

Chapter Three: Ethnographic Description on Tai Aiton

This chapter presents the holistic data as the ethnographic writing on Tai Aiton of Banlung Mantai (Assamese name as “*Bargaon*”), Assam, India. The holistic data of Tai Aiton represents the background of the village. Moreover, the ethnographic data aims to represent the daily-life of Tai Aiton in their point of views.

The story of Sukhapha has been told among the Tais in the region of South East Asia and Northeast India. Sukhapha name has been written in the history of Assam in 1228 A.D., Tai Ahoms came to Brahmaputra Valley and built up the Ahom Kingdom. Besides Tai Ahoms, there are the other five Tai groups live in Assam and Arunachal and they still use Tai and they are maintaining the Tai culture such as Tai Khamti, Tai Khamyang, Tai Phake, Tai Aiton and Tai Turung. The Tai people in Assam who still use Tai for communicate sometimes they call themselves as Mantai which means the people who speak Tai language in daily life.

6.1 The background of Banlung Mantai village, Karbi Anglong, Assam, India

6.1.1 History of Migration of Tai Aitons at Banlung Mantai

Edward Gait mentioned that Tai Aitons came to Assam in the eighteen centuries around 1791 A.D. Jaya Buragohain (1998) wrote that Tai Aiton village in Bargaon established in 1835. There are 8 villages of Tai Aiton in Assam; 1. Banlung Mantai or Bargaon 2. Ban Hin or Ahomani 3. Ban Sai or Balipathar 4. Chakihola 5. Kalioni 6. Barhola 7. Dubarani 8. Tengani and another one village in Arunachal Pradesh, is called Jonapather.

Tai Aitons call themselves as *Aiton* while Assamese people know them as ‘*Aitonia*’. Tai Aitons stayed with Ahom groups along with Tai Turung villages where were nearby. The prehistory of Tai Aitons is same as the prehistory of Ahoms from Sue Kha Pha to far backward to Khunlung and Khunlai in the 6th century. Puspadhar Gogoi (1996) explains that the name of the Aiton means the highest man among all has been honoured, Aiton means a man of high rank. Tai Aiton’s old folk spoke about Tai Aitons that there was Tai Aiton hero ‘*Pu Cham Deng*’ who fought against Burmese soldiers during their attack in Ahom kingdom, Pu Cham Deng could win the war at the end.

According to oral tradition among the Tai Aitons, their origin place was called “Mueng Aiton” in the upper Chindwin valley of Myanmar. The Aitons came from Mung Mau and then migrated to Assam in the eighteenth century. Tai Aitons took permission from Ahom kings and settled in upper region of the Brahmaputra valley. There was an oral tradition about the hostile between Tai Aitons and Tai Khamtis, that they used to stay nearby but they had conflicts between each other, later on, Tai Aitons had to migrate to many places until they found ‘*Kalioni*’ and Dholaguri and Morongi in Golaghat district. And from these places, Tai Aitons now already settle down in Borpathar Ahomoni, Borgaon (Banlung Mantai village), Balipathar (Ban Sai), Chakihola and Hanhsora in Karbi Anglong District and Borhula, Dubarani and Tengapani in Jorhat District.

There was a record in the year of 1812-1826, the Myanmarese attack on Assam during Ahom rule. At that time, there was a beautiful Tai Aiton woman named *Nang Ramati Romoni*, the wife of *Chao Mong Yang Kulu*, later he was killed by Myanmarese soldiers and captured his wife and she was sent to the Myanmarese king along with gold and silver. Then, one of Tai Aiton leader dreamt about her, so he said to the other villagers that gold and silver were here at Dhalaguri. After digging they found a lot of gold and silver. It was given to Ahom officer of Morongikhowa Gohain. Later on Tai Aitons shifted to Kalioni and Borgaon (Banlung Mantai), Dubarani, Balipather (Gogoi, 1996:141). And the story of migration links to the present place of Tai Aitons of Banlung Mantai.

6.1.2 The migration of Tai Aitons

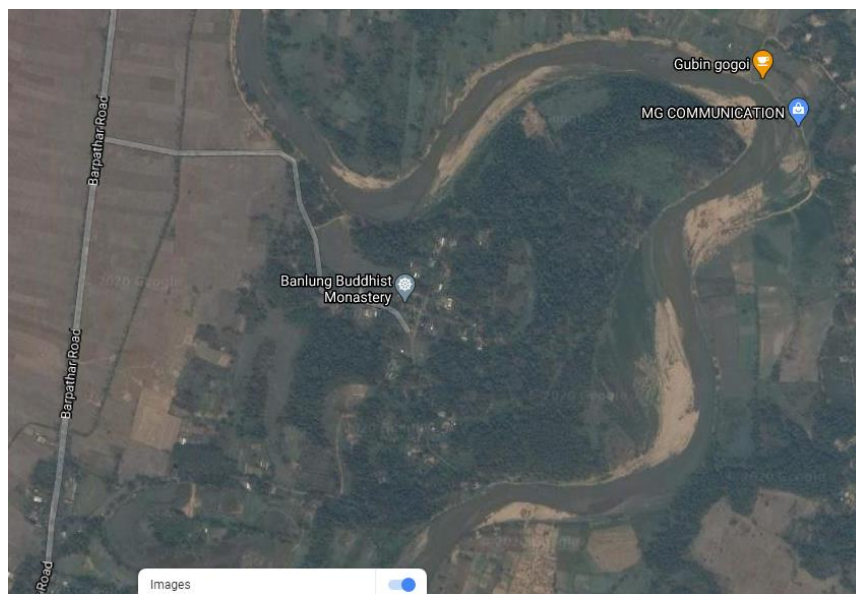
Banlung Mantai village is established in the early nineteenth century and there is no exact record of the first settlement of the village. As the oral history said by Tai Aiton elder people in the village that, “*Banlung was very big village during the year of 1920-1940*”. At that time (in 1920-1940), Tai Aitons from Banlung had to migrate from Banlung to Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh, Banhin village or Ahomoni and Ban Sai, Balipartha because of the density of people. Nowadays, Tai Aitons from Banlung still have many relatives in those places.

Tai Aiton people in Assam live in the middle of Dhansiri valley. The migration of Tai Aitons were told in *Lik Khu Mung* (means written accounts) that Aitons migrated from upper Chindwin valley in Burma when Alungpaya made war with many tribes for his conquer. The original homeland that mentioned in *Lik Khu Mung* was *Mong Hi Mong Ham* and then they migrated to *Mung Kwang* and migrated to Assam or *Mung Nun*. The name of Tai Aiton is derived from two words in Tai, Tai as they called themselves as Tai and

Aiton comes from 2 words in Tai; *Ai* means the first, *Ton* or *Don* means higher place so the meaning of Aiton is ‘Superior’. In 1870s there were three Aiton villages that recorded in *the Indian Atlas*, there were Bargaon, Kalyoni and Balipathar.

6.1.3 The extension of the village

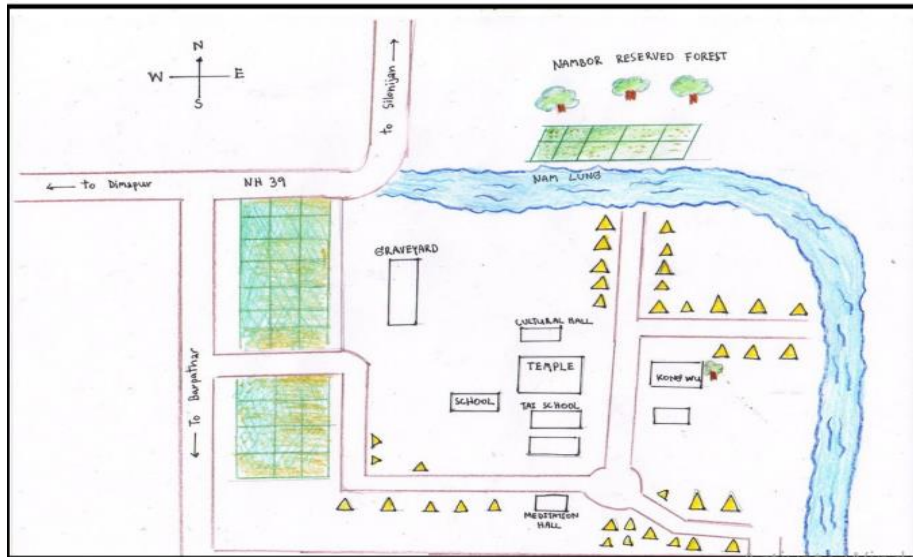
In Banlung Mantai village or Bargaon, is located on Golaghat-Sarupathar road. *Banlung* in Tai refers to two words; *Ban* means village and *Lung* means big, from the name of the village, the name of Banlung can refer to the size of the village where is very big village. *Mantai* means people who speak Tai language. The environment in the village is similar with Chindwin valley as it is in tropical rainfall zone. Banlung Mantai has residential area and farming area which is not too far from each other. They live by the riverside; the land at the river side is abundant for planting vegetable and wet-rice cultivation.



Map 7: Banlung Mantai village from Google Map.

6.1.4 Geographic data of the village

It is seen that, Banlung is surrounded by Dhansiri river, the plain area is suitable for agriculture. Dhansiri river is in the northern, eastern and southern. Tai Aitons call Dhansiri river as *Nam Lung* means the big river. The western side of the village has *SianNa* or beautiful rice field and a small area on the west was made as *Paheiw* or graveyard. Tai Aitons believe that western side symbolized bad luck, evil or mysterious.



Map 8: Banlung Mantai map from the fieldwork.

The location of the village is suitable for rice cultivation and Nambor Reserved Forest touches the Northern part of the village. Tai Aiton people still have *Hern-Tai* or raised-house or *Sang-Ghor* (in Assamese) because they live by the side of the river. Tai Aiton's houses keep *Jong-Lik* or *Keng-Phra* or prayer room separately from the house. Because Tai Aiton lives attach with Buddhism as the way of life and the tradition of building the house in Tai, they must construct *Jong-Lik* separately but nearby the house for praying and practices a small ritual at home every day.

6.2 Social Structure of Tai Aitons, Economic and Agricultural Life

6.2.1 The social structure of Tai Aiton

Banlung Mantai has been constructed into autonomous community. With the location of the village also is isolated itself from the other Assamese communities or Karbi communities but the village is not too far from Ban Hin (the other Tai Aiton's village). The leader of the Tai Aiton village is called as *Chao Leam Ban* or *Keban-Thowban*. Tai Aiton still has clan system, The Aiton boys or girls have to know their own status since they were young to know their own hierarchy by learning the kinship terms from their parent and other people in the family along with that Tai Aiton children also have to learn their own duties in the future by helping their parent in ritual and household works. Nowadays (2016-2018), there are 39 households in the village (collected data in 2018) which is same as the data from Jaya Buragohain (1998), she also collected field data in

1987 in Banlung, at that time in Bargaon village had 39 households and the populations was 359 people that means there is no dynamic changing much in term of the households here. The researcher collected the population in the village from 2016-2018 found that there are now 156 people live in Banlung Mantai.

Tai Aiton of Banlung Mantai has social cohesiveness. Cooperation among the fellow member are seen distinctly. They help each other in every works such as religious ritual, house construction, agriculture etc.

6.2.2 Economic Cooperation

Tai Aitons do wet-rice cultivation and plant sugar cane, betel leaf, pineapple, and vegetable. Some Tai Aiton women go to sale their own vegetable in local market nearby the village especially weekend market in Borpatha road and Silonijan. They live in self-sufficient economy. Rice is the staple food. Every household has their own granaries. Tai Aitons make their own agricultural implements such as yoke (*Kho Hang*), Plough (*Thai*), Sickle (*Kuew*), hoe (*Kho*) etc. Some Tai Aitons are working in private business and some people work for government, but majority of the people are farmer.

Tai Aitons still use buffaloes in many agricultural works especially male buffalo (*Kwai*) but nowadays the use of buffaloes is decreasing in the village because of the coming of ploughing machines and the new generations of Tai Aiton children have to go to school and no one is willing to learn how to take care of cattles. The present days, Tai Aitons there who are rich, they hire workers or hire the tractors to do a hard work in the farm. The Labors come from outside the village who are not Tai and they may get paid by a daily wage. But most of the villagers work on their own farms if they have a small piece of land and have enough labours.

There is one organized economic group in Banlung Mantai. Banlung Mahila group is the self-help micro financial group which is established in 2008. There are 100 members in the group with female and male members. In this group, the treasurer would collect 30 rupees monthly from each member by the end of the month, so every month they would have 3,000 rupees for each member who wants to take a loan and the next month she has to pay with minimal interest. If there is loan, with interest money will save in the name of the group for upcoming events in the village such as Poi Sangken or funeral in the village. The activity of this group is not only financial but also this group is openly to the other economic activity and religious event. Nang Pa Thoumung (personal interview on 4th April, 2019) said that if there is paddy field work, and any member in the group needs help

and inform to the member in agricultural works and the rest of the member would come to the farm and help each other. It is a voluntary service which needs reciprocal work groups. Moreover, if there is religious event, the members would contribute money to buy necessary utensils or the essentials for the community.

6.3 Family and Clan System

6.3.1 Kinship and clan system

Tai Aitons have five clans in the village.

- a. Phalung
- b. Thoumung
- c. Bannu
- d. Chaohai
- e. Jiring

Clan exogamy is strictly followed. Nowadays, young generation Tai Aiton said that they prefer to get married with Tai Aitons or the other Tai groups because Tai Aiton population is decreasing day by day and marry Tai women is easy for their religious lives as she would know how to behave in the temple or in Tai ritual and in everyday life she would know how to cook Tai food and the other Tai's rule and norms. Monogamy is still the general practice. In the past, men and women married between 18-25 years old. But nowadays, Tai Aitons get married between the ages of 25-30 years old.

Cross cousin marriage was preferred in Tai Aiton community. A Tai Aiton boy in the family had to marry with the daughter of his own uncle in the past. If he is not willing to do, his parent has to pay the fine costing around 125 paisa to his uncle's family. But nowadays this marriage pattern is extinct, and the tradition is not acceptable anymore.

Tai Aiton family system is patriarchal and patrilineal society. Thus, inheritance of property belongs to the sons. For the girls, after marriage, she has to shift to her husband's house. There is the custom of son staying in the same house with his parent. Once the daughter-in-law deliver a baby, all people in the family can help her to take care of the children. A married son and his family live in their parent house and share a common kitchen, the daughter in law has to help the mother in law cook and be her assistance in

any kind of works. Tai Aiton has to visit their relative houses or ancestor house in every religious festival. The elderly people are highly respected by the young people.

Father is the head of the family. He has to work and take care of all family's properties. The absence of father, mother and son would be the head of the family. The boys in the family may turn into monk in short period in their lives for making a great merit for their family but it is not a mandatory. While girls have to learn how to cook, weaving, sawing, planting vegetable and paddy field works from their mothers and elder of the family.

Father (Pox)		Mother (Mae)	
<u>Pu</u>	Father's father	<u>Poo Nai</u>	Mother's father
<u>Ya</u>	Father's mother	<u>Nai</u>	Mother's mother
<u>Noog Chao</u>	Father's brother	<u>Noog Chao</u>	Mother's brother
<u>Aa PA</u>	Father's brother's wife	<u>Aa Pa</u>	Mother's brother's wife
<u>Aao/Aa</u>	Father's brother, Father's sister	<u>Por Na / Mae Ann</u>	Mother's brother. Mother's sister
<u>Pi-chav</u>	Brother	<u>Nong-chay</u>	Brother
<u>Pi-sao</u>	Sister	<u>Nong-sao</u>	Sister
<u>Lan</u>	Grand son, Grand daughter	<u>Lan</u>	Grand son, Grand daughter
<u>Lin Chav/Lin Jing</u>	Grand child	<u>Lin Chav/Lin Jing</u>	Grand child

Table 1: Tai Aiton Kinship Terms

6.3.2 Status and role of men and women

Tai Aiton community follows patriarchy. The head of family is a father, and the older son is the second leader while mother has all the authority in the kitchen and harvesting. The group of Banlung Mohila Group shows that Tai women here try to help their husband and the village at the same time for financial.

Tai Aiton boys learn their duties from their father and the elder male members in the village. And Tai Aiton girls would learn from their mothers. If there is a newborn baby, the status of couple would change from 'Nang' follow with mother's name into "the mother of the baby's name", same as the father will be called the same. After marriage a married women would be called as 'Nang' and for married men would be called 'Chao'.

Older siblings are addressed by younger as *Pi* and followed with sex, for example *Pi Chai* is for brother, *Pi Sao* is for sister. And for the younger siblings are addressed by older as *Nong* and followed with sex, for example *Nong Chai* (brother) and *Nong Sao* (sister)

Moreover, there are a set of number for calling the son and daughter in the family in term of birth order. For example, the first child for male is *ai*, girl is *ye*, second son is *ngi*, second daughter is *ee*, third son is *cham*, third daughter is *aam*, fourth son is *chai*, fourth daughter is *ai*, fifth son is *ngo*, fifth daughter is *ok*, sixth son is *nok*, sixth daughter is *et* etc. In Tai Aiton, they would use these terms prefix among the children's name for example, Ai Seng is the first son in Thoumung family and Ye Seng is the first daughter in Thoumung family.

Kin group is important for Tai boys and girls. As they would help each other in every family functions. The elder son gets property such as land and house from parent, and daughter would get movable property.

6.4 Beliefs, Religion and practices

Tai Aitons are the followers of Buddhist. In the earliest year of settlement, Tai Aiton practiced Mahayana Buddhism after that they shifted into Hinayana Buddhism as the oral history talks about the coming of Burmese monks from Burma to Assam. Burmese monks converted Tai Aitons from Mahayana Buddhist into Hinayana Buddhist. In Banlung Mantai village has one temple, there is one vihara and one Bikshu or monk or *Chao Ke*.

Besides Buddhism, Tai Aitons believe in *Fi* or Spirit also. And the auspicious days or *wandi* is found in their everyday life.

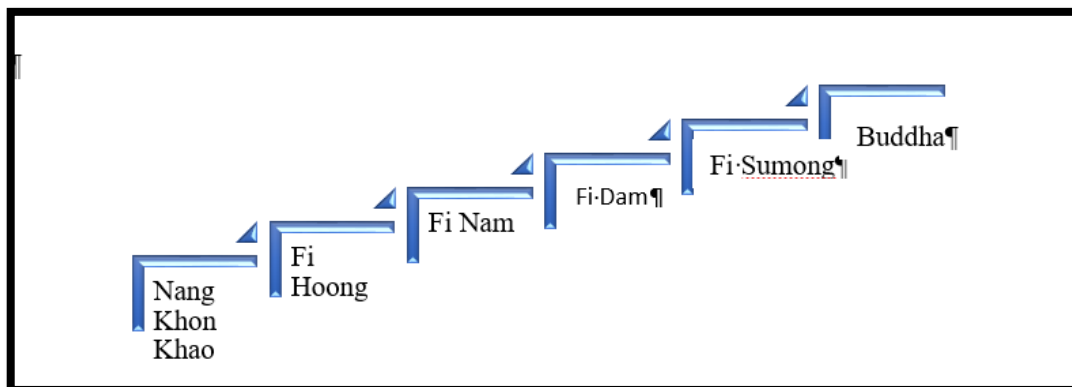


Figure 1: Belief system in Tai Aiton of Banlung Mantai village (collected from the field in 2017-2018).

Thus, there are two kinds of belief in Banlung;

- a. *Fra* or Buddha
- b. *Fi* or spirit

Buddha for Tai Aitons is the greatest one. From the participant observation, it is found that Tai Aitons would always pray to Buddha before worship a different spirit. Few informants said that spirit is not exist because Buddha can overpower them.

6.4.1 Life cycle ceremony of Tai Aiton

Tai Aiton's life is attached to family and community. There is a tai aiton proverb "*Pak Kut Chamwang Hiu*" (Nabin Shyan Phalung, 1998:121) means one can survive in different environment but one should not forget his own language and his community. Tai Aitons maintain their own languages by using Tai Aiton language among themselves. If they have to communicate with non tai people, they have to use another language. From fieldwork observation, Tai Aiton children would love to go to temple with their family with traditional attire and many of them would follow all the customary activities.

6.4.1.1 Birth ceremony

Tai Aitons prefer to have the boy more than girl but there is no problem to have a baby girl. Because the boy can help all family's work and boy can become *Khamsang* if he wants to make the greatest merit for his family by living a religious life.

After seven days of their birth, newborn babies are brought outside the first time for sunbathing before sunrise in the early morning at around 5 a.m. Before taking the baby outside the house, there is a ritual, parents or the elders in family should worship to Lord Buddha and *Khun he khun Sang* and pray to them for protecting the baby from any kind of harmfulness and sickness. In the case of a baby boy, parents would bring baby's right leg to touch the ground first but if the baby is a girl, her left leg would touch the ground. Tai Aitons believe that the boy's right leg is stronger than the left leg which means Tai Aitons have different gender role to the babies. And they would start giving nickname in Tai for the baby in the first week.

After 2-3 months, naming ceremony would be arranged for the baby. The ceremony is arranged depending on the economic condition of the family, if they have budget for the ceremony, they would invite monk along with the elders. But if they don't have money, they invite the elder for the ceremony. In this ritual, they would put water in metal bowl for bathing baby. Tai Aitons believe that it will bring prosperity for their life.

The directive of giving name for the baby would depend on their date of birth. If the baby is born on Sunday, his or her name will start with Oo, Aa. If the baby is born on Monday, his or her name will start with Kha, Ga, Ka, Nga. If the baby is born on Tuesday, his or her name will start with Ja, Cha, Nga. If the baby is born on Wednesday, his or her name will start with Ya, Ra, La, Wa. If the baby is born on Thursday, his or her name will start with Pa, Fa, Bha, Ha, Ma. If the baby is born on Friday, his or her name will start with Pa, Ha, La. If the baby is born on Saturday, his or her name will start with Ta, Pa, Da, Ma. And the baby name would put the number according to the birth order.

Birth order	Male	Female
First	Ai	Ye, Je
Second	Ngi	Ee
Third	Saam	Aam
Fourth	Sai	Ai
Fifth	Ngo	wu
Sixth	Nuk	uk

Table 2: The set of the name following the birth order in Tai Aiton belief.

In the naming ritual, '*Phuk Mai*' or thread binding from monks, elderly people and parent is also observed along with the blessing while tied the thread on his/her small wrist.

If the baby is sick or feels unwell, the parent or elder in family would worship Lord Buddha and *Khun He Khun Sang* for the protection and after that thread binding ceremony (*Phuk Mai*) would perform too.

After this ceremony, when the boy reaches 7-20 years old, he can become *Khamsang*. And for girl, there is no ritual after that.

6.4.1.2 Wedding ceremony

Marriage in Tai Aiton is called '*Ao-Lung-Me*'. *Ao* means to take, *Lung* in Tai means to bring down, *Me* is wife. In the past there is another kind of marriage in Tai Aiton community which is called '*Ao-Pai-Me*' it means to marry a wife by elopement. Nowadays only *Ao-Lung-me* is acceptable. A marriage ceremony is always performed at the bride's house and the groom's family provides the feast. The relatives and villagers volunteer their service.

The marriage starts with the meeting of the bride and groom family for selection of the auspicious day. There are three good month for marriage in Tai Aiton belief; they are April, March and May but December and January are believed to be the bad month. And wedding ceremony July-October should not be arranged because it is Buddhist lent. Wan-Kam or bad day is fixed in the Tai Aiton astrology book (*Phe Wan*). So Tai Aiton avoid arrange wedding ceremony on that day. There is a belief on the day of the birth or both are born on Friday and Saturday is believed that is not a good union and it needs to be avoided. On the other hand if the boy and girl were born on Thursday and Sunday , Monday and Wednesday (before noon), Friday and Tuesday, Wednesday (before noon) and Saturday is considered to be good to match a couple.

The good day or Wan-dee would be fixed by *Chao Jereh* by his own calculation based on the astrology book. In the time of sending proposal, *Pa Sao Kun Di* is the negotiator from the boy's side to go and talk to girl's parent. And *Pa Sao Kun Di* must be the leader in the ceremony. *Pa Sao* has to visit girl's family several times for selecting auspicious day. *Pa Sao* has to bring a gift to girl's family in *Pan Tong* (metal tray) and put four areca nuts (*Mak Mu*), four pieces of betel leaf (*Bai Pu*) and a few money wrapped in *Tong Jing* leaf. It is called *Ho Mak Mu Bai Pu*. After reaching girl's family, *Pa Sao* would say that "they have come to make new relatives" (*Ma Jong Luk Chao Ma Hit Pi Hit Nong*) and then he would offer *Pan Tong* with *Ho Mak Mu Bai Pu* to girl's family.

After that *Pa Sao* would visit girl's family again for getting girl's data of birth, if the calendation is not matched with the boy them the parent changes their mind in that case the girl's parent have to return the gift that they had received in the first day back to *Pa Sao*. If girl's family agrees with the proposal, then auspicious day would be fixed. After the selecting good day for marriage the boy's family would bring powdered fried rice (*Khoa Mao*), a small amount of molasses (*Nam Oi*), twenty areca nuts, betel leaf and some cash kept in bamboo basket (*Khong*) which is covered with white cloth. The tray is called *Wan Khai Lung* (big tray).

Wedding ceremony would start at the bride's house, and it should start in the morning before 9 a.m. The groom's family has to set up the procession to the bride's house. The auspicious time is fixed according to Tai astrology.



Figure 2: Groom's procession in front of bride's house.

After reaching the bride's house, the elders would enter first and all the guests are welcome. As soon as the groom has reached the house, ritual starts too. The ritual starts with praying to Buddha and offering food. (*Khao Som Fra*). The main ritual is thread binding ceremony (*Phuk mai*). The white thread symbolizes the bond of two families and the blessing from elders.



Figure 3: Phuk Mai (Photo was taken in the filed)

After the morning ritual, all guests would have lunch together. The last ritual is to send the bride to the groom's house. The last ritual is full of tears because the bride is going to be the daughter of another family and she can't take care of her parent anymore. The auspicious time is fixed for the bride to leave her parent's house and it is not after 5-6 p.m. this time some of the bride's relatives would stop the groom at the entrance by holding their hand making a human chain from bringing the bride to his house until and unless he gives money to all the relative, this is for fun only. And the relatives may ask the

groom to give them a reward for wedding preparation. This time the gift and movable property would be packed to start her new life.

6.4.1.3 Death ceremony

Tai Aitons in Banlung Mantai bury a dead body and it is a Tai Aiton tradition. But cremation is also found. The death ceremony would start by the monk. Monk would pray for the dead body before burying at *Pa-Hiew* or graveyard on the western side of the village. And for the cremation the ritual would be same. The dead body is dressed up and lied down on the mattress like he/she was sleeping. The dead body would be carried from house to graveyard covering with white cotton cloth.

Tai Aitons won't bring the dead body back to the village if that person dies because of accident. They have to bring the dead body directly to graveyard. Tai Aitons believe that it will bring bad luck to the village.

After 7 days of bury the dead body or cremation, again the family would go the temple and offer food, candle, incense stick, flower, pillow, mattress, knife, utensils etc. to the monk. Tai Aitons believe that the offer these essentials to the dead person, he/she can use in the life after death. Moreover, Tai Aitons donate religious books to temple on behalf of the dead person.



Figure 4: The dead body in funeral dress



Figure 5: A group of Tai Aitons were carrying the dead body to Pa Hiew



Figure 6: Preparing for bury the dead body

If the monk dies, the ritual for monk would be the cremation. This ritual is *Poi Leng*. *Poi Leng* is the sacred festival to remembering the good deeds of the monk who passed away. The monk's dead body would be kept for a year for this ceremony. The ceremony would be arranged for 3 days. The festival starts with the chariot preparation for putting monk's corpse inside. The chariot symbolizes a long journal of one monk's life and at the end of the journey this chariot would take his body and soul to heaven. And this festival also is reminded people about the cremation of Lord Buddha.

6.4.2 Rituals of Tai Aitons in a year

Tai Aitons follow lunar calendar these are the life-cycle ritual and the researcher collected information from field at Banlung Mantai village from 2016-2018.

Tai Aitons use the word '*Dern*' or '*Noon*' for calling a month. From the starting of the first month in a year on January, *Mai Ko Sum Fai* along with *Gin Khao Mai* (eating

burying. If the chariot is pulled in soil then it is known as Poi Len and if it is pulled in water, it is called as *Poi Miafong*.

Poi Khamsang and *Poi Khamkey* is the celebrating of the primary stage of being Monk or the celebration of novice.

Poi Lu Jong is celebrated after a new built temple. The temple is in the name of Buddha and handed over to the monks of the village.

Poi Lu Fra.Lu means to donate, and *Fra* means statue of Buddha. It is celebrated at any Laymen donate statue of Buddha to the temple.

Serial No	Name of the ritual	Name of the month	Detail of the ritual
1	'Mai Ko Sum Fai' and 'Gin Khao Mai'	January	The ritual is related to the story of Buddha. Tai Aitons believe that Mai Ko Sum Fai is celebrated the declaration of the cremation of Lord Buddha after he got enlightenment or Mahapanirban. Tai Aitons believe that the fire of the woods is the donation of fire by King of Malla in Theravada Buddhist mythology. Along with Mai Ko Sum Fai, every Tai Aiton's house would prepare Khao Ja Khu (boiled rice with the smoked pork), Khao Puk (Tai Aiton sweets is made of Sticky rice and black sesame) and Khao Lam (steam rice in bamboo). These all are made with new rice or Khao Mai in Tai.
2	'Poi Noon Si'	March	Tai Aitons celebrate Poi Noon Si with the story of Buddha's returning to Kapilabastu after his enlightenment. It is celebrated among the community with strong attachment at the temple of the village.
3	'Poi Sangken' and 'Poi Khanto Sala'	April	It is the time of Tai Aiton new year according to luna calendar. Tai Aitons would wash the statues of Buddha with pure water and perfume. It is also called 'Poi Son Nam' or

			festival of water splashing. Not only the Buddha statues, Tai Aitons would bath or play the water games with the monks at the temple.
4	‘Poi Buddha Jayanti’	May	It is celebrated to commenorate the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha.
5	‘Poi Khaw Wa’	July	Khaw Wah means to enter the rainy season, At this time, the monks would stay in the temple for three month and ‘Poot Wah’ means the end of the rainy season.
6	‘Poi Poot Wah’ or ‘PoiOkwah’ and ‘Poi Kanto Sangha’	October	These occasions are celebrated after rain retreat. Tai Aitons would offer the food for monks.
7	‘Poi Katin’	November	Tai Aitons would offer the new yellow robes for monks.

Table 3: Rituals in a year of Tai Aiton

6.5 Tai Aiton House, Dress and Food

Tai Aitons of Banlung Mantai village live nearby Dhanrisi river. Tai Aiton’s houses are raised house to avoid the flood that come in rainy season and wild animals. Long ladders are used in front side and back side of the house for climbing up. Every Tai Aiton house has *Jong Lik* or prayer room. And granary (*Ji Khao*) is built up separately from the main house and *jong Lik*

Tai Aiton women wear ‘*sinh*’ or lower garments and simple ‘*sue*’ or the shirt. There is a specific pattern of *sinh* named ‘*Lai Bok Ja*’ (flower pattern). ‘*Fa Bhai*’ is a long scarf to wrap the upper part of the body. If any women got married, she has to wear the green *Lang Wat* which is wrapped upon *sinh*. Tai aitons men wear ‘*Toong*’ and simple shirt. Men wear ‘*Fa Pok Hu*’. And Thoong or bag are generally used.

There are oranaments made of broze, silver, gold which are used among Tai women such as *Ven* or bangles, *Poie* or necklace, *Lak Chop* or ring. *Khet Kaw* or hair pin, *Patt* or earring.

Tai Aiton staple food is steamed rice and seasonal vegetable. The main food item of the village is steam rice. In the past, Tai Aiton woman would cook rice with *Hhook* or the bamboo handicraft that made for cooking rice but nowadays most people use rice cooker or pressure cooker for cooking rice. There are a lot of rice products in Tai Aiton word is 'Peng' is the rice cake, such as *Khao puk nga dam*, *Khao ja-ku*, *Khao Lam* etc.

6.6 Language and literature

Tai Aitons preserve their own language because of their own practice. Every house would have 'Jong Fra' or *Jong Lik* (a prayer room) and in the temple has 'Jong Lik' to keep all the Tai books which are related to Buddhism. Moreover, Monks play an important role to preserve all the Tai language. Along with monks, *Chao Jereh* is the knowledgeable person who knows about *Tom Lik* or prayer and all the process of rituals and festival, who transferred the knowledge of language to the fellow member of the village.

Interestingly, in the year of 1890-1960 many *Dhamma Duta* or religious ambassador from Tai groups of Assam visited Burma for learning Tai language and Buddhist philosophy. Nowadays, this mission is not found the monk named Bichitra Mohathero narrated that he himself used to the travel to Burma.

In Banlung Mantai there were Tai language school. It was established in 1956 but now it is closed because the monks who can teach Tai language, left the village. Tai Aitons in the past made paper be themselves and wrote Tai language on the paper about religion, Lord buddha's life and astrology. The old astrological chronicles are *Kannagi Phenu Lai Chong Lai An*, *Phalung*, *Lik Hong Kwan*, *Tai Ramayana*, *ManKun Sai Parpek* (medicine books) etc. Tai Aitons also wrote about how to construct a house. In *Kannagi Phenu Lai Chong Lai An* recorded about supernatural story for example how to find the lost things.

6.7 Identity movement and Political issues and revival of Tai-ness

Tai Aitons of Banlung Mantai still preserve their customs and language among modernity for example the new road that invites many non-tai people to come easily to the village or the formal education system that created a new norm to Tai children about not using Tai language while speak to non-Tai speakers and new fashion cloths. It is observed in the time of field study that many Tai Aiton children study outside the village but when

there is a religious event, all Tai Aitons would attend with Tai traditional dress, and they would mingle with all people in the village.

After 1960s, Tai language school in Banlung was close but all the Tai customary is continued by all Tai Aitons. Interestingly, during 2016-2019 from field observation, Poi Sangken at Kalioni Temple is known to outsiders or non-Tai speakers and the people come and visit the festival as a part of cultural tourism.

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