Embroidering at the Edge: Mutwa Women and Change

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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Date Dec 18/02
This dissertation examines how a group of rural Muslim women in Western India are negotiating tradition and identity against a backdrop of dramatic change. The Mutwa are a small Muslim naat, an endogamous group claiming common descent. Originally from Sindh, for the past 8-10 generations they have lived in a cluster of villages along the northern frontier of Kutch, adjacent to the Pakistan border. Over the past 40 years, they have been forced to shift from pastoralism to wage labour; a shift that has encouraged the commoditisation of the embroidery traditionally produced by Mutwa women. Where embroidery was an important component of dowry and distinguished Mutwa women at different life cycle stages, more recently it is produced almost completely for outside markets.

This research reports on an apprenticeship with Mutwa embroiderers, an approach that compliments recent anthropological work on embodiment (Jackson, 1983), and has been cited as a suitable means of learning the subtle, often unarticulated aspects of craft production (Coy, 1989). Where earlier accounts of folk embroidery have often seen it as tradition bound and without history, by virtue of these intimate insights, I argue for embroidery as a creative medium women uniquely employ to negotiate change. Similarly, in contrast to early accounts that perceive change, particularly the introduction of new markets, as detrimental to traditional art forms (Graburn, 1976) and women's authority over them (Dhamija, 1989), I demonstrate how Mutwa women's relationship with embroidery has shifted yet introduced new opportunities for enhancing status. I show how Mutwa women are re-inventing embroidery and the meanings associated with them (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) according to an evolving sense of Mutwa identity and Islamization.

This research documents the recent history of change from Mutwa women's point of view. Although Hindu women are well represented ethnographically in India, accounts of Muslim women remain rare—accounts of creative Muslim women subjects even more so. In keeping with contemporary anthropological and feminist research, this work seeks not to recover Mutwa women as subjects, but to examine how they are subjects, differently constituted, and engaging change on their own terms (Rosaldo, 1980; Abu Lughod, 1991; N. Kumar, 1994).
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My interest in cloth began long ago. I learned to sew in high school then experimented with weaving and dying in art college. I loved it and I loved the idea of becoming a textile artist although I never really addressed the practical, economic dimensions of my chosen craft. I produced a large body of textile sculptures, exhibited enthusiastically\(^1\), and sold nothing. I waitressed to support my textile habit and grew increasingly disillusioned. By the time I graduated from art college, I had already begun to wonder if my lack of success, if the lack of apparent work opportunities, was related to gender, or more specifically, to a medium trivialised by its close links with femininity in Western Culture. I began to wonder why textiles are associated with femaleness? If this was universal? What making with textiles means in different cultures? And how other makers survive—emotionally, practically, and artistically?

Looking back, there are several moments when I can claim to have shifted perspectives from that of an artist to something of a fledgling anthropologist. One of the more poignant ones occurred while I was a student at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. I remember a fellow student doing a project on hooked rugs. She claimed to have insight into the lives of the women who had once made these things—yet she had not questioned contemporary makers and had not learned how to hook rugs herself. Rather, she had read technical accounts and based her research on a visual analysis of historic examples. I felt that she could hardly understand the women who had made rugs unless she talked to them, inquired about their experiences, and perhaps compared them with her own experience of hooking rugs. Her art project involved a series of paintings based on traditional hooked rug designs—to my mind a reductive approach that privileged rug aesthetics above their human dimensions.

After graduation I travelled, I sewed, I continued to waitress, and to consider graduate school. Eventually I moved to Edmonton to pursue an MA in Clothing and Textiles in the Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta. I did not fit particularly well in a department traditionally more concerned with textile science and consumer studies than the cultural production of meaning. There was, however, support for new ideas and the three years spent at the University of Alberta helped define the scope of my research and the approach I wanted to take. As part of my MA research, I made my first visit to India in 1992. I visited Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan and the Punjab conducting a visual survey of embroidery types. My completed thesis\(^2\) drew on this preliminary research and examined some of the theoretical and philosophical issues surrounding textiles research.
While in India I visited Kutch, the largest and westernmost district in the Indian State of Gujarat. Quite by chance, I landed at a wedding in a village called Dhordo held by a people called the Mutwa. I was entranced by the fine embroideries the women made and knew that I had found a potent site, suitable for more intensive research. I began my PhD in 1995, shifting from Human Ecology to Anthropology. I managed to spend another 21 months in the field, over a period of several years. As I had anticipated in 1992, I based my research on the Mutwa, focusing on the changes that have occurred to the embroidery the women have traditionally produced.

Dates of Field Research:

- October 1992 - December 1992
- January 1997 - April 1997
- July 1997 - May 1998
- September 1998 - December 1998
- May 1999
- May 2000 - June 2000
- May 2001 - June 2001

Building on my early arts training and tactile proclivities, I conducted a type of apprenticeship with the Mutwa. It was not formal in the sense that my labour was bonded to a master or involved the exchange of money—rather it was based on affection and a more general sense of reciprocity. Given that young women have traditionally learned to embroider from mothers, close female kin, or friends, this was appropriate. I did not pay my tutor, nor any of the Mutwa, but I did bring frequent gifts, ran errands in town, purchased embroidery supplies, minded children, took photographs on demand, assisted and sometimes policed foreign visitors, and, I hope, returned the affection they offered.

As much as possible I wanted to learn how the Mutwa embroider with my whole, sensing body. I wanted to learn how to stitch, as well as how to stitch well, and what that means from their perspective. I wanted to experience the intimate context of stitching, and document how it is socially produced and maintained. I wanted to understand how Mutwa embroidery has meaning, and how women negotiate tradition and change through the medium of embroidery. I wanted to resist the reductive tendencies, not to mention the dismissiveness, I perceived effecting understanding of textiles and women makers in India, Nova Scotia, and elsewhere.
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The Mutwa speak Kutchi (aka kachchhi, kacchi), which, although it is widely spoken across Kutch, differs from community to community often depending on the origins (or ambitions) of the people involved. The Mutwa's Kutchi, for example, is heavily mixed with Sindhi whereas for many outside Banni, their Kutchi is more mixed with Gujarati. The many Ismaili Kojas and Bhoras living elsewhere in Kutch, speak a Kutchi mixed with Swahili, betraying their East African connections. Language spoken is also related to age and gender— in some areas schools have been introduced only recently hence older generations, particularly women, are more likely to only speak Kutchi. Since Kutch became part of the State of Gujarat in the early 60's, Gujarati has been the official state language and the language of business, administration, and education.

Kutchi is recognised in Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1968) as a Sindhi dialect with a closer affiliation to the Sindhi spoken in Central Sindh than to Lar, the Sindhi dialect spoken in South Sindh (1968, p.184). This corresponds with the Mutwa's assertion that they originated from the area around Hyderabad in Central Sindh.

Because Kutchi is an unwritten language transliteration has proved particularly challenging. Wherever possible I have made use of Achariya's Kacchi Sabdavali (1966), a Kutchi dictionary, however many of the textile terms used by the Mutwa are not included in this small volume. Hence, I have striven to write Kutchi using the Gujarati script following indigenous spellings and pronunciations as closely as possible then transliterate into English following the "ALA-LC Romanization Tables" (1997) for Gujarati. I have also consulted Deshpande (1988; 1985), Lekhwani 1987, and Pathak (1991).

With the exceptions noted below, pronunciation follows the ALA-LC standard. For clarity, I have restricted use of diacritical marks in the text to first usage of a Kutchi or other foreign word. Similarly, I have indicated plurals with the addition of an 's' as in English (i.e. kanjari, kangaris). A detailed glossary is appended.
### Vowels

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| ऐ | i | ऐ | ai |
| ऑ | o | ऑ | au |

### Consonants

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### Pronunciation Exceptions:

- झ is transliterated ca but is pronounced ch as in cheese (i.e. cāndhī is pronounced chandhi)
- छ is a retroflex lateral transliterated as l but pronounced like a nasalised rd (i.e. copa| is pronounced chopard).

### Abbreviations:

- H=Hindi
- U=Urdu
- G=Gujarati
- K=Kutchi
- S=Sindhi
- L=Latin
INTRODUCTION

PUPPETS AND FEARS

I first arrived in India in late September 1992. I was met at the Indira Gandhi Airport by the friend of a friend waiting just outside the arrivals lounge exit/entrance to India. The automatic doors opened and the arrivals lounge slipped away behind me like a sweater falling from my shoulders. I was exposed: India was in my face, against my skin, and inside my lungs. The air was thick, acrid and hot, and carried the chill of uncertainty and fear. Suddenly I realised I felt the pressure of hundreds of eyes searching over and through me, barely restrained by the flimsy barrier that separated us. I searched the crowd. On one side, my welcoming ambassador, brown face, blue turban, effusive English, was clutching a bouquet of flowers and a sign with my name. He called me Michael and I secretly wished to be more confident, more like a 'Michael'. I didn't correct him but followed his lead through the crowd and into the Delhi night.

After two weeks of being comfortably conducted around Delhi, I left for Ahmedabad to begin my research. Big and old with crowded, dirty, convoluted streets, Ahmedabad was overwhelming. It was my first experience of India alone and unguarded. I tackled the street outside my hotel. It was full of noisy, smoking scooters, rickshaws, and cars. There was no sidewalk. I had to wind my way around vendor's carts and parked vehicles lining the road as I searched for evidence of Ahmedabad's famous textile industry. All I found were car parts shops. How would I ever find what I needed in this inhospitable, incomprehensible place? I ducked into a restaurant, taking a seat against one wall. A young man brought me a menu in English and Gujarati though he didn't speak English himself. I had no idea what a vegetable jalfrez or a biryani was however I picked something in the vegetable section and bread. After a few minutes the waiter brought me a plate of sliced raw onions with a piece of lime. I almost cried. Was this what I had ordered? Was this all I was going to get? I forced myself to be calm, to just wait and see what happened next. Eventually hot cooked vegetables came with some chapatti and I relaxed enough to look around the room. As I ate I realised there was a group of Muslim men sitting talking on the other side of the room. I knew they were Muslim by the caps and white suits they wore. They ignored me— almost as disconcerting as the blatant stares I had received on the street. A family arrived; the women dressed in enveloping black burqas. They climbed a set of stairs I hadn't noticed to a separate dining room labelled "Ladies and Families Only". I was sitting in the wrong place. I was on the wrong street, in the wrong part of town. I retreated to my hotel room, locked the door, and turned on the television, defeated.
After a few days I met the contacts I had written to before arriving in India. They introduced me to some of Ahmedabad's research and development institutions including the wonderful Calico Museum of Textiles and several shops that specialised in folk embroidery. Though I was feeling more confident, my sense of purpose renewed, I was uncomfortable beyond the doors or gates of these institutional settings. The 'real' Ahmedabad was terrifying. I tried walking through some of the older neighbourhoods one day with the intention of photographing the beautiful wooden buildings so characteristic of Gujarat. I felt so conspicuous, so intrusive walking up the narrow, crowded streets with my camera, looking. I took very few photographs and then only when no one was around. While the women ignored me, the men, particularly the younger men, stared— openly, unabashedly.

One afternoon I visited a children's aid organisation in a poor Muslim neighbourhood. The centre offered local children a safe place to play and learn how to make various crafts, which could be sold to help their families. That afternoon they were making paper puppets on sticks; an array of colourful scrap paper, pencils and crayons littering the floor. Invited to join in, I happily sat down and started to draw. As I had once made a successful wolf mask out of paper plates and styrofoam cups, I decided to do something similar—a wolf in sheep’s clothing—the irony of the design escaping me until much later. After a half an hour of intensive colouring, cutting and stapling, I found myself staring, not a wolf, at least not the four legged kind, but a fierce moustached caricature of an Indian man complete with earrings, turban, and dhoti. It was as if all my fears of Indian otherness generally and Indian men particularly had been inscribed with brown wax crayon. I was appalled at the ferocity of my creation and not a little concerned about what it revealed about my subconscious fears and their effect on representation.

Ethnographic accounts traditionally open with some sort of arrival narrative introducing the field of study and how the ethnographer came to be there. Descriptions of swaying palms, enticing white sandy beaches or barren, inhospitable terrain serve to pique the reader's interest, situate the study and impress upon the reader the magnitude of the research and credibility of the researcher. The landscape was there, just over the horizon, at the end of the road, waiting to be entered, waiting to be discovered. Similarly the natives were just there, nameless and without history. While it may have been possible for early explorers to walk down a gang plank and come face to face with peoples they had no previous knowledge of, they never arrived without preconceived notions of who or what they would find living in the wilds of Bongo Bongo Land or the high Arctic. Maybe the inhabitants had two heads or four wives, ate their young, or only their enemies. Maybe they toiled endlessly or not at all. Maybe their young women were promiscuous, or maybe they weren't but lied about it. Maybe they were human, maybe they were not. Similarly, while it may have been possible at one time to encounter authentic, 'traditional' peoples with little or no knowledge of the
outside world, the possibility was not only rare, but theoretically untenable. My point is that for
many reasons arrivals—whether of missionaries, adventurers, traders, tourists, or ethnographers—
have never been as pristine as portrayed in these traditional arrival narratives. Mine certainly was
not.

I did not arrive once and forever, but several times, over a period of years. In 1992, after
spending a couple of weeks researching markets and museum collections in Delhi and Ahmedabad,
my first contact with the Mutwa came when— quite by chance— I attended the wedding of Mutwa
Abbas’s son. The wedding was held in Dhordo, a tiny village located at the northern fringes of the
District of Kutch, on the edge of the vast desert that separates the Indian State of Gujarat and
Pakistan (ill. I.1). During the wedding I was captivated by the colours, the contrasts, and the others
I could barely comprehend— not to mention the beautifully embroidered textiles I saw the women
wearing. The Mutwa seemed so distinctive and, in the intervening years, as I recalled the event and
planned my research, they virtually became more so.

When I finally was able to return for the second time, in early 1997, the Mutwa did not
remember me— only that there had been a white foreigner among the guests at Basheer’s wedding.
Accompanied by a local friend, we sat rather uncomfortably in Abbas’s house— the old man much
more frail than I remembered, reclining on his canopy bed smoking a Player’s cigarette. We
exchanged pleasantries. I mentioned that I had visited earlier and he pointed to a thick, dusty
guestbook containing signatures and comments dating back over 20 years. A young girl brought us
tea, strong, rich and sweet and pulled some pieces of embroidery out of a cupboard. They were not
what I had remembered. Large crude stitches on nasty synthetic fabrics. Disheartened, we slipped
away as the desert sun was sinking.

I made a number of short trips to Dhordo that spring. After my initial disappointment with
what I had seen in Abbas’s house that day, I discovered some women still wore finely embroidered
blouses while many more continued to stitch. However, the possibility of conducting the kind of
intimate research I had hoped to remained remote. It was not until I had come and gone a few
times that the Mutwa realised that I was the white foreigner at Basheer’s wedding. At that point
photo albums and videotapes were hauled out and examined for evidence of me. It was an exercise
I would repeat with Basheer himself, his brother Sameer, his sister, Khadeeja as well as other
members of their extended family. Although there were few photographs that showed more than
the top of my head or the side of my face, I was clearly present in Basheer’s videotape. They were
Illustration I.1. Map of Western India.
delighted that I had returned—not that I meant anything to them at the time—but the idea of a returning guest flattered them, honoured the hospitality they are so proud to be known for. They claimed I looked much better than five years previously, I could say the same about Khadeeja and Basheer—the latter had grown from the skinny uncomfortable looking groom of my photographs to a rollicking young father of two adored girls. We shared a history. This time when I explained my project, they were warm and enthusiastic.

EMBROIDERING IN DHORDO

This project attempts to contribute the first analysis of the impact of changing markets on women and embroidery in Kutch. It reports my efforts to recover the history of Mutwa embroidery from the perspective of the women who make, and until recently, primarily used it. As such it represents a unique ethnographic contribution. Moreover, by attempting to describe women's subjectivity this project hopes to pose at least a small challenge to the structures which have continued to colonise them.

The Mutwa are only recently and still sporadically literate. Traditions, stories, and songs are orally transmitted, however, it is the men more likely than the women to recount specific histories. Women's history, their lived history, is bound up with a more or less continuous record of embroidered artefacts. Time and time again Mutwa embroiders have adopted new materials, absorbed new influences—purged others—restitching, reinventing what is Mutwa embroidery (Hobsbawm, 1983). This promises to shed light on how Mutwa women have engaged, negotiated, resisted, and accommodated change more broadly. It is a subtle history, yet it speaks to how women negotiate the past and the present, how they are active subjects.

With Niessen (1994) and McCracken (1987) I argue that embroidery does not function like a language although it is a form of symbolic expression that is gendered and operates on many levels. Although the Mutwa men I met were more or less conversant with its aesthetics, they tended to regard embroidery symbolism as a separate domain. On the few occasions that a man offered an interpretation of embroidery symbolism, women usually dismissed his comments as uninformed. Women's embroidery is tantalisingly rich with symbols associated with fertility, protection and Sufism—yet it is muted and increasingly so. One of the effects of change I will examine in the pages ahead concerns the subduing of some of the more embarrassing embroidery
symbols. This occurs against a backdrop not only of increased contact with outsiders, but the commodification of embroidery and a re-evaluation of the Mutwa's identity as Muslims.

This project focuses on Mutwa women and the embroidery that they have, until recently, controlled all aspects of. Because I was interested in the history of embroidery since Partition, a period that saw a dramatic shift from domestic to commercial production, it made sense to work closely with women. I found their knowledge and historical insight much deeper than the few Mutwa men who have become commercially involved since the early 70's. Another reason for focusing on women, partially alluded to with my wolf's tale above, is that I found it more comfortable to work, at least initially, with women. Fortunately working with women was also culturally appropriate and allowed me access not only to the intimate lives of women, but eventually, to the familial lives of men. Had I focused on men's activities and spent the bulk of my time with them, it is unlikely I could have gained the trust of the women. Khadeeja once commented that had I been an Indian woman or had I wanted to go off with the men all the time, she would not have allowed me to stay more than a few days.

These research findings are the result of field research conducted in Kutch over a period of almost 10 years. Over the course of several trips, I spent about 25 months in the field, the longest continuous period being 10 months (July '97-May '98). My research focused on the women of one particular family who live in the village of Dhordo. Although there are several Mutwa villages in the area, Dhordo offered several important advantages. As well as being the site of my almost 'accidental' first meeting, made during MA research and while scouting potential field sites in '92, it is one of the most easily accessible Mutwa villages and has a long history of visitors and tourists. It is home to the Mutwa-Morana, arguably the most powerful and influential Mutwa family who, in many ways, are at the frontier of change. The women of this family have tended to control access to embroidery materials, skills, and markets, enhancing their positions vis a vis other Mutwa women. Another important advantage, affected mainly through contact with foreigners, is that many of the Mutwa-Morana women speak English. Although I spent a number of months studying Kutchi, the local language, my efforts to continue tended to be undermined by the Mutwa's desire to improve their skills in English—skills that further enhance status within their community.

During my research I based myself in Bhuj, the commercial, political, and touristic centre of Kutch. I generally travelled back and forth, spending a week to ten days in Dhordo before returning to Bhuj for a few days. Although I relished the time in Dhordo, the trips to Bhuj were
necessary in order to decompress, write up notes, obtain supplies, and conduct interviews with dealers, merchants, and consumers of Mutwa embroidery. I made several trips to Ahmedabad, Baroda, Delhi and Bombay, where I examined public collections of folk embroidery as well as the Indian urban market for folk embroidery.

In Dhordo, I lived with Khadeeja, her husband Ammar and their nine children. Initially I slept apart from the family, in a not-quite-completed concrete-block house. The space was hardly my own, however and I quickly abandoned efforts to seclude myself with my notebooks. I had to learn to write with one or more children poised inches from my book staring at my slowly swirling pen. Gradually they grew bored and the novelty of my books and pens and other foreign paraphernalia wore off. And eventually I slept together with Khadeeja and her family; one body amidst the other 11 sprawled across her bhungo (traditional round mud-brick house of Banni) floor.

MAKING CONTACT

During the first few visits to Dhordo I spent a lot of time with the children. Hard to avoid and considerably less shy than the adults, I took advantage of their insatiable curiosity and patience, playing with them, asking them questions, and gleaning Kutchi from them. I was a source of entertainment with all sorts of weird and wonderful foreign knickknacks to be explored in my bags. Creams and haircare products were particularly enticing. Bottle after bottle were regularly pulled out, opened and handed around for all to smell. The young girls would sniff with wide-eyed bliss. "Koro aye?" (What is it?) They would demand. "Cream" or "shampoo" I answered after the first few rounds, increasingly self-conscious of my superfluous toiletries. Call them my means of exerting some control over an unknown and probably hostile dermatological environment. As my confidence grew I pared down my toilette, leaving the eye creams, hair gels and conditioners back in town.

I felt uncomfortable around the adults, not quite knowing what to do or what to say, when to assert myself and my anthropological agenda, and when to back off and respect their privacy. Reflecting on the situation they were probably just as shy and uncomfortable as I was. Nevertheless, Khadeeja, my hostess and mother of nine of the children, would often join me in the evenings where her kids would play punch run jump scream around and sometimes in-between us. Whether I'd proved worthy because of my affection for her children, whether she was just curious or felt sorry for me I can't say, but our friendship grew as we watched her playing children, laughed with them, consoled them and answered their many questions.

It was the affection of Khadeeja's youngest son, Fuad that likely ensured my acceptance with his extended family, and eventually, the other villagers. He was about fourteen months and just walking when I began making regular and extended trips to Dhordo. During one of the earliest trips, made with two colleagues, I began playing
with him to free his mother to talk with my associates. A cheerful, adventurous toddler, I happily indulged him. Over time I became something like a favoured auntie to whom he would run if he was upset or just wanted attention. It gradually fell to me to help dress him and watch him during the day, distract his tears and divert his inquisitive fingers from my ever-present notebook. He provided a context and means to visit different houses as I occasionally chased him around the village. He also helped to ease some of the uncomfortableness of sitting with women with whom I could barely speak.

Though I seemed to be warmly accepted by the villagers in general, Wajeeha, Khadeeja’s mother, remained a cool, imposing figure seemingly unmoved by Fuad’s affection or my foreign novelty. As a guest of her husband’s family it fell to her to feed me my evening meal. Every night I would wait till one of the children summoned me then I would make my way to Wajeeha’s kitchen where a plate of steaming kidjri (boiled rice and mung beans) would be waiting. I hated being alone in the kitchen with her, the silent tension, my slow, self conscious efforts to eat with my right hand, Wajeeha’s bored? expression. Sometimes, if we were late or I was particularly slow, she would start her evening namaz behind me making me feel self conscious and intrusive. I always thanked her for the meal as I bolted out the door, glad to relax my must-be-on-my-best-behaviour stiffness.

All during that winter and early spring excitement was mounting in the village: Wajeeha was going to make the Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca). Although she was not the first Mutwa woman to do so, she would be one of the few and the first person in her husband’s family. She was scheduled to leave Dhordo the middle of March, spend a few days at the Haji Camp in Bombay, then fly to Saudia in time to encircle the Ka’aba (the large black cube around which Muslims circumambulate) on Bakri Id (the yearly commemoration of Abraham’s sacrifice). The trip would be made with two male relatives from an adjacent village and cost each of their families about Rs. 60,000— an impossible sum for most Mutwa. Wajeeha was calm and carried on with her daily round of chores as if nothing extraordinary was happening. Nevertheless around her the tension was mounting. The men held meeting after meeting to discuss the travel arrangements. New white cloth was purchased and sewn into Punjabi suits and odhnis (veils) for her-- the finished products passed around for the women to admire. I was quizzed about the train’s facilities (do they have lights? bathrooms?). Streams of visitors from the surrounding villages arrived to wish Wajeeha well and request that she offer their salaams to Mecca. Wajeeha’s youngest daughter-in-law barely left her kitchen for the weeks prior to Wajeeha’s departure, making round after round of chai (milky sweet tea) for the visitors.

On the appointed morning I arose, had my chai then proceeded to the side of Khadeeja’s house where I usually spent the morning hours writing or stitching. Across from Abbas’s bhungo and Wajeeha’s kitchen, it is, in many ways, the heart of the village and the place where Wajeeha’s extended family or female visitors gather to chat. The men were already busily dressing. Wajeeha, however, was hard at work. Squatting low, she was spreading the
courtyard with a new layer of chair garo, the dung and mud plaster she had prepared earlier that morning. Passers-by were careful not to step on the wet surfaces but didn’t interfere with her work nor appear surprised that she would be so engaged on the morning of her departure to the holiest site in Islam.

By mid morning Wajeeha had finished her work, bathed and changed clothes. I had wondered whether she would don one of her new white outfits and whether she would remove her jewellery as is customary for women making the Haj. She had decided, however, to travel to Bombay wearing her embroidery and with her jewellery in place—the only difference being the gathered trousers she replaced her long wrapped skirt with. Further changes, Khadeeja explained later, were deemed too difficult for the family to bear and would be made before flying to Saudia.

Family and friends clustered around Wajeeha. Their farewells and best wishes were moving—proud, plaudited yet touched with fear. Mecca is a long way from Dhordo and the journey is dangerous. Followed by her sons, Wajeeha entered the bhungo she shared with her husband to bid him goodbye. The old man was now often confined to his bed or a chair in the courtyard. Their goodbye was short. She reappeared momentarily to be led to the waiting Jeep, leaving behind the village women dabbing their eyes with the corners of their odhnis.

I had been invited to accompany Wajeeha as far as Gandhidam, where she would catch the evening train for Bombay. We piled into the Jeep and, after a brief stop in Gorewadi to pick up the two men also making the trip, drove to the main road where a truck had arrived and was filling up with Mutwa men. The Hajis were all seated in the Jeep: Wajeeha, unmoving, her odhni pulled closely around her, sat in the front between her youngest son, who was driving, and I. Whether I was sat there simply because I was the only other female, because I provided a useful shield against prying eyes, or whether my conspicuous foreignness added some caché to the proceedings or some combination of the above, I never discovered. I was simply glad to have been included.

After the hour and a half drive to Bhuj we stopped for lunch. The men gathered in a local Muslim restaurant while Wajeeha and I were dropped off at a friend’s house. As we assembled to resume our journey, another Jeep and a couple more trucks full of men arrived. A veritable convoy. Driving past the offices and the tea stands, the market stalls, the rows of rickshaws and taxis, the crowds making their way along Station Road, the men in the trucks waved their arms and yelled "Allahu Akbar!"—a scene jubilantly repeated as we passed through each small town enroute to the train. I shared their excitement and couldn’t help but smile to myself—this was such a proud moment for the Mutwa. Throughout it all Wajeeha remained quietly contained.

We arrived in Gandhidam just as the sun was setting. After stopping at a mosque for the men to do their first evening namaz, we proceeded to the station. I remained in the Jeep with Wajeeha while the men bought platform tickets and looked for the most secluded route to get her onto the train. After a few minutes her son reappeared and
led us around the side of the station through a hole in the fence, across the tracks and down the platform to the assigned compartment. The Hajis and immediate family members went aboard. Not sure whether I should follow, or what to expect next, I remained on the platform surrounded by the men. Just before the expected departure time they began to file, solemnly, onto the train and into the compartment to bid a final goodbye to the three Hajis. Basheer motioned for me to come also—inside I nodded to the two men then turned to Wajeela. My Kuchi abandoned me. I muttered something in English about how happy I was for her, my voice catching in my throat and my stinging eyes betraying emotions I hadn’t anticipated. Wajeela embraced me and, for the first time that I remember, beamed at me.

Pointing to the ethnocentrism frequently embedded in the reification of culture, Abu-Lughod, has recently recommended three methodological strategies for writing against culture (1991). The first strategy involves focusing on connections between the natives and the global village, but also between the ethnographer and the informant, selves and others. Recognising that 'they' have their own histories of travel (which I discuss in Chapter 2) is part of an effort to acknowledge their agency, their subject status in lives lived, not for us, not for the anthropological lens that spies them, but for themselves. They have their own experiences, views of the world, histories and, increasingly, histories of being studied by anthropologists that need to be examined. Attending connections between ethnographer and informant is, likewise, an acknowledgement of their agency not to mention their agendas in sharing/shaping the research. Abu Lughod notes, moreover, that

we need to ask questions about the historical processes by which it came to pass that people like ourselves could be engaged in anthropological studies of people like those, about the current world situation that enables us to engage in this sort of work in this particular place, and about who has preceded us and is even now there with us (tourists, travellers, missionaries, AID consultants, Peace Corps workers). We need to ask what this "will to knowledge" about the Other is connected to in the world (1991, p.148).

The rapport researchers develop with local people is influenced, positively or negatively, by that developed earlier with one's ethnographic predecessors. It is almost as if an invisible third party is present during fieldwork, influencing the research design and relations with the local people, especially where early ethnographers are still remembered by the locals. Perhaps they are remembered fondly, perhaps they were useful, or perhaps they were resented. During my visits to Dhordo I shared a cast of foreign characters with the Mutwa that spanned almost forty years and included a German anthropologist, several British textile scholars, an American author, and a
Norwegian researcher. I also shared the field with numerous foreign and domestic tourists. Kutch—removed and almost inaccessible from the traditional Indian tourist haunts—is aggressively marketed by Gujarat State Tourism as the site of 'authentic', uncharted, 'pre-touristic' folk culture—a slice-of-India-as-it-used-to-be. Arriving in growing numbers, the tourists spawn new industries, but also effect the Mutwa's relationship with embroidery and tradition, ultimately effecting their identity itself.

The second strategy for writing against culture Abu-Lughod recommends is to resist the timelessness, anonymity, objectification, irresponsibility, and imposed distance of generalisation. She calls for ethnographies of the particular, stressing the value of narrative ethnographies that are "open about their positionality, less assertive of their scientific authority, and more focused on particular individuals and families" (1991, p.152). This research focuses on the embroidery and women of the Mutwa-Morana women in the village of Dhordo. As I note above, it involved living with them and developing emotional bonds with them. I am not the first to claim to do so of course, but I do claim those bonds as a means of legitimate knowing that resists the usual objectification of selves and others (see Code, 1991). I have reported much of my research in the first person both in an effort to situate the data within the intimate context that shaped it and leave it open for re-analysis (see Harding 1987; Hawkesworth, 1989; Haraway, 1988). These efforts are also directed at illustrating my (limited) authority over the subject matter. The credibility of this work does not derive from the elegant seamlessness of its theoretical formulations, but the rich texture it evokes and its emotional poignancy.

Reading ethnographies now, I wonder where are the little voices and what is involved in ironing out the rumpled cacophony I always seemed to work through? My conversations with Khadeeja were not privileged affairs held in secluded spots, but inserted between other tasks and simultaneous conversations with children, guests, tourists or others often in different languages. I did not bring a video camera and I seldom used my tape recorder—not only did it stilt conversation and draw all too much attention from the children, I never knew when to turn it on.

The third strategy Abu-Lughod proposes, primarily influenced by Bourdieu, involves emphasising practice and discourse in an attempt to embrace the contradictions and breadth of 'real' life. Most of my time in Dhordo was spent with one or another of the Mutwa-Morana women stitching. Inspired by the growing social science attention to practice and experience (Csordas, 1990; Guédon, 1994; Young & Goulet, 1994)—themes that I am personally attracted to by virtue of
my background as a textile artist—I sought to learn about the Mutwa and about being a Mutwa woman through embroidery. The attention to practice is particularly important with respect to Islam as it has (non unproblematically) often been described as an "orthopraxy". Starrett (1995) has warned that the emphasis on Islamic practice risks undermining Islamic agency. My own emphasis is meant therefore, not to undermine or deny the thoughtfulness or willfulness of Mutwa women, but recover fine, lived-in, expressions of their agency.

Several ethnographers have heeded Jackson's (1983) early call for an embodied approach to learning, one that includes as data, the ethnographer's subjective and sensory experiences. Many of the scholars included in Coy's (1989) volume on apprenticeship cite Jackson's example. Apprenticeship itself has been demonstrated as a research technique particularly well suited to eliciting the shared but often unverbalised context and meaning of craft production (Dilley, 1987; 1989). Apprenticeship has yet, however, to be employed in a systematic way to uncover the potential technical, aesthetic, or social strategies embroiderers may employ.

Apprenticeship promises to be useful, moreover, in mapping 'refusals'. Mutwa women, no less than other women, are embedded in complex systems of power and authority. Although many have proposed various sites for the expression of women's resistance to domination (Messick, 1987; Scott, 1986), as Abu-Lughod has noted, women's power within the systems they are part of is often limited (1990). I have found Visweswaran's idea of "refusals" a useful means of marking Mutwa women's points of resistance. She notes that feminist ethnographers cannot assume the willingness of women to talk. Their silences, their refusal to be represented should be examined—not in order to promote a more invasive ethnography aimed at uncovering 'hidden truths', but as expressions of agency. She recommends examining

the silences among women as the central site for the analysis of power between them. We can begin to shape a notion of agency that, while it privileges speaking, is not reducible to it. My aim is to theorise a kind of agency in which resistance can be framed by silence, a refusal to speak (Visweswaran, 1994, p.51).

In the case of the Mutwa their agency is also framed by their refusal to be photographed and audiotaped. Acknowledging the inequalities between myself and the Mutwa as well as between the Mutwa themselves, their silence, their refusals may be less a matter of inconvenience, less a matter of reticence, less a matter of being silenced by Islamic men, than it is a matter of defiance, a refusal to be subjected, to be our, Western, kind of subject.
My research involved living with the Mutwa, observing them, participating as much as possible in their daily lives—negotiating, becoming part of (and occasionally falling victim to) local struggles, embracing their children, learning to embroider with them, like them, with my whole body in space and time. Inspired by Jackson and Coy, I have perhaps taken Burgess's (1982) suggestion that the researcher is the main tool or instrument of social science investigation more literally than most. This is, I believe, consistent with calls to make ethnography not only more reflexive, but more responsible and more sensitive to alternative forms of knowing and being. I conducted an informal embroidery apprenticeship learning the aesthetics and techniques of Mutwa embroidery, as well as something of what embroidery means to them. But my approach was also rooted in more traditional anthropological methods. It was most akin to what Holy has called "observant participation" (1984, p.29)—a shift from the participating observer that, while it emphasises the participatory, interactive aspects of data collection, is also grounded in careful, self conscious observation. I lived with the Mutwa, stitched with them, attended their weddings and other rituals (secular and sacred) where I examined social hierarchies, domestic economies, kinship relations, and the changing roles of women within the community.

This work examines the recent history of change and embroidery from Mutwa women's point of perspective—but it also reports my ethnographic journey, the two strains interdependent and intertwined. I have included a number of ethnographic sketches throughout the chapters in order to situate my knowledge and enhance the picture of the Mutwa I am crafting. These sketches also serve to introduce data for the recovery and reanalysis of the context of knowledge production (Harding,1987).

While the anonymity that often colours representations of folk artisans and their work is regrettable, and likely speaks to persistent ideas about timelessness, conservatism, and homogeneity (Price, 1989), I have chosen to use pseudonyms throughout this work. While I wish to acknowledge the skill, knowledge, and artistry of the women I lived and stitched with, this decision was made to protect their identity and respect their seclusion. Most Mutwa are called by one of a number of fairly common nicknames—names like Khadeeja, Firdoos, Maysoon, or Wajeeha. Although they suggested I use these nicknames, not all Mutwa have one, nor are they necessarily unrecognisable. I have used randomly selected Islamic names where appropriate.
CHAPTER SUMMARY

This thesis reports my attempts to recover the history of Mutwa embroidery. Based on my ethnographic research, it examines how Mutwa women are negotiating tradition and change, reinventing embroidery as they strive to engage the modern in their own terms. At the broadest level, it seeks to answer the question "why do Mutwa women embroider?" The question, however, is not as straightforward as it might seem. It recalls the rhetorical question posed by Nochlin, "Why are there no great women artists" (1971) seemingly begging, if not an universalist answer, a consensual, eternal one. Similarly, while Nochlin points to the knee-jerk reaction of attempting to answer the question in the form it was posed, privileging gender as a transparent determinant, "why do Mutwa women embroider?" seemingly privileges culture as an uncontested category.

In Chapter 1 I describe an 'odd' concurrence between Indian and Western writers and the stakes involved in promoting the timelessness, anonymity, and changeless of embroidery, rural peoples, and tradition generally. In Chapter 2 I introduce the Mutwa and note the major axes of change that are effecting their lives, changes that include (but cannot be reduced to) how the Mutwa have become increasingly connected to the outside world. Since the 60's visitors have arrived with increasing frequency—many in pursuit of embroideries, particularly the older, seemingly more 'authentic' examples. In Chapter 3, I describe Mutwa embroidery, noting how it has, traditionally, distinguished the Mutwa from their neighbours, defined domestic space and identified Mutwa women at different stages of their life-cycles. I also note how women have controlled its "social life"—its production, exchange and distribution (Appadurai, 1986). In Chapter 4 I examine the context of embroidering in Dhordo, noting its intimate connections with Mutwa women's bodies and how embroidery affects discipline. In Chapter 5, I describe the changes to Mutwa embroidery—changes which include shifting to a new level of commoditisation, the introduction of male embroidery designers, embroidery schools, and, eventually, a new corpus of meanings surrounding embroidery. These new or re-newed meanings are the topic of Chapter 6. I return to the connections between embroidery and women's bodies and propose how production is increasingly valued in connection with an evolving sense of Muslim identity. I also examine how embroidering for market has shifted relations of production and tended to concentrate certain power and privilege in the hands of a few women. Finally, in Chapter 7, I return to the question of identity, examining the Mutwa's altered sense of identity. I discuss how, given the context of dramatic changes described earlier, the relationship between embroidery and Mutwa identity is shifting—objectifying embroidery while reinvesting embroidering with renewed, moral value.
Anthropologists' recently renewed interest in the effects of history is not unprecedented; however, unlike earlier generations who tended to examine the effects of political change on culture, more recently, culture itself has been politicised through the process of history. Hobsbawm and Ranger, for example, have proposed that traditions are "invented", often during periods of rapid political transformation (1983). Contrary to the normative view that traditions are 'survivals' of the past, somehow invariant and timeless, the idea of 'invented' traditions exposes both their underlying historicity and politics. Tradition, as a particular type of historical account, or fiction (in the crafted, Geertzian sense), begs analysis as a system of ideological domination. Although the idea is evocative and sheds new light on hitherto unexamined motivations and cultural production, the project is not without its limitations. Dirks points to the "colonial resonance" of analyses that seek to expose the invented-ness of cultural traditions without necessarily acknowledging, either the effects of exposure, or the analyst's moral and historical agenda in doing so (Dirks, 1996, p. 40-41). He notes further that,

the effort to historicize tradition and custom can thus both expose the mystification of cultural hegemony and be appropriated by them. When historical methods are used as if the methods themselves are exempted from historical scrutiny and critique, history becomes a way of deauthenticating everything but its own authority, denigrating difference, and displacing the categories and logics of historical discourse (Dirks, 1996, p.41).

Moreover, the project risks reinscribing authenticity as something determined only by history (or historians) while it underestimates the effective potential of reinvented traditions to 'stand for' or represent cultural groups and cultural moments in real time.

With respect to material culture, the impact of the 'historical turn' in anthropology is no less significant or enlightening than it has been with respect to analyses of authority and social organisation. Indeed, collections of ethnographic and other objects have been examined in light of historical—particularly colonial—systems of domination and control (Chapman, 1985; Stocking, 1985; Duncan & Wallach, 1980). The politics of museum representation have been hotly debated (Karp & Lavine, 1991; Ames, 1986) particularly as the traditional 'subjects' of anthropology claim their rights to self determination, including the right to (re)present themselves (Ames, 1987; Phillips,
1989). The arts of traditional societies, including India, their aesthetics often impermeable to Western observers (Coomaraswamy, 1957; Mitter, 1977), are only more or less like familiar forms, more or less like art, and seldom able to overcome the imperialism implicit in their recontextualisation as Fine Art. Sally Price has pointed to the problematics of viewing so-called 'primitive art' in the West. She questions normative assumptions about timelessness and anonymity—exposing them more as reflections of a Western preoccupation with authenticity than the prerogatives of 'primitive' artists. She proposes that for Western audiences, the act of viewing primitive art is analogous to discovering or uncovering the primitive genius—reinscribing the viewer's authority over it (Price, 1989). She notes that

once we do not require our knowledge of the past to come to us in black-and-white pages of date-sprinkled texts... the historical dynamism of other peoples, as well as their memory of it and interest in it, are much greater than Western commentators have traditionally imagined (Prince, 1989, p.67).

The folk embroidery of Western India would seem to be particularly vulnerable to these 'traditionalising' effects. Both Western and Indian scholars have tended to romanticise embroidery—to see it as evidence of a golden past, degraded into the present. Although their aims and agendas differ, they appear to broadly concur in viewing folk embroidery, and the rural women who embroider, as relics, as conservative agents unwilling or unable to engage change or history in any creative or progressive sense.

Western impressions of folk embroidery—of India and elsewhere—are equivocal. Ironically we have a history of embroidery. Through the Victorian era embroidery was promoted as a particularly suitable means for poor women to earn an income. It was, however, increasingly viewed as a technological and ideological relic; feminised, it was associated with unskilled non-productive labour (Parker; 1984; Callen, 1980; Halpin, 1994). It was prescribed as a means for better-off women to offer financial assistance to the poor, the homeless, and to support missionary efforts overseas (Callen, 1980). Embroidery (and its ambivalence) was exported to the colonies, where missionaries employed it to help impoverished women, attract converts, and instil upon them proper Christian morals. At the close of the 19th century many British considered embroidery to be associated more with 'spare' time than 'real' time, domestic rather than public space, a craft rather than a fine art, and a hobby associated more with charity, therapy, or personal pleasure than 'real' work.
As Irwin has pointed out, from the 18th century, Western impressions of Indian textiles (including embroidery) tended to be coloured by admiration for their technical expertise if not their designs (1949; 1959; 1955). Professional embroiderers in Gujarat, for example, altered their colour schemes and designs specifically to suit the tastes of European consumers (Irwin, 1959). Folk embroidery does not appear to have garnered any more than the passing interest of early European collectors. Although many, particularly late in the 19th century were concerned about the fate of Indian handicrafts and their producers, their efforts to revive or promote handicrafts tended to focus on those associated with India's Great Traditions. Men including Birdwood, Jones, and Kipling, organised exhibitions, published catalogues, and ran new art schools, however they tended to focus on crafts traditionally produced for elite patrons by professionalised, usually male, craftspeople. Although the folk and India's Little Traditions were revered, particularly among Tagore's circle in Bengal, their impact was more inspirational than material. Although the folk, for example, inspired new art forms and a new Nationalist dialogue, they remained 'traditional,' speaking more to India's past than engaging its present (Guha Thakurta, 1992).

As Wolf has noted, after the Great Mutiny of 1857, the idea of 'tradition' took on new meaning for the British in India. Where earlier their attitudes towards their Indian subjects had been coloured by the idea of reform through the application of English liberal ideas, following the Mutiny and the distrust and animosity it inspired, the British sought to strengthen what they regarded as Indian traditions (Wolf, 1997, p.251-252). While ostensibly this applied to legal and political matters, by re-inscribing the importance of 'tradition', the British sought to undermine the new English-educated, Indian middle classes' efforts to change, and challenge the legitimacy of British rule. The British used 'tradition' to distinguish the authentic from the acculturated, celebrating the former at the expense of the latter. Hutchins has noted that 'real' Indians were (coincidentally) identified as those least threatening to British colonial rule—namely peasants, princes, and minority groups (1967, p.156). From the middle of the 19th century, colonial officials were employed in increasing numbers to document the variety of India's peoples, noting their political organisation, susceptibility to British influence, as well as their traditions. Their accounts were often informed by the idea that India was essentially, properly, changeless (Bayly, 1993).

Kapur has noted that in India, the idea of tradition "was put in the fray by 19th century nationalism" (2000, p.267). Like the British, the Indian Nationalists were engaged in the appropriation/re-invention of Indian tradition—however their aims were to demonstrate the
legitimacy of Indian culture rather than undermine it. Mahatma Gandhi initiated a reappraisal of the lower castes, of handicrafts, of women, and simple, moral village life. While similar ideas were promoted in Britain by Ruskin, Morris and others associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement\(^\text{10}\), the situation in India was always and necessarily more political. Gandhi's promotion of hand spinning and hand-woven cotton khadi cloth were potent symbols of India's previous pre-eminent position as a textile producer and her subsequent loss of autonomy (Bean, 1989; Bayly, 1986; Cohn, 1989). Hand spinning and khadi symbolically bridged the gaps between rural and urban, villager and townsperson, past and present. Kapur notes that, following Gandhi's example, the Nationalist's reappraisal of tradition was political, an act of resistance to British cultural, economic, and political domination designed to unite the Indian classes, to instil pride and demonstrate the legitimacy, longevity, and authenticity of Indian culture (2000). She notes further, that "received like patrimony, tradition has a heroic and authoritarian aspect" (Kapur, 2000, p.270).

Though useful in the context of Indian Nationalism, the concept of tradition they espoused was highly problematic. Coomaraswamy, for example, promoted the idea that Indian tradition was located in the pre-colonial past and was essentially spiritual (1957). Of the Indian craftsman, Coomaraswamy noted that he

conceives of his art, not as the accumulated skill of ages, but as originating in the divine skill of Visvakarma [lord of the arts], and revealed by him. Beauty, rhythm, proportion, idea have an absolute existence on an ideal plane, where all who seek may find. The reality of things exists in the mind, not in the detail or their appearance to the eye. Their inward inspiration upon which the Indian artist is taught to rely, appearing like the still small voice of a god, that god was conceived of as Visvakarma (1909/1989, p.47).

Havell, a British supporter of Indian Nationalism, equated Indian tradition especially with the arts and crafts. He consider them the only living arts of India, naturally and spontaneously growing like the industrial arts of the European middle ages (Havell in Guha-Thakurta, 1992, p.151). He also equated Indian tradition specifically with Hindu tradition— noting the "desecration and destruction" Muslims had effected (Ibid, p. 157).

Their views of Indian tradition were designed to challenge colonialism, challenge normative European views of Indian arts, and serve as a pro-Indian rallying point. However, in locating tradition in the past, specifically a Hindu past, and rendering Indian arts as primarily spiritual, they undermined the very history they sought to recover. While Coomaraswamy and Havell attempted to locate the authentic nature of Indian arts, they did so by essentialising them— removing them
from real time and place. While Havell, in particular, promoted the cause of Indian Fine Arts, bridging past and present, the experience of history, the impact of change and development was largely precluded. Their brand of Orientalism created a powerful equation between the ideas of 'art', 'tradition', and 'Indian-ness'. The image it projected of the Indian art tradition (as integrally linked with antiquity, religion and mystical philosophy) conditioned the wider image of India as an abstracted, essentialist entity, encapsulated within an idealised past (Guha-Thakurta, 1992, p.148).

While these appropriated traditions spoke to the Nationalist present, and even inspired their postcolonial future, the folk and their traditions—including embroidery—have rarely escaped the essentialising, if celebratory, discourses spawned by the various streams of Nationalist recuperation. While the folk were held up as the cultural heart and soul of India, their timelessness legitimised Nationalist's claims for cultural longevity and specificity. However, this version of 'tradition' was decidedly ahistorical and, while it appropriated the folk to their cause, did not necessarily challenge the structures that had marginalised them in the first place.

The folk embroidery of western India would seem to be particularly vulnerable to these effects. There are parallel traditions of embroidery practice in India. One involves urban, professional, usually male, embroiderers who catered to the nobility or who, following the arrival of the Europeans, embroidered for export. These embroideries are often intricate, highly formalised, and may include precious materials (i.e. gold wrapped threads, gemstones). Although technical knowledge was handed down from one generation to the next, certain techniques were considered the prerogative of specific occupational groups. Folk embroidery, alternatively, appears to be not one tradition but many as various groups of mainly rural agriculturists, pastoralists, and horticulturists produced their own distinctive styles of embroidery. While there is no universal consensus regarding media, distribution, and gender, folk embroidery in western India tends to be produced by women, in the home, of non-precious (even recycled) materials, draws on knowledge and skills widely available, and is mainly geared for domestic consumption.

The richness and variety of Kutch's folk embroidery has been widely noted (Irwin & Hall, 1973; Dongerkerry, 1951; Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1986; Gillow & Barnard, 1991; Chattopadhyay, 1977). They are featured in several Indian and foreign collections as well as numerous exhibitions and catalogues (Elson, 1979; Hacker and Turnbull, 1982). While Elson (1979; 1991), Jain (1980) and Nanavati et al (1966) have documented the rich variety of folk embroideries found in Kutch,
their descriptions of styles and techniques provide little contextual information. Only Frater's work among the Hindu Rabari offers some insight into the history of embroidery and the cultural meanings surrounding it in Kutch (1975; 1992; 1995). Frater's efforts aside, these accounts tend to describe and classify embroidery stitches and motifs largely without reference to the embroiderers or the specific cultural traditions that support and give meaning to them.

In spite of the attention garnered by folk embroideries in Kutch, its cultural history has remained largely unrecorded and unexamined except for the cursory observations of occasional British civil servants and visitors (MacMurdo, 1820; M. Postans, 1839) or Census of India officials (G. Patel, 1971). The Black Hills of Kutch (1958/1981), though almost the sole volume dedicated to the history of Kutch and a useful treatise on its political fortunes, sheds little information on the lives of its people. Kutch tends to be overlooked in the numerous accounts that propose to examine the history and culture of Gujarat State despite merging with it in 1960. In contrast to mainland Gujarat, which is well represented ethnographically, Kutch has only rarely been examined by anthropologists (Westphal-Hellbusch, 1965).

These 'characterising' accounts of folk embroidery, and the fact that Kutch is barely represented historically or ethnographically, suggests a broad discursive concurrence between Western and Indian writers. Although both have (different) stakes in promoting the timelessness and anonymity of tradition, they collude in celebrating Kutchi folk embroideries, at the expense of history and the women who make it. To the extent change is acknowledged, it is denigrated; the 'new' dismissed as derivative and inauthentic rather than progressive.

MOVEMENT AND DIFFERENCE

Anthropologists' renewed interest in history has encouraged reflection on their 'subjects' own histories of travel, trade, and contact. As Wolf (1982/1997), Taussig (1980), and, more recently, Clifford (1992) have pointed out, even peoples in seemingly isolated corners of the world travel and are tied into historic, economic, even political circles that go beyond, sometimes way beyond, the local. Kutchi people were, traditionally, engaged in extensive foreign and international trade. Kutchi merchants engaged in, among other ventures, slave trading between East Africa, Kutch and the Hijaz. The descendants of slaves brought to Kutch before it was banned in the mid 19th century, remain, locally known as the Sidis (from Abyssinian) (J. Patel, 1991). Cotton, sugar, rice, and ghee (clarified butter), were traded overseas for wood, ivory, and spices which were carried
overland to markets in Sindh, Marwar, and Delhi (see Appendix I). The Mutwa were immigrants to
the region they now occupy, arriving some 10 generations back. Before Partition they shifted back
and forth across what would become the border, hence their identity is hyphenated, multiple and
defies compression.

It is important to avoid privileging territory in discussions of identity since subjects, like the
Mutwa, are not bound to a single, specific location. This is, as Appadurai has pointed out, all the
more important as the pace, frequency and purposes of travel shift, as communications networks
expand, creating newly imagined and highly permeable cultural boundaries. Landscapes become
"ethnoscapes" in Appadurai's terminology, shifting, changing, expanding and littered with
preconceptions. He notes that ethnographers must confront

the changing social, territorial, and cultural reproduction of group identity. As
groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and
reconfigure their ethnic "projects" the ethn in ethnography takes on a slippery,
nonlocalized quality to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to
respond. The landscapes of group identity—the ethnoscapes—around the world
are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer
tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious or culturally

This spacial slippery-ness has important implications for an ethnography of rural people and
change. Straining the normative notions of the 'field' as discrete, bounded, and fixed, the idea of
ethnoscapes encourages attention to connections—historically and politically. Recent scholarship
has suggested the very potent role of the imagination in forging identities, large and small
(Anderson, 1983) suggesting an avenue for the recovery of subaltern agency (see below). Identity is
perhaps less inherent, than it is creatively imagined between different poles, peoples, and places—
"coalitional" according to Visweswaran (1994). The Mutwa negotiate identity between the real (i.e.
material) and the ideological, the proximate and the imagined, between traditions, practices, and
histories and an evolving sense of being Muslim (in India) and being better Muslims.

Acknowledging the fluidity of cultural boundaries calls into question the whole notion of
culture itself. Culture, as Abu-Lughod notes, has too often implied "coherence, timelessness and
discreteness" (1991, p. 147). Moreover, culture is

the essential tool for making other. As a professional discourse that elaborates on
the meaning of culture in order to account for, explain, and understand cultural
difference, anthropology also helps construct, produce, and maintain it.
Anthropological discourse gives cultural difference (and the separation between groups of people it implies) the air of the self-evident (ibid, p.143).

While I situate Abu-Lughod's comments within broader postcolonial, postmodern debates concerning anthropology and subjects—they also impinge on the positionality of anthropologists themselves. She notes that increasing numbers of previously colonised peoples are engaging anthropology and using it to study 'others' who are not quite so. She calls them "halfies"—anthropologists with links to two (or more) cultures that are both inside and outside of the cultures they study. These poly-cultural anthropologists challenge the distinctions between anthropologists and their subjects—not collapsing them, but by pointing to connections and continuity as much as difference. Narayan, a tri-cultural anthropologist, points out that her ethnography of storytelling in Gujarat is not a discovery of the exotic, but a "deepening of the familiar" (Narayan, 1989, p.9). While anthropologists have been described as 'cultural brokers' engaged in rendering the unknown, familiar (Geertz, 1960), Narayan challenges the distinctions of subject and object, and the authority implicit in them. Her authority is not linked to some special insider's privilege, but demonstrated in the connections she forges and familiarity she plumbs. This resists the inevitable stratification of insider and outsider views. Abu-Lughod argues for writing against culture, against naming names and enforcing "separations that inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy" (1991, p.138). The goal of anthropology, she claims, should not be to displace differences nor galvanise them, but to uncover more of them, grounding our generalisations in particulars.

MUSLIM/WOMAN/SUBJECTS

In South Asia the urgency of acknowledging politics, specifically relations of power and domination, has been argued many scholars, notably the Australian-based, Subaltern Studies Group. Guha's seminal work on the historiography of colonial India (1988) points to the elitist biases of normative histories of the period and calls for histories of the oppressed or "subaltern" peoples of India. Pointing specifically to histories of Indian nationalism that privilege the Indian elites' roles as instigators and agents, he notes that they fail to explain nationalism for the mass movement that it was. "What clearly is left out of this un-historical historiography is the politics of the people" (Guha, 1988, p.40). Spivak adds that the Group attempts to locate the agency of change in the subaltern. Eliciting that agency apparently involves examining at least two important points

first, that the moment(s) of change be pluralized and plotted as confrontations rather than transition (they would thus be seen in relation to histories of domination
and exploitation rather than within the great modes-of-production narrative) and, secondly, that such changes are signalled or marked by a functional change in sign-systems (Spivak, 1988, p.3).

Within the social sciences attempts to deconstruct hegemonic claims to Truth have focused on interpretation, and inspired by Geertz (1973), the creative, even generative role of the ethnographer (Clifford, 1988; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Cushman, 1982). Ethnographies, seen as inherently partial and fictive, are seemingly politically neutralised. However, their aims to replace Truth with truths, blur subject/object distinctions and undermine claims to authority, are problematic from the point of view of the subaltern, particularly subaltern women. The "new" ethnography, has been criticised for its true-for-you circumscription of authority, for reinscribing difference, and posing its own Truth claim (Harstock, 1987; Masia-Lees et al., 1989). Masia-Lees et al. note the irony of promoting an alternative, equally hegemonic non-truth, destabilising and relativising the claims of women and non-western peoples, precisely at the time when they are beginning to proclaim themselves as subjects (1989, p.15).

These postmodern debates about the viability of subjects and objects undermine the possibility of situated subjects, differently constituted. While some suggest various “tactical” humanisms aimed at reinvesting the politically expedient notion of subjects with at least partial authority (N. Kumar, 1994), others have boldly deconstructed it. Spivak points to how women of the third world must seemingly choose between opposing, mutually exclusive and excluding options determined from without. In her famous essay Can the Subaltern Speak, Spivak examines the polemical discourses surrounding sati and concludes that the subaltern cannot speak. She notes they are trapped between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, [hence] the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the "third-world woman" caught between tradition and modernization (Spivak, 1988, p.306).

Butler concurs, noting that the notion of the subject has masqueraded as a logical foundation, a universal (1992). She aims, therefore, at deconstructing the notion, interrogating "what the theoretical move that establishes foundations authorises, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses” (Butler, 1992, p. 7). Furthermore, she states that to take the construction of the subject as a political problematic is not the same as doing away with the subject: to deconstruct the subject is not to negate or throw away the concept; on the contrary, deconstruction implies only that we suspend all commitments to that to which the term, “the subject,” refers, and that we consider
the linguistic functions it serves in the consolidation and concealment of authority. To deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously has not been authorised (Butler, 1992, p. 15).

While anthropologists have traditionally examined the lives of marginal peoples—Dirks and Spivak seem to suggest above that they have not always examined them as marginalised subjects capable of acting in their own best interests—of exercising agency. Indeed, claiming their status as subjects has proved problematic for marginalised peoples, particularly non-western women who must struggle not only against patriarchy, but cultural imperialism. The specificity of, for example, South Asian women's goals and priorities, not to mention their particular experiences of history, power, and domination have often been overlooked, or worse, undermined, by benevolent if universalist-minded Western feminists (H. Moore, 1988; Reiter, 1975; Mohanty, 1987; 1988; Amos & Parmer, 1984; Lazreg, 1988). Third world women are

automatically and necessarily defined as: religious (read 'not progressive'), family oriented (read 'traditional'), legal minors (read 'they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights'), illiterate (read 'ignorant'), domestic (read 'backward') and sometimes revolutionary (read 'their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war; they-must-fight') (Mohanty, 1988 p. 80).

And they continue to be discursively colonised. Mohanty argues that the 'third-world woman' is largely a Western construct, created and maintained through colonial forces, which serve, not only to disempower women of the so-called third world, but to further the needs and aims of the Western scholars who perpetrate them. Recalling Said's arguments for the necessity of Western constructions of the Orient as 'other' and inferior (1979), she notes that

it is only in so far as 'Woman/Women' and 'the East' are defined as Others, or as peripheral, that (western) man/Humanism can represent him/itself as the centre. It is not the centre that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the centre (Mohanty, 1988, p. 81).

While a politics of difference has captured the imagination of feminists and ethnographers alike who strive for poly-vocality in their texts (Harding, 1987; H. Moore, 1988), the concept of difference is still often tethered to notions of relative sameness, rank and ranking (Abu-Lughod, 1991). We are presented with other subjects, not different subjects.

Claiming themselves as subjects has been particularly challenging for Muslim women. As Abu-Lughod has noted, they must seemingly choose between remaining true to their faith or their gender (1998; see also Lazreg, 1988). Muslim women have also tended to be portrayed as relatively
passive victims rather than subjects, who, while still frequently dominated, also contribute, resist, or react to the processes and ideologies they are part of. As Lazreg has written of accounts of Algerian women by Western feminists, Islam is held as the essential and determining feature of their difference, hence Islam is guilty of preventing them from being more like 'us' (Western feminists). She notes the prejudice levelled at Islam by Western scholars who tend to view it as monolithic, impervious to change, and incapable of critical self reflection, adding that

although religion is seen in Western societies as one institution among many, it is perceived as the bedrock of the societies in which Islam is practised. A ritual is established whereby the writer appeals to religion as the cause of gender inequality just as it is made the source of underdevelopment in much of modernization theory (Lazreg, 1988, p.85-86).

Though Muslim women have been the objects of, by now, intense academic scrutiny, they clearly do not always meet ‘our’ expectations, nor fit into the subject space constructed to contain them. They remain ‘other,’ ‘unknowable,’ ‘unfathomable.’ Their voices have remained largely unrecorded, unheard, their silence an apparent testimony of their oppression. Witness early feminists efforts to “give voice” and un-veil Muslim women as if, impediments aside, they could achieve the equivalent status, the equivalent subjecthood as Western feminists (Lazreg, 1988). As Bhattacharya (1992) and Neuburger (1997) claim some Western feminists have fixated on veils as the symbol of Muslim women’s oppression, ignoring (until recently) Muslim interpretations of veils, their relationship with nationalism, Islamic identity, solidarity, and anti-westernism. They have also largely ignored the discussion Papanek (1982) initiated with her theory of the separation and symbolic shelter veiling provides leaving unexplored the fashionability of veils (historically, aesthetically), how they denote, beautify, identify, embody, sanctify, conceal and reveal and how they amplify and extend body gestures, and body meanings that are, heterogeneously, Muslim.16

Ahmad (1976; 1981), Z. Hasan (1994) and Haniff (1983) note a similaressentialising tendency in accounts on Indian Muslims generally by both Western and Indian scholars. Muslims in India tend to be seen as a monolithic community with an irreducible interest in self-identity deriving from the community’s commitment to an absolute Islam. This monolithic character is supposed to shape their world view and the community’s fundamental religious commitments, overriding all others (Z. Hasan, 1994, p.ix).

While all Muslims adhere to the Five Pillars of faith, Islam comprises not only a set of broadly shared spiritual beliefs, but a way of life and a way of being which reflects cultural differences
(Cragg & Speight, 1980; Esposito, 1988). As Islam spread to India with Arab traders in the seventh century, it assumed a unique character that is at once formal, as derived from Islamic texts, and proximate, validated by custom (Ahmad, 1981, p.5). Hence, the assumed homogeneity of Muslims in India obscures the fact that, despite brief periods of political unity forged between Muslims in the face of perceived threats to their "community," they are diverse. They are divided according to criteria that reflect their Islamic heritage and accommodation to the Indian cultural environment. They are divided according to whether they are Sunni or Shi'ite, of ashraf (noble) or non-ashraf birth, of foreign or indigenous descent, fundamentalist, conservative, or liberal, as well according to language, political affiliations, class, economics, and caste. They are also distinguished according to Islamization. Like its conceptual cousin, Sanscritization, Islamization involves a general trend toward federation, reform, and political participation. Reform... entails a combination of traditional high practices and prestigeful modern ways. Reform among Muslim villagers particularly, means a greater observance of their religious traditions and so there has been a marked turning toward Islamic practices and symbols (Mandelbaum, 1970, p.558).

The perceived homogeneity of Islam noted above is probably related to the idea that Islamization is a discrete process. However, as Mandelbaum notes, Islamization is related both to esteemed Islamic practices and "prestigeful modern ways," consequently specific aims and aspirations are likely to differ widely. Although Mandelbaum discusses Islamization in relation to caste or jati groups, I suspect individual and family groups attempt to enhance prestige in similar ways.

While it is important to recognise the divisions between Muslims in India, it is also important to recognise that a certain amount of overlap exists between Muslims and Hindus. Ahmad (1978) has pointed out, for example, that many Hindus, particularly among the lower service castes, converted to Islam yet retained many of their beliefs, practices, and social structures. Consequently, many local customs, despite efforts by religious reformers (Lateef, 1990; Metcalf, 1982; Minault, 1986), remain syncretic in nature (see E. Moore, 1993; Burman, 1996). Caste, for example, although not sanctioned by Islam, is a feature of Muslim life in India (Misra, 1963; Aggarwal, 1978). Like the Hindu caste system, it tends towards endogamy, occupational specialisation, and hierarchical ordering, however, it is based on descent rather than ritual purity. While Dumont (1966/1980) suggests that caste was a compromise Muslims made to the Hindu majority in India, I. Ahmad claims that caste reinforced pre-existing Islamic, even pre-Islamic, ideas regarding birth and bloodlines. Hence, "caste, sect, religion are the three main primordial identities...

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in terms of which a Muslim may see himself [sic] in Indian society" (I. Ahmad, 1978, p.15)—identities neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily segregating Hindus and Muslims.

Conspicuously absent from I. Ahmad's corpus on Indian Muslims is an analysis of Muslim women. This is unfortunate since many of the books and articles claiming to represent Muslim women tend to be less sensitive than Ahmad's to the variations and specificity of Islamic practice and belief in India. The general absence of Muslim women from the ethnographic record on India has been noted (Haniff, 1983; Papanek & Minault, 1982; Anjum, 1992). Papanek (1982) points out that because of the practice of excluding women called purdah male ethnographers have not usually had access to Muslim women. However, they are obscured by more than the purdah or curtain Muslim women are said to live behind.

Muslim women in India were the frequent objects of investigation during the 19th and early 20th century reform movements. The situation of Muslim women, their legal rights, education, and ritual observances were debated largely without their input (R. Kumar, 1993). By the early 20th century, upper class and educated Muslim women began taking matters into their own hands—agitating for women's rights, publishing their own magazines, and opening girl's schools (Minault, 1981; 1982; 1986; Forbes, 1981; 1982; Lateef, 1990). Hambly (1998), Tharu & Lalita (1991), and R. Kumar (1993) have examined their long history of political and economic involvement, patronage, activism, and self-expression. Other accounts focus on women's roles or legal status within a narrowly interpreted Islamic framework speaking for or about Muslim women (Nanda, 1976; S. Roy, 1979). Others have examined the effects of essentialising discourses on Muslim women and how they have been used as symbols to uphold or undermine the moral authority of Islam particularly in the communally charged atmosphere following the Shah Bano case and the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, in the state of Uttar Pradesh in 1992 (Calman, 1992; Kapur & Cossman, 1993; Mani, 1990; Lateef, 1990; Bacchetta, 1994; Chhachhi, 1994).

Though many of these scholars have acknowledged the need for expanding the ethnographic record on Muslim women in India—examining their particular subjecthood—few have risen to the challenge. Although many have described Muslim women's lives, their descriptions are often restricted by physical the space of purdah—women's lives are not seen within broader historical or political contexts (Nath, 1981; Fruzetti, 1981). Eglar's (1960) analysis of women's exchange networks in the Punjab stands as an exception, offering important insights into women's political networks. Similarly, Jeffery's account of women and purdah in Delhi...

Metcalf's analysis offers insight into Islamic moral philosophy and suggests dimensions of Muslim women's subjecthood. Her analysis of the concepts 'aql and nafs and especially adab are significant. Adab is often translated as deportment or propriety however, Metcalf notes the term's meaning is both richer and more metaphysical than the English translation suggests. Adab can also be translated as 'esteemed behaviour', behaviour that is morally affective. She points out that for Muslims one's inner and outer life are thought to be continuous, hence good deeds and good habits enhance one's spiritual development. Anyone is capable of spiritual realisation which is "possible only through full experience of that ordinary or everyday life" (Metcalf, 1990/1992). Self control and discipline are important and are instilled through the development of good habits, good thoughts, and correct behaviour. Muslims describe 'aql as reason or the faculty of moral discrimination shared with the angels. The nafs, alternatively, is the faculty shared with animals and is considered associated with the wilful, carnal soul (Metcalf, ibid). One's true calling is to suppress the nafs with 'aql through the development of good habits and adab. Women are popularly thought to be more vulnerable to the effects of nafs however, women, no less than men, are thoughtful agents who can enhance their spiritual realisation and sawab (spiritual rewards).

Inspired by Spivak, I locate the agency for change in the Mutwa and see change, less as (unconscious) "transition", more as multiple, often contradictory, "confrontations". This effectively shifts the impetus for change from strictly outside ('inevitable') forces to the subalterns themselves, to their interaction of inside and outside. It is a shift that acknowledges both their agency as well as the effects of political domination. In order to understand and situate Mutwa women's agency, I focus on changes to embroidery, changes authored by women in response to a variety of political
and economic shifts. I examine their changing relationship with embroidery, as well as how it has been altered aesthetically, productively and distributively.

Cloth and the stylistic changes that it often embodies, have been discussed as indicative of important political and economic shifts. Schneider notes that while "some understandings of style obscure this link, in particular the ones that view style as the homogenous and uncontested expression of a discrete culture's worldview, or as propelled by its own logic," her own view follows that of Meyer Schapiro. For Schapiro "political and economic shifts in great transregional systems of interaction are accompanied or followed by shifts in the centres of art and their styles" (Schapiro in Schneider, 1987, p.409). In my own analysis of Mutwa embroidery, I see change as continuous, as a continuous reflection and response to the 'new', mediated by each generation of embroiderers. As they adopted new materials, for example, they developed new ideas about what to embroider or how. Although these (often subtle) changes were negotiated amongst received aesthetic ideas, they nevertheless speak to generational embroidery fashions. Other, more dramatic shifts to embroidery admittedly point to more profound moments of economic or political change. In recent years, embroidery, for example, has shifted to accommodate new markets as well as new ideas about embroidery and meaning.

Another area I have found useful for recovering the history of embroidery and women's roles in it has involved examining the social life of embroidery. Appadurai (1986) has noted that normative economic theories render gift and commodity exchange as opposing and mutually exclusive. He suggests that they are coloured by ethnocentric notions regarding the use-value of objects and the means of exchange and are marked by "the proclivity to marginalize and underplay the calculative, impersonal and self-aggrandizing features of noncapitalist societies" (1986, p.11). They are coloured; moreover, by romantic ideas regarding the noble savage whose forms of exchange are based on "love" or "altruism" (Appadurai, 1986; see also Weiner, 1976; 1993). Furthermore he notes that commoditization has tended to be viewed as a discrete process of change involving the inevitable alienation of producers and products (Appadurai, 1986). These ideas tend to reinforce the opposition of tradition and change, collapsing history, foreclosing the possibility of recovery or even alternative outcomes, and pre-empting the agency of, in this case, folk art producers.

To counter these tendencies, Appadurai suggests that all objects have commodity potential and can move into and out of different phases of commoditization. It is, he notes, the movement
of things that illuminate "their human and social context" (1986, p.5) and reveals the role that politics play in mediating value and exchange (see also Weiner, 1993). For Mutwa embroidery, privileging the recent shift to production for market, and positing change as a function of (this) commoditisation, undermines the Mutwa's specific history of change and exchange (internally and externally). Rather, by focusing on what Appadurai has termed the "social life" of an object—its production, exchange, and use—the whole trajectory of embroidery is recovered, encouraging a more finely nuanced understanding of Mutwa embroidered strategies.

CLOTH AND EMBROIDERY IN INDIA

Since the early 1970's, folk arts, particularly folk textiles, have received considerable scholarly and popular attention. Studies from this period tend to be coloured by assumptions that cloth and cloth production are "feminine" and discriminated against by patriarchy—factors which were used to explain the absence of women and textiles from the history of art (Parker & Pollock, 1981; Parker, 1984; Mainardi; 1973/1982; "Women's traditional," 1978; Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987). Although Rosaldo (1980) pointed to culturally variable expressions of gender, noting, for example how domestic space is not, universally, posited as feminine, cross cultural studies of women and textiles betray an often ethnocentric privileging of gender as an explanatory category. Textiles are seen rather unproblematically as 'feminine' condensing understanding.

The relationship between women and textiles would appear to itself particularly well to structural analysis. The differences between men and women have often been discussed in relation to the differences between speaking or writing and weaving or embroidering (March, 1983; Berlo, 1991). The cloth structure, the weaving process, and the symbols used to embellish it have been argued to reflect/affect the structural integrity of cultural life—particularly in Indonesia (Adams, 1980; Gierhart-Matin, 1985). The process of weaving has also frequently been examined and compared to childbirth (Messick, 1987; Prechtel Carlsen, 1988). While insightful and elegant, these structuralist analyses tend to privilege gender as essentially oppositional, while reducing the possibility of alternatives. While textiles and women are closely connected in many cultures, they are neither inherently, nor universally so. Hence, my own analysis is concerned less with the appropriateness of embroidery for Mutwa women than how women appropriate it.

More recent studies of women and textiles are increasingly sensitive to issues of difference and agency. Just as gender has been demonstrated to be culturally constructed and politically
situated, so too textiles. Several studies examine cloth as a potential site and means for the expression and accumulation of power for women. Berlo, for example, discusses the "aesthetic strategies" Latin American women employ investing meaning in textiles and expressing women's concerns with "tradition, transmutation", and "modernism" (1991, p. 438). Similarly, in her 1993 keynote address to the American Ethnological Society, Weiner proposed examining how objects, including cloth, "limit or expand the possibilities for gender-based power, status, and hierarchy" (1993, p.395). Weiner's research on cloth and exchange in the South Pacific suggests how women manipulate exchanges in their own best interests. Schneider has examined the role of cloth consumption and production in the expression of identity, the consolidation of social relations, and the mobilisation of power (Schneider, 1987; 80).

As Gittinger has noted "India had more than two millennia of growing, handling, and processing of cotton before any other areas of significant cotton cultivation developed in the Old World" (1982, p.16). Not only did this contribute to the development of highly refined skills and extensive trade networks; it fostered a unique complex of cultural meanings surrounding textiles in India. Cloth is implicated in, for example, the expression and manifestation of cultural identity. In India professional cloth production, like other crafts, is associated with specific occupational castes who share a common identity, status, and lifestyle (Gupta & Channa, 1996; N.Kumar, 1988; Patra, 1965; R. Trivedi, 1968).

Through gift-giving, cloth in India expresses and maintains social hierarchies. Raheja notes that members of a dominant Hindu land-owning caste in a village in Uttar Pradesh give gifts of cloth and food not only as a means of payment for services rendered but to remove inauspiciousness. The mandatory acceptance of these potentially polluting gifts engenders subordination (Raheja, 1988). Eglar (1960) and Rahat (1981) describe how women's gift giving in the Punjab, frequently include cloth in presentations made to friends and kin on the occasions of birth and marriage. Cloth is a noted important element in a woman's dowry (Wadley, 1994; Frater, 1975; Edwards, 1996; Eglar, 1960). Elson notes that in Kutch, embroidery for dowry is produced by the potential bride, her mother, friends, and relatives. She notes that this strengthens social ties amongst the contributors and expresses the bride's "value" to her family and in-laws (1991, p.65). Seen in the context of Eglar's suggestions above, the bride's "value" may have as much to do with the wealth and variety of her dowry and her apparent industriousness, as it does with the network of potential supporters she may exchange gifts with.
Cloth in India also manifests hierarchies. The Moghul emperors, for example, used to present special robes of honour (khilat) which had come in contact with their bodies to favoured nobles, transforming them into extensions of the emperor's body (Richards, 1978). As Cohn notes clothes are not just body coverings and adornments, nor can they be understood only as metaphors of power and authority, nor as symbols; in many contexts clothes literally are authority (1989, p.313).

Cohn examines the relationship between cloth and authority in India—a relationship that was often misunderstood by the British colonisers (1983; 1989). It is a relationship, examined in depth by Bayly (1986), built on long standing assumptions regarding the transformative ability of cloth. Soft, malleable, and porous, it is thought capable of absorbing and transmitting bio-moral essences (see also Dar, 1969). This is illustrated by recent ethnographic research. Mehta notes that a group of North Indian Muslims perceive the patchwork quilts their women make to have a male and female side depending on the source of the scraps used. Because these scraps of cloth are thought to acquire "vigour," men refuse to sit on what they consider the female side of the quilts (D. Mehta, 1997, p.154). Bean's (1989) examination of Gandhi's use of the hand spun and handloomed cloth called khadi, points out that its success as a symbol of Indian nationalism was due, in no small part, to its transformative potential (Bean, 1988; Tarlo, 1996). The physical process of production is also meaningful and has been implicated in the maintenance of social and cosmological relations. D. Mehta notes, for example, that for the Ansari, weaving techniques establish rhythms of interactions that transform the physical movements of the body into externally visible and transmissible statuses of social relationships. In their widest sense, the techniques of weaving embody and personify the social world of both the weaver working at the loom and the worker providing services to it, and simultaneously express such a world (D. Mehta, 1997, p.75).

Where these studies provide important and sensitive insights into the meaning of cloth in India generally, women's roles in production and what the textiles specifically associated with them mean have yet to be examined. Existing accounts of Indian folk embroidery have tended to remain oddly insulated from considerations of gender and agency. Though accessing folk embroiderers and recovering their often muted discourses is challenging, as I have argued above, their analysis is hindered by a concurrence of Western and Indian values which, for different reasons, view the folk as ahistorical. Consequently, existing accounts of folk embroidery in India tend to locate meaning in symbolic form or pry it loose with functionalist arguments. While these analyses are not invaluable, they are limited in the extent to which they illuminate the interests of cultural insiders.
CHAPTER 2: THE MUTWA OF BANNI

Humanity! Truly We have created you male and female and made you to be nations and tribes in order that you might know each other. Truly the noblest among you in God’s sight are those who fear Him most. God knows and observes all (Surah 49.13).

COMINGS AND GOINGS

The first time I met the Mutwa was at a wedding. I had barely arrived in Kutch when Mushrif, a local textile dealer, asked if I wished to accompany him and some colleagues to what he promised would be a very important wedding. Hosted by Mutwa Abbas, considered the ‘king’ or big man of the area called Banni and head of the Mutwa clan, the wedding of his son, Basheer, would be attended by guests from all over Kutch. It was an opportunity too good to miss.

October 1992

We went by taxi. Abbas’s village, Dhordo, was about 80 kms north-west of Bhuj— the last half of it along a barely paved, deeply potholed road. As we approached the village the sun was just setting, turning the dust filled air thick and pink. Beyond the cloned Ambassador taxis, Jeeps, and pedestrians clogging the road I made out an enormous tent lit with a galaxy of bulbs and neon tubes. Music blared. We managed to manoeuvre our way to the tent’s entrance where we were led inside and sat on an eclectic collection of chairs, men on one side, women on the other. The young groom sat beside his father looking apprehensive and thin. His father, surrounded by local dignitaries, looked vigorous and stately. From the dimly lit burgundy depths of the tent I could just make out the figures of hundreds of men and boys.

Greetings were offered. Water was brought. We were videotaped, the camera light dissecting us with its brilliant intensity. After a few minutes I joined a group of women headed towards Abbas’s house where his daughter and other women had gathered. Unable to cope with the strain, the power failed. Basheer came with a flashlight to escort us past the makeshift partition and through a whitewashed maze opening onto a crowded courtyard. There before me in the warm candlelight were the Mutwa women, brilliantly dressed and glittering. Red and pink, green and gold the atmosphere was heady, seductive, embracing. Khadeeja was seated in the middle of the courtyard displaying her brother’s gifts to the bride— the centre of attention in a glittering constellation of women drawn forward to view the gifts and the visitors arranged nearest them.

I was sat, wedged between the local gynaecologist and a government administrator’s wife— the former
interpreting 'them' for an 'us' that clearly included she and I. Little did she know that, to me at the time, she was only slightly less of a marvel than the women surrounding us. Khadeeja sat with a small child clutching her side, chatting with the guests, showing the gifts, unmoved and calm (ill. 2.1). The gynaecologist pointed out that Khadeeja was Muslim and already the mother of six children—a statement I'm not sure was meant (simply) to inform, to condemn, or commend. I couldn't imagine my life with six children and in any case I was more interested in photographing the women, their embroidery, and capturing the beauty and exhilaration I was witnessing, I felt.

**TALES OF WHO**

One of my early trips to Dhordo was made with Professor Anne Morrell and Dr. Archanna Choksi with the aim of interviewing Mutwa Abbas and his daughter Khadeeja on the techniques and origins of Mutwa embroidery. We met in Abbas's bhungo, the old man reclining on his bed. Archanna directed her questions in Gujarati to Abbas while Khadeeja, Anne, and I listened quietly. Various family members came and went during the interview. Abbas spoke at length on the history of the Mutwa, with little prompting from Archanna. After twenty minutes or so, he sank back into his pillows and lit a cigarette. With nothing further to add, we shifted out attention to Khadeeja and the techniques of Mutwa embroidery.

During my subsequent fieldwork I would occasionally ask the women to tell me how the Mutwa came to Banni—they always referred me to Abbas. Though I had, by then, read the translated interview with Archanna, I hoped to elicit further insights, further details about their past. Interviewing Abbas by myself had proved frustrating. Whenever I went to see him, the other women disappeared. My Kutchi made no impression on him (he always responded in Hindi) so that without Firdoos or Khadeeja (my principle translators and informants), my visits were strained and quiet. However, one warm winter day when I was sitting in the sun with Khadeeja and Firdoos, Abbas ordered his chair to be set up outside and joined us. I asked Firdoos if she would help me ask him some questions about the history of the Mutwa. He agreed to her request and I pulled out my tape recorder. He cleared his throat and stared at the recorder, saying nothing, clearly distraught. I switched the machine off while Khadeeja spoke to him. He acquiesced, picked up the microphone and without waiting to be asked began to recite the history of the Mutwa. He spoke quickly staring straight at a wall in front of him. Lists of clans, names of kings and battles, I could tell without Firdoos's help that I had heard the account before.
In history there was a Rao (Hindu king) named Godeji [ruled 1760-78] who had a daughter. One of his ministers, a man named Punja Seth, turned against the Rao and fled to Sindh. Intent on revenge, Punja Seth convinced the Mir [Muslim king] Gulam Shah Kalhora [d.1772], that he should seek the hand of Godeji's daughter. Gulam Shah sent a proposal to Godeji but was refused because “he was a Muslim”. "The Mir was powerful (like USA today) and decided to use force to get the princess." Godeji, hearing the Mir's plans, "called a meeting of the local Rajputs, Muslims, everyone, and decided that they would not give the girl but give blood." Where as Gulam Shah had an army of one lakh [100,000] soldiers; the Kutchi king had 10-12,000. They met at Zharo hill, near Haji Pir in western Kutch [1762]. "At dawn the fighting broke out between the two forces and blood began to flow like a stream." Despite their smaller numbers, the Kutchi forces defeated the Mir and he withdrew back to Sindh. While retreating, Gulam Shah built the Allah Bandh [God's dam] on the Indus, diverting its waters away from Kutch, and turning Banni into a virtual island surrounded by an arid wasteland 32.

The Mutwas originally lived near Hyderabad. “A very good looking community, a local Mir sought to marry a Mutwa girl.” The Mutwa refused however because he was not of their naat (caste, community). Outraged, the Mir demanded that the Mutwa leave, forcing them to migrate to Kutch. Desalji [ruled: 1819-1860], the Rao of Kutch at that time, “gave Banni to the Mutwas to settle in 33. Then the Mutwa made Banni their home. Others who came were the Jats from Baluchistan, Raisiputras from Tharparker, Haleputras from Halera. The Rao said you are Maldhari (cattleherders), so do that business here. Stay wherever it is convenient for you to use this pastureland for your cows. But on one condition— don’t kill cows’. We promised that we would not kill cows and we do not kill cows.” 34

ALTERED LANDSCAPES

Traditionally the land called Kutch has often been likened in appearance to a tortoise, its very name suggestive of a link: kachha, in Sanskrit, means ‘a bank or any ground bordering on water; a marsh’; and kachhapa is ‘a turtle, a tortoise’ (Goswamy & Dallapiccola, 1983, p.1).

The literature on Kutch— both popular and scholarly—inevitably paints a colourful picture of an isolated island-like kingdom. Surrounded by a sea of sand and salt on one side, an ocean on the other, Kutch’s distinctiveness is presumed the result of its unique geography (ill. 2.2). The Great Rann is presented as a barrier, precluding military and ideological invasions and informing the
Illustration 2.2. Map of Kutch showing the location of the Mutwa’s villages in Banni.
rugged hardiness and cultural integrity of the Kutchi people. Kutch as a "place apart" is a recurrent motif and one with increasing currency among those promoting Kutch as a tourist destination. Kutch's isolation is related to claims for its authenticity and untainted traditionalism.

Kutch and Sindh are geographically separated by the Great Rann of Kutch—a region that is as physically divisive as it is symbolically potent. Until the border was drawn in 1947, it was a sort of liminal space. Many Kutchi residents crossed the Rann generations ago but continue to distinguish themselves as having made the crossing. The Mutwa, among others, take pride in having crossed the Rann, of having prospered in spite of its harsh, unforgiving geography. It is a testament of their rights to the land, their loyalty, their history, and their faith. The pain and suffering affected both by the Rann and their separation from the green, productive ease of Sindh etched upon their ethos. Historically the Rann and its environs were outside the jurisdiction of either Kutch or Sindh. The British characterised it as lawless and claimed it was peopled with tribes of bandits, nomadic herdsmen, "huntsmen" and other outcasts. Living precariously along the Rann's fringes they were blamed for stealing or destroying British property and assisting invading armies in crossing the Rann (Williams, 1958/1981).

The Great Rann of Kutch, contrary to post-Independence imaginings, was not always experienced as a barrier or an enclosure, isolating Kutch from the outside world. It was, and remains, a broad salty sandy arm that embraces and connects Kutch to the 'mainland'. Although separating Kutch from its once powerful neighbours, the kingdoms of Sindh and Kathiawar, it was permeable by those with intimate knowledge of the region. These included, not only bandits, but Jat and Rajput nomadic herdsmen and adivasis, not to mention the legendary Makran Dada, who assisted those lost in the Rann. Moreover traders carried goods between the Kutchi ports, Sindh, Marwar, and Delhi until well into the 19th century (Williams, 1958/1981; Wong, 1997). One route, favoured by invading armies and traders alike, crossed Banni and the Rann through Sumraser, Khavda and Ballari in Sindh, a route that passed only 25 km from the Mutwa villages. One observer noted

of the classes who in ordinary seasons move about the province, the chief are, of artisans, carpenters, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, masons, and weavers who with little capital go from town to town offering their services or selling their wares: of carriers, Ahirs, with their bullockcarts, Charans, Lohanas, and Memans with their pack bullocks, potters with their asses and Sindis with their camels: and of the lower classes, shepherds, Ods or wandering diggers, cotton cleaners, and labourers, especially field labourers in harvest time. Of immigrants, polishers, blacksmiths
known as Gadalias, and Ods, come from Marwar and return within the year: and in the cold and hot seasons traders from Cabul and coppersmiths from Kathiawar come and sell their fruit and brass vessels and return before the rains set in (Campbell, 1880, p.103).

The Rann also saw migrations and immigrations affected by economics, drought or conflict. The Rabari came with their herds of camels and sheep from Marwar (Frater; 1975; 1995; Jain, 1980). The Khatri dyers, printers and tie-dye makers came from Sindh where, popular legend has it, they were Kshatriyas (warriors) who converted to Islam—exchanging their swords for needles. Moreover, the shift in power from the ruling Kalhora clan to the Talpura clan in Sindh in 1786 prompted the persecution and expulsion of the Kalhora and their supporters from Hyderabad (Williams, 1958/1981; Burton, 1851; Campbell, 1880). Many of these migrated to Kutch, admitted by a Kutchi Rao as anxious to welcome politically useful defectors as the Sindhi Amirs had historically shown themselves. Other migrants from Hyderabad were the Khosas (or Kosias) who remained in the vicinity of the Rann where they developed a notorious reputation as a "predatory tribe" (T. Postans, 1843/1973, p.41; Williams, 1958/1981, p.213). On June 16th 1819 a devastating earthquake hit Kutch, followed by months of aftershocks. As a result of the quake, over 1100 people were killed and 7000 houses destroyed (Campbell, 1880, p.165). Furthermore, in 1823 the monsoon failed, resulting in a famine, the loss of thousands of cattle, and the departure of as much as one fifth of the population of Kutch (Ibid). But Kutchi people also had a reputation for being expert navigators and entrepreneurial—in the 1880 version of the "Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency", Sir J.M. Campbell noted that

from the uncertainty of the rainfall and from the pushing, vigorous character of the people, there is much more migration in Cutch than in most parts of the Bombay Presidency. The higher class of traders, among Hindus, Bhatias, Osval Vanias, and Lohanas, and among Musalmans, Khojas, Memans, and Bohoras, are always ready to leave their homes in search of employment (Campbell, 1880, p.103).

This pattern of migration has continued into the present. Patel notes that in the two decades following 1947, the population has increased almost 12 and 23% respectively—figures which include the 10,884 displaced persons from Sindh who arrived after Partition in 1947 and formed the new settlement of Gandhidham (G.Patel, 1971, p.116). Moreover, following the 1971 India-Pakistan War, a number of Sodha Rajputs migrated into Kutch from Sindh, many settling in Banni. Many members of the Isma'ili communities of Gujarat, the Khojas and Bohras, whether to escape persecution or pursue business interests, migrated from Kutch to East Africa and subsequently to Britain and Canada (Misra, 1963; G.Patel, 1971). Other Kutchis are transnational.
Many Sonara families (a caste of Muslim goldsmiths) have set up lucrative gold businesses in the Gulf and return to their Kutchi homes infrequently. The Swami Narayan sect, based in Kutch, has several temples and a large following in the U.K and U.S. Others shuttle back and forth between Bombay and Kutch or Britain and Kutch maintaining businesses, residences, and increasingly expansive family networks.

Not only were Kutchi’s connected historically, personally, and in many cases, economically to inland areas through the Rann, they were connected by sea to ports throughout the Indian Ocean and beyond. Pearson notes that Gujarat, after it was dominated by Akbar in 1572-73, played an important role in transporting pilgrims to and from the Hijaz (1996). Kutch’s role in the pilgrim trade is mentioned briefly in Williams (1958/1981), as well as Tod, who noted that Kutch,

being nearly insulated by the sea on one side, and the Grand Rin on the other, had little to dread from its Hindu neighbours; while, by a piece of admirable policy, that of undertaking to convey all Mahomedan pilgrims gratis to Mecca, they conciliated every Mahomedan power, and were never visited in wrath by the kings (Tod, 1839, p.489).

Kutch was a significant centre of seafaring trade with several harbours including Mandvi, Mundra, and Lakhpat (Campbell, 1880, p.117). Major sea routes from Kutch included Karachi, and Bombay, as well as various ports in Kathiawar, Zanzibar, the Hijaz, Konkan, Malabar, and the Mediterranean (Campbell, 1880, p. 117; Pearson, 1996; Williams, 1958/1981; Varadarajan, 1991). During the first half of the 19th century, trade was vigorous (see Appendix I). Campbell notes that even after trade patterns had begun to shift, in 1880 almost 32% of the population of Kutch were still merchants, traders or shopkeepers.

Most of the goods entering Kutch, whether by sea or overland, were destined for distant markets. After the construction of the railways however, this through trade began to decline. The railways would not reach Kutch until the 1950’s (Williams, 1958/1981) hence goods once sent through Kutch to inland markets (and vice versa), were re-routed38 to railheads in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Karachi. Not only were the traditional routes and means of transportation altered, the goods they carried were shifting39. Campbell noted that

the chief changes in the trade of the past twenty-five years are, besides the falling off in the through trade, in the local trade under imports an increased demand for European goods, cotton cloth, plain, coloured and printed, and broadcloth, and for tables, chairs, couches, cots, and other articles of European house furniture. There is also a decline in the imports of timber and ivory, and the export of ivory and dyed cloth (Campbell, 1880, p.121).
Another commodity Kutchi merchants had specialised in transporting were slaves from East Africa. While slavery was abolished in India early in the 19th century, many Kutchis continued to transport slaves from East Africa to Arabian ports (Williams, 1958/1981). The slave trade was tied into the trade of printed cotton textiles and ivory. Kutchi craftspeople produced distinctively printed cottons that were important trade items with East Africa and the Hijaz. Ivory, imported from Africa was used to fashion various ornaments for Kutchi women. After 1869, however, at the British Resident's insistence, Rao Pragmal issued proclamations to prohibit slaving among resident and non-resident Kutchis—a move which coincides with a decline in Kutch's cloth exports to, and ivory imports from, East Africa (see Campbell, 1880, p.117). Competition from European yarn and later cloth, eroded not only the local markets for these Kutchi goods, but their export markets.

The British took little political interest in Kutch until the early nineteenth century. Located between the powerful kingdoms of Sindh to the north-west and Kathiawar to the south-east, Kutch persevered as a relatively peaceful and autonomous princely state beyond the political or economic machinations of the British East India Company. By 1809 however, the British had established themselves in Gujarat and Kathiawar. They were increasingly concerned that the Amirs of Sindh, with whom they had strained relations, would use Kutch as a landing point from which to attack British holdings. They claimed that political unrest within Kutch had already resulted in increasingly frequent pirate attacks and raids along the border it shared with Gujarat (Williams, 1958/1981).

It was with a view to Kutch's strategic importance that the British East India Company proposed the formal treaty of alliance signed by the Maharao of Kutch in January 1816. The treaty ensured the continued political 'autonomy' of Kutch in return for promises to suppress bandits, prevent Europeans or Americans from landing or passing through Kutch, and permit a British representative at the Maharao's court (Williams, 1958/1981). Once Sindh itself was annexed by Britain in 1843, Kutch became a transit point, not for Sindhis attacking British held territories, but British soldiers sent to ensure Sindhi co-operation (T. Postans, 1843/1973; J. Burnes, 1829; Burton, 1851). Kutch therefore retreated from being the frontier to a hinterland, its strategic redundancy and relative economic insignificance preserving its relative political autonomy. In 1948 Kutch joined the Indian Union and subsequently became a part of the state of Gujarat in 1960 (Williams, 1958/1981, p.267-68). Bowing to Kutch's claims to linguistic and cultural distinctness, it
was made a district within the state of Gujarat. Since that time, Gujarati has become the language of education, business, and administration. Although Kutch is the largest district in Gujarat, it is the most sparsely populated and poorly developed. It is generally felt that Kutch's interests are often marginalised by the Gujarat government.

Kutch was on its way to becoming an isolated "place apart" as a result of the shifting markets and new technologies of the 19th century. With the imposition of the border, Kutch was cleaved from Sindh, the Rann rendered impermeable, and Banni forced from being a byway to a margin.

February, 1997

The taxi was late. Mushruf had told me to come at 8:00am so we could get an early start and avoid the heat of the afternoon. I had had to talk him into escorting me on this outing to visit Dhordo and the other Banni villages. He had accompanied willingly five years earlier. Now he claimed various aches and pains that made the ride too uncomfortable, or he was too busy, or there were problems with the roads or rumours of breached border security. I persevered. He had been collecting textiles from the villages for years, knew the area and the villagers well and seemed to have a good rapport with them. I thought he also shared my passion for textiles and understood what I hoped to accomplish. I wanted him to introduce me, or reintroduce me, to the village, explain my project to the Mutwa and help me make the necessary living arrangements. As my knowledge of the Kutchi language was rudimentary, I felt I needed him.

The taxi finally came and we were off. Though I explained I wanted to spend the bulk of our time in Dhordo, the morning and early afternoon were consumed visiting the Banni equivalents of tourist traps. In Hodka he took me to visit a Megvar man named Basser Bura, with whom he had been trading textiles for years. The austere mud exterior of his house gave way to a knick-knack riot and blaring colour television inside. He pulled out bundles of textiles from as far as the Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, his business connections obviously extensive and thriving. I purchased nothing. They took me to visit Baiyan, a Megvar woman who does Mutwa-style embroidery and suggested I study with her rather than go to Dhordo. The idea of syncretism was tempting, but I declined. Before we left (Mushruf still reluctant to face another 20 km of potholes), I distributed some photographs I had taken in the same village five years before. I also showed them the photos I had taken at Basheer's wedding and planned to take to Dhordo. Baiyan begged me to keep the photograph of "her friend" Khadeeja, Basheer's sister. I was reluctant and looked to Mushruf to intercede. He waved it aside as unimportant. Baiyan kept the picture and we headed to the car.
Our meeting in Dhordo was short and formal. We had spent so much time visiting the other villages we did not have much time left if we were to get back to Bhuj before dark. We were led to Abbas's house where the old man lay on his bed. In his seventies now his health was faltering and his mind frequently wandered. Tea was brought. I presented him with copies of the photographs I had taken during my first visit. He thanked me and handed them to a child to distribute. The men made small talk. We were shown some embroidered textiles and Mushrif stuffed two blouses into his carry-all with a nod from Abbas, then got up to leave. Outside I reminded him, rather desperately, of my mission. He approached Khadeeja sitting outside her father's house and explained what I wanted to do. She shrugged and said I was welcome to come anytime. I felt disappointed that her invitation was so offhand, so casual. Perhaps she did not appreciate my interest or that I had returned to India just to study with them? I mentioned the photographs I'd given to Abbas and promised I would bring a copy of the photo Baiyan had absconded. "My photo? She took my photo?" Khadeeja looked horrified. I was horrified and saw the welcome mat being rolled up. Unconcerned, Mushrif strolled over to the taxi.

MUTWA, MALDHARI, AND CHANGE

As a region, Banni is very different from others in Kutch—a difference that has fostered a unique lifestyle and material culture (figs. 2.3-2.7). Banni is almost completely surrounded by the Rann, a vast, low lying flatland that is prone to salt water flooding during the monsoon. The Rann separates Banni from Sindh in Pakistan to the north and the rest of Kutch and India to the south. Although permanent roads have connected it to the rest of Kutch since the 70's, it has a reputation for being a remote and isolated place. The landscape is flat, unchanging, and there are few trees. During the summer months it is extremely hot and dry with blowing dust and sand, during the winter it is equally dry with bitterly cold nights. The monsoon rains that so frequently bypass Kutch are even less frequent in Banni. Within Kutch, Banni is even more isolated and tends to be viewed as even more traditional than many other parts of Kutch. While to tourists this suggests timelessness and cultural authenticity, to others, it spells backwardness. With the exception of those with family in the area or those involved in tourism or the military, few Kutchis visit Banni. It is popularly perceived as a harsh place, with dirty, poorly educated, "jungly" people.

Banni is home to 15 different Sunni Muslim clans who are collectively referred to as Maldhari (cattle breeders) who have traditionally made their living from the sale of cattle, ghee, and more recently, milk (Jain, 1980). Each of these clans migrated into Banni in separate waves of migration from Sindh over the last 500 years (Elson, 1979). There are presently about 46 villages
with approximately 13,000 inhabitants scattered across Banni (Jain, 1980). Although Muslims predominate, each village also consists of about 10% Megvars (Hindu leatherworkers) and 3-5% Vadhas (scheduled caste carpenters) (ibid) who live in their own separate enclaves surrounding their Muslim patrons. Most speak Kutchi as their mother tongue although it is distinguished from the Kutchi spoken outside Banni by the admixture of Sindhi. Gujarati and Hindi are now widely spoken among younger generations in Banni.

The Mutwa are one of the largest Banni clans and dominate it politically and economically. They left their original homes near Hyderabad sometime in the 17th century—possibly during the struggle for power between the rival Kalhora and Talpura clans. It is also likely they were displaced by the Baluchi who began migrating into the plains from the hills of western Sindh during the early years of Kalhora rule (1740-1786) (Burton, 1851, p. 236). The Mutwa arrived in Kutch or its vicinity 10 generations ago according to Mutwa Basheer Abbas, settling in their current villages 8 generations previously, during the time of Desalji II (ruled 1819-1860). Desalji was undoubtedly encouraged to settle Banni by the Britisher's continued complaints about the raiders. The Mutwa were granted grazing rights in return for their promise of loyalty, an agreement to care for Desalji's cattle, provide him with ghee, and refrain from practising agriculture or slaughtering cows. The rich grasslands of Banni supported large herds which, in turn, supported the Mutwa well enough to enable them to settle in permanent villages, develop a vibrant and distinctive material culture, and attract a small number of Megvar craftspeople to their villages. Though they are not mentioned by name in British accounts of the period, Burnes might well have described them when he wrote in 1818:

In the grazing lands in the north and on the Rann islands there was a rough, unsettled, and poor, but hearty and strong population. Living in grass huts, almost never growing or eating grain, they fed entirely on milk, buttermilk for every day fare and sweet milk on their few holidays. They had large herds of cows, buffaloes and camels, and flocks of sheep and goats, and the export of butter brought in enough to meet their wants for clothes, tobacco, and opium (A. Burnes, in Campbell, 1880, p.167-68).

The isolation the Mutwa (and others living in Banni) have experienced has been instrumental in the development of a unique way of life and cultural identity. While similar statements are often taken to imply that, left alone, a certain group was able to realise an authentic culture, read against the grain, their isolation is not so much about being alone, nor is it simply being made to be alone, it is also about choice. Why is isolation (which is always relative anyway)
chosen and how it is maintained? When asked who the Mutwa are, Abbas would inevitably launch into the story of how Gulam Shah Kalhora diverted the waters of the Indus away from Kutch, effectively isolating Banni. While the story does not say anything specific about the Mutwa, it does emphasise isolation as something that was inflicted upon them and as something they bear with a certain amount of pride. Pain and suffering are recurring, potent themes in Islam associated with faithful endurance, purification, and heavenly reward (Schimmel, 1997)—in this sense the Mutwa appear laudable. However, Abbas was never explicit on whether the Mutwa arrived before or after the events in the story took place. While hardship is hardship and must be endured, isolation is relative, shifting, and not necessarily negative.

Whatever the Mutwa's relationship with the trade networks that criss-crossed the Rann close to their villages (see above), they were integrated into social and economic networks that extended far beyond Banni. As Maldhari, they raised cows and buffaloes, selling ghee to urban markets and traders throughout the year and young cows to farmers in Saurashtra annually. Milk, considered the "blood" of the Maldhari, was not traded until relatively recently. Agriculture—whether because of the poor soils or because the Rao wanted to limit their claims to the land—was prohibited in Banni, consequently food stuffs other than meat and dairy items had to be obtained from urban markets or itinerant merchants. Similarly cloth. Since at least the early 20th century, the Mutwa obtained the cloth they needed from the Khatris, a Muslim caste of dyers and printers operating in Bhuj and Dhamadka. The late Khatri Muhammadbhai Siddiq used to devote eight months of the year producing and selling cloth to the Maldhari of Banni. He would travel to their villages on foot, by cart, or camel depending on the quantity of cloths he had to sell. Not only did merchants come to them; the Mutwa—men and women—periodically made trips to markets. Although the Kutchi markets of Bhuj and Anjar are closer, before 1947, the Mutwa preferred to cross the Rann to Sindh.

Before the Maldhari had established villages in Banni, it was not unusual for whole families to travel with the herds, returning to Banni after the monsoon floods had subsided. Even after they settled, drought would prompt them to search for pastures outside of Banni, beyond the Rann. Initially women played a significant role in the care and milking of the animals, processing milk, and collecting fodder for them. After settling in their present villages, however, women's involvement in the care of the animals declined. Wajeeha, Basheer's mother can remember travelling with the herds as a girl—something her daughter, born after Partition, has never done.
Although the period following Partition was relatively peaceful in Kutch, the imposition of the border and political re-organisation of India and Kutch's place in the union, were profound. Where Mutwa Abbas's father had been appointed the local magistrate of Banni by Rao Desalji, a position his elder brother inherited, the official title was lost after Indian Independence. Both Abbas, and currently Abbas's son Basheer, have however, continued to act, if unofficially, in this capacity. Although Kutch's overland trade was already eclipsed by the end of the 19th century, the peoples of Banni, including the Mutwa, continued to travel back and forth across the Rann, shifting their herds during droughts, trading ghee, purchasing supplies, and maintaining kinship ties. With the border, this activity was halted or at least rendered illicit, altering their lives in subtle and profound ways. Where rice from Sindh, for example, had been a diet staple for the Mutwa before Partition, grains from Kutch replaced them afterwards. The silk threads used by Mutwa women for embroidery were also originally purchased in Sindhi markets. After Partition, silk threads became increasingly expensive as they now had to be imported into Kutch and purchased in Bhuj or Anjar markets.

The imposition of a border necessitated the presence of military personnel to protect it. Several Indian army bases were built within Kutch while a special unit, the Border Security Force (BSF), has been established to patrol Banni's northern border areas. This was accompanied by unprecedented road construction linking even the most remote corners of Kutch with Bhuj, its commercial and administrative centre. In the 1950's an overland route linking Kutch to Gujarat by rail and highway was constructed. To facilitate the BSF's work, a highway linking Bhuj and Khavda was constructed across the Little Rann of Kutch, indissolubly linking Banni and the rest of Kutch even during the monsoon floods. The BSF maintain a series of checkposts along this route as well as outposts where its members patrol the border areas. Roads linking the villages and BSF outposts were not constructed until the 1980's and remain largely unpaved and in poor condition. Government bus service to the Banni villages began shortly after the roads were constructed. Power, though still unreliable, was available in most villages from the early 1980's. Until very recently, telephones were only available in the larger villages. The Mutwa village of Dhordo, located along the southern fringes of the Great Rann, received telephone service in December 2000.

Compounded by these political and demographic changes, Kutch has experienced a number of environmental problems that have had a profound effect on Banni. I have already alluded to the
recurring water shortages and periods of drought. In the past, pastoralists were able to move their herds to better grazing areas when necessary. Since Independence this has proved increasingly difficult. Pastoralists and agriculturists once enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship, the latter allowing the former's animals to graze on or pass through (and hence fertilise) harvested fields. With the settlement of previously nomadic peoples, the erosion of traditional patron-client relationships and an increasing emphasis on, not just agriculture, but intensified agriculture, the viability of pastoralism has been undermined. L. Mehta has pointed out, moreover, that the surge in Kutch's population since Independence, the construction of numerous wells, extension of irrigation networks and development of certain industries (specifically cement factories) have effectively lowered Kutch's water table and enhanced the effect and frequency of drought (1996). Mutwa Abbas described how, when he was a child, the Mutwa only had to dig a few feet to find 'sweet' water. These shallow wells or virdas were usable only for a short time before the water turned salty but provided Banni with an adequate water supply. Currently sweet water can not be obtained even at depths of 1500 feet. Except for a few months after the monsoon when local depressions fill with precious rainwater, water is brought in by tanker truck. A proposed pipeline linking the northernmost villages with a productive well in Jhura has not yet materialised (GoG, 1989).

A related issue concerns the reforestation of Banni. Peoples displaced by the Sardar Sarova Dam being built on the Narmada River in eastern Gujarat, have been resettled on lands once designated Protected Forest Areas (PFA) in eastern Gujarat. Consequently the State government has sought to relocate PFAs in Kutch. The government has been active in attempting to reforest Banni although it is unclear whether Banni was ever deforested. In the 1960's they instigated planting *prosopis juliflora*—a species that has so readily spread across Banni, other indigenous species have been rendered extinct. *Prosopis juliflora* or gando bawal, as it is known in Kutchi, is extremely problematic from the Maldhari's point of view as it causes serious digestive problems for cows and damages hoofs.

Another serious environmental problem in Banni is desertification. Increased soil salinity aggravated by frequent periods of drought has threatened a number of species of plant life. Grasses that were plentiful in Abbas's youth are now extinct in Banni. While many of these provided useful materials for the Maldhari or fodder for their herds, they also checked the spread of the Rann. Where Dhordo, for example, was 13 km from the southern edge of the Great Rann in Abbas's
youth, it is now only 11 km (see also GoG, 1989). Several villages in Banni have already been abandoned because of the Rann's encroachment (L. Mehta, 1996).

Given these environmental and political changes, pastoralism has become an increasingly tenuous occupation for the Maldhari of Banni. The shift towards a strict market economy devoid of the personal relationships and reciprocity that characterised earlier economic relations has compounded the difficulties the Maldhari face. Consequently, since the late 1960's young Mutwa men began exploring alternative occupations. In addition to keeping cows and buffaloes, Abbas, for example, served as a government agent and acted as a guide for visiting foreigners and Indians alike. Other men of his generation turned to breeding horses, shop keeping, woodworking, and tailoring—occupations they have probably always pursued but became more important during this period. Subsequent generations turned to truckdriving, particularly after the prolonged drought of 1970-1974—a period that prompted many families to sell off their herds and encouraged the commoditisation of goods previously restricted from circulation. Other men have become involved with embroidery, employing local (often the poorest) women to stitch for them and selling the goods to retailers in Bhuj, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Delhi. A couple of men have also revived the making of chitri kam, a form of mud embellishment Mutwa women traditionally used to decorate their house interiors. These men solicit commissions from offices and restaurants and have worked extensively through Western India.

In the early 1990's a bromine factory was constructed 11 km north-west of Dhordo and now employs many local men. One of the instigators behind the factory is Mutwa Ammar (Abbas's BS and DH) who, as a manager, is one of the few local people employed beyond the level of a labourer. Ammar's sons and nephews will likely never work with herds (nor have they shown interest in embroidery related work). Unlike factory work, herding is now perceived by Mutwa youth as dirty, unreliable, and backward.

September 1998

There is a dramatic bend in the road just before it reaches Dhordo and splits in two. One side pushes north, squeezing its way between spiteful stands of gando bawal to the edge of the Rann then west to the Agrood factory. The other side slows and spreads out, encompassing a water tank, a school, a few ruined government buildings and a small BSF post. It was here the men's large tent was pitched at Basheer's wedding in 1992 and it is here that the Government bus expires each p.m. only to rattle back to life each a.m. On the south-east side is a Meguvar hamlet—
just two families live there now. Immediately to the south there is one house of Vadhas. To the south-west a cluster
of crudely built shelters where the Sheiks or "new" Muslims (converted Vadhas) live. To the north, down a broad
path of deep silky dust, lies Dhordo (fig. 2.2). I seldom arrived undetected. The sound of the bus or truck was
audible and evoked anticipation of guests or returning menfolk. Someone would inevitably spy the plume of dust my
sandsals kicked up or the children, playing near the school, would see me and run with the news. The boys would come
and insist on carrying my bags, trudging passed the tidy mosque on one side, the back of Basma's kitchen on the
other, to Abbas's guesthouse. This structure, with its imposing roof and south-facing courtyard, is used by the men for
meetings and occasional socialising. It is furnished with an eclectic collection of old wood and leather chairs, a round
table and one or more new metal charpoi. The walls are lined with framed photographs and newspaper dippings of
Abbas and his father. A cupboard on one side is dedicated to old car parts, oil and rags. This is the formal entrance
to the village, the one used by guests. After I had visited a few times I used a narrow path on one side of the
guesthouse, one that skirts the sides of bhungos and leads directly into the large courtyard shared by the extended
Mutwa-Morana family.

I always seemed to arrive early evening, just after dinner and as the family bedding was being brought out.
After greeting me, Maysoon would drag over a quilted mattress pad, a pillow, and a quilt for me and arrange them
beside her own. Although they sleep indoors during the winter, during the summer months most Mutwa sleep outside,
in family clusters, on charpoi or quilts in their courtyards. The first few times I stayed in the village Khadeeja
assigned me, alone, to one of the rooms in her new house, unfinished and concrete dampish. Eventually however I
slept with her family— the men on charpoi on one side, Khadeeja and the smallest children in the middle on the floor,
the girls on the other side with me at the furthest edge.

After their expulsion from Hyderabad, the Mutwa eventually arrived in Kutch. Some took
up pastoralism and remained in Banni— others made their way into Saurashtra and turned to
agriculture. The Mutwa who remained in Kutch, settled in the villages of Dhordo, Gorewali,
Punavari, Uddo, Siraito, Patigar, Anidiyung, and Mithadi within Banni as well as Dora and Fulae
along the south-western edge of the Rann (Jain, 1980). Each Mutwa village consists of the
extended families of several lineage groups (atak). The Mutwa are descended from a common
ancestor who had two sons, Mutlab and Morana. Most Mutwa trace their ancestry to Mutlab, and
take the name of one of his descendants. There are several agevan or bigmen who preside over the
daily affairs of one or more villages and government appointed sarpanch, positions that often
overlap and are monopolised by members of the same families.
Abbas's family claims a distinct status based on the fact they are descended from both Mudab and Morana and take the name Mutwa-Morana. They are considered by many Mutwa to be the "first" Mutwa family (ill. 2.4). Abbas was agevan, a position he inherited from his elder brother, who inherited it from their father. Various members of the family have served as sarpanch including Abbas's daughter, Khadeeja, in response to the Government's efforts to include women in village-level politics. The family's position was further enhanced with the appointment of Abbas's father as a local magistrate. This position too was handed down to Abbas and Basheer, although, since 1947 it has been 'unofficial'. The family's renown has continued to help them land numerous government contracts, attract visitors and guests from outside Banni, and play a significant role in the development of market embroidery— something I examine in more depth in Chapter 5.

The Mutwa-Morana have played an influential role in encouraging development and effecting change. Abbas's elder sister, Sana, was married to a man from Sindh named Hafs Muhammad Khasam. Khasam was a well educated man who spoke several languages and had studied under Jandiwara and Rashidalo— both respected pirs in Sindh. It is likely that Khasam came in contact with the reformist teachings of the Ahl-al-Hadith in Sindh, and shifted to Banni to avoid conflict with his former teachers. In any event, he is responsible for not only initiating reform amongst the Mutwa, but education as well. He was the first to teach the Mutwa, establishing a school in Punavari at about the time of Partition.

The village of Dhordo consists of about 100 structures (in various stages of repair) arranged over an area of approximately 1000 square metres. Some are considered communal: the mosque, the guesthouse, a new community hall, the water tanks etc. (ill. 2.3). Others— bhungos, kitchens, a few privies, and other houses— belong to specific families. With the exception of the newer structures built of concrete-block, most are built of mud and dung with either thatch or tile roofs. Houses are built on solid platforms, raising them above the level of the surrounding desert. Desert-level paths wind through the village, between the courtyards, dividing family groups. There are few gates and then only to prevent the occasional cow or buffalo from entering. Dhordo is a relatively compact village— other Mutwa villages are more spacious, the paths dividing family clusters are broader and lined with cactus hedges or bundles of dried acacia— designed to keep animals away and ensure some privacy for occupants inside.
Each bhungo houses a nuclear family—the father, mother and their children—who, in most cases, also maintain their own kitchen. Extended family members, related to the patrilineage, generally share a common courtyard and occasionally a privy. Courtyards range in size from about 12-175 square metres. The Mutwa are endogamous within their clan and may marry a member of any of its various lineages, including first cousins. Patrilocal, once married, a Mutwa woman moves to her husband’s home and becomes a member of his lineage. Dhordo is divided into several clusters of dwellings, each associated with a different lineage group (ill. 2.3). When a wedding takes place the groom's family will endeavour to build a new house for the couple somewhere within the extended family's compound. Young brides frequently share their mother-in-law's hearth, separating only after they begin to bear children.

The Mutwa-Morana live at the centre of Dhordo, for the most part, around an irregularly shaped courtyard. The oldest dwelling is probably the small bhungo used by Wajeeha as a kitchen (see figs. 4.9-4.14)—the other four bhungos located in the main part of the courtyard were built sometime in the 60's. Abbas's elder brother's only son, Naasih, lives separately in a small compound close to the main Mutwa-Morana courtyard. His only sister, married into another lineage group, lives in a separate compound on the far side of his. Naasih's bhungo was built in the 70's and features the modern embellishments discussed in Chapter 5 (see figs. 4.17-4.18). Within the main compound, the most prominent bhungo was occupied by Abbas and Wajeeha (see ill. 2.4, #2). Abbas's brother, Baasim, has lived in the bhungo located immediately west of Abbas's until recently. With the marriage of Baasim's son Saeed to Firdoos (his FBSD), the family has shifted to a rather dilapidated house located behind the bhungo, leaving the more comfortable dwelling to the newlyweds. A new bhungo, to be located next to the kitchen, has been planned. Saeed is not Baasim's first son to marry; in fact, he has a son and three daughters from an earlier wife who died years ago. His first son, Ammar, now in his early 50's, is married to his FBD, Khadeeja. He and Khadeeja, along with their children, live in a bhungo supplied by her father (see ill. 2.4, #10). Khadeeja's brother, Sameer, his wife and unmarried children, live in a bhungo just SE of his father's. Her younger brother, Basheer, his wife, and 4 young children live in a new concrete-block house behind his father's bhungo. In anticipation of at least some of their son's marriages, Ammar and Khadeeja have built an enormous concrete structure on the east side of their family's courtyard (ill. 2.4, #12). Divided into 'apartments' it will likely house the elder three sons and their wives—the younger two will have to occupy unused bhungos or await further construction (see Appendix II for further kinship information).
When I visited the Mutwa for the first time in 1992 my foreign otherness was reconciled according to a long history of visitors, tourists, facts, fiction, hopes and fears. I was, moreover, implicated in the Mutwa's relationships with a series of local 'others'. When I arrived in Dhordo, I arrived to an existing set of dynamic relations between the Mutwa and the gynaecologist, the Mutwa and Mushrif, the Mutwa-Morana and Pirana 'castes', the Mutwa and Megvars, the Sodhas, Kutchis, Gujaratis and Indians from further afield. Each holds a different view of the Mutwa. The gynaecologist, claiming greater inside knowledge (pun intended), was the first of several self appointed interpreters from outside the community whose representations became too predictable. The Mutwa (and Indian Muslims in general) are "backwards," "simple," "uneducated," "lazy," "have large families," and "love ornament." Through the course of my fieldwork I met many visitors to the village who would stare incredulously at me, "you live here...?" The Mutwa are not unaware of their disdain and would shoo the dirty or undressed children out of sight, serve tea in the best china cups and saucers, refer the guests to their guest book with signatures and comments dating some twenty years back, offer to view the village from the roof of one of the new concrete-block houses—in short present the village and themselves in the best possible light. I became a not entirely unwitting player in their schemes—it fell increasingly to me to interpret the Mutwa to foreign visitors for reasons of language as much as for the caché having a resident foreign anthropologist offered. My agenda, to the extent I was aware of it, was to counter the normative views of the Mutwa first presented by the gynaecologist, embodied by other local's dismissiveness, and resonating with every local tourist who tried to trap women with their cameras or who didn't remove their shoes before entering Abbas's bhungo.

December 1998

I was preparing to leave Dhordo for the last time. I had been kept from dwelling on the fact by a flurry of Mutwa social activities and weddings. As he drove me to town one-day enroute to another wedding, Basheer pointed out, it had been a good year. The rains had been plentiful which meant the grasses were abundant and the cowherds did not have to leave home with their cattle and buffalo. It had been a good year for Basheer, he had helped his mother reach Mecca, he had a new son, a new Jeep, a new house, government contracts and factory work to sustain him. In the six years since I had first met him at his wedding, he had grown from a shy, lanky youth to a responsible husband, father, and businessman. He had inherited his father's position as local magistrate, settling disputes, setting marriage dates, and liaising with government officials. He had also inherited a mischievous-ness, the sort of teasing
indulgence his father, sister, and some of his nieces and nephews shared. He complained about having no money—I inquired how his air-cooler unit was working? He laughed and told me that now that he had built a new modern style house (with attached bath, though no running water) he was going to build a bhungo. I must have looked surprised. "Not for living in," he noted, "only for tourists."

On my return trip from town Khadeeja informed me that there was going to be a wedding in Dhordo. Taahira’s sister-in-law, Rawdha, was marrying Talal who lived with his family in the house closest to Khadeeja’s. The only problem was the wedding was slated for the day I had to reach Bombay in order to catch my flight home.

With or without me, the village was bustling with activity centred on the groom’s family compound. Talal’s mother, Mayyada had married a widower much older than her but managed to have two sons and a daughter by him. Talal was the first to get married and Mayyada could not contain her joy. At the slightest provocation she burst into giggles. Used to rather sober Mutwa mannerisms, I found her mirth infectious. The courtyard of her tiny compound was cleared of debris including the remnants of a broken-down kitchen. Everything was re-plastered with mud and dung while the doors and furnishings were cleaned and re-painted. A new house would be constructed for the couple later on the site of the old kitchen. In the meantime the family would shift to one bhungo in order that the couple had use of the second.

For her part Khadeeja was also busy cleaning and replastering. Firdoos and Maysoon, excited at the prospect of a wedding in their village, proposed that they would (as a parting gift) dress me up in Mutwa clothes for the festivities. Fabric was brought to town; a Mutwa lady tailor; two and a half metre of blue polyester print for the sothi; and a pink and green kanjari front, one of Khadeeja’s own she donated to the cause. Maysoon advised me that on my next trip to Bhuj I was to purchase some larger, hanging earrings in gold-coloured metal as well as some bangles in red and green.

I did as I was told but returned to the very disappointing news that the wedding date could not be altered, other weddings planned in Gorewadi and Mitlee conflicted with the date Basheer had suggested. I would miss the wedding though I might see some of the vena turan (pre-wedding ritual), and witness the preparations. I had looked forward to the possibility of a wedding in a village where I was known, where people felt comfortable with me and I with them. I also had looked forward to the opportunity of photographing the wedding preparations as well as women who did not ordinarily allow their picture to be taken.

On the Saturday Khadeeja and I went to see Mayyada in her house. She sat beaming amidst a circle of village women, her daughter, Nashida, crouched by the hearth on one side making chai for the guests. Mayyada untied the red bundle beside her and laid out her son’s gifts for the women to admire: seven odhnis, two Punjabi suits,
plastic sandals, kareo (ankle bracelets), some coloured bangles and a gold-coloured necklace. The family was poor. It was a rather meagre hatajo (bridewealth) yet Mayyoda handled each item with great care and obvious pride.

In the afternoon Nashida and her friends gathered to sing wedding songs in the family courtyard. They were replaced later that evening with mature women. They sang in Sindhi, recalling the history they share and the common (if changing) ideals they hold. The bride, whose arrival and departure is surrounded by joy, sadness, emptiness and fulfilment, embodies the new, change, hope and despair—the conflict evident in song. She is the face of Mutwa social and physical rebirth on the threshold of change. Women have often been cited as "tradition bound" in comparison to men. But it is women who have, time and time again, moved, changed, plunged into the unknown of a husband's family, forging a new identity.

Sunday morning I awoke amidst the jumble of Khadeeja's children on the floor for the last time. I was excited at the prospect of home and running water—but saddened at the thought of leaving. The youngest, Fuad, tottered in and out, one shoe on, one shoe off dragging his pants behind him. He crept close, "Ya?" I opened my eyes; he grinned and dropped down beside me. That too would be the last time.

Maysoon and Neema accompanied me on my rounds to say goodbye to the families I had worked with. Later I was sitting with Khadeeja, tongue tied and feeling more awkward than I had since my first arrival. We heard a car. The taxi I had booked to take me back to Bhuj was early. I was packed and ready but I couldn't leave without trying on my Mutwa clothes. Maysoon flew over to the tailor's. I sent a message to the driver that he was early and I needed a couple of hours. Someone sent him tea; someone else spotted him a little later, sleeping. Maysoon returned empty handed; Inas had not finished my outfit. I slipped out to say a few further good-byes and returned a few minutes later to find Khadeeja, Maysoon and Firdoos waiting for me with a set of Mutwa clothes. Wajeeha had donated the sothal (gathered trousers) she had departed to Mecca in, Khadeeja one of her own kanjari (embroidered blouse worn by married women) and an odhni (veil). I quickly changed and stepped outside for them to admire my transformation. I could tell their smiles were indulgent. At least seven inches of my white ankles showed and the only way I could possibly keep the odhni on my head was by holding it with one hand under my chin. I didn't mind their fun.

Maysoon and I went to show Haleema my new dress. I was standing in her courtyard, in the open, talking to Haleema (more indulgence) who sat just inside her house when I was spotted. We hadn't heard the other vehicle or seen the arrival of a group of Indian tourists to Abbas's bhungo. One of them, poking his head around the corner spotted me and strode over. Firdoos and Haleema disappeared inside. He was a middle aged military officer stationed in Bhuj who had brought some out of town guests to Banni for an outing. After briefly explaining my presence and my present dress, I mentioned I was about to leave for the last time and was in the process of bidding the
Mutwa good-bye. "Come, come and show my friends" he demanded. I politely refused. "No, really, they would love to see this." Again I refused. "Come on" he cajoled and started to head back to the bhungo, stopping near its window to see if I was following. "Madam, please." "No" I said, feeling trapped, annoyed, embarrassed and powerless if a little belligerent. Khadeeja could not but have heard the altercation, intercepted and led him to her father's bhungo. I felt like crying.

I waited until the tourists had departed then said my final good byes. Surrounded by Wajeeha, Khadeeja, Firdoos and Neema, we watched from inside the guesthouse as the driver loaded my bags in the taxi. Maysoon had already crept away, biting her lip. The taxi driver opened the passenger door and I crossed the courtyard to quickly climb into the waiting car, still dressed in my Mutwa clothes.

I have attempted to suggest some of the significant contours of the Mutwa's ethnoscapes—pointing to their historical connected-ness as well as their isolation. It is rather tempting to present the history of the Mutwa as a history of change affected by roads and increased numbers of tourists and other visitors. Although the pace and direction of the changes the Mutwa have experienced since Independence have been affected by an increased rate of contact, they cannot be reduced to it. Many of these changes began long before roads began carrying the outside inside. Similarly although their traditions—pastoralism, material culture, oral history and other institutions—define them in part, those same traditions are shifting in form and meaning. The young do not have the same relationship with those 'traditions' as their forebears. Many are deemed embarrassing, backward, 'jungly'. Hence the Mutwa negotiate their identity amidst an expanding universe of others and are not unaware of their impact on those others.

Above, I have argued that their physical isolation was, at best, relative and not always perceived as problematic. The Mutwa today are, in many ways more isolated than they were before Partition. Over the last 50 years, for example, they have shifted to a market economy, disrupting traditional economic relationships and tending to concentrate power and privilege in the hands of a few, select, families. Concurrent with the shift away from pastoralism was the introduction of the Ahl-al-Hadîth, promoting the idea of purdah for women. Moreover, with the creation of the border, the Mutwa are no longer Sindhi Muslims living across the Rann from Sindh, but Sindhi Muslims living in India. The physical and cultural reality of Sindh removed, it remains a largely imaginary ideal the Mutwa use to distinguish and even re-create themselves with. Similarly, while the Mutwa are economically and physically more closely integrated with those beyond Banni, they are increasingly self conscious about their place on the world stage.
Mutwa-Morana Abbas Basheer

Abbas was the patriarch of the Mutwa clan and the Mutwa-Morana family. The Mutwa-Morana claim descent from two ancestral figures, the brothers Mutwa and Morana, whereas other Mutwa families are descendants of only the first brother. This renders the Mutwa-Morana the 'first family' among the Mutwa although the distinction has not always been associated with great wealth or respectability. Abbas's father was appointed by the late Rao of Kutch the magistrate of Banni and was responsible for collecting taxes and settling local disputes. Abbas inherited this position from his elder brother Imaad and was, in addition, the âgevân or 'big man' presiding over local affairs in Dhordo and neighbouring villages. Kutchi people viewed both Abbas and his elder brother as relatively 'progressive' or 'modern' Mutwa—indeed Abbas welcomed the outside world to Dhordo and encouraged both education and development. He had a reputation for fine hospitality and a long history of entertaining visitors, researchers, and tourists alike while liasing with government and non-government development officials. He was highly respected, gregarious, generous, and a gifted orator—if he also had a reputation for being something of a 'rogue'. Though he was in his late 70's when I began my field research and had suffered a couple of strokes; I learned to keep beyond arm's reach. Unfortunately interviews with Abbas were trying. The strokes appeared to have effected his memory and I could never prompt him off the beaten path, beyond the stories he had already (wearily) recited.

Mutwa-Morana Wajeeha Abbas

Wajeeha was the wife of Abbas and is now in her late 70's. She was born in Gorewali, a Mutwa village 3 km south of Dhordo. She was initially married to a young man from Gorewali, but legend has it that he was a hijra (eunuch) and incapable of fathering a family so they divorced. In their early 30's Wajeeha and Abbas fell in love and married against her family's wishes. Although Abbas's family had political power, they were poor, and regarded as somewhat dubious. Wajeeha took matters into her own capable hands, running off to Dhordo one night, marrying Abbas, and resisting all attempts by her family and police to return home. Eventually the marriage was recognised by her family. Together they have three children (Sameer, Khadeeja, Basheer). There were no schools when Wajeeha was small, hence she speaks only Kutchi and does not read or write. She cannot read the Qu'ran although she has a reputation for being a very devout Muslim. As Abbas's wife, Wajeeha is also an agevan and is responsible for presenting certain gifts to brides and grooms as well as presiding over certain rituals associated with marriage. As agevan Wajeeha also endeavours to set a good example for other women. She is generous, hard working, devout, and a passionate critic of the changes to embroidery.

I took my evening meals with Wajeeha, sitting opposite her in the tiny bhungo she used as a kitchen. As far as I could tell, she only ever cooked one thing, a mixture of mung beans and rice called kidjri. Occasionally her daughter or daughter-in-laws would send over some cooked meat or vegetables but Wajeeha only ever served kidjri. She became my Mutwa 'mother'—a relationship that developed slowly and cautiously. When, after I had known the Mutwa for some time, I arrived with my new husband, Wajeeha proclaimed how delighted she was for her 'daughter' to bring home her husband.
Mutua-Morana Khadeeja Ammar

Khadeeja is second child and only daughter of Abbas and Wajeeha. It was with her and her family that I stayed during my time in the village. She is now in her mid 40's, has been married since 1979 to Ammar, and is the mother of nine children (Maysoon, Husaam, Tariq, Neema, Jumaana, Mutazz, Fareed, Suha, and Fuad). A member of the 'first' family of Mutwa, Khadeeja is a remarkable woman in many ways. She is among the first generation of educated Mutwa women, speaks Kutchi, Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, Sindhi, Baluchi, and English and reads enough Arabic to understand the Qu'ran. From the age of 13, she managed local operations for Shrujan, the Kutchi development organisation that has been instrumental in developing an external market for Mutwa embroidery. Guests, including tourists, are always shown to Abbas's bhungo where, from a tender age, Khadeeja would be called on to demonstrate embroidery and sell samples. During the 1980's Khadeeja was appointed by the Gujarat Government to teach embroidery to young Mutwa women. She has also served as sarpanch (elected local leader) of 4 Mutwa villages although it was her brother Basheer who fulfilled the administrative duties of this role.

Though her mother is the recognised agevan, Khadeeja often stands in her place and will assume the role when her mother passes away. Like her mother she endeavours to set a good example morally, socially, fashionably. In her own words, she is "sly" meaning she is smart or quick-witted (and, I would add, cunning and entrepreneurial). She supported her expanding family for years on an income derived from embroidery. It has only been since the Agrocel factory opened in the mid 90's that Ammar has found regular employment. Consequently Khadeeja is now "resting"; she does little embroidery herself, and has relinquished most of her duties for Shrujan. Locally renowned as a fine embroiderer, visitors still occasionally call on her although much of the responsibility for tourists has passed on to her niece, Firdoos.

Having been exposed to so many visitors, Khadeeja has had the opportunity to reflect on and explain her culture. I found her quite bored with the whole topic of embroidery (although she approved my interest and approach to learning it) and much more interested in discussing Islam. She is warm, friendly, generous, and relaxed, a remarkably calm eye in the storm that is a family of 9 boisterous, growing children. I rarely saw her frustrated with them and would only growl or shout "chokro" (children!) if they became too bothersome. We would often sit in her kitchen with a swarm of children running in and out, crying, undressing, arguing, the chickens that live in the rafters squawking, chicks scurrying this way and that, renegade goats eyeing scraps stuck to the stainless cups and plates littering the floor till someone clucked at them or threw a stick in their direction. Khadeeja would sit, her back against the wall, stirring yet another pot of chai, as I strained to hear and understand her views on Mutwa life, culture and Islam.

Mutua-Morana Ammar Baasim

Ammar is Khadeeja's husband and her cousin by her father's brother's first wife. Prior to their marriage in 1979, Ammar drove a truck owned by Abbas, transporting goods all over Western India. Concerned about his long absences from home, however, they sold the truck and Ammar remained in Dhordo where he assisted his father-in-law with various government contracts and odd jobs. In the late 1980's he initiated research into the viability of converting the saline waters beneath the Rann into bromine. In the mid 90's, Argocel Pesticides was founded by Kanti Shroff, a local business man with a keen interest in the upliftment of the rural peoples in Kutch (it is his wife, Chandraben Shroff who founded Shrujan). A factory was built on the southern fringe of the Great Rann of Kutch, only 11 km from Dhordo with Ammar hired as Operations Manager. Since its
inception, the factory has attempted to hire local workers, including a number of Mutwa men and most of the young men of Ammar’s extended family.

Although I stayed with his family I saw little of Ammar. Like most Mutwa men he tended to rise early, head off to work and not return until early evening. On the occasional days that he remained at home, he either retreated to one of the decidedly male gathering spots within the village, or remained indoors sleeping or reading. Although always friendly and helpful, his English was halting and our conversations somewhat guarded. The exceptions were those rare evenings when the family (and I) would gather outside on the charpoi—Ammar usually reclining in the middle somewhere with one or two small children pressed close and sleeping. On one memorable occasion he asked me to bring him, on some future trip, a shaving machine—except that the rest of us heard sewing machine and fell about laughing at his (good-natured) expense.

Mutua-Morana Sameer Abbas

Sameer is the eldest son of Abbas and Wajeeha. Although respected within the family, his talents did not incline him to take over his father’s position as agevan or magistrate—roles that have, instead been assumed by his younger brother, Basheer. Sameer is known as the local ‘doctor’ and is under contract both to the State government and Agrocel to dispense first aid. Although his uncle Imaad was renowned as a hakim (Islamic doctor), Sameer’s training and knowledge are decidedly secular.

Small-boned and wiry, the doctor is effusive, particularly with respect to his love of music and drink—the latter a serious bone of contention with his family. He is married to Naila, a quietly conservative woman from Gorewali and the father of four children (Firdoos, Abdul Ghafoor, Jamaal, and Tharaa).

Mutua-Morana Firdoos Saeed

Firdoos is the eldest child and daughter of Sameer and Naila. She is more like Khadeeja than either of her parents—practical, driven, ‘sly’, and a fine embroiderer. Unlike her cousin Maysoon, Firdoos enjoys embroidery and spends most of her time stitching. Prior to preparing for her marriage, Firdoos produced embroideries for market. In the two years before her wedding she stitched quilts and other household textiles for her dowry. She and her elder brother, Abdul Ghafoor, were married in March 2001 to another brother and sister, a form of marriage called budo saguy that is much preferred if increasingly difficult to arrange. In addition to her market embroideries, Firdoos has assumed the role her aunt, Khadeeja, used to fulfil in greeting tourists and selling pieces of embroidery. Her work with foreigners has enabled her to learn English—something still considerably rare among the Mutwa. Her new husband, Saeed, her FFBS, and his family support her embroidery work and have encouraged her to continue at least until Saeed’s younger sister marries and Firdoos assumes her share of the housework.

When I first arrived in the village, Firdoos was appointed my embroidery teacher. It was a situation that was advantageous to both of us as, unlike Khadeeja, she had the time and interest in embroidery to show me how, and, unlike other women in the village, we could communicate easily in English. What Firdoos appeared to lack in experience, she made up for in acumen. Though our early meetings were shy and our conversations stilted, we developed a close personal relationship. Firdoos has and continues to grow into a wonderful informant—understanding, often anticipating my questions, while providing a unique perspective on changing conditions.
Maysoon is Khadeeja and Ammar's eldest child and daughter. She is the same age as Firdoos, but unlike Firdoos, prefers to occupy herself with housework rather than embroidery. That said, Maysoon and I spent many hours stitching together—perched on one of the family's rickety charpoi, the radio between us, stitching away the hours between Maysoon's rounds of chores. She only works on pieces for sale and only knows a few stitches. Although she will include embroidery in the dowry she and her mother are amassing, it has all been contracted from other women. More than many young women, Maysoon is interested in new fashions and experiments with colours and styles not normally preferred by the Mutwa. Last year, for example, she had a Punjabi suit stitched of a delicate lilac floral material. Tall, elegant and pastel, she cut a dramatic figure in her new suit amongst the bright yellow and red swathed figures at weddings.

It was Basheer's wedding to Haleema, his FBDD that I stumbled upon on my first trip to India in 1992. When I returned, in 1995, he was the father of two girls, had assumed most of his father's administrative duties, and was in charge of a number of government contracts. He has done well financially and has built a new, concrete-block house behind his father's bhungo. A son was born in 1998, and another daughter in 2001. Along with his father's duties, Basheer has inherited his father's bright-eyed mischievousness—teasing me in his broken English. Like Ammar, Basheer was frequently away from the village during the day—either checking the progress of his contracts for grasscutting and water delivery, or conducting business in Bhuj. He was a good source of information on his father's struggles to draw attention to the environmental degradation of Banni and his own family's lineage.

Moosa is popularly known as "the artist" outside of Banni. When still a young man, faced with the decline of pastoralism and the need to develop new occupations, Moosa re-invented chitrikam, a form of low-relief mud decoration Mutwa women had traditionally used to embellish the interiors of their houses. Moosa altered the technique to enable him to create much finer, more refined decorations and has managed to solicit commissions from restaurants, shops and offices across Western India. In addition to his mud work, Moosa has worked as an embroidery designer for Shrujan for many years helping to translate Mutwa embroidery for a new audience and consumers. He is married to Hameeda, whose fine embroidery is showcased in some of his more recent designs aimed at foreign art markets. They have three children.
GATHERING THREADS: AUGUST 1997

My first morning in Dhordo I awoke early. I had slept on the roof of Khadeeja's new house and awoke to watch the stars fade westward into the softening indigo. It was cold and damp and I pulled the embroidered quilts Maysoon had hauled up the stairs to the rooftop the night before, close. I watched as the enormous pink sun slowly heaved its way above the horizon, its welcome fingers grasping, warming, massaging away the night's chill. A herd of buffalo lumbered past, the bells around their necks curiously clanging, clunking, tinkling. An engine roared, a cock crowed, and the crows began their bickering on some nearby rooftop. I heard the day's first call to prayer (azan) from the mosque. The day had begun.

I stretched and rose to watch Dhordo come to life. I saw women fetching water, their water pots (hando) piled high on their heads. I saw smoke rising from kitchen fires as the day's first round of tea was prepared. I saw Ammar and Saneer, Khadeeja's husband and brother, make their way to her kitchen where I could hear them talking together peacefully before the children woke. I saw Wajeeha, Khadeeja's mother, already hard at work washing dishes. I saw Reema, one of 'new' Muslims arrive to start sweeping Wajeeha's courtyard, her granddaughter Farine following, a pot on her head. I saw Haleema, her belly swollen with her third child, milking a tethered cow. And I heard before I saw the footsteps and a pair of shy little heads peaking above the topmost stair that had bounded my temporary eyrie. I initiated what would become a morning ritual. Khadeeja's youngest children would join me to watch as I pulled foreign treasures out of my bag, groomed myself and prepared for the day's activities. I can't say I ever got used to the audience, but I eventually learned to tolerate them, even humour them. Having finished sweeping the family's courtyard, putting away the bedding and washing the pots and pans from the previous night's supper, Khadeeja's eldest daughter, Maysoon joined me with cups of steaming hot tea. Her cousin, Firdoos, followed after she had had tea with her mother and brothers.

Although I had hoped Khadeeja would be able to teach me how to embroider, she claimed she was too busy and had appointed Firdoos my instructor instead. Both Firdoos and Maysoon were 17 years old and unmarried when I arrived. Unlike Maysoon, who only knew a few stitches and preferred to occupy herself with housework rather than embroidery, Firdoos did little else. I was concerned, however, that Firdoos had neither the experience nor the depth of knowledge I had hoped to tap, however I rationalised that she could teach me the basics after which I would look for other women who could teach me about 'really good' stitching and tell me about what life and embroidery were like in the past.
My lessons began slowly with Firdoos. We both felt shy and self-conscious. She took me to her grandfather’s house where a chest of embroidery was kept for sale to tourists. She pointed out the different stitches and identified a number of motifs. Once I had acquired the proper embroidery threads and some cloth, she began to teach me how to stitch. She drew a simple design on the cloth I had brought, showed me how to work the outline for copal (see below) then let me struggle along cursing my lack of dexterity and productivity for shredding the delicate embroidery floss.

I had obtained my supplies from the markets in Bhuj learning, in the process, to ask for unspun rayon floss that is 'guaranteed' colour fast as opposed to that only possibly so, a difference reflected in the price. I also learned to look for the thin, unblemished pieces of mirror the Mutwa cut into tiny circles to embellish their embroidery with. For my first round of samples, I had especially purchased hand woven white cotton fabric. To my mind, and according to my previous experience, that was what you learned to embroider on— white because it forms a neutral background, cotton because it feels nice, and hand woven because it is easy to stitch through. Returning to Dhordo, I quickly realized why white was not a practical choice in a village essentially built of mud and dung. More slowly I realized that Mutwa women virtually never wear white and never embroider on white hence, though I had chosen the proper thread colours, the designs never looked right. It was much later before I realised the relationship between cloth texture, needle size, and fine stitching.

My first sample was wonky. Uneven lines of orange ankhs (see Appendix V) veering wildly left and right patrolling a centred square filled with copal and rows of mirrors held down by frantic stitches. I had to show it again and again to family and visitors whom, predictably nodded and said, in English “veddy goood.” I had Firdoos draw the pattern out for a second sample, which proved much more orderly, less tortured, and less humiliating than the first.

My working relationship with Firdoos settled into a regular pattern. We generally met in Khadeeja’s house in the morning, drifted off to her house if the children became too rambunctious, or even if they didn’t. She preferred to embroider in her own home, against the wall, by the window for light. Generally it was just the two of us though occasionally Maysoon or a girlfriend would join us or one or the other of her brothers would drift in watch for a while. Sometimes we would be joined by her mother, Naila, who would stitch or cut mirrors while listening to the Qur’an reading, broadcast on Radio Pakistan every morning. Sometimes Naila would spread her prayer mat and do her namaz (prostration and prayer) right there, but more often than not she left us alone and worked in her kitchen. Firdoos often cared for Basheer and Haleema’s two young daughters, Muna and Nawar, who would sit quietly next to Firdoos watching her stitch, absorbing the colours, the patterns, the rhythms. After their brother, Imaad, was born in January, he too was frequently included in our circle.
When I first visited Kutch in 1992 it was one of the few places in India where folk embroidery continued to be widely used by the women who have traditionally produced it. Kutchi women are internationally renowned as prolific embroiderers, embellishing garments, a wide variety of household textiles, cloths used in rituals and animal trappings (Frater, 1975, 1995; Elson, 1979; Nanavati et al, 1966; Jain, 1980). Embroidery visually expresses both the connections between different communities— their shared Kutchi identity—as well as the divisions between them. Until recently, many Kutchis considered embroidery, especially embroidered women's dress, one of their most salient and distinguishing features. Although, in 2002 embroidery continues to express identity, it does so in relation to an emerging market for embroidery as well as continuing social and environmental changes. The relationship between communities as well as between embroidery producers and users is altering the association of embroidery and identity in new and unprecedented ways. Where the changes to the embroidery produced by the Mutwa and its relationship with an emerging identity will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, in this chapter and the next I document contemporary embroidery and its social context. I will note how it visually distinguishes the Mutwa, describe its technical and stylistic variations, and discuss how it is produced, used and exchanged within Mutwa society. The market for embroidery and how embroidery is being changed in relation to that market will be discussed in Chapter 5.

DISTINCTIONS

Banni is a virtual island separated from 'mainland' Kutch by miles of frequently flooded salty sand. Bound by the experience and exigencies of Banni's environment, by its isolation, economic interdependence, and, in many cases, a common history and faith, the people of Banni have developed a lifestyle and material culture that is unique among the peoples of Kutch. Banni houses, for example, are distinctive. They are typically round, constructed of mud and dung, and have a cone-shaped, thatched roof. Called bhungos, they represent not only an accommodation to locally available materials but a designed response to the extreme temperatures of Banni's seasons.

Whereas the population of Gujarat is almost 90% Hindu and 9% Muslim (Census of India, 1991), Banni is about 80% Sunni Muslim (Jain, 1980). Most of the Muslim clans living in Banni migrated from Sindh sometime over the last 200-500 years and continue to speak Kutchi laced with their native Sindhi. Older generations frequently do not speak the official state language, Gujarati, even though it has been the language of business and administration in Kutch since it
became part of Gujarat in the early '60's. Because of its association with their origins and, more importantly, with Islam, Sindh remains an important marker of identity even though few have visited since Partition. Sindhi music and folk stories remain popular while wedding songs are still sung in Sindhi. Sindhi cloth, is revered for its exoticism as well as its associations with an Islam perceived as better than that observed locally.

Muslims dominate Banni, numerically as well as economically. Each Muslim village has a small number of Megvars and Vadhas living in their own hamlets nearby. Traditionally they provided goods and services to their Muslim neighbours and continue to enjoy some forms of patronage from them. The low-caste Hindu Megvars who moved into Banni comprise about 10% of the population (Jain, 1980) and have adopted elements of Muslim dress and behaviour. Consequently, they generally avoid the use of representational motifs in their embroideries and other visual arts. Previously adivasis, the Vadha are the descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of Banni but now comprise only 3-5% of its population. Many Vadha practice a syncretic faith although some have fully converted to Islam and are known as Sheiks. Like the Megvar, they avoid the use of representational motifs and often adopt the fashions and material culture of Muslim Maldharis. Both Megvar and Vadha men, for example, wear what is generally perceived as 'Muslim dress' outside of Banni—ghārdārikaprā—a suit consisting of a long tunic worn over gathered trousers with a brightly coloured shoulder cloth. Megvar and Vadha women's dress styles, though different from each other, share with the Muslim women's dress a tendency to fully cover the body. Unlike the short, form-hugging blouses commonly worn by Hindu women outside of Banni, women's blouses within Banni tend to be long and, while tight fitting across the arms and upper chest, hang loose below.

Where most parts of Kutch have traditionally supported a relatively varied economy that has included agriculture, pastoralism, and trading, in Banni it has revolved almost completely around pastoralism. The Maldhari clans herded cattle and water buffalo and traded calves, ghee, and more recently milk, both within and without Banni for the things they could not produce themselves. The Megvars processed the leather of their dead cattle and supplied the Maldhari with shoes as well as various leather pots and bottles for milk and ghee. The Vadha worked as carpenters, providing both groups with tools, cooking implements and the simple furnishings used in Banni houses. As I have argued elsewhere (see Chapter 2), Banni was never completely isolated,
nor were the peoples of Banni completely self sufficient—they were, however, closely linked and interdependent despite the obvious differences between them.

Like women across Kutch, Banni women have traditionally stitched clothes for themselves and their children, quilts, bags, hangings, cushions, and, occasionally, pieces used for ceremonies or rituals. These cloths play an important role in both expressing identity and distinguishing one caste or clan from another. Group membership is indicated through the cut of a blouse (or other cloth object), how and where embroidery is applied, and the stitches used. In Banni, embroidery is concentrated on the shoulders and especially the bodice front. The bodice is frequently divided into square or rectangular sections organised symmetrically on either side of a central band or axis extending from the neck towards the pelvis. There is usually a square, circular, or rectangular shaped embroidered motif located over each breast and each shoulder. The geometric arrangement and loose cut of Banni women's blouses lend then a characteristic 'flatness' that is in direct contrast with the moulded structure and more curvilinear or even representational embroidery designs found outside Banni.

The 'flatness' of Banni women's blouse design is further enhanced by the preference for certain materials and a particular way of stitching. The chain stitch, or more properly the open chain stitch, is most indicative (see Appendix IV). Used across Kutch it has frequently been noted to distinguish Kutchi embroidery from that elsewhere. Within Kutch, however, it varies tremendously. The Rabari, of central Kutch, for example, frequently make wide, densely packed open chain stitches with cotton thread. This gives their work a slightly raised appearance. Ahir women, from Eastern Kutch, may use thin cotton or rayon threads to make fine, densely packed lines of open chain stitch. As Hindus, both groups use the open chain to 'draw' motifs that include peacocks, parrots and elephants as well as to outline design areas. Within Banni, rayon floss is more frequently used to make either, the tiny, tightly spaced stitches used to delineate design areas, or the wider and equally dense bands of stitches used to fill areas. Banni embroidery is characterised by a patterned density and an integration of ground and surface. Banni women share preferences for seven colours (satranghi\textsuperscript{63}), colour combinations, motifs, designs, scale and materials that reflect their shared landscape and economies, as well as an Islamic inspired aesthetic that not only proscribes representational motifs, but encourages a densely patterned surface.\textsuperscript{64}

Despite their similarities, each of the castes and clans of Banni have developed their own unique styles of embroidery that distinguish the members of one community from another as well
as a woman's particular life stage within her community. Although there are certain motifs or designs that are never shared between communities in Banni, there are others that form a common repertoire Banni embroiderers draw on and add to periodically. By altering colour, tension, dimensions or arrangement, stitches are deployed in distinctive ways. Mutwa women, for example, frequently used the open chain stitch (see Appendix IV), called pako (see below) in Banni, to delineate design areas. It is almost always stitched with orange floss when used in this way. Megvar women however are more apt to vary the colour. Both Jat and Mutwa women embroider motifs called phulli (nose stud), however, the scale and density of their work varies. Phulli are circular motifs divided into different pie-shaped coloured wedges. Jat women frequently stitch these 8-10 cm in diameter. Mutwa women stitch smaller phulli, 2-3 cm in diameter. Embroidery designs are occasionally adopted from newcomers. Suph embroidery, for example, is associated with the Hindu Sodha people who migrated into Banni from Sindh following the 1971 war between India and Pakistan. Suph is a form of counted thread work using long running stitches (see Appendix IV). Perhaps attracted by the novelty of the new forms, the Mutwa began stitching similar patterns but with the satin stitch or false satin stitch (see Appendix IV) on their blouses and called them “suph” work. Suph work is now out of fashion among the Mutwa— their taste perhaps influenced by the growing tensions between the Sodha and Mutwa communities. Another shared fashion is for what is commonly called jari work outside of Banni but is called muko within. This involves couching (see Appendix IV) gold (son) or silver (cândhi) wrapped threads onto the surface of the cloth. It is a form of embroidery broadly associated with Muslims in Western India. Jari embellished clothing, particularly veils, are often worn by Muslim brides. In Banni it is primarily associated with the Halepotras although other clans and the Megvars have adopted the technique.

KNOWING STITCHES

Traditionally young Mutwa women learn to embroider by watching other women stitch, whether it is their mothers, elder sisters, sisters-in-law or other female kin. Before the Mutwa had access to schooling, girls began to learn embroidery between 8 and 10 years of age. Today’s young girls may play with needles and thread, but it is not until they are about twelve that they begin to learn to embroider, taking it more seriously after they leave school at around fourteen years of age. Younger sisters will frequently join elder sisters, peering over shoulders and picking up discarded work to try before being shooed away. Young women do not make samplers but learn by assisting with other women’s projects, stitching simpler or less conspicuous sections.
The first stitch taught to young embroiderers is pako, the open chain stitch, widely used across Kutch. It is one of the most prevalent as well as most resilient stitches used by the Mutwa. In Kutchi, pako refers to something baked, clever, and durable (as opposed to something unbaked and not durable, see kaco, below). Since it was introduced in the late 60's the Mutwa always use unspun rayon floss ("art silk") on cotton, cotton blend or increasingly synthetic fabrics. Rayon floss enables the Mutwa to make very tiny, delicate rows of pako, distinguishing it from that made by neighbouring communities. The Mutwa use pako to outline areas, usually in prescribed colours, as well as to fill-in design areas. Deceptively simple in appearance, it is one of the most challenging stitches to stitch well. To produce a long row of pako, straight and even in width and tension, is an accomplishment that requires concentration, dexterity, and skill.

After learning pako, young women today generally learn how to stitch copal, a stitch named after a once popular game played on a cross-shaped board. Named after a board game, copal is a pattern uniquely associated with the Mutwa and one used increasingly in market-bound embroidery. It is a pattern that involves pako as well as three other stitches. A grid, usually worked in black, is first stitched then filled in either with rows of pako and kun, small satin stitches. Subsequently, mirrors, cut into rounds, are applied to the spaces between the rows of the grid. A young, inexperienced embroiderer will often be given the task of stitching the grid or attaching (but not embroidering) the mirrors in place. In the finest copal the mirrors may only be 3-4 mm wide while the areas filled with pako will have three rows of fine stitching. In most commercial embroideries, a single row of pako is used to fill the grid and mirrors are 8-10 mm wide.

There are over 30 different motifs in current use by the Mutwa. They are formed with prescribed stitches and colours. Copal, for example, is almost always stitched with a black grid and filled with rows of orange pako. The outlines for the various border designs called phārvā, (see below), are also almost always stitched in orange. With a few exceptions, notably pako, stitches are not named, motifs are. The pattern called katarī, for example, involves a grid stitched in black floss (katarī ma chedar/katarī outline) and bands of short satin stitches. This suggests that the building blocks of Mutwa embroidery design are not individual stitches, as is commonly the case with Western embroidery, but groups of stitches forming recognised motifs. While this may give the impression that Mutwa embroidery is static or even formulaic, as I will discuss in Chapters 5 and 6, this is not the case. Mutwa embroidery has a long history of change. One important area of change for example, involves what women know about embroidery. Prior to the 1970's most women could
only stitch a few motifs. Today's young embroiderers, while they may not be as proficient as elder women at specific motifs, often have a broader range of knowledge, claiming to know all the motifs.

The following is a brief guide to Mutwa stitches and motifs. Intended as a guide for identification, I have included technical details and illustrations in Appendix V. Referring to non-western embroidery techniques with English terms—which are themselves variable—potentially undermines local variations in technique and understanding (Hardy, 1995). Moreover, insisting on English terms tends to obscure the rich symbolism and history contained within the names themselves. Many of the terms used by the Mutwa reflect their Sindhi origins and suggest the intimate connections between embroidery and women's bodies. Consequently, I have used Mutwa names for stitches and motifs referring to standard English terms (Christie, 1920/1971) only to facilitate clarity when stitches are not named as discrete units.

MUTWA EMBROIDERY MOTIFS AND COMPOSITE MOTIFS:

**Copal**

Today this is one of the most common and distinguishing motifs used by the Mutwa. Although other Banni communities stitch motifs they call copal, they are very different. It is named after a cross-shaped board game that was once popular. Copal is very adaptable. It can be made into discrete medallions, or it can be extended to fill in areas or form border designs. Copal is made by stitching a grid usually in black floss with a combination of running and couching stitches (fig. 3.1-3.2). The ovoid parts of the grid are filled in with pako. In the finest work, three rows of pako are used; the outer two rows are stitched in orange while the middle row varies but is often green, blue or red. The crossed parts of the grid are filled in with two tiny satin stitches made on top of one another. These are made with white floss and are called kun—said to add "light" to the work. Subsequently mirrors are attached in the spaces between the grid. A variation on copal is pakī copal, which does not use the black grid.

**Katari**

Katari is a very old motif that has undergone interesting changes. It is widely used across Banni although that stitched by the Mutwa is characteristically fine. Like copal it involves the stitching of an outline in black floss which is filled with kun and narrow bands of satin stitch.
Mirrors are stitched between the spaces in the grid. Katari is frequently used to fill-in areas, as a border design, or it may be arranged into independent motifs (fig. 3.3-3.4).

Kharak

Kharak is named after dates dried on their stem. It is made in a similar fashion to katari. A black grid is stitched in place then filled in with narrow bands of satin stitch and kun. An additional 'grid' is stitched in white. Kharak can be used as a fill, as part of a border design or it may be arranged into independent motifs (fig. 3.5).

Ser Kich and Pako Kich

While the above designs tend to be geometric and suggest a history of counted thread embroidery, other motifs are more curvilinear and suggest alternate influences. Ser and pako kich (figs. 3.6-3.7) are most often described as buti or flowers but do not represent specific flowers or fixed designs. They may also be used to form motifs as varied as feet, mangos, or pestles but these are unusual. The names, ser or pako kich, describe a process of filling with colour using particular stitches. An outline of the design is stitched with pako in black and is then filled in. Ser kich involves filling with narrow bands of satin stitch worked at right angles to the outline. Pako kich involves filling the outline with a row of pako worked parallel to the outline. The black outline is then enhanced with a row of bacıyo, a double backstitch worked in white. Like kun, this is said to add "light" to the work. Ser and pako kich are frequently combined with čikan (see below). Mirrors are usually applied around the motif rather than attached to it. Ser and pako kich designs may be continuous and used to enhance borders but are more often discrete medallions that are symmetrical along their horizontal and/or vertical axes. They range in size and shape depending on how or where they are used. For example, if used on the chest portion of the kanjaru, they form motifs called lād (see below) and are always long and narrow. On kanjari, when stitched over the chest, they are more square shaped. The most elaborate renditions of ser or pako kich are reserved for the stomach portion of a woman's blouse and quilts.

Kaco

Like pako and ser kich, kaco is less a specified motif, more a means of stitching designs broadly described as buti. Kaco can be adapted to form continuous bands of pattern but is more commonly used to form discrete, medallion-like designs (fig. 3.8). As with previous motifs, the size and shape of kaco designs depend on how and where they are used. Unlike previous motifs, kaco does not involve an outline with fill. The motif is made with a band of satin stitch that varies in
width and is often stitched with black floss. A row of bacīyo is stitched in white on either side of the satin stitch band. Mirrors are used to surround the motif but are not integral to it. In Kutchi, kaco refers to something that is unripe, raw, or even weak. Although popular among Dhordo Mutwa during the 1970's, currently it is only Gorewali Mutwa who still stitch it.

**Gotun**

Gotun is another ancient stitch that is found all over Western India and Sindh. It is a form of needle weaving often called the 'interlace stitch' in English (see Appendix IV). Unlike neighbouring groups who tend to use gotun to make thick, mono-coloured webs, the Mutwa use tiny stitches and alter their thread colours. They claim this make their work "Sindhi" rather than Kutchi and indeed, it appears closely linked to the fine interlaced patterns of Sindhi textiles. Gotun is never combined with other stitches to form composite motifs. It is used as a fill, a border, and as discrete medallions (fig. 3.9).

**Suph**

Suph embroidery has fallen out of fashion among the Mutwa in recent years. It is primarily associated with Hindu Sodhas who immigrated from Sindh to Banni following the 1971 India-Pakistan war. Suph is a form of counted thread work similar in appearance to the supplementary weft patterning produced by weaving. Suph work uses a running stitch (see Appendix IV) to form the design on one side of the cloth. Similar techniques are used throughout northern Pakistan and Sindh as well as the Punjab and parts of Rajasthan in India. The suph work fashioned by the Mutwa uses a satin or false satin stitch and lacks the precision of the counted versions. It is seldom mixed with other motifs (fig. 3.10).

**Naharan**

Like suph, nahāran appears to have been introduced to the Mutwa's repertoire from outside. It involves tiny satin stitched chevrons often arranged in a band or used to fill in design areas. Although seldom seen today, it remains widely used by neighbouring Megvars. Askari & Crill note that is also used in Sindh and that the name, naharan (S=nehran) means 'river'.

**Muko**

Muko is a variation on what is commonly called jari or zardozi work outside Banni. It has traditionally been a craft associated with professional male embroiderers who applied gold and silver wrapped threads to cloth in intricate designs (i.e. Gupta, 1996; Trivedi, 1968). How much muko was produced in Banni prior to the introduction of inexpensive, machine-made metallic
threads is unclear. Muko is a form of couched work (fig. 3.11-3.12). The metallic threads are laid on the surface of the cloth and held in place with discrete stitches made with sewing thread. Muko was popularly used on wedding blouses and, though often used alone, is occasionally combined with ser or pako kich.

**Pactali**

Like many other castes and clans across Kutch, the Mutwa embellish their embroidery with motifs called pacta involving tiny mirrors (tika). The Mutwa only use round mirrors ranging in size from 3-10mm. Pieces of mirror, purchased in urban markets, are cut to size with scissors. They are attached to the cloth with sewing thread (see Appendix V) then embroidered with rayon floss. The stitches used to fix the mirror to the cloth are called tika jurnoe. The floss is used to make a tight buttonhole stitch (see Appendix IV) through the cloth and the thread stitches, encasing the mirror and holding it in place. A second row of stitches is made around the mirror, surrounding it with tiny white lines. These may be made with either a second row of buttonhole stitch, worked in the opposite direction to that holding the mirror in place, or, as in older pieces, with a ring of bullion stitches (see ashrafi below). Although surrounding individual mirrors with tiny white lines is most common today, other embellishments include a circle of muko and a circle of kac with/without pharva (fig. 3.13-3.14).

**Phulli**

Phulli are round multicoloured wheels of embroidery named after the phulli or round nose studs worn by the Mutwa and other Muslim women across Kutch (fig. 3.15). Their name derives from phul or flower in Kutchi. Phulli are stitched by the women of several communities in Banni, notably the Jats who may stitch them up to 7-10 cm wide. The Mutwa prefer to make smaller phulli, usually 2-3 cm wide. Each phulli is filled in with as many as seven different colours, usually with a mirror placed at the centre. Phulli are frequently surrounded with a band of white baciyo or dantej. They are generally used in combination with ser or pako kich to fill design areas. I have not seen phulli used on anything but women's kanjari and kanjaru.

**Cikan**

Despite its name, cikan embroidery does not appear to have any links to the cikan embroidery of Lucknow. Cikan always involves stitching a flower or part of a flower with rows of pako (fig. 3.16). Cikan flowers frequently form the budding tips of pako or ser kich designs and are
used to fill in empty spaces. They are usually stitched with a mirror at the centre and a row of white baciyo surrounding the outside edge.

Golalo

Like cikan, golalo are flowers or parts of flowers but are worked with a satin stitch. They are likely related to those identified in Askari & Crill (1997) as "golharho" in Sindhi, a common flower found in the dry areas on both sides of the Rann. Although increasingly rare, they are usually stitched with ser or pako kich motifs, have a mirror for a centre and are surrounded by a row of white baciyo (fig. 3.17-3.18).

Dhoram

Dhoram is a way of forming intricate geometric borders or medallion-like motifs with a stitch similar to what is know as the cretan stitch in English (see kac, below and Appendix IV). Seven stitches are made in one colour, close together and in a row to form a little square. Subsequent squares are made in alternate colours. Traditionally, seven colours would be used in all. After the squares are stitched, a line of white baciyo is stitched around the motif. There are few embroiderers today that have the patience or skill to stitch dhoram (fig. 3.19-3.20).

Tun

Tun is a form of needle weaving similar to gotun. It is used to produce small squares of pattern usually with two colours. One colour is worked in long running stitches across the square then a second is 'woven' through these. Tun is increasingly rare and today, made by only a few women on young boys' clothing. The motifs are usually used on the edges of collars or pockets (fig. 3.21).

Cavliya

Cavliya like tun, is today only found on young boys' clothing and is only made by a few women. It is also related to needle weaving and gotun. It is used to form small rectangular motifs filled with tiny cross-stitches (fig. 3.21).

Bhoriya Phul

These are types of flowers once used on gaj, women's wedding blouses. Bhoriya phul might be stitched over each breast and on each shoulder. Pukāḷir, the 'fringe' part of the design is reminiscent of those used in chitri kam, the low relief mud work used to decorate Mutwa house interiors. It recalls the Mutwa's previous nomadic existence. Bhoriya phul (and chitri kam) are seldom made today (fig. 4.13).
Ghana

Ghana is a type of laid work previously common on both sides of Kutch’s border with Sindh. The few samples I was able to uncover date to c. 1920—it seems to have fallen out of fashion after that time. It was used to embellish the borders of women’s skirts as well as the cloth bags women used to stitch. The shape of ghana (fig. 3.22) are reminiscent of saint’s resting places or tombs although the connection is not confirmed by the Mutwa themselves (see Chapter 5).

Others

There are several other stitches the Mutwa consider their own although they are rarely seen today. These include stitches named after various desert flowers, akaphullī, hīṭa, and ṭīṭ— the former two mentioned in Askari & Crill as being made in Sindh (1997). Ashrafi appears similar to the bullion stitch (fig. 3.23). It was usually stitched in white and used to surround mirrors or motifs, especially ghana, adding light. It has been replaced with baciyo and the buttonhole stitch.

Stitches for Borders and Edges

Pharva

Demarcating specific design areas, borders, and edges is important in Mutwa design. The most prevalent method of doing so is to surround or outline areas with a band of pharva. Pharva always involve two parallel rows of pako, usually stitched in orange. There are an almost infinite variety of designs used to fill the space between the rows of pako, some of which I illustrate below. These designs are always repeated along the length of the band and frequently involve mirrors. Pharva are also used in a special way on gaj, women’s wedding blouses. Over each breast and shoulder are stitched circular candhar (moon) motifs, embellished with short tassels and shells. While candhar may be stitched in a number of different ways, including using muko, pako or ser kich, it is also common to use bands of pharva (fig. 3.24).

Pako/Ser Kich

Listed above as a method of filling abstract floral designs, ser kich may also be used to form borders similar to pharva. Narrow bands of satin stitch are worked perpendicular to two rows of pako. Usually two rows of each colour are used; their order repeated indefinitely (fig. 3.25).

Kac

Kac is one of the most common edge finishes and is found on garments, quilts and other textiles. Kac was also used to embellish the seams sewn on women’s veils as well as those used on
ajrakh cloths occasionally still used by men. It is also used to strengthen and embellish the front edge of women's veils. It is frequently combined with a band of pharva to frame design areas or embellish edges. Traditionally it was stitched with 7 stitches of each of the 7 colours favoured by the Mutwa. Fewer colours are often used today (fig. 3.27).

**Kandhalo**

Like dantarli, traditionally kandhalo forms an intricate zigzag web of stitches especially used around the neck edge of women's blouses. It is seldom made today having been replaced with what is known as the double featherstitch in English (see Appendix IV). The modern version may be used to fill in the space between two rows of pako as in the pharva, or may be used alone. It is usually stitched with white floss (fig. 3.28-3.29).

**Dantarli**

Dantarli is frequently used by the Mutwa to surround and enhance motifs. The Kutchi word for tooth is dandh, and indeed, it's tooth-like appearance likely contributed to its name. Dantarli may also be used along the front edge of the neck opening of women's blouses. It is frequently stitched with white floss (fig. 3.30).

**Machi Kandhlo**

This is a border design with a chevron pattern named after fish (mach). I have not been able to locate samples of it.

**Kal, Tesori, Ganu**

Kal, tesori, and ganu are rarely seen today and only found around the neck edges of women's blouses (fig. 3.31-3.32).

**Baciyo**

Baciyo is the characteristic white outline frequently stitched around motifs. It is also occasionally worked down the middle of a band of kac, further embellishing it. Like kun, baciyo is said to add light to the embroidered surface. It is a tiny, tight backstitch worked with a double thickness of white floss. Embroiderers aim for a dense line with pronounced dots. The double thread is often knotted directly behind the need to keep the thread lengths even during stitching (figs. 3.16-3.17).
WOMEN'S EMBROIDERED CLOTHING

Embroidered clothing is currently only worn by married Mutwa women of approximately 25 years and older. Mutwa men do not have a tradition of wearing embroidery. Although babies and toddlers are occasionally dressed in embroidered garments for special occasions, young boys or girls no longer wear embroidery. Since the 1960's the 'traditional' dress for married women has included a kanjari or kanjaru, both embroidered, short sleeve, mid-stomach length (jabbhbo) blouses (ill. 3.1-3.2). Widows wear a variation of the kanjari called a danayal jo kanjari (widow's blouse). The embroidery used on women's blouses distinguishes them at different life stages through variations to blouse cut, colour, motifs and stitches used (see below). Previously unmarried women were also distinguished by embroidery; however, the younger generations have not worn embroidery since the 70's (see Chapter 5).

The kanjari is the most common type of blouse used by married Mutwa women. It is constructed of three basic shapes, the pet, or stomach, a large rectangle worn over the stomach and breasts, the than, meaning breast, a short but wide triangle associated with the upper chest, and two squares called kola, meaning shoulder and worn over each shoulder (ill. 3.3). Mutwa blouses were traditionally open-backed with only a tie at the neck and mid-back to hold them in place. Since the 60's women have begun to add back pieces. Hidden by a woman's veil, these pieces are decidedly 'other'—unembellished and cut from cloth that does not match the rest of the blouse. Although the back and blouse lining may be made of used cloth, the right side of kanjari are always made from new cloth. Plain, un-printed cloth is most commonly used, although some women will occasionally choose printed cloth for everyday wear. They feel that the printed design helps "fill" the area, reducing the need for embroidery. Although cotton and polyester/cotton blended fabrics are still available, women increasingly prefer polyester or nylon cloth. They claim that it is "better"—less expensive, more durable, and more colourfast. Synthetic fabrics, because of their evenness also appear to facilitate fine embroidery, although Western tourists seldom appreciate this point.87

The pet and kola sections of kanjari are always cut from the same coloured cloth. The than is cut from a different colour—usually the complementary opposite to that of the pet and kola. A blouse with a red pet and kola, for example, would have a green or blue than. The four pieces of cloth that make up the blouse front are stitched together by hand with the lining (if used) before the
Illustration 3.1. Kanjari types (from top left, clockwise): sor kanjari, loki kanjari, danayal jo kanjari, and sabot kanjari.
Illustration 3.2. Gaj and kanjaru.
Illustration 3.3. Kanjari parts.

1. KOLA
2. THAN
3. BANDH
4. POPTI
5. PET
embroidery can begin. Traditionally designs were marked on the pieced blouse with lengths of thread and running stitches. It is now more common to mark designs on the fabric with a pen or pencil, or to commission one of the handful of male designers to print designs on the cloth utilising a wooden block or what is commonly called the 'prick and pounce' method. After the designs are marked, the embroiderer often stitches the design outlines on all three sections of the blouse before rolling it up, tacking it closed, and beginning the work of filling in the outlines on the kola then the than and pet.

After the blouse is embroidered, strips of embroidered cloth are added to the bottom front edge and the outside edge of each kola. These are frequently cut from the same or similar colour cloth as the than. The red blouse described above, for example, may have a green than and green additions, or they may be blue or purple (but not red, orange, yellow, pink, black or white). After these are added the blouse is left flat, or, if needed, sent to the village tailor to complete. The tailor finishes the front neck edge, adds a tie at the neck, stitches on the back, and additional bands around each sleeve, along the bottom front edge and sides of the blouse. He or she may also add rows of purchased trim and machine stitches embellishing and reinforcing the bands.

The designs used in each of the three sections are usually variations of the same embroidery motif or technique. Their shape and size vary according to the section they are used on, and they tend to be named after that section. A flower or buti, for example, embroidered on the than is called a than ni buti, one embroidered on the kola is called a kola ni buti. The embroidery in each section is discrete—it is generally contained within that section, and emphasises its shape. With the exception of the central front band used on the gaj (see below), embroidery does not cross over from one section to another. Designs exhibit horizontal, bilateral symmetry within each section.

There are three kanjari variations: the sor (figs. 3.33-3.34), loki (figs. 3.35-3.36) and sabot (figs. 3.37-3.38). The sor is embroidered only to the bottom of the bandh. This is the area coinciding with the breasts and means closed or even forbidden. The sor kanjari is used for everyday wear and involves the least amount of embroidery. The loki has an embroidered bandh as well as an embroidered V-shaped design extending over the stomach, below the bandh. The sabot has a fully embroidered pet area. The latter two blouses are used mainly for special occasions such as attending weddings.

A kanjaru was traditionally included among the blouses given to the new bride by her mother-in-law (figs. 3.39-3.40). Only married women wore it, particularly during the first few years
after the wedding and likely between the wedding and nikoti, when the bride shifts to the husband's home. Subsequently women only wear kanjarů on special occasions. Kanjarů frequently include a variety of different stitches and patterns and are among the most elaborate items embroidered by the Mutwa. Like the kanjari, kanjarů are pieced together in three sections however, all three are cut from the same colour cloth. Bright colours are preferred, especially pink, yellow, or orange, although blue, red and maroon may also be used. Unlike kanjari, each of the three main sections is divided into vertical bands of embroidery. The kola, for example, are divided into two sections, the than into four, and the bandh into five bands of embroidery. Below the bandh, the poptic (see ill. 3.3), an embroidered band added to the bottom edge of the blouse, are very elaborate. In between these borders, the pet is filled with tiny butis and occasionally a large, central medallion.

Kanjarů are embroidered with a greater variety of stitches and motifs than other blouses. In a sense, they are tour de force pieces of embroidery showcasing a woman's skill and knowledge. One blouse may contain bands filled with copal, katari, kharak, muko as well as phulli. They may also include bands filled with elongated floral motifs called lad. Stitched with ser kich, lad are only used on kanjarů and gaj.

The third type of blouse is the gaj, the blouse traditionally worn by the bride during the wedding ceremony (figs. 3.41-3.42). It is gifted to the bride by her new mother-in-law. Gaj are almost always stitched on mashru, originally a hand woven, supplementary warp-faced fabric with a striped design or mashru-like printed synthetic material. The gaj consists only of the kola and pet. Like the kanjarů, the embroidery of the gaj is markedly different from the kanjari, worn as the woman matures and bears children. Where the embroidery on the kanjari tends to emphasise the horizontal, suggesting fulfilment and filled-in-ness, the kanjarů and the gaj, emphasise the vertical—suggesting the youthful potential of the young woman. The embroidery of the gaj is arranged symmetrically around a long centre band extending from neck to navel. Above each breast and on each shoulder are embroidered motifs known as candhar (moons) which are only used on gaj. They are embellished with short red or black tora (tassels) attached to small kodīs (shells). These are stitched down the centre front band as well as at the centre of each candhar. Gaj are frequently stitched with muko, and, like the kanjarů, are elaborately embroidered with rows of lad. Gaj are only worn by brides during the wedding ceremony or shortly thereafter.

The last type of blouse is the danayal jo kanjarů or widow's blouse. This is, as the name suggests, only worn by widows and is prepared for them by close friends or relatives. Though the
cut of this blouse is the same as the other kanjari, the colours and embroidery are much more subdued. The kola and pet sections are generally cut from some dark blue, black or green material, the than is red, dark blue or pink. Embroidery is restricted to two narrow bands stitched along the bottom edge of the kola, two small motifs on either side of the than and a narrow band of stitching across the top of the pet with three short vertical bands extending between and on either side of the breasts.

Mutwa women wear a type of veil commonly called an odhni or, in Sindhi, a gandhi. It is a large square pieced together from two lengths of cloth. Although tie-dyed cotton or silk are still popular for special occasions, for everyday wear, odhnis are made of printed synthetic cloth. The middle portion of one edge of the odhni is reinforced with a narrow strip of cloth, machine stitched in place, and one or two rows of purchased trim. These embellish the edge of the odhni worn closest to the face and also help to keep it in place. A special odhni is worn during the wedding ceremony called an acho odhni (white odhni). It represents one of the few times in a woman's life she wears white. The acho odhni is embellished with a 10-15 cm wide band of embroidery called a puṭī. Puṭi are always stitched on black (likely to contrast with the white cloth of the odhni) and frequently with gotun although other stitches may be used.

**QUILTS, HOUSEHOLD AND OTHER EMBROIDERED TEXTILES**

Although many of the household textiles a young woman would have prepared for her wedding are no longer made, quilts remain important. Traditionally a young woman would also have embroidered a number of khotri, bags of various dimensions, which would have been used to store fine cloth, jewellery, or other valuables. The only bags made today are the two lugan kothri (figs. 3.51-3.52) used by the bride (lāḍā) and groom (lāḍo; goṭ) to hold the special sweets (mura) they distribute during the wedding ceremony. A young woman would also have stitched one or more usīkos, cushions, as well as a sera, the mask worn by the groom during the wedding ceremony. Although sera are still used by the Mutwa, they are often borrowed, handed down, or purchased from other Muslims in Banni.

A young woman is still expected to produce or acquire at least 21 dhādkī (quilts). These accompany her to her husband's house and are used by the family for bedding, sitting, and decoration. There are three types of quilts still commonly made. Of the 21 quilts a young woman makes, one or two are considered special and are used to cover the quilts piled on top of the
manji—a low bench-like piece of furniture usually located opposite the entrance to the house. Called manji nu pallo, these special quilts are embellished either with bharat kam, embroidery (fig.5.31-33), or ghulvārī, applique (Fig 4.11). They are always made of new cloth and usually involve a large central medallion surrounded by four smaller medallions, one in each corner. As with the blouse embroidery, certain stitches, like gotun, are used alone, others are used in the prescribed combinations described above. All quilts have a decorative patchwork border called kor that include bands of colour with one or more bands of kongrī and tok (see Appendix VI). The order of the colours is prescribed. The kor used on manji nu pallo, are much more elaborate than those used on bedding quilts. These more utilitarian quilts, or attar dhadkī may be made of old printed or tie-dyed cloth, especially old odhnis. The centre field is generally cut from a single piece of printed cloth. Attar dhadki are unembellished save for the rows of sebo, running stitches and the kor.

Other quilted goods include thick quilted pads called soar. Though only occasionally made or used today (having been replaced by purchased cots and mats), they were made from pieces of scrap cloth and are unembellished. Small appliquéd or embroidered quilts called goadri are often made today and presented to new-borns by close relations. Up until 30 years ago quilted 'carpets' were also made. Likely only used for special occasions, these 'carpets' were almost double the size of the attar or manji nu pallo. They had an elaborate kor and a large central field that was occasionally embellished with rows of butis.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF EMBROIDERY

Traditionally, Mutwa women controlled the production, use, and exchange of embroidery. They used it to embellish their own garments as well as those worn by their young children, and daughters—Mutwa men do not wear embroidery. Only Mutwa women make it, use it, sell or occasionally give it as a gift. Although in recent years a few Mutwa men have begun to design and market embroidery outside of Banni, women are the only ones who stitch and continue to control the distribution of embroidery gifts as well as much of the local sale of embroidery. Gifts of embroidery are rare and denote particularly close relationships between women. They are generally made in the context of major lifecycle changes such as marriage, birth, and death. As has been noted for Muslims elsewhere in South Asia (Eglar, 1960), the Mutwa record most of the gifts exchanged between families during weddings, after births, and on other special occasions. These
gifts are usually presented from a wide circle of friends and family and recorded in the name of the giver's husband or father. It is expected that at some point in the future, they will be reciprocated. Gifts of embroidery, however, operate within a more intimate circle of women and closer to the level of generalised reciprocity.

It has been often noted that women's gifting of textiles in small-scale societies demonstrates ties of affection (March, 1983; Chaussonet, 1988). Mutwa embroidery is only gifted between related women or close friends and is not recorded (although it is remembered). The Mutwa say it is presented out of "love". This is not to say that embroidery is always or only motivated by altruism. As Weiner has noted for the Trobriands and Samoa (1989), textiles (or other 'gifts', see below) also affect ties of affiliation. The finely woven grass mats produced by Samoan women are considered "inalienable", allowing women to "keep while giving" (ibid). Mutwa embroidery, arguably allowing more scope for personal expression than fine mats, represents a particularly affective/affectionate gift. The embroiderer's skill is admired, even long after the gift has been made. Similarly, her relationship with the gift recipient remains charged with expectations of mutual support, aid, and affection (Eglar, 1960). These types of exchanges are informal and unrecorded but no less affective in maintaining or building solidarity between women. In addition to gifts of embroidery, women often help one another embroider. It is not unusual for one woman to work on a section of embroidery another finds challenging. This gifting of time and skill is informal, is often associated with socialising and, like gifts of embroidery, tend to enhance existing relationships between women.

Young women begin stitching the garments and household textiles meant to accompany them to their husband's home as they approach marriageable age—traditionally this would have been around the time of puberty, today it is in the early 20's. Young women would strive to produce, with the help of their mothers and other female kin, a number of embroidered kanjari as well as cloth bags, borders, cushions, the sera or mask worn by the groom, and other pieces. Two or three days after the wedding, the young bride would return to her father's house and remain there for up to two years depending on her age and the family's situation. During this period, she would stitch at least 21 quilts, drawing on the supply of cloth given to her during the wedding ceremony (described below) or purchasing cloth with any money that was presented. Usually two of the quilts would be the highly embellished manji nu pallu described above.
When her quilts were finished and the bride was deemed ready to rejoin her husband, a ceremony called nikoti was arranged. Her parents would cook sweet rice and call the village women to view her completed embroidery. During this time a second round of gifts would be given—plates, quilts, cups—items considered "small" but enough to "fill her house". When she moved to her husband's house, her embroidery would again be displayed along with her jewellery and household goods. A Mutwa bride with poor or insufficient embroidery might be deemed "useless".

It has been noted that women's textile skills are valued as indices of industriousness (Vexler, 1976; Weir, 1989; Fienup-Riordan, 1988). But while being seen as industrious is an important attribute for young Mutwa women, one tied to morality (see Chapter 6), the 'usefulness' of embroidery is not strictly utilitarian nor material. The ability to produce a quantity of embroidery is related to economics and the availability of time, but, as noted above, it is also dependent on 'affectionate' resources. Embroidery is not necessarily produced independently. Women often share labour, moreover, mothers and other female relatives often give pieces of embroidery to young bride's to be. A young woman's dayj or dowry is thus not only a reflection of her labour (her skill at stitching or taste), but her social embeddedness—the physical and emotional support she is able to call upon.

Although dayj is an important feature of Mutwa weddings, it is balanced by equally important gifts called hatalo presented to the bride by the groom and his family. Many Hindu castes, in Kutch and elsewhere in India (Edwards, 1996), are experiencing problems associated with escalating demands for dowry. Women whose families fail to provide adequate dowry or meet the groom's family's demands are vulnerable to attack, abandonment or even death. Although Muslims are not exempt from the motivations that appear to stimulate these actions, the customary limitations placed on mehr (marriage payment), their close knit communities, and egalitarian ethic prevents the extreme differentiation of wife takers and wife givers seen elsewhere. Among the Mutwa, the gifts exchanged between the bride and groom's families are largely prescribed and have changed less in quantity than they have in quality over the past 20-30 years. The hatalo usually includes a house, a bed, and the manji on which quilts are stacked. In the past the new couple would also be given cows and buffalo in order to start their own herd. Khadeeja's mother Wajeeha, for example, was given 70 head of cattle and waterbuffalo.

Traditionally hatalo also included three blouses embroidered by the groom's mother for the new bride. She would receive a gaj, a kanjaru and a kanjari stitched in prescribed colours. The gaj
is always red, while the kanjaru and kanjari may be red, blue, or pink. The gaj was meant to be worn by the bride during the wedding ceremony along with three of the odhni that were also included in the hatalo: the patori, kombi, and acho odhni to which the bride would affix a border of embroidered black cloth called the paff. The gaj is embellished with motifs specifically associated with fertility—the colour red, the moon, shells, and tassels—representing her new role and status within the groom’s family. The kanjaru, similarly, is worn by brides after the wedding and includes motifs associated with fertility and growth. These blouses, stitched by the mother-in-law, symbolise the bride’s physical and emotional incorporation within the new family.

The hatalo is the focus of attention for the female members of the groom’s family for weeks before the wedding. Although many mothers and grandmothers begin stitching garments or quilts for future daughters-in-law years before the wedding, as it draws near, they select which items they will include in a particular hatalo. Local women frequently visit to check the expanding contents of the hatalo, offer support, suggestions, and occasionally make contributions. Prior to 1947, the Mutwa would travel to markets in Sindh to shop for hatalo gifts. Small groups of men and women would go by cart, across the Rann—a return journey that could take several days. Since Partition, shopping expeditions have been made to markets in Kutch instead. Bhuj, the largest market centre in Kutch, is only an hour and a half away by jeep. Women, however, no longer accompany the men on these trips.

As the date of the wedding approaches, the home of the groom begins to bustle with activity. When Khadeeja’s neighbour’s son, Talal, was married, the family moved into the elder and smaller of their two bhungos so that the new couple could have their own space while a new house was constructed for them. Walls and floors were repaired, door frames and cupboards were repainted, the courtyard was emptied of junk and carefully swept—all as streams of female visitors arrived to visit and view the hatalo. A few days before the wedding, the groom’s unmarried sister invited her young friends to sing wedding songs as elder women dropped by to listen. They were replaced after the evening meal with older, more experienced singers. As the singers and other guests arrived, Talal’s mother, Mayyada, showed off his completed hatalo and discussed the improvements they had made to the house, and their plans to build a new house for the young couple.

Two days before the wedding, an event called vana turan occurs. Like the singing party earlier, this is less an opportunity for gift giving, more the public recognition of what the groom will
give. Vana turan involves the wife of the agevan or Mutwa big man. In addition to representing the village, and settling local disputes, the agevan negotiates the terms of proposed weddings and sets dates. In the past he probably ensured that livestock, promised as part of wedding settlements, were delivered and healthy. The agevan's wife (also known as agevan) plays an important role in enhancing and maintaining his power within the community. Abbas's wife, Wajeeha, remains the agevan even though Abbas has passed away. Her daughter, Khadeeja, explained that the Wajeeha is responsible for performing certain ritual functions, for maintaining a certain level of largess and hospitality, and for setting a good example for the other women. She is cautious, frugal and efficient though generous in her hospitality.

During the vana turan, the (female) agevan inspects the hatalo to make sure the groom's family has carried out its commitments, presides over the women's celebrations, and presents certain prescribed gifts meant to help provide for the wedding feast. On the appointed day before the wedding, the agevan arrives at the groom's house. She is greeted by his female kin and other village women and given refreshments. Subsequently, the groom's mother presents the agevan with the hatalo, wrapped in a red cloth. The agevan unwraps the bundle, then inspects and counts its contents. A large weigh scale (turān) is then brought in as well as a ceramic pot. The agevan pulls out of her bag lumps of gur (unrefined brown sugar) and places them on the scale. She weighs out one kilo of the gur and then places it in the ceramic pot. She also produces a container of ghee that she has prepared herself. This is weighed and placed beside the jaggery. As she weighs her gifts, a group of women sing wedding songs. Before she leaves, she is asked to help mix the mehendi (henna) paste used to decorate the bride and other women. The mehendi powder (purchased from town) is dumped into a large pot. Water is added while the agevan stirs and tests its consistency—again while wedding songs are sung. The bride and her female guests will use this paste to stain the palms of their hands and soles of their feet red. Unlike urban dwellers who prefer to apply henna with cones in intricate designs, rural women are more likely to smear it on and revel in its rich saturated hue.

The nikah is the formal Muslim marriage rite and is usually conducted in relative privacy. The groom, his male kin, and friends gather at the village mosque where the mullah (local religious leader) leads them in prayer. A male relative—usually a father or brother—represents the bride, having obtained her agreement to the marriage. The mullah asks the groom three times if he agrees to the marriage then asks the bride's representatives if she also agrees. The mullah sets the mehr or
marriage amount—money the groom promises to pay the bride upon request or if they should separate. After the nikah a meal of biryanī (spiced rice with meat) and buttermilk (cāy) is served to the men and women in separate sections of the village.

The bride remains in her house during the nikah and meal, surrounded by her female kin and friends. Although the public celebration of the marriage begins the day after the nikah, many guests arrive that evening, after the evening meal, helping to prepare the bride and groom, keeping them company, singing, and visiting. During Rana’s wedding in Bhuj, I sat with Khadeeja, Firdoos, Maysoon, Rana and her mother watching Hindi films as Rana’s hennaed hands dried. Other women collected in a separate room where a pair of (female) professional musicians had been hired to sing and drum. Women periodically stopped by to visit, present gifts, and view the hatalo. Gifts included items like stainless steel tumblers, plates, water pots etc—the size of the gift related to the closeness of their relationship with the families involved. Rana’s mother carefully recorded each gift in a notebook.

On the morning of the wedding, the bride remains in her home surrounded by her female kin and friends. The agevan helps to dress the bride from behind a modestly held curtain. Traditionally, she would wear the gaj gifted by her mother-in-law with a very full, gathered, tie-dyed skirt (barwar, fig.5.25) (replaced with soeturn since the mid ’60’s) and three odhni mentioned above. While the bride wears odhnis that are given to her by the groom, the top-most acho odhni would traditionally be embellished with a black pati embroidered by the bride or at least supplied by her family. Although the pati is often removed from the acho odhni after the wedding and re-used, worn with the white odhni, it would seem to suggest the union of the two families (fig.5.13).

Once dressed, the bride takes her position against one wall of her house—often a corner surrounded by her closest friends. Throughout the day well wishers bring her small gifts of rupees which she places inside a box or bag kept beside her. Her ahavar (wedding assistant) returns each gift with a handful of sweets drawn from an embroidered bag called the lugan kothri made for the purpose. On the men’s side, the groom’s ahavar carries a similar bag prepared by the bride (or provided by her family) reciprocating gifts of money with sweets. These gifts are meant for the bride and groom’s own uses and are not recorded.

The groom makes two trips to the women’s side. The first is made mid-morning accompanied by the ahavar. The two men are led to the bride’s family’s house (though she does not participate and is not seen by the men) for chikium. Standing still, with their heads slightly bowed,
the two men are surrounded by jostling, joking women who dip their fingers into a container of hair oil then smear them on the groom and ahavar’s hair. After all the women have had a turn, the two return to the men’s side to dress and prepare for the second visit, the singar.

Like the women's celebration, the men's celebrations consist of relaxing with friends, talking, visiting, drinking tea, and observing wedding negotiations. These usually involve the groom’s male kin and friends who discuss how much each should give in reference to what they have received in the past. Gifts are carefully recorded. During Firdoos’s high profile wedding in the spring of 2001, gifts of cash were lavish and plentiful—she and her husband collected over Rs. 20,000. This money is intended to help the couple build a house, provide furnishings, defray wedding costs etc. In the past, livestock rather than cash were likely given. After the negotiations have been completed, the agevan or other elder male ties the groom’s putko (turban) and fixes the embroidered sera in place. Carrying a sword wrapped in strips of cloth, the groom, the ahavar and a Vadha man, make their way back to the women’s side— the mask suggesting the groom’s new status as a married, adult male who can no longer enjoy free access to the women’s side. When the men reach the women’s side, women and children gather around with gifts of money or small pieces of cloth. Circling the groom’s head in blessing, these gifts are dropped into a pot carried by a Vadha assistant and are meant as 'payment' for him and the other Vadha who have helped with the wedding arrangements. The men are showered with sweets and peanuts that the children scramble for in the dust. The groom and ahavar are led to a seat covered with quilts as the gifts continue to be added to the pot. When they are complete, the two men return to the men’s side for another meal of biryani and buttermilk.

After the groom and other men return to the men’s side, the bride, still secluded in her home, removes the acho odhni, suggesting the break she is making with her own family. She remains dressed in a blouse made or at least provided by her husband’s family, in veils and jewellery given to her by her husband, her body incorporated by other’s stitches.

After the women have been served lunch, they gather for the pedapatī, the women’s main gift exchange. The hatalo is laid out on the ground, its red cover opened. The agevan or other senior woman is asked to record the gifts (nindhar) (in the husband or father’s names) and sits on one side. Another begins to joke and berate the assembled women, demanding contributions to the hatalo. Each gives a number of pieces of cloth which may include 1/2 metre lengths intended for use as blouse fronts, 4 metre lengths used for odhnis, or 5 metre lengths destined for use as Punjabi...
suits. Cash may also be given although embroidery is never included. The quantity and quality of the gifts presented reflects the giver's resources as well as the relationship between the giver and receiver's families. Because the gifts are restricted to (un-embroidered) cloth, however, differentiation is relative. Reciprocal gifts are expected to be more or less equivalent to those given in the past although higher ranked families are expected to give more. The cloth added to the hatalo is meant to help clothe the bride and her children and provide the raw materials for her quilts. It is also meant to provide the bride with cloth she can exchange with friends and family at weddings or other occasions.

As noted, embroidery is seldom exchanged although it is, increasingly commissioned. Embroidery is occasionally gifted to new-borns. Usually the child's maternal grandmother presents it with a small quilt (goađri) while other close relatives may present an embroidered cap (topalıu) (figs. 3.43-3.44).
CHAPTER 4: MUTWA WOMEN AND STITCHING STORIES

embarrass
embed
embellish
embezzle
embitter
emblematic
embody
embolden
emboss
embrocation
embroider v.1. to ornament with needlework. 2. to embellish (a story).
embroidery n. embroidering, embroidered material.
embroil
embryo

(Hawkins, 1979)

CONTEXT OF EMBROIDERING IN DHORDO: BODIES AND SPACE

The extended families of Abbas and his brother Baasim, the Mutwa-Morana, live at the centre of Dhordo around an irregularly shaped courtyard (see ill.2.4). Abbas and Wajeeha's bhungo is located roughly in the centre of the village, behind the guesthouse. A few metres to the west of Abbas's bhungo is that of his brother, Baasim, a few metres to the south-east, his eldest son's bhungo, to the east, his daughter and nephew's bhungo, and to the north, his youngest son's concrete-block house. Each family has its own kitchen, rectangular buildings of mud and dung built adjacent to their bhungo. Each of these families also has or shares a privy—other Dhordo families must go outside the village. The family's courtyard is surrounded by a number of clusters of bhungos—each cluster arranged around a courtyard shared by a different Mutwa clan.

Although the Mutwa-Morana courtyard is shared communally, it is rare to find men here during the day. With the exception of the elderly or youths, most men work outside of the village. Others either relax in one of the communal areas (guesthouse, community hall, or the edge of the village near the road) or have designated workshops for their personal use inside their family compounds. Male family members may come and go during the day, but they seldom linger.
Visitors (foreign or Indian) are inevitably escorted to Abbas’s guesthouse or bhungo—while they may be encouraged to view the village from the roof of one of the new concrete-block houses, they are not encouraged to wander around the village. Should they do so, women warn each other with coughs and calls to retreat behind closed doors. The courtyard, like the village, is by and large the preserve of women during the daylight hours. The Mutwa-Morana women may move freely within this extended courtyard, however, most of the married women prefer to stay close to the kitchens and bhungos they share with their husbands. Young girls are free to visit neighbours and girlfriends within the village; however, they too begin to circumvent their movements as they approach marriageable age. Older women and widows also enjoy relative freedom of movement although those who can afford to forfeit this freedom in the name of virtue.

The physical and emotional centre of the family and, arguably, the village, is the small space between Abbas’s bhungo, Wajeeha’s kitchen and Khadeeja’s bhungo. On the west side of Khadeeja’s bhungo is a wide bench-like shelf, somewhat protected from the dust and sun and conducive to socialising, stitching, grooming, and participant observation. After their morning chores or during the late afternoons the women, particularly the older women of the family, frequently stop by for impromptu gatherings. However, though tucked behind Abbas’s bhungo, this corner of the courtyard was relatively vulnerable—the arrival of visitors inevitably drives the women away.

It is a space presided over by Wajeeha. A regular fixture in the late afternoons, she could often be found here sitting on a slab of black tire rubber, with her thick black glasses perched on the end of her nose, embroidering or cutting mirrors for her next project (fig. 4.1). She is something of a sentinel, watching over the family, watching over the entrance to the family’s sanctum, and setting a moral example. Occasionally she does her first evening namaz (prayer) here; spreading a special quilted mat stitched with a koho (a design suggesting the direction of Mecca), as she faces the setting sun. The younger women of the family were less frequent occupants. Although Firdoos and Maysoon would occasionally join their mothers, they preferred the privacy and security of their own homes or a more secluded spot on the far side of Abbas’s bhungo. Here they could gather without fear of intrusion or the stern gaze of their grandmother.

It was May 2001 and I had returned for a brief visit to Dhordo. As it was the hot season, we were sleeping outside in the family’s shared courtyard, relishing the evening breezes. I woke early to the cocks crowing nearby and the metallic hiss of milk streaming into a metal bucket. I rose to write, sitting on the platform adjacent to Khadeeja’s
bhungo, basking in the early golden light. Clusters of charpoi (string cots) held still sleeping families— Sameer and his family on one side, heads buried beneath a tangle of quilts. I felt shy looking. Khadeeja’s daughters and youngest sons were before me— her husband and elder sons off to one side. Wajeeha was already up, had finished milking and started to churn the rich curds. She sat near her kitchen, a ceramic pot of milk between her feet, churning with a rope looped around a stick, one way then the other— dark bony angles swishing and swishing again. Khadeeja and Ammar were also already up. She was making tea and heating water for him to bathe and shave. I didn’t disturb her— knowing she likes to read the Qur’an as she waits for the water to boil. Her quiet didn’t last long however.

The youngest children rose, rubbing their eyes as they stumbled towards the kitchen. “Ama, chai pi!” (Mother, I want to drink tea!). They squatted near the fire and ate rotla (hearty flat bread), left over from the night before, sprinkled with sugar and rusks softened in their bowls of sweet milky tea. As usual, the older ones had to be prompted to rise— Khadeeja stood over the school-bound children with bowls of hot tea calling “Otee otee!” (get up, get up!). She sat the tea on the ground and left them to peel back their quilts. The elder sons she left to do as they please. As the children finally left for school, she poured one last cup of tea, handed it to me, and sat for a few minutes. She reminded me of how, when she was young, a packet of store-bought biscuits would last her a week at least— she would only take one biscuit at a time, saving the rest for another day. She complained as she had many times, that her children are “crazy”, consuming whole packets of biscuits or boxes of sweets within minutes.

Maysoon worked around her still slumbering brothers, dragging the unmanned charpoi away, folding the bedding and storing it inside the bhungo. In the open space just beyond Wajeeha’s kitchen, Naila crouched, washing dishes leftover from the night before— the stainless steel ware clattering as she stacked it to dry in the sun. Reema arrived with her granddaughter— they live in the hamlet of 'new' Muslims just outside Dhordo and help Wajeeha sweep and clean the latrines. Although Khadeeja assures me they are good Muslims and regarded as equals, the young men I have asked to escort me to their hamlet have been contemptuous. On her haunches, Maysoon crept across the emptying courtyard in front of us with her grass broom, beating back the omnipresent May dust. Sakeena, Ammar’s sister, joins us with Sameer. He asks me how I am in Gujarati, combs his dyed hair, and turns his attention to Khadeeja and Sakeena. Our conversation is interrupted by the arrival of two Jat women from a neighbouring village carrying a small child— they stand quietly on one side, waiting to be acknowledged. The amiable “Dr.” Sameer jumps up, adjusts his lungi, and greets the women. He motions them to sit on one side of the platform while he retrieves his kit bag. They have walked several kilometres carrying the sick boy. They sit and say nothing. One of the women is elderly and large and wears a tattered, dusty black chori, its bodice embroidered but threadbare. She also wears a gold coloured nath through her left nostril, the Jat’s characteristic nose ring. The boy’s mother is younger but no less tattered and dusty. I am reminded of rumours that Jats never wash and own only one or two chori, wearing them until they fall apart. They do not embroider for sale. Sameer returns, looks over the wide-eyed
but silent child, and gives him an injection. "Malaria" he says shrugging as if it is nothing serious. Haleema appears with water and two cups of tea for the thirsty group. The young mother pours tea into a saucer and holds it up to the boy’s lips to drink. Basheer and Naasih arrive and chat briefly with the visitors before moving on. The women work for Basheer, cutting grass for a government contract he has. As the men move on, the Jats slip away, padding carefully across the courtyard, over to the dirt track and behind the acacia that surrounds the village.

Left alone, I pulled out my embroidery, untangled the threads, and began stitching. I love stitching here in the morning light, my back resting against Khadeeja’s bhungo enjoying the quiet— just the sound of the birds chirping as they darted under the grass overhang of the roof, the distant clattering of pots and a radio somewhere. I have become such a regular feature; her children leave me to my obsessive writing in books and stitching useless bits of cloth. Although I’ve stitched it many times, I practice arakh, determined to stitch a line that is straight, even and fine. But my concentration did not last, my stitches veered off course once again. I heard small feet and looked up to find Salah smiling shyly, watching me from a distance. Last year he clung to his mother, Hameeda, and hid behind her veil whenever I approached—now he has a new baby sister, and is venturing out on his own. A goat picked its way past us, then stopped to look disdainful. I’m in its spot. Wajeeha growls at it from the darkness of her kitchen “Hey yaaaaa” and it rushes across the courtyard. Salah chases behind it, yelping.

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Firdoos’ father’s bhungo, is built just to the southeast of Abbas’s, across the courtyard from Wajeeha’s kitchen. Her mother’s tiny kitchen clings to one side while a new concrete-block house, built for their eldest son’s impending marriage, sits on the west, in between Abbas’s bhungo and the guesthouse. Visitors, arriving for the first time, must be warned not to bang their heads on the staircase leading up to the roof of the new house. Though warned, I learned experientially. Sameer’s bhungo is not the prettiest house in Dhordo. By Mutwa standards it is relatively unembellished and sparsely furnished. Opposite the door is a raised mud platform where the manji sits, piled with quilts covered with a printed sheet. On one side of the manji is a small painted cupboard holding a stack of suitcases. On the other side, a number of brass water pots, piled one on top of another. The only other piece of furniture is a large charpoi—an old one of wood with turned, lac embellished legs. There is no chitri kam and few purchased knickknacks displayed on the top shelf. Whether it is spartan by choice or necessity I never could find out. The family also has a second small bhungo and rectangular block building on the far side of the village designated a ‘dispensary’. Inspite of whatever medical supplies are stored there, it is where Sameer sleeps, spends most of his free time and, since the installation of a television in 1998, where his sons and many of their friends gather.

Firdoos and I generally sat by the east-facing window, squeezed between the end of the charpoi and the cupboard. Although I liked to stitch outside in the courtyard, where the light was better, Firdoos preferred to stitch
inside, pointing out that the children were less likely to harass us. Inside we were hidden from sight of any new arrivals, however we could see the path leading into the courtyard and hear the news as it arrived. At times Firdoos seemed to have almost a sixth sense, pulling back from the window or disappearing into her mother's kitchen if we were outside well before I heard the footsteps and realised men from outside Dhordo were approaching.

Whenever I arrived to sew with Firdoos, no matter how long or how many times I had been there, she insisted on spreading a quilt for me to sit on. We would sit closely together—Firdoos with her tiny knees close to her chest, me with my legs beneath me, on one side, then the other, then outstretched, leaning against the wall then sitting upright. It was never easy. Firdoos would just sit, holding her embroidery in front of her shins, stitching. I had to hold my own closer to my eyes as I attempted to analyse each stitch, measure its distance from the last one, keep them straight and even, prickling my finger raw in my attempts to guide the sui (needle). When learning a new stitch or pattern, Firdoos would demonstrate then leave me to struggle on. We chatted as we stitched. Sometimes Firdoos's mother, Naila would join us to do her namaz or sit and cut mirrors. She is not a skilled embroiderer and is rather ambivalent about it. She works only on collaborative pieces destined for sale to passing tourists. Firdoos's devotion to embroidery is a point of contention between them.

Sometimes in the late afternoons, Firdoos and I would join Widad to stitch in the shade between her home and Abbas's bhungo. Widad is the eldest child of Baasim, Abbas's younger brother, and Lamees, his second wife, the first wife having died young. The two girls are engaged to each other's brothers, a preferred arrangement the Mutwa call budo sagai. At the far western end of the Mutwa-Morana courtyard, around the corner from the entrance to Abbas's bhungo, the girls gather in a protected spot. Opposite our refuge is Widad's mother's kitchen, on one side, reclining on a charpoi, the elderly Baasim, now virtually blind. Lamees emerges from the kitchen with a cup of tea for her husband, walking slowly, stately, and with purpose. Rushing is associated with youth and with questionable actions. Occasionally she sits with us though more often she retires to her kitchen leaving Widad, Firdoos and I. We stitch, talking sporadically. Out of earshot, Baasim sings softly to himself.

Widad does not embroider particularly well however she stitches diligently. Like Firdoos's mother, she primarily works on large collaborative pieces sold to passing tourists. The winter before their weddings, Firdoos stitched a cushion cover for Widad's dayj—a intimate gift symbolising both their friendship and future collaboration. Late in the afternoon, after their chores are done, Maysoon and her younger sister, Neema, join us. Maysoon usually has an embroidery project at hand though she does not care for it and often tosses it aside. Like her sister, Neema embroiders only sporadically and only for market. The sisters take turns tuning the radio and inserting music cassettes. They enjoy Hindi radio dramas but prefer old 'filmy' songs. As the afternoon progresses, younger siblings
stop by to watch, shooed away when their jostling becomes too noisy or their snacks too messy. As the sun begins to set, the men begin to return home and the girls slip away to their own bhungos.

WOMEN AND BHUNGOS

Most of the Mutwa-Morana family's bhungos were built 25-50 years ago. Although bhungos continue to be made, the younger generations more often opt for rectangular, concrete-block houses. Abbas's bhungo is about 35 years old and is, in many ways the most grand of all the bhungos in Dhordo. It is particularly large, measuring about 15' across and has had various improvements and renovations over the years—the most conspicuous of which is an attached privy. In most bhungos, opposite the doorway is a low, raised platform on which sits the manji, piled high with quilts, and flanked by cupboards stacked with painted metal suitcases (senduk), brass and stainless steel water pots (figs. 4.2-4.3). Often, particularly in newer bhungos, Islamic prints, clocks, and mirrors dot the circular, whitewashed walls. The floor may be of mud and dung or, as in Abbas's bhungo, of polished concrete with a painted quilt design in the centre. Depending on resources, the roof may be thatch, plain or painted, or tile. The high shelf running around the top of the wall, just below where the conical roof meets the walls, is arranged with a vast assortment of knickknacks. In the wealthiest homes this often includes a carefully arranged display of consumer goods including stainless steel ware, china and colourful plastics—those in poorer homes are often more sparse and include more plastic than stainless and recycled items like batteries. Abbas's bhungo contains two beds—the charpoi used by Wajeeha and a wooden canopy bed used by Abbas: most homes boast only one charpoi used by men for sleeping and everyone else during the day for sitting. As befitting his position within the community, his bhungo also contains a variety of chairs that can be brought out for guests, two ceiling fans, an air-cooler and a refrigerator.

Except amongst the poorest families, most bhungos' interiors are embellished with chitri kam. Chitri kam is a form of bas-relief worked with mud and dung, kneaded together until they form thick clay. Chitri kam is traditionally used to decorate the perimeter of a bhungo's walls, just below the high shelf that meets the conical roof. The chitri kam embellishing Abbas's bhungo is particularly intricate and has been painted silver to highlight its rare beauty. It consists of a band of squares; each filled with a different geometric pattern, and an elaborate border design. The band embellishes the top 9-10" of the walls, just below the shelf, except behind the manji where a solid band of chitri kam replaces the shelf, framing the quilts below (similar to figs. 4.5-4.8).
Around the corner from Abbas's bhungo, is a smaller, older bhungo that dates from the 50's—used by Wajeeha as a kitchen. It measures only about 9' across and has a low roof. Khadeeja has explained how, with the introduction of electricity, bhungos were built (or renovated) several feet higher to accommodate ceiling fans. Wajeeha's kitchen is spartan—it contains a wooden cupboard, a matto (clay water pot) on a metal stand, and her clay wood burning stove. It is however richly embellished with chitri kam. The kitchen walls have two bands of chitri kam—one just above, and a second just below the shelf that meets the roof. Decorative panels sit on either side of the shelf, lending support to a wooden crossbeam. It also has very elaborate chitri kam designs framing two small built-in cupboards, and two small windows (figs. 4.9-4.14).

Chitri kam was originally a woman's craft, however, Mutwa women stopped making it in the '60s—Abbas's bhungo was commissioned from neighbouring Megvar women although it is modelled on traditional Mutwa designs. Not surprisingly, the designs used have a close affinity with embroidery and jewellery (see Appendix VII). The bands of chitri kam usually feature square sections filled with geometric patterns reminiscent of the grids used in many of the stitch patterns—especially katari, copal, and kharak (see Chapter 2). Underneath this band is usually a fringe-like design called pakajir, which is modelled on the jir (ankle bracelets) the groom presents his bride at the time of marriage (figs. 4.8 and 4.14). Pakajir ('real' or 'durable' jir) is frequently also used to surround windows, doors, and built-in cupboards (fig. 4.16). These areas may also be embellished with designs based on the stitch motifs pako/ser kich (see Chapter 2). Surrounding the windows and cupboards of Wajeeha's kitchen, for example, are expansive, intricate designs featuring the same flowers, buds, thorns, leaves, moons, peacocks and scorpions used in Mutwa embroidery—particularly the embroidery used on gaj and kanjaru, the two blouses most closely associated with marriage and fertility.

The Mutwa only embellish house interiors—exteriors are left whitewashed and plain although many houses have handsomely carved doors. It is a space presided over by women and their children during the day and shared by family members in the evenings. Should men entertain, women generally retreat to their kitchens. Bhungos are not entered by the uninvited except among close kin or women. Although they are seen as women's sanctuary, it is not a feminine space nor is it 'private' in the sense of being reserved exclusively for particular individuals or for one purpose (i.e. sleeping). Pandya notes that for the Megvar, bhungos are similarly not entirely 'private'—a woman's embroidered quilts are placed opposite the doorway, where they are meant to be seen and
appreciated by guests (Pandya, 1998). Bhungos are used, variously for sleeping, eating, praying, reading the Qur'an, dressing, meetings, socialising, playing, making love, and giving birth. Only cooking and bathing occur in designated areas, although these, too, may occasionally shift inside the bhungo. As N. Bhattacharya has noted, Indian women tend to conflate what is elsewhere regarded as public and private spaces (1992). Mutwa women's space is not fixed—it tends to expand and contract depending on the time of day, the presence of men, and their activities.

Pandya has suggested, in his structural analysis of Megvar bhungos and embroidery elsewhere in Banni, that houses are "worn" and clothes "lived-in" (1998). Certainly the Mutwa share many of the same connections between bodies, space, and embellishment, however, purdah tends to repudiate the public spirit his account suggests. The Megvar decorate the inside and outside of their houses, and their embroidery is relatively bold in scale and design. In contrast, the Mutwa embellish only the inside of their houses and their embroidery is fine and delicate, almost more textured than patterned. Both are, therefore, experienced on a much more intimate scale than the Megvar. To perceive Mutwa embroidery or chitri kam patterns, for example, one must be physically close—something purdah often prevents.

The Mutwa and the Megvar also share an aesthetic preference for 'filling'. Pandya notes that the Megvar strive to 'fill' both their houses and embroideries with symbols of abundance, fertility, and wealth (1998). The Mutwa, for their part, talk about how stitches are used to 'fill-in' motifs, which must similarly 'fill-in' blouse fronts. Patterns are completed with the addition of tiny white stitches and mirrors, adding light to the designs and helping to enhance the illusion of 'fullness'. Printed cloth is occasionally embroidered, the printed designs helping to fill the surface, reducing the need for embroidery (although it remains less satisfactory than a fully embroidered blouse). Complimentary colours are chosen, white stitches applied and mirrors added to enhance the effect of being 'filled'. Houses too are filled. The groom's family traditionally provides the bhungo itself, as well as a charpoi, and the manji. The bride provides the quilts and many of the metal water pots, cases, and stainless steel ware arranged around the top shelf. The bride and her goods complement the groom and his goods, filling the bhungo with light, colour, warmth and the promise of children.

Although unconfirmed by the Mutwa, women's position at the procreative heart of the family is both protected and enhanced by the physical space and decoration of bhungos. The walls, the doors, the windows and cupboards are embellished with chitri kam in patterns reminiscent of
both jewellery and the motifs found on women's blouses, particularly those associated with marriage (gaj and kanjaru). On bhungo walls chitri kam surrounds openings, offering occupants symbolic protection while reminding them of the obligations of purdah. Chitri kam frequently includes rows of thorns (see Chapter 5) or bands of pakajir, both motifs that mark a woman's married status. Blouses embroidered with thorns and other sexually charged motifs are presented to the bride along with the heavy ankle bracelets called jir. They mark the divisions of the body; embroidery covers her breasts and pubis, jewellery surrounds her extremities (ankles, wrists, and neck)—both, enhancing, legitimising and containing her sexuality. The body's vulnerable openings are protected, as are the openings in the bhungo's walls.

Every few days Maysoon or Neema would ask me to come with them to Zakiyaa's house. Their father's mother's sister, Zakiyaa is an elderly widow and something of a benevolent grandmother to her nephew's family. She lives with her two daughters and her son in a small bhungo along the eastern fringes of Dhordo. We often visited late morning or early afternoon—Maysoon's youngest sister Suha would often accompany us, tugging me along the rough dusty path behind their house. There are many houses on this side, but the girls only visited Zakiyaa. Neighbours would wave or call "Ay Michele!" but we kept to our course. We had to climb across a mud partition and cross the courtyard shared by sisters Reem and Nasira and Inaya, their sister-in-law. These three women spent a lot of time embroidering in Reem's tiny bhungo. Before Nasira married in 1999, occasionally we stopped for a brief chat. Inaya's young daughter, Haniya usually clung to her mother in fear of me until her brother was born. The sister's elderly father eventually raised his hand as I passed and greeted the family. Across their courtyard, we had to climb over two crude gates made of acacia branches and wire, cross the courtyard of an old man (Zakiyaa's brother-in-law) who never looked up, to finally reach Zakiyaa's home.

On one side of the family's raised courtyard is a small bhungo where the women spend most of their time. Beyond is a relatively new rectangular, concrete-block house used by Zakiyaa's son. Opposite the bhungo is the kitchen. Like others in Dhordo, it is a small rectangular structure built of mud and dung. On the far eastern side of the courtyard, beyond the concrete-block house, is a clearing of pounded dirt surrounded by thick pile of dried acacia. It is one of the clearings the Mutwa previously used to house their cattle and buffalo at night. It is unusual now to see any livestock there. Behind Zakiyaa's kitchen, to the south, is one of Dhordo's two shops.

During the day Zakiyaa is usually to be found sitting inside her bhungo with her youngest daughter, Areebah. At about 25 years old Areebah is ready for marriage and awaits the final negotiations with a family in a neighbouring village. Zakiyaa's elder daughter, Fadheela, is in her thirties and, while married, has lived separately
from her husband for many years. In cases such as Fadheela's where the marriage is unsuccessful, prolonged attempts at reconciliation are made before a divorce is considered.

The family lives precariously on the proceeds from the son's work and Areebah's embroidery. Their bhunga is Spartan with no furniture save a small cupboard, a manji, and a few consumer trinkets piled up on a shelf. Zakiyaa's brother runs the government shop in Uddo, a neighbouring Mutwa village who periodically sends gifts of cloth or jewellery for Areebah. She wears a Punjabi suit and devotes all of her spare time to stitching for market. Fadheela wears an embroidered kanjari with sothal. She has little time to stitch, managing only to reproduce her own wardrobe. Zakiyaa wears a slightly tattered daniyal jo kanjari (widow's kanjari) and the black pot (wrapped skirt) worn by senior Mutwa women. She continues to stitch although her efforts are usually directed at stitching quilt borders to supplement both the family's supply and Areebah's dayj.

Khadeeja's youngest children are frequent visitors. On this day Fuad zooms in and out sputtering "Brooom!" with a piece of wire twisted into a steering wheel of sorts. Suba chases him for a while then sits quietly in the doorway. Fareed appears; he's skipped school, again. We tell him off and he sulks against a wall for a few minutes then jumps up to chase his brother. Maysoon lounges in the doorway talking quietly to Zakiyaa. Areebah continues to stitch, barely looking up. The women spoil them with attention and a steady supply of sweets obtained from the shop. Zakiyaa asks Fuad to fetch her tin sweets box. Still sputtering, he plonks down with it, tosses the lid aside and helps himself, throwing his sister a wet sweet only after she complains. Having refuelled, he drops the wrappers where he sits and zooms away once again.

When I first met Areebah, her doe-like eyes and sweet demeanour struck me. No matter when we visited, she was always bent over her embroidery, leaning against the wall, by the door of her mother's small bhunga. She would leap up when I arrived to spread a quilt on the floor for me, and return to her stitching. Although she occasionally helps her sister and mother with their stitching, primarily she works on pieces destined for market. Most of these are for Shrujan or one of the local Mutwa entrepreneurs—she does not stitch for the local tourist market. During the winter of 1997-1998, Areebah worked on a sari for Shrujan; spending months and months filling a woven checkerboard with motifs worked with couched gold threads. It was time consuming work but Areebah was diligent. She completed a number of such commissions during my field research, providing the family with needed income as well as a few consumer goods, new cloth, and jewellery for herself.

When I returned to Dhordo in the autumn of 1998, I was greeted by the news of babies born, an old woman's death, and Areebah's transformation. Where many Mutwa women chew tobacco, Areebah had become addicted to supari (mixture of chewing tobacco, betal nut and various flavourings) and it appeared to be effecting her mind. I spent that first morning with Khadeeja's family, catching up on news, handing out small gifts, and long
awaited copies of photographs. I was sitting with the women on the platform between Khadeeja’s bhungo and her mother’s kitchen when Areebah appeared and demanded a copy of the photograph I had taken of her earlier in the year. I was surprised to see her as I had never known her to leave her mother’s courtyard. Not wanting to leave the group to search for her photographs, I told her I would bring it to her later. She sat on the edge of the platform looking larger, more defiant than I ever remembered her. Her odhni was thrown back, her eyes probing, even mocking. She demanded her photograph again. Firdoos and Maysoon pulled away from Areebah, hiding their expressions from her with their odhnis, their eyes communicating to me their embarrassment, disgust, amusement? Khadeeja and the elder women sitting with us ignored her. Maysoon leaned towards me, “better you give now” and I left for Khadeeja’s house to search for the photograph. Areebah followed.

I had stored the photographs I had brought against the flat bottom of my suitcase, which meant my clothes, notebooks, gifts and toiletries had to come out in order to retrieve them. Areebah sat on the charpoi next to the growing pile of goods excavated from my suitcase smelling my various creams and ointments. At last I found the photographs and turned to see Areebah helping herself to the sequinned trim I had brought as a gift for the village ladies. Khadeeja walked in and snatched the scissors and trim away from Areebah though not before she stuffed several yards into her pocket. I handed her the photograph and she ran out, laughing to herself.

Over the next few weeks Areebah pursued me, demanding money, supari and more photographs. Her mother and sister were attempting to cut off her supply of supari making Areebah even more desperate. She followed me to Firdoos’s house, to Hameeda’s or Haleema’s even Safwan’s house on the far side of the village, swatting me when I asked her to leave so I could talk to him in peace. Areebah was becoming more than just a pest, she was becoming abusive and slanderous, making lewd comments and suggestions about my life beyond the village. I continued to visit Zakiyaa occasionally, though Maysoon refused to go now that Areebah was so troublesome. Zakiyaa looked at her youngest daughter with a confounded expression, Fadheela gestured that Areebah’s mind was no good.

The family eventually took her to a doctor in Bhuj who confirmed her addiction to supari. When I visited after their return, Areebah seemed more calm although she insisted on dragging out all the goods they had purchased while in Bhuj—the gold earrings (from Areebah’s embroidery earnings), the sweets, the cloth and the radio with emergency signal light which had to be demonstrated again and again. I asked Areebah to show me the new embroidery she was making: printed handkerchiefs stitched with large, irregular stitches. One of these she was to present to me later (in return for a photograph)—a handkerchief printed and embroidered with lyrics from a popular Hindi film song “Pardeshi, pardeshi. Jana nahi” (foreigner, foreigner, don’t go)—an ironic sentiment from a girl who claimed, on another occasion, to be “waiting for my death.”
DISCIPLINED BODIES

The story of Areebah illustrates the dangers associated with an undisciplined body. With her relentless wandering, her lack of deportment, her immodesty, and poor embroidery—Areebah ran the risk of being labelled "halkī halkī" (fast). Although the villagers understood the impetus for her poor behaviour, it was nevertheless, embarrassing for her family who sought to smooth over her social transgressions and risked a trip to a doctor in Bhuj in order to cure Areebah of her addiction. Ordinarily, Mutwa women do not venture beyond the village, except to attend weddings or, occasionally, to visit relations. Similarly, they do not wander around the village—to do so is to appear dangerously purposeless, un-contained, exposed, hungry, and risks contact with men.

Mutwa bodies are 'contained' or 'disciplined' not only by the physical space of the village, and especially their courtyards and bhungos, but through their embroidered garments and shared ideals, rites, and practices. Despite the rivalry and recently enhanced ranking among them, the Mutwa, as Muslims and as recent pastoralists, place a high value on egalitarianism. Ideally this prevented the accumulation of wealth and stressed the importance of the group or community as opposed to individuals. Women's bodies are thus 'trained' or 'socialised' to reflect an emphasis on sharing, on collectivity. Notions of beauty involve shared ideals of physical form as well as gracious, graceful behaviour. Women attempt to enhance their outer forms through dress, jewellery, grooming etc. Good behaviour reflects a certain sober-ness, as well as being quiet, shy, and respectful etc. Bodies are solid in their movements—particularly among mature women—Mutwa women do not dance and do not gesticulate.

In India I adopted different costumes for different contexts and occasions. While perusing the libraries in Delhi and Baroda I wore a khadi kurta with a pair of salwar or jeans—such an outfit was practical, not foreign enough to make me feel uncomfortable and commonly found on university campuses in India. In Bhuj I sensed the need to cover more of my body, I added a dupatta to my ensemble and packed my jeans away. Gradually I replaced the kurtas with the longer, considered more feminine kameez and finally, as I prepared to begin my research in Dhordo, I purchased matching salwar kameez suits with dupattas. My transformation was gradual but not unconscious. I wanted to appear 'good' though my understanding of being 'good' was limited and ongoing. It was obvious I needed not just to cover my body, but deflect the stares of men. I had to learn to walk through the bustling markets of Bhuj without seeming to be seen, without making eye contact with men, my dress generally enhancing the boundaries I needed to erect. I had chosen salwar kameez in contrast to the Mutwa's Punjabi suits because their looser cut was cooler and more ambiguous—I could wear them both in Dhordo and beyond. I chose to have my suits
made with strong, closely woven cotton fabrics locally printed with natural dyes—choices that reflected my taste more than the Mutwa’s even though they had worn similar fabrics decades ago. My clothes and the way they were worn were chosen for a combination of practical, aesthetic, and culturally accommodating reasons and passed without great comment in Dhordo. I was, after all, a foreigner not expected to live up to the same aesthetic, and moral codes as the Mutwa women.

In spite of being notably ‘different,’ I always sensed that my body was not completely my own in Dhordo, in fact in India. How many times, for example, was I on a train headed to Bombay or Ahmedabad only to have a big elderly woman sit down on the bench beside me and ‘crowd’ me off the end? Perhaps only in North America can we afford to insist on the individuality of ‘personal space’? I had to learn to stay put and not be afraid or offended if the woman beside me seemed to sit more in my seat than her own. With the Mutwa women I learned to be at ease sitting closely together, crowding together on mats or charpoi. They commented openly and without embarrassment on my body—an experience that struck me not only for the intimacy it assumed, but the altered physical and moral boundaries it suggested. They simply had a ‘right’ to comment on my appearance just as they had the ‘right’ to share my combs and creams when needed (and I, their’s). I slowly grew used to the lack of privacy, the children’s claims to my lap, being one of twelve bodies sleeping together on the floor of Khadeeja’s bhungo.

I realised that bodies are differently inscribed in Dhordo. There is a reliance among Mutwa women and a continuity of bodies that betrayed itself and co-opted my body in subtle ways. Though my clothes were seldom mentioned I began to feel drab in my utilitarian cottons surrounded by such beautiful and beautifully adorned women. I began to see that the care and attention placed on grooming and wearing beautiful clothes, while self gratifying, is simultaneously a social and familial responsibility. Certainly women in one family want to outshine those in another and young girls are increasingly competitive, however motivation for dressing well is also to embrace God’s gifts and share them with the community. Dressing well is an act of love, an act of affirming the individual and collective body.

One of my most precious experiences in Dhordo was time, time spent discussing, stitching, observing, dreaming, and reflecting on, among other things, the experience of time. While I worried about indulgence and if I shouldn’t adopt a more structured approach to research, I also realised that my enjoyment, the novelty I perceived in time thus spent was a reflection of a Western lifestyle that encourages hurried, harried lives more occupied than engaged. For the Mutwa the experience of time is no less precious although it is differently quantified. Compared to the West, Mutwa time is less commoditised and less abstracted? As elsewhere however, time is affective, effecting the enculturation of Mutwa bodies.
The Mutwa's days, like other Muslims, are delineated by the five daily calls to prayer (azan) made by the Mullah over a loudspeaker from the village mosque. The timings of the five daily prayers vary with the rising and setting of the sun. The first is conducted at dawn (fajr), the second at noon (duhr), followed by afternoon (asr), sunset (maghrib), and night time (isha) prayers. The specific prayers recited and number of ritual protestations (rakas) made depends on the time of day. Only the men pray inside Dhordo's tiny mosque and then attendance is sporadic. The exception is the Friday afternoon and special holiday prayers where the absence of able-bodied Mutwa men is considered gravely dissident. Women generally pray in their homes although prayer itself is not an activity that demands privacy. Unmarried women pray less regularly than married women, children infrequently. Often, if I was stitching with Firdoos or Maysoon and the azan sounded, our stitching would not be interrupted, however, the girls would adjust their odhnis more closely over their foreheads, the radio would be turned off and we would lower our voices or remain silent for its duration. I would learn later that during prayer time activities such as cutting one's nails, sexual relations, eating, and drinking are proscribed.

Bouhdiba (1985) notes that the body must be in a state of 'purity' for prayer. Impurity is associated with bodily excretia, not 'sin' and is, therefore, impermanent. Minor impurities are removed by bathing with water in a prescribed manner called wudu. In Dhordo, women normally perform these minor ablutions in their courtyards. Squatting with a pot of water they silently repeat nyat wudu, a statement of intention to purify themselves in preparation for prayer—an act distinguished from bathing to remove dirt. Wudu involves washing the hands up to the wrist, taking water in the right hand and using it to rinse out the mouth three times, the nose three times, the face three times, the right hand, forearm, and elbow three times followed by the left. The head is wiped, the ears are washed inside and outside using the thumb and forefinger of each hand, and finally the right foot and ankle are washed three times followed by the left. This purifies the body and mind, and prepares one to greet God.

For the removal of more serious impurities resulting from the emission of sperm, menstruation or lochia, ghusl is necessary. This is performed in private and involves pouring clean water over the entire body from the head downwards followed by the ablutions described above. Major impurities render humans extremely vulnerable and must be addressed as soon as possible. As Bouhdiba notes
the impure man [sic] comes dangerously close to evil... The angels who normally keep watch over man and protect him leave him as soon as he ceases to be pure. So he is left without protection, despiritualized, even dehumanized. He can no longer pray, or recite sacred words, still less say the Quran (1985, p.44).

Of particular reference to the Mutwa and other Muslims living in drought prone areas, is tayammun. This is an alternative form of ablution that replaces water with clean sand or dirt.

After her ablutions Khadeeja would spread her prayer mat in the direction of Mecca, wrap her odhni around her so it closely covered her upper body and head, and tucked in the end so that the cloth stayed in place during prostration. Mutwa women do not wear special clothing for prayer, however, if an odhni is printed with representations of animals or humans, it will be replaced with another.

I often watched Khadeeja pray. She would stand quietly for a few minutes, eyes closed or lowered. I might be sitting chatting with Maysoon, the children running in and out. Although no one would interfere with her prayer, no one (except me) seemed embarrassed or concerned that a prayer was being performed. Most disconcerting to me, was the period after her prostrations when she would sit on her knees, eyes closed, rocking ever so slightly back and forth offering dua, a personal request or prayer. I felt more uncomfortable, more like a voyeur watching Khadeeja pray, than at any other point in my research.

In preparation for Friday prayers, children are often bathed and dressed in clean clothes on Thursday afternoons. Women also tend to bathe and wash their hair on Thursday's, donning clean clothes in preparation for Friday. Traditionally Mutwa women twisted the hair surrounding their faces then pulled the rest back into a single braid, an arduous task that they reserved for Thursday afternoons. This would often be performed in the open, as women gathered to talk in the late afternoons. There are few women who continue to wear this hairstyle however, most wear their hair loose or pulled back into a loose braid or knot. Kanjari wearing women generally wear one of only two embroidered blouses—wearing them for about a year, until they wear out, then replacing them with two more from their collection. The younger generation, in contrast, wish to change their clothes much more frequently.

The month long Ramzan fast had already begun by the time I returned to Dhordo after a Christmas holiday in 1997. Knowing that the able-bodied adults would be fasting for the duration of Ramzan, I had resolved to join them in their fast. When I told Khadeeja of my intent she tried to discourage me pointing out that several members of her own family were not fasting (the elderly,
expectant mothers, children) and had to be fed during the day. One more mouth to feed was no trouble. But, I explained, I wanted to fast with them for other reasons. I wanted to show solidarity with their customs and beliefs, but also experience the collectively followed ritual. Of course it would not have the same meaning for us, but I hoped, nevertheless, to understand more intimately the observance and implications of Ramzan.

My first morning back in Dhordo I awoke to my alarm clock at 5:00am. It was mid January 1998 and cold; the desert retains none of its daytime warmth after dark. I was sleeping alone in an unused, unlit room. It was hard peeling back the warm layers of my quilts, finding my flashlight, wrapping a chilly woolen shawl over my shoulders and creeping outside towards the light streaming from beneath Khadeeja’s kitchen door. I kicked off my sandals and slipped into the warm room. Khadeeja sat, as usual, beside the earthen stove against the West wall of her kitchen, a pot of tea simmering. In front of her, scattered on the floor were various clean and already used pots and plates, cups and utensils. Maysoon sat between the door and the hearth near her mother. Ammar sat on a cushion opposite the door. He pushed another cushion towards me and I sat, glad of something to insulate me from the chill of the concrete floor. Khadeeja rinsed out a metal cup and poured me a cup of hot tea, another of cool buttermilk and, shaking the crumbs off a plate, served a thick chapatti made from jowra, fried in oil and topped with sugar. I had no appetite this early in the morning but choked down my breakfast knowing that I wouldn’t have anything else to eat or drink until after sunset. The three of us sat quietly, blinking against the light of the bare bulb above Khadeeja’s head. Ammar reminded us of the time and noted that if I wanted to brush my teeth or drink any water I had to finish it before 6:00, after that time nothing is supposed to pass the lips. I went off to brush my teeth and drink my fill, then, finding the kitchen deserted and no one in sight, stole back to my bed and fell asleep for another hour.

I did not find the fasting itself difficult although the first few days— denied my mid-morning and mid-afternoon cups of tea, I had a mild headache and caught myself fantasising about drinks in the rain. Of course I felt hungry and fell victim to the children’s teasing when my stomach audibly revolted. During a meeting held between officials from Shujan, an American researcher, Basheer, and a number of embroiderers, Basheer caught me squeezing my stomach quiet knowing the guests did not understand Kutchi. He began teasing me about being hungry from across the room, disrupting the meeting and causing the women to giggle. They were pleased I was fasting. Every morning those who I had not seen at breakfast would ask if I was still roja (fasting), when I replied in the affirmative and gave the daily count (punja roja, five day’s fast), they would nod and tell me it made God happy. Those outside of Khadeeja’s family often looked surprised. A group of visiting Jat women, told I had fasted for six days, looked incredulous then pointed out their children and told me how many days they too had fasted.
The Ramzan fast is meant as a period of sustained reflection on the mercy and power of God. It is meant to instil mental and physical discipline and is considered one of the five pillars or foundations upon which Islam is based\(^3\). It is also associated with "an awareness of human frailty and dependence on God, as well as for remembering and responding to the needs of the poor and hungry" (Esposito, 1988, p.92). Hence the giving of alms (zikat) is closely associated with the observance of Ramzan. Khadeeja informed me that every year her husband gives her Rs.1000 to distribute to the needy during Ramzan\(^4\). A steady stream of Hindu and Muslim mendicants, poor widows and children flowed through the village that month.

Life went on, quietly, caffeine and calorie-reduced. The Dhordo diet plan I would later refer to as. If truth were told I had developed a mild viral infection and had no appetite anyway. I could barely face the meal at the end of the day and hadn’t the heart to tell Khadeeja I didn’t enjoy the meat she would sometimes save for me\(^5\). I wasn’t the only one. The cold dry air and the dust, stirred up by winter winds, seemed to have effected several of us similarly. I felt more tired than usual and, like most of the others who were fasting, took to napping away the long afternoons waking to wonder about the intense dreams that seemed to have erupted from my subconscious.

The daily fast is broken following the evening call to prayer. Often I was sitting alone writing up my notes or stitching in the waning light when the azan would sound and Sulha would coming running to me with a sticky handful of dates or a banana. Sometimes Khadeeja would follow with a welcome cup of tea and we would sit and talk before she fed her children. Occasionally I would send one of the children to the shop to buy some sweets or peanuts, sharing our treats on the floor of Khadeeja’s house in the evenings.

I had been fasting for only a week when Khadeeja inquired if I had had my period. I replied that I had (merciably, in town, before arriving in Dhordo). She told me she was happy that I was fasting but as her period had started, she asked if now I would stop with her. She explained that while having their periods women do not fast, do not pray, do not touch or recite from the Qu’ran, and do not bathe until their period is over. She would break her fast although she would continue to appear as if she were still fasting. She would continue to rise as 5:00, prepare and eat breakfast, then take her lunch and tea with me, out of sight of the men. As my goal had been solidarity and my infection was not getting any better, I readily agreed.

On the twenty-seventh day of Ramzan Muslims celebrate the night when Muhammad first received God’s revelation and is an especially important day to observe the fast. Ramzan fasting concludes when the crescent moon is spotted for the first time, an event that is associated with joy and anticipation. The following day is called Id al-Fitr. On this day gifts of new clothes are made to family members, sweet dishes are made and distributed to friends and relatives, and a special
sermon is read in the mosque. Although only men pray inside the mosque, in Dhordo, many of the women crowded into a narrow alleyway adjacent to the mosque, hidden from the road and the men, in order to listen to the service and offer their prayers.

Scholars have not always attended to variations of purdah in practice, assuming that, despite variations, ideals are broadly shared amongst South-Asian Muslims and/or Hindus. Similarly, they have not always acknowledged the fact that purdah is a system of ideals, beliefs and practices lived by both women and men—something that is, likely, more obvious in small, relatively homogenous, rural villages than urban settings. The Mutwa observe a form of purdah that curbs the interaction of women and men outside of their extended families and promotes respectful, "shy" behaviour between both. Purdah among the Mutwa is much less restrictive than that practised by Hindus or Muslims in other parts of Western India. Mutwa women veil, for example, but they do not cover their faces as is common among the Rajputs, nor are brides required to show extreme deference to husbands and fathers-in-law as is common among the Kanbi and Kharek of Kathiawar (Tarlo, 1996). Among the Mutwa of Dhordo, although most of the men in the village are considered kin, able-bodied men generally avoid the village during the day. Should a male neighbour make an informal visit, a woman is not required to leave unless her husband is absent—if he is, the neighbour is likely to exchange a few polite words in the courtyard and leave. Outside the village, purdah is observed more stringently. If men visit other villages, they should avoid 'seeing' the women there—just as the women should avoid being seen. Men as well as women carry the responsibilities of purdah, although the burden rests, admittedly, more heavily on women's shoulders.

Purdah abbreviates the movement of women in space while it shapes their bodies, their experience of space and social interactions. Purdah dictates modesty in dress and deportment. Embroidery marks women's bodies, defines them as Mutwa, and identifies them as being at a particular life stage. It literally moulds the body and effects the body's movements in a particular way. I have already compared the shape and fit of Banni kanjari with the cholis worn elsewhere in Kutch (see Chapter 3). Mutwa blouses are characteristically flat—although the breasts, for example, are covered with the embroidered bandh, their shape is de-emphasised, the area considered "bandh" or 'closed'. Blouse embroidery is fine and even, the motifs tending to geometric patterns, the mirrors small. This gives more of the appearance of texture than pattern, enhancing the quiet solidity of the body. Other Banni kanjari are bold in scale, more effectively reducing the body to a
‘flattened’ surface. Mutwa kanjari were once designed to accommodate the hard physical work associated with herding. They had short sleeves, open backs and an apron-like front allowing women to move while also accommodating changes to their bodies brought on by pregnancy. It was not until herding as a viable mode of production was threatened that women began to fill-in the backs of their blouses. Gradually the younger generations have grown to question the morality of traditional dress—opting for garments that cover more of the body.

Traditional Mutwa bodies were strong, solid bodies. Married women wore a large silver vārī (necklace type), jīr, and armloads of chūra (white plastic bangles), further enhancing the appearance of solidity. In contrast, the younger generations are now wearing un-embroidered Punjabi suits, dress they explain as more modern, modest and Islamic—although Muslims outside of Banni would avoid such form fitting garments. Young women prefer printed polyester fabrics—particularly shiny ones. Their bodies are perceived as more moral and more graceful but appear less solid, less strong. The new fashions speak to newly exposed bodies, bodies more dependent—both on markets and external sources of protection. They are more tentative bodies. The young women who wear the new styles appear more anonymous—in a mass-produced, democratic sort of way. They no longer carry the overt signs of identity and status they once did, a move perceived as enhancing respectability and offering enhanced protection from the gaze of men (Najmabadi, 1993).
CHAPTER 5: EMBROIDERING CHANGE

More than jewellery of the hand, cherished is handiwork fine;
Handiwork is the skill toward which everyone does incline
(Thanawi in Metcalf, 1992, p 51)

Perhaps the biggest challenge to recovering the history of Mutwa embroidery has been the absence of textiles older than 50 years. Most have worn out, disappeared, or were sold off in lean years. Faced with economic stress caused by a series of serious droughts and the dramatic changes discussed in Chapter 2, many Mutwa were forced to sell their embroideries. Although they do not have a tradition of keeping heirlooms— at death, all personal possessions are given away to the needy— fine old embroideries were often kept and re-used. With the arrival of various private art collectors and dealers from the mid 60's, most of these old textiles as well as many contemporary pieces made for young women's day(j, were sold. Today, few remain in local collections and memories of the oldest embroideries are fading. Although, for example, older embroidered garments, such as the chori and udarne, were described to me, I was never able to see them first hand and was unable to locate a woman who could remember how to make them. Similarly, I was only able to find one example of a cho(lo, the short sleeve blouse young women wore to the mid 70's.

It has also proven very difficult to date the few examples of old embroidery I have located with accuracy. Only recently literate, Mutwa women do not have a tradition of recording personal information and are more apt to reckon time in relation to births or events than years. For recent history this information is detailed and can be translated into dates with relative accuracy however, more distant history is problematic. Shrouded in memories, it is often condensed and partial. When I asked, many textiles were simply described as "old" or Mutwa "original" style. More helpful were those textiles that could at least be attributed to a distant relative. Khadeeja, for example, has a number of embroidered bags her grandmother stitched that I have dated to the 1920's. My estimation is based on the materials and styles used as well as the presumption that there is approximately 20 years between generations of women and that the bulk of a woman's embroidery, especially items like gaj, kothri and darkey, are produced prior to marriage, in her mid-late teens.
The oldest Mutwa embroidery I have been able to locate is a black kanjari with very fine cotton embroidery in the collection of A. A. Wazir (figs. 5.1-5.4). The blouse is made of hand-woven cotton and has hand stitched seams. Both the ground fabric and threads appear to be dyed with natural dyes. The red is likely from madder root, the black, iron rust—both widely used by the Khatri dyers from whom the Mutwa traditionally purchased their cloth. Wazir collected by the piece from a Mutwa family who claimed it was their great-grandmother's—it dates, therefore, to approximately 1880-1900 although it may be older. Although black was later associated only with older women, Khadeeja claims that "originally" all Mutwa women wore black. This particular blouse, with its vibrant thread colours and 'youthful' embroidery (see below) supports her suggestion. It has the same three horizontal divisions as contemporary kanjari however all three are black. It is stitched with silk pat (unspun silk floss) and cotton threads and uses pako kich, cikan, and kac stitch motifs.

A second piece (figs. 5.5-5.6), also collected by Wazir, is a red cotton blouse stitched with cotton and silk pat. Wazir collected this blouse from Fulae, a Mutwa village located outside of Banni, in Nakatran Taluka and estimates it to be made c. 1910. It is an unusual blouse having a tripartite division of the bandh and makes use of a stitch I have not seen on any other Mutwa blouse (and which could not be identified in Dhordo). It is significant if only to demonstrate that by this period, Mutwa women were wearing red blouses, likely to distinguish them from more mature women.

Another embroidery, also dated to c. 1910, is a patchwork bag called a kothri stitched by Abbas's elder stepsister (figs. 5.7-5.8). Young women used to stitch a variety of similar bags for their dayj. These were used to store jewellery or other precious objects and were stored flat, between the layers of quilts piled up on the manji. Khadeeja pointed out that at one time there were specific designs stitched on different types of bags but could not elaborate further. Small, un-embroidered, patchwork bags called a bungari kothri were also commonly stitched by young women for their male kin and used to store their pipes (bungari) and tobacco. With the introduction of inexpensive plastic goods in the 60's, these small bags fell into disuse. The bag shown in Figure __ is worked with fine silk pat on cotton with a stitch called katari in a pattern called mandurya. Mandurya is a variation on mandi or butter churn. Similar patterns, also stitched with khatri, have
been widely made by Muslims and Hindus on both sides of the Kutch-Sindh border. Mandurya are
variable in form and may be stitched with khatri or kharak.

Another old textile is a bag stitched by Khadeeja's grandmother and which I have dated c. 1920 (figs. 5.9-5.10). Like the previous two embroideries, the bag is red and black with some additional stripes of white cloth—the pattern of the stripes (B-W-R-W) is traditional and serves to heighten the contrast between the colours. The base of the bag is embellished with a band of embroidery worked in silk pat and cotton likely with some chemically dyed threads. The most striking elements of this band are the stepped, mausoleum-like shapes repeated along the length of the band\textsuperscript{87}. Each houses what appears to be a kuber (tomb), perhaps suggesting the resting-place a revered Sufi pīr (saint). Above this is a row of inverted triangles—the space between them scattered with embroidered mirrors and tiny star-like motifs. According to Paine, zigzags and triangles are generally thought to be protective (1990, p.133)\textsuperscript{88}. In Kutch, rows of triangles are also frequently used to represent doongri (mountains)\textsuperscript{89}. Both the triangles and the mausoleum-like shapes of this bag are filled in with a stitch locally known as ghana and which is commonly known as laid work or couching in English (see Appendix IV). At the top of each 'tomb' and every other triangle, is a row of seven kac stitches. Each of these are surrounded with a row of ankh, worked in black, and, in the case of the 'mausoleums' a second row of ankh in white. The triangular shapes are surrounded with a row of short white bullion stitches called ashrafi (see below). The border consists of three rows of ankh, filled in with a pattern composed of satin stitch.

I have not been able to discover any more recent samples of ghana and indeed, it seems to strain the memories of the oldest Mutwa. Wajeeha told me it was previously used to embellish women's skirts\textsuperscript{90}. If my reading of its symbolism is correct, its references to saint worship or even Sufism may have served to condemn it after the introduction of Ahl-al-Hadīth.

\textit{1930's-1960}

Unfortunately the embroidered record from the 1930's to the early 1960's is very thin. Although Kutch remained relatively peaceful before and following Partition, it saw a number of migrations and other changes that likely disrupted the production of embroidery in Banni. The Mutwa, for example, were geographically cut off from the markets in Sindh where they had obtained the silk pat and some of the cloth used in their embroidery. With the introduction, in the 1950's (Williams, 1958/1981), of a railway linking Kutch to Kathiawar and the rest of India, as well
as the construction of highways and local roads, new consumer goods were increasingly available even in the most remote Banni villages. From this period the Mutwa began widely using machine woven cloth, dyed with chemical dyes in a wide range of colours. Blues and greens, for example, although used occasionally earlier, were used much more frequently from mid-century on. Although cotton and silk fabrics continued to be used, cotton-polyester blends, and eventually a range of synthetic fabrics slowly supplanted them.

A textile that likely dates to the period just before Partition is an unfinished woman's blouse stitched by Abbas's elder step sister's daughter (figs. 5.11-5.12). It is worked with silk pat and cotton threads on machine woven cotton. It represents a significant shift from the earlier pieces as the fabric ground is dyed with chemical dyes in a non-traditional colour. Parts of the blouse are lined with machine printed cotton cloth indicating not only the availability of industrially woven and printed cloth, but perhaps an altered relationship with local Khatri dyers. The blouse is densely stitched with copal. The tiny ovoid shapes that make up the copal grid are outlined with a row of ankh then filled in with three very fine rows of ankh in alternating colours. In keeping with the Mutwa preferences for pairing opposite colours, the copal outline, normally stitched in black, has been rendered in red on the green fabric, black on the red fabric. Although unfinished, it was kept because of its exceptional fineness. Mirrors would have been added between the rows of the grid and the tiny white dots characteristic of Mutwa embroidery would have also been added.

A second example (figs. 3.42-3.43) dated to this period, is a topoloe (baby hood) stitched by Wajeeha for her daughter, Khadeeja, c. 1958. It is stitched with pako kich and cikan and includes clusters of seven mirrors stitched in each corner. Another (figs. 5.13-5.14) is a puttee (border) worn by Khadeeja on her wedding odhni. The piece, stitched with silk and cotton on a hand-woven cotton ground, was purchased from a woman in Mitlee who sold it to pay for medical expenses. Although Khadeeja suggested it was stitched about 1965, I would suggest, based on the colours, motifs and fact that the cloth appears hand-woven, that it dates from about the time of Partition.

1960-1970

The embroidered textiles produced during this period were produced by a generation of women living through a period of dramatic social, economic, and political change. These effectively encouraged a new relationship between women and embroidery, gradually censuring newly problematic content, dis-embodying it, and nudging it from one level of commoditisation to
another. The Mutwa, for example, had increased access to schooling and, under the influence of the Ahl-al-Hadith, were increasingly concerned to "improve themselves" and rid themselves of "backwards" customs. It was during this period that young Mutwa women ceased to wear the embroidered udarne and chori, adopting the sparsely embroidered colo (figs. 5.15-5.16) and a padu (a type of gathered skirt) instead. This was also a period of increased experimentation among Mutwa embroiderers. The introduction of new materials spawned new designs and emphases, while the arrival of immigrants from Sindh provided new sources of inspiration. It was also during this period that a market for Mutwa embroidery was slowly developing.

Although there are few remaining examples of embroidery that can be dated to this period, one exception is a red silk kanjaru dated to c. 1965 (figs. 5.17-5.18). It is stitched with silk pat and cotton threads and makes extensive use of a motif called golalo. These are small flowers with six petals stitched with a satin stitch. Each petal is outlined with a row of baciyo worked in white. Scattered between the rows of flowers are small mirrors, affixed to the cloth with a buttonhole stitch and surrounded by a second row of buttonhole stitches worked in the opposite direction in white. The Mutwa stitch many types of flowers however, golalo were unusual at the time. Until that time the satin stitch was used to fill in the tiny grids formed in katari and kharak as well as small, repeated shapes used in border designs. Unlike the Megvars on both sides of the Kutch-Sindh border, who make more extensive use of the satin stitch and who also stitch flowers called golalo (S=golharho, Askari and Crill, 1997, p. 22), the Mutwa seldom used it to form 'stand-alone' motifs. Flowers were filled in with concentric rows of pako (and called cikan). Pako, as well as the other stitches typically used by the Mutwa up until this point, were remarkably efficient—covering the face of the fabric without 'wasting' expensive threads on the back of the cloth. Satin stitch, alternatively, appears the same on both sides of the cloth. It uses long stitches, worked side by side, to fill areas. Small areas filled with satin stitch are relatively secure, however, larger areas, utilising long 'floating' stitches are prone to snagging. These are often referred to as kaco (weak, unfinished) as opposed to the open chain stitch which is pako (durable).

While this might be taken as a sign of new affluence, threads continued to be expensive throughout this period. Cloth, however, was more readily available and relatively less expensive than the hand woven cloths used earlier in the century. At that time, women had only a few garments, the cloth beautified and strengthened with densely worked embroidery\(^9\). As machine woven cloth became more widely available, less expensive and often stronger, durable embroidery
became less important. Moreover, women's dowries from this period began to expand. The satin stitch, in part, facilitated this growth because it could be worked much more quickly than the traditional stitches.

1970-1980

This creative spirit has continued to characterise Mutwa embroideries to the present. The period 1970-1980 saw a surge in interest in Mutwa embroidery—from art collectors, development workers, and among the embroiderers themselves. New materials continued to be introduced, including, notably, "art silk"—the unspun rayon floss that has completely replaced the silk and cotton threads used earlier. Various synthetic fabrics, some with knitted structures, were also introduced and have been adopted by Mutwa women who appreciate their durability, ease of care, and colourfastness. The combination of the fine rayon floss and synthetic materials has, in some case, facilitated remarkably fine, detailed stitching in a new range of designs. Although Mutwa embroidery retains a characteristic grid-like structure it is no longer based (or mainly based) on counted thread, geometric designs. Embroideries stitched on rough, hand-woven cloth are often counted, exploiting the grid provided by the warp and woof. This is particularly true among non-elite Muslims from the Middle East, through Central, and South Asia. Cloths with smooth textures make counting difficult, but do support stitches and designs of a more curvilinear nature. Such cloths were often only afforded by the nobility or other wealthy patrons and were stitched by professional embroiderers. During this period the Mutwa adopted various synthetic fabrics, including synthetic satins. The smooth texture of these new cloths has similarly encouraged relatively more free-flowing embroidery designs.

With respect to the Mutwa, their embroidery has always incorporated both geometric and curvilinear elements. The former, were often reminiscent of embroideries found farther north and west and could be stitched with such precision, often in prescribed numbers of stitches, as to suggest mystical influences. The curvilinear patterns used by the Mutwa share many similarities with those stitched by Hindus and Muslims on both sides of Kutch's border with Sindh. The Hindu Lohanas and Megvars, as well as the Muslim Memons and Halepotras, for example, were particularly renowned for their vibrant embroideries filled with stylised flowers and birds (Askari & Grill, 1997). Despite these similarities, the Mutwa have devised their own characteristic approach to these types of patterns.
Unlike many of their neighbours, Mutwa embroiderers do not completely cover cloth with dense embroidery, nor is it as bold in scale. Mutwa embroidery is intricate, delicate, and animates rather than dominates surfaces. Flowers remain important focal points, however, they are often attached to, or surrounded by, distinctive jointed ovoid shapes. Similar designs, applied with mud and dung, have also been used to embellish the inside walls of bhungos. The perimeter of the bhungo, just below the high shelf that meets the roof, the area above the doorway, as well as that around windows, any built-in cupboards or niches, were traditionally sites for elaborate chitri kam. When I asked what these designs represented, I was told they were generic "flowers". In comparison with embroidered textiles from other parts of Kutch, Sindh and even Saurashtra, however, I suggest that these forms are representational although they are highly, even increasingly, stylised and not necessarily recognised by contemporary embroiderers.

Many of these jointed ovoid forms, especially those attached to flowers, appear to be leaves, or, when arranged in a row, trees or thorn (kahadho) bushes, both of which are common folk embroidery motifs used in Kutch and Saurashtra (Frater, 1975; Tarlo, 1996). The Mutwa motif lad (fig. 5.19) is a row of thorns or a thorn bush only embroidered on gaj or kanjaru—two blouses associated with a young woman’s fertility and her transition from one life stage and household, to another. It is very likely lad were intended to announce the bride’s new status as well as offer her protection. Figure 5.20 illustrates another common Mutwa embroidery design frequently used to demarcate design areas or edges. A similar tattoo pattern, used by Maldhari women in Saurashtra, is called pandadu in Gujarati (leaf, K=pann) (Rubin, 1988). When lined up in a row, these motifs recall the garlands of leaves or stitched torans Hindus hang over doorways elsewhere in Kutch to guard against malignant forces.

The mor (peacock) is a motif widely featured in folk embroideries across Kutch, Saurashtra, and Sindh. Askari and Crill note that in the Tharparkar district of Lower Sindh, the peacock is associated with union of bride and groom (also Grewel & Grewel, 1988). Moreover, among the Hindus of this area, the peacock is a metaphor for a bridegroom who comes to claim his bride from her parents… The peacock is revered as a noble bird, it is the embodiment of good and is often represented as a vehicle for Saraswati, goddess of wisdom, poetry and the arts. Peacocks, as Tharri folk legends relate, are thought not to mate physically but through the medium of dance (Askari & Crill, 1997, p. 20).
Although not acknowledged by the Mutwa, older examples of embroidery include what appear to be stylised peacocks while new embroideries include forms reminiscent of these. On the than portion of the old kanjari shown in Figures 5.1-5.4, curved ovoids form V-like shapes arranged around a square. Each of these V-like shapes has one side slightly shorter than the other. Although the two sides are outlined with the same colour thread, they are filled-in with different colours. Very likely these V-like shapes represent peacocks surrounding a square garden. Similar peacocks are also included in the vertical patterns stitched across the bandh (chest) and popti (lower border of the bandh) of this blouse (see also fig. 5.22).

Another very common motif among Kutchi and Sindhi embroiderers, one also associated with fertility, is the vicchī (scorpion) (fig. 5.21). Like the bride, who comes from 'outside' to the groom's home, scorpions often find their way inside desert homes where they are considered both a blessing and a curse. Their auspiciousness is related to their fertility and the fact that they rid the home of other bugs however, they remain dangerous intruders who carry a lethal sting (Pandya, 1998, p.65). The segmented bodies of scorpions lend themselves stylistically to the segmented design of Mutwa embroidery. Ovoids with pincer-like shapes attached to one or both ends are frequently included in Mutwa embroidery and may represent scorpions.

Kitchen implements and jewellery are also included among the motifs frequently stitched by the Mutwa using the jointed ovoid forms discussed above. Of the former, a motif called molardo, continues to be used and identified (fig. 5.23). It is a large pestle possibly once used to pound dried chilies in an okulo (mortar). Figure 5.24 illustrates a motif called pakajir, which appears modelled after the heavy anklets, called jir, included in the groom's gifts to the bride. The embroidered version resembles a fringe and is often used along the bottom edge of the bandh, along the sleeve edges, bottom front edge of the blouse, and around the front opening. It may also be used to surround the candhar stitched over each breast and on each shoulder of the gaj (wedding blouse). Pakajir is frequently featured in chitri kam work, where it surrounds openings and marks important divisions of space. In his book on clothing in India and Pakistan, Dar calls anklets, bracelets, rings and other circular, binding ornaments "spiritual fetters" and points to the protection they offer the body's extremities (Dar, 1969, p.137). Grewel and Grewal (1988) note that circles have protective qualities and suggest the sources of life. Others have pointed to the prevalence of similar zigzag or triangular designs used along edges and openings in folk embroidery found elsewhere in Gujarat including the Rabari (Frater, 1975), and the Kharak (Tarlo, 1996), and have speculated on their
protective abilities. As Tarlo also points out, these are also common tattoo designs used by Hindu women across Saurashtra on their arms, legs, and faces. Tassels, as Paine has noted for folk embroiderers generally, may have talismanic associations, may be used to divert the evil eye and offer protection (1990, p. 143). Pakajir, whether worked in mud around the perimeter of a bhungo or in thread around edges and design areas, may offer similar protection to the Mutwa wearer.

In the samples of Mutwa embroidery I have been able to date to between 1970-1980, there is a new playfulness and even experimentation with traditional forms. This is the period that saw the influx of Sodha Rajputs from Sindh to Kutch, displaced by the 1971 war between India and Pakistan. Although Mutwa embroiderers did not adopt the counted thread techniques the Sodha's use, they were nevertheless inspired to stitch star-like motifs clearly reminiscent of Sodha patterns. This period has also seen a new reliance on satin stitch—both to form motifs on its own as well as to fill-in shapes. Traditionally the jointed ovoid shapes discussed above were outlined with a row of pako then filled in with one or more rows of pako worked in different colours. Called pako kich (filling with pako), this technique continues to be used, however a related technique called ser kich (filling with ser) has become more prevalent. Ser kich involves filling the outlined ovoid shapes with short bands of satin stitch worked at right angles to the length of the ovoid. Although ser kich is not necessarily faster to produce than pako kich, it does offer broader scope for the new thread colours introduced at this time.

The 1970's also saw the introduction of embroidery designers. The first was Moosa of Dhordo who began designing for Shrujan early in the 70's. In conjunction with staff designers at Shrujan, Moosa interpreted Mutwa designs to suit the tastes and needs of a new market while introducing ways to speed production. This enhanced the already growing emphasis on curvilinear, as opposed to geometric patterning in Mutwa embroidery design. Compared to the carefully counted geometric designs prevalent early in the twentieth century, curvilinear designs are easier to stitch and faster to produce. Moreover, unlike patterns such as khatri and karkh, widely shared by Hindus and Muslims across Banni and Sindh and almost indistinguishable one from another, patterns such as pako and ser kich are more idiosyncratic and therefore recognisably Mutwa.

Although Mutwa embroidery has shifted towards more curvilinear design, the greater potential for representation this would seem to offer is being subverted. Mutwa women are increasingly mute on the meanings once associated with the motifs they have traditionally stitched. Stylised motifs such as the peacock (discussed above) are not recognised. Although curved V-
shapes are included in contemporary embroidery, the subtle changes in stitch and thread colour used to distinguish the peacock's head and tail are no longer used. Freed of much of its representation, Mutwa embroidery during this period has become increasingly decorative but also vibrant and experimental. Moosa, for example, has introduced new motifs and colour combinations. One of these is loosely based on a mango. Khadeeja's mother, stitching kanjari for her daughter's approaching wedding, adopted Moosa's mango but added her own embellishments.

This tendency to interpret embroidery design along strictly formal lines is facilitated by the new emphasis on producing for market. Not only are women increasingly alienated from the eventual consumers of their embroidery, but the design process has slowly been monopolised by a few male designers. Islamic reform and especially the ideology associated with the Ahl-al-Hadith, denouncing superstition, syncretism, and Sufism alike have further facilitated these shifts.

1980-1990

In the embroidery of 1980-1990 the tendency to speed production, simplify stitches and emphasise curvilinear designs continues. The jointed ovoid patterns traditionally associated with pako kich are occasionally rendered completely in satin stitch introducing a new, highly dramatic but ambiguous pattern called kaco. The fact that a stitch once denigrated for being "weak" or "unfinished" is now featured on its own speaks to the Mutwa's changing relationship with embroidery. With the continuing emphasis on producing embroidery for market, certain stitches became more prevalent than others. Copal, for example, is used extensively as an efficient means of 'covering' cloth with embroidery. Unlike the finest copal (see fig. 5.11) in which each tiny ovoid would be outlined with a row of pako, then filled with three rows of pako, copal from this period is very often larger, and contains only one row of pako filling. Other changes are also evident. Previously mirrors were attached using a tight buttonhole stitch and surrounded with a ring of short white stitches radiating from the mirror, short stitches similar to what is called the bullion stitch in English. Increasingly, from this period, this second ring of stitches has been reinterpreted as a second row of buttonhole stitches worked in the opposite direction to those encasing the mirror. The reasons given for this shift refer to the ease of production.

This is the period in which government sponsored schools for embroidery were initiated. In Dhordo, Khadeeja taught a number of young students in her home. Lessons focused, not on the significance of the stitches or designs, but how to stitch all of the Mutwa stitches. Significantly,
design was not taught. It was also a period of intense stitching for Shrujan. Cloth was provided to
the embroiderers, stamped with the designs, the colours prescribed.

Moosa's influence on embroidery for local consumption continued as he provided women
with stamped kanjari and dhadki designs. Many of these demonstrate a new Islamic formalism,
recalling the arabesques of Persian carpets, Moghul decorative arts and architecture. Many of these
designs, moreover, include a variety of stitches and patterns previously never used together. Some
almost have the feel of the Victorian 'samplers' stitched by young women to exhibit their skill and
range of knowledge (Parker, 1984). As I have noted above, until the advent of market embroidery
and embroidery schools, women often knew or excelled at only a few stitches; subsequently, they
endeavour to learn all the currently recognised stitches. Many motifs and stitches, such as ashrafi
(discussed above), those used on young boys garments (i.e. tun and cavliya, see Chapter 3) have
either disappeared or are relegated to tiny motifs used to fill-in backgrounds.

Young women, learning to embroider during this period, had already adopted un-
embroidered Punjabi suits for their own use. The embroidery skills they were learning were
therefore never seen as connected to their bodies in the close and intimate way they likely were for
earlier generations. Fewer and fewer women were wearing gaj for their weddings with its overt,
sexual symbolism. Similarly, fewer and fewer women were wearing kanjaru. For the elder
generations of married women it was no longer age appropriate, for the younger generations it is
embarrassing. While many young women from this generation have stitched quilts for their dayj,
most focus their efforts on embroidery for sale.

1990-present

Embroidery in the period 1990-present is characterised by enhanced experimentation with
forms at the expense of representation. Some of the most remarkable embroidery has been
designed by Moosa and stitched by his wife Hameeda (figs. 5.26-5.39). Technically outstanding,
their work nevertheless challenges the traditional integrity of Mutwa design. New forms have been
constructed out of traditional ones, spatial relationships altered, and the traditional preference for
pairing complimentary opposite colours, replaced by a range of rainbow colours. Hameeda, and
many of her contemporaries, were trained in the embroidery schools set up during the early 80's.
She excels at a wide range of stitches that Moosa exploits in his designs. Many of their most
outstanding pieces have been stitched specifically for national exhibitions or to sell to textile
collectors. These pieces specifically showcase a wide range of Mutwa stitches in a more 'artistic' format. Unlike the work they have done for Shrujan, and the work Hameeda continues to stitch for her own use, these works address a new audience of artistic, cultural connoisseurs.

Women of Hameeda's generation continue to stitch blouses for themselves or must commission other women to stitch for them. Moosa supplies the designs for some of these—others are based on designs copied from older textiles. The younger generation of embroiderers, as noted, may stitch quilts for their dayj, but focus most of their efforts on stitching for market. By and large they do not design their own patterns but must rely on one of the designers. As Moosa has gradually disassociated himself from Shrujan, other, non-Mutwa designers have taken over the design work he used to do for them. This has resulted in further changes to the embroidery marketed by Shrujan as these designers tend to approach it as purely decorative: forms are further interpreted, stitches altered or simplified, backgrounds and foregrounds occasionally confused.

ADDRESSING CHANGE

Perhaps the most dramatic change women have effected to embroidery has been its use in relation to women's garments. While embroidery is still used to embellish certain household textiles, since Partition it has played a decreasing role in the embellishment of women's clothing. Since 1947 the Mutwa have experienced an unprecedented rate of change and have been forced to renegotiate their identity in a shifting and expanding network of relationships. Mutwa women have responded by re-making themselves through alterations to their clothing, adopting new styles, materials, and forms of embellishment. Precisely because embroidery is so culturally dense, so intimately associated with women, family, social and biological reproduction it is particularly vulnerable to the 'exposure' which has characterised the changes since 1947. Just as Mutwa women have observed purdah more stringently in the post-Partition period, so embroidery has been part of an 'embodied' reform of Mutwa identity. Embroidery is still intimately associated with the Mutwa's sense of self, however, how embroidery represents the Mutwa has radically shifted.

Although we cannot assume Mutwa women's clothing styles did not change before 1947, reliable data is only available for the period following. The 'others' they met, the enemies they resisted and alliances they made, as well as the introduction of new materials have undoubtedly always influenced the Mutwa's garments and embroidery. Independence not only initiated a chain of events that eroded the Mutwa's isolation and introduced new ideals and consumer goods, it
forced the Mutwa (and other groups living in Banni) to renegotiate their identities. Banni was no longer liminal. The Mutwa were no longer Sindhi Muslims living across the Rann from Sindh, they are Sindhi Muslims living in India. It has been during this period that they have adopted certain reformist tendencies, sought to identify themselves more closely with Pan-Islamic values, and de-emphasise cultural practices that have come to be viewed as provincial. The Mutwa's desire for "improvement" along these axes is motivated by a sincere desire to achieve religious merit, to be better Muslims, however, they are not unaware of the more secular benefits improvement affords. Reform, for example, is likely only the most recent avenue of distinguishing themselves from neighbouring groups.

According to Khadeeja, Mutwa women "originally" wore long embroidered dresses similar to those still worn by local Jat women. Because these garments were worn without undergarments or trousers, they were considered immodest by the Mutwa and abandoned long ago. When this change occurred it is impossible to determine however we know from British records of the mid-19th century that Sindhi Muslim women commonly wore blouses called a kanjari and gathered trousers called suthan (Burton, 1851) similar to those currently worn by married Mutwa women.

Dresses continued to be worn by young Mutwa women until about the 1930's. There were two forms: one, called an udarne was worn by the youngest girls (to about 10 years). It had a fitted bodice, short sleeves, and a gathered skirt. Both the sleeves and the bodice were heavily embroidered (front and back), the latter with a distinctive mandala-like design richly embellished with mirrors. The udarne was usually made of plain black cotton cloth although tie-dyed fabric could be used and poorer families might substitute printed cloth for embroidery. The second dress was the chori and was worn by unmarried young women. In cut and choice of material it was similar to the udarne although it was embellished differently. It was characterised by vertical lines of embroidery extending down from the shoulders and neck edge, buṭīs (flowers) scattered over the skirt and a heavily embroidered skirt border. Married women at the time wore embroidered open-backed blouses called kanjari with either wrapped skirts of black cotton called pot while at home or gathered tie-dye cotton skirts called gaghra outside of the village and for special occasions.

Sometime before Partition young women's clothes not only began to change shape but their colour and material. While older women continued to wear black kanjari, younger married women adopted red kanjari. Unmarried women gave up their long dresses for a blouse called a colo worn with a pot. The colo had a front opening that was lined with a few narrow rows of embroidery,
applied braid, and other trim and could be made of cotton or one of the new synthetic blended fabrics that were increasingly available through the 60's. It was replaced in the mid to late 70's by the kameez, a long un-embroidered blouse worn with suthan (also called salwar) and subsequently by the 'frock' or Punjabi suit from the early 1990's. It is generally pre-adolescent girls who wear frocks (dresses with a gathered skirt and pieced bodices) with suthan while the older girls wear Punjabi suits. While these newer fashions are not embellished with embroidery, they do include rows of tailor made tucks or frills particularly over the bodice front.

Married women's dress through this period also changed although less dramatically than the young, unmarried girls' fashions. As mentioned above, younger women began to use coloured fabrics from the time of Partition adopting more sober pallets as they mature. White continues to be reserved for men, widows, hajis, and is used to shroud corpses. Few widows or female hajis wear white however. Backs were added to women's blouses during the 60's. Barwar, once an essential piece of clothing for festivities and the marriage rituals (fig. 5.25), were discarded during the 70's and replaced by suthan by the younger women while the older women continue to wear pot. Most married women born before about 1975 have continued to wear kanjari with their suthan. Newer brides, however, no longer change their clothes after marriage but continue to wear Punjabi suits. Similarly, most brides do not wear gaj, the traditional embroidered wedding blouse which the younger generation consider risqué.

Mutwa women also wear a large 2.5m square veil or odhni which has probably not changed in shape so much as in material and design during this period. Previously they wore cotton or silk tie-dyed odhnis of maroon with orange dots or black with red dots. Like their tie-dyed skirts, these were tied in special Mutwa designs by Khatris dyers. Traditionally, the groom gave a fine, tie-dyed odhni called a patori to the bride which became a prized possession worn on festive occasions. Since the 1980's the finer cotton and silk tie-dyed odhnis are rarely purchased or gifted to new brides although cruder tie-dyed cotton odhnis are still common. Various printed synthetic cloths have been widely adopted by the Mutwa for odhnis including machine-printed 'tie-dyed' synthetic cloths. One edge of these cloths is generally reinforced with applied cloth and machine stitching. This may be further embellished with rows of embroidered kac, gingri (small silver coloured bells) or, more recently, bands of purchased braid and tinsel.

Mutwa women's explanations for these changes revolve around the enhanced modesty of the newer fashions as well as the durability and colourfastness of the new materials. I was told
repeatedly how immodest dresses and skirts were as they were worn without suthan and how pots, if not worn carefully, could reveal legs or even fall off! Salwar, by comparison cover the women from waist to ankle and are secure. I would speculate that suthan, worn with short blouses like the Mutwa's is not the dress of nomadic or unsettled women. Rabari women and Jats alike continue to wear skirts and dresses in part because they facilitate personal modesty on the open plains. The Mutwa's adoption of suthan may reflect the prohibitive costs of tie-dyed fabrics and the erosion of economic ties between the Mutwa and the Khatri, but it is also a measure of Mutwa women's increased tendency to remain within the village due to purdah restrictions and men's shifting occupations. Another reason for abandoning skirts is likely to distinguish the Mutwa from other Muslim clans in Banni and their Megvar neighbours. The Punjabi suits currently worn by some married and all unmarried young women, is as much a collective statement of Mutwa identity as embroidery was in the past however it is a statement tinged with new aspirations including Islamic reform, Pan-Islamicism, modernisation, economic status and class.

With respect to embroidery, the changes to the use of embroidered clothing reflect shifting values while they affect social relations within the community. Previously embroidery embellished three general distinctions: girls, unmarried adolescent women, and married women. Embroidery and colour were lavished on young women and particularly brides. Older married women wore less and less embroidery and progressively darker colours. Widows' garments did not change shape significantly from married women's but became darker and were embellished with only a few spare lines of embroidery. Within the period since Partition women's garments have, generally, brightened with the introduction of synthetic fabrics, increasingly blurring the distinctions between married and unmarried women. Where a young woman would have exchanged her chori or colo for a kanjari and skirt (or suthan) when she married, a change that marked her new status, the current generation does not alter their dress after the wedding. Indeed, the wedding itself is marked not by different types of garments, but by more elaborate versions of the now standard Mutwa dress. Where embroidery once celebrated youth, beauty and fertility, it is now increasingly relegated to the realms of history and commerce.

EMBROIDERING RELATIONS

As Mutwa embroidery has shifted from one level of commodification to another, the network of relations it once affected has altered. Gifts of embroidery, between mother-in-law and
daughter-in-law at the time of marriage, between female kin and new babies or brides or widows, once denoted particularly close relationships between women. The mother of a prospective groom, for example, traditionally prepared three embroidered blouses of prescribed types and colours for her new daughter-in-law—a gift considered particularly intimate and representative of the bride's new bonds of affection and dependence. Unlike cloth, which is still gifted by women on certain occasions and implies reciprocity, embroidery was only given to close friends and family members "out of love." As embroidery has become more economically valuable, it is gifted less frequently and tends to represent a very different type of gift and denote different types of relationships. The Mutwa do not, traditionally, save old textiles—after a person's death their personal effects are given away to the needy or destroyed. In a context where embroidery was a current, evolving tradition, there was little need to save past examples of embroidery. Given the growing commercial value of old embroideries, and the perception that embroidery "is going," those who can afford to, save older embroideries knowing their value (as gifts or saleable commodities) will only increase. Khadeeja, for example, possesses a number of embroidered blouses her mother made for her in her youth and that she is saving for her sons' wives. Knowing they are more likely to sell these blouses than wear them, her gift will likely be perceived as a gesture of largesse, an impressive 'traditional' gesture possible only to a few Mutwa families.

Contemporary brides are presented with an increasingly diverse array of consumer goods. Of course these gifts must be purchased in urban markets with cash—threatening the Mutwa's autonomy as well as undermining the traditional gift economy maintained by women. While embroidery was rarely sold prior to the 1960's and 70's, it could be 'liquidated' in times of need. The great stacks of quilts and embroidered blouses a young bride brought with her to her husband's home represented not only the ties of friendship and support she could potentially draw on, but a repository of replenishable wealth. While quilts are still considered essential to a young woman's day, other embroidery is converted into jewellery or other consumer goods. The embroiderer generally keeps the income she derives from embroidery. While for many families it is used to purchase food, for others it is converted into jewellery for themselves or gifts for friends and family members. Gold jewellery has tended to supplant embroidery as a repository of women's wealth. Although quantities of embroidery did enhance a woman's status, the status associated with gold jewellery is of a different nature. Unlike embroidery, which was more or less accessible to all Mutwa women, gold remains expensive and accessible to only a few. Similarly, where embroidery could be exchanged between Mutwa women or they could stitch small gifts for brothers, fathers, or
husbands, these tokens of affection have been replaced by consumer goods. Young women of means will frequently use the proceeds from embroidering to purchase gifts for brothers, enhancing relations and perhaps ensuring support after marriage.

HAMEEDA AND MOOSA

Moosa is of the same generation as Ammar, and like him, was forced, in the 70's with forging a new career for himself—something that did not involve cattle. The young Moosa was reputedly artistically inclined and used his talents to embellish the interiors of many bhungos with painted designs loosely based on Mutwa embroidery. Moosa was particularly interested in chitri kam. A form of low-relief mud work used to decorate house interiors, chitri kam was traditionally women's work but had all but died out by the early 70's. Moosa began experimenting with it and has, in the intervening years, managed to build a good business with it (figs. 4.17 - 4.18). He uses a variation of the traditional technique to embellish offices and restaurants across Western India. In the early 70's he was also contacted by Chandraben Shroff to begin working for Shrujan. Moosa was employed to design for Shrujan, adjusting 'traditional' Mutwa designs to suit new markets. By and large these new designs make use of traditional stitches, motifs, and colours however, they are organised in radically different ways and put to new uses embellishing sari's, chania choli and salwar kameez for well-heeled, mainly urban, Indian women.

In the mid-80's Moosa married Hameeda—Khadeeja's cousin and about 10 years her junior. Both Hameeda and her younger sister Haleema are very skilled at embroidery, learning from their mother, as well as in Khadeeja's embroidery classes. Moosa and Hameeda have formed an unusually close and productive personal and business partnership. Moosa is frequently called on by local women to provide designs for kanjari or quilts made for their own use—many of his most inventive designs Hameeda stitches for sale to clients or tourists. Their work is unique and distinctive. Moosa includes a much greater variety of stitches in his designs than was traditional, has introduced new colours and colour combinations, and new forms. His designs, for example, make use of arabesques and are considered more Islamic than traditional designs. Hameeda's stitching is regular and fine—her hand almost as distinctive as Moosa's design work.

Hameeda has stitched extensively for Shrujan, at first obtaining the work from Khadeeja and later from Moosa. As Khadeeja has become less involved with the distribution of Shrujan embroidery, Moosa and Hameeda became more so. Most recently, however, Moosa, has chosen to
focus on his chitri kam work. Hameeda continues to distribute and execute orders for Shrujan, stitch Moosa's designs, and in a program similar to the one she pursued under Khadeeja, has recently begun to teach embroidery to a new generation of Mutwa embroiderers. Hameeda's embroidery was honoured with a National Crafts Award in 1999. She and Moosa travelled to Delhi to receive the award in person from the President of India, making Hameeda likely the only living Mutwa woman to have visited the nation's capital.

She and her sister Haleema appear to be the last generation of Mutwa women to wear embroidered kanjari. Younger women and even a few of their contemporaries are wearing Punjabi suits—even though most wore embroidered garments as children. Hameeda and Moosa are very fond of embroidery, even a little nostalgic about it and other traditions. Where vīṇḍho, a large ring worn through the left nostril have not been worn for many years by the Mutwa, Hameeda recently purchased one and wears it for special occasions.

MARKETING EMBROIDERY

Although the Gujarat portion of the 1961 Census of India's special section on household industry painted a rosy picture of the future of crafts in Gujarat, there was growing concern with the 'disappearance' of traditional crafts. While the seeds of concern for Indian craftspeople had been sown much earlier, in the newly minted state of Gujarat, institutions dedicated to documenting, preserving, and marketing traditional folk craft were founded from the mid 60's. In the introduction to Folk Art and Culture of Gujarat (1980), the catalogue to the Shreyas Folk Museum (officially opened, 1977), the incentive behind the museum was outlined:

Owing to repeated natural calamities, border area conflicts, construction of interconnecting highways, industrial growth around cities attracting people from rural areas, and infiltration and spread of modern trends, many age-old traditions and traditional manufacture of folk arts and crafts are fast becoming obliterated and lost. Colourful costumes, articles of handicrafts prepared for different occasions and purposes, full-throated singing, folk dancing and music are all declining and being replaced by humdrum commercial and factory made articles and recorded music on loudspeakers. Under these circumstances it is necessary to salvage whatever is still available and preserve it in a museum which can develop a sense of appreciation for these things in the new generation of children now growing up as well as for lovers of art, students of anthropology and researchers of social history and also for other visitors from India and abroad (in Jain, 1980, p.vii).

The collections of the Shreyas Folk Museum, among others, were facilitated by the changes the Mutwa and other groups experienced since 1947, especially the environmental problems that
plagued Banni during the 70's. Objects previously restricted from circulation were thrust into the market, their meaning and intent irrevocably altered. Although it is likely there was always a small market for Mutwa embroidered articles and that Mutwa women undertook commissions to stitch for various patrons from time to time, most embroidery was produced by women for their own or their immediate kin's use. After 1970 Mutwa embroidery began to rapidly shift from one, rather restricted level of commoditisation, to another (Appadurai, 1986).

One of the earliest collectors of Kutchi folk embroideries was Ramsinji Rathod, an Indian Forestry Official who has published accounts on Kutchi history (1959; 1992) and who founded a folk art museum based on his collections in Bhuj. Rathod began collecting during the 60's and alerted others to the plight of the rural villagers. Collectors with more commercial intentions soon followed, initially purchasing only the oldest embroideries, patchwork quilts and handicraft items directly from the rural women (or their families) which they sold to interested visitors or dealers in Ahmedabad and Bombay. Subsequently, as the business became more established and lucrative, various intermediaries have positioned themselves to purchase goods from the villagers that they then sell to the dealers. The finest or oldest textiles collected are generally sold to one of a handful of dealers in Bhuj or Ahmedabad who have been in business since the late 1960's. Many of these first generation dealers have established contacts with national and international collectors and museums and focus almost exclusively on 'art' textiles. With the supply of local textiles diminishing, particularly the oldest and consequently rarest pieces, prices have risen dramatically. As the supply of 'antique' pieces dries up, dealers have been forced to seek new, ever more remote sources of textiles, acquiring embroideries from Western Rajasthan, the Indian Punjab, Sindh, and, most recently, Afghanistan. Few are involved in promoting 'new' embroidery.

Textiles of lesser quality are sold to one of the many dealers who cater to local markets including a local tourist market. Many of these textiles are either sold intact as novelties or fashionable accessories, or are combined with other elements to suit urban tastes. Folk blouses, for example, are difficult to sell; consequently local designers will often take them apart and use the pieces to embellish ladies' salwar kameez. The textiles considered the poorest quality (embroidery that is coarsely stitched or damaged) are sold (often in bulk) to workshops where they are cut into little bits and re-stitched as relatively inexpensive patchwork quilts, bags, or cushion covers both for the tourists and a speciality local market.
Another dramatic shift in the production and distribution of Mutwa embroidery arose with the introduction of Shrujan, a Kutch-based organisation devoted to promoting and developing handicrafts. Founder, Chandraben Shroff, became aware of Mutwa embroidery during the late 60's early 70's through Ramsinji Rathod and decided to ask them to work for Shrujan. Although there were no roads to Dhordo at the time and travel was difficult, Shroff managed to contact Abbas and initiate the production of commercial embroidery. Embroidering for Shrujan became an important source of income for many families, sometimes the only source of income during periods of drought and unemployment. Shrujan provides the women with cloth pre-stamped with 'Mutwa' patterns for cushion covers, bodice fronts, chania choli and other goods it sells in its showrooms in Bombay and Bhujodi. Although Shrujan's designers have remained true to the form and colour preferences of Mutwa embroidery, shifts have inevitably occurred as designs are misinterpreted, background colours altered, designs simplified, and embroiderers strive to complete more work faster. In order to speed up production, for example, designers emphasise copal (see Appendix V) as it covers more ground and is more dramatic than other stitch motifs. Embroiderers, for their part, tend to simplify their work, make their stitches larger, looser, and less closely spaced than in non-commercial embroidery.

Following the success of Shrujan, a number of Mutwa men have become embroidery entrepreneurs. They produce their own designs, contract the embroidery from Mutwa or other local women, and sell the finished embroideries to retail outlets in urban centres. Although they are not formally organised, they respect each other's distribution rights to Bombay, Ahmedabad, Delhi and Kutch.

The expanding domestic and international market for 'ethnic' arts and antiques including textiles has spawned popular and scholarly interest in Kutchi embroideries. In response to changes within the tourist industry as well as the national and international attention Kutchi handicrafts have garnered, Gujarat Tourism has recently begun promoting Kutch rather aggressively as the site of unspoiled, unchanged, traditional peoples. Hence during the winter months Banni villages are visited almost daily by tourist laden taxis and buses. Various tour agencies operating from Europe conduct 'textile tours' which often include village stays. Local people are not unaware of the value (in tourist dollars) of their traditions and may actively seek to perpetuate or reinvent certain traditions for the benefit of visitors. A local Rabari textile merchant dresses in his traditional white suit and turban for visitors (polyester trousers and a shirt suffice at
other times). A local hotelier has constructed a resort featuring a number of concrete, air-cooled bhungos for tourist use. Gujarat tourism has recently opened a tourist camp in Bhuj, also featuring 'bhungos'. Once a year they hold a large fair called Kutch Utsav in Bhuj, meant to showcase traditional crafts as well as folk singers and dancers. Pictures of traditionally clad women and children feature prominently in the promotional material they distribute to tourists. In Dhordo, Basheer is planning to build a new bhungo adjacent to his new concrete-block house aware that tourists like the "old-style" houses. Mutwa women avoid using synthetics or printed fabrics for their embroidery projects knowing the tourists don't like their new-ness. They are well aware foreign visitors like dull "English" colours and "old" things.

REINVENTING STITCHES: RANA

Before I left Kutch in December 1998 Rana and her husband Karim had moved from Bhuj to Dhordo. Unable to find work in town, Karim and his cousin had decided to accept jobs at the Agrocol factory and shift their families back to the village. Initially Rana and Karim stayed in Basheer's old house while their own dwelling was built. When I returned, 18 months later, both they and the cousin's family had moved into two tiny mud houses constructed along the northern edge of the village, on land that used to be used by the cattle at night. Firdoos and Maysoon were enthusiastic about Rana's arrival in Dhordo. City raised with city tastes she was a glamorous new addition to the circle of young women embroidering outside Lamees kitchen in the late afternoons. Rana wore salwar kameez rather than the Punjabi suits favoured by rural Mutwa women, wore 'fashion' jewellery rather than gold or silver, and knew about the latest beauty aids and products from town.

On my return, Maysoon took me to visit Rana at her new house. She warned me that Rana and her husband were very poor and that her house was very small. It was built facing the cousin's across a raised mud platform, on one side of a pounded dirt clearing—exposed and hot. The walls were unpainted and unadorned. It contained a single bed, a metal chair with an electric fan perched on it, a stack of suitcases and a high shelf piled with the stainless ware she had received at her wedding. Seating me on the bed, Rana and the others seated themselves on the floor. In the corner, beside a radio cassette player sat two cloth bags full of the latest Hindi film soundtracks. Maysoon eagerly investigated the contents of Rana's bags— the exaggerated swoons and comic expressions of Hindi film stars provoking awe, scorn, and amusement. A child came running with two bottles of locally produced carbonated drinks purchased at the store— the first time I had ever been offered a cold drink in Dhordo. Women routinely send their children to one of the tiny shops to purchase dry goods, onions, supari, and occasionally sweets—other products either unknown or considered extravagant and avoided. After our refreshments, Rana pulled out a
cloth bundle from a corner and unwrapped the contents. She showed me a number of finely stitched salwar kameez suits she had prepared for one of the men for orders in Mumbai. The designs were Mutua yet distorted, the colours pastel and revolutionary, stitched on semi-transparent organza. Marysoon and I admired them—they were beautiful if alien.

I saw Rana shortly before I departed Dhordo that same trip—she still wore her thin hoop earrings and plastic coloured bangles—this time with a black salwar kameez inset with a bodice embroidered with Mutua designs. Rana had embroidered the bodice herself before turning it over to a Bhuj tailor. She was the first Mutua woman of her generation I had seen wearing an embroidered salwar kameez. I wondered if she might be the harbinger of a new fashion for embroidery among the Mutua. Exoticised by associations with fashionable urban centres, almost purged of its backward connotations, recontextualised and objectified, rendered more formal and decorative, Mutua embroidery reinvented, again.
CHAPTER 6: THE NEW EMBROIDERER: PURDAH AND THE TOURISTS

More than jewellery of the hand, cherished is handiwork fine;
Handiwork is the skill toward which everyone does incline
(Thanawi in Metcalf, 1992, p 51).

Inas

During the 1970's a book on Kutchi textiles was published in the United States with a photograph of a beautiful girl named Inas on the cover. The photograph had been taken when she was about 7 years old, wearing an embroidered blouse called a colo that is no longer worn by the Mutwa. Inas, now in her 30's, is married but childless. A member of the Hamadani family, she lives in a separate compound adjacent to the Morana's compound. Unlike most women her age who wear the more traditional embroidered blouses with gathered pants, Inas wears Punjabi suits and no longer embroiders. This earns her some criticism from the elder women in the village, particularly Wajeeha. Inas is unusual in that she learned to tailor women's garments from an uncle and hence makes a living sewing for the women of the village. Her income has been used, in part, to fill the bhungo she shares with her husband with a profusion of colourful knickknacks, artfully arranged around the bhungo's walls and shelf. Although her bhungo offered few attractions to my eyes, the younger women cited it as among the most beautiful in Dhordo.

December, 1998: there was great excitement in Dhordo. The rains had been late but had finally come and been abundant. There was plenty of grass for the cows and buffaloes to eat so the cattle herders of the community were able to remain at home during the winter. Economically it had been a good year and there had been several weddings already celebrated. Unfortunately for me, the only wedding to be held in Dhordo that year was slated for two days after I had to leave. Though they tried to change the date to suit me, in the end, it was impossible to do so. The women were busily cleaning and resurfacing houses and courtyards with a mixture of mud and dung, preparing for an onslaught of visitors. Most of the attention and work was directed on the groom's family's house. A plot was cleared next to his father's house where a new bhungo would be constructed soon after the wedding. Mayyada, his mother, was giddy at the prospect of her son getting married. Though Mutwa women are not supposed to laugh or talk loudly, I caught Mayyada frequently giggling, checking herself momentarily, then collapsing in uncontrollable mirth.

Five nights before the wedding the young girls gathered at the groom's house to sing wedding songs. The girls began their singing in the late afternoon sitting outside in the family's courtyard. Later they moved inside a small bhungo where they sat close together facing the groom's younger sister who started each song. Their voices were raw,
girlish and shy. They sang, not in Kutchi the local language, but in Sindhi, the language of their forebears. I liberally took photographs and recorded their songs while women visitors dropped in to hear the singing.

Khadeeja had always maintained that the Mutwa do not like singing as it is considered immodest. I had listened to Mutwa wedding songs at several weddings outside Dhordo and observed that given the choice, the older, higher status women would refrain from singing. Nevertheless, Khadeeja informed me that the night before I was to leave the women of Dhordo would gather to sing. She promised some really good singing and encouraged me to tape record it for my book.

After dinner, on the appointed night the women began to congregate at the groom’s house. A poor family, Mayyada had had to give up the small house she and her family slept in to accommodate her new daughter-in-law. They had relocated to the bhungo she used as a kitchen, one wall blackened after years of smoky fires. It was here that we gathered. Mayyada proudly showed the gifts her son would present to the bride to those who hadn’t seen or seen enough of them yet. The house started to get very crowded. Women and children appeared at the door, picked their way through the clustered figures and dropped, taking their position in the brightly swathed throng on the floor.

The singers, chosen for their voices and willingness to sing, arranged themselves in the middle of the bhungo, pressed together and facing each other. Basma, Asma, Inas, Sawada, and Khadeeja began to sing, tentatively and with giggles at first, then intensely, leaning into the circle. Their songs were repetitive, textured and rich. After each one the women would lean back, breathless. Inas was in high spirits, laughing after each song and chatting with her friends before Basma began the next song. Sitting with her back to me she didn’t see my tape recorder until after the first 2 or 3 songs. When she did happen to glance my way and saw the machine she stopped singing. She scowled in my direction and pointed out the tape recorder to her neighbours. At the first sign of her indignation I switched off and indicated that if she didn’t like it I wouldn’t persist. After the singers finished their song, however, Inas stood and announced “au vinyati” (I’m going) and left. I was horrified. Another woman took her place and Basma began another song. Khadeeja leaned back to ask why I wasn’t taping. I said, “Inas didn’t like it.” “She’s gone now, it’s no problem” Khadeeja insisted. I switched the tape recorder back on but the music has lost much of its appeal for me.

NEGOTIATING PURDAH AND STATUS

Although the Mutwa hold purdah as a communal ideal, the observation of it varies and is related to the negotiation of both moral and social standing. It can be selectively used by women to negotiate, resist, or assert higher status. In the case of Inas, discussed above, she stormed out of the women’s singing party claiming her husband did not like her singing to be recorded. When I
asked about it, I was told she had done the same thing on a number of occasions, most recently at a wedding that was being videotaped for the groom's family—and was unlikely to be shown beyond the community. I also learned that she had a long standing conflict with Wajeeha and other elder women on account of refusing to wear embroidered kanjari. I couldn't help but wonder if Inas's unwillingness to be recorded, and her demonstration of displeasure had less to do with her husband's wishes, and more with asserting herself and enhancing her position within the women's hierarchy.

While women may invoke purdah to assert their own interests, they may also selectively deploy tradition. Individuals periodically recover old-fashioned cloths, garments, or jewellery bestowing themselves with 'traditional' authority. Vindho, for example, are large nose rings worn through the left nostril and supported in front of the face with black threads attached to the hair. Different styles of vindo distinguished Megvar, Jat, and Mutwa women. While there are a few older Mutwa women who occasionally still wear vindo, among the younger generations, they have not been worn since the late '70's. Hameeda (introduced in Chapter 4) however, has recently purchased a new gold one and wears it at weddings and other celebrations. She claims she likes them and is nostalgic for the past. As someone who is actively negotiating past and present through the embroidery she creates with her husband, Moosa, wearing a vindo is likely more than a gesture of admiration and respect. A vindo is a traditional piece of jewellery most Mutwa consider 'backward'—adopting one, and a fine, expensive specimen at that, likely enhances Hameeda's authority to interpret traditions.

Another example concerns the gifting of embroidered kanjari. As Mutwa embroidery has shifted from one level of commodification to another, the network of relations it once affected has altered. The mother of a prospective groom, for example, traditionally prepared three embroidered blouses of prescribed types and colours for her new daughter-in-law—a gift considered particularly intimate and representative of the bride's new bonds of affection and dependence. Unlike cloth, which is gifted by women on certain occasions and implies reciprocity, embroidery was only given to close friends and family members "out of love." Today's young brides are occasionally still gifted embroidered blouses, however, most opt to sell them and purchase jewellery or other personal goods. The Mutwa do not, traditionally, save old textiles. With the growing commercial value of old embroideries however, and the perception that embroidery 'is going' those who can afford to, save older embroideries knowing their value (as gifts or saleable commodities) will only increase.
Khadeeja, for example, possesses a number of embroidered blouses her mother made for her in her youth and that she is saving for her sons' wives. They are likely to represent very different kinds of gifts and very different kinds of relationships than previously—rather than symbolically incorporating the new bride into her family, it becomes a gesture of largesse, an impressive 'traditional' gesture possible only to a few Mutwa families. Similarly Firdoos's wedding gift to her friend, Rawdha. Knowing the family Rawdha was marrying into was poor, Firdoos stitched a kanjari which was included among the hatalo gifts presented to Rawdha. Being young Rawdha is unlikely to wear a kanjari however, as Firdoos pointed out, she could always sell it if she needed money. Firdoos's gift was widely praised for the 'love' it implies, its beauty, quality, the high price it might fetch, and the traditions it represented. Like the embroidered gifts Khadeeja plans to make at her sons' weddings, gifts of embroidery are rare and increasingly the prerogative of the wealthy as well as those with a vested interest in enhancing social positions threatened by change\(^\text{17}\).

Generations: Wajeeha

I don't really know how old Wajeeha is—indeed, like many of her generation, she doesn't know herself—seventy something. She was born into a relatively prosperous family in Gorewadi where she was initially married to a young village man however the marriage was unsuccessful. According to rumours never confirmed by Wajeeha, the man involved was physically incapable of fathering children and so the couple eventually divorced. Three kilometres up the road in Dhordo Abbas, second son of Basheer, the local magistrate of Banni, was interested in Wajeeha. While his family enjoyed some prestige from the position, they were relatively poor and Abbas's proposal of marriage was refused. Wajeeha, however, took matters into her own hands and, in the dark of night, slipped away to Dhordo to marry him. According to her daughter, there was a big scandal following the marriage with Wajeeha's family calling the police and attempting to separate the couple. Eventually, they accepted the situation and gifted the young couple 70 head of cattle and waterbuffalo and several lakh's worth of silver jewellery. Around 30 and 35 when they married, Wajeeha and Abbas bore three live children: Sameer, Khadeeja, and Basheer.

Wajeeha and Abbas married shortly after Partition, when cattle herding was still a viable occupation. That began to change during the '60's and '70's with a series of serious droughts and the introduction of gando bawal. Wajeeha remembers Abbas having to sell off their herds and her jewellery in order to buy food. She also remembers begging him not to sell off her embroidery. She was a fine and prolific embroiderer stitching blouses not only for her daughters-in-law, but her daughter Khadeeja's dayi. Khadeeja has shown me many of the kanjari her mother prepared for her as well as the topalu (baby hood-like hat) Wajeeha stitched for Khadeeja when she was a baby and
which each of Khadeeja's nine children later wore. Wajeeha also stitched the gaj Khadeeja wore—an unusual move made because Khadeeja's husband's mother had died before their wedding.

Wajeeha's embroidery was innovative in the sense that she manipulated forms and tried new materials. Although gaj, for example, are usually stitched on the striped mashru cloth described in Chapter 2, Wajeeha stitched her daughter's gaj on plain red cloth. She was one of the first generation of mature embroiderers to begin stitching with the rayon floss that was introduced in the early 70's and thus, in a sense, can be credited with inventing what is (today) often held as 'traditional' Mutwa embroidery (see Chapter 5). She is also an outspoken critic of the changes to Mutwa women's dress. Abbas was less enthusiastic about embroidered kanjari believing that, while they reflected Mutwa khandani (family honour, character), they were also pachat, backwards. He considered wearing kanjari locally, "naika ma naika", or equivalent to "selling things on the street" (considered a lowly activity). Wajeeha however, remains very fond of Mutwa embroidered dress and disparages those who wear 'modern' dresses. Khadeeja once cited her mother as saying "you can leave your country but not your dress"—a saying that probably held more weight when the Mutwa had to follow their herds across borders and boundaries but nevertheless speaks to the intimate connections between Mutwa dress and identity. Wajeeha continues to encourage her granddaughter's to wear Mutwa embroidery, at least during their weddings, so far, with little success.

With all her children married and her granddaughters uninterested in wearing kanjari, Wajeeha now stitches blouses for sale. She does not stitch for any of the NGO's her daughter works with, but sells her work to the tourists who happen by in the winter months. Her youngest son protests that she need not work, that he can provide for everything she needs, but Wajeeha persists, conspicuously. Her hard work and diligence are considered exemplary.

Most afternoons, after she has finished her round of household chores, Wajeeha can be found in the shade against the wall of her daughter's house, adjacent to her own kitchen, thick glasses perched on her nose, bent over her stitching. She always works on black cloth nowadays, and stitches gajun, most often in red, yellow and white. She does not need to mark the designs, but works from experience. She works quickly, efficiently and often silently.

Generations: Khadeeja

Now in her mid-40's, Khadeeja is one of the first generation of educated, literate Mutwa women. Unlike her mother, who does not read and write and only speaks Kutchi, Khadeeja speaks Kutchi, Gujarati, Hindi, and English. She also reads and writes Gujarati and reads enough Arabic to understand the Qur'an. Khadeeja grew up in a house considered 'progressive'; both her uncle Imaad, and her father, Abbas, encouraged education for boys and girls, economic development, and doing away with customs and practices deemed 'backwards' elsewhere. Abbas also had a reputation for hospitality, for welcoming visitors from near and far. Khadeeja remembers how, in the 1960's
Dr Westphal, a German scholar, visited with his wife—the latter wearing such a short skirt, the Mutwa were scandalised. Occasionally Abbas would lead hunting parties of wealthy Indians from outside Banni, inviting them back to his bhungo for tea and a meal. Despite the fact there was no road until the 80's, the visitors continued to come, including, in the early 70's, Chandruben Shroff, founder of Shrujan, an NGO devoted to the promotion of Kutchi embroidery through sales and marketing. Initially the Shrujan project was managed by a Megaj man but was eventually handed over to the then 13-year old Khadeeja. She assumed responsibility for allocating embroidery work, explaining how it was to be done, collecting the finished work, selling embroidery floss, and paying the embroiderers in between 10 and 12 villages. For her distribution work, Khadeeja earned a small commission from each finished piece. In addition, Khadeeja stitched for Shrujan, earning the standard fee for embroidering and a reputation for fine stitching.

From an early age Khadeeja was exposed to visitors from outside Banni. Because of her father's reputation for hospitality, not to mention Khadeeja's own reputation for embroidery, it was only natural that the fledgling tourist industry would centre on Abbas's home in Dhordo. Then, as now, tourists arriving by taxi or bus, would be escorted to Abbas's bhungo and offered refreshments. The young Khadeeja would attend to the tourists, demonstrate Mutwa embroidery and offer pieces for sale. It was because of this work that Khadeeja learned English, picking it up from the tourists she dealt with.

In the 1980's Khadeeja received funding from the Gujarat Government to teach embroidery to other Mutwa women. This came on the heels of concern for the impoverished state of traditional peoples and especially folk artisans expressed during the 70's by Jain and which led to the creation of the Shreyas Folk Museum in Ahmedabad. In a dramatic shift from how embroidery had traditionally be taught and learned, Khadeeja instructed groups of young women the basics of Mutwa embroidery in her home. Lessons focused on technique and learning the 30+ Mutwa motifs. The young students stitched pre-stamped or drawn designs—they were not, themselves, taught how to design. Similarly, lessons focused on producing embroidery for sale rather than producing kanjari or other 'traditional' items. Young women completing the course were paid a small amount and awarded a certificate.

Married in 1979, Khadeeja's income from Shrujan, from tourist sales, and teaching were crucial means of support for her growing family. Although he had worked as a truck driver before his marriage to Khadeeja in 1979, Ammar (son of Abbas's younger brother, Baasim), was unable to find steady employment for many years after their marriage. In the mid-90's Ammar became involved in Agrocel. Owned by Chandruben Shroff's husband, Kanti, Agrocel extracts and processes bromine from the salt water of the Rann. The factory has proven enormously successful and has provided a new source of income and stability for many Banni families including Ammar's. Since his involvement, Khadeeja has become less and less involved in the embroidery business, both that with Shrujan and the
tourists, leaving this work to Moosa and Hameeda and her niece, Firdoos. She claims she is now too busy with her family and other work and is resting. In recent years, urged by the Gujarat Government's sponsored equity, she has served as village sarpanch. As such, Khadeeja acts as a government representative for three of the Mutwa villages. Beyond meeting with occasional government representatives in Dhordo, most of the day to day activities are carried out on her behalf by her brother, Basheer. Occasionally Khadeeja still embroiders, helping other women with their projects or demonstrates tricky stitches. Khadeeja continues to wear kanjari and salwar feeling too "shy" to wear Punjabi dress. She is not embroidering items for her eldest son or daughter's upcoming marriages. Instead, she has commissioned other women to stitch quilts for them.

Embroidery straddles the past and present ambiguously. It is traditional, yet in its new public, economic guise, it contributes to some very un-traditional social forms, including enhanced stratification. As Muslims, the Mutwa consider all other Muslims to be equal however there are political and economic disparities between them. Although, for example, Mutwa embroidery has become an increasingly valuable commodity, not all families have benefited equally. The Mutwa-Morana, for example, employ a variety of strategies to protect, even enhance, the power and privileges they enjoy vis a vis other Mutwa. While the male family members play a dominant role in the administration of Banni, as well as Gujarat government's contracts for supplying water or fodder, they have also played a significant role in establishing and now running the Agrocel bromine factory. They attempt to keep their family closely knit, marrying women from within Dhordo if not within their extended family itself. Mutwa-Morana women have, since the early '70s, managed much of the embroidery work produced for Shrujan—controlling access to materials, work, and wages. They have also monopolised the local tourist market for embroidery. This enables them to observe purdah more stringently than other women who, until recently were forced to come to them in order to obtain work and supplies, and must still in order to access the tourist market. Initially a local Megvar man managed the work for Shrujan, travelling to the various villages to distribute work, collect finished items and settle debts. After his demise in the mid-70's, Khadeeja was proposed as a suitable replacement. As a member of the 'first' Mutwa family, she commanded her family's authority and status within the community, possessed good managerial skills, was one of the first generation of literate Mutwa women, and a skilled embroiderer. However, because of purdah, Khadeeja was unable to distribute work directly to women in other villages. Consequently, she arranged for women to come to see her in Dhordo—reinforcing both her family's moral and political status. Although Khadeeja's involvement with Shrujan has recently
decreased and she leaves most of the work with tourists to her niece, Firdoos, she continues to be asked for by visiting tourists, fashion designers, NGO's and various government officials.

This was not the only way in which embroidery consolidated her family's position of pre-eminence. Whether they are collectors, tourists or government agents, visitors to Dhordo are inevitably escorted to Abbas's residence. As the leader of the Mutwa, Abbas had a reputation for being both progressive and welcoming. Given his position, it was only natural that families with embroideries to sell brought them to Abbas to offer to the visitors who happened by. Khadeeja was called upon from an early age to assist with these negotiations, learning to speak English in the process—an asset that further enhances status as well as sales. Firdoos, Khadeeja's niece has taken over most of the work with tourists and has likewise, learned to speak English. Embroideries brought to Abbas's house are held on consignment; the embroiderers receiving payment only after the goods are sold, less a small commission for 'the house'. Both new and old textiles are brought with women increasingly producing embroideries specifically to sell to visitors to Dhordo. This has proven very lucrative for those with access to this market. Other women, socially or physically isolated from it or perhaps unable to afford the investment of time and materials these tourist items represent, are dependent on Shrujan for work.

A woman's wealth and security were, at one time, tied up with her embroidery. In the past, a young woman was expected to produce a certain quantity of embroidered quilts, blouses, and bags—a larger quantity indicative not just of her industriousness, but her financial standing and ability to devote time away from other (subsistence related) chores. A young bride's quilts, proudly piled up and displayed on the manji, directly opposite the entrance to the bhungo she shared with her husband, was an emotional and aesthetic focal point, as well as a statement of economic ability, morality, and potential hospitality. Before the introduction of inexpensive, highly durable and colourfast synthetic cloth, cotton or silk must have represented a considerable investment and were relatively much more valuable than the synthetic cloths more readily used today. Their preciousness is reflected in the fact that Mutwa women elaborated them with intricate, time-consuming stitches—stitches that enhanced their beauty as well as durability. Gifts of embroidery continue to be made only between family members or very close friends. The pedapati (see Chapter 3) involves gifts of cloth from a wide circle of friends and family members and expresses the connections and linkages between families. These gifts of cloth are today often more impressive for their number than their specific contents. Owning great bundles of cloth—because
it is so accessible—is no longer the status symbol piles of silk or cotton cloths may have once represented. Both cloth and embroidery remain important items of exchange between women although they circulate in an increasingly circumscribed economy of emotion.

In Wajeeha's youth, women's silver jewellery would be sold during times of economic stress—embroidery was the last thing a woman would part with. Embroidery was considered precious—it was time consuming and relatively expensive to produce. The silk and cotton threads and cloth had to be purchased from distant markets and were costly. During Khadeeja's youth, consumer goods began to circulate much more readily as embroidery itself became a much more valuable commodity in the market. Although women were still expected to produce a quantity of embroidery for their dayj, the exchange-value of embroidery seems to have begun to eclipse its use-value. Women still wore mainly silver jewellery although gold was becoming more popular.

Firdoos's generation does not always include embroidery in their dayj: some commission embroidery from other women, some use store bought goods. Women's security or wealth is now more often tied to her gold jewellery or other consumer goods than piles of embroidery. While gold is considered more durable than embroidery, and more valuable than silver, more importantly, it is considered more fashionable and more modern than either. Store bought goods such as televisions, refrigerators, and gold jewellery offer the cache of distant markets and are unprecedented means of asserting social status. Although not all women excelled at embroidery in Wajeeha's youth, certainly the means of enhancing women's social status were more widely available than today. Although materials are relatively cheap and plentiful embroidery knowledge is now no longer widely shared and access to markets is limited.

With the shift from pastoralism to wage labour, for most Mutwa families, men remain the major wage earners and household heads. Although women influence how income is used, it is the male heads who make the major decisions and purchases. It is they who have, at least since Partition, travelled to urban markets to shop for food, cloth, jewellery, furnishings, and other necessities. Young women, desirous of the latest beauty aids frequently asked me to shop for them in town rather than rely on capricious brothers or fathers. Although Dhordo boasts two shops and is visited by travelling merchants, most women avoid the shops themselves and are disappointed by the poor quality merchandise available locally. Heads of households generally give a portion of their income to wives or mothers to make local purchases. In addition, women are allocated a special allowance for their use at celebrations such as weddings where gifts of cash are required and
snacks or other treats are often available for purchase. They are also usually given an allowance meant for distribution to mendicants, particularly during the month of Ramzan.

Women generally control the money earned from market embroidery, however, how it is used differs according to the relative affluence of the family involved. Among the Mutwa-Morana the young women I stitched with used their earnings to purchase luxury goods for themselves and their families. Khadeeja, claiming to be tired after so many years of her family's dependence on embroidery, has opted to discontinue embroidering, devoting her spare time to reading Islamic texts. Unmarried women in other families, providing they can afford it, will often use their embroidery earnings to purchase cloth and jewellery in anticipation of their weddings. During the 70's and 80's, when many men were un/under-employed the income derived from embroidery was crucial for many families' survival. Since the opening of the Agrocel factory many Mutwa men have found employment generally reducing the dependence on embroidery. That said, there remains many Mutwa women, particularly those in the more remote villages, who are still forced to use their embroidery earnings to supplement family income and purchase basic necessities. Although it could be said that embroidery reduces women's economic dependence on men, unless the family is reasonably affluent, few are able to act on this 'independence'. Furthermore, although market embroidery has clearly effected women's social status, it is unclear whether, having absorbed women's productive labour after the demise of pastoralism, it has enhanced their status within the family.

EMBROIDERING VIRTUE

Wajeeha, Khadeeja, and Firdoos belong to the Mutwa-Morana family—unquestionably the most affluent family in Dhordo and one of the most powerful families in Banni. The Mutwa-Morana are quite literally at the forefront of change—not only are visitors inevitably shown to their homes, where new ideas are exchanged, but they have largely managed the commoditisation of embroidery, have encouraged Islamic reform and embraced education. Their women have not been excluded from these changes—but, in many ways, have been instrumental to them, particularly with respect to embroidery. They have managed embroidery's shift from one level of commodification to another, experimented with new markets, new stitches, motifs, and materials. They have revolutionised the way embroidery knowledge and skill are transmitted, have revised what counts as skill, as well as purdah and the behaviour associated with it. These changes are
underscored by Islamic reform. Since the 1940's, the Mutwa have been influenced by the Ahl-al-Hadîth and have actively sought to become "better" Muslims. Consequently, the changes the Mutwa-Morana women are negotiating are evaluated within an evolving understanding of what it means to be Mutwa as well as what it means to be a good Muslim.

The various developments the family has supported, the changes and visitors they have been exposed to over the years have effected their relationships with other Mutwa in important ways. For the Mutwa-Morana women, greeting visitors and selling embroidery to passing tourists is profitable and enhances the status and authority they have within the community, particularly with respect to change. It is largely the women of this family who, for example, influence what is 'backwards' and what is more progressive behaviour and dress styles for women. More so than other Mutwa women, the Mutwa-Morana are concerned to uphold their honour and respectability within the community and observe a rather strict form of purdah. While an enhanced observation of purdah is linked to a renewed expression of Mutwa identity generally, it also must be seen as a means by which individual women enhance their position vis a vis other women and mediate what might be considered the dangerous effects of dealing with outsiders.

While selling embroidery to outsiders is a potential source of contention, embroidering offers a culturally recognised means of enhancing virtue— one that the Mutwa-Morana take pains to exploit. The most obvious one to exploit embroidery's ability to enhance virtue is Firdoos. Managing tourists and embroidery sales is an unusual role for a teenage Muslim woman. Like Khadeeja previously, Firdoos must seek to balance the seemingly incongruous requirements of business and modesty19. Though purdah precludes her from interacting with men from outside of her village, and preferably those outside of her extended family, her (still limited) interaction with foreign men is tolerated. This relaxation (or reinterpretation) of purdah is possible for her, primarily because of her family's position within the Mutwa community and their control of the business but is also because of certain skills Firdoos possesses and strategies she employs to compensate for and minimise the threat of exposure.

Generations: Firdoos

Firdoos has grown up, literally, in the shadow of her grandfather's bhungo observing the comings and goings of visitors over the years through the window of her father's adjacent bhungo. She attended the local elementary school, quitting after the seventh standard. Since that time she has focused on her embroidery, primarily stitching market-
bound embroideries. She also began to help and eventually supplant Khadeeja selling embroidery to passing tourists from Abbas’s bhungo. When I met her she spoke Kutchi, Gujarati, Hindi and a little English. We spent days together in her father’s bhungo, stitching, chatting, watching for tourists or other visitors from one of the bhungo’s two tiny windows. When tourists came the youngsters playing outside on the road would direct them to Abbas’s bhungo. Firdoos would meet them there, offer them chairs, water, and chai before seating herself on the floor. After a few minutes she would ask if the visitors were interested in seeing embroidery then open one of the cabinets and spread the colourful stitched cloths out on the ground. Unlike men and women in other Banni villages, Firdoos never pushes, never cajoles and seldom haggles over prices. When I asked her about it, she shrugged—there would be others who might be more interested or willing to pay their asking price.

When I first met Firdoos in 1995 she spent most of her time stitching quilts to sell to passing tourists. Like many of the works produced for sale to tourists, Firdoos had designed them herself, drawing the designs on the cloth with a ballpoint pen without the benefit of a straight edge or measuring device. Most of these were rather crudely, if extensively worked. She also worked on other quilts destined for sale in collaboration with her mother, her cousin Maysoon, or other female kin. In the winter of 1997-98, Firdoos sold several pieces. She used to proceeds to purchase a television for her brother, a kerosene stove for her mother, gold earrings for herself, and a big box of oranges to share with the well wishers who came to view the goods when they arrived from the market. By 1998, Firdoos had begun to focus more on embroidering goods for her wedding, which took place in March 2001. Up until this time, I had thought Firdoos a proficient but not particularly skilled embroiderer. The pieces Firdoos stitched for her day were beautiful and fine. Some she asked Moosa to design for her, others, she designed herself based on older patterns she liked. Clearly the time and effort she invested in different pieces reflected their intended destinations. During this period Firdoos produced 25 quilts, an usiko, a pati, and a lagun kothri. Moreover, she continued to look after the tourists who came, work on joint projects with her relatives, and stitch a few gifts for close friends.

Firdoos is slight in stature, fastidious with her odhni and careful of speech. To anyone who doesn’t know her, she is the embodiment of respectful shyness. She usually sits by quietly while visiting tourists talk amongst themselves or attempt small talk with Abbas while he was still alive. It is not usually until someone addresses her directly that she answers, making it known that she speaks English—something that inevitably catches visitors off guard (to her delight). Although these proceedings take place within Abbas’s bhungo, they are certainly not ‘private’—there is often a cluster of children or young boys who follow the guests into the bhungo, lining the far walls, straining to understand the foreign words. Similarly the other women sit unseen but watching and listening just beyond the bhungo’s windows. At some point Firdoos asks if the visitors are
interested in seeing Mutwa embroidery and, if so, begins to pull pieces of embroidery out of a nearby cupboard. The embroideries are spread out on the floor. Frequently the visitors are more interested in photographing them and the bhungo than making purchases. Firdoos indulges them but does not allow photographs of herself.

Firdoos's demeanour in the presence of tourists is reticent. As my visits to Dhordo became longer and more frequent, I was increasingly called to help with the visitors, Firdoos sitting silently beside me or retiring altogether. Although it is appropriate for a young woman of marriageable age to remain close to home, Firdoos's movements within the village are particularly circumscribed. When she embroiders, she prefers to work alone within her father's bhungo or in one or two secluded spots within the family's courtyard. Although she occasionally stitches with young friends or kin most of her time (before marriage) was spent stitching alone. She occasionally attends weddings in other Mutwa villages however, she only visits girlfriends and more distant relations within Dhordo on special occasions such as Ramzam Id. Khadeeja's daughter, Maysoon, does not help with the embroidery business and is similarly selective in the homes she visits, but is not as 'conspicuously absent' as Firdoos.

Apart from Firdoos's behaviour with the tourists and her careful observance of purdah, more so than any woman I met in Dhordo, she is devoted to embroidery. She spends most of her waking hours bent over her stitching, often silently and often alone. Before her marriage she frequently worked on pieces intended for sale, converting the proceeds into gifts for her family and jewellery for herself. One year she presented her brother with a television—one of only a couple in Dhordo—a gift likely made out of love as well as with the intention of insuring his support and affection later on. The year before her marriage she began stitching quilts for her dayj—one of the few young women in Dhordo to do so. Although quilts remain an important component of a young woman's dayj, more and more women commission others to stitch for them. Firdoos also stitched a few gifts for close friends and her sister-in-law to be. These gifts carry potential monetary value while they invoke 'tradition' and largesse in a manner few can afford. Firdoos's devotion to embroidery and the skill she has developed not only bring her a steady income, but recognition for being 'good'.

With respect to women's virtue, there has been an important shift from Wajeeha to Firdoos's generations. Prior to 1947, a young woman's virtue was likely tied as closely to her demeanour as it was to her industriousness and skill at a variety of tasks, including milking, making
ghee, chitri kam, cooking, childcare, embroidery, dressmaking etc. Following the introduction of the reforms associated with the Ahl-al-Hadith and the shift away from herding, women have been increasingly restricted to the home and their virtue more closely tied to ideas of chastity. Not surprisingly, observance of purdah has become stricter, with women no longer simply avoiding contact with men from outside their own villages, but increasingly remaining indoors. They strive to remain quiet, refrain from singing, do not dance, and adopt more modest, more 'Islamic' dress.

While embroidery may or may not have once functioned as a sort of women's language, it was a form of expression uniquely associated with women, their bodies, and especially fertility. Embroidery was used to mark, even celebrate, a woman's passage from one stage of life to another (see Chapter 3). Young women wore the most heavily embroidered garments whose cut, colour and design suggested ripening fertility. The wedding blouse or gaj was, until very recently, considered essential for brides and an explicit marker of their legitimised sexuality. The sexual subtext of embroidery has, however, been increasingly subdued. Young women no longer wear embroidered garments and do not/ can not unravel their symbolism. Najmabadi has noted, that prior to the introduction of the printing press, women's spoken language in Iran was earthy and often sexually explicit. Once "the female voice found a public audience, it became a veiled voice, a disciplined voice. Erasing or replacing its sexual markers, it "sanitized itself"" (Najmabadi, 1993, p.489). Weir has noted that Palestinian women's embroidery shifted similarly following European colonisation (1989).

Mutwa embroidery, newly exposed to the market and to a new level of scrutiny resulting from Islamic reform and change, is being similarly, selectively, "sanitized." Wajeeha notes that in her youth the embroidered dresses worn by young unmarried women were already disappearing. They were replaced with blouses and skirts that were considered more modest, because they covered more of the body and no longer contained the embroidery that referred to their sexual maturity. In her youth, Khadeeja wore a colo—a mid hip-length blouse with a little embroidery around the neck edge. Her generation began to fill in the open backs of their kanjari and adopted suthan, again because they were thought to protect a woman's modesty better than the gathered or wrapped skirts of her mother's generation. While Khadeeja's generation wore gaj for their weddings and continue to wear kanjari, few wear kanjaru any longer. Firdoos's generation have adopted unembroidered Punjabi suits because they cover more of the body than the hip-length, short sleeve kanjari of her mother and aunt's generation. To this generation, wearing Mutwa
embroidery is associated with an embarrassing past—with being backward, uneducated, and unenlightened.

I am not the first to link women's virtue with embroidery, however, the links I propose are subtle and frequently overlooked. Where analyses have tended to emphasise the fact that embroidery stands for or represents women's virtue, inspired by the experience of being discussed here, I examine how embroidery makes Mutwa women 'good'. Where embroidery in small-scale cultures has often been seen as demonstrating women's love or industriousness or representing their marriageability/fertility (Vexler, 1976; Weir, 1989; Paine, 1990), it has also been discussed, though less frequently, as a means of enhancing women's virtue. Chaussonet (1988) and Fienup-Riordan (1988), for example, discuss how the embroidery of Alaskan Eskimo women effect the maintenance of life on earth as well as the cosmological order. Women who make sloppy, irregular stitches are thought to cause the animals on which life depends, to run away (Fienup-Riordan, 1988, p. 263). Of the Huichol of northern Mexico, Eger (1978) has described how women's embroidery is a means of achieving spiritual and intellectual completion. Somewhat similarly, among the Shipibo-Conibo of Peru, women studied embroidery design under the guidance of shamans, "increasing the power of their shina (mind, intellect, creativity, vitality)" (Gebhart-Sayer, 1985, p.159). Shipibo-Conibo designs, embroidered, painted, carved and tattooed, are believed to have "spiritual, ethical, aesthetic, emotional, and medicinal significance, which provides the individual and society with a mode of differentiation, integration, identity, and meaning" (ibid, p. 143). These analyses attempt to make sense of embroidery/embroidering less as symbols more as effective, potentially empowering, tools and root these, again, less in the exigencies of material life, more in a broadly shared ideology. This more subtle analysis of embroidery and women's virtue, attempts to examine how embroidery makes women good and therefore how they may use it effectively. While embroidery/embroidering stand for a woman's virtue, an alternative reading additionally considers them means of actualising, effecting, or enhancing virtue in ways that may not be readily observable in this world (or the next).

When I began my research on embroidery I hoped to find a connection between stitching and the moral integrity of Mutwa women— that those who embroider are somehow 'better' than those who do not. What I found is that embroidery's role has shifted in relation to the commoditisation of embroidery as well as the new emphasis on chastity and purdah. It is, increasingly, valued as practice. Embroidering is evidence of sustained focus and dedication, a
demonstration of industry rather than leisure. Industriousness, to the Mutwa, implies not only economic productivity, but moral productivity. Embroidery is valued as an index of virtue, but it is also affective. It instils good habits and discipline, and protects women. It is evidence of purdah observed, but it is also, itself, beneficial. As Firdoos and Hameeda pointed out, skilled, dedicated embroidery earns women sawab, moral points or merit.

So often discussed in terms of family (male/public) honour, purdah is also a means (though not the exclusive means) of moral refinement for women. Purdah cannot be understood simply as a form of control exercised over women or as an expression of class aspirations women have no stake in—to do so risks rendering women cynical bystanders or unconscious pawns. Purdah is something lived by women, manipulated, resisted and accepted at various levels. It is also an ideal that has particular efficacy, as does embroidery.

In her edited book, Moral conduct and authority: The place of adab in South Asian Islam (1984), Barbara Metcalf discusses adab, a concept which implies both moral discrimination and behaviour for Muslims. According to Metcalf, adab refers to "propriety; deportment" (1992, p.415). It suggests not just the embodied expression of culturally or aesthetically refined behaviour but a process of moral betterment. It is based on a very different notion of the body than that which, since Descartes, has tended to characterise Western understandings. Islamic notions of the body are characterised by their integrity. Metcalf notes that

adab may "mean" correct outer behavior, but it is understood as both cause and then, reciprocally, fruit of one's inner self. Knowing, doing, and being are inescapably one (Metcalf, 1984, p.9-10).

Moreover,

the central metaphor for personal development is that of habit or malaka through which outer action transforms or colors the soul. Actions reflect true knowledge and actions create truth... Obedience to legal injunctions generally is both a good in itself and the means to self-transformation (Metcalf, 1984, p.10).

Metcalf reminds us that women, no less than men, are capable of spiritual discipline and realisation, and that moral exemplification is not the prerogative of a religious elite separated from ordinary individuals (1984, p.4). A major goal of Islam is to realise the self through the full engagement in everyday life as prescribed by the Qur'an and the hadis. Women's mode of engagement obviously differs than men's due, in part to historical circumstance and cultural prerogatives. It also differs by virtue of the widely held belief that the influence of the nafs—the
"lower soul" or "animal faculty" (Metcalf, 1992, p. 418)—is felt more strongly in women than aql—"intelligence; sense; wisdom" (Metcalf, 1992, p. 415) or the "angelic faculty" (ibid, p. 418). According to Schimmel (1997), the nafs are widely thought to incite one to evil and must, therefore, be tamed. The opposition of nafs and aql, however, is not as simple or straightforward as that of emotion/reason. Muslims generally view them as equally necessary and important although women are popularly believed to be both lacking in reason (Schimmel, 1997) and more vulnerable to the effects of nafs (Metcalf, 1992). According to Schimmel, Sufis interpret the nafs as the soul at peace as well as the soul inciting to evil and the accusing soul (1997). The seeming contradictions contained within these interpretations referring to the very real, daily, struggles one must overcome in order to achieve the peace associated with true faith and union with God.

This suggests that purdah is a form of adab for women, one that assists them in developing discipline and self-control, potentially offering them both psychological and corporal freedom. Referring to a discussion of the adab of musicians, equally relevant to purdah, Metcalf notes that specific codes of conduct, of discipline, of grammar and rules, far from being repressive, were seen to permit one to transcend one's self, to lose one's self in favor of creativity and true freedom. It is that transcendence, that freedom from confusion, conflict, and conscious deliberation, that is understood by one's audience as the very basis and source of moral authority. The perfected individual represents not only the embodiment of the received tradition, but by interpretation and choice of elements within its repertoire confirms its current relevance and immediacy as well (Metcalf, 1984, p. 12).

What then of embroidery? Like purdah, embroidery has been more often discussed in terms of negatives, that it prevents women from doing more important things, finding 'real' jobs, making 'real' money, that it is a 'leisure' time activity as opposed to a 'real' time activity or, equally important, an 'occupation' (Parker, 1984; Wilkinson-Weber, 1999). What has been overlooked is that, like purdah, embroidery is efficacious and offers Mutwa women a means of realising themselves—spiritually and socially.

While embroidery, the object, has value and meaning, it is embroidering, the act, in the most encompassing sense of the word, that has particular importance for the contemporary Mutwa. Embroidery is highly valued as an aesthetic object, as a testament to a woman's industriousness and productivity and is increasingly valuable as a commodity. Embroidery is also a continually developing, renewable symbol of Mutwa identity and historicity. Embroidering, on the other hand, offers women a means, an avenue, not just for the demonstration of certain moral qualities, but for
the attainment of certain goals including moral refinement. Among the Mutwa, embroidery is considered adab for women, a form of esteemed behaviour. Those who are skilled and diligent, women like Firdoos and Wajeeha who continue to embroider prolifically, who earn money with their own hands, and who remain at home are hoonar.
CHAPTER 7: STITCHING ON THE FRONTIER

After returning home from my first, heady meeting with the Mutwa in 1992, I studied my photographs for evidence of the beautiful embroideries I remembered seeing. They were disappointing. The camera flash had destroyed the warm, intimate light I could remember almost tasting and the images were haphazardly and inconsiderately composed. Children's faces pressed too close to the lens obscuring women too distant to be distinguished. Snapshots. They were reactionary rather than considered representations. Worse, they revealed little embroidery. The women sat close together in small groups, talking, most with their back to me. Of those facing me, few looked at the foreign photographer—those who did, cast their eyes downwards and held their veils close to their chests, obscuring what might be underneath. The only photograph that showed any embroidery was one Khadeeja had allowed me to take of her as she sat showing her brother's hatalo gifts to a group of guests. In the photograph she sits on the ground framed by the hem of the gynaecologist's sari, a row of disembodied heads in the foreground and headless bodies in the background, her young daughter Jumaana staring straight at the camera, unsmiling. Facing her guests, Khadeeja had turned her face so that her eyes were hidden from the camera lens by the gold darni hung low on her forehead, her lips closed and drawn back in a small, tight smile. I could just make out the signs of a pink kanjaru stitched with delicate rows of khatri, ankh, and copal behind the folds of her enveloping veil.

During my subsequent trips to Dhordo photography remained one of the most frustrating aspects of conducting research among the Mutwa. Although I had taken photographs in 1992 and knew that other photographers have visited Dhordo, by the time I returned in 1997, photographing women of childbearing age was discouraged. I had wanted to document how the women wear their distinctively embroidered blouses noting the contexts and gestures associated with them. And as this is likely the last generation to wear embroidery, it seemed pressing. I was, however, only allowed to photograph men, children, some unmarried girls, and older women.

This restriction was not in place when I visited in 1992, indeed Khadeeja has hundreds of photographs of herself taken from the time she was small until fairly recently. Beginning in the 1960's increasing numbers of visitors began making their way to the Banni villages, especially Dhordo where Abbas had a reputation as an amiable and accommodating host. Initially photography was, if not welcomed, at least 'tolerated'—particularly by the members of his
immediate family. In the mid 70's, for example, Vickie Elson visited Banni where she collected textiles and took numerous photographs for the Museum of Cultural History, University of California and which were used in conjunction with an exhibition at the University's Frederick S. Wight Gallery in 1979. Jyotindra Jain also documented the Mutwa for his 1980 catalogue and guide to the collection of the Shreyas Folk Museum in Ahmedabad. The catalogue includes a photograph of Mutwa Jeejee Abbas and her uncle. T.S. Randhawa, a past Collector of Kutch, photographed Kutchi people for his book *Kachcbh: The last frontier* (1996) including Mutwa Abdul Kalam and his wife Phoopli. Other photographers are less well known to the Mutwa—some return copies of photographs taken, many do not, some request permission, others are more surreptitious.

Ostensibly the prohibition is associated with the stricter form of purdah the Mutwa have endeavoured to adopt in the wake of the reforms associated with the Ahl-al-Hadith and Islamization. As discussed in Chapter 2, these reforms coincide with the Mutwa's shift away from cattle herding and integration into a more strictly cash-based economy. As women were 'freed' of the need to help with the animals, their labour was increasingly diverted to embroidery—something that has facilitated the observation of purdah, and, as I discussed in Chapter 5, is increasingly seen as a symbol of purdah observed. Restricting photographs of women of childbearing age is a reflection of the need to protect women from the gaze of outsiders—known and, increasingly, unknown.

Not surprisingly, the most ardent supporters of this ban on photography are the Mutwa-Morana—even though they were the ones to most likely have 'benefited' from it earlier. As the locally recognised 'first' family, the Mutwa-Morana are in an enviable position to meet with visitors and be photographed. Khadeeja's photographs are a testament to her father's progressiveness, his role as guide and host, and a symbol of the family's power and prestige within the community. Given the growing emphasis on purdah discussed above, however, the Mutwa-Morana are also increasingly vulnerable to exposure, potentially compromising the high moral standing they wish to cultivate. Hence the women of this family are among the most rigidly opposed to photography. Preserving their own honour, however, did not prevent them from encouraging me to take photographs of other Mutwa women, especially those in other villages.

As I have suggested above, however, the prohibition on photographs is fairly recent and remains variable. Although I was not allowed to take photographs of the Mutwa-Morana women, other women in Dhordo were less reticent. Opportunities to photograph women
generally arose in conjunction with holidays or weddings—provided it was done discretely. Young unmarried women were the most anxious to have their photographs taken although doing so compromised the 'shyness' they were supposed to cultivate. Consequently they were apt to ask quietly and be photographed out of sight of men and older women. Generally they wanted photographs of themselves with girlfriends, showcasing their pretty dresses and jewellery—not the 'naturalistic' portraits I suggested. Their photographs were almost always posed, the girls' faces and bodies frozen into expressions and gestures reminiscent of 'filmy' portraits—their very conventionality, protecting. Other, usually candid candidates, would grow serious and stiff as they faced the camera, staring into it with unusual intensity. And still others would turn their faces or lower their eyes, succumbing appearances.

Another group more willing to encourage photography were youngsters and their mothers. Although the novelty of my camera and promise of photographs to come was equitably managed in Dhordo, the situation was different in the more remote villages. When I visited and pulled out my camera I would be instantly surrounded by dozens of excited children who left only after being pushed aside by their equally excited mothers thrusting babies at me. Other mothers would wait to catch my eye from a distance, inclining their heads towards the precious little ones gathered at their feet. As my suggestions to photograph the mothers holding their little ones were generally declined; I have albums full of grim faced toddlers and crying babies supported by disembodied arms.

Apart from the Mutwa-Morana's efforts to reassert their moral authority through limiting photographs of their members, the fate of particular photographs was an increasing concern. Khadeeja claimed that her husband no longer likes her to have her photograph taken because they never know where it might end up or who might see it. It is well known that images of Banni women have turned up on brochures, CDs and book jackets, in magazines, textbooks and featured in exhibitions. Indeed, I found a photograph of a pre-adolescent Firdoos printed on two different occasions in a local Vancouver paper illustrating two very different stories.

Personally, I made a point of returning copies of almost all the photographs I took to the Mutwa, keeping two cameras for the purpose. I used a single-lens reflex camera strictly for slides most of which I did not develop until I returned home. My second camera was a simple 'point and shoot' that I used for prints and which were developed locally. This reduced the turn-around time between taking the photographs and returning them to the Mutwa. Generally I had my films

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processed in Bhuj at a small studio with an automated processing machine. Perhaps the fingerprints all over some of my own prints should have been a clue, but it never occurred to me that my photographs might be more or less interesting than anyone else's photographs in Bhuj. After some time however, when the young men at the studio knew me and could anticipate my orders for reprints, one questioned me about a particularly beautiful young woman. He opened one of my packets of photographs, quickly retrieved the print in question and asked who she was. Knowing her father and brothers would be outraged, suspecting I was contravening their trust in some way, and annoyed at the young man's forwardness—I snatched the photograph and chided him "that's a married purdah lady, you can't look at her!" The married bit was a lie of course but it effectively quashed any further interest or questions. The Mutwa were right, you never know who is looking and what they are thinking.\textsuperscript{130}

While concern to protect women from the gaze of unrelated men is one incentive for the restrictions on photographing them, these limitations are also related to attempts to manage impressions and exert control over how the Mutwa are represented. Returning to the example of my early photographs described above, my disappointment in the images was related to the fact they had not captured the embroidery I remembered seeing. It was not just the camera flash that had intervened, it was the act of photographing, the act of potential representation, that had prompted women to adjust their poses, their expressions and, generally wrap their veils more closely around themselves. I realised that I had arrived expecting to 'see' embroidery— for it to be obvious, up front, and available for viewing (not to mention photographing)— even shown off by unselfconscious women\textsuperscript{131} who, surely, would be flattered by the attention I focused on their artistry? In retrospect I was naïve, but more importantly, I realised that Mutwa women are very conscious selves who negotiate what is seen by whom and when. I was unknown to them at the time, a foreign 'other' whose intentions were unclear.

SHIFTING PLACES

In Chapter 2 I argued that the Mutwa have become more rather than less isolated in the years following Indian Independence. While they have become more physically incorporated into mainstream Indian society, they are increasingly aware of their cultural distinctness. This is viewed with mixed emotions, notably, pride tinged with embarrassment, security tempered with longing. The unprecedented changes around them provoke unprecedented reflection on the meaning of
being Mutwa in this expanding world. Mutwa-ness is no longer the taken-for-granted consequence of living where they do, how they do, sharing a history, symbols, ideals and rituals—if it ever was. Increasingly politicised Mutwa identity is something negotiated in a newly charged, self-conscious arena.

The changes that have effected the Mutwa have altered their traditional autonomy, political affiliations, and occupations. Previously cattleherders, Mutwa men are taking up factory work. Relationships with neighbouring castes and clans are being reinscribed, decreasing the reliance on or terminating hereditary service agreements, shifting exchanges from barter to cash, and enhancing competition for increasingly limited natural resources. The growing importance of tourism enhances the rivalry between the Mutwa and their Banni neighbours as they compete for representation on the global stage. I mentioned in Chapter 2 how anxious women in Hodka were for me to study with them. During my latest visit to Dhordo (June, 2001) I heard that the Mutwa-Morana’s leading rivals in Gorewali desperately want their youngest daughter to learn English so the family can attract more tourist attention. New distinctions are forged, not only according to economics and purchasing power, but evolving ideas about education, ‘modern’ occupation, moral standing and the seclusion of women.

The construction of new roads, new modes of transport and communication have, in part, fuelled these shifts. They have been further enhanced by the arrival of various representatives; those who seek to represent the peoples of Banni to the outside world (reporters, tourists, tour guides, government and non-government officials, antique dealers, art collectors, anthropologists etc.). Their representations alternatively celebrate or dismiss the changes effecting the Mutwa without, necessarily, heeding the Mutwa’s incentives for or experiences of change. The Mutwa are conscious of an imposed temporal and qualitative gulf separating the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’ and seek to use this ambiguity to their advantage in negotiations with non-Mutwa. During an early trip to Dhordo, for example, Firdoos’s mother beseeched me to purchase a tattered quilt that belonged to a female relative in another village. She pointed out that even though it was torn in spots, dirty and ragged, it was ‘old’ and that foreigners, presumably including myself, like ‘old things’. The quilt was definitely unremarkable save for the fact it was made of a recycled tie-dyed cotton odhni. I was reluctant to have to carry around a quilt of such little aesthetic and limited ethnographic value however, when the price dropped for the second time and Naila’s pleading became unbearable, I relented and bought the thing.
As tourism grows and 'traditional' embroidery becomes even more important economically, the Mutwa and their neighbours will undoubtedly compete to reinvent it. 'Charm' replaces skill as women find new ways of accommodating the productive and ideological constraints of the markets. Living arts become, finally, folk arts.

November, 1997: Paka Mutwa

Monday morning dawned cold and crisp. I drank my tea in the sunshine outside Khadeeja's house then turned to my stitching. Firdoos came and joined me. When the sun moved into our eyes, we retreated into her family's house. Her mother, Naila, came and informed us that she, Wajeeha and Khalida were going to visit her elder sister in Gorevali who had just returned from the hospital in Bhuj. She asked me "adhi, hallandia Gorevali?" (sister, will you go to Gorevali?). I was surprised she'd asked but happily agreed. After lunch she came to collect me: the other women were already waiting near the truck that had been commandeered to transport us.

Although only three kilometres separated the women from their natal village, it was rare that they were able to return to visit their families. With the exception of the driver, a local man who neither spoke nor looked at us, we travelled alone, unaccompanied by kinsmen, I suspect because Wajeeha and Khalida were both senior women in their 70's. The journey, though long in effect took only minutes. Turning off the main road, the truck headed down a short embankment, across a flat expanse of dust and struggling acacia to a blue wooden gate, the entrance to Naila's sister's courtyard.

Pushing aside the gate we entered and walked to the far end of the courtyard. It was bright and full of local women who had come to greet the visitors. We headed towards the bhungo where the old woman lay resting on a charpoi. Bending low, I entered the dark bhungo behind Wajeeha, Khalida and Naila. The others crowded in behind while the children stood in the door, plugging the exit and blocking out the light. The Dhordo visitors made their way through the crowd seated on the floor, touching heads and hands in gestures of welcoming and respect. Once they had finished their greetings, they sat on the floor beside the old woman's bed with the other older women and family members. Naila pulled out a large bag of sweets, dumped them into an empty cooking pot and passed them around. I sat against the opposite wall with the younger women who pressed close and chatted quietly. Late arrivals walked silently between the seated figures, touching younger women's heads, clasping hands with contemporaries or bending low to have their heads touched by senior women. After some time water was brought then tea.

The old woman related the tale of her trip to Bhuj and the doctor's prognosis to the women around her. She looked older than her 60 odd years: thin, and drawn, her embroidered kanjari and pot hung loose about her tiny frame. Not being able to identify the problem, the doctor had sent her home. A daughter or granddaughter dug out
her x-rays and passed them around the bhungo. The first x-ray made little impact on me—a small rib cage with a black hole at the bottom. The second x-ray showed the same black hole and the same small rib cage this time punctuated by symmetrically arranged clusters of tiny white dots. They were the tiny mirrors stitched onto the old woman’s blouse reflecting the x-rays’s probing light. One of the young women next to me leaned forward and pointed to the white dots, “paka Mutwa” she exclaimed. Real Mutwa.

OLD AND NEW

Many of the different styles of embroidery found in Banni were recorded in Elson’s Dowries of Kutch, the catalogue to an exhibition held at the University of California in 1979. The exhibition was arranged following the gift of a number of Kutchi textiles to the University of California collected by Elson in the early 70’s. In the more than twenty years since the publication of the catalogue, many groups in Banni have abandoned or altered their embroidery beyond recognition. The Mutwa, however, living in a cluster of villages along the southern reaches of the Great Rann of Kutch, at the furthest end of the rough dirt road linking them to the highway and the rest of Kutch, remain prolific embroiderers. Where isolation has frequently been cited as an explanation for the persistence of tradition, the Mutwa have never been completely isolated nor has tradition ever been fixed enough to persist into the present, unchanged. Rather, I believe, the nexus of values surrounding Mutwa embroidery have shifted in response to their (selective) integration with external groups and organisations—not buffering embroidery, but reinvesting it with new meaning.

Across Kutch the shape of many women’s garments still readily distinguishes their caste or clan membership although the embroidery that would further identify specific sub-castes or clans or a woman’s particular lifecycle stage is now often absent. There are many reasons why embroidery is given up. In neighbouring Kathiawar (Saurashtra), Dongerkerry (1951) claims that as the Kathi prospered and became landowners, women increasingly turned to others to embroider for them. Tarlo has documented how, among the Kanbi and Kharek women, also of Saurashtra, hand embroidery has slowly been replaced by machine embroidery. For others, embroidery has been abandoned because of practical and financial constraints. Edwards (1996) notes, for example, that the Dhebariya and Vagadiya Rabari collectively decided to stop embroidering women’s blouses in 1995 as women’s efforts to meet inflated dowry demands kept them embroidering blouses into their 30’s, delaying marriage. I met a number of Ahir women, living in Rapar Taluka, in NorthEast
Kutch, for whom embroidery has become such an important source of income; all their time is devoted to producing for market.

Many of these groups have retained the traditional cut and colour of their distinctive garments but stitch them of new fabrics. The Ahir, for example wear short blouses with full skirts stitched from a printed, synthetic 'mashru'-type fabric. The Rabari incorporate bits of shiny fabric into their black blouses— not replacing the elaborate embroidery they used to stitch, but perhaps providing a new outlet for creative expression. New, printed cloths available in the markets reproduce many of the older, traditional patterns. Printed tie-dye cloths are popular choices for the veils worn by many rural women in Kutch. Although tie-dye is still produced by Kutchi craftspeople, they are considered prohibitively expensive. Another cloth modelled on traditional forms, is a printed cloth with narrow stripes, often printed in seven colours. The Mutwa used to use kac, a pattern worked by stitching each of seven colours with seven stitches, to finish edges and join cloths together (see fig. 3.23). The printed cloth has been widely adopted to bind blouse edges, largely replacing kac.

Embroidery continues to play an important role in the expression of Mutwa identity, however, it is less frequently used to distinguish their individual bodies as it is to represent the public face of the Mutwa. To a certain extent, embroidery has been co-opted, removed from domestic intimacy into a public, and increasingly, political sphere. While the embroidered or appliquéd quilts hung over the manji have traditionally marked the procreative heart of the bhungo, forming a colourful backdrop to domestic life, they were also frequently hung behind the prominent participants of weddings, award ceremonies, music parties, local meetings, and other gatherings. Oral histories tell of large embroidered tents called maro, made for newly married couples. Although maro have not been made or used within living memory, they suggest a long history of embroidery used to protect, embellish, and signal newly attained status or identity. Embroidery traditionally transcended the dichotomies of public and private, male and female. That said, embroidery has increasingly entered the public realm. Since the '70's embroidery has seemingly been pried loose from the intimate associations that may have prevented earlier commodification and is now produced almost exclusively for market exchange. It has also increasingly been used to 'stand for' the Mutwa, at other more public gatherings. Videotaped speeches made by Abbas during the 80's on the economic and political problems faced by the Maldhari show him speaking in front of Mutwa embroidered quilts. At a public ceremony
honouring the Freedom Fighters of Banni, the awards were presented in front of a number of embroidered quilts hung for the occasion. The *Times of India* ran a photograph of the Gujarat Government's representative and one of the Freedom Fighters framed by the distinctively patched border of a Mutwa quilt ("Freedom Fighters," 1997). Increasingly Mutwa embroidery marks Mutwa space and history, even while it speaks to a renewed increasingly politicised sense of identity.

Although I believed I was looking at 'traditional' Mutwa embroidery when I first saw it in 1992, I was, in reality, only looking at its most current manifestation. Hobsbawm has suggested that traditions are invented

when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old traditions have been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated: in short, when there are sufficiently large and rapid changes on the demand and supply side (Hobsbawm, 1983, p.4-5).

While Hobsbawm talks about "invented" traditions, those that have broken with, but refer to the past, Mutwa embroidery has a continuous history. It is, however, undergoing a process of 're-invention' of being revised, renewed, and re-interpreted in a foreshortened context similar to the one Hobsbawm describes. He also notes that invented traditions are characterised by a process of formalisation and ritualisation (Hobsbawm, 1983). Mutwa embroidery is slowly being formalised but the process of ritualisation and recovery of the past sit uncomfortably. The Mutwa's past is not necessarily revered by the younger members of the clan while the process of (public) ritualisation is problematic because of lingering associations of embroidery with sexuality and the domestic sphere.

Co-opting embroidery to represent Mutwa identity at political gatherings is part of an ongoing process of re-inventing it. Similarly, as embroidery has shifted from a domestic to commercial pursuit, and as it has circulated in wider and wider markets, it has been forced to stand-for the Mutwa to an unprecedented extent. I have already described the economic importance embroidery played, particularly during the 1970's (see Chapter 5), garnering the Mutwa a reputation, in many cases an international reputation, as fine embroiderers. Thrust on to the world stage, Mutwa embroidery has been used to draw attention to many of the problems they face. However, given this context of dramatic change and the exposure that goes with it, the Mutwa are increasingly conscious of the equivocal nature of their traditions—especially embroidery. While it has been made to stand for Mutwa identity in an overt, public way, it is also embarrassingly backward. One reason young women have ceased to wear it is not because being identified as Mutwa is no longer
important, but because embroidered clothing has historically been associated with the expression of sexual maturity that is now considered embarrassingly immodest. Embroidery co-opts their bodies in uncomfortably 'public' ways—it is too recognisable, too revealing, too intimate. Moreover embroidery is increasingly associated with the past, with older generations, with backwardness and immorality. Referring to the story above, the embroidery on the old women's blouse in Gorewali may have made her "paka Mutwa" but her authenticity—or the fact that her authenticity was explained with reference to embroidery—was both self conscious, historic, and, perhaps, manufactured for my benefit.

Perhaps one of the reasons quilts continue to be made and used is because, unlike clothing, they more comfortably bridge the shifting chasm between public and private. Similarly embroideries produced for sale. They speak to Mutwa identity, but in a more sanitised, publicly approved manner. Unlike clothing, they are meant to be seen by others, meant to stand for the Mutwa in realms beyond the domestic one. Since the early 70's Mutwa women have relied more and more heavily on designers to provide printed patterns not only for market-bound embroideries, but quilts and other textiles. Their designs are increasingly formalised, often reminiscent of Moghul patterns, and devoid of much of the individualism and sexual symbolism associated with earlier embroidery (see Chapter 4). It has been noted that women's expressive traditions, as they shift from one, rather limited level of commoditisation to another, more public one, tend to erase sexual markers and "sanitize" themselves (Najmabadi, 1993, p.489), or, in the context of reform, be sanitised (Bannerjee, 1997). In terms of the Mutwa, not only has embroidery been re-modelled, but it has been removed from the body. Khadeeja's is one of the last generations of women to wear embroidery and many are ambivalent about it, younger women refuse.

Mutwa women are not removed from the revisions described above—they are concerned with how the Mutwa are imagined, how they are represented, and are engaged in realigning embroidery and identity. I have suggested above that the women in my early photographs of Basheer's wedding covered themselves in part due to modesty and purdah, but also as a means of controlling or even censoring my representations. Where anthropological access to women living in purdah has often been limited and photography out of the question, it is worth exploring the stakes women have in resisting representation. For the women discussed above, photography was refused on the basis of a number of excuses: because they didn't "like" it, because they were "shy", because their dress was "no good" or they were dirty, or because their husbands did not like it. While
photography does contravene the personal modesty and privacy purdah encourages, I do not believe Mutwa women were acting strictly on their husband's (or other male kin's) orders.

May 2000

It was 18 months since I had last been in Dhordo. Baba Abbas had passed away, Basbeer and Haleema had had another son but he too had passed away before his second month. Fuaad was now a busy four year old who called me "Michele"—I was no longer "Ya ya ya". Firdoos and Maysoon were 19 and preparing quilts for weddings anticipated within the next year. And Abdul Ghafoor, Firdoos's brother, had a colour T.V. and a satellite dish. We talked of London, Paris, The Discovery Channel, and computers. He wanted to learn how to use one; he wanted to try but had so far been frustrated. I heard the story of Nasira, a Dhordo woman who had recently married into the only Mutwa family residing in Palanpur, a mixed village along the southern border of Banni. Nasira had arrived at her husband's home with 50 quilts—a tremendous achievement by Mutwa standards—only to be laughed at by her new neighbours. She is one of the finest embroiderers I know. I wonder, now that her dowry is complete, now that she is married, whether Palanpur will be conducive to her artistry? Will her daughters learn to embroider? Is this a skill that will continue to garner Mutwa women respect within their culture? Respect, not simply for the beauty they are able to create or the time, effort, and wealth their embroidery represents, but for positively expressing, even embodying Mutwa-ness—its forms, its colours, its rhythms and values?

EMBROIDERING CHANGE

In Chapter 5 I outlined the changes which have effected Mutwa embroidery and described its shifting degree of commodification. Existing studies of folk arts have tended to assume that change spells corruption or degradation and that artisans are largely victims of processes they cannot control. Such views posit authenticity as something timeless and unchanging—undermining the ability of contemporary producers to negotiate, adapt, select, and re-present themselves. Even if I were to restrict my analysis to technical and stylistic changes or the adaptation of folk embroidery to new markets, it should be clear that Mutwa women do not reproduce 'tradition' unthinking nor is their embroidery simple or without history. Mutwa women have consistently altered their embroidery and they have done so consciously and in response to the changes they are part of. New motifs and stitches have been adapted and purged, new patterns, new materials, new formats for embroidery have been experimented with, tastes altered, and distribution networks expanded.
The young have a very different relationship with 'tradition' than previous generations. 'Tradition' has been a living, constantly recreated model colouring, instructing, guiding, and choreographing Mutwa lives. Mutwa embroiderers have been engaged with negotiating intimate, even contentious traditions generation by generation. In the context that has developed since Partition and particularly since the mid 60's, the Mutwa's relationship to 'tradition', has however become increasingly ambiguous. They are faced with the perception of a gulf separating the 'modern' from 'tradition' prompted by their growing contact and integration with urban India. To the young, Mutwa identity has become less a living model, more about history— old, old fashioned and, increasingly, 'other'. Where earlier generations of embroiderers re-refined and re-interpreted established models, today's young embroiderers are faced with an ever widening, ever changing series of goods and ideas altering their desires and posing challenges to the authority of traditional models.

Closely related to this is the Mutwa's changing relationship with design and designing. Embroidery from the 60's and 70's is characterised by a creative engagement with 'traditional' motifs and stitches combined in new ways, stretching established patterns, creating new motifs, and experimenting with new materials and modes of production often in highly individualistic ways. The introduction of new and cheap materials combined with the growing outside interest in Mutwa embroidery in the 60's and 70's, and economic uncertainty prompted a resurgence of Mutwa interest in embroidery. Dowry embroideries from this period were elaborate. The end of this period saw the introduction of professional embroidery designers—a handful of Mutwa men and non-Mutwa designers employed by Shrujan. Their influence growing through the 80's and 90's, currently they almost completely dominate Mutwa embroidery design. Although women continue to 'design' embroideries offered for sale to visitors, these pieces tend to be unrefined and exploit copal— one of the simplest and most efficient ways to 'fill' surfaces. Most women rely on Shrujan or one of the local male designers to supply cloth stamped or drawn with embroidery patterns. Several tendencies can be noted with respect to the designers: one is the potential rifts to the aesthetic integrity of Mutwa embroidery (as when backgrounds and foregrounds are confused, stitches inappropriately called for or colours altered), another is the increasingly formalised, even Mogholised design (fig. 7.1); and the simplification of design including the emphasis on motifs and stitches which offer greater coverage or visual impact for less work. While current embroiderers are heirs to this creative tradition, economically and creatively they are increasingly reliant on these middlemen designers.
If my analysis of Mutwa embroidery went no farther than this, my findings would appear to confirm the pattern of deskilling and gendered exploitation frequently described in the literature on women and work in India\(^\text{136}\). My analysis has attempted not simply to document how embroidery has changed, but why. Recalling Abu-Lughod's (1990) warnings against romanticising resistance, I have tried to show how Mutwa women's motivations differ from 'ours' and 'our' traditional representations of 'them'. The Mutwa do not, for example, privilege gender, they are not naïve nor is purdah an intellectual vacuum. While young women have seemingly 'forfeited' the creative engagement their mothers and grandmothers embroidered with, their 'loss' is calculated according to an emerging set of values, an altered identity and relationship with tradition. Mutwa women have stopped designing because it can be done for them— that in itself is a sign of modernity and of rationalised production. Moreover, when asked what does Mutwa embroidery mean, or what does a specific motif imply, Mutwa women invariably name the motif and say they either don't know or don't remember its significance. While I do not think they 'hid' meanings from me, I do think their silence on the subject is noteworthy. Women's 'ignorance' of symbolic meaning, the fact the young no longer design and the conscious disassociation of embroidery from women's bodies contribute to the objectifying tendency I identified above. Considered against a backdrop of change, women's actions can be interpreted as strategies for resistance and renewal. Women's clothing since Independence has become increasingly modest, generic\(^\text{137}\), and fashion-conscious.

Stitching Ankh

It looked so easy. *A variation on a stitch I had known since I was a child. Commonly called "open chain" or "ladder stitch" in English, pako is the most prevalent embroidery stitch used by Mutwa women. It was with a row of pako that my embroidery lessons began. Firdoos drew a simple design on the cloth I had brought before returning to her own stitching. I watched, threaded my needle with orange floss and began. "It is a simple craft, anyone can do it," I had heard people say again and again. Yet after painstakingly stitching, watching my orange ladder veer left and right, swelling and constricting, I realised they had probably never tried it. It is not difficult to name stitches or even determine the gestures that form them, it is challenging to stitch well, finely and evenly. I practised, I altered my technique, I bought needles so fine I had to go outside into the sun to thread them. I wondered how these young women could make such fine stitches in dimly lit rooms with their work held, not inches from their faces like mine, but on their laps. Granted their youth gives them some visual advantages but I had never had difficulty with my eyesight before.*
I often brought my embroidery with me when I made my periodic visits back to Bhuj. I enjoyed relaxing during the heat of the day, alone in my room with my embroidery on my upturned knees. My city stitching was noticeably finer and more regular than that made in Dhordo, a result of the greater focus I could invest in my stitching.

After being away from Kutch and indeed away from embroidery for 18 months I returned for a short visit in May 2000. I hadn't intended on embroidering during my visit—I thought the Mutwa might be offended if I focused on embroidery rather than my conversations with them. But Khadeeja and her mother asked why I wasn't stitching, as if something were amiss so, I brought out my needles and thread, drew a design, and set about stitching a row of ankh. I was happy to discover my stitching had not deteriorated in the intervening months although my movements were initially awkward and my neck and knees ached from sitting curled up for hours. It was a pleasure to stitch with the girls again, to chat and participate. Returning to Bhuj after our last good-bye I continued to stitch, relishing the time, its rhythm, the space to think my own thoughts. One afternoon I found a comfortable spot on the roof of the guesthouse and finished the row of ankh I had begun in Dhordo just as the sun was setting. I began a second row in my fluorescently lit room. My stitching was good, much better than that stitched outside in the light even though the neon tube seemed more grey than bright. My stitches were smaller, more regular and I realised that I was concentrating less on 'seeing', more on doing. I realised for the first time that fine embroidery has less to do with eyestrain, more with focused intent and embodied knowledge. It was ironic that I hadn't been able to understand the practised gestures, the trust, and flow Firdoos and the other fine embroiderers achieved with their stitching until after I had left the village. My experience was not simply the result of practice and concentration nor would I claim it was necessarily meditative—it represented a subtle shift in understanding from seeing and analysing to embodying and creatively engaging, the one rational and reductive, the other encompassing and generative.

Embroidery can be learned by breaking the patterns or stitches down into so many requisite movements, but skill comes from embodying those movements and thinking through needle and thread rather than thinking about them. Skill requires commitment and a particularly intimate level of engagement. It also requires the ability to focus, to concentrate for sustained periods inspite of (or occasionally as a respite from) the events whirling around. Though Firdoos and I frequently stitched alone, the radio was often playing in the background, visitors might drop by, Firdoos's mother might come in to berate her or a group of children might play at our feet.

In the past, Mutwa women knew and excelled at only a few stitches and motifs. With the shift towards commercial embroidery, most young women now know how to stitch all the motifs although they may not be as skilled or conversant as previous generations. Whatever symbolic
significance embroidery once had for the Mutwa, it is knowledge that has been discouraged by both Islamic reform and the Mutwa’s evolving aspirations—both antagonistic to superstition, Hindu influences, Sufism, and folk traditions. Although, for example, white stitches and mirrors are added to Mutwa embroidery to "add light", the rich connections this suggests to Sufism, remain unsaid, unembellished, lost to an ancient history in Sindh. Embroidery’s symbolic significance has also been discouraged by the move towards commercial production, alienating producers and consumers for whom the value of embroidery and the contexts of their appreciation are radically different.

Within this context embroidering has shifted both form and meaning. Certainly contemporary Mutwa use the same stitches produced in the same way as their predecessors, but the meaning of stitching, its importance for women, and the experience of stitching has changed. Settling in Banni likely produced more qualitative than quantitative changes to women’s work as they continued to be involved with the animals and had to gather firewood and water (both in short supply at the time). Women’s involvement with activities outside the home began to shift with the influence of the Ahl-al-Hadith from about the time of Independence. As a result of the introduction of gando bawal in the 60’s and the prolonged drought of the early 70’s the Mutwa were forced to give up their traditional occupation as herders and find other occupations. Although it is impossible to say what embroidering meant to Mutwa women before Independence, certainly by that time purdah had become not only a desirable state for women, but logistically possible. Embroidering was a means not only of passing spare time pleasantly, but doing so productively, creatively, and in an appropriately moral fashion. By the early 70’s the Mutwa began stitching commercially and embroidery became less a means of passing time than of condensing it. Women’s embroidered contributions to their dowries increased with the introduction of commercial embroidery—facilitated by new, inexpensive materials, more ‘spare’ time, and a stricter observance of purdah. The growing economic value of embroidery is mitigated by the enhanced moral value of stitching. The present generation of Mutwa embroiderers produce little that is not destined for sale elsewhere. The prestige they earn as embroiderers is due to the value (in rupees) of time spent embroidering, skill—although this may imply more efficiency than proficiency—and their observance of purdah.

I have argued above how ‘tradition’ has become increasingly contentious as the young view it as not only old, but increasingly distinct from the present. Seen in this context, denying
symbolism and relinquishing designing are strategies of self-assertion. As Mutwa identity is redrawn according to the twin ideals of modernity and Islamization, embroidery production has become rationalised, embroidery objectified and increasingly associated with purdah. While it has been noted that South Asian Muslims strive to adopt purdah if economically possible (Hale, 1988) why women should want to do this has not always been examined. For Mutwa women purdah offers not just familial prestige by protecting their chastity, but a measure of individual power and influence over women less able (or willing) to observe purdah. But purdah is also transformative, encouraging certain activities and forms of behaviour that are meant to enhance faith and integrity. Where other groups in Gujarat have abandoned embroidery in order to bolster their social prestige (Dongerkerry, 1951; Edwards, 1996; Tarlo, 1996), the Mutwa strive to enhance social standing by reinscribing embroidery and their relationship with it. Emphasis is placed not on embroidered objects, but on the process of stitching—a process that encourages women to be unselfish and non-materialistic, to be quiet and reflective, to remain at home, to be productive, and to work with one's hands, and to be thrifty and independent. In this sense embroidery, like purdah, is a type of adab for women. It is a form of esteemed behaviour or etiquette, evaluated within a Muslim context as morally beneficial and beautiful. Embroidery is frequently noted as a "suitable" occupation for Muslim women who are prevented from seeking alternative occupations by purdah. While Mutwa women's options for remunerative work are indeed few, economic need cannot be assumed their pre-eminent motivation. Rather, embroidering resonates with attractive moral, social and even historic frequencies bridging the modern and the traditional.
POSTSCRIPT

At 8:45am, January 26, 2001 a 7.9 earthquake violently shook Kutch. In a matter of minutes most of the towns and villages surrounding Bhuj, Anjar and Bachao were reduced to piles of rubble. Initially news coverage focused on the situation in Ahmedabad where the quake toppled several high rise apartments but much greater devastation lay in Kutch. When reporters and aid finally managed to get to the area, the stories relayed were shocking. Although the number of dead will never be truly known, a widely held estimate in Kutch itself is 20,000-30,000.

For days I read every newspaper, watched every news program on television and searched online for details and photographs. I heard that, with the exception of Khavda, the northern areas had been little effected, allaying my fears about the Mutwa. My husband however was in Bhuj at the time of the earthquake—sleeping on the ground floor of the three-story guesthouse we always stayed at. For five days I did not know whether he had survived or been buried under mountains of broken concrete. The phone lines had been cut with the earthquake and the few satellite lines open were constantly busy. Eventually I convinced a member of the Indian Consulate to intercede and a call to Abdul got through. He spoke of how he happened to be sleeping near a refrigerator filled with pop bottles—their rattling waking him. After rousing the others around him he raced outside to the street until the shaking stopped—the dust so thick he couldn’t see the devastation only a few feet from where he stood. Meanwhile, around the corner, my closest friend in Bhuj, Ranju, was struggling with the lock to her shop. She heard a low rumbling sound but assumed it was low flying aircraft. The shopkeeper across the street called out that it was an earthquake and Ranju took a few steps back, far enough to save her from the bricks and broken concrete that tumbled down on top of were she had been standing. Afraid of looters, she managed to collect her valuables from the shop and proceeded home—an arduous journey over mountains of unstable rubble punctuated with cries for help, with bodies, with scenes of unimaginable horror.

I was tempted to get to Bhuj, tempted to join in the digging for survivors but, in the end, I feared I would be one more body drawing on scarce resources. Abdul said no—better to stay home where it was safe. Aftershocks continued to threaten even those who had escaped the ravages of the 26th. I did however, join him three months later in April. He met me in Bombay and we took the train back to Kutch. As we neared the station at Gandhidam, the wreckage grew visibly more severe. We hired a taxi to take us directly to his family’s village, Bhuj being too
dangerous and without hotels or restaurants. We passed through Anjar, the wreckage, unbelievable. Abdul and the driver relayed horror story after horror story of survivors and fatalities.

My first trip to Bhuj was made by scooter. We left Kothara, a large village 82 km south west of Bhuj, early morning. By April most of the roads had been cleared, the rubble dumped along their edges. As we neared Bhuj, the piles became larger. Abdul drove me past a multi-story apartment building I had once lived in. One side had fallen away and the rest seemed to sag. Unbelievably, the ground floor shops were open. He drove into the old city, past the City Guesthouse, through the main bazaar—all desolate. We found a defeated looking Attul, a young friend and tailor manning his family's shop. After the earthquake his parents, young wife, baby and his brother had retreated to the safety of Mandvi. Attul had just returned anxious to begin work. The shop that had always been lined with rows of meticulously stitched suits and sari blouses was empty. There were few customers about. People were too afraid to venture into the small, close streets of the old city. The markets had (temporarily?) been relocated outside the old city, in an open space next to a major thoroughfare. Leaving the old city, we drove past where the General Hospital used to stand to the Lotus Colony to visit the Wazirs. Selling antique textiles had proved lucrative for Wazir, encouraging his move from the rough and tumble 'Camp Area' where the rest of his extended family lived to a more upscale housing complex. The family had only just completed second floor living quarters for their married sons when the quake hit. Unfortunately only Salim was present for our visit—he looked tired and old beyond his years. Insisting on making tea for us, we waited staring in horror at the deep cracks running around the perimeter of the room. It was as if the whole top portion of the house had been lifted and had not quite been set back in the same place. Salim explained that the Camp houses had been destroyed hence most of the family had shifted to another village for safety. Wazir's textiles were safe and he had travelled to Bombay in a desperate pitch to convert at least some of them into cash. Leaving Salim we headed back to Kothara but not before being forced to make a detour around an apartment building that had just come crashing down. Although most of the multi-story apartment buildings in Bhuj had been condemned, many people with no where else to go had moved back in. The apartment that collapsed that day in Bhuj had 13 people living in it. I don't know if any of them survived.

Bhuj was trying but even more difficult was a visit to the Khatri village, Dhamardka. I had visited and enjoyed the hospitality of Ismail Khatri and his brothers on several occasions. Their late father had prompted a shift back to the use of vegetable colours for the family's dyeing and printing
business—a move which has earned them international acclaim and customers. Unfortunately the earthquake ravaged Dhamadka, only two or three structures remained standing—all other houses, workshops, and shops were flattened. Ismailbhai described how he had lost his mother and his daughter, how his brother's wife had been seriously injured and how, after days of caring for others and searching for survivors he had finally succumbed to a serious back injury. His words were weary but the pain they evoked obviously raw. Dhamadka was finished. The villagers have decided to shift to a new location, already named Ajrakhpur. It is closer to Bhuj, offered better water supplies, and was far from the painful memories associated with Dhamadka.

I was able to make two short trips to Dhordo. It was a jubilant reunion. Basheer proudly told me that there were no casualties in Banni from the earthquake and that there had been little structural damage. In Dhordo, although several of the concrete-block houses were cracked, and a few of the worse ones had been converted to animal shelters, only one old bhungo had come down—Sameer's. In the middle of the village, adjacent to the guesthouse and immediately opposite Abbas's bhungo, the gapping hole left by the collapsed bhungo had been replaced by a big green military tent. Many had been sleeping outside since January—too frightened to sleep indoors. The Agrocel factory had not been damaged and the men continued to work—luckier than many in Kutch.

Firdoos and her brother Abdul Ghafoor had been married to Saeed and Widad only two months before and shifted to their new homes. Although the weddings hadn't been planned until the summer, Firdoos explained the earthquake prompted the earlier dates. She claimed it was a modest affair in lieu of the disaster, held early to enhance the community's spirits. Abdul Ghafoor and Widad had taken up residence in the small square house Sameer had built in between the guesthouse and Abbas's bhungo—the one I always seemed to bang my head against. Firdoos and Saeed had moved into Baasim's bhungo—the rest of the family shifting to an old, rather dilapidated bhungo behind the former. Firdoos was in her element. She and Saeed were very happy together and she showed me with pride the gifts they had received. The bhungo's walls were lined with clocks, mirrors, religious prints, an enormous tin cupboard, and stacks of stainless steel water pots. Her new family supported her embroidery work and had agreed for her to continue until Saeed's younger sister was married in 3-4 years time. Firdoos explained that instead of stitching together in her father's house, now we would meet here, in the bhungo she shared with Saeed.
As much as Firdoos and Saeed were happy, Widad and Abdul Ghafoor were not. Widad showed me her wedding gifts mechanically, wistfully—the groom nowhere in sight. Rumour had it that he was interested in another girl and that he had married against his will—undoubtedly pressured to preserve the arrangement for his sister's sake. He had always appeared such a quiet, intelligent young man—this rebelliousness surprised me. It was obviously an issue of grave concern to both families and I heard several arguments issuing from behind the closed door of Naila's kitchen.

Abdul Ghafoor was not the only one. Maysoon and her brother Husaam's marriages to another brother and sister were also threatened. Although Husaam had initially proposed the arrangements, he too was having second thoughts. Maysoon's marriage was planned within the next year, however Husaam would have to wait as the girl was still too young. He claimed he also wanted to choose his own wife—causing both Khadeeja and Maysoon considerable concern. His younger brother, Tariq, informed me he had already chosen the woman he wanted to marry, a beautiful young woman from another village. Khadeeja confided in me that she just didn't know what to do with these boys.

One of the more bizarre effects of the earthquake was the distribution of used clothing. Khadeeja explained that following the earthquake, relief organisations began appearing handing out medical supplies, water, food, bedding, and clothes. It seems the supply of the latter far outweighed the demand however, truckloads of the stuff were left in Dhordo. Khadeeja produced bales and bales of it, trying to convince me to give it to my husband's family (who had already done the same), return home with it, keep it for myself, give it to my mother, or friends. Very little proved useful to the Mutwa themselves—the children's clothes were used, shirts and trousers taken by the boys, but the women would not, could not imagine wearing any of Western styles. Sitting with Khadeeja, going through one of the bundles of clothes, she pulled out a pair of tights—"Michele, what is this?" I explained and she looked disgusted, "that makes me want to vomit".

The earthquake seems, moreover, to have piqued the Mutwa's relationship with the past—in some cases, reaffirming the wisdom and value of traditional practices and values, in others, enhancing the tension between tradition and change. The old, perhaps because so much of it had been lost, was that much more precious. Khadeeja suddenly remembered old textiles she had never shown me and hauled them out, describing how each would pass to a different son's wife. Wajeeha gave Maysoon a magnificent, and now rare, bandhani odhni she had worn when young. Young
women's arguments over whether to wear or not wear embroidered blouses were surprisingly revised. There was, for example, considerable tension between Firdoos and Wajeeha during my visit. Neither Firdoos nor Widad had worn a gaj for their weddings however, Widad had promised to wear a kungeree after marriage if Firdoos would—she had refused so both girls became the first Mutwa-Morana women to renounce the embroidered symbols of marriage. Maysoon claimed she would wear a gaj for her upcoming wedding to make Wajeeha happy but was less clear about what she would wear after the ceremony. She was adamant that if Wajeeha died before her wedding, she would not wear a gaj.

Ammar and his sons had started a new business making specially curved concrete-blocks for bhungos—capitalising both on the post-quake increase in cement prices, as well as the proven resistance of bhungos to the earthquake's devastation. Firdoos had always claimed she wanted a new, rectangular concrete house similar to Basheer's—following the quake however she planned to build a new bhungo for Saeed's family (with her combined wedding and embroidery earnings). Building with cement was a concession to hygiene and modernity, however, choosing to build a bhungo was significant.

Perhaps one of the most profound effects of the earthquake was one we could not even see. With one fell swoop the tourist industry in Kutch had been wiped out. The hotels, the restaurants were destroyed, the tour companies waylaid. Most of the textile tours that normally include a visit to Kutch were diverted over the winter of 2001-02. Although a few will venture forth next winter, it will likely take years for this market to be rebuilt. Although there will continue to be opportunities for women to embroider for outside agencies and entrepreneurs like Moosa, the loss of the local tourist market is a loss of a market controlled by women. Although it was not always reliable and not necessarily available to all women, it nevertheless provided embroiderers with an alternative to markets controlled by outsiders or men.

The plight of Kutchi craftspeople following the earthquake has been widely publicised, in India and beyond, spurring numerous fund raising events and selling exhibitions in urban centres. While such exhibitions are useful in the short term, it is unlikely they can replace the more sustained and sustaining local markets the craftspeople previously catered to in Kutch including a local, if seasonal, tourist market. The earthquake, moreover, has prompted at least one textile dealer from Ahmedabad to comb the remote Banni villages offering to 'help' villagers by buying whatever textiles they were willing to sell. Khadeeja claimed the prices paid were generous, but I wondered about the motives involved. It was not, of course, the first time poverty or disaster had prompted the sale of cultural objects to outsiders.
## Glossary

### Vowals

| अ | a |
| आ | ā |
| इ | i |
| ई | āi |
| उ | u |
| ऊ | āu |
| ऋ | ō |

### Consonants

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<tr>
<th>गुटराल्स</th>
<th>पालाटाल्स</th>
<th>क्रिकराल्स</th>
<th>डेंटाल्स</th>
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<tr>
<th>लैबियल्स</th>
<th>सेमिवोवेल</th>
<th>सिबिलेंट्स</th>
<th>आस्पिरेट्स</th>
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<th>अनुसर्वाय</th>
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**Pronunciation Exceptions:**

- आ is transliterated ca but is pronounced ch as in cheese (i.e. cāndhi is pronounced chandhi)
- ल is a retroflex lateral transliterated as l but pronounced like a nasalised rd (i.e. copal is pronounced chopard).

**Abbreviations:**

- H = Hindi
- U = Urdu
- G = Gujarati
- K = Kutchi
- S = Sindhi
- L = Latin
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<th>Kutchi</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>'aql</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reason, intelligence, wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acho</td>
<td>अचो</td>
<td>G=फेल (saphed) White.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acho odhni</td>
<td>अचो औडनी</td>
<td>A white veil (odhni) worn by Mutwa women during their wedding ceremonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adab</td>
<td></td>
<td>Propriety, deportment, esteemed behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>āgevān</td>
<td>अगेवान</td>
<td>A local leader, a 'big' man or woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahavar</td>
<td>अहवार</td>
<td>A relative or friend who accompanies the bride or groom through the wedding ceremony, a maid of honour/ best man</td>
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<tr>
<td>ajrakh</td>
<td></td>
<td>Block printed cloth typically dyed with indigo, madder, and iron rust and worn by Muslim men as turbans and shoulder cloths. These were supplied by local Khatri dyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akaphullī</td>
<td>अकाफुली</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch likely based on संपत, the sun plant (calotropis gigantea)(see also Askari &amp; Crill, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alu lac</td>
<td>अलु लच</td>
<td>Women's large gold-coloured earring shaped like two cones (one inverted and stacked on top of the other) worn through each earlobe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ankh</td>
<td>अंख</td>
<td>A row of open chain stitch usually stitch in orange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>अर्फसो</td>
<td>अर्फसो</td>
<td>G=abella; S=shisho Mirror.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ashraf</td>
<td>अश्रफ</td>
<td>A high ranked Muslim noble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ashrafi</td>
<td></td>
<td>An old embroidery stitch worked in white, similar to a bullion stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asr</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Muslim afternoon prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aṭak</td>
<td>अटक</td>
<td>Family, lineage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atār dhadkī</td>
<td>अतार धाड़की</td>
<td>An unembellished quilt used for everyday purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>azan</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Muslim call to prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baciyo</td>
<td>बाचियो</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch said to add light to the work and resembling grains of rice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bālur tok</td>
<td>बालुर तोक</td>
<td>A diamond shaped patchwork quilt border.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bandh</td>
<td>बाँड</td>
<td>Closed, binding, knot, restraint. The section of the kanjari that corresponds with the breasts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bandhanī</td>
<td>बांधनी</td>
<td>Tie-dye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barwar</td>
<td></td>
<td>A 12m tie-dyed, gathered, skirt previously considered essential for for Mutwa brides. The name likely comes from बार (baro) meaning 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhāju bandh</td>
<td>भाजू बांड</td>
<td>A wrapped thread ornament worn around the भाजू or upper arm (see jari).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>bharat</td>
<td>भरत</td>
<td>Embroidery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bharat kam</td>
<td>भरतकम</td>
<td>Embroidery work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bharnū</td>
<td>भरनु</td>
<td>To fill, load, embroider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhorīya phul</td>
<td>भोरियाफुल</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch based on an unidentified flower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhuli</td>
<td>भुली</td>
<td>A nose ring worn through the septum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhungo</td>
<td>भुंगो</td>
<td>Traditional round, mud and dung brick houses used in Banni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bīlo</td>
<td>बीलो</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch likely based on a flower known as beyri in Sindhi (L= zizyphus jujuba) (see Askari &amp; Crill, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bīryānī</td>
<td>बिरजयली</td>
<td>The spiced rice dish with meat traditionally served at Muslim weddings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budo sagai</td>
<td>बुढोसागर</td>
<td>Brother-sister exchange marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bundhā</td>
<td>बुंडा</td>
<td>A type of earring worn in groups of four along the top of the earlobe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bungari kothri</td>
<td>बूंगरीकोठरी</td>
<td>A small unembroidered patchwork bag previously used by Mutwa men to hold a pipe (बूंगरी bungari) and tobacco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burqa</td>
<td>बुरे</td>
<td>An enveloping overcoat-like garment worn by Muslim women primarily in urban centres. Though often black, cut, colour, and embellishment vary with the community or sect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buṭī</td>
<td>बुटी</td>
<td>A small embroidered floral motif.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>candhan hāre</td>
<td>चन्दनहारे</td>
<td>A long silver women's necklace comprised of several chains suspending a large tubular piece reminiscent of a dodi (small, capsule-like bead that frequently contains amulets). The name may be literally translated as 'silver garland' (S=har (garland)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>candhar</td>
<td>चन्दर</td>
<td>The moon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cāndhī</td>
<td>चांदी</td>
<td>Silver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cāvīyā</td>
<td>चावीया</td>
<td>A embroidery stitch resembling the cross-stitch only used on small boys clothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cāy</td>
<td>चैय</td>
<td>Buttermilk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chair gario</td>
<td>चैरगारो</td>
<td>Dung (colette), mud (mitti), and water (pani) mixture used to plaster floors (v. ragaru) and walls in Banni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chalkarey</td>
<td>चाखरेय</td>
<td>A small earring worn through the front part of the ear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaḷn</td>
<td>चैल</td>
<td>colette  Dung.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charpoi</td>
<td>चारपौई</td>
<td>A string cot used for sleeping or sitting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>chikTum</td>
<td></td>
<td>The ceremony performed during Mutwa marriage rites in which the groom and the anniyal have their hair oiled by the bride's female kin and assembled female guests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chitkT dhaTkT</td>
<td></td>
<td>A patchwork quilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chitrT kam</td>
<td>mitti jo kam; G=lipin kam</td>
<td>Low relief mud and dung decoration used to embellish the interior walls of boongos in Banni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chori</td>
<td>ghagho</td>
<td>Embroidered dress previously worn by young unmarried women. It is also the name of the dress worn by Jat women and the two would have been similar, although their embellishment differed dramatically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>chotT</td>
<td></td>
<td>A hair ornament worn braided into the hair (see jari).</td>
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<tr>
<td>chura</td>
<td>rusi</td>
<td>Plastic bangles in graduated sizes worn in sets of twelve on each fore and upper arm. Previously these were made of ivory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chuti</td>
<td></td>
<td>Beaded hair ornament, plaited into a single hair braid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>cikan</td>
<td>dhavan</td>
<td>A floral embroidery motif stitched with the open chain stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colo</td>
<td>curalo (Jhulo)</td>
<td>A collarless tunic worn by young Mutwa women until the early 80's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copal</td>
<td>dhupat (Jhupat)</td>
<td>An embroidery motif named after a once popular board game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copal kutub dhaTkT</td>
<td></td>
<td>A type of quilt with cut-work designs based on a chopar designs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>dahi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yoghurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refers to the food given to parrots. It is also refers to the wrapped thread ornament attached to the back of the head and used to support nath or vindho.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>danayal jo kanjari</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutwa widow's embroidered blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dandh</td>
<td>dhv</td>
<td>Teeth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dantariT</td>
<td>sizzal</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch that looks like teeth (S=dandhu).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darni</td>
<td></td>
<td>A wrapped thread or metal ornament worn over the forehead and ears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dartikum</td>
<td></td>
<td>Earthquake.</td>
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<tr>
<td>dayj</td>
<td>sley</td>
<td>Dowry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhaTkT</td>
<td>susl</td>
<td>Quilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dharuv</td>
<td>dhr</td>
<td>A type of grass found in Banni once favoured for use as a roofing material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhobi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caste washerperson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhoram</td>
<td>.digesti</td>
<td>An embroidery motif based on the cretan stitch. Traditionally, seven stitches would be used to form tiny squares of colour, which were arranged in geometric patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>digaro</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shallow metal vessel used for cooking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ďīrī</td>
<td>ściřl</td>
<td>An embroidery motif likely based on the satin stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dolar</td>
<td>ściľar</td>
<td>A type of silver necklace with three or more rectangular pieces reminiscent of amulets. This is said to be old-fashioned now and is only worn by children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doola</td>
<td>ściľar</td>
<td>A round stud earring popular with Muslim women across Kutch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doongri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mountain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dua</td>
<td></td>
<td>A Muslim personal prayer offered after the required prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duhr</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Muslim noon prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dupatta</td>
<td></td>
<td>A veil or scarf worn with salwar kameez especially by Hindu women and urban Muslim women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elcho</td>
<td></td>
<td>See mashru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fajr</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Muslim dawn prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaghra</td>
<td></td>
<td>A full gathered skirt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaj</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutwa wedding blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gando bawal</td>
<td>L=prosopis juliflora</td>
<td>A type of acacia tree introduced into Banni in the 1960's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gānu</td>
<td>⽰רם</td>
<td>A stitch similar to couching used around the neck edges of women's blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garbi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supplementary warp fabric associated with Sindh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td></td>
<td>Old motif once used around the bottom edge of women's skirts and bags. It is a type of couching or laid work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghardari kaprā</td>
<td></td>
<td>The men's suit worn across Banni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghuivārī</td>
<td>ｇｖｉｒ🐛</td>
<td>Applique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghusl</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bathing to remove major impurities before Muslim prayer: impurities associated with the emission of sperm, menstruation etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goadri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baby quilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gōlālo</td>
<td>S=golharho</td>
<td>An embroidery motif stitched with the satin stitch and likely based on the flower L=coccinia cordifolia (see Askari &amp; Crill, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gopis</td>
<td></td>
<td>The female cowherd companions of the Hindu god, Krishna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>gotun</td>
<td>गोटू</td>
<td>The interfacing stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>got</td>
<td>गोट</td>
<td>lādo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gulābī</td>
<td>गुलाबी</td>
<td>The colour pink.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gur</td>
<td>गुर</td>
<td>jaggery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hadith</td>
<td>हदीथ</td>
<td>The reported words and deeds of the Prophet Mohammad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haj</td>
<td>हज</td>
<td>The annual pilgrimage to Mecca made at least once in a lifetime by all able-bodied Muslims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hajām</td>
<td>हजाम</td>
<td>Caste barbers who traditionally act as helpers and messengers during weddings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halkī</td>
<td>हल्की</td>
<td>Quickly, &quot;fast&quot;, promiscuous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hando</td>
<td>हाँडो</td>
<td>A type of water pot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hansī</td>
<td>हंसी</td>
<td>A solid ring-type necklace worn by young girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>har</td>
<td>हर</td>
<td>A plough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haree</td>
<td>हारे</td>
<td>A heavy silver necklace worn by young girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hatālo</td>
<td>हतालो</td>
<td>Bridewealth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hatreo</td>
<td>हट्टियू</td>
<td>A type of silver bracelet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honnar</td>
<td>हन्नर</td>
<td>A craft, a skilled and honourable woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isha</td>
<td>इशा</td>
<td>The Muslim evening prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jabhbho</td>
<td>जाब्बडो</td>
<td>Refers to the proper length of Mutwa women's blouses, mid stomach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jalir</td>
<td>ज़ालिर</td>
<td>A cut-work band, usually of white cloth, used to embellish quilt borders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jari</td>
<td>जरी</td>
<td>The couched gold-wrapped thread embroidery made by professional embroiderers in Western India. In Banni it also refers to a type of wrapped thread work, made with gold or coloured threads, and used for hair ornaments, jewellery, and ties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jāri</td>
<td>जरी</td>
<td>Illicit sexual intercourse, window bars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeremera</td>
<td>जैरेमेरा</td>
<td>A type of gold or gold coloured necklace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeta chura</td>
<td>जेता चुरा</td>
<td>A women's wide silver bracelet with a ridge around the middle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jīr</td>
<td>जीर</td>
<td>Women's chain-type heavy ankle bracelets worn slung low around the ankles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jutti</td>
<td>जुत्ती</td>
<td>Shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kac</td>
<td>काक</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch similar to the cretan stitch. It is used as a border design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaco</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>Weak, unripe, raw, unfinished, type of embroidery stitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaḍho</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>A thorn, a spike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kal</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch used to finish the neck edge of women’s blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kameez</td>
<td></td>
<td>A semi-fitted, knee-length embellished tunic worn over salwar and with a dupatta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kandhalo</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>A complex, zig zag shaped embroidery stitch now often replaced with the feather stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanjarī</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>Married Mutwa woman’s embroidered blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanjarū</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>Embroidered blouse worn by newly married Mutwa women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kapra</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>G=kapad (सेव) Cloth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kareo</td>
<td></td>
<td>A solid ankle bracelet worn by young girls and babies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kāro</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>The colour black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kataři</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>A widely used embroidery stitch based on the satin stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kesari</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>The colour orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khadi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Handloom cotton cloth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khandani</td>
<td></td>
<td>Family honour, character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khārak</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dried date; an embroidery stitch said to resemble the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khilat</td>
<td></td>
<td>A robe or gift bestowing honour on the recipient, especially those presented by Moghul emperors (see Bayly, 1993).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kich</td>
<td></td>
<td>A method of filling with colour, see pako or ber kich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kidjri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooked rice and mung beans. A staple of many rural peoples in Kutch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kodī</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>The tiny white shells used to embellish the guj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kohro</td>
<td></td>
<td>A design meant to indicate the direction of Mecca for prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kole</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>G=khabhā (क्रिया) The shoulder portions of the Mutwa women’s blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kolī nī buṭī</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>A flower design for the kula portion of the Mutwa women’s blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kombi</td>
<td></td>
<td>This is a type of odhni presented to the bride by the groom. Today it is frequently printed with tie-dye patterns and embellished with machine embroidery in gold thread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kongri</td>
<td></td>
<td>A decorative patchwork border.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kor</td>
<td>ᵃʳ</td>
<td>A decorative patchwork border.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>korankh</td>
<td></td>
<td>A round stud worn through the middle of the ear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kothrī</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>thelf ( Gesture) A patchwork cloth bag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuber</td>
<td></td>
<td>A Muslim tomb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kun</td>
<td></td>
<td>A small satin stitch often referred to as light.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kungari</td>
<td></td>
<td>A type of silver bangle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kurta</td>
<td></td>
<td>A long, straight cut, and unembellished tunic, often made of khadi. Although primarily a man’s garment, it is commonly worn by urban women, especially on university campuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lad</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>Caressing, endearment, indulgence; An embroidery motif found on bridal blouses generally referred to as ‘flowers’ although the word is related to kutchi words for bride as well as the round sweets served at weddings G=ladu ( Gesture); and wedding songs S=lado ( Gesture).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lāḍī</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>Bride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lāḍo</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>got</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lakh</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>One hundred thousand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loki</td>
<td></td>
<td>A type of kanjari with an embroidered V-design and used for special occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lugan kothrī</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>A patchwork cloth bag with an embroidered end used by the bride and groom to distribute sweets during weddings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lungi</td>
<td></td>
<td>A 2m piece of cloth wrapped around the hips and worn by men for sleeping or relaxing at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>macchi</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>Fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machi kandlo</td>
<td>🌼</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch previously used to form border designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maghrib</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Muslim sunset prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maldhari</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cattlebreeders and traders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mandurya</td>
<td></td>
<td>The name of an embroidery pattern widely used across Kutch and Sindh. It is said to be based on a mandi or butterchurn ( Gesture).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manji</td>
<td></td>
<td>The low wooden platform used to store folded quilts during the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manji nu pallo</td>
<td></td>
<td>A decorative quilt, one usually embellished with embroidery or applique and used to cover the quilts stacked on the manji during the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maro</td>
<td></td>
<td>The embroidered tent previously used for weddings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>mashru</td>
<td>elcho</td>
<td>A warp-faced fabric woven with a warp of one type of material (often silk or rayon) and a weft of another (usually cotton).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matlo</td>
<td></td>
<td>A clay waterpot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mawo</td>
<td></td>
<td>The colour blue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meghār</td>
<td>मेघार</td>
<td>A low-ranked Hindu caste who traditionally specialised in leatherworking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mehendi</td>
<td>henna</td>
<td>A vegetable dye women (especially Islamic women) use to make decorative patterns on their hands and feet. It is said to have a calming, cooling effect on the bride. Mehendi is also commonly used as a hair dye and was favoured by the prophet Mohammad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mehr</td>
<td></td>
<td>The marriage amount. This amount, fixed at the time of the wedding, is promised to the bride for her own use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>molardo</td>
<td></td>
<td>A type of pestle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peacock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muko</td>
<td>jari</td>
<td>A form of couched embroidery using gold wrapped threads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muko phārvā</td>
<td>मुको सिर्व्र</td>
<td>Embroidered border design incorporating muko.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mullah</td>
<td></td>
<td>A local Muslim religious leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mura</td>
<td></td>
<td>The sweets distributed by the bride and groom at Muslim weddings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community, caste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nafl gandhi</td>
<td></td>
<td>A special odhni worn briefly by the groom during the wedding and subsequently gifted to the bride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nafs</td>
<td></td>
<td>The lower or 'animal' faculty of the human being, the lower soul/self, opposite 'aql.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāhrān</td>
<td>नृहरान</td>
<td>An embroidery stitch similar to the satin stitch and related to सनहरान, meaning river (see Askari &amp; Crill, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaz</td>
<td></td>
<td>The five daily prayers of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāsi</td>
<td>नाशि</td>
<td>The colour brown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nath</td>
<td>नाथ</td>
<td>A large nose ring worn through the left nostril of Jat, Megvar, and previously Mutwa women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nikah</td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal Muslim marriage rite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nikoti</td>
<td></td>
<td>Following the wedding, the nikoti is held to celebrate the bride's final move to her husband's home. It is accompanied by a showing of her handwork and involves a meal and gift exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nīlo</td>
<td>नील</td>
<td>The colour green.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nindhar</td>
<td>निन्दर</td>
<td>A written account of the marriage gifts; to sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyat wudu</td>
<td>न्यत वुदु</td>
<td>Recited by Muslims before commencing their ablutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>odhni</td>
<td>गाँधी</td>
<td>A 2.5 x 2.5m veil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>okulo</td>
<td>ओकुलो</td>
<td>A small wooden mortar used to grind chili and garlic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pachat</td>
<td>पाचैत</td>
<td>Underdeveloped, backwards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pactalī</td>
<td>पातचली</td>
<td>The tiny white stitches made around mirrors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>padu</td>
<td>पाडू</td>
<td>A 3m skirt wide skirt, previously worn by young women; also the name of the tie-dye design frequently used to embellish these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pakājīr</td>
<td>पाकाजीर</td>
<td>Fringe design, may also refer to pakā-jīr, real or durable jeer (ankle bracelets).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pakā copal</td>
<td>पाकाकपाल</td>
<td>An embroidery motif similar to copal (see above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pako</td>
<td>पाको</td>
<td>The open chain stitch; baked, durable, or clever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pako kich</td>
<td>पाको चिक</td>
<td>Filling an embroidery design with rows of open chain stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pako phārvā</td>
<td>पाकोफार्वा</td>
<td>A border design using the open chain stitch to fill in design areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pann</td>
<td>पाँण्डु</td>
<td>A leaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pat</td>
<td>पाट</td>
<td>Untwisted rayon floss used for embroidery. Previously it was made of silk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pat vidnu</td>
<td>पाट विद्नु</td>
<td>A turned wood stick with notches for winding embroidery threads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paṭī</td>
<td>पाटी</td>
<td>An embroidered border usually stitched on black cloth and attached to the white veil worn by the Mutwa bride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patori</td>
<td>पाटोरी</td>
<td>One of the three odhni presented to brides by their grooms. Previously this was ideally made of finely tie-dyed silk. They are often omitted by Mutwa brides today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedapati</td>
<td>पेदापाती</td>
<td>A gift exchange made by Mutwa women during wedding celebrations involving lengths of cloth or cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pet</td>
<td>पेट</td>
<td>Stomache; the stomach portion of the Mutwa women's blouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phārvā</td>
<td>फार्वा</td>
<td>Embroidered border design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phul</td>
<td>फुल</td>
<td>Flower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phūṭī</td>
<td>फूठी</td>
<td>A nose stud; an embroidered motif named after the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pīr</td>
<td>पीर</td>
<td>Sufi saint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pīro</td>
<td>पीरो</td>
<td>The colour yellow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>popti</td>
<td></td>
<td>The band of embroidery located just below the bandh and separating it from the pait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pot</td>
<td></td>
<td>Two 2.5m lengths of cloth, joined in the middle, worn wrapped around the lower body and tied in the front. Traditionally men wore white pots, women wore black although both are only seen on the elderly today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pupaṭṭi</td>
<td>ṭvṛkō</td>
<td>Women’s large earring said to resemble a parrot (poepart) worn over the tops of each ear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purdhah</td>
<td>paḍḍā (практик)</td>
<td>A curtain, the seculusion of women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>putliūm</td>
<td></td>
<td>A chain type ankle bracelet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>putko</td>
<td></td>
<td>A turban.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rakas</td>
<td>ḫrāy</td>
<td>Muslim prayer cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rangh</td>
<td>ḫrāy</td>
<td>Colour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ratto</td>
<td>ḫrāy</td>
<td>The colour red.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reyāḷ</td>
<td>ᵃ₩yp</td>
<td>Women’s speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roja</td>
<td>ḫrāy</td>
<td>A day’s fast (especially for Muslims).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rotlā</td>
<td>ḫrāy</td>
<td>A heavy flat bread made with jowar flour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sabot</td>
<td>ᵃ₩yp</td>
<td>A type of kanjari with a fully embroidered pat and is used for special occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadhi tok</td>
<td>ᵃ忿忿</td>
<td>A decorative patchwork border used on quilts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salwar</td>
<td>ᵃ忿忿</td>
<td>Women’s gathered trousers worn under kameez.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanghar</td>
<td>ᵃ忿忿</td>
<td>A chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarpanch</td>
<td></td>
<td>A government appointed local leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sat rangi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seven colours used for embroidery preferred by the Mutwa and other Muslim groups: red, green, yellow, orange, blue, white, and black (see Askari &amp; Crill, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sawab</td>
<td></td>
<td>Religious merit or points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sebo</td>
<td>ᵃ忿忿</td>
<td>A quilt stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senduk</td>
<td></td>
<td>A suitcase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ser kich</td>
<td></td>
<td>Filling an embroidery design with short parallel bands of satin stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sera</td>
<td>ᵃ忿忿</td>
<td>moor (פעון הרוח) The wedding mask worn by the groom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shauq</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interest, passion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sickar</td>
<td></td>
<td>A pendant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singar</td>
<td></td>
<td>The groom's second trip to the ladies side during which he and his attendants are blessed by the women and presented with cash and cloth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soar</td>
<td></td>
<td>A thick, quilted, mattress pad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sor</td>
<td></td>
<td>A type of kanjari only embroidered to the bandh and used for everyday wear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sothal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Women's gathered trousers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sui</td>
<td></td>
<td>A needle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sunna</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refers to the &quot;trodden path&quot;; the example of the Prophet Mohammad (Metcalf, 1992, p.420).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supari</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chewing tobacco mixed with betal nut and various other flavourings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suph</td>
<td></td>
<td>A style of embroidery associated primarily with the Sodha Rajputs who migrated into Kutch from Sindh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tako</td>
<td></td>
<td>A stitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tayammun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bathing with sand (in the absence of water) to remove impurities before prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tesori</td>
<td></td>
<td>A stitch used to finish the neck edges of women's blouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than</td>
<td></td>
<td>A woman's breast, upper chest portion of the Mutwa women's blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than ni buti</td>
<td></td>
<td>A flower design for the tanu portion of the Mutwa women's blouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theli</td>
<td></td>
<td>kothri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pat (♀♂)</td>
<td>A patchwork cloth bag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ticklee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unspun rayon floss used for embroidery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tika</td>
<td></td>
<td>Metal spangles or mirrors used to embellish embroidery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tika jumoe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stitches used to attach a mirror to cloth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toile</td>
<td></td>
<td>A shoulder cloth worn by men. Previously these were of ajrakh supplied by local Khatri dyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tok</td>
<td></td>
<td>A decorative patchwork border.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokri</td>
<td></td>
<td>ghanti (♀♂)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small, silver coloured bells often stitched to the front edge of odhnis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topalu</td>
<td></td>
<td>topi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A hood-like cap worn by infants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tora</td>
<td></td>
<td>A woman's solid ankle bracelet worn just above the ankle; short tassels used to embellish the guj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toran</td>
<td></td>
<td>An embroidered decoration hung above the doorway, mainly in Hindu homes in Kutch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutchi</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tun</td>
<td>giri</td>
<td>A tiny embroidery stitch said to &quot;add light&quot; to the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turan</td>
<td></td>
<td>A weigh scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tangar phārvā</td>
<td>ᵃ鄅  ᵃ鄅₄</td>
<td>An embroidered border design with a star (K=tangar) motif.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>udarne</td>
<td></td>
<td>Embroidered dress previously worn by prepubescent girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ušīko</td>
<td>ḍīlāī</td>
<td>A cushion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valeri</td>
<td></td>
<td>A silver collar-like ring worn by women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vana turan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutwa ceremony, held two days before the wedding, in which the agiwan inspects the hitaro and presents gifts of gur and ghee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vārlo</td>
<td>ḍaraī</td>
<td>A heavy silver necklace worn by Mutwa women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varna</td>
<td></td>
<td>A ring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vatio</td>
<td></td>
<td>A metal drinking cup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaylo</td>
<td></td>
<td>A silver necklace worn by young girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vicchī</td>
<td>ḍīlāī</td>
<td>A scorpion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vīndhī</td>
<td>ḍīlāī</td>
<td>A large nose ring previously worn by Mutwa women through the left nostril. It is similar to the nath worn by Jats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vīndho</td>
<td>ḍīlāī</td>
<td>nat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virdas</td>
<td></td>
<td>A type of shallow well once productively used across Banni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viya</td>
<td></td>
<td>U=shadi H=lugan A marriage, wedding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wudu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bathing to remove minor impurities before prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zikat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alms. Muslims typically give 2.5% of their earnings to the needy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.1. Cutting grass in Banni.

Figure 2.2. The entrance to the village of Dhordo.
Figure 2.3 Dhordo roofs.

Figure 2.4 Dhordo roofs.
Figure 2.5. Bhungo with a tile roof. The building on the left is a kitchen.

Figure 2.6. Bhungo with a thatch roof.
Figure 2.7. Bhungo with charpoi.

Figure 2.8. Dried acacia fences in Dhordo.
Figure 29. Mutwa Alamkhan, October, 1992
Figure 3.1. Copal

Figure 3.2. Copal.
Figure 3.3. Katari.

Figure 3.4. Katari
Figure 3.5. Kharak.

Figure 3.6. Ser Kich.
Figure 3.7. Pako Kich.

Figure 3.8. Kaco.
Figure 3. 9. Gotun.

Figure 3. 10. Suph.
Figure 3. 13. Pactali, older couched version.

Figure 3. 14. Pactali, newer buttonhole stitched version.
Figure 3.15. Phulli.

Figure 3.16. Cikan surrounded with a row of white haciyo.
Figure 3.17. Golalo surrounded with white baciyo.

Figure 3.18. A buti stitched with golalo and puko kich.
Figure 3.19. Dhoram.

Figure 3.20. Dhoram with a band of muko and caviya.
Figure 3. 21. Chachanana wearing a Sindhi-style cap embroidered with copal. The shoulder of his shirt is embroidered with tun and cavliya.
Figure 3.22. Ghana.

Figure 3.23. Ashrafi. (small white, perpendicular stitches).
Figure 3.24. Candhar with a row of molala pharva and kac.

Figure 3.25. Pako pharva with kac.

Figure 3.26. Tangar pharva with a band of muko.
Figure 3.27. Kac with a baciyo.

Figure 3.28. Two rows of traditional kandhalo with a band of pako pharva and a row of kac. The kac has been worked extra wide, stitched through the middle, then cut to form a tufted edge.

Figure 3.29. Contemporary kandhalo more often resembles the feather stitch than the more complex stitch in 3.28.
Figure 3.30. Tungar pharwa with dantarli.

Figure 3.31. Tungar pharwa with tesori used to finish a blouse neck edge.

Figure 3.32. Tungar pharwa with kal used to finish a blouse neck edge.
Figure 3.33 Sor kanjari stitched with kaco.

Figure 3.34 Sor kanjari, detail.
Figure 3.35. Loki kanjari stitched with copal.

Figure 3.36. Loki kanjari, detail.
Figure 3.37. Sabot kanjari stitched with ser and pako kich.

Figure 3.38. Sabot kanjari, detail.
Figure 3.39. Kanjaru stitched with copal, katari, phulli, puko and ser kich.

Figure 3.40. Kanjaru, detail.
Figure 3.41. Gaj stitched with pakko and ser kich

Figure 3.42. Gaj, detail.
Figure 3.43. Topalu stitched by Wajeeha for her daughter, c. 1955.

Figure 3.44. Topalu, detail.
Figure 3.45. Gaj stitched by Wajeeha, c. 1970.

Figure 3.46. Gaj, detail.
Figure 3.47. Kanjari stitched by Wajeeha for her daughter's wedding, c. 1975.

Figure 3.48. Kanjari, detail.
Mutwa Wajeeha Abbas

Figure 3.49. Kanjari stitched for Wajeeha, c. 1975.

Figure 3.50. Kanjari, detail.
Figure 3.51. Lugan kothri stitched by Wajeeha, c. 1980.

Figure 3.52. Lugan kothri, detail.
Figure 3.53. Gotun kanjari stitched for sale to tourists by Wajeeha, c. 1992.

Figure 3.54. Gotun kanjari, detail.
Figure 4. 1. Cutting mirrors in the courtyard.
Figure 4.2. Bhungo interior with quilts stacked on the manji.

Figure 4.3. Painted suitcases stacked opposite the entrance to this bhungo.
Figure 4.4. Bhungo painted roof.

Figure 4.5. The high shelf running around the perimeter of the bhungo holds a variety of knickknacks. Beneath it is a band of chitri kam, c. 1970.
Figure 4.6,4.7,4.8. Views of chitri kam.
Figure 4.9. Old bhungo currently used as a kitchen, c. 1950.

Figure 4.10. Old chitri kam, detail of 4.9.
Figure 4.11. Chitri kam surrounds a small cupboard in an old bhungo.

Figure 4.12. Chitri kam, detail of 4.11.
Figure 4.13. A chitri kam bhoriya phul in an old bhungo.

Figure 4.14. Chitri kam stained with kitchen smoke. Note the lower edges of the two bands form a pattern called pakajir resembling tassels and women's ankle bracelets.
Figure 4.15. Old chitri kam, c. 1960.

Figure 4.16. Old chitri kam, c. 1960.
Figure 4.17. Chitri kam and painted decorations made by Moosa, c. 1975.

Figure 4.18. Detail of 4.17.
Mutwa Sawda Safwan

Figure 4. 19. Sor kanjari stitched with gotun by a Gorewali woman for Sawda, c. 1980.

Figure 4. 20. Sor kanjari, detail.
Figure 4.21. Sor Kanjari stitched with muko by a local woman for Sawda, c. 1980.

Figure 4.22. Sor kanjari, detail.
Figure 4. 23. Gaj stitched by Sawda for her wedding (never worn), c. 1980.

Figure 4. 24. Gaj, detail.
Figure 4. 25. Manji nu pallo stitched by Sawda, c. 1980.
Figure 4. 26. Unfinished kanjaru stitched with pako kich and phulli, by Sawda, c. 1980.
Figure 4. 27. Sabot kanjari stitched with puko kich by Sawda c. 1980.

Figure 4. 28. Sabot kanjari, detail.
Figure 4.29. Kanjaru stitched with puko and ser kich. It was made for Sawda by a woman in Gorewali, c. 1980.

Figure 4.30. Kanjaru, detail.
Figure 4.31. Sabot kanjari stitched with ser kich by Sawda, c. 1980.

Figure 4.32. Ser kich kanjari, detail.
Figure 4.33. Sabot kanjari stitched with ser kich by Sawda, c. 1980.

Figure 4.34. Ser kich kanjari, detail.
Figure 4.35. A sabot kanjari stitched with kaco by Sawda's HMZ and given to her at her wedding, 1970.

Figure 4.36. Kaco sabot kanjari, detail.
Figure 5.1. Kanjari from the collection of A.A. Wazir, c. 1890 (photograph courtesy David March).

Figure 5.2. Kanjari, detail (photograph courtesy David March).
Figure 5.3. Kanjari, detail. The V-shapes surrounding the square are likely peacocks (photograph courtesy David March).

Figure 5.4. Kanjari, detail. Close up of pako stitches and what may be scorpions (photograph courtesy David March).
Figure 5.5. Kanjari likely from Fulae, c. 1910. From the collection of A.A. Wazir.

Figure 5.6. Kanjari, detail.
Figure 5.7. Kothri stitched by Abbas' elder step sister, c. 1910.

Figure 5.8. Kothri, detail.
Figure 5. 9. Kothri stitched by Wajeeha's mother, c. 1920.

Figure 5. 10. Kothri, detail.
Figure 5.11. Copal kanjari stitched by Abbas’ elder step sister, c. 1940.

Figure 5.12. Copal kanjari, detail.
Figure 5. 13. Pati embroidered in Mitlee, c. 1965.

Figure 5. 14. Pati, detail.
Figure 5.15. Colo, c. 1975.

Figure 5.16. Colo, detail.
Figure 5. 17. Silk kanjaru embroidered with golalo, c. 1965.

Figure 5. 18. Silk kanjaru, detail.
Figure 5.19. Lad.

Figure 5.20. Pann motifs.
Figure 5.21. Vicchi.

Figure 5.22. Mors (peacocks) stitched on a gaj, c. 1960.
Figure 5.23. Molardo with phulli

Figure 5.24. Paka jir.
Figure 5. 25. Barwar.
Mutwa Hameeda Moosa

Figure 5.26. Kanjaru embroidered with cikan, katari, pako and ser kich and phulli. Stitched by Hameeda, designed by Moosa, c. 1990.

Figure 5.27. Kanjaru, detail.
Figure 5.28. Kanjari embroidered with suph, kaco and phulli. Stitched by Hameeda, designed by Moosa, c. 1990.

Figure 5.29 Kanjari, detail.
Figure 5.30. Centre field for an "art" quilt. Stitched by Hameeda, designed by Moosa, c. 2000.
Figure 5.31. Loki kanjari embroidered with ser and puko kich. Stitched by Hameeda, designed by Moosa. c. 1990.

Figure 5.32. Loki kanjari, detail.
Figure 5.33. The interior of Moosa and Hameeda’s bhungo featuring Moosa’s contemporary chitri kam and a quilt stitched by Hameeda c. 1990.
Figure 5.34. Quilt stitched for sale by Hameeda, designed by Moosa, c. 1990.

Figure 5.35. Quilt stitched by Hameeda, designed by Moosa, c. 1995.
Figure 5.36. Kanjari embroidered with muko, katari, cikan, and puko kich. Stitched by Hameeda, designed by Moosa, c. 2000.

Figure 5.37. Kanjari, detail.
Figure 5.38. Kanjari embroidered with puko and ser kich. Stitched by Hameeda, designed by Moosa.

Figure 5.39. Kanjari, detail.
Figure 7.1. The Taj Mahal.


3 Collections of folk embroidery in India include: In Delhi: The Crafts Museum; National Museum; in Ahmedabad: Calico Museum, Shreyas Folk Museum; in Baroda: The Baroda Picture Gallery.

4 This is not to claim that Muslim women are not oppressed nor opt for a cultural relativism that precludes ethical responsibility. It is, firstly, to assert that Islam is neither inherently oppressive nor homogenous (I. Ahmad 1976;1981; 1983; Z.Hasan, 1994), and secondly, to assert the importance of deconstructing the notion of subject in order to reconstruct difference as separate, distinct and without hierarchy.

5 Edward Evans Pritchard initiated an earlier 'historic turn' when, after fieldwork in Africa, he became convinced that the changes to African society, many resulting from colonialism, could no longer be ignored (Gabarino, 1977).

6 Dirks' specific example is Trevor-Roper's (1983) analysis of the 19th century invention of Scottish traditions.


8 See for example: Mies (1982); Basu (1993); Compton Brouwer (1989); Comaroff (1997).

9 For a discussion of the 'fine art' biases of the Nationalists, particularly in Bengal, see Guha-Thakurta (1992).

10 Although the arts and crafts movement had a strong socialist dimension, especially under William Morris, it was primarily an aesthetic reaction to the perceived shortcomings of 19th century industrial design.


13 For example: Rajyagar, 1982; Majmudar, 1965; Chavda, 1983; Desai, 1976.


15 Sati refers to the practice of widow immolation associated mainly with upper caste Hindus. The woman who burns on her husband's funeral pyre is also referred to as a 'sati'.

16 See Hardy (1999).

17 The Five Pillars of Islam include: 1). profession of faith in God and Muhammad as the messenger of God, 2). daily prayer, 3). almsgiving, 4). fasting during the month of Ramzan, and 5). pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia (Esposito, 1988).

18 M. Hasan (1996) notes that Muslims were particularly united during the campaign for Islamic Nationalism preceding the creation of the independent state of Pakistan. In his judgement in the Shah Bano case in 1985 (see fn.19) Judge Chandrachud not only ruled in favour of Shah Bano but used the opportunity to condemn Islamic Personal Law--prompting massive demonstrations in favour of Muslim solidarity (Calman, 1992; Kishwar, 1986; R. Kumar, 1993).
The tensions between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims are illustrated by M. Hasan (1996) who describes the context of sectarianism in colonial Lucknow. He notes how each sect would attempt to solicit the support of first the British and subsequently the Indian National Congress in attempts to disadvantage the other. Relative cooperation was achieved for a time as both sects threw their support behind the Muslim League and the creation of an Islamic state (M. Hasan, 1996).

I. Ahmad (1978) notes that the Prophet Muhammad became the cornerstone of evolving ideas of Islamic nobility. Distinction was conveyed on those who could claim descent from the Quraysh, the Prophet's tribe. Likewise, those of Arab descent are considered superior to non-Arabs.

Muslims and Hindus practice various forms and degrees of purdah. According to Vatuk (1982) for Hindu women purdah generally involves veiling in front of affinal males older than one's husband. Muslim women, in contrast, must ideally be veiled in front of all non-related men. In practice, however, these "rules" are much less rigid than Vatuk implies and are manipulated by women in various ways (Raheja, 1994; Omvedt, 1975; Sharma, 1985; Hale, 1988).

Although the Kutchi word for purdah would be transliterated as paḍḍā, I have used the widely recognised form, purdah, throughout the text.

With the immanent cleavage of Hindu India from Muslim Pakistan, Muslim women's issues tended to be eclipsed by those of Muslim nationalism. After 1947 those Muslims remaining in India represented a newly depleted, disempowered minority of questionable loyalties—a situation that has perhaps prevented more widespread support for women's issues (R. Kumar, 1993).

With the rise of religious fundamentalism in India during the 1930's, both Muslims and Hindus sought to blame the other for the adoption of customs which contributed to their perceived moral decline. Hindu's, for example, blamed (and continue to blame) the Moghuls for the introduction of purdah to India despite evidence that the practice neither originated with Islam, nor was absent from India prior to the arrival of the first Muslims (Forbes, 1981; I. Ahmad, 1983, p.xxv, fn.7).

Shah Bano was an elderly Muslim woman who appealed to the Indian courts for maintenance from her estranged husband in 1978. The Supreme court decision of 1985 upheld Shah Bano's right to maintenance under both the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC 125) and Muslim personal law. In his judgement, Judge Chandrachud condemned Islamic Personal Law as immoral—prompting massive pro-Shariat demonstrations by Muslims and inflaming communal tensions. As a result in 1992 the Babri Masjid, a Muslim mosque reputedly built on the site of the birthplace of Rama in Ayodhya, was demolished by angry Hindus (Calman, 1992; Kishwar, 1986; R. Kumar, 1993).

While Indian Muslim women's subjectivity has rarely been examined, Hindu women's lives and motives have increasingly been explored from their points of view (Raheja & Gold, 1994; Wadley, 1994; R. Kumar, 1993; N. Kumar, 1994).

Dying too has been examined in relation to the functional structure of Indonesian cultural life, see Hoskins (1989); Heringa (1989).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a review of all the available literature on women and textiles. Some outstanding examples however include Weiner & Schneider's edited volume Cloth and Human Experience (1989) as well as Niessen, 1985; Hendrikson, 1996; Schevill, Berlo & Dwyer, 1991.

For the Indian history of textile technology, see Varadarajan, 1983a; 1983b; 1984; 1986; Irwin & Schwartz, 1966; for textile trade, see Parikh-Burua, 1988; Gittinger, 1982; Irwin 1959; 1949, and for the impact of British made, industrially produced cloth, see Harnetty, 1991; Ludden, 1988, and T. Roy, 1996; 1999.

Bismillah's The Song of the Loom (1996) is a fictional account of the socio-political solidarity forged between a group of low caste Muslim weavers in Banaras.

Many studies of women's textiles link textile skill with industriousness and therefore, desirability. Vexler (1976) proposes, for example, that among rural Mexican women small, neat stitches signify a woman's worth as a potential mate (see also Cate, 1994; Weir, 1989). These accounts, however, do not acknowledge that women's skills may also be directed at producing objects that are valued by men and seen as necessary for the maintenance of life. Berlo's (1991) discussion of how Mayan women weave the textiles which allow certain male rituals to take place is therefore exceptional (see also Chaussonnet, 1988; Eger, 1978).
32 According to Williams (1981) Gulam Shah's revenge was not as dramatic as popular accounts portray. He notes that a serious earthquake in 1819 caused the Indus to be cut off from Kutch while a depression formed which filled with salt water, causing the Rann to be submerged and Banni to become an island in its midst.

33 According to Mutwa Basheer, his ancestors did not settle immediately upon arrival in Banni. Likely they shifted back and forth across the Rann with their herds, settling in Banni only after being granted land by Rao Desalji (Godeji's grandson).

34 This account is based on the two interviews made of Abbas and supplemented by versions published in Williams (1958/1981) and Campbell (1880).

35 Burton mentions the Shikari or Dapher—a "race" of "huntsmen" inhabiting the area near Omerkot and the Thurr who are neither Muslim nor Hindu although they observe some Muslim rituals and utilise Mullahs or their own Bhopas (1851/1973, p.307). Although unconfirmed, it is likely the Vadha living in Banni are descendants of these adivasi groups.

36 Makran Dada is said to have traversed the Rann with a dog and donkey offering guidance and water to those who had lost their way. The symbolic implication of his assistance is certainly not lost on those who continue to offer prayers to him. It is mainly the Hindu Rabari and Ahir who attend his annual festival and make offerings at his temple in Dhrang. Although my Mutwa informants knew the story of Makran Dada, predictably in light of their Ahl-al-Hadith leanings, they do not accord him any particular importance.

37 There were three major camel routes across the Rann to destinations in Sindh and Thar. Used mainly during the dry winter months they were: 1. Nara to Luna in W. Banni → Rahim-ki-bazar (near Ali Bandar on the Kori river); 2. Sumraser, W Pacham → Balari in Thar; 3. Island of Bela → Nagar. There were also a number of overland routes, passable by cart from Eastern Kutch Palanpur and Ahmedabad in Gujarat, as well as routes for pack bullocks linking Eastern Kutch to Marwar and Ujain in Rajasthan (for lists of trade routes and goods, see Appendix I).

38 See Wong (1997) for a discussion of how supplies of opium were re-routed through different ports in order to avoid the British control (see also fn. 42).

39 Visiting Kutch shortly after it joined the Indian Union in 1956, Williams noted that

- gone were the days when Mandvi argosies brought bullion, dates, grain, timber, rhinoceros hides, cardamons, pepper, ginger, silks, and drugs from Malabar, Mocha, Muscat and the African coast, taking in return the cotton, cloth, sugar, oil, butter and alum of Kutch and its hinterland, which extended into Sind, Jesalmer, Marwar and Gujarat; when the elephant tusks imported for the skilful ivory-carvers of Bhuj and Mandvi were sometimes so long that the bullock carts carrying them stuck in the narrow streets winding between the many-storied stone houses; when the rich merchant fleet-owners of Mandvi would climb the lofty tower near the lighthouse... on the seaward fortifications, staking fortunes upon whose ship in the Suvali (African) fleet which sailed in October and returned in May, would first be sighted, laden with eagerly-expected goods from Zanzibar (1958/1981, p.41-42).

40 Gittinger (1982) makes a similar point although with reference to Gujarati rather than Kutchi textiles. Without meaning to overly force the distinction, Kutchi textile producers, being predominantly Khatri Muslims from Sindh, may have catered more directly to Muslim tastes than their Hindu counterparts elsewhere in Gujarat. During the 18th century textile production in Gujarat was reorganised to meet the demands of the European traders who set up factories in Surat, Broach and Cambay near Ahmedabad (I have not found references to European factories in Kutch). The delicate chinoiserie prints on white backgrounds the Europeans favoured were developed and produced in Gujarat in association with Europeans (Irwin, 1959b). In a slightly different context, Steiner (1985) has discussed how European cloth traders struggled to compete with Indian producers in West Africa during the 19th century.

41 Local Kutchi and Sindhi women used ivory for rings and especially bracelets. The Rabari, for example, used to wear large hourglass shaped ivory bracelets called cudo (Jain, 1980, ill. 92). Sindhi women, particularly among the Rajputs, wore multiple ivory bangles, graded in size over the length of their forearms (and sometimes upper arms) (T. Postons, 1843/1973). Bracelet makers were called chudgars or maniars, could be either Muslim or Hindu and operated in Bhuj, Mandvi, and Anjar (Patel, 1971, p.160; Campbell, 1880, p.127)
42 'Deindustrialization' of the textile industry in India and Indian craftspersons' responses has been discussed at length by Harnetty (1991; see also Irwin's (1995) discussion of historic changes to Gujarati production. Interestingly, although it has been suggested that spinning was more or less extinct by 1825 (Bean, 1989, p.361), Campbell notes that there were 200 Muslim "families" from Marwar engaged in cotton spinning in Bhuj at the time of writing his account. (1880, p. 125). Although he does not give further details about them, it suggests that British yarns had not supplanted spinning as completely as suggested by Bean above.

43 Though moved by political expediency, the British were also interested in exploring the Indus and determining its commercial possibilities (noted in T. Postans 1843/1973). Q. Ahmad notes that the British had their first glimpse of Sindh when Alexander Burnes of the Bombay Army (whose brother Dr James Burnes had been called from Kutch to treat one of the Amirs in 1827— see J. Burnes, 1829/1974) inspected the territory while carrying gifts from the British monarch to the Amirs (1994).

44 Wong notes that although the annexation of Sindh has traditionally been viewed as a strategic move, buffering British interests in India from Afghanistan and Iran, opium may also have played a significant role. By the early years of the nineteenth century the British controlled the Bengal opium trade to China. A rival source, produced in Malwa in the independent states of Central India, was traded initially through British controlled Bombay ports until the fees attached to its transport were raised excessively. Traders responded by re-routing Malwa opium through Sindh and Portuguese controlled Damon and Diu thereby avoiding British controlled areas and fees. By annexing Sindh, the British hoped to control the trade of opium to China and, through the collection of fees, add needed revenue to its coffers (Wong, 1997).

45 A case in point concerns the promise of water from the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project on the Narmada River flowing through eastern Gujarat. The controversial dam project was promoted by the Gujarat Government as a means of providing water to some of the driest areas of Gujarat including Kutch. This would have involved an extensive network of canals extending some 300 miles. It is now generally held that Kutch will not benefit from the waters of the Narmada, that the plan was logistically problematic, environmentally unsound and likely to cause untold devastation to those displaced by the dam (L. Mehta, 1996; Wood, 1993; Fisher, 1995; Morse & Berger, 1992). This was not the first time water was promised to Kutch by a Government that later renounced the plan (see L. Mehta, 1996).

46 Kutchi is the distinct dialect spoken (though not written) in Kutch, which developed in association with Sindhi and Gujarati. Although it is not recognised as a standard language by the Linguistic Survey of India, because of its local importance, it has been included in Census of India surveys since 1961. Although Gujarati is the language of commerce and administration in Kutch, Kutchi predominates in rural and domestic spheres (Patel, 1971, p.126).

47 The Megvars are low caste Hindu leatherworkers who traditionally depended on the Muslim Maldhari for the raw materials of their craft and patronage. With shifts to the local economy since Independence, however, the Megvars are less economically dependent on the Maldhari. Many have taken to raising cattle themselves or supplementing their craft incomes with other work. Skins of the Maldhari's animals are still the prerogative of the Megvar but they must supplement their supplies with purchased, already tanned leather which they turn into sandals, bags, frames and other goods for sale to local residents and tourists.

48 Although Desalji was officially the ruler of Kutch, he inherited his position when still a child from his father who was deposed by the British. Raised to rule under their care, he assumed his official duties during the 1830's (Williams, 1958/1981).

49 It is likely the conditions of Desalji's agreement with the Mutwa (and other groups in Banni) were aimed not only at populating the area but contributing needed revenue to his coffers (Williams, 1958/1981, p.p. 133).

50 Although it was once possible to grow rice in the area, after the diversion of the Indus (jointly effected by Gulam Shah in the mid 18th century and a devastating earthquake in 1819), agriculture became virtually impossible as well as illegal. According to a Government of Gujarat report, Banni is 'owned' by the government, however, it acknowledges the Maldhari's "customary" right to utilise the grasslands of Banni. This right, established by Desalji II, as well as the prohibition on agriculture, may have been a means of restricting future claims to the land (GoG, 1989, p.66).

51 The remaining four months were devoted to producing cloths for Hindu groups including the Rabari whose needs were greatest around the time of Jan Mashtami, Krishna's birthday, celebrated in late August. Whether Muhammadbhai had the 'right' to serve the Maldhari, as Fischer and Shah have described for the Muslim potters of Anjar in Kutch (1987) is unclear.
52 Rumours of smuggling surround many individuals and border communities in Kutch none of which I have been able to substantiate.

53 Although local individuals pass through the checkpoints without incident (or slowing down), foreigners are regularly stopped and asked to produce the proper documentation. Until the winter of 2000, all foreign visitors to the border areas were required to apply for permission to visit from the District Security Police (DSP). Certain areas were strictly prohibited (i.e. Haji Pir, Lakhpat, and Koteshwar) from foreign visitors. Landscape photography, for obvious reasons, is prohibited. Although I was never denied permission to conduct my research, I was warned that during periods of local fighting or political tension between India and Pakistan, the DSP prevents visitors to the 'sensitive' border areas.

54 The difficulties faced by contemporary Rabari pastoralists are vividly described by Davidson in her travel account, Desert Places (1996).

55 Khadeeja noted that one of these was ḍhāruv, the preferred material for bhungo’s roofs. Over the last 25 years, ḍhāruv became increasingly difficult to find in Banni. Although other grasses may be used, they are not as long lasting or as resilient to insects as ḍhāruv. Those who can afford to do so now prefer tiled roofs.

56 Perhaps indicative of this shift towards a market economy was the introduction of milk as a commodity. The Maldhari did not traditionally sell milk—it was considered akin to the blood of the Maldhari and consumed locally. With the demise of royal patronage, their new accessibility, the growth of urban markets, and increasingly frequent periods of drought, aluminium milk cans tied to the roofs of the rickety orange Gujarat State Transport buses that grind along the back roads of Banni, became a common sight.

57 The two groups have remained separate with few ties to each other.

58 The Ahl-al-Hadith is a South Asian Islamic reform movement often confused with Wahhābism. The Wahhābī movement, founded by Muhammad ibn-‘Abd-al-Wahhāb (1703-1792), strove to purify eighteenth century Arabian Islam of superstition and corrupted beliefs. Though similar reformist ideas were prevalent throughout the Muslim world in the 18th century, Wahhābīsm was restricted to Arabia. The excessive violence and destruction of holy monuments in Hijaz that was associated with the latter phases of the movement was widely condemned by Muslims (Nadvi, 1987). The British, concerned about the threats Islamic reformers posed to their authority in India, branded the various Indian reformers “Wahhābī” in an effort to discredit them (Nadvi, 1987; Q.Ahmad, 1994). The Ahl-al-Hadith was a splinter group that developed from the specialised study of the hadīs (word of the Prophet) introduced to India by Shah Walli-Allah in the early 19th century. The Ahl-al-Hadith was one of a number of neo-traditionalist reform movements developing in the second half of the 19th century, characterised by an “exclusive and comparatively uncritical preoccupation with the traditional corpus of the hadīs” (A. Ahmad, 1967, p.114). The Ahl-al-Hadith rejected the authority of the four established Islamic juristic schools in favour of the Qur’ān, hadīs and sunna (practice) of the Prophet. (A. Ahmad, 1967).

59 Though the Mutwa offered the same hospitality to all their visitors, it always seemed that more stress was associated with the entertainment of Indian tourists. It was when a taxi or jeep-load of Indian male tourists pulled up to the village that the Mutwa women most stringently observed purdah, when the tea would be brought by one of the men rather than the woman who made it. Decidedly 'other' and outside the network of competing local relationships, foreign males were avoided by the women though not as stringently.

60 Unbeknownst to me at the time I was re-enacting cultural preferences that had coloured the export market for Indian textiles to Europe two hundred years ago. Irwin notes that it was not until Indian artisans started producing coloured designs on white backgrounds (as opposed to reserved white designs on coloured backgrounds) that Indian painted textiles gained popularity in Europe (Irwin, 1955, p.14).

61 Unlike Mutwa men who wear white cloth for any special occasion, Mutwa women only wear white when they marry, when they make the Hajj, and after they die. Although Hajjis are permitted to continue wearing white, the only female Mutwa Hajji I knew reverted to her traditional dress upon returning to India. Like Mutwa men and Muslims generally, Mutwa women are buried in white clothes.

62 Partial exceptions to this are the Jats who speak Batauchi.

63 Like groups in both Sindh and Banni, the Mutwa prefer to embroider with seven colours: rāṭṭo (red), nīn (green), pīrū (yellow), kessār (orange), mawo asman (blue), achno (white), and kārō (black). Schimmel notes that Sufis associate seven colours with mystical visions: green represents paradise, dark blue is the ascetic’s colour, red represents life, health, blood, and yellow represents weakness (1994).
While this echoes the complex geometric designs that characterise Islamic arts generally, in Banni it also suggests a moral work ethic I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6.

65 See Jain, (1980, page 27, fig. 39) for an illustration of a copal from Saurashtra.

66 Ajrakh is the name used for the printed cotton cloths once widely used by Muslim men across both Sindh and Kutch. They are blockprinted, often on both sides, with intricate patterns reminiscent of Islamic tile-work. They are most frequently dyed with indigo, madder, and iron rust and are made by the Muslim Khatri clan. Ajraks were traditionally sewn into large squares measuring about 2.5 x 2.5m and used as shoulder cloths or turbans. Considered prohibitively expensive, they are seldom worn by local men today (Varadarajan, 1983b, Cousins, 1989)

67 See Schneider on polyester and prejudice (1994).

68 The 'prick and pounce' method involves tracing a design onto some sort of sturdy paper or card and prickling the design lines with a pin. Positioning the prepared paper over the fabric, powdered colour is rubbed through the holes transferring the design to the cloth surface. Similar to waxed paper, in Kutch "butter-paper" is commonly used with a mixture of kerosene and chalk. This method leaves little white dots on the fabric that are later washed away.

69 Mashru, originally a silk faced, cotton backed supplementary warp fabric, was developed to help Muslim nobles circumvent traditional proscriptions on wearing silk. According to Bayly (1986), silk was thought to interfere with prayers. Mashru was widely used across Kutch although it has fallen out of fashion among most of the Muslims. Although some cotton and silk or rayon mashru continues to be made, synthetic fabrics printed with mashru patterns are increasingly popular.

70 Although Mutwa kanjar and kanjaru designs are distinctive, gaj designs are closely linked with the other Muslim clans residing in Banni and Sindh. Askari and Grill note that gaj is the Sindhi word used to described an embroidered blouse front (1997), not denote a wedding blouse in particular.

71 The manji is always located opposite the doorway in bhungos. In the more recently constructed, concrete-block houses, the manji may be located elsewhere but always forms an important focal point in the room. See Pandya (1998) for a discussion of Megvar houses and quilts elsewhere in Banni.

72 See also Bayly on khilat (1986).

73 Although most of the Mutwa villages have their own agevan, some are considered more highly ranked than others. The agevan of Dhordo was, until recently, Abbas, whose lineage, the Mutwa-Morana, are considered to be the "first" Mutwa family— a claim nevertheless disputed by the agevan of Gorewali. There is considerable competition between the two families— my own presence served to enhance the prestige of the former. The latter is rumoured to be looking for opportunities for his daughters to learn English from a foreigner.

74 The acho odhni, only worn by brides, represents one of the few times Mutwa women wear white. Other times include while visiting Mecca and at death. Women who have made the haj are entitled to wear white, however, I did not observe any Mutwa women who chose to do so.

75 A hajam or barber usually performs this role outside of Banni. Because there are no hajam in Banni, Vadha men and women are recruited to assist with the wedding preparations. These usually involve cleaning and setting up tents or equipment. The Vadha do not cook at Mutwa weddings. The money and gifts collected during the gote are intended as 'payment' for the Vadhas' assistance.

76 Following the terrible dartikum (earthquake) of January 2001, bhungos are likely to enjoy a new popularity. Compared to the more modern, rectangular concrete-block structures, bhungos withstood the 7.9 quake admirably, apparently because of their round shape. According to Ammar, even if a bhungo should topple, the bricks fall outward rather than inward. In Dhordo, only one bhungo was damaged and there were no casualties. Following the quake, Khadeeja and Ammar's sons have started a new business manufacturing specially designed curved concrete-blocks for bhungos.

77 Since the early 70's Moosa has been using chitri kam to embellish offices and other commercial spaces (see Chapter 5)

78 Though the notion of 'filling' is manifest in distinctive ways in Banni, the idea of complementary goods (especially textiles and jewellery) being exchanged at weddings, symbolising the creative and procreative union of bride and groom has been widely noted, particularly for South and Southeast Asia (Hoskins, 1989; Heringa, 1989).
79 See Appadurai, 1986

80 Bouhdiba notes that the Arabic word wudu also refers to 'embellishment' and comes from wadha, which means beauty (1975/1985). While I can not argue for the relations between Kutchi terms, certainly the connection between women's beauty, ornaments and morality is also common in Urdu (see Metcalf (1992) on Thanawi's _Bihisht Zevar_, which means, 'heavenly ornaments').

81 Traditionally the Mutwa purchased tie dyed cotton odhnis from the Khattris of Dhamardka or Khavda who produced specific designs to suit their Muslim and Hindu clients. Tie-dyed odhnis are becoming increasingly rare as inexpensive, machine printed synthetic versions have become widely available in the market. For whatever reason, designs originally only worn by Hindus (including animals and humans) are now purchased and worn by Muslims. I saw many odhnis with representations of gopis and elephants given at weddings and worn by young women. Maysoon pointed out, however, that they do not wear them when performing their prayers.

82 Muslims follow a lunar calendar consequently holy days and festivals are precipitated by the phases of the moon and shift relative to the solar calendars followed by Hindus and Christians. In 1998, for example, Ramzan coincided with the month of January, in 1999 it began in late December.

83 The five pillars of Islam are: 1) the profession of faith (shahada) "there is no god but God (Allah) and Muhammad is the messenger of God", 2) prayer (salat; namaz), 3) almsgiving (zakat), 4) the month-long fast of Ramzan, 5) pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) (Esposito, 1988).

84 Muslims typically give a percentage of their wealth as alms every year—usually 2.5%. Khadeeja explained that she has a list of the weight and value of each piece of jewellery she owns (about Rs. 50,000) which factors into how much her family gives out in alms every year.

85 As Muslims, the Mutwa only eat halal (permitted) foodstuffs. Pork and animals not killed in the appropriate fashion are considered haram and are avoided. Although beef is permitted, the Mutwa continue to observe an agreement made with Desalji II not to kill or eat cow in return for their land. Meat is eaten only occasionally and then preference is given to men and children. Milk, buttermilk, and dahi (yoghurt) are regularly consumed, preventing protein deficiency and probably contributing to the Mutwa's reputation for longevity and strength.

86 For a discussion of the differences between Muslim and Hindu forms of purdah in South Asia see Vatuk (1982).

87 It is also reminiscent of the front opening of the caps Sindhi men traditionally wear. For a brief analysis of the motifs shared by women's jewellery, embroidery and tombs in Sindh, see Bunting (1980).

88 See also Frater (1975) and, for a critical analysis of folk motifs and protection, see Tarlo (1996, p.226-228).

89 Khatri Ismail Mohammad Siddik, personal communication.

90 Unfortunately I have not found any Mutwa examples of this. Askari and Crill include a detail of a skirt border, dated to the early 20th century and made by Hindu Lohanas of Lower Sindh. This skirt has a similar pattern to the one the Mutwa call ghana however it is worked with different stitches (1997, ill. 15, p. 17). Given the long association of Hindu, adivasi and Muslim groups in Lower Sindh and Kutch, it is likely that patterns (and stitches) were broadly shared though given different names and attributions. In his slim volume on the textile collection of the Indian Museum of Calcutta, Mukhopadhyay (1983) includes two photographs of similarly embroidered salwar. They are listed as being made in "Cutch" and having been collected in 1918 (fig.12. & fig. 13, no page). Each piece is embroidered with a band similar to the one described above with a row of stepped 'mausoleums' arranged in front of a row of triangular 'mountains'. While no further information is provided in either account, they support the date I have suggested above.

91 Neighbouring Jat women (semi-nomadic Muslim cattleherders) embroider only a few of the intricate bodices used to embellish their dress-like garments (chori). A woman may have only one or two such garments at any time during her life—patching them, re-stitching them, even sending them to local Khatri dyers to overdye and 'refresh' them (also noted in T. Postans, 1843/1973). Prior to settling in their present villages eight generations ago, the Mutwa were, like the Jats, also nomadic or semi-nomadic cattleherders whose women, likely, possessed little time or capital to invest in embroidery beyond a required minimum.
Although Muslims are not the only ones to make counted thread embroideries, and have produced their share of curvilinear work, some of the finest counted thread embroideries can be attributed to Muslims from across this region. Consider, for example, the intricate two-sided embroideries of the Hazara, (Morrell, 2000; Paine, 1990) Palestinian embroidery (Weir, 1989), Turkeman embroidery (Kalter, 1984), Swat and Indus Kohistan embroideries (Askari & Crill, 1997). The orchestrated 'fit' between Islam and geometry, a 'fit' that goes beyond iconoclasm, has been widely noted for architecture and calligraphy, but still needs to be examined in relation to folk and women's arts, including embroidery.

See for example, Goswamy (1993) on embroideries for the Moghuls, Gupta (1996) for professionally made zardozi embroideries, Irwin & Hall (1973) for chamba rumals and export embroideries.

Tarlo notes a similar ambiguity amongst Kharek embroiderers in Saurashtra (1996).

Askari and Crill make a similar analysis of a Sindhi Megvar (S=Meghwar) marriage shawl (1997, ill. 26, p. 24-25).


See also Paine, 1990.

See also Rubin (1988) for further information on tattooing in Saurashtra and among tribal peoples in Eastern Gujarat.

The Mutwa do not acknowledge kinship with the Jats. The Jats use of the Baluchi language and characteristic dress suggests their descent from Baluchistan rather than Sindh. The Mutwa, while they admired the embroidery skill of Jat women, often alluded to how dirty and ignorant they were. The Banni Jats are barely settled and desperately poor. Many work for the Mutwa as grasscutters.

I have not been able to discover the derivation of the Mutwa's Punjabi suit. Its cut and overall form are considerably different from the suits commonly worn in the Indian Punjab. Urban Muslims in Kutch and elsewhere would not likely wear such a fitted dress, preferring loose cut salwar kameez (as do the few young urban Mutwa). The Mutwa however consider this "Musalmani" dress— more modest and more modern than their previous styles.

This shift may have been motivated by the price of tie-dyed fabrics relative to synthetic materials. Barwar used 12 meters of expensive hand-dyed cloth. Suthan use only 2.5m of synthetic cloth.

An exception to this observation is the wearing, during the wedding, of two odhnis. One of these, the acho odhni, is a white veil often (though not always) embellished with a band of embroidery worked on black cloth. This veil is only worn during the wedding.

For example the pedapati, see Chapter 3.

For a discussion of a women's economy in the Punjab region of Pakistan, see Eglar, 1960.

Schneider notes that Sicilian women used embroidery as an economic buffer, protecting them from the uncertainty of the shifting economy of the late 19th century (1980).

Salvador has noted how the appliqued molas made by the Cuna women of the San Blas Islands of Panama, serve as a means of absorbing excess wealth into channels readily available to all Cuna women. To the egalitarian-minded Cuna, the skills associated with mola-making are widely accessible and easily learned, limiting accumulation of wealth and social stratification (1976).

Young Gujarati women frequently wear chania choli for special occasions as well as for dancing during the annual Navratri festival. They consist of a long, wide A-line skirt with a tight fitting, waist length blouse. Loosely based on folk costume, the most sought after chania choli are richly embroidered, preferably by rural women. Navratri is a festival unique to Gujarat and features nine nights of dancing with sticks called dandiya ras. Both men and women compete during the festival winning prizes for best dancing and best costume. The Mutwa, although their embroidery is frequently worn for these festivals, do not participate.

Census of India, 1961, Volume V-Gujarat, Part VII-A, Selected Crafts of Gujarat. This section included twelve monographs of crafts selected from across Gujarat. Ironically, none of the monographs focused on crafts practised in Kutch and only one focused on a craft dominated by women (crochet work of Jamnagar). The crafts featured included: the agate industry of Cambay, woodcarving, Patara making at Bhavnagar, Ivory work of Mahuva, Padlock making at Sarva, scale making at Savarkundla, perfumery at Palanpur, crochet work of Jamnagar, Sujani weaving at Broach, Soap making at Kapadvanj, Mashru weaving at Patan and glass work at Kapadvanj.
109 Havell (1912); Bean (1989); Bayly (1986).

110 For example: Gujari, the retail arm of Gujarat Handicrafts. The National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad spearheaded ethnographic research on craft traditions in Gujarat with its first publication, *Rural craftsmen and their work: Equipment and techniques in the Mer village of Ratardi in Saurashtra, India* (Fischer & Shah, 1970). Nanavati *et al* followed with a survey of embroidery and beadwork in 1966 in conjunction with the Department of Archaeology, MS University in Baroda. In 1977 the Shreyas Folk Museum was opened in Ahmedabad, built largely on folk textiles collected in Kutch and Western Gujarat during the early 1970's. To date, Jain's (1980) catalogue to the collection, *Folk Art and Culture of Gujarat* is the most complete survey of Gujarati folk textiles.

111 In an ambitious monograph published by the Gujarat Department of Archaeology, Nanavati, Vora and Dhaky note the unfortunate effect new immigrants from Sindh and new ideas from the West were having on traditional folk embroideries (1966, p. 31). Recalling the threats to traditional industries voiced during the Quit India movement, they complained that new stitches and motifs, introduced from outside, had "practically invaded" and had virtually ousted "all the fine surviving indigenous traditions" (ibid).

112 One group that has taken to collecting folk textiles from the villagers is the low caste Hindu Vaghari. Itinerant vegetable sellers, the Vaghari possessed extensive knowledge of village conditions and family situations and have been able to purchase textiles that might not (readily) be offered up for sale. They sell their embroideries to dealers or tourist shops in Bhuj or send them to kin in Ahmedabad where they are sold at a popular tourist market (see Tarlo, 1991). The Vaghari collect mainly from eastern Kutch among the Rabari and Ahir. There are a number of individuals involved in collecting and selling folk textiles to urban dealers. Often a male relative will bring goods to town for sale although groups of women, especially Rabari women, are increasingly common. The Rabari have recently banned embroidery in an effort to enhance their social status and reduce dowry costs (see Edwards, 1996) consequently Rabari embroidery has flooded the market.

113 Although beyond the scope of my thesis, it should be mentioned that the growing tourist industry with Europe and particularly Japan has had a significant impact on what is sought by these merchants and prices they are able to command for different textiles. Japanese clients are said to pay almost any price for tie-dyed fabrics but are uninterested in embroidered (particularly folk embroidered) textiles.

114 On a trip to Rapar in north-east Kutch I was able to visit a factory run by a local Jain businessman (who's brothers are textile dealers operating a gallery in Bhuj). The factory imports scraps of embroidery from Saurashtra and Rajasthan and employs local Ahir women to turn them into various household textiles and garments which are sold in Bhuj as well as the tourist markets in Delhi. The pieces of embroidery are generally glued in place on a backing by one of the (male) designers before the women roughly stitch the edges in place. Ahir women, whose traditional blouses and skirts were at one time crowded with finely stitched embroidery no longer wear embroidery nor make it for themselves.

115 The local market for these goods is largely seasonal in Gujarat. The festival of Navratri is particular to Gujarat and immediately precedes Diwali (the Hindu festival of light, New Years). It involves nine nights of folk dancing with urban revellers donning 'folk' costumes. While some are able to purchase (or rent) authentic costumes, most others either make or make up their own outfits. In Bhuj several young men I met annually raided their sister's closets seeking brightly coloured saris and scarves to wear as sashes and turbans. Articles of clothing made of patched pieces of embroidery are popular choices for Navratri dancing parties.

116 See Tarlo for an analysis of India's 'ethnic chic' (1996). Growing Euro-American interest in 'women's traditional arts' fostered by the crafts revival and feminist movement of the 60's and 70's has likely also contributed to interest in Kutchi textiles. It is not surprising that the first sustained, ethnographic study of folk embroidery in Kutch would be conducted during the early 1970's by the American, Judy Frater, who has now spent over 25 years studying the embroidery of the Rabari of Kutch (1975; 1992; 1993). Elson's (1979) widely circulated catalogue to the 1977 exhibition at the Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, *Dowries from Kutch: A women's folk art tradition in India* has contributed to this interest as have Hacker & Turnbull, 1982; Gillow & Barnard, 1991; Dhamija, 1985; Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1986. More recently, fashion houses in Europe and the U.S have showcased 'neo-primitive' looks drawing heavily on the tattoos, jewellery, and embroidery of folk women in Western India.

117 Firdoos and Hameeda have also begun to save pieces of old embroidery. When the occasional old piece is brought for sale to Dhordo, one or the other will often buy it outright and keep it aside. Some are sold at inflated prices; others are stored for posterity—something that will inevitably bring the women a new sort of prestige within the community.
The money she earns from embroidering is hers to use as she wants. Her daughter once explained that money made from one's own hands, as opposed to interest or commissions, is 'good' and can be used for such noble purposes as travelling to Mecca. Other money is 'bad' and cannot or should not be used for this purpose.

Muslim women are not precluded from participating in business ventures, in fact, South Asian reformists' texts from this century have encouraged them to become economically self-sufficient (Thanawi in Metcalf, 1992). Purdah, however, restricts the form of women's participation in business ventures, tending to restrict them to home-based businesses especially as pieceworkers. Such activities, because they are perceived as extensions of women's domestic duties and occur within the home, are considered culturally appropriate. While their public invisibility in business protects their family and personal honour, they are often unacknowledged as legitimate workers and therefore often do not receive the same rights or wages others do (Mies, 1982; Wilkinson-Weber, 1999). Wealthier Muslim women have historically participated in a variety of business ventures through intermediaries who have included eunuchs, specially trained female retainers, elderly women, male relatives and possibly children (Hamiby, 1998).

Distinctive speech patterns have been noted for women in various locations in South Asia (K=reyāl; H=kari boi; U=begamat zuhar) (see Raheja, 1994; Minault, 1994; 1986). Although embroidery operates within a gendered sphere and is similarly idiomatic, intimate, and contextually variable, the analogy between textiles and language is problematic. Despite the frequency with which textiles are compared to language (Maines, 1974; Messick, 1987; March, 1983), they do not make meaning in the same syntactical fashion as language (Niessen, 1994; McCracken, 1987).

This has been suggested for women embroiderers elsewhere by Egar (1978), Chausonnet, (1988), and Berlo, (1991). Weaving and dying practices have been more thoroughly studied than embroidery and have suggested strong connections between textile processes, women, and cosmology across many if not most cultures (see Niessen, 1985; Schneider, 1987; Weiner & Schneider, 1989; Hendrickson, 1996; Schevill, Berlo & Dwyer, 1991). Although they do not discuss women's roles in particular depth, Cohn (1989), Bayly (1986), and especially D. Mehta's (1997) recent ethnographic work among Muslim weavers near Delhi, discuss and demonstrate the moral integrity of textile production in South Asia.


My thoughts here are inspired by Abu Lughod (1990). Surely the resurgence of veiling among women in the Middle East and their defence of it suggest that, at least this aspect of purdah, cannot be reduced merely to gender or class issues. As Neuburger (1997) and Najmabadi (1993) have suggested, veiling has political and especially nationalistic overtones. I am suggesting, moreover, that purdah has a moral dimension for women that has often been overlooked.

René Descartes (1596-1650) was a metaphysician and natural scientist with a strong interest in mathematics. Central to his metaphysics was the problem of the union of the mind (thinking substance or soul) and body. He believed that there are two fundamentally different types of existing things, thinking and extended substances or souls and matter. Only souls can reason and therefore know—extended substances he believed were merely subject to mechanical laws (Urmson and Réé, 1989). According to Code, the dualism implicit in Descartes' notion of the body, privileged reason at the expense of the emotions or the senses, both of which were thought to distract reason from its proper course (1991).

Marriage, for example, is necessary (for men and women) in order to fulfil their prescribed roles. Asceticism is not recommended and was seldom practised except among the Sufis (Boudhiba, 1985).

Schimmel notes the symbolic importance of mothers, of longing, suffering and devotion and points to the higher value placed on the unquestioning faith of an old woman than the reasoned arguments of scholars (1997).

Islamization is the tendency among Muslim groups to adhere more strictly to the tenets of Islam. Like its conceptual cousin Sanskritization (Srinivas, 1957; Pocock, 1973), it can be interpreted as a means for individuals and groups to cope with uncertainty and enhance status.

Although I did not repeatedly request to photograph them, Khadeeja and several other female members of the Mutwa-Morana eventually allowed me to do so provided the images were not published or shown beyond the circle of my immediate family.


I never mentioned the incident in Dhordo until one day I caught the young lady alone, feeling a little blue. I whispered the story to her as she covered her face in embarrassment—and pleasure.
In a similar vein, see Berger (1965/1980) on the inherent disappointment of viewing animals in zoos.

Ironically, the quilt’s story did not end in Dhordo. Transported to town and semi-transformed by the dhobi (washerperson) a Japanese colleague noticed it and offered to purchase it for several times the price I’d paid. By this point, however, I’d grown rather attached to it, symbolising as it did so many conflicting systems of value and my relationship with the Mutwa.

Schneider notes a similar phenomenon with respect to changes in the Sicilian economy (1980).

Previous generations of embroiderers marked design areas with thread—a technique unknown to all but a few old women.

I have noted this tendency widely in Muslim Kutch. Khatri Abdulgafoor, a fabric printer who employs an unusual technique called rogan kam has consciously shifted his work towards a more Mughal appearance. Rogan, which involves fixing coloured castor oil gum to the fabric surface, was made by Abdulgafoor’s father and grandfather for local Maldhari who could not afford embroidery. Historic examples of rogan recall embroidery patterns and tended to be rather simple and crude. Abdulgafoor, with an eye to the Japanese market, has studied Moghul art and architecture and now produces intricate, detailed works of art. Khatri Abdulgafoor was recognised with a National Crafts Award in 1997.

See for example: Dhamija (1989),

Generic in an Islamic sense—the Mutwa point out that the suits now worn by young women are "Islamic dress" and differ from the suits worn elsewhere in India. Interestingly, Muslims living outside of Banni spurn the Banni styles for being too fitted and therefore immodest.

The continuing importance of Sufism in South Asia (Werbner & Basu, 1998) and particularly Sindh has been noted (Schimmel 1997). According to Schimmel, the Qur’an says that “God is the light of the heavens and earth” hence Sufi thought encourages men and women to become ‘men/women of light’ with hearts as unstained mirrors reflecting the Divine Light (1994, p.13). Another ideal promoted by Sufis that may have had special significance to pastoralists such as the Mutwa in a drought-prone area, is of living off light. Fasting, for example, teaches one to live off light (Schimmel, 1994). Although this is a fascinating topic, without further research on the history of the Mutwa in Sindh, I will not speculate further on the impact of Sufism.
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### APPENDIX I

**19TH CENTURY TRADE GOODS AND ROUTES**  
(from Campbell, 1880)

#### OVERSEAS TRADE BETWEEN KUTCH AND

**Karachi:**
- **Exports:** Indian Millet, pulse, chimad seeds, earthen jars, sails, silk, cotton, snuff
- **Imports:** Millet, wheat, rice, gram, rape seed, lotus seed, fruit, ghee, gingelly oil and mats

**Kathiawar**
- **Exports:** gum, cloves, dates, ivory, wax, dyed cloth, mashru (silk and cotton-silk), embroidery, gold and silver work, shields
- **Imports:** wheat, gram, pulse, adad phaseolus mungo, chola vigna catiang, molasses

**Daman, Balsar, other Konkan ports**
- **Exports:** castor oil seed, guvar cyamopsis psoralioides, mag phaseolus radiatus
- **Imports:** rice, gum, khankhan (dyestuff), tuver caajanus indicus, ginger cumin seed, anise seed, suva, timber, cheroots leaves, molasses

**Bombay:**
- **Exports:** alum, white clay, oxide of iron, kanyo (dyestuff), korad phaseolus aconitifolius, cotton, cotton seed, garlic, onions, gugal, balsamodendron mukul, chimad seeds, wool, **embroidery**, gold and silver work
- **Imports:** metals, rice, wheat, spices, sugar, sugarcandy, molasses, cloth, woollens, Euro articles, (carriages, furniture, fireworks, umbrellas, stationary, matches)

**Malabar, Karwar, Cochin**
- **Imports:** timber, coconuts, rice, betel nuts, cardamom, ginger, coffee, pepper, chillies, myrobalam, harda, molasses, snuff, coir, red powder gulal

**Persian Gulf**
- **Exports:** dyed cloth
- **Imports:** dates, wheat, fram, rice, millet, raisins

**Arab Ports**
- **Exports:** mag phaseolus radiatus, tobacco, inferior cotton, dyed cloth
- **Imports:** rock salt, saindhav, red ochre, grain, dates, raisins, pomegranates, dry rose flowers, figs

**African Ports**
- **Exports:** salt, horses, earthen pots, dyed cloth, silk
- **Imports:** chandroz resin, timber, wheat, rice, millet, mag p.r., tobacco, coconuts, cloves, molasses, sugar, wax, ivory

#### OVERLAND TRADE

Inland trade was mainly directed at Omerkote or Thar in Sindh and was conducted by camel over three routes. 1. Nara to Luna in west Banni to Rahim-ki-bazar (near Ali Bandar on the Kori river), Sindh; 2. Sumraser, west Pacham to Baliari in Thar, Sindh, 3. Island of Bela to Nagar, Sindh.

**Other routes:**
- East Kutch to Palanpur and Ahmedabad (by cart)
- East Kutch to Ujain and Marwar (by pack bullocks)

**Sindb**
- **Exports:** alum, dates, coconuts, madder, sugar, molasses, ivory, gold and silver work, **embroidery**, cotton and silk
- **Imports:** carbonate of soda, kharo, rice, millet juvar, sorghum vulgare, maize, sesamum, tumeric, coriander seed, indigo, cheap molasses, lotus seed, babadi, bullocks, buffaloes

**Thar and Parkar, Palanpur**
- **Exports:** dates, coconuts, ginger, betal nuts, pepper, chillies, garlic sugar, molasses, cloth
- **Imports:** millet bajri, penicillaria spicata, mag p.r., tal sesamum indicum, math p.a., guvar c.p., khankhan, gugal, gum, ghee

**Ahmedabad**
- **Exports:** alum, kanyo, ivory, gold and silver work, embroidery
- **Imports:** rice, tobacco, safflower, cumin seed, dry mangos, gold and silver brocade

**Marwar**
- **Exports:** alum, ivory
- **Imports:** dyed cloth
APPENDIX II

MUTWA KINSHIP

2. Nawar    22. Adham     42. Muna
3. Thanaa   23. Wajeela  43. Imaad
7. Maysoon  27. Abdul Ghafoor 47. Sakeena
9. Imaad    29. Tharaa   49. Lamees
11. Aida    31. Maysoon 51. Saeed
12. Yamha   32. Husaam   52. Rabab
17. Basma   37. Fareed   57. Salah
18. Ayoob   38. Suha     58. Adeela
19. Hameeda 39. Fuad
20. Haleema 40. Basheer
APPENDIX II

MUTWA KINSHIP

1. Basheer
2. Nawar
3. Thanaa
4. Nazaaha
5. Nashida
6. Sana
7. Maysoon
8. Saalma
9. Imaad
10. Abbas
11. Aida
12. Yama
13. Baasim
14. Jala
15. Naasih
16. Asma
17. Basma
18. Ayoob
19. Hameeda
20. Haleema
21. Faakhir
22. Adham
23. Wajeha
24. Sameer
25. Naja
26. Firdoos
27. Abdul Ghafoor
28. Jamaal
29. Tharaz
30. Khadeeja
31. Maysoon
32. Husaam
33. Tariq
34. Neema
35. Mutazz
36. Jumaana
37. Fareed
38. Suha
39. Fuad
40. Basheer
41. Nawar
42. Muna
43. Imaad
44. Aasmaa
45. Nadira
46. Nudhar
47. Sakeena
48. Ammar
49. Lamees
50. Widad
51. Saeed
52. Rabab
53. Aroob
54. Aamiz
55. Moosa
56. Malak
57. Salah
58. Adeela

#24

#13

#30 & 48

#27 & 50

#51 & 26

279
### APPENDIX III

#### WEDDING INVENTORIES

**KHADEEJA (MARRIED 1979)**

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<td>digaro</td>
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<td>-kanjari</td>
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<td>clock</td>
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<tr>
<td>bhuli</td>
<td>-gandhi</td>
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<td>gold bundha</td>
<td>-mashru patori</td>
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<td>bholi</td>
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<td>phulli</td>
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<td>2 kothri</td>
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**FIRDOOS (MARRIED 2001)**

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(no nikoti)
APPENDIX IV

ENGLISH EMBROIDERY STITCHES
(after Christie, 1920/1971)

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<th>COUCHING</th>
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<td>APPENDIX IV</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FALSE SATIN STITCH</strong></td>
<td><strong>INTERLACING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OPEN CHAIN STITCH</strong></td>
<td><strong>RUNNING STITCH</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SATIN STITCH</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX V

MUTWA EMBROIDERY STITCHES

Copal
The outline of copal is first stitched with a series of short stitches usually in black (Ill. a-m). Subsequently two rows of open chain stitch are made inside the ovoid shapes between the cross-shaped copal (Ill. o). In the finest copal, a third row of open chain stitch is made between these in a different colour (Ill. p). Subsequently the copals are filled with a few bars of satin stitch usually in white or another light colour and the mirrors are added (Ill. q).
Katari
As in copal, the outline of the motif is stitched first, often with black floss (Ill. a-e). After the grid is stitched, rows of satin stitch are used to fill in the open spaces (Ill. f). A few bars of satin stitch, usually in white, are used to fill the surrounding squares (Ill. g) then mirrors are added to complete the design (Ill. h). Kharak is stitched in a similar fashion although the colours and shape of the grid differ.
**APPENDIX V**

*Pactali*

The mirror is held down with a web of stitches made with regular sewing thread (Ill. a-b). After the mirror is secured, the needle is threaded with embroidery floss and a tight buttonhole stitch is worked through the web of stitches with every third stitch piercing the background fabric (Ill. c-d). In newer embroideries it is now common to surround the embroidered mirror with a second row of buttonhole stitch, worked in the opposite direction and in white (Ill. e-f). Older works surround the mirror with a row of short couched stitches worked in white (Ill. g-h).
Pako Kich

Pako kich begins with an outline of the design worked in an open chain stitch (Ill. a). Design areas are filled in with bands of open chain stitch (Ill. b). Subsequently flowers are added stitched with either cikan or golalo, a row of white baciyo is stitched around the outside edge of the design, and mirrors are added (Ill. c).
Ser Kich
Ser kich is worked in the same way as pakō kich however bands of satin stitch, worked at right angles to the design outline, are used to fill the design areas (Ill. a).
APPENDIX VI

MUTWA QUILT BORDERS
1. KOR
2. TOK
3. BALUR TOK
4. SADHI TOK
5. KONGRI
6. JALIR
APPENDIX VII

MUTWA JEWELLERY

1. Kareo
2. Dolar
3. Jarmar
4. Pupati
5. Alu Lac
6. Bhuli
7. Bundha
8. Candhan Hare
9. Bhaaju Bandh
10. Jir
11. Chuti
12. Darni