The Bhomias

The bhomias occupied a pivotal position in the rural society and claimed a variety of superior rights in land. By and large, they were cultivators and, had at the same time claim to a share in the surplus produce.

The land held by the bhomias was termed as bhomi. "Bhomi" according to Wilson is defined in Rajputana as hereditary landed estate held free of assessment and is said to be applied to uncultivated land only. But this definition is not correct, as a separate assessment was made on the cultivated bhom lands, while uncultivated lands were exempted from the assessment. According to Tod, "the bhom was allodial holding which was transmitted to the descendants of those who had originally brought the land under cultivation, or those who had been displaced by later conquerors and were allowed small bhom by way of a subsistence allowance." In addition to it, bhom grants were made by rulers in recognition of exceptionally meritorious services rendered by the grantees to the state.

2. Tod, James, Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, loc. cit. pp. 133.
   Parwana Khas Mohar to Dalel Singh Rajawat, dt. K.M. Bhadon Vadi 5, V.S. 1800/1743, confirming the grant of the villages of Bhandraj etc. in bhomi. (Dhoola Records, under the custody of Thakur Dhoola, Dhoola House, Jaipur).
   Chithi to the Amils pargana Jai pura, dt. K.M. Posh Sudi 13, V.S. 1822/1765, D.D.H.
In the revenue documents and the chithis the term bhomia is used as a synonym to zamindar and most of the bhomias were engaged in cultivation.

During the period under study many Rajputs belonging to Kachhawa clans were given bhomi rights. In the process of the subjugation of other castes and clans by the Kachhawas during the course of the 18th century, many Kachhawa Rajputs acquired bhomi rights and established their zamindaris over the areas dominated by the Jats, Gujars, Chauhans and Tomurs. In many areas, especially in those where the vanquished were Rajputs, the members of the subjugated clans were driven away by the Kachhawas.

The documents make frequent references to the various Kachhawa clans who had bhom rights as well to the areas dominated by them. For example, in pargana Malpura, Naraina, Tonk and Toda Rai Singh persons belonging to Sultanate, Nathawat, Khangarot and Rajawat clans


2. Parwana K.M. Asoj Sudi 15, V.S. 1812/1755; Parwana Khas Mohar from Maharaja Swai Jaisingh to Dalel Singh Rajawat, dt. K.M. Asoj Sudi 13, V.S. 1795/1728; from Maharaja Swai Jai Singh to Sardul Singh Shahkamet, dt. K.M. Magh Vadi 12, V.S. 1797/1730. Chithi from Divan Kashi Ram Shiv Nath to Hari Har and Ram Nath, the Amil pargana Swai Jaipur, dt. K.M. Asoj Vadi 11, VS 1812/1755. Chithi from Divan Jaisingh Amal Chand to the Amil pargana Udehi, informing him about the grant of the villages Veghar Vabhori and Datasuti in zamindara bhomi to Megh Singh Rajawat. The grantee was instructed to expel Chauhans from the aforesaid villages. Chithi dt. K.M. Posh Sudi 14, V.S. 1830/1773.

had bhom rights. Similarly in pargana Malarna and Swai Madhopur
the Rajawats and Kilyanots were the bhomias. Later on, the Kilyanot
bhomias were driven away from the area on grounds of disloyalty and
repeated recalcitrance. They were replaced by the Rajawats who were
given bhom rights. 1 Some other Kachhawa sub-clans were also dis-
possessed of their bhom rights on grounds of disloyalty and were
replaced by loyal ones. 2

The bhomias in the state of Jaipur can be divided into two
categories. The first category consisted of the holders of more
than one village or a group of villages in bhom. The areas granted
to them were treated as their watan zamindaris. 3 They were required
to pay large amounts of peshkash 4 to the maharaja in seasonal instal-
ments. The seasonal amount paid by them was not calculated on the
actual produce or on the basis of detailed assessment. In their case

Cont'd... f.n. 3. pargana Mauzabad, dt. KM Savan Vadi 12, V.S. 1811/
1754. Chithi to the Amil pargana Naraina, dt. KM Dujam Chaitra
Sudi 15, V.S. 1804/1747. Chithi to the Amil pargana Malpura,
dt. KM Posh Sudi 13, V.S. 1822/1765.
1. Chithi to the Amils pargana Khohri, dt. KM Bhadon Vadi 12, V.S.
1811/1754, D.D.H.
2. Chithi to the Amil pargana Malpura, dt. KM Posh Sudi 13, V.S.
1822/1765, D.D.H. The Kangarots who were old bhomias were ousted
from the village of Mandawari etc. on grounds of disloyalty.
3. Parwanas from Maharaja Swai Jai Singh to Dalel Singh Rajawat, dt.
KM Asoj Sudi 13, VS 1795/1728 (Dhoola Records). Parwanas from
Maharaja Swai Madho Singh to Rao Vikramaditya Rajawat, dt. KM
VS 1817/1750, dt. KM Chaitra Sudi 9, V.S. 1821/1764.
Parwana from Maharaja Swai Ishwari Singh to Ratan Singh Rajawat,
dt. KM Chaitra Sudi 4, VS 1802/1745. Parwana from Maharaja Swai
Pratap Singh to Rao Vikramaditya, dt. KM Savan Vadi 11, VS 1834/
1777 (Thilana Records, Barwara, Barwara House, Jaipur).
4. Parwana Khas from Maharaja Swai Pratap Singh to Rao Vikramaditya
Rajawat, dt. KM Bhadon Vadi 10, V.S. 1834/1777 informing him
about the grant of pargana Bhagot Garh to him in watan zamindara.
The grantee had agreed to pay Rs. 100,000 as peshkash.
the revenue became standardized. They may be called peshkashi zamindars, exercising superior rights over areas already settled. They had the right to collect revenue from the dependent raiya and also to realize bhom or malikana from the raiyat. Some of them had the legal right to realize rahtari. By and large they were not cultivators though some of them may have held land which was cultivated by paltis or vasidars, either in sanjha or as tenants. These rights came into being as a result of military conquest.

The second category of the bhomi was of those who held either a village or a part of it or some bighas of land as bhom. Such grants were made by the state in lieu of meritorious military services and for colonization of new villages. These bhomi were

1. See chithi to the Amil pargana Udehi concerning the grant of Vaghor etc. mauza three to Lekh Singh Rajawat in zamindara. The grantee was required to pay a sum of Rs. 5,000/- per year. Chithi dt. K.M. Posh Sudi 7, V.S. 1830/1733.

Parwana Khas from Maharaja Swai Jai Singh to Dalel Singh Rajawat dt. K.M. Chaitra Vadi 1, V.S. 1797/1740 regarding the grant of tappa Patni in zamindara Kotri against a sum of Rs. 42,946/- per annum.

Parwana from Maharaja Swai Madho Singh to Rao Vikramaditya Rajawat, dt. K.M. Jeth Sudi 13, V.S. 1821/1754 informing him about the grant of village Gagai etc. in watan zamindara. The grantee was required to pay Rs. 6,000/- per annum inclusive of meh sayar rahtari etc.


Parwana from Maharaja Swai Jai Singh to Dalel Singh Rajawat dt. K.M Chaitra Vadi 1, V.S 1797/1740. Chithi from Diwan Bhag Chand to the Amil pargana Udehi dt. K.M Magh Sudi 14, V.S 1842/1785 (Dhoolla Records).

usually cultivators. They cultivated their land in various capacities i.e., either as gharuhala or in sanjha. They also rented out their spare land to other needy cultivators. The bulk of the bhomias belonged to this category. They may be identified as primary zamindars.

Usually, these bhomias held their grant without rendering any regular service to the darbar, except as watch and ward of the village boundaries and as protectors of standing crops. Some other officials too were entrusted with these obligations, such as vadhdar who were granted vadh land. However, there was a considerable difference between their position. The bhom grant was hereditary and without any condition of regular service to the state whereas the land granted in vadh was conditional upon the performance of regular service and the vadhdar could not claim hereditary or any proprietary right over land granted in vadh. The vadh grant could be confiscated, curtailed or transferred at any time by the darbar whereas the bhom grant was highly secure, normally unresumable though


it could be taken away by the state in the case of disloyalty. At
the time of emergency or war the bhomias were expected to render
military service to the ruler. In such cases they could be assigned
jagirs or paid cash salaries instead.\footnote{1}

The bhom right did not imply only hereditary proprietary right
but also the right to pay land revenue and other cesses on conces-
sional rates. All this made the bhom tenure very valuable.\footnote{2}
The superior property right which the bhomias claimed in the village
society was expressed by the demand of a share from the surplus
produce and payment of land revenue at concessional rates on their
gharuhala lands. Further the revenue rates charged from the bhomia
were less than those paid by other gharuhalas.\footnote{3} According to dastur-
ul Amal of pargana Antela the rate of revenue paid by the bhomias
was 20\% of the total produce whereas other gharuhalas paid at the
rate of 33.33\%.\footnote{4} However, from other revenue records it would
appear that the revenue actually paid by the bhomia was quite nominal.

1. Chithi to the Amil pargana Lalsot, dt. KM Falgun Vadi 2, VS
1815/1758. Chithi to the Amil pargana Mauzabad, dt. KM Magh
Sudi 5, VS 1819/1762, D.D.H.

2. Chithi to the Amil pargana Gaji ka Thana, dt. KM Chaitra Sudi
5, VS 1821/1764. Chithi to the Amil pargana Naraina, KM Dijam
Chaitra Sudi 15, VS 1804/1747, D.D.H.

3. Dastur-ul Amal pargana Nivai, dt. VS 1800/1743, pargana Gijgarh
dt. V.S. 1791/1734, H.S.

4. Dastur-ul Amal pargana Antela, dt. V.S. 1794/1731, H.S.
It was 6 paisa per bigha. In return, the bhomias were required to render service with musket at the time of harvest. The number of muskets was determined by the number of ploughs used by the bhomia in cultivating his lands. Usually it was one musket per plough. The main obligation of the bhomia was to protect the standing crop and the village boundaries.

The bhomias who were engaged in gharuhalas were required to cultivate lands with their personal ploughs and with the help of family labour. However, in those cases where the bhomias had large holdings, a part of it could be rented out or cultivated by the bhomias in sanjha along with the raiyat. In the majority of cases, the bhomias, having reserved a portion of land for gharuhala, also cultivated land in sanjha along with the paltis and pahis. In some cases they cultivated fallow lands of the village in sanjha. But the responsibility of paying the various village dues and land revenue both for sanjha lands and lands let out to others rested on them.


2. Chithi to the Amil pargana Gijgarh, dt. KM Posh Vadi 1, VS 1783/1726. D.D.H. The amil was instructed to take service from the bhomias with musket at the time of harvest.


4. Amber Records, letter from Diwan Murli Dhar to the Amil pargana Manzabad, dt. KM Sawan Sudi 1, VS 1811/1754, dt. KM Sawan Vadi 12, V.S. 1811/1754, H.S.

The bhonias were required to render gharuhala first in their homestead village as a matter of customary obligation. They could perform gharu or pahi kasht also in another village only after having fully cultivated their lands in their residential village. In case the bhonias refused to cultivate lands and to pay various village dues (malba etc.) on sanjha land he could be dispossessed from his lands.

The assessment on the bhom land was made afresh every year. Another economic advantage attached to the bhom tenure was the exemption from the payment of malba and many other cesses on the lands cultivated as gharuhalas.

His principal fiscal right was to demand dastur bhomi from the raiyat. The incidence of dastur bhomi is not mentioned in the documents. It might have varied from pargana to pargana according to the customary practices. In addition, the bhonias were entitled to many customary perquisites on many occasions in the rural society. He had the right to charge kansa and

vagdum. He was entitled to receive 4 kansa and Re. 1/- as vagdum from the raiyat at the time of any marriage ceremony in the village. Other cesses were dhol, tawro and farka. The customary rate of dhol was 50 paisa. However, the rates of tawro and farka are not mentioned in the documents. Some bhomias had the legal right to realize a cess known as kori bhomi ki from the traders, who passed through the territory held under their jurisdiction. Legally only such bhomias could impose it as were realizing it since long and they were not expected to levy it afresh. However, practically all the bhomias were appropriating it and it proved detrimental to the interests of the traders who, from time to time, protested against this extortion.

The bhomias had also the right to demand free service or begar on the basis of customary practices from a section among the raiyat. The begar appropriated by the bhomia was known as begar kotri ki which consisted, for the most part, of agricultural labour services. Sometimes this compulsory begar was parti-

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"परमना सदाई जैपुर के गांव से जमींदार दरी कौँटी विशाल पी आ न थे उनके नोपारी व्यापार दरवार दो पदभिन्न के..."

cularly heavy. The paltis were required to render begar kotri ki to the bhomia on special occasions such as harvesting season, at the time of marriage taking place in the house of the bhomia and whenever a guest visited the latter. The real victims of the bhomia's demand for begar were the kamins. Documents are full of instances where the kamins were harassed, maltreated and exploited by the bhomias. In many cases the bhomias compelled them to render begar in more intensive manner than sanctioned by customary practices, thus making their life miserable. In many cases the kamins deserted their homestead villages in order to get rid of growing harassment of the bhomias.

Though the bhomia's right over bhom land may be termed as property which was inheritable, it appears that bhom land was not treated as a fullfledged article of private property and it could not be sold or alienated though it could be bequeathed. This assumption seemed to be valid in the absence of any documentary evidence regarding the sale and mortgage of the bhom right.

The bhomia had no right to appropriate the waste (banjar) and fallow (parat) lands of the village. Only such raiyats were given possession of banjar land as could bring it under cultivation.


Nor to the bhomia interfere with land already under the possession of other riaya. He had no right to convert the pasture land of the village into his gharu land. It also appears that he had no right over the trees of the village. The trees were considered as state property and the entire village community had the right to its usage. The trees of the village could be appropriated by the bhomia only for common use of the village community such as repair of the village pond.¹

Usually, each bhomia had his separate vasi or settlement.²

The bhomia's kotri was also situated in his vasi. The vasi was inhabited by the bhomia's family members, his personal retainers, tenants and kamins, who were known as vasidars as they lived in the vasi and undertook cultivation of the lands of their master.

1. Amber Records, letter from Diwan Murli Dhar to the Amil pargana Mauzabad, dt. K.M. Savan Sudi 1, V.S. 1811/1754, H.S.

"गांव बुडानी का एटिल पटाहार जाने देय अधिक उत्तारोत भोजना गांव तो वेल रखे --- जानक सबे लागान उपीता दरजत लाची लिया ती रिया का तरक्क दो दरख बाल दो सदास दी गर्लित ने लाग दी जो थो ने हार्द को रापी ---"

Chithi to the Amil pargana Mauzabad, dt. K.M. Savan Vadi 12, V.S. 1811/1754, D.D.H.

A certain social status and dignity (marīḍa) was attached to the kotri of the bhomias. By virtue of being holders of the custom-
mary superior rights they were the leading members of the village society and were closely associated with the socio-economic life of the rural population.

The bhomia was required to perform certain social ceremonies in the village on different occasions on behalf of the village community. He was required to perform the ceremony of the dhol wherever a marriage took place in the village. It was his customary obligation to beat the dhol at the time of the arrival of a marriage procession as well as departure from the village. No marriage procession could depart from the village until the ceremony of dhol had been performed by the bhomia. In return for this service, the bhomia had the right to demand customary cesses like kansa, dhol and vagdum from the raiyat. The bridegroom was required to call on the bhomia and offer him presents before the marriage ceremony. It was obligatory on part of the raiyat to extend invitation (nyota) to the bhomia and his vasidara for a feast at the time of marriage. These

4. Amber Records, letter from Diwan Murli Dhar, to the Amil pargana Mauzabad, dt. K.M. Sawan Sudi 1, VS 1911/1754, H.S.
customary privileges of the bhomias turned into a sort of coercion and harassment to the poor raiyat especially when he demanded his customary exactions at an exhorbitant rate.\(^1\) The bridegroom's obligation to call on the bhomia also caused harassment to the raiyat. In many cases bridegroom were maltreated by the bhomias and the raiyat of the village thus found it difficult to contract matrimonial relations with outside communities.\(^2\) In many cases the raiyat protested against the high rate of marriage cesses charged by the bhomia. Often poor raiyat, unable to meet the bhomia's demand, when they were unable to marry their daughters even/became overaged for marriage.\(^3\) The bhomia sometimes pressed upon the raiyat to extend invitation (nyota) at the time of marriage to a large number of persons attached to his vasl even though it was beyond the capacity of the raiyat to


"भोमिया के रायट का चेतना अधिक साधन योजना की गुलारिकहे दैनिक भोजन का वाद भरी --- जो रैली के वाल होते तो ताक़ड़े दो रुपये। तार कर्ता 12 या वाल 15 से वीं गरीब की वे देते देते पररणी रहा नहीं वर जीवा वा तो नामकरण करी जी तर को घर के कृपया तो भोजन भी --- "


"भोजन उपलब्ध न होते रायत चाहे जो वाल ने बाद घी दी तो देते बाद वी वा जी बाद वा बाद के प्राप्त हो तो --- "
entertain such a large gathering. In some cases the bhomia compelled the raiyat to feed his guests even without any proper intimation.

The bhomias, sometimes, stood surety (zamini) to the state officials on behalf of those members of the village community who were held suspect. The marriage between persons who were unknown to the village society could only take place in the presence of the bhomias, who had to witness such marriages and the former were required to furnish a zamini to the bhomia. He was required to give muchalka, thereby undertaking the responsibility of good conduct of the bad characters in the village, who were alleged to have harassed the raiyat. The bhomia was also responsible for the conduct of his vasidars who could be ousted from the village in case they threatened its law and order.


2. Amber Records, letter from Diwan Murlidhar to the Amil pargana Mauzabad, dt. KM Sawan Vadi 1, VS 1811/1754. H.S.


Between the bhomias and a section among the raiyat existed a relationship of mutual dependence. The economic aspect of this relationship was of primary importance.

The bhomias, who possessed spare land were dependent on the paltis for its cultivation. The paltis were a source of manpower in the absence of which the bhomias' spare land must have remained fallow. Thus the bhomias' dependence on the paltis for supplying labour gave him an abiding interest to retain the paltis rather than to lose them. The paltis, who had no land of their own and also those who did not possess sufficient resources such as ploughs, bullocks, seeds, etc., were dependent on the bhomias. The paltis dependent on the bhomias not merely for obtaining land for cultivation, or for occasional supply of resources but also for loans. The bhomias not only provided the poor raiyat with direct loans but also stood surety on behalf of the raiyat for obtaining loans from other sources i.e. mahajans and the state. In one case we find


2. Numerous instances are found in the documents where the bhomias either rented out their spare land to the paltis or cultivated such lands in Sanjha along with the paltis.


4. See Dilbagh Singh: "The role of the Mahajans...." loc. cit.
Raj Singh Bhairon Singh Khangarot, the bhomia of the village of Khurnala in pargana Mauzabad standing surety to Kirpa Ram Pancholi the mahajan of the village from whom the raiyat of the village borrowed money. In another case we find the bhomia of the village of Sub Rai in pargana Gaji ka Thana advancing a loan worth Rs. 2,000/- to the raiyat. In some cases the bhomias even joined hands with the raiyat against the tyranny of the state officials, the jagirdars and the udikis. There are numerous instances of the bhomias acting together with the raiyat in other economic spheres. They jointly took ijaras along with the other sections of the village community or with the entire raiyat of the village for common economic interest. By providing the needy raiyat with resources to undertake cultivation, the bhomias played a progressive role in the growth of the village economy. Such growth was in his own interest, as a prosperous village meant more income and comfort to the bhomia.

Though we find instances when the bhomias cooperated with the raiyat for the safeguard of vertical interests, in many cases we find them in a different role that of an exploiter of the raiyat. His role was thus not always progressive. Also, the relations bet-


4. See Chapter VI of the thesis (The ijaras system).
ween the raiyat and the bhomias were not always cordial. Instances of the bhomias ruining the fields and seizing the standing crops of the raiyat show that relations between them and the peasants were, sometimes, strained. As already stated the bhom grant was treated as a sacred grant and it was, generally, unresumable. Perhaps it was as a result of this security, which the bhomias enjoyed regarding their grants, that they often exploited, harassed and maltreated the raiyat of the village in many ways. They often compelled the raiyat to render begar for purposes which were not sanctioned by the customs. Sometimes they made even high caste cultivators of the village render begar.

It was not unusual on the part of the bhomias to seize bullocks and ploughs of the raiyat under the pretext of begar, thus creating hindrance to the raiyat in normal cultivation. The bhomias, often, refused to pay legitimate cesses on the cultivation of their gharu and sanjha land and shifted their burden on the shoulders of the raiyat.


2. Chithi to the Amil pargana Mauzabad, dt. K.M. Magh Sudi 5, VS 1819/1762.


They also harassed the traders who came to the village by imposing undue *mappa* cess on them. They, in turn, gave up visiting the village, thus causing inconvenience to the rural population, who transacted with the outside traders for many day-to-day requirements.

From a number of documents we find that the *raiya* abandoned their villages as a protest against the harassment of the *bhomias* and the villages were depopulated. Perhaps it was due to the tyrannical attitude of the *bhomias* that the *raiya* sometimes joined hands with the *ijiradars*, *jagirdars* and the *mahajans* of the village against them. They refused to pay the *bhomia's* customary cesses and in some cases even threatened the dignity of the *bhomia's* *kotari*.

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