Mandinka villages are large compact settlements of from two or three hundred to several thousand people, generally situated from one to five miles apart. The village can be considered the highest effective unit of social organisation, though in a few instances we do find groups of related villages with mutual obligations on important ceremonial occasions such as Circumcision ceremonies. Beyond the village level, there is little sense of cohesion, and the wider unit- the district- is of importance only from the administrative viewpoint.

The majority of marriages , 70 to 80 per cent , take place within the village and three quarters of the remaining marriages are generally with people from within a five mile radius.

The village head (sate-tio, or owner of the village) is the senior man of the lineage which established the village. The position is determined by seniority in the lineage structure and not by age. The administrative head is known as the alkalo or alkali. He is responsible to the district chief for the maintenance of law and order, tax collection, and various other duties. In many cases the sate-tio is also alkalo, but sometimes where the sate-tio is a very old man, a younger brother may be chosen as alkalo, while in other cases he may belong to a line put in as village heads by one of the early Commissioners or by the district chief. This is not entirely a modern development for in pre-Protectorate times rulers often placed representatives in a village to see that their orders were carried out.

(b) The ward (kabilo).

The villages are divided into kabilo or wards,which consist of a number of yards or compounds. The nucleus of a ward is a patrilineal kin group, but the ward includes the wives who marry in, the descendants of settlers, people of slave origin, and the nyamalo - the "low caste group",which includes the smiths, leatherworkers, and musicians and singers. A woman is normally regarded as bec oming a member of her husband's kabilo, and should her husband die, she almost invariably marries a brother or parallel cousin of the deceased, and continues to live in the same ward.

Kerewan has three kabilo, Fatikunda, Sisekunda, and Jauwarakunda, each of which has two major lineages. The founders of Kerewan were the Fatis from Kachang in Upper Baddibu led by Mamadi Fati, whose descendants form Madikunda. He was later joined by his brother Ma Yesa, from whom Yesakunda originated.(See page 43). Sisekunda has three lineages, all with the surname Sise, though of different origins. The ancestors of one came from Bai, not far from Kachang; the second (Almamikunda), which provided the almamo (or Imam) of the Mosque, came from Kachang ; while the third also came from the latter village. This lineage has now only one adult male alive, a young man, and in practice it has become assimilated to the Dai lineage. Jauwarakunda is also divided into two- Banta Gu and Majauwarakunda.

In general each of the major lineages holds its minor ceremonies on its own. When marriage money is received for a Madikunda girl it is shared only in Madikunda and not in the whole of Fatikunda ward. When a ceremony is held in Madikunda for a child who is being sent to a teacher for religious instruction, representatives of Yesakunda will attend, but

1. Based on data from Kerewan in Lower Baddibu and Koneba in Western Kiang.