CHAPTER V

KINSHIP ORGANISATION

I

The basic kinship group among the Mers is the element-
ary family.   A Mer father remains as the head of the family
till the end of his life with his wife or wives and child or
children living together.   It is likely that after the demise
of the head of the family the authority of the family may rest
either with the mother or with the eldest son.   The family
expands when the sons marry.   As a matter of fact, the transi-
tion from an elementary family to a joint family is a recurring
process and so is the process of the splitting up of joint
families into various elementary families.   The elementary as
well as joint family grouping entails manifold rights and
obligations; e.g., the mutual dependence of a husband and wife
in economic pursuit, religious observances and gratification

of sex and the rearing of children.   The parents on the other
hand expect good behaviour, obedience, care and protection in
old age from their grown up children, especially, the sons.

Other types of domestic groups that are found among
the Mers are those of childless couple, a mother or a father
with a widow or a divorced daughter with children, or a deceased
son's wife and children, or a couple having adopted a son from
the agnatic group.   These types of domestic groups are recogni-
zed as the integral parts of the Mer society, because they are
interconnected by the net-work of kinship with many other joint
or elementary families.   Whenever there is a voluntary distri-
bution of gifts, i.e., lan, each of these types of domestic
groups is entitled to get the same.   In marriage feasts they
receive invitations independently.   In all the events of
community life these domestic groups are bound up with mutual
give and take relationships with other kin groups.

A Mer word for an elementary or a joint family is
katam (corrupt form of kutumba in Gujarati), all the members
of which are called katami, adjectival form of katam.   The
term katami is also applicable to other agnatic relatives and
it likewise includes, except father's sister's daughter,
female ascendents and collaterals, e.g., father's mother,
father's sister, one's own sisters, half or uterine, father's
brother's daughter and others of the same category.   All
sublings in a katam are recognized by a collective term

bhāndaranā which means brothers and sisters. Obviously, it is incestuous to have sex relations with the persons of this category.

The term bhāndaranā is equivalent to 'sibling' in English and it generally refers to the children of a man and woman, of the family of one's mother's sister and father's brother.

It has been made clear earlier that the Mers are divided into fourteen exogamous lineages known as shākh. Each lineage or shākh represents, according to their traditional way of thinking, a family, i.e., katam. It is in the wider sense that a lineage is looked upon as a big family. The members of each of these lineages are looked upon as sibling; and in this context members of a lineage consider each other as brothers and sisters, i.e., bhāndaranā. Those who do not belong to one's lineage are known as nātariā (plu. of nātario). Nātariā means those who may be married; the word is derived from nātarun which literally means remarriage; but the Mers use this word not only for remarriage but for marriage and betrothal too. A special word for remarriage is ghargharanu and a word for betrothal is sagāi. The word sagāi primarily refers to affinity and secondarily to consanguinity. The term sagānvahālān (sagān means the subjects of sagai and vahālān means dear ones) is also current among the Mers. The term sagān-vahālān includes both kin and affine and is a term

of wider connotation than katami.   At the most a man can call
all the members of his lineage katami but he can use sagān-
vahālān to denote any person related to him by affinity or
consanguinity.   There is one, more term sambandhi of such a
wider connotation that it includes people of any caste, tribe,
region or country, and as such it is applied to any individual
known to the people.   The use of this word is unanimously
accepted, almost in the whole of Gujarat.

II

        Mer kinship terminology is classificatory.   The
singular as well as collective terms are defined by generation
and sex.   The charts 'C' and 'D' ('C' having a man and 'B'
having a woman as egoes respectively) are given in genealogi-
cal form.   They, therefore, explain the nature of the kinship
terminology of the Mers.   Most of the terms given in these
charts are those of reference.   They are also commonly used
by the people of Gujarat.   However, it should be made clear
that the terms for grand-parents and grand-children given in
the charts are Mer terms.   The charts 'C' and 'D' reveal that
the categories of primary relatives,i.e., the members of an
elementary family, like father, mother, brother, sister,
husband, wife, son and daughter are denoted (among the Mers
as well as other Gujaratis) by as many different terms as
there are categories.   Unlike other Gujaratis, the Mers use

the same kinship terms for grand-parents and the great-grand-parents on the father's as well as the mother's side. Similarly, the terms for the great-grand-children of a son and those of a daughter are the same. It should be noted that the terms for grand-parents and grand-children given in the charts 'C' and 'D' are exclusively Mer terms. The terms potaro and potari are corrupt forms of pautra and pautri in Sanskrit.

To distinguish elder and younger relatives the Mers use the same prefixes as the others do. The prefixes moto or moti (elder man or woman), nāno or nāni (younger man or woman) are attached to the kinship terms for primary relatives of either sex: e.g., moto bhāi, nāni bēn, moto kāko, nāni kāki, moto āto, moti āii and so on. There are also some additional terms for some of the secondary relatives, e.g., the father's brother (kāko) is known as moto bāp, the father's brother's wife is known as kāki or moti mān (or māā).

There are separate terms of reference, for a husband and wife, e.g., gharvāro and gharvāri or dhani and dhaniāni. However, in practice, when they want to refer to or address each other, they do not make use of the terms of reference but resort to teknonymy.

Linked terms, such as sāsu-sasaro (mother-in-law and father-in-law), vēvāi-vēvān (ones son's or daughter's father-in-law and mother-in-law), sālo-banēvi (wife's brother

and sister's husband), nanand-bhojāi (husband's sister and
brother's wife), dēr-dērāni (husband's younger brother and
his wife), jēth-jēthāni (husband's elder brother and his wife),
etc., are the terms of reference used for various kinsmen.
These terms are also current among many other castes of Guja-
rat. However it is important to note here that the Mers use
other significant terms of address for all the prevalent linked
terms. The comparison of the charts 'C' and 'D' with 'E'
and 'F' shall make this point much more clear. The following
terms, for example, are used both for reference as well as
for address: e.g., fuo (father's sister's husband), māmi
(mother's brother's wife), māso (mother's sister's husband)
and kaki (father's brother's wife). (see charts 'C' and 'D').
But unlike other Gujaratis, Mers prefer to use separate terms
of address for the above mentioned relatives. For instance,
they use the term māmo for fuo, fui for māmi, kāko for māso
and mosi for kāki (see charts 'E' and ' F').

The tendency to use collective terms is observable
in the case of the children of a man's sister and brother,
and also in the case of his father's brother's and father's
sister's children. The children of a man's sister are group-
ed as bhānējadān (sing. of bhānēj); they are the potential
spouses of the children of the man concerned. The children
of a man's brother are grouped as bhatrijān (feminine, bhatriji
and masculine, bhatrijo); they are the classificatory brothers
and sisters of the children of the man concerned. Father's

brother's children are categorically termed as <u>bhandarnan</u>; they are one's classificatory brothers and sisters. Father's sister's children are likewise termed <u>natarian</u>; they are one's potential spouses and are therefore at least accessible to the licence of speech (see charts 'G' and 'H').

The charts 'C' and 'D' indicate that neither of the egoes concerned is united by cross-cousin marriage, while the charts 'E' and 'F' indicate that either of the egoes concerned is united by cross-cousin marriage. So, a careful comparison of the charts 'C' and 'D' with the charts 'E' and 'F' (representative of the Mers) points out how the kinship terminology remains consistent with the custom of bilateral cross-cousin marriage.

The following points throw specific light on the fact that the Mer kinship terminology is in harmony with the form of bilateral cross-cousin marriage and also with the institutions of sister-exchange, junior levirate and junior sororate.

(A)   The instances in harmony with bilateral cross-cousin marriage are:

(1)   <u>Fui</u>: It is applied to one's father's sister and to one's spouse's mother.

(2)   <u>Mamo</u>: It is applied to one's father's sister's husband and to one's spouse's father.

(3)   Collective term <u>natarian</u>: It is applied to one's father's sister's children, to one's wife or

husband, to wife's sister, or husband's brother and to brother's wife or sister's husband.

(4) Collective term bhānējadān: It is applied to one's sister's children and to son's wife or to daughter's husband.

(5) Again fui is applied to one's mother's brother's wife and to wife's mother.

(6) Again māmo is applied to one's mother's brother and to husband's father.

(7) Collective term nātariān: It is applied to one's mother's brother's children, to one's wife or husband, to wife's sister or husband's brother's wife or sister's husband.

(8) Collective term bhāndaranā: It is applied to one's wife's brother's children and to son's wife or to daughter's husband.

(B)   The instances in harmony with the institution of sister-exchange are:

(1) Fui: It is applied to one's mother's brother's wife and to father's sister.

(2) Māmo: It is applied to one's mother's brother and to the father's sister's husband.

(3) Bēn: It is applied to one's sister and to wife's brother's wife.

(4) <u>Bhāi</u>: It is applied to one's brother and, to wife's sister's husband.

(5) Collective term <u>bhānéjadān</u>: It is applied to one's wife's brother's children and to sister's children.

(C)   The instances in harmony with junior levirate are:

(1) <u>Mān</u>: It is applicable to sister and to father's elder brother's wife (also called <u>moti mān</u>).

(2) <u>Bén</u>: It is applicable to sister and to the father's brother's daughter.

(3) Collective term <u>nātariān</u>: It is applicable to both one's wife and to brother's wife.

(4) <u>Dikari</u>: It is applicable to one's daughter and to one's brother's daughter.

(D)   The instances in harmony with junior sororate are:

(1) <u>Mosi</u>: It is applicable to one's step-mother and to mother's sister.

(2) <u>Kāko</u>: It is applicable to one's step-father and to father's brother.

(3) <u>Bén</u>: It is applicable to one's sister and to one's mother's sister's daughter.

(4) Collective term <u>nātariān</u>: It is applicable to one's wife and to wife's sister.

(5) <u>Dikari</u>: It is applicable to one's daughter
and to wife's younger sister's daughter.

III

The range of application of kinship does not end so
abruptly as shown in the charts 'C' and 'D' which end with the
great-grand-parents and the great-grand-children of ego.   The
classificatory terms which a Mer uses for his ascendents and
descendants for a limited number of generations, can be virtua-
lly used in a discriptive way upto the Nth generation.   More-
over, a Mer may use these terms for the members of his lineage
related or unrelated for other affinal lineage.   A man looks
upon the members of any other lineage, excepting his own, as
affines (nātariān) eventhough he cannot trace any relationship
with them.   For instance, a Mer man or a woman calls all the
elderly members of his or her mother's brother's village as
<u>māmā</u>.   I have heard people addressing the Brahmins and Lohanas
of their <u>māmā</u>'s village as <u>māmā</u>.   Also, if a Brahmin is of
a group other than to which the family priest belongs, a Mer
will call him as <u>māmā</u>.   Because, a family priest is also
looked upon as a brother and any Brahmin who belongs to some
other group than that of his family priest, is looked upon as
one of the affines; to his elder affinal person he calls <u>māmo</u>
(sin.).   So he calls <u>mamo</u> to the Brahmin of a different group
than to which his family priest belongs.   This is how each

kinship term is widely utilised outside, including the tribal limits; it lessens the social distance between the Mers and the people of other castes. In short, the translation of social bonds into kinship terms is a widespread feature of societies. This is one society where kinship plays a pivotal role in social relations; kinship bonds are thus used as a means for the expansion of social relations.

The informants told me that the founders of the village named Khambhodar were three Mer brothers of Sisodia lineage. These founding ancestors invited some families of craftsmen and traders to come from other villages and told them to live with them on the terms of brotherhood. This relationship between the Mers and others is continued even to-day. So the youngsters of the Mers address the elders of other castes as paternal uncle, or kākā and recognise their equals as brothers and sisters. It is interesting to note here that the Untouchables of this village address all its members as fathers (bāp) or as paternal uncles (kākā), because the Untouchables consider themselves to be as good as children of the high-caste people.

The Mer kinship system can also be related to the stratification of generation in the society. Every individual attains three positions in life; viz., child-hood, adult-hood and old age. When a man passes from the first position to the second or from the second to the third one, his value and status changes accordingly. Obviously, the behaviour and

relations with the people of one's own generation remain the same, which are that of equality in all respects. The first position starts from child-hood and ends in adolenscence, the second from adolenscence to the middle age and the third one terminates in old age. The individuals of the first position address those of the second as father (bāp), uncle (kākā or māmā), and aunt, (fui or mosi). The people of the second position come in the centre. They, therefore, address those above them as grand-father (āto), and grand-mother (āii) and those below them as son and daughter (dikaro-dikari), nephew and niece (bhānēj) and/paternal cousins (bhatriji and bhatrijo).

IV

A Mer village is (as it is told earlier) a strong-hold of a major segment or sometimes of a minor segment of a lineage. So the relationship of the individuals in a village is as intimate as that in a family. It is interesting to note how people behave with one another in every day life. In the village Khambhodar (inhabited by a segment of Sisodia Mers) some persons are known as ātā, i.e., grand-father and others as kākā, i.e., uncles, irrespective of their age differences and the rest are known as brothers. Mers give greater weight to generation than age; i.e., a man may call a small boy kaka if he belongs to his (man's) uncle's generation. But sometimes this results in an absurd position, and so the

conflict is resolved by readjustment in terms of age.

Let us now take a hypothetical instance. There are two brothers in a family and both of them marry at one and the same time. The younger brother gets a boy at the end of a year, while the elder brother either has no issue or has only a daughter. Now, after twenty years, the elder one gets a boy, and the son of the younger brother who is married by now, also gets a boy. Both these boys are almost equal in age, but the son of the elder brother, eventhough he is equal in age, is addressed as kāko (uncle) by the grand-son of the younger brother. In passing away of the time, the paternal cousin, i.e., the grand-son of the younger brother may get a son, fifteen years later; and the son of the elder brother may also get a son. Here comes the difference in age, almost of thirty five years, between the great-grand-son of the younger brother and the grand-son of the elder brother. Thus, the paternal cousin becomes elder in age but younger in generation; he is of a lower position than his paternal uncle who is very young in age, almost a minor, and perhaps, equal to his own son. When the paternal uncle realizes that he is just a boy and his paternal cousin is as good as his father in age, he forgets his greatness in generation and calls him brother instead of calling him son. Similarly due to differe-ntiation in age grade and generation grade a young man becomes grand-father āto of an old man; but when he realizes the fact, he harmonises or resolves the situation by using the kinship
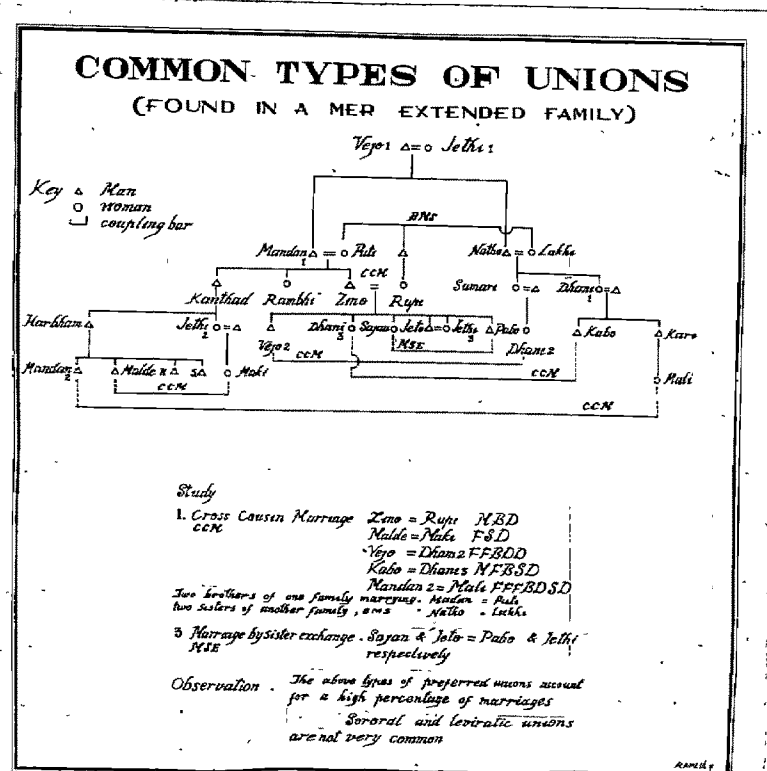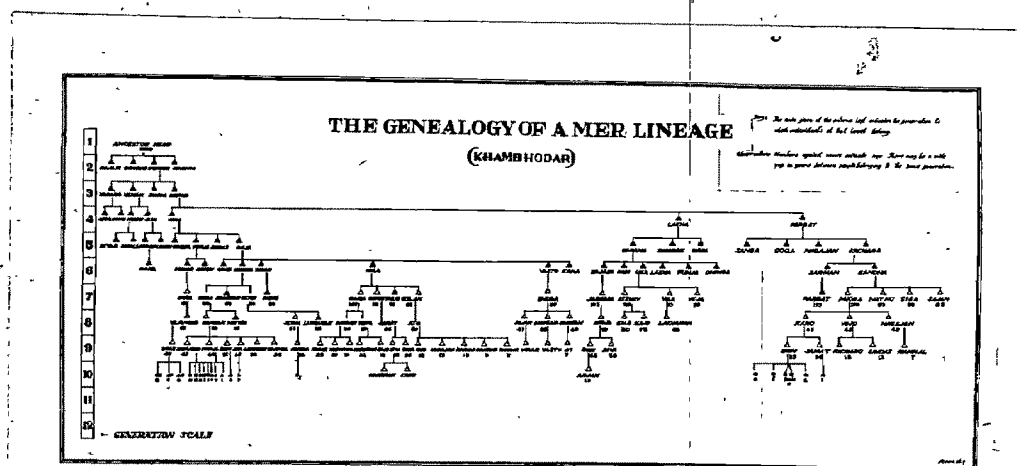
CHART - I

COMMON TYPES OF UNIONS
(FOUND IN A MER EXTENDED FAMILY)

Vejo 1 △=○ Jethi 1

Key: △ Man
○ Woman
⌐ coupling bar

Study

1. Cross Cousin Marriage
CCM
   - Zmo = Rupi MBD
   - Malde = Make FSD
   - Vejo = Dham 2 FFBDD
   - Kabo = Dhanes MFBSD
   - Mandan 2 = Male FFFBDSD

Two brothers of one family marry. Mandan = Puli
two sisters of another family, ans · Natho = Lakhi

3. Marriage by sister exchange. Sajan & Jeto = Pabo & Jethi
MSE   respectively

Observation: The above types of preferred unions account for a high percentage of marriages
Sororal and leviratic unions are not very common

THE GENEALOGY OF A MER LINEAGE
(KHAMBHODAR)

GENERATION SCALE

Key: The scale given at the extreme left indicates the generation to which individuals at that level belong.

Observation: Numbers against names indicate age. There may be a wide gap in years between people belonging to the same generation.

terms which maintain a respectable behaviour towards the old
man concerned. The genealogical chart 'J' of a Mer lineage
of Khambhodar shows that age grade and generation grade vary
a great deal in the cases of the children of the latest genera-
tion.

V

It is evident that the form of marriage and kinship
terminology of the Mers represent a consistent picture of the
kinship system. There is a well-known proverb among the Mers,
viz., _fui pāchhad bhatriji_, which means that paternal cousin
follows maternal aunt. This explains how it is obligatory on
the part of a man to give his daughter to his sister's son,
and it also implies that he must prefer his sister's daughter
for his own son; because it is likely that he might have married
his sister's husband's sister. It is prevalent to take
sister's daughter for one's son, but this is considered an
exchange or sātun as it is called by the Mers. Thus, immigra-
tion of a girl to father's sister's son is looked upon as a
natural course but the immigration of a girl to mother's bro-
ther's son is equivalent to compensation. It cannot be said
here whether the form of marriage regulates kinship system or
the kinship system is responsible for such a form of marriage;
but it is true that they go hand in hand among the Mers (see
chart 'I').

It should be noted that it is obligatory but not
compulsory to marry one's cross-cousins either on mother's
side or on father's side. In practice all the sons and the
daughters of a family cannot have excess to cross-cousins,
because it is uncertain to have the existence of suitable or
marriageable (aged) spouses in this short ranged relationship.
The return of a creeper depends upon its proper growth. So,
when a maternal uncle and paternal aunt are devoid of children,
a person is compelled to take freedom from the obligation of
marrying the cross-cousins. As a result, a man or a woman
seeks spouses from the families distantly related by affinity
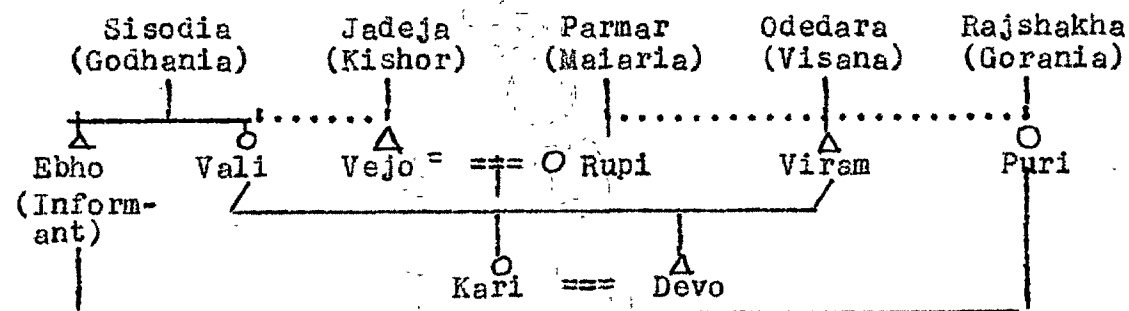or from those not related at all.

Thus, a bride and a groom may or may not be cross-
cousins, but they are thought of as such, and in similar
context are recognized the agnatic and cognatic relatives of
both respectively. In the charts 'E' and 'F' it is not
certain that the ego's spouse is a cross-cousin; however, as
it is indicated in the respective charts, the ascendents and
the descendents of the ego concerned are set up in the frame-
work of kinship terms which concur with those of the married
cross-cousins.

VI

Before I proceed to give analysis of the functioning
of kinship relations I should like to clarify the following
points.

A man's mother and father-in-law (vēvāṇ-vēvāi) or his

father and mother-in-law (vēvāi-vēvāṇ) consider each other as

siblings eventhough they each belong to affinal lineages of the

other.   Thus a man or a woman of one lineage will call a man

or a woman of another lineage as brother and sister (as the

case may be) provided their respective children are related by

matrimonial bonds, but if they are not so related, and if they

are of equal age, they may consider each other as potential

spouses.   A person may call the spouse's paternal uncle māmo

instead of kāko, paternal cousins bhānējadān instead of

bhatrijān,/paternal aunt mosi instead of fui.   The charts 'E'
                    and

and 'F' given earlier, give a clear understanding of the pairs

of potential spouses as coming under the principle of cross-

cousin marriage and the institutions of sister-exchange, junior

levirate (deravatun) and junior sororate.

The following information conveyed by my Mer friend

Ebho will give an actual idea of the functioning of the kinship

system.   The chart given below will be helpful in this matter.

Key:

(1)   Sisodia, Jadeja, Parmar, Odedara and Rajshakha are
        lineages.

(2)   Godhania, Kishor, Maiaria, Visana, Gorania are the
        segments.

=== & /_____/   — indicate marriage

....   — indicate thought of relatinnship

Ebho speaking:

' I am the mother's brother (māmo) of Devo (Odedara),
so Devo's wife Kari looks upon me as her paternal uncle (kāko).
I myself, as one and the same person cannot become mother's
brother (māmo) to both a husband and a wife; otherwise they may
be considered to be classificatory brother and sister.   My
normal role is that of a father-in-law to my cross-nephew
(sister's son).   So my cross-nephew's wife becomes my daughter
whether she is so in fact or not.   This is a 'legal fiction'.
This is also due to looking upon some lineages as affinal (i.e.,
nātariā) and others as not (in the present context).'

' Though Kari's father Vejo is of a different (affinal)
lineage (namely Jadeja) from mine (Sisodia) I have to consider
him as my classificatory brother, because Kari is my sister's
son's wife, and so no less than my own daughter.   Had I an
aged daughter, I would have married her to Devo in the place of
Kari.   If I were younger than Kari's father Vejo, she should
have called me as Kāko and if elder as bhābho or moto-bāp.

Kari's father, my sister and I consider ourselves as siblings.
Thus Devo and Kari are looked upon as sister's son and brother's
daughter (māmā fuinā) respectively.'

' In the same context Viram's (Devo's father's)
classificatory sister Puri (i.e., Devo's fui) is looked upon
by Kari as her mother's sister (mosi); because in view of the
relationship, Viram and (Kari's mother) Rupi (who belongs to
Parmar lineage) are looked upon as brother and sister.   So,
Kari's mother and Viram and his classificatory sister Puri
consider themselves as siblings.   Also, Kari would have call-
ed my wife Puri as mosi instead of calling her as kāki or
moti-mān, had Puri belonged to Parmar lineage.'

' As a matter of fact Vejo belongs to a different
lineage, viz., Jadeja, and we (my sister and I) belong to
Sisodia lineage, therefore my sister Vali could have been
Vejo's potential spouse.   But, because Vejo gave his daughter
to Vali's son, he has no more remained an affine (or nataria);
instead, he has provisionally become our classificatory
brother and thus a unit of our kin group.'

' Moreover, my sister Vali's husband Viram belongs
to Odedara lineage, my wife Puri belongs to Rajshakha lineage
and Kari's mother Rupi belongs to Parmar lineage.   Consequent-
ly, had the present relationship not taken place, Viram
Odedara would have been the potential spouse of Rupi as well
as Puri.   But when Puri is married to me, i.e, to Viram's

son Devo's mother's brother (māmo) and Rupi is married to Viram's son Devo's father-in-law (māmo), Viram considers both these women as classificatory sisters.'

Thus, when the persons of two or more affinal lineages come closer into affinal or kinship bonds (by marrying their children), the barrier of lineage distinction disappears, and it provisionally drags various affinal people into agnatic relationship.

The informant Ebho gives me further information: "People of my lineage will call my father-in-law as māmo (who may be called our mother's classificatory brother) in my presence, because my true māmo is also the māmo of any one of my lineage. But in my absence they may not call my father-in-law (not true māmo) māmo, because at this time they look upon him as an affine and therefore call him by his proper name. I shall generally call an older affine māmo, if male, and fui, if female, because such a man and a woman are considered my potential father-in-law and mother-in-law respectively. But if a person of an affinal (nātariā) lineage is of the same age as mine, I would call him simply as nātariā or affine, while one who is younger, I would call as bhānēj, i.e., sister's son or daughter as the case may be.

The sisters A and B descend from an Odedara father.
A married Karsan of Rajshakha lineage and B married Ram of
Sisodia lineage. In the second generation come Noghan and
Veji, the son and daughter of Karsan and Ram respectively.
Noghan and Veji may not marry because they are called mosiāi
bhāndaranā, i.e., maternal aunt's children. Even the son
and daughter of Noghan and Veji respectively may not marry
each other as they (Karo and Gheli) fall in the third genera-
tion. But the children of Karo and Gheli may marry without
restrictions, because at this stage, i.e., at the fourth
generation the earlier kinship relations are supposed to have
come to an end. This four generation rule breaks the barrier
created by the matrimonial alliance contracted by the people
of the first generation. Besides, it should be noted that
this barrier does not stop X and Y from marrying their child-
ren. In fact X and Y look upon each other as affines even-
though their respective brothers Karsan and Ram have become
'fictitious brothers'.

VIII

The Mers generally believe that the custom of soro-
ral union is ideal and practical in the case of a polygynous
marriage. The sisters may be affectionate towards each
others' children when they happen to marry one and the same
person. Once when I was hearing a serious conversation

between two women, I noted a proverb which gave a contradictory
statement to the above mentioned belief.   The proverb says
that the relationship of mother's sister (mosi) is only in
words (mosini sagāl to kēvāni).   When a woman dies leaving
some children, people prefer to give a younger sister of the
deceased woman to her husband.   People commonly believe that
the younger sister would look after the children of her elder
sister with care and affection; but actually there are many
examples to prove that mosi does not fulfil expectations re-
garding the rearing of her sister's children.   A mother's
sister, when she becomes a step-mother she belies the expecta-
tions of a mother.   Any woman that a widower takes as wife
or that a man marries for second time is called mosi by the
children of the previous wife.   Thus, the step-wives are
considered to be sisters eventhough they belong to different
lineages.   A step-mother who is not a true mosi of the child-
ren is expected to be harsh but occasionally or usually she
is not so.

        The relation between a Mer woman and her husband's
sisters is not one of conflict, because it is likely that
she may have to take in future the daughter of her husband's
sister for her son; or she may have to give her daughter to
the son of the latter.   The mutual interdependance of a
woman and her husband's sister in this type of matrimonial
expectations bring about a harmony between them.   On the other
hand, a woman may come in conflict with her husband's brother's

wife, because both these women become the members of a joint
family where they have to establish their rights and perform
numerous duties.   So, if the wives of the brothers are not
on good terms they may pursue their husbands to break away
from the joint family.   Besides, the conflicts between a
woman and her mother-in-law may also prove harmful to the
unity of a family.   As a matter of fact a woman (daughter-in-
law) may be the brother's daughter (bhatriji) of the mother-
in-law and the relation of these should have been as close as
that of a daughter and a mother.   But in practical life a
woman may nòt be married to her father's sister's son; con-
sequently many points of disputes and quarrels arise between
the individuals of these two categories.   And, specially
when a daughter-in-law comes from some other lineage than that
of the mother-in-law, the latter picks up quarrels even from
the most insignificant faults of the former.   These conflicts
are sometimes so severe that they may result into a premature
partition of the would be joint family, and it is to avoid
such conflicts that people prefer to marry the cross-cousins.

IX

        The relationship of mother's brother and sister's
son (māmo-bhānēj) is very intimate and close among the Mers.
People have sacrificed their lives in the cause of this
relationship.   The story of Natho Modho given in the next

paragraph will explain this better. Similarly, the bond
of wife's brother and sister's husband (sālo-banēvi) is also
intimate; but it is not so strong as the bond of māmo-bhānēj.
For instance, when a woman seeks divorce from her husband,
the friendly behavioural pattern between her brother and her
husband gets shattered. We cannot say for what reasons a
husband and wife will seek divorce, but when they resort to
it, the bonds of sālo-banēvi also become loose. Thus the
nature of the bonds of sālo-banēvi is of flexible character;
while that of māmo-bhānēj is much more strong.

The love for a sister's husband is due to the love
that prevails between a brother and his sister. This is
further strengthened by the fact that there is a likelihood
of a man marrying her sister's husband's sister. Such a soli-
darity is liable to be breached when a man does not get on
with his wife or when his sister does not get on with her
husband.

The relationship of the husbands of two sisters
respectively is also very intimate. The persons so related
are looked upon as brothers; and a proverb says that sādhu
bhāini sagāi sāchi, i.e., the bond of brothers-in-law is real,
or, I should say, reliable. Inspite of the fact that the
brothers-in-law generally belong to different lineages they
are helpful to each other in many respects.

Here I should like to refer to an institution call-
ed dhāl which refers to menial or monetary help that a Mer
has to give and receive from the kin as well as the affines.
Dhāl literally means shield and it is a kind of assistance
given to one's kin or affine in the times of acute need.   At
the time of harvest and sowing a man offers his helping hand
to his relatives and in the same way he expects the relatives
concerned to help him in field labour, etc., whenever he is
running short of hands.   This expectation of return of help
once rendered to a relative is called dhāl.   Similarly, a
person may give help in cash or kind to his relatives who
have to return him these things at their convenience.   This
relationship of dhāl is most prevalent among the people of
the same lineage and it is also prevalent between the pairs
of relatives such as māmo-bhānēj, sālo-banēvi and the sādhubhāis
mentioned above.

The following incident which took place in an
agnatic lineage throws light on the relationship of a mother's
brother and the sister's son.   It illustrates the fact that
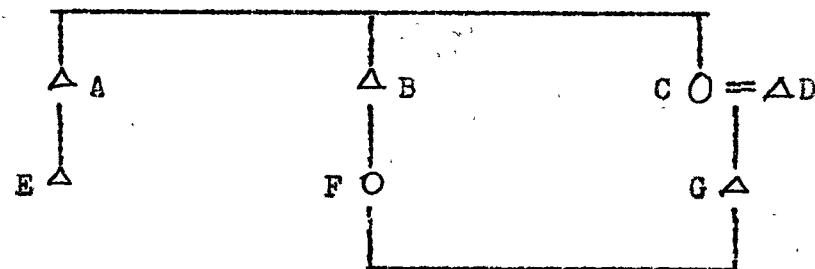a man is expected to avenge the death of a mother's brother.

Natho Modho was a well-known outlaw.   He belonged
to the Modhwadia segment of the Sisodia lineage.   His outlawry
was against the state of Navanagar (Jamnagar); but he took
refuge in the territory of Porbandar state, his place of domi-
cile.   He lived in a cave called polo-pāno situated on the
western side of the Barda Hills near the village called Khistri.

The then political agent of Saurashtra ordered the Rana Chief
of Porbandar either to arrest him or to kill him.

On page 83 I have made it clear that the Munjo Patel
of the village Khistri and Natho Modho of the village Modhwada
belonged to Sisodia lineage. They became enemies because
the associates of the outlaw transgressed the limits of the
village Khistri. Munjo decided to kill Natho to avenge the
insult of his village-men and also to help the Rana Chief of
Porbandar on whom lay the responsibility of getting rid of the
outlaw.

The point of interest, here, is this that when
Natho was killed, his death was avenged by his sister's son
Harbham who belonged to the Ratadia segment of the Keshwara
lineage. Harbham Ratadio (as he is known) waged a feud for
several years against the Mers of the village Khistri and
especially against the family of Munjo Patel. But when
Harbham failed to kill any agnatic relative of Munjo he killed
Munjo's sister's son Pabo. This happened because Pabo, as
it was expected of him, was taking side of his mother's
brother, namely Munjo. Thus Harbham got full satisfaction
of his mother's brother's revenge by killing the son (Pabo) of
Munjo's sister. This shows how a man prepares to sacrifice
his life for mother's brother. And it may also be stated
that a man may sacrifice his life for avenging the death of his
sister's son. But as Munjo had already died a natural death
before Pabo was killed, the feud came to an end.

I would now give another instance of blood-feud
which shows that sometimes a great hostility prevails between
a father's sister's husband and wife's brother's son. The
hostility between these affines becomes intense specially
when an agnatic relative of one is injured by the other. In
such instances a person's behaviour is balanced by the streng-
th of the ties that bind him to an affine and a kin respecti-
vely.

There was some hatred between E and his father's
sister's husband D. The reason of the hatred is not known
to me. Once when D tried to kill E, B interferred and stop-
ped the blood-shed. After a long while it so happened that
G, the son of D, kept the girl F of B, inspite of the latter's
wish. As a matter of fact G and F are father's sister's son
and mother's brother's daughter and so are potential spouses.
But when B disliked this alliance, he began to threaten G to
return his daughter; but the latter did not pay heed to B's
threatening. Now, E was always seeking an opportunity to
injure or kill D. So the above mentioned dispute gave him a
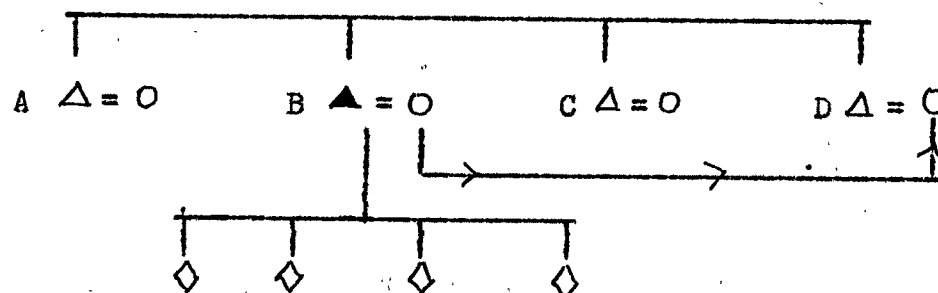venue to take revenge on D for the fault of the latter's son.

Therefore E contrived to kill D under the pretext of help-
ing his paternal uncle B. Really speaking B never dreamt
that his sister's husband D should be killed for the fault
of his son. B became too wild at this and out of anger he
ran after E to kill him and avenge his sister's husband's
death. But E escaped as he was armed better.

Here we can see that B's role towards E and D
was very reasonable and in conformity with the expectations
of his kinship and affinal bonds, respectively. In brief
he saved the life of his cousin E in the first clash with
the latter and with D. At this time it was his duty to
take the side of his nearest agnatic descendent, while in the
next happening he ran to kill E because it was his duty to
avenge the death of his sister's husband who was his very
near affine. Thus, B's behaviour is balanced between an
agnate and an affine. This incident also provides an excep-
tional case where the love and affection expected/between a
father's sister's husband (d) and wife's brother's son (E),
is unduly lacking.

X

I discuss in this section an example of an unconn-
ventional type of leviratic union. This incident created
an embracement for the members involved in it as to the proper
use of kinship terms for one another. Junior levirate is

known as d͞ervatun among the Mers.

The brothers A, B, C and D were the members of a joint family, and the family was poor. This incident took place before a year when I was in the field.

When B died, he left a widow and four children behind him. The remaining brothers did not like that the widow should remarry an outsider, in which case the responsibility of looking after the deceased's children would lie on all of them jointly. The third brother was willing to marry the elder brother's widow in leviratic union. But he was already married at this time and besides he was not ready to have an additional wife because of his poverty. C was therefore seeking a reasonable ground to divorce his present wife with a view to remarry the widow. His wife who was pregnant gave birth to a son. Had the child been a girl, he would have secured a ground to divorce his wife, but unfortunately for him the child was a boy and hence he was helpless. Ultimately the elder brothers, A & C, decided to remarry the widow to the youngest one, viz., D. This was, according to their notion, an unconventional step in the rule of junior

leviratic union; because, the next legitimate man was left
in the way.

The widow was now married to D, but she was put in
an ackward position and did not know how she should address C.
When she was the wife of B, she called C dēr and was on free
terms with the latter, because she was his potential wife.
But now she was the wife of D, whereupon she was expected to
look upon B as her jēth and pay him respect.   This new situa-
tion had put not only her into an ackward position but her
children also begotten by B.   These children used to call
C as kāko formerly, but now they have to call him moto bāp or
or bhabho.   Though in practical life these minute distinctions
in the use of terms of address are not given much weight but
they do perplex for the timebeing the persons involved in such
a situation.

I should like to point out here that a widow or a
divorced woman who brings her children by her first husband
to the one whom she remarries, pre-plans the future of these
children.   Usually it is the genitor or his agnates who take
all the responsibility of maintaining the children of the
divorced woman.   But if a woman wants to keep her infants
with her, she remarries only to one who consents to allow her
to bring the children with her.   Such children who go with
the mother to their step-father are known as āngaliāt which
literally means, 'those who go by the mother's finger'.

XI

I should now like to give some interpretations on the kinship organization of the Mers.

The study of the Mer lineages has revealed the fact that some branch lineages of various Rajput groups (following patrilineal descent) entered into matrimonial relationship with the original (ādya) Mers of Keshwara or Rajshakha lineages. Before getting absorbed into the Mer social organization it is likely that the Rajput groups practised asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage, as they do to-day. And, probably those Rajputs who established matrimonial relations with the Mers adopted also the Mer kinship system marked by a bilateral or a symmetrical cross-cousin marriage.

The bulk of the Rajputs seemed to have looked down upon such of those Rajputs who entered into the Mer fold and lowered down in the status on the ground that the latter allowed marriage with the father's sister's daughter. This tantamounts to marrying a person of the same blood and therefore an incest. On this ground, the bulk of the Rajputs claim superiority over those who entered into the marital alliances with the Mers.

In support of my views I should mention here the story of a Jethva prince named Randhirji. It is said that

Randhirji married a Mer woman called Pabi and so he preferred
to remain in the Mer fold because of his love for Pabi. There-
fore, he forgo his right over the throne eventhough he was the
heir apparent. He passed on the throne of Porbandar to his
younger brother, and his descendents are now known as Rajshakha
Mers, i.e., the Mers who descended from the royal branch of
the Jethva Rajputs.

In this context it should also be mentioned that
the Mers of Ajmer-Merwara do not permit any sort of cross-
cousin marriage. These Mers seemed to have changed their
kinship organization to such an extent that they do not allow
even sororal and leviratic unions. Inspite of all these
incest taboos it has been reported*that if a Mer in Ajmer-
Merwara violates these rules the caste elders fine a person
but they do not go to the extent of excommunicating him.

£ £ £ £ £ £ £
£ £ £ £
£

----
* This information has been supplied to me by Shri Jagadish-
  chandra R. Mer who belongs to Rajputana but who now lives
  in Baroda.