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stripped clean of every iota of valuable ornaments several months after the disaster; it was as though looters still saw value in ripping apart the bare bones of a skeleton.

This erasure has produced a deeply troubling politics to do with interpreting historic photographs. I was asked by local politicians, on two occasions, to steer my conclusions about the content of this book's pictures in directions that would agree with political ideologies of the day, for them to ostensibly use it as a platform from which to argue ideas about Bhuj's historical formation. There were occasions when I was summarily dismissed by residents as being such an outsider to the reality of life and history in Bhuj that I could never possibly hope to portray ideas and emotions basic to understanding the place. And, finally, there were occasions when property developers, asked to comment upon development trends in the city, shied away from talking about the exact reasons why historic buildings had been torn down to make way for high-rise structures in the walled city in the 1970s.

Recently, the Gujarat State Government uncovered a well-orchestrated financial scam to do with rubble removal and which had involved crores of rupees, and the same contractors who once laughed at me in Soniwad later found themselves under legal scrutiny. Whether they will be put to proper justice or not is another matter altogether, but their infractions throw up entirely new, thought-provoking, brave questions. Can a city's cultural heritage be completely recalled and preserved in the aftermath of a disaster? How does one choose what to conserve? Is clandestine art dealership always reprehensible? Or is there perhaps some value to be gained from destruction, deliberate erasure, and the commodification of culture in the process of redevelopment? Since cities have often, in the history of civilization, been reborn from the ashes of older layers (think of Delhi, Jericho, Jerusalem and London), why should we hope to keep Bhuj's old city pristine and untouched by the imprint, if not outright scars, of deliberate change?

Below left: A late-19th century house, in Vaniawad.

Below right: Although architects from the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) painted a yellow mark on the building's facade, it still fell prey to vandals in the weeks after the earthquake in 2001.



POLITICS, PATRONAGE AND THE CITY

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Some neighbourhoods were named after a specific trade. Lungha Sheri, for instance, housed the famed Lungha community of Muslim musicians, who had performed every morning—ever since the art-loving Maharao Lakhpatji patronized their community in the mid-1700s—at the Darbargarh’s *nagaara khana* (the main gate) to announce a new day. They did this for three hundred years, playing the *dhol-sharanai* at 4 or 5 a.m. We used to call their performances *choghadias*. Each *choghadia* lasted about twenty minutes, and once the King had awakened the *choghadia* turned into a classical raga exposition. Lungha musicians also performed seated in the *delo* of the famed Jain *derasar* in Kothara, but none survive to do this any more. Machhi Pith, the neighbourhood east of Jethi Sheri, was where fish and meat used to be sold; Bhatia Sheri housed the enterprising Bhatia community, who dealt in imports and exports on the sea routes to the Middle East and China.

Maniar Falia, located next to Haveli Falia, is named after the once-famous ivory-carver *maniar* community of Bhuj, whose art was once patronized by the Maharaos in Bhuj.

Salaat Falia was populated by the traditional (Hindu) *salaat* builder community. They, along with their (Muslim) *manjothiya* brethren from Bhuj (who lived on Manjothiya Sheri off Bhid Chowk), were the true architects of Bhuj for four hundred years, building the city’s houses and its administrative centre.

Jethi Mal Falia was named so because it housed a community of *jasti-mals*, professional wrestlers and bodyguards to the king. Kamaagar Falia was famous at one time for its *kamaagar* artists, but no one knows that the word *kamaagar* is actually derived from *kamaan*, the word for “bow”. Specialists in the production of bow-and-arrows, the *kamaagar*

Above: The front elevation of the Nagaara Khana gate to the Darbargarh, Bhuj. Lungha musicians performed on the *shehmai* (a clarinet-like instrument) and *nagaara* or *dhol* (a double-sided drum) in a room on the gate’s upper story, at five o’clock every morning, to wake the Maharao.

Facing page: Bhid Chabutara, photographed c. 1890.

