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Detail of *pallav* (draped end of sari) of a *patolu* woven with gold thread (*jari*) and featuring a double ikat border

Private collection

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Man's robe (*angarkha*) of silk and goldwrapped thread (*jari*), lined and quilted, L 104 x W (across sleeves) 114 cm See appendix ill. 1 for garment analysis.

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Kachchhi Rabari from Gardo area, west Kachchh, wearing a white cotton smock (kediyun), an ankle-length man's garment wrapped around the hip (dhoti) and turban (pagdi)



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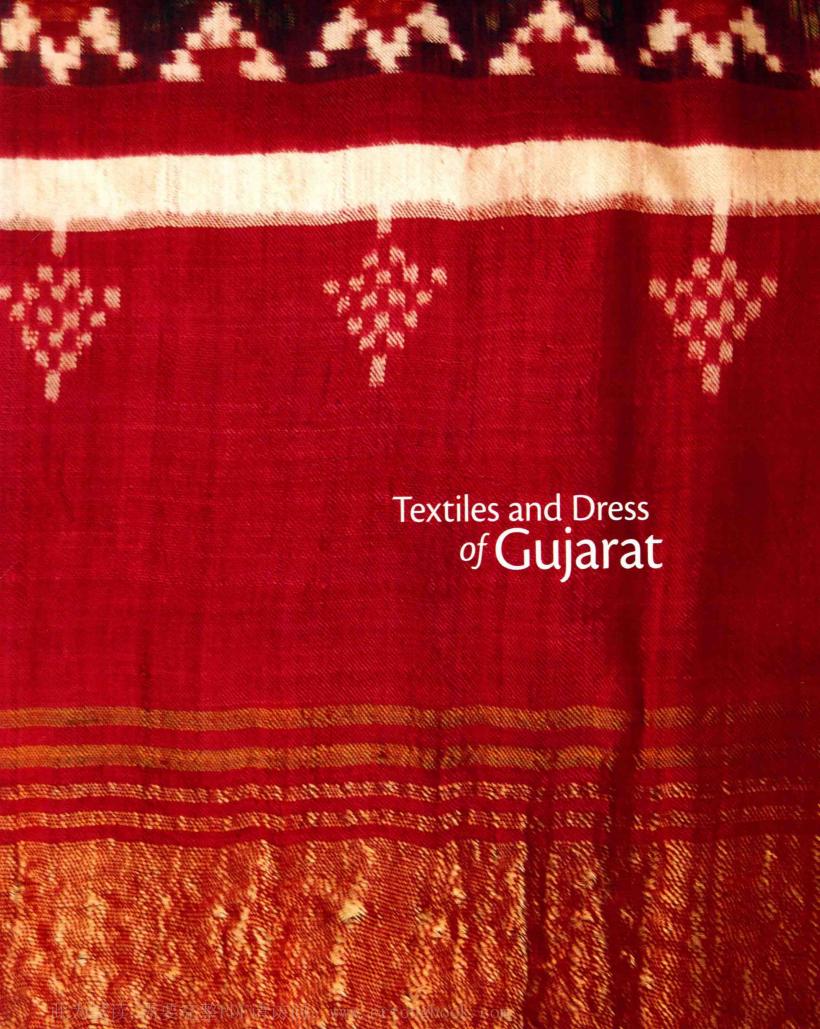
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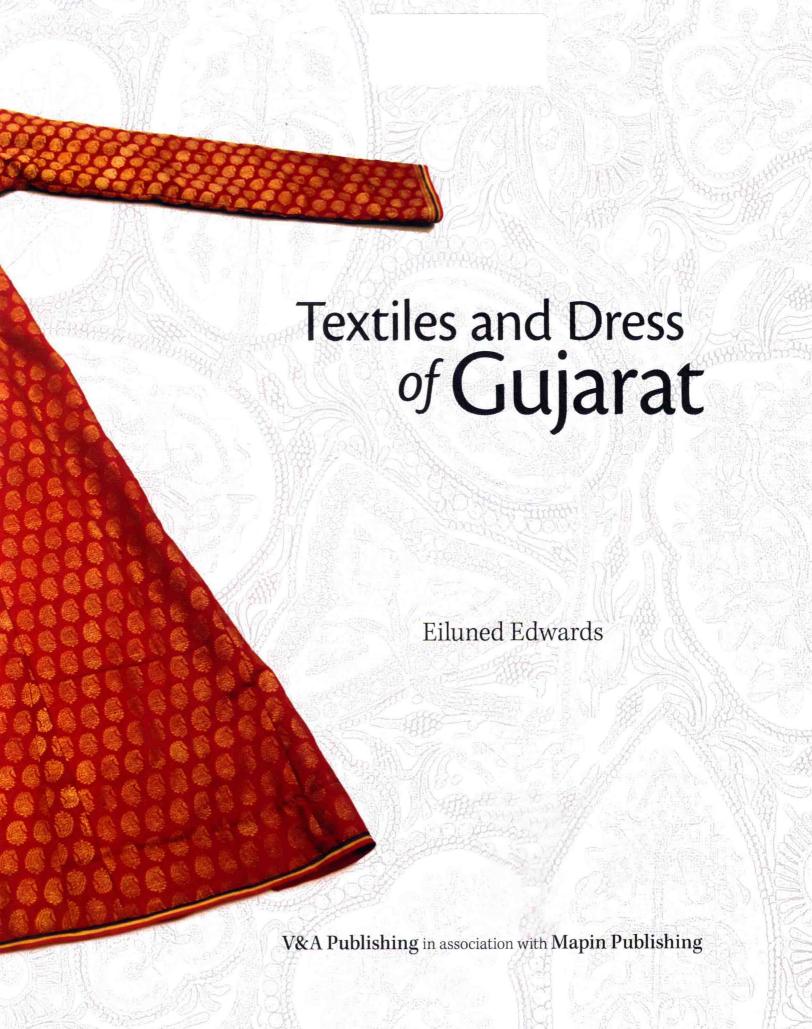
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Kachchhi Rabari from Gardo area, west Kachchh, wearing a white cotton smock (kediyun), an ankle-length man's garment wrapped around the hip (dhoti) and turban (pagdi)



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Contemporary map of Gujarat







Introduction

This book is about the contemporary production and use of handmade textiles and popular dress in the state of Gujarat, western India. It describes the types of textiles made by the region's artisans whose hereditary occupation as weavers, printers and dyers has been determined by the caste system. Similarly, local usage reflects the caste occupation and faith of local customers; the use of textiles and dress plays a key role in social institutions such as dowry and marriage. The book also tells how the consumption of textiles has changed in the past fifty years, notably with the rise of synthetic fabrics and readymade clothes, and considers the impact of this on craft production. The transformation of cloth into dress is revealed by following the 'social life' of textiles.

PAGE 7

Detail of a ceremonial banner made in Gujarat, radiocarbon-dated 1340 ± 40 years

Resist- and mordant-dyed, block-printed and painted resist cotton.

See fig. 1.12 for larger detail.

V&A: IS 96-1993

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Embroidered skirt, ivory satin, coloured silk, L 99 x W 77.4 cm, Kachchh, early 20th century

The embroidery is entirely in chain stitch and was made by the Mochi community. The design of flowers, leafy stems and parrots is characteristic of Mochi embroidery for local use.

See appendix ill. 15 for garment analysis.

V&A: IM 246-1920

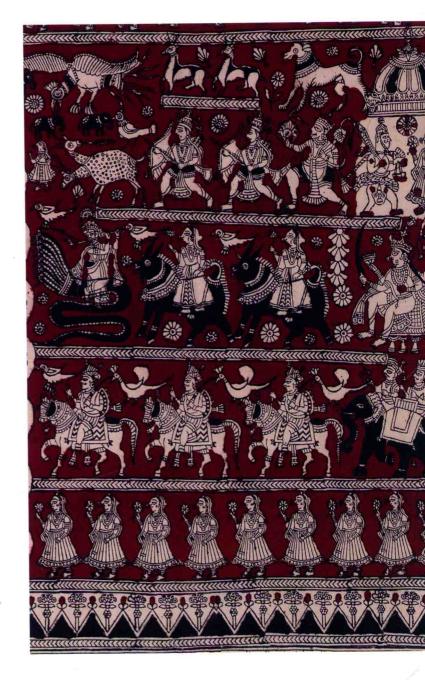
Handmade fabrics have played a central role in the formation of the visual identity of the peoples of Gujarat, in carefully regulated dress codes that also encompass jewellery, footwear, and body art in the form of tattoos and mehendi (temporary tattoos drawn in henna paste). A coherent aesthetic language is discernible across dress, textiles used in domestic and sacred space, and animal trappings, the symbolism of which is discussed. Distinctive styles of dress and decoration differentiate one community from another; they also reveal the interplay between textiles made by professional artisans, such as tie-dyed fabrics, and decoration like embroidery made by women, which until thirty or forty years ago was widely regarded only as a domestic craft. Contemporary activity is set in historical context and the factors that have influenced the evolution of the state's material culture are delineated. The book concludes with a review of current developments in handmade textiles. It identifies a range of initiatives to preserve the state's craft and textiles heritage, including schemes introduced by state agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and considers the role of entrepreneurs, educational institutions, including the National Institute of Design (NID) and the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), and museums, such as the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad, and the Tapi Collection at Surat.

THE FORMATION OF MODERN GUJARAT

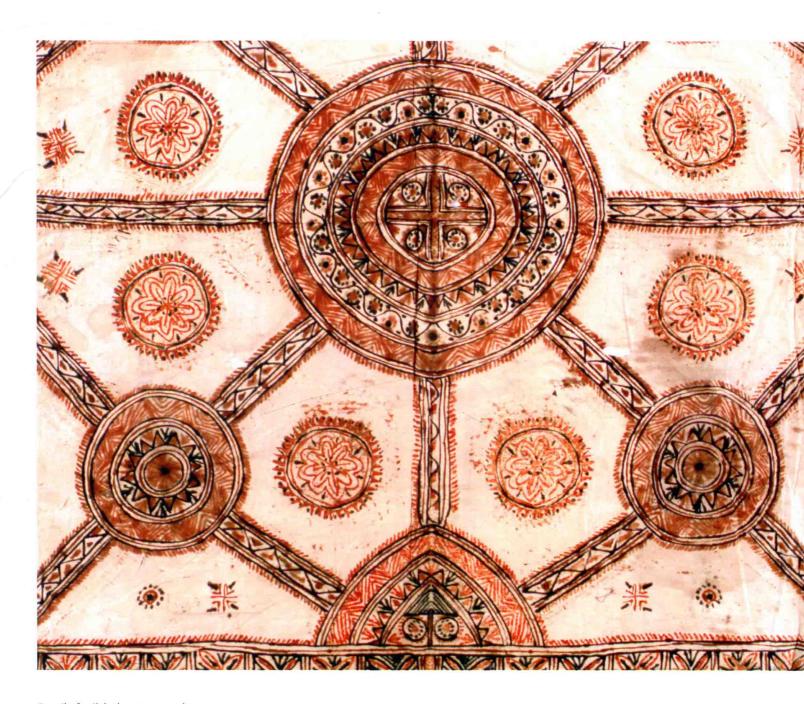
In order to understand the textiles and dress of Gujarat, it is necessary to recall the formation of the modern state. The boundaries of Gujarat in western India were established only in 1960. Prior to India becoming a sovereign nation in 1947, the area of modern Gujarat consisted of numerous smaller princely states. After independence, the national government grouped these into three larger administrative units: Kachchh, Saurashtra and Bombay State. In 1956, Kachchh and Saurashtra were absorbed into Bombay State, along with parts of Hyderabad State and Madhya Pradesh in central India. Linguistically the expanded state divided into a Gujarati-speaking north and a Marathi-speaking south; it lasted only four years. Persistent agitation on the part of Marathi nationalists for a separate state led the national government to split Bombay State into Gujarat and Maharashtra on 1 May 1960.

Considering the emergence of the modern state from older polities, many communities in Gujarat share a greater regional identity with kindred groups in neighbouring Rajasthan to the north, and Sindh province across the border in Pakistan to the west. This is expressed through shared religious practice, occupation, patterns of betrothal and marriage, and dress codes. Thus many of the groups—castes—identified in this book as Gujarati, are also to be found in Rajasthan

and Sindh, the region formerly encompassed by Harappan culture—the earliest civilisation on the subcontinent which developed in the Indus Valley in the period 2500–1750 BCE. Clearly there are plural identities, defined variously by caste, gender, occupation, religion, state, country. Partition in 1947 marked the creation of the Dominion of Pakistan on 14 August and the Union of India on 15 August, and the dissolution of the British Indian Empire.



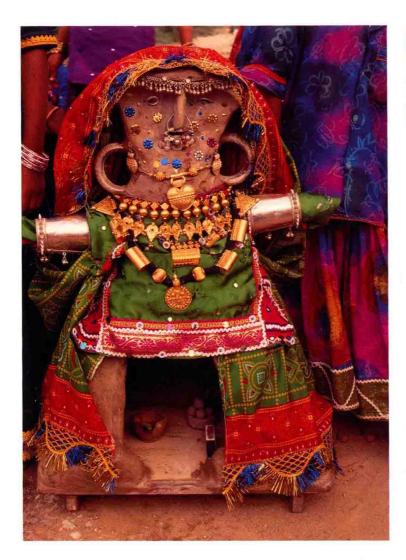
Detail of *mata-ni-pachedi*, ceremonial cloth, dyed, printed and painted
See complete cloth on pp. 138–139.
V&A: IS 6-1967



Detail of veilcloth, cotton, roghan decoration

See complete cloth on p. 151.

Private collection





Many communities were divided by the international border between the two newly established countries which left some family members in Pakistan and others in India. Maintaining cultural and family links has been difficult in the face of on-going tensions between the two countries. Livelihoods were badly affected by Partition: for example, the Rabaris of Kachchh, who are pastoral nomads, lost the western extremity of their old migration routes in Sindh and Baluchistan, areas that offered respite from the recurring droughts of Kachchh. In addition to which they no longer have access to important religious sites such as the shrine of Hinglaj Mata on the Makran coast. The outbreak of hostilities between India and Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 triggered a flood of refugees, mostly Hindu Sodhas from Sindh, to Kachchh (and Rajasthan). They brought with them

FACING PAGE

LEFT

Figure used in the Kanudo ceremony marking the birth of Krishna, near Bhuj, Kachchh

Kachchhi Rabari women fashion the deity's mother in mud and dress the figure in fine clothes and gold jewellery. The infant Krishna is placed in the cavity of his mother's body. The figure is carried through the village to the temple for all-night prayers and hymns.

RIGHT

Vaghari family painting a mordant onto a *mata-ni-pachedi*, Vasna, Ahmedabad

The cloths are predominantly red and a mordant is required to permanently fix the colour to the cloth.

RIGHT

Bharwad boy, Saurashtra, wearing coloured cotton smock and drawstring trousers (chorni)

Private collection

FOLLOWING PAGES

Vagadia Rabari women at a wedding, east Kachchh, 1997

These women are wearing dowry items, including embroidered bodices and jewellery. Their jewellery includes necklaces of beadwork (*jermar*) and a torc (*varo*), vambrace (*chud*) of silver and a huge bangle (*baloyun*) stained an auspicious shade of red. *Baloya* were formerly made of ivory but most are now plastic.

only the things they could carry which included exquisite *suf* embroidery with distinctive triangular patterns worked in silk floss, made by the women for dowry. The sale of these embroideries, typified as 'hardship sales' by NGOs, sustained many families during the gruelling period in isolated refugee camps in Kachchh. Nowadays, the skill of Sodha women provides their families with a steady income as many of them work for NGOs making commercial embroidery. Textiles such as these present a compelling narrative, and the use of ethnographic data, drawn from nearly twenty years research in Gujarat, is a particular feature of the book. This material is then allied to the study of historic Gujarati textiles in London's Victoria and Albert Museum which are accessible to visitors to the UK or via the Museum's website. This approach gives deep insights into Gujarat's rich heritage of textiles and dress, and recognises the ingenuity and expertise of the state's craftspeople.

