

APPENDIXES

I

A note on the early rulers of Ghumali.

Dr. A. S. Altekar has something new to say on the history of the early rulers of Ghumali, viz., the Saindhavas and the Jethvas. His views formulated from the content of the "Six Saindhava Copper-plate Grants from Ghumali" are briefly summarized in this section.¹

In the beginning of the eighth century when the Arabs invaded Sind, the ruling Saindhava dynasty sought refuge of the Maitraka king Shiladitya Dev the sixth of Valabhi. The Saindhavas wanted to establish in Saurashtra. They were, therefore, given feudality of western Saurashtra. These feudal lords established the capital Bhumilika or Bhutambilika in the 'Bartaka mountain' (Barda Hills). The insignia of Sindhuraja Jayadratha, the ancestor of this royal family was Varaha, but when they came to power in Saurashtra, the ruler Pushya Dev kept Matsya or Makara as a new insignia. In the middle of the eighth century, Saindhavas consolidated their hold over the new territory.

During the rule of the next kind Krishnaraja Dev, the Arab Suba Hasham invaded fruitlessly the Saindhavas of Bhutambali. Twenty years later the Arabs invaded again the Saindhavas during the reign of Agguka, but unfortunately they met with natural catastrophe and had to leave Saurashtra. The Arab soldiers fell a victim to epidemics, and those who tried to return to Sind by sea were drowned.

In the later half of the eighth century, the Arabs attacked Valabhi and killed Shiladitya Dev, the last of the Maitraka rulers. It is hard to understand why Saindhavas did not seize the opportunity to control the whole of Saurashtra after the fall of Valabhi. On the contrary, Saindhava king Krishnaraj II accepted the sovereignty of Ramabhadra, the Pratihara of Kanauj.

When Krishnaraja II died he left behind him a young prince, a successor to his throne. But his step-brother Jaik usurped the kingdom. Jaik left aside the heir-apparent and enthroned his own son.

Ghumali flourished and prospered till the beginning of the fourteenth century. But now, the ruling dynasty was known as Jethva instead of Saindhava. The hereditary bards seem to have invented a story of the Jethvas' origin. The story does not refer to the Saindhavas as the predecessors or the ancestors of Jethvas. On the contrary it says that

Jethvas are the descendents of Hanumana Mayurdhwaj who comes next to one named Makaradhwaj.

The real history of the Saindhavas was thus forgotten, and in its place, new cobweb conjectures were made about the migration of the Jethvas. It is, therefore, said that the Jethvas migrated from Sind to Morbi and from there to Srinagar near the city of Porbandar.

II

A note on the Mers of the fourteen lineages.

1. Keshwara Mers

The Legend of origin: According to tradition, Shri Rama, the hero of Ramayana, built a bridge between India and Ceylon in order to invade the latter. Ceylon was then ruled by Ravana who had kidnapped Rama's wife Sita. Rama created a man out of a hair from his back in order to look after the bridge. The man who was, thus, the product of hair or kēsha was known as Keshwara.¹

The members of the Keshwara lineage of the Mers are supposed to be descended from that man. According to tradition Rama was a king of the Solar line (Suryavamsha), and the Mers of the Keshwara lineage, also, claim to be descendants from the Sun from the part of their descent from Rama.

History: No accurate history of the Keshwara Mers exists. However, it is believed that they commanded great respect during the

regime of the Jethva rulers of Ghumli. An ancestor of Keshwara lineage, named Budo Ato, was owner of about twenty-four villages in the high-land area. The Keshwara are said to be the original (adya) Mers and the Mers of other lineages are the descendents of those Rajput men who married Keshwara women.

General Characteristics: The members of the Keshwara lineage have regular features, and are light skinned. A number of religious-minded and brave persons have come from the Keshwara lineage. In olden days the internal disputes of the Mers were settled by the elders of this lineage. Besides, the right of excommunicating from, or readmitting an outcaste person remain with the Keshwaras. For instance, if a person drinks by mistake water served by an Untouchable, he has to approach the caste-elders who help him in effecting purifications. An elder of the Keshwara lineage has the power to readmit and the readmitted person takes a dinner alongwith that elder and a few others from other lineages. Thus the act of taking cooked food or drinking water in the company of a Keshwara Mer is a recognized means of attaining purity from even a grave a wrong as drinking water from an Untouchable. Needless to say, this ritual power confers high status on the Keshwaras.*

The women of the Keshwara lineage are expert at wall-decoration and artistic clay-work in base-relief. The favourite deities of the Keshwara lineage are Shri Rama and the goddess

* See page 234.

named Khodiar.

2. Rajashakha Mers

The Legend of origin: The origin of the Rajashakha Mers is probably linked with the Jethvas of Porbandar, for, they are supposed to be the descendents of a Jethva prince called Randhirji. "The Porbandarchiefs have a tradition tracing their dynasty to Makardhvaja, son of Hanuman, and there are some Puranik legends attached to the tradition".² So, like the Jethva Rajputs of Porbandar, the Rajashakha Mers can be considered to be the descendants of the monkey god Hanuman.

History: A Jethva prince named Randhirji married a Mer woman called Pabi, the daughter of Nagajan Keshwara. Pabi received a village called Khandagad as a gift from her father, and so her children by the Jethva prince are known as Khunti (probably, the corrupt form derived from Khandagad). The prince Randhirji was forced to give up his claim over the Jethva throne for this reason; and thus, a new royal branch, i.e., rājashākha

 *(for p. 233) Here is an instance showing how a Keshwara elder purified a Mer couple. It is said that a husband and wife who were notorious for witchcraft, were causing immense trouble to the people of their village by the power of their black magic. The villagers decided to remove the nuisance. For this, they compelled the couple to drink water from the basin or the kund in which the Untouchables (especially the Chamars) used to clean hide, (this is considered to be a recognized means of nullifying the powers of black magic). Subsequently, it was found essential to purify them in order to make them members of Mer society. At this juncture, the help of a Keshwara Mer was sought by other Mers of the village concerned. The couple was directed to take a holy bath in the step-well called jnāna vaṁ of the village

came into existence. However, this dissension of Randhirji and his descendants from the royal line was marked by the fact that Randhirji himself enthroned his younger brother by putting a 'mark of royalty' (rājatilaka), with the blood from his little finger, on the forehead of the latter. This age-old tradition is still continued, and when a new prince ascends to the throne, a descendent of Randhirji performs the ritual act of putting the forehead-mark with the blood of his little finger. The Mers of this lineage have remained faithful to the rulers of Porbandar and have fought bravely to preserve the independence of that state.

General Characteristics: The Rajashakha Mers, like the Keshwara are handsome, tall, sturdy and have a pink complexion. The women are expert at wall-decoration and artistic clay-work. Some of the Rajashakha men are found to be clever masons and stone-carvers. They worship Hanuman, and the goddesses Chamunda and Vindhyavasini.

3. Odedara Mers**

The legend of origin: Brahma, the Creator, created among other things the two royal lines of Chandravamsha and Suryavamsha of

Visavada and then allowed to take cooked food in company of a Keshwara Mer and those of some other lineages. It is after this ritual injunction that the husband and wife were readmitted to the Mer caste.

** The Odedara Mers originally form a section of the Sumara Rajputs of Sind. A group of Sumara Rajputs who migrated to the Mer region and who mixed with the latter are known as Odedara Mers, because, they established their stronghold in the village Odadar near Porbandar.

Indian mythology. Atri and Marichi are considered to be the two sons of Brahma. Chandra is the son of Atri and those who descended from them are called Chandravamshi or belonging to the Lunar line. Surya is the son of Kashyapa and grand-son of Marichi, and those who are descended from them are called Suryavamshi or belonging to the Solar line.

Shri Krishna, the hero of the Mahabharata and the incarnation of Vishnu, is, according to tradition, a descendent of the Lunar line and he is supposed to be the thirty-fifth descendant of Brahma. Narapat, Asapat and Bhupat are said to be the prominent but remote descendants of Shri Krishna. The descendants of Narapat are Jadeja, and those of Asapat and Bhupat are the Chudasama and the Bhatti Rajputs, respectively.

As mentioned earlier the Odedara Mers form one of the thirteen branches of the Jadejas.³ The Odedara Mers are descendants from the Lunar line.

History: It is not very certain when the Sumara Rajputs mixed with the Mers. But it is said that they entered into the Mer region in the later half of the Muslim period, from the village named Gorana, located in the north-west corner. Before mixing with the Mers the Sumara men had to shave off their beards. It is likely that during this period they were known as the Sumara Mers and later, in the sixteenth century, when they gave shelter to the Jethva queen Kalanbai in the village Odadar, they became famous as the Odedara Mers.

General characteristics: They are tall, sturdy, good-looking and of pink complexion having regular features. The women are wellknown for beauty which is highly admired in the following proverb:

" Turmeric is sold in every shop,
but musk is rarely to be seen;
Other Mer women are easily accessible,
But it is difficult to get an Odedara woman."

Moreover, Odedara women are very skilful at wall-decoration and the artistic clay-work. The men are very proud and sensitive. They are quick to take offence and when they feel insulted, may fight till death. Their folk-songs and tales are usually about their great fighters. They worship Gorakhnath (m.) and the goddess Balavi.

4. Sisodia Mers

The legend of origin: In the Solar line, described earlier, comes Shri Rama. One of the fifty seventh descendants of Rama is said to be Bapa Raval of Mewad, the founder of the Cohel or the Sisodia line.⁴

History: Bapa Raval's birth-date, roughly, falls between 700 and 712 A.D.⁵ The fifth descendant of Bapa Raval is Khuman who had five princes, namely, Deshal, Katavo, Godho, Manaji and Hatising. Khuman banished the later four from Mewad. Katavo and Godho came to Ghumali, in the gorge of Barda Hills,

where Bhan Jethva was ruling. Katavo, who bravely killed a lioness in the Barda jungle, married a daughter of Haloji Keshwara, the chief minister (divān) of Bhan Jethva. Both the brothers became Mers; and in the beginning they founded two villages, Katwana and Godhana, in the land given to them as gift, near the foot of Barda Hills. Their descendants later founded or occupied other villages in the high-land.

General characteristics: They are sturdy and well-built, but are short and dark. They are illiterate but intelligent. They have, besides, an aptitude for intrigue and an ability to get out of difficult situations. A chain of proud and brave persons have come from them. Reference has been made to the out-law Natho Modho who comes from this lineage. Their chief deity is the goddess Khodiar.

5. Parmar Mers

The legend of origin: The story of Parmar, Solanki, Chauhan and Pratihara, the first three of whom seem to have mixed with the Mers, forms a single, inter-related narrative.

A Kshatriya king named Haihaya Kartviryarjuna ruled at Mahismati (modern Maheshwar) situated on the bank of the river Narmada. In his arrogance, he killed the Brahmin sage Jamadagni, the father of Parshuram, who being enraged took revenge on all the Kshatriyas, by wiping out twenty-one generations. A few, however, fled the wrath of Parshuram and

saved themselves. In the absence of the Kshatriyas, Brahmins were asked to rule, but they were unable to rule efficiently. They could not defend their subjects from the harassment of the demons. The sage Vishwamitra, who was a Kshatriya, could not tolerate this chaotic condition and decided to revive Kshatriya rule.

With this aim in view, the sage Vishwamitra, along with several other sages, performed a penance on the Arbuda Parvata (modern Mount Abu), and urged the almighty god Vishnu to revive the Kshatriyas and thereby to put an end to anti-religious activities of the demons. Vishnu granted their request and directed them to perform a sacrifice in the Agni Kunda (fire-pit) on the mountain. On this occasion the sages propitiated and sought the help of Agni, Indra, Brahma, Mahadeva or Shankara and Vishnu. Indra created a man called Pramara or Paramara who protected the region around the city of Ujjain. Brahma created a Solanki warrior (or Chalukyas) who ruled at Anahilpur Patan in North Gujarat. Mahadeva or Shankara created a man who was named as Purihara or Pratihara who ruled in Marwad. And, lastly, Vishnu created a warrior named Chauhan who ruled at the city called Makkavati in the North-west province.⁶

The Parmar Mers who originally form a group of Rajputs, thus belong to Agnivamsha.

History: It is not clear when the Parmar Rajputs mixed with the Mers. From the history we learn that the Parmar of Sodha line settled in Saurashtra near Wadhawan (modern Surendranagar) as famine-struck immigrants from Parkar (western Rajputana). The Vaghela Rajputs who ruled at Wadhawan at this time, employed the Parmar chief Mujo to attack the Bhils living on the bank of the river Sabarmati in Gujarat. The Parmars succeeded in defeating the Bhils. They got four districts Muli, Thana, Chotila and Chobari from the ruler of Wadhawan.⁷ Some of these Sodha Parmars have possibly mixed with the Mers of Saurashtra.

General characteristics: They are good-looking, but the women are more beautiful than men. The women are expert at wall-decorations and clay-work. The principal deity worshipped is Sichiari or Mandavari(f.).

6. Solanki Mers

The legend of origin: The legend of the Solanki Mers is given earlier along with that of the Parmars. Some of the Solanki Rajputs seem to have mixed with the Mers. In this respect, the Solanki Mers belong to the Fire line (Agnivamsha).

History: The Solankis who mixed with the Mers came, probably, from Anhilpur Patan, the capital of Gujarat during the time of the great ruler Siddharaj Solanki. It should be noted here

that the Solanki and Vala Rajputs claim to be the early inhabitants of Saurashtra. The Solankis in Saurashtra became feudatories enjoying chieftainship from the Chudasamas of Junagadha and the Jethvas of Porbandar.⁸

General characteristics: They are sturdy, well-built and short. Their chief deity is Khijavmata Matri (f.).

7. Chauhan Mers

The legend of origin: The legend of the Chauhan Mers is given earlier along with that of the Parmars. Some of the Chauhan Rajputs seem to have mixed with the Mers. In this respect, the Chauhan Mers belong to Fire line.

History: The Chauhan Mers probably descended from the remnants of the Chauhan rulers of the imperial family of Delhi. It is likely that some of the Chauhan Rajputs might have fled to Saurashtra and mixed with the Mers during the rule of the Muslims.

It is narrated that some of the Kharvas of Navibandar, in the low-land area and the Chauhan Mers of the village Garej have a common genealogical record. This suggests that a group of the Chauhan Rajputs might have divided into two sections, one mixing with the Kharvas and the other with the Mers.

General characteristics: The Chauhan Mers are popularly known as Gareja Mers; because, they live in the only village Garej near Navibandar. They are sturdy and proud, and are wellknown for their bravery. They worship the goddess Ashapura.

8. Chudasama Mers

The legend of origin: The legend of the Chudasama Mers is given along with that of the Odedara Mers. In this respect, the Chudasama Mers belong to Lunar line or Chandravamsha.

History: It seems that a group of Chudasama Rajputs mixed with the Mers after 1472 A.D., when the last Chudasama ruler Ra Mandalik was defeated by Mahmed Shah Begada of Ahmedabad.⁹ It is also reported that some of the Chudasama Mers of the village Vaghania (in the low-land) mixed with the Khant Kolis living near Girnar. Some of these Khant Kolis claim common descent from the ancestors of the Chudasama Mers of Vaghania.

General characteristics: The Chudasama Mers are popularly known as Vagh Mers as they primarily belonged to the village named Vaghania. They are dark and short, and are a peace-loving people.

9. Bhatti Mers

The legend of origin: The legend of the Bhatti Mers is given along with that of the Odedara Mers. In this respect, the Bhatti Mers belong to Lunar line or Chandravamsha.

History: The Bhatti Mers are said to be the descendants of Bhatti Rajputs who ruled at Jesalmer in 1156 A.D.¹⁰ A group of Bhatti Rajputs is also reported to have mixed with the Khant Kolis of Girnar.

General characteristics: They are popularly known as Bhutia. They are dark and short; and their principal goddess is Jogan.

10. Kishor or Jadeja Mers

The legend of origin: The Kishor Mers like the Odedara Mers belong primarily to the stock of Jadeja Rajputs. Their legend is, therefore, evident from that of the Odedara Mers. In this respect they belong to the Lunar line.

History: It is not certain when the Kishor Rajputs mixed with the Mers, but it is likely that they might have come to the Mer region, later than the Sumara Rajputs. It should be noted here that some of the Kishor Mers or Rajputs are reported to have mixed with the Kharvas and the Kolis of the low-land.

General characteristics: They are dark and short; and their principal goddess is Ashapuri Kandhal.

11. Chavada Mers

The legend of origin: The legend of the origin of the Chavada Mers is not recorded by their lineage bards. However, it is believed that Chavada Mers who come from Chavada Rajputs belong to the Lunar line.¹¹

History: The Chavada Rajputs are said to be the earliest immigrants to Saurashtra. They were wellknown for piracy. They occupied the coastal territory from Dwarka to the west and Somnath and Div to the east. In the fourteenth century they seem to have suffered a great deal from the Chudasama and Vadher Rajputs.¹² It is probably that during this time some of them mixed with the Mers.

General characteristics: They are generally dark and short; and they worship Balnath and Surya (Sun).

12. Vadher Mers

The legend of origin: The legend of the origin of the Vadher Mers is not clear. But they are said to belong to Solar line.¹³

History: The Vadhers, a branch of Rathod Rajputs, entered Saurashtra, perhaps during the thirteenth century, from Rajputana. They treacherously drove out the Chavadas and occupied Dwarka and Bet.¹⁴

A Vadher chief named Sangan lived in a village called Arambhada in the Okhamandala territory of the Gaekwars of Baroda. He was a great devotee of Shri Dwarakanathaji of Dwaraka and Shri Madhavraiiji of Madhavpur. He used to visit very often the temple of Madhavraiiji and so people called him dasa, i.e., the faithful servant of the deity. Once he became

the guest of the Parmar Mers of the villages Pata and Gorsar (both situated near Madhavpur). The Mers loved him very much and therefore requested him to avoid the trouble of travelling so long a distance from Arambhada to Madhavpur, whereupon he built a village on an old mound between the aforesaid two villages and the new village named Chingaria came into existence. Subsequently he died in a fight with the cess-collector of the Suba of Ahmedabad, who insulted the Brahmin pujāri of Madhavraiiji.¹⁵ After this incident, he became wellknown as bhad dāso (lit., the brave devotee). His descendants who are popularly known as dāsā, mixed with the descendants of Parmar Mers who brought him to the low-land.

General characteristics: They are quite good looking, fair and stout. They show greater devotion to Madhavraiiji.

13. Vala Mers

The legend of origin: The origin of the Vala Mers is connected with the Vala Rajputs who are supposed to be the descendants of the Sisodia Rajputs of Udaipur in Rajputana. In this respect, they belong to Solar line.¹⁶

History: It is believed that the Vala Rajputs belong to the Kathis of Saurashtra.¹⁷ Some of them seem to have mixed not only with the Mers but also with the Khant Kolis of Girnar.

General characteristics: They are dark and short; and, their chief deity is Visant Mata (f.)

14. Vaghela Mers

The legend of origin: The origin of the Vaghela Mers is connected with the Vaghela Rajputs who come from Solankis. In this respect, they belong to Fire line.

History: The Vaghela Rajputs ruled over Gujarat after the Solankis from whom, probably, the Vaghela Mers are descended. The last Hindu king of Gujarat, Karan Ghelo was driven away by Alaf Khan in 1297 A.D.¹⁸ It is after this defeat that some of the Vaghela Rajputs migrated to Saurashtra and mixed with the Mers.*

General characteristics: They are dark and short; and their chief deity is Khijavmata Matri (f.).

& & & & & &
 & & &
 &

* The legendary account and the local history of the Mer lineages reveal the fact that the various Rajput groups came into the Mer fold and increased its strength. In this respect I must point out that the results of the racial and serological survey conducted, among Mers and other tribes and castes of Gujarat, by Prof. D.N. Majumdar and his colleagues, are very enlightening. These investigations have proved beyond doubt that there is a certain amount of racial inter-mixture in the composition of the Mer people.¹⁹