

Rice-beer Traditional Beverage of the Bodos

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Introduction

The Bodo community is the largest indigenous group in Assam. Linguistically they are Tibeto-Burman language family. In Assam the Bodos are in District of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri, Sunitpur, Darrang, Golaghat, Karbianglong Kamrup and Goalpara. The Bodos are mainly agriculturist. Rice is the staple food of the Bodos. The Bodos are rich in their traditional culture. Zou (rice-beer) is the traditional beverage of the Bodos. The Bodos celebrate rice-beer in their festivals and ceremonies.

Aims and Objectives of the study:

- The study aims to attempt the indigenous knowledge of the Bodo women to prepare rice-beer.
- The study aims to cultural significance of rice-beer of the Bodos.

Methodology:

Descriptive methods are used in the study. Both primary and secondary sources are used in the study.

Area of the study : The study is Bodos of Dudhnoi area

Explanation:

The Bodos are mainly agriculturist. In a year ,they practice two types of paddy cultivation *Asu* and *Sali* .The Bodos are the hard worker.They takes rice-beer to alleviate the fatigued body after work. Rice-beer is the traditional beverage of the Bodos. The Bodos celebrate rice-beer in their festivals and ceremonies. *Boikhagw* (Boisagu in standard language) is the seasonal as well as agricultural festival of the Bodos. In earlier the Bodos celebrate Boisagw festival in one month. Now the Bodos celebrate Boisagw in seven days from last sangkranti of Chaitra. The Bodos celebrate Boisagw festival with dancing, singing , merry-making and take variety of rice-beer. Magw-Domasi is the harvest festival of the Bodos. In this festival

they take community feast called *Bhelagur zanai* and celebrate with different types of cakes and rice-beer.

Ceremonies like birth, marriage, death and agricultural ceremonies i.g. first paddy plantation ceremony *Gosa Lanai* and last paddy plantation ceremony *Hal Zangkhra* are celebrated with rice-beer.

The Bodo women have the traditional knowledge to prepare rice-beer which is transferred traditionally from one generation to another generation. They prepared two types of rice-beer *Gisi* and *Goran* (**Jonga** and **Khawnai** *zou* in Bodos of Goalpara). Both two types of rice-beer are made of *Matha Mairong* (normal rice) and *Maibra Mairong* (sticky rice). *Emao* is the key medicine to prepare rice-beer.

Material used of rice-beer:

- Rice: *matha mairong* (normal rice) and *maibra mairong* (sticky rice)
- *Emao*: key medicine to prepare rice-beer
- *Jonga*: rice-beer preserve pitcher
- **Traditional knowledge prepared to rice-beer:**

Emao: *Emao* is the traditional fragmented cake prepared *zou* (rice-beer) of the Bodos. *Emao* is the key medicine to prepare rice-beer. The Bodo women made *emao* with their indigenous knowledge which is transferred from generation to generation. The *emao* is made from the *matha mairong* (normal rice). The Bodo women have the good skill to make *emao*. Firstly *matha mairong* is soaked in water from 1 to 1/2 hours. After soaking they collect the rice from water to be dry. When the rice is completely dry then grain in *uwal* (mortar) with mixing of wild leaves like *khuser bilai*, *seni bilai*, *anaros bilai*, *makhana bilai* and *fanlu goran*. When the grain is complete then mix with the water and bake the cake of *emao*. On the new *emao*, *gornoi emao mukhang gundra* (two old *emao* powder) sprinkle and cover with paddy straw and preserved for three nights. After that they dry for sun hit for few days and the *emao* is ready to prepare rice-beer.

- **Jonga *zou***: This rice-beer is made from the *matha mairong* (normal rice). To prepare *jonga zou* (rice-beer), rice is cooked in dryly. After that the rice is poured into the winnower to be cool. When the rice is cool, one or two *emao* is mixed with rice and preserved the *jonga* for three to five days to be ready for rice-beer.

- **Khaonai zou:** To prepared this rice-beer , the ripe rice-beer is soak with water hall night in a big pot . In next day the soak rice-beer big pot place on the oven to cooked. On the top of the big pot, a pot called *makhra du* is place and the top of makhra du , a pot is place to preserved cool water . The joining is plaster with *Jujai* and *sofari* . After that the fire is hit to slowly. Become to hit of fire, rice-beer '*sofari*' become hot and exchange to fogg and hit the makhra du and drop through pipe in the bottle. In this way the *Khaonai Zou* (dry rice-beer) is prepared.
- **Maibra Zou:** This rice-beer is prepared from the maibra mairong (sticky rice). The Bodo women have the traditional knowledge to prepared *maibra zou* (sticky rice-beer). To prepared the *maibra zou* the Bodo women *steamed* the sticky rice. When the rice is cooked they poured steamed sticky rice to winnower to be cool. After cool they mix with the Emao $\frac{1}{4}$ part and preserved in jonga. After fifteen to twenty days the maibra zou is ready to drink. The Bodos preserved the *Maibra zou* (sticky rice-beer) from one to three month.

Cultural significance:

- **Hospitality:** In earlier days the Bodos welcome the guest through rice-beer. This tradition is still now. They filled joyfully to hospitality their guest with *maibra rusi* (juice of sticky rice-beer) .The Bodos offer *maibra rusi* to their one own or beloved in occasion of fairs and festivals.
- **Fairs and Festivals:** The Bodos celebrate *Seasonal and Agricultural* festival *Boikhagu* , *Harvest festival Magu-Domasi* and *Religious festivals Kherai*. They also celebrate *Birth ,Marriage ,Death and agricultural ceremonies*.
 - i. **Boikhagu :** *Boikhagu* is the greatest seasonal and agricultural festival of the Bodos. This festival is start from last *sankranti of Chaitra* and continue to seven days. On the first day of *Boikhagu* the Bodos clean their houses from inner to courtyard and offer a puja to *chief God Bathou* with rice-beer juice. The Bodos celebrate *Boikhagu* with drinking rice-beer ; dancing ,singing and marry-making.

- i. **Magu-Domasi:** *Magu-Domasi* is the harvest festival of the Bodos. This festival is start from the last *sangkranti of Push* .They take a community feast called *Bhelagur* with rice-beer.
- ii. **Kherai :** *Kherai* is the greatest religious festival of the Bodos. *Bathou* is the chief God of the Bodos. Including *Bathou* the Bodos offer *eighteen* kind of God and Goddesses of the Kherai. In this puja *zou rosi* (rice-beer juice) is offer of the named of *Bathou Borai*.
- iii. **Ceremonies :** Ceremonies like *birth ,marriage and death* they take the rice-beer. Agricultural ceremonies like *Gosa lanai*(first plantation of paddy) , *hali uthinai* (ending day of paddy plantation) and *engkham gadan zanai* (new rice ceremony) ,the Bodos enjoy with rice-beer.

Medicine:

The Bodos used rice-beer as medicine too. When urine become red then they drink the *jonga zou* and relieved from it. When in indigestion then they take the *Khaonai zou* and relieved .The Bodos are the hard worker. When they filled weak, they take rice-beer and refresh their body. The Bodos practice their cultivation with pair of bulk. When the bulk is become weak then they give to eat *emao* (rice-beer prepared medicine) powder to bulk to become strong .

Conclusion :

Rice-beer is the traditional beverage of the Bodos. The Bodo . *Emao* is the key medicine to prepared rice-beer. *Emao* is made by some wild herb.The Bodos celebrate rice-beer in their *festivals* and *ceremonies*. The Bodos hospitality their guest and beloved one with rice-beer.Traditional rice-beer *zou Gwran* , *Mibra zou Bidwi* and *zou Gisi* are got GI Tag refers to Geographical Indication tags granted to Bodo cultural products from Assam, India October 2024.

Now the variety of wine is available in the market. But still now the traditional rice-beer *zou* is importance in the Bodo society.

PHOTO GALLERY



Zoumai



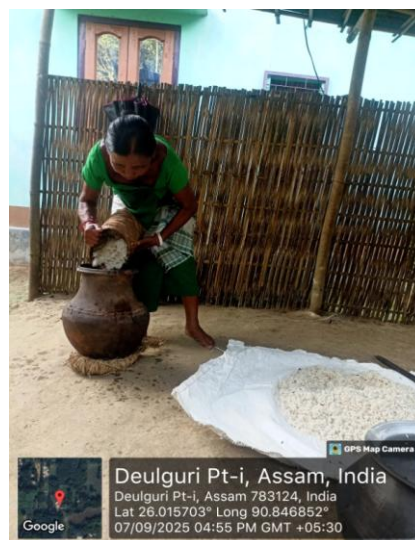
Emao



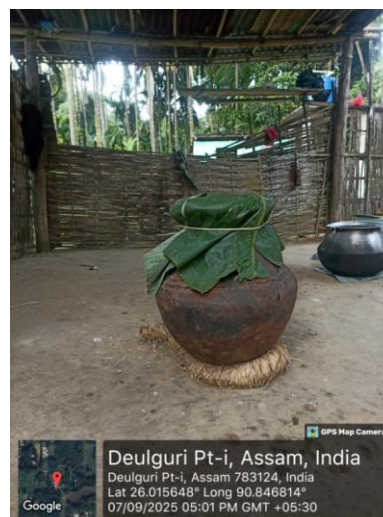
Pouring the rice



Emao mix to prepared rice-beer



Entry Zoumai to Jongga



Pouring the Hasung Doi in Jongga

Jonga zou



Khaonai zou

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