Festivals

The essential unity underlying diversity in Indian culture is best gleaned from the festivals and fairs joyously celebrated throughout the year in all parts of the country. These festivals are not mere occasions of congregation of men, women and children, but in fact they reflect the inherent feelings of the people of a great nation having a long historical and rich cultural background. This is the reason why India can boast of having the maximum number of festivals in the world. The life of a man in India is deeply soaked in colourful festivals, both religious and social. The celebrated poet Kalidasa has said, “Man are, by their very nature, fond of festivals.” Festivals, whether religious, social or seasonal, have played an important part in the life of the Indian people. They provided ample opportunities for enjoyment and change in their daily life. Women in particular found a major change at the festivals, as on such occasions they could free themselves from
their household work and go out for participating in various kind of recreational activities. They observed fast, worshipping gods and goddesses and after the completion of the ceremonial rites, enjoyed grand feasts.

In folklore – folklife represents that aspects of cultural anthropology which concentrates on the study of one’s own national cultural heritage. When an American studies Japanese community he is doing anthropology, whereas his Japanese colleague is studying folklife. When a Japanese anthropologist studies on American community, he is doing anthropology, but an American working in same community is studying folklife.¹ Assamese culture is a composition of different tribes and communities living in this land. Tiwas contribution to the great Assamese socio-cultural life is remarkable.

Like other tribes in the North-Eastern region of India, the Tiwas also can take pride in their rich tradition of folklore with songs and lores. It has been aptly said the whole system of customs and habits, community ceremonies, dances, folklore and folksongs, religious beliefs and observances revolve round agriculture. In the Tiwa society

also folk songs and festivals revolve round the different stages of agriculture.\textsuperscript{2} The Tiwas of the hills as well as plains do not have any idol or temple. There are only \textit{thans} for the gods of the Tiwas. \textit{Fa-Mahadeo} is their supreme God. In my study areas most of the villages have their \textit{thans} where different \textit{pujas} are offered to different deities like \textit{Lukhimi, Bodolmaji, Khul-devata} etc.

The Tiwas have their various festivals which are closely linked with rhythmical tunes of different musical instruments like \textit{Khram, Khrambar, Kiringadhol, Gomona, Kali} etc. form an important part of their festivals. The Tiwas important festivals are the three \textit{Bisus, Barat, Sagra-Misawa, Wansua Misawa, Maifadla Misawa, Khelswa Misawa, Jon-Bil Mela, Yangli Misawa, Lankhun Phuja} etc. In their socio-religious occasions \textit{Lo Ho La Hai} and \textit{Lali Hillali} songs are sung by the village folks which make the whole area a fantastic festive atmosphere. \textit{Lo Ho La Hai} songs are generally sung during wedding and harvesting occasions, while the \textit{lali hillali} songs are sung during \textit{Karam} and other festivals.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{2} Gohain, Birendra Kumar : \textit{The Hill Lalungs}, 1993, p-86.
\end{flushright}
A few specimens of *Lo Ho La Hai* songs are presented below –

\[
\begin{align*}
&lo \ ho \ la \ hai, \ lo \ ho \ la \ hai \\
&lo \ la \ heloya \ lai \\
&bhai \ oi \ la \ ha \ heloya \ lai
\end{align*}
\]

The *Ojha* or the expert leads the songs while the *Palis* or assistant repeat it after him.

**Ojha**:

\[
\begin{align*}
&kino \ mas \ mariba \ sole \ mor \ bupai \ oi \\
&kino \ mas \ mariba \ sol, \ bhai \ oi \\
&la \ la \ heloya \ lai;
\end{align*}
\]

**Pali**:

\[
\begin{align*}
&lo \ ho \ la \ hai \\
&lo \ ho \ la \ hai
\end{align*}
\]

**Ojha**:

\[
\begin{align*}
&abujan \ bhaiyek \ bujabo \ noware \\
&dhon \ di \ haraki \ gol, \\
&bhai \ oi, \ la \ la \ heloya \ lai.
\end{align*}
\]

**Pali**:

\[
\begin{align*}
&lo \ ho \ la \ hai \\
&lo \ ho \ la \ hai
\end{align*}
\]

**Ojha**:

\[
\begin{align*}
&a ya \ naiekia, \ bhaiyek \ naiekiya, \\
&akale \ moribi \ kandi \ bhai \ oi, \\
&la \ la \ heloya \ lai.
\end{align*}
\]

-79-
Lo Ho means tune, La means slowly and Hai means loudly, Heloya means carefree and Lai means proceeding while dancing. The meaning of the above lo ho la hai song is that – "My dear, why you are rejecting my love. Without your mother and brother why you surrender yourself with an unknown boy?" This is a kind of romantic song sung at the time of marriage ceremony and other festivals like Barat etc. in the plains areas of Morigaon district.

Another important song of the Tiwas is lali hillali. Lali hillali means – series of songs are sung by male and female, in question answer type. When singing these songs the leader and the followers use to take rice beer.

A few specimens of lali hillai songs are presented below:

lo la lahoi lola bahoi
la len heloyia laiea luki lobal
la len heloyia lal
lali lung loha lo bai
lali lung loha lo bai
la len heloyia laica lukia lo bai
la len heloyia lai
The *lalihillali* songs are although sung mainly in cultivation and in many places, these are sung and danced in the *malpuja* and in ritual ceremonies of the child birth. At the time of working in the field they drink rice beer. Through singing different songs they portrait the beauty of the field, the river and the reverine water near the field as –

```
guimari bilora lajai bengmara
kajbang kajala hangu,
eiana daksa tianae daksa
thale jurania hanga.
tubar haoa maiba saolia
khat panai panai sao
lali hillali haia mor pitadeo
lali hillali hai.
hali lang gharate birali homale
sang tol malangi jai.
```

Sometimes, being intoxicated with wine they describe the incident of social injustice of a boy and girl who marry within same blood relation –

```
lathori llathori sulinuhua tapori

lale dadayakor pas
```
tora gela gondhata moriba lagiche

satkhan sagarar mach

satkhan sagarar machmari dhukale

aru mari dhukali nador

tora gela gondhata mariba lagicha

parbator thalua bandor.

Some of the *lali-hilali* songs are composed by unknown folk which are related with freedom movement of India. They use the word *bongal* state to denotes the Britishers.\(^3\) In these folk songs they explain the beauty of their beloveds by singing and dancing –

Boy – *sira khundi de tetele potia*

*Bongal maribloi jao*

Girl – *Bongal marili bhaloke karili*

*Aamoloi anicho ki.*

Boy – *tomailoi anicho sira muri angothi*

*Majat balichanda di*

*Moloi anicho sira muri anguthi*

*Kalah dotola bhang.*

---

Through these songs and dances their works in the field are completed with joys and cheers. At the end they recapitulate their chivalrous tribal spirit. They differentiate their mode of cultivation, ploughing etc. without keeping in mind the prohibition of ploughing in fields on some days unlike their Hindu counterparts in the surrounding villages.

When the works in the field ended with song and dance of the *lali hillali* the host family offers thanks and gratitude to the cultivating villagers.

### 4.1 Classification of Folksongs

The Tiwas are proud of their unique folksongs. Through these songs they express their culture, rituals, traditions etc. The Tiwa’s folksongs help us to know the Tiwas folklife and traditions. Most of the Tiwas are agriculturists. So it is natural that their festivals and pujas are agriculture oriented.

Generally, Tiwas folksongs can be classified in the following ways:

a. Songs related with festivals
b. Romantic Folksongs
c. Agricultural Folksongs
d. Ballads
a. **Songs related with festivals**: Folk songs which are sung in different festivals like *sagra misawa, wanswa misawa, khelswa misawa, lankhun fuja misawa, magro khelswa misawa, moinara misawa, barat* etc are known as festival related folksongs.

b. **Romantic Songs**: *Panthai kharala* or *samada rajawa* songs are known as romantic folksongs.

c. **Agricultural folksongs**: *Panthai chalawa* songs, *maira kit, mai fathla kit, fader kachewa kit* etc. are sung in the agricultural fields when Tiwa men and women are engaged in cultivation.

d. **Ballads**: *Wanswa fadon sekiya kit* and *samadi sangtuwa kit* etc. are known as ballads in Tiwa society.

There are different clans in Tiwa community. The folksongs and the festivals are organized differently by different clans. At the same time rules and regulations, songs and lyrics are also very from clan to clan.

Generally Tiwas folk festivals are organized clanwise. The following table shows the festivals and clans observing different folk festivals.

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Table 4.1
Festivals organized by Clans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Clans</th>
<th>Festivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Marjong</td>
<td><em>Wansawa, Lankhun Fuja,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Sagramisawa, Yanglimisawa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Amsai</td>
<td><em>Yangli Misawa, Lankhun Fuja</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Misawa, Sugramisawa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Amkha</td>
<td><em>Wanswa Misawa, Fuja Misawa,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Sagramisawa, Panthai Salwa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ronkhai</td>
<td><em>Yangli Misawa and Lankhun Misawa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Amoni</td>
<td><em>Lankhun Misawa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Lumphoi</td>
<td><em>Sagramisawa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Amjong</td>
<td><em>Sagramisawa and Yangli.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. *Wanswa Festival*

Wanswa festival or rice grinding festival is a major dance festival of the Tiwas. The festival is organized every five years of interval which is also a mark of integration among Tiwa community. This is also known as *maldeu* festival or *chatanga* festival. Generally, Tiwas observe *wanswa* festival from Tuesday to Thursday in the month of June-July. They celebrate this festival for the agricultural development of the land generally in the bachelor dormitories or *samadies*.

The whole festival is controlled by the leadership of *changdoloi*, *changmajhi*, *haruma*, *khuramul*, *khurasa* and *munsip*. The organizing villages have to invite the nearby villages to take part in the festival. In response to the invitation the neighbouring village youths with their cultural troop attending the festival from Tuesday evening. The households of the host village have to bear the responsibilities of the fooding and lodging of the guests. On Thursday morning *urol* or rice grinding tools have to be arranged in front of the *changdolois* house. With the rhythm of songs and dance, the participants grinding rice up to 4–5 quintal within three days festivals. After rice grinding, they


– 86 –
offer puja at night to Lampha Raja, Chatanga Raja and Malden Raja. Dance and songs continue for all the nights. Zu or rice beer, areca nut, banana leaf, fire wood, pigs and one red colour fowl is very much essential in this festival. All the boys and the girls enjoy this festival and provide full freedom by their parents to choose a life partner.

The songs sung in this festival are mainly romantic or involving a love affairs between boys and girls. One example of such song sung by a youth to address her new girl friend is like as–

Ha paka kharaine khuburi jalam son
mugung manoya mang,
ha paka telunga mahati, jalam son
nam go manaya khang,
mungo mankai dom
chalkowone chag go
cholgo tiga mang
namgo sal nangane chag go
sadar tica mang.
Ha mayalina pethau
Hada roma jikam
Khum tuling khorine sajo
Joyalina saro roma jicam
Khu mutoling khorine sajo.
4.3 *Sagra-Misawa* festival

In Tiwa language *sagra-misawa* means dancing collectively. It is a spring festival of the Tiwas which is held in the month of *Fagun* or February/March. Generally the festival started on Sunday or Wednesday.

There is a management committee for this festival where *loro* and his assistant *hatari* are the chief advisers. The *samadi* takes the leading part with its leader the *changdoloi*. The *changdoloi* keeps the musical instruments on the banana leaf for this festival. Then the priest asks him to direct the leader of the musician to take the instruments and to repair them if necessary. As this has been done bowl of ricebeer is taken by all.

On the Wednesday when the youngman and musicians assemble for a rehearsal, the *changdoloi* asks them to get bamboo for new flutes for the next day. They call it *pangsi tana* literally drawing the bamboo flute. *Pangsi* means flute and *tana* means drawing. Along with the priest and his assistant they go to the jungle and clean a small area near a small hill for a ceremony. The *changdoloi* sets up the

---

mindai kham of modar tree (Atrocarpur lococha) to represent the chari bhai charikora the presiding deity of the bamboo grove. Lastly, seven pieces of bamboo are fetched from the jungle and seven of the new bamboo flutes are made on the spot are offered to the mindai-kham by the changdoloi, as he utters, under the guidance of the priest a prayer to the deity the rest portion for cutting more good bamoos for new flutes for the spring festival. After this ricebeer offered to the deity is served among the people. Then, all of them proceed to the forest to collect the bamboos that they needed. Before they leave the place they break the seven pieces of bamboos and the seven flutes which were offered to the mindai kham and back to the village singing songs with the refrain 'hei krru, hei krru' (O' God, O' God)\(^9\) and assemble at the house of the changdoloi.

The headman and the elders are informed of their return with bamboo and instruct the changdoloi to keep them carefully and return after drink. In these days the young men collected firewood from the jungle and also collect kou leafs to serve food during the festival and store them in the changdoloi's house.

---

In the evening, the youngmen, the elders, the priests and the musicians assemble in the bachelor’s hall. The musicians play the drums and the flutes and the boys go around the fire by dancing and singing of the sagramisawa songs. On conclusion the youngmen’s leader with his assistant goes inside the dormitory and prays to the presiding spirit to forgive them any mistakes committed by them in the rehearsal.

The main function of the sagramisawa begins at night. The whole village has to observe rigorous taboos for four days from the evening. The Barikhas go around the village announcing the taboos which are extensive.10

At the time of sagra-misawa festival nobody is allowed to –

i. wear shoes

ii. put on trousers

iii. riding bicycle or any other vehicle

iv. washing cloth

v. pound paddy

vi. go for fishing

vii. weaving

viii. ploughing

ix. cutting firewood or bamboo from forest

x. touch the granary

xi. touch the musical instrument to be used in dance in the

\textit{sagramisawa}

xii. use stick or umbrella

xiii. smoking outside the dance-yards

xiv. have guests at home and

xv. spend nights at home.

The \textit{Changdoloi} sets a special group of his boys called \textit{phurakhel} to watch if these are correctly observed or not.

4.4 \textbf{Songs of Sagramisawa}

The \textit{sagramisawa} songs are the songs of love and beauty of nature. Some of them are also romantic sung by the Tiwa youth in praise of their beloved.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
Some of the popular songs are as follows –

*Shali nangane taw taw*

*Chonai nawane taw*

*Amukhi paligo nihalgaido*

*Iathong iakora taw*

*Thasuki paligo nihalgaido*

*Chonai lekha mokhang blaw*

Look at the legs of my darling, so beautiful are they; look at her toes, they are like red roses and her face is like a full moon.

*Ye hei, su, su, su*

*Ye hei su, su, su*

*Owe owe ... ...*

“the old man made a fun, so very very pretty. If his daughter be mine, I’d fan her all the night”

*teoi pai dao i pai dai*

*narahanae ash*

*faksai honae ash*

*kashon honae ash*

*khon dinae komfar*
"O' my sweet sister let me have my last piece of cloth and ornament. Let me go out of the village and let me not be back here to show my face to the villagers. Let us go to a secluded place and start our family life there."

The Tiwa villagers are not only simple in their dresses and behaviour but their simple living and way of thinking is explicit in their folksongs and dances. These simple and melodious songs reflect the real life and mode of living of this community.

The *sagramisawa* festival, is one of the most important festival of the Tiwas. The festival have certain similarities with some of the festivals of a number of communities of Assam and north-east such as the *Johong* festival of Karbis, and *Me-dum-me-phe* of the Ahoms.12

4.5 **Yanglimisawa**

In Tiwa language *yangli* means worshiping Goddess Lakshmi. After every five years *yangli puja misawa* is performed at the *yangli sal* where goat, ducks, pigeons, fowls, pigs are offered. This festival is organized by the Tiwa’s specific clans like *amsai, marjong, rongkhai* and *magro*.  

The worship of *yangli* is done by chanting sacred incantation. The worship of *Lakhimi* is attended by a dance called *yangli misawa* dance. The *banthai* (the young lads) with sword (*langkhui*) in their right hands and shields (*paru*) in their left hands dance in circles. The *chang doloi* and *chang maji* leading the group. The young volunteers control the people so that the dance becomes orderly. The people offer bundles of paddy, fowles, ducks and pigeons for *Maiphur* and for *Posmota Posumati* (Vasumati in Sanskrit, meaning the earth) they offer goats as sacrifice. The *yangli puja Miswa* is performed in the month of *soat* (March-April) at a interval of five years. This festival is observed mainly in Gova area of Morigaon district. It may be mentioned that *yangli* puja is performed after *Jonkhong puja* is performed for sowing seeds.

Another important festival of Tiwas is known as *Langkhun puja misawa*. The word *langkhun* in Tiwa dialect means bamboo. Hence it is known as bamboo worshiping puja. In the plains, areas of Morigaon district like Manipur, Tetelia, Pachim Nagaon, Bangthai gaon this festival is known as *malthakur puja*. The Langkhun puja is performed in the month of *Aghon* early December of every year. The puja continues for 4 days from Monday to Thursday. The whole puja is connected with various songs and dances.

For *langkhun puja*, *loro*, *changdoloi*, *changmajhi* and other officials have to go to hills for collecting *langkhun* or bamboo. They address the members of 12 clans with ricebeer, a pot of water and 7 numbers of *Tara* leaves in the following manner —

*Sande lina nang O' baro khule sa*

*Sob sandena nang O' baro khule sa*

*Ma bijuli roun go aali nana ring*

*Bena mane kurine fara oi wai*

*Bena fane kurine fara oi wai*

*Hande labong aawa, bole lara oi baro khule sa.***
Meaning – ‘My dear members of 12 clans. Please come with us. We will request bamboo queen to cut 18 numbers of it for our puja.’ In this way they will identify a good Bijuli bamboo yeard and will pray to Deu chalja raja king of bamboo with ricebeer, one paisa coin, betel nut etc. They regard Bijuli bamboo as a royal princes.  

Hence to get her proper worshiping to his father king chalja is very important. At the time of requesting bamboo princes again they started a song –

\[
\begin{align*}
Ju-lai koi lai feddong O’ ba bijuli rowon \\
Mai law lai feddong O’ ba chalja raja \\
Ne chajo, bijli khowbarig lana \\
Ne tiz mahadi khowbarig lana \\
Thebo ju-law chana thobe mai law chana \\
Cha-cha-changdoloi, cha-cha-changmajhine \\
Cha-cha- boroine, cha-cha-methane oi.
\end{align*}
\]

Meaning – ‘O’ my Lord Chalija, we are accompany with changdoloi, changmajhi and other villagers to welcome your princes. We are offering you ricebeer, battle-nut, sweet gourd of liquor, please give us permission to accompany us with your princes. In this way

they collect bamboo from the hill side. On the specific day they offering puja with song and dance for the welfare of the village. They offer puja to bamboo princes so that she can vanish the impact of sani (Saturn) which is destructive to the common people of the village. They recite a stanza in the following way at the time of worshiping –

\[
\begin{align*}
Hebe & \text{ teas fara huni chikilang} \\
Hebe & \text{ teas fara pegini chikilang} \\
Tawa & \text{ faraw leu nahai lee-bo} \\
Afot & \text{ chekailang befot bujailang} \\
Thalgo & \text{ chekailang khuligo chekailang} \\
O' & \text{ ma bijili khowobori ma chalja mahadi oi}
\end{align*}
\]

At last all the members of the village collect new and decorate langkhungs or bamboos and reject the old ones. They again started dancing and singing with jill by taking ricebeer, pork and chicken.

### 4.7 Khaplang Rawa Festival

This Khaplang Rewa Misawa is observed on Sunday in the early winter season. The word Khaplang in Tiwa means thatches. So, the festival is known as thatch cutting festival. The tiger is believed as king of the forest by the Tiwas and as such they believe that only by
offering puja to tiger they can get rid of the attack of tiger and cut the thatches peacefully. For this performance, every household of the village have to offer a fowl and have to purchase a pig by the villagers. Again 7 eggs, 7 chicken, a small bed of reeds, rice powder, rice, betel-nuts, banana leaf and 210 nos. of Tara leaves are required. Loro prepare the worshiping yard and the chairs are arranged systematically like - on right hand chari bhai chari kora, on left hand mahadeu, on extreme left jol devata and next one is for bagh devata (Tiger). After completion of puja the dancers with kharm and khramber have started dancing up to night. When Bhandari informed about the dinner they will stop their dance programme. For taking dinner all will be sitting in a circle and enjoy it with meat and ricebeer. In this festival, village disputes are also settled and the wrong doers are penalized with feast of pig and ricebeer.15

4.8 Jongkhong Puja Misawa

Jongkhong Puja Misawa is popular among hill Tiwas as well as plains Tiwas, specially in Silchang, Neli, Gova, Daborghat and Morigaon areas. Jongkhong is generally performed in the last part of March. Pigs are offered as sacrifice in Jongkhong Puja. The Porias

(the village elder) will assemble in the house of the Loro in one evening. Then they go to the jongkhong sal and sacrifice two fowls there. There they have to spend the night in the jungle, and in the morning they come to the village and complete the puja. The village head attended the puja in the jungle, dine there and take with them abundant liquor. The loro, offers sacrifice by cutting the fowls. Fa Mahadeu and other gods of the area are worshipped. In the village, where there is no loro, elders perform the puja. Before this ceremony the Tiwas do not dig or cut the earth.¹⁶ So it is very much important to note here that Jongkhong Puja Misawa is the festival which is related to their agricultural production.

After observing the Jongkhong rites, they go to the agricultural field and singing the songs in the following ways –

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{Oh Tiwa panthairow oh Tiwa khorlaraw} \\
    \text{Chare nem hebe chara nude hebe} \\
    \text{Chari bhai chari karane nem hebe} \\
    \text{Mathi sarjena naw} \\
    \text{Shong thaithong chari bhai chari kora} \\
    \text{Mathi sarjena naw.}
\end{align*}
\]

Meaning – ‘O chari-bhai, chari-kora and other Gods, we have no land, no hoe, no seeds. How would we cultivate? Create suitable lands, hoe and seedlings for us. We have no water. Give us water by creating streams.’

A mantra is chanted by the priest which is collected by me from Daborghat village at the Jongkhong sal.

\[\begin{align*}
De \, kan \, ang \, ruto-saratala \\
Nagaganang \, khojoifida \, gunifida \\
Athatogano \, naganang \, khojoifid \\
Gunifida \, sarato \, taoidina \, taoikhano \\
Salorolo \, sa \, tololoi \, su \, hajarilo \\
Saridania \, laju \\
Rongai \, lafang \, rongai \, budirisana \\
Pangkhi \, shana.
\end{align*}\]

Meaning – ‘O, God in this auspicious day we including the village chief like loro and doloi come in group to offer puja to you for the wellbeing of this area. O’ Lord bless us with your magnanimous heart.’
4.9 Barat Festival

In simplified Assamese word *barat* means *brat* i.e. fasting. In order to appease God, strict penance is undergone by a few girls or women and at the end of the fasting, a festival is arranged to celebrate the occasion.

Although it is a festival as well as *puja* of the Tiwa community, it is only celebrated centrally at Tetelia Mouza of Morigaon district. It is interesting to note here that the puja was obtained by Tetelia king and Kumoi king from Dimoria king as a dowry at the time of marriage.17

The Barat festival is started from the very day of *Kati Bihu* (last part of October and first part of November) by observing *Swaraswati puja*.18 On full moon day of the month of *puh* or December/January is considered as the auspicious date for holding the main festival. Generally Barat is celebrated in order to get relief from epidemic diseases by the villagers.

For Barat puja -- banana, rice, flower, betelnut, candle and earthen pot etc. are required. The Barat is observed by a *kumari* girl (pre-adolescent girl).

In each and every Saturday, she (kumari) has to bath by the holy water collected from the seven Ghats (parts of river) of the river Kolong. For this occasion four pre-adolescent girls are appointed by the Loro. For the main Barat puja handkerchief, 360 candles, joha rice, flower, betel-nut, banana leaves etc. are required. For feast tortoise, vegetables etc. are needed. One important point is that in barat puja ricebeer is prohibited. But it is only supplied to satisfy the guests.

The songs which are sung in bsarat containing 120 stanzas. On the day of swaraswati puja the first 20 stanzas have to be sung at the time of bath by the fasting girl. It should be repeated for seven times continuously. The musical instruments like thurang, picu khram, madol etc. are used with the dance. In ancient time the barat songs were sung in Tiwa language. But now a days most of the songs are sung in Assamese.

The tribal communities in the hills and plains present day Assam are not known to have children’s toy which merit serious attention. However, some of them fashion beautifully toy like figures, mostly of wood and bamboo, which are attached to objects connected with their rituals and ceremonies. The Tiwas of the plains, particularly those

of the old Nagaon district perform a kind of dance (Sarai lau) on the occasion of a festival called barat in which musical instruments incorporating bird and animal figures are used to keep time in a manner similar to that of the Rabha instruments. These instruments attractively made also add to the colour and drama of the dance.

A specimen of song related to sarai lou dance is as follows –

Sarai lou oi
Sarai lou oi
Sarai lou oiram
Saraia sikuna telia kharena
Machora sikuna mali.

Another song sung at this puja as follows –

O' aji jung baratak oi
Kali jung baratak oi
Baratar dhopola pat
Baratak jungte oi
Chorate dakila oi
Reha naikeea etia oi gat.

The young boys and girls, whenever they learn that the barat festival is organizing they become impatient. Various arrangements have to be made such as cutting pieces of Satiyan and Moder trees for the doll. In Barat festival they will display the dolls while enjoying feast with fowles and tortoise. Most of the dancers in Barat festival used locally made musks of different animals like tiger, deer, monkey, bear etc. The dance of this type is called mukha nach (musk dance). Torches are carried by the dancers and sometimes these torches are thrown to the audience. It is believed that these torches do not harm the audience as all are participating the puja.

The most important part of the festival is the pirajuj or fighting with a wooden stool with small legs. The fight continues among four damsels and the pira.

In barat puja the pre-adolescent girls, appointed by the loro, have to maintain fasting throughout the day. At night all the villagers including the king gather in an improvised robha or pendal. A pira (wooden stool) is placed in the centre of the robha and all the people make a circle around it. The girls take their seats near the four corners of the pira keeping their hands over the pira one above the other while the elderly people sing the religious songs. At one stage the pira
rises up but the four girls try to pull it down. This tug of war continues for sometime.

After sometime the pira automatically come down. A prayer is held after that and the festival comes to an end. At last all the participant of the festival as well as guests take their lunch in the same pandel.

4.10 Jun-beel Mela

The historical Jun-beel is situated in the southern part of Morigaon district. It is about 3 km from Jagiroad and 20 km from Morigaon district headquarter.

The word Jun-beel gets its name from the beel which looks like crescent moon. On the bank of the beel the Tiwa people organize a festival with their king in the month of magh (January) before they observing Magh bihu in every year. The Jun-beel mela starts on Thursday and ends on Saturday.²¹ On the preceding day of the mela the local people enjoying with collective fishing in the Jun-beel. The Raja and the officers share a community feast on the bank of the Jun-beel.

A large crowd of tribals in traditional attire, women and children jostling with each other at a roadside meadow, people having pork

and rice beer in an open field. But nobody can give a definite date and year when it was started first. However, it is confirm that the king of Gova was the founder of this mela.\textsuperscript{22} The original name of \textit{Jun-beel} was \textit{Sonai-beel}. Because in Tiwa \textit{sonai} means moon. One prominent Tiwa intellectual said the fair is believed to have its origin during 1729 when Gobha king, during the Ahom dynasty, had originated a feast in a field and subsequently need for a market of tribals living on the adjoining hills was felt.\textsuperscript{23}

The annual barter festival, which began ages ago, has now turned into an event for confluence of cultures for tribals. One of the participant came from Karbi Anglong, when asked about attending the mela she said that they grow plenty of turmeric and ginger but can not prepare the tasty \textit{chira} and \textit{pitha}. So they came down to the mela every year and exchange their products. As tribals living in the Hills cannot produce all things, they exchange their products with those living in the plains. This subsequently become a regular fair and turned more popular. The barter system is on even in the days of liberalization. From turmeric, ginger, salt, wild potato, fish, bamboo shoots to local products, everything changes hands during the three days \textit{Jon-beel mela}.

\textsuperscript{22} Deuri, Maneswar: \textit{Marigaon Zilar Loka Sanskriti}, 1994, p-171.
The Tiwas have their traditional kings even today. The Gova king and other poali rajas attend the festival at Jun-beel. It is also a season of tax-collection from the hills and plains Tiwas. The hill Tiwas have to offer turmeric, ginger, potato, laa, chillies, cane and bamboo products as tax.\(^\text{24}\)

Nowadays this mela has started to attract the attention of non-Tiwa people of the locality in particular and Assam in general. The people of various caste and community take part in this mela. Therefore, Jun-beel mela may be regarded as the symbol of socio-cultural exchange and integration.

4.11 The Bihu or Bisu

The three Bihus i.e. Bohag, Magh and Kati Bihu, which are the proud cultural heritage of Assam are observed by the Tiwas with great mirth and merriment. The Tiwas called the bihu as bisu. They observe the Baisak Bishu as a major spring dance festival. The date of observance of bisu varies from place to place.

The Tiwas living in the foothills, particularly in Khola areas (Silsang, Mokaria etc.) observe the Bisu on Tuesday and

Wednesday. The Tiwas of Gova and Neli observe *Bisu* on Saturday and Sunday of *Magh* and *Bohag* respectively.\textsuperscript{25} In Barapujia area as well as Morigaon Town area, as a result of the conversion into Hindu religion they are observing the bisus on the *Sankranti* day.

There is a close connection between the three *bisus* and the agricultural operations. Thus *magh bisu* is observed as harvesting festival and *bohag bisu* as festival of merrymaking and dance after the agricultural operations are over. The *Kati bisu* on the other hand is observed in a very auster manner as stocks of paddy is exhausted. Out of these three *bisus* the Tiwas observe the *bohag bisu* with much pomp and fanfare.

They also worshipping different deities during these *bisu* festival. The following table shows the deities and worshipping time by the Tiwas of Morigaon district.

\textsuperscript{25} Sharma Thakur, G. C.: *The Lalungs* (Tiwas), 1985, p-100.
Worshiping deities during Bisu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Bisu</th>
<th>Deities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bohag Bisu</td>
<td>Mahadeu, Jongkhong, Bhagawati, Kalika, Ganesh, Kartick, Sari Bhai, Farimahar, Bura Ramsa, Bagh Raja etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Magh Bisu</td>
<td>Badalmajhi, Fa-Mahadeu, Barghar Puja, Sari Bhai puja etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kati Bisu</td>
<td>Biswakarma, Deosewa etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the month of April, the nature gets a new life. The Tiwas offered pujas at the thans before observing the Bisu and for this the villagers make necessary arrangement for the first week of Sot or March – April. On the day of the bohag bisu, in the morning all the villagers gather at the barghar and cut the vegetables like gourd, brinjal, cucumber and thekera into pieces to be thrown over the cows and bullocks. It is almost like the Bihu observed by the non-Tiwa Assamese people. The gharbura arranges a puja in the barghar where a fowl is sacrificed. Unless this sacrifice is made, the villagers cannot take out
their cattle for bathing. But now a days this system has been disappearing from the Tiwa villages of the district. In *bohag bisu* puja is offered to the different deities praying for plentiful crops and wellbeing of the people for the year. In the Kumoi area cock fighting are also arranged on this occasion. As it is a spring festival, all the boys and girls collectively perform Bihu dance in the village. The elderly villagers gather at the *barghar* and entertained with pork, chicken curry with *puhon zu* which is specially prepared for *bisu* festival. In *bohag bisu*, *joratola* ceremony is also arranged by the villagers. *Jora* is a packet of rice. In a *kau* leaf rice, *tulsi* leaf and *dubari* grass are wrapped and kept in the *barghar*.

The *magh bisu* is also observed by the Tiwas of the district with traditional gaiety. Construction of *meji* and *bhelaghar* is completed before one or two week before *bisu*. On the eve of the *bisu* the young boys spend the night at *bhelaghar* by lighting bonfire, singing and dancing. In some villages of Morigaon district the young boys burn wooden *meji* at night. In this *Bisu* the people worship their deity at *barghar* with rice cakes, *zu* and with other items. Special offerings are made to the ancestors also. In some villages, offerings are made at *Sasanghar*. Most of the essential commodities which are required for *magh bisu*, the Tiwa people collected them from the
Jun-beel mela through barter system. This bisu festival is observed on Sunday specially in Gova area.

On the last day of ahin (September/October) the Tiwas, like Assamese villagers observe kati bisu. In the morning of that day they visited the paddy fields and plant bamboo thorns. Scales of rabab tenga are spread in the fields for the proper growth and development of the paddy. Fowl and zu are offered in the name of biswakarma in this bisu. Deosewa puja is also arranged in their respective borghar and thans.

The bisus of Tiwas are to some extent same with the Assamese bihu. But a little difference found in respect of food habit and worshipping of various deities.

The above mentioned festivals are not equally observed by whole Tiwa community of the district. For example Barat is popular in Kumoi and Tetelia area. Sagramisawa, yangli misawa are popular in Daborghat, Marjong, Khola, Kamarkuchi area. Jon-beel festival is popular among the villages of Jagiroad area and nearby Bangthaigoan and Jagi area. But bisu festival is observed by all the Tiwa community with equal mirth and merriment.