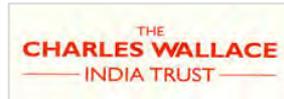

Vernacular Furniture of Gujarat At South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection (SADACC) Trust, Norwich, UK

A short research project owing to the Charles Wallace India Trust (CWIT) and
Simon Digby Memorial Charity (SDMC) research grant 2016

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to conduct research on vernacular and traditional storage furniture pieces from Gujarat, India, which are a part of the South Asian Decorative Arts and Craft Collection (SADACC) Trust, Norwich, UK.

Considering the time available for this project, i.e. three weeks (23rd May to 11th June 2016), the research focuses on selected storage pieces from among 141 furniture items from the India collection at SADACC. These furniture pieces are studied in terms of their, utility, history, significance, materials, craft techniques, ornamentation, and associated customs. This research transpires from the ongoing yearlong international collaborative research project between Design Innovation and Craft Resource Centre (DICRC), CEPT University, Ahmedabad, India, and the SADACC Trust, Norwich, UK. The project titled Vernacular Furniture of North-West India was initiated in December 2015. The objective of this research is to enrich the existing database of the SADACC Trust, and at the same time accumulate research material for the ongoing yearlong international collaborative research project between the two organizations. This research is a result of the Charles Wallace India Trust (CWIT) and Simon Digby Memorial Charity (SDMC) short research fellowship, awarded to Mitraja Bais, Senior Researcher at DICRC, CEPT University, in the year 2016.

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DICRC Team: Foremost, I would like to thank Jay Thakkar, Head of Research at DICRC, CEPT University, who encouraged me to apply for this research program. My teammates Samrudh Dixit, Mansi Sathyanarayan, Rishav Jain, Rajdeep Routh and Upasna Jain, who have been working at various levels on the yearlong collaborative project between DICRC and SADACC. The team composed a noteworthy exhibition material which was appreciated by one and all.

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SADACC Team: I was a privilege to have worked at the Old Skating Rink amidst wonderful people. I would like to express my gratitude to Philip and Jeannie Millward, co-founders of the SADACC Trust, who have been the kindest and most considerate hosts during my stay at Norwich. Many thanks, to Ben Cartwright for organizing my schedule, arranging several meetings and accompanying me to them, for all the thought provoking discussions, and for setting up the exhibition along with Hannah and Zak, and doing a great job at it. Many thanks, to Hannah for the lovely company at lunches; to Zak, Sarah and Allan for their help at various times. It was a pleasure to have met Ruth, Daniel, Katrina, Jake and other members of the staff. I would also like to thank Amy Chang for all her help during my application process and Nadine Zubair for the city tours and thought provoking discussions.

My family: I consider myself fortunate to have a family that is extremely enthusiastic about my work. The constant support and encouragement from my husband Hursh, my parents-in-law, parents, and several other family members, has been very instrumental in the successful completion of this research.

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Additional activities at SADACC

Apart from conducting the research on vernacular furniture of Gujarat at SADACC, I got an opportunity to deliver a talk, attend a few events, as well as meet several academicians and individuals.

Presentation and Exhibition

Through the talk: *A Vanishing Vernacular Heritage: Recording Vernacular Furniture of North-West India*, the audience was introduced to an ongoing collaborative research project - on vernacular furniture of North-West India - between DICRC, CEPT University and SADACC. The presentation discussed various aspects regarding first phase of the research project which focuses on vernacular furniture of Gujarat. It showcased a glimpse of furniture of Gujarat and various customs associated with them. The talk was followed by an interaction session, after which, the exhibition was opened to all. The talk and exhibition was hosted on 7th June 2016.



The talk titled - A Vanishing Vernacular Heritage: Recording Vernacular Furniture of North-West India



Question and answer session



Onlookers viewing the exhibition display

Events and meetings

Apart from the time spent at SADACC, I had an opportunity to meet Dr. Daniel Raycroft, Chair, India Dialogue at University of East Anglia (UEA); Dr. Alisa Miller, Director of Research; Stephen Larcombe, Course Leader BA (Hons) Interior Design, and Victoria Mitchell, Research Fellow at the Norwich University of Arts. Dr. Ben Cartwright accompanied me to both these meetings, during which we discussed the prospects of future collaborations between the institutes, the SADACC Trust and DICRC, CEPT University. The partnerships were conceptualized as collaborative research projects between institutions, workshops, and internship programs for students of postgraduate and graduate courses.

It was a great experience to visit the graduation show at the Norwich University of Arts, in the company of Philip and Jeannie and look at the works of students from departments such as architecture, textiles, film and animation, fine arts etc.

Introduction

Project outline

The short research on vernacular furniture of Gujarat at the SADACC Trust aims at studying selected storage pieces from among the 141 furniture items from the India collection at SADACC. These furniture pieces are studied in terms of their, utility, history, significance, materials, craft techniques, ornamentation, and associated customs. The research transpires from a yearlong international collaborative research project - 'Vernacular Furniture of North-West India' - between DICRC, CEPT University and the SADACC Trust, that was initiated in December 2015. North-West India comprises of the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab. The need for this project arises due to the lack of documentation and records on vernacular and traditional furniture of India at large. There is little or no research material available on such, making this a significant research project. The first phase of this research project focuses on Gujarat, which will act as a model for the research on vernacular furniture of other states in the subsequent phases. This being a primary research, most data is collected first-hand through the means of field visits within the state of Gujarat. At this stage (June, 2016), the DICRC team has travelled a distance of around 5000 km (3100 mi) across 13 districts in Gujarat, recording 500 odd pieces of vernacular furniture, and collecting oral histories related to them.

A lot of furniture from Gujarat in the SADACC collection is bought from secondary sources such as furniture dealers, leading to a lack of accurate information regarding the pieces. This research aims at strengthening the information on these furniture pieces by drawing parallels with the findings on the research being conducted back in India. The Gujarati furniture at SADACC will also feature in the final outcome of the yearlong collaborative project.

Research Methodology

This research focuses on vernacular furniture of Gujarat among the SADACC objects. Hence, the first step was to identify the furniture specific to Gujarat region.

The SADACC Trust has a growing collection of over 4000 items. These have been collected from the regions of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Northern Thailand and Burma since 1970. Among the collection there are around 615 categories under 'Indian objects' (excluding textiles and some metal work). Out of this, approximately 150 items are categorised as architectural items, and 142 as furniture items. The Indian furniture at SADACC includes chairs, daybeds, domestic shrines, stools, storage cabinets, tables etc. Most furniture has been collected from furniture or antique dealers; hence not much information is available about their region of origin or place of production.

Identifying vernacular furniture of Gujarat

At SADACC, furniture from Gujarat and Rajasthan is largely categorised under 'North-West India'. Among this lot, the furniture specific to Gujarat was segregated by making comparisons with the furniture recorded on the field visits for Phase 1 (Gujarat) of the Vernacular Furniture of North-West India; and a detailed discussion with Philip on the features of the furniture, place of purchase, etc. By this method, a series of furniture items belonging to Gujarat were identified within the collection.

Selecting the furniture type

Given the time period and a wide range of furniture collection, it was decided that studying different sub-types of a particular furniture type would reap good results for this short research. Out of several furniture items, the storage furniture collection is considerably strong. According to Philip, "it was bought to be sold, but was too big to fit in the houses, and hence has stayed at the gallery!" Thereby storage furniture of Gujarat was chosen for this study.

Brief background of furniture in the Indian Subcontinent

Furniture in India

Furniture in its most evolved form was introduced in India through the advent of Europeans. Many scholars have written about the lack of furniture in the Indian context. Joseph Butler in an article in Encyclopaedia Britannica states that India's place in the history of furniture is that of an adapter or transformer of imported western styles rather than a creator of independent styles of its own.ⁱ According to Peter Moss, even such objects as tables and chairs that were quiet common in the western world were rarely used until the successive arrivals of the Portuguese¹, Dutch, French and English; and, it was through colonial intervention that furniture came to India, not ethnic, not indigenous but imported from Europe - and then transfigured by the proficient Indian carpenters.ⁱⁱ



Figure 1: An early 17th century painting of Prince Salim on his throne.
*See, the intricacy of decoration on the throne, resting on guilt turned legs.
Also notice, the calligraphy on the borders of the painting.*

When the Europeans first arrived in India, the subcontinent was ruled by the Mughals²; and there are evidences of thrones and State chairs used by the Mughals that were rich with elaborate gilding, with legs or supports sometimes of turned wood, and some of

¹ The "sea route to the Indes"; marked the association of Indian Subcontinent and Europe, during the Medieval period.(It was opened after **Portuguese** explorer Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 and his fellow countryman, Vasco da Gama, crossed the Indian Ocean to reach Calicut, a rich trading city on the Indian coast)

² The Muslim Rule (which began in 8th century CE.) was at its peak in the Indian Subcontinent during this period. Several successive invasions from Central Asia towards the end of the Medieval Age, had finally led to the formation of Muslim empires such as - the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire in the Indian subcontinent.

The Mughals were perhaps the richest single dynasty to have ever existed. The "classic period" of the empire started in 1556 with the accession of Akbar the Great. A few major contributions during his reign were - creation of a road system, new trade routes to Arab and Turkic lands, establishment of a uniform currency, together with the unification of the country and the introduction of Central Asian (Persian) art and culture, which amalgamated with its Indian parallels. Akbar was the first great Mughal patron of the arts and culture.

the members carved. However, apart from the use of a *charpoy*³ (bead-stead), most of the day to day activities were performed at the floor level. This was probably because the carpet, a crucial item of furnishing in the Islamic world, served not merely as a floor covering but as seating and bedding as well. Carpets were used not only in religious settings – prayer rugs and the multi-niche prayer carpets, but also in political settings: “the monarch held official audiences in a throne room richly embellished with textiles and carpets, and sometimes outside, either beneath a dais or a kiosk with fitted rugs or less formally, seated cross-legged on a small mat”ⁱⁱⁱ. Luxury textiles in the form of bolts of silk cloth and fine carpets were routinely conferred as a mark of favour and as diplomatic gifts.



Figure 2: : Manuscript illustration from the *Bhagavata Purana*, 1525. Museum no. IS.2-1977
Source: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Figure 3: an Indian jewel merchant displaying his valuables to a procurer. The case piece in the image closely resembles the fall front table cabinets that originated in Spain.. Detail from a portrait of Rustam Khan; gouache on paper; Mughal c.1650.
Source: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Note: An early depiction of state furniture (furniture associated with denoting hierarchy, like throne chairs) in the Indian context can be observed in Hindu paintings from about 1500's depict thrones as can be seen, in one of the illustrations from the Bhagavata Purana in Figure 2. Hindu painting at this time in northern India dealt mainly with mythical and religious subjects such as the exploits of the god Krishna. Real people were not depicted in Indian painting at this time.^{iv}

³ Sir George Watt, In the *Archive for Indian Art Exhibition* (1902-1903) mentions that the household furnishing and ornamentation, in the European acceptance, might almost be said to be unknown to the simple primitive life of the Native India. He asserts - 'all must have a *charpai* (a bedstead) and with the peasant this is made of variously ornamented feet and bamboo shafts, with the prince, of ivory, silver or gold - they are identical otherwise.'(Pg.99)

K. De B. Codrington, mentions that various articles of furniture such as tables, chairs and settees were made in Mughal India, but the most important of these were the travelling chests or caskets of various sizes; fitted with drawers and a drop front to lock, which like many other material goods during that period, were inlaid either with different woods, or with ivory. In his article "Mughal Marquetry", he states that the form of these chests is "universally European". According to him, the chests "are clearly derived or copied from Italian prototypes of the 16th and early 17th centuries"^v.

Towards the 1800's paintings depict objects such as low chairs and huge water and grain storage pots as can be seen in figures 4 and 5. Although it is difficult to associate a specific time period to the emergence of domestic furniture in India, these images confirm the presence of such furniture and objects which can be considered native and vernacular.



Traditional and vernacular furniture of Gujarat

In Sanskrit, the words - *Petika*, *Majjusa* ⁴, *Bhandaka*, *Bhandini* signify a box, case, casket or chest used for storage. Metal craft ⁵ of Gujarat is found in an array of articles. According to secondary sources, years ago metal was used to make almost any object⁶ in Gujarat, during medieval times. Metal containers were used to store articles ranging from grain and water, to clothes and jewellery; and their sizes varied from small holy jugs used for performing *puja*, to giant pitchers for storing grains. Around the mid-18th century⁷, there emerged wooden chests which were used for storage. In the western India, decorative wooden dowry chests made in Gujarat, Rajasthan as well as Sindh, were carved and sometimes painted.

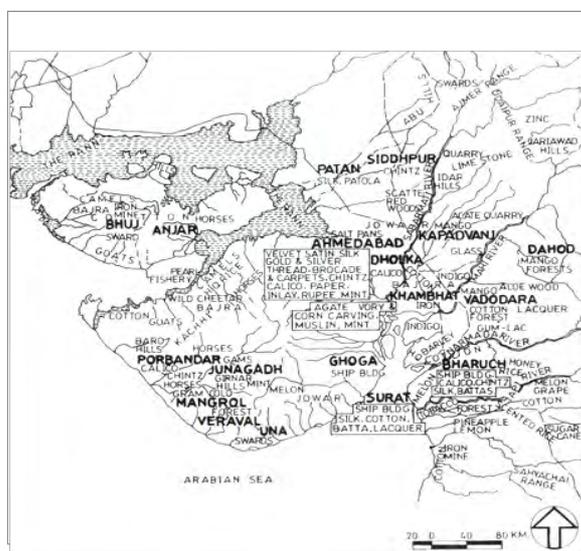


Figure 6: A map of Gujarat in the 17th century indicating various regions in the state and the goods that each place was famed for producing, which were exported to foreign lands.

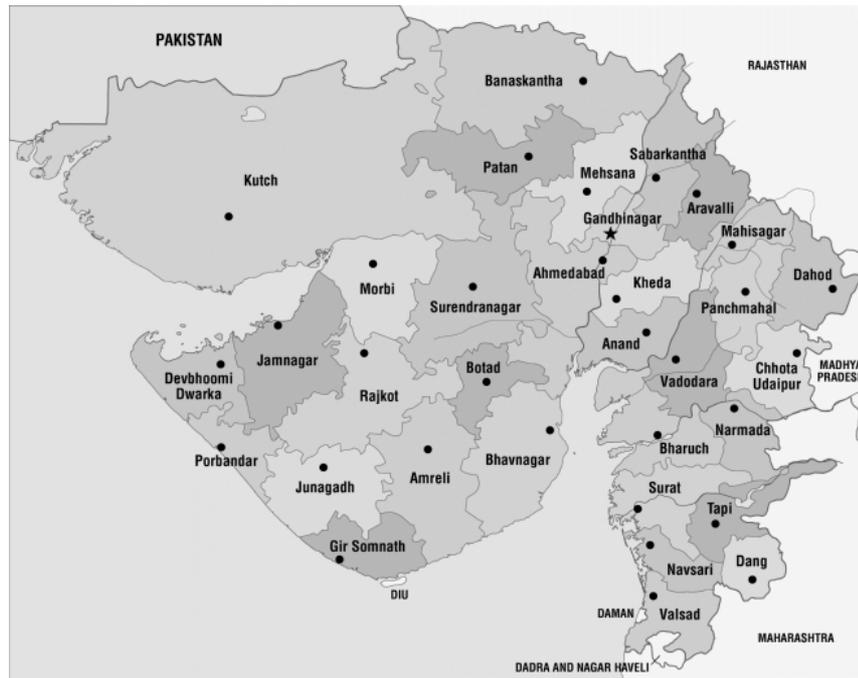
⁴ *Majjusa* or *Manjusha*, is a Sanskrit word that means a box. Manjushas are indeed are temple shaped boxes, made of bamboo, Jute-Straw and Paper inside which the devotees keep their ceremonial materials. According to legend, The name Manjusha is associated with Manjusha art or Angika art that originated in AngaPradesh, and was used in Bihula-Vishahri Pooja, celebrated usually in the month of “Bhadra” (August) to please the Goddess Bishahari, so she keeps people safe from snake bites. Angapradesh was a kingdom that flourished on the eastern Indian subcontinent in the 6th century BCE; It comprises of present Day [Bihar](#), [Jharkhand](#), [West Bengal](#), and [Tarai](#) area of the [Nepal](#).

⁵ The metal artisans of Gujarat are known as ‘*kansaras*’. The name is derived from the Gujarati word ‘Kansu’ which means bronze.

⁶ Gujarat has been the home of metal workers from as early as the Chalcolithic⁶ Age⁶. It is a known fact that the Harappan people, whose remnants have been found in abundance in Gujarat, had excelled in forging, hammering and casting of copper and bronze. Among numerous objects retrieved from the Harappan excavations, some include a giant bronze hammer, a big chisel, a gold wire, gold ear stud, gold globules with hole, copper tools and bangles, pottery with painted motifs, goblets, perforated jars, terracotta tumblers in good shape, etc. Centuries later, Copper, iron and brass were used to make articles ranging from decorative items like jewellery to utilitarian ones like storage containers. Before the introduction of brass, use of bronze utensils was very common among the people of Gujarat.

⁷ Although an accurate account of wooden chests has been unavailable during the course of this study; most of the wooden dowry chests - called *pitaraas* or *dahchiya* in Gujarati and Rajasthani, which were made in western India in the regions of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Sindh - that exist in museums or are available with antique dealers, date back to mid-eighteenth century. Hence the student assumes that the wooden chests would have been very popular in the western region during this period.

Vernacular furniture of Gujarat at SADACC



Present-day Gujarat comprises of 33 districts. The DICRC team has covered 13 districts in five months (Dec 2015 to April 2016). The field visits for Vernacular Furniture of North-West India, Phase 1 – Gujarat, have revealed varied types of furniture pieces used for sitting, sleeping, and storing as well as objects of daily use. Of all the furniture recorded, storage pieces are the most interesting and several variants of it are found across Gujarat. A storage piece is named based on its function, region it is located in, and/or the community which it caters to. Examples of some of the local names of the storage furniture are: *majju*, *majjus*, *kothla majjus*, *pataara*, *peti* etc.

Based on the observations and interactions on field visits for the project, following is a detailed study of selected storage furniture pieces of Gujarat at SADACC.

Majjus - IN 591



Object Details

Object number	IN 591
Similar objects at SADACC	IN 625; IN 305
Object name	Chest on stand
Object local name	<i>Majjus</i>
Dimensions	Length: 113 cm x Breadth: 59 cm x Height: 95.5 cm
Place	North or Central Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, sculptural and relief carving, fretwork), Iron (fittings)
Ornamentation	Floral, geometric and figurative patterns carved in wood

Object Description

Constructed using wooden framework and panels that are held together by flat iron holdfasts nailed into them, this *majju* can be accessed from the front through a centrally located wooden shutter. It rests on four legs that slope in the outward direction. The façade of this furniture piece is intricately ornate, while the sides and back are devoid of ornamentation. The top and bottom rails of are decorated with carved scrollwork; an apron with stylized flowers and acanthus motifs lies below the bottom rail. The shutter is constructed by nailing a wooden cross frame over a flat wooden surface; on either side of which, are two wooden panels, fitted with a horizontal member that divides each panel into two parts. The smaller surfaces thus formed are intricately carved with stylized louts and geometrical motifs. The grid in the façade can be observed on the top surface of the *majjus* as well. While they do provide structural stability to the *majjus*, these grids seem more like a design element incorporated by the craftsperson that created this furniture piece. Side rails of this *majjus*, run along its breadth on the top as well as bottom edges of its rectangular carcass. The top and bottom side rails are connected to one another with a bracket carved in the form of *Gajavyala*^{vi}, a mythical creature, prominent feature in the bracket ornamentation of traditional wooden houses of Gujarat. The intricacy of the figural and geometrical carvings on the front elevation, and *Gajavyala* on the brackets, strongly resemble the ones observed in traditional wooden architecture across Central and North Gujarat.

Similar references



Object no.: IN 625
Object Name: Cabinet on stand
Local Name: *Majjus*
Place: North or Central Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials and Techniques: Wood (joinery); Iron (fittings)
Source: The SADACC Trust



Object no.: IN 305
Object Name: Cabinet on stand
Local Name: *Majjus*
Place: North or Central Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials and Techniques: Wood (joinery); Iron (fittings)
Source: The SADACC Trust

Majjus - IN 625



Object Details

Object number	IN625
Similar objects at SADACC	IN 305; IN 529
Object name	Chest on stand
Object local name	<i>Majjus</i>
Dimensions	Length: 108 cm x Breadth: 46 cm x Height: 72 cm
Place	North or Central Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, sculptural and relief carving, fretwork), Iron (fittings)
Ornamentation	Floral, geometric and figurative patterns carved in wood

Object Description

This *majjus* - constructed using wooden framework and panels - is similar to that of the previous furniture piece. It can be accessed from the front through a centrally located wooden shutter, and rests on four legs that slope in the outward direction.

The top rail is decorated with acanthus ornamentation, and the bottom rail is accompanied by an apron with stylized flowers and acanthus motifs. At junction where the vertical structural members of the façade meet the top rail, the horizontal structural members (ones that support the top of the *majjus*) extend out, in the form of a carved lotus ornament. The shutter of this *majjus*, which is fitted to the carcass with iron holdfasts and hinges, displays carving of a full bloomed stylized lotus. While the vertical frame structure and the bottom rail are adorned with scrollwork and floral carvings, the front panels showcase intricately carved geometric patterns on their surface.

The side rails (at the top and bottom) are connected to one another with a bracket on each end. The bracket on the right side of the *majjus* is carved in the form of *Gajavyaala*, while the one on left is carved in the form of a parrot. The intricacy of the figural and geometrical carvings on the front elevation, as well as the *Gajavyaala* and parrot carvings on the brackets, bare a strong resemblance to the ones witnessed in traditional wooden architecture across Central and North Gujarat.

Similar references



Object Name: Brackets

Description: Adjacent images show *Gajavyala*, carved on a wooden bracket in *pol* houses of Patan, Gujarat. These mythical creatures are a prominent feature in wooden architecture of the region.

Dated: Late 19th century

Source: Thakkar, Jay, "Naqsh: art of wood carving in traditional houses of Gujarat", SID Research Cell (2004), Ahmedabad. pg. 116

Majjus - IN 305



Object Details

Object number	IN305
Object name	Chest on stand
Object local name	<i>Majjus</i>
Dimensions	Length: 134 cm x Breadth: 61 cm x Height: 101.5 cm
Place	North or Central Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, sculptural and relief carving, fretwork), Iron (fittings)
Ornamentation	Wood (joinery, sculptural and relief carving, fretwork), Iron (fittings)

Object Description

Like the earlier examples of *majjus*, this too has been constructed using wooden framework and panels. On the outside, the side, the back and top panels of the *majjus* are held in place with crude wooden members nailed onto the surface. From the inside, a metal straps nailed into the panels, tightly secures the outer wooden member in place. The *majjus* can be accessed from the front through a centrally located wooden shutter, and rests on four legs that slope in the outward direction.

The front of the *majjus* comprises of three wooden panels - intricately carved with floral and foliage ornaments - positioned between the top and bottom rail, separated by vertical wooden members. These wooden members are decorated with sculpturally carved figures of four musicians. The figures on either side of the wooden shutter, hold a plucked two-string musical instrument; the figure on the left side of the *majjus* holds a *kartal* (an ancient musical instrument used in devotional folk songs), while a peacock perches on the hands of the figure on the right side. The top rail of this furniture piece is carved in floral scrollwork that runs uniformly along its length. A frieze carved in floral scrollwork, and cornice bearing a *toran* (festoon) ornament rests over the top rail. The frieze and cornice is supported by four petite wooden brackets carved in parrot and peacock figures. A small ledge projects out from the bottom of the *majjus*, and is adorned by a horse figure at each end. The ledge is supported by a bracket - carved in the form of a parrot - that rests on the front legs of the *majjus*. Features like the frieze and cornice with the supporting brackets resemble the entablature in traditional wooden houses of Gujarat, where figures like the parrot, peacock, horse and the musicians are also very notably present.

Similar references



A *Majjus* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat. Its proportions and construction techniques are similar to IN 305. The carving is crude compared to the one observed in previous *majjus* from Central Gujarat.

Place of Origin: Saurashtra or Central Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust

Kothla Majjus - IN 206



Object Details

Object number	IN206
Similar objects at SADACC	IN174; IN065
Object name	Chest on wheels
Object local name	<i>Kothla Majjus</i>
Dimensions	Length: 150cm x Breadth: 77 cm x Height: 113 cm
Place	Central Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery), iron (fittings)
Ornamentation	Structural grid made of wood and fastened with iron straps

Object Description

A Gujarati dictionary defines *kothla* as a chest made out of mud (a mixture of mud, dung and hay), and finished with lime plaster, used for storing food. At this stage in the study, it is difficult to figure out the origin of *kothla*; however, a *kothla* is a prominent feature in rural houses till date.

This chest (IN206) is a fine example of a *kothla majjus*. It can be accessed from the top through a small lockable trap door. This rectangular chest on wheels is made of intricate frame and panel construction. Four vertical rails, one on each edge of the chest, support five horizontal members on each surface. Additionally, seven vertical members strengthen the horizontal members on the front and back façade, while two vertical members support the ones on the sides. The grid thus formed is strengthened by nailing thin wooden strips over the intersecting members. Iron straps nailed at the top, bottom and sides, further strengthen the structure of this chest. The hollow portions of the grid thus formed, are fitted with wooden panels. Vertical members on each edge of the chest rise above the top surface in the form of turned finials.

Similar references



Kothla, a storage piece made out of mud
Place: Kutch, Gujarat
Dated: Not known

Materials & Techniques: Mixture of mud, hay and dung;
lime plaster

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



Object no.: IN 174
Object Name: Cabinet on stand
Local Name: *Majjus*
Place: Central Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century

Materials and Techniques: Wood (joinery); Iron (fittings)

Source: The SADACC Trust



Object no.: IN 065
Object Name: Cabinet on stand
Local Name: *Majjus*
Place: Saurashtra, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials and Techniques: Wood (joinery); Iron (fittings)

Source: The SADACC Trust



A *kothla majjus* located at Devgad Baria Palace, Central Gujarat

Place of Origin: Central Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, turning); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *kothla majjus* located at Devgad Baria Palace, Central Gujarat

Place of Origin: Central Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, turning); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *kothla majjus* located at Devgad Baria Palace, Central Gujarat

Place of Origin: Central Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, turning, fretwork); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A kothla majjus at a residence at Rajpipla, Central Gujarat

Place of Origin: Central Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A Majjus located at antique dealer's warehouse in Ahmedabad, Central Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving); Iron (fittings),

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust

Majjus - IN 72



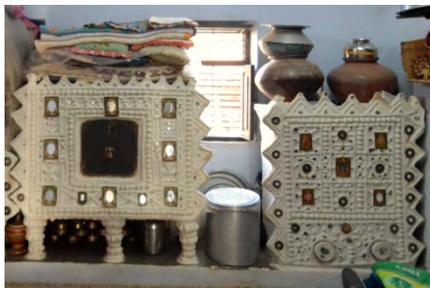
Object Details

Object number	IN72
Similar objects at SADACC	None
Object name	Chest on stand
Object local name	<i>Majjus</i>
Dimensions	Not known
Place	Kutch, Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, chip carving, turning), iron (fittings), square and circular mirror embellishments
Ornamentation	Geometric patterns carved in wood, and embellished with mirrors

Object Description

This *majjus* possesses a simple frame and panel structure. It can be accessed from the front with a centrally located double-door wooden structure, and is fitted with three drawers beneath the rectangular storage space. Distinct features of this *majjus* like the simplicity of structure, petite proportions, straight legs, horse-head finials carved out its vertical side members, chip carving, and embellished mirrors, associate the furniture piece to the Kutch region of Gujarat. It is often referred to as a '*kutchi majjus*'. The carvings and mirror embellishments bare a close resemblance to the mud-relief and mirror work observed on the walls, and in-built storage spaces in the traditional *Bhunga* houses of Kutch. In earlier days - when wood was not easily available - built-in storage spaces were created using a mixture of mud, hay, and dung, and fitted with wooden shutters. These storages were plastered with lime and decorated with patterns in mud - relief and embellished with mirrors by the women of the house. The women of this region are very skilled in embroidery, which also uses a lot of mirror work. It is interesting to observe how the motifs and mirrorwork used in embroidery are transferred to the mud-relief work on the walls and in-built storage spaces in the interiors, which then might have transferred to the furniture pieces made in wood.

Similar references



A built-in storage cabinet made of mud and embellished with mirrors, in Kutch, Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century
Materials & Techniques: Mixture of mud, hay and dung; lime plaster; mud-relief work; Wood (joinery, carving); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *Majjus* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *Majjus* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *Majjus* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *Majjus* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Surendranagar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *Majjus* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Ahmedabad, Central Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *Majju* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Ahmedabad, Central Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University | The SADACC Trust

Majjus - IN 79



Object Details

Object number	IN79
Similar objects at SADACC	IN452
Object name	Chest on stand
Object local name	<i>Majjus</i>
Dimensions	Not Known
Place	Saurashtra, Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, chip carving), Iron (fittings)
Ornamentation	Geometric patterns and figures carved in wood

Object Description

Four horse-heads, one on each corner of the front façade of the furniture, is a typical feature on *majjus* of Saurashtra region. This *majjus* can be accessed from the front, which is fitted with a sliding shutter. The shutter can slide out completely, opening up two-third of the front, making the inside easily accessible as compared to the single shuttered *majjus* seen earlier. The top and bottom rails of this *majjus* are decorated with stylized flowers and other geometric motifs. The original legs of this furniture seem to have been replaced with turned wood bun feet. The front panels depict various figures and motifs. On one end, the carving depicts two women churning buttermilk, a stylized floral motif lies in the center of the *majjus*, and the other end displays Lord *Ganesha*, a man on horseback, a woman, and vegetation etc. which resemble day-to-day activities in a village set-up. The carved motifs and figures are similar to the ones found on the embroidered cloth pieces of the region called 'chakda'.

Similar references



Detail on a *Keel*, an embroidered hanging for a pile of quilts when they are not in use, made by women of the Ahir Boreecha herding caste, Saurashtra

Note: Women churning butter, man on horseback, flora and fauna (peacock, peahen, parrot, scorpion, elephant, etc.)

Place of Origin: Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Textile (embroidery)

Source: Barnard, Nicholas; Gillow, John, 'Indian Textiles' Thames and Hudson (2008) pg.16



Embroidered *chakda* of the Charan or Bharwad castes, Saurashtra, depicting Lord Ganesha.

Place of Origin: Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving,); Iron (fittings)

Source: Barnard, Nicholas; Gillow, John, 'Indian Textiles' Thames and Hudson (2008) pg.76



Object no.: IN 452
Object Name: Cabinet on stand
Local Name: *Majjus*
Place: Saurashtra, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials and Techniques: Wood (joinery); Iron (fittings)

Source: *The SADACC Trust*



A *Majjus* at a residence in Chuda Sorath, Junagadh, Saurashtra, Gujarat.

Place of Origin: Saurashtra, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving,); Iron (fittings)

Source: *DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust*



A *Majjus* at the *Darbagadh* in Bilkha, Junagadh, Saurashtra, Gujarat. This *majjus* is an example of different variants of this category of furniture found in the Saurashtra region.

Place of Origin: Saurashtra, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving,); Iron (fittings)

Source: *DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust*



A *Majjus* located at antique dealer's warehouse in Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving,); Iron (fittings)

Source: *DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust*



A Majjus located at antique dealer's warehouse in Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Kutch, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving,); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A Majjus located at antique dealer's warehouse in Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving); Iron (fittings)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust

Majjus - IN 161



Object Details

Object number	IN161
Similar objects at SADACC	None
Object name	Chest
Object local name	<i>Majjus</i>
Dimensions	Not known
Place	Saurashtra, Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, chip carving, turning), iron (fittings), square and circular mirror embellishments
Ornamentation	Geometric patterns carved in wood, and embellished with mirrors

Object Description

Belonging to the region of Saurashtra, this *majjus* is similar to the chest on stands found in Saurashtra and Central Gujarat. This *majjus* rests on feet allowing it to have more storage space compared to the ones on stand. It can be accessed from the centre through a hinged shutter, which is carved in foliage scrollwork ornament, while adjacent panels on each side of the shutter bear geometric carvings. Four peacock shaped brackets support the cornice on this furniture piece, which is adorned with turned wood danglers. A ledge extends from the bottom rail of the *majjus*; it houses one carved horse on each end.

Similar references



Majjus on wheels at a residence in Morbi, Saurashtra, Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University | The SADACC Trust



Majjus at Orchards Palace, Gondal, Saurashtra, Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, turning); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University | The SADACC Trust



Majjus at a furniture dealer's warehouse, Limdi, Saurashtra, Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, turning); Iron (fittings), embellished with square and circular mirrors

Source: DICRC, CEPT University | The SADACC Trust

Maju - IN 91



Object Details

Object number	IN91
Similar objects at SADACC	IN323
Object name	Chest on wheels
Object local name	<i>Maju</i>
Dimensions	Not known
Place	Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork, turning, lacquer), iron (fittings)
Ornamentation	Horseheads, parrots, peacocks, intricate fretwork, and lacquer work

Object Description

A *maju* - which resembles a chest on wheels - is the most elaborate furniture piece in a Mer household (the Mer are a dominant agricultural community residing in Porbandar district of Saurashtra). It is a part of a bride's possessions that she brings to her in-law's house, after marriage. It is commonly fitted with secret compartments, and is used to store valuables. The facade of this *maju* is formed of a grid of interconnected wooden members; this grid is formed by five - horizontal, and seven vertical members. At the intersecting junction, a decorative circular turned wood ornament is nailed to the façade. This grid forms 24 squares that are fitted with wooden panels. As a part of ornamentation, carved panels are framed - and nailed onto these panels - using strips of lacquered wood. The top row of square panels bear peacock carvings, while the rest are carved in geometric patterns in fretwork. At a level of three quarter of the height, the facade of this *maju* is divided by an intermediate tray. Of this division, the upper part is accessible through a trap door, and the lower through a pair of winged shutters. Horse-heads carved at the end of the structural beams protruding from the top and bottom rail of the furniture piece is a prominent feature in this type of a *maju*. The top rail houses a series of - hanging - decorative turned wood ornaments; horse-heads on the top rail are accompanied by parrot brackets.

Similar references



Object no.: IN 323
Object Name: Chest on wheels
Local Name: *Maju*
Place: Saurashtra, Gujarat
Dated: Early 20th century
Materials and Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings)

Source: The SADACC Trust

The *maju* above (IN323) displays similar construction techniques as well as ornamentation to that of IN9, except for the structure of its front facade that is made of four horizontal and seven vertical members, which house 18 rectangular panels.



A maju at a dwelling in Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat A stack of mattresses rests over the maju; this arrangement is locally referred to as a mari.

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings),

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A maju at a dwelling in Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings),

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



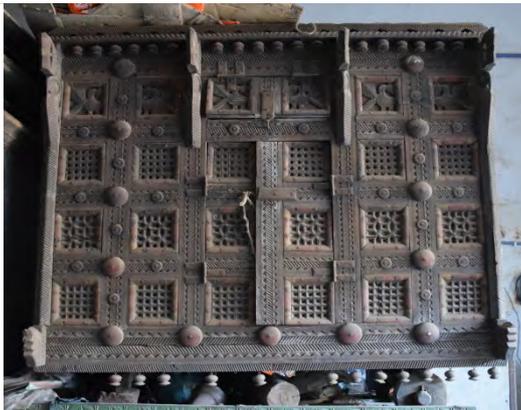
A maju at a dwelling in Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings),

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A maju at a furniture dealer's warehouse, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings),

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A maju at an ashram, Porbandar, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings),

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A maju at dwelling, Porbandar, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, fretwork, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings),

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *maju* at a dwelling in Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat. This *maju* is fitted ceramic tiles instead of the complex wood carved panels.

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat Dated: Late 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings); ceramic tiles

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *maju* at a dwelling in Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings); ceramic tiles

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *maju* at an ashram in Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving, turning, lacquer work); Iron (fittings); ceramic tiles

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *maju* at dwelling, Porbandar, Gujarat. This is a more recent version of the *maju*. It bears no carvings; its façade grid is fitted with paintings of God's, Goddesses, flora and fauna on a glass surface. Such *maju* are often painted in bright colours like blue, yellow and red

Place of Origin: Porbandar, Saurashtra, Gujarat. Dated: Late 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery,); Iron (fittings), Glass (painting)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust

Pataara - IN 87



Object Details

Object number	IN87
Similar objects at SADACC	None
Object name	Chest on wheels
Object local name	<i>Pataara</i>
Dimensions	Length: 131 x Breadth: 80 x Height: 94
Place	Saurashtra, Gujarat
Date	Early 20 th century
Materials	Wood, Iron, Brass
Craft techniques	Wood (joinery, carving), iron (fittings), brass (ornamentation)
Ornamentation	Iron and brass strap work on wooden carcass

Object Description

This type of chest on wheels - locally known as a *pataara* - is one of the largest vernacular storage pieces found in Gujarat. A *pataara* is used as a strong box to store valuables. On The inside of its carcass is one big storage space fitted with secret compartments along the sides. The chest can be accessed through the top lid that makes a loud creaking sound when opened. It is designed to make this sound, as an alarm to signal the opening of the chest without the owner's knowledge. All *pataara* are made of panel and frame work construction but ornamented with different materials as per the owner's community or spending capacity. Most commonly used *pataara* are ornamented with iron strap work and embellished with brass cut-outs in the form of flowers. *Pataara* attributed to the Kathi community in Surasthra display a great level of skill in brass ornamentation. These chests are clad with thin sheets of brass and embellished with embossed and cut brass ornaments among which, flowers, peacock, parrot, lion, elephant and horse are the most common motifs. These *pataara*, along with other brass, copper and steel utensil display forms an important part of interior decoration in a *kathi* household. The richness of the display is a significant status symbol among the community. This *pataara* (IN87) is modestly ornamented with intersecting iron strap work and stylized flower motifs cut out in brass and nailed to its surface.

Similar references



A *pataara* clad in metal sheets and decorated with embossed brass work, Morbi, Saurashtra Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving), iron (fittings), brass (cut and emboss work)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A *pataara* clad in metal sheets and decorated with embossed brass work, Mulii, Saurashtra Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving), iron (fittings), brass (cut and emboss work)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A pataara clad in copper and brass sheets and decorated with embossed motifs, Saurashtra Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving), iron (fittings), brass and copper (emboss work)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A pataara clad in brass sheets and decorated with embossed motifs, Dedan, Saurashtra Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving), iron (fittings), brass (emboss work)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A pataara clad in brass sheets and decorated with embossed motifs, Gondal, Saurashtra Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving), iron (fittings), brass (cut and emboss work)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust



A pataara clad in brass sheets and decorated with embossed motifs, Gondal, Saurashtra Gujarat. Dated: Early 20th century

Materials & Techniques: Wood (joinery, carving), iron (fittings), brass (cut and emboss work)

Source: DICRC, CEPT University |The SADACC Trust

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