

Chapter 5

Land Ownership: Caste and Economic Status

Introduction

In this chapter I will be examining some of the features of the system of land tenure in Rajasthan and analysing the distribution of land ownership in Hinganiya. The underlying aim is to demonstrate the biased distribution of land ownership particularly along caste lines and to examine the extent to which landownership and caste are related. The working hypothesis is that there is a land-wealth nexus. In later chapters I will examine the points at which wealth and landownership diverge.

One of my aims is to show how hierarchical systems based on caste and landownership are related and how they diverge. From the point of view of the study as a whole, I wish to show how the higher positions in these hierarchies provide advantages in situations of recurring drought. This is readily understandable in the case of landownership: it seems reasonable to expect that those with more land are in a better position to cope in bad years. In later chapters I will bring together the other strand of the argument which I have been developing: that membership of particular castes (especially higher ranked castes) may also provide economic opportunities distinct from those associated with landownership. However, it is first necessary to show the relationships between the two hierarchies.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of systems of land tenure and the history of land reform in Rajasthan. A section on the relationship between the household as an institution and land ownership and inheritance will follow. I will then discuss the nature of the land records and some of the problems in interpreting them. Some of the theoretical problems involved in establishing a model of the rural class system in western Rajasthan will also be considered before I turn to a description and analysis of land distribution in Hinganiya itself.

Land Tenure and Land Reform in Rajasthan

(a) The Jagir System

In my discussion of the Rajput Caste (Chapter 4), I briefly described the relationship between the Thakur landlords and the Maharajah under

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the *Jagir* system. I will now discuss land tenure under the system in greater detail, before looking at land reform legislation in Rajasthan.

Prior to the land reforms of the 1950s, land tenure in western Rajasthan was characterised by a complex variety of grants from rulers to various local landlords, who acted as intermediaries between the rulers and the people who actually farmed the land as tenants. The history of the development of the Rajput states is in large part the history of the development of loose ties between local chieftains and rulers into a fairly rigid hierarchy.

It is possible to simplify this and to look at the process as essentially a two-stage one. Sharma (1977), in a history of the State of Marwar, sees the restructuring of Marwar polity along the lines of the Mughal *jagirdari* system as the crucial turning point in this process. From the beginning of the thirteenth century there were a number of small principalities spread throughout western Rajasthan. The boundaries of these small principalities were ill-defined and often ill-defended. The Maharajahs of Marwar appointed *sardars* (mostly from members of their own clans) to rule over villages. Rao Chunda (c1383-1423 A.D.) created another category of fiefs by recognising existing chiefs as *bhomias* and established marital ties with these *bhomias*. This early system was called *bhai-bant* (literally 'brother-bond') and was the rule, through brotherly ties, by members of the royal clan, or by affines of the ruler.

Under the Mughals the system was replaced by a more rigidly hierarchical one. The previously loose and shifting territorial divisions became clearly defined and named divisions (*parganas*) and subdivisions (*tappas* or *patti*). The local Rajas became *mensabdars*, with obligations to the Mughal state. The ruler himself became a *jagir* of the Mughals and, in turn, made *jagir* grants to nobles within his territory. Thus the system of *bhai-bant* was replaced by an internal hierarchical system within the Rajput client state which developed to meet the external military and financial obligations (Sharma 1977).

Although the position of the ruler as a *jagir* of the Mughals changed after Mughal times, the main elements of the internal hierarchy survived. Essentially the system persisted until the land reforms of the 1950s. Except where specified, the following account refers to the position just prior to Independence.

There were two broad types of land within the Rajput state: *khalsa* land was held for direct use by the ruler; all other land was given in grants to various types of intermediaries. In fact there were many types of grant with different rights and obligations. One important form, dating back to the recognition of *bhomias* by Rao Chunda, was *Bhomichara* tenure, under which the descendants of Rajputs who 'held the lands prior to the Rathore conquest of Marwar' (Upadhaya 1973:160) held tenure.

Apart from a small fee due to the ruler, *bhomichara* holders had no other obligations (Upadhaya 1973:161).

There were other forms of tenure, based on different rights and obligations. These, however, need not concern us here. I will confine discussion to grants to *jagirdars* (otherwise known as Thakurs), since that was the dominant system in Marwar and was the system applying in Hinganiya.

A *jagirdar* received a grant of a specific territory with an assessed annual income called *rekh*. Upadhaya separates the term *rekh* into three distinct aspects, although most authors use the single word, blurring the three aspects. *Patta rekh* was the assessed annual income specified in the grant deed. Actual income varied from year to year in practice. The *jagirdar* annually paid a tax called *rekh bhartu* which was a fixed proportion of the *Patta rekh*. Rajput *jagirdars* (there were some non-Rajput *Jagirdars*) also had to provide a fixed number of troops in proportion to *jagir* income. This military *rekh* was called *rekh chakri* (Upadhaya 1973). In earlier times the *rekh* was assessed in terms of military obligation (the provision of a fixed number of horsemen or infantry), but later a lump sum was paid to the ruler in lieu of this, or in addition to it (Sharma 1977). There were other types of taxes and obligations which the *jagirdars* had to meet, but these are not important here.

As an intermediary, the *jagirdar* then allocated land to various tenants who paid him rent from which he paid the *rekh* to the Maharajah, supporting himself and his supporters from this income and from the produce of land kept aside for his own private purposes. Land kept for the landowner's private purposes was farmed by hired or bonded labourers, members of the Thakur's own family, or by share farming tenants. It was also possible for the *jagirdar* to make *jagir* grants of land to others, usually close kinsmen and/or retainers. These people could themselves use the land for self-cultivation or rent it to tenants. While the position of *jagirdar* itself was passed on by primogeniture, the younger sons of a *jagirdar* received a small proportion of the *jagir* land for their upkeep (Upadhaya 1973).

According to Upadhaya, *jagir* grants were effectively hereditary, although, when a *jagirdar* died his land technically became *khalsa* (i.e. under the direct control of the ruler) until the heir's claim was recognised. In fact inheritance by a direct lineal heir was refused only in very rare cases.

The obligations placed on tenants were extensive. Besides rent, usually paid as a share in kind, there were a large number of other obligations. In Marwar, between fifty and one hundred and fifty different levies and taxes applied in different parts of the state in 1941 (Jodha

1985). They included grazing fees, levies on livestock and compulsory labour.

It is not easy to describe any particular individual as the landowner, since everyone within the hierarchy held or used land within a complex network of rights and obligations. In one sense it would be appropriate to say that the land was vested in the State, in the person of the ruler. In Upadhaya's view it was actually considered to be vested in the ruling Rathor clan, of which the Maharajah was the first among equals (1973:166). In practice, I suggest, the *jagirdar* can usefully be described as the 'landowner' since his rights were essentially hereditary and alienable at his discretion. Tenants might, in fact, use land passed on from generation to generation, but this was at the discretion of the *jagir* holder.

Clearly, a major function of the *jagir* system was to provide for the needs of the rural nobility at the cost of tenants and labourers. However, it has also been argued that the *jagir* system was an ecologically effective land management system. Jodha, in a series of papers (1980, 1985, 1987), claims that land reforms in the 1950s led to a breakdown of controls on land use. This led to an increase in the cultivation of marginal land and livestock grazing on common land. Degradation of the quality of the land was a result. Jodha argues that, under the *jagir* system, access to grazing land was controlled by the landlord, who charged fees for grazing. Landlords also controlled cultivation, preventing cultivation of marginal land. After land reform these controls were lifted, with the result that marginal land was increasingly cultivated and livestock numbers increased. Jodha stresses that this management system emerged 'as a by-product of [the] . . . exploitative mechanism' (1987:203).

As far as my field area is concerned, there is no evidence in favour of Jodha's thesis regarding increased use of marginal land after land reform. In Hinganiya, as I will show, land classified as cultivable did not increase from 1947 (before land reform) to 1986. However, Jodha's case for an overall increase of cultivated land in western Rajasthan since land reform is convincing and there is no doubt that the proportion of cropland to all land has increased. In my view, however, the efficiency of the *jagir* system as a form of land management should not be overstated. There is an alternative view which blames desertification on the *jagir* system, rather than on its removal. Purohit (1978) argues that the demands of *jagirdars* on tenants led to overexploitation of land resources and that this was a major cause of desertification.

(b) Land Reform

During the 1950s land reform legislation was passed in many states of India. In Rajasthan a series of Acts, beginning with *The Rajasthan Land Reform and Resumption of Jagirs Act 1955*, and including the most

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important *Rajasthan Tenancy Act 1955*, abolished the position of intermediaries such as *jagirdars* and transferred effective ownership of land to the user. The user was given *khatedhari* rights, under which land could only be taken from the cultivator by the state. Those with *khatedhari* rights no longer had to pay rent to the former landlords. The previous landlords themselves maintained a right to *khudkushi* land (that is, land used for personal cultivation, including land cultivated by hired labourers, but not by tenants). There were, however, limits placed on the amount of *khudkushi* land which could be claimed. A number of other features of the package of land reform legislation were:

- There was an overall land ceiling, to be gazetted for each district or sub-district. The ceiling applied to a household of five members. Larger households were entitled to exceed the limit.
- Land in excess of the land ceiling was to be transferred to poorer farmers. Members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were to receive preference.
- Once land was held by a person from a scheduled caste or tribe it could not be sold to anyone not also from a scheduled caste or scheduled tribe (depending on which category the seller himself came from).
- Land could only be leased for a maximum of five years. There were some exceptions here: land owned by minors, students, widows, mentally or physically disabled people, military servicemen and people in a small number of other categories, could be leased for a longer period.
- A land tax was to be paid to the state based on the area of land and its assessed quality. There were provisions for suspension of tax liabilities at times of natural disaster (such as drought). The amount of liability was, and still is, actually quite nominal. For example, in 1986 the tax for the best quality of unirrigated land was Rs 0.47 per bigha (about three rupees per hectare) per year.

The main legal effect of the land reform legislation was to transfer the 'fruits of the land to the cultivator' (as it was put to me by the Sub-Divisional Officer responsible for Hinganiya). Subject to limitations on the amount of land which could be owned and the restriction on selling land outside the categories Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, the user of land had rights of hereditary ownership and the right to alienate the land. The previous tenant effectively became the owner.

It is significant that rights to land were conceived in terms of enjoying the products of the land. This way of looking at things persists from the period before land reform up to the present. In the 1947 village settlement

papers for Hinganiya, the land register refers to the *bhokta* and the *up-bhokta* for each piece of land. The word *bhokta* means literally 'one who enjoys'. The terms thus mean, respectively, the one who enjoys the fruits of the land and the subordinate enjoyer (*up-bhokta* means sub-*bhokta* or vice-*bhokta*). The terms can be glossed as landholder and tenant, respectively, in reference to the period before land reform. After land reform their referents shifted. The *bhokta* is now the state (the *bhokta* column actually being left blank in the register) and the *up-bhokta* is now the landowner.

(c) *The Effectiveness of Land Reform*

The India-wide movement towards land reform following Independence can be seen as the result of a philosophical commitment by the Congress Party, particularly of Jawarharlal Nehru (Harcourt 1986). It is worth examining briefly the practical effects of land reform legislation.

It is something of a commonplace observation of land reform in India generally that the people who most profited were the previous tenant classes. Large owners lost land, and, more critically, the income from land previously farmed by tenants. The landless remained landless, or gained comparatively little (see, for example, Kamal 1984). In the case of Rajasthan, it is clear that major changes took place, but the extent to which they might be described as revolutionary is questionable.

Sharma (1970), in a comparative study of six villages in eastern Rajasthan, found that there had been no significant change in the class structure, despite the abolition of the *zamindari* (another type of tenure) and *jagir* systems. There had been some new developments. For example, the higher classes mobilised other resources in the post reform period (for example, in money lending), but the basic structure remained essentially unchanged.

Kamal (1984) cites evidence that 2.91% of rural families in Rajasthan remain landless while 9.84% possess as little as one half of an acre of land (0.02 ha). The top 3.33% of families own 24.34% of the total land, with more than 50 acres (20 ha) each family. The bottom 46.83% own five or less acres (2 ha) and less than 9% of the total land. While I am very doubtful about the precision of such figures, based on my own experiences in trying to obtain similar data for a very small area, even the general order of magnitude demonstrates that the distribution of land ownership remains desperately skewed, despite land reform.

Kamal attributes the inadequacies of the reforms to the fact that the Congress Party, once it ceased to be a nationalist movement and became a political party, was forced to include the former feudal elite in its fold. Thus the State Government lacks political will in enforcing land reform. I think that this somewhat distorts the process of land reform. It emphasises

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the role of those who had most to lose in blocking effective land reform, but ignores the interests of the tenant classes who gained most. Land reform legislation was explicitly concerned with transferring land to the people who were cultivating it, that is, the tenant farmers. Attempts to distribute land to the landless were a somewhat secondary concern. The lack of political will in enforcing land reform is, I suggest, not so much a result of the incorporation of the feudal elite into the Congress Party, but the result of the fact that the leaders of movements towards agrarian reform (the former tenant classes, particularly the Jats) have got what they want.

Rosin reports on an analysis of reform in various parts of Rajasthan. His findings support

. . .the general success of the initial Rajasthan land-reform program in removing intermediaries and eventually giving title to land to those who cultivate it, whether previous tenants or resident landlords. (1981:76)

Rosin's study suggests 'that absentee landlords were more readily divested of their estates' than resident landlords (p.76).

To me the crucial issue is the notion that the original tenants *largely* gained from land reform (Rosin talks about some ways in which its purposes were side-stepped), but the pre-Reform landless seem to be left out of the equation. I think there is a problem in the way Rosin attempts to measure the success of land reform.

He identifies two indices for measuring its effectiveness. Both indices are conceived of as statistical tools for comparing different regions. One is the 'percentage of cultivators who had not previously been landlords [now] holding proprietary rights' (p.75). The other index is the extent of subleasing. The significance of this second index is rather ambiguous in my view. A high rate of subleasing could be as much an indicator of the failure of land reform as of its success. I therefore intend to leave it out of the discussion.

But what of the other index, Rosin's percentage of cultivators holding proprietary rights? It is, in practice, rather difficult to express changes in the numbers of people holding proprietary rights as a percentage. In fact, I am a little uncertain as to what is supposed to be a percentage of what. If we are talking in terms of the percentages of pre-reform households which held proprietary rights in comparison to the number of post-reform households which hold proprietary rights, we would need to know the actual number of households at some specific time immediately prior to reform. The records, for Hinganiya at least, do not tell us that. They only say which individuals held property rights and which individuals were tenants. Brothers can own land individually in

terms of the register, but whether they are members of a combined household is not shown. The records don't mention landless households and they don't help us to distinguish between individual tenant households and clusters of tenant households.

I prefer to talk about the transfer of proprietary rights as an indicator rather than as an index and to look at whatever evidence is available to see whether it does suggest a transfer of proprietary rights. Have the descendants of the old landholding class avoided land ceilings?

There is a more fundamental problem. Emphasis on proprietary rights obscures the key issue: to what extent have more people gained access to land since land reform?

I suggest that the most useful indicator of the success of land reform is the pattern of land distribution among rural households. Thus, in terms of the transfer of proprietary rights, land reform has been largely (although to different extents in various parts of Rajasthan) successful. However, in terms of the actual distribution of land amongst households it has not been particularly successful, as Kamal shows.

An increase in the spread of proprietary rights is not, in itself, a trivial thing. I do not wish to imply that a change in status from a tenant paying substantial rent (perhaps as much as a half share)¹ to that of an owner paying only token land tax to the government is not a major change. However it is the extent of distribution of land accompanying the new status that completes the process of revolution. In discussing the figures for Hinganiya, I will be examining the extent of changes in the social structure since 1947 in terms of both criteria.

The Institution of Household and Inheritance of Land

As a pre-requisite to understanding land ownership an essential starting point is the concept of household. I would like to digress briefly to describe the main attributes of the concept of household and the related concept of household cluster. Both terms are useful glosses for indigenous terms, not mere anthropologist's abstractions.

The term *ghar* (literally 'house') is used to describe the basic domestic and economic unit in western Rajasthan. A household may be a simple nuclear family, a patrilineal extended family (comprising the household head, his wife, married sons and various wives and children) or some other form of composite household (such as a household head, his nuclear family, and an un-married brother or sister).

¹ Just prior to land reform, tenants of the Kur *Jagirdar* paid one third of all crops to the landlord. He, in turn, paid Rs 150 per year to the Maharajah as tax.

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Essentially the household is a domestic unit, although some individuals are effectively part-time members, since they are frequently, even usually, resident elsewhere because of career or employment requirements. The most obvious indicator of household membership is that members share food cooked from a common hearth when they are together. The Census of India bases its definition of household on eating together (Census of India 1981b).

The economic focus of the household is primarily obvious in terms of shared consumption. The household boundaries do not necessarily limit cooperation. Even though extended families might be broken up into separate households in a formal sense (with all parties asserting this separateness), a great deal of cooperation (such as sharing herding or farming tasks) occurs between households, particularly those related through a proximate common ancestor, living or dead. A cluster of related households, approximating a minimal lineage, is simply described as *ek parivar*, which can be translated literally as 'one family'. I translate *ghar* as 'household' and use the term 'household cluster' for *ek parivar*.

Theoretically, all income earned by members of a household should be given to the household head to control and distribute. In practice, this does not always occur, particularly when some members of a household are resident elsewhere and have separate expenses and separate income from wages or salary. However, even in these cases, much of the income is used for household purposes.²

The pooling of resources is perhaps the most essential characteristic of a household (Neil Maclean, pers. comm.). One way in which members of a household resident elsewhere contribute is by purchasing goods (including foodstuffs) for which they are not reimbursed. When goods are purchased on behalf of others outside the household, even from closely related households, the buyer is usually reimbursed.

The relationship between the household and land holding is crucial, but highly complex. Where the household holds land the household head (usually a male) is responsible for its management. This does not mean that he is the owner of the land, since he may merely hold it in trust for other members of the household. This may occur either because the owner is relatively young or, sometimes because the owner is frequently absent, perhaps on military service. I must stress that in this context I am referring to land ownership in terms of rights recognised by the parties. These rights usually conform to the rights which would apply under the

² As Hill (1984) points out, in reference to the concept of household in many agricultural societies, the degree of economic individualism in a household may be such that the household head can become a very unreliable source of data, simply because there is much about the economic affairs of the household that he doesn't know.

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Hindu Succession Act 1956 (at least as far as males are concerned), but do not necessarily do so.

Land is often legally registered in the household head's name, but this is not always the case. Sometimes, particularly in a joint household, land may be registered in the name of another member or more than one other member. While the household remains together, land can be regarded as the property of the household. Nevertheless certain individuals are regarded as having an entitlement to specific shares and land is partitioned on the basis of those shares when new households are formed. The household head effectively holds land, whether legally registered in his name or not, in trust according to legally and/or traditionally defined shares.

Land, is inherited in the male line, being shared equally by sons.³ (Customarily, a father's house is inherited by his youngest son.) Land is vested in an individual, not in a household. The household, while it is not the landowning unit, is the land-using unit. The production from the lands owned by a member of a particular household is used for the household as a whole as long as that person remains a member of the household.

While the household can be conceived of as a unit which uses land jointly, there are some intermediate forms which confuse the relationship between households and land.

One intermediate form occurs in the situation in which land is held by a household head, but some sons (or siblings) own separate livestock and operate as independent households in other respects. This can happen when the head of the non-landholding household is normally absent from the village (on military service or working in Jodhpur) while his wife and children remain in the village and operate as a separate household. Land which will ultimately be partitioned may be held in trust by a resident father or brother. It is also possible for land to be held by a senior, despite the existence of otherwise separate households, in order to prevent or delay the sub-division of land into very small holdings.

The household may be intermediate in a chronological sense as well as a structural one. On one occasion I was interviewing one of two brothers. He said that there were two separate households, yet the other brother held all the land. At that time I was accompanied by an informant who explained that they were 'just going separate'. The brother who had no land had recently retired from the army.

The existence of separate households is normally quite clear-cut, being based on self-identification. However there are some ambiguous cases.

³ Under the *Hindu Succession Act 1956* the property of an intestate household head is divided equally amongst his wife, sons and daughters. The shares of female offspring are generally ignored, in practice, at least as far land is concerned.

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People outside a particular household cluster sometimes assert very confidently that a particular group comprises a single household in cases where the parties themselves assert that there are two or more separate households. On one occasion my statement that 'X says that he and Y are heads of separate households and Y says so too', was simply dismissed by a third party who insisted that they belonged to a single household. This is hardly surprising, given that household membership is largely a matter of self-definition. However, there are two cases in which there seems to have been some genuine ambiguity about household membership because people made differing assertions about their relationships to each other.

In one case, involving two Meghwal brothers, the elder brother said there was one household, while the other claimed that they were separate. This occurred during my 1983-84 fieldwork. By 1985 the households were unambiguously separate. I interpret this as another case of 'just going separate'. Each of the parties had different views about the status of the intermediate form and about the exact point at which separation was complete. One regarded the transfer of land as the conclusive issue, the other did not. It is also possible that there may have been some conflict about the process of separation.

For present purposes, the important point about the household is that one of its main functions is the control of land, although control of land does not define the household. Similarly, the process of household formation is related to the inheritance of land, although the inheritance of land is not a necessary pre-requisite for household formation. Land and property can be divided between sons while a father is still alive (depending on the agreement of the parties concerned) or after his death. Sometimes one brother (often, but not necessarily, the elder) becomes household head and holds land in trust for younger brothers, or for those doing military service. It is quite possible for other brothers to head their own otherwise separate households while land remains in trust. This would normally occur when they are 'part-time residents' (see Chapter 9) or frequent absentees from the village. It is common for the shares of some siblings to be held in trust while the shares of others are distributed (partitioned).

As will become clearer later, reference to holding in trust relates to effective control of a share, not necessarily to legal *registered* ownership.

Under local practice, land originally owned by a father will be divided equally among his sons. Wives can hold land in trust, but in practice widows usually transfer responsibility to the eldest son, or adopt a son if there is no natural son. If sons are very young, temporary absorption of the household into the household of a relative of the deceased father may

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occur. The three cases in Hinganiya of households headed by women are rare examples.

Two of these simply relate to a situation in which a male household head has died, leaving sons, but the widow has held land in trust rather than choosing to have her household absorbed into another. One case is that of one of the four households of the Soda clan, which is headed by the widow of the previous household head. The household consists of the woman and one young son. Her name appears on the village land register as a landowner. The other case is a Bishnoi woman with four adult sons and a younger daughter.

In these two cases the role of the mother as household head is not necessarily a deviation from the normal practice of dividing land only among male offspring, since the function of the arrangement is to hold the land in trust until the sons come of age.

The other case, an all female Bishnoi household, was derived from unusual circumstances. The woman's husband died in 1983. As their only son had been murdered some time before, no male descendant was available. Normally the household would have become assimilated into the household of a near male relative of the husband, or the wife would have adopted a young male kinsman (usually a son of the deceased man's brother) to inherit both the property and position of the deceased household head. In this case the woman refused to nominate a successor because of the tensions which existed over the death of her son, who had been murdered by a young kinsman of her husband.

In 1983 a Rajput informant told me that he thought the woman would probably sell her land, because she would not choose someone to take over. This informant assumed that she would either have to select someone or sell the land. He apparently did not regard permanent leadership of a household by a woman as conceivable.

In 1985 the household continued to exist as an all female household, consisting of the woman, a married daughter and three young girls (one of the household head's own daughters and two daughters of her married daughter. The married daughter continued to live separately from her husband, who lived in another village.

The appearance of women's names on the 1947 land register for Hinganiya suggests the possibility of women heading households even before the period of modern law, but this is uncertain and, even if it were so, such cases appear to have been just as rare then as they are now. The reasons for women heading households were probably similar to the first two contemporary cases mentioned above.

Despite the local practice of distributing land equally among sons there are several ways in which unequal holdings between male siblings

may develop. Firstly, new land acquired during a period of trusteeship is regarded as the property of the household head. It can be retained and divided at his discretion.

Another source of potential discrepancy is the institution of *khola* (adoption). When a household head dies without male offspring the widow may adopt a younger male kinsman (normally a brother's son of the deceased household head) as *khola bacca* (adopted son). Adoption can also be arranged during a landholder's lifetime, if he has no natural heirs. The *khola bacca* inherits land and the position of household head. He is not normally eligible to inherit land from his genitor as well as his adopted father, although there are one or two cases in the land records where this appears to have happened. I am unable to explain these exceptions.

There is one other way in which unequal holdings among male siblings may originate, although this relates solely to the descendants of the *jagirdars*. Under the *jagir* system inheritance of *jagir* land was by primogeniture. As some of the old Thakurs (a more common local term for *jagirdar*) are still alive, unequal land holdings between ex-Thakurs and their siblings are often evident.

Although the *jagir* system has ceased to exist legally, the title Thakur (or Thakur-sahab) is still inherited by the process of primogeniture and those who hold the title still attract considerable prestige.⁴ English speaking Thakurs often describe themselves as 'ex-Thakur', just as the Maharajah is described as 'ex-Maharajah'. The 'ex' does not imply that the holder of the title has personally retained it from the pre-reform period. He may have succeeded long after the legal abolition of the position of Thakur (or Maharajah). The 'ex' seems to have become an intrinsic part of the title, as it is used in English. (The English prefix 'ex' is also used in the vernacular.)

The current Thakur of Hinganiya inherited his title only a few years ago. His predecessor was a paternal uncle who died childless and passed on his role and his remaining land (this all happened after land reform) to the current Thakur as *khola bacca*. The previous Thakur's brother (genitor of the present ex-Thakur) is still alive. Due to the fact that the current ex-Thakur is himself very ill and rarely leaves his house, the brother of the former Thakur is himself often called Thakur-Sahab, as if this fills a gap among the roles available in the prestige hierarchy. This case, of what seems to me to be very loose usage, probably would not have been possible if the position had any legal authority.

⁴ The rule of primogeniture was explicitly intended as a means of protecting Thakurs from assassination by siblings. It also minimised partition of land.

Land Ownership Today: Interpreting the Register

The analysis of land ownership in Hinganiya later in this chapter is based on data obtained from the register of landholdings kept by the Patwari (the land registration officer, who is ultimately responsible to the District Collector in Jodhpur). In 1985-86 the Patwari for Hinganiya was stationed in Kur and was responsible for the three villages in the Panchayat. A separate register was maintained for each village. Administratively speaking a village is the smallest area for which separate land records are kept. I was able, with the assistance of the Patwari, to abstract details from the register for Hinganiya. I also examined and copied extracts from the 1947 settlement records kept in Jodhpur.

The basic land register is in the form of a set of columns. The first column is a tax account number, but it acts simply as a serial number. The second column is the *bhokta*. In the 1947 Land Settlement records the *bhokta* was either one or both of the Jagirdars, or a close relative of the Jagirdars. In 1985 it was left blank, the government being regarded as the *bhokta*. The third column identifies the *up-bhokta* (the sub-*bhokta*). Effectively this refers to the tenant of the Jagirdars in 1947 and to the land holder in 1985.⁵ Following this are listed the plot numbers of fields held within the account, the area of each plot and the category and quality of land. The categories of land refer to the assessed quality of land in the case of farming land, or to any other purpose for which it is used: road, wells, cremation ground, *abadi* (village residential area) or *dhani* (dispersed residential hamlets). The classification of land is based on a dichotomy between irrigated and unirrigated land. Within each of these categories there are a number of grades. Land tax varies according to the grade. All agricultural land in Hinganiya is unirrigated (*barani*). The four grades are BA (tax Rs 0.47 per bigha), B1 (Rs 0.32 per bigha), B2 (Rs 0.25 per bigha) and B3 (Rs 0.15 per bigha). While this amount is referred to as a tax, it is entirely nominal and should probably be regarded as a registration fee. Nevertheless, during declared famine it is not collected. In 1985 there were ninety-four account numbers and 355 numbered fields.

While the register is the official record of landholdings there are substantial difficulties in using it to compile breakdowns of individual holdings or holdings by household. I shall discuss these difficulties in some length here because assessing the reliability and usefulness of my data on landholding depends on an understanding of these points.

⁵ While theoretically the state owns all land it is convenient to gloss the term *up-bhokta* as land owner because the *up-bhokta* can alienate the land or pass it on to his descendants.

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For each account a number of blocks of land are listed and the individual or individuals who hold this land are identified. An individual may appear in several accounts, since he may have joint shares with different combinations of partners. Often, the land is held by a number of people (sometimes ten or eleven) on a share basis. The problem is that the size of the shares is not always clear. Where several names (usually of brothers) are listed without a share being defined it is possible that the division of shares is not equal, but it is reasonable to assume that it is equal in most cases. In some cases shares are made quite explicit: for example the entry may read 'so-and-so one third share and so-and-so two thirds'. The most complicated cases combine the two types of entry. For example three brothers are identified as holding a one-third share between them, but no details are given as to their individual shares. Another set of four brothers shares the other two-thirds share. Thus, assuming equal sub-sharing between owners of fixed shares, we have a case where three people each own one ninth of the land nominated and four others each own one sixth. The land in question may be in several dispersed blocks of unequal size. It may also be extremely small, as plots are often less than one hectare in area. If one of the nominated share holders is deceased then the sub-division of his one ninth share becomes very complex. In the case of the 1947 Settlement Records the situation is further complicated by the fact that the same sort of sharing of rights to land can relate to both the *bhokta* and the *up-bhokta*. In other words a number of people are joint owners and several other people are, jointly, tenants.

In the case of jointly owned plots of land, the plots are not normally farmed cooperatively, unless shareholders are members of the same household. Rather, some sort of sub-division of plots is made between the people involved. The land register does not operate at this level of detail.

An underlying problem is that the record itself, despite the efforts of the Patwari, is not always completely up-to-date. Sales of land appear to be updated promptly, but changes of land ownership following a death are often not recorded. The register lists several deceased people as landholders or holders of shares in land. Reluctance to get too involved in the paperwork of re-registering land may be a factor in this. When a plot, or several plots, are identified as the property of a single deceased owner, the current situation can be fairly easily calculated on the basis of known modes of inheritance. However, when the deceased person held the land jointly with a number of others (in sometimes unequal and sometimes unspecified shares), it can be exceedingly difficult to calculate the sub-shares of heirs.

There is not always a co-incidence between *de jure* (legally registered) and *de facto* ownership of land.

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- Sometimes land is legally transferred by a father to his sons (or to some of them) before his death. This, presumably, is done to avoid complications later. The father may continue *de facto* to manage some of the land himself, while remaining nominally landless.
- It is quite common for people who do not legally own land (i.e. land is not registered in their names) to be landholders in fact. Partition of land between brothers may have taken place, but because a transfer hasn't been recorded one brother appears as the legal owner.
- People who are registered as legal landholders (including small children) may be members of another household (father's, brother's or father's brother's). Land is *de facto* held by the household head in trust.

From the point of view of compiling data on *de facto* landholdings the issue is quite complex. It is necessary to use the land register and then to make certain assumptions about the actual divisions of land owned by individual household heads. The inheritance practices are the basis for making these assumptions and knowledge of genealogical relationships and household status (derived from a full census of the village) are essential.

The principles I have used in analysing the records from Hinganiya are as follows:

- Where the register names an individual as landholder or as holding a defined share, I have simply recorded that share against his or her name, unless
 - he or she is deceased, in which case land is equally apportioned among living male descendants;
 - he or she is not recognised as a household head, in which case the land is recorded against the name of the household head.
- Where the equal share inheritance rule is used, but some heirs are still members of another household, the share is included as part of the ownership of that household. (For example, three brothers may be entitled to equal shares, with the second brother having separated from the eldest brother and the youngest still living with the eldest. In this situation the household of the middle brother is assessed as having one share whereas the eldest brother's household has two.)
- Where two or more names are listed as sharing land, but the details of the shares are not defined, I assume it is an equal share. Similarly where a specified share is further sub-divided among two

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or more individuals without details of the sub-share, I assume that the sub-division is equal.

- Where my own local knowledge suggests that these conclusions do not apply, I have made adjustments accordingly.

In summary, the analysis gives priority to recorded *de jure* ownership, modified according to inheritance rules and my own knowledge of *de facto* variations.

An obvious objection to the priority given to legally registered landholdings is that a thorough survey of households for *de facto* holdings would have been more useful. That might be true in theory, but, in fact, such data is very hard to obtain for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that many people are reluctant to say how much land they own and may distort figures for one reason or another. Another reason is that concepts of area are very vague. People tend to think of landholdings in terms of location of plots rather than in terms of gross area. The register records land in hectares and bighas, but these terms are not used by many villagers. There is a local measurement (*halki*) which is perhaps better known. Attempts to obtain data on landholdings through a semi-structured survey in 1983 provided me with data which I regard to be completely unreliable. Approaching the question of land ownership through official records seems to be the only viable approach, whatever its limitations.

Despite the use of these principles there are some cases where ambiguities exist and other cases where obvious irregularities occur. However, I maintain that the overall exercise is fairly accurate. Firstly, ownership by caste is completely accurate, as there are no cases where land is shared by members of two or more castes. Secondly, because of the accuracy of caste totals, averages per head of population and averages per household within castes are accurate. Thirdly, the larger landholders tend to own land individually and in easily assessable shares. It is mainly in the case of middle and smaller landholders that complex sharing of holdings exists. The ambiguities thus affect relative ranking of individual households, not gross categorisation as larger, middle size and small landholders. Fourthly, almost all irregularities or ambiguities relate to the breakdown of shares within a cluster of related households (that is, households whose heads are descended from a single proximate ancestor). While this last factor makes it tempting to give all households within a household cluster equal shares, this would ignore such factors as unequal inheritance through adoption, purchase of new land and so on.

The most likely source of error in the figures is in the case of households which are in the transitional stage of breaking away from another household, or where households are separate but, because the household head is a part time resident, land has not yet been transferred.

In the absence of specific evidence that land has been legally or *de facto* allocated to them, they are treated as having no land. A related situation is that of a landless Bishnoi who has legally transferred all land to his sons and is now nominally landless. The sons are heads of separate households, although the household cluster operates fairly cooperatively. The landless household category is, thus, something of a false category as it essentially comprises people who would normally own land.

I have focused on landholdings per household rather than on landholdings per household cluster despite the fact that more reliable figures could be calculated for household clusters. I have done this because the household is fundamentally more important as a focus of economic activity. The household cluster is simply not a corporate unit, especially in terms of landholding, despite the fact that members often work cooperatively together and sometimes hold land in trust for other members. To analyse landholdings on the basis of household clusters would be to impose a function on to a social category to which it has no relevance. Further, as household clusters are immensely variable in size and composition, the resulting figures would be of little value for comparing economic status.

The analysis of Hinganiya landholdings which follows needs to be qualified in one other respect. I have based my figures on an analysis of the land records for Hinganiya. A significant amount of land within the administrative boundaries of the village is held by people who are not resident. Some of these people are 'part-time residents'. A person is a part-time resident if he is a member of a household which is normally resident in the village, but spends most of his time living and working elsewhere. (The category is explained more fully in Chapter 9.) This is quite different from people who have economic interests in the village (including land ownership) but who are members of and live with a household resident elsewhere. I call these people absentees. Absentees who have landholdings in Hinganiya include close relatives (siblings or sons) of householders presently resident in Hinganiya. Others are resident in nearby villages.

The main difficulty with all of this is that, given the considerable share of village land held by non-residents, it is clear that residents may also hold land outside of Hinganiya. In fact I am explicitly aware of only a single Rajput who does own land elsewhere and he was rather confidential and secretive about it. I simply do not have any other data on outside landholdings. In order to find other landholdings held by people from Hinganiya it would be necessary to examine the records from all villages. Obviously this is impossible. The only way that the Patwari can assure that an individual's holdings in other villages do not cumulatively exceed the land ceiling is by liaison with other Patwaris. There is considerable margin of error in this, and consequently there is some

potential for cheating on the land ceiling laws. This fact, plus the fact that all 'absentee' landholders who hold land in Hinganiya are from higher castes, tends to suggest that absentee land-ownership is more likely with larger landholders. The distortion is in the direction of under reporting of larger holdings.

Class Models of Rural Peasant Societies

The working hypothesis in my analysis of landholdings is that there is a close nexus between land and wealth. Thus, I will initially be treating economic status as purely an outcome of the size of a household's landholding. I am, of course, aware from the beginning that this is not the case. In fact, even if the quality of land is fairly constant, factors such as household size and alternative income are important factors in economic status. Nevertheless, the size of landholdings makes a useful starting point for discussion. My purpose in approaching the data from the point of view of the land-wealth nexus is to identify the points at which the nexus breaks down.

I must stress that I am concerned with variations of economic status *within* the peasant sector of the society of western Rajasthan, not with the broader class structures. While it might be argued that 'class' ought to be used only for categories of people who are identifiable by fundamentally different relationships with the means of production, I believe it is useful to use the term as a gloss for sub-categories within the broader category 'peasant'. I use the term class in this way because my aim is not to discuss the subtleties of class theory, but to examine sub-categories of peasant farmers which identify qualitatively different levels of economic self-sufficiency or dependence.

Before examining the land-wealth nexus in Hinganiya, I will, in this section, establish a typology of economic strata within which households can be ranked. This presents some preliminary theoretical and practical problems.

Agrarian households can be ranked using a variety of different principles of ranking. It is possible to plot households hierarchically using various single factor criteria such as size of landholding or average annual cash income. Alternatively it is possible to use multi-dimensional criteria, such as a formula which takes account of landholding, agricultural production, non-farm income and the number of consumers in the household. However, continuous scales produced by numerical ranking alone are of limited value for analysis. Some method of classification is needed to define categories of households into classes with some basic economic characteristics in common. Simply breaking numerical rankings into deciles or quartiles or other numerically defined ranges is not particularly helpful unless the ranges coincide with some

sort of qualitative differences. This is not to say that the qualitative characteristics need to have fixed boundaries coinciding with the numerical ones, but at least the characteristics need to form a cluster approximately related to the range.

Thus, there are two problems: (1) on what numerical criteria can households be ranked? and (2) what method can best be used to group ranked households into economically distinct and meaningful categories?

Athreya *et al.* (1986), in an analysis of a rural class system in southern India, adopt a 'surplus criterion of class'. Depending on complex calculations of surplus production, particular farms are placed on a continuous scale. A number of points on the scale are treated as modal points roughly identifying particular 'reproductive levels'. The 'reproductive levels' coincide with differing capacities of the income of a farm to enable the farm to reproduce itself and the household without non-farm income. The first reproductive level comprised poor peasants 'whose farms do not yield enough to provide the household even with its grain requirement' (p. 4). The second and third levels, comprising lower middle and middle peasants, are able to meet household grain requirements, but require non-farm income to meet 'cash costs for production' and 'the needs for non-grain consumption'. Reproductive level four comprises the 'notional middle peasant' whose farm is 'a fully reproductive farm where non-farm sources of income are not necessary for the reproduction of the family and the farm' (p. 4). Reproductive level five includes the 'surplus appropriators' who may be of several types: 'rich peasants, capitalist farmers, big capitalist farmers, cultivating landlords, and pure landlords' (p. 4).

A merit of this approach is that the 'classes' are defined in terms of various levels of farm self-sufficiency. The qualitative characteristics suggest economically significant categories. Before they can be used, however, there is a major problem to be resolved: the whole approach depends too much on a very complex formula for defining where a farm (or household) fits on the continuous scale.

The formula for defining the surplus requires data in order to establish variables on 'gross income from marketing of farm produce', 'grain requirement of the household', 'cash costs for production', 'cash required to meet non-grain consumption needs', 'wage equivalent of family labour days' etc. I am very suspicious of attempts to obtain good data for any of these variables. Data could be obtained either by watching a very small number of households for a full annual cycle or through very detailed interview data for each household. The first approach might provide accurate data for the households actually observed, but would not help for other households (and would not help where conditions varied drastically from year to year). The second approach makes all sorts of assumptions

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about the cooperativeness of household heads, their detailed knowledge of all facets of the economic affairs of the household, their ability to quantify inputs and outputs and, unless interviews are very regular, their ability to remember inputs and outputs over a period of time. As Hill (1984) shows, none of these assumptions can easily be made and data based on such assumptions are likely to be very dubious. Even if satisfactory data could be collected in a given year, the problems of using this sort of formula would be multiplied in an environment where 'normal' conditions rarely apply.

My view is that complex formulae based on dubious data are unlikely to produce anything more useful than classification made on the basis of *relatively* simple criteria. However, even if this is accepted there are alternative approaches each with strong arguments for and against their adoption. Ranking in terms of the single criterion of land ownership per household has seductive appeal due to its very simplicity. However, where farm production is directed at subsistence as a first priority and surplus is a secondary concern, there is some argument for including some allowance for the subsistence requirements of particular households. This can be done either by simply dividing land area by the number of people in a household or by dividing landholding by the number of consumption units (a measure which provides a differential weighting for adults and children). Ranking would thus be in terms of land available per person or per consumption unit.

There are problems involved in rankings which take account of subsistence requirements. Firstly, the subsistence requirements of a particular household vary over time as people are born, grow older, marry outside the household and die. Ranking households to take account of such factors produces rather ephemeral results: people go up and down the 'class system' according to the part of the household development cycle they have reached. If people can move in and out of particular classes so easily, we have moved away from a concept of a class as a ranked status group whose members *tend* to pass on their status to their descendants. A class is usually thought of as a ranked status group which tends to reproduce itself.

There is another problem with a ranking which takes account of household size. One relationship which I wish to examine is the relationship between landholding and household size. If this relationship is to be tested then the two variables need to be kept separate.

This leaves us with something of a dilemma. On the one hand simple ranking in terms of the size of landholding alone, tends to obscure variations in the self-sufficiency of the farming unit due to differing subsistence requirements. On the other hand including some measure of variable subsistence requirements tends to overemphasise the ephemeral

changes of economic status due to the life cycle stages of particular households.

It seems to me that the latter is perhaps a larger problem. I will proceed with an analysis of rankings based on landholdings alone. This brings me back to the second problem of ranking: what method can best be used to group ranked households into economically distinct and meaningful categories?

I have pointed out that the numerical formula used by Athreya *et al.* is so complex as to be of dubious value as a basis for ranking. However, the characteristics of the various reproductive levels indicate substantive differences in what the authors describe as the differing capacities of the farm to reproduce itself and the household without non-farm income. These reproductive levels are perhaps better described as levels of self-sufficiency.

I propose a slightly simplified series of agricultural classes for Hinganiya and the surrounding villages, based on a similar model. The system does not take account of non-farm income, or of income from pastoralism, being based purely on land ownership.

The categories are as follows:

Category 1:

Very poor peasant owning less than two hectares of land. As explained below two hectares is a threshold below which grain production will be inadequate for an average household's consumption even in a good year. Peasants in this category are heavily dependent on non-farm income. (Non-farm income refers to income earned otherwise than from the household's own land.)

Category 2

Poor peasant owning two or more but less than five hectares. Households in this category will be self-sufficient in grain for household consumption in a good year, but would not be able to meet consumption needs in a poor year. Households would be substantially dependent on non-farm income.

Category 3

Lower middle peasant owning five or more but less than ten hectares. Households in this category would produce enough grain to meet household consumption needs under most circumstances. Surplus grain produced in good years allows the household to survive in most poorer years. Farm income needs to be supplemented by paid labour to obtain cash for non-grain needs and to enable needs to be met in a bad sequence of years.

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Category 4

Middle peasant owning at least ten but less than twenty hectares. Households in this Category produce enough income from agriculture to meet all normal household requirements even in poor years and can be regarded as self-sufficient.

Category 5

Rich peasant or capitalist farmer, owning more than twenty hectares. Capitalist farmers are differentiated from rich peasants by virtue of carrying out capital intensive agriculture, by the use of tractors, investment in irrigation etc.

A key issue in this typology is the categorisation of households in terms of their tendency to hire labour or to work as hired labourers. The importance of income from wage labour is a crucial indicator of the qualitative differences between households in terms of self-sufficiency/independence. The poorest category of householders rarely, if ever, hire labour. People from households in categories 4 and 5 rarely, if ever, work as hired labourers, although individuals may earn income from military or other career occupations. Households in categories 2 and 3 may both employ labour and provide wage labour to other households. This is because some agricultural tasks require large inputs of labour for a short time. The general trend, however, is for households in category 2 to be substantially dependent on wage-income (they are net suppliers of labour) whereas those in category 3 have substantially less dependence on wage income and may even be net employers of labour, although only slightly so. Those in categories 4 and 5 are net employers of labour.

The use of specific landholding sizes as numerical thresholds for each category is obviously arbitrary. The numerical ranking is useful only to the extent that it is a tool which helps to identify qualitatively different categories. However there is a logical basis for selecting the thresholds and the results are quite consistent with various observations made during fieldwork.

Firstly, there is the question of the logical basis. The average household size in Hinganiya in 1985 was 4.8 consumption units. The average has been calculated using both full-time and part-time population. A consumption unit is based on the rather arbitrary assumption that adults consume about equal amounts and that children consume about half the amounts of food and other resources as adults do. In practice in the field it did not prove practical to obtain data on the ages of all offspring and, in fact, I am unable to differentiate consistently between infants, young children and adolescents from my census and genealogical data. So I have treated each married adult or unmarried person judged to be seventeen or older as a consumption unit and

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everyone else as a half unit. I assume that infants will balance adolescents. The concept does not differentiate between the food requirements of an adult man and the requirements of an adult woman. Nor does it allow for increased energy requirements during peak work periods. The notion of consumption unit has, therefore, only a very general indicative value, but it is a more refined basis for estimate than simple household numbers.

According to estimates by informants, an average adult male requires between twenty and twenty-four kilograms of millet per month. This is quite consistent with my own observations and estimates, although I did not carry out test weighings. I would stress, however, that villagers are acutely aware of such matters as the weight of grain and many households routinely weigh production after harvest. Loans of grain (for household consumption) are also weighed. It is reasonable to assume, then, that villagers' estimates are fairly accurate. One qualification about the average is that poorer people have much less varied diets and may eat somewhat more millet than those in wealthier households. The ration of grain provided by the government as famine relief was twenty-two kilograms per month, which is close to the other estimates discussed above. Accepting this figure as a working estimate, then the requirement for an average household (of 4.8 consumption units) for a year is 1267 Kg of millet.

In converting these figures into expected outcomes for small landholders there are some qualifications. It is a common practice to leave land fallow occasionally. Smaller holders tend to be unable to carry out this practice as regularly as larger holders. Very small holders also tend to place emphasis on millet production only. For these reasons lower productivity from smaller holdings might be expected as land deteriorates. This would suggest that a landholder with twelve bighas (about two hectares) would produce somewhere between 1200 and 1800 Kg of grain in a good year, probably something closer to the lower figure than the higher one. (See Chapter 6.) In a good year this would meet household grain requirements and possibly provide a slight surplus for storage, sale or barter. Where there is reduced production due to drought a grain deficit would be inevitable.

Households with five hectares would be able to produce somewhere around 3000 Kg in a good year, allowing for some land remaining fallow or being placed under mixed crops. Assuming one good year in four, two years with about 50% production and one year with little or no production, the average annual production over a four year period would be 1500 Kg, enough to meet average grain requirements. An average 50% production is, in fact, very optimistic (see Chapter 6). Households with five hectares would have some years of serious deficit. The further

landholdings are above the five hectare threshold, the more likely the household is to be self-sufficient.

Of course these thresholds are arbitrary, but I would suggest that they approximately indicate points at which qualitative differences in the level of self-sufficiency begin to appear. Observational data on the extent to which households are self-sufficient is generally consistent with these thresholds and tends to confirm that they represent qualitative differences. Firstly, my census of Hinganiya of December 1985-January 1986 shows a close association between landholdings owning less than five hectares (categories 1 and 2) and emigrant labour. Of eleven people identified as part-time emigrant labourers nine were from households which were landless or in categories 1 and 2, one was from a household in category three and one was from a household in category 4. The emigrant labourer in category 3 was from a household holding only a fraction of a hectare above the threshold.

The case of the household above the ten hectare limit (in category 4) is also barely above the appropriate threshold. It is the case of a Bishnoi household of four (household head, wife, widowed adult son and the female daughter of the household head) in which the son worked fairly regularly in Jodhpur and the household head himself very occasionally did the same. (Only the son has been counted as a part-time resident.) I have no knowledge of any particular factors which might explain the need for additional cash. It may be that it is all simply a matter of economic opportunism - taking the opportunity to collect some extra cash. The household is part of a cluster which includes three other households headed by the other three sons of the household head. This is one of the cases where household and household cluster have somewhat blurred boundaries. Three of the four households live in the same *dhani*, although each is regarded as a separate household. Presumably the close proximity of the households, with the opportunities for cooperation in labour it provides, frees some members of the household cluster to work in Jodhpur. The young man's widower status suggests that he may work in Jodhpur as much for some sense of independence as for anything else.

The second way in which observations support the validity of the thresholds relates to observations about wage labour (and famine relief labour) in the village itself. I do not have comprehensive data on this, but my field notes contain frequent references to the composition of work parties. I have no evidence of people from households in categories four or five working as wage labourers. On the other hand people from most households in category 3 were sometimes observed doing wage labour, although these households may have been net employers of labour. There were only two households in category 3 from which I have no record of individuals doing wage labour. One is the case of a Rajput household (just under the ten hectare threshold) from which two members were in

'service' in Jodhpur. People in categories 1 and 2 were frequently observed working for wages.

It is important to stress that references to wage labour above refer to agricultural labour, paid labour on domestic projects or famine work. Work at *adolas* (voluntary working parties - discussed in Chapter 6) or other voluntary or cooperative work is not included, even if food was provided.

All of this observational evidence supports the view that the thresholds I have used coincide fairly closely with points at which qualitative differences in the capacity of households for self-sufficiency emerge. Obviously some cases will occur where households do not easily fit into categories, but the thresholds are surprisingly reliable indicators of agricultural self-sufficiency. I cannot stress the importance of this too much. My objective was to develop meaningful categories. I attempted to develop a numerical basis for placing individual households. Essentially it works. However, the fact that a numerical scale is used should not obscure the qualitative/structural basis for the classification. The coincidence of qualitative and numerical ranking occurs, despite my concerns about using a ranking system which does not take account of consumption requirements. I suspect that this may be because household size is relatively uniform and relatively small at the lower end of the scale of landholding sizes. In fact, of the total of 37 households owning less than five hectares, only three households have more than seven members. Thus, the households with small landholdings rarely exceed the average of 4.8 consumption units per household. (I will further discuss the relationship between household size and landholding in Chapter 8.)

The threshold of twenty hectares for rich peasants and capitalist farmers is quite arbitrary. The main basis for selecting twenty hectares is that the land ceiling on unirrigated land in the Bhopalgarh Tehsil is 135 bighas (21.6 hectares). Thus twenty hectares seems to represent a major departure from the normal situation. The cases in which the land ceiling are exceeded are all apparently explained in terms of increases to the ceiling to allow for large households.

The category 'capitalist farmer' is virtually an empty category in Hinganiya itself. At first sight it may appear odd that little investment in capital intensive projects has occurred, particularly given that there are four households owning holdings over twenty hectares. The answer lies in the fact that opportunities for capital investment are limited. Athreya *et al.* (1986) analysed class differences in farming in south India, examining both wet and dry areas. Wet, in this case, refers to canal-irrigated land. The dry area depends on rainfall for water. They found that opportunities for capital investment on dry land were comparatively limited, private irrigation works providing the main opportunity. For this reason capitalist

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farming was proportionately less common (in comparison to middle peasantry) in dry areas than in wet areas. These generalisations would be equally true of my field area. In adjoining villages several individuals have invested in private wells and pumps and have flourishing land as a result. However, in Hinganiya, the depth of the water table, and the salinity of the existing wells, means that this option is not viable. The opportunities for capitalist investment in agriculture are very limited.

Only one household could be said to have made any capital investments of any significance and that on a small scale. This household, the largest in size and the one with the largest landholdings, owned half-share in a tractor, which the household used on its own land and for hire. The tractor was purchased in 1983. By 1987 it had been sold. The use of tractors to intensify farming has limited use. No tractor owner with only unirrigated land would be able to use his tractor enough to justify the Rs 70,000 cost, so there is a heavy dependence on hiring tractors to other farmers. The main uses for a tractor, besides occasional use as transport for people to fairs and so forth, are for ploughing, for crushing crops prior to threshing and for carrying harvested crops (or water, in a bad year). These activities are limited by the fact that there is only one crop per year. Thus a tractor will be of economic value mainly for a few operations in peak periods of high demand *within* a five month agricultural season. In bad years there is even less potential for use.

The potential for hiring out a tractor is further limited by the fact that smaller farmers usually cannot afford to hire a tractor and, in any case, find the use of a bullock or camel drawn plough quite adequate for their relatively small plots. Unirrigated land is usually only ploughed once, in any case.

A tractor, then, is used relatively intensively for a few peak periods within the growing season. Occasionally tractors might be hired from another village if the local tractor happens to be occupied, but generally a single tractor meets most of the needs of the village. Capital investment in a second tractor is not likely to be particularly helpful for self-cultivation or as a source of additional income from hire.

In this section I have developed a typology of economic categories based on the assumption that there is a land-wealth nexus. One disadvantage of this typology is that it does not allow for the ranking of pastoralists. Within Hinganiya, however, there are no full-time pastoralists, and only two or three households whose income from pastoralism probably exceeds income from agriculture. In one of these cases pastoralism apparently became possible because the householder has a source of income from outside the pastoral sector. I will be showing the role of non-agricultural inputs in determining economic status later. For the present, however, the typology will suffice.

An Analysis of Landholdings in Hinganiya

(a) Overview

The administratively defined boundaries of Hinganiya encompass a total of 735.3 ha. Table 5.1 gives a breakdown of this into major categories. (Although the present tense is used I am referring to the situation according to the land register in January 1986.)

The total amount of land held by people not normally resident is a significant proportion of the total land available for private purposes (34.47%). Most of this land is held by people resident in nearby, usually adjoining, villages. There is no evidence of urban dwellers owning land, except in the case of a few people who are immediately linked with resident households and who are likely to re-settle. In these cases landholdings are small. I have already pointed out that residents of Hinganiya may own land in other villages. While I know of only one such case, it is reasonable to assume that the pattern of absentee ownership of land in Hinganiya is similar to the pattern of Hinganiya residents owning land elsewhere. In Hinganiya some land is held by Brahmans and Goswamis. These people are descendants of temple priests (*pujaris*) who had access to 'temple land' prior to land reform. These aside, most of the absentee ownership involves Bishnois, Jats and Rajputs, castes which generally held relatively large amounts of land. (Table 5.2 gives a breakdown of absentee landholdings in Hinganiya by caste). It is probably reasonable to assume that those residents of Hinganiya who hold outside land are from similar categories. Thus, the figures for the poorer (usually lower caste) farmers in Hinganiya are likely to be more reliable than those for the wealthier (usually upper caste) farmers.

Table 5.1

Summary of Hinganiya landholdings

Identified resident landholders, including part-time residents	451.47 ha
Absentee (landholders permanently resident outside village)*	237.47 ha
Total private land	688.94 ha
Panchayat (common) land	46.36 ha
<i>Total</i>	<i>735.3 ha</i>

* Includes 5.85 ha held in name of person allegedly from Hinganiya (according to land records and the Patwari) but unknown to me.

Table 5.2

Absentee ownership of land in Hinganiya, by caste

Caste	Ha.
Rajput*	42.1
Bishnoi	122.15
Jat	48.81
Nayak	8.26
Brahman/Goswami	16.15
<i>Total</i>	<i>237.47</i>

* Includes 5.85 ha held in name of person allegedly from Hinganiya (according to land records and the Patwari) but unknown to me.

The following analysis excludes the element of absentee landownership (unless it is clearly indicated otherwise) both in terms of outsiders owning land in Hinganiya and in terms of Hinganiya residents owning land elsewhere.

Taking the 451.47 ha owned by people normally resident in Hinganiya (this includes part-time residents) the average landholding per household is 6.74 ha. The average per individual is 1.04 ha. These averages are quite high by an all-India standard, but it must be remembered that the land is of poor quality, being very sandy and also being entirely unirrigated.

On the basis of the typology of rural 'classes' developed in the previous section, I have ranked all sixty-two landholding resident (full-time and part-time) households in Table 5.3. Note that there are also five households which are effectively landless. There are some irregularities about each of these. Three of the household heads are part-time residents, either in the army or working in Jodhpur. They hold no land in a *de jure* sense, and are not regarded as being landholders in a *de facto* sense. In each case future partitions of land may change their status. Of the other two landless households, one is the household of an old man who has already distributed all of his land to his sons, while being regarded as the head of his own separate household. His household could be regarded as dependent on others in the household cluster. The final case is that of a household which is apparently in a transitional stage: it is regarded as separate, but no land has yet been transferred. For the purposes of Table 5.3, I have excluded the five landless households as being, each in some way, anomalous.

Land Ownership

Table 5.3

Landed households. Average size of holding by class and percentage of total land by class

Class/ category (ha)	Holding range	No. of house- holds	% age of total house- holds	Average size (ha)	Total land (ha)	% age of land (ha)
5	20+	4	6.45	28.2	112.80	24.99
4	10-<20	16	25.81	12.39	198.26	43.91
3	5-<10	10	16.13	7.24	72.36	16.03
2	2-<5	15	24.19	3.17	47.52	10.53
1	0-<2	17	27.42	1.2	20.53	4.55
Total		62	100	7.28	451.47	100.01*

* - Error due to rounding

The first thing to note is that only twenty households (32% of the total) fall within the top two classes, that is, the classes which can be described as agriculturally self-sufficient. Sixty-eight per cent of households (the lower three classes) are to some extent dependent on income from sources other than their own land. In the case of the seventeen households (27.4%) owning less than two hectares, other sources of income are very important.

The average size of holdings within each category and the percentage of total land held by that category are also set out. The distribution is quite uneven in these terms. The four households in Category 5 (6.45% of all landed households) own 24.99% of the land. At the other end of the scale, the seventeen households in Category 1 (27.42% of landed households) own only 4.55% of the land. The twenty households in categories 4 and 5 (32.26% of landed households) own 68.9% of the land. The 42 households in the lowest three categories (67.74% of landed households) own only 31.11% of the land.

(b) Landholdings and Caste

The association between landholding and caste is very marked, but presents some important irregularities. Table 5.4 gives the average landholdings per household and per head of population by caste. The averages suggest an association between caste status and economic status.

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Nevertheless there is a large variation in the range of landholding sizes within castes. This is evident in Table 5.5. The Rajputs have the largest average holdings on both a per person and a per household basis. While all four households in Category 5 (the largest landholding class) are Rajputs, the Rajputs are represented in all categories. They are even present, for what it is worth, considering the anomalies discussed above, in the landless category. In fact there are more Rajput households in Category 1 than there are in category 5 and the total number in categories 4 and 5 (ten) is only greater than the total number in categories 1 and 2 (nine) by one. This means that the Rajputs cover the entire range of landholding size categories, being the only caste to do so. The Bishnois are confined to the three middle landed categories and are not represented at all in either of the extreme categories. The single Jat household also falls in the centre. The landed Meghwals all fall in categories 2 and 3. The Meghwal household in Category 3 is, in fact, right on the threshold between the categories. All Nayak households fall within the two lowest landed categories.

Table 5.4
Landholdings by caste

Caste	Total land	No. of households	Average land/ household	No. of persons	Average land/ person
Rajput	222.51	23	9.67	155	1.43
Bishnoi	176.03	21	8.38	142	1.24
Jat	7.84	1	7.84	7	1.12
Meghwal	15.25	5	3.05	25	0.61
Nayak	29.84	17	1.75	104	0.29
Total	451.57	67	6.74	433	1.04

Table 5.5

Range of sizes of landholdings by numbers of households and by caste

Class/ Category	Ha	Total No. households	Rajputs	Bishnoi	Jat	Nayak	Meghwal
5	20+	4	4	-	-	-	-
4	10-<20	16	6	10	-	-	-
3	5-<10	10	2	6	1	-	1
2	2-<5	15	4	3	-	5	3
1	0>-<5	17	5	-	-	12	-
	nil	5	2	2	-	-	1
<i>Total</i>		67	23	21	1	17	5

There is a clear relationship between caste and landholding in all castes except the Rajputs. This raises two important questions:

- Why do caste differences in landholding still appear so striking, despite land reform?
- Why do the Rajputs diverge from the pattern of a close relationship between caste and landholding?

A look at the effects of land reform in Hinganiya will help to answer these questions.

(c) The Effects of Land Reform in Hinganiya

Earlier I suggested that the most important indicator of the effectiveness of land reform is the gross distribution of land. Clearly land reform in Hinganiya did not achieve a great deal in this respect as my analysis of the various tables showing the variations in the size of landholdings and the distribution of land by caste has shown. It is particularly clear that, whatever the effects of land reform, the lower ranked castes (that is, the scheduled tribes and castes) are still relatively poorly off in terms of land. In this section I want to examine the land records to ascertain to what extent the balance has changed, given the fact that it is pretty obviously skewed.

Fortunately there is a record of the rights which existed in Hinganiya not long before land reform. A land settlement was made in 1947. The

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papers are available in Jodhpur and I was able to transcribe the details. Using these records, it is possible to ascertain some indications of the shifts in land ownership between castes and it is sometimes possible to trace the broad outlines of what happened to particular households. There are some limitations in interpretation, however.

- It is not possible, from the data I have, to ascertain whether proprietorial rights or tenancy of particular plots of land were transferred sometime between 1947 and the period of land reform or after land reform. The 1947 situation simply has to be taken as the point of comparison because I have no intermediate data.
- It is sometimes possible to trace the movement of individual plots of land because both the 1947 land register and the 1986 land register give plot numbers. However plots are sometimes split and renumbered. From the continuity of plot numbers in the possession of identifiable individuals and their descendants (in some cases the same individuals actually appear as landowners in both 1947 and 1986) any renumbering appears to have been minimal, but there is no way of confirming this. I was unable to obtain a usable copy of either the 1947 or 1986 maps which indicate plot location and numbers.
- There are a number of people on the 1947 register who I was unable to match with people on genealogies even after questioning older informants. In some cases these people were absentee landholders or tenants. In some cases individuals seem to be identified by reference to a father whose name differs from the name given in the genealogies. This may be the result of different names being given to the same person in the construction of my genealogies and on the land register, or it may result from the fact that a person was an adopted son of a person who simply does not appear on my genealogies.

In 1947 Hinganiya was under a joint *jagir*, consisting of a resident Rajput of the Bhati clan and an absentee Rajput of the Tanwar clan. The latter was resident in Jodhpur. Each of the joint Thakurs held a half share. A number of relatives of the Bhati Thakur also held smaller grants of *jagir* land. For convenience I will describe these as sub-*jagirdars*. The sub-*jagir* lands were often held jointly by several Rajputs and the resulting shares were often quite small. Close relatives of the Thakur, described in the register as the Thakur's brothers, held larger shares than more distant relatives. Both the joint Thakurs and the sub-*jagirdars* held some land for self-cultivation and let the rest to tenants. In the case of the smaller joint holders of sub-*jagirs* the land was sometimes held by one combination of sets of siblings and let out to tenants in another combination of sets of siblings. Individual Rajputs may have held a share

of a particular plot as sub-*jagir* holders and been part-tenants of the same plot. In these situations calculation of the rights of a particular individual are dazzlingly complex.

Besides the land used by Rajputs for self-cultivation, and a small amount of temple land for self-cultivation by the *pujaris*, the only land not let to tenants was the land held for public purposes, including land for wells, roads, the cremation ground and the village residential area (*abadi*). Table 5.6 presents a summary of all land in Hinganiya in 1947, identified (apart from public or temple land) by the caste of the person *using* the land. The category of Rajput land-users includes land used for self-cultivation by Rajputs and land used by Rajput tenants. The 1947 figures are compared to the 1986 figures for land ownership. Thus the principles of classification shift from land user (including both persons holding rights as proprietor and tenants) in 1947 to persons holding proprietorial rights only in 1986.

These figures do not separate non-residents and residents. While it is possible to do so for 1986, it is impossible to do so for 1947. As most absentees came from nearby villages in 1986 and the situation was presumably similar in 1947 (tenants, almost by definition, are likely to live nearby) the figures are comparable.

The table demonstrates one point conclusively: while the basis under which people in various castes gained access to land in 1947 and 1986 was different, there were only minor shifts in the distribution of access by caste. Very small variations to areas used for temples and public lands can possibly be explained by a resurvey or resurveys since 1947 coming up with slightly different areas for different plots. There are, however, some genuine changes which should be examined.

Firstly, the Daroga tenant of 1947 has disappeared from consideration. He was certainly an absentee tenant, presumably from a nearby village, since all of my informants are adamant that no Daroga has ever lived in Hinganiya. The plot number held against his name now appears as the property of a Rajput living just outside the village boundaries, although the area has approximately been halved, which suggests a division since 1947.

In general a small decrease in the land available to Rajputs has allowed increases to land available to the Bishnois, Meghwals and Nayaks and a very small increase to Jats.

Table 5.6
The effects of land reform.
Shift in land access by caste - 1947-86

Caste	1947 (ha)	1986 (ha)	% age change
<i>Rajput</i>			
Jagir (self-cult)	38.1		
Jagir's relatives (self-cult)	15.44		
Jagir's brothers (self-cult)	172.76		
Rajput tenants	57.51		
<i>Total Rajput</i>	<i>283.81</i>	<i>264.6</i>	<i>-6.77</i>
<i>Tenants (1947)</i>			
Bishnoi	278.44	298.18	+ 7.09
Jat	55.25	56.65	+ 2.53
Meghwal	7.95	15.25	+91.82
Nayak	33.77	38.1	+12.82
Daroga	6.96		-100.00
<i>Other</i>			
Temple	15.97	16.15	+1.13
Public	46.15	46.36	+0.45
<i>Total</i>	<i>728.3</i>	<i>735.3</i>	<i>+0.96</i>

Note: The discrepancy in totals is presumably due to a resurvey done since 1947

While the percentage increase to Meghwals is considerable, the actual amount of land is not, since they hold so little land anyhow. In fact the entire difference is accounted for by the transfer of a single plot, held by the joint Thakurs for self-cultivation in 1947. All other plots used by the Meghwals as tenants in 1947 are now held by Meghwals. During my 1985-86 fieldwork there was a legal dispute over the single transferred plot, which had been purchased by some Meghwals from one of the former Thakurs, in fact the Bhati Thakur. The descendants of the now deceased co-Thakur (of the Tanwar clan) had claimed that their father had never been paid by the Bhati Thakur for his share of the sale. I was unable to find out when the sale occurred, but it was presumably since land reform.

Land Ownership

In the case of the Nayaks, all plots for which there were Nayak tenants in 1947 are held by the descendants of the particular Nayak tenants, with the exception of a single batch of three plots (totalling just under four hectares) apparently purchased since land reform.

The fact that a large proportion of the land previously used by rent paying tenants is now used by people holding proprietary rights is an important change given that tenancy before land reform was insecure and rent was high. On the other hand the reform has been less than revolutionary because there has been very limited change in terms of the distribution of access to land on a caste basis. Assuming the land wealth nexus, there has been no major change in the relative economic status of various castes. The tenant castes (Bishnois and Jats) are now middle peasants. The village service castes are now poor peasants. The places of castes in the hierarchical structure have not changed.

The reason why the caste-based structure of the rural hierarchy didn't change with land reform is straightforward. The main emphasis of land reform legislation was in *transferring title to land to those who were already using it*. The question of transferring surplus land to the scheduled castes and tribes applied only to surplus land used by *jagirdars* for self cultivation, not surplus land used by tenants. The tenants themselves got that land. In a small village like Hinganiya, which was a petty *jagir* anyhow, and where quite a lot of land had been granted to various Rajput relatives of the Bhati Thakur, there simply wasn't much available land. It is also quite likely that surplus land held by the *jagirdar* for self-cultivation was given to other Rajputs as tenants when the possibility of land reform looked imminent. Such land would be transferred under land reform legislation to the Rajput tenant, not treated as surplus land for transfer to scheduled castes and tribes. There is some evidence that this may have occurred.

If we examine the land held by the joint Thakurs for self-cultivation in 1947 we find that, in 1986, only three plots were no longer held by the adopted son of the Bhati Thakur or the sons of the Tanwar Thakur. Of these, one plot is the one sold to the Meghwals and currently under dispute. The other two plots were still held by Rajputs in 1986. I do not know when the transfers from Thakur to other Rajputs occurred, but the land was apparently never treated as surplus land for the purposes of transfer to scheduled castes or tribes. It therefore seems likely that land reform may have been to some extent bypassed by the simple expedient of obtaining Rajput tenants rather than leaving land as surplus. This would not have avoided the loss to the landholder, but would have kept the land within the Rajput caste. This is, of course, supposition, but it is plausible and at least explains how land remained Rajput land. There is no reason, of course, why favoured Bishnoi or Jat households might not have received land in the same way.

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There are certain other ways in which certain Rajputs, closely linked with the *jagirdar* or his descendants, have maintained large holdings. I have already mentioned that there are four households in category 5, that is with land in excess of twenty hectares. In fact each of these households owns land in excess of the nominal land ceiling of 135 bighas (21.6 ha). In each case, however, the household size is in excess of the standard size of five for which the ceiling is calculated. On a pro rata basis each household technically owns land within the limit for its household size.

Case 1. Holding 35.8 ha.

This household has the largest landholding in the village and is also the largest household. There are seventeen members (one of whom is in the army and is therefore a part-time resident). The land is registered in three names: the household head (14.59 ha), his brother who is in the army (15.34 ha) and their mother (5.85 ha). As the amounts of land owned individually by the brothers are less than the land ceiling, there is no direct connection between household size and the need to beat the ceiling by maintaining a large household. The joint family structure is apparently largely determined by the exigencies of looking after the military brother's large and young family. A third brother heads a separate household. He recently joined the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary and has a young child. While he is the youngest brother he heads a separate household because he has received his land (14.9 ha) through adoption from his father's brother, whose wife is still the registered landholder. The household is emphatically regarded as separate, but is, in fact co-resident. The effects of the adoption are to keep the land owned by the previous generation intact within the household cluster.

Case 2. Holding 30.24 ha.

The household head, whom I will call Nahar Singh (not his correct name), is the brother of the previous Thakur (and the genitor of the current Thakur). Figure 5.1 shows the household and its place in the Bhati Thakur lineage. With a household consisting of nine members (including one part-time member), Nahar Singh is not in breach of the land ceiling. However, he has had to juggle two different requirements. On the one hand there is the need to have a household large enough to enable the land ceiling to be raised so as to avoid loss of land. On the other hand there is the need to minimise the number of heirs who will obtain full shares when the land is partitioned.

In all there were originally five sons and six daughters. All of the daughters are now married or deceased. At present two married sons and their wives and children are household members (one son is a part-time

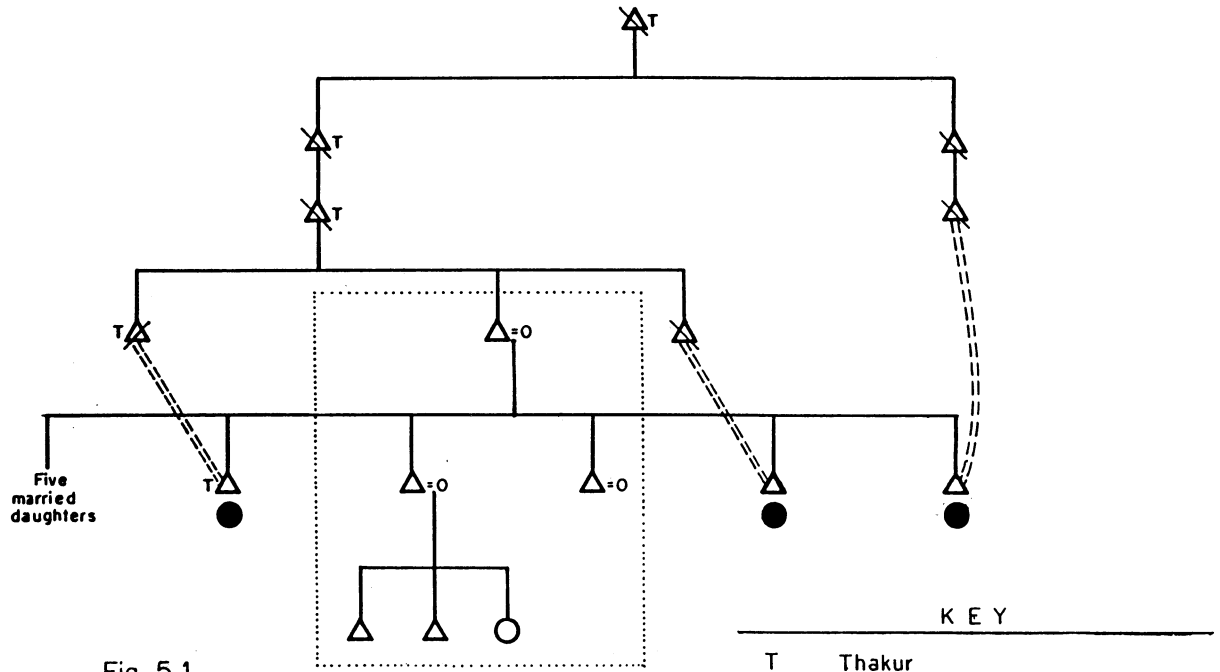


Fig. 5.1

The lineage of the Bhati Thakurs, indicating the household of Nahar Singh.

- KEY**
- T Thakur
 - Adoptive tie
 - Household of Nahar Singh
 - Indicates Head of separate household

member). All of the household head's other sons inherited land by adoption from other Rajputs. By maintaining a joint household comprising the wives and children of two of his sons, Nahar Singh has maintained the household numbers required to meet the land ceiling exemption requirements. He has managed to avoid having too many heirs by having his sons adopted to kinsmen without sons so that they will no longer inherit from him. It is, of course, rather fortunate that so many of his male kin (including two brothers) died without male offspring. Nevertheless, the fact that a strategy depends on some luck doesn't stop it from being a good strategy. The sons left in his own household will inherit a sizable holding after his death. Further, the land held by deceased ancestors has been held within the lineage, at least for the current generation. I do not wish to suggest that Nahar Singh had a large family in order to achieve these aims. However, he has responded to the situation by manipulating household size to delay partition of his landholdings.

Case 3. Holding 25.26 ha.

This household has seven members. The eldest son (who is classified as a part-time resident) is married. The household head has four sons and five daughters. All of the daughters are married. Again it is clear that having a large family has advantages in allowing a household to own in excess of the land ceiling. In the next generation, however, the land will be split four ways.

Case 4. 21.51 ha.

The household head is the current Thakur, adopted son of the previous Thakur and son of the Rajput in Case 2. There are six members of the household.

It seems to me to be significant that all of the households which exceed the 21.6 ha bigha limit have household sizes sufficient to enable them to fall within the adjusted limits for large households. Further, each household has a joint family structure, and in two cases siblings of the household head, or sons of the household head, have received land through adoption. In one case the household head himself was adopted. In the only case where adoption was not a factor the household head has several daughters, now married. It seems to me that large joint households and large numbers of children provide the flexibility which allows household size to be built up to a size adequate to maintain land ceiling requirements. Some of the implications of this will be followed up later.

A final question which remains to be answered is why the distribution of land within the Rajput caste is so skewed. The current distribution is comparatively easily explained. Apart from those who have managed to

purchase land since 1947 and those who have sold or lost surplus land through land reform, Rajput landownership today is a result of the inheritance of land for which user's rights were held before land reform. The question, then, is not to explain the current distribution, but to explain why rights were so unevenly distributed *before* land reform.

The above discussion shows that the Rajputs most closely related to the *jagirdars* were the ones who held the most land. Other Rajputs were comparatively disadvantaged. But why should they have been worse off than the tenant castes, the Bishnois and the Jats? Nowadays it is from the poorer Rajput households that most people go into military service. Presumably the same applied in the period before land reform. It has been suggested to me (Neil Maclean, pers. comm.) that the answer may be associated with the need for the Thakur to maintain a pool of potential soldiers. Too generous a distribution of land amongst Rajputs would certainly have made it difficult for a *jagirdar* to meet his obligations for the provision of troops when the *rekh* was assessed in terms of military obligations. Even in the later 'feudal' period, when the *jagirdar* had no such obligations, those Rajputs who chose a military career would have been unable to farm large landholdings and would not have needed them for their support. There is a clear tendency for those Rajputs with little land to be associated with a tradition of military service. Case 1 in Chapter 9 involves a lineage, with relatively little land in 1947, which has a tradition of at least three successive generations of military service.

(d) Tenancy

There are some ways of defeating the limits to household staple production imposed by land ownership. Legally, land tenancy is restricted in Rajasthan. Except in the cases of nominated categories (such as widows, minors or servicemen), landholders are not permitted to enter into long-term tenancy agreements. The maximum permitted period of tenancy (except when the owner is in an exempt category) is five years.

Details of existing tenancies are very hard to obtain, largely because most tenancy agreements are outside the provisions of the legislation. Consequently, people are reluctant to discuss them. Even when a particular tenancy is legal (when the legal owner is a widow, for example) there is a great reluctance to register agreements. However, despite the difficulty in obtaining systematic information, tenancy appears to be relatively common.

Hissar, the most common form of tenancy, requires the tenant to pay a fixed proportion of the crop to the landowner. The proportion varies; sometimes it is one third, sometimes it is fifty percent. In *hissar* the tenant provides all seeds and labour, but has to pay the landowner only on the basis of actual production. In another form of tenancy (*harsal*) a

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fixed fee is paid before sowing. The risk, therefore is entirely for the tenant. This latter form does not, apparently, exist in Hinganiya. Given the risk of crops failing it would have little to offer to a tenant.

I have information on only four tenancy arrangements. In all cases the landowners are Rajputs. Three of the tenants are also Rajputs, while one is a Meghwal. This is, however, not a complete list of all arrangements in Hinganiya and the apparent predominance of Rajputs as tenants almost certainly reflects the fact that one or two Rajput informants were forthcoming on the subject.

Interestingly, one of the Rajput tenants himself owned about seventy bighas (over 10 ha). He farmed an additional twelve bighas (2 ha) on the tenancy arrangement, leaving about twenty bighas of his own land fallow. This raises an important point. Apart from the obvious advantages of larger landholdings, there are advantages in terms of flexibility. Large landholders are able to rotate their crops and keep some land fallow. On the other hand, small landowners tend to limit their crops to millet, which is the staple, and to exploit all their land. In the long term this means that smaller landholdings would be expected to become less productive. Small landowners may be able to leave land fallow if they are able to obtain a tenancy agreement.

The ultimate limit to the number of tenancy arrangements is the amount of land available which is surplus to the needs of the owner. In fact, this is relatively limited and would generally belong only to landowners in landholding categories 4 and 5, although I know of one case of a category 3 landowner who has a tenant.

What are the advantages of a tenancy arrangement? To a landowner they are obvious. In a good year he obtains a substantial share of crop without any increased inputs. In a bad year he loses nothing. In fact he gains because any preliminary work or seed costs for which he might otherwise have been responsible are borne by the tenant. There are no risks for the landowner.

From the point of view of the tenant the position varies. It may be a means of increasing flexibility, as in the case I mentioned above, or it may be a means of increasing overall production beyond potential produce from one's own land.

Discussion

In this chapter I have examined the pattern of distribution of landholdings in Hinganiya. The main conclusions are as follows:

- The distribution of landholdings by size is very uneven.
- There are significant differences in landholdings by caste, both in terms of averages per household and in terms of averages per head of population. The average landholdings increase as the relative ranking of the caste increases.
- In the cases of all castes except the Rajputs the range of landholding sizes per household are limited to two or three adjacent categories. The spread of landholding sizes is, thus, relatively consistent for each of these castes.
- The range of landholdings sizes for Rajputs covers all five categories, although the caste averages (per household and per head) remain higher than those of any other caste. The diversity of landholdings among Rajputs probably derives from the fact that the Rajputs have always had a sub-class of people not closely related to the *jagirdar* who tended to join the military.
- In terms of the total amounts of land available for the *use* of each caste, there have been very few changes since land reform took place, although the proprietorial rights to land have changed from almost total Rajput domination (the exception was land held as temple land for self-cultivation by *pujaris*) in 1947 to a distribution of proprietorial rights amongst the *users* in 1986.
- Land reform in Hinganiya did not lead to a significant redistribution of land. This may be a result of the fact that, in what was a small *jagir* anyhow, land had been effectively distributed to a number of Rajput sub-*jagirs* before land reform.

As far as the relationship between castes and landholding is concerned, the greatest problem of interpretation lies with the Rajputs, who cover the entire range of landholding sizes. This range is a striking feature of the economic status of the Rajputs in Hinganiya. But there is a second striking feature: to a much greater extent than any other caste the Rajputs have permanent attachments to non-agricultural sources of income. While men from other castes obtain income from migrant labour, permanent salaried income (particularly in the army) is almost a monopoly of Rajputs. The Rajputs in the lower landholding categories, including the nominally landless category, tend to be in 'service' or to be returned military men. In terms of their overall economic position land ownership is not an accurate indicator of the wealth of these Rajputs.

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The land-wealth nexus seems to work for the other castes, but falls down in the case of Rajputs. The cases of landless Rajputs and of landless Bishnois highlights this fact. The two landless Rajputs both have salaried jobs in Jodhpur. The two landless Bishnois, on the other hand, are landless by virtue of life cycle factors: one has already settled land on his sons and the other is a new household head who has not yet received his share of land. Both cases are irregularities which are nevertheless consistent with the assumption that wealth is based on land.

This chapter has examined the 'agrarian hierarchy' in terms of the working assumption that land equals wealth. That, while useful as a working assumption, is inadequate in two respects. Firstly, it ignores the importance of pastoralism as a source of income. While there is a link between pastoralism and land ownership it is quite possible for small landowners to make substantial income from livestock and there are, in any case, nomadic and semi-nomadic herders who make considerable income from pastoralism without any need to own land. I will consider this in Chapter 6. Secondly it ignores income from outside sources.

In Chapter 9 I will be pursuing the second of these inadequacies. In particular I will be continuing the argument (commenced in Chapter 4) that the Rajput caste has certain characteristics which can be turned into economic advantages.