

## Some Devices Employed by the Aitons in Fixing Auspicious and Inauspicious Moment

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The Aitons are a distinct group of people who live in 8 villages of Barpathar and Kaliani areas, 3 of which are included in the district of Golaghat and 5 in the Karbi Anglong. About 40 years ago some Aiton families shifted from Barpathar and founded a new village at Jonapathar in the Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh.

They profess Buddhism of the Theravada School which distinguishes them from their immediate neighbours who are mostly Hindus. Every village has a Buddhist monastery called *vihar* with one or more monks besides several novices. The people faithfully perform all Buddhist religious functions. They speak Tai language and many of them are not conversant with the Assamese language. This is more apparent among the people of older generation whose contact with other neighbours was much limited.

The Aitons have their own house type built on piles like other Tais of South-East Asia. They have their own type of dress for males and females. Agriculture is their main occupation done in conventional method.

But behind this superstructure of Buddhism there also exists a thread by which they are linked with supernaturalism such as their belief in taboo, supernaturals, spirits, some other gods for whose propitiation they make offerings. They also believe in the spirit of dead, ancestors and they pay regular homage or prayer. Although as Buddhists of Theravada School believe in gods ritual fuction, and prayer to gods and spirits do not arise, have many beliefs from time immemorial. But they never feel that such beliefs are outside Buddhism.

In this paper an attempt is made to discuss a few devices employed by them for ascertaining auspicious and inauspicious time.

(1) Device ascertaining auspicious and inauspicious time for bringing out paddy from granary.

For finding out auspicious days they consult a book called *Phelung*\* i.e. a book of astrology. According to this book, 17 days out of 30 days are auspicious and the rest 13 days are inauspicious

and hence grain should not be removed from the granary on these days. If they remove grain on inauspicious days they will be disturbed by evil spirit or will suffer from stomach trouble, vomiting or other ills.

\*Data collected from *phelung*, a Manual of astrology in Tai Aiton language, Ms. no. 1196, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati. I am indebted to Sri Nabin Shyam, the Ahom Pandit in the same department, who kindly translated the *phe lung* for me.

A table indicating auspicious and inauspicious days is given below.

**Table I**

Auspicious and inauspicious days to take out paddy from the granary.

Days	Indication	Consequences
1st day	not good, <i>phi</i> (spirit) will take	inauspicious
2nd ,,	cause to be broken by the spirit	inauspicious
3rd ,,	3 spirit will take	inauspicious
4th } 5th } 6th }	good days to take out grain	auspicious
7th ,,	2 spirit will take	inauspicious
8th ,,	1 spirit will take	inauspicious
9th } 10th } 11th }	good days to remove paddy	auspicious
12th } 13th }	2 spirit will take	inauspicious
14th } 15th ,,	good day	auspicious
16th } 17th }	2 spirit will take	inauspicious
18th } 19th } 20th }	good day	auspicious
	1 spirit will take	inauspicious
	3 spirit will take	inauspicious

21st	..	1 spirit will take	Inauspicious
22nd	}	good day	auspicious
23rd			
24th	..	1 spirit will take	inauspicious
25th	..	good day	auspicious
26th	..	3 spirit will take	inauspicious
27th	'	good day	auspicious
28th	..	2 spirit will take	inauspicious
29th	)	good day	auspicious
30th			

There are three evil spirits mentioned in the *phe lung*. One spirit eats paddy on 3rd, 20th and 26th days; another spirit eats paddy on 7th, 11th, 12th, 15th, and 28th days and the last one for three days on 8th, 18th, 21st and 24th days. Besides these 12 days, the first and second days of the month are also not good to bring out paddy from granary. The most inauspicious day is the second day of the month. If the paddy is brought out on this day the paddy would be destroyed either by fire, insect, storm, flood and so on.

The rest of the days of the month are auspicious on which paddy may be taken out from granary. These days are 4th, 5th, 6th, 9th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 19th, 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th and 30th days. Of these the most auspicious days are on 4th, 5th, 6th, 9th and 10th days. However, they do not take out paddy on those days on which their parents died and also on Saturday and Tuesdays. Further all Buddhist religious days are observed as taboo. The Aitons believe that they should not offer grain or paddy to the beggar on the day on which paddy was first stored in the granary else they would suffer from loss of paddy.

Now a days the villagers are not much interested or conscious about all these. All of them, however, do not bring out paddy from granary on the day on which the head of the family expired.

(2) Device for ascertaining good and evil result depending on moment of birth.

The future of a person is ascertained by taking into consideration the moment of birth. A day is divided into 8 periods. They believe that a child would show sign according to the specific moment of birth, signifying the future of a person. The table given below, carries the identity of the future of a child.

Table II

Ascertaining good and evil results depending on moment of birth

Time	Equivalent	Consequence
Chang han na po na kai cham.	Cocks crow in the morning	will be the owner of gold, silver, courageous, expert brainy.
Chang han na po wan hung cham.	Sun rise	foolish.
Chang han na po kin ngai cham.	Meal time in the morning	intelligent and clever.
Chang han na po ap chuk.	Bath time in the morning at about 8'O clock	Poor in young stage, rich in old.
Chang han na po kin wan.	mid-day meal	to abound in jewel and property.
Chang han na po bu khai ma len Cham.	Cattle binding in the after-noon.	gods will not love.
Chang han na po khao kan pha pu.	Time for going to bed about 8'O clock. In case of female child. In case of male child	Will get love and affection from her husband. happy, will live in much comfort.

In the table above we have found the best time is the morning hour when cock crow. A child born at this period brings gold, silver. Besides, the baby would be courageous, expert and highly intelligent. If born during sun rise it would be foolish. In the meal time between 7'O clock to 8'O clock it would be intelligent and clever. At bath time i.e. in the morning from 8'O clock to 10'O clock it would be poor in young stage and rich in old age. During mid-day meal it would have jewel and property. If born in afternoon it would try to stand on its foot. A child born at sleeping time at about 8'O clock in the evening would share love and affection from husband in case of female baby and would live with much comfort in case of male child.

All these show that although they are Buddhists have still retained some of their pre-Buddhist beliefs and customs,