CHAPTER –III

ROLE OF BATHOUISM IN : SEASONAL FESTIVALS &
PUBLIC CELEBRATION

The followers of Bathouism, both the factions of traditional and modified; and even the followers of Brahma religion observe five kinds of seasonal festivals. These festivals are –

(I) Bwisagu (the Rongali Bihu)

(II) Aosia Nangnai or Amsisua (the Ombubasi)

(III) Khatigasa (The Kati Bihu)

(IV) Nown Janai/ Wngkham gwrlwijanai (No khowa)

(V) Magw Domachi (The Bhogali Bihu)

The celebration of these festivals are discussed elaborately and analytically in the following manner –

(I) BWISAGU

INTRODUCTION:

Bwisagu is the first and the biggest colourful spring time seasonal and agricultural festival of the Boros. Since time immemorial Boros have been celebrating this Bwisagu festival at the outset of Bwisag month.

The term ‘Bwisagu’ has a significant meaning. It means the start of the year i.e. bwisw + agu> Bwisagu. This Bwisagu is closely related to nature,
agriculture (sowing, harvesting etc.) marked by merry-making, singing, dancing with the help of musical tune and feasting accompanied by some rituals.

The term ‘Bihw’ (Bi + hw) is also popularly used in Udalguri area of undivided Darrang district which appropriately signifies the meaning of the festival. ‘Bi’ means to beg or begging and ‘hw’ means giving or donating. Again the term ‘Bihu’ is also popularly used by the Assamese speakers to express the same meaning. Late Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha, a famous laureate and artist of Assam pointed out that this term ‘Bihu’ originated from the Boros. Because ‘Bi’ means to beg or begging and ‘hu’ means donating or giving alms (by picking up with a container to the groups/party/individuals.) During this festival people (both young and old) form groups and go for begging from every household of the village. They sing and dance in each and every house and the younger ones kneel down before the elderly guardians of every house and seek their blessing. The guardians in return give their blessing and whatever else they could afford/provide like jou (rice beer), eggs, rice, alms etc. Thus the term “Bihw” or ‘Bihu’ is a combination of ‘Bi’ which means begging and ‘hw’ or ‘hu’ which means hwnay or hunanwi hornai or giving (donating) alms or other goods from the stock.

During this spring season nature puts on a new garb of lustrous green leaves. Bar-dwi-sikhla (nymph of air/storm and rain) contributes much in this regard. It relieves the dry and cracked mother earth by quenching her thirst with rain water. The surface of the earth is covered again with a carpet of fresh long
grasses, cattle have plenty to eat, flowers bloom profusely and the cuckoo fills the atmosphere with her melodious music/ song giving a message of the advent of the new year. When Bar-dwi-sikhla storms with her nature to bring about changes, the clouds start thundering and send a shower of rain filling up the drying ponds, rivers and seas. As a result fishes, frogs, snails, crabs etc. rejoice with relentless pleasure. Thus nature shines with life and beauty during this season.

The changes in nature brings a new phase of life to the people as human beings are also a part of nature. They celebrate and enjoy the Bwisagu festival and after the completion of this celebration they become busy again in their agricultural works. That is to say they welcome and celebrate Bwisagu by singing, dancing and merry making and thereby prepare themselves for the routine work of the new year.

The Bwisagu celebration of the Boros can be divided into different parts which are discussed below:

(i) Mwsou Bwisagu or thukhwinai (Cattle bathing rites)

(ii) Khungkha Janai (eating a special dish prepared from some bitter wild leafy herbs and vegetables)

(iii) Guthwisi Baonai (offering to deceased family members)

(iv) Merry making at the arrival of the new year.

(v) Sath Bihu (Eating of collected or begging goods)
(i)  **Mwsou Thukhwinai (Cattle bathing rites)** :-

On the day of *sankranti* i.e. the day before the first day of the new year or on the last day of Assamese *Sat mah*, this rites of *Mwsou thukhwinai* (cattle bathing rite) is observed. On that particular day cattle are taken to the nearest river or pond and formally bathed. On the way to the river, starting from *Goli* (cowshed) already cut pieces of *Lao* (gourd), *phanthao* (brinjal), *haldwi* (turmeric) *diglilithi bilai* (branches of a kind of small tree with long green leaves) and *babri khof bilai* (branches of a kind of small tree with leaves) are thrown over the cattle and the following traditional verses are recited.

"**Lao ja, phanthao ja**

_Bwswr bwswr er hanja hanja_

_Bimani khither, biphani khither_

_Nwngswr jagwn halua geder,_

_Bima gaide badi daja,_

_Bipha bolod badi ja_

_Bari khonani Embu Bongla_

_Bibadi ja geder jangela.""'

**English version** –

"Eat gourd, eat brinjal,

grow (here increase) in number year after year

---

1. Anil Boro : *Folk literature of Bodo*, N.L. Publication, Guwahati, (and ed) 2010 p-68
Out do your mother, out do your father.
You will be large bullocks;
Donot be short statured like your mother
Be large like your father bull,
Like the big frog of the corner of the campus
May you be sleek and long.”

Before being taken to bath the cattle are properly decorated by the cowherds. Cattle are adorned with garlands., their whole bodies are painted with black dots and their horns are smeared with mustard oil. The colour which is used for marking black dots is prepared by mixing proportionate amounts of the juice obtained from green gourd leaves, mustard oil and soot (the black powder collected from the backside of a karahi or any other rice cooking utensil).

Striking the back of the cattle with bamboo stick is restricted or prohibited on that day, therefore branches of diglilithi or babri khof trees are used instead as substitutes. Garlands are exchanged with other families on the spot during the bathing ceremony. A pair of garlands and old rope are left out by the riverside hanging on the branches of diglilithi or babri khof trees. In some places where diglilithi or babri khof trees are not available, other substitutes like cane leaves and mwkhna or lwkhwna ( a kind of small plant) are used. The remaining garlands are brought back to home and they are hung in every house, cowsheds and loom post (salkhuntha) n pairs.
After the bathing is over the cattle are left free to graze in the fields or jungles. That is to say they are given complete freedom for the day. The black spots or dots in their bodies are painted to ensure their safety from wild animals especially from tigers when they wander in jungles.

In the evening a small area or place of the cowshed is cleaned with water and a plaintain leaf is placed over it. The plaintain leaf contains a pair of areca-nuts, betel –leaves and some new ropes. The guardian of the family kneels down before the plaintain leaf and after springkling dhwi gwrar (holy water from the pot) he prays to the laokhar gosai (Lord Krishna) requesting him to increase and enlarge the cattle and keep them free from diseases and any other harm.

There after cattle are tied with new ropes as a mark of love and affection to them so that they would oblize (the family) with their invaluable service for the new year. The elderly guardian of the family prays the cattle or laokhar gosai and ask him to shower his blessing on them as he had done in the last year.

The term ‘laokhar’ means ‘cowherd’ and ‘gosai’ means ‘the God’. Hence the term ‘laokhar gosai’ significantly mean the God who take care of the cattle, who is the owner of cattle, who can increase and enlarge the cattle of a family, who can save or rescue the cattle from the tiger or any other harm, to whom a red hen/ cock is sacrificed in the Kherai worship and Garja worship for the same purpose.
(ii)  **Khungkha Janai (Eating bitter herbs):**

The Boros have a traditional habit of eating a special dish prepared from a mixture of bitter leafy wild vegetables along with some folk herbs on the day of *sankranti* or *mwsou thukhwinai san* or the day before the first day of the new year or *Bwisag dan*. For this special dish collection of vegetables and wild herbs are done by a group of collectors from the jungle after the cattle bathing ceremony is completed and left free.

The literal meaning of *khungkha janai* is the farewell of the outgoing year. It is significant in the sense that it is based on a popular belief among the Boros. The Boros have an age old belief that the consumption of the special dish (prepared from selected bitter wild vegetables and herbs) keeps them free from many diseases. Thus to ensure a disease free life in the coming year this little ceremony is observed.

These traditional things which have been discussed above are almost ancient in origin but are still in practice in rural Assam where Boro population can be seen. Of course, now-a-days the *Boros* celebrate the *Bwisagu* as *Ranjali Bwisagu* in a quite modernized way. They build stages and organize functions performing several programmes on the stage.
(iii) Gwthwi-si- baonai: (Offering to the deceased members of the family):

This ritual is observed since the time of ancestors on the first day of Bwisagu month i.e. the first day of the new year. On that day every member of the family takes bath and offer prayers to the deceased family members and forefathers.

Various food items like phitha, enthab (cakes), rices, curry, oma and dao bedor (pork, chicken) and many other things which the deceased members liked when they were alive are also offered. After completing the offering the living member of the family are allowed to eat the various items. Otherwise eating any food item are restricted.

The family which follows the newly revised Bathouism observes this rite in a further lengthened process. After the completion of the above rite, the younger generations (son, daughter, daughter in - laws) wear new dresses and present a colourful or white (in some other place/ village) phalli (scarf) to each of the elderly members of the family (grand father, grand mother, father and mother, father- in -laws, mother-in – laws). They also kneel down before them to seek their blessings.

This ritual is generally observed as a family rites and ritual, but it is also observed as a society rites and rituals at the villages Bathousali/Thansali (Bathou altar) as its community rites and rituals. The guardian who takes the lead role in
the offering has to undergo a fast from the previous night itself and this practice or ritual has descended down the generations through oral tradition.

(iv) Bwisagu Mwsanai arw maginai (Merry Making):

On the first day of the new year the people form groups especially the younger generations prefer to have only young members in their group. Similarly the old ones form their own groups and sometimes both young and old members are seen in the same group. After forming groups they go for begging from every household of the village. As it is the festival of merry making they enjoy themselves by singing, dancing and playing the traditional musical instruments like kham (drum), sifung (flute), jotha (symbal) and thorkha (a kind of traditional musical instruments of the Boros made of bamboo). The Boros used to celebrate the Bwisagu for one week in earlier days, but now-a-days they observe or celebrate it only for three days. On the final day i.e. the third day (earlier on seventh day) they arrange a grand feast (party, feast) with whatever they have collected through the begging from different villages and places which was called Sath Bihu in earlier celebration.

(II) Amsisua (the Ombubasi):

The second seasonal festival observed by the Boros is Amsisua (the Ombubasi). This festival is celebrated or observed for three or four days from 7th
of Ashar dan to 10th/11th of Ashar (the third month of Boro calender) as per written in the calender.

The earth (so far as Boros believed and knowledge is concerned) is supposed to be feminine in gender. So, the earth has also menstruation which occurs once in a year during the Ashar month.

During this observation, among the Hindu society if any female member of a household happens to be menstruating, she is prohibited from doing some of the household works such as cooking, entering the temple of offering any item to the household deities. The Boro cultivators too abstain from works like ploughing, sowing planting paddy during this time because of mother earth’s menstruation (Sua). There is a belief that plants get withered and finally die away when planted on Amsisua (ombubasi). So, they never do it.

Even the domesticated pet birds like maina, parots etc. are kept confined during amsisua. It is because the Boros believe that if these pet birds set their feet on the menstruated earth during these days of amsisua, they will be rendered incapable of walking.

The paddy seeds (maili/ maijli) are too carried out from the granary before the Ombubasi because of the fact that the Bathouism even Brahmanism are believed when paddy seeds are not carried out from the granary it will be grainless.

The day after the sua is over, the followers of Bathouism clean their houses in the morning. After having a bath all of them will gather for a prayer
song (hymn) at the villages Bathou altar. There after all the family members (people) as well as the houses ware purified by sprinking holy water on them. But this kind of practices are not seen among the followers of traditional Bathouism.

(III) **Khatigasa (The Kati Bihu)**:

*Khatigasa* is a kind of seasonal festival celebrated by the Boros. It is a celebration of lighting lamps in the paddy field. The paddy plants planted during the summer season in the month of *Ashar-Shawan* and *Bhadra* (Assamese month) get ready for harvest in *Khati Dan (Kati mah)*. In this month almost all varieties of paddy plant grow up and start bearing grains. On this occasion, in the evening of first day of *Kati* month the Boros light several *gasa (saki)* in the paddy fields and also at home with a hope to keep the crop safe from natural calamities and diseases or any other harm. They pray to *Mainao* (Goddess of wealth) to provide them with a high production of crops or grains.

In this celebration the materials used by the nature loving Boros are collected from nature itself. The materials used for the purpose include many things like *thaigir phithai* (elephant apple or a kind of fruit composed of hollow scale), bamboo branches, *thulunsi* (basil) acimum sanctum, few uncooked rice, white thread (*ewa suta*) and mustard oil. The *thaigir bikhong* (part of elephant apple) are used as a *saki* which is kept on a bamboo stand. Then some amount of mustard oil is poured into the *thaigir bikhong*, there after a *hala* or *saltha* (similar
to lamp pita) which is made of ewa thread is placed in the bikhong (the hollow scale) to make it a lamp. After this, few uncooked rice and one basil leaf are put into the thaigir bikhong (now a lamp) and the lamp is lighted.

He kneels down (if there is possibility to kneel down) to the east direction (otherwise by standing) and recite the following mantra or oral text –

"Dwl, dwl ....... khati gasa dwl;
dohai .... aiwi Bima Mainao,

mwngnw jahwgra, phwthangna lakhigra,
gorse khou gornwi khalam nangwn;
oraibw backhriao thib thib/abungwi thahwina ngwn,
hwifwd afwd-emphou enla mi-junadnw

jahwjbwnw mwnnai nonga dwi

Aai Bima Mainao- mwng jwngkhou

Fwthangna lakhinangwn; mwnjahwnangwn."

English rendering:

"Blown, blown the earthen lamp of the Kati Bihu
Blessed mother Mainao (goddess of wealth)
You are the person who feed, who keep us survived
You are to increase from one to two more;
You are to remain in our granany in full

2 Informant Sri Bhedu Goyary (M-82), Rangidara, Baksa.
(You ever keep our granary in full)
You are to safe our crops
from insects, animals
It should not let free to be eaten up
Mother Mainao you make live us
You are to feed us.’’

Each and every Boro family observes this rite by lighting several such lamps amidst their own paddy crops. Some families do this on the last day of *Ashin dan* (Ashin month) while some others observe it on the first day of *Khathi dan* (Kati mah).

Some other village people of both the factions of Bathouism celebrate it gorgeously with a day long programme. In the evening a special programme which is known as ‘*Mainao thisonmai*’ (carried forward of wealth) is observed. The modified group pray at their community *thansali* (Bathou altar) with the help of grand prayer group and finally the wealth which is already ritually earned and kept at *thansali* with the help of customary practices are welcomed by an individual female member to their *granary* with well decorated and arranged gate at their entrance. The amount of wealth contains two *don* or *kherkha* (bamboo made container) *full mai* – (grains) and *mairong* (uncooked rice) which are suppose to be the *Sali Mainao* and *Asu Mainao*. But the group which will perform the sacrifice, organise a *Garza* (sometimes *Kherai* is also celebrated along with this *Garza*) and the *mainao* (wealth) will be carried forward by two selected
ladies followed by its traditional practices. The mainao will be carried on her head, one in each, to the person and almost all the people take part in the dancing and playing traditional musical instrument with a grand slogan like —Bima Mainaoni....jwi; asu Mainaoni.....jwi, sali mainaoni....jwi.; Bathou Bwraini.....jwi......(Hurray, for mother of wealth; hurray for mother of asu wealth; hurrah for mother of sali wealth). This kind of grand dancing is observed on the way from the community altar or Garzasali (place of Garza worship) to the granary of the selected person where wealth is decided to be dropped.

Some sort of grains are thrown to the backside when she reaches to the person before dropping into it inside the granary. The small amount of grains collected by the devotees at their clothes or garments are welcome to their own home and dropped inside their granary. On this day in the evening two banana trees are planted at their entrance and decorated with the help of flower garlands and lighted two earthen lamps for the welcoming of wealth. It can be mentioned here that the process of welcoming the wealth of both factions are same. The earthen lamps at Bathou altar, at the foot step of granary, in the ising (kitchen) are lighted.

(IV) Wangkham gwrlwi Janai (Eating new rice):

It is a ceremony of having a feast on the first harvest or the new product of the session observed by every Boro family in particular and village community as a whole within Aghon dan (the eight Assamese month). The rich family
especially celebrate this agricultural rite gorgeously. At this celebration a grand feast to the whole village people (some invite their kith and kin or relatives or neighbours) providing several Boro dishes like chicken, pork, fish and traditional curries like sobai kharwi (a pulse curry cooked by giving edible alkali) and ondla kharwi (curry made from rice powder by giving edible alkali), tharunjwng najwng (arum with fish) are feasted.

Along with this ceremony the traditional followers of Bathouism performed their annual family worship which are known as Bormani, Biswahari, Salami etc. which are discussed elaborately in the same chapter under the sub headline of worship performed by the family in particular. In this annual worship some families sacrifice a he or she goat, pigeon, chicken and small domestic cock or hen to observe their traditional rites for the welfare of the whole family.

In this case the followers of modified version of Bathouism perform several devotional songs led by the selected prayer group of the community. On this occasion this group offer some flowers and prasads instead of sacrificing animals and fowls and beg for His blessing for peace and prosperity on behalf of the families who invite them to perform the rite. Of course, this celebration is observed as community feast, now a days, with a day long colourful programme by the followers of modified section of Bathouism.

There is a traditional ritual in which all the forefathers and also deceased members of the family are remembered and offered some cooked rice and other items before they are served to any member of the family. All Bathou
Mahasabha (earlier All Bathou Religious Union), a religious organization how accepted this ceremony as one of the seasonal festivals of Bathouism. In some family of course rare in number, some dangri (bhar in Assamese) are provided to their bullocks.

(V) **Magw domachi (The Bhogali Bihu)**

The Boros celebrate this seasonal festival gorgeously, with a grand preparation, as a whole in the month of Magh, the 11th month of Assamese calendar. From the last day of push dan and the first day of Magh dan this festival is observed for a period of two or three days only. The Boro cultivator start cultivating from Bwisagu month till the month of Bhadro –Ashin without carrying for the scorching sun and rain. All the crops are carried home in the month of Magw. In this month Boro families, especially the cultivators, have no crisis of rice. During this month we can find cooked rice even in the tail of a dog, so there is a saying in Boro –

"Wngkhamni ali, bedorni akhai, jouni phukhri,
ja regang ja, boybw rongja baja." ³

**English version** –

“A heap of rice, a large piece of fried meat,
a pond of rice beer, eat, drink, and be merry.”

---

³ Informant : Sri Bhedu Goyary, (M-82), Rangidara, Baksa
The Boro people consider the *Magw domachi* as the festival of eating and drinking. The term *Magw* implies an appropriate and significant meaning when properly analysed. It contains two words — *Mag* + *gw* where 'Mag' stands for *Magh dan* (The month of Magh) and 'gw' means eating satisfactorily. So, the significant meaning of this term is "*Mag danni gw janai*" eating satisfactorily or feasting of the month of *Mag* or *Magw* festival. The key points of this *Magw domachi* are—

(i) **Laokhar or Gurkhia joma** (gathering of cowherds):

On the last day of push month the cowherds of the same village gather together at a temporary hut built somewhere outside the village in the evening. They spend the whole night eating, drinking and merry making. In the name of *gurkhia* or *laokhar* (cowherds) this day or occasion is considered as *gurkhia* or *laokhar joma* in Boro. For this ceremony the cowherds organized amongst themselves before one or half month of the day.

(ii) **Belagur Saonai** (ritual of burning down Magi, a tower made of straw and bamboo):

This ritual is not a separate practice from the *gurkhia* or *laokhai joma*. The cowherds are the ones who perform this ritual. Of course now-a-days this ritual is not restricted to the cowherds alone. Other people too perform this ritual. Before sunrise at the first crowing of the cock they (or cowherds or other people)
get up and take bath in ponds or river or tube well, which ever is available. After bathing they burn the Magi towers which is made of straw and bamboo one after another and shout a louds slogan saying –

Dum belagur ........ whwi ............
Mwsani bigur .............whwi.............”

“shouting as ‘dum’ (a sound of bamboo blast when it is burn down) of the magi- hurray; burnt down the skin of tiger.” Lastly they burn down their temporary built hut as camp fire. Earlier it was celebrated for two days.

(iii) Sabai Sarnai (Throwing or Sprinkling Pulses) :

During this ritual Boro women get up early in the morning at the first crow of the cock. They would fry some pulses and sesame, rice and mix them all together and this mixture is thrown over the cowsheds before the sun rises. This is done to prevent diseases, to counter the curses of the evil mouthed persons. To increase the number of cattle is the main aim and significance of performing this ritual.

(iv) Gwbwr San (marking the walls of the house with cowdung) :

This ritual is performed on that night just after the sobai sarnai (sprinkling of pulses). It is a ritual of putting a round black mark of dung on the wall of noma no (the main house) and also granary. This ritual is performed by the

4 Informant: Sri Bhedu Goyary, (M-82), Rangidara, Baksa
female members of the family. This mark on the wall signifies a knot which binds or tie up the *Lwkhi or Mainao* (wealth) so that the family does not fall shortage of food.

There is a common belief and faith, even today, among the followers of *Bathouism* and *Brahma* that one who is not bathed before the sun rise they remain unpurified (*badua*) and their aim in life will not become fulfilled.

And hence in the morning after their bath, the young generation of the villages kneel down before their elders to seek their blessing.

**(v) Phitha eonai or Saonai (preparation of cakes):**

*Maibra mairong* (a special kind of rice, sticky rice, *Borni saol* in Assamese from which cakes are made) is beaten into powder in the evening of the last day of *Push dan* (*Puh mah* in Assamese). The next day early in the morning after the marking of *gwbwr san*, variety of *phithas* (cakes) are prepared out of the rice powder.

The first piece of *phitha*, is offered to the *mwdaï*, the spirit of the deceased family members, by breaking it into small pieces, first to the east-west, north-south direction before being eaten by any one else. If this offering is denied then the other *phithas* will not be perfect in shape as well as in taste, because the spirits would not allow them to be perfect ones and make them tastless. The *Boros* are strict to this age old belief even today. Therefore, grand moms suggest to tie the neck of earthen jar (where *phithas* one cooked) by the small pieces of
straw of hasib or jaru (Barhoni in Assamese), so that such evil force can’t spoil the phithas (cakes).

(vi) Bifang khanai (tying the trees with straw):

Trees especially fruit bearing ones like thaijou (mango), khanthal (jack fruit), goi (areca nut), nalengkhor (coconut) etc. are tied with straw (a knot of straw which is round the trunk of the tree) or tharai (a stinging plant) on the first of Magh dan. It is a symbol of khasini (a traditional tie knot containing spiritual power) which protect them from any kind of harm. It is also believed that if this knot is tied round the trunk of the fruit tree, then they bear fruits earlier than the expected period or expectation.

The followers of modified Bathouism gather at their community altar and perform several prayer songs for the whole day.

FAMILY RITES AND CEREMONIES RELATING TO AGRICULTURE:

Family rites and ceremonies relating to agriculture of Boros are of three different kinds. These are –

(i) Akhai lanai or gosa lanai (First paddy planting)
(ii) Nangwl jangkhra (Last ploughing and planting)
(iii) Mainao or lwikhi lainai (Bringing wealth from paddy field)
(i) **Akhai lanai or gosa lanai (First paddy planting):**

The first planting of paddy (*Sali maisali*) crop is called *akhai lanai* or *gosa lanai* in Boro. Followers of Bathouism and also Brahma observe this family rite according to their own traditional customs till today.

The guardian of the family select a good day for this act of *akhai lanai* (first paddy planting) which will be performed by a selected women member (if there are many women members in a family) of the family. According to the traditional practices of Bathouism an *Alari bathi* or a *saki* (earthen lamp) is lighted in the Bathou altar of the family by a selected woman and prayer are done where *Bwrai Bathou* or *Song Bwrai – Song Burwi* and *Bima Mainao* (goddess of wealth) are addressed. The prayer goes like this –

```
Dohai Afa
Noni giri Bangni giri nwng afa
Bwrai Bathounao Alari saonanwi
Maikhou dinwi akhai lajennai jabai
Fubabw, jababw-lwngbabw jwbnw mwnnai nonga,
Muthasea sni mutha jananggwn afa
Nwng bifani bwrao
Jammw mwnnai nonga
Semnw mwnnai nonga
Song Bwrai –Song Burwini Bwrao
```
Noni giri bangni giri

Jeblabw-

Janayao lwngnaiyao

Mwjangwi mwjiang lakhinanggwn

Alari bathi lwngnai baidi

Fisafwrni khafulao jwnghw nanggwn

Dei........dohai afa Bwrai Bathou."

This mantra is usually chanted on the occasion of akhai lanai ceremony which is a ceremony observed by all the followers of Bathouism at the time of planting of first bunch of seedlings of maima crop. During the ceremony Bwrai Bathou, Song Bwrai and Song Burwi are invoked through this mantra and are appealed to bless the concerned family so that it does not have to face any scarcity of food. Besides a rich harvest, prosperity is also sought for the family through the mantra.

Again another version of mantra which is chanted by the modified Bathouism is –

Wng hring khling fws se

Dohai afa Bwrai Bathou –

Dohai ai Bima Mainao

Angni khulumnaikhou najao

Informant: Mrs Chidey Bala Basumatary, (F-75), Chandana Borigaon, Udalguri.
He ai Mainao-

Dinwini be gwtar san sombarkhali

Jwngha akhai lanw nagirdwng

He bima Mainao nwngnw ma hwnw ma thinw

Gwiya jwngha mua daise,

Gasibw mua mani afa Bwrai Bathounijwb

Oblabw gws w gwr bwkhou baoswmnanwi

Nwngni khathiao aroj gabdwng-

Jahathe jwnghi be nokhora gainw lanai

Mai-dwikhou mwjngwi mwjng

Gaifung jwbnw hayw.

Beni thakhai nwng Bimani

Khathiao khor gongglainanwi

Aroj gabdwng.

Dohai afa Bwrai Bathou

Arw Bima Mainao." 6

The meaning of the version is – “I, on behalf of this family worship you and would like to request you to accept my conveyance. Oh father Bwrai Bathou, Oh mother Mainao, today on this Monday, on such an occasion our family would like to start our first planting of paddy. Oh mother Mainao we have nothing to offer you; the things that we enjoyed are created by afa Bwrai Bathou Himself.

6 Informant: Mrs Sambari Basumatary, (F-55), Rangidara, Baksa.
By offering myself, my hearth and soul, would like to request you to bless our proposed cultivation or planting of paddy be a successful crop without any harm by natural calamities to make a healthy and wealthy family.”

After this ritual is performed, the women member of the family will move to the field. Again same kind of Alaribathi (Earthen Lamp) will be lighted at the corner of the targeted plot which is already ploughed and the seed plant (khwthia) which is ready to be planted will be smeared by mustard oil. The inaugurator will incant the above mentioned mantra and start planting the paddy. This first planting of paddy is done with the left hand as per traditional belief and faith is concerned since time immemorial. After that only the rest will enter into the dubli (ploughed field) and start doing the same.

After this formality, the paddy planting will go on in full swing for the session till nangwl jangkhra (last ploughing and planting).

(ii) Nangwl jangkhra (Last ploughing and planting):

This ritual is observed in all the household of the Boro cultivators. This is nothing but a kind of celebration or rejoicing at the termination of ploughing and planting work for the session.

On that day, the family gives a grand feast in the name of the planters. The planters are given enough jou (rice beer) to drink. On that day the ploughmen and the planters enjoy smearing and throwing mud at each other. Finally in the
finishing corner of the plot they make a bakhri (granary) with seedling of paddy (khwthia).

(iii) Mainao Lainai (Carrying wealth from the paddy field):

Before the harvest of the ripe paddy the Boros observe an agricultural rite of the family which is known as Mainao lainai or Lwkhi lainai (carrying wealth from the paddy field).

On a particular day (which is regarded as an auspicious day) a female member of the family takes bath to perform this family rite. First of all she will light an Alari bathi (Earthen Lamp) at their Bathou altar and pray to the Bima Mainao. Then wearing a new or clean set of dress and carrying some materials like plaintain leaf (lajou), thulunsi (basil), dwi gwther (holy water in a pot) and a khasi (sickle) goes to the paddy field (dubli) to perform the rite. A sandri (a sieve made of bamboo) is used to carry all these above mentioned materials.

The present form of modified Bathouism recommends a white dokhna and a white phalli (scarf) for the purpose.

After reaching the paddy field she will sprinkle the holy water over the paddy and cut a bundle of rice with the sickle. She will carry this Mainao on her head and keep it inside the granary (bakhri).