CHAPTER 5
MOBILITY AND CHANGE
AMONG THE MEOS

The changes that took place in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in northern India were very crucial for the transformation of the Mewāti people. The establishment of the Turkish rule in northern India in the thirteenth century was a great watershed in this respect as it unleashed a series of factors and forces that brought about considerable alterations in the social and economic life of the times. The arrival of Islam along with the introduction of Turkish mode of administration had strong bearings over the subjugated regions and indigenous people who had not witnessed revolutionary changes of such magnitude in the previous regimes. This development was not an isolated event but can be better understood as a cumulative impact of certain processes that had some kind of linkages with each other.

The most striking feature regarding the Mewātis is that they came into historical sight as hill men, herdsmen, highwaymen and Hindu rebels. In the medieval times, they first appeared in the Arāvalli hills of the Mewāt region which currently corresponds to the modern districts of Alwar and Bharatpur districts of Rājasthān, and Nuh district of Haryāna. Originally, they belonged to some tribal groups who inhabited the Kala Pahad and other Arāvalli ranges. Persian sources throw light on the modes of their subsistence, the nature of their settlements, extent of their marauding activities in the vicinity of Delhi and the remedial actions by the Delhi Sultans against them. During the thirteenth century
(1260 CE). Minhaju-s Siraj reported that Ulugh Khan (Balban), the minister of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud "invaded the Kohpayah, or hills of Mewāt, to chastise the rebel inhabitants of Mewāt....Great booty was gained, and many cattle captured. Defiles and passes were cleared, strong forts were taken..." The physiographic features of the Mewāt region, particularly its hilly terrains along with dense forests also provided a natural habitat for the Mewāti herders and raiders. The early Meo settlements were located either on hill tops or closely surrounded by the hills for the purpose of defense, clearly pointing towards a strategic choice commonly noticed among the tribals. The fact is also corroborated by the Persian evidence that Mewāti villages "were on the summits of the loftiest hills and rocks," and the Muslim soldiers "climbed the highest hills, and penetrated the ravines and deepest gorges" in search of Mewātis. Hill top settlements provided these people not only protection against external dangers but also facilitated and sharpened their frequent raids and incursions into the territories of the neighbouring kingdoms. Reference to the destruction of Mewāti forts by the Sultans of Delhi also corroborates the martial skills of the early Mewāti settlers.

ECONOMIC TRANSITION-FORMATION OF MEO PEASANTRY

The key to understand the process of the transformation of the Meos lies in the changes that occurred in the pattern of their economy in due course of time. Such an examination of the nature of economic mobility of a particular community needs to integrate some other elements that might have influenced the economic behaviour of

1 Minhaju-s Siraj, Tabakat-i Nasiri, (tr.) ED ii, op. cit., p. 359.
3 Siraj, op. cit., ED, ii, p. 381.
4 Ibid., p. 359.
these people. In other words, apart from the study of their occupational shift, it is important to investigate the accompanying constraints caused by the contemporary political and administrative changes, and the consequent movements and migrations of these people in search of alternate modes of subsistence. Therefore, a scientific enquiry of economic change necessarily involves a study of important developments occurring during that period in that region, and the feasibility of drawing some kind of linkages between these occurrences and economic change. This is made possible by a judicious use of Persian sources along with some of the Meo traditions of semi-historical nature such as Jagga records which help us to fill certain gaps and delineate a somewhat reliable picture of Meo history.

Changes in Cattle-herding Economy:

The ecology of Mewāt echoes the tinai concept of the early Tamil country, particularly the clash of interests and conflicts between the people of hilly (mullai) and plain (marudam) areas. The limitations and economic constraints of the cattle-herding economy sharpened the rivalries between the hills and surrounding plains and consequently brought Mewātis in confrontation with the neighbouring kingdoms and territories. Cattle constituted an important part of wealth in herding economies and therefore, it is noteworthy that cattle and other animals were one of the main objectives of Meo raiders in the plains. The significance of cattle in the general life and economy of Mewāt is well-attested by references to cattle and cattle-lifting by the Mewātis. In 655 H.

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5 Jagga records are the exclusive source of history of Meo Pals and gotras since the colonization of villages by the Meos. The term ‘Jagga’ refers to the Brahmins who record the rituals and ceremonies of their respective Meo clans.
(1257 CE), the Mewātis "carried off from Hansi a drove of camels." In 658 H. (1260 CE), when the imperialists (Ulugh Khan) "reached the Koh-payah Mewāt, a huge booty and a large number of cattle fell into their hands" This suggests that Mewāti economy was struggling at the subsistence level, and there was tremendous pressure on them to replenish their growing needs by frequent raids and highway robberies in the surroundings. The establishment of the Sultanate in the vicinity of Mewāt (within 60 kms), and particularly the choice of Mehrauli as the capital of the new dominion, brought the cattle-rearing Mewātis into direct collision with an imperial structure and ambitious Sultans of Delhi. However, from the Meo perspective, their pillaging acts could be interpreted as a legitimate right of a hard-pressed community to survive and cater to the needs of their kinsmen. But, conversely, the Sultans of Delhi could not have remained silent spectators to such a macabre situation in the vicinity of its capital when daring assaults were carried out upon its territories and subject population. In other words, the Meo menace was causing a great deal of economic loss to trade, commerce and agriculture of the Sultanate. During the reign of Sultan Nasir-ud-din, the Mewātis "drove away the cultivators," "ravaged the villages in the districts of Harriana, the Siwalik hills, and Bayana," and even "carried off from Hansi a drove of camels and a number of the people of Ulugh Khan." By the time Balban became Sultan, this phenomenon had taken such an unpleasant turn, that at night, writes Barni, the Mewātis "used to come prowling into the city, giving all kinds of trouble, depriving the people of their rest; and they plundered the country houses in the neighbourhood of the city. In the neighbourhood of

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7 Yahiya bin Ahmad bin Abdullah Sirhindi, Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi, (Tr.) H. Beveridge, Delhi. 1996, p. 37.
8 Siraj, op. cit., ED, ii, p. 380.
Delhi there were large and dense jungles, through which many roads passed. The disaffected in the Doāb, and the outlaws towards Hindustan grew bold and took to robbery on the highway, and they so beset the roads that caravans and merchants were unable to pass. In terms of wealth and resources, the impact of the Meo menace on the Sultanate was tremendous. Besides, the nefarious activities of the Meos were also undermining the prestige of the Turkish State. Barni further tells us that “the daring of the Mewātti in the neighbourhood of Delhi was carried to such an extent that the western gates of the city were shut at afternoon prayer, and no one dared to go out of the city in that direction after that hour, whether he traveled as a pilgrim or with the display of a sovereign. At afternoon prayer the Miwattis would often come to the Sar-hauz, and assaulting the water-carriers and the girls who were fetching water, they would strip them and carry off their clothes. These daring acts of the Miwattis had caused a great ferment in Delhi.” Reckless loot and plunder by the Meos had a devastating effect on the economic foundations of the Sultanate and compelled the rulers to take decisive action against them. The dreadful image of the Mewāti as robbers and mischief-mongers is also reflected in the lines of famous poet, Rushnidhi—

Chhavi van mein dauran lage jab te tav drug Mev  
Tab te kadhe sanehiya man chhan le ke chhev.  

“Ever since the rogue Mewātis struck the beautiful forest (of Brij region), theardent lovers abandoned this place.”

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10 Ibid., p. 104.  
The predatory character of the Meos signifies more than what we ascertain from general impression and popular notions regarding their activities and behaviour. Two important points can be stressed in this regard. First, that the practice of carrying out raids and robberies was a traditional and integral part of the Mewāti life and economy because it suited and supported their material needs, as well as supplemented the restricted income from hill economy based on cattle rearing. Exclusive dependence upon resources derived from cattle-herding couldn’t have allowed the growing Mewāti population to develop beyond subsistence level. Second, the recurring loot and plunder by the Mewātis augmented their economic wellbeing and supplemented their scare resources.

The form of their plundering activities did not remain unchanged over a period of time. Even within their loot and plunder perspective, a perceptible progression can be detected in the nature of their attacks and boldness. By the twelfth century, the Mewātis were considered as the “the most turbulent of all the Hindu groups of the Doāb and the Ganges.”12 In the thirteenth century, Minhaju-s Siraj reported that they “drove away the cultivators,” “ravaged the villages in the districts of Harriana, the Siwalik hills, and Bayana,” and even “carried off from Hansi a drove of camels and a number of the people of Ulugh Khan.”

Despite the fact that the Mewātis belonged to a cattle-herding society, we must bear in mind that they replenished their resources from raiding and plundering activities in the adjoining regions. By the second half of the 13th century, the practice of loot and plunder had enormously increased their resource base and allowed, in considerable

12 Wolseley Haig, The Cambridge History of India, vol. 3, Turks and Afghans, Delhi, p. 233. Also cited in Mayaram, Against History Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins. New Delhi, 2003, p. 76.
degrees, accumulation of wealth. The flow of wealth through spoils of war or booty enhanced their striking ability on major highways and even helped them to penetrate village settlements in the vicinity of Delhi. During the reign of Nasir-uddin, they are reported to have struck Haryana, Siwalik hills, Bayana, and Hansi where they are said to have “plundered the goods,” “ravaged the villages,” and “carried off camels.” But the situation had reportedly changed under Balban. Barni laments that under Balban, “the turbulence of the Miwattis had increased, and their strength had grown in the neighbourhood of Delhi.” He found Mewatis, “prowling into the city,” “giving all kinds of trouble,” and plundering “country houses in the neighbourhood of the city.” By this period, the terror of the Miwatis had widely spread to neighbourhoods of Delhi as well as to the interiors of the city. No place was considered safe from their forays as they could easily target highways and jungle roads, town and villages, caravans and cattle-yards. The victims of the Mewati plunder included men and women, Hindus and Muslims, merchants and cultivators, pilgrims and water-carriers.

It is not without significance that owing to their notorious image as raiders and highway robbers, the Meos were treated with utmost cruelty by the successive regimes in Delhi. Thirteenth century marked an important stage in Mewāti history as it witnessed intense sharpening of conflict between the Delhi Sultanate and Mewāt. The reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud saw alarming rise in bloodshed and suppression against the Mewāti hordes by the armed forces of his trusted minister, Ulugh Khan. Writings of Persian chroniclers reflect the brutalities with which the Mewātis were hunted and massacred by

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14 Barni, ED, op. cit., p. 104.
15 Ibid.
the Delhi Sultans. During late 13th century, Minhaju-s Siraj reported that in AH 658, i.e. 1260 CE, Ulugh Khan invaded the Kohpaya, the hills of Mewāt. "The villages and habitations of the mountaineers were ....all taken and ravaged....and the inhabitants who were thieves, robbers, and highwaymen were all slain. A silver tanka was offered for every head, and two tankas for every man brought in alive. Eager for these awards the soldiers climbed the highest hills....and brought in heads and captives."16 The extreme punishments meted out to the captives signifies the extent of hostilities, hatred and madness against ill-famed Mewāt: "By royal command many of the rebels were cast under the feet of elephants, and the fierce Turks cut the bodies of the Hindus in two. About a hundred met their death at the hands of the flayers, being skinned from head to foot; their skins were all stuffed with straw, and some of them were hung over every gate of the city. The plain of Hauz Rani and the gates of Delhi remembered no punishment like this, nor had anyone ever heard such a tale of horror."17 Again, in 1266 CE, when Ulugh Khan became Balban, the Sultan of Delhi, he launched an elaborate expedition against Mewāt and is believed to have put about 100,000 Mewātis to the sword.18 Such a massive onslaught against the Meo rebels was not without consequence as it triggered significant changes in their lives. Selective persecution of this rebellious community continued under successive regimes leading to a state of disorder and pushing the people downhill or into the plains in order to escape the impending death and destruction. In the words of a contemporary chronicler, Yahiya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, "throughout the period of Muhammadan rule the Meos were

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16 Siraj, op. cit., ED, ii, p. 359.
17 Ibid.
the Ishmaelites of their own country and of the upper Doáb, and harried again and again by
the Kings of Delhi from 1259 to 1527. 19

The treatment meted out to the Mewātīs drew strength from the prevailing notions
about their obnoxious and coarseness behaviour articulated in various forms—

_Dekhi teri Mewāt,
Pahle gali, piche bat._

"See what a place is your Mewāt, where abuse must precede talk." 20

**Migration and Resettlement:**

The impact of the persecution of the Mewātīs was tremendous. One of the direct
consequences of the pressure exerted by Ulugh Khan was that the hordes of Mewātīs took
flight from their rocky settlements in the Arāvallis and sought shelter hither and thither.
Uprooted from their habitat traditional economic setup, they were forced to survive
exclusively on loot and plunder. It is striking to note that Balban’s offensive in the hills
of Mewāt considerably increased acts of raiding and pillaging in the plains of Mewāt and
its neighbourhood. The sequence is reflected in the words of Minhaj Siraj—"When
Ulugh Khan carried war into the hills, and punished the rebels....a number of them
escaped by flight. They now again took to plundering on the highways, and murdering
Musulmans, so that the roads became dangerous. This being reported to the Khan, he sent
emissaries and spies to find out the places where the rebels had taken refuge, ....He fell
upon the insurgents unawares, and captured them all, to the number of twelve thousand—
men, women, and children—whom he put to the sword. All their valleys and strongholds

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19 Sirhindī, op. cit., HB, p. 209, n. 6
20 Ibid., p. 30.
were overrun and cleared, and great booty captured." It can be argued that having pushed from the Arāvallis, the rebels were driven downwards, and the site of their habitation was now being shifted from 'hills' to 'valleys.' This trend gradually developed into an elaborate process of migration which had far-reaching consequence in terms of economic mobility and social change.

The nature of these movements in the core area of Mewāt suggests a clear pattern of down-hill migration from the high ranges of the Arāvallis into the plains of Mewāt. In view of this trend, it is pertinent to question as to what exactly is the significance of this migration in Meo history? Was it merely an inadvertent movement of an adventurous people, or must we look for deeper and wider implications of this phenomenon? In consideration of the extent of the Mewāti migration, it is important to postulate a broad perspective that would relate this development with concurring changes in the economic and political domains of the time.

Jagga records suggest that in the early period the settlements of the Meo Pals were originally situated in the Mewāt hills. Abdul Aziz has identified twelve such village sites, located on high hills which had been claimed by the Mewātīs to be their original settlements.21 It is important to note that all of these twelve Mewāti villages now stand deserted and the ruins of their sites are reminiscent of their previous occupation and abandonment.22 But the most remarkable feature of this trend lies in the continuity between the old and new sites, and the current existence of all the twelve settlements in the plain areas. In light of the abandonment of the original sites in the hills, the

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22 Ibid.
Map 9: Location of the Original Villages of the Meo Pals with Migration Lines

subsequent occupation of new sites in the plains clearly indicates a massive migration of the early Mewāti population from the high hills to the plains. Since the process of migration involved all the twelve hill top settlements, it can be argued that a great transition in the social and economic life of the Mewātis was in progress. Since each major village settlement is associated with a particular Meo Pal, an examination of the individual village sites can be helpful to ascertain the pattern of migration and understand the nature of change.

Kajhota, located in Lachhmangarh tehsil of Alwar district in southern Mewāt, is the original village site of the Demrot Pal. But the present village is obviously a later settlement in the plain area. The shift from the old to the new site suggests that a downhill migration had occurred here leading to the abandonment of the old and the occupation of the new site.23 In Alwar tehsil of district Alwar is situated Sahori, the original village of Ratawat Pal. It is also marked by a movement of people from the hill top site to the ground location in plain area.24 Burja is located in the upland area near the Alwar town, and happens to be the primitive settlement of the Kalesa Pal. Here, the pattern of migration and settlement from old to new site is almost similar to the above-mentioned villages. Neekach, which is considered as the earliest settlement of Nai Pal, is positioned in the Ramgarh tehsil of Alwar district. This site stands at the edge of a hill and saw occupation only after desertion of high hill settlement.25 Baghora was the primitive village of the Landawat Pal, and was situated in Kishangarh tehsil of Alwar district. Here too, downhill movement occurred when the settlement shifted from hill top to the

23 Ibid., p. 15.
24 Ibid., p. 17.
25 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
foothills with additional advantages of natural defence. The earliest village of Dulot Pal is Nihau which was located in Nagar tehsil of Bharatpur district. It was also characterized by a similar kind of change in its settlement. Village Garh, which was known as the primitive site of Pahat clan (Pallakra), descended downhill from the original site on the five-peak range in Kama tehsil of Bharatpur district. In the same tehsil, another major site of this kind is Neemli which is claimed as the original settlement by Chhiraklot and Punglot Pals. It is also a result of the process of abandonment and migration from the hills to the new settlement in the plains. However, Chhiralkot Pal and Punglot Pals later extended their territories towards the north and west of the original settlement respectively. Village Lilhor (also Meoli), situated near Nuh town in Gurgaon district, is regarded as the initial settlement of Durwal Pal. It also shifted down from the hills and presently flanked by hills on three sides. Similarly marked by a shift from the hills to the plains is village Raisina which is situated north of Sohna and considered as the original settlement of Dehngal Pal. Finally, two major sites in this category are Bhundsi in Gurgaon tehsil, and Garh Dhamina in Mehrauli block of Delhi. Regarding ancestral association, Bhundsi is said to have been the earliest site of Seenghal Pal whereas Garh Dhamina is the original village of Balot Pal.

The ruins of the original villages in the Aravalli hill tops indicate the significance of the previous occupation of the ancestral settlements of the Meo Pals for a certain period. Subsequently, the twelve original settlements in high hills were completely

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26 Ibid. p. 19.
27 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
28 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
29 Ibid., p. 23.
30 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
abandoned and a downhill movement took place that shifted the large sections of Mewāti population to the plain areas in the nuclear region of Mewāt. Why the original settlements were abandoned, leading to the downhill migration of the people and establishment of new settlements in the plains? What are those factors and compelling needs that pushed the Mewāti habitations from the high hills to the ground? The remarkable fact that all the twelve village settlements are presently located in the plain areas is of great historical importance because it provides the basis to look for occupational change and mobility. We must remember that originally the Mewātis were cattle herders who regularly supplemented their incomes by conducting raids and highway robberies. The emerging pattern of their migration suggests that under tremendous economic pressure the previous modes of subsistence, i.e. cattle-herding and raiding economy was breaking down and paving the way for crop and food-producing economy. This process of change can be interpreted as an economic transformation of a cattle-herding population into a peasant community between fourteenth and sixteenth century. However, in order to argue in favour of such a great transition that may have wide implications in Meo history, it is necessary to substantiate our postulation and situate this economic change in correct historical perspective. Therefore, our primary concern is to delineate important stages in the evolution of Mewāti economy, and study the significance of perceptible changes in their economic conditions.

**Meos' Conversion to Agriculture—Colonization of villages:**

For a close examination of nature of economic change in Mewāti history, we need to look at major political and socio-economic developments in and around the region of Mewāt during the period under review. Such noticeable developments in this regard were
the foundations of Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526 CE), and of Khānzāda state (1389-1527 CE), both of which received the fatal blow at the hands of Babur at Panipat and Khanwa respectively. The formation of these two political entities in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in close proximity to Mewāṭ was noteworthy as it determined the Mewāti way of life in more than one way. The fact that the territories of the state of Khānzādas closely corresponds to the nuclear region of Mewāṭ itself indicates the extent of influence of the new structure on the traditional way of life and modes of subsistence. The choice of Mehrauli, bordering outer reaches of Mewāṭ, as the capital of the Sultanate had far-reaching consequences to the future of the rebellious and autonomous Mewāti population whose pillaging activities have hitherto never been effectively checked and dealt with. The impact of the new Islamic State and the attempts of subordination over infidel territories by the successive Sultans of Delhi marked a new stage in the history of Mewāṭ as, being contiguous to the nerve centre, it bore the maximum brunt of Imperial politics, acts of vengeance and policy of ‘blood and iron.’ In addition to above, another major episode that was a turning point in the sixteenth century, and had large bearing over all aspects of Meo history, was the establishment of a new centre of power in the vicinity of Mewāṭ—the Mughal Empire, which rapidly demolished much of the previously built structures including the Sultanate and Khānzāda State, and unleashed forces of change and transformation.

Major political and economic activities and experiments of the Delhi Sultans, particularly those of Iltutmish, Balban, Alauddin Khilji, Muhammad Tuglaq and Firoz Tuglq denote enormous imperial efforts for defence, expansion and consolidation of
empire by means of re-organization of economic, administrative and military structures. Agriculture and revenue were two major considerations in this respect. Clearing of the jungles, reclamation of land, and colonization of villages were some of the essential measures adopted by the successive regimes for promotion of agriculture and enhancement of revenue. Massive clearing of the forests in the territories of Mewāt carried out by Balban must be viewed from this perspective. Barni has reported that immediately after acquiring the throne of Delhi, Balban tried to contain the Mewāti menace when he “employed himself in harrying the jungles, and in routing out the Miwattis”\(^\text{31}\) It is important to note that he “built a fort at Gopal-gir, and established several posts in the vicinity of the city, which he placed in the charge of Afghans, with assignments of land (for their maintenance).”\(^\text{32}\) Barni further adds that after the Sultan had thus “routed out the Miwattis, and cleared away the jungle in the neighbourhood of the city, he gave the towns and country within the Doāb to some distinguished chiefs, with directions to lay waste and destroy the villages of the marauders, to slay the men, to make prisoners of the women and children, to clear away the jungle, and to suppress all lawless proceedings.”\(^\text{33}\)

Large-scale deforestation drive, the construction of forts and other facilities, the appointments of the Afghans, introduction of the system of land-assignment and the granting of towns and country to distinguished chiefs with additional rights to clear away the jungles—all of these indicate a premeditated attempt to create conducive conditions for introduction of agriculture in the territories of Mewāt. The process of clearing of the

\(^{31}\) Barni, op. cit., ED, iii, pp. 103-4.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 104.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., 105.
jungles in Mewāt released a sizeable area of land which could now be easily converted into manageable fields for crop cultivation. The conversion of forest land into agricultural land appears to have been first major incentive for introduction of agriculture in this region. It provided the material basis for the ultimate evolution of a herding society into a peasant society. These measures, accompanied by the system of land-assignments to provide infrastructural support to the new assignees, expressed the agrarian concerns of the Sultan and his predilection towards extension of the new agrarian order in the vicinity of the capital. Therefore, the role of external factor, i.e. Sultanate, in preparing favourable grounds for food-producing economy in Mewāt is clearly established.

Thirteenth and fourteenth centuries can be regarded as the most remarkable period that witnessed the transition of the Meos from a herding group into a peasant community. Information gleaned from Meo traditions has been found valuable to delineate the nature of change in this respect. Jagga records are an important source of information on ancestral settlements of the Meo Pals, their conversion to agriculture and colonization of villages. According to Jagga records, the ancestral village of the Deharwal Meos was Meoli (near Nuh) which was colonized by Mewa Singh, who was originally the head of 52 Khorai (settlements) in the Kala Pahad. A tradition of the Landawat Pal encapsulates the conditions that resulted in their migration from the Kala Pahad to the plains near

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34 Jaggas used to keep the genealogical records of the Meos. They maintained the records of the Meos since the colonization of the villages by the Meos. These records were divided separately on the basis of Gotras and the Pals of the Meos.


36 The term Dehrawal was derived from Dehar which comprised the low lying area near Nuh (periphery of Kotla lake). Dehrawal Meos are also called the snake charmers (Nath).

37 Since Baghore was the original village of their Pal, Landawat Meos were also known as Baghoria Meos.
Ramgarh (Distt. Alwar). It also reveals their struggle against harsh ecology and dense forests during the process of their peasantification.38

Jagga records also help us to situate the ancestral settlements of the five brotherly Meo Pals39—Chhiraklot, Punglot, Dumrot, Dulot and Nai—in the Kala Pahad, and describes how these close-knit Pals lived on cattle-herding and raiding traders and merchants. When the sovereign tried to grab hold of them, they all managed to escape in the guise of a juggler, snake charmer, basket maker and grass-cutter. Consequently, they settled down in the plains of Mewāt and adopted crop cultivation. Jagga records show the pattern of the colonization of villages and the occupational shift to agriculture by the five Pals. The juggler is said to have settled in Lachhmangarh and colonized Kajhota village which was regarded as the ancestral village of Damrot Pal. The snake charmer adopted agriculture and colonized Nimly village near Alwar. He was known as the founder of the Punglot Pal. The third fugitive established himself near Firozpur Jhirka and got recognized as the originator of Chhiraklot Pal. Jagga records enlist Chhirakan as the founder of Chhiraklot Pal. The fourth one colonized Ramgarh (Alwar) and came to be regarded as the architect of the Nai Pal. The last absconder also took up farming between Nagar (Bharatpur) and Firozpur Jhirka, and came to be called as the founder of the Dulot Pal. Therefore, Meo traditions indicate that the colonization of Meo villages and the consequent occupational conversion of the Meos into an agricultural economy seemed to have occurred within the ambit of the Meo Pal system. In comparison to their condition

38 Surajbhan, op. cit., p. 5.
39 These Pals share common brotherhood and refrain from inter-marriage amongst themselves.
in previous centuries, this stage transformed Mewāt into an agricultural zone, and its Mewāti inhabitants into a vigorous class of cultivators.

The significance of these changes may be highlighted by the fact that no pillaging activities by the Meos had been reported during the Khalji period. Amir Khusrau refers to Ala-uddin Khalji’s passage through Mewāt on his way to Ranthambore, but we do not find any reference to Mewāti plunder or unruly conditions in Mewāt. The conspicuous absence of Meos’ predatory activities suggests significant changes in their modes of subsistence which obliterated the need of Sultanate’s revengeful expeditions against them. This stage may be thus marked as a period of transition wherein the large sections of the Meos were adapting to the sedentarian and agricultural way of life leading to the process of stability and change in Mewāt region.

However, there are some indications that during the Tuglaq period, some sections of the Meos and Jadon Rājpūts committed acts of burglary in Mewāt. Firoz Tuglaq is reported to have “cantoned a force at Jhirka-Firozpur for the control and subjection of the hill tribes,”42 built a fortress at Indori in the Arāvallis,43 and “founded two flourishing towns (kasbas), one called Tughlikpur, and the other Salarpur”44 in Mewāt. Mewāt is appeared to have been afflicted again with pillage and lawlessness but the perpetrators were not exclusively Meos as Jadon Rājpūts are also mentioned along with them. The fact that both rebels belonged to the peasant communities of Mewāt shows that they

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40 Amir Khusrau, Khazaina-i-Futuh and the Kiranu-i-Sadain, (Tr.) ED iii, p. 540. Also cited in Surajbhan, op cit., p. 8.
41 Makhdum Mohammad Thanvi, Arzang-i-Tijara, Urdu (Hindi tr.), Anil Joshi, Alwar, 1989, pp. 3-4.
43 Shams-i Siraj Afif, Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi, ED iii, p. 354.
44 A. Cunningham, op. cit., p. 15.
derived strength from the new agricultural conditions and their outrage was seemingly associated with the changes in surplus economy. But the most remarkable point is the establishment of two *kasbas* by Firoz which was the result of the growth of urban settlements and townships supported by satellite agricultural villages. It can be surmised that the Tuglaq period marks the beginning of the process of urbanization in Mewāt which presupposes sizeable accumulation of agricultural surplus and corresponding development of trade and commercial activities.

In the early 16th century, we find the appearance of the Meos with their strength and wealth increased in good measures. Mewāti villages are categorically mentioned in Babur-Nama supposedly inviting the wrath of Babur. According to Babur, “On Sunday the 22nd of Jumada I (24th Feb. 1527 CE) Shaikh Jamal was sent to collect all available quiver-weavers from between the two waters (Ganges and Jamunā) and from Dihli, so that with this force he might over-run and plunder the Miwat villages.”45 These villages were apparently major agricultural settlements belonging to the Meo peasantry. The most striking point that emerges from this account is that the Mewātis had so remarkably increased their strength that the first Mughal noticed them and pursued them accordingly. The extent of their agricultural settlements and the military strength of the Mewāti peasantry can be ascertained by the fact that fragments of the Mughal forces scattered in the Gangetic Doāb and Delhi were all harnessed to execute a major offensive against the Mewātis. Babur’s emphasis on loot and plunder of Mewāti villages underlines the point that the Mughals were badly in need of wealth and resources, and the prosperity of the

Mewāti villages roused the greed of the foreign invader. Babur reinforced his strategy by stating that "Mulla Tark-i-ali was ordered to join Shaikh Jamal and to neglect nothing of ruin and plunder in Miwat..."46 It cannot be disputed that in wake of looming dangers and impending conflicts with the Rājpūts and Afghans, Babur wanted to consolidate his position by enlarging his military base. Obviously, in contemporary Mughal perspective, the proverbial wealth of the Meo villages was considered as a panacea for their immediate troubles. This argument may draw sustenance from the fact that it was not just a figment of Babur’s imagination but he actually plundered the Mewāti villages to his heart’s content. In words of Babur, “they went; they over-ran and raided a few villages in lonely corners (hujqaq).”47

It is pertinent to ask as to what exactly made Meo villages so important in the eyes of the new political master? From Meo’s point of view, it is essential to discuss the nature of changes that had occurred in Meo economy in the first half of the 16th century. It may be noted that instead of defeating Mewāti rebels, or conquering Mewāti territories, Babur had precisely chosen to “plunder” the Mewāti villages. Doubtless, neither ‘order’ nor ‘territory’ but only ‘wealth’ seems to be the chief motive of Babur’s invasion of Mewāt. What then is the size and source of this wealth that lured the voracity of Babur? As mentioned before, the conversion of the Meos to plough agriculture had already occurred during the period of Khānzādas (1389-1527 CE). During the 15th century, with the growth of population and the pressure of Delhi Sultans, sections of Meo agriculturists migrated to new areas and brought the entire plains of Mewāt under cultivation, resulting

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
in extensive colonization of villages and increasing dependence on agricultural production. The intensification of agriculture encouraged by high yielding varieties and new methods of irrigation contributed to the sizeable accumulation of agricultural surplus. Commenting on the various irrigation methods adopted in different parts of Hindustan, Babur sheds light on the practice of well irrigation in Agra-Biana region. He mentions that “in Agra, Chandwar, Biana and those parts...people water with a bucket.”

Referring to another tradition in the same region, he says that “to some crops needing water, men and women carry it by repeated efforts in pitchers.”

Viewing that Mewāt subsequently became a part of Agra Suba, it is quite obvious that bucket and pitcher modes of irrigation were also practiced in all parts of Agra Suba including Mewāti villages. However, Babur exclusively refers to the use of the Persian wheel in Lahore region: “In Lahor, Dipalpur and those parts, people water by means of a wheel.” It may be argued that the presence of the Persian wheel has certain linkage with the increasing productivity in Panjab and South-east Panjab. From time immemorial human societies around the world have reaped the advantages of technological advancements that occurred in far-off lands such as the agricultural revolution of the Neolithic Age, urban revolution of the Bronze Age, and the diffusion of gunpowder and iron stirrup in Middle Ages. Considering the proximity of Mewāt with South-east Panjab which was penetrated and enriched by the wheel, it would not be unreasonable to presume that the Meos were familiar with the Persian wheel, but we have no evidence to claim that the Persian wheel was used in Mewāt during 16th century. In Babur-Nama, Babur has estimated the

48 Ibid. p. 487.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 486.
revenue of the territories of Hindustan held by him. It is mentioned there that the revenue of 1 krur, 69 laks and 81,000 tankas was collected from the Sarkar of Miwat in the year 935 A.H. (1528 CE).\(^5\) Though the actual size of Miwat is not clear here, the size of revenue raised from Miwat was amazingly significant. This piece of evidence is very valuable as it helps us to determine the relative status of revenue yield or agricultural production in Mewāt vis-à-vis other territories under Babur’s suzerainty. According to Babur-Nama, revenue yield from Miwat was higher in comparison to revenue collection from the Sarkars of Sirhind, Hisar-Firuza, Biana, Agra, Qanauj, Sambhal, Laknur (Rampur), Khairabad, Oudh, Karra-Manikpur, Sarwar, Saran and Kandla.\(^5\) In light of Babur’s estimate that total revenue collection “from Bhira to Bihar is 52 krurs,” we can figure out the proportion of Mewāt Sarkar to Mughal revenue, i.e. 3.25% which is astonishingly a substantial contribution. Therefore, in terms of revenue, Mewāt emerges as one of the key territories with enormous wealth accrued from agricultural. Certainly, in the previous century a great transformation in agricultural production is appeared to have taken place in Mewāt resulting in accumulation of substantial agricultural surplus and emergence of a revenue-paying class of peasant-proprietors. In other words, by the third decade of the 16th century, the results of high productivity and flourishing agriculture of Mewāt were appropriated by some influential sections of the Meo peasantry leading to the rise of wealthy landed gentry. However, this trend also reflects that the outcome of the process of economic mobility was not exclusively restricted to occupational change only but also trickling down to social spheres.

\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 520-21.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 521.
EMERGENCE OF MEO ZAMINDARS

By the end of the sixteenth century, the process of economic transformation reached its culmination point when the Meo peasantry enormously increased its strength and emerged as Zamindars under the reign of Akbar. Our chief source of information in this respect is Ā'īn-i-Akbarī that provides elaborate lists of Meo Zamindars in Mewāt region and important details regarding their corresponding revenue and military authority in the contemporary Imperial structure. The Ā'īn records pargana-wise distribution of the Zamindars of different castes in the Mughal Subas. In the Agra Suba, Meo Zamindars have been reported in the three Sarkars of Alwar, Tijara and Sahar. The appearance of the Meos in the list of Zamindars suggests that they had consolidated their position to such an extent that they became indispensable to the Imperial revenue structure in the region of Mewāt. The spatial existence of Meo landholdings in the three Sarkars was a cumulative result of the economic change that transformed them into a class of peasant-proprietors in the previous centuries and brought about proliferation of peasant groups into the nuclear region of Mewāt. Since Ā'īn-i-Akbarī clearly mentions the caste of Zamindars in each Paragana, it helps us to formulate our perspective regarding the spatial spread of the Meos landholdings as well as the social, economic and military strength of the Meos at the close of the sixteenth century.

It is significant to note that the Meo Zamindaris are distributed in sizeable number of parganas of the three Sarkars of Agra Suba. The concentration of Meo Zamindaris in the three adjoining Parganas reflects the pattern of the Meo settlements and the degrees of social and economic influence of the Meos in the contemporary society. The fact, that at the end of the sixteenth century, the members of the Meo community had carved out
Fig. 6: Arable land and land revenue held by Meo Zamindars

Sahar Sarkar
Castes of Zamindars

Alwar Sarkar
Castes of Zamindars

Tiara Sarkar
Castes of Zamindars
sufficient space in the landed gentry and now belonged to the Mughal aristocracy, suggests that the process of change had occurred, yielding encouraging results in form of upward mobility.

During the reign of Akbar, the Suba of Agra consisted of thirteen Sarkars but Meo Zamindars are found only in three Sarkars, namely Alwar, Tijara and Sahar, which roughly corresponds to the region of Mewát. However, out of total 68 Parganas belonging to the three Sarkars, Meo Zamindaris have been reported only from 30 Parganas, i.e. from 12, 14 and 4 Parganas of Alwar, Tijara and Sahar Sarkars respectively.\(^5\) Though other castes are also mentioned in the Ā'īn along with the Meos, it is remarkable to notice that the tribe that was previously condemned as Mewāti rebels, raiders and robbers, had transformed into a powerful agricultural community and fruitfully entered the threshold of Mughal aristocracy. Their occurrence in the Ā'īn along with other leading landlord groups indicates that they now wielded enormous economic resources and enjoyed substantial social prestige in Mewāt region. The inclusion of the Meos as intermediary Zamindars also suggests that their social and economic significance had risen to an extent that the Imperial authorities and particularly Emperor Akbar considered them as resourceful and competent enough to handle the revenue and military assignments in the three Sarkars of Agra Suba. Indeed, the Zamindari rights of the Meos were nothing but an acknowledgement of their newly-acquired landed resources and influence by the Mughal authority. The evidence of the Ā'īn also indicate that in the 16th century plough agriculture had penetrated the entire region of Mewāt and

Fig. 10: Proportion of Arable Land held by Meo Zamīndārs in Tijārā, Alwar and Sahār Sarkārs of Āgrā Sūbā c. CE 1595.

Fig. 11: Proportion of Land Revenue held by Meo Zamīndārs in Tijārā, Alwar and Sahār Sarkārs of Āgrā Sūbā c. CE 1595.
by the end of the century, a powerful class of Meo peasant-proprietors had emerged who were then integrated into the Mughal administrative system as Zamindars of different Paragnas.

The Sarkar of Alwar had total 43 paraganas but Meo Zamindars occurred only in 12 Paraganas whereas Khânzâdas of Mewât are found in 18 Paraganas. Out of the 12 Paraganas, the Meos are exclusively found in 5 Paraganas, namely Dadekar, Rath, Khelohar, Harsoli, and Harsana.\(^{54}\) Obviously, this fact reveals the predominant position of the Meo Zamindars in certain Parganas wherein they seemed to have enjoyed exclusive revenue and military rights. The absence of other castes in these Parganas demonstrates the existence of sole authority of the Meos as well as the socially privileged position of this community vis-à-vis other social groups of Mewât. However, in the remaining 7 mixed paragans, i.e. Panain, Baroda (Bagar) Meo, Bajherah, Jalalpur, Hasan Badohar, Hasanpur Kori (Gori), and Dhara, the Meos shared their Zamindari rights with the Khânzâdas of Mewât.\(^{55}\) The appearance of Meo Zamindars along with Khanzada Zamindars is remarkable as it lays emphasis on the growth of Meos’ power and prestige. The Meos appeared to have substantially increased their influence, and consolidated their social and economic position to such an extent that they were now being considered akin to the Khânzâdas, the former chieftains of Mewât. \(Ā‘in-i-Akbarī\) provides sufficient details regarding Meos’ contribution to the Mughal administration particularly their revenue and military assignments in each Pargana. This information can be gleaned to

\(^{54}\) Ibid., pp. 202-203.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.
ascertain their actual position in contemporary society in relation to other castes enumerated in the list of Zamindars.

The Sarkar of Tijara consisted of total 18 Parganas out of which Meo Zamindars have been reported from 14 Parganas. Out of these, Meo Zamindars are exclusively mentioned in 12 Parganas, namely Pinangwan, Bhasohra, Tijarah, Jhimrawat, Khanpur, Sakras, Santhadari, Firozpur, Fatehpur Mungarta, Karherah (Ghaserah), Khorah ka Thanah (Khawa) and Naginan (Noganwa). In the remaining two Parganas, namely Umra Umri and Bisru, the Meos shared their rights with other castes, i.e. Thathar and Khânzâdas.

Out of total 7 Parganas of Sahar Sarkar, Meo Zamindars are found in four, i.e. Pahari, Kamah, Koh Mujahid and Nunherah. However, none of these consisted of exclusive Meo Zamindaris, and part from the Meos, they also included other castes—Jats, Ahirs and Thathars.

Social significance of the record of the A’in also lies in the fact apart from providing details regarding exclusive Zamindari rights of the Meos, in some of the Parganas it also mentions other castes as Zamindars along with the Meos. The inclusion of other castes along with the Meos signifies that the Meos had to share their revenue and military rights with landed elites of other castes. It is important to know who were these fellow Zamindars, what was the extent of their rights, and what was the relative position of the Meo Zamindars vis-à-vis other Zamindars. In the Sarkar of Alwar, the Meos shared their Zamindari rights with only one caste, i.e. the Khânzâdas of Mewât. Here, there were

56 Ibid., pp. 203-204.
7 Parganas, namely Panain, Baroda (Bagar) Meo, Bajherah, Jalalpur, Hasan Badohar, Hasanpur Kori (Gori), and Dhara, wherein the Meos shared their Zamindari rights with the Khänzädas of Mewät.\textsuperscript{57} Khänzädas were the former chieftains of Mewät and wielded considerable influence over the people. The predominant position of the Khänzädas in Mewät can also be ascertained by the fact that in Alwar Sarkar, the Khänzädas had 10 exclusively-held Parganas, whereas the exclusive rights of the Meo Zamindars were restricted to only 5 Parganas. It can be argued that it were the Meo Zamindars who derived greater social advantage from their association with the Khänzädas. The co-existence of the Meo Zamindars with the Khänzäda Zamindars in such Parganas promoted conditions of social harmony, professional coordination and working relationship which significantly enhanced the social status, made them more and more acceptable, and helped them to overcome their stigmatized past. In terms of social mobility, these conditions had far-reaching consequences. In the Sarkar of Tijara, the Meo Zamindars reportedly shared their rights with only two castes—the Khänzädas and Thathars. In Bisru Pargana, the Meo Zamindars are mentioned with the Khänzädas, while in Umra Umri, they shared their Zamindaris with the Thathars. Therefore, the sharing of Zamindari rights is very marginal in the Sarkar of Tijara in comparison to Alwar Sarkar. The most significant feature of Tijara Sarkar is the high proportion of exclusively Meo-held Parganas which indicates unmistakable predominance of the Meo Zamindars. Out of a total of 18 Parganas of Tijara Sarkar, the Meo Zamindars are said to have exclusively controlled 12 Parganas, namely Pinangwan, Bhasohra, Tijarah, Himrawat, Khanpur, Sakras, Santhadari, Firozpur, Fatehpur Mungarta, Karherah, Khorah ka Thanah, and

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., pp. 202-203.
Naginan. It may be noted that there were only two exclusively non-Meo Zamindari Parganas out of which Indri Pargana solely belonged to the Khâنزâdas, and another one, Pur consisted of Thathar caste only. Hence, the marked existence and the numerical strength of exclusive Meo Zamindars in comparison to weak presence of non-Meo Zamindaris in the Sarkar of Tijara reflect the process of formation and proliferation of Meo agricultural settlements in the nuclear region of Mewât. Another important feature noticed in Tijara Sarkar was the existence of forts in some of the Parganas. Ā in mentions that the Parganas of Pinangwan, Bhasohra, Jhimrawat and Tijara consisted of a stone fort. Interestingly, all these 4 Parganas were exclusively Meo Parganas. The tendency of fortification suggests high threat perception, adoption of conventional modes of warfare, and the growth of warrior-hood among the Meos of Mewât.

Amazingly, we do not find any exclusively Meo-held Pargana in the Sarkar of Sahar. Therefore, the Meos of this Sarkar reportedly shared their Zamindari rights with the Jats, Ahirs and Thathars. Out of total 7 Paragans, the Meo Zamindars have been reported from 4 Paragans, namely Pahari, Kamah, Koh Mujahid and Nunherah. whereas the Jats, Ahirs and Thathars are found in 6, 2 and 1 Parganas. Here, the presence of Meo Zamindars in relation to other castes is quite noticeable, with sole exception of the Jats who marginally exceeded the Meos.

The grant of Zamindari rights to the Meos by Emperor Akbar marks the culmination of the process of change that initiated with the downhill movement of the Mewâti herdsmen and raiders during thirteenth century. It was barely credible that the people who were despised as knaves and thieves, and were selectively hunted and
hounded in the hills of Mewāt by the ruthless armies of Sultan Balban in 13th century, would transform their lives by adopting plough agriculture, augment their agricultural and landed resources, and would eventually appear in Āʻīn-i-Akbarī as a highly privileged class of Zamindars. This alteration was a result of occupational changes that initially occurred and brought about economic mobility in their lives. The shifting over from a subsistence economy (cattle-rearing) to surplus economy (crop cultivation) was a massive economic transition that had important bearings on social life and status of this community. Economic mobility brought surplus, landed wealth, military power, and political ambitions. Perhaps all this was necessary to bring this condemned marginalized community into the mainstream. The process of economic mobility restructured their economic foundations that provided the basis for another process of mobility and change. Economic mobility and change augmented their wealth and resources, enhanced their social prestige and social acceptance, and thus led to a social transformation.

The evidence of Āʻīn is also important to ascertain the actual relationship between the Meos and the Mughal Empire. Shail Mayaram has emphasized that Meos had always been hostile to successive state formations and that the Mughal State was also in a state of perpetual war the Meos.58 But the extent of revenue and military rights, exclusively or jointly enjoyed by the Meo Zamindars alone or along with others, does not corroborate the postulation presented by Mayaram. The inclusion of Meos as Zamindars in the Sarkars of Alwar, Tijara and Sahar help us to formulate our perspective regarding Mughal-Meo relations. It is obvious that the notion of Zamindari denotes conferment of certain rights on certain individuals by the Imperial authority. Nurul Hasan has argued

58 Mayaram, op. cit., p.
that intermediary Zamindars were those Zamindars who were conferred the right to collect revenue from territories under direct Mughal control. Since Alwar, Tijara and Sahar Sarkars of Agra Suba were certainly an integral part of the Mughal Empire, it is obvious that Meo Zamindars fell into the category of intermediary Zamindars. In the capacity of revenue collectors, Meo Zamindars were the chief representative of the Mughal State at the Pargana level and therefore, they made an important contribution to the economy of the Mughal State. The fact that Zamindari rights were also inclusive of military duties further enhances the role of Zamindars in consolidation of Mughal rule in India. The grant of Zamindari rights or the selection of a particular community for the rank of Zamindar largely depended on their social, economic and political capabilities, as well as on Imperial preferences. In other words, the choice of a Zamindar in a particular territory was determined by the administrative ability and loyalty of the beneficiary. It is not without significance that Meos, who were known as substantial landholders with tremendous revenue and armed strength, were also able to display their trustworthiness to their Imperial masters. The exceptionally high range of exclusive Meo Zamindaris particularly in the Sarkar of Tijara proves beyond doubt that Emperor Akbar considered the Meos as a socially dominant, loyal and competent social group who could be entrusted with highest official responsibilities in their respective region. Therefore, it is pertinent to argue that on account of their faithfulness and administrative contribution to the Mughal Empire, the Meos enjoyed not just cordial relationship with their political masters, but were effectively integrated into the Mughal structure. In light of this, we can
argue that stirring theories that override historical basis and attempt to cast the Meos as anti-State or anti-History do not stand the test of validity.\textsuperscript{59}

Revenue records of \textit{A in-i-Akbar} also help us to ascertain the nature of control of the Zamindars over the land and revenue in their respective Parganas. However, in mixed-caste Parganas, the records represent only the generalized control of different castes over land and revenue. On the contrary, in exclusively single caste Paraganas, it is easier to determine the nature and extent of actual control of a particular community over cultivable land and revenue collection. \textit{A in} shows in the Sarkar of Alwar a total of 107,182 Bighas Biswas of agricultural land was subjected to the exclusive control of Meo Zamindars. It is striking to note that the size of Meo-controlled land was relatively larger than the control exclusively exercised by the Zamindars of other castes, namely Kachhawahahs, Baqqal, Bargujars, Rājpūts, Minas, Abbasis and the Jats in their respective Parganas. The size of revenue collection assigned to exclusively Meo Zamindars was 2,819,428 dams which was higher than exclusive collection of several castes, namely Kacchwhahas, Bargujars, Rājpūts, Minas, Mahats, Abbasis and Jats. In this way, the Meo Zamindars appeared to have enjoyed exclusive rights over 7.4\% of cultivable land and 6.7\% of land revenue However, the only castes that exclusively exceeded the Meos in terms of both size of land and revenue collection were the Khānzsādas and Chauhans. Besides, the Khānzsādas and Meo Zamindars jointly controlled 171,722 bigha biswas of agricultural land, and 4,072,357 of land revenue which was higher than any other caste combination in mixed-Zamindari Parganas of this Sarkar. Therefore, the joint control of Khānzsād and Meos over land and land revenue is

\textsuperscript{59} Mayaram. p.
estimated at 11.9% and 9.8% respectively. By adding together the size of land and revenue collected from exclusively-Meo Parganas and joint Meo-Khânzâda Parganas, we find that the Meo Zamindars enjoyed considerable degrees of control over 19.5% of the total land and 16.5% of total land revenue in the Sarkar of Alwar.

Therefore, along with the Khânzâdas and Chauhans, the Meos emerge as one of the pre-dominant landed groups in the Sarkar of Alwar. But the most significant aspect of this trend was the emergence of the Meos as one of the most productive community. The record of the Ṭīn shows that cultivable land exclusively held by the Meos had a tendency to yield higher revenue than the territories held by non-Meo Zamindars. For instance, the Pargana of Dadekar yielded revenue of 695,262 dams from an agricultural area of 27,051 bigha biswas.\(^6^0\) Similarly, 229,741 dams were collected as revenue from an area of 6,030 bigha biswas in the Paragana of Rath.\(^6^1\) In another case from Harsana, an exceptionally high revenue figure of 208,281 dams was raised from a narrow cultivable stretch of 4,025 bigha biswas.\(^6^2\) It is noticeable that Meo Zamindaris certainly yielded higher revenue in comparison to the revenue yield raised from the Zamindaris of the Bargijar, Chauhan, Râjpût and Abassi communities. The exclusive presence of Meo Zamindars in these Parganas further enhances the significance of this trend of agricultural productivity. With few exceptions, this trend is more pronounced in sole Meo Parganas. It may be argued that the class of Meo Zamindars had evolved out from great masters of crop cultivation who, with continuous experimentation in the fields, brought about the phenomenon of intensive agriculture in the semi-arid regions of Mewât.

\(^{60}\) Ain, op. it., p. 202-203.
\(^{61}\) Ibid.
\(^{62}\) Ibid.
In the Sarkar of Tijara, Meo Zamindars appeared to have tremendously increased their strength in revenue collection and productivity. In twelve Parganas they enjoyed exclusive rights over 450,024 bigha biswas of land (i.e. 61%), out of which they collected 12,962,217 dams of revenue which is approximately 72% of the total collection. The commanding position of the Meos as excellent Zamindars and revenue collectors also becomes clear when we draw a comparison of the exclusive strength of the Meos with that of the Khānzādas (134,150 bigha biswas and 1,995,216 dams), and Thathars (2,476 bigha biswas and 540,645 dams) respectively. Besides, Meo Zamindars also far exceeded the Khānzādas with respect to productivity. In the Pargana of Santhadari, wherein Meos enjoyed exclusive Zamindari rights, an exceedingly high revenue yield of 406,811 dams was extracted from the agricultural land measuring 7,712 bigha biswas.\(^6^4\) Pargana Naginan is said to have yielded 377,257 dams of revenue from an area of 7,215 bigha biswas.\(^6^4\) Likewise, from a cultivable tract of 64,150 bigha biswas in the Pargana Firozepur, 3,042,642 dams of land revenue was reported.\(^6^5\) Therefore, the evidence of high revenue yields from solely Meo-held Parganas suggests enormous capacity of the Meo Zamindars to increase the productivity, yield and revenue from the territories under their exclusive control. Though we do not have any idea regarding the nature of inputs in crops and irrigation, we can surmise that such a breakthrough in agricultural yield could not have occurred unless massive efforts towards promotion and intensification of agriculture had been undertaken by the class of Meo Zamindars.

\(^6^1\) Ibid., II, p. 204.
\(^6^4\) Ibid.
\(^6^5\) Ibid.
In the Sarkar of Sahar, wherein single-caste Zamindaris are non-existent, higher productivity is found either in Jat-inclusive or Meo-Inclusive Parganas. In Pahari Pargana, jointly held by the Meos and Thathars, 1,228,999 dams of revenue were yielded from an area of 106,422 bigha biswas. The Pargana of Nunherah, where the Zamindari rights were shared by the Meos, Jats and Ahirs, total revenue of 618,115 dams was raised from a stretch of 50,816 bigha biswas. It can be argued that apart from the Jats, the Meos immensely contributed to production, and the presence of Meo Zamindars was crucial in increasing the productivity of these Parganas.

SOCIAL PRIVILEGES: MEORAS AND KHIDMATIYAS:

The process of change among the Meos was not restricted to their conversion to agriculture and landed aristocracy but also expressed itself in other respects. The formation of the Mughal Imperial system appeared to have played a major role in offering new opportunities of employment to various classes and social groups. A noticeable development in this respect is the marked presence of certain sections of the Meos in the Mughal services. The Ā'in classifies the Meos into two major categories, i.e. agriculturists including cultivators and Zamindars, and the Meoras and Khidmatiyyas who worked as postal carriers, spies and royal guards. Abul Fazl referred to them as Mewrah, and tells us that they are natives of Mewät, and were famous as runners, and that one thousand of them were employed by Akbar as post-carriers, and were called Dak-Mewrahs.66 Further commenting on their traits, he observed that "they bring from great distances with zeal anything that may be required. They are excellent spies, and well perform the most intricate duties. They are likewise always ready to carry out orders.

66 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama. Also cited in A. Cunningham, op. cit., p. 22.
The caste which they belonged to was notorious for highway robbery and theft; former rulers were not able to keep them in check. The effective orders of His Majesty have led them to honesty; they are now famous for their trustworthiness.⁶⁷ The importance of Dak-Meorahs under the Mughals is also mentioned in Tarikh-i-Akbarî which states that “Emperor Akbar employed four thousand foot-runners (Dak-carriers). They are expert in espionage also, they are on his majesty’s service day and night so that news and reports reach regularly everyday from all sides of the world. This class of men run as fast as lion, so that within ten days news comes from Bengal which at a distance of seven hundred Karohs (kos) from Agra. His majesty gets all information of good or bad and profit or loss.”⁶⁸ Though other classes might also have found employment in the postal service but it is quite obvious that a substantial portion of the 4,000 post-carriers were Dak-Mewrahs. The utility of Dak-Mewrahs is clearly borne out from the fact that the Mughal State was increasingly becoming more and more dependent on their services particularly in the fields of military communication and espionage. Their growing numerical strength synchronizes with the enormous expansion of the Mughal territories under Akbar which necessitated a vast network of postmen, messengers, informers, detectives and secret agents. Irfan Habib has discussed at length the elaborate relay system as it was nearly impossible for a messenger to cover a distance of 700 Karohs (kos) single-handedly.⁶⁹ The mobility and efficiency of the Mughal communication system is also attested by Tarikh-i-Akbarî which states that Akbar had installed a Dak Chauki at every 5 Kurohs.

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⁶⁸ Muhammad Arif Qandhari, Tarikh-i-Akbarî, (tr.) Tasneem Ahmad, Delhi, 1993, p. 62. Also cited in Surajbhan, op. cit., p. 31.
⁶⁹ Irfan Habib, “Postal Communication in Mughal India” PIHC, Amritsar, 1985, pp. 236-52.
(approx. 11 miles) which was manned by at least two Dak-Meorah and two horses.\textsuperscript{70} Frequent ed by relay runners and relay horses, Dak Chaukis were widely distributed along important land routes all over the Empire.\textsuperscript{71} Ninety-four Meoras are said to have been posted on the Dak Chaukis situated on the route extending from Khandap (Ajmer Suba) to Ahmedabad and thence to Baroda up to Broach.\textsuperscript{72} Similarly, 164 Meoras were entrusted with postal duties on Agra-Ahmedabad route, and about 77 of these were positioned at Dak Chaukis.\textsuperscript{73} The trend continued well up to later Mughal period during which a number of Dak Meoras were duly recognized or rewarded for their outstanding contribution.\textsuperscript{74} Dastur Komwar, a Rājasthāni record of later period, refers to about 200 Meoras stationed at the Dak Chaukis along Delhi-Jaipur-Agra route.\textsuperscript{75}

The role of Khidmatiyyas in the Mughal Empire was no less significant as unflinching loyalty to the Emperor was the cornerstone of their employment and functioning. They constituted the most trusted class of infantry who not only shielded the Mughal Emperor in person but also supervised the execution of the royal orders. As royal guards they were stationed at the royal palace and considered as the confidential crew of the Emperor. The fact that the Khidmatiyyas belonged to the Meo community reinforced the existence of an unmistakable Meo-Mughal nexus, and substantially enhanced the social and political weight of the Meos in the Imperial eyes.

\textsuperscript{70} Qandhari, op cit., p. 62.
\textsuperscript{71} Habib, op. cit., p. 236-252
\textsuperscript{72} Habib, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} BL Bhadani, 'The Mughal Highway and Post Stations in Marwar,' \textit{Pr.IHC}, 1990, pp. 141-155.
\textsuperscript{74} Arzdasht dt. Mahvadi 6, v.s. 1740/1683 CE; Arsatāa pargana Jalalpur, v.s. 1744/1687 CE; Arsatāa pargana Pahari, v.s. 1793/1736 CE.
\textsuperscript{75} Dastur Komwar Mutfarkat, vol. 23, v.s. 1774/1717 CE, pp. 59-140.
Therefore, the Dak-Mewrahs and Khidmatiyyas appear as pillars of strength that effectively catered to the communication and security needs of a rapidly growing Imperial system. In other words, the services of these sections of the Meos had become indispensable for efficiency, control and consolidation of the Mughal Empire. Such important and secret assignments could have been accomplished only by securing the services and support of a class of trusted and devoted workers, and in this regard, the Meoras and Khidmatiyyas were found to be most suitable.\textsuperscript{76} Obviously, they had won the confidence of the Mughal authorities and Emperor Akbar considered them as faithful servants of their Imperial master. The reference to a ‘thousand Dak-Mewrahs’\textsuperscript{77} in Mughal service indicates the extent to which Mughal Emperor counted on them. It is pertinent to cite the example of Hatwa Meora who helped Akbar to trounce his enemies in 1567 CE by providing highly confidential information regarding the movements of the rebels. The loyalty of the Meoras also enabled them to serve as royal bodyguards\textsuperscript{78} of Emperor Akbar, and Hatwa Meora was even asked to escort Akbar during his campaigns.\textsuperscript{79} Once inducted into the Imperial service by Akbar, the Meoras carved out a permanent place in the Mughal administrative structure, and it is noteworthy that Dak Meoras are found running between Dak Chaukis even during the reign of Aurangzeb.\textsuperscript{80}

What is the social significance of this phenomenon? The large-scale employment of the Meoras in the Mughal administration brought about key changes in the socio-economic position of the Meos. At the outset, it altered the social and political relations

\textsuperscript{76} Surajbhan. op. cit., pp. 31-32.
\textsuperscript{77} A Cunningham, op. cit., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{78} FC Channing, \textit{Land Revenue Settlement of the Gurgaon District}, Lahore, 1877, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{79} Abul Fazl, \textit{Akbarnama}, vol. 2, pp. 427-28.
of the Mewati populace with their Imperial masters. Considering the spate of distrust, vengeance and bloodshed that characterized the relationship between the Meos and the Delhi Sultans, the induction of the Meoras in the Imperial structure transformed the Meo-Mughal relations to a great extent. This process introduced a new element of social and political integration of the Mewati populace into the imperial structure. From Mewati point of view, the social impact of this phenomenon was tremendous. The recruitment of the postal personnel exclusively from the Meos enhanced the economic and social status of this group in the eyes of other communities of Mewat. In the first place, the opening up of loads of employment opportunities in the Imperial offices brought about occupational mobility among the Meoras, and secondly, it enormously increased their income and resources. According to Ā’in-i-Akbarī, a Dak Meorah used to draw a monthly salary of 100 to 120 dams during the reign of Akbar.\textsuperscript{81} In later Mughal period, the Diwan of Amber is said to have made a payment of Rs. 22 to Bhoja and Madho Meoras for obtaining a letter from Allahabad.\textsuperscript{82} In many cases, the Meoras were even paid special allowances for special services in addition to their salaries. It is also evident that some of the Meoras also enjoyed special exemption and concessions in land revenue on their landholdings. It has been reported that Bhoja and Laad Khan Meora received a grant of 10 and 14 bighas revenue free land in Pargana Bharkol.\textsuperscript{83} Therefore, the Dak Meoras derived a great deal of economic advantages from their position. The nature of payment and remuneration brought them into the economic mainstream of the Mughals wherein they accrued the advantages of cash economy and commercialization. The system of cash

\textsuperscript{81} Ain-i-Akbari, I, op. cit., pp 188-189.
\textsuperscript{82} Khatoot Ahalkaran dt. Asaj Sudi, v.s. 1771/1714 CE.
\textsuperscript{83} Arsatta pargana Bharkol, v.s. 1722/1665 CE.
payment and the size of their monthly salaries relieved them from the vagaries of nature and rampant economic distress, and enormously helped them to consolidate their economic and social position. Beyond fixed salaries they also enjoyed exclusive economic concessions such as revenue free grants which not just augmented their resource base but also marked them out as a socially privileged class. In this way, economic advantages earned them considerable social prestige and significantly altered their social status. Being a part and parcel of the secret agencies of the Mughal administration, the social image of the Meoras was also transformed into a confidential, influential and formidable group that enjoyed sizeable royal patronage. Their proximity with the Mughal authorities and their special bond with their patron, Emperor Akbar also buttressed their social status. Therefore, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Meoras as well as their brethren Meos emerged as a politically influential, economically vigorous and socially privileged group who possessed a distinct social identity. Another important aspect of this trend was the growth of social differentiation among the Meos. Certainly, by the 16th century, the Meo population had broadened its horizons and branched out into various locations and different modes of occupation. Obviously, a particular section of the community worked as Mughal postmen and spies, another segment operated as Mughal Zamindars, while the rest constituted the general peasantry. This clearly indicates that the peasant community of the Meos had developed into a complex social group whose various segments had attained adequate dynamism to adopt an independent course of action. Despite the fact that the outer world continued to regard them as one people, intrinsically the community had split up into coherent sections that could articulate its preferences and express itself in its own distinctive style in accordance to its aptitude and
existing opportunities. The diversification of the Mewāti population first from herders and raiders into cultivators, and thence into Zamindars, Meoras and Khidmatiyyas suggests a definite social and occupational differentiation. When viewed against their earlier background, it was a remarkable change from a homogeneous community that lived on herding and raiding, into a dynamic, diversified and socially differentiated group of people.

CHANGES IN MEO MILITARISM—CATTLE-RAIDERS TO PEASANT-WARRIORS:

It is necessary to delineate the military character of the Meos as this particular attribute also played a vital role in the social transformation of these people. The beginnings of militarism among the Meos can be traced from tribal warfare and cattle-raiding that characterized the early Mewātis. Initially, the Meos belonged to those cattle-herding groups whose subsistence needs pushed them into the habit of loot and plunder. Thus, the military traditions of the Meos were firmly rooted in their social organization and physiographic features of Mewāt region. In the early periods, the Meos inhabited the hilly terrains of the Arāvellis and their militarism was restricted to dense jungles, roads and highways in the neighbourhood of Delhi.84 During the early Sultanate period, they were referred to “thieves, robbers and highwaymen,”85 “rebels,” “marauders,” and “outlaws,”86 “miscreants,”87 and “most turbulent of all the Hindu groups”88 All these references reflect the nature and extent of their belligerent activities against Delhi Sultanate. The manner in which the Mewātis were addressed by the Persian chroniclers also indicates the Imperial perspective about such non-conformist groups at large. The

84 Barni, op. cit., ED, iii, p. 104.
85 Siraj, op. cit., ED, ii, p. 381.
86 Barni, op. cit., ED, iii, pp. 104-105.
87 Sirhindi, op. cit., HB, p. 37.
88 Haig, op. cit., p. 233.
ability to wage war or conduct raids on enemies' territories by rebel groups largely depended on the marshalling of manpower and limited resources particularly arrangement of horses and weapons of war. In the early medieval period, Meos appeared to have survived on the basis of their armed strength which enabled them to organize raids and offer resistance to the Imperial establishment of the Sultanate. Every successful raid brought immense material gains which helped them to revamp their raiding bands and enlarge their striking abilities.

However, the military status of the Mewatis underwent significant changes over a period of time and these changes had certain linkages with the process of social transformation of this particular group. During the second half of 13th century, Barni noticed certain changes in their martial activities: “The turbulence of the Miwattis had increased, and their strength had grown in the neighbourhood of Delhi.” 89 It seems that by now they had augmented their resources on the basis of which they were able to penetrate new territories and began to plunder new classes. They are said to have targeted “country houses,” “highways”, “pilgrims,” “caravans and merchants.” 90 Audaciously, they even captured “a drove of camels and a number of people of Ulugh Khan” and “ravaged the villages in the districts of Harriana, the Siwalik hills, and Bayana.” 91 The upsurge in their strength had emboldened them so much so that they had even begun to target water-fetching girls, “strip them and carry off their clothes.” 92 Barni lamented that

89 Barni, op. cit., ED, iii, p. 104.
90 Ibid.
92 Barni, op. cit., ED, iii, p. 104.
“these daring acts of the Miwattis had caused a great ferment in Delhi.” Such was the dread of the Mewāttis that “the western gates of the city were shut at afternoon prayer, and no one dared to go out of the city in that direction after that hour.” Such daring acts occurring directly under the nose of Delhi Sultans clearly indicate that Mewāti armed strength had reached a formidable height and now they were willing to contend with the Imperial armies.

Full of vengeance, the Imperial backlash in the hills of Mewāt under Sultan Balban devastated the strength of the Meo insurgents. Barni tells us that the Mewāti centres of power were located “on the summits of the loftiest hills and rocks, and were of great strength, but they were all taken and ravaged.” The onslaught of the Delhi army revealed the nature of control and the scale of the military might of the Meo rebels: “Two hundred and fifty of the chiefs of the rebels were captured. One hundred and forty-two horses were led away to the royal stables, and six bags of tankas, amounting to thirty thousand tankas...were sent to the royal treasury.” Certainly this was the mainstay of their military power that bolstered Mewāti menace and heightened militarism in this region. But the most remarkable aspect of this conflict is reported by Barni which states that “one hundred thousand of the royal army were slain by the Miwattis.” If this is true then not an iota of doubt can be expressed about the emergence of the Mewātis as a distinguished class of warriors. In his study of the origins of Meo Pals, Abdul Aziz refers to the ruins of a fortress along with the original Meo settlement on the top of the hills at

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93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Siraj, op. cit., ED, ii, p. 381.
96 Ibid.
97 Barni, op. cit., ED, iii, pp. 104-105, 111.
the sites of Kajhota and Garh in Alwar and Bharatpur districts respectively. In light of the fact that all the twelve settlements, originally belonging to the twelve Pals, were located on hill tops, it can be argued that these sites were the nodal centres from where the Pal chiefs carried out their raiding expeditions and conducted wartime measures. Their war strategy, system of defence fortifications, guerilla tactics and mobility of their footed and mounted soldiers seem to suggest that the Meos had attained an impressive military status and Meo society enjoyed the protection of a well-organized and vigilant army of mountaineers.

During the Tuglaq period, the signs of anarchistic activities of the Meos became evident once again and therefore, genuine attempts were made by Sultan Firoz to contain the Meo menace. The Panjab Gazetteer reported that “the emperor Firoz Shah cantoned a force here [at Jhirka-Firozpur] for the control and subjection of the hill tribes.” A fortress is also said to have been built at Indori in Kala Pahad by Sultan Firoz suggesting military preparations in Mewat. In his Futuhat-i-Firoz Shahi, Sultan Firoz also claims that he “founded two flourishing towns (kasba), one called Tughlikpur, the other Salarpur.” It appears that the Meos had gathered substantial armed strength to provoke elaborate military response from Sultan Firoz Tuglaq. From Arzang-i-Tijara we come to know that apart from the Meos, some sections of the Jadon Rājpūts were also

99 Ibid., pp. 10-34.
101 Afif, op. cit., ED iii, p. 354.
102 Firoz Tuglaq, Futuhat-i-Firoz Shahi. ED, vol. 3, p. 381. Also cited in A. Cunningham, op. cit., p. 15
causing a great deal of disturbances in Mewāt by plunder and pillage which necessitated military action by Firoz.103

However, an event of far-reaching consequence was the formation of the kingdom of Khānzādas in 1389 CE in the nucleus region of Mewāt which altered the socio-economic and military character of the Meos. The process of Meos' conversion to agriculture along with colonization of villages generated sufficient amount of agricultural surplus and obliterated the need of recurrent raids and highway robberies. Consequently, the focus of their armed strength gradually shifted from loot and plunder to protection of their standing crops and security of their flourishing village settlements. Therefore, occupational changes altered the status of their raiding bands into regular and respectable infantry and cavalry. It may be noted that since Khānzāda chieftains shared the genealogical pool with few Meo Pals, the chieftainship of Khānzādas brought substantial economic and military benefits to these sections which might have strengthened the position of the Meos.

The establishment of the Mughal power in India roughly coincided with the disintegration of the Khānzāda rule in Mewāt. Significantly, both these events constitute the transitional stage in Meo history as it demarcates the new development of Meos' from the previous one. In the first half of the 16th century the Meos appeared in Babur-Nama as a formidable force against whom Babur is said to have ordered major loot and plunder expedition.104 The rise in military strength of the Mewāti peasantry can be ascertained by the fact that fragments of the Mughal forces scattered in the Gangetic Doāb and Delhi

103 Thanvi, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
104 Babur-Nama, op. cit., p. 551.
were all harnessed for this purpose. On the eve of the battle of Khanwa (1527 CE), Babur refers to Hasan Khan Mewāti, the Khānzāda ruler of Mewāt, as “the sole leader of the trouble and mischief” and “mover of all disturbance” because “Hasan Khan Miwati really had joined Rana Sanga.” Babur’s anxiety about Hasan Khan Mewāti’s alignment with the forces of Rana Sanga indicates the military status of the Khānzādas and the impending consequences of the unity between the two leading forces of the times. In his estimation of Rana Sanga’s forces at Khanwa, Babur worked out that “Hasan Khan of Miwät had 12,000 horses.” Considering the fact that Meos had genealogical links with the ruling clan of Khānzādas’, the participation of the Meo peasant-warriors in Hasan Khan’s army cannot be ruled out. It can be surmised that a considerable number of Meo warriors, being important constituents of Hasan Khan Mewāti’s division, had fought in the battle of Khanwa along with the forces of Rana Sanga. Doubtless, the presence of Meo warriors in the plains of Khanwa against the imperial army of Babur marked the transformation of the localized guerilla bands of Mewāt into a standing army, skilled in conventional mode of warfare. As the rule of Khānzādas faded away into oblivion with the death of Hasan Khan Mewāti, the refurbished Meo warrior hood surged ahead and found new avenues to demonstrate its newfound strength and vigour.

Towards the end of the 16th century, substantial changes occurred in the military character of the Meos and other peasant classes. The actual size and the nature of Meo

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105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., p. 523.
107 Ibid., p. 578.
108 Ibid., p. 547.
109 Ibid., p. 562.
110 Ibid., 573.
warrior hood is best represented in *A'in-i-Akbari* which furnishes precise details of military strength of Meo Zamindars in each Paragana. Execution of military duties was an integral part of Mughal Zamindari system. Such responsibilities included maintenance of a specific number of horsemen and foot soldiers by the Zamindars of each Pargana. *A'in-i-Akbari* provides exact figures of cavalry and infantry that the Zamindars of each Paragana were expected to maintain. However, the size of military strength varied from Pargana to Pargana, and it also depended on whether a Pargana is exclusively controlled by a particular caste or jointly controlled by a number of castes. In the Sarkar of Alwar, there were 43 Parganas but the Meos Zamindars have been reported from 12 Parganas only. Total military strength of the 12 Parganas of Alwar Sarkar, wherein Meo Zamindaris occurred, is estimated at 715 cavalry and 4,208 infantry. Out of this, the Meo Zamindars had exclusive responsibility in 5 Parganas to arrange a total of 335 horsemen and 2700 foot soldiers. In two of such Parganas, i.e. Dadekar and Khelohar, the military superiority of the Meo Zamindars is quite evident where they solely maintained 150 cavalry and 1,000 infantry, and 125 cavalry and 1,000 infantry respectively. However, in the 7 Parganas that were jointly held by the Meos along with the Khânzâdas of Mewât, a number of 380 cavalry and 1508 infantry were apparently shared by both of them. It is noteworthy that the figures of infantry exclusively controlled by the Meos (2700) exceeded those of mixed-caste parganas (1508). However, in terms of cavalry, the figures of Meo-Khânzâda mixed Parganas (380) were marginally

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111 *Ain*, pp. 202, 203  
112 Ibid.  
113 Ibid.  
Fig. 12: Infantry and Cavalry held by Meo Zamīndārs in Tijārā, Alwar and Sahār Sarkārs of Āgrā Sūbā c. CE 1595.
higher than those of exclusively Meo Parganas (335). On the other hand, a comparison of the total military strength between exclusively Meo Parganas (335 cavalry & 2700 infantry) and exclusively Khānzādas' Parganas (980 cavalry & 9,000 infantry) shows military superiority of the Khānzādas over the Meo Zamindars in the Sarkar of Alwar. For instance, the exclusive strength of the Khānzādas was reportedly 350 cavalry and 2,000 infantry in the Pargana of Bihrozpur, and 500 cavalry and 2,000 infantry in Bahadurpur.\textsuperscript{116} We may cite another example of the Pargana of Khohari Rana where 900 horsemen and 500 foot soldiers are jointly attributed to the Zamindars belonging to Khānzāda, Ama and Duar communities.\textsuperscript{117} Though, it cannot be denied that in terms of exclusive military hold, the Khānzādas apparently enjoyed supremacy over the Meos, yet when viewed from a strictly historical perspective, the military edge of the Khānzādas can be attributed to the fact that they were former chieftains, whereas the Meos had emerged from a meager tribal background and within a span of three centuries rose to the privileged position of the Zamindars. Therefore, the military power of the Meos in the Sarkar of Alwar cannot be underestimated as the grant of Zamindari rights to the Meos by the Mughals was itself a special recognition of their social and economic status as eminent landlords and warriors. Be that as it may, the marked presence of the Meos in both the Mughal cavalry and infantry in the Mewāt region clearly suggests that the Mughal Emperor recognized the social, economic and martial usefulness of this peasant community and entrusted them accordingly with sizeable revenue and military responsibilities.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. p. 202.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p.203.
\( A'\text{in} \) shows the degrees of military power exercised by the Meo Zamindars in the Sarkar of Tijara, but it is not uniform and varies from one Pargana to another. It may be noted that in case of Parganas with mixed Zamindaris, \( A'\text{in} \) does not provide the actual proportion of military strength of Zamindars of a particular caste, therefore, we must ascertain the military weight of the Meo Zamindars from the total number of cavalry and infantry collectively mentioned against each Pargana. However, the picture is certainly clear in the Parganas exclusively held by the Meos, since the enlisted figures of horsemen and foot-soldiers obviously reflect the exclusive martial strength of this community. In those Parganas of Tijara Sarkar where Meos occurred along with other castes, we find a total strength of 20 cavalry and 300 infantry. In Umra Umri Pargana where Meos shared Zamindari rights with Thathars, the figures stand at 10 cavalry and 100 infantry.\(^{118}\) Similarly, a number of 10 horsemen and 200 foot-soldiers are recorded in Bisru Pargana wherein Meo Zamindars are mentioned along with the Khānzādas.\(^{119}\) On the other hand, in 12 exclusively Meo-held Parganas of Tijara Sarkar, the total armed strength of the Meo Zamindars has been estimated at 1014 cavalry and 5100 infantry. In Tijarah Pargana, Meo Zamindars significantly controlled 500 cavalry and 2000 infantry, whereas in Firozepur, the Meos are said to have maintained 50 cavalry and 1000 infantry.\(^{120}\) Variation in armed strength of the Meo Zamindars is also visible in some of the exclusively-held Parganas such as Sakras (14 cavalry, 150 infantry), Karherah (10 cavalry, 200 infantry), Pinangwan (20 cavalry, 300 infantry), Bhasohra (30 cavalry, 400 infantry), Jhimrawat (50 cavalry, 300 infantry), Naginan (100 cavalry, 150 infantry), and

\(^{118}\) Ibid., p. 204.  
\(^{119}\) Ibid.  
\(^{120}\) Ibid. p. 204.
Santhadari (200 cavalry).\textsuperscript{121} Broadly, the exclusive military strength of the Meo Zamindars in individual Parganas of the Sarkar of Tijara apparently ranged from 10 to 500 in cavalry, and 150 to 2,000 in infantry.\textsuperscript{122} Judging by the standards of medieval Indian armies, the nature of this evidence regarding the martial significance of a local peasant community in an Imperial structure, is extremely impressive and indicates substantial military predomination of the Meos in this region.

In the Sarkar of Sahar, total armed strength of the four mixed-Zamindari Parganas was 34 cavalry and 1200 infantry. Here, the strength of Meo Zamindars along with other castes varied from 4 to 20 horsemen and 200 to 700 foot-soldiers. Pargana Pahari consisted of Meo and Thathar Zamindars who maintained a number of 20 cavalry and 700 infantry. In the Parganas of Kamah and Koh Mujahid, where the Meos shared their Zamindari rights with the Jats and Ahirs, the strength of cavalry and infantry was reportedly 10 and 300, and 4 and 200 respectively.

In their military capacity, the Meo Zamindars appeared as the chief recruitment authority whose main task was to maintain a specific number of infantry and cavalry and keep them in readiness. They were also required to suppress revolts and maintain law and order in the territories under their jurisdiction. Since intermediary Zamindars exercised a great deal of liberty in execution of their duties, it can be construed that the Meo Zamindars were enrolling soldiers from their own community and not otherwise. As leaders of vigorous peasant communities, the Zamindars were socially bound to give precedence to their kinsmen in recruitment to military services. Therefore, a large number

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., pp. 203-204.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid. n, pp. 203-204.
of Meo men might have found employment in infantry or cavalry in the three Sarkars of Agra Suba. In this respect, the military authority of the Meo Zamindars served as the source of income and status to thousands of youths belonging to Meo peasant households, and thus brought about economic and social upliftment of their brethren.

Obviously, the possession of Zamindari rights in the reign of Akbar transformed the military character of the Meo peasantry. From the previously held position of peasant-warrior, they had risen to the rank of intermediary Zamindars who were the chief representatives of the Mughal military organization at the Paragana level. The integration of the Meos, who had earlier confronted Babur in the fields of Khanwa, into the Mughal military structure, can be considered as a great military transition which provided legitimacy to their martial traditions and acknowledged their indispensability in military affairs in Mewāt region. These developments had significant bearings on their social status as the enhancement of their rank, rights and armed strength brought tremendous political and administrative power, social and economic privileges, social prestige and social acceptability. Though rooted to their peasant settings, the Meo Zamindars now became the symbols of Mughal state, standing apart from the multitude of other cultivating classes of Mewāt.
Table 4: Pargana-wise Distribution of Meo Zamīndārs in the Śūba of Āgra in 1595*  
(Exclusive and Joint Control over Revenue, Army and Sayurghāl)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Pargana</th>
<th>Bighas Biswas</th>
<th>Revenue Dāms</th>
<th>Sayurghāl Dāms</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Castes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARKĀR OF ALWAR:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Panain</td>
<td>28,726</td>
<td>195,680</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Baroda(Bagar) Meo</td>
<td>13,062</td>
<td>158,045</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bajherah</td>
<td>2,663</td>
<td>104,890</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Jalalpur</td>
<td>46,840</td>
<td>893,599</td>
<td>10,665</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td></td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Hasan Badohar</td>
<td>20,353</td>
<td>947,871</td>
<td>3,020</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Hasanpur Kori (Gori)</td>
<td>47,740</td>
<td>1,259,659</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Dadekar</td>
<td>27,051</td>
<td>695,262</td>
<td>7,312</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Dhara</td>
<td>12,338</td>
<td>512,613</td>
<td>5,015</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Rath</td>
<td>6,030</td>
<td>229,741</td>
<td>3,744</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Khelohar</td>
<td>58,276</td>
<td>1,459,048</td>
<td>14,088</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Harsoli</td>
<td>11,800</td>
<td>227,096</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Harsana</td>
<td>4,025</td>
<td>208,281</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARKĀR OF SAHĀR:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Pahari</td>
<td>106,422</td>
<td>1,228,999</td>
<td>26,045</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>Meo, Thathar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Kamah</td>
<td>90,500</td>
<td>505,724</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Meo, Jat, Ahir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Koh Mujahid</td>
<td>23,769</td>
<td>170,365</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Meo, Jat, Ahir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Nunherah</td>
<td>50,816</td>
<td>618,115</td>
<td>17,515</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ahir, Jat, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARKĀR OF TIJĀRAH:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Umra Umri</td>
<td>8,107</td>
<td>307,037</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Thathar, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bisru</td>
<td>35,703</td>
<td>215,800</td>
<td>5,354</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Khanzadah, Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pinangwan(stone fort)</td>
<td>75,148</td>
<td>1,329,350</td>
<td>34,312</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Bhasohra (stone fort)</td>
<td>57,778</td>
<td>1,416,715</td>
<td>25,471</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Tijarah, has a fort</td>
<td>131,960</td>
<td>3,603,596</td>
<td>204,419</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Jhimrawat(Stone fort)</td>
<td>22,632.11</td>
<td>496,202½</td>
<td>31,283½</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Khanpur</td>
<td>9,893</td>
<td>195,620</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Sakras</td>
<td>12,106</td>
<td>460,088</td>
<td>50,411</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Santhadari</td>
<td>7,712.11</td>
<td>406,811</td>
<td>267,470</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Firozpur</td>
<td>64,150</td>
<td>3,042,642</td>
<td>69,044</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Fatehpur Mungarta</td>
<td>43,700</td>
<td>1,135,140</td>
<td>12,955</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Karherah (Ghaserah)</td>
<td>9,785</td>
<td>330,076</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Khorah ka Thanah</td>
<td>7,945</td>
<td>168,719</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Meo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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