CHAPTER II

THE TIWAS

2.1: Origin and Migration

The mongoloid people living in Assam are linguistically Tibeto-Burman in origin and had migrated to this land at different intervals of time from their original homelands in South-East Asia- China, Burma, Tibet, etc. According to Gait (1963) and other historians and linguists, the inhabitant of Assam like Bodo, Kachari, Kuch, Chutia, Lalung, Deuri, Rabha, Mech, Tipara and Garo etc. belong to the Bodo group of people, linguistically they belong to Tibeto-Burman language group.

The Tiwas are one of such Mongoloid group of people living in various parts of Assam. (Senapati, 2008). They form a significant group of plain tribes of Assam. Numerically they hold the 6th position among the different tribes of the Assam. The other five positions are held by the Bodos, Miris, Karbis, Rabhas and Sonowal Kacharis respectively. The concentration of the Tiwa people is mainly found in Nagaon and Morigaon districts, which form the central part of Assam. They spread in Kapili, Kathiatoli and Kampur Development Block areas of Nagaon district and Mayang and Bhurbandha Development Block areas of Morigaon district. They are also distributed in Titabor area of Jorhat district and in some areas of Dhemaji district of Upper Assam and in Sonapur areas of Guwahati Sub-Division of Kamrup (M) district of Lower Assam. A significant population of the Tiwas is found in the hill district of Karbi-Anglong. The Tiwas have two sections on the basis of their habitat- the Hill-Tiwa (Hazowali) and the Plain-Tiwas (Thaluwali or Datiwalia).

There are various tales and legends regarding the origin of the terms ‘Lalung’ and ‘Tiwa’. According to Syamchoudhury and Das (1973), ‘Lalung is a Mikir word, formed of two parts, lang and lung, with separate meanings, lang means water and lung means to sink in it. These two words have been
compounded into Lalung. Some Mikirs are distributed in the same region with the Lalungs but in the plains they are not as numerous as the latter. There is a Lalung tale of how the Mikirs came to distinguish the Lalungs as the people who were drowned in water and were rescued by them.

The story goes that during the invasion of Assam by the Maan (Burmese), the Lalungs were driven out from the eastern part of their habitat in the plains towards the Kolong River in the Nowgong district. In their attempt to cross it, they drowned in the river. The Mikirs who were also there, helped them to get out and cross the river. After this incident, the Mikirs started calling them lang-lung, which later on was shortened into Lalung.” (ibid, 1973: 7)

According to Sarma Thakur (1985) “The River Brahmaputra rescued or gave shelter to the Bohemian people, hence they were known as Lalungs. It is said that there was a branch of the river Daiyang in Karbi Anglong called Nilalung. During the reign of the Kamata kings, the Lalungs had to leave their original habitat and established villages on the bank of the river Nilalung. In course of time the people living on the banks of the river were known as Lalungs.

According to the Lalung dialect Libing or Libung means man. In course of time this Libing or Libung changed its form to Lalung. (ibid: 1985: 9)

The meaning of the word Tiwa is the people who have the relation with water; because in Tiwa language the term Ti represents water. The Tiparas (Tripuri) called themselves as Tibra or Tifra who might have relationship with the Tiwas. The original home land of the Tiwa and Tifra was Tibet which is a land with the origin of various rivers from the glaciers. The term Tiwa might have evolved from the term Tibra or Tifra and thus the Tifra and the Tiwa are the same group of people. (Bordoloi, 2008:6).

According to the Tiwa dictionary (Tiwa Matpadi: 1995: 344) the meaning of the word Tiwa is ‘sweet’. This might have been a reason for accepting the name Tiwa as the nature of the community is gentle and polite and good mannered and
there is sweetness in their behavior. The word Tiwa might also have been evolved from the word Tiwethe meaning of which is straight.

In his book *The Background of Assamese Culture* Raj Mohan Nath, mentioned that the Tifra come down from Tibet to the Yamuna valley and settled in Allahabad. But due to the pressure of Aryans they migrated towards the east direction and entered Assam (*Pragjyotishpur*) and settled in the bank of river Kapili. There they established a kingdom called Tribeg in 1900 BC. (ibid: 6).

The exact location of Tribeg could not be ascertained, but in all probability this principality was somewhere near Kasua Gaon lying on confluence of Borapani, Jamuna and Kapili. (Sarma Thakur: 1985: 1). The meaning of the name of the kingdom Tribeg in which Tri means three and Beg means flow of water (river). As such, the area somewhere near these three rivers the kingdom was established. (ibid: 7)

During the reign of the 15th king Tripur there was total anarchy and the citizens had to face severe disturbances and suffer from famine, as a consequence of which these people had to leave their kingdom Tribeg and take shelter in different neighbouring areas. Most of them took shelter in Jaintia kingdom of Meghalaya. The former kingdom of Tribeg became tribute kingdom of the Kachari king. The people who lived in this kingdom were the Tiwas. (ibid: 8).

The section of them who had taken shelter in the Jaintia kingdom accepted the traditions and customs of the Jaintias. Their inheritance rule became similar to the Jaintias who are matrilineal in nature. The daughters enjoy the rights on property. Sons had to leave their parental houses after marriage and live in the houses of their wives. The boys did not have the right on the immovable property. The exception was there if the sister wanted to donate a share of her immovable property to the beloved brother then the boy could enjoy the right on that property. If a couple did not have girl issue then they selected a girl of other clan for their
son’s marriage and thus the daughter-in-law was raised into their clan and she inherited the property of her mother-in-law.

From the Jaintia kingdom, the Tiwas entered into the Ahom kingdom in about 17th century A.D (ibid: 17). The Tiwas of Jaintia kingdom were not happy due to matrilineal inheritance rule of the Jaintias and secondly there was a sad custom of human sacrifice in the Jaintia kingdom during their annual worship. The victim for that sacrifice was to be supplied by the Tiwas who took shelter in Jaintia kingdom. Every family had to offer a person for sacrifice before the Jaintia deity according to their turn. These families who were not capable to offer their family member for sacrifice left the Jaintia kingdom secretly. (ibid: 16)

From the Jaintia kingdom they entered into the Ahom kingdom and requested the Ahom administrator- the Jagial Gohain for their shelter. The Jagial Gohain sent them to another administrator- the Rahial Baruah of (Raha). The Rahial Baruah settled them in three principalities of Topakuchi, Baropujia and Mikir Gayan and made their chiefs as the tribute king to the Ahom king. (ibid: 16)

The Ahom king Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha later on created two other principalities for them at Khola and Khaigarh. Thus altogether these five principalities of Topakuchi, Baropujia, Mikir Gayan, Khola and Khaigarh were commonly known as Pacho-Raja (five-kings) under the Rahial Baruah of Raha. (Bordoloi, :33)

Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha also created seven other principalities under the Ahom administrator, the Jagial Gohain of Jagi-Choki which were known as the Sato-Raja (Seven kings). These seven principalities were Kumoi, Boghora, Ghagua, Kumoi-Kacharigayan, Tarani-Kalbari and Sukhunagog. The chiefs of these principalities were known as the Powali Raja (small kings). These Powali Rajas administered their respective principalities autonomously helping the Ahom king with soldiers during the time of wars and paying the nominal tribute. (ibid:33)
In the book *History and Culture of the Tiwa People*, Bordoloi, mentioned “During the Ahom rule most of the hill Lalungs came to the plain areas of the Brahmaputra valley and due to development of communication, they have come in closer contact with other communities like the Assamese people and came under the influence of Hinduism.” (ibid: 40)

2.2: Climatic Features

The Tiwas live in the plain districts of Assam, concentrated in the middle part of Assam composed of Nagaon and Morigaon districts. The topography of these districts is plain on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. The siltation caused by the flood water of river Brahmaputra, Kapili, Borapani, Umium (Kiling) and their tributaries make these areas fertile for agriculture. The Tiwa people living in the plain areas practise the plough cultivation like their neighbouring Assamese communities.

The climate of the area is mild, which is not much hot in summer and cold in winter which is bearable and suitable for good vegetation. The summer season starts from the month of April-May and continues up to September-October and from the month of November, the winter season starts and lasts up to the month of March. The heat of the summer season is minimised by the rainfall that which generally starts from the month June-July to September-October due to South west monsoon.

The temperature is high in the summer season and it goes down during the winter season. The day temperature is more than the night temperature. The temperature decreases from the month of November and the winter season starts which lasts up to the month of March. The night temperature in the month of December and January becomes the minimum. The temperature starts rising from the month of March in day time with nights being cool. High temperatures are experienced in summer months at day time. Humidity is abundant in the air throughout the year. The rainfall caused by the monsoon wind in the summer
season increases the humidity of the atmosphere. Light and moderate breeze make the atmosphere pleasant.

2.3: Material Culture

The habitation of the Tiwas reflects the living pattern of the rural farmers. The house type of them in Morigaon district is the same with the non-Tiwa communities. The main entrance (door) of the house is made in the middle part of the house, like the traditional Assamese houses. Earlier the main door of the Tiwa house was made at the front end of the house. They construct their houses with wood, bamboo, and thatches which are readily available in and around their habitation areas. The houses constructed for dwelling may be called huts which are not so much big. Every family has a big court yard in front of the main house and some times the courtyard is surrounded by three to four huts which are used for different purposes, such as main living house, kitchen, cow-shade, granary, coops for poultry and piggery etc. The courtyard is mainly used for agriculture related activities, such as thrashing and drying grains, drying fire wood in sun light and other domestic as well as socio-cultural activities. The houses are constructed on mud plinths, roofed with thatches and walled with reeds and bamboo splits.

“Choraghar an out house is constructed a few yards away from the main house where guests are entertained and unmarried young boys sleep at night. Now-a-days in most of the Tiwa villages the ‘Choraghar’ is replaced by a portico or an additional house near the main house. In between ‘Choraghar’ and ‘Barghar’ there is a ‘Majghar’, which is for sleeping purposes. The ‘Majghar’ may have two or three rooms. The ‘Barghar’ also has two rooms—one meant for the household deity and the other for cooking purposes. Generally the room towards west is used for the household deity.” (SarmaThakur: 1985:29).

The sanitation facilities of the Tiwa villages are not so much developed. The drainage system of the water is not well managed. Since they occupy a
comparatively big plot of land for homestead they do not have to face the problem of water lodging. Most of the families do not possess the sanitary toilets. Some families have constructed the temporary (Kacha) latrine to serve the purpose and those who do not have such arrangement have to go to the open space when nature calls.

The source of water is usually well or tube-well. Almost every family possesses its own tube-well or well. In some villages there are some public wells constructed by the Public Health Department to provide usable water to the villagers.

Bamboo and cane craft is one of the important works of the social life of the Tiwas. ‘Bamboo and cane products like ‘Japa’ (a suitcase), ‘Pera’ (a big suitcase), ‘Petari’ (a small suitcase), ‘Sarai’, ‘bata’ (wooden plates with stand) are the specialities of menfolk. They also make canoes, spinning wheel out of wood pieces. In ‘Barat’ and ‘Sagra Misawa’ festivals the people use varieties of masks made of bamboo slices and cloths. Carving of animals and birds are seen in the entrance beam of the ‘Samadi’. Besides they carve beautiful elephant designs in combs which are used in ‘Sagra Misawa’ festival. (ibid, 1985:34)

2.4: Dresses & Ornaments
2.4.1: Dresses

One of the prime needs of human being are the clothes (dresses). The socio-cultural identity of an individual is generally reflected through his/her customary dresses. The Tiwas who have their own cultural identity had their own traditional dresses which are woven by the women folk in their traditional looms. They have the indigenous system of spinning thread from cotton and eri cocoons weaving different clothes to prepare dress materials out of these. They have separate dress items for males and females. The women are good weavers and almost every woman had the knowledge of spinning and weaving in the earlier days. Even today most of them are expert in spinning and weaving jobs. In the villages of this
study no complete traditional pattern is found, except in Markangkuchi village very minute trace of it is observable. The traditional dresses of the Tiwa males are *thagla* (waist coat), *thana* or *lengti* (a narrow strip of cloth), *thalisha* or *saru gamusha* (small towel), *thenas* (*paguri*) etc., the female dresses are mainly *kachong* (*mekhela*), *phaskai* (chest covering cloth) and *nara* (loin cloth). All these dresses were generally woven with either cotton or *eri* thread by the women.

**Thagla**

The main male dress, the *thagla* is a waist coat or a kind of shirt used by the youths. When the *thagla* is woven, the weaver designs on its back and front side with floral designs. The portions of the *thagla* which touch the neck and arms of wearer are designed with narrow strips. The *thagla* resembles with the males waist coats of other tribal communities of Assam, like Bodos, Karbis, Mishings etc. but the picture of flowers designed on the back side and on the chest make it different from others. Some times in the lower portion of the *thagla* some long fringes are tied which cover the lower portion of loin of the wearers. At present the *thagla* is made with designs and raw material borrowed from other tribal people. And the touches of modernity make it indifferent from the waist coats of other tribal communities and as a matter of fact it becomes difficult to identify, whether it is *thagla* of the Tiwas or the waist coat of some other tribal communities like the Karbis (*soinangpo*), mishings (*goluk*) etc.

**Thana**

The *thana* or *lengti* is a traditional male dress of the Tiwas. It is about 6 to 7 inches width and about 14 inches in length. The two sides of it are designed with narrow strips and the two ends are also stripped thickly in yellowish white colour. In the front of this cloth is pichoed in both sides with about 3 inches long fringes. It is worn in the loin by two wraps and then passed from front to back through the gap of the thighs and knotted in the back side of the loin in such a manner that it covers the genital organ. The colours usually used in *thana* are white and dark
brown. At present this type of dress item is not used in every day life. It is usually used in their traditional ceremonial occasions such as, during the cultural festivals, dances etc. The thana used today has lost its originality of width. At present it is woven in about 9 inches to 10 inches instead of 6 to 7 inches in width, so that it lessens the nakedness of the wearers. The use of dhoti was not prevalent among them in the earlier days. But during the sagra festival the dancers of sagra-misawa wore dhotis. Due to the influences of the Assamese caste Hindu people the Tiwas of Morigaon district wear the dhoti as the common traditional dress.

**Thalisha or Gamusha**

It is one of the main traditional dress items of the Tiwas. It is about a five ft. long and one ft. wide rectangular piece of cloth, which is the identity of the Tiwa tradition. It is woven by the women in their traditional hand looms. It is usually coloured in deep yellow and its four sides are stripped in light red, green or yellow colour which is desiged with different floral pictures and used as the towel as well as the symbol of identity and respect.

**Thenash or Paguri**

The thenash is a narrow and slender piece of cloth about 14 ft. in length woven from cotton threads and generally white in colour. It is usually designed with the pictures of different flowers, elephant calves, black-panther, arrow mark etc. The sides are striped with the designs of flowers and two ends are piched with long fringes. It is used as a turban and worn by the dancers in sagra-misawa dance. The dancer covers his head and ears with the thenash. It is also worn with the thagla by passing the two ends through the sides of the chest below the arms and crossed above the chest and then passed over the shoulders to the back. During the early days the length of the thenash was less than it is today, which was woven with cotton thread. But at present it is woven with synthetic thread available in the market.
**Kachong**

*Kachong* is the female dress which covers the whole body from chest below to the knee and above the ankle. It has the similarity with the *mekhela* of Assamese women. But it is not stitched, just a wide piece of cloth. It is woven generally with cotton threads, but now-a-days the *Thailand-threads* and the *Masraj-threads* are used to weave this cloth. It is generally woven in deep blue and magenta colours with the design of a few lines of narrow and thick stripes at the bottom end. It is worn to cover the chest which continues to the calves of the legs. It is wrapped above the breasts and passed towards the right shoulders and tied in certain tyle with a clothed string connected in the upper right end of the cloth.

**Phaskai**

It is a long and medium sized cloth which covers the chest part of the woman. Earlier it was woven from cotton or eri threads, but now-a-days other threads like *Thailand-threads*, *Masraj-threads* etc. are also used to weave the *phaskai*. It is also designed with the impression of different flowers. It is worn by passing one end under the right shoulder from back side and tied with the strings connected in two ends above the left shoulder and thus covers the breast part of the body.

**Nara or Loin cloth**

*Nara* is a piece of cloth like the *phaskai*. It is generally found in white or black colour and seldom in other colours which is woven with cotton threads. But now-a-days the various imported threads are used to weave the *nara* like *kachong and phaskai* which has brought about the divergent designs and colours. It is worn to cover the hip portion of the woman. For that purpose the two ends of this cloth are brought through two sides of the loin from back to front and tied above the abdomen with the strings connected in the two ends of the cloth.
The Tiwa women wove their clothes with cotton and eri threads in early days. But now-a-days the production of the cotton and eri threads are decreasing day by day and the impact of the industrialisation compel them to use other Mill made threads to prepare their traditional clothes, which has changed the pattern of colour and designs of their clothes. In the early days they coloured their threads with different colours prepared from leaves and barks of different plants.

Though the Tiwas have their remarkable traditional dresses, yet in the villages under study they are not found to dress themselves in these traditional dresses. These dresses are now-a-days worn only in connection with different occasions and by the performers in the performance of dances and other socio-cultural activities. In the day to day life they wear the casual dresses as other tribal and non-tribal people. Most of the males like to wear pants and shirts and females dress like other Assamese caste Hinduwomen, such as *mekhel-sadar*, blouse, peti-coat, sari etc. which are woven by themselves or brought from the shops and markets.

2.4.2: Ornaments

“Scanty ornaments are used by the Lalung women more as a sign of femininity than for enhancing the effectiveness of personal appearance of the wearer. Some elderly women wear silver, bead or stone necklaces ear-rings. Formerly the womenfolk wore *Gamkharu* (silver/gold bracelet), *Sipatmani* (necklace), *Gotakharu* (bracelet), *Senpatia Angathi* (a specially designed ring), but today these are not used by the womenfolk. The men folk used to wear *siha* (ear-ring) made of gold and silver. The school going girls wear factory made ear-rings and bracelets which are cheap. Decoration which signifies tattooing and mark on the body, is however, conspicuous by its absence among the Lalungs.”(ibid: 33)

2.5: Pattern of Family

A typical Lalung household consists of parents, unmarried sons and daughters and a married daughter with her husband who stays in the house as a
resident son-in-law with his children. Usually, the youngest daughter stays with her husband in the house of her parents and inherits the parental house and a major share of parental landed property. The youngest daughter is called sodiya in Lalung. The sons after marriage go and stay in the parental houses of their wives. In case his wife is not the inheritress daughter in her family of birth, he constructs a new house in the land of his parents-in-law as his wife gets a share of her parental lands. Such a son-in-law is also called a gobhia (one who resides with the parents-in-law) although he does not stay in the same house as of his parents-in-law. As a result of this system of having resident husbands (gobhia) in the family, the boys of the family are also to go to some other houses as gobhia and they do not inherit the parental lands or houses. Thus new households are created out of one household to accommodate the sons-in-laws. In case there is no daughter in the family and the sons, if any, also go to live in the houses of their parents-in-law, the household becomes extinct after the death of the couple. The husbands of the non-resident married daughters construct their houses in the lands of the family but do not construct them in the same homestead plot. There is no system of adoption of girls to carry on the family. So an issueless couple also means an end to a household. If the wife dies without any issue and the husband does not re-marry, the household also becomes extinct.

The core of the household is always a female. Among the Lalungs, there cannot be any household without a female. On the other hand, a widow with her children may constitute a household, although it is not considered to be an ideal household and as soon as a grown up daughter of the widow marries, the son-in-law becomes the head of the family. In the Lalung family, the husband of the principal female is the head of the family. A male can become the head of the family only after marriage and Lalung males want to be the heads of households and as such marriage is almost universal. Imbeciles, the blind or persons with serious physical defects are not considered proper mates for marriage and so they are denied the pleasure of conjugal life.
“The matrilineal system of inheritance in the Lalung society demands that an old household consisting of a father and a mother and a daughter is given a new lease of life by bringing in the husband of the daughter into the household as resident son-in-law who continues in the household after the death of the older couple. After marriage of his son who goes to another house in the same village or in some other village as gobhia, the household is continued by his daughter and the son-in-law. The resident son-in-law becomes the head of the family after the death of his father-in-law. His wife becomes the principal female in the family after the death of his mother-in-law. The daughter becomes the building block of the household and she inherits the house, lands, family heirloom of her parents and her husband becomes the manager of the property and the master of the house. When there are more than one daughter in the family it gives rise to establishment of new households, the inheritress daughter inheriting the old house and the other daughters getting lands for construction of their own houses from their parental homestead lands. The husbands and not the wives are the heads of Lalung families. It is noteworthy that the daughters other than the inheritress daughter also get share of permanent paddy lands. The husband of the inheritress daughter is called ‘borkabi’. (Gohain, 1994 :79,80)

2.6: Clan

Among the Tiwas there were twelve clans which later on sub divided into number of sub-clans. The main twelve clans were originated from twelve youths and twelve maids. According to an old legend, the divine powers (devtas) were lived on the earth in khels (hemlet). They lived for twelve years like this and there after decided to include the human being into the khel to make them learn the system of living in the khel and then after that they would leave for heaven. As such, the devatas invited the humans to a meeting for this purpose. In the first meeting, the humans did not want to attend the meeting. So the devatas organised the meeting for a second time. In the second meeting, the humans participated. But the devatas allowed only twelve youths and twelve maids to take part in the
meeting and included into their *khel*. The *davatas* taught them to cultivate the soil and so they cultivated from Himalaya to many other places and established a *Deoworship place* (*than*) in every foot hill. From these twelve pairs of youths and maids the twelve clans (*kuls*) of the Tiwas believed to be originated. (Deuri: 1998).

The twelve Tiwa clans are *Macharang, Madur, Maloi, Dafar, Sukai, Amphi, Lasas, Chalang, Amchong, Kakhor, Darnong and Lorom*. These clans have been subdivided into number of sub-clans, such as *Macherang, Magor, Ladur, Puru, sagara, Fangsong, pumbe (Puma), Mithi, Lomfai, Kharai, Aagara, Chanchara, Mithi, Muni, Melang, Amchi, Aagari, Damlong, Kholre* etc. (Sarma Thakur: 1985:66),

Bordoloi (2013: 67) in his book, *History and culture of the Tiwa People* stated the names of clans and sub-clans as following

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clan</th>
<th>Sub-Clan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maslaiwali</td>
<td>Malangwali, Sagrawali,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agrawali, Jamlarwali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumphaiwali</td>
<td>Kholarwali, Madurwali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hukaiwali</td>
<td>Malangwali, Kholaiwali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumawali</td>
<td>Phangchawali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amchiwali</td>
<td>Amchongwali, Durungwali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darphongwali</td>
<td>Pacaphongwali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakhawali</td>
<td>Agari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laramwali</td>
<td>(No phaid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasawali</td>
<td>Mithiwalı</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.7: Marriage

Marriage is the socially and culturally accepted form of union between man and woman among the Tiwas. The incestuous relation or the marital relation between the persons related by blood, relation in no circumstances is accepted. The persons entering into such union never get social recognition and they are hated very much and excommunicated by the society (villagers) and sometimes driven away from the village.

A Lalung Woman will not leave her house after marriage, for that will deprive her of all her rights to property. She will not have lands in her own home if she leaves her mother's house and goes as a daughter-in-law to her husband's house. (Gohain, 1994:81)

Clan plays an important role in case of marriage. The clan exogamy is strictly observed as the members of the same clan are assumed to be related by blood and therefore clan endogamy is considered as no less than incestuous marriage. “Inter-clan marriages in the same cluster or maharsa are also prohibited. The basic function of clans being regulation of marriage, clustering of clans is regulatory in the sense that marriages are prohibited between the members of the clans of one cluster. Traditionally, it is thought that the clans affiliated to one social grouping (maharsa) originated from sisters of the same mother and hence marriages between the off-springs of sisters are regarded as socially incompatible and thus prohibited. In the hills, wherever one clan may reside, members of the same clan behave as brothers and sisters and cannot marry within the clan. Same is the case of the clans grouped together in one maharsa.”(ibid: 82)

Monogamy is the socio-legally accepted form of marriage but existence of the polygyny marriage cannot be ignored. Sarrorate marriage is popular among them but the levirate is not in practice. Widow marriage (remarriage) is allowed between widow and widower. The break down of marriage relation through divorce is rare in the society. There are four forms of marriage among the Tiwas,
such as Borbiya, Gobhia Rakha biya, Joron biya and Paluai Ana biya (which would be discussed later on in chapter VI)

2.8: Kinship

Kinship is a universal phenomenon that has bound people with bonds of relationship based on marital and consanguinal ties, which forms the basis of relationship in a society. It has a significant role in the regulation of the behavior among the kins. The kinship ties of members of a particular society determines the nature of dealing with their relatives, whether they are related through the paternal or maternal or affinal relationship.

Their kinship relation is based on consanguinal and affinal bond of relationship. The consanguinal relationship includes the parent and children, siblings, relatives of father’s side such as paternal grand parent, paternal uncle and aunt and so on, the relatives of mother’s side maternal grand parent, maternal uncle and aunt and so on. The affinal kin are husband and wife and the consanguinal kin of each of them to other. This kind of kinship includes parent-in-laws, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and such kin of the husband related to wife and vice-versa. In both consanguinal and affinal kinship, there are the primary, secondary, tertiary… kin according the distance of kinship ties.

Among them the kinship relation is as strong as other communities to measure the close attachment of the relatives. On the basis of kinship relation among the Tiwas mostly the joking and avoidance behaviors are found which are varied on the basis of kinship ties. The joking relationship is normally found between a man and his wife’s younger brother and sisters and between the grand parents and grand children, a woman and her husband’s younger brothers and sisters and some times even parents and children. On the other hand the avoidance relationship indicates the some kind of prohibition of joking and face to face conversation with particular set of their relative to show due respect. The avoidance
relation is maintained between a man and his younger brother’s wife, father-in-law and daughter-in-law, mother-in-law and son-in-law, a man and his younger sister’s husband and a man and his wife’s elder sister. These relatives avoid to call each others by names. If the situation compel them to talk to each other, they maintain indirect means of conversation or with the help of third person. Even the husband and wife do not utter each other’s name and call through the medium of their sons or daughters.

According to Sarma Thakur (1985), “The terms of address and terms of reference prevalent among the Lalungs reveal that the terms of reference are more distinctly applied than the terms of address. Fa, Mo, (e)Br, (e)Si are addressed and referred to by distinct kinship terms while So, Da, (y)Br, (y)Si are addressed by their personal names. Separate kinship terms are applied for referring them. Uttering of husband’s name is taboo. The husband also does not utter the name of wife. They however address each other technonymically.

The social behaviour in respect of paternal and maternal relatives does not differ very much. Both the relatives command respect. Although Mo. Br. is a distant relative yet he takes much interest in the welfare of his sister’s children.

The kinship terminolgy prevalent among them, particularly in the plains, may be termed as descriptive. But the use of certain classificatory kinship terminolgy cannot be overlooked. Thus ‘Maghra Ayung’ is used to address father’s elder sister as well as mother’s elder sister. Similarly ‘Ma-Aa-Ayung’ denotes the father’s elder brother as well as mother’s elder sister’s husband.” (ibid: 1985: 70)

2.9: Religion and Beliefs

The belief in supernatural power and performance of rites and rituals are the basis of the religious practices of the Tiwas which form an integral part of their entire social life. Due to the belief in supernatural powers they worship different gods and goddesses, the supreme of which is Lord Mahadeo or Fa
Mahadeo whose blessings are there with the worshipers. Thus all their activities begin with the prayer in the name of Fa Mahadeo. The Tiwas not only worship the different gods and deities with certain ritual and ceremonies, but also perform the worship of their ancestors as they believe that their deceased ancestors are equivalent to deities. The propitiation of the spirits of the ancestors is one of the bases of their traditional religious beliefs. As the supernatural power is attributed to the spirits, the Tiwa people believe it is important to seek help from these spirits for their welfare. They propitiate these deities so that they will not cause any harm to the people. This sentiment is manifested in their seasonal rites and rituals of performing different worship and festivals. The religious rituals are performed by the Tiwas in three levels—family, descent and community (village), which will be elaborated in the chapter VII.

2.10: Social Control Mechanism

“Unity of the village is manifested in its corporate life. There is an integrated system for maintaining a proper mode of conduct and co-operation between individuals, families and clans. The spirit of community life is inculcated among the boys through an organisation, which is symbolised by the Chamadi, the dormitory where they live till marriage. Literally Chamadi means the place of enjoyment for boys. But here they also learn to work in strict discipline.” (Shyamchandra & Das, 1973: 22)

The main duty of the leader of the dormitory, the Chang-doloi is to maintain discipline among the boys. He is assisted by a deputy the Chang-majhi. The leaders of the dormitory are assisted by the barika, huruma, hurmphali (assistant of huruma), khurinol with his assistant khuriphali and kra-kurumi. All these post holders of the dormitory have separate duties to be carried out on various festive occasions and normal village life to maintain order in the village. All the dormitory boys and those youths going out from the dormitory even after marriage constitute the deka-khel.
The Chang-doloi controls the behaviour of the dormitory boys. He is assisted by the Chang-majhi. “He has in his charge the dresses and musical instruments used by the dormitory boy on festive occasions. The next post in order and importance is that of the barika, the messenger of the village. He proclaims the commands of the village elders and circulates them in the village and brings any one summoned by them to their presence. Where necessary the dormitory boys assist him. The fourth official in order is huruma. He is responsible for maintaining and keeping clean the village paths and water sources from which the drinking water is obtained. During festivals he keeps watch on the entire village. He has an assistant the hurmphali. There are two more persons who are given odd duties on the occasions of ceremonies and festivals. They are the khurinol and kra-kurumi. The khurinol has the charge of rice-beer, areca-nuts and betels leaves which he distributes to the elders. He is assisted by the khuriphali. The kra-kurumi cooks and makes rice-beer.” (ibid, 1973:30)

Other than the dormitory boys, the group of elders of the village or the bura-khel are the highest authority in the village set up. “They constitute the village council and are eight in numbers. They are selected from the deka-khel. Once a member enters the council, he remains on it for life. The village chief and the village priest cannot by virtue of their position, become members of the council. (ibid, 1973: 33)

2.11: Social Functionaries

The members of the group of elders or bura-khel, members of the deka-khel and the youths of the dormitory play different roles in social functions. “The Loro is the traditional head of a Tiwa village. He administers the village with the assistance of the officials like Doloi, Phator, Hadari, Saot, Majhi, Parika etc. The village elders headed by Loro tries all disputes of the villagers. Loro plays the pivotal role in the matters of maintainance of social customs and rules.” (Gohain, 1994 : 41)
2.12: Power Deligated to the Functionaries

The power exercised by the village council in controlling relationship between persons is very wide. The village council decides all the matters of social control by punishing the wrong doers according to their depth of deviant behavior. The head man of the village may not be member of the council, but he acts in strict collaboration with it bringing all disputes to its notice, announcing its decisions and keeping for it the money realized as fines. (ibid, 1994: 41)

2.12.1: Village Head

The village headman Gaonbura is the representative of his village to the outsiders. The position of the village headman has changed in the course of historical development. At present the head man has a recognized position with the Government. Important revenue communications are sent to him to be transmitted to the villagers. He acts a liaison between the government and his village. (Syamchaudry & Das, 1973:38)

2.12.2: Conflict Management

Usually each community has its distinct living area within the village. Such a division is called Khel. In the corporate life of a village, the khel is the primary unit and nobody can go against the wishes of its leaders. Usually one elder person from a group of families who are closely related form the council in a khel, they maintain social discipline and settle disputes in the khel. Before a dispute is taken into consideration, the contending parties are required to make some payment to the khel council when it sits in a meeting showing their willingness to abide by the decision that will be made. The amount to be paid is fixed by the khel council in each case according to the nature of the issue involved. (ibid, 1973: 41)

*****