



Historical Roots of the Meos of Mewat

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Abstract: The Meos are a native tribe, inhabiting the Mewat region. They are considered as a unique community, demonstrating fusion of Hindu and Muslim cultures. Being a syncretic community, the Meos had to pass through a series of struggles and challenges, posed by the Turks, Afghans, Mughals, Rajputs, Jats and the British. The Meos draw their inspiration from their indigenous traditions. This study attempts to investigate the historicity of their trials and tribulations, and situate the Meos in historical perspective.

Keywords: Med, Meo, Mewati, Pal, Arab, Rajput, Jat,

Introduction: The Meos belong to a native tribe of Mewat, lying south of Delhi and comprising part of the British districts of Gurgaon, Mathura and Alwar.¹ It is believed that originally the Meos were Hindu Rajputs who were converted to the Mahomedan faith in the medieval period. But the most significant feature of the Meos is that even after their conversion to Islam they did not abandon Hindu customs and traditions, and articulated a cultural synthesis of both religions. They are generally referred to as 'Meds', 'Mids', 'Khanzadas', 'Mewatis', "Mev" or 'Meos', but the latter term has been more preferred and found convenient particularly after their conversion to Islam. Meos themselves derive their origin from *maheo*, a word used in driving cattle.² H.A. Rose suggests a probability that Meo simply means "hill-man."³ According to some scholars,, 'Meo' originated from the word 'Med.'⁴,

¹ H.A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Panjab and North-West Frontier Province*, vol. 1 (Delhi, 1990), p. 79-80; *Imperial Gazetteers*, vol. 17, p. 313.

² Crooke William, *Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, vol. iii, Delhi, 1975, p. 485; Cited by *Imperial Gazetteers*, vol. 17, p. 313.

³ Rose H.A., op. cit., p. 82

⁴ Shamsh Shamsuddin, *Meos of India: Their Customs and Laws*, (New Delhi, 1983), p.18.

The Meos are divided into fifty-two original gotts, which include twelve *pals*. In fact, the neighbouring Jats, Minas, Ahirs and Rajputs share the same *bans*, *pals* and *gotras*.⁵ Of the fifty-two original gotts, three gotts are named after the parent village, eight show Rajput tribal names, eight those of Brahman and Gujar, and four occupational names, while the remaining sixteen are of unknown derivation.⁶ The Meos who accepted Islam were divided into seven *pals*– Dahngal (Kachwaha), Saingal (Badgujar), Chirklot, Demrot, Panglot, Dhulot and Nai (the last five being Jaduns by origin). The origin of the *pals*⁷ reveal the distinct identity and the spatial spread of each *pal*. The Meos encapsulate their past struggles and glories in their written and oral traditions such as *lok gathas*, *khyats* (chronicles), *vansavalis* (genealogies) and biographical narratives. This study will examine various kinds of historical records and try to reveal their historical roots and genuine nature of Meo history.

Main Text - Historical Roots:

The history of the Meos has been characterized by migrations and displacements.⁸ They moved from one place to another either in search of pastures or to escape the cruelties of war, tyranny and oppression. From about the twelfth-thirteenth century, we find direct historical evidence about the Meos, but few centuries before this period, their history is retrieved through a considerable amount of speculation and corroboration.

In the wake of the Arab invasions of Sind, Arab scholars refer to the clusters of the Meds and the Jats inhabiting the swamps, mountains and deserts of Sind. It is believed that the Jats and one section of the Meds, migrated to Punjab whereas another section of the Meds crossed the Mewar and Merwara regions of Rajasthan, which derived their names from the Meds.⁹

The earliest reference to the Meds dates back to the ninth century when the Arab scholar, Ibn Khurdadba refers to Sind: “From Sind are brought the costus, canes and bamboos. From the Mihran to Bakar....is four days’ journey. The people are wanderers and robbers. From this place to the Meds are two parasangs; they also are robbers....”¹⁰

⁵ Singh, *People of India: Rajasthan*, vol. 38, Part II, Mumbai, 1998, p 638.

⁶ Rose, op. cit., p. 82.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 82-83.

⁸ Shail Mayaram, op. cit. p. 19.

⁹ Shail Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes– Myth, Memory and the shaping of a Muslim Identity*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 28.

¹⁰ Ibn Khurdadba, *Kitabu-l Masalik Wa-l Mamalik*, in Elliot H.M. and J. Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, vol. 1, New Delhi, 2001, p. 15.

We find frequent references to the Meds by the Arab authors on Sind, and along with their rivals the Jats, they seem to have been the earliest inhabitants of Sind who have survived to the modern times.¹¹

The earliest account of the Meds can be traced in the eleventh century text, *Mujmalu-t Tawarikh*:

*“The Jats and Meds are reputed to be the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah. They dwelt in Sind and (on the banks of) the river which is called Bahar. By the Arabs the Hindus are called Jats. The Meds held the ascendancy over the Jats, and put them to great distress, which compelled them to take refuge on the other side of the river Pahan, but being accustomed to the use of the boats, they used to cross the river and make attacks on the Meds, who were owners of sheep. It so came to pass that the Jats enfeebled the Meds, killed many of them, and plundered their country. The Meds then became subject of the Jats.”*¹²

The earliest notice of the Meds is by Virgil, who “calls the Jhelum *Medus Hydaspes*. The epithet is explained by the statement of Vibius Sequester, which makes the Hydaspes flow ‘past the city of Media.’ Now this is clearly the same place as Ptolemy’s *Euthemia*, or *Sagala*, which was either on or near the same river, and above Bukephala. Lastly, in the Peutingerian Tables, the country on the Hydaspes, for some distance below Alexandria Bucefalos, is called *Media*. Here then we have evidence that the *Medi*, or *Meds*, were in the Punjab as early at least as the time of Virgil, in B.C. 40 to 30, and as we know that they were not one of the five tribes of *Yuchi*, or *Tochari*, whose names are given by the Chinese writers, it may be inferred, with tolerable certainty, that they must have belonged to the great horde of *Sus* or *Abars*, who entered India about B.C. 126, and gave their name to the province of Indo-Scythia.”¹³

Arab sources indicate that frequent Mid and Jat raids on seaports and the maritime trade of the Persian Gulf and the western Indian ocean invited the Arab invasion of Sind. They justify the conquest on grounds of defending the commerce of the Persian Gulf against alleged piracy. Gardizi describes the al-Mayd and the al-Zutt as sea pirates of the coastal region from Daybul (Debal) to Kathiawar.¹⁴

¹¹ Elliot and Dowson, vol. 1, op. cit. p. 519.

¹² *Mujmalu-t Tawarikh*, in Elliot and Dowson, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 104-05.

¹³ Elliot and Dowson, op. cit. p., 529.

¹⁴ Gardizi, *Kitab Zain al-Akhar*, ed. T. Muhammad Nazim, Berlin 1928; Cited by Mayaram, *Against History*, op. cit., p. 19.

The ninth century Arab chronicler, al-Biladhuri throws light on the immediate cause of the Arab invasion. He says that “the Meds plundered an Arab vessel off the coast of Sind and captured orphan girls who were being sent to Hajjaj, the viceroy of the Eastern provinces of the Khalifa by the King of Ceylon. Hajjaj demanded reparations from Dahir, the ruler of Sind, but the latter refused to do so on the grounds that the pirates were not under his control. This event led to the Arab war against Sind.”¹⁵

During the period of Arab occupation, Muhammad Qasim is represented as making peace with the Meds of Saurashtra, “seafarers and pirates, with whom the men of Basra were then at war.” This gives a great extent to their dominion at that period towards the southeast.¹⁶

The Arabs introduced measures to settle the pastoral–nomadic communities in Sind. Some groups of the Jats compromised and adopted Islam but the Mids of southeastern Sind remained hostile to the Arabs. The Jats were granted immunity on their submission, and they subsequently joined the Arab armies and were deployed against the Mids. Further commenting on the Med and Jat affairs Al-Biladhuri says, “In the reign of Khalifa, Amran proceeded to Multan, and then made war upon the Meds, and killed three thousand of them. Then he constructed a *band*, which is called “Sakru-l Med,” *Band of the Meds*. He encamped on the river at Alrur. There he summoned the Jats, who came to his presence, and took Jizya from them. He again attacked the Meds, having with him the chief men of the Jats. He dug a canal from the sea to their tank, so their water became salt; and he sent out several marauding expeditions against them. During the reign of Khalif, an Arab chieftain Muhammad bin Fazl proceeded with sixty vessels against the Meds of Hind. He killed a number of them, captured Kallari and then returned towards Sindan.”¹⁷

The Mids continue to be described as robbers by Arab geographers through the ninth and tenth centuries. During the tenth and eleventh centuries there are references to frequent clashes of the Mids with the Muslim kingdom of Mansura (Sind). According to Masudi, when he visited Sind, the people of Mansura were supposed to defend themselves against the Med aggression. He mentions that “Multan is seventy-five parasangs from Mansura..... It is constantly at war with a nation called the Meds, who are a race of Sind, and also with other races on the frontiers of Sind.”¹⁸ Obviously, all these campaigns against the Meds could not

¹⁵ Al-Biladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, tr. P.K. Hitti, Beirut, 1966; Cited by Mayaram, *Against State*, op. cit., p. 19; V.D. Mahajan, *The Sultanate of Delhi*, New Delhi, 1963, p. 15.

¹⁶ Elliot and Dowson, vol. 1, p. 521

¹⁷ Al Biladhuri, *Futuhu-l Buldan* in Elliot and Dowson, vol. 1, p. 128-9.

¹⁸ Al Masudi, *Muruju-l Zahab*, in Elliot and Dowson, vol 1, p. 24

effectively reduce the power of the Meds. Expeditions against the Jats and the Mids continued till 844.

Arab geographic-history, composed from the sedentary state's viewpoint, treats pastoral groups as the 'other' of the political order.¹⁹ According to Shail Mayaram, this kind of perception tends to understate the actual position such as the active participation of the Jats and Mids in the commercial life of the Persian Gulf.²⁰ The Chachnama, which denounced the Jats and other tribes²¹ as 'of wild nature of brutes,' 'refractory,' 'disobedient,' 'robbers,' and 'villainous set of people,'²² also mentions that they are employed in the armed forces of the Sind²³ and served as guides of caravans.²⁴ The Meds are also described here as sailors of the coastal regions of Makran, Sind and Kathiawar.²⁵ It can be argued that the motive behind the slamming of the Jats and the Meds was the Arab ambition to control the trade and commerce of the Gulf. Trade and piracy were closely related.²⁶

It has been suggested that Mewar and Merwara regions of Rajasthan have been associated with the Meos. According to James Tod, Mewar was known as 'Medapat,' meaning the country of the Meds.²⁷ Some scholars, particularly contemporary genealogists of the Mers of Ajmer claim that the Meos of Mewar are a section that migrated from the settlements of the Mers in the central Aravallis.²⁸ On the other hand Elliot says the Mers of the Aravalli and Kathiawar are descendants of the Mids.²⁹

Successive invasions and the rise of monarchical states in the early medieval period led to the displacement of many pastoral and peasant groups including the Meos.³⁰ According to Meo traditions, there was a considerable concentration of the Meos in the

¹⁹ Mayaram, op. cit., p. 21.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Fredunbeg Mirza Kalichbeg (tr.), *The Chachnama – The Ancient History of Sind*, Delhi, p. 36.

²² Ibid., p. 170

²³ Fredunbeg, op. cit., p. 37.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 37; 170.

²⁵ Ibid. 150 [?]

²⁶ Mayaram, op. cit., p. 21.

²⁷ Tod James, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central and Western Rajput States of India*, Delhi, vol. 1, p. [?]

²⁸ Shakur Abdul, *Tarikh Mev Chatri* (Urdu), Gurgaon, 1974, p. 93; Cited by Mayaram, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

²⁹ Elliot and Dowson, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 529 [Elliot says "during the whole period of their known history, they have been conspicuous for their lawless and predatory habits, from the time when four thousand Mer archers defended their passes against Prithviraj, down to A.D. 1821 when their excesses compelled the British government to attack them and reduce them to complete obedience."] *Appendix*, ED, vol. 1, p. 525-30.

³⁰ Mayaram, op. cit., p. 22

Ganga-Jamuna doab.³¹ The Meos claim to have established many villages in Bulandshahar, Kol and Etah and to have battled Ghaznavi along with the rulers of Bayana.³²

After Prithviraj III's victory over the Turks in 1191, a part of the Punjab and some of the Meo territories were brought under the Chauhan Empire. The Meos were dispossessed by the Rajput clans of Bulandshahar and Etah at the order of Prithviraj of Delhi towards the end of the twelfth century.³³ The Bargujar raja, Pratap Singh, a relative of Prithviraj is 'said to have cleared the region of the turbulent Mewatis which pleased the Dor raja, Chait Singh so much that he gave his daughter in marriage to him.'³⁴

The Meos first crossed the Jumuna in the period of anarchy in wake of Mahmud Ghazni's invasion in 1018-19.³⁵ In the first half of the eleventh century Salar Masud, the nephew of Mahmud Ghazni conquered Delhi and Meerut. Meo traditions speak of their dispossession from doab, the crossing of Jamuna, their westward movement, and then farther to the south and southwest of Delhi.³⁶

During Prithviraj's rule Meo lands in Aligarh, Meerut and Bulandshahar are said to have been taken by the Rajputs. The Bargujar Rajputs were also victorious over the Meos, Chandellas and Bihars. Another dislocation of the Meos is attributed to Mahmud Ghaznavi who made 17 raids on northwest India between 1000 and 1025. In the first half of the eleventh century Salar Masud, his nephew and general conquered Delhi and Meerut.

The victory of Muhammad Ghuri over Prithviraj III in 1192 resulted in the churning of the social and political situation in northern India.³⁷ Delhi was occupied and soon his general Quub-ud-din Aibak conquered Meerut and Ajmer as well. The sweeping raids of the Turks over entire northern India shook Delhi and neighbouring regions and a considerable amount of the Meos were pushed out of Delhi region.³⁸ The choice of Mehrauli as the capital of the Sultanate resulted in the misappropriation of their territories and the subsequent

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mewati Habibur Rahman Khan, *Tazkirah-i-Sufiya-I Mewat*, 37, 46-50; Cited by Mayaram, p. 262n

³³ Crooke, op. cit., p. 485; *Imperial Gazetteers*, op. cit., p. 313.

³⁴ Joshi E.B, *Moradabad: Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers*, Allahabad, 1966, p. 38; Cited by Mayaram, op. cit., p. 262n [According to Nevil, it was the Meos who overran the doab and expelled the Dors. But if this is so, it is surprising that a Dor raja, Chandra Sen was ruling when Aibak conquered the area in 1193.H.R. Nevil, *Aligarh:A Gazetteer*, Allahabad, 1909, p. 163; Also cited by Mayaram, p. 262n]

³⁵ Crooke, op. cit., p. 485; *Imperial Gazetteers*, p. 313.

³⁶ Mewati, op. cit., p. 37 [Sections of Meos continued to inhabit the southern parganas of Meerut in the late thirteenth century. Joshi, *Meerut*, p. 34; Cited by Mayaram, p. 262n]

³⁷ Elliot and Dowson, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 204-43.

³⁸ Mayaram, op. cit., p. 22-23.

marginalization of the Meos.³⁹ Hence, their earliest raids were directed against the new Turkish capital in form of bold attacks on the traders, pilgrims and water carriers.⁴⁰

After the death of Qutb-ud-din Aibak the Turks began to loose control over Bayana on account of revivalist zeal among the dispossessed rulers.⁴¹ Iltutmish recaptured Bayana and Tahangarh and defeated the ambitions of these elements. But Iltutmish's successor's were too weak and the continued depredations of the turbulent people of northern Alwar region known as 'Koh payah of Mewat' weakened them considerably.⁴²

The Meos were also adversely affected by the early Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century.⁴³

In the mid-thirteenth century, we can spot a good number of Meo settlements in the region south of the Turkish capital. This region was known as Mewat which possibly derived its name from Mewatis. It was Mewat region that became the heartland of Meo resistance.⁴⁴

Balban, with his policy of 'blood and iron' restored the lost prestige and territories of the Sultanate. He adopted strong measures against lawlessness and deputed experienced Afghans to check the Mewati depredations. Ziau-d din Barni provides a vivid account of the Mewati menace and Balban's efforts in dealing with the Mewatis:

"Towards the end of the first year of his reign he [Balban] employed himself in harrying the jungles, and in routing out the Miwattis, whom no one interfered with since the days of Shamsu-din. the turbulence of Miwattis had increased, and their strength had grown in the neighbourhood of Dehli. At night, they 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 Delhi there were large and dense jungles, through which many roads passed. he disaffected in the doab, 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. The daring of the Mewattis 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

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ *Bharatpur: Rajasthan District Gazetteer*, p. 51.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. 23.

⁴⁴ Mayaram, op. cit., p. 23

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. In the year of his succession, the Sultan felt the repression of the Miwattis to be the first of his duties, and for a whole year he was occupied in overthrowing them and in scouring the jungles, which he effectually accomplished. Great numbers of Mewattis were put to the sword. In this campaign, one hundred thousand of the royal army were slain by the Mewattis, and the Sultan with his sword delivered many servants of God from the assaults and violence of the enemy. From this time the city was delivered from the attacks of the Miwattis.”⁴⁵

After the Sultan had destroyed the power of the Meos and cleared away the jungle in the neighbourhood of Delhi, he appointed there some distinguished chiefs and authorized them to ruin the rebellious Meos.⁴⁶

In the fourteenth century, “numerous Rajput adventurers are said to have poured into the defenseless country (Bulandshahar) and expelled the Meos from their land and villages.”⁴⁷

One of the important causes of Mewat-Sultanate conflict was the question of control over the land routes. The profitable overland routes, linking Delhi to Punjab that were further connected to West Asia and Central Asia, passed through Mewat and it was economically essential for the Sultans to bring Mewat directly under their control.⁴⁸

Ala ud-Din Khilji conquered Mewar and brought much of Rajputana under his control. All turbulent chiefs and rais were suppressed in the region of Delhi, forced to pay tribute and rebellions were dealt with severely.⁴⁹

During the troubled times of Timur’s invasion (1398) Bahadur Nahar, who founded the subdivision of Mewatis called Khanzadas, members of which were, for many years, rulers of Mewat, was one of the most powerful chiefs in this part of India.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Zia-ud-din Barni, *Tarikh –i-Firozshahi* in Elliot and Dowson, vol 3, p.103-5.

⁴⁶ Zia-ud-din Barni, *Tarikh –i-Firozshahi* in Elliot and Dowson, vol 3, p.103-5.

⁴⁷ *Imperial Gazetteers*, vol. 9, op. cit., p. 49.

⁴⁸ Mayaram, op. cit., p. 24.

⁴⁹ Lal Kishori Saran, *History of the Khaljis, A.D. 1290-1320*, Delhi, 1967, p. 134-39; Cited by Mayaram, op. cit., p. 24.

Mubarak Shah, the Saiyyid Sultan, set out on punitive expeditions to suppress disorder and insurgency. Yahya bin Ahmad describes the campaigns of Sultan Mubarak Shah against the rebellious Mewatis in the fifteenth century.⁵¹

Mubarak Shah was able to subdue the rebellions at Bhatinda and in the doab and recover balances of tribute from a limited area. Delhi Sultanate had already begun to crumble and the power and the prestige of the Sultans shrunk to the size of a principality. Between 1390 and 1428 there were widespread revolts and uprisings against the Tuglaqs and the Saiyyids.⁵² Some of the ambitious Mewati lineages actively participated in Delhi politics and sided with one or the other court factions.⁵³ These lineages carved out their sphere of influence in Mewat and provided support and shelter to the insurgents. In 1398 Timur sacked Delhi and devastated neighbouring areas including Mewat. The tussle between the Turks and Afghans further weakened the sultanate and ultimately the Afghan Lodis captured power in Delhi. Bahlol Lodi led several expeditions against the Mewatis but could not crush their defiance. The evidence of endless Pathan tombs in Mewat indicate the degrees of Afghan desire to control Mewat and the resistance to their designs.⁵⁴

From the thirteenth to early sixteenth century, the assertion of the Sultanate's authority brought about significant changes in the Mewat configuration. Fortified towns and plenty of urban centres such as Rewari, Jhirka, Taoru and Tijara came into existence.⁵⁵ Other centres such as Indor, Sarheta and Kharol were also identified with the resistance of the Mewati warrior lineages.⁵⁶ This period also witnessed the settlement and growth of the Jats, Ahirs and Gujars in this region.⁵⁷

In the early sixteenth century, Babur did not fail to notice the presence, defiance and the strength of the Mewatis, when he contemptuously remarked at Hasan Khan Mewati.⁵⁸

Babur reports in his memoir the economic significance of Mewat which yielded a revenue of about three or four cores.⁵⁹ Babur wanted to establish complete control over the Mewati territories by showing favours to the great Mewati leader, Hasan Khan Mewati but he

⁵⁰ *Imperial Gazetteers*, op. cit., 313.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵² Mayaram, op. cit., p. 27.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Babur, *Baburnama (Memoirs of Babur)*, tr. A.S. Beveridge, New Delhi, 2003, p. 523.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

rebuffed the offer.⁶⁰ After the first battle of Panipat (1526), Babur tried to win over Hasan in order to abort Mewati-Rajput alliance against the Mughals, but failed to do so.⁶¹

At Khanva (1527) Babur not just defeated the Rajputs under Rana Sanga but also frustrated the designs of a massive Rajput-Meo-Afgahan coalition against the foreign invader. The Khanva debacle gave a powerful blow to the Meo aspirations. The largest concentration of Meo population was in Agra Suba, particularly in the Alwar sarkar that incorporated southern Mewat, while north central Mewat was administered by the Tijara sarkar.⁶² Under Akbar, Mewat was brought directly under the Mughal imperial control and divided into parganas subsumed under five sarkars that were governed by the Agra and Delhi Subas.⁶³ As the Mughal empire was consolidated, the Meos underwent drastic change in their status. By the mid-sixteenth century the Meos seem to have been firmly sedenterized and reduced from a warrior, self-governing group to a revenue paying, landowning caste.⁶⁴

The unfolding events in other parts of Rajasthan had far-reaching consequences for the Meos of Mewat. The rise of Kacchvaha Rajputs of Amber (Jaipur), their submission to Akbar in 1562, and the subsequent Mughal-Rajput alliance altered political equations in Indian politics. Akbar accepted marriage alliances with the Kacchvaha Rajputs and later Man Singh of Amber received the title Amir-ul Umra from Akbar and emerged as a great Mughal general. During the reign of Shah Jahan, the Kacchvaha Rajputs were involved in all military expeditions including those against the Meos. The Meos who had already been reduced to a subordinate status could not withstand the Rajput onslaught. Under Jai Singh (1622-67) the Kacchawa principality of Amber rose to the position of dominant kingdom in early half of eighteenth century. They used the ijara (lease) system to legitimate the extension of territory by claiming to bring recalcitrant Mewati zamindars under control⁶⁵. In this way, the historical Mughal-Rajput alliance underwrote Meo marginality.⁶⁶

Jagirs were granted by the Amber ruler to his Rajput kin which started a process of transfer of land in which much land passed from the hands of the Muslim Meos and Khanzadas to the new Rajput gentry that was specially constructed to build a more loyal base to state formation.⁶⁷ The Naruka Rajputs used their access to Mughal power to acquire

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 577-8.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 545.

⁶² Ibid., p. 27.

⁶³ *Imperial Gazetteers*, op. cit., p. 313; Mayaram, op. cit., p. 27.

⁶⁴ Mayaram, p. 27.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 28

extensive land rights in villages through coercion or by usurping the rights of Meo and Khanzada clans.⁶⁸ As a result, the Meos offered a strong resistance to defend their rights from Mughal and Rajput aggrandizement.

The rule of the Mewatis was subsequently challenged by the Jats, who had already risen to importance before the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, and consolidated their power in Southern Mewat in the first half of the eighteenth century; and from this time the history of Mewat merges in that of Alwar and Bharatpur.⁶⁹

Khafi Khan mentions the activities of the Mewatis during eighteenth century:

*“As the news (of Hussain Ali’s death) spread, the Mewattis and the turbulent zamindars rose up and gathered round Saiyid Abdullah on every side. They attacked the baggage and tents in the rear, and plundered whatever they could lay hands on. A detachment of the discouraged army was sent against them, but without success.”*⁷⁰

The fast deteriorating rule of the later Mughals allowed the emergence of regional powers such as the Jats and the Sikhs. In the seventeenth century, the Jats endlessly raided the Mughal empire and by the eighteenth century they carved out a powerful Jat state, Bharatpur in the Mewat region. The Meos fought against both the Jats and the Marathas. They raided Maratha battalions. According to local history, the Jats attacked the Meo clans of the Ghasera and Bhagora, troubling the Meos each day. In a Meo narrative, the ruler of Bharatpur, Jawahir Singh is referred to in kin terms by the chief of a Meo clan, leading to his alliance in battle with the Jats against the Rajputs of Amber.

The Meos or Mewatis, however, retained their character for turbulence; and towards the end of the eighteenth century traveling in the upper and central Doab was unsafe owing to armed bands of Mewati horsemen.⁷¹

Conclusion: The transitions from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century reduced the Mewatis from a self-governing, relatively autonomous group to one with a mere peasant pastoral status. Marginality had both a political and spatial manifestation. In the coming years, with the advent of Colonial powers, it led to a remarkable contraction of the territory called Mewat, and a massive process of subordination of the Meos.

⁶⁸ Bhardwaj Suraj Bhan, “Socio-economic Conditions in the Mewat Region, 1650-1750 AD,” *Ph.D. Thesis*, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, 1990, 16-17; Cited by Mayaram, p. 30.

⁶⁹ *Imperial Gazetteers*, op. cit., p. 313-14.

⁷⁰ Khafi Khan, *Muntakhabu-l Lubab* in Elliot and Dowson, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 507-8.

⁷¹ Crooke, op. cit., vol. iii, p. 485; Cited in *Imperial Gazetteer*, vol. 17, op. cit., p. 313-14.