APPENDICES
APPENDIX - A.

A Note on Festivals of the Ex-tea Garden Labour Population

The ex-tea garden labour and the tea garden labour societies are seen to observe some common festivals. These festivals can be broadly divided into two groups. First group of festivals originated in the predominant group of the immigrants in their original homes from which they were brought to their new residences. Although these festivals were not observed by all of the immigrant labour in their places of origin, most of them have now adopted these festivals as their own. It may, however, be mentioned that most of these festivals are now performed in modified forms. Ghatwak (1975:5) said that principal among these festivals or Paraha are Karan Parah, Sharaa Parah and Tusu Parah. Religious rituals are associated with all these festivals. The second group of paraha is consisted of Fakua or Holi, the Durga Puja and the Kali Puja. The Kali Puja and the Dewali festival take place at the same time. This second group is formal Hindu festivals.
The Karan Puja is worship of Karan Davata which bestows general well-being to households. It is reported to be held three times during the year. The major one is held in the month of Bhadra usually on eleventh day of the new-moon. It is associated with songs and dances known as Jumur or Jhumur. All households cannot afford to perform this Puja on account of its expenses. One sample household reported that the Puja was performed during the reference year. All other households of the village participated in the festival specially in the Jumur songs and dances which continued for seven nights. The Chauhana, Kaota and some Cowalla caste groups reported that they do not participate in the Karan Parab. The Christian respondents reported that they do not join the Puja but some of them reported participation in Jumur songs and dances which is associated with it. Some respondents reported going to other villages and tea gardens to participate in such dances and songs.

The Sahraa festival is observed for the well-being of the cattle. The cattle owners are specially interested in the festival. It is reported that the cattle is given oil massages from several days before the day of the festival. The uniformity in regards to the actual rituals is difficult to be found. Some reported that they sing a kind of song known as Jaheli which is almost similar to
Assamese Huaari\(^1\) which is sung at the time of Bohag Bihu.\(^2\) It may be mentioned that Assamese Bohag Bihu has also a special day for the cattle. But the Bohag Bihu is a Spring festival and the Sahraa is held during Autumn months. It may be mentioned that Sahraa is held in the same day when Dvadi festival is held. Some groups like the Kurmaia reported that they do not perform the Sahraa. But they observe the Kali Puja and the Dvadi. A few respondent belonging to Munda tribe reported that they observe Kali Puja but on actual enquiry it was revealed that they performed the Sahraa but termed as Kali Puja. They have adopted the Sahraa in terms of Kali Puja. It is interesting to note that the Mundas make sacrifices of fowls in the name of Sing Bonga (their own God) in their traditional fashion. Tribals almost all of them in the tea garden labour population as well as in the ex-tea garden labour population are used to sacrifices of fowls and evoke their own deities or gods during these festivals. This festival is also associated with songs and dances. The formal songs on the

\(^1\) Huaari is sung during Bohag Bihu. A party goes out singing and dancing from house to house.

\(^2\) Assamese people observe three important festivals known as Bihu. The principal two are Bohag Bihu and Magh Bihu. Bohag Bihu is held in the month of Baisakh i.e. in April and is a Spring festival and Magh Bihu is held in the month of Magha i.e. in January is a harvesting festival. For full details Das (1972) may be seen.
occassion of Sahraa is said to be not similar with the Jumur songs. But it is reported that some younger section prefer to sing Jumur songs also. The sample villages did not report wide participation in Sahraa dances and songs. But it appears that some kind of rituals in a pattern of their own performed in almost every household either in the name of Sahraa or Kali Puja or Dewali. It may be due to the fact that both are performed in the same time.

The Tusu Puja is said to be performed in front of a goddess Tusu Devi. The Goddess Tusu who might be described as Mother Deity of the tea garden labour and who might have the origin in the Hindu Goddess Sitala is reported to have the power to bestow children to the barren. There are legends telling that this Tusu was a girl of exceptional beauty who sacrificed herself to keep her chastity. A few Tanti households reported that they perform Tusu Puja in their households. This Parab is held in the Pausa Samskranti (equinox) in the month of January on which the Assamese people observe the Magh Bihu i.e. harvesting festival. This festival is also accompanied by songs and dances while carrying the image from house to house following the day of Puja and prior to its immersion in the river.
It may be mentioned that these Paraba are mostly accompanied by lot of drinking of the Haria and liquor. The dance in Karam Puja is joined by young girls and boys which adds to the participation from a larger section of the ex-tea garden labour population. It was reported that some Assamese boys also witness such dances and songs. It is very difficult to say that all these Paraba of the tea garden labour command wide participations from all sections of the ex-tea garden labour population. The fact that the ex-tea garden labour and tea garden labour have a common separate culture as manifested in these festivals is overemphasised with political motives.

The Hindu festivals like the Pakua and Durga Puja are also occasions of festivity in the ex-tea garden labour population. But these festivals are not associated with any rituals in the households excepting the fact that during Pakua some groups make sacrifices of fowls and drink the Haria in excess.

Assamese Festivals and Ex-tea Garden Labour Population

A section of the ex-tea garden labour population in the rural areas of Assam consider some of the Assamese festivals like the Bohag Bihu and the Magh Bihu as their own festivals. This is particularly true in a few sample villages in the Sibsagar district. Wide participation in
Meai-Bhoi (a feast held in the night preceding the day of Marsh Bihu) organised in one sample village was noticed. It was within their own society. Similarly, observation of Bohag Bihu was noticed in case of three sample villages. Thus it is evident that some of the ex-tea garden labour villages had influences of Assamese socio-cultural life.

Investigation revealed that many younger ex-tea garden labour boys and girls^the Bihu songs and dances. This signifies that many of the cultural elements of the Assamese rural society has made their way into the ex-tea garden labour society.

In one sample village, it was found, that a Namghar (a common prayer house) was established like the Assamese people and Bhawona was annually performed. They have also learnt the difficult art of playing the Khol (a kind of percussion instrument like the Mridanga) and reciting for the enactment of the drama in typical Sankardeva style. The Bhawona is becoming popular among tea garden and ex-tea garden labour.

3 The Bhawona is a type of open air theatre popularised by Sri Sankardeva the great Assamese Vaishnavite teacher in order to popularise religious themes. The art of enacting the Bhawona involves playing the Khol in difficult Bagas and Talas and also dancing in the style of dance drama.