

# **Bihu As A Sub-Nationalist Performance: Reading Its Representation From The Bihu Vcds Of 2000's**

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## **Abstract**

This paper looks at the representation of Assamese sub-nationalism in the Bihu VCDs of Assam. It sees Bihu more as a political performance adhering to the sub-nationalist ideological current, associated to the Assamese socio-cultural identity. The researchers have gone through the literatures on the trajectory of Bihu from folk to political performance, where the performance and the space has transformed itself into a popular cultural space, as a medium of socio-political messaging. This research work looks at the cinematic representation of Bihu and how it got re-packaged in Assamese Bihu VCDs, with conscious and sub-conscious efforts, to uphold the Assamese sub-nationalist identity. The researcher tries to understand the scope for a folk performance to evolve as a political performance on a medium of popular culture. Eric Hobsbawm's 'Inventing tradition', Michael Billig's 'Banal Nationalism', and Anthony D. Smith's concept on 'Nationalism and Ethnic identity' served as the theoretical backdrop for the study.

## **Introduction**

Bihu, evolved as a regular, agrarian celebration observed by most communities in Assam, could be a special illustration of a celebration of acculturation implying the fine amalgamation of numerous societies where religious & ritualistic components of different ethno-racial bunches get acclimatized. Celebrated within the pre and post harvesting period since hundreds of years as recorded within the Buranjis<sup>i</sup> or the chronicled accounts of the Ahoms, Bihu could be a celebration of maturity, ripeness, abundance and enchantment faction.

Bohag or the Rongali Bihu observed during Spring, is the foremost dynamic, happy and colourful among the three Bihus which are watched at different times with distinctive agrarian ritualistic observations. Bohag Bihu's centrality lies within the celebration of Spring characterised by dance moves by young men and women with brisk venturing, fast hand movements and also of hip to the musical assistance of Dhol (traditional drum), Taal (cymbal), Mohar Singar Penpa (an aerophone made of buffalo horn), Gogona (a type of little string instrument made of reed and bamboo) Toka (A long Bamboo Clapper)

etc. Although Assam celebrates two other varieties of Bihu cherishing the good harvest and the wish for it, around the Assamese months of Magh (mid January) and Kati (mid of October), known as Magh or Bhogali Bihu and Kati or Kangali Bihu; in practice Bihu becomes identical to its performance associated to Bohag Bihu.

Proscenium or Stage Bihu, a term as well as practice derived from the celebration of Bihu by Latasil Bihu Sanmilani (1952) and subsequent Proscenium arrangements of Bihu celebration across the state of Assam, post independence, can be credited for the institutionalization of Bihu, both the festival and the performance as the identification icon of Assamese sub-nationalism. Bihu as a performance has been in practice with variations since time immemorial across different communities of Bor Asom<sup>ii</sup> or Greater Assam. As a festival 'Bihu is a festival of acculturation and synthesis'. (Gogoi, 2015) As a performance, Bihu has its origin in Upper Assam<sup>iii</sup> and the folk dance was not performed in Lower Assam<sup>iv</sup> until the emergence of its proscenium celebration during 1950s. In a famous Bihu Geet<sup>v</sup>, the origin and territorial spread of this performance has been documented as,

Mor dhan Kaliyaa  
Alakhor Dewata  
Nilagat Asila roi  
Kolimatik lag pai  
Rangalik lagat loi  
Rohila Kalibarat.

### **English**

My Dear Kaliya<sup>vi</sup>, Deity from heavenly abode. You were waiting at a distance, till you met Kolimati<sup>vii</sup>. With her you established Rangal- the Spring Festival at Kaliabar.

(Kaliabar is the present time constituency of Assam state assembly, also considered to be the mid of Brahmaputra valley of Assam.)

Folk performances under Peepal tree at villages of upper Assam entered into a political domain with Rajaghariya Husari<sup>viii</sup> at King's courtyards during Ahom rule. Radha Govinda Baruah, architect of modern Assam introduced the concept of Stage Bihu in 1952 at Latasil, Guwahati.

With growth of the pluralistic national idea, there is a parallel growth of sub-nationalism across India based upon, ethnicity, cultural identity and language. The emergence of proscenium or stage Bihu in the Latasil field of Guwhati and popularisation across the state, even in the Western Assam, where the performance was not part of the festival, took place with the purpose of having a national festival for the Assamese sub-national identity. This can be seen in the light of similar other cultural nationalistic arrangements, can be seen as 'inventing traditions' defined by Eric Hobsbawm, such as Barowari Durga Puja of West Bengal and Ganesh Chaturthi of Maharashtra<sup>ix</sup>. However, unlike its Maratha or Bengali counterparts, Bihu has no religious association.

The sub-nationalist idea in the context of Assam that has its origin in 19<sup>th</sup> century Assam was further catalysed by the “Assam Movement in 1979” that surfaced as one of the most prominent identity verification and assertion movement in Independent India, revolving around the issues of immigration from neighbouring Bangladesh. Influential faces of the movement utilized traditional performances and expressions like Bihu as a medium to disseminate their message. Performances were used as banal reference to ‘Assamese nationality’ as well as to raise regional identity questions.

The performance of Bihu as an idea of unifying the Assamese national populace and a banal national reference to Assamese identity also found more prominent place in the movies of Assam especially post 1980s movement. However, suggestions were made even before from the very first Assamese film, Joymoti. Emergence of the Bihu VCDs that got popular in the 2000s, has made more significant reference of Bihu as national icon.

The late 1990s and early 2000s was an appalling time for many in Assam. The radical and counter-insurgency operations were at one of its most noticeably awful peak. Human life was cheap and individuals lived beneath the shadows of Bandhs (Strikes), Bomb Impacts, Curfews and Encounters. One of the a few side-effects of this was the withdrawal of the normal individual from public and cultural spaces such as, the cinema halls. The decay of the cinema halls implied the decay of the Assamese film industry which was as of now under-performing in terms of income. The industry, for economic sustainability, reinvented itself within the newly emerged VCD medium of home-video viewing. Within the mid-2000s, with less and less individuals coming to cinema halls, the industry moved from creating feature length movies for theatrical releases to transcendently Bihu-centric hour-long family shows to be sold as VCDs.

Since VCD made films accessible to the bulk rural population in Assamese villages and small towns, there was a parallel movement in subjects as the industry transitioned from creating for theatres to producing for VCDs. This marked a significant shift in Assamese film audience, which had previously been dominated by urban and semi-urban moviegoers. As a result, the focus changed from city/town portrayals of family drama to village depictions , with an emphasis on Bihu.

Popularity of these VCDs as the most significant prevailing medium of popular culture has further re-established the performance and the festival of Bihu as the national cultural icon of Assamese identity. This paper, in a broader sense, would aim to understand the scope and evolution of a folk performance to evolve as a political performance on a medium of popular culture, the Bihu VCDs. Eric Hobsbawm’s idea of inventing tradition will back the following discussion on Bihu as a Political expression as well as national reference, reading from Bihu VCDs, along with Michael Billig’s idea of banal nationalism and Anthony Smith’s concept of ethno-centric national identity.

### **Bihu as a political expression**

The 1980s witnessed uproar against the illegal immigrants and the great Assam Movement kicked off to achieve a conclusive solution from the wretched problem and to protect the life

and rights of the indigenous communities of the state. The movement symbolically used Bihu instruments such as Bihu Dhols, Penpa and Banhi<sup>x</sup> in the upper Assam section (districts of Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar) to mobilise the people and spread the message of unity and affinity among the Assamese people. (Bora, 2020)

Debutant Assamese monthly 'Prantik' in the year 1980, carried a report with a photograph of a cultural rally documenting a group of people marching in Bihu attire. Bihu attires such as Gamusa, Tongali, were used as symbol of unity and integrity, which can be asserted as a "Banal Nationalist symbol". Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism refers to such casual representation and reconstruction of a nation on day to day basis. Such casual representation of the nation over media and in other activities, build a common sense of national belonging amongst a group of people that shares a national boundary and a government. Gamusa, a hand weaved towel, often worn in the head during farming and other activities by male members to wipe their face is also tied around the head as a garment during bihu performances was used as a flag, a symbolic representation of Assamese identity even today.



The photograph captured at a non-credited location, accompanied by a emotionally powerful caption denoted the ethos of the movement.

The caption was: "Aiya diya mor bihu gamochare guli howa tej machi"

**English:** I have used the 'Gamocha' gifted on Bihu by my mother to wipe out the blood from my bullet wound hand.

Meghai Das, a Dhuliya (drummer) from the Golaghat district of Upper Assam, recollected his memory from the performances of Bihu during 1980's, where he improvised many songs from popular slogans of the movement:

Aji asomire bukute

Kune jui logale

Desh bulile adeshu amak nelage

Ulai ah homoniya

Desh rakhibole jau

Pran di holeu

Jibon di holeu

Desh rakhibole jau

Heiyah heiyah hein.

**English:** Who put the fire at the heart of my mother Assam? We don't care for orders when it comes to fight for our nation. Come one come all my friends to save our motherland. We care not to sacrifice our lives and we only want to keep our motherland/nation alive.<sup>xi</sup>

Such banal elements of nationalism have been adhered in Bihu performances even before the Assam agitation. Traces can be found anywhere and everywhere in literature, dance, music even in mundane Assamese daily life. Whereas the garments, ornaments, instruments, the lyrics even body postures associated with Bihu have always been inscribed as an Assamese socio-political identity, political expression of Bihu and its performances can be traced back to Colonial rule of British East India Company. One of the celebrated Bihu Geet from the early colonial time documents the coming of East India Company and its effect on normal Assamese life,

Ujaye Aahile Companyr Jahaj oi

Pithopi tolbol dekho

### **English**

With the East India Company Ship came up the river, I see the earth shaking.

Another example of contemporary political narrative being a part of Bihu performances during the rule of East India Company inscribes the killing of two Assamese nationalist rebels from Sepoy Mutiny time- Maniram Dewan and Piyali Phukan. The song says,

Maniramak marili bhalake karili

Piyalik marili kiya

Xeino katha xuni Rangpurar Aamolar

Aakaxe uri gol Jeewa.

### **English**

I can understand you killing Maniram; but why have you killed Piyali ? With this news the administration of Rangpur, received a real shake.

This particular Bihu Geet also documents the end of Ahom rule or the Medieval era in Assam, that has its base in Rangpur or present day Sivasagar. However, Bihu performances made

space for political narratives even before British time, when they incorporated the battle between Ahoms and Sutiya community held in Sadiya during the Sixteenth century,

Diburur rankhan Xadiyat lagile

Miriyani kandile dalat

Tomare xantapat thakiba nowaaro

Marimgoi Xadiyar ranat.

### **English**

The battle of Diburu was fought in Sadiya, where the Mising women cried a lot. I can't take this separation from you, rather I would die in that battle of Sadiya.

However, it will be fair enough to say the whole identity of Bihu from an agrarian festival to the epitome of Assamese identity has been reconstructed during the Assam movement with idea of Assamese sub-nationalism at its core. Assam movement provided a political character to Assamese identity with Bihu as a banal expression and icon representing this identity.

### **Assamese Sub-nationalism and Bihu**

Looking at the evolution of Assamese sub-nationalism, the idea has always been pertinent within the working set up of Indian nationalism since the time of Indian Freedom Movement. If one observes the genesis and growth of Assamese media and literature scenario- an intricate part of Assamese sub national identity, it is inherently connected to and shaped by the sub-national Assamese identity. Joydeep Biswas has observed the existence of this sub nationalism in case of Assamese print media scenario,

...since the time when the first Assamese news periodical, Orunodai, was brought out under the aegis of the American Baptist Missionaries from Sibsagar. As or much later down the line when the first daily, Dainik Batori, began to be churned out from the outskirts of Jorhat in 1935 till the fag end of the last century when in 1995 the highest circulated Assamese daily, Asomiya Pratidin, was first published, Assam print media journalism has always rallied around Assamese nationalism.(Biswas, 2015)

During 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial rulers evidently showed great reliance and confidence on the middle-class people from neighbouring Bengal for government services including railways, tax and legal affairs. It resulted in the migration of a Bengali middle class and appeared as a threat to the newly emerged Assamese middle class in getting jobs and professions. This further sourced a cultural nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eminent scholar Hiren Gohain said,

From the 1840s onwards the middle-class had led a revolt against the Bengali domination of the administration and culture of Assam. They had looked forward to an assured, gradual transformation of Assam into an Assamese-speaking state under their leadership, and to the enjoyment of the fruits of their hegemony. (Gohain, 1983, p. 633)

Traditional performances and expressions become significant in case of an identity movement, when an identity conflict arises in a social system, as these are usually attached to social identity. Debojeet Bora, referring to Arnold Hauser, has observed any artistic expression often incorporates the societal changes within the structure. (Bora, 2020). Hauser's opinion turned out true in case of 19<sup>th</sup> century formation of Assamese sub-nationalism. As a result of the newly felt socio-cultural identity crisis, Assamese literary and cultural figures started exploring and experimenting with cultural heritages from the region that can serve as an identity icon for Assamese national identity. Result of this conscious experiment can be observed in the illustration of Bihu as national festival that first took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century 'Assamese renaissance' with the help of Assamese novels like Manomati, Joymoti, Danduwa Droh or plays like Lobhita, Kanaklata and others.

Immediately after independence, proscenium stage popularised the performance of Bihu across the state, even in the Western part, where the performance was not that familiar among mass if not alien. With the dominance of the performance, the celebration of Bohag or the Spring time Bihu also started enjoying the status of national festival of Assam. Gradually Bihu becomes the national identity of Assamese sub-nationalism and a performance synonymous to Assamese identity. This process reached its peak during Assam movement.

During Assam movement, a new set of doctrines to the ethnic festivals was born, traditions have been reformed and Bihu emerged as a polished festival. This political dimension of Bihu can be analysed from Eric Hobsbawm's 'Invented tradition'. Invented tradition refers to a bunch of ritualistic practices; usually administered by obvious or tacitly accepted regulations and a ritual that tries to infuse and inspire certain behavioural values and norms by virtue of recurrence, which involuntarily implies continuity from the past. Hobsbawm explained the idea as,

The term 'invented tradition' is used in a broad, but not imprecise sense. It includes both 'traditions' actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within brief and dateable period—a matter of a few years perhaps—and establishing themselves with great rapidity. (Hawbson, 1983).

Connecting the idea to the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism', he observes national movements to create new tradition often, to go with their nationalistic narrative structure (Hobsbawm, 1983). Dynamics between Bihu and Assam movement is a logical reflection of Hobsbawm's explanation. Changes like 'Stage Bihu' can be seen as inventing tradition in the light of nationalism.

Anthony D. Smith's idea of 'Nationalism and Ethnic identity' that considers ethnicity as the most significant and dominant origin of the nation-states with an ethnies cultural heritage at its core can also be rightfully evoked here. Smith argues ethnicity to be the most influential origin of the nation-states. (Smith, 1991) Ethnic unity is a primary requisite for a nation as without a coherent mythology, symbolism of history and culture, it would be very hard for a community to survive with a national identity. The relation between cultural heritage of an

ethnic identity and nationalism was explained with reference to the raise of Assamese nationalism echoing Jelena Petkovic (2011) by Parismita Hazarika & Debarshi Prasad Nath as a sense “often marked by the vision of a national identity based on the history and cultural heritage of a particular community or a group of people.” (Hazarika & Nath, 2022) Inventing tradition of Stage Bihu can here be looked at as a symbolism of Assamese ethnic culture and re-structuring of Bihu festival and the performance can be looked at as the reform of ethnics, a primary condition according to Smith for any ethnic community- in this case a cluster of communities, to emerge as a nation.

The Assam movement in the 1980s came up with a more structured-choreographed performance style. These performances, which were once associated to post-harvest celebrations, are now given a more unified meaning. As Debojeet Bora has observed the connection between stage Bihu and Assamese sub-nationalism during 1980s,

Whereas Organized/stage Bihu was initially sorted out to oblige Bihu Dance troupes and artists in arrange to celebrate the Assamese New Year, the concept of organize Bihu was utilized as a stage to not as it were to celebrate Bihu, but to welcome prevalent leaders to provide talks amid those politically unstable periods, who were more often rooting to the idea of Assamese identity. (Bora, 2020)

The movement urged for a unified identity for the people of Assam and stood against the illegal immigration. Since traditional performances and artistic expressions are often attached to the social identity, we can find sheds of traditional as well as cultural performances of ‘Bihu’ used as a tool by the movement leaders to send the messages across the state. Such usage of traditional Bihu instruments like Dhol, Banhi, Penpa, Tal still plays a significant role in the protests and movements for Assamese identity sub-nationalist identity. The recent movement against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) and consequent Citizenship Amendment Act (ACT) lay witness to it.

Transition of Bihu performances and expressions from traditional space to a proscenium stage during 1950s and subsequent appropriation of the festival to a political space during 1980s, all these factors facilitated the formation of a political and cultural icon associated to Assamese sub-nationalism. Today, the performance of Bihu has become an identity as well as banal expression of Assamese or Asomiya and Assamese sub-nationalism and as discussed before banal reference of the same has also found place in Assamese cinematic expression.

### **Bihu VCDs and portrayal of Assamese sub-nationalism**

Michael Billig came up with the idea of Banal nationalism that refers to the often-unnoticed processes of replicating nations every day. (Billig, 1995) The idea stresses upon the signs of nation and nationalism, which are usually too common and over circulated to catch separate attention. The concept focuses on the banal expressions of nationalism and its elements often overlooked in the discussions of hot nationalism. Discussing about the role of media Billig has discussed about the banal projection, circulation and utilization of symbols and indirect



reference of nation in different media platforms. In his *Banal Nationalism and the Imagining of Politics* Michael, he said,

“...ordinary citizens may fail to observe the national symbols on the stamps that they are affixing to their letters or on the banknotes that they are spending in shops, it is less forgivable that social theorists should routinely be so unobservant.” (Billig, 2017)

One can look at the political re-structuring and projection of Bihu since pre-independent period in the light of banal representation of Assamese sub-nationalism. And quite naturally, such reference of Bihu and its related rituals, performances and expressions made some space in the popular medium of cinema as well.

From the very beginning of Assamese Cinema in 1935, Bihu has been projected to symbolize Assamese identity. The first Assamese film *Joymoti* also had reference of Bihu in it. Another significance reference can be traced in Sarbeshwar Chakraboty's nationalist historical drama *Maniram Dewan* in the year 1963. Reference of Bihu as symbolic to sub-national identity got more prominence in 1980s, post Assam movement both in art-house films like *Aparupa* (1982) or mainstream crowd pleasures like *Ajali Nabou* (1982). Much like *Gamucha*, *Sarai*, *Tea* or *one-horned Rhinoceros* Bihu performances also started getting a political character as a banal nationalist reference to Assamese identity.

In early 2000s, Assam witnessed the rise of a new set of film category, both in projection and making, when the main militant groups of North-East India, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) 'banned' screening of Hindi or so-called Bollywood films in the state. The given logic was that these Hindi films were polluting indigenous culture of Assam with the inputs from western films or trends. Incidents of bomb blasts in few cinema halls made the people frightened to come to theatres to watch films. But Hindi film industry aka Bollywood is such a big industry that a ban in a state like Assam can't influence it anyhow. Therefore, this ban only led to shutting down of cinema halls in Assam, because these halls were mainly dependent upon Hindi films since number of Assamese films produced in a year is less than sufficient to run the theatre business profitably.

As a result of this decline of cine business people started making films of short duration to release in the form of VCDs, in a low budget using new digital technology. Interestingly, when industry moved from creating feature length movies for theatrical releases to short length VCD projections, stories were centered on Bihu in rural Assam. This was a shift in subjects of the films as the industry transitioned from targeting urban and semi-urban moviegoers.

As a result, the focus changed from city/town portrayals of family drama in 1990s, which had no local identity, to Assam centric village depictions, with an emphasis on Bihu. Almost all of these VCD films are based on stories of an essentially Assamese village life, and are developed using some Bihu songs. An Assamese way of life was represented and reinforced with performances of Bihu. Bihu served as the revival element of ethnic identity hence a banal reference to Assamese sub-nationalist identity was projected in these VCD films.



Image 1:

Still from Assamese Bihu VCD Lefafa with female protagonist standing alongside a Kapou ful (Foxtail orchid) - state flower of Assam and essential part of Bihu repertoire.



Image 2:

Still from Assamese Bihu VCD Junbai. Characters performing Bihu Husori with formal Husori repertoire.

Gamocha (Assamese Towel), Kapou ful (state flower of Assam), Muga and Cotton hand weaved Sadar-Mekhelas (traditional attire for women) and other elements of Bihu repertoire become popular among youngsters through these VCDs and thus VCDs inculcated an Assamese way of life among the new generations.

Apart from Bihu performances and the subject of Bihu itself, these VCDs also showcased elements of Assamese folk life, like Dheki (traditional rice mill), Jeora (Bamboo fencing), Assam type house, Jetuka (Traditional form of Mehendi worn on Bihu), Kaanhar Baasan and Taamol-Paan (Bell metal utensil and Betel nut), Dola, Khorahi and other bamboo appliances for harvesting and storing activities of crops, Bhaaonaa (kind of Folk theatre) and even local proscenium Bihu performances etc. These elements made Banal references to ethnic identity of Assamese sub-nationalism.



Image 3



Image 4

Image 3 & 4: Jeora (Bamboo fences) and Assam type House- banal reference to Assamese rural life from Lefafa 1 and a performance of Assamese folk theatre Bhaaonaa from Junbai 1



Image 5



Image 6

Image 5 & 6: Banal use of Bell metal utensil to keep water during a casual conversation between the protagonist and her husband in Lefafa 1; Banal reference with Bamboo appliance of Kulaa and Kharaahi in Lefafa 2.

Even in these VCDs, proscenium Bihu played a pivotal role presenting it as a traditional part of the Bihu festival. Plots were surrounded around these proscenium Bihu, where competitions like Bihu kunwari (best female Bihu dancer/performer), Dhulia (best drummer), Penpuwa (best \_\_\_ ) were presented as the climax. Bihu Akhora (Rehearsals) are presented as the most important activity in the day-to-day life of the youths. It is presented on the same balance as that of a soldier fighting in the border for his country. Collection of Chanda (donation) for organising proscenium Bihu was presented and also justified when needed.



Image 7: A Proscenium performance from VCD Jonbai-1



Image 8: A scene of road blockade to collect chanda (donation).

Such banal Assamese reference of subliminal nature in Bihu VCDs can be analysed from the perspective of cinematic nation construction as discussed by Mette Hjort (1983) Hjort said existence of nation in cinema are perennial reference of the topical theme of nation. Hjort has noticed reference of Danish cookies in Danish cinema as perennial reference of Danish theme of nation. Similarly the festival of Bihu and all the ritualistic expressions and performances made some perennial reference to Assamese sub-nationalism in the discussed VCDs.

### Conclusion

Usually when we look at mass performances like Bihu with the idea of ‘theatre event’ by Theatre historian Thomas Postlewait, the larger political role of these performance forms get

reflected. Bihu as a banal nationalist reference to Assamese identity had been reconstructed and recreated during Assam movement. The transition of Bihu from traditional space to a political space had advanced the formation of Assamese sub-nationalism. This political role associated to Bihu reflecting sub-nationalist identity gets re-packaged in Assamese Bihu VCDs, with conscious and sub-conscious efforts, to uphold the Assamese sub-nationalist identity. It is a matter of directing the audience's attention toward those references suggestive of national identity to hit at subliminal level, and also of doing so at key moments throughout the narrative. In the process, Bihu has been fostered in these VCDs as a strong socio-political narrative as well as expression and thus recreating the Assamese sub-national identity.

The researchers believes that like the 19<sup>th</sup> century novels of Assam, these VCDs also tried to re-construct and re-enforce the national identity of Bihu over a medium of popular culture. Consequence of such re-construction over popular media can be seen in the objectification as a reality among a large mass as defined by Berger and Luckman (1966). Construction of a Bihu centric society in the Bihu VCDs of 2000 also further objectified the sub-national reality of Assamese with Bihu at its core across the state.

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### **Endnotes**

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<sup>i</sup> Buranjis chronicled accounts of the Ahoms.

<sup>ii</sup> Bor Asom or Greater Assam is he idea and regional identity that refers to the greater-undivided state of Assam until 1967

<sup>iii</sup> Upper Assam refers to the administrative division of Assam comprising the eastern part of the Brahmaputra valley. Ahom ruled this region that started from present day Tinsukia district to the Kalibar in middle Assam.

<sup>iv</sup> Lower Assam is an administrative division of Assam that consist the Western Part of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam.

<sup>v</sup> Bihu songs to accompany Bihu performances.

<sup>vi</sup> First Bihu Dhuliyaa or Drummer as per Bihu legends.

<sup>vii</sup> First and best dancer of Bihu as per legend.

<sup>viii</sup> Husori or the Bihu performed at the King's courtyard.

<sup>ix</sup> Barowari Durga Puja is the public observance and celebration of untimely worship of Goddess Durga during autumn Navaratri. Ganesh Chaturthi of Maharashtra and Barowari Durga Pujas were evolved as invented tradition during Indian freedom struggle.

<sup>x</sup> Assamese traditional drum, Buffalo horned wind instrument and Flute

<sup>xi</sup> Meghai Das sung these lyrics while in conversation with Dr. Debajit Bora at his home at Rajanakhat, Golaghat in 2016.

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