CHAPTER- V

Textile Tradition and Manufacturing of Cloths

1. Textile, Cosmetics and Ornaments in oral tradition:

Weaving is life itself for a Tiwa woman. There are few social customs which enjoin upon their social significance in relation to woman. For instance, the birth-rite of a girl baby presents a symbolism which is meaningful in terms of associating her life in future with weaving. Her birth rite is solemnised with a miniature bow given to the baby for a touch when she attains the first seventh-day after her birth. The bow represents the ginning bow used in ginning cotton. Traditionally cotton having been seeded is carded by flicking with a little bow. The bow symbolizes the expectation that she should be expert in weaving in future. The borhari, who is the senior most female descendant of the original family of the mahari or clan and is the mother’s eldest sister, immediate or classificatory to the baby performs the rites.1

Tiwa folksongs2 available in print is a source of our knowledge on textile tradition, dresses and ornaments of the people of the tribe. Few couplets used to sing in the rati-sewa ceremony (rati means night and sewa is the service; the religious service is held at night and hence the name) contain information on the use of silk and tawar dhuti by the malefolk. The container of clothes was a japa.

As regards perfume, one couplet refers to mutha, gathiyan and gandh-biringa as essential ingredients for making scented oil called gondh-tel

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1. The Lalung Society, p. 82.
2. Balairam Senapati: Panco-rajya Lalungor etc., pp. 26 & 36
(gondh = scent, tel = oil). Yet another verse refers to gold of the weight of 13 maha (one maha is equal in weight of \(\frac{1}{4}\)th of a rupee of old days) and cotton weighing 12 dangs (1 dang is of the weight of 20 kg.)

Some verses of the Barat festival observed in the kingdom of Teteliya have come out in printed form. Riha (female upper garment), finger ring, gold and silver ornaments, bracelet and earing have found mention in few verses.

One lyric narrates how the borjela is attired:

Our borjeta wears a turban
Rolled up and tightly wounded
A cheleng of muga or pat fabric glitters on his body
He holds a staff of the nahar plant.

(page paguri amar borjela
thuriai pindhile ati
gate jilike muga pator cheleng
hatat naharar lathi.)

Every year the king of the old province of Sahari pays public appearance on the occasion of celebration of fair held at Basundhari and Mahadeo-sal. On this occasion the king and his officers are attired in traditional dress befitting ritualistic performances. The attiring ceremony is accompanied by singing of few songs. One of the songs narrates how the turban is wounded around king’s head. The singing of songs continue till the king finishes dressing and wearing of sacred marks on his forehead. The royal office-bearers also wear dresses and sacred marks after the king is fully attired. The drums, shields and swords are sanctified and vermillion marks

3. Senapati: Barat Ussav, chapter VIII.
4. Among the Tiwas every family has a borjela. They have also a borjela in the clan; but their functions are different. The borjela in the family is the eldest male and he represents in every generation a particular line of male descent in the matrilineal clan. The borjela of the family has only domestic responsibilities to perform towards his sisters, whereas the clan borjela discharges his responsibilities both ceremonial and social as the male head of the clan. Postnatal rites of a new-born baby boy in the clan has to be discharged by the clan borjela. The Lalung Society, pp. 81-83.
are put on in each object. One of the songs narrates that there are number of styles for wounding the turban; but the style in which the king wears his turban at present does not allow his stripped hair visible to the eyes. Another verse relates that the king is black in complexion, he is given a sacred mark of *chandana* on his forehead. In the verse, king’s complexion is compared to a young blue-bird known in Assamese as *kam-charai*. Yet in another song it is mentioned that the king wears a shirt adorned with cross-border lines in the fabric, an earring of gold studded in red and a *cheleng* in *ghagarigatiya*\(^5\) style of wearing.

It is considered disgraceful for a young girl who does not know how to weave. A legend known to the hill Tiwas relates a story of a girl named Langa. According to the story, Langa did not have cloth to wear and attend a dance festival held in a nearby village. She thought of a plan and devised a means to cover up her nakedness. She took some amount of treacle and smeared her entire body with it in order to overspread some soft cotton. She did according to the plan and left for the village. There was a rivulet on the route. She took utmost care to cross it. But alas! due to her bad luck, she fell down on the stream and drenched. She lost the cotton cover from her body. She was extremely sad. She decided to stay in disguise under cover of a rock herself assuming the form of a worm. People believe that, the girl is still hiding herself in her worm form. She could be found in that form anywhere beneath earth and whenever somebody removes a clod of earth she at once fled from being exposed to human eyes. Like Langa, any girl who does not know how to weave has to hide herself in her society. People censure her in the name of Langa saying that you have become Langa.\(^6\)

There are some interesting tales developed by the Tiwa folk on the origin and source of textile. It is worthmentioning that the hill Tiwas believe in the

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5. In this style of wearing, the cloth is extended from the shoulder on the one side to the side of the body on the other. It follows the same style of wearing like the sacred thread.

6. The story was retold by Hunki Amchi of Tharakhunjli.
existence of different clan gods. They believe that the gods dwell in the hills 
lying nearby their villages. They are benevolent and can be appeased with 
sacrifice and offerings. This belief led them to pray the gods for dance 
costume, bridal attire and food etc. The gods in turn gave them cloths as 
prayed for. They taught them also different forms of dance.

The story associated with the *sagra* dance relates that an orphan boy of 
the *sagra* clan who witnessed the gods at play in the thicket acquired 
knowledge of the dance as gods' gift. The gods asked Pala Khongor, the 
than-god of the hill, to provide dance costume to his worshippers. Accordingly 
Pala Khongor gave his followers the necessary costume to celebrate the 
*sagra* festival. The god continued the practice of giving clothes year after 
year and the people held the festival every year with his blessings. But the 
god stopped giving of clothes one year. Because he detected the taints of 
betel-nut chewing in the clothes.

But the affection, favour and support of the god to his followers did not 
diminish. This time he extended his favour and support in a different way. 
He gave them *khul* (cotton) and *singuru* (*eri*) and asked them to develop 
the culture of spinning and weaving by themselves. He gave them the loom 
and its accessories. He gave them also different patterns to decorate their 
clothes. Thereafter, the people began spinning of *singuru-sut* (*eri-yearns*) 
for their clothes. In this way the textile craft developed in the hills.

The Bor Rongkhoi clan got dance costume and other clothes from god 
Nursing of the Nursing hillock. The people of the clan expressed their 
gratitude to the deity as follows:

Oh, Lord of earth, the hillock Nursing
We propitiate you with a tray full of betel-nut, 
We pray you, for you did not dishearten us 
And give us clothes, 
You have showered your blessings on us
And we have aptly performed the rites,
We propitiate you with a sacrifice,
Be pleased to accept it.

Tradition goes that each than-god gave clothes to his worshippers in old days. But each one stopped giving when it was detected that the people developed temptation for the divine cloths and resorted to malpractice. Among the goddess, Parvati was also affectionate to the followers of Pala khongor. She gave them clothes. But she discontinued the practice when she found that the clothes returned to her got tainted with human saliva.

Clothes tainted with red spittle is also associated with another god from whom the Tiwas of Tharakhunji got the floral motif called the *kundali baman*. Maheswar Patar has let us know that Baman is a benevolent god of the Tiwas. The god is worshipped with *mah-prasad*, banana and other vegetable eatables. His share of vegetable offerings is separately given to him when he is worshipped along with the dead ancestors whom the Tiwas propitiate with sacrifice.

The story of acquisition of clothes from the deity, Baman, as retold by Mandoi Amchi of Tharakhunji is as follows:

In old days, a man took a gourd shell of liquor on a platter and went to the hill to propitiate the deity for clothes. He placed the platter and gave his back to it while sitting nearby. He waited there for the result. After a while, he heard a sound. He turned his eyes to the gourd shell and the platter. The gourd shell was empty and the platter was full of clothes—the *thenas* and other dance costume. The god continued giving clothes and dance costume year after year. But he stopped the practice when he found that the clothes returned to him were dirty with spittle taint.

Kundali is the hillock Kondoli lying nearby Kothiatoli in the Kampur revenue circle. The Tiwa village of Nambor is nearby the hillock. The Tiwas of Nambor also hold *sagra* festival in the village. The floral motif called

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kundali baman may have its origin somewhere in the village located nearby the hillock Kondali.

There are number of folk beliefs around the acquisition of various decorative motifs from the than-gods. The means of acquisition of the motifs is like that of theft. The story of acquisition of the motifs called muikuri and kilalongai is interesting. According to the legend, a woman of Amswai village committed the theft for their acquisition. But she failed to keep the designs memorized. However, her husband retained them in his mind and reproduced them on the leaf of a tree. Thereafter the woman transferred them to the medium of textile threads.

Another legend made the people of Amni clan responsible for committing theft of the motifs from the clothes supplied to them by Budha Ramsa, the tutelary deity of the clan.

Similar thefts were said to have been committed by different clans for the acquisition of textile motifs from different than-gods. The Amswai clan committed the theft and acquired the textile motifs from Pala Khongor. Similar theft was committed by the people of Bar Rongkhoi clan of Tharakhunji and this time the than-god was Nursing whose abode was in a hillock of the same name. The than-god of Amrimakha hill located in Ulukhunji was associated with the theft committed by the people of Amri clan. The people of Bar Marjong were made responsible for committing theft from the hillock Sabrimakha (makha denotes a hill or hillock). Our resourceful informant, Lasti Mithi of Amkha-lam village has let us know that ramsakhajari, kilalongai, muikuri, pla-khum, sing-gong, hadipisa and several other motifs of old days owe their source of origin to the clan deities.

2. Male Dresses:

The dress of a Tiwa male in the hills consists of a tagla and a thana. Various nondescript garments of modern days have become popular among the Tiwas of both the hills and the plains.
Tagla: It is an upper garment of the males. The tagla in old days was different from the one known to the youths at present. It was a sleeveless coat weaved in such a manner that it leaves the neck and the arms of the wearer bare. It was very short and could cover only up to the ribs of the wearer. However, the long warp threads constituting the frinze were allowed to swing so loosely in front and back that the garment did not appear too short to reach the buttock of the wearer (Plate-9-i). The suspended frinze was considered necessary for driving away the gadflies and other insects while the wearers were at work in cultivation. Khasi\textsuperscript{8} and Jaintia\textsuperscript{9} impact could be detected in making the garment for the Tiwa males. Dr. Gohain has rightly pointed that in dress, “the Lalung male follows the Jaintias and this was because of the long association with them in the past.”

A traditional tagla of old days was a two piece garment fastened together. The inner one was made of eri yarns, as it required to absorb red dye derived from natural lac. The outer one was a cotton fabric and it was dyed in dark blue derived from vegetable leaves and others. The length of a traditional tagla was measured out in terms of the length of that part of the body stretching from shoulder to the breast of the wearer.

The seam in a traditional tagla below the armpits is stitched with threads by hand. The stitch is called chamai-yasi. (Plate-9-ii)

The weavers developed their own technique for making the garment in the loom itself. According to the technique the warp thread at the middle of the cloth are parted into two to provide open passage for the neck. The passage is called tagla-kodo (kodo means neck) and it is done in the loom itself (Plate-9-iv). The point of diversion of the weft threads is later on fastened into a stitch called suwan.

The loom used to weave a traditional tagla is the re-thad, a ground loom. The beating sword is a peo and not the usual reed. The loom is a single heddle one.

\textsuperscript{8} Compare jymphong of the Khasis. See The Khasis, p 18.
\textsuperscript{9} Gohain; The Hill Lalungs, p. 24
The motifs used for ornamentation in a tagla are culture specific. The motifs taking together were known as the tagla-kanthi. The word kanthi denotes both the pick and the knot. The tagla-kanthi should be called knot instead of calling it as a configuration of different motifs (See Appendix 2 for detail illustration).

A traditional tagla has undergone changes in two stages. The changes were due to the changing perception of the youths around fashion. (Plate-9-iii)

In the first stage of change, the length of the tagla was increased. At this stage, one of the two pieces of tagla was discarded. It became a single piece garment with its front open. Sewing became necessary to make it like that of a jacket.

In the second stage, the length was further extended to make the tagla a jacket proper. Another significant change was noticed in the fabric. Mill-made yams, both acrylic and woolen, purchased from the markets replaced eri and cotton of old days thereby contributing to the extinction of the culture of spinning of eri as well as the cultivation of cotton from the society. However, rearing of eri worm continued for earning cash money. In both the stages of development, the hanging frinzes are made exceedingly shorter or totally discarded.

A tagla is regarded as memento symbolizing the ancestor's soul. Such a tagla is known as khorteng. Sometimes it is observed that a new-born male child creates trouble by crying incessantly refusing breast feeding. Then the parents go to consult the Oja, the magic man, and takes his advice. Generally the advice is always positive around the belief that someone from the dead ancestors is taking rebirth in the new-born baby. The baby may be consoled by allowing him to wear the tagla of someone dead if available in the family. And if not, a new tagla is to be made in the name of the dead ancestor. The tagla used to appease the dead ancestor whose soul is believed to have entered into the body of the baby is known as khorteng. The Tiwas in the plains also profess the same belief in case a new-born
baby who creates trouble by way of crying and refusing sucking mother’s breasts.

**Thana**: The lower garment of a Tiwa male was a piece of long cloth of cotton fabric. Only a few old men are seen to have worn *thana*. The old man (Plate-10) who wears it wraps it round his waist. The cloth is allowed to pass between the legs and coming up behind it wraps round the waist with the end tucked in under the folds at the back. The other end is allowed to hang in front like a small apron. To the young generation of people *thana* as a wear has become a fashion of the past. They are now accustomed to wearing of nondescript garments like shirts and pants bought from the market. But the social custom of the people demands that one must wear *thana* once in his life-time when he will have to discharge his role as *borjela* of the family and propitiate the household deity.

Some old Karbi men also wear a similar garment like the *thana* of the Tiwas. But the piece of cloth a Karbi man wears is extraordinarily narrow and short. The normal length of Tiwa *thana* varies between 338 cm and 346 cm, while the breadth varies between 28 cm to 34 cm or more. The length of the frinze is around 11 and 15 cm. Both the ends of a *thana* are adorned with few strips of coloured threads. *Turumo* is used for ornamentation in the ends of the cloth. *Thin-khadi, khum-khoria* and *dobol* are also used for ornamentation.

*Thenas, pag, phali* and *phalisa* are some other cloths of the males. *Thenas* is a common garment of both male and female. Similarly, *phali* is also a common garment of both male and female. Man wears it as waist-cloth, while the women as a breast cover. *Phalisa* is narrower than the *phali*. *Pag* is an exclusive wear of the males.

The male wears a gorgeous costume on special occasion and in dance recitals and festivals. He attires himself magnificently with a *dhoti* and *tagla*, a waist-bend of *phali* and two pieces of *thenas* the ends of which are tied into knots at the waist level after allowing them to cross each other
while passing over the body. He wears a gorgeous turban adorned with the feathers of the bird *bhimraj*.

**Thenas** : *Thenas* is a long piece of cotton fabric. It is wide and richly embellished with excellent motifs. The decorative patterns which have adorned the cloth are intricate in the level of designing and also in the level of execution. Only the talented women can render the design in the medium of coloured threads. Their talent could be perceived from the dexterity they showed in blending of different motifs into a cohesive configuration. The motifs are *muikuri-muijali, kila-longai, khadisa, thin-khadi, khungrewmo, khaji-haso, thui-par, champui-yasi* and *hadi-pisa* etc. The researcher has come across a piece of *thenas* of old days in the house of Hunki Amchi of Tharakhunji. The piece of cloth carries a significant motif of a *sing-gong*, a mythical animal and a magnificent design called *ramsa-khajari*. (Plate-26.)

A present day *thenas* is around 2m 36 cm long and 57 cm width. The old one which the researcher found in the house of Hunki Amchi was 3m 10 cm long with its breadth in 66 cm. The frinze varies in length from 30 cm to 36 cm. Two or three hanging threads are tied to a knot called *akhra-tusi* (*agara-guti* in Assamese).

*Thenas* is regarded as a status symbol of the wearer. It is obligatory to wear *thenas* in the festivals. Similarly it is obligatory on the part of the dancers to put on the garment. It has been a custom of the Tiwas that the dancers and the traditional functionaries of the village receive at least a single piece of the garment for the festival from both the clans – the clan of their mother and the clan of their father. The number of *thenas* received in this way shows not only the status of the dancer but also the prestige of the families. The women who are engaged in the reception of the guests and others in the festival are required to wear *thenas* besides a *nara* as waist bend.

A boy who accepts to reside with his bride in the parents-in-law’s house is given a piece of *thenas* from the bride’s family. It is obligatory on his part to wear it on his first visit to his parents house. When he moves
on the road with the thenas on his body, people discern it easily that the boy has accepted uxorial residence in his bride’s family.

A thenas is considered sacred and it is used as a cloth to cover the dead body on his last journey. This cloth is never allowed to burn with the dead; it is taken back for preservation. A thenas is also used as a cover of the wine-pots meant for the deities when the family members of the dead go to the house of the phambari (the exorcist) for his advice on the spirit.

All customs associated with the thenas are pointer to the greatness of the cloth as having socio-religious significance.

The researcher has come across a rare mode of wearing of thenas by the fair sex. The style maintained by women in old days is documented here in Plate-12-i&ii. The women is majestically holding the two ends of the garment on the elbow of her left hand. The garment is a single piece of cloth and she allows it to wrap round her waist before the ends are tucked to hold at the elbow.

**Phali**: The Bodos, the Rabhas and the Tiwas have their own tradition of wearing phalis, which serve multi-purpose objectives like the gamocha of the non-tribal Assamese. Phali is a common garment of both male and female among the Tiwas.

The Tiwa males in the plains use a simple phali as loin-cloth to cover the lower part of the body from the waist to the knees. The favourite colour seems to be the green as noticed in Barapujia and Nambor. Workmanship of the weavers in terms of ornamentation is absent.

The hill Tiwa’s conception of phali appears to be different from their brethren in the plains. In old days, the phali was woven in hand-spun cotton. Now-a-days cotton is replaced by acrylic or other variety of yarns.

It is observed in the village Tharakunji in Karbi Anglong that the traditional phalisa are somehow decorated with side and cross-border ornamentations. Hanging frinzes are not added to the cloth although the ends are sufficiently ornamented.
It has been reported that the Tiwa women in the past used *phali* as an upper garment covering the breasts. The cloth was allowed to pass below the armpit on one side and rest at the shoulder on the other after it passed over the breast. Thus the privacy of the upper part of the body of woman was ensured with the mode of wearing of the cloth. *Phali* is also used as a band to keep the turban in position when it grows bigger and bigger as a sequel to winding around several pieces of *thenas* one above the other. It is worthmentioning that there is a custom of giving gifts of *thenas* to the dancers by their clan people. The dancers accept the gifts gladly and wraps round their head each piece of cloth they get in the dancing field.

A variety of *phali* is *phali-re*. *Phali-re* is a warm cloth of 173 cm x 93 cm size. The woman informants of Silaguri village told the researcher that *phali-re* is a garment exclusively for the woman who wears it to prevent cold.

**Phalisa**: *Sa* in Tiwa language denotes small and hence *phalisa* carries the meaning of a narrow piece of cloth. The ends of *phalisa* carry floral decorations as well as the hanging frinze.

The researcher found a *phalisa* of old days in the house of Hunki Amchi of Tharakhunji. The ends of the piece of cloth are magnificently decorated. The ornamentation is significant for it carries the motif of the mythical animal, the *sing-gong*, besides the motif of *hadipisa* and the intricate design of a *plakhum, rath-khum* and *khum-longai* of 6 picks (Plate 17-i).

*Phalisa* as comforter has become a culture specific garment of the tribe. People wear it irrespective of age and status. Plate 18 presents a group of retinues of a king (center), all wearing a comforter around their neck. The colour of each *phalisa* is orange with side and cross-border decorations in red threads. There are hanging threads as frinze at both ends with ornamentation and running lines in coloured threads.

**Re-pron**: *Re* means cloth. *Pron* denotes the variegated patches of colour. *Re-pron* is a stripped cloth. Generally the old men use it like a shawl in winter. Normal size of a *repron* is 204 cm x 108 cm.
**Anthla:** It is a warm cloth used as blanket. Its normal size is 2.70 m x 1.35 m. Formerly, *anthala* was woven of *eri* yarns.

A variety of *anthla* is known as *khamelane-anthla*. *Khamela* denotes the dancer who takes part in *sagra* performance. Two pieces of cloths are stitched to make an *anthla*. Actually *anthla* denotes the meaning of a folded cloth. The fringes of the cloth are adorned with some knots called *kanthi*. The knots keep the rhythm of the dance. Plate-50 presents the clothes to be used as dance costume. The white cloth is a cotton fabric and its size is 2.36 x 1.75m. The ends of the cloth are decorated with *kilalongai*, *tuchi-kanthi*, *khum-thoka* and *tokhra*. The motif called *tokhra* makes a stool for holding other motifs in a design. The red cloth worn by the lad is called *chuphan*. It is used as band over the turban. The cloth is an *endi* fabric coloured in indigenous lac dye. *Khum chatholaya* and *masu-hagam-khum* (grinding tooth of a cow) are used as decorative motifs.

**Jorlang-nara** is another garment which the *sagra*-dancers wear for the disposal of *sagra*. They wear one piece of the cloth as turban and another piece as *lengthi*. Normal size of the cloth used as *phaga* (turban) is 2.80 x 0.35 m.

*Khamelane-anthla*, *chuphan* and *jorlang-nara* bear religious significance.

**Phaga / Paguri:** Generally a piece or more than a single piece of *thenas* can be used to make a turban to wear in dance and festival. But there was another piece of fabric which was exclusively meant for male head-gear in old days. The piece of fabric was called *phaga*. The term *phaga* stands for both the fabric as well as the turban. The hills Tiwas maintain a difference between a *phaga* and *paguri*. A *phaga* is shorter than the cloth used as *paguri*, which requires to be wrapped up in several round.

The people in the hills and their compatriots in the plains differ in their conception regarding the length of the cloth. In the hills, the standard length of *phaga* was said to be 12 *hastas* (approximately 18 feet). But it was 20
hastas in length in the plains. But the researcher has not come across such a long piece of cloth either in the hills or in the plains. The fabric of a phaga is eri dyed in lac.

To the people of the hills, a phaga is a significant cloth in their culture. It is an object of veneration when it is offered to a medicine man in recognition to his service in the field of treatment. The phaga as a symbol of reverence to the superior (in Assamse the practice is called guru-manani) is called kuthi-konang-phaga as the hanging frinzes of the cloth contain knotted threads like some hanging pendants. The greatest significance attached to the cloth was associated with a social custom related to the marriage of the younger boy who tied himself in nuptial knot before his elder brother was yet to marry. According to the custom, the bride of the younger brother would be required to tender apology to the elder brother of the groom with a phaga made by herself.

According to the custom, she herself has to spin cotton for the yarns, dye herself and weave the cloth herself. The researcher found such a piece of cloth being preserved in the house of her informant, Hunki Amchi, at Tharakhunji. A turban of muga fabric was also recovered from her house. However the provenance of the cloth could not be assigned to the hills as muga was not cultured by the hill people. Some one belonging to the family of Amchi imported the cloth from the plains. It may be mentioned here that the Khasis, who were the neighbours of the hill Tiwas, used to import muga cloths from the plains, more particularly from the textile village at Suwalkuchi. The muga fabric stated above carries ornamentation in kip-khum and kiptar at both ends.

Thongali: Thongali is a garment exclusive for the males. It is used as waistband by them on special occasion. It is not known to the plains Tiwas. In Barapujia, some people used a separate piece of cloth called narabandh as waistband. Both male and female use the narabandha. The research has made a significant recovery of two thongalis of old days in Tharakhunji. Plate- 21, presents the bhimraj bird decorating the thongali
at its centre. Plate-13 presents the other piece of the garment with its both ends profusely decorated.

**Kavaca cloth**: The informant of Amswai has let the researcher know that a cloth endowed with magical properties is also known to the Tiwas. The cloth serves the purpose of a charm to the person who wears it. Actually the man, who is commissioned to accomplish the animal sacrifice, wears it. He is called *hadar*. The woman, who is asked to weave the cloth, has to complete the entire process of weaving in a single day. She observes fast while working on the loom. She is remunerated for rendering her service in the loom.

The cloth is 6ft x 2 ft in size. Dr. Majumdar\(^{10}\) has recorded the existence of a similar piece of cloth called *phali-alanga* among the Bodos. The cloth was used by the warrior in the olden days. It was believed to be a protective armour of the warriors. The Ahom historical chronicle has also recorded the existence of armour cloth endowed with charms for the warrior. It is stated in the chronicle that the Ahom commander Chao Frachengmung Borgohain died in a battle he had fought against the Muslim General, Turbak, as his wife, Mula Gabharu, could not weave the cloth for attending the period of unclealiness at that time and provide it to her husband.

3. **Female Dresses**:

Traditional dress of women in the hills consists of a *kasong* and a *phaskai*. But the dress of women in the plains differs from their compatriots in the hills. In the plains their dresses are same as those of their non-tribal neighbours. A pair of garments *riha* and *mekhela* constitute her normal dress. The mode of putting on a *mekhela*, however, differs from the non-tribal neighbour. A woman belonging to the old generation wears a *mekhela* covering her breast stretching below the knee. It is the normal mode of wearing when the woman is busy in household activities and in the field on agricultural activities and fishing. In such cases, the woman generally takes...
another cloth of short dimension to cover the bare part of her body above breast. This piece of cloth also serves her as a veil on her head.

An attempt is made here to enumerate the traditional dress of Tiwa women in the following lines:

**Kasong**: It is a long piece of cloth worn by woman covering her body from breast to the level of the knee calves. It serves the same purpose as does the *mekhela* to a non-tribal Assamese, *pini* to a Karbi woman, *dakhana* to the Bodo and *gaseng* to the Mising.

Although the Tiwas live close to the Karbis in the hills of Karbi Anglong and although *kasong* of the Tiwas and *pini* of the Karbis follow the same basic format, there is a basic difference between the two. While *pini* is a stitch garment of two equal pieces of cloth, *kasong* is a single piece garment without any stitch. Ornamentation is rarely done in a *kasong* in old days, but there should be three strips of *turumo*, which run lengthwise along the warp. The strips at the center of the cloth are three in number. Plate-11-i presents a *kasong* and its mode of wearing, which resembles the one followed by the Synteng women of Meghalaya as documented by Gurdon.\(^\text{11}\) One of the two ends of the cloth is allowed to pass under one armpit to reach the opposite shoulder where a lace holds the border of the cloth lying at the back of the wearer. The other end of the cloth is then wound round the body and fastened at the waist, from which it hangs down to a little above the ankle. The lace which holds the cloth above the shoulder is called *jaskai* by some.

The weavers in the plains, however, have maintained a distinction between *kasong* and *jaskai* as two different garments. The weavers at Barpujia, who have of late popularized hill cloths in the plains, have let the researcher know that a *jaskai* is a cloth double in length than the *kasong*. The piece of *jaskai* demonstrated before the researcher by Renu Pator of Barapujia was 4m x 1.16 m in size. On the other hand, the piece of *kasong* demonstrated before her was 2m and 1.16 m in length and breadth.

\(^{11}\) *The Khasis*, p. 20
respectively. That *kasong* and *jaskai* as two separate garments serving the same purpose are known by the same nomenclatures in the plains.

Jayanti Kholar of Amswai-paro of Karbi Anglong demonstrated a *kasong* of more than hundred years old, the size of which was 2.26 x 0.82 m. It was a black cotton fabric dyed in *nili* dye. It was woven in the floor loom, *kari-sal*, the beating sword being the reed.

**Phaskai:** *Phaskai* is a breast garment, an exclusive wear of woman. It is one of the most colourful garment remarkable for magnificent design made of configuration of different motifs. It is hardly 85cm long with a width of 30cm. Hanging frinzes adorn either ends of the cloth. A Tiwa woman completes her dress with a *phaskai*, which she wears as upper garment.

Like *tagla* of the males and *kasong* of the females, the *phaskai* earns great popularity among the young girls in the plains. Of course, the girls in the plains, wear it on special occasions and at festivals. (Plate-52) Several self-help groups of Barapujia have popularized the cloth in the plains. Few weavers of Na-khola, Jagiroad are also responsible for the popularity earned by some cloths of the hills.

*Re-thad* or the floor loom is used to weave *phaskai* in the hills. The young girls and the weavers feel it comfortable in operating the loom, which they can carry to the fields to use when they find time for rest.

The motifs used to decorate a *phaskai* are many. They are *turumo*, *thin-khadi*, *dobbol*, *thui-par*, *khum-kharia*, *kilalongai*, *muikuri*, *orawpar*, *khangrewmo*, *champui-yasi*, *phutumpar*, *lao-kuthi*, *muria-shokkor*, *khaji-haso*, *phaskai-su* and many more. *Phaskai* combines rare finesse with colourful design of wonderful intricacy.

The resourceful old lady of Tharakhuji, who was none other than Hunki Amchi, showed the researcher two pieces of *phaskai* she had woven at her old age. She told the researcher that the intention of weaving the cloths was to preserve the patterns from being lost.
Nara: Nara is not a waist band, but it serves the same purpose at the loin of the wearer. Like phaskai and kasong, it is a garment exclusively for the fair sex. Nara adds beauty to the loin part. The style of wearing itself adds majesty to the contour in human body.

Nara is not like the wamkok belt of the Karbi women who use it to hold the under garment called pini tightly on the loin.

The usual size of nara in the hills is 2.11 x 0.30 cm. The size varies in the plains and it revolves round 1.65 x 28 cm.

Plate-12-i and Plate 12-ii have been presenting both the front and the back view of the wearer of nara. The normal practice of wearing is that both ends of the cloth are to be brought to the front in such a manner that its central portion lies on the back of the wearer. The ends are tucked to make a cross at the front. Again the ends are allowed to pass on either side of the loin to tie them into a knot at the back.

Like phaskai, nara is another example remarkable for finesse with coloured motifs integrated into wholesome design of great intricacy. The motifs involved in the designs are shuguri-khum, khum-ding, mukhsuwa, kilalongai, khangrewmo, thuipar, khukri-yaphli, khum-thoka, muikhuri, rutha and phairewmo. One artisan informs us that it takes 4 years to complete, for it is woven in the ar field during leisure time.

In the hills, the women wear nara occasionally in the festivals. Occasional use of the garment is one of the causes of diminishing trend in the production of the cloth. Once a piece of the garment is woven, it can be preserved for several years to come. On the other hand, the decreasing trend in production can be attributed also to the intricate designs.

4. Textile tradition and modern dress of the plains Tiwas:

The up-to-date male dress is very much the same as other neighbours who wear shirts and pants made by a tailor. Shirts and pants are available
in the market and one can buy any ready-made garment suited to his style. However, a Tiwa male is often seen wearing a *tiwa-gamocha* as waist-cloth while he is at home or in the fields on agricultural work. His loin-cloth may be a *churiya* with one end of it tucked in behind when he attends a socio-religious congregation held in his village. He may be seen dressed in a *churiya* and a ready-made short-sleeved shirt while he is going to a market or attending a fair held in the countryside. Hence the *churiya* has become a culture specific attire of a Tiwa male in all transactions having socio-cultural relevance in his own village.

The *churiya* is woven of mercerised brand of yarns. It is of the size of 2.40 x 0.90 mts and it covers the waist reaching little below the knee. The cloth is white in colour having been marked with streaks in green or blue at both ends. The texture of the cloth is thick for the density of the picks.

Apart from the *churiya*, the *tiwa-gamocha* is another piece of culture-specific object which is used in multiple ways from wiping the body and face to wearing as waist-cloth. It is little shorter than the *churiya*. It is weaved of coloured threads, however, without harming the monochromatic look.

The third piece of culture-specific cloth is the *phali*, the comforter, weaved of 1 ply *thailand* or acrylic yarns. Its colour is orange with border and cross-border streaks in red. Normal size of a *phali* is 1.45x0.39 mts.

Apart from the *phali*, the Tiwa weavers are fond of weaving *gamocha* of the non-tribal Assamese. Nilamoni Phukan has rightly observed that the *gamocha* is without a second in the repertoire of Assamese textile, which commands respect from all\(^{12}\). An Assamese *gamocha* is woven invariably in white with red as border and cross-borders. The *gamocha* with floral decorations in red is the most honoured piece of cloth for the Assamese.

The Assamese mind has an emotional attachment with red, which lends

\(^{12}\) *Loka-kalpa-dristi*, p. 32
beauty to the tiny and bold floral motifs decorating the gamocha. It is significant to note that the gamocha acquires spiritual significance in its existence as an object of Assamese life and culture.

The modernised tagla of to-day have become popular among the youths and aged alike. But it is not a garment of everyday use. It has been a fashion dress with the males. It is equally significant as a traditional costume, which projects the culture of the tribe. It has been a fashion dress also with the children. The present researcher has come across several such taglas meant for the children in a sales counter of cloths in Barapujia.

The women weavers in the plains are mostly confined to the weaving of cheleng, chadar and mekhela. But there are few localities inhabited by the Tiwas where one or more other varieties of cloths are woven. One such piece of cloth is warm cloth for use in winter as wrapper.

The present day dress of the womenfolk of the plains Tiwas does not differ from other non-tribal Assamese. Therefore, a discussion in respect of the dresses of the non-tribal women who are their neighbours would be rewarding for an understanding in this regard.

The typical dress of the Assamese womenfolk consists of three pieces of cloth – a riha, a chadar and a piece of mekhela.

**Riha**: A folk verse sung by the Tiwas narrates that the skin of a woman is irritating at the contact of the leaves of chorat (Elephant nettle) when she went to the barat festival without covering her body with a riha. Yet another verse relates the bashful wailing of a woman for not having had a riha to cover her body.13

**Riha** is woven out of cotton, eri, pat and muga. The size of a riha is approximately 3.25 x 0.70 mts.14 It is an indispensable attire for a woman when the piece of blouse of today was not known to her. The Tiwas of Bherakuchi laid great emphasis on a riha decorated with the motif of

13. *Barat* is a religious fast. It is celebrated as a colourful festival by the Tiwas of Teteliya, a small province of old days lying adjacent to Dharamtul. The festival is also known as the *Usha-barat*. The song referred to above has a peculiar appeal in its melody.

mogor-phul as an essential piece of cloth for the bride to celebrate her wedding ceremony. Riha as a bridal attire is also indispensable even today among all sections of people of the Assamese society.

Once upon a time the riha woven of cotton was popular as a wear of everyday use among the women in the countryside. But it has lost its old glamour and popularity among most of the women these days.

Now-a-days, the chadar takes the place of riha.

Chadar: A chadar is little shorter than the riha. It is generally woven of fine cotton. A cotton chadar is an everyday wear of womenfolk. It is a white piece of cloth with cross and side borders in coloured threads. A bridal chadar woven of pat and muga are remarkable for profusion of ornamentation in gold threads in the case of pat cloth and coloured threads in the case of muga cloth. Recently chadars with stripes in coloured threads of cotton have appeared in the market. The present researcher has observed such cotton chadar in the market.

Mekhela: Mekhela is the lower garment of women in the Assam plains. Majali-suta, also called japani-suta and pakowa-suta (twisted yarn) and mercerise yarns are used to weave the mekhela of day-to-day use. The bridal mekhela is woven of pat with extraordinary ornamentations in gold threads. Unlike the kasong, the mekhela is a sewn garment. Mekhelas woven of coloured threads are also popular as everyday wears among many women. These are woven out of polyester in the warp and cotton in the weft.

Cheleng: Cheleng is another piece of cloth used by both male and female. Chakathiya cheleng is a name given to a piece of cloth to represent a variety of it. Here the appellation chakathiya denotes a unit of measurement. One kathi denotes the minimum unit measured out of a stick. Like the thenas in the hills, a cheleng in the plains serves the same purpose of showing respect to the dignitaries, the elders and the in-laws.

The need of bar-kapor as wrapper in winter has diminished with the
availability of machine-made shawls which cost less than the handloom product.

Presently almost all weavers are confined to the production of mekhecha-chadar, churiya, tiwa-gamocha and phali in their looms. Weaving of the traditional dresses of the Tiwas have been undertaken by many. The reverence for jaskai, kasong, phaskai, and nara by the Tiwa womenfolk is praiseworthy. It is worthy to note that the young girls could not, however, withstand the charms of churidar-shalwar as their everyday costume.

It has been observed in Barapujia that some of the households have been conducting commercial productions of dresses of both male and female. But there is the problem of man-power for smooth running of the industries. They have solved the problem by engaging non-tribal weavers of nearby villages on wage basis. The wage rate as on 2008 is as follows—

1. Tiwa gamocha Rs. 20.00 per piece
2. Tagla Rs. 75.00 per piece
3. Jaskai Rs. 100.00 per piece
4. Kachang Rs. 60.00 per piece
5. Mekhela Rs. 140.00 per piece

Motifs and designs in Assamese cloths are many and varied in name and form. The floral motif called guna-phutuki is considered, according to Nilamoni Phukan, to be the king of the floral motifs.

There are many floral patterns which are geometric in character. The weaver creates half the pattern first leaving the other half to be done later on by reversing the picks which she has kept with the help of some split sticks in the warp threads. The composition of some motifs is interesting. The composition called bulowa is an example in this regard. It can be otherwise called spotted or speckled method. It is done with coloured threads of two different hues. The butas of variegated hue have been done like some speckled patches on the body of the cloth or elsewhere in limited
space. Actually when the centre in a motif is patterned with a different colour, the emerging form is said to have done in accordance with the principle of *bulowa*. It is known as *polewa* in the tradition of the hill Tiwas.

It has been a common practice both with the weavers of the hills and the plains that many compositions are done by setting the figures vertically and also along horizontal progression. Another practice is guarding of motifs by cross-border streaks of coloured threads. In the plains, it is mostly done by meandering vines of flower. It is called *porbati* (also pronounced as *parbati*). The appellation *porbati* has been taken from *porbat* meaning the hill. The *porbati* design looks like the arrangement of peaks in a row. In the hill tradition of weaving, the coloured streaks are called *tokhra* meaning a sitting stool for the motifs. *Tokhras* are also used as dividers between different colours.

It is absurd to find that most of the weavers in the plains do not know the names of the floral motifs with which they have been working. Dr. Majumdar\(^\text{16}\) has made a commendable work by recovering the names of a good number of motifs. *Bakul* (*Mimusops elengi*), *babari* (*Annual chrysanthemum*), *champa* (*michelia champaca*), *gutimali* (jasmine), *nahar* (*Mesua ferrea*), *aou-pul* (flower of *Dillenia indica*), *padum* (lotus), *golap* (rose) and *era-pat* (castor-leaf) are some of the names of motifs. There are some running motifs called *lata* meaning creeper. The creepers are named after the number of picks called *kathi* involved in the pattern. For example, *chata-kathir-lata*, *nata-kathir-lata*, *egharo-kathir-lata* have picks of six, nine and eleven respectively. Bird and animal motifs are also varied and many in name and form. Fish, lion, tiger, elephant, horse, deer, dog, goat etc. have formal expressions in cloth in highly stylized form. Peahen and swan are two bird motifs which draw attraction of the beholders. There are several structural motifs like the hand-fan, sickle, bracelet called *gāmkharu*, *letai-chereki* (weaving implements), *sarai*, *ghoti* and others which are derived from artifacts and objects of everyday use. "*Kech* is another mode of

\(^{16}\) Her unpublished thesis.
ornamentation indigenous to Assam. The coloured compact plain cross border (on ribbed effect) is called *dobua* whereas the bands of geometric arrangements of lines, bars in contrasting colour along with *dobua* is called *kech*. The *dobua* and *kech* as indigenous modes of ornamentation are probably adopted from tribal designs done on the loin loom.”

Some of the motifs mentioned above have their parallels in different textile tradition of the tribes of the hills and plains of Assam. I have mentioned few and their existence in both tribal and non-tribal tradition in this book on the chapter on motifs and designs.

The present tendency for ornamentation on cloth is for the liberal use of innovative designs which are mainly flowing and meandering along a vertical plan. The overall aesthetics is agitation on the surface of the cloth. But one must appreciate the imagination and innovative dexterity displayed by the designers on Jacquard loom.

5. Dance costumes:

*Sagramisawa* is the major dance form of some of the clans residing in the hills of Karbi Anglong. *Misawa* means dance and hence, *sagramisawa* denotes the *sagra* dance. Amswaiparo and Bar Marjong are two major villages where the dance festival is celebrated with pomps and glory. Both the villages have retained the customs of old days in holding the *sagra*. Other villages where it is held cannot be said to have maintained the old tradition without any deviation.

The *sagra* festival is held every year in the last part of February or the early part of March just on the eve of the commencement of agricultural activities. Only after holding the festival, the villagers can go to their field for ploughing. There are some rigorous taboos to be observed by the people during the period of the festival which continues for four days. The

17. Dr. Majumdar: op.cit, p.149
18. The authors of the *Lelung Society* have spelt the word as *Sagramechewa*, p.-141 and several other pages.
Taboos are many and extensive. Weaving is one of the taboos which forbids one from looming and weaving.\textsuperscript{19} The entire festival is known as the \textit{Nashuni-ne-nem} (rules of worshipping Nashuni). Nashumi is the tutelary goddess of the \textit{madar} clan.

Origin of the \textit{sagra} dance is associated with local divinity.

In old days, the Tiwas did not have cloths to wear. They wore plaintain leaf to protect their modesty (The practice may be a pointer to the vegetable source of cloth in the primitive society). The \textit{than} god, Pala Khongor of Amswai gave them clothes and taught them singing and dancing. Since then four among the dancers in \textit{sagra} cover their body from head to toe with plantain robe (Plate-47). The reason behind it may be the reminiscence of the past. It is also believed that the robe could dispel the effect of evil eye.

Sagra is the name of a clan. One day an orphan of the \textit{sagra} clan was wandering in the wilderness in search of something to eat to quell his hunger. All on a sudden, he saw that the gods were dancing in the thickets. He was dumb founded at the sight. At once he took refuge in a cavity of a tree. The gods at play sensed the presence of human being. They searched for him and found him in his hiding place. They asked him not to be afraid of and told him that they were pleased with him to grant him a boon. The boon was none other than the dance itself. Suddenly the gods disappeared from his sight. After a few while, the boy saw a bunch of flower was floating in the sky. He then outstretched a white cloth with his both hands and prayed the gods to let the bunch of flower fall down on the cloth. It fell down instantly on the outspread cloth. The boy took it

\textsuperscript{19}. See Shyamchaudhury and Das: \textit{The Lalung Society}, pp. 146-147. The authors have mentioned 15 taboos to be observed by each and every household. There are several other taboos which the authors do not mention. For example, blood of fish or animal must not fall on the ground during the days of the festival. The taboo suggests that eating of fish and meat is prohibited. However, there is liberty to eat both if the fish or the animal is cut to pieces in another village. One of the rigorous taboos is related to the principal dancers, the Tengore, Mudi Mosowa and Mudi Muslung, who are debarred from leaving the dancing arena on all days and nights of the festival. They are fed everything by the attendants engaged in the festival to serve the dancers. The attendants are called \textit{re-bhari} (\textit{re} = cloth, \textit{bhari} = the porter).
to the elders of his village and reproduced before them everything what had happened to him in the wilderness. The elders after a deliberation on the event decided to organize the festival in the name of *sagra*. They enacted the dance as it was imparted to the boy by the gods. The village elders organised the clans living in the village with each clan having its own part to play in the festival. Accordingly, the office of the Loro (who was responsible for regulating different religious practices and rituals) was given to the Kholar clan. Other responsibilities of the village organization were assigned to different clans.

Another traditional lore relates that the Tiwas did not know how to sing and dance. One day, a man was pondering over it. All on a sudden, his eyes were drawn to a fight fought between two peahen. He noticed that the peacock tried its best to quell the fight. He discovered grace of a dance in the fight and decided to dance accordingly. He went to a pond and stood on its bank and gratified the god with his worship. The god gave him the dance jacket, probably the *tagla*. But the man had no garment to cover the lower part of his body. He then picked up a plantain leaf and wound around his waist. Since then the people used to wear plantain leaf in *sagra*. The above lore is significant for it presents the world view of a tribe and the aesthetic sensibilities of the people.

All lads of the *panthai-khel* of a *samadi* take part in the dance. The major dancers are known by different names:

1. **Pura**: He is the group leader.
2. **Mos**: It means an antelope. He holds a bamboo contrivance looking like the antelope’s horn.
3. **Tengoriya**: He fastens *thenas* in both the arms. Each *thenas* is tucked to a knot with which he not only keeps rhythm in dance
but also strikes other dancers who are slow in keeping the tempo of the dance.

4. Mudi Mosowa: He wears a black re-sangar in Bar Marjong.

5. Mudi Muslung: The player wears a white re-sangar in Bar Marjong and appears in the arena like that of a female. Mudi Muslung represents the Nashuni.

6. Lai 4: The number of lai is four. Lai means leaf and the boys who play the part of lai wear plantain leaf covering the entire body from head to toe. The plantain leaf is a reminiscence of the past.

In Bar Marjong, the leaders of the samadi, viz. 2 surumas, 1 kraikhura and 1 khurasa take the roles of lai.

But in Amswaiparo, the roles are played by one member selected from four different clans. The selection of the clans are made by rotation method.

7. Instrumentalists: (i) 2 drummers, (ii) 2 flute players, (iii) 2 thurang players. Thurang is a peculiar wind instrument having only two holes. It is made of dolau-bah.

Other lads of the panthai-khel also take part in the dance.

The tengoriya or the tengore, mudi-mosowa and mudi-muslung are three major players in a sagra. They wear khum-khadi atop the turbans. It is believed that the khum-khadi was a god’s gift. In order to keep the religious sanctity of the dance, the three actors are not allowed to go home or leave the dancing arena during the days of the festival. There are rebharis or attendants to take care of them and feed them in the acting arena itself.

An attempt is made in the following lines to illustrate the personal decorations of the principal characters. The khum-khadi which they wear is a bunch of flower made artificially. In Amswai, the flowers are made of
the pulp of an aquatic grass. In Marjong, each bunch of flower is made of *kuhila* (India cork plant). Artificial flowers made as above are fastened to three sticks, each stick carrying four pieces of it. The *tengoriya* wears fifteen flowers in his *khum-khadi* (*khum* denotes the meaning of flower and *khadi*, the stick). The players who wear *khum-khadi* are known as *khamela*. The *tengoriya*, *mudi-mosowa* and *mudi-muslung* are the *khamelas* in the dance. They constitute the trinity of center figures in the performance.

The leader of the group is known by the term *pura* (*burha* in Assamese, its English equivalent is senior or the leader). His headgear is adorned with a tuft of flower made of the flowers of pin-reed-grass (*bor kuhila*) presents him with the *tengoriya* who is seen with a *thenas* fastened in his fore-arms. (Plate-46). The tuft of flower adorning the head of the *pura* is an imitation of the tuft of flower received by the orphan as god’s gift. The fabric used to make his headgear and the *khamelas* in Amswai is a red piece of cloth called *chuphan*. But the headgear bears the nomenclature of *phaga yaci* for the reason that the turban (*phaga*) is made of a short (*yaci*) piece of cloth. Beneath the turban, they take another piece of white cloth known as *anthla* (meaning big) or *khamelane-anthla* (big cloth worn by the *khamela*, the dancer) Plate-50.

Lower garment of the *pura* and the *khamelas* is a *dhoti* and their upper garment is a *tagla*. They wear two pieces of *thenas* making a cross at the chest. Another piece of *thenas* is used as waist-belt. The *pura* wears a *kamcha* (*gamocha*) as an additional waist-belt. He is holding a bamboo stick with his both hands. The stick is fastened to two cords drawn from the turban. The cords protect the turban from falling from the head. The headgear of other dancers in Marjong is different (Plate-48). A red *thenas* is used to make the headgear. The difference is maintained also in the style of wearing. In this style, the frinzes are allowed to pass through the turban.
so that the yarns dangle loosely in front (Plate-45). In Amswai, both ends of the red cloth used to make the *phaga-yaci* are tied to a knot just at the back of the neck and allowed to dangle behind the back. Sometimes the other dancers wear a *thana* to cover their private parts. The drummers wear is a *kamcha* as the lower garment.

It is stated above that the *mudi mosowa* and the *mudi muslung* of Bar Marjong wear a cloth known as *re-sangar*. *Re* means cloth, while the *sangar* carries the sense of essence. Actually the essence of devotion of the people is attached to its weaving.

The *re-sangar* is of two varieties, one black and the other white. It is woven out of hand-spun cotton. The weaving process of the cloth is in fact significant. Both the cloths are woven out of yarns contributed by each household of the *madar* clan. It does not matter, where the members of the clan live. But each household must come with a skein of home-spun cotton yarn to the village, Bar Marjong, and deposit it for making the cloth. In this way, the required quantity of yarns are collected every time when the need arises to make a new cloth. Thereafter, a day is fixed for weaving the cloth in a secluded place lying in a hill which stands quite at a distance outside the village. *Re-sangar* is conspicuous by its absence in Amswai *sagra*.

The people have displayed extraordinary devotion mainly to three objects – the *re-sangar*, *khum-khadi* and *lai* (plantain leaf). The *re-sangar* is kept in a basket with care and devotion. The basket containing the cloth is taken to the residence of the *hadari* for preservation. It is forbidden to open the basket during the intervening period before the next festival. The *khum-khadi* and the *lai* are taken to the *samadi* and kept there for seven days till next Monday when these are taken to a hillock in order to dispose. The disposal is done by fastening the objects in the tree-twigs.
Dhuti, tagla, thenas and paguri (turban) are common costumes of different dance, viz. yangli, wanchuwa and kheljawa etc. There is no specific costume for phuja misawa. The dancers appear in their garments of daily use.

Mainari kanthi is one kind of dance in which both boys and girls take part. It is held in Magro village in Meghalaya. The male dancers wear dhuti, thenas, tagla and paguri. The costume of female dancers consists of kasong, thenas, phaskai and nara.

The people of Amswaiparo celebrate a festival of fan in the month of Kati. Mahadeva, Pala Khongor, Basumati and the tiger are propitiated with sacrifice of fowl. Each dancer holds a hand-fan made of split bamboo. The patterns of muikuri and kilalongai have been transferred to decorate the hand-fans (Plate-31-i). The patterns are also transferred to mat. It shows that there is inter-dependence between bamboo craft and handloom.