

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the thesis titled “**Religious Practices and Agency: A Study of the Female Ritual Specialists in the Tiwa Society of Central Assam**” submitted to Tezpur University in part fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology under the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, is a result of my original research work on the subject. It has not been submitted in any form or part for any diploma or degree of any other institution, including this University.

Date: 29-12-2023 (resubmitted on 14-06-24)

Place: Tezpur University



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Registration No.: TZ189877 of 2018



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Certificate of the Supervisor

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Religious Practices and Agency: A Study of the Female Ritual Specialists in the Tiwa Society of Central Assam**, Tezpur University in part fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **Sociology** is a record of research work carried out by **Maitrayee Patar** under my supervision and guidance.

All help received by her from various sources have been duly acknowledged.

No part of this thesis has been submitted elsewhere for award of any other degree.

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Place: Tezpur

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'nirmali'.

(**Dr. Nirmali Goswami**)

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It gives me immense pleasure to finally reach the stage of completion of my doctoral thesis. They say that the journey of research is a lonely one. It is partially true and the level of hardship can give rise to repeated thoughts of giving up. However, the rewards that come along are worth cherishing. What I realised is that the journey of PhD is a model for the journey of life itself. It seemed to me like a road full of meaning, trust, sharing and support among mentors and peers alike. It has been the only journey in which I found myself building bridges that I never thought I was capable of building. I met many good souls during the course of my doctoral research who in their own ways helped me sail through the various professional and personal phases that I experienced as a woman pursuing research. I am particularly grateful to some of these people without the support and guidance of whom this thesis would not have seen the face of completion.

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GLOSSARY

Lalungs	Another term for Tiwas
Haari	Tiwa female ritual specialists
Uwa Borot	An indigenous festival of the Plains Tiwas
Kul	Indigenous term for clan
Borghor/Nobaro	A Tiwa community structure of religious significance
Ghorbura/ghorjela	A male ritual specialist
Xoru bura/Hatari	A male ritual assistant
Gobhia	A custom of matrilocal residence among Tiwas
Borot Phuja	Another term for <i>Uwa Borot</i>
Puha	A month in the Assamese calendar
Borotaani	A female ritual specialist of Uwa Borot
Jyu-sa	Traditional rice beer of Tiwas
Maagh-phagun	Two months in the Assamese calendar
Tiwa Pisu	Tiwa celebration of spring, similar to Assamese Bihu
Eksarana Vaishnavism	A sect of neo-vaishnavism initiated by Assamese saint Sankardeva
Sanghati	Four sects that branched out from the original Vaishnav philosophy
Satra	Residential monastery based on Vaishnavite religious principles
Naamghar	Assamese prayer hall
Sharan	Local term for Hindu rite of passage

Brihattar Axomiya Jati	Greater Assamese nation
Hajowali	Local Assamese term for Hill Tiwas
Datiyolia	Local Assamese term for foothill dwellers
Puwali Roja	Tiwa chieftains
Xoron	Religious preaching
Dehaan	Term for members of Kus community
Laali Hilaali geet	Tiwa traditional folk songs
Lalungoni	Term used to refer to Tiwa woman
Tuloni biya	Menarche rituals observed in Assamese society
Kirtan Ghuxa	An Assamese religious text
Maahaari	People born from the same mother
Xomaaj	Assamese term for community
Maas bozar	Fish market
Upakul	Sub-clan
Mindaipha/Pha Mahadeo	Tiwa indigenous divine figure, similar to Lord Shiva
Khel	Local term to denote a group of clans
Ghaai Ghor	Ancestral home
Bhoralghor	Traditional granary
Guxaaighor	Traditional Assamese prayer space
Mekhela Saador	Traditional Assamese attire worn by women
Tuti	Prayer songs
Maatripurush	Female ancestors

Goi/Koi	Betel nut
Udong/ridong	To do/doing
Baaro xomaaj	Twelve khels
Thuna khuta	A religious object kept inside the borghor
Chuburi	Neighborhood
Nu-maji/Bahir mojiya	Outer room
Nu-kathi/Bhitor mojiya	Inner room
Jaala	Sacred iron spear
Kaak bamboo	An indigenous species of Bamboo
Deu Laau	Sacred gourds
Sonbola	Indigenous Tiwa female deity
Pachimbola	Indigenous Tiwa female deity
Korom	Tiwa death ritual
Monshwo	Tiwa birth ritual
Giyaati	Relative
Bhagawati	Indian goddess
Kamakhya	Indian goddess
Kesaikhati	Indian goddess
Kalika	Indian goddess
Garbhagriha	Inside of a temple
Monikut	Core and innermost sacred structure
Maayeki baapeki	Local term to refer to ancestors

Bhado	A month in Assamese calendar
Naam-Kirtan	Prayer chants performed in Assamese
Methoni	Woven skirt wrapped from around the bosom
Pitha peluwa/deu-xewa	An annual ritual of the Plains Tiwas
Mongol suwa	An act of telling past and future among Tiwas
Mongoloti	A person who tell fortune
Gamusa	A traditional Assamese towel
Dhoti	An Indian attire worn by man
Kurta	An Indian attire worn by man
Ron	Assamese term for battle
Jela bhakat	Elderly members of the clan
Godalboriya geet	Tiwa traditional folk songs
Monshwot guwa geet	Songs sung in Monshwo ceremony
Maakor	Tiwa cremation ground
Vaishnav bhokot	A devotee affiliated to the beliefs of Neo-Vaishnavism