A. Musical Instruments:

The musical instruments such as drums, cymbals, flute, lute, bells and so on may rightly be regarded as the outer lives of a Pātra, i.e., a dancer. It is said:

"Pātrasya Vahih Pṛṇah."¹

The musical instruments of India can be classified into four classes viewing the material they are made of, the style of their playing and their functional uses. Bharata in his Natya-sastra categorizes the musical instruments into (i) tata, comprising all stringed instruments, (ii) āvanādhaka, comprising all instruments covered with skins, (iii) ghana, comprising cymbals and (iv) susira, comprising wind instruments of all kinds.² According to the modern scholars Bharata’s taxonomy of the musical instruments may be the oldest nevertheless it is based on logic. Rightly does observe B. Chaitanya Deva: "The oldest Indian classification that we know of, and the logical unity of which has not been bettered yet anywhere in the world, was that of Bharata".³

¹ M. Ghosh (ed): Abhinayadarsanā, p.44 fn
² Natya-Sastra, 6/27-29
³ B. Chaitanya Deva: Musical Instruments of India, p.37
The biyāh-gowā ojāpāli uses only the ghana-yantra as the only musical instrument. The ghana-yantra (idiophones) comprises different cymbals and anklets. The cymbal used by the biyāh-gowā ojāpāli is known as Kartāl, i.e. Karatāla, played with either hands. B. Chaitanya Deva observes, "Any two pieces held in the hands and clashed become a Kartāl". The Kartāl(Karatāla) used by the biyāh-gowā ojāpāli has no similarity at all with the Karatāla prevalent in Odissa, particularly used by the dāskāthīya art form. Cymbals(Karatāla) are the only musical instruments in use among the biyāh-gowā ojāpālis who use both their hands. Again this Kartāl or Karatāla has peculiar shape and size which can be compared with the Kartāla mentioned by the Sangītaratnakara,

trayodasāṅgulavyāsaū Śuddha kāmsya vinirmitau /
madhyamukhaustanākārau tanmadhye rajju gumphitau //
padminīpatra sadṛṣāu karābhyaṁ rajjusasthitau/
Karatālavubhau Vādyau ne vādyau pāṣeṣhankti //
i.e., "The Karatāla is made of pure brass or bell-metal and its frontal diameter is thirteen āṅgulas. Its middle face is like a youthful lady's breast or of a blooming lotus petal.

4. K. Bardoloi ; Sura-Paricaya, p. 13
5. M. Sastrī ; Asamāṭ Sangīt Carosa, p. 82
6. B. Chaitanyadeva, op.cit., p. 55
7. M. Neog : Sattriya Dances of Assam and their Rhythms, p. 11
8. Skt. Karatāla> As. Kartāl
The middle part of the Karatāla protrudes outward like the nipple of the breast of a youthful lady. A bunch of string is tied there.8(a) However, the size and the shape of Karatālas mentioned above have not been retained in toto, since the shape of Kartāl used by the biyāh-gowa cjāpāli now-a-days remains unchanged, but the size is reduced to some extent. The Kartāl now used by the biyāh-gowa form of cjāpāli is certainly smaller than the Karatāla mentioned in the Sangeitaratnakara as the diameter of the faces of right and left hand Karatāls are 9 cm. and 10 cm. respectively against 16.5 cm. of the original Karatāla.9 And the circumferences of both the left hand and the right hand Karatāls, are 31.4 cm. and 28 cm respectively. Thickness and the height of this variety of talas are 5 cm and 5 cm respectively. The hole of the Kartāl is 5 cm and weight of the left hand Kartāl is 360 gm. The right hand Kartāl weights 300 gm. The left hand Kartāl contains a bunch of strings known as Cowar (skt. cāmara) which is 8 cm in length. The right hand Kartāl does not contain the cowar but contains only a 6 cm. long double strings. The Fālīs excluding the oja hold the string connected with the cowar between the bottom of the thumb and the fore-finger of the left hand. The other tāla is held by the left hand in such a way that the little finger is inserted between its double strings. The other fingers of the right hand help at the time of action. Then, they clash both the tālas against each other. The collision may be either face to face or rim to rim (tinkling), either vertically 

8.(a) M. Sastri, op.cit., p.82
9. 13 angulas = 16.5 cm.
or horizontally.

The cymbals do not lend themselves to melodic construction, and are primarily used for rhythmic purpose. 10

(i) The nepur or nupur:

The nepur or nupur (skt. nūpura, anklets) is a kind of ghana-vādyā which has prevalence from the time of yore. "Anklets are of various shapes: more or less spherical with a free moving ball of metal inside. The body of nūpura resembles a close bud, the petals of the bud being slightly separated. The material of construction is brass, though ornamental bells are made of silver. More than the 'musician' it is the 'dancer' for whom it is indispensable; indeed, to a dancer in India the ankle-bell is almost a totem; and to tie them on ceremoniously is a sign of entry into the profession." 11

This tradition is also strictly maintained by the active bearers of the biyāh-gowā ojāpāli. At the end of the learning of the ojāpāli art, the ojā enters the profession by putting on the nūpura ceremoniously at the behest of his guru. 12 And similarly, he leaves the profession by giving away the same to another ojā. 13 It is well admitted by all the ojās of biyāh-gowā form that the anklets used by them have migrated from the land of Bhutias, i.e., Bhutan. The ojā puts on a pair of anklets in both legs. Its length is 16 cm and is 9.5 cm in breadth. The ojā maintains the harmony of musical rhythm(tāla) by the nūpura with the cymbals of the vālis.

11. B. Chaitanya Deva, op.cit., p.52
12. Informant: Sri Bhabi Ram Sarma ojā(95 years)Vyasapārā, Darrang data collected on 16.1.85
13. Informant: Sri Sarat Ch. Sarma ojā, Vyasapārā , Darrang data collected on 16.1.85
The Tauryatrika Yantra or the Mudra:

It has already been mentioned that the biyah-gowa-oja specifically the ojas hailing from the Daivajna family of the village Vyasarapara used to hold a Yantra called the tauryatrika yantra or the mudra at the behest of the kings of Darrang Rajya in the singing of Jagara-rita of Visnu and Siva as well as Durga at the time of their worship. Originally the king of Darrang Rajya gave only one such mudra to a particular oja. But subsequently the number of the mudras increased up to six. There are only six mudras in that village. The mudra neither produces any musical sound nor helps in rhythm. It is only a symbol. M. Sastri is of opinion that the mudra is made of eight metals which is nothing but a symbol of the goddess Durga. The biyahar oja worships the mudra as the tutelary deity. There is a tradition that the goddess Durga can be best satisfied if songs related to Durga are sung by holding the mudra associated with dances.

The oja circle also believes that the mudra is a symbol of the goddess Durga. D. Sarma holds that although some scholars think that the mudra is a symbol of the damaru (tabor) of Lord Siva nevertheless the hypothesis does not carry any weight. He observes that, no doubt, the mudra is a symbol of Nada Brahman.

14. Supra, Chapter V
15. Informant: (1) Sri Shabi Ram Sarma Oja (95), Vyasarapara, Darrang
Data collected on 16.1.85
(ii) Sri Nareswar Sarma Barua (80), Dipila, Darrang;
data collected on 19.1.85
16. M. Sastri, op. cit, p. 89
17. D. Sarma: Mangaldair Buranjii, p. 116
The mudra seems to be a magic-wand by which the ojā tries to spell magical charm on the audience. The ojā sings and dances in the tantric worship of Vasudeva and Visnu and Śiva as well as Durgā. In the practice of tantric worship both mantra and Yantra are very essential. The ojā recites Sanskrit mantras while he holds the Yantra. "The Tantras declare that sound and form are directly related just as a musical note or tone can be demonstrated to have a particular pattern, so every Mantra has a distinct form; this is know as its Tantra. So it is that a Mantra or matrix form, is both the shape of a sound and means of focusing thought on the subtle source from which all phenomena emerge. Tantras speak of our body as our personal Yantra and the sound of the breath as our personal Mantra." 18 Says the Kularnava Tantra: "The Yantra is ensouled by the Mantra and the personal deity is the expression of the personal Mantra. As the body is to the Jīva (the individual soul), as oil is to a lamp, so is the Yantra the established seat of all divinities." 19

The Yantra may indicate the tantric tradition of complex erotic postures. The two ends of the Yantra may symbolise the union of both Śiva and Durgā. Observe N. Douglas & P. Slinger:

18. Nik Douglas & Penny Slinger: Sexual Secrets, pp.82-83
19. Quoted from sexual secrets, p.84
"There are many complex erotic postures in the Tantric tradition. Some of these are allegorical reminders of the Yantras that hold together the material world. Eastern teachings indicate that Mantra, Yantra and Tantra together form the key that unlocks the sexual secrets, enabling us to communicate directly with the divinity within."  

Secondly, the mudrā may have migrated from the land of the Bhutias, i.e., from Bhutan. The Bhutanese call it Mānipema or Mahāmuni. Bhutan has a long and strong Tantric tradition. Hence, it would not be unreasonable if we say that the mudrā surely has a Tantric origin.

A mudrā-yantra (i.e. dharani khati) is supposed not to be perfect if it is not supported by another mudrā-yantra called the rāngeli khati. The rāngeli khati, believes the ojāpāli-circle, is more powerful than the mudrā-yantra. It has already been mentioned that the ojā of biyāhar variety regards the mudrā-yantra as the tutelary deity. Both the mudrā-yantra and the rāngeli khati are consecrated separately at the place of worship by the ojā and are worshipped separately. The mudrā-yantra (dharani khati) can be removed at the time of jāgara-singing but the rāngeli khati cannot be removed.

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20. N. Douglas & P. Slinger, op.cit., p.84
21. Informant Sri Durgeswar Nath Ojā, Darrang, data collected on 26.1.85
22. Informant :: Sri Sarat Chandra Sarma Ojā, Vyasapara, Darrang data collected on 16.1.85.
The mudrā-yantra is 41.5 cm. in length and can be divided into three parts. The upper and the lower extreme points of the mudrā-yantra are known as urddhva and adhah respectively. The middle part of the same is called musti and is 13 cm. in length. The ojā holds the yantra in this part at the time of action. This part is always wrapped with a piece of red cloth or by a gāmochā. The upper and the lower portions of the musti are 14.2 cm each in length respectively. At the two ends of the musti there are two cakras known as musti-cakras. In the same way at the two extreme points of the mudrā-yantra which are known as meru-bindus. At the bottom of the Urdhva meru bindu there are two cakras styled as the Puskara-cakras. These two cakras can be easily turned. Between the Puskara-cakra and the upper musti-cakra there are six spokes of oval shape connected with the two ends of the cakras. The ojā circle believes that the presiding deity of the Puskara-cakras is Vāsudeva or Viśnu. The upper part of the adhah-meru is connected with two fixed cakras named the adhah-cakra and the presiding deity of these cakras is goddess Lakṣmī. Between the adhah-cakra and the lower musti-cakra there are oval-shaped six spokes. The six spokes both at the upper and lower parts of the mudrā-yantra may indicate different meanings, such as:

(a) Six parts of the body
(b) Six works auxiliary to the Vedas,
(c) Six acts that may be performed by means of magic (Santi, Vasikaraṇa, stambhana, vidvega, Uccatana and māraṇa),
(d) Sixfold Tantra,
(e) The six acts belonging to the practice of Yoga,
(f) One well-versed in the Tantra-magical rites,
(g) having six attributes,
(h) an assemblage of six qualities,
and (i) six cakras.

The six spokes both upper and lower, therefore, may have indicated the relation of the Yantra with the Tantra.

The pole about which the parts of the mudrā-yantra are systematically arranged is called the merudanda, i.e., axis or the dharanī-khāti, i.e., the axis of the earth. The position of the cakra is on the merudanda (i.e. vertebral column). "They are the centres of cosmic consciousness, the generation of prāna or vital force and the openings on the macrocosm."24

These are six, viz:

(i) mulādhara cakra (pelvic plexus),
(ii) svādhīstāna cakra (Hypogastric plexus),
(iii) Manipura cakra (solar plexus),
(iv) Anahata cakra (cardiac plexus),
(v) Visuddha cakra (pharyngeal plexus),
and (vi) Ajñā cakra (plexus of command)

23. Informant : Sri Sarat Chandra Sarma Ojā, Vyāsapāra, Darrang, data collected on 16.1.85
24. D.N. Bose & H. Haldar : Tantras : Their philosophy, p. 184
One knowing the position, working and attributes of these cakras, can acquire perfect knowledge of the Nāda Brahman or the sabda Brahman. The songs and the recitations are nothing but the perfect manifestation of the Nāda or the Sabda Brahman. Thus the mudrā-yantra may rightly be said to be a symbol of the Nāda Brahman, so, the inference of D. Sarma seems to be more convincing.

The mudrā-yantra is also known as the tauryyatrika-yantra. The term tauryyatrika-yantra denotes the union of sāng and dance as well as instrumental music or triple symphony of gīta - vādyā and nṛtya. Hence, the yantra, i.e., mudrā seems to be a symbol of gīta, vādyā and nṛtya, i.e., sangita. Sangita, on the other hand, is an outward expression of the Nāda Brahman. So, it appears that the mudrā-yantra has a deep relation with the Tantric tradition.

The rangeli-khāti (bearer of the red-spokes) is also made of eight metals. The rangeli-khāti is a replica of the other mudrā-yantra specially in shape. It is 13 cm. in length. Like the mudrā-yantra, the rangeli-khāti has a merudanda. The middle part of the merudanda appears to be same with the musti of the mudrā-yantra. The musti is also wrapped by a piece of

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25. D. Sarma, op. cit., p. 116
red cloth. Between the urdava meru bindu and the extreme upper point of the musti like the mudra-yantra there are eight oval shaped red spokes. In the same way, between the urdava meru bindu and the extreme lower point of the musti there are eight oval shaped red spokes. The oja propitiates both the mudra-yantra and the rangalikhati always with the leaves of the marmelos.27

A mālītā28 (etiological ballad) pertaining to the origin of the mudra-yantra is current traditionally from oja to oja among the biyāh-gowa ojaāli circle of Darrang. The mālītā goes thus:

Gosāîr āge nṛtya kare gandharva gana /
hāte mudrā nāi nṛtya nakare sōbhana //
tetikṣane gosāi viśvakarmāk hūṅkārilā /
hingulapure viśvakarmār hrdi kampa bhailā //
deva devī āchilā kriya kautahale /
tetikṣane sarīrara bahilā gharmajala //
sarīrara gharmajala prthivīta thailā /

27. Informant: Sri Sarat Ch. Sarma, Vyāsapāra, Darrang, data collection 16.1.85
28. P. Goswami suggests that the word mālītā comes from Skt. mālā garland.
P. Goswami: Ballads and Tales of Assam, p.9
The Gandharvas dance in front of Lord Siva; He feels that the dance is imperfect since the dancers have no mudra-yantra in their hands.

29. Informant: Sri Bhabi Ram Sarma, Ojā(95), Vyāsaparā, Darrang, data collected on 2.10.83
Immediately Lord Śiva summons the gods' architect (Viśvakarma). Hearing the summon, Viśvakarma's heart begins to quake at Hīṅgulapura, his residence.

The gods and goddesses are busy sporting.

At that moment sweat rolls down from their body. They keep the sweat on the earth. Immediately the sweat transforms into bell-betal and brass. All the bell-metal is weighed into telas by the gods. The bell-metal melts into fragrant sweat at the crucible. Vāyu (the god of the wind) takes the form of bellows, and Vasumati work as breath.

Śani appears as burning coal, and Gaṇapati emerges as an anvil. The planets and Brahmā become the crucibles and fire respectively. The sun acts as a chisel and the god Varuna takes the form of water. The god Dharma(Yama) himself acts as the tongs.

And thus, Viśvakarma creates the mudrā-yantra in front of Lord Śiva. The four sides of the mudrā-yantra are decorated with different colours.

The mudrā-yantra is connected with golden tinkling bells. God Pavana resides on the wings of the mudrā-yantra. And Nirañjana makes his presence as the presiding deity of the musti.

The sun and the moon reside in the Puṣkaras. At the axis Vasumati takes her seat. Goddess Lakṣmī resides at the tinkling bells, and goddess Sarasvatī makes her place at the Cāmara.

In this way the mudrā-yantra comes into Vogue.

The sukṛṇī ojāpāli uses the ghana-yantra as well as the avanaddha-yantra. This form of the ojāpāli uses khūtītal and bhūrtītal. A pair of khūtītālās is connected with a rope made
of cloth with two knots at the extreme points. These two knots keep tight the two khutitāls. The rope is 50 cm in length excluding the knots but including the knots the rope appears 60 cm in length and its breadth is 30 cm. The two Khutitāls used by one pāli are the same in size and shape. The diameter of both the khutitāls are 9 cm, each and circumference of each tala is 28.3 cm and the height is 3.5 cm. The weight of each khutitāl is 560 gm. It contains a hole which measures 5 cm x 2 cm. The Suknāmi oja pali excluding the oja, the pālis hold a pair of khutitāls between the thumb and the first and the second fingers in such a way that the rope wraps 2½ times round the thumb and the remaining portion of the rope keeps tight round the other two fingers. Both the tālas are kept at the bottom of the fingers. The tāla under the first and the middle fingers is kept always fixed and the tāla that is kept under the thumb moves according to the necessity of tāla (i.e. rhythm) at the time of action. The bhortāl is played only in the context of pūja and deohani nac, but it is never used at the time of singing and reciting.

There is a mālītā (etiological) ballad regarding the origin of the tala and nupura sung by the suknaṇi variety which is transmitted orally from oja to oja. There is a tradition current among the oja pālis of manasa variety of Kamrup and Goalpara that the mālītā is to be sung by both the oja and the pālis at the time of making of either the tala or the
nūpura. But the tradition seems not to be operative in respect of the ojāpālis of Darrang. 30.

The mālītā goes thus:

Dihā: śūn gaurāi kāhār ṭāl bīrāncīlā /

Pada: padmāka pūjite māriyāra raṅgamana /

Vādya bihane pūjā nakare sōbhana //

ehi buli māriyāi bhābe mane mana /

enakāle padmāvatī dilā darisana //

padmāka cāhiyā māriyāi bulilā bacana /

vādya bihane pūjā nakare sōbhana /

tāka śuni padmāvatī harasita mana

Sivara ocare padmā karilā gamana //

padmāi bole śuna pitā deva trilocana /

vādya bihane pūjā haibo kemana //

30. Informant: Sri Nabin Chandra Deka, oja, Titkuchi, Kamrup data collected on 24.9.82

Sri Praneswar Rabha, Darrang (kecañal) data collected on 27.9.82

Sri Nareswar Sarma Barua, Dipila, Darrang, data collected on 2.1.85
Dihā : O Gaurai, listen to me,
I am telling about the creation of the cymbal.

Pada : The mariyā (male worshipper of the goddess Māre) was very eager to worship goddess Padmā; but without the musical instrument the worship could not be completed.

31. Informant : Sri Nabin Chandra Deka, oja Titkuchi, Kamrup
Data collected on 24.9.82
At that moment goddess Padmāvatī appeared before the māriyā. The māriyā said to Padmāvatī: "How can I worship you without having musical instruments?"

Hearing this, goddess Padmāvatī made a start to meet Lord Sīva. Goddess Padmā apprised Lord Siva of her Problem. She said, "O father, listen to me, how can there be a pūjā without musical instruments?"

Being satisfied with goddess Padmā, the Lord descended from Kailāsa to the world of mortals. Devine sweat rolled down from His person. The brass and bell-metal made out of the divine sweat. Having seen the brass and the metal brass the immortal beings were delighted very much. They made necessary arrangements to make cymbals out of the brass - metal.

Under the twelve coconut trees and the thirteen Palm trees the immortal beings set up the smithy. The planet Saturn took the form of an anvil and the god of wind (Vāyu) acted as bellows. Brahmā the divine creator Himself came to take the charge of a blacksmith.

The immortal beings broke the metal into pieces each of half  rati. And them made them pieces contained one tola each. Thus, the tāl and nūpura came into being.
The gods sold the cymbals at the market named Kundagarh.

Being happy the māriyā purchased the cymbals by paying nine couris of gold.

The cymbals used by the Satārīya variety of ojāpāli are similar to the cymbals of biyāhar-ojāpāli but a bit smaller in size than the latter. The diameter of the tāla of Satārīya form of ojāpāli is 8.2 cm. and its circumference is 25.7 cm. The hole is 0.4 cm. and is 3.5 cm. in height. The weight of a single tāla is 175 gm. Like the biyāhar-gowā ojāpāli the pālis of the Satārīya ojāpāli also play on the cymbals with either hand. The tālas of māre-gaṅ of south Goalpara are smaller than the tālas of the sukānī variety. The shape and the size of the tālas of māre-gaṅ are quite different from that of the sukānī tālas. The circumference of the tāla of māre-gaṅ is 22 cm. and its height is 2 cm. and diameter is 7 cm. The weight is only 75 gm. A pair of tālas is connected with the two ends of a 10 cm long rope made of jute. The two ends of the rope keep between the thumb and the first fingers which is known as the mātri i.e. female tāla and between the ring finger and the little toe known as the mātrā i.e., malē tāla in such a manner that the two tālas are hanging at the bottom of the fingers.

The pālis move the fingers in accordance with tālas (i.e. rhythm). The tālas of biyāharir-gaṅ a bit bigger than the tālas of māre-gaṅ.

31a. Informant: Sri Praneswar Rabha, Darranggiri (Kecadal) Goalpara data collected through his personal letter 20.2.85
but smaller than the tālas of the suknh cambi variety. The measurement of this variety of tālas can be shown below:

- height 2.4 cm, radius 3 cm, circumference 18.9 cm, and weight 100 gm.
- Like the tālas of the suknh cambi form of ojāpāli, a pair of tālas is connected with a 14 cm long rope made of cloth or jute.
- The gītal or Pāthak and the juri or pāli plays the cymbal with both hands. The pāncālī-ōjāpāli uses both manjīrā and mrdanga. But the duladi ojāpāli uses only khuitāl.

The ojāpālis use two types of cymbals, viz:

(a) Kāharuwa, i.e. made out of bell-metal and

(b) Bhutiya i.e. after the design of the Bhutiyās.

Both kinds of cymbals are made of a mixture of bell-metal and silver. The Bhutiyā bell-metal is known as bondā kāh and its colour is black. The ojāpālis mostly use the cymbals made at Sarthebari, a well-known place of Assam for brass-metal factory. 31b.

Both the suknh cambi ojāpāli and the māre-gān-govā ojāpāli play the Jaydhol or mādal dhols (drum) at the time of awakening of goddess Manasā or Padmā as well as at the time of dances of female shamans. The Jaydhol and mādalhol appear to be same in size and shape as well as structure. The mādal is called

31b. Informant: Sri Prafulla Nath Oja, Garukhuti, Darrang, data collected on 10.10.84
the jaydhol as it announces the victory of (=nayadhvani), the snake goddess Manasā. The mādal drum enjoys all-India reputation. Observes B. Chaitanya Deva: "The word maddalam may be significant, with a pointer to the mādal of central Indian tribes. The same word has variations as maddale (Kannada), mādol (Bengali), mandar (Hindi) and mārdal (Sanskrit). It is in such cases that we really meet difficulties of tracing the origins of instruments, for the mutual influences are very ancient and the linguistic exchanges between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian are deep and far-reaching. Only a very careful study of the etymology of the names can help us." The jaydhol is 50 cm. in length and its circumference is 105 cm. and the diameter of each face is 33.5 cm.

The durgāvari ojāpāli uses both the kartāl and the khañjari. K. Bardoloi holds that the durgāvari ojāpāli prevalent in the area of Barpeta used the cerendā and the dotārā along with both the kartāl and the khañjari.

B. Structure of the ojāpāli Troupes:

Although the ojāpāli institution is a great bearer of the tradition of nrtva-gīta and Vādyā nevertheless all the forms of ojāpāli are not quite similar in regard to their

32. B. Chaitanya Deva, op. cit. pp. 17-18
33. The khañjari may be included both in the avanaddha (membra nophones) as well as the chana yantras
34. The cerendā is a stringed instrument (tata-yantra)
35. The dotārā is a two stringed instrument (tata-yantra)

B. Chaitanya Deva observes that the dotārā has a close likeness to the Ajanta Veena Musical Instruments of India, p. 166

36. K. Bardoloi: Sura-Paricaya, p. 10
structures. The word structure suggests act of putting together and arrangement of parts as well as an organic form. A structure is a unit whole and each unit is a part of the unit whole of the structure. Similarly, an ojāpāli troupe may rightly be called a unit whole and each member of the troupe is one of the units of the unitwhole.

The structure of the bijāh-govā ojāpāli and the suknāni ojāpāli are more or less same. The ojā, the dāināpāli, the banādharā gor pāli and sahāvak pāli. The structure of the bijāh-govā-ojāpāli may be shown in the following way:

\[ \begin{array}{cc}
A_0 & B_0 \\
B_0 & C_0 \\
C_0 & D_0 \\
D_0 & A_0 \\
\end{array} \]

A \rightarrow The ojā (leader of the troupe)
B \rightarrow The dāināpālis (chief assistants)
C \rightarrow The banādharā gor-pālis (chief helpers of the
At the time of performance both the ojā and the pālis take their position in the above style. This variety of the ojāpāli needs six pālis. But occasionally the art form performs with four or two pālis only, however, at least two pālis are very essential for a performance.

The structure of the suknāni ojāpāli of the district of Darrang has similarity with that of the biyāh-gowa ojāpāli e.g.,

\[
\begin{align*}
A &\quad \text{The ojā} \\
B &\quad \text{The dāināpāli (the left hand dāināpāli)} \\
C &\quad \text{The so-dāināpāli (The right hand dāināpāli)} \\
D &\quad \text{The gor-pālis (chief helpers of the dāināpāli)} \\
E &\quad \text{The āg pālis (assistant pālis)}
\end{align*}
\]

Like the biyāh-gowa-ojāpāli, the suknāni ojāpāli also needs six pālis. But they can perform with the help of at least two pālis if necessary.
The structure of the पातवमा-गोवा ओजापली as well as the भाईरा ओजापली are more or less similar to the structure of the भिवन-गोवा variety.

The सत्त्रिया form of ओजापली appears to be different in respect of structure. The component parts of the सत्त्रिया form of ओजापली are the ओजा, the दाइनापली, the दुहेन्यास, the पालिस and the new learners, e.g.,

A → The ओजा
B → The दुहेन्यास or the doheriäs
C → The दाइनापलीs
D → The पालिस
E → The new learners.
The dainapali has no place, in the satrīya form of ojabali
of the school of Sankaradeva.

The pāncalī variety of ojabali form consists of the
following units:

A → The oja
B → The bayanas (The drummer)
C → The Smāraka (the prompter)
D → The gayanas (the singers)

The dulali form of ojabali consists of the oja, the
duheriya (or doheriya) and the dainapali:
The bisahar-śān-gōvā ojāpāli or bisahar-śān performs in the sitting position. The units of this variety of the ojāpāli are the gītal or pāthak (ojā) and the eight jurīs or pālis.

The structure may be shown in the following way:

A ——> The gītal or pāthak (or ojā)
B ——> The jurīs or pālis.

The mare-śān gōvā ojāpāli or mareśān consists of the ojā, the deodhanī and the pālis, e.g.:
(151)

A ———> The deodhaniya (female shamans)
B ———> The oja
C ———> The palis

The structure of paddapuranar gan consists of the mulgavaka or gital or gidal (= the oja), the gayakas or pails or palis and the bails, e.g.:

A

B

B

C

C

A ———> The mul-gavaka or gital or gidal, i.e., the oja
B ———> The gayakas or pails or palis
C ———> The bails (who beat khol and play on cymbal)

From the aforesaid discussion it may be assumed that the structure of the different forms of ojāpāli are not same. As such, each of the form of the ojāpāli has its own style of presentation.

C. Place and occasion of performance:

Originally the biyāh-gowā ojāpāli was associated with the temples.37 This can be definitely substantiated by the copper

37. T.N. Sarma: Pracin Asamat Sangīt aru Bartamanar Samasya (Sanskrtika), p. 3.
inscriptions issued by the kings of medieval Assam. We have already mentioned that king Laksāni Simha issued a copper-plate in the 1697 Saka year in connection with land donation to one Gāntāl oja of Hazo. So that he could perform gīta and nṛtya constantly at the time of the worship of Haygrīva-Mādhava at the Mādhava temple without thinking of his livelihood. In the same way, the koch kings also engaged ojāpāli to perform gītā and nṛtya in front of the deities of different temples. The king Śiva Simha engaged one ojā and six pālis in the Siddhesvar Temple of Suwalkuchi, Kamrup, by issuing a copper-plate in the Saka year 1645. The same king empowered one ojā and six pālis to perform nṛtya and gīta at the time of daily worship of Lord Dharesvara Śiva at the Dharesvara temple of Kamrup by granting a copper-plate in the Saka year 1660. The same king engaged eight pairs of ojāpāli in the temple of Umānanda to perform dance and to sing songs of Lord Śiva and the daily worship by granting a copper-plate in the Saka year 1661. In the same year king Śiva Simha engaged three pairs of ojāpāli in the temple of Dīrghesvari of Kamrup to perform gītā and nṛtya in front of the goddess Dīrghesvari (i.e. Durgā) by issuing a copper-plate.

38. Supra, Chapter V
39. N.C. Sarma: Aṣamīya Loka Sanskritir Abhās, p. 120
40. M. Neog (ed): Pracīya Sasanavali, Pp. 17, 177
42. Ibid, Pp. 30, 181
43. Ibid, p. 184
Due to political upheavals and a host of such other reasons the tradition of singing and recitation as well as dancing at the deva-grahas by the ojāpālis by getting royal support has been lost. However, the traditions of singing and dancing of the ojāpālis are confined only to the worship of Vāsudeva performed privately or publicly.

The worship of Vāsudeva may end in one day or in a night or in two days. The pūjā comprising one day is called the ekaparīya sabha (skt. eka prahara). The worship ending in a night is known as the ād-cāparī (skt. ardha catusprahara) and Vāsudeva pūjā ends in two days is called the gondh cāparī (skt. gandha-catusprahara). The biyāh-govā ojāpāli sings different mālītas (etiological ballads) regarding the origin of the Prthivi (earth), mandapa (pavilion), ghata (pot), dhūpa (incense), dīpa (lamp), candra tāpa (canopy), cāmara (bos-grumniens), phul (flower), tuṣāsil (sacred basil), dūrva (bent grass or panic grass), āraicāul (unboiled rice), dadhī (curd) durgāha (milk), gūrta (ghee), madhu (honey), ṭekeli (earthen pot), sindura (vermilion), kalapuli (plantain), āmpūt (mango leaves) at the time of Vāsudeva-pūjā in the sitting position.44 A mālīta relating to the origin of the mango tree is given below as a specimen:

44. N.C. Sarma, op. cit., pp. 113-14
The great sage Visvakarma created a cow by his magical power to perform yajña. He went to have a bath after keeping the cow at the sacrificial ground. Lakṣmana was sent there by the sage to see the cow. But Lakṣmana found a piece of flesh there instead of the cow. The great sage planted the piece of flesh and a mango tree came out from the flesh. All the sages purified the tree and started to perform homa (offering oblations to gods by throwing ghee into the consecrated fire) with the

45. N.C. Sarma, op.cit., p.114
After completion of the puja, the ojapali performs nritya and gita and ends before sun set. The gondh cānavi sabha consists of two parts: (a) gandha adhivāsa and the (b) pūjā-homastava etc. The gondha-adhivāsa is commonly known as gondh. It commences in the evening. The biyāhar ojapali sings the songs of gondh (gondhar-git, i.e. songs of gondh) in the sitting position while the priest propitiates the deity by the Vedic and the paurānic and the tantric practices. The gandha-adhivāsa continues generally up to 10 p.m. and then the ojapali in their traditional costume presents performance for the whole night. At the dawn the ojapali sings the juna or jhunā songs and puwelīgit (skt. prabhātī gītā, songs of morning). Next day, the ojapali recites songs in the sitting position while the priest worships the deity by the Vedic and the paurānic and the tantric modes. The worship ends generally at 12 a.m. or 1 p.m. And then the ojapali at their traditional costume performs songs and dances up to the evening. The performance ends with the juna or jhunā songs.

The sketch of the place of performance has been given below:
- (156) -

East

Altar

A

Extreme boundary

F

D

Rectangular stage

E

(Both in Nāmaṣṭar or open place)

North

B

G

West

H

A — Deity/the Bhāgavata purāṇa
B — Place for guru (spiritual guide)
C — Place for purohita (Priest)
D — Place for ojā and pālis

G

Entrance

G

E — Place for audience
F — Place for performance
G — Restricted place
H — Entrance
I — The ojā
J — The daināpālis

K, L — The pālis
The *rāmāvya-govā ojāpāli* and the *bhārā ojāpāli* have similarity with the *bihān-govā ojāpāli* in respect of performance.

The *sattriya ojāpālis* invariably confine themselves to the Sattras. The *ojāpāli* performances are essential in the daily ceremonials of the Sattras. A sketch of the place of performance of Auniati Sattra is given below:

![Sketch of Auniati Sattra](image-url)
place of performance: Nāmāghara (prayer hall)

A → Manikāta (devagrha)

B → Place of Govinda-puriya (next to dekāsattradhikār i.e. young sattradhikāra)

C → Place of Sattradhikāra (The head of a sattra)

D → Place of Vārisa (a learned man who expounds the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa)

E → Place of Dekā Sattradhikār (next to the Sattradhikāra)

F → Place of Ātyaka (reciter of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa)

G → Place of three Sravanis (persons appointed by the sattra with the specific duty of listening to the recitation of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa)

H → Place of Bhadalis (store keepers)

I →

J → Place of Mahanta (a noble man)

K → Place of Barapūjārī (head priest)

L → Place of Āśīrvadīya (one who blesses)

M → Place of three Sravanis

N → Place of Barabāyana (leader of the party of instrumental players)

P → Place of Baragayana (leader of the party of singers)

R → Places of bhakats (devotees) and srotas (listeners)

S → The ojā

T → The duheriyās or doheriyās
The suknani ojapali sings in connection with the Manasa-puja or the Mare-puja. The troupe sings some mālitās relating to the origin of the snake goddess Manasa or Padmā, her sister Neta, the eight nāgas (astanāgas) and other materials necessary in the worship of Manasa in the sitting position while the priest worships the goddess by the Vedic and the paurānic as well as laukic (or laukika) modes. Like the biyāh-gowa ojapali, the suknani form of ojapali performs gīta and nṛtya after the completion of the worship and it ends before the fall of night. In the gōta-raṅg puja, the suknani ojapali awakens the snake goddess at night with the beating of drums and playing on bhowtāls as well as khitāts with dance and song. At the end of the sastric worship, the ojapali presents performance for the whole night. The next day again the ojapali sings songs relating to the worship of the snake-goddess Manasa in the sitting position by keeping constant touch with the priest. Again the ojapali presents gīta-and nṛtya up to the evening. The outline of the place of performance of the suknani ojapali may be furnished in the following way:
Rectangular open stage

A → An altar of goddess Manasa
B → An altar of god Dharma
C → An altar of goddess Sitalā
D → Place of the priest or guru
F → Place of the Ojāpāli
The Mare-pūjā generally continues for more than three days and its upper limit may be fifteen or twenty one days. In such Marai-pūjā at least six or seven troupes of ojāpāli are essential. In each day after the completion of the sastric pūjā the ojāpāli performance is a must. The ojāpālis not only perform in the day time but also perform during the whole night. The last day of the Mare-pūjā is commonly known as bhardak. On that day the female shaman presents ritualistic dance in the evening along with pālis. The Mare-pūjā current among the pāti Rabhas of south Goalpara has no place of a priest as in other Mare-pūjā prevalent among the non-tribals. The ojā acts as the priest.

The troupe of māre-gan performs songs and dances in connection with the worship of goddess Paddā (skt.Padmā) or goddess Barmanī (skt.Brahmanī). The outline of the place of performance of māre-gan may be shown below:

46. The Assamese term bhar denotes full and dak (skt.damstra i.e. snake bite, dak may be equated with Bengali word danka meaning 'snake bite').
Square open stage

A ___ Manikūta
B ___ Altar of goddess Barsānī
C ___ Sitting place of ojāpāli
D ___ Place of deuris (skt. Devagrhika)
E ___ Place for male audience
The troupe of bisaharira-gan performs in connection with the worship of goddess Bisahari or Manasa or Padma. The performers of this variety of the ojapali recite the songs of the goddess in sitting position. The sketch of the place of performance of bisaharira-gan is given below:

Square open stage
D. Style of performance:

It has already been mentioned that the ojāpāli presents songs both in sitting as well as standing positions. However, the bhairā ojā and the saṭṭrīyā forms of ojāpāli as well as pāncāli and the dulāli forms of ojāpāli perform only in standing position. The bisaharīr-gan-gowa ojāpāli or bisaharīr-gan does not present performance in standing position. The sitting position is the only position of this variety. Both the māre-gan gowā ojāpāli or māre-gan and padda-purānar-gan present their performances only in the standing position. The biyāhagowā ojāpāli and the sukhāni ojāpāli perform in both sitting and standing positions. The ojās and the pālis of both the forms dress themselves in the traditional dressed only in the standing position but the style is never maintained in respect of sitting position. But it is also correct that the ojās of both varieties dress themselves in new dhobis and cāddars received from the worshippers as Varana (i.e., the act of appointing some one to do a religious ceremony). The sitting position
is confined to only for singing of songs related to worship. The ojāpāli does not perform any dance or such other abhinaya in the sitting position.

The ojā and the pālis dress themselves at the greenroom. The pālis generally enter the sabhāgrha or the stage though the west side by holding the tālas in their right hand. Similarly, the biyah-gowa-ojā enters the stage by the west side holding a pair of anklets in his right hand. At the entrance both the ojā and the pālis offer prayer to the deity or to the guru as well as to the audience. Then, they take their seat at the place allotted to them for a while. The pālis of the biyah-gowa variety generally move towards the western extremeity of the sabhāgrha and stand there vertically in two facing the deity holding a pair of kartāls in their right hand. The ojā moves gently towards the deity with a pair of anklets in the right hand. He seats on his feet near the altar of the deity and both the ojā and the pālis offer prayer. Then the ojā puts the pair of anklets on his ankles and makes tinkling sounds. The pālis also start to play on the cymbals simultaneously with the tinkling sound of the anklets. The sound of the anklets of the ojā indicates the very beginning of the performance. Then the ojā moves gently back towards the west and takes his place between the two pālis, i.e. the dūnāpālis of the first row and commences sura-sādhanā i.e., ālāpa. Then the ojāpāli recites guruvandana with appropriate mudrās. The ojā with the help of the pālis perform different
aspects of the five-fold music accordingly. And at the end the oja indicates the ending of the performance by putting off the pair of anklets from his ankles.

The suknahi ojapali also takes their seat in the manner of the biyah-gowa variety. After offering of the prayer the oja stands between the two dainapalis and begins sura-sadhana, i.e., alapa. Then the oja and the pali recite a Vandana either god or goddess with appropriate mudras. After finishing the Vandana the troupe sings the songs of the snake goddess Manasa of the Padma-purana of Sukavi Narayanadeva.

The palis including the new learners of the sattriyaa variety of ojapali stand in ardha-brttakar (semi-circle) position. The oja sings by taking his place in the middle of them. This form also commences sura-sadhana i.e. alapa in the line of the biyah-gowa ojapali. The performance continues only for one hour.

The style of presentation of the bhairaa ojapali is more or less similar to the style of presentation of the biyah-gowa ojapali. But the former puts stress on the abhinaya aspect and the latter gives emphasis on Sangita aspect.

The style of performance of the mare-gan-gowa ojapali or mare-gan is quite different from that of the suknahi ojapali. The deodhani (female shaman) stands to the left of the oja.

47. For detailed discussion see Chapter VII.
in the same row. The oja along with the deodhani moves round the altar very often while the former sings songs. The pâlis do not move at the time of singing.

The bisahârîr-gân-gowa ojâpali or bisahârîr-gân sings the songs associated with the snake goddess by sitting in front of a sarai. The manuscript written by Manakar and Durgavara is kept on that sarai. The gîtal or pâthak (of oja) takes his seat in front of the sarai. He sings from the manuscript kept in the sarai and the juris take up the refrain.

(E) Oja and his functions:

The oja is the leader of an ojapali troupe. He is endowed with many qualities and is skilled in many arts. He is well versed in gita-vâdya and nrtya. An oja should know about the different aspects of music such as râga, tâla, laya, mudrâ, gati, bhângi and such other things which are associated with the art of music. The Mirror of Gesture indicates the good qualities of a dancer: 'wisemen say that the dancer (or actor) should be

48. Sarâi /skt. Sarâva, the word sarâi denotes 'a brass tray having an artistically carved stand'.

S.N. Sarma: The Neo-Vainavite Movement and the Sattra Institution of Assam, p.230

49. N.C. Sarma: Origin and development of the ojapali (Folklore), p.251
handsome, of sweet speech, learned, capable, eloquent, of good birth, learned in scriptures (śastras) of art and science, of good voice, versed in song, instrumental music and dancing self-confident, and of ready witty. 50

The ojā should have a sharp memory. He can continue the act of singing for five or six days without any help of a prompter.

However the ojās of pāṅcālī variety is generally attached with a smāraka. The gītāl (ojā) of bīshāharī-rāṇī of Suwalkuchi and Kāmākhya and so on sings songs from the manuscripts of Mankara and Durgāvāra's compositions.

Who is a good ojā? The answer is given by a saying current among the ojās:

"nāte mudrā mukhe pada pāve dhare tāla /
mayūra sadṛṣa nāce sei ojā bhāla // 51"

i.e., that ojā alone is good, who, with songs on his lips, gestures in his hands, and rhythm on his feet goes round and round like the bird Mayūra. The ojā acts as the controller as well as manager of the troupe. He is something like a sūtradhāra of the Sanskrit drama. 52

The chief function of an ojā is to lead the chorus. He sets the refrain for both the daināpālis and other vālis to repeat it. The bīshāhar ojā keeps the tāla with the vālis with his

52. M. Sastri : Asamat Sangit Carca (Rāmadhenu), p. 82
anklets. The ojās of sukamā and other varieties of ojāvalis keep the tāla on their feet in accordance with the tālas of the pālis. "The ojā sings the main body of verses of the narrative taken up on the occasion." He makes dancing movements with appropriate gestures and mudrās keeping harmony with the songs. After setting the refrain the ojā makes dancing movements while the pālis repeat the refrain. He occasionally shows bhāva to expound and to elaborate his songs in the midst of singing. The ojā of māregān plays the role also of a priest.

Both the ojās of the biyāh-gowa and the sukamā as well as the bhāira expound the themes in prose (verse cannot be ruled out) with the help of one of the two daināpalis whenever the ojās think it necessary. But the ojā of biyāh-gowa variety generally expounds and explains the themes at the end of songs sung in thokatāla. Secondly, the ojā indicates the time of dialogue by the sound of anklets. "He addresses his audience as a story-teller does, and explains to them the different incidents of the tāle, wherever such explanation is thought necessary. This is sometimes done by the daināpali, with whom the ojā occasionally holds conversation."54

53. M. Neog: Sattriya Dances of Assam and their Rhythm, p. 9
54. ——: Sankaradeva and His Times, p. 250
The ojā may elaborate or may add something new in the original story if he thinks it necessary by keeping the unity intact with the outlines of the original theme. This tendency is clearly apparent in respect of the durgavari ojā. Durgavara who was an ojā omitted many verses of Mādhava Kandali's Assamese version of the Ramāyana and filled up the gaps with his own imagination maintaining the unity with the original story.\(^{55}\)

The ojā acts as a stage-director who very often corrects mistakes committed by the pālis on the stage with a hint. He may act as a teacher in the folk society as he teaches many things. Often the ojā may do something as a village doctor. If anybody of the audience falls ill, the ojā may cure at once.\(^{56}\) Many ojās of the sukmanī variety act as snake-charmers or snake doctors or they have the power of nullifying the effects by invoking mantras. They can perform certain rites by which they are able to force a snake to suck out the poison from the person bitten. A popular saying current among them goes thus:

\[
\text{Karma karibi bāpar / } \\
\underline{\text{mantra labi sāpar}} /^{57}
\]

i.e. Let him accept his father's profession

Let him learn the charms(mantras) of the snake.

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55. M. Neog (ed): Durgavari Giti Ramāyana, Intro. y. 29
56. Informant: Sri Rajani Sarma, ojā Bargāo, Kamrup, data collected on 7.3.83
57. Informant: Sri Lalit Chandra Nath, ojā, Sipajhar, Darrang, data collected on 16.10.84
Pālis and their functions:

The pālis are assistants of an oja. Some scholars are of opinion that the term pāli derives from the pālita. The word denotes protected or as pupil. But another scholar specialized in the field holds that the word pāli does not come from the term pālita. It comes from the word pāli or pāli When the word pāli or pāli can carry the full sense of the Assamese pali, i.e. subordinates of the oja, there is no necessity to show connection with the word like palita, as such, the word pāli may come from Sanskrit pāli or pāli.

The term pali carries the following meanings:

(i) the tip of the ear,
(ii) the edge, skirt, margin
(iii) the sharp side, edge or point of any thing,
(iv) boundary, limit,
(v) a line, a row,
(vi) a spot, a mark,
(vii) bridge, a cause way,

58. M.Neog : Sankaradeva and His times,p.250
A.C.Barua : Ojāpāli : Its different Types and Functions,p.1
P.Chaliha : Asamar Nātyakalā (Assam Gaurava),p.407
Bkt. pālita > MIA Pāliya > As pāli

59. Informant : Acaryya Manoranjan Sastri, Nalbari
Data collected on 11.12.84
(viii) the lap of bosom,

(ix) an ablong pond,

(x) maintenance of a pupil by his teacher during the period of his studies.

(xi) a louse,

(xii) praise

(xiii) a woman with a beard,

(xiv) a measure of capacity

and (xvi) a circumference.

Out of the above meanings, the pali of the ojapali institution carries the following senses:

(i) a line, or a row,

(ii) margin

(iii) boundary

(iv) maintenance of a pupil by his teacher during the period of his studies.

(v) a circumference

The pali of ojapali stand in two vertical lines or rows and act as margin or boundary of an ojapali troupe. The pali seems to be a pupil of an oja as the ojapali teaches the art to his pali in many respects. The oja takes all responsibilities of maintenance of his pali during the period of learning the art. Tradition goes that the pali or pupil also offers a very nominal manani or arcanā 61 to his oja at the first day of

60. M. S. Apte: The practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary

61. Present given to a revered person.
his entrance to the art form. The pāli or the pupil generally does not pay anything to his master at the time of learning.

The word pāli is also used in different contexts in the Assamese language, such as, pāli-khutā i.e., supporting posts. The pāli-khutās of a house made of bamboo and thatch support the side walls and the roofs. In the same way, the pālis support the ojapali troupe. Secondly, a person holding a junior position is also known as pāli. In the ojapali context, the pālis are junior to the ojas.

The pālis are the real strengths of an oja. An oja is good only because of his pālis. A folk saying goes thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dhuliyar bal tali,} \\
\text{ojār bal pāli} \\
\text{be√r√r bal kāmi} \\
\text{tir√r bal svāmi}
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., The drummer's strength is in the tali (on who plays on the cymbals)

The ojas strength is in the pāli (assistant)

The wall's strength is in kāmi (a long narrow piece of split bamboo which supports the wall)

The woman's strength is in her husband.

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62. R. Saikia : Ojāpali Nācar Sikṣā (Kupakar), p. 62
63. Informants: Dr Nabin Ch. Sarma, Hazarikapara, Darrang data collected on 1.9.84
Sri Prafulla Chandra Nath oja, Garukhati Darrang data collected on 9.4.84
Sri Indreswar Nath, dāināpāli, Garukhati, Darrang data collected on 9.4.84
Shri Tarini Chandra Dāināpāli, Makhibaha
The pālis assist the oja in all respects of the performance. The oja leads the chorus and sets the refrain (dihā) for the pālis to repeat with marking of time with their feet striking the ground and with their hands striking cymbals. The oja sets the first parva of a carana of a pada (verse) and the second parva of the carana of pada (verse) is recited by the pālis. This part is known as śripāla in respect of the biyāhar ojāpāli. The pālis are also expert in dance, gait and gestures as well as mudrās. The pālis of māre-gan present dramatic performances along with the recitation.

The taxonomy of the pālis may be shown below:

(i) dāinā pālis,
(ii) bānādhara pālis or gor pālis,
(iii) sahāyak pālis or ag pālis

The bānādhara or gor pālis take their position just behind the dāinā pālis. The number of this category of pāli is generally two. Harmony of their voice is a must. They take an active part in regard to continuity of the rāgas and the bānās set by the oja. It is a very difficult to complete a rāga or a bānā without the help of the bānādhara pāli. These two pālis back the oja in all respects, hence they are called gor-pālis.

64. M. Neog: Śāṅkaradeva and His Time, p.250
64a. Informant: Sri Jagat Chandra Sarma, Katakipara, Darrang data collected on 2.6.84
The other category of pali is the ag pali or the sahāyak pali or the helper. Generally the number of ag-pali is two. They assist both the bāradhara pāli and the ojā. Now and then they work as a substitute of the bāradhara pāli when they take rest for a while. 65

Daināpāli and his functions:

The word daināpāli comes from the term daksīna + pāli. 66 He is called the daināpāli because he acts as the right-hand man of the ojā. The daināpāli is like a second leader of the chorus. The ojā expounds the material of the songs both in prose and verse with the daināpāli so that the audience can follow the theme. The act of a daināpāli is known as dūnā-dhara. 67 The ojā questions the daināpāli and he answers accordingly in the style of dialogue. Occasionally, in the middle of the performance, the ojā pauses and converses with daināpāli by way of expounding the story in order to give the entertainment, the appearance of a dramatic dialogue. 68 The dialogues are extemporary in nature. The pāli particularly in the satṛīya form of ojāpali of the Śaṅkaradeva school performs the role of a daināpāli to some extent. In the midst of performance the ojā occasionally

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65. M. Sastri: Asamat Saṅgīt Carcā, p. 83
66. Skt. Daksīna + aka > MIA *dānīna + a< > As dānīna+ā, dānī, medial a> ā due to compensatory lengthening
67. N. C. Sarma, op. cit., p. 119
68. B. K. Barua: Śaṅkaradeva Vaishnava Saint of Assam, p. 69
inquires one of the pālis. The pāli says: 'jāno bāpu kahiyo' i.e., respected one, kindly tell me what you know.' The oja proceeds accordingly.

The dāināpāli represents dramatic performance with vacana (dialogue) and bhāva (state) as well as arouses crude humour to cater to the unsophisticated listeners. This is much more evident in the bhārā ojaṇāli. The dāināpāli of this variety presents all the bhāvas in terms of abhinaya. As for example, if the ojaṇāli sings the episode of Sītā Svayambara (marriage of Sītā) the dāināpāli shows all the situations of the story with proper acting. In the midst of the performance, the oja refers to the ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. Then, the dāināpāli tries to cap the statement of the oja with the retort that his wife can take avatāras more than even Lord Viṣṇu. The dialogue goes thus:

dāināpāli: The daughter of my father-in-law has ten incarnations.
oja: dāināpāli, what are you saying? Is it true?
dāināpāli: yes, Everyman has ten incarnations.
oja: No, It's not possible.
dāināpāli: Then, whose?
oja: The God Viṣṇu Himself has only ten incarnations.
dāināpāli: If God Viṣṇu's has ten incarnations, then my father-in-law's daughter has eleven incarnations.
oja: If I say that God Viṣṇu's has twelve incarnations?
dāināpāli: Ours is twelve or thirteen and so on.
Ojā: Can you substantiate?
Daināpāli: you?
Ojā: Yes, I can. It is already stated by the Sāstras.
Daināpāli: But my Sāstra is written newly.
Ojā: What kind of new Sāstra?
Daināpāli: It is purely private.

Ojā: Listen to me, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāh, Narasiṃha .......
   O Lord! I bow down to you!

Daināpāli (jokingly) O Lord! I salute Thee!
   O Lord! I salute Thee!
   Is there any tail?

Ojā: Why are you saying about a tail?
   why? why? why?

Daināpāli: There are sufficient grounds. If I can speak
   of more than ten incarnations of my father-in-law's
daughter, you may also try to increase the numbers
   of incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Hence I am telling
   about a tail.

Ojā: O daināpāli, the ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu are
   already recorded by the Sāstras. No body can increase
   or decrease the number. Let me hear the names of the
   incarnations of your wife.

Daināpāli: What do you call the first appearance of her from
   her mother's womb?

Ojā: O, this is __
dainapali: Babe incarnation.
ojā: very well, I get one.
dainapali: When the babe is able to move its feet and hands it is called the brisk incarnation.
ojā: Yes, two.
dainapali: When she is able to stand erect it is called namako, i.e., dear little girl incarnation.
ojā: Thank you. Three, no doubt.
dainapali: When she is able to move from house to house it is an aḍi, i.e., girl incarnation.
ojā: Good! four I am counting.
dainapali: When she gets ready for marriage is called a jhīva, i.e. blooming girl incarnation.
ojā: I get five.
dainapali: She gets the likirī, i.e. maiden incarnation when her forehead is adorned with tilaka of vermilion by the women of her father-in-law's side.
ojā: Six definitely.
dainapali: On the day of her marriage ceremony she is called the kanya, i.e., bride incarnation.
ojā: seven.
dainapali: The day of her departure to her father-in-law's house is called the bōvāri, i.e. daughter-in-law incarnation.
Dāināpāli: If she gives birth to a good child she is called the māk, i.e., mother incarnation.

Ojā: Nine.

Dāināpāli: If she produces a naughty child she is known as the kachkachī, i.e., brawling women incarnation.

Ojā: Well, I get ten. Any more?

Dāināpāli: So many, such as tiri(lady), gharinī(house-wife), sahurā jīyak(father-inlaw’s daughter), ramānī(a lovely young woman), āmār tāi(ours she) and so on.

Ojā: O my Lord!

Dāināpāli: What do you call a woman at the time of husking?

Ojā: Bareti (female husker).

Dāināpāli: What do you name her when she goes for fetching water?

Ojā: Āyeti(a woman having a husband alive).

Dāināpāli: When she goes for plantation?

Ojā: Bowani(a woman transplanting paddy seedlings).

Dāināpāli: What do you call her at the time of weaving?

Ojā: Bowani(female weaver).

Dāināpāli: What do you term her when she goes for cooking?

Ojā: Rāndhāni(a female cook).

Dāināpāli: What do you call her when she goes for chanting of names?
The audience also enjoy the defeat. Then, the oja again comes back to the act of singing.

In many respects the daināpālī arouses hāsyarasa by twisting the main incident in the conversation along with the oja, e.g.

oja: matsya rupe avatāra bhailā prathamat /

i.e. Firstly, God īlarayana incarnated in the form of a fish.

daināpālī: matsya rupe avatāra bhailā pathārat /

i.e. God Narāyana incarnated in the form of a fish in the field.

it is said:

oja pon pāli bāla /

tār mājhe rasa rānar nijārā //

i.e. The oja follows the story directly but the pāli i.e. daināpālī twists it to arouse hāsyarasa. But within a very short time the daināpālī like a fool admits his mistake and follows the oja.

Moreover, the daināpālī of the bhairā form of ojāpālī appears to be a caricaturist.

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69. Informant: Sri Pratap Besbarua and his party, data collected from Sadilapur at the time of performance on 25.10.83.

70. D. Nath Oja: Mangaldair Vyāsagita: Ojāpālī (Daurāiga Surti) p. 29
In the midst of conversation, both the ojā and the daināpāli recite some mālitās pertaining to the story of origin of hoka (hookah) and such other things which are associated with the day to day life of the folk. For instance, the mālitā of the hookah is given below:

nararūpe nārāyaṇa hoka mahēsvara /

jalarūpe gangā aiche tāhār bhitara //

cilim bhāīā praṣāpati aṅgī dhānījaya /

hokā nindle manusya ṛa āyu ḍove ṛāyā //

najāniyā yito loke hokā nindā kare /

marileyo sīrgāla haiyā ḍove ṛavā kare //

eka hokā yāra gharesalagram tāra ghare /

duihokā yāra gharesalakṣmī-nārāyaṇa tāra ghare //

* *

tini hokā yāra gharesarvadeva tāra ghare /

hokā dekhiyo tare mahāpāpi gana /

āra jānā tāra ḍove punya aganana //71

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71. Informant: Sri Bhadra Kant Sarma, Baladevapara, Darrang, data collected on 13.5.84
Nārāyana takes the form of man and Mahesvara appears in the form of the hookah.
Goddess Gangā enters the hookah in the form of water.

Brajāpāli (Brahmā) appears as the bowl and Dhanañjaya takes the form of fire.

Those who speak ill of the hookah they will have to lose the duration of life.
And after death they will have to cry in the forms of fox.

One hookah is equal to a sālagrāma.
Two hookahs are equal to both Laksmī and Nārāyana.
Three hookahs may represent all gods and goddesses.
The sinner may get relief of their sins if they have a look the hookah.
And they may acquire merits.

This type of humour content dramatic conversation is not an organic part of the theme sung by the ojāpāli, since it has no organic relation with the story. This is just an innovation of the ojā and the dāināpāli in viewing the taste of the folk. In the biyāh-gora form of ojāpāli no doubt humour-content conversation is there, but such type of inorganic conversation is not found frequently. In the Sattriya form of ojāpāli such type of humour-content conversation is totally absent.
The dainapali very often acts as an oja while the latter takes rest at the time of the performance. Even the dainapali teaches the ojapali art to newcomers. And the oja very often learns the art from the dainapali.

The mare-gowa ojapali or maragam, and the bigaharir-gan gowa ojapali or bigaharir gan have no place of the dainapalis. Similarly, the sattriya ojapalis of the Sankaradeva school have no dainapalis like the School of Damodaradeva.

It is remarkable that the oja and the dainapali are the sources of innumerable tales. Rightly does observe P. Goswami: "The ojapali, which is a choric team reciting verses from the Mahabharata to the accompaniment of dance and gestures, is another source of tales. Thus, religious activities, if not the festivals as such seem to have maintained a tradition of story telling."

Dress and ornament used by both oja and palis:

The Nātya Sastra classifies abhinaya into four folds, e.g., (i) śāncika, (ii) vacika, (iii) abhāryya and (iv) sattvika. The abhāryya abhinaya (the extraneous representation) chiefly depends on dress and make-up. The term abhāryya indicates something which is external. According to Abhinavabharati the abhāryya abhinaya

73. Nātya Sastra, viii/8-9
is "like a wall for the painting in the form of the performance with all the representation. Even though all the other histrionic representation is absent, the particular character is determined by the special dress and makeup."74 The Sātvika and the Vācika as well as the āṅgika aspects of abhinaya are connected with the actor's physique, on the other hand the āhāryya abhinaya is something that is externally added.75

The āhāryya abhinaya predominantly depends on the ornaments (ālaṃkāras) and the costumes. Like all the abhinayas the ojaṅpāli art form also depends on the āhāryya aspects of abhinaya.

Ālaṃkāras:

The ālaṃkāra includes both mālya (flower garland) and abharana (ornament) as well as vāsa (drapery).76 The ojaṅpāli art form except the oja and pāli of the satṛiya form does not use flower garlands at all. The oja and the pālis of the satṛiya ojaṅpāli as well as the pāncali ojaṅpāli put on small garlands on their pāgaris (head-gear).

G.H. Tarlekar : Studies in the Nātyasāstra, pp.133-34

75. Nātyasāstra, XXIII/1-2

76. Ibid, XXXIII/1
The abhara may be classified into four categories, e.g.

(i) āvedhya (to be pierced), (ii) bandhanīya (to be tied), (iii) kaśpya (to be put on) and (iv) āropya (to be put round the neck). The āvedya comprises the ear ornaments such as kundala and the like. The ojas excepting nare-gan and bisahrir gān as well as the bhārā form of oja-pāli use the ear ornaments in both the ears, which are known as the kānar sonā (ear ornament made of gold), or anti or unti, or he may put on a pair of phutis (clove-like ear pins) in his either ear. The oja of sattriya form of oja-pāli of the Dāmodara school pierces the kunti in the both ears. The dānin-pālis of both the biyāh-gova and the sukāni forms of oja-pāli may put on ear-ornaments in both ears.

The bandhanīya includes the girdle and the arm band. The ojas do not use any ornament made of silver or gold but the function of a girdle is served by long and narrow cloth used by them. But they use the arm band at their both hands. The arm band used by the ojas are known as mutti khāru or sām khāru (broad bangles made of silver or silver worked by gold). The

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77. Natya-Sastra, XXXIII/11
78. Ibid., XXXIII/12
80. S.N. Sarma : Asamiya Natya Sahitya, p.4
81. Natya-sastra, XXXIII/12
82. Informant : Sri Sarat Chandra Sarma, oja Vyasapara, Darrang data collected on 16.1.85
dāināpālis of both biyāh-gowa and suknāni forms may put on bangles. The deodānī of mere-gan puts on a pair of undecorated kāras (bangles) on either hand. Both the ojās of biyāh-gowa and suknāni forms start the profession by putting on the bangles and leave the profession by putting off the bangles from the hands.

The kaṇoṣa (to be put on) comprises anklets and decoration of dress. The ojās of different forms of ojāpāli excepting the ojā of biyāh-gowa variety do not use the anklets. We have already mentioned about the anklets used by the ojā of biyāh-ar variety. The anklets in respect of biyāh-gowa ojāpāli may be regarded both as an instrument and an ornament.

The ṛoṣa (to be put round the neck) includes golden neck chain and various necklaces. The ojās of biyāh-gowa and suknāni varieties of ojāpāli put on dhol-mādalis (a kind of necklace made of a few golden beads and other red coral beads with a small drum-shaped gold bead in the middle). Similarly, the ojās of bhāira form of ojāpāli also puts on a mani-mādali or a dhol-mādali round his neck. The ojā of satṛīva variety particularly the school of Damodara puts on a māka-mani (a kind of necklace) round his neck.

83. Natyaśastra, XXXII/13
84. Ibid., XXXII/13
The Natya-sastra refers to four kinds of ornaments of the fingers. The gjās of different forms of ožābāli put on one or two rings either vetika (golden ring) or ādulimudrā (ring with various design, and made of gold or silver). The deodhani of ṛāre-ṛān also puts on one or two rings either made out of gold or silver round her fingers.

**Dress or costume:**

The dress or costume plays an important role in the extraneous representation. The Natya-sastra classifies male costume into three categories, e.g., (i) suddha (white), (ii) vicitra (variegated) and (iii) malina or rakta (red). The suddha dress should be used when going to the temple of gods while observing some auspicious rite or a vow or at the time of the conjunction of some tithis and stars (naksatras) or at the time of marriage or any other sacramental rite, men and women should have white costumes and same is the rule for a trader (Prayantika).

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85. Natya-sastra, XXXIII/34-35

86. Ibid, XXXIII/117

87. Natya-sastra, XXXIII/118-20


The ojā and the pālia generally use the śuddha or white dresses since the art form is associated with temples or some auspicious rite or a vow or at the time of the conjunction of some tithis. The ojā of biyān-gova variety puts on a head-gear (pāguri) like that of the sutradhāra of sākhyā bhāguna. The two ends of the head-gear are pointed like the two ends of a boat. According to some scholars the head-gear of the ojā of biyān-gowa form may be called kosāpatiya-pāg. The length and the shape of a pāguri of ojā vary according to shape and size of the head of ojā. Generally it is 35 cm in length. Both the ojās of sattriya and bhairā forms have resemblances to the ojā of biyān-gowa variety in regards to the pāguri. But the ojā of bhairā form uses readymade pāguri. On the other hand the ojās of biyān-gowa and sattriya forms of ojāpali do not use ready made pāguri. The pāguri of sattriya ojā is made of a piece of cloth which is 45 cm in length and is 8 metres in length. The head-gears of the ojās of suknāni form of Kamrup and māre-gam of South Goalpara are very simple. Most of the ojās of these two forms put on head-gears made from gamocha. However, the pāguri of the ojā of suknāni variety of Darrang

88. N.C.Sarma, op.cit., p.106
89. P.Chaliha: Asamar Natya Kāla (Asam Gaurava), p.408
90. Informant: Roseswar Saikia Bayan, Gauhati; data collected on 3.10.84
91. As. gamocha (skt. aṅga vastra)
is peculiar and it is made of a piece of white cloth which is 10 metres in length and is 60 cm in breadth. This paguri is known as kuhumiyā pag. (oval shaped head gear). The pāl̄is of suknāni form of Darrang very often use the same type of paguri.

The biyāh-gowā ojā puts on a pattajāma (cāpkan connected with jāmā with long sleeves). The pattajāma is put on over a white dhoti and a white genji. It covers him from neck to ankles. To prepare a pattajāma it is said that at least 16 metres of cloth are necessary. The pattajāma opens like the feathers of a peacock when the ojā moves in a circling manner in the course of his dance. An embroidered belt, commonly known as taṅgālī measuring about 5 cm in breadth and 2.25 metres in length weaves on the waist of the ojā. It works as a girdle on the waist. The taṅgālī may be of various colours. The ojā uses a gala vastra (scarf). One end of the gala vastra wraps round the hip beneath the bend of the taṅgālī and the end hangs on the lower part of the jāmā. The other end of the gala vastra goes upward and wraps very loosely one and half times round the neck and the remaining portion keep under the bend of the gala vastra on the hip. The

92. Informant: Late Thanu Ojā, Pithakhowa, Darrang, data collected on 10.3.66 by Dr N.C.Sarma
93. Informant: Sri Anandamohan Bhagavati, Guhati, data collected on 8.8.84
94. Informant: Sri Sarat Chandra Sarma, ojā, Vyasapara, Darrang, data collected on 16.185
galavastra is 3.60 metres in length and is 15 cm in breadth.

The oja of bhairā form of ojāpali puts on a causā and jāmā. Unlike the oja of biyāh-govā variety, the oja of bhairā form does not wear a pattajāmā. The pattajāmā cannot be separated from each other but the causā and jāmā can be separated, since they are two distinct dresses. The oja of bhairā art form usually keeps tight his waist, with a girdle. The style of wearing the girdle of the oja of bhairā ojāpali is quite different from that of the oja of biyāh-govā form. The pālis of māre gān also use jāmā, but it is too short in comparison with that of the oja of biyāh-govā variety. They do not use pattajāmā like the oja of biyāh-govā form. They wrap a batuk (a kind of long narrow towel around the waist). The pālis of both biyāh-govā and suknāni form of ojāpali wear white dhoti-shirt or penjī and keep a gamochā on their shoulder. They also use pāgurī made out of cāddar or gamochā. The oja including the pālis of biyāh-govā form use white candana as tilaka. The mālitā mentioned below surely exhibits the style of costume of the oja of biyāh-govā variety, e.g.

Viṣṇurūpī pāgagota sīrata prakāsa /
kapāle tilake bhakti-mātāra nivāsa //
parīhita pattajāmā sīva-muladhāra/
kundalā kāṅkane sthiti svarūpa mayāra /
A turban representing Viṣṇu decorates the head (of the ojā).
The tilaka beautifies the forehead, the dwelling place of Mother Bhakti.
He puts the silk-coat (chāpkan) on the outer part of the Śiva-mūlādhāra.
Māyā resides in his ear-ring and in bangle.
Brahmā Prajāpati dwells in the scarf that hangs on both sides of the neck.
Goddess Ganga appears in the form of anklets and Goddess Sarasvatī reveals herself in the form of a girdle.
Thus, the biyāh-ojā emerges in the form of a Gandharva.
(In the way) the divine performances have come down to the earth.

96. Quoted from N.C.Sarma's op.cit.p.15
The ojā of suknāṇi variety puts on a traditional coat, a dhoti with long ends in front, a cāddar keeps on the both shoulders with the two ends hanging in front. The pālis of suknāṇi form of ojāpāli wear dhoti and shirt or genji and keep a gamača on the shoulder. The ojā including the pālis decorate their fore heads by the tilakas of red candana. According to some ojās of suknāṇi variety of Kamrup the ojā uses a gamača having three fingers embroidered border that hardly reaches the knees. Furthermore, he takes a kavaca-gamača (a gamača being charmed with mantras) on his neck that woven within a day. It is charmed with mantras which contains seven knots.

The ojā of māre-gān puts on a white dhoti and a shirt and a turban on his head. He wraps a long phāli (long narrow multicoloured towel) on the neck in such a way that both the ends of the phāli may reach below the front. The ojā of sattrīyā form of the school of Saṃkaradeva dresses in a white dhoti, a pāguri with a small garland on it, a netted waist coat and a cāddar. The pālis also use more or less the same dress. The Sattrīyā ojā of the school of Damodaradeva puts on a silken dhoti.

97. Informant: Sri Bhabendra Sarma, an octogarian ojā, of the suknāṇi form, Bargāo, Kamrup, data collected on 3.9.84

98. M. Neog, op. cit. p. 27
and a cākan (a kind of shirt) and a silken cāddar keeps on the neck in such a way that the two ends of the cāddar hang on the front side.

The deodānti associated with māre-gān wears a typical Assamese dress comprising a mekhlā (a kind of gown), a cāddar and a red-spotted ribā (scarf i.e., upper garment). She covers the breast and the upper part of the body with a piece of yellow silken cloth. She keeps tight her waist with a girdle made of cloth. She puts on a big round vermilion mark on her forehead.

Thus, the bhāryya aspect of abhinaya of the ojapali art form in general is maintained by the costume they use.