

Bodo Weaving Culture and economic development in Assam: A Socio-economic Study

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Abstract

This study explores the interrelationship between Bodo weaving culture and economic development in Assam, highlighting its socio-economic significance within the Bodo community. Bodo weaving deeply rooted in tradition an identity plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage through distinctive costume and intricate design. Weaving is the cottage industry of the Bodo community and it is also one of the oldest cultural practices. This culture is traditionally transmitted from generation to generation. The research examines how weaving serves not only as a cultural expression but also as a vital source of livelihood, particularly for rural women, thereby contributing to household income and community development. In rural areas every household has a handloom because all Bodo women are very expert in weaving. It further analyses the impact of government initiative aimed at promoting traditional crafts. Improving market access and supporting skill development despite this effort. This study underscores the potential of Bodo weaving as a sustainable economic activity that can enhance socio-economic conditions while safeguarding of Indigenous culture. By integrating traditional knowledge with policy support and market opportunities, Bodo weaving can significantly contribute to inclusive economic development in Assam.

Keywords: Bodo, Bodo weaving, Costume, Government Initiative, and Socio-economic development.

1.0 Introduction

Assam is one of the most beautiful and attractive States of India, which is located in Northeastern region. Earlier, Shillong was the capital of Assam before Dispur took over in 1973. Shillong became the capital of Meghalaya after the state was divided. Now-a-days Dispur is the capital of Assam. It is surrounded on all sides by hilly and mountains areas- Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the north; Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal on the east; Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura on the south and Meghalaya on the west. At present in the Assam has total 35 Districts and 49 Co-districts. Assam is famous for the Natural beauty, Tea plantation, natural resources, Brahmaputra River, Biodiverse Forest, rich heritage culture, Kamakhya Temple, traditional music and dance, cuisine, etc. Assam has also a rich and diverse history with various dynasties and empires rules and region. Assam states is a part of seven sister. Because North-east region is also known as “Seven Sisters” and one “Brother” refers to the contiguous northeastern states of India: *Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya* and neighbouring state of *Sikkim* is Brother of north-east region. The term “Seven Sisters” was firstly used by Journalist Jyoti Pradesha Saikia during a radio talk show in January, 1972. After that he was wrote a book titled ‘*The Land of Seven Sisters*’.

Weaving is an integral part of the Bodo’s. Among the Bodo women having a long tradition of spinning and weaving their own clothes for everyday wear and special occasions. They are prepared to weave cloths themselves as per their needs with various types of design and colour. Weaving is deeply intertwined with their social and economic life, as a girl’s skill in the craft was once considered essential for marriage. Every Bodo household traditionally having a handloom. In Bodo society, weaving is a core cultural practice passed from mother to daughter (generation to generation). In earlier days Bodo women are known to weave cloths on their loom. Because a Bodo woman who does not know the art of spinning and weaving is regarded as “*Aluri*” or “*Aoluri*” (good for nothing) and neglected by the society as well as difficult to get married.

1.1 Aim & Objectives

1. To study the cultural importance of the traditional weaving practices of the Bodo women.
2. To study and analyse the classification of traditional attire in Bodo costume.
3. To identify traditional motifs, design and patterns.
4. To study the socio-economic status of the weavers and their families.

1.2 Method

The present study is based on Descriptive and Analytical methods to examine the traditional weaving practices of the Bodo community in Assam.

1.3 Data collection

The data for the present study are collected from both primary and secondary sources to understand the traditional weaving practices of the Bodo community of Assam.

Primary data were collected through field visits to various Bodo villages. The main sources include-

- I. Field Observation.
- II. Personal Interview.
- III. Questioner.
- IV. Photographic Documentation.

Secondary data were collected from both published and unpublished sources such as- Book, Journal, Magazine, Research Article, Govt. Report, etc.

2.0 Bodo Community

The Bodo people are the largest tribal community in the northeastern Indian state of Assam, particularly in the Bodoland Territorial region (BTR), covering *Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri* and *Tamulpur* District. Kokrajhar is the headquarter of Bodoland Territorial region (BTR) as well as they are also found in other state across Northeastern, India like-*Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur* and *West Bengal*, and also found in neighbouring countries of India like- *Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh* and *Myanmar* (Burma). In Assam they are recognized as a plain Schedule Tribe (ST). They belong to the Tibeto-Burma branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, Specifically the Bodo-Naga sub-group and they are one of the earlier settlers of Assam. The ancient Indian literatures especially the ancient Aryan Sanskrit literatures, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana describe the Indo-Mongolian and the Sino-Tibetan people as

'Kirates'.¹Historically, they are considered one of the earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley and are known as their distinct culture, traditions and language, which is recognized as one of Indian schedule language. According to L. Brahma (1993), Bodo's, Rabha, Garo, Tiwas, Kok-Boroks, Mech, Dimacha, Sonowals, Hazongs, etc, they are belonging to the Great Bodo group. The Bodo words firstly used by Bryan Houghton Hodgson (B.H Hodgson) in 1846. The **Bodo** words refer to both the Bodo people and the language. Now-a-days the Bodo language is an associate official language of Assam. The Bodo also called **Boro**.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the Bodo people, but it is not their only one. Because their economy is based on a mix of activities, including agriculture, farming, weaving, handicrafts, etc. They have rich culture heritage including their own traditional religious like- **Bathouism** as well as Hinduism and Christianity. Bathou is derived from Bodo word **Ba** and **Thou**. Ba means "Five" and Thou means "Deep philosophy". The five principles are Air (Bar), Water (Dwi), Ha (Land), and Or (Fire). They have also their own tradition food habit or cuisine such as- Onla Dao, Sobai Dao, Narji Oma, Napham, Sobai Samo, Gwkha-Gwkhwi, Pitha (rice cake), Zou (rice beer), etc. **Bwisagu** or **Bwisagw** (Seasonal festival) is a main traditional festival of the Bodo. They are celebrating this festival in April month as well as Domashi, a winter festival in mid-January and etc.

2.1 Traditional Weaving Practice of the Bodos

The word "weaving" comes from the Old English word "wefan", which means 'to weave' or "to interlace". Weaving is the second largest source of employment in India after the agriculture². A handloom is a simple machine of weaving. Weaving in the Bodo society bears great significance. In the ancient time Bodo women without weaving expertise was not given due respect in the society from ancient time Bodo women have been using the dress materials which are handwoven by themselves. The place of weaving is called "**Hisanshali**" or "**Ishansali**" in Bodo language. The word "**Hisanshali**" or "**Ishansali**" is derived from **Hi** and **shali**, hi means *cloth* and shali means *place* that which means place of weaving. The Bodo words **Hi**, **Si** and **Zi** means cloth.

Every Bodo woman is very skilled in weaving cloths. Every household has a loom in Bodo villages. Weaving is an integral part of the socio-cultural life of the Bodo's. It is proud privilege for the Bodo people that almost all Bodo women have intimate knowledge and skill in weaving. In Bodo villages anyone visiting can see the preparation of yarn and weft and her the "click clack" sound of the shuttle. Their loom techniques are very similar with the neighbouring tribes. They produce Endi, Muga and silk of high standard cloths.

At the age of 7 to 10 years girls are taught to weave by their mothers or other senior members of the family and the village. This traditional knowledge transmitted from mother to daughter from generation to generation. Endle (1911) remarked.... A kachari women if not greatly on frequently interrupted, "in her work can weave half a yard each day". A Bodo woman who does not know the art of spinning and weaving is regarded as "**Aluri**" or "**Aoluri**" (good for nothing) and neglected by the society as well as difficult to get married. That is why in every Bodo household there is a handloom for weaving cloths. If there are more adult women, then there may be more looms according to the numbers of weavers. In Bodo society the men never weave, but they are assisting the womenfolk by way of making of loom accessories and setting up the loom³. Traditional Weaving process of the Bodo's (Figure 1) such as-

1. Spinning
2. Dyeing
3. Sizing
4. Denting
5. Setting up the loom
6. Weaving
7. Finishing.

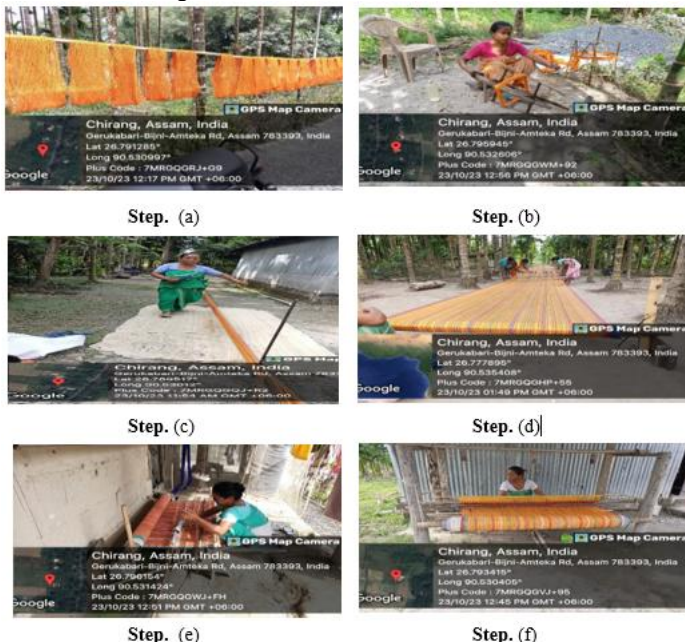


Figure 1(a), (d), (c), (d), (e) and (f), Weaving Process of the traditional loom of the Bodo's.

Source: Field Survey (in Chirang District)

2.2 Bodo Costume

¹ Ivy Daimary, The Bodo Women Representation in Folklore and Culture, P. 20

² <https://www.scribd.com/document/30746996/India-is-the-Second-Largest-Employment-Generator-After-Agriculture>

³ Labanya Mazumdar, Tribal Studies Emerging Frontiers of Knowledge, P. 153

The Bodo people of Assam have an age-old tradition of Spinning and weaving. They weave various type of cloths for their daily used. The Bodo male and female attire are different (Figure 2). Such as-

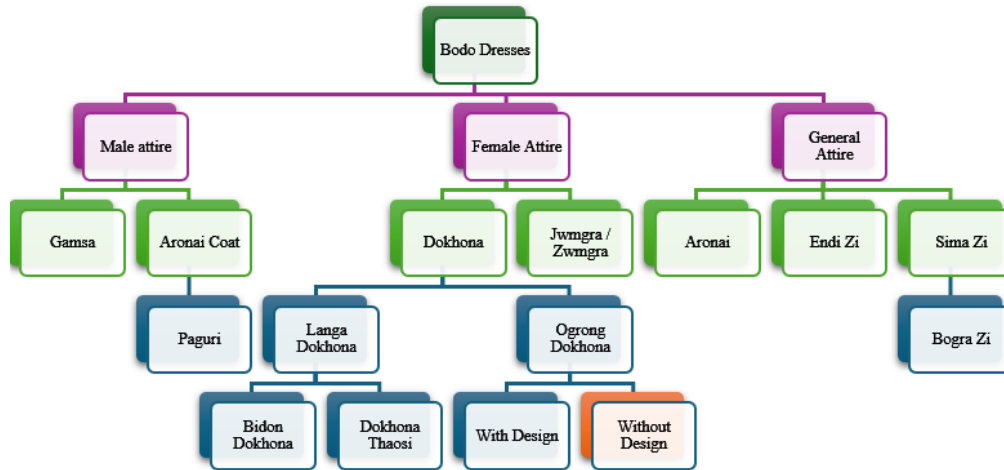


Figure 2 Classification of the Bodo costume

2.2.1 Dokhona

Dokhona is a traditional attire of the Bodo women. The Uniqueness of Bodo traditional attire makes Dokhona a symbol of the Bodo cultural identity. There is no proper meaning of Dokhona. Generally, dokhona is classified into two categories such as-

- i. Langa Dokhona
- ii. Ogrong Dokhona

2.2.1.1 Langa Dokhona

Dokhona is the principal traditional attire worn by Bodo women. It is a one-piece cloth that is distinct garments from other communities in India. It is wrapped around the waist. It is also known as *Golparia* Dokhona and it is worn by every Bodo woman (Figure 3). Dokhona reveals the artistic mind of the Bodo women. They weave it in looms with attractive designs and bright colours the Bodo used by the bride is beautifully designed with harmonious arrangement of colours and gives testimony to the imagination, creativity and skill of the weavers. Generally, the Dokhona is 3 meter in length and 1.5 meter in breath. The breadth of dokhona varies from according to the height of the women who wear it. Dokhona is known by the manes of the designs⁴.



a.



b.

Figure 3 (a), (b). The Bodo women are worn by traditional Langa Dokhona

Source: Field Survey

2.2.1.2 Ogrong Dokhona

Ogrong Dokhona is also known as Hasung Dokhona in local language (Figure 4). It is worn by Bodo women with a knot above the breast. The shape of the Ogrong Dokhona is rectangular and stitched at both the Borders. It covers the whole body from breast to ankle in perpendicular position. Floral motifs are commonly used at the lower border⁵. The red colour Ogrong Dokhona is used in religious performances. The Bodo's of the district of the Darang, Sonitpur, Kamrup and Udalguri to use.



a



b.

Figure 4 A Bodo girl wearing a Ogrong Dokhona., Source: Field Survey

2.2.1.3 Dokhona Thaosi

⁴ Juri Gogoi Konwar, Warp & Weft Textile Tradition of the Bodo's, P- 31

⁵ Rani Kakoti Hazarika & Kabita Boro, Textile Designs of the Boros of Northeast India, P-90

Dokhona Thaosi (Figure 5), i.e. attire for bride and Daudini, a holy woman who demonstrates dances to propitiate the gods and goddess and Bwirathi (Two helpers of Bride and groom), special woman who cut betel nut in the Bodo marriage ceremony⁶.



Figure 5. (a) and (b) A Bride wearing a Dokhona Thaosi in traditional Bodo wedding ceremony., **Source:** Field Survey

2.2.2 Gamsa

It is worn by male. Gamsa is a useful dress in everyday life (Figure 6). It is a plain weave rectangular shaped cloth with stripes in whole body or a plain body with simple border. Generally dark green colour is preferred for Gamsa with marrow yellow borders without floral motif. The motifs are for formal occasions like marriage ceremony or social function or religious occasions. In marriage and religious ceremonies Gamsa of red colour are preferred. Now a days many new varieties of floral motifs are used in Gamsa⁷.

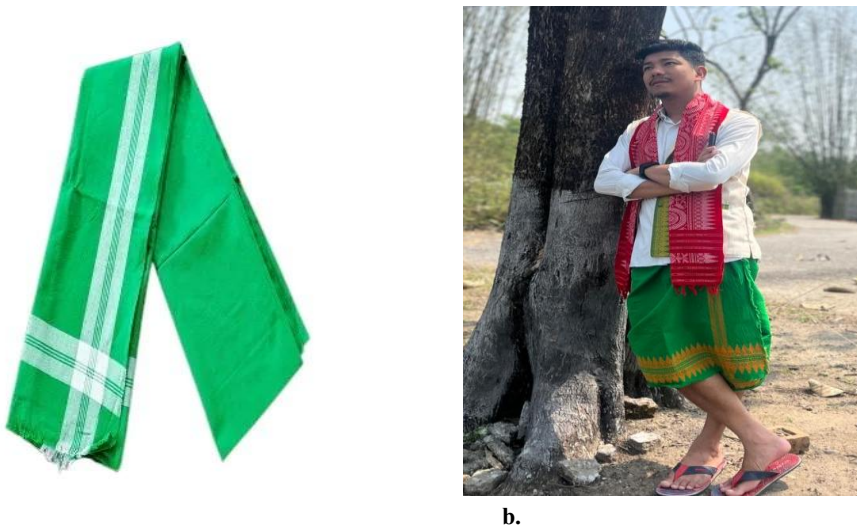


Figure 6. (a) and (b) A Bodo man wear a traditional Gamsa., **Source:** Field Survey

2.2.3 Sima Zi (shawl): Sima Zi is a large size of soft fabric worn round the shoulders during the winter season. Both male and female of every age use it. The yarns used for this cloth are Wool, Cotton, Eri, etc. It is decorated with the floral motif on both ends. Sometimes single motifs are used on the whole body at equal distance of the cloth along with the Border motifs⁸.

2.2.4 Endi Zi (Eri Shawl): Endi zi means Eri shawl. it is an ensi shawl used by both men and women in winter to keep the body warm This shawl is famous for soft and durability⁹. The weaver herself spins and weaves the cloth out of the reared Eri their own loom.

2.2.5 Jwmgra: Jwmgra is a long cloth that covers the part of the Body from neck to arms and breasts. Jwmgra is also known as **Fasra** or **Sadri** (

Figure 7). It is a common item of Bodo women's dress used in Combination with Dokhona (Figure 8), when going outside of home. It is considered as a must to make her dress complete while going out or during any socio-cultural occasion. In earlier times generally dingkia and Hajw agor was used in the Jwmgra. But, now-a-days women use different designs with various colour¹⁰. The Bodo women are prepared to weave own their loom. Sometimes it is also decorated in both borders by using the similar colour and motifs of Dokhona.

⁶ <https://www.vkic.org/article/spinning-and-weaving-of-the-bodos>

⁷ Rani Kakoti Hazarika & Kabita Boro, Textile Designs of the Boros of Northeast India, P-96

⁸ Rani Kakoti Hazarika & Kabita Boro, Textile Designs of the Boros of Northeast India, P-36

⁹ Juri Gogoi Konwar, Warp & Weft Textile Tradition of the Bodo's, P- 30-31

¹⁰ Juri Gogoi Konwar, Warp & Weft Textile Tradition of the Bodo's, P- 30-30



Figure 7. A traditional Attire of Jwmgra, *Source: Field Survey*



Figure 8 A Bodo Girl hang on shoulder of Jwmgra., *Source: Field Survey*

2.2.6 Aronai

The Bodo people's Aronai are a stunning and vibrant piece of clothing. In the past, Bodo warriors wore belts made by their wives, mothers, or sisters called Aronai on the battlefield. According to a belief, Aronai must be braided during the night, which represents a favourable omen for soldiers. Bodo people currently wear it in a variety of ways according to the occasion and ceremonies. The Bodo's are a tribe with a rich cultural heritage, and the society has several traditional dances. During the Bathou rituals, such as the Kherai festivals, some dances are done. Through Bagurumba, Daoshri Delai, and other cultural manifestations, several dances are included. Aronai is a crucial costume that both male and female dancers must wear in all dance styles. It is hung from one shoulder and fastened at the waist with another Aronnai around both edges. It is simply hung around the neck during social occasions and when someone is being honoured or congratulated (

Figure 9). Bandhuram Agor is one of the oldest designs or patterns.

a.



b.



Figure 9 (a) and (b) Aronai is gift as an honour to respect and welcoming to guest., *Source: Field Survey*
 The Size and Shape (Table 1) of traditional dresses of Bodo's are not same. Because it is depended on their requirement.

Table 1 The Size and shape of traditional dresses of the Bodo's are given below.

Table. 1

SL. No	Name of Dress	Size (in cm)
1	Dokhona	270 x 136
2	Gamsa	190 x 80
3	Jwmggra	182 x 80
4	Aronai	185 x 40
5	Endi Si	200 x 130

Source: Field Survey

2.3 Raw materials: Raw material is the main essential of weaving. In weaving, yarn is the most important raw material for the production of various type of handloom textiles. Before going to weave the weavers are prepared to produced yarn. Because without any yarn can't not be weave. The Bodo weavers are used different types of yarn and that are collect from the natural sourced to create their traditional textile. The Bodo weavers are using Cotton, Jute, Muga and Eri silk yarn for traditional weaving. These yarns are now available in the market and machines are used in their manufacturing.

The Bodo weavers in spinning of yarn is also expressed of the Bodo folk songs such as¹¹-

“Buri oi oi buri oi,
 Oi okha mnaici naici naici
 Khun lunaiya
 Honoi lapha caikhowlay
 Urao mari mari gab lanlay.”
 Rendering English,
 “Have not you, old woman,
 Get up before dawn,
 And spun your fill,
 Look the day has broken
 And the bird, keteki
 Is singing in heavenly heights.”

2.4 Dyes and colours

Colour means *Gab* in local language. In the earlier days the Bodo weavers were used some of their traditional methods for preparation of colours dying from the **bark, leaves, flowers** and **roots** of tree (Table 2). Available in nearby hills, forests and villages. Nowadays, the traditional method of colour dye has become almost obsolete. Because they are the loss of memory of traditional knowledge of colour dye, lack of practices. The reason may be easily found readymade colour dye yarn in the local market.

The preparation of colours from various trees and creepers are shows in Table. 2¹²

Table 2 Statement showing colours prepared from trees and creepers

SL. No	Names of the trees and creepers		Colours prepared		
	Local Name	Botanical Name	Portion Use	Colour made	Local name
1	Kumna	Strobilanthes Flaccidifolius	Leaf	Black/blue	Gwswm/gwthang
2	Temphor or Nili	Garcinia-Xanthochymus	Bark	Yellow	Gwmw

¹¹ Mohini Mohon Brahma, Folk-Songs of the Bodo's, P- 40

¹² <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/67532>

3	Asu	Morinda-Angustifolia	Bark, Roots	Red	Gwja
4	Khair	Jack-tree	Bark	Violet	Phantao Gab
5	Kanthal		Bark	Yellow	Gwmw

Generally, the Bodo women prepare red and yellow colour. Usually, women were attracted to these bright and shining colours and therefore these colours were prepared for common use. In any occasion, festivals and ceremonies, they are preferring to use especially red and yellow garments. The Bodo peoples are believing that the colour red is the symbol of the deity of the wealth i.e. goddess Lakshmi¹³. The famous Bodo painter Shobha Brhama says that the colours of yellow, red, green, black, light red and blue (Table 3), are frequently used by the Boros. However, Brahma mentions that ‘Yellow was the Queen’ among the many colours used by the Boros in their dresses¹⁴. Every Bodo weaver has the knowledge of colour combination which is passed down generation to generation as a traditional knowledge. Yellow is the favourite colour of the Bodo’s.

Why Bodo women prefer yellow colour?

“The body colour of Bodo women was yellowish. So, the wear of Bodo women called ‘Dokhna’ was woven in yellow, reddish yellow, yellow, yellowish red and red thus matching the body colour¹⁵.”

They are expert themselves in preparing of such kind of colours from natural sources.

The Bodo weavers are preference for yellow and red colour is also expressed in the folk songs such as¹⁶-

“Oua Bizouso banay dao gomo

No ada lanoba gomo.”

Rendering English,

“On the bamboo tree sits the yellow bird

Come dear, and take

The yellow cloth woven with my hand.”

Table 3 Most useful colour among the Bodo weavers

SL. No	Local Name	Colour
1	Gwmw	Yellow
2	Gwja	Red
3	Swkhwr	Green
4	Khomla	Orange
5	Gupur	White
6	Pantao gab	Purple
7	Gwmw gwthang	Lemon yellow
8	Gwswm	Black

Source: Field survey

2.4 Looms of the Bodo’s

Loom is called *Isnsali* or *Hisansali* in Bodo language. The Traditional loom one is the fixed system which can’t be shifted from one place to another. This system is slowly decreasing. The Bodo traditional loom is known as names such as Sal-Khuntha, Daophang, or Tat Sal and is a type of Throw-Shuttle-handloom where the loom setup on a four-post frame fixed to the ground. Bodo women sit in in front of the loom, using both legs on a footrest to operate it and employ the basic weaving motions of shedding, picking, and beating to create intricate designs and traditional Bodo attire.

Bodo peoples are using various types of looms. The Bodo men never weave, but they are assisting the women by way of making the loom accessories and setting up the loom. Such as-

a. Throw shuttle loom.

b. Fly shuttle loom.

2.4.1 Throw Shuttle loom (Saljwng Zi danai)

Loin loom, throw shuttle loom and Fly shuttle is different types of looms. The Throw shuttle loom is the most common and traditional loom used by all communities in Assam. Throw shuttle loom is the oldest kind of loom. The accessories required for the existing throw-shuttle loom are very simple and can easily be made out of indigenous materials, mostly make from Bamboo and wood. Because it is available in local.

2.4.2 Fly Shuttle loom (Tat Salwng zi danai)

¹³ Juri Gogoi Konwar, Warp & Weft Textile Tradition of the Bodo’s, P- 51

¹⁴ <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/67774>

¹⁵ <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/67774>

¹⁶ <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/67532>

At present, Bodo weavers mostly used the fly shuttle loom in their weaving practices. Fly shuttle loom (

Figure 10) is another Bodo's. Fly shuttle is language. It is than the throw shuttle A timber is considerable various design. Both the type of hollow makes fasten by the nails, from the speed. A wooden planks to fit the wooden bit parallel with the rashw. Shuttle stick like rope side by side and the sled with hands. This developed by an English "half weave and half mechanic" John key in 1733 was introduced in Assam after more than two centuries of its invention.



method of weaving of the also known as Tat Sal in Bodo technologically upgradation loom. Tat sal is made of Wood. thickness is cut in length wise in end of the length, there is a box with pieces of wooden bits where shuttle is braking up shallow panel is cut in the rashw into them. There is also a wooden planks to keep tied up is used by flying with handle the beating has done by pulling improved loom developed loom

Figure 10 A Bodo women weave on Fly shuttle loom.

Source: Field Survey

2.4.3 Sudam Sunai or Danai

The traditional practice of Sudam (

Figure 11), in which every child in the Bodo villages participated until a few years ago, is no longer popular among the new generation of Bodos. Sudam is very sweet practice of the Child sitting with elder family members and watching them weave fabrics, would also start to weave in a smaller set up besides the main loom in the households. This practice was very useful in inheriting the skills by the young generation from the older generation.



Figure 11 Two Bodo little girls play with a toy loom. This is called *Sudam Danai* or *Sunai* in local language.

Source: Field Survey

2.5 Mu (Measurement): The word *Mu* (Measurement of textile) (

Figure 12) comes from the local language of the Bodos. The Bodo weavers are used this *Mu* word for measurement of cloths. They are not used any cm, meter and feet for measurement. Generally, one *Mu* is left hand finger to right hand shoulder is 'Mu se'. In a one *Mu* approximately 2.44 feet.



Figure 12. A Bodo girls' measure to cloth with traditional method. Source: Field Survey

2.6 Traditional Tools of the Bodo Weaving

Weaving is one of the main activities of Bodo women. Through the weaving they are showing their talents. Weaving practice is in every home of the Bodo's; Bodo women are expert weavers. Tools are main parts of weaving. They are used traditional tools which are made by themselves with local resources such as bamboo, wood, iron and thread robe.

They have been weaving their own dresses at home with the help of indigenous materials found in nature. The materials which are generally used by Bodo women in the process of weaving. Such as- Sal Khunta (Loom-post), Sal, Gandwi, Makhu, Rashw, Gorai, Kilabari, Bangwja, Gorkha, Putul, Swrki, Mushra, Nw, Sal Saikhong, Baleb, Swrki, Kaitha, Akai, Ambu, Boudangi, Bobbin, Hasung, Kanjong, Jenthwr (Figure 13) and etc.

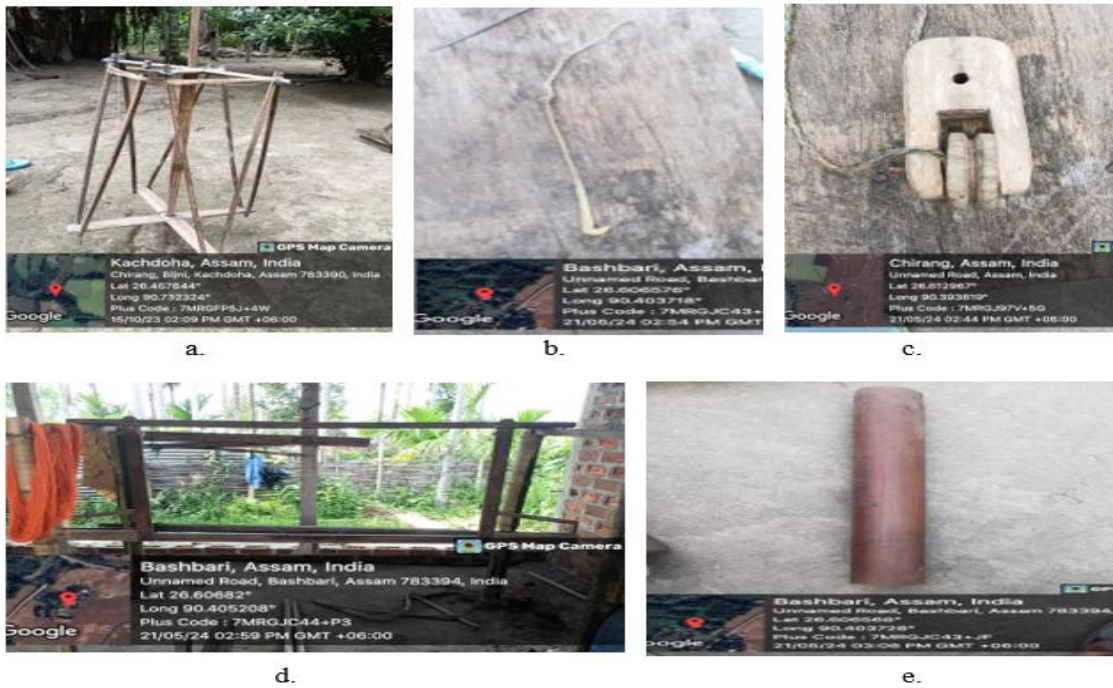


Figure 13 (a) Swrkhi (Charkha), (b) Khaitha, (c) Gorai, (d) That (slay) and (e) Nw Hasung (pipe), The traditional Handloom Tools of the Bodo's. **Source:** Field Survey

2.7 Agor (Design)

Agor means design (Textile design) in local language. Design is one of the important components in weaving. According to Oxford Dictionary, the term 'design' is derived from the Latin word 'Designare'. There are rich varieties of design and texture of Bodo textiles. There is definite impact of the geographical and natural surrounding on most of the design are used by the Bodo people. The dresses used for domestic purpose are generally plain or simple in design. But the dresses used on special occasions and festivals are decorated with beautiful design. Juri Gogoi Konwar "*Warp & Weft textile tradition of the Bodo's*" in this book the Bodo agor (design) are classified into four categorized like- (i) Animal, (ii) Nature, (iii) Floral and (iv) Man made. **Sarat Borthakur** has classified to different types of Agor (Design of textile) in her thesis paper such as-

1. Plants, creepers and flowers
2. Birds, Animals and insects
3. River and rivouletes
4. Hills
5. Natural sceneries
6. Designs after the name of persons or users.

But, generally In the Bodo society the weavers are used various design in cloths and they are inspired by nature such as **Animals, Birds, hills, river, flower, leaves, and insect** etc.

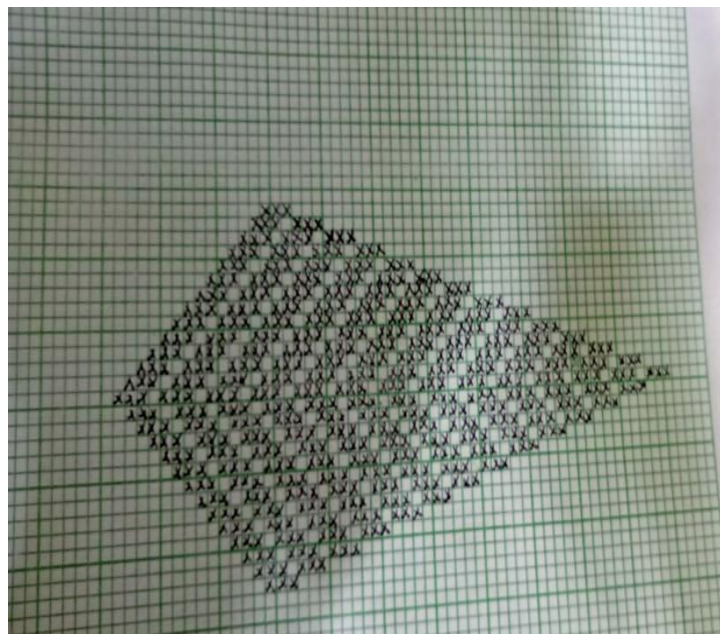
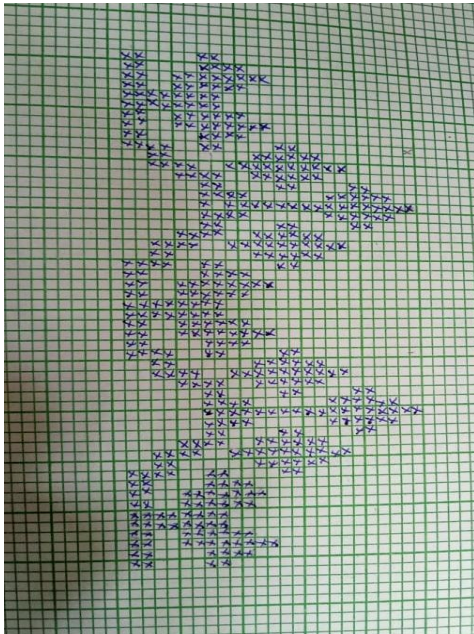
The name of Traditional design follows as-

1. Hajw agor (Hajw means hiily or mountain, a design representing hill)
2. Thaigir bibar agor (a design representing elephant apple)
3. Dingkhiya agor (a design looks like a fern leaf)
4. Khaseo bikha agor (a design representing heart of turtle)
5. Jong agor (a design looks like a spearhead)
6. Bema agor (a design representing spider)
7. Sikhiri agor (a design representing butterfly)
8. Bwigri bibar agor (Bwigri means plum, a design representing plum flower)
9. Thakhamala agor (a design looks like a chain of coin)
10. Maoji apha agor (a design looks like a footprint of cat)
11. Muphur apha agor (a design looks like a footprint of beer)
12. Laojong agor (a design made a Bodo girl, his name Laojong)
13. Thampwi agor (a design representing mosquito)
14. Dril agor (a kind of design)
15. Mwswo hatai agor (mwswo means cow and hatai means teeth, a design representing

2.7.1 Preservation of Agor (design)

Weaving is a long-standing tradition among the Bodo people. In Bodo weaving Design means "Agor". It is rich in symbolism and often inspired by nature. These designs are passed down from generation to generation. In earlier days the Bodo weavers are preserved their handmade design to cut a small piece of cloths and sometimes they are art on normal graph paper (Figure 14). Because, the maximum numbers of Bodo weavers are lived in villages and they are Isolated from modern technologies.

a **b**
 Figure 14 (a), (b) A traditional Design of Bodo and art on a normal graph paper (Dingkia Agor).



Source: Field Survey

2.7 Weaving and its reflections in Bodo Folk songs

The term folk song has an equivalent Bodo appellation known as “Boroni Kuga Mithai” or “Boroni Dengkw”. The Bodo’s have melodies folksongs of various type which can be categorized on the basis of content, form, context, texture and so on. Songs accompany most of their day-to-day activities including spinning and weaving. These folk songs are sung with or without the accompaniment of the Sifung (Flute), Kham (Drum), Jotha (cymbal) and Serja (Lute)¹⁷.

De hai lwgw bima burwini
Danai lunai agor ernaikwo swlwngdini
Sikhiri bidwi swbnai
Okhwrangao dao birnai
Agor erwi erwi boinibw sigangao
Khinthani lwgw khinthani
Mulug bikhayao dинthilangni (Brahma. M.M. 160).

Rendering

Come friend
 Let us weave the butterfly
 And to make the design
 Of our mother old
 Let us weave the butterfly
 That gathers floral honey sweet
 Let us weave the flying butterfly
 On our cloth and display to all¹⁸.

When a husband goes to the nearby hills to chop wood or to collect firewood the wife sings a folk song, urging him to fetch a shuttle for her:

Hajw khoro hajw khoro
Thongpan danno
Thanbola thanbola
Sal zora makhu zora
Labo labo ada laru bandaru
De labogwn agoi goiciri maynao
Zou bidoi donkha
Agoi goiciri maynao.

(From Upen Narzari, Guwahati and
 Nitul Boro, Tezpur)

In the next song mother-in-law sings addressing to her would be daughter-in-law:

Nanga Hai Angnw Nangthara
Ji Danw Rwnzwi
Agor Ernw Rwnzwi Baohari. (Boro R., 2018)

i.e. I don't need a daughter-in-law who doesn't know how to weave or who doesn't have the skill to weave. Because weaving is a primary requirement for a Bride.

2.8 Folk beliefs related to weaving (Subung Fwthainai)

In Bodo society, weavers observe various folk beliefs related to weaving and these traditions are still carefully upheld today. These beliefs are-

¹⁷ Juri Gogoi Konwar, Warp & Wept Textile tradition of the Bodo's, P. 54

¹⁸ Juri Gogoi Konwar, Warp & Wept Textile tradition of the Bodo's, P. 55

1. The weaver does not begin the weaving process on *Tuesdays* and *Saturdays*, as it is believed that starting on these days will cause the weaving to proceed with difficulties and not go smoothly.
2. When a person is traveling for an important task and happens to see the warping process on the way, it is believed to be a sign of a good or lucky day.
3. Among the Bodo's they are belief if a person at the time of war goes with a *kabas* cloth than he will be safe of life in the war and will definitely win the war. This cloth is completely woven within a one night and on these clothes make a design of *derhasar agor* (design). The word Derhasar means 'win'. It is the pious duty of the wife to prepare a *Kabas* clothes for their husband.
4. If any small piece of a cloth goes missing, the Bodo women discontinue the use of Such garment for fear of inviting harm because they believe that only witches or evil men take such specimen with evil design.
5. The place of loom they are to protect from the evil eye they also keep small piece of impure/sinful/used broomsticks at one side of the beam containing warp thread.

3.0 Government Initiative and Schemes of the Handloom

According to 4th All India handloom census 2019-20 (Table 5), there are 26,73,891 handloom weavers and 8,48,621 allied workers in handloom sector across the country. It is a second largest employments production after the agriculture sector. In the last Five years 2021-2026 the govt of India takes many initiatives to increase of handloom sector. Ministry of textile is implementing following schemes in India such as-

1. National Hnadloom Development Programme (NHDP)
2. Raw Material Supply Scheme (RMSS)
3. Weaver MUDRA Scheme
4. Handloom weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS)
5. SAMARTH (Capacity Building in Textile sector)
6. Marketing Promotion Scheme
7. Handloom Mark & India Handllom Brand.
8. North Eastern Region Textile Promotion Scheme (NERTPS)

Through the Handloom Development Programme, financial assistance is provided to eligible handloom weavers and agencies for upgraded loom & accessories, Solar lighting units, construction or work shed, product & design development, marketing access, concessional loans under weavers' MUDRA scheme and etc.

Under the Raw Material Supply Scheme, the weavers and handloom agencies get many benefits to increase of their handloom. The Ministry provided subsidy for transportation of yarn and 15% price subsidy on cotton hank yarn, Domestic silk, woollen & lines yarn and blended yarn of natural fibres.

Assam Government has also launched many Schemes to development of handloom sector. Managed by the Directorate of Handllom & textiles such as-

1. Swanirbhar Naari
2. Economic Upliftment of Weavers
3. Yarn Bank Schemes
4. Handloom Training Centres (HTC) & Institutes (HTI)
5. Income Generation Intervention
6. Exhibition & Publicity
7. Legel Production.

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) is a part of Assam, it is a council and they have own autonomous power and function. Assam govt also take many initiatives to development of handloom as well as BTC govt also launched many schemes for handloom. These schemes are helps to rural areas weavers and upgraded their handloom like financial assistance, handloom distribution, accessories, and yarn etc.

Handloom schemes and Initiatives under BTC Govt. such as-

1. Bodoland Hnadloom Mission
2. Model Handloom Village Scheme
3. Handloom & Textile Training Centres
4. Bodoland Sericulture Mission
5. Dwimu Project

Main purpose of these all above mentioned schemes are-

1. To preservation of the Indian weaving culture
2. Provide high quality training, financial support, handloom and accessories and market access.
3. To generate more employments power in rural areas.
4. Increase of the Hnadloom sector across the country.

At that time Govt. of Assam and Govt. of Indian has established many training centre and institute (Table 4) across of Assam to support weavers and develop the handloom sector. Important centres institutions include:

Table 4 Training Centres and Institute of Handloom in Assam

SL. No	Centres / Institute	No. of Centres / Institute
1	Handloom Training Centre (HTCs)	102
2	Handloom Training Institute (HTIs)	4
3	Handloom Research and design Centre (HRDC)	1
4	Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology (IIHT)	1
5	Weavers Service Centres (WSCs)	1

Table 5 4TH All India Handloom Census 2019-20 Report

SL. No	State/ UTs	No. of Handllom weavers	No. of allied workers	No. of total handloom workers
1	Andhra Pradesh	1,27,662	49,785	1,77,447
2	Arunachal Pradesh	77,600	17,016	94,616
3	Assam	11,07,428	1,76,453	12,83,881
4	Bihar	7,216	5,631	12,847
5	Chhattisgarh	14,077	7,426	21,503
6	Delhi	3,236	1,049	4,285

7	Goa	22	4	26
8	Gujarat	10,179	422	10,601
9	Haryana	14,414	11,128	25,542
10	Himachal Pradesh	13,211	477	13,688
11	Jammu and Kashmir Including Ladakh	15,784	7,544	23,328
12	Jharkhand	12,364	10,133	22,497
13	Karnataka	27,175	27,616	54,791
14	Kerala	15,480	6,604	22,084
15	Madhya Pradesh	12,805	5,267	18,072
16	Maharashtra	2,882	627	3,509
17	Manipur	2,12,481	12,203	2,24,684
18	Meghalaya	41,221	1,553	42,774
19	Mizoram	17,298	10,242	27,540
20	Nagaland	35,950	7,534	43,484
21	Odisha	53,472	64,364	1,17,836
22	Puducherry	908	782	1,690
23	Punjab	631	338	969
24	Rajasthan	8,687	1,403	10,090
25	Sikkim	632	65	697
26	Tamil Nadu	1,97,818	45,757	2,43,575
27	Telangana	25,930	21,922	47,852
28	Tripura	1,11,927	25,712	1,37,639
29	Uttar Pradesh	1,30,778	60,179	1,90,957
30	Uttarakhand	7,967	4,594	12,561
31	West Bengal	3,66,656	2,64,791	6,31,447
	All India	26,73,891	8,48,621	35,22,512

Source: 4th All Indian Handloom Census 2019-20.

According to 4th All Indian Handloom Census 2019-20 Report, Assam is the only one state of highest number of weaving sectors.

4.0 Economic Contributions of Bodo Weaving

Weaving plays an important economic contribution of Bodo community of Assam. Many Bodo weavers are engaged full-time as well as part-time. Handloom industry offers employment avenues to the unorganized sector that is largely found in the rural areas as well as urban areas. It is the highest opportunity for employment generate to the illiterate women. The new wave of establishing the self-help groups (SHG) in both rural and urban areas has offered challenges to the co-operative sector for sustainable economic activities. Government of Assam has given support for establishing Self-help groups (SHG) in every village for the economic development.¹⁹ The Economic role of weaving like-

Employment Generate: According to 4th All India Handloom Census 2019-20 report, handloom is the second largest employment generate after the agriculture. Through this census report we are knowing handloom is the main employment generated. Many Bodo women are engaged in weaving as full-time as well as part time (Table 6) occupation. Such as-

Table 6 Assam handloom workers (full time-full time) Distribution

State	Location	Male		Female		Transgender		Total
		Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	
Assam	Rural	19,682	7,910	92,027	50,138	157	4	1,69,918
	Urban	576	334	3,781	1,844	0	0	6,535
	Total	20,258	8,244	95,808	51,982	157	4	1,76,453

Source: 4th All India Handloom census 2019-20

Income generation: Weaving provide a primary source of income for Bodo women. In the villages Bodo women are weave various type of garment own their loom. They are sale of these garments in the local market and earning income from weaving (Table 7). Many Bodo peoples are established Handloom and weavings own their houses. As well as many Self-help groups (SHG) and societies are established Handloom and weaving centre/afad in rural areas. At present the Bodo men or women setup small bossiness (shop) to sell of traditional dresses and they are income generate (gain profit). Such as-

Table 7 Distribution of handloom by income from handloom related activities-

State	Location	Less than 5,000	5001 – 10,000	10,001 – 15,000	15,001 – 20,000	20,001 – 25,000	25,001 – 50,000	50,000 – 1,00,000	Above 1,00,000	Total (HH)
Assam	Rural	11,07,105	1,22,667	16,011	2,979	1781	1493	64	88	12,52,188
	Urban	15,278	1,774	224	35	4	3	0	0	17,318
	Total	11,22,383	1,24,441	16,235	3,014	1,785	1,496	64	88	12,69,506

Source: 4th All Indian Handloom Census 2019-20

Household economic support: Many Bodo families engaged in weaving and supporting household economy of many families in Assam. The Bodo weaver's income generated from the sale of handwoven garments such as- **Dokhona, Gamsa, Aronai, Jwmgra, and Indi si** etc (Table 8). They are using their earning to support of their families like- education, healthcare, and food etc.

Table 8 Average Price of Bodo dresses

SL. No	Items	Cost Price (in ₹)	Selling Price (in ₹)	Profit (in ₹)
1	Dokhona	1100 - 1200	1300 - 1400	200
2	Gamsa	300 - 350	350 - 400	50
3	Jwmgra	700 - 800	800 - 900	100
4	Aronai	300 - 350	350 - 400	50
5	Indi Si	6000 - 7000	7000 - 8000	1000

Source: Field Survey (seller)

4.0 Problems and Solution of the Bodo weaving

¹⁹ Juri Gogoi Konwar, Warp & Wept Textile tradition of the Bodo's, P-59

Weaving is a cultural identity of the Bodo's. At that time traditional Bodo weavers are facing so many problems. Some problems are given below-

1. **Competition from machine-made materials:** Actually, machine-made textile is cheaper and produced faster like- power loom and jacquard, compared to traditional handwoven.
2. **Low Income:** Traditional Handwoven products is taking more time to weave but sell at low price.
3. **Lack of Market Access:** The Bodo weavers are mostly depending on local market in her villages and middlemen (Figure 15) to sell their product. Sell Distribution of weavers-



Figure 15 Types of Channels of distribution.

4. **Hight cost of raw materials:** Raw material is the main essential of weaving. The price of Cotton, silk and dye has increased.
5. **Lack of Modern Technology:** Maximum number of Bodo weavers are still use traditional looms. There is less number modern technology of weaving tools.
6. **Declining interest of young generation:** At present young generations are not interested in learning of weaving because they are educated and prefer to Govt. job with better life and income sources.

Solutions: -

1. **Government support:** - Government can be launched many new schemes for handloom. Government provides financial assistant, handloom distribution, accessories, and loan etc. Through the schemes the weavers will be get benefit to upgrade their loom.
2. **Marketing:** - To provide better marketing opportunities for selling their product like- National level market, international level market, exhibition, social media and online platforms (Amazon, Flipkart etc).
3. **Training and skill development:** To Established handloom training centre and handloom training institute for teaching of handloom. As well as organized high level training programs to tech modern technique of designs and weaving techniques.
4. **Access of raw materials:** To decrease the price of cotton, silk yarn and dye etc.

Conclusion

The Bodo weaving traditional practices is a rich and living heritage that encompasses cultural identity, gender roles, mythology, sustainability, design innovation, and ritual practices. Traditional Bodo costumes represent a profound cultural legacy, embodying the community's identity, craftsmanship, and deep connection to nature. Garments such as the *Dokhona* and *Gamsa* showcase intricate weaving techniques, featuring motifs inspired by flora, fauna, and tribal symbolism. The use of natural dyes and handloom weaving reflects sustainable practices that have been passed down through generations. These costumes are not merely items of clothing—they signify social status, age, and hold ceremonial importance, especially during festivals like *Bwisagu*. The preservation of Bodo textile knowledge through oral traditions and apprenticeship plays a crucial role in safeguarding indigenous heritage in the face of modernization. Weaving is the played an important role to development of economic sector. Many Bodo women are engaged in weaving as well as at that time Govt. of Assam and Govt. of India has taken many initiative and launce many new schemes to help of weaver. Through the Govt. Schemes many weavers are getting benefits like-financial assistant, loan, solar units, and accessories etc. Recently, several Bodo costumes have received **Geographical Indication (GI)** tags, underscoring both their cultural and economic significance. Including specific examples of motifs or regional weaving variations could further enrich the understanding of this vibrant tradition. The intergenerational transmission of knowledge, symbolic meaning of attire, and the ecological and artistic aspects of weaving make Bodo textile heritage a vital part of India's intangible cultural legacy—one that deserves careful documentation, preservation, and global recognition.

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