CHAPTER VI:

SECTION I: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SIVA TEMPLES AT VARIOUS PLACES.

Religious beliefs, according to Max Muller, not only include what we can see, but something else that we cannot see.¹ Even in the lowest fetish worship, "the fetish is not only what we can see, or hear, or touch, but something else, which we cannot see, or hear, or touch."² Assam was inhabited by various groups of people of the Negrito, Austro, Dravidian, Aryan and Tibeto-Burman races since early times. As she was the meeting ground of these people the "various aboriginal beliefs, cults and myths of these diverse races and tribes mingle together as if in a witch cauldron and formed the foundation of the esoteric religion of the Tantras."³

In dealing with the historical background of the growth of the cult of Siva in ancient Assam we have discussed the probable ingatherings of:

1. O.C.R., p 34.
2. Ibid., p 34.
collects by it from the tribes and have also noticed some of the beliefs associated with the practices of the erection of menhirs, dolmens and such other things prevalent among the tribal people. We have also taken note of the fact that the cult of Siva evolves out of such beliefs associated with the menhirs and dolmens and the deity was first conceived in his linga form. At the present stage also all the Siva temples of Assam possess lingas of Siva and the worship is being conducted in his linga form only.

Linga is believed to have its relation with the cult of fertility. The tribes of Assam have extensively cultivated the erection of megaliths, which were also associated with fertility and magic. The megalithic monuments are classified into two categories—Nao Shingaing and Nao Kynthai. The former megaliths are tall upright and they represent male stones and the latter are flat horizontal slabs, which represent female stones. Button observes that these monuments are definitely phallic. With these the belief of the tribes in soul-matter of the living, as of the dead and also the fertilization of nature is made associated. Button records that the dolmens have actually been regarded as Siva temples and the children Kunyak Nagas worship the phallic stone skull cists, while the barren women embrace nakedly the stone slab carsa with the image of Hanuman. Evidently these objects indicate their nature of their the power of procreation of offspring which is also attached to a linga as a symbol of procreation in Aryan belief. Therefore, we can think that the conception of linga evolved later on in Hindu mythology was originally

6. Ibid., p 11; C.I., p 246.
7. C.I., p 245.
8. Ibid., pp 246-247.
a tribal conception of fertility and procreation. The tribal people associated fertility and magic with the stone cults. The Khami-Syntangs who were the original authors of Assam's neolithic culture exhibit magical beliefs in the stone implements. K.L. Naru describes some of the beliefs associated with the stone implements and observes that such implements were regarded by the Nagas and Abors as they had either fallen from the sky or they had been sent by God. 9 As observed by Hutton magic is a normal feature of tribal religion, which includes various festivals, rites and dancing. 10 "Such festivals or rites are usually associated with the agricultural year and may involve sexual licence which is probably intended to have a magical effect on the fertility of the crop and of the community itself." 11 At what period of history these rites entered the parlance of the worship of Siva is not known. But it is true that the later developments in the worship of Siva with sex and dances originally came from the tribal society and they were all given gradually a ceremonial as well as a devotional aspect. The original beliefs had been lost and a new religious Hoga took the place. The tendency can be best illustrated with the Kherai performance of the Bodo, who are said to have planted a Siju tree in the altar (vedi) and placed a round stone under the tree at the time of the performance. 12 The Siju tree is treated to be Siva and the round stone to the Mother. 13 Whatever might be the original belief around the tree and the stone, it turns to be a religious performance in course of time. So also the original conception of linga

11. Ibid., p 260.
12. बोदो-कृषि समाज , p 241.
13. दोरे-रौजन, p 55.
had been lost sometime past and a fresh conception full of symbolic as well as philosophical interpretations has been attached to it. The new conception is associated with the worship of linga in almost all the Siva-temples distributed all over Assam.

Lingas are divided into two classes, namely, the Oala or the movable lingas and the AcaLa or the immovable lingas. The Oala lingas are known to be Calanta Vigrahas and the Acala lingas are Sila Vigrahas. S. S. Kātakā in his paper on the "Antiquities of Assam" writes that every temple of Assam has two sets of images and the Calanta one is brought out of the temple on the occasion of festivals. However, the scholar did not mention whether the Calanta one is a linga of Siva or his icon. It is to note here that the Calanta image of Siva is not a linga but an icon. It was a custom in some of the temples in Assam to make the public visit of the icon of Mahādeva around the village on some festive occasion.

However, almost all the temples in Assam contain lingas of Siva only. Of the oldest lingas we have heard are the Jolphisā linga and the Bēna linga at Mahābhairava.

The Jalpīsa linga is located, according to the K.P., in the north-west corner of Kāmarupa. According to the Y.T. it is a white and luminous stone. According to the K.P. it is as white as the kumāra flower (Jasminum multiflorum or pubescens) and exhibits the varaśa and abhya poses. The K.P. mentions that the linga has exhibited the two poses with its two hands. But whether the linga had actually possessed two hands or it was without hands cannot be known. The writer of Impresa

16. Ibid., p. 367.
17. Chap. 77.
18. 2/VIII/44.
19. तत्तांतरभवस्तैःस्य तिब्रतन : कुंदसामि/77/32.
'Jalpesa Mahāpitha' records that there are three pieces of broken stones worshipped separately along with the Nārāyaṇa Vīgraṇa, which is situated in the north-east of the Jalpīśa temple. A tradition goes that the stone-pieces were the three parts connected on the top of the linga. It cannot be ascertained also at present as to when the parts were dislocated and taken to the Nārāyaṇa temple, where they are still worshipped with proper rites. In what manner the pieces were connected with the Jalpīśa linga also cannot be known at present. But this can be surmised that the two oblong stones were probably two hands, while the relatively small-sized stone was the head of the linga.

Further a tradition goes that once an ascetic entered the temple, where he remained absorbed in deep contemplation fasting consecutively for fourteen days. After expiry of the period he came out of the temple taking three pieces of stones in his hands. He proclaimed that icon of Māhādeva should be worshipped only in Satya, Tretā and Vēparā. As the sāstra prescribes only the worship of linga in the Kāli age, he, therefore, transformed it to a linga. Moreover, he told the people that the head and the hands of Māhādeva should be worshipped separately along with Nārāyaṇa. Saying thus the ascetic disappeared.

If the traditions are taken to be correct then we can identify the linga to be originally an icon of Śiva. However, it is to note here that there is not a single instance of worshipping Śiva in his anthropomorphic image in Assam.

The earliest record of Jalpīśa linga is found in the Skandā Purāṇa.²¹ According to the Purāṇa it was known as Anādi linga.²² There is a local tradition that the bottom of Jalpīśa linga "goes deep down

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²⁰ जलपीश महापीठ , pp 34–35.
²¹ आदिमहादेव , Chap. 56.
²² इबिद., v 36.
into the earth and that the bottom cannot be reached however much the surrounding earth is excavated. About thirty years back the platform of the Garbhagriha of the temple was excavated. After excavation of 8 feet of the surrounding earth it was found that the bottom of the linga gradually appeared its breadth and its breadth seems deepening towards inside the earth. Therefore, it is thought that Jalpiśa is really an ānādi linga. It came to be known as Jalpiśa or Jalpeśa or Jalpeśvara because a king named Jalpa after observing great austerities got merged with the linga.

The Skanda Purāṇa associates some beliefs around the saity. It says that one who would pay a visit to the saity would remain free from death of his son or loss of his wealth. Fears of earthly bondage, of dacoits and kings, of grabhas and devastation would never attack him whoever visits the saity. He, who takes refuge in him, is worthy in the earth of human habitations. Only a single visit to the saity would yield the merits of all the sacred places, or more than that. Therefore, he is conceived to be a saviour of human beings. He is bhuktija (giver of worldly enjoyments) as well as muktija (deliverer of salvation) and

25. J.C.Ghosh forwards a different explanation of the name of Jalpeśvara. In chapter 77 of the K.P. it is stated that Nanāṭa by performing austerities before Śiva-Jalpiśa linga obtained his attentantership. It further states that the linga existed even at the time of Parasāram. On this testimony of the K.P., the writer observes: "This scene of asceticism of Nanāṭa is called Jāyesvāra in Siva Purāṇa (Sanatkumāra-saṁhitā, chap.74). It also occurs in the Linga-Varaha and the Kūrama Purānas. All these Mahāpurānas are surely earlier than the Yogīlāntana. The Siva Purāṇa is mentioned in the Mahāpada grant of king Viśvarūpasena of the thirteenth century (Bengal Inscriptions,Vol.III,p 139). Most probably the Jāyesvāra is course of time changed to 'Jalpeśvara', 'Jalpeśa' and "'Jalpiśa'. J.A.R.B., Vol.IV, p 14.
always a favourite deity.

The K.P. also asserts the religious merits associated with the deity.\textsuperscript{27} It prescribes a few rites to be observed before and at the time of worship. It suggests that having bathed in Nandīkunda\textsuperscript{28} a devotee should have to observe a vow called Maha-vrata at night. The next day he should bathe in the Mahānadi and then worship the deity. It is to point here that the K.P. clearly mentions the rites of bathing in a kunḍa or reservoir. Such kunḍas are called Caranāṁrtakunda, "a receptacle for the holy water, used for washing the sacred image."

It was a feature probably much in vogue during the Indus Valley Civilization, as water reservoir unearthed at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro prove to be so.\textsuperscript{30} It is also a common feature of the temples of Siva even to-day.\textsuperscript{31} Almost all the Siva temples in Assam contain such water reservoir or Caranāṁrtakunda adjacent to the temple.

The Y.T. asserts like the K.P. the religious merits of Jalpīṣa Siva. According to it the worship of the deity with due observation of religious rite would yield the merits of the Agnīṣṭoma (a particular spring sacrifice).\textsuperscript{32} Locally it is believed that the deity can grant offspring to the childless women or to those who are desirous of begetting sons. In the month of Vaṣākha such women worship the deity "with libations of milk which fills up the well."\textsuperscript{33} Worship is performed daily in the temple, while the Sivarātri festival is observed with fairs and

\textsuperscript{27} Chap. 77.
\textsuperscript{28} The kunḍa is so named because performing austerity by the side of it Nandī obtained the attendantship of Siva. K.P., 77/2-3.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p 1.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p 1.
\textsuperscript{32} 2/VIII/45.
\textsuperscript{33} J.A.S.B., Vol. XXVII, 1951, p 267.
festivals continuing for at least one month.34 Daily offerings include cooked rice, pulses and vegetables in the morning and pancakes, locally known as 'luscis', and milk in the evening at the time of arati.35

We have already mentioned that Jalpisā linga was originally worshipped by some aboriginals, who were non-Aryan people like the Koches and the Meches. The K.P. calls them as Alesachas. These people were given the status of degraded Kṣatriyas or Bhanga-Kṣatriyas. S.C. Mitra believes that the stone of the linga which these people adored is of meteoric origin and probably it fell from the sky for which the aboriginal people believed it to be sacred and worshipped it.36 According to him the worship was a form of animism.37

However, in order to discuss the form of Saivism flourished on the north bank of the Brahmaputra we shall have to dwell on the linga of Jalpisā. We have elsewhere mentioned about the exist of Narasāryana of the Koch dynasty, who is said to have legalised a form of Śiva worship to be observed by the Koch and Meche people residing on the north of the Gehā Kamalā road with offerings of wine and flesh. These people belong to the Mongoloid tribe also known as the Kirātas. The original worshipper of Jalpisā linga were the aboriginal Koches and the Meches who were Kirātas. Before they were Aryanised there were no Hindu priests in the temple. They themselves had conducted the worship of the deity. The Kirātas, as appeared from the K.P. and the Y.T., were well-known in their practices notorious for the association of wine, flesh and semen.

34. Sir H. M. Bowring, Col. of the Brahmaputra, p 53; Völ. No. 5, p 145.
37. Ibid., p 269.
pleasing rites. The K.R. records that the Aryan people, who for fear of Paraşuráma disguised themselves as alcocas took shelter in the linga, became degraded for they assumed alcoca manners and customs. The Katriyas thus degraded were none but the Bajvamá Alvohes, who were also Kirátas. In the Dhyana Bajvamávali it is found that Śádiya Mandal, who is supposed to be the founder of the Koch dynasty, was born of a Bajvamá Koch. Thus it is evident that the Koches or the Bajvamáis followed a non-Aryan form of worship, which Naranarayana had legalised later on. As such the system of practices seduced in the worship of Śiva in the temple of Jalpíša was of a Kairátiika manner and it was the common feature of Saivism flourished on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Even at present the Bajvamá Alvohes are in charge of some of the duties in the temple,33 which is a survival of the past tradition. It may be mentioned here that the Bajvamáis believe in a god called Śiva Ṭhākur, also known as Mahéśvara, who "protects the people from troubles" and they provide the deity with offerings of dahi (curd), milk and plantains.39 They worship the deity regularly.40

Next to Jalpíša, the Mahadeálava temple at Tempur is supposed to be of a remote past. The mythological king Bānásura of pre-historic times is said to have constructed the temple and erected thereon the linga known as Bāna linga.41 We have discussed the origin of Bāna lingas. It is one among the nine42 or ten43 Acala or Sthāvara varieties. Local people believe it to be a representation of the five-faced Śiva. It is set up in a pedestal or yonipitha. It is supposed to be one of the Siddha pāthas.

Worship in the temple is seduced according to the Vedic rites.

38. उदभेद जारंगनाथ , p 34.
39. Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars of the Jalpaiguri District, 1889-95, para 223.
40. Ibid., para 223.
41. T.L.A., p 64; पवित्र अन्तर , p 176; E.H.K., p 3; Archaeology in Assam, p 45.
The offerings contain cooked food other than meat and fish. Worship is carried on daily in the morning and also at noon and in the evening. The worship performed in the morning time is one with ten upacāras, i.e., with paṭaya, arghya, aśamaniya, maṇḍuparka, maṇi, garha, puṣpa, sūpa, ṛupa, and naivedya. The worship of the second prahara is performed with sixteen upacāras, i.e., with āsana, svāgata, punarācāmaniya, vasana, abharaṇa and vandana in addition to above required for ten upacāras. In the evening arati is performed through burning incense after completion of worshipping paścādevatās with pulses. Worships of navagrahas, assādikpālas, Gaṇeśa and Narāyana are some features in the worship of Śiva. The subordinate priest of the temple informs us that pigeons and goats are presented with proper ceremonies to the deity and they are then let off to go in a living condition. The persons other than the ascetics are not allowed to take food offered on the top of the deity. There is no Carenāyaktakūṇḍa in the temple. Śivarātri is observed here with festivals and fair.

Apart from the temples enumerated above there are certain other temples of Śiva of age-old reputations. Of these the temples of Singari, Viśvanātha, Halesvara, Nagaśāṅkara, Umānanda, Kañāra, Pariharēśvara, Bilsēśvara, Hāresvara, Bhringesvara, Nogheriting and Śiva-ōl are worth mentioning. In the following lines we will deal with these temples and some other temples distributed all over Assam.

Singari: The mountain Śyamati, as recorded in the K.P., is the Singari hill, named after the sage Rayaśija. It is situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra at about seven miles south of Thakiajiuli. According to the K.P. the mountain is situated on the east of the river Nandī, identified with modern Pañcamālī. There was the procreative
symbol of Siva on the top of the hill. Siva is two-handed, brahmarāja-vahana and always engaged in sport with Uma. Siva is to be worshiped here with vāmadeva mantra and tatra, while his consort should be worshipped with Uma mantra. It is believed that the devotee will obtain salvation through the propitiation of Siva after bathing only in the river Trisrotā, which flows on the south of the hill. Trisrotā is identified with the river Nisāi.

At present there is no such linga of Siva on the top of the hill, but there is a Siva temple on the bank of the Brahmaputra in the south-west corner of it. The temple is known as Gopesvara or Gopesvāra, because the linga enshrined in the temple remains within deep water all along.

A tradition goes that the temple was built by the sage Rayāmages. The temple is ascribed to the 9th century A.D. The temple is mentioned as 'Śāṅgatika Agrahāra' in the copper plate land grant of Anantavarmā, the Ganga king of Kalinga (A.D. 822). The temple was well-reputed in the days of Śāṁkarācārya, the Vaishnava reformer of medieval Assam. The presiding deity of the temple was believed to be a giver of offspring to the childless. The chronicles of the Vaishnava saints have recorded that Śāṁkarācārya was born as a result of a boon granted by Siva to Kusumavāra, who worshipped the deity in the temple with offerings of flowers and incense. Thus the presiding deity of the temple is associated with the common belief of procreation. The deity is worshipped daily and the Siva-

47. K.P. 30/6.
48. K.P. 30/7-8.
49. K.P. 30/8.
50. K.P. 30/4-7.
51. p 189, fn 2.
52. Ibid., p 189.
53. Ibid., p 189.
54. Archaeology in Assam., p 43 (No.196).
56. p 20; p 27; p 189.
Nātri festival is observed for several days.  

Visvanātha:—According to the K.P., the Visvanātha Kṣetra is located in the midstream of the river Brahmaganga on the north bank of the Brahmamapura. The Śiva linga located here is known as Visvanātha and the great goddess present here in yoni symbol is called Visveśevi.  

Here the six goddess should be worshipped with Śaceśmaatra, Gaurijñavaja Vignu with Hayagriva tantra and mantra and Śamkara with Kamesvara tantra and mantra on the 12th, 9th and 14th lunar days.  Any devotee, who does so, earns great merit and as a result of this he remains there for one kalpa in the abode of Śiva. After it he remains for equal periods in the abode of Vignu and Purga consecutively. He is said to have taken his birth finally in the earth as a Brāhmaṇa, adopt in the Vana. It is stated in the K.P. that the Lord of the world having killed the horse-headed demon or Hayagriva in the Visvanātha Kṣetra retired to the Manikūṭa mountain.

The Visvanātha linga of Śiva remains submerged in water in the rainy season. During this period worship to be conducted in the highland, where there is the linga of Vāma or highland Śiva. There is a proverb saying: "Unsteadily is the Visvanātha Gosāñi, He sinks in water for six months and for six months he stays in highland." Mr. Neog has wrongly recorded that Vāma Visvanātha is an anthropomorphic icon of the city made of brass-metal. It is also a linga of Śiva. However, there is an icon of Vignu, which is made of brass-metal. The surrounding

57. पोर्व अर्थात् , p 190.  
58. 90/22-29.  
59. निशेष तृतीय तत्त्व  in the Y.T., 2/1/99, निशेष तृतीय in ग्रांथ वर्तन or the ancient history of Lekhimputra, प 466.  
60. K.P. 90/23.  
63. K.P. 90/22.  
64. K.P. 90/24.  
65. पोर्व अर्थात् , p 188.  
66. पोर्व अर्थात् , p 189.
area of real Visvanātha is locally known as Cakrutīrtha and people believe that bathing there would yield great merits. On the south-east of the temple of Vāma Visvanātha there is an icon of Bhāluk Gosāi or Bear-go. It is believed that no boar can enter the campus of the temple as he is guarding there.

An Ahom chronicle records the performance of a sacrifice at Visvanātha by the Ahom king, Gagānchar Singh, on the night of Friday, the 12th Pahā of 1612 Saka. He did the sacrifice with the help of one hundred and eight Brāhmaṇas. The chronicle further records that two persons—"Ktṛtyāyana Bhāṭṭācārya and Mākalimūra made offering of til and kusa and blessed the king with the longevity of a hundred Brāhmaṇas." The evidence shows the regard paid by the Ahom monarchs to the kṣaṭiya. At present, nitya or daily worship is a common feature in the temple. Worship is done in all the four praharas of the day. The rites observed in the worship are Veṇie and daily worship of Viṣṇu, navagrahas and Assāikpals have also to be performed along with Śiva worship. Cooked rice is not always offered to the kṣaṭiya from the side of the temple except on the day of Gosāi Bihu. Offerings include cooked rice with pulses, other than fish and meat, and rice flour, nice. Festivals such as Aghera Caturāṣā, 2 Gosāi Pūjā on the second day of Behāg and Śiva Caturāṣāi are being observed. Aghera Caturāṣāi is a newly included festival. It is believed that this particular Caturāṣāi is the proper day for worshipping Śiva.

In the Gosāi Pūjā festival, the Gosāi is given seven numbers of Ārovīn (a flat round bamboo-frame covered with cloth). It is a custom of the local people to offer Ārovīn to the kṣaṭiya with a desire to obtain merits. Another custom prevails in the locality that the people take Visvanātha Gosāi on the third day of Bihu to go about from the temple to a village.

66. Tungkhungla Buraśi, Para 41.
67. पौरो साहित्याते, pp 184–185.
situated at about three miles on its north. In the evening the deity is
taken again to the temple. At that moment some people take the side of
Gosālī and a few others the side of Gosānī. The latter group of people
ask the former, - "Where has the Gosālī gone to sing Bihu? Gosānī will
not allow him to enter into the temple". Then the former group of people
will say - "He has not gone to sing Bihu elsewhere, please don't ask him". Even then he is not allowed to enter into the temple. Thus attempt-
ning for seven times he forcibly enters the temple.

Formerly it was a practice during the Ahom rule to emply Naṭī
or Devasālī in this temple. Ahom chronicles have recorded an incident of
stealing away such Naṭīs from the temple by Satrajit of the Mughal army
in 1615 A.D., when Pratāpa Simha was in the Ahom throne. 68

Halesāvara: - Halesāvara is situated at about six miles north of
modern Tezpur. The temple was constructed by king Ruṣṭa Simha in 1703
A.D. 69 There is a linga of Śiva embiased in a piṇḍikā in the temple. It
was found at the time of tilling the earth with a plough for which it is
known as Halesāvara. Daily worship is carried on in two praharas except
on the day of Sivarātri, when it extends to four praharas of the day.
On the day of Sivarātri, worship is performed with sixteen upacāras while
on other days worship is complete with five upacāras. Worships of Śaiva-
grāma, navagrahas and pañcaśeśvataś are regular features. Offerings to
the deity consist of cooked rice, other than fish and meat. Rice frremercy
is also offered to the deity. Pigeon and cow are offered but they are
let off to go. Arcana, ṇaṭa bhajana, śrāvana and kirtana of Vaishnavism
are also done in the temple. People believe the linga as identical with

68. (3rd chronicle) para 168.
69. Patitāra (3rd chronicle) para 174.
Vianu. In this context it is to be mentioned here that Vanamaliśeva, who was the founder of the Vaishnava Sattra at Takshinpāta, visited Halesvara Śiva and bowed to the deity regarding it as Hari. The present priest of the temple informs us that Śiva appears before him in the form of a nāga at the time of worship in the first praḥara. There is a Śivakūṭa or water reservoir adjacent to the temple.

Nāgasāṅkara:—The Y.T. mentions a place called Brāhma where Nāgākhyāsāṅkara is situated. Rāibahāur A.C. Agarwāla identifies the place with the present mausa of Nāgasāṅkara at Na-owār in Bārāṅg District. As such the present temple of Nāgasāṅkara was the Nāgākhyāsāṅkara mentioned in the Y.T. According to the priest of the temple there is the navel part of Śiva in the temple and not his linga. It is believed that the presiding deity of the temple is more alive than the deity of the Viṣvanātha temple. Worship follows Vedic rites. The prime worship is done in the pitha after preliminary worship of the Bāna linga, Gaṅgā, navagrahas, Indra and Vianu with five upacāras. The prime worship in the pitha is done daily with ten upacāras, while on the day of Śivaratrī it is done with sixteen upacāras. Offerings include cooked or uncooked rice other than fish and meat. Dhūṭūra, śronda-puspa and the vibhava leaves (asele marmeloś) are other accessories in worshipping the deity.

Umānanda:—Umānanda is situated in the mountain Bhasmakāla or Bhasmakūta mentioned in both the K.P. and the Y.T. A legend goes that Śiva is always present here in order to appease his consort Umā, for which it is to be known as Umānanda. According to Ṛṣabha the Y.T. here Śiva is Umānanda, who is Īśanavaktra having trident in his hand.

70. विनासासांका सत्र ग्रन्थि, v 304.
71. 2/1/38.
73. K.P. 79/33; Y.T. 2/v/49, 141.
74. 2/v/201-202.
linga of Uaanaada is called Vyamanabha. It is believed to be a svayambhū linga of the Asala variety. The Y.T. enumerates the merits of the linga. According to the work a visit to the deity is supposed to have yielded the merits of all the jay jajnas. He, who worships the deity on Monday, when the tithi of Amavasya also falls simultaneously, will obtain eternal bliss. The linga is to be bathed with scented water and beautiful flowers, and after this, it should be smeared with sandana (sandal) and pâñcârta or the mixture of five sweets, viz., milk, curd, sugar, ghee and honey. Next to this the deity should be worshipped with chanting prasāda mantra and flowers such as rudrapuja and budiha and particularly the vilva-leaves. He is appeased with pâthkamas, as such these performances should also be observed in worshipping him.

At present the worship of the deity is in accordance with the Vedic procedures. However, the mantras and prakranas are Kaulika. The daily offerings include victuals other than fish and meat. When āyige bhoga is offered to the deity it then includes fish and meat. Of the festivals, Śiva Caturdasi is observed here in a most colourful manner. In this particular festival worship is being done in all the eight preharas of the day with the performance of homa and cooked offerings of castrated goats duly wrenched in the neck. A mixture made of the powders of hemp and milk, fluid of unripe coconut and sugar is poured down in the linga. The flowers specially preferred are vilva-leaves, akana, achūtra and lotusos.

Kedāra:— The Śiva linga at Kedāra situated at the mount Naśana is svayambhū. According to the K.P. Śiva resides here in the form of a

75. Y.T. 2/7/180.
76. 2/7/180.
77. Y.T. 2/7/195-205.
Local tradition goes that Kédára-Siva is Anahándásavara having Gaurī in his left half, marks of three eyes place and three matted locks on the back and also with the mark of Ganges coming from the lock. The linga is embedded in a Gauripatta. According to the Y.T. the linga is swyaya, with due devotion it should be worshipped with flowers mixed with sandana, incense or fragrant gum, candle-light, oblation, respectful salutation, stava, dance and song and reverential punctuation.

Worship of the deity is Tántrik with daily offerings of cooked rice including fish. Meat is offered casually. The offering in the evening time includes pancakes locally known as puri-pithā. The evening worship is carried on with five upásāras after ārati, known as lāha-anēma of the linga, is only performed. Cooked meat of constable goats after purumālāng its neck by Bājēnār (a sevīte of the temple) is offered to the deity. Pigeon, deer and tortoise are also offered. Vilva-leaves and flowers, particularly Mūrūrā are essential accessories in the worship. According to the Y.T. worship in the temple is to be conducted according to the manuscripts of Śiva Tanaṣṭraya.

In ancient times dances and songs of Naţiś were essential vāmaśūkan associates of the worship of the deity in the temple. There is a Naţumā darüber clickable to the temple still surviving in good condition, which testifies to a culture flourishing at an early date. There is a custom that the Calanta vīgraha of the temple must pay visit to the locality every year.

There is another Śiva temple at about fifty feet east of Leśāṇa which was known as Kūmāraka according to the Y.T. The linga mandira

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78. 78/67.
79. 2/11/66.
82. 2/11/73.
there is smaller than the Kedāra and is also embedded in a Gaurīpatta. The deity is known at present as Kamalesvara. It has no separate offerings and oblations of its own. A part of bhoga of Kedāra is offered to the deity. There is a water reservoir known as Śivakunḍa on the south of Kamalesvara and on the south-east of Kedāra.

There is another temple to be found on the way to Kedāra. The temple is known as kāmesvara and is situated in the mount Gokarna, which appears like Vṛṣabhā. Here worship is conducted according to Tantrik rites and bhoga offered to the deity is usually cooked food other than fish and meat except on some festivals such as Durgā ūjā, Śiva Caturmāsī and Mādana festival, when bhoga includes fish and meat also.

Pariharēśvara:—The Pariharēśvara temple in Bajāḷī Paragāṇa belongs to the 18th century A.D. and was constructed by the Āhom king Śiva Siṁha. The linga enshrined here is believed to be svayambhū. The procedure followed here in worshipping the deity may be either Tantrik or Vedic. Offerings according to Tantrik rites include juice of hemp called ghota, cooked rice, unscaled fish and meat; the latter are used if the visitors provide them. Castrated goats are offered also.

Though fowls and pigeons are offered yet meat of these birds are not used in the bhoga of the deity. Animals and birds offerings are all pumelled in the neck. Sacrifice of buffaloes by decapitating is used only when the visitors provide. The general orders of worship followed here are the worship of pāṇḍa devatās, śaṅkalpa in the name of the king (Śiva Siṁha), worship of five-faced Śiva made of silver, worship of salagrāma, Durgā and Tāṇgali Śiva (i.e. the image is so named because it was taken from

83. I.T. 2/II/118.
84. Archaeology in Assam, p 34; विवेक अत्म , p 251.
Tillage name: Tangsl. Flower such as Nūrā and vilva-leaves and Nūrvā are used in the worship. Once Sancing by eva-sāsis was regularly held in the evening times.

**Silvesvara:** The temple is situated in Belsar, Kāmarūpa. Here Tāntrik form of worship is followed. The bhoga is either sāmīsa or nirāmīsa with cooked rice. Formerly there was the practice of the performance of ārati and pancakes were offered to the city, which is a linga embeeed in Gaurīpaṭṭa and believed to be svayambhū. There is a separate set of image—an anthropomorphic icon of the city, which is also worshipped with proper rites. Kāṇīka linga made of earth is worshipped at the commencement of worshipping Nūrā in the Nūrā Pūjā festival. Castrated goats are used as offerings as in other temples in the district of Kāmarūpa. Birds other than pigeon are restricted to use as offerings at Śiva Pūjā. At the time of Nūrā Pūjā sacrifice of buffaloo by seaptating the neck is essential and compulsory.

The festivals of Maśana and Śivarātri are observed there. There is a custom of chanting verses in praise and prayer of the city in each monady on the month of Jyeṣṭha by local women. The practice is called Bārāṭ. On the fourth day of Aśātha the Bārāṭ is made close. On this day a flat stool consisting of five varieties of geminate seeds, viz., rice, pulse, til, mustard, and certain other fruits is made floating on the nearest pond. It is believed that the childless woman who eats such a fruit from the stool will begot offspring.

Formerly there was another custom of distribution of juice of termeric among village people from the corovan of an uncastrate she-goat. The juice was regarded by the people as consecrate water of God’s feet.

**Māresvara:** The temple is situated at Hastiparvata near Bāḷupā in Kāmarūpa. The linga enshrine in the temple is believed to
be svayambhū and is regarded as Aghora Siva. The worship followed here was formerly Tāntrik and the priest, becoming naked, had to worship the deity. It is believed that the deity was formerly worshipped by the Kaśārīs. A reading of the verses of Nilakantha was a regular practice. Offering to the deity includes cooked food other than fish and meat. Formerly the priests of the temple were not even allowed to eat fish and meat.

Bhūngesvara: Bhūngesvara is situated in the village Sangsar near Suālkucī. The garbhagṛha of the temple is a big hole in a huge rock lying on the edge of a mountain. The presiding deity of the temple is a linga in the shape of a flat stone. The deity is also known as Bhūngā Siva for he is believed to be much more addicted to the smoking of hemp. The worship is Tāntrik and the victuals to be offered contain castrated goats duly pummelled. pigeon and fishes other than so'1 and garal.

The I.P. registers the name of a kūnda called Antarāloka, situated at the north-western slope of the Gandharanādana hill. According to the Kāśarūpar Buraṇjī here is situated the Bhūngesvara temple, adjacent to which is the kūnda called Antara. This kūnda may be identified with Antarāloka of the Purāṇa. The I.P. mentions that one can obtain Ānandaśāmāpya of Śiva by a bath in the kūnda.

Siddhāsvara: The I.T. mentions a mountain called Vindhyācala. Siddhāsvara is located in this mountain at Suālkucī. The I.T. further mentions that Siddhāsvara is situated on the bank back of Kāṇesvara narrated earlier. There are two lingas in chief - one is called Bānesvara and the other is Tatpurūsa. The former is worshipped with five upaśās in accordance with Tāntrik rites and the latter with...
sixteen upacāras. Apart from these two there are two other lingas outside the temple an one set of Gañanta vigraha, which is pūñcovaktra or five-faced. The bhoga in the temple includes cooked food other than fish and meat. Chanting of two verses of Mālakantha was an essential feature in the worship. The Y.T. enumerates a few modes of worship in the temple.

According to the devotee has to circumambulate first the mountain for three times and then to consecrate the deity with scents water. It should be consecrated with trisita (i.e. mixture of sandal, lopus and usāra), trikantha (i.e. mixture of nitya, malayāja and mārtiya scents) and trijala (i.e. mixture of tirthokottaka, scents water and water mixed with camphor).

Neglecting: 2 The Ahom chronicles have eloquently referred to this temple situated at Barga in the Golaghat sub-division. The garbhagṛha of the temple contains a large Bāna-linga ombeo in a large flat stone on which are carved a number of Śiva-lingas. The Ahom kings called the deity 'Bar Bopāi' ('the Great Father') and paid great reverence to it. King Pratap Simha is said to have employed five hundred men in the service of the temple and consecrated elephants and horses to the temple. It was a custom among the reigning Ahom monarchs to get the Nirnaya of daily puja conducted in the temple before they had their meals. Therefore, they engaged people numbered seven hundred in the service of the temple including Brāhmaṇas, Śūrjas, musicians and female dancers, potters fishermen and others.

History records some practices formerly observed in worshipping the deity of the temple. Manirām Devan records that the Kachārl kings used to worship the deity with wine and flesh.
The origin of the temple is traced to a sage Aurvya, who is said to have collected numerous Siva lingas there with a view to making there a second Kasi. However, he could not come out successful in his endeavours.

Siva No 1:— Siva No 1 or a temple is situated at Sibasagar.

The symbol of the linga is in the pit. It is believed to be the Prime God, who is also an assimilation of both Siva and Sakti. It is also believed that there is no distinction of identity among Siva, Vishnu and Bhagavati. As Siva is associated with Bhagavati here, the place is, therefore, regarded as a pitha of both Siva and Sakti for which the procedure of worship in the temple is Tantrik. Of course, sacrifice to the deity is not allowed. However, when visitors provide with goats, pigeons, ducks, cows and buffaloes, they are all offered to the deity and let off to go, the process thus follows is known as 'aṃśala'. Worship is conducted daily with ten upacāras except on the festival of Sivarātri, in which sixteen upacāras are used. The bhoga offered to the deity is both cooked and uncooked. Cooked food includes rice frumenty and pancakes. Only sweets and fruits are offered daily to the deity.

Worship in the Sivarātri festival continues for four praharas at night, to which visitors are not allowed to enter. In this particular festival Astabhairava, Bhairavs and other Yoginis are also worshipped. Worship of five-faced Siva is to be performed with its relevant nyānas. Akhandapradipa or ever-burning light is an essential feature in the temple.

99. संस्कारी अलव चुरू (2nd chronicle), para 140.
Apart from the temples enumerated above, there are numerous temples lying scattered in different corners of the state. The K.R. and the I.T. have mentioned a few of them. At present these temples have retained only a few architectural remains of the past. Of course, some sanyāsins coming from outside the state have used to swell in a few of these temples. They have, however, managed performances of worshipping the deity there out of their own accord. Therefore, the practices which they have followed at present hardly seem authentic to be registered here.

We have elsewhere mentioned that the Ahom kings had patronised the construction of temples dedicated to Śiva throughout the state. They had extended hands not only to the erection of new temples but also reconstructed the old ones, which were damaged or were in damaging conditions. As a result of their support numerous temples of Śiva came into existence. But at present all these temples do not possess regular worship, only the local people use to visit casually, specially on some festivals. The Buḥāgosāi Thāns, 101 which the Ahom kings or their officials patronised to survive, can be found in large numbers in the villages of Assam. People of the locality use to adore the presiding deity of such Thāns. It is seen that these Thāns although were originally Śiva Thāns at present they have been exhibiting a grand assimilation of both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. Particularly Vaiṣṇavism crept into the temples so much so that the worship of a gālagrama as well as Viṣṇu gains the supremacy. It is locally believed

101. Buḥāgosāi Thāns are Śiva temples without any suspicion. The Āhoms in general call the deity Buḥāgosāi or Buḥānāgari (vide p 40–) As such Buḥāgosāi Thāns stand for sacred place where Śiva resides.
that Siva and Visnu are not of different identities. Therefore, the influence of Vaisnavism asserts the impact of Vaisnava rituals and nama-kirtanras in the observances of these temples.

The Siva temples in the district of Goalpara exhibit an influence of the rituals of the Brahma Samaj much more explicitly. The prominent among them is the Uttapâni Siva-sthânam also known as the Ārya Brahmajñan Sadhan Math established recently in 1853. The temple is situated at about thirty-two miles north of Kokrajhar and in the frontier line of Bhutan and Assam (India). It contains a flat linga about 6 inches long, a pair of sandal made of stone and a few other small pieces of same stones, some of which are supposed to be lingas. The linga enshrined in the temple is like a fish, for which the priest of the temple calls it a Matsyalingsa, record of which cannot be found in any text. The priest of the temple collected the articles from a near-by rivulet called Uttapâni according to the direction of a sanyâsi whom he met in a green at night. However, the articles and the linga deserve attention for the fact that the old kingdom of Hādiya Mandel, the founder of the Koch dynasty, was at a distance of two miles west of Uttapâni. Some ruins of the old kingdom can still be seen in the place. As such there might be a Siva temple somewhere in the locality, where the old Koch kings had a centre of Siva, from whom the Koch dynasty is believed to have been originate. The new temple at Uttapâni clearly shows its relation with the Ārya Brahma Samaj. It is governed by its own constitution frame in accordance with the ideals of the Samaj, which tends also to confirm its relation with the latter. Another factor which confirms the influence of the Brahma Samaj is that one of the disciples of Sankaracarya came here in about 1853.

The priest of the temple told us that the Kherai worship, which is well-known as Bođo mode of worship of Siva, had been performed there twice but with flowers only.
There are other temples too, viz., Pagalā Bābār Thān at Vīmāl-gāna, near Kekrājhār and Śiva Mandir Sanyās Āśram at Kekrājhār, where Vaisnavī rituals have been followed. However, there are a few rites in some of the villages of Gaurīpur, viz., Āgamānī, Kaimārī, Jhāpocābārī, where there are no temples of Śiva but worship of the deity has been conducted with rites performing the sacrifices of castrated goats. The inhabitants, the Rājvāsī and the Khān people of the villages use to worship the deity by erecting temporary Śiva-mānḍapas or pandals. In most of the interior villages of Gaurīpur and Thābourī, worship has been conducted in the 'Būḍhāṭhakurār Pāṭ', also known as the 'Māhādevar Pāṭ' or the holy place of Māhādeva. There can be seen no lingas of Śiva in the villages, but a big stone with a trident of Māhādeva is generally worshipped under a big tree. The stone and the trident have been regarded as symbols of Māhādeva. Offerings in some of such Pāṭas include cooked food of castrated goats.

There is a curious cult in a village called Clear Pathār in Nābānā Mauzā in the District of Sālpārā. The deity of the cult is known as Bālkhāwā Thākur assimilated to Śiva. People observe the cult in a manner in which they offer a cloā of earth to the deity by way of votive offering. As a result of regular offerings of cloā to the deity there arises a mound of earth in the place. People believe that formerly there was a stone in the place which was later on covered with cloās. At present an image of Śiva has been erected there. Ś.C. Mitra records such a curious cult prevalent also in Orijyā and Bengal. 102

Another practice is noticed in some of the villages of Gaurīpur. The practice is known as the worship of Būḍhā and Būḍhī. Būḍhā is identified with Śiva, while Būḍhī is with Pārvatī. The village people

make images of Buṣhā and Buṣhī with a plant called Sola. Although Buṣhā and Buṣhī stand for Siva and Parvati the images of the deities do not seem to be Siva and Parvati as well. The worship is done at the time of puṣhāraṇa without the observance of any sastric rites. As such the offerings made to them include curd and parboiled rice. The performance in the worship of Buṣhā and Buṣhī is also supposed to protect children from premature death. Therefore, the tonsured hairs of the child are offered to the deities.

The Cāṅkū Pūjā, which is also regarded as a form of Siva worship, is observed regularly in the district of Goalpara. The festival "directly," comes from Bengal. The royal family of Gautipur observes the worship regularly every year. It begins on the Bārtrā Seankranti day and continues for four days. Both the Brāhmaṇa and the Neovāmāli priests are employed in the performance. The Neovāmālis are a class of people, who are engaged in a hereditary way in the worship by the royal family. The priest of the Neovāmālī class has to arrange a dance in the worship. The dance is known by those people as Neovāmāli dance akin to the Neakhani dance prevalent in some parts of Assam. Without the employment of the Neovāmāli priest as well as the dance, the worship of Siva cannot be "complete." At the time of the dance pigeons are offered to the deity through the dance. It can be presumed that there is still non-Aryan influence in the worship.

Apart from this we can notice certain other rural performances prevalent in the worship of Siva in Goalpara district. The royal family of Cidli worshipped their tutelary deities - Siva and Parvati in the name of Lenga and Lengteni. The present village of Vidyapur was the capital of the Cidli kings. In a hillock in the village there is the sacred place of Lenga and Lengteni. There is no any image at present. Formerly the deities were worshipped in trees and stones. There was a custom of sacrificing uncastrated black goats by decapitating and then
throwing the goat to a grove in the hillock so that the tiger might take it 
away. But this particular method of worship should not be confused with 
a similar performance observed in the worship of tiger known as 'Renārī 
Puja', which was originally a product of the non-Aryan people later on 
influenced by the Aryans.

So also in the Bucchā-Bachi Thān on the bank of the Brahmaputra 
both Hindu and Muslim people use to worship Siva in the symbol symbol of 
large stones - 25 or 30 feet in circumference with milk. Once Hajang people 
of Sivabari in Gare Hills worshipped Siva by letting off uncastrated goats 
and pigeons.

However, in the district of Goalpara we have several names of 
Siva and also of Parvati such as Bucchā-Bachi, Langhtā-Langteni, 'uMañāth 
(as Siva is worshipped with offerings of milk), Bucchā Thākur, Thel Khāwā 
Thākur, Pāglā Bābhā, etc., with colourful practices attached to the worship. 
In the practices we can notice also the influences of non-Aryan elements, 
Vaishnavism, Muslim culture and lastly the influence from Bengal. The 
local people residing in the interior villages employ such practices 
which have helped in transforming Siva to a rustic deity.
SECTION II: WORSHIP CONDUCTED IN THE TEMPLES.

It appears from the foregoing discussions that some of the temples of Siva in Assam observe Nitya or daily worship and some others follow Naimittika or occasional worship. It also appears that three different ways of worship are being conducted in the temples. The three ways are - Sāstric, Tāntākik and the popular form of worship, the origin of which we can trace to an indigenous source.

Before going into the details of the forms of worship conducted in different temples it is to mention here that the temples have retained some way or other some of the old practices, but in general they have followed orientations in the modes of worship. Briefly it can be said that the temples at present have retained the old methods with some modifications with the advance of time. In my visit to most of the temples distributed all over Assam, I have been informed by some old men of priestly class, who or their predecessors were formerly the priests of the temples, that the new priests have adopted new Śrīyāna mantras supplanting the old ones used in the worship of the deities. Moreover, I have also come to know that a few of the new priests, unlike their predecessors, who were scholars in Sanskrit language and literature, merely know only the modes of worship and the mantras and relative ānga-prakāranas to be performed in daily worships. The priests generally have
learnt the procedures from their direct predecessors, who on the other hand learnt these from their immediate predecessors, as such the process of learning the forms of worship from the predecessors by the followers remain the tendency in the temples. In this process it is quite natural that some of the old functions might be lost in course of time. Moreover, the process itself opens door for new functions to come into the body. It would be worth mentioning here that some of the old functions associated with the worship are being eliminated either intentionally or regarding them as of no use, for such functions were generally employed in Tantrik form of worship, where they created an atmosphere not indecent for sensuousness. We have already mentioned about the influence of Vaisnavite rituals, which have also exerted influence to eliminate them. Therefore, now-a-days we can find that Vishnu is also worshipped invariably in the temples of Siva. Even in all the strong centres of Tantrik worship, where Siva is invoke with fish and meat, Vishnu has been propitiated there with nirâmiša bhogas. In such temples generally a separate dish containing nirâmiša articles has always been kept ready for invocation of Vishnu.

However, as observed by Dr. S.N.Sarmā the presiding deity of the temples of Siva in Assam can be divide into two categories, viz., Bhogâ Śiva and Yogâ Śiva. According to him, the former is worshiped with the offerings of fish and meat, while the latter is only with cooked rice and vegetables. We have notice earlier that there are a few temples where nirâmiša bhogas is generally offered to the deity, but sometimes in a few festive occasions the deity is invoke with śmiša bhogas, i.e., with fish and flesh. Therefore, we can see an intermediate class of temples, where both śmiša and nirâmiša bhogas are offered. The temples in the present District of Kamarupa, as p observe by K.L. Baru, fall in the two categories, where bhogâ as well as Yogâ Śiva

104. Ibid., p 4.
is invoked. Apart from above, the intermediate group also can be seen. The temples other than the District of Kāmrupa cannot be included strictly in the above categories. Because although a few of these temples have followed Tantrik rites but they do not seem to be bhogī, for no fish and meat are offered in these temples. On the other hand, then there are such temples, where rites are sastric and sacrifice of animals by decapitating is unknown, both birds and beasts are offered and then they are let off to go in living conditions. Therefore, we cannot include the temples in the Districts other than Kāmrupa in the above categories. The rites observed in the temples are either sastric or Tantrik and Siva is neither bhogī nor yogī in the strict sense, but is more a yogī with the exception that offerings of birds and beasts are also made in his name.

However, the worship of Siva conducted in the temples of Assam is done in his linga form. Some of the temples have possessed Galanta vigrahas, which are the anthropomorphic representations of Siva, are also invoked in the evening time as it is prevalent in the temples of Bhuvanśvara and Kadēra.

We have elsewhere discussed about Siva in his Ārchanārīśvara aspect, which is mentioned from the days of Bharmapāla (1040-1115 A.D.), who invoked Siva as Ārchanayuvatiśvara in two of his inscriptions. We have also found mention of the aspect in the K.P. The Ārchanārīśvara aspect is a Tantrik concept. K.L.Barua rightly observes that "Bharmapāla and his predecessors of the dynasty of Brahmapāla were votaries of Tantrikism" and in all probability they had constructed the temples of Ārchanārīśvara Siva in Kāmrupa.106 The learned scholar also comments appropriately that the presiding deity of the temples of Siva where ānasa bhogī is offered is invariably the Ārchanārīśvara Siva whose worship is conducted in accordance with Tantrik rites.

106. 2.H.K., p 101.
The Tāntrik form of worship includes all the paraphernalia and elaborate processes of Tāntrik rituals. In the worship of Śiva according to Tāntrik rites all the procedures of the ritual are employed. Enumerating the characteristic features of the Tāntrik form of worship C. R. Chakravarti illustrates the following on the testimony of various Tantras as required for the worship. They are dikṣā (initiation), bhūtasuddhi (symbolic purification), nyāsa, purāṇa-sāraṇa, yantra (diagram), Tāntrik system of yoga, śāṭkarmas, dūtiyāga, śavasaḍhana (worship with the corpse), smāskāra (Tāntrik sacraments) and pāṇcatattva-sāḍhana (the purification of five tattvas, viz., madya, māïsa, matya, mudrā and maithuna). Some of the rites such as the śāṭkarmas and dūtiyāga involving the use of pāṇcanskāra and śavasaḍhana are mostly associated with Saktism in particular and are usually held in modern times. However, wine in the form of hemp or juice of hemp, parched grain in the form of pancakes locally known as purī-pithā or luci and sexual intercourse in terms of gestures are employed in the worship. Wine in the form of juice of hemp is called ghoṭa and it is prepared with unbaked milk, hemp, camphor, sugar, cardamom, cinamon, clove and ginger. So also pancakes are made of grainpowder mixing with molasses and ghee in the ratio of one seer of the former and one-fourth of a seer (one pesā = one-fourth of a seer) of the latter respectively. Hemp or the juice of hemp is an essential as well as unavoidable element in the worship of Śiva.

The I.P. and the I.T. have also dealt with the rites and offerings associated with the Tāntrik form of worship in the temples. Both the works have described Tāntrik rites such as bhūtasuddhi, nyāsa - like the Mātrikāyāsa and Tripurānyāsa, image, yantra, and ghoṭa.

Both the works have narrated Satrubali, which aspect is commonly found.

108. Ibid., p 4.
among the primitive people, the aspects of gods and goddesses, use of charms and amulets, mantras and aśānas and purāṇas including the feeding of the Brahmans. Of the various articles, which the Y.T. have recorded as required for the purpose of worshipping Śiva, we find mention of Āpupa, Āhārana, Ākṣaraṇa, Āyana, Ājya, Jāba-pūpa and various kinds of sacrifices invariably mentioned in the texts. The Y.P. describes Śiva in the aspect of a Brahmāra, whose worship would have to be conducted according to the left-hand practices of Tāṇtrikas. Offerings in the performance would include buffaloes, goats, fish and human blood and spirituous drink including still-burnt flesh. The Kāpālikas used to worship Brahmāra by a pot called Brahma Kāpalas with wine. In the Y.T. also we can notice such colourful practices utterly revolting in nature. It records also the offering of one's own blood. It records burnt offerings of wine, fish and meat. However, all such practices are evidently revolting and they are all discouraged in modern times. Therefore, such practices as enumerated above cannot be found in present-day worship of Śiva in the temples of Assam.

In some of the interior villages, particularly in the district

110. K.P., 9/5. Āpupa is a small and round baked cake made of rice or barley mixed with ghee, sugar and spices.
111. K.P. 9/4. Rice cooked along with molasses.
112. E.P. 9/4. Rice boiled together with til and madga, offered to Śiva while observing the Śaṅkavṛata.
115. Y.T., 2/88/71.
118. Y.T., 1/VI/52-53.
119. Y.T., 1/IV/21.
of Gealpāra there are a few Thānas also called as Pātas or more places of Śiva. In such places a piece of stone under a big tree is believed to be a symbol of Śiva and the village people generally tender their devotion to the deity in the symbol of the stone. The tradition is in the process since long past.

In the Pātas no Brahmans priests are employed to conduct the rituals. A selected person of a community is engaged in carrying out the rites and making the offerings to the deity. We have already discussed the modes of practices followed in such Pātas. It may be pointed out here that such practices among the village people have furnished a popular form of worship of the deity.
We have mentioned that the tribes of Assam have their own belief in a local deity, who is akin to Hindu Siva in nature and characteristics. We have also mentioned that how the tribal god was later on identified with Siva. As such a tribal procedure of worshipping Siva can be traced among the tribes of Assam.

The Ahoms had a belief in Siva and the Ahom chronicles have recorded the regards paid by the Ahoms to the deity. The original mode of practices associated with the worship of various deities included animal sacrifices. The Deochais or the Ahom priests have still retained the original form of worship performed according the Ahom rites. The Ahoms call Siva in the names of Lānkuri and Būḫādevatā. According to the original procedure Lānkuri is worshipped with offerings of a boar, three cocks, plantains, cakes, wine, flower and areca nuts.  It is also recorded that the first

120. Vide supra Chap. III.

121. Vide supra Chap. III.
Āhoms under the leadership of Sukaphā coming to Assam had met some aboriginal people of the Chutiā, Barāhī and Morap tribes, who had also followed a primitive form of Śiva-worship. The Āhoms coming into contact with these people were probably influenced by the latter. As such some of the procedures of worship prevailed among the aboriginal tribes surely had entered the fold of the Āhoms rituals.

It has been mentioned elsewhere in the present work that Naranārāyaṇa, the Koch king, had legalised the tribal mode of worship of Śiva in his territory. Moreover, he had himself performed the worship of Śiva according to the rites of the Kachāris. The Kachāris are a Bōgo group of people. According to B. Nānjajāl, the worship performed by king Naranārāyaṇa was no other than the Kherāi worship of the Bōgos.123

Worship of Śiva was the religious tenet among the aboriginal Bōgos-Kachāris.124 From time immemorial they had been worshipping the deity, and it is continuing still among them. The worship is known as Kherāi Kherāi.

The first of all the essential features:125 to perform a Kherāi is to erect its vedā or altar. The altar of a personal Kherāi is to be made in the campus of the family, while in the case of a public Kherāi it is to be constructed in a suitable place in the fields. The soil used in its construction has to be taken from a highland place. Then it is to be enclosed with five pairs of bamboo lath woven in nine pairs of stake. In the altar a siju-tree is to be planted and a round stone with an egg of hen are also to be kept there.

The five pairs of bamboo lath symbolically stand for five

123. ibid., p 264.
124. Ibid., p 213.
125. Ibid., pp 240ff.
tattvas or principles, while the stakes for nine principles. The stone and the egg stand for Siva and Mother Goddess respectively. On the other hand the siju-tree stands for the symbol of creation. At the time of construction of the altar, from its beginning to the end Avahana mantras in Bodo language shall have to be chanted with beating of drum ( madal ) and a music on the flute ( dhomi ),

Siva is known as Bathau Mahāraja among the Bodos. In the Kherai performance he is to be worshipped with the sacrifice of a boar. The Deodhani drinks the blood of the sacrificed animal. Only an insignificant amount of blood including the head of the decapitated animal has been offered to the deity. A portion of meet from the legs and the body of the sacrificed animal have been cooked and offered to him.

Apart from the worship of Bathau Mahāraja, his attendant - Ailong, commandant - Agrāng, envoy - Khaila and minister - Kāji are also worshipped at the time of the performance with wine and sacrificed animals. There are certain Avahana mantras for each of the deities. Moreover, dances as well as music on flute plays a prominent role in the Kherai performance. The dance of Deodhani is an essential feature of the worship. Apart from this particular dance, there are several other dances, which are made associated with the worship of other deities such as the attendant, minister and others.

There is another worship called Gārjā of the Bodos. In this particular worship also the supremacy of Mahādeva all over other deities is much more prominent and he is here worshipped with the offering of an one-side burnt cock and a pitcher of wine.

The Bodo-Mahārājas are evidently the worshippers of Siva. Bathau Brāi of these people is Mahādeva, the Great God. The epithet Bathau Brāi

127. Deodhani song, pp 53-54.
128. Glorious Assam, Note on picture 2.
129. Bodo song, pp 241-244.
130. Ibid., p 245.
131. Ibid., pp 245-246.
132. Ibid., pp 238-240.
133. Ibid., pp 239-240.
significantly means an old god or ancient god, who is possessed of five tattvas. 'Ba' means five, 'than' means three and 'gathau' means great. Hence Bathau means one having five tattvas and three qualities.\textsuperscript{134} He is the Supreme God. He can protect men fromasses and the field from wild ferocious animals. He protects cattle and favours one to win in the battle. He is the Lord of wealth and saviour of all.\textsuperscript{135} Therefore, the Boço-Kashâris believe that he should be worshipped for the god of the created beings.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{134} असम साहित्य संस्था पत्रिका, Vol. XIII, Part II, p 117.
\textsuperscript{135} अचेरे को करार अयाद, p 216.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p 216.