

Name of the Element: Hingan: Votive Terracotta Painted Plaque of Molela, Rajasthan, India.

Community/ies: Communities are categorised in four groups, as mentioned below:

Terracotta Artisans: Caste – Kumhar, Sub caste – Asawla

Priests: Local name 'bhopa' - can be of any Hindu caste residing in the region

Tribal communities: the buyers of the votive plaque; Bhil, Mina, Garasiya (from the villages lying on the border of Rajasthan and Gujarat)

Other communities: Gujjar and Garijat caste (from Rajasthan)

Region: Village: Molela, District: Rajsamand, Rajasthan, India

Brief Description: Votive terracotta painted plaques produced by the terracotta artisans of Molela is a hand modelled hollow relief of Hindu deities, especially of the neo-Vaishnava deity, Dev Narayan. Dev Narayan is accompanied by his characteristic snake symbol in the plaque. Made from clay, mixed with rice husk and donkey dung in required proportion, the plaque is sun dried and baked in an indigenous kiln before it is painted with mineral colours and eventually coated with a local made lacquer, called 'jala'. Several tribes in Gujarat and Rajasthan travel for more than 200 km once in a year to buy these plaques from Molela and bring them to their villages. Each group is led by a 'bhopa', the family priest, who helps to identify the appropriate deity for the family. These deities are installed and worshipped for 3 to 5 years in the shrines located in their villages till they are replaced by the new ones. Each shrine inhabits a minimum of nine such plaques of several gods and goddesses including Dev Narayan. Terracotta artisans from Molela are the only community entitled to meet this requirement of the tribes. This system has provided sustenance to the traditional craftsmanship for several generations.