



Kutch, a vast crescent shaped region in the western part of India has a long coastline of about 350 km. Bounded by the Arabian Sea in the west; Gulf of Kutch in the south and south east; it is bordered by Rajasthan in the north; Pakistan in the northwest and in the east shares its boundary with Banaskantha, Patan and Surendranagar Districts.

Kutch had remained in self-contained isolation for hundreds of years due to its location and submerged geography. This is probably why it has preserved its unique way of life through its oral tradition of remembered history, and managed to retain a distinct character over the ages. This very aspect of Kutch, made it the primary choice to begin the field visits for the 'Study of Vernacular Furniture of North West India', a collaborative research project - by Design Innovation and Craft Resource Centre (DICRC), CEPT University, India and South Asian Decorative Arts and Craft Collection (SADACC) Trust, UK - initiated in December 2015. Areas covered during the primary visit to Kutch include thirteen odd villages and towns.

In the villages, most communities live in cluster of circular mud huts known as *bhunga*. The walls of the *bhunga* are made with sun-dried mud blocks and plastered with mud mixed with cow dung. Inside the huts, furniture is minimal and very vernacular in nature. In-built storage cabinets known as *sanjeriya*, are made with mud and cow dung; complete with small, lockable wooden shutters. These cabinets are further decorated with delicate relief patterns, studded with mirrors, which often reflect patterns of embroidery done by the women of this region.

Storage containers called *kothi* (feminine) or *kotho* (masculine), are used to house grains in a large quantity. Small openings - with peg like stoppers - provided around bottom of these containers allow grain to flow out whenever required. These containers are also made of mud and cow dung, and often decorated with relief patterns and mirrors.

Movable furniture comprises of *dahmachiyo* - a bench like furniture piece with turned and lacquered wooden legs - which is exclusively used to house mattresses and quilts stacked over one another. The stack thus formed, is covered by a decorated quilt and held in place with a rope, securely fastened (on the wall or beam from) the center, and its two ends tied on the protruding turns of the two front legs respectively. Other furniture pieces in the region consist of *manchi* (low seating chair), *bajoth* (stool), *khatlo* (charpoy/cot), *pataara* (trunks) *majus* (storage cabinet), *ghodiyu* (cradle), etc.

While the mud constructed storage units are built by the men and women of the family, most of the wooden furniture in the region is made by the local carpenters belonging to the Vadha community, using babool tree wood, which is indigenous to the region. While the villages have still retained a lot of vernacular furniture, the town and city houses have gotten rid of most of this furniture, in order to accommodate modern day needs. A lot of discarded furniture right from *bajoths* to heavily ornamented *pataaras* can be found at the *kabadiwala's* (junk or scrap dealers) in the region.



1. Sahaasan (Throne), 2. Sagadi (Fireplace), 3. Manchi (Chair) & 4. Majus (Storage), 5. Bajoth (Stool), 6. Kothi (Granary),  
7. Manchi (Chair) & 8. Sanjeriyu (Granary)

A monthly report of field visits conducted as a part of: **Study of Vernacular Furniture of North West India**

A collaborative research project by: Design Innovation and Craft Resource Centre (DICRC), CEPT University, India ([www.dicrc.in](http://www.dicrc.in)) &  
South Asian Decorative Arts and Craft Collection Trust (SADACC), UK  
([www.southasiandecorativeartsandcrafts.co.uk](http://www.southasiandecorativeartsandcrafts.co.uk))

# VERNACULAR FURNITURE OF GUJARAT

Focus On : Kutch District

ISSUE 01, December 2015

## Overview

Places Visited: 14

Distance travelled: 1300 km

Elements Mapped: 60

Scholars approached: 6

Craftspeople approached: 7



Kothi (Granary)



Dahmachiyo (Bench for storing mattresses)