CHAPTER III

Village Study :

Morten Area :

The area called Morten, which is known for having a kingdom in old days, is consisted of several villages. The researcher has visited Silaguri (Silikhaguri), Kromkhunji, Maslaikhunji, Makhaguri and Mugaguri. Like Amswaiparo the arable land is like that of a basin.

Maslaikhunji (including Salnaromang) :

Maslaikhunji has 32 households with a population around 270. On the other hand, Salnaromang has only 2 households with 20 members. People of Mathrong, Amchong, Malang, Maslai, Mithi and Kholar clans live in the former village. The two households in the latter village belong to two clans, viz. Maslai and Mathrong. Both the villages are located 30 kilometers south of Amsoi. In Maslaikhunji, the Amchong clan is dominant. There are 1 M.E. and 1 L.P. Schools in Morten.

On enquiry, it is found that the system of gobhiya exists in the village. Few old men wear thana. Weaving is a living practice among the women. Apart from the women, there are some males, aged and young, who know the weaving tradition of the locality along with the dye and dye-stuff, although dyeing of cloth in natural dye does not exist because of easy availability of mill-made yarns. Some of the households seldom cultivate cotton. There are two varieties of cotton – one with long fibre called khulbaro is seasonal and the other called khulsha with short fibre continues to produce cotton for 4 to 5 years.
Formerly, the cloths were woven out of cotton. The *thana* worn by the males to hide their private parts were woven out of cotton. Now-a-days 2/40 count of mercerized threads are used to weave *thana*. Every household has at least a single piece of *thana* for the male. The males are proud of having a piece of *thana*, which they consider as culture specific garment. The dance called *Sagramisawa* is held in the village. But the dance costume called *laikane* (plantain leaf) is not worn by any dancer. The costume of the dancers are a *tagla* and a *thana* (or a *dhoti* or *phali*).

**Mugaguri and Ruphakhunji:**

Both the villages are nearest to Maslaikhunji. The number of household in the former is 26 with around 200 population. Ruphakhunji has a total of 6 households with around 50 members.

Textile tradition on both the villages does not differ from Maslaikhunji.

**Silaguri:**

Silaguri is a small hamlet situated at a distance of about 5 kilometers north of Ulukhunji. The inmates of the village belong to Puma and Amchong clans. There are about 40 households with a population of around 250.

The research has come to know that few households present mixing of blood between the Tiwas and the Karbis. She met a housewife, Kache Elengpi Amchong, who belonged to the Karbi tradition. She was told that Kache came to live with her Tiwa groom in order to save her husband's clan tradition from being discontinued after him as he was the only sibling in the family. According to the social custom of the Tiwas, who practise the principles of matrilineal descendancy, the groom has to embrace the system of *gabhiya* and to go for a uxorial residence with his bride in his parents-in-law's house. In that case, a family having single sibling, who is a male, can retain the clan tradition only if he brings his spouse to live with him in his parents' house.
Handloom weaving is a domestic craft in the village. The young girls, although they are school goers, are well acquainted with every tit-bits of the textile tradition of the tribe. *Eri*-culture is a living tradition in the village. Cotton is not cultivated and spun. Mill-made threads are bought from the local market or markets located elsewhere around Ulukhunji. Birsinki market is nearest to the village.

**Ulukhunji:**

Ulukhunji is a developing village with a bus-terminus and a Bank and various other Government offices. There is a High English School and a weekly market held at Birsinki on every Friday. Large number of traders from the plains frequented the market for selling of essential commodities, garments and utensils, ready-made yams and many more.

Among the government offices the Block Development Office, both the sub-divisional and divisional office of the P.W.D., Handloom and Textile, Sarba Siksa Mission’s office are few to name here. The establishment of the government offices is gradually changing the look of the village for a mini township.

Ulukhunji is located at a distance of about 94 kilometers south-west of Hamren, the headquarter of the civil sub-division of the same name. The village can be reached by a macadamized road from Nelie via Langerdang, Amswai and Umpanai. The distance between Ulukhunji and Nelie is 49 kilometers.

There are 65 households in the village. The resident clans are Madar, Puma, Malang, Maslai, Phanjong, Damlong and Amchong. Their dwelling areas are distributed over a few small hamlets, each connected by village paths. The dwelling huts are built on raised plinth of earth or mud. Each hut is a *nu-baro* in the true sense of the term, i.e. each *nu-baro* is a composite structure of three compartments with the first compartment
bearing socio-religious significance of a *nu-maji*. Socio-culturally the number of uxorial residences in the village is significant.

The researcher met several women weavers and three old men in the village for discussion. They had sound knowledge on the craft of weaving and the textile tradition handed down from generation to generation. The weavers know how to operate the traditional ground-loom with or without a reed. Yarns used to weave cloths are all mill-made.

Few old men in the village are found to have attired in their traditional costumes, viz., the *thana* as lower garment and the *tagla* as upper garment. The *gaonburha* of the village whom the researcher met on the day of her visit was seen wearing also a *thenas* besides the *tagla* and the *thana*. He was wearing the *thenas* because he was returning from paying public visit to another village on that day.

**Amswaiparo**:

The village is in Amri Mauza under Hamren Sub-Division in Karbi Anglong district. An ornamental mat is called *amsa* in Tiwa language. We have been informed that the King of Gobha was given an ornamental mat to sit on whenever he visited the place. Actually, the King of Gobha used to visit the place in order to inaugurate the Sagra festival every year in the past. The old custom is no longer in vogue at present. Instead of it the headgear (*paguri*, turban) of the King preserved in the residence of the *kunwari* at Gobha was ceremoniously taken to Amswai days before the commencement of the Sagra festival. *Paro* suffixed to the name of the village means big or great. As such, the name suggests that it is a big village. There are around 100 households in the village. Socio-culturally the village maintains a strong bond of relationship with the Gobha kingdom of Jagiroad. It has come to the knowledge of the researcher that in old days there was a custom that sacred grove of Deosal near Jagiroad was built with bamboos brought from Amswai.
The village stands near a historical route. During the 17th century A.D. the route received considerable significance when the Kachari and the Ahom kings acknowledged it as the only route for all communications abandoning the usual route through Marangi in the Dhansiri valley. The opening of the new route necessitated the establishment of the outposts at Raha, Jagi and Kajali by the Ahom king, Jayadhvaja Simha (1648-1663 A.D.)

The village is situated 28 kilometers south of Nelie, an important trading center which lies along the 37 National Highway, "The settlement area and arable lands of the village are topographically distinguishable. The houses are built on a fairly big knoll overlooking a tiny valley on the east where paddy is grown by irrigation. The entire area is somewhat like a basin that receives rain water from the hills on the north, east and south. A small stream, called Umswai, flows south-west through it."1

The clans who are resident of the village are Maslai, Hukai, Puma, Kholar, Melang, Phangsong, Lumphuid and two others. The *samadi* is newly built with cement and concrete. The ladders attached to it present a difference from other *samadis* in which the ladders run diagonally close to the floor at both ends. But in the case of the *samadi* at Amswaiparo the ladders are placed straight from the courtyard.

Nelie, Khola and Gobha are some of the market places where the hill people bartered their produce with dry fish and essential commodities in the past. With the setting up of the office of the PWD at Umpanai in 1965 and also with the construction of a macadamized road for plying motor-vehicles from the plains of Nelie to the hills a weekly market was started to operate every Wednesday at Amswai along with the regular market at Umpanai. The Tiwas of the hills, however, have not stopped visiting the principal market at Nelie once a week on Monday to sell their indigenous products like lac, castor seeds, sesame, *eri-*cocoons.

Amswai was the village where the Lalungs lived many years after their migration from the Jaintia hills. The large number of stone slabs planted on a ground at a nearby place recall the tradition of holding an annual ceremony called *Jongrang*. At this place they split into five groups on account of internal rivalries and then dispersed. The five groups, later on, came to be known as Ams-wali, Amswai-wali, Amni-wali, Rangkhoi-wali and Marjong-wali after the name of the place where they settled first after dispersal.

Economic stay of the people of Amswai is agriculture. People practise both wet and shifting cultivation. But growing of wet paddy is specific. The people meet their demand for staple food largely from wet cultivation.

Traditional dress of male consists of a *tagla*, a *thana* and a *phaga*. The women wears consist of a *phaskai*, a *nara* and a *kasong*. Blouse as a significant women wear is common in all villages in the hills. However, compared to the males, the dresses of the womenfolk have not been changed much. The village folk totally abandoned spinning of cotton. *Eri* spinning as well as weaving is continuing in the society. The weavers use spun thread now to be bought from the market. The readymade garments such as shirt, skirt, coat, underwear, frock and blouse are common apparels of wear in their wardrobes. The changes that have taken place in the cultural sphere specially in the mode of making and using of dresses can be attributed to the growing dependence on cash economy.

The researcher has noticed the existence of buffaloes in the village. On enquiry, it has come to her knowledge that the buffaloes are reared for milk to be sold to the traders as well as for drawing a mower for levelling soil. The mode of lossening earth by allowing a buffaloe to revolve round

---

2. *The Lalung Society*, p. 56
3. Ibid, p. 57
4. Ibid, p. 117
repeatedly is called *kachewa*. The authors of the book *The Lalung Society* have let us know that the villagers do not eat pig, goat and fowl and other such domestic animals unless they are offered as sacrifice on religious occasions. They attach socio-religious value to these animals greater than economic.\(^5\)

The people of Amswaiparo seem to have adored modern things of luxury as part of their life. Solar energy plates are installed by some households to operate their T.V. sets and also for lighting purpose. Things of luxury like clinic-plus-shampoo and Bajaj almond drop have found place in the toilets. Few households are familiar with water filter and thermos-flasks.

**Amkhalam :**

It is a small hamlet of greater Amswai with about 15 Tiwa households. The village was named after the clan called Amkha. *Lam* suffixed to it denotes the meaning of a road in Tiwa language. Amkhalam denotes that the road leads to the village inhabited by the people of *Amkha* clan. The researcher met the most resourceful lady, Lasti Mithi, who was 60 years old in 2006 hailed from this village.

The village is located nearby the village Amswaiparo. Culturally, viz. in terms of material culture, both the villages are very close to each other.

Male and female dresses are same as stated in the context of Amswaiparo.

**Tharakhunji :**

Tharakhunji appears to be the most resourcefull village among those enumerated here. It is situated at a distance of 5 kilometers north-east of Langerdong which is the meeting point of the village path leading to

---

5. *The Lalung Society*, p. 124
Tharakunji with the principal road running between Ulukhunji and Nelie. The distance between Nelie and Langerdong is 30 kilometers. One time bus service daily is available in the road. On the other hand, the 5 k.m. road which connects Tharakunji with Langerdong can be covered on foot or by any vehicle owned by the traveller. The journey pleasant for the piscuresque beauty of the hill is extremely charming. The traveller can enjoy the beauty of the valley below and the charms of Jagiroad plains. The road runs through the village and terminates in a wide open field at one end surrounded by hillocks. The hillock lying at the south of the field is the abode of the people. There is a samadi in the upper hillock.

The people of Amchi and Mithi clans have constituted the majority of inmates. Total household in the village is 60 with a population around 350. Few families have embraced Christianity. The age-old custom of uxorial residence is gradually disappearing. But the system of matrilineal inheritance of property exists with the exception that each male sibling in the family is also given a share of property from his mother if he does not embrace the gabhiya system of marriage. The youths of to-day want to stay with their wives in the original house of their parents. The present researcher has witnessed a marriage ceremony of a young couple in the house of Hunki Amchi. The bride had already passed several months of conjugal life in her husband's house. Finally the mother of the boy invited the village elders to the ceremony and offered them a feast with the request to concur social recognition to the couple.

There is no restriction in wedding Karbi bride by a Tiwa groom. Ameliya Tokbipi is a Karbi bride and at the same time a Tiwa daughter-in-law. She is the secretary of the women wing of a self-help group.

The name of the group is Tharakhari. The word Tharakhari is a combination of two words – thara and khari. Thara is a herbeceous plant
known as *tara* in Assamese, while *khari* denotes a stream. The name of the stream is Ti-amphong. Interestingly the self-help group was founded on the bank of a stream in the month of June, 2003. At its inception it was an organisation of 13 males. Each member contributed Rs. 100.00 in order to start the organization. It opened its women wing on 3rd February 2006 with 12 members. The women wing is named Thirima meaning women-mother (*thiri* = women, *ma* = mother). Originally the self-help group was founded with the objective of launching various health and hygiene programmes. One of the major objective was related to the construction of low-cost sanitary latrines. With the opening of the women wing the group laid emphasis on the development of handloom and textile. Accordingly six numbers of fly-shuttle looms were purchased. All looms were busy in productive activities when the researcher visited the group’s shed in 2006. One of the looms was engaged in weaving *kasong* for the women. Another loom was weaving cloths for making portable wallet (*shala*), while in another the cords called *shala-juri* for the wallet were woven. Yet another loom was busy in weaving *phalisa* with *phali* in another. Handkerchiefs were woven in the sixth loom. All yarns including the colour threads were mill-made products.

The *tharakhari* group of women have since discontinued weaving in the common shed of the self-help group. The members took one loom each to her residence to continue weaving individually.

It is worth mentioning that the little girls spend their childhood days playing with toy looms of small bamboo sticks (Plate-7). They learn the craft from childhood days and become expert weavers. Their mothers help them learning the craft.

Primary education is imparted to the village children in the lone L.P. School located in the field where the village path terminates. There are college going students, both boys and girls. They have studied in the higher educational centres at Nelie and Jagiroad.
The people are dependent on shifting cultivation. They do not possess lands for wet cultivation. There are hardly a few bighas of land in a cove. The lands are not sufficient to those who have possessed these to meet the deficit in food. Each household depends on supply of paddy from the plains of Nelie, Amsoi, Gobha and few other places where it has land purchased on share basis of produce. Rice is the staple food. The villagers practise both shifting and wet cultivation for food grains. Broom cultivation* has emerged as a major productive activity for earning cash money. Betel-vine is another source of earning cash. The third one is bamboo. Although the villagers are cultivators, they do not rear cow for two reasons. Firstly, cattle is not employed in ploughing. Secondly, broom-cultivation needs protection from the cows.

Tharakhunji is advancing in many ways. Sanitation and cleanliness are two significant features that can attract the outsiders. Each household has a traditional hut built on raised plinth. It is observed that few households possess small gable structure with C.I. sheet roofing and plastered walls within the domicile to accommodate guests and visitors. Each domicile is surrounded by a bamboo fencing. It is interesting to find that the opening at the gate is covered with bamboo bars suspended loosely from a horizontal bar fixed on two poles. The suspended bars create jingling sound when one swing them aside to pass through them.

* Broom has emerged as a major source of cash money. Brooms harvested in March/2009 were sold @ 4,500.00 per quintal. It was the highest rate ever since the inception of broom cultivation. Most of the families earned more than Rs. 50,000.00 from selling brooms.
Bor Marjong:

Bor Marjong is located at a distance of about 4 kilometers south of Langerdong. It has 140 households with around one thousand population. The people are grouped into Amchong, Madar, Malang, Puma, Khorai, Maslai and Amchi clans. There is only one L.P. School. There are good number of boys and girls who go to Don Bosco School nearby their village for High School education. The residential huts and the arable lands of different households overspread a bigger plain area overlooking few hillocks.

Bor Marjong is one of the three cultural villages of the hill Tiwas. The other two villages are Amswaiparo and Tharakhunji. The village is known outside for the celebrated dance of *sagra*, which is also the national dance of the Tiwas. The people of Bor Marjong also celebrate *yangli, phuja* and *wanchowa* festivals, each festival is significant for a beautiful dance accompanying it. *Yangli* and *wanchowa* are held at an interval of three years. Bor Marjong is also known for the statue of Mohan Patar who was famous for chivalry and heroism. The statue was carved in a flat stone slab. It is said that Mahan Patar was a great hero of the erstwhile Gobha King who established his kingdom first in Bor Marjong.

The people have been building a new samadi with cement and concrete by the side of the old one, which remains serviceable till to-day.

In a sub-section of this book (Chapter-V) I have discussed about holding of the sagra dance and the similarities and differences in celebrating it by the people of Amswaiparo and Bor Marjong. The differences are highlighted primarily in terms of costume and modes of wearing. People belonging to the Tiwa tribe say that both the villages, Bor Marjong and Amswaiparo have retained the customs of old days in holding the *sagra* festival as well as all other festivals and dances. They consider Bor Marjong
as the cultural village of the Tiwa community. In support of their argument, they say that the old customs of the community persists in the village without being distorted.

Weaving is a living craft among the women. Every household possesses more than one loom. The little girls are often seen playing in the courtyard toy looms. A toy loom is called ha-pad.

The researcher has met some male inmates of the village who know many things about the traditional loom and making of patterns in the fabric. She has observed that the names given to certain patterns in Bor Marjong differ from some other villages. For example, the shangkhorla-khum of Bor Marjong is called tokhra in Tharakhunji. Learned scholar, Maheswar Patar, has told the researcher that there are minor differences among different clans even in the spoken form of the Tiwa language. Similarly minor differences can be observed in other context too.

Komarkuchi (Gobba):

Komarkuchi is the place of residence of the Kunwari (also called the hari-kunwari, the only female in the hierarchy of three member priests) of the Gobha royal family. The Kingdom of Gobha was founded in the dantipar (foot hills) by the Jaintia King. It was one of the three important passes for transaction of trade and keeping up of political vigilance between the Jaintias and the Ahom Kings. Other two passes were Nelie and Khola. Gobha remains to be a protectorate of the Ahom King after Pramatta Rai’s rebellion against the Jaintia King in 1658 A.D. till the fall of the Ahom dynasty.7

In the olden days when the royal family practised matriarchy, the son of the kunwari, i.e. the hari-kunwari was recognised as the heir apparent to the throne. The royal family at Gobha shifted to patriarchy and according to this system the kingship became hereditary i.e. the son of the reigning king owed his legal right to succeed to the throne. From that time onwards

---
6. Pramatta Rai was the grandson of Jasamanta Rai, the Jaintia king. He made a futile attempt of rebellion against his grandfather. See Gairt, History of Assam, p. 315
a new custom was developed keeping both the king and the kunwari away from each other in two separate residences located quite at a distance. According to the new custom the king was not allowed to discharge administrations from the same residence where the kunwari resides.

Komarkuchi is located at a distance of 3 kilometers south of N.H.37. The river Kiling runs in the east of the village. There are 42 households in the village. They are grouped into the Puma, Hukai, Phangcho, Khoral, Moloi and Khorai clans. The king belongs to the Maloi clan. Phangcho, Puma and Maloi have got individual khutas.

There is no samadi among the Tiwas of Komarkuchi. Instead of it, they have a namghor where Krisna is the main idol. The Tiwas propitiate Mahadeva with sacrifice. But they do not invoke the goddess Parvati with sacrifice. Sacrifice of animal is carried out outside the namghor. The present researcher on her latest visit to the village in March, 2009 saw a sacrificial hut built newly with thatch in front of the namghor. It was built in connection with the celebration of a puja. The hut is called mernu. It is similar with the bhoralghor in construction held over wooden stilts.

The villagers have enjoyed many benefits of modernity.

The residence of the kunwari at Komarkuchi has been the house of an ancient relic of King's turban which is greatly revered with devotion. The turban is a cloth of the size of 3 angulas. It is believed to be a kavaca-cloth. It is kept in a leaf of kaupat (like the leaf of Indian arrowroot) which is fastened with seven number of knots. The turban is taken ceremoniously to Amswai every year on the eve of the Sagra festival. Its return journey which happens just after the close of the dance, is also accomplished in ceremonious manner. The persons, who are responsible for the too and fro journey of the turban, have to travel on foot. The distance between Amswai and Komarkuchi takes about a day's journey.
The King's costume consists of a dhoti, chadar (woven of pat silk), a tagla, a shirt and a paguri (woven of muga yarn). He wears an ear-ring and a string of beads made of gold being interspersed with some red beads (Plate-37). The string ornament of the king bears testimony to its affiliation to similar ornament of the Khasis. The kunwari is attired in traditional costume when she pays public appearance. Her everyday attires do not differ from the garments worn by other women.

The fair held at Zoonbil near Jagiroad annually in the month of Magha is a significant event which is a part and parcel of the life and culture of the royal family. The fair is said to have organized to commemorate an old custom of community dinning with newly harvested rice. Community fishing in the bil is another touching event associated with the fair. Fishes caught in Zoonbil and Arom-bil complete the community feast. It may be mentioned here that the Zoonbil with its waterbody belongs to the king, while the Arom-bil (with an area spread over 121 bighas of land) lying nearby Komarkuchi is to the kunwari. Rajita is the present hari-kunwari of Gobha. She is the daughter of the king's uncle and is his elder sister.

Dabor-Ghat:

The hamlet of Dabor-ghat was founded by some people who migrated from the hills of Karbi Anglong. It stands along the river bank of Kiling and lies on the east of Komarkuchi. The entire area is like a basin with the hills overlooking it. The people of the village belong to Madar, Khorai, Puma and Amchang clans. They have retained the samadi culture. They speak their mother tongue like the inhabitants of Komarkuchi and other villages like Gorongkuchi and Markangkuchi lying almost contiguous to Daborghat. In terms of material culture, viz. in terms of dresses of both male and female they do not differ from their neighbours.
Bherakuchi:

The village has two hamlets – Bherakuchi Pothar and Bherakuchi Gaon. It is located in the Dhupaguri Gaon Panchayat under the Dimariya Block Development in the district of Kamrup. Both the hamlets are inhabited by the Tiwas. The number of household in Bherakuchi Pothar is 48. On the other hand, Bherakuchi Gaon has 45 households. The village stands along the 37 NH at a distance of about 10 kilometers south-west of Jagiroad. There are two L.P. Schools one in each village. Dimoriya High School is near to the village. A few households in the village have orange-cultivation. There is no restriction in marriage between a Tiwa groom and a Karbi bride.

The women of the village wear chadar and mekhela on all occasions. They seldom use kasong and that too on special occasion. They weave cloths for their own use and not for other members of the family.

Sashi Prabha Deori, a lady of 55 years of age, has let us know that she spins cotton everyday at home regularly. She is a gram-sevika trained in Wardha. She has also informed us that she reared pat worms in the past. Now the practice does not exist at all. She told us that mekhela-chadar ensemble having been decorated with the motif of magar-phul on cotton fabric was considered an object of veneration for the bride. Riha was another wear of a bride. Marriage could not be held without a riha which was not patterned in magar-phul. The motif was lost for ever sometimes in the past. The weavers used coloured soap bought from the market to dye yarns.

Popular ornaments of women are the dugdugi, thuriya, nakphul and galpata. The galpata is a string necklace made of four anna coins of old days. Mati-mah (black gram) was used for shampooing hairs. It prevents falling of hair and help growth of new ones. Hair lock called sekot were removed with a khojong (traditional comb made of bamboo). It was like the redding comb used in old days.
Amsoi Marjong Gaon:
The people of the village originally belonged to Bar Marjong in Karbi Anglong district. The village is, therefore, named after the original place of residence. Till today the people of the village have been maintaining cordial relations with the people of Bar Marjong.

The Yangli festival is held in Bar Marjang after every three years. Few persons from the village use to visit the village on the eve of the festival to collect contributions from the people of Amsoi Marjong Gaon. In this way, the relationship between the people of both the villages is being maintained since long past.

There are around 45 Tiwa households with an approximate population of 270 in the village. The clans are Puma, Amchang, Madar and Malang. The people can speak their mother tongue although they read in the Assamese medium schools. They have earned natural proficiency in Assamese for being close neighbours with the Assamese. Since few decades back, there developed a small colony of Bengali people in the locality thereby transforming the village into a multi-ethnic one. With the establishment of a Don Bosco School at Amsoi some of the Tiwa lads are attracted to pursue education in the medium of English. At present, there are more than 16 schools managed by the Government and private organizations.

The villagers have built a new samadi at a place some few meters away from the old site. The wooden columns of the old samadi are lying scattered in the old site after its demolition. The columns are beautifully decorated. The patterns engraved on the capitals of the columns bespeak the aesthetic sense of the people.

Few people of the village are service holders. Maheswar Pator, a renowned high school teacher of Ulukhunji High School, hails from the village. Presently he has headed the state literary organization, Mathonlai Tokhra, of the Tiwas as its President. He is a folklorist and a celebrated scholar of considerable eminence in Tiwa culture.
Handloom weaving is a major household activities of women. Cloths are woven for domestic consumption mainly of the women. Male members use shirts and pants and other wears bought from the markets. Weaving is not an industry for earning cash. People are mainly dependent on agriculture. However, the productive activities for earning cash are confined to homestead area where the people have developed orchards for growing of horticultural crops like betel vines and areca nut, bananas and bamboo. The greater Amsoi is a developing area with tea-garden and a big market. It is growing fast with the establishment of different Government offices, Banks and forestry.

**Nambor:**

The village Nambor is located 26 kilometers south of the district headquarter of Nagaon. NH 36 runs close to the village. Kathiatoli, where roads from east and west meet, is nearest to the village and it has developed as an important trade center. Hospital and higher education centers at Kathiatoli are at a walking distance from Nambor. The authors of the *Lalung Society*\(^8\) have informed us that the village Nambor was established in the late 19\(^{th}\) century. Prior to that, the village was six kilometers further south of the present habitat. At that time, the Karbis were their neighbours. The Lalungs migrated to the new place to avoid the effects of a curse.

One Nahar Sing Bordoloi, who was the chief of the Amchang clan, took the lead with his clan members and settled at Nambor. Other clans followed and joined them. The people of Nambor speak their mother tongue. They have also acquired natural proficiency in Assamese.

The resident clans in the village at Nambor are Amchang, Ladur, Kholar, Madur, Sonjol, Kharai, Hukai, Sangram, Mithi, Amphi, Buma, Maslai and Khargol.\(^9\) Amchong is the biggest clan and the dominant one. Total household of the Lalungs in the village is 300.

---

8. *Lalung Society*, p. 54
9. Ibid.
With the settlement of Nepalis, Bilaspuris and several other communities the village has transformed into a multi-ethnic one. The Lalung villagers of Nambor are agriculturists having little economic relations with the new dwellers.

The village dormitory is a *ha-samadi* meaning the *samadi* built on the ground. It is unlike the one seen in the hills where the floor of the *samadi* is built on stilts. The roof is not as sloping as it is in the hills. There is no permanent fire-place in the building. Nobody lives in the building and it has lost its function as a sleeping house of the boys. In terms of function, the building also differs from its counterpart in the hills. Sacrifice is carried on inside the *ha-samadi*, whereas in the hills it is done outside. The center columns of *ha-samadi* bears three different names, viz, *chala, kabi* and *hari*.

Rearing of *eri*-worms and spinning have been a living practice with many households. All young girls above the age of 13 weave cloths in their looms. Their mothers, elder sisters and the grandmothers are their teachers to teach them how to operate the looms and weave cloths. *Tagla, paguri* (turban), *tangali* were some traditional wears of the males. *Kasong* was the traditional drapery of the womenfolk. The people called this garment *mekhela*. The *mugane-kasong* meaning the *kasong* made of *muga* threads was valuable and costly. The *kasong* conceals the body of the wearer upto her breasts. It is a sewing garment having a hem in it. Formerly the use of blouse was unknown to the women. The women covered their heads with a separate piece of cloth like a veil.

In old days, dance costumes were made of hand spun yarns. The costume used in Sagra dance was consisted of three pieces of cloths viz. a *churiya* woven of *muga* threads, a *paguri* and a *tangali*, both were made of hand-spun cotton. Each piece of cloth was 20 *hastas* in length. The sash in the *tangali* was adorned with floral designs and hanging fringe. An old
tangali was recovered from the residence of a woman named Malini Amchong (aged 56 years). Coloured threads of old days are seen in the patterns on either end of the cloth. The floral patterns are kip-khum (hand-fan design) kipetar (border) and khum-thoka (designs of dots). There is yet another pattern which represents an animal. The animal is not identified. It is believed that it was associated with the barhani-kata-puja. The barhani-kata-puja is held on the first Sunday of the month of Kati. In old days, harvesting as well as spinning of cotton was formally launched after the festival.

The office-bearers appointed in charge of dance costume was called re-bhari (re means cloth and bhari its porter). His function was to collect the articles of dress from the borghors of different households on the day of dance recital. He himself had to dress the dancers and made them ready for the performance. Formerly there were 2 re-bharis in the village.

The village is under swift transition from traditional to modernity. Modern amenities of all sorts are available in almost all households. The mother-tongue has only keeps off the people from being completely de-tribalised. Handloom weaving continues to exist in the families to meet the needs of day-to-day wears like the riha and mekhela for the women, eri cloths and other warm cloths and few other cloths. The researcher visited the residence of Narayan Bordoloi for data collection. Bordoloi has a photo-shop at Kathiatoli. Bordoloi was wearing a phaga as waist cloth when she met him in his courtyard. He changed it for a white kamcha which he wrapped in his waist allowing it to cover him upto his knees.

Jagiroad:

Jagiroad is an industrial place in the district of Morigaon. The Spun Silk Mill and the Nagaon Paper Mill are two heavy industries which are responsible for affecting changes in the life-style of the people.
There are at least three Tiwa villages with Tiwa speaking people in and around Jagiroad. The villages are Bhomoraguri, Charangkuchi and Markangkuchi. Besides these, there are fourteen other villages with Tiwa speaking people of considerable strength. The villages are Sindisar, Sonaikuchi, Garongkuchi, Kamarkuchi, Gaonliya, Owabari, Makariya, Bengenabari, Dahali, Darapani, Silchang, Amchoi Marjang-gaon and Palahguri. Only fifty percent people of the last named village can speak their mother tongue.

Jagiroad is a multi-linguistic locality with a dominating population around 6000 souls of the Tiwas. The other linguistic groups of people are the non-tribal Assamese, Nepalese, Punjabis, Marowaris, Muslims and Baganiyas.

There are twelve number of Lower Primary Schools in and around Jagiroad. Besides these there is one English Medium High School besides higher secondary School and an Under Graduate College in Jagiroad.

Na-Khola Rajakuchi is the abode of the Gobha King. The researcher has met a few women weavers in the village who have taken weaving on professional line. Bhogeswari Bordoloi, Akani Bordoloi and Ratneswari Bordoloi have made wonderful headway in earning cash from the profession. They have installed a couple of looms in their residence for weaving varieties of garments belonging to their tradition. The tradition is, however, retained only in terms of some textile motifs brought from the hills. It has been observed that the motifs brought from the hills are modified affecting many changes in their forms. Nadiram Deori, a social activist and one time councellor of Tiwa Autonomous Council, has let us know that the changes in form and design are due to local influence in the plains.

Few decades in the past have witnessed the growing interest for cultural upheaval among the people of the tribe as a sequel to political awareness
among them. The mother tongue of the people and the traditional dresses have been recognised as two significant means in the sphere of restoration of their identity as a nationality. Many young people and social activists have come forward for resuscitation of both language and weaving. They have developed a sense of belonging for their people and also the unstained fascination for traditional dresses, if not the fabric. As a sequel to this development the demand for female costume like the kasong, phaskai and nara, thenas and the male dress, the sleeveless coat called the tagla, has increased among the people. The womenfolk, particularly the young girls use to drape themselves in traditional costume on all special occasions. The male dress, the tagla, spreads its charming net over all sections of people irrespective of young and old and tribal and non-tribal. The weavers of Na-khola Rajakuchi of Jagiroad have accepted the challenge and developed trading on traditional dresses. Besides these, they have released dinner sets of the size of 18\"x16\", carpets and several other objects of luxury for the consumers.

The weavers of Na-Khola Rajakuchi know how to operate the fly-shuttle and throw-shuttle looms. They use to keep graph books and plot the designs in their pages. The medium of graph book has become the means of transmission of the motifs from one weaver to the other.

Ezarbari :

Ezarbari is a big locality comprising of 13 villages, viz. Ezarbari, Owabori, Koraiguri, Dahoti Padumpukhuri, Gorkotabori, Mikirbors, Meruwagaon, Belaguri, Koroibari, Jurgaon, Bakori, Chapor, Gunamora and Jerenga. Among the villages Koroibari, Jerenga and Ezarbari are intimately associated with the unique cultural festival of Barat (also called Usha-barat and Uwa barat-) of Tetelia Kingdom. The villages are significant for higher concentration of Tiwa people in the district of Morigaon.
Ezarbari can be reached along a macadamised road from Telahi Chariali which is the meeting point of the connecting road running between Bangaldhara Tiniali Gate, which stands at NH 37, and Morigaon. The distance between Ezarbari Tiniali and Telahi Chariali is 6 kilometers. The road to Ezarbari runs towards west along the river bank of Kolong. There are more than 13 L.P.Schools, 2 M.E.and 2 High Schools in Ezarbari besides a hospital at Meruwagaon. The common cultural complex of the locality is a rasa-mandapa located nearby the Ezarbari Tiniali. For last 35 years the complex remains to be the place for holding the rasa festival which is celebrated consecutively for 5 days. Another significant cultural function is a fair. It is held in two places, one at Ezarbari and the other at Owabori, on the 5th and 4th day respectively in the month of Bohag. Out of a total of 13 villages, the following villages have been taken here for our study.

Owabari and Koraiguri :

Owabari and Koraiguri have been taken here together for conducting our survey in the villages of Morigaon district in the context of textile tradition of the Tiwas. Owabari presents a mixed or multi-ethnic population to some extent. The people of both the villages, Owabari and Koraiguri, conduct all discourses in the spoken language of the Tiwas of Nagaon and Morigaon. Actually the language is Assamese and it is modified to be spoken with regional touch in the accent.

As it is informed, the clans in the two villages are Purulok, Amphilok, Amchilok, Radulok, Khorailok, Masronglok, Damlok, Sukailok and Melang. Radolok and Melang are two major clans having a dominant population. There are two khels with 14 households in one and 145 in the other. The number of borghors are three although the number of clans are 9 or so. Amphi, Radu and Melang clans have built their borghors. Each and every
clan is suffixed by a word ‘lok’ evidently taken from Assamese to denote man or people. The use of the suffix is also found in Komarkuchi in Gobha.

Weaving is a living practice among the women of the two villages. Generally they weave almost all cloths required for the womenfolk. The cloths include chador and mekhela and phaga like churni for the women. For the males they weave churiya, tagla and gamocha called phali-re. Kasong, jaskai and phaskai are some of the traditional garments for women woven in throw-shuttle loom fitted with fly-shuttle sley. The traditional Assamese looms have disappeared from the villages. Eri-culture is abandoned and woolen threads and acrylic yarns have replaced the eri-yarn. Few weavers are found to have woven warm shawls in their looms.

The women not only weave cloths in their looms, they also stitch woolen shawls for the winter.

The women participate in different fairs for display and sell of cloths weaved by them. They have founded several self-help groups for the empowerment of women. They also participate in the fairs for the sale of cloths through the government agency like DRDA. We are told that Udoyjyoti Atma Sahayak Got (Udayjyoti Self-help Group) is heading for prosperity with the craft and also of the economy of the members.

Jerenga:

The village is situated about 1 km south-west of Ezarbari Tiniali. One of the important clan is the Monikul. The Doloiraja, Moniram Doloi, of Tetelia hails from the Monikul of Jerenga Gaon. He is the King of the Usha-barat of Tetelia. Other clans living in the village are Amchi both black and white, Amphi, Purulok, Sukailok and Damlok. Purulok is the major clan with 47 households, while the Damlok is known for having only 1 household. The clans are grouped into 4 khutas, viz. Amphi, Amchi, Purulok and Sukailok. There is only one khel in the village. The society is
run by four clans. A saying goes as “chari khuta, chari dham” which regulates all socio-religious affairs in the village. Chari khuta stands for the four columns—Amchi, Amphi, Purulok and Sukailok. The persons who represent the four clans are called charidham literally carrying the sense of four cross-beams to hold the social structure.

Weaving is a living practice in the village. There is one organization named Navajyoti Atma Sahayak Got. It has 10 members. The group has got no common shed to shelter the looms of the members. Therefore, each member is allowed to weave cloths at her own home. Weaving is concentrating around the production of churiya, mekhela-chadar, gamocha, scarf, bed-sheet etc. DRDA has created a network for selling the cloths inside and outside the district. The group has received a sum of Rs.1 lakh of which 50% of the money is marked for the development of weaving while the rest will be spent on rearing of pigs and goats.

The informants have let us know that the system of reciprocal help through hadari was known to them. 6 to 8 daughter-in-laws of different households assemble together alternately in the house of each member for spinning eri. But with the extinction of eri-culture the hadari has lost its importance.

As regards the patterns of figures, the women weavers could say nothing excepting the reverse method of picking of the weft threads. They call the figure as phira-phul meaning the reversal of picks.

Barapujia:

It is believed that the place owed its name from the concentration of places of worship of twelve deities. The word bara means twelve in Assamese. Pujia has come from puja meaning worship. Hence Barapujia does conventionally mean that it is a place where the people of the Tiwa
tribe have conducted worships in twelve separate precincts. In this context, an alternative suggestion may be forwarded for a meaningful interpretation of the name of the village. To the Tiwas, the house of worship is itself known as baro or nu-baro. Puji is derived from a Khasi word punji which means cluster. Hence, the word Barapujia may stand for a cluster of houses of worship.

In the hills each nu-baro is known for its dual function as a place of household worship besides being the residential hut for the members of the family. But in the plains, it does not serve both the functions. Here nu-baro bears its own entity separate from the residential hut. Each residential hut in the plains is not a nu-baro like its counterpart in the hills. The plains Tiwas pay less importance on the protection and preservation of the nu-baro as a religious complex. Recently it is observed that a common building is constructed in the same place at Gandhibori to accommodate four nu-baros of different clans.

Barapujia is a meeting point of two roads. One of the roads connects the district headquarters of Morigaon and Nagaon. The other road connects Raha with Barapujia. Both the roads are macadamised for the movement of vehicles. There are two daily markets where vegetable produced locally in nearby villages are sold along with different consumer goods.

The old provinces of Barapujia and Mikirgaon are close to each other. Both the provinces were founded during the reign of the Ahom King, Jayadhwaja Simha (1648-1663 A.D.)

Barapujia is a multi-ethnic village with exclusive living areas for the Tiwas, who are grouped into a number of clans, viz. Hokai, Damlang, Madur, Poma, Taram, Macherang, Madur, Pangchang, White Amchi and Black Amchi, Meleng and Phangcho. It has another territorial division called Khaplangkuchi at a little distance from the principal locality.

The village organization of the Tiwas of Barapujia presents a well organized stratified society with bamsa (lineage), khel and bara-khel as its stratas. Bamsa (lineage) is the lowest strata, while the
khel, being constituted of a number of bamsas, is next to it. The third stage is called bara-khel.\textsuperscript{10} It is constituted of the Ghorburas or Bar-zelas\textsuperscript{11} of different lineages (bamsas) of different khels. A private survey conducted in the latter part of 2008 presents that the number of household under the jurisdiction of bara-khel was around 800.

The entire locality of Barapujia with Tiwa domiciles is divided into a number of villages. These are Ujanichuk, Bahgaon, Sipargaon (sipar means on the other bank), Bakarigaon, Amaraguri and Pota-Kolong (it is a newly occupied farm land). On the other hand, each village is divided into several sub-localities called chuk meaning the corner. There are different khels at Barapujia. One of the khels is known as Bor-khel (bor means big). This khel is constituted of seven bamsas of five clans, which are Hokai, Damlang, Madur, Poma and taram. The people of the Madur clan are grouped into three separate bamsas (lineages) having one borghor in (abode built for invocation of deity) each.

Barapujia develops into a small township with the establishment of various government departments like the Kopili Block Development, rural hospital, Public Health Department, Vaterinary Hospital etc. There are more than 4 L.P. Schools with one Govt. M.V. School. There is one Girls’ H.E. School besides a High School and a Higher Secondary School for both boys and girls.

Most of the inhabitants are agricultural farmers. Few among the inhabitants are teachers, traders and army personnels. All rickshaw-pullers native of Barapujia.

\textsuperscript{10} Bara-khel does not denote the meaning of 12 number of khels since bara in Assamese stands for twelve. Here bara carries the same meaning as does the English word several. 

\textsuperscript{11} Ghorburha who is also called Bar-zela is the chief priest attached to a borghar. The office of a Ghorburha is hereditary for a particular family. Ghor denotes the borghar (the place of worship) and burha means old. But the Ghorburha is not supposed to be the oldest man in the bamsa (lineage). He must be a man of that family of the bamsa which has the previledge
The present status handloom weaving in the village is hopefully progressing. Barapujia has already earned its name as a celebrated place of handloom weaving. Here all women are expert weavers. Every household has possessed a minimum of one loom and a shed for weaving. The number of looms varies with the number of woman inmates in the household. It is worth mentioning that most of the looms are throw-shuttle looms fitted with fly-shuttle sley. This type of loom is distinguished as bongali-sal or ura-makur-sal (fly-shuttle loom). A traditional Assamese loom is hardly to be found. There are few families, which have been producing pat and muga cloths, have got Jacquard looms to weave. Bandana Handloom Textile founded in 1994 has raised an industry with 4 Nos. of Jacquard-looms. Mrs. Lilu Dekaraja (45 years of age) has been continuing weaving of pat and muga in Jacquard loom for a couple of years. Recently she has discontinued it and concentrated in commercial productions of chadar, mekhela, gamocha (both Tiwa and non-Tiwa), cheleng and churiya in her fly-shuttle looms. Like her, there are several other families who have undertaken weaving for commercial purpose. But the maximum number of clothes they weave are of non-tribal tradition except the churiya of the size of 2.40m x 0.90m, a wear of all Tiwa men who are supposed to attend social or socio-religious congregations as member of a family, and the Tiwa comforters of the size of 1.45m x 0.39m. The owner of Bandana Handloom Textile has let the researcher know that the industry has engaged weavers in different villages to weave all non-traditional clothes. However, the traditional wears like the tagla (of modern form and design) and the comforter are also given to the outside weavers to weave. The industry has been producing woman wears like mekhela and chadar in mixed medium of polyester and cotton yarns. The researcher has come to know that there are few male weavers in and around Barapujia. She is delighted to know that a boy of 17 years of age,
who is student of H.S. 1st year in a local Higher Secondary School, The present status of handloom weaving in the village is hopefully progressing. Barapujia has already earned its name as a celebrated place of knows how to operate Jacquard loom.

A good number of self-help groups constituted of woman have been working on textile weaving in Barapujia. They have developed their own premises for their looms which are none other than the fly-shuttle looms. Government is extending loans to some of the groups besides training to the members of the group.

It is observed that all traditional dresses of the Tiwas are weaved in acrylic yams, while the yams used to weave other cloths are mill-made cotton. Hand-spun 'eri' is used to weave the 'eri'-cloths. The number of 'eri'-worm rearers are many at Bahgaon and so also the number of weavers on 'eri'-yarns. Now-a-days the weavers have been weaving 'eri'-cloths in the fly-shuttle looms. It is a common sight in almost all households at Bahgaon that the aged women are all busy in spinning 'eri' in their traditional spindle.

For the weavers, individual industrial concerns and self-help groups of Barapujia the immediate place for all sorts of mercantile transactions is Raha, a semi-township growing along the National Highway 37. However, Guwahati, which is the eastern corridor of India, is a major place for marketing of textile goods produced at the cottage industrial centers at Barapujia.

Balairam Senapati has let us know that Barapujia Budhagaon was known for rearing of muga-worms in old days. The host tree, Sowalu for rearing the worms was abundantly grown there. Senapati has also let us know that the weavers of Barapujia obtained cotton from their compatriots in the hills by exchanging dry fish in the market at Nelie in old days. He has also let us know that young girls of five constituted a hadari khel in old days for spinning cotton and 'eri'. They gathered together alternately in the house of each member before dawn for spinning.
Khaigarh and Kamarjan:

Khaigarh and Kamarjan are two separate hamlets lying contiguous to each other along the N.H.37. Both the villages fall under Raha revenue circle in the district of Nagaon.

Khaigarh is one of the five old provinces which constituted the group of the five *powali* (pretty) *rajas* in Nagaon. Other provinces of the groups are Barapujia, Mikirgaya, Topakuchi and Sora. Khaigarh and Sora were founded by Kirtichandra Barbaruah during the reign of the Ahom King, Rajeswar Simha (1751-1769 A.D.).

Almost all the members of the royal family of Khaigarh have embraced Vaisnavism and abandoned the animistic practices of old days. There are 30 households of the Tiwas. Their clans are Masrong and Sukailok. They are members of a single *borghor* with a single *khel*. There are two sacred groves with one for Ganesa and the other for the goddess Kalika. Few years back, the people of the village built a *namghor* in the sacred grove ascribed to Kalika. A local fair called the *gosain-uliwa-mela* (meaning a fair celebrating the public appearance of god) is held annually on the last Tuesday of the month of Bohaga. A procession is organized in this context. Till couple of decades ago, the procession was heralded by a group of dancers and musicians who gave it a unique look to the event.

All women in the village weave cloths out of cotton and *eri*. Cotton yarns are not spun manually on the spindle. But *eri* cloths are made out of hand spun yarns. A single household rear *eri*-worms in the village. Each family has a loom to weave cloths.

---

12. *Dantiyalia Buranjii* incorporated in the *Deodhai Asom Buranjii*, para 253, p.143
The people of the hamlet called Kamarjan are grouped into 3 clans, viz. the Sukailok, Amchilok and Masronglok. There are 34 households with 2 borghors and 4 khels. Eri worm is reared by 4 to 5 households. There are 5 to 7 households who have spindles for spinning eri.

The soil of Kamarjan was considered sacred. Formerly the Tiwas of Barapujia took the sacred soil of Kamarjan for raising the plinths of their borghors.