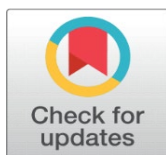


HANDLOOM AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY: A STUDY AMONG THE BODO WOMEN WEAVERS OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The practice of handloom weaving holds significant historical and cultural importance for the Bodo community, serving as an integral aspect of their socio-economic fabric for countless generations. In addition to engaging in agricultural activities, the Bodo community, along with the wider rural and semi-urban population of India, have traditionally pursued handloom weaving as a secondary occupation. The significance of handloom textile and weaving in the lives of the Bodo weavers can be understood via two distinct dimensions. Firstly, at the local level, it serves as a manifestation of local wisdom and tradition deeply ingrained into their cultural practices. Secondly, at the national level, it acts as a tangible representation of the community's distinctive identity. This article attempts to comprehend the importance of weaving within the Bodo community, specifically among women weavers, and examines how their involvement in the handloom sector contributes to the development of cultural identity. Nevertheless, it is crucial to comprehend the viewpoint of the weavers in their commitment to the preservation of the weaving practice, as they assume the role of custodians and guardians of this longstanding heritage.

Keywords: Handloom, Modernity, Globalization, Commodification, Cultural Identity, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Handloom is a traditional avocation of the Bodo and has constituted an inseparable component of their socio-economic and cultural heritage for centuries. In addition to agriculture, handloom has been the secondary occupation of the Bodo and the whole rural and semi-urban population of India. Bodo is one of the ethnic groups of Assam that has a distinct cultural identity in the form of language, beliefs, culture, customs, and traditions. Traditional weaving holds a prominent position within the social and cultural fabric of the Bodo people, permeating various

customary events and activities. The traditional garments created by Bodo weavers serve as tangible manifestations of cultural and philosophical elements, therefore significantly enhancing comprehension of these principles [Narzi \(2003\)](#).

According to [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#), the handloom industry significantly influences the construction of social and cultural identities among weavers belonging to diverse cultures. For both household and ceremonial requirements, Bodo women still make the appropriate woven materials for their personal use as well as for the use of other members of their society [Kakati Hazarika et al. \(2006\)](#). The components of legends, rituals, myths, ceremonies, festivals, and the physical surroundings may all be found in these textiles, which serve to symbolize the community's cultures [Chakravorty et al. \(2010\)](#), [Khatoon et al. \(2014\)](#). Along with serving as an item of clothing for practical purposes, clothes may also serve as a visual indicator for conveying roles like rank, social class, and gender [Forney & Rabolt \(1986\)](#), [Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell \(2001\)](#), [Eriksen \(2005\)](#), [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#). Furthermore, these visual markers offer helpful information that assists in developing cultural identity, values, and attitudes in both individuals and communities (*ibid*). For instance, the Bodo tradition of offering an *aronia*¹, a traditional gesture of welcome and felicitation, exemplifies their reverence for guests on various occasions. In historical contexts, it was customary for unmarried women to create a little textile piece, *anthwb*² commonly referred to as a handkerchief, using remnants of thread from a loom. This hand-woven item served as a symbolic gesture of their romantic attachment to a special person.

Bronislaw Malinowski, a professor of anthropology and a professional psychologist, had a very practical perspective on culture and identity. He claimed that people in a community are content with what they know as long as they get along, or if their psychological requirements are met [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#), [Lindholm \(2001\)](#), [Malinowski \(1944\)](#). Human conduct, he reasoned, is driven by a desire to find and provide for underlying demands in the simplest manner possible [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#), and Bodo women weavers may pursue weaving to meet psychological requirements, such as clothes and financial support. Additionally, by participating in these activities, women are given a position in society that helps construct their identity (*ibid*; [Devi \(2012\)](#), [Devi \(2013\)](#), [Karolia & Ladia \(2012\)](#), [Ramaswamy & Kumar \(2013\)](#)). The tradition of weaving in the Bodo society has been associated with fulfilling both physical and psychological needs. However, a change in the economic and socio-political structure of society brought about by various factors as modernisation and globalisation may invariably change the psychological requirements of the women weavers, which may have an impact on their cultural identity (*ibid*). The article, therefore, attempts to understand and document how modernisation and/or globalisation have affected and/or transformed the traditional handloom sector of the Bodo. This will further help in determining how women weavers view traditional weaving as an aspect of their cultural identity.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study endeavours to meticulously document the profound significance of weaving within Bodo society, with a specific focus on the pivotal roles assumed by women weavers. It aims to elucidate how their active engagement not only fosters

¹ A traditional scarf of the Bodo. It is worn by both men and women during celebrations and festive occasions, and it holds a special position in their culture. It is presented to a guest as a gesture of respect.

² A hand-woven handkerchief has a specific position in the social life of the Bodo. Apart from its normal usage, the handkerchief is used as a medium to express romantic feelings. A Bodo maiden has a custom of weaving a pair of decorated handkerchiefs, one of which she preserves for herself and the other she gives to the man of her desires as a sign of her love. When a Bodo maiden presents a handkerchief, it is always a sign of their developing romantic relationship.

the sustenance but also the enrichment of cultural identity amidst the multifaceted challenges presented by the forces of globalisation and modernisation. Furthermore, the present research illuminates the crucial role handloom practices play in the lives of female weavers, underscoring its substantive contribution to the preservation and perpetuation of Bodo identity, particularly within the overarching context of the Bodoland Movement.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To unfold this research problem, both primary and secondary data are used to support its findings. An observational approach was employed to gather the data for this study, which entailed meticulous observation of the daily practices among Bodo traditional weavers in their village settings. In this research, two villages—Sundrihora and Thalitbari situated within the Kokrajhar district of Assam are studied. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted during fieldwork with key stakeholders including middlemen, stall owners, and women leaders. These individuals were specifically chosen due to their nuanced understanding of the evolution and transformations within the Bodo community's traditional weaving practices.

4. HANDLOOM INSIGHTS: EXPLORING RAW MATERIALS AND WEAVING STYLES

The traditional loom of the Bodo are two types: throw-shuttle loom and fly-shuttle loom. The traditional loom for spinning and weaving consists of a simple indigenous handloom made of wood and bamboo and some other minor parts of iron [Mosahary \(2022\)](#). The loom can be dismantled during the time of unsuitable surroundings and can be assembled again. Endle (1911) described the loom employed for weaving as of very simple construction, and most, if not all, the material needed for the purpose can be provided by the villagers themselves from local resources. The loom is generally set up on a shady side of the dwelling house, or, where this is impracticable, a rude structure of thatch and bamboo work is provided to shield the weaver from the sun (Endle, 1911). Over a period, a more advanced form of loom is constructed like the frame loom that can be placed permanently without dismantling the loom parts or the highly sophisticated Jacquard loom. Prior to the influence of modern society and a demanding market, the weaving products of the Bodo were restricted to the weaving of *dokhona*³, *jwmgra*⁴, *gamsa*⁵, *aronai*, and *endi si*⁶. Now, however, the products cover a wide range, including waistcoats for boys, scarves, pillow covers, tablecloths, and cushion covers.

³ A female garment that is worn in two folds. The first fold is wrapped around the chest while the second is wrapped around the waist that reaches to the leg thus covering the whole body from breast to ankle. It is around 3.18 metres long and 1.36 metres wide. Dokhona comes in a variety of forms and designs.

⁴ It is worn along with dokhona and slung over the shoulder. It is around 2.15 metres long and 45 centimetres wide and has a rectangular form.

⁵ A style of clothing worn by Bodo men. It is a rectangular-shaped plain weave cloth with stripes running the entire length of it or a plain body with a simple border. Typically, dark green is the preferred colour for gamsa with yellow borders devoid of floral motifs. Its length is 1.3 metres and its breadth is 62 centimetres.

⁶ A cloth made from endi thread. Endi a local term use for Eri (*Philosomia ricini*). 'Eri' worm derives its name from the Assamese word 'era' or castor plant (*Ricinus communis*) on which 'eri' worm normally feeds.

Figure 1**Figure 1** A Fly-Shuttle Loom

Source Fieldwork 2021, Thalitbari, Kokrajhar

The primary raw materials used earlier were cotton and *endi* yarn. Cotton was cultivated in the rural settlements and the yarn was hand-spun by weavers themselves. However, over time the production of cotton was not sufficient to meet the large demand for bulk production of traditional attire. And, there are other environmental factors that gradually become unfavorable for the cultivation of cotton like frequent floods in the region, resettlement, and the easy accessibility of mill-made cotton yarn. Gradually, acrylic, polyester, poplin, and lurex substituted these materials as the primary raw materials for weaving. The lack of excellent quality cotton and the fact that weavers find acrylic yarn considerably simpler to use—as well as the fact that it is 100 percent fast wash—are the factors that contributed to the switch from cotton to acrylic yarn and other yarn varieties. The yarn is procured from the local markets or delivered by yarn vendors.

5. BODO WOMEN AND HANDLOOM

The significance of handloom textile and weaving in the lives of the Bodo weavers can be understood via two distinct dimensions. Firstly, at the local level, it serves as a manifestation of local wisdom and tradition deeply ingrained into their cultural practices. Secondly, at the national level, it acts as a tangible representation of the community's distinctive identity. The Bodo handloom textiles created by the weavers not only show their expertise in technique and artistic ability but also an inherent cultural value that is strongly related to the sociocultural practices of the community.

The primary skill set commonly associated with Bodo women is a well-recognised expert in the art of spinning and weaving. As a result, a young lady who does not possess this skill not only encounters ridicule from her contemporaries but also encounters difficulties in securing a suitable marital partner. The proficiency of Bodo women was determined based on their weaving skills. Those were the steadfast notions that people had in the past. Back then, looms were a common sight in most Bodo households. In fact, rural households still have looms in their courtyard. Hence, weaving has always been a crucial component of household tasks; it is safe to say that every Bodo woman has a deep-seated love for creating different types of clothing and fabrics. All the required clothing of the family members was

woven by women and the domestic tasks would not have been deemed complete without the weaving operations. These women are thus accustomed to subtly integrating the knowledge they have received from their moms, grandparents, and other female family members. According to local folklore, Bodo women are claimed to be 'born weavers' and that weaving is their way of life [Narzi \(2003\)](#).

In order to create a genuine and unique item, female weavers sought inspiration from various sources such as nature, their cultural heritage, historical events, as well as their social and religious experiences [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#). This approach imbued the final product with a distinct feeling of refinement and grace. Motifs serve as a means of creative expression. The design is rendered within the fabric by the incorporation of an extra layer of yarn, which is applied in accordance with the underlying components. Typically, these supplementary strands intended for visual appeal are seen to traverse over the interlacement of fibers. Earlier, the patterns were crafted on the surfaces of banana leaves and the robust sheaths of areca palm trees [Narzary \(2021\)](#). Subsequently, the design was meticulously rendered on graph paper ([Figure 2](#)), so creating historical remnants of design or design catalogues that served as a reference for the weavers. In recent years, a shift has been observed in the themes and designs employed in woven items. Due to the impact of textile patterns originating from a neighbouring community, a certain number of weavers have switched to adopting contemporary design motifs. Nevertheless, traditional weavers prioritise the creation of a design that symbolises natural elements while incorporating cultural components. Regarding the newly generated designs, it can be mentioned that they continue to be used as inspiration for a variety of products and, up until this point, have successfully merged traditional style with vibrant hues.

Figure 2

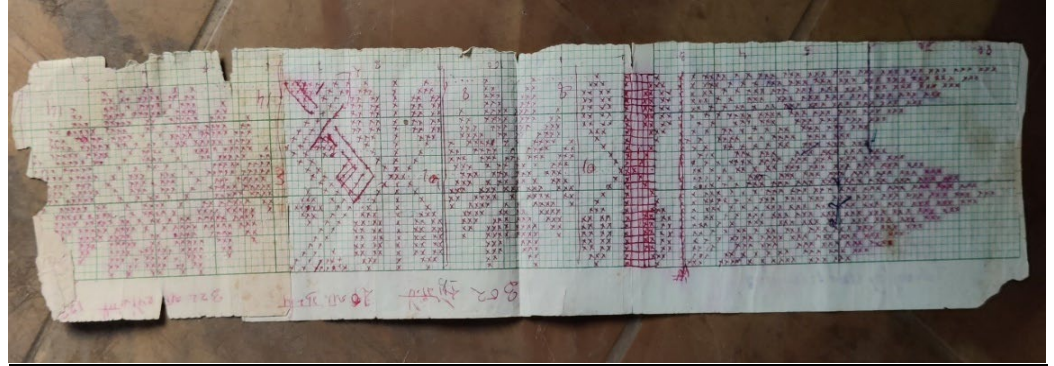


Figure 2 A Design Catalog Drawn on Graph Paper

Source Fieldwork 2021, Thalitbari, Kokrajhar, Assam

The elderly women in the village wistfully reminisce their golden days when weaving was a requisite of every womenfolk. But in modern society, such a kind of achievement is no longer considered an accomplishment. Although the majority of mothers used to pass down cultural practices to their daughters, the younger generation now has different prerogatives. Several studies have shown a lack of interest in weaving among the younger generation of women weavers [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#), [Devi \(2012\)](#), [Devi \(2013\)](#), [Mamidipudi & Bijker \(2012\)](#) therefore, leading to the increased purchase of ready-made garments from retail stores [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#). Furthermore, the introduction and promotion of foreign and domestic machine-made products pose a great threat to the handloom industry [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#), [Devi \(2012\)](#) and the role of weaving among the Bodo women weavers.

6. TRADITIONAL WEAVING AS CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE BODO

On a global scale, it is estimated that there are between 5,000 to 6,000 distinct cultures, with approximately 4,000 to 5,000 of these cultures belonging to indigenous communities. According to [Proschel \(2012\)](#), these cultural groups constitute around 80-90 percent of the global cultural diversity. Defining culture is a challenge in distinguishing between its material components and its lived representations [Eagleton \(2000\)](#), [Barnes \(2002\)](#). Hence, culture encompasses the collective attributes and dynamics of a group, extending beyond mere social interactions within its structural framework. Additionally, it encompasses the entirety of the community's way of life, encompassing all individuals within it and their everyday activities and encounters. [Dunn \(2008\)](#), [Proschel \(2012\)](#).

Identity can be viewed as the point of contact between personal perspectives and social and cultural situations. Our sense of identity provides a picture of who we are, how we relate to others, and how we engage with our surroundings. The identity reflects the ways in which we are similar to others who hold similar views and the ways in which we are distinct from those who do not [Nugroho et al. \(2021\)](#). Culture and identity are integrally interwoven, and our sense of style and identity are closely related. Clothing provides a direct material reality, expresses identity and shape, and conveys time- and space-related emotions. In a world where social and cultural identification factors are becoming more important, clothing serves as a visual marker [Dias & Dias \(2019\)](#).

Figure 3



Figure 3 Bodo Women Wearing Traditional Attire Dokhona and Jwmgra
Source Fieldwork 2021, Thalitbari, Kokrajhar Assam

6.1. BODOLAND MOVEMENT AND ITS INHERENT IMPACT ON WEAVING

The traditional attire of the Bodo community has significant importance in their cultural practices and daily existence. The Bodo weavers encourage themselves to participate in the tradition of weaving due to the profound sense of pride associated with wearing hand-woven fabric. A key factor enabling the continued involvement of women in weaving is the way Bodo handloom products have been politically appropriated and sold as markers and representations of the communal identity. This scenario has persisted since the 1970s, when Assamese tribal political

organisations led by the Bodo leadership pushed for the state to grant them political legitimacy Narzary (2021).

Weaving is thus intrinsically linked to this 'idea of nationhood' since Bodo nationalism depends largely on retaining indigenous cultural elements in both tangible and intangible forms. The Bodoland Movement, initiated during the latter part of the 19th century, signified the beginning of Bodo women's active involvement in socio-political endeavors, as well as the transformation of the Bodo community's handloom sector from household weaving to commercial production. The significant involvement of women in the Movement facilitated their exposure to external societies, leading to a re-evaluation of their own cultural heritage. In the beginning, a limited cohort of women engaged in weaving as a means of generating income. However, as time progressed, these women successfully advocated for the expansion of this practice among their peers, encouraging them to explore the possibility of commercialising their traditionally woven garments, rather than limiting their efforts solely to personal use. During the Bodoland Movement, prominent individuals actively involved in protest actions expressed a notable need for traditional clothes, including *aronai* and *endi si*. As a result, there was a significant rise in the manufacturing of *aronai*, *endi si*, and similar commodities, which prompted the establishment of weaving operations with the objective of satisfying the escalating market needs during that timeframe.

6.2. GROWTH OF BODO HANDLOOM

Following the establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council ⁷, the Bodo handloom industry entered its second phase of expansion, which continues to thrive in the present day. Subsequent to that period, the conventional handloom sector of the Bodo community has experienced significant transformations in response to many endeavours aimed at modernising their traditional handloom practices. In juxtaposition to the preceding phase of advancement, the current stage is characterised by heightened difficulty and vulnerability, mostly due to the advent of the power loom and the subsequent influx of inexpensive textiles facilitated by the establishment of the global market. Individuals acquire machine-produced fabrics manufactured in different areas of the country by textile mills, ostensibly driven by a strong demand for fashionable design, and afterward utilise them in the creation of garments adopting the *dokhona*-style ⁸. The customer's attention was drawn to the affordability and cheap cost of the mill-made *dokhona* ⁹ products, which are imported from West Bengal and made available in the market. When comparing the hand-woven *dokhona* to mill-made items, it can be observed that the latter are more cost-effective.

Traditional art has undergone a significant process of commercialization, resulting in the treatment of its goods as commodities. The utilisation of advertising and strategic commercial partnerships is employed to generate income and achieve financial gains via the promotion of traditional attire. The meanings and values

⁷ A movement for a tribal homeland in India out of the present state of Assam. The movement's inception can be linked to the feeling of deprivation, injustice, and discrimination experienced by the Bodo Community and the growing perception among people that their identity was threatened for several reasons. The leaders of the Bodo movement stated, that as the Bodos are ethnically distinct from the other Assamese, they should be granted exclusive political rights by creating a separate statehood for them.

⁸ A Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) was signed between the Government of India, the Government of Assam, and the Bodo extremist group Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) on 10 February 2003 for the creation of an autonomous self-governing body called the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) under the amendment of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The area under the jurisdiction of Bodoland Territorial Council is called Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) and includes four districts of Assam viz, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri.

⁹ A *dokhona* is created from a machine-made fabric imported from outside the region. It is just an imitation of the hand-woven *dokhona* that failed to exhibit any of the distinctive characteristics of the traditional attire.

attributed to traditional craft have been altered as a result of commercialization and commodification. The uniqueness of the items has been damaged due to the significant level of demand. The concept of commercialising textiles is commendable, as long as it upholds and preserves the core objectives and values of the handmade tradition. [Boruah & Kaur \(2015\)](#)

6.3. WOMEN WEAVERS AS THE KEEPER OF THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE BODO

The self-sustaining villages remain pivotal in Bodo culture, embodying customary traditions integral to the community's identity. Women, as custodians and transmitters of these traditions, play a crucial role. However, the encroachment of globalization is evident in rapidly evolving urban centers. Weaving has historically been predominantly linked to women across various societies. However, this practice was often regarded as one among several domestic tasks performed by women, resulting in insufficient recognition for their creation of intricate artworks and the embodiment of communal values through their creative imagination. Although women have often been overlooked in the recording of what is often known as official history, they have undeniably played a central and influential role in the safeguarding of social and cultural heritage. They have functioned as carriers of oral histories and narratives, simultaneously serving as dynamic bearers and markers of our social and cultural traditions. The participation of women in traditional cultural practices, specifically weaving, has historically been attributed to social and economic imperatives. However, the cultural value of these activities remained largely unrecognised until the emergence of the Bodo movement in the latter part of the twentieth century [Narzary \(2021\)](#).

The Bodo women weavers are distinguished individuals who have inherited the intricate art of weaving from preceding generations and are now diligently passing it down to subsequent ones. Central to these women is the profound understanding of Bodo traditional weaving as a cornerstone of cultural heritage. Consequently, the cultural artifacts stemming from Bodo traditional weaving encapsulate not only the existence of the women weavers but also the broader social, economic, and cultural elements of the community. These women stand as the principal driving force behind the preservation of the intangible cultural artifacts rooted in the Bodo people's traditional weaving techniques, ensuring their sustainability through the meticulous process of cultural inheritance.

As elucidated by [Narzary \(2021\)](#), women possess the primary knowledge essential for crafting cultural objects intricately linked to the community. However, it is observed that males predominantly assume decision-making roles regarding the utilization of these items within the politico-cultural framework. The contemporary utilization of weaving as a medium for expressing political viewpoints underscores the inherent cultural dynamism associated with this craft. Despite the pervasive adoption of western attire by males in contemporary society as a means of adapting to the demands of a rapidly evolving globalized world, the enduring use of the traditional handloom garment known as *aronai* by both men and women is noteworthy. This particular attire has served as a potent tool for conveying symbolic messages, particularly within a context where issues of identity transcend conventional gender boundaries. The influence of globalization on Bodo culture and its cultural identity is discernible in the manner in which the culture is promoted, inadvertently highlighting the indispensable role of women in these endeavors. [Goswami \(2006\)](#)

Nonetheless, the significance of women's involvement in weaving within Bodo culture has been somewhat diminished due to the advent of contemporary technology and the prevalence of the free-market economy, consequently diminishing its stature as a vital aspect of cultural expression.

7. TRANSITION IN THE TRADITIONAL HANDLOOM OF THE BODO

The handloom sector in India has expanded rapidly in recent years, meeting surging demand at home and abroad [Government of India. \(2010\)](#). This expansion has been made possible thanks to the initiatives and money provided by the government, non-profit, and international organizations to improve loom technology, provide raw materials, and foster talent development [Devi \(2013\)](#), [Mamidipudi & Bijker \(2012\)](#). As a result of the disruptive effects of technology and globalization, the handloom sector is in a perpetual state of change. Furthermore, the handloom industry has been compelled to expand its product offerings and embrace new production techniques due to competition from the powerloom sector and rising consumer demand. The Bodo society too is currently undergoing a period of transition, characterised by socio-cultural dynamics, and shifting paradigms. The influence of globalization on Bodo society has resulted in a significant change shift in lifestyle, wherein individuals have adopted altered perspectives and approaches to culture in pursuit of what is often termed 'modern life.' The present time, characterised by the proliferation of mass media and technological advancements, has afforded women undeniable opportunities to discerning the profound influence of globalization on the cultural representation of women [Narzary \(2021\)](#). Economically, this shift has empowered women to assume entrepreneurial roles by harnessing their weaving skills to produce dokhona and various other garments. Consequently, there has been a noticeable cultural shift in the approach to preserving the weaving tradition, with handloom products assuming symbolic significance in the public sphere as mass representations of community identity, thus serving as crucial promoters of Bodo culture.

Furthermore, weaving is presently undergoing a process of reassessment as it becomes intricately intertwined with the political aspirations of the community. The practice of weaving is being redefined in order to align with the political objectives of the community, establishing women as the main creators and consumers of Bodo textiles, thereby upholding the tradition. Nevertheless, the cultural importance of weaving has somewhat declined as a result of the emergence of advanced technology and the widespread influence of the free-market economy. However, the production and consumption of it are still closely connected to social interactions.

The market for handloom items has experienced a significant impact owing to the recent surge in customer preferences for a variety of modern fabrics ([Figure 3](#)). Large-scale mills adeptly produce contemporary textiles, gaining access to a broader range of markets. Some contend that traditional looms are ill-suited for mass production, rendering them incapable of meeting demand deadlines. Although machine-manufactured products boast accelerated production speeds, they lack the nuanced craftsmanship and intricately woven values inherent in handcrafted items. This modern materialistic trajectory of large-scale production and consumption has led to a neglect of the intrinsic values and craftsmanship associated with the art of weaving. Undoubtedly, the impact of globalization on Bodo society has precipitated significant transformations in their socio-cultural fabric. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that this phenomenon has also presented women with

newfound opportunities to establish and manage their enterprises, thereby enabling them to sustain the traditional skill of weaving.

Figure 3



Figure 4 Women Selling Dokhona at a Village Market

Source Fieldwork 2021, Kokrajhar, Assam

8. CONCLUSION

To establish a comprehensive historical record of the traditional handloom culture and associated practices among the Bodo community, it is imperative to meticulously document the evolutionary transformations within the Bodo handloom tradition. In the context of a dynamic and fluid economy characterized by the proliferation of commercialized handloom items and the widespread accessibility to cost-effective mill-made materials, it becomes essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role clothing plays in representing individual and cultural identities. Therefore, incorporating the viewpoints of weavers is crucial to fostering and safeguarding cultural traditions. Furthermore, comprehending how the social, political, and economic systems might influence the community of weavers is indispensable for providing significant contextual information.

The findings of the study indicate a notable transformation in the traditional handloom practices of the Bodo community. Specifically, there has been a shift from utilising a temporary wooden loom set up in the courtyard to adopting a more sophisticated permanent loom. Additionally, there has been a change in the type of yarn employed, with a transition from hand-dyed cotton and silk to synthetic yarn, which offers enhanced convenience and versatility in its application. Furthermore, this study examines the impact of the Bodoland Movement on the expansion and development of the Bodo handloom industry, as well as its subsequent effects on the production capacity and livelihood of weavers. Weavers have adapted the traditional value, as previously noted, in order to fit social, economic, and political transformations associated with modernisation. Consensus was reached among the weavers about the paramount significance of preserving the weaving heritage and cultivating an appreciation for its historic values. The enduring significance and sagacity of weaving have not been diminished by this adaptation, as weavers continue to create classic themes and designs, but with modifications in the materials, threads, colours, and arrangement of the patterns. Moreover, weavers continued to hold the belief that these modified items were authentic manifestations of their craftsmanship.

Undoubtedly, women within the Bodo society have played a key role in preserving the cultural traditions of their group. Despite the dominance of patriarchy as the prevalent societal framework, women have succeeded in establishing a significant presence for themselves within a developing socio-cultural context. Currently, women are prominently present in various dimensions of communal existence, and their visibility is particularly pronounced in public domains. The economic self-sufficiency of women has increased as a result of their engagement in many socio-political endeavours. In recent years, a significant number of individuals have gained recognition as successful small-scale entrepreneurs specialising in the production and sale of woven goods. Additionally, a substantial proportion of women have pursued and attained advanced levels of education during the past two decades, actively contributing to the process of redefining and reaffirming the communal identity. These women exemplify the convergence of traditional and modern elements within the dynamic Bodo society.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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