the Amil pargana Mauzabad, dt. K.M.Magh Sudi 5, VS 1819/1762. Chithi to the Amil pargana Malrana dt. K.M.Vaisakh Sudi 2, V.S. 1810/1753, D.D.H.

²². Chithis to the Amils pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Kati Vadi 8, V.S. 1808/1751; dt. K.M.Asoj Vadi 4, V.S. 1808/1751; dt. K.M.Asoj Vadi 5, V.S. 1808/1751; dt. K.M.Bhadon Sudi 3, V.S. 1808/1751; dt. K.M.Kati Vadi 11, V.S. 1808/1751; dt. K.M.Kati Vadi 13, V.S. 1808/1751, D.D.H.

²³. Chithis to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Bhadon Sudi 11, V.S. 1808/1751; dt. K.M.Asoj Vadi 1, V.S. 1808/1751; dt. K.M.Bhadon Sudi 3 and 8, V.S. 1808/1751, D.D.H.

every year. However, in a number of cases, the assignees were not required to renew their sanads every year and assignments even tended to become hereditary.

As noted earlier the majority of the state servants were paid their emoluments in the form of jagir or revenue assignments and the amount of the salary of a jagirdar was determined by the nature of obligations which the holder undertook to fulfill. The amount of the salary of a jagirdar was invariably expressed in cash, therefore it became necessary that the income of the state territory (i.e. villages) be calculated. This necessitated the valuation of every village. The estimated income or the valuation of a village was termed as tan mauza.

Little information is available in the documents regarding the manner in which the tan of the mauzas was computed. However, it is quite clear from the documents that the tan mauza included estimated income from all sources of revenue realized under the heads of mal-o-jihat, sair jihat and siwai jamabandi as well as expected income from the bhomi land or tan bhomi. The tan figures were separately ascertained for mal, sair, siwai jamabandi and bhomi. However, it was discretionary on the part of the state to assign either tan mal or tan mal sair, bhomi kul habubayati.²⁴

The amount of tan assigned in jagir was expected to be equivalent to the amount of salary of the assignee. However, a comparative study of the tan figures pertaining to various

²⁴ Arṣatta pargana Chatsu, dt. V.S. 1808/1751 and 1823/1766, H.S.

areas with the jama (actual assessed revenue) and the hasil (actual realization) figures reveals that there was a considerable divergence between the tan and the wasuli or hasil. The wide gap between these two figures leads to the conclusion that the tan figures were fictitious and highly inflated. This fact was officially recognised by the revenue administration.²⁵ The implications of the inflated nature of the tan mauza were however, detrimental to the working of the administration.

From the study of documents, it also appears that the tan figures remained more or less static.²⁶ Some times, takhfif in the tan was granted to a jagirdar.²⁷ But even after this concession the gap between the revised tan and hasil was still substantial.²⁸

²⁵ Nakal Haqiqat Gaon Pulalao pargana Naraina, V.S. 1818/1716. Chithi to the Amils of pargana Sawai Jaipur, Khohri, Gaji ka Thana, Naraina, Niwai, Gaori, Chatsu, Tonk, Dausa, etc. dt. K.M.Asarh Vadi 2, V.S. 1817/1760. D.D.H. The document reads: The jama of Khalisa and Jagir villages has been decreased due to the Marathas etc., therefore the jagirdars are not able to receive any hasil and it has become difficult for them to render service. The tan has been increased and upeja (yield) has considerably decreased.

²⁶ Muwazana Kalan pargana Chatsu, Sawai Jaipur, Lalsot, Dausa Bahatri and Malarna. H.S.

²⁷ Arhsatta pargana Chatsu, dt. V.S.1808/1751, 1809/1752, 1823/1766, H.S. Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M.Vaishakh Sudi 3, V.S. 1819/1762. Chithi from Diwan Ratan Lal to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Asarh Vadi 14, V.S. 1826/1769, D.D.H.

²⁸ Muwazana Kalan pargana Chatsu, H.S. The tan of the village of Dahor was Rs.2800.00 and tan takhfif Rs.700 was granted to the jagirdar in V.S. 1819/1762. The hasil figures given in subsequent years are as follows:

V.S. 1820	1821	1822	1823
632.97	804.44	708.15	574.25

(See Muwazana Kalan pargana Chatsu).

At times the tan figures were arbitrarily raised without taking any notice of the then current revenue.²⁹ It is clear from the documents that usually the jagirdar was left to bear the risk of fluctuation in the amount of tan wasuli which was not the concern of the state, nor was he granted any relief in norms conditions in case his collection was far below the tan.³⁰ However, in the case of losses incurred due to military incursion, he could be granted relief after verification by the state revenue officials.³¹

²⁹ Nakal Haqiqat Gaon Pulolao pargana Naraina, D.D.H. also see Chithi to the patel and the patwari of the village of Manpura, dt. K.M.Falgun Vadi 12, V.S. 1830/1773 (Thikana Records, Thikana Dhula, Dhula House, Jaipur. Chithi from Diwan Ratan Lal to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Asrah Vadi 14, V.S. 1826/1769, D.D.H. The hasil of the village of Pulolao was as follows:

In V.S.	1816	In V.S. 1817
	Rs.303.97	Rs.339.75

The said village was assigned in jagir to Badan Singh Rathaur son of Abhai Singh Rathaur from Unhalu V.S. 1818. The tan was fixed as follows:

V.S. 1818	V.S.1819	V.S.1820	V.S.1821	V.S.1822
Rs.1200.00	Rs.1700.00	Rs.2200.00	Rs.2700.00	Rs.3000.00

The hasil of the village of Sri Madho Rajpura was as follows:

V.S. 1823	V.S.1824	V.S.1825
Rs.1340.34	Rs.1942.62	Rs.800.00

The tan in the subsequent years was determined as follows:

V.S.1826	V.S.1827	V.S.1828
Rs.5333.31	Rs.6000.00	Vs.6500.00

(See Muwazana Kalan pargana Chatsu).

³⁰ Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Falgun Vadi 3, VS 1808/1751, D.D.H.

³¹ Chithi to the Amils of pargana Sawai Jaipur, Khohri, Niwai, Chatsu, Gaji ka thana etc. dt. Miti 2, K.M.Asarh Vadi VS 1817/1770. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu. dt. K.M.Bhadon Sudi 9, VS 1808/1751, D.D.H.

Jagirdar could increase the hasil of the jagir to some extent through his personal efforts, by bringing fallow lands under cultivation. This was true of small jagirdars who took to plough with a view to increasing their income. The jagirdars were constantly encouraged by the state to bring fallow land of the jagir village under the plough. We find that the Meena jagirdars either cultivated lands themselves or got it cultivated through hired labour.

The position of the Meena jagirdars can be comprehended from the Table-I.

List of the Meena Jagirdars in Paragana

Sawai Jaipur

Name of the Village	Revenue of the Village	Name of the Jagirdars
• Shri Mukundpura Baaj Jalaju	2400	Kirpa Meena
• Shri Mukundpura Baaj Jalju	2400	Keso Meena
• Shri Mukundpura	2400	Kujala Meena
• Jamvay Ka Ghat	of 600 Bighas	Kujala Meena
• Datala Gujra	900	Khiva Meena
• Chappar Hodi	23611	Gidha Meena
• Shri Mukundpura Baaj Jalaju	2400	Gangaram Meena
• Shri Mukundpura Baaj Jalaju	2400	Gordhan Meena
• Dhund	2000	Natha Meena
• Chainpura Baaj Doda Hadi	924	Chapa Meena
• Khora Meena Ka	--	Choda Meena
• Natata	1200	Thakerjee Meena
• Nangal Sujawata Ka	2900 Bighas	Toda Meena
• Datalo	1400	Teja Meena

Name of the Village	Revenue of the Village	Name of the Jagirdars
• Nadanno	19821	Dudaram Meena
• S̄v̄ai Ghetor	3080 Bight Land	Datta Meena
• Toda Meena Ka	1300	Devkaran Meena
• Kishanpur Baaj Nadanna	400	Parja Meena
• Datalo	424	Parsa Meena
• Kati	900	Manduda Meena
• Shri Mukundpura Baaj Jalaja	2400	Maan Meena
• Bilota	800	Roopa Meena
• Ghati Najik Ghata	490	Ramchand Meena
• Toda Meena Ka	1300	Hema Meena
• Kishanpur Baaj Nadanna	400 (10 months)	Parsa Meena
• Kati	900 (10 months)	Maan Meena
• Khora Meena Ka	1400 (10 months)	Choda Meena
• Ghati	490 (10 months)	Ramchand Meena
• Ghati Khurd	490	Hari Meena
• Nitato	1200 (10 months)	Thakarji Meena
• Nangalo Susawat Ka	2900 Bigha Land	Khoda Meena
• Jamvay Ka Ghat	600 Bighas	Kujla Meena
• Dantali Gujar Ki	900 Bighas	Khiva Meena
• Chapar Hodi	23611	Gidha Meena
• Ramjipuro Vas Ghinoti	2880	Gangaram Meena

Name of the Village	Revenue of the Village	Name of the Jagirdars
• Dhund	2000	Natha Meena
• Khora Meena Ka	1400	Choda Meena
• Chainpur Boj Didhadi	924	Chokha Meena
• Nangal Sukovta Ka	2900	Toda Meena
• Nirado	1200	Thakerji Meena
Name of the Village	Revenue of the Village	Name of the Jagirdars
• Dantalo	1400	Teja Meena
• Sawai Getore	1900	Dola Meena
• Nadano	19821	Duda Meena
• Dantalo Meena Ko	424	Parsa Meena
• Kishanpur Baj Nadona	400	Parja Meena
• Amarpur Vaaje Kiratpur	14631	Badka Meena
• Amarpur Vaaje Kiratpur	14631	Kheva Meena
• Amarpur Vaaje Kiratpur	14631	Likhama Meena
• Kato	900	Man Meena
• Shri Vadavaneji Baaj Ghati	490	Ramchand Meena
• Vilot	800	Roopa Meena
• Ghati Khurd	800	Hira Meena
• Toda Meena Ka	1300	Hema Meena
• Chappar Vadi	23611 (10 months)	Gidha Meena
• Dhund	2000 (10 months)	Nathu Meena

Source : Arṣatta Pargana Sawai Jaipur

THE MEENA PATEL

The office of the patel was an essential part of the local and agrarian administration at the village level. The documents describe him as the chief village officials besides the patwari.³² The patels generally descended from the first line of the colonisers of the village and were the initial proprietors (Dhani) of village land.

In normal circumstances, the holders of the office exercised hereditary rights which were fully recognised by the state.³³ In due course of time, the pateli rights began to be treated as 'property' which could easily be brought, sold or mortgaged.³⁴ This concept of the office of the patel being a property was implicitly recognized by the state.³⁵ The pateli right could also be acquired through purchase³⁶ and it could also be conferred by the State.

It was the very process of colonization particularly the setting up of new villages which enabled many Meena families to acquire the pateli rights. This fact is testified^{to} by

³². Muwajana Kalan pargana Chatsu, Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M. Asoj Vadi, V.S. 1810/1753.

³³. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Asarh Vadi 11, V.S. 1812/1753. Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. KM Asoj Sudi 8, V.S. 1820/1763.

³⁴. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Sawan Sudi 6, V.S. 1810/1753. Chithi to the Amil pargana Swai Jaipur, dt. K.M. Jeth Sudi 9, V.S. 1810/1753..

³⁵. Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M.Jeth Sudi 9, V.S. 1819/1762. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. Vaisakh Sudi ii, V.S. 1808/1751.

³⁶. Chithi to Shah Salig Ram Shah Raja Ram, dt. K.M. Jeth Sudi 9.

numerous parwanas of pateli issued by the state to the Meenas who founded new villages. In an overwhelming majority of the cases, the pateli often belonged to the caste of Meenas, Ahirs and Jats, but the patels were also in some cases Brahmans and Rajputs.

The law of inheritance and the nature of proprietary rights governing the pateli, led to fragmentation of the pateli jurisdiction held by a family. Apart from the law of inheritance, the frequent sale and purchase of the pateli rights, either in part or in full, further accelerated the process of division and subdivisions of the pateli jurisdiction. Thus, the number of patels in a village could be more than one at a time.³⁷ There are instances when a village had as many as seven patels at a time. Where the number of patels exceeded one, their respective jurisdictions were clearly stated and termed as pattis. Their shares — were expressed in biswas.³⁸

As in disputes between jagirdars resulting in the demarcated^{ion} of specific territorial jurisdictions, expressed in the form of pattis or shares, the pateli right too was similarly demarcated when the village was unable to prosper due to mutual discord between the co-patels.³⁹ In such cases, the Diwan instructed the amil to either resolve the dispute

³⁷. Muwajana Kalan pargana Chatsu.

³⁸. Chithi to the Amil pargana Sawai Jaipur, dt. K.M. Kati Vadi 14, V.S. 1829/1772. Amber Records, Chithi, dt.V.S.1824/1767.

³⁹ Chithi dt. Sawan Sudi 2 V.S. 1801/1744; Chithi dt. kartik Sudi 13 V.S. 1790/1733; Chithi dt. Jeshti Sudi 7, V.S. 1789/ 1732; Chithi, dt, Magh Sudi 5 Vs. 1801/1744; all pertaining to Pargana Sawai Jaipur and Chithi dt. Vaishakh Vadi 3 V.S. 1820/1763 and Chithi dt. Sawan Vadi 7 V.S. 1796/ 1739 both pertaining to

himself, or enlist the services of the tappadar to make out the respective pattis;⁴⁰ or to verify the facts in consultation with the patels of the adjoining villages and accordingly demarcate the respective pattis of the co-shares.⁴¹ In instances where owing to tension between the patels the land in the village remained uncultivated, the standard instructions issued by the Diwan, state that the pattis of the patels' be marked out in accordance with their respective shares, and a "muchalka", or undertaking, extracted from each patel stating that the entire arable within his jurisdiction was to be cultivated, failing which the patel would be obliged to pay the revenue on it.⁴²

A series of three documents, regarding a dispute between the co-sharers over the pateli right of the villages Sitarampur and Gijhada, in pargana Malpura, present the sole example where the state exercises its prerogative to cancel the hereditary pateli right. When Hirolum Meena patel, holding 11 1/2 biswas share in the pateli of the above mentioned villages, and Kusalya and Mapa Gujar, jointly holding 8 3/4 biswas of the pateli, entered

pargana Tonk; Chithi dt., Asoj Vadi 10 V.S. 1795/1738 pargana Fagi and Chithi's dt. Asoj Vadi 10 V.S. 1791/1734 and Chithi dt. Asoj Vadi 9 V.s. 1833/1776 both pertaining quasba Sawai Jaipur.

⁴⁰. Chithi dt. Asad Vadi 5 V.S. 1791 / 1734 pargana Sawai Jaipur; Chithi dt. Magh Sudi 5 V.S. 1801/1744 pargana Sawai Jaipur and Chithi dt. Asoj Vadi 10 V.S. 1795/1738 pargana Fagi.

⁴¹. Chithi dt. Asoj Vadi 9 V.S. 1855/1776 qasba Sawai Jaipur.

⁴². Chithi dt. Asad Vadi 5 V.S. 1791/1734 tappa Khoh, pargana Sawai Jaipur of similar instructions by the Diwan when the patel intentionally left the arable land in the village un^ucultivated.

into a violent confrontation which led to a physical assault by the Gujars' on Hirolum patel, the latter immediately appealed for state-assistance. Subsequently, the Gujars looted the village and fled, provoking the Diwan to order the confiscation of their pateli, their house, land and well, and resumption of these into khalisa.⁴³ Thereafter, the Diwan issued instructions that the Gujars' pateli rights be transferred to Hirolum Meena on payment of an acceptance fee of Rs.1501/- and the peshkash, which could be remitted in instalments.⁴⁴ However, in a later document we are told that Hirolum had refused the offer and that the pateli of village Gijhada, on being requisitioned by Bija Gujar, had been sanctioned to him on payment of Rs.501/- as Peshkash.⁴⁵

In addition, evidence of the sale of pateli rights and the disputes arising thereof, are also recorded. In an interesting case, one Ghaitra Meena and Akhayram Nirwan pleaded that since the village had been settled the pateli had been divided thus between the various co-shares: Nahira Meena exercised pateli rights over 11 1/2 ploughs, Brahman over 5 1/2 ploughs and Chachya Meena over 5 1/2 ploughs. Subsequently, Chachya Meena sold equal shares of his pateli right to Nahira Meena and the Brahman in 1681 A.D. and 1694 A.D., respectively. Since then, the purchasers and their dependents had been paying peshkash on their respective shares bought from Chachya Meena. However, their claim to

⁴³. Chithi dt. Posh Sudi 5 V.S. 1808/1751 pargana Malpura.

⁴⁴. Chithi dt Magh Sudi 8 V.S. 1809/1752 pargana Malpura.

⁴⁵. Chithi dt. Magh Sudi 15 V.S. 1809 / 1752 pargana Malpura.

Chachya's pateli share was challenged by the latter's relatives in 1724 A.D. and again in 1751 A.D., on the plea that the pateli had been illegally acquired. The dispute was then referred to the nyaya sabha for arbitration and finally settled in favour of the plaintiffs.⁴⁶ In another instance, following the sale of portion of the coparcenary pateli right, the brothers entered into litigation over the distribution of the proceeds from the sale.⁴⁷ Incidentally, documents on disputes between patels throw light on the fragmented nature of the pateli right. Thus, we find one Tuchiram Ahir held 1/3rd of 1/4th of the pateli of qasba Tonk, while in villages Surajpura and Shayampura Sadi in pargana Fagi there were 5 patels, 2 Malis, 2 Jats and 1 Kumhar.⁴⁸

Disputes resulting from an attempt to extend the pateli right are expressed in various forms in the documents. Extension of rights was contrived either through illegal extension of jurisdictionally defined limits - i.e. through occupation of land in the co-sharers pateli, or realization of the co-sharer dues from his patti - or through the usurpation of the rights, or territories, of the legal claimant.

Thus, the Meena patels of village Sanjoli, in Tappa Ramgarh, who held 12 biswas of the pateli contended that their co-sharers, Deep Singh and Sabat Singh Hamirde, whose

⁴⁶ Chithi dt. Asad Vadi V.S. 1809/1762 tappa Ramgarh pargana ^aSawai Jaipur.

⁴⁷ Chithi dt. Asoj Vadi 2 V.S. 1812/1755 pargana Fagi.

⁴⁸ Chithi dt. Sawan Vadi 7 V.S. 1796/1739 pargana Fagi; Chithi dt. Asoj Vadi 10 V.S. 1795/1738 Pargana Tonk.

pateli had been confiscated by the state due to non-payment of the peshkashi dues, had forcibly occupied land in their patti.⁴⁹ In a similar case, when the co-sharer refused to allow his partner to cultivate his share of the pateli patti, the dispute was referred to the patels of the neighbouring five villages for arbitration.⁵⁰ Similarly in instances where the pattis of the patels were clearly defined but one of the co-sharer confiscated the entire pateli dues, the dispute was often arbitrated by the patels of the neighbouring villages.⁵¹

Although, hereditary right to the office of the patel was entertained, the state reserved the right to appoint a patel or remove him from the office at its discretion.⁵² The state also exercised its right of appointing patel for villages which were newly colonized or were due to be settled as also for those villages where the office fell vacant due to the absence of natural heirs or the dismissal of the patels by the revenue officials.⁵³ There are

⁴⁹. Chithi dt. Asad Sudi 3 V.S. 1809 / 1752 pargana Sawai Jaipur.

⁵⁰. Chithi. dt. Sawan Vadi V.S. 1789/1732 pargana Sawai Jaipur.

⁵¹. Chithi. dt. Jesht Sudi 10 V.s. 1795/1738 pargana Sawai Jaipur, Chithi dt. Chaitra Vadi 3 V.S. 1799/1742 pargana Gazi Ka Thana; Chithi dt. Vaishakh Vadi 3 V.S. 1820/1763 pargana Tonk.

⁵². Chithis to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Asarh Vadi 1, V.S. 1822/1765; dt. Asoj Vadi 12, V.s. 1810/1753. Chithi to the Amil pargana Sawai Jaipur, dt. K.M. Jeth Sudi 12, V.S. 1816/1759.

⁵³. Amber Records, Chithi, dt. V.S. 1824/1757.

instances of the village community ousting the patels from the office as well as from the village.⁵⁴

The Meena Patel was not merely a semi state official, he was also a privileged and resourceful cultivator himself holding substantial land and undertaking cultivation as gharuhala.⁵⁵ He was possessor of numerou ploughs and bullocks.⁵⁶

When the pateli was conferred on a person, he was required to pay a lump sum as peshkash, generally payable in two annual instalments.⁵⁷ He was confirmed only when the sum due from him had been fully paid. In newly settled villages the pateli was usually entrusted to the pioneer colonizer of the settlement. Where rehabilitation of old ruined village was involved, the office was given to a person who could settle ruined villages by

⁵⁴. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Jeth Sudi 12, V.S. 1821/1764. Daula, the patel of the village of Luhara who had killed shobha Mahajan was expelled by the raiyat from the village as well as from the office. Chana, the patel of village Mala ka Nangal was ousted by the Panchas of the village from the office. Chithi to Sighi Lala Ram Shah Salig Ram, dt. K.M. Kati Vadi 14, V.S. 1826/1769.

⁵⁵ Chithi to to the Amil pargana Malarna, dt. K.M. Duji Vadi 10, V.S. 1812/1755.

⁵⁶. Chithi to the Amil pargna Bahatri, dt. K.M.Joth Sudi 14, V.S. 1819/1762. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Sawan Vadi 2, V.S. 1823/1766; pargana Khahri, Vaisakh Sudi 14, 1778/1721.

⁵⁷. Arṣatta pargana Bahatri, V.S., 1813/1756. Chithi to amil pargana Sawai Jaipur, dt. K.M. Jeth Sudi 9, V.S. 1810/1753. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu. dt. K.M. Asarh Vadi, 11, V.S.1821/1755.

his personal efforts.⁵⁸ There are instances when an original settler of the village combined in himself the office of the patel and zamindar. Thus the office of the patel and zamindar were simultancously conferred upon Har Ram Meena, who was the pioneer colonizer of the village of Harbhagatpura in paragana Chatsu.⁵⁹ There are also instances where outsiders tried to acquire vacant office by offering a large amount of peshkash to the state.⁶⁰

The patel who may have abandoned his village for a variety of reasons⁶¹ could claim back his pateli rights. In case he was a victim of harassments by bhomias and so on, he was induced to resume the office and given an assurance that he would not be harassed in future. However, if he desired to resume his rights, he had to pay the arrears outstanding against him. Neta Meena, the patel of village Nehri who was ousted from the office on the charge of misbehaviour with the state officials was allowed to resume the office. However, he was asked to furnish a muchalka as an assurance for his future behaviour.⁶² In many cases, we find the patels undertaking to attract new ploughs and to construct new chapparas in the village in a bid to regain their lost position.⁶³ For repeated recalcitrance and evasion of the

⁵⁸ . Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Asoj Sudi 5, V.S. 1819/1762; dt. K.M. Asarh Sudi 7, V.S. 1823/1766. Muwazana Kalan Pargana Chatsu.

⁵⁹ . Chithi to the Amil pargana chatsu, dt. K.M. Asoj Sudi 5, V.S. 1819/1762.

⁶⁰ . Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Falgun Vadi 11, V.S. 1811/1754.

⁶¹ Yaddashti Pradakhti Gaon pargāna Malarna, dt. V.s. 1783/1726.

⁶² . Ibid.

⁶³ . Chithi to the Amil pargana Fagi dt. K.M.Asoj Sudi 2. V.S. 1983/1726. The Meena patel of the village of Ram Parsadi offered in his petition to the state that if he is

payment of state dues, a patel could be ousted from his office and his pateli rights liable to be conferred on another person.⁶⁴ There are also instances of patels being ousted from the office by the village community. Hathila Meena, the patel of village Nagrivas in pargana Chatsu was ousted from the office and the village by the raiyat as he was accused of having killed Sobha Mahajan of the same village. Chaena Meena, the patel of village Malaka Nangal was ousted from the office by the members of (panchas) panchayat as he had developed strained relations with them. Chaena made an appeal to the state but the decision of the panchas was upheld⁶⁵.

The patel was closely associated with the land revenue administration of the village.

Although the revenue was assessed by the state officials, the responsibility for the collection of hasil from the raiyati village rested with the patel. The raiyat of the village classified as raiyati normally paid the revenue through the patel who was required to deposit it in the pargana tahvil (treasury) or had to entrust it to the jagirdar in an assigned village.⁶⁶ It, therefore, became the responsibility of the patel to collect the revenue share from each individual peasant. His performance thus was considered an official service to the state. At

restored to the office once again he would bring 25 new ploughs to the village. He also undertook to get cultivated entirely cultivable land (laik zarait) of the village.

⁶⁴ Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M. Jeth Vadi, 14, V.S. 1813/1756.

⁶⁵ Chithi to the Amil Pargana Sawai Jaipur dt. Kartik Vadi 14, V.S. 1826/1769.

⁶⁶ Chithis to the Amil pargana Bahatri. dt. Jeth Vadi, 7, V.S. 1807/1756; dt. K.M. magh Sudi. 12, V.S. 1818/1761. Chithis to the Amil pargana Chatsu dt. K.M. Bhadon Sudi 7, V.s. 1810/1753, dt. K.M. Vaisakh Vadi 9, V.S. 1812/1755; dt. K.M. Asoj Vadi 2, V.S. 1814/1757.

times the patel exploited his position for self interest and to the detriment of the interest of raiyat. In many cases we find them cheating the raiyat as well as the State by misappropriating the amount of hasil.

In addition, the patel undertook to collect the legal cases from the raiyat⁶⁷ From many references it appears that the weaker peasants were exploited and harassed by the patels under pretext of realizing malba and other cesses irrespective of their caste affinity with the peasants.⁶⁸ The patel was also closely associated with the assessment of the revenue of the village. He was at times required to prepare the jamabandi⁶⁹ and khasra⁷⁰ papers of the village with the help of the patwari. The record thus prepared served as the basis (to the state revenue officials) for the preparation of jamabandi for the entire pargana. He also assisted the tappadar whenever the latter visited the village for the purpose of assessment of the state revenue.

⁶⁷ Chithi to the Amil pargana Lalsot, dt. K.M.Sawan Vadi 11, V.S. 1809/1751.

⁶⁸ Chithi to the Amil pargana malarna, dt. K.M.Buji Vadi 10, V.s. 1812/1755. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Chaitra Sudi 5, V.S. 1811/1754, Chithi to the Amil pargana lalsot, dt. K.M. Vadi 6, V.S. 1817/1760. The documents reads as follows: It has been revealed by Vishbhar Nath, the jagirdar of village Abhaneri that Khushla, the patel of the village is assessing the malba at higher rate and the raiyats are for that reason unwilling to cultivate.

⁶⁹ Chithi to the Amil pargana Khohri, dt. K.M. Sawan Vadi 7, V.S. 1806/1749.

⁷⁰ Khasra Mauza Aniyala, pargana Malarna dt. V.S. 1824/1767.

The patel also assessed the malba cess in the khalisa villages, but in assigned villages he had to do it in presence of the jagirdars.⁷¹ The amount collected under the head of malba remained with the patel who could use it to meet common requirements of the village community, such as the maintenance and repair of wells and ponds, spiritual requirements of the village community and entertainment of guests and state revenue officials whenever they visited the village.⁷² The jagirdars were instructed by the state to realize their legal dues in the presence of the patels of their respective villages.⁷³

The patel played a crucial role in the growth of village economy. In fact, he was the chief instrument in the colonization of new villages and was expected to play an important role in attracting asamis to the newly colonized villages.⁷⁴ Patel Har Ram, Nathu Dalu, Raju and Thakarsi Meenas colonized the village Sawai Ishwari Singh Pura in 1747 A.D. by appropriating 1450 bighas of fallow land lying in village Laruvas located in pargana Sawai Jaipur. Similarly, Nonanda, son of Nanhu Meena was granted Pateli of the village Nonund Pura in pargana Bahatri which was founded by him in 1772 A.D. He incorporated 1000

⁷¹ Chithi to the Amil pargana Lalsot dt. K.M.Sawan Vadi 6, V.S. 1817/1760.

⁷² Chithi to the Amil pargana Lalsot, dt. K.M. Asarh Vadi, V.S. 1820/1763. Chithi to the Amil pargana Malarna, dt., K.M. Vaisakh Sudi 2, V.S. 1810/1753. Chithi to the Shah Birdi Chand, dt. K.M. Bhadon Vadi 1, V.S. 1826/1769.

⁷³ Chithi to Chakravarti Hari Har Shah Gulab Chand, dt. K.M. Asarh Sudi, 5, V.S. 1814/1757.

⁷⁴ See Satish Chandra, and Dilbagh Singh "Structure and Stratification in the Rural Society in Eastern Rajasthan", PIHC. 1972 Chithi to the Amil pargana Fagi, dt. K.M. Asoj Sudi 10, V.S. 1780/1723. Chithi dt. Bhadwa Sudi 10, V.S. 1806/1749; Chithi Amil Pargana Bahatri dt. Chaitra Vadi 12, V.S. 1819/1772.

bighas of cultivable waste available in villages Nathalwara, Vidhota and Mundawari. The Patel also took initiative for the rehabilitation of old ruined and deserted villages. It was his entitlement to perform the custom of chhapparbandi whenever he allowed an outside peasant to settle in the village⁷⁵. The patel also performed an important role in bringing cultivable waste land lying in the village under the plough⁷⁶. He had full power in the choice of new cultivators and could bestow the land on whomsoever he liked and his authority in this respect was recognized by the state. However, the state officials could interfere in these cases where the patel allotted more land to the privileged tax payers than the paltis. He was expected to get more land cultivated by the pahis and paltis than by the privileged cultivators. In villages where the number of patels was more than one, the patels divided the land under their jurisdiction in proportion to their shares (termed patti patel ki) and tried to attract the pahis and the paltis to settle in their pattis by offering them better terms.⁷⁷ The patel, however, could not interfere with the land already occupied by the cultivators.

Moreover, a patel also induced the cultivators already settled in the village to extend their holdings by cultivating fallow lands.⁷⁸ He provided the needy paltis with ploughs,

⁷⁵ Yaddashti Pradakhti Gaon pargana Malarna, dt. V.S. 1983/1726.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Posh Sudi 14, V.S. 1820/1763.

⁷⁸ Chithi to the Amil pargana S^owai Jaipur, dt. K.M. Jeth Vadi, 15, V.S. 1811/1754; dt. K.M. Kati Vadi 14, V.S. 1826/1769.

bullocks etc. and also requested the state to advance them tagai loans. He also stood surety for the repayment of the loans distributed through him. Further it was his duty to acquaint the revenue officials with the condition of the raiyat, their agricultural fields and the agricultural implements available with them.⁷⁹ He suggested ways and means for improving the conditions of cultivators. The patel was vital for the implementation of the state policies of maintaining uninterrupted cultivation extending the area under cultivation and encouraging production by the palti category of peasants in the village. He was penalized by the state if he did not discharge his obligations.

If cultivation suffered due to his negligence, he had to pay revenue to the state even for the fallow lands.⁸⁰

The patel was expected to till his gharuhala land either with the help of family members and full time or part time agricultural labourers. They also had the option to cultivate his land in sanjha along with the paltis. In many cases the patel settled his vasidars

⁷⁹ Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Sawan Sudi 2, V.S. 1815/1758. dt. K.M. Posh Sudi, 14, V.S. 1820/1763; dt. K.M. Asarh Vadi, 5, V.S. 1815/1758. Patel's were required to prepare Yaddashtis of Hal and Bail (ploughs and bullocks) available with each peasant. They were expected to keep full record of the hal bail sauik (old hal and bail) in the village and of the nawada hal bail (new ploughs etc.) in the village and of the nawada hal bail (new ploughs etc.) brought to the village and of the newada hal bail (now ploughs etc.) brought to the village. See Yaddashti Hal Bail pargana Chatsu 1666 A.D.

⁸⁰ Chithi to the Amil pargana Sawai Jaipur, dt. K.M. Jeth Vadi 15, V.S. 1811/1754. Amber Records, Chithi dt. K.M. Sawan Sudi 1, V.S. 1811/1754.

to get his personal land.⁸¹ In case the patel neglected the cultivation of his gharuhala land he forfeited the right to such land which could be reallocated by the state revenue officials.⁸²

The patel's jurisdiction over the village was not only financial, he was also partly responsible for maintaining law and order. He was required to inform the higher authorities of serious disturbances in the village and to investigate the criminal cases of theft, altercations, murder, adultery, etc., within the village boundary. In these matters he could seek help from the higher authorities.⁸³ It was his responsibility to look after the village boundary markings and represent the interest of the village in the case of any boundary dispute.⁸⁴ Again, it was he who encouraged the continuance of the village customs and report any violation of such customs to the state officials and the panchas of the village.

The raiyat presented their demands and expressed their grievances to the state through the patel.⁸⁵ In the case of unjust assessments⁸⁶ and unauthorized collections by the

^{e1} Chithi to the Amil pargana ^aBhatri, dt. K.M. Asoj Vadi, V.S. 1810/1753.

^{e2} Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Jeth Sudi, 15, V.S. 1822/1765. The patel of village Vimalpura who was not cultivating land in his village and was residing in village Anuppura was deprived of his land.

⁸³ Amber Records, Chithi from Nawal Rai Maha Chand to Diwan Rai Chand dt. K.M.Chaitra Vadi 3, V.S. 1851/1794. Chithi dt. K.M.Maqishri Sudi 14, V.S. 1853/1796.

⁸⁴ Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.magishri Vadi 2, V.S. 1819/1762..

⁸⁵ Chithi to the Amil pargana Malarna, dt. K.M.Asarh Sudi 13, V.S. 1812/1755. Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M.Jeth Sudi i, V.S. 1819/1762. Chithi the Amil pargana Dausa, dt. K.M.Duji, Sawan Vadi , V.S. 1817/1760..

pargana revenue officials, the raiyat could approach the state authorities through the patel who could lodge complaints against any oppressive pargana official, zamindars as well as jagirdars on behalf of the raiyat.⁸⁷ We find patels lodging complaints against the amil of pargana Bahatri, who had exacted unauthorized amount from khalisa and jagir villages. The patel of the village of Mundawari in pargana Malarna lodged a complaint against Fateh Singh Harah, the jagirdar of the village, who was grabbing the lands of inamdars and the cultivators and also against his highhandedness in many other matters.⁸⁸ We also find the patel of Khurnala village in pargana Mauzabad lodging a complaint against Raj Singh Bhairon Singh Khangarot, the bhomia of the village who was harassing the raiyat and the kamins in many ways.⁸⁹ Thus the patel had a dual authority: first, as a traditional representative of the village society and secondly, as the official headman of the village.

The patel acted as an arbitrator and adjudicator in agrarian disputes concerning the ownership of land, the sharing of the produce and the demarcation of boundaries. Such disputes were referred directly to him for arbitration. The recognition of his authority on the arbitration of these disputes is apparent from the Diwans instructions to the amil that these decisions be implemented. The important role played by customary practices in the

⁸⁶. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Posh Vadi 14, V.S. 1816/1759

⁸⁷. Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M.Vaisakh Vadi 11, V.S. 1807/1750.
Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M. Chaitra Sudi 6, V.S. 1825/1768.

⁸⁸ Chithi to the Amil pargana Malarna, dt. K.M.Vaishakh Sudi 15, V.S. 1826/1769..

⁸⁹. Chithi to the Amil pargana Mauzabad. dt. K.M.Sawan Vadi 12, V.S. 1811/1754.

village society necessitated the involvement of patel in the process of arbitration of various levels. He was either called upon to arbitrate on the dispute or to provide the relevant information to the amil to help in the process of arbitration. We find a panchayat consisting of the patels of four neighbouring villages, arbitrating in a dispute between the jagirdar and the patwari of the village of Kiratpura in pargana Chatsu regarding the ownership of a cultivated field.⁹⁰ In another case we find higher authorities instructing the amil to settle a dispute regarding the proprietary rights in a field and a well in consultation with the patels of five villages.⁹¹ A land dispute between the zamindar of the village of Jagner and the jagirdar of the village of Sri Raipur in pargana Lalsot was decided by the patels of five neighbouring villages.⁹² A boundary dispute between the two neighbouring zamindars i.e., the zamindars of the village of Kherli and Ram Singh Pura Khurd was settled by a panchayat consisting of the patels of ten neighbouring villages.⁹³ Yet another dispute between two jagirdars concerning the share of produce was decided by the patels, chaudhris and qanungos of five villages.⁹⁴

⁹⁰. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. Magishri Vadi 1, V.S. 1822/1765.

⁹¹ Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. Magishri Vadi 10, V.S. 1820/1763. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. M.M.Kati Vadi 8, V.S. 1808/1751.

⁹². Chithi to the Amil pargana Lalsot, dt. K.M.Kati Sudi 8, V.S. 1815/1758.

⁹³. Chithi to the Amil pargana Bahatri, dt. K.M.Bhadon Vadi 12, V.S. 1819/1762.

⁹⁴ Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Bhadon Sudi 10, V.S. 1810/1758..

However, disputes regarding the possession of the pateli right and extent of their jurisdiction were decided by the amil with the help of chaudhris and qanungos, or they could be directly referred to the rulers.⁹⁵ Sometimes these disputes were decided by the nayay sabha.⁹⁶ In the majority of cases the disputes arose out of sale and mortgage transactions of the pateli rights and occasionally they related to the division of shares among the heirs.

Apart from the usual obligations, the patels were at times required to perform certain functions concerning the rural social life. He used to perform a number of customary ceremonies on various occasions such as at the time of birth and marriage. He was required to beat the drum at the time of the arrival of a marriage procession as well as its departure. The marriage party could not depart from the village till the ceremony had been performed by the dholi of the patel.⁹⁷ He was also required to give muchalka in the case of suspicious matrimonial contracts.⁹⁸ The evidence for our region suggests that the power in the village, measured through the control of village finances and revenue management, rested with the village patel who was almost invariably a member of the numerically predominant

⁹⁵. Chithi to the Amil pargana Chatsu, dt. K.M.Asoj Vadi 8, V.S. 1827/1770.

⁹⁶. Chithi to Sanghi Lala Ram Shah Salig Ram, the Amils pargana Sawai Jaipur, dt. K.M.Kati Vadi 14, V.S. 1826/1769.

⁹⁷ Chithi to Rajshree Anand Singh, dt. K.M.Sawan Vadi 9, V.S. 1816/1759.

⁹⁸. Chithi to the Amil and Faujdar pargana Malarna, dt.K.M. Magishri Sudi 6, V.S. 1827/1770.

agricultural caste resident in the village. The disjunction between economic and political dominance of the Rajput clan, economic privilege granted to the upper caste cultivators and the power of the patel at the level of the village resulted in frequent conflict in the village society over issues pertaining to the financial control.

In multicasite villages such conflicts represented by the patel offer an interesting insight into the nature of relationship between the Meena patels and section of the rural society. In view of his official position as the representative of the village a degree of control was ascribed to them which was infact inconsistent with the actual pattern of dominance within the village. This is quite evident from disputes between the patel raiyat on the one hand and the upper caste privileged cultivators on the other.

In lieu of his services, the patel was entitled to a number of customary privileges. In fact the right to the pateli, even though hereditary, was conditional upon service to the state. Although he was not directly paid from the state exchequer, he was entitled to receive muqaddami.⁹⁹ Out of the hasil of the village at the rate of 2%, bisondh¹⁰⁰ (5% of the total revenue reckoned as the share of the raiyat), dagli, a customary dress which the patels used to get from the state every year and siropau.¹⁰¹ Apart from these usual prerequisites, he was

⁹⁹ Dastur-ul Amal pargana Niwai, dt. K.M.Posh Vadi 4, V.S. 1800/1743.

¹⁰⁰ Chithi to the Amil pargana Malarna, dt. K.M.Vaisakh Sudi 2, V.S. 1810/1753.

¹⁰¹ Chithi to the Amil pargana Sawai Jaipur, dt. K.M.Asarh Vari 5, V.S. 1810/1757.

entitled to charge a share from the malba, which was known as pateli ka malba.¹⁰² He also received petty customary cesses such as tavro, farka, pateli ke khera ka dhol etc., on the occasion of marriage in the village.

However, the remunerations and customary exactions of the patels varied in magnitude from pargana to pargana according to the customary practices. In the case of exceptionally meritorious services, the state could bestow upon him prerequisites which were not sanctioned by custom. This can be seen from an instance of 1783 when the patel of village Sita Rampur, who had colonized the said village by incorporating fallow lands of three neighbouring villages and taken considerable pains in bringing new ploughs and constructing chhappars was sanctioned the right to collect bisondh which previously was not customary in pargana Phagi.¹⁰³

In consideration of the fact that the patels were either pioneer colonizers or were their descendants, the state conferred upon them the status of riyayatis which implied the payment of revenue on their personal lands at concessional rates. From economic

According to dastur-ul-Amil pargana Gijgarh the patel was entitled to receive a sum of Rs.34.50 yearly as siropay from the state. Dastur-ul-Amil pargana Gijgarh dt. V.S. 1791/1734.

¹⁰². Chithi to the Amil pargana Malarna, dt. K.M.Vaisakh Sudi 2, V.S. 1810/1753.

¹⁰³. Chithi from Diwan Narain Das Kirpa Ram to the Amil pargana Fagi dt. K.M.Posh Sudi 11, V.S. 1783/1726.

considerations this was the most important privilege granted to the patel. The vital importance of this concession can be further visualized if we compute the patel's privilege granted to the patel. The vital importance of this concession can be further visualized if we compute the patel's principal customary remuneration i.e, bisondh and muqaddmi in relation to the hasil of the vilages. Sometimes another source of the patel's income was the grant of Khalisa village on ijara on nominal amount. It appears from a large number of documents that the patel quite often augmented his personal income by cheating the state as well as the raiyat. The patel not only under reported to the state the revenue to be collected from various sources but also misappropriated proceeds of the malba cesses which was collected from the paltis to meet common expenses of the village. It was not unusual that he acted more in self interest and to the determinant of the interest of the raiyat.

Chapter IV

The Meenas and Crime in the Rural Society

I

There are two images of the Meenas of Rajasthan. One is as that of the "Law Maker" or "The Ruler" and other is as that of the "Law Breaker" or the "Marauding Criminals". In medieval Rajasthani sources, Meenas are referred to as the rulers of South Eastern part of Rajasthan and this image of the Meenas is also avowed by the British Colonial Records. However, the British reports in their discourse on crime, reverse from the first image of Meenas (as rulers) to the second and the whole notion of 'criminal tribes and castes' brand them as criminals and marauders. The transition of the Meenas from rulers to patels and dominant peasant caste and the extent to which the Rajput rulers compromised with the dispossessed Meenas need to be looked into, in the light of historical evidence. The archival records housed in Bikaner, which pertain to the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries offer important information on this aspect. Historical antecedent of the nineteenth century colonial perspective of crime and the notion of 'criminal castes and tribes' in the context of the princely states of Rajasthan is yet to be established in respect of the Meenas.

The Rajasthani documents of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which offer a good deal of information on several aspects of the functioning of rural society refer to the Meenas as Patels, paltis, petty state officials and the holders of jagir lands. The arzdasht

document's indicate that from mid 1650 onwards it is the Rajputs who were the main object of complaints as plunderers. The patels and paltis petitioned against the Rajputs, who used to plunder the inhabitants of the villages.

Given this historical background, it is quite surprising that a sedantry dominant peasant caste i.e. the Meenas, are labelled by the British accounts as criminals, thieves, marauder, highway dacoits, etc. in the post 1857 colonial perspective of crime. It is noteworthy that Col.Tod did not record any instance which would place the Meenas collectively as criminals. Though he has very elaborately dealt with the conflict of the Meenas with the Rajputs of Kachhawa and Hara clans, suppression of the Meena Chiefs in Dhundhar and Bundi and the formation of Rajput states in the conquered territories. Col.Tod also accepts the inhabitation of the Meenas in the area since long as settled agriculturists as a historical fact.

D. Ibbetson (1881) wrote in the census report, "the Meenas are the boldest of our criminal classes. Their headquarters so far as Punjab is concerned, are in the village of Shahjahanpur attached to the Gurgaon District but surrounded on all sides by Rajputana territory".¹ Russel, wrote about, "their existence in Central Provinces that is in Hosangabad, Nimar and Saugor Districts. They are referred to as "Deswali" here, sometimes also called as Pardesh or foreigner like other caste people coming from

¹. Quoted by, Russell and Hiralal, op.cit. p.239.

different places". "They reside in Alwar, Bharatpur, Gurgaon and also in Jaipur in large number".²

British records identify different sub-clans of Meena residing in different areas, who were involved in criminal activities. According to British reports, the Meena chaukidars who did not participate in agricultural activities were the most notorious criminals. M.Kennedy (1885) wrote, Meenas are not known by any other name. Broadly speaking there are two social divisions among them: Chaukidars and Zamindars. The former alone are noted for their criminal propensities, the latter are land-owners and law abiding.

The best known goths or clans among chaukidars are:

1. Kagot
2. Bhonrayat
3. Jeff
4. Sevria
5. Seehra
6. Jhirwal
7. Pabdi
8. Bagdi
9. Gomladoo
10. Basanwal
11. Khata
12. Nowgada
13. Dewanda

². Ibid. pg. 235, 236.

The first five are the "most criminal", and they all are called Ujle Meenas. He further specifies, that Kagot Meenas hail from Mandawar in Alwar State and Shahajhanpur; Bhanrayat from Taravati, Jeypore state; Jeff from the Nimka Thana District of the Jeypore State; Sevria from Bairat District, Jeypore State; and Seehra from Kotpootli and Khetdi under Jeypore.

Their sphere of activity extends pretty well all over India, but the Bombay Presidency, Central Province, Mysore State and the Nizam's dominions are especially attractive to this criminal tribe. Kennedy in contradistinction to Ujle Meenas says about the Maile (unclean) Meenas, that they are divided into two classes:

1. Khairwade
2. Bhilwade

Both are subdivided into a number of goths, the following being the best known:

Khairwade:

Cheeta	Seenghal
Dankal	Sevgan
Dhavana	Mer
Jonrwal	Padiya

Bhilwade:

Booj	Mal	Barad
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Khairwade and Bhilwade Meenas hail from the Rajputana State and Udaipur.

Khairwades visited most of the districts in the Bombay Presidency. They come down in small gangs, not exceeding ten in number. Bihlwades do not ordinarily come south but raid into some of the districts of Gujrat. They are hand-in-glove as a rule with the criminal Bhils of some of the Native states bordering the parts of Gujrat.³

Powlet in his Gazetteer of Alwar states, "the Meenas are the principle class which the "Dacoity suppression Department" has to watch. So notorious are they as robbers that the late chief of Alwar, Banni Singh afraid lest they should corrupt their agricultural brethren and desirous of keeping them apart, forbade their marrying or even smoking or associating with members of the well conducted class. In April 1863 orders were issued by Major Impey, then Political Agent of Alwar, placing the chaukidar Meenas under surveillance, and subsequently under Major Cadells direction, list of them were made out for periodical 'roll call' enforced in the villages, and absentees without a leave certificate punished".

There are said to be 32 clans of Meenas says Powlet, of 59 Meenas apprehended for dacoity by the Dacoity suppression Department, the Jeb clan furnished 17, the Kagot 9, the Siro 8 and the Jawal and Bagr 5 each.⁴

³. M.Kennedy, "The Criminal classes in India" (foreign tribes who visit the Bombay presidency) Bombay - 1885, p.p.207-212.

⁴. Powlet, Gazetteer, op.cit. p.204, 205.

The reports given by various British officials imply that the Meenas had long history of criminality. The Meenas were involved in marauding activities and were highway robbers. They were performing the task of robbery not alone, but moved in group of 15 to 20, not only men but women also equally took part in the task.

Forbes Watson (1868) wrote, "Meenas and their women infinitely prefer to steal, and so whenever they have an opportunity being pickpocket, or cutters away of pockets, which is dexterously done with a sharp knife in crowded bazar". Some of the women are supposed to possess secrets of charms and love philtres and the use of particular herbs; but in most cases they are like their husbands, idle and thievish and in the lowest condition of poverty and degradation". Therefore being troubled by their activities many steps were taken by the state to curb them.⁵

In these records itself it is interesting to note that no other caste apart from the Meenas are branded as thieves. Only few other tribal people like Bhils, Sansis etc. are also noted for their criminal activities. However, the British officials ~~who~~ acknowledge the active support of the other caste people in helping Meenas to perform the robbery. Infact, they say no robbery at large scale was possible without the help of local people. Not only the local helped the Meenas in giving clues and various information required for

⁵. J.Forbes Watson and John William Kaye, "The People of India - a Series of Photographic Illustration with descriptive letter press of The Race and Tribes of Hindustan" Vol.IV, Calcutta 1868, p.p.204-205.

the task, they also took their share of the booty stolen by the Meenas. Therefore, their active involvement became necessary for the Meenas to perform his job. Kennedy asserts, "In towns, Meenas nearly always have Brahmin, Thakore, Rathod, Shroff or Marwadi friends, in fact, till they have established a connection they will not make a prolonged halt there. These friends act as 'informers' and frequently invite them down-country, accommodate them and supply their needs".⁶

Sometimes they committed robbery on the orders of political elites. Jadunath Sarkar in his History of Jaipur quotes a popular account: 'A Rajah of Jaipur had heard of the wonderful miracle working power of the idol installed in a famous temple in the far off Tamil country. He tried in vain, with all his treasures, to induce its priests to transfer the deity to him. Then he called to his aid a crack thief among his Meena subjects. This man went to the Tamil country in disguise, spent some time in the temple and found it always double locked at night and guarded by sentinels at the front porch. So, one dark night he climbed on the roof from the rear with some mason's tools, lime and mortar, and food and drink for three days, removed the stones of the top of the tower slowly and carefully and on the last night let himself down by the rope into the locked Santuary. He stole the idol, went up hand over hand to the roof, filled up the hole with stone and mortar, and on getting down fled to Jaipur with the image tied round his waist.

⁶. M.Kennedy... op.cit. p. 211.

The stolen deity now adorns a temple outside the Kachhwa capital.⁷

It was also reported that the tribal people who passed as good mercenaries and soldiers some of them were used by the state authority and also the zamindars and the rural elite to serve their own illegal purposes. They use to get the robbery done for their self interest by making use of the strength of these tribes. These people were employed as soldiers and were disbanded when ever it was found essential. They were not paid and were forced into such tactics.

Even if some did fall into the practice of robbery, but to pass the entire tribe as professionally marauders is not justified. There are cases of false accusation and also exaggeration being made by the ruling clans against Meenas, trying to prove them as threat to law and order. Which upon investigations were found out to be fabricated report. It was done to malign their image or to use them as the scape goats, to serve their own vested interest. This was one of the important finding in Colonel Lockhart's Report of 1831. Lockhart's work indicates the formation of criminal gangs drawn from mixed castes and their sponsorship by the political elite, ^{A paper} which was submitted to the British authority by the Raja of Alwar for looking into the matter of looting and plundering committed within the borders of Alwar territory by the inhabitants of Jaipur, comprising of Rajawat Rajpoots and Meenas habitating in Jaipur and Kotpootly pargana. Lockhart

⁷. Jadunath Sarkar, "History of Jaipur," op.cit. p.12.

on the above complaint in 1831, says, "this paper was drawn up in the most solvenly manner possible. No dates were specified in any of the cases. Nor any estimate offered of the value of the property said to have been plundered. It appeared to have been hastily prepared from memory, and not from an actual inspection of the official correspondence with the Dehlie Residency".

There was gross inaccuracy in the estimate of damage, in one instance its given Rs.75 and in another its written as lakhs of Rupees in the first paper. Second paper contained 8 cases of plundering and distrubance committed by the inhabitants of pargana Kotpootly in the territory of Raja of Alwar. The whole of these cases related to the conduct of the Meenas of Kotepootly.

Lockhart says, "after pursuing, in the presence of the Vakeel, the two papers from which the above details are extracted, I pointed out to him the careless, unsatisfactory manner in which the cases were stated and requested him to furnish me with copies of the original correspondence with the resident at Dehli, that I might satisfy myself on every point of importance and if necessary, prepare a correct abstract of their contents for the information of the Governor General. He promised to do so, but never returned, nor has any explanation of his conduct been afforded by the Alwar Darbar.

Lockhart up on Governor General's request began the investigation and arrived at

the conclusion that the allegations of Raja of Alwar were baseless.

It is evident from the report of Lockhart, that the authenticity of the papers sent by Nawab Fyz Muhammad Khan of Baraich on the predatory nature of the Meenas, prepared by Diwan Kishan Lal was questionable. The report asserted that the marauding Meenas enjoyed the patronage of the authorities of pattern.

There was inaccuracy of the total strength of Meena population. Reason given for inaccuracy through the Resident of Dehli, by Nawab Fyz Muhammad Khan, "2500 are entered, but that statement contained only those who are well known to be notorious thieves and robbers by profession". There are also the Rajpoots of Butessee acting in confederacy with these Meenas, are calculated at 7,900 in the report. Meena, says the papers submitted to Lockhart, adopt many deceitful ways of doing robbery. They are aided and well connected with the Baniyas of the town, Baniyas are rewarded with one fourth of the booty. Similarly, Brahmins also help them to acquire information.

Lockhart says from the paper furnished to him by Dewan Kishanlal, the Nawab Minister, which exhibits the various cases of deparadation that (have) occurred, from 7th Jan 1819 to the 31st March 1831 during a period of twelve years and 3 months. There were 351 robberies committed and that the total value of property plundered including money amounted to Rupees 32, 182:8.9.

The amount of money plundered was rupees 7,644.4; the value of cattle 5,648.8; of jewellery 9,106:6:9; brass and other metal utensils 706:11:9, and of clothes gram and C. and C. 9, 076:10:3.

Lockhart estimates, the maximum value of property plundered at any one time, did not exceed Rs.2,567. The smallest was not less than 3 Rs.

This statement would show an average of nearly 29 1/2 cases of robbery yearly, with a loss of Rs.2,627:1:8; - or two and half cases per mensems nearly, with a loss of 218:14:10; or descending still lower, a loss of Rs.7:4:9 per diem.

Lockhart says, "this is the substances of the Dewans's statement. I asked him whether he was prepared to substantiate all the cases of robbery contained in it, but he acknowledged he could not, he could produce evidence he thought for about one half. I have myself doubts of this; I doubt indeed whether he could prove satisfactorily fifty cases out of the 351".

On further probing by Lockhart, it was revealed by the Dewan, that there was a long standing disputes between the zamindars of Nawab's country and the Rungurs and thieving Meenas, of the former tract.

After the Diwan left, Lockhart proceeded further into Shekhawatee to be personally acquainted with the Chieftains of Shekhawatee and their connections. He proceeded to Khetre, the residence of Raja Sheo Nath Singh, 14 km of Narnool.

Then he met Dhabae, who represented the state of Shekhawatee and particularly the Khetree possessions, under his own immediate management. Lockhart asked him, whether it was true that the Khetree government supported the Sulheydee and Larkhanee marauding association, and that many of the principal villages in the pargunnah, of Kotepootly and Bubae were filled with thieving who acted in concert with those predatory associations. I added that I had it from good authority, that there were not less than 2000 Meenas in the town of Khetree alone, whose profession was theft and robbery and that twelve hundred Rajpoot horse with two hundred Sulheydees and an equal number of Larkhanees, were now acting under the immediate command of two Larkhanee Chieftains, named Soorat Singh and Bagh Singh, both of whom resided in the fort, and were understood to be his own personal friends. I alluded to the written information transmitted to me from Delhi by Diwan Kishan Lal.

The Dhabae expressed the greatest astonishment on hearing this, and assured me in the most solemn manner that the information was entirely without foundation. In the whole town of Khetree he said, there were only two resident Meenas", and with respect to the military force kept up by the government, he would himself send me an authentic

statement, which would exhibit every details of armed men.

Bagh Singh and his son Soorat Singh of Larkhanee tribe, who had been said Lockhart, represented to me as leaders of the predatory associations in Khetree, were mān he said, of the most peaceful and respectable character.

On another occasion, papers were presented to Lockhart by the Mehta at Chooroo containing a minute details of losses sustained by the event of attacks inflicted by the marauder Meenas. But it failed to convince him on its authenticity as it lacked precision and accuracy and none of the loss could be verified because of lack of time he had for investigation.⁸

Lockhart's Report is an important formulation of the early colonial discourse on crime and can be contrasted with a series of reports that culminated in the Criminal Tribal Act of 1871. On the later perspective crime was perceived inhering in lawless marginal "Criminal Tribes and Castes" Lockhart's formulation then suggests an answer to questions such as who patronized criminal gangs and why? To what extent was crime the result of factional disputes and struggles over land and power between Rajputs? In what way were official functionaries landholders involved with bandit gangs ?

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⁸. "A Journey from Bharatpur to Bhusawar" 1831, Report by Lockhart. Misc., National Archives of India, New Delhi.

The seventeenth and eighteenth century administrative records pertaining to the Mughal administered parganas and those falling in the Watan Territory of the Kachhawa Chiefs of Amber do not single out the Meenas as 'Criminals'. This is in contrast to nineteenth century English Texts, where ethnographic construction of the Meena criminality is supported by settlement reports, administrative accounts and records of the Dacoity Department. As will be examined in this chapter - the whole notion of criminal tribes and castes' is so saturated with crude colonial sociology as to provide little insight into the realities of rural crime in pre-colonial Indian context.

Approaches to the study of crime and punishment in a society in which the fundamental distinction between legislature, bureaucracy and judiciary may be expected to be absent are linked up with the way one views the problems of the nature and organisation of the polity. If the overarching bureaucratic structure of a centralized state is the frame of reference, the crime and punishment can be perceived as concerns solely of the administrative apparatus of the state; on the other hand, the notion of the essential autonomy of the village community may perceive crime and punishment in the rural society as matters which are resolved at the level of the village community itself.

The question of the community or of clan and caste as distinct units in the context of administration of justice is seen to vary from one unit to another. Empirical evidence alone, relating to how different communities figure in actual cases where administration

of justice was involved can throw light on this issue. It is unlikely that any attempt at codification could cover the wide range of case which the documents present, and it is, therefore, necessary to look at all recorded cases to come to an understanding of the perception of what constituted punishable offence, not according to any legal texts but from the perspective of contemporary society and texts. The key points that we need to consider are:

- i) What is the range of offences committed which are perceived as offences requiring intervention by authorities?
- ii) Who were the punished? Was there a necessary correlation between the nature of social stratification in contemporary rural society and the individuals or representatives of social groups who figures as guilty in the document?
- iii) What was the range of punishment meted out?

Farohi accounts given under the revenue head *Sāwai Jamabandi* contained in the *Arhsattas Muzmil* are quite interesting as they indicate the types of crimes, offences, violation of customary norms committed in the rural society, social groups involved, how they were viewed by the state and the rural society, nature of punishment inflicted upon the culprit and caste and class determinants, if any, of penalty imposed on conviction in

the form of monetary fine termed taksirana or gunehgari.

In the case depicted under the tax category hasil farohi, emphasis is on events or developments that deviated from the norm, were exceptional or had led to conflict. First of all, it is necessary to specify (i) what are considered to be cases of crime, offences or violation of norms and in what context. (ii) computation of different types of crime etc. and how are such cases differentiated in order of seriousness? (iii) who took the initiative in tracing civilian or faujdari crimes except in cases where the interests of the state were concerned? (iv) The individuals, families and social groups involved in crimes, caste or class biasedness? (v) Are natural punishments meted out in the form of fines or other forms of punishments?

In order to form an idea of what are perceived as cases of offences, we have analysed more than one thousand such recurrences from the villages of pargana Lalsot Dausa, Bahatri, Chatsu, Malarna, Todahhim, Udehi, Gaika Thana, Mauzahad, Hindon, Swai Jaipur, Nirwar, Malpura and Phagi from period 1670 to 1800. A.D. that are recorded in the Arhsattas with a view to ascertain caste and class background of the offenders and if there was any differentiation made on the basis of community status of the offenders while meting out punishment. On the basis of the contents of the documents, it may however, be noted that the crime statistics available in the documents is not necessarily accurate - many crimes went unreported and many of those initially reported were later

found as false being intended to harrass an enemy or conceal a more serious crime. Under the general heading farohi or gunehgari a wide variety of crime's were recorded. We can classify the cases perceived as offences into certain broad categories in order to comprehend the range of offences. The offences committed and perceived as such can be viewed under the following categories.

- i) Embezzlement of revenue through variious devices and concealment of facts or information pertaining to taxes, destruction ^{of} agricultlural wealth and employment of productive labour engaged in Khalisa land are perceived as crime by the state.
- ii) Removal of crop, threshing of crop without permission or in the absence of the Sahna or Watchman.
- iii) Disrespect of state officials, jagirdars, moneylenders and their representatives irrespective of their position in the apparatus of state administration, entering into arguments or altercation with them, non-cooperation in the discharge of their assigned functions and duties.
- iv) Killing of certain birds and animals for whatsoever the purpose or occasion, fishing in the ponds, being associated with such crimes in any manner, cutting of wood or felling of Pipal, Barh and Neem trees.

- v) Misappropriation of state property including unclaimed property in any form including stray cattles.

- vi) Violation of customary practices such as burning more than one Holi bonfire, showing disrespect to the elders, sale of grain and tobacco on an auspicious day, not accompanying the Dussehra procession, consumption of certain types of grains.

- vii) Theft, highway robbery, cheating, murder, suicide, abetment to suicide, false allegation, misrepresentation of facts, feeding the thief, gambling, indulging in violence, sale and purchase of male and female child, unlawful custody, not reporting matter to the state.

- viii) Crime against women including rape, adultery, forcible marriage, marriage without state permission and non-payment of marriage cess, eloping with a married woman, keeping woman without marriage and harrassment of married woman.

- ix) Dereliction of duty causing loss of revenue to the state.

From the analysis of documents it appears that the cultivating classes including the dominant groups were adopting different ways and means to avoid paying what the state had demanded from them as mal or tax on crop. Offences pertaining to evading paying

hasil or land revenue comprehend such malpractices (from the view point of the state) as removal of standing crops, consumption of crop yet to be extricated even in small quantity in the field itself, concealing entire land holding or part of it under cultivation from being measured, not disclosing area under cash crops and irrigated lands, tampering with measured area figure, threshing of grain without obtaining prior permission from the state, cutting the crop from the field in the absence of Sahna, removal by personnel of his share of grain before the entire crop being officially sealed, tampering with the seal or chak, attempts to bribe the Sahna and members of the measuring party, false declaration regarding the rate of assessment applicable, getting land belonging to unprivileged category assessed as privileged as riyayati land, upturning the soil if seed could not germinate without informing the state, killing the bullock and sale of fresh stock of grain obtained soon after the harvest.

About one-third of the recorded offences pertained to this category involving all sections of the village community. What is more striking is the fact that village headman (Patel) and privileged categories of cultivators are the ones who were accused of committing offences perceived to be more serious in nature and constituted the majority. Out of 76 such cases that we have analysed, the Patels are exclusively involved in 20. Rajputs in 11, Brahmans in 8 and Mahajans in 2. In contrast the number of middle caste peasants booked i.e. the Jat, Gujar, Ahir, and Meena under the offences is 24 and charges against them largely pertain to pilferage of grain from the threshing floor, attempt to bribe

the petty revenue official and replacing the already sown crop by other one. Eleven Meena cultivators were found guilty of evading the payment of hasil to the state. Bhoora meena of qasba Udehi cultivated oil seed along with the paltis (sanjha). At the time of assessment of revenue he declared only the share of the paltis in the crop and misappropriated his own share of the produce. He was fined Rs. 51 by the state⁹. Likhma Meena of village Malarna Khurd was fined Rs. 25 as he was charged with having removed standing crop of sugarcane from his field.¹⁰

Vaniya Meena of village Ajmeripura who had tried to conceal three bighas of land under cotton cultivation was fined Rs.11. His fraud was detected by the Tapadar¹¹. Hathu Meena of village Kalmadha was caught by the Sahna while removing crop from his field¹². Thakarsi Kanungo and Dayaram Meena of village Mirzapur cultivated land in sanjha. At the time of assessment the entire holding was declared as belonging to the Qanungo. Later on it was found out by the Tapadar that the holding was cultivated in Sanjha. Both were fined Rs. 12 each.¹³

⁹ Arhsatta pargana Udehi V.S. 1789/1732.

¹⁰ Arhsatta pargana Malarna V.S. 1771/1714.

¹¹ Arhsatta pargana Chatsu V.S.1772/1715.

¹² Arhsatta pargna Mulpura V.S. 1788/1731

¹³ Arhsatta pargana Toda Bhim V.S. 1778/1721.

The number of offenders belonging to artisan and menial castes is ten and by and large they were caught by the Sahna or Watchman while consuming sheaves of the standing crops on the spot. One tanner or Vaphi was caught chewing the ear of the corn in the field out of hunger and fined Rs.1.50.

In four cases the entire peasant community along with the Patel and the Panch were held guilty of having colluded in removing of part of the standing crop before estimate (Kut)¹⁴, cutting away the standing crop in the absence of Sahna¹⁵ and not disclosing the name of all tax payers or asamis at the time of Kut. This fraud was detected subsequently when assessment was undertaken afresh inviting collective punishment in the form of being fined Rs.75.¹⁶ Removal of crop from the field without Sahna being present was considered as petty offence subject to mild punishment, i.e. imposition of Re. 1 as fine. The state also imposed restriction on the sale of fresh stock of grain obtained from the current harvest by the primary producers and made it a punishable offence. There are numerous instances of the state officials detecting such offences and levying fine on the offenders. A collective fine of Rs.161 was imposed on the Patel, Raiyat and the Rajput resident cultivators belonging to the Village Vanhari for

¹⁴ . Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1770/AD 1713.

¹⁵ . Ibid.

¹⁶ . Ibid.

marketing fresh grain.¹⁷

Nature of the seriousness of the offence as perceived by the state authorities can perhaps be gauged from the incidence of cash fine which is indicated as the only form of punishment inflicted upon the culprits. The amount of fine imposed upon individuals varies from Re.1 to Re.80. The Patel and privileged cultivators fall under the categories of those being fined heavily. Thus, one Patel who evaded his field under maize cultivation from being measured was fined Rs.69.¹⁸ Prahalad Singh Rajput was fined Rs.51 for concealing his field measuring 13 bighas under sugarcane from the measuring party.¹⁹ Daulat Singh Sultan who had 1/5 share in the produce of Kushala Jat's field got it assessed as per his entitlement to pay revenue at the rate of 25% of the produce, was fined Rs.26.²⁰

It is evident that all ranks of people of the rural society seemed to be involved in the common objective the evasion of tax obligation. The peasants seem to be on the perpetual look out to cheat ~~the~~ state, ^{to} ~~the~~ escape assessment and to get away with lesser

¹⁷. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot, V.S. 1794/1737.

¹⁸. Hasil Farohi, Village Nijharna, pargana Lalsot, See Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1770/1713.

¹⁹. Hasil Farohi, Village Udaipura, pargana Lalsot, Arhsatta pargana Lalsot, V.S. 1769/1712.

²⁰. Hasil Farohi, Village Lohorwara, pargana Lalsot, Arhsatta pargana Lalsot, V.S. 1770/1713.

payment. What is more striking is the nature of collusions, collaborations and connivances engaged in by the peasants which cut across caste and class differences, despite all the deep seated antagonisms between section of the highly stratified rural society. In this context we may place the involvement of Meena peasants in such activities. Killing of bullocks was also perceived as a loss of revenue to the state and an offence that had long term implications as the bullocks were regarded as crucial component of agricultural capital. Lala Meena was held offender of killing his bullock, though unintended, as while beating he struck it, a blow with the stick. He was fined Rs.47.²¹ However, Tuda Gujar who deliberately killed his bullock was fined Rs.80.²² A Patel who reploughed his personal field under maize cultivation of finding out that proper germination of seed could not be effected was fined Rs.22 on the charge that prior permission of the state was not solicited.²³

Destruction of standing crop was also perceived as loss of agricultural wealth affecting the state revenue. Offences causing loss of agricultural wealth fall under two categories (i) i) where the accused is charged with inflicting loss deliberately as an act of vengeance or high-handedness against the victim and (ii) where the destruction is perceived as negligence on the part of the offender whose stray cattle were responsible

²¹ . Hasil Farohi, Qasba Malarna, Arhsatta pargana Malarna, V.S. 1771/1714.

²² . Ibid.

²³ . The Patel of the Village Chauravas was punished for this offence. See Arhsatta pargana Lalsot, V.S. 1770/1713.

for causing the damage. The members belonging to dominant groups constitute the majority among the offenders.²⁴

Two cases which did not directly concern the revenue interests of the state and pertain to the internal organization of the village and its power structure were also viewed as penal offences. Hira Meena the Patel of village Chhatrapura who had inflated the amount of Malba expenses was fined Rs.37.²⁵ Manram Rajput resident of village Kadehra was fined Rs.9 for causing harassment to the Paltis.²⁶

Display of temper with the state officials, even placed at the lowest rung of the village administration, their representatives whatsoever inferior be their position, indulging in argument with them are all classified as insulting the person representing the authority of the state or its agents. Interestingly, unbecoming behaviour (Beadubee)²⁷ with the Brahmans was also perceived as offence. Out of 31 instances that we have found in our documents pertaining to misbehaviour with the Sahna or Watchman of standing crops, the patels are involved in 18 cases and Brahmans and Rajputs in three each. A Banjara was

²⁴. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1769/1712, 1770/1713, 1771/1714, 1773/1715.

²⁵. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1768/1711.

²⁶. Ibid.

²⁷. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1771/1714.

punished for indulging in altercation with the Patel.²⁸ The Meena cultivators were involved in five cases and the menial caste in one. Vaksya Meena was fined Re.one as he fought with the pyada. Mohan Meena of village Nangal had misbehaved with the Sahna. He was also fined Re.1²⁹ Kisna Brahmin of village Kikasa was fined Rs.35 for fighting with the Sahna.³⁰ The Patel of the village Khanduwari was fined Rs.10 for having an altercation with the Sahna sent by the Jagirdar and misrepresenting facts. The Sahna had accused the Patel of misappropriating a part of Jagirdar's share of grain. The same Patel after four years was again fined Rs.7 for refusing to provide the sepoy of the state with a cot when he visited the village to issue summons to Rao Aniruddha Singh, the bhomia.³¹

Patels and members belonging to different social groups also figure prominently in an array of offences which, strictly speaking, cannot be identified as belonging to either civil or faujdari crimes. They rather pertain to violation of customary norms and practices. Tara, the patel of village Arnaya Vujrag was fined Rs.57, for violating the custom of the village that only one bonfire would be burnt to celebrate the Holi festival.

²⁸. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1774/1717.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S.1774/1717.

³¹. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1773/1716.

He, however, burnt second Holi bonfire.³² Madna Meena the Patel of village Vaghar was fined Rs. 111 for sending gifts to Boddh Singh Bhomia on the occasion of Dussera³³. Sunder Meena of village Badrinath Pura who violated customary norms on the occasion of his daughter's marriage was fined Rs.11. Similarly, the Meena patel of village Gowal was fined Rs.7 for attending party hosted by the Rajputs and slaughtering a goat for meat to celebrate Dussehra.³⁴ Slaughtering of goat or buffalo on the occasion of Dussehra was considered to be an exclusive privilege of the Rajputs. Slaughtering of goat by the Meena, Jat etc. was regarded as an offence resulting in the imposition of fine. Out of 11 instances of slaughtering goats on the occasion of Dussehra, Meena patels were offenders in 8 cases. A Jat, a Koli and a Gujar were the other offenders. Patel Jagram of village Toda Dhyama was fined Rs.9 for felling a branch of Barh tree.³⁵ Hathila Meena of village Maharecha was fined Rs. 11 for felling a branch of the peepal tree.³⁶ The Patels and the raiyat belonging to different castes were involved in several cases of felling trees, cutting wood from the forest and hills.

Pitambar Brahmin, the patel of village Aranya invited a fine of Rs.35, for indulging in

³². Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1770/1713.

³³ Arhsatta pargana Udehi V.S. 177/1716.

³⁴. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1771/1714.

³⁵. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1773/1716.

³⁶ Arhsatta pargana Malarna V.S. 1774/1717.

altercation with the Sanyasis.³⁷ Three persons who were party to the killing of a cock were collectively fined Rs.37. Lal Keer sold the cock to Chhitar Mali who needed its slaughter for the treatment of his son and Roopla was the one who arranged this deal. Fines amounting to Rs.19,14 and 4 were imposed upon them respectively.³⁸ Dena Brahman of the village Bishanpur had cooked Khichri (mised food) made of millets, jawar and Ragi was fined Rs.2.50.³⁹ Similarly, a number of peasants including the Meenas belonging to the villages of pargana Chatsu were punished on the charge of consuming bread made of millet bajra.⁴⁰

Gambling in the rural society was also widely prevalent cutting across caste and class. Jagan Brahman, Nathu Jat, Sita Tailor and Heera Dom a menial of village Chaderkai were caught while gambling. They were fined Rs. 6 each. Chaina Meena and Mathura Mahajan of village Shankarpura were fined Rs.8 as they were found gambling.⁴¹

Crimes against women were also numerous. The majority of offences pertained

³⁷. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1770/1713.

³⁸. Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1773/1716.

³⁹. Hasil Farohi, Village Bishanpura, pargana Bahatri, See Arhsatta pargana, Bahatri V.S. 1722/1665.

⁴⁰. Arhsatta pargana Chatsu V.S. 1768/1711.

⁴¹ Ibid. V.S. 1792/1735.

to adultery or chamchari. However, no distinction had been made between the cases of adultery and rape. Irrespective of the seriousness of offence, the punishment inflicted upon all offenders was invariably in the form of fine. Perhaps one can measure the gravity of the offence by going into the magnitude of fine as it ranges from Rs.3 levied on a Brahman who had committed chamchari with a Brahman woman,⁴² to Rs.375 imposed on Dipa Kalal who is similarly charged.⁴³ Jagannath Patel's son had committed chamchari with the widow of his elder brother and absconded from the village. His father, the patel was made to pay a fine of Rs.70.⁴⁴ Chokha Brahman had illicit relations with a Brahman woman. When she conceived, Chokha got her aborted by administering some medicine. A fine of Rs.44 was imposed upon him.⁴⁵ Hatiya Meena of Qasba Todabhim committed Chamchari with Roopi a Mahajan woman as a result of which she became pregnant. He was fined Rs. 33. Ghasi Meena of village Ladpura who after committing chamchari with a Meena woman got married to her. However, he could not escape punishment in the form of Rs.31 in fine.⁴⁶ Daya Ram Meena of village Saharuarka was engaged to Bhau Meena's daughter. However, he committed chamchari

⁴² . Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.s. 1769/1712.

⁴³ . Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1773/1716.

⁴⁴ . Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1770/1713.

⁴⁵ . Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1773/1716.

⁴⁶ . Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1770/1713.

with her before marriage. He was fined Rs. 5.50.⁴⁷

Chatra Patel, son of Dhanraj, the patel of village Sonado committed chamchari with the unmarried daughter of Kheta Mali was punished along with his father despite Dhanraj being innocent. Both were fined Rs.24 each.⁴⁸ Jangli Mahajan was "caught red handed committing chamchari" with the wife of Todar Pande. Both were residents of village Bishanpura. The Mahajan had to pay Rs.45 as fine.⁴⁹ However, in two other incidents occurring in the same village, the punishment is not as severe as in the earlier case. Chhaju Bania was fined only Rs.6 for committing chamchari with Narbada Brahmani.⁵⁰ Bhikha Brahman and Bhopati Rajput were together involved in chamchari with a Rajput woman referred to as "Rand". But they were let off with mild punishment. Both were fined Rs.2 each.⁵¹ Pema Chamar of village Azam Nagar committed chamchari with a Brahman woman and paid a fine of Rs.20.⁵² Jonu Turk (Muslim) was fined Rs.3 on the charge of committing chamchari with the wife of Valiya Barber⁵³ whereas; Shamis

⁴⁷ Ibid. V.S. 1826/1769

⁴⁸ . Arhsatta pargana Lalsot V.S. 1771/1714.

⁴⁹ . Arhsatta pargana Bahatri V.S. 1722/1665.

⁵⁰ . Ibid.

⁵¹ . Ibid.

⁵² . Arhsatta pargana Chatsu V.S. 1768/1711.

⁵³ . Arhsatta pargana Bahatri V.S. 1722/1665.

Musalman who was involved with the wife of Jodha Bania received harsher punishment. He was made to part with Rs.45 in fine.⁵⁴ Out of 1062 cases of rape and adultery which are recorded in the arhsattas, ^{the} Meenas were involved in sixty nine cases. The meena culprits were also fined for committing such offences as having illicit relations with brother's wife. However, the Brahmans, Mahajans and members of middle and lower castes were involved in more heinous crimes which included rape of daughter inlaw and adulterous relations with mother in law.

The information concerning crime against women contained in the arhsattas is much more comprehensive and offers details regarding harrassment of women and atrocities committed upon them both within and outside the household. An insight into the nature and range of such crimes against women is best given by the cases that were reported to the state either by the victims or local state officials. Jaga Meena of village Bhausta forced a Brahman woman to stay in his house as his mistress.⁵⁵ Sobha Meena's wife was constantly harrassed by her inlaws. Unable to bear with maltreatment she jumped into the well and died.⁵⁶ Khusi Tailor of the village of Vajoli was found guilty of having sold his wife to a Teli.⁵⁷ We have noted the involvement of almost all sections

⁵⁴ . Arhsatta pargana Malarna V.S. 1768/1711.

⁵⁵ Arhsatta pargana Bahatri V.S. 1780.

⁵⁶ Arhsatta pargana Hindon V.S. 1780. This case pertains to village Phulwara.

⁵⁷ Arhsatta pargana Bahatri V.S.1777.

of the rural society cutting across caste, class or community lines but it is difficult to discern any discrimination on the part of the state. While inflicting punishment upon the offenders in terms of caste, class or communal status the nature of offence seems to be the determinant of the degree of punishment awarded by the state.

We can also reinforce this argument by looking into offences of murder and violence in the rural society. Kheta Meena of the village Bishanpur was poisoned to death by his wife being instigated to do so by the sons of Ratan Singh Chauhan and Chahar Gujar. Kheta's wife was made insolvent as her entire property was confiscated by the state which also imposed a collective fine of Rs.63 upon her collaborators.⁵⁸ Ghura Gudi, a Musalman resident of village Sehna was indebted to Kushti Halalkhor. When she approached Ghura to recover her loan, he tricked her into accompanying him to a nearby nullah and killed her. The matter was reported to the state by other Halalkhors, whereupon an enquiry was conducted which found Ghura guilty of murder. Consequent upon his failure to pay cash fine, his house and other belongings were sold away fetching a sum of Rs.170.94 and taka 124.⁵⁹ Ghan Musalman of village Vetahri was fined Rs.11 for killing the son of Dola Musalman, a resident of the same village.⁶⁰ The state

⁵⁸. See Farohi account of Village Bishanpura, pargana Bahatri Arhsatta pargana Bahatri V.S.1722/1665.

⁵⁹. Arhsatta pargana Malarna V.S. 1771/1714.

⁶⁰. Arhsatta pargana Malarna V.S. 1770/1713.

imposed a fine of Rs.91 on Sahja Brahman of the village Idawa for killing a Meena.⁶¹ Tikura Brahman of village Chandlar was fined Rs. 16 on the charge of killing a Muslim woman⁶². Sadi a Brahman woman of Qasba Chatsu in a fit of rage killed a Muslim maid.⁶³ In village Jhahri Gidhu Thori was involved in the murder of his brother. He was arrested by the state officials. Har Ram Meena of village Kishanpur was punished by the state for killing a Dom woman. Out of 35 cases pertaining to murder the Meena were involved in 5 cases.

The number of cases involving violence and assault were also significant involving almost all sections of the rural society. Sawai Meena of village Kashipura struck Vakhta Meena a blow with the stick.⁶⁴ Mohkam Singh Rajput of village Harnarayanpur was fined Rs. 15 as he attacked Jasa Meena with a stick. Surat Ram, Hamirdeka was charged with assaulting the son of village headman.⁶⁵ Jodha Gujar of village Jagatpura was fined Rs.11 for indulging in violence against the patel.⁶⁶ Kesar Meena of village Diwara was fined Rs. 11 on the charge of hitting the wife of Nayala barber which resulted in

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Arhsatta pargana Chatsu V.S. 1805/1748.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Arhsatta pargana Chatsu V.S. 1802/1755.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid. V.S. 1773/1716.

termination of her seven month old pregnancy.⁶⁷ Kashi Ram Patel of village Kalyanpur grievously injured the patel of village Devalda⁶⁸ Kalyan Gujar of Village Vilana mortgaged his land holding to Banna Brahman. When the Brahman came to cultivate the land he was attacked by the Gujar⁶⁹ Caste conflicts in which violence was freely resorted to were also common. The patels of villages Kanjoli, Pilwagudha, Valheri, Mohepura, Mohewara, Vajirpur and Sekhpur etc. in pargana Hindon were heavily fined by the state because of participation in the fight between Meena and Gujar raiyat residing in these villages. The amount of fine imposed on the patels ranged from Rs. 50 to Rs.3001.⁷⁰ The patels of the villages of pargana Toda Bhim were also punished for similar offence.

The incidence of thefts recorded in our documents are not significant. Out of more than 4000 cases of recorded crimes only 52 pertain to thefts. The Meenas were involved in 28 cases. Out of these 28 cases in which the Meenas were identified as culprits, 10 cases relate to the theft of cattles particularly oxen which were regarded as key agricultural asset. In seven cases of thefts the Meena were charged with having stolen food grain in small quantities. In the remaining eleven cases involving the Meenas, the stolen property was identified as cot, sari, wood and other cheap items. That these thefts

⁶⁷ Ibid. V.S 1768/1711.

⁶⁸ Arhsatta pargana Malarna V.S. 1771/1714.

⁶⁹ Arhsatta pargana Bhutse V.S. 1777/1720.

⁷⁰ Arhsatta pargana Hindon V.S. 1790/1733.

were not regarded as serious crimes is evident from the amount of fine imposed on thieves which varied from Rs. 5 to 11.⁷¹ It is also not clear whether those involved were professional thieves or they were forced to do so in distress caused by draught, famine, exceptionally high prices of food grains and so on.

In two instances the Meena were punished for giving shelter to the thieves. Mohan Meena and Manroop Meena of village Maheshsara Khurd in pargana Dausa were fined Rs. 100 each for keeping thieves of village Chainpura. However, Vijay Singh a Rajput resident of the village was also booked under the similar charge and fined Rs. 51.⁷² A large number of documents refer to female infanticide in the rural society in which Rajputs and middle castes such as Jats, Gujar and Meena were involved. Adil Kheldar resident of the village Vethari committed heinous crime of burying his daughter alive. The state punished him by imposing Rs.9 in fine.⁷³

In all cases cited above - and there are numerous others recorded in the same category of documents which cannot be cited - the punishment inflicted upon "offenders" was in the form of fine in cash. But even this limited access leads to certain insights.

⁷¹ See Arhsatta's pargana Niwai V.S. 1800, 1801, 1807, 1825, Udehi, 1824 Dausa 1804, 1816; Chatsu 1771, 1780, 1781, 1817, 1819, Mauzabad, 1780, 1794, 1800, 1803

⁷² Arhsatta pargana Dausa V.S. 1816.

⁷³ Arhsatta pargana Malarna V.S. 1775/1718.

The foremost among these is the local crime, and what could be defined as crime, was not the sole concern of the village community or of the locality; perhaps there were areas where crime could be defined and punished at the local level, but the way the rural and local elites too were being constantly subjected to fines for offences and dereliction of expected behaviour would definitely suggest that the states' apex authority represented the overarching authority in judicial matters. Secondly, crime as perceived by the state cut across communities, caste and clans. There are a number of cases in which the state perceived the involvement of members of different communities - Rajputs, Brahmans and members of lower social order - as of equal guilt; The punishment does not vary.

There is little to distinguish the Meena criminals from their other counterparts i.e. Rajputs, Brahmans, Mahajans, Jats Gujars and menial castes. **There is hardly any justification in branding the entire Meena caste as criminals, thieves and robbers.**

CONCLUSION

Prior to the formation of the Kachhawa principality of Amber and the Hara Chauhan state of Bundi; Dhundhar and Bundi tracts lying in Eastern and South Eastern Rajasthan was under the possession of various chiefs belonging to the Meena tribe. Rajasthani Khayats refer to the Meena Chiefs as Thakurs, Bhomias and Chaurasias. According to the local tradition, Dhole Rai who was brought up by Ralunsi, the Meena chief of Dhundhar, usurped the throne of his benefactor, through treachery. Dhola Rai when attained the age of 14 years was sent to Dehli court, where with his Rajput brethern made plans with the help of 'Jaga' or a Meena Bard to usurp the throne of Meena chief. Jaga advised him to attack the Meenas when they were all enmasse taking bath in the tank while celebrating the festival of Diwali.

Dhola Rai did the same, he attacked the Meenas with the help of his brethern. Meenas were taken away weaponless and were all slain in the tank. Though the Jaga who had helped Dhola Rai was also killed by the usurper but the throne of Dhundhar was taken away by Rajputs, paritally through treachery and partially through sword.

Meenas played important role in the state of Rajasthan as the law makers by the virtue of being the rulers. Though some of their strongholds were taken away by the Kachhawa Rajputs, but their power was being observed as long as Bharmal, who routed them out completely with the help of ^{The} Mughals.

The territory of Bundi which also included Kota, was termed Harauti. The Hara's were one of the most important septs of the Chauhan Rajput clan, who had left Nandol and migrated to this region. They made Bhainsrod as their headquarters. It was Deva Hara who overpowered the Osara gotra of the Meenas and founded the Hara state of Bundi.

According to the versions of folktales given by Nainsi, the throne of Bundi was usurped by the Haras by making false matrimonial promises. In all the versions Nainsi states that Meenas were invited for matrimonial alliances and were burnt in the 'Janwasa' in the drunk state, on the pretext of performing marriage.

Here also according to folktales, Rajputs took over the Meena territory by treachery.

The process of regional state formation involved the dispossession of several erstwhile ruling groups, including the Meenas by the Rajputs. In addition to the strength of their superior arms, the Rajputs also used methods involving treachery to defeat the Meena chiefs of Dhundhar and Bundi. This was later overwritten by the chivalric heroic Rajput tradition embellished by the khayal writers and Tod. The Khayat writers, display a contempt for the life style of tribal communities, refusal to see what was good for them, their consumption of alcohol and drugs and their peculiar social practices. The restoration of law and order and protection of the people from the tyranny of tribal chiefs are cited as reasons which prompted the Rajputs to establish their authority in different parts of

Rajasthan. However, in order to make it effective, the Rajput chiefs made certain compromises and adjustments with the erstwhile aristocracy. Accordingly, the Rajput chiefs not only let continue the local potentates that they themselves had defeated or subjugated, The Rajput chiefs recognized their authority in the rural society as Bhomias and Patels. The Rajputs did not interfere in the social and cultural life of the subjugated people. The pattern of relationship that emerged between the conqueror and vanquished can be illustrated by the newly created tradition that the coronation ceremony of the Kachhawa ruler would be completed only after securing the presence of the Meena Chief in the darbar and his putting 'Tika' on the forehead of the new ruler. The Meenas were also given the privilege to act as guard of the royal treasury and ^{placed} in other trustworthy positions.

The Meenas were quite numerous and also had the tradition of settled agriculture. They were known for doing hard work and take up cultivation in right earnest. They were already in possession of sufficient agricultural land.

The administrative measures gradually introduced by the Kachhawa Rajput rulers to exploit all possible resources of the region in the context of highly favourable land man ratio, strengthened the position of the Meenas in the rural society. The resourceful Meena families were encouraged by the state to colonize new villages and bring the cultivable waste under the plough. The pateli rights were freely bestowed upon the Meenas, who were involved in the process of rural colonization. As village headman, the Meenas became an officially recognized agency for the implementation of the agrarian policy of the state. In the raiyati villages, they also carried on the strenuous burden of revenue

collection and maintenance of the common financial pool of the village. They were also supposed to assist the regular state officials in running day to day administration of the village. In lieu of these services, the Meena patels were given the superior right to realize certain dues from all sections of the village society and a fixed share out of the state revenue collected from the village. They also had the privilege to pay tax on their family land holding at concessional rates. It is also evident from the documents that the Meena patels in their rituals and social practices were increasingly emulating the Rajput Bhomias and Jagirdars.

The state also recruited the Meenas in the state administration to perform the tasks of rural policing, prevention of thefts, recovery of stolen property, guarding the market place, offices and residences of the higher state officials and treasury of the pargana headquarters. Meena chaukayats were entrusted with these responsibilities. In order to make the system of rural policing effective, the chaukayats were made fully accountable for any theft committed, producing the culprit for punishment and recovery of stolen goods. An incompetent Chaukayat was fined and punished by the state, the Chaukayat's direct responsibility was to the Chief Chaukayat termed as Raokha-Meena who was assigned Tankwah Jagir in lieu of cash salary. Out of the proceeds of the Jagir, he disbursed salary to his subordinate Chaukayats.

The Vadhdars were appointed for the purpose of protecting village boundaries and standing crops. It was also their duty to keep an eye on any stranger passing through the village. They were allotted cultivable waste termed 'vadh ki dharti' in lieu of cash salary. Vadh land was exempted from the payment of any revenue to the state.

The Khojis or spies were also recruited from the Meenas. Their primary task was to keep intimate knowledge of every household, its sources of income, its contacts etc. which might have provided invaluable information to the prevention and detection of crime. He was responsible for a group of villages. He was required to investigate the cases of thefts, trace the thieves and help in recovering stolen items.

In addition to being appointed as chaukayat, vadhdar and khoji, the Meenas were also recruited as halkaras or messengers and runners. This system of rural policing in the State of Jaipur continued up to the end of eighteenth century. We have not gone into the working of this system beyond 1800 A.D. Considering the fact that a large number of the Meenas were employed in these capacities, it would be quite revealing to investigate the element of continuity and change in the administrative system during the nineteenth century.

During the seventeenth century, the Meena Bhomias were further marginalized with the emergence of the Kachhawa principality of Amber to the position of a dominant Rajput state in Rajasthan. Following the submission of Bharmal, the Kachhawa chief to Akbar in 1562, the wealth and power of the Kachhawas went on increasing. The records indicate a deliberate attempt on the part of the Mughal-Rajput coalition to undermine the position of Zamindars belonging to Chauhan, Badgujar and Tanwar Rajput clans on the one hand and that of the Meena and Mco Zamindars on the other. The Kachhawa Rajputs appropriated Bhom rights in many new areas and became a force to be reckoned with ~~for~~ control over a large number of fortresses and thanas. The Kachhawas rulers and Bhomias embarked on a deliberate policy of heterogenising the composition of single

caste dominated villages. Jat, Gujars, Ahirs and Malis were encouraged to settle in Meena dominated villages. However, the Meenas continued to occupy superior rights in land at the village level as patels.

The process of state formation in Rajasthan by the Rajputs also resulted in promoting caste based stratification of the peasantry, caste status of the cultivators was taken into account while computing the magnitude of land revenue demand. The high caste groups such as Brahmans, Rajputs, Mahajans and hereditary village officials irrespective of their caste status enjoyed privileged land tenure right. Accordingly, they had to pay only 25 to 33 percent of the produce as land revenue. The Meena cultivators were reduced to the position of middle and low-level peasant proprietors. Although an overwhelming majority of the Meena cultivators were proprietors of their holdings, a section of the Meenas cultivated land as tenants and sharecroppers. In the caste hierarchy of the village society, Meenas were equated with the intermediate castes such as Jat, Malis, Gujars and Ahirs called raiyati or palti who paid land revenue according to a different schedule of land revenue rates. In their case, the state share came to 40 to 50 percent of their gross produce and they were also required to shoulder the entire burden of the "malba" or common village expenses. It is difficult to examine the position of Meena paltis in isolation from the palti's belonging to other intermediate castes. The eighteenth century ~~contrary~~ documents clearly show that paltis were increasingly burdened with taxes conventional as well as arbitrary and dispossessed of land as a result of indebtedness.

Frequent occurrences of famines and draughts and the failure of harvest intermittently greatly reduced the capacity of palti peasants to cope with the burden of revenue demand, increased indebtedness, their dependence on the richer section. The cumulative effect of all these factors put a severe strain on the meagre resource position of the paltis. The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed growing immiserization of the palti peasants who were forced to surrender their land holdings to the money lenders. Many palti proprietors including the Meenas were reduced to the position of tenants, share croppers and agricultural labourers.

The seventeenth and eighteenth century official documents pertaining to the erstwhile state of Amber (later designated as Jaipur) nowhere single out Meenas as habitual or professional criminals, thieves or robbers. Conversely, the Meenas are referred to as numerically strong land owning peasant caste. Their involvement in the rural policing and appointment as security guards of royal treasury and of the administrative headquarters of the pargana and its safe exorting to the capital town, clearly indicate that the Meenas were not viewed as criminal by the contemporary state and society. As we have already seen, crime and criminals were not confined to a single caste or community and the notion of criminal tribes and castes does not hold good for precolonial Rajasthan. It also fails to provide any insight into the perception and nature of crime in caste divided rural society.

Although, the farohi accounts contained in the arhsattas are not very helpful in identifying the factor in the incidence of crime, they do describe and explain the incidence of the principle types of rural crimes in Eastern Rajasthan including castes and class background of the culprits and the victims. Statistical analysis of the data on crime

following the classification of different types of crime, first and the most numerous crimes related to the theft of state revenue for which different ways and means were adopted by all sections of the highly stratified peasantry, quite often engaged in collaboration and ⁱⁿconcess cutting across caste and class distinction. These acts might be seen as a passive resistance to the state by all sections of the rural society including lower strata of the peasantry. The Meenas being numerically dominant peasant caste also acted in similar fashion. Defiance of the state revenue officials particularly the 'sahna' who kept watch on the standing crops in the village was also perceived as a crime by the state. The offenders were by and large members of the dominant groups. Chamchari or sexual crime which is the second main type of criminal activity was also very widely prevalent in the rural society, breaking almost all barriers of caste, class, status and economic background. Again it is not possible to identify any caste or community as criminals.

Statistical analysis on other crimes such as theft, murder, violence, destruction of property etc. clearly reveal that crime was not confined to specific caste or community. It was resorted to by both upper and the lower stratas of rural society. The motivation, wants and opportunities might have varied depending on the situation in which individuals were placed. In many cases the victims belonged to the same caste or economic background as that of the offenders. At times the offenders belonging to dominant groups tried to buy the silence of the village officials. **To speak of the Meenas as criminals, obscures the complex realities of crime.**

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