

Chitaris' Chitrakala:

A Historical Analysis of the Traditional
Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices
of an Artisanal Community of
Goa and Sawantwadi



Cover art illustrated by Raysancia D. Cunha

Chitaris' Chitrakala:
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Practices of an Artisanal Community of Goa and Sawantwadi**

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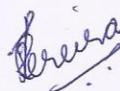
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I hereby declare that the data presented in this dissertation report entitled, “*Chitaris’ Chitrakala: A Historical Analysis of the Traditional Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices of an Artisanal Community of Goa and Sawantwadi*” is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the discipline of History at the D. D. Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioral Studies, Goa University under the supervision of Professor Dr. Pratima Kamat and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will not be responsible for the correctness of observations/experiments or other findings given in the dissertation.

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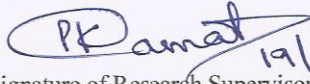
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COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation report "*Chitaris' Chitrakala: A Historical Analysis of the Traditional Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices of an Artisanal Community of Goa and Sawantwadi,*" is a bonafide work carried out by Ms. Leeann Clizma Pereira under my supervision in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in the History Discipline at the D. D. Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioral Studies, Goa University.

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PREFACE

The dissertation, titled, '*Chitaris' Chitrakala: A Historical Analysis of the Traditional Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices of an Artisanal Community of Goa and Sawantwadi*,' is the research work carried out by me as a part of my Master of Arts in History degree for the academic year 2023-2024. Community studies have always piqued my attention, as Goa is known for its cultural diversity which is a result of diverse communities coexisting to create a unique blend of each other's traditions. Being a native of Cuncolim, I came across this topic as a suggestion, I was interested in conducting in-depth research concerning the Chitari community in Cuncolim.

When one hears the words 'Chitari art,' one automatically becomes nostalgic and relates to the *popat*/parakeet *paat* or the wooden kitchen toy set which are the motif or toys distinct to the Chitari community of Goa. However, there is no awareness of their traditional craftsmanship and contribution to the Goan society and culture. Chitaris in Goa are known for their unique craftsmanship, which their forefathers transmitted for generations. The Chitari is an artisanal community of Goa that was involved in traditional woodcraft and wood art, especially lacquerware. They are responsible for the traditional art of Goa to travel to neighbouring regions such as Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Researching on this topic has been a good learning experience. While conducting fieldwork in Cuncolim and Sawantwadi, I came across several Chitari artisans who are still practicing this art. As I documented them practicing their artwork, I came across various tools and techniques involved in this production. Moreover, some of the raw materials were locally available in abundance. In some cases, the artisans revealed to me their traditional techniques of production such as using the hand lathe and it was so mesmerizing to watch them craft their masterpieces. It was also fascinating to know about their involvement in lacquer work, *ganjifa*

art, and carving. However, now the traditional techniques have been replaced with modern tools and techniques of production, thus, threatening to its essence and traditional craftsmanship. The future of this artwork in Goa is under threat as there are very few artisans involved in Goa, whereas in Sawantwadi many other communities have undertaken this art form and the art has been continued.

Through interviews, I got insights regarding their role and contribution to the Goan society and culture, as well as in Sawantwadi. The cultural practices of the Chitari community are shaped according to the states in which they reside, in this case, it was the Hindu Maharashtrian or southern Deccan and Goan culture. The ethnohistorical approach applied in this study enabled me to fulfill the aims and objectives of the research.

Not much research has been done on the Chitaris of Goa, about their traditional craftsmanship, the tools used, the techniques of production, and cultural practices other than about their art motifs and products. Therefore, this dissertation fills in the void that existed regarding Chitaris' traditional craftsmanship and cultural practices in the Konkan region. Through this research, firstly, I have documented the traditional knowledge system, particularly, the traditional craftsmanship of the Chitari community of Goa. Secondly, this dissertation examines their role in Goan society as well as documents their cultural practices. Furthermore, I have compared the Chitari community living in Goa with the Chitari artisans in Sawantwadi as they are said to have kinship ties with one another.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success and outcome of my dissertation titled, '*Chitaris'Chitrakala: A Historical Analysis of the Traditional Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices of an Artisanal Community of Goa and Sawantwadi,*' required assistance and guidance from many individuals and I am very grateful to everyone who has helped me along the way. I am grateful to God for endowing me with the grace, determination, courage, and patience necessary to complete my research dissertation successfully. I express my sincere gratitude for all the help and support I have received both formally and informally, even though it would be impossible to thank each of the many individuals who have contributed to this dissertation. Nonetheless, the following individuals do deserve special mention.

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The dissertation wouldn't have been completed without the cooperation and contribution of various Chitari artisans residing in Cuncolim and Sawantwadi. I'd like to thank every artisan who agreed to share their knowledge regarding their traditional craftsmanship, and photographs and for their valuable time and hospitality whenever I visited them. I'd like to acknowledge the following Chitari artisans in Goa; Nilesh Chitari, Pradip Chitari, Atul Chitari, Nitin Chitari, Pramita Chitari, Anita Chitari, Savita Chitari, Satish Chitari and Hema

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A special word of thanks to Dr. Carlos Fernandes (M.L.I.SC, Goa University) for providing assistance whenever required in gathering primary sources for the topic and sharing information regarding the GI application for Chitari art.

I am grateful to my friends Naveenkumar Manturagimath (M.A. English), Aaron Andrade (M.A. International Relations), and Sinalda Cardoso (Mangalore) for translating various literature available in Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, and Portuguese about the research topic that proved to be a great help to me.

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I'd like to extend my special gratitude to my friend, batchmate, and talented artist, Raysancia Cunha for agreeing to paint an incredibly beautiful cover page along with the illustrations within a short time.

I'm grateful to all my friends, classmates, and the History Programme faculty for providing me with their valuable feedback and suggestions. I'd like to thank the staff of various

institutional repositories for allowing me to undertake reference work. These include Goa University Library, Krishnadas Shama State Central Library, Xavier Centre of Historical Research, Goa State Archives and Library, and GHRSSIDC and Department of Handicrafts, Textile and Coir.

This acknowledgment would not be complete without thanking my parents. I'm forever grateful to my parents for their innumerable acts of patience, moral support, understanding, and untiring help. The extensive field visits undertaken in Goa and Sawantwadi wouldn't have been possible without their unending support throughout. Words cannot express the gratitude I owe to them both.

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GLOSSARY

Arti - A sacred ritual.

Bazaar – A marketplace.

Chapatis - Round flat unleavened whole meal bread cooked on a griddle or Indian flatbread.

Chakram gaddi - A three-wheeled walker for toddlers.

Gudfalem - A traditional Goan board game

Gaddo/gaddi – A three-wheeled walker for toddlers.

Gaunkar – The descendant of the original inhabitant of the village.

Gotra/s - Equivalent to lineage.

Grama devatas - Village deity

Fati - Paper decorations used during the festivals and rituals of *talgadi*, *tonyamell*, and *haldi Kumkum*.

Khutali - Wooden pegs for hanging clothes.

Khelni - Miniature kitchen toys or wooden toys.

Khilone – A term for wooden toys in Hindi.

Kumkum -Vermillion applied by Hindu women on their foreheads.

Kula devata – Family deity.

Lakdi – Wood or wooden items.

Mogra – Jasmine flowers.

Mahars - Basket weavers.

Mahal- Administrative Unit.

Mantaps - A small wooden shrine for doing puja in a house.

Malik - King (in Istanbul)

Matoli - A wooden canopy hung above the Ganesh idol that is decorated with seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Mulpurush – The first person to settle in a new land or founder.

Mokasa - Collection of type of tax under Maratha empire.

Na'ib - A governor.

'Novas conquistas' - Territories of Goa captured by the Portuguese towards the late eighteenth century.

Palkhi -Temple palanquin used to carry images and idols during festive processions.

Paat/paats - A low wooden decorative seat/s.

Palne/pallnim-Baby cradle.

Rath/Rathas- Temple chariots

Sontreo/s - Colorful, decorative umbrellas on wooden poles, carried by the faithful during the festival of *Satryo* in Cuncolim, Goa.

Shigmo - Spring festival celebrated in Goa

Saibinn – Mother Mary.

Tonyo/s/ toni/tonis - Sticks made of cane or bamboo that are used during the festival of *Tonyamel* in Goa.

Tonyamel - A folk dance performed during the spring season or *Shigmo* in Goa that involves folk songs based on mythological stories in Canacona *taluka*.

Talgadi - A folk dance performed by male dancers during the spring season or *Shigmo* in Goa that involves folk songs based on mythological stories in Canacona *taluka*.

Tabulfalem - A traditional Goan board game.

Thani na'ib - A Governor.

Taluka - An administrative unit which constitutes a part of the district

Tulsi – A medicinal plant sacred to Hindus.

Tarangas – A decorated wooden pole draped by sarees, carried by faithful during the *tarangutsav* festival at Shree Mallikarjun temple Canacona.

Vhojjem/vorjem – Gifts sent by the bride's family to the newlywed couple.

'Velhas Conquistas'– Territories captured by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century in Goa.

Vangodd - Original clan of village settlers.

Zatra - Temple feasts.

ABSTRACT

Artisans and craftsmen have been a part of Indian society since time immemorial. Chitari is an artisanal community of Goa that is known for its woodcraft and wood art, especially lacquerware and wooden toys. Chitaris were hereditary painters present in Goan society through the ages. They were known for their skilled craftsmanship on wood and were also involved in producing lacquerware in Goa. The Chitaris made use of the naturally available raw materials to produce their arts and crafts. The principal products produced by the Chitaris in Goa include parakeet *paat*, wooden fruits, and vegetables, *lakdi khelni*, *chakram gaadi*, and wooden dolls, while the production of *ganjifa* cards was carried out only in Sawantwadi by the community.

During the Portuguese period in Goa, many Chitari families fled to avoid religious persecution and they migrated to the neighbouring areas in Kannada as well as Konkan. The Chitari community in their respective societies in two different states have played an important role by contributing their services to the royalty and the common folks. They not only involved themselves in craft production but they actively take part in the socio-cultural and religious traditions practiced in their respective societies. However, today the Chitari community is still seen practicing their traditional occupation but their traditional craftsmanship is under threat. Therefore, this dissertation has attempted to document their traditional craftsmanship and cultural practices as well as examine their role in respective societies and contribution to culture.

Keywords: Chitari art, Wooden toys, Traditional knowledge system, Traditional craftsmanship, *Ganjifa* art, Artisanal legacy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

India is a country with diversity in climate, culture, socio-economic status, historical background, communities, and a rich traditional cultural heritage. Spanning from the snow-capped Himalayan peaks in the north to the tropical rain forests of the south, India covers an area of 32,87,263 square kilometres. India's mainland comprises of the great Himalayas, the plains of Ganga and Indus, the southern peninsular region, and the desert region. The peninsular region is surrounded by the Western and Eastern Ghats and lapped by the waters of the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The Konkan region is a narrow strip of land located on the west coast of India that encompasses all of the territory from Daman to the Goa region, between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea.

The diverse nature of India results in the synthesis of cultures, religions, languages, arts, and crafts, yet the Indian society has maintained its unity and distinctiveness. The Indian society consists of various communities with rich traditions. Since the earliest times, people have lived in close-knit groups, depending on each other for survival. These groups eventually expanded to form a greater part of the society. Most scholars point out hierarchical and caste features of the Indian society that play an important role in understanding and learning about a particular community. Earlier historians mainly focused on documenting and writing about the political history and rulers and often undermined the role played by the masses in their kingdoms.

The common folks possess the capacity to make history. In fact, the historic initiative of the masses has time and again produced social cataclysms that have changed the world.¹ The artisans and craftsmen contribute to the Indian economy and society. They have provided their services to everyone since the earliest times, yet often they go unnoticed by the higher sections of the society. In the 1980s, scholars and historians began focusing on and around people as they constitute a central theme of history. The subaltern studies of history claim to be an improvement on the elitist mode of explaining and exploring history, by focusing on the ‘history from below.’²

Artisans and craftsmen form an integral part of Indian society as they render their services to both rural and urban needs and caste has often played a significant role in the status hierarchy of the craftsmen and artisans. In a primarily agricultural society, the craftsman’s role was crucial, enabling the village community to survive independently. The artisans played a significant role in the development of Indian culture and society. The craftsmen and artisans were comprised of professionals who included goldsmiths, brass smiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, coppersmiths, basket-makers, and cobblers. Crafts were passed down through generations, thus resulting in the transmission of traditional knowledge among the communities.

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, traditional knowledge (TK) is knowledge, know-how, skills, and practices that are developed, sustained, and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity.³ It refers to tradition-based literary, artistic, or scientific works; performances;

¹ Abhijeet Sahoo, “Subaltern Studies: A New Trend in Writing History,” *Odisha Review*, November 2014, 81, <http://magazines.odisha.gov.in/Orissareview/2014/Nov/engpdf/82-87.pdf>.

² Sahoo, “Subaltern Studies: A New Trend in Writing History,” 1.

³ “Traditional Knowledge,” WIPO, accessed January 1, 2024, <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/>.

inventions; scientific discoveries; designs; marks, names, and symbols; undisclosed information; and all other tradition-based innovations and creations resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary, or artistic fields.⁴ Traditional cultural expressions, which include music, dance, art, designs, handicrafts, signs, symbols, performances, ceremonies, and the like, are a subset of the traditional knowledge systems. Knowledge regarding traditional craftsmanship acquires a prime position during the process of documenting the traditional craftwork.

Craftsmen known by the generic term of ‘Vishwakarma,’ the divine architect of Gods, played a crucial role in the early medieval economy of peninsular India. The Vishwakarma in medieval peninsular India constituted a group representing five crafts. The constituent craft persons were goldsmiths (*tattan*), brass smiths (*kannan*), blacksmiths (*karuman or kollan*), carpenters (*tachchan*) and masons (*silpi or kal-tachchan*).⁵

Goa and Sawantwadi town lie adjacent to each other on the mid-western coast of India. To the east lies the Sahyadri hill range. To the north and east of Sawantwadi lie the Ratnagiri and Kolhapur districts of Maharashtra state. South and east of Goa are the Karwar and Belgaum districts of Karnataka state. These two territories in the Konkan region shared a common history during the ancient and medieval periods, as several pre-colonial inscriptions of dynasties indicate that, often, Sawantwadi and Goa were jointly ruled. The favourable geographical, social, and economic conditions attracted many artisans to settle in these regions.

My dissertation, ‘*Chitaris’ Chitrakala*’ deals with the Chitari community of Goa and that which migrated to Sawantwadi following the Portuguese rule in Goa resulting in the study

⁴ Akansha Saini, *A State of Documenting Traditional Knowledge* (New Delhi: Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, 2022), 6.

⁵ Vijaya Ramaswamy, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 4 (2004): 549, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/25165073>.

of the areas based in two different states that are culturally different. Goa is the smallest state in India and it is renowned for its beautiful landscape and cultural heritage that has been shaped throughout centuries. Goa was politically, geographically, culturally, economically, and linguistically associated with the Konkani region. It is firmly embedded in the Indian culture and history, yet stands out from that of its neighbours due to Portuguese colonial influence in its architecture, folklore, cuisine, religion, and customs. In the twenty-first century, politically, the state is divided into two districts⁶ and twelve *talukas* of Tiswadi, Bardez, Pernem, Bicholim, Sattari, Salcete, Mormugao, Sanguem, Canacona, Quepem, Dharbandora, and Ponda for administrative purposes.

Sawantwadi town, presently situated in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, was an integral part of the Konkani region; it was the former capital of the Sawantwadi kingdom, which was ruled by the Sawant-Bhosale rulers during the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The rulers were the great patrons of art and culture resulting in the flourishing of the handicraft industry even in the twenty-first century.

Indian handicrafts are renowned throughout the world for their exquisite craftsmanship, grace, elegance, sense of colour, and a vast variety. The word ‘handicraft’ refers to a broad category of items. The Office of the Development Commissioner, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India (Handicrafts) offered a workable definition in the Eighth Plan: “Items made by hand, often with the use of simple tools, and generally artistic and/or traditional in nature.”⁷ Thus, the wooden toy-making industry is also considered a part of the handicraft industry in India. Several states in India are known for their traditional arts and handicrafts; the

⁶ Goa is divided into two districts for administrative conveniences - North Goa and South Goa.

⁷ Manjusmita Dash, “Problems of Handicrafts: An Overview,” *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research* 9, no.5 (2021): 29, <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0349.0905004>.

most prominent are Karnataka, Odisha, Gujarat, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu Kashmir, and Kerala. These states are known for their woodcraft and lacquerware.

An important aspect of India's cultural legacy is the wooden toy industry and the lacquerware industry. Historically, the craft of making wooden toys dates back to 5000 years. Toys have been found during the excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. These findings provide us with a clear picture of human children playing with toys as early as the Indus Valley civilization. In the contemporary period, traditional wooden toy manufacturing mostly takes place on a cottage industry scale, with the majority of craftspeople working on their own. Some examples of traditional Indian handicrafts are the Channapatna toys from Karnataka, the Etikoppaka and Kondapalli toys from Andhra Pradesh, Sawantwadi woodcraft, and the Chitari art from Goa.

The Chitari artisans in the Konkan region involved themselves in producing lacquerware crafts. The term 'lacquer' is derived from the Sanskrit word '*laksha*,' which denotes a particular kind of resin.⁸ Lacquer is coated over wooden items that are rotated on lathe machines, giving them a shiny surface. Thus, this increases their durability and preserves the natural dyes used during the production process. The Chitari woodcraft is known for its excellent traditional craftsmanship, making it popular as one of the prominent handicrafts in the Konkan region.

The Chitari community is a small community residing in the Konkan region that has depended mainly upon fine arts, woodwork, and lacquerware to make a living. It can be considered as a minority community in this region as there are very few families. 'Chitari' literally means 'to draw' in Konkani and is derived from the word *chitrakar* or an artist, hence

⁸ Thomas Brock, Michael Groteklaes and Peter Mischke, *Europeans Coating Handbook*, ed. Ulrich Zorll, trans. Heather Yesson and Eiger Translations Ltd (Hannover: Vincentz Verlag, 2000), 11.

the name. The Chitari community would engage itself to produce lacquerware that came to be known as the Chitari art.

Chitari art is a simple art form that has survived for generations in the villages of Goa, especially Cuncolim, and Sawantwadi town in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra. The Chitaris originally settled in Goa and are said to have migrated to the neighbouring regions of Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra and Shimoga district of Karnataka during the colonial period in Goa to avoid conversion to Christianity.

The Chitaris are known for their artwork, such as the wooden toys, the parakeet *paat*, floral *paat*, (see figure 1.1) wooden fruits, little jars (kitchen accessories), cradles for infants, pegs for hanging clothes, the *gaddo*, teething toys, (see figure 1.2) and *tabulfalem* or *gudfalem*. Their products also include household items such as utensils of various shapes, the *adolli*, (see figure 1.3), and other kitchen accessories like rolling pins for *chapatis* and grinding stones. They also engage in traditional temple woodwork such as *mantaps* (see figure 1.4), *sontreos*, *palkhis*, *tonyos* for the festival of *tonyamel*.

Goa has a wealth of cultural legacy and tradition, which is evident in the diverse range of handicrafts it produces. These goods are highly regarded for their exceptional designs and craftsmanship, blending utility and aesthetic value. The popular handicrafts seen in Goa are pottery work and clay art, brass work, bamboo work, and woodwork, which includes wood carving and wood painting or lacquerware.

Chitari art or lacquerware wooden artifacts gained popularity during the eighteenth century in Sawantwadi town. The Sawant-Bhosle family in Sawantwadi greatly patronized this art form. They also patronized the Chitari artists to carry on their artistic activity to produce the *ganjifa* cards. The *ganjifa* cards are Indian playing cards traditionally hand-painted by artisans.

The word *ganjifa* derives from the Persian word ‘*ganj*’ meaning treasure.⁹ The card game was introduced in India by the Mughals in the sixteenth century. In Sawantwadi, many forms of *ganjifa* bear different themes of Hindu mythology; the most popular one is the *Dashavtar ganjifa* which consists of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. These craftworks represent high artistic craftsmanship. Sawantwadi town is popularly known for its woodcraft, *ganjifa* art, and wooden toy industry.

The artisans identified as Panchala Brahmins in Goa included coppersmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, sculptors, goldsmiths, and *gudikaras*.¹⁰ In Goa, these professions are hereditary, and usually, the skills and traditional knowledge are passed down through generations. In Goa, traditional occupations also include the making of rural handicrafts and artisanal items that are well known for their wide diversity, elegance, skilled craftsmanship, and heritage value. From the medieval period on, the Goans got themselves engaged in these occupations, as it was their only means of sustenance. Some communities also migrated to neighbouring regions of Goa to protect their livelihoods during the colonial rule in Goa. Goa’s rich tradition of art also includes the Chitari community, which is associated with the carpenters, painters, and lacquerware makers in Goa.

In the Konkan region, this community is a follower of Hinduism, and their customs are often shaped by their religious beliefs. The Chitaris hold their *kula devatas* in high regard and most of the families in Goa and Sawantwadi worship Shri Mahalasa, Ravalnath, and Mahamaya as their *kula devatas*. The Chitaris have played an important role in their respective societies by providing their services, especially during various religious feasts and festivals.

⁹ Rudolf Von Leyden, *Ganjifa The Playing Cards of India* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1982), 5.

¹⁰ V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 45-55.

The Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi involved themselves in producing this local art, which included the parakeet *paats*, wooden toys, games, and the like. The lacquerware items, popularly known as the Chitari art, which are being produced by the Chitari community, have evolved as a result of advanced technology, and today they are facing major threats due to globalization, foreign plastic wooden toys and better work prospects among the younger generations.

Identification of Research Problem

My dissertation, “*Chitaris’ Chitrakala: A Historical Analysis of the Traditional Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices of an Artisanal Community of Goa and Sawantwadi*,” aims to trace the origins of the Chitari community in Goa and to elucidate their migration in the neighbouring regions of Konkan. This study aims to review and document the Chitari's traditional craftsmanship, as they are involved in producing traditional handicrafts in both regions.

By examining and evaluating their contribution in the fields of art, culture, and economy in both the regions of Goa and Sawantwadi, an attempt has been made to differentiate between the Chitari communities in two different regions of Konkan concerning their contribution to woodcraft, economy, and culture.

The oral traditions, rituals, and ceremonies, as well as the traditional knowledge system of the Chitaris in Goa and Sawantwadi, indicate strong kinship ties that suggest their belonging to a common lineage.

Aims and Objectives

The present dissertation, in an attempt to make a comparative study of the Chitaris of Goa and Sawantwadi, has been conceptualized with the following aims and objectives:

- To trace the historical origins of the Chitari community in the Konkan.
- To compare the similarities and differences between the Chitaris in Goa and the Chitaris in Maharashtra and elsewhere.
- To document and analyse the oral traditions, rituals, customs, ceremonies, and traditional knowledge systems of the Chitari community in the Konkan region.
- To examine the kinship ties between the Chitaris of Goa and Sawantwadi.
- To examine the socio-cultural aspects of the Chitaris in Goa and Sawantwadi town in Maharashtra.
- To analyse the contribution of the Chitaris in the social and economic fields.
- To examine the artisanal legacy of the Chitaris in the Konkan region and the rest of the country.
- To analyse the artisanal occupation of the Chitari community in terms of continuity and change.

Literature Review

Craftsmen and artisans are an integral part of every society. They render their services to the village people as well as contribute to the economy of the village they reside in. There is enough research material available on the pre-colonial and colonial society and economy of Goa and Sawantwadi, but much remains to be investigated about the documentation of the traditional knowledge systems and cultural practices of the indigenous communities that involve themselves in practicing the traditional craft in the Konkan region. The Chitari

community in Goa and Sawantwadi was involved in the craft of lacquerware production, wood painting, and manufacturing wooden toys.

A few works address the communities of artisans and craftsmen dwelling in the Konkan and Deccan regions, who are the only heirs to the tradition of producing traditional handicrafts from these regions. To obtain a better insight and develop a better understanding regarding this topic, the following review of literature is undertaken:

Christopher Souza in his doctoral thesis, “Craftsmen and Artisans in Goa (A. D. 1000-1700),” has dealt with the types of artisans and craftsmen that existed in Goa. In this thesis, he has provided an analysis of the types of craftsmen and artisans that were a part of Goan society, their social standing, guild organizations in the villages and towns, and the commodities that they produced. He has documented, classified, and analysed their contribution to Goan society.¹¹

A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara by V. R. Mitragotri is a work that deals with the history of Goa up to the Vijayanagara era. The author has provided details about the different artisanal communities present during this time and has discussed the social structure and caste system of the artisanal communities. The author also provides information regarding the Panchala Brahmins class.¹²

In the article, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India,” Vijaya Ramaswamy concentrated on the Vishwakarma artisans. This article provides an analysis of the dynamics of social change among the artisan groups in peninsular India.¹³

¹¹ Christopher H. de Souza, “Craftsmen and Artisans in Goa (A.D. 1000-1700)” (PhD diss., Goa University, 2020).

¹² V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji, Goa: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999).

¹³ Vijaya Ramaswamy, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 4 (2004), 548-582, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/25165073>.

Coomaraswamy in his work, *The Indian Craftsman*, examines the role of craftsmen in three different settings, that is, the craftsmen at the village, temple, palace, or town. Concerning these three different settings, he comments on where they lived, worked, and had their patrons. The author also discusses the association of the craftsmen with the Vishwakarma castes.¹⁴

Medieval Goa: A Socio-Economic History, authored by Teotonio R. de Souza, has provided a detailed analysis regarding the medieval urban and rural economies of Goa and has provided interesting insights into the Goan rural heritage as well as the urban economic life in the medieval period in Goa.¹⁵

The *Census of India 1961*, volume X, deals with the state of Maharashtra. This census report provides information regarding the handicrafts practiced in Maharashtra. It is a monograph that largely deals with the wooden toys of Sawantwadi and the coir ropes of Achare in the district of Ratnagiri. This work by the Maharashtra census office also provides historical details regarding Sawantwadi.¹⁶

Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari have published a seven-volume work entitled *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*. This work is the result of the ethnographic survey conducted by the Government of British India in 1901. This work provides ethnographic details such as the manners, customs, and physical features of the Chitaris and Gudigars.¹⁷

Another book that discusses Goa's history as well as the local artisans and craftspeople is A. B. de Bragança Pereira's *Ethnography of Goa, Daman, and Diu*. The book sheds light on

¹⁴ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Craftsman* (London: Probsthain & Co., 1909).

¹⁵ Teotonio R. de Souza, *Medieval Goa: A Socio-Economic History*, 2nd ed. (Saligão: Goa 1556 and Panjim: Broadway Book Centre, 2009).

¹⁶ *Census of India 1961: Volume X Maharashtra Part VII-A Handicrafts in Maharashtra* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1968).

¹⁷ Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. 6 (Madras: Government Press, 1909).

the various artisanal communities that existed in Goa, the goods they produced, and their customs. The book also provides details about interactions between the different artisanal communities. The book contains information on the geographical features of the state of Goa. Lastly, the author examines the artisanship of various artisans including painters and carpenters.¹⁸

Teotonio R. de Souza, a renowned scholar from Goa, in his edited book *Goa Through the Ages: An Economic History*, provides a better understanding of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Goa and its economic aspects. The book deals with various artisans in the village system in Goa. He also provides insights into the economic conditions prevalent in Goa during that time.¹⁹ In *Goa to Me*, the author analyses the history of Goa during Portuguese rule and gives a brief overview of the society during the same period. It provides the reader with some insights regarding the rural life in Goa and the occupations that were prevalent during the colonial period.²⁰

The *People of India* series by the Anthropological Survey of India contains anthropological profiles of most of the states in India. The volume on Maharashtra and Goa provides insights into the Chitari community in the Sawantwadi district of Maharashtra²¹ and Goa.²² These volumes contain insights regarding the cultural life of the community in two different regions. Apart from this, there are several such series published by recognized

¹⁸ A. B. de Bragança Pereira, *Ethnography of Goa, Daman and Diu*, trans. Maria Aurora Couto (New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 2008).

¹⁹ Teotonio R. de Souza, ed., *Goa Through the Ages: An Economic History*, Vol. 2 (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1999).

²⁰ Teotonio R. de Souza, *Goa to Me* (Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1994).

²¹ K. S. Singh, ed., *People of India: Maharashtra* (Mumbai: Anthropological Survey of India Popular Prakashan, 2004).

²² K. S. Singh, ed., *People of India: Goa* (Bombay: Anthropological Survey of India Popular Prakashan, 1993).

authorities that include the government's published census survey reports and monographs that shed light on the woodworkers and the Chitari community in India.²³

The book, *Traditional Occupations of Goa*, by Pantaleão Fernandes provides photo documentation of at least fifty traditional occupations that people engaged in and still practice in Goa.²⁴ The author has captured in this book the rural essence of Goa, which is slowly declining. One of the fifty documented traditional occupations in Goa is the Chitari Art. Thus, this book sheds light on the Chitari community of Goa which later migrated to Sawantwadi, and the Chitari artwork that is undertaken by the community.

Rudolf Van Leyden in his work, *Ganjifa the playing Cards of India*, throws light on the *chitragars* in Sawantwadi. He also discusses the various types of *ganjifa* cards and the method of playing the game.²⁵

In *Goa: Land, Life and Legacy*, a book by Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, an attempt has been made to document the heritage of Goa. In this book, the author speaks about the progress, development, and changes that have taken place from the earliest times until the contemporary period in Goa and it also makes a mention of the lacquerware makers in Goa.²⁶

Goa: Cultural Trends, a book edited by P.P. Shirodkar, is a compilation of seminar papers and this book has several articles by various authors that discuss and analyse the history of Goa. It has information on the art and culture that were prevalent in Goa and it also contains articles that deal with the rural economy.²⁷

²³ S. Ranjendran, ed. *Census of India 1981: Series 29: Goa Daman & Diu Part -XD Handicraft Survey Report Woodcarving in Goa* (Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1989).

²⁴ Pantaleão Fernandes, *Traditional Occupations of Goa* (Beaulim: The Word Publications, 2015).

²⁵ Rudolf Von Leydan, *Ganjifa The Playing Cards of India* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1982).

²⁶ Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *Goa: Land, Life and Legacy* (Panaji: Directorate of Art and Culture, 2016).

²⁷ P. P. Shirodkar, *Goa: Cultural Trends* (Goa: Directorate of Archives and Archaeology and Museum, 1988).

Goa and Portugal: History and Development is a book edited by Charles J. Borges, Oscar G. Pereira, and Hannes Stubbe, which deals with the trade and industries, village communities and Goan life, religious issues, and literature during the period 1520-1961. In this book, a chapter authored by Percival Noronha provides information regarding the presence of Chitaris in Goa, and the work they engage in.²⁸

Sawants of Wadi is a book by S. K. Mahmai that elaborates on the history of Sawants of Wadi during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in special reference to coastal politics. Mahmai Kamat has at large discussed the rules of Khem Sawant II, Phond Sawant II Jairam Sawant, Ramchandra Sawant Bhosale, and Khem Sawant III.²⁹

The dissertation entitled “A Study of Toys Industry in Savantwadi Taluka” by A.G. Pandurkar provides an analysis of the wooden toy industry in India, particularly in Sawantwadi town, Maharashtra. The author has provided his analysis and interpretation regarding the toy industry in Sawantwadi town, Maharashtra, from an economic perspective.³⁰

Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities by Rui Gomes Pereira discusses matters related to the different communities in Goa. It also informs that certain artisan communities worshipped their deities in certain temples in Goa. There are references to the Shantadurga temple of Cuncolim and Mahalsa temple in Mardol.³¹

²⁸ Percival Noronha, “Indo-Portuguese Furniture and Its Evolution,” in *Goa and Portugal: History and Development*, ed. Charles J. Borges, Óscar G. Pereira, and Hannes Stubbe (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2000).

²⁹ S. K. Mahmai, *Sawants of Wadi: Coastal Politics in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1984).

³⁰ A. G. Pandurkar, “Study of Toys Industry in Savantwadi Taluka” (M. Phil. Diss., Shivaji University, 1992).

³¹ Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities*, ed. A. Gomes Pereira, trans. Antonio Victor Couto, vol. 1 (Panaji: Printwell Press, 1978).

The book *History of Cuncolim* by Lingu R. Dalvi provides historical information regarding Cuncolim village. This book gives a detailed and vivid account of the atrocities committed by the Portuguese on the Hindu religion in Cuncolim during the sixteenth century.³²

The article titled, “Power, Religion and Violence in the Sixteenth Century,” by Angela Barreto Xavier provides a detailed analysis of the Cuncolim revolt in 1583. The author comments on the geo-political position and village economy during the sixteenth century.³³

The gazetteers issued by the governing authorities in both the regions of Goa and Sawantwadi provide detailed information regarding the state and district. These gazetteers shed light on the geographical features of these two regions. The gazetteers of the Union Territory of Goa and that of the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra contain information about the land and the people and enable us to trace the political and economic history of both regions in the Konkan.³⁴

Apart from the above review of literature, several articles deal mainly with the Chitari community and these are published in the local newspapers, magazines, and journals.

Research Design and Methodology

The methodological approach of the present dissertation is indicated by its subtitle, “A Historical Analysis of the Traditional Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices of an Artisanal Community in Goa and Sawantwadi,” which goes to show that the emphasis is on elucidating

³² Lingu R. Dalvi, *History of Cuncolim*, trans. Harischandra T. Nagvenkar (Margao: Late Adv Dattaram Lingu Dalvi Memorial Trust, 2007).

³³ Angela Barreto Xavier, “Power, Religion and Violence in Sixteenth-Century Goa,” *Parts of Asia Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 17/18 (2010): 27-49, https://ojs.lib.umassd.edu/index.php/plcs/article/view/PLCS17_18_Xavier_page27/1005.

³⁴ V. T. Gune, ed., *Gazetteer of the Union Territory: Goa, Daman and Diu, Part 1: Goa* (1979; reprint, Panaji, Goa: Gazetteer Department, 2009).

the origins of this community and analysing the traditional heritage, craftsmanship, socio-cultural and economic aspects of the Chitari community in the Konkan region.

Both primary and secondary sources have been utilized. Reference work has been undertaken at repositories of primary as well as secondary documentation in Goa and also at museums, galleries, and government offices, notably the Krishnadas Shama State Central Library, Panaji; the Goa University Library; the Department of Archives, Panaji; Dr. Francisco Luis Gomes District Library, Navelim; the Xavier Centre of Historical Research, Porvorim; Goa Chitra Museum, Benaulim; Big Foot-Ancestral Goa, Loutolim and the Goa Handicrafts Rural and Small-Scale Industries Development Corporation, Panaji.

In the pursuit of my research on this topic, I have employed the tool of qualitative analysis by conducting a sample survey and analysing the results of the same. A select few Chitari families from the state of Goa and Sawantwadi town in Maharashtra have been interviewed. These interviews have provided more insights into the ethnohistory, oral traditions, practices, and traditional knowledge, and an analysis of the same has been carried out. Chitari community members, painters, and workers have been interviewed and the oral traditions of both places in the Konkan region are examined and an analysis of the same has been done.

A sample survey was conducted among the five practising families in Cuncolim, Goa. This survey was conducted to gather information regarding their educational qualification, and proficiency in languages, products manufactured, and their family deities. Two artisans from Cuncolim were interviewed. In Sawantwadi, only one practising artisan was interviewed. Apart from the Chitari artisans, an interview was conducted with Dr. Puttuswamy Gudigar, a scholar and sculptor belonging to the Gudigar community.

Photo documentation of their customs and video documentation of their artwork, traditional and modern craftsmanship have been undertaken by conducting extensive field visits to the Chitari community in Cuncolim and Sawantwadi town, Maharashtra, and the same has been analysed.

The field visits were carried out during the months from August 2023 to March 2024. Their workshops in the Demani ward in Cuncolim village where they reside and the ‘Chitari Art Village’ a shop owned by Mr. Pradip Chitari were visited. During this visit, he provided me with information regarding their art, and the products that they produce or manufacture. I also met Nilesh Chitari upon prior request as I had come across articles dealing with his late father. He revealed to me some of his father's accomplishments, including some awards that were conferred upon him.

Field visits were also undertaken in Sawantwadi town, here the Sawant Bhosale Palace was visited where I was able to witness the production of *ganjifa* cards. Also, the Chitari Aali was visited. Here most of the stalls of Chitari artisans have been set up. At this place, I came across artisans such as Uday and Lalita Chitari who provided me with better insights. Field work was also done at museums like Goa Chitra and Beads and Cross Museum. These two museums contain artifacts produced by the Chitaris in Goa.

In the course of the study to examine the artisanal occupation of the Chitaris in the Konkan region, a mixed methods approach has been adopted. This research is based on an analysis of primary archival sources and ethnographic details of the Chitari community; thus, an ethnographical analysis has been undertaken.

Iconographical analysis of the deities worshipped has shed light on the socio-religious practices of the Chitari community. Also, an analysis of the statistics published in the census survey has been carried out. The tool of comparative analysis has also been employed in this

research by comparing the present census surveys with the previous surveys conducted by the officials for this community. A comprehensive review of the literature has been undertaken for this topic of research and the same has been analysed.

Scheme of Chapters

The dissertation has been broadly divided into five chapters:

Chapter One, entitled '**Introduction**,' introduces the topic of research by examining the artisans and craftsmen that resided in Goa and Sawantwadi town in Maharashtra. This chapter also incorporates the literature review, objectives of the study, scope of the study, research problem, scheme of chapters, research methodology and design, sources, and significance of the study.

Chapter Two, entitled '**Historical Background**,' explores the historical background of both the regions in the Konkan and examines its geographical and political setting. This chapter attempts to trace and elucidate the origins of Chitari artisans and their community in Goa, Sawantwadi, and elsewhere in India. The chapter deals with the various woodcrafts, lacquerwares, and woodcarvers in India.

Chapter Three, '*Chitaris' Chitrakala*,' analyses the traditional knowledge systems and artwork of the Chitaris. An attempt has been made to examine the raw materials used and the techniques of production. It studies the evolution of different raw materials, such as types of wood, paints, other painting techniques, and production techniques. This chapter also analyses the utilitarian and heritage value of the products of the Chitaris in a cultural and social context. This chapter also studies the economics of production and deals with the economic aspects of the Chitaris of Goa and Sawantwadi, especially their contribution to the economy in both states. It examines the government schemes, regulations, and legislations that are applicable in both

states. This chapter also reviews the marketing strategies adopted by the community in the Konkan region and beyond.

Chapter Four, **Society and Culture**, largely focuses on the socio-cultural practices of the artisanal community in the Konkan region. This chapter explores the different oral traditions and practices performed by the communities. This chapter also studies the lifestyle and culture of this community in both regions. Lastly, in comparison, this chapter documents the birth, marriage, and death traditions among the community in two different states and it attempts to examine the Chitari community's role in society and the role of the Chitari women in society.

Chapter Five, **Conclusion**, reviews the findings of the study and views this traditional occupation in terms of continuity and change. By examining the artisanal legacy among the Chitaris in the Konkan region, this chapter also discusses the future of their artwork as a result of globalization, growing competition in today's market, and alternate aspirations of the younger generation.

Scope of the Study

Craftsmen and artisans were an important composition of every society from the earliest times. Craftsmen and artisans played an important role in Indian societies as their services were utilized in both rural and urban settings. This research examines the socio-cultural and economic evolution of the Chitari community of Goa and Sawantwadi from a historical perspective with the help of an interdisciplinary approach. This study has attempted to review the traditional craft and cultural practices of the artisanal community, the Chitari, based primarily in Goa, that later moved to Sawantwadi in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra during Portuguese colonial rule.

In this research, an attempt has been made to thoroughly document the Chitari community and their art and traditional craftsmanship with the help of the methodological tools of oral history and oral traditions, along with ethnographical evidence and literary sources. The research concentrates on the woodcraft, artwork, and social and economic aspects of the Chitari community which resides in the Konkan region.

Relevance of the Study

The research is significant because an attempt has been made to document the traditional knowledge systems of Goa and Sawantwadi practiced by the Chitari community, which are on the verge of being forgotten as a result of globalization, foreign competition, and alternate professional aspirations of the younger generation

The research is relevant because it focuses on tracing the origins of the Chitari community and their artwork, which has been practiced for centuries in the Konkan region. It has examined the artisanal occupation in both places of the Konkan and provides an analysis of their similarities and differences in the context of the local cultural traditions of the places where both communities reside. This dissertation largely focuses on the traditional craftsmanship of the Chitari community. The analysis of the oral traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and traditional knowledge systems documented in this dissertation sheds light on the Chitari community that resides in Goa and Sawantwadi.

This study mainly deals with the community of carpenters and painters, and an attempt has been made to examine the artisanal legacy of the Chitaris and the Chitari art. Thus, this research has filled in the void that existed regarding the Chitari community in Goan history, who are considered to be the tradition bearers of Goan society as the producers of traditional woodcraft and art in Goa.

Figure 1.1: Floral design *paat*

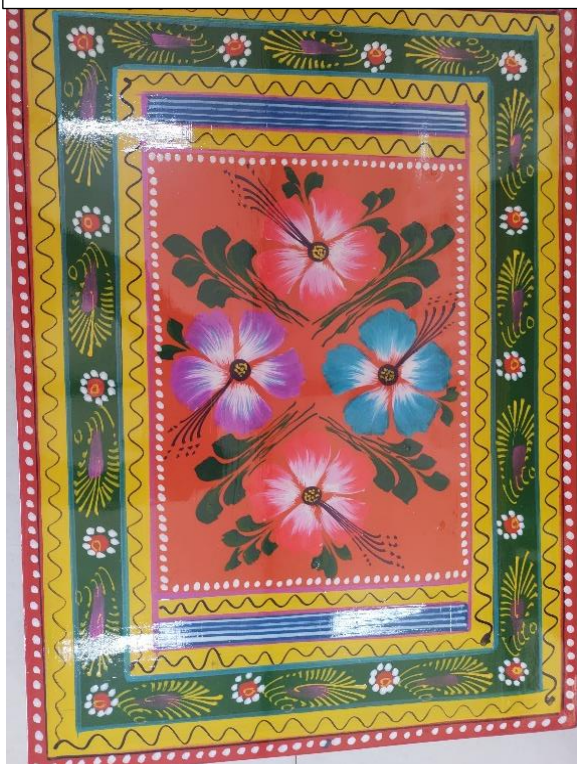


Figure 1.2: Teething wooden toys for infants



Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 1.3: Modern *adolli* crafted by Chitaris



Figure 1.4: *Mantap*



Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

India as a country, was once a part of the earliest human civilization, that is, the Indus Valley civilization, which is traced back to five millennia. India was a part of various dynastic rules that included not just the regional dynasties but also the foreign rulers from Asia and Europe. Thus, Indian culture and lifestyle have been shaped either directly or indirectly by the rich history of the country resulting in the synthesis of multiple cultures and art forms. Through the ages, India has developed its unique culture as well as borrowed several aspects from outside and this is visible in its arts, crafts, religion, lifestyle, and the like.

Geographically, India is bounded by the Himalayas to the north and by the Indian Ocean to the south while its mainland comprises the plains of Ganga, and Indus, the Southern peninsular region that includes the Deccan plateau, and the desert region. The peninsular region is surrounded by the Western and Eastern Ghats. The wide range of flora and fauna has been a resource to various communities of India, including the artisans and craftsmen.

The western coastline of India, from the Gulf of Kutch to Cochin has a unique cultural ecology shaped by the events of thousands of years of history. Since the earliest period, western India was known to several traders and travellers including foreigners, thus, establishing contacts with one another.¹ It comprises the Konkan region, Kanara region, and Malabar region. These regions were occupied by the tribal settlements of Kols, Kharwas, Mundaris, and Shabars who were involved in shifting cultivation, fishing, and hunting. The Konkan region throughout the ages had different territorial limits and mainly included all the

¹ Nandkumar Kamat, "Cultural relations of Goa with Gujarat," in *Essays in Goan History*, ed. Teotonio de Souza (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1989), 1

land that lay between the Western Ghats and the Indian Ocean.² In ancient times the western coast was known as *Sapta Konkan* which extended from Gujarat to Kerala. In the Hindu mythological lore, the legend of Parashurama is associated with the western coast of India. As the legend goes, Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu after facing banishment from the lands he once conquered set seven arrows fly from the top of Sahyadri to push back the sea and create a stretch of land which he could claim for himself.³ Thus, the region came to be identified with Parshurama *Kshetra*.

History of Konkan

Historically, Konkan was known to the earliest travellers including the Egyptians, and Greeks as there is a reference made to Konkan by Ptolemy in his book *Geography* as well as it is mentioned in works such as *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. In ancient times, it was also known as *Aparanta*, which is one of the five divisions of India, as mentioned in the *Puranas* and *Kavyamimamsa*. The *Aparanta* of the ancient Indian literature was the coastal region that stretched from Broach in the North to the Northern border or Murla river in the south.⁴ Apart from this, Konkan was also mentioned in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, *Raghuvamsa*, and *Bhismaparva* of *Mahabharata*. The Konkan was divided into Payve or Havye-500 in North Kanara, Konkan-1400, Vairavi-116, and Konkan-900. The latter encompasses the present Goa, Redi, Iridge, Sawantwadi, and parts of Ratnagiri. Thus, indicating that Goa and Sawantwadi, form a part of the intra-coastal cultural setting in this region.

² Alexander Kyd Nairne, *History of Konkan* (Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1988), i.

³ Pratima Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," in *Goa: Through the Ages: An Economic History*, ed. Teotonio R. de Souza, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1990), 5.

⁴ Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 7.

The territorial limits of Goa adjusted themselves within Konkani-900 and also outside this division.⁵ The ancient borders of Goa could probably be traced to the river Damanganga in the north and the river Gangavalli in the south. Presently, nestled on India's mid-western coast, Goa state and Sawantwadi *taluka*, in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra are situated adjacent to one another forming a part of the Konkani region. It occupies a central position in the Konkani region. To the east lie the Sahyadri mountain range while the cities of Karwar and Belgaum in the state of Karnataka lie to the south and east of Goa and the Ratnagiri and Kolhapur districts of Maharashtra state are located to the north and east of Sawantwadi, accordingly. Goa covers an area of 3702 square kilometres while Sawantwadi has an area of 896 square kilometres. These two territories in the Konkani region shared a common history during the ancient and medieval periods in India as several pre-colonial inscriptions of dynasties indicate that Goa and Sawantwadi were jointly ruled till the sixteenth century.

Geo-Political History of Goa

Goa is as much a part of Indian culture and civilization as any other state. Goa lies on the mid-western coast of India known as the Konkani region or the Konkani coast and it can be located within the latitudes of 14° 53' 57" N and 15° 47' 59" N and longitudes of 73° 40' 54" E and 74° 20' 11" E.⁶ It is bounded by the Arabian Sea to its west, the Sindhudurg district in Maharashtra to its north, and the Western Ghats and northern Kanara districts of Karnataka to its east. The current political boundaries of Goa, extend from river Terekhol in the north to Polem village in Canacona *taluka* in the South. These borders of Goa state were drawn following its liberation from Portuguese colonial rule in the year 1961.

⁵ Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 7.

⁶ Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 1.

The flora of Goa consists of trees such as the Indian coral tree, mango tree, and jackfruit tree. These trees have been important for various artisans and craftsmen such as the Chari and Chitari communities in Goa. Other than the tribal communities, the Chari and Chitari communities worked on timber that could be easily procured from the forests of Goa. Timber was obtained from *hedi* wood (*Adina Cordoflia*), *pangara* wood (*Erythrina Indica*), jack wood (*Artocarpus Heterophyllus*), white wood (*Picia Abies*), mango wood (*mangifera indica*), and sisoo (*Dalbergia sisso*).

Goa had come under the direct or indirect political sway of a host of ancient and medieval rulers, including Mauryas, Bhojas, Satavahanas, Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas, Silharas, Kadambas, Bahamanis, the kings of Vijayanagar and Adil Shah of Bijapur and the territorial limits of the modern state of Goa have undergone several changes of expansion and reduction throughout time.⁷

Goa's strategic location on the western coast of India made it known to the world since the ancient period. During the ancient and medieval periods, it was a regular port of call on the maritime trade route in the Indian Ocean and hence, many times became a bone of contention for several kingdoms and polities. Many dynasties of the Deccan plateau tried to control the sea coast.

In the pre-Bhoja period, it is believed that Goa was a part of the Satavahana empire. In the second century B.C., the Satavahanas overran the Konkan with Bhojas probably accepting their suzerainty. Archaeological and numismatic evidence suggests that after the rule of Shak Satakarni, the Konkan was controlled by a north Kanarese dynasty, the Chuttus, who probably held control of Kunkalli, Balli, and Kankon. under the Bhojas.⁸

⁷Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 14.

⁸Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 9.

The earliest recorded history of Goa can be traced to the third century A.D. as a result of the findings of Bhoja copper plates in and around Goa. The Bhoja kingdom not only comprised the Chandrapur region, which was their seat of power, but they also controlled areas of Sashti including Khuthalli, Antruz, and Bardesh.⁹ They ruled Goa until the sixth century A.D.

The Bhojas were succeeded by the Konkan Mauryas who ruled Goa during the sixth and seventh centuries. Three epigraphic evidences of the Konkan Mauryas on the West coast, throw light their rule in Goa. The Konkan Mauryas were succeeded by the Chalukyas of Badami, one of the major dynasties to establish control over the West Coast. As a result of this political control, Goa was formed as the province of Revatidvipa in Maharashtra and it also included the Konkan-900. Hence, it comprised of a narrow strip of land stretching along the coast from Sawantwadi embracing Vengurla, the southern part of Malvan, Goa, up to the Kalawali river in the south.¹⁰ They had established their regional headquarters at Redi in Sawantwadi *taluka*. One copper plate of Indravarman was found in Goa while seven were recovered from the region of Sawantwadi. With the above inferences, one can say that under the Chalukyas of Badami, the present-day Goa and Sawantwadi were jointly ruled. The Badami Chalukyas controlled Goa from c. 578 to c. 753. A.D.

The Rashtrakutas of Malkhed reigned over Goa from c. 753 A.D. to c. 973 A.D. along with other regions in Deccan, Konkan, Karnataka, and Gujarat. Rashtrakutas were overthrown by the Chalukyas of Kalyani.¹¹ Later, Goa came under the control of the

⁹ Kamat, Historical Geography and Natural Resources,” 9.

¹⁰ Kamat, Historical Geography and Natural Resources,” 10.

¹¹ Also known as western Chalukyas.

Shilaharas.¹² During the Shilahara rule, the present-day Goa along with the regions of Sawantwadi and Iridige tract, was jointly ruled.

The Goa Kadambas rose to prominence with the decline of the rule of the South Konkan Silaharas in c. 1015 A.D. The Goa Kadamba territory included not just Goa but also North Kanara, parts of the north Konkan, Dharwar, and Belgaum. Initially, Kadambas had controlled most parts of Salcete, and their capital was based at Chandrapur but eventually, under Jayakeshi II their kingdom stretched from Thana in the north up to south Kanara in the south. By the fourteenth century, the Kadamba power weakened with the rise of the Bahamani Sultanate and the Vijayanagara Kings as well as the lootings and destruction of Malik Kafur.

Goa came under the control of the Bahmani and Vijayanagara dynasties in the latter part of the fourteenth century. These two powers constantly fought over territories between the years 1356 and 1378. The Vijayanagara Kings controlled not only Tiswadi and Salcete but also acquired control over Ponda, Sattari Bardesh, Dicholi, and Pernem and by 1391 Sawantwadi was also under its control.

Finally, in 1472, Bahamanis took over Goa and merged it with their Junnar province for administrative purposes. But the Bahamani kingdom soon fell prey to internal dissensions leading to the creation of five Deccani Sultanates in 1498. One of these was the Adil Shahi kingdom of Bijapur which extended its suzerainty over Goa and established its capital at Ela.¹³ During this period Adil Shah developed the port of Ela which soon became an important emporium of the Indian Ocean trade.¹⁴

¹² Feudatories of Rashtrakutas.

¹³ Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 15

¹⁴ Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 15.

In the sixteenth century, some territories of the Bijapur Sultanate were conquered by the Portuguese. However, the entire Goa was not conquered by the Portuguese so he had control over a few territories in Goa such as Ponda, Quepem, Bali, Canacona, Pernem, Bicholim, Sattari, and Chandravadi. It was only in the mid-seventeenth century when Shivaji took over the territories of Ponda that led to the downfall of the Bijapur Sultanate in Goa.

Following the fall of the Bijapur Sultanate, the territories in Goa that surrounded Portuguese Goa in the north, south, and southeastern lands were controlled by the Sawants of Wadi and the king of Sonda till the eighteenth century. During the eighteenth century, the Marathas also tried to capture parts of Goa and they had captured the areas of Ponda in 1703.

Portuguese Goa

By the late fifteenth century, the European powers, Portugal and Spain were on a mission of God, Glory, Gold. Drawn by the ambition to own Goa's lucrative and strategically located commercial entrepot, the Portuguese admiral, Afonso Albuquerque captured the Tiswadi islands in 1510 and, as a result, Goa became a part of the Portuguese thalassocracy, although with varying territorial boundaries from the year 1510 to 1961. By 1543, the Portuguese had annexed the adjoining lands of Bardez in the north and Salcete in the south.¹⁵ The Portuguese policy of evangelization was practiced strongly in these three areas.

During the colonial period, Goa was divided into '*velhas conquistas*' and '*novas conquistas*.' The former territories comprising Ilhas, Bardez, and Salcete were acquired by the colonial masters in the sixteenth century (1510 and by 1543), and the latter, comprising territories of Pernem, Bicholim, Sattari, Ponda/Antruz, Canacona, Quepem, in the eighteenth century (by 1788).

¹⁵ Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources," 15.

During the early years of the Portuguese period in Goa, the Portuguese set their imprint through Christianization and lusitanization. Efforts were made to lusitanize the population by forcing them to convert and adopt Christian names and practices. Almost every aspect of Hindus in Goa was affected. The Portuguese policy of evangelization involved conversion, and destruction of temples along with the construction of churches. Destruction of temples also led to the loss of the market economy in several villages, thus several businesses including craftsmen, artisans, and traders were affected. To add to this, the Goa Inquisition was established in 1560 during which a large number of *gentios* suffered, many were prohibited from practicing their culture and those who were found to do so were persecuted. Hindus who disagreed with conversions were debarred from government jobs.

Artisans and painters in Goa who would work on Hindu art and architectural styles in temples were forbidden from practicing the same. Hindu artists were forced to stop painting Hindu religious idols and pictures and they were also not allowed to perform their religious rituals. In a reference to the book, *The Goa Inquisition*, the author mentions that Hindus were forbidden from performing the thread ceremony nor were they allowed to go out of the state to attend the same.¹⁶ Similarly, they also banned Hindus from performing religious rituals and ceremonies, thus, stopping them from practicing their religion. Hence, to avoid religious persecution many Hindu common folks including artisans left their villages and migrated to the neighbouring states such as northern Konkan and Kanara regions. A few families returned to their native places after the Inquisition was banned in the nineteenth century while some remained in those states permanently.

Portuguese colonial rule in Goa led to the development of an Indo-Portuguese culture which is a blend of two cultures, that is, Indian and Portuguese, leading to the creation of a

¹⁶ A.K. Priolkar, *The Goa Inquisition*, 2nd ed. (Panaji: Rajhauns Vitaran, 2008), 113.

distinctive and composite culture. The Indo-Portuguese influences were evident in all facets of Goan life ranging from religion, society, art, architecture, language, music, and food. Religious syncretism is seen among both Hindu as well as Catholic rituals, feasts, and festivals. The influences were evident in art and architectural activities that came to be known as Indo-Portuguese art, such as Indian motifs on European architectural buildings and vice-versa.

History of Cuncolim

Portuguese and Indian scholars and writers since the early modern period have made mention of various artisans and craftsmen present in the village of Cuncolim, presently situated in the Salcete *taluka* of South Goa. It is located at 15.17°N and 73.98°E. In recent years, it has been bordered by villages such as Assolna, Velim, and Chinchinim on its western and north-western sides while on the eastern and northeastern sides, it is bordered by the areas of Veroda, Sarzora, Balli, and Quepem to its south and southeastern side. Some writers have traced the etymological roots of ‘Cuncolim,’ with ‘*kumkum*,’ which means vermillion or crimson powder, and ‘*halli*,’ meaning a village in Kannada, thus, indicating a place where ‘*kumkum*’ was produced.¹⁷ It was locally known as Cucally. (see figure 2.1)

Cuncolim is known for its diversity and unity among the Hindus and Catholics and this is visible in their feasts and festivals that include the *sontreos* and the feast of Our Lady of Health. The former is associated with the goddess Shantadurga or Mamai *Saibinn* and the latter with *Saude Saibinn*. The *gaunkars* of this village still hold their hereditary privileges and celebrate the festivals.

¹⁷ Sanjeev V Sardesai, “Cuncolim: the land of festivities, arts and braves,” *The Navhind Times*, August 4, 2018, <https://www.navhindtimes.in/2018/08/04/magazines/zest/cuncolim-the-land-of-festivities-art-the-braves/>

Figure 2.1: Map of South Goa



Source: Census of India 2011, District
Census handbook, South Goa

Historically, Cuncolim was a prosperous village, agricultural and industrial, and it was known for its strategic importance. As a result, varied traders, artisans including blacksmiths, carpenters, painters, and mahars could have settled in this village. Cuncolim, during the ancient and medieval periods, was part of various dynasties that ruled over Goa. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it came under the control of the Bhojas, Kadambas, Vijayanagara kings, Bahamanis, and even Adil Shah of Bijapur.

Cuncolim was one of the largest villages along with Margao and Verna in the Salcete *concelho* (*taluka*). It was located on the southern end of this *concelho* between the river Sal and Oudh, bordering the neighbouring lands of Bijapur.¹⁸ It is one of the first villages to bravely and fearlessly fight against the colonial and anti-Hindu rule of the Portuguese. The village comprised twelve *vangodds* of *gaunkars*, namely, Mhal, Shetcar, Naik, Mangro, Shet, Tombddo, Porobo, Sidakalo, Lokakalo, Bandekar, Rounom, and Benklo, all of Kshatriya descent with surnames such as Dessai, Naik, Porobo. The strategic location of the village was that it was located on the route that linked it with important towns along the south Indian western coast, and also across the Ghats. It served as a staging post for the runners that ensured communication links between these relatively distant places.¹⁹ Additionally, there are references that this position of the village was an important stopover.

Cuncolim was under the dominion of various dynasties that ruled over Goa which has been discussed earlier. However, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the political scenario of Salcete, in general, and this village, in particular, was often disputed among the

¹⁸ Angela Barreto Xavier, "Power, Religion and Violence in Sixteenth-Century Goa," *Parts of Asia Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 17/18 (2010): 29, https://ojs.lib.umassd.edu/index.php/plcs/article/view/PLCS17_18_Xavier_page27/1005.

¹⁹ Barreto Xavier, "Power, Religion and Violence in Sixteenth-Century Goa," 29.

Portuguese and Adil Shahi forces. There were references to natives of this village being recruits in Adil Shah's army thus, proving the existence of a military or paramilitary tradition amongst the local inhabitants.

Furthermore, its prosperity also depended on the permanent *bazaar* that was set up at the end of more than one caravan route connecting it with its mainland through the Ghats of Asthagrahar province. Other ghats that became a part of this network were Donkorpem Ghat and Kudal Ghat which led to Netarli and Naiquini; and also, Dighi Ghat to Veroda via Talvarda contributed to its prosperity. Many caravans would trade in cloth and other provisions.²⁰

Teotonio de Souza mentions that Cuncolim was not only prosperous for its fertile land with abundant water that yielded a surplus agricultural production, but the village was known for its highly skilled and specialized crafts that included the manufacture of guns, production of copper and brass objects, wood inlay, and lacquerware. Thus, the permanent *bazaar* located at the conjuncture of the caravan route can be considered one of the elements that attracted many artisans and craftsmen to settle in this village and contribute to its socio-economic development.

Moreover, Cuncolim was known for having many temples in its vicinity, including those dedicated to temples of Shantadurga, Acarudeguy (church area), Mahadeva (Biunsa ward), Golcho-Paik, Sat-purusha, Sidha-purusha (Biunsa), Rama Krishna, Goddeamata, Naryanaa Ramanatha, Santeri, and Durgadevta.²¹ There were also temples dedicated to the deity Panduronga in Maddicotto, Ramnatha, Betall, Santer, Rama-pursuha, and Sinviandeva

²⁰ Teotonio R. de Souza, "Why Cuncolim Martyrs? - An Historical Re-Assessment," in *Jesuits in India: In Historical Perspective*, ed. Teotonio R. de Souza and Charles J. Borges (Macau: Instituto Cultural de Macau; Goa: Xavier Center of Historical Research: 1992), 41.

²¹ Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities*, ed. A Gomes Pereira, trans. Antonio Victor Couto, (Panaji: Printwell Press, 1978), 95.

in Talvorda. The religious festivities and traditional fairs of these temples were closely linked to the *bazaar* economy, demonstrating that the economy of the village also depended on its ritual life.

However, with the Portuguese policy of evangelization and the conquest of Salcete, the situation in Cuncolim took a drastic turn in the mid-sixteenth century. During the first thirty years of Portuguese rule in Goa, their motive of Christianization and lusitanisation was in its benign stages. However, it was only after the 1540s that the local population in Goa was brutally affected by policies of conversion and Christianization. By then, the territories of Bardez and Salcete were incorporated into the Portuguese colonial dominions in 1543, thirty-three years after the capture of Ilhas, their strategies for converting and lusitanizing became more precise.

In the mid-sixteenth century the Portuguese zeal to Christianize the Goan population had reached its zenith. Decrees were passed directing all the temples to revert their funds to the Jesuit missionaries, who would use the same to construct the churches, hospitals, and other expenditures. Moreover, several temples were destroyed by the 1560s and instead, churches were built on their ruins. Most of the villages of Salcete accepted these terms, except for the five villages of Cuncolim, Velim, Assolna, Veroda, and Ambelim who retaliated by destroying Jesuit residences and churches and also participated in a siege led by Bijapur.²² Nevertheless, the Jesuits rebuilt their churches and residences and continued with their zeal to Christianize Goan lands.

However, even in the 1570s the villagers of Cuncolim refused to pay tributes, went against the imperial order, and rebuilt their main temple with a few additional ones as well. They also held non-Christian ceremonies, indulged in human sacrifices, and festive

²² Some of the inhabitants of Cuncolim participated in the siege of Goa by joining the forces of Bijapur in 1570-1571.

celebrations in public. Similarly, they did not allow the royal officers to pass through nor did they allow the courier carrying letters from Cochin to the Viceroy to pass through the village, rather, they took away the letters and engaged in open conflicts with the Crown agents. This angered the Portuguese, and in retaliation, in 1577, Gil Eanes de Mascarenhas along with the captain of Rachol fort, its soldiers, and garrison, vicar and chaplain priests of Colva and Orlim Antonio Francisco, Pero Berno, Manuel Teixeira, and Afonso Pacheco brutally attacked the village by setting fire and destroying everything they could find including the lands, temples, palm groves, and the rest.

During this time several Hindus ran away and their houses were destroyed while some returned to repair the temples. But the very sight of temples and Hindus performing their pagan rituals led the Portuguese to attack again. This time Portuguese with the help of a native seminarian named Domingos destroyed coconut groves, ravaged the orchards and agricultural fields, and constructed palisades.²³ They also destroyed the rebuilt temples and other smaller temples, destroyed the anthill worshipped by the pagans, killed a cow, and degraded the sanctity of the water tank by its entrails that were used by Hindus to purify themselves for their sacrifices. This forced them to subdue the Royal authorities but they were always fearful that one day a church would be constructed in the village which would prevent them from practicing their religions and rituals. However, in 1581, they again provided their support to the Adil Shah of Bijapur by desecrating churches and Christian houses but, in protection, the Jesuits recruited about two hundred locals to protect themselves, mainly from the village of Orlim.²⁴

²³ Lingu R. Dalvi, *History of Cuncolim*, trans. Harischandra T. Nagvenkar (Margao: Late Adv Dattaram Lingu Dalvi Memorial Trust, 2007), 27.

²⁴ Barreto Xavier, "Power, Religion and Violence in Sixteenth-Century Goa," 32.

The Portuguese zealotness of evangelization was growing strong with the policy of Inquisition and conversion in the 1580s. During these years, they built several churches but many new converts were still following their older practices. Following the return from the Mughal court, Jesuit priest, Rudolfo Acquaviva, was made the rector of the College of Salcete in 1583. In the process of reviewing the conditions in Salcete concerning the conversion policy, he visited the villages of Cortalim and Verna in July 1583 where decisions to convert the people of Cuncolim were felt necessary in order to achieve their policy of Christianization in Salcete. As a result, they decided to go to Cuncolim and soothe the spirits of Hindus who were upset with the destruction of their temples and at the same time search for a land to construct a church hoping to maintain peace and increase the number of faithful in the area.²⁵

Therefore, Fr. Acquaviva along with the other five people met at Orlim on 14th July 1583 and decided to proceed from there to the Cuncolim on the next day. On 15th July 1583, Rudolfo Acquaviva along with a group of fifty, consisting of priests, seminarians, laypersons, and other volunteers and native converts from Orlim reached Cuncolim. These included Brother Francisco Aranha, Francisco Rodrigues (collector of rents and temples, Joao da Silva (registrar) Paulo da Costa (father and procurator of the new Christians), and Brahmin boys Domingos and Afonso Goncalo Rodriguez and Domingos de Aguiar (Portuguese lay person), Fr. Afonso Pacheco, and Fr. Berno. However, their visit to this village involved a drastic turn of events leading to the most terrible event in the village's history which came to be known as the Cuncolim Revolt of 1583 which involved the death of five Jesuit priests and the locals.

A rumour spread among the locals that the priest had come to this village intending to construct a church. The *gaunkars* thought of assaulting the native Christians from Orlim who

²⁵ Rowena Robinson, "Cuncolim: Weaving a Tale of Resistance." *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 7 (1997): 334-340. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/440591>, 335.

had arrived earlier to set up a shelter for the group to protect them from monsoons but then they decided to wait for the priests. Eventually, when the priests arrived only one *gaunkar* received them and made them believe that the others would follow him later. However, later, the villagers came in a mob carrying spears, swords, and arrows and attacked the group. Even though the native Christians tried to stop the protesting *gaunkars* in vain, leading to the merciless murder of the five Jesuit priests and a few others who accompanied them. Elaborate details of this event have been provided in the works of Rowena Robinson,²⁶ Angela Barreto Xavier,²⁷ and Rui Gomes Pereira.²⁸

Following the massacre, the bodies of these five priests were dumped into a well in present-day ward named Madicotto. The five Jesuit priests were declared martyrs in 1741 and were beatified at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on April 16th 1893.²⁹ In retaliation to the massacre, the Portuguese invited the village chieftains to the Assolna fort, where the sixteen *gaunkars* were charged with treason and sentenced to death. It is believed that out of these sixteen, one escaped to Adil Shahi lands. The Jesuit priests who were recognized as martyrs of Cuncolim as opposed to the fifteen *gaunkars* who were executed by the Portuguese as retaliation have been the subject of scholarly discussion in recent years.

Eventually, Cuncolim was lapsed to the Portuguese crown and the villages of Cuncolim and Veroda came to be known as the County of Cuncolim or *Condado de Cuncolim* under the leadership of Joao da Silva in 1585 and his successors until the nineteenth century.

²⁶ Robinson, "Cuncolim: Weaving a Tale of Resistance." 334-340.

²⁷ Barreto Xavier, "Power, Religion and Violence in Sixteenth-Century Goa." 27-49.

²⁸ Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities*, 95-97.

²⁹ Frazer Andrade, "Martires de Cuncolim- The Retelling of the Cuncolim Massacre," *Herald* (Panaji, Goa), July 27, 2023.

The Church of Cuncolim known as the Our Lady of Health Church or *Nossa Senhora de Saude Igreja* was constructed by the missionaries in the seventeenth century on the ruins of the temple of Acarudeguy. The villagers including the Hindus and Catholics believe that *Saude Saibinn* and *Mamai Saibinn* are sisters resulting in the worship of the two deities by both communities with equal pomp and gaiety. This is an example of religious syncretism in Goa. Nevertheless, in 1983, some villagers tried to convert the existing church into the Independent Church of Cuncolim with the *kula devata* of their ancestors at the altar.³⁰ Thus, leading to religious turmoil and the closure of the church for a few years.

Geo-Political History of Sawantwadi

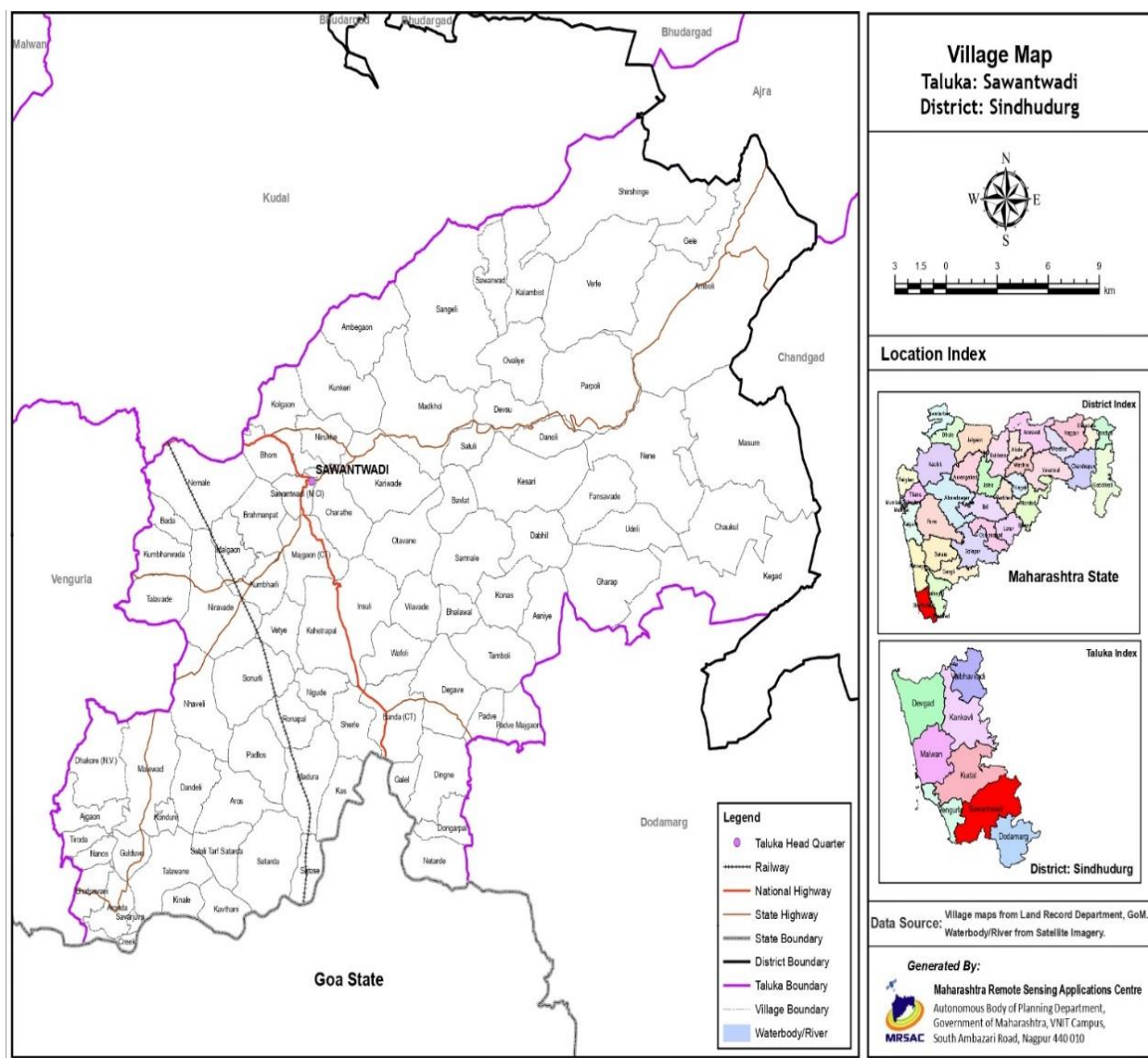
Presently, Sawantwadi is one of the eight *taluka/tehsil* of the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra located at 15° 90'N latitude and longitude 73° 82'E. (see figure 2.2) It is bordered by Kudal on its north, Vengurla on its west, Kolhapur district on its east, and Goa border in the south. The Sindhudurg district is a part Konkan division in the State of Maharashtra. During the pre-Sawant-Bhosale period, Sawantwadi was jointly ruled with Goa. The erstwhile Sawantwadi state was ruled by the Sawant-Bhonsle rulers and was the former capital of the kingdom from the seventeenth century until it was merged into the Indian Union in 1947. Located at the foothills of Narendra hill, Sawantwadi throughout the ages was by thick wooded forests as a result, it was known as 'Sundarwadi,' for its natural beauty and it derives its name from the early Sawant family that shaped its destiny throughout the ages.³¹

In earlier times this territory was also known as Wadi. It was a small principality under the dominion of various dynasties such as the Chalukyas, Yadavas, Kadambas, Vijayanagara, Bahamani, and Bijapur until the beginning of the seventeenth century.

³⁰ Pratima Kamat, "Goa: A Syncretic Shaktipitha," *The Navhind Times* (Panaji, Goa), September 8, 2013.

³¹ The Maharashtra Census Office, *Census of India 1961: Volume X Maharashtra Part VII- A Handicrafts in Maharashtra* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1968), 1.

Figure 2.2: Map of Sawantwadi taluka



Source: <https://mrsac.gov.in/MRSAC/map/map>

The Chalukyas of Badami established their regional headquarters in Iridge *vishaya* (Redi) in Sawantwadi *taluka* and Redi might have been an entrepot.³² Six out of Seven epigraphical evidences belonging to the Badami Chalukyas were found in Sawantwadi. There is evidence of the rule of Chandraditya, the son of Pulakesin II, governing the western region of Chalukya dominion which then included the areas of Ratnagiri and Sawantwadi. Chalukyas were succeeded by the Yadavas in the tenth century but the other branch of Chalukyas got control of this territory in the thirteenth century. Under the Vijayanagara rule in 1391, it was governed by Madhav Mantri with its headquarters at Goa. In the middle of the fifteenth century (1436) it formed a part of the territory of the local Brahmin dynasty.³³

Adil Shah of Bijapur also governed the lands of Sawantwadi. In 1485, the independent Adil Shahi Kingdom was established, and the area from Kudal to Chintacora constituted a province of the Adil Shah Sultans of Bijapur called the Talkonkan.³⁴ During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, some members of the Sawant-Bhonsles served Bijapur Sultan by looking after the territories.

The *mulpurush* of the Sawant-Bhonsles was Mang Sawant and they trace their origins to the Sisodia family from Udaipur who came down in this region. The family name of the Sawants was Bhosale and they were remarkable as commanders of the infantry.³⁵ He declared himself as an independent chief with headquarters at Hodavda and maintained his independence but the territory was subdued by the Bijapur forces again forcing the successors to accept their sovereignty. Phond Sawant was succeeded by Khem Sawant I, who ruled from

³²V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 36.

³³ S. K. Mhamai, *Sawants of Wadi Coastal Politics in 18th and 19th Centuries* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1984), 3.

³⁴ Mhamai, *Sawants of Wadi Coastal Politics in 18th and 19th Centuries*, 3.

³⁵ Mhamai, *Sawants of Wadi Coastal Politics in 18th and 19th Centuries*, 3.

1627 to 1640 as a semi-independent ruler. This area was given as *jagir* to the predecessors of Khem Sawant I. Khem Sawant I was involved in a lot of construction and building work. He was succeeded by Som Sawant and Lakham Sawant. Under the rule of Lakham Sawant, Shivaji made the Sawant-Bhonsles rulers the *sardessai* of the South Konkan. Sawant-Bhonsles of Sawantwadi controlled the territories in Goa that surrounded Portuguese Goa in the north, south, and southeast following the fall of the Bijapur Sultanate, till the eighteenth century. These included Pernem, Bicholim, and Sattari.

Khem Sawant II succeeded Lakham Sawant and ruled between 1701 to 1709 as a Bhonsle *sardesai*. He was a hereditary servant of the Adil Shah Kingdom but after the fall of the Bijapur Sultanate, all the territories of the same came under Mughal control. During the eighteenth century, he controlled the lands of five *mahals*, namely Kudal, Banda, Maneri Dicholim, Sattari (Sanquelim), and Pernem. During the rule of Shahu (Marathas) in 1708, a *watan* grant of Mahals, Kudal, Banda, Bicholim, Perenem, Sanquelima, and Maneri was given to Khem Sawant for providing services to the former.

He also demanded from Tarabai as well as Shahu the right to collect the *mokasa* from the six districts of Kudal to strengthen his position. Thus, being independent in this area he established his capital at Sundarwadi, present Sawantwadi which was a hamlet of the village of Charathe, and subsequently built a palace and also appointed various officials. While the Marathas had captured Ponda, Khem Sawant was encouraged by the Portuguese to fight against the Marathas by assisting the Mughals. This resulted in the defeat of the Marathas and Khem Sawant got control of the Mardangad fort from 1703 to 1705 but in 1707 he got control of the fort again. However, Khem Sawant was defeated and had to retreat from the fort.

Khem Sawant III succeeded Ramachandra at the age of six. However, his mother Janakibai who acted as regent, and, his first secretary Jivaji Vishram Sabnis looked after the administration till 1763. During this period, they had several conflicts with the Marathas but at the same time, the Portuguese maintained ties with the Sawants to fight against the Marathas. However, in the 1750s, the Portuguese and Sawants of Wadi engaged in conflict with one another for territorial gains, and finally in 1788, their territories in Goa were captured by the Portuguese adding to their new conquest areas. Khem Sawant III took over the reign in 1763. As he took over the throne his secretary, Jivaji Vishram was replaced by Raghunath Dalvi Bhosale, Sadashiv Narayna Chitnis and Anand Rambhat. As a result of his removal, Vishram joined forces with Kholapur, thereafter threatening the rule of Khem Sawant III.

The architectural marvel, the Sawant Bhosale Palace was built during the reign of Khem Sawant III in the nineteenth century. This palace is known for its architecture which involves the workmanship of native builders and English arches. The palace consists of the *darbar* hall, façade square, an area for many administrative offices in earlier times. The Lester Gate was built at a later stage, in 1895, named after a British political superintendent who had contributed to the development of the state. During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, several artisans and craftsmen were patronized by the Sawant-Bhonsle rulers to produce various arts and crafts.

Sawantwadi eventually became a part of the Indian Republic as a part of the Bombay State in 1947.

Gudigars

Gudigars are a small community residing in the state of Karnataka mainly in Sagar, Sorab, in Shimoga district, Honnavar, and Karwar. The Gudigars in Goa and Sawantwadi are

called Chitaris. The origins of the Gudigar community residing in Karnataka regions can be traced to Goa. Many families have their *kula devatas* in Goa, such as the Mahalsa Narayani in Mardol, Nagesh and Mahalaxmi in Bandoda, Someshwar in Kurdi, Ravalnath and Mahalaxmi in Shiroda and Marcel respectively. The name gudigar or Gudikar is derived from *gudi* meaning flag.

Various artisans were a part of Goan society, these included carpenters, blacksmiths, painters, sculptors, and others. However, during the Portuguese policy of evangelization, many artisans including carpenters and sculptors from the '*velhas conquistas*' left Goa and settled in the Sirsi, Honnavar, and Bhatkal regions of the Karwar district or the Uttar Kannada regions.³⁶ They continued with their trade and craftsmanship and in the Karnataka region they came to be known as the Gudikaras or temple Builders. The Madras District Manuals of South Canara mentions that Gudigara are Canarese caste of wood Carvers and Painters.³⁷

History of Arts, Crafts and Wooden Toys

According to the *Vastu shastra*, *praumalakshana* and *citralalshana* were also part of *silpasatras*, the former dealt with religious sculptures or images of God while *Citra* was referred to as paintings and sculptures of various kinds. Sculpture and painting can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization, as there are references to innumerable sculptures of stone bronze, and terracotta as well paintings have been found on earthen vessels. Also, the painting was regarded as a work of art or *kala* in the *Artha Shastra*.

Chitrakars or Chitragars are an artisanal community found in various states of India including Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, and others. These

³⁶ V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 56.

³⁷ J. Sturrock, comp. *Madras District Manuals South Canara*. Vol.1. (Madras: The Superintendent Government Press, 1894), 166.

artisans were not only Hindu artisans but they were Muslims as well. In earlier times, they were involved in temple art by painting the temple walls and sculpting idols. These artisans involved in such artwork in Uttar Pradesh are known as Chitar; Orissa as Maharana; and Goa and Maharashtra as Chitari.³⁸

Historically, the craft of making toys has been a part of human life since the earliest civilizations in the world and it is continued even today as a living tradition in several nations and states of India. Toys were prepared for young children to kill time and simultaneously aid in their developmental growth. Initially, toy making could have begun as a folk tradition or a community-based craft but today it has gained considerable aesthetic and commercial value. Several Indian states since the medieval period have been involved in manufacturing toys of a variety of shapes ranging from intricate to minimal designs. Toys are generally an outcome of traditional cultural expressions, like other art forms, toys represent art, culture, religion, society, and civilization.³⁹ Wooden toy crafts were painted with vibrant colors to immediately grasp the attention of children.

However, today, many traditional handcrafted toys have been dwindling rapidly due to globalization and foreign competition or the absence of craft producers. There is a transition taking place among the toys as they were initially crafted for domestic purposes, today are being produced on a commercial level or large scale.

Several states in India are known for their unique craftsmanship of toy making in India. They would prefer to work on wood. Some of the well-known toy-producing states are

³⁸ Laxmidas Borkar, "Sawantwadichya Chitareyache Hastakaleche Kherit Daiz," *Sunaprant* (Panaji, Goa), January 8, 1995, 5.

³⁹ Pradipta Biswas, "Wooden Toys of Chennapatna India: Beauty of Form and Socio-Cultural Reflection on the Characterization of Toy," *Indian Journal of Arts Science and Humanities* 9, no. 2 (October 2021): 21, <https://doi.org/10.34293/sijashv9i2.4153>.

the Chennapatna toy industry, Etikopaka toy industry, Nirmal toy industry, Gokak toy industry, they would make use of lacquer to coat most of these toys.

Toys and games constitute a highly significant aspect of a culture because of their importance in people's lives and the level of creativity and skill that goes into creating and playing them. Several individuals, including adults and children, dedicate a significant amount of their free time to playing games and watching others play them. Along with games, toys have developed alongside technological and human advances. Some of the traditional games are *tabulfalem*, *gudfalem*, *ganjifa* cards.

Indian handicrafts are known for world over for their rich variety, grace, elegance, and skilled craftsmanship. Nevertheless, several handicrafts because of their stiff competition with factory-made products, non-availability of natural raw materials, exorbitant increase in the manufacturing cost, and lack of proper marketing facilities for finished products, lack of craft practitioners or due to a variety of other reasons have either become extinct or have reached the moribund stage.

History of *Ganjifa*

Ganjifa is a game of playing cards in countries such as India, Nepal, Iran, Turkey, and Arabia. The word '*ganjifa*' derives from the Persian word '*ganj*' meaning treasure, treasury, hoard, or granary (later). Scholars say that it is a corrupted foreign word form of unknown antecedence.⁴⁰ One significant feature that is common among all *ganjifa* cards is that every card system has a single money suit that is named after a local coin.

Ganjifa was also spelled as *ganjafah* and scholars also link it to the Mamluk cards of Syria and Egypt which were as known as *kanjafah* or *kanjifah* in the medieval period in these

⁴⁰ Rudolf Von Leydan, *Ganjifa The Playing Cards of India* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1982), 5.

regions. However, few scholars have dated these cards to the thirteenth century while there are some references to playing such cards during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Asia and Europe. In the early days, cards were played as gambles. The earliest known, Mamluk pack of cards had four suits and represented the functions of the important officers at the court. These included cups, swords, coins, and polo sticks with thirteen cards in each representing *malik*, *na'ib*, *thani na 'ib*.

Ganjifa was also known as *ganjeepha*, *ganjeefa* or *ganjappa* in various states of India such as Odisha, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, supposed to have originated in Persia but was introduced in India by the Mughal emperors during the sixteenth century.

History of Lacquerware

The art of lacquering dates back several millennia in Chinese history. Lacquerware is a form of Chinese art that includes a variety of decorative techniques used to coat wood, bamboo, metal, or other surfaces, with a hard resinous and glossy finish. The methods of lacquering evolved throughout time, became increasingly complex, and produced an enduring art form that combined great utility with a wealth of traditional knowledge. Lacquer is a hard resinous substance obtained naturally from trees and insects.

In earlier centuries lacquer was not only used to decorate items but also acted as a protectant and it was based on the sap of the Chinese rhus tree. The terms 'lac', and 'lacquer' are derived from the Sanskrit word '*laksha*,' which denotes a particular kind of resin known as shellac. This resin is produced by lac insects from the sap of an Indian fig tree. In India, the basic raw material of lacquer work is shellac, which is made from the resinous substance secreted by the lac insect, *Kerria lacca* or *Coccus laccae*.

In India, lacquer is coated on items such as jewelry, bracelets, boxes, bowls, cradles, furniture, walkers, spinning tops, toys, and other wooden objects. Various artisanal

communities in India involved themselves in producing lacquerware. Most of the wooden toys produced in India such as the Chennapatna toys, Ettikopaka toys and Kutch toys are lacquered. The Chitari artisans in the Konkan region involved themselves in producing lacquerware crafts. In the following chapter, the traditional wood art involving lacquer, practiced by the Chitari community has been discussed.

Figure 2.3: *Ganjifa* card by Kamlakar Chitari from Sawantwadi



Photo courtesy: Nilesh Chitari

Figure 2.4: The lacquer art of Chitaris

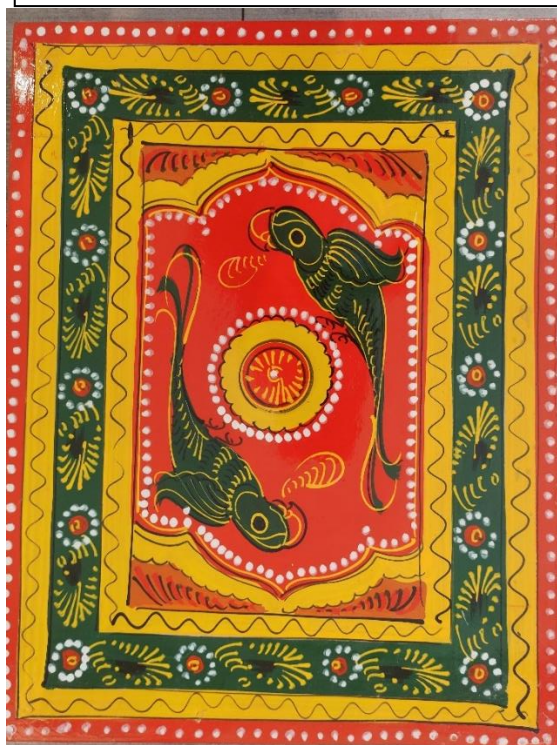


Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts ,
Cuncolim

CHAPTER 3

CHITARIS' CHITRAKALA

“Whenever an old man dies, it’s a library burning down.”

Amadou Hampâté Bâ

India’s crafts are both diverse and rich in terms of their culture, religion, and history. The people’s ancient cultural heritage is portrayed through arts and crafts. Over several generations, India’s rural population has entrenched crafts as a part of their culture and traditions. Also, Indians have been exposed to foreign cultures as a result of trade relations, colonial relations, and invasions by foreign powers since time immemorial, thus, leading to the creation of new forms of art. Over time, India’s distinct culture has emerged as a result of cultural blending.

The Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi are hereditary artists well-known for their artwork, painting skills, and lacquer crafts that include wooden toys, the parakeet *paat*, wooden fruits and vegetables, small jars or small kitchen accessories, wooden cradles for infants, *khutali*, the *gaddo*, teething toys, and *tabulfalem* and *gudfalem*. Their art and craftwork also include other household items, such as the *adolli*, rolling pins for chapatis, and various styled utensils. Additionally, they work on traditional temple wood crafts including *mantaps*, *sontreos*, *palkhis*, and *tonyos* for the *tonyamel* festival

The art heritage of India generally involves traditional craftsmanship and this traditional knowledge is static but at the same time evolves to suit the varying developments of the particular group. However, today traditional craftsmanship of the Chitari community is threatened as artisans make use of only the designs or motifs that have been passed to them by their forefathers thus, contributing to the loss of traditional craftsmanship of the Chitari arts and crafts.

This chapter analyses the traditional craftsmanship and the artwork of the Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi. The traditional craftsmanship expressions of the Chitari community are studied at length, by examining the raw materials used and the traditional techniques of production along with its evolution. An attempt has been made to analyse the heritage value of the Chitari art and craft in social and cultural contexts. Also, this chapter studies the economics of its production throughout the ages along with the marketing strategies adopted by the artisans and craftsmen.

Traditional Knowledge System

A significant amount of human knowledge is the product of a group, ranging from traditional folk music to a specific understanding of the medicinal properties of particular plants to skilful crafting. Such knowledge is not dynamic; rather, it changes according to the particular needs of a community or culture.

The World Intellectual Property Organization defines traditional knowledge as the knowledge, know-how skills, and practices that are developed, sustained, and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity.¹ In broad terms, traditional knowledge incorporates both the actual content of knowledge as well as traditional cultural expressions such as distinct designs, symbols, and the like, that are in turn related to the traditional knowledge but in specific terms, traditional knowledge, is the knowledge derived from intellectual and creative activity within a traditional background that includes, know-how techniques, skills, innovation, and practices.

Vijendra Jain, ex-chief justice of Punjab Haryana High court, in his speech on “Safeguarding the Traditional Knowledge in India,” in 2008, commented that traditional knowledge is often related to agricultural knowledge, medicinal knowledge, biodiversity-

¹ “Traditional Knowledge,” WIPO, accessed January 1, 2024, <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/>.

related knowledge, and expressions of folklore in the form of music, dance, song, handicraft, designs, stories, and artwork. Traditional knowledge is not created systematically as it is for recording scientific knowledge yet it still doesn't diminish its cultural value.²

Traditional knowledge is often associated with intellectual property and is often passed on orally within communities and similar groups. Traditional knowledge very much forms an integral part of the cultural identity of the social or indigenous group in which it is practiced and preserved. All works of literature, art, designs, inventions, names, symbols, and images that are utilized in business and industry are considered forms of intellectual property.

Indigenous and local communities justly cherish traditional knowledge as a part of their very cultural identities.³ In most countries in the world, including India, traditional knowledge and intellectual property are often protected through patent rights, trademark rights, and geographical indication tags. The wooden toys of Sawantwadi and *ganjifa* art have received the geographical indication tag in the year 2024.

Traditional Craftsmanship

Concerning the research topic, the Chitari communities of Cuncolim and Sawantwadi are hereditary painters and artisans who are involved in practicing traditional art and producing wooden toys and lacquerware in their respective states. The knowledge, know-how skills, designs, and production techniques have been passed down within their community for several generations. Chitari arts and crafts were produced using traditional know-how skills by making use of naturally available raw materials including vegetable dyes, paints, and powdered dyes.

² Justice Vijender Jain, "Safeguarding the Traditional Knowledge in India," Seminar Speech, Asia Specific Jurist Association, April 28, 2008, Delhi, transcript, https://highcourtchd.gov.in/sub_pages/top_menu/about/event_files/apjaspeech.pdf.

³ World Intellectual Property Organization, *Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge* (Geneva, Switzerland: WIPO, 2005), 1, https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/tk/920/wipo_pub_920.pdf.

Even today, some of the traditional tools and techniques of production have been employed by the Chitari artisans.

Traditional craftsmanship is a subset of the heritage, traditional knowledge system, indigenous knowledge system, and traditional cultural expressions or expressions of folklore. Traditional craftsmanship is often associated with artisans and crafts persons who express their artwork and craftwork through tools, clothing, jewellery, costumes, props for festivals, ritual items, storage containers, toys, household utensils, musical instruments, and decorative art. Craftsmanship is the distinct skills employed by artisans and crafts persons to prepare various arts and crafts, including handicrafts. The creation of arts and crafts is as varied as the skills involved in creating the final product by working on varied raw materials and these range from delicate and detailed.

Thus, UNESCO rightly considers traditional craftsmanship as perhaps the most tangible manifestation of intangible cultural heritage.

Traditional Cultural Expressions

The traditional cultural expressions of the Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi consist of lacquered and painted wooden items such as wooden toys, wooden fruits, and vegetables, jewellery boxes, wooden *paats*, *ganjifa* cards, baby cradles, three-wheeled walkers, clothing pegs, combs, *sontreos*, the game of *tabulfalem* and *gudfalem*. Even, the art designs of parakeets and floral motifs have been consistently painted for several generations in both areas of the Konkan.

Traditional cultural expressions form an integral part of traditional knowledge systems along with indigenous knowledge systems of local communities. (see figure 3.1) According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, traditional cultural expressions or expressions of folklore include music, dance, art designs, names, signs, symbols, performances, ceremonies,

architectural forms, handicrafts, narratives, and many other artistic or cultural expressions.⁴ Traditional cultural expressions refer to a wide range of artistic and cultural forms and consist of varied forms of folk art, folk dance, folk music, chants, narratives, rituals, motifs, and designs that make one community or social group recognizable among one another.

In Goa, Chitari artisans have been traditionally involved in producing lacquered wooden toys, fruits, vegetables, and lacquerware. They would also prepare the lacquered wooden *paats* including the parakeet and floral designed wooden *paats*. Apart from these, they used to craft miniature wooden kitchen sets, *adolli*, *khutali*, wooden walkers and cradles, and wooden dolls. Similarly, in Sawantwadi, the Chitari artisans gained popularity for their *ganjifa* artwork apart from their lacquered wooden toys, kitchen utensils, baby walkers and cradles, jewellery boxes, and others. With the exception of their *ganjifa* art, the majority of the Chitari artisans who lived in Sawantwadi produced artwork that was comparable to Goan Chitari art.

Figure 3.1: Traditional Craftsmanship as a subset of Heritage



Image source: <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/folklore/>.

⁴ “Traditional Cultural Expressions,” WIPO, accessed March 24, 2024, <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/folklore/>.

The principal products crafted by the Chitari community in Goa as well as Sawantwadi throughout time have been listed below:

Wooden Fruits and Vegetables

The Chitari community residing in the Konkan region is commonly known for their wooden fruits and vegetables (see figure 3.2,3.3). The painted and lacquered wooden fruits and vegetables are known as imitation fruits and vegetables. Originally, these items were hand-painted with natural dyes and paints, and covered with lac which gave them a natural appearance, and these wooden fruits and vegetables were usually prepared on a lac-turnery machine. In association with religion, these fruits and vegetables are used to decorate the *matoli* which is put up during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, above the idol of lord Ganesh. The *matoli* frame which is usually hung above as a support was also painted with floral designs by the Chitaris.

Also, a newlywed bride is traditionally given a wooden fruit basket along with a wooden hand-painted parakeet *paat* or a hand-carved *paat* as a part of the Hindu *vhajjem* tradition in Goa as well as Sawantwadi.

These wooden fruits and vegetables apart from being in high demand during the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities in the region under study also served as toys for kids as back then, the natural colours applied on these fruit and vegetable toys were child-safe.

Wooden *Paat*

A wooden *paat* is a low wooden decorative or unadorned seat used generally among the Hindu community in Goa. The Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi are highly specialized in producing decorative and painted wooden *paats*. The parakeet or floral designs painted on the top of these *paats* form a distinction between the Chitari *paat* makers and the other woodcraft artisans. The parakeet and floral motifs constitute the Chitari art. These motifs

on the wooden *paats* were hand-painted in natural colours of red, yellow, green, and black. Pradip Chitari, an artisan from Cuncolim, stated that the traditional design of two parakeets on the wooden *paat* has remained unchanged for generations.⁵

Apart from these traditional motifs, they also produce plain red and hand-carved *paats*. The former type was used for setting up the Ganesh idol during Ganesh Chaturthi while the latter was generally purchased among the higher classes since they were originally made of sandalwood. The hand-carved *paats* are also embellished with sheets of precious metals, preferably, silver. (see figure 3.4)

The Chitari artisans also craft the *chowki/chaurang*. In comparison to the wooden *paats*, the *chaurang* or *chowki* is slightly raised than the *paats*. (see figure 3.5) These are generally used to place Ganesh idols on a higher level so that the idol is visible. The *chowkis* were also traditionally hand-painted with colours of red, yellow, and green and coated with lacquer.

In earlier days, natural colours and lac obtained from the nearby forest were applied to these wooden *paats* and tended to be more durable than the others. Over time, the artisans began using powdered colours as the technique of preparing the lac and natural paints was more time-consuming. The powdered colours would also result in vibrant and vivid hues. Currently, very few artisans prefer using powdered colours. Nowadays, these wooden *paats* are hand-painted with acrylic paints and colours and are finished off with synthetic varnish available in stores. The sandalwood *paats*, which were originally carved by hand, are now machine crafted using the CNC router woodcutters. Typically, these wooden *paats* are in demand during the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities in Goa and Sawantwadi. Likewise, as a part of the Hindu *vhajjem* tradition, newly wed brides receive these wooden hand painted and hand carved *paats* from their maternal house.

⁵ Pradip Chitari (Chitari artisan), interview by Lecann Pereira, Cuncolim, March 8, 2024.

Wooden Toys for Infants and Toddlers

The Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi produced wooden toys for infants and toddlers. These wooden toys include *lakdi khelni/khilone*, teething toys, spinning tops, rattles, (see figure 3.6) bullock carts, and others. These wooden toys were painted with natural vivid colours and coated with lacquer in the earlier days. The *lakdi khelni/kilone* is a set of miniature kitchen utensils, jars, and containers. (see figure 3.7) The Chitaris would also paint wooden dolls in Goa as well as in Sawantwadi. (see figure 3.8)

In contemporary times, these wooden toys are painted with artificial paints which are safe for children.

The *Tabulfalem* and *Gudfalem*

This is a board game traditionally hand-painted by the Chitari community in Goa. ‘*tabulphale*,’ or ‘*tabulfalem*,’ simply translating to sticks and wooden plank, is a combination of chess and ludo.⁶ It consists of a wooden board which is usually rounded on corners and is hand-painted with floral motifs and decorations on its borders, and wooden sticks. (see figure 3.10) Similarly, *gudfalem* or *gudphale* consists of five different types of games painted on different sides of the box. Among the five games, two are known as the tiger and pawn game, and the game of *gulios*. (see figure 3.11)

Anant Ramkrishna Sinai Dhume in his book, *The Cultural History of Goa*, traces back the games of *tabulfalem* and *gudfalem* to Sumerian origins.⁷ He relates it with the Royal game of Ur, but this board game was made of shell, bone, and lapis lazuli and with seven yellow and seven black colour bits. In Goa, the colours of the bits named in Goa as *ghulos*, are the

⁶ Anna Fernandes, “Fun and Games,” *The Navhind Times*, January 6, 2022, <https://www.navhindtimes.in/2022/01/06/magazines/buzz/fun-and-games/>.

⁷ Anant Ramkrishna Sinai Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa: From 10000 B.C. to 1352 A.D.*, eds. Nandkumar Kamat and Ramesh Anant S. Dhume, 2nd ed. (Panjim: Broadway Book Centre, 2009), 100.

same as found in Sumer. In Goa, the game employs four small pieces of bamboo or timber- flat curved on one surface, of red colour crossed by two black or blue colour lines at both ends of each piece. Those four pieces are named *tablam*. In Goa, the bits are twelve of each colour and he feels that it has been the same in Sumer as the counting units in Sumer was six and its multiples and submultiples. During this game, all four *tablam* are spread by throwing on the floor.

Hath Gaddo and Rocking Horse

Chitaris produced the three-wheeled toddler walker, locally known as *hath gaddo*, or *baba gaddo*, *chakram gaddo* or just *gaddo*. (see figure 3.12) This type of *hath gaddo* was painted in traditional Chitari shades along with parakeet and floral designs and coated with lacquer. Nilesh Chitari in an interview, adds that the three-wheeled walker was equipped with more support, and hence, toddlers would easily learn to use it and begin walking quickly.⁸ In the late 1990s, they also manufactured the rocking horse. Even though, this object was adopted in later years, today, in Sawantwadi it is in great demand.

Sontreos

Artisans in villages, including painters, wood carvers, and artists would offer their services to their village temples. In the case of Chitari artisans in Cuncolim, they associate them with their village deity, Shantadurga Kunkallakarin. (see figure 3.13) The Chitari artisanal community in Cuncolim, Goa, for several decades, has been commissioned by the Shantadurga Kunkallkarin temple committee to prepare the twelve *sontreos*, representing the twelve *vangodds* of the village during the festival of *sontreos* in this village.

⁸ Nilesh Chitari (Fine arts teacher), interview by Leeann Pereira, Cuncolim, March 3, 2024.

Pradip Chitari in an interview recollects, that, the wooden poles were traditionally hand-painted with natural dyes and coated with lacquer.⁹ They would fix the cloth by stitching it to the bamboo stick giving it the shape of an umbrella. He also adds that his forefathers were also engaged in this craft of *sontreo* making in Cuncolim.

In the twenty-first century, the Chitari artisans in Cuncolim have been commercially crafting the *sontreos* and *tarangas* for various temples in Goa, especially during the *Shigmo* festivities. These include Shantadurga Verdekarin in Veroda, Mallikarjun temple in Canacona (see figure 3.14), and various other tribal villages such as Gaondongrim, Barcem in Canacona *taluka*. The *sontreos* prepared for the Mallikarjun temple in Canacona are hand-painted on cloth by the Chitari artisans, thus making them distinct from other *sontreos*.

Tonyo/Toni

Chitari artisans are the only artisanal community in Goa that prepares hand-painted *tonyos* for various festivities. *Tonyos* or *Tonis* are sticks made of wood, cane, or bamboo sticks used during the *Shigmo* festival of *talgadi* or *tonyamel*, especially in the tribal villages of Canacona. In earlier days, these were coated with lacquer while now these items are mainly hand-painted with powdered dyes or acrylic paints in shades of green, red, yellow, and black and coated with varnish.

Palanquin and Baby Cradle

Another principal product that forms a part of the traditional Chitari art is the palanquin or the temple *palkhi*. The Chitaris in Goa would craft wooden palanquins for temples to carry deities during feasts and festivities. Chitari-crafted palanquins were different from the others as they were hand-painted mainly with natural paints and floral and religious motifs along with

⁹ Pradip Chitari (Chitari artisan), interview by Leeann Pereira, Cuncolim, March 8, 2024.

the lacquer coat. Similarly, in Sawantwadi the Royal Palace would also use the traditional Chitari-painted palanquin as a part of their royal culture or tradition. Here, instead of religious deities, the newlywed bride was carried in this palanquin at the time of marriage.

The Chitaris were also known for crafting baby cradles. These are locally known as *pallnim/pallne* in both areas of study. These wooden cots were usually low or high-raised and were painted with traditional shades of vibrant colours of red, yellow, green, black, and white and coated with lac. (see figure 3.15) Pradip Chitari mentions that the colours used for these baby cradles could help with colour blindness.¹⁰

Household Articles

The Chitari artisans did not only limit themselves to producing wooden toys and items of cultural significance rather they also involved themselves in crafting household articles or domestic furniture including kitchen items. The Chitaris apart from producing the wooden *paats* for domestic purposes also prepared the *adolli*. *Adolli* is a wooden stool on which a sharp iron implement is fixed to cut, scale fish, and as well grate coconuts. The traditional *adollis* were very much low as compared to the current designs. The *adollis* produced in earlier times were more durable than the current ones as they were coated with lacquer.

The Chitaris also produces the kitchen items such as the *lattfollem*, and the *lattnim*. The former is a round wooden plank on which flour dough is rolled while the latter, is a wooden or a bamboo rolling pin for making *chapatis*. Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar also accredits the Chitaris for making wooden combs during the 1950s.¹¹ The wooden pegs for hanging clothes were also crafted by the Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi. In local terms, it is known as *khutali*. (see figure 3.16) The Chitaris would also prepare the wooden churners and spoons.

¹⁰ Pradip Chitari (Chitari artisan), interview by Leeann Pereira, Cuncolim, March 8, 2024.

¹¹ Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *Goa: Land, Life and Legacy* (Panaji: Directorate of Art and Culture, 2016), 55.

The lacquered jewellery boxes and small *kumkum* boxes were crafted by the Chitari community. Such boxes were painted with intricate floral designs and coated with lacquer. Generally, the *tulsi chaura* in Goa are masonry built but there is a reference to wooden portable *tulsi chaura* in the Goa Chitra Museum, Benaullim. (see figure 3.20) This object is also coated with lacquer and probably it could be the artwork of the Chitaris since they were involved in lacquerware production in Goa.

Chitari traditional art was not only limited to Hindu homes in Goa as there are references that the Chitari art was also painted on domestic as well as religious items among the Catholic population in Goa. There is evidence of a traditional hand-painted cross with Chitari art designs that include the parakeet and floral motifs and a coat of lacquer. (see figure 3.17, 3.18) These crosses are currently musealized at the Cross and Beads Museum in Loutolim.

Similarly, I came across another two empty crosses that could be painted by the Chitari community in Goa. The primary colours of the Chitari art and coat of lacquer are faintly visible. Frazer Andrade, in an article in the *Herald* newspaper, comments that the empty crosses were a part of the post-easter traditions in Goa, in which, the priest would carry an empty cross during house blessings, rather than a crucified one to signify the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (see figure 3.19) The empty cross would symbolize an empty tomb and the victory of Christ over death and sin. These crosses can be traced back to the nineteenth century. He believes that these crosses could have been crafted by the Chitari artisans in Cuncolim.¹²

With regards to the crosses discussed above, Maendra Alvares, during a conversation, recalls that he came across these two crosses fifteen years back in an old degraded house in

¹² Frazer Andrade, "A slice of Easter," *Herald*, April 8, 2024, <https://www.heralldgoa.in/News-Today/A-slice-of-Easter-traditions-observed-in-Goa/219934>

Cuncolim. To the best of his knowledge, the cross was a local portable cross that was kept roadside during the night hours by the Catholic agricultural community to protect the threshed grains after they were harvested.

The *Ganjifa* cards

The Chitari community in Sawantwadi is highly skilled in producing *ganjifa* art. The *ganjifa* art in Sawantwadi incorporated the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. The *ganjifa* cards are circular Indian playing cards that are typically hand-decorated by the Chitari artisans. In Sawantwadi, the *dashtavtar ganjifa* cards gained popularity. These cards represented the ten forms or incarnations of lord Vishnu. Traditionally, these cards were painted using natural dyes and they were prepared on various raw materials including, ivory, cloth, and paper.

The *ganjifa* card game was introduced by the Mughals in the sixteenth century and was quite popular in northern India at the time of its introduction. The word *ganjifa* is derived from the Persian word ‘ganj’ meaning treasure. These cards were also given as gifts for dignitaries who visited the royal court in the earlier centuries. The Queen Satvashiladevi Bhonsle of the Sawant-Bhonsale family adds that earlier the *ganjifa* cards were rectangular and only had symbols and Islamic writings since the Muslims did not practice idol worship.¹³ Mughal *ganjifa* cards were based on the Mughal administration. It had images of heads of nine departments such as the king, minister, and others. The Mughal version of *ganjifa* cards had ninety-six cards. The *ganjifa* cards patronized by the Hindu rulers were circular and oval and included floral motifs on their borders. These cards represented the ten forms of lord Vishnu and consisted of 120 cards. These cards came to be popularly known as the *dashavatar ganjifa* cards. Apart from *dashavtars* of lord Vishnu, symbols of animals, flowers, and humans were used. Traditionally, these cards were painted using colors extracted from plants and vegetables.

¹³ "Sawantwadi Lacquerwares: Preserving a Dying Artistic Tradition," 5:38 minutes, video by Mela Artisans on YouTube, June 14, 2012, <https://youtu.be/iSJGJ74VM0I?si=mQQ8OUoXhsvyPrN4>.

In Sawantwadi the two prominent types of *ganjifa* cards were the *darbar calam* and *bazar calam*. The former had decorated borders and the latter had only lines and were generally made for the public. In the earlier times, *ganjifa* art was made on cloth, palm leaf, or ivory, and a stone was used to flatten these materials to produce these *ganjifa* cards. The main colours visible in these cards were rust, cream, yellow, black, red, and green. Today, paper is used to make the *ganjifa* cards. This paper is cut using a stencil to get the required circular or oval shape. The size of the card varies from five to seven centimeters. In the year 1760, two types of *ganjifas* were prepared by 22 Chitari families in Sawantwadi and it was known as *Hukmi* or *Changkanchani* and *dashavtari* cards. The former had 96 cards while the latter consisted of 120 cards. The process for producing *ganjifa* art in the eighteenth century involved painting on thin three layers of cloth.

A paste was applied which was mixed with a gum-like substance prepared from tamarind seeds. This was followed by applying a chalk coating until a white surface was obtained. These cards were further rubbed with stones to get a polished and smooth surface. The back part of the card was then coated with dull vermillion and lacquer thus resulting in thicker and stiffer cards.

Chitari community in Sawantwadi

Sawant-Bhosale rulers of Sawantwadi were patrons of arts and crafts. They promoted a wide variety of crafts resulting in various communities coming together to practice various arts and crafts. During the colonial rule in Goa, Chitari artisans evaded the Portuguese policy of evangelization that prohibited them from practicing religious and temple art and their religious rituals, resulting in the migration of many artisans belonging to this community into these neighbouring regions of Sawantwadi. As a result of their migration, the Chitari artisans

from Goa involved themselves in producing a variety of arts and crafts other than their traditional wooden *paats* with parakeet motifs, wooden toys fruits, and vegetables.

In Sawantwadi, the Chitaris were involved in crafting clay images of Lord Ganesha and their *grama devatas*. They would also paint the *ganjifa* cards. Apart from this, the Chitari artisans handcrafted flowers and garlands. These items were either made of ‘bhend’ or sholapith wood. The Chitaris in Sawantwadi would also paint wooden dolls or *bahulya*. The Chitari artisans would purchase these wooden dolls from carpenters in Kunkeri village and later paint them.

Tools of Production

Throughout the ages, wood arts and crafts have evolved with advancements in technology. Chitari artisans would employ traditional tools and techniques to produce their art and crafts. The traditional tools and techniques employed, generally, form a part of the traditional craftsmanship, indigenous knowledge systems, and traditional knowledge systems that have been practiced by the community since time immemorial. In pre-Portuguese Goa, the Chitaris were primarily painters and artists who would provide their services to various temples that existed in villages that they resided in. The primary tool that a painter requires is a paintbrush. These paintbrushes were made using naturally available squirrel tail hair, goat hair, and mouse whiskers or hair. Coloured paints were obtained from nature which included vegetable and fruit dyes.

Some writers and archaeologists, mainly from Goa, relate the *kaavi* art found in pre-Portuguese temples to the craftsmanship of the Chitaris. However, not many primary records have been available to justify this claim.

Over time, the Chitari artisans engaged in woodcraft and wood art and as a result, wood became the primary medium for their artistic expression. The Sahyadri mountain range played

a role in Goa's as well as Sawantwadi's dense forest cover, which had an extensive variety of trees with varying characteristics that were beneficial for different communities. The Chitari community primarily made use of *hedi* wood, *pangara* wood, jack wood, white wood, mango wood, sisoo, and acacia since this wood was susceptible to seasoning, light in weight, and evenly grained. Initially, wood was procured directly from the forest.

In Goa, the arrival of the Portuguese not only affected the traditional designs of the Chitari community but also, they had to seek permission to cut trees from the forest. Pradip Chitari mentions that their community was given licenses to cut wood from the forests.¹⁴ Eventually, wood was purchased locally and sent to sawmills to size the wood into blocks and planks.

Initially, traditional hand-prepared tools were used to produce wood arts and crafts. These hand tools were a combination of wood and metal and thus the Chitari artisans had to depend on blacksmiths who would cast the metal into the required design, shape, and size of the tools. These traditional hand tools included the *khervont/Kharwat*, *martel*, *attodi*, *dispiss*, *contlem*, a variety of chisels, and the like. Hand chisels were used to carve out the wood to produce certain designs. The chisels are generally, rounded, flat, and curved.(see figure 3.21) Today, traditional hand tools are replaced with machines.

The *khervont/kharwat* is a hand saw that is used for cutting wood into the required shape or design. (see figure 3.22) Eventually, this hand saw was replaced by electricity-led machine cutters. The Chitaris, traditionally made use of the *sangodd*. This is a traditional hand-powered lathe. The *sangodd* also consists of the *dhono/asnim* that enables the object to rotate. With industrialization and technological advancements, the traditional *sangodd* was replaced by the woodturning machine, better known as the lathe. Most of the items handcrafted by the

¹⁴ Pradip Chitari (Chitari artisan), interview by Leeann Pereira, Cuncolim, March 8, 2024.

Chitari made use of the traditional *sangodd* and with changing trends adopted the wood-turning machine or lathe.

In this technique of production, the required wood or the wood piece is fixed on the *sangodd* or electric lathe. The former technique, *sangodd* consists of two log pieces and is fixed with two iron hooks on each wooden log on the interior side. It is supported by a wooden stick or a metal rod in between. The *dhono/asnim* is a bow-shaped tool supported by a strong thread. The wood is fixed onto the hooks of the *sangodd* and is rotated with the help of the *dhono*. Due to the fact that this method necessitates simultaneous use of both hands, it is extremely skillful. (see figure 3.23) One is to hold the *dhono* and rotate it so that the object is turned, and the second hand is to hold the other tool so that the object is shaped, smoothened, painted, or carved accordingly.

In regards to the electric lathe, the wood or the object is directly fixed onto the machine and turned or rotated, thus the artisan mainly focuses on one aspect, that is either turning, painting, carving, or shaping at a particular time. The *sangodd* or the wood turning machine is usually used to shape, paint, and carve wooden toys, fruits, vegetables, *tonyo*, and other wooden items. For nailing, most often, wooden or bamboo dowel pins were inserted while in rare cases iron nails were used. For the nailing and drilling purposes, the corkscrew tool or hand drill was utilized.

Before painting the wood art, the wood items are required to be smoothened. Traditionally, this procedure was done using ‘*pattey*,’ meaning, leaves. This was the sandpaper tree, locally known in Goa as *kharvant* or *karvat* in Sawantwadi. The botanical name of this tree is ‘*ficus exasperata*.’ Chitari artisans in Cuncolim as well as in Sawantwadi would plant this tree in their backyard so that they could pluck it whenever they required rather than purchasing it commercially. Eventually, *kharvant* leaves were replaced with the sandpaper

available in markets. The lathe machines were also fixed with a sanding belt to smoothen the rough edges of the wooden artifacts and toys.

Techniques of Production

The traditional craftsmanship also involves the traditional techniques of production employed by the Chitari artisans. Traditional techniques for producing these wood art and Chitari art were transmitted down to the younger generations by their forefathers. These traditional techniques involved using raw materials that were locally available in abundance. Below I have examined the traditional techniques of production employed by the Chitari community.

The wooden fruits and vegetables were traditionally hand-chiseled, carved, and shaped out from blocks of wood but today, the items are carved out and shaped on machines. These are then placed on the traditional *sangodd* or machine lathe (see figure 3.26) to carry out the further process of shaping, smoothening, painting, and lacquering. After smoothening and before painting and coating the objects with lacquer the artisans would apply a naturally made paste, known as *khal*. *Khal* is a tamarind seed paste that, once dried would result in a better grip on the wood. This paste was used on wooden surfaces and objects to fill up the gaps or cracks in the wood. Tamarind trees (*Tamarindus indica*) were in abundance in Goa as well as Sawantwadi and hence the paste was locally produced without any difficulties.

Apart from this paste, in Goa, the Chitari artisans would apply *shado* or limestone deposits that are usually yellow which were naturally extracted from the river tributaries or rivulets in Cuncolim. These limestone deposits were brought in huge quantities and were further processed. It involved a three-stage process, the first being the collection process, and the second was the filtration process, during which stones and organic material were removed or rather filtered. Pradip Chitari recalls that they had three large brass vessels in which they

would filter the material from one vessel to another.¹⁵ Later these sticky, bulbous mounds were sun-dried to form the *shado*. This *shado* was applied using the hand-rotated *sangodd* or the machine lathe.

This paste was later replaced by commercially produced limestone, locally known as *patti*. It is completely white limestone powder. Finally, in the twenty-first century, all the traditional techniques for preparing the various pastes were replaced by wood paint primer. This was applied before coating the wooden objects with the overall paint.

The production of Chitari art, especially concerning the Chitari painting, involved the use of natural pigments to paint intricately on wood. These organic colours were made from naturally available pigments. For instance, the orange colour was obtained from pumpkin, the green colour from green leaves, black from oil lamp ash, yellow from *haldi* (turmeric). These colours were mixed thoroughly with the help of a *ghonn* along with locally available gum, known as *dink*. *Ghonn* is a small thick wooden stick used to mix the colours. (see figure 3.24)

In regards to the lacquer, the naturally produced colours were mixed with natural lac and applied onto the surface. After all the painting and lacquering work was undertaken, the artisans would assemble the wooden toys and art manually. The art of lacquering involved the use of traditional hand tools such as *sangodd*. Lac was prepared from shellac, a type of resin produced by the insect. This lac was then heated on fire and natural colour was added during this process. This heated lac was then prepared into a small stick shape. In order to apply this lac, the object was placed on the traditional *sangodd* and it was turned with the arrow-shaped stick. During the friction, the lac would be melted upon the wooden object. This process was then furnished with the locally available plant leaf of *khetki* or *kewda* plant. This leaf would automatically give the object a glaze.

¹⁵ Pradip Chitari, (Chitari artisan), interview by Leeann Pereira, Cuncolim, March 8, 2024.

The traditional Chitari wooden *paats* were hand-painted using natural dyes and paints. The colourful wooden parakeet *paat* was prepared by sizing wood into planks of the same size. The same techniques of coating, as discussed earlier, with naturally made paste were practiced while painting the *paats*. The *paats* after coating with *shado* were kept for drying. Later only the floral borders were painted and after painting the red colour the two parakeets were painted. Similarly, wooden carved *paats* were traditionally hand-carved intricately using metal tools. After hand carving, these *paats* were coated with lacquer and upon request embellished with precious metals of silver on its edges.

With modernization in contemporary times, the naturally produced vegetable and fruit dyes and paints were replaced with powdered colors. These machine-produced artificial powdered dyes would result in similar vibrant colors as earlier centuries. (see figure 3.25) Today, none of the Chitari artisans use lacquer and natural colors. Also, the traditional paintbrush was replaced by paint-spraying machines to get the work done quickly.

Traditionally, all these wooden items were crafted using hand-powered tools. All processes were carried out manually by the Chitari artisans themselves with the support of their families. Chitaris no longer make use of any of the traditional techniques of producing dyes and preparing lacquer rather they coat it with synthetic wood primers and use oil-based paints.

Economics of Production

Production of woodcarving and woodcraft in Goa was practiced for several generations in Goa. The woodcraft of the Chitari community was initially processed at the comfort of the artisan's house thus classifying it as a household industry. In the household industry, the artisan along with their family was involved in the production of the Chitari craft. This was practiced similarly in Sawantwadi, as well.

According to the *Census of Maharashtra 1961*, in Sawantwadi during this period, only five craftsmen were engaged in making toys with the help of the housewives. They would mainly involve themselves in producing wooden fruits. The Chitari art and craft have been passed down from generation to generation. In the earlier centuries, wooden toys and wooden household objects were in great demand whereas due to rapid globalization in current times, the demand for hand-painted wooden Chitari art and craft is gradually decreasing. In the village of Cuncolim, there are five families residing in the ward of Demani whereas in Sawantwadi there are seven families who are still engaged in this art and craft work.

Pradip Chitari also provides insights on the future of this art as he feels traditional art and craft is under threat due to foreign goods with cheap prices and advanced technology and also the younger generations of this community are seen pursuing other aspiring interests such as doctors and engineers.¹⁶ As a result of this, some migrant workers and other Chari community-based workers are involved in producing this art in Cuncolim.

The household furniture work which includes carpentry and wood carving is being undertaken by the Chitari families residing in Cuncolim. This gives them a means of sustenance since there is not much demand for traditional Chitari art. The religious and festive items are much more in demand today. Another important setback faced by the artisanal community is due to the change in social and cultural conditions. In more recent times festivals and celebrations that once required elaborate craft production may become more austere, resulting in fewer opportunities for artisans to express themselves.

Following India's independence, several schemes were introduced by government agencies for their growth and development yet still, very few crafts have thrived.

¹⁶ Pradip Chitari (Chitari artisan), interview by Leeann Pereira, Cuncolim, March 8, 2024.

Marketing Strategies

The market is the most crucial factor in the expansion and advancement of any industry or craft. Without an appropriate platform for marketing, no craft is likely to thrive. Handicraft manufacturing tends to be affected by market demand. Throughout the ages, the Chitari artisans in Goa as well as in Sawantwadi have continued with their traditional occupation. In Goa, it is practiced on a small scale as there is not much demand due to foreign competition and cheaper synthetic items. Chitari artisans generally market their finished goods directly to their consumers in villages and towns where they reside. In the twenty-first century, the traditional craftsmanship of the Chitaris' is threatened and it is fading away with modernization, alternate aspirations, and advancements in technology.

During earlier centuries, Chitari artisans would travel to various villages in Goa during feasts and *zattras* to partake in the fair and set up their stalls. Several newspaper articles make a mention of the Chitari artisans participating in the same. The Chitari artisans would set up stalls at the '*Ashtamache* fair' in Panjim, Our Lady of Health Church fair in Cuncolim, temple *zattras* in Fatorpa, the Three Kings Chapel in Cansaulim, Masandevichi Zatra in Narvem in Bicholim and others. Also, some local establishments in Mapusa and Sanquelim markets, sell the items of Chitaris by purchasing them in bulk. They would also set up stalls during weekly markets preferably in Cuncolim and its neighbouring villages.

In contemporary times, the Chitari community in Goa has been practicing their craft independently. In Goa, the artisans have thrived independently without any royal or political patronage throughout the years. The Chitaris have established their respective workshops beside their houses, thus, directly catering to the demands and requirements of the locals. In Cuncolim, currently, six families engage in traditional arts and crafts that were transmitted down by their forefathers. They have set stalls beside the road in the ward of Demani, in

Cuncolim, on the route to Canacona *taluka* and Karnataka state. Daily commuters and tourists can easily locate these stalls by viewing the unique and vibrant craftsmanship.

In the last fifteen years, the Chitari artisans in Cuncolim have promoted their art and crafts through social media platforms such as Facebook, and Instagram. Several videos on Instagram and short documentaries showcasing their unique craftsmanship and art have been uploaded on YouTube and other media platforms.

Sawantwadi *taluka* is known for its woodcraft industry which also includes Chitari art, wooden toys, and *ganjifa* art; hence Chitari art is much more in demand in Sawantwadi as compared to Goa. However, it is promoted under the banner of Sawantwadi wooden toys and crafts. In Sawantwadi, there is a lane in the main market that is chiefly dedicated to the Chitari artisans, it is popularly known as Chitari *aali*. In the early years, this lane would only consist of Chitari traditional arts and crafts as they would reside there, and prepare products in the confinement of their houses, and artisans were seen doing active business in this place. The Chitaris had converted a part of their house into stalls and shops and thus made profits. In recent years, some Chitari artisans moved to Kolgaon, a village in Sawantwadi which is under the jurisdiction of a panchayat under which the community is provided with some benefits and incentives such as subsidies to carry out their profession.

During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, the Chitari artisans who had migrated to Sawantwadi were patronized by the Royal Sawantwadi Palace to practice their arts and crafts. The Sawant-Bhosale family was traditionally involved in promoting their heritage arts and crafts. Beginning in the 1970s the Sawant Bhosale family tried reviving and promoting the *ganjifa* art as they came across the *ganjifa* cards in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Deutsches Spielkarten Museum in Germany. Apart from reviving the *ganjifa* art and cards, they put in efforts to preserve and promote the *ganjifa* art, *ganjifa*

cards, and lacquerware. The then queen took the help of Pundalik Chitari who was the only surviving *ganjifa* artist back then. He was able to share the traditional craftsmanship with other individuals who were interested in learning the traditional arts and crafts. However, today the Chitari artisans are seen practicing their craft individually under government assistance to some extent and no Chitari artisans are seen continuing working under the Sawantwadi palace.

Even in the twenty-first century, the queen's legacy is continued by the younger folks of the Sawant-Bhosale Palace. The Royal family has converted parts of their eighteenth-century palace into the Sawantwadi Boutique Art Hotel, a museum, and also provided space for artists to practice and showcase their artistic skills mainly in *ganjifa* art. They organize *ganjifa* art workshops that enable the common folks to learn the skills required to produce *ganjifa* art designs including the *ganjifa* cards.

Today, if one visits the Sawantwadi Palace, one can witness the *Ganjifa* art and the production of these cards. However, only the traditional *ganjifa* art designs are maintained, mainly the *dashavtar ganjifa* are hand painted, with the help of poster colors on normal chart paper. Also, the Sawantwadi Boutique Hotel is furnished with *ganjifa* art, their hotel rooms are based on the themes of the *dashavatar ganjifa* and they also sell their hand-painted products including the *ganjifa* cards and other items such as photo frames, trays, bangles. turn, promoting the traditional art of Sawantwadi.

Post-independence in India, the government undertook a few steps to protect traditional handicrafts of every state in India. During the First Five-Year plan, six boards were set up for the promotion of Handicrafts, village, and small industries. These included the Khadi and Village Industries Board, the All-India Handicrafts Board, the all-India Handloom Board, the Central Silk Board, the Coir Board, and the Small-Industries Board. These Boards not only concentrated on Production techniques but also on organization, extension credit, marketing,

and export. Several states also worked on creating reports regarding their traditional art and crafts, these include the *Handicraft Survey Report on Woodcarving in Goa, crafts of Sawantwadi, and Handicrafts Survey Monographs of wood crafts in Mysore*. The governments in some states also offer several incentives and subsidies in order to promote and continue their craftsmanship.

In Goa, the Chitari community forms a part of the cottage industries or small-scale industries. Similarly, in Goa, the Chitari art and crafts are a part of the cottage industries. The Goa Handicrafts Rural and Small-Scale Industries Development Corporation provides various schemes and subsidies in order to promote their artwork. In Goa, there are only two schemes under the handicraft corporation these include the Vishwakarma Kaushal Yojana and Swalamabhan Yojana. Post covid-19 the government of India began with the campaign of ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat.’ The government tried to promote Indian local goods under the slogan of ‘Vocal for local.’ The government of India tried to promote India’s heritage and culture mainly through tourism preferably in the areas where handicrafts are produced.

Utilitarian and Heritage Value

The Chitari artisans are known for their unique craftsmanship of ‘Chitari painting,’ which involves the use of colourful natural pigments to paint intricately on wood. Their works were inclusive of various games, toys, household articles, and furniture used in Goan homes, churches, and temples.

Today, Chitari art is generally in demand during the Ganesh Chaturthi in Goa and Sawantwadi. They produce these items only if they are made to order in Goa while in Sawantwadi they’re in demand as the place is a tourist destination. The Chitari art of Goa traditionally consisted of wooden toys, fruits, and vegetables, wooden hand-painted parakeet *paats*, *lakdi kelni*, *gaddo*, *khutali*, *tonyo/toni* and the games of *tabulfalem* and *gudfalem*.

Wooden toys prepared by the Chitaris included the miniature kitchen set that mainly caught the eyes of younger girls. Apart from these *lakdi khelni*, the Chitaris would also craft wooden dolls and these were again preferred by young girls. Wooden fruits and vegetables crafted by the community not only served a religious purpose but also served as toys for kids. Hindus, unlike Catholics, seldom use chairs or tables during meals; instead, they commonly use wooden *paats*. The wooden games of *tabulfalem* and *gudfalem* was an entertainment activity for elderly men. Men used to spend their time at the *tavernas* playing these games.

India's diverse and exquisite handicrafts created by craftsmen all around the country are a reflection of its rich cultural legacy. Indian artisans and craftsmen employ the craft knowledge and expertise that has been passed down to them from past generations to produce artistic creations. The materials and methods employed in handicraft manufacturing demonstrate the creativity of the artisans.

The Chitari community still practices traditional methods of craftsmanship in order to produce wooden objects such as wooden *paats* and wooden toys, vegetables, and fruits. The four main types of art and crafts produced by the Chitari community involve artifacts for religious, household items, toys, and *ganjifa* art. Even though *ganjifa* art is not carried out by the Chitari artisans in today's times in the early centuries they were greatly associated with *ganjifa* art and lacquerware. Traditional wooden games such as the *tabulfalem* and wooden kitchen toys are mainly produced by the Chitari community in both regions. Thus, the Chitari artisans are trying to safeguard the traditional art and craft that was passed down to them over ages.

Figure 3.2: Wooden Fruits



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Lalita Chitari, Sawantwadi

Figure 3.3: Wooden vegetables



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.4: Hand carved *paat*



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts,
Cuncolim

**Figure 3.5: Wooden *Chowki* with
parakeet motifs**



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts,
Cuncolim

Figure 3.6: Wooden rattle, teething toy and spinning top



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.7: *lakdi khelni*



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.8: Chitari crafted wooden doll from Goa



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.9: Chitari crafted wooden toys in Sawantwadi



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Uday Chitari

Figure 3.10: Chitari crafted *tabulfalem*



Photo credit: Atul Chitari

Figure 3.11: Chitari crafted *gudfalem*



Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo courtesy: Ancestral Goa, Loutolim

Figure 3.12: *Chakram gaddo*



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.13: *Sontreo*



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.14: Handpainted upper portion of *Sontreo*



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.15: *Pallnem*



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.16: *Khutali*



Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo Courtesy: Chitari Heritage Arts, Cuncolim

Figure 3.17: Local cross**Figure 3.18: Local cross**

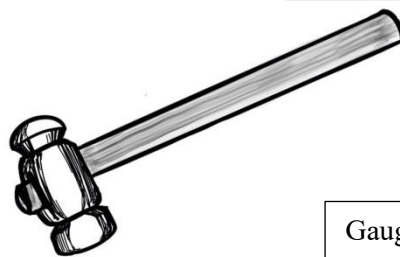
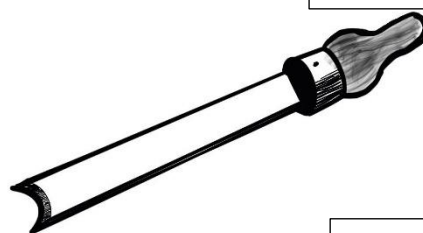
Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira
Photo Courtesy: Ancestral Goa,
Loutolim

Figure 3.19: Empty crosses

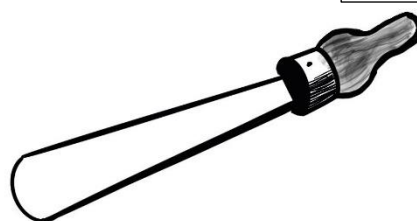
Image source: Frazer Andrade, Herald
Newspaper, April 8, 2024.

Figure 3.20: Tulsi Chaura

Photo Credit: Leeann Pereira
Photo Courtesy: Goa Chitra Museum

Adze/*Tasani*Hammer/*mortel*Chisel/*patali*Gauge chisel/ *goib*

Round Chisel

Pointed chisel/*kanta**Chirne* chisel

Flat chisel



Figure 3.21: Tools and implements used by Chitari artisans

Illustrated by: Raysancia Cunha

Figure 3.22: Hand tools used by artisans

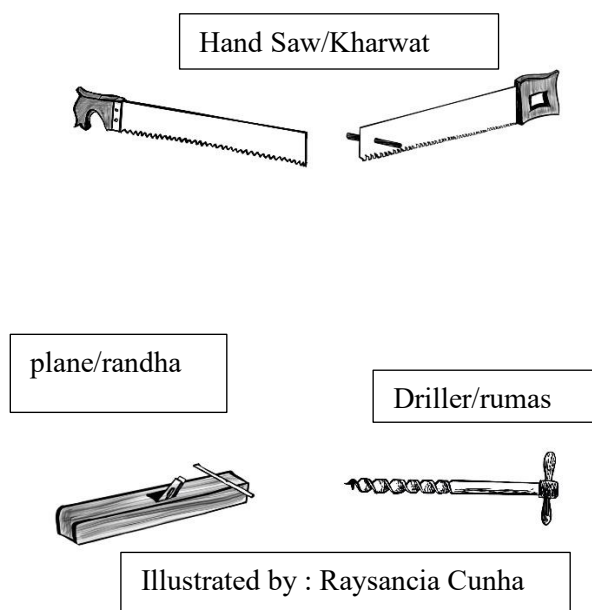


Figure 3.23: Artisan using the sangodd



Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Figure 3.24: Ghonn to mix colors



Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Figure 3.25: Powdered colors

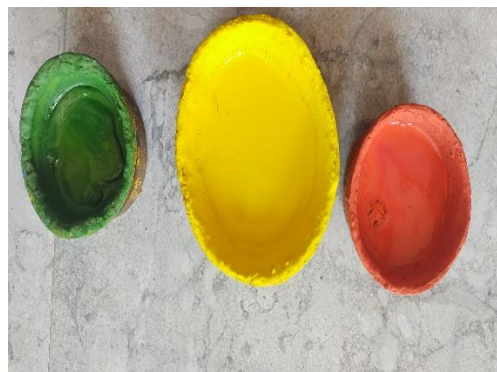


Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Figure 3.26: Sangodd/ hand lathe



Photo credit: Leeann Pereira

Photo courtesy: Chitari Heritage art

CHAPTER 4

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

“A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Indian society is known for its varied communities and rich cultural traditions. Apart from kings, queens, priests, and warriors, artisans and craftsmen have formed an integral part of Indian society since time immemorial and they have played a significant role in the development of Indian society and culture. Indian society is generally hierarchical and caste-based. Indian society is generally divided among the four varnas including the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras, and also the *jatis*. Concerning the caste system prevalent in Goa, the artisans are generally identified as Panchala Brahmins in Goa. These include goldsmiths, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, and sculptors and these professions were hereditary.

The Indian culture has evolved with time and it was not just the elite classes that contributed rather various communities including that of artisans and craftsmen played a significant role in the development of Indian culture and society. The craftsmen and artisans comprised professionals who included goldsmiths, brass smiths, carpenters, painters, blacksmiths, potters, coppersmiths, basket weavers, and cobblers. Even, among the artisans, caste has played a significant role in the status hierarchy. Woodcraft artisans often associate themselves with Vishwakarma.

The Chitari community of Goa is a micro-group involved in the traditional arts and crafts in Goa and Sawantwadi. They are practitioners of Hinduism but their religious and cultural practices are shaped by the norms and traditions of the particular place they reside in.

A society of a particular place plays a vital role in shaping its civilization and culture, therefore resulting in distinct cultural traditions within the Chitari community in two different states.

This chapter examines the role of Chitari artisans in their respective societies, their contribution to culture as well as the role of women throughout the ages. It also analyses the socio-religious and cultural practices of the artisanal community in two culturally distinct states of India by documenting the birth, marriage, and death rituals and traditions.

Artisans and Craftsmen in India

Craftsmen and artisans form an integral part of Indian society as they render their services to both rural and urban needs. In a primarily agricultural society, the craftsman's role was crucial as it enabled the village community to survive independently. The artisans and craftsmen possessed skills that were handed down to them by their forefathers for generations. These artisans and craftsmen included the *sonars* or goldsmiths, *sutars* or carpenters, *lohars* or blacksmiths, *khumbar* or potters, *chitaris* or painters, *sthapatis* or sculptors, *kansars* or coppersmiths, *mahars* or basket weavers, *rathakars* or chariot makers and *chamar* or cobblers.

The artisans are responsible for the art heritage of India. It consists of its contents, motifs, and chronology which is a result of the skilled craftsmanship of the artisans and craftsmen.¹ The art heritage of India has evolved throughout centuries thus showcasing the aesthetic brilliance of artisans under the patronage of several Indian and foreign dynasties. Artisans were present during various phases of art activity and thus they were mainly responsible for bringing about artistic brilliance.

An artist in ancient India belonged to a broad class of artisans who practiced a variety of skills: they were not an isolated institution in the social structure, rather, the position and the

¹ R. N. Mishra, *Ancient Artists and Art-Activity* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Technology, 1975), 1.

craft of an artisan were associated with a similar group of artisans and their professions. Artisans in India were clubbed together in on general group known as *silpin*.² The word *silpa* was found in the *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas*, mostly associated with manual crafts, ceremonial acts and artistic works

Artisans and craftsmen in ancient India were further divided into classes on the basis of their specialization in particular crafts and arts. These include *chitrakaraka*, *vardhakarupakara*, *karupatrika*, *pustakaraka*, *pustakarmakaraka*, *lepaka*, *stapati-sutrakara*. However, the word *chitrakaras* along with the words *rupkara* and *kammin* was also associated with the profession of sculpting. Mishra in his works mentions that Sri Santana was one of the known sculptors and his son was famous for sculpting the Mahoba Bodhisattva image in which the *chitrakara* was described as ‘well versed in the science of all fine arts.’³

Throughout India, craftsmen and artisans, such as goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, coppersmiths, and sculptors associated themselves with Vishwakarma.

Vishwakarma

Artisans and craftsmen are generally identified with ‘Vishwakarma’ who was considered to be the divine architect of Gods. The term ‘Vishwakarma’ in medieval peninsular India consisted of a group of five craftsmen, these were goldsmiths(*tattan*), brass smiths (*kanan*), blacksmiths (*karuman or kollan*), carpenters (*tachchan*), and masons (*silpi/ kal-tachchan*).⁴

² Mishra, *Ancient Artists and Art-Activity*, 52.

³ Mishra, *Ancient Artists and Art-Activity*, 52.

⁴ Vijaya Ramaswamy, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 4 (2004): 548.

As quoted in the article, ‘Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India,’ by Vijaya Ramaswamy, Vishwakarma is the lord of the arts, master of thousand crafts, carpenter to the gods, builder of their palace divine, the fashioner of every jewel, first craftsmen by whose art men live and whom a great deathless god, they continually worship.⁵ This mythical association allowed artisans a proud religious basis for their craftsmanship and spiritual desire to intricately work. Indian artists are known for their technical skills, which are evidently seen in their works and even in the decadent works of art.

Artisans and Craftsmen in Goa

Artisans and craftsmen in Goa were no different than the ones in the rest of India. Pre-Portuguese Goa was under the influence of several Indian dynasties who promoted various types of art and art activity. The artisans in Goa comprised mainly goldsmiths, carpenters, painters, blacksmiths, *gudikaras*, *kasar* makers, bangle makers, sculptors, basket weavers, and cobblers. Similar to the social structure in India, the Goan society is also hierarchical and caste-based. In Goa, the artisans such as the goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, and coppersmiths were regarded as the Panchala Brahmins. V. R. Mitragotri in his book *Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* cites B. D. Satoskar regarding the migration of the *Panchala Brahmins*, he adds that it is believed that they were brought along with the *Saraswats* by the sage Parashurama in 2500 B.C. to assist the priests while performing sacrifices.⁶

Such Brahmins wear the sacred thread through the process of *Brahmanization*. It was a form of Sanskritization. Certain groups tried to improve their social standing at different times due to economic power. This was a result of Sanskritization. It is a process by which a lower

⁵ Ramaswamy, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India,” 548.

⁶ V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji, Goa: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 54.

caste or group changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a higher or more often twice-born caste.

The prominent artisans in Goa, comprised goldsmiths who were referred to as *sonars* and they were known as Daivadnya Brahmins. This community usually are recognized by their surname such as Shet, Lotlikar, and Raikar. The goldsmiths of Goa were mainly Hindus. The blacksmiths were generally known as *lohars* in Goa but in Cuncolim such artisans were referred to as *kammar*. Carpenters in Goa were known as *thavaya* or *thovi*. They were engaged in woodcarving from the ancient times. The Chari community is generally associated with the carpenter community of Goa. The sculptors were recognized as *sthapatis* or architects and they were involved in temple building and stone carving.

The Portuguese ruled Goa from 1510-1961 with varying territorial boundaries. During this period there was expansion of craft production in Goa but at the same time, many Hindu artisans and craftsmen migrated to neighbouring regions to avoid religious persecution and in search of better patronage for their art. Artisans such as the Chitaris, and Gudigars/Gudikaras migrated to southern Maharashtra, Uttar Kannada regions, and south India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Chitari Community in Goan Society

The Chitari community is a hereditary artisanal community of Goa. The word ‘Chitari’ means ‘to draw’ and is derived from the Sanskrit word *citrakar/chitrakar* referring to an artist, hence the surname. *Chitra* means a painting or drawing and since these artisans were involved in painting and drawing as their occupation, they came to be known as the same. However, Christopher de Souza in his thesis, mentions that the varna system was used to designate craftsmen and artisans, as a result, the top three varnas were named based on their status while the Shudras were associated with their work while it is unclear whether the rules were followed

in Goa.⁷ In *Goa A Social History* by Sheela Srinivasan she categorizes the Chitrakars as Sudirs or Shudras.⁸

In Goa, concerning the social status of the Chitari community residing in Cuncolim, they claim themselves as the Panchala Brahmins. The male members of the community wear the sacred thread which is a result of Brahmanization and they practice the rituals of the Brahmins. However, they aren't looked upon as Brahmins.⁹ Also, as a result of *Brahmanization*, the *gotras* were created. Puttuswamy Gudigar mentions that there are seven *gotras* in the Chitari community in India. These include Bharadwaja *gotra*, Vashista *gotra*, Vishvamitra *gotra*, Kashyapa *gotra*, Kaunindya *gotra*, Kaushika *gotra* and Gautama *gotra*.¹⁰ Accordingly, these *gotras* are assigned to particular family deities. For instance, the Vishwamitra *gotra* is associated with Mahalsa Narayani in the Konkan region, and the Vashista *gotra* is associated with the goddess Santeri.

There are references to the *chitaris* or painters in Goan history. They provided services in villages, temples, and churches throughout time. In pre-Portuguese, they were known for their temple art. During the Portuguese period, the *Foral of Salcete* makes a mention of Chitaris who were residing in the villages of Cortalim,¹¹ Veroda,¹² and Cuncolim.¹³ Author Lopes Mendes in his works makes a mention that in the village of Cuncolim, there were several Hindu

⁷ Christopher H. de Souza, "Craftsmen and Artisans in Goa A. D.1000-1700," (Ph.D. diss., Goa University, 2020), 38.

⁸ Sheela Srinivasan, *Goa A Social History 1640-1750* (Panaji: Rajhauns Vitaran, 2012), 48.

⁹ Souza, "Craftsmen and Artisans in Goa A. D.1000-1700," 55.

¹⁰ Puttuswamy Gudigar (archaeologist and sculptor), interview by Leeann Pereira, Verna, March 4, 2024.

¹¹ Historical Archives of Goa, *Foral de Salcete* (1568), Mss. 3071, fol. 421.

¹² Historical Archives of Goa, *Foral de Salcete* (1568), Mss. 3071, fol. 215v.

¹³ Historical Archives of Goa, *Foral de Salcete* (1568), Mss. 3071, fol. 297.

craftsmen among which one was the family of *marceneiros* who made items called *lacreadas*.¹⁴ Souza in his thesis mentions that *marceneiros* were woodworkers who specialized in making furniture and inlaid works in wood.¹⁵ Also, mainly during the Portuguese rule, there are references to the artisans in various villages. These villages were further divided into wards which were named based on the group of artisans or professionals who lived there. Portuguese records such as the *forais* make mention of various artisans residing in the villages. There is evidence that Chitaris were present in several villages of Goa. The *Foral of Ilhas* 1567, makes a mention of *citrianchim bata* in the village of Carambolim.¹⁶ This word could be associated with *citari* who are painters and sculptors.

In another reference, the by-laws of Shree Shantadurga Kunkalkarin, 1911, make a mention of the Chitari artisans, namely, Mhabal Shet Chitari and Bombo Shet, who along with their families were involved in providing services to the temple. They were involved in the chariot decoration and had to renovate, paint, and decorate the chariot before the temple *zatra*. This tradition of painting the images of gods on the chariot is continued even today. (see figure 4.1) Apart from painting, they were also involved in preparing the *sontreos* for the annual festival at this temple.

The Chitaris in earlier times had Goan surnames. Puttuswamy Gudgar in an interview commented that the Chitari community members had surnames like Shirodkar, Bandekar, Vernekar, Xette, and Kurdekar.¹⁷ The fact that they had such surnames indicates that they resided in these villages and that this community migrated from Goa to other states. He

¹⁴ A. Lopes Mendes, *A Índia Portuguesa: Breve descrição das possessões Portuguezas na Ásia*, vol. 2 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1886), 177.

¹⁵ Souza, "Craftsmen and Artisans in Goa A. D.1000-1700," 55.

¹⁶ Historical Archives of Goa, *Foral das Ilhas de Goa* (1567), Mss. 7594, fol. 58v.

¹⁷ Puttuswamy Gudigar (archaeologist and sculptor), interview by Leeann Pereira, Verna, March 4, 2024.

mentions that Xette could be a common name for a master. Over time, the community confined themselves to the village of Cuncolim as the village of Cuncolim was known for its strategic location and thriving economy. In present times with regards to social stratification, they belong to the general social category in Goa.

Chitari Community in Sawantwadi

The Chitari community in Sawantwadi had migrated from Goa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to avoid the Portuguese policy of conversion. They also migrated to the then Mysore state and from there some families migrated to Sawantwadi. Their presence in Sawantwadi can be traced to 1760. The census of Maharashtra of 1961, makes a mention that around twenty Chitaris were involved in producing the *ganjifa* cards.¹⁸ Similarly, the *Bombay Presidency Gazetteer of Ratnagiri and Sawantwadi* makes a mention of 100 Chitaris or painters being present in the nineteenth century in Sawantwadi. It also mentions that the Chitari community was responsible for the introduction of lacquered wood and toys in this region.

During the 1970s, the Sawant-Bhonles, H. H Shivramraje and H H Satvashiladevi revived the Sawantwadi lacquerware and *ganjifa* art. During these years, very few artisans such as Pundalik Chitari and Kamlakar Chitari were well-versed in producing *ganjifa* cards. He was employed by the palace authorities to teach other artisans the art of *ganjifa*. (see figure 4.2)

Women contributed to the artisanal activity in their society. Among the Chitari community, the women folk were also involved in craft production. Apart from involving themselves in woodcraft and painting, women would engage in paper craft and other works.

¹⁸ *Census of India 1961: Volume X Maharashtra Part VII- A Handicrafts in Maharashtra*, (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1968), 4.

Women were also trained to produce wooden fruits and paint the same. Further in this chapter, I have examined the role and status of women in their community.

Socio-Religious and Socio-Cultural Aspects

Religion has a significant impact on people's social and cultural environment within a community. It alters people's social patterns and serves as a conspicuous constraint. Practically every element of society, including the political and economic spheres is governed and driven by religion while simultaneously it formulates societal morality, human conduct, and behavior, among other things. Goa and Sawantwadi, historically and culturally form a part of the Konkan coast and even though Goa was under the sway of Portuguese dominion since 1510 it constituted an inseparable part of Indian culture, religion, and polity before 1510.

India is home to nearly eighty percent Hindu population. The artisanal community in the Konkan region under study, the Chitari, practices Hinduism. The Chitari community are followers of Shaivism as well as Vaishnavism. In Goa, Shakti worship has been prevalent since the ancient period. The main *Shaktis* worshipped in Goa include Santeri, Bhauka, Kelbai, Gajalaxmi, Mahalaxami, and Mahalasa. The Hindu deities can generally be classified into five categories such as *grama devatas*, *kula devatas*, *ishta devatas*, *vastu devatas*, or *gruha devatas*. The difference between *kula devatas* and *grama devatas* is that the former deities are sacred to the family while the latter are considered to be the protectors of the particular village they reside in.

Within the Chitari community in Goa that currently resides in Cuncolim, they worship Mahalsa Narayani and Shantadurga Kunkallkarin either as their *kuldevata* or *gramadevata*. Similarly, the Chitari community in Sawantwadi also has their *kuladevatas* in Goa. These include Mhalasa Narayani, Ravalnath, Mahamaya, and Nagesh. Thus, one can conclude that

the Chitari art is a traditional art of Goa and the Chitari community in Sawantwadi can be traced back to their original roots in Goa through their *kula devatas*.

Religious Feasts and Festivals

Certain families hold *kula devatas* and *grama devatas* in high regard, and as a result, the family observes special ceremonies in honor of these deities. In this case, among the five families surveyed in Cuncolim worship their *kula devata* Mahalsa Narayani at Mardol and they partake in all of the feasts and festivals associated with the deity and visit the temple whenever possible. Mahalsa Narayani is one of the most prominent Shaktis worshipped in Goa among the locals as well as the Chitari community of Goa. A few Chitari families residing in Sawantwadi worship Mahalsa Narayani as their *kula devata*.

The Mahalsa Narayani temple is situated in the village of Mardol in Ponda. The original temple of Mahalsa was located in Verna village in Salcete *taluka*. This goddess was one of the deities that was shifted to Antruz *mahal* from Salcete *taluka* during the reign of terror unleashed by Diego Fernandes as a result of Portuguese persecution.

The worship of Mhalasa could be traced back to the Kadamba period in Goa. The folk deity Mahalsa, which originated in Karnataka, was eventually absorbed into the *Puranas* and subsequently Sanskritized. As regards the epithet Narayani suffixed to Mahalsa it may be stated that it is the sixteenth epithet of Mahalsa. It is one of the epithets of *devi* mentioned in *Devibhagavat* which forms a section in *Markandeyapurana*. This work is of c.1000 A.D. therefore, this syncretic trend can be noticed in the epithet of Mahalsa Narayani.

For its iconographical features, the Shri Mahalsa statue at the temple in Mardol is in a standing position and has four hands. It has a *trishul* (trident) in the right backhand and an *amrut khumba* in the left backhand. A demon, Virochan is kneeling on the right-hand side and he appears to have been held by hair in the right forehand and she also holds a sword. Similarly,

she holds a severed, bleeding demon, *Chandasur*, in her left forehand, beneath which a lion is seen. Some scholars are of the view that the lion seems to be licking the blood streaming down. She is also seen wearing anklets of semi-precious stones.

Followed by the name Shri Mahalsa is written in Devanagari script on the *prabhabval* in the background, together with the symbols of Lord Vishnu such as Shankha, Chakra, Sesha, and so forth.

Another family deity among the Chitari community in Sawantwadi is Ravalnath. Few families in Sawantwadi worship their *kula devata* Shri Ravalnath in Shiroda, Ponda. Ravalnath is a Shaivite deity. There are many speculations regarding the origin of Ravalnath. Scholars like Varde Valalvalikar trace this deity to the Buddhist period. In contrast, Chapekar considers Ravalnath as the third aspect of Parameshwara. Ravalnath in earlier times was not accepted by the higher classes like the Saraswats. It was only in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that he was accepted by the Brahmins.¹⁹

For its iconographical features of Shri Ravalnath, the statue is in a standing position and has four hands while his left leg is slightly bent. He holds a sword in his right forehand and *amrit* in his left forehand. On another right hand, there is a *trishul* and on the other left hand, a *damaru* is seen. He is adorned with a crown and a *rundamala* and is shown wearing a *dhoti*. Few other families have their *kula devatas* in Goa and these include Mahamaya and Nagesh.

The Chitari families in Cuncolim worship Shantadurga Kunkallkarin at Fatorpa as their *grama devata*. Shantadurga means 'peaceful Durga.' In ancient times temples of Shantadurga, Acarudeguy, Mahadeva, Golcho-Paik, Sat-purusha, Sidha-purusha, Rama Krishna, Goddeamata, Naryanaa Ramanatha, Santeri, and Durgadevta existed in this village. However, they have been associated with this deity for several generations. They not only provided their

¹⁹ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara*, 165.

services to this deity and temple but they also equally took part in the feasts and festivities associated with the deity. They would partake in the temple *zatra* that is annually held in January by pulling the deity's *ratha*, thus showing their strong devotion towards the deity. As mentioned earlier, they would prepare and paint the *rathas* for generations and it even continues today.

The Chitaris in Cuncolim in great pomp and grandeur celebrate the *sontreos* festival that is associated with the temple and the deity Shantadurga Kunkallkarinin Fatorpa. The festival of *sontreos* is held every year on the twentieth day of the month *Phalguna*. This cultural tradition of the festival of *sontreos* is linked with the religious persecution of the 1570s and the revolt of Cuncolim of 1583 as discussed in earlier chapter two. These Chitaris not only crafted these *sontreos* for the festival for generations but they actively participate in this festival.

The traditional festival of *sontreos* in Cuncolim is celebrated during the *shigmo* festivities or four days after the Holi festival in Goa. (see figure 4.3) *Sontreos* or *Satryo* festival involves the annual procession of the deity Shantadurga from Fatorpa temple to the original site of the temple in the locality where the current Sacred Heart of Jesus Chapel is built. The deity of Shantadurga Kunkallkarin is placed in a palanquin led by a procession involving twelve colorful decorated wooden *sontreos* sprinkled with *gulal*, representing the twelve *vangodds* of the *gaunkars* of Cuncolim. The *palki* or the procession is taken through the same old routes by which the deity was brought to Fatorpa centuries ago. The procession passes through the wards of Morlanguinim, Biunsa, Voddy, Tolliebhat, Markut, and Demani. This cultural tradition symbolizes the re-enactment of the time when the Hindus of this village fled away to save their faith.

Several faithful take part in this procession during which people walk and dance with decorated umbrellas including Hindus and Catholics thus, promoting religious harmony

between one religion and another. At the original temple site, an *arti* is performed and *prasad* is distributed to the devotees thus leading to the culmination of the festival. During this festival, the Catholics also participate and are dressed in typical Hindu attire by wearing turbans. The Chitaris also wear a similar attire during this festival as the *gaunkars*. Thus, one can say that the Chitari community in Cuncolim was closely associated with this *grama devata*. The festival was forbidden by Patriarch D. Antonio Sebastiao Valente and was only re-established after the Portuguese Republic.

The other festivals that the Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi celebrate are Ganesh Chaturthi (see figure 4.4) Dusshera, Diwali, Gudi Padwa, and Shigmo. For Ganesh Chaturthi in Goa, the Chitari families celebrate this festival with great pomp and gaiety. Most of the families come together during this festival who have shifted to other places for better prospects.(see figure 4.5) During Dusherra, they perform the *hatyar puja* during which they worship their machines and tools useful to their craftsmanship.

In the twenty-first century, the Chitari-Gudigar community has formed a Chitari-Gudigar Samaj and they come together annually and perform a *puja*. This is a kind of get-together within their community to foster their relations. A few families from Goa-Sawantwadi and Karnataka who have kinship ties with one another come together to be a part of this celebration.

Life-Cycle Rituals

Religion is an essential and even fundamental aspect of people's culture. The majority of Hindu customs originate from a sense of religiosity and are observed from the time of birth till the time of death. Mostly Hindu families are particular in the observance of their family customs. Among the Hindus, these rituals and ceremonies are known as *samskaras*. The life-cyclic rituals of the Chitari community are shaped according to the society they reside, in two

different states. The Chitari community of Goa has similar practices to that of a Goan Hindu while the Chitaris in Sawantwadi are drawn towards the Maharashtrian culture. Their *samskaras* are examined below briefly.

Among the Chitaris in Goa, birth rites usually begin at the beginning of pregnancy and continue throughout childbirth. They practice the *fulam malop* ceremony during which the mother is usually sent to her maternal home and she is adorned with flowers and gifts. This ceremony is significant because both families come together to pray for the well-being of the mother and unborn child. It is usually held during the fifth, seventh, or ninth month of pregnancy. The woman is usually dressed in a green outfit signifying fertility. While in Sawantwadi this ceremony is known as ‘*godh bharai*.’

Post-birth rituals in Goa include the *shastipujan* or *satti*. This ceremony is performed to honour the female deity *Sottvai* by playing the *ghumot*. This ritual is performed on the fifth or sixth day after birth. In Sawantwadi, a similar ritual is performed, known locally as *panchavi* or *shasthi*. On the fifth day, a few families among the Chitaris perform this ceremony by offering a betel nut, rice, flowers, sandal paste, and a sickle/sword to protect the child from the evil eye. On the sixth day, some families worship the deity *Sottvai*. Another ritual performed post-birth is the naming ceremony or *barso* in Goa among the Chitaris. Here, in these rituals, families come together to pray for the well-being of the mother and the child on the twelfth day after birth, and later the relatives are feasted. A similar ritual of *namadheya* is observed in Sawantwadi as well.

Another significant ceremony or ritual performed in Goa among the Chitari community is the *munj* ceremony. This is the tonsuring ceremony or the thread ceremony performed as a result of Sanskritization. This ritual is a form of Brahmanization. It is a purificatory ritual when the male child is initiated into *bramacharyashrama*. During this ceremony, the sacred thread is

worn by the male. Following the ritual, a feast for the relatives is held in the community. Generally, the minimum age is ten years to twelve years while some Chitari families perform the munj ceremony at the time of marriage.

Among the Chitaris families in Goa and Sawantwadi, their marriages are fixed between the same community. This practice is also known as endogamy. In the earlier centuries and even in the twenty-first century the community tends to be an endogamous group. Some rituals practiced among the Chitari families in Goa include the *samar bhajap*, *haldi*, and *kanyadaan*. In Sawantwadi, the tradition of *sakharpuda* is held. It is also known as the engagement ceremony or the ring ceremony. Other pre-wedding traditions include *muhurtamedh*, *grakhamakh*, *naandi shraddha*, *devak*, *sod munj*, and *chuda*. The wedding rituals include *ghana bharane* or *halad lavane*, *gaurihara puja*, *mangalashtake*, *kanyadaan*, *mangalsutra bandhan*, *paanigrahan*, *vivahhoma*, *lajahoma*, *kaan pili*, *saptapadi*, *airani puja*, *sunmukh*, *Lakshmi puja*, *maap olande*, *rukhwat*, *gondhal* and *satyanaryan puja*. Followed by the reception for their friends and relatives. This tradition is observed in Goa as well as Sawantwadi. (see figure 4.6)

With regards to the death rituals performed among the community, the Chitaris cremate their dead and observe twelve days as the mourning period. After which on the twelfth day or the *baravo*, the community performs *shraddha vidhan* ceremony and makes offerings to the priests and poor. The Chitaris worship their ancestors as a result they perform the *pind daan* ceremony. This is also known as the *shradh* ceremony and it is usually performed on the new moon day. As part of this ritual, the family offers meal bowls to crows.

Language and Education

The Chitari families residing in Goa and Sawantwadi are literate with the exception of a few elderly members of this community. The artisans and their families residing in Goa generally speak Konkani, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, and English while in Sawantwadi their

main language is Marathi and Hindi. Also, very few, especially elder men and women can communicate in Konkani but they slightly maintain the Malvani dialect. The knowledge of Kannada and Marathi among the Goan Chitaris could be the result of their kinship ties with the families in Sagara, Sorab, and other Kannada regions and Sawantwadi.

In the post-independence period, the Chitari community in Goa as well as Sawantwadi are well educated, with the exception of a few members. The younger generations have pursued careers in various streams ranging from bachelor's in arts, science, and commerce. As a result of higher education, most members have swapped from their traditional occupation of woodcraft to other alternate professional aspirations such as doctors, engineers, business, and teachers while some members have pursued fine arts and they are into commercial modern art.

Table 4.11 showing the educational qualification, languages known and occupations in Goa

| | Male | female |
|--------------------------------|------|--------|
| Only high school | - | 3 |
| Only higher secondary | 2 | 4 |
| Only graduate | 5 | 3 |
| Post graduate | 1 | 1 |
| Proficiency in other languages | 6 | 11 |
| Traditional occupation/crafts | 6 | 4 |
| Other works | 6 | 2 |

The above table contains data from a survey conducted among five practicing Chitari households in Goa.

Role of Women

Women have been an integral part of Indian society and culture since ancient times and they have made enormous and significant contributions to contemporary society. They are making an impact in every field, including politics, education, business, social services, sports, the arts and culture, entrepreneurship, social activism, science and technology, literature, entertainment, and spiritual and religious leadership. However, gender discrimination, violence, unequal pay distribution, female feticide, and infanticide particularly in rural areas continue to be a significant issue even in the twenty-first century.

There are instances of women working in craft manufacturing in India, especially in South India. If not entirely, to some extent they provided assistance to their families in craft production. Among the Chitari community, in the earlier centuries, women helped with painting traditional wooden objects. Even today there are a few elderly women within the community who involve themselves in painting the traditional wooden toys in both the regions of Konkan. In Goa, the women also paint the *tonyos*. (see figure 4.8,4.9) The women in this community usually make shola-pith and sandalwood *malla*. This artwork was a result of their migration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the neighbouring regions in Karnataka such as Sagar, Shimoga, and Sirsi, Sorab.

The community practiced endogamy and hence most of the marriages were fixed within their community in Karnataka, that is, the Gudigar community and the Chitari community in Sawantwadi. The women who were married in Goa and Sawantwadi actively took part in their community's traditional occupation. In case a girl was married in Karnataka Goa within the same community she actively took part in the same occupation. The women of the community residing in Sawantwadi were involved in garland making and other crafts.

Chitari women have involved themselves in making the sola-wood *mogra fati*, varied colored cloth *gazra*, hair clips, and small flowers made of stocking materials to put on their heads. These items are generally served for the *haldi kumkum* ceremony. They also make the paper *fati* which is used during *talgadi* and the *tonyamel* festival in Goa. In Sawantwadi, the women generally look after their families while some take charge of their small shops set up in the Market. (see figure 4.10) The women sell these arts and crafts through online orders in places such as Mumbai, Mangalore, Bangalore, and Belgaum. Thus, the women belonging to the Chitari community are well known for their paper crafts in Goa as well as Sawantwadi for their handicrafts including paper decorations, flowers, and the like.

The women of the earlier generation in the Chitari community were provided with basic education. The educational qualification of the elderly women in the community is quite low. But in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there are instances where women have taken charge of continuing their father's traditional occupation even after their marriage into another community because it's a lucrative business to some extent. Today, most of the younger women have completed their high schooling while some are graduates.

The community is a patrilineal family in Goa as well as in Sawantwadi. Today, mostly there are no older male members in the community in Goa and hence the mother is recognized as the head of the family while in Sawantwadi among the ten families, the elderly father is recognized as the head of the family. Not much is known about the status of widows within the community during the earlier times but in recent years widows are seen continuing their husband's traditional occupation in some cases.

With changing trends in society, the younger female members of the community in Goa and Sawantwadi have taken alternate professions thus threatening the future of the traditional art of wood painting.

Prominent Chitari Artisans

Chitari community is well known for their woodcraft and painting not just in Cuncolim, Goa but also in Sawantwadi town in Sindhudurg district in Maharashtra. The Royal Sawant-Bhosale family gave patronage to the Chitari community in Sawantwadi during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The most prominent Chitari artisans in Goa were Laximan Pandurang Chitari, Gopal Narayan Chitari, Babuli Balu Chitari, Prakash Chitari, Ramesh Chitari, and others to name a few. In Sawantwadi the prominent artisans of the Chitari community belonging to the twentieth century were Mahadev Sakaram Chitari, Kamlakar Mahadev Chitari, Pandurang Krishna Chitari, Govind Chitari, Pundalik Chitari.

In Goa and Sawantwadi, Chitari artisans were known for their skilled craftsmanship which included crafting wooden toys, wooden *paats*, and *ganijfa* art. At the beginning of the 1970s, the Sawantwadi Palace put in efforts to revive the Ganjifa art and lacquerware in Sawantwadi. The Sawantwadi lacquerware which has been revived and popularized by the Sawant-Bhosale family in the twentieth century was a result of the traditional knowledge and craftsmanship shared by the prominent Chitari community artisans. The artisans mainly produced *ganjifa* cards, wooden toys, and other traditional art thus, contributing to the revival of lacquerware and *ganjifa* art.

In Goa, the Chitari community independently practiced their art in the village of Cuncolim in Salcete. They provided their services to the temples in nearby villages by painting the interiors of the temples, making hand-painted decorations during *zattras*, *shigmo*, carving out *rathas*, painting *sontreos*, *tonyos*, and others.

Apart from involving themselves in traditional woodcraft, painting, and providing services to the temples, the Chitari men actively took part in the freedom struggle of Goa. The two well-known freedom fighters who fought for Goa's freedom from the Portuguese colonial

rule were Gopal Narayan Chitari and Babuli Balu Chitari and their work has been recognized by the state government.

Gopal Narayan Chitari was born on 6th July 1936 in the village of Cuncolim in Salcete *taluka*, South Goa. Since they had kinship ties in Sawantwadi he spent his early years in Sawantwadi and completed his schooling therein. A writer from Cuncolim, in his article in the *Tarun Bharat* newspaper, sheds some light on Gopal Chitari and his life. During his years in Sawantwadi, he actively took part in the Indian freedom struggle. He joined the *Rashtra Seva Dal* in 1945 and also participated in the merger movement of Sawantwadi after India's independence.²⁰

Gopal Narayan Chitari returned to his hometown in Cuncolim in 1953. He began teaching during the pre-liberation period and thereafter he popularly came to be known as 'Gopal master.' Initially, he started teaching in a local school, Shree Shantadurga Vidyalaya in Culvaddo ward in Cuncolim. He continued imparting knowledge in other schools and higher secondary schools in the neighboring villages of Barcem, Bendordem, Balli, Subdale, Khede, and others including the Damodar Vidyalaya in Margao where he acted as the headmaster.

Apart from being a traditional Chitari artist and teacher, Gopal Chitari enrolled himself as a member of the *Azad Gomantak Dal*. *Azad Gomantak Dal* was a militant organization of freedom fighters that was formed in the year 1947. *Azad Gomantak Dal* hindered the smooth functioning of the Portuguese colonial government in Goa by attacking police outposts, disrupting road traffic, cutting down telephone wires, and other activities. As a part of their relentless struggle against the colonial government, *Azad Gomantak Dal* would preferably attack police *chowkis*.

²⁰ Shripad Govind Dessai, "Ballmanavar Sanskar ghadvinare Gopal Master," *Tarun Bharat*, March 15, 2024.

Through the attacks on police outposts, firstly, the freedom fighters tried to disrupt law and order in Goa as this would weaken the dictatorial regime in Goa. Secondly, they tried to terrorize the government machinery since the police would take action against any nationalist movement by committing violence against the local population of Goa. Lastly, by attacking the police outposts, the *Azad Gomantak Dal* aimed to collect weapons and arms to defend themselves from the Portuguese forces.²¹

Such violent acts of attacking police outposts and stealing arms and ammunition began in 1954. Several police stations, military posts, and mines were attacked throughout the years 1954 and 1955 mainly under the leadership of Mohan Ranade. Similarly, an *Azad Gomantak Dal* volunteer named Prabhakar Vaidya along with the youth attacked the Cuncolim police station on 13th April 1955. This particular date was chosen to attack the Portuguese government to commemorate the Jallianwala Bagh incident that occurred in the year 1919. The volunteers were successful in capturing the police outpost and weapons.

Following this attack by *Azad Gomantak Dal* in Cuncolim a curfew was imposed in the village while some were arrested and imprisoned. Gopal Chitari was also an active volunteer of *Azad Gomantak Dal*. He acted as a volunteer and distributed pamphlets and other supplies, painted and installed the organization's banners and flags. Apart from this through his educational profession, Gopal Chitari tried to instill feelings of nationalism and patriotism among the young students in schools through education and his writings, and as a result of such methods of instilling patriotism among young students, he was arrested several times.

During the pre-liberation period in Goa, his teaching career was faced with hurdles. Shripad Govind Dessai in his article mentions that Gopal Chitari was very determined in his educational profession and even worked at very low wages, and sometimes instead of wages

²¹ Seema Suresh Risbud, "Goa's struggle for Freedom 1946-1961: The Contribution of National Congress Goa and Azad Gomantak Dal," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2003), 390.

he was given food. He used to work as a teacher in private and public schools such as Shree Jantashrey Marathi Vidyalaya in Balli, Fatorpa, and Damodar Vidyalaya in Margao. He worked in the poor and tribal regions of Quepem such as Barcem, Khede, and Bendordem. During his years in these backward areas, he worked for the upliftment of the children belonging to the Harijan community. He allowed the children to undertake education which was earlier opposed to them by their parents. Moreover, he was able to provide education to the depressed Harijan children and the common people. Thus, he succeeded in freeing education from the constraints of caste and providing knowledge to even the lower and poorer classes in this region.

With Goa's liberation in 1961, from 1962 to 1975 he was appointed by the Goa state government as a primary teacher in Deulwadda ward in Balli which is the same village he provided education to the young Harijan children. He also held the post of vice-president of the Teachers' Society for five years. Thus, for his contribution to the field of education, he was conferred the National Teacher Award by the then president Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma in the year 1993.(see figure 4.11)

Gopal Narayan Chitari was not only renowned for his traditional woodcraft but he also fought to overthrow the colonial rule in Goa as well in Sawantwadi. He also contributed to the educational field by allowing the young downtrodden children in poor regions in Goa.

Babuli Balu Chitari a resident of Demani Cuncolim was also recognized as a bonafide freedom fighter by the home department of Goa. Not much is known details are known about him but his family members say that he was an active volunteer during the pre-liberation period in Goa.

Alternate Aspirations

The Chitari artisans are known for their traditional wood arts and crafts. Throughout the ages until the twentieth century, the Chitaris mainly practiced their traditional occupation

and preserved their traditional art and craftsmanship in Goa as well as Sawantwadi. Sadly, in contemporary times, many Chitari artisans are shifting from their traditional occupation as a result of modern education and profitable opportunities to achieve a better standard of living.

In Cuncolim, currently, there are only five families that are practicing this traditional occupation along with modern arts and crafts. Pradip Chitari laments that in Cuncolim none of the younger generation has undertaken the profession even though some have learnt the art. and that their generation is the last generation practicing the traditional art in Cuncolim. Some have pursued fine arts as their career thus they tend to practice modern art rather than the traditional as it is time-consuming and less profitable. The younger generations have pursued their careers in the fields of science and commerce.

The same trend is seen in Sawantwadi as well. The younger generation of the community is shifting from their traditional artisanship in search of better or higher-paid jobs. Abhijeet Chitari, currently a doctor by profession, today has set up his hospital under the name Chitari Hospital and Criticare in Sawantwadi. Abhijeet's father was a well-known Chitari artist in the previous century. Similarly, Uday Chitari's son has learned this art form, but he mainly practices modern and abstract art due to his fine arts career.

Some have also migrated to cities and towns in search of better life opportunities and better income. This has also affected the population statistics of the community in both these places in Konkan.

Chitari community is a hereditary artisanal community of Goa. They were painters during the medieval times in Goa. They were known for their temple artwork before the Portuguese arrival in Goa. Chitaris in Goa are categorized as Panchal brahmins and as a result of Sankritization, they perform the thread ceremony. These artisans often associate themselves

with Vishwakarma, the lord of crafts. Even the women played a role in their traditional craftsmanship and contributed to their society.

The religious life of the Chitaris is often associated with the Hindu *samskaras* and they hold their *kula devata* in high regard. They also provide their services to the temple in which they are associated with. The Chitaris in Goa were not only known for their traditional art but some played a role in the Goan freedom struggle as well. Thus, their role in society cannot go unseen.

Figure 4.1: Chitari artisan painting the images for the temple chariot



Photo courtesy: Nilesh Chitari

Figure 4.2: Pundalik Chitari in Sawantwadi

80 year old Artisan Pundalik Chitari, the only Artisan left in 3 1970s, started reviving & promoting the art of Ganjifa on the request of H.H Shivramraje and H.H Satvashiladevi Bhonsle of Sawantwadi

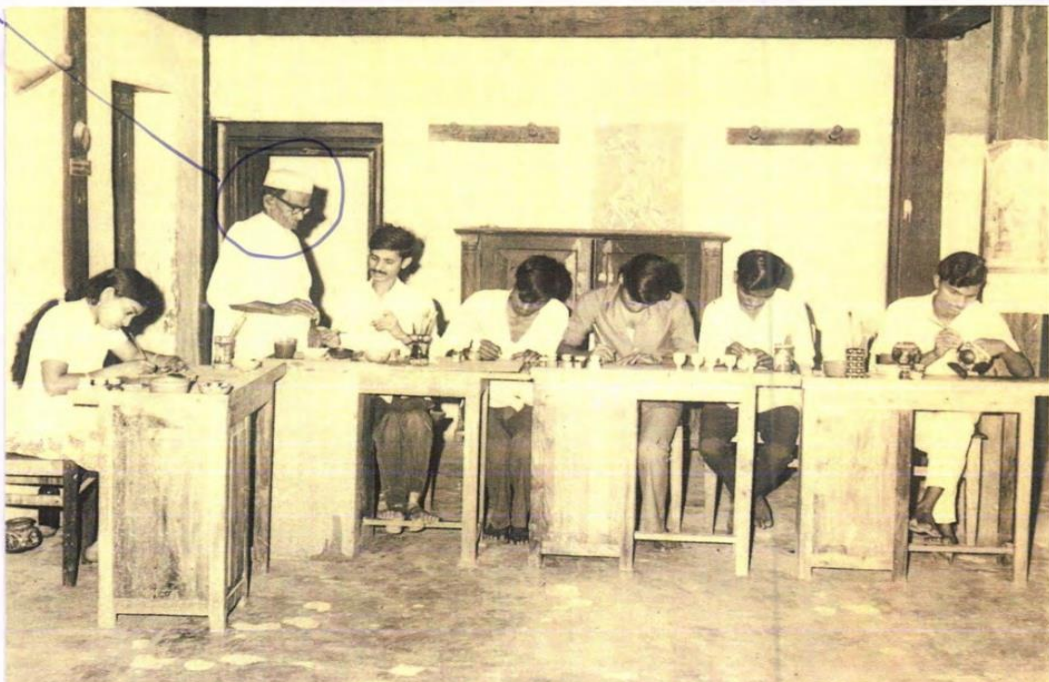


Image source:
<https://search.ipindia.gov.in/GIRPublic/Application/ViewDocument>

Figure 4.3: Sontreo festival



Photo courtesy: Nilesh Chitari

Figure 4.4: Ganesh Chaturthi



Photo courtesy: Pradip Chitari

Figure 4.5: Ganesh Chaturthi



Photo courtesy: Pradip Chitari

Figure 4.6: Wedding reception in Goa



Photo courtesy: Savita Chitari

**Figure 4.7: Woman painting
tonyos**



Picture credit: Leeann Pereira

**Figure 4.8: Woman working on a
machine lathe in Sawantwadi**



Photo courtesy: Pantealeao
Fernandes

**Figure 4.9: Woman incharge of
the shop in Sawantwadi**



Picture credit: Leeann Pereira

**Figure 4.10: Gopal Narayan
Chitari receiving award**



Picture credit: Leeann Pereira
Photo courtesy: Nilesh Chitari

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The dissertation titled, '*Chitaris' Chitrakala: A Historical Analysis of the Traditional Craftsmanship and Cultural Practices of an Artisanal Community of Goa and Sawantwadi,*' documents the traditional knowledge systems, particularly the traditional craftsmanship and the socio-cultural and religious aspects of the Chitari community of Goa and Sawantwadi.

India is renowned for its rich traditional legacy, diverse communities, climate, culture, and socio-economic prosperity. Indian history not only involves the political history of various dynasties that have ruled India throughout the ages but also involves the various communities that have been part of Indian society since time immemorial. Throughout centuries, craftsmen and artisans have played an important role in Indian society. Various artisanal and craftsman communities are scattered throughout the country. They not only produced for the rulers and elites but their products and services were utilized by the common people in the villages. Artisans such as painters, carpenters, and sculptors, were involved in temples by providing their services to the temples, as well as they actively took part in temple celebrations and activities. This is evident even in contemporary times.

India displays a rich heritage of arts and crafts. Throughout the ages, artisans have blended traditions, social norms, religion, and functionality to achieve various artistic styles. The art and craft history of India can be traced right to the times of its ancient civilization, the Indus. Artisans and craftsmen have played an important role in every society by providing their services to others. Artisans and craftsmen were a part of Indian society under various dynasties. Some rulers would provide patronage, thus, helping them thrive. Indian handicrafts are globally recognized for their craftsmanship, grace, elegance, and variety. The Eighth Plan

defines handicrafts as items made by hand with simple tools, often artistic or traditional. states like Karnataka, Odisha, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu Kashmir, and Kerala are known for their woodcraft and lacquerware.

Artisans in India associate them with the Vishwakarma. The Vishwakarma in medieval peninsular India constituted a group representing five crafts. The constituent craft persons were goldsmiths, brass smiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, and masons. All these artisans present in the society would make a village self-sufficient.

In Goa, during the pre-Portuguese period, a varied number of artisans resided in a village setup. These included coppersmiths, painters, blacksmiths, carpenters, bangle and *kasar* makers, gudikaras, and others. Most often their occupation was hereditary thus resulting in craft transmission from one generation to another. It was not only the craft transmission but also the transmission of traditional knowledge and craftsmanship among the artisans.

The Chitari community is an artisanal community of Goa involved in wood art and woodcraft. As discussed in earlier chapters, Chitaris played an important in temples due to their artistic skills. They were involved in temple art such as painting the images of gods and goddesses on temple walls. They provided their services in temples, such as painting the *sontreos*, and decorating *rathas* by painting the images of gods. In earlier times they would also do temple art which involved painting images of gods and goddesses on temple walls.

The wooden toy and lacquerware industry in India has a rich cultural legacy dating back 5000 years. Excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa reveal early human children playing with toys. Today, traditional toy manufacturing is mostly cottage-scale, with craftspeople working independently. Examples include Channapatna toys, Etikoppaka and Kondapalli toys, Sawantwadi woodcraft, and Chitari art.

The traditional wooden toys industry depends on traditional knowledge systems or traditional craftsmanship. Traditional knowledge (TK) refers to knowledge, skills, and

practices passed down through generations within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity. It includes literary, artistic, or scientific works, performances, inventions, designs, and undisclosed information. Traditional cultural expressions, such as music, dance, art, and handicrafts, are subsets of Traditional Knowledge systems. Knowledge about traditional craftsmanship is crucial in documenting traditional craftwork.

The Chitari community in Goa and Sawantwadi produces local art, including parakeet *paats*, wooden toys, and games. With advanced technology, art faces threats from globalization, foreign plastic toys, and better work prospects among younger generations, affecting the evolution of lacquerware items.

Several artisans were a part of the village Cuncolim. It was also known for its geopolitical position and it was often disputed among various rulers during the medieval period. The economy depended on the religious temples and the caravan route that existed resulting in many artisans settling in this region. However, in the sixteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese and their zeal to Christianize Goan lands, several Hindus were dispossessed of their religious idols, many fled with their deities, they were prohibited from religious rituals and festivities, and locals were debarred from government jobs and services if they did not comply to adopt Christianity. Thus, this forced many to leave their lands and migrate to neighboring regions of Goa.

One of the communities, that fled was the ‘Chitari’ artisans. This community was involved in temple art and religious art. During the Portuguese period, the destruction of temples affected them the most. Also, with regard to their religious rituals, the Chitaris are recognized as the Panchala Brahmins and they perform the thread ceremony. The Portuguese policy of evangelization prohibited all Hindus from performing their rituals and ceremonies, including the thread ceremony. Thus, all these prohibitions on social and artistic life could have been one of the reasons for them to migrate.

Many artisans migrated to Kannada regions and in North Konkan regions. In the nineteenth century, the Sawant-Bhosle family in Sawantwadi town favored the art of Chitari, particularly lacquerware wooden artifacts. They also encouraged Chitari artists to produce *ganjifa* cards, these traditional Indian playing cards hand-painted by the Chitari artisans. *Ganjifa*, derived from Persian ‘ganj’ meaning treasure, was introduced by the Mughals in the sixteenth century. In Sawantwadi, the most popular *ganjifa* is the Dashavtar *ganjifa*, featuring the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu.

The Chitaris were known for their traditional craftsmanship. The artisans made use of the naturally and locally available raw materials to produce items. Both the regions of Goa and Sawantwadi were bounded by dense forests. The artisans would directly procure timber from these forests and natural colors were also made. The main colors of the Chitari art include red, yellow, black, and green. In today’s times, artisans make use of advanced technology to carve and paint items while in earlier times, artisans made use of hand items such as chisel, hand lathe, and saw.

In Sawantwadi, their rulers patronized various forms of art as a result the Chitari Community not only involved themselves in producing traditional art rather they produced various other handicrafts including, sculpting the Ganesha idols, doll making and *ganjifa* painting, preparing hubble-bubbles and others. In Sawantwadi, these wooden toys are in demand as a result of tourism which promotes the same.

With regard to their role in society and culture, these Chitari artisans have played an important role throughout time. The Chitari community under study is a community indigenous to Goa. Chitaris were present in every Goan society involved in temple art, sculpting, and lacquer work. As discussed in chapters four, there are several references to Chitaris in Goan society. The *Foral de Ilhas* and *Foral de Salcete* make mention of these artisans being present in several Goan villages. In Goa, they not only contributed their services in temples and

churches but they equally participated in the temple festivals of temple. For instance, at the festival of *sontreos* in Cuncolim, the Chitari artisans not only produce the *sontreos* but are a part of this procession and aid the temple committee.

Hereditary played an important role among the Chitari artisans in passing down the crafts and traditional knowledge from one generation to another. While in Sawantwadi, hereditary as well as apprenticeship played a major role in craft production. In Goa, mainly during the Portuguese rule, there are references to the artisans in various villages. These villages were further divided into wards which were named based on the group of artisans or professionals who lived there.

With regards to the religious rituals, the Chitaris artisans in Goa have similar rituals and practices as that of any Hindu native of Goa. This community performs the thread ceremony which is a result of Sanskritization. They also perform all the Hindu *samskaras* pertaining to birth, marriage, and death. The Chitari artisans in Goa are not only known for their artwork but they have also contributed to Goan freedom Struggle. As discussed in an earlier chapter, Gopal Narayan Chitari and Babuli Balu Chitari have played an important role in creating awareness among younger students. Thus, the Chitari community of Goa and Sawantwadi have not only contributed to their artisanal legacy but have also played an important role in society and culture.

Not much research has been done on the Chitaris of Goa, about their traditional craftsmanship, the tools used, the techniques of production, and cultural practices other than about their art motifs and products. Therefore, this dissertation fills in the void that existed regarding Chitaris' traditional craftsmanship and cultural practices in the Konkan region.

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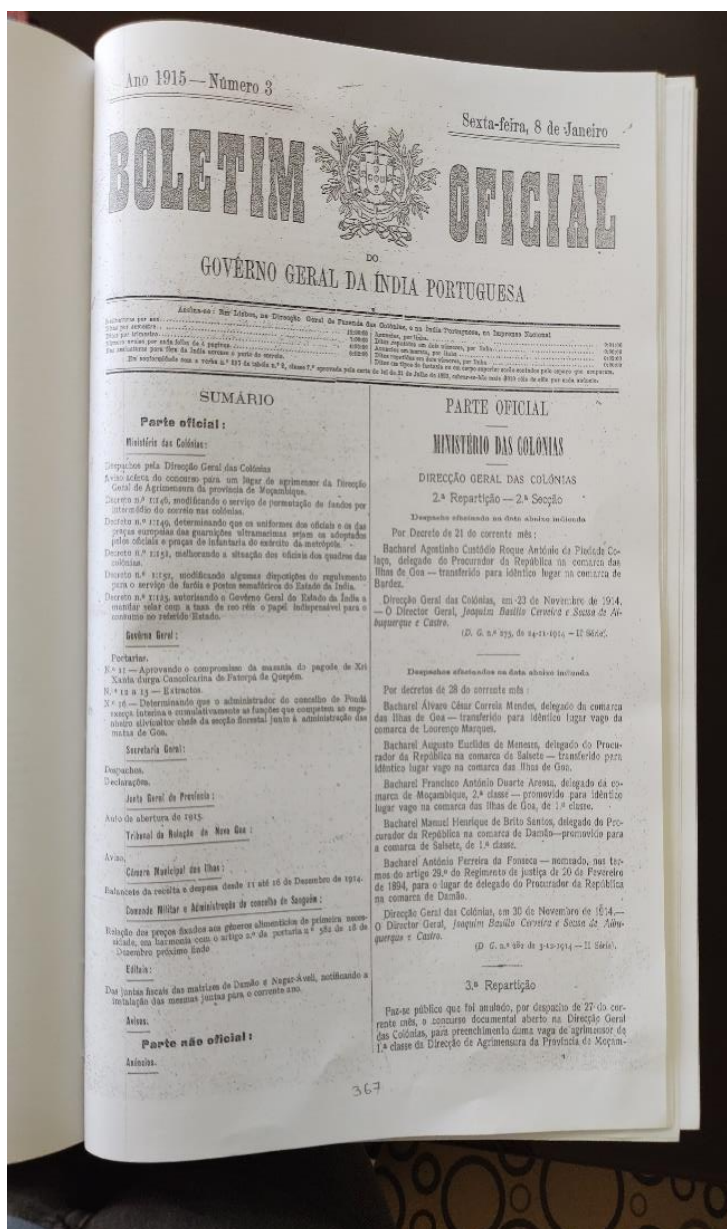
Source: Historical Archives of Goa. *Foral das Ilhas de Goa* (1567), n° 7597, fol. 58v.

Appendix II

Compromisso de Devalaia shree Xantadurga

(The by-laws of temple Shree Shantadurga Kunkalkarin in Fatorpa)

The *Boletim Official* mentions the duties of Chitari artisans in the temple in Article 10.



Source: Francisco Manuel Couceiro da Costa, "Compromisso a que se refere a portaria

supra," *Boletim Oficial Governo Geral Da Índia Portuguesa*, January 8, 1915, 369.

pezas precisas — vinte e cinco curús chirbumliós, (arroz torrado) 4 medidas avel, 6 côcos, uma medida de arroz, um quartilho e meio de azeite, docxena, etc., segundo o orçamento.

No dia 12 da lua cheia a festividade Caló no pagode de Xri Madevá é solenizada pelos Stolcares culavés de família de Dulbá e Camnom, servidores do pagode, recebendo do cofre um xerafim ou seis tangas e oito réis, e meia mão de azeite, além de três xerafins que os mazanes e bôto e guruu do pagode são obrigados a dar-lhes correndo as mais despesas por conta dos mesmos stolcares.

A iluminação de Kambo no dia da lua cheia é solenizada pelos mazanes com a sua assistência recebendo do cofre uma mão de azeite e quatorze tangas segundo o orçamento.

h) No mês Pôuxa.

A festividade Zatr por cinco dias desde o 5.º dia da lua nova, com a assistência da mazania ou de doze mazanes, um de cada vangor, o Zolmi e os Culavés stolcares e servidores, fazendo cada qual a cerimonia da sua competência.

É também obrigatória a assistência de Pernins de Molcorném para 4 zagorés, segundo o estilo recebendo do cofre oito rupias, cinco tangas e quatro réis, 2 panos de vestir para mulheres uma canada do azeite, e 2 fardos de arroz de stolcares para 4 natôcas e 3 suanis; a assistência de Ordax para natôcas mediante a remuneração de 4 rupias e um pano.

No 3.º dia de zatr deve realizar-se a procissão de Lálki kandelô rôto á custa de Bozocos caldeiros ou latoeiros, e no 5.º dia a procissão do grande rôto com precedência de um dos ditos zagores, a expensas do cofre do pagode, segundo o orçamento; e no dia immediato ao de procissão a solenidade de Zogon com a assistência dos mazanes, servidores e zolmi com as formalidades do estilo, á custa dos mazanes.

i) No sobredito mês cheitra terá lugar a cerimonia—Ramanovimim — á custa do Bôto e Stolcares por três dias, com a assistência dos mazanes.

Art. 4.º É obrigação dos mazanes, em número doze, um de cada vangor, assistirem e fiscalisarem todos os actos de que trata este compromisso.

Art. 5.º As obrigações do bôto são, além das que lhe impõe o rito, as seguintes:

a) Fornecer todos objectos necessários da sua competência para as cerimonias de Abixê e Gonêspuzá, quando tenha lugar no pagode, mediante a remuneração de duas tangas e oito réis paga pelo interessado.

b) Fazer diariamente, Avarton, Puzá, Nevédia, no pagode de Xri Mahadeva e quando for necessário a cerimonia de Homo e Archasudi, — lêr e explicar purana nos dias das festividades, acompanhar o palanquim nos dias da procissão, cantando Mongolastocam e fazer os mais actos segundo o costume até hoje observados.

O actual bôto do pagode é Balcrisna, de família do finado Caxinato bôto.

Art. 6.º Compete ao guruu prestar os serviços do seu officio, no pagode de Xri Xantadurga, e são: Puzá: Nevedia, acender luzes ou zôti de nondadip, incensar ou fazer dumarôte, todos os dias, consultar o oraculo-agouro, e praticar todos os actos do seu ministério, recebendo a remuneração do costume.

Art. 7.º Direitos e obrigações dos Culavés servidores no pagode de Xri Xantadurga e perante o palanquim e nos actos fazer várias cerimonias segundo o costume e determinação dos mazanes.

Esta obrigação é extensiva aos culavés stolcares, esparzir e varrer diariamente os pavimentos dos pagodes, esparzir chitôdo, aporntar lume para dumarôte, tanto no pagode, como junto do poncharôte, alimpar os vazos e utensilios dos pagodes e quando preciso para dumarôte junto do palanquim e outros actos.

Esta obrigação é da família dos servidores Dulú e Calér, cada uma por 15 dias.

c) Acompanhar o palanquim nas procissões com poncharôte e fazer o mais que é próprio da ocasião segundo ordenarem os mazanes.

É obrigação da família dos ditos Dulú e Calér, cada uma pelo período de 15 dias.

d) Tocar a mordanga e Zánza e pegar no diuti em todos os actos aos domingos e em outros dias que haja, procedente dos ditos pagades.

É obrigação da família de Dulbó Gan e de Cam nom Gan, cada uma por quinze dias.

e) Tocar em todos actos festivos dos pagodes tal, arab e pe-gar pelo optaguir.

É obrigação da família do dito Camnom Gan.

f) Fornecer os objectos precisos para armar a nova espiga no Noyeamponchômim.

É obrigação da família da finada Mossú bailadeira:

g) Fornecer dois begarins no último dia de zatr para conduzir os idolos durante a procissão. É obrigação da família da dita Mossú bailadeira.

h) Pegar o diuti nas procissões aos domingos e o Sombreiro e Aptaguir em todas festividades solenes segundo a praxe.

É obrigação da família de Pissolém bailadeira:

i) Pegar pela torna e fazer todos os serviços inherentes aos actos do pagode de Acar-Udengui.

É obrigação da família da finada Campód bailadeira e de Vitém deulón:

j) Além dos serviços mencionados da obrigação dos Culavés e Stolcares vários outros que tem relação com os actos dos pagodes, segundo o antigo estilo, e no serviço de diuti de que trata este compromisso é sócia a família da finada Zaiú bailadeira, a quem compete prestar por seu turno uma quarta parte do respectivo serviço.

Art. 8.º São Culavés os indivíduos de ambos sexos da família de finados Calér-Dulú, Dulbá Gan e Camnom Gan, inclusivê os adoptivos tomados segundo a lei e costume.

a) Estes culavés e os servidores mencionados nas alíneas deste artigo 8.º tem o direito de perceber como remuneração do serviço respectivo as oblatas em dinheiro nãoexcedentes cada oferta meio xerafim em cobre ou tres tangas e quatro réis, e em genêros: côco, arroz, fiores e comestíveis—que se arrecadarem nos ditos pagodes, e se partilharão, findo cada acto, em três lotes iguais: —um subdividindo-se em duas partes iguais, uma para o guruu e a outra para a família Calér e Dulú; — outro lote uma metade ao bôto e a outra metade para a família Camnom, Dulbó, Zaiú e Mossú; e o 3.º lote subdivide-se em 23 quinhões iguais: ao bôto 3 quinhões — ao guruu 5, — a Calér 3, — a Dulú 1, — a Dulbó 2½, — á Zaiú 1, — a Camnom 2½, — a Pissolém 2, — á Chondrém Sanquelicarina 1, — e a Mossú 2.

b) Pertencem também nesta proporção aos ditos culavés e servidores o rendimento do tulabar, com excepção dos objectos de qualquer metal e a moeda, que são receitados para o cofre do pagode.

c) São pagos também com os rendimentos do prédio Stolcut-bana-Assonachém-Moroda que são usufruidos por glebas ou adições: uma pelo bôto, — 4 pelo guruu, — 2 pelo Calér, — uma pelo Dulú, — 2½ por Dulbá, — 2 por Zaiú, — 2½ por Camnom, — uma por Chondrém Sanquelicarina, — 2 por Mossú, — 2 por Pissolém, — uma pela família Irú Gan, — uma pela Campur, — e uma por Quidi.

d) É obrigação da família Camnom e Dulbó construir com o material seu as tendas ou barracas por ocasião de Zatr, no sitio do pagode, para os vendilhões, pertencendo-lhes o respectivo aluguer.

Art. 9.º A família do faraz Cacori, de Cuncolim, é obrigada a juntar os bambús que os mazanes fornecem para as barracas em Cuncolim, pela festividade Zatr, e conduzi-los para o sitio do pagode, e bem assim tocar o tambor por ocasião de festas Martan e Sotrió, com a remuneração de quatro rupias, que paga o pagode, além do usufruto de dois prédios que ela possui em Cuncolim.

Art. 10.º É obrigação dos carpinteiros Roulú e Chondrú e dos ferreiros Pocló e Santú armar o grande rôto para o zatr — e fazer-lhe os concertos precisos e todo o serviço do seu mister tocante aos pagodes, sendo o material fornecido pelo pagode. O seu salário são 2 fardos de arroz, 2 panos de vestir para mulheres, e quinhão de chirbumlió no cartico punovom. Tem elles direito a uma medida de arroz, por cada individuo, que os bosôcos bramanes contribuem-lhes pelo Rongpusá que estes solenisam.

a) É obrigação da família de Bombó Xette e Mabôl Xette, Chitaris, pintar com varias côres e renovar as pinturas sendo preciso, das peças do grande rôto para o Zatr. O seu salário são oito xerafins e cobre ou tres rupias cinco tangas e quatro réis e um pano de vestir para mulheres, em cada ano pagos pelo cofre.

b) A obrigação da família de Chondré oleiro Zolmi é em todos domingos e pelas outras festas e actos que têm logar no pagode prestar o serviço de zolmi. É remunerado este serviço com meia medida de chirbumlió para cada pessoa de família dele, um quarto de quartilho de azeite no cartico punovom; três quartos de azeite no Zatr, pagos pelo pagode; e uma medida de arroz para cada individuo pelo Rong pusá dos bosocos bra-

(c) The rendiment of property Sihal Kutumbana Hassanachem Morad is enjoyed (usufruct) as additions, one for Bhat; four for Gurav; two for Kaler; one for Dulu; two and half for Dulba; two for Zelu; two and half for Kamno; one for Chandrem; two for Massu; two for Pissolem: one for family of Hiru Gan; one for Kampod and one for Kiddo.

(d) It is obligatory to the family of Kamno and Dulba to construct with material of their own cost the Mandap and stall mandaps during Zatra festival.

Article 9: The family of Kakodi Mahar, r/o Kunkalli is to arrange Bamboos to Zatra Mandap in courtyard of temple. So also to play/bit drum (Dholkem) on occasion of Mhatan and Chatrios. He shall get the remuneration of Rs. 4 paid by coffre. Besides the enjoyment (usufruct) of two properties which he possesses in Kunkalli.

Article 10: It is the duty of Ravlu and Chondru Sutar and Poklo and Santu Lohar:- To decorate and dress the Maharath for Zatra; to make all the services towards these duties they shall receive two heap of rice, two kapdans for their ladies, and share of Chirmulio in Kartik Poornima. Also they shall get one *sher* of rice per each individual from Bhajak Brahmins during their Rangapuka.

(a) It is a duty of family of Bombo Shet and Mhabal Shet Chitari:- To paint all the pictures of Maharath before the Zatra, to renovate the parts of Maharath, their remuneration is Rs. 3, 5 anas, 4 reis, besides 1 Kapod for their ladies per year.

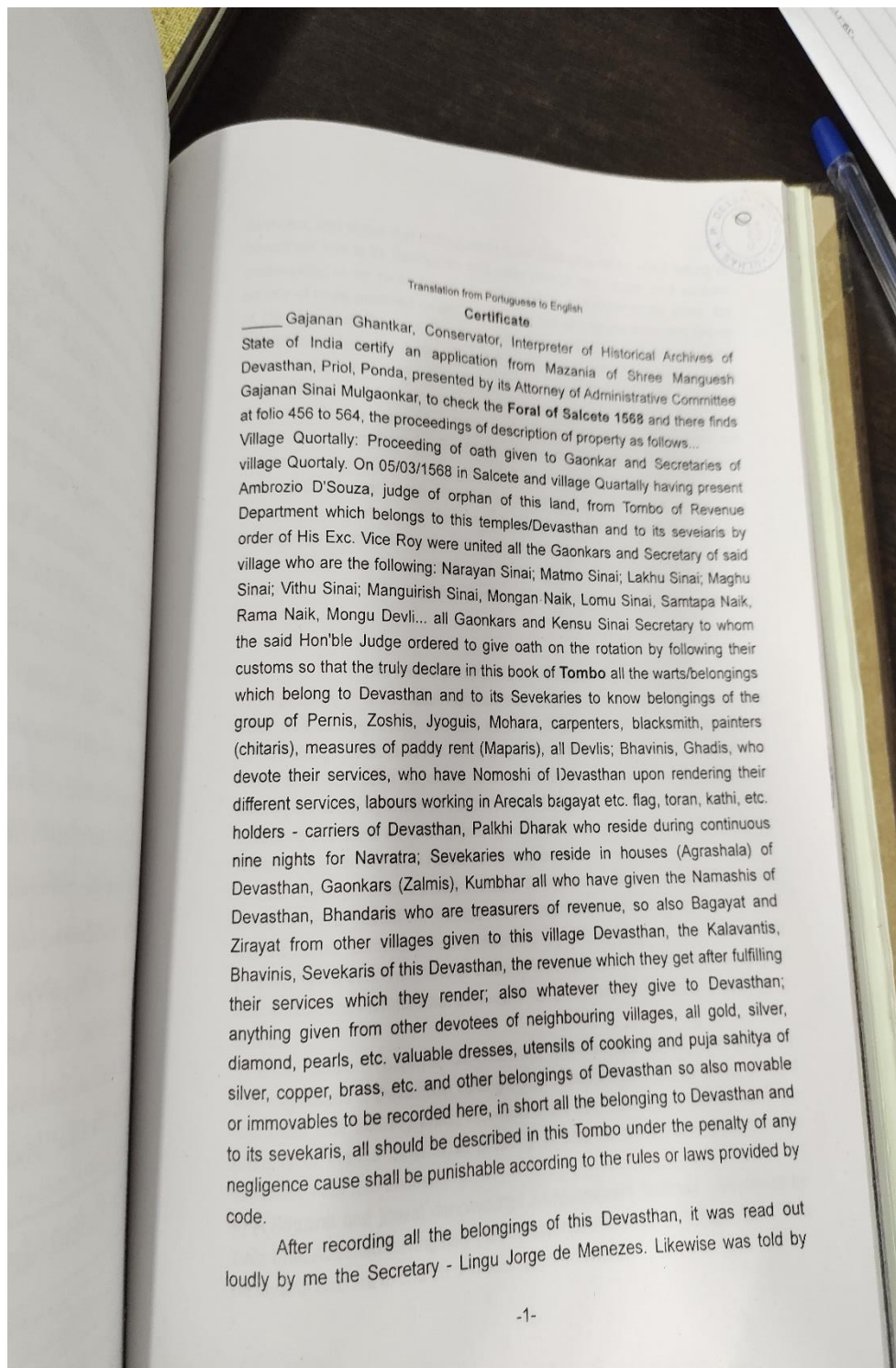
(b) It is a duty of Chandru Kumbhar Zalmi:- To perform his duty as per rituals and usage on all Sundays and festival days whenever it is required. For these services he shall get the remuneration of half palli Chirmuleao; one fourth golem oil for Kartik Punav; three fourth golem of oil for **zatra** by Devasthan. Also he shall be paid by Bhajak Brahmins one *sher* of rice in Ranga puja (each member of this family). And towards 24 Budkules and carrying of Novim from Kunkalli to Fatorpa during occasion of Novianchi Panchami. He shall get five *sher* of rice and five coconuts. Besides as a **Zalmipon** he shall enjoy the property coconut bagayat **Gharbhat** where he resides and a **paddy field Renvot** in Kunkalli.

(c) The duties of family of Zalu and Kono Shudra:- To act as service of Tahshildar (messenger of Devasthan), conveying messages from Mahajans to other Sevekaries and in Kunkall Mahajanas 12 Vangods as per customs and usage. His remuneration besides the enjoyment of properties Killikadchem Bhat Varika Morad situated in Kunkalli, granted by Devasthan and a contribution of twelve Kudavs of paddy from 12 Vangods (i.e. each vangod one kudav) besides one palli of paddy from each Mahajanas on thrashing floor during sorod crop. Well like Rs. 15/-, two Kapadans, two pudvins which Devasthan gives him annually. In Kartik Poornima half palli of Chirmuleo per each member of his family, four *sher* of rice and four coconuts on Novianchi Pancham. Besides one *sher* of rice per individual shall be given by Brahmin Bhajak during their Rangapuja.

(d) It is a duty of Noble and Vithem Devli: To send a male member in Fatorpa on all Sundays and other festival days who shall perform his duties in Udo

Translation of Compromisso de Devalaia shree Xantadurga, article 10.

Translation of *Foral of Salcete* of village Cortalim



Appendix IV

This document mentions about the Chitaris in Veroda village in Salcete.

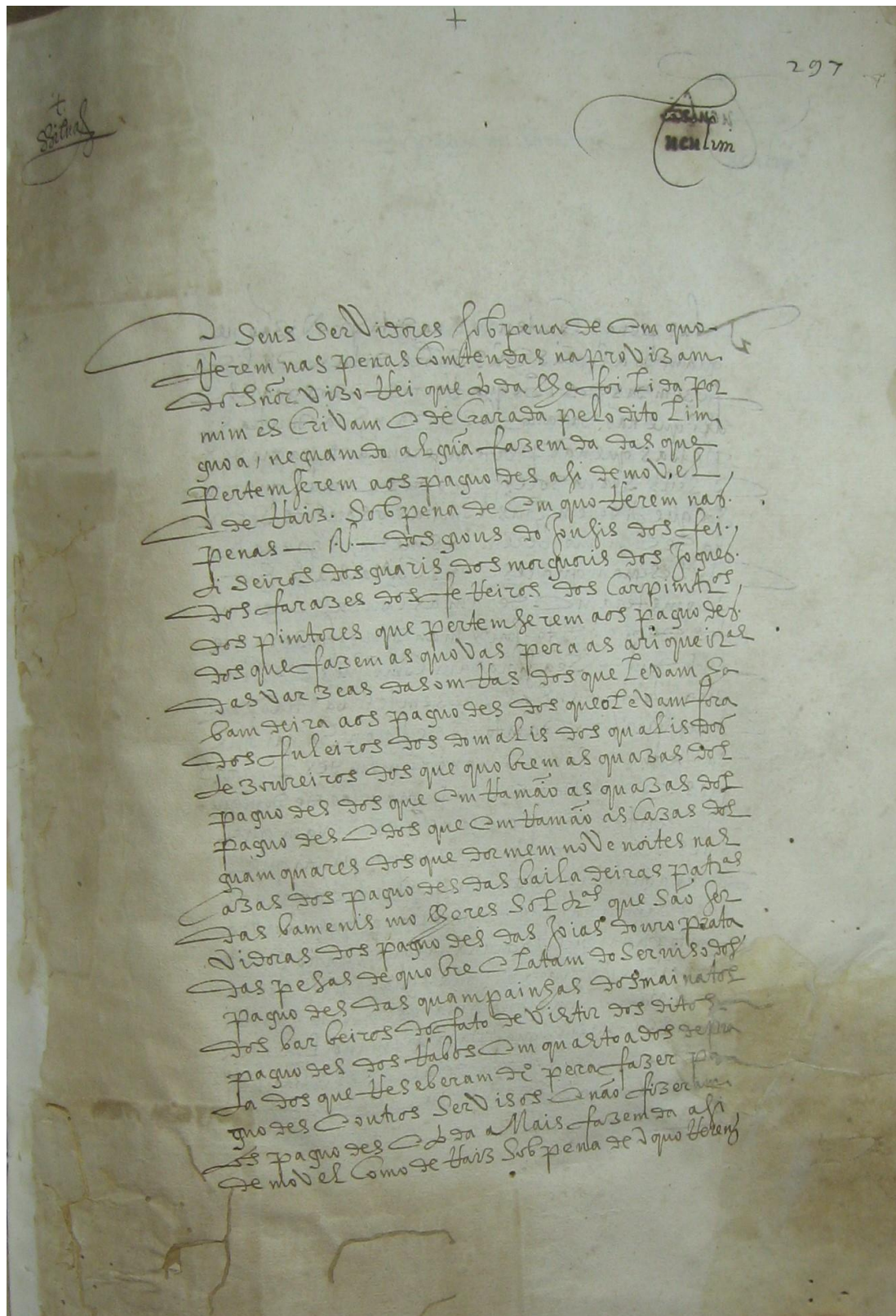
Veroda Aldeia de Verda

Anto do Juramento que se deu aos guam
quares Ces Cuião da dita aldea de Verda

Por se ba nome dias domes de dezembro de
mil e quinhentos e sessenta e sete a
nos em Salsete obtendo ambos os de
ba juiz dos reffos da gente dade da Gib-
Jão e gentios da cidade de guara e Senb.
Jermos fazendo o Tombo das fazendas que
pertencem aos paguodes e seus seruid-
res e outras de Ligitas por mandado
do Sr. Visorrei Comal Sada e v. por
seu mandado foram juntos os guam qua-
res Ces Cuião da dita aldea de Verda
que são os seguintes — .N. Lo qu m n-
nai que — e madu nai que .j. e madu porto-
guam quares e mam gufinai .j. es Cuião, e os
quais o dito juiz mandou dar juramento
na dita segundo seus costumes que se
foi dado pelo Linguageiro de mene Beor
pera que bem e verdadeiramente se Co-
rafe e das fazendas que pertence-
rem aos paguodes e seus seruidores
de toda a cidade que se fa — .N. e os
bons dos por nris dos malis qualis dos.
bons dos fufis dos malis dos e pim-
deros fefferos pintores dos e Soqua

Appendix V

This document mentions about the Chitari artisans in Cuncolim village.



Source: Historical Archives of Goa, *Foral de Salcete* (1568), Mss. 3071, fol. 297.