CHAPTER – 5
THE MISING (MIRI) CASE

Background Note:

As we have mentioned in the ethnographic account of the Mising (Chapter-III), the concentration of the Mising population is found in the upper Assam districts. However the culture of the Misings of the Jonai area of Dhemaji district is considered as the most undisturbed and authentic by all sections of the community.

On the other hand the Mising population in Sonitpur district of central Assam is small and confined to few pockets along the banks of the rivers Jiayabharoli, Dikorai and Buroi. However because of their greater presence in the Jiyabhoroli riparian areas Sontipur, Misings are referred to as “Bhoroliporia” Misings. The “Bhoroliporia” Misings have a distinctive way of life, which is somewhat different from that of the Misings of upper Assam. In this work also we have often used the term “Bhoroliporia Misings”.

We have made an attempt to make an in-depth study of the Bhoroliporia Misings since most of the academic works so far done on the Misings have concentrated their attention on the upper Assam Misings and the “Bhoroliporias” have been more or less left out.

For my fieldwork I have selected a few villages in the Jonai area of Dhemaji district for the following two reasons –
a) The Mising culture of Jonai area is regarded as the most representative.

b) Most of the important developments in the socio-cultural and socio-political fields have originated in this region; particularly the Mising of this area have given the lead in the ethnicity-related moves of the community.

For this study the following villages were covered for fieldwork:

**In the Sonitpur Area**: Bokagaon (Miri), Baligaon (Miri), Rangajan (Miri), Toubhanga, Tinighoria, Kekokoli, Sarudikorai, Bamunipam, Sikombasti.

**In the Dhemaji Area** : Gali-mesaki, Gali-nabang, and Lai-mekuri.

The villages under Sonitpur district were familiar to me from my post-graduation days. I have done field work for my post-graduation dissertation in these villages – particularly Baligaon (Miri) and Bokagaon (Miri). As I had a good rapport with these villages it became naturally very easy for me to carry out field work for my present study. That background has helped me a lot in gathering information and better understanding of the field situation. Although I have visited all these villages and collected data, the intensive field work had been done in Baligaon, Bokagaon and Rangajan. Similarly in Dhemaji district also as I stayed at the village Gali Mesaki and developed a good rapport relatively more intensive field work has been done in that village mainly.

**II. Trends of Change:**

Now we are presenting below the data according to the set parameters mentioned earlier.
(i) In the Field of Socio-Economic Life:

In Sonitpur area we would like to concentrate on the trends of change regarding the economy and its related aspects.

As agriculture is the mainstay of the people of the villages under study, so the economy of the people mainly centered round agricultural activities. While agriculture has been the prime source of livelihood since long past, the nature of agricultural operations have changed particularly during the last 50 years.

As we have mentioned earlier, the Misings, who had once been hilly-dwellers, practised jhum cultivation which they continued even after coming down to the plains. In the past, more precisely till 60 to 50 years back, jhuming was the only mode of production in these villages – e.g., Baligaon, Bokagaon, Rangajan. Their jhum fields were on the hill slopes of the nearby hills and hillocks as well as on the plains. At that time more stress was given on the production of horticultural items rather than paddy. Rice was produced, but only the ahu variety in a much smaller amount while yam, potatoes, different kinds of vegetables were produced in large quantities. Gradually they shifted their fields to the plains and by clearing jungles, they prepared fields for cultivation. At the initial state of cultivation in the plain area, jhuming was the sole method of production. It was about 40 to 50 years back that they gradually learnt the skill of settled cultivation from their non-tribal Assamese neighbours. Even after the adoption of this new method, they simultaneously practised both jhuming and settled cultivation. Thereby jhuming had lost its importance. Now, apart from occasional practice, jhuming has been almost completely abandoned by the people of these villages.
This shifting of fields from hill slopes to the plains as well as adoption of settled cultivation in place of jhum has brought successive changes in a number of agriculture-bound activities, for example, in methods of production, agricultural implements, cropping pattern, food habits, transportation and commercial transaction, etc. In fact, the changes and adoptions in these aspects are either directly or indirectly involved with the economic life of the people.

One major change is distinctly found in the case of agricultural implements. For jhuming, the digging stick and the chopper had been the main implements. Jhuming involves cutting and felling of trees followed by burning, and thereby preparing the soil for cultivation. For cutting purposes the chopper called *okto* or *yoktung* was in use. For preparing the soil after burning of trees, an iron hoe called *kuriyan* or *pakur* was used by them. The digging stick locally known as *tulingkun* or *tooyun* was used for digging, sowing the seeds as well as planting. However, adoption of settled cultivation has been followed by the adoption of implements used for the letter kind of operation. The terms used for implements of wet cultivation are loan-words from Assamese and this is sufficient evidence that the villagers have acquired the skill from their non-tribal Assamese neighbours. The implements which are used for the cultivation are *nangal, moi, joboka, bindha, kasi* etc.

Formerly, i.e., about 40 to 50 years back the buffalo (*minjek* in Mising) was the only breed cattle reared by the villagers, which was also used for ploughing. Buffalo rearing is a very old practice of the Misings, which must have been a continuation of their hill past. But gradually they began to rear more cows than buffalos. It is also another example of change
under the circumstances. As the cow has come to their economy much later, especially after close contact with the Assamese farmers who mostly use the cow for ploughing, the term used for the cow is also a loan word from Assamese i.e. *goru*. Now-a-days although the cow is used by most people, there are a few families having buffaloes although in limited numbers.

The latest change and at the same time adaptation in this field is provided by the coming of the power-tiller and the water-pump. The Mising villagers are using power tillers to till the soil as well as water pumps for irrigating the fields. These are the latest additions to their agricultural technology. Although only a few wealthy families have modern agricultural machineries like power-tiller, pump set etc., the facilities are shared by the villagers through mutual agreement. Like the changes in the case of implements involved in production, the other implements related with agricultural activities have also undergone similar changes for example, in the processing of crops. Now-a-days, the huller machine is used for husking paddy instead of the traditional boat-shaped mortar and pestle or the husking pedal (*dhenki*) – itself an adaptation from non-tribal Assamese neighbours. There are a few families having puller machines and the others get their paddy husked on payment at a reasonable rate.

Thus a series of changes have come about over the period of time in the field of implements related with agricultural activities right from the digging stick to the power tiller. Here the striking fact is that the villagers have learnt to cope up with the changes in the process blending the old and the new.

Changes have taken place in another sphere of their economy
i.e. the cropping pattern. At the time when jhuming was the only means of production, yam, different kinds of taros, and potatoes were the staple items along with a small amount of *ahu* rice, pulses and vegetables. In addition to these items, cotton was also produced in a fairly large quantity. But as they gradually gave up jhuming and began to cultivate extensively in the plains and on the river bank by clearing the jungles, some changes occurred in their crop items. New items were introduced, i.e. new varieties of rice other than *ahu*, mustard seeds, sesame, sugar cane, jute etc.

In the past they produced only for consumption and the economy was purely at the subsistence level. Production was not at all market oriented and the barter system was prevalent. But since about 50 to 40 years back, things began to change: the concept of money and market economy became much stronger and they started playing significant roles. This development also led to the concept of market oriented surplus. The cumulative effect of these factors finally led to the increase in the production of rice. Formerly rice was produced once in a year. Gradually with the stronger market pull, land has come to be cultivated more than once, often twice and sometimes even more. Now-a-days they produce other crops wherever rice is not grown. In addition, *bao* rice is cultivated in the low lying areas. However, still a small amount of *ahu* variety is produced mainly for socio-religious reasons. As *ahu* was the original variety of rice produced by the villagers, even today they try to identify their traditional rituals and practices with this variety of rice. Along with rice, the production of mustard seeds has also increased. In comparison to earlier times, due to the rising tendency in the market value, jute is gaining importance among the wealthy industrious farmers of the villages.
In the case of vegetables also new items have been introduced. When a new variety proves successful, it gradually gets incorporated in their agricultural set up. Carrots, cabbages, cauliflower, tomatoes, different varieties of beans, beet, peas, papaya etc. are such additions. A few industrious cultivators are now experimenting with different hybrid varieties of crops and vegetables.

As with implements, cropping pattern, and crop items, in the case of fertilizers and pesticides also a lot of changes have taken place. Cowdung along with the ashes of burnt trees and leaves have been the fertilizers used by the villagers from remote past. Even about 20 years back they didn’t have much knowledge about the modern chemical fertilizers and pesticides. But gradually through the government promotional programmes, they have come to know about such facilities. Some industrious farmers have successfully utilized such fertilizers and pesticides and got good results. Another recent addition in this field is the plantation of trees yielding green manure. This is definitely due to contact with the neighbouring tea gardens where such trees are exhaustively grown for shade and manure. From the remote past the villagers have been using certain locally available tree called gunori, and a kind of sour fruit (rabab tenga) as pesticide. Erection of small bamboo sticks or small branches of trees at regular intervals in the entire field was also in practice keeping in mind that such sticks or branches will provide perches for numerous birds who will eat up the harmful insects. Although the use of chemical pesticides has become popular now-a-days, the villagers are still using their traditional manure and pest-control devices.

Regarding adaptation in various fields like technique of production, implements, cropping pattern and so on we are giving below two
case studies for having a clear picture of the actual situation through a comparative analysis:

**Case-1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mr. Mukunda Mili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>75 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Qualification</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Baligaon (Miri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>20-10-99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Mukunda Mili 75 years old with a paralyzed left side recalled his earlier days when he was an active farmer. When he was a young man in his twenties, they used to cultivate in the plains by clearing the jungles. They used both jhuming and wet method of cultivation. Buffaloes were reared in large numbers and used for ploughing. Cowdung was the prime manure item and also the ashes of the burnt trees and leaves. They used certain locally available leaves and fruits as pesticides. Yam, taro, potatoes, vegetables and cotton were produced in their jhum fields while rice, pulses, mustard, sesame were produced with the help of ploughing. At that time the only variety of rice was *ahu* and that of pulse was *matimah*. Mustard was produced mainly for selling purposes. They hardly had direct contact with the market. The sell of products especially mustard and jute took place through middle man who came to the village or at the mahajan's place. These businesses then were normally of Marwari community locally known as Kenya.

Egg plant, pumpkin, gourd, chillis, black pepper, garlic, ginger, varieties of banana, various kinds of herbs were the common products. The
production was at a subsistence level but they worked very hard. Gradually things began to change and the cropping pattern also changed a lot. They have almost given up jhuming and adopted wet cultivation as the principal basis of production. From about 25 to 20 years back production of rice has increased tremendously, especially the sali variety.

Case - 2

Name: Mr. Komison Mili
Sex: Male
Age: 40 years
Marital Status: Unmarried
Educational Qualification: Gradulate
Place: Baligaon (Miri)
Date: 21-10-99.

Mr. Komison Mili, a second cousin of Mr. Mukunda Mili, is an industrious young farmer. He has about 150 bighas of land and according to him this time out of almost 150 bighas, the area under jute plantation is about 70 bighas because he has speculated that this time the prices of jute will go up. The rest of the land is divided into a number of divisions for production of other items, especially rice followed by mustard and vegetables. Komison, a well known person of the area, has a good link with the outside world. He has brought fast growing, high yielding varieties of rice, pulses and well as various vegetables and fruits like papaya, coconut, mango, tomato, carrots, cabbages, cauliflower etc. He has employed about 40 workers from their neighbouring Nepali and tea workers community. The land is tilled with power tiller. He uses chemical fertilizers along with cow-
dung, the traditional manure. For increasing the nitrogen content and productivity of the soil, particularly for the vegetables, he has planted certain fast growing trees which the villagers call *aar gos* (manure tree) commonly used in the tea gardens for this purpose as well as for providing shade. He too has used chemical pesticides along with their traditional devices of past control.

* * *

Besides these adaptations, there is a recent important development in the economic field, that is the plantation of valuable trees for multiple purposes. Such plantations are completely profit oriented. Till now they use wood for cooking. One important object of this plantation of fast growing trees like *kadam*, mango, etc. is to get firewood. From the remote past fire wood was collected from the nearby jungles. But gradually the forests were declared as reserved forests and protected from human habitation. Therefore, the supply of fuel has became limited and in recent years it has created problems to some extent. Of course the villagers get a substantial supply of fuel from drift wood during rainy season from the Jiya Bhoroli river. But as alternative the villagers now have started plantation of fast growing trees consciously for the supply firewood. Similarly plantation of such trees as *sal*, *segun*, *sisu*, *gamari* etc. are done for two purposes i.e. for using as timber both for home consumption and for sell.

Again, a few wealthy enthusiastic villagers have launched a new venture by planting *agar* trees that fetch a good price from exporters. However, this experiment is yet to be proved profitable as it is still in it's initial stage.
Such new developments have made a great impact on a number of aspects of social life. For example, till recent times use of wooden furniture was unknown to the villagers. But now almost every household possesses some items of such furniture as chairs, bench, bed, table, etc. However, the most sticking feature is that some well to do families are now having luxurious furniture of latest design which are in fashion.

The new developments – the changes and the adaptations, have been helped by improved communication, transport and the forces of market economy. As we have mentioned earlier, about 50 years ago barter was the popular medium for exchange of goods and commodities at a given rate fixed by mutual understanding. However at that time the villagers were not totally unaware about the monetary transaction. Of course, the use of money by them was occasional and negligible. But gradually the money oriented market economy had influenced their transaction system especially with the outside world. The economic interaction with the outside world through the neighbouring market centers or towns has made their production system market oriented and at the same time it has opened up avenues of diverse earning sources for them. The increase in the production of rice, changing cropping pattern regarding various items, plantation of trees for multiple purposes are directly involved and influenced by the market oriented production system.

Such exposer followed by numerous adaptations have direct as well as indirect implications on their socio-cultural life. A significant shift of attitude, a more or less pan-Indian phenomenon i.e., the young generations are now heading towards a money-based society and it is definitely fueled by the communication boom through various mass media
and growing consumerism. The young fellows are now interested in getting easy money through business, contracts etc. rather than agricultural activities even though they are skilled in and capable of doing so.

Another subtle but significant implication to which the villagers have adapted themselves is their food habit. Traditionally their staple diet was yam along with varieties of taro and potatoes. In addition to these, rice constituted a major food item with large amount of leafy vegetables, fish and meat – both boiled and smoked. Pork was popular and common, although chicken was also eaten. Use of oil was practically unknown in the past and even about 30 to 20 years back, the people seldom used oil. But now they use oil like their non-tribal neighbours. However, boiled preparations are still taken in large quantities and relished by them. Increase in the production of rice has brought a change in their staple diet i.e., a shift has occurred from yam to rice. Rice is now-a-days considered as the major food item by the villagers. The changes in their food habits can be visualized with the help of a case study.

Name : Mrs. Giyoni Mili
Sex : Female
Age : 70 years
Marital Status : Married
Educational Qualification : Nil
Place : Baligaon (Miri)
Date : 19-10-99.

Mrs. Giyoni Mili a seventy-years-old lady told me a lot of things about their food habits, their delicacies as well as the changed and the changing trends. According to Mrs. Mili, so far as she can remember,
in her childhood days a lot of yam, different kinds of taros and potatoes constituted their major food items. Boiled preparations were extensively used along with smoked fish and meat. Use of oil was occasional, Boiled yam was used as snacks as well as a substantial food, apart from rice. Mrs. Mili recalled some of the favourite recipes of her childhood. Of course, such preparations are still done but with a modified version. According to her, *pentoani* is one of her favourites. It is a preparation of chicken plus rice paste – simply by boiling with salt. However, now-a-days the same preparation is done with oil and spice by little bit of frying. Another favourite recipe of hers is a dish of smoked fish with pumpkin. Like the other one this preparation was also done by boiling; but now-a-days it is done with oil an spice. Today rice is consumed in a much larger quantity than in earlier days. Bread, biscuits, various other market - based items have become very common. Such items are often used for entertainment of casual visitors.

According to Mrs. Mili, *apo* or *apong* (a home made rice beer) is their traditional beverage. It was used for all kinds of purposes – as a part of their food habit, offering in the rituals and ceremonies for consumption and worshipping, for strengthening and nourishing the body, for offering to the guests, etc. However, gradually tea is taking the place of rice beer. Today tea is the common drink consumed by the villagers. It is also offered to the guests. Due to the awareness about the bad effects of the consumption of liquor, the villagers particularly the young generation, have restricted the preparation and consumption of *apo* or *apong* to a large extent. However, the preparation and consumption of *apo* is essential for ritualistic and for festive occasions. Of course, rice beer is still consumed particularly by the older generation.
The above represents an attempt to give a picture of the trends of change in the socio-economic life of the Mising people of central Sonitpur area.

The Misings of Jonai:

We now turn to the Misings of Jonai area of Dhemaji district. Jonai is a subdivision of the district of Dhemaji. It is situated on the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Jonai is also known as Murkagselek.

The economy of the Misings of Jonai solely depended on agriculture until about 25 to 30 years back. Though now-a-days other occupations are being taken up by a substantial section of the people, agriculture still remains the mainstay. As observed earlier, the Misings were originally hill-dwellers they practised shifting cultivation. After coming down to the plains they continued to practice it for a long time. But gradually they have adopted the wet cultivation in order to adapt themselves with the changed environment. Now they have almost given up shifting cultivation.

Different varieties of taro, yam, potatoes, a number of varieties of rice, sesame, cotton vegetables were the main items of production. Now-a-days rice is the major item.

The youth organizations especially students' organizations like All Assam Mising Student's Union have started motivating the people to produce crops which have either high market value or which are used as a raw material of certain high-priced finished products. Such commodities are both economically significant or in some cases in addition to their market value, they have has got some cultural value as well. A few examples will help us in understanding the situation.
1. A special variety of crop locally called as phaphar (a kind of pulse) is introduced as a cash crop because of its high yield and high market price. Usually they sell it to the traders from outside, particularly to the Marwari businessman. It is a very recent development.

2. Traditionally the Misings used to cultivate cotton. Cotton was used mainly for preparing yam for cloths. Again the Misings have a special kind of hand-woven blankets popularly known as mirijim which is made of raw cotton – in the similar manner a special type of male jacket is also made.

After the coming of ready-made cotton yam in the market, which started about 30-40 years back, use of yam prepared by spinning cotton gradually became less. As a result, the quantity of production with such yam has become insignificant. Again, because of the limited supply of cotton and lack of eagerness to learn the craftsmanship of mirijim and similar other hand-woven items that craft is presently on the verge of extinction. But of late in the modern world people are showing ever increasing interest towards ethnic artifacts due to their aesthetic value. This has naturally generated demand for this kind of products and mirijim is one of them. But the craftsmanship associated with mirijim production is not in wide practice and the supply is not adequate. To capitalize on this possibility, the young Misings are now trying to grow cotton in large scale on commercial basis and to revive the craftsmanship.

The notion of regaining identity currently having strong hold among the indigenous communities from socio-political point of view has also acted as catalyst in this phenomenon.
3. A part from agricultural practices the youth organization have also encouraged people to take up dairy production. The most significant and interesting thing in this connection is that traditionally the Misings did not use milk for consumption. Though cows, buffaloes had been reared by them since a long past, the concept of milk production as a source of income was not, there among them. Actually, earlier they didn’t consider it for commercial purpose.. But the situation has radically changed: now the Misings of Jonai supply about 7,000 litres of milk per day to Dibrugarh.

It may be added here, as we have already mentioned, that milk consumption was not present among the Misings since long past but now-a-days their attitude towards milk and milk products has changed. Especially the modern educated parents have started giving milk as health drink to their children.

4. Another recent development is in the field of pig rearing. Pig rearing is a traditional practice of the Misings. Selling and buying of pigs are common among them as pig plays a very important role in the socio-religious life of the people. That kind of transaction was limited only within the village or neighbouring villages. However, being aware of the high demand of pork in the market of neighbouring areas, the youths have planned to promote pig rearing on commercial basis.

(ii) In the Field of Social Institutions:

The term ‘social life’ encompasses a vast field and it will be difficult for us to cover every aspect of it in detail. Thus we have decided
to concentrate on certain major aspects of social life i.e. kinship, family, marriage along with the clan system that are mutually interlinked with one another. Through these we will be able to grasp the trends of change in the social life of the villagers.

As family is the smallest social unit, from anthropological point of view it is also considered the base of social structure and relationship. The study of family structure reveals many dimensions of social life. From our investigation in the villages we found that formerly i.e., until about twenty five to thirty years back, the joint family was the prevailing structure. As practice of patrilineal descent being the traditional Mising system, all the sons and unmarried daughters lived together with their parents. The married daughters used to live in their in-laws houses. But gradually the joint family system became weak and the family started splitting – which is more or less a pan-Indian phenomenon. Today there are only a few joint families in the proper sense in these villages under study. Usually a common hearth is considered as the criterion of the joint family. Now-a-days the practice of common hearth is gradually giving way and brothers are establishing separate hearths after marriage. This change of family structure from joint to nuclear type has implications in various fields of life. One important aspect covers property and inheritance. In the earlier times as in most of the other tribes the concept of individual property was not very clear. At one point of time anyone could build a house or cultivate any plot of land under the jurisdiction of their village and farm lands. With the increase of population and non-availability of adequate cultivable land (creation of reserve forest by the government being one of the factors), the concept of individual ownership has become prominent among the village people and with the
splitting of joint families, it grew much stronger even within the family itself.

In their traditional set up they have certain rules of inheritance, according to which each son gets an equal share of his parents' property. The youngest son has to take the responsibility of the aged parents and therefore gets an extra share i.e., of their parents. However, in the joint family system such rules were not strictly followed because all the brothers lived and worked together with their parents and the property was considered as common. Now after the marriage of one or two sons usually the joint system splits into a number of nuclear units. From earlier days till now such division of property used to be made with the consent of the elderly members of the family as well as the village and the parties concerned. However, now-a-days such division of property doesn't take place so amicably and it is often accompanied by bitterness. Sometimes strained relations replace the cordiality between brothers and between parents and children, which in turn shatters the very base of relationship of the smallest social unit i.e., the family. As a result, another pan-Indian phenomenon i.e., lonely parents feeling insecurity in the family has reached the tribal villages.

These are some direct consequences while there are some indirect impacts also, the cumulative effects of which have ultimately changed the fabric social life of the people concerned. One such important impact is the loosening of kinship ties. Secondly people have become relatively more individualistic.

Apart from the socio-psychological consequences, the splitting of the joint family has affected their material culture e.g., in the case of house type. (This aspect receives attention in the material culture section).
New developments have taken place also in the field of kinship terms and their implications. Consideration of kinship terminology, both terms of reference and terms of address, along with their views about kinship relations (i.e. whom they consider as close kins and distant ones, upto how many generations they identify their kins etc.) had provided a more or less clear picture of their kinship system. Changes in their attitude regarding kinship relationship has led to a number of adaptations caused by different factors. For example,

i) formerly they had certain definite ideas about close and distant kins.

ii) there were definite rules about preferred marriages, M.B.D. being the most preferred one. These were reflected in the kinship terms as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Terms of reference</th>
<th>Terms of address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Abu</td>
<td>Babu/Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Ane</td>
<td>Nan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother (younger)</td>
<td>Anga</td>
<td>Matsunga/Masunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother(elder)</td>
<td>Bura</td>
<td>Ai/Aiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister (younger)</td>
<td>Anga</td>
<td>Oiyas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Milo</td>
<td>Father of the child/children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Mima</td>
<td>Mother of the child/children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father-in-law</td>
<td>Kake</td>
<td>Kake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal uncle</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Father's sister's husband: -do- -do-
Uncle (outside one's own clan): -do- -do-
Mother-in-law: Yanyi Yanyi
Wife of maternal uncle: -do- -do-
Aunt (outside one's own clan): -do- -do-
Grandfather (both): Tato Tato
Maternal & paternal)
Grandmother (both): Yayo Yayo
Maternal and paternal)
Father's brother: Apa Pai/Paya
Brother-in-law: Bhindeu Bhindeu
Sister-in-law: Mamo Mamo
Mother's sister: Mamo Mamo
Boys of contemporary age: Yago Yago (outside one's own clan)
Girls of contemporary age: Yigne Yigne (outside one's own clan)
Daughter-in-law: Yama by name
Son-in-law: Makhbo Bhagin
Brother's son: Ao by name
Brother's daughter: Onna by name
Grandson: Nati by name
Granddaughter: Natini by name

The terms used for address as well as for reference of kins show the relationship between them. The same term being used for mother's brother, father's sister's husband, father-in-law, uncle (outside one's own
clan) implies that M.B.D. type of cross-cousin marriage was prevalent in this society. Similarly the terms of address for son-in-law was the same as the term of reference for sister's son i.e., bhagin (the term bhagin itself is a loan word from Assamese which refers to sisters son). Thus marriage between mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's son was prescribed by their society. Although the terms have remained the same the relationship have changed and cross-cousin marriage is no longer practiced, by the people. Now-a-days the young generation has started to consider their earlier probable mates as their cousins which is the usual practice of their caste Assamese neighbours. This change of attitude has occurred during the last thirty years or so. Formerly due to cross-cousin marriage, the relationship between the families of probable mates was very close and firm. Maternal uncle had enjoyed a very important and significant position in their traditional set up. Now-a-days these things are loosing significance and therefore the relations have become loose.

Another minor change was observed during my investigation. Formerly the husband and the wife used to address each other not by name. The practice was to use the indirect terms, so-n-so's father and so-n-so's mother. But now-a-days the young couples usually address each other by the first name. This reflects a very modern trend.

As a consequence of the changing and changed attitude of the new generations towards kinship ties, both of the former and present generations, there has also been a conspicuous change in the ability to trace back their ancestry and to connect their kinsman of the present generation. While the older people could recall the names of their ancestors sometimes upto fourteen generations, the younger people can hardly remember upto
three or four generations. Similarly, in comparison with the older people
the younger people have very limited knowledge of their kins outside the
village.

As for organizations which roughly correspond to the concepts
of clan, sub-clan and phratry, the people of the village count two ‘aprin’ and
‘gumin’. These organizations still play vital role in their social life including
family, kinship and marriage. While the first one aprin represents a cluster
of lineages bound by blood descent the second one gumin represents clusters
of families owing allegiance to particular gods including totems.

As we have mentioned earlier in Chapter-5 while giving brief
ethnographic profile of the Misings in general, the community has numerous
clans and sub-clans. But all of them are not present in each Mising locality.
Some are dominant in some regions while others are in other areas. Among
the Bhoroliporia Misings we did not find all of them. The clans and sub-
clans which are found in this area have been recorded as follows:

i) Clan – Boomi

(aprin)

sub-clan Mili Doel Kuli Kardong Poman Padum

(gumin)

ii) Clan – Lingreng

Sub-clan Narah Panging Pogak Padum Sinte

iii) Clan – Miyo-Panoykong-Miyong

Sub-clan Yngate
iv) Clan - Bokhi
   Sub clan Pa-di Pa-lo

v) Clan - Koder Gudang
   Sub-clan Pegu

vi) Clan - Loing
   Sub Clan Pao

vii) Clan - Pangkong
     Payeng Pa-lo

Formerly in respect of marriage two kinds of prohibitions were in operation: (i) inter-marriage within the sub-clan was not possible; (ii) inter-marriage between two sub-clans of the same clan was also prohibited. But now the position has changed to a certain extent. Inter-marriage within the sub-clan still continues to be a taboo. However, the taboo in the case of marriage between two sub-clans of the same clan is mostly relaxed.

If such marriages take place, which has not occur very often, the society has come to give its tacit approval. The operation of their clan rule in respect of marriage can be illustrated with an example – a member of Boomin clan cannot marry a kuli or dole. But he or she can marry a member from the sub-clan like Narah or pa-Iop who are from fingreng and Bokhi clan respectively. It is needless to mention that marriage between the same sub-clan is impossible e.g. between two Milis.

There are some sub-clans which are found under more than one clan e.g., the sub-clan Pa-lo is found under both Pangkong as well as Bokhi clans. Therefore, in such cases both the clans become exogamous to one another.
Although most of the clans are believed to be band on human ancestry, there are a few clans and sub-clans members of whom consider themselves as being emerged from totem objects like animals, e.g., Bokhi clan is believed to be descended from the tiger.

One interesting change in the field of clan system of the village Baligaon (Miri) is the addition of two families from the Ahom community which are in the process of being adopted into the Mising clan system. These two families have been residing in the village since long past. They have completely adopted the Mising way of life and have established marital relation, with the Mili Gumin. Thus according to the Mising clan rules, once they have established relations with the sub-clan Mili, which is under the Boomi clan, they cannot be members of this particular sub-clan as well as the clan. According to a number of traditional priests and elderly persons, though these two Ahom families are yet to be completely identified with their clan structure, they hope within a very short span of time particularly after the marriage of the present young generation they will automatically become members of one or the other sub-clan as well as clan or they will form a new sub-clan or gumm.

This is a very significant adaptation in their social structure. We will now move to the field related to marriage.

The most common marriage type in the past, more precisely upto about forty to fifty years back was marriage by service. As we have already come to know, MBD type of cross-cousin marriage was the prescribed type of marriage; the would-be-groom had to render his services in his maternal uncle’s house for a certain period. When the uncle and his wife i.e., the would-be- parents-in-law were satisfied with his work, they
arranged for his marriage with their daughter. A case can be cited in this connection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mr. Litikai Mili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>75 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Widower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational qualification</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Baligaon(Miri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>25.10.99.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Litikai Mili a man in seventies recalled his memories of young age and told us that he himself married by rendering services in the house of his maternal uncle. To marry Lupati, his uncle’s daughter, he had to work for three years. The service included various agricultural works like ploughing, sowing, reaping and so on, collection of fire wood, house construction, etc. He got married about fifty years back. Unfortunately his wife Lupati Mili is no more. She died about fifteen years back.

Today this kind of marriage is not at all practised by the villagers. As marriage by service was inter-related with the MBD type of cross-cousin marriage, the discontinuance of MBD had led to the discontinuance of marriage by service. The discontinuance of this distinctive type of marriage system is definitely due to contact with non-tribal Assamese neighbours and to some extent exposure to the outside world through education and other kinds of communication.

Apart from marriage by service, marriage by elopement has been the most common since long past till now. One of the major causes
for elopement is to get rid of the huge expenses of an arranged marriage. Although elopement is the common practice, actually it is not the prescribed type of marriage like the cross-cousin type in their society. The society considers it to be a guilt or fault. However, the formalities for social acceptance are not very strict. A fine in cash along with a public apology in front of the village crowd followed by a simple feast are considered to be enough to settle the matter. Of course, if the couple caught while absconding by the relatives or other members of the village, they will be showered with public beating. In the past the couple used to be severely beaten by the villagers. However, beating is reported to be lighter now. This type of marriage is locally known as dauglalaman.

Although marriage by elopement is an old practice of the village, till fifteen to twenty years back it was confined within the Mising community. But incidence of elopement with non-Mising are gradually taking place. Formerly marriage with non-Mising was not accepted by their society. Therefore the couple had to reside outside the village. But gradually the village community has started accepting this kind of elopements with observance of certain formalities, which are followed in the usual cases of elopement. Of course, in such cases if a Mising boy marries a non-Mising girl, the girl has to be adopted by a Mising family within or outside the village, a clan that has marriage possibilities with the boy’s family. Here is a case of such a marriage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mr. Rabiram Yngate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>65 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational Qualification: Read upto Class IV

Place: Bokagaon (Miri)

Date: 25.10.99

About ten years back Mr. Rabiram Yngates son Mr. Dlip Yngate came home with Bina – a Nepali girl from the neighbouring Chiloni (Nepali) gaon and disclosed about theirs affairs and marriage. At first they were not allowed to enter into the house, particularly the chang (platform house). Then Mr. Yngate summoned the village elders, discussed with them and decided to accept the couple after the girl was adopted by some one within their community. Mr. Omidhar Payeng of neighbouring Toubhanga village adopted Bina as his daughter and after performing the other formalities – a public apology along with fine followed by a feast, they were accepted by the family as well as the village. Of course, in addition to these formalities, they also had to perform a purificatory ritual, which took place in front of the hearth.

Marriage by negotiation is locally known as kumna-sola-lanam. Wealthy as well as families with good repute mostly prefer this kind of marriage. It requires a lot of money, arrangement as well as time. The first step of this type of marriage is to send a proposal for the girl by the boy’s family. The parents’ of the boy come and negotiate with the girl’s parents. Such visits are accompanied by lots of exchange of gifts like apo, betel nut and leaves, cakes made of rice paste, etc. After the final talk, the bride’s parents come and fix the date and the occasion is called Saki konam.

On the day of marriage the bride takes her bath early in the morning and offer prayer to the sun and the moon (Donyi Polo). The elderly persons of the village assemble and sing congregational song. The Medhi
- representative of Auniati Satra (Vaishnava monastery) performs puja with rice. During the puja performance the bride wears new gapa and ribi with ornaments. When the puja is over she may wear muga or pat silk. The guests start arriving from the morning onwards. There are arrangements for serving both tea and rice. At dusk the groom and his party arrive at bride’s place. The groom is welcomed by the would-be mother-in-law. A young girl of bride’s side washes the feet of the groom and presents a hand woven towel (gamocha). After arrival the bride and the groom sit together and perform a puja in the name of Donyi Polo under the supervision of the Medhi. Then the couple bows down to the assembly and the family elders and in return get blessings from all. After that the groom’s party is entertained with a feast. Then the party set out for the groom’s place along with the newly married bride. At the time when the bride is being escorted to the Chang of the groom’s house the parents-in-law sprinkle a jar of holy water on the staircase of the chang and say such and such has become our daughter-in-law from to-day. Then she enters the Chang and had to touch the rice container. In the meantime the elderly persons of the family and relatives come up on the Chang. The newly married couple sit in front of the hearth and the assembly pray to Donyi-Polo and ask blessings for the couple. After that the hearth is washed with water. In the next morning the groom’s family gives a feast to their relatives and neighbours. The bride serves foot to the guests.

On the day of marriage no ritual is performed at the groom’s place. The guests come from the morning and are entertained with rice and tea. The groom takes lunch with the best man who should be an unmarried person having parents.
After one week of marriage, the groom’s parents come to bride’s place with two pitchers of rice beer.

Though the marriage ceremony has been performed since long past in this fashion, some subtle changes and adaptations have taken place in this respect. In the past there was no standardized rule regarding gifts and essential objects that were to accompany the bride. Whatever one could afford was given to the girl and such objects included primarily garments, ornaments, and utensils. Even if the parents did not have the capacity to give anything with the girl it was not a matter of guilt or fault. But now-a-days gift-giving has become almost compulsory and incapability to offer gifts is considered as shameful. Formerly there was no demand from the groom’s side. But now such demands have become quite common. The wealthy families give lots of things including furniture. Such things influence others and provoke to do the same. This is definitely due to outside influence.

Again in the case of food items of the feast and tea some changes have taken place. Instead of curd (*dol*) and flattened rice (*chra*), puri with vegetables constitutes the menu. Of course, feast with pork is still consumed with relish.

Polygamy has been practised by the villagers since long past. Of course the incidences of polygamy is decreasing now-a-days. In the past, the status of a man was enhanced if he had more than two wives. But gradually monogamy has become the standard norm. Of course, a few cases of polygamy especially among the older generation had been found.

Although junior levirate is permitted by the society, the incidence of such marriage is very rare in the villages. In the past sororate
was a common practice among the villagers, especially after the death of the wife. Even to day such practice is found prevalent among the villagers.

Besides these kin based institutions like family, marriage, kinship etc. the Bhoroliporia Misings have certain other important social institutions which link the entire village as a community like the Kebang (the village council), Miyumyame (the youth group), etc.

These institutions play significant role in public matters e.g., in the case of settling disputes, in festivals and ceremonies, in the case of public works while services are required. However, the changes have taken place in these institutions in their forms and pattern of work. Formerly Kebang was the council of male elders, the young did not take part in the decision-making or could not be members of the council. But gradually young people are asserting themselves. In some cases women also take active parts in village matters. However, in recent times such organizations as the village Panchayat, the Mahila Samiti, the Youth Club are becoming more and more prominent. Miyamyame, which used to be a strong institution earlier, is today a spent up force.

Formerly, even about thirty to forty years back Miyamyame played a very significant role in social life of the village. It had strong grip over the entire youth of the village. Dekabora, Tiri Bora, Mukhiyal, Tekela were the officials of this institution. It served as a public working group. The group helped the villagers in the field, in constructing houses; sometimes they raise funds for families who were in distress. The services were rendered to the village community not for money but as a part of social duty. Now-a-days the families have to pay for any service rendered. Miyamyame was also given heavy responsibility during the celebration of public ceremonies.
and rituals. Each and every member of it had to participate without failure on the occasions like Bohag or Rongali Bihu, Norasinga Bihu or Porag, Ali-Ai-Ligang etc. Protection of village girls was also vested with this institution. The members had to follow strict rules, violation of which led to severe punishment. Gradually the group solidarity of the institution had become lose. Now-a-days it has been transformed into a club house where people meet on special occasions of religious and social importance.

So far as the social institutions are concerned, the same pattern has been observed in the Jonai area also. Moreover, from the information available from the various sources, it is seen that practically the same set of norms including the changes referred to are common to the Mising community as a whole.

(iii) In The Field of Socio-Religious Life:

The most striking and interesting situation of change and at the same time of adaptations, is found in the field of religious life, because it shows a mixture of diverse elements. The present scenario of religious life of the people gives the picture of the co-existence of mainly three types of belief-system – the traditional Mising faith, the Assamese neo-Vishnava order, and sundry beliefs and practices of Hinduism in general. We have already given a general overview of traditional Mising religious beliefs and practices while detailing the ethnographic profile of the Misings. Here we will deal with the ritual and performances specific to the Bhoroliporia Misings focusing on the specified villages while discussing their traditional belief system.
Like the Mising community as a whole, the Bhoroliporia Misings also worship *Donyi-Polo, Karsing-kartang, Sedi Melo* as the supreme powers of the universe. They believe in numerous gods and deities called *Ui* whom they perform worship in various rituals and ceremonies. In addition to these belief in the force of the soul (*yalo* in Mising) is also very prominent among the people of the village. The traditional priest known as Mibu conducts the rituals either publicly or in individual households. The ritual which is performed by the villagers of this area together every year in the month of June or July in the name of the river Jiyabhoroli. The ritual is performed on the bank of the river itself. The main objective of the ritual is to get rid of the evil by public expulsion. The paraphernalia required for the ritual include chipped areca nut and betel leaves, pulses, banana and a black fowl. A raft of plantain bark is prepared and all the paraphernalia are placed there. The fowl is tied at the top of the plantain bark raft. The Mibu conducts the ritual. If any member of the family particularly the young children falls ill a simple ritual is performed at the individual households in the name of the river Bhoroli and offerings are kept carefully in bundles in the household. At the time of the public ritual this bundle is placed at the puja site and forms a part of the puja paraphernalia. This practice is called *obakhomsa*. All the villagers perform this ritual together for the welfare of the society as well as the respective villages.

Similarly at the time of Porag festival the villagers assemble and commonly worship the supreme powers like *Donyi-Polo, Sedi-Melo, Karsing-Kartang* and others. At that time also Mibu conducts the ritual which require sacrifice of pigs and fowls along with rice beer (*apo*).
Apart from these rituals which are performed commonly, there are numerous rituals which are observed at the individual households or by a cluster of households and not by the entire village.

One such important ritual is the worship of Taleng Dabur (the god of thunder). Sometimes this ritual is done yearly in the Assamese month of *ahar* as a precaution and for the welfare of the family. However, usually after heavy shower accompanied by thunder and lightening during the Assamese months of *Jeth, Ahar, Saon*, this ritual is performed. The usual place for such ritual is the backyard. The family members of the household concerned do not participate except the heads of the family. The Mibu officiates with five or seven assistants from neighbouring households. The paraphernalia include a black female pig, salt, chilli, areca nut and betel leaves, branches of a special kind of locally available fern called *piro*, thread of cotton. The families who are considered as impure due to birth or death of any member are not allowed to participate. Before going to the backyard the assembly first performs a ritual at the front yard. At first the pig is washed with water and rice mixed with *saimad* or *poro apong* (a special kind of rice beer prepared for offerings and consumption in the rituals and ceremonies) are sprinkled at the pig by chanting their traditional hymns, in the name of Donyi-Polo, Karsing-karatang. After that the head of the household has to lift the pig in the direction of the sun and express the purpose of the performance and then drop it on the floor. After that the assembly moves to the backyard and under a tree erect six/seven *piro* branches which are tied with cotton thread. Then the pig is placed within the *piros* and chopped into pieces and the blood is poured at the root of the *piro* branches. After that the pork is boiled and consumed by the assembly.
There are a number of rituals involving the belief of soul (locally called *yalo*). The most common among them is the *yalolaluknama*. If an individual shows fear for water it is believed by the villagers that the *yalo* or the soul of the person has left the body and gone to the river. Thus to fetch the soul back to the person this ritual is performed. In addition to the family members, near kin’s and neighbours also participate in the ritual. The required paraphernalia include a long thread of cotton yarn, a bundle of locally available special kind of fern, called *piro*, betel leaves and areca nuts. At first a *piro* is erected at the courtyard and the thread is tied and similarly after a definite interval a *piro* is erected and the thread is also stretched up to the river. Then four *piros* are erected at the river itself in front of which a pair of areca nut and betel leaves are offered. After that the maternal aunt of the individual of lost soul performs a ceremonial fishing with a fishing net made of bamboo. Whatever comes in the net is carried to the household. In the meantime, the afflicted person takes bath and dressed in fresh new cloths (traditional dress) sits along with some family members in front of the hearth in the *chang*. People who do the fishing operation keep asking whether the soul had returned from the river, the answer from inside should be yes. Then the returning party comes up to the *chang* and whatever has come in the net when fishing is tied at the head of the person after wrapping it with cotton. The person has to keep it in place for five days. Purring these five days the person has to follow certain taboo – he/she should not go out of the household, should not talk with outsiders, etc. After the formalities the assembly takes lunch with pork and rice beer.

Another such ritual is performed for the same purpose but in
the jungle and with certain alterations. This time the maternal aunt accompanies with the party but has no special duty to perform. The offerings include an egg along with areca nut and betel leaves. And the lunch is taken with chicken instead of pork as in the case of earlier ritual. In addition to the rituals connected with the yulo (soul), they also perform numerous rituals in the name of various deities and spirits. They believe that these deities and spirits whom they call Ramseng Dangaria, Dotar Dangaria, Atun Dangaria, Dangaria Ui and so on cause various diseases and upheavals to individuals, families and the society as a whole.

An important ritual is performed in the Assamese month of Kati to avoid pests in the field in the name of Ramseng Dangaria. At that time usually the sheaves of paddy become heavy with grains and the ritual is observed by individual families in their respective fields. The paraphernalia include rice, black gram (matimah), areca nut and betel leaves, a pair of fowl, plantain leaves, bamboo, rice beer, mibu conducts the ritual with the assistance of the family members. When the ritual is over, the family members along with the mibu and neighbours and some relatives have their lunch in the field itself. A similar type of ritual is performed in the name of Dotar Dangaria in the jungle. For the relief of back pain, chest pain etc. a ritual is observed in the name of Atun Dangaria, which requires only a pair of red fowl. The ritual is performed in the jungle individually. Another similar type of ritual is observed for the relief from gout. It is known as pajabdoni. A mibu is invited to perform it. The paraphernalia include a duck, a small bamboo basket or plantain bark sheets, a small quantity of rice, charcoal, and chilli. The duck is sacrificed, roasted and cooked. Then either in the basket or in the plantain bark the other offerings are placed and carried
to a road crossing and kept there in a corner. The cooked preparation is served as a special food to the ailing patient.

These are some of the traditional practices which have been observed and performed by the villagers since long past with great importance and enthusiasm. However this is one aspect of the religious belief and practices of the villagers. While talking about the religious life the influence of Assam Vaishnavism cannot be denied and it plays a very significant role. As we have already mentioned the Misings have come under the influence of Assam Vaishnavism through the agencies of various Satras. In the case of the Misings of Baligaon (Miri), Bokagnon (Miri), Raṅgajan (Miri) villages, the concerned Satras are Auniati Jamuguri branch) and Sesa (local branch). The villagers are disciples of these Satras. Although the Vaishnava influence has already got a strong hold in the religious life of the people, the process has started only about thirty to forty years back. Today almost all the villagers claim themselves as followers of Vaishnava tradition.

Medhi and Satola (Atola in Mising pronunciation) are the two representatives of the two Satras Auniati and Sesa respectively. They are selected by the Satra authority in consultation with the elderly members of the village to officiate various rituals and especially the purificatory rites which is very much apart from Vaishnava tradition.

The Hinduized way of the concept of purity and pollution as well as the performance of purificatory rite is one of the most important and significant influence of Vaishnavism on their religious life. The purificatory rite which is called parachit in the Vaishnava tradition locally known as yamnam, has occupied such a significant place in their belief system that sometimes it has well-merged with their traditional type of purificatory rite.
For example since long past non Mising or the Mipak are not allowed to enter the *chang* and if such a thing happens in a household, they have to perform a purificatory rite according to their traditional way. As the Mising consider the hearth as sacred, the ritual is performed on the hearth itself. Originally the traditional priest conducted the purificatory rites but with the increasing influence of the Vaishnavism, now-a-days the *Medhi* or the *Satola* the representatives of two Satras conduct the ritual. However, the striking factor is that the person who is the representative of Satra also conducts the traditional Mising rituals. The same person, when he conducts the traditional ritual, is called Mibu and when he performs a Vaishnava ritual he is called Medhi or Satola. In this way the same person plays a duel role in the religious life of the people. Thus it is an example of admixture of two belief systems.

Among the Vaishnavas of the village, the processes of initiation in the Vaishnava fold plays a very significant role. For the initiation they have to go to the Satras of Jamuguri and Sesa. The initiation ceremony is called *saran* in the Vaishnava tradition and the individuals who are initiated at the same time address each other as *haribhakat*. However these two terms are incorporated in the Mising vocabulary and pronounced as *aran* and *aribhakat* respectively. The Vaishnava elements are found in various rituals and ceremonies which are otherwise observed in the traditional way. For example, the *parachit* or purificatory rites in the case of birth rituals, marriage by elopement, entering of non-Mising in the *chang* are performed in the Vaishnava way. The paraphernalia requires water, *tulasi* leaves, *dubari*, cowdung, incense stick, earthen lamps, etc. The mantras are chanted in Assamese by *Medhi*. The entire process is locally called *yamnam*. 
Apart from these beliefs and practices associated with the Assam neo. Vaishnava order certain other rites and practices of socio-religious nature traditionally followed in the caste Hindu Assamese society have also found their way into the social life of the Mising of the village. For example, in the case of birth ritual in earlier times there were very few rituals observed by the family, only the dropping of umbilical cord was marked by a cleaning operation of the household. The concept of impurity of the household due to the birth of a child was not there. But gradually with the increasing connection with the caste Assamese neighbours the concept of purity and pollution are becoming important. Now-a-days a series of rituals are performed in connection with the birth of a child. The first five or six days i.e., before the dropping of the umbilical cord is the first purificatory rite. It is called yulcn-chunam by them. The day is marked by a thorough cleaning operation of the entire household by the mother. Before the cleaning both the mother and the child have to take a ceremonial bath of water mixed with the ashes obtained by burning a quantity of thatch from the family haystack.

The final purificatory ritual is performed after one month but sometimes it may be one and a half months as the time depends on the appearance of the moon (Polo) in the sky. The ritual is called mobinchunam. The occasion is marked by shaving of hair of the baby, a ceremonial bath of the mother and the child, followed by a cleaning operation of the entire household and performance of a purificatory rite. From that day the state of impurity ends.

However, the story is significantly different in the case of death
ritual. It is still performed in the traditional way with some adoption of certain elements from the non-tribal neighbours. The first purificatory rite after the death of a person is performed on the third day. Traditionally the Mishings bury the dead. The most striking feature is that the Vaishnava group which includes the majority of the villagers and who identify themselves with Hinduism also practice burial. The grave is usually dug in the backyard of the household, although there is a public graveyard within the village. The grave should be a long and a horizontal one. After that the grave is purified with fire three times and it is known as magi. Then the body is placed and covered with earth. All rites connected with the death of a person are performed by the left hand. At the top of the grave low bamboo fencing is put up and it is also covered with a thatch roof constructing a more or less houselike structure. The materials which were used by the deceased person are placed there, i.e. the garments, utensils, smoking pipes, in the case of females ornaments etc. From the day of the death five times a full dish is offered in the name of the deceased on the grave. Thus on the third day of the death the first purificatory rite is performed. It is known as ampan pannam. The family members along with neighbours and relatives come to the backyard with a prepared dish and fire. Two male members prepare a houselike structure which is considered as granary beside the grave. After that the offerings are placed there and the assembly leaves the place.

There is no fixed time for the performance of the final purificatory rite. It involves a lot of expenses. That is why it requires much time. Some wealthy families can afford within one or two months but for the poor families, it is not possible to arrange immediately. Sometimes it may take one or two years.
The final death rite is called **Ka**\^{\text{}} which is definitely a loan word from Assamese. The final death ritual is performed together for several deceased members. Not only of the family, sometimes deceased clan members are also included. In the early morning the female folk take bath and prepare *poro apo* (the rice beer specially prepared for ceremonial offerings and consumption). At first they prepare two bundles and keep separately for offering in the name of the deceased members then they again prepare twenty four bundles for the guests. In the name of the deceased members a pig has to be sacrificed.

All the relatives both near and distant within or outside the village are invited along with the entire village people. The ritual is performed in the morning. The offerings are placed in the courtyard. As a part of the ritual the first three batches of invites are served the lunch in the *chang*. Lunch for each guest is presented with one or more coins in the name of the deceased. Then the head of the household spread a hand woven towel (*gamocha*) in the staircase of the *chang* and the guests have to pass by stepping on the towel.

Again there are some rituals which are definitely later development in the religious life of the people for example, the worshipping of Goddess Ai (the deity of measles, pox) is an adaptation due to contact with the caste Hindu Assamese neighbours. The ritual is performed in the individual household where a family member is suffering from the disease. It is conducted by an elderly lady who is called *punjali*. The ritual is known as *abhahanmise*. The paraphernalia requires rice paste, pulses (*bootmah*), comb, vermillion, amulet (*maduli*). The *punjali* chants mantras in Assamese. The *punjali* is assisted by nine ladies who are called *gopini*. The elderly
male members also come to attend the ritual. All the paraphernalia are offered in the name of the deity and after the end of the ritual, are thrown into the river. No sacrifice is required to perform this ritual which is a non-tribal characteristic of worshipping. Same is the case with Kati Bihu. It is observed in the same way as the non-tribal Assamese observe it.

There are certain rituals and ceremonies which have been observed by the villagers since long past but due to contact with the non-tribal Assamese neighbours who also practice similar kind of ceremonies and ritual especially connected with agriculture, these performances are now-a-days often identified with the non-tribal Assamese ones. Though as a result of contact with the non-tribal neighbours some elements may have been introduced, these have got themselves integrated into the traditional belief system. Some such celebration of Amgona Nanum, Lakhomi, etc. They identify Amgona Nunum with the non-tribal Assamese custom of na-una and na-khowa. Similar is the case with Lakhomi which is identified with the custom like Lakhimi Adora, etc. However, the ritual is performed in the traditional way. The Lakhomi is performed after harvesting in the Assamese month of Puh at the granary. It requires a pair of fowl, a kind of pulse (matimah), rice paste, a handful of rice, rice beer (poro-apong) used for rituals and ceremonies, a kind of fern locally known as piro, cotton, and an earthen lamp. Mibu, the traditional priest, conducts the ritual. The pair of fowl is sacrificed in the granary and the rice paste, rice, rice beer are sprinkled into the granary by chanting hymns. The piro are erected around the granary wrapped with cotton. In front of the granary door two piros are erected and a fire is lit up with the paddy husk. An earthen lamp is also lit up in the front of the granary. The rice beer is prepared in the courtyard.
itself for offerings as well as for consumption. When the ritual is over, the
sacrificed birds are cooked in the courtyard and the family members have
their lunch with the mibu.

Similarly angona nanum is observed to mark the occasion of
the first reaping of the crop as well as eating of the new rice. In the case
of ahu variety, a bundle of crop is brought to the household for three
consecutive days and after drying and grinding these are kept in three separate
bundles. In the case of sali variety, the reaping is done twice only.

This process is locally called as angopinam and it is followed
by nabhatdonam i.e., the consumption of rice of the new crop. But before
the celebration of the consumption of new crop, another occasion is observed
which is known as dokedonam. Dokedonam is an occasion in which young
children of the neighbourhood are invited and are given lunch prepared with
the new crop. On the day of nabhat donam the neighbours are also invited.
After cooking, the head of the family offers the preparation along with rice
beer to the hearth (locally known as keera, which is considered as sacred.
The custom is called losuk keera punam. After consumption, the remaining
food is offered along with rice beer in the name of the deceased family
members in the backyard.

In addition to Vaishnava influence the influence of Hinduism
in general have also gradually become part of the religious belief system
of the people. Mainly two factors are involved here. Firstly all the non-tribal
Assamese neighbours, even the believers of Vaishnavism, as a result of the
influence of what can be called as the greater Assamese Hindu religion,
observe certain pijas and rituals. The observation may be in indirect way
e.g., the Durga Puja, Lakhirni Puja, Dewali, etc. which are performed in the
urban and semi urban centers like Balipara, Khonamukh and even in Tezpur. On such occasions they may not participate in the ritual itself but a festive atmosphere spreads over the area and the ritual is celebrated with the entertainment only. These are occasions for public merriment. Thus the implications are more socio-cultural in nature than religious.

Secondly, the influence of the neighbouring Hindu Bengalis and Biharis and to some extent Nepalis also led to certain new additions in their religious life e.g. the performance of *graha puja* which I witnessed during my stay in the field. The following case study will highlight some details.

Name : Mr. Amidhay Payeng
Age : 45 years.
Sex : Male
Marital Status: Married
Educational qualification : Matriculate
Place: Courtyard of the house
Date : 22.10.99.

A *graha puja* was performed in the household of Mr. Amidhay Payeng to ensure an auspicious start of his newly purchased power tiller. A Bihari priest from Khonamukh was invited to conduct the puja. The puja was performed in the name of the planet Saturn i.e., *Sani*. Offerings were made in front of an earthen pot called *ghat* painted with vermilion placed on an earthen dish filled with paddy. The *ghat* was surrounded by four plantain plants. The required paraphernalia included *tulasi* leaves, *dubari*, fruits and pulses (*bootmah*), earthen lamps, incense stick wood, apple wood, mango leaves, seven bundles of salt, a piece of black cloth, unstitched cotton thread, etc. The leaves of mango were placed on the *ghat*. Again the black cloth
and the thread placed just above these leaves. The priest chanted Sanskrit mantras. The relatives and neighbours were invited and all participate in the puja. I was told that once it is over, Mr. Payeng would introduce his power tiller in the field.

This is a completely a new development. Such practices have been introduced only within the last couple of years. The striking aspect of this ritual is that neither the power tiller nor the Grahapuja were part of the life of the people of the village till recently. But today they are already accepted and incorporated into their economic and socio-religious life in such a way that it would be difficult to sort out such later additions from the original one in years to come.

Though Durga puja, Lakhsmi Puja etc. are not performed within the village but the villagers participate just for the entertainment. Similarly lighting of earthen lamps and the busting of crackers of Dewali is a recent development. Similar is the case with Lakhsmi Puja. After the establishment of the village primary and M.E. School, gradually the celebration of Saraswati puja has become an important event for the villagers especially the younger section.

The Misings of Jonai:

The Mising of Jonai consider themselves and their way of life as the most authentic representative so far as the Mising culture is concerned. It has been more or less accepted by the Misings of other areas also. Thus till recent time the way the different religious activities are performed and observed by them are considered as the original form of the Mising socio-religious life. The socio-religious activities and rituals performed by the
Misings of other areas are often considered as deviated from the original form, for example, the Bharoliporia Mising (Misings inhabiting the bank of the Bharoli of Sonitpur district). The way they celebrate Ali-Ai-Lrigang is quite different from that of Jonai celebration. However, gradually the things are changing. Changes have come about due to various factors. Even the Misings of Jonai themselves admit that now-a-days most often they loose originality and gradually they are recognizing the distinctive style of the Misings of other areas. Still they are trying for the survival of their traditional rituals and customs.

Several forces have been working on the socio-religious aspect since a long time – more precisely after their coming down to the plains. The main forces along with their recent trends can be laid down as follows:

(i) After coming down to the plains – the exact date or period of which is very difficult to trace back, approximately 150-100 years back, the Misings came into contact with the plains people – a majority of whom constituted of the Assamese Hindu population.

Again Assamese Hinduism has been greatly influenced by the neo-Vaishnava reform movement pioneered by the 15th century Assamese Saints Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. The neo-Vaishnavism because of its liberal attitude have played a very significant role in the social formation of the present Assamese society. It embraced different sections of people, even the so called lower castes the tribals (which are considered as out of the Hindu fold) into it's religious area and has given a respectable status by considering all of them as equal.

As a result, the process of tribe caste continuum which has been continuing since a long past got a push to accelerate. It workered as
a natural process of assimilation of the greater Assamese society till recent
times. But that natural process has got a jolt and it has been diverted to
other directions by certain recent social phenomena.

Thus in the socio-religious life of the Misings in general the
Assamese Vaishnavism has played a very significant role. In a way it has
acquainted the Misings with the Hindu way of life.

The picture that emerges from the above is clearly a mixed
up one and the diverse elements that have gone into it's making seem to
have engrained themselves into it.

(iv) In The Field of Socio-Political Life:

It may be pointed out here that the outstanding feature of the
changes in the field of socio-political life has so far been basically attitudinal.
The psychological orientation has been infused with a new kind of
consciousness but so far there has not been much evidence of being
institutionalized along claries. However, there has been a new development,
which has significance in this context. The traditional village administrative
system in which the kebang (village council) had a dominant role has lost
its old function and power. In it's place the new government-instituted
panchayat system has come to operate.

As has been hinted earlier in the background note, it is the
Misings of Jonai area that have been at the forefront of the socio-political
activities concerned with the promotion of the interest of the community.
Most of the organizations that have taken the lead in self assertive and
revivalist movements (including the Bharoliporia Misings) have received
stimuli from the Jonai-based forerunners and accepted their leadership.
Before Independence, the literacy rate was very low among the Mising people. But after Independence the scenario has changed a little bit – schools were established in different parts of the Mising concentrated area. Gradually the young people have come out with new socio-political consciousness. The concepts like Scheduled Tribes, tribal belt, tribal sub-plan etc. have given new dimensions to their thought process. They have become conscious about their identity, legal and political rights and so on.

As a result a revivalist tendency has developed in recent time and the reflection of such attitude is visible in different spheres of life.

As socio-political scenario of the Mising people in general has been marked by the formation of various organizations working at different levels. In 1971, Murkongselek Mising Area Students’ Union, now known as All Mising Students’ Union was established. It has played a major role in developing political awareness of the tribal folk. They established it as a forum of the Mising people to express their views, ideas and perception regarding their own community as well as people around them. Gradually the people have become conscious about their ethnic identity, legal and political rights – various constitutional safeguards, such as – Scheduled Tribe status, tribal belt and Block, tribal sub-plan, etc. Initially it was almost like a public awareness programme but slowly it has taken the shape of self-assertion movement with a revivalist attitude.

Two other organizations actively involved in this process were established in the late 80’s. Those are – a) Mising Mimang Kabang 1987 (Mising National Struggle Council) (b) Pakem Mising Mime Kabang 1989 (All Mising Women’s Organization).
Though these three organizations work for the entire Mising community, their functioning is mainly conducted from Jonai itself. Murkong selek Mising Kristi Kabang at Jonai a cultural organization for promotion of Mising culture – is also playing an active role in this process.

Apart from these, the Mising Autonomous Council Demand Committee was established in 1987 to strive for gaining the power of self-administration in the Mising majority areas. It appears that this goal is almost at the point of attainment – but not without giving rise to various complicacies.

Apart from their demand for autonomy, these organizations are involved in various kinds of social activities also. Particularly the youth organizations are trying to motivate people in the economic sector. They are heeding workshops for training and teaching various technical skills including in the field of agriculture.

Another development may be noted here as a pointer to the growing solidarity movement the celebration of Ali-Ai-Ligang was done on the month of Phagun and there was no fixed date. But as a result of the revivalist attitude, they have considered their socio-religious and cultural elements and celebrations as ethnicity marker. Because of that, the date of celebration of Ali-Ai-Ligang has been fixed i.e., on the first Wednesday in the month of fagun. This decision was taken by the Mising Bane Kabang.

Though the socio-political developments including the ethnic assertive moves are prominent in the Jonai area, the Bhoroliporia Misings also have developed in their own way a socio-political consciousness among their people. A number of voluntary organizations have been working for the upliftment of the Misings of Sonitpur area both economically and socio-

During field visit I had learnt about the felt needs of the Bhoroliporia Misings from Mr. Komison Mili – a leading personality in the socio-political life of the village Baligaon (Miri) as well as in the entire area. Those felt needs can be laid down as follows:

1. Most of the people of this area are landless. And those who own land don’t have proper titles. As such it becomes difficult for them to get loans from the bank and other financial agencies. Steps should be taken in this regard by the government.

2. At least one teacher, who is a native speaker of Mising, should be appointed in each primary school of the area and local people should be given the preference.

3. The educational institutions of the Mising inhabited in this area should receive due government recognition and grants.

4. The Misings students from this area should be given scholarship.
5. The unemployed youths should be given loan from bank or other financial agencies for self-employment.

6. Medical facilities, drinking water, electricity, developed transport system, should be provided in the Mising concentrated area.

7. Each village of this area should be included under the tribal sub-plan.

8. Measures should be taken to control erosion of river Jiyabhoroli and Dikorai.

9. Irrigation facilities should be developed and the Mising farmers of this area should be provided with modern agricultural implements free of cost.

10. News in Mising language should be broadcast and telecast.

The present socio-political situation gives a somewhat complex picture. But unlike many other tribes, the Misings have not gone for extremist activities. According to one of the leaders of The Mising Students' Union they want their demands to be fulfilled in a peaceful manner. He said they donot want any separatist movement. They strongly believe that they are part of the greater Assamese society and in that way they are part of the Indian society.

(v) In The Field of Material Culture and Language:

a) Material Culture:

Material culture represents tangible expression of the way of life of a community. It encompasses such items as house type, food habits, dress and ornaments, various implements of production, means of transport and communication, etc. Significant changes have taken place in those fields during the past several decades. Given below are some noteworthy examples.
House type:

Three different kinds of houses represent the successive modes of adaptation. Almost every household has a raised platform house made of bamboo wood and thatch—which is the traditional type of house, of the Mising community as a whole. The platform is about 5 ft. above the ground supported by rows of wooden posts. About thirty years back a single house often contains a family of thirty to forty persons living commonly in a long rectangular hill. All the sons and daughter-in-laws and their children lived together with their parents. Usually no partition was found in their houses. Specific space was allotted for each married son and his family which was demarcated by a hearth. Now-a-days as joint families have become rare, instead of long raised houses they construct small to medium sized ones. Not only in the size but also in the raw material used changes have taken place. While the original material used for such houses were bamboo and wood with a thatched roof, now-a-days some raised platformed houses are constructed with mud-plastered walls, wood, and tin roofs. This represents an interesting blending of the traditional and newly adapted items in the use of raw materials. One important factor in the change is the non-availability of traditional used raw materials. Bamboo, wood were plenty in the natural habitat about twenty to thirty years back but these raw materials have become somewhat less available at the present time. This has a more or less direct impact on the changed mode of construction.

The other two types of houses found in the village are the mud plinth thatched houses as well as mud plastered or cemented, thatched roof or tin roofed Assam type house and R.C.C. construction. Building of mud plinth thatched roofed houses are obviously the consequences of changes
in the habitat accompanied by the contact with the neighbouring plains non
tribal majority community. Same is the case of the houses with cemented
walls, generally mud-flowered, occasionally cemented, tin-roofed; which is
a modified structure of the mud plastered thatched houses.

In the case of R.C.C. construction, it can be said that it is not
necessarily due to contact with neighbouring communities, but it reflects
the general tendency towards modernization of life style which has swept
over all communities, tribals and non-tribals. This has also got something
to do with the relatively better economic status as well as the desire to
raise the social status. Of course, only a few wealthy families have R.C.C.
houses in the village.

Although they have constructed different types of houses other
than their traditional ones i.e., raised platformed cang ghar alone and not
with the other two types. The hearth is always in the chang and it is
considered by them as sacred. Since the hearth is on the chang, cooking
takes place there but the hearth is much more than a cooking place. It is
a sacred center. Certain religious and purificatory rites also take place
centering round the hearth. Thus, special kind of sanctity is attached to the
whole chang ghar. That is why outsiders, especially the beef eaters, are
not allowed entry the chang. Outsiders i.e., the non-Mising guests are
entertained in the other types of houses. The fact that every household retains
a chang ghar points to the people’s attachment to the traditional religious
belief in spite of the Hindu Vaishnva influence on them which is evident
in some other fields. It is an interesting case of adaptation which combines
the two tendencies of retention of the traditional one and on the one hand
and its relaxation on the other.
Custumes and Textiles:

In the case of weaving and dress patterns, an obvious change and adaptation is clearly visible. Loin loom is the traditional type of loom of the people of Baligaon (Miri). Locally the loin loom is called ege comdung. The traditional attire of males and females are produced on such looms. The speciality of the Bhoroliporia Mising women lies in their distinctive dress. Unlike the Mising women of the other parts of Assam the Bhoroliporia Mising women do not use sewn piece of cloth (mekhela) to cover the lower part of the body. Instead they use an unsewn piece of cloth known as gapa. It is usually of pinkish red colour with beautiful intricate designs in the middle. The unmarried girls wear chadar gaya while the married women wear gabon, a breast cloth wrap below the armpit to cover the upper part of the body. They use ribi (a special kind of chadar) for special occasions. Red, black, green, yellow and dark blue are the colours commonly used by them. The traditional attire of the males consist of ugan (dhoti) a piece of cloth to cover the lower part of the body usually of white colour. Galuk (sleeveless shirt) commonly in black, but other colours are also used and dumal (turban) and tangali (a kind of belt, a piece of cloth are tied round the waist). The elderly people use the traditional dhoti but very few of them use galuk except on ceremonial occasions. The younger generations have completely taken up the modern western type of dress.

The women folk of the village are expert weavers and lack of this skill is considered as shameful for girls. In addition to the extensive use of their loin loom, they also use the common Assamese loom with throw shuttle as well as the fly shuttle. This is definitely due to contact with the neighbouring Assamese populations. They have learnt the skill of these looms
only about fifteen to twenty years back and also have adapted to their set
up within a very short span of time. One obvious proof is that the terms
used for denoting different parts of the loin looms are Mising while in the
case of the other kinds of looms such terms are loan words from Assamese.

The different parts of the in loom are tagul, gatuk, sumoa, 
paba, and lobakati, narbalo and that of the throw shuttle loom are tuluta, 
durpati, ras, bokati, nasani, jakala, make, mahura, putal, goroka, etc.
Similarly the spinning items are also known in their Assamese names – jotar, 
sereki, ugha etc.

Thus the simultaneous use of three looms is a striking example
of adaptation. Like the looms the changing trend of dress pattern also has
taken place within a few years. They use their traditional dresses in their
day to-day life as well as on the special occasions of their own. Young girls
use saris and mekha chadars of latest designs when they go to the places
outside the village. The teen agers wear salowar kurta, skirt, blouse, frock,
etc. This is of course a completely new development and can be considered
as an influence of some pan- Indian phenomenon spreading everywhere,
thanks to the influence of the mass media and market economy. Some
innovations are formed for example from various woven materials with their
traditional designs. They prepare salowar kurta, which is a significant mode
of adaptation from the material point of view.

Some industrious young girls have taken weaving as a means
of earning money. With the help of financial aid from some government
and semi-government agencies, they have set up small weaving factories and
these not only provide self employment but also employment opportunities
for a few other girls. They work on contract basis and take orders from
individuals as well as business farms. Here we can have a clear picture with the help of a concrete case study.

Name : Ms. Guneswari Mili
Age : 30 years.
Sex : Female
Marital Status : Unmarried
Educational qualification : Studied upto class X.
Place : Baligaon (Miri)
Date : 30.10.99.

Guneswari Mili is an industrious young lady with a progressive attitude. She studied upto Class X. Her brother Mr. Imol Mili is a councilor of Gaon Panchayat and her cousin Mr. Komison Mili is a prominent personality of the village. They have links with various organizations and institutions. With the help of their initiative, Guneswari went to different exhibitions and training camps within and outside Assam. Such experiences have developed her confidence and courage and also opened up avenues for self employment. Last year she applied for a loan from NIRD to establish a weaving factory and she got it. Now she has started her factory, employed a number of girls who assist her and at the same time get further training. Her factory is now in it's initial stage and it is within the compound of their house but she told me that she has plan to make it in a large scale. She has got orders from different neighbouring areas like, Tezpur and a few from Guwahati. She has got a contract from a Delhi based farm for weaving the materials for handloom bags which look ethnic and are now in fashion. During my stay in the field she was busy in weaving those materials. Guneswari's experiments have now encouraged a number of young ladies and
they are also coming up with such types of plans and programmes.

Thus this business oriented weaving which is a completely new trend in this village reveals another dimension of adaptation. They have changed from need-based production to money-earning production. The change in the agricultural pattern necessitated the changes in the agricultural implements, in the cropping pattern, the item of production, in food habits, in the transaction system and so on. Details regarding these features have already been discussed in sub-section II of this chapter.

Transport and Communication:

Rapid expansion of communication through various media has got a tremendous impact on the socio-cultural as well as economic picture of Baligaon (Miri). First of all the improvement of transport facilities have influenced various aspects and more particularly the economic system making easy access to the markets of the nearby towns and weekly markets. (Details will be discussed in the section on socio-economic life).

Some forty to fifty years ago, bullock cart was the only means of communication with distant places. And for nearby places, they used to go on foot or by boat. Then the bicycle came which is still being extensively used by the villagers. For communication with distant places gradually the bus services were introduced, Railway was introduced some item ago Jiyabhorili railway station is within the village boundary. Now-a-days frequent bus services are there to nearby townships like Balipara, Rangapara and Tezpur.

Apart from transport, they have postal and telephone facilities for communicating with the outside world. A few families subscribe to news
papers. But in recent times, the electronic medias like the radio and the television have come in a big way, particularly the later. About ten families have television sets and several families have radios. Younger generation hungrily lap up the latest popular T.V. productions.

Language:

As in other aspects of life, Mising language also tells a similar story of culture change. Belonging to the family of languages spoken by the Tani group of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Mising language has incorporated many features of the Assamese language, especially in the matter of vocabulary, e.g., most of the Mising words connected with settled cultivation are loan words from Assamese.

Moreover, there are other dimensions of the linguistic acculturation of the Misings. First, although Mising is their mother tongue, they speak Assamese almost like the second mother tongue. In that way they are bilingual. Secondly, certain groups of Misings, (viz. Temar, Samuguria, Bankawal and Bebejiya) have adopted Assamese as their mother tongue in place of Mising.

Again in the case of formal education also the medium of instruction is Assamese. So naturally the educated Misings use the Assamese language not only for conversation but also for formal discourse including writing.

The Mising children have received formal education through the medium of Assamese. They also learnt Assamese language and literature at various levels of schooling. But in recent times, growing ethnic consciousness has given rise to the demand for teaching of the Mising language in schools of Mising majority areas. The state govt. has taken steps
for the introduction of Mising language at the primary level. However, the Mising is being taught only as a language and Assamese is till continued to be the medium of instruction.

Mising Agom Keang has produced text books for teaching the language. Although earlier the Assamese script was being used to write down Mising material, the Roman script has now been adopted for the purpose. This seems to have created some confusion.

This general picture in respect of changes in the Mising language is applicable in the cases of both Sonitpur and Jonai area also.³

Notes:

1. I happened to witness a Sanipuja ceremony connected with the purchase of anew power tiller during my field investigation. The ceremony has been described in detail in the section on socio-religious life.

2. As a result of recent socio-political developments, Assamese Vaishnavism has lost it's earlier relevance as well as significance. But some other newly-developed pan-Indian religious cults have made their entry into sections of the Mising community; such as, cults of Sai Baba, Anukul Thakur, etc.

   Unlike in some other tribal communities, Christianity has not made much inroad in the Mising community. However, a small section has been converted to Christianity in the Jonai area and Jengraimukh area of Majuli river island.

   There have been just a few isolated cases of conversion into Islam too.

3. As the trends involving the other selected tribes have been found to be more or les similar, we have often referred to the Mising case in order to avoid repetition.
THE MISSING CASE: PHOTOGRAPHS

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THE MISSING CASE: PHOTOGRAPHS
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THE MISING CASE: PHOTOGRAPHS

1. View of the Jia Bhoroli river from Baligaon Mising village
2. General view of a Bhoralipariya Mising village
3. General view of a Mising village in Jonai area
4. House-building with community participation
5. Pounding rice in a typical Mising mortar
6. Drinking and smoking inside a traditional Mising house
7. Two elderly women gossipping in the courtyard
8. A Mising death ritual in progress
9. A woman carrying a baby in front of her house
10. Cooking for a community feast in a Mising village
11. Weaving on a loin-loom: Mising style
12. Winnowing in a courtyard with brick houses under construction
13. A ‘new style’ morung structure
14. A Sani Puja being performed for trouble-free operation of a new tractor
15. A sari-clad Mising maiden out on business
16. Mising village girls in modern dress
17. Researcher with the family of Komison Mili (contact person) in his modern house
18. A highway Dhaba owned by a Mising youth
19. Ali-ai-ligang ritual led by the priest (mibu)
20. Ritual dancing in Ali-ai-ligang celebration
21. Organised celebration of Ali-ai-ligang with gate, flag and pandal
22. Researcher with others resting during a pause in Ali-ai-ligang programme
23. Dance performance on the specially put up stage
24. A ‘symbolic’ modern morung structure