## **Table of Contents**

	Certificate of Supervisor Acknowledgement			
A	bstract	i-v		
L	Declaration			
C	Certificate of Supervisor			
A	Acknowledgement			
7	Table of Contents			
L	ist of figures and maps	xvi-xviii		
(	Glossary	xix-xxii		
СНА	PTER 1	1-27		
INTI	RODUCTION			
1.1	Introduction	1		
1.2	Statement of the problem: Contextualizing the study of religion a	nd 3		
	women			
1.3	Conceptual framework and literature review			
	1.3.1 The critique of secularisation thesis	5		
	1.3.2 Religion and gender in South Asia/Global South: A femin	ist 6		
	approach			
1.4	Research objectives and research questions			
1.5	Research method and methodology			
	1.5.1 Feminist research as a site of knowledge production	13		
	1.5.2 Orality as a methodological approach	14		
1.6	Location of the Researcher	16		
1.7	A brief account of my visit to <i>Uwa Borot</i> : Field leading to field	17		
1.8	Tools of Data Collection			
1.9	Research design and process			
1.10	Limitations of research			
1.11	Organisation of the thesis			

CHAPTER II		28-53	
REL	IGION, IDENTITY AND GENDER: THE TRIBE AND THE		
TRIE	BAL WOMAN IN TRANSITION		
2.1	Introduction	28	
2.2	Caste, religion, tribe, ethnicity: Revisiting colonial categories	28	
2.3	Tribe, caste and the Hindu/tribal dichotomy: The problem of 'simplified' assumptions	29	
2.4	Indigeneity, ethnicity and tribe: Fluid categories and overlapping identities	32	
2.5	Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam: The porous wall between the 'Assamese' and the 'tribal'	35	
2.6	Emergence of a modern Assamese nationalism: The ambiguity of the 'secular' Assamese and alienation of the tribal	37	
2.7	Neo-Vaishnavism, the Assamese society and the Plains Tiwas	38	
2.8	Overlapping identities and revivalist tendencies: The Assamese- speaking 'Hindu Tiwa'	42	
	2.8.1 Hindu Tiwa Kanthichuri Akurai Tokhra	43	
	2.8.2 'Ghar wapsi'	45	
2.9	The paradox of religion, caste and tribe: Ambiguity of identity among the Hill Tiwas	45	
2.10	The tribal woman in transition	46	
2.11	The Assamese Hindu Tiwa Vaishnavite woman: An ambiguous corollary of the 'Aideu'	48	
2.12	Women's status in matrilineal societies	50	
2.13	Towards an alternative framework	52	
СНА	PTER III	54-85	
THE	HAARIS OF BARAPUJIA VILLAGE: EXPLORING THE		
QUE	STIONS OF AGENCY		
3.1	Introduction	54	
3.2	Contextualising the practice: Who is a <i>haari</i> ?	54	
3.3	The <i>haari</i> : An oral text of ambiguities	56	

3.4	Arriving at Barapujia		
3.5	Mapping the field		
3.6	The basic structure of Tiwa kinship		
3.7	Sancti	ioned ritual hierarchies within the tribe: The haari, the	62
	Ghorb	burha and the Borjela	
3.8	Self, b	pelongingness and ambiguous agency	63
	3.8.1	Podumi Patar: The ideal <i>haari</i>	63
	3.8.2	Ambiguity of residence, ritual status and agency: The case of Ratneshwari Dewri	67
	3.8.3	Ambiguity of self, domesticity, ritual status and agency: The case of Xoruphul Dewri	69
	3.8.4	Self, ritual status, agency and the ambiguity of belongingness: The case of Premalata Patar	71
	3.8.5	Ritual status, agency and and the 'bargain' of belongingness: The case of Kamali Patar	75
	3.86	Agency and ambiguity of belongingness: The case of Xulakhyana Bordoloi	78
3.9	Concl	usion: Agency as an ambiguous (exercise)	80
СНА	PTER I	IV	86-115
THE	INS'	TITUTION OF BORGHOR: HIERARCHIES AND	000
AMB	IGUIT	TIES OF THE RITUAL PRACTICE OF THE HAARI	
4.1	Introd	luction	86
4.2	Borgh tribe	nor: A possible reminiscence of past matrilineal linkages of the	87
4.3		institution of Borghor: A critical representation of Tiwa	89
		nunity life	
	4.3.1	The physical structure of the <i>borghor</i> : Construction rules and belief systems	90
	4.3.2	The thuna khuta or the thunda phang	91
	4.3.3	The ritual universe of the Borghor: Complex interaction of	93

4.4	'Haariye gaari': Ritual hierarchy and the ambiguity of authority	95
4.5	The notion of the mythical woman versus the actual woman:	96
	Contextualising the ritual practice of the <i>Haari</i>	
4.6	The borghor and the female ritual specialist: Beyond the ambit of	100
	vernacular Hinduism	
4.7	The 'private' Borghor and its 'public' courtyard: Ambiguities of	101
	boundaries	
4.8	Between overlapping religious experiences: Borghor, the namghar and	104
	the oscillating ritual position of the <i>haari</i>	
4.9	The changing notions of purity: Contemporary shifts in the idea of the feminine	107
4.10	Of concrete <i>borghors</i> and divine images: Changes observed during	108
1.10	fieldwork	100
4.11	Conclusion	110
СНА	CHAPTER V	
	IMUNITY RITUALS, IDENTITY AND GENDER:	116-149
	TEMPORARY SHIFTS AND CONTINUITIES	
CON	TEMI ORAKI SHIF IS AND CONTINUITIES	
5.1	Introduction	116
5.2	The community rituals in the borghor: Representations and omissions	117
	of gender in literature	
5.3	The ritual of Korom and Monshwo: Philosophy of birth and death	119
5.4	Monshwo: The community birth ritual	120
	5.4.1 Monshwo and the symbolism of 'ron' or battle: Prescribed	121
	interpretation of birth and the ambiguity of practice	
	5.4.2 Songs of monshwo: The symbolism of 'laali hilaali' and	126
	ʻgodalboriya'	
	goddioonyd	
	5.4.3 <i>Monshwo</i> : A site of ritual continuity and contest	129
5.5	·	129 130
5.5	5.4.3 <i>Monshwo</i> : A site of ritual continuity and contest	
5.5	5.4.3 <i>Monshwo</i> : A site of ritual continuity and contest <i>Korom</i> : Death ritual of sacrifice, ancestral bonds and kinship	

	5.5.3	The <i>maakor</i> : A representation of indigeneity and sustainable	136		
		ecological care			
5.6	Comn	nunity rituals: Formal roles and informal belongingness	137		
5.7	Shifts	, continuities and implication on gender	138		
5.8	Concl	usion	139		
CHAPTER VI			150-154		
CON	ICLUSI	ON			
REF	REFERENCE				
LIST	r OF PU	JBLICATION	169		