

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CUSTOMS OF TRIBAL PEOPLE OF DIMORIA TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT BLOCK

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter an attempt has been made to highlight the social structure and customs of the tribal people of Dimoria. Various types of religion and social tribal cultures practised by the tribal people stand in the way of economic progress of the region. In the following sections, the traditional cultures and religious festivals observed by the tribal people of Dimoria have been discussed.

4.1 RELIGION

The religious philosophy of tribal people is based on mainly 'animism'. Animism is that 'crude' form of religion in which magic is the predominant element.¹

Lord Siva is worshipped by Tiwa and Bodo as their sole God. Infact, Sivaism and Saktism including Tantrism have strong roots here from the past. So, it can be said that tribal people of Dimoria are practically Hindu by religion. It is well known that Hinduism is a product of many cultures. On the otherhand, there are a small number of Garo villages, which belong to Christian community except the Sonapur Baragharria village. The Karbi is the most superstitious tribe of all. Therefore, the tribe is known as Deopujak.²

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1. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Raj, B.K. (1977) : "The Tribal Culture of India", Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, p. 237.
 2. Teron, L. (1974) : "Karbi Janagosthi", General Secretary, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Chandra Kanta Handique Bhavan, Jorhat, Assam, Chapter IV, p. 47.
Deopujak, i.e. Demon-worshipper (animist.)

The religion at present followed by the Bodos is rather a mixture of their traditional religion and Hinduism.³

4.2 LANGUAGE

Most of the tribes of this area are bi-lingual in the sense that they speak the tribal dialect at home and the local dialect outside their homes for communication with the non-tribal people.

4.3 MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Marriage system is in vogue among the tribal people of Dimoria, but their system of marriage is different from that of non-tribal people. The system of marriage practised by the tribal people is of eight types. These are —

- (1) Marriage according to standard practice
- (2) Marriage by elopement
- (3) Gharjia system of marriage
- (4) Widow marriage
- (5) Forcible marriage
- (6) Joron Biyã
- (7) Sudden marriage
- (8) Marriage by arecanut and betel leaves

The first four types of marriages as mentioned above from 1 to 4 are common among all the tribes Bodo, Karbi, Tiwa, Hindu Garo, Christian Garo and Rabha. Forcible marriage, Joron Biyã and sudden marriage are

3. Bordoloi, B.N., Sarmah Thakur, G.C. and Saikia, M.C. (1987) : "Tribes of Assam", The Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, p. 8.

practised only in Tiwa society. Although the Lalung population of the present day society practise the traditional Hindu marriage, forcible marriage and elopement form of marriage are very common in Tiwa society.⁴

Marriage by arecanut and betel leaves is performed only by Rabha tribe.

4.3.1 Marriage According to Standard Practice

When a son of a tribal family attains a marriageable age (i.e. fifteen to twenty years) his parents select a suitable bride for their son. After making a final choice of the bride, a formal proposal is generally sent to the parents of the bride along with some items of commodities like rice, liquor, betel-nuts, cakes and pig. If the items offered to them are accepted, then the proposal is considered to be favourably accepted and there after a final date of marriage is fixed by both the parties. After fixation of the final date between the two parties the actual marriage takes place.

On the day of marriage, the guests and relatives bring a Tikili (one kind of earthen vessel) of Har⁵ and Phak (pig). In the evening the bride-groom along with his friends, relatives, co-villagers proceeds to the bride's house. In the Bodo society, the bride-groom party consists of Barlangphā (two young persons), two Barjus (four girls) and Gidakharu (two aged women) who perform dance ceremony at the bride's house.⁶

4. Baruah, A.K. (1989) : "The Lalungs", The Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, p. 30.

5. Har is one kind of wine brewed with new sali rice.

6. Brahma, K. (1989) : "Aspects of Social Customs of the Bodos", Chiranjib Brahma, Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar, Assam, Chapter II, p. 27.

The bride-groom party also carries Bhār (a kind of basket with cover and full of goods) of cowherd (Garakhiābhār), thirty bottle of Ālāngāhar⁷ five kilogram of Chāng (husked rice) and nine big Ākchināris (dry fish) and other items to the bride's house. A good reception is arranged on the day of marriage with pork, rice beer, arecanut and betel leaves for the guests and relatives.

4.3.2 Marriage by Elopement

Marriage by elopement is another type of marriage which is widely prevalent among the tribal people of Dimoria. The young couple occasionally take the decision of marriage, ignoring the wishes of their parents. Such a type of marriage is performed by the villagers headed by Kāthār (priest) on special request of bride-groom's parents. The priest performs the purification of rituals. A feast is immediately arranged with sufficient amount of wine and pork. But in Christian Garo Society, the system of marriage is different. The eloping couple have to confess their crimes in the name of God, in the Church. After the confession, the priest or Palok registers their marriage. The mutual understanding between the bride and the bride-groom is enough for this type of marriage.

4.3.3 Gharjiya System of Marriage

This is also an irregular system of marriage, the bride-groom lives in the house of the bride. The father of the bride has to pay a fine comprising of pig, wine and a sum of money to the parents of the

7. Ālāngāhar is one important variety of the fermented drink of Karbi.

bride-groom. This type of marriage is highly popular among the Tiwa society of Dimoria. The parents of the bride observe this system of marriage in which a feast is offered to the villagers.

4.3.4 Widow marriage

This type of marriage is prevalent among the tribal people of Bodo, Hindu Garo and Christian Garo. In this system of marriage, the bride is a widow. Like the marriage by elopement in this marriage also, a big feast is arranged for the villagers. In the Christian Garo society, a widow may remarry only with that person who belongs to the member of her deceased husband's family.

4.3.5 Forcible marriage

This type of marriage is confined only to the Tiwa society of Dimoria. According to this system of marriage, the bride is forcefully taken away from the house of the bride to the house of the bride-groom and the marriage is solemnised. It is not a socially approved system of marriage in the present Tiwa society. As a punishment of taking away the girl forcefully, the boy's family has to pay a fine an amount of money with rice beer, rice, betel leaves and nuts.

4.3.6 Joron Biyā

Generally persons of low income group of Tiwa society take resort to this type of marriage. The father or the guardian of prospective groom meets the father or guardian of the prospective bride and discusses about the marriage. When both the parties agree, a date is

fixed for the 'Joron' ceremony.⁸ On the agreed date the bride-groom party arrives at bride's house. After receiving the groom party in the bride's house, the groom party offers dresses and ornaments to the girl's father. The bride is taken out to that place where the elderly villagers are sitting. The father of the girl gives her dresses and ornaments which are offered by groom party. The girl bows before the elders who bless her. After that the girl's father entertains the villagers with rice beer. The boy's party leaves the girl's house along with the bride. With this, the Joron Biyā comes to an end.

4.3.7 Sudden marriage

This type of marriage is only prevalent among the Tiwa society of Dimoria. If a girl wants to marry with a dishonest boy, the parents of the girl immediately arrange for the marriage of the girl with that of other one. There are no special laws of this type of marriage. The villagers are only served with wine on the occasion of marriage.

4.3.8 Marriage by arecanut and betel leaves

This type of marriage is in vogue only in Rabha society. The people who live from hand to mouth observe such type of marriage ceremony entertaining the villagers with arecanut and betel leaves.

4.4. DIVORCE SYSTEM

Divorce system is possible only in the Bodo and the Karbi society. In Bodo society, if a couple desires to divorce on mutual under-

8. Sarmah Thakur, G.C. (1985) : "The Lalungs (Tiwas)", The Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, Chapter IV, p. 47.

standing, then it is performed by tearing betel leaves. If the husband divorces his wife without any reasonable ground then he has to bear the responsibility of her livelihood forever.⁹ The village old man who is known as Gaonburāh, performs the issue of divorce on the consent of the couple. In presence of the village elders a 'Pan-leaf' (betel leaf) is torn in two pieces which is called Pān-cirā. It is a symbolic act which indicates that torn leaf can never reunite, so their marriage is severed forever.

The structural relationship in Karbi society is so strong that divorce hardly takes place in their society. Moreover divorce is so heavy that only a few people can bear the burden of divorce. So, divorce hardly takes place in Karbi society.

4.5 DEATH RITUAL

On the death of a person, the dead body is washed and cleared with water and thereafter new clothes are tied on the body. The near and dear ones and relatives offer rice and some favourite items of food and wine to the deceased. Thereafter the deceased is then placed on Sāngrā (a kind of trellis made of raw bamboos) or Āmahāng Kibi.¹⁰ In Bodo and Rabha society, the son of the deceased performs the functions of Mukhangni,¹¹ but in Karbi and Tiwa society two selected Gaonburāhs (village old men) perform these functions and in Hindu Garo society

9. Brahma, K. (1989) : "Aspects of Social Customs of the Bodos", Chiranjib Brahma, Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar, Assam, Chapter II, pp.39-40

10. Āmahāng Kibi is one kind of trellis, specially made for the deceased is highly decorative and expensive (of Karbi).

11. Mukhangni is a ceremony of putting fire on the face of the corpse before lighting the funeral pile.

Kāthār (Priest) performs the functions of Mukhangni. After cremation is over (especially in Bodo society) the people spread mustard-seeds, cereals, sesamum on cremation ground. Karbi people pour Lāngpāng¹² of Har on the heap of ashes.

4.5.1 Lang-e Kisun

The Lang-e Kisun¹³ is the next rite associated with the death ceremony of Karbi tribe of Dimoria tribal block. Erection of rough hewn (cut in to pieces) stones are very common in the Karbi villages of Dimoria area. These stones can rightly be termed as memorial stones, raised in honour of the departed soul. These memorial stones are popularly termed as Lang-e. There is a flate table stone in front of each Lang-e, it is known as Jamā Chenge which is supported by two stones called Ākeng or Adal. The raising of Lang-e is always associated with the different rites and they are termed as the Lang-e Kisun. The place where the memorial stones are raised is designated as the Lang-e-āri.

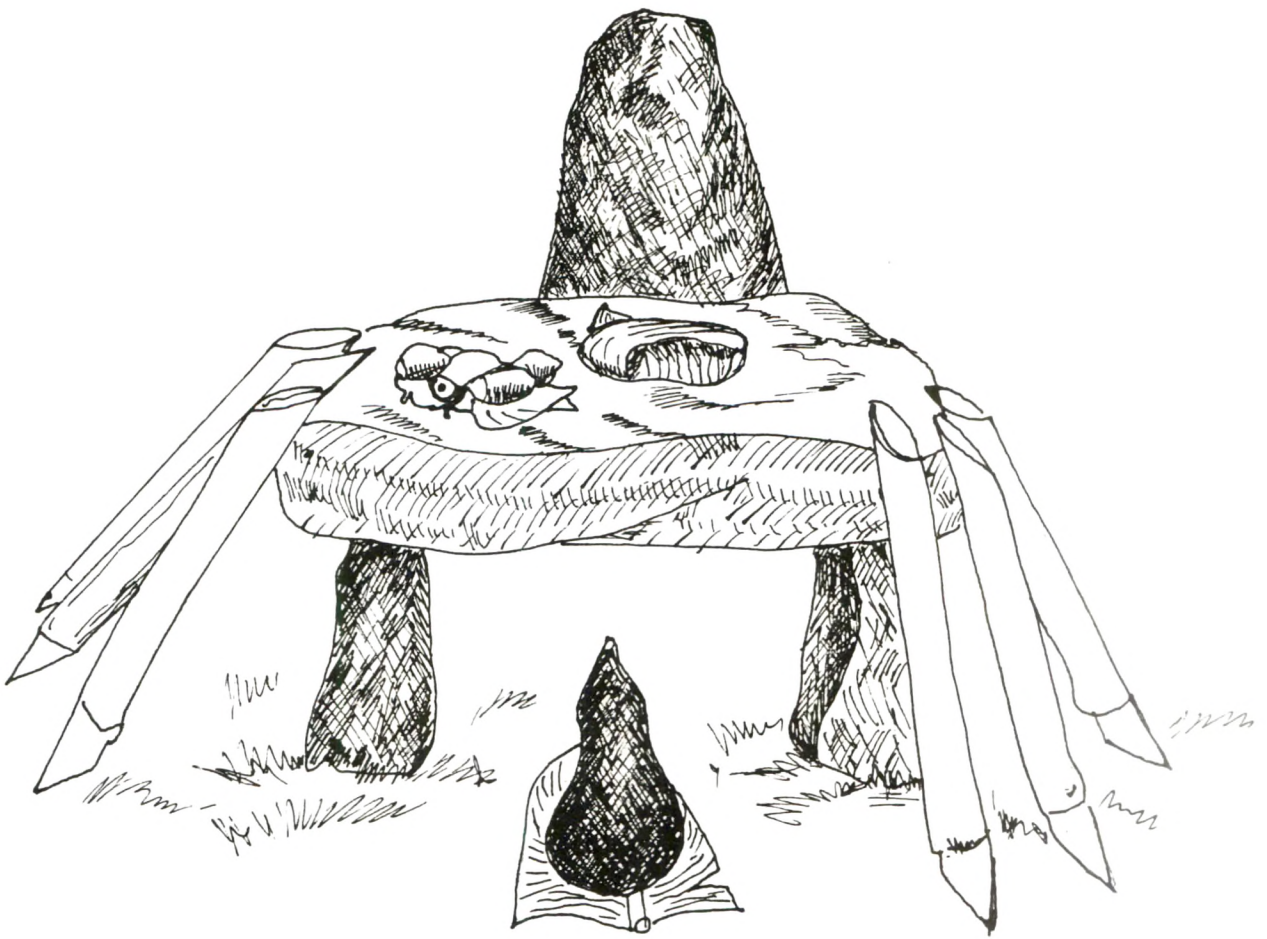
At the end of the cremation of the deceased the men folk except the old, proceed to raise a Lang-e in the memory of the departed soul. Firstly, they collect a stone and wash it and pour a Bang¹⁴ of Āpa-āhar¹⁵ on the stone. Then the purified stone is erected at the Lang-e āri. After its erection, different articles are placed on the Jamāchenge and offered to the deceased. Among the articles, Har is essential.

12. Lāngpāng appears to be a glass. It is made out of bamboo. It is used generally in the occasion of festival of Karbi.

13. Lang-e Kisun : The term Lang-e suggests the meaning of a stone and the term Kisun indicates the sense of digging of soil.

14. Bang is an important utensil. It is essential in religious contexts. It is made out of bitter gourd.

15. Āpa-āhar is a third variety of fermented drink of Karbi people.



SKETCH - I
LANG-E-KISUN

4.5.2 The sraddha ceremony

It is the last ritual associated with death. This ceremony takes place after three days or a month or even after a year. The correct date is generally fixed depending on the economic factors of the family. The sraddha ceremony of the Tiwas is called "Karom".¹⁶ On the day of this ceremony, the villagers are entertained with big feast serving items like pig, meat, rice beer and rice. At first, these articles are offered in the name of deceased. The Karbi people offer these articles to the departed soul at that place where the stone is erected.

But the death ritual of Christian Garo is completely different from other sub-tribes. On the death of a person the villagers proceed to the house of the deceased. Some villagers go to the burial ground in order to dig a big hole. They also make a big wooden box to put the corpse with new garments and the people offer prayer in the name of God. After placing the dead body into the box, the cover is closed. Then the box is carried by the villagers to the burial ground, where the box is placed into the hole and finally the hole is covered with soils. Many articles and flowers are generally offered to the deceased in the name of God.

On every X-mass day and Good Friday, candles and incense sticks are lighted on the grave of the deceased. The Christian Garos do not observe the Sraddha ceremony.

16. Deuri, M. (1983) : "Tiwa Samaj", Assam Sahitya Sabha, Chandrakanta Handique Bhavan, Jorhat, Chapter III, p. 73.

4.6 BIRTH RITUAL

Every tribe of Dimoria Block observes the birth ritual. But the birth rituals of Karbi and Tiwa are very attractive but highly expensive.

On the birth of a child in a family, a priest is invited to perform the birth ritual. On that auspicious occasion, the hair cutting ceremony of the child is observed. The priest is entertained with new clothes, rupees, wine, arecanuts, betel leaves and rice. On this occasion a feast is arranged where large quantity of rice beer, pork and rice are offered to the villagers, relatives and friends.

4.6.1 Birth ritual of Karbi people

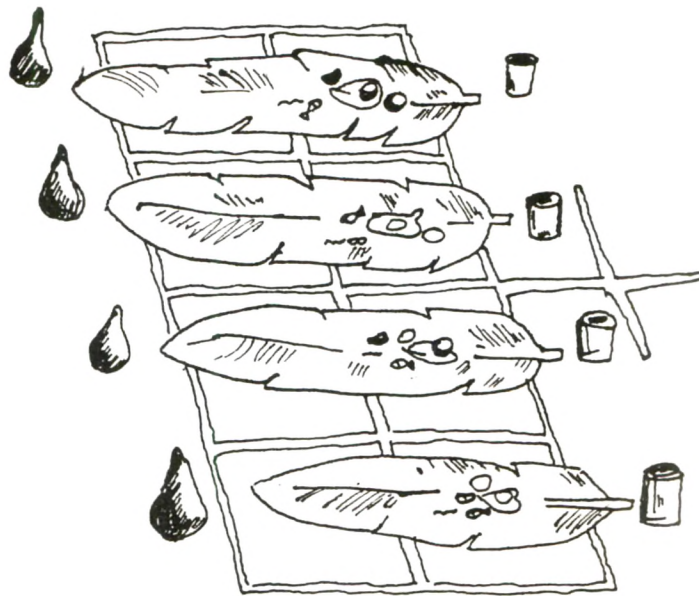
This ritual is performed by the priest in the courtyard. The priest first takes the Langpang of Apa-ahar in his hands and begins to recite incantations and pours the Har on the Alanala¹⁷ thrice. After that fowls are sacrificed one after another. These fowls are cut into pieces and few pieces of chopped meats are kept on the Alanala. The same process is then repeated with the Bangs of Alangahar. Then the ear of black dog (only the tip) is cut off and placed on the Alanala. A drop of blood mixed with a drop of Alangahar is dropped in the tongue of the new born baby.

4.6.1(A) Amen Kibi (Name Giving Ceremony in Karbi society)

A week prior to the ceremony the women folk brew Akithé-Mathis¹⁸ of Har. Besides, about four liters of Alangahar are also kept away separately in different Bang for the ritual.

17. Alanala, i.e. forefront of a plantain leaf.

18. Akithé-Mathis is a large earthen vessel.



SKETCH - II
AMEN KIBI RITUAL

On the auspicious day, the father of the newly born child invite the Kathar (priest) by offering a Bang or Alangahar along with Arkeng¹⁹ and Bithi.²⁰ on the arrival of the Kathar, he is offered a seat specially kept for him (a seat of deer skin). A Langpang of Alangahar is offered to the Kathar and he is requested to perform the ritual.

THE RITUAL

First the biggest fowl is sacrificed in the courtyard and kept aside for Kathar. Ritual begins in the Munpearri.²¹ The priest takes the Langpang of Alangahar and recite incantations and pours a little Har on the Phu-u.²² Then three fowls are sacrificed one after another. Few pieces of meat are kept on four pieces of Phu-u. The same process is repeated with the Bangs.

While the ritual is finished the guests and relatives are entertained with Apa-ahar. The name of the newly born baby is suggested by the guests and relatives. All the audiences are entertained with feast. Bang of Alangahar is sent to Kathar's house and is known as Katharaham bhar.

4.6.2 Birth ritual of Tiwa people

In Tiwa society also, a folk of women come to that house where the child is born. They enjoy a feast, cutting hen or cock in the name of new born baby. To purify the members of the family, the following

19. Arkeng, i.e. arecanut

20. Bithi i.e. betel leaves

21. Munpearri is the main house of Karbi

22. Phu-u i.e. leaves of plantain tree

items are arranged – (i) eight cocks, (ii) forepart of the plantain leaf, (iii) leaves of basil plant, (iv) prasad i.e. food offered to a deity, (v) arecanut and betel leaves. Collecting these articles, purifying water is sprinkling. Finishing these works, the villagers are entertained with feast.

4.6.2(A) Name giving ceremony of Tiwa society

In order to observe the name giving ceremony in Tiwa society, the parents of new born baby arrange 14 pieces of garlic, a cup of wine and one forepart of plantain leaf. If the baby is male, the village head (Gaonburah) gives spittle on the mouth of the baby, chewing one garlic and suggests the name. If the baby is female, the women (who cut the navel cord of the child) chewing one garlic and suggests the name of the baby.

4.7 FESTIVALS

Most of the festivals observed by the different sub-tribes of the block are more or less similar. But the ritual of every festival is different. But in all festivals, animals and birds are sacrificed in the name of God and sufficient quantity of wine is used for observing those festivals. Without wine these festivals can not be performed. The use of rice beer during the celebration of the community festivals is indispensable. Rice beer is also needed by the tribal communities for the performance of traditional religious rites.²³

23. Sarmah Thakur, G.C. and Saikia, M.C. (1984) : "Report on the impact of enforcing liquor prohibition among the Bodo-Kacharis in a rural setting : A case study", in "Bulletin" (ed.) Bordoloi B.N. Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, Volume I, No. II, p. 1.

Like the caste Hindu Assamese people, all the tribes observe Kati Bihu, Magh Bihu and Rongali Bihu. Besides observing the Bihu festivals the tribal people of Dimoria observe different kinds of festivals at different seasons.

4.7.1 Festivals of Bodo People

The Bodo-Kachari observes their festivals in three ways. They are viz. Bihu festival, Marriage festival and Religious festival.²⁴

4.7.1(A) Kherāi Puja

Kherāi is the oldest Bodo-Kachari festival and had been their only community festival for a pretty long time.²⁵ The main purpose of Kherāi puja is the welfare of the people and sometimes it is observed for good harvest of crops. This puja is highly expensive and decorative

The altar for Kherāi is prepared in a square elevated altar with a 5/6 feet long and half a feet wide tiny spur like structure projected in the south west direction. The altar is fenced with split bamboo pieces, eighteen vertical and ten horizontal.²⁶ The Bodos have no temples. Generally, one courtyard is selected for making an altar for the Kherāi puja. The Siju tree is planted before the altar. The Siju tree is considered by the Bodos as a symbol of Siva.²⁷ Under the Siju tree, an earthen lamp is lighted. In the name of God Bāthow-Borāi (the

24. Narzi, B. (1983) : "Boro Kacharir Git-Mat", Assam Prakashana Parishad, Guwahati, Chapter 1, p. 1.

25. Choudhury, M. (1988) : "The Boro-Dimasas of Assam", The Director, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, p. 53.

26. Ibid., pp. 53-54.

27. Narzi, B. (1957) : "Boro Kacharir Jana Sahitya", Promod Chandra Bhattacharya, Guwahati, Assam, p. 5.

Lord Siva) twelve red cocks are sacrificed. Ten fowls are dedicated to God Bāthow-Borāi. On the occasion of the puja, a feast is arranged for the villagers.

4.7.1(B) Baisāgu

The new year festival which is termed as 'Baisāgu' is observed by the Bodos. On the last of Chaitra, the Bodo women clean their houses with fresh water and rub the yards with cowdung mixed with mud. Cows are smeared with a black substance prepared from a mixture of mustard oil and carbon that sticks to the cooking pots. After smearing the horns and hoofs with the mixture of mustard oil, the cows are washed with water either in rivers or ponds and let loose in the field. On the first day of new year the youngers bow down at the feet of elders who bless them in return, youngers present newly woven towels or Gamosha. Having finished the traditional rituals, all the members of the family bow down before Bāthow and offer chicken and rice beer to Him (Bāthow-Borāi). After the worship, all members start drinking (their national beverage). During the festival, the youngers collect donations by singing and dancing from door to door till the festival is over. The festival concludes with a community feast on the seventh day of the new year.

4.7.1(C) Paddy Plantation Festival

Paddy plantation festival is performed with some rites. The guardian of the family, generally the elderly female member offers a pair of arecanut, betel leaves and Naibedya (Mug, Gram, Banana etc.) in

the name of the Goddess Lakshmi. Then other members of the family start plantation saluting the Goddess of wealth.

4.7.1(D) Harvesting Festival

At the time of harvesting, when paddy becomes ripe, on a fine Thursday a virgin goes to the paddy field and lights an earthen lamp in the field and offers a pair of arecanuts and betel leaves in the name of Goddess Lakshmi. She brings home three branches of paddy reaping with a sickle. These small quantity of paddy is kept inside the Bākhri²⁸ of paddy. On that occasion they sacrifice one white hen in the name of Goddess Lakshmi and one black hen in the name of Kubir (one kind of God of Bodo). This puja is called Bharāl puja by the Bodos.

4.7.2 Festivals of Karbi Society

Like the other counterparts of Assam, the Karbis also observe the Bihu festival which they call Damāhi. The spring time Damāhi is known as Ākethe Damāhi. The Magh Bihu or winter Bihu held in mid January is called Damāhi Hanjeng.

4.7.2(A) Ākethe Damāhi

The Ākethe Damāhi is celebrated from the last day of Chaitra (mid April) and continues for about six days. The last day of month of Chaitra is known as Cow Bihu.

A week prior to Damāhi, the women folk start to prepare the Har. On the day of Churang adamahi (Cow Bihu) the male members of family

28. Bākhri i.e. granary (store house for paddy)

bring their cattle to a nearby tank or river, for their bathing. Meanwhile the villagers assemble at the house of the village headman and proceed towards the tank or the river playing drums and pipes (traditional musical instruments). After washing the cattle with the water of the river or tank, garlands made with vegetables like bringal, potato, gourd and such other items are tied on the neck of the cattle. The villagers after making the necessary rituals, proceed to the village headman and offer him a Bāng of Ālāngāhar. The headman blesses them with a happy Damāhi and long life.

4.7.2(B) Kikān Ādamāhi

First day of the month of Bohag is known as Kikān ādamāhi. The village folk, on that auspicious day visits the different house-holds and performs dances similar to the Huchari.²⁹

As soon as the Huchari party arrives, the owner of the house brings out a chara (vessel) of Āpa-āhar covered with a Phu-U along with Arkeng-Bithi and Donna (one kind of vessel) of Chāng (husked rice). These articles are kept in the middle of the courtyard, and all the members of the family bow down before the party. Then the party make dances with song at the courtyard in a circular way, while the women folk serve with Har.

29. Huchari : The song sung by persons going in procession from house to house playing upon drums, like the Bihu festival of Assamese.

4.7.2(C) Damāhi Hanjeng

This is the post harvest festival observed by the Karbis of Dimoria. A week prior to it, the village folk prepare Har. In the evening of the auspicious day of the festival, the people assemble in a particular hut made of paddy straw. The young boys after drinking Har, spend the night singing and dancing before the bonfire. After the ritual, the heap of firewood is ignited. The people take their food along with Har and than leave.

4.7.2(D) Nawān

Nawān or eating of new rice is a feast held after the harvesting. There are different types of Nawān, such as : (i) Ākethe ānawān i.e. community Nawān (ii) Ācha ānawān, i.e. family Nawān.

(i) Ākethe ānawān : Ākethe ānawān is a popular post harvesting ceremony.

It is generally held in the month of January. A week before the day of the feast, Har is prepared with new sali rice. One Ākethe māthi or Har is essential in this Nawān.

On the stipulated day, the village folk assemble at the house of the host early in the morning. All are entertained with Lāngpāng of Ālāngāhar. Then all the guests along with members of family proceed to river or pond for fishing. They carry with twenty five liters of Apā-ahar supplied by the host.

On reaching the fishing ground, they are again entertained with Lāngpāng of Āpa-āhar distributed by women folk of the family. After fishing they come back to the host family and the feast is arranged in the night. The feast is served with fish, meat and drinks along

with rice and rice beer.

(ii) Ācha ānawān:

The Ācha ānawān is a family affair and no elaborate preparation take place. Hars are brewed in Tikilis which are generally consumed by the member of family.

4.7.2(E) Bao Puja

In order to protect the villagers from wind and storm Bao puja is observed. On the puja, fowl, goat and pig are sacrificed, in the name of God. Har is absolutely essential in the puja. After completion of the puja, all the villagers enjoy a big feast.

4.7.2(F) Silmoder Puja

In this puja, the Karbis sacrifice a good number of fowls in the name of God Indra for raining. Har is essential in this puja also.

4.7.3 Festivals of Tiwa Society

Most of the Lalung festivals are closely connected with certain pujas. They are Saktas but their pujas and images are not the same as those used by other non-Lalung Saktas.³⁰

4.7.3(A) Sangkhang Puja

After Rangali Bihu, the Tiwa people of Dimoria observe this festival. This puja is performed for three days. Pig, wine, swans, hens, cocks are dedicated in the name of God, Sangkhang (Goddess Lakshmi). It

30. Sarmah Thakur, G.C. (1985) : "The Lalung (Tiwas)," The Director of Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, Chapter IV, p. 76.

is an annual puja where Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped. The puja is observed for the prosperity of agriculture.

4.7.3(B) Malgohai Sani Puja

This puja is observed in the month of June and April. The Māldāhi (one kind of tree) is very essential in the puja. The young boys decorate the upper portion of the tree with cutting flower ground in front of the altar of the God. Deuri^{*} performs the functions of this puja. Red cock is sacrificed in the name of God. At the end of the puja a big feast is arranged in Dekāsāng³¹ with pork and wine. The selected persons bow down to the altar of the puja. Taking the Māldāhi tree in their hands, they retreat towards west uttering 'Koi, Koi' (i.e. come, come). When they arrive at the entrance of the village another puja is held on the road side. This is done mainly to scare away the evil spirits (Sani Dakoā). This puja is observed to protect the people from epidemics and other natural calamities.

4.7.3(C) Malanda Puja

The puja is observed for the prosperity of agriculture. Two jack-
fruits, fifty hen or cock and two pairs of pigeon are devoted to the God Molonda (one kind of God).

* Deuri : who are usually man of a certain age and recognised social position in the village community, village elders infact.

31. Dekāsāng : imparts training to the unmarried youth and its acts; by and large as welfare institution which is responsible for the welfare of the villagers in various aspects.

4.7.3(D) Baghrajā Puja

In the name of tiger, two pairs of cock, wine and one goat are devoted so that the tiger cannot mischief the people.

4.7.3(E) Ansāwa Festival (Ricing Powder Pounding Festival)

This festival of Tiwa is observed in the month of Aswin or Kartik. The festival is arranged in order to protect the people from misfortune, distress and adversity. Tiwa people devote two red cocks and sacrifice four pigs in the name of God 'Siva' during the festival. After observing the ritual of the festival one hundred mortars (vessel in which substances are pounded with a pestle) and pestles are placed circularly in an open field. Besides, small bamboo pipes are placed beside the mortar and pestle for drinking wine. About ten or twelve full baskets of husked rice are pounded in the mortars with pestles on the occasion of the festival. After finishing the puja rituals, young boys start dancing around the mortars taking the pestles in their hands. Along with dancing they start pounding the husked rice with the pestles. After the pounding is over, rice powders remaining in small portion in every mortar are used in the feast.

4.7.4 Festivals of Rabha Society

The Rabha people observe Monasha and Kali puja both for the welfare of the people and the cattle of the village. Both in Monasha and Kali puja, hens and pigeons are sacrificed in the name of the Goddesses.

4.7.5 Festivals of Hindu Garo People

Hindu Garos of Dimoria, worship of Hābi Gosāi (the God of Kubir) for the welfare of the villagers and the domestic animals. In the puja, one white goat, one coloured goat and one pig are sacrificed in the name of God Kubir.

Before ploughing every household of Hindu Garo worship the Lord Siva. They offer one white cock, wine, milk, dry rice powder, flower, sāki (earthen lamp) in the name of 'Siva'.

Before harvesting the paddy, the Hindu Garos devote one white hen, flower, banana, milk, rice powder in the name of Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth).

4.7.6 Festivals of the Christian Garo Society

The festivals of Christian Garos are completely different. They observe X-Mass Day, Good Friday and New Year's day like other Christian people of Assam. They do not use wine and cattle in their festivals.

4.8 FOOD AND DRINKING HABITS

Rice is the principal food of the tribal people of Dimoria Tribal Block. The use of Har or Zu or Lāu Pāni i.e. alcoholic beverages is common in every day life of Karbi, Tiwa, Bodo, Rabha and Hindu Garo. They regularly use meat of fowls, goats, pigs as items of food. Fish which is available in plenty is a common item of daily dish. There are three types of dried fish of Karbi which are preserved for a year. They are —

- (i) Chenaphāla (Fishes are cut equally in length and dried)
- (ii) Hidal khunda (Fishes are preserved inside the bamboo pipes)
- (iii) Shukuti (Dried fish).

4.9 DRESS

The tribal folks of Dimoria have their own traditional dresses. But now a days their dresses are almost similar with that of the Assamese people.

The traditional dresses are as follows :

	<u>Assamese</u>	<u>Karbi</u>	<u>Tiwa</u>	<u>Bodo</u>
(i)	Mekhelā	Pānik	Kachung	Mekhalā
(ii)	Tangāli	Wānkok	Phākā	Aronnāi
(iii)	Phāli	Pekak	Thenāt	Jeumbrikṛā
(iv)	Chādder	Jālchā	Pāchkā	Chāddar
(v)	Chōla	Chal	Daglā	Kochlā
(vi)	Lengti	Bāmtele	Thānā	Lengti

Source : Compiled from field survey

4.10 ORNAMENTS

The tribal communities have their own ornaments. The ornaments of Karbi, Tiwa and Bodo are as follows :

	<u>Karbi</u>	<u>Tiwa</u>	<u>Bodo</u>
(i) For ear	Notheng	Cihā	Kherā
(ii) For nose	Nakphāli	Nakbāli	Ganthangti
(iii) For neck	Gālpāta	Galpata	Chandrahār
	Mādoli	Dhul	
		Maduli	
(iv) For hand	Rupā-ral	Ruphā	Āshanshri
	Cher-āral	Khāru	(Bracelet)
	Arnan	Sonakhāru	

Source : Field survey

4.11 HOUSES

The houses are of usual type. Thatched houses are common and walls are made of reeds of bamboo with mud plastering on both sides like non-tribal Assamese huts.

4.12 SUPERSTITIONS

The tribal people are animistic in their religious belief and practices. Human death and birth, fortune and misfortunes, suffering and losses all are attributed to the capricious wishes of both the benevolent and malevolent spirits. To have good harvest, to protect the lives of the members of the family, to make speedy recovery from illness, to avert misfortunes, to protect the lives of domestic animals, the tribal people observe a number of rituals devoting wine and cattle in the name of God and Goddess.

From the foregoing analysis we can make the following observations :

4.13 OBSERVATIONS

- (i) Each tribal group has its own way of life, customs, practices and traditions.
- (ii) The needs of tribal families are limited to the bare essentials of the life like clothing, utensils and ornaments, most of which are produced by themselves. They do not react very sharply to new ideas, new methods and experiments. This has serious impact on the pace of development in almost all economic sectors.
- (iii) Each tribal community of Dimoria Tribal Block has its own ethnic identity, expressed through its custom, religion, language/dialect, dresses and ornaments, dance and music, value judgements, cultural heritage and distinctive way of life.
- (iv) Habit of drinking wine is a part and parcel of tribal society.
- (v) Rites and ceremonies are two essential components of the institution called 'Religion'.
- (vi) All the festivals are the product of religious motives and human activities. This bring happiness to the lives of the people by associating it with merry making.
- (vii) Particular item of culture symbolizes the basic social values, norms and views of the community.
- (viii) Belief leads to festival or worship and thus rites and rituals can be described as the implementation of belief systems.
- (ix) Sacrifice of birds (pigeon, hen, swan) and animals (pig, goat) and

the use of rice beer (wine) are indispensable in every religious occasion.

- (x) Socio-religious rituals make them indebted to village Mahajans who lend money to the poor villagers to perform their rituals.
- (xi) The tribal people always believe in destiny which is subject to Karma (deed of a person).
- (xii) The tribal people like easy-going life. They have also rich culture of their own. The tribal people are very fond of drinking and it is a part of their culture. The tribal women are expert in brewing. They use to deal in liquor for their livelihood. They also prepare large quantity of rice beer for different pujas. Both young and old-men consume rice beer in large quantity and forget their duties.
- (xiii) The majority of tribal people are landless. Because they dispose of their lands easily to perform their rituals of different festivals.
- (xiv) The tribal women are found to be more laborious than men and in reality they work more than men without practically having any leisure from morning till leaving for bed at night. The women are the main wage earners of tribal society of Dimoria.

4.14 CONSTRAINTS

Because of their ignorance and strong adherence to their social customs, the following socio-economic barriers may stand in their economic progress.

The tribal households rear domestic animals like pig, fowls, goat and cow. Their social structure and customs are so expensive that they can not improve their economic conditions. A large number of domestic animals such as pig, goat, fowls are killed and offered to the spirits and deities. Many families are ruined in performing elaborate ceremonies one after another.

They believe in a number of evils. In order to remove these evils from among the people they incur huge expenditure observing different rituals in their daily life.

The tribal people are superstitious. A large sum of money is spent in every year for observing the rituals of birth, death, marriage and other religious festivals and ceremonies. Therefore majority of the people of Dimoria suffer from poverty.

Har or Zu or Lāupāni (wine) plays an important role in tribal society of Dimoria. Without Har or wine no ceremonies can be performed. So major portion of the husked rice is destroyed for making rice beer at the cost of subsistence living.

For observing the rituals, the tribal folk borrow money from the rich people, but they are being unable to repay the money, their debt burden increases.