The Oxford dictionary defines ‘Culture’ as ‘the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievements regarded collectively’ (Oxford Dictionary 2009). It also explains it as ‘the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society.’ The word ‘Culture’ comes from ‘Cultura’ in Latin which literally means ‘cultivation’.

The way a child grows mentally and intellectually is his culture. The elements of culture constitute of each and everything that the child is taught and those he learns by himself, starting from the way he calls his mother to his disposition towards life. Life is made up of various kinds of elements, intensely serious as well as utterly casual. And both are needed in the right proportions. So the modes of making and keeping oneself happy are as indispensable in a man’s life as food is for his survival. Thus games form as important a part of a person’s growing up and grown-up life as education. The types of games played by a child depend on his surroundings and are dictated by his social norms. The games, in turn, form the personality and the behavioural nature of the child. So, like everything else, games are also a mirror of the culture they have developed in and vice-versa.

Here the focus is on card games. The game of Ganjifā did not just remain a card game but also became a part of the lives connected with it in various ways, directly or indirectly. And things that get associated in this way with the life of a community survive for generations and, consequently, for ages. Sometimes they acquire the label of a tradition or heritage of a particular place or community. Many a time such a heritage becomes the identity or the cause of fame of those particular surroundings they dwell in. Those heritages popularise the cultures which have given birth to them. They become reasons for pride for the people. Thus, in other words, we can say that they enrich those
cultures. They enhance the cultural value of the regions and people. Those cultures attain a distinction due to such outstanding traditions inherent in them.

Moreover, sometimes such heritages become the cause of popularity and survival of other cultural elements associated with them, thus culturally enriching the region further. This chapter will elaborate upon the hidden cultural value of the cards and the game that has enriched the culture of the community of its players over the centuries.

The secular cards were transformed into Hindu-deity themed ones. Not just the pictures on them, but also the methods of painting those pictures changed and differed from region to region. They even started being influenced by the local painting styles in various places of the same country. In Rajasthan the Rajasthani style of miniature paintings were painted on them and they were mostly made of ivory, tortoise shell or such high-priced materials as they were mostly Darbar Kalam- meant only for the elite (Leyden 1982). In Maharashtra it has survived till now in Sawantwadi, a principality which specialises in woodcraft and lacquer work. During the Maratha rule, cards were made of ivory and other costly materials but after the fall of royalty and the unavailability of ivory, the luxury sets stopped being manufactured. In Sawantwadi they are made with paper by the wood and lacquer workers (Leyden 1982).

Likewise, in Odisha, it has become associated with the traditional painting style of the Odia culture, the Paṭacitra. It is a traditional cloth scroll painting art, typical to this state.

The ‘paṭa’ which is the base of the paintings consists of layers of cloth stuck together. The adhesive that is used to stick the layers, the colours that are used to paint the canvas, even the brushes are traditionally made out of natural materials. The acquisition of the raw materials, their processing and the hard work that goes into crafting one complete painting without any flaw, call for
days’ or even months’ of effort and patience for which the price charged is quite reasonable.

This tradition of paṭa painting has survived in very few places in Oḍisha, viz. Puri, Sonepur, Chikiti and Paralakhemundi though there are very clear stylistic differences between the depictions of all these places. The most popular of the centres is Raghurajpur, a village in Puri district near the town of Puri.

The themes of Paṭacitras are mainly based on Vaiṣṇavism, especially the Jagannātha cult. The origin of the style dates back to the construction of the great temple of Jagannātha, i.e., during the 11-12th century (Mohanty 1984). The mural paintings on the walls of the temple and the colour themes of the images of the deities themselves have been reproduced on the cloth sheets. No such work on a cloth base has survived till date due to the perishable nature of the medium. But there are traditions that prove that sheets of cloth have continued to be painted with this style since the beginning of the Jagannātha cult. During the week preceding the famous chariot festival of the three deities, the idols are hidden from public view. In place of the idols three enormous sheets of cloth painted with their images are hung up to let the devotees continue with their worship. This may suggest that the usage of cloth to paint the similar pictures as on the walls is as old as the chariot festival of the Lord.

Paṭa paintings are undoubtedly a very pride-worthy art that Odisha possesses. The Citrakāras, as the Paṭacitra artists are called, are a group of people who have continued the tradition hereditarily for generations. The most celebrated place for this art is a small, but not at all an insignificant, hamlet in the district of Puri and very near the town of Puri, named Raghurajpur. We can say that almost the whole population of this place thrives on this art. That can be seen starting from the first house of the village itself. Most of the members of almost every house are artists in their own right, assisted by the others as helpers to the artists. To display their skills to the tourists and customers and with the hope of getting some of their works sold, the front walls of the huts are
painted in the style of the paṭa paintings. Those walls mostly depict pictures of deities, of the Dashavatara or some mythological stories, but generally related to Vaiṣṇavism. We can also find equally breathtaking works of art inside those tiny dwellings where space is a great constraint but has failed to limit the beauty of the creations. This is a family tradition for them and most of their children follow this traditional profession religiously. Not only the children of the family but a few aspiring artists from other places are also trained in some of these houses, and, perhaps, also employed there (Pati 2010).

![A painter painting on the outer wall of his house](http://www.incredibleindia.org/eri/Raghurajpur.php)

**Fig. 5.1: A painter painting on the outer wall of his house**

(Source: http://www.incredibleindia.org/eri/Raghurajpur.php)

The cards of Ganjapā are also prepared and painted here in a few of these huts. One of the ace artists here is Shri Banamali Mohapatra. He is the son of Late Shri Jagannatha Mohapatra who was a National Award winner. Both the father’s and the son’s works have great demand not only within the country but in other countries as well. Incidentally, this is the only family which has some knowledge about Ganjapā cards and also crafts them. Though, hardly anyone knows how to play the game, quite a number of people place orders for sets of these cards to be made to satisfy their curiosity and to treasure them in their collection. Shri Mohapatra, the son, also makes the twenty four-suited cards set but that is also only made to order (Pati 2010).
The Ganjapā cards serve as a window to the cultural life of the people that make and play them. From the point of view of someone from outside Odisha, who is ignorant of the existence of the paṭa paintings but has come across the cards, Ganjapā opens a wide horizon of arts. He comes to see the whole picture of which Ganjapā is just a small part. This, in succession, leads him to see the life and style of the whole community that is involved with these paintings personally and professionally. For example, an art lover from outside Odisha comes across these cards, buys a set and gets curious about more details as art lovers often do. He ventures to explore more about them. This naturally leads him to the places of preparation and playing. He comes to know about Puri and Raghurajpur and their culture. He comes to know about the extremely dominant Vaiṣṇava cult in that region which is why most of the paintings represent various stories of Lord Viṣṇu. He sees how the game has imbibed the culture. That can also be seen in the way the cards are prepared. The traditional way of preparing the canvas and paintings in this place is used to make these gaming objects too which were originally not part of this art. This shows that though they might have been foreign in origin, they have won the hearts of the people patronising such traditions of painting in this country. Thus, just a few cards make its buyer aware of the existence of such a rich cultural phenomenon in a society foreign to him.

The buyer then notices the small area of Raghurajpur, a village named after Lord Rāma, an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. This small locality again reveals profound facts about the Odia culture, the Jagannātha culture and the culture of this village. Besides Paṭacitra, the inhabitants of this village are experts in many more skills like stone sculpting, palm leaf painting and etching, Odishi music and dance (which are Odisha’s very own classical music and dance genre), papiermâché, coir work, coconut painting, mural paintings, etc. This village is incredibly rich in culture. Besides Sri Banamali Mohapatra, there are also some other nationally and internationally famous names. Guru Kelucharaṇ Mohapatra, an internationally renowned Odishi dancer who is, sadly, no more but has left his legacy with his almost equally renowned
students from all over the world. Another such man is Raghunatha Mohapatra, a stone sculptor who was recently given the Padma Bhushan honour, one of the highest honours in India for the individuals of unique genius.

These cards opened a much wider picture in their background. This could work in reverse too. If one knows about the culture of Paṭacitra, one will naturally come to know about all kinds of artistic items that are prepared using this method. Among them one will find the Ganjapā cards with a long antiquity of their own. Thus a bigger cultural component introduces one to many of its smaller components which have their own great and small stories.

The traditional style of painting, Paṭacitra, has retained its patterns intact over the centuries. The themes, in the first place, are still taken from the old mythologies associated with the regions where they are prepared- the Kānci Abhijān of the Gajapati king, the adventures of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s life, the trio of Jagannātha, Baḷabhadra and Subhadrā, etc. Like every traditional painting form Paṭacitra also has regulations which spell out how the depictions are going to be painted on the base. The treatment of the different objects and characters drawn are controlled by some texts and the evolution of some local styles. The local flavours are born and grow over ages in the regional traditions, legends or other cultural elements. These styles that follow texts and traditions become conventions for the paintings and the painters mostly follow the same over the years (Das 1982). But, of course, they do evolve and change many a time.

The paṭa paintings follow a similar kind of code of some written and some unwritten rules. The most interesting thing about this painting style, however, is that the depictions, the patterns, the clothing and ornament designs, the animals and birds and the colour associations have not changed much since the start of the culture of this art.

One of the main aspects of any painting is the colours that are applied, the theme and the range of palette that is chosen.
The oldest convention of colour that the Odia paṭa painters follow is the colour of the three deities worshipped in the great temple- black for Jagannātha, white for Bālabhadra and yellow for Subhadrā. Most probably they were painted immediately after their installation in the temple in the 12th century itself. As a reference the 17th century manual for colouring the deities mentions kalā (black), śaṅkha (milky) and haritāḷa (yellow). Some more conventions that are followed by the citrakāras with regard to the colours of different deities are as below (Das 1982):

1. **Yellow**: Matsya, Kūrma, Paraśurāma, Buddha, Rādhā, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Brahmā, Maids and other females.
2. **White**: Nṛsiṁha, Balarāma, Śiva, Varuṇa.
3. **Black**: Kālī, Nārāyaṇa, Yama. In some older paintings Kṛṣṇa is painted with this colour.
4. **Blue**: Vāmana, Kalkī, Kṛṣṇa.
5. **Red**: Agni, Maṅgalā.
6. **Green**: Varāha, Rāma.
7. Demons are coloured *light green* and snakes and mountains are usually *grey*.

There are conventions also regarding the depictions of human and other creatures. The Citrakāras follow the instructions of Viṣṇudharmottara regarding the representations of various characters including clothes, body type, ornaments, etc. (Das 1982). Following this the kings on the cards are decked up elaborately and in an extravagant way with crowns on their heads and a lot of jewellery. Ministers and other royalties are also adorned similarly but do not wear a crown, they rather wear a turban or stay bare-headed. Sages have matted hair and are generally portrayed as weak and Brāhmaṇas are shown full of majesty.
From a religious point of view, another very important part of the culture of a place is that the cards give a lot of information. Puri is one of the four biggest pilgrimages for the Indians. The great Jagannātha temple of Puri is one of the greatest temples in the whole country. The Ganjapā packs here are highly influenced by the nine centuries’ or older, strong Vaiṣṇav inclination of the region. The sets played in this region are purely based on the Vaiṣṇava sect, or rather the Jagannātha cult, the foremost being the Daśāvatāra set. To make the game more complicated when new sets had to be added, other gods appeared but the sequence of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu were kept unchanged. Moreover, the fervour for the Jagannātha cult can be seen in the fact that the Kṛṣṇa incarnation has been replaced by Jagannātha, who is also considered a form of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa comes in the set later but not as an incarnation. In order to even incorporate the Buddha devotees in the sect, Buddha was also made into an incarnation in some versions of the set. The second most popular set is the one which has Navagunjara (the mythical form of Lord Viṣṇu consisting of various parts of nine animals) as the king and a worshipping Arjuna as the minister of the suits. The suit’s names, signs and colours remain almost the same as the Mughal ones, only the versions are regional, but the themes are absolutely changed to suit the religion of the people. The third commonly found set is about the eight adventures of Lord Kṛṣṇa with different demons, the victory of the Lord over evil. Surely there are sets which are not related to Vaiṣṇavism but their existence is almost negligible and nobody really plays those cards.

Beyond the Vaiṣṇav deities, when the packs started becoming complex, more and more gods were added to the Daśāvatāra set in the order of Gaṇeṣa, Kārttikeya, Brahmā, Śiva, Iṅdra, Yama, Nārada, Kṛṣṇa, Garuḍa, Hanumān, Agni, Kāmadeva, Kubera and Kañdarpa. The main religious scenario and the auxiliary ones can be clearly seen in the suits and the succession of deities. The religious mindset of the people of Puri is also noticed in their place of playing.
After working all day in the great temple they gather in a small temple dedicated to a local form of goddess *Kālī* in the lane right opposite the big temple. The tendency to keep in touch with their religion is very high in this area.

Similar is the case of the other places viz. Sonepur, Chikiti and Paralakhemundi. Different cultural traits and their history are reflected directly or indirectly on the cards and the game. Their painting fashion is different though they are all made on the *paṭa* base.

**SONEPUR:**

The Sonepur or Subarnapur (District Subarnapur) style is known as *Putaḷābaṅdi*. *Putaḷā* in Oḍiā means ‘doll’, though the exact meaning of the word is not clear to the research student. The images drawn look more or less like line-drawing dolls and are very small in size. Consequently, the cards are also smaller than those of the other places as the space required is very less. There is only one kind of set that is played in this town i.e. the Rāmāyaṇa set. It consists of two groups of six suits each, one led by Lord Rāma and the other by the demon Rāvaṇa. The players and artists in Sonepur also believe that this game of Gānjapā actually started from here. They tell a story that the British bureaucrats of Sambalpur, which is one of the main towns in Odisha especially of the western region, used to give packs of these cards to the Muslim rulers as gifts and they used to purchase these from the artists of Sonepur, the ancestors of the present ones. This, they say, was about two to three centuries ago.

The depictions on the cards of this town bring to light the background of the theme chosen to paint the local Gānjapā cards. Sonepur or Subarnapur is called *PaścimaLankā* or the Western Lanka by both the local people and some scholars. It is believed to be the site of Rāvaṇa’s Lankā (Source: http://www.royalark.net/India/sonepur.htm). Sonepur Copper Plate grant was issued by the Somavamśī prince *Kumārādhīrāja Somēvariadeva*, who was the governor of this region for the Somavamśī dynasty. It was issued from his
administrative headquarters, Subarnapur, and he is mentioned as the Paścimalankādhipati or Lord of the Western Lankā. In the first decade of the 12th century A.D. the Telugu Coḍa king Someśvara Deva II registered his land grant i.e. the Mahada Copper Plate Charter near the Lankāvarttaka (Lankā Whirlpool) on the bank of the river Citrotpalā (Mahanadi) (Panda 2005). The goddess Lankeśvarī is considered the tutelary deity of the region. Her seat of worship is on a rock-bed, on a small island inside the river Mahanadi at Sonepur itself. There are also religious symbols associated with Vaiṣṇavism like gadā, śaṁkha, padma, cakra and Hanumān around the rock (Panda 2005). Lankeśvarī was also the tutelary goddess of the Lankāpurī of the villain of Rāmāyaṇa i.e. Rāvaṇa. In this way too Sonepur or Subarnapur, which literally means ‘the golden city’ in Oḍiā language, is identified with the golden citadel of Rāvaṇa.

This geo-mythological relationship explains the obsession of the people with this epic and has made the whole folk culture to be based on it. This might explain the production of only the Rāmāyaṇa set which is designed like the final battle between the good and the evil in the epic. Now a temple has been built around the worshipping area of the rock bed.

![Fig. 5.2: The Lankeśvarī temple](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/7/7f/Lankeshwari.jpg)
The temple in front of which the surviving players of Ganjapā still play the game is the Dadhivāman temple. So, from the ancient times to the present, the impact of Vaiṣṇavism is quite apparent.

**CHIKITI:**

Chikiti or Chikati or Chikitigaḍa town in the district of Ganjām used to be a kingdom. *Garh* means a fort or in that sense, kingdom in the local language. With the decline of monarchy the royal family too lost their authority and now they are active politicians. The present king *Sachchidananda Rajendradeb* recalled the days when this game used to be played in the royal court. He said that even he used to know how to play it in his prime. Now he is in his early nineties. Though he keeps good health, it is too difficult for him to remember the rules of such a complex game that he used to play five or more decades ago.
The keeper of the royal granary had learnt this game from the king and then from him some other workers too learnt it. But nobody actually knows anything about the origin or arrival of the cards and the game to this place. However, presently they do not really play the Ganjapā game. These cards are used only by the lower class of workers that too only for playing Naqṣ which is a gambling game. The custom of gambling during a big festival of a community or a place is nothing new. *Kumara Purnima* is a really important festival for the Odia people when these workers play Naqṣ with Ganjapā cards. So there is no serious religious association with the game except for the fact that the cards are used to gamble during a religious festival.

Till a few years earlier, when artist Appana Mohapatra was alive, Ganjapā cards were being prepared in this town. It used to be one of the main places for Ganjapā production and it had its own signature style. After him there has not been much activity in painting in Chikiti. However, the predominance of the Vaiṣṇav cult of the state is evident here too. Even here the most popular set is the Daśāvatāra one. Then there are Kṛṣṇāṣṭamalla and Rāmāyaṇa sets. There are sets with the same themes but have one particular depiction of some form of Viṣṇu on the king card of every suit e.g. Rāma-Paṭṭābhiṣeka Rāmāyaṇa set, Ananta-Śayana Daśāvatāra set, Śeṣa-Nāga Kṛṣṇāṣṭamalla set. Besides these, some interesting themes like Aṣṭadikpāla and Saptamāṭrā have also been painted by Shri Appana Mohapatra. Saptamāṭrā set is the only one with goddesses depicted on them. The presence of Śākta sect might not have been a weak one in the town. So, on the whole, though the predominance of Vaiṣṇavism is there, people of this place are religiously flexible too. Moreover, there are also sets that are secular in theme. They are called the Ratha-Hāthī (chariot-elephant) or Naqṣ sets. They are basically Mughal sets with no religious associations. These are the cards that are used by the Naqṣ players. Unfortunately the traces of Ganjapā have almost disappeared from here, both, in production and playing.
Dharakote is another place in the same district where these cards were made too but that has never really got much fame. Ganjām is the only district where the Saptamāṭrākā set has some name. Though the Śākta cult might not have been very strong, it was surely more respected here than in other places.

**KALAHANDI:**

The district of Kalahandi still has a few villages left around the periphery of Bhavanipatna town, the district headquarters, that have kept up the tradition of playing this game even though the cards are not manufactured here. Evidences point to its importation from outside, i.e., from another district of Odisha itself. Its antiquity here may not be very old, but it has a significant role in the history of the villages where it is played and the families playing it.

The ruling family of Bhavanipatna was the *Naga* dynasty. A small genealogy of the family would be as follows.

1. Sola Deo
2. Aḍa Deo
3. Phatei Narayana Deo
4. Jugasa Deo
5. Udit Pratap Deo
6. Raghu Kesari Deo
7. Braja Mohan Deo
8. Pratap Kesari Deo
9. Udit Pratap Deo

During Maharaja Shri Jugasa Deo (1796-1831 A.D.) and his son Shri Udit Pratap Deo (1853-1881 A.D.), they wanted to establish the rule of Brahmins here. So they induced some Brahmin families, who used to be the royal advisors, royal priests, legal advisors, revenue collectors, etc., to migrate from the district of Ganjam to their region. The Brahmin families inhabiting the present villages of Ichchhapur, Jagannathapur, Balarampur, Uditnarayanpur and the combined Dumer Bahal, Chakuli and Padia villages, etc. are the
descendants of the immigrants (Acharjya 2002). These families again requested the king and gained his patronage to bring in the families of some other castes too to help them in their daily chores. They shifted base and so did many other families which were dependent on them or vice-versa. Further, many more just followed in the hope of getting work in a newly growing and promising settlement. Gradually, for systematising work and to carry out errands many people came here from Ganjam and they all became permanent inhabitants of Kalahandi over generations.

With their families and some other associated people, they also carried their cultural habits along with themselves and spread it in Kalahandi as they settled down there. That is how the game of Ganjapā landed up in a new place.

One such prominent family in the village of Icchapur is the Acharjya family residing almost at the entrance of the village. They used to be Rajpurohits (royal priests). They were originally the inhabitants of Khallikoṭ, Ganjam. Below is their history, as they recount it.

The then king of Ganjam was king Mardaraja. In those times, as a prize for recognition of services, distinguished employees were granted a certain amount of land or a village to own and enjoy the revenue as their salary. They were exempted from all the other taxes. This family was granted a village called Kedar-Udit-Pratappur (or the present Icchapur) by the king near another region i.e. Bhavanipatna in the year 1823 A.D. They had acquired four copper plates as the official proof for the village grants but one has been lost, one is in the Bhavanipatna museum and another is in the Odisha state museum. Only one stays safe in their custody today, as an eloquent proof of their past achievements and recognition they had acquired from the king.

As the Acharjya family was the family of royal priests, they had to worship the family deity of the ruling dynasty in the temple of the kings. The village of Icchapur was granted to them and was exempted from taxes altogether for the purpose of worshipping the family goddess of the Nāga
dynasty, *Kanaka Durgā* (literally meaning Golden Durgā), a local form of the Śakti cult of Hinduism.

These details have been mentioned in the copper plate that was issued during the grant and these stories of the administration also tell us the history of the cards in this place.

To start with, the Ganjapā cards that are played in Kalahandi have never been made locally. The players never took that much trouble to start making them themselves or employed anyone especially for this job because while coming from Ganjam, their former native place, they had purchased some packs and these cards last for generations. So the present players say that the next generations too did not bother much as they had got into the habit of playing these old sets and they were also in remarkably good condition even after all these years.

The packs played here now were made in Paralakhemundi, which used to be in Ganjam district but now is in Gajapati district. The tradition of the crafting of these cards was there even till a few years ago. It is generally called Aṣṭamalla Sāra (cards) in Ganjam as it is eight-suited. Even now if at all the players need new packs, they inform their relatives or friends in their old home and get them. The one with which the candidate recorded her data was bought around twenty years ago or more and had cost the buyers seven Indian rupees.

They call it the Aṣṭamalla sāra but the set that they were playing with was a Ratha-Hāthi set which is a Mughal set and has no religious associations. They do not play it in a temple, during any religious festival or even in front of a temple. All the players gather in the house of one of them and play it in a very casual manner. Among the players not all are very old though the number of people having knowledge of it is quite few.
**PARALAKHEMUNDI:**

Paralakhemundi was one of the eighteen ancient zamindaries of undivided Ganjam district. Later the district was divided and it was included in the new Gajapati district. Now it is the district headquarters of Gajapati. This is another of those centres that was very famous for the unique cards it produced. The game has stopped being played since long. It used to supply cards to the Kalahandi players but even the cards are not being manufactured anymore. There is almost no trace left of the tradition of the cards or its preparation here.

However, the candidate has had the good fortune of coming across a big collection of cards in the K. K. Maheshwari collection in IIRNS where there were several sets from this town too. Among them the Daśāvatāra, Rāmāyaṇa and Ratha-Hāthi sets had more than one sets. The Daśāvatāra ones are not very high-class in painting quality and instead of drawing all the attributes clearly, the four hands of Viṣṇu just hold four lotus buds in most of the incarnations. The Ratha-Hāthi is quite common here unlike the other places. The Bird Ganjapā of this place is too, in fact, a Ratha-Hāthi set with only the numeral cards being with bird pictures. The Rāmāyaṇa cards are the most unique of all the sets here and also among all the Rāmāyaṇa cards of the state. The king cards have a chariot made up of ladies in the middle of which Lord Rāma is shown seated either alone or with Lakṣmaṇa or Sitā. In the minister card the ladies make a structure of an elephant above which Rāma sits either alone or with company. Come to see it, this set can also be called a Ratha-Hāthi set after the structures made with human beings. Suit signs are arrows facing upwards.

This town is also not free from Vaiṣṇava influence as the sets of cards show. The number of secular sets of cards, however, is almost as many. So the balance of religiositiy is observed.

**OUTSIDE OḍIṢĀ**

As in the case of Odisha, outside the state too, the manufacturing of the gaming devices got associated with the traditional painting styles of the
respective places. Since the Marathas and the Mughals had regular encounters with each other, Maharashtra was one of the very first states to come in contact with Ganjifā. The wooden toy- and lacquer-work town of Sawantwadi in the state of Maharashtra is the place where the cards are also produced along with the other objects. Raja Khem Sawant III Bhonsle, king of Sawantwadi, was a great lover of art. He had gathered many kinds of artists in his court. In the 17th and 18th century Brahmins from Andhra region had come to have discussions about Dharmaśāstras with the king. So, it is likely that they imparted their art to a particular caste of artists known as the Citaris (Source: http://ganjifa-kishor.com/Revival%20of%20the%20Sawantwadi%20Ganjifa.htm). Only a few families of this craftsman community survive in the town now.

The most popular set here is also Daśāvatāra. This popularity is reinforced by a particular community called the Daśāvatārī, in Sawantwadi town, who have a tradition of enacting plays on the Daśāvatāra wandering from place to place. The fancy for this story and the Vaiṣṇava cult in general is apparent.

Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, Ganjifā got linked with the Nirmal paintings in Adilabad district of the Telengana region. After the name of the town, the painting-style is also called Nirmal style of painting. This is not an art that is limited to producing only large and miniatures paintings, but is equally famous for creating wooden toys and utilitarian objects like furniture, plaques, bangles, jewellery boxes and screens, among many others. This art arose in the 14th century under the patronage of the then ruling nobility. Initially, the themes on the paintings used to be based on Hindu mythologies. Later on, the Mughals and the Nizam became fascinated by it and supported the artists who are known as the Naqqash. Influences of Mughal, Ajanta and Kangra paintings on Nirmal painting are evident. This might have been the time when the Nirmal artists started making the Mughal Ganjifā cards too. Most of the sets of Nirmal are like the Mughal eight-suited packs with suit names and suit-signs similar to the
original Mughal ones. But, Daśāvatāra and other Hindu deity packs are also made.

Likewise, Mysore painting in Karnataka, Rajputana painting in Jaipur, Rajasthan, Paṭa painting of Bishnupur in West Bengal are the traditional arts that were and still are producing them though the game has stopped from decades ago. The Mysore school of art is an offshoot of the famous Vijayanagara School. After the fall of the Vijayanagara kingdom in 1565 A.D., Raja Wodeyar (1578-1617) rehabilitated some artist families to Shrirangapatna. But the clash of Tipu Sultan and the British destroyed all the creations that had been patronised by Wodeyar and his successors. In 1799, after the death of Tipu Sultan, the Wodeyars were re-established and Mummadhi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1799-1868) revived the tradition. This is when all kinds of themes and paintings started being made with this style. The Ganjifā cards or Cada, as they are called locally, were and are even now a very important product of the Mysore School of art. The themes have always been focussed on the religious richness of the area and a huge range of deities are depicted on the cards. Daśāvatāra, Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Cāmuṇḍeśvarīcada, Kṛṣṇarājacadas are some of the most popular themes (NFSC Public Programme, May 2003).

West Bengal paṭa paintings of Bishnupur in Bankuda are very similar to the Odisha ones as far as the preparation of the base and colours are concerned. Being another serious seat of Vaiṣṇavism, the themes here are also based on it. The Daśāvatāra theme is the most popular. The artists are a sub-caste of Citrakāras called the Paṭuās. It is an art of rural Bengal. Influences of the tribal style of Sānthāḷpaṭa and the Bengali style of Kalighat bazaar paṭa can be seen. The Paṭuās also act as priests for the Santhal community and make paintings on their folklores (Source: http://www.cohands.in/handmadepages/pdf/255.pdf).

Rajasthan used to be a flourishing centre for both manufacturing and playing the cards. The courtyards of the nobility and the common people’s verandas were bustling with players. The imperial gazetteer mentions Karauli,
Sawai-Madhopur and Sheopur as the most important places for their production. The style of painting of Rajasthan is very close to the Mughal style because of their constant contact. In the last decades of the 16th Century Rajput art schools began to develop distinctive styles combining indigenous as well as foreign influences (Persian, Mughal, Chinese, European) into unique styles (Singh 1991). The most common set used to be the standard Mughal Ganjifā. The court life is depicted clearly in these cards. There are cards even where rulers like Maharana Sangram Singh have been pictured playing Ganjifā.

With the overall description of the relation between a gaming device and the cultural, social, religious and economic associations of the places it can be said that it forms an integral part of the region. They are influenced by each other and in turn reflect each other. To make a complete assessment of the culture it is necessary to study them in each other’s light.

The game of Ganjapā was thus becoming an integral part of the culture of Odīśā in some aspects. The glorious tradition of painting in the state, the well established Vaisnava sect in the region and the influence of the cult on the everyday life can be evinced through this acculturisation of Ganjapā. The players were belonging to the higher castes mostly and the game getting accommodated in the Vaisnava fold suggests the strong inclination of these people towards Vaisnavsim. It also suggests that the people were at most places inclined to associate even small things to religious thought. However, at some places, there were other castes getting involved in the game. Some secular sets were also known. This suggests that the game was not always bound to religious thought. But as seen at many places all encompassing nature of the Vaisnavism and its associated cults was much more responsible to popularise the game and the art form associated with it.