CHAPTER - 4
THE MINOR PRACTICES
4.00 THE MINOR PRACTICES

Rituals are the reflections of the religious behaviours and customs of a particular group or community. There are a number of rituals performed on different occasions.

The minor rituals are as much important as the major rituals or ceremonies because minor rituals are more close to the performer and are performed by the performer when he feels the need. The minor rituals are performed frequently and can be performed on a less expenditure. The minor rituals or religious ceremonies are observed in different spheres of life from birth to death. The major rituals are performed as a state grand ceremony while the minor rituals are performed either individually or also communally. The minor rituals can fulfill the religious sentiments of a householder and the family members as these can be performed very easily in a small scale. An individual performs these rituals when he finds a suspect, any dander, evil. And also perform these rituals to celebrate the good happenings or happy occasion. Individual sentiments could be fulfilled through individual practices which makes the life of a performer smoother because it depends on his ability.

The minor religious ceremonies of the Tai Ahoms are:

4.01 Rituals performed in Tai Ahom's traditional way: Saipha, Jashing Pha puja, Pu Phi Siu worship, Langkuri worship, Khen khao ceremony, Dam Phi ceremony, Rikkhon ceremony, birth ritual, marriage ritual, death ritual.

4.02 Rituals performed under the influence of Hinduism and local tribes: Hubochani puja, Sara diya, Gatial puja, Ho Song Khora etc.

These religious ceremonies are elaborated on the basis of participatory observances.

4.01 The Tai Ahoms perform their original rituals in their own traditional way. These are still practiced by the priestly families as their domestic rituals. These rituals are:

i) SAIPHA CEREMONY

'Saipha' is a purely Tai Ahom religious ceremony. In this ceremony only the gods of Ahom pantheon are worshipped. This worship is same with that of worship in the Bor Deosal of Um Pha ceremony. In other word, all the religious rites and
ceremonies performed to worship only the gods of Tai Ahom pantheon are the different forms of ‘Saipha’. The ancestors of the family are also worshipped along with the gods. The ceremony is performed to get rid off all evil happening, ill fortunes etc.

*Saipha* is generally performed by a clan as well as a family. Whenever there is any evil happens to a family or clan then *Saipha* ceremony is performed. The priestly clans still perform this ceremony.

This worship is also known as *Chit Phun Ka Rik Khon* (Chit- seven, Phun or maihang: platter or raised platform). In this ceremony seven raised platforms are made to worship and offer oblations to eight gods. The propitiated gods are – *Khao Kham* (Lord of water), *Ai Leng Din* (Lord of Earth), *Jan Chai Hung* (Lord of gods), *Pha-nu-ru-Lengdon* (Lord of Heaven), *Chit Lam Cham* (Lord of the galaxy of seven natural powers), *Mut-Kum Tai-Kum* (gods of light – the sun and the moon), *Jashing Pha* (A comprised body of wise scholars), *Ra-Khin Ba-Khin* (evil powers or evil deities). *Khao Kham* is worshipped by constructing platform on the ground. *Ai Leng Din, Jan Chai Hung* and *Lengdon* are worshipped separately and oblations are offered on raised platforms inside the temporarily made houses of banana sheaths (*Madghar*). *Chit Lam Cham* and *Jashing Pha, Mut-Kum Tai-Kum* are worshipped on raised *maihangs* or platforms under a long roof. On the other hand *Ra-Khin* and *Ba-Khim* are also worshipped by constructing sheds on the ground.

The requisite articles are: boiled *bora* rice (a kind of sticky rice), boiled *bora* rice packed in a triangular shape, pieces of betel nuts and vine leaves folded with *chingkora* flower, sugarcane, ripe bananas, raw bananas, raw sweet meat, akhoi, *maihang*, fowls pig, eggs of duck, rice beer, rice.

The above articles are given to all the gods except the fowls, pigs, eggs. In the *maihang* of *Khao Kham* three bunches of ripe bananas, rice, three eggs of duck are offered. *Ai Lengdin* is offered three fowls. The other articles are same but no eggs and pig are offered to him. *Jan Chai Hung* is offered four fowls on the *maihang*. *Lengdon* is also offered four fowls. On the other hand *Chit Lam Cham* is offered seven fowls to his subordinate seven deities. Two fowls are offered to *Mut-Kum Tai-Kum*. *Jashing Pha* is offered nine fowls along with other oblations on the *maihang*. *Ra Khin* and *Ba
Khin are worshipped with the offering of five chicks. Again, Ai Leng Din is offered a spotted hog. Lengdon is also offered a white hog. Jan Chai Hung and Chit Lam Cham are offered two black pigs. There is a chain (made of bamboo sticks) made to connect the platforms of Khao Kham with the platform of other gods. The ritual is same with that of Bor Deosal of Um Pha ceremony. But here no calf is sacrificed to Lengdon. Here the Ghai Dam of the family is worshipped by offering two fowls.

The whole ritual is performed by chanting Ao Tang, Kin Tang, Jon Ming and Boi Tang in Tai language. The hymns are same with the hymns chanted in Um Pha ceremony, hence these are not mentioned here.

ii) JASHING PHA WORSHIP

In Tai Ahom pantheon ‘Jashing Pha’ has been regarded as the most wise as Jashing Pha is the God of learning and knowledge. In the Tai Ahom chronicles ‘Jashing Pha’ is attributed a female form and qualities, who looms and always remains busy in winding thread with three hundred female servants (Barua 1985:5).

The Tai Ahom chronicles give description of Jashing Pha, the Goddess of learning in a peculiar way which is not found in case of other gods of the Tai Ahom pantheon. ‘Jashing Pha’ is described as a female goddess who dressed her body with fine cloth decorated with gold stars. She puts on gold necklace, She also puts on diamond flower on her hair (Barua 1985:5).

Although Jashing Pha is described as a female goddess and is the supreme forefather of the wise scholars (Mohan, Deodhai and Bailung). Yet the Tai Ahom priests sometimes take her as a comprised body of divine wise scholars but not a single goddess. As Jashing Pha is the goddess of knowledge and learning sometimes she is equated with Hindu goddess Saraswati by the Hindu priests.

In the Tai Ahom pantheon, Jashing Pha is depicted as the most important goddess of Lengon’s Moung Phi (heaven). She always helps in the decision making process of Lengdon. The chronicles gave the references of such happenings. It is said in the chronicles that the descent of Khun Lung and Khun Lai to the earth happened due to the advice of goddess Jashing Pha. While Lengdon told Jashing Pha that, "there is no king of my family on the earth. The wide earth is in disorder. None of our
descendants are there. I have called you in to help me in selecting some one of my family, whom I may send down to the earth’ (Barua 1985:6).

Then Jashing Pha said to Lengdon, ‘I think some one of the young princes of our family should be sent down from heaven to rule the earth. It would be better for you... if an ordinary being be sent, he will not be able to rule the earth. You should therefore, send your grandsons to rule the wide country’ (Barua 1985:10).

And thus the grandsons of Lengdon, the Lord of heaven, were sent to earth to rule. In fact it is a well known myth popular among the Tai Ahoms regarding the heavenly descent of gods or the forefathers of Tai Ahoms.

Jashing Pha is worshipped as a master goddess of learning and knowledge. From time immemorial the Tai Ahoms used to worship Jashing Pha to calculate and fix a favourable date and time, perform religious ceremonies and fix the favourable date for other affairs too, such as, the wars, excavation of tanks, making agreement with other foreign kings, marriage, building of royal palaces etc. In order to make such calculations for a favourable date and time, Jashing Pha is worshipped by sacrificing a fowl by casting incantation as per the instruction recorded in the book ‘Du Kai Cheng Moung Lit’ or ‘the book of Divination by the legs of fowl’, and the other articles such as - chingkora flower, bunches of betel nuts, eggs of hen etc. are offered on a raised altar (maihang) along with the sacrificed fowl.

The Tai Ahom priests perform Jashing Pha worship as per the instruction of ‘Jashing Pha Puja Bidhi’.

The worship of Jashing Pha:

The priestly families perform Jashing Pha worship in their houses by constructing a single maihang or raised altar, in the eastern pole of the house. A white cloth is hanged on to cover the ritual place where a raised altar is made on an earthen platform by the priests.

The requisite articles are: one raised altar made of bamboo sticks and banana sheath; three whole some betel nuts and vine leaves (both the sides of the betel nuts are cut down), fine rice mixed with salt, ginger, mustard oil, a banana sheath container full of sweet rice beer without mixing water, three eggs of hen, three pieces of betel
nuts folded with *chingkora* flower, one earthen lamp or a lit wick, one shed is given on the ground outside the *maihang* of *Jashing Pha*.

After arranging the articles the priests prepare holy water (*nam nga pulok*) and sprinkle over the articles and the family members and on themselves too.

While they prepare the holy water, they chant incantation (*nam jario jara*) which is same with the incantation (*nam jario jara*) chanted in other ceremonies which are already stated. After chanting this, the priests and the family members sing the prayer ‘*Ai sing lao*’ as collected from *Jashing Pha Puja Biddhi* preserved by Tileswar Mohan, a well known *Mo’hung* priest, Bakata, Parijat village:

> ‘*Chao kao oi, Pha Tu Ching Phrong Hum oi.*
> *Pha lai bet, pha pin bet, Pha Phura tara along*
> *chi kia rani pan boi mou chao kao oi.*
> *Chao kao oi, Pak Peyn Kaka chon cheu kham*
> *doi ma lung moung na oi. Heu pang mut chi*
> *khring jao chu kona mo’mun bou mun chegn*
> *ji nang lu king khu boi mou chao kao oi.*
> *Chao kao oi, Ai Ke Khen, Ai Ke Kham, Ai Chang Ching*
> *Mo’Ching Pha Mo’Laokhri, Pujakji mungti Jashing Pha*
> *Cheng Kham kon tun man mo’ru mo’ching*
> *kon tun man mo’khao rang rao kon tun man*
> *Mo’cham Mo’chai Mo’plong kon tun man cham Mo’*
> *Mun bai jim kon kon tun man thuk tang lai boi mou*
> *chao kao oi’ (Jashing Pha Puja Biddhi).*

Meaning: Oh’ the Lord above our head! You are the creator of all. The Divine thought. The great knowledge giver. The Lord of *Lit Lai bet* and the sustainer of *Phura Tara*. The Lord of *Peyn Kaka*. The forefather of divine wise scholars. *Ai Ke Khen, Ai Ke Kham, Ai Chang Ching, Jashing Pha Cheng Kham, Mo’ Laokhri* and their descendants *Mo’hung, Changbun*, and *Mo’plong*, we salute you all.
Joshing Pha is worshipped by chanting the following hymn:

‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Chao Mo’Lik – Mo’Lai, tun ru moung len
kham chao mo’ ngeu chao pha ka rulai chao pha kham
ching moung chao pha peyn ching moung,
ha chi puk mo’ ru cham chi puk mo’ ching
lai ching moung tu chao, lai ching moung tu khan.
Ngek ba cheng tam la, chao ka chanik ru
phu ka cha nik kham. Ai Ke Khen Ai Ke Kham,
Ai Chang Ching chung mou chao chung mou
phi mo’ ching pha Mo’Laokhi Pujakji, moungti
Jashing Pha Cheng Kham. Hit di hit khen boi
mou chao kao oi’ (Jashing Pha Puja Biddhi).

Meaning: Oh’ the Lord over head! The Lord, the fore fathers! You are the first composer or author of the Text. You are the supreme preceptor, the great master. Knowledge originated from you. You are all pervading. You are the creator of the first letter, sentence and the religious scripture. You are the master of all knowledge. You are the master of the three wise scholars who circulated the light of knowledge.

The Ao Tang hymn is chanted by the Tai Ahom priests, as such;

‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Ao Tang nang na pang khang na jang nang na pang khang na phun.
Tong mou kup tong hun tong mou kup tang pha
tangkak di mou ma tang kak di mou ma theng
bloc ching pha ka ringn ringn bloc ching pha ka
ringn plaik mak mu kup bou plu.
Mak mu phu leng bou plu phu leng luk lao
deng kam nang kham, luk lao deng kam nang
leng khao chan di hom rao, khao chan di hom
khen. Khao chan di kup kai khai di hom rao
kai khai di hom khen. Khring tuk nu klu tuk
nam man tuk teu hom ringn ringn hom cha cha
row khun bun. Ao Tang chup tao di mu ma tha.
Mak mu bou plu ning cheu ba on na ma
Khup ma boi. Khok phi ban phi chung mou.
Chao chu mou phi boi mou chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the Lord overhead! You are invited and requested to take your seat. You are presented on a maihang, on a three pairs of the foreparts of banana leaves on a receptacle stand (tangkak) three pieces of betel nuts. Three pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with chingkora flower, three packets of fine rice mixed with salt, ginger and mustard oil, three eggs of hen. On three receptacles (made of banana sheath) rice beer is given excessively. Under the maihang, one packet of each article is given to an attendant. Oh’ the Lord overhead! You are welcomed and requested to take your assigned seat.

After the chanting of Ao Tang or welcome hymn the priests chant the offering hymn or King Tang which is same with the Ao Tang hymn, just instead of chanting of word Ao Tang the word Kin Tang is chanted. After the chanting of Kin Tang Hymn the priests chant the blessing hymn or Jon Ming. The Jon Ming hymn runs as follows:

‘Chao kao oi, heu thuk jon pan jon ken, jon jo ru
Jon lao ao jon ju thao, Nang Mo’Laokhri tha
ru hok poi dam ja ru hok poi khen, nuk
jang bou dam ka bou phok rin bou phok.
Pha dit mai ching ru ja phan Jon khon rao
Jon khon ming chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the Lord over the head! Bless us to have a long life like the old Mo’Laokhri. Unless and until the melon sink and stone float, crows turn in to white and heron become black, like the long life of bamboo trees God may grant long life to us.

The priests seek blessings for the family members by chanting the Jon Ming hymn. After this they give farewell to the gods by chanting Boi Tang or farewell hymn. The hymn runs as follows:

Meaning: Oh’ the god over the head! You are given holy water and your hands and mouth are washed by the holy water. You are requested to take the way to return through which you came, by washing your hands and mouth, with great satisfaction. The way is cleaned by sprinkling the holy water from the chup tao.

After giving farewell to the gods the priests give the oblation to the family members to partake and shake the post of the maihang by pushing and give farewell to Jashing Pha. The priests keep aside the maihang after sprinkling holy water on it and taking the eggs and rice and partake the fried eggs with rice beer. And with this the ceremony ends.

The worship of Jashing Pha is prevalent among the Tai Ahom priestly families. During the reign of Ahom Dynasty almost all the kings used to worship Jashing Pha in the form of Divination (Barua 1985:63,99,102,116,196,279-280). At present only the priestly clans are performing this ceremony. To them Jashing Pha is the Master of all knowledge. It is believed that by worshipping Jashing Pha one can rise in life and can develop spirituality.

In all religious ceremonies Jashing Pha is worshiped as a must along with other gods. Even today the Tai Ahom priests worship Jashing Pha annually to seek blessing for the well being of the family, for a successful education life to acquire knowledge etc.

iii) PU PHI SIU /PUPHISHU WORSHIP

Pu Phi Siu is known as the presiding deity of jungle who resides on a Tunrung rai (peepul tree). Among the three priestly clans, Mo’plong or commonly known as Bailung clan is believed as the descendant of Pu Phi Siu, the jungle god, who came to the earth earlier than the Tai princes Khun Lung and Khun Lai. In the Tai Ahom chronicle it is stated that while Lengdon, the Lord of heaven, decided to send down
Khun Lung and Khun Lai to earth, *Lengdon* advised them to act wisely and also said that:

‘I send down Puphishu also there. He is directed to dwell in a large tree and reign in the forest. The tree is known as Tun rung rai (peepul tree) and he will be Lord of it (peepul tree). When the month of Dinpet (Ahar) comes, and the lakes and rivers be full of water, Puphishu should be adored by all the people by sacrificing buffaloes. Thus propitiated, he will keep you all safe and sound’ (Barua 1985:11).

Hence, from the very beginning the worship of *Pu Phi Siu* is performed by the Tai Ahoms. In the Um Pha ceremony *Pu Phi Siu* is worshipped in the Habi deo sal, the third division of worship. In the Habi Deosal, along with *Pu Phi Siu* some other local gods are also worshipped as they are the habitats of jungle as well as companions of *Pu Phi Siu*. They are namely, Langkuri (Langkuri is the god of Tai Ahom pantheon), Likha Chaman, Gatial, Chan Palik-Hu palik, Khetor, Jokh, Bhut (ghost), Bagh-Baghini, Garakhia, Jakhya, Jol bak. *Pu Phi Siu* is also known as Bor Chaman.

**Worship of Pu Phi Siu:**

The worship of *Pu Phi Siu* is followed by the Tai Ahom incantation prayer known as *Ai sing Lao*. The other hymns (*Ao Tang, Kin Tang, Jon Ming, Boi Tang*) are same with the hymns of Um Pha Habi Deosal's hymns. The offered articles are also same. The only exception is that, here a red coloured dog is sacrificed instead of a buffalo. During Um Pha ceremony, Rangagarah Amlakhi Deosal, Lakwa (2004), Kaka Khusa Deodhai Clan's worship of *Pu Phi Siu* in Bakata, another Dangdongia Deodhai Clan's (Motakukura family) worship of *Pu Phi Siu* in Rukang, *Pu Phi Siu* was offered red colour dogs. During the worship spirit possession was found as a common phenomenon (Field study, Pu Phi Siu worship observed in 17th May, 2004 at Rukang by Dangdongia Deodhai clan).

The function of the worship of *Pu Phi Siu* is performed in jungle as he is the Lord of jungle. And while the priests worship *Pu Phi Siu* along with the local habitats of jungle and the gods of *Tai Ahom* pantheon are also worshipped there.
The Tai Ahoms brought silk to this part of the country, Assam. Edi Muga worms are already there in the Brahmaputra river valley. The Tai Ahoms have the practice of raising the silk as well as muga worms in the *chum* tree (*Machilus odoratissima*). The raising place of silk and muga worms which is full of the *chum* trees, is called *chumoni*. To have a good number of muga or silk cocoons the Tai Ahoms worship Pu Phi Siu, the Lord of jungle. To keep these worms safe from the birds, they worship Pu Phi Siu. In this worship blood sacrifice is must. Pigs, fowls, dog are sacrificed here by cutting their throats (*pat chi*).

The Tai Ahoms give regard to banian and peepul tree as these are the residence of Pu Phi Siu. These are long living trees so, whenever the Tai Ahom kings perform Rikkhon (worship to seek longevity) ceremony they implant these banian or peepul trees as the symbols of long life. And it is expected that the king or the country may get the long life like these trees.

Pu Phi Siu is also known as Lai-Lung-Kham and with this name the Tai Ahom youths perform a particular dance by wearing black dress. This dance is also known as Lai Lung Kham. But this Lai Lung Kham dance is not their traditional dance. It is a modern inclusion, yet not accepted by the scholars.

iv. **HARAGDEO LANGKURI WORSHIP**

Langkuri is also known as Ai Leng Din. Ai Leng Din is the presiding deity of earth. Ai Leng Din is worshipped as Khunthau ngeu Langkuri in the haragdeo Langkuri worship. When Ai Leng Din is worshipped inside the house by constructing raised altar then Ai Leng Din is named Langkuri and while worshipped outside by constructing altar on the ground Langkuri is named as Ai Leng Din. In Dam Phi ceremony Langkuri is worshipped. Similarly, while Khao Kham (the presiding deity of water) is worshipped in Dam Phi ceremony inside the house by constructing raised platform then Khao Kham is called Phi Lareng and when worshipped outside in the ground on a earthen platform then Lareng is called Khao Kham.

Haragdeo Langkuri worship is performed annually at the beginning of a year in the month of Din Ching or Aghon. The priestly clans still perform this ceremony in the month of Aghon (November–December) (During field study, in the house of
Ushadhar Phukan (Sepon Hologuri) Haragdeo Langkuri worship is observed on 15th Nov., 2007).

In the worship of Langkuri or Haragdeo Langkuri Puja four maihangs are made to offer oblations. This is also known as Ha Phun Ka Ban Phi (Ha-five, phun-maihang or raised altar).

The requisite articles are:

*Maihang or Phun* made of bamboo, myun nga (mustard oil), blok jong flower, khao chan (wet rice), klu (salt), khring (ginger), mak mu and bau plu (betel nut and vine leaf), blok ching pha flower, luk lao (rice beer), kuign bok thung (receptacle made of banana pseudo-stem), kuign ban lak (rib of banana leaf), chin mai (bamboo stick), ha tong mou (banana leaf), cheo tong mou (later portion of a banana leaf), nam tong (container full of water), kok phai (earthen lamp).

The priests make four maihangs from bamboo sticks, and banana leaves are placed on these. On the banana leaves the requisite articles are placed. The first maihang is made to Langkuri and Jan Chai Hung both. On a pair of banana leaves lying the inside part upward (Ahom Bhogia) three pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with blok jong or lakhimi flower, three containers full of rice beer, three packets of rice mixed with salt, ginger and mustard oil and a lit wick are offered to Langkuri. On the same maihang on a pair of banana leaves two pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with chingkora flower, two containers full of rice beer, two packets of rice are offered to Jan Chai Hung.

The second maihang is offered to Lareng. On the maihang, on a pair of banana leaves two pieces of betel nuts wrapped with lakhimi flower, two containers full of rice beer, two packets of rice are offered.

The third maihang is offered to Lengdon. On a pair of banana leaves four pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with chingkora flower, four containers full of rice beer, four packets of rice are offered.

The fourth maihang is offered to Jashing Pha. On a pair of banana leaves, three pieces of betel nuts wrapped with chingkora flower, three containers full of rice beer, three packets of rice are offered.
Before offering the oblations to the corresponding gods the Tai Ahom priests sprinkle the holy water (nam nga pulok) over the maihans and articles. After this the priests chant *Ai sing lao* prayer and ask the family members to salute the gods and chant the *Ao Tang* or invocation hymn as follows:

**Langkuri:**

'Chao nu ru chao kao oí.  
*Khun thau ngue Langkuri, Po’ Phi Khru Me’ Phi ngeu.*  
*Ta moung-ba moung khru, teo pha ba moung ngeu.*  
*Jim mu phun din bou mi nga, rin lung tek pin*  
*chao rin klang tek pin khun. Doi ngin doi kham*  
*mou hit khun. Chao nu ru chao kao oí'.

Meaning: Oh’ the Lord above the head! Oh’ Lord Langkuri! The great Lord of white mountains. You appeared in the rock and become the Lord of huge mountains. You are the oldest and ancient god. You reside in the snow covered mountain in the north. You are the king of mountains of gold and silver. Oh’ Lord above the head! We salute you.

**Jan Chai Hung:**

'Chao nu ru chao kao oí.  
*Na ngam chui phu leng khek, Chao Pha Jan Chai Hung. Ngi Phai Pha lang chang. Khai mou*  
*Lengdon tek pin chao, Ngau Kham Lengdon*  
*Tek Pin Khun. Chu chongdong cham dong rom*  
*kin lao, chu chong dong cham nang kiu phrong.*  
*Bit lang chong kin tai, lak nang chong kin kham,*  
*chao nu ru chao kao oí'.

Meaning: Oh’ the lord overhead! You are the creator, the Lord of sky Jan Chai Hung. You are the master god of all gods. In your absence with due your permission Lengdon can take your place. You both are wise and can become mate with each other. Hence, both of you (Langkuri and Jan Chai Hung) could partake the offerings in the same maihang and could get satisfaction. Oh’ the Lord above the head! We salute you.

**Phi Lareng:**

'Chao nu ru chao kao oí, Lareng chao cham ba  
*Phi Lareng, phi bu teng, la la-khon-ba, la la ju*  
*chi plao. Mu ran lung chit cham koi pang, pi*  
*mou bong kham kham. Chao nu ru chao kao oí'.

Meaning: Oh’ the Lord above the head! Oh’ Lord Phi Lareng. You are the master god of all gods. You are the creator of all. In your absence with due your permission Lareng can take your place. You both are wise and can become mate with each other. Hence, both of you (Langkuri and Jan Chai Hung) could partake the offerings in the same maihang and could get satisfaction. Oh’ the Lord above the head! We salute you.
Meaning: Oh' the Lord overhead! We salute you. Oh' the Lord of food and life, you are the nourisher, you are also the god of lake or ocean. You are all pervading in all these. You are offered oblations as you are one of the seven natural powers of great Chit Lam Cham. You are paid homage every year.

_Lengdon:_  ‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Chao Pha phet kham kham bong kham-kham tu moun tu te, luk re pha Chao Phi dam. Chao Pha yanang yanang kep chong bun. Chong chao yanang yanang moung kep chong kham. Pi pai nang lai dai khun khae nang lai chon.
Chao nu ru chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the lord above the head! We salute you. You are the Lord of thunderstorm, the Lord of the world of living and non-living. You are the Lord of the universe. You are the supreme fore-father. As you are sustaining and governing all from the very creation so you will protect us always. Oh’ the Lord over the head! We salute you.

_Jashing Pha:_  ‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi, chao Mo’lik Mo’Lai
Tun ru moung len kham chao Mo’ ngeu.

Meaning: Oh’ the great god above the head! We salute you. Oh’ the great creator of the wise forefathers, the wise preceptors. You are the creator of first letter, sentence and the creator of the scripture. You are the first preceptor of the three wise scholars. You are the master of all knowledge. You are the master of all the wise scholars above fifty generations, Ai ke Khen, Ai Ke Kham, Ai Chang Ching, Mo laokhri,
Pujakji, moung ti Jashing Pha Cheng Kham. We salute you. Please come and accept our oblation.

The above hymns are collected from Biswa Changbun Phukan (Lit Me-Dam Me-Phi, Sadou Asom Mohan Deodhai Bailung Sanmilan, Bakata :4).

The Tai Ahom priests after chanting the welcome hymn (Ao Tang), chant the offering hymn (Kin Tang), after chanting of Kin Tang hymn they chant the Jon Ming or blessing hymn and farewell hymn (Boi Tang) which is same with the hymns chanted in Me-Dam Me-Phi. The priests while chant the Jon Ming give a piece of betel nut and leaf from the maihang of Langkuri or Lengdon to the house holder. After chanting the farewell hymn the priests sprinkle the holy water over the maihangs and push them back and with this the ceremony ends.

In Charaideu, the first capital of the Ahom dynasty, there is a Langkuri Deosal which was installed by Siu Ka Pha, the first Tai Ahom king, on the hill known as Langkuri pahar. During field study (on 25.12.2008) visited the Langkuri Deosal, only the ritual hole on the ground is there. The remaining sign of Langkuri Deosal is still there but in a poor condition. Like the Langkuri Deo Sal, there was the first Bor Deosal installed on the top of the Deo hill, which is also found in a very poor condition. Out of eight brick pillars only four pillars are there, that Bor Deosal was shifted to Rangagarha Amlakhi Deosal at the bank of river Dichang.

Although there is no idol worship in the Tai Ahom religion yet Langkuri is worshipped in the Habi Deosal of Um Pha ceremony with an image. The image is made of banana sheaths, on the head of the image a trident holder is tied up which is similar to the trishul.

Langkuri is regarded as the most ancient god with a three headed stick or a trident holder, who resides on mountains and hills.

The priests believe that unless Langkuri and the other four gods are worshipped in the beginning of a Tai year, the dead ancestors will not partake the offerings made by the householders on the Dam post or Pho Kam. Only after the performance of Haragdeo Langkuri Puja, the dead ancestors can be worshipped.
v. KHEN KHAO WORSHIP

*Khen* means time, *Khao* means rice. This *Khen Khao* ceremony is performed in the month of *Densing* (*Aghon*). Generally at the time of harvesting *Khen Khao* offerings are presented to the 'Dams' of the household. Again during 'Ban Cheng' (fortune telling ritual) if there is some omen associated with the dead, when a new house is taken and when a member of the family dies this *Khen Khao* offerings are made (Gohain 2009:168 & field study on 12/12/2006).

In this ritual the ancestors of three generations are given offerings namely the *Na Dam*, *Ghai Dam* and *Chi ren Dam*. Some families offer oblation to the *Jakorua Dam* also. The *Dams* are worshipped in the eastern pole of the house known as *Dam Khuta* or *Pho' Kam*. The offerings are thus:

**Na Dam**: One piece of betel nut wrapped with *chingkora* flower, one packet of rice beer, one packet of vegetables (baked) are presented on a *maihang*.

**Chi ren Dam**: Two pieces of betel nuts wrapped with *chingkora* flower, two packets of rice beer, two packets of vegetables are offered on a *maihang*.

**Ghai Dam**: On a *maihang* two pieces of betel nuts wrapped with *chingkora* flower, two packets of rice beer and two packets of vegetables are offered to *Ghai Dam*.

After arranging the articles on the *maihangs*, the priests sprinkle the holy water *nam nga pulok* (water mixed with sacred *chingkora* flower) over these. After the purification, the priests ask the family members to salute their dead ancestors, *Ghai Dam, Chiren Dam, Na Dam and Jakorua Dam, Dam Khao, Dam Bao, Dam Likhai, Phusai man*. Together with the *Dams* the evil spirits are also requested to accept the offerings.

*Jakorua Dam* is not given offerings by all the priestly families. While *Jakorua Dam* is worshipped, on a raised altar two packets of rice beer, one piece of betel nut, three packets of vegetables are offered. In front of the *maihangs* on banana leaves hens are offered to all the *Dams*. Each *Dam* will get one hen. Hens are sacrificed by clubbing with a guava stick or *Dighloti* stick after chanting the welcome hymn (*Ao Tang*) to all the *Dams* and after chanting of the welcome hymn, the priests chant the
offering hymn and during that they offer hens by clubbing to death. After this the priests cleansed the hens and taken out the heart, liver and all things and mixed it with salt, ginger and mustard oil and keep it to roast in fire. The sacrificed hens are stuffed with a kind of sticky rice or any fine rice. Vegetables are entered through the beaks. The priests then offer rice beer to the Dams and chant Kin Tang hymn to the Dams to accept and partake the offerings. After chanting the Kin Tang hymn, the priests chant Jon Ming hymn to bless the house holders. After that, the priests too partake the cooked meat of hen. Then they chant the farewell hymn and sprinkle the holy water over the maihangs and push ahead the maihangs and with this the Khen Khao ceremony ends.

In the Mo’hung family the seat of Ghai Dam is on the right side of the Dam post while it is on the left side of the Dam post in the Deodhai and Bailung families. The offerings are seasonal vegetables as available in that time.

Sometimes, the Khen Khao is performed in other months also, it depends on the householder. The Tai Ahom priestly families still observe it as a must.

vi. DAM PHI

Dam Phi is a form of ancestor worship. And this worship has been performed by all the kings during their reign and till today the three priestly clans are practising this worship as their original Tai ritual.

The practice of this ancestor worship by the Tai Ahoms is found in their religious tradition. Dam Phi worship is one of the most important rituals performed in their houses. Dam Phi is performed at the beginning of a new year during Bohag Bihu festival, in the Kati Bihu and Magh Bihu festival, during the Na Khua ceremony (a feast of new rice and seasonal crops), ceremony of Na Purusar chaung khua, during Chak lang marriage ceremony, annual death ceremony, in any family institutions also this ritual is performed as a part of the ceremony.

In the houses of Tai Ahom priestly families in the north-eastern pole of the kitchen is regarded as the linkage of the departed ancestors and the householders. It is said that the first installed post of the houses of the Ahoms towards the north-eastern
pole is called *Pho’ kam* post. The ‘*Phi Dam*’ word is later on pronounced as *Pho’ kam* and hence it is called *Pho’ kam* post or *Dam* post.

This *Pho’kam* post is the post of the dead spirits or *Dam Phi*. The household *Dams* (deads) and *Phi* (gods) are worshipped at the side of this post. It is believed that the departed ones (*Dams*) are the guardian deities who protect the householder or their living family members hence they must be propitiated duly by worshipping and by making offerings to them. It is believed that they reside in the *Pho’kam* post while they were worshipped. This post is regarded as the most sacred place of the house. This worshipping place is like the ‘*Thapana*’ or ‘*Gokhai Ghor*’ of the Hindus. The departed ones (*Dam*) are worshipped to seek blessings so that they would keep safe the living ones from any danger, evil happenings and ill fortune. There is a saying which is firmly believed by the *Tai Ahoms*:

‘Neither the walls nor the roof nor other gods can save the household; only the household spirits (*Dams*) can save. If the household spirits are propitiated then snakes do not bite, tigers do not eat and even the death does not dare’ (the Assamese saying is collected from *Tileswar Mohan*).

During *Dam Phi* ceremony *Ghai Dam*, *Chiren Dam*, *Jakorua Dam* and *Na Dam* are propitiated with great devotion.

(1) *Dam Phi* ceremony during three *Bihu* festivals: The *Bihu* festivals are the seasonal celebrations as these are associated with three distinct phases of agriculture. Astronomically *Bohag Bihu*, *Kati Bihu*, *Magh Bihu* are associated with Vernal equinox, Autumnal equinox and Winter Solstice. These *Bihu* festivals begin on the last day of the previous month, generally known as *Sankranti* (Solstice) day or *domahi* in Assamese language.

(i) *Dam Phi* in *Bohag Bihu*: ‘*Bihu*’ is a seasonal festival and *Bohag Bihu* is observed during spring season when the nature put on newness. The *Tai Ahoms* brought with them their own rites and rituals and the observance of *Bihu* festivals is one of them. They called the *Bohag* or *Baisakh Bihu* as *Poi Cheng Ken* or *Kalika logo Bihu* (Barua 2000:9-20). In the *Tai Ahom’s* ‘*Kheklai bet*’ it is said that:

‘*Den ha jao pai ka den ruk poi cheng ken ao ma, hu ap nam, khai ap nam*....’
The meaning is thus, 'the month of Chat (Den ha) is gone. The Kalika loga Bihu came in the month of Bohag. Cows and buffaloes are washed with water'.

The Ahoms called this Bohag Bihu as 'Poi hang bichu' or 'Poi hu' and 'pihu'. Roi rang bi chu or chao (Poi-ceremony or festival, rang-body, bi-with reverence or with divine transcendental importance, chu or chao- tiger or the royal insignia of power) refers to bathing the powerful Chumdeo or Chengdeu who is as powerful as the tiger, the royal insignia or the symbol of royal power. The Ahoms by worshipping the royal insignia Chumdeu or Chengdeu's image as per the instructions of kheklai bet, worship the supreme energy at Bohag Bihu. Poi hu (Poi- festival, hu-cow) refers to the festival of bathing the cow or to show care and respect to the cow as it is the most important associate of cultivation. And Pihu (Pi- beginning of a year, hu- cow) refers to the festival of seeking good harvesting by washing cows and buffaloes as these are the important associates of cultivation. Bohag Bihu is observed up to seven days started from the Garu bihu. One Ahom scholar Dr. Lila Gogoi (Bor Bihua) has named these seven days of Bohag Bihu as—Garu Bihu, Manuh Bihu, Hat Bihu, Chenehi Bihu, Maiki Bihu, Rongali Bihu, Chera Bihu (Gogoi 1994:169).

The Tai Ahoms perform this Bohag Bihu with Bihu songs and dance assisted by the beating of drum, playing of wind instruments (flute, pepa), bamboo instruments (toka, gagana), clay instrument (hutuli). By offering oblation to the dead spirits of the household, they seek blessings for the family.

The worship of Dams in Bohag Bihu (the worshipping hymns are collected from Mo’lunng Tileswar Mohan):

(1) Ghai Dam: Ghai Dam is worshipped by offering the following articles on a pair of banana leaves (fore parts) placing on a raised phun or maihang: Two pieces of betel nuts wrapped with chingkora flower, two containers full of rice beer, two rice cakes, two packets of pounded fried bora rice, two pieces of molasses.

One packet of the above articles are offered on a pair of the later part of banana leaves under the maihang of Ghai Dam.

The hymn to worship Ghai Dam or Principal spirit of household is same with that of Ghai Dham as worshiped in Na-khua ceremony and in other occasions.
(2) **Chi ren Dam:** The above articles are offered to *Chi ren Dam*.

(3) **Jakorua Dam:** Three packets of each articles stated above are offered to *Jakorua Dam*.

(4) **Na Dam:** To each newly departed ones the above articles in one packet on each *maihang* are given. One extra packet of the above articles is given under the *maihang* in the *Pho’ kam* post assigned for the *Dams*. The raised *maihangs* are constructed to each *Dam*. The priests sprinkle the holy water *nam nga pulok* over the *maihangs* and offerings. After the arrangement of articles on the *maihangs* the priests chant the welcome hymn with the objective of the ceremony and by addressing the articles.

**The hymn is thus:**

‘Oh’ *Ghai Dam, Jakorua Dam, Chi ren Dam* (senior dead spirit), earlier you were men who now have become gods. You are protecting the house as the household gods. Partaking the mango, you have left the seeds to grow. As your children we are saluting you, on this day on the occasion of *Bohog Bihu*. And respectfully we are offering you our worship with betel nuts and leaves, cakes of the *Bihu* and other eatables and home-made wine. We have given bath to the cows, to the buffaloes on the occasion of *Bihu*. People also are taking bath, sprinkling water on one another with small containers (*lahonee*). Please be satisfied with these offerings and bless from the little kid, to the old ones, all the inmates of the house including the servants. So that they are safe from all illness and there is no pain, no suffering. Please bless them so that they spend their days with happiness from the royal houses. No walls, no roofs, no others gods can protect the inmates of the house, if the gods of the household do not. Neither the serpent bites, nor the tiger kills and even the God of death is afraid when the dead spirits (god) protect us. The sharp javelin gets blunted. The enemy gets reduced and makes the friends victorious. Bless us to spread your name and fame in future. Oh’ the dead spirits! Please, bless us on this they’ (Field study, Bakata Parijat village, 14/04/08).

After worshipping the *Dams* by chanting the above hymns the priests chant incantation (*Ao Tang*) to welcome them.
The Ao Tang hymn to the Dams is as chanted:

‘Changnai chao kao oi
Dinha jao Poi ka din rup poi ao ma. Rang bichu man ka,
rum ren man ka, kun phu-bao phu ngign man ka
rit khi tang rong hai. Hu-ap nam, Khai ap nam,
Kun ap nam, hao ngau ngen chat thi, lik-mak khru
mak ben, mak tao, mak ming, mak chum, kati kai,
nam bi te nam phrao chi rome ren man ka, kun phu
bao, phu ngign man ka rit khi tang rong hai han
chang nai chao kao o\".

Meaning: After the month of Chat (Dih ha) the month of Bohag has come, the cow is washed, buffalo is washed as this is the month of Bohag. The villagers gathered and are sprinkling water to each other by small containers and are enjoying. Pieces of melon, bringal, thekera, bitter gourd, turmeric are pierced through bamboo sticks (chak) and throw towards the cows and buffaloes and wash them. You are offered oblations in this Bohag Bihu, you are welcomed and requested to take the offerings:

Kin Tang hymn:

‘Chang nai chao kao oi.
Kin tang na pang, khang na phun, kin tang tong mou kup tong pha,
kin tang mak mu kup bou plu. Kin tang khao
mao nam oi di hom rao, kin nam oi di hom khen.
Kin tang pen lung man nga phat di hom rao,
pegn lung man nga phat di hom khen. Kin tang
luk lao den kam nang kham, nam lao den kam nang let
chang nai chao kao o\".

Meaning: Oh’ our forefathers, household dead spirits! On a pair of banana leaves excessive nam lao (rice beer), rice cake fried in mustard oil, Bora handah (dry fried and grinded bora rice powder), molasses, pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with chingkora flower are offered on a maihang. Please, accept all these with satisfaction.
Jon Tang hymn:

‘Chao kao oi. Heu jou khon rao jon khon ming.
Jon ju ru rang lao kao, Jon ju thao nang Laokhri,
Thao ru hok poi dam, jar u hok poi khen ring
Pi ja- pi ban, lan pha ja-lon ming nuk jang bou
Dam ka-bou phek rin bou-phok, phat pha dit-ja
Phan-mai ching ru. Rome thao rome ke, tu-khao,
tu ke - jon khon rao jon khon ming’.

Meaning: Oh’ the forefathers, mothers, bless us to live a long life like the forefather Mo’Laokhri. Unless and until melon sink, stone float, crow become white, hereon become black. Titakochi (bitter cane) turned to sweet till then, like the clump of bamboo trees we may live a prosperous life along with children, Oh’ the forefathers bless us!

With the chanting of Jon Ming hymn the priests take nam lao to drink and chant the Boi Tang hymn as thus:

‘Chao kao oi kin lai lai boi lai lai, lai lai boi mou chao lai lai bou mou phi.
Chup mou chai mou ko mou, len mou, aa pak bai, nam tao din nam phat chi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the household departed spirits! You are offered nam lao excessively (on container made of banana sheath), rice cake, grinded fried bora rice powder, molasses, pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with chingkora flowers. While worshipping you there may be faults in offering the things, chanting the hymns, the later done in earlier and earlier done in later, you pardon us, please forgive us. By partaking the offerings with satisfaction, you are requested to take your return journey in that way through which you came. Your mouth and hands are washed with clean water. The way is also sprinkled by the holy water.

The above hymn is actually the Kin lai Boi lai hymn as is chanted at the end of the worship. Before chanting this, the priests chant Boi Tang hymn as:

‘Chang nai chao nu ru, chao kao oi.
Pu thao Dam, me thao Dam, Dam likha likhi, Dam tang
Lai khoa oi, Dam chiren, Dam on mou, Dam tang lai kho
Meaning: Oh' the household dead spirits! We salute you, our household spirits of forefathers, mothers, the unnatural deads, the boys and girls, the childless unnatural deads, the grand senior dead spirits, the newly dead spirits, you are requested to take your return way through which you came. After partaking our offering with satisfaction you please take the way to return back. We salute you, oh' the household dead spirits!

After chanting the Kin lai Boi lai hymn (the preparation to give farewell after chanting the Boi Tang hymn) the priests sprinkle the holy water mixed with chingkora flower over the maihangs and push ahead the maihangs and ends up the Dam Phi ceremony in Bohag Bihu. The priests and family members eat the cooked meat of the sacrificed fowl and rice beer.

(ii) **Dam Phi in Magh Bihu (January-February)**

*Magh Bihu* is another festival concerned with cultivation. At the completion of the harvesting of seasonal crops from the mid of January to the mid of February this festival is observed and it is a winter festival in which fire is worshipped with great veneration. This festival is observed in the month of Dincham or Magh, hence the festival is also named as *Magh Bihu* and in this festival a tall building is made by cross-lapping logs and bamboos in a square shape and set fire to it in the early morning. In this *Magh Bihu* the Tai Ahoms worship their forefathers in the north-eastern corner of the house or kitchen or *Dam* post.

*Magh Bihu* festival is well known for the grand feast at the night of the last day of *Puh*, as shared by the villagers or a number of people altogether observe the feast in which all the available seasonal crops, vegetables, fish, meat, are taken as meal.

In *Magh Bihu* fire is worshipped as it is the source of light, heat and energy. Chao Indra Mohan Borua gives the significance of this ritual referring to *Pha Tu*
Ching Phrong Hung (Pha: Absolute or ultimate creator; Tu: Supreme father; Ching: sound or the first letter, Brahman; Phrong: manifestation, Hum-shining). Phra or Pha is the ultimate creator of supreme light and sound or the first word Brahman. The light or fire is the first manifestation of creation. The Supreme Father Phra is the creator of cultivator father Langkuri and creator father Phai Mai Bithuk Thao (Phai Mai: the tremendous energy from burning of logs, Bithuk Thao: creation or source of life and food after the fire and light). 'Bithuk Thao' refers to the continuity (Bi), stalk of seeds (Thuk), prime or first creation (Thao) (Barua 2000:17-18). In this month of Dincham (Magh), the supreme God, the creator of crops, through this energy while created the sun and the rain, the fire got rise of energy of creation. Hence this festival is the festival of worshipping the creator god of food. According to Indra Mohan Borua, the sound is created along with the creation of fire and light. The bamboos with knots are offered to fire to create the sound. Even today youths burn raw bamboos with the knots to make huge sounds which is also called 'heloi phutua'. Heloi means cannon. As the cannon makes huge sound while it is fired, similarly the huge sound is produced by burning the whole some raw bamboos as a part of the ritual of worshipping fire.

At the burning of the crossslapped logs, as build like a tall temple (Meji) people offer rice, mati mah (cereal), molasses, betel nut and leaf with a coin or rupee to the fire and seek blessings. This ‘Meji’ or Maiji (Mai- bamboo, Ji -wood) is a must in Magh Bihu.

The Tai Ahoms worship the Dams by offering grinded fried bora rice (handoh), boiled Kath alu (a kind of potato), molasses, pieces of betel nuts with chingkora flower, luk lao (rice beer) on banana sheath containers are offered on maihangs. The welcome hymn (Ao Tang), offering hymn (Kin Tang), blessing hymn (Jon Tang or Jon Ming), farewell hymn (Boi Tang and Kin lai Boi lai) are same with the hymns chanted in other Dam Phi ceremonies.

(iii) Dam Phi Ceremony in Kati Bihu

Kati Bihu is performed in the month of Kartik and is also related to cultivation. This is performed as a custom in the mid of harvesting to seek good
harvesting. Earthen lamps are offered in paddy fields, on the earthen platform of *tulsi* tree (basil), on two gate posts. This *Chip chong* or *Kati* month is regarded as the last month of the *Tai* year and *Aghon* is the first month.

This *Bihu* is observed in a limited way, during this *Bihu Ghai Dam, Jakorua Dam, Chiren Dam* and *Na Dams* are worshipped by offering rice beer, pieces of betel nuts-leaves on banana leaves. The *Ao Tang, Kin Tang, Jon Tang, Boi Tang* are same with the hymns of other *Dam Phi* rituals.

2. **Dam Phi in Na Khua Ceremony**

In the month of *Denching (Aghon)* after harvesting all the people (who have completed harvesting of their own paddy field) observe a feast called *Na khua* ceremony (*Na- new*) or the feast of new crops. Only the *Tai Ahoms* observe this feast by offering the first crops to their ancestors. The *Dam Phi* ritual is a must at the time of *Na khua* ceremony. The *Tai Ahoms* believe that if the ancestors are not offered the first seasonal crops then they could bring misfortune to the family. The ancestral spirits are the guardians of the living ones and it is believed that the ancestors look after their descendants and they should be worshipped with respect.

*Dam Phi* worship is performed inside the house in the north eastern pole known as *Pho’ kam* or *Dam khuta* which is the linkage of the ancestors with their descendants and in that place the ancestors do reside.

The *Tai Ahoms* perform *Dam Phi* ritual in the *Na khuwa* festival for the winter paddy (*sali rice*) harvest in the month of *Aghon* and also in the month of *Ahar*, the harvest of *Ahu* paddy. The *Tai Ahoms* perform *Dam Phi* ritual. After performing *Haragdeo Lang Kuri* worship *Na khua* ceremony is observed.

In *Dam Phi* ceremony *Na Dam, Ghai Dam, Chi ren Dam* are worshipped with great honour.

The offerings are as follows:

Newly harvested boiled rice, rice beer made of *bora* rice (a kind of sticky rice) mixing with the medicinal beer tablets and water (*nam lao*), betel nuts and leaves, meat or fish curry etc. all are offered on a banana leaf.
Ghai Dam: On a pair of banana leaves two pieces of betel nuts wrapped with chingkora flower, two containers full of rice beer, vegetables (arum root, lai herb) are offered on a maihang.

Jakarua Dam: On a pair of banana leaves pieces of betel nuts, three containers full of rice beer and vegetables are offered on a maihang.

Chi ren Dam: Two packets of the above articles are given on a maihang.

Na Dam: One packet of each item is offered here, one extra shed of oblation is given under the maihang.

The Tai Ahom priests after arranging the offerings to each Dam chant the welcome hymn to invite them as follows: Oh' Ghai Dam, Jakarua Dam, Chi ren Dam and Na dam! Earlier you were men who now have become gods. After crossing the river (samsara) you did not recognize any one. Leaving your body you become gods. You are protecting the house as the household gods. You have left on this earth your son, daughter in law, grand children, son and daughters. We have offered to you the yearly offerings (Khen Khao). The new year has entered at the end of the old year. The old has become the new and the new has become the old. After the month of Puh, Denching has come. You are offered new rice, new vegetables, rice beer, new betel nut and leaf, new flowers, a raised old hen, on the occasion of the new year. Whenever there is a son, there is your worship. Otherwise the scriptures will term them blasphemous. For worship, a son is needed. For donation, a daughter is needed. With this worship protect all the inmates of the household, from the youngest to the eldest, from the servants to the masters, from all ills, so that they could be safe from the wild leech, wild sharp grass and straws. By demolishing the enemies and strengthen their friends, make sharp weapons directed against them blunt. Please protect them all.

Ghai Dam is invoked with the chanting of Ao Tang hymn as follows:

'Chang nai chao kao oi. Nuk tu rang Dam ti ren Dam.
Dam nok chok khok tai pin Dam. Chip mou poi pin
Dam chao mou poi pin Phi. Chao tung Dam mou
choi kum ngi tung Dam mou choi khen changnai
chao kao oi'.
Meaning: Oh’ our forefathers, the principal Dam! You have become gods after abandoning the rotten body like a muga worm. Oh’ the dead spirit after ten days of your death ceremony you are entered as the household god to become the principal Dam and the deity of the Dam post and you are protecting all of the household like a protective shield.

Chi ren Dam is welcomed with the chanting of Ao Tang hymn as follows:

‘Chang nai chao kao oi.

Pu Chiren ti ju, ja Chiren ti le,
Pu ta lak, ja ta lak. Pu oi pu a jak ja man
Pha ruk mou choi khen Chang nai chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the forefather, father-mother household gods! You are at the final stage of the Dam post oh’ father-mother. You are resting at the upper threshold oh’ our departed spirits, father and mother spirits.

In Jakorua Dam worship the Ao Tang hymn is chanted as follows:

‘Changnai chao kao oi,

Dam thao, Dam bao, Dam kan ngi kan, Dam chao
Pheu ka Dam, Dam li kha li khi Dam tang lai kha oi.
Chang nai chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the forefather, the dead old men and women, dead young boys and girls, small and big, girls and boys, children, unmarried unnatural dead ones! We salute you all.

Na Dam is worshipped by chanting the following hymn:

‘Chang nai chao kao oi.
An mou Dam, ti ren Dam
Dam nok cha
Khak tai poi pin dam chang nai chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the forefather, Oh’ the new departed spirits of the household, father and mother. You left your bodies to become gods. After ten days of your death ceremony.
you have taken the new place as household gods. Oh' the departed father mother gods!

The priests after chanting the Ao Tang hymn before offering the hens (by clubbing with a guava stick) to each Dam, they chant the hymn:

‘Chang nai chao kao oi.
Ao tang nang na pang khang na jang.
ao tang nang na pang khang na phun.
Tong mou kup tong bun, tong mou kup tong pha.
Blok ching pha ka reng chang blok ching pha
Ka reng plai. Mak mu kup bou plu nam lao
deng kam nang kham, nam lao deng kam nang
let. Phak kat di hom rao, phak kat di hom khen.

Po' kai me thao di hom rao, po kai me thao di hom khen’.

Meaning: Oh’ the forefather, Ghai Dam, Chi ren Dam, Jakorua Dam, An mou Dam! We are inviting you, please come and accept our offerings. You are offered on a pair of banana leaves placing on a maihang, pieces of betel nuts and leaves with blok chingpha flower, rice beer on containers excessively, lit wick, oh' the fore fathers please come and take your assigned seats.

After cleaning the hens, the priests taken out the inside things of the hens and mixed the hens with salt, ginger and mustard oil and let it to roast in fire. After that the hens are stuffed with rice. Rice is also given in the beaks of hens, and the priests chant the offering hymn (Kin Tang) to the Dams as:

‘Chang nai chao kao oi.
Kintang nang na pang khang na jang.
Kintang nang na pang khang na phun
tong mou kup tong pha. Kintang mak mu kup bou plu.
Kin tang ap jap di hom rao, kintang ab jab di hom khen.
Kintang nam - lao deng kham nang kham, nam lao deng
kam nang let. Kintang khang kai di hom rao. Kai pa
khang kai di hom khen, kin tang khao khao di chop ra,
ung kai di kha kai nu klu tuk teo khring tuk na hom
ringn ringn, hom cha cha not bon chang nai chao kao oi’.
Meaning: Oh’ the household gods! You are offered pieces of betel nuts with chingkora flower, rice beer, vegetables (jute or lai), rice, hen with the fragrance of salt, ginger and mustard oil excessively on maihangs. Please be satisfied with these and partake. Oh’ the dead household gods! Please, come and accept our offerings.

After chanting Kin Tang hymn by addressing the names of offered articles the priest chant Jon Ming to the householders which is same with that of Haragdeu Langkuri worship. The Jon Ming hymn is as follows:

‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi. Jon khon rao jon khon ming.
Jon ju ru nang lao kao, jon ju thao nang Laokhri.
Thao ru hok-poi dam, ja ru hok roi khin.
Rin pi ja pin ban lan pha ja lan ming. Ran pin
thun cham mlan mak kho kham ka choi. Di dai
moung thao dai ke. Ru mo’thao run mo’ ke.
Tu Khao - tu ke, jon khon rao jon khon ming’.

Meaning: Oh’ the forefather! Ghai Dam, Chi ren Dam, Jakorua Dam, Na Dam. Bless us by partaking our offerings with satisfaction. Bless us and grant us to have the long life like Mo’Laokhri. With your blessings drive away all the evil omens and strengthen all within the sphere to worship and service. Unless and until the crows become white and heron become black, melon sink and stone float till then grant us the longevity as much as the numbers of hairs on head and bless us to spread out your name and fame, and to lead life satisfactorily.

At the end of the Jon Ming hymn the priests chant Boi Tang hymn to give farewell to the Dams as follows:

‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Kin lai lai boi lai lai. Lai lai boi mou chao
Lai lai boi mou phi. Kin cham bat cham bat
jau poi ka. Ju ha bat ruk bat poi tao ma.
Chup mou dima kin. Chup mou, chai mou,
ka mou, len mou, aa pak bai nga bai,
nam tao di nam phat chi’.
Meaning: Oh' the forefather gods! Please, take your return journey in that way through which you came, with satisfaction by partaking our offerings. Forgive us for our faults in propitiating you. Your mouth, hands are washed with the holy water from the *chup tao*. You please take your way to return.

After chanting this, the priests push ahead the *maihang* and wind up the ceremony.

vii. SMALL MARRIAGE OR *NUAI TULANI BIYA*

In case of small marriage, when a girl usually attains puberty between eleven to fourteen years and sometimes earlier, is performed as a minor function by giving sanctified water (prepared by the priests) to the girl to drink. Again this small marriage is performed by worshipping five deities – *Langkuri*, *Jang Chai Hung*, *Lareng*, *Pha nu ru Lengdon* and *Jashing Pha*. The five deities are worshipped by offering four *maihang*. On the first *maihang* *Langkuri* and *Jan Chai Hung* are worshipped.

The offered articles on the *maihang* are - fine rice mixed with salt, ginger and mustard oil, fruits (sugar cane and banana).

During field study, this small marriage is observed in the house of Mr Haresh Phukan, a descendant of Deodhai clan, on 21.10.08. In this ritual the household *Dams* are also worshipped by offering oblation. This ritual is called ‘*Tai lit Chi Phun Ka* or *Nang tek rek teo Chi Phun ka rikkhan*’. Before starting this ritual, the girl is kept in a room so that she could not see the sun and the moon for three days. On the fourth day the girl is made to take bath by the mother and relative ladies after worshipping the god of water *Khao Kham* by offering a pair of betel nuts and leaves. The girl is made to take bath on the platform which is made on ground by placing a pair of fore parts of banana leaves, on which a wooden stool (*tamuli pira*) is kept. Four *pati doi* stem (a kind of a plant) are posted around the platform. After bathing, the girl and her mother are given *nam nga pulok* (water mixed with *chingkora* flower to drink as prepared by the priests). Then they would worship five deities and household *Dams* and chant the welcome hymn. The welcome hymn and the other hymns are same with the *Haragdeu Langkuri* worship which are already stated. The priests give blessings the girl, thus
Meaning: The daughter of the householder attains a stage of puberty. Therefore her all faults and ills should be terminated and make her all good. All the gods overhead and the household Dams, all please bless the girl and grant a long life.

After worshipping the gods and the Dams, the priests are offered a feast of the cooked meat of a fowl, vegetable mixed with rice powder and rice beer. With this the ritual ends and after performing this ritual the family members and kin members prepare a feast to all that present there.

viii. BIRTH RITUAL

Birth rituals are concerned with the new born baby. After the baby is born, the baby rubbed with the yolk of eggs so that the skin will be clean and smooth. The first drop of mother’s milk is offered to the gods by throwing on the ground. By chanting the hymn – ‘Chao cheng hung cheng ban Ai Leng Din ka jao lu kan heu’ (Jatak Phe An Ak). (Meaning: ‘the baby is given three drops of milk by recalling Ai Leng Din, the god of earth, as witnessed by the moon and the sun’). Only after that the mother gives milk to her baby.

When the baby’s umbilical cord dried and dropped off then the baby is taken to the courtyard to perform the ritual called Baj uliua or introducing the child to the world. In this ritual the elder women sprinkle nam nga pulok (holy water) prepared by the priests over the baby and the mother to purify them and they show the baby to all, the sun-the moon and bless the child. The elder women offer three folded (thuria) pieces of betel nuts and leaves to the sun god and the moon god in this ritual. In case of a male child, bow and arrow are given to him and he is also made to bow down towards the sun. On the other hand when it is a female child, she is given cotton thread, needle etc. along with books, pen. The elder women chant by holding the baby over a stone slate that, ‘may you become so strong like the stone, so you could bear the pain and misery’. After chanting this they stroke thrice on the slate and chant – ‘always obey your father, always obey your mother’. Again they hold the baby over the water and chant ‘Be brave like the water to flow down and clean out all the sorrow
and suffering’. Again they chant by holding the baby over the fire that ‘Be powerful
like the fire so you could burn the evils and suffering’. During field study, this ritual
is observed in the house of Mr. Priyanath Phukan, a descendant of Bailung clan, on
18.09.08 in Jhanji Hanhchara Bailung village.

At the completion of twenty one or thirty days the Tai Ahom people perform
the ritual of purification. In this ritual four gods are worshipped by constructing four
*maihangs* to the gods - Langkuri, Lareng, Pha nu ru Lengdon and Jashing Pha. The
offered articles are fine rice mixed with ginger, salt and mustard oil, rice beer. The
priests prepare holy water mixed with *chingkora* flower and give it to the parents of
the baby to drink. And if there is any ill happened to the baby then the priests worship
God Almighty (*Phura*) and seek blessing by installing the holy scripture *Peyn Kaka.*
The priests chant the following hymn to worship *Phura:*

‘Chao Phura Chao Tara Phura Tara along boi mou
chao kao oi. Chao ren man ka kun phu bao phu ning
Man ka phe ok nok cham heu dai, chao phura tra ka
Khek phi um heu cha na, chao phra ka kui leng lak
cham kok phai ben be nai heu hit chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ the God overhead in the sky! We are calling you, as a new baby has
come to the house. *May Phura Tara* bless him to live well.

With a well wish to live a long life to the baby the priests enlighten the eleven
earthen lamps in a lamp stand called *kui leng lak* and sing devotional song of *Phura* or
God Almighty.

At the completion of five or seven months the baby is given to taste the meal
or rice by chanting the name of *Phura Tara,* God Almighty.

Another ritual is naming of the child, which is performed as per the instruction
made in the book of astrology called *Phe lung Phe ban.*

Again *Jashing Pha* worship is performed at the eve of starting of education
life of the child. *Jashing Pha* is the goddess of learning and knowledge and
sometimes she is depicted as a comprised body of wise scholars of knowledge and
learning, thus she is worshipped by offering oblation of fruits with a wish that the child may acquire knowledge and get a successful education life.

ix. CHAK LANG

The Tai Ahom marriage ceremony is called Chak Lang, which is an age old tradition as the Tais and is still observed by the Tai Ahom people. During field study, full fledged marriage rituals are observed on 22.02.04 and 09.02.09 in Sepon Hologuri village, Bakata and in Jhanji Hanhchara Bailung Gaon. Even after converting to Hinduism most of the Ahom people are performing this ritual as a sign of their belongingness to Tai Ahom tradition. The Ahom Lexicons gives the meaning of Chak Lang or Cak lang as ‘an Ahom marriage ritual’ (Barua and Deodhai Phukan 1964:108). The etymological meaning of this Chak and Lang is-

Chak: (Noun) Impure or ceremoniously unclean; bright; the pestle of a husking pedal; a washer man; a crowd; a proper place; multitude; a mat. (verb) To wash; to come near; to husk paddy; to wash cloth; to select; to thrust with a pointed instrument.

Lang: to go down stream; divine power, a husking pedal, an embroidered end of a pillow, wide open (Barua and Deodhai Phukan 1964:133).

Lung: (adj.) big, great; (verb) to eat something on the road; to come down; to pack in a wicker grain basket, to beat, to become silted up (Barua and Deodhai Phukan 1964:131,128).

According to some priests, the actual word is ‘Chang Klong’. To them Chang means ‘two’ and Klong means ‘a promise’, and the meaning is thus ‘two make promise’. And this two refers to the bride and the bridegroom. The words Chang and Klong are found in Ahom Lexicons as- Chang: two; again Chang means to glitter/ to emit light/ to disclose/ to act a farce (Barua and Deodhai Phukan 1964:147). Klang means (verb): to husk paddy; to spread on a bamboo sieve; (noun): a gun; a drum; trilling sound caused by the repeated movement of the tongue, specially by woman; a continuous shrilling sound made by an owl; worship; strength.

The etymological meaning of Chak Lang is not clearly found in the Tai Ahom chronicles, yet the religious manuscript ‘Lai Lit Nang Hun Phd’ (preserved by Junaram Changbun Phukan, Parijat Village, Bakata), gives the reference of ‘Chak
Lang' as a marriage ritual performed in between Lengdon, the lord of heaven and Nang Hun Pha, the eldest daughter of Ak Kai Mo'hung. In the Lai lit Nang Hun Pha it is stated that:

'in Lakni kachyeu the Lord of heaven, Lengdon sent a mission of gods to matrimonial negotiation, headed by Mo’Laokhri, the divine scholar of heaven, to the bride’s father Ak Kai Mo’hung to ask for the hand of his eldest daughter Nang Hun Pha with presents of honour consisting of betel leaves and nuts; clipped on both ends, and well-trimmed on two platters with stands (this is called neng in Tai and Sarai in Assamese) and beautifully covered with red towels. The load so carried is called Sakali bhar or Sodhani-bhar. When the mission reached the place of Ak Kai Mo’hung in the kingdom of gods it was received with due honour by the parents and elders of the bride’s family and the leader of the mission was asked about the purpose of their visit. Mo’Laokhri placed one platter of honour with betel leaves and betel nuts before the parents of the bride Ak Kai Mo’hung and Nang Pha Cau-Kan jan Tha and explained the object of their visit thus: ‘Lengdon, the Lord of heaven, had sent these presents of honour requesting for the hand of Nang Hun Pha in marriage for him. Hence I am presenting this sarai, kindly give us your opinion on this matter’. The divine priest Mo’ hung and Kan jan Tha agreed to offer the bride and informed him accordingly. In due time, as appointed, the marriage was performed in conformity with the ceremony of Cak-lang’(Gogoi 1976:65).

Since that time Chak Lang ceremony has been performed as the most sacred marriage custom. In the Chak Lang ritual, a marala of seven colours and hundred and one earthen lamps must be lighted and the offering of royal sword or Hengdan is a must. The marala is built in a shape of a lotus flower or a circle, yet the whole platform is made in an octagonal shape having eight banana plants posted in the eight corners of the octagonal platform.

The following procedures are required in celebrating the Chak Lang -

1. Juran or Tekeli: The first day of the three days marriage custom is called Juran diya (Ju: to live, ran: to join). Thus Juran means ‘to live together’. The various gifts of Juran are the token of agreement to live together. The articles are wedding dress, jewelry etc. The earthen pots are decorated with cotton yarn and filled with rice with a
fresh mango twig having five leaves planted in each of them and four packets of pastes of black pulse (mati mah – *Phaseolus aconitifolius* or radia – *tus*) and turmeric. All these are carried by the group of female and male relatives and friends of the groom to the bride’s place. In the presence of the assembled women, the bride is dressed up with the *Juran* apparel by a member of the bridegroom party. After having dressed up, the bride take her seat on the carpet with the above two pots placed before her. Then the bridegroom’s party comb and trim up the bride’s hair, holding the silver or normal betel nut vertically with a gold ring round it on the head of the bride and pour scented hair oil over it to flow down to the head. The *Tais* never use vermilion, thus in the *Tai Ahom* community also vermilion is not used, yet as a cultural assimilation vermilion is used by the general *Ahoms* and so after pouring the hair oil, vermilion is applied on the forehead and in the head between the parted hair. But the *Tai Ahom* priestly families have never use this even today. They strictly follow this. During this ceremony, the women sing *Juran* song with *uludhvani*. While returning to the groom’s place they carry back with them one of the two rice pots, one black pulse packet, one turmeric packet, one set of knife and lime box or betel nut and one set of dress for the bridegroom presented by the bride’s parents or guardians. All these articles are touched by the bride before taking them back to the bride groom’s place.

The bride and the bridegroom have to keep with them the knife and the lime box or betel nut till the end of the marriage function. It is believed that the knife protects the bride and bridegroom from any evil spirit or evil effects and happening of injurious incantations made by enemies. Along with this a few mustard seeds are tied with in a corner of a handkerchief, it is also believed that it keeps the evil spirits far away from the bride/bridegroom.

2. Ceremonial bathing or *Noani*: In order to have a ceremonial bathing, a temporary wooden or bamboo platform is made in a quadrangular shape as called *beyi* in Assamese. At the centre of the platform a wooden stool (*tamuli pira*) is kept and sitting on it the bride or bridegroom is made to take bath. Beneath the bathing platform one egg of hen, one pair of betel nuts, a coin, one needle and one sickle are buried in the ground to ward off evils. Over head around the posts of the *beyi* are tied strings of mango leaves as they represent purity and auspiciousness. The bride or bridegroom has to rub on the body the pastes of black pulse and turmeric before
bathing with the fetch water from the river or pond. The custom of fetching water from river was done during the reign of the Ahom kings also. The water is fetch in a pitcher by the mother of the bride or bridegroom by drawing three lines on the surface of the water with a knife. This is called *panitola*. With this water the bride or the bridegroom has to take bath in all these three days.

3. Ceremonial feast: A community feast is a must before the marriage function. This feast is called *Na purusar chaul khaua* (*na* – nine, *purush* – generations). In the house of either bride or bridegroom a feast is offered to the nine generations of ancestors of the bride or the bridegroom as an oblation to their ancestors. While this feast is observed in the bride’s house it is called ‘bride offering feast’ (*Kanya sampradanar bhoj*). This feast is a form of ancestor worship where nine elder nobles of the community are required as to symbolize or represent the nine clans of ancestors.

4. *Rikkhon* ceremony: In *Chak Lang* marriage ceremony *‘Rikkhon’* ritual is performed for a longer conjugal life of the bride and the bridegroom. *Rikkhon* is performed on the first day of the three days marriage function. In this ritual *Khao Kham*, the Lord of water is worshipped (Barua 1985:275,277,290). As water is the source of life and the building block of each essential commodities to live thus *Khao Kham* is worshipped by offering betel nuts, eggs of duck, rice, basil flower and other suitable offerings. In this ritual two or three *Tai Ahom* priests go to the river or pond or stream with two or three triangular shaped bamboo fishing scoop (*Jakoi*). The priests chant the *Rikkhon* hymn and seek blessings for the longevity of the bride and groom. One of the priest scoops into the water and whatever is caught (fish / crab), is wrapped up with a piece of cloth and with a banana leaf or *kou pat*. The priest after returning back to the bride or bridegrooms house, they hung up the caught fish over the head of the bride or groom at her or his seat by chanting the prayer *‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi’*. At the dawn of the next day, the fish is cooked and the bride or bridegroom is made to eat a portion of it so that they could get a long life.

During this *Rikkhon*, *Khao Kham* is worshipped by chanting the following hymn as recorded in the *Rikkhon Puthi* preserved by *Mo’lung* Tileswar Mohan:

‘*Chao kao oi, Pu Khao Kham choi kum*  
*ja Khao Kham choi khen.*
Pu dang ri ja dang nam.
Ja dang ri pu dang khan
pu chun moung ja chun ban
khek chao ao rik ma khek chao ao rik khen
chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Ao Tang tong mou kup tong ka,
blok ching pha ka reng chang blok ching pha ka reng ply,
mak mu kup bou plu
khao chan pit kai khai, chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Kun phu rao le man ka nang poi chak-lang heu hit chang
Ao tuk ma ao khwan mi chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Kun phu rao le man ka ao tuk ma, ao khan me ut pat
oot kha, oot lik je rai be nai phit pa chi,
Pu Khao Kham choi kum
ja Khao Kham choI khen, pu dang ri ja dang nam
Khwan ka ma ta na, chao kao oi' (Rikkhon Puthi).

Substance: Oh' the supreme God overhead in the sky! Oh' the great forefather, the great grand father, grand mother, the water god Khao Kham, protector of the country and villages, protect us all. You are offered betel nuts and leaves wrapped with blok mita (basil flower), rice mixed with salt, ginger, mustard oil, an egg of duck etc. Oh' the supreme God overhead! We salute you. The person is going to perform Chak Lang should know how to prolong a long life. The person should not suffer but prosper in life. Therefore, we are praying you to grant a long life to the bride-groom. Oh' the supreme God, overhead in the sky! Let all the ancestor forefathers and mothers come and protect us from all evils. Oh' the supreme God overhead in the sky! I will go to the seas and the rivers to catch fish so that the khon or the 'life' will come nearer...

In this way by chanting the hymn the priests seek blessing for the bride or bridegroom who are going to start a new life. After worshipping Khao Kham, the priest offer oblations to the gods – Lengdon, Langkur, Jashing Pha, Dams by constructing raised platter (maihang). The bride or bride-groom has to take seat near to the raised platters with new dresses. After chanting the Ai sing lao prayer a white
fowl is offered to Lengdon, a red fowl to Langkuri and one red fowl to the ancestors (Dam) are offered. The priests then pray to all the gods and Dams and seek blessing for a happy married life of the bride or bridegroom. The offered articles are cooked afterward and ate by the priest and the kin members, bride or bride-groom and all that present there.

5. Deo-Ban: On the second day or the day before the marriage function, the Deo-ban ritual is performed. The ritual is performed by worshipping the gods – Langkuri, Jan Chai Hung, Lareng, Lengdon and Jashing Pha to seek blessing. The word Deo-Ban means (Deo – god, Ban – sun) the prayer to the tutelary gods above (Gogoi 1976:71). In this ritual, the dead ancestors (Dam) of the household are worshipped along with the gods. Two platters are offered to the Mo’lungs and the old women (in Assamese they are called Gopini). The betel nuts as sent from the bride groom’s house to the bride’s house are used in this ritual. Along with betel nuts, a dozen of eggs of hen, rice, rice beer, pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with chingkora flower are offered on the raised platters to gods and the Dams. Betel nuts and leaves are cut into pieces and folded with the leaves, are offered on the platters (sarai) to the Mo’lungs and the women. In this ritual Phura (God Almighty) is worshipped by offering seven oil lamps and consecrating articles of worship in seven banana sheath receptacles (dong). The hymn chanted by the priests is thus:

‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi, khun thao ngeu Langkuri.
Po Phi khru me phi ngeu, ta moung ba moung khru.
Teo pha ba moung ngeu. Jim mou phun din bou mi nga.
Rin lung tek pin chao, rin klang tek pin khun.
Doi ngin doi kham mou hit chao, doi ngin doi kham mou hit khun. Chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Chao pha Jan Chai Hung, Ngi khai pha lan chao
Khai mou Lengdon tek pin chao. Nga khao Lengdon tek pin khun. Chu chong dong cham dong rum kin lao
Chu chong dong cham dam nang kieu phrong.
Bit Lang chong kin tai lang nang chong kin kham.
Chao nu ru chao kao oi. Lareng chao cham ba
Phi Lareng phi bu teng la la la khan ban
la la ju chi plao. Moung ran lu chip chan koy pang
kun deo ba klao klao, nang ta chang
chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Chao pha phet kham khang rong kham kham
tu moung tu te luk re pha chao dam
chon chao ja nang chao pu lok, chong na myung kep
chong bun, chong na myung kep chong kham
Pi pai nang lai dai, khun phai nang lai cham
chao nu ru chao kao oi, tun ru mung len kham chao mo
ngeu. Phao pha ka ru lai, chao pha peng ching mung
Chao pha kham ching mung nuk ba cheng tam la,
Chao ka cha nik ru, phuk cha nik kham
chao nu ru chao kao oi, ban phi kha rik-khwan
chung mou chao ching mou phi, chao nu ru chao kao oi.
Nuk tu Dam ti ren Dam chao mou poi pin Dam. Chao kun Dam
mou choi kun ngi tung Dam mou choi khen chang nai
chao nu ru chao kao oi....

Substance: Oh’ the Lord above in the sky, the gods Khun Thao Langkuri, Pu Phi Siu! Lord of the earth, sky, the country with villages. There was no grass on earth. It was a big house without any owner. At last there was an owner born to become the Lord of the whole world. Oh’ my god overhead! Jan Chai Hung became the first king on the earth. The divinity of the egg Cheng Khai predicted that Lengdon would be the king and after him there would be kings in that lineage for two to three generations in the family to enjoy the royal life. Oh’ the Lord overhead, we salute you. The god of the wind Lang bin arrived at his place in the seventeenth constellation, the highest place. Oh’ The Lord, we salute you. The god of lightning, Pha chang dam, you are the son of Chang-dam, you are keeping chong ban at your hand, we salute you.... Let all the persons living in the house and the new owner of the house be blessed by you (Chetia 2005:126-127).

Through this Deo ban ritual, the priests worship the gods and seek blessing to the bride and bridegroom to lead a happy married life.
6. *Ap tang*: The sixth stage is *Ap tang* (*Ap* – to wash the body, *tang*– with all mixed) or ‘to take bath with the sanctified or medicated water’, which is prepared by mixing with the ingredients of bronze piece, an axe, a tiger’s tooth, black turmeric, three headed mud (made by earth-worm), eight kinds of metal (gold, silver, copper, brass, iron, lead, steel, tin); *chingkora* flower, *tangloti*, *sonbaraliya* plant, a portion of clod of earth used for supporting a cooking vessel, the horns of deer, buffalo etc. The priest by stirring the water with a sickle chant the *Ap tang* hymn. After completing this, the bridegroom is made to take bath with that medicinal water. As a part of this ritual, the bride or the groom should stand on a sieve with a chicken pressed by the foot and would look at a full fledged grown up tree with branches, leaves, fruits etc. and has to pour water on the head by uttering the name of *Phra-tara*. After dressed up the bride or the groom should take a sickle, retreat three steps and draw three sacred lines on the ground with it by uttering the name of *Phra tara* and should leave the place by saying – ‘Oh’ the ills and evils! Do not come hither across these lines’.

The ‘*Ap Tang*’ ritual is at present not completely followed as per the instruction of *Chak Lang Bidhi*. And the ingredients for preparing the sanctified water are now become rare to find, hence to observe this ritual simply water is used to take bath.

Through this ritual, by preparing the sanctified water the bride / bridegroom is made to take bath, and wish that no evil could harm them.

7. *Gathain Khunda* (grinding): *Gathian* is a medicinal root of a knotted plant with fragrance, it is pounded on a stone slab by the women and the paste is applied at the forehead of the bride or the groom at night after the ceremonial bath on the second day of three days marriage function. It is like the aroma therapy which refreshes the mind as well as the body.

8. *Ko’la buri*: The *ko’la buri* ritual is made for merry making and for more fun on that occasion, it also renders wisdom and wit with valuable advice to the bride or groom. In this ritual, a pair is made- one is a man and the other is a woman, they dance with the tunes made by beating of drum, cymbals. They play act on any comical story regarding marriage and ask question to the bride or bridegroom, after merry making they wish a happy conjugal life of the bride or bridegroom.
9. **Doiyan-diya:** *Doiyan* means *(Doi – curd, yan – apply)* apply or rub curdled milk, which is good for the skin. At the marriage day, at the early morning the mother of the bride and a group of women, young ladies perform this ritual. At the morning, the bride/bridegroom is made to sit at the particular place for bathing and the mother holding two betel leaves in the hands (one in each hand) having dipped in the curdled milk kept on a pot, apply on the cheeks, arms and feet of the bride or bridegroom for three times. The gathered women and young ladies also do the same for three times followed with *uludhwani* or *uruli*.

10. **Marriage procession:** During the reign of *Ahom* Kings the *Chak Lang* ceremony was performed in the royal palace of the king. The bride is accompanied by her father, relatives and well wishers. At present the *Chak Lang* is performed in the house of the bride. The marriage procession goes to the bride’s place. The bridegroom is accompanied by his friend (*Dara dhara*), relatives, elder nobles, young ones of the villages.

11. **Huaguri-tula:** The welcome ritual of the bridegroom at the wedding gate of the bride’s house is called *Huaguri tula* and this is a must in *Chak Lang* ceremony to get the luck and fortune for the groom. In this ritual the feet of the bridegroom is washed by a young sister of the bride in a washing basin (*saria*) keeping the feet on an wooden stool (*tamuli pira*) and the mother of the bride receives the bridegroom by fanning him with a decorated fan for three times and sprinkles holy water on the body of the groom and on herself from the pot with mango leaves for three times. Then she with her palms waves the warmth of the flaming light on *dunari* directed towards the bridegroom and then towards herself thrice. After that she kisses on both the cheeks of the bridegroom and leads him to the marriage pandal or sometimes the elder brother or relative of the bride lift up and carries the groom to the pandal. As a part of this ritual the bride’s party throws rice toward the groom. Now-a-days both the parties throw rice on each other to enjoy. Throwing of rice symbolizes wishing prosperity.

12. **Taking seats under the marriage pandal facing the altar made with a sacred marala.**
13. Leading out of the bride and sitting on the left side of the bridegroom. At the left of the bride’s seat, her father and relatives take their seats. At the south, the head priest takes his seat along with his assistants.

14. Performance of Chak Lang ceremony: After sitting orderly, a platter of betel nuts covered with a beautifully stitched up cloth (sarai dhoka), is placed ahead in honour of the father or guardian of the bride and a few more platters of betel nuts and leaves also put forward as a token of respect for the relatives of the bride’s family. Then the priest and his assistants are offered dress and a nominal fee to solemnize the marriage ceremony by mentioning the name of the bride and her father’s name and the bridegroom and his father’s name. Then the priests start performing the Chak Lang by chanting the hymn:

\begin{verbatim}
‘Pha Tu Ching Phrong Hum pha lai bet
pha pin bet pha phura tara
boi mou chao kao oi’.
\end{verbatim}

Substance: Oh’ the God Almighty! You are the great God above all gods, we salute you. We are praying your blessing to the bride and the bridegroom.

Again the priests chant:

\begin{verbatim}
‘Phra lai bet Phra Tu Ching Phrong Hum
chao nu ru chao kao oi
krup ong boi mou khu’.
\end{verbatim}

Substance: Oh’ the great God above all the gods! We salute you. Let all our faults be pardoned and bless us to perform the Chak Lang smoothly.

15. Mo’lung Srara Boitang: The priests again chant the prayer hymn to perform the ceremony with folded palms. The hymn is thus (field study: Medini Madhab Mohan):

\begin{verbatim}
‘Chao nuru chao kao oi, khun thao ngaau Langkuri,
Po phi khril me phi ngeu. Ta moung ba moung khril.
Teo pha ba moung ngeu chao kao oi. Jim mou phun din
bou mi nga, rin lung tek pin chao, ngi
khai mou Lengdon tek pin khun. Phi Lareng phi
bu teng chao cheng hun cheng ban, chao kao oi.
Luk ni luk khui ji nu rao na tek khan rao jan
\end{verbatim}
Meaning: ‘Oh’ the great God over our heads! I pray to you. You are the Lord of all and the only God. You have created this world as well as all beings, and you are the protector as well as the Lord of destruction. The sun and the moon manifest your glorious creations. Peace and tranquility prevail through air and fire. The air and the fire are propagating the peace and harmony in this universe proclaiming your divine power. Oh’ the Great God! Today on this auspicious occasion, the bride and the groom prayed and beseech your blessings. Be kind to them. Let their married life be fruitful glittering like gold and coral bead’ (Chetia :2005:168):

After chanting the prayer, the priest directs the bride and bridegroom to pray to God by offering flower buds and rice, black gram seed to the marala of hundred and one lamps. They chant the prayer as: ‘Oh’ Phra ban nai chak - long chi chim heu tim’.

Meaning: Oh’ the supreme God! Let make our marriage be solemnized successfully, today.

16. Kanya Sanmilan: In the Tai Ahom marriage custom, the bride is not given away as dana but is regarded as a responsibility. The father or guardian of the bride by offering rice and flower to the marala, and chant that:

‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi, kao a phu ming phrao jon
heu tai lang bak lang ka phi ka charg kup ka’
mai chao kao oi’.

Meaning: Oh’ The Lord overhead! I salute you. I am offering this bride to the bridegroom for procreation according to the natural law.

After the prayer the father or guardian of the bride presents clothes and ornaments to the bridegroom. Then he again would say by keeping the right hand thumb of the bride on the right hand thumb of the bridegroom – ‘Chao nu ru chao kao oi, ban nai luk chao kao. Nang chao kao, Pi chao kao a kao lan chao kao chao Phura mai khang na bai si hang mao kha yao mou ku egnu aota’. 
Meaning: Oh’ the God above our head in the sky! Today in presence of you, I am keeping my daughter/sister/cousin/grand daughter to you. Always keep her with care and affection.

Then accepting the bride from her father the bride groom would say -

‘Khrung lu mou chao kao di di chi hap ao jao,
Kao hang luk chao mang chao pi chao a kao
lan chao, mou chao di di chi ti bai jao’.

Meaning: I respectfully accept your offer. I shall keep your daughter/ sister/ cousin/ grand daughter with care and affection.

Offering of garland of flowers:

The bride would say by standing and picking up a garland of one hundred and one flowers with both hands from a platter, and places the garland round the neck of the bridegroom thus, ‘Phu chao pak pak blok khon khup tang jon heu’.

Meaning: Oh’ my bangahardeu (husband)! I adore you with this garland of hundred and one emotions of my heart in the form of hundred and one flowers and choose you as my husband from today.

The bridegroom also picks up his garland of hundred and one flowers from the platter and puts it round the neck of the bride and would say -

‘Nang Chao blok khan ru heu di’.
Meaning: I accept you as my life partner as my wife from today.

After this the priest would say -

‘Phra tra phra lai bet Pha Tu Ching Phrong Hum
som phuma phumi jan khan rao jan khan min’.

Meaning: Oh’ the God Almighty, the supreme God of all gods! Bless the couple to live a happy conjugal life.

Then the bride and bridegroom pray to the God Almighty with folded palms, the prayer runs thus:

‘Oh’ Phra Chao, Oh’ Lengdon mau chao
hang tang lung met khan kao jao
mou chao ni lung hang mau kao ka cham
Tang lung ni loi, mou chao chao khan kao chao a lu.
mau chao chang lang nu chi khan ka' khan,
mau chao chum loi khan cham chi chim khem cha.
O' Po' kao chao hang rao, tang lung luk chi tang
khiring tang mai heo pun wai ta,
an rao tang lung an me yang heu jang ta.
Rao hit a mu chang ko' khegn.
Tang lung heu di ching ta, khan cham hang rao
an pe heu heng nang nai rao kan lang di nai hang
rao ao mau chao heng pe ju. A nai chu tong jao,
O' chi chim khem chao o' po' chao chgen pha an rao
chong ko' mou lao chik pi heu phit kan ta.
O' chao khun lung a khu chong ka rak kan heu ta
pin tang di nai oi wak ta'.

Substance: Oh’ the Lord! Oh’ Lengdon, you are the mightiest and the greatest of all.
You are the holy one and every thing. All become sacred at the recall of you or when you
are recalled. You are the Lord of all and giver of everything. You are the self of all selves. You are blessed with happiness and kind. Keep us away from the sufferings, sorrows and all anxieties. Fulfill our desires and wants. What ever we do may all be good. Bestow us such power so that we may follow the path of truth and noble mind in life. It is our kind prayer to you. Oh’ the Lord of the earth, the beneficent, guide us with your noble principles so that no conflict could ever arise in between us. Oh’ our most revered God! Bless us to have a conjugal and prosperous happy life.

By chanting this, the bride and the bridegroom offer flower and rice to the marala.

16. Prayer to Marala: The bride groom and the bride would again take rice and flowers in their palms and by looking at the central light of the marala make the prayer thus:

‘Oh! Phra Tra Along khup tang boi mou chao khup
tang boi mou phi het mut het chang nai chao kao oi’.
Meaning: Oh’ the great God! We salute you. We also pay salute to Phi and the deity and other gods. Make us clean and pure mentally and physically.’

With this chanting they throw flower and rice to the Marala.

17. Prayer to Dharmma: Again the bride groom and the bride pray to Dharmma, as follows:

‘Oh! Phra Tra Along cha thu cha thu cheng hang boi mu chao kao oi’.

Meaning: We are praying to Dharmma, Phra tra Along, so all be all-good, Oh’ the Lord overhead in the sky! By saying this they throw flower and rice to the central light of the marala.

Prayer to gods and deities: The bride and the bridegroom chant the hymn -

‘O' Phra Tra Along cheng hun cheng ban

chao pha phet kham boi heu chao kao oV’.

Meaning: O’ Phra tra Along, the great God! The holder of the lights- the sun and the moon, the god of lightning, we salute you. – With this they throw flowers and rice to the marala.

18. Offering of Hengdan: Hangdan or Sword is the symbol of a warrior, at the end of the above joint prayer, the bride take the Hengdan kept on a platter and addresses the bridegroom as follows:

‘Ao khrang na cheng nap chak nai, cham moung mau chao luk ao re wai ta’.

Meaning: Oh’ my beloved, please hold this Hengdan, with this you subdue your enemies, protect your country, your child, family and do good for the country.

By accepting the Hengdan the bridegroom says -

‘Kun juk kun khin tak tyuk ao pe phu met kun ni tak jong ba chi khun

cham khyung bao a kiu rao tak heu khen kha si kao nap chak nai rap

ao jao di kin lao jao’.

Meaning: I vow by holding this Hengdan and promise to subdue the wicked, to administer good-will and friendship amongst the honest ones, to protect the country
from enemies, to protect the righteous and to uphold dharma to prevail over, and to protect my wife, child and the family in future and their wealth." With this they throw the oblation of flowers and rice to the marala.

18. Offering of Kavac-kapur: By holding a cloth girdle the bride addresses the bridegroom thus follows:

'O po' chao pi nang khung pha nai cham
Ao nung chi heu pe heu ang ta'.

Meaning: Oh' my beloved by wearing this cloth as the kavac, you become victorious and protect all.

Then the bridegroom says -

'Ao pha nai cham kao chi hit pha phuk ing chi juk phu khin tak ao pe ba di kn lao'.

Meaning: By wearing this kavac cloth I promise to subdue the enemies and the wicked ones.

19. Narration of Ancestral History: In the Chak Lang marriage function, the history of ancestors of both the bride and the bridegroom are narrated by the priests.

20. Advice to the newly married couple: The priest gives advice to the newly married couple as follows:

'In the sacred scriptures it is stated that if a man or woman remains without being united in earthly life till then she or he remains incomplete in this world. Now you can fulfill your mission by being united. We hope you will not do anything which is against morality. Every work should be done with mutual co-operation and consultation. Always do respect your parents. In-law parents, elder ones and be kind and caring to the members of the family. To lead a happy married life you have to tolerate more physically and mentally. To be happy, one must have to work by bearing all the difficulties without idleness and lethargy but with a smiling face. Don't be lazy and indolent. Start your household work before the first call of the crow in the early morning. So, wake up at the dawn. Do not be addicted to any liquor, wine, opium etc. unless it is necessary for the purpose of health as medicine. Because this may brings misfortune to you. Always speak the truth and be always simple. Do not
engage yourself in doing evil deeds which could bring misfortune to the family. Keep faith in God and within your capacity do try to help others in need. We pray to the God Almighty for your happy and prosperous conjugal life. Virtues like goodness and morality be endowed on you for having children of good character. Let the God Almighty bless you granting mental and physical strength and peace (Changbun:1990).

After this advice the priests speak out the duties of husband towards his wife and again the duties of wife towards her husband. After that a dunari (pot) full of rice is placed before them, and the bridegroom is made to put inside the rice a ring from his finger and would say to the bride thus -

‘Khrang rak tang lung kao nai bai bai ti nai jau tha ao ni’ (I have kept here my cordial gift of love for you. Find out and take it)

The bride after finding out the ring inside the rice would say – ‘Chum chum me me di kao bap ao jao’ (I cordially accept it). Then the bride would keep a ring from her finger and in the same way put inside the rice and ask the bridegroom to find and accept it.

In this merrymaking ritual a silver box, a knife from both the parties of bride and bridegroom are exchanged in between them.

After the exchange of gold rings, silver limebox and knife, another formality is made by offering a mixture of milk, curd, butter, honey and sugar (panchanrirta or nga pulok) on a dish or stand. The bridegroom has to touch this only.

After this the newly married couple has to play the game of dice and cowrie on a dish. Cowrie is a symbol of sex and productivity.

By performing all this formalities the bride leaves her house. At the gate of the house of the bridegroom, the bride and the bridegroom are welcomed by washing their feet with water by a younger girl. At the threshold of kitchen the bride is to lift out whatever is put in a pot full of water. Then the mother-in-law would show her rice kept in a pot or bamboo basket, betel nut and leaves are put on it and also a jar full of water. After this the couple would show their respect by kneeling and bowing down at the feet of the bridegroom's parents placing before them cloth, manoni (rupee), pieces
of betel nut and leaves on a platter called Sarai by covering with a cloth. On first entering the husband's bedroom, the couple would worship the five deities by offering betel nuts, a lamp on a platter. The five propitiated deities are - Langkuri, Lengdon, Jan Chai Hung, Lareng and Jashing Pha.

A grand feast is again given after the marriage function is over.

In case of the royal families, the Chak Lang marriage is performed in the house of the bridegroom. The bridegroom never visited the bride's place to perform the marriage instead of it the elders of bride's family take the bride to the royal house or bridegroom's place otherwise it is believed that some evil may occur to them. It is still followed by the Ahom royal families of Lakwa, the Rajkonwar clan. After an interview among the royal families of Kamala Rajkonwar, Late Ratneswar Rajkonwar, Nagen Rajkonwar, Kamal Rajkonwar, Lakua, Sivasagar District, it is found that they still believe in their tradition of performing Chak Lang in bridegrooms place. Whenever the bridegroom went to bride's place to perform marriage then some uncommon events like fall of thunder-bolt took place. Yet, there is also a provision in performing Chak Lang in bride's place by them. The bridegroom should not touch the ground of the bride's place, so a cloth is laid on the ground from the gate to the place of Chak Lang and the bridegroom is made to walk through the cloth to the place of Chak Lang. (Field study, Lakwa, 18-07-2007).

In Chak Lang marriage the bride and bridegroom must belong to the same community, yet they should not be relative or no blood relation in between them. Whether the general Tai Ahom or the priestly families all of them in order to maintain their Tai Ahom tradition are still performing this sacred marriage ritual. Although it is very expensive, yet it is performed by a family (individually) and thus it is taken here as a minor ritual.

x. DEATH RITUAL

Death is a fact of human life, thus it is accepted by following rituals to show respect to the person even after his death or absence. The Tai Ahoms being a branch of the Tai race have a peculiar practice of performing death ritual by burying their deads and constructing an earthen mound over the burial ground called Moidam. At
present the burial ritual in *Tai Ahom* religious tradition is performed by only the priestly clans and a few royal families but most of the royal families have given up their burial custom.

(During field study in Sepon Hologuri, Bakata mouza the death ceremony of Phonidhar Phukan (Deodhai clan) on 5th Oct.'05; Durlov Ch.Phukan(Bailung clan) on 18th Oct.'10 at Bailung Gaon; at the funeral of Jugen Mohan's father (*Mo'hung* clan)at Rukang on 16th Sept.'07; at the funeral of Deben Phukan's mother (*Deodhai* clan) on 26th Jan.'10 at Bakata; are observed. The priests were *Mo'lung* Kamala Phukan, Tankeswar Barua, Tileswar Mohan).

The death ritual among the priestly clans:

When a person dies, the news must be given to all his/her relatives or kin members as far as possible. In presence of them the dead body is prepared for ceremonial bathing. The eldest son or elder brother or elder relatives take the dead body with the help of other persons to the doorway and make it sit on a wooden stool, and with a sickle breaks a hen’s egg on the head and let the fluid flow down from the head to the legs and give a bath with the water kept in an earthen pitcher and then put in it new white cloth. The falling water on the ground is let to flow out by making a hole or way through the wall of the house. Sometimes the ceremonial bath is performed outside the house by keeping the head of the dead body towards the east. The body is rubbed with turmeric and black pulse paste and then is washed. They believe that like birth or marriage, death is also a fact thus the body is washed with anointing the materials as is done in the ceremonial bath in marriage ceremony. On a cleaned space of the courtyard, a small pandal is constructed with four bamboo posts and banana leaves. The body is kept there on a mat, the body is covered with a white cloth by keeping the head towards the north east. Four pieces of betel nuts and betel leaves or leaves of a kind of small herb called *kona simolu* are placed on the various parts of the dead body, i.e., on the forehead, on the navel, on two arms. Sometimes the pieces of betel nuts are placed on the chest, on the lower part of the feet also. In case of *Deodhai* family five pieces of betel nuts and leaves are placed on the body. The white cloth covering the body is pierced at the position of the navel with a bamboo needle with a white thread. The string is tied three times and the thread is cut with a large position of the cloth and throw it on the roof of the house. This is called *nadi*
This is performed to show that from then the worldly relationship of the dead with the living ones is passed away and a new relation is made with the living ones as a Dam Phi or mritak devata. After performing this, three posts of the oven are brought from the kitchen and posted on the left side of the dead body to cook meal for the dead. This act is called ‘mritakoloi bhat randha’. On a new earthen pot rice, three eggs of hen are boiled and whatever is brought by the relatives all are cooked by the sickle bearer. Then a fowl is killed and the inside things are taken out of it and it is roasted in fire. The roasted fowl is stuffed with the boiled rice and offered on a pair of banana leaves on a maihang made of banana stem as constructed at the right side of the dead body. On the maihang three pieces of betel nuts and leaves wrapped with chingkora flower, three packets of nam lao (water mixed rice beer), rice, boiled eggs are offered along with the fowl are offered to the dead. By offering these, the priests give a message to the departed fore fathers and invoke the newly departed one. After propitiating the dead and the dead ancestors a coffin or cusket (chung/tungkhung/rang) is made to keep the dead body. This is made with split bamboos or timbers. A carrying platform is made of bamboo or timbers. Two posts of bamboo of equal length are used to carry the bamboo platform. The sickle bearer put the dead body in the casket after sprinkling holy water on it. At that time a ritual of ‘pengani kubua’ or ‘peng mora’ is performed. In this ritual a chicken is beaten to death with the stick carrying ‘Rang bhar’ with the left hand by the priest or eldest one. One leg of the chicken is severed by pulling it away and put it in the rang or coffin and the other part of it is thrown away. After putting the dead body in the rang, a white cloth is spread over the rang by the person who performed the ritual ‘pengani kubua’. This covering cloth is called ‘Mo’ cheura’. With the burial of the dead all the articles used by him or her during lifetime are given in the burial ground, so, all the articles along with the cooking vessel, cooked rice, are led to the burial ground by the villagers. The sickle bearer carries on his soldier on a pole a betel (areca) nut tree, a banana sapling, a bamboo container with black gram seeds or mustard oil seeds, a digger. They carry all these in a bag made from a portion of the white cloth. In that bag instead of gold and money turmeric pieces and a particular kind of a cane (pati doi) are kept, and the raised platform (maihang) is also taken to the burial ground. The funeral procession is led by the sickle bearer who is the eldest son of the deceased. He carries a lit bamboo
stick or torch and a spinning device (ughā) having raw thread. The threads from the ughā are torn and thrown on the ground by him on all the way up to the burial ground, that signifies severing the ties or bond of the deceased with the living household and relatives. At the starting of funeral procession the main door of the house as well as of the granary are to be closed so that the wealth of the household may not go with the dead.

When the procession arrives at the burial ground a ritual is performed by offering rupees or coins with a betel nut and leaf as that particular chosen place is bought from the owner of the land, the lord of earth Ai Leng Din. After paying homage they start digging and prepare the burial ground. The procession take three rounds around it anti clock wise and keep the casket or rang in the left side of it. The grave is washed with the water from the pitcher. Then another coffin is made of urium wood to keep the dead body in the grave with his head in the north-east direction. The coffin is closed fixing with wooden timber planks. The cooked rice and the articles used by the deceased are placed at the side of his feet in the grave. Then everybody would take in their hands clods of earth. The eldest son would give the first clod of earth on the coffin. Before starting this, the priests would chant to the deceased thus: 'We give you this house. You have gone either at the end of your life or are taken forcibly by the Almighty. Give up your affection and attachment henceforth towards your wife and children and near and dear ones. Let you live in peace' (Gogoi 1976:96). After this announcement everybody drop clods of earth and fill up the grave and a high earthen mound is raised by them over the grave which is called 'Moidam' (Moi - earth, dam - dead). A doorway is made in the south western pole of the Moidam by the sickle bearer or the eldest son. Over the Moidam a house is constructed this is called 'Mad ghar' or 'Mo rang' in which a bed is made of four planks painted with the yolk of eggs, burnt charcoal and turmeric. Various images of bird, bees, horse etc., are made from bamboos and are tied with the four corners of the bed as the symbols of the domesticated ones. The belief may be that these can be used as tools to travel by the dead. An orchard is also made on the burial tomb. The eldest son sow some mustard seeds, black gram (sesamum seed) seeds; betel nut tree, banana sapling are planted there and a bamboo fence which is weaved unsystematic and odd way, is posted around the Moidam to protect it from animals. The gathered
villagers or relatives place some branches of thorny trees on the *Moidam*. Then the priest chant incantation and utter blessings to the deceased and return home. Everyone came from the burial ground have to cross or walk over fire set on a bundle of paddy straw and a stone at the gate, and they have to take bath. Only after that they could enter into their houses. The sickle bearer or the relatives of the deceased while walk over the fire are sprinkled holy water from a pitcher with a branch of *chingkora* flower.

*Teu Lungia or Kun tai chi ba ban Le*: The ritual of *Teu Lungia* or *Tilani* is performed on the third day from the date of death of the person. On this third day the priests predict the future happenings related to the dead and the household. On the first day of the death, the person, who closed or placed the cloth over the door of the granary keeps some paddy on a bamboo tray (*dola*) covered with a cloth in three parts, the tray is kept in the pandal in the courtyard before the dead body is brought there and then this is kept inside the main chamber or the *Dam* post of the house. On the third day or *Tilani* the priests sees the omen on the tray and if the paddy seeds are found to fall short of the original numbers after counting, then it is assumed that the deceased has taken away the paddy and the household should never cultivate the same kind of paddy anymore. Because, it means a bad omen for the household and if the number remains same then the condition of the family will remain same or so so. And if it happens to exceed the original number then it is assumed that the family will rise in wealth and prosperity.

On the third day the household as well as the relatives all would clean the cooking pots and utensils, clothes, the house etc. In the open yard of the house, a small pandal is constructed. Two fowls and rice beer (*luk lao*) are offered to the villagers and to those who carried and buried the dead, they are called ‘*rang bhari*’. One fowl is given to the villagers and the other is to the *rang bhari*. The relatives of the deceased have cooked the meat of the fowl with rice powder and the tender inner part of banana stem (*pachala*). The priests prepare holy water mixed with mustard oil, copper, rice, sesamum seeds, *blokching pha* flower in a bowl. This mixture is called *telpani*. The villagers first are made to touch the purification water with their left hand fingers. After that the householders or relatives can touch the holy water. Sprinkling
the holy water with a twig of basil flower over the rooms the priests purify the house 
by chanting –

'The house is impure, the door is impure, today with the holy water and oil all these are purified and we wish happiness to all the members, relatives of the household'. The priests after the blessing would take the cooked meat with rice beer.

*Mora log logua: Mora log logua* is the ritual of establishing a relation or associating the dead to the company of the deads or Dam. This ritual is performed on either the tenth day or eleventh or fifteenth day from the death or on a odd day within the month. The ritual is followed by a grand feast. This ritual plays the most important part in establishing or connecting the dead with the ancestors and assigning his/ her place in the Pho kam or Dam post as a Dam on mou or Na Dam (newly departed one who get the room in the particular place of the house where the ancestors are believed to reside while they are worshipped).

In the courtyard a big pandal is constructed. The preparation of feast starts with the sacrifice of a pig done by the eldest son-in-law of the deceased person. All the varieties of dishes containing fish, meat (i.e., pork, chicken, duck etc.) are cooked in a separate place temporarily constructed for cooking these for the feast. This cooking is started with the initiation of the eldest son-in-law by putting the cooking vessel on the oven posts.

On the tenth day, a pang or platform is made to the Ghai Dam (Ghai- main, Dam- dead) on the north east corner of the pandal by offering a red hen. On that pang or platform the cooked rice, rice beer, meat curry of the lower belly part, the intestines of the pig are offered to the dead. By offering these the priest welcomes the dead ancestors and says, ‘Oh’ the great fore fathers, please come and accept our offerings, from today so and so (name of the deceased) who is your so and so (relationship) became one of you’. In this chanting the name and relationship of the dead with the ancestors, names of the offered articles are also uttered. Through this ritual the dead is transformed and ascended to Dam at the Dam post. At the same time another platform is made to offer oblations to the dead by the kin members of the main family. A pair of duck is offered on this platform.
After taking the feast by the villagers and relatives, the cooks and the distributors (bilonia) of the feast have constructed a raised platform (maihang) on which cooked rice, meat curry, nam lao (water mixed rice beer) are offered on a pair of banana leaves to the deceased, under the maihang one extra packet of the above articles are offered to a companion (tekela).

Finally when the eating is over the sickle bearer/elder son of the deceased is made to bow down and seek blessings from the priests. From this ceremony on the tenth day the deceased is believed to get a place in the Dam post of the house and could get oblation from his descendents. Outside the house, on an earthen octagonal platform a lamp stand is established with either eleven or twenty-five or hundred and one devices to hold the lamps. The main priest lit light on the three-faced lamp placed at the top of the kui lak or lamp stand. By enlightening these, the priests perform the Phura Lung ceremony and sing the Phura song in praise of Phura. They pray to Phura, the God Almighty to seek blessings for the deceased with the offering of fruits, pulses etc., no blood shed is done here. All the family members come all together to offer their oblation. After the chanting of Tai hymns the priest sprinkle nam nga pulok (holy water mixed with chingkora flower) on all and again gave nga pulok (a mixture of milk, sugar, curd, butter and honey) to everyone to eat. With the chanting of hymns all the family members throw flowers to the main platform. And the death ceremony comes to an end with the blessings of the priests.

The Tai Ahoms have their own burial system and the kings were buried with a raised earthen mound on the burial place. In the reign of the Ahom kings, while an Ahom king dies, the death is kept a secret till the next successor is selected from among the royal houses by the nobles of the royal court and the new king is placed on the throne with all the formalities and grandure immediately with official announcement of the news of the death of the king. The new king order to make a coffin for the dead body of the king to be buried (Gogoi 1976:88). The body of the deceased king is then buried which was laid in the coffin made of planks of a timber of uriam wood dyed with red and yellow paint (hengul and haital). A raised huge mound of earth was made on the burial grave called Moidam. On the top of the Moidam a Mad ghar (house) was constructed. It is believed that upto ten days the deceased king or the Dam of the king took rest in the house and after ten days of
performing death ritual the Dam of the king transformed into Phi. This peculiar way of burying the dead which is similar to that of the royal tombs of China. The dead body is kept in a wooden coffin and buried in a grave by constructing vault and earthen mound is raised over it as it looks like a hillock. Again the Moidams also resemble the pyramids of Egypt. From the earliest periods of Egyptian history, all Egyptians were buried with at least some burial goods that they thought were necessary after death. At a minimum, these usually consisted of everyday objects such as bowls, combs, and other trinkets, along with food. Wealthier Egyptians could afford to be buried with jewelry, furniture, and other valuables, which made them targets of tomb robbers. In the early Dynastic Period, tombs were filled with daily life objects, such as furniture, jewelry and other valuables. They also contained many pottery and stone vessels (Grajetzki 2003:7-14). The ancient Egyptians had an elaborate set of burial customs that they believed were necessary to ensure their immortality after death. These rituals and protocols included mummification, casting of magic spells, and burial with specific grave goods thought to be needed in the afterlife (Digital Egypt, Burial customs & http://web.olivet.edu/gradusers/hgerth/leeanne.htm retrieved November 26, 2007). Funerary Boats are a part of some ancient Egyptian burials. Boats played a major role in religion because they were conceived as the main means by which the gods traveled across the sky and through the netherworld. Human sacrifices found in early royal tombs reinforce this view. These people were probably meant to serve the pharaoh during his eternal life. Eventually, figurines and wall paintings begin to replace human victims (Donadoni 1997:262). Some of these figurines may have been created to resemble certain people, so they could follow the Pharaoh after their lives ended. In the Moidams of the Tai Ahom kings also golden ornaments, royal sword, silver baskets, gold limebox, and the things used in their lifetime all are given.

The construction of the royal Moidam is under the direction and supervision of Changrung Phukan. Every Moidam was constructed with an underground chamber with an arched roof and a door. The Moidams were built with bricks and stones cemented by the mixture of black pulse, molasses, eggs of duck, barali fish, lime (from lime stone and snail shell). Boundaries were also made around the burial tomb or Moidam. There were Deo sals or sacred religious sacrificial altars in the eastern
pole of the *Moidams* of the kings. Most of the dead bodies of the kings and queens, high rank officials were entombed at the Charaideo cemetery. There are almost one thousand to twelve hundred *Moidams* all over Assam (Gogoi 1657:48). Each *Moidam* of the *Ahom* kings is constructed in a peculiar way (Rajkumar 1980:104-117). During the *Ahom* reign *Mo’sai Phukan* was given the charge of giving daily offerings with illumination in worship of the dead kings and queens and to beautify the area with flower gardens all around the graveyard (Handiqui 1994:V). When *Dam* puja was performed after the death of a king for the union of the departing soul with the souls of its forefathers, the *Mo’sai Phukan* presided over the function (Bhuyan 1974:172).

At present the death ritual as per the *Tai* law is performed only by the few priestly clans, even today they used to build *Moidam* on the burial ground. But most of the royal families have given up their burial custom. Only a few royal members in Lakwa are still practicing this.

4.02 The priestly clans are practicing their own religious rites and ceremonies in full vigour, yet they perform some ceremonies like *Hubochani, Sara Utua or Sara dia, Ho Sang Khora or Lakhimi Puja, Mah Jakhar Puja, Gatial Puja* etc. These are the influences of Hinduism and of the local tribes so are performed in a mixed form. These religious ceremonies are briefly cited below:

i. WORSHIP OF HUBONCHANI/HUBASANI

‘*Hubochani*’ is a Hindu Goddess and is worshipped in the Hindu *Deosal* of *Um Pha* ceremony. *Hubochani* worship is also held for welfare of the whole village or for a clan in an interval of 2, 3, 5 or more years. Last *Hubochani* worship was held in the house of Mr. Priyanath Phukan, a descendant of a *Khumtai Bailung* clan, on 29.09.09 at Jhanji Hanchhara Bailung Gaon. This was performed after an interval of long fifteen years. The worship was performed by the Priest Chao Rameswar Deodhai Phukan, Charing Deodhai Gaon, Patharua Chuk, Amguri, Sivasagar.

One earthen platform is made in a square shape, on the four sides of the platform, four banana trees are posted along with wholesome sugarcanes. A *Chandra Tap* (decorated white and red cloth) is hanged over the platform as its roof and tied to the four posts. Inside the temporarily constructed house on a banana leaf a *tamuli pira*
(wooden stool) is placed on which a new gamucha (towel) is given. A lit wick, complete female dress, a looking glass, golden ring, chain, a pair of earrings, gam kharu (bracelet), vermilion, new hair oil, comb, hair (artificial hair) or chuli chong etc. are kept on the stool covered with the gamucha. One packet of rice, daal, mustard oil, one egg of duck are offered. One earthen pot is kept near to this. One betel nut and leaf with a rupee is given, under the seat on a bamboo sheath container (dung) water is offered for washing the feet of Gosani. A few gosani flowers (a kind of a red hibiscus flower small in shape) are kept in water. At the left side of the platform two long bamboo creepers with fishing hooks made of banana sheath are kept leaning on the banana tree posts. Under the creepers on a banana sheath container a few fishes are kept alive in water.

On the ground six pangs or platforms are made for the following deities:

1. **Matri Pang (Goddess Hubochani):** On a pair of banana leaves ripe bananas, raw rice powder, a betel nut and leaf wrapped in banana leaf, leaves of wood apple (Bel), Akhoi flower (flower of a medicinal plant or grass commonly known as Durun Ban), tonglati (a kind of a sacred leaf of the Ahoms) are pierced through a thin stick and both the sides of the stick are put into a banana. Another stick is made in which only the Akhoi (similar to cornflakes, but it is made from rice) are stitched and put into a banana; half of the money kept on the main platform is offered to the Matri (Mother) pang.

2. **Mahadeu Pang:** This platform is offered to Mahadeu at the left side of the Matri pang. The offered articles are same with the Matri pang. Half of the money is kept on the Matri pang is given in the pang of Mahadeu. In the pang of Mahadeu a lit wick is given.

3. **Lava-Kusha Pang:** Two pangs are made in between the Matri and Mahadeo pang. On these pangs on a pair of banana leaves folded betel nut and leaf and the offered articles as same with the Mahadeu pang are offered to Lava-Kusha.

4. **Bidhi-Bidhata:** Bidhi-Bidhata are the companions of goddess Hubochani. On a pair of banana leaves all the above same articles are offered to Bidhi-Bidhata. This pang is made at the right side of the Matri pang.

5. **Jajali-Saraswati:** All the above articles are offered here.
Jakarua Mritak Tekela: Same articles are offered here.

In each pang lit wicks are given and rice beer is offered to all.

Blood Sacrifice is a must in this ceremony. On the Mahadeu pang a red fowl is given. Two fowls are offered on the two pangs each to Lava and Kusha. On the Matri pang a duck, a white pigeon are offered by cutting their throats. On the pang of Mritak or Dam a red hen is offered. Bidhi-Bidhata, Jajali-Saraswati, Jakarua Mritak tekela are given fowls to each of them. In the Matri pang after sacrificing the white duck and a white pigeon, a white goat is sacrificed by cutting the throat. After sacrificing the white goat a pigeon is offered as a muhudi (mouth freshener). The sacrifice of the white goat is followed by the uruli dhvani.

On the heads of the sacrificed fowls and hens, the lit wicks are posted. In the Matri pang an earthen bowl is given to hold the blood of the victim of Sacrifice. In other pangs banana sheath containers are given and in each pang grinded black pepper, salt are given. Wicks are made by wrapping cotton thread on bamboo sticks and the wicks are lighted on the pangs before the worshippers bow down to seek blessings. The priest sprinkle holy water mixed with basil leaves over all. During the ceremony, the priest chants devotional songs in Assamese language relating to the birth and life of the Gosani. As per the song, the birth of Gosani is due to the egg laid after copulation of Mahadeu and Matri in the form of goose while playing in a lake (brook). The egg was caught in the net of the fishermen and from that fisherman one Brahmin take the egg to his home and he gave it to his wife. After few days, from that egg one beautiful girl came out. The Brahmin has no child; so they take the girl as their own child. Then an owl hooted and a frog cut the naval....

After worshipping Gosani, on the pangs for the gods are given oblations made of rice, milk, sugar boils altogether. After offering this sweet rice to the gods and goddesses the priest requests them to partake these so that the anger of the Gosani is gone. The sweet rice is distributed among the family members and their kins as well as villagers also.

At the end all the people bow down and seek blessings from Gosani for the welfares of the family. With this the ceremony ends.
The *Hubochani* worship while performed by a village is observed in an open field and while performed by a family is held on the courtyard.

This *Hubochani* worship is equivalent to the worship of goddess *Durga* of the Hindus.

In this worship a feast is given to all, meat is cooked with rice powder which is a must in this feast.

ii. **SARA DIA OR SORA UTUA**

This *Sara* (boat) *dia* ceremony is a minor ritual still performed by the priestly clans. This is performed after the completion of paddy plantation. On this occasion a *Sara* or boat is made from three banana sheaths (*bhim kalar pat*); the heads of the boat are made as pointed. On the middle of the boat a cabin (*dingora*) is made from banana sheath in a round shape. Eleven boatmen are made of banana sheath who are posted in the boat. Five boatmen are posted at the front of the *dingora* and six boatmen are posted behind the *dingora*. On the heads of the boatmen *gosani* (red colour hibiscus) flower and basil leaves are kept. Two extra boatmen are posted on the heads of the boat. One boatman is posted in the middle of the *dingora*. Inside it one bunch of ripe bananas, raw powdered rice and one lit wick is offered. On the ground nine platforms (*pang*) are made. One pang is given to *Matri* (Mother Goddess), at the left of this *pang Darial* (a god) is given oblation on a *pang*. At the right side of *Matri pang* eight sheds of oblations are given on pieces of banana leaves to her associate eight sisters. On all the sheds raw rice powder, banana, incense sticks are offered. Inside the boat in front of all the images, on pieces of banana leaves a little raw powdered rice, ripe banana with its heads are cut, are offered.

On each of the pangs one lit wick (*aroia*) is given. On the *Matri pang* white colored duck and a white pigeon are offered by cutting the throat. The heads of the offered duck and pigeon are placed inside the *dingora* and wicks are posted on the heads. When the lit wicks on the pangs put off the priest takes the boat on his head with the help of two persons near a river or a stream and leaves it in the water and let it there to float with the current and while they return they never turn back. After
coming back the remaining parts of the sacrificed birds are cooked with powdered rice and are eaten by all.

The priest worships the goddess *Matri* and *Darial* by chanting hymns in Assamese language.

*Matri* or *Mother Goddess Gosani*: Oh' Hari! Oh' Ram! Mother goddess along with nine (*Ai na bhani*) sisters be satisfy with the offerings. Surrender to *Ai* (*Matri*), submission to *Ai*, death never comes while think of *Ai*. Neither the wall, nor the roof, nor the three crore of gods can save, unless and until mother goddess with nine sisters saves.

You are offered lacs of rupees, incense and lit wicks, flowers-basil leaves. Being satisfied with these grant us the long life (*Amritar hat phurabo lage*), keeping far from ill-happening, evils, diseases, measles, pox.

*Darial*: Oh’ Hari! Oh’ Ram! Oh’ Darial Dangaria, you are offered lacs of rupees, incense and lit wicks, flowers and basil leaves. Please being satisfied with these and protect by holding them all the old ones, young ones, youths and all the house holders.

*Barokuri Boisa, Terokuri Dingora*: Barakuri Boisa, Terokuri Dingora you are also offered lacs of rupees, incense and light, flowers and basil leaves. Be satisfied with these, by managing, convincing Mother goddess you too protect the inmates of the house from all kinds of evil powers as a protecting shield. Oh! Hari, Oh! Ram.

*Jakorua Mora Tamuli takela*: Oh’ the collective attendants of deads, you are also offered lac of rupees, incense and light, flowers and basil leaves. When the household gods leave, outside gods take, when the deads leave, ghost eat. If the household deads are propitiated, one can sail even on a broken boat. Snakes never bite, Tigers never eat, even the god of Death (*Yama*), never dare. Please bless us, by convincing mother goddess, and keep safe all the inmates of the house from any evil. Oh! Hari, Oh! Ram.

This *Sara diya* ceremony is performed to get rid off evil spirits who causes diseases in human being, cattle and paddy field, by floating away the boat it is believed that all the evils too go away with it from the village or area. (Field study, hymns collected from Deodhai Priest Rameswar Deodhai Phukan. Personal observation of *Sara dia* ceremony on 01.10.09 performed in the house of Mahendra
iii. *GATIAL PUJA*

*Gatial* is worshipped by constructing eight platforms towards the eastern and western pole. Out of eight platforms four platforms are made on raised posts (*maihang*) from bamboo posts and banana sheaths. The other four platforms are made on the grounds. *Gatial* is worshiped in the Hindu *Deosal of Um Pha* ceremony also. *Gatial* is a local god. In the *Gatial puja* the following gods are worshiped.

1. **Balia Dangaria**: Two spotted (red-white) fowls, one egg of duck, an earthen lamp, one bow, one wrapped wholesome betel nut and leaf are offered on a raised platform.

2. **Indra**: Two white coloured fowls are offered on a raised platform.

3. **Chaman**: Two red fowls are offered on a raised platform.

4. **Gatiah**: Two white coloured fowls are offered on a raised platform.

5. **Jol khai**: One red fowl is offered on a platform made on ground.

6. **Haragdeu**: One red fowl is offered on an earthen platform.

7. **Baghdeu**: One red fowl is offered on an earthen platform.

8. **Jakorua Mora Tamuli Tekela**: One red fowl is offered on an earthen platform.

In each platform or stand (*pang*) rice bear (*luk lao*), rice, ripe banana, rattan sprout (*batgaj*), *bhekuri* (*Solamun indicum*), *mechaki* (a kind of vegetable plant), *mejenga* (vegetable plant), *nephaphu* (vegetable plant) are offered. Boiled pieces of banana, sweet (boiled rice with milk, sugar, honey) and raw sweet meat are offered to the gods one packet each. The birds are sacrificed by beating with a guava stick. In this worship twelve fowls and hen are required. Earthen lamps are given in each pang.

In the western pole one boat (*sara mo*) is made of banana sheaths. The construction of the boat and posting of boatmen are same with the *Sara dia* ceremony. In this *pang* of Mother goddess (*Matri*) one white coloured duck, one white coloured pigeon are offered (sacrificed). After sacrificing these, one white coloured goat is
sacrificed by cutting the throat by keeping it on the sacrifice stand (a banana stem) is followed by the *uludhvani* made by the women. After that on the piece of banana stem or the sacrifice stand a white pigeon is sacrificed to conclude the eating (*muhudi*). Towards the right of the boat one black coloured goat is sacrificed to *Kechaikhati Gosani* (*Kecha*-raw, who takes raw blood or meat); before the sacrifice of the goat a black coloured pigeon is sacrificed as the opening and after the sacrifice of the goat a black pigeon is again sacrificed as the end up of the sacrifice function. In this ceremony no boat is made to *Kechai Khati Gosani*, instead of boat a house is made by banana sheaths, inside it an earthen lamp is given. The platform of *Kechai Khati Gosani* is taken by a woman on her head and the boat of *Gatial* is kept on the head by the male member and take these to the river or stream to float it away. After floating down the boat they came back and eat the oblation and a feast is given to all on that place. The worship is performed for the well being of the family, cattles and paddy field. On the day of *Gatial* worship the women folk offer ablation (*sarai*) in the *Namghar* (prayer house of Vaisnavite people) (Field study, information of ‘Gatial Worship’ is collected from Deodhai priest Rameshwar Deodhai Phukan, Deodhai Gaon, Amguri, Sivasagar, 2009).

iv. **LAKHIMI PUJA OR HO SONG KHORA**

*Lakhimi* is a goddess of Hindu pantheon, regarded as the goddess of wealth. Yet the *Tai Ahoms* believe *Lakhimi* as a goddess of *Mouran* or *Moran* clan who is the forefather of *Then Kham*. The *Ahoms* called *Lakhimi* as *Laikhaomi* who has two manifestations-*Aijong lao* (*Ahu*) and *Nijong kham* (*Sali*). To them *Ahu Lakhimi* is a descent of *Moran* who resides on mountain and *Sali Lakhimi* resides in ocean (sea). In the worship of *Lakhimi*, *Khao Kham* the presiding god of water is worshipped because *Lakhimi* is believed to be resides in sea or ocean and *Khao Kham* is the god of water. Due to this connection *Khao Kham* is worshipped in *Lakhimi puja*.

At the end of harvesting, a bunch comprising the last stalks of paddy is brought by a male member of the family and is hung on a tree in front of the courtyard. On completion of harvesting and storing, this bunch is stored in a granary by performing *Ho’song khora* ceremony (Borua 1978:92). ‘*Ho Song Khora* or *Badou*
Khara’ is the father of Lakhimi according to the devotional songs to Lakhimi, and so perhaps this ceremony is called Ho Song Khora ceremony.

This Lakhimi worship is performed in such a festive way that it is also known as Lakhimi biya, for the preparation to bring Lakhimi to the granary.

The following articles are required in worshipping Aijonglao Lakhimi:

Khekari, a small replica of the granary is made in the right hand side of the actual granary of the house holder, made with palm leaf, basket, spear, javelin (a hooked pole), blokjong or Lakhimi flower, rice beer, container made of banana sheath in both small and big size

Inside the temporarily made granary with palm leaf, betel nut and leaf wrapped with koupat, rice cake from Ahu rice, ripe banana and earthen lamp are given. Vegetables like gourd, arum, brinjal, meseki, mejenga, titakachi, bhekuri, betgaj etc. are also given. It is believed that before to be the goddess she was brought to the human civilization. She was living in the hills, where she used to eat any available vegetable. Thus members of the house holder offer a wide choice of vegetables to get her blessings (Barua 1978:91). Again it can be said that the offered vegetables are the available seasonal vegetables, thus these are offered as a part of the food habits during that season. In this ceremony a red fowl is also sacrificed to goddess Lakhimi.

Again in the worship of Sali Lakhmi or Nijong kham a replica of the granary is made from banana sheath. Inside this on a banana leaf two packets of ripe banana, raw rice cake from sali rice, betel nut and leaf, wholesome betel nut and leaf wrapped with koupat are offered. One pair of ducks and two fowls are sacrificed by cutting their throats.

In the Lakhimi puja, Khao Kham is worshiped, the requisite articles are: a triangular shaped fishing scoop, an earthen lamp and an egg of duck.

The priest goes to the river or pond and scoop there. Whatever is caught by the scoop is kept on the dula and returned back to home, in the whole way the women sing devotional songs to Lakhimi.
‘As Lakshmi is a goddess of wealth thus this worship is performed to seek blessing to get good harvesting so that the granary could be filled up with paddy crops, the cow shed be filled with cattles’.

These rituals are performed as a part of their assimilation as well as influence of local tribes and Hinduism.

REFERENCES


Dinanath Changbun (Tr.) 1990 *Chak Lang Bidhi*, Sivasagar.


During field study in Sepon Hologuri, Bakata mouza the death ceremony of Phonidhar Phukan (Deodhai clan) on 5th Oct’05; Durlov Ch.Phukan(*Bailung clan*) on 18th Oct’10 at Bailung Gaon; at the funeral of Jugen Mohan’s father (*Mo’hung clan*) at Rukang on 16th Sept’07; at the funeral of Deben Phukan’s mother (*Deodhai clan*) on 26th Jan’10 at Bakata; are observed. The priests were Mo’lung Kamala Phukan, Tankeswar Barua, Tileswar Mohan.

Field study, full fledged marriage rituals are observed on 22.02.04 and 09.02.09 in Sepon Hologuri village, Bakata and in Jhanji Hanhchara Bailung Gaon.

Field study, 17.05.04, *Pu Phi Siu* worship by Dangdongia Deodhai clan, Rukang.

Field study, 15.11.07, *Haragdeu Langkuri* worship is observed, in the house of Ushadhar Phukan (Sepon Hologuri), Deodhai clan.
Field study, 18.07.07, Lakwa.

Field study, 14.04.08, Bakata Parijat village.

Field Study, 18.09.08, birth ritual is observed in the house of Mr. Priyanath Phukan, a descendant of Bailung clan, Jhanji Hanchara Bailung village.

Field study, 21.10.08, small marriage is observed in the house of Mr Haresh Phukan, a descendant of Deodhai clan.


Field study, 29.09.09, Hubochani worship was held in the house of Mr. Priyanath Phukan, a descendant of a Khumtai Bailung clan, Jhanji Hanchara Bailung Gaon.

Field study, 01.10.09, Priya Nath Phukan, a descendant of Khumtai Bailung clan, Jhanji Hanchara Bailung Gaon.

Field study, 03.10.09, Mohendra Gogoi, a descendant of Khumtai Bailung clan, Jhanji Hanchara Bailung Gaon.

Field Study, 2009, information of Gatial worship is collected from Deodhai priest Rameswar Deodhai Phukan, Deodhai Gaon, Amguri.

Gogoi, Lila 1957, Buranje parasa nagar, Sibsagar.


Hymns are collected from Biswa Changbun Phukan (*Lit Me-Dam Me-Phi, Sadou Asom Mohan Deodhai Bailung Sanmilan*, Bakata).

Hymns collected from Rikkhon Puthi, Tileswar Mohan, Bakata Parijat village.


*Jashing Pha Puja Bidhi*, collected from Tileswar Mohan.

‘*Lai Lit Nang Hun Pha*’ preserved by Junaram Changbun Phukan, Parijat Village, Bakata.
