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Bamboo Weaving Crafts of Hill and Plain Tiwas of Assam

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Abstract

Most of the communities residing in the state of Assam share common culture traits. The factors are mostly acculturation due to common geographical territories and having common natural resources. Material culture, particularly, bamboo basketry is no exception to this commonality of culture trait. There are, therefore many baskets and crafts which are commonly used by many communities of Assam, with even the weaving pattern being the same, hence the difficulty in outlining which craft originally belongs to which community. However, there are a few skills and indigenous knowledge of certain communities, such as dyeing, layering and others which are maintained inclusively. These knowledges still existent, stand as the evidences to each of their distinctiveness. In this study, the bamboo basketry of the Tiwa tribe has been explored. With the help of proper collection of the attributes, dimensions, and weaving patterns of the bamboo craft items, this paper is an attempt to document the bamboo craftsmanship of the Tiwas and the weaving techniques from both hill and plain areas of Assam.

Keywords: Tiwa, Bamboo Basketry, Bamboo Craft, Material Culture, Basket Weaving

1. Introduction

The Tiwas are also known as Lalungs, and are an ambilineal group of people residing in the North Eastern part of India. They are designated as plain and hill Tiwas, based on their geographical concentrations. The plain Tiwas reside in the villages of Dhemaji area in Lakhimpur district, Kapili, Mayang, Bhurbandha, Kathiatali and Kampur Development Block areas of Nagaon district, Nellie, Silchang, Bangaldhara, Sahari areas of Morigaon district, south tribal belt of Sonapur area of Kamrup, and Titabor areas of Jorhat sub-division of Sibsagar district of Assam ; while the hill Tiwas reside in villages of Amri Development Block and a part of Chinthong Development Block of Hamren sub-division of West Karbi Anglong district, and the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. The Tiwas have been considered as akin to the other speakers of the great Bodo linguistic group, however, ethnically they have always remained separate (Gohain, 1993: 7).

Like the rest of the North East Indian tribes, the Tiwas know the art of basket weaving, with bamboo as their main raw material along with cane. A few research papers were found which generally cover the material culture of the Tiwas. However, these papers have not focused on bamboo craft items, with their weaving patterns and designs. The present study is an attempt at documenting the attributes of woven bamboo craft items, identifying their weaving patterns and shapes, and examining the efforts of the native members in preservation and continuation of usage, creation, consumption, and trade of the bamboo basketry prepared with their indigenous knowledge, covering both the hill and plain Tiwa dwellers of Assam.

2. Study area

The study has been conducted in two field areas, namely, Bormarjong village in Umswai area of West Karbi Anglong district, Assam, and Kumoi village, Morigaon district of Assam. Bormarjong village is inhabited by the hill Tiwas, who, to quite a considerable extent, still follow their pristine faith and customs. They speak in their local dialect Tiwa, besides knowing Assamese, Hindi and English. It is surrounded by a Karbi village named Roman Marjong on the north, Christian Tiwa village Shikdamakha on the eastern side, Shabrimala hills on the west, and Hulao Khodalamakha hills on the south direction. Bormarjong is inhabited by approximately 200 households. The settlement pattern of houses is linear and both concrete and thatched houses are seen. Sanitary system is well maintained. The villagers avail their daily needs from the weekly market at Umswai on Wednesdays, and from Nellie weekly market on Mondays, which are about 2 kms. and 34 kms. respectively, from the village.

On the other hand, Kumoi village of Morigaon district in Assam, has various hamlets, of which Nizarapar and Borkuchi have been covered for the present study. Kumoi village is inhabited by plain Tiwas, along with two other areas, namely Tetelia and Kanthijuri. Kumoi has a total of about 350 households inhabited by the Plain Tiwas. The inhabitants speak in Assamese language, and besides, they know Hindi. The houses are both linear and scattered, bounded by roads, paddy field and hilly areas. Houses of both tin roof and thatched roof are seen. Sanitary system is well present in all the houses of the village. The nearby weekly market is Bangthaigaon Chariali which is about four to five kilometers from Kumoi, held on every Fridays.

3. Materials and Methods

For this study, the following methods have been applied:

- Observation has been made of the crafts-making, bamboo and other material objects, which are prepared in the village.
- Interview, mostly semi-structured, of the artisans and a few key informants have been taken.
- Measurement of the craft items using measuring tape has been taken.
- Basket weaving techniques of the craft items have been documented. Techniques of weaving have been identified following the classification of basketry by Crowfoot and Mason.
- Photography of crafts has been covered to show the types and techniques of preparation.
- Secondary data were extracted and referred from related books, writings, articles and websites.

4. Findings

4.1 Bamboo Crafts

There were many types of material culture seen among the Tiwas of both hill and plain areas. In this study, selection has been made of those bamboo-made woven material culture which are integral part of the Tiwa indigenous knowledge. Below is a table showing the attributes of those basketry items:

Table 1: Attributes and Dimensions of Bamboo Baskets among the Tiwas

Sl. No.	Local Name of Implement	English term	Category of Bamboo Craft	Raw Materials	Size (in cms.) [L-Length B-Breadth H- Height Circ.- Circumference Max- Maximum Min- Minimum T.H.- Total Height]	Shape	Technique of Preparation/ Weaving	Function	Preparation Time
1.	Am (hill)	Mat	Household	Bamboo	L– 175.5 B – 87 Warp & weft: 1 cm. each	Rectangular, flat form	Twilled (closed weave)	Used as a mat	Two and a half days
2.	Chakhui (hill)/ Jakoi (plain)	Fish trap	Fishing	Bamboo, cane	Hills: L-73.5 B-50.5 H/ Depth - 28.5 Warp – 0.5 Weft – 0.5 Plains: L -66.3 B-43.5 H/ Depth - 21.5 Warp – 0.3 Weft – 0.3	Triangular	Twilled (open weave)	Used for catching fish	Hills – one day Plains – one and a half day
3.	Chapakho (hill)	Storing basket	Household	Bamboo, Cane and resin of Artocarpus	**Body**: Rim circ. – 14.5, Diameter – 43.5 Max circ.– 157.5	Lid - Conical Body – Receptacle convex, square	**Body**: Check (closed weave), **Lid**: Check (closed	Used for storing clothes, ornaments and	Eight -ten days

				lacucha (Moraceae) plant locally known as phang hada plant for the inner layer	Height – 54.6, Length – 58 **Lid**: Rim circ.– 158.5 Diameter – 49.3, Height – 42.5, Rim height – 1 Warp & weft: 0.5 cm. each Base height – 3.8 Base l & b – 17.5	base	weave), No gap between wefts, 1 cm. gap between warps	other household assets	
4.	Khardisugor (hill)	Sieve for alkaline solution	Household	Bamboo, Cane	Circ. – 65.4 Diameter – 19.8 Height – 17.4 Length – 20 Warp and weft: 1 cm. each	Conical	Check closed weave	Filtering rice liquor or alkaline solution	One day
5.	Kho (hill)	Carrying basket	Household	Bamboo, cane	Rim Circ.: 149 Diameter: 47 Total H: 29 Base l & b: 18 each Height of base: 4 Warp &	Cylindrical, barrel shaped with a square base	Twilled close weave	Used for carrying objects	Seven days

					weft: 0.3 cm. each				
5.	Khodem (hill)	Rice liquor storing basket	House-hold	Bam-boo, cane	Circ. of rim: 148 Diameter: 46.2 Total Height: 35.4 Max. length : 37.8 Base l & b: 21.6 each, Height of base: 3.5 Warp & weft: 0.5 cm. each	Storage convex, square base	Check (closed weave), two-layered weave, no gaps be-tween wefts, 0.2 cm. gaps between warps	Storing rice liq-uor	Seven days (four days weaving, one day preparing and apply-ing resin, 2 days dry-ing)
6.	Khosa (hill)	Meas-uring basket	House-hold / agricul-tural Imple-ment	Bam-boo, Cane	Circ.: 119.5 Diameter: 38.5 Total Height: 53 Length: 58.8 Base Rim Circ.: 14.5 Base l & b: 18 each Height of base: 4 Warp: 0.6 cm. Weft: 0.5 cm.	Conical with a pointed tip	Body: Twilled (closed weave, each weft passes over two and under three warps) Rim: Check (closed weave, gaps be-tween warps, no gaps be-tween wefts)	Used for measur-ing rice and other grains	Seven days
7.	Khoral Panthai (plain)	Ritual-istic bam-	Ritualis-tic	Bam-boo, Cloth	Warp & weft: 0.5 cm. each	Human shaped	Hexago-nal open weave	Used during rituals	Seven days per figu-rine

		boo figurine							
8.	Khuji (hill) /Khaloi (plain)	Fishing trap	Fishing	Bamboo	Hills: Rim Circ. - 23 Rim Diameter - 6.7 Neck Circ.- 16.8 Max body circ. -36.1 Base L & B -7 cms. each T.H. -19.6 Warp – 0.4 Weft – 0.5 Plains: Rim circ. – 27. 6 Neck circ. – 18.5 Max. body circ. – 37.4 T.H. – 21.4 Warp – 0.4 Weft – 0.5	Receptacle constricted neck, Vase-shaped	Rim– Wrapped Neck– Check (open), Body– Check (closed)	Catching fish	Hills - One day Plains – One and a half days
9.	Khreng (hills) / Thopa (plains)	Carrying basket	Household / agricultural	Bamboo, cane	Warp- 0.5 Weft- 0.5	Cylindrical, barrel-shaped with square base	Khreng (hills) type 1- First 8 weaves below the rim and last 6 weaves at the base are done	Carrying objects	One and a half days

							with Check weaving technique with no gaps between warps, but gaps between wefts (closed weave). Remaining weaves are done by Check weaving technique with gaps between both the warps and wefts (open weave) Type 2: Hexagonal Thopa(plains) – Hexagonal		
9.	Kip (hill)	Ritualistic hand fan	Ritualistic	Bamboo	L-92 cm. B-16.6 cm. Warp & weft: 0.5 cm. each	Square-shaped, flat form, elongated handle	Abstract traditional weaving pattern called muigure	It is literally a hand fan, however, it used as a prop during	Two days

								ritualis-tic dance	
10.	Langkhon	Ritual-istic bam-boo pole	Ritualis-tic	Bamboo	Whole bamboo pole of any length	Pole	The pole is retained in its orig-inal form; however, few thin strips are made and curled on top as decora-tion.	Used as a prop during ritualis-tic dance	Thirty minutes
11.	Shaldeng (hill)	Sun and rain shield	House-hold / agricul-tural	Bam-boo, Cane	Length: 122 cms. Breadth: 87.5 cms. Strap: 138 cms. (69 x 2) Warp and Weft: 0.5 each	Oval-shaped	**Inner layer**: Check (open) at the edges, Hexago-nal through-out the body **Outer layer**: Same pat-tern as inner lay-er A layer of dried leaves of Phrynium pubinerve plant is placed in between the two layers of bamboo weaves.	Used as shield against sunrays and rain	Approxi-mately eight - nine days (drying leaf – one week, weaving – one to two days)

12.	Tran (hill)	Rice liquor server	House-hold	Bam-boo, Cane resin of Arto-carpus lacucha (Mora-ceae) plant plant for the in-ner lay-er	**Body**: Rim cir-cumfer-ence – 91.2 Diameter – 28 Height – 24.7 **Base**: Length and breadth – 14 cms. each, Height – 3.9 **Spout**: Length – 18.7 Cir-cumfer-ence – 7.7 **Two sup-porting sticks:** Length – 10.5 cms. each	Storage convex, square base and a curved spout on one lat-eral side, support-ed by two sticks	Check (closed)	Used for serving rice liq-uor	Five days (Weaving–three days, Resin ap-plication and dry-ing-two days)

4.2 Raw materials for crafts

Bamboo: The following are the species of bamboos used for specific craft and implements found abundantly in the field areas: Bambusa tulda (jati) and Dendrocalamus hamiltonii (kako). The traditional basket weaver and craftsmen have to be particular about the time of cutting bamboos. They informed that the beginning of winter is the most suitable time.

Image 1: Bambusa tulda (author's own)

Image 2: Dendrocalamus hamiltoni (Internet)

Cane/ Rattan: Besides, the use of bamboo as main raw material for basketry and matting, cane and rattans are required for wrapping and coiling the rim for the finishing grip of the products. Among the rattans or cane, Calamus flagellum is commonly used by the Tiwa weavers, being available in the outskirts of both the field areas.

Wood: The Tiwas obtain from the Mesua ferrea tree locally known as nahor, available in abundance within the village vicinity.

Although, bamboo, rattans and wood are the main raw materials used traditionally by the Tiwas, at the present times, they are observed to be resorting to modern materials such as cloth strips, plastic strips etc. as substitutes for rattan and cane, which they avail from the market.

4.3 Tools and implements

A common tool of the basket weavers of North East India for making bamboo and cane crafts, baskets and mats is the ‘dao’, which is a form of slashing knife. The closest English word to ‘dao’ according to Das (1979, pg. 15; 2016, pg.14) is ‘bill’ or ‘billhook’. However, a dao may have different varieties, mainly based on their shape and size. Each community have their own local terms for the different types of dao. Two types of dao have been observed to be used by the Hill Tiwas of Bormarjong village of Umswai area, namely, khangra and tap.

The big-sized dao is known as khangra in Tiwa. This type of dao may again have various sub-types depending on the shape, size and depth of the working edge. The hefts are seen to be made of bamboo, with impressions for grip. Sometimes, some work of art in the form of motifs such as flower designs are seen on the iron part of the khangra. The raw material for hefting is derived from either the solid bamboo poles of Bambusa tulda called jati, found locally or the smaller types of bamboo called pigel wathi which are found in the wild. The wild varieties of bamboo are known as wathang. The main utilities of a khangra are cutting bamboo trees, splitting the bamboo poles and chopping heavy wood. The khangra is operated by single-hand. A smaller version of khangra is called khadari in Tiwa dialect**.** It is used for exactly the same purpose as khangra, which includes, cutting trees and bamboo, splitting bamboo and firewood. However, it is smaller in size as compared to the former.

The second variety of dao used by the Tiwas, is a foldable one, called tap. This type of dao is mainly used for preparing strips of bamboo for weaving baskets and splitting smaller bamboos. The heft is seen to be made of wood unlike the other types where bamboo is used for hefting. The tap is held at its tang area with the wooden heft with the help of a nail. It is seen that the length of the working body is almost

equal to that of the wooden heft. It is much shorter in length and lighter in weight than the other varieties of dao. Hence, it is convenient for light cutting work only. Nowadays, most of the Tiwas avail all the three varieties of dao from the weekly Umswai market, which are sold by the traditional ironsmiths.

Image 3: Khangra (variety 1) with slightly more depth in working edge and broader width at the curve point

Image 4: Khangra (variety 2) with less depth and narrow width at the curve of the working edge

Image 5: Khangra (variety 3) with less depth at the working edge and broader width at the curve-point

Image 6: A folding dao variety called tap

Table 2: Showing the types of dao used by the Tiwas for basketry, and some of their attributes

Sl. No.	Name of dao	Total Length (in cms.)	Length of working iron part (in cms.)	Length of Heft (in cms.)	Maximum breadth of working edge (in cms.)	Minimum breadth of working edge	Raw Material	Function
1.	Khangra (variety 1)	78.2	26.4	51.8	6.1	1.3	Iron, bamboo	Cutting and splitting big bamboos, trees, and chopping firewood

2.	Khangra (variety 2)	70.65	24.4	46.2	4.9	1.4	Iron, bamboo	Cutting and splitting big bamboos, trees and chopping firewood
3.	Tap (folding dao)	33.4	15	15.8	4.8	1.9	Iron, wood	Preparing strips of bamboo for basketry, splitting smaller bamboos

4.4 Shapes and forms of bamboo craft objects

Taking into consideration the bamboo craft items of both hill and plain areas together, the following categories of shapes are found:

- Conical - sieve khardisugor and containers like chaphakho and khosa are some of the conical shaped bamboo items woven
- Cylindrical / Semi-cylindrical – Kho and khreng are such shaped types of bamboo basket
- Flat – hand fans - (kip) and mat (am) are flat-shaped bamboo crafts
- Receptacle constricted neck – fishing implement jakoi, called chakhui by the hill dwellers is a type of receptacle constricted neck shape of implement
- Storage convex – Khodem and Tran are bamboo baskets with such shapes
- Abstract / Others – A few other implements which do not fall under any of the above-stated shape and forms are, kip (decorated handfan for ritual), sedar (strap for carrying basket), tukhuji (fishing trap), human bamboo figurines, etc.

It can be said that the shape and form of the baskets and material culture objects depend on the function of each object, as well as the basket weaving designs.

4.5 Process of Bamboo Basket Weaving

The process of bamboo basket weaving starts with searching for the required species of bamboo. Mostly it is available in the village vicinity; in some cases, the local people may have to go down to nearby forests in search of the required bamboo. once the bamboo trees are spotted and selected, they are procured by cutting them off with the help of khangra or khadari dao. Thereafter, these bamboo poles are split into two with the khadari dao. After that, the bamboo is further cut into small strips in desired sizes, which will be made into warps and wefts, as required. These strips are given final touches and scraped off with the small dao called tap, and then woven as warps and wefts, according to the requirement of the basketry.

4.6 Dyeing in Bamboo Basketry

The process of bamboo basket weaving with dyed bamboo strips involves similar process as that of a general basket weaving, except that there are additional steps for dyeing. So, similarly, it starts with

searching for the required species of bamboo, followed by cutting them off with the help of khangra or khadari dao. Then, these bamboo poles are split with the khadari dao, and then further cut into small strips into desired sizes.

In certain types of basket weaving, the strips of bamboo are dyed in certain patterns, to give a specific design to the whole basket. The Hill Tiwas are found to prepare traditional dyes out of their natural surrounding and used for giving designs and motifs to the basket weaves. They use the leaves of the Baphicacanthus cusia plant, locally known as nili, which are available in plenty in their habitat. The leaves are plucked and boiled in water, to obtain a rich burgundy colour. Thereafter, the strips of bamboo to be dyed are dipped into the solution and kept for a few minutes to absorb the colour. After that, the strips are taken out and dried in sunlight. Accordingly, the strips are placed as weft or warp, so that while weaving the basket, the desired pattern of design is obtained.

Image 7: Leaf of Baphicacanthus cusia of family Acanthaceae called nili (left) used for dyeing

Image 8: Ritualistic hand fan called kip made with dyed bamboo strips

4.7 Layering in Basket Crafts

The Tiwas have an indigenous knowledge of layering a bamboo basket or container, so that the holes can be covered up to store liquid. They use the bark of Artocarpus lacucha locally known as phang hada tree to prepare resin for layering various baskets. Household items such as khodem, a basket for storing rice liquor and tran, another bamboo container for serving rice liquor, are woven and then given a layer of resin from the fluid of the phang hada. This completely blocks the gaps between the interwoven bamboo wefts and warps of the container, making it convenient for storing any liquid without leakage in it. This is an age-old indigenous knowledge maintained by the community.

Image 9: Artocarpus lacucha (Marantaceae) tree called phang hada in Tiwa

Image 10: Rice liquor storage basket, khodem, layered by resin extracted from phang hada

They also use dry layering in a few of their material culture objects, the most prominent one being the use of Phrynium pubinerve (Marantaceae) leaf. This leaf is collected, dried and placed in between the two layers of traditional rain shield called shaldeng. The plant Phrynium pubinerve (Marantaceae) called laigran is easily available in the village area.

Image 11: Leaf of Phrynium pubinerve (Marantaceae) called laigran

Image 12: Rain shield called shaldeng with a layer of dried Phrynium pubinerve (Marantaceae) leaf

4.8 Techniques of Basket Weaving

Crafts and basket weaves may be made with simple or sophisticated designs and techniques. Strips or strands of bamboo are woven, such that they form a pattern. The strands placed horizontally are called warp and those woven vertically across the warps, are known as weft. There are various types of basket-weaving techniques woven around the globe, however, two broad categories of basket weaving technique can be classified, as given by Mason (1901:109, in Das, 1979:20), namely – hand-woven or plaited, and sewed or wrapped or coiled. Again, there are sub-categories of techniques under each of these two broad categories.

Among the Tiwas of the field areas, the following techniques have been identified to be applied:

- Check open weave basketry – This is the most basic and elementary form of weaving by two strips passing alternately under and over each other.
- Check closed weave basketry – This is the same technique as the earlier one, but the passing of warp and weft are done without gaps.
- Twilled open weave basketry – The weft passes under two or more and then over two or more warps, with gaps in between.
- Twilled closed weave basketry – The weft passes under or more and then over two or more warps, with no gaps between warps or wefts or both.
- Hexagonal open weave basketry – This type of technique has three sets of bamboo strips or strands which are woven such that the shape created by the interlace is a hexagon with six sides. This method is mostly used for weaving those baskets which are for temporary functions.
- Wrapped basketry – Weft or wefts are wrapped around warps to form a pattern.
- Crossed figure of eight (rim weave) – Also called knot stitch, this technique of weaving is mostly seen on the rims of the bamboo baskets. In the front, the stitch passes up and over the new coil, and in the behind, it passes down and under the preceding coil; this pattern makes it look like a row of knots between the successive coils (Notes and Queries on Anthropology; 1929, pp.274).

Figure 1: Check Open

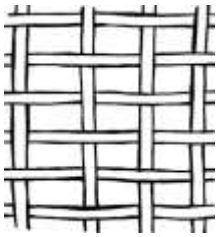


Figure 2: Check Closed

Figure 3: Hexagonal Open

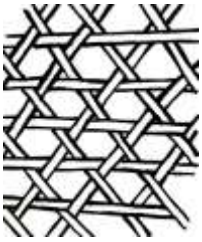
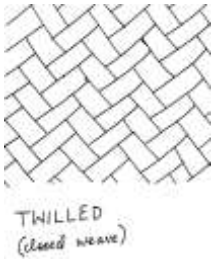


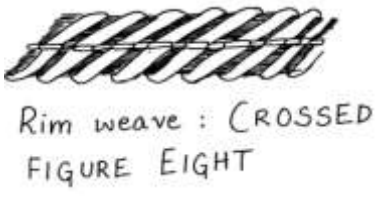
Figure 4: Twilled open

Figure 5: Twilled closed



Crossed figure eight

Figure 6: Rim weave-



4.9 Tiwa Craftsmanship, Transitional Issues and Suggestions

Like most of the traditional basket weavers of North East India, the Tiwas of both the hill and plain areas, learn the art of basket weaving from an early age. Mostly, the menfolk are seen to perform the craft. These craftsmen learn the art from their fathers and other elder men of their family. Basket weaving, matting, and tool preparation are regarded essential, so as to avail the agricultural and household implements for daily life. Most of them weave bamboo baskets and implements for their own personal and household uses. However, some of them also sell their bamboo and cane products in the market as a secondary occupation. This is so, because agriculture is mostly their primary occupation. The products are also not sold at regular intervals; therefore, it cannot be called as a regular source of income. However, it is seen at the present times, that few young Tiwa men from the hills, learn the art of basket weaving and matting. A considerable number of plain Tiwa households rely on the markets to avail the household implements, rather than weaving on their own.

Image 13: Smoothening bamboo strips

Image 14: Weaving a bamboo container

The craftsmen expressed that nowadays, the availability of cane and rattan has become limited. Therefore, although fortunately, bamboo still grows in abundance, they have to resort to plastic strips and ropes for wrapping and tying the basket. For this they have to depend on the markets and hence the finished product is not made with purely local raw materials. The other threat is that, the boys of younger generation are not as interested in learning bamboo and cane craft as their ancestors, because of which there is a fear of losing the art in coming generations. The plain Tiwas still have a few artisans, but many of them have to rely on the market for availing their necessary baskets and household implements. This is because the number of artisans knowing the art is decreasing with days.

Based on the present scenario with regard to the practice of the art of bamboo basketry among the Tiwas, the following points of measures could be suggested:

1. The younger generation should be encouraged to learn the weaving techniques from the existing craftsmen of the community. Workshops could be held regularly.
2. The indigenous crafts should be promoted and the artisans should be encouraged to continue practicing the art and selling them in the markets.
3. Use of bamboo crafts should be encouraged as they are biodegradable and eco-friendly as a raw material.

4. Incentives could be given to support the local artisans from economically weaker families.

5. Conclusion

Having discussed the bamboo crafstmenship of the Tiwas, specifically, as prepared by the indigenous method of both the hill and plain dwellers, it can be stated that the Tiwas have a strong connection with nature just as the other tribes of the region. The two types of bamboo commonly used for making crafts, are Bambusa tulda and Dendrocalamus hamiltonii called jati bah and kako bah respectively in Assamese, which are found in abundance in both the study areas; however, comparatively, the hill Tiwas can avail bamboo along with other raw materials more easily than in the plains. This is also one of the reasons, for the people of Kumoi village, where the plain Tiwas reside, to be more frequently buying the bamboo crafts from the market, than weaving them on their own. Many implements of hill and plain Tiwas are identical; however, they have difference in names. The plain Tiwas mostly have Assamese names for the implements.

It is noteworthy that, a few hill Tiwas have converted to Christianity and they have discarded a number of traditional beliefs and practices. This could perhaps be one of the reasons, for the lesser use of a few traditional implements, such as rice beer container. Again, most of the plain Tiwas have been considerably influenced by the neighbouring populations, particularly the Assamese caste community. Therefore, comparatively, a few hill Tiwa villages are found to be maintaining the age-old beliefs and practices to quite an extent. Owing to this, the Tiwas are quite comparable to the Karbi tribe, who also dwell in both hill and plain areas, and have both Hindu and Christian influences. The annual observation of Jonbeel mela at an area called Dayang Belguri in Morigaon district, poses as a saving grace to uphold the cultural values and preservation of the plain Tiwas. Almost all the folk performances, food items, traditional art-forms, plays depicting folk beliefs, are displayed at this mega event. It is also famous as the only market place where barter system takes place in the whole region. The annual Langkhon festival is also another significant event of the hill Tiwas, to display and maintain their cultural and folk practices. Rice beer brewing, performing ritualistic dances during cutting and sowing of paddy, traditional dress and ornaments, musical instruments are some of the few customs still observed in both areas. The male dormitory called Samadhi among hill Tiwas and dekachang among the plain dwellers still see the light of the present day, though with many differences in the structural and ritualistic forms.

In the context of hill Tiwas, Gohain (1993) pointed out, ‘material culture amongst the Lalungs show rapid changes, while the non-material culture more or less preserves its continuity.’ He cited examples of changes in dress and food consumption patterns, among others. The non- material culture mostly relates with the traditional faith and belief system, which is firm among the Tiwas. Gohain (1993) continues, ‘but if the process of revivalism continues, there is a chance that the Hill Lalungs will continue to preserve their distinct cultural identity’….; this statement seems to hold true for Tiwas as a whole, irrespective of hill or plain dwellers. The Tiwas can definitely be proud of their rich culture, both material and non-material, irrespective of their geographical dissemination.

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