



SOCIO-CULTURAL FISHING ACTIVITY OF TIWAS, MORIGAON DISTRICT, ASSAM, INDIA

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Abstract

Fishing is an important socio-cultural activity of Tiwas in the Morigaon district of Assam. They used locally available plants to make different fishing tools. An attempt has been made to study the plants used for making fishing tools and their threat. The study has been carried out from June 2019 to March 2020. This study reveals that Tiwas are used 20 plants in making fishing tools and fishing. These plants and fishing activities are under threat with the changes of time. Plants used by Tiwas for making tools are gradually disappearing from the environment due to deforestation for economic development and agricultural land. Another most important threatening factor for Tiwas is young Tiwa youth are educated with western education are not interested to learn the techniques of making fishing tools. There two factors leading the fishing socio-cultural activity of Tiwas to an uncertain future.

Keywords : Fishing, socio-culture, Tiwas, and Morigaon district.

Introduction

Lalungs are indigenous people of Assam and form a small ethnic group of North-East India. They are originated from the Bodo tribes. Lalungs are like to call themselves "Tiwa" and mostly found in Morigaon, Kamrup and Nagoan districts of Assam. The Tiwas of Morigaon district observed different rituals, taboos and festivals; they used different flora and fauna to perform these socio-cultural activities. Among these socio-cultural activities of Tiwas, fishing is much popular activity. Tiwa men and women are going out for fishing individually as well as in groups of four to five individuals to a nearby stream or marsh. Tiwas have a tradition of community fishing on the very first day of most popularly known Junbeel Mela in Jagiroad, Morigaon district and after community fishing; their Gobha King organized a feast for them. Tiwas used locally available plants to make fishing tools like "jakoi", "polo", "juluki", "chepa" etc. to catch fish in shallow and deep water.

Morigaon district is crisscrossed by numerous small and meandering river channels which are flows more or less parallel to Kopili and Kalong river towards north-west to meet the Brahmaputra river. The district has a series of ox-bow lakes, beels and swamps. Riverine tracts of Kalong and Kopili river provides a favorable geo-ecological condition for the development of these wetlands. Assam Remote Sensing Application Centre (1997) reported Morigaon district has a total of 144 wetlands comprising lake (37), ox-bow lake (41), waterlogged seasonal (04), swamps or marsh (59) and Tanks (03). This geo-ecological setup of wetlands and monsoon periods together makes an ideal condition for fish breeding and habit which attracts Tiwas to catch fish with their locally made fishing tools. The study has been referred to following sources Bora (2001), Deka, Ahmed and Deka (2006), Jain (1989), Borthakur (1981), Myers(1991), Kansilal, Kansilal and Das(1032-43).

Geographically, the Morigaon district is located in between 26.12°N to 26.30°N latitude and 91.98°E to 92.28°E longitude with total geographical area 1704 km². Morigaon district of Assam is situated in the central part of Assam on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra river. The mighty river

the Brahmaputra occupies the northern boundary of the district and flows on the westerly direction. The district is bounded by Karbi Anglong and West Khasi Hills towards the south, Nagaon in the east, Kamrup district in the west. Morigaon district has the subtropical and humid type of climate with average annual rainfall is 1770mm, average maximum and minimum temperatures are 29.5°C and 17.5°C respectively.

Materials and Methods

The survey has been conducted for the study from June 2019 to March 2020. The required information about plants and parts of plants used for fishing was collected by personal interviews with the locals. Plants were identified and their local names were listed with the help of Tiwa people. 20 species of plants were identified and used in fishing by the Tiwas. Botanical names, local names, parts use with family are tabulated in the table no.1.

Result and Discussion

Plants that have been using in fishing by Tiwas are gradually decreasing from the environment due to deforestation and developmental activities. Because of the unavailability of these plants, their place is taken by the plastic products. There are two factors which replace the plants by plastic are first, unavailability of plants and second most importantly, now a day's Tiwa youth are educated and more attracted towards the western lifestyle, they do not want to learn the techniques of traditionally making fishing tools rather they prefer to buy fishing tools from the market. These days' fishing became a commercial activity and only sees among the economically backward Tiwas.

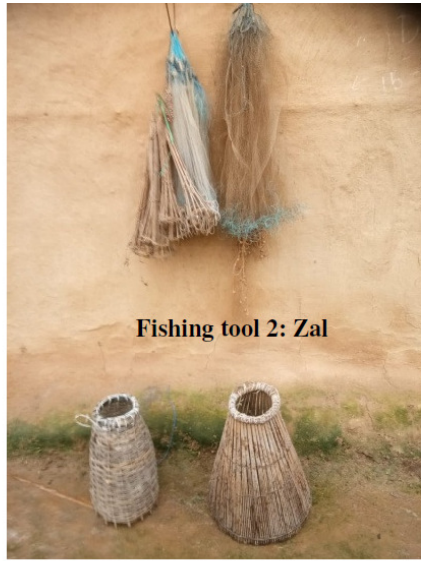
Traditionally, Tiwas were used Riha (*Boehmenria nivea* Hook. Et. Am.) for knitting fishing net, Hijal (*Barringtonia acutanhula* (L) Gaertn.), Kandu (*Diospyros enbryopteris* Pers., *Diospyros taposia* Ham.) for coloring, Bet (*Calamus tenuis* L.) and Marapat (*Corchorus capsularis* L.) for making knots and ties. Now their place has been taken by plastics, artificial colors and iron materials as on fishing tools no.1 to 5. Plants like Gamari (*Gmelina arborea* Roxb.), Ajar (*Lagerstroemia flos-reginae* Retz., *Lagerstroemia reginea*

Roxb.) Bijulibah (*Bambusa pallid* Munro.) and Jatibah (*Bambusa tulda* Roxb.) are hardly found and using of fishing tools made from these plants is gradually decreasing among Tiwas. There is an utmost need to make awareness among

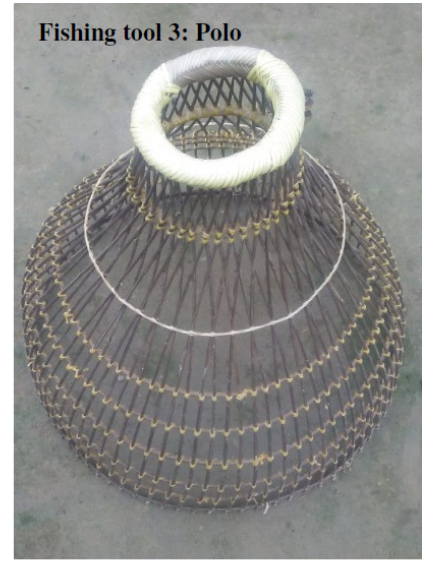
the Tiwa youth about the importance of their socio-cultural activities which help in the conservation of Indian art and culture and to stop deforestation for sustaining their rich culture.



Fishing tool 1: Jakoi



Fishing tool 2: Zal



Fishing tool 3: Polo



Fishing tool 4: Khaloi



Fishing tool 5: Dingori



Fishing tool 6: Fishing Boat



Fishing tool 7: Chapa



Tiwa man with Zal and Khaloi



Fishing tool 8: Thoha

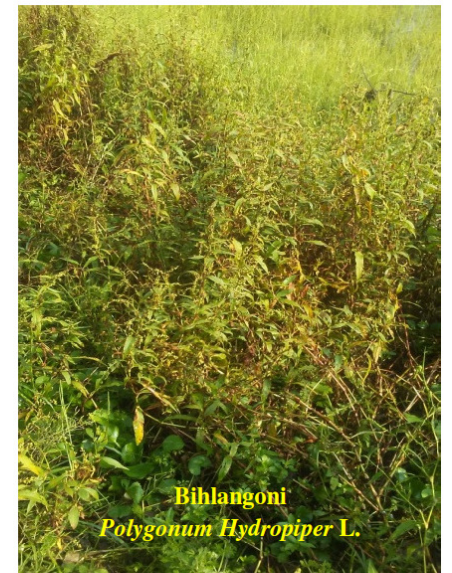


Table 1: Plant names and their use in fishing activities by the Tiwas of Morigaon District, Assam

Sl. No.	Botanical names	Family	Local name	Use
1	<i>Areca catechu</i> L.	Arecaceae	Tamul goss	Stem: Use to catch fish on pond, tank and small beel.
2	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllous</i> Lamk.	Moraceae	Kathal	Stem: Wood use in making fishing canoe.
3	<i>Bambusa pallid</i> Munro.	Poaceae	Bijulibah	Stem: Use as fishing rod and handle of fishing javelin.
4	<i>Bambusa tulda</i> Roxb.	Poaceae	Jatibah	Stem: Use to make fishing tackles, fish weir, fish garth, fish creel, fishing rod, rowing stick, handle for fishing javelin, use to drop the net.
5	<i>Barringtonia acutanhula</i> (L) Gaertn.	Barringtoniaceae	Hijal	Bark: Bark boli in water and use to give black colour of fishing net.
6	<i>Boehmenria nivea</i> Hook. Et. Am.	Urticaeae	Riha	Fiber: Use to knitting of fishing net.
7	<i>Brassica nigra</i> (L.) Koch.	Barssicaceae	Sariah	Oil cake: Ues as fish food to motivate the fish.
8	<i>Calamus tenuis</i> L.	Arecaceae	Bet	Cane: Use to knitting and tie in different type of fishing tackles, fish garthand fish creel.
9	<i>Corchorus capsularis</i> L.	Tiliaceae	Marapat	Fiber: Use to kint fish weir, tie etc.
10	<i>Diospyros enbryopteris</i> Pers.	Ebenaceae	Kandu	Fruit: Fruit boil in water to give black colour of the fishing net.
11	<i>Diospyros toposia</i> Ham.	Ebenaceae	Kandu	Fruit: It is boiled in water and use to give black colour of the fishing net.
12	<i>Eichhormia crassipes</i> (Mart.) Solm.	Pontederaceae	Mayteka	Whole Plant: Use to make fishing hook-"Punga"
13	<i>Gmelina arbrea</i> Roxb.	Verbenaceae	Gamari	Stem: Fishing boats are prepared from its wood.
14	<i>Gossypium barbadense</i> L.	Malvaceae	Kapah	Fiber: use in knitting fishing net, string for fishing hook.
15	<i>Lagerstroemia flos-reginae</i> Retz.	Lythraceae	Ajar	Stem: Fishing boats are prepared from its wood.
16	<i>Lagerstroemia reginea</i> Roxb.	Lythraceae	Ajar	Stem: Fishing boats are prepared from its wood.
17	<i>Phargmites karka</i> Trin-ex-steud	Poaceae	Khagari	Stem: Use as punga of the fishing net and hook.
18	<i>Polygonum Hydropiper</i> L.	Polygonaceae	Bihlangani	Whole Plant: Use as poison to catch fish.
19	<i>Psidium guajava</i> L.	Myrtaceae	Madhuriam	Leaf: Leaf is boil in water and use to give black colour of the fishing net.
20	<i>Streblus asper</i> Lour.	Moraceae	Sarua	Branch: Branch put in pond to give nest for fishes.

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