

# VERNACULAR FURNITURE OF GUJARAT

Focus On : Saurashtra  
(Porbandar District)

ISSUE 04, March 2016

## Overview

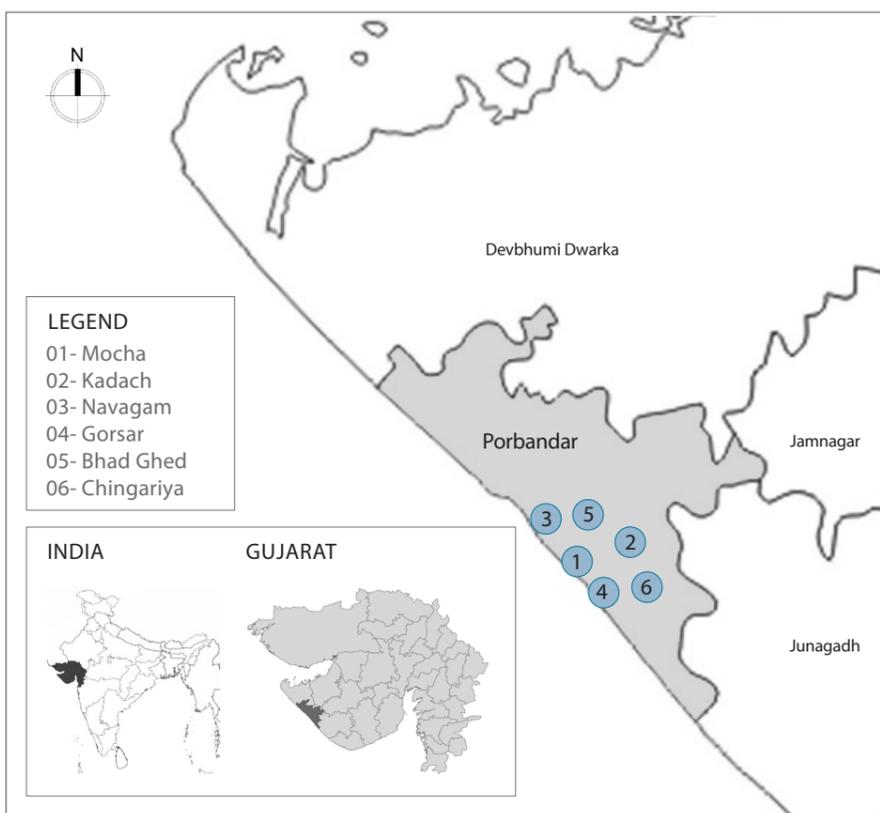
Places Visited: 06

Distance travelled: 1250 km

Elements Mapped: 23

Scholars approached: 6

Craftspeople approached: 1



Gorsar



Navagam



Mocha

Porbandar district in Saurashtra region, is located on the west coast of Gujarat. Field visits for the month of March were spread across six villages in the district - Mocha, Kadach, Navagam, Gorsar, Bhad Ghed and Chingariya. Predominant population in these villages comprises of the Mer (also known as Maher, Mehr) community. Historically hailed as a warrior clan, the prime occupation of this community is agriculture; most farmers have their own livestock and live in houses amidst the farms they tend. The newer houses - built out of stone and finished with cement plaster - are set with modern furniture like sofa and beds; however, vernacular furniture still prevails in Traditional Mer houses which are built of stone walls (finished with clay plaster), wooden columns and tiled roof.

A **Maju** - which resembles a chest on wheels - is the most elaborate furniture piece in a Mer household. It is a part of a bride's possessions that she brings to her in-laws house, after marriage. A maju is commonly fitted with secret compartments, and is used to store valuables. The facade of a maju is formed of a grid of interconnected wooden members; this grid commonly comprises of five horizontal and seven vertical members, and is fitted with rectangular wooden panels. As a part of ornamentation, relief carved panels or ornate ceramic tiles are framed - and nailed onto these rectangular panels - using strips of wood. At a level of three quarter of the height, the facade of a 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 a **maju**. Often, the horse-heads are accompanied by parrot and peacock brackets. A stack of mattresses rests over the **maju**; this arrangement is locally referred to as a **mari**. Another variant of the traditional **maju** is kitschy in nature. It bears little or no carvings and its façade grid is fitted with paintings of God's, Goddesses and other elements found on the former **maju**. This **maju** is often painted in bright colours like blue, yellow and red.

A rectangular chest called **peti**, is used to store food items such as milk, curd, butter etc in the Mer houses. In houses where they cannot afford wooden furniture, food items are stored in a **hanjariya**, a large square storage space built out of clay, and molded feet, with a small opening on the front surface, fitted with wooden shutters. **Hanjariya** is similar to the **sanjeriyu** found in **bhunga** houses of Kutch. The **ghodiu** (cradle), found in this region, is made of carved and joined wooden members, unlike the ones made of turned wood and lacquer which are common across Saurashtra and other parts of Gujarat. Other common furniture elements in a Mer house include **machi** (stool), **sanga machi** (low heighted chair), **dholio** and **dhorni** (charpoy), **tunk** (metal trunk), **kandhi** (wall shelf to display pots and other utensils), **ikad** (hanger), **kothi** (granary, some of which is as high as three meters, having a diameter of nearly two meters) and **paniara** (water pot niche).



1, 2 & 3. **Maju** (Storage Chest), 4. **Peti** (Chest for storing food), 5. **Ghodiu** (Cradle), 6. **Dholio** (Charpoy), 7. **Kothi** (Granary) & 8. **Ikad** (Hanger).



**Maju** (Storage Chest)



**Dholni** (Charpoy with carvings called Troda)

A monthly report of field visits conducted as a part a Project: **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))