INTRODUCTION

The evidence from Eastern Rajasthan has opened up new vistas for historical research. At a time when the need and importance of undertaking regional studies was increasingly felt, the sources preserved at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, made it possible for scholars to examine the agrarian system of the region, especially the land revenue administration, the system of agricultural production, nature of rights in land etc. Similarities with the Mughal system and peculiarities of the region were probed. The village society was minutely analysed. Our understanding of the extent of differentiation within the peasant world was given new depths.

This study of the exercise of power and the resistance offered to that exercise is premised on the groundwork already done by scholars of the region. It has been possible to look afresh at issues like protest and resistance only because the outline of the political, social and economic history of the region is in place. It also draws on studies of the peasantry, which have a ready been thinking afresh on peasant resistance. The notion of resistance, as we will shortly discuss, has undergone a paradigm change and this study is both a part as well as a consequence of the broadening of the horizon of peasant resistance.
The search for documentary evidence of the everyday variety of resistance has been a long and tedious exercise. The evidence is scattered and has to be gathered from un-ending bundles of seemingly un-related documents. Due to the sporadic nature of the evidence, a complete picture of the micro-level patterns of resistance has not been possible. ‘Sedaka’s’ history of resistance cannot be obtained for any village of our region, considering the limitation of our sources.

What is possible and has therefore been attempted is to show all that happened between quiet acquiescence and rebellion. It is indeed a marvel that such an account has been possible to recover for a period like the 17th and 18th centuries, based entirely on archival records.

This study has been inspired by the desire to unravel the relatively little explored aspect of peasant resistance- called ‘everyday forms of resistance’ in the Indian context. The effort is to understand the various ways in which peasants resist apart from rebellions and revolts. Violent and confrontational forms of resistance have received more than their due share of attention by medieval Indian historians. The non-confrontational ways of resistance have been left, by and large, unexplored. This attempt to foster a more holistic understanding of what constitutes resistance has been situated in the larger framework of the prevailing power structure and authority
system. The political structure of the Kachhwaha principality of Amber, the nature of power exercised by the Raja and his officials, will it is hoped, help understand the milieu in which peasant resistance occurred and why it assumed the forms that it did. The context will be made clearer by a discussion on rural society. This is intended to help come to terms with the complexities within the peasant world, the differences within them and the ground from which they counter the exercise of power. The section on tensions within the ruling class and between the dominant groups is meant to further our understanding of the exploitative group, the strains within the group and how this affects the exploitation of peasants. The nature of exploitation will be analysed so that resistance can be contextualized. The state's response, both to exploitation of peasants and to the resistance offered by them will hopefully shed light on the nature of the state.

**Historiography**

This beautifully growing discipline we call history has witnessed a paradigm change. From the dry, narrative historical accounts of earlier times, full of dates and events, obsessed with Kings and wars, we have come a long way. The focus of the new history being written is on economic and social issues rather than political events and the subalterns, instead of the ruling classes. We are past the stage when our understanding of peasants was
obscured by stereotyped notions about their passivity. From being treated as adjuncts, peasants were brought centre stage in the study of history in their own right. Then came a stage when they were studied and valued for those moments of rebellion, when they shook the foundations of Empires. The writing of history during this period closed down on events which were either dramatically successful and brought about dramatic changes or those which were unsuccessfully dramatic. Mundane activities, since they were not perceived as amounting to historical change, did not receive the attention of historians. And finally now, the entire concept of peasant resistance has been looked at afresh, the notion of binary opposition between acquiescence and revolt has been proven untenable, the emphasis has shifted from the 'flashes in the pan' to the patient, silent, stubborn struggles going on round the clock. The kind of politics peasants engage in has been studied and the subtleties have been researched.

In this changed way of looking at peasants and the myriad ways in which they resist, the notion of 'everyday resistance' has been crucial. The concept of 'everyday resistance' has undoubtedly got much of its present shape in the work of James C. Scott⁴ and as

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Scott himself acknowledges, 'Weapons of the Weak' shares the spirit of the Subaltern school of historiography.²

With regard to medieval history, let us briefly review how the concept of everyday resistance has featured in some of the famous works. It is significant that Marc Bloch’s treatise on feudalism, did refer to the everyday variety of resistance. Bloch posited the “peasantry’s remarkable capacity for passive resistance” as the only force which could effectively counterbalance the abuses of power by masters.³ What is important to note is that not only was the possibility of passive resistance conceded, but it was also judged as the only hope of the subject peasantry. In another work,⁴ we come across a more forthright reference to the notion of everyday resistance by way of a comparison between the great insurrections, which were “flashes in the pan” and the “patient, silent struggles” of the rural masses.⁵ Even here, the latter is judged as being more effective.

Georges Duby, while discussing the costs incurred by lords in the 14th century Southern Alps, wrote that charges were

² In the Preface to the South Asian Edition, James C.Scott, regrets not having been exposed to the Subaltern Studies, before he went to ‘Sedaka’. He says further that there is a ‘family resemblance’ and a ‘zeitgeist’.
⁴ French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics, First published in 1966,
⁵ French Rural History, p 170

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"continuously contested" by those subject to them, who did their best "to avoid paying what they owed". And submission had to be literally bought. Duby also argued that labour services were not ubiquitously advantageous to lords, because those subject to labour services, "worked badly and ate too much".

In Rodney Hilton's work, a wide range of activities which we today discuss as 'everyday resistance' are mentioned. The 13th century West midland peasants, put up sheds in forests, poach and steal. They refuse to do labour services and keep their children away from it. They insult, rebuke and misbehave. They conceal and engage in house-breaking, gangsterdom and banditry. Hilton thus visualized the peasantry as trying to make and hold on to gains. He did not confine the peasantry forever to the

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6 The Chivalrous Society, translated by Cynthia Postan, 1977, p. 195
7 Ibid. p. 198.
8 A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the 13th Century, 1966
9 Ibid. p. 109
10 Ibid. p. 241
11 Ibid. p. 155
12 Ibid. p. 155
13 Ibid. p. 155
14 Ibid. p. 251
15 Ibid. p. 251
16 Ibid. p. 217
17 Ibid. p. 231
18 Ibid., p. 230
19 Ibid. p. 253
20 Ibid. p. 253
receiving end of exploitation. In another work, Hilton observed that the peasantry is not necessarily devoid of “forms of practical cooperation.” The subject of non-conformity has been broached. Hilton has written explicitly of the range of actions, right from “quiet pressure” to open rebellions. He has elaborated upon the pressure tactics used by peasants. Conflict is not confined solely to the issue of land rent. Hilton looked beyond.

E.J. Hobsbawm stressed on falseness of the dichotomy between traditional societies without politics and modern ones with politics. He wrote of the peasants’ awareness of their subalternity. He wrote of passivity as “the normal strategy of the peasantry” and of slowness, imperviousness and stupidity as being “functionally useful” Hobsbawm visualized peasants as being capable of working the system to their minimum disadvantage. He thus captured the very essence of the notion of ‘everyday resistance’.

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22 Ibid. p. 30
23 The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages, 1979, p. 64
24 Ibid. p 65
25 Ibid. p 64
27 Ibid. p. 5
28 Ibid. p. 13
29 Ibid. p. 13
30 Ibid. p. 13
Clearly, historians have thought about the everyday variety of resistance and conceded it as a possibility. The idea has been there, but the tone acquires as altogether different pitch with the publication of Scott’s *Weapons of the Weak* in 1985. To a very great extent, comparison of the historical works we have just discussed with Scott’s sociological study is unwarranted, considering that the wealth of information Scott is able to lay his hands on through his two years of field work, is just not available to historians.

The purpose of this juxtaposition however is not to compare, but to trace the line of continuity in historiography. With ‘Weapons of the Weak’, the emphasis shifts from events to what had been almost dismissed as non-events. A whole range of variables is subsumed into the concept of resistance. ‘Everyday resistance’ is cogently defined. Our understanding of resistance is broadened to include real and token resistance, masked and unmasked resistance, routine and extraordinary resistance, resistance in thought, resistance in behaviour and resistance in the daily toil.

‘Everyday Resistance’ as a theme, remains by and large unexplored in medieval Indian history. The attitude towards peasant resistance has therefore to be gleaned from works on agrarian systems, the system of peasant production, studies of institutions and a large body of regional explorations. As stated earlier, since the theme of everyday resistance has not been taken up by historians, all
we can do is to try and understand the attitude of historians towards peasant resistance from their respective areas of research.

At the crux of *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* is the notion of a recklessly exploited peasantry thrown into either flight or rebellion. Refusal to pay land revenue is treated by Habib as “the classic act of defiance” by peasants. Though complaints by peasants are mentioned, the focus unquestionably is on flight, which according to Habib, was the peasant’s “first answer” both to famine as well as oppression, and armed resistance, which he treats as the embodiment of peasant anger and desperation. The role of the more routine, non-confrontational resistance by the peasantry, hardly features in Habib’s formulation of the agrarian crisis. In ‘The Peasant in Indian History’, Irfan Habib details the ‘dual exploitation’ which the medieval peasantry was subjected to. He writes of land tax as the principal contradiction and proceeds to analyse peasant revolts. Though Habib cites evidence of peasants uprooting crops and
trying to delay or refuse payments.\textsuperscript{37} in ‘Forms of Class Struggles in Mughal India’, the focus again is on armed resistance. Habib writes of the range of resistance, right from passive to armed defiance,\textsuperscript{38} but apart from armed resistance, the other variables in this range do not hold his attention for long. Though the possibility of the passive variety of resistance is conceded, the overall attitude towards peasant resistance remains unchanged. The peasantry is shown as having very few options to choose from.\textsuperscript{39} The basic premise is that peasants finally take to armed resistance when unable to cope with ever increasing oppression. The notion of everyday resistance is clearly, difficult to situate in this kind of a schema.

Harbans Mukhia on the other hand, explores the notion of everyday resistance in two essays “Was There Feudalism in Indian History?”\textsuperscript{40} and “Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society”\textsuperscript{41}, both published before Scott’s work. Resistance is understood as being both silent as well as overt\textsuperscript{42}. The importance of the “silent, imperceptible (struggles) inherent in the daily toil on the field” has been underlined.\textsuperscript{43} It has been argued that peasant resistance

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. p. 241. 
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. p. 239. 
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. p. 240. 
\textsuperscript{40} First read in IHC, 40th session, 1979. Later reprinted in \textit{Perspectives on Medieval History}, 1993 
\textsuperscript{41} Published in \textit{Perspectives on Medieval History}, 1993 
\textsuperscript{42} “Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society” in \textit{Perspectives on Medieval History}, 1993 p. 159 
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. p. 161
assumed various forms, depending on the production system. Lethargy, carelessness, haggling over payments, concealment, petitioning, threats to give up cultivation, violent upheavals - have all been conceded as possibilities. Succession from one form of resistance to another has been observed. It has been suggested that tensions were generated at "multifarious joints". Mukhia has argued that the peasants accept only a part of the alien ruling class ideology. He has clearly visualized the peasantry as possessing a certain amount of power and a considerable degree of dynamism, notwithstanding the fact of their exploitation.

As far as medieval Indian history is concerned therefore, two positions are visible. First, we have studies, which take up only revolts and rebellions. In the second category we have comments from historians conceding to the possibility of the passive, everyday variety of resistance. In the latter category, the degree of importance attached by historians, to this other variety of resistance is a variant. Apart from these two positions, two pictures of the peasantry emerge. On the one hand, we have the picture of an utterly oppressed, exceedingly exploited, absolutely hapless and helpless peasantry, totally powerless and degraded, not knowing what to do and how to survive in the face of ever increasing exploitation, its only weapon being the ultimate one of rebellion. On the other we have a picture

44 Ibid. p. 160
which cautions against placing them forever at the receiving end of exploitation, questions the wisdom of treating peasants as an utterly passive and powerless lot, argues that peasants resist the exercise of power in myriad ways and contest spaces in more ways than we usually think of.

In some important ways then there has been a movement away from the binary opposition between the exploiter and the exploited, where conflict resolution occurs only through a catastrophic collision between the two, to a more nuanced problematique where historical change is visualized as a slow, daily process finding expression in myriad ways. It is possible to envisage outbursts and rebellions as part of a continuum of various forms of resistance rather than as singular ruptures.

The Region

The Kachhwaha or the Amber principality of Eastern Rajasthan, was distributed over suba Ajmer and Agra at the close of the 16th century. It comprised five sarkars- Ajmer, Ranthambor and Nagor in suba Ajmer; Alwar and Narnaul in suba Agra.45 The nature of emergence of the Amber principality and it territorial spread will be discussed in the next chapter. The Kachhwaha principality rose to

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prominence after its alliance with the Mughals and by the 18th century, most parts of Eastern Rajasthan had been integrated with the principality, which also came to be known as the State of Jaipur.

Though this study has been situated by and large within the territorial jurisdiction of the Kachhwaha principality, it has not been possible to focus on any one part of the region within the principality, nor even on the entire principality in a uniform way. This is because the search for documentary proof of the everyday variety of resistance has been a random and inexhaustible exercise. Activities that constitute everyday resistance have had to be recovered from a wide variety of documents. The information unearthed has been extremely uneven and sporadic in nature. The effort nonetheless has been to focus on the core area of the Amber principality, comprising the parganas of Amber, Bahatri, Chatsu, Dausa, Malarna and Lalsot. Any and every information of consequence, even though not from this core area of the Amber principality has also been used in the study.

Sources

The sources used in this study are archival. Chithis, Arhsattas, Arzdashts, Roznamas, Amber Records and Syah Hazur, all available at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, have been used.
Chithis are invaluable and by far the richest category of documents. Chithis, both of Daftar Mawajana Kala as well as Mawajana Khurd have been used in this study. These were letters written by the Diwan to various officials at the pargana level. They were mostly addressed to Amils. Sometimes Faujdars, and Amins were also addressed. Amils and Faujdars were often addressed together. The range of information furnished by Chithis is breathtaking. It is unfortunate that the petitions in response to which chithis were written, have not been preserved. This limits the utility of chithis as far as studying petitioning is concerned. The substance of the complaints received by the Diwan, is however mentioned and the information thus provided is extremely rich and varied. The nature of exploitation raiyats were subjected to can be understood, since fragments of the complaints and petitions by raiyats is adequately documented. We come across chithis wherein jagirdars, amils, ijaradars etc complain about non-payment by raiyats. There are complaints about peasants cultivating the land of vadhdars, inamis etc. These have been used to analyse the range of activities peasants indulged in. Chithis also contain information about tensions within the dominant sections. The state's attitude towards various issues can be analysed from the directions given by the Diwan to Amils, Faujdars etc. Chithis are infact invaluable in terms of the light they shed on the nature of the state.
Arhsattas provide information of a comprehensive nature on the number of villages in every pargana, assessment and realization of revenue, the income and expenditure of each pargana etc. What was obtained by way of ‘Farohi’ under the head ‘Siwai Jamabandi’ is an important source of information on violation of rules and deviation. We have in arhsattas, a description of the amount obtained by way of fines from each village in every year. A brief description of the activity for which an individual was being fined is given in Hasil Farohi. Theft, pilferage, non-payment, concealment, misbehavior, defiance, flouting of rules etc is all documented.

Roznamas were accounts of receipts and expenditure of the village. It is sometimes mentioned in arzdashtas, that roznama farohi fard has been dispatched for the Maharaja. In each bundle of Roznama, we come across documents that furnish information about ‘farohi’. These have been used in this study.

Arzdashts were written by officials and addressed to the ruler. Apart from the political events, these provide details about rainfall, irrigation, cultivation etc. Officials often reported that directions received have been implemented. Some arzdashts provide information about the condition of raiyats. The information contained in Arzdashtas help understand the nature of polity.
Amber Records are again in the form of letters. They are mostly addressed to the Diwan and cover a wide range of topics. Requests for the grant of tagai was frequently reported. Officials informed the Diwan of the effort undertaken to call back peasants who had abandoned their villages. The Diwan was kept informed of raiyats who went to Delhi to petition.

Yaddashtis provide information on a range of issues. They contain details about the terms of grants to jagirdars. They also record agrarian conditions. Decrease in the output of villages is sometimes recorded. Details about the number of ploughs and bullocks owned by peasants are also provided.

Syaah Hazoor is an interesting source of information about the events and occurrences at the Jaipur Durbar. The ceremonies at the court, the Raja’s elaborate sawari and his visit to the various chowks, temples, lakes etc was minutely recorded. The visits of important dignitaries to the durbar were detailed. The gifts offered to the Raja and the rewards given by him were documented. The ceremonial aspects of sovereignty can thus be understood.

All documents available at the Rajasthan State Archives are essentially official records. They record events from the point of view of officials of the state. The handicap and indeed the challenge in utilizing the information from such records to write the ' unwritten
history of resistance’ lies in the fact that the peasant point of view has to be gleaned from the state’s point of view, without letting the latter obscure or distort the former. Through the eyes of the state and its officials, one has to interpret documents and do justice to the subtleties and nuances of peasant behavior and the peasant worldview.