CHAPTER II

SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF SONITPUR DISTRICT
The socio-cultural life of Sonitpur District is more or less similar to the other regions of the Brahmaputra Valley. As a whole, the core of the socio-cultural life is the rural life as almost ninety percent of the total population resides in rural area. On the other hand, most of the people, who reside in towns are also migrated from the rural areas.

A. THE TYPICAL VILLAGE STRUCTURE:

The general arrangement of an average village of the area is not so different from that of villages in other parts of the Brahmaputra valley. Generally, the villages are surrounded mostly by rice fields and often by low-lying areas or patches of marshy land or by jungles. It appears that villages of medieval Assam and even at present did not have a definite shape or design. Shapes or patterns recommended in ancient Indian Vāstuśāstras like the Mānasara were not followed. If some villages took the square or rectangular, circular or semicircular shape, it was not probably due to the people’s awareness of the Vāstuvidyā tradition, but mainly because of the availability of higher land for those construction and proximity to the cultivable land and communication facility. Therefore, such formations or shapes of the villages were probably accidental or fortuitous\(^1\). It holds good in case of Sonitpur district also. Besides, each village also has

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\(^1\) Sarma, S.N.: A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200 -1800 A.D.), Guwahati 1989:
lots of small and big trees standing on the public land. Interestingly, there is no boundary between two villages and therefore, most villages also don't seem to tell where one village ends and another begins. The social relation of the villagers of one village to the villagers of a neighboring one is commonly cordial.

The homesteads are generally on both sides of the village path and loosely arranged. Each homestead generally has a fairly large compound with a profusion of trees like arecanut, banana, mango, jackfruit and almost invariably clumps of bamboo. John M'Cosh opines on homestead pattern of Assamese people in 1837 which runs thus: "The houses of the Natives are for the most part elevated upon terraces of clay, about three or four feet high; the walls are made of large trees roughly hewn, sunk about seven feet into the ground, and covered with mats and reeds, and sometimes plastered with clay. The rich and the poor make use of the same materials, with this exception, that the Baboo's is of larger size, with a finer texture of mats and a higher terrace. In ancient days none but the Rajah was privileged to build a house of brick and mortar, none but he could build a house with two round ends to it; and none but the nobles a house with one round end".

As Assam falls in earthquake zone, so, the inhabitants usually prefer to build bamboo-wood-thatch house. Mostly they use wooden post and the bottom of the post is jointed with another piece of wood, especially of such type which cannot be damaged of

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2 M'Cosh, John: Topography of Assam, 1837, p.27.
earthen insects and the jointed part is called *sikar*. At present, the well-to-do families build their houses with C.I.sheet, brick-cement and rod. Therefore, we find both kheri i.e. thatched and *puccā ghar* in the villages of Sonitpur district. As like as the other parts of Assam, here also the people build their houses in the typical Assamese pattern with *borghar, chorāghar, māral ghar* and *rāndhanighar* or *pākghar* with separate *bharālighar, gohālighar* and *gossaighar*. The tribal people (specially the Misings and the Karbis) build their houses with wood-bamboo and thatch in the typical *chāngghar* pattern. But it is observed that, here, in some cases the tribal people, especially the Mising people begins to build their houses in general pattern i.e. with brick and cement. Perhaps, it is because of scarcity of wood, reeds, thatch etc. materials and modernization is also responsible for this change.

Religious shrines or places of worship are an integral part of a village, be it Hindu, Muslim or tribal. *Nāmghar* is the popular shrine in the Hindu villages. *Nāmghar* is not only a place of worship, but also the most essential and undivisible socio-cultural centre of the rural life. Actually, it is the community hall for the village folk. The villages of the area can boast of their well constructed *Nāmghrs*. Every village has a big *Nāmghar*. Especially, the *Nāmghrs* of the Naduar area are very large in size and also well constructed. Of course, there are some thatched *Nāmghrs* in some villages which seem to be not common. In the Muslim villages, R.C.C. mosques are usually seen, though thatched mosques are not uncommon.
The road-condition of most of the villages is not satisfactory. Presently some villages adjacent to a town or national highway have pitched or gravel road as these are maintained by the Public Works Department under the state Government. But, most of the villages have earthen road self constructed by the villagers themselves. The village people of such villages constructs and mends their village road with hai (work done collectively for public utility).

Wells are most common source of water in the villages. Almost all the families have their own personal wells and those, who have not take their water from their neighbours’ or from public wells. There are some public wells in the villages which are constructed for common use. Now-a-days, though Public Health Engineering Department of the state Government facilitates a number of villages with water supply scheme, yet, most of the villagers prefer to take their water from wells. The women folk of the villages situated at the bank of rivers usually draw water for their daily use from such rivers. Some draw their water from their own tank or from public tank.

In case of sanitation, though up to a few years back, most people had a habit of using riverside or jungles when one has a call of nature; now-a-days, we would find such a person hardly. They use their own latrine. Generally the well-to-do families have their sanitary latrine and the others a latrine with an earthen tank.

Few villages have regular cremation or burial grounds. Usually, an area, fairly
away from the centre of the village is roughly marked out for the purpose of the disposal of the dead and the people avoid the area as far as practicable. The well-to-do families prefer to dispose their family members' dead body in their own land. Sometimes, such land is avoided as far as practicable. On the other hand, now-a-days, due to growing of scientific mentality among the people, some cremate their family members' dead body within the campus of their residence too. Yet, most people like to cremate one's dead fairly away from the centre of the village.

There are regular daily markets in towns and big villages to which the villagers occasionally go to buy provisions. But it is hāts, weekly or bi-weekly, that really cater to the needs of the peasantry. A hāt is not only the place where the villagers buy what he needs and sell what he can spare, or where he has his hair-cut or shave, but also where he meet people and has his share of the latest news or gossip.

The names of a village usually conform to certain set patterns derived by the addition of such suffixes as gāon (literally, a village), chuk (literally, a corner), Kuri (suggesting the homeland of twenty families usually of a particular profession), bāri (suggesting the abundance of something, usually trees of a particular species), āli (a high land near a river), toli, tal and guri (signifying the association with some particular species of trees). Apart from these suffixes some more suffixes are also noticed. Some examples are cited below:
গা�ون : Bhakat gāon, Salāl gāon, Pāchi gāon, Lehu gāon, Bām gāon etc

চুক : Pātalar chuk, Herēpā chuk, Bāruā chuk, Naganyā baruā chuk etc.

বারী : Kuhīrbāri, Tākaubāri, Kundārbāri, Talakabari Tetonbāri etc.

কুরি : Moranākuri, Pāthekakuri, Bahuākuri, Kumārakuri, Bindukuri, Uparkuri etc.

এতি : Amlakhiati, Barati, Khetraati, Buduati

মরী/মরা : magurmāri, Chenimāri, Chandāmāri, Baghmāri, Bandarmāri, Asurmāri, Chengelimarā, Solmarā, Gorōmarā, Ghoramāri etc.

গুরী : Āmguri, Jalpāiguri, Dhalguri, Salaguri, Bihaguri, Dikorāguri, Jāpariguri etc.

জুলি : Bogijuli, Moujuli, Barājuli, Bharālijuli, Bhimājuli, Chirājuli, Dhekiājuli etc.

জান : Bālijān, Rangājān, Barijān, Chengelijān etc.

পথার : Kāuripathar, Bedetipathār, Barpathār, Disiri pathār etc.

কাতা : Bholākatā, Dhomākatā etc.

ভঞ্চা : Taubhangā, Gohālibhangā etc.

পুর : Pānpur, Bikrampur, Udaipur, Nabapur, Nurpur, Gohpur, Gopalpur etc.

হোল : Bejarholā, Chalāholā etc.

বিল : Bokābil, Kārubil, Akābil etc.

বস্তি : Gadharābasti, Miribasti, Laxmanbasti, Kalbasti, Orangbasti etc.

বন্ধা : Hātibandhā, Silābandhā, Garubandhā etc.

ধরা : Cholādhara, Gādharā etc.
B. OCCUPATION:

As with the rural population in other plain districts of Assam, agriculture is the principal occupation of the vast majority of the people of Sonitpur. The dependence on agriculture is, if anything, even greater than elsewhere. The land is fertile and therefore, both rabi and kharif crops grow very easily and without intensive care. The land of the district is very much suitable for tea plantation and therefore, there are a lot of tea gardens. These tea gardens are also taking a leading part in the socio-economic and cultural life of the district.

Next to agriculture, fishing has also considerable importance as an occupation in rural life. Though people of a particular caste, namely Kaivartas or doms are professional fishermen, all sections of people, whether of high-caste or low-caste, rich or poor, take delight in catching fish for home consumption. Fishing is both a favourite sport and for many, a part-time gainful occupation that helps to add zest to the family’s meal.

As for other occupations, few people are engaged in trade and a few are government or tea garden employees. Weaving gives part-time occupation to women. Most of the women tamed silk worms (endi, mugā and pāl) one time, but now this is gradually dying out. Some people earn their livelihood with craft work of bamboo and cane. Women of the area generally take leading part in transplanting and harvesting of crops.
C. AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS:-

In the sphere of farming, rice cultivation occupies the most important place as rice is the staple food of the people. The other important food crops traditionally cultivated are mustard seed, various pulses such as *magumāh* (phaseolus minimum of rumph), *mātimāh* (phaseolus), *machurmāh* (lentil), pea, *rahar* (pigeon pea) and sugarcane.

Though new varieties of rice and other crops and also modern techniques of cultivation are being introduced now-a-days, most villages still retain the traditional farming. *Sāli* (transplanted winter rice) is the principal crop farming. There are many varieties of *sāli* rice viz *Kalājaha*, *Prasādbhoga*, *Kunkunjahā* or *Pokarpuri jahā*, *Solponā*, *Māguri*, *Kātisāli*, *Siālkāti* or *Biriābhanga*, *Barā*, *Komal* and many others (the names of some varieties differ from place to place) that cultivated here. Though some cultivate traditional *āhudhān* and *bāodhān* and some new varieties *puchā* and *mālā*, yet these varieties are cultivated not in a large-scale manner. Most farmers believe that the fertility of a rice-field declines if one cultivate rice more than one time in a year and therefore, they prefer to sow corn only one time in a year.

Generally, the hard laborious works such as ploughing, weeding, putting up embankments etc. are done by adult males. In the summer and rainy seasons, they go to their field early in the morning and are busy with such works for the whole day. Sometimes, boys of age of 12 or 13 also accompany the grown-ups and help in work. In
referring to a boy of such age, the expression frequently used is 'ḥālar muthit dhāra
bayas', i.e. 'he attains the age to hold plough'. Generally, the minors and women of
farmer family bring drinking water, launch and other refreshments to the field when the
farmers are too busy to go home for food. Besides, the women folk take part in
transplanting (bhuirowā) and reaping the paddy; sometimes these are their exclusive
responsibility.

When the crop is ready for harvesting, women folk cut off handfulls (muthi) of the
corn near the head and tie them with a piece of straw. The muthies are made into larger
sheaves called bitā and a number of bitās put together and tie them with straw, tamāl or
tarājarī. Now it is called dāngari. Two dāngaries are affixed to either end of a both side
sharp pointed bamboo called biriā or holongā and are carried by the men across their
shoulders. The affluent farmers also use their bullock carts or buffalo carts for the
purpose. At the homestead, the threshing is done by men with the help of bullocks. This
operation is called maranāmarā. The separated paddy is passed through a sieve (chājani)
and winnowed with the help of winnowing trays called Kulā, the process is called bā-divāj
thus separated from the chaff, the paddy is stored in the granaries (bharālghar). Mustard,
pulses and the smaller grains also go through similar processes of harvesting, threshing
and winnowing and are generally stored in a big bamboo drums called duli.

The straw, when dry, is taken home and made into neat heaps called meiī,
somewhere near the outer yard. The straw is used as cattle fodder. Dried jute sticks are
also neatly stored by many for future use to make fire and make wall of cattle shed.

Some cultivators have some farms, which is called pām or chāpari, a few kilometres away from their village home, where they cultivate mustard, pulse, jute, sugar cane and vegetables. These farms are generally on river bank and there they have a small hut where they camp at the time of cultivation and it is termed as bahā (rest camp).

The farmers plant various kinds of seasonal vegetables. Various gourds, pumpkins, cucumbers, ladies finger etc. are to be found growing in abundance in the compound of almost every household in summer and they need little effort and care. In winter a variety of vegetables like cabbages, cauliflowers, radishes, potatoes, tomatoes, bringals, onions and garlic and leafy greens like pāleng (spinach), jāi (leaf mustard) chuka (field surrel) bābāri (menta) and so on are cultivated with due preparation and care. Those, who have a chāpari, cultivate these in a large scale manner, so that, they can earn two penny by selling it. Different kinds of arum and yams, chilies, ginger and turmeric are also extensively grown in the compound and also in the chāparies.

The plantain or banana of different kinds, such as āthiya or bhim, mālbhog, chenichampā, sondā, bhot manohar, bāulimanohar, kāckal, purāka etc. is one of the most valuable and important garden crops. These are valued not only for its' fruits, but also for
the leaves, barks and trunks used for various purposes, specially on ceremonial occasions. On the other hand, betel nut or arecanut (areca catechu) is undivisible part of socio-cultural life of the Assamese people. Every family plants betel nut in their compound. The betel leaf or pān vine (piper betel) is trained up the trunks of arecanut trees. Moreover, coconut is also an important garden plant of the area. It is a good coconut producing area. With the plantain and bamboo, betel nut and coconut trees forms the great trinity of trees in which houses of the villages are usually embedded.

D. FOOD AND DRINK:

Cooked rice is the staple food of the people. Most people take simple boiled rice with boiled or burned potato (sometimes along with bringal) as a breakfast item apart from the principal meals. Rice is also used for the preparation of refreshment (jalpān) items as flattened rice (chirā), puffed rice (muri), powdered puffrice (Karāiguri or sāndahguri), popped rice (ākhoi) and popular cakes. Apart from fresh cooked rice, paitābhāt/karkarābhāt is also popular item of food. Rice soaked in water overnight is called pailābhāt and many people take it at breakfast, especially in summer season, with salt, mustard oil, raw onions, chilies and behuā (a mixture of alkali and grinded mustard seed also known as khārali in the other parts of Assam). Farmers in the field eat paitābhāt with the greatest of relish as it is cool and refreshing. Karkarābhāt is the rice
cooked on the previous day and left overnight but not soaked in water. It consists of mostly the left over of the previous night, which the poor people eat for breakfast or as a late morning refreshment. It is believed that if one cooks rice twice in a night, Laksmi (the goddess of wealth) avoids the family. So, the village folk cook rice more than their actual requirement and the left over should not be thrown for the satisfaction of the Laksmidevi. Rice is eaten with various kinds of seasonings called ānjā or tarkāri (curry) and bhāli (fry).

Soft rice and rice flour respectively known as komal chāul and pithāguri are two kinds of most common food as refreshment or jalpān. Komal chāul is a kind of rice husked out from some definite varieties of paddy after being boiled and dried in the sunny day. It is generally taken in two processes-mixing with gram or pea, ginger, chilli and salt and with curd and molasses or ripe banana after soaked in water to get soft. Pithāguri is made by pounding the soaked rice into flour. The rice flour is fried or baked and is taken with milk and molasses or ripe banana. From pithāguri or rice flour, different kinds of cakes are prepared such as khōlā pithā or tlipithā, chungā pithā, puchi pithā, ghilā pithā, barpithā, pānipithā etc. A special kind of paddy named as borādhān, is generally used for preparing these cakes and cooked in vapour barāchāul with milk and molasses is also a kind of most popular item of refreshment.

Betelnut chewing is a habit to which people throughout Assam are addicted. Here, raw betelnut is taken instead of the betelnut dried and make into supāri as in other parts.
of India. In Assam, the nut is shelled, split into pieces and chewed in combination with betel leaf and little lime. Almost all the people of Sonitpur are veteran betelnut chewers. Many people add pieces of tobacco leaves (sadā/dhapāt), especially the black variety in the combination. A specially prepared dhapāt, in combination of tobacco leaves and molasses keeping in a cungā (bamboo pipe) is called malādhapāt or mukhatkhowā dhapāt is a delicious one. Some people take karphul (scented root of a special herb) and dewāchāli (bark of dewā tree) with the combination. Men, women and even children are found chewing betelnut at almost anytime of the day and there are many, who would rather do without food than without tāmol-pān. Ripe betelnuts are preserved under the ground and this form of betelnut, known as burhā tāmol is the most favoured form. In the time of scarcity of burhā tāmol, even unripe betelnut is also chewed. As with the rest of Assam plains, in Sonitpur also, arecanut and betelleaf 'have a definite place in many religious and ceremonial functions. They are the first things offered to a visitor.....13. The habit of chewing and eating of tāmbula in ancient Kamrupa is recorded both in the Harsacarita and in the accounts of the Muslim historians4. The practice of eating betel-nut specially by the women, is mentioned in the Yogini Tantra5.

Tobacco smoking is also a common practice though now this practice is decreasing. The use of wine is also noticed though it is not commonly used. Generally,

4 J.A.S.B.XLI,p.81.
5 1/6, Na Sukradarsanani.hrinam tāmbulāsā sadā bhavet (Quoted from History of Civilization of the People of Assam by P.C. Chaudhury,p.328.
people belonging to Brahman, Kalita, Koch, Keot communities are not accustomed of drinking. Even the people of Āhom community of the area are also not habituated to drinking. Drinking is a common feature among the tribals and the tea garden labour communities. They are accustomed of their own indigenous process of making it which is commonly known as läopāni mad or phatikā. The wines made of rice is called läopāni and distilled one is called mad or phatikā.

W. Robinson says that, 'In Assam as in every part of India, chewing and smoking various vegetable substances, some of them highly intoxicated is a favourite luxury and here the people are more than usually addicted to such practices. Under this head, opium is by far the most important article\(^6\). From the records, it is seen that opium smoking was a common practice here during the British rule. But now, this practice is totally abandoned. Smoking of bhāng (canavis setivum) is also noticed occasionally.

**E. DRESS AND ORNAMENTS** :-

\(~\) The people of Sonitpur district generally wear the traditional dresses and ornaments of Assam. The male generally wear dhuti- cholā and the female chādar-mekhelā-rihā. However, the use of rihā is very much rare now-a-days. The tribal women of all tribes use their traditional three-piece-wear as dresses like the tribes in the other parts of Assam. It is noteworthy that, the women folk of the Mising tribe of the

\(^6\) Robinson, W.: *A Descriptive Accounts of Assam*, p.273.
district (specially the Mising who reside on the bank of the river Bharali) wear a piece of unstitched red coloured cloth on their belly to legs named egey (mekhela) which is a special characteristic of the Mongoloid but now this custom is found among the Ādi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh but not among the Mising or any other tribe of Assam.

The women are very sensitive in connection with personal beauty and they use traditional Assamese ornaments and cosmetics, of course, now-a-days the women of the district use the modern styled ornaments and chemical cosmetics. Some traditional ornaments like thuriā (an ornament of gold which is weared on ear), galpatā (a kind of neckless), bangles, ring all made of gold are commonly used ornaments. Golden ornaments are so dear to a woman that, no girl want to marry a person, who cannot provide the golden ornaments. However, ornaments of silver and raw gold (Kechā or patāson) are also used to some extent.

F. RELIGION:

Hinduism and Mohamedian are the main religions of the people of the district. Moreover, Christians are also there more or less. Some tea garden labours and tribal people have accepted Christianity. Most of the tribal people observe their traditional religion.

Once the whole district was dominated by Śaivism, a sect of Hinduism. It is said...
that, the traditional ruler of ancient Tezpur, Vānāsura, was a staunch devotee of lord Śiva and the Mahāvairava temple is of that time. He was the first ruler to establish the Śiva-līnga. The temple of Nāgsanka, the temples of Viswanath, Śingari temples, Haleswar temple may furnish ample evidences to that effect.

The Śākta cult of Hinduism was also in existence here. The Śingari temple is associated with Durgā. According to S.Kataki, the temple was dedicated to goddess Durgā. This view is also supported by R.D.Choudhury. Of course, among the many temples of Śingari, one of them might have been dedicated to goddess Durgā. The Kalyāni Devālay, situated at the Kalang Mouza is an ancient devipitha. There is a chaturbhūja Manasā image of the 10th century A.D. and up to a few years back, there was a golden Kālī image of the Āhom age. The practices of buffalo-sacrifice and the deodhani dance are also performed here traditionally. The Chandi temple of Viswanath is dedicated to Mahādevi. These ancient temples suggest the existence of Śaktism in the area from ancient time.

Vaisnavism is also an important cult of the Hindus of the area. There are many temples dedicated to Lord Visnu at present also. Due to the impact of neo-Vaisnavite movement led by Śankardeva, many satra institutions were established here and these

satras played a vital role in spreading of neo-Vaisnavism in the area. The Gāngmou thān, at the juncture of Borgang tributary and the Brahmaputra, was established by Sankardeva himself in 1516 A.D. He spent here five years according to the Kathāgurucarita and seven years and six months according to Laxminath Bezbaruah. However, he completed a lot of literary works such as Pāṣaṇḍa Mardana, Ajāmil Upakhvān, Prahlād Charitra etc. chapters of the Kirtana during the period. After Sankaradeva's departure from Gāngmou to Dhuāhāt-Belguri, the thān was looked after by Paramānanda Ātai, a staunch follower of Sankardeva belonged to the Mirī (Mising) community. Thus, the cult was accepted by many tribal people in general and the Mising in particular. There are a large number of Vaisnavite Misings at Gohpur area. The Vaisnavite Misings celebrate their marriage ceremonies according to the prescribed form of the 'Sankar Sangha' with nām-kirtan and they have given up their customs of chicken and pig eating and taming. On the other hand, there is instance of performing bhāonā at Bāligaon Mising Village near the river Bharali.

Apart from the Śiva, Devi and Visnu temples, a Śūrya Mandira is also found at Galsepā village, three kilometres away on the southward direction from Māgani village of Gohpur area. The image is the Śūrya on a ratha pulled by seven horses. There are all total a number of fifteen micro-sculptures on the gigantic stone Vigraha of size 1.55 metres x 1.51 metres. the sculpture suggests to believe it to be the of 8th -9th centuries A.D.\textsuperscript{10} There is a Ganeśa temple at Tezpur and a lot of Ganeśa images are scattering

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p.44
over the hills of Tezpur. On the otherhand, the district museum of Tezpur preserves a stone image of lord Śanī found at Kalabari, which is of the late medieval period and also an image of lord Īndra. These suggest that, apart from lord Śīva, Visnu and the mother goddess, other gods and godlings were also worshipped from time to time.

It is noticed that, though there are different religious people in the district, there is no conflict among them and ideal communal harmony is maintaining.

G. FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS :

Of the festivals observed round the year in this region, Bihu festivals, Durgā pujā, Kālipujā, Lakhṣī pujā, Phākuā or Dolvātra are the main.

The district is famous for RongāliBihu festival and specially, Chatia and Jamugurihat areas of the district claim to be the pioneer of mukali Bihu (open Bihu) in Assam. In the celebration of the three Bihus (Rongāli, Kongāli and Bhogāli) in the area, we notice both folk and religious elements. However, it is discussed in details in a latter chapter.

The pujās of the Mother goddesses Durgā, Kāli and Lakhṣī are also celebrated with pomp grandeur. There are a number of tea gardens in the district and in these tea gardens, the pujās are celebrated enthusiastically. Various melās are arranged in the
Phakua or Dolvatra is the festival of colour. It is observed in the month of Phagun or Chaitra. In some places, viz. Jamugurihat, Viswanath etc. the rite of gossain furua (moving of the icon of Visnu) is celebrated.

The tithis (days) of the great saints Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, Janmastami tithi, (the birthday of lord Sri Krisna) etc. are also observed. In these contexts, bhāonā performances are held.

Jamugurihat area in the district is famous for the fame of its most fastidious bare-sahariyā bhāonā. At least twenty to twenty four bhāonās are staged at the same time within one circular mandapa (pandel) consisting of twenty to twenty four khalas (open stage) by the people of different villages. This performance is the bare-sahariyā bhāonā. From the records, it can be learnt that such type of bhāonās were also performed at Chatia in a few years back. Actually, bare-sahariyā bhāonā is the revised and enlarged form of hejari bhāonā of Kaliabor area of Nowgong district. However, bare-sahariyā bhāonā is performed in a very enthusiastic manner.

H. CULTURAL HERITAGE:

Sonitpur district has a very rich cultural heritage. The ruins of stone gate of
Dah-parbatiya temple near Tezpur town is of 6th century A.D. according to eminent archeologists. Famous historian Saranga kumar Saraswati opines that the ruins of Dah-Parvatiyā may be placed in the 5th century A.D.\footnote{Bhattacharjee, Satish: article in 'Salastambha', a Souvenir, page:19} However, the sculptures on the gate suggest it to be of Gupta School of sculpture. The Gangā-yamunā sculpture on the gate attains world fame. A rock-inscription of Harjjarbarman of 510 Guptabda or 829 A.D. near the Bhairabpada temple, various ancient temples at Singari, Tezpur, Nagsankar and Viswanath also support the rich heritage. The fine sculptures found in Tezpur which are now preserved at Cole park of Tezpur are fine artistic expressions.

The Vaisnavite satras bear a rich heritage. Some manuscripts of Kāññheli script of Lūtiimantra, Birā mantra, Vaidya sāstra etc. are found in the district. A manuscript of the Māhabhārata, in bāmuniya style of script has been found at Jamugurihat. It is now preserved at the district museum, Tezpur. A manuscript of the Kirtana with illustrations (the script is in Kāññheli style) has been collected from Naharbari and is preserved at the district museum. Apart from these manuscripts, there are some paintings of traditional Vaisnavite style in the satras. On the other hand, many wooden sculptures and musks are also found at various satras. All these may testify the strong cultural heritage of the district.