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Cultural Survival and Historical Memory among Pakistani Meos: A Postcolonial Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the sociocultural evolution of the Meo community in Pakistan, tracing their journey from a syncretic Hindu-Muslim identity in pre-partition Mewat to their fragmented existence in post-1947 Pakistan. The Meos are ethnic community largely migrated from Princely states Alwar and Bhartpur and Gurgaon, Punjab.¹

Through historical analysis, ethnographic insights, and community narratives, the research examines how forced migration, state policies, and religious nationalism disrupted the Meos' traditional systems like the *Jajmani*² economy and *Pal-Gotra*³ social structure. Despite efforts to reclaim their heritage through cultural organizations, media, and political mobilization, the Meos face challenges in preserving their identity amid urbanization, assimilation pressures, and generational shifts. Critically, the study highlights the tension between their multicultural past and Pakistan's homogenizing Islamic identity, revealing how systemic neglect and internal fragmentation have left the Meos navigating marginalization while striving to retain their unique traditions.

Keywords: Mewati Community, Subaltern Studies, Criminal Tribes Act, Post-Partition Islamization, Cultural Syncretism, Digital Ethnography.

Introduction

The Meos practiced their customs and traditions related to birth, death, and marriage in their own distinct syncretic manner. The Meos primarily adhered to only a few Islamic rituals, including Khatna (circumcision in males), Nikah (the essential Islamic marriage ceremony), and Dafn (burial after death).⁴ A common sentiment was and still relevant

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¹ Alwar and Bharatpur were princely states in British India (Rajputana Agency) that acceded to India in 1948–49 and are now part of Rajasthan; Gurgaon was a district in colonial Punjab and is now in Haryana, India.

² S. B. Yadav, "An Empirical Study of Socio-Economic Status of Meo Muslims in Mewat Region: Emerging Issues and Trends," *International Journal of Advances in Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2018): 51–56. Jajmani. A system according to which services are rendered by specialist castes. The Meos had such a hereditary patron-client relation with castes such as the brahmans, Mirasis, and Nais.

³ In Rajput culture, the term gotra is considered to be equivalent to lineage. It broadly refers to people who are descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor or patriline.

⁴ KOTIN IGOR, "THE MEOS of RAJASTHAN and HARYANA - ISLAMICISED HINDUS or



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among Meos that “Meo to mulla ki na mane” (the Meos do not listen to the Muslim clerics). Their clothing, jewelry, furniture, and houses reflected their socioeconomic status. As Muslims, they celebrated festivals such as Eid ul-Fitr (Festival of Breaking the Fast), Eid ul-Azha (Festival of Sacrifice), Eid Milad-un-Nabi (Prophet Muhammad's Birthday), Shab-e-Barat (Night of Forgiveness), Shab-e-Qadr (Night of Power), Shab-e-Meraj (Night of Ascension), and Muharram (The Islamic New Year / Month of Remembrance). And as Mewati along with other communities in Mewat, including Ahirs, Meenas, Jats, and Gujjars, celebrated as Holi (Festival of Colors and Spring), Basant Panchami (Festival of Spring and Knowledge), Purnima (The Full Moon Festival / Auspicious Temple Days), Dussehra (Festival of the Victory of Good over Evil), Diwali (Festival of Lights), and Maha Shivaratri (The Great Night of Shiva). Despite their religious differences, the people of Mewat respected and honored each other's customs and traditions, fostering an atmosphere of communal harmony. Major P.W. Powlett in Alwar Gazetteer stated it as;

The Meos are now all Musalmans in name; but their village deities are the same as those of Hindu Zamindars. They keep, too, several Hindu festivals. Thus, the Holi is with Meos a season of rough play, and is considered as important a festival as the Muharram, Id, and Shab I Barat; and they likewise observe the Janam ashtmi, Dasehra, and Diwali. They often keep Brahmin priests to write the pili chitthi, or note fixing the date of a marriage. They call themselves by Hindu names, with the exception of “Ram” and “Singh” is a frequent affix, though not so common as “Khan.”⁵

This kind of social structure, along with its socio-cultural and religious pluralism, was significantly affected during and after Partition. While, in Pakistan, some of their traditions can still be observed in villages, religious syncretism has largely diminished. However, the Cheetahs, another community living in the Aravalli Hills remains a living example of what the Meos were like before communal divisions altered the fabric of Mewat.⁶

Pakistani Meos often think that they are not enough common people; sometime Excessively Proud otherwise dumb and arrogant, it is very much common to hear that according to the history Meos are plunderers and uncivilized, Aggressive, and lawless,⁷ and their culture is more closed to Hindus and should be abandoned. Meos, even, themselves are not seem satisfied with their traditions and history. The new generation is questioning their ancestors for their lawlessness; most are proud to be Meos and their legacy. In this research, it is cross-checked through history that, why Meos are standing here and cursing themselves for their portrayal of the image in Pakistan as a marginalized ethnic community.

Namesake in Pakistan

The Meo community in Pakistan has a rich and layered identity, reflected in the many names they use today. These names, like Meo, Mewati, Rao, Khan, Chaudhry and others, tell the story of their history, culture, and how they've adapted over time. The Meos have roots tracing back to Rajput clans, known for their warrior traditions. Over centuries, as

HINDUISED MUSLIMS?” (the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, n.d.).

⁵ Powlett, Percy William. *Gazetteer of Ulwur*. London: Trübner & Co., 1878. P38

⁶ PSBT India. "Bit of Both." YouTube video, 27:07. July 13, 2015. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjbPLQSBgnE>.

⁷ Minhaj Siraj, ‘Tabakat-i-Nasiri’, in *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, vol. 2, ed. H. M. Elliot and John Dowson (New Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1990), 380–3; Ziauddin Barani, ‘Tarikh-i-Firozshahi’, in *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, vol. 3, 104–5.



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they embraced Islam, they blended their Rajput heritage with new influences. Names like Rao and Khanzada hint at their royal past, while titles like Khan and Chaudhry show how they connected with ruling powers, such as the Mughals or British. Scholars like Shakoor note that over 100 different names have been used for the Meos historically, including clan names (like Dahngal, Pahat, Demroat), job-related terms (Nai, Mirasi), or even titles linked to their role as fighters for faith (Ghazi or Mian G).⁸ Each name is like a piece of a puzzle, showing how the Meos have balanced their proud past with the challenges of migration, politics, and cultural change, from Rajput warriors to a Muslim community with a unique, resilient identity in Pakistan.

Returning homeland

Following the 1947 Partition, the Meo community encountered significant obstacles in establishing their place within the social fabric of Punjab and Sindh. Often viewed with suspicion, they were forced to navigate a complex landscape to assert their identity. During the settlement process, they were burdened by the colonial-era "criminal tribe" stigma—a label so pervasive that even newborns were categorized as criminals.⁹ This historical baggage, coupled with the loss of properties due to high treason cases during the liberation struggle, meant that many had to pay a heavy price for their resettlement. Based on the interview with Shahabudin Malbia, Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Ghasera and his description of the Meos as the "backbone of India" inspired many to remain in India or plan their return. However, local authorities and soldiers actively pushed them toward Pakistan, threatening, "your home is in Pakistan... if you do not go away, we shall drive you with our sticks". Despite this state-led pressure and violence from the princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur, reports by 1950 indicated that the Indian Government was keen to have them back, even offering enlistment in Muslim Rajput battalions. Consequently, a large number of disgruntled Meos registered in Lahore to return to India, while others ended up settling in Sindh, fundamentally reshaping their community's narrative.¹⁰

Family record keeping by Jagas

In Pakistan, the tradition of genealogical record-keeping by the Brahman sub-caste known as Jagas, as seen in Mewat,¹¹ is not practiced any more. Unlike in Mewat, where Jagas systematically update family records each year, no such organized system exists among Pakistani Meos. However, some individuals make efforts to document their family trees, according to Hafiz Suleman, but this remains a personal initiative rather than a widely followed practice within the community.¹²

Meonis in Pakistan

Meoni women are the backbone of their community, balancing rigorous domestic roles with extensive agricultural¹³ work and professional careers in urban centers. Despite this, their socio-economic contributions remain undervalued within a deeply patriarchal structure.¹⁴

Historically, dowry, symbolized by texts like *Bahishti Zevar*—has evolved into a

⁸ Shakoor, Tareekh Meo Chhatri, Fiction House, Lahore 2018, p85, 96-97, 222-277, 454-457

⁹ Chattha, "Suffering, Survival and Sustenance: Meos' Post-Partition Experiences in Pakistan. SOUTH ASIA: JOURNAL OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES, p 459"

¹⁰ Interviewed Shahabudin Malbia on 3 jan, 2025

¹¹ Aggarwal, "A Muslim SubCaste of North India: Problems of Cultural Integration." 159

¹² Interview of Hafiz Suleman Tariq (Chief Editor; Sada I Meo) February 6, 2025.

¹³ Qais Ch. Chirkalot, Tamadun I Mewat, Mewati Dunya, 2012, p 148-149

¹⁴ Dr m habib (p53 – p60)



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competitive social burden. In areas like Lahore, lavish dowry demands often serve as a forced substitute for Quranic inheritance. To maintain family ties, many women are pressured to forfeit their property rights to their brothers, receiving only occasional gifts (*Bhait*) in return. Those who demand their legal share often face social ostracization.

A notable cultural divide exists between Karachi and Lahore; while Lahore struggles with escalating dowry costs, the Meos of Karachi have largely transitioned toward simpler marriages and greater gender equity.¹⁵ Supporting this shift, a landmark Shariat Court ruling has declared customs that deprive women of inheritance, such as *Chaddar* or *Parchi*, as un-Islamic and illegal, providing a vital legal precedent for the economic empowerment of Meoni women.¹⁶

Cosmopolitanism in Meos

The Meo identity in Pakistan reflects a long history of syncretism shaped by migration, state policies, and religious reform movements such as the Tablighi Jamaat and narratives of “Pakistaniat.” While state discourse often constructs India as the “other,” many older Meos still retain emotional ties to Mewat, their ancestral homeland, sometimes valuing a visit there over even sacred sites like Makka and Madina. This memory preserves a shared cultural world where Hindus and Meos once coexisted, celebrating festivals like Diwali together and sharing everyday customs.

In Pakistan, where Hindu communities are absent, these practices have largely faded. Oral transmission of epics such as the Ramayan and Mahabharat survives only among elders, while younger generations are increasingly oriented toward Islamic narratives, reflecting a gradual shift in cultural memory. Living among dominant Punjabi Muslim society, Meo traditions are often labeled as “Hindu-like,” accelerating their assimilation into mainstream Islamic norms.¹⁷

Ahmad Khan, a Meo man, shared how interacting with Hindus in Tharparkar reminded him of his grandparents’ stories about Mewat. He said, “Being around the Hindus of Thar felt like being in the community my grandparents described—it was like being back in Mewat.” This highlights how the Meos’ identity still carries echoes of their multicultural past, even as they adapt to life in Pakistan.¹⁸

Despite this, traces of pluralism persist. In cities like Lahore, Meos maintain interfaith social ties, exchanging food during Eid and participating in Christian festivities. Local initiatives occasionally create inclusive spaces where families of different religions gather, including participation in Christian weddings.

This syncretic ethos is historically rooted. The Meo worldview resists rigid communal binaries, expressed in the popular saying: “*Jat Kaha Hindu, Meo Kaha Musalman.*”

کہے لال سائیں کو پیارو، سرون سنو ایک شبد ہمارو
بندو ترک ایک سو سوجھے، صاحب ست گھٹ ایکھن سوجھے
کہے لال سائیں کو پیارو، صاحب ایک بناون ہارو
بندو ترک کو ایکھن صاحب، راہ بنائیں دوئے عجائب

These lines are attributed to the spiritual tradition of Laal Das Mewati (1540–1648),

¹⁵ Interview of Dr. Ilyas Meo (President, Meo Social Welfare Organization Karachi), June 16, 2024.
Interview of Muhammad Ali (General Secretary, GC Meo Tanzimat), September 26, 2024.

¹⁶ Sabih ul-Hussnain, “FSC Declares ‘Chaddar and Parchi’ Custom Un-Islamic, Illegal,” The Friday Times (Lahore), March 21, 2025, <https://thefridaytimes.com/21-Mar-2025/fsc-declares-chaddar-andparchi-custom-un-islamic-illegal>.

¹⁷ Naseeb Khan Meo, Bhamba Kilan, (interviewed on 26 June, 2025)

¹⁸ Ahmad Khan Nadeem (interviewed on 8 March, 2025)



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reflecting a vision in which Hindu and Muslim identities are understood within a shared spiritual unity.¹⁹

Mewat itself functioned historically as a cultural zone rather than a rigid administrative unit, where Meos and Hindu castes coexisted, sharing rituals of birth, marriage, and kinship. Their ceremonies were deeply intertwined, forming a shared cultural grammar across communities. The proverb “Jat kaha Hindu, Meo kaha Musselman” circulated widely across Rajputana, symbolizing this fluid identity.

However, this pluralism has been gradually eroded by two parallel processes: Hindu communal consolidation on one side and Islamic reformist movements such as the Tablighi Jamaat on the other. Practices once seen as cultural synthesis are now often reinterpreted as *jahiliyat* (ignorance), leading to the gradual withdrawal of syncretic traditions from everyday life.

Is Meo culture dying?

"Batwara mein baap bhai se aur behen behen se bichhad gayi, par hamari Meo qom ne apna pichhla (virs) kabhi bhulaya nahi."²⁰

this generation is questioning exogamy and Pal Gotra system as Hindu culture and leaving these traditional way of living day by day. They now opt Islamic names most of the times the names of prophets and their companions and discuss it that there insisters had Hindu names. Got Pal system was very important in Mewat that had the influence of the fight on the interstate level. Irrespective of religion, Hindu Muslim unity based on the pal system had a great impact on Meos' formation of identity, there are many examples of pal-based unity like the story of Chowdhry Mohammad Ismail Khan of Khandeola in Bharatpur state and Musamat (Lady) Nawazi of Rasa. The affair between Chowdhry Ismail and Lady Nawazi is memorable because this case was spread to the whole of Mewat overnight and an interstate quarrel was about to happen, was settled by Chowdry of pals. but it's not possible in Pakistan because, in Bari Mewat, villages were divided in the specific order of clan population. every got pal had their number of villages²¹ that also denotes the power of each got pal,²² if someone came from another Got or pal and settled in a village of a different Got or pal, then he was called 'Pahi' And pahi was known by the name of their former village rather than his Got for example if a pahi belonged to jamalgarh, he or she would called jamalgarhia.²³ but at present it is disturbed and cannot organised on that parameter. The settlement in Pakistan was not based on their pal got system²⁴ anyway many of the Meos tried to unify their gotra in the same village but it was not as easy as was in Mewat where by and large it was by default though after partition it was dispersed.

¹⁹ Elaqa-E-Mewat Ka Samaji Va Tahzibi Mutalaya, By Dr. Mohd. Habib 2003, Islamic Book Foundation, New Delhi

²⁰ "During the Partition, fathers were separated from brothers and sisters from each other, yet our Meo community never abandoned its ancestral roots and heritage." Youtube Video **Program Mera Gaon Meri Pehchan with Riaz Noor Meo, September 2023, <https://youtu.be/SPS5hZajEJI?si=Sm-UmRtDMUQyv1VI>**

²¹ Elaqa-e-Mewat ka samaji va tahzibi mutalaya, by Dr. Mohd. Habib 2003, Islamic Book Foundation, New Delhi (p61)

²² Every village was demarcated by heavy stones called Chawand. (Qais Chaudhry Chirkalot)

²³ Dr. Mohd. Habib 2003 (p61)

²⁴ Due to the diversity of settlement of Meos in Pakistan, the Mewatis have lost the rank of Pahi over time, and people of other Pal castes have equal status in any village. However, if someone settles in the village as a newcomer, he is called NayaBasi instead of pahi, and he never gets rid of this tag.



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Status of Paldar system or Panchayat

The Mewati Paldar or *Panchayat* system was established during Akbar's era when the Meos recognized the need for unity against external forces. In response, they reorganized themselves under the *Pal-Gotra* system, aligning their social structure with territorial and security concerns. This *pal* polity of Meo clans institutionalized dispersed Mewati power, which had been previously subdued by rulers such as Balban, Babur, and Firoz Shah. As part of this reorganization, they demarcated 12 *pals* and formalized a structured *panchayat* system for conflict resolution.²⁵

Within this system, disputes within a village were adjudicated by the village *Chaudhary*, who held sole authority. When conflicts involved parties from different villages but of the same *gotra*, the *Chaudharys* of both villages jointly resolved the matter. Disputes spanning multiple *pals* were addressed by a *panchayat* composed of representatives from eight villages, where the *Chaudharys* first elected a *Sarpanch* before proceeding with deliberations. More significant conflicts, including inter-*pal* or *gotra* wars, were resolved by a higher assembly known as *Palwal*, comprising *panchayat* representatives from 22 villages.²⁶

Even today in Bari Mewat, each *pal* is led by a hereditary *Chaudhari*, typically a wealthy and influential figure who heads the *pal* council and receives tributes at major social events. However, *pal* divisions have lost their significance. With British rule in the late 19th century, new administrative boundaries disregarded *pal* divisions, and Mewat itself was split between two princely states and a British province. So the Panchayat system was already weakened in Mewat

The traditional Chowdhry (chieftain) and Panchayat (village council) systems have declined among Pakistani Meos. In rural areas, these councils still resolve minor disputes but hold fading influence. In cities like Lahore, Panchayats are inactive in conflict resolution; urban Meos now depend on formal laws or local leaders. This rural-urban divide reflects modernization's impact: structured systems are replacing collective decision-making. While village elders maintain limited traditional roles, cities prioritize institutional frameworks, highlighting a societal shift away from community-based authority.²⁷

The collapse of the Jajmani system

The Jajmani system was an old economic system in Indian villages where lower castes provided services to upper castes in exchange for food or goods. It kept villages self-sufficient but also restricted people to their traditional jobs. Over time, industrialization, migration, and social changes weakened the system, making it less common today. Critics say it blocked progress by limiting job choices and movement.²⁸

The Meos of Mewat, though Muslim, retained a syncretic jajmani system shaped by their Rajput heritage.²⁹ Services were rendered hereditary by specialist castes and it was almost fixed in practice that Mewatis adopted services and societal roles irrespective of their Gotras. The Meos had such a hereditary patron-client relation³⁰ with castes such as

²⁵ Traditional governing, arbitrating, and consultative body of elders of Meo pals and of other castes.

²⁶ Interview Qais Chaudhry Chhirkalot (27 Jan, 2025)

²⁷ village "Olak Otaar" Program Mera Gaon Meri Pehchan With Riaz Noor Meo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5h3gg32G-I&t=577s> (Accessed 10 Jan, 2025)

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jajmani_system

²⁹ S. B. Yadav, "An Empirical Study of Socio-Economic Status of Meo Muslims in Mewat Region: Emerging Issues and Trends," *International Journal of Advances in Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2018): 51-56.

³⁰ Roles are caste-determined and passed through generations.



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the brahmans, kumhar, Chimar, Bhangi, Jaga, Lohar, Mirasis, and Nais, or barbers and other occupational Gotras provide services to landowning patrons (*jajmans*) in exchange for fixed payments in kind (grain, clothing, Naig cash). Mutual dependency ensures economic security for service providers (like Brahmins (for rituals), Jagas (Family record keepers) Mirasis (bards/musicians), and Nais (barbers)), and steady services for patrons.³¹ The system sustains self-sufficient rural economies, minimizing reliance on external markets.

However, post-1947 Partition, the migration of 800,000 Meos to Pakistan shattered this system. Dispersed across Punjab and Sindh without cohesive communities, the Meos lost the geographic and social foundations essential for jajmani reciprocity. Urbanization, a cash economy, and Pakistan's orthodox Islamic milieu further eroded hereditary roles, as younger generations abandoned traditional occupations and Hindu-influenced rituals clashed with Islamic norms. Unlike Wiser's static Hindu villages,³² the Mewati system's collapse underscores how forced migration, cultural dislocation, and modernization can dismantle even deeply rooted socio-economic traditions, highlighting the fragility of syncretic systems in the face of geopolitical upheaval and homogenizing nationalism.

The Jajmani (Qasabgar) system among Pashtuns near Peshawar and the syncretic system of the Meos in Mewat share core similarities rooted in agrarian South Asia's socio-economic fabric. Both relied on hereditary occupational castes (blacksmiths, barbers, etc.) providing services to landowners in exchange for goods, fostering self-sufficient villages with rigid hierarchies. Mutual dependency ensured economic stability but entrenched lower-class status for service groups. Their decline stemmed from cash economies, industrialization, and urbanization, which offered alternatives to hereditary roles. However, the Meos' system collapsed abruptly post-1947 Partition due to mass migration and Islamic orthodoxy eroding Hindu-influenced practices, while Pashtun Qasabgars saw gradual integration into mainstream society. Despite geographic distance, similarities arose from pan-South Asian feudal structures and caste-like hierarchies adapted to local contexts (Pashtunwali vs. Meo syncretism). Shared agrarian needs and historical labor systems outweighed cultural differences, illustrating how universal rural dynamics shaped parallel traditions, dismantled by modernity and upheaval.³³

The Socio-Cultural Reclamation of Meo Heritage in Pakistan

The journey of reclaiming Meo identity has been a long and evolving process marked by a variety of community efforts. Early on, groups like the Anjuman Itehad e Taraki Mewat came together to unite the community, setting the stage for a stronger collective voice. For example, in 1998, a significant Meo rally led by figures such as Sardar Tufail demonstrated the community's determination to assert their rights and celebrate their heritage.

Media and publications have played an important role in this revival. The Meo community has launched newspapers like Sada e Meo and AIMewat, which provided platforms for spreading news and cultural stories. In one instance, Sada e Meo was restarted in 2015 by Hafiz Suleman, drawing contributions from over 100 writers. These publications, along with platforms like Meo Express and the digest Aravali monthly published by Mewati Dunya, helped keep the community informed and connected

³¹ Elaqa-e-Mewat ka samaji va tahzibi mutalaya, by Dr. Mohd. Habib 2003, Islamic Book Foundation, New Delhi p 142

³² Wiser, William Henricks. *The Hindu Jajmani System: A Socio-Economic System Interrelating Members of a Hindu Village Community in Services*. Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1936. P 136

³³ Interviewed Tariq Jamil, (15 march, 2025)



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through shared language and literature.

Cultural events have also been key to these efforts. The Meos organized conferences and celebrations, such as the conference held in Minar-e-Pakistan in 2003 by Ajmal Khan and the large-scale celebration of Jashn e Fath-e Mewat in 2005 at Qadafi Stadium, where Meo politicians gathered to plan for the future. Regular cultural gatherings like the annual Meo Kachahri, Meo Bethak in 2017, and the cultural exhibition Meo Saqafi Numaish in 2023 have further reinforced a sense of pride and unity within the community.

In addition to these cultural and media efforts, there has been significant work in formal organization and legal advocacy. The formation of Meo lawyers in 2008, and later the establishment of the Meo Tanzeemat Council in 2017, created structures to support the community's initiatives and supervise various organizations. Efforts to promote the Meo language were also rewarded when NADRA accepted it as Pakistan's regional language.³⁴ Other programs, such as the Ijtimai Shadi program and events like the Independence and Mewat Seminar, further demonstrate the community's active role in reclaiming and celebrating their identity.

Overall, the reclamation of Meo identity has been built on a mix of community gatherings, media outreach, cultural events, and organized advocacy. Each effort—whether through lively rallies, thoughtful publications, or organized cultural celebrations—has contributed to the growing pride and visibility of the Meo community.

Important Developments In Recent Times

Year	Developments	Key Figures, Points
Established before partition, reorganized in 1979	Anjuman Itehad E Taraki Mewat	Settlement issues
27 February 1978	Meo Welfare association	Rao Ghulam Muhammad Meo
1984	Anjuman Nojawanan i Mewat	Nazeer ahmad ghazi, deen Muhammad dard, nawab nazam
1985	Ceminar youth, kahna	Muhammad ali khai, chairman senat
1986	Meo agriculture (BRB canal)	Ghulam headar wain
1986	Meo fadratio jalsa steel bagh	Subhan khan
1989 ongoing	Eid Milan Party	An important event, playing crucial role in policy making of Meos of Pakistan
1998	Meo Rally	Sardar Tufail MNA
2001	Pakistan Meo Ittehad	Ajmal Khan Meo
Mar 2002-2004	Sada E Meo Newspaper	PMI
2007-8	Meo Lawyer Form	
Aug 2003	Meo Conference	Minar E Pakistan
Nov 2005	Jashn I Fath I Mewat	Qadafi Stadium Lahore
2004-2008	Al-Mewat Newspaper	
2008	Mewati Dunya	Promotes Meo literature through monthly Mushairas, cultural events, and its Aravali digest.

³⁴ Pakistan, Ministry of Interior, National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), official correspondence, July 30, 2020, NADRA/HQ Ops/MOI-23-17400/17356/Com-09-17783.



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2009-2010	Meo Express Newspaper	Lahore
May 2015	Sada E Meo Newspaper	It was relaunched by Hafiz Suleman and saw contributions from over 100 writers.
May 2015- Ongoing.	Sada E Meo Platform	
Feb 2015 - Ongoing.	Ijtamai Shadi Program	Sada e Meo platform (To date, 21 mass wedding ceremonies have taken place across different cities, with nearly 450 people tying the knot)
22 May 2017 - Ongoing.	Meo Bethak	Sada e Meo Platform
Nov 2017	Meo Tanzeemat Council	Meo Tanzeemat Council oversees and facilitate Meo organizations. Also conduct all parties conference (3, so far)
Nov 2019	Mewati Culture Day	Meo Tanzeemat Council
July 2020	Recognition Of Mewati Language.	NADRA now recognizes Mewati as a regional language
Aug 2021 - Ongoing.	Meo Panchayat (Issue Based)/ Meo Milan (3, Annual)/ Meo Siyasi Bethak (3, Annual)	
2017	Meo Saput Award	15 programs in different cities of Punjab (awarded 500 plus individuals as well as groups)
Aug 2022	Independence celebrations And Mewat Seminar	Alhamrah
Jun 2023	Meo Saqfti Numaish	Islamabad and Lahore, Mewati Dunya
Sep 2024	Bhai-Chara Muhim	To dissolve major conflicts within community
Annual - Ongoing.	Meo Kachahri	In Election days

List of Organizations working in Meos shaping socio-cultural dimentions

Meo Tanzeemat Council Pakistan
 Pakistan Meo Ittehad
 Mewati Duniya (Registered) Lahore
 Pakistan Sada-e-Meo Forum (Registered)
 Meo Welfare Society Pattoki
 All Pakistan Meo Federation
 All Pakistan Meo Welfare Organization (Registered)
 Meo Welfare Trust (Registered) Karachi
 Meo Welfare Association Islamabad (Registered)
 Meo Foundation (Registered) Mirpur Khas
 Anjuman Ittehad-o-Taraqqi i Mewat (Registered)
 Meo Lawyers Forum Pakistan (Registered)
 Meo Employees Welfare Forum Lahore
 Meo Qaumi Yakjehti Council Pakistan



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Meo Foundation Gujranwala

Meo Educational Force Pakistan

Meo Social Gathering Karachi

Meo Ajmal Shaheed Welfare Organization Hyderabad (Registered)

Meo Social Welfare Organization Karachi

Meo Ittehad Qomi Tehreek Karachi

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Mewat

Mewati Sangat Karachi

Al-Musa Welfare Foundation Kot Radha Krishan (Registered)

Pakistan Meoati Qomi Tehreek Karachi

Rahbar e Mewat

Al Jabbar Mayo Education Organization (Karachi)

Report on Meo Organizations

After Pakistan's independence, the Meo community initially relied on a single organization, Anjuman Ittehad-o-Taraqqi Mewat, to represent their interests. People from across the country joined this group and worked tirelessly for the community's welfare, even with limited resources. Over time, smaller regional organizations began to form. In Islamabad, the Meo Welfare Association was established to address local needs, while the Meo Lawyers Forum focused on legal support for Meo professionals. In Gujranwala, the Meo Foundation emerged at the district level. Karachi saw the creation of the All Pakistan Meo Welfare Organization, followed by the All Pakistan Meo Federation. By 2001, a new group called Pakistan Meo Ittehad gained prominence, but this led to the gradual decline of older organizations, including the original Anjuman Ittehad-o-Taraqqi Mewat, which eventually became inactive.

The Meo Conference held at Minar-e-Pakistan in 2003 marked a turning point, solidifying Pakistan Meo Ittehad as the leading organization. However, the assassination of Ajmal Khan Meo in January 2006 weakened the group within months. In 2008, a literary organization named Mewati Duniya was formed in Lahore. This group successfully campaigned for the recognition of the Mewati language by NADRA, a significant achievement for the community. By 2009, Pakistan Meo Ittehad had lost its influence in Punjab. Efforts by Sada-e-Meo, a vocal advocacy group, led to the creation of Awami Ittehad in 2010. This new organization organized large-scale gatherings in cities like Lahore, Raiwind, Kot Radha Kishan, and Shujabad. However, poor leadership and a lack of accountability caused Awami Ittehad to dissolve by 2015, replaced by the Pakistan Sada-e-Meo Forum.

In 2014, after 17 years of inactivity, Anjuman Ittehad-o-Taraqqi Mewat was revived through elections. However, internal conflicts over the construction of Badoki Meo College led to its collapse once again. In 2020, the Meo Youth Welfare Forum Islamabad was formed to engage younger members through sports programs, but after two years of limited activity, leadership changes stalled progress. Several attempts were made to unite Meo organizations through conferences. In 2012, Sada-e-Meo and the Meo Welfare Association organized a conference, but it failed to produce results. A similar effort in 2014 with the Meo Foundation Gujranwala also fell short. However, a 2017 conference led by the Pakistan Sada-e-Meo Forum resulted in the formation of the Meo Tanzeemat Council, which successfully lobbied for the official registration of the Meo identity with NADRA and the Statistics Department, a rare example of tangible progress.³⁵

³⁵ How did Mewati get the status of separate language in Pakistan? <https://loksujag.com/story/How-Did-Mewati-Gain-Language-Status-76-Years-After-Migration-eng>



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In Punjab, a group called Meo Force (later renamed Meo Educational Force) was established, but its impact was limited because its leaders were based in Canada and visited only occasionally. Many members left due to the lack of consistent engagement. Currently, only a handful of groups remain active in Punjab, including Mewati Duniya, the Meo Welfare Association Islamabad, the Meo Lawyers Forum Lahore, and the Meo Employees Forum. The Pakistan Sada-e-Meo Forum continues to organize events such as the Meo Suput Award ceremony, collective weddings, student conventions, and community gatherings, maintaining a visible presence.

In Sindh, the martyrdom of Ajmal Khan Meo in 2006 sparked the formation of new organizations. Groups like Meo Ittehad, Meo Federation, Meo Social Welfare Organization, Meo Social Gathering, Mewati Qaumi Tehreek, and Al-Jabbar Meo Education Foundation emerged. However, most of these exist in name only, with little practical impact. A few hold regular meetings, but many lack clear goals or effective leadership. For instance, the Al-Jabbar Meo Education Foundation and the Meo Social Welfare Organization rarely go beyond social media posts or symbolic gestures.

Despite the existence of over 25 organizations, the Meo community faces challenges in achieving unity and meaningful progress. Sada-e-Meo, a prominent voice within the community, acknowledges that having multiple groups is not inherently negative. However, the lack of coordination, visionary leadership, and concrete actions has led to widespread disillusionment. Most organizations operate in isolation, with no central structure to bring them together. While some groups, like the Meo Tanzeemat Council, have achieved specific goals, the majority struggle to move beyond symbolic gestures or social media activism. Without inspiring leadership, a shared vision, or a commitment to collaboration, the community risks further fragmentation. The recurring cycle of organizations forming, collapsing, and reforming highlights the urgent need for sustainable strategies to address the Meo community's social, educational, and cultural needs effectively.³⁶

Khanzada Mewatis in Pakistan

The Khanzadas are a Muslim Rajput community originating from the Jadon Rajput clan, who converted to Islam during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq (14th century). They historically ruled Mewat (spanning parts of modern Haryana and Rajasthan) as a martial elite, blending Rajput traditions with Islamic practices. Though orthodox Muslims (praying, secluding women), they retained Hindu marriage rituals (e.g., Brahman officiants, pheras), reflecting syncretic identity. They disassociated from the Meos (lower-status Muslim converts), asserting superiority as ashraf (noble-born). Their power waned under Mughal and British rule, reducing them to marginal landowners in Alwar and Gurgaon.³⁷

In Pakistan, the Khanzada presence is minimal. Historically centered in India's Mewat region, some may have migrated to Pakistani Punjab post-1947, but they are not a recognized tribal or social group there. Their identity remains tied to their Indian Rajput-Islamic heritage, with no significant documented communities or influence in Pakistan.

³⁶ Report and organizations list is prepared with the help of various with Hafiz Suleman Tariq, Shahab u Din Malbia, and Muhammad Ali

³⁷ Dr ALTAF HUSSAIN, "Khanzadas of Mewat: An Ethno-Historical Overview," Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education Vol. 15, Issue No. 12, December-2018, ISSN 2230-7540, 2018, https://www.academia.edu/85367073/Khanzadas_of_Mewat_An_Ethno_Historical_Overview.



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Kinship Networks and Community Fragmentation

Among the Meos, marriages were traditionally arranged according to the *got* (clan) system, a custom that strengthened social unity. The “12 pals and 52 got” formed a vast network of kinship, connecting villages through marriage ties. A single village could become linked with dozens of others through daughters given and received in marriage, creating relationships of mothers, aunts, sisters, and in-laws across Mewat. This system greatly expanded social bonds and communal harmony. A famous Meo proverb says: **Meo to godri ka halāwān kī tarah ek dūsrā su juṛā paṛā hā.** “Meos are connected to one another like patches in a quilt.”³⁸

Suleman Tariq says “One unique quality of the Meo community is that wherever they are, if they find someone speaking in the Meo language, they greet that person warmly, often forming kinship ties within minutes of conversation. In the past, when a wedding was held at a Meo family home, everyone would come together to help. However, with the rise of marriage halls, these close-knit practices have somewhat declined.”³⁹

However, in cities like Lahore, this distinctiveness has faded compared to Mewat. There are 43 districts where millions, thousands, and hundreds of households belong to the Meo community. In terms of population, Kasur (Mini Mewat⁴⁰) ranks first, followed by Lahore, Sialkot, and Narowal. Other Punjab districts with a significant Meo population include Sheikhpura, Multan, Lodhran, Khushab, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Okara, Nankana Sahib, Bahawalpur, Vehari, and Rajanpur. Additionally, there are districts where hundreds of Meo households are found, such as Faisalabad, Bahawalnagar, Mianwali, Bhakkar, Muzaffargarh, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Khanewal, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Leh, Pakpattan, Rahim Yar Khan, Attock, and Sargodha.

In Sindh, a large number of Meo people also reside. Their population is high in areas like Mirpur Khas, the four districts around Karachi, Tando Allahyar, Larkana, Hyderabad, Shikarpur, Tameer-e-Shahdad Kot, Thatta, Sukkur, Umar Kot, and to some extent in Nawabshah. In Balochistan, they are mainly found in the district of Khuzdar, and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in Dera Ismail Khan and some parts of Peshawar.

The 2023 Census shows that Kasur is the most important place for Mewati-speaking people in Pakistan. Around 470,749 people there speak Mewati, which is 43% of all Mewati speakers in the country (total: 1,094,219). This huge number proves that Kasur is the heart of Mewati language and culture. The area’s farming traditions, history, and location near the India-Pakistan border (close to India’s Rajasthan and Haryana regions) help keep the language strong here.

Lahore, Pakistan’s second-biggest city, has the next-largest group of Mewati speakers: 260,544 people. Many likely moved here from rural areas like Kasur for jobs or better opportunities. This shows how the community is blending into city life while still holding onto their language. Smaller groups live in other areas: Sialkot: 56,787; Multan: 49,954; Narowal: 44,491; Lodhran: 42,196; Karachi: 30,375.

Another 139,121 people live in smaller towns or villages.⁴¹ The spread of Mewati

³⁸ Qais Ch. Chirkalot, *Tamadun I Mewat, Mewati Dunya*, 2012, p614-615

³⁹ Interviewed Hafiz Suleman Tariq, February 6, 2025

⁴⁰ Dr Muhammad Habib wrote where ever Meos live in large number they name it Mewat or mini Mewat, like in Bareilly (U.P.) they call their village Mini Mewat, likewise in Bhopal, Indore, Chitor, and Tonak, there are villages called Mewat. *Elaqa-E-Mewat Ka Samaji O Tahzibi Mutalaya*, by Dr. Mohd. Habib 2003, Islamic Book Foundation, New Delhi (p12)

⁴¹ National Data (including Mewati speakers): Table 11: Population by Mother Tongue, Sex, and Rural/Urban, Census-2023 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics). Punjab District-Wise Language Data: Table 11: Population by Mother Tongue, Sex, and Rural/Urban, Census-2023 (Punjab). Sindh District-Wise



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speakers across Punjab province and even to cities like Karachi (in Sindh province) reflects past events, like families moving during the 1947 Partition, and current trends of people leaving villages for cities. However, Kasur remains the key place for Mewati identity, and efforts to protect the language are crucial here, as Urdu and English grow more popular nationwide.

Some Meos argue that their settlement across a wide region was a deliberate decision by Pakistan's founders. According to this perspective, the Meos were recognized for their patriotism and bravery, and instead of being confined to a single district, they were strategically settled from Khairpur in Sindh to Sialkot in Punjab to strengthen and safeguard Pakistan.

This view suggests that their dispersal was not a result of marginalization but a recognition of their strength and value to the nation. It implies that the state saw the Meos as defenders and loyal citizens rather than outsiders or suspects. However, the reality of their post-Partition struggles, such as being labeled as criminals, facing forced relocations, and struggling for social integration, complicates this narrative.

Chattha argues that After Partition, the Meo community in Pakistan faced many challenges that pushed them into different areas and made it hard for them to stay united. They were forced to leave behind their old homes in India and moved to various parts of Pakistan, often landing in refugee camps under harsh conditions. This long journey and subsequent displacement broke up their traditional social networks, so the community spread out geographically.

In addition, state policies and local discrimination played a major role in dividing them. The new authorities often labeled the Meos as "criminals" or used them as informants (mukhbir) on the border, which not only stigmatized the community but also created distrust with the local populations who already had their own established identities.⁴² Their unique blend of Hindu and Muslim customs set them apart culturally and linguistically. While some Meos tried to change their traditions to fit in with the majority, others held tightly to their heritage, deepening the gap between different groups within the community.

All these factors, forced migration, varied settlement patterns, state-imposed labels, and cultural differences, made it difficult for the Meos to come together as one united group in Pakistan. They ended up being seen as outsiders, even by those who lived nearby, and the divisions were reinforced both by local attitudes and official policies.⁴³

Although people in Lahore have tried to unite based on their got, it is not as easy today. As a result, the strong got identity is weakening, and a more general Meo identity is taking its place. While older generations still value their got connections, many young people (Gen Z) are less interested in this traditional system.

Conclusion

The Meos of Pakistan embody a complex interplay of resilience and vulnerability, shaped by historical upheavals and modern pressures. Partition shattered their cohesive sociocultural fabric, dispersing them across Punjab and Sindh and eroding systems like the *Jajmani* economy that once bound their communities. While organizations and

Language Data: Table 11: Population by Mother Tongue, Sex, and Rural/Urban, Census-2023 (Sindh) <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/digital-census/detailed-results>

⁴² Rj Qasim Pakistani, "Pahat Meo Gottra Chur |" YouTube video, June 30, 2021, <https://youtu.be/JD6cW318Iv4>.

⁴³ Ilyas Chattha, "Suffering, Survival and Sustenance: Meos' Post-Partition Experiences in Pakistan," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 47, no. 2 (November 19, 2023): 455–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2023.2274163>.



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cultural initiatives have revived pride in their Rajput-Islamic heritage, these efforts struggle against urbanization, stigmatization, and the pull of orthodox Islam. The younger generation, less tied to traditional *Gotra* identities, increasingly adopts mainstream norms, risking the erosion of their distinctiveness.

Critically, the Meos' experience underscores the fragility of syncretic cultures in nation-states prioritizing religious homogeneity. Unlike their Indian counterparts, who benefit from affirmative action, Pakistani Meos rely on grassroots resilience amid state indifference. Their story reflects broader tensions in multicultural societies: the coexistence of hybrid identities with nationalist narratives, and the paradox of preserving tradition while adapting to modernity. For the Meos, the path forward hinges on balancing unity through cultural revival with pragmatic engagement in Pakistan's socio-political landscape. Their journey serves as a microcosm of how marginalized communities navigate survival in the face of erasure, offering lessons on identity, resistance, and the enduring power of memory.

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