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**CULTURE CHANGE IN A TRIBAL SOCIETY: A
STUDY ON THE PLAIN TIWAS OF ASSAM**

**A thesis submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

by

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Dedicated to my beloved parents

Late Jogendra Nath Borah

And

Late Kanmai Borah



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This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Culture Change in a Tribal Society: A Study on the Plain Tiwas of Assam” submitted to the Tezpur University in the Department of Cultural Studies under the School of Humanities and Social Sciences in part fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies is record of research work carried out by Ms. Manashi Borah under my personal supervision and guidance.

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

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

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

1.1. Background and Context of the Study

1.1.1. The Tribes of Assam

1.2. The Scope and Objectives of the Study

1.3. Methodology

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Change is a universal phenomenon in all societies. It is so in the case of culture too. The process of regular addition and subtraction of cultural traits result in culture change. However, the rate of change and aspects of culture that change varies from society to society. Moreover, the factors and process of culture change too are different from culture to culture. That is why scholars have studied culture change in different times in different frameworks. The present study is based on anthropological perspectives. Since anthropology is the holistic study of mankind, it takes into consideration the various aspects of life like social, political, religious, economic, etc. of a society. The present study also deals with the social, political, religious and economic life and folklore of the Tiwas of Assam. This study tries to explore the changes and continuities that have taken place in the culture of the plain Tiwas of Assam. The Tiwas formerly known as the Lalungs are one of the prominent tribes living in both plain and hill areas of Assam. The Tiwas living in the hill areas are known as Hill Tiwas and those who are living in the plain areas are known as Plain Tiwas. They are to be found in the districts of Nagaon and Morigaon of central Assam, although a very small group of them are also to be found in the hills and plains of Karbi Anglong, Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Jorhat districts. Elaborate discussions on the concept of culture change and the tribe under study have been undertaken in the second and third chapters respectively.

1.1. Background and Context of the Study:

Assam is the homeland of various ethnic groups having diverse racial, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Different groups of people had migrated

into this geographical location known as Assam in different centuries of its history. They came through different routes in different times, thus making this region a meeting point of various races and cultures. Gradually under the shastric influence from the Hindu heartland, the erstwhile ruling dynasties of ancient Assam embraced Hinduism and thus attained the status of Kshatriyas. They in turn also took measures for the propagation of Hinduism amongst the various tribes in their vicinity. However, traces of their pre-Hindu ritualistic practices still survive in the practice of the Hindu faith in Assam, thus making the Assam-Hinduism distinctive from other places of India. After this first phase of Hinduization, the Neo-Vaisnavite movement in Assam propagated by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva in the 15th-16th centuries consolidated the process to a large extent. The egalitarian tenets of Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva attracted many tribal people to the Vaisnavite fold. Thus, a condition was created for the emergence of a wider society in Assam, which later on came to be identified as the Assamese society.¹ The acceptance of Vaisnavism and Assamese identity by the tribes of Assam has undergone a radical revision amongst the various tribes of Assam in contemporary times. Ethnic assertion and identity politics based on tribal language and cultural practices that can be traced from the later half of the twentieth century amongst the tribes of Assam and the Tiwas are also no exception. A tendency of self assertion from this period can be seen amongst the Tiwas too.

The Tiwas have been recognized as a 'Scheduled Tribe' in Indian constitution. It is a different issue that the Tiwas and many other such 'Scheduled Tribes' of India do not conform to the anthropological definition of a tribe. Anthropologists have tried to define a tribe and a few of definitions are as follows:

Anthropologist D. N. Majumdar defined tribe as:

A tribe is a collection of families or groups of families, bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak

the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutually of obligation.²

Marshall Sahlins, a social anthropologist defined tribe as:

A tribe is of the order of a large collection of bands but it is not simply a collection of bands ...there is kingdom also which coordinates economic, social and religious activities and redistributed a large part of the production of local community.³

Sociologists R. N. Sharma and R. K. Sharma defined tribe as:

.....the tribe is a group of persons having a common definite territory, common dialect, common name, common religion, and a common culture, in which there is blood relationship and consequently a feeling of unit, who have a peculiar political organization and who generally marry within their own group.⁴

The definitions of tribe given by early anthropologists bear different connotations. 'Backward', 'primitive', 'living in isolated area', 'sharing common religion and common language' are some of the common attributes given by the former anthropologists to distinguish tribe from the non tribes. But the definitions containing these attributes are not beyond criticism. For example, it is not proper to say that all the tribal communities of the world are 'backward' or 'primitive' in present day context. That is why the use of the term at present has been challenged by several anthropologists. Chris Lowe writes:

Tribe is used for groups who trace their heritage to great kingdoms. It is applied to Nigeria's Igbo and other peoples who organized orderly societies composed of hundreds of local communities and highly developed trade networks without recourse to elaborate states. Tribe is also used for all sorts of smaller units of such larger nations, peoples or ethnic groups. The followers of a particular local leader may be called a tribe. Members of an extended kin-group may be called a tribe. People who live in a particular area may be called a tribe. We find tribes within tribes, and cutting across other tribes. Offering no useful distinctions, tribe obscures many. As a description of a group, tribe means almost anything, so it really means nothing. If by tribe we mean a social group that shares a single territory, a single language, a single political unit, a shared religious tradition, a similar economic system, and common cultural practices, such a group is rarely found in the real world. These characteristics almost never correspond precisely with each other today, nor did they at any time in the past.⁵

It was Edmund Leach who first challenged the meaning of the term 'tribe'. He was followed by Neira, Julian Steward, Swartz, Turner and Toden etc. Julian Steward calls the concept of tribe as a 'Holdall' concept. He said, 'it includes everything, and excludes nothing.' Hence, it can be said that the concept of tribe is nothing but a creation of the colonial period. Maurice Godlier, a Marxist anthropologist, tried to find a way out and defined tribe from the Marxist point of view. He defined 'tribe' as a social organization, characterized by special mode of production.⁶

In India, before independence, the term 'tribe' was frequently used by the British rulers. They used this term to distinguish the tribes from the non-tribes. Now, in India, the term 'tribe' is used in two different senses: according to the definitions provided by the anthropologists and the other is according to the recognition provided by the Indian constitution. The tribes recognized by the Indian constitution are known as 'Scheduled Tribe' (ST). The Constitution of India has specified the "Scheduled Tribes" in Article 366(25) as:

...such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled tribes for the purpose of this constitution".⁷

In the Article 342 it is stated:

(1) The President may, after consultation with the Governor or Rajpramukh of a State, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State.

(2) Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification.⁸

S. L. Dosi and P. C. Jain state that:

...by the Scheduled tribe order, 1950, issued by the President in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 232 of the

Constitution of the India, 312 tribes have been declared to be Scheduled tribes. Later, by an Act of Parliament, some other groups were also included in the schedule.⁹

Later on, 414 ethnic groups were included in the “Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes List modification Order” of 1956.¹⁰ The total number of tribal communities in India as identified by the *People of India* project conducted under the auspices of the Anthropological Survey of India is 461, of which about 172 are identified as subgroups.¹¹ According to the census report of 2001 the total scheduled tribe population of India is 84,326,240; which constitute 8.2% of the total population.¹² These “Scheduled tribes” get special protective and developmental safeguards and legal privileges in the Indian Constitution.

It is quite evident that the term tribe acquires different connotations in different time and place. That is why most of the scholars are reluctant to use this term in academic purpose. Rather they prefer terms such as ‘ethnic group’, ‘ethnic community’, ‘nationality’, ‘people’ etc. depending on the context. The term tribe is basically an administrative category today. Though the term ‘tribe’ has no consistent meaning in the present context, yet this term is used in the present study for these reasons: Firstly, this particular ethnic community, the Tiwas, are recognized as ‘Scheduled tribe’ by the Indian Constitution. Secondly, ‘tribal status’ is a desirable attribute for the ethnic communities of India, particularly for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) because this recognition brings constitutional safeguard to the scheduled tribes. In Assam, presently the communities who have been demanding ‘tribal status’ are- the Adivasis, (formerly known as tea garden and ex-tea garden communities), the Koch Rajbongshis, the Morans, the Motoks and the Chutias. Thirdly, the term ‘tribe’ is used here to distinguish the tribes from the non-tribal communities living in Assam.

1.1.1. The Tribes of Assam:

There are several racial and linguistic groups in India. Generally, four main races and cultures that are found in India are blended together into one people, the Indian. These racial groups are:

(i) the Austro-Asiatics- represented by the Kols or the Mundas, the Khasis and the Nicobarese;

(ii) the Mongoloid people who are found largely along the sub-Himalayan regions - represented by the Nagas, the Bodos, the Kuki-Chins, etc;

(iii) the Dravidians - represented by the Malers, the Oraons, the Gonds and the Khonds, etc. and

(iv) the Aryans who are supposed to be the last to come to India.¹³

The inhabitants of Assam constitute the following racial groups: (i) The Mongoloid, (ii) The Austroloid, (iii) The Mediterraneans, i.e. Dravidians, and (iv) The Nordic. The majority of the tribal population of Assam belongs to Mongoloid and Austroloid groups. Except the Khasis and Jayantias, other tribal groups such as the Bodos, the Rabhas, the Karbis, the Misings, the Dimasas, the Tiwas, the Deuri-Chutiyas, and the Hazongs are the descendents of Mongoloid stock. In ancient Indian scriptures they were referred to as *Kiratas*.¹⁴ The tribal population of North-East India in general and Assam in particular can be divided into two broad categories: hill tribes and plain tribes. Majority of the hill- tribes inhabit in Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya and also scattered in the hilly districts of Manipur, Tripura and Assam. The plain tribes inhabit in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam and they have been living with the non tribal communities since the time of their migration. Hence, the plain tribes have differences in cultural characteristics as compared to the tribes living in the hills.

According to the Census Report of 2001 the total population of Assam is 26,655,528 and the total Scheduled Tribe population is 3,308,570 which

constitute 12.4% of the total population.¹⁵ The Scheduled Tribes are spreading over all the districts of Assam. The highest concentration of the Scheduled Tribe population can be found in North Cachar Hills district with 68.3%. Karbi Anglong and Dhemaji districts follow with 55.7% and 47.3% respectively. The Bodos are the largest of all scheduled tribe communities consisting of 40.9% of total population. To be arranged according to percentage of population in a succeeding way, the list of other major communities is like this: the Misings, the Karbis, the Rabhas, the Kacharis, the Tiwas, and the Dimasas. There are other minor tribes with small population size. Fig. 1: shows the population size of the major Scheduled Tribes of Assam.¹⁶

SL No	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Total population	Proportion to the total ST population
1	All Scheduled Tribe	3,308,570	100%
2	Bodo	1,352,771	40.9
3	Miri(Mising)	587,310	17.8
4	Mikir(Karbi)	353,513	10.7
5	Rabha	277,517	8.4
6	Kachari	235,881	7.1
7	Lalung(Tiwa)	170,622	5.2
8	Dimasa	110,976	3.4

Fig. 1: Table of Census figures in connection to the Population Size of the Major ST's of Assam (Source: Census of India 2001)

These tribal groups have been living in this part of the country with other non tribal groups since time immemorial. The Brahmins, the Kayasthas, the Kalitas, the Keots, the Ahoms, the Koches, the Hiras, the Kaiborttas and the Namashudras are some of the non tribal groups of Assam with whom the Plain Tiwas are living in close proximity. The Muslims, the Nepalis, the Sikhs and the Marwaris are some of the non-tribal groups living in Assam.

Assam bears a great deal of geographical, linguistic, racial, religious, ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Diversities of ecological, historical, linguistic and racial factors have characterized the region. As this region is a meeting place of different communities and cultures, there has been great amount of culture contact among the ethnic groups living in this region. Hence, this area can provide an interesting case for research.

1.2. The Scope and Objectives of the Study:

Researches on the dynamics of culture are not new. In India many scholars have studied the change in the culture of different tribal groups. Scholars like J. P. Mills (1931), Robins Burling (1965), D. N. Majumdar (1980), J. K. Bose (1985), A. M. Kurup (1986), K. S. Singh (1986) and Yogendra Singh (2000) etc. have studied on the dynamic aspects of culture on different ethnic groups of India. But much of these studies are based on the hill tribes. Birendra Kumar Gohain had studied the changes and continuity that had taken place in the life and culture of the hill Tiwas (1994). In Assam, it is a common assumption among the people that plain tribes have been vastly assimilated with the Assamese caste Hindus. It is not always acceptable in all spheres of their culture. The majority of the tribal population inhabits in the valleys of Assam. Along with the tremendous trend of culture change, they are now experiencing the trends of revivalism for their separate identity. Plain Tiwas are one of such groups. The culture change and resurrection of culture are operating simultaneously in their society. They have been living in this part of the country along with the non-tribal communities as well as other tribal communities throughout the evolution of Assamese nationality. Therefore, different sphere of their culture have been influenced by the neighboring communities in different ways and different factors are responsible for that.

The present research project is an endeavour to make a comparative study on the changes that have taken place in different spheres of their culture and factors responsible for that. The study aims to explore the changes and

continuities in the life and culture of the plain Tiwas. The following parameters were taken into consideration for the accomplishment of the project:

- (i) Social Institution
- (ii) Socio-Political life
- (iii) Socio-Religious life
- (iv) Socio-Economic life
- (v) Socio-Cultural life as Reflected in Folklore

The study might help in understanding the tribe in question, as well as their problems, tribal non-tribal relations and also will help in formulating policies like economic and political etc. for the Tiwas in particular and the tribes in general.

1.3. Methodology:

This research work was undertaken by following a multi-disciplinary approach. Ethnicity, culture and consolidation and redefining of ethnic identities have been the focal point of disciplines like Anthropology, Folklore, Cultural Studies and Sociology. Thus it is not possible to use exclusivist methods that deny the approaches of other disciplines in favour of a particular one. One has to acknowledge that diverse approaches exist in addressing issues pertaining to subjects like identity and ethnicity. Thus the work seeks to revisit sites of multiple engagements with such ideas. Moreover, disciplines like Anthropology in its pre-independent and the immediate aftermath of independence carried in its understanding of 'tribal' customs and culture, colonial prejudices involving notions of 'progress' and 'civilisation' as opposed to notions of being 'primitive' and 'uncultured'.

Data generated on the Tiwas from the annals of secondary sources will be interfaced with fresh data from the field that will interrogate the discursive notions on the Tiwas from the approaches of various disciplines. Hence, the

study is a field based one. The field study was carried out in select villages of Nagaon (spelled by the British as Nowgong) and Morigaon districts. According to the census of 2001, these two districts constitute 92.79% of total Tiwa population of Assam. Individually the Nagaon district bears the 32.97% and Morigaon District bears 59.82% of total Tiwa population of Assam.¹⁷ Moreover, the ancient Tiwa kingdoms were situated in these districts. Gait's *A History of Assam* (1963) bears evidence of this fact:

In Sahari Mauza in Nowgaong are the remains of an old fort with high embankments known as the Jungalgarh. This alleged to have been the capital of Jungal Balahu, another son of Arimatta, who was defeated by the Kacharis and drowned himself in Kallang river.¹⁸

These two districts are situated in the middle of Assam. The district of Nagaon is one of the largest districts of Assam. It covers almost four thousand square kilometers of fertile alluvial plains and thickly forested hills. The mighty river Brahmaputra flows along the northern periphery of the district. Other major tributaries meandering through the district are Kolong and Kopili. Lying at a distance of 123 kilometers away from Guwahati, Nagaon town constitutes a vital corridor linking the Upper Assam districts of Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and the North Assam districts of Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur. The Kaziranga National Park, home of the one-horned rhinoceros, is situated adjacent to the district of Nagaon. The district of Nagaon is famous for the *Bordowa Thaan*, the birth place of Sankardeva. Sankardeva propounded Neo-Vaisnavism of Assam and made a great contribution to the formation of greater Assamese society.

Morigaon is basically an agrarian district. It is the second smallest district of Assam. Morigaon Town, the headquarters of the district, is situated 78 Kms away from Dispur, the state capital. The present Morigaon district was a sub-division of Nagaon district. This was upgraded to a district in 1989. The Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in this district. Moreover, the famous *Jonbil Mela* of the Tiwas, a living institution of barter, is held every

year on the bank of a lake called Jonbil of Morigaon district. The Jonbil lake is at a distance of 3 km. from Jagiroad.¹⁹

The Tiwas of this region have been living peacefully with other tribal and non-tribal communities. Now, the Tiwas of this region are experiencing the trend of cultural change, though their traditional practices have not totally gone out of place. Hence, the area provides an interesting case for field study in 'culture change'.

The study draws on both primary and secondary data. For collection of primary data, the methods generally followed in social sciences such as non participant observation, individual and group interview, case study, questionnaire, photographic documentation etc. were used. Interviews were held with persons of different age groups. For collection of secondary data - books, journals, websites, magazines, news papers and archival materials were used with due acknowledgement. Secondary data are used in theoretical part. The Chicago Style Sheet is used for referencing and bibliography. This work has been organized into nine chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory note. Chapter 2 is dealing with the theoretical interpretation of the concept of culture change and literature review. Chapter 3 is explanatory note on the tribe under study. Chapter 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 are dealing with the issues like changes in social institutions, socio-political life, socio-religious life, socio-economic life and representation of socio-cultural life in folklore respectively. Chapter 9 is the conclusion.

Notes:

¹ Chandan Kr. Sharma, "The Bodo Movement: A preliminary Enquiry into the Role of the Middle Class & the State," in *Political Dynamics of North East India*, ed. Girin Phukan (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 2000), 130.

² D. N. Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), 367.

³ Quoted in S. L. Dosi and P. C. Jain, *Social Anthropology* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001), 365.

⁴ R. N. Sharma and R.K. Sharma, *Social Anthropology and Indian Tribes* (Bombay: Media Promoters & Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987), 177.

⁵ Chris Lowe, *Talking about "Tribe" Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis*. Feb, 2008,
http://www.africaaction.org/bp/documents/TalkingaboutTribeFeb2008Update_001.pdf (accessed June 17, 2008).

⁶ S. L. Dosi and P. C. Jain, op.cit., 363-364.

⁷ *The Constitution of India* (New Delhi: Secretary to the Government of India, 2000) 165.

⁸ Ibid. 148.

⁹ S. L. Dosi and P. C. Jain, op.cit., 368.

¹⁰ Stephen Fuchs, *The Aboriginal Tribes of India* (Delhi: The Macmillan Company of India Limited, 1973), 23.

¹¹ K. S. Sing, *Peoples of India: National Series: Volume III. The Scheduled Tribes* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.

¹² Census of India 2001, *Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Population*, New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2007,
http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/scst.aspx (accessed March 09, 2008).

¹³ L. P. Vidyarthi and Binay Kumar Rai, *The Tribal Culture of India* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1976), 26.

¹⁴ N. C. Sarma, *Oral Songs of Tribal Communities of Assam* (Guwahati: Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, 2006), 11-12.

¹⁵ Census of India 2001, *Assam: Data Highlights: The scheduled Tribes*, New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General, India,
http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_assam.pdf (accessed March 12, 2008).

¹⁶ Ibid.

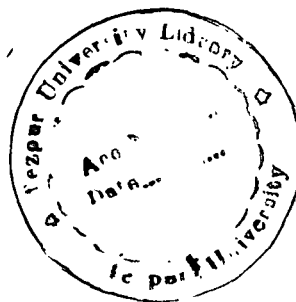
¹⁷ Census of India 2001, *Basic Data Sheet: District Nagaon (10), Asam (18)*, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Dist_File/datasheet-1810.pdf (accessed March 09, 2008) and

Census of India 2001, *Basic Data Sheet: District Marigaon (09), Asam (18)*, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Dist_File/datasheet-1809.pdf (accessed March 09, 2008).

¹⁸ Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, LBS 1st ed. (Guwahati: LBS Publications, 1983), 18.

¹⁹ See <http://www.dmoz.org/Regional/Asia/India/Assam/Districts/desc.html> (accessed May 04, 2008).

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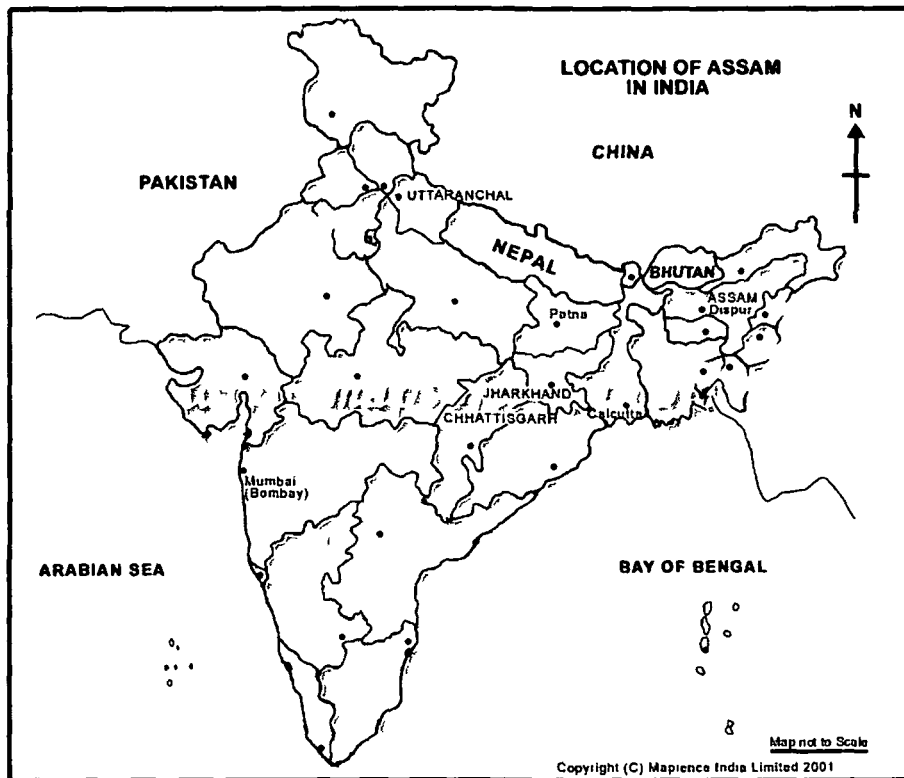


Fig. 2: Map of India showing the location of Assam
 (Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>)

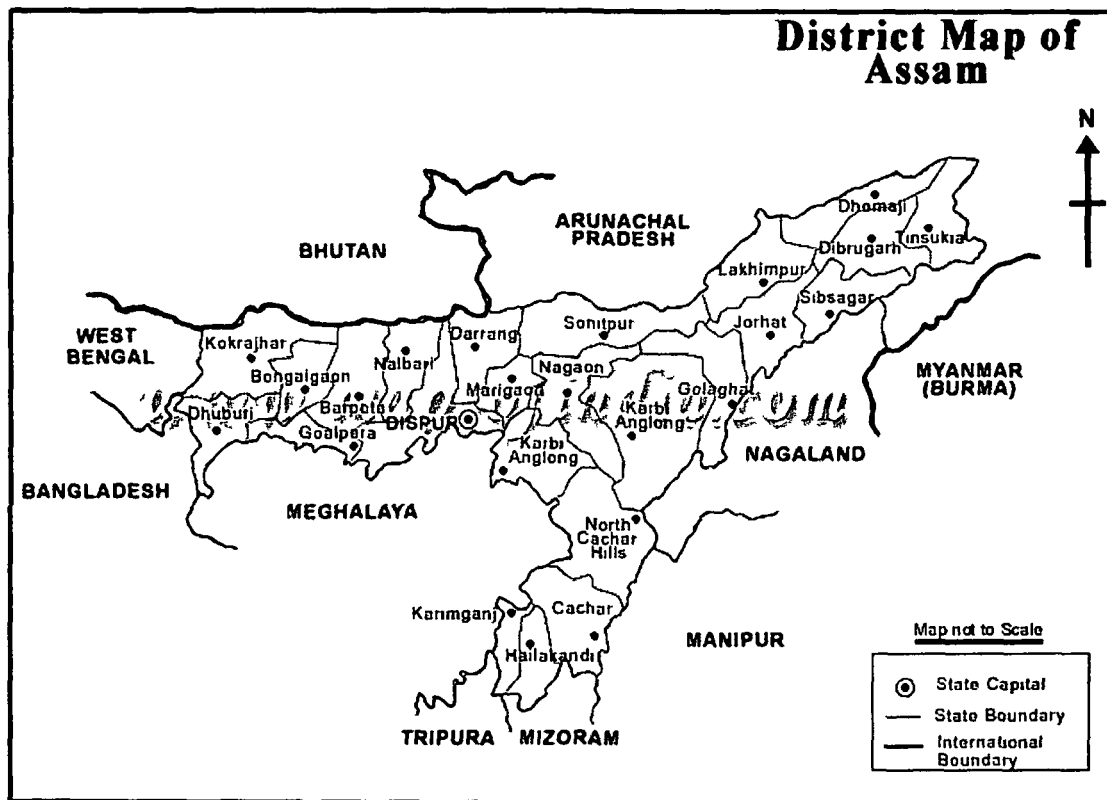


Fig. 3: Districts of Assam (Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>)

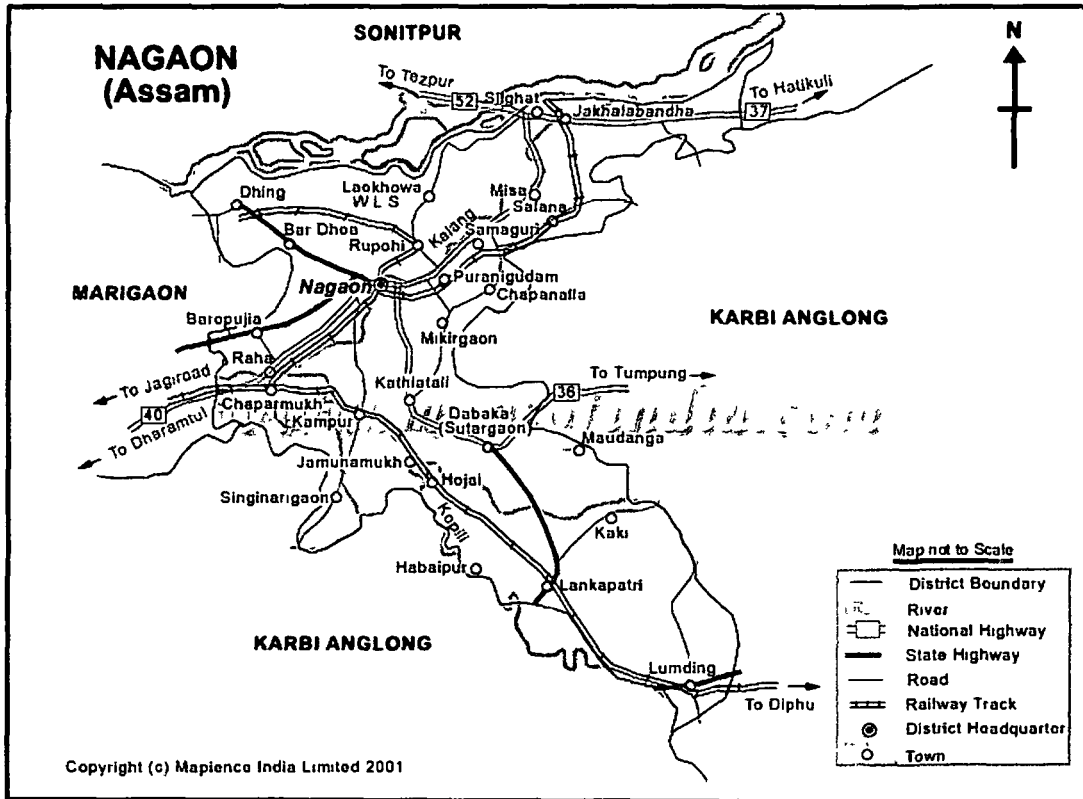


Fig. 4: Map of Nagaon District (Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>)

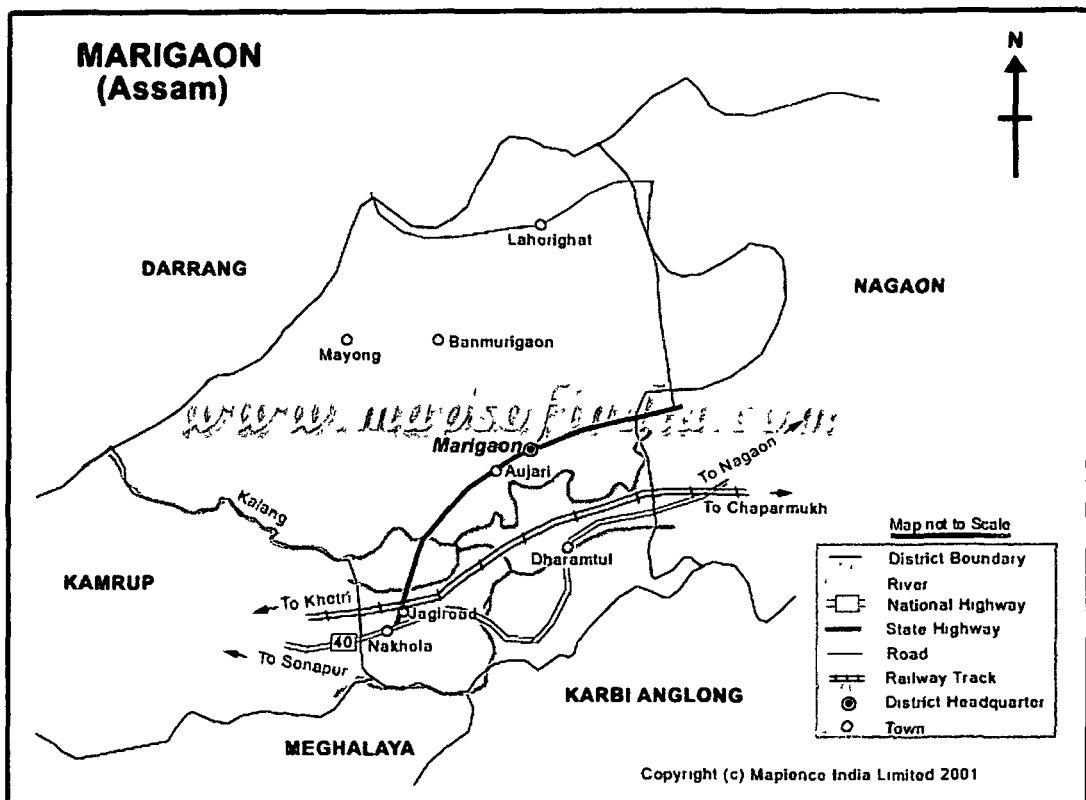


Fig. 5: Map of Marigaon District (Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>)

Chapter 2.

On the Concept of Culture Change

2.1. The Concept of Culture

2.2. On the Concept of 'Culture Change'

2.2.1. The Concept of 'Culture Change'

2.2.2. Factors of Culture Change

2.2.3. Processes of Culture Change

2.2.4. Evolution of the Theories of Culture Change

2.3. Review of Literature

2.3.1. Studies on Culture Change in India

2.3.2. Studies on Culture Change in North East India with Special Reference to Assam

CHAPTER 2

ON THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE CHANGE

2.1. The Concept of Culture:

The term culture is widely used in behavioural sciences. It has different connotations in different subjects like Anthropology, Sociology and Biology etc. For an anthropologist and other behavioral scientists, it refers to the full range of composite learned behavioural pattern of the human beings. *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* explains that:

Etymologically it is associated with the word like 'cultivate' and 'cultivation', 'agriculture' and 'horticulture'. What these different words have in common is the sense of a medium for growth, a meaning quite transparent in modern biological usage where a mould or bacterium may be grown in a laboratory in an appropriate 'culture'. In English in the seventeenth century it became common to apply this meaning metaphorically to human development, and in eighteenth century this metaphorical meaning developed into a more general term...In German (where the word was spelt first *Cultur*, and then *Kultur*), the term was used in works of speculative history from the second half of eighteenth century and, crucially, started to be used in the plural in the sense of humanity being divided into a number of separate distinct *cultures*.¹

The classic and most popular definition of culture was given by the 19th century English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871):

Cultureis that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.²

This definition forms the basis of the most modern anthropological theories of culture. This conception of culture served anthropologists for nearly 50 years. Later on other anthropologists have given many definitions of culture but

those definitions show only different facets of culture and not culture as a whole. Anthropologist A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn cited 164 definitions of culture in their book *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (1952). These definitions are ranged from “learned behaviour” to “ideas in the mind”, “a logical construct”, “a statistical fiction”, “a psychic defense mechanism” and so on.³ Phillip Smith states that Kroeber and Kluckhohn managed to identify those definitions in six main understandings as follows:

1. *Descriptive definitions* tend to see culture as a comprehensive totality making up the sum of social life and to list the various fields making up culture. An influential starting point for this understanding was definition by Tylor from 1871...

2. *Historical definitions* tended to see culture as a heritage which is passed on over time through the generations...

3. *Normative definitions*. Those could take two forms. The first suggested culture was a rule or way of life that shaped patterns of concrete behaviour and action...the second form emphasized the role of values without reference to behaviour...

4. *Psychological definitions* of culture emphasized its role as a problem-solving device, allowing people to communicate, learn, or fulfill material and emotional needs.

5. *Structural definitions* pointed to the “organized interrelations of the isolable aspects of culture”...and highlighted the fact that culture was an abstraction that was different from concrete behaviour. In this respect such definitions could be contrasted with those which simply listed the things that were culture and made no distinction between the ideal and behavioural (e.g. that of Tylor given above).

6. *Genetic definitions* defined culture in terms of how it comes to exist or continued existing. These had little to do with biology, but rather explained culture as arising from human interaction or continuing to exist as the product of intergenerational transmission. (Cultural Theory: An Introduction: 2-3)⁴

The definition preferred by Kroeber and Kluckhohn and also by a great many other anthropologists is that culture is an abstraction, or more specifically, “*an abstraction from behaviour.*”⁵ William A. Haviland, a cultural anthropologist opines as follows:

Culture consists of abstract values, beliefs and perceptions of the world that lie behind people's behaviour and that are reflected by their behaviour. These are shared by the members of a society, and when they are acted upon, these elements produce behaviour that is intelligible to other members of that society.⁶

Clifford Geertz tries to explain the concept of culture as thus:

The concept of culture...is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs, and the analysis of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.⁷

Clifford Geertz again described culture as follows:

...culture...denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embedded in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitude towards life.⁸

Marcel Danesi and Paul Perron defined culture as thus:

...culture... is a way of life based on a signifying order developed originally in a tribal context that is passed along through the signifying order from one generation to the next.⁹

Recently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2002) described culture as follows:

... culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.¹⁰

What is evident from these definitions is that culture stands for total way of life and everything created by human being is a part of culture. Hence, culture comprises all aspects life within a given society including material and non-material aspects. It includes all the conscious and unconscious creations of human being. From the sociological view point culture is the mutually shared

products, knowledge and beliefs of a human group or society. This concept is not limited to art, literature, classical music and other high elements. Instead sociologists consider culture to include all aspects of life within a given society. The study of culture is a hard task as it constitutes various aspects of human life. Herskovits wrote that who would comprehend the essential nature culture must resolve a series of seeming paradoxes, which may be stated as follows:

1. Culture is universal in man's experience, yet each local or regional manifestation of it is unique.
2. Culture is stable, yet is also dynamic, and manifests continuous and constant change.
3. Culture fills and largely determines the course of our lives, yet rarely intrudes into conscious thought.¹¹

2.2. On the Concept of 'Culture Change':

2.2.1. The Concept of 'Culture Change':

The study on 'culture change' was started during the late 19th century. The main perspective of these studies was trying to understand how manufactured things, such as tools, are invented and modified in design over time. Later on the concept of culture change has been formulated by many scholars in different ways. Anthropologist Herskovits said:

Change ... is a universal phenomenon and the processes of change over a period of time constitute the dynamics of culture. cultural change can not be studied as an isolated phenomenon, for change, by and of itself, is meaningless until it is projected against a baseline of human behaviour as of a given time and nature.¹²

F. M. Keesing defined culture change as:

... reformulation in group behaviour. Such reformulation may be seen occurring from the level of individual experience to that of the total functional and integrational setting of a cultural system.¹³

Loise S. Spindler and Goerge D. Spindler defined culture change as thus:

...culture change is any modification in the way of life of a people, whether consequent to internal developments (such as invention) or to contact between two peoples with unlike ways of life (acculturation).¹⁴

The *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* defined the concept of culture change as:

Culture change is the conceptual formulation that refers to many ways in which societies change their patterns of culture.¹⁵

The basic issues concerned here is how and why there are shifts in rate and type of change, than a question of static versus changing cultures.

The phenomenon that is opposed to culture change is the phenomenon of cultural stability or continuity. Continuity is an inherent part of any culture and the survival of culture depends on its continuity. Herskovits is of opinion that, if the culture stresses change, there is a tendency to slight the vast body of stabilizing elements that, lying beneath the changes that are actually in the process gives continuity in the way of life.¹⁶ These factors in the society encourage changeless stability. Herskovits again said:

Cultural change must be contrasted to the phenomenon that is always opposed to it, the phenomenon of cultural stability, which, in its psychological aspects, is called conservatism.the appraisal of either change or stability not only depends on taking both into account, but is dependent as well on the degree to which the observer achieves detachment from the culture in which he is studying change or stability.¹⁷

It quite clear that culture change and stability is interrelated and it is necessary to taking both into account while studying culture change. The factors that result in resistance to change within a society include habit, and integration of culture traits, religion and ethnocentrism etc.

2.2.2. Factors of Culture Change:

All cultures change over time. The regular addition and subtraction of cultural traits results in culture change. However, the rate of change and aspects of culture that changes varies from society to society. Different factors are responsible for resulting change in a culture. The factors and process of culture change too are different from culture to culture, hence it a hard task to generalize the factors of culture change. The *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* states as follows:

The data on change do not yet permit any easy generalizations concerning the relative primacy of various factors that may generate significant shifts in rates and types of culture change. Some anthropologists favor a basically Marxist, or Neo-Marxist, interpretation and give primacy in their theories to such factors as “the amount of energy harnessed per capita per year”(White 1949). Some such as Steward (1955), place emphasis upon ecology and stress the “adaptation of a culture to its environment” as the primary factor. Other scholars emphasize the importance of “religious ideology” (Weber 1922), cultural “themes” (Opler 1945), and “cultural focus” (Herskovits 1955) or, like Geertz (1957), point to inherent incongruities and tensions in social and cultural systems that generate constant pressure for change. Still others have developed more specialized theories, such as Murdok (1949, p. 199), who concludes that “... social is a semi-independent system comparable in many respect to language, and similarly characterizes by an internal dynamics of its own,” or Hallowell (1955) and Wallace (1961), who stress the psychological aspects of culture change. (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences: 554)¹⁸

Here it has been clearly stated that, whatever special emphasis may characterize a theory, it is useful to isolate three general factors that influence change in a given culture. These are -

(i) Any change in ecological niche occupied by a society influences culture change. Such a change may occur as result of either (a) natural environmental changes; or (b) the migration of a society from one ecological niche to another. New cultural adaptations are always required for survival in the case of such shifts in ecological niche.

(ii) Any contact between two societies with different cultural patterns influences change in both societies.

(iii) Any evolutionary change occurring within a society is obviously a factor of critical importance. Here “evolution” is used simply to designate “process of orderly adaptive change.” For example, if a society (for whatever reasons) shifts from matrilocality to patrilocality, then again there are adaptive changes in a whole range of cultural patterns.¹⁹

The general factors of culture change as described by the anthropologists include some processes like innovation, diffusion, acculturation, cultural loss, transculturation and revolution etc. These factors can be divided into two broad categories- internal stimuli or internal factors and external stimuli or external factors. Internal stimuli originate inside a society such as innovation and cultural loss. The external stimuli originate outside a society such as diffusion, assimilation and transculturation etc.

Dennis O'Neil in *Cultural Anthropology Tutorials* described the factors and processes of culture change in a comprehensible way, which can be summarized as thus- all cultures are inherently inclined to change and, at the same time, to resist change. There are dynamic processes operating that encourage the acceptance of new ideas and things while there are others that encourage changeless stability. It is likely that social and psychological chaos would result if there were no the conservative forces resisting change. There are three general sources of influence or pressures that are responsible for both change and resistance to change. Those are –

- (i) Forces at work within a society,
- (ii) Contact between societies,
- (iii) Changes in natural environment.²⁰

The processes leading to change *within a society* include innovation and cultural loss etc. Innovation simply is a discovery or invention of an object in

a society. Innovation may be of four types: intentional, unconscious, technological and ideological. Cultural loss is process of abandonment of some existing element in a society. Intentional innovation includes deliberate inventions to seek solutions for some problems. Example of unconscious innovations are fire, wheel etc. the ideological innovations include such things as the invention of algebra and calculus or the creation of a representative parliament as a replacement for rule by royal decree. Technological inventions include new tools, energy sources, and transportation methods as well as more frivolous and ephemeral things such as style of dress and bodily adornment. Cultural loss is an inevitable result of old cultural patterns being replaced by new ones.

On the contrary, processes that result in the resistance to change within a society include habit and the integration of culture traits. Older people, in particular, are often reluctant to replace their comfortable, long familiar cultural patterns. Habitual behaviour provides emotional security in a threatening world of change. Religion also often provides strong moral justification and support for maintaining traditional ways. The fact that cultural institutions are integrated and often interdependent is a major source of resistance to change.

The processes leading to change that occur as a result of *contact between societies* are diffusion, acculturation, transculturation and assimilation etc. Diffusion is the movement of things and ideas from one culture to another. In this process cultural elements are borrowed from another society and incorporated into the culture of the recipient group. When diffusion occurs, the form of a trait may move from one society to another but not its original cultural meaning. Diffusion may be direct or indirect. When a group or society is in contact with a dominant society, the weaker group is often obliged to acquire cultural elements from the dominant group, that process is called acculturation. It happens to an entire culture when alien traits

diffuse in on a large scale and substantially replace traditional cultural patterns.²¹ For example, Dennis O'Neil states:

....after several centuries of relentless pressure from European Americans to adopt their ways, Native American cultures have been largely acculturated. As a result, the vast majorities of American Indians now speak English instead of their ancestral language, wear European style clothes, go to school to learn about the world from a European perspective, and see themselves as being a part of the broader American society. As Native American societies continue to acculturate, most are experiencing a corresponding loss of their traditional cultures despite efforts of preservationist in their community.²²

Thus, acculturation is a process that happens to an entire culture. In contrast to it, transculturation is what happens to an individual when he or she moves to another society and adopts its culture. Immigrants who successfully learn the language and accept as their own the cultural patterns of their adopted country have transculturated. The word transculturation is first appeared in 1940. It was first preferred by Ortiz, a Cuban scholar, who gives the following reasons for its use:

I am of the opinion that the word *transculturation* better express the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which would be called neoculturation. (quoted in Harskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, 475)²³

When alien culture traits diffuse into a society on a massive scale, acculturation frequently is the result. The culture of the receiving society is significantly changed. However, acculturation does not necessarily result in new, alien culture traits completely replacing old indigenous ones. There often is a syncretism or an amalgamation of traditional and introduced traits. The new traits may be blended with or worked into the indigenous cultural patterns to make them more acceptable. This process is called syncretism.

Other process that can be mention here as a result of contact between societies is the process of trans-acculturation. In this process exchange of cultural traits takes place between two cultural groups. This is also a process in which we talk about 'give and take' as the process of Hinduization and tribalization operating in the Indian situation.²⁴

There are processes operating in societies that result in resistance to change. These are due to "us versus them" competitive feelings and perceptions. Ethnocentrism also leads people to reject alien ideas and things as being unnatural and even immoral. These in-group out-group dynamics commonly result in resistance to acculturation and assimilation. Assimilation is a process by which a minority adopts the patterns and norms of a dominant culture and it is incorporated into the point that it no longer exist as a separate cultural unit.

Change in a *natural environment* in which a society exists is another important factor of culture change. There is always a relation between the natural environment and culture. For example natural calamities and hazards always have had an impact on people's culture. Moreover, environmental degradation of fresh water supplies, arable land and energy sources historically have resulted in the creation of new invention, migration, even war to acquire adequate resources. Hence, the approach to understand culture change must also include consideration of changes in the environment in which a society exists.²⁵

Herskovits also gave emphasis on environmental factors along with historical and psychological factors while studying culture change and stability. He wrote:

Conservatism and change in culture are the result of the interplay of environmental, historical, and psychological factors. All must be considered when studies of cultural process are made.²⁶

2.2.3. Processes of Culture Change:

Scholars have studied culture change in different time from different perspectives and in different magnitude. The study of the culture change refers to the actual social mechanisms by which the change takes place. Some scholars take the position that the basis of all culture change is located in changes in the attitude and behaviour of individual member of a society. This point of view is found by Barnett in 1953. Other scholar like White, Kroeber and Murdock take the point of view that although individuals are the carriers of a culture, there are process of change in social and cultural systems which have dynamic properties of their own that can be isolated and studied.²⁷

Firth differentiates between “social structure,” which he views as providing the principle of continuity in society, and “social organization,” in which lies the principle of variation of change “...by allowing evaluation of situations and entry of individual choice.” Herskovits emphasizes “individual variation,” which is found even in the most isolated and primitive societies, and the importance of this variations in the mechanisms of culture change. Wallace attempts to combine individual personality and cognition with changes in cultural systems in his study of “revitalization” processes.²⁸

Other contributions to the conceptual mapping of process of culture change include Herskovits’ formulation of “reinterpretation”, Firth’s description of the process of “social conviction” and “social conduction”; and Vogt’s distinction between “recurrent processes” and “directional processes”. These contributions were made during the period of 1950 to 1965. “Reinterpretation” is a process by which old meanings are ascribed to new elements or by which new values change the cultural significance of old forms. “Social conviction” is a process by which individuals not directly involved in a change in the first instance tend to modify their behaviour to adjust to the change and the “social conduction” is a process by which an innovation brings unforeseen results that must be adapted to. “Recurrent

processes” are found in micro time scales, which characterize the daily, seasonal, annual and generational life of a society, and the “directional processes”, are found in macro time scales, which involve non-repetitive, cumulative shifts in the structures of social and cultural systems. These contributions were made during the period of second half of the last century.²⁹

2.2.4. Evolution of the Theories of Culture Change:

The growth of the theories of culture change is elaborately discussed in the *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 1, (1996) under the entry “Culture Change”. In this recent work the discussion is made in a historical sequence, which can be summarized as follows:

Theories of culture change heavily depend on the concept of culture embedded in them. For example, if one conceives of culture as a list of social and material traits, then the loss or replacement of an older trait by a newer one constitutes change. If, however, a culture is not the sum of its traits but rather the unconscious pattern that governs their arrangement, then change must be understood in a different way as argued by the anthropologist from Edward Sapir to Claude Levi-Strauss.³⁰

Cultural Evolutionism was concerned with the states through which human societies had passed on the road to civilization and with the process that inevitably led from one stage to the next. It was reflected specially in the works of Edward Burnett Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan. The Victorian doctrine of progress assumed a uniform transition from a primitive or savage stage through a more complex era often labeled barbarism toward the highly evolved civilizations of the present. The specific stages organized by different theorists varied, but within a given stage, technological developments were linked with intellectual improvements and to growth in the scope of social organization. Some theories stressed the impact of improved tools and techniques on social and intellectual life, while other emphasized the role of

increasing rationality, as man put aside primitive notions of magic and witchcraft in favour of a logical, scientific understanding of the world. More recent advocates of an evolutionary approach to culture have tended to favour new technology as the basic cause of other changes. For example Leslie White and Elman R. Service view increasing control over energy resources as fundamental to the growth of culture and social organization.

Historicism rejected grand evolutionary theories in favour of more detailed, regional studies of culture and its process of change. Leaders of this approach included Franz Boas and Alfred L. Kroeber, who, despite their many differences insisted on the rigorous description and comparison of cultural traits within limited geographical areas. The goal was not to establish general stages of cultural development but rather to chart the distribution of social and material traits in order to understand the processes (e.g., of invention, borrowing, rejection, adaptation and syncretism) that led to their presence or absence and thus to reconstruct their history. In later years, Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict and Kroeber came to emphasize the distinctive patterns that integrated traits from diverse sources into coherent, psychologically satisfying wholes in given societies.³¹

Functionalism insisted on the intensive study of individual societies. Earlier, the practitioners of functionalism were simply uninterested in change, preferring a synchronic approach to description and analysis. Later on, the functionalist concerned themselves with a wide range of issues. Bronislaw Malinowski wrote on the dynamics of change, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown on social evolution and E. E. Evans-Pritchard insisted on the mutual relevance of history and anthropology. In a significant functional study that attempted to translate the synchronic into the diachronic, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* (1941), Robert Redfield described four communities lying along the “folk-urban continuum,” suggesting the ways in which small, relatively homogeneous, isolated villages are transformed and incorporated into large,

relatively diverse and open societies, proposing processes such as industrialization and cultural disorganization as necessary correlates.

By using the theory of perception derived from Gestalt psychology, Homer G. Barnett (1949) studied innovation and its role in culture change. He analyzed the processes that gave rise to new cultural items and suggested some reasons for the acceptance or rejection of innovations within and between societies. Philip K. Bock (1969) later pointed out the similarities between cultural innovations and the processes of linguistic change and of genetic mutation.

George P. Murdock (1949) carried out his studies of cross-cultural correlations among traits, in terms of behavioral theory. He tried to establish correlations between kinship terminology and descent rules, or between residence and sexual taboos. Murdock's studies led him to the hypothesis that changes in residential arrangements, usually adaptations to economic factors, most often led to changes in descents groups and marriage rules that, in turn, affected kin terminology. He thus unpacked a historical sequence from synchronic correlations. His hypothesis has been supported by a number of long term studies of change.³²

The materialist approaches in anthropology stem from the theoretical formulations of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and most of these center on the notion of modes of production, whether or not they accept the doctrine of the inevitable progression from one mode to another (e.g., feudal to capitalist, or capitalist to socialist). In ethnology and archaeology, materialists look first to changes in the material base of social relationships for the key to all forms of cultural change. The dynamic of any society is unequal control of the means of production. This produces tension among the haves and have-nots as well as generating characteristic social relations of production and factors that set off a chain of other changes, either evolutionary or revolutionary.

The approach of cultural ecology in form of specific studies of societal adaptations to environmental conditions continues to be important. In the works of Julian H. Steward (1955) cultural ecology is represented as the adaptation of people to an environment that determines the makeup of the cultural core, those customs and institutions that are compatible with ecological requirements. Marshall D. Sahlins and Elman R. Service (1960) argues that such specific evolutionary studies complemented the general evolutionary trends hypothesized by White and Steward, that is, while cultural change always involves responses to local conditions, viewed over the long term the trend in a given region or worldwide is to greater size and complexity with accumulation of technological innovations.

The well-known contemporary inheritor of this tradition is Marvin Harris (1979), whose research strategy draws heavily on Marx and Steward. Harris presented a casual theory on which the material base “probabilistically determines” social structure, which in turn determines the superstructure. The causes of social change are, thus, always to be sought in the materially determined “modes of production and reproduction”, although Harris allows a degree of independence to the ideological superstructure. He presents ingenious, materialist solutions to cultural puzzles, such as Hindu “cow love” and Jewish “pig hatred”, as well as a sweeping account of the evolution of human society from small hunting bands to complex modern civilizations. He also systematically critiques cognitive, symbolic, or structural approaches in anthropology, but these theories still fascinate researchers concerned with the details of cultural change.³³

Focusing on cognitive categories, which are deal with the changes in the modes of thinking, anthropologists have demonstrated systematic changes in ways of thinking about the plant or animal world or about the human body. Perhaps the best known anthropological study of cognitive evolution is the works of Brent Berlin and Paul Kay (1969). While collecting and comparing the terminology used in hundreds of languages for classifying colors, Berlin

and Kay discovered a pattern that correlated with levels of social complexity and other behavioral and environmental features. What began as an investigation into the cultural relativity of cognitive categories became a universal theory of cultural linguistic change and stimulated study of its physiological roots.

Linguists have provided a model for other anthropologists in their investigations of cultural change and stability, which, it is now recognized, requires explanation as much as change. Levi-Strauss (1963) has drawn on concept of structural linguistics, such as opposition and transformation, to show how kinship systems and myths change over time and among neighboring groups. He is one of those anthropologists who seek universal structures at a very deep and unconscious level of the human mind.

Almost by definition, elites are content with the status quo and, as Marx thought; social change is most likely to erupt from an oppressed group or class that recognizes its exploited situation. The dominant class does not easily give up its privileges (wealth, power), but as James Scott has shown (1985), there are many things that the oppressed can do, short of revolutionary action, to improve their situation. Aihwa Ong (1987) brings together some of these newer ideas in a powerful way. Her study of Malaysian factory workers describes the means by which these relatively powerless women relieve some of their oppression.

Culture change remains an era in which historical, functional, materialist, structural and cognitive symbolic approaches struggle for convincing explanations innovations and stability, growth and decline. Internal and external causes, material and psychological factors may ultimately be seen to complement rather than to contradict one another and a systematic theory of change may someday be achieved.³⁴

2.3. Review of Literature:

2.3.1. Studies on Culture Change in India:

Although major theoretical postulations concerning Indian culture and civilization as well as sound methodological exercises and hypothesis were initiated in India after Independence in 1947, but there were some early pioneers, who talked about the theory of diffusion in Indian Anthropology before Independence. For example, K. P. Chattopadhyay's studies on *Dharma Puja and Chadak Puja* (1935, 1942), Das's paper on *Sun Worship among the Tribes of Eastern India* (1927) and N. K. Bose's study of the *Spring Festivals in India* (1927) referred to the diffusion of culture traits in India. The credit for first field study of acculturation in religion among the tribes goes to S. C. Roy. In his work *Oraon Religion and Customs* (1928), Roy analyzed the nativistic and reformist Bhagat movements among the Oraons as a response to the pressures of acculturation. Bose's important article- *Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption* (1941) indicates how incorporation of Hindu religious symbols has followed the economic and power gradient from the dominant Hindu peasantry to the tribes.³⁵

However, the first systematic attempt to define the processes of change taking place Indian society was attempted by M. N. Srinivas in his study of the *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952). In this work, he postulated two concepts *Sanskritization* and *Westernization* as two types of sources of social change. Srinivas defines *Sanskritization* as the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a twice-born (dwij) caste; and *Westernization* implies change resulting from cultural contact with the western countries. Western technology, improvement in communication system and industrialization etc. are some factors associated with *Westernization*. *Sanskritization* as a concept not only identified a very crucial aspects of the process of change in the Indian culture and institution but the use of this term soon led to the beginning of a debate in Indian

Anthropology, which has not yet come to a conclusion. Scholars like V. Raghavan (1959), Deva Raj Chandana (1961), Herper (1959), J. F. Stall, Mc Kim Marriot (1955) etc. conceived the different context and meaning of *Sanskritization* and also gave their interpretations.³⁶

Robert Redfield introduced the concept of *continuum* in his work *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* in 1941. Later on F. G. Baily (1960-61) presented a more systematic interactional model for considering the position of the position of the tribe viz-a-viz caste as two ideal poles in a in a linear continuum. However taking off from this interpretation of *continuum*, Surajit Singha suggested that the *continuum* be conceived simultaneously and yet distinctively, on the level of social structure and culture, both as ethnic groups and as local communities. Following Singha's theoretical outline H. N. Banerjee (1969) has made a detailed study of the pattern of *tribe- caste continuum* among the Kora of Barrabhum.³⁷

Other two works of Redfield- *The Little Community* and *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach* was published in 1955 and 1956 respectively. Here he develops his propositions of *Great Tradition* and *Little Tradition*. According to him the intellectual influences that come from outside the village may be termed as *great tradition* and those coming from the local areas termed as the *little tradition*. Martin Orans, in his famous book *Santhal: a Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition* (1965) has emphasis that how a tribe has been looking towards great traditional elements of Hinduism, which have pulled the tribe towards emulating the caste pattern.

Mc Kim Marriott, a disciple of Redfield, applied some of the concepts of Redfield in the context of Indian villages, which he studied as a part of the complex Indian social system. Marriot Studied a village in Kishangari, in 1955 and published this work in a book form as the *Village India*. Marriot while studying the Indian village modified the *great* and *little tradition*, and argued that the twin concepts of *Universalisation* and *Parochialisation* are

operating in the socio- religious systems of Indian villages. According to him the concept of Universalisation refers to the carrying forward of materials which are already present in the little tradition, which it encompasses. The opposite processes that of Parochialisation, is defined by him as the downward devolution of great traditional elements and their integration with little traditional elements. It is a process of localization. Thus, Marriot has perceptively christened two contrasting, yet complementary processes of cultural growth of the indigenous civilization in India as Universalisation and Parochialisation.³⁸

Milton Singer has tried to understand the processes, unity and continuity of Indian civilization. His two books- *Traditional India: Structure and Change* and *When a Great Tradition Modernises* were published in 1958 and 1972 respectively. Following A. L. Kroeber and Robert Redfield, Milton Singer conceives Indian civilization as a coherent structure of rural networks and urban centers which at the same time acts as a medium for the mutual communication of great and little traditions and of other cultural differences between and among tribes and castes, linguistic regions, regions and centre, town and country.³⁹

Some significant researches on the processes of transmission of cultural traits in Indian civilization have been done, among which special mention may be made of V. Raghavan (1959), Surajit Singha (1957), J. T. Hitchcock and Leigh Minturn(1963) etc. G. C. Ghurye and K. P. Chattopadhyay wrote on the traits of cultural diffusion operating in Indian civilization.

In the study of Indian civilization B. N. Saraswati has made a significant contribution and is well known for his originality and penetrating insight into the concepts and themes related to Indian civilization. He is of opinion that in Indian society the tradition is cultivated, preserved and transmitted in three different ways namely- (i) Oral, (ii) Writing or Text, and

(iii) Self- realizing esoteric process. He argues that each culture adopts one of these ways as the essential mode of survival and changes effectively when the mode is changed. Therefore, what is most important in a culture is not its external manifestation but the inner mechanism which operates within the culture. According to him the structure of culture remains a meaningless entity so long as its function is unexplained. His best known works are *Contributions to the Understanding of Indian Civilization* (1970), *Khasi: Myth and Reality of a Classical Cultural Tradition* (1975) and *Brahmanic Ritual Tradition* (1977).⁴⁰

The *Indian Village* of S. C Dube was published in 1955. S. C. Dube and B. N. Swaraswati did not accept the view of Redfield in classifying Indian tradition into two water tight dichotomy. Dube holds the view that analysis of cultural change with the help of *little and great traditions* framework would be insufficient because traditions in India are organized not in a *bipolar* but *multi polar* system. He alternatively postulates a five fold classifications of traditions, which according to him, are more representative of the Indian cultural realities and offer better framework for analysis. Those classifications are: (i) the classical tradition, (ii) the emergent national tradition, (iii) the regional tradition, (iv) the western tradition and (v) local sub-cultural traditions of social groups. Dube's view was again criticized by other scholars like Singh, and said that his view does not able to eliminate the basic limitations of the traditions approach to the study of change and his view was theoretically homologous to the approaches of Srinivas, Singer etc.⁴¹ He discussed on Indian culture and changing trends in other work *Indian Society* published in 1990. Dube's another work named *Understanding Change: Anthropological & Sociological Perspective* published in 1996. It is a compilation of his UGC national lectures delivered in 1970. Here he discussed the concept of *change* from different perspectives like perspectives from anthropology, sociology and development etc. in a comprehensible manner.⁴²

Mention should be made here of some other publications related to the culture change studies on ethnic communities of India. Those are - *The Tharus- A Study in Culture Dynamics* (1958) of S. K. Srivastava and *Culture Change in Tribal Bihar of Sachchidanand* (1964) etc. P. C. Ray's *Socio-Cultural Process and Psychological Adaptation of the Santal* was published in 1975. This monograph deals with a comparative psychological adaptation of the Santals in their socio-cultural condition, typical personality structure as assessed by Rorschach Test. It has been found that out of the three levels of cultural contact, the most contact group was reported to be more productive, less critical and having poor relation with reality as compared to the least contact and in - between contact groups. *Impact of Industrialization on Tribe in South Bihar* of P. K. Dasgupta was published in 1978. The book describes how industrialization in a rural tribal belt of Bihar where a new industry has been established, has affected the socio-cultural life of the Ho tribe.

L. P. Vidyarthi and Binay Kumar Rai have published their book *The Tribal Culture of India* in 1976. This is the first major study on the tribes and their life in India. This work makes a comprehensive study of the economic, social, political and religious organizations of Indian tribes. The psychological factors in personality structure in tribal setting have been studied and discussed in detail. The other major aspects discussed here are: tribal village, customs of matriliney and polyandry, approaches, planning and programmes for tribal development and more specifically the cultural change in the tribes of India.⁴³

L. P. Vidyarthi and K. N. Sahay studied the *Dynamics of Tribal Leadership in Bihar* in 1978. Their studies of the tribal leadership of Chhotanagpur plateau have brought out significant contribution in the field of social change as revealed through political differentiation and structural changes taking place in the tribal societies of India. Earlier Vidyarthi had also studied the *Impact of Industrialisation on the Tribes of Chhotanagpur* in 1970,

which was conceived as the best methodological and longitudinal analysis of industrialization taking place in the primitive societies of Chhotanagpur.

Besides these studies taking place in Indian society, K. N. Sahay studied on the impact of Christianity and Hinduism on the Tribes of India. He published two books *Hindu Shrines of Chhotanagpur: A Case Study of Tanginath* in 1975 and *Under the Shadow of the Cross* in 1976. His works were considered as important works on social and culture change operating in the tribal societies of India.⁴⁴

The *Continuity and Change in a Little Community* by A. M. Kurup was published in 1986. In this work he tried to focus on the nature and extent of change taking place among the Bharias of Patalkot, an ethnic group of Madhya Pradesh. The factors and forces responsible for changes and the directions of change are also discussed here. The main aspects observed in this study are material culture, economic life, social life, religious life and leadership.⁴⁵

Another scholar K. S. Singh's stewardship of the People of India project yielded an excellent anthropological profile of the country. The *People of India* (POI) project, an undertaking of the Anthropological Survey of India initiated in 1985 and running into 43 volumes - all documenting the tremendous diversity that is India - would not have taken off without the determined efforts of its then Director-General Kumar Suresh Singh. His work *The Scheduled Tribe* under this project, published in 1994 covers all of the scheduled tribes of India. Moreover, it throws light on the trends of changes.

Yogendra Sing's *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, a work on the systematic study on social change was published in 1972. Here he made an attempt to analyze the processes of modernization in India from a systematic sociological perspective. The two key concepts which have been used here to

analyze the forces of modernization are *social structure* and *tradition*. The theoretical analysis of this volume not only places the existing concepts into their logical and meaningful context, but also offers an alternative conceptual scheme for the study of social change in India.⁴⁶

R. S. Mann's *The Ladakhi: A Study in Ethnography and Change* was published in 1986. This study explains and interprets diverse parameters of Ladakhi cultural matrix. The focus remains on aspects of continuity and change. The book covers ethnographic features cauterized as - historical perspectives; ethnic composition and social stratification; family; marriage; status of women; rituals; economic structure; political organization; religion; and culture change. *Acculturation and Social Change in India* edited by S. C. Panchbhai was published in 1989. The book contains valuable information on the aspects of acculturation and social change among the diverse segments of Indian populations based on inter-disciplinary contributions made by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, linguists, folklorists and ecologists.

Besides the above, some other works on culture change published recently are: *Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalization*, a well known work of Yogendra Sing, published in 2000. Most of the papers included here were written by him in 1990s and delivered as national lecture and some of the articles were published in journals. Here he elaborately offers a critical evaluation of changes in cultural values, institutions and ideologies which constitute India's response to the contemporary challenges from the forces of cultural and economic globalization. This book mainly concerns with challenges in cultural styles through exposure to global cultural pattern.⁴⁷ *India: An Illustrated Atlas of Tribal World* of Hrisikesh Mandal, Sumit Mukherjee and Archana Datta was published in 2002. Abhimanyu Mahto's *Changes in Terrains and Socio-Economic Profile of an Oraon Dominated Rurban Centre in Chotanagpur* was published in 2006.

2.3.2. Studies on Culture Change in North East India with Special Reference to Assam:

Studies on the socio-cultural life of the ethnic communities in North-East India were started during the pre-Independence period, before 1947. Studies of this kind have been initiated by the British government officers, their wives stationed in India and Christian missionaries. Most of the anthropological works and monographs of them are related to the life and culture of the ethnic groups of this region. These works of Christian missionaries and British administrators and officials can provide us good knowledge about the socio-cultural life of these ethnic communities of this region and changes taken place in it.

Some of the monographs published by the British government officers and Christian missionaries before the Independence of India are: C. A. Soppitt's *A Historical and Descriptive Account of the Kachari Tribes of North Cachar Hills* (1885), P. R. T. Gurdons *The Khasis* (1907), Lyall and Stack's *The Mikirs* (1908), T. C. Hudson's *The Meitheis* (1908) and *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (1912), Major A. Playfair's *The Garos* (1909), Rev. Sydney Endle's *The Kachari* (1911), J. Shakespear's *Lusai-Kuki Clans* (1912) and *The Sema Nagas* (1931), J. P. Mills's *The Ao Nagas* (1922), *The Lotha Naga* (1923) and *The Rengma Nagas* (1937) etc.⁴⁸ These works contains description on life and culture of the concerned ethnic groups.

After the Independence of India most of the native and foreign scholars have studied on the ethnic communities of India from the Anthropological as well as Sociological point of view. In North-East India also the systematic studies containing valuable ethnographic information on the ethnic communities has been started from this period.

The Background of Assamese Culture, a unique work of Rajmohan Nath was published soon after the Independence of India, in 1948. The second

edition was published in 1978. This book is a treatise on the cultural evolution that took place in the North Eastern region of India beginning from the pre-historic time. The author traced the cultural influences that affected the various ethnic groups and cultural entities that existed in this region right up to the late nineteenth century. The historical role of both physical and cultural migrations has been delicately discerned and placed in a proper chronological perspective.⁴⁹ The *Kirata-Jana-Krti* of Suniti Kumar Chatterji was first published in 1951. It is a profound work on the Indo Mongloid people- the *Kiratas*. Though a major section of the volume is about the *Kiratas* in general the main focus appears to have been given on the *Kiratas* of North East India. The author has covered partly the ancient period and major emphasis was paid to the medieval and the modern period. The second revised edition of this volume was published in 1974.⁵⁰

D. N. Mazumdar's work *Culture Change in two Garo Villages* was published in 1978. It is a comprehensive account about impact of adoption of settled cultivation on various social institutions of the Garos' life and culture. Though there has been large scale adoption of Christianity among the Garos, the basic household property holding pattern has not been adversely affected. L. P Vidyarthi's good work *Art and Culture of North East India* was published in 1986. This work gives a fair account of origin, history, rich cultural heritage, customs, traditions and beliefs of various tribes now settled in different parts of the North East India. The author has paid well attention to various segments of the region and concentrated on past researches, the life, economic conditions, occupational patterns, art and crafts, traditional dormitories and inherent concepts, dress, entertainment and rapidly changing cultural and economic scene of the North-East India.⁵¹

The Society Culture and Ecological Adaptation among Three Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh of Jayanta Sarkar was published in 1987. This is an ethnographic account of three tribal groups, viz. the Khamtis the Padams, and the Kamam Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh highlights degree of social change

and adaptation of these tribes in different ecological settings through a study of material culture, economy, and social organization, cycle of festivals, political organization and contact with outsiders.

Apart from the above publications, there are many other publications that can provide an image of the changing situation of different ethnic groups of this region, notable amongst them are *The Tribes of Assam Part I* edited by B. N. Bordoloi, G. C. Sharma Thakur and M. C. Saikia; *The Tribes of Assam Part II* edited by B. N. Bordoloi and G. C. Sharma Thakur; and *The Tribes of Assam Part III* edited by B. N. Bordoloi was published in 1987, 1988 and 1991 respectively. These three series have covered life and culture of almost all of the tribal groups of Assam including the Tiwas. Some other publications are: B. N. Bordoloi's *Constraints of Tribal Development in North East India* (1990), S. R. Maitra's *Ethnographic Study of the Chakma of Tripura* (2002), Girindra Nath Das's *Tribal Tradition and Development in the Hill Areas of Assam* (2006) and N. A. Hazarika edited *Tribal Women and Development* (2007) etc.

Although no elaborate study was undertaken on the Tiwa community during the pre Independence period. But after independence, this tribal community attracted serious attention from the scholars. As a result, a few studies came into being. The first ethnographic study on the Tiwas is initiated by an anthropologist, during the 1955-1956. It was M. M. Das, who conducted this work under the guidance of N. K. Shyamchoudhuri. This work was taken as the most authentic account of this major ethnic group of central Assam, which was published as *The Lalung Society* in 1973. This analytical study of the Tiwas deals with their historical background, village organization, marriage system, family types, clan organization, economy, ecology and religion.⁵² G. C. Sarma Thakur's *The Lalungs(Tiwas)* was published in 1985. This book made a detailed account of this ethnic group.⁵³ Three books published in Assamese *Tiwa Sampradayar Parichai* (1975) a collection of essays compiled by All Assam Tiwa Yuva-Satra Sanmilan, *Tiwa Samaj*

(1983) and *Tiwa Sakalar Chamadi (Dekachang) Anusthan: Eti Bislesanatmaka Adhyayana* (1997), written by a prominent Tiwa writer, Moneswar Deori. Other Two series published in Assamese are *Tiwa Sanskritir Ruprekha: Part I* (1985) and *Tiwa Sanskritir Ruprekha: Part II* (1986) of Lokeswar Gogoi. All of these four books deal with the social, religious and cultural life of the Tiwas. *Tiwa Sakalar Chamadi (Dekachang) Anusthan: Eti Bislesanatmaka Adhyayana* (1997) is an analytical study on the Dormitory institution of the Tiwas. *The Hill Lalungs* of Birendra Kumar Gohain was published in 1993. This book elaborately deals with the life and culture of the hill Tiwas. *Continuity and Change in the Hills of Assam* by Binendra Kumar Gohain was published in 1994. It was a systematic study on the changes and continuity that has taken place in the life and culture of the hill Tiwas. This study was based on the field work done in three villages of Karbi Anglong District of Assam. The study dealt with the social, political and religious changes of the Hill Tiwas.⁵⁴ Another good work *The Lalungs* of S. K. Agnihotri was published in 1996. This book deals with the total way of the life and culture of this ethnic group.⁵⁵ Other two works in Assamese language, were published recently are Mileswar Pator edited *Tiwa Sanskritir Jilingoni* (Glimpses of Tiwa Culture) in 2004 and Rupa Deka Pator's *Tiwa Samaj Aru Sanskritir Acherenga* in 2007.

All of these publications related to 'culture change', 'ethnic groups' and 'Tiwa community' can provide a good understanding on the main areas of interest in the study, and also the process of culture change operating in the ethnic communities of India as well as North East India and Assam and its relevance to present study. The literatures available on the Tiwas can provide information on the changing cultural situations of this ethnic group over periods.

Notes:

- ¹ *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 1996, s.v. "Culture."
- ² E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (New York: J. P. Putnam's Sons, 1871): 1, quoted in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 16, 15th ed., 1993, s.v. "Culture".
- ³ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 16, 15th ed., 1993, s.v. "Culture".
- ⁴ Phillip Smith, *Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2001), 2-3.
- ⁵ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *op.cit.*
- ⁶ William A. Haviland, *Cultural Anthropology*, 9th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), 35.
- ⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretations of Cultures* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 5.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, 89.
- ⁹ Marcel Danesi and Paul Perron, *Analyzing Culture: An Introduction and Handbook* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 23.
- ¹⁰ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, "Culture", June, 2008, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture> (accessed June 22, 2008).
- ¹¹ Melville J. Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1969), 306.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 446.
- ¹³ M. F. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Rinehart & co., Inc., 1959), 381.
- ¹⁴ Louise S. Spindler and George D. Spindler, "Culture Change," *Biennial Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 1 (1959): 37-66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2949200>.
- ¹⁵ *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol 15, 16, 17, rp. ed., 1972, s.v., "Culture."
- ¹⁶ Melville J. Herskovits, *op.cit.*, 446-447.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Dennis O'Neil, "Culture Change: An Introduction to the Processes and Consequences of Culture Change," in *Cultural Anthropology Tutorials* (California: Dennis O'Neil, 2008) <http://anthro.palomar.edu/tutorials/cultural.htm>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ F. Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (New York: 1947): 102-103, quoted in Melville Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1969), 475.

²⁴ Makhan Jha, *An Introduction to Indian Anthropology* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1995), 128.

²⁵ Dennis O'Neil, op.cit.

²⁶ Melville Herskovits, op.cit., 451.

²⁷ *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, op.cit.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*. Vol. 1, 1st ed., 1996, s.v., "Culture Change."

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Makhan Jha, *An Introduction to Anthropological Thought*, 2nd Rev. ed. (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1994), 142.

³⁶ Ibid., 142-143.

³⁷ Ibid., 145-146.

³⁸ Ibid., 150.

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- ⁵⁰ Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti*, 2nd rev ed. (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1974).
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Chapter 3.

The Ethnographic Profile of the Tiwas

3.1. Settlement and Population

3.2. Migration and History

3.3. Socio-Cultural Background

CHAPTER 3

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TIWAS

The Tiwas, a scheduled tribe of India, are formerly and constitutionally known as “Lalungs”. The name *Lalung* was given by the neighboring ethnic group Karbis. The Karbis gave this name to denote those people who were living in the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. The meaning is: *La* means water and *Lung* means rescued. As the river Brahmaputra gave shelter to these people, hence they were known as Lalung. But this ethnic group introduces themselves as “Tiwa”. The meaning is: *Ti* means water and *Wa* means superior. There are many myths and legends related to these issues which have been discussed in Chapter 8.

Tiwas are one of the prominent scheduled tribe of Assam living in both hill and plains. Racially, they belong to the great Mongoloid stock. The tribal people of Himalayan region especially of north Himalaya come under this category. The Mongoloids of India are referred to as the Indo-Mongoloids. The major portions of the tribal people of Assam are basically Indo-Mongoloids who came to this place in successive waves at different intervals of time from different directions- north, north-east and south-east. Linguistically, the Tiwas belong to one of the language/ dialects of the Bodo group, where the Kacharis, the Dimasas, the Garos, the Tripuras etc. are also included. The Bodos are one of the groups of languages belonging to the Assamese-Burmese Branch of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family falling under great Tibeto-Chinese Family of languages.¹

3.1. Settlement and Population:

Their main settlement found in Middle Assam, particularly in Nagaon and Morigaon districts. Moreover, some of them are resided in Karbi Anglong,

Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Jorhat Districts too. The hill Tiwas are generally found in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam, particularly in the Amri Development Block, Chinthong Development Block of Hamren Sub-Division and Jayantia Hills district of Meghalaya. The plain Tiwas are mainly inhabit in the Morigaon Sub-Division; Nagaon Sadar Revenue Circle, Kaliabor Revenue Circle, Raha Revenue Circle, Lanka Revenue Circle, Kampur Revenue Circle of the district of Nagaon; South Tribal Belt of Sunapur Revenue Circle of Kamrup district; Demaji Civil Sub-Division of Demaji district and in Titabor areas of Jorhat District of Assam.² The topography and ecology have a noticeable influence on the life and culture of this ethnic group. Hence, there are socio cultural variations among the Tiwas living in the hills and those living in the plains. These variations can be visible in the case of dress pattern, agricultural pattern and food habit etc. Moreover, the people living in the hills are some what isolated from the contact of other groups of people. But those living in the plains are in long contact with the other neighbouring tribal and non tribal groups.

According to the census of 2001 the total tribal population of Assam is 3,308,570 which constitute 12.4% of the total population. The Tiwa population is 1,70,622, which constitute 5.2% of the total scheduled tribe population of the state. As per the census of 2001 the literacy rate of the all scheduled tribe population of Assam is 62.5%, among them the literacy of the Tiwas is 61.8%.³ Major concentrations of the Tiwa people are found in Nagaon and Morigaon districts of Assam, which constitute 92.79% of total Tiwa population.⁴ The Tiwa have a unique and distinct social characteristic. They have still by and large retained their cultural identity as a tribal ethnic group in the plains.

3.2. Migration and History:

Although there is no any written history available on the Tiwas of Assam, yet the early references are found in R. M. Nath's *The Background of Assamese*

Culture and Sir Edward Gait's *A History of Assam* about their migration to the plains of Assam and the role played by the Tiwa kings of the principality of Gobha, Neli, Kholā and Sahari etc. R. M. Nath mentioned about the original abode and the migration of the Tiwas to the plains in his book *The Background of Assamese Culture*. He said that, the Tipperahs had their original homeland near Allahabad and Baranasi in Uttar Pradesh. They preferred to call themselves as the children of water goddess and were therefore known as the Tiphras or the Tippras. Due to the onslaught of the Aryans they migrated to the East and settled at the Pragjyotisha. These people migrated to the Kapili valley of Nagaon district, which is then known as Trivega. They established their principality there around 1900 B.C. and ruled for sixteen generation. Probably the Tiwas are earlier known as Tipperahs. He wrote:

Whatever might have been the origin of the royal dynasty, it traditionally believed that one Protardon came over to Assam and established a kingdom named Trivega in about 1900 B.C. with his headquarters on the banks of the Kapili river in the present Nowgaon district and the dynasty ruled for full fourteen generations. What relations the kings had with the king of the Naraka dynasty, is not known. Chitra-Ratha –the twelfth king of the line is said to have attended the royal convention invited by Yudhisthira –the king of the lunar dynasty at Delhi.⁵

To maintain a friendly relation with the Kacharis, Trilochan, the sixteenth ruler of Trivega married a Kachari princess. He had two sons Drikpati and Dakshin. Drikpati become the king of Kachari kingdom as the Kachari king was issueless. Dakshin become the king of Trivega after his father death. Subsequently there was a battle between Drikpati and Dakshin for the throne of Trivega, where Dakshin was defeated. Along with the royal subjects Dakshin proceeded towards southern direction and after crossing the Barail range he established a kingdom at Tippera or Tripura.⁶

Some of the Tipperahs did not follow Dakshin and hid themselves in the hilly areas and their descendents were later known as Tiwas (Lalungs).⁷

The Jayantia kings established the Lalung principalities out of these people on the foothill as a buffer among the Jayantia kingdom and the Kachari and Ahom kingdoms. These principalities included Gobha, Neli, Sahari, Khola commonly known as *Dantir Charibhai*.⁸

R. M. Nath also stated that the Tiwas have twelve small principalities under the suzerainty of the ruler of Jaintia. The king of Gobha Panteswar stood against the Koch general Chila Rai in 1564 A.D. He wrote:

From earliest time, there appear to have been twelve states within a small area under the suzerainty of the ruler of Jaintia. Gobha was the biggest state, and then there were Nelly, Khola, Tapakuchi, Roha, Baropujia, Rani, Luki, Beltola &c.

... In 1564, Panteswar, the king of Gobha stood successfully against the Koch general Chila Rai. During the Ahom rule some Lalung Chiefs near Roha were alienated by the Ahom chief stationed at Roha from the suzerainty of Jaintia.⁹

Arimatta was identified as a Lalung (Tiwa) king who established his kingdom in Brahmaputar valley.¹⁰ The dynasty established by the king Arimatta and his son Jongal Balahu, remained in power for about six decades from 1138 A.D.¹¹ E. A. Gait also wrote that the site containing the remains of a old fort with a high embankment called *Jongal Balahu Garh* situated in Sahari mauza in Nagaon district was the capital of king Jongal Balahu.¹² During this period, the Tiwas are living in the Brahmaputra valley on the both banks of the river. Their main concentration was at Helem in Sonitpur district. Later on they left Halem and settled in KarbiAnglong hills, Khasi and Jayantia hills. Their main settlement was at Khyrim.¹³ Later on they came to the plains.

E. A. Gait wrote about the migration of the Tiwas to the plain areas particularly to the Nagaon district as follows:

In 1658 Pramatta Rai rebelled against his grand father Jasa Manta Rai, Raja of Jaintia, and called on the tributary chief of Gobha to help him. The latter refused, and Pramata Rai thereupon destroyed four of his villages. He appealed for help to the Kacharis, who were

preparing to come to his assistance, when the local Ahom officials intervened and said that, as the Ahom were the paramount power, it was they whose protection should be sought. The Gobha chief accordingly went with seven hundred men to Jayadhvaj Singha and begged for help. Orders were issued to the Bor Phukan to establish him in Khagorijan, corresponding more or less to the modern Nowgaon, and this was accordingly done.¹⁴

The *Linguistic Survey of India* of G. A. Grierson also bears historical facts of the Tiwas. Though Grierson did not mention about the date of the migration of the Tiwas to the plain areas, yet he mentioned that they came from the Jaintia hills. He wrote:

How the Lalungs came to their present site or when is not known. They are not mentioned by the Ahom historians nor in the accounts of the Koch kingdom. In Nowgaon they are said to have a tradition that they came from the Jaintia Hills while some of the Lalungs in the latter district say that their ancestors immigrated thither in the reign of the Jaintia Raja U Mon Gohain. Another account, however, says that the Lalungs claim to be the autochthones of the Jayantia Hills. [quoted in Sarma Thakur, *The Lalungs (Tiwas)*, 8]¹⁵

The Tiwas used to practise human sacrifices till the advent of British rule in Assam. Chatra Singha, the Tiwa king of Gobha have had sacrificed three British people too. Probably this made the downfall of the Tiwa kingdoms during the British period. R. M. Nath wrote thus:

Chatra Singh, the Lalung chief of the Gobha state near Nowgaon, who was a vassal to the ruler of Jaintia was alleged to have had sacrificed three human beings who were the British subjects of Guwahati before his tutelary deity Kali according to his time-honoured religious custom. The ruler of Jaintia was asked to account for this and hand over the culprits, though the culprit who had killed three officer and 150 followers were dealt with directly.

... In 1834, Chatra Singha, the ruler of Gobha was alleged to have sacrificed several persons Kamarupa before the Goddess Kali and this made the British interfere, and ultimately resulted in the annexation of Jaintia and thereby of the Lalung States to the British Empire.¹⁶

After the coming of British, the Tiwas had come under the subjugation of British administrators with the rest of the population of Assam. After the

revolt of 1857 when the government contemplated to impose tax on their poppy cultivation, the Lalung peasants of Phulaguri area of Nagaon district made a bold protest against it. This armed conflict with the British authority is known as *Phulaguri Dhewa*.

From the above short historical description, it is noticed that the Tiwas had been in long contact with other communities from the pre-historic times. Notable among them are the Jayantias, the Koches, the Kacharis, the Ahoms and the Chutiyas etc. The Tiwas living in the plains of Assam were influenced by the Hinduism since the pre-British period, as the above mentioned communities were also Hinduised community. In the Plains they come under the influence of the Neo-Vasnavism of Sankardeva. In later years some other religious faiths have also influenced their culture.

3.3. Socio-Cultural Background:

Any kind of discussion on cultural background of a group of people is incomplete without referring to the rites and ceremonies related to the life cycle of human being. The Tiwas have multifarious socio-cultural rites and ceremonies related to their birth, marriage and death, which depict the background of their cultural life.

A Tiwa expectant mother is generally kept in a separate temporary room. Here only the *Ojani* (care taker) can enter, but in special cases the husband and select close relative can enter. Two or three women are appointed for taking care of the expectant mother and baby. In the plains they are known as *Ojani* and in the hills they are known as *Giyati*. After the birth of the baby the *Ojani* cuts the umbilical cord with a very thin bamboo slice. Mother takes rest in a bed made of dry paddy stalk. A special curry made of chicken and arum leaves (generally the black variety) mixed with spices is given to the mother after the child birth. They believe that this enable the

mother to recoup quickly. A drop of this curry is also dropped in the mouth of the baby.

There are two types of birth related ceremonies prevalent among the plain Tiwas. Those are - the household purification and name giving ceremony known as *Aus Gara* and the community purification ceremony known as *Manashwa*. The *Aus Gara* ceremony is celebrated just after the fall of the naval cord of the baby. After receiving this news, *Hari kunwari* (lady religious head of *Borghar*) places an altar at the threshold of the particular room of the mother. *Borjela* (religious head of *Borghar*) worships the deity and sacrifices a cock. After observing this ritual, the hair of the baby is shaved by the father. In his absence close relatives does this task. Thereafter the *Hari kunwari* places another altar in the courtyard and the *Borjela* offers another prayer there. If the baby is male, then the mother takes a bow and shoots six arrows towards six directions. She makes some fake attempt with the seventh arrow and places the bow and arrow in the hand of the baby. If the baby is female, then she places a sickle, a cotton processing device known as *Dhuna*, some devices of loom are places in the hand of the baby. These tasks have some symbolic meaning. The bow and arrow symbolizes heroism while the devices of loom and sickle symbolize efficiency in weaving and agricultural operations.

The *Hari Kuwanri* then draws seven vertical lines near the altar of the courtyard. She takes some earth from the middle line and with her middle finger she gives imprint (*Tilak*) in the forehead, chest, and both the ears and shoulders of the baby. The *Borjela* utters prays some mantras for the wellbeing of the child. Then the *Borjela* gives name to the child. The parents of the child bow before him by offering a pair of battle leaves and nuts. Earlier, at least till the 1970s, the elderly people used to sing the Lali Hillali songs in this ceremony.

The community purification ceremony, i.e. *Manashwa* is celebrated in clan basis. *Manashwa* in one clan is celebrated once a year in *Borghar*. When there is more than one new born baby in a *Bangsha* or *Khuta* (a group of families of same clan) the families decide a stipulated date for the celebration of this ceremony. They request the *Borjela* to arrange this ceremony in their *Borghar*. Once the date is decided, the *Borjelas* of different clan and the families of the particular *Bangsha* are invited for it. On the stipulated day of this ceremony, the *Borjela* offers a cock to the God on the threshold of the *Borghar*. The families who join the *Manashwa* offer a cock if the baby is male and if the baby is female, they offer a hen. The *Borjela* sacrifices the birds in the name of God and forecasts the future of the babies by observing the manner of death of the sacrificed bird. It is considered as ominous, if the bird dies facing north east direction. They arrange a feast with these sacrificed birds. All guests are entertained with this curry and *Zu* (Rice beer). Then the children are taken before the altar of the *Borghar*. The *Hari Kuwanri* smears mustard oil over the bodies of the children. The elderly women wrap the children with new clothes. Then all the children are made to bow before the altar. The *Borjela* prays to God for the welfare of the children and bless them. Then the children are brought outside the courtyard before the invited *Borjelas* of different clan. The *Borjelas* bless them for happy future.

Marriage is the accepted form of union between a man and woman among the Tiwas. Boys usually marry around of 25 to 30 years of age and girls 20 to 25. No illegal union especially incestuous relations get social recognition; rather these types of relations are very much hated by the people. Clan exogamy is strictly adhered to. They are generally monogamous although cases of polygamy cannot be ruled out. Preferential marriage including cross cousin marriages are not in vogue. The cases of widow remarriage and divorce are few and far between, although there is no bar for a widow and a divorcee to enter into marriage.

Different types of traditional marriage systems are prevalent among them. These are: (a) *Bor biya* (marriage by negotiation), (b) *Joron biya* (marriage by negotiation), (c) *Gobhia rakha biya* (marriage by service), (d) *Poluai ana biya* (marriage by elopement), (e) *Soali dhari rakha or Balpurbak biya* (marriage by capture), (f) *Soali dhari bandhi diya biya* (marriage by imposition) and (g) *Dhum biya* (marriage by imposition). These days, out of the above traditional marriages, only the marriage by negotiation and elopement are popular among them. Rests are totally gone out of place due to socio-economic changes.

Monogamy is socially and legally recognized among them. Levirate is not socially accepted while sororate is socially accepted but examples are very few. Both the nuclear and extended families are found, though the instances of extended family are less. Patriliney has gained importance even in the *Gobhiya rakha* system of marriage. The issues related to marriage system have been discussed elaborately in the chapter related to Social Institution.

Earlier, both cremation and burial are practiced by the Tiwas. Now, cremation is the general practice among them. There are different exclusive areas for different clans (*khuta* or *Bangsha*) in the cremation ground (*Mangkhor*). They use those specific areas *Hatham* to cremate the dead bodies of their clan members. Two officials known as *Giyati* (both male and female) are selected by the *Borjela* of the concerned clan. They take all the responsibility of the cremation rites. The male *Giyati* performs all tasks related to cremation rites. He goes to cremation ground and breaks an egg and worships in the *Hatham*. The Tiwas believe that the *Hatham* unites the soul of the deceased with ancestors. Female *Giyati* takes all the responsibilities of tasks of preparing and offering the *Pinda* (food) to the deceased. The period from the death of a person till the seventh day is recognized as unclean period. During this period no can enter the *Borghar* and granary. This impure period ends with the *Tamol Bata Phurua* ceremony, a ceremony of offering prayers to ancestors. It is organized on the seventh day inside the *Borghar*.

Karam a community purification ceremony after death is solemnized after one year. Here the pending death ceremonies of the other deceased person of the same *Bangsha* (clan) are solemnized jointly in the *Borghar*. Earlier this function was held for seven days but now it is three days function. Even in some places it is one day function. Every family of the *Bangsha* contributes to the common fund of *Karam*. One pig, five fowls and *Zu* is essential item for this ceremony. The *Borjela* take out the *Zela* (arrow) of *Borghar* and places it in the courtyard. The female *Giyati* sprinkles purified water (water mixed with basil leaf, *Dubari* Grass and copper) on the ground. The pig and fowls are sacrificed in the courtyard, where the *Zela* is placed. The female *Giyati* takes some meat of the sacrificed pig and prepares *Pinda* (food) inside the *Borghar*. She offers this *Pinda* in the name of the deceased person on whose behalf the *Karam* is held. The food for the feast is prepared by the elderly villagers.

Nuclear and joint or extended families are found in Tiwa society. The instances of joint family are lesser in comparison to the nuclear family. In extended family, other than a man, his wife and unmarried children, the same homestead may also be occupied by the married sons. Moreover, if their son-in-law is a *Gobhia*, then the same homestead is occupied by their married daughters too. Families are of mainly Patrilocal. Tiwa society had followed a matrilineal system of inheritance in the past decades which, however, is not practiced now a days.

The Tiwas have twelve exogamous clans which have different sub clans. Clan exogamy is still maintained by them. The main clans found among them are as follows: (i) Macharang, (ii) Madur, (iii) Maloi, (iv) Dafor, (v) Sukai, (vi) Amfli, (vii) Lasa, (viii) Chalang, (ix) Amchong, (x) Kakhor, (xi) Darnong and (xii) Lorom. These clans are further divided into sub clans. Cognates families of same clan are united in one cluster known as *Bangsha* or *Khuta*. The *Borghar* and *Khuta* system play a vital role in cultivating and regulating the domestic and social sphere of culture of the cognate families of

same clan. There is another institution made by different *Bangsha* or *Khuta* (clan) is known as *Khel* system. One village may have different *Khels*. Generally village level ceremonies, festivals are organized by the *Khels*. *Deka*, *Raja*, *Deka raja*, *Bordoloi*, *Doloi*, *Deuri*, *Senapati*, *Pator*, *Konwar*, *Bharali* etc. are some of the surnames used by the Tiwas.

The traditional village level social organizations of the Tiwas are well structured, which provide them unity, self-sufficiency in the lives of the members and play a vital role in village level judiciary, socio-cultural, socio-religious and economic life. Some of these institutions are socio-political, socio-religious in nature and some are both socio-cultural & economic in character. These organizations are important part of their tribal life and the jurisdiction of these organizations is a single village. The village level social organization of the Tiwas can be divided into two categories. Those are secular and non secular or religious organizations. The secular village organizations are: (a) *Deka-khel* or *Deka-xari* or *Chamadi* (the council of youth or bachelor's dormitory), (b) *Bura-khel* or *Bura-xari* (the council of elders), (c) *Doloi* or *Gaonburha* (the traditional village chief), (d) *Borkhel-bichar* (a judicial council), (e) *Hadari khel* (a working group) etc. The non-secular or religious organizations are run by the three office bearers namely *Loro* (village priest), *Ghorbura* or *Borjela* (head of *Bangsha* or *Borghar* or Clan) and *Hari-Kunwari* (lead head of *Borghar*).

The *Deka-khel* or *Deka-xari* or *Chamadi* is an organization of all young men above fourteen years of age. The *Doloi* or *Gaonburha* is the head of the village. He decides petty cases in a *Mel* (meeting) of the village elders and inflicts punishment on the offenders. The *Bura-khel* or *Bura-xari* consists of eight members and is a higher judicial body. The members are appointed for life and are selected from the *Deka-khel*. The *Borkhel-bichar* is the predominant rural judicial institution prevalent among the plain Tiwas. Before the advent of the British the Tiwas had their own independent *Rajas* (king). He enjoyed the highest judicial authority. The institution of kingship is still in

vogue. The *Raja* is assisted by such office bearers as: *Bordololi, Konwar, Patar, Barbarua, Dhaliya, Dalia and Paik*. The *Hadari-khel* is a group of young girls in a village. The help of *Hadari-khel* is generally sought at the time of agricultural operations. The function of this institution is based on fellow feeling ness and co-operation.

Amongst the office bearers of the non secular or religious organizations, the *Loro* is the village priest. He presides over all of the village level religious ceremonies and festivals. The *Ghorbura or Borjela* is a religious head of *Borghar* (a prayer hall of every clan). This post is hereditary and he is also a head of the clans. *Hari kunwari* is a lady religious head. She may be married or unmarried. If she is married, she must remain in the same *Bangsha* even after the marriage. Every clan has their separate *Borghars*. No religious ceremony can be held in the clan without the presence of *Borjela* and *Hari-kuwanri*.

The traditional Tiwa religious beliefs and practices are based on animism or polydemonism. The religious practices are based on a belief in some deities. Lord *Mahadeo* is their supreme God and He is symbolized and represented by the *Zela* or sacred arrow in the places of worship. All worships begin with a prayer to Lord *Mahadeo*. Another important God worshiped by the Tiwas is *Jal-thal-devata* who as his name signifies, is the presiding deity of land and water. Another deity is *Charibhai chari kora* who is the presiding deity of bamboo grove as well as the spring festival. Apart from these main deities, many others are also worshiped in *Borghars and Thaanghars*. The *Borghar, Thaanghar* and *Namghar* are three religious places of worship. *Borghar* is a prayer hall consisting of two rooms; one for household deities and the other is a cooking room used for religious purpose only. *Thaanghar* and *Namghar* are the places of community worship in a village. The Tiwas worship many deities in *Borghar, Thaanghar and Namghar*. Among them *Ganesh* and *Parameswar* are their benevolent male deities while *Aai Gosani, Lakhmi, Padumi, Kalika, Kamakhya, Saru Aai, Bor Aai, Kani Andheli* are the

important benevolent female deities. Certain *pujas* and ceremonies are also held in the *Borghar*. *Deo Sewa*, *Kalika puja*, *Bhakat sewa* and *Rati Sewa* etc. are some of them. Now, the Tiwa have been initiated into various religious faiths as Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva, Christianity and very recently the religious faith of Krishna Guru and Anukul Thakur.

The *Jongkhong Puja*, *Chagra Michawa*, *Bihu*, *Gosain Uliwa Utsav*, *Barat-utchava*, *Wancawa*, *Lankhun Puja* and *Kheljawa* etc. are some of the festivals of the Tiwas. These festivals are observed with songs and dances. The *Jonbil Mela* is a traditional periodical market or fair of the Tiwas which is held once in a year. It is held after the *Magh Bihu* (in the month of January) at the bank of *Jonbil* lake which is 2 k.m away from Jagiroad of Marigaon district. The fair is known for the barter system.

The mainstay of the economy of the Tiwas is agriculture. Sifting cultivation is practiced on the hills and the settled cultivation is the main agricultural practice in the plains. Cultivation of variety *Sali* (wet cultivation) is the major crop of the plains Tiwas. *Boro*, *Ahu* and *Bao* varieties of paddy are also grown. Other crops such as vegetables, fruits, coconuts, areca nuts, sesame, mustard, turmeric, ginger etc. are also cultivated in the homestead lands.

Besides rice, horticultural cash crops such as banana, betel, areca nut and seasonal vegetables like gourd, pumpkin, brinjal, radish, chilli etc. are also grown by them. The most popular horticultural crop is areca nut, which is produced for home consumption as well as for sale in the market. Bamboo is also grown by them. Bamboos are used for making baskets and fencing, construction of the dwelling house, granaries, cattle-sheds etc. In plains all agricultural works are done by ploughing. Besides cultivation; fishery, piggery, poultry are other economic activities of the Tiwas. Moreover, basketry and weaving are other popular activities.

The traditional Tiwa homestead consists of four parts, such as: *Majghar*, *Choraghar*, *Borghar* and Granary. *Majghar* consists of kitchen, dining room and bed rooms as per requirement of the family. *Majghar* is constructed in between the *Borghar* and *Charaghar*. *Choraghar* is an outhouse generally consisting of two rooms and it is constructed a few yards away from the main house where the guests received and unmarried young boys sleep at night. The traditional Tiwa homestead also has a granary. The granary and cattle-sheds are constructed in the backyard. Houses are generally built by bamboos, wood, thatch etc.

The traditional dress of Tiwa women consists of three pieces of clothes: *kasang*, *jaskai* or *phaskai* and *thongali*. *Kasang* is use to cover the lower portion of the body, It is an unstitched garment like *mekhela* (lower garment of Assamese womenfolk) with horizontal stripes. *Jaskai* or *Phaskai* is worn to cover the upper portion of the body from the breast to the waist. Earlier this was used as a blouse. Now a days they wear both the blouse and *Jaskai*. *Thongali* is used to wear over *Kasang* like a waistband because earlier they did not use under garment like petticoat along with traditional dress. The traditional dress in the case of men folk consists of five pieces of clothes. Those are *Tagla*- a jacket like traditional shirt. *Dhoti* can be of *Muga* or cotton, which is used to cover the lower portion of the body. The *Kamasa* or *Seleng* is placed on upper portion of the body over two shoulders like an 'X'. *Thangali* is a waistband; *Phaga* is a turban.

Rice is the staple food of the Tiwas. Their traditional food consists of rice, wild vegetables like *Mayong masua* (fern like vegetables), *Samsui* (wild vegetable), *Tumru lai* (fig leaf) and indigenous alkali or *khar* prepared from banana stem. *Laflang* (dry fish) is also a traditional food of Tiwas. The *Poita bhat* (boiled rice soaked in water) is a favourite item of food of the Tiwas. It is generally taken in summer season. Moreover, the arum roots, bitter medicinal plant locally known as *Bhekuri tita*, *Xokota tita*, *Bahak tita* (*Adhatoda vasica*, *phlogocanthus*) etc. are their traditional items for preparing food. *Tamlong* or

Kharisa (a mixture prepared of tender bamboo shoot) is also a favourite and traditional item of food. They use *Kharisa* in all kinds of preparation. Generally it is used and eaten with fish. Pork, chicken, fish are non-vegetarian items. *Zu* is drink which is used in both social and religious ceremonies. *Zu* (rice beer) is taken by all irrespective of age and no religious and cultural ceremony can be celebrated without using *Zu*. They use indigenously produced *Zu* in their everyday life. It is prepared from *Bora rice* (a special variety of summer rice) or from *Sali* rice grown in winter.

The Tiwas have their own language. Tiwa language belongs to the Bodo group of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. It is spoken by all in the hills. But in the plains, majority of the Tiwa population cannot speak Tiwa, instead they speak Assamese language. Tiwas are more or less bilingual. Even some people have forgotten their language and speak only Assamese. Both the Assamese and Roman scripts are used to write the language.

Notes:

¹ L. P. Vidyarthi and Binay Kumar Rai, *The Tribal Culture of India* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1976), 68-69.

² Binendra Kumar Gohain, *Continuity & Change in the Hills of Assam* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1994), 34.

³ Census of India 2001, *Assam*: "Data Highlights: The scheduled Tribes," New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General, India, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_assam.pdf (accessed March 12, 2008).

⁴ Census of India 2001, "Basic Data Sheet: District Marigaon (09), Asam (18)," http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Dist_File/datasheet-1809.pdf (accessed March 09, 2008) and Census of India 2001, "Basic Data Sheet: District Nagaon (10), Asam (18)," http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Dist_File/datasheet-1810.pdf (accessed March 09, 2008).

⁵ Rajmohan Nath, *The Background of Assamese Culture* (Gauhati: Dutta Baruah & Co., 1978), 77.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁷ Ganesh Chandra Sarma Thakur, *The Lalungs (Tiwas)* (Guwahati: The Director, Tribal research Institute, 1985), 2.

⁸ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, *The Lalungs* (Lucknow: S. Kumar and Associates, 1996), 6.

⁹ Rajmohan Nath, *op.cit.*, 112-113.

¹⁰ Binendra Kumar Gohain, *op.cit.*, 57.

¹¹ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, *op. cit.*, 7.

¹² Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, LBS 1st ed. (Guwahati: LBS Publications, 1983), 18.

¹³ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, *op.cit.*

¹⁴ Edward Gait, *op.cit.*, 119.

¹⁵ G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol II, reprint (Delhi:1967), quoted in Ganesh Chandra Sarma Thakur, *The Lalungs (Tiwas)* (Guwahati: Tribal Research Institute, 1985), 8.

¹⁶ Rajmohan Nath, *op.cit.*, 107-113.



Photo 1:
Main Gate of the
Jongal Balahu Garh
Fish Seed Farm



Photo 2:
Remaining of Jongal
Balahu Garh
Embankments (1)



Photo 3: Remaining
of Jongal Balahu
Garh Embankments
(2)



Photo 4: Map of Jongal Balahu Garh Fish Seed Farm

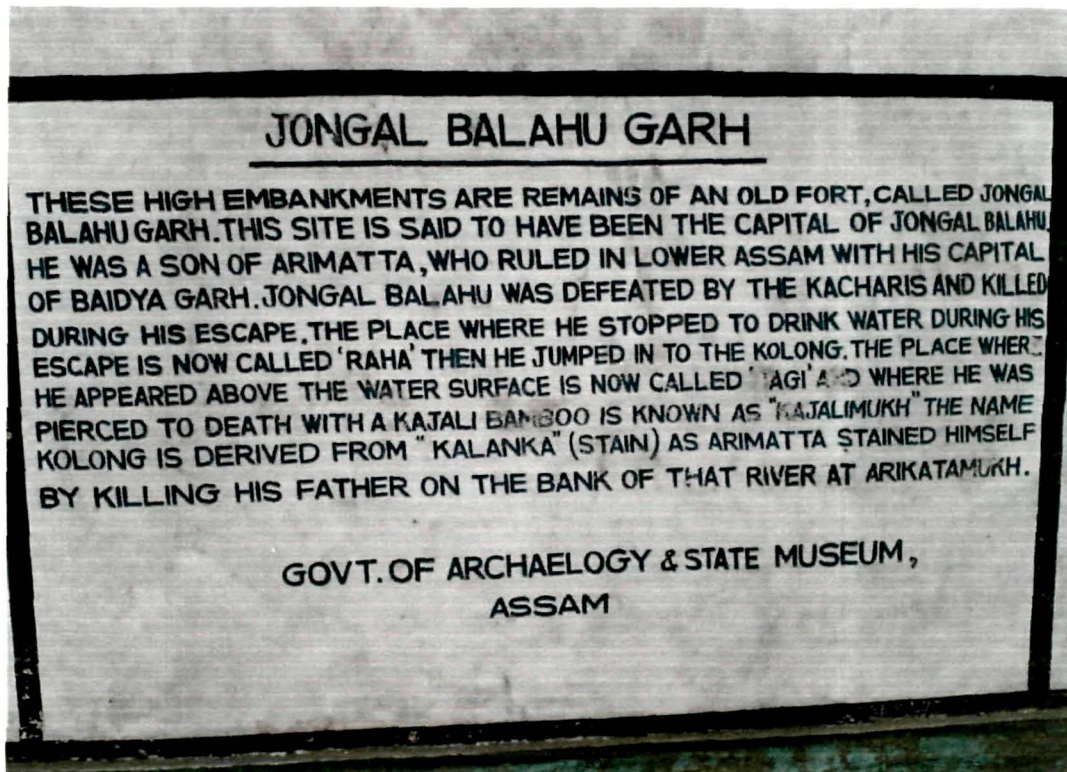


Photo 5: Archeological Evidence of Jongal Balahu Garh (English)

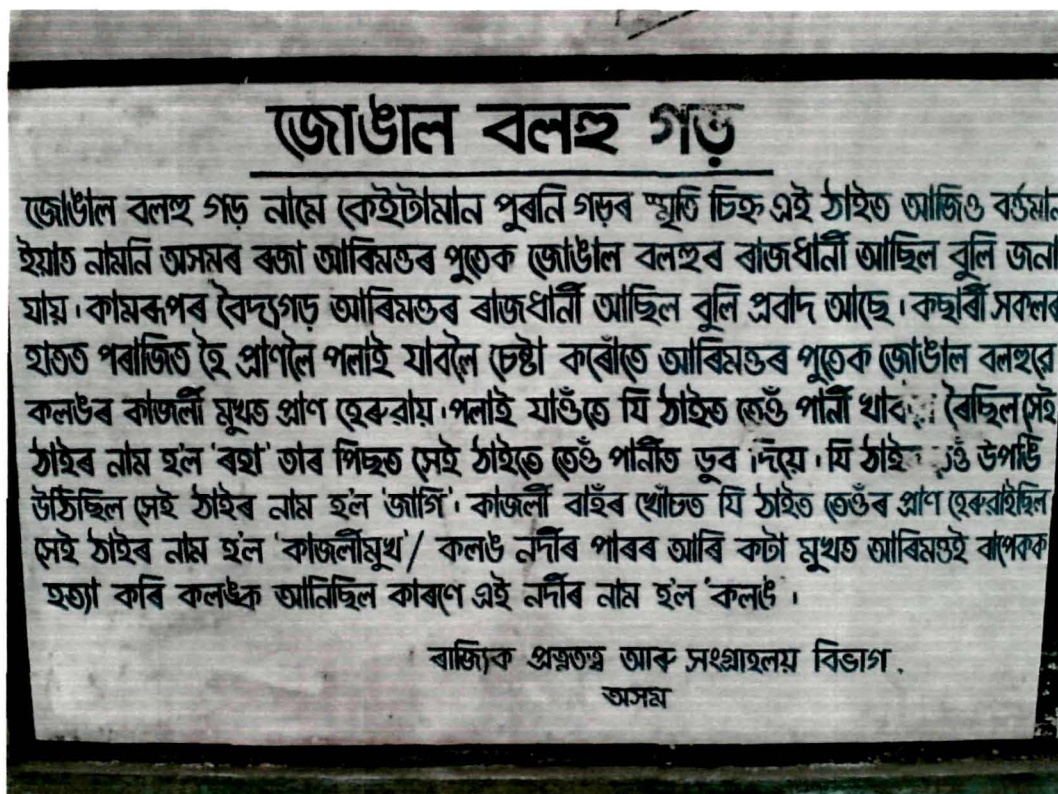


Photo 6: Archeological Evidence of Jongal Balahu Garh (Assamese)

NO. - 3		46'5 m X 24'8 m		0'11 "	
NO. - 4		48'0 m X 18'5 m		0'09 "	
TOTAL				0'43 HACT.	
GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM					
OFFICE OF THE FISHERY OFFICER : JONGAL BALAHU GARH FISH FARM					
RAHA • NAGAON • ASSAM					
BOUNDARY OF THE FARM -----					
		NORTH - GORMAJ VILLAGE.			
		SOUTH - NH-37 & LAWPHULABORI.			
		EAST - DIGHALIATI VILLAGE.			
		WEST - BOGORIGURI VILLAGE.			
TOTAL LAND AREA OF THE FARM -----		43'63 HACTORS.			
TOTAL WATER AREA OF THE FARM ---		20'80 HACTORS.			
TYPE OF TANKS WITH SIZE & NOS. --		TYPE OF TANKS : NOS : WATER AREA			
		(1) STOCKING TANK	20	20'00 HAC.	
		(2) MARKETING TANK	1	0'15 HAC.	
		(3) REARING TANK	4	0'43 HAC.	
		(4) NURSERY TANK	6	0'22 HAC.	
NOS. OF ECO-HATCHERY -----		1 UNIT.			
SIZE OF THE ECO-HATCHERY ---		NAME : SIZE : NOS			
		(1) WATER STORAGE	10'80 m X 4'00 m X 1'30 m	1 NO.	
		(2) HATCHING POOL	3'00 m dia X 1'20 m	3 NOS.	
		(3) BREEDING POOL	7'00 m dia X 1'20 m	1 NO.	
		(4) SPAWN STORAGE TANK	8'50 m X 3'50 m X 1'00 m	1 NO.	

Photo 7: Land Area of the Jongal Balahu Garh Fish Farm

Chapter 4.

Changes in Social Institution

4.1. Marriage

4.1.1. Marriage: The Concept

4.1.2. Marriage: The Forms

4.1.3. Changes in the Marriage System of the Tiwas

4.1.4. Present Scenario

4.2. Family

4.2.1. Family: The Concept

4.2.2. Changes in the Family of the Tiwas

4.3. Clan

4.3.1. Clan: The Concept

4.3.2. Changes in the Clan of the Tiwas

4.4. Conclusion

CHAPTER: 4

CHANGES IN SOCIAL INSTITUTION

A Social Institution can be defined as an organizational system which functions to satisfy basic social needs by providing an ordered framework linking the individual to the larger culture.¹ Social institutions are small units of a social system having cultural values. These small units carry the traditions of a particular cultural group as a result of which they survive. Changes in such small units can be result in the alteration of domestic and social spheres of a given culture. Marriage, family and clan are the institutions that best reflect such dynamics at work.

4.1. Marriage:

4.1.1. Marriage: The Concept:

Marriage can be defined as a socially and culturally recognized union between a male and female. Though such a definition can be taken as a universal definition of marriage, yet there are many problems to accept this as a universal norm as it does not address the situations relating to marriages universally. Many scholars have struggled to formulate a definition of marriage that would apply to all human societies, but it is difficult to arrive at a definition of marriage that will satisfy all situations in all societies as the meaning, functions and conditions are different in different societies. Regarding this matter Makhan Jha is of the opinion that the definitions related to the function such as the legitimating of children can not hold universally, because for any given function at least a few societies can be found that do not include it in marriage. On the other hand, a limited number of ends, including child rearing, economic partnership between husband and wife, and the formation of alliances between kin groups, are the characteristics of

marriage in many societies.² The words 'male' & 'female' also do not match with some marriage systems as a few societies allow someone to marry a member¹ of his or her own sex or even a ghost or spirit. For example, Azande society of Sudan allows a form of marriage based on homosexuality.³ Hence, it is difficult to arrive at a definition of marriage that will satisfy all situations in all societies. Karl G. Heider defines marriage as follows:

Marriage is the socially recognized union of a male and female marked by some sort of public wedding ceremony that establishes a family, a social unit whose functions are to regulate sexual activity, to produce and raise children with a particular social identity and cultural skills, and to constitute a basic economic unit.⁴

We can accept this definition of marriage as marriage is generally accepted as socially recognized union between male and female. Moreover, present study is also related to such type of marriage.

4.1.2. Marriage: The Forms:

Marriage is a universal institution found all over the world and its institutional forms have been accepted by all; however there are variations in form and nature. The system of marriage varies from culture to culture and society to society. There are variations even within a particular culture and to some extent within the same people and same society spread over different parts of a country. However, some of the common forms of marriage existed all over the world are- (i) Monogamy and (ii) Polygamy.

The forms of marriage depend upon the number of spouses involved in a marriage. If one marries a single person at any given time then it is called Monogamy. It has two sub-forms. Those are Serial Monogamy and Non-Serial Monogamy. In Serial Monogamy an individual has several spouses in succession after divorce and deceased of the mate. In Non-Serial Monogamy an individual has the same single spouse life long.

Polygamy is a form of marriage in which an individual has multiple spouses at any given time. It has three sub-forms. Those are Polygyny, Polyandry and Polygynandry. In Polygyny an individual has multiple wives at any given time. It has two sub-types: Sororal Polygyny and Non-Sororal Polygyny. In Sororal Polygyny the multiple wives of an individual are all sisters. In Non-Sororal Polygyny the multiple wives of an individual are not necessarily sisters. Polyandry is sub-form of Polygamy in which a woman has multiple husbands at any given time. It has three subtypes: Fraternal or Adelpthic Polyandry, Non-Fraternal or Non-Adelpthic Polyandry and Familial Polyandry. In Fraternal or Adelpthic Polyandry the multiple husbands of a woman are own brothers (off-spring of the same mother). In Non-Fraternal or Non-Adelpthic Polyandry the multiple husbands are either clan brothers or unrelated men. In Familial Polyandry the multiple husbands of a woman are father and son. Polygynandry is a sub-form of Polygamy in which a man has multiple wives and a woman has multiple husbands at any given time. It shows the coexistence of Polygyny and Polyandry.⁵

4.1.3. Changes in the Marriage System of the Tiwas:

Marriage is the accepted form of union between a man and woman among the Tiwas. Boys usually marry between the ages of 25 to 30 and girls 20 to 25. A union outside the marriage is supposed to be illegal. No illegal union, especially, incestuous relation gets social recognition; rather such relation is prohibited and considered to be 'taboo'. Sexual relations between close relatives, extra-marital affairs are considered by them as incestuous relation. Clan exogamy is strictly adhered to. They are generally monogamous although cases of polygamy cannot be ruled out. The cases of widow remarriage and divorce are few and far between, although there is no bar for a widow and a divorcee to enter into marriage alliance again. Presently four types of marriage are found among them. These are: (i) *Bar biya* (ii) *Joran biya* (iii) *Gobhia rakha biya* and (iv) *Poluai ana biya*.

(i) Bar biya:

The *Bar biya* or marriage by negotiation involves long drawn formalities and traditions. It is very expensive and generally educated & well to do families prefer this type of marriage. Here guardians of the prospective couple take the initiative. The *Borjela* (the head of the clan) played an important role in such marriage. Many traditions are associated with this type. They are as follows:

(a) *Bata Bhaga*: The boy's party carries one shoulder load (*Bhar*) of rice bear pot, betel leaves and nuts, *Bata* (a bamboo or cane made traditional plate with stand) and one basketful of rice cakes (*pitha*). Acceptance of this *Bhar* by the girl's father indicates his consent to the marriage.

(b) *Soa Sui*: On a fixed day the boy comes to the prospected bride's house to see her. The boy presents a gold ring to the girl and the girl reciprocates with a *Seleng Sadar* (a prestigious traditional cloth).

(c) *Kharumani phindhua bhar*: This is one of the formal stages of a *Bar biya*. On a stipulated date, the father of the boy accompanied by some villagers and relatives goes to the girl's house. The *Bhar* contains one pair of *Bata* full of betel leaves and nuts, one pot of rice beer, two big baskets of rice and two small gourds and a gold ring for the girl. When the girl's would be father-in-law hands over the ring to her, the girl bows before the elders and wears the ring in front of them.

(d) *Bar Bhar*: The boy's father with some companions visits the girl's house with a *Bhar* containing of 5 fowls , one big baskets of *Aangulipitha* (finger shaped rice cakes), one pot of *Zu* (rice beer), some betel leaves and nuts, two small gourds, two pairs of clothes and ornaments, just two or three weeks before the marriage. The girl's parents entertain all the invited guests and boy's party in a big feast. Items of the feast must include flesh of the five fowls brought from boy's house. On this day the date for *Khatira bhar* is fixed.

(e) *Khatira bhar*: This *Bhar* has much significance as they fixed the date of the marriage on this day. A party consisting of elderly relatives along with *Borjela* proceeds to the girl's house with a big *Bhar*, consisting of eatables. The *Borjela*'s of girl's and boy's village sit for a discussion regarding the marriage and fix a date for it. Earlier, the Bride price is also fixed by the *Borjelas* on this day. But, now a days, the system of bride price is totally vanished from the Tiwa villages.

(f) *Biya*: *Biya* continues for three days. Two days before the marriage the groom and the bride are ceremonially bathed in their respective houses. Marriage ritual is observed at the house of the bride on the third day. During the day sumptuous feasts are arranged for the villagers in both the households. *Zu* and pork are the essential items of the feast. In the evening the groom and his party and the *Borjela* proceed to the girl's house. The marriage procession preceded by a *Garakhia bhar* which contains one stack of banana (*Bhim kal*), one pot of milk, three pots of rice and some betel leaves and nuts. The elderly villagers gather at the girl's house and the bride and groom bow down before them who bless them for a happy conjugal life. After completing all necessary rituals, the couple returns to the groom's house.⁶

Now a days, all these extensive traditions are not observed by the Tiwas in their *Bar biya* system of marriages. They do not prefer this marriage system due to its expensive and extensive traditions. Those who observe this system usually effect changes. They generally celebrate it in Assamese Hindu style with the traditions like *Bata bhaga*, *Soa-sui*, *Joran* and *Biya*. Three types of wedding rituals are included in Assamese Hindu marriages. Those are (i) pre-wedding rituals- such as *Angothi pindhua* (ring ceremony or engagement) and *Joran* (pre-wedding ceremony). After receiving the consent from both sides *Angothi pindhua* ceremony is solemnized as engagement. *Joran* is solemnized just before the wedding day. On this day both the bride's and groom's family exchanges gifts for the bride and the groom. (ii) The wedding rituals- marriage is solemnized on the wedding day, where elaborate wedding

rituals are observed by both the families. (iii) Post-wedding rituals- such as *Khuba-khubuni* and *Aath-mongola*. *Khuba-khubuni* ritual is observed on the third day of the marriage. The marriage is consummated on this day. *Aath-mongola* ritual is solemnized after seven or eight days of the marriage. On this day the newly married couple visits the bride's family. It is the first formal visit of the new son-in-law to his in laws house. Now a days, it is found that such rituals are observed by the Tiwas too.

(ii) *Joran biya*:

This is an arranged marriage or marriage by negotiation. In this type of marriage the details of a *Bar biya* are not followed in toto. Generally poor people solemnized the marriage according to this type. When both the families agree to the marriage, a date is fixed for the *Joran* ceremony. On the stipulated date the boy's party proceeds to the girl's house with ornaments, dresses and three *Bhars* (two *bar bhars* and one *Garakhia bhar*), which contain *Anguli pitha*, *Sandah* (cake and other eatables prepared out of rice powder), pots of *Zu*, curd, molasses, betel leaves and nuts. The boy's family offers the dresses and ornaments to the girl's father. The bride is taken out to the place where the elderly villagers are sitting. The father of the girl gives her the dresses and ornaments and asks her to accept those in presence of all as acceptance of the clothes and ornaments amounts to consent to the marriage. The girl bows before the elders who bless her for happy conjugal life. After some entertainment the boy's party returns to the groom's house along with the bride which marks the end of the ceremony. This is the most popular form of marriage among the Tiwas due to its simple traditions and less expenses.

(iii) *Gobhiya rakha biya*:

The *Gobhia rakha* system of marriage or marriage by service signifies the existence of matrilineal system of inheritance in earlier times which has lost its significance at present. Generally, parents having only daughter prefers to have a *Gobhia*. If a boy maintains secret relationship with a girl and the parents of the girl when come to know about the secret liaison, the boy is

accepted as a *Gobhia* by them. Sometimes if a boy wants to marry a particular girl, he has to offer free physical labour in his would be in-laws house at least for one year. Then only the girl's parents give consent to that marriage. There are not much traditional rituals related to this kind of marriage. On a stipulated date the parents of the girl invite the villagers and entertain them with a small feast. After the feast the couple is taken inside the *Borghar* of the bride's clan and they bow before the villagers to take bless from them. The issues of such couple are regarded as the descendents of the mother's line. The boy ceases to have the property-right of his parental home. The girl gets the property right from her parents and remains in the same clan.

Now a days, *Gobhia rakha* system of marriage has been few and far between among the Tiwas. Now for the growing importance of patriarchal system in every society, staying as a *Gobhia* in the in law's house is looked down upon and the practice has lost its practical utility, and is thus on the verge of extinction. Now a *Gobhia* enjoys the inheritance of property in his in-laws house and his children are known by their father's line and they are considered to be the descendents of their father's clan. It signifies the recognition of the patriarchal system in present Tiwa society.

(iv) *Paluai ana biya*:

Poluai ana biya or marriage by elopement is most popular form of marriage among the Tiwas because this practice is to be found less expensive and less traditional procedures involved in it. Traditionally Tiwa marriages are held in this system and no social disgrace is attached to it. Moreover, it is the only way for the lovers to get married who do not get the consent of their parents. Earlier the marriage by elopement was followed by such rituals, namely *Sajati dekhua*, *Bhar cinga*, *Gharcina bhar* etc. and invariably the bride price too should have to be paid. Now a days, an elopement marriage has to be formalized by offering a feast to the fellow villagers and relatives of the boys. The bride price is not seen to be paid by the boy's family in this case.

Besides these marriage systems, some other types of marriages which are of late on the verge of extinction were also prevalent. Those are: (i) *Chowali dhari rakha or Balpurbak biya*, (ii) *Chowali dhari bandhi diya biya* and (iii) *Dhum biya*.

(i) *Chowali dhari rakha or Balpurbak biya:*

The *Chowali dhari rakha* or marriage by capture generally took place when the boy loves a girl and wants to marry her against her wishes and also against the wishes of the girl's family. Sometimes it also happens with the consent of the girl. In this marriage the boy takes away the girl by force with the help of his friends and marries her. Here also the boy's family has to entertain the villagers with a small feast and the couple takes blessings from the villagers. Thus, signaling the recognition to their conjugal life.

(ii) *Chowali dhari bhandhi diya biya:*

The *Chowali dhari bhandhi diya biya* or marriage by imposition by elders was another informal marriage prevalent among them. When a girl is given in marriage by force by her parents, it is called a *Chowali dhari baandhi diya biya*. Here, in this case, the consent of the girl or the boy has not been taken into consideration by their respective families. Because this type of marriage was performed by the villagers only to legitimize a secret and illicit relationship taking place in a village. The cases are now rare amongst them.

(iii) *Dhum biya:*

In this type of marriage the consent of the girl was not taken into consideration. When a girl crossed the preferable age limit of marriage or she developed a relationship with some one, then the elder member of the family arranged her marriage with anybody whenever they get the consent of that person. Here, it is generally seen that groom is an aged person or a widower.

4.1.4. Present Scenario:

From the above discussion it is clear that the Tiwas have many distinctive traditions associated with the marriage system. Some of them are very elaborate whereas others are simple. The elaborate traditions related to the *Bar biya*, *Joran biya* have been lessening day by day. Now, the Tiwas have given up some traditional practices associated with these formal marriage systems like carrying *Bhars* to bride's and groom's houses, wearing their own traditional dresses of bride and groom and following the traditional recipes of the feast. The practice of taking *Bhar* still exists with some changes. Now, a *Bhar* contains only areca-nuts and *Zu*. The ceremonies associated with their *Bar biya*, *Joran biya* and *Poluai ana biya* etc. are no more elaborate. Although, the traditions related to their formal marriage have been modified vastly. Now a days Tiwa marriages have been greatly influenced by Assamese Hindu marriage system. In many areas marriages are solemnized in the same way as Assamese caste Hindus do. This is true in case of those Tiwas who are the followers of Sankardeva as well as Krishna Guru. It is a living example of the ongoing process of assimilation and syncretism among the Tiwas.

Changes could be observed in case of recipes too. Ordinarily Tiwas do not favour spicy food but now a days spice is used in case of non-vegetarian preparations. Tea and snacks are also finding a place among the Tiwas in their social interactions.

The ceremonial dress of a Tiwa groom includes *Powal moni* (an indigenous bead) and *Gam kharu* besides other things. Now-a-days thing have changed a lot and now such insignias no longer adorn the body of a Tiwa groom. Changes have been observed in case of bride's dress too. A bride's traditional dress consists of *Jaskai or Phaskai*, *Thongali* and *Kamsa* etc. But now a days, they wear the silk *Cadar-mekhela* of Assamese caste Hindus. Earlier, they wore their colorful dress but now they wear the white dress like

Assamese caste Hindu bride and groom. These changes have taken place due to the assimilation with neighboring Assamese caste Hindu society.

Besides these changes, the other forms of informal marriages like *Chowali dhari rakhi pata biya* or *Bolpurbak biya*, *Soali dhari bhandhi diya biya* and *Dhum biya* have been totally abandoned.

So far as the marriage is concerned the clan-exogamy is still maintained. Clan endogamy is not encouraged at all but some relaxations have been found during the field study. Endogamous marriage is considered as *Gram-Cuwa* (defiling of village). They considered that endogamous marriages defile a village and for purification of the village a series of actions are prescribed. A case is found during the field work in Bundura village of Nagaon district. A boy married a girl of same clan by elopement. Whenever the villagers come to know about the incident they catch a couple of pigs from a household of the village and arranged a feast. Except the families of the boy and girl, all of the villagers are invited to the feast. At last the families of the boy and the girl are made to pay the entire expenses of the feast. They are also informed to pay an amount of fine as a penalty for the offence. Thereafter the girl is inducted into her maternal uncle's clan. Then both of the boy's and girl's families entertain the villagers with a feast and thus solemnized the marriage. The practice includes a penalty too. The couple pays obeisance to the villagers and invokes blessings from them.

Preferential marriage including cross cousin marriage⁷ is not in vogue amongst the Tiwas. Preferential marriages are often designed to promote inter-familial solidarity by making certain linkages imperative. For example, the MBD type marriage of the Karbis of Assam is a preferential marriage. The mother's brother's daughter (MBD) is the most preferred 'girl' for marriage amongst the Karbis. If a Karbi boy does not have his own maternal uncle, then the preference goes to the nearest maternal uncle's daughter. The cross cousin marriage, as a form of exogamy is often explained to be a device for avoiding

payment of a high bride price and also for maintaining property in one's own household. This type of marriage too is not found amongst the Tiwas. Example of taking bride price has become obsolete. But the groom has to pay an amount of money to the bride's family in his first visit to his father-in-law's house after marriage. It is as good as a bride price.

Levirate is not popular among the Tiwas. In this practice, a woman can marry her husband's brother (younger brother) after the death of her husband. This practice is same with the fraternal or adelphic polyandry. As the sisters-in-laws for them are like 'mothers', this practice is socially not encouraged at all. Unlike Levirate, Sororate is socially accepted but the examples are few and far between. Sororate is practice where several sisters are the spouses of the same man. The practice of Levirate and Sororate, which emphasize the acceptance of inter-familial obligations and the recognition of marriage as a tie between two families and not only between two individuals, has presently lost its practical utility.

Alliances with other tribal groups like the Karbis, the Boros, the Misings, the Dimasas and the Kacharis are considered as normal phenomena. Even marriages with non tribals are common now. Marriages with non- Tiwas are acceptable subject to observance of purificatory rites like *Gram-Cuwa* and paying a penalty to the village council. These types of marriages are generally marriages by elopement. Marriages with Assamese general caste Hindus i.e. Kalita and Keot have also been found.

There is no bar in marrying widows and divorcees though the cases are rare. In the case of widow remarriage the man has to pay a fine fixed by the villagers along with a fee for social acceptance of a widow-remarriage. However in some parts of Kamrup district, the practice of widow remarriage is prevalent without any fine and there is no bar on such a marriage.⁸ System of dowry is absent in Tiwa society. Hence, there is no question of inflicting torture for dowry. Also child marriage is unknown among them.

4.2. Family:

4.2.1. Family: The Concept:

Family can be regarded as a universal human phenomenon facilitated by marriage. It is the smallest social unit in a social structure. Murdock states as:

Family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually co-habiting adults.⁹

The members of the family are bound together by kinship relationship based on marriage and descent. These relationships are: between husband and wife, between parents and children; and among siblings (children of the same parents). The second and third kind of relationships need not necessarily be tied with blood as children are often adopted.¹⁰ Each society has its distinctive culture and tradition as a response to the natural and ideological environment. The family is the agency through which the impressionable rising generation is made familiar with such traditions. Transmission of the cultural traditions proceeds from generation to generation through enculturation process inside a family. Enculturation is simply described as a cultural learning process. Thus, family functions simultaneously as an educative as well as a socio-cultural unit in a society. The systematic classification or typology of the families can be constructed on the basis of the criterion or form of marriage.

4.2.2. Changes in the Family of the Tiwas:

Amongst the Tiwas, family is a closely knit unit which is the basis for a well coordinated social system. A Tiwa family includes mother, father and children. They have both primary and joint family system based on monogamous marriage. Families are of mainly Patrilocal. Besides a father, his wife and unmarried children, the same homestead may also be occupied by the married sons. Moreover, when there is a *Gobhia* son-in-law, then he also

can occupy the same homestead. The following diagrams will elaborate the point sufficiently:

Kinship Symbols: \triangle :- Male (Father/ Son)
 \circ :- Female (Mother/ Daughter)
 = :- Affinal or Marital tie
 — :- Consanguineal tie
 | :-Line of Descent

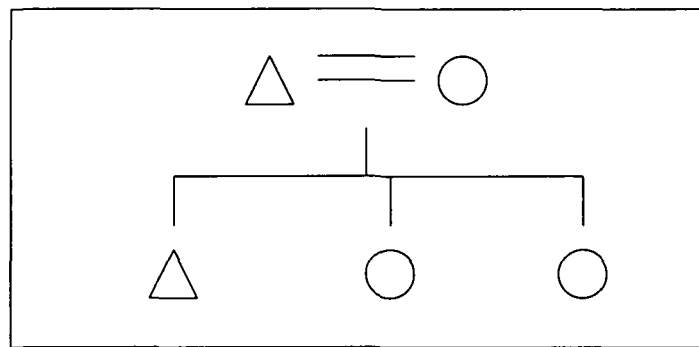


Fig. 6: Diagram of the Nuclear Family of the Tiwas

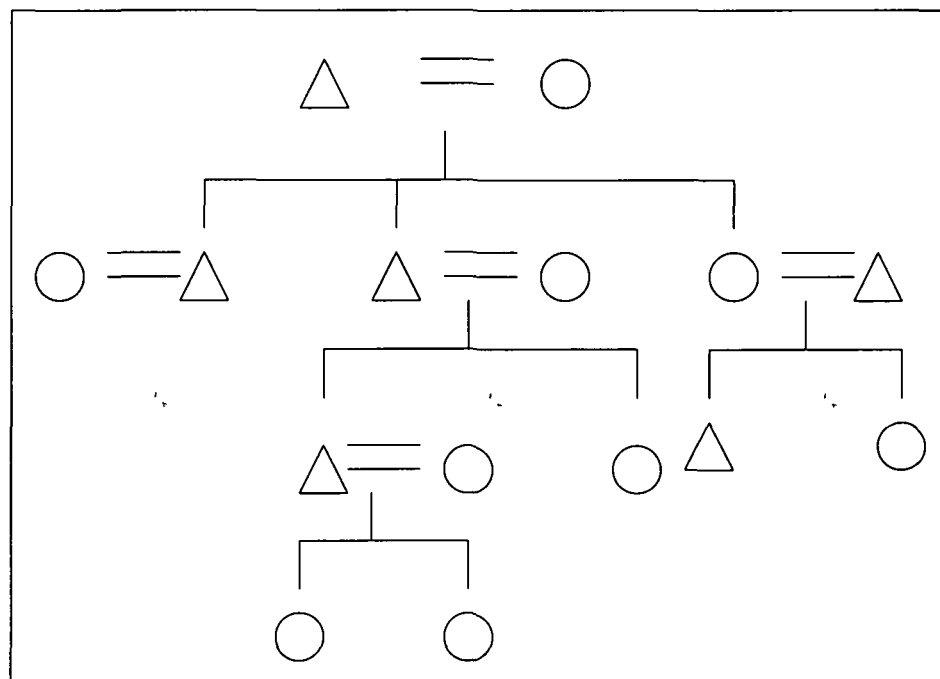


Fig. 7: Diagram of the Joint or Extended Family of the Tiwas

Both nuclear and joint or extended families are found amongst the Tiwas. The instances of joint families are less in comparison to nuclear families. The tendency to form a nuclear family has increased mainly after the later half of the twentieth century. It has something to do with the present economic system of the country. Matriliney has lost its importance which was traced through the *Gobhia Rakha* system of marriage. Now a days, the instances of *Gobhia Rakha* have become few and far between, thus the institution of matriliney is on decline. Patriarchy has gained its importance in Tiwa society. The father is the head of the family. All authority is vested on him and the lineage or descents are traced by him. Even in the nuclear family formed by the *Gobhia Rakha* system of marriage, the *Gobhia* is the head of the family. The inheritance of property gained from his in-laws house is enjoyed by him and the lineage or descent is traced by him. It signifies the recognition of the patriarchal system in present Tiwa society.

There is close co-operation between male and female in their daily walk of life in a family. Both husband and wife contribute to the maintenance of the family, but there is division of labour based on gender. Husband goes out for ploughing the paddy field, harvesting the paddy, carrying the paddy to home. Fishing, hunting and taking care of the domestic animals are men's domain. Wife's responsibilities include transplanting and harvesting, fishing and attending household chores including child care etc. Houses are built by men and women maintain them. The role of the wife in a family is important and responsible. Her main jobs include cooking, weaving and child rearing. The Tiwa women command high respect from their male counterparts.

Children hold an important position in a family. Of late, male children enjoy more importance in the society as compared to the past. There is also division of labour for male and female children. Male children help father in his work while female children help her mother in household works. These divisions are traced also from their age old traditions related to the birth of new born babies. While a male baby is born in a Tiwa family, then a pair of

bow and arrow is given in his hand with these utterances “Your battle field is outside the home”. In the case of a girl child a sickle and some parts of loom are given with these utterances “Your battle field is inside the home”. This tradition has symbolic meaning that reflects the inherent gender role. This practice reflects the expectations of parents from their children, which too is a construction of their cultural norms. They hope that boy should become a brave, strong and powerful person and the girl should be expert in weaving and household work in their future life.

Succession and inheritance of property bring about gender discrimination. Tiwa society used to follow a matrilineal system of inheritance in the past. However, it is no more in vogue now a days. Matriliney is practised by those limited few who keep ‘*Gobhia*’. Here the son-in-law cuts off all connections with his own family and lives with his wife in her house. In such cases the property goes from mother to daughter. But the son-in-law also enjoys the property right subject to the consent of his wife if he wants to transfer it. Under the prevailing patrilineal system of the Tiwas, the daughters do not inherit the property. The inheritance of the property is enjoyed by the male child after the father. Apart from the jointly owned family property, the individual members can acquire personal property. Earlier the property right was enjoyed by the female lineage. Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri wrote that:

The inheritance is through the male line among the Lalungs in the plains. In the hills, it is through the female line. The youngest daughter receives all the property after the death of the mother. The mother-in-law, when alive and residing in the house, is the head of the family. After the death of the mother, the youngest daughter becomes the next head.¹¹

The adopted children also enjoy equal property right with other children. The issueless parents generally adopt children from their own family. Two cases of adoption were found during the field visit. In both the cases the child was adopted from their own relatives. One couple has adopted their elder brother’s son and another couple has adopted their elder brother’s daughter. They are now the legal parents of the adopted children.

4.3. Clan:

4.3.1 Clan: The Concept:

Almost the entire tribal group of India has reported the existence of clan organization. Clan is an exogamous group of selected kins by birth which comes next to family. The members of the clan can not change their clan by choice. It is only a pattern of unilateral social relationship within the tribe.

Karl G. Heider states:

Clans ... are a larger unilineal descent group in which people believe that they can trace their descent back to some founding ancestor and therefore have a sense of collective identity. However, the line of descent is only assumed and can not be reconstructed. Clans are generally exogamous, marriage being forbidden between members of the same group. A distinction is often made between groups that are territorially bounded and own property in the name of the group is called clan.¹²

As clans are mainly exogamous, it plays an important role in settlement of marriage. Thus a clan performs many important functions in the tribal society not only at the level of negotiating marriages but also at the level of organizing ceremonies, rituals, fairs and festivals which are performed at the clan level.

4.3.2. Changes in the Clan of the Tiwas:

As it has been mentioned earlier, the Tiwas have twelve exogamous clans which have different sub clans. Those are as follows:

Clan	Sub clan
1. <i>Macharang</i>	<i>Machereng, Magor</i>
2. <i>Madur</i>	<i>Ladur, Puru, Sagara</i>
3. <i>Maloi</i>	<i>Fangsong, Pumbe (Puma)</i>
4. <i>Dafor</i>	<i>Mithi, Lomfoi</i>
5. <i>Sukai</i>	<i>Kharai</i>
6. <i>Amfli</i>	<i>Aagara, Chanchara</i>
7. <i>Lasa</i>	<i>Mithi</i>

8. <i>Chalang</i>	<i>Muni, Melang</i>
9. <i>Amchong</i>	<i>Amchi</i>
10. <i>Kakhor</i>	<i>Aagari</i>
11. <i>Darnong</i>	<i>Damlong, Kholre</i>
12. <i>Lorom</i>	<i>Lorom Ali</i>

All the clans mentioned above are not found during the field visit. The clans mainly found during the field visits are *Ladur, Madur, Kholar, Khargol, Amchong, Pumbal, Samrang, Fasun, Sampol, Lorom Ali* and *Khorali*. It is observed during the field work that all these clans have variation in the celebrations of their ceremonies, rituals, fairs and festivals which are performed at the clan level. The traditions and customs related to these rituals and ceremonies are not same across clans.

Every clan has their separate *Borghars* and religious heads known as *Ghorbura* or *Borjela* and *Hari-kuwanri*. Cognate families of same clan unite in one cluster known as *Bangsha* or *Khuta*. The *Borghar* and *Khuta* system plays a vital role in cultivating and regulating the domestic and social sphere of culture of the cognate families of same clan. It still plays as strong means of enculturation within the clan. *Borjela* and *Hari-kuwanri* play a vital role in religious and cultural affairs. No religious ceremony can be performed within the clan without the presence of *Borjela* and *Hari-kuwanri*. Among all the cited clans the *Ladur* clan or *Bangsha* is regarded as superior and known as *Gurukul*. Hence, the *Ghorbura* or *Borjela* of this clan or *Bangsha* can perform all the religious ceremonies of other clans. There is another institution made by different *Bangsha* or *Khuta* (clan) is known as *Khel* system. One village may have different *Khels*. Generally, village level ceremonies and festivals are organized by the *Khels*.

Clan exogamy is still maintained by them. The cases of clan endogamy and marriage with other caste are also socially accepted. But it is accepted after performing a purificatory rite and payment of fine as penalty to the village⁴ council. Due to the on going process of syncretism and assimilation with the Assamese Hindu section, inter caste marriages mainly with Tiwas are

taking place in Assamese Hindu villages too. It is found during the field visit that Tiwa girls are married to Assamese Hindu youths of neighbouring villages. These marriages are mostly marriage by elopement. In Assamese Hindu villages also these types of marriages are accepted after observing a purificatory rite which is followed by a community feast.

Earlier the clans are mainly matrilineal. It is evident from having matrilocal families formed by *Gobhia rakha* system of marriages. In such types of marriages descent are traced through mother's lineage and the succession and inheritance of property is also enjoyed by the mother's lineage. As already mentioned, patriliney has gained its importance in present Tiwa society; clans are now patrilineal and inheritance of property is also enjoyed by the father's lineage. The existence of matriliney is evident from the functioning of the *Hari Kuwari* as a religious head. She cannot go over to her husband's clan. The *Hari Kuwari* must remain in the same *Bangsha* or clan even after her marriage. In other words her husband must be a *Gobhia*. Moreover, the *Hari Kuwari* officiates in *Pinda-dan* ritual related to death ceremony known as *Karam*. The *Karam* is a community purification ceremony after death in which the pending death ceremonies of the families of a *Bangsha* are solemnized jointly in the *Borghar*. *Hari Kuwanri* offers *Pinda* (cooked food, meat etc.) in the names of the dead persons on whose behalf the *Karam* is held. In patrilineal society this right is enjoyed by the male person mainly the elder son of the deceased. Presently due to the assimilation with the other neighbouring patrilineal society this ritual in plain Tiwa society is performed by the elder son of the dead person.

4.4. Conclusion:

All living cultures or societies have their own distinctive cultures and traditions. With the passage of time these traditions march in to other directions of change. Some traditions and rituals remain intact and some have changed along with the changing time. Influence of other neighbouring

communities and the contemporary economic and social conditions are also responsible for this. In the case of traditional marriage system, family type and clan organization, the influence of neighbouring non-Tiwa Hindu groups and present economic and social conditions are factors that play a vital role. Modes of marriages are determined according to the economic conditions of people. Although the *Joran biya* and *Poluai ana biya* are popular among them, the rich section of the Tiwas still prefers the *Bar biya* system of marriage but with changed form. Selection of marriage system depends on the economic condition as well as education of the people. Educated and rich section prefers *Bar biya* system of marriage, but the illiterate and poor section of the people prefers the *Poluai ana biya* and *Joran biya*.

Matriliny has lost its ground and patriliney has gained its importance now. The matrilineal residence is gradually giving space to patrilineal residence. The traditional joint family has changed over to the nuclear family during the last three decades. Patriarchy is the prominent feature in the Tiwa family now. Even the *Gobhia* also enjoys the right of the inheritance of property. From the earlier time the division of labour has been maintained in the family. Clan exogamy is still maintained but with some relaxation. Marriages have taken place with other non tribal communities. As both of the Tiwa and non Tiwa villages are influenced by each other, the syncretic process is well and truly underway.

Notes:

¹ "Social Institutions", <http://www.tomcravens.com/inst.html> (accessed October 17, 2008).

² Makhan Jha, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. 2nd Rev. ed. (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1999), 63.

³ Ibid. 63-65.

⁴ Karl G. Heider, *Seeing Anthropology: Cultural Anthropology through Film* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 194.

⁵ Ibid. 71-72.

⁶ Ganesh Chandra Sharma Thakur, *The Lalungs(Tiwas)* (Guwahati: Tribal Research Institute, 1985).

⁷ Cross-Cousin Marriage is a marriage between the children of brothers and sisters. It is of two types: one is Mother's Brother's Daughter (MBD) and the other is Father's Sister's Daughter (FSD).

⁸ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, *The Lalungs* (Lucknow: S. Kumar and Associate, 1996), 61.

⁹ George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 1.

¹⁰ D. N. Majumdar and T.N. Madan, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, 12th ed. (Noida: Mayoor Paperbacks, 1999), 45.

¹¹ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, op.cit. 40.

¹² Karl G. Heider, op.cit. 178.

Chapter 5.

Changes in Socio-Political Life

5.1. Changes in Social Life:

5.1.1. The Traditional Village Level Organizations of the Tiwas

5.1.2. Structures and Functions of the Traditional Village Level Organizations and the Changing Trends

5.2. Political Organizations and Changes

5.2.1. The Traditional Political Field of the Tiwas

5.2.2. The Contemporary Political Field of the Tiwas

5.2.3. Changing Scenario: From the Traditional to Contemporary Political Field

5.3. Conclusion

CHAPTER: 5

CHANGES IN SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE

In this chapter, discussion focuses on gradual changes in the field of socio-political life of the Tiwas. There are different types of traditional social and political organizations based on traditional laws and customs which provide self-sufficiency and unity. Some of the institutions are based on clan lineage and others are based on group of the villagers. They signify the general characteristics of tribal political system. Different village level social organizations have different structures and functions. Besides providing unity, self-sufficiency in the lives of the Tiwas, these organizations play a vital role in village level judiciary, cultural, religious and economic life. Some of these institutions are political and religious nature and some are both cultural & economic in character. These organizations are the important part of tribal life. Every village has its own such organizations. The tribal political structure can be divided into two types: Traditional political field and Contemporary political field. The Tiwas too have these traditional and contemporary political structures. These two types have different sub types. Due to the changes in culture and modern democratic set up their traditional socio-political structures are changing along with their growing political consciousness.

5.1. Changes in Social Life:

5.1.1. The Traditional Village Level Organizations of the Tiwas:

The traditional village level organizations of the Tiwas are: (a) *Deka-khel or Chamadi* (the council of youth or bachelor's dormitory), (b) *Burha-khel* (the council of elders), (c) *Doloi or Gaonburha* (the traditional village chief), (d) *Borkhel-bichar* (a judicial council) and (e) *Hadari khel* (a working group).

These are secular in nature. These organizations are run by many office bearers selected from among the villagers.

The *Deka-khel* or *Chamadi* is an organization of all young men above fourteen years of age. Regarding the meaning of the word *Chamadi*, *cha* means 'boys' and *madi* means 'enjoyment'.¹ The officials of the *Chamadi* are selected by the *Burha-khel*.

The *Doloi* or *Gaonburha* is the head of the village. He is selected by the villagers on the basis of organizing capabilities and community wisdom. He presides over the *Mel* (meeting) of the village elders held to try the petty cases. The *Mel* can inflict punishment on the offenders.

The *Burha-khel* consists of eight members and is a higher judicial authority in the village. The members are selected from the *Deka-khel* who enjoys life-membership in the *Burha-khel*.

The *Borkhel-bichar* is the most popular and prominent rural judicial institution prevalent among the plain Tiwas. They are governed by the customary laws.

Before the advent of the British the Tiwas had their own independent *Rajas* (king) who enjoyed the highest judicial authority. The *Raja* was helped in exercising his judicial power by his subordinate officers such as *Bardololi*, *Konwar*, *Patar*, *Barbarua*, *Dhaliya*, *Dalia* and *Paik*. All these ranks were hereditary.

The *Hadari-khel* is a group of young girls in a village. The assistance of *Hadari-khel* is generally sought in agricultural operations. Community feeling and mutual co-operation are the two guiding factors behind the *Hadari-khel*.

Besides these secular organizations, non-secular organizations too can be found in Tiwa villages. They are run by three office bearers; namely, *Loro*, *Ghorburha* or *Borjela* and *Hari kunwari*.² *Loro* is the priest of the village. The *Ghorburha* or *Borjela* is a religious head of *Borghar* or head of the clan. This post of *Borjela* is hereditary. *Hari kunwari* is a lady religious head. She may be either a married or an unmarried woman.

5.1.2. Structures and Functions of the Traditional Village Level Organizations and the Changing Trends:

The functions of the traditional village level organizations can be classified into categories like (a) Judiciary (b) Economic (c) Cultural & (d) Religious. The traditional structure and functions of the traditional village level social organizations of the Tiwas can be arranged in following ways (Fig. 8:). Among these institutions, some institutions play economic role, some play both judiciary and economic roles and some play socio-religious & socio-cultural functions.

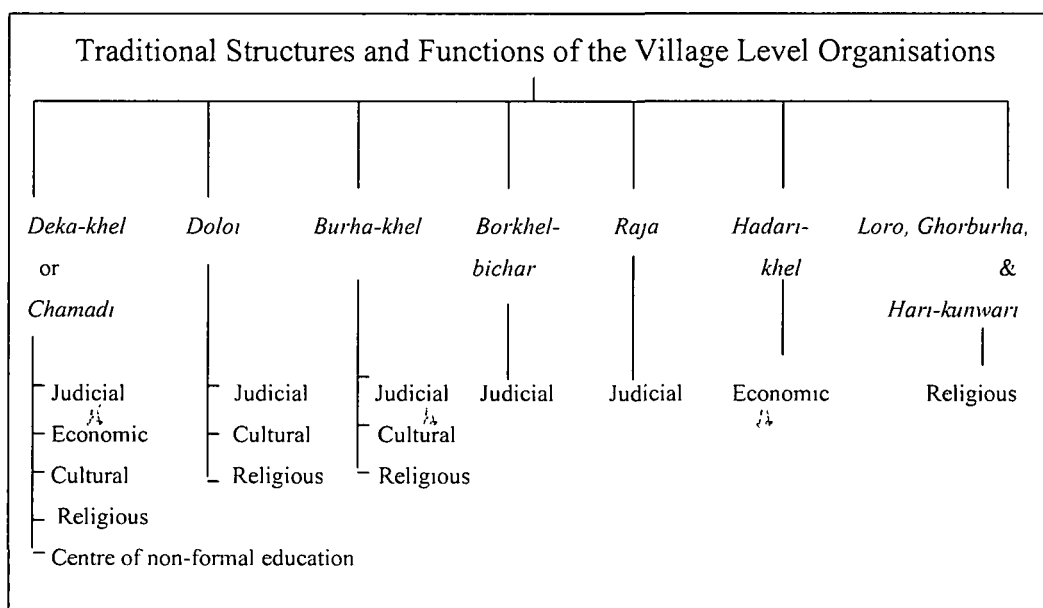


Fig. 8 : Traditional Structures and Functions of the Village Level Organisations of the Tiwas

(a) Judicial Functions: The traditional social organizations of the Tiwas play a vital role in the village judiciary system. The traditional judiciary system is quite effective and powerful among them. This can be arranged in ascending order of importance: *Deka-khel* or *Chamadi*, *Doloi* or *Gaonburha*, *Burha-khel*, *Borkhel-bichar* and *Raja*.

The *Deka-khel* or *Chamadi* holds the lowest position in the ascending order of the organizational structure of the village judicial system having different responsibilities. *Chamadi* is a large house situated in a village which is constructed on posts about two meters above the ground. It is an open house that is constructed by bamboos, canes and woods (Photo: 8). A festival *Kheljawa* is celebrated in the *Chamadi* during the time of the entry of new boys and exit of the old boys. Normally, after every six years a new dormitory is constructed with the celebration of *Kheljawa* festival. But presently it is celebrated almost after every thirty or forty years when the dormitory needs to be reconstructed. The organization of *Deka-khel* exists among both the hill and plain Tiwas and is manifest in the form of bachelors' dormitory. Earlier, the officials of the *Deka-khel* or *Chamadi* were divided into three distinct groups: the (i) *Kharkia-panthai* (the junior group), (ii) *Panthai* (the middle group), and the (iii) *Khra-panthai* (the senior group). The junior group was expected to follow a strict code of conduct and performed all the work under the directions of *Changdoloi* (the head of the *Deka-khel* or *Chamadi*) while the senior group supervised both the junior groups and played music. The main duty of the junior group was to keep an eye on the conduct of both the senior groups and also of the villagers. If anybody did something wrong in or out side the village then the members of junior group used to inform it to the *Changdoloi*.

These structures of the dormitory and officials are still being maintained in the hills but in the plain areas they have been changed. Changes have taken place in both the structure of the dormitory and the functions of officials. All the Tiwa villages may not have dormitories. Even where there

are dormitories, they are with changed pattern and functions. They construct it on the ground with the help of bamboo, wood, brick, sand and cement. These types of dormitory houses have been seen in three villages Nambor Lalung gaon, Gurigaon-Banpar Kisam and Silsang during the field study (Photo: 9, 10 & 11). They call it as *Xa-Chamadi* (*xa* means land and *Chamadi* means dormitory). In Silsang area the dormitory house is made in modern style though it is constructed above the ground with help of brick and cement etc. (Photo: 11 & 12). The *Thuna khuta* (the middle post of the *Chamadi*) is also found in different shapes. It is a symbol of a phallus, which represents power and fertility. The dormitory officials worship it as a *Sivalinga* (Photo: 12 & 13). Another change that can be noticed in the dormitory is its officials. The dormitories of the plains have only one group now and that group performs the role of all the three groups that are seen in the dormitories of the hills. Earlier, the council of elder or *Burha-khel* and the village chief selected the members of the *Deka-khel* (which is now known as *Deka-xari*) on the day of *Kheljawa* festival. But now any one can be a member of *Chamadi* or *Deka-xari* at any time by offering a *Manoni* (an amount of fee offered with betel nut and betel leaf) to the *Changdoloi*. The leaders *Changdoloi* and *Changmajhi* (the assistant of *Changdoloi*) exercise full control over the boys of the village. Besides other responsibilities, the officials of this institution have to keep an eye on all the villagers and they need to keep the *Changdoloi* informed from time to time of everything that happens in the village. Generally the officials of the dormitory settle the small disputes or other misconducts of the dormitory inmates. If they fail to settle a case then they refer it to the village chief or *Doloi* or *Gaonburha*.

The position of *Doloi* or *Gaonburha* is one step higher than the *Changdoloi* and *Changmajhi*. The position of *Gaonburha* is coveted and prestigious one. In each village there is a *Gaonburha* and he is selected by the villagers. He has the authority to settle intra-village disputes such as conflicts among individuals and give punishment for any socially prohibited act as per the provision of customary laws. He takes decision after discussing the matter

with the council of village elders or *Burha-khel*. Earlier, the Tiwa kings depended heavily on the *Gaonburha* for internal administration of the villages and used to consult with him on all important matters. But nowadays this advantage is enjoyed by both the *Gaonburha* and *Loro*. The *Loro* takes part in the meetings of the *Burha-khel* for settling disputes, announces the punishment.

The council of elders or *Burha-khel* is a higher judicial body in a village. Earlier it consisted of eight members, but now there is no hard and fast rule as to the number of members. But the members must be a *Borjela*. The main function of this council is to settle intra-village disputes and to look after the general welfare of the village. The council takes cognizance of a wrong done in the village when complaint is received through the traditional village chief. The village priest (*Loro*) announces the decision of the council. In this connection mention may be made to S. K. Agnihotri's comment given in his book *The Lalungs* (1996). He writes:

The cases usually submitted for decision to the council are minor sexual offences, offences relating to property, defamation etc. Through its decisions in such cases, the council wuld considerable influence over the inter-personal relationships in the village. But such influence it not all pervasive; it works as a check and balance in the institution of village chief.

While the council of the elders is highest secular authority in the village with judicial powers, the executive powers are vested in the village chief aided by the officials of the *deka-khel* wherever necessary. Although decision on disputes are taken by the council of elders, such disputes are brought to the notice of the council by the village chief who is also responsible for implementing the decisions taken. The Chief is also responsible for releasing and maintaining an account of fines imposed by the council.³

The council of the elder still functions as a higher judicial body in a village. Although it is now known as *Burha-xari*, but the functions are same as cited above.

Another rural judicial institution is *Borkhel-bichar*. This body is now on the verge of extinction. In earlier days when this institution was in practice, it was constituted by the elderly people of different *Khels*.⁴ This institution used to settle disputes in a meeting of the *Borjelas* of various clans. The decision of *Borkhel-bichar* was announced by the *Bichar-majhi* (chief judge). This organization was similar to the *Baro-goya-bichar* (a judicial council) existing in Assamese villages. It is a council of elderly people of different villages. Generally inter village problems are discussed in *Borkhel-bichar*. The function of this organization can easily be understood from the comment of S. K. Agnihotri. He writes:

...anybody contravening the *Borkhel-bichar* is ex-communicated from the village. There are very few cases of disobedience of the orders of *Borkhel-bichar*. There is no system of appeal against this decision. The cases decided upon the *Borkhel-bichar* includes misbehavior, the violation of any social norm by the priest or an officer of the king, laxity in offering to duties on the part of persons who are assigned such duty, and other activities against the interest of the village. The *Borkhel-bichar* also decides upon cases of narrating not approved by the custom. The fine imposed on a boy for marrying a lower caste girl belonging to kaiborta, hari and bania is also finalized in a *Borkhel-bichar*.⁵

But now the function of this organization is played by the *Burha-xari*. Before the advent of the British, the erstwhile Tiwa Kings used to enjoy the highest judicial power. He was responsible for administering justice according to the traditional system. Kholā, Neli, Sahari, Gobha are some of the small principalities where there were Kings. When all the above institutions failed to settle cases, then the matters were brought to the King who gave the final verdict. The duty of the King was to settle disputes between villages. But now the Tiwa kings have ceased to enjoy the judicial power. This is due to the expansion of modern democratic system of administration. Though there are still Tiwa kings in some ancient Tiwa-inhabited areas like Gobha and West Nagaon they enjoy only symbolic status and power. The King of Gobha and West Nagaon themselves admitted that they are now King only in name and

thus have become cultural symbol of their society. Now, they are honoured as kings during the *Jonbil mela*. (See photos of Chapter: 7)

At present, *Deka-xari or Chamadi, Loro, Gaonburha* and *Burha-xari* are to be found in the Tiwa villages of the plains. Among these, the *Burha-xari* enjoys the highest position in the village judiciary system. Now the hierarchy of these organizations in the village judiciary system can be arranged in ascending order as *Deka-xari or Chamadi, Dolo or Gaonburha, Loro and Burha-xari*. Tiwas are found to attach much adherence to their socially accepted customary laws and the decisions of the juries of the traditional social institutions are followed in right earnest. Many of such disputes are found to be disposed of without referring to the civil judiciary. This reflects the existence of a well-organized judicial system among the Tiwas. During the field visits, present researcher had come to know that a property dispute of Nambor village was settled in the village. A plot of land was bought by a villager, but the plot was illegally occupied by a non tribal villager. The tribal villager lodged an FIR to the nearest police Thana. But the police referred the case to the *Burha-xari*. The *Burha-xari* recovered the plot from the illegal occupant and thus settled the case.

(b) Economic Functions: On the other hand the *Chamadi or Deka-xari* and the *Hadari-khel* play an important role in the economic activities of the village.

The dormitory inmates are responsible for rendering help in agricultural activities to any family of the village at the time of need. Any villager may seek the help of *Changdolo* for cultivation of his land. The members of dormitory help the villager in cultivating his paddy field. For this, the dormitory inmates take a nominal charge from the villager. Money collected in this manner will be kept deposited to organize the next *Kheljawa* festival. Moreover, manual labour is offered by the members of the dormitory on occasions like community *pujas* and marriage ceremonies in the village.

The dormitory offered opportunity to its members to learn about the skills of the community thus passing the traditional knowledge from earlier generation to the next generation. In the dormitory the boys use to learn how to construct a house and to carve designs and figures on it. They learn to make different types of traditional wooden, cane and bamboo crafts like mat, baskets, furniture. This way they not only earn their livelihood but also contribute to the dormitory fund.

In some places there are separate paddy fields for dormitory inmates. The harvest is stored in a separate granary at the disposal of the *Changdolo*. The product belongs to all and is used in the common festivals of the village. The product is consumed on festive occasions. The produce is also given on loan to the needy villagers. During the field work, examples of this kind were experienced in Guri gaon-Banpar kisam. The *Chamadi* of this village has a separate granary. (Photo: 10)

Another institution that helps in economic activities of the villagers is *Hadari-khel*. It is a working group of young girls and young boys. The assistance of the *Hadari-khel* of girls is generally sought in agricultural operations like sowing, planting and harvesting of paddy and for plastering of walls of new houses. Moreover, they render help in making traditional textiles in their looms. The girls who need not attend to domestic chores constitute this group. Generally, the duty is shared equally by all member of the group. Any girl of that group can receive a request from a household. Earlier, the *Changdolo* used to receive the request for rendering help in the households and he himself used to select the girls for *Hadari-khel* of the girls and boys for the *Hadari-khel* of the boys. The assistance of the *Hadari-khel* of the boys is generally sought in agricultural operations like ploughing the paddy field, harvesting the paddy and carrying the paddy to household. Earlier, help was rendered to the needy villagers without taking money. But the villagers had to offer rice beer and feast to them. This tradition is known as *Haori-mata*. This practice is still prevalent. Nowadays, both boys and girls of the *Hadari-khels*

charge some amount from the villagers in lieu of their help. Both the groups consist of six to eight members.

(c) Religious Functions: Besides these functions, the traditional village level organizations of the Tiwas function over religious matters too.

The *Loro*, *Ghorburha or Borjela and Hari-kunwari* are the three religious heads, without which there cannot be any religious ceremony in the village and *Borghar*. The *Loro* presides over all of the religious functions of the village. He is assisted by *Hadari* and *Changdolo*. The *Ghorburha or Borjela* presides over the *Pujas* held in *Borghars* and offers oblations to the ancestors of a *Bargsha* or *Khuta*. They take part in all types of religious ceremonies with the help of selected official from *Burha-xari and Deka-xari*. *Hari-kunwari* renders help in all of the *pujas* celebrated in the *Borghars*. Generally, she prepares all the offerings for the deities and ancestors in the *Borghar*.

The officials of *Deka-xari or Chamadi*, *Burha-xari* and also the *Doloi* render help to the villagers in all types of ceremonies and function related to birth, death and marriage. They also render help to the village people in household *Pujas* and ceremonies. Nowadays some changes have taken place in the plain Tiwa villages.

There is a group of six elderly persons called *Oja-khel*. All the members of this group are supposed to be good singers as well as experts in playing musical instruments. The main duty of this group is to play music and dance during festivals and religious ceremonies. The boys of *Deka-xari* learn music, songs and dance from the members of *Oja-khel* in the *Chamadi* during festival season. The chief of this group is known as *Oja-khel-baro*.

(d) Cultural Functions: The officials of *Chamadi* the officials of *Burha-xari* and *Doloi* play an important role in Socio-cultural activities. The officials of

village institutions play important roles in organizing festivals. Some of the important festivals are: *Kheljawa*, *Jongkhong* (a festival related to agriculture), *Sagra-mechewa* (a spring festival) and *Bisu or Bihu* etc. The *Deka-xari*, under the leadership of *Changdolo* has an important role in the festivals in providing music & dance. The members of *Burha-xari* also perform music and dances in festivals. In the *Sagra-mechewa* festival the members of *Burha-xari* perform a peculiar type of dance and music. The members of *Deka-xari* have to learn it only during the time of performance at the festival. Normally, they can learn or rehearse other dances or music in any time and at any place. The members of the dormitory have different responsibilities in different festivals. Moreover, boys learn different types of dances, music, songs, related to their culture in the dormitory. This function of the dormitory is found to be more prevalent in the plain Tiwa villages.

Among all these social institutions *Chamadi* plays a vital role in the life of the Tiwas. The contribution of *Chamadi* can be noticed in every sphere of their life viz. village judiciary, cultural life, economic life and religious life. Moreover, *Chamadi* functions as a centre of non-formal education in earlier times. Boys get vocational training, agricultural knowledge, knowledge about community life, economic activities and everything necessary for their future from the senior members of the *Chamadi*.

Nowadays the dormitory seems to be a pale shadow of its past glory. Now, in the plains boys do not stay in dormitory, because they have to go to the schools and colleges. They assemble in the dormitory only during a festival. Moreover, the new generation has lost their interest to spend time in *Chamadi*.

After verifying the historical data, collected from different sources with the primary data collected from fields, it is found that changes have taken place in both the structure and functions of the village level social organizations. Hence, the structure and the functions can be divided into two

categories the **traditional structure and functions** and **modern structure and functions**. The Fig. 8: shows traditional structures and functions of village level organizations. The modern structures and their functions are shown in Fig. 9: below:

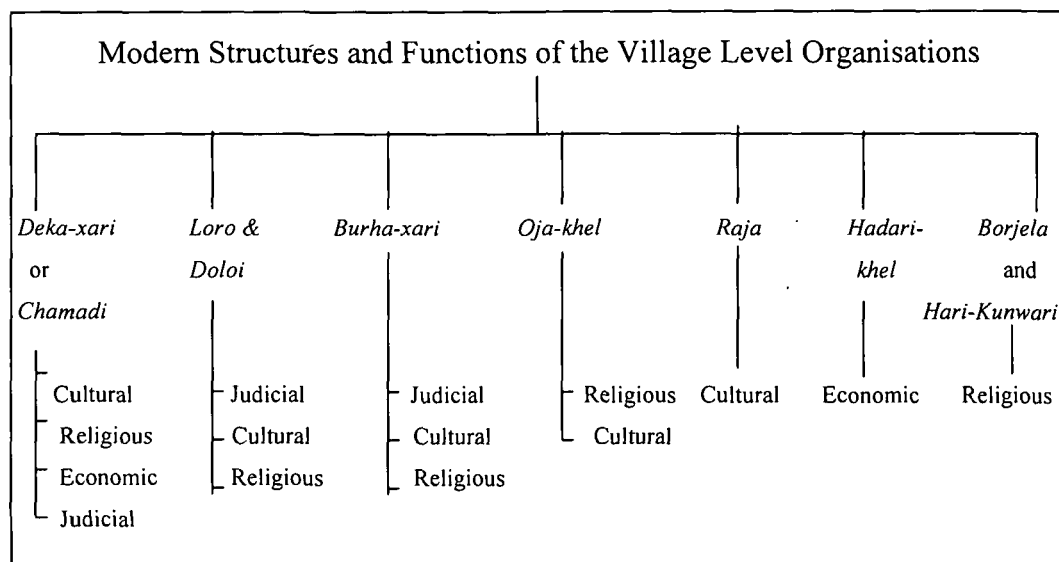


Fig. 9 : Modern Structures and Functions of the Village Level Organisations of the Tiwas

5.2. Political Organization and Changes:

There are different types of tribal political associations. L. P. Vidyarthi and B. K. Rai stated in their book '*The Tribal Culture of India*' that the political characteristics of tribals may broadly be looked at through their social organizations viz. (i) political association based on their clan lineage, (ii) political association based on the village and (iii) political association of a group of villagers or territory.⁶ According to them the political structure of the tribal people can be divided into two types: Traditional Political Field and Contemporary Political Field. The Traditional Political Field is the product of their traditional political life where political affairs are combined with social and religious affair. The Contemporary Political Field has emerged out of culture changes, culture contact, and the mode of electing the village chief

under the existing democratic set up. These two types have sub types.⁷ These socio-political characteristics can be found in case of the Tiwas also.

5.2.1. The Traditional Political Field of the Tiwas:

It is a general fact that every tribal village has its own village council consisting of members selected from among the elderly villagers. Tiwa villages also have village council and officials of different status outside the purview of the civil judiciary of the state, which are the part of their traditional political system. These types of village councils and officials play a vital role in the village judiciary system. Makhan Jha has described these institutions as 'Judicial machinery' of tribal people.⁸

The traditional political institutions of the Tiwas can be divided into following ways that are based on clan, village and group villagers or territory.

- (i) Institutions based on clan/ lineage: *Raja, Loro, Doloi* and *Borjela* or *Ghorburha*.
- (ii) Institutions based on village: *Chamadi* or *Deka-xari* and *Bura-xari*.
- (iii) Institutions based on group of villagers or territory: *Borkhel-bichar*.

The Tiwa king was the highest judicial authority in traditional political system based on the first category- **clan/ lineage**. But he enjoyed highest position amongst all institutions based on above three categories. The king was responsible for administering justice in the traditional system. The function of king was to settle the cases relating to disputes among the villages and other inter-village problems. But now king is a titular one and he has nothing to do with judicial system. The king is now only a cultural icon. Earlier, the Tiwas have small principalities ruled by their *Satu-raja* (seven kings) and *Pasu-raja* (five kings) within the state of Assam.

Another political institution based on the clan/ lineage is *Doloi* or *Gaonburha*. He is selected by the villagers. He has the authority to settle different intra-village disputes such as conflicts among individuals, any illegal act and relationship etc. by applying customary laws. He takes decision in consultation with the council of village elders (*Burha-khel* or *Burha-xari*). Earlier, the Tiwa king was used to depend heavily on the village chiefs for internal administration.

The *Loro* and the *Gharburha* or *Borjela* are the two religious heads. But they take part in the judicial matters of the village too. Particularly the *Loro* has a special place in village judiciary system. He announces the award of punishment to the offenders in a meeting. The trial is based on the Tiwas' traditional laws and customs which are unwritten and related to their religious beliefs.

The *Chamadi* and the *Burha-xari* are two traditional political institutions which are based on the second category- **village**. The members of *Chamadi* are a group of young boys and the *Burha-xari* is a group of elders. The leaders *Changdoloi* and *Changmajhi* exercise full control over the youths of the village. Generally the officials of the dormitory settle the small disputes or other misconducts of the officials of the dormitory and the villagers. The council of elders or *Burha-xari* is a higher judicial authority in the village. The main function of this council is to settle intra village disputes and to look after the general welfare.

The traditional political institution based on the third category- **group of the villagers or territory** is *Borkhel-bichar*. It is constituted by the elderly people of different *khels*. It settles the disputes in a meeting of the village elders mostly *Borjelas* of various clans. The functions of this organization now play by the *Burha-xari*. It is a council of elderly people of different clans. Generally inter village problems are discussed here.

Historically the king was at the highest position of the hierarchy. But now kings do not play any role in political field. As discussed earlier, the position and function of a king is now cultural. Now the highest position is held by the *Burha-xari*. The hierarchy of the traditional political institutions of the past and present can be arranged in ascending order as follows in Fig. 10: and Fig. 11: respectively.

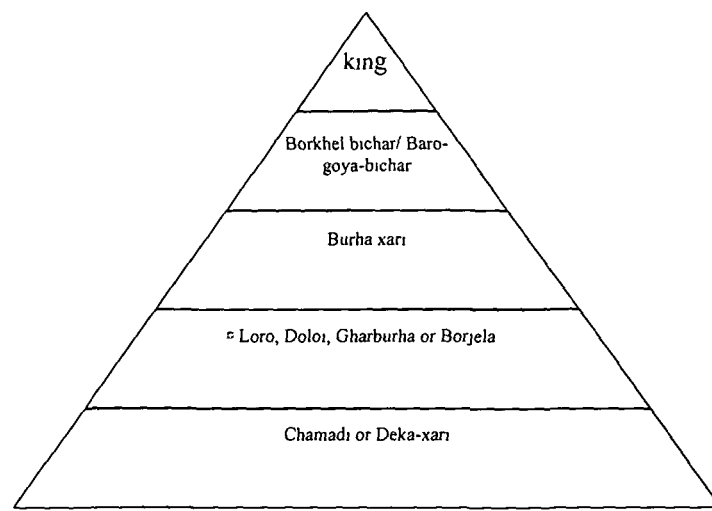


Fig. 10: Hierarchy of the Traditional Political Field of the Past

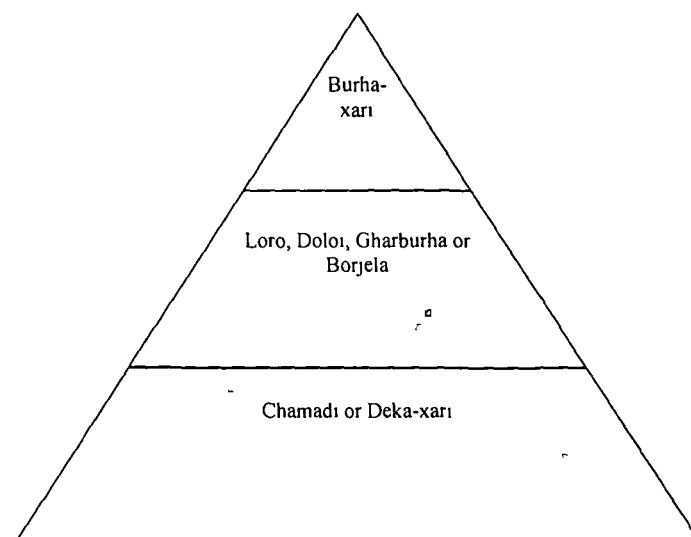


Fig. 11: Hierarchy of the Traditional Political Field of the Present

5.2.2. The Contemporary Political Field of the Tiwas:

It is a phenomenon to be observed generally that the contemporary political field is growing fast in all the tribal areas and is replacing the traditional political set up of the tribes. In India the traditional political field of the tribals is affected since the time of British rule and the replacement of the traditional political field with modern democratic setup has been started from the time of independence. In some areas, with the establishment of modern democratic setup, the traditional tribal political system gradually entered into the fold of contemporary political fields of the concerned state government. In the case of Tiwas their traditional political fields still remain intact along with the contemporary political fields.

The contemporary political fields constitute competing village leaders, the statutory panchayat and emergent regional and district councils that have a direct relation to the state government.

In the Tiwa inhabited areas, the *Sorkari gaon-burha* (govt. village headman) is a statutory officer. In one statutory panchayat there are many villages. The *Sorkari gaon-burha* is different from the traditional village chief of the Tiwas (*Doloi or Gaon-burha*). The *Sorkari gaon-burha* plays a part in respect of settling the village problems. He is the link to the district council and also to the Block Development Officer and the *Gram sevak*. The member of District council of the area contacts the village headman for developmental works in the village as well as for helping him during election. The *Sorkari Gaon-burha* plays role in matters related to election to the local bodies. The district council appoints the *Sorkari gaon-burha* to liaison between the administration and the villagers.

5.2.3. Changing Scenario: From the Traditional to Contemporary Political Field:

Gobha was known to be the ancient principality of the Tiwas. The Gobha 'king' is the king of the Tiwas. There have been twenty five 'kings' known to have ruled over Gobha till date. Gobha is situated at the east of Nokhula hill. The word 'Gobha' might have come from the word 'Guha'(cave). There is a myth which reveals the fact about their ancient kings. The story had it that in ancient time, the Tiwas were living in the Khaurang region of Jaintia hill. The capital of the Tiwa king Arimatta was in Gobha. The story had it that he killed his father by mistake. He became very upset and left his principality and leaving the reign in the hands of minister Samudra. He started to live at Kumdang hill. The Tiwas living in the Kumdang region (Kumai) introduced themselves as the descendents of *Satoraja* (seven kings). Those are (1) Kumai (2) Tarani (3) Bagara (4) Telelia (5) Kachari Goan (6) Sukhnaggia (7) Ghaghewa raja. Later on, the kings of these seven small principalities were known as *Puwali raja*. After the death of the king Arimatta, his two sons Gajanka and Mriganka become kings. In course of time, Gajanka accepted a new name i.e. Jongalbalahu and established his capital at *Jongal Gar*, near Raha. Mriganka came to be known as Ratna Singha. He established his kingdom at Dimoria. The myth had it that Jongal Balahu killed his father Arimatta. Tiwa are still to be found in great number around the embankment known as 'Jongal Balahu Gar'. The *Pasuraja* (five kings) also inhabit the vicinity of this place. They are the kings of Tupakusia, Barapujia, Mikir Gaya, Phulaguria and Khaigoria.⁹

There is a myth which reveals the fact that when they came down from Khaurang to the plains of Assam they had 12 clans. King Arimatta also appointed 12 officials in his kingdom for the smooth functioning of his administration. On the other hand he also engaged 12 priests (*Doloi*) for purifying his sin of killing his father. These *Doloi* are the representatives of the common people. Thus a republican type of administration has been

maintained till sixteenth century. The Kingdom came under the reign of Ahoms in sixteenth century. Moneswar Deuri, a Tiwa writer, commented in his writings that the ruling system of the Tiwas before the rise of Ahom kingdom was republican type.¹⁰ Not only the Tiwas but also every Mongolian tribes of Assam had a republican type of administration under a chief. Regarding this Sir Edwar Gait commented as follows:

...There was no strong national spirit or other cohesive element among the Mongolian tribes of Assam, and their natural condition was probably that of a number of small communities, each under its own chief or headman, and independent of its neighbours; a state of things, in fact very similar to that which existed at the time of the British conquest among the Garos, Khasis and Nagas, whose organization in many cases was of a distinctly republican type. From time to time a local chief of unusual enterprise and ambition, or possibly some Kshatriya adventurer, would reduce these petty states and make himself master of the whole country.¹¹

At the time of the down fall of Ahom kingdom the British came to India. The first king under the British rule was Dakhar Singh. Latter on, Rai Sing, Rup Sing and Kumal Sing etc. were appointed respectively as the king of Gobha. After 1947 India became independent, all of the small principalities of the Tiwas have been dissolved under the contemporary political system. In the constitution of India, the Tiwas and many other tribal groups like Bodo, Kachari, Mising etc, have been listed as scheduled tribes of Assam.

Towards the Autonomy Movement:

The tribal communities of Assam took part in the freedom movement of India. The non-violence movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi became successful in attaining the independence of India in 1947. There was high hope that the independence would bring all kinds of development into the educational, economic and political spheres. But in reality that did not happen. The tribal communities of Assam too did not make any considerable progress in educational, economic and socio-political spheres of their life after independence. Earlier, the tribal communities were not politically conscious. They were the part of the larger Assamese society. All of the castes and tribes

of Assam were known as Assamese. Most of the Tiwas of the plains of Assam were assimilated with the Assamese caste Hindus. They are mainly influenced by the Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva and accepted his religious philosophy. But gradually they become conscious about their cultural and political identity.

Almost all the tribal communities of Assam have been continuing a struggle for the demand of their self control after independence of India. The Bodos, the Karbis, Missings, Rabhas and the Kuch Rajbanshis are the main groups amongst them. These tribal communities have started autonomy movements for their self control in the form of protest against the administration of Assam. Since 1980s the revival of these tribal communities has influenced the social, political and economic life of Assam. The Tiwas too started a strong democratic movement in central Assam for their autonomy. The Tiwas represented by the Lalung Darbar and Lalung Youth Front have been demanding creation of an autonomous district within Assam since 1967. The All Tiwa Students Union (ATSU) joined the movement for creation of an autonomous district within Assam in 1989. The Autonomous Lalung District Demand Committee (ALDDC) representing various Lalung organizations- the Lalung Darbar, The All Assam Tiwa Sanmilan and Lalung Youth Front submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam on 10 May 1993 for creation of an autonomous Lalung District Council for the Tiwas. The demand was made for proper and all round development of the Tiwas in order to protect and maintain their separate identity, and to obtain political and administrative powers for fulfillment of their genuine aspirations.

On 10 December 1993, the All Tiwa Students Union, the All Tiwa Women's Association, The Tiwa Cultural Society and Tiwa Sahitya Sabha submitted separate memoranda to the Chief Minister of Assam demanding creation of a Tiwa Autonomous District under the provision of sixth schedule of the constitution of India. Their other demands include recognition of the Tiwa language and acceptance of Roman script for writing the language and

introduction of Tiwa language at school level in Tiwa dominated areas. A memorandum of settlement regarding the demand of autonomy of the Tiwas was signed on 13th April, 1995 at Guwahati between the Chief Secretary of the Government of Assam and the authorized representatives of the Autonomous Lalung District demand committee.¹²

5.3. Conclusion:

Before the British annexed this part of the country into their empire, the Tiwas had their own separate small principalities and kings. Though they were initially indifferent towards politics or political rights, but later on they became conscious about their political right. Tiwas became organized among themselves and started demanding for political autonomy. Earlier, they liked to introduce themselves as Assamese though they had their unique tribal culture and political system based on traditional laws and customs. Gradually they became self-conscious and the ongoing assimilation process with Assamese is interrupted. They are now trying to establish themselves as culturally and politically separate entity within the greater Assamese fold.

Tiwas had well organized traditional political system based on local customs and traditions which had been transmitted orally from generation to generation. Their traditional administrative system was based on village level organizations. It reflected the existence of a well organized republican type of administration in earlier times. This system is by and large still prevailing in the villages. These organizations provide them unity, self sufficiency in all aspects of their life. These organizations had not only contributed towards judicial field but also to the cultural, religious and economic spheres. These organizations were instrumental in preservation of their rich cultural heritage. For example *Chamadi* is still functioning as a centre for training in handicrafts, dance and music. All welfare works involving the entire village community are still taken up by the members of *Chamadi*. The main purpose of the *Chamadi* is to ensure that boys understand and follow the organized

system of the tribal society and the community life of a village. But a trend of change has been occurring in their society. The developmental activities including spread of education and proselytization may be seen as some of the reasons for decline of the colorful and glorious traditional organizations. Though it becomes increasingly difficult for the traditional institutions to withstand the pressure of the changing situation, even then *Chamadi* is still capable of maintaining the law and order within the village, in preserving traditional culture and in keeping up the spirit of co-operation among its members. This is possible due to the adherence and reliance of the Tiwas to their traditions and customary laws. The efficiency of these systems reflects the inherent strength of the village community. But by the influence and entrance of modern democratic ruling system, this type of well organized traditional ruling system is almost vanishing out from many Tiwa villages. However, many villages are still maintaining their traditional social organizations along with modern democratic set up.

Notes:

¹ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, *The Lalungs* (Lucknow: S. Kumar and Associate, 1996), 17.

² *Loro* is the priest of the village. The *Gharburha* or *Borjela* is a religious head of the *Borghar*, *Bangsha* or *khuta* and the *Bangsha* or *Khuta* consists of many families of same clan. The *Hari-kunwari* is also a lady head of *Borghar*. *Borghar* is a religious praying hall of a *Bangsha* or *khuta*. Every clan has their separate *Borghars*.

³ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, op.cit. 15.

⁴ *Khel* consists of the members of different *bangsha* or *khuta*. And *bangsha* or *khuta* consists of many families of same clan.

⁵ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, op.cit. 23-24.

⁶ L. P. Vidyarthi & Binay Kumar Rai, *The Tribal Culture of India* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1976), 196.

⁷ Ibid. 201.

⁸ Makhan Jha, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. 2nd rev. ed. (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1999), 138.

⁹ Moneswar Deori, "Tiwa Samaj Aru Rajneeti: Eti Bislesan," in *Ring-Chhang: Statesman of All Assam Tiwa Sanmilan*, ed. Padma Pator (np: All Assam Tiwa Sanmilan, 1972), 75-76.

¹⁰ Ibid. 77.

¹¹ Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, LBS 1st ed. (Guwahati: LBS Publications, 1983), 8.

¹² Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, op.cit. 115.



Photo 8:
Traditional Pattern
of *Chamadi*

Photo 9:
Changing Pattern of
Chamadi or *Xa-
Chamadi*



Photo 10:
Changing Pattern of
Chamadi with
Granary



Photo 11:
A modern *Chamadi*



Photo 12:
Shape and Design
of *Thuna Khuta* (1)



Photo 13:
Shape and Design of *Thuna Khuta*
(2)



Photo 14:
Inmates of
Chamadi during
Chagra Misawa
Festival



Photo 15:
Inmates of
Chamadi in an
Occasion of
Festival



Photo 16:
A meeting of a
Burha-xari

Chapter 6.

Changes in Socio-Religious Life

6.1. Religion: The Concept

6.2. Traditional Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Tirwas

6.3. Continuity and Change

6.3.1. Observations on 'Borghar', 'Thaanghar' and 'Namghar' Worship

6.3.2. Observations on 'Jongkhong Puja' as a Traditional Village Level Worship

6.3.3. Impact of the Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva

6.3.4. Impact of the Religious Philosophy of Krishna Guru

6.3.5. Impact of other Religious Trends

6.4. Conclusion

CHAPTER: 6

CHANGES IN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS LIFE

The trend of religious transformation has been noticed amongst the tribes of India since the first half of twentieth century. Since the pre-British period, the tribes of India have been showing a tendency of going over to the fold of Hinduism. With the Britishers in our country, the dynamics of religious transformation changed with the addition of Christianity in socio-religious dimension. This happened in Assam too. Like other tribes, traditionally the Tiwas were also animistic. But gradually, in the plains of Assam they had been absorbed into the fold of Hinduism, particularly the Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva. Likewise they came under the influence of other religions too. Such conversions into other religious faiths were accompanied with certain changes in their socio-cultural life such as food habit, ceremonial observances and daily household activities. It is not that all the tribes have accepted one or the other formal religions. Some of the tribes of Assam still have retained their tribal identity to some extent. But it is also a fact that they are attracted towards the liberal philosophy and relatively easy norms and practices of other religious traditions. The extent of acceptance of new religious philosophy and ideas has led the people to a state of social environment that stands out due to its uniqueness. The newly initiated tribal people have not been given a relatively high position in their accepted religious spheres. Again, on the other hand the tribes have not totally given up their age old traditions. Thus, simultaneously they have traditional as well as newer dispensation. This situation seems to have created intra-tribal tension. The present discussion focuses on the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Tiwas and the changes that have taken place.

6.1. Religion: The Concept:

Religion is a socio-cultural system which is based on beliefs and practices. Religion is a universal feature of human culture that helps man to overcome the tensions of life. But the religious practices of different society are not universally the same. They vary from society to society. As such, religion can never be fully understood in isolation from a society. Any study of religion must begin by observing and describing beliefs and behavioural patterns, but such study will become significant only when it is related to their social meaning and functions. Religion has a significant influence upon economic, politics, family pattern and modernization amongst other facets of life. The influence is always mutual; secular institutions in turn affect the religious forms, values and beliefs. William A. Haviland says that:

Religion may be regarded as the beliefs and patterns of behaviour by which humans try to deal with what they view as important problems that cannot be solved through the application of known technology or technique of organization. To overcome these limitations people turn to the manipulation of supernatural being and powers.¹

Religion may thus be understood as a system of attitudes, behaviour patterns, beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people attempt to cope with the ultimate problem of human life.

In every religious system, there are three parts. First, there is the philosophy, which presents the whole scope of that religion, setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means of achieving the goal. The second part is mythology, which is philosophy made concrete. It is the abstraction of philosophy concretized in the more or less imaginary lives of men and supernatural beings. Third is the ritualistic part. This is still more concrete and is made up of forms and ceremonies, various physical attitudes etc. Radcliffe Brown gave more emphasis on studying rites while studying religion. The same view has also been expressed by Loisy and opined that rites are the most stable and lasting elements in religion.²

6.2. Traditional Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Tiwas:

Animistic beliefs and practices involving the worships and propitiation of various Gods and Goddesses have since time immemorial formed the core of the religious ideology among the Tiwas. Most of these beliefs and practices are based on the worship of nature and offering sacrifices. They worship and propitiate for personal as well as group welfare and to secure success, mental and physical wellbeing in life. The religious beliefs and practices of the Tiwas are an integral part of the overall pattern of social conduct in all spheres. Sacrificial practices, ancestor worship and the use of rice beer in every religious occasion are the main characteristics of their religious practices.

Lord *Mahadeo* (Siva) is the supreme God of the Tiwas and He is symbolized by the *zela* or sacred arrow in the place of worship. He is the protector of crops, of agricultural fields and human beings. He is the presiding deity of *Borghar*, *Thaanghar* and the bachelors' dormitory in the village. All worships begin with a prayer to Lord *Mahadeo*.

Besides Lord Siva, the Tiwas worship many deities in *Borghar*, *Thaanghar* and *Namghar*. The *Borghar* is a place of worship for each clan while the *Thaanghar* and the *Namghar* are the places for community worship. The *Borghar* has two altars: one for the presiding deity and other for the ancestors. They place a *pot* and a *Lang-khui* (sword) in the *Borghar* (Photo 19:).³ Near the alter, there is a *Thuna khuta* (sacred wooden post) and a figure made of four bamboo post. It is known as *Rangdoswari*. *Rongdo* means rice. Every year freshly harvested rice is kept in a pot near this altar and it is called *Rangdaswori*. This rice pot is to be substituted by a new pot in the next year. The old one is used in the feast of taking new rice known as *Na-khua*. Before harvesting the new *Sali* paddy every year, a heap of *Sali* paddy is collected at one auspicious night of a Wednesday and binds it with the *Thuna khuta* inside the *Borghar*. The *Borghar* is considered as a very sacred place by the Tiwas.

Unlike *Namghar*, the *Borghar* can not be used for holding any *Mel* or discussion.

The hill Tiwas worship stone images of deities in the *Borghar*, while their counterparts in plains do not install any image on the altar. Of course the *Zela or Tripod* is found in their altar which is a symbol of lord Siva. Another important God worshiped by the Tiwas is *Jal-thal-devata* who as his name signifies, is the presiding deity of land and water. Another deity is *Charibhai chari kora* who is the presiding deity of bamboo and grove and the spring festival. Apart from these main deities many others are also worshiped in *Borghars and Thaanghars*. Among them *Ganesh, Parameswar* etc. are their benevolent male deities while *Aai Gosani, Lakhmi, Padumi, Kalika, Kamakhya, Saru Aai, Bor Aai, Kani Andheli* are the important benevolent Goddesses. Besides these, certain *pujas* and ceremonies are also held in the *Borghar*. *Deo Sewa, Kalika puja, Bhakat sewa* and *Rati Sewa* are some of them.

There are separate *Thaans* for individual god or goddess like *Mahadeo, Sani, Kalika* and *Kesaikhati*. Though the sacrificial practices were prevalent in ancient time, presently no sacrifice is offered in *Thaanghar* and *Namghar* worship. Gram, banana, betel nuts and leaves are offered as offerings. *Basundhari Thaan, Mahadeosal Thaan* and *Deosal Thaan* are some famous *Thaans* of Tiwa people. *Namghar* is a new edition to their culture. Generally each village has one *Namghar*. But having more than one *Namghar* in a single village is also not rare.

The *Loro*, the *Ghorburha or Borjela* and the *Hari kunwari* are the three religious heads. The village priest or the *Loro* performs all the religious functions in a village. He is not a preceptor, but a specialist in the traditional priestly functions. His position is not hereditary. He has an assistant known as *Hadari* whom he selects himself. The *Loro* exercises important power in the matters of religious and social law. He is only a priest of the village but he

does not have to lead an extra ordinarily sanctimonious life. Another religious head, the *Gharbura* utters *Mantras* in their prayers in the *Borghar*. *Mantras* are differing from clan to clan. The mantras are unwritten and the *Ghorbura* learns these from his predecessors. The Tiwas call the '*Mantras*' as *Bedang*. The *Hari kuwanri* helps the *Ghorbura* in performing religious functions in *Borghars*.

Besides worshipping above deities in the *Borghar* *Thaanghar* and *Namghar*, the Tiwas observe some other important religious ceremonies. Those are *Jongkhong puja*, *Dew sewa*, *Bhakat sewa*, *Bhitor sewa* and *Sani puja*. In an agrarian society, the communication between the human beings and super natural world is made due to secure protection from the supernatural beings for the agricultural field and house hold activities. Shyam Choudhury and M. M. Das⁴ of opinion that

The intercourse of the Tiwas with the supernatural world of the deities is characterized by a desire to secure their livelihood, specially agriculture. There is a systematic order of rationalization, in which the deities are propitiated. Rituals are the means to establish a link with the deities, but it is not an end in itself. The importance of the priest is that he is specialized in the technicalities and knows the incantations. Naturally he makes them into a secret of trade, and is very wary in letting others into it. This enables him to monopolize the intermediation between them and the Gods, so that the supernatural help can be sought only through him.⁴

6.3. Continuity and Change:

Continuity is holding on to the legacy of cultural heritage handed down through generations. Change is usually construed as being adaptation by which a society faced with evolving paradigm 'adopts' to the changing expectations. Though changes in religion may occur in any of its three elements, yet more often than not, an understanding of change and continuity is limited to the more concrete aspects of religion viz. forms, rituals and ceremonies. Change in the rituals and ceremonies affect its appearance- the 'form', the essence or 'spirit' of religion remaining intact. However, if there

were a significant shift in its philosophy, the religion would lose its 'spirit', clinging to dead appearances, but having lost the very core of its cultural heritage.

Now-a-days considerable changes have taken place among the Tiwas in the mode of worship. Sacrifices are rarely resorted to. The offering constitutes pulses like *phaseolus mungo* - a kind of bean, gram and banana in the *Namghar* and the *Thaanghar*. Here, the influence of *Neo-vaisnavism* of Sankardeva can be seen. Changes have taken place in their *Borghar* worship, community worship, and house hold activities and most importantly in the case of their religious ideology.

6.3.1. Observations on *Borghar*, *Thaanghar* and *Namghar* Worship:

Generally, *Deo-sewa*, *Bhakat sewa*, *Kalika puja* are observed in a *Borghar* but now the mode of worship in the *Borghar* is changed. Now, there are two types of *Borghars*: *Kesa Borghar* and *Poka Borghar*. Along with above mentioned *pujas* the Tiwas celebrate *Bhitor sewa puja* inside the *Poka Borghar* which is similar to the *Rati sewa puja*. The *Bhitor sewa puja* is celebrated during the month of February and March. The actual time of celebration differs from clan to clan. It is celebrated at night. The door of the *Borghar* should be closed from inside during the *puja*. The main deity of this *puja* is *Badal Maji*, which is another name of Lord Siva. Most significant thing of this *puja* is the sacrifice of pig and fowl but the procedure of sacrifice is different from other sacrificial practice.

Informant Nandi Pator and Jageswar Bordoloi of Jorabari gaon and Chitraram Deori of Bundura gaong informed the *Bhakatas* chant mantras from a manuscript known as *Digambori puthi* invoking God to kill the pig and the fowl. This process is known as *Jiva-uruwa*. While chanting the mantras, the *Bhakatas* keep their hands on the pig or fowl and thus the creatures die. But another informant Gakul Bordoloi informed that animals die because of

suffocation put by the *Bhakatas*. Rice, pork and chicken curry, rice beer, banana and rice powder are offered to the deity during this *Puja*.

In the *Kesa Borghor* they observe some *Pujas* like *Na-axisia sabah* for the purification and wellbeing of the new born babies of a *Bangsha*, *Pitri-matrir sewa* for their ancestors, *Dhanor gush lua puja* before going for agricultural work and *Dhanor muthi lua puja* before harvesting the paddy. During the field work it is observed that the *Pujas* celebrated inside the *Borghar* is somewhat different from clan to clan and village to village.

Most of the Tiwas of Jarabari village observes *Satya Narayan Puja* (a religious ceremony of the Hindus) inside the *Borghar* which is a religious practice of the Hindus. Only banana and rice powder are used in this *Puja*.

Thaan worship is prevalent among the Tiwas from earlier times. Though *Thaan* worship is mainly concerned with the worship of Lord Siva, they have different *Thaans* for different Gods and Goddesses like *Kalika*, *Durga*, *Lakshmi*, *Kesaikhati*, *Bhagawati* and *Sani*. Earlier, sacrifices were a must during the *puja*. But at present offerings which contain banana, gram, betel leaves and nuts are used in the place of sacrifices.

Same situation is also observed in case of *Namghar* worship. The mode of *Namghar* worship is different from village to village. There are pictures or images of various Gods and Goddesses in one *Namghar*. In the Nambor village the Tiwas do not follow the Vaisnava rituals like celebrating the *Janmastomi* (birth anniversary of Lord Krishna), the *Tithi* of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva (birth/death anniversary of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva) and the daily congregation in the holy month of *Bhada* (August-September). But the whole village celebrates a religious ceremony once a year inside the *Namghar* which is known as *Bor-Sabah*. This ceremony has the elements of both traditional and Vaisnava worship systems. Seven *Axonas* (temporary image for prayer) inside the *Manikut* (Sanctum sanctorum) are installed for

worshipping in this ceremony. At the end of this ceremony the *Axonas* are kept in a *Nauka* (boat) made of the bark of banana tree. Some people holding the *Nauka* move around the *Namghar* seven times. The women sing the *Nam-kirtan* (religious chorus of Sankardeva's Neo-vaisnavism) while they move around the *Namghar*. After that, they let the boat float in a river. It is a belief among them that all evil spirit of the village will flow along with this *Nauka*. Besides this celebration, the Kirtana, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are also recited here. The *Ainam* (prayer for chicken pox) is also observed in *Namghar*.

6.3.2. Observations on *Jongkhong Puja* as a Traditional Village Level Worship:

Jongkhong puja is a community religious ceremony and is related to agricultural activities, celebrated in the month of May-June before the paddy fields are ploughed for next plantation. The village priest *Loro* performs all the necessary rituals in this ceremony and he is assisted by *Hadari* and *Ojha*. The purpose of this *puja* is to pray for good harvest, to read the omens to determine whether the crops will be bountiful or not and also to protect the villagers from the evil spirit. The villagers select a place in the paddy field for this *puja*. Then they make a small altar of mud and seven bamboo stems are planted in front of the altar. The main *puja* is performed by sacrificing pig, goat and fowl. The village priest reads omen by cutting eggs. If the egg is clean it is good omen and if it contains spots then it is a bad omen. He also reads omen by examining the internal organ of the sacrificed pig and fowl. There after the meat is cooked and offered to the deities. The cooked food is consumed with rice beer (*zu*). The main deities of this ceremony are *Mahadeo*, *Jal-thal-devata*, *Bagh raja* and *Chari-bhai chari-kora*. Specific items are offered to each deity. Mahadeo is offered a pot of *zu* (rice beer) and areca nuts; *Jal-thal-devata* is offered areca and betel nuts, rice and basil leaves. *Bagh raja* is offered a heap of rice topped by an egg on banana leaves and the *Chari-bhai chari-kora* is also offered the same thing of *Bagh raja*. There is

tradition of taking a pot of rice beer and a fowl to the *puja* whoever comes to join. After performing this *puja* they are free to start work at paddy field for the next cycle of crops. The Nambor village of Nagaon District still celebrates this ceremony every year (Photo: 25, 26 and 27). The use of basil leaves is a noticeable change in this religious ceremony.

6.3.3. Impact of the Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva:

Caste system is not that rigid in Assam. Sankardeva's teachings have contributed a lot towards this. Neo Vaisnavism introduced by him is monotheistic in nature and does not subscribe to caste rigidity. He was a great socio-religious and socio-cultural reformer of Assam as his advent gave a new shape to Assamese society. He had not only contributed to the field of religion but also to literature, music and theatre of Assam. Assam has been the meeting ground of different races and cultures. Sankardeva's Neo-Vaisnavism was instrumental in binding these people within the fold of one religion i.e. *Ekaxaran nam-dharma*. Unlike Polytheism, Animism, Trantricism and Saktism consisting of animal sacrifice, Sankardeva's religious philosophy is based on monotheistic Bhakti cult. Here devotion is centered only on the Lord Krishna. He introduced a simple mode of worship consisting of prayers, hymns and *Nam kirtana* (religious chorus) composed in simple language. The essence of Sankardevas Vaisnavite philosophy was derived from the *Srimadbhagavata Puran*, the holy scripture of the Hindus. He introduced two religious institutions the *Namghar* and the *Satra*, which control the morality and ethics of the Assamese Hindus. *Namghar* is a village level community prayer hall. But the *Satras* are monasteries, seat of a religious head (the *Satradhikara*), where the Assamese culture is cultivated by the devotees of *Satras*. The *Satras* came into existence in the first part of sixteenth century which eventually became an indispensable part of the Assamese socio-cultural life.

Sankardeva's Neo-Vaisnava philosophy has contributed a lot to abolish the age old social discriminations like castes that prevailed in the greater orthodox Hindu society. His philosophical ideology was based on Humanism and Liberalism which are manifested in his writings:

*Brahmanar Chandalara Nibichari Kul
Datata Chorata Jen Dristi Samatul
Nicata Sadhuta jar bhaila ekgyan
Tahakese pandito bulo sharbajan⁵*

(A high born, a low born, a rich, a poor, a wise or a thief - consider all as equal). Another similar humanitarian epithet is as follows:

*Kukura Chandala Gardabharo Atma Ram
Janiya Savako Pari Kariba Pronama⁶*

(God is in everywhere. Gog is in a dog, an ass and a scavenger. So, respect them all). It is manifest in the other work of Sankardeva that his Vaisnava faith has no caste and race distinction:

*Kirata kachari khasi garo miri
yavana kanka goala
asama muluka rajaka turuka
kuvacha mlechcha chandala
ano jata nara Krishna sevakara
sangata pavitra haya⁷*

The Kirata, the Kacharis, the Garos, the Miris, the Javanas, the Kankas, the Goalas, the Assamas (Ahoms), the Mlechas, the Rajakas, the Turukas (Muslims), the Kuvachas, the Mechas, the chandalas, and other become pure in the company of the devotees of Krishna. May be, so, a large section of people living in Assamese and neighboring states, regardless of caste, creed or

language attracted towards this type of religious ideology of Sankardeva and got converted into the Neo-Vaisnava faith. Sankardeva himself also took initiative in this matter. He accepted a large number of Brahmins and Sudras including Kaibarttas and Other Backward Classes (OBC) besides a Muslim, a Garo, a Bhutiya, a Mising, a Naga, a Kachari and an Ahom as his disciple. Dr. Birendra Nath Dutta has written that Govinda, a Garo who had risen to be an *atai* (a devotee of high status) was a favourite disciple of Sankardeva.⁸

Initially Madhabdeva, the great disciple of Sankardeva was known to be a follower of Saktism. But he was attracted to the fold of Sankardeva's Neo-Vaisnavism and soon became an ardent follower principal disciple of Sankardeva. He holds the next position to spread Neo-vaisnavism in Assam after Sankardeva. During their lifetime the *Eka saran nam dharma* flourished in Assam and remained intact.

The tribal communities of Assam have been influenced a lot by the liberal philosophy of Sankardeva's Neo-Vaisnavism. Similarly, most of the Tiwas of plains have also embraced the neo Vaisnavism of Sankardeva. Some of the Tiwas are totally converted into the fold of Neo-Vaisnava faith and some others while following Vaisnavism, retain traditional religious faith as well. As a result of the influence of Vaisnavism the *Namghar* becomes an important place of worship. To some extent, it takes the place of youth dormitory in all the plain Tiwa villages. The followers of Neo-vaisnavism of Sankardeva do not eat pork or rice bear, nor do they maintain a *Borghar*. Many of the Hindu religious ceremonies are observed in the *Namghars* such as celebration of *Janmastomi*, *Raas Leela* and *Tithi* of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva. They do not now follow many of their traditional *Pujas*. Instead of worshipping *Maldaka* and *Sanidaka* by offering sacrifices, the Tiwas prefer to propitiate these deities by reading *Sani-charit* in the *Namghars*. Expensive and elaborate formalities of traditional worship are another reason for embracing Vaisnavism. Most of them have even given up their age old traditions and tried to follow the life style of a *Vaisnava*. In this case, the

Satras offer a means of purification to the tribal people. The novice had to abstain from drinking rice beer and eating pork or other things accepted as impure by Vaisnavism and had to follow the rules of Vaisnavism. To attain a higher status in the society they purified and elevated their lifestyle and deliberately got converted into Assamese, and accepted caste surname like *Laskar* instead of *Doloi, Deka, Deori etc.* This had resulted in the situation of tribe-caste-continuum process in Assamese Hindu Society. Thus, here we find two types of *Vaisnava* followers. One is converted *Vaisnava* follower and other is the traditionalist retained the dual form of religious beliefs – Vaisnavism and Animism.

6.3.4. Impact of the Religious faith of Krishna Guru:

Krishna Guru was born in Nasatra village of Barpeta District, Assam in the year 1934. His father Ravi Deva and mother Maya Devi was vaishnavite devotional persons. Krishnaguru has established Krishnaguru Sewashram at Nasatra in Barpeta district of Assam, in the year of 1974. This Krishnaguru Sewashram has since become a holy place for congregation of all devotees coming from all over the world. The religious scripture is *Krishnaguru Tatwaxar* written by Krishna Guru himself, adopted from the *Srimadbhagwat Purana*. Krishna Guru expresses his philosophy in the form of *Amritbani*. Some of those are as follows:

... Since God is present in all human beings in the form of a soul, if we insult a man, we insult God; if we get jealous of a man's success, we show jealousy towards God. This kind of actions generates unrest in the world..... Truth , cleanliness, forgiving, tenderness , simplicity, love, patience, contentment, non attachment etc are essential for human life .To keep alive these qualities in mind , you will have to take initiation from Satguru and accept the Krishnaguru Ek Naam. With chanting of the Krishnaguru Ek Naam, impurities from the heart will vanish, and you will be blessed by Krishnaguru, only then you will be able to attain heights. The aim and duty of human life is the chanting of Krishnaguru Ek Naam and love and devotion.⁹

According to the philosophy of Krishna Guru, it is the God who as infinite soul is omni-present in this Universe. It is He who infuses life into living beings. He said that the worship of imaginary gods and goddesses by offering *pujas*, performing *yagnas*, going for pilgrimages etc. are meaningless. Gods and goddesses are imaginary concepts only. In fact, idol worshipping and sacrificing animals to appease them cause more harm. The Almighty is *Nirgun* (formless). However, He becomes *Sagun* (a definite form) when He takes birth in the form of *Satgurus* in this world. The *Satguru* is knowledge incarnate. Only the *Satguru* can remove the ills plaguing mankind. Only Satguru can make his devotees feel the presence of God in this world and even makes it possible to have visions of Him and attain wisdom. He Himself as God incarnates on earth and through various expressions of his supreme powers arouses wisdom in his devotees. He bestows on his devotees the *Ek Naam* and through this *Naam*, He enters into the heart of His devotee and expresses his mysteries... By taking the *Satguru's EK Naam* and heeding all His advices, man can behold supernatural experiences and powers.¹⁰

The philosophy of Krishna Guru is also monotheistic in nature and does not subscribe to caste rigidity. For this reason, many people of Assam irrespective of caste and creed have accepted the religious path of Krishna Guru. Even the many plain Tiwas have accepted his path. In this regard a case study can be placed here which can give a clear picture of how some people of Assam have accepted the path of Krishna Guru during last three decades. Gakul Bordoli, a plain Tiwa, was a follower of their traditional religious practices during his young age. He did not like their traditional sacrificial practices. He wondered how these sacrificial practices can be beneficial for someone or how someone can get the blessings of God by killing other creatures of God. Moreover, according to him their traditional religious practices are more expensive. It was not possible for the poor people to meet the expenses of Pig, Fowl and Goat for sacrifice in various *pujas*. Later on, he became a follower of Sankardeva's Neo Vaisnavism. But in this practice also he experienced problem from the vaisnavite Assamese caste Hindus. He faced

the problem of untouchability with the followers of *Sankar Sangha*. He did not enjoy the same social status enjoyed by the Assamese caste Hindus. Gradually he was attracted towards the liberal philosophy of the religious practice introduced by Krishna Guru. According to this philosophy, all followers have same social status, all are equally treated and all have the equal right to pray God. He was most attracted by the behaviour and attitude of the followers of Krishna Guru. According to him they do not practically maintain any distinction amongst them. Now, from the last seventeen years he has been following the religious philosophy of Krishna Guru.¹¹ The followers of Krishna Guru recite only the *Krishnaguru Tatwaxar* (the religious scripture of the followers of Krishna Guru) in their household prayer hall and *Ashrams* (community prayer hall of the Krishna Guru followers). There is a picture of *Xorai* in front side of every household prayer hall (Photo: 31). The follower of Krishna Guru can be identified from the *Gamocha* (bath towel) they use which has green border. This group does not take part in any traditional religious practices of the Tiwas.

6.3.5. Impact of other Religious Trends:

Besides the influence of Sankardeva's Neo-vaisnavism and Krishnaguru's philosophy, the Tiwas have been influenced by the other branches of Hinduism too. It is evident from the worship of *Mahadeo*. Use of basil leaves in the worship of Mahadeo and *Jongkhong* puja is definitely a Hindu influence. The purification practice after returning from the cremation ground is like taking bath with water mixed with sacred basil leaves in which copper, gold, and silver are also dipped, touching fire after taking bath etc. These are apparently the results of cultural contact with Hindu society. The use of banana leaves on ceremonial occasions also resembles Hindu customs. The Tiwas use to give offerings to Gods on banana leaves. They generally sacrifice fowls, pigs and goats but they never sacrifice or kill a cow or an ox. This indicates Hindu influence.

The religious philosophy of Sri Sri Anukul Thakur has also had an impact on Tiwa people. Sri Sri Thakur said that the Supreme Being is one. All the Prophets are same and there is no difference. His ideology is based on some concepts like God is one and all prophets are the same. All prophets such as Krishna, Jesus Christ, Mohammad and others related to different religion like Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam etc. are the same. So, everyone should respect them all. Secondly, he said that the Gurus are living ideal of God. So everyone should take the path of the Sad-Guru. Thirdly, he believes in varna system in case of marriage. He said that man should marry a girl of his own varna and one can marry females from lower varna. But he was against of marrying a female of the higher varna. Fourthly, he believes in cause effect relationship etc.¹²

The religious philosophy of Anukul Thakur is based on *Veda*. The followers of this philosophy are found in Nambor village of Nagaon district. The followers have separate prayer hall in their household. However, the Tiwas, who have taken the religious practices of Anukul Thakur; they take part in all traditional religious ceremonies.

Besides accepting the faith of different branches of Hinduism, most of the Tiwas have accepted Christianity too. Most of the Tiwas living in Silsang area have accepted Christianity. One remarkable thing was observed in the Christian influenced area was that the Christians who came to spread Christianity, always try to establish schools in those areas where they want to spread their religious faith. This initiative is not observed in the places influenced by other religious faith. Christ Jyoti School of Silsang area was established in 1995 by the Christian people, who came there to spread Christianity. This initiative of Christian people has attracted the local tribal people towards Christianity.

There are three types of Tiwa religious groups found in the Jorabari village of Nagaon district. One group observes the traditional religious practices of the Tiwas along with the rituals in a *Namghar*. The second are the

followers of Sankardeva's Neo-Vaisnavism; but they have organized themselves into *Janajati Sankar Sangha*. This group does not maintain any relation with the *Sankar Sangha* of the Assamese caste Hindus and in traditional religious practice of the Tiwas. They celebrate all religious practices sanctioned by the Neo-Vaisnavism of Srimanta Sankar Deva. They have *Gosaighars* in their home and read *Bhagavata* regularly. Both these groups have separate *Namghars* in the village. The third type is the followers of Krishna Guru. This group too does not maintain any relationship with the traditional religious practices of the Tiwas. They have separate household prayer halls and community prayer halls.

6.4. Conclusion:

The systems and institutions embedded in the idea of a specific religion are essentially a product of time and space. As the group advances in time or moves in space, it undergoes change. This modification is a response towards adoption to changed circumstances; though certain traits are preserved to retain identity with original patterns. The Tiwas have been in long contact with the neighboring people of different religious ideologies and practices. Their religious change towards Hinduism, particularly towards the *Neo-vaishnavism* of Sankardeva and other faith is due to long contact with other religious practices. The educated sections, by and large, do not participate actively in the traditional religious practices. They believe that it is the necessity of time to reform traditional sacrificial practices, because, they think that, it is too hard to meet the expenses of sacrificial practices for the poor people and it is an absurd belief that one can please the God by killing animals. Thus, the instances of ideological changes have been noticed amongst them. Now, from the point of view of religion practiced by the Tiwas, following five categories or groups can be mentioned. These are:

- (a) The followers of Traditional religions, who have retained dual form of religious beliefs-Animism and Vaisnavism.

- (b) The Vaisnavas, who have organized themselves into *Janajati Sankar Sangha*.
- (c) The followers of Krishna Guru.
- (d) The followers of Anukul Thakur.
- (e) The Christians.

The Tiwas converted after being attracted by the liberal and easy norms of other religious philosophy. Hence, we can say that a distinct mode of proselytisation occurred here. On the other hand though they accepted various religious faiths, they were not ready to detach themselves from tribal identity and sentiment. Nor did they totally forego their traditional religious practices. Acceptance of other religious has faiths resulted in identity crisis amongst them. This has resulted in a situation of intra-tribal tension. Hence, one kind of consciousness about their own social status and cultural distinctiveness is arising among them like other tribal groups of Assam. In this way a revivalist movement has started among them. A large section of the Tiwa population had embraced the Neo-vaisnavism of Sankardeva and entered into the Assamese caste fold. The followers of Sankardeva's Vaisnavism in Assam had organized themselves into *Sankar Sangha*. But the converted Tiwas had not been given the same social status like other Assamese caste Hindus who were included in *Sankar Sangha*. Hence, the tribal Vaisnava followers have organized themselves in *Janajati Sankar Sangha*. Sankardeva started the process of greater Assamese society formation through his Neo-vaisnavism. Having a *Namghar* in every plain-Tiwa village is a good evidence of this fact. But this process has been immensely interrupted during the last two decades of twentieth century. Of late, acceptance of the religious faith of Krishna Guru has dramatically increased. But one noticeable thing is that, irrespective of religious beliefs and practices, all the Tiwas unite together in social and political issues under a single umbrella.

Notes:

¹ William A. Haviland, *Cultural Anthropology*, 9th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999), 511.

² Makhan Jha, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. 2nd Rev. ed. (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1999), 150.

³ The Tiwas do not permit other people to enter their *Barghars*. This photograph was taken after the *Barghar* was broken open in a thunderstorm.

⁴ N. K. Shyam Choudhury & M. M. Das. *The Lalung Society* (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1973), 157.

⁵ Board of Editors, *Kirtana-Ghosa Aru Nam-Ghosa* 3rd Ed. (Nagaon: Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, 1999), 462.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kaliram Medhi, ed. *Mahapurush Sankardevar Bani* (Guwahati: Lawyer's Book Stall, 1997), 198.

⁸ Birendranath Datta, "Sankardeva and the Tribals of North East India," in *Essays on Sankardeva*, ed. Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami (Guwahati: Forum for Sankardeva Studies, 1996), 208.

⁹ See official website of Krishnaguru Sewashram <http://www.krishnaguru.org.in>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ This case was collected from Gakul Bordoloi. Sex: Male, Age: 70, Marital Status: Married, Educational Qualification: Higher Secondary, Place: Jorabari Gaon, Nagaon, Date: 16-11-07.

¹² See <http://srisrithakuranukulchandra.com/data/>.



Photo 17:
*A Hari-Kunwari
in front of a
Kesa-Borghar*

Photo 18:
*A Borjela or
Gharburha in front
of a Poka-Borghar*



Photo 19:
*A Borjela or
Gharburha showing
the place where there
was a Barghar*

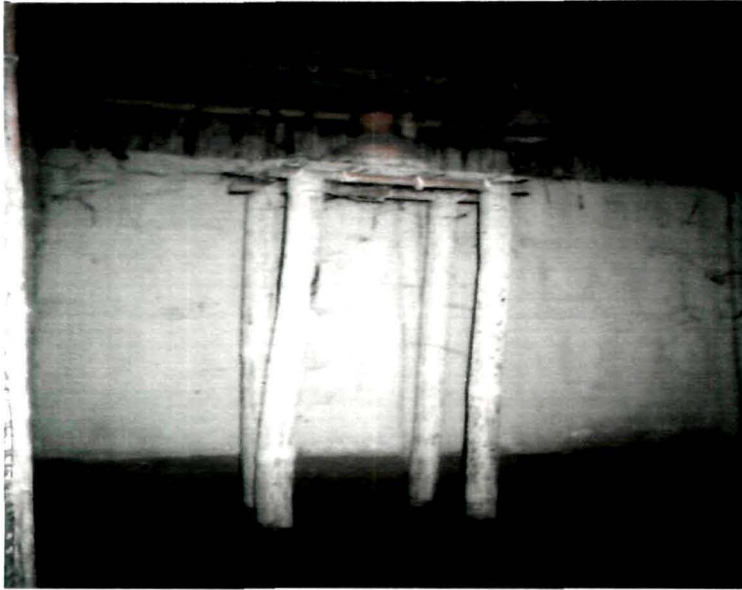


Photo 20:
A Inside View of a
Borghar



Photo 21:
A Village *Thaanghar*



Photo 22:
A Village *Namghar*



Photo 23:
Entrance of the
Kirtan-Ghar of
Khola Deo-
Raja

Photo 24:
The *Kirtan-Ghar* of
Khola Deo- Raja



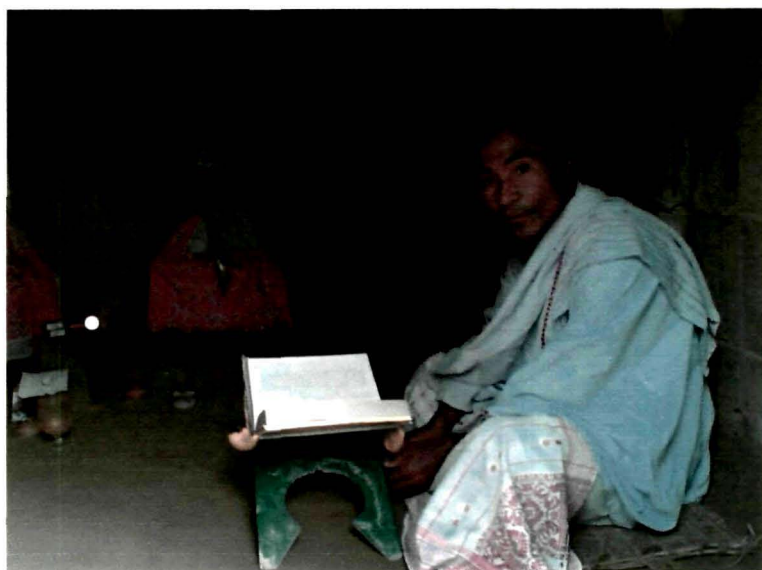
Photo 25:
Jongkhong Puja (1)

Photo 26:
Jongkhong Puja (2)



Photo 27:
Jongkhong Puja (3)

Photo 28:
A Follower of Neo-
Vaisnavism of
Sankardeva in his
Household Prayer
Hall



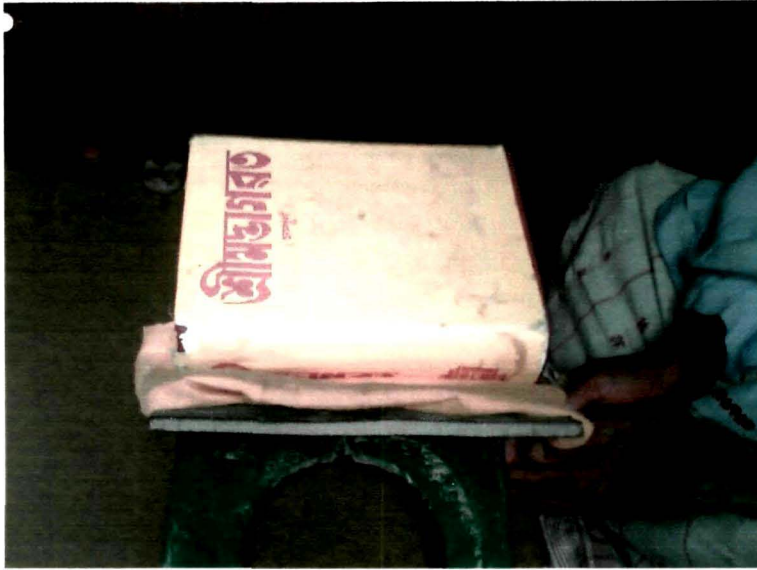


Photo 29:
Srimadbhagavata-
the Scripture of the
Followers of Neo-
Vaisnavism of
Sankardeva

Photo 30:
A Follower of
Krishna Guru in his
Household Prayer
Hall



Photo 31:
A Household Prayer
Hall of the Followers
of Krishna Guru

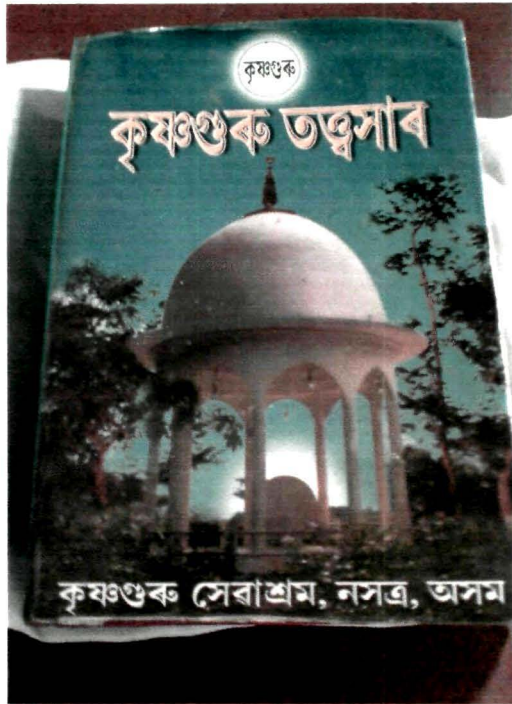


Photo 32: *Krishnaguru Tatvaxar*- the Scripture of the Followers of Krishna Guru

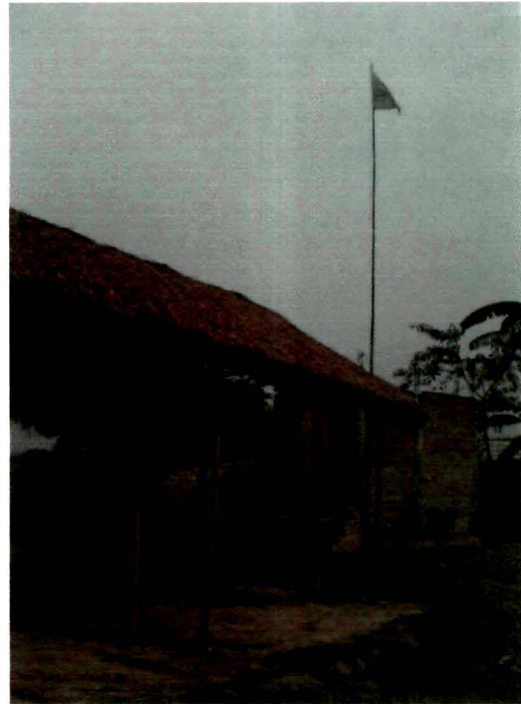


Photo 33: An *Ashram*- The Community Prayer hall of the Followers of Krishna Guru is under Construction

Photo 34: Followers of Krishna Guru Taking Part in Religious Congregation





Photo 35:
A Household Prayer
Hall of the Followers
of Anukul Thakur

Photo 36: A Church- the
Community Prayer Hall of
the Christians

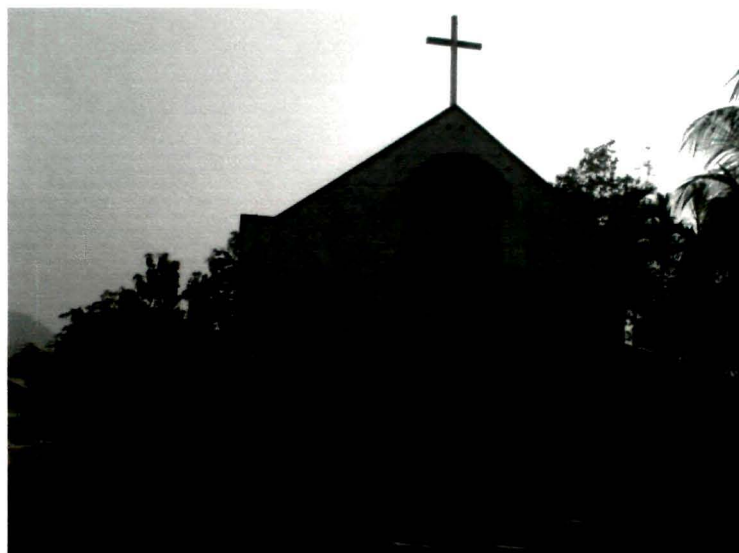


Photo 37: Christ
Jyoti School, Silsang

Chapter 7.

Changes in Socio-Economic Life

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CHAPTER 7

CHANGES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE

Economy is an important constituent of the community life. It plays a vital role in the formation of cultural and social structure of a society. As the activities associated with the fulfillment of material wants of the people are the parts of economic life, the study of socio-economic life of the tribal people helps us to understand the important aspects of their culture. David Throsby opines as follows:

Economic discourse and the operation of economic systems function within a cultural context; similarly cultural relationships and process can also be seen to exist within an economic environment and can themselves be interpreted in economic terms. If culture can be thought of as a system of beliefs, values, customs, etc. shared by a group, then cultural interactions among members of the group or between them and members of other groups can be modeled as transactions and exchanges of symbolic or material goods within an economizing framework. He argues that the interpretation of culture in functional terms, we can identify the notion of culture as economy and interpretation of culture as residing within an economic milieu.¹

Both economy and culture of a community are inter-related. If economic condition of a society is developed or changed, the cultural life of the given society is also influenced accordingly. Similarly, the economic life and economic development of a particular society are always influenced by their cultural system. The study of economic system consists of many economic theories given by the eminent economists in different times. But this discussion focuses only on the changes in the socio-economic sphere of the Tiwa life and inter-relationship between the economy and culture by providing examples from Tiwa society.

7.1. Tribal Economy:

Economy can be divided into two broad categories, viz. production-consumption type economy and production-consumption-distribution type economy. Tribal economy of Assam is mainly of subsistence type and they fall into the broad category of production-consumption economy. In production-consumption economy production is made according to the need. On the contrary, the production-consumption-distribution economy is based on the accumulation of economic surplus or surplus production.² The following four stages have been mentioned by the economists as the main stages of economic development of the tribal people. Those are: (i) Hunting and food gathering, (ii) Pastoral, (iii) Agricultural and (iv) Technological.

The economy of the tribes of North-East India is based on agriculture. Tribal agriculture is dependent on two types of cultivation, viz. shifting cultivation and settled cultivation. The hill tribes mainly depend on shifting cultivation that is known as Jhuming. Almost all the tribal people of the North East India are cultivators. Therefore, the economy of the people of these areas is dependent on agriculture. The basic principles of their economy are: production for consumption, no capital investment, investment of excess wealth for enhancement of prestige and kin oriented economic co-operation.

The modern economy and the tribal economy are different from each other. Modern economy is related to production, distribution, exchange and consumption. S. L. Dosi and P. C. Jain state that, the tribal economy can be looked at from two different perspectives. One is from the point of view of production, distribution and consumption and another is actor oriented where the actors use available means to maximize value. The former is called system oriented or subsistence economy and the later is called actor oriented or formal economy. In system oriented or subsistence economy the actor or individual has no determining voice in production process. The actor oriented or formal economy is basically the economy of the present market, where

individual maximize their value and base their behaviour on cost-benefit, and increase the value of economy.³ In other words tribal economy is the economy of household and generally their production is only for self-consumption. But they also exchange their surplus production in traditional markets like *hat* and *mela*. These traditional markets have important roles on their economy. On the contrary, modern economy is rational that wants to work on the cost-benefit idiom.

7.2. Socio-Economic Life of the Tiwas:

Agriculture is the basic economy of the Tiwas. In the hill areas they depend on shifting cultivation. But in the plains, permanent cultivation is practiced by them. Although there had been the legendary reference of hunting as the basic traditional profession of the Tiwas, in the present- social system it is neither popular nor practical. Now, almost 70 percent of the total populations of the Tiwas engage in cultivation. Agricultural works of the Tiwas begin after celebrating the *Jongkhong puja* during the month of May-June. All villagers participate in this *puja*. It is against of the tradition of the Tiwas to involve in agricultural operations before celebrating *Jongkhong puja* in community basis.

Both staple and cash crops are cultivated by the Tiwas. The *Sali* variety (wet cultivation) is the major crop of the plains Tiwas. *Boro*, *Ahu* and *Bao* varieties of paddy are also grown. The *Ahu* paddy is cultivated in high lying land during pre- monsoon season. *Boro* paddy is cultivated in winter. During the summer season *Sali* and *Bao* paddies are cultivated in low lying field where heavy inundation occurs. In November-December, the crops are ready for harvesting. Both men and women take part in harvesting, generally women reap the crop and men join only if the area of the field is large. For the completion of agricultural work there is the corporate activity like *Hadari-khel* system among the Tiwas. Friends and relatives also help, but that would be on a personal basis and without compulsion.

Besides the paddy cultivation, horticultural cash crops and seasonal vegetables like gourd, pumpkin, brinjal, radish and chilli are also grown by plain Tiwas. The most common horticultural crop is areca nut, which covers a large area in the backyard. The produce is for home consumption as well as for sale. Bamboo is another important plant used for making baskets and fencing, construction and repairs of the houses, sheds for cattle and pigs or for granary. Mustard, jute and sugarcane are also grown in Tiwa families. In the plains the cultivation of land is done by ploughing. Surplus stocks of their products are sold in the markets for purchasing items of daily use. Besides the cultivation, spinning and weaving, fishery, piggery, poultry and basketry are also done by the Tiwas.

7.3. The Changing Scenario of Socio-Economic Life:

7.3.1. Changes in the Field of Agricultural Operations:

It has been mentioned already that the Tiwa-Economy is based on agriculture. Presently the main varieties of crops cultivated by the Tiwas are as follows:

- (i) *Sali*: It is the main crop cultivated by the Tiwas during summer season. The varieties are *lasmonbhug*, *koina sali*, *aaka Sali*, *kumol*, *joha*, *baomusa*, *goya*, *aijong*, and *porimol* are cultivated by them. The *ranjeet*, *bahadur*, *biplab* and *untrish* are some new varieties of *Sali* paddy.
- (ii) *Bao*: The *Bao* variety is cultivated in low laying land, as it requires sufficient water. The varieties are mainly *mikir bao*, *madolbao*, *tora bao*, *bora*.
- (iii) *Boro*: The *Boro* variety is cultivated during the winter season (December-January), though it requires sufficient water. It is ready for harvest during the pre-monsoon period

(April-May). The names of some varieties are *ranjeet*, *biplab*, *pankaj*, *bahadur* and *untrish*.

- (iv) *Ahu*: the *Ahu* variety does not required much water though it is cultivated during the summer season (February-March). It is harvested during the pre-winter season (August September).

The Tiwas are hard working people and start working hard early in their life. But most of them do not have sufficient land for cultivation. During the field visit it is found that most of them cultivate in the rented land of other people of neighbouring villages. It is locally known as *Adhi loa* system. In this system, the landless Tiwas get land and crops for cultivation from the original land owner. In return, they have to give half of their products to the land owner after harvesting it. Although some of the Tiwas have good agricultural lands, yet their agriculture is at subsistence level. The main cause of this state of affair is the age-old pattern of cultivation with indigenous tools and implements, use of traditional seeds and organic fertilizer. Though a small number of families have adopted improved agricultural practices like use of tractors, power tillers, high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, yet these new practices have been accepted in a half hearted manner. The villagers generally do not like innovative agricultural practices mainly because of their traditional faith in the God of cultivation who may be displeased if new methods are used. People are not ready to give up their age-old practices and traditions.

The literacy rate is very low amongst the Tiwas. Illiteracy is a cause of their economic under-development in every village. Due to the lack of education they do not have any idea about modern equipment of cultivation and modern varieties of seeds. Their economy is kin based economy. All of the family members do engage in agricultural operations. Generally parents cannot afford the educational expenditure of their wards. Rather they are

compelled to engage them in agricultural and domestic works. Population explosion is another cause of their economic-underdevelopment. They believe that the children are the gift of God and having more children means more helping hands in their agricultural works. This type of belief has an impact on the population explosion. It is found somewhat true in the case poor families. Because, the poor families cannot afford wage labourers for work in the agricultural fields. Rather they are dependant on the kin based economic activities.

There is a division of labour based on gender in agricultural and domestic works. Men take the responsibility of the outside work such as ploughing, harvesting the paddy, carrying the paddy to home, fishing, basketry and looking after domestic animals. Women take the responsibility of all the domestic chores as well as planting and harvesting, fishing, and take care of the children so on and so forth.

7.3.2. Changing Role of Women in Economic Activities:

Men and women are two equal components of the human society and are considered complementary to each other in all aspects of life. But the role and status played and enjoyed by these two components are not same in every human society. Women have different role and status in a society according to its social norms. Tiwa women have also different role and status in their family economy which is based on division of labour. Their roles in family economy can be discussed as follows:

- ⋈
- (i) *In the Field of Agriculture:* Without participation of womenfolk, agriculture is not possible for a Tiwa family. The female members of every household work hard during the time of planting and harvesting the paddy. For the completion of agricultural work there are some co-operative

activities like *Hadari-khel* that has already been discussed in chapter 5.

- (ii) *Custody of Granary of the Family:* It is a common practice of the Tiwa society that the granary of a family is kept under the custody of the wife. Her husband can not dispose off paddy without prior discussion with her.
- (iii) *Custody of the Cattle, Poultry and Pigs of the Family:* All female members of a family are to be the owners of the cattle, poultry and pigs. The father, who is the head of the family, has to take permission from his wife or daughters if he desires to sell off any cattle, poultry or pigs of the family.
- (iv) *Production of Zu on Commercial Basis:* *Zu* is an important commodity of the Tiwas. It is produced and consumed daily and regularly. Production of *zu* is not only for their self consumption but also for the people of other castes living in neighbouring villages as *zu* is popular among them too and consumed by other people irrespective of caste and creed. Hence, Tiwa women earn money by selling it. Women are the ones who do all works relating to *zu* production at home.
- (v) *Weaving:* Every indigenous community in this region, tribal or non-tribal, in the hills or in the plains has their own range of textiles produced by the women in their traditional looms. Weaving is compulsory activity of Tiwa women. Hence, every Tiwa girl is bound to weave her traditional dresses herself. Traditional dress of women consists of three pieces of clothes e.g. *Kasang* (lower garment), *Jaskai* or *Phaskai* (upper garment) and *Thongali* (waistband). The traditional dress in the case of men folk consists of five

pieces of clothes; they are *Tagla* (shirt), *Muga dhoti* (lower garment), *Kamasa or Seleng* (upper garment), *Thangali* (waistband) and *Phaga* (turban). Women are the bearer of weaving tradition. It is observed that women earn good amount of money by selling cloths woven by them and thus provide financial help to the family.

- (vi) *Self-help Groups among Tiwa Women:* Now a days, weavers' association is established in Tiwa villages with the view to weave cloths in community basis. The weavers are self employed and get financial benefits from the weavers' association. The self-help groups also earn money from poultry, pigs and cattle rearing in community basis. The purpose of self-help groups is to help the members during the time of distress or hardship. Self-help groups have gone a long way in providing sustenance to otherwise unprivileged underdeveloped needy families.

7.3.3. Changes in the Fields of Animal Husbandry and Handicrafts:

Animal husbandry and handicrafts are two spheres that help in economic upliftment of the Tiwas. Pigs, poultry, and cattle rearing are common practices for many families. Pigs are reared for sale. They earn good amount of money by selling pigs. Poultry is reared for selling of eggs and meats. Pigeon is also a common domestic bird. Cow, goat and buffaloes are common animals reared by them. Milk produced from these animals is another commodity to be sold in market. Generally cow and buffaloes are reared for the dwell purposes of engaging them in agricultural work as well as selling. Tiwa women take the main responsibilities in this task.

Tiwa males are expert in bamboo and cane work. They produce beautifully designed bamboo and cane household items for the purpose of

sale. The bamboo and cane items produced by the Tiwa men are popular among all of the rural people of Assam. Some bamboo and cane made items are: baskets, *Japi* (traditional umbrella), *Dala* (bamboo tray or platter), *Saloni* (bamboo sieve) and fishing tools. Besides these household items, now a days they produce bamboo and cane made show pieces like *Xorai* (raised tray with cover), *Bota* (raised tray), puppets and masks.

7.3.4. Observations on *Jonbil Mela* as a Living Institution of Barter:

In tribal dominated areas, the presence of periodical market is a common fact. The Tiwas a traditional periodical market or fair known as *Jonbil Mela* held once in a year after the *Magh Bihu* (January) at the bank of *Jonbil* lake; 2 k.m away from Jagiroad of Marigaon district. Now a days the barter system has become obsolete. But it is only the *Jonbil Mela* of Tiwa community where barter system is still in use. This fair is popular amongst the Tiwas. People of other community too show interest in this *Mela*. Moreover, tourists both domestic and foreign are attracted to this *Mela* because of the uncommon practice of barter system.

Legends has it that Tiwa king Pranteswar Singha while sailing across the lake saw the reflection of the Moon in water of the lake and thus named this lake as *Jonbil*.⁴ The original inhabitation of the Tiwas was in the hills of present Karbi Anglong district. They migrated to the plains probably in 13th century. The *Jonbil Mela* is supposed to have started from the 14th century. It's a known fact that essential commodities like salt, oil, fish are not available in hill areas, hence this fair was started for the convenience of both the hill and plain people. Here the hill people could procure their essential commodities in exchange to their own products from the plain people. They used the system of barter instead of money. Still this tradition of barter exists among the Tiwas.

Formally *Jonbil Mela* is held for three days, but now, informally it continues for four to five days. The *Mela* starts on the first Thursday of the month of Magh (during January) and ends on Saturday. On the first day the hill Tiwas, the Khasis, the Garos, the Karbis, the Jaintias come to this place with their agricultural products viz. sweet potato, pumpkin, gourd, arum roots, bamboo shoots, chilli, turmeric, ginger and medicinal herbs and they build temporary huts using the stubble of paddy. The plain people address them as *Mama* (maternal uncle) and *Mami* (Aunt) in the fair. The shops with modern items are started from this day. On this day the king of Gobha Deep Sing Deoraja and his officials and invited guests and the members of *Jonbil Mela* committee enjoy a community feast together in the courtyard of the permanent office of the *Jonbil Mela* committee. Exchange of commodities through barter system and community fishing starts from the very early morning of the second day. Community fishing is done by the Tiwas of this area in the *Jonbil* Lake. People enjoy the community fishing with full enthusiasm here. Formerly, Tiwa king came to observe this community fishing but now the king does not come to the fair on second day. After that, the cock fight is held in the main field of the fair. Formerly buffalo fight was also held on this day but now it is not in practice. On the third morning, the hill people become ready to go back to their respective places and dismantle their temporary huts and add fire to them; this way they pray to the *Agni Devta* (God of Fire) on the eve of Magh Bihu. Another attraction of this fair besides the continuity of barter system is the presence of the Gobha king in his royal regalia along with his officials on third day. It is an assembly of all kings of the small states like Gobha. Formerly, Gobha king used to come to this fair on elephant but now he comes in car. Now, the officials and escorts of the Gobha king also come on bikes. On this particular day the Gobha king Deep Sing Deoraja, who is a student of class IX in Alpha English High School of Shillong, is treated with full honour by his subjects and offer him 'taxes' in the form of gifts. Moreover, the king is entertained by traditional Tiwa songs and dances. After finishing the cultural items and offering gifts to him, the officials visit each shop the fair and collect tax from them according to the size of the shop. One

portion of the collected money is still offered to the Gobha king to meet his family expenses and one portion is kept by the Jonbil Mela committee to meet the expenses of the fair. Formerly, this fair continued till the third day (Saturday) because the king and people of Gobha used to celebrate the Magh Bihu on Sunday after observing the fair. But now though the fair formally ends on third day, informally it continues for another two days.

Although it is a fair of barter system where traditional and home made items are sold, presently other stationary and essential commodities are also being marketed. Customers are seen to be keen for such things. Community fishing is part and parcel of the *Jonbil Mela*. A noticeable change observed in the case community fishing is that, from the last three years the quantity and variety of the fish has been decreased gradually due to the water and air pollution. The lake-water has been polluted by the Nagaon Paper Mill situated at Jagiroad.

The problem faced by the local people and *Mela* committee is that the committee does not have a permanent land for this fair. Committee arranges the area for the celebration of the *Mela* by paying Rs. 200/ for per Bigha as rent to the owner of the land. They manage to collect money from the shop owners of the *Mela*. They do not receive financial assistance from the government for organizing this *Mela*. The *Mela* ground is strewn over with polythin bags, broken glasses, rotten vegetables, and other rejects and the owner of the land find it difficult to clear the ground for cultivation after the *Mela*. There is lack of proper hygienic measure during the *Mela*.

This *Mela* is important for both economic and cultural points of view. Here, the Tiwas' traditional sports, performances, rituals and customs have been exhibited. In present day money-economy, barter system does not hold much value and importance. Even knowing that, the people are still indulging in it in the *Jonbil Mela* only because that it is accepted as a tradition of the people. Tradition dies hard. Presently, the noticeable change in *Jonbil Mela* is

that the expansion of the market of wooden material. People of this area wait for this fair to buy necessary wooden articles. The markets of garments and utensils are also other attractions of the *Mela*. Moreover, different types of modern things including electronic gadgets, metallic, plastic, bamboo, wooden and cane-made materials, vegetables and fruits are also sold here. This fair becomes so wide that it is no longer a fair of Tiwa people or tribal people but becomes a shared festival of the people of Assam. It is a fair of love and brotherhood. This fair helps in creating an atmosphere of brotherhood and love among the people.

This *Mela* is the best example of continuity and mixing tradition with modernity. Existence age-old barter system and modern currency in one fair is the best example of this fact. Again, arrival of king to the fair in his traditional royal regalia is a tradition. But his arrival by car is the example of modernity. Now, this fair has become a symbol of the Tiwa culture.

7.4 Culture and Economy:

7.4.1. Impact of Culture on Economic Activities: Examples from Proverbs:

Proverbs a branch of folk literature are the store house of the collective and ethnic wisdom of the various races and communities. Hence, proverbs are generally regarded as true and people use them in day to day life. It is observed that there is similarity of proverbs used by the people of different communities of this region. Proverbs can provide solution for different problems faced by the people in daily walk of life. Proverbs provide information and knowledge on environment, agriculture, medicine, trade and commerce, customs, traditions and manners. This discussion focuses on the proverbs related to agricultural knowledge. Human civilization initiated by the practice of agriculture.

about how farmer should take care of their staple and cash crops goes like thus:

Gobare Paniye Pan
Nikai, Nirai Dhan ⁷
(Cow dung and water can nourish betel leaf
Likewise weeding can nourish paddy)

Dried cow dung is a best soil conditioner for any kind of crops. It is used as an ingredient to prepare the soil for any kind of cultivation by the rural people. Similarly, sufficient water is needed for all kinds of cultivation more so for cultivation of betel leaves. Again paddy field is often covered by unnecessary plants and grasses that hamper their growth. Therefore, keeping the field clean by weeding from unnecessary plants and grass is necessary for natural growth and nourishment. Hence, this practical knowledge is spread and stored in the form of proverb by the rural people.

Other proverbs containing the knowledge about the plantation of banana, bamboo and other vegetables and fruits are as follows:

Age ruba barit kal
Majot diba aan phosol
Pabo tetiya kolor sah
Ximat kodapi nuruba bah ⁸
(At first plant Banana tree
Then plant other crops or vegetables in between those trees
Then these crops or vegetables will get the shade
Never plant Bamboo tree on the boundary line)

The plantation of banana tree keeps the soil moist and soft and provides sufficient shades. Hence, if somebody can plant these trees, there will be good production. Bamboos are rapidly grown up plants. If bamboos are planted on the boundary, there is likelihood that it will in course of time become a bone

of contestation between two neighbours. Thus, it is prudent to avoid such situation.

Phagunat jui

Chotot Mati

*Xei Bah uthe dathi*⁹

(Make a bonfire in the bamboo-grove in the month of Phagun

Add soil on its root in the month of Chot

Then only bamboo-grove will have good growth)

Bamboos are deciduous trees that lose leaves in the month of Phagun (February-March). If a bonfire is made in this month the heaps of garbage and the harmful insects, white ant, and crickets can be destroyed and the ash would work as fertilizer thus helping the grove in its good growth. After destroy the harmful insects, it is important to cover the roots of bamboo with soil. Another proverb that provides knowledge about the plantation of coconut tree is as follows:

Narikolor gurit lunia mati

*Xighre 'xighre lage guti*¹⁰

(Give salted soil on the root of coconut tree

Then the coconut tree will bear fruits frequently)

Every one of us knows that coconut is mainly produced in the coastal area because of the salty soil. Salty soil can increase the production of coconut and at the same time destroy the insects from its roots. Let us take up another proverb that contains the knowledge about the plantation of other crops and vegetables:

Xolla chahe Tula, tar ardhek Mula

*Tar ardhek Dhan, bina chahe Pan*¹¹

(Plough 16 times for planting cotton; plough half of it for planting radish

Again plough half of it for paddy plantation, no need to plough for betel leaf plantation)

Cotton plantation requires maximum ploughing of the field; in a nutshell it requires utmost care. The radish plantation required half its. Again half of it is sufficient for paddy cultivation. But betel leaf plantation does not require ploughing. It requires only water, organic manure and weeding for its nourishment and growth. What type of care is required for the gourd, chilli and brinjal plants can be known from the following proverb:

Lao, Jalakia, Bengenat chai

Tehe xaisye bol pai ¹²

(Give ashes to the plants of Gourd, Chilli and Brinjal

Then only these plants get strength)

Sprinkling ashes to the plants of gourd, chilli and brinjal plant can destroy the harmful insects from it. Moreover, ashes work as a fertilizer for these plants. Therefore, ashes can increase the strength and production of chilli and brinjal.

For the cultivation of any kind of crops and plants require sufficient water. Water is a vital thing for all living beings and also for other living beings. So, it is necessary to preserve water for the future. This knowledge is reflected by following proverb:

Ahin katit rakhiba pani

Jenkoi rakhe rojai rani

(Reserve water in the month of Ahin and Kati (September-October)

Like a king protects his queen)

In the autumn season water in the paddy field starts drying up. But this is high time for the flowering and maturing of paddy. Lack of water during this time

may hamper the growth of paddy. Therefore, everyone should try to keep water in the paddy field in autumn season with utmost care.

There are many more proverbs found amongst them which contain agricultural knowledge. These proverbs are still circulating in their society. Thus the age old agricultural knowledge is still continuing amongst them through these proverbs.

7.4.2. Impact of Economic Development on their Culture:

In the present era of globalization, no ethnic communities are remaining isolated. Basically globalization is an economic process but it includes mass communication, culture, politics, and many other human endeavours. Globalization is worldwide phenomena; the impact of globalization can be felt in every part of the world. Globalization has been made possible through the establishment of worldwide, information and communication network. New telecommunication and computer networks have overcome the barriers of time and space. In the present era of globalization, the whole world has become a “global village”. The small places have been exposed to the wider world. Hence, the tribal homelands are linked with the region, state, nation and the world. Therefore, no group even tribal communities are remaining isolated and they have been influenced by the process of globalization and so also the Tiwas.

In the case of economy, the Tiwas now, have developed their agricultural practices. They have adopted improved agricultural practices like use of tractors, power tillers for tillage the paddy field; high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Of late, the Tiwas are more exposed to modern education and technology particularly the ones used in agriculture. Now, they do not hesitate to use modern technology and method in agricultural activities. Such shifts have yielded well. And this knowledge provides them good result in their agricultural production. Educated Tiwas take up different types of jobs. The Tiwas do not have any professional castes.

This has enabled them to take up any occupation they may find suitable. It is found during the field work that the new generation of the Tiwas is reluctant to agricultural works. Rather they prefer to work in towns and cities no matter what type of work. Industrial workers have been increased amongst them. And in this way economic condition has improved to a great extent.

Due to the increased purchasing capacity most of the Tiwa families now have Television, Music system, Motorcycle, Mobile phone and other Electronic gadgets. These things have influenced their traditional lifestyle and practice. For example, the main agricultural operations like sowing, planting, weeding and harvesting are quite laborious jobs. To get rid of the boredom resulting from the hard labour in the field and to get relaxed, folk songs—*Lai Hilali* is sung. Their folk songs reflect the social customs and traditions of their society. But at present instead of singing the communities own traditional songs people show interest in playing modern filmy Hindi songs or popular Assamese songs. Leisure time recreation in the past consisted of traditional games or performances, but now a days they prefer to go for movie or watch television or listen to the music. As a result their own culture has become a casualty.

On the contrary, improved economic condition has enabled the Tiwas to use still camera, video camera while celebrating their traditional festivals and ceremonies. Now a days it has become a regular practice with all to document the events like marriage and other cultural ceremonies. This kind of documentation of people's cultural activities might be helpful in research on such activities. This kind of documentation of their culture can provide us knowledge about their cultural and social systems. Due to the increasing purchasing capacity through the sale of cash crops and the access to markets, the consumption of manufactured consumer goods have increased gradually. This has brought the Tiwa community into close economic co-operation with their neighbours.

From the above discussion it is found that the Tiwa economy has undergone many changes. Their living condition has also undergone change. Their economy or agricultural operations are influenced by their cultural system. Similarly, culture is also influenced by their economic condition. Prof. Arthur Lewis, a distinguished Economist writes:

Economic growth depends on attitude to work, to wealth, to profit, to having children, to invention, to strangers, to adventure and so on, and all these attitudes flow from deep springs of human mind.”[qtd. in Madhab, 2000]¹³

Human mind set is designed according to the culture and the working attitude of people. Again the working attitude of the people is regulated by cultural setup. Cultural set up depends on different factors such as traditions, customs, religion, geographical environment, physical strength, education and so on and so forth. On the contrary economic condition has a great impact on the cultural continuity. Hence both are inter-related and influenced mutually. Diagrammatically it can be described as thus:

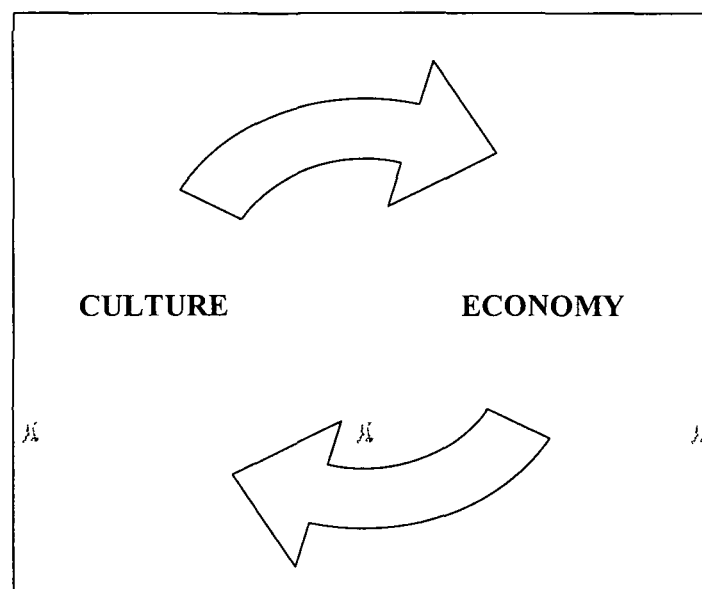


Fig. 12: Relationship between Culture and Economy

7.5. Conclusion:

Tiwa economy falls under the broad category of production-consumption type, where any kind of production is only for their self consumption. Hence, it is still in subsistence level, although a minority of the Tiwas enjoys a high economic status. As of now, the economic condition of the Tiwas has been improved in comparison to their earlier condition. But in comparison to other societies, their economic growth rate is low. Illiteracy is one reason of that. They are not that sharp in adapting new technology nor are they innovative. Their traditional professions are in a state of shambles. Entrepreneurship is still not a forte for the Tiwas. Some of them are petty businessmen but successful professionals are few and far between. Present day Tiwa young people are not seen to be inclined to adapt their own age old economic, social as well as cultural practices, not to speak of glorifying them.

Of late, many people of the Tiwa community, both male and female, are seen working in unorganized sectors as manual workers. Lack of interest in accepting new business for their economic development is also a factor of economic backwardness. But now a days, their outlook towards life and other things has changed. Boys and girls get themselves admitted in schools. Literacy rate is increased gradually. Young boys have shown interest in joining industrial work. Kin based economy is still going on in their society where women play an important role.

The economic problems of plain Tiwas are not different from the economic problems of the Indian peasantry in general. They have faced the problem of landlessness, land alienation, indebtedness, fragmentation of holdings, backward agricultural practices, flood so on and so forth. Among these, landlessness, flood and backward agricultural practices are the main problems encountered by them. During the field work it was observed that most of them have been engaging in cultivation on such land which is in fact owned by rich people. They take lease of the land for some years in return of

rent or products. This system is locally known as *Adhi lowa* or *Adhi diya* system where the farmers have to offer half of their production to the owner of the land. Frequent flood in Assam during the last two decades has also badly affected their economic condition. Some of them have even lost their agricultural land due to the land erosion in flood. Production rate is not too high due to the adherence to the age old agricultural practices. The number of some families who have adopted modern agricultural practices is quite negligible.

Their culture and economy bear a close relationship. Every kind of agricultural operation is associated with cultural and religious celebrations. Some of these practices incur large amount of expenditures. For example, they observe *Jongkhong puja* before starting agricultural work in the paddy field. It needs many sacrifices. Sometime it becomes hard for the poor families to meet the expenses of this kind of religious practices associated with agriculture. Because, presently the cost of a fully grown pig is Rs.7000/- or more. Nevertheless these traditions are still continuing along with other traditions like the continuity of periodical market known as *Jonbil mela*. This *mela* can be described as the living cultural heritage of Tiwa people. It has provided the example of maintaining continuity in their traditional practices. Existence of barter system in this *mela* is a good example of this fact. Relationship between culture and economy can be traced from the proverbs. The proverbial expressions of Assam provide good agricultural knowledge to the rural people and these can be considered as the first stage of agricultural science, because these proverbs bear practical knowledge of the agricultural field.

It can thus be concluded that the culture, economy and geographical environment are always interrelated. Geographical environment gives shape to the culture & economy of a particular group of people. Economy depends on the ideology of a group of people which is also a product of their cultural system. The economic activities, working attitude, food habit, and dress

pattern are depended on culture, religion and climatic condition. On the other hand, the economic development or economic conditions also have an impact on particular culture. Because the continuity of cultural tradition and cultivation of cultural practices depend on economic condition of the people. Hence, the relationship between culture and economy can be described as a two way process and both are influenced by each other as seen in the case of the Tiwas of Assam.

Notes:

¹ David Throsby, *Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10-11.

² D. N. Majumdar & T. N. Madan, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, 12th ed. (Noida: Mayoor Paperbacks, 1999), 162.

³ S. L. Doshi & P. C. Jain, *Social Anthropology* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001), 316-317.

⁴ Narayan Kumar Radukakoti, "Lalung Rajya Gobha aru Oitihaxik Jonbil Mela," in *Tiwa Sanskritir Jilingoni*, ed. Mileswar Pator (Marigaon: Assam Tiwa Sahitya Sabha, 2004), 36.

⁵ Sarbeswar Rajguru, *Asamiya Pravada* 2nd. Rev. ed. (Nagaon: Balagopal Prakashan, 2003), 246.

⁶ Ibid. 248.

⁷ Saiyad Abdul Malik, *Raijor Mukhar Maat* (Guwahati: Student Stores, 1988), 1.

⁸ Sarbeswar Rajguru, op.cit. 249.

⁹ Ibid. 250.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. 251.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jayanta Madhab, "Culture and Development: A case study of Assam," in *Horizons of Culture: Perspective on the North East India*, ed. Amarjyoti Chaudhury and Pradeep Jyoti Mahanta (Guwahati: Assam Academy for Cultural relations, 2000), 107.



Photo 38:
Agricultural Field

Photo 39:
Cultivation of *Boro*
Paddy

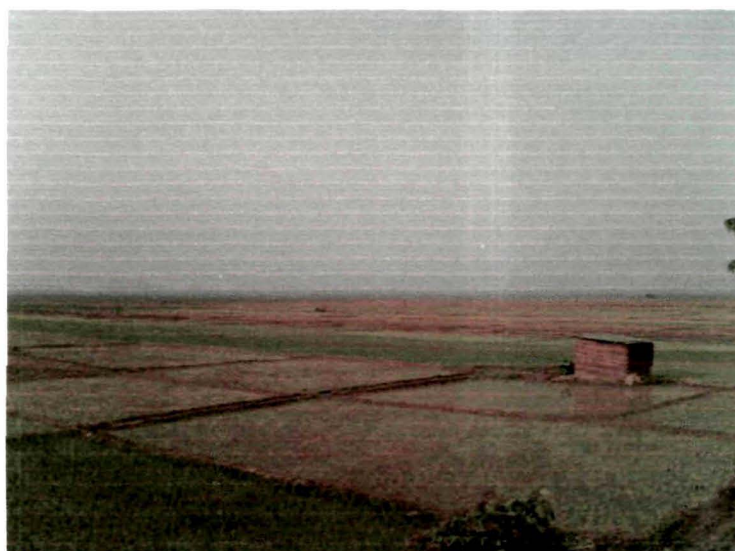


Photo 40:
Hadari-Khel of
women working in
Agricultural Field

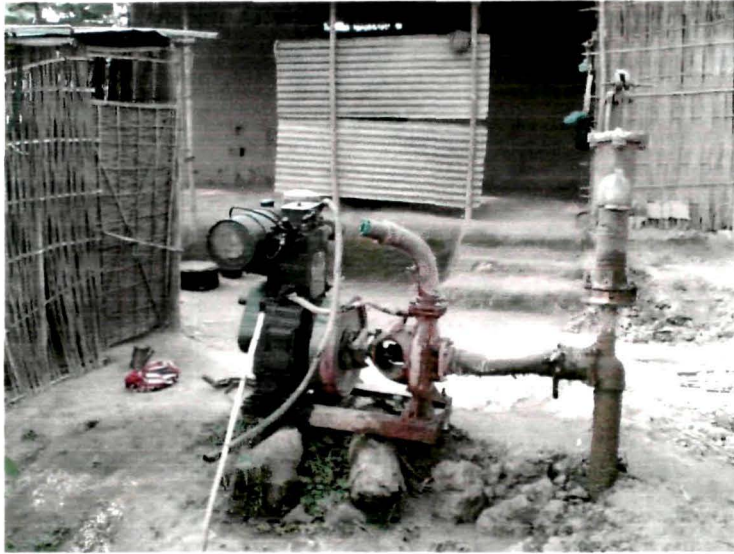


Photo 41:
Modern tools used by
the Tiwas in
Agriculture



Photo 42: Modern
tools of Agriculture



Photo 43: A Woman Engaged in
Weaving

Photo 44:
Woman Preparing
Rice Beer





Photo 45:
Bamboo Baskets



Photo 46: A Model of a Tiwa
Girl



Photo 47: A Model of a Tiwa
Boy

Photo 48:
A *Bata* (Wooden Raised
Try)





Photo 49:
Main Entrance of
Jonbil Mela



Photo 50:
Gobha Deo Raja
(king) enjoying
Community Feast in
Jonbil Mela



Photo 51:
Office of the *Jonbil*
Mela Committee



Photo 52:
Researcher in the crowd in 'Jonbil Mela'

Photo 53:
Community Fishing in the Jonbil Lake (1)



Photo 54:
Community Fishing in the Jonbil Lake (2)



Photo 55:
People Bartering
Commodities in
Jonbil Mela(1)

Photo 56:
People Bartering
Commodities in
Jonbil Mela (2)



Photo 57:
People Bartering
Commodities in
Jonbil Mela (3)



Photo 58:
Some Items for
Bartering (1)

Photo 59:
Some Items for
Bartering (2)



Photo 60:
Some Items for
Bartering (3)



Photo 61:
A view of the Cash
Market in *Jonbil
Mela* (1)

Photo 62:
A view of the Cash
Market in *Jonbil
Mela* (2)



Photo 63:
Another view of the
Cash Market in
Jonbil Mela (3)



Photo 64:
The Vehicle of
Gobha *Raja* (king)
with Royal Flag

Photo 65:
People waiting to
welcome the king
of Gobha



Photo 66:
The King of Gobha - Deep Sing Deo
Raja



Photo 67:
Presentation of
Tiwa Traditional
Dance before the
King of Gobha

Photo 68:
Presentation of
Tiwa Traditional
Music in Honour
of the Gobha
King



Photo 69:
The King of
Gobha, Honoured
by a subject in
Jonbil Mela



Photo 70:
The King of West Nagaon is Honoured by the people

Photo 71:
Collection of Tax by the Officials of Gobha King in Jonbil Mela

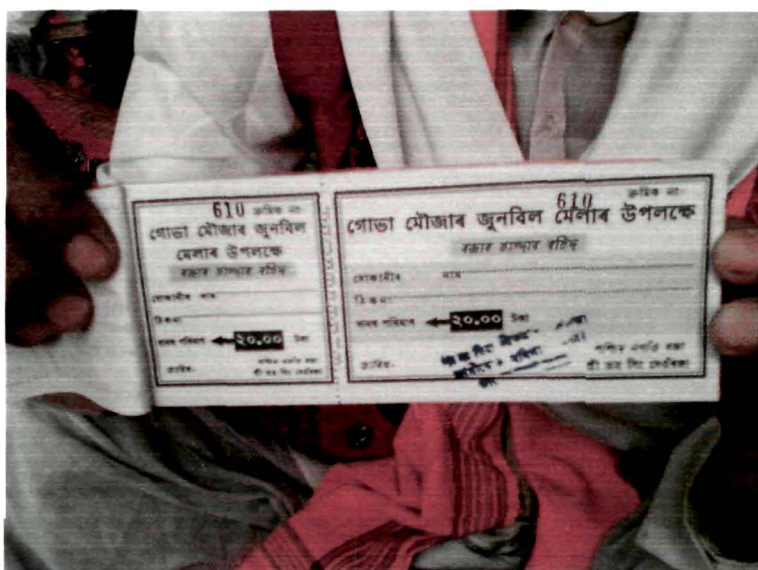


Photo 72:
Receipt for the Collection of Tax

Chapter 8.

Socio-Cultural Life as Reflected in Folklore

8.1. Observations on Folk Literature

8.1.1. Observations on Folk Songs

8.1.2. Observations on Prose Narratives

8.1.3. Analysis of these Oral literatures

8.2. Observations on Material Culture

8.2.1. Observations on Folk Architecture

8.2.2. Observations on Folk Costume

8.2.3. Observations on Folk Cookery

8.2.4. Present Scenario

8.3. Conclusion

CHAPTER 8

SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE AS REFLECTED IN FOLKLORE

Culture is a total way of life and every human construct is a part of culture. Hence culture comprises all aspects of life within a given society including material and non-material aspects. It includes all the conscious and unconscious creations of human beings. Accordingly, folklore is a part of culture that consists of four fields viz. Oral literature or Verbal art, Material culture, Social folk customs and Folk performing arts which are shared by every member of a society and survives by experience and words of mouth. Folklore is such a field of culture which reflects the happiness, grief, habits, behaviours, mental agony and tensions of a group of people. The worldview and the native wisdom of a society are manifested in folklore. Every conscious and unconscious creation of men convey their creativity, mental state and aesthetic sense. Moreover, these things also convey the habits, belief system and social situation of the past and present. In this way folklore reveals many aspects of a society or culture. William Bascom opines that folklore has many cultural aspects, such as allowing for escape from societal consequences. Moreover, it can also serve to validate a culture as well as transmit a culture's morals and values. It can also be used to assert social pressure, or relieve them. The definition given by him is:

Folklore means "folk learning"; it comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and other techniques that are learned by imitation or example, as well as the products of these crafts.... Folklore includes folk art, folk craft, folk tools, folk costume, folk custom, folk belief, folk medicine, folk recipes, folk music, folk dance, folk games, folk gestures, and folk speech, as well as those verbal forms of expression which have been called folk literature but which are better described as verbal art.¹

Another definition given by Marius Barbeau and accepted by Bascom in his paper “Folklore, Verbal Art and Culture” (1973) is as follows:

Folklore is handed down by example or spoken word, by the older to the new generations, without reference to book, print, or school teacher and it is born opponent of the serial number, the stamped product, and the patented standard.²

Folklore belongs to all members of a society. Its value is no way less than that of the history and heritage. Hence it deserves to be documented and preserved as a legacy for the future. All the four fields of folklore consist of different sub-fields. Oral literature comprises of analytical categories and ethnic genres. Analytical categories aim at classifying various sub groups of oral literature in accordance with the classification accepted internationally by the scholars. Examples of Analytical categories are: Folk song, Prose narrative, Proverbs and Riddles; and Folk Speech. Ethnic genres aim at classifying the oral literature according to the cultural reality of different ethnic groups.³ Ethnic genres are also known as Native genre as these are culture specific. Material culture consists of five sub-fields. Those are Folk art, Folk craft, Folk architecture, Folk costume and Folk cookery. Here the discussion focuses on Folk songs, Prose narratives i.e. Myths and Legends, the Folk architecture, Folk costume and Folk cookery of the Tiwas. The Oral literatures of the Tiwas can reveal many facts about their ancestors, history, and their migration to this place. The architectural designs, dress pattern and food habit convey the beliefs, social systems and habits of their past and present. Several changes are taking place in their society and culture. Many factors are responsible for the changes. The following discussion focuses on such issues.

8.1. Observations on Folk Literature:

Every community of the world has their own cultural heritage. The Tiwas of Assam have not been an exception. They have their own distinctive folkloric items which convey some facts about their society and culture. Oral literature is a form of communication that uses words to express ideas, values, beliefs,

native wisdom and world views of a particular group of people, which can provide an insight into their socio-cultural life. Here the discussion focuses on Folk songs, Myths and Legendry beliefs of the Tiwas.

Folk songs are verse narratives which more often than not depict the way of life of people. Folk songs have cultural and social meaning as these are generally created in a particular social-cultural environment. Hence it can provide us knowledge about a particular period of time. Moreover, Folk song often speaks on particular social and political issues such as work, war and popular opinion. According to Phillips Barry,

Folk song is a treasure-house of the events of human experience in all possible phrases, of all the lights and shadows of human fancy, and furthermore, of all that by common consent of all the folk is beautiful.⁴

Myths, one of the branches of prose narrative that are generally stories found in prose forms. Myths tell about the origin or creation of natural, supernatural, or cultural phenomena of universe. The mythical characters are generally from supernatural world. Men generally perceive the world in symbolic form and the myth is only one of the many forms. According to William Bascom

Myths are the tales believed as true, usually sacred, set in the distant past or other worlds or parts of the world, and with extra-human, inhuman, or heroic characters.⁵

Myths are defined differently by different scholars in many times. Mary Magoulick has opined that the definitions of myth given by different scholars can be summarized as thus:

Myths are symbolic tales of the distant past (often primordial times) that concern cosmogony and cosmology (the origin and nature of the universe), may be connected to belief systems or rituals, and may serve to direct social action and values.⁶

Legends, another branch of prose narrative are generally stories found in prose form. Legends tell about events of human history. The characters of legends

are generally historical figures. A professional definition of legend was proposed by Timothy R. Tangherlini in 1990:

Legend, typically, is a short (mono-) episodic, traditional, highly ecotypified (specifically located in place and time) historicized narrative performed in a conversational mode, reflecting on a psychological level a symbolic representation of folk belief and collective experiences and serving as a reaffirmation of commonly held values of the group to whose tradition it belongs.⁷

These analytical categories are the part of a socio-cultural identity of any community. Some times these are also accepted as the source of history. These oral literatures can help to explore the missing history of a group of people. Thomas Wright admitted that

There is no subject of inquiry relating to the history of a people more interesting than its popular mythology and superstitions...In these we trace the early formations of nations, their identity or analogy, their changes as well as the inner texture of the national character, more deeply than in any other circumstances, even in language itself. [qtd. in Georges and Jones, 1995]⁸

Here discussion focuses on some of the folk songs, myths and legends of the Tiwa community. They have folk songs, myths and legends which convey facts about their origin, habitats, cultural continuity and change.

8.1.1. Observations on Folk Songs:

Folk songs can be classified into many sub-genres and the sub-genres are connected with: (i) the seasonal or agricultural festivals, (ii) rites and ceremonies, i.e., songs associated with *rite-de-passage*, (iii) worship, (iv) incantations, (v) philosophical idea, (vi) ballads, (vii) children, (viii) work songs and (ix) love songs. Though the Tiwas have songs related with all these sub-genres, here the discussion focuses on the songs associated with seasonal festivals only. Because the seasonal festivals are frequently celebrated by

them and the songs connected with the festivals can better express their culture contact with neighbouring communities.

Songs Associated with Seasonal Festivals: The Tiwas celebrate seasonal festivals such as *Bihu*, *Chagra Michawa*, *Barat-uchava*, *Wancawa* and *Lankhun Puja*. There are many folk songs found amongst them which are related to seasonal festivals. Here some specimens of their folk song have been selected for discussion which can better express their culture contact, continuity as well change.

In the context of *Magh-bihu* they observe fire worship and they sing songs called the *Jhuna* song to the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments along with appropriate dance-movement. Here is an example:

Ai mindai la cinjiga nithawa ei phirdimi

Phir dimo danaga ai dharma

Ai libingla libin bujil manana

Antar acaga ai maram ⁹

The God has created this beautiful earth, and has set up religion. He has given love in the hearts of the men to understand each other. Oh my brothers, 'We should live with love and should die with love. How should we save ourselves if there is no love in the heart of the human beings? There is none in this earth except man. Man is the only God, he is the creator. If man does not love man, nobody will survive in the earth.

The song is replete with the idea of humanism, since the song gives emphasis on the values of humanity, brotherhood as well as love. It signifies the existence of humanitarian and simple outlook of this ethnic group in ancient time as compared to the present position. As far as the history of the Tiwas is concerned, there is no reference to any conflict between the kings of different Tiwa principalities in the name of power. This type of songs signifies

the authenticity of these types of historical information and existence of humanitarian ideologies amongst them.

Another important seasonal festival of the Tiwas is *Wancawa*. It is observed in the village dormitory, i.e. *Chamadi*. The festival is observed for the welfare of the cultivators. One of the important features of this festival is the ceremonies of preparing of rice powder. In this festival songs are sung by the bachelors. Here is an example:

Ai s'war cari bhai
Lampha rajane nem karajang
Lampha phawane nem karajang
*Jine gurune dakhra karajang*¹⁰

*We are four brothers; we have not abandoned the tradition of the Lampha. We have been carrying on the tradition of pounding rice-powder in the mortar for 1000 years. Let us have many children. The king of our land was born in the hills and the queen was born in the land of the Missings. All of our customs have been prescribed from that land.*¹

From this song, it is revealed that the Tiwas have strong adherence to their tradition. Both the Mising and the Tiwas have a strong cultural and historical relation and they have been maintaining it from a reasonable past. Moreover, they belong to the same human family i.e. Mongoloid.¹¹ Again, a wish to have more children is also evident from this folk song. Existence of kin based economic system has infused this kind of wish in the minds of rural people in ancient times. But this kind of wish is still found among them along with the kin based economic system. (See Chapter: 7)

The *Barat* is another popular festival of the Tiwas. The word *Barat* originated from the Assamese word *Brat* (fasting). *Barat* festival is celebrated

in order to get relief from epidemic or danger of wild animal. A specimen of *Barat* song is given below:

Tetelia Paharar bhaiamor datit
Tate Barat kore Puhar purnima ratit
Shakalu jatitkoi Lalung jati besi
Bahibi nukulai jagibohe hesa-hesi.¹²

The Barat festival was celebrated in the foothill areas of Tetelia hill during the full moon night of the month of December-January. Population of the Tiwas is more than the other communities, hence they sit densely.

This song provides us information on the origin of the *Barat* festival. As per the information provided by this song, this festival was at first celebrated by the king of Tetelia in the full moon night during the months of December-January. Still this festival is celebrated by the descendents of *Saturaja* (Seven kings) in the Tetelia area. It is also evident from this song that the Tiwas were the populous community in earlier times. Moreover, this song itself provides us example of culture change as the language of the song is Assamese.

8.1.2. Observations on Prose Narratives:

Myths of the Tiwas:

There are different myths found among them which reveal some facts about their origin and migration. Three randomly selected myths have been discussed below:

The story of one of the myths narrates that, a God namely *Lungla Mahadeo* was created by lord Siva. Lord Siva was one of the great Hindu Trinity. In fact it was Lord Shiva's saliva that gave birth to *Lungla Mahadeo*. Here *lung* in Tiwa language means saliva of Lord Siva and *la* signifies

creation of living beings out of saliva. The union of Lord *Lungla* and *Jayanti Devi* (Goddess Durga) produced three daughters. The Karbis, The Bodo-Kacharis and the Tiwas are supposed to be descended from the first, the second and the third daughter respectively.¹³

Scholars are of opinion that, the Bodos, the Rabhas, the Karbis, the Misings, the Dimasas, the Tiwas, the Deuri-Chutiyas, the Hazongs all are the direct descendents of the common racial family, namely, Indo-Mongoloid group.¹⁴ The myth under consideration too corroborates to the same theory although in a symbolic manner. Another significant thing that can be mentioned here is that the myth is a conscious attempt to trace the origin of this Mongoloid group (i.e. Tiwas) to a Hindu God (i.e. Lord Siva). This is an example of what is called in Sociology, Hinduization or Aryanization process.

Another popular myth on creation is as follows: Once Lord Siva drank rice beer heavily and become intoxicated. He was lying unconscious on a road and in that condition a stream of saliva (*lal*) came out from the mouth of Lord Siva. The Lord created two human beings out of his saliva and they came to be known as 'Lalung' (so called, because they were created out of Lord's *Lal*).¹⁵

From this myth it is evident that they like to introduce themselves as the descendents of Lord Siva, a popular God of the Hindus.

A similar mythical story with slight variation is also prevalent among them. The story goes like this: once upon a time Lord Siva and his consort Parvati were enjoying the scenic beauty of the Manas Sarovar Lake. The soothing beauty of the lake and its adjoining area enchanted the Lord so much so that he soon fell asleep on the bank of the lake. When he woke up he saw five drops of saliva at the place where he was taking rest. The Lord created five human beings out of the five drops of saliva (*lal*). As these five human beings were created out of the divine saliva, they came to be known as

Lalungs. These five original Lalungs had the unique privilege of seeing the creator in the form of human being and therefore the Lalungs call Lord Siva as *Manus Mohadeo*. (*Manus* means human being and *Mahadeo* is another name of Lord Siva)¹⁶

Tiwas have the tradition to offer five oblations to Lord Siva as a part of their religious practice. The myth mentioned above must have something to do with this religious practice. As per the myth, five original Tiwa people were born out of the five drops of saliva of the Lord Siva that is why they offer five oblations (*Naibadya*) to the God. The five human beings in course of time might have become five kings of the Tiwas who are called *Pachu Raja* (five kings). This myth signifies the existence of these five original kings in earlier times.

Legends of the Tiwas:

There are legends that try to explain the origin of the words 'Lalung' and 'Tiwa'. Again there are legends on the questions of the Lalungs original place of inhabitation and causes of migration. Some of them are describe as below:

One popular legend goes like this: originally the Lalungs were ruled by the Demon king Bali who was a faithful devotee of Lord Vishnu. The king wanted that all his subjects should adhere to the royal religion. A section of the Lalungs refused to accept that religion and as a result the king's fury fell heavily upon them. The entire populace was being punished by the dictate of the king. A red mark in everybody's forehead was put as a part of the punishment and the people were made to leave their own country. And those people with red mark on their forehead were known to be Lalungs (Tiwas).¹⁷

Another legend narrates that it were the Karbis who called those people living on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra as Lalungs. The word Lalung comprises of two parts, 'La' and 'Lung'. The first part signifies

'water' and the latter part signifies 'rescue'. Together, the word means that the river i.e. the Brahmaputra rescued or gave shelter to the people who resided on its banks. That is why the people were called Lalung.¹⁸

Another belief tells that there was a branch of the river Daiyang in the Karbi Anglong called 'Nilalung'. During the reign of Kamata kings, the Lalung had to leave their original habitat and established villages on the bank of the river 'Nilalung'. In course of time the people living on the banks of the river were known as Lalungs.¹⁹

Another popular legend tells about the origin of the word Tiwa. The word 'Tiwa' a synonym of 'Lalung' has two parts- 'Ti' means 'water' and 'Wa' means 'superior'. The Lalungs themselves introduced as 'Tiwa' to other because they considered themselves to be superior people who came down along with the river Brahmaputra.²⁰

A legend prevalent among the certain section of the Lalungs of Nagaon district reveals a different meaning of the word 'Tiwa'. According to the legend 'Ti' means 'water' and 'Wa' means 'pig'. The Lalungs believe that originally the earth was lying under a vast body of water. Then the God appeared in the form of a pig and lifted the earth from that expanse of water. The Tiwas believe themselves to be the descendents of the 'pig' which is in fact the almighty God.²¹

This belief has some thing to do with the Hindu religious belief of *Dasa Avatar* (Ten Incarnations) of Lord Vishnu. The ten incarnation of Vishnu is a theoretical concept in Vedic history. According to Hindu religious belief Lord Vishnu is the supreme God and creator of the Universe. He enters and descends to our world in the form of *Avatar* (incarnation) whenever his presence is needed. According to the belief almighty Vishnu took ten incarnations to rescue the earth or his creatures from different calamities in different times. Pig is one of his ten incarnations known as *Varaha*. Once

almighty Vishnu appeared in the form of a *Varaha* and rescues the earth from expanse of water.

Other beliefs regarding the original abode of the Tiwas are found mixed with the folk songs related to harvesting and purification ceremonies after child birth. Regarding this fact G. C. Sarma Thakur wrote:

The folk songs during harvesting and purification ceremonies after child birth reveal that Lalungs once lived in the 'Hillali' kingdom, the boundaries of which extended the whole of present Nagaon and eastern Darrang districts. At first they were residing on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra but later on their habitations spread to the other bank also. As time passed the people preferred to call themselves as subjects of 'Lali', an abbreviated form of 'Hillali'. On the northern side of Nagaon district there is dead branch of the river called 'Lali'. Probably the capital of the 'Hillali' Kingdom was on the north western side of the present Nagaon district.²²

The above cited fact is found to be somewhat true as majority of the Tiwas are now living in present Morigaon and Nagaon districts.

8.1.3. Analysis of these Oral literatures:

The present socio-cultural condition of a community is invariably conditioned by its past. Past is in fact the history. History is based on facts but myths and legends are far from the true 'stories'. The folk believe them to be true and thus they have great impact on their mind. Myths and legends may sometimes give clue to history. In people's mind a myth is a divine story, they have hardly any doubt in their mind regarding the veracity of those stories. Sometimes people believe it to be true more than the history. Because history is generally written under royal patronage, hence history may not provide the real information about royal families and rulers. But folk literatures are created by the common people and they always carry definite meaning. Folk literatures can not be understood without referring to their context. Texts and contexts both are equally important. The text of the folk literature without context is like a body without life. The contextual study of folklore can

provide data about the situation they represent. Thus, it is comprehensible that the above cited folk literatures have a definite social situation where these literatures are created. Hence, these literatures have a definite social meaning. Sometimes the apparent meaning of any genre of folk literature is not the all that it represents, since it contains inner meaning. As such, it is said that what is not said is more important than what is said in folklore. Contextual study can reveal the inner meaning.

The inner meaning is generally conveyed with the help of metaphor. As a social phenomenon any genre of the folk literature can furnish ethnographic information of a particular tribe or community. It is a known fact that folk literature is a kind of reflection or native ethnography of the society in which it is prevalent. So the relation between the society and its folk literature is quite evident. Society being the primary factor in the relationship and folk literature appears to be the secondary factor. As such, folk literature can furnish us direct information about a society in which it exists. Regarding this fact Malinowski has commented as follows:

Myth serves as warrant, a charter and often even practical guide. Myth can strengthen a tradition.....The function of myth, briefly is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial event." [quoted in Sarma, 1997].²³

The above specimen of the folk literatures of the Tiwas can furnish us some direct information about their socio-cultural life, tradition, migration and creation. From these folk literatures we can make some assumption that most of the communities feel proud to have mythical origin related to some deities. It is also evident from the story of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In both the scriptures all of the royal dynasties have originated from some deities like Surya, Chandra and Indra. The descendents of these deities are known as Suryavanshi, Chandavanshi and Indravanshi. The Tiwas too have myths to show that they are the descendents of Lord Siva. It reveals that they like to introduce themselves as the descendents of a Hindu deity i.e. Lord Siva. The

legends also tries to establish their relationship with Lord Vishnu, he too is a Hindu God. It can be explained that, these myths are created to attain a higher status in existing caste hierarchy.

Secondly, these oral literatures contain the genuine fact that, not only the Tiwa community but also most of the tribal communities of Assam belong to the Mongoloid family and they have cultural and social relations amongst themselves.

Thirdly, from the legendary beliefs cited above the Tiwas once lived in the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. Tibet is not far away from this region. Belief has it that the Tiwas originally migrated from Tibet. Probably the word 'Tiwa' derives its origin to the term 'Tibetia' meaning people hailing from Tibet. In course of time 'Tibetia' might have changed into Tiwa. The above legends reveal that the original habitats of the Tiwas were on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra.

Fourthly, food, cloth and shelter are three primary needs of people. People had always migrated from one place to another in search of these needs. We can assume that the Tiwas also migrated to this region in search of food and shelter. Some of them scattered to the hill areas of this region and later on they scattered in the plains of Assam.

Fifthly, the folk literatures prevalent amongst the Tiwas are mostly common with the folk literatures found in written form. No new or uncommon folk literatures have been found among them during the field work. It is hard to trace that whether the written literatures are circulated amongst them or the oral literatures are compiled in written form. However, these folk literatures can reveal facts on their culture, their origin, tradition and migration.

8.2. Observations on Material Culture:

All visual and physical aspects of Folklore are called Material culture.

According to Richard M. Dorson,

Material culture responds to techniques, skills, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generations and subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal art. How men and women in tradition-oriented societies build their homes, make their clothes, prepare their food, farm and fish, process the earth's bounty, fashion their tools and implements, and design their furniture and utensils are questions that concern the student of material culture.²⁴

In tribal societies all these processes are generally traditional and products are hand made. Material culture can be divided into five categories. Those are folk art, folk craft, folk architecture, folk costume and folk cookery. This discussion focuses on the folk architecture, folk costume and folk cookery of the Tiwas as food, cloth and shelter are the primary needs of any group of people. The study on these aspects can provide a clear picture of socio-cultural life along with the change and continuity. The architectural design, dress pattern and food habit convey the beliefs, social systems and habits of their past and present. Several changes are taking place in their society and culture and many factors are responsible for it. Here an attempt has been made to study the tradition and change of their society through material culture.

Jawarharlal Handoo is of the opinion that folklorists have always been warning about the disappearance of folklore items with time without leaving a trace behind.²⁵ This warning is more relevant to material culture today than ever before. Because in this present era of globalization people are more in comfort and busy with the modern scientific creations. As a developing country, the Indian society is undergoing rapid transformation in its all spheres since the past three decades. For example the structure of the Indian joint family is breaking down. Folk media is being replaced by modern mass media, folk housing pattern in the villages is disappearing fast, and the

traditional folk decorative designs that once adorned the domestic surroundings have disappeared. Folk jewellery, which India has traditionally been proud of and through which Indian folk mind has for centuries been expressing the artistic genius of Indian mind in the form of most popular motifs of Indian art, is fast disappearing and unfortunately a good part of it has found its way into the foreign museums. So are our traditional modes of transportation, architectural design, food habit, dress pattern, etc. vanishing or undergoing changes.²⁶ Accordingly the above scene has relevance for all tribal societies of our country and more so for Tiwas of Assam. Several forces have been influencing their material culture to the direction of change. With the faster growth in the processes of development, these transformations are going to be more rapid in the near future. Hence, the study of the change in these fields can help to understand their changing socio-cultural life.

8.2.1. Observations on Folk Architecture:

Folk architecture is different from academic architecture; it is traditional and much more significant vis-a-vis academic architecture. According to Warren R. Roberts,

Folk architecture is concerned with all traditional aspects of building; the shapes, sizes and layouts of buildings of all kinds, such as dwellings, barns, sheds, and craft shops; the material used and the tools and techniques of building; the sites chosen and the placement of various buildings on the site; and the use to which buildings and various parts of buildings were put.²⁷

The traditional Tiwa homestead consists of four parts, *Borghar*, *Majghar*, *Choraghar* and *Granary*. *Borghar* is a praying hall consisting of two rooms; one for household deities and another is cooking room used for religious purpose only. *Majghar* consists of kitchen, dining room and bed rooms as per requirement of the family. This is the main part used for sleeping purpose and it is constructed in between the *Borghar* and *Charaghar*. *Choraghar* is an outhouse generally consisting of two rooms and it is constructed a few yards

away from the main house where the guests are entertained and unmarried young boys sleep at night. But presently no *Charaghar* is found in the Tiwa homestead. Now *Majghar* plays the role of *Charaghar*. The traditional Tiwa homestead also consists of a cow-shed within their boundary which is constructed a few yards away from the main house.

The plinth of the *Borghar* is raised about two feet above the ground in order to distinguish it from other apartments. The main post of the *Borghar* called *Thunakhuta* does not touch the beam. It is fixed only after the completion of the house which is made of *gamari* timber. The head of the family, the *Borjela* (head of clan) and the *Hari-kunwari* (lead head of *Borghar* or clan) only go to the *Thunakhuta*. A socio religious ceremony is performed at the time of first occupation of the house in the presence of *Loro* (the priest of the village) and *Borjela*.

The *Granary* is constructed on the east of the compound and in absence of the granary, a corner of the living room is used for this purpose. Certain taboos are observed in connection with the granary. Nobody can keep paddies in granary before celebrating the *Dhanor Aag Aana* or *Cholia Peluwa* ceremony. This ceremony is observed in the month of *Aghon* (November-December). In this ceremony, six branches of *Aaka Sali* paddy are brought in the auspicious night of a Wednesday and are kept on the *Thuna khuta* of *Borghar*. Moreover, no one is allowed to enter into the granary in the month of *Magh* (January-February).

Cow-shed is constructed near the granary. Every Tiwa household consists of a big courtyard in front of their main house which is used for threshing, winnowing and drying the paddies. Houses are constructed facing the village road. East and south directions are regarded as auspicious. Every homestead consists of two porches. One is in the front side and another is in the back side of the house. The front porch is used for weaving purpose and the back porch is used for husking paddies in traditional husking machine

(*dheki-shal*). Every household consists of one pit latrine and bathroom made of bamboo and thatch in a corner of the compound. They fence their compounds with bamboo fencing.

The *Chamadi* is an identity marker of Tiwa community. It is a large open house constructed on posts about two meters above the ground. It is constructed by thatch, bamboo, cane and wood. A festival *Kheljawa* is celebrated while they construct a new dormitory. Normally, after every six years a new dormitory is constructed with the celebration of *Kheljawa* festival. But presently it is celebrated almost after every thirty or forty years when the dormitory needs to be reconstructed. These traditional structures of the dormitory house and officials are still maintaining in the hills but in the plains it has been changed. Changes have taken place in respect of the structure of the dormitory house as well as the selection of the office bearers (See Chapter: 5). Here the discussion focuses on the changes taking place in its structure. Now all the Tiwa villages do not have a dormitory. The villages which have a dormitory, _____: shows a changed pattern. They construct it on the ground with the help of bamboo, wood and cement. This type of dormitory is seen in three villages Nambor Lalung gaon, Gurigaon-Banpar Kisam and Silsang during the field study. They call it as *Xa-Chamadi* (*Xa* means land and *Chamadi* means dormitory). In Silsang area the dormitory house is made in modern style though it is constructed above the ground with help of brick and cement. The *Thuna khuta* (the middle post of the *Chamadi* from the front side) also found in different shape and design. It is a symbol of phallus, which represent the power and fertility. The dormitory officials worship it as a *Sivalinga*.

Presently, Tiwa villages of plains consist of *Naamghar* and *Thanghar* as community prayer hall. These two religious prayer halls consist of two parts. The main part is known as *Monikut*, where images of deities are kept. The second part does not have any specific name, it is a big hall where the villagers sit for prayer.

A traditional Tiwa homestead is constructed with bamboo, wood and thatch. Walls are made of reeds, bamboos and wood. A paste of clay and cow dung is used for plastering the walls. But now the rich families use bricks and cement for the construction of their house.

The noticeable thing observed in case of folk architecture of the Tiwa people is that their houses are made of wood, bamboo and thatch etc. Majority of them depend on the natural things available in their surroundings. Only the rich families use brick, cement, iron rods and corrugated iron sheets for constructing their houses. Moreover, the co-operative helps are still provided by the villagers in the form of *Senehua Mata* and *Hadari khel* or single labour to every household during the construction of their houses. In the *Senehua Mata* system one villager can invite many co-villagers to help him constructing the house; in return the co-villagers are entertained with food, *Zu* and tea. In *Hadari- khel* system help is offered for many days and there are six to eight members in the group and help is offered in rotation.

8.2.2. Observations on Folk Costume:

Every community has their distinctive folk costume. Don Yoder tried to give a definition of folk costume which is based on the functionalist viewpoint. The definition is goes like thus:

Folk costume is that form of dress which (1) outwardly symbolizes the identity of a folk community and (2) express the individual's manifold relationships to and within that community. ²⁸

Weaving is the exclusive domain of the Tiwa women. The textile designs of the Tiwas express their creativity, native wisdom, beliefs and even the social situation of the past and the present. The designs and colours used by Tiwa women have their significance. The traditional dress of Tiwa women consist of three pieces of clothes. Those are *kasang*, *jaskai or phaskai* and *thongali*. *Kasong* with horizontal stripes is used to cover the lower portion of the body.

Jaskai or *Phaskai* is used to cover the upper portion of the body from the breast to the waist. *Thongali* used to wear over *Kasang* like a waistband. The traditional dress in the case of men consists of five pieces of clothes. Those are *Tagla* a jacket like traditional shirt. *Dhoti* can be of *Muga* (traditional silk of Assamese people) or cotton, which is used to cover the lower portion of the body. *Kamasa* or *Seleng* is used to wear like a *Seleng* (a traditional cloth of Assamese people used to wear on upper portion of the body). They put on this cloth over the two shoulders like an 'X'. *Thangali* is a waistband; *Phaga* is a turban.

The Tiwa kings have their own traditional dress, which they wear on specific occasions and it is some what different from the traditional dress of common people. The dress of kings constitutes a *Muga Dhoti a Muga Sola* (shirt), one *Muga Phaga* (Turban), one Cotton *Sadar*, one silver necklace, two *Gam Kharu* (bracelets) and two ear rings (siha). It is reported that in the past headman, officers of the king and king himself used to wear gold earrings. Turban was a part of dress for the king and the officers. On special occasions like annual festivals, they wore Silk & *Muga* dresses.

Designs:

The Tiwa women can express their artistic tendencies and skill in their textile designs. The Tiwa textile designs are of mainly geometrical. These designs look like some geometric forms such as triangle, cube and strait lines. Tiwa women weave *cubic design*. This design is very simple in the shape of cube and is a combination of some straight lines. Formerly they also use to weave the *animal motif* in their traditional dress. It signifies that they tried to express things from nature. *Animal motifs* such as deer, lion, tiger, bird etc. are taken from the nature. They are also used to weave the *kingkhap design* (Paisley design), *diamond motif* in their traditional dress. The diamond motif in red, yellow or green on black surface is typical of tribal textiles. Another ancient motif is *bhat phutuki phul*. As this design is a combination of many small round shapes like rice (Bhat), this design is known as *bhat phutuki phul*.

Now a days Tiwa women weave many designs and motifs which have similarities with the designs of Assamese women, those are *floral design, tree motif* and *running motif (like creeper)*. Now, they weave Assamese traditional tree motif like *padum gach* (latus plant), *kadam gach* (Kadamba tree) and *aam gach* (mango tree). The running motif is known as *lata* (Creeper). Women of present generation weave all types of Assamese *lata* design like *panch kathir lata, sat kahir lata, and nai kathir lata*. Generally they weave these running motifs on *kamsa and thongali*. Now a days they weave this design in *kasong* also. Now they generally weave *cubic design and diamond motif* on *kasong*. Originally on *kasong* there did not have any design. Originally they use to weave three groups of red and yellow horizontal stripes on black surface. In case of *tagala, phaskai or jaskai, thongali* of men and *phaga* they weave *diamond motif, cubic design and tree motif*. They do not weave any design on *dhoti and seleng*. Presently, the influences of Assamese textile designs are fully evident in Tiwa textile designs.

Colours:

It was observed that the major colours used by Tiwa people are red, black and yellow. They believe that these three colours are their identity. Initially they used black colour for *kasong* with red and yellow stripes; yellow colour with red stripes and design for *kamsa and thongali* of women; yellow, black, red and white colour combination for *jaskai or phaskai*; red, black and yellow for *tagla*. *Seleng, phaga* and *thongali* of men are of white colour. But presently, due to the influence of other culture they weave the blue, green, orange and maroon in their traditional costumes. Earlier, colours are prepared by using various indigenous dyes. In the hills even today most of the Tiwa people use such dyes. For example, indigo is cultivated to prepare blue dye and different varieties of herbs to produce different types of colours. But with the availabilities artificially coloured yarns in the market the Tiwa weaver go for colours available in the market. They give up their traditional practices of dyeing a cloth.

The Loom:

The art of weaving was handed down from generation to generation by practice on their traditional loom. The Tiwas generally use thick cotton yarns for their traditional costumes. Personality of the weaver, her hereditary skill, her innate sense of colour and balance all help to create a unique product. Their traditional loom is known as *Re-xal*. It is a *loin loom* and also known as *Mati-xal*. This loom consists of two posts and weaver sits on the earth and wraps the loom around their waist with a belt. But gradually they started to use *throw-shuttle loom*. This loom consists of four stout posts, which are driven into the ground so as to make a rectangular and joined together at the top by cross beams. These four posts are connected with two wrap and cloth beams. Now this type of loom is used by almost every household. Presently they also use the *fly-shuttle loom*. This loom is same with the *throw-shuttle loom*; the only difference is that the shuttle is throwing with the help of a mechanism.

Ornaments:

Ornaments are the important parts of their traditional dress. Different types of ornaments are used by the Tiwa women more as a sign of femininity than for enhancing the effectiveness of the personal appearance of the wearer. Formerly, the Tiwa women wore silver or gold made *gamkharu* (bracelet), *sipatmoni* (necklace), *gota kharu* (bracelet), *sunpatia angathi* (a specially designed ring), but today these are not used by the women. Some elderly women wear silver, bead or stone necklaces and ear-rings. The men used to wear *siha* (ear-ring) made of gold and silver.

Khram (their traditional drum) and *Singai* (Flute) is closely related to their culture. These two are the symbols of their culture. Therefore, *dholbiri* (a necklace like a drum) signifies their culture. *Dholbiri* & *Sasharua Kharu* (Gamkharu or bracelet) are used by both men and women. The people of Nambar village believe that *dholbiri* & *sasharua kharu* are the item of their traditional culture and they believe that Assamese people have borrowed these

items from them. It is an interesting case, because the Assamese people also believe that *gamkharu* and *dholbiri* are their traditional ornaments. Normal ornaments worn generally by women elsewhere are now a days used by the Tiwa women whereas men wear only rings.

The noticeable changes have taken place in the case of folk costume is that presently the Tiwas use to weave different types of designs and colours in their traditional costume. Traditional loom *Mati-xal* is almost vanished from every village. They weave in Assamese traditional loom and the technology of weaving and the traditional designs are preserved by the word of mouth and practice by providing good example of enculturation process.

8.2.3. Observations on Folk Cookery:

According to Don Yoder the folk cookery is the traditional domestic cookery marked by regional variation. He says that the study of folk cookery includes the study of foods themselves, their morphology, their preparation, their preservation, their social and psychological functions, and their ramifications into all other aspects of folk-culture.²⁹

Different types of regional traditional foods constitute the Tiwa folk cookery. Like other communities of North- East India, rice is the staple food of Tiwas. A traditional meal consists of rice, vegetables, fish, pork, chicken and *Zu* (rice beer). Meat, fish, eggs are included in their delicacies. The breakfast consists of a pot of *Zu* (traditional rice beer) followed by boiled rice, salt, green chilli and onion. The mid day & evening meals consists of boiled rice without straining, fish and vegetables. One kind of common broth *posola* is also taken depending upon the seasons. Fish cooked with the slices of tender banana stem constitutes *posola*. *Dal* is rarely taken and mustard oil is rarely used as cooking medium. Generally they prefer boiled rice and boiled vegetables. Seasonal vegetables like beans, radish and lady's finger, gourd, pumpkin are part of their everyday meals.

Other favourite traditional foods of the Tiwas are indigenous alkali or *khar* prepared from banana stem, some wild vegetables like *Mayong masua* (fern like vegetables), *Samsui* (wild vegetable), *Tumru lai* (fig leaf) and *Laflang* (like dry fish). *Laflang* is also taken as a medicine for malaria in Nambar village. Besides these the *Poita bhat* (boiled rice soaked in water) is a favourite item of food of the Tiwas. It is generally taken in summer season. Moreover, the arum roots, bitter medicinal plant locally known as *Bhekuri tita*, *Xukuta tita*, *Bahaka tita* (*Adhatoda vasica*, *phlogocanthus*) and *Xukoti mash* (dry fish) are their traditional item of food. *Tamlong or Kharisa* (a mixture prepared out of bamboo shoots) is also a favourite and traditional item of food. They use *Kharisa* in any kind of preparation. Mainly they prefer it with fish.

Pork, chicken and *Zu* are essential items in their socio religious ceremonies, Pigs and fowls are reared by almost all the Tiwas. *Zu* is taken by almost all of the Tiwa people and no religious and cultural ceremony and ritual can be celebrated without *Zu*. They use *Zu* in their day today life. It is prepared from *Bora rice* (a special variety of summer rice) or from *Sali rice* grown in winter. Broken rice grains are mixed with yeast cake (*Bakhor*) and then boiled. Yeast is prepared locally from a certain kind of leaves viz. *Melia indica* leaves (*nim tree*), fern leaves (*dhekia*), leaves of jackfruit, leaves of shrub (*makhiloti*) and leaves of horse-radish: *moringa pterygosperma* (*Chajina tree*). Yeast cakes are prepared by drying these green leaves in the sun in winter and dried leaved are powdered with rice gruel and made into cakes. Dried mixture is stored in narrow necked jars for brewing beer for a period of two-three days. For making beer, water is added to the fermented rice. Water is slowly mixed with the fermented rice with the help of along straw and the jar is thoroughly shaken. Beer is taken out of the jar by slightly tilting it so that fermented rice remains within the jar.³⁰ It brewed everyday and is important item of food which is consumed by them everyday. It has socio-religio-economic significance. *Zu* is an essential item in almost every religious and cultural ceremony.

Now a days it is replaced by another type of rice bear known as *Photika*. *Photika* is more refined than *Zu* and it is taken casually. *Photika* is in fact steam of the *zu*. A common thing^{was} observed during the field work in different Tiwa villages is that they are indifferent towards milk. But they offer tea and betel nut and betel leaf to every casual guest.

The Tiwa people use various apparatus for preparation, consumption and storing of food. Generally big earthen pots are used for preservation of food and also for the preparation of *Zu*. The traditional refreshment prepared by the rice powder is preserved in earthen pots. They also use the earthen pot for keeping water cool in summer season. Bell metal utensils are used for taking meals and *Zu*. Bamboo pipe are also used as a means for the storage of food like *Zu* and water.

8.2.4. Present Scenario:

Though the Tiwa people are maintaining continuity in their tradition of material culture, yet they have not been able to resist the change. Several changes have taken place in their material culture. For example in case of folk architecture several changes have been noticed in the structure and designs of their houses. Now they do not necessarily follow their traditional architectural structure and designs of *Borghar*, *Majghar* and *Charaghar*. Moreover, they do not necessarily use the locally available materials for making of their houses. *Charaghar* is totally absent from their architectural designs. The structure of *Chamadi* has also changed. Nevertheless the structure of *Thanghar* and *Namghar* remains same. But the existence of *Namghar* in Tiwa villages itself is an example of change.

In case of *folk costume* also changes are prominent. Several changes have been noticed in the structure, design and colour of their dress. It is presently observed that, the new generation, weave and wear their traditional dress in a peculiar pattern in case of women where they have only one piece

of long cloth which plays the role of *kasang, jaskai or phaskai* and *thongali* altogether. This piece of cloth is also known as *phaskai or jaskai*. It is something like the Bodo traditional dress known as *Dakhana*, a long piece of cloth that can cover the whole body. The Tiwa women wear this piece of cloth with *kamsa* over the body and also without *kamasa*. They do not use waist belt (*Thongali*) here. It is a markable change in the case of traditional dress pattern.

In the case of colour also formerly the Tiwas use only the red, black and yellow. But now they use all the colours used available in the market viz. maroon, orange, green, blue and so forth.

Now, the Tiwa women weave the many designs in their textile designs. For example, *cubic design and bhat phutuki phul* were their traditional designs in earlier times but now they weave floral designs, tree motif, running motif and animal motif in their traditional dresses. Human psyche or aesthetic sense of people is reflected in textile designs. Initially Tiwa textile designs were simple and are based on some straight lines. But now interactions are made among many neighboring communities and they entered into a complex socio-cultural environment. Hence, this way their designs were also assimilated with other communities and have become complex.

They have been influenced by the neighboring Assamese caste Hindus in the case of dress pattern. Generally the followers of Sankardeva's Vaisnavism dress like Assamese caste Hindus. Their food habits are also like the Assamese caste Hindus. These are the examples of Assimilation. Assimilation is a process where a minority culture merges into the dominant cultures to the point that it no longer exists as a separate identity. Changes in designs and colours of dress are example of syncretism. On the other hand abandonment of some exiting event is the process of cultural loss. Therefore, abandonment of the use of *Lengti* (a small piece of lower garment used by man folk) is the example of cultural loss.

In the case of folk cookery also, changes have taken place. Use of *Dal*, mustard oil and spices are very common and they have learned the art of frying the item of food. Different types of eatable are brought from the shops in the towns or from the market. Items like tea, milk and betel nuts are new additions in the present settings. Moreover, the educated sections of the Tiwas discourage the rice beer consumption due to the cultural contacts with some neighbouring high caste communities. They take tea as beverage. Now a days guests are entertained not with '*Zu*' and *Photika*, rather a cup of tea and betel leaves and nuts are the items of reception of casual guests. Previously the casual guests are entertained with the offerings of *Zu* and refusal to taking *Zu* was considered as the disrespect to the family.

8.3. Conclusion:

In the field of oral literature no noticeable changes have been observed. But they are good means to study their socio-cultural life as the context of these literatures can provide a clear picture about the social and cultural situations where it was created. It is observed in the folk songs of the Tiwas that their worldview is replete with the idea of humanism, since the songs give emphasis on the values of humanity, brotherhood as well as love. It signifies the existence of humanitarian and simple worldview of them as compared to the present, as they now have lost these qualities in the name of autonomy or revivalist movement.

The myths and legends have a relation with their cultural practices and history. When we throw light on the myths of the Tiwas, we can assume that Lord Siva is their main deity. But we see that the Aryan people also worship Lord Siva. Moreover, he is one of the great Hindu Trinity known as Maheswar (Siva). The "Great trinity" in Hinduism is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar. From ancient time different communities have been living here. Intermixing has been taking place among them from the remote past. The existence of Lord Siva in both Aryan and non-Aryan cultures is a good

example of culture contact from the ancient time. Changes have been taking place in both of the tribal and non tribal cultures.

On the contrary the changes are prominent in the case of material culture as compared to the oral literature. In the case of folk architecture, they no longer follow the traditional architectural design while constructing a house. The structure of youth dormitory and community prayer hall has also been changed.

In the case of folk costume also the changes are prominent. Their folk costumes have symbolic meanings. The dress differentiates the person who wears it in respect of following factors: (i) sex (ii) social status, and (iii) work/leisure. In contrast to the modern dress, the common thing about the folk costume is that it rigidly separates the sexes. Tiwa folk costumes differentiate the person in respect of gender. Secondly, their dress itself symbolizes the social and political status. For example, the dress of the king and the officials and the dress of common people are not same. The white color symbolizes the widowhood of women in their society too. Presently a Tiwa widow generally wears white cloth like Hindu women which was not prevalent in previous times. Thirdly, their day-to-day dress and festival dress are also different. They wear complete traditional dress while attending cultural and religious ceremonies, festivals and political meetings. In the case of their traditional costumes and ornaments, markable changes have been noticed. The old style is now giving way to new style. The modern traditional costume of women that consists of only one piece of cloth known as *Phaskai or Jaskai* is a result of culture contact with the Bodos. The continuity observed in the case of folk costume is that they are still preserving the skill and knowledge of weaving.

In the case of folk cookery degree of change as well as continuity is different according to the religious practices followed by them. The followers of Neo-Vaisnavism of Sankardeva have given up their traditional food habit like eating pork and drinking rice beer. Their dress patterns also have

changed. They casually wear *Chadar*, *Mekhela*, *Dhuti* and *Kurta* like neighboring Assamese caste Hindus. The followers of Anukul Thakur and Krishna Guru have also given up the traditional food habit like eating pork and drinking rice beer. The followers of traditional religious practices and Christianity have still maintained their traditional food habit.

New mass media has also influenced their culture in cases of casual attire, food habit and ornaments. Members of new generation have started using modern garments, ornaments and foods popularized by the mass media. The folk costume is used as an identity marker only. Education is another factor for which they discard some existing practice. For example, educated portion of them discourage rice beer consumption. They realize that too much rice beer consumption is not good to health.

Change is inevitable in any society. The study of a society is not complete without a study of changes that have taken place in it. It is generally held that whenever changes are taking place in a culture the material aspects of life change at faster rate than the non material aspects. In the case of Tiwas also it is observed that the material culture have changed in faster rate, as compared to the oral literature. Again, amongst the material culture, the extent of change is relatively more in case of folk architecture and folk costume than folk cookery. Nevertheless, these fields of folklore have maintained some amount of continuity within it. And both of these two aspects- oral literature and material culture provide information about their socio-cultural continuity and change.

Notes:

¹ William Bascom, "Folklore, Verbal Art and Culture," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol.86, No. 342 (Oct.-Dec., 1973): 374-381, <http://www.jstor.org/search>.

² Ibid.

³ Nabin Chandra Sarma, *Oral Songs of the Tribal Communities of Assam* (Guwahati: Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, 2006), 61-62.

⁴ Phillips Berry, "Some Aspects of Folk-Song," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol.25, No. 97 (Jul.-Sep., 1912):274-283, <http://www.jstor.org/search>.

⁵ Mary Magoulick, "What is Myth?" <http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/~mmagouli/defmyth.htm> (accessed May 3, 2008).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Timothy R. Tangherlini, "'It Happened Not Too Far from Here...': A Survey of Legend Theory and Characterization," *Western Folklore*, 49.4 (October, 1990:371-390): 85, quoted in *Legend*, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legend> (accessed June 2, 2008).

⁸ Robert A. Georges and Michael Owen Jones, *Folkloristics: An Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 160.

⁹ Nabin Chandra Sarma, *op.cit.* 145.

¹⁰ Idrish Ali, "Tiwa (Lalung) Git-Matar Rahghara," in *Siphung-Gungang*, ed. Birendranath Datta (Guwahati: Directorate of Tribal Research Institute, 1986), 35.

¹¹ Nabin Chandra Sarma, *op.cit.* 12.

¹² This song was collected from Ratnakanta Bordoloi of Silsang area, Morigaon. Similar song is also available in Lokeswar Gogoi, *Tiwa Sanskritur Ruprekha (part II)* (Silchang: Tiwa Mathonlai Tokhra, 1987), 182.

¹³ This myth was collected from Chitra Ram Deori of Bundura village, Nagaon and it is similar with a myth found in Ganesh Chandra Sarma Thakur, *The Lalungs (Tiwas)* (Guwahati: Tribal Research Institute, 1985), 9.

¹⁴ Nabin Chandra Sarma, *op.cit.*

¹⁵ This myth was collected from a villager of Nambor village, Nagaon, named Bibhu Bordoloi which is similar with a myth found in Ganesh Chandra Sarma Thakur, *op.cit.*, 9-10.

¹⁶ Ganesh Chandra Sharma Thakur, *Ibid.*

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- ¹⁷ Ibid. 9.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. 8-9.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid. This legend is still popular among the Tiwas.
- ²¹ Ibid. 10.
- ²² Ibid. 4-5.
- ²³ Nabin Chandra Sarma, *Loka Samskriti* (Guwahati: Chandra Prakash, 1997), 133.
- ²⁴ Richard M. Dorson, "Introduction: Concepts of Folklore and Folklife Studies," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 2-3.
- ²⁵ Jawaharlal Handoo, *Theoretical Essays in Indian Folklore* (Mysore: Zooni Publications, 2000), 36-37.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Warren E. Roberts, "Folk Architecture," in Richard M. Dorson (ed.). *op.cit.* 281.
- ²⁸ Don Yoder, "Folk Costume," Ibid. 296.
- ²⁹ —. "Folk Cookery," Ibid. 325.
- ³⁰ Sailendra Kumar Agnihotri, *The Lalungs* (Lucknow: S. Kumar & Associates, 1996), 31.



Photo 73: A Hill Tiwa in Traditional attire



Photo 74: A Plain Tiwa in Traditional attire



Photo 75: A Plain Tiwa Woman in Traditional Dress



Photo 76: Changing Dress Pattern of of Plain Tiwa Women



Photo 77: The *Tagla* of Hill Tiwa Men



Photo 78: The *Tagla* of Plain Tiwa Men



Photo 79: The Changing Pattern of a *Tagla*



Photo 80: The Geometrical design on a *Jaskai* or *Paskai*



Photo 81: The Floral design on a *Jaskai* or *Phaskai*



Photo 82: The Pattern and Design of *Kasang*



Photo 83: The Changing Pattern and Design of *Kasang*



Photo 84: A Tiwa Boy and a Girl in Their Traditional Dress



Photo 85:
Tiwa Girls
taking part in
Tiwa Sahitya
Sabha by
wearing their
Changing
Traditional
Dress

Photo 86:
A Tiwa woman
with Throw-
Shuttle Loom



Photo 87:
A Tiwa woman
with Fly-Shuttle
Loom



Photo 88:
Preparation of
Steamed Fish (1)

Photo 89:
Preparation of
Steamed Fish (2)



Photo 90:
Preparation of
Boiled Curry



Photo 91:
Pounding of Rice Powder and
Tree Leaves for Yeast Cake



Photo 92:
Preparation of
Yeast Cake

Photo 93:
Preparation of
Rice Beer



Chapter 9.

Conclusion

CHAPTER: 9

CONCLUSION

Change is a universal factor and human mind is prone to change. In nature change is inevitable and in no condition, it can be stalled. Again, culture is by nature dynamic. Culture goes on changing itself in synchronizing with the change of time. This project is an attempt to observe the trends of changes on the plain Tiwas of Assam in their various spheres of life and society. It also tries to locate the factors responsible for the changes. To have a clear picture of the changes in their society spheres like social institution, religion, socio-political life, economic life and folklore have been observed from a comparative point of view. When changes are discussed, continuities are also not left out. Some of the folkloric items related to these spheres have been studied mainly to observe the change and continuity factor amongst the Tiwas. The study is not only a synchronic one; it takes into consideration the diachronic aspect of the culture of the Tiwas. Here an attempt has been made to address questions such as: Is there any particular factor, besides the general factors, responsible for the changes in all spheres of their culture? Do the changes in one particular field affect the other spheres of their culture too?

After examining the task from different angles in the present research project, several changes have been noticed amongst the Tiwas. It is observed that certain traditions and rituals have remained intact and some others have changed along with the changing of time. In the sphere of social institution, it is observed that matriliney has lost its ground and patriliney has gained importance. Patriarchy has become a prominent feature in the Tiwa society now. Even the *Gobhia* enjoys the right of the inheritance of property. Marriage alliances have not confined to their own community only. Alliances

have taken place with other tribal communities as well as the Assamese caste Hindus. As both the Tiwa and non Tiwa villages are influenced by each other, the syncretic process is well and truly underway. They are losing their matrilineal system of descent, inheritance and succession and matrilocal residence. Instances of both the nuclear and joint families have been found amongst them. However, the instances of nuclear families are more than the joint families. Clan exogamy is still maintained but with some relaxation.

In the socio-political sphere the structures and functions of the traditional social organizations have been changed. Here, the existence of a well organized republican type of administration in earlier times could be observed. It had contributed towards the jurisprudence as well as to the cultural, religious and economic life. Amongst the village level social organizations dormitory (*Chamadi*) used to function as a centre for non-formal education in earlier times as the dormitory inmates used to stay in the dormitory for a particular period of time. But now due to the advancement of modern education the boys hardly get time to spend time in dormitory. However, dormitory is still functioning as a centre for training in various handicrafts, dance and music to some extent. The dormitory and other traditional village level social organizations are still continuing along with the modern democratic setup in many Tiwa villages. These organizations had contributed a lot in preservation of their rich cultural heritage.

In the religious sphere transformations have been widely noticed amongst the Tiwas. In contemporary times, the Tiwas follow five religious patterns as follows: (a) The followers of Traditional religious faith, who have retained dual form of religious beliefs-Animism and Vaisnavism, (b) The converted Vaisnavite, who organized themselves into *Janajati Sankar Sangha*, (c) The followers of Krishna Guru, (d) The followers of Anukul Thakur, and (e) The Christians. The religious changes can be examined in the framework of the concepts like Sanskritization, tribe-caste-continuum and proselytization. Sirinivas defines *Sanskritization* as the process by which a low caste or tribe

or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a twice-born (dwij) caste.¹ In Assam, tribe caste dichotomy is not so rigid and both the twice born castes and tribes have been influenced mutually. Non vegetarian habit and consumption of rice beer by the twice born castes are examples of this fact. In other words there is are not such hard and fast rules followed by the twice born castes of Assam as compared to the twice born castes of the South India. However, there are differences in case of customs, rituals and ideology followed by the twice born castes and that of tribes in Assam. Hence, we can not say that the sanskritization is a total phenomenon in case of the Tiwas of Assam. Rather we can say that a distinct mode of proslytization occurred here. Because the plain Tiwas have accepted the paths of Sankardeva, Anukul Thakur, Krishna Guru and Christianity being attracted by the liberal norms and ideologies of these religious practices. In Assam, the twice born castes are more liberal and unorthodox. Flexibility in the strict rules that are subscribed for them has become a common factor now-a-days. Yet they are recognized as higher castes in Assamese-context. The mobility towards caste system from the tribal strata is note-worthy factor in Assam. Being attracted towards the status of twice born castes in the Assamese society the Tiwas purified and elevated their lifestyle and deliberately got converted into Assamese Hindu castes to be known as *Saru-koch*, and accepted caste surname like *Laskar* instead of *Doloi*, *Deka* and *Deori*. This had resulted in the situation of tribe-caste-continuum process in Assamese society.

In the economic sphere it has been observed that their economy is still in subsistence level. Agriculture and animal husbandry are their main sources of livelihood though the educated Tiwas are engaged in service sectors. Kin-based economy is still going on in their society. The problems faced by them in the economic spheres are landlessness, flood and backward agricultural practices. Culture and economy have close interrelationship since remote past. It is evident from the existence of traditional celebrations associated with agricultural activities, proverbial expressions and traditional periodical market

like *Jonbil Mela*. Every kind of agricultural operation is associated with cultural and religious celebrations. Moreover, circulation of proverbs replete with agricultural knowledge and existence of traditional periodical markets are evidence of these facts. But the converted Tiwas do not follow the traditional ceremonies associated with the agricultural practices. It can be also added here that economic condition of the people has influenced the cultural continuity and change. Hence, the relationship between culture and economy can be described as a two-way process and each one is influenced by the other.

In the field of folklore no noticeable changes have been observed in oral literature. But the oral literatures are good means to study their socio-cultural life. The contextual study of the texts of these oral literatures can provide a clear picture about the social and cultural situations where they are created. The folk songs, myths and legends have relation with their cultural practices and history. On the contrary, the changes are prominent in case of material culture as compared to the oral literature. Again, in material culture, the extent of change is relatively more in case of the folk architecture and the folk costume than the folk cookery. Their contact with different neighbouring groups can be discernable in the case of the traditional dress pattern. At first their traditional dress has been influenced by that of the Jaintias and Karbis and very recently, by the Bodos and Assamese. Folk architecture has also been influenced by the Assamese Hindus. The food habit has been influenced by the religious practices they follow. Nevertheless, these fields of folklore have maintained some continuity within it. And both oral literature and material culture provide information about their socio-cultural continuity and change.

The findings of the work can be sum-up as follows:

(a) Assamese culture has many sub-cultures as many diverse communities living in Assam. Most of the communities have maintained their separate

ethnic identities and cultures. It is after the independence of India that a deep sense of self consciousness has been observed amongst the tribes of Assam. The recent movements by different ethnic communities are the results of that sense of consciousness. The Tiwas have been living side by side with other non-tribals as well as tribal groups since long time. Therefore, both the tribal and non-tribal groups of Assam have had a great impact upon the cultural and social life of the Tiwas. Mainly, they have been influenced by the Jaintias, the Karbis, Misings and the Bodos. The neighboring tribes of the Tiwas mainly the Bodos, the Karbis, the Missings, the Rabhas, the Dimasas, the Deuri-Chutiyas, the Hazongs all are the direct descendents of the same racial group, i.e. the Indo-Mongoloid group. Naturally there are some affinities in cultural traits amongst these ethnic groups. Most of the prevailing oral literatures of the Tiwas provide us information on their cultural affinities. (See Chapter 8) Moreover, influence of these ethnic groups can be noticed in the case of ethnic assertion, dress pattern and food habit and of the Tiwas. The autonomy movement started mainly by the Bodos and Karbis has a great impact upon the ethnic assertion of the Tiwas. (See Chapter 5 and Chapter 8)

On the other hand, among the non tribal groups, the Assamese caste Hindus are the main group with whom the Tiwas are living in close proximity. Therefore, different spheres of the Tiwa culture have been influenced by the culture of the Assamese caste Hindus. Their socio-religious life and daily life is particularly influenced by the Assamese caste Hindus. (See Chapter 6)

(b) All spheres of their culture have been influenced by various trends of changes. However, one finds a streak of continuity amidst the changing patterns. Changes have taken place mainly after the independence of India. Democratic set up of the nation, modernization in education, introduction of tribal development and community development schemes by the government have influenced a lot the life and culture of the Tiwas.

(c) The transacculturation process is going on in Assam as both the tribal and non-tribal groups have been influenced by each other. Examples of this process are prominent in the cases of dress pattern, food habit and language. The influence of Assamese culture on their dress pattern is evident in case of the designs and colours of their traditional dress and casual attire. Influence in case of food habit is evident in religious practices they follow. In the case of language the plain Tiwas use Assamese language in their day-to-day life. Most of them have even forgotten their Tiwa language. Those who use Tiwa language have incorporated many Assamese words in day-to-day conversation. Similarly the Assamese Hindus, who have come in contact with the Tiwas, have incorporated many Tiwa words in their language. Each of these languages has been greatly influenced by the other not only in words, syntax but also the tone. Assamese food habit and dress pattern have also been influenced by the neighbouring Tiwas. Nowadays, Assamese people do not hesitate to eat pork and drink rice beer, although habitually these were once considered as taboos. Moreover, influence in the case of textile design can be seen too. The red, black and yellow are three main colours of the Tiwa traditional dress. But these colours are now used by the Assamese women as prime colours in the case of Assamese cotton *Chadar-Mekhela* (traditional costume of Assamese women).

(d) Different spheres of culture are interrelated and changes in one sphere can influence another. Here the five spheres of their culture such as social institutions, socio-political life, religious life, economic life and folklore are closely related to each other. Hence, a holistic approach is needed for study of culture change. Study of an individual sphere is quite impossible without referring to the other spheres of culture. This fact can be understood from the following figure:

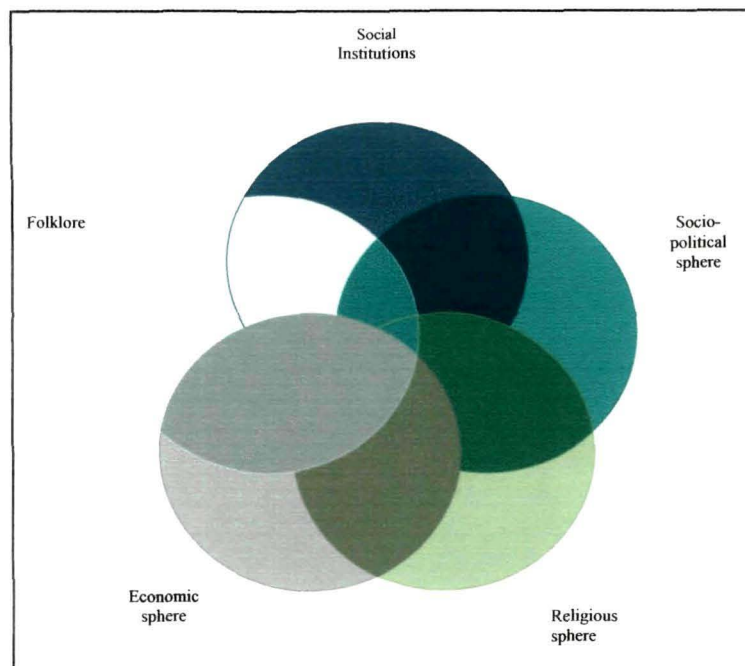


Fig. 13: Relationship between the Different Spheres of a Culture

(e) In the five spheres of their culture under study, the changes in religious sphere are more prominent and the rate is faster. Now, there are five religious groups amongst the Tiwas. This situation has created intra-tribal tension amongst them. Religion has validating functions. Religions legitimize the social order in a society. It has relation to other spheres of culture like political, social, economic and education. Hence, changes in this sphere have influenced the other spheres of their culture. Durkheim too believed that the social, political, and kinship organization of a society are reflected in its religion. In other words, all the institutions of a society are related to one another.²

(f) In contemporary times, the rate of change is faster in all spheres of their culture. Due to the changes in their culture, a strong ethnic consciousness has been generated amongst the Tiwas and a revivalist movement has been started amongst them. Revivalism always tries to search for roots. Revivalist movement amongst the Tiwas can be noticed in the form of movement for resurrection of their language and literature and culture. The establishment of The Tiwa Sahitya Sabha (The Tiwa Mathonlai Tokhra) in 1981, the demand

for immediate introduction of the Tiwa language and appointment of teachers in the schools of Tiwa dominated areas in the State and formation of Tiwa Autonomous Council are some of the demands of their revivalist movement. This phenomenon has vindicated the observation of Herskovits:

If the culture stresses change, there is a tendency to slight the vast body of stabilizing elements that, lying beneath the changes that are actually in the process gives continuity in the way of life.³

(g) Both the change and the continuity are area-specific. The rate of change and the rate of continuity vary depending on the areas the people have been living in. In the Nambor village and Banpar kizam of Silsang area, the extent of continuity is more as compared to other villages under study. On the contrary the extent of change is relatively more in Bundua, Butikura and Jarabari villages. The changes as well as the continuity are subject to the influence of adjacent communities.

(h) Same culture has different manifestations in different areas. The Tiwa culture has provided different facet of their culture in different areas. One particular area is unable to provide the universal pattern of their culture. Hence, it can be concluded that culture too is area specific.

To sum up what have been discussed in the previous chapters, several factors are responsible for culture change. Some are internal factors and some are external. There are three general sources of influence or pressures that are responsible for both change and resistance to change. Those are – (i) forces at work within a society, (ii) contact between societies, and (iii) changes in natural environment. Here the factors responsible for resulting in change in their culture can be divided into five categories:

(a) *Forces that work within a society:* cultural loss, innovation and changes in ideology have resulted in proselytization in the religious

spheres of the Tiwas which is also accelerated by the contact between societies.

(b) Contact between societies: processes of assimilation, transculturation, diffusion, transacculturation and syncretism are resulted due to the contact with neighbouring tribal and non-tribal communities.

(c) Changes in natural environment: Frequent flood during last two decades affected the life and economy of the Tiwas. The floods of 1989 and 2004 in Assam have badly affected the economic life of the Tiwas. The Tiwas living in Nagaon and Morigaon districts are badly affected by the floods of Kapili, Hariya, Barapani and Brahmaputra rivers. Some of the Tiwas have even lost their agricultural land due to the land erosion in flood. This situation has compelled them to work in the unorganized sector as manual workers or fourth grade employees.

(d) Constitutional provisions and safeguards: Constitutional provision and safeguards for the Scheduled Tribes have provided opportunities in case of education and self employment. The Sarva Shiksha Mission has a strong influence on their society. It has increased the literacy rate amongst them. The Sarva Shiksha Mission wants to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 5+ to 13+ age group by 2010. It is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system. The Sarva Shiksha Mission has enabled the poor Tiwa families to provide institutional education to their children. Moreover, Govt. of India reservation policy for Scheduled Tribes has definitely produced positive result among the tribal people particularly in enhancement of literacy and employment rate.

(e) Technological advancement: Technological changes alienate the Tiwas from their traditional practices and people are moving towards a

new lifestyle. Presently in the wake of the process of globalization, the technological changes have become all the more conspicuous. The situation has subjected smaller societies to experience a sense of loss of tradition and identity leading to the emergence of identity consciousness among them. Technological advancement in the forms of television, print media and cinema takes this group more close to a global culture which has affected their daily life.

In contrast to change, some factors help to maintain a changeless stability in their society and culture. In-group out-group dynamics are the social and psychological forces operate in the interaction between groups of people and societies. These in-group out-group dynamics are responsible for maintaining continuity in their society. In interaction between groups of people, ethnocentrism plays the main role to resist change. For the feelings of ethnocentrism the Tiwas view their own culture as the best. The competitive feeling of 'us versus them' leads to ethnocentrism. Habits also reject alien culture as unnatural and even immoral. Habits have stuck the Tiwas to their traditional practices. Hence, it has helped them to maintain continuity in their culture. Revivalism and in-group out-group dynamics commonly result in resistance to the dynamics of change and are able to maintain equilibrium between change and continuity.

Notes:

¹ Makhan Jha, *An Introduction to Anthropological Thought*, 2nd Rev. ed. (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1994), 142-143.

² A.R.N. Srivastava, *Essentials of Cultural Anthropology* (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 2005), 139.

³ Melville J. Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1969), 447.



Photo 94:
Main Entrance of
8th Session of the
Tiwa Sahitya
Sabha (Dec.
2008)

Photo 95:
Cultural
Procession of 8th
Session of the
Tiwa Sahitya
Sabha



Photo 96:
The *Lai Khuta* of
8th Session of the
Tiwa Sahitya
Sabha

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I

Appendices

Appendix I.

Notified Scheduled Tribes in States/Union Territories: Assam

Appendix II.

Glossary of Tiwa Words

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Appendix 1

NOTIFIED SCHEDULED TRIBES IN STATES/UNION TERRITORIES

Assam

I. In the autonomous districts:^a

- 1 Chakma
- 2 Dimasa, Kachari
- 3 Garo
- 4 Hajong
- 5 Hmar
- 6 Khasi, jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam
- 7 Any Kuki Tribes, including:
 - (i) Biate, Biete
 - (ii) Changsan
 - (iii) Chongloi
 - (iv) Doungel
 - (v) Gamalhou
 - (vi) Gangte
 - (vii) Guite
 - (viii) Hanneng
 - (ix) Haokip, Haupit
 - (x) Haolai
 - (xi) Hengna
 - (xii) Hongsungh
 - (xiii) Hrangkhwal, Rangkhohol
 - (xiv) Jongbe
 - (xv) Khawchung
 - (xvi) Khawathlang, Khothalong
 - (xvii) Khelma
 - (xviii) Kholhou
 - (xix) Kipgen
 - (xx) Kuki
 - (xxi) Lengthang
 - (xxii) Lhangum
 - (xxiii) Lhoujem
 - (xxiv) Lhouvun
 - (xxv) Lupheng
 - (xxvi) Mangjel
 - (xxvii) Misao
 - (xxviii) Riang
 - (xxix) Sairhem
 - (xxx) Selnam
 - (xxxi) Singson
 - (xxxii) Sitlhou

- (xxxiii) Sukte
- (xxxiv) Thado
- (xxxv) Thangngeu
- (xxxvi) Uibuh
- (xxxvii) Vaiphei
- 8 Lakher
- 9 Man (Tai speaking)
- 10 Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes
- 11 Mikir
- 12 Any Naga tribes
- 13 Pawi
- 14 Syntheng

II. In the State of Assam including the autonomous districts:

- 1 Barmans in Cachar
- 2 Boro, Boro-kachari
- 3 Deori
- 4 Hojai
- 5 Kachari, sonwal
- 6 Lalung
- 7 Mech
- 8 Miri
- 9 Rabha

^a The autonomous districts of Assam comprised of Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts.

Appendix II

GLOSSARY OF TIWA WORDS

Tiwa word	English Meaning
<i>Ojani/Giyati</i>	Care taker of expectant mother
<i>Aus Gara</i>	Household purification and name giving ceremony of new born baby
<i>Manashwa</i>	Community purification ceremony of new born baby
<i>Borghar</i>	Community prayer hall of a clan
<i>Borjela/Gharburha</i>	Religious head of <i>Borghar</i>
<i>Hari-kunwari</i>	Lady Religious head of <i>Borghar</i>
<i>Dhuna</i>	Cotton processing machine
<i>Bangsha/ Khuta</i>	A group of families-of same clan
<i>Zu</i>	Traditional rice beer
<i>Mangkhor</i>	Cremation ground
<i>Hatham</i>	Specific area allotted to cremate the dead bodies of clan members in cremation ground
<i>Pinda</i>	Cooked food for the deceased
<i>Pinda-dan</i>	Offering of cooked food in the name of deceased
<i>Karam</i>	A community purification ceremony after death
<i>Tamol Bata Phurua</i>	Name of a ceremony of offering prayers to ancestors
<i>Zela</i>	A sacred arrow placed in <i>Borghar</i>
<i>Gobhia</i>	A son-in-law who stays in his in-law's house
<i>Khels</i>	A group of clans (<i>Bangsha/Khuta</i>)
<i>Deka-khel/Deka-xari/ Chamadi</i>	The council of youths or bachelor's dormitory
<i>Bura-khel/Bura-xari</i>	The council of elders in a village
<i>Doloi/Gaonburha</i>	The traditional village chief
<i>Hadari-khel</i>	A working group
<i>Borkhel-bichar</i>	A judicial council
<i>Loro</i>	The village priest
<i>Raja</i>	King
<i>Jal-thal-devata</i>	The presiding deity of land and water
<i>Charibhai chari kora</i>	The presiding deity of bamboo, grove and spring festival.
<i>Thaanghar</i>	Religious place of worship (Prayer Hall)
<i>Namghar</i>	Community prayer hall of the Assamese
<i>Jonbil Mela</i>	A traditional fair of the Tiwas
<i>Majghar</i>	The main part of the house used for the purpose of sleeping, cooking and dining.
<i>Choraghar</i>	Outhouse generally constructed a few yards away from the main house
<i>Kasang</i>	Lower garment of Tiwa women

<i>Jaskai/Phaskai</i>	The upper garment of Tiwa women
<i>Thongali</i>	A waistband
<i>Kamsa</i>	A bath towel
<i>Tagla</i>	A jacket like traditional shirt of Tiwa men.
<i>Phaga</i>	Turban
<i>Lengti</i>	A small piece of lower garment used by Tiwa man
<i>Zu</i>	Traditional rice beer of the Tiwas
<i>Photika</i>	Refined rice beer
<i>Biya</i>	Marriage
<i>Bar biya</i>	A form of marriage by negotiation with elaborate rituals
<i>Joran biya</i>	A form of marriage by negotiation which skips the details of a <i>Bar biya</i>
<i>Gobhia rakha biya</i>	A form of marriage by service
<i>Poluai ana biya</i>	A form of marriage by elopement
<i>Chowali dhari rakha biya</i>	A form of marriage by capture
<i>Chowali dhari bhandhi diya biya</i>	A form of marriage by imposition
<i>Dhum biya</i>	A form of marriage by imposition
<i>Gram-Cuwa</i>	Defiling of village
<i>Kheljawa</i>	A festival celebrated during the time of the construction of a bachelor's dormitory
<i>Changdolo</i>	The head of the bachelor's dormitory
<i>Changmajhi</i>	The assistant of <i>Changdolo</i>
<i>Xa-Chamadi</i>	Modern bachelor's dormitory
<i>Thuna-khuta</i>	A secret pillar inside the <i>Borghar/</i> the middle post of the <i>Chamadi</i>
<i>Oja-khel</i>	A group of six elderly persons who are expert in singing and playing musical instruments
<i>Oja-khel-baro</i>	The chief of <i>Oja-khel</i>
<i>Lang-khui</i>	Sword
