

The Important of Bamboo and Cane in the Bodo Society

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ABSTRACT: Assam has been described as the museum of nature comprising numerous races and tribes with different cultures. The Bodo Kacharis form a very important section of these races and they have contributed considerably under different name and in different places to the growth of civilization in Assam.

In the folk craft study, the folklorists intend to study the making of basketry, wood carving, house construction, pottery, metal works, weaving and dress designing, making of toys and tools for various works and also the sculptural arts. The Bodo community has a rich store house of arts and crafts and it is mainly reflected in their composite material culture. The bamboo made article are playing a vital role in the daily life of the Bodo people.

KEYWORDS: Folk crafts, Bamboo, Vital role, Design and Traditional.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Material culture responds to techniques, skills recipes and formulas transmitted across the generations and subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal art. Folk craft grows out of the necessity to meet the daily life of the people. Folk craft is said to be more cohesive to human life than even language. Craft is an experience of the human spirit in material culture form which fulfilled the needs and gave delight to mankind. In the world of craft there is no hiatus between service aesthetics and ability. According to Warren E. Robert, “Until relatively recent times, craft techniques and designs were passed down within one family for many generations or were transmitted by the apprentice system wherein a boy learning the craft served for as long as seven years under a master craftsman. Only fairly recently has the older, traditional system of transmitting the skills and knowledge of a craft been partially supplanted by formalized training in schools and by printed manuals and books.”¹

It may also be a reason for the decline of craftsmen ship in Assam. However “If there is one field in which the North-Eastern region surpasses others in the matters of colours, design and craftsman ship, it is that of textiles. Nowhere else is weaving so full of artistic sensibility and so intimately connected with life. Every indigenous community in this region, tribal and non-tribal, in the hills or in the plains, has its own range of textiles produced by the women in their traditional loom.”²

II. METHODOLOGY

The proposed study and source of data would be based on field work. In the present study, I have used a few suitable methods like observation, interview and case study method to get more and more reliable data on the concerned material culture of Bodo communities.

For the secondary source of data, I carefully analysed different books, journals and bulletins, the published and unpublished magazines relating material Culture of the Bodos as well as to the other communities.

III. DISCUSSION

Bamboo and Cane works:

The people of this area make a large variety of articles of bamboo. The bamboo made article are playing a vital role in the daily life of the Bodo society. Only some kinds of article are found which are made of cane. They are used to cane split especially for tied to articles. They make varieties of household article, agricultural implements, fishing implements, musical instruments, weaving implements and traditional loom etc. Some of common articles are mentioned below.

¹ Roberts, W.E. : “Folk Craft” in *Folklore and Folklife : An Introduction*, (ed.) R.M.Dorson, Chicago, 1972, P.233

² Datta,B., Sarma,N.C., Das,P.C. : *A Hand Book of Folklore Materials of North East*, P.215

(i) Agricultural Implements:

Jwngali: The Jwngali is made of Burkha owa (one kind of bamboo) wood or bamboo. The length of jwngali is 5 feet. Jwngali is used to combine two bullocks in the agricultural work for the pulling of nangwl (plough). The pair of bullocks holds the jwngali on their shoulders at the time of pulling the plough. Both the sides of jwngali are fixed to two small sticks.

Mwi: Mwi is made of Burkha (one kind of bamboo) bamboo. It is generally used to level the surface level after the ploughing of land. The length of mwi is 5 feet. Two steps made of bamboo are joined to the two divided bamboo poles. At the time of its use the man boarding it used to stand on it.

Dangkhura: The dangkhura is also made of bamboo. This Implement is used to connect mwi with the jwngali. Dangkhura is joined to the both sides of mwi and jwngali, when the bullocks pull the mwi.

Khofri (head gear): It is also made of bamboo split and palm leaves. Khopri is used by farmers for protection from the rain and sun light especially in the field work. It is a head gear which is used instead of an umbrella. The weaving technique is two similar nets of hexagonal and V pattern shape in the centre which is equal in size of a man's head. In the midst of these two nets leaves of khofri plants (palm leaves) are placed smoothly after being dried. A jute string is provided at the inner side which helps the man to bind with his neck.

Naora: The Naora is made of wood and the handle is a piece of bamboo. It is like a spade but size is larger. It is used to pull the paddy or corns together while drying in the sunlight (used in pulling).

Hukhen: Hukhen is made from a single piece of burkha bamboo. The last part of the bamboo is used by keeping one branch node for the purpose. It is about 6 or 7 feet in length. Hukhen is used when the paddy seeds are to be separated from the plant.

Sandanga: The Sandanga is woven with fine bamboo slips. It is a round shaped disc like object and its diameter varies from 7 feet to 8 feet. It is almost same like chandri (sieve), but it is larger in size. It is woven with fine bamboo split; small holes are made between to wrap and weft as used by twill technique. The holes of sandanga are bigger than chandri. It is generally used to separate the rice from the hay.

Bharti or Baokha: It is also made of Burkha bamboo. Bharti is also important equipment for the farmer. It is 6 feet to 8 feet long strong bamboo piece which is pointed or torn both side to carry a hump of paddy on their shoulder. This is basically used to carry paddy or corns.

Maithob: Maithob is also another important implement for farmer. It is used as a container of paddy seeds. It is made of bamboo splits and hay turned into an oval shape in order to keep the paddy seed for sowing in the next season.

Khichiri: Khichiri is also another important tool or implement of the farmers. It is made of cane and is given the shape of a ring. It is woven with fine cane split to wrap and weft as used in the technique of twined methods. They are used to make maithaob to keep the paddy seed for sowing in the next season.

Laothi: Bamboo stick. It is also made of bamboo piece and used for beating cattle in the time of ploughing.

Duli (A large basket in which grain is stored): It is made of bamboo strips. This is used to store paddy and mustard seed etc. It is a U shaped basket but its diameter in the mouth portion is slightly greater than the bottom part. It is woven with fine bamboo split wraps and wefts used by twill technique. Dwli is longer and wider than any other baskets.

(ii) Household Commodities:

Khada: The Khada is made of bamboo strips and flexible cane slips. It is a kind of basket. The shape is circular and technique applied for it is by fixing two or four flat bamboo strips which strengthen the edge and the bamboo strips are tied in regular intervals so that their ends join at the conical apex of the basket. Foundation is started with twill technique with two pairs of khami both as warp and weft. Those strips are tied to the basket with cane. It is used for carrying as well as storage of paddy or other corns etc.

Dala: The Dala is also made of bamboo strips and cane slips. The technique applied to twill and its shaped is circular like a tray or platter. The bamboo strips are tied to strong boundary rods with cane strings. It is used for drying corns under sunlight and cleans the rice.

Chandri: Sieve for rice powder and the shape of chandri is circular. Chandri is two types chandri gecheng and chandri gubung. There is no big difference in design between the two but one is of small size and the other is big. It is woven with fine bamboo split; small holes are made between to wraps and wefts used by twill technique. It is tightly bound by bamboo bars suitably made and tied with string of cane. This is used for sieving the corn, paddy, pulses and for separating smaller gains from corn etc. It is also used for washing fish and vegetables.

Khebkhra: It is also made of bamboo split. It is a U shaped basket like khada and the technique of twill method is used in this. Size varies from 35 cm to 55 cm in the outer diameter. The bamboo strips are smaller in width than the Khada. Generally it is used to clean rice, any corn with the water pass through the smaller holes but the rice could not pass through it. The Khebkhra is woven in plane and square form but is gradually bent in a round shaped size.

Batha: The Batha is made of bamboo split and fine cane. It is used to serve betel nut and leave to the guests. It may be of different shapes and sizes.

Jurkha: The Jurkha is a unique implement designed from bamboo split. It is used to keep the young chicks of chicken and ducks in safety. It is like a cage and technique of twined method is used here. On the top a hole is kept to provide food to the chicks.

Doon: Doon is prepared with fine bamboo strips and cane for measuring rice or paddy. It is almost conical in shape. Its holding capacity varies from 2 seers to 3 seers from place to place. A ring is attached at the bottom to enable it to stand on the ground.

Dhara: The Dhara is kind of mat and it's made of bamboo slits. It is woven with fine bamboo split and wraps and wefts are used by twill technique. It can be of larger and smaller sizes. The larger ones are used for sleeping or to dry rice. The smaller Dhara are generally used for sitting and other such purposes.

Mora: Mora is made from bamboo sticks and cane split. It is like a stool and the technique of twined method is used. Mora is used for sitting.

Gisib: It is also made from bamboo strips. It is a hand fan developed by the people. Gisib is made into different shapes and sizes. This is used in the summer time.

Jengkha: Jengkha is made from fine bamboo splits and it is like a vacuum. It is used to sieve rice beer.

Sanggi: Two strong bamboo pieces are weft parallel to bamboo splits. The technique used here is of twined method. The farmers used to carry goods. This is locally known as Sanggi.

(iii) Musical Instruments:

The Bodo are rich in their traditional dances and music which are related to their festivals and rituals. The notes of music are the soul of such folk songs. The singers are accompanied by various instruments which serve the purpose of the singer and give life to their songs. These simple traditional instruments are also some examples of their craftsmanship. The traditional Bodo instruments are discussed below:

Siphung: It is a flute made from bamboo, the long sized Bodo flute having five holes. The length of the Siphung may vary from 3 feet to 3.5 feet.

Thorkha: It is a piece of bamboo clapper and its length varies from 2.5 feet to 3 feet. It is cut vertically into two equal levels so that the lower node is closed or uncut. The lower node saves the clapper from being completely split away. It is a very simple music device which produces sounds like clapping of hands and is generally used in Bwisagu dance.

Gongana: It is the Jew's harp and small wind instruments used by the Bodos. It is like a mouth organ made of bamboo strip which produces sweet musical sound.

(iv) Fishing Implements:

The Bodo people are expert in rowing and fishing. They adopt various methods in fishing operations. People do not use many baskets for fishing but they used khobai for keeping fish. A few fishing traps like ghuni, khoka, jekhai are woven with bamboo splints with a filled to it and placed on the flowing of water of low depths. The traps like jekhai, khabai, pholo are observed in group fishing.

Description of construction of these traps are given below-

Jekhai: The Jekhai is used by the women community, who fishes in shallow pools or river sides. It is prepared with bamboo splits and bamboo is specially used for making this particular implement. The shape and size of trap is triangular or conical shaped bamboo device and its sides are of 2 feet each. Small holes are placed in it so that water passes through it. The holes of wraps and wefts are arranged at least at a distance of one centimetre. This trap has a handle and a string is provided with the trap to put it in water. The joining portion of upper side of the trap is diagonal of the triangle and is woven with hexagonal method of weaving creating comparatively bigger holes.

Khobai (Fishing basket): The Khobai is prepared with bamboo strips. It is very important during the time of fishing. The strips required for the weft are very long at the bottom, while the top is short as compared to the bottom. The shape of khobai is like an earthen pot. This is used for temporarily keeping the fishes during the time of fishing.

Mukhura: It is a kind of cap which is used to cover the khobai (fish basket). It is of funnel shape made of bamboo split.

Khokhlong: The Khokhlong is also another important implement which is used to keep the fish. It is also made of bamboo split. The shape of khokhlong is almost like a bucket.

Ghuni: The Ghuni is made of bamboo strips and fine cane strings in a roundish fashion. The strips are woven in twin holes fashion. This is a kind of fish trap in conical or rectangular in shape and is used to catch fish in shallow water. There are two holes in the middle portion as the exists hole. In the time of trapping the exit holes are closed with thatch. The small fishes can enter into the device and there is no scope for going out.

Pholo: Pholo is a fishing trap made of bamboo and cane used in group fishing in river or pools. It is made of small bamboo strips and flexible cane slips. They apply the twine method in preparing this. It resembles the

shape of a dome with short stem of about 5 inches diameter open at the top. Diameter of the bottom varies from 2feet to 3feet and height varies from 3feet to 4feet. Whenever the fish is caught they put their hand inside it through the stem and catch the fish.

Khokha: The Khokha is made up of a single piece of bamboo. The mouth is made large in shape by making way for water and fishes to enter. The rest is made of such way so that water can easily come out but fishes can not come out of it. The khokha is placed in small streams and river, where there is continuous flow of water. Khokhi is a small size of khokha prepared in the same design.

Jong: The small size of bamboo is made of this trap. It is used for fishing in shallow water. Three or four small sticks are fixed to it by rubbing with a sharp knife.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Bodo community has a rich storehouse of arts and crafts and it is mainly reflected in their composite material culture. They have a proud heritage of handicraft which carries both decorative value and utility in daily life. The Bodo community has indigenous raw materials such as bamboo, woods, cane, thatch, reed etc., for their domestic purposes, functional ceremonies, decorative and other social avocations. They have developed their expertise in making different crafts traditionally out of the locally and naturally available resources. There are varieties of decorative art and craft; there are two distinguished styles which are enjoying monopoly among man and woman.

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