

## CHAPTER - VI

THE GRASSIAS

The collectorates of Ahmedabad and Kheda broadly contained two sorts of villages - Khalisa and Grassia.<sup>(1)</sup> The former were directly under the Government, the latter were held by the grassia chiefs who paid revenue to the government and were responsible for maintaining law and order in their areas of jurisdiction. The history of the grassias and of everything connected with them is involved in much obscurity. According to some Hindu Pandits "Gyrassie" was a term signifying a mouthful, bit or small portion and equally applicable whether the bounty given was voluntary or extorted.<sup>(2)</sup> The Muhammedans with more quaintness perhaps than candour defined the word to be a compound of 'Ghyre' without and 'Rast, right, or an imposition; on a deeper enquiry some have surmised that the word originated from the word Ghaus allusive to the most object appearance of indigence and distress which a subject sometimes assumed in the presence of his ruler by standing before him with a wisp of grass in his mouth.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. East India Papers, P. 469.

2. Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., P. 607; [ ]

. J.D.D. 1812, No. 63, P. 912.

3. Ibid.

Some have observed that the term grass appeared to have been originally applied to gifts made to religious persons which were afterwards more particularly denominated 'puṣay'.<sup>(4)</sup> In the bardic chronicles the word grass was applied to the lands given for subsistence to the junior members of the chieftains families and this sense of the word continued for long. At length, the term 'gras' came also to be used to signify the blackmail paid by a village to a turbulent neighbour as the price of its protection and forbearance and in other similar meanings. Thus the title of a 'grassia' originally an honorable one and indicating its possessor to be a cadet of the ruling tribe, became at last as frequently a term of approbrium conveying the idea of a professional robber.<sup>(5)</sup>

#### Historical Background :

A study of the process of the establishment of the Rajput principalities in Gujarat could help us in understanding the origin of the Grassias. There is lack of contemporary accounts mentioning the trends of the eruption of Rajputs in Gujarat and the nature of their conflicts with aboriginal inhabitants, Bhils and Kolis. However, the details furnished by Muhnot Nainsi, the Diwan of Maharaja Jaswant Singh, do throw significant light on

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4. Alexander Forbes, Ras Mala, Vol. II, P. 276.

5. Ibid.

these problems.<sup>(6)</sup> Nainsi's account makes it evident that the Rajputs acquired their possession over Anhilwara Patan and later on other areas of Gujarat by force defeating or dislodging the Bhils and Kolis.<sup>(7)</sup> As a process of expanding and consolidating authority, as one may notice in the Rajput States of Rajasthan, they seized upon and apportioned the areas they conquered and founded amongst their family members.<sup>(8)</sup> The Kolis and the Bhils, the aboriginal inhabitants of the region were thus driven out or they moved to the hilly tracts of the region.<sup>(9)</sup> The practice of distributing lands or villages or group of villages amongst the Rajput leaders according to their ties with the ruling families caused the emergence of small semi-autonomous principalities in Gujarat. In general the Rajput leaders of these principalities owned allegiance to the Rajput rulers of Patan till the establishment of Muslim rule in Gujarat.<sup>(10)</sup>

The last ruler was Raja Karan Waghela who was defeated in a battle between the Rajputs and an army sent from Delhi by emperor Ala-ud-din Khilji in 1296 A.D.<sup>(11)</sup> From

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6. Muhnot Nainsi, Muhnot Nainsi-ri-Khyat, Part I, P. 258-279; R.D.V. 1856, No.99, P.84.
  7. Nainsi, P. 258-59.
  8. Ibid.
  9. Ibid.; List No. 11, Gen.Vol.No.12, Para 3.
  10. Alexander Forbes, Op.cit., P. 28.
  11. Ibid., P. 28.

this event dated the termination of the Rajput dynasty and the establishment of the Muslim power in Gujarat. During the governorship of the different viceroys from Delhi and for some years after the formation of an independent sovereignty under Zafar Khan in A.D.1411,<sup>(12)</sup> the Rajput Rajas and Grassias and Koli chiefs in different parts maintained a state of partial if not complete independence barely acknowledging a tributary allegiance.<sup>(13)</sup> Thus it was left to the grandson of Muzaffar Shah, the celebrated Ahmed Shah to bring them for a time under same degree of subjection which he appeared to have done on the occasion of a formidable rebellion excited by a noted Koli Chief Asa Bhil in which Rajput chiefs, grassias, kinsmen and vassals took part, and from the period we may date the appointment of Talpat and Wanta lands. Three parts of the lands of each village under the denomination of Talpat were acknowledged as the property of the king and one part was given to the Zamindars under the denomination of Wanta and they engaged to furnish guards and protect their own villages and were to hold themselves in readiness for the service of the king whenever called upon. As these people without paying obedience to the sultan did not see it possible to establish themselves, they attended to make their submission

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12. Ibid., P. 36.

13. Revenue Department Volumes 1856, No.99, P. 92.

and engaged to pay to the government a salary from the Wanta lands.

Again many Zamindars such as those of Attarsoomba, Ghodasar, Mandwa, Halderwas and other became Muslims for the sake of preserving their possessions and the Padshah in consideration of their conversion to Islam continued the Talooqs to them and settled something to be paid from them in the manner of Peshkash. Apart from these, there were other powerful Zamindars who remained in possession of their right as the royal power was not sufficient to crush them and the zamindars submitted to the payment of a Peshkash.<sup>(14)</sup> Whether these zamindars were ancestors of that class of people which came to be known as Mewasi under the Mughals and Marathas, is a point which needs to be examined further.

The talpad and Wanta lands are again referred in the Mirat-i-Sikandri during the reign of Sultan Muhammad II. We learn from what is there narrated that these divisions were in full swing then. It is stated that when the Sultan had consolidated his position, he expressed the desire of seizing on Malwa. However Asaf Khan, his minister, dissuaded the Sultan against this enterprise.

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14. Mirat-i-Ahmadi, Pg. 149-150, Mirat-i-Sikandri Pg. Though Irfan Habib makes mention of the Talpad and Wanta lands as established during the reign of the Muslim Sultans of Gujarat (while quoting from Mirat-i-Ahmadi) he does not explicitly mention the name of the Muslim Sultan viz. Ahmed Shah.

and suggested that he might obtain a country equal to Malwa by merely attaching a fourth of the (wanta) land of the Rajput Grassias and Kolis.<sup>(15)</sup> Thus the order is said to have been given for the resumption of the Wanta lands. The result was a formidable rebellion by the grassias (or rather Rajas) of Idar, Sirohi, Doongarpur, Banswada, Rajpipla and those on the banks of the Mahi while the Sultan's soldiers were ordered to extirpate the very name of Rajputs and Kolis from those places. However the author is silent on the final results of this policy and how far the Sultan was able to extirpate the Rajput families. Thus we may presume that the efforts of the Sultan singularly failed and the Rajas and Zamindars continued in possession of their estates and villages on the original germs. For it is clear that they were in possession of these at the time of the assassination of the Sultan. It is stated that after the murder of the Sultan, the Rajputs and Kolis set up an image of the murderer which they worshipped as their protector.

The Mirat-i-Ahmadi, on its account on Akbar again refers to the origin of the Talpat and Wanta lands.<sup>(16)</sup>

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15. Mirat-i-Sikandri, Pg. It may be mention here that Wanta was derived from 'banta' or batai as the territory was shared between two. Talpad was derived from 'Tripat'.

16. Mirat-i-Ahmadi, P. 149.

It is stated therein, that when the Muslims (as has been mentioned earlier) tried to punish and expel the Rajputs and Kolis from Gujarat, the latter had sought refuge in service and malguzari. It was agreed that one fourth of their lands were to be retained by them as Banth(Chauth) while the  $\frac{3}{4}$  part known as Talpad (Tripat) was to go to the government. Again salami was to be paid from the Wanta lands, the Kolis and Rajputs acted as sentinels and patrols of the place.<sup>(17)</sup> With the passage of time some of them acquired a little strength, created commotion in near and distant places by carrying away ryots, cattle or killing cultivators at the time of the sowing season. The ryots of those places had to helplessly please them by payment of a fixed sum in cash annually or grant of one or two cultivable fields. This tribute<sup>12</sup> was named as giras and udhal. Gradually this practice became very current and by the accession of Akbar as Emperor it had increased to a considerable extent on account of the weakness of the governors of the Suba. Many of the thanas (fortresses) established for the security of the government and the protection of people against the rebellious Rajputs and Kolis had been demolished and the latter had appropriated most of the tripat portion of the government by way of giras. In fact they had become so strong that they had completely set the

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17. Ibid.

government at defiance and the salami from their lands had to be collected by march of a force. Even the governor of the Suba could not pass the city gate without an escort from them (in this perhaps we may find the origin of the right of Walluva).

That this was the actual state of things up to the period of the conquest of Gujarat by Akbar which dates from 1572 A.D. is authenticated by a farman or imperial order issued by the Emperor in 1590 A.D. for abolishing transit duties.<sup>(18)</sup> From this document it is clear that complaints had been made to the governor of Suba by the desais, mugadams and ryots of several parganas that the agents of the Nazims and Jagirdars were possessing themselves of all revenue dues and that the Rajputs, Kolis and Muslims of the villages they had been in possession of were in rebellion and destroying the standing crops of cultivators so as to occasion the ruin of the subjects and a deficiency of the governments collections. Thus remedial measures were suggested in the farman, that the Diwan of the suba was to collect half the revenue with consultation of the desai and mugaddams, the Wanta lands were to be shown separately and no revenue was to be charged on it. However the last expression appears to be equivocal as we have definite information from the

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18. Ibid.



survey records of Todar Mal that the Wanta lands were to be assessed as follows : (19)

The wanta lands of the Ahmedabad Haveli and pargana were to pay half the amount paid by the Ryoti land;

Wanta lands<sup>in</sup> Mahundha pargana were to pay according to the settlement of 4 shares viz. 1 share to the government, 1 share of grassias and 2 shares to the ryots; those of the Mehmoodabad pargana were to pay a lump-sum salami in some cases but when the grassias cultivated the lands themselves, they were free; in the Thasra pargana the Wanta lands were to pay according to the ancient regulation fixed.

In Broach the Wanta lands were to pay according to the ground cultivated in some villages, in some  $\frac{1}{4}$  and in others  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the produce. In the villages which paid  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  2 mahmudis were charged per beegha and credited to the sarkar, some of the latter paid only one and a quarter mahmudi. The grass lands of the Baroda Sarkar according to ancient regulations were free.

The Mirat-i-Ahmadi informs that in 1592 A.D. most of the places in Saurashtra were inhabited by the different tribes of Rajputs and Kolis who did not pay land

revenue without the help of an army.<sup>(20)</sup> They kept armed horsemen with lances and as brigandage was in-born with them they seized opportunities for pillage and robbery. Of course, efforts were made by the governments to crush their rebellious activities. And in 1671 A.D. it is reported that a farman was issued in which it was stated that grassias and zamindars who were mischievous, rebellious and confirmed offenders were to be punished on evidence against them and even killed for public benefit.<sup>(21)</sup> How far this measure was carried out and how successful it was, We don't have definite evidence. However, the Marathas continued <sup>of</sup> applying force to realize land revenue during the period of their sway indicates that this part of the region remained ~~was~~ Jor-talab.

During the decline of the Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb, "all sorts of excesses were committed and a great commotion and vast relaxation spread in the suba of Gujarat". The Mirat-i-Ahmadi makes several references to the disturbances created by the rebellious Rajputs and Kolis.<sup>(22)</sup> Thus in 1707 it is stated that the rebellions Rajputs and Kolis who had crept like Jackals

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20. Mirat-i-Ahmadi, P.153, Such areas were called Jor-talab.

21. Ibid., P. 249.

22. Ibid., P. 323.

in corners and waste lands due to establishment of order by Subehdars, Faujdars and organisation of thanas raised their heads in revolt and rebellions.<sup>(23)</sup> They made raids and committed dacoities. At night they used to enter the cities and suburbs, plunder cash and commodities and oppress the people.<sup>(24)</sup> The Maratha in roads into Gujarat during this time worsened the situation and the Kolis took full advantage. In fact, at times the Marathas were helped by the Kolis in creating disturbances and fighting the declining Mughal forces.<sup>(25)</sup> Of course efforts at times were made for the chastisement and punishment of Kolis and even security for absence of rebellions, revolt and stoppage of brigandage were taken from them.<sup>(26)</sup> However, they could not be fully crushed.

These disturbed conditions materially helped the Rajputs and Kolis to increase their Wanta lands in two ways. First, as it is stated that after the death of Aurangzeb, the suba of Gujarat was so invested by the incursions of the Rajputs, Kolis and Bhils inhabiting the adjacent Bhils and Jungles that the Nawab of Surat, about the time of Farukhsiyar's reign, in the style of

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23. Ibid., P. 333.

24. Ibid., P. 364.

25. Ibid., P. 444.

26. Ibid., P. 455.

degenerality which had then begun to mark the decline of the vigor of the Mughal government, submitted to a compromise of certain cessions of lands to them in each village to induce them to settle in and protect instead of plundering them.<sup>(27)</sup> These surrenders were termed Wanta grounds and exempted from any tax by the Mughals but subjected afterwards to a quit rent by Damaji Gaekwad when he conquered the country.<sup>(28)</sup> Second, the power of the Rajputs and Kolis increased so much that the proportions between the earlier talpat and wanta were in many cases reversed, only one fourth being left to the government while the wanta lands swelled to the former dimensions of talpat.<sup>(29)</sup>

Again, the Rajputs and Kolis by means of attacks on the peaceable castes of people were enabled to establish fixed contributions in many places to be periodically paid as well as grants of land for their forbearance which were denominated grass or vol.<sup>(30)</sup>

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27. J.D.D. 1812, No. 63 P. 915; Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., P. 607.

28. Ibid. . . . ,

29. J.D.D. 1819, No. 114, P. 2316.

30. Ibid. Mention of these has already been made earlier for reference see footnote No.17.

From the above it is clear that the pecuniary claims of the grassias included both land and money. The land under their control was termed as Wanta. The opinion of some of the historians and early British officials that the Wanta land holdings dated from the reign of Emperor Akbar is not correct. As it has been mentioned earlier it was under Sultan Ahmed Shah that the first division of lands into Talpat, and Wanta appear to have been made.<sup>31.</sup>

The Wanta holders enjoyed a proprietary right and held their lands subordinate to the ruling authority to whom they owed a tribute (peshkash or salami) which at times was even termed as Jama.<sup>(31.a)</sup> In its meaning, however, this Jama was very different from the assessable revenue which the government received from the talpat villages. The Grassia Jama was assessed arbitrarily<sup>as</sup> as government had no means of ascertaining the produce or of examining the revenue funds of the possessing<sup>ns</sup> producing the Jama.<sup>(32)</sup>

The rates of salami from the Wanta lands were not regulated by any fixed principles, sometimes they varied

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31. Bombay Revenue Selections - P. 717-718. Also see F.N. No. 14.

31.a For the origin of salami - see Chap. III Bg.

32. Ibid., 1806, No. 52, P. 2113; Ibid., 1804, No. 42, P. 801.

even in the same village. Generally they ranged from half a rupee to one rupee per beegha,<sup>(33)</sup> and though they were conceived to be fixed and certain, yet from the operation of force or unfavourable seasons they suffered either an increase or diminution.<sup>(34)</sup> The rates of salami fixed by Raja Todar Mal during Akbar's reign have already been detailed. In some cases the Wanta lands were held entirely rent free as well.

Apart from Wanta lands, the Grassias enjoyed a number of other rights the origin of many of these is but involved in obscurity. Of these mention may first be made of Grass or Toda grass. The origin of these claims as detailed in the Mirat-i-Ahmadi has already been studied.

#### Nature and Magnitude of Grass :

It would be incorrect to assume that Grass was a service Haq.<sup>(35)</sup> Of course, it was generally believed that if the grassia failed to provide security his allowance could be attached by government.<sup>(36)</sup> Instances of attachment did occur, but only under British rule. Whether they occurred under the Marathas is difficult to say

33. J.D.D. 1819, No.114, P.2298.

34. Ibid., 1820, No.157, P.4078.

35. Mr. Willoughby in his famous minute dated 28 April, 1851 has argued that Grass was service haq.  
R.D.V. 1853, No. 97, P. 21-30.

36. R.D.V. 1853, No. 97.

for lack of information. The receipt of grass appeared more in the nature of security for good behaviour on the part of the grassias than services either expressed or implied. Thus to assume that the grassias could be brought into the category of district officers having hereditary emoluments would not hold.<sup>(37)</sup>

The next important point of consideration is by whom were the grassia allowances paid by the government or by the villages. It was considered by some of the early British officials that the payment of grass was made by the villages as a private arrangement to buy off the aggressive attacks of the Grassias and that the state had nothing to do with the matter.<sup>(38)</sup> They argued that the only bond or promise was between the Grassia and the as long as the Grassia could compel the villagers to pay his grass he was entitled to receive it.<sup>(39)</sup> However these arguments do not appear to be convincing. For, if a separate payment had been collected from the villagers for the grassias that sum would have been credited on the Jama of the village as grass. After examining the relevant Modi documents we find that there was no separate collection made on account of grass, though it is definite

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37. This opinion was expressed by Mr. Simson, Principal Collector of Surat. For ref. see Ibid., P.27.

38. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 13, P.A.

39. Ibid.

that a certain amount was annually paid to the Grassias. The Jama and Khurch accounts of Kapadvanj for the year 1805 A.D. and 1814 A.D. show about Rs.700 being the expense incurred on account of grass from this pargana annually.<sup>(40)</sup> Besides this, there are other instances which suggests that no ~~dist~~<sup>inct</sup> collection was made out of the revenue of the village and that the burden was borne by the state and not by individuals. In fact, grass was coupled with Gam Khurch, Desaigiri and all the village expenses which were generally managed by the village Patels on behalf of the government.<sup>(41)</sup>

It may also be mentioned here that under the Marathas, the Desais in course of time had assumed unlimited power and usurped many of the duties of the Patels and Talatis. Thus they had in many cases begun to pay the grass on behalf of the state. In return for the trouble taken by them on these occasions the grassias made them presents names Cheerda. When they paid the grass to the grassias or their agents they always took Olias or receipts from them. These Olias thus represented the amount of grass received by each grassia as his haq and as these remained in the possession of the Desais they were aware of the exact sum that each grassia was entitled to receive.<sup>(42)</sup>

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40. Daftar Number 291, Pudka Nos. 208 and 212, CROB.

41. R.D.V. 1856, No.99, P.128.

42. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 13, P.A.



Again it is stated that under the Marathas, remissions were made to the ryots in years of scarcity. This however, did not influence the payments made to the grassias who whether the season was good or bad received the full payment of their hags. It consequently sometimes happened that the sums paid to the grassias much exceeded the actual jama of the whole village. Thus it could not be possible that the villagers would have paid more than their actual produce to the grassias.<sup>(43)</sup>

From the above it is clear that the grassias was an alienation from the state and not a separate sum collected from the individuals or communities. On their part the grassias either directly collected the grass dues from the villages in person themselves or by the aid of their selotes or gents.<sup>(44)</sup> These visits were a source of oppression in themselves for under pretence of collecting their dues they alongwith their dependants used to remain for several days in the village during which time they were provided gratis with food, opium, tobacco, forage etc. and if the grass was not paid, they wound up by carrying off the cattle, of the village. However previous to the grassias or their selotes repairing to the villages to collect their

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43. List No. 11, Gen.Vol.13, P.A.

44. Vaze's Manual, Section II, Part IIA, P.4063, P.A.

dues, they were compelled to procure a parwana or pass from government.<sup>(45)</sup> This was an important fact in as much as it proves that from the earliest periods the state directly interferred with the payment. If the grass had been simply an affair between the grassia and the villages what necessity could there have been to have obtained a pass from the state previous to drawing the money ? In fact the state when giving a parwana to the grassia was simply writing a draft on the village treasury.

There appear to have been various levies of the grass description in different parts of Gujarat to which some distinguishing appellation or term was prefixed, denominative perhaps of its origin or descriptive of circumstances connected with its establishment. With the grassias it was an immutable axiom, that a claim once received never became defunct and thus many spurious charges were collected annually under an infinite variety of names.<sup>(46)</sup> It occasionally happened that some of these demands lay so long dormant that the extinction of the claimants was concluded, when suddenly an heir, real or fictitious enforced his pretensions by conflagration and murder.<sup>(47)</sup>

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45. List No. 11, General Volume, 13, P.A.

46. Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., P. 608.

47. Ibid.

First of all, comes the grass which we have so far considered. This appears to have been the most common levy in the generally of cases. It may be mentioned here that there was no difference between grass and Toda grass. The term Toda was stated to be in use only in the Principal Collectorate of Surat and Sub-Collectorate of Broach and was not there held to imply any distinctive peculiarity.<sup>(48)</sup>

Next mention may be made of Wanta Grass which appears to have been a commutation to a money payment from the villages for Wanta lands held therein.<sup>(49)</sup>

In some instances the grass appears to have been levied in the shape of a less tax from certain castes, or on certain professions or trades and were known by different names as Grass Vera,<sup>(50)</sup> Vol Vera, Laljee Vera<sup>(51)</sup> etc. In some cases these Veras appear to have been a stipulated amount to be paid yearly, in others they appear to have fluctuated.<sup>(52)</sup> Perhaps these were <sup>es</sup>cases changed over and above grass and not paid by government.

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48. R.D.V. 1844, No. 67/1624, P. 112.

49. Bombay Revenue Selections, P. 723.

50. List No. 11, General Vol. 2, P. 20. P.A.

51. Ibid., P. 23-24.

52. Ibid., P.22.

There appear to have been regular rules laid down about succession to grassia allowances though it seems that the claims of only the lineal descendants of the original grantee were generally recognised.<sup>(53)</sup> The claims of adopted sons appear to have had little recognition. Regarding the right of females to succeed to Grass dues, we find that their claims were fully recognised in the Kheda Collectorate;<sup>(54)</sup> while in the Surat Collectorate the females were only entitled to a maintenance allowance and had no right to succeed to the allowances of their deceased husbands.<sup>(55)</sup>

Regarding the right of alienation of grass allowances, it appears that a sales though allowed were not the universal practice.<sup>(56)</sup> However it was usual for grassias to mortgage their grass, one to the other, the name of the mortgagee being inserted as the incumbent in the public accounts.<sup>(57)</sup>

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53. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 13, P.A.

54. R.D.V. 1844, No. 67/1624, P. 283.

55. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 13, P.A.

56. R.D.V. 1841, No. 50/1279.

57. Ibid.

Wullawa :

Very similar to Grass is what is known in Gujarat as the right of Wullawa. Its probably origin has been already studied. It was a fee levied on travellers escorted on a particular time of road. The Grassia who asserted such a right to the greatest extent in the Kheda Jilla was the Thakur of Ghodasar.<sup>(58)</sup> He claimed the right of escorting travellers on the main road from Ahmedabad to Mehemdabad, but if required he could even furnish an escort in any direction as far as Baroda or Surat and was responsible for all loss sustained. The following were his charges for escort from Ahmedabad to Mehemdabad.<sup>(59)</sup>

A single cart with travellers	Rs. 1/-
Ditto of merchandize from Malwa	Rs. $\frac{1}{2}$
Ditto of palm leaves	Rs. 2/-
A single traveller on foot	One anna

If the carts proceeded on to Nadiad these charges were doubled and so on in proportion.

Marriage or funeral parties were charged at the rate of Rs.  $1\frac{1}{4}$  per cent for 20 Kos and the escort got them food and opium besides. The Ghodasar Thakur had formed out

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58. Ibid., 1856, No.99, P.214.

59. Ibid., P. 214-215.

his right to Wulluwa on the road from Ahmedabad to Mehmoodabad for Rs.400 per annum.

However the charges made for escort as well as the amount of protection afforded and responsibility incurred were usually a matter of private contract between the parties dependent on the amount of property escorted and the line of road travelled.<sup>(60)</sup> When a large train of carts containing merchandize were travelling together they were often charged as low as Rs.  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cart per 7 or 8 Kos, while escorts by night were usually charged double. Besides the Thakur of Ghodasar there were many influential grassias throughout the Jilla who would furnish escorts wherever required.<sup>(61)</sup>

#### Position and Administration of Grassias :

The Grassias could not as it is generally presumed, have had the slightest claim to the distinction of a tribe or caste, not could they, from the great variety of individuals ever be formed into one.<sup>(62)</sup> The Grassias were of many different tribes of Hindus, some were even Muslims; in fact any person purchasing or mortgaging their claims, or on farming their lands and collections, even

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60. Ibid., P. 216.

61. Ibid.; R.D.D. 1805, No. 56, P. 1214-1216.

62. Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., P. 607;  
J.D.D. 1812, No. 63, P. 912-913.

if he was a Parsi or Christian, came equally under the denomination of Grassia which was also extended to all ~~extended to all~~ the mercenaries employed by the principal to impress terror or inflict injury. (63)

In the main, the Grassias belonged to the clan of the different sects of the Rajputs. Gujarat was ruled for about 575 years till the year 1296 A.D. by three successive Rajput ruling families viz. Chavdas, Solankis and Waghelas. Thus in many parts of the country there were Rajput Grassias who retained the distinctive appellations of the clan from whom they claimed descent. (64)

The Jadejas, Jhalas, Choorasumas, Gohels, Rathors, Chauhans etc. claimed descent from an alliance with the chiefs or Bhyad, descendants of the heads of these clans in Kathiāwar. (65) Thus there were Choorasumas in Oond and Choorasumas in Dhundooka; Jhalas in Drangdra and in Dhandooka.

The character of the grassias won bitter criticism at the hands of the early British officials in Gujarat. To James Forbes Grassias meant a savage race of men <sup>fully</sup> inclined in wanton depredations and plunderings. (66) It was

63. Ibid.; R.D.V. 1822, No. 4128, P.11.

64. R.D.V. 1856, No. 99, P.93.

65. Ibid., Also see, G.D. Sharma, "Zamindars of Kathiāwar and the English colonial interests in the beginning of the 19th century," P.I.H.C. 1982, P. 593-601.

66. James Forbes, Op.cit., Vol.II, P. 85.

reported that the Grassias were a proud and indolent people and had a great opinion of their own caste.<sup>(67)</sup> Thus they looked upon themselves as great soldiers and thought they excelled all others. As their lands were cultivated by Rajputs and Kunbees they passed their time either in the stable or in one of the common halls which were to be found in every village. For them the attainment of knowledge was an inferior duty incumbent only on whose professions forced them to acquire it was the only means by which they could attain a livelihood. Not being able to read or write, they were consequently in the hands of their Karbharis or managers or where they had the intelligence to look after their own estates, in the hands of the bankers or money lenders <sup>(68)</sup>

The position of the grassias varied according to their power. In some cases he was a chief holding lands and rights in various villages. On others he was a little better than a recognised free booter but with established dues on his particular village.

The first category of grassias were generally to be found to the north of the river Sabarmati, in the jurisdiction of the Ahmedabad Collectorate comprising mainly

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67. H.D.D. 1805, No. 46, P. 1182.

68. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 12, P.A.



the parganas of Dholka, Dhanduka, Goga and Ranpur. The internal administration of the villages possessed by these grassias was traditional.<sup>(69)</sup> They had their own forms of government and conducted their communities by their own interior regulations or customs.<sup>(70)</sup> Every grassia who had under his protection four or five villages styled himself Raja while his dependents looked up to him in all things and acknowledged no other master. The community of a Grassias village consisted of the Grassia or Grassias, his attendants who were commonly Rajputs of the Chauhan, Rathor, Furmar or any other such clan; one or two shopkeepers' with whom the Grassia had an account for petty supplies, the Mookhee whom the Grassia nominated; the Hawalदार who helped the Mookhee and looked after the crops in the grain yard; the village barber, puggee and others; and the cultivators of whom a few were kunbis and the rest Kolis, Ahirs and such like.<sup>(71)</sup> There were no hereditary village officers and the name of even Patel was unknown except in Dholka.

The power of life and death and the administration of justice within the Grassia village was possessed by

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69. R.D.D. 1805, No. 46, P. 1214-1216; R.D.V. 1856, No. 99.

70. R.D.D. 1805, No. 46, P. 1201.

71. Ibid., P. 1119.

the head Grassias'. Their customs and rules were guided by tradition.<sup>(72)</sup> It has been argued that they never thought it necessary to make reference to the authority of the superior government residing at the Qasba of the pargana in order to obtain leave for the punishment or to avert the effects of having punished a criminal or disobedient ryot.<sup>(73)</sup> And also in the event of crime against government being committed, it was usual to demand of the grassia whose ryot might have committed the act, that he was to take the necessary measures for punishment the same.<sup>(74)</sup>

Under the Maratha rule, the Grassia chiefs appears to have exercised the same degree of independence as that of autonomous chiefs. They enjoyed the right of peace and war with each other and formed such connections as were necessary for the extension and security of their commerce; they built fortifications and maintained troops. With their hereditary possessions they also received a variety of sagnieural rights and privileges.<sup>(75)</sup> The Grassias proprietors of villages assigned lands to Rajputs and others for military ser-

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72. Col. Walker, has observed it differently. According to him there is nothing which could have resembled to a regular system. Op.cit., P. 31.

73. Alexander Forbes, Op.cit., P. 279.

74. Col. Walker, Op.cit., P. 31.

75. Alexander Forbes, Op.cit., P. 280.

vices in the defence of themselves and property. They called for the services of all the artificers of the village whenever they required them; They possessed the right to all trees which might fall down, although the produce might belong to the tenant who occupied the ground. Fees were paid to them for permission to conduct a marriage and some collections were made on the birth of children.

Land Revenue - Methods of Assessment and Magnitude :

The principal source of revenue possessed by the grassia chief was the share of the crops which he received in kind.<sup>(76)</sup> There were different methods of dividing the produce according to the Dhara or custom of the village. Generally speaking it was divided equally between the chief and his tenants after deductions for seed and labour.

The Grassia chief also levied transit duties on trader's goods, taxes on liquor shops and on tanners and curriers which latter tax was in compensation for the perquisite allowed to those traders of removing the hides of all animals which died in the village.<sup>(77)</sup> It appears

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76. Ibid.; Selections from the Records of Bombay Government No. CVI, P.23.

77. Alexander Forbes, Op.cit., P. 280.

that the Grassia chief had the right to increase or decrease the revenues they derived from the ryots at their own pleasure.<sup>(78)</sup> There was no interference of the ruling authority in regard to relations between the grassia and this ryots, which was favourable to the latter, as they found much leniency at the hands of the Grassia chief than they would have done from a revenue farmer.<sup>(79)</sup>

It seems that neither the Mughal <sup>the</sup> nor Maratha government did ever interfere in the internal management of the possessions held by Grassias.<sup>(80)</sup> It was generally believed that the ruling authority could not infringe upon or usurp any of those principles of autonomy which each petty chief had assumed within the bounds of his own possessions.<sup>(81)</sup> These rights were recognised by the early British officials who described them as 'sovereign princes' with whom the government had no right to interfere beyond the collection of a tribute or salami, the payment of which in a majority of cases was obliged to be enforced annually by arms.<sup>(82)</sup>

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78. Ibid.

79. R.D.D. 1805, No. 46, P. 1201.

80. Ibid., P. 1119.

81. Ibid., 1804, No. 42, P. 802.

82. List No. 11, General Vol. 12, P:A; Col. Walker, Op.cit., P. 30.

So far we have confined our attention to the superior land holders or grassia chiefs confined to the north of the river Sabarmati. We may now note some observations which refer generally to the grassias who enjoyed a portion of a village (Wanta) as their inheritance. These were generally to be found in the villages of the Kheda district. The Wanta holder was the proprietor of the soil and held subordinate to the ruling authority, to whom he owed a salami which was generally conceived to be fixed unless from the operation of force or unfavourable season it suffered an increase or decrease.<sup>(83)</sup> During the period of the decline of the Mughal empire and the succeeding relaxation and inability of the rulers of the country to control the chaos and confusion that followed, the Grassias were able to increase their Wanta lands as well as grass payments.<sup>(84)</sup> These unlawful encroachments were supported by the nefarious condition of the Maratha Kamavisdars who from the transitory duration of their offices were always ready to make the most of it. Much government property in this manner was alienated and swelled the Wanta lands. Some of the grassias increased their holdings by purchasing and some by receiving the Talpat lands in mortgage from the Patels. These mortgaged lands were

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83. R.D.D. 1820, No. 157, P. 4078.

84. J.D.D. 1812, No. 63, P. 916.

seldom redeemed to the owners.<sup>(85)</sup> Again the regular system of encroachment too, which the stronger practised towards the weaker was another great cause of the increase of Wanta lands for when a Grassias field bordered on that of a Talpat Ryot, the former carried on his cultivation with a lighted matchlock at pleasure made as much of his neighbours field to become his own property as he found convenient to possess.<sup>(86)</sup>

The salami on the Wanta lands under the Marathas appears to have been increased to Rs. 2, 3, 4 and in some instances even as high as Rs. 8 per beegha.<sup>(87)</sup> However, it must not be supposed that such increases were acquiesced in by the grassias without some adequate compensation which was immediately to be found by the village manager making over to them a portion of the government land which the latter held free of any assessment.

In some villages, Wantas suffered a considerable decrease rather than an increase under the Marathas. There were various circumstances by which some of the Wanta came under the management of Patels. Sometimes Wantas lapsed

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85. Secret and Political Department Diary 1806, No. 19 P. 10319.

86. Ibid., P. 10320.

87. J.D.D. 1819, No. 114, P. 2298.

to the government from the proprietors dying without heirs, sometimes they were confiscated by the Marathas as a punishment for misconduct, and often from the proprietors residing in other villages and being unable to attend to them themselves, they were leased to the village for an annual fixed sum or for a certain rate per beegha.<sup>(88)</sup>

However, the constant divisions of property which took place under the law of inheritance among the Hindus, was perhaps a circumstance that contributed more to destroy the species of Wanta property than any of the causes above stated.<sup>(89)</sup> From this rule, it invariably followed that the property of each holder became trifling and without other assistance and he being indolent and despising industry, it became insufficient for his support. Thus he was induced to lease it to the village Patel or other Kunbis, for a fixed sum or dispose it of by sale or mortgage. These wanta lands were attached generally to the whole village though they were preserved under the above denomination and considered under various pleas claimable by the owner or his heirs.<sup>(90)</sup> In some cases, the Patels did not make known to the government the Wantas which had lapsed for the reasons stated above, and thus they turned

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88. R.D.D. 1820, No. 149, P. 396; J.D.D. 1719, No. 114 P. 2334; Ibid., 1815, No. 75. P. 1054.

89. R.D.D. 1820, No. 157, P. 4075.

90. Ibid., P. 4077.

the charge of these to their private advantages.<sup>(91)</sup>

It is further stated that in some instances where the Patels had obtained possession of Wanta land situated in their villages and paid the Grassias a fixed sum annually, the practice of the Maratha government on discovering any transaction of this kind was to occupy the place of the Patels and to pay the grassia the same amount as he had been in the practice of receiving and appropriate the difference.<sup>(92)</sup>

Thus we find that after the original appointment of Talpat and Wanta lands had been effected, encroachments were made on both sides (Government as well as grassias) and as the ruling potentates were not always weak, the grassias came to loose much of their Wanta lands. To these encroachments Mr. Elphinstone also adverted in his minute in which he stated that the Wanta land holding of grassia was much reduced by sale, mortgage and encroachments of the Patels and government officers until it had ceased to bear anything like its original proportion (viz one fourth) to the Talpat.<sup>(93)</sup> It may be mentioned here the Wantas of the autonomous Grassia chiefs were better prevented from the encroachments of the Marathas and Patels

91. Ibid., No. 149, P. 396.

92. R.D.V. 1856, No. 99, P. 123.

93. G.W. Forrest, Op.cit., P. 471.



while those confined mainly to the Kheda Jilla in most cases had come to exist little more than in name. (94)

The immunities which the Grassias enjoyed in respect to their Wantas were originally various and in many instances not very valuable to their owners. The Wanta holder enjoyed the right of regulating the economy of his own lands and the affairs of his dependants provided always that in doing so he did not disturb the peace of the area or the safety of the government in which case the government had a right to check and interfere as was necessary.

Sometimes the grassia cultivated his land rent free, sometimes he cultivated it on a quit rent, in other instances he leased the land to the village, residing himself probably in another village where he might also have wanta and in others he leased the whole of his property for a given annual sum. (95) The quit rent or salami which he paid when he cultivated the lands himself or the consideration which he received when he leased them to the village was not fixed according to any given standard. In the one case every exertion was made by Patels to render Grassias subject to as high a contribu-

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94. R.D.D. 1820, No. 153, P. 1853.

95. Ibid.

tion to the village Jama as was possible. In the other, they took advantage of the inability of the Grassia to attend to his lands himself and the consideration thus accorded was small. In some cases it was a more pittance, in others it amounted to about 1/3 of what the land if let under other circumstances would have yielded.<sup>(96)</sup>

The Grassia chieftains as well as the petty Grassia holders of Wanta land were at liberty to sell or dispose of their holdings to whom so ever they pleased, subject to payment of the same contribution as acknowledgement of supremacy as paid by themselves.<sup>(97)</sup> However, in case of the petty wantas being sold or mortgaged, in addition to the salami, a swade tax according to the caste of the cultivator was imposed as follows :<sup>(98)</sup>

The Kunbis were to pay Rs.2.11.8 per beegha, Patidars and Banias Rs.1,13,2 per beegha, Brahmins and other castes Rs.1.5.10. It made no difference whether land was cultivated by the holder or his cultivator. Sales and mortgages of Wanta holdings were more indulged in by the petty Grassias who were common in the Kheda Jilla.

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96. Ibid.

97. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 12, P.A.; Col. Walker, Op.cit., P. 23; R.D.D. 1894, No. 42, P. 804; Ibid., 1805, No. 46, P. 1202-1204.

98. List No. 11, Kaira Volume 34, P.A.

The reasons for the same have already been listed above.

The Grassias who held estates in the Ahmedabad Jilla rarely relinquished their property altogether.<sup>(99)</sup> Once the estate was ceded or mortgaged, the Grassia lost all authority over it, which was transferred to the person to whom it had been surrendered.<sup>(100)</sup> Frequently the property was divided into shares and each individual was in that case at liberty to dispose of his own.<sup>(101)</sup> In the case either of a sale or mortgage the validity of the act was attested by documents formerly executed under the seals or signatures of the parties.

Regarding the laws of inheritance amongst the grassias if a father had four sons, five shares were made of which the eldest son got two shares and his junior brothers one each; in some cases the eldest brother got one and a half shares.<sup>(102)</sup>

#### Bhat Security :

Closely connected with the regular payment of Salami from the Wanta lands was the system of Bhat security. The

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99. R.D.D. 1820, No. 157, P. 4077.

100. R.D.D. 1805, No. 46, P. 1202.

101. Col. Walker, Op.cit., P. 23.

102. Secret and Political Department Diary, 1806, No. 222, P. 1163-1173.

Bhats were not peculiar to Gujarat but were found in various parts of India. They traced their origin to a very ancient date, some mention of them being made in the Mahabharata and Ramayan.<sup>(103)</sup> Their original profession was said to be similar to the bards of Europe who continued to transmit to posterity the traditions of their ancestors and the memory of honorable events. Although this was the usual occupation of the Bhats, many of them had other modes of living as well. In Gujarat they were bankers and cultivators but no merchants. What is of relevance here is they offered themselves as security to the different governments and individuals for payment of their revenue and the good behaviour of the Patels and revenue farmers; they also became guarantees for treaties between rival princes and the performance of bonds by individuals.<sup>(104)</sup> Thus we find that Bhat security was in common use in the revenue and judicial proceedings of Gujarat and it was almost the only species of security obtained from the chieftains of Kathiawar either for the payment of their revenue or their behaviour.<sup>(105)</sup>

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103. Selections, Vol. 9, (M.S.A.B.), P.2.

104. James Forbes, Op.cit., Vol.I, P. 376;  
Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., Vol.I, P. 609.

105. Selections, Vol. 9, P.6.

The origin of the Bhat system of security appears to be of quite an old date for it is certain that a custom of such general and extensive use must have required a long time to obtain the authority and respect it had come to command. Col. Walker has reported that it was Raja Todar Mal who first introduced the Bhats as securities.<sup>(106)</sup> Mr. Crow, the magistrate at Surat, and Mr. Prendergast at Broach traced the origin of the Bhat Security for revenue and police transactions to the rise of the Maratha power in Gujarat.<sup>(107)</sup>

For revenue purposes the Bhats were employed as securities both in the Khalisa as well as the Grassia and Mewasi villages. As has been mentioned in Chapter III, the Bhat was the common pledge of security between the government and the Patels and the latter and the ryots for the payment of revenue. Such practice of securities prevailed in nearly all parganas to the north of the River Mahi with the exception of Dholka and Dhandhuka.<sup>(108)</sup> For undertaking such services the Bhats were usually rewarded with the best parts of the lands in the village.

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106. Ibid., P.5.

107. Ibid., P.12.

108. Ibid., P. 17.

The system of police under the Marathas was also much assisted by the application of Bhat security. Thus as a police agent it was the duty of the Bhat to produce culprits and to answer for their conduct, to use his exertions to recover the restoration of stolen property and to enforce compliance with the authority of the country. However his responsibility remained till the culpr<sup>its</sup>ts did not quit <sup>his</sup> area of jurisdiction.

There is no doubt about the fact that no security was esteemed, so binding or sacred as that of a Bhat.<sup>(109)</sup> The means by which the Bhats maintained their extensive moral influence was by operating on the superstitions ideas of the Hindus in general among whom their persons were revered.<sup>(110)</sup>

A Bhat, however, would never become security for a person of whom he knew nothing. Between the security and the principal there generally existed a bond of union founded on the experience of their mutual necessity to each other and the intimate knowledge possessed by the Bhat of the resources and disposition of his client enabled him fully to appreciate the risk he was exposed to.<sup>(111)</sup>

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109. James Forbes, Op.cit., Volume I, P. 376.

110. J.D.D. 1809, No. 47, P. 48.

111. Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., Vol. I, P. 609.

In fact, the Bhats were perhaps the only link which conected the non-Khalisa territory of the society with the government; every grassia, Koli and Bhil had his Bhat who derived subsistende or opulence from a participation in the revenue of his patron and whose intervention appeared calculated to produce salutary influence on minds callous to other impressions.<sup>(112)</sup>

The principal profession of the Bhats was of singing the praises and keeping the pedigree and register of events in the families of their Jujmans (client) or Rajputs who employed them.<sup>(113)</sup> Certain families of Bhats claimed as their Watan the employment of their particular patrons or Jujmans. During the rains they lived with their families and pursued the necessary labours of agriculture but afterwards proceeded on their annual visits to the several branches of their patrons families. It was during these circuits that the Bhats received their usual charity, they attended weddings and registered the events as well as all deaths, births and other remarkable occurances which may have happened in their patrons families since the preceding visits. On these occassions they carried with them the Chopda or family register from which they amused their patrons by

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112. Ibid.,

113. Selections Volume 9, P.3.

a recitation of the pedigree of their family in a musical carlence. This Vahi was a record of authority by which almost all disputes relative to division of property were decided. The Bhat who kept this record was termed Wye or Wahi Wancha - the reader or expounder of the Book. It was the close attachment of the Bhats to their Rajput patrons that the position of the former was elevated to a rank of veneration equal to that of the Brahmins with whom they were confounded with. (114)

When the persons for whom the Bhats stood as securities failed or refused to perform the promises of their engagements, the Bhats indulged in a dreadful sacrifice known as Traga. This was performed generally in two ways. In the first, the Bhat would generally sit in Dharna at his own door, fasting, (115) In fact this step itself was a certain instigation to the fulfilment of the Grassias engagement. But if the grassia remained stubborn whether from necessity or inclination, the Bhat would continue to wound himself in different parts of his body until his life was endangered, the client would naturally unbend before the death of the Bhat, for that crime, as was believed would subject both him and his posterity to the wrath of the God(Mahadev). This unreason-

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114. Ibid., P. 10.

115. Ibid., P. 18-20.



able alternative was peculiar to the Grassias alone and never practised amongst the ryots.

By the second method, when the person for whom a Bhat may have become security was not forthcoming the usual process was to put the Bhat under daily fees (Mohsuls) and then to fine him heavily.<sup>(116)</sup> He was then allowed giving another Bhat security for his return to proceed in search of his client and when he found him he proceeded to exercise various tortures on himself until the client promised to enable him to fulfil his security by accompanying him. If this effort failed he next brought an aged mother or his wife or some near relation and put her to death at the door of his client, contriving from the first to denounce the heaviest curses on him as being the cause of it and would ultimately stab himself. When this last extremity was resorted to all the Bhats in the country assembled in a riotous body pulled down and plundered the clients house and property and indulged in violence against his family members. In these violent proceedings no opposition was offered by any ruling authority. In some cases, the members of the female sex belonging to another tribe viz. Tragalla were sacrificed.<sup>(117)</sup>

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116. Ibid., P. 32-35.

117. Ibid., P. 45. This race of people was usually employed in the temples and were of the lowest order of the Hindus.

It may be mentioned here that the Bhat would proceed to such dreadful extremities only when driven to desperation by the severity of the government to whom he may have become security. Otherwise such events were of rare occurrence. It was not the actual execution of the pledge but the well known and salutary dread of it which so powerfully restrained the turbulent activities of the Grassias and Mewasis.<sup>(118)</sup>

And if under any eventuality, Traga did take place, then miserable would be the lot of the person who had occasioned it and who would thus become an outcaste even from his own tribes.

The Bhats for furnishing of security, received a consideration equivalent to the risk. The entire rate cannot be ascertained as the value of the consideration depended on the amount and the supposed ability of the person requiring the security to satisfy the demands against him.<sup>(119)</sup> Generally the Bhats had lands assigned to them which were rent free or they received a percentage on the amount for which they had become security. The ultimate acquit<sup>ance</sup> of the Bhat with his clients resources and disposition enabled him fully to ascertain the risk he might run. The client was also aware that with-

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118. Ibid., P. 38.

119. Ibid., P. 25.

out the security of the Bhat he could make no settlement with the government and it was only by the observance of good faith in his contract that he could expect aid from the Bhat.<sup>(120)</sup> Indeed, the Bhat found his becoming a security, a much more profitable profession than his original one of singing and keeping records and registers.

As has been mentioned earlier, the lands assigned to the Bhats were held rent free. However, it is stated that in 1775 the Bhats of Nadiad were also asked to pay the tax, but they refused and on being compelled they killed one another in a dreadful sacrifice.<sup>(121)</sup> The lands of the Bhats were cultivated by those employed in agriculture.

To conclude, we might say that the Bhats emerged as a medium through which money and other transactions were forced to be conducted, whether amongst individuals or between the governing power and its subjects; the realisation of revenue, the recovery of private debts, the performance of every engagement, the apprehension of thieves, murderers, the detection of crimes, the submission of criminals, the recovery of stolen property

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120. Ibid., P. 26.

121. James Forbes, Op.cit., Vol. I, P. 378-379. Also see Chap. II.

etc. as well as the suppression of all knowledge of criminal acts, the scope of offenders and the obstinate refusal of parties to perform all just engagements were equally within the influence of the Bhats. (122)

The Bhat security seems to have declined in importance under the Maratha revenue system of farming in which the manotidari, because an essential requirement of the economic transactions.

Mewasi :

Besides the Grassias, references are made of the Mewasis. It is difficult to trace the origin of these people as well as to offer a trangible etymological definition of the term Mewas. Earlier, in this chapter it has been stated that when the division between talpat and wanta lands was made, some of the chieftains (Rajputs and others) whose territories were lying on the periphery or whom the ruling power was not sufficient to crush, retained their full rights and independence, and some agreed to pay a peshkash. Whether these were ancestors of that class of people which came to be known as Mewasi is a point which needs to be examined further. This has been referred by Mr. A. Rogers as well. (123) He states

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122. J.D.D. 1816, No. 84, P. 1992.

123. List No. 11, General Volume 12.

that when the Rajputs established their sway in Gujarat the Kolis who were the aboriginal inhabitants were pushed to the wild and inaccessible parts of the country where they maintained their freedom in a great measure. The successors of the Rajputs, viz. the Muslims and later the Mughals probably found it prudent to leave the internal administration of villages held by powerful chieftains in the more distant parts to their original owners and were satisfied with the payment of a tribute.

The application of grass to Rajput and Mewas to Koli villages was first clearly made by Mr. Elphinstone,<sup>(124)</sup> but Mr. Prendergart doubted its correctness as he observed that Mewas<sup>st</sup> villages were chiefly situated in broken ground and the word was used whether the population was Koli, Rajput or Bhil.<sup>(125)</sup> In support of the distinction Elphinstone contended that Mewas was used in the sense of refractory and that as all independence on the part of a Koli was reckoned usurpation and was <sup>not</sup> noted in a Rajput the term had come to be limited to Koli villages.<sup>(126)</sup> However, this distinction does not seem accurate for the defeated leaders may belong to Koli as well as Bhil, Rajput and Muslim.

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124. G.W. Forrest, Op.cit.

125. East India Papers, Vol. III, P. 705.

126. Ibid., P. 708.

The Mewasis of the Rajput caste were mainly of the following eight clans - Parmar, Rathore, Solanki, Goyal, Chauhan, Jadhev, Vaghela and Dandee and amongst them religious and economic differences were little.<sup>(127)</sup>

Those of the Koli caste branched into 4 divisions called Puggee, Kotwal, Ranth and Barya who had internal variations and were recognised by various names.<sup>(128)</sup> Of course, it cannot be denied that the villages belonging to the Kolis were comprehended under the general name of Mewasi. But to restrict the Mewasis only to the Koli character would not be historically correct. For example the Barria chieftain of the Mewasi village of Ometha in Napad pargana was a Koli while Thakur Narainsinghjee of Mauze Mogur and Thakur Narsingh Pratabsinghjee of Mauze Gajna also in Napad pargana (both of Mewasi villages) were Rajputs. May be they were Grassias earlier and when they showed disobedience to the ruling authorities they were categorised as Mewasis.

The Koli character did not find much favour with the early British officials. "Of all the plunderers, who infest Gujarat the most bloody and untameable are the Kolis who however present different characters in different districts the most turbulent being in the

127. List No. 11, Kaira Rumal, P.A., Para 41.

128. Ibid.

vicinity of the Ramm or in the neighbourhood of the Mahi river. (129)

It was due to this character that the administrators called them indigenous tribes of free booters and robbers in Gujarat. (130)

They were universal for fickleness, infidelity, ingratitude, revenge, malice, Knavery and cunning. (131) Although the Kolis were independent in spirit, yet they were said to be remarkably faithful when trusted and were never sanguinary.

The Kolis lived under their own Thakurs whose authority alone they willingly acknowledged and paid little respect to the laws unless when it suited their interest or they were constrained by the presence of an armed force.

Their ostensible and indeed their chief employment was agriculture and they were said to be often industrious farmers and labourers and when kindly treated to pay their revenue to government as well as their Rajput neighbours. (132)

No wonder Forbes was surprised to see the Koli villages under excellent cultivation,

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129. Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., Vol. I, P. 609.

130. James Forbes, Op.cit., Vol. II, P. 160.

131. R.D.D. 1805, No. 48, P. 2063.

132. British Heber, Op.cit., Vol. II, P. 141.

their villages large and popular and the fields enclosed by hedges planted with mango and tamarind trees.<sup>(133)</sup>

Turning back to the Mewasi villages we find that in their villages, the Patels and people were all Rajputs, Kolis and Muslims or either of these castes predominating greatly above the proportion of Kunbis or genuine industrious labourers of the soil.<sup>(134)</sup> The Mewasi inhabitants of the Kheda and Ahmedabad Districts generally lived in the neighbourhood of the different rivers, viz. the Mahi, Watruck and the Sabarmati.<sup>(135)</sup> The ravines which abounded on these river banks and which were covered with thorny underwood in the midst of which their hamlets were situated particularly favoured their turbulent inclinations and rendered the efforts of the ruling authority to subdue them or to alter their habits in a great measure if not wholly, abortive.<sup>(136)</sup> Though their lands produced for them enough to satisfy the necessary wants of life, the frequent robberies, quarrels and murders were to be ascribed to their passion for spirituous liquors and other inconsiderate expenditure

133. James Forbes, Op. cit., Vol. II, P. 163.

134. List No. 11, Kaira Rumal, P.A.

135. Ibid.

136. Baroda Residency, Daftar, No. 31, Vol. No. 152, BCRO, P. 914; Selections XI, P. 65. Perhaps the topographical situation prompted them to assume the character of Mewasi.



like that of dancing girls and musicians and of course to the idle state in which they were prone to live.

We are indeed fortunate to possess some interesting details of a few Mewasi villages outlining the area of each village, the revenue derived from it and the amount of Jama paid to government and the nature of transit duties and the like. Let us first study those of the Nadiad pargana. Of the 45 villages comprising this pargana, 36 were Rastee and 9 Mewasi viz. Pratapur, Kholwad, Ahima, Kherda, Jorapura, Jussapura, Lindora, Chitlaw and Rania. The Mewasi villages were situated along the banks of the Mahi river among the ravines and broken ground which afforded so many strong positions. (137)

The area, population and the average revenue derived from the above is detailed below : (138)

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137. Selections from the records of the Bombay Government, No. XI, P. 65.

138. The details regarding area are taken from R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326 and Ibid., 1840, No. 131/1215 regarding population from Baroda Selections 64 CROB, P.2 and the average revenue has been derived from Modi records of the years. 1779/80 to 1795/96 available in the CROB.

Name of the village	Area in beeghas	Popula- tion.	Average revenue derived from the years 1779-80 to 1795-96 (Rupees in whole figures)
1. Pratapur	400	150	301
2. Kholwad	1000	200	530
3. Ahima	1200	200	514
4. Kherda	1840	200	980
5. Jorapura	8846	100	160
6. Jassapura	1300	200	300
7. Lindora	2145	100	325
8. Chitlaw	1200	50	215
9. Rania	1393	500	625

The Baria chiefs of Pratapur, Kholwad and Ahima were descendants of one Fateh Rawal, the Rajput Raja of Pawa-gad who was deprived of his territory by Mahmud Begda. One of the Rawals descendants, Kurrumsee, married the daughter of the Koli chieftain of Canara and thus lost his caste among the Rajputs and became a Baria Koli.<sup>(139)</sup> He then contracted friendship with Ratansingh Chander-bhan the Raja of Seelee who gave the said Kurrumsee 12 villages in inam for the support of the ancient and respectable family of the Rawal. These villages were accordingly enjoyed for some years until Mahmud Begda.

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139. R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326, P. 99.

again deprived them of 10 villages leaving two villages viz. Ahima, Kholwad together with the right of levying transit duties in the Khanpur in their possession.

The chiefs of the Chitlaw and Rania were descended from the 2 sons of one of the Rajas of Seehora (in Savli pargana of Baroda) whose names were Bhojraj jee and Agarjee.<sup>(140)</sup> The Raja gave his sons the village of Rania and 700 beeghas of Wanta land of Wusurva. For some-time these were enjoyed collectively but at length a division took place. Agarjee took the wanta of 700 beeghas and a portion of land from Rania and established a village for himself called Chitlaw. The remainder of the lands together with the village of Rania remained in the possession of his brother, Bhojrajjee. Thus these villages were enjoyed for a length of time entirely free from every kind of payment to any government, until the Marathas, when a small tribute varying annually was levied on these villages.<sup>(141)</sup>

Kherda was an inamee village of the Bhats who in consequence of the turbulent Mewasi neighbourhood which they could not cope up with made over the village to one Purmar Randhir Singh, whose ancestors were related to

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140. Ibid., P. 101-102.

141. Ibid., P. 1-3.

the Raja of Bhetasee. This village was given to the Parmar on condition that he would let them freely enjoy 400 beeghas of Nakru land and afford them his protection.<sup>(142)</sup> Thus these villages were held rent free by the Parmar and his progeny up to the time of the Maratha conquest which government imposed an annual levy upon it the amount of which fluctuated, according to the opposition the chief showed towards a compliance.

The ruling chiefs of the remaining villages viz. those of Lindora, Jassapura, Jorapura were of the Baria caste.

The following were five Mewasi villages in the Tappa of Napad viz. Salole, Gajna, Dhewan, Ometha and Kankapura. The area of the above villages and the average revenue derived from them by the Marathas are given below :<sup>(143)</sup>

Name of the Village	Area Beeghas	Average revenue between 1788-89 to 1801-02
1. Ometha	1600	Rs. 401
2. Gajna	4000	Rs. 290
3. Salole	1200	Rs. 820
4. Dhewan	850	Rs. 1226
5. Kanakpura	900	Rs. 600

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142. Ibid., P. 105.

143. Infra-fn. 158.

While examining the history of these villages it appears that five villages viz. Asarma, Amlole (included in the Petlad pargana) Kotwakhar, Ometha and Sankyar were given to the ancestors of their Barria chiefs in inam - the first three from the Raja of Bhetasi - Parmar Jodhajee Parbatjee in 1488 A.D. for having defended him against the outrage of one of his cusions and the other 2 villages were given by a kinsman of the chieftain of Bhaderwa in 1693 A.D. because he could not keep them himself on account of his Koli neighbours bearing an hatred against him.<sup>(144)</sup> These villages were uninterruptedly enjoyed by the Baria family after paying some revenue to the government (see the above table), the whole of their management, transit duties etc. being in their hands.

The village of Dehwan among 23 other villages was granted to the Dudhej Brahmins by Sidh Raja Jai Singh in charity.<sup>(145)</sup> In 1197 A.D. the village was bequeathed to one Parmar Vanejee (the ancestor of the ruling Jhallia chief) by the widow of the last Dudhej Brahmins. The Parmar adopted the title Jhallia and enjoyed the whole revenue till the accession of the Maratha government when a tribute which fluctuated was exacted. It was later

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144. R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326, P. 78.

145. Ibid., P. 85-86.

divided into 2 portions one as Kankapura and the other as Dehwan.

The ruling Thakurs of Gajna were descended from the family of one Raja Doodajee who possessed 66 villages out of which 12 were given to his brother Joodajee in 1423 A.D.<sup>(146)</sup> As the family of the latter increased, these villages were divided among them who again disposed of their shares as they thought proper. Out of these the ancestor of one Thakur Narsingh Partabsingh held the village of Gajna which was enjoyed rent-free till 1593 A.D. in which year Mahmud Begda caused a tribute to be levied annually of Rs.351. After this a further levy under the name of Ghasdana was levied by the Marathas.

The village of Salole was held by Dorrea Rajputs up to 1648 A.D. on condition of paying a fixed revenue.<sup>(147)</sup> When he failed to fulfil the condition it was granted to one Joger Kanjee who agreed to pay the dues on condition of getting the management of the villages.

The following were nine Mehwasī villages in the pargana of Petlad viz. Mogur, Gorewa, Rajupura, Bhanpura, Assarma, Amlole, Katanah, Badalpura and Kamwarjee. The

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146. Ibid., P. 91.

147. Ibid., P. 90.

area and the revenue derived from the villages is as follows.<sup>(148)</sup>

Name of the village	Area in beeghas	Revenue for 1752-53	Average revenue between 1787-88 to 1814
1. Mogur	3200	836	2505
2. Gorewa	800	101	1185
3. Rajoopora	800	-	-
4. Bhanpura	350	-	-
5. Assorma	1000	-	-
6. Amlole	800	-	-
7. Katanah	3542	182	1861
8. Badalpura	575	175	555
9. Kamvaree	1400	-	-

The village of Mogur was given as a source of maintenance by Mahmud Begda to the ancestors of one Thakur Narainsinghjee Jaimalsinghjee and Mahadevainghjee.<sup>(149)</sup>

It was enjoyed free of tribute till 1740 A.D. after which the Maratha government succeeded in exacting a tribute annually. This tribute, as the above table shows nearly trebled by the time the British took over. This applied to three other villages (viz. Gorewa, Badalpura and Katana) the tribute of which also increased considerably.

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148. Vide Foot Note 158.

149. R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326, P. 83-84.

A British report of the early 19th century speaks of 10 Mewasi villages in the Matar pargana.<sup>(150)</sup> This needs further investigation for in the relevant modi records of the second half of the 18th century we find that the above 10 villages are not given separately from the Khalsa villages.<sup>(151)</sup> Also, the taxes which were supposed to be levied only in the Khalsa villages viz. Oonth Vera, Dallali, Dharala Vera etc. appears to be levied in the above 10 villages, with no distinction being made between the Khalsa and Mewasi villages, perhaps the above 10 villages were not Mewasi in the true sense of the term.

This supposition applies to the villages of the Mahundha parganas as well. Though the above mentioned British report<sup>(152)</sup> speaks of 14 Mewasi villages, we find that in reality there appear to be only two Mewasi villages in this pargana viz. Ghodasar and Halderwa measuring an area of 3700 beeghas and 3200 beeghas respectively.<sup>(153)</sup>

150. Baroda Selections, No. 64, BCRO. The 10 villages were Sehaj, Soorasmal, Mattage, Vansar, Koomervar, Dethalee, Bhalleda, Vassad, Shakepur, Buchasan.

151. Daftar No. 290, Farishta No. 10, CROB.

152. See Note No. 154.

153. R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326, P. 94-95.



The pargana of Kapadvanj was recognised as a frontier Mewasi Mahal, it being surrounded on all sides but the south by the very worst description of Gujarati Mewasis.<sup>(154)</sup> Also comprehended under the name of Koli villages, these villages numbering thirteen were all situated on the banks of the Vatrak and its neighbourhood.<sup>(155)</sup>

There were two Mewasi villages in the pargana of Thasra viz. Junore and Soneepur occupying an area of 8000 beeghas and 3000 beeghas respectively. The ruling Thakurs of Junore were the descendants of Siddh Raja Jaisingh, Raja of Pattan and were given the village by one of the Muslim rulers as a source of maintenance for himself and posterity on condition of paying a small sum as tribute.<sup>(156)</sup> Those of Soneepur were descended from Raja Jaisinghjee, a petty raja of Sojitra who possessed 700 villages from which Soneepur was one.<sup>(157)</sup> Mahmud Begda deprived him of his territory but later one of his descendants was allowed to retain the village of Soneepur as a source of maintenance for himself and posterity on payment of a fluctuating tribute.

154. R.D.D. 1817, No. 112, P. 665-666.

155. The names of the villages were as follows : Chapyal, Mondel, Nanee, Mondel Motee, Gadrel, Gahuwa, Burkunda, Gangyal, Sallalee, Aral, Ratanpur, Danadra, Bhootya.

156. R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326, P. 76.

157. Ibid., P. 73.

From the above, it is clear that the Mewasi chieftains could be either Rajputs or Kolis or even Muslims. In fact most of them like the grassias were descendants of the Rajput rulers of Gujarat. Again the Mewasi villages were not usurped by their respective rulers nor held by coercion. In fact, these villages were either given as inam (viz. those of Ahima, Pratapur, Kholwad in pargana Nadiad and Asarma and Amlole in pargana Petlad) or in charity (for instance, Dehwan in Napad pargana) or sometimes as a source of maintenance (Mogur, Junore and Soneepur). Of course, they had no sánads or such like documentary evidence to adduce, but their rights were never called in question and were recognised by first the Maratha and later the British rulers.

#### Internal Economy :

The internal economy of the Mewasi villages like that of the Grassia chief was in the hands of their rulers entirely. The ruling authority had only a right to a sum of tribute the amount of which varied little. The Thakurs waresly refused to pay knowing that such conduct would bring the force of government upon their heads and oblige them to abandon their homes.<sup>(158)</sup> Immunities from assessed taxes and annual inspection of their

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158. List No. 11, Kaira Rumal, P.A.

wealth were greatly valued by them. They also sent Mohsuls on their own cultivators to press revenue demands.<sup>(159)</sup>

The Mewasi villages were not of an equal character. Some were independent principalities in the real sense of the term viz. those of Dehwan, Ometha and Ghodasar. While others, specially those of Kapadvanj were small hamlets, inferior in size and paying small sums as tribute. The practice of Bhat security for the due payment of revenue as well as maintenance of law and order was in prevalence in Mewasi villages also. Apart from land revenue, these rulers also levied transit duties, on trade passing through their areas. These duties differed in their rates depending on the nature of commodity and the mode of transport. They were either collected by the servants of the Mewasi chiefs or farmed out.<sup>(159.a)</sup>

#### Changes under British :

The authority and independence of the Grassias came to be much circumscribed under the sway of the British rule. In 1819 the right of government to increase the salami or tribute payable by the Grassias was clearly established after a great deal of discussion.<sup>(160)</sup> This

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159. R.D.V. 1821-21, No. 21/45, P. 830.

159.a R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326.

160. East India Papers, Vol. III, P. 717-729;  
R.D.D. 1813, No.87, P. 1733.

right, in fact arose out of the decision previously passed upon the question of sovereignty which was determined to vest in the British government, to the utter exclusion of the pretensions set forth by the Grassias. The effect of that decision was to place these classes on the same footing as other subjects and consequently to render their property liable to a proportionate share of the public burden.

The first modification attempted among the Grassias was an increase to their tribute. Again the grassias who held more villages than one were compelled to appoint Mukhi Patels, who from the time of their appointment became responsible to the magistrate alone. Those who had one village were themselves appointed Mukhi Patels; in other cases they were obliged to nominate another person for each village who was responsible to the magistrate and not to the Grassias. However it was the appointment of a talati which was most disagreeable to the chiefs than the increase of their tribute. It was generally felt that the talati assumed the character of a representative of government, received complaints from their ryots, threw their village into confusion and utterly destroyed their confidence among their people.

The Governor of the Bombay Presidency in 1821 saw and pitied them. He had the Talatis withdrawn and

lowered the rate of tribute or Jama so as to leave 30 per cent instead of 20 per cent of their revenue to themselves. He also suggested some checks on the actions of the Adalat to recover debts etc.

The above mainly refers to the rulling Grassia chiefs of Dholka, Dhandhuka, Ranpur and Goga situated in the Ahmedabad Collectorate. Those of the Kheda Collectorate were mainly the petty Wanta holders, enjoying a few beeghas of land in different villages. The British Government entered into direct engagements with some of the wanta holders in consideration of which the latter resigned to government all control over the lands which were thus in consequence managed in the same manner as all the lands of the village. (161)

Such engagements were in some instances reduced to writing in others the practice merely of paying the annual rent direct from the treasury or through the Talati was observed. In no case were the receipts of the Grassias lessened while in some they were improved.

We have first one statement in possession showing the number of beeghas of Wanta lands being enjoyed by Grassias in the Kheda Collectorate during the British rule in Gujarat as follows. (162)

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161. R.D.D. 1820, No. 149, P. 399-400.

162. R.D.D. 1836, No. 34/387, P. 33.

	Wanta Land <u>beeghas W.Ww.</u>
1. Napad	4733.13.18
2. Ahina	4432.3.10
3. Thasra	4165.15.0
4. Mahundha	7891.12.0
5. Kapadvanj	1355.5.0
6. Antroli	48
7. Borsad	10778.12.0
8. Matar	16447.15.0
9. Mehmdabad	3057.15.0
10. Sandana	2359,9.10
11. Dholka	10214.17.10
12. Nadiad	15339.7.10
13. Bhakej	280.0.0
14. Kaira	1154.4.18
15. Oomret	1258.15.0
TOTAL	<u>83517.15.16</u>

With regard to Grass, as it has been mentioned earlier, the Grassias used to collect these dues from the villages direct either in person themselves or by the aid of their selotes or agents. The violent proceedings of the Grassias of the then Gaekwad districts of Kapadvanj, Antroli and Attarsoamba while collecting their grass dues from the British villages rendered the adoption

of speedy measures necessary for their relief. (163)

It was decided that a Panchayat should assemble and settle the claims of the turbulent grassias as early as early as possible and instructions to that effect were issued by government under date 28 September, 1810. In accordance with these Mr. Rowles, the Collector of Kheda reported on 3rd Sept. 1811, to government that he had effected a settlement and though the claimants were averse to receive their dues from the public treasury, still they had acceded to a just decision on the amount and had agreed and given security never to molest any village but to prefer their claims to the Bhat security who would get any disputed matters settled and adjusted. This appears to have been the settlement which was ever made by the British Government to the Grass claims in Kheda.

With reference to the exact nature of these deeds of agreements it does not appear that any rules were followed or that they were ever taken in a particular form. They seem to <sup>very</sup> according to the caprice of the different authorities by whom they were taken or perhaps according to circumstances of the case under which they were taken.

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163. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 2, P.A.; Vaze's Mannual,  
Section II, Part II-A, P. 4062-4084.

It is worthy to remark that hardly any of them were signed or attested by any authority, neither did it appear in most cases that the terms of the deeds were made applicable, to the descendants ~~of~~. The primary point which was stressed in these agreements was that the grass was to be given in lieu of protection of the village and the grassias were not to molest or rob any village.

In a revenue report of 1819 Capt. Robertson, the Collector of Kheda alluded to the arrangements made from the district treasuries for the payment of grass in the districts of his collectorate and according to a statement attached the total grass payments amounted to Rs.50138.3.43 while the total gross land revenue was Rs.1758,815.1.46.<sup>(164)</sup> Though the sum appeared large, it may be observed that the deduction it caused from the public income was trifling to what occurred under the old system of the Grassias collecting it themselves. These engagements were first entered into the parganas of Matar, Mahundha and Nadiad and were later applied to those of Mahemdabad Petlad, Kapadvanj, Antroli and Thasra. The above arrangements first introduced in Kheda were within the next few years extended to the other Gujarati Jillas as well.<sup>(165)</sup>

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164. R.D.D. 1820, No. 149, P. 421-424.

165. R.D.V. 1856, No. 99, P. 198.



It may be noted here that the Cheerda allowances were paid to the selotes or gomastas by the Grassias for collecting their dues. When the British government ordered the Grass Haq to be paid from the Public Treasury, the Cheerda allowances instead of being done away with were amalgamated with the Jama Grass. Thus it appears that the government came to pay the Grassias what the latter had paid to their selotes.

In fulfilment of their agreements in 1825 A.D. the Grassias of the Kheda Jilla were called upon to defend it from the depredations of certain armed parties of Kolis and in obedience to this call they attended and placed themselves under the orders of the Collector, again during the disturbance in 1829 in the Mahundha pargana, the payment of grass was stopped till the restoration of tranquillity. (166)

Also, it was settled by government, that a grassia going on Bhurwattea or outlawry was considered to have the whole of his grass rights forfeited for misconduct. (167) Thus in 1831-32 when one Hatabhai Umabho of Chipiae in Mahundha went out on outlawry, one half of his grass was confiscated by order of government. (168)

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166. Ibid., P. 207-209.

167. Ibid., P. 209.

168. Ibid., P. 208.

Regarding the right of alienation we find that selling one's grass right was seldom the practice.<sup>(169)</sup> However, the Grassias were allowed to pledge their dues to others informing the treasury to which persons the amount was to be paid, the original grassias name was never removed from the accounts of the government and he often redeemed his haqs by satisfaction of the debt for which he had pawned them.

No sales were ever made of grass dues either by the Adawlut or in any other way, though the Haqs were frequently attached by the court for debt and the income was applied to satisfy creditors.

#### Mewasi Villages :

With regard to the Mewasi villages it was early desired by the British government to reclaim these refractory tribes by a course of justice and moderation, rather than by a recourse to measures of violence or coercion. In 1806, the Collector of Kheda Mr. Diggle was called upon to undertake necessary but mild steps for securing the engagements of the turbulent Kolis of Nadiad who had committed several encroachments in the British and Gaekwads territories. Thus, securities were entered into by

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169. Ibid., 1841, No. 50/1279, P. 108.

the chiefs of the Mewasi villages of Nadiad not to commit depredations or robberies and pay the government dues regularly.<sup>(170)</sup> It was also settled that villages were to be subjected to the payment of expenses which might become chargeable when marching a detachment to enforce obedience.

Thus at the introduction of the British rule in Gujarat, the Mewasis were restrained from plundering or encroachments to a large extent, but in all other respects they were left entirely on their ancient footing.<sup>(171)</sup> No talatis or Mukhi Patels were appointed in the Mewasi villages of the Kheda Jilla. However in the Ahmedabad Jilla talatis were appointed and in many cases were resisted by the Mewasis. The Thakurs or persons of their recommendation were appointed as Mukhi Patels. Apart from this, the British government restrained from all interference in the internal administration of the villages. The chiefs entered into a bond every year for the amount of their Jamabandi the payment of which was not increased. It remained stationary and in fact assumed in a great measure, the character of a tribute, the amount of which was the same as it had been under the Marathas.<sup>(172)</sup>

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170. R.D.D. 1805, No. 48-A, P. 33.

171. East India Papers, P. 486.

172. R.D.V. 1822, No. 14/38, P. 127.

The conduct of these turbulent chiefs had become so regular and orderly under the British by the 1820s that it was generally agreed that no considerable change was to be introduced to risk this tranquillity for a little addition to the revenue.<sup>(173)</sup> Thus it was stated that in 1824 when there was a scarcity, the Kolis of Gujarat remained quiet which was in contrast to their behaviour in such circumstances.<sup>(174)</sup>

The revenue derived from them, known as Oodhur Jamabandy, accounted for about 5 to 6 per cent of the total revenue of the Kheda Jilla. While examining the data as per table (Chap. VI / No.1.) find that the Oodhur Jamabandy accounted for about half of the total revenues collected from the Mewasi villages. In one instance (viz. village Kherda) it appears more than the revenues of the village while in two instances (viz. Khoaliad and Pratapur) it is equal to the amount of the said revenues. This does not appear to be feasible.

Besides land revenue the Mewasis also derived income from transit and town duties, the enjoyment of which was done away with by Act I of 1838 and Act of 1844 respectively. Of course compensation was given to the affected parties and claims of the Mewasi rulers were to be adjusted

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173. Ibid., M. Elphinstone, Op.cit., P. 486.

174. R.D.V. 1824, No. 12/96, P. 4.

by the grant of a bond bearing 10 per cent interest for 10 times the amount of net income and redeemable at the pleasure and convenience of government without notice.<sup>(175)</sup>

Regarding Bhat security we find that in the more early stages of British establishment in Gujarat, policy dictated the propriety of having recourse to every expedient for checking and keeping in order the unruly tribes until such time as experience of its justice and energy should convince them, that full reliance might be placed on the first, and that the last was not to be resisted with impunity.<sup>(176)</sup> However once the government was convinced of the inefficiency of the Bhat system as an instrument of Jurisprudence, it determined entirely to supersede their agency as securities within the limits of the British territories which accordingly took place in 1817 A.D.

#### Maliki Tenure :

It is now noteworthy to mention a tenure which was of quite a different origin and related specifically to the Collectorate of Kheda viz. the Maliki tenure. This was located in the pargana of Thasra in a tract of country

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175. Table No. I gives the amt. of compensation for the abolition of transit duties.

176. Bombay Selections Vol. 9, P. 80;  
Walter Hamilton, Op.cit., P. 611.

called the Barya gaum and was subject to Muhammedans of the Maliki tribe. Regarding the origin of the rights of the Maliks in the Thasra pargana it is stated that Mahmud Begda, the Sultan of Ahmedabad had granted as a reward for military services at the capture of Pavagadh, 12 villages in Thasra to certain Muslim families known as the Malik-Zadas. (1777) These 12 villages the Maliks had at the introduction of British rule increased to seventeen and later to twentyfive. Though there existed no documentary evidence of the grant of these villages by Mahmud Begda, yet there appeared to be no reason to doubt the truth of the tradition.

The original grant appears to have been free of all encumbrances except that of military services and this appears to have carried on for two and a half centuries. The Maliks managed their villages on the system then usual in Gujarat, that of 'bhagbatai or division of the produce, though their terms would appear to have been more liberal towards their ryots, than the common arrangement by which the landlord and the ryot received equal shares of the produce. This was perhaps the reason of their being able to increase so largely the number of

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177. Bombay Government Selections No. CXIV, P. 311; List No. 11, Kaira Rumal P.A. Perhaps it is these Maliks which N.A. Siddiqui equates with the Zamindars. However he fails to mention their origin and their existence as a distinct category of landholders in Gujarat. See P. 149.

their villages. They received as revenue a 'wuje' or share of one third, the remaining two-third being retained by the cultivator.

Under the Maratha they were compelled to pay an 'Udhar Jamabandy' for the villages. To raise the money for this tribute they imposed upon their cultivators a cess called 'karam Vera', the meaning of which was a cess not imposed exclusively on the land, but levied from each cultivator in proportion to his means. This cess was in addition to the wuje, the one third of the produce claimed by the Malik.

About 1769 A.D. the Mulukgiri army of the Gaekwad began to levy a tribute under the name of Ghasdana from the Malik villages and this continued to be irregularly exacted until the introduction of British rule. When Capt Ballantine settled it apparently at Rs.5194.<sup>(178)</sup>

Besides the above tributes, the Maliki villages were liable to a Jamabandy payment to the Babi of Balasinore. It was probable that when the Mulukgiri army of the Babi of Balasinore were strong enough to insist on the payment of a larger tribute than usual, the Maliks were hard pressed for money to satisfy these claims.

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178. Bombay Government Selections No. CXIV, P. 312.

They consequently sold or mortgaged a considerable quantity of land and from such Vechnan and Girania lands the owners received from the cultivators one third of the produce according to the Maliki practice of receiving 'Waje'.

Administration of Maliki villages :

The management of the Maliki villages was carried on by the headman who was also responsible for the collections of revenue. The Maliks also claimed acknowledgements of their superiority such as a certain small quantity of ghse, offerings on occasions of rejoining etc. The other resources of the Maliks included toda grass or vol exactions which they levied from various villages in Savli, Godra and other parganas. They also had Nakas or octroi posts to levy transit duties in their villages. Again some of the lands were cultivated by the Maliks themselves and these were completely rent free.

It may be noted here that the Ghasdana and the tribute to the Babi of Balasinore were to be paid not from the Waje of the Maliks but from the Karam Vera.

Thus from the above it is clear that it was the custom with the Maliks not only to exempt the whole of the lands actually cultivated by themselves from any contribution to the revenue, but also to approximate for themselves one third portion of the produce of their tenants



who were later, in addition, to this subjected to a Vera equal to the Ghasdana and all other exactions.

The Pargana of Thasra came under British rule in 1817/18 A.D. In the following year government talatis were appointed<sup>ed</sup> the Malik villages and Khurdas prepared of all the lands. A beeghoti was then imposed upon all sarkari, vechanea and girania lands in lieu of the Karam Vera, the Maliks still conti nuing to levy their Wuje in kind. This arrangement pressed so hard upon the ryots that the villages began to become des<sup>er</sup>ated, the reason of which appeared to have been not that the beeghoti rate which was founded upon the Karam Vera was excessive but that the Maliks refused to pay the Ghasdana and Balasinore tribute out of their Wuje and endervoured to levy extra cess from their ryots to provide for them. This increased burden on the ryot. Realising the situation Capt. Robertson, Collector of Kheda introduced in 1819-20, a new and totally different system into these villages. He abolished all cesses on lands and practice of levying one third of the produce in kind, and in lieu thereof fixed a consolidated beeghoti rate upon all lands, including sarkari, vechania and girania, beyond which rate nothing was to be levied from the cultivators. This rate varied from Babasye Rs.6 per beegha to Babsye Rs.2 $\frac{1}{2}$ . However its amount did not depend upon the quality of the land but upon the caste of the cultivator, and it varied

somewhat in different villages. The reason for this appeared to have been that the usual agreement upon which the cultivators held their lands was Khatabandy or leasehold, and that it was supposed that the cultivator took up his lands, the good with the bad and paid an average rate upon all land contained in his Khata. Rates were not fixed upon lands not included in any Khata and the village officers were at liberty to let such lands on any terms they pleased. The usual rate on government lands held on Khatabandy tenure was Babasye Rs.5½ for Kunbis and Rs.3½ for Kolis.

In lieu of their share of the produce the Maliks were to receive Rs.1.5.10 upon all cultivated government lands and were also to enjoy free of assessment the lands they themselves cultivated. The management of Vechania and Girania lands was resumed by the Government and in lieu of their Wuje the purchasers were to receive a Kotthee santh of Rs.0.44.7 (it being less than the amount to be paid to the Maliks). Government talatis were put into the villages and the entire management taken out of the hands of the Maliks who were reduced from the position of proprietors of alienated villages, paying a certain tribute to government to that of persons having merely a claim on a certain share of the revenue of government villages. Half of the Gaekwads Ghasdana and apparently of the Balasinore tribute

was to be paid by the Maliks and half by the British government.

All the Maliks agreed to these terms except those of Pudal who refused to pay anything for the Gaekwad's Ghasdana. Thus Capt. Robertson concluded a separate agreement with these Maliks and passed them a sanad in 1820, which stipulated that the Gaekwad's Ghasdana and Balasinore Jamabandy were to be paid by government and that the Maliks were to receive Rs.1.5.10 per beegha of cultivated land and to enjoy 764 beeghas rent free. (179)

The natural result of the exorbitant rates imposed by Capt. Robertson soon became apparent and the inferior lands went out of cultivation. To remedy this the Maliks of villages, applied in 1823 for a fresh arrangement, by which on all lands paying Rs.2.11.8 and upwards the Maliks were to receive Rs.1.5.10 and government the surplus and that of lands paying less than Rs.2.11.8 was to be divided equally between the government and the Maliks. (180) In one village, Wusroo a different arrangement was entered into by which on all lands paying Rs.1,13.2 the Maliks were to receive Rs.1.5.10 and government the

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179. List No. 11, Gen. Vol. 15, P.A.

180. These 16 villages were Warsad, Jurgal, Sonya, Mathana, Moolara, Dabhalee, Palya, Sunadra, Landhelee, Sultai, Nudodara, Khurgodra, Wanodia, Wagrolee, Palee, Mehwan and Rustompur.

surplus while from lands paying less government were to receive Rs.0.7.3 and the Maliks the surplus. The Maliks of seven other villages viz. Puddal, Bulara, Menpura, Konee, Rasoolpur, Mugharee and Pahrea the Maliks refused to depart from the arrangement of 1819. In one village, Rajwa though it was called a Maliki village, the Maliks had no interest beyond a trifling cash payment, the wuje being received by the Babe of Balasinore.

In 1824, the government passed a resolution to cancel the above settlement so far as the government management of the villages was concerned stating that the Maliks had as much claim to consideration as the chiefs of Mewasi villages or the small grassia proprietors. Thus the Collector immediately removed the government talatis and handed the villages over to the Maliks to the great satisfaction of the latter. Also the exemption from the payment of Ghasdana which had been earlier conceded only to the Maliks of Puddal was extended to all the Maliki villages and thus the ghasdana became a charge on the government revenue. The Maliks immediately appointed and paid talatis of their own. However Captain Robertson's arrangements with regard to the rates and to the relative shares of government and of the Maliks was to continue.

About this time however several of the villages including apparently those seven the Maliks of which had determined upon abiding by the arrangements of 1819 were farmed out to the Maliks upon lease. Accordingly the Maliks managed the entire villages including the Kothlee santh lands and paid as rent to the government, the lumpsum stipulated in lease, and also the Rs.0.14.7 per beegha of cultivation upon kothlee santh lands to the mortgagees and purchasers. Thus the Maliks then raised or lowered the rates upon land as they considered most advantageous to themselves.

These leases terminated in 1837 and the arrangements of 1819 and 1823 as far as the amount of Wuje in cash to received by the Maliks was concerned, once more came into force. But the rates fixed by the Maliks both on santh and on government lands remained unaltered. The consequence was that while in the 18 villages in which it was stipulated in 1823 that the rent of all lands rated below Rs.2.11.8 was to be equally divided between government and the Maliks the loss caused by any reduction of rates fell equally upon both parties; in the other 7 villages the Maliks still received Rs.1.5.10 whatever the land was rated at and the reduction of rates fell exclusively on the government share. A very serious loss of revenue was the natural consequence as the Maliks who could not receive more than Rs.1.5.10 per beegha lowered their rates in order to increase the prosperity of their villages.

The attention of the government was drawn to these irregularities in 1843-44 but it refused to interfere. Thus the state of the Maliki villages in 1850 was as follows:<sup>(181)</sup> The Maliks appointed and paid their talatis who collected the whole revenue according to the rates fixed and paid it into the government treasury. The cash Wuje was then divided among the Maliks and the Kothlee santh among the representatives of purchasers or mortgagees.

The population of the Maliki villages was almost entirely agricultural.<sup>(182)</sup> The Maliks enjoyed the land custom revenue from 14 villages viz. Willad, Sondelee, Vussoo, Dobhalee, Pallia, Sulone, Nundadra, Sunadra, Angayadee, Pales, Mallawada, Kudghogur, Wangrolee, Puddal. After the passing of Act I of 1838 it was agreed to give them compensation to the amount of about Rs.2112 in lieu of their annual collections which amounted to about Rs.2815.<sup>(183)</sup> The transit duties had been earlier levied by the Maliks personally or through their servants.<sup>(184)</sup>

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181. Bombay Government Selections No. CXIV, P. 317.

182. Ibid., P. 338.

183. R.D.V. 1841, No. 97/1326, P. 78.

184. Ibid., P. 71.

From the above, it is clear that the Maliki tenure lost its original nature under first the Marathas later the British. Supposed to be enjoyed completely free of all charges, it was subject to a fixed revenue under the Marathas. The British later increased this amount and in fact made its payment more regular, while the 'Wujeh' which was earlier enjoyed in kind was changed into a money beeghoti . Thus though the Maliks managed the villages on their own, the rates of revenue were fixed by the British.

## Chapter - VI / Table No. 1

Statement Showing, the amount of revenues and land customs of Mewasi villages and Oodhar Jama paid to the Government.

Name of parganas	Land custom in 1836-37	Average of Coll. for past 10 Yrs.	Amount Compen- sation granted	Revenue Yielded by each village	Tax paid to Govt. as Oodhar	Amount of town du- ties
	Rs.a.p.	Rs.a.p.	Rs.a.p.	Rs.a.p.	Rs.a.p.	Rs.a.p.
<b>NAPAD</b>						
1. Ometha	3470.0.0	2975.4.5	2666.5.5	5326.0.0	198.0.0	254.12.0
2. Gajna	105.0.0	-	78.12.0	1875.0.0	732.0.0	-
3. Mogur	250.0.0	-	187.8.0	4500.0.0	3612.7.0	264.14.0
4. Salole	550.0.0	-	412.8.0	3000.0.0	2104.8.0	-
5. Dehwan	3044.0.0	-	2283.0.0	4125.0.0	2913.0.0	388.11.5
6. Kankapura	50.0.0	-	37.8.0	1350.0.0	804.8.0	24.15.1
<b>MATHUNDHA</b>						
1. Bhodasar	2501.0.0	-	2501.0.0	7000.0.0	5400.0.0	-
2. Hulderwa	-	-	-	501.0.0	35.0.0	-
<b>NADIAD</b>						
1. Josapura	-	-	-	7378.0.0	1200.0.0	77.8.9
2. Jorapura	-	-	-	436.0.0	431.0.0	80.3.4
3. Kherda	575.0.0	-	431.4.0	1840.0.0	1950.0.0	-
4. Chitlaw	200.0.0	-	150.0.0	525.0.0	376.8.0	-
5. Rania	225.0.0	-	158.12.0	1551.13.8	1470.8.0	-
6. Ahima	100.0.0	-	75.0.0	2700.0.0	1256.12.0	-
7. Khodiad	-	-	-	1265.8.0	1265.8.0	27.4.5
8. Pratappur	-	-	-	724.0.0	724.0.0	105.8.0