



FESTIVALS OF KARBIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 'JOHONG PUJA' OF PAMOHI, GUWAHATI, ASSAM

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Abstract:

A festival is a special event or occasion that is generally marked with ceremonies, performances, and activities to commemorate a specific cultural, religious, or social importance. Festivals can have a wide range of themes, traditions, and customs, and they frequently incorporate large crowds, music, food, decorations, and many sorts of entertainment. The present paper is an attempt to discuss the festivals of Karbis with special reference to 'Johong Puja' of Pamohi, Guwahati, Assam. Apart of 'Johong Puja' they celebrate other festivals like 'Rongker', 'Dehal Kachirdom', 'Domahi' etc.

Keywords: Karbis, Pamohi, Festival, Johong Puja.

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DOI: 10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si10.00376

Introduction:

A festival is a spectacular event held by a community and centred on some distinctive aspect or parts of that community's religion or cultures. It is frequently observed as a mela or eid, a local or national holiday. A festival is an example of glocalization as well as the interaction between high and low culture (Caves, 2004). Aside from religion and folklore, agriculture is a key origin. Because food is such an important resource, many festivals are related with harvest time. Religious commemoration and appreciation for bountiful harvests are combined in autumn celebrations such as Halloween in the northern hemisphere and Easter in the southern.

Festivals frequently serve specific communal functions, particularly in commemorating or praising the gods, goddesses, or saints: these are known as patronal feasts. They may also provide entertainment, which was especially vital in local communities prior to the introduction of mass-produced entertainments.

The Karbis linguistically belong to the Tibeto-Burman group. The original home of the various people speaking Tibeto-Burman languages was in western China near the Yang-Tee-Kiang and the Howang-ho rivers and from these places, they went down the courses of the Brahmaputra, the Chindwin, and the Irrawaddy and entered India and Burma. The Karbis, along with others, entered North East India from Central Asia or from South East Asian countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia or the Philippines (karbianglong.gov.in.).

Among the festivals observed by the Karbis, mention may be made of the "Chojun", "Rongker", "Dehal Kachirdom or Dehal Rongker" "Domahi" and "Johong Puja" etc.

Objective:

The main objective of this study is to discuss the different festivals observed by the Karbis of Pamohi, Guwahati with special reference to 'Johong Puja'.

Methods:

The data for the present study was collected by the interview as well as observation method.

Description:**Rongker:**

Rongker is conducted at the start of the new year by praying to the many deities for the well-being of the entire village. All of the village's elderly males worship the deities in order for the people to be free

of sicknesses and natural disasters throughout the year, and for the families to have a prosperous crop. Women are not permitted to enter the worship arena.

Another type of Rongker is performed on a larger scale. This sort of Rongker is known as 'Wofong Rongker,' and it is performed at the beginning of every 5 years. This Wofong Rongker is conducted for the benefit of all the inhabitants in the villages under a greater jurisdiction. In the performance of the Wofong Rongker, each village is represented by the village headman and a number of village elders (males only). The Rongker performed for a village lasts only one day, however the Wofong Rongker lasts two days.

Dehal Kachirdom:

Dehal Kachirdom or Dehal Rongker has been conducted with all ritualistic flavour and gay among the Karbis of Kamrup and some parts of Meghalaya at the start of the year. Since time immemorial, the Karbis of the plains have celebrated Dehal Kachirdom. The Karbis of the Hills refer to the same or comparable ceremonies in the hills as Roongker.

This Ritual is mostly associated with the people's agricultural livelihood. Karbis are primarily cultivators who rely on agricultural products for survival. Every year, before the start of a new season of agricultural work, each individual village in the Karbi Kingdom performs this rite, asking for protection and blessing from the Karbis' chief deity so that the coming year may be prosperous and beneficial for all. It is primarily performed for the benefit of money, health, and a higher return on agricultural activities undertaken by the people.

Previously, when people went to cultivate in those dense forest areas, wild animals would occasionally clash with man. It is also thought that sacrifices are made for the deity of the jungle in order to avoid confrontation with wild animals and for man and nature to coexist together. Dehal is most likely derived from deohal, which means the place of the Gods, and Dehal Kachirdom meaning the place where the Gods abide.

This is the season when the maiden dances to the tune of the Murik-Pongsi and the village priest chants the language of the hundred gods in order to appease for the hamlet's well-being. The Karbis of Assam's plain district commemorate the national festival "Rongker Dehal Kachirdom" at this time of year. Dehal kachirdom, also known as Dehal Rongker, is a three-day event in which the principal

deities Tamlong, Bilimi, and Bolia are propitiated and requested for protection and favour. Tamlong is the primary male deity, whereas Bilimi is the primary female deity. Bolia has a lower status than the other two.

The first day of the ritual is known as Jogan Kethan, and it is on this day that the rituals and legend behind the ritual are recited, and all deities are invited to participate in the rituals to be performed on Monday. Tuesday is the biggest ritual day, when all the deities are praised and offerings are made to them all. Wednesday is the day of feast, gay, and revelry, when all the deities' blessings are obtained.

The Central Rongker Dehal Kachirdom begins with the installation of a "Lai Khutta" by village leaders at the location where the rituals will be performed. The priest then chants in the language of the gods, urging the gods to be present throughout the rites so that sacrifices are well accepted and everyone is blessed. During the rituals, villagers from each household bring their offering to the dehal, who sacrifices and asks for blessing from the gods so that the people and territory of the Karbi Kingdom are blessed and fruits are borne for all future cultivation. The following day, all cultural events such as dancing, making merry, and dancing to the music of the flute and drum are performed.

Dehal Kachirdom is the sole festival observed by the Karbis of the Plains, aside from Domahi, when the old and the young gather together to exchange and pass on the knowledge of the forefathers to the next generation.

Domahi:

It is observed between the months of March and April. It is a festival of thanks giving to the almighty Hemphu, the Karbi Household's traditional deity head. Each member of the village's social arrangement is known as MEKAR, which could be the origin of the word MIKIR, as the tribes were known until recently and still are in some official papers. However, this is merely a notion that I'd like to investigate more. During the event, all of the village's ancestors are remembered and revered, which is very similar to the practise of their hills cousin.

Johong Puja:

"Johong Puja" is the main festivals of Karbis of Pamohi, Guwahati. 'Johong' refers to Lord Shiva. This puja is celebrated in the month of April every year in this village. In the month of April they start their journey to Johong. Johong is a place where a flat vast stone is there and in that vast flat stone a

'Shivling' is present. According to the Karbis of Pamohi that this Shivling has life and lord Shiva is present there. If someone worship with full devotion then their wishes fulfil within a short period of time. This is very interesting to know that the wild elephants come to this place every year to worship lord Shiva. And it is also noticed that some of the elephants suicide there after getting old. In this present study a very interesting festival has been found among the Karbi people who are residing over the place Pamohi.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it is cleared that the Karbis of Pamohi celebrate different types of festivals which are also celebrated by other Karbi people also in another region. But 'Johong Puja' is the only puja which is only celebrated by the Karbi people of Pamohi, Guwahati.

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