

## CHAPTER-III

# PREPARATION OF RICE AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

### 3.1 Introduction

The scientific name of the rice is *Oryza sativa* that grown in wet and humid climatic weather. It is a kind of wild grass variety mostly grown in the Himalayan foot hills. Asian countries mostly grow rice for their staple food. Indian people use rice as staple food. The southern Indian people think that the rice production in India was initiated in south India and scattered to Northern India to China, Korea, Philippines (about 2000 B.C.) and then Japan and Indonesia (about 1000 B.C.). People believe that Alexander the Great invader took rice back to Greece (in 327 B. C.), the travellers from Arab to Europe, Portugal, Netherlands and then to West Africa and so on Spanish to South America.<sup>107</sup> It seems to have appeared around 1400 B.C. in southern India after its domestication in the northern plains.

### 3.2 Acquisition of Rice

Rice is the staple diet for more than half of the world's population and is consumed principally in Asia.<sup>108</sup> Indian land is suitable for rice cultivation. The largest area of Indian land is used for rice cultivation. The rice variety *indica* were domesticated in North Eastern India. It is believed by historiographers that the rice variety *indica* were domesticated in North Eastern India. The *japonica* variety was domesticated from wild rice in southern China which was introduced to India. The permanent wild rice variety is still growing in Assam and Nepal. North east India has the diverse land quality with swamp, under water and dry lands. The north Eastern Indian plains are suitable for rice cultivation for swamp land. Assam is the best for cultivating rice varying its seeds as per change of the seasons. Ashra, Bawa, Maisali all traditional varieties are produced and traditional cultivation methods are deployed to produce organic rice among the Bodos.

Rice is the foremost frequently used staple food of the Bodo community living in Assam. The weather to cultivate rice is very good in Assam. People live on agricultural products especially on rice cultivation Assam. It has previously been noticed that the revenue of the land was estimated in measures of *dhanya* or rice yielded by it.<sup>109</sup> B.K. Barua in his

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<sup>107</sup> <https://farmer.gov.in/imagedefault/pestanddiseasescrops/rice.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> Shakuntala Manay. N. and Shadaksharaswamy, M. *Food facts and principles*. New Delhi: New age international private limited publishers, reprint, third edition, 2010(2001).p.210.

<sup>109</sup> Barua. B.K. *A Cultural History of Assam (Early Period)*. Gauhati: Bina Library, Third Edition, 1986(1951).p.93.

book *A Cultural History of Assam* (early period) states about the prevalence of barter system using rice in the then Assamese society. Even today the agrarian Bodo families exchange rice with other materials or borrow rice in the measuring unit of Mon<sup>110</sup> as loan. Poor cultivators borrow rice as loan from rich landlords as loan for a season and recover it with additional amount of rice in time of the harvest. Earlier measurement of rice was in dukhli a bamboo basket as a basket full of rice or two as measuring unit.

They are busy in cultivation of rice in rainy and winter seasons both for ashu and maisali traditional Asian rice varieties. Traditional cultivation method for the cultivation is still prevalent in the area. The use of land for the cultivation is also traditional in acquisition. They collect rice by cultivating in their owned, land for *bondhak* (land for lease) and *adhi* (a system of equal share after cultivation) for cultivation. Rice production is the highest in Assam followed by Tripura and Manipur<sup>111</sup> in North East India. They mostly dwell in fertile land and in search of this they migrate to the fertile land or nearby forest for their available food commodities. In the medieval Assam people cultivated both wet and dry (ahu and sali), being the principal agricultural pre occupation of the people varieties of paddy both finer and coarser types were cultivated.<sup>112</sup>

The word ahu and sali are usual spoken in Assamese language and the Bodos use these two terms as ashu and maisali for the same. Ashu is also called the khorma mai in some places of the state. It is of brown colour with single traditional variety of the season. Another seasonal variety has different species like maima and maisa are known as *Maisali mai*. *Maisa* means mai fisa the small rice variety and *maima mai gidir* means the large rice variety. *Bawa mai* is another rice variety cultivated in the rainy season. Both large and small shaped rice are used by them. Sticky rice the maibra, jwsa scented rice, maima, tangaguri, tengrai, siali jwsa, bokha mai, mai fakhri along with numbers of traditional rice available in the area are cultivated in daily life

Like other Hindu communities, Bodos too have faith on rice as wealth, prosperity, and fertility. Rice is believed to be the mother Mainao in Bodo the Lakshmi as Hindu deity. Use of rice in every worshipping activity in Bodo community is a custom.

Every ritualistic function are celebrated and observed by using rice. Marriage ceremony of the community people is integral part of human life. Every aspect of marriage

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<sup>110</sup> Mon is a measuring unit for weighable materials such as rice, wheat etc. in traditional way. A mon is equal to forty kilograms.

<sup>111</sup> Sarma. B.K. and Pal, P.P. *Food production food problem and public distribution system in North- East India in the Book Agriculture food security nutrition and health in North East India edited by Basu, Debashis , Francis Kulkarni, B. and Dutta Ray B.* New Delhi: Mittal Publications, first edition, 2006. P.104.

<sup>112</sup> Sarma. Satyendranath. *A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200-1800 A.D.)*. Gauhati: Bina Library, First Edition, Reprint, 2001(1989).p.246.

has use of rice. Offering rice in don<sup>113</sup> is a traditional idea of the people that they believe it to be the prosperity of the households. The mai duni/ don and mairong duni/don are the customary processes for exploitation of rice in the community. Pinching of rice by the bride and bridegroom in marriage is a sign of seeking blessing for prosperity on the family. At the end of the mainao puja or other spiritual ceremonies the progression of round procession around the Bathwu alter keeping Mairong Duni/don and Mai duni/don on the head of women member of the family is also an indication of respect for rice in the society.

The arrangement of Mai Nainai fwrwb in the month of Kati is a women ritual that woman of the family goes to gaze paddy field and offer a goi khandi, fathwi, sunwi and sindur to make intimacy with the rice property. Woman offer her edibles to rice treating as a biological being. Paddy plants are pasted with mustard oil by touching on cotton and baleb is done to please the rice plant.<sup>114</sup> It has a great cultural value with the expression of the woman folk.

The offering materials are added with rice or rice made edibles. Phandra ritual associated with rice and rice made varieties of cakes. Asi phitha, kharai phitha, enthab phitha, pani laru, Those rice made items are offered to the departed soul of the family in time of Phandra.<sup>115</sup> Spreading rice in time of feasting on shraddha in the name of deceased is a ritual among them.

Marriage ceremony of the society is almost impossible without rice. Biban the package of the bride price contains the rice along with other packages. Mainao biban is the main package containing rice, areca nuts and betel leaf to offer the bride's guardian. Bodo onla wngkhri is prepared with rice powder grinded and produced from rice grain. Hathasuni khurnai is a traditional system of marriage. As a ritual the bride cook rice and curry of ground rice and chicken without applying spice and turmeric.<sup>116</sup>

They worship the supreme god Bathwu Bwrai and other 18 numbers of subordinate Gods and deities. Before worship they prepare the Bathwu alter holy by spreading rice powder. Pasting mud and cow dung is a process of purification and then the grinded rice powder is stretched on it. Rice is treated to be the pure and holy. The society has a habit of offering and preparation of food items to their believed gods and deities.

Bwthwr mwdai hwnai is a tradition of offering food and other edibles to the home deity. There are two seasonal deity worship rituals in traditional Bodo villages. These rituals

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<sup>113</sup> Don is a pot filled with rice both milled or row rice crops especially used for ritual purposes. The word is also used as duni in most of the Bodo dominated area. Pot is named after its containment of rice form this are mairong don for containing rice and mai don for containing row rice don.

<sup>114</sup> Kamali Ramchiary. Female, 57 years, housewife Vill. Hatirtari, P.S. Mushalpur, Baksa. Dated. 14/10/2019.

<sup>115</sup> Parul Mushahary. Female, 49 years. Vegetable Vendor, Vill. Amjonga, Goalpara, dated 15/3/2020.

<sup>116</sup> Brahma. Sekhar. *Religion of the Boros and their Socio-Cultural Tradition*. Guwahati: DVS Publishers, First Published, Reprint, 2011.p.24.

are basically celebrated to satisfy the home deity in ashu and maisali seasonal rite. These two rituals have sole relation with both the seasonal rice for those are offered to the holy beings. Red coloured Ashu rice is needed for ashu seasonal bormani and maisali rice is necessary to offer in the maisali season to Bormani deity only. In the name of seasonal rice the puja is named as ashu maini puja and maisali maini puja. They call this ritual as No ni mwdai hwnai or Bormali/Bormani puja or the Bisohori puja.

Rice is added with other edibles like lentil of the season, bettle nut and leafs, ginger and a pair of pigeons for sacrifice or flowers for whom not sacrifice bloods in the puja. On the contrary maisali rice is offered with same process. In some places there was a tradition of Shakta worship who sacrifice goat fowl, pigeons in the name of Bishohori or the goddess of prosperity Padmabati. They worship by offering a pair of white pigeons or white goat to Bormani or the Bisohari<sup>117</sup>. The Bodos offer black goat to Kola Kuber<sup>118</sup> and sacrifice a buffalo in Marai puja.<sup>119</sup>

Bodo Brahma dharma believers do offer rice along with other fruits, grams, grains and perfumes to the Brahma the Agni god or the great Brahma one of the three supreme Gods. In respect to their gods and deities they offer flowers, areca nuts and Prasadas. Prasadas offered to gods and deities are proportionally added with cereal like mung, grams, rice and coconuts. Rice made local liquor is offered to Bathwu Bwrai and other subordinate gods and deities it was a tradition of the community.

Phutli Haba the doll marriage contains the reference of the rice variety of both Ashu and Maisali along with the sacrificial animals, fowl or whatever they wished to have in the time of marriage. This has been noticed in the performances that are sung and presented. The following stanza expresses the presentation of rice and rice beer in time of Phuthli Haba-

Akhu Mainao khw hwnanggwn  
 Khali Mainao hwnanggwn  
 Khali Mainaoni jokhaikhw  
 Ishwrnw hwnanggwn hwnanggwn<sup>120</sup>

### **English rendering-**

We will have to offer the Akhu rice  
 We will have to offer the Khali rice

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<sup>117</sup> Bishohari is a deity that receives a pigeon, lentil, areca nut- betel leaf, traditional seasonal rice especially ashu and maisali in two different agricultural seasons. Bodo community people worship the goddess in the name of Bormani and other Hindu name Marai offering blood of animals.

<sup>118</sup> Kola Kuber is a god of money who is worshipped by the community people offering goat to have wealth and prosperity.

<sup>119</sup> Basumatary, Sukumar. *Boro Khuga Thunlaini Oja Sukumar Basumatary ni Swrji Bihung (Khwndwnwi)*. Mushalpur: First Edition, 2012.p.51.

<sup>120</sup> Basumatary, Phukan. *Phuthli Haba*. Baganpara: Nilima Prakashani, First Edition, 2011.p.22.

We do have to offer the rice beer  
Of Maisali to the God.

A mother who delivers baby is given a kind of rice-chicken soup added with Banlu Bwddwn after three days to strengthen her body. Wngkham mar or wngkham Maldi is a liquid food coming out of boiling rice with highly valued food. The rice soup is produced when the cooking rice is bubbled over the cover of the pot these are poured on the cover then it is collected to consume.

Rice is the first and foremost food for newly eating baby. Soft cooked rice the wngkham gephe<sup>121</sup> with curry recipes are given to baby after six months. In this ritual rice made diverse foods are given to him or her so as to make him owner of varieties of edibles having no scarcity in life to come.

Throwing rice without any meaning accepted as lwkhisara, that has no richness.

Bodo community people take rice three times a day. Cultivating family members eat rice items in morning day time and night. Rice fulfils the hunger and no other food can do. Nature and habit of eating rice is different in communities. Bodo people living in Kokrajhar district has special variety of rice eating habit that they eat rice mixed dal curry. They eat sobai gwan that is light food.

### **3.3 Methods of Rice Preparation and Recipe**

The methods of rice preparation are divided in to the following division

1. Steaming
2. Fried Items
3. Cooked Items
4. Boiled
5. Grinding Items
6. Laddu Pasting Items
7. Puffed
8. Flake item

#### **3.3.1 Steaming**

The general method for steaming food is needed food items to cook in steam. The food item is covered with a compact utensil without touching water level or any liquid in the vessel except water vapour. Steamed rice or wngkham homnai is a rice item prepared without mixing water in it. It is prepared with water heating in an earthen pot of water. For the

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<sup>121</sup> Wngkham gephe is a kind of cooked rice that is prepared adding more water in time of cooking. The rice need more water more heat in cooking to become soft.

preparation of steamed rice sufficient amount of rice is soaked for one to two hours in a pot. The soaked rice is drained keeping on a holed pot khirkha<sup>122</sup>.

A pot of boiling water is ready to steam the rice. When the boiling water is bubbled the rice is to be taken in a pot is taken in a pot made of coconut cell. It is covered with flat cleaned cloth and then kept it on the mouth of earthen pot. After a few while the bowl is removed separating from the rice. Then the load of rice is covered wholly with the cloth. After a few minutes the rice gets cooked with the steam of boiled water and this is called wngkham homnai which the steamed rice. The steaming rice is also prepare in another way keeping rice with a little water fully covering the container without leaking air and heat on it.

The steamed rice is prepared for the consumption in the following rice varieties and items mentioned.

Sl.	Name of rice	Food item	Consumed as
1.	Matha mairong	Wngkham homnai	Tiffin /meal
2.	Maibra mairong	Maibra homnai	Tiffin
3.	Bokha mairong	Bokha homnai	Tiffin
4.	Jwsa mairong	Jwsa homnai	Tiffin /meal
5.	Maibra gswm	Maibra gswm homnai	Tiffin
6.	Maibra gufur/ jwsa maibra	Maibra gufur homnai	Tiffin

The above table shows the 6 types (from sl.no.1 to 6 of the above table) of food items with the variety of rice consumed as tiffin or general meal. All the items are made of rice and the items are named after the rice varieties.

Steamed cake item is one of the cakes that are consumed in various occasions basically in Magh festival this kind of cake is prepared. The steamed items are made with rice flour after pounding the rice in a wooden grinder the dingkhi or owal.

### 3.3.2 Fried Items

Bodo people consume rice in the form of fry also. The fried item of the rice is sourai, wngkham eonai. The wngkham eonai is a form of rice that is cooked and fry in the Bodo self-form. They generally do not fry the rice for the consumption. When rice is remained after eating in meals it is prepared as the fried item. When rice of previous night cools and tight for it frying that is fried adding a little mustard oil, salt to taste and turmeric on it.

<sup>122</sup> Khirkha is a bamboo pot half circle shaped with draining facility to drain water from the pot. It has small medium and large-shaped.

### **3.3.3 Cooked items**

The method of cooking rice for food is an ordinary process practiced among the community like other neighbouring communities of Assam. The cooking process is generally named as songnai, for which ingredients are blended, heated and it is get ready to eat. There is a linear process that makes rice to eat able for healthy living.

The process of songnai may be divided into two different items with its methods these are (i) songnai wngkham, (ii) sornai wngkham and (iii) seki nai wngkham. These processes are universally known as songnai the cooking methods and by methods these are named as such.

#### **3.3.3.1 Songnai wngkham**

The rice is also cooked for food. For the cooking rice item rice is first washed and drained the water from the rice. A sufficient amount of water is boiled for a few minutes or till it bubbles. Then the washed rice is poured on it and blend the rice by a khadou<sup>123</sup>. The mouth upside of the pot is covered to stop vapour. The rice and water are blended by heating a few minutes. After a few minutes of heating the rice will become soft and ready to serve. This process is called the cooking by heating.

#### **3.3.3.2 Sornai wngkham**

Another form of the cooked item is made with water and rice. The washed rice is added in water in a pot then heated it. When the rice softens the water of the rice is drained from the pot then kept the rice on the same pot for a few minutes and heat again slightly. Then the rice is ready to serve. This process of cooking is called the sornai<sup>124</sup>

The process of cooking rice is something alike with the sornai process. Take a sufficient amount of rice for cooking. Wash the rice first and keep on a pot till the rice water is drained. Take a pot full of water and heat the water till it bubbles. Then pour the rice on boiling water. Then rice will be stirred with a kind of strainer slowly when the rice is softened it will be poured on a strainer basket dukhli. The rice water will be drained completely on the strainer and it will be kept on an open pot and will be covered with a banana leaf. Then the rice will be enlarged and soft. This kind of cooking process is done in the feast organised for huge gatherings. It reduces the high protein of the rice in cooking.

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<sup>123</sup> Khadou is a wooden stick especially made to stir the rice in time of cooking rice.

<sup>124</sup> Sornai is a form of process that is drained water from a substance.

### 3.4 Boiling Method and Boiled Rice Item

The boiling rice item is prepared by boiling rice with a process. The rice grain is first boiled in a pot by adding water and heating. When the rice is half boiled then lift the rice and drain the water from the rice. Then it is dried in hot sunny lights for two days. After being fully dried it is milled and husked for separating unnecessary stuffs. Then for preparing food this will be cooked as to produce rice food.

#### 3.4.1 Grinded Items

The rice grinding items are prepared by grinding rice. This process of grinding items is made of grinding rice. For the grinding of rice, it is soaked for a day long and dried by draining water from it. Then the rice is grinded in a grinder. After grinding the rice dry the rice in a sunny light for a few hours, and then husk the stuff with a husker. Then it will be ready to serve in dry form.

#### 3.4.2 Laru phitha the Laddu pasted Items

Laddu is a kind of food item pasted by making rice. The laddu items are given below

Table –1. List of common laddu items made of rice.

SL. No	Name of laddu pasting rice items	Making knowledge
1.	On gwthangni laru	Rice laddu without fry
2.	On narengkhol laru	Fry and mixed laru
3.	On jwng sibirig laru	Fry and mixed laru
4.	Gur methai on laru	Blended rice with molasses
5.	On laru	Fry and pasted

The laddu pasting item is one of the rice food preparation methods that all parts of the jobs are traditionally designed. The rice is soaked for three to four hours in deep water. Then rice flour is prepared after grinding rice with traditional grinder. The general laddu is pasted without frying traditionally the rice flour.

The narengkhol or coconut added laddu is prepared with the coconut blended rice flour. First the coconut is added on the grinded rice or on gundwi then it is fried for a few minutes till it become slightly yellow coloured. Immediate after the frying these are taken on hands and pasted in needed size and shape. Laddus are of round in shape but in traditional Bodos have no more interest on the shape only the large or small, so some times it may be getting in oval shaped also.



### 3.5 Puffed Rice and Puffed Item

The rice item is made with the rice item that is by heating rice. It is made of rice without milling and husking. It is also made at the time of warm from fire. It is made by throwing on fire with straw and when it puffed lifted for eating. This is a traditional puffed rice method and the rice item is named as puffed item.

The Bodos have the habit of consuming rice in roasted, steamed, and boiled shape. Preparation of different kinds of food items made from mairong or cleaned rice is their tradition. They prepare Phitha (cake) rice items like Phitha huguma a kind of Phitha made of rice powder. Phitha huguma in some other places it is called thingkhli phitha. Thingkhli is a small earthen pot in Bodo language and from this small earthen pot its name may derive as thingkhli phitha. It is made with rice powder of Jwsa or Joha (a kind of scented rice) specially. Now a day with the shortage of such type of rice, other rice (except sticky rice) is also used. In preparation of this phitha a sufficient amount of rice is wet for three to four hours. In festive season, they wet the large quantity of rice for phitha for whole night or eight to nine hours in normal water.

Soak the rice for eight to ten wet rice is grinded in uwal or dingkhi (dheki) and well shacked with sieve on “songrai” or dala (a kind of bamboo made big tray) then a little salt, and little water is sprinkled and again shacked ready to prepare. An earthen pot with pouring water is boiled on and the prepared rice is kept on a “khotha” or a small pot made from coconut cell. The rice powder is spread on the pot and a little til is spread on it and again rice powder is spread gently. The rice powder pot is wrapped with a flat cleaned cloth and places it on the boiling pot. One has to mind that the pot should not be full with water (keeping below the pot neck) that the boiling water may reach the rice powder and damage in wet. The only water vapours heat will cook the *phitha*. After getting a few rotations, the hot phitha gets ready to serve. Like this, the other non-sticky rice phitha or rice cake is prepared without sugar, salt or other materials are called Dangua Fitha.

This is a non-material without luxury phitha only with rice powder. The word dangua in Bodo is used for an aged bachelor man or having no wife or female life partner. As the phitha is without any materials except rice powder this is called the “dangua phitha”. This phitha is prepared only for offering in the name of gods and goddesses or departed soul of their households. The other rice made foods in Bodo are enthap phitha, Phitha, phitha Sithao, hapina Phitha, Sibing phitha, narengkhol phitha, gur methai phitha (cake with molasaes), laru, swurai, swurai dakha, sira, muri, akhai, kharai etc.

## **Wngkham Homnai**

Rice Cleaned rice (mairong) is boiled on a boiling water pot. When it cooked on steam of boiling water then it is called “wngkhamhomnai”. This variety of rice is made of both sticky and non-sticky cleaned rice.

### **Rice cake preparation**

The Bodos have the habit of consuming rice in roasted, steamed, and boiled shape. Preparation of different kinds of food items made from mairong or cleaned rice is their tradition. They prepare Phitha (cake) rice items like Phithahuguma a kind of

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Next morning the wet rice is grinded in uwal or dingkhi (dheki) and well shacked with sieve on songrai or dala (a kind of bamboo made big tray) then a little salt, and little water is sprinkled and again shacked ready to prepare. An earthen pot with pouring water is boiled on and the prepared rice is kept on a “khottha” or a small pot made from coconut cell. The rice powder is spread on the pot and a little sibing or sesame is spread on it and again rice powder is spread gently.

The rice powder pot is wrapped with a flat cleaned cloth and places it on the boiling pot. One has to mind that the pot should not be full with water (keeping below the pot neck) that the boiling water may reach the rice powder and damage in wet. The only water vapours heat will cook the “pitha”. After getting a few rotations, the hot pitha gets ready to serve. Like this, the other non-sticky rice phitha or rice cake is prepared without sugar, salt or other material is called “Dangua phitha”.

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With the invention of new producing equipments the community people tries to adopt the new methods of producing rice items. They are in charge of new rice varieties and traditional rice varieties are the way of missing from the community now a day. This happened because of less producing capacity of the traditional rice breeds.