

**GORRA: SOCIO-RELIGIOUS
INSTITUTION OF THE
APATANIS**

**Thesis Submitted to Rajiv Gandhi University in fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History**

By

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Under the Supervision of

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Gorra: Socio-Religious Institution of the Apatanis" submitted by Tage Habung in partial fulfillment of the requirement for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Itanagar, is piece of an original and bonafide research work which was carried out between 2006-2009 under my supervision. I recommend this thesis for consideration for award of the Ph.D degree and put this before examiner for evaluation.

Further, I certified that he has not submitted this thesis or any part of it to any other university / institution of higher learning for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Preface

Writing cultural history had always remained as marginal and elusive till twentieth century. This is because most of the historical writing of nineteenth century revolved round the “nation-state and its activities”. However, with the emergence of historical sub-disciplines such as social historical, labour history, women’s history and so on, more scope for studying the aspect of the human past also emerged. Consequently, a new discipline known as “Cultural history” has emerged in the academic arena, which seeks to study cultural in order to unravel the aspect of human past.

Cultural history can be precisely defined as a study that concern with the historical analysis of a range of cultural “artifacts”. These artifacts include written and visual text; building and other discrete material object; and, social practices and institution of the society, which need historical interpretation and reconstruction.

Study of the tribal culture in any part of the world is an interesting and adventurous task as it helps us to venture in the domain of tribal culture and give us an opportunity to know the tribal people very closely. But study of tribal culture in this part of region, i.e., Arunachal Pradesh, is not easy task and is full of difficulties because of absence of any form of literature. With

onslaught of progress and modernity, this has become all more difficult because many fast paced changes have taken place in the realm of tribal culture practices.

Nevertheless, with an insider's perspective I was keen to understand the tribal cultural practices in Arunachal in general and the Apatanis in particular. This has immensely inspired me to take-up this study. The present study is an attempt to reconstruct the cultural history of the Apatanis by understanding the institution of the *gorra*.

An institution as we know is an integral part of human society. Every society evolves their association or institutions according to their necessities and circumstances. So by studying the specific institution of a particular society, cultural history of the same society can be reconstructed. In similar way, here the attempt have been made to reconstruct socio-religious and economic history of the Apatanis by understanding the institution of *gorra*.

However, no social science studies are complete or final in its nature and, gaps and lapses are always there. However, I have tried my best ability to encapsulate all vital aspects pertaining to *gorra* institution. This would help to unravel the rich cultural practices of the Apatanis from historical point of view. Still than, I perceive that this study is a modest beginning,

and there is every chance of omission and commission on this study.

Nevertheless I would like to record my sincere gratitude to all those people who inspired me to take-up this study and those who helped me through the various stages of the work.

At the outset, I must acknowledge my deepest sense of gratitude to Dr. Sarah Hilaly, Associate Prof., Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, under whose supervision and guidance this study is completed. Truly I could not have been completed this work without her constant guidance and keen interest in my study and overall development. I am really indebted her for her inputs in the amount of time invested for the revision of my thesis.

I would also like to record my gratitude to Prof. B. Tripathy, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, for his encouragement and guidance in preparing the final draft and organization of the Chapters of this studies. Indeed I learnt many aspects of research form him.

I would be failing in my task without acknowledging to Dr. M.C. Behera, Associate Prof., Dr. S.K. Chaudhuri, Associate Prof., and Dr. S.C. Chaudhuri, Asstt. Prof., of Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies (AITS), Rajiv Gandhi University, for their timely guidance and suggestion, and the help rendered to me in terms of providing study materials. And

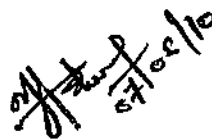
also my heartiest special thanks is due Dr. Otem Pertin, research scholar of J.B. Pant Institute, Itanagar, who helped in revision of this thesis.

I also grateful to Bomchak Riba, Senior Cartographer, Department of Geography, Rajiv Gandhi University; Tage Rupa , Assist. Prof. Department of Geography, Rajiv Gandhi University; Duyu Talley, Research Assistant, Gazetteer of India, Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar; Kalung Bakhang, Inspector, Statistic Department, Lower Subansiri District, Ziro; Kuru Tado, student, St. Claret College, Ziro; and Library Staffs of Rajiv Gandhi University, and State Library, Itanagar for help rendered to me in composing map work, collecting statistical data and in the field works.

This thesis would have been unimaginable without the encouragement and stimulus of my elder brother Tage Bida, Sisters Mrs. Moby Sai and Taniyang Yabyang and their family. Their love, affection and steady presence has provided me this opportunity to engage myself in this study without worldly worry. My especially thank is due to my wife Tage Yami, who greatly cared me in revision of this thesis.

Above all my heart felt gratitude is due to the priests and elders of the Apatanis for their kind warm response to me in the field, without whom the analysis of crucial social institutions would have been impossible.

Last but not the least; I like to dedicate this maiden effort to the *gorris* of the Apatanis who rendering a yeomen service to the society and to my elder brother late Tage Tana, who always aspired for my higher studies.



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Abbreviations

- ALCS - Apatani Literary and Culture Society.
AITS - Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies.
AYA - Apatani Youth Association.
HTCC - Himalayan Tribe from Cattle to Cash.
JNC - Jawaharlal Nehru College.
SRCAAP - Socio-Religious Ceremonies of the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh.
IFCSAP - Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh.
TAAAP - The Advancing Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh.
TATN - The Apatanis and their Neighbourhood.

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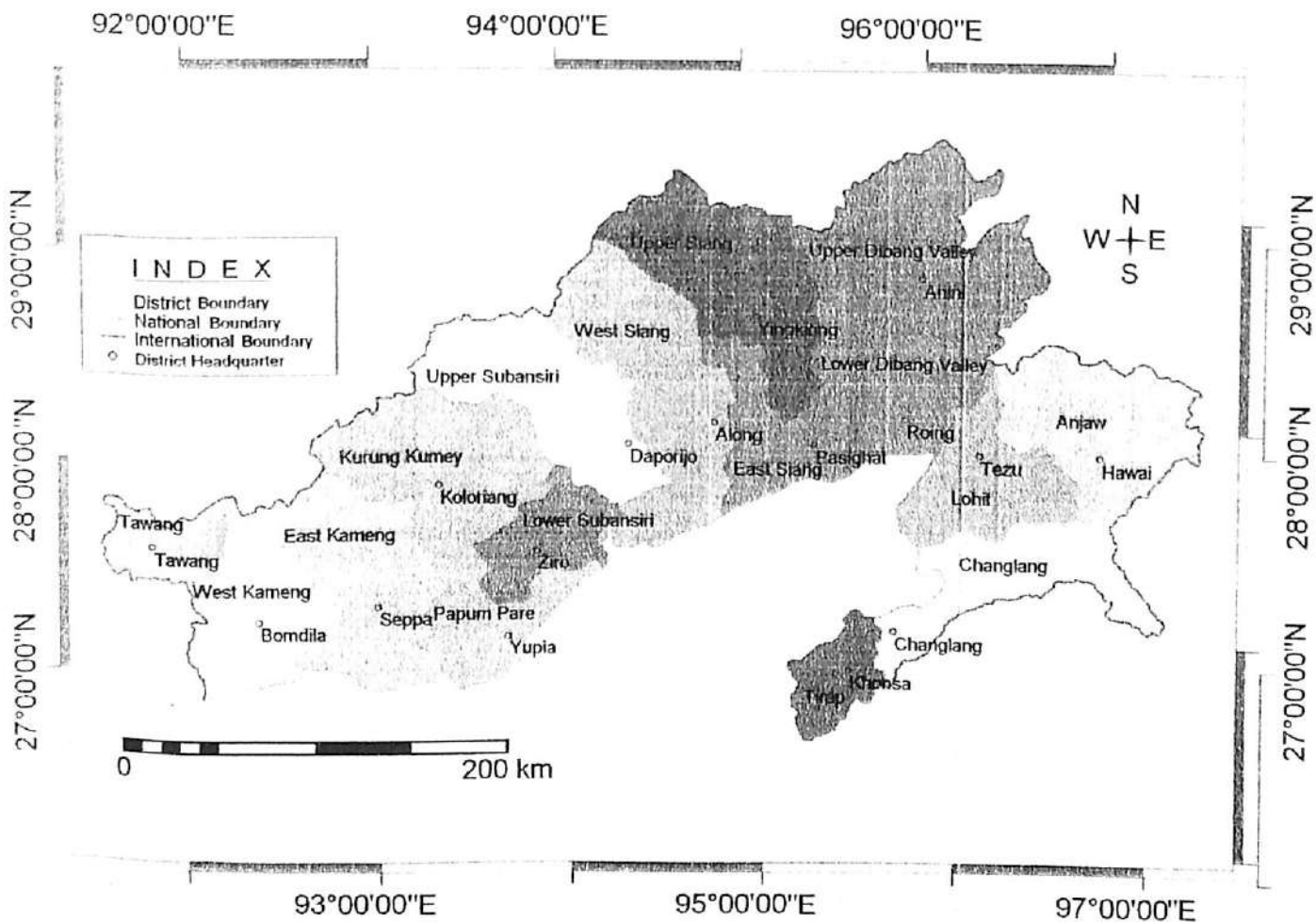
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ARUNACHAL PRADESH



Sources: Economic and Statistic Department, Itanagar, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

CHAPTER -I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Arunachal Pradesh: A General Profile:

Till 1972, Arunachal Pradesh was known as North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)¹. On 20th January, 1972, it was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh, which means the land of the rising sun, and status of full-fledged Union Territory was granted. On the account of its strategic location Arunachal Pradesh began to attract direct attention of the Government of India particularly after 1962,² and started the slow and arduous journey towards socio-economic and political development as a distinctive entity in the geo-political framework of the Union of India³. Finally it attained full-fledged Statehood on 20th February, 1987.

Arunachal Pradesh, which receives the first ray of the dawn, is a land inhabited by multiple ethnic groups. The state is an abode of vibrant tribes and it is identified with 26 major tribes and 119 sub-tribes⁴. Linguistically, these tribes are affiliated to the Tibeto-Burmese

¹ The North-East Frontier Agency, better known as NEFA was created for the first time on 23rd February, 1951. It was administered by the President of India through the Governor of Assam as his agent. The governor was assisted by an Adviser who was the administrative head. NEFA initially consisted of five administrative divisions, viz., Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap. Tuensang now a part of Nagaland was separated from NEFA in 1957.

² Until 1962, NEFA was under the control of Ministry of External Affairs and was administered by the President of India. But after the Chinese aggression of 1962, Government of India became more concerned about the administrative affairs of NEFA and it was put under the control of Ministry of Home Affairs.

³ H.G. Joshi, Arunachal Pradesh: Past and Present, Mittal Publication, 2005, pp.1-3.

⁴ N. Lego, History of Arunachal Pradesh (Early Times to 1972), Jumbo Gumin Publication, Itanagar, 2008, p.3

group of language⁵. With regard to their racial affiliations; they have been described variously belonging to the Indo-Mongoloid, Proto-Mongoloid, Paleo-Mongoloid and so on.⁶ In the sphere of religion traditionally, the people of Arunachal Pradesh can be classified into the Bodic and Non-Bodic religious groups.⁷ The Bodic group includes those who profess Buddhism; both Hinayana and Mahayana forms. The tribes like the Monpa, the Sherdukpen, the Membas, the Khambas, the Khampti, the Singpho, etc. belong to this category. On the other hand, a majority of the tribes follow primal or the natural religion, i.e., their faith and beliefs are centered on attributing personhood to objects of nature. They are the Nyishi, Apatani, Adi, Tagin, the Wancho, the Mishmi, etc. On the basis of the common strands of culture the entire tribes can be divided three categories which are outlined as follows: (i) the communities which form the larger cultural traditions, comprise of the Monpas, the Sherdukpens, the Khamptis, the Sinphos, etc.; (ii) the communities inhabiting the south-eastern portion of the state, such as the Nocte, the Wanchos and the Tangsas who shows clear impact of the neighbouring culture of the Nagas and Vaishnavism and (iii) all other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh who have close cultural and linguistic affinities amongst themselves⁸. Their traditional culture is less influenced by external factors.

⁵ B. Tripathy & D. Pandey, A Comprehensive History of Arunachal Pradesh, Bani Mandir Publication, Pasighat, 1997, pp.16-17.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ J.L. Dawar, 'Religious Conversion and Contending Responses', in Tamo Mibang & Sarit K. Chaudhuri (eds), Understanding Tribal Religion, Mittal Publication, New-Delhi, 2004, p.159.

⁸ B. Tripathy & D. Pandey, op.cit., pp.16-17.

The State has a total area of nearly 83,743 sq. km. The capital of the state is identifiable with the twin habitations of at Naharlagun and Itanagar. When it became an integral part of the nation state in 1947 the afive districts were named after the five major rivers crisscrossing across the state. Currently the state is divided into eighteen districts (of these two districts known as Lower Siang and Changlang districts have been recently proposed). The state has thirty-six Sub-divisions, fifty-seven Development Blocks and one hundred forty-nine Circles. Some the of the prominent townships which are primarily administrative headquarters are Itanagar-Naharlagun, Tawang, Pasighat, Aalo, Tezu, Bomdila Seppa, Roing, Daporijo, Khonsa and Ziro. The state of Arunachal Pradesh is bounded by China and Tibet on the north (1,030 km), Myanmar on the east (1,440 km) and Bhutan in the west (160 km). It shares a common boundary with Nagaland in the east and south-east and Assam in the south. Greater portion of the state falls in the outer Himalayas and Patkai range⁹ and is vivisected by innumerable rivers and streams that flow into the Brahmaputra in Assam. The major rivers are Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Dihang, Lohit, Diyun and Dihing. Geologically the state is consists of mainly shale, schist and conglomerates of the Himalayan system and is comprises of mountanieous territory, situated on the southern slopes of the eastern Himalayas¹⁰.

⁹ B. Tripathy & D. Pandey, *op.cit.*, pp.17-18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

According to 2001 Census, the population of the state is 10,91,117 persons comprising of 573,951 males and 517,166 females. Of these 487,796 persons are literate with literacy rate of 54.74% of which 64.07 percent are males and 44.24 percent are females. The density of population according to 2001 Census is 13 per sq. km., while the sex ratio found 901 percent are males and 44.24 percent are females. The density of population according to 2001 Census is 13 per sq. km., while the sex ratio found 901.

Each of these 26 tribes maintains distinctive features in respect of dress, customs, ritual traditions and dialects¹¹. Each of these tribes has their own social control system, economic practices, faith and belief system and political institutions. Of these 26 tribes of the state, the Apatanis of Ziro valley is one of the well known tribe to world outside¹².

1.2. Land and the People:

The Apatanis, the subject of investigation in this study are said to belong to the Tibeto-Mongoloid stock¹³. They trace their descent from one legendary ancestor called '*Abotani*'. According to Hage Lasa they are gentle and peace loving tribes¹⁴ who live in a very fertile

¹¹ C.S. Panchani, Arunachal Pradesh: Religion, Culture and Society, Konark Publication, Delhi, 1989, pp.1-5.

¹² J.N. Chowdhury, Arunachal Panorama, Himalyan Publishers, Itanagar, 1999, p.117.

¹³ Statistical Hand Book (2001), District Statistical Office, Lower Subansiri, Arunachal Pradesh, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ Hage Lasa, '*Ritual and Social Significance of Pig Blood in Apatani Society*', in M.C Behera & S.K. Chaudhuri's eds. Indigenous Faith and Practices of the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Himalayan Publication, Itanagar, 1998, p.32.

valley in and around Ziro Valley, the District headquarters of Lower Subansiri. They are said to have migrated to this magnificent valley from the northern direction, from an earlier habitation (etched in their memory) from beyond the *Kuru* and *Kime* rivers. They are a sedentary tribe with expert knowledge of agriculture coupled with their indigenous irrigation system. They are an enterprising and industrious community of Arunachal Pradesh. The Apatanis inhabit the area is known as Ziro Valley, an area of roughly (36 Sq miles/Kms). The valley is sequestered by the hills and ranges in all directions and a small river, locally known as kiile flows through the valley from the north to south. The river alongwith its tributaries supplies sufficient water for the terrace wet-rice cultivation of the people. Linguistically the Apatanis is said to belong to Sino-Tibetan family¹⁵. But the ordinary dialect spoken by the Apatanis has more affinity with the Adis of the East Siang District instead of their immediate neighbour the Nyishis, Hill Miris and Tagin¹⁶.

The longitudinal situation of the valley is about 93°48' to 93°53' and latitudal position is about 27°32' to 27°37'. The nearest railway station for the valley is North Lakhimpur in Assam, which stands at one hundred-thirty kilometers from Ziro¹⁷. The valley comes under the Sub-Himalayan climatic zone¹⁸. The soil and salubrious climate¹⁹

¹⁵ Takhe Kani, The Advancing Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh, (henceforth as TAAAP), Purbadesh Mudran Publication, Guwahati, 1993, p.12.

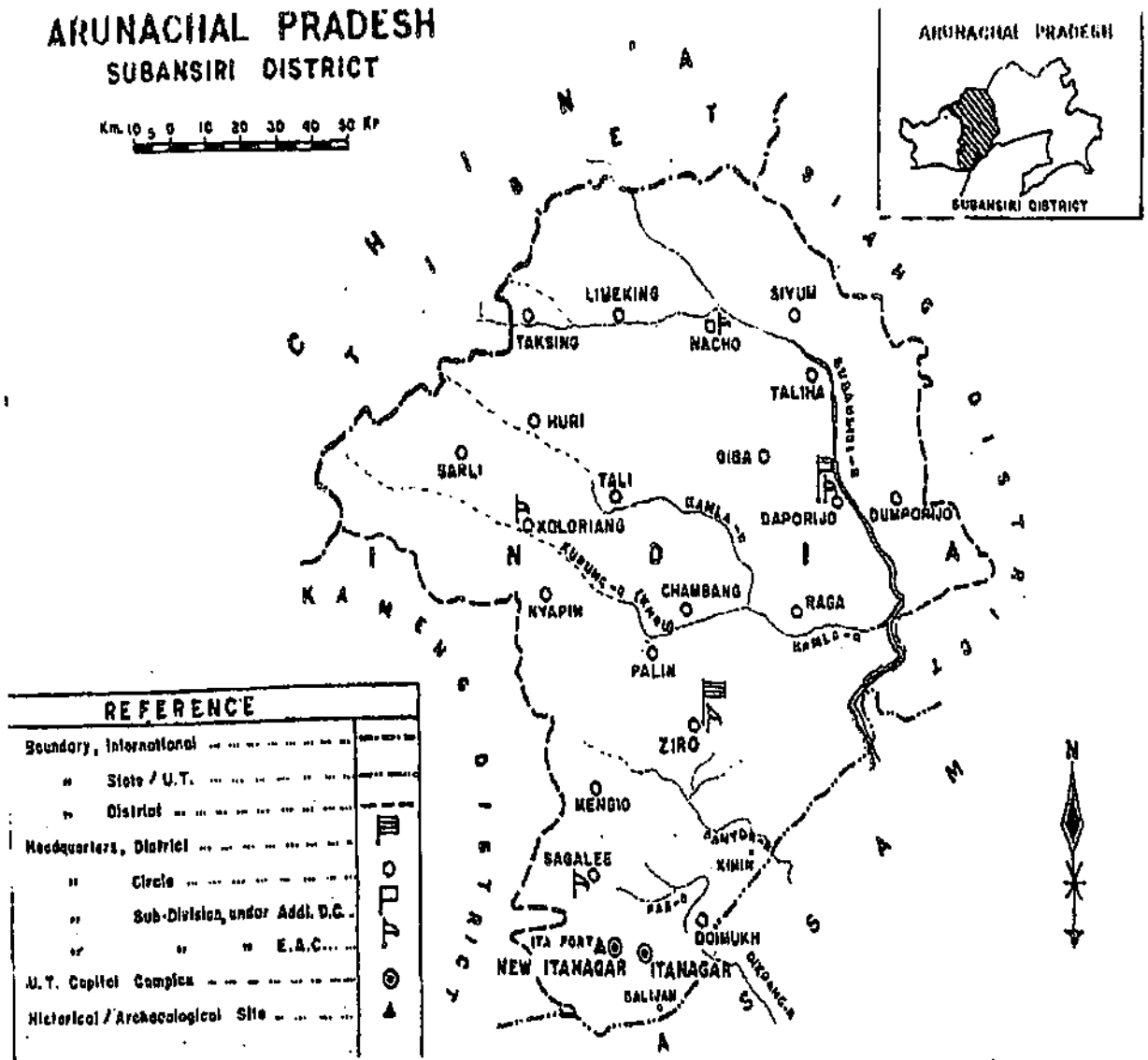
¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.2

¹⁸ Takhe Kani, '*Indigenous Cane and Bamboo Culture*' in a Souvenir Hao Langkar, Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee, Government Middle School Hari, 2003, p.21.

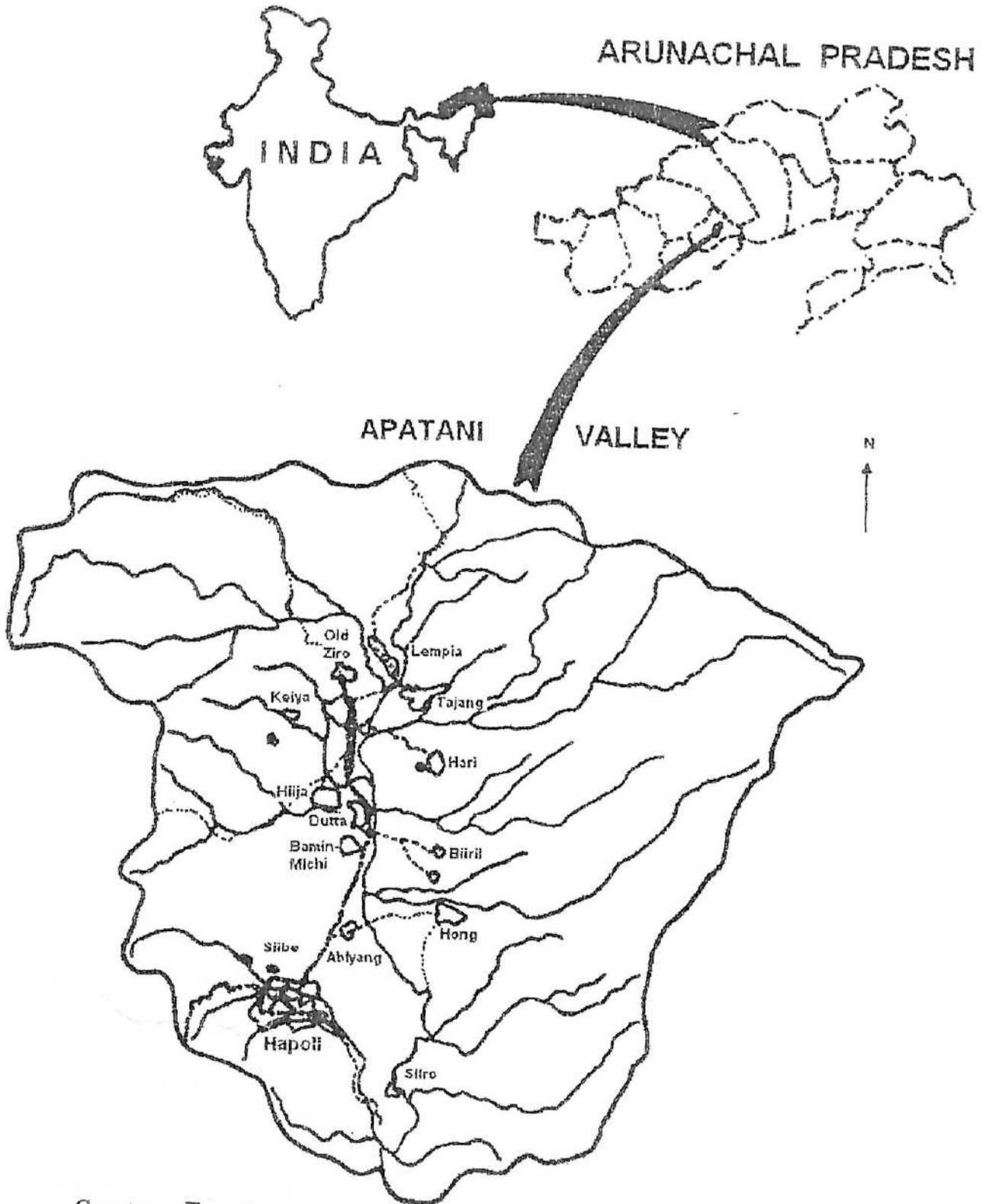
¹⁹ Ibid.

Sketch Map of Lower Subansiri District Prior to the Bifurcation of Upper Subansiri, Kurung Kumey and Papumpare Districts.



Source: Gazetteer of India, Arunachal Pradesh, Lower Subansiri District, 2008.

SKETCH MAP OF THE APATANI VALLEY



Courtesy: Tage Rupa, asstt. Professor, Department of Geography, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono-Hill, Doimukh, Itanagar.

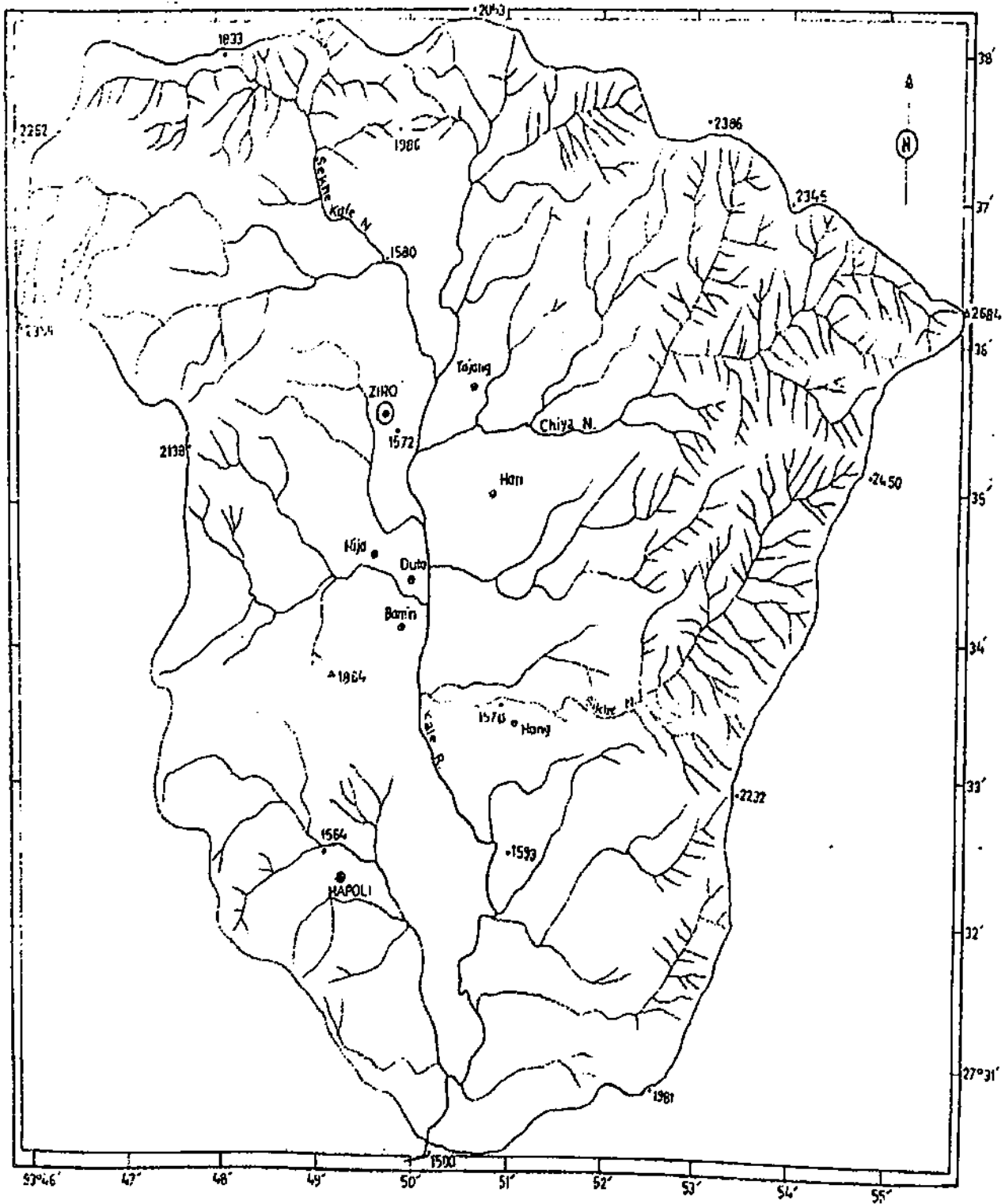
of the valley provides for a luxuriant growth of crops and vegetation including bamboo and pine trees.

According to 2001 Census, the total population of the Apatani Valley is 24,703(approx.) of which 12,572 is urban and 12,131 is rural, and 12,478 is male and 12,225 is female. Their literacy rate is 55.72. The population is been spread over fifty-one villages of which seven villages are traditional, while the rest are the modern the modern villages. Recently some new settlements have been made by the Apatanis in place likes *Tarin, Hakhe-Tari, Siro, Manipolyang, Dilopolyang, Sibe*, etc. Despite settling in different villages they strongly maintain their social relation and reinforce social cohesiveness through various ritual associations. However, the present study is on only on the seven traditional villages of the Apatanis.

The identity of the Apatanis is characterised among other things by their belief system which is embedded in various aspects of their socio-cultural life. The customs, culture, tradition, socio-political and economic pattern of the Apatanis are different from those of other neighbouring tribes of the district. They have very rich and elaborate 'culture'²⁰ which includes the spiritual values in the sense of religion, philosophy, legal system, etc. Their culture can be understood as a collective of activities of the entire populace, which is conditioned by

²⁰The term 'Culture' has very broad meaning and scholars have defined it in various ways. The earliest definition of the term 'Culture' was provided by Edward Burnett Tylor in 1871. See Chapter V.

SKETCH MAP OF THE APATANI VALLEY.



the environment and the geographical location. Their society functions and works through different institutions such as *nyibu* (priest), *huilañ* (upholder of law and order), *gorra* (ritual organizer) and *patañ* (agricultural gang labour). All these have been institutionalized formally which ensures their traditional socio-religious and cultural practices to sustain over the ages.

1.3. Framework for Understanding:

Within the discipline of history 19th century was marked by its development into an empirical science. The trajectory of the discipline till the Second World War was focused on the nation state, its politics and economy²¹. The 20th century witnessed massive diversification within the discipline, with a proliferation of sub-disciplines like social history, labour history etc., and negotiating wider aspects of human past. The emergent specialisms were defined by use of specific research techniques such as oral history or micro-history and also led to the development of new methodologies. These sub-disciplines shifted focus away from the elite to those of the wider sections of society. The concern was often with enduring social structures and transformations rather than on short term narratives of events. With the expansion in the subject matter of history there began an intellectual exchange of concepts and methods with other social sciences.

²¹The core of the emerging historical discipline was in the connected areas of the political and constitutional history, with their necessary adjuncts of diplomatic and military history.

Bernard Cohn finds a celebration of the new variety of history in the works of E.P. Thompson and Natalie Z. Davis who extensively used songs, folklore, public celebrations and rituals. The conclusions of these proctological historians he argues has directed historians to study of structures and the meanings involved in the creation of systems of solidarity and authority²². E.P.Thompson repeatedly called for dialogues with anthropology. Yet he cautioned its practitioners to overcome the shortcomings of the discipline which often tended “to ignore historical specificities and elide questions of power²³.” This new kind of social history involved issues of exploring the underlying cultural formations, the systems of concepts, meanings and beliefs manifest in symbols rather than just its surface features. It is in this new space that a conjuncture of the epistemological aspects of anthropology and history took place. The dynamic problem of culture and culture change has made the cultural/social historians to increasingly turn to cultural anthropology and particularly to ethnography. It was here that ethnohistory found its roots.

Within these developments cultural history also grew. It was concerned with the historical analysis of a range of cultural artifacts, primarily a product of human activity. Such artifacts could be in its broadest definition included written texts, visual texts, material culture and more complex aspects like social practices and institutions²⁴. A cultural historian is required to reconstruct them as an object of

²² Bernard Cohn, An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays, Oxford University Press, New Delli, 1987, p.39.

²³ Ibid., p.56.

²⁴ Bernard Cohn, *op.cit.*, p.6.

knowledge prior to interpretation. It is within the framework of cultural history and its emphasis on delving to the system of production, signification and reception of the artifacts particularly social institutions that I seek to study the institution of the *gorra*. Hence it is imperative to define the term institution.

The term 'institution' has been defined by different scholars in various ways. Hamilton²⁵ in his book *–Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, has defined an institution as arrangement as diverse as the money, economy, classical education, the chain store, fundamentalism and democracy are institution or any informal body of usage, viz., common law, higher learning, literacy criticism and more are termed as an institution. Similarly, MacIver and Page²⁶ defined an institution as “established forms of procedure.” According MacIver, “there are two types of institution: (a) associational institution which includes like college, school, universities, etc; and (b) communal institution which includes like fares, festivals, etc., While, G.R. Madan, in his book *An Introduction to Sociology*²⁷ has defined the institution as “recognized and established usages governing the relations between individual and groups”. He further writes that “institution is a

²⁵ A. Hamilton, *Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, Concept Publication, New Delhi, 1990, pp.78-81.

²⁶ R.M. MacIver, & C.H. Page, *Society and Introductory Analysis*, Macmilan India Limited, New Delhi, 1998, pp.29-30.

²⁷ G.R. Madan, *Theoretical Sociology*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1991, p.281.

complex norm which regulates the activities in the society, or a set of behavioural pattern”²⁸.

Alternatively, an institution can be viewed as a complex norm and behaviour that persists over time by serving some socially valued objectives. It is a concept plus a structure, which is instituted or established by a group. It can be understood as the organization or agency which is the physical and material embodiment of such law or custom, which the group has adopted and sanctioned. It is essentially social in nature, universal in existence, which satisfies the specific needs and is generally inter-related. In fact, an institution is both means and as end in itself, which ensure continuity of the human race and maintain stability in the society. Institutions are embodied structures of roles and associated rules. Institutions in this sense is dynamic, evolving entities, therefore has a history with a diachronic structure of a narrative with a partially open-ended future.

The sociologists like Ritambhava Hebber & Sarthi Acharya²⁹ has classified the institutions into three categories, viz., (i) those which are intrinsically a part of the traditional common parlance, for example the family, kinship, marriage or social configuration of a conventional village administrator and others; (ii) the state sponsored

²⁸ G.R. Madan, op.cit., p.281.

²⁹ Concept paper based on the proceeding of the seminar on Changing Social Institution and their Impact on the Quality of Life, under the title of '*Social Institutions and Development Challenges in India*', presented by Ritambhava Hebber and Sarthi Acharya.

institutions such as credit co-operatives, banks, schools, the Panchayat system, governance mechanisms and (iii) the modern people-centred institutions like the self-help groups, NGO-promoted and other spontaneously organized groups, especially by urban communities³⁰.

Anthropologically, the institution, as Malinowski defined it, is characterized by as group of people united for a purpose. They have an organization for carrying out the purpose, and they have the culture, both material and ideal, to assist them. They have a set of ideas, which Malinowski called the “charter” of the institution, about the things should be done and the reason why they should done³¹. Society, for Malinowski, consisted of a body of institutions related to current adaptive needs of man. It is the study of those institutions – economic, political system, law, education, religion, family organization and individual relation to them that must take precedence over historical reconstructions, whether in the hands of evolutionists or diffusionists³². He has classified the institutions into socio-religious, political and economic institutions. Here the religious institutions have been perceived as organization or agency deals with the religious practices, explaining it in myth, story and history. It is an agency through which the people attempted to interact with the supernatural world. The religious institutions are raised on a foundation of social groups based on their experience and surrounding environment in case of the tribal people.

³⁰ R. Hebbler & S. Acharya, op.cit.

³¹ Paul Bohannan, Social Anthropology, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2007, pp.358-359.

³² V.S.Upadhyay & G. Pandey, History of Anthropological Thought, Concept Publication, New Delhi, 1993, p.170.

The concept of institution implies an agreement on a set of traditional values for which human beings come together. This also implies that these human beings stand together in definite relation to one another and to a specific physical part of their environment, natural and artificial under their charter of their purpose³³. Thus by studying institutions, one can get concerted picture of social organization within a culture.

The *gorra*, a subject of investigation in this study is a well-organized and established socio-religious institution. Legends allude that this institution existed among the Apatanis since their early sojourn etched in their memory about a settlement in Mongolia. Literally *gorra* means a religious organizer or socio-religious volunteers as perceived by many earlier scholars such as Takhe Kani³⁴ and Pura Tado³⁵. But ethno-linguistically, the word *gorra* is derived from local word "gorgu", which means "boundary fence". The *gorras* (members of *gorra*) are considered as a 'boundary fence' of the society as they provide security to the society against all kinds of adversities, through their intervention in the realm of the gods and goddesses.

The main task of the *gorra* is to organize village rituals and oversee its related taboos. It is an institution for collective worship

³³ V.S. Upadhyay & G. Pandey, p.181.

³⁴ Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), op.cit. p.

³⁵ Pura Tado, Political Transition Among The Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh: A Case of the Apatanis, Ph.D. thesis (unpublish), Arunachal University, 2000.

and each of the Apatani villages have this institution. But in some villages this institution is known by different names. For instance, amongst the *Hong* village it is known as *muddo builañ* or *Dree gorra*, while in the *Hari* and *Mudang Tage* village it is known as *kholi*. But in majority of the villages it is known as 'gorra'.³⁶ Each of the village has a *gorra* in which, each of the clan sends in their representative. Hence, it may be referred to as an autonomous socio-religious institution, which plays a vital role in the realm of the Apatani society, economy and culture.

1.4. Review of Literature:

It is worthy to note that no work has been done exclusively on *Gorra* and its working so far. However, a few passing references of *Gorra* are found in the studies taken up on the Apatanis. As a backdrop of the study I have tried to place it in the perspective of understanding a surviving social institution through the workings of lineage societies in early India. Many of the studies discussed aspects of tribal life in other parts of India in terms of the caste - tribe continuum.

Romesh Thapar in his edited book *Tribe, Caste and Religion in India*, provides an account on various aspects of tribal life in other parts of India. This edited volume contains twenty essays written by different scholars including C.V.F. Haimendorf, Verrier Elwin and others. Haimendorf in his paper *Tribal Problems in India* has discussed the general aspects of tribal life in India. Verrier Elwin in

³⁶ Field data collected from *Hong, Hari* and *Mudang Tage* village on 29th November, 2007.

his article *Tribal Development* has dealt with the issues of evolving a comprehensive tribal policy. A very relevant article is M.K. Halder's *Hindu Values, Myth and reality*, where he discusses practices and factors behind the development of Hindu culture. The text provides a perspective on the tribal life in the rest of India particularly on the permeation of caste system and Hindu religion.

D.D. Kosambi in his book *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, has made an attempt to interpret the history of Indian civilization within the materialist interpretation framework. He traces the history from primitive life to great civilization holding the mode of production and material changes as the main factor behind any social formation and social change. His book provides an insight into aspects of social formation in ancient India. Though work of Kosambi can not be used directly in context of proposed study but it is certainly useful to understand the whole process of transition period in pre-state societies /pre-literate societies in a historical perspective.

R.S. Sharma in his book *The Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India*, also made an attempt to interpret the history of ancient India from materialist point of view. He seeks to attribute to the formation of state societies the use of iron in the development of agricultural practices. He discusses how agricultural surplus production in turn impacted the culture practices and social formation in ancient India in the mid-Gangetic valley. Like Kosambi, he also held the mode of production as the main base of all social

formation. It is on the material base that the superstructure comprises among others of the cultural practices including religious outlook is developed.

Romila Thapar in her book *From Lineage to State*, discussed the factors behind the state formation. She makes a distinction in term of the composition of lineage societies which are less stratified with practically little economic specialization and state societies. She traces the history of a region from food gathering stage to settled agricultural life. She also discussed the subsequent changes that took place in the settled agricultural life leading to the formation of large state. However, her main focus was on social formation in the mid-first millennium B.C. in the Ganga valley. In her entire discussion, she also holds the changes in material base as the crucial factor behind the emergence of modern state from lineage society. Her book gives us good account to understand the process of state formation from relations of production point of view.

Romila Thapar again in her book *Ancient India Social History: Some Interpretation*, writes on various aspects of social formation from the historical materialism perspective. In her discussion, she tries to focus on the fact that ethics, religion and social protest within a society has a close relation to the mode of production. This book provides a basis to the understand as to how the sphere of economy especially, the agricultural development shapes the society.

C.V.F. Haimendorf an anthropologist whose services had been enlisted by the constitution makers of the Indian state for providing

ethnography of the tribes of the Subansiri region produced the most exhaustive work on the Apatanis. In his book *The Apatanis and Their Neighbours*, he thoroughly discusses the Apatani society in all its aspects. His work reflects the social, economic, religious and political aspects of the Apatanis. He gives detailed account of institutions like family, clan, kinship, and marriage, *patang*, *nyibus* and the *builang*. Yet he failed to throw light on the institution of *gorra*.

C.V.F. Haimendorf in his book called *The Himalayan Tribe: Cattle to Cash* in continuation of his earlier work he gives more detailed of the Apatani society. He also cited certain changes that occurred during the interim period. He tried to encapsulate the changes within the social, economic, religious practices and polity, yet he failed to take notice of the existence of an institution called the *gorra*. Haimendorf's work is considered well researched and most reliable of the studies done on the Apatanis till date. But mention can be made here that certain aspects of its society and culture which have not been dealt with in detail. In spite of the authoritative nature of his study yet it is a surprise has failed to comprehend the existence of such an important institution which was so crucial to the sustenance of the Apatani life particularly agriculture.

B. Tripathy and D. Pandey in their book *A Comprehensive History of Arunachal Pradesh*, provides an account of the tribal way of life in Arunachal Pradesh. It is only the book that available in providing a wide view on aspects of traditional socio-economic, religious and political life of the people of the state. The trajectory of

political markers in the constitutional development and introduction of modern political institutions is also dealt with. While focusing on all the tribes they do deal with the Apatanis tribe and its history. They provide a substantive account of their economic life including land holding, agricultural practices, etc. Besides this, they also throw the light on political activities of the Apatani and thoroughly discussed the *builang* system. But they failed to discuss about the *gorra* system.

J.N. Chowdhury in his book *Arunachal Pradesh from Frontier Tract to Union Territory*, also discussed the certain of aspect tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. He gives general description of physiography of this region. He discusses about the society, polity and economy of the tribes of all the tribes but while discussing on the Apatanis he fails to highlight on the institution of the *gorra*. The book also highlighted the growth of administration in Arunachal Pradesh in the colonial period till its attainment of Union Territory status in 1972. Various aspects of economic development in the post independence period too find a place in the book.

B.B. Pandey, in his book *Festivals of Subansiri*, discusses all the popular festivals of tribes living Lower Subansiri District including the Nyishis and the Hill Miris. About the Apatanis, he discusses the festivals like *Subu*, *Murung*, *Myoko*, *Dree*, etc. But he failed to discuss the role of *gorra* in the festivals like *Dree*, *Subu* and *Murung*.

Deepak Nath in his M.Phil. dissertation (unpublished) titled *Economic Life of he Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh*, thoroughly

discusses the economic activities of the Apatanis. He discussed the land holding pattern, forest activities and agricultural practices. Though his emphasis is largely on the various agricultural practices, but he failed to notice the role of *Gorra* in the economic activities of the Apatanis.

Tage Tatung in his M.Phil. dissertation (unpublished) titled *Agricultural Practices Among the Apatanis*, focuses on the land holding pattern and explores its influence on the social existence of the Apatanis. To quote him "the system of land ownership in the Apatanis is intimately linked with the social institution"³⁷. He thoroughly discussed the agricultural practices of the Apatanis including crop pattern but he failed to through light on the agricultural rituals, which supplement the physical labour in case of the Apatanis.

Takhe Kani in his book *The Advancing Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh*, while discussing on the economic and religious activities of the Apatanis briefly refers to the *Gorra*. He writes "...from the events, a village elder known as 'Gorra' formed in the society to conduct such religious performances"³⁸. His work gives good account of the Apatanis economic activities and rituals involved in it. But he failed to provide a detailed account of agricultural rituals and role played by *Gorras* in these rituals.

³⁷Tatung, Tage, *Agricultural Practices Among the Apatanis* (Unpublished M. Phil. desertation) Arunachal University, 2000, P.18.

³⁸ Kani, Takhe, op.cit., p.285.

Takhe Kani in his book *Socio-religious Ceremonies of the Apatanis*, while discussing the origin of the *Dree* ritual, refers to the *gorra*. He states thus: “for conduction (sic) of ritual *Dree*, one or two person(s) are appointed permanently or temporarily from each clan of the village. These persons are known as ‘*Dree Kholi*’ or ‘*Dree Gorra*’. They collect small quantity of rice or millet from each individual in order to meet the expenditure of ceremonies”³⁹. The work of Kani provides an exhaustive account of the Apatani cultural practices including the socio-religious ceremonies. But his work superficially touches on *Gorra* and he fails to comprehend it as an important socio-religious institution. He focuses on the agricultural rituals like *Myokung*, *Dree*, *Tamu* and *Chandi-metii* but failed to throw light on the origin and role-play by the *Gorras* in these rituals in Apatani society.

Pura Tado in his doctoral thesis (unpublished) mentions about the institution of *gorra* in thus: “for the purposes of security political, civil and economic rights in the society, Apa Tanii society was nationally divided into four strata. They are – i) *Jogyih-Khabo* or *Mijih* and *Miirah* or *Kiidii Builang* or priest and a person who buries dead body; ii) *Giitu-Giira* or knowledgeable person well versed in customary law and traditions; iii) *Builang – Gorra* or members of village council and organizers of village festivals and iv) *Nii-Pabo* or general public who constitute the majority of population”⁴⁰. Pura

³⁹ Takhe Kani, *Socio-Religious Ceremonies of the Apatanis*, Pubadesh Mudram, Guwahati, 1996, p.174.

⁴⁰ Pura Tado, op.cit., p.24.

Tado's work was particularly focused on the political transition of the Apatanis. So he primarily dealt he emphasized on the political institution of the *builang* rather than on the *Gorra*.

Verrier Elwin in his book *Democracy in NEFA*, provides a descriptive account of local polity among the Apatanis. He also discussed in detailed about the institution of *builang* but he has not discussed the *Gorra*.

Verrier Elwin, in his book *Philosophy for NEFA*, in this seminal work provides an elaborate account of the society, cultural practices and material aspects of the tribes of Arunachal tribes. In relation of the Apatanis, he focuses particularly on the faith and belief system. Though he throws light on institutions like *Builang*, *Patang* and *Nyibus* but he also does not discuss about the *Gorra*.

Hage Naku in his thesis called *The Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Apatanis, Study in Continuity and Change*, exhaustively explores the traditional religious belief and practices of the Apatanis. He also throws light on the changing trends within these practices. But he also not discusses the role of *gorra* in these socio-religious practices of the Apatanis.

C.H. Panchani in his book *Arunachal Pradesh Religion, Culture and Society*, briefly discusses the faiths and beliefs system of the Apatanis. But he also does not to throw any light on the *gorra* system of the Apatanis.

Besides these, early Ethnographies on the Apatanis included R. Izzard's *The Hunt for the Buru*, London; Mrs Bower Ursula's *Hidden Land*, London; C.V. F. Haimendorf's *Ethnographic Note on the Tribes of the Subansiri*, Shillong; *Himalayan Barbary*, London; Alexander Mackenzie's *History of the Relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* contain substantial reference on aspects of Apatanis socio-political institution and economic life. Especially Mackenzie's account makes a brief reference of the first ever expedition into the Apatani country in the year 1876.

But inspite of all these work, no attempt has so far been made to study the institution of *gorra* in light of understanding culture and to reflect upon the cultural change among the Apatanis. Under such circumstances, the present study has been taken to make a detailed and systematic study of the *gorra* institution so that a cultural history of the Apatanis can be unearthed. It shall also put in continuity and change perspective.

1.5. Objective of the Study:

The present study is intended to explore the cultural history of the Apatanis by understanding the workings of the institution of *gorra*. Therefore, this study includes following objectives:

(i) to explore the origins of *gorra* system through exploring the originary myths and a focus on the existing economic and religious milieu.

(ii) to examine the social structure of the Apatanis by analysing the membership pattern of the *gorra* system.

(iii) to examine the traditional economic practices of the Apatanis and the role of the Gorra and also identify its transformation.

(iv) to understand the traditional religious activities of the Apatanis and role of *gorras* therein.

(v) to examine the impact of the modern institutions on the *gorra* system, and to reflect the cultural change among the Apatanis. In the process to provide a historical profile of a pre-literate society.

1.6. Scope of the Study:

The *gorra*, a subject of investigation in this study is an important institution of the Apatanis. It is one among the earliest traditional institutions and still exists amongst the Apatanis. This institution did not originate in a vacuum. The Apatanis evolved this institution for the conduct of their daily life. It is their response to their temporal and spiritual urge which helped them in coping with their environmental niches.

The *gorra* is closely associated with economy, and the faith and belief system of the Apatanis. It is their response to collective apprehension of the unknown or supernatural power, which forced the latter to institute the *gorra* system. Since its inception, the *gorras* collectively organized the rituals for entire village whenever it was necessary.

Similarly, the prosperity of the Apatanis is perceived to be dependent upon the *gorra* institution. They collectively organized agricultural rituals, in sequence during each stage of its annual agricultural cycle to ensure a bountiful harvest and to retain the fertility of soil. Besides, the *gorras* also play a vital role in trying to prevent natural calamities such as flood, drought and epidemics through their intervention into the realm of spirits.

Overall, the *gorra* institution is considered as 'boundary fence' of the Apatani, which provides social security to the Apatanis against all kind of adversities. Unfortunately, the institution of *gorra* has not been studied historically, which could anticipate the history and natural development of the institution among the Apatanis. As I belong to the Apatani community, I developed interest in this area and selected the study of the institution of *gorra* for the present study and investigation.

1.7. Methodology:

The present study is an empirical and historical study based on primary and secondary data. The primary data had been collected from the Apatani Valley by undertaking field works. The study area covered all the villages of the Apatanis, especially the seven traditional villages.

Ethnographic and historical accounts available had been used for having comprehensive understanding of subject matter. Journals and other articles published by Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh and Apatani Literary and Cultural Society (ALCS), providing

insight into the ethno-history and oral history had been accessed. Available data from Census Reports and Reports of Economics and Statistics Department and the Soil Conservation Department, Ziro had also been collected for this study.

While collecting primary data, both the closed and open interview method had been used, in which both the structured and unstructured forms of questions had been used.

As to certain about the aspects of *gorra* institution – its activities and functioning, a cross-section of the population has been interviewed. It included women, sections of the population converted to Christianity and educated elites from each village of the Apatanis. For the understanding of the origin and religious activities of *gorra* institution in historical profile, the members of *gorra*, the *nyibu* (priest) and elderly persons from each village have been interviewed. In this regard, the method of random sampling and, direct and focused interview method had been used.

Beside this, in undertaking field work the observation method of both Participant and Non-Participant had been used. Observation Schedules have been employed to generate primary data for specifics and details of *gorra* system from all the villages. In some of the ritual performances, I have participated alongwith the *gorra*. As I was quite aware of the situation and I tried to achieve an objective viewpoint about the performances. I tried to understand the symbolism of the associated rituals. In collecting primary data, I used audio-visual tools, viz., tape-recorder and still camera to facilitate the collection of visual

representation of the data. Field diary and notes have also been maintained, which were transcribed and analyzed latter on in scientific manner. The tables and suitable maps of data and area also were made which supplemented this study.

Various aspects of habitat, economy, society and other findings related to the *gorra* institution have been interpreted in a historical perspective. The data generated through primary and secondary sources has been analyzed in a scientific manner and interpreted with inter-disciplinary approach to reflect the cultural phenomena and to arrive at reasonable logical conclusion.

1.8. Approach to the Study:

My approach to the subject is historical and analytical. The scientific treatment of the Apatani society and culture has been done under the ethno-historical method. The ethno-historical method which is also known as “sub-discipline of the cultural anthropology” was first developed by John Reed Swanton in 1940(footnote). Ethnohistory as a discipline emerged in America in the post World War II almost parallel to the growth of the American school of anthropology.

Since the Symposium on the nature of ethnohistory at Indiana University in 1960 its practitioners have broadened and refined its definition. Historians and anthropologists broadly agree that ethnohistory is essentially “the use of historical and ethnological methods and materials to gain the knowledge of the nature and causes of the change in culture defined by the ethnological concepts and

categories”⁴¹. Ethnohistory thus is a product of the diachronic dimensions of history and the synchronic sensitivity of ethnology though at variance, yet are complementary ways of understanding culture or any social phenomenon. Like anthropologists, ethnohistorians ideally focus on the whole culture of an ethnic group or society as a developing entity over time and space. Secondly the ethnohistory emphasizes on the socio-cultural change, with an emphasis it shares with history and with anthropology.

Considering the institution of *gorra* as the remnant of the Apatanis society, through its encapsulation an attempt shall be made to reconstruct the culture history of the Apatanis. The society is currently in a phase of transition under forces of economic modernization and social its concomitants. A study of a surviving institution would enable me to capture the state of the *gorra* under the strain of social transformation. Through the study I would seek to understand as to whether this institution has totally ceased to be of social relevance or exists in an altered state.

1.9. Organization of the Study:

To reflect about the cultural practices of the Apatanis in general and *gorra* institution in particular, this study has been organized in six chapters.

Chapter-I, deals with the methodological aspects of the present study. It focuses on the tools used in collecting data; survey of

⁴¹ James Axtell, Ethnohistorian: An Historian's Viewpoint, *Ethnohistory* Vol.26, 1979, p.2.

literature. It outlines the objectives, scope of the study and seeks to understand cultural history by exploring the attributes of an institution.

Chapter-II, deals with the origin of the *gorra* through exploring and analyzing the popular myths and the oral traditions prevailing amongst the Apatanis. This chapter also deals with organization and membership pattern of the *gorra*.

Chapter-III, deals with the role of the *gorra* in agricultural rituals, particularly focusing on sacrifices and implementation of taboos in the society. It also traces the origins of the agricultural rituals among the Apatanis through a reading of their prevailing myths and oral traditions. Here an attempt had also been made to reflect on the traditional economic system of the Apatanis.

Chapter-IV, deals with the role of *gorra* in non-agricultural rituals. This chapter also examines the traditional religious practices of the Apatanis and role of the *gorra* in some of the individual initiated rites and rituals.

Chapter-V, examines the impact of modern institutions on the *gorra*. This chapter also deals with the process of cultural change and emergence of the new socio-cultural elements among the Apatanis.

Chapter-IV, deals with the summary which, all the findings related to the *gorra* institution has been interpreted and analyzed within a framework, and arrived at logical and reasonable conclusion.

CHAPTER – II

GORRA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1. Introduction:

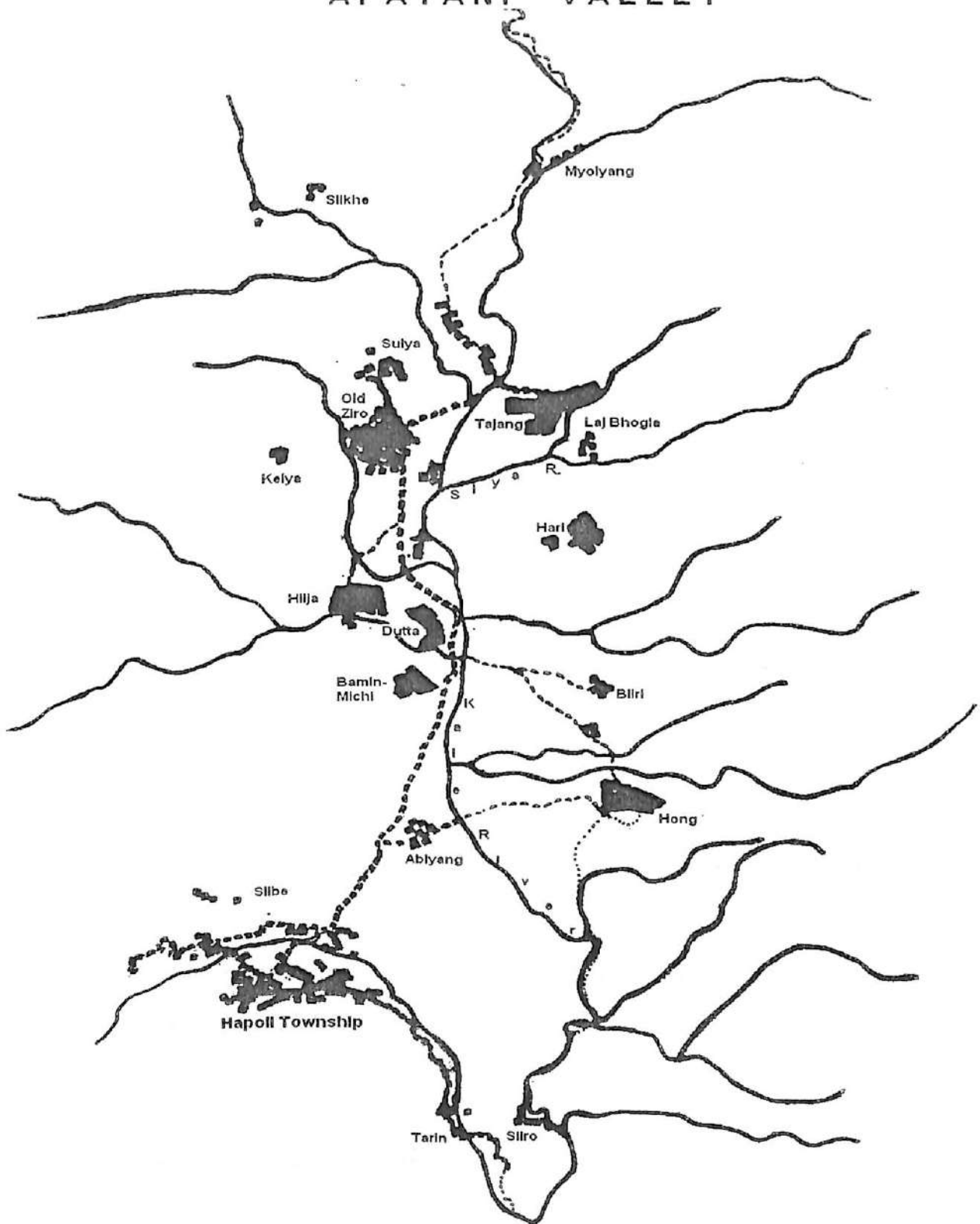
Being a social animal, human being do not live alone; and in order to meet the needs of food and shelter, companionship and love, recreation and play, they form into society, associations and build institutions through which such needs are satisfied¹. Every human society has developed certain material and cultural mechanisms for the conduct of daily life and in order to cope up with the nature². For instance, the socio-economic institution has come up with response to their biological needs, which bring them into contact with immediate natural environment³. Likewise the religious institution has come into existence in human societies as in response to the apprehension of some supernatural and supersensory powers. To analyze religion as a separate system of beliefs and ritual practices apart from subsistence, kinship, language, governance, and landscape is to misunderstand indigenous religion. Such mechanism or institutions not only serve the societal needs but also include a series of techniques for group living and for the training of younger individuals to such mechanisms and institutional activities.

¹ Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Tribal Life in India*, National Book Trust of India, New Delhi, 2007, p.48.

² Bikash Banerjee, 'Religious Beliefs and Practices among the Bokars of Arunachal Pradesh' in Tamo Mibang & Sarit K. Chaudhuri's eds. *Understanding Tribal Religion*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2004, pp.143-144.

³ Ibid.

SKETCH MAP OF APATANI VALLEY



Religion as a term in circulation is mediated by western value systems which are identified with rituals and its most important pillar being theology. This led to a stress on the supernatural character of indigenous faiths or religion⁴ according to Harvey. Religion as a term in circulation is mediated by western value systems which are identified with rituals and its most important pillar being theology. This led to a stress on the supernatural character of indigenous faiths. Indigenous faith or religion according to Harvey could be defined as:

.....ways of being human in which the world/cosmos is both to be found and constructed as meaningful. Particular ways of relating, knowing, acting, considering, communicating, discovering and sharing are themselves enacted and communicated within larger or smaller groups⁵.

The traditional institutions of the Apatanis such as the *gorra*, *builañ*, *patañ*, etc. have their own myths of purpose and history. A myth is the integration of religious symbols into a narrative form. Myths not only provide a comprehensive view of the world, but they also provide the tools for deciphering the world. Although myths may have a counterpart in ritual patterns, they are autonomous modes of the expression of the sacredness of the world for pre-literate people.

The Apatanis have evolved these institutions over the time as a mechanism for regulating the conduct of their daily life. Their relation

⁴ Graham Harvey(ed), *Readings in Indigenous Religions*, Continuum, London, 2002, p.1.

⁵ *Ibid.* p.12.

to the environment necessitated them to organize their society into several institutions, without which no basic drive could be satisfied. These institutions on the other hand, have close links with their faiths and belief systems. It was their response to the collective apprehension of the unknown and unseen power which was both supernatural and supersensory. It was the outcome or collective expression and type of adjustment with perception of the supernatural power. But before discussing these traditional institutions in general and *gorra* in particular, it will be desirable for us to have a brief idea about the historical background and socio-cultural profile of the Apatanis.

2.2. Historical Background of the Apatanis:

The Apatanis who occupy a picturesque valley, spread over an area of 14,263 hectares⁶ in and around Ziro, the district headquarter of Lower Subansiri, are an important tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. Of this area, 4150 hectares is cultivated land⁷ while 420 hectares is under pine and bamboo groves⁸. They are surrounded by the Nyishis and the Hill Miris on three directions, viz., north, south and west. In the east, a few miles away is an area inhabited by the Assamese in common parlance referred to as 'plain people'. J.N. Chowdhury in his book called *Arunachal Panorama* had described the Apatanis as the "best known

⁶ Deepak Nath, Economic Life of the Apatanis, Unpublished, M.Phil Dissertation, Arunachal University; 1996, p.27.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. p.28

to world outside”⁹. E.T. Dalton has described them as “most humane and generous people among the mountain tribes”¹⁰. He further writes that;

“To the North-West of the Hill Miri country we hear of a tribe called Anka Miris by the Assames,(sic) who never visit the plain, but who, from the accounts we have received of them, must be very superior to the tribes of this polity and customs. Surrounded by lofty hills, the country which they inhabit is an intensive valley, represented as being quite level and watered by a branch or perhaps the principal stream of the Sundri river, and richly cultivated”¹¹.

Early visitors of the valley like C.T. Dalton, R.B. Maccabe and H.M. Crowe and others named variously the inhabitants of this valley as *Miri, Anka Miri, Ankas, Apa-Tanang, Tanang*, etc¹². Similarly, the area inhabited by the Apatanis was referred to as a ‘plateau’ instead of ‘valley’. It was only in 1944 that CVF Haimendorf called them as *Apa Tani*. Since then they are known as the ‘Apatani’. Besides this, he referred to the habitation of the Apatanis as ‘valley’ by comparing it to the Nepal Valley. He writes, that “Instead there is a certain similarity between the much larger heart-land of the Nepal and broad Apatani Valley, which is so flat that though surrounded by hills it is often

⁹ J.N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Panorama*, Himalayan Publication, Itanagar, 1996, p.117.

¹⁰ Quoted in Takhe Kani's book – *The Advancing Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh*, Purbadesh Mudra Publication, Guwahati, 1993, p.20.

¹¹ Quoted in Joshi, H.G.'s book – *Arunachal Pradesh: Past and Present*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p.21.

¹² Takhe Kani, *The Advancing Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh*, (henceforth as TAAAP), Purbadesh Mudran Publication, Guwahati, 1993, p.8.

mistakenly referred to as 'Apatani Plateau'¹³. Possibly this fertile land was a lake in the remote past. Traditions also confirmed that their forefathers who migrated down to the valley found that amphibian called '*buru*'¹⁴.

Their inhabited area is surrounded by hilly ranges with forest around it. It lies between the valleys of the *Kamla* and *Kuru* on the north and Panior on the south. The Valley has also some peaks of which the Salin¹⁵ and Ekhadi is the most prominent. It is, therefore, called as the Ziro valley, which lies at an altitude of approximately 1,524 metres above the sea level¹⁶. The vegetation found here ranges from the growth of evergreen shrubs and trees, pine trees, giant bamboo and wild bananas of the sub-tropical rainforest of the higher hills¹⁷.

The word Apatani is derived from two words, viz., *Apa* and *Tani*. The former is prefixed to the later, which is used in an honorific sense. To quote Takhe Kani, "It is a mark of regard or affection which can be used against any name"¹⁸. On the other hand, the word Tani is derived from the earliest ancestor 'Abotani.' Here "*Abo*" means father and '*Tani*' is a signifier of the human race¹⁹. But while conversing in their dialect the Apatanis called themselves as Tanii or

¹³ Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), op. cit., pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ H.G. Joshi, Arunachal Past and Present, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p.64.

¹⁵ The Salin peak, locally known as *hagiñ pudu*, is old trade route to North Lakhimpur which the Apatanis said have used before the opening of the Ziro-Kimin road.

¹⁶ Gazetteer of India, Arunachal Pradesh, Subansiri District, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar; 2008(1st reprint edition), p.5.

¹⁷ Koj Tacho, A Study of Builyang of the Apatanis in Contemporary Society, Unpublished, M.Phil. Dissertation, Rajiv Gandhi University, 2007, P.20.

¹⁸ Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), op. cit., p.8.

¹⁹ Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), op. cit., p.8.

Apatanii. Even many of the academicians used the word 'Apatanii' while referring the Apatanis²⁰.

However, the origin of word 'Apa' and its meaning is still a mystery as it was not in circulation among the early people of this valley. Even elderly people of this valley have no any clue about the origin and meaning of this word. Probably, Haimendorf called the people of this valley as 'Apatani' at the instance of his personal interpreter who belonged to the Nyishi tribe. It was because the neighbouring Nyishi tribe who earlier used the word 'Apatanang' for the people of this valley²¹.

The physical structure of the Apatanis is more similar to that of Mongoloid stock. They are stout and well-built of short to medium height. The somatoscopic characters of the Apatanis by and large show similarity as of the Mongoloid traits like scanty beard and moustache, shallow depression in nose, medium epicanthic fold, and narrow size of eyes, pronounced zygomatic arch and light brown skin colours²². This led the anthropologists and historians to believe that the Apatanis are of Mongoloid stock. In fact the oral traditions of the Apatanis also reveal that they had been in Mongolia before their migration to *supuñ lembyañ*, the present habitation in the Apatani valley.

²⁰ Many of the scholars and academicians including Dr. Pura Tado, Nani Bath and others use the word - 'Apatanii', while addressing the Apatanis.

²¹ Earlier the neighbouring Nyishi tribe especially of *Joram* and *Yachuli* referred the people of *Ziro* valley as 'Apatanang.'

²² Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), op. cit., p.34

The prevalent oral tradition and priestly lore state that *uhi-supuñ* and *iipyo-supuñ* were the earliest mythical abode of the Apatanis, where various tribes of especially Tani group had been originated²³. Their other association is with a mythical abode known as the *muddo-supuñ*. The anthropologists and historians who have tried to explore this myth believe that *uhi-supuñ* and *iipyo-supuñ* to be located somewhere in the belt of Chinese province of Yunan and Mongolia,²⁴ while the *muddo-supuñ* associated to the present Tang Tsampo valley in Tibet.²⁵ From *muddo-supuñ*, they are said to have migrated to *nyimle lembyañ* (Eastern Himalaya). Their oral tradition makes reference of *nyime Pemu*, which means the Himalayan ranges²⁶. Afterwards they are believed to have crossed the rivers Kuru and Kamala, which is commonly known as *kuru rego* and *kiime rego*²⁷. They crossed the rivers Kuru and Kamla, which lies beyond the Pij Cholo, a peak of 8,417 feet rising north of the Kamla river. Before reaching to Ziro Valley, the Apatanis are said to have settled at Talley Valley for quite some time²⁸ after crossing the *Kuru* and *Kamla* river. The oral traditions and mythical legends says that the Apatanis

²³ Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), op. cit., p.34.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Mihin Kaning, The Rising Culture of the Apatanis Tribes (Arunachal Pradesh), Himalayan Publisher, Itanagar, 2008, p.7.

²⁷ *Kuru rego* and *kiime rego* are the name of rivers which flows near the Tang Tsampo valley of Tibet from where the Apatanis had crossed in course of their migration towards the present habitat. Here, A.A. Ashraf (1990) carried out an excavation and unearthed various Neolithic stone tools like scrapper, cutting tools, etc.

²⁸ Mihin Kaning, op.cit., p.7.

were originally divided into five villages²⁹ at Talley Valley. From there they grouped themselves into three, viz., *Tinn Diibo* (*Hija, Dutta and Diibo*); *Nichi-Nitii* (*Hong*), and *Talyang-Hao* (*Hari, Kalung, Reru and Tajang*) and moved ahead in three different directions, viz., (i) North-western; (ii) North via *Tapang Talle* and (iii) North-east (Present Talley valley)³⁰.

After followed different routes and directions, they again met at the place called *Biiri* (near Hong village). From *Biiri*, they finally moved *supuñ lembyañ* (present Ziro valley). When the Apatanis reached Ziro there were already three tribes settled there³¹. They are *Jiro* tribe in the northern side of the Valley, and *Tabyu* and *Dusu* in the southern side of the valley. Of these tribes, both the *Jiros* and *Dusus* were very turbulent and they frequently raided and kidnapped the men and the cattle of the Apatanis. Consequently, the Apatanis developed differences with these two tribes, which finally resulted in into open conflict of the Apatanis. In the ensuing conflict the Apatanis are said to have defeated the latter and these tribes were driven out of the valley, which are said to have migrated in the southern direction. Currently many of the scholars are of the view that these deposed tribes are the present Bagnis (Nyishi) of the East Kameng District,

²⁹ Tage Tada, *Trial Archaeological Exporation and Exacavationof the Apatni Valley Based on Folk Stories*, *Dree Souvenir*, Itanagar, 2003, pp.19-22.

³⁰ Talley Valley, now a reserve forest is located at 35km. away from Ziro Valley. Its total area is approximitly 51587.5 hectares. Its lies between 93.57-94.12 East and 27.30-27.24 north in the Lower Subansiri District.

³¹ Tage Tada, *op.clt.*, pp.19-22.

because of resemblance of certain cultural practices³². While about the *Tabyu*³³ tribe it is said that they intermixed with the Apatanis. Now they are settled in the *Tajang* village as one clan.

Another version of the local tradition goes thus; that when the Apatanis reached Ziro, the valley was under a local ruler called *Mengeh Radde*. Alternately he is also known as *Ato Jiro* ruled over local people³⁴. The Apatanis did not obey the strict code of conduct of the *Ato Jiro* and *Jiming Jiro*, (presumably the wife of *Mengeh Radde*). As a result, differences arose among the migrated groups (the Apatanis) and the local subjects of *Ato Jiro*. These differences finally resulted in an open conflict between two in which, the local people of Ziro were driven out from the valley and the Apatanis settled there permanently.

In both the cases, it is evident that prior to coming of the Apatanis, the Ziro Valley was inhabited by some local people, whom the Apatanis have driven out of the Valley but whether they are Nyishis of East Kameng or not, it is yet to be confirmed historically.

³²Tage Tada, op.cit., pp.19-22.

³³ According to prevalent oral tradition among the *Tajang* Village, *Tabyu* clan of the *Tajang* village said to be the one of oldest in the village and it is said that once it had been most populated clan in the village. But because of their untimely performance of the *Subu-Murun* rites in the month of July, their population is declining generation wise. Apatanis originally performed this rite in month of January but *Tabyu* people violated norms of the ritual by observing it in month of July/.As a result they have been visited by curse of malevolent spirits which inturn is considered responsible for its declining population. Now their strength is hardly twenty persons.

³⁴ Mihin Kaning, op.cit.,p.7.

2.3. Socio-Cultural Profile:

The early settlements of the Apatanis at Ziro Valley was confined to seven villages,³⁵ viz., *Bulla (Kalung and Reru), Tajang, Hija, Dutta, Diibo (Mudang Tage and Bamin Michi), Hong and Hari*. Of these the *Hong* is the large village. These villages are grouped into three, viz., *Tinn Diibo (Hija, Dutta and Diibo); Nichi-Nitii (Hong), and Talyang-Hao (Hari, Kalung, Reru and Tajang)*. With the rapid explosion of the population, the Apatanis have now established many more villages. According to Statistical Hand Book of Lower Subansiri District of 2001, there are thirty-five villages in the Apatani Valley. In 2007-08, this number has increased to fifty-one. Of these newly established villages, the villages namely - *Siuro of Hong, Lempia of Tajang, Suluya of Kalung, Reru and Tajang, Biiri of Mudang Tage, Neychaliya of Hija and Dutta and Siibe of Bamin Michi* are most prominent.

Though the Apatanis are settled in different villages, they are culturally homogenous. Besides this, the traditional religious and ritual performances are carried out only in the original villages. Therefore, most of the Apatanis generally have a residence at their respective traditional villages though they may have settled at modern villages. Hence, the core cultural practices of the Apatanis could be observed and witnessed only in these traditional villages. Their traditional villages are highly crowded with populations ranging from

³⁵ Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), op. cit., p.43.

Fig. 2.1
Village wise Population (Traditional Villages) of the
Apatanis 2007-2008

Name of village	Total household	Total population	Male population	Female population
Reru	164	597	289	308
Kalung	94	9395	179	216
Tajang/ lampia	255	1029	506	523
Hija	335	1362	638	724
Dutta	90	404	179	225
Mudang Tage	114	547	250	297
Bamin Michi	89	345	156	189
Hong	398	2235	1075	1160
Hari	266	805	379	426

Source: Statistics Department, Lower Subansiri District, Ziro.

a few hundreds to thousands. Each house stands along side each other with the roofs merging into each other with the streets and narrow lanes within the village. Each clan group occupies a specified segment and creates a wooden platform; locally known as *lapan*³⁶. Each of the traditional village has its distinctive indigenous patterns of dwelling which is uniform even in terms of the length and breadth of the houses including the granaries. Space within the settlements is limited for which the piles of houses and granaries stand wall to wall within the Village Street and narrow lanes.

³⁶ *Lapan* is a community wooden platform for holding meeting, settling disputes and performing clan rituals and ceremonies like *subu* and *murun*. However, women are not allowed to step into this wooden platform. This traditional community wooden platform could only be seen in the traditional villages.

Their society is patriarchal in its nature. A rural nuclear family consisting of a couple and their unmarried children is the societal norm and is considered as the basic social and economic unit. As soon as the sons get married they settle themselves independently with their wives. Their marriage system follows tribe endogamy but clan exogamy. Marriage is generally considered as a personal affair, and parents and kinsmen do not interfere to any great extent with young people's choice of partners³⁷. They look upon marriage primarily as a means to provide for a life long partnership of two congenial individual³⁸.

Their social system is guided by stability, unity and integrity. They have well established socio-religious and economic institutions such as *builañ*, *gorra*, *patañ*, *nyibu*, etc. through which society runs and functions. Traditional system of their social control was based on the general conciouses. Details of those institutions and their activities are shown in Fig. 2.2.

Tattooing had been an important social custom and the traditional Apatani practice required to tattoo their faces, locally known as '*tiipe*'. The male members had a horizontal line tattoo on his chin, across the under-lip and straight line was drawn downward from if the point of the from if the point of the chin³⁹. The women

³⁷ C.V.F. Haimendorf, The Apatanis and Their Neighbours, Free Press of Gleycoe, New York, 1962, p.92. (Henceforth as TATN).

³⁸ C.V.F. Haimendorf, Himalayan Tribe from Cattle to Cash, Vikas Publishing, Ghaziabad, 1980, p.105. (Henceforth a HTCC).

³⁹ Mihin Kaning, *op. cit.*, p.6.

Fig. 2.2

**List of the Traditional Socio-Religious and Economic
Institutions of the Apatanis**

Name of institutions	Nature and Activities
Builañ	Village council represented by each clan of the village. They look after the political affairs of the society.
Gorra	Socio-religious volunteers represented by each clan of the village. They organize the rituals and rites for the entire village.
patañ	Agricultural gang-labour formed within the same age groups. They help each other in their agricultural activities.
Nyibu	Priesthood, who mediate between human being and supernatural being.

were tattooed with broad blue line from the top of the forehead to the tip of the nose and again fine straight lines were drawn from the lower lip to the nose of the chin and a horizontal line was drawn across the under lip. Women also wore wooden plugs called 'yapiñ *hulo*', which were inserted on the side of the nostrils expanding the nose right across of the face⁴⁰.

On the culture of tattooing and use of nose plugs the prevailing oral tradition says that when the Apatanis migrated to present inhabitat, they found two earlier batches of Apatanis⁴¹ settled at present Ziro and *Pangañ Pali*. Settlers of Ziro were known as *Ziro Tanii*⁴² and those who settled at *Pangañ Pali* were known as *Pangañ*

⁴⁰ Mihin Kaning, op. cit., p.6.

⁴¹ Tage Tada, op. cit., p.21.

⁴² The people of *Ziro Tanii* had been under the rule of *Ato Ziro* and *Jiming Ziro* according to oral tradition prevelant among all villages.

Pali. Settlers of *Ziro* used to abduct the Apatani women because were very attractive. Therefore, the women tattooed and wore the nose plugs defacing their beauty in order to ward off the *Ziro* people. And men presumably tattooed to distinguish themselves from local people of *Ziro* or *Ziro Tanii*.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people, which was supported by forest activities and crafts. Besides, animal husbandry is also practiced to a limited extent. Their agricultural practice is permanent in its nature as they practice wet rice cultivation with an indigenous irrigation system. They also practice paddy-cum-fish cultivation, which was introduced by Government of India in 1960⁴³. Landholdings are intricately linked to the pattern of agricultural. their landholdings can be categories into three viz. (i) individual; (ii) clan and (iii) village. Details of these land ownership system have been discussed in succeeding chapter. Apart from these, occupations the Apatanis also depend on cane work and weaving as subsidiary sources of income.

Earlier these products were only had utilitarian value but now-a-days, it is also meant for the sale at market as well as. The early Apatanis are said to have trade relation with their Nyishi and Miri neighbours, and with the plain of people of North Lakhimpur, which

⁴³ Koj Yabyang, A Study of the Murung Festival of the Apatanis, Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Rajiv Gandhi University, 2006, p.13.

was largely complementary in nature in relation to their economies⁴⁴. The Apatanis extracted a salty substance from a kind of herbaceous plant and the Miris sometimes were obliged to buy it from them when they could not procure enough salt from the bazaar of the plains. The habitation of the Hills Miris was also regularly visited to by the Apatanis on trading trips. The Apatanis, in exchange of merchandise predominantly rice, procured from the Miris pigs, fowls and sometimes dogs. Pigs, however, ranked first among the goods which were in great demand from the Apatanis who themselves not experts in animal husbandry as these people⁴⁵.

The following are the main aspects of polity formation among the Apatanis. The village affairs are managed by the traditional village council known as *builañ*. Haimendorf (1980) writes;

“though the *builañ* were collectively the upholders of tribal custom, they acted primarily as the spokesmen of their own clans and not as village-headmen with clearly defined functions. Their duties were those of arbiters rather than of judges, and they usually did not take action unless a dispute had become a public issue which had to be dealt with by the community as a whole, be it by mediation or the use of force”⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ C.V.F. Haimendorf, TATN, op. cit., p.47.

⁴⁵ H.G. Joshi, op.cit., p.172.

⁴⁶ C.V.F. Haimendorf, (HTCC), p.130.

This council comprises of representatives of the clans and its member is chosen on the basis of their personal influence. Currently, the membership pattern of the *builañ* has become heredity. *Builañs* are responsible for settling disputes and, maintaining peace and stability in the society. Nevertheless, they do not intervene unless a dispute has become an issue which must be dealt with by the community as a whole either through mediation or the use of power.⁴⁷ Besides this, the Apatanis also enter into a friendship pact known as *gyotu-rako* with the neighbouring tribes, especially with the Nyishi through an exchange of the *mithun* (*bosfrontalis*). Besides such an exercise is also initiated by an individual as a measure to avert conflict in the near future⁴⁸.

The Apatanis in general are believers of *Danyi-Piilo* (sun and moon). They also believe in large number of gods, goddesses, malevolent and benevolent spirits. They believe that all diseases, accidents and misfortune are caused by the malevolent gods and spirits. Their activities are therefore centred on appeasement of these outraged spirits.⁴⁹ Here the *nyibu* (priest) acts as a mediator between the living and supernatural. They deeply adhere to their traditional culture and religious faith and beliefs. Their most popular religious festivals are the *subu*, *murun*, *myoko* and *dree*. Details of these festivals are shown in fig. 2.3.

⁴⁷ Koj Yabyang, op. cit., p.11.

⁴⁸ Joshi, H.G., op.cit., p27.

⁴⁹ Koj Yabyang, op. cit., p.11.

Fig. 2.3

List of the Religious Festivals of the Apatanis

Name of Festivals	Nature and Celebration
Subu	A religious festival or rite at individual initiative is observed at two different time periods, viz., in the month of January or October. This festival is observed for invoking divine blessings and protection.
Muruñ	An individual initiated religious rite of highest primacy celebrated in the month of January. It is celebrated mainly for ushering divine blessings and protection. Besides, the person also gains social prestige by celebrating this rite or festival.
Myoko	A community festival celebrated in the month of March. The festival is celebrated to prevent the occurrence of famine and outbreak of epidemic and to pave way for healthy life and prosperity of mankind.
Dree	An agricultural ritual observed on the 5 th of July, every year.

Thus, their way of life, customs and traditions give them a distinctive cultural identity and form an important part of total cultural fabric of Arunachal Pradesh.

2.4.1. Origin of the *Gorra* Institution:

Reconstruction of the past history largely depends upon the availability of sources. The extent to which one is able to present his study of subject findings in a systematic and coherent historical manner depends on the nature and volume of sources of his / her disposal. Here the written records of the past and archaeological

sources play an important role. In fact in a narrow sense 'history' refers to the study of the past which produced written records, and to the study of the past as reflected in written records⁵⁰. But there are cultures lacking writing or without any archaeological remains. Implication of this does not mean that such cultures do not have their past history or lack of history. The people of such cultures often recorded their past in form of social memory and oral history, which till recently occupy a low status in the historian's craft⁵¹.

The tribes of Arunachal in general and the Apatanis in particular do not have any written records of the past. Under such circumstances, the exact process, the periodic evolution and at what point of time in history their traditional institutions emerged can not be precisely gleaned. This can be said of the institution of *gorra* too.

Indeed, where there is no written record of the past history, the people orally recall of their own past through myths, legends and folklores. These can be used as most effective and productive source to reconstruct the same.

No doubt, oral history may be distorted and exaggerated but we all know that written history can be also a subject of manipulation, prejudice and ideological bias. In fact, written history too can be

⁵⁰ William C. Sturtevant, 'Anthropology, History and Religion', *Ethnohistory*, Vol.13, No,1/2 (Winter-Spring, 1966, 1-5.

⁵¹ Stuart Blackburn, 'The Necessity of Oral History', in *Souvenir Dree Festival*, Central Dree Committee, Itanagar; 2002, p. 1.

reality'.⁹³ Many scholars now tend to believe that oral history reveals a certain kind of truth, not a scientific truth, but a deeper, psychological truth about the human condition. To quote Stuart Blackburn, "the most important aspect of oral history is that they our living contacts with the past".⁹⁴ Here oral history can be understood as information passed on from one generation to the next by the story-tellers. The forms of oral history include myths, legends, folktales, proverbs as well as logical spells, religious instruction, and recollection of the past. Stuart Blackburn⁹⁵ broadly categorized the oral history of the Apatanis in four major areas and they are: (1) ritual practices, such as *myoko*, *murun* and *dree*; (2) objects, such as *lapan* (wooden platform), *maji* (Tibetan bell) and *tasañ* (beads); (3) oral traditions (beliefs and custom expressed orally by means of specialized voice form such as priest's chanting, etc.) and (4) ordinary memory of the past events.

The oral traditions of the Apatanis which have a sanctified position throw a significant light on all aspects of their past life including their origin and migration. They frame their past according to epochs. These epochs are the: *kolyun-kolo*, *uni-iipyo*, and *muddo* age. The village elders and priests state thus:

⁹³ Stuart Blackburn, op.cit., p. 1-3.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p.1

⁹⁵ Ibid. pp.1-3.

*Kolyuñ-kolo*⁹⁶ ho *Kiidi-yapuñ*, *Putu-puko*, *kilee-yasie hi lintii*, *uhi-supuñ ho uhi-miyu*, *sanii-sanko*, *hi-Muddo-supuñ ho miyu hi gand-nencha mi lahrii biitih*.⁹⁷

This oral tradition and priestly version states that *kolyuñ-kolo* was the earliest epochs when the universe and its physical manifestations such as mountains and rivers originated. This was followed by *uhi and iipyo* age, where the various gods and goddesses, human beings, other living and non-livings of the earth and the sky inhabited the earth. *iipyo-supuñ* was the new settlement of the human beings. During this period the concept of worldly possession in land or other properties did not occur. It meant that a sense of private property did not emerge. However, there is a reference to a rudimentary form of cultivation appearing in the last part of *iipyo* epoch which will be subsequently discussed in detail. The *iipyo* epoch was followed by *muddo* epoch which the Apatanis called as *muddo-supuñ*.⁹⁸ During this era, human beings are said to have evolved the idea of possession in land and other forms of properties. The oral tradition and priestly version of the Apatani myth also reveal that there was brief intervening period between the *iipyo* and *muddo*, which is known as

⁹⁶ *Kolyuñ-kolo* is a divine pair of the Apatani. The former refers to the earth, while the later stand for the rain. It has been said that rain impregnated the earth by the process of raining. As a result, the earth gave birth to the mountains and rivers.

⁹⁷ The entire version was narrated by Mihin Tapa. He is eighty six years old and well conversant in oral traditions of the Apatanis. Many of the renowned priests of the *Tajang* village consult him while trying to trace the origin and migration of the Apatanis.

⁹⁸ Takhe Kani is of the view that the Apatanis used word '*Supung*' instead of '*Tasmpo*' and *Muddo-Supung* is believed to the present Tsampo valley of Tibet.

'don'. And it was in the *don* era that humans being took to cultivation. A detailed discussion about these aspects has been taken up in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, the traditional cultural practices of the Apatanis including rituals, rites and festivals like *myoko*, *muruhn*, etc. are said to have originated in the *iipyo* age. Besides this, the traditional institutions like priesthood, *builañ*, *gorra*, etc. also originated at this era. On this aspect the priests and village elders state thus;

*Kapha nayhee hii iipyo hoki lima nii nyiima, kapha nayhee iipyo hoki dori biid.*⁹⁹

This means all aspects of life and livelihood patterns emerged in the *iipyo* era. Regarding the origin of the *gorra* institution, oral traditions goes thus:

*.....iipyo garda mi, iipyo pamiñ-myolyañ mika tari dalyi ho, ho sii niih na? Huka taru pushi, sanda chako hona, siika huka musu-murru khona si talyie-taro liyie niih? Ho ma si iipyo amuñ, amuñ -yasañ mi papi khomu ko hopa la lumyu siila la. Ho siimi niih na miich niih, muddo-yasie mi, ganda-siiko mi? Ho iipyo popi luniiñ nii-pabo hoki gorra pa lulyañ-luda la duto hilla yarliñ tii. Noh gorra, hi siika silyie-siido, talyi-taro lin siimi putuh-silley tuh nii pa duto hila yarliñ tii. Hoki la gorra duri bittih. Ho iipyo pamiñ-myolyañ miika tari daniñ mi putuh-siiley tuh la gorra hi yapuñ miihri tii.*¹⁰⁰

When *iipyo* land, especially *iipyo pamiñ-myolyañ*⁶⁰ was destroyed by thunderbolt and hailstorm people were in a state of awe in face of the calamity and were keen to go to the root cause of the disaster. They concluded that it occurred because of the cutting and chipping out of *iipyo-amuñ, amuñ-yasañ* (tree). The people were keen on finding a solution to this vexed problem. What would happen to the forests and lands if such natural calamities continue to occur? Then *iipyo popi*, the eldest person of of that era suggested that there must be *gorras* from amongst the *nii-pabo* (general public) to negotiate such unknown disasters and appease the underlying spirits. He authorized the *gorras* to initiate measures to prevent thunderbolt and hailstorm from damaging their lands and forests. Since then the institution of *gorra* came to exist. To negotiate and appease the spirits of thunderbolt and hailstorm which afflicted the lands for the chipping and cutting of *iipyo amuñ, amuñ-yasañ*, and *the gorra* started the *yapuñ* ritual.

The same myth has been interpreted by priests from different perspectives. It goes thus:

Uhi-lembyañ ho 'pyoni-tani' neyie duba siito la. 'Pyoni' hii sishka ngunu ka uhi atañ, ho 'tani' hii ngunu miyu. Uhi hii tamoh-haro yalha ngunu miyu mii lumiñ yabii tola dulye nii. Ho iipyo popi, iipyo paka abañ jahii luniiñ hii, mah ho sitañ pa ngunu duba siila diima hiil lula la iipyo ganda mii laser tii. Ho iipyo ganda ho duku la lemba-giira aya yapa hiila, halu-giira

⁶⁰ The land *iipyo pamiñ-myolyañ* belongs to *builañ*. This explains that the institution of *builañ* was older than the institution of *gorra*.

aya yapa hiila miisah-pasah mii piilyhe haipa duto teh hiila lutii. Hii (i) jogyih-khabo; (ii) Sango-hago; (iii) Builyañ-gorra la (iv) giitu-giira / nii-pabo. Jogyih-khabo hii nyibu la miira; sango-hago hii lemba aaha miiji-migung chinii; builyañ hii miyu-yalu mika lulyañ luda nii. Gorra hii uhi-yalu mika lulyañ luda nii. Gorra hii kapyo nyima tii. Iipyo pamiñ-myolyañ mika tari dailye ho, ho iipyo popi ka lumiñ nii giitu-giira/nii-pabo hoki siimi putuh siilye tuh nii pa builyañ mii duba la gorra dutuh hiila yarliñ tii. Hoki la builyañ-gorra nyi duba siila duri tii⁶¹.

*Uhi-iipyo*⁶² lived together during the *uhi-age*. *Uhi* denotes an important deity of the Apatanis pantheon appeased till date, while *iipyo* meant the human being. *Uhi* being more powerful dominated over the human lives. At this state of affairs *iipyo popi*, the eldest of the *iipyo* generation suggested “we can no longer live with the *uhi*, we must have country or land that free from dominance of *uhi*.” Then they took over the *iipyo* land and declared it free from *uhi*. After settling at *iipyo* land or country for the purpose of securing peace and order, *iipyo popi* notionally divided the society into four stratas. They were: (i) *Jogyih-khabo* (priest and a person who buries the dead); (ii) *Sango-hango* (village elders and knowledgeable persons who are well versed in traditions and customs); (iii) *Builyañ-gorra* (a

⁶¹ Narrated by Mihin Talling, a renowned priest of the *Tajang* village.

⁶² *Uhi-iipyo* was later on renamed as *Pyoni* and *Tani*.

member of village council and socio-religious volunteers); and (iv) *Giitu-giira* besides the *builañ* to deal the human conflict with supernatural powers and to take measures to mitigate such unknown disaster. Since then *gorra* came into existence. The members of the *Builañ* were well versed in customary law and they dealt with the earthly realm and resolved human conflict. The *gorra* on the other hand was council of village elders who dealt with the human conflict with the gods and goddesses.

2.4.2. Organisation and *Gorraship*:

Human beings do not live alone nor do they live by bread only. They live in a group, form association and built institutions for basic needs and requirements. Some of this association and institutions concerned with their world-view by weaving its immediate experiences with what it has learnt from the past; to which are added the hopes and fears which it projects into the dimly visible future⁶³. The priest who in traditional notional division of society is known as *Jogyih* is attributed with divine power to mediate between the human and supernatural world. On the other hand, *gorra* is spiritual administrators of the society by organizing community the rituals.

Gorra is a well organized socio-religious institution of the Apatani, which existed among them since their settlement at *iipyo-*

⁶³ Nirmal Kumar Bose, op. cit., p.58.

supuñ or Tsang Sampo valley in Tibet. It is a permanent body represented by each clan of the village. Each village of the Apatanis has this institution except for *Reru* village, where this institution had ceased to exist because of reasons unknown⁶⁴.

The members of this institution are elders of the village who are chosen by virtues of their experience and knowledge of oral traditions. The members of this institution have their own unwritten code under which they enforce *anyodu* or abstention from work by all villagers at the time of ritual observance. Regarding the organization of *gorra* Dr. Pura Tado writes:

“The *gorra* also represents the clan of the village like the *builang* but their work is to organize and oversee the common festivals of the village and to enforce *anyodu*...Usually, elderly persons, who are well conversant with customs and traditions of society are chosen to be a *gorra*”⁶⁵.

This clearly indicates that to become a member of the *gorra*, one has to be well conversant with traditions and customs of the society rather than being a physically well endowed personality or in

⁶⁴The institution of *gorra* dissolved among the *Reru* village on account of some differences among its members but villagers still tell the importance of institution. Today they follow the ritual observance of neighbouring village of *Tajang* and *Kalung* village and they also make contribution to *gorras* of this village for organizing the agricultural ritual.

⁶⁵ Pura Tado, Political Transition Among the Arunachal Tribes, A Case Study of the Apatanis, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Arunachal University; 2001, p.58.

possession of wealth, which was a determinant in case of membership of the *builañ*⁶⁶. In order to assign the *gorras*' independent powers in organizing the village rituals; two or three priests are included within the membership. Consisting of village elders and priests, the institution of *gorra*, thus, represents an autonomous socio-religious institution of the village. Though there are differences in the nomenclature of the institution among the villages of the Apatanis which I mentioned in the previous Chapter, oral tradition of the people does not make any distinction about its origin myth and its initial role. In all probability this difference of nomenclature and type of institution developed only after their settlement at present habitat, though there is evidence to support this.

It may be mentioned here that in villages like *Hong* and *Dutta* two types of *gorra* are functioning. For instance, in *Hong* village, both *muddo-gorra* and *dree gorra* are functioning. When I enquired about these two types of institutions, the village elders and priests told me that it is just represents a division of work among the *gorras*. The *muddo-gorra* exclusively organizes the *yapuñ* ritual, while *dree-gorras* organize the other agricultural rituals like *dree*, *tamu*, *chandi-mettii* and *myokuñ*⁶⁷. Similarly, in *Dutta* village two types of *gorra*, viz., *yapuñ-gorra* and *dree gorra* are functioning. Here too, the

⁶⁶ For appointment of members of *builañ* wealth and status or personal influence in the community always matter. But *gorras* are appointed on the basis of their experience and knowledge of customs and tradition.

⁶⁷ Kani, Takhe, TAAAP, p.139.

yapuñ-gorra exclusively organizes *yapuñ* ritual,⁶⁸ while *dree-gorra* organizes the rest of the village rituals. Thus, existence of these two types of *gorra* institution can be simply understood in terms of division of work among the *gorras*.

2.4. Membership Pattern:

There is prescribed norm for the membership of the *gorra*. Previously, when the *gorra* died, his place was usually taken by his eldest son. In the absence of a direct heir, his place could be taken by his younger brother⁶⁹. Presently, this practice is no longer in vogue. Instead villagers select from among the elders of the village. Qualification as such for the members of *gorra* is not fixed.

Though the institution of *gorra* is a representative body of clan but women have never been members of the *gorra*. I enquired about this aspect to the village elders and priests. They replied that women cannot be a member of this institution because of two reasons. Firstly, their clan membership is not permanent in its nature as they could be married or re-married at anytime. Secondly, the job assigned to a *gorra* entails immense responsibility. It requires the physical labour as well as the mental courage.

⁶⁸ Members of *gorra* consider *yapuñ* ritual as most important agricultural ritual of the season.

⁶⁹ Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 20 to 25th July, 2008.



Traditional hat that used by the priest who chants the hymns for agricultural rituals.

Gorras collecting the contributions for performing the village rituals.



Fig. 2.4.1
List of the *gorras* of the *Kalung* village⁷⁰

Name of <i>Gorras</i>	Name of Clan	Age
Nako Jilley	Nako	62
Subu Sala	Subu	61
Tailyang Sambyo	Tailyang	60
Mom Khoda	Mom	64
Kalung Gangku	Kalung	50
Kalung Gambo	Kalung	45
Lod Dalyang	Lod	52
Kalung Pugang	Kalung	54

Source: Field data collected from the *Kalung* village.

Fig. 2.4.2
List of the *gorras* of the *Tajang* village

Name of <i>Gorras</i>	Name of Clan	Age
Tage Hassang	Tage	75
Millo Hinda	Millo	51
Ngilyang Tallang	Ngilyang	49
Radhe Takkar	Radhe	54
Rubu Doilyang	Rubu	53
Mihin Lali	Mihin	56
Tabyu Karlung	Tabyu	57

Source: Field data collected from the *Tajang* village.

⁷⁰The *gorras* of the *Kalung* village has been divided into two sub-groups, viz., *Tailyang Subu* and *Lod Kalung* group. The *gorras* of *Kalung* village organize only *Dree* and *yapuñ* ritual but they share the taboos of other agricultural rituals such as *myokuñ* and *chandi-metli* with *Tajang* village.

Fig. 2.4.3

List of the *gorras* of the *Hija* village⁷¹

Name of Gorras	Name of Clan	Age
Taku Koyang	Taku	64
Kago Tadi	Kago	47
Nada Kapa	Nada	46
Kago Tago	Kago	39
Dani Yakang	Dani	50
Pura Riido	Pura	40
Taku Taller	Taku	32
Taku Dolyang	Taku	60
Dani Taggur	Dani	60
Dani Doging	Danyi	60
Pura Danyi	Pura	60
Nending Rido	Nending	60
Kime Tasso	Kime	61
Pyagang Yachang	Pyagang	62
Kimle Dukhung	Kime	63
Nada Raju	Nada	30
Pyangang Taj	Pyagang	61
Nada Kano	Nada	61
Kime Chatung	Kime	59

Source: Field data collected from the *Hija* village.

⁷¹ The *gorras* of the *Hija* village has been divided into four sub-groups, viz., *pihi papii*, *slañ pullo*; *tadubo pullo* and *siikar pullo* or *Nada Kime*. Here only *siikar pullo* or *nada* group organize the *dree*, *yapuñ* and *myokuñ* rituals, while the rest of three sub-group only organize *yapuñ* ritual.

Fig. 2.4.4

List of the *gorras* of the *Dutta* village⁷²

Name of Gorras	Name of Clan	Age
Koj Hassang	Koj	50
Chiging Loder	Chiging	61
Koj Hanya	Koj	53
Er. Moby Pussang	Moby	42
Hinyo Taday	Hinyo	42
Koj Takkar	Koj	43
Dr. Koj Tam	Koj	38
Koj Bida	Koj	40
Koj Guro	Koj	62
Hinyo Kago	Hinyo	61

Source: Field data collected from the *Dutta* village.

Fig. 2.4.7

List of the *gorras* of the *Hong* Village⁷³

Name of Gorras	Name of Clan	Age
Kago Yachang	Kago	54
Takhe Tajo	Takhe	63
Takhe Hinda	Takhe	64
Punyo Nikang	Puniyo	65

Source: Field data collected from the *Hong* Village.

⁷² Amongst the *Dutta* village, some of the agricultural fields are considered as sacred and owners of those fields are bound to be member of *yapuñ gorra*. The persons like Er. Moby Pussang and Dr. Koj Tam are few among those who owned such a sacred agricultural field. Therefore, they are called as member of *yapuñ gorra*. Though they do not directly participate in organizing *yapuñ* ritual but make contributions for organizing *yapuñ* ritual timely.

⁷³ Amongst the *Hong* village, there is only four *gorras* for entire village and they organize the village ritual related to agriculture and social harmony.

Fig. 2.4.6

List of the *gorras* of the *Hari* Village

Name of Gorras	Name of Clan	Age
Doging Kago	Doging	54
Nending Lali	Nending	53
Landi Sala	Landi	46
Hage Rando	Hage	45
Dusu Tajang	Dusu	51
Hage Tapa	Hage	53
Hage Tagia	Hage	51
Hage Tamang	Hage	52
Hage Oliyng	Hage	53
Hage Pumbo	Hage	52
Hage Taygu	Hage	46
Hage Talo	Hage	45
Hage Bida	Hage	52
Hage Kayo	Hage	48
Hage Tago	Hage	47
Nending Riku	Nending	64
Tadu Kago	Tadu	51
Hage Tanyu	Hage	54
Tasso Yange	Tasso	53
Hage Gyati	Hage	37
Hage Apo	Hage	38
Hage Talley	Hage	38
Hage Tallang	Hage	52

Source: Field data collected from the *Hari* Village.⁷⁴



⁷⁴ In *Hari* village, the *gorras* are divided into three group, viz., the *dree gorra*, *yapuñ gorra* and *myokuñ gorra*. This division signifies the division of work among the *gorra* and *dree gorras* are commonly priests who exclusively organize the *dree* ritual.

Fig. 2.4.5

**List of the gorras of the *Bamin Michi* and the
Muddang-Tage Village⁷⁵**

Name of Gorras	Name of Clan	Age
Tamo Chobing	Tamo	60
Tamo Kani	Tamo	62
Tamo Abing	Tamo	64
Mudang Doley	Mudang	61
Mudang Pumbo	Mudang	61
Buru Tanio	Buru	60

Sources: Field data collected from the *Bamin Michi* and the *Muddang-Tage* Village.

Sometimes they are required to perform rituals during midnight and at other times they are required to stay at forest for weeks together while driving-out the malevolent spirit from society. For all these reasons, women cannot become *gorras*⁷⁶.

2.4.3. Reward System:

The institution of *gorra* is voluntary in its nature and the *gorras* receive no specific reward as such for their service to society. Their services to society are considered as free of any return. However, in individual rites like *subu* and *muruh*, the initiator of rites calls the

⁷⁵ In the *Bamin Michi* and the *Muddang-Tage* villages, there is only three *gorras* each, who organize the agricultural ritual for entire village.

⁷⁶ Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 15 to 20th September, 2008.

member of *gorras* of the village, serves them with a feast and contributes Rupees 50/- towards the *gorras* for their services. The *gorras* deposit this amount in their general fund. Earlier, when no money was in circulation in the society, this contribution was made in form of kind. They were offered dry meat bundles locally known as *yoh-sankho* by the initiator of the individual *subu* and *muruañ* rites. This contribution is known as *gorra-amañ*. After introduction of monetary system, this contribution was turn into form of cash. Initially the amount of 2/- rupees had given as *gorra-amañ* and thereafter it was raised to 5/- rupees; and subsequently today 50/- rupees is a widely accepted amount for contribution towards the *gorra*. It is dependent on the members of *gorra on* how they spend this contributed amount. But it is generally observed that the contribution amount does not go to individual account of the *gorras* rather they keep this amount in general fund of *gorras*⁷⁷.

2.4.4. Taboos and its Implication:

The term taboo is an anthropological word, which denotes prohibition or forbidden activity, something that is not permitted or something stands against socio-religious approval of a given society. It can be precisely defined as "restriction established to guard against supernaturally evil and dangerous things like plants, animals and objects or even the persons especially those believe (sic) to have been

⁷⁷ See note 75.

possessed by evil spirits”⁷⁸. At the back of the taboo there is a sanction of socio-religious obligation. Its disobedience is not a crime but a sin. The purpose of taboo is to prohibit the member of society from doing some specific activities. Radcliff Brown⁷⁹ has studied taboo as one of the various social mechanisms by which an orderly society is able to maintain its self existence. Truly, “taboo as one of the means of social mechanism help in establishing some fundamental social values, which are vital to social survival”⁸⁰.

Taboos are of three types as pointed out by Majumdar and Madan⁸¹. They are (i) the taboos which associated with the process of cultivation designed to be productive; (ii) the taboos which keep women and children away from certain places and objects are protective and (iii) the taboos which seclude a person like a black magician or a menstruating women are designed to be prohibitive in the sense that they prohibit the specific persons from doing harm to others⁸².

Therefore a kind of ritual behavior defines the proper mode of contact with the sacred. Failure to act properly with respect to the sacred opens the door to the negative experience and effects of sacred

⁷⁸ A.W. Longchar, *Tribal Religion Tradition in North East India*, cit. ref., in N.T. Rikam's Emerging Religious Identities of Arunachal Pradesh, A Study on Nyishi Tribe, Mittal Publication, New Delhi; 2005, p.34.

⁷⁹ Quoted in V.S. Upadhyay & Gaya Pandey's History of Anthropological Thought, Concept Publication, New Delhi, 1997, p.98.

⁸⁰ Bikash Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p.155.

⁸¹ D.N. Majumdar & T.N. Madan, An Introduction to Social Anthropology, Mayoore Paperbacks, Nodia; 2001, pp.41-42.

⁸² *Ibid.*

power. The specific term for this negative power among is taboo. They strongly believed that if anyone is found to be erring in violating the taboos then the whole society or the village would face cataclysm.

Therefore, whenever *gorras* performs village rituals, there are certain restrictions communicated verbally as do's or 'don't. Though these restrictions are an unwritten law but, has wider implication in the society as this has got socio-religious sanction behind it. The Apatanis call this restriction as *anyodu*, which means abstention from work⁸³. The purpose of such taboos or *anyodu* in case of village rituals among the Apatanis is to limit an individual to the norms of society and securing peace with environment at the time of ritual observance. It is usual for the *gorras* to make public announcements asking the villagers to collect necessary items required for their households including firewood and vegetables before initiating the village rituals. Once the ritual is performed, all the villagers are supposed to obey the *anyodu*. However, the taboos for all the rituals organized by *gorras* are not similar. Following specific rituals taboo is enjoined over a varied range of objects with longer period of restriction. For instance, the *yapuñ* ritual is considered as most dreaded ritual of all the rituals organized by *gorras*. So the taboos or *anyodu* of this ritual are stricter and enforced for a longer period of time. The details of taboos involved in each rituals organized by *gorras* have been discussed in the subsequent chapters.

⁸³ Field data collected from *Mudang-Tage* village on 29 to 31st August, 2008.

During the period of taboos or *anyodu*, people are not allowed to work in the agricultural field and kitchen garden nor are they permitted to bring in vegetables and firewood from the forests to their respective houses⁸⁴. They believe that if the taboos of performed ritual are violated, the ritual would remain ineffective. Rather such an act would bring further misfortune for the entire village. Therefore, in case of violation of taboos or *anyodu* of a particular performed ritual, the ritual is performed again. The expenses for that repeated ritual is borne by violator of the *anyodu* of that particular ritual.

When *gorras* impose a fine on anyone for violation of taboos or *anyodu*, no one can interfere in this regard. This is because they have independent powers regulatory authority on matters pertaining to the village rituals. The range of the fine depends upon the nature of violations of the taboos. If the violation was made intentionally, it is considered as a challenge to authority of *gorras*. In such cases, fine could be very high ranging from one cow to Rupees 3000/-. But if violation was made unintentionally or unknowingly, the fine is not heavy. In such cases they impose Rupees 500/- as a fine on violations. Thus, it is very clear that *gorras* have unchallenged authority on the realm of the village rituals and implications of its taboos.

⁸⁴ See note 124.

2.5. Conclusion:

Every human society institutionalizes as many aspects of its culture and its ideas as well as because institutions fulfill the needs of human beings and of social groups. The institutions of a society, including the institial institutions, can study be – indeed they must be – studied as of a piece. Ideas from one institutional area are influenced by ideas from other institutional areas⁸⁵. We have already seen that *iipyo Popi*, the then eldest of the *iipyo* epoch notionally divided the society into four strata for securing peace and order. The *gorra* was an integral part of these divisions of strata. It was integral part of the social and religious organization. Even today they play an important role in the society by organizing the community rituals for which they have highly regarded and respected by the elderly members of the society. The manner in which the society encountered and negotiated the vagaries of nature while moving towards sedenterisation led to the evolution of complex set of rituals. Survival in the face of human assault, natural disaster, or deprivation has been a conscious concern of indigenous peoples. Therefore it was essential that a complex body comprising of village elders in addition to the priests was entrusted with autonomous power in organizing the village rituals. They are therefore a medium intervening and merging the realm of the sacred in terms of spirits and the profane in terms of the material world inhabited by human beings. Concerns of the mundane therefore coalesced with the spiritual through such an institution.

⁸⁵ Paul Bohannan, Social Anthropology, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2007, pp.373-374.

CHAPTER –III

AGRICULTURAL RITUALS THROUGH THE *GORRA*

3.1. Introduction:

Economy is an integral part of human society. It can be defined as a pursuit or cluster of activities including production, investment, innovation and so on¹. It is an important constituent of the community life and play a deciding role in the formation of the cultural and social structure of the society. The Marxist historians including D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma and others are of view that the mode of production in material life, conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general as mode of production determines the culture setting and practices in the society. It is the relations of production which constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation,² on which rises a legal, political consciousness and religious outlook as well as. As a matter of fact, the economic activities of the particular or given society help us to understand an important aspect of that culture.

The social anthropologist and sociologist variously defined economy. Ralph Piddington writes, “economic system is designed to satisfy material wants of the people, to organize production, to control distribution and to determine the right and claims of ownership within

¹ C.N. Shankar Rao, *Sociology Primary Principles*, S. Chand Publication, New Delhi, 2004, p.380.

² T.G. Ashplant, & Gerry Gwyth's eds. *Exploration in Cultural History*, Pluto Press Publication, London: 2007 (rpt), p.11.

the community"³. On the other hand, Majumdar and Madan are of the view that "economic activities consists of the ordering an organization of human relation and human efforts in order to procure as many of the necessities of day to day life as possible, with the expenditure of manimum efforts. It is attempted to secure the maximum satisfaction possible through adapting limited means to unlimited ends in an organized manner"⁴. However, the economic anthropologists sharply differentiate between the economic activities of the 'complex society'⁵ and 'tribal societies'.

In tribal societies, this very pursuit or cluster of activities has closely been linked with their socio-cultural and religious myths.⁶ In fact the study of economic activities of tribal communities across the wold have led to the formation and crystallization of the concept of 'tribal economy'⁷. K.S. Singh, in his book *Economics of the Tribal and their Transformation*, noted that:

Economy of the tribes is a projection of tribal society, a response to the ecosystem in which it is placed, its function of production and distribution are governed by the bonds of kinship within or between families, class and kindered(sic). Production is based on the exploitation of the resources locally

³ Quoted in Makhan Jha's *An Introduction to Sosial Anthropolgy*, Vikas Publication, New Delhi; 2009, p.120.

⁴ Makhan Jha, op. cit., p.120.

⁵ 'Cmplex Societies' sociologically and anthropologically refers to peasant societies or modern industrial societies whose economic practices fundamentally differ from tribal economy. Their economy is large scale and they are technologically more advance.

⁶ C.N. Shankar Rao; op.cit., p.282.

⁷ Gurudas Das, *Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh in Transition*, Vikas publication, Delhi:1995, p.28.

and easily available with the crude technology largely for consumption'⁸.

Their cultural system, social settings and religious practices ensure that the resources continue to sustain the means of livelihood for several generations. The basic characteristics of the tribal economy are small economy, simple technology and cultural isolation. In view of Makhan Jha, the structure of the tribal economy is generally based on forest and sea (in case of forest coastal and island tribes). They have simple technology and at the socio-economic and cultural level the family is a unit of both production and consumption. The community itself acts like a co-operative unit, and the tribal communities living in a village or locality are economically independent⁹. In the tribal economy, the production and consumption are, more or less, complimentary. Vidyarthi, writes:

The first and foremost characteristics of the tribal economy are the close relationship between their economic life and the natural environment or habitat which is usually the forest. Besides the forest, the existing natural environment moulds their economy to a great extent¹⁰.

The contention of early environmental historians in India has been to view pre-modern societies as existing in harmony or in

⁸ Quoted in Gurudas Das's, *ibid.*

⁹ Makhan Jha, *op. cit.*, p.123.

¹⁰ Quoted in Makhan Jha's, *ibid.* p.120.

equilibrium with nature. The ecological romantics have been represented by the works of Ramchandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil. The critiques while refusing to accept the binary opposing western concepts of 'nature' and 'culture' emphasize on societies 'cultural understanding of their environment'. The relationship between the people and their environment is considered 'mutually constitutive'.

Ecology, as awareness of the interdependence of life in ecosystems, and scientific conservation was not developed by indigenous peoples. Yet many of the practices of the indigenous people are a type of environmental ethics which stem from a sense of kinship with all life. Indigenous lifeways foster sustainable subsistence practices by gatherers, hunters, and agriculturists. It also reflects their ingenuity to devise means of production to improve their lot.

Arunachal Pradesh, a state of the Indian Union, is homeland to diverse tribal groups, who are reflect a bewildering array of social and culture features. However, their traditional economic practices had been more or less same as all the tribal communities followed the same pattern. Traditionally, the economy of the people of Arunachal Pradesh is entirely based on the agriculture, which is supported by forest activities including fishing-hunting, allied craft and domestication of animals.

In this regard, Pandey & Tripathy (1997) have correctly stated that "mother nature is the real factor, which determine the economic

life of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh”¹¹. Furthermore, Dr. Verrier Elwin states that the crucial factor which determines the economic life of the people of Arunachal Pradesh thus:

For centuries, the real ruler of the tribal people has been environment; it has shaped their bodies, directed their art, forceable on their tongues; it has been their governor, their policy maker.....¹²

The constraints of geography and its formidable terrain have circumscribed the economic life of the people inhabiting Arunachal Pradesh. Remaining confined to their respective environmental niches, the people have evolved their economic institutions with distinctive features. The primary geographical features of the region are explained in the introductory chapter.

The agricultural practices among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh can be categorized into three distinct types, viz., (i) the shifting or *jhum* cultivation;¹³ (ii) the permanent or sedentary cultivation and (iii) a mix of terrace and shifting cultivation. Though there is no record or written law regarding land control system. However, the Jhum Regulations of 1947-48,¹⁴ recognized three types

¹¹ D. Pandey, & B. Tripath, A Comprehensive History of Arunachal Pradesh, Bani Mandir Prakashan, Pasighat, 1997, pp.124-125.

¹² Verrier Elwin, A Philosophy of NEFA, Directorate of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2006 (Fifty impression), p.6.

¹³ In some anthropological studies the term ‘horticulture’ has been used for ‘jhum or shifting cultivation. But most of the cultural historians and cultural anthropologist prefer to use the later as it is less technical.

¹⁴ The jhum Land Regulation of 1947 provided the legal framework for land ownership pattern in Arunachal Pradesh. this regulation recognises private ownership right over jhum land which earlier happened to be community land.

of land ownership system in the state. They are: (i) privately owned land, (ii) collectively owned land by clan, and (iii) mixed type of ownership, i.e., partially private and partially community based. These regulations recognized the individual and community rights over jhum lands. Customarily, the village community is the owner of all lands and forests located within the village boundaries. Within this boundary, various clans have their areas demarcated. Individuals exercise their right over land by clearing the jungle. A right over land was by virtue of usufruct. Among some tribes the permission of the village community is required before that¹⁵.

The tribes like the Nyishis, the Hill Miris, the Nas, the Solungs, the Tagins, etc. practice the shifting or jhum cultivation. In such types of agricultural practices, the land generally belongs to entire clan or the village and the people have usufruct rights over the land. The tribes like the Noctes, the Monpas, the Singphos and the Sherdukpens, etc. practice mixed type of agriculture, in which both the jhum and sedentary cultivation are practiced. In such type of agriculture, the land under permanent cultivation is owned privately, while the land under the shifting cultivation is community land¹⁶. In entire Arunachal Pradesh the Apatanis are the only tribes who have evolved a truly indigenous technique of sedentary cultivation. The farmers have inalienable rights over their land and the agricultural plots are not

¹⁵ Land ownership pattern differ tribe to tribe even in case of jhum cultivators. Among some tribes the permission of the village community is required before that.

¹⁶ Gurudas Das, op. cit., pp.28-30.

rotated. But women generally do not have right to claim over the land and other properties as right to inheritance is patrilineal. Besides this, land cannot be transferred to a person who does not belong to the same tribe and village¹⁷.

Nevertheless, intricately associated with the various types of livelihood practices are socio-religious activities which provide relief in the otherwise uneventful and "isolated life style"¹⁸. In Fig 3.1, some of the agricultural rites and ceremonies of different tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh has been shown which indicates the importance of religious rites and rituals in agricultural cycles of these people. Livelihood activities are not disembedded from the lifeways of indigenous people. Therefore each stage of agricultural operation is commenced after performing certain socio-religious rites and rituals both at the individual and the community level¹⁹. The economic sphere or subsistence practices cannot be seen as distinct from the interrelationship between the humans and the spirit world of the local bioregions.

¹⁷ T.B. Subba & G.C. Ghosh, *The Anthropology of North-East India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2003, pp.244-245.

¹⁸ D.K. Duarah, 'The Problem of Agricultural Transformation in the Highland', in B. Dhar & Coomer Chandra's ed. *The Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh*, Abhijeet Publication, Delhi, 2004, p.63.

¹⁹ D.K. Duarah, *op.cit.*, p.27.

Fig. 3.1

List of the Agricultural Festival of the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh

Sl. No.	Name of the Tribes	Name of the festivals	Date of celebration
1	Galo	Mopin	4 th April
2	Adi	Solung	1 st September
3	Apatani	Dree	4 th July
4	Hill Miri	Bori-Boot	16 th February
5	Mishmis	Reh / Tamladu	2 nd & 15 th Feb
6	Khampti	Sangken	15 th April
7	Monpa	Lossar	25 th February
8	Nyishi	Nyokum	24 th February
9	Nocte	Loku	-
10	Tagin	Si-Donyi	5 th February

Source: Takhe Kani, Agricultural Festivals of Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

3.2. Economic Condition of the Apatanis:

The Apatanis of Lower Subansiri district have a distinctive socio-political organization reflected in their economic activities. The primary source of their livelihood is sedentary agriculture, which is supported by forest activities. Hunting, fishing, basketry, weaving are utilitarian activities, taken up by members of the community. In the current economic transactions these are important sources of earning. The domestication of cattle and fowls, etc. also contributes to the economy of an individual. However, their agriculture is not linked

away from their villages contain valuable trees, cane and are covered within evergreen forest²³. Similarly, they have three different types of land holdings, viz. (i) individual or private-owned land, (ii) clan land and (iii) village or common land. The individual lands are those which inherited from ancestors or purchased from others. The pasture lands and near-by forest which are used for grazing and collection of firewood comes under the clan land. The distant forest, and burial ground etc., are owned by the entire village²⁴. Here the economic system remains embedded in the social system. In view of H.G. Joshi, the pattern of land ownership the economy of the Apatanis “can be described as a combination of the capitalistic trend and communal cooperation”²⁵.

Though their present agricultural system is permanent in nature, the slash-burn system or shifting cultivation was also known to them in the past.²⁶ Prior to their settlement at the present habitation, “the Apatanis had settled in various places in the north of Subansiri district in search of better terrace cultivation”²⁷. However they failed to find a suitable place for sedentary cultivation due to difficult terrain and inhospitable climatic conditions. They finally settled down at present Apatani or Ziro valley, where they started wet rice cultivation²⁸. As

²² Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), p.6

²³ Ibid., p.2.

²⁴ Ibid., p.6.

²⁵ H.G. Joshi, Arunachal Pradesh: Past and Present, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp.65-66.

²⁶ Field data collected from Dutta village on 28 to 31st April, 2007.

²⁷ Takhe Kani, TAAAP, op.cit., p.172.

²⁸ Ibid.

Haimendorf states it to be an “elaborate and most efficient system of land utilization by a people who cut-off from the material development of Indian high civilization”²⁹.

3.2.1. Agricultural Pattern:

Their agricultural system was planned enough to check soil erosion and deforestation with proper arrangement made for water management. . It is organized through kinship relationships and based on relationships of reciprocity – both exchanges between human and supernatural beings and exchanges of labor among networks of individuals are necessary for production. Their entire agricultural operations are solely dependent on manual labour and plough culture was never known to them even in the remote past³⁰. In view of N.K. Bose,

Among the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh fields have been terraced and ingeniously irrigated by diverting hill streams. But the Apatanis, like the Newars of Nepal, use only the hoe, and not plough or animal for cultivation³¹.

They made comprehensive arrangements for the utilization of land and water, which enabled them to enjoy a comparatively better economic life without substantial sources. Division of labour in rigid term for agricultural purpose is not seen among them. The entire

²⁹ C.V.F. Haimendorf, TATN, p.13.

³⁰ D.K. Duarah, ‘*The Traditional Agricultural System of the Apatanis*’ in M.C. Behera & N.C. Roy’s ed. *Trends in Agrarian Structure in the Hills of North East India*, Commonwealth Publication, New Delhi, 1997, p.72-74.

³¹ N.K. Bose, *Tribal Life in India*, National Book Trust of India, New Delhi; 2007, p.21.

agricultural activities operate through a kinship bonding in which, both men and women whether young or old join hands together in the field. The material, social, and spiritual world works through overlapping cycles of giving and receiving. Because labor is often scarce, both men and women develop networks of labor exchange³². For the purpose of their agricultural activities, Apatanis have an institutionalized gang-labour system called 'Patañ',³³.

The role of women in agriculture, however, is more prominent than their male counterparts. Practically, the womenfolk are the ones who are responsible for looking after the agricultural fields. The menfolk involve themselves in activities like construction and repairing of dams and channels, preparations of nurseries and terrace plots,³⁴ and in threshing and carrying of the grains from the field in the granary. The most innovative aspect of their agricultural activities is the management of water resources with their indigenous irrigation system known as 'bogo'³⁵ among the local people. Regarding this, Haimendorf (1980) states that:

Every one of the larger steams rising on the wooden heights that ring the Apatani country is tapped soon after it emerges

³² Such an institution known as the *anyi* was found among a community of Sullk'ata in Bolivia. Cf. Krista van Vleet, *Partial Theories: On Gossip, Envy and Ethnography in the Andes*, *Ethnography* 2003; 4; 491

³³ The institution of *Patañ* is important not only from economic point of view but from socio-religious point of view. They also involve in many socio-religious function such as marriage.

³⁴ C.V.F. Haimendorf, TATN, p.43.

³⁵ *Bogo* or *Bogo Boran*, refers to the artificial dam built basically for diversion of water into different water canal via which the water reaches the agricultural field.

from the forest and reaches a gully wide enough to accommodate a series of narrow terraces. A short distance above terraces occurs the first diversion from the stream but usually only a little water is here deflected; the stream continues on its course while the feeder channel, branching off at an angle, leads water alongside the series of terraces so that by blocking or opening the connecting dots any field can be flooded or drained as required³⁶.

It is true that some economically resourceful families often employed slaves and agricultural labours for agricultural activities. But this practice was not that extensive as compared to sustainable peasants' society. They carried on agriculture mainly with the help of family labour, sometimes supplemented by hired workers or agricultural gang-labours known as *patañ*.

The major staples of the Apatanis are rice and millet, locally known as *emo* and *sarse*. Rice is a wet crop, which is grown in the well maintained and irrigated rice field. Millet is a dry crop, which is grown on the areas bordering the rice field and in drier plots which is especially prepared for millet. Besides this, a good number of vegetables and leafy vegetables are grown in the kitchen gardens, known as *balu* and *yohrlu*. Prominent among them are *tero* (chilly) and *mukuh* (tobacco). The oral traditions revealed by the village elders and priests confirmed that these crops i.e., rice, millet, chilly and

³⁶C.V.F. Haimendorf, Himalayan Tribe: From Cattle to Cash, Vikas Publication, Ghazibad, 1980, p.27. (Henceforth as HTFCG).

tobacco are the earliest crops grown by the Apatanis.³⁷ These crops are significant from a religious point of view. These crops are significant from a religious point of view and many of these crops are also used for religious ceremonies³⁸.

3.2.2. Phases of Agricultural Activities:

The Apatanis are very hardworking community which is clearly demonstrated in their intensive land use for agriculture. Dependent primarily on agriculture for their sustenance, they do not refrain from work in all seasons as their agricultural activities continue throughout the year. They are blessed with extensive plot of lands ideally situated, where permanent and sedentary method of cultivation is pre-eminently possible³⁹. There is a constant attempt to keep their agricultural field in an orderly fashion and trying to sustain it in such a state. This is evident from the physical state of their agricultural fields where not a single blade of grass is found, except for their cultivated crops. The Apatanis are not content merely to maintain an established system of terraces and channels but also seek to carry out improvements⁴⁰. This is done whenever the produce of a field does not meet their expectation. Regarding methods of tillage Haimendorf (1980) writes:

Ever since the Apatanis established themselves in their present habitat, rice cultivation on irrigated fields has been the main

³⁷ Field data collected from Tajang village on 25th August, 2007.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ J.N. Chowdhury, *Arunachal Panorama*, Himalayan Publishers, New Delhi, 2006, p.223.

⁴⁰ C.V.F. Haimendorf, TATN, op. cit., p.25.

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⁴⁰ C.V.F. Haimendorf, TATN, op. cit., p.25.

base of their economy.....Yet, the methods of tillage were – and still are archaic, and indeed of a type usually associated with a Neolithic economy rather than with a peasant civilization of the Iron-age, in so far as they depended entirely on human labour and made no use of animal traction⁴¹.

This contention of Haimendorf needs to be re-examined as technologies in agriculture are related to their respective environment niches and cannot be equated vis-à-vis western categories. It can be instead regarded as a sustainable agricultural technique. They used both flat wooden batons, and iron and stone hoes⁴² for remodeling and repairing of dikes and fields. Village elders and priests are still in possession of these antiquated wooden hoes is used by their ancestors. Some of these tools and implements used by the Apatanis have been shown in fig. 3.2.

Fig. 3.2

Traditional Agricultural Tools and Implements of the Apatanis

Sl. No.	Name of tools and implements	Uses
1	Deepe	Spade used for ploughing the agricultural field
2	Yatii	A traditional rain shield used while working in agricultural field
3	Sampya	A wooden tray used for carrying soil in the paddy field
4	Kele	A pointed split bamboo stick used in weeding which supplements the hoe in the process

⁴¹ C.V.F. Haimendorf. HTFCC, op. cit., p.27.

⁴² Use of iron technology is only a modern phenomenon and in earlier days they are said to have used the wooden and stone hoes.

5	Huta	A long wooden bat used for preparing in paddy field and for draining excess water.
6	Palii	Made up of single piece of split bamboo with on edge sharpened for weeding.
7.	Tagi	Sickle for cutting rice grain or ginger millet locally known as <i>sarse</i> .
8	Damu	Wooden stick with a pointed and to make hole for putting grain / seed in the dry field.
9	Kedu	Wooden stick with a pointed and to make hole for putting grain / seed in the wet rice field.

Sources: Field observation.

Despite of their agriculture being permanent in nature, they do not use pesticide or fertilizer in their agricultural field.

The agricultural operations commence in the *Nenke Pillo* (December). During this period the fields are weeded-out and the stumps of the previous paddy crop is extracted. In addition organic manure from decomposed-pits containing plant remains are spread in the fields. In the month of *Muruñ* and *Parge Pillo* (January and February) the dams, channels, water conduits, etc. are repaired. These jobs are mostly done by the men⁴³. From the beginning of *Myoko Pillo* (March), the agricultural field are weeded and the nurseries are prepared for transplanting the seedlings of paddy. From the second week of the *Myoko Pillo*, the seeds are sown in the nurseries close to the village, which are kept under water throughout the year and regularly manured.

⁴³ Based on field observations conducted by me during January and February, 2007.

In the last week of *Myoko Pillo* till the commencement of *pagar pillo* (April) the agricultural fields and gardens are freed of weeds and prepared for transplantation⁴⁴ of the seedlings from the nurseries. Transplantation begins in the middle of *Hailiñ Pillo*. Women and young girls pick the rice seedling from the nurseries, tie them into bundles and carry them in baskets to the fields for sowing. Starting from the edge of the field they move forward as they work, planting single seedlings at intervals of about eight inches⁴⁵. From the end of *Hahlo Pillo* (August), the harvesting begins which continues till the last week of *Emo Pillo* (November). Thus, the community remains engaged in agriculture pursuits throughout the year.

3.3. Agricultural Rituals:

The Apatanis have been practicing this method of agriculture sedentary wet rice cultivations ever since their settlement in their present habitat. Ritual practices and the cosmological ideas which undergird society cannot be separated out as an institutionalized religion from the daily round of subsistence practices. From sowing seedlings till harvesting, they perform certain rituals and rites which are linked with agriculture both at an individual and village level. Certain rituals and ceremonies of these have assumed the nature of major festivals which binds together the entire community.

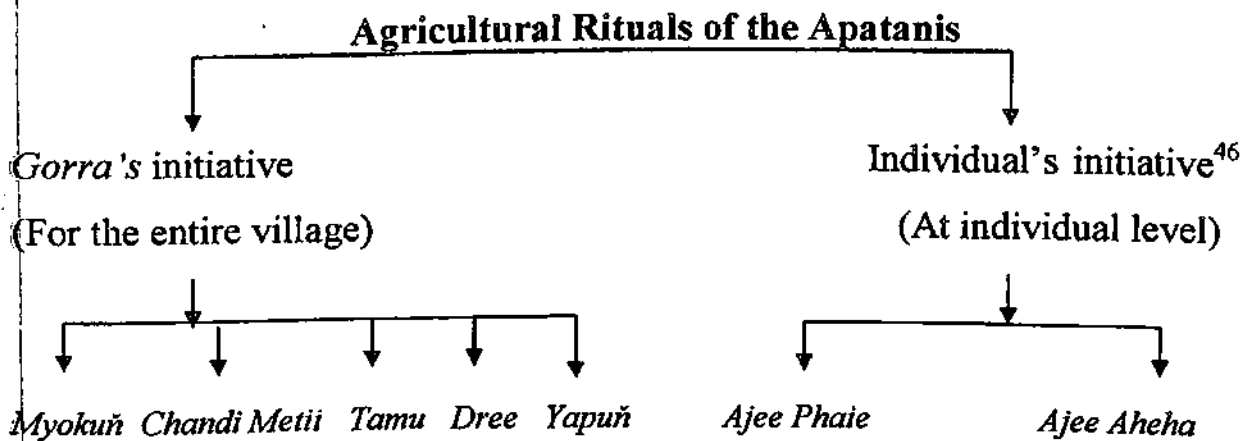
⁴⁴ See note 43.

⁴⁵ Takhe Kani, (TAAAP), *op. cit.*, p.173.

To have an insight into the Apatanis socio-cultural history, it is pertinent to study the major rituals connected to agriculture. The major concerns are to maintain the fertility of the soil and ensure a bountiful harvest, for which a series of rites and rituals are initiated. The study of these rituals is also important from the standpoint of their views on the supernatural world and collective efforts to adjust with the same. In the consciousness of the indigenous people human, animal, plant, and mineral bodies are attributed 'personhood', thus expressing the interrelatedness of all life.

These agricultural rituals can be categorized into two, viz. (i) the individual and (ii) village rituals. Details of these agricultural rituals are shown in fig. 3.3

Fig. 3.3



⁴⁶ The agricultural rituals at individual initiative are of two types, viz., *aji aheha* and *aji phaie*. The former is performed in two different occasions, viz., during *subu-muruñ* rites and during the *myoko* festival. The latter on the other hand, is performed during the *dree* festival. Objective of these rituals is to solemnize and propitiate the mother goddesses to retain the fertility of soil and for bountiful harvest.

An individual performs specific rites within the spaces of the agricultural plots which assume sacred status. The 'gorra' organizes rituals for the collective good of the village. The agricultural rituals which are performed at individual initiative are outside purview of the research area.

The thrust area of the research is to exclusively study those rituals organized by the 'gorra' for the entire village. This would help us to have an insight in the role of the 'gorra' in the economic and religious sphere of Apatani life. The association of the 'gorra' with agriculture rituals is as old as the practice of sedentary agriculture amongst Apatanis. Before discussing these agricultural rituals, it is essential for us to trace the origin of these agricultural rituals. This will not only provide an insight into their past religious practices but also reflect upon the origin of *gorra* and their role in these agriculture rituals.

3.3.1. Origin of Agricultural Rituals:

There is a legend pre-dating their existence in their present habitat and oral tradition on the origin of these agricultural rituals among the Apatanis. Through these cosmological stories the traditional environmental knowledge becomes a recurring force. Regarding the origin of these rituals, the priests and village elders of the Apatanis state that once upon a time, both the god known as *Pyoni* and human being known as *Tani* (ancestor of the Apatanis) lived together. But they finally decided to divide the lands between them so that each of them could lead separate lives. *Tani* proceeded

towards the place called “*chantu-kochuñ*” and took possession of “*empu myobañ*” and “*elañ myoko*”, and declared that henceforth these lands were his domain. But these lands proved to be barren and hence unfit for the cultivation. Hence, *Tani* did not possess cultivable land under his control⁴⁷.

Thereafter, *Tani* proceeded towards his new place of settlement called ‘*don*’. After having settled at *don*, *Tani* again took possession of the land called ‘*Puntii-Pu Hassañ*’ and declared that land belonged to him. Here he prepared for cultivation with the help of a spade called ‘*tihruñ deepe*’ and sword called ‘*tiigo ilyo*’ clearing all the forests in newly acquired place. The cleared forests were burnt down and the lands were finally prepared for sowing⁴⁸. This alludes to their earlier knowledge of dry hill cultivation. But there were no seeds available for sowing. Thereafter, *Tani* approached the deity called ‘*dojii*’, who gave him seeds of *nacho tanyie* (maize); *ucho takoo* (cucumber) and *sarcho sarse* (millet).

Yet the original paddy seeds for wet-rice cultivation were not yet available. In order to get this, *Tani* captured goddess called ‘*ayo Yaruñ*’ who gave him ‘*empu*’ and ‘*elañ*’ (paddy seeds) as ransom. Finally, all these seeds were sown in the land ‘*puntii-pu hasañ*’. After sometime the crops *mitti-hiise* (rice plants), *yorli hiisi* (chilly) and *kuki hisi* (tobacco) began to cry. When it was inquired as to why they

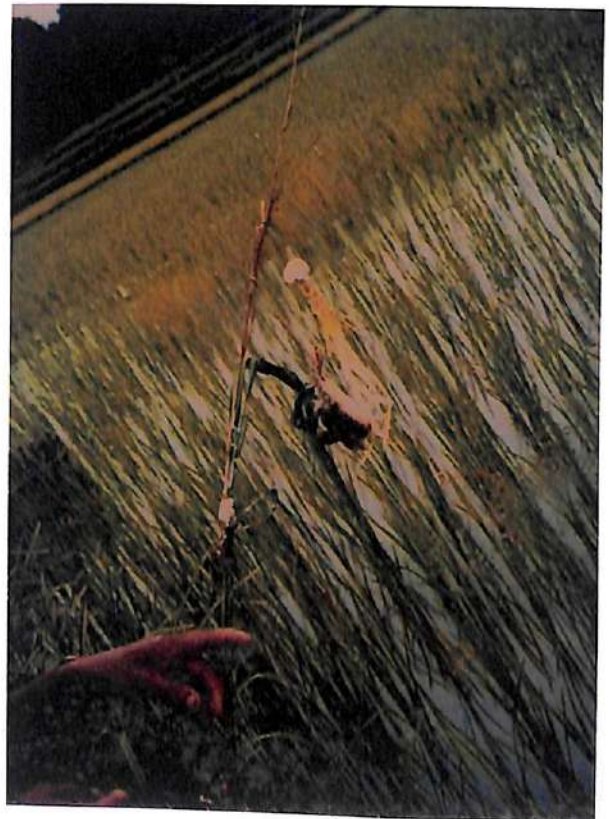
⁴⁷ Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 19 to 23rd March, 2008.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*



Ajee agyang, erected during the *Dree* ritual to observe the *ajee phaie* ritual to appease the goddess of agriculture for fuller harvest.

Ajee phaie ritual is initiated at individual level and *gorras* have no any role in this.



were crying, it was discovered that *mitii-sartii's lachuñ* (marrow of paddy and millet plants) has been sucked out by *tiyo* (insects) and *yorli-kuki's libañ* (knee of chilly and tobacco crops) have been eaten up by *tachañ*(pests). The crops are said to have declared that they could not bear the ailments and hence could not survive. They pleaded with the people to kill the insects and pests, so that they could survive and flourish⁴⁹.

At this juncture, a priest known as *Don kharee*⁵⁰ decided to call upon a god known as *supuñ-yachu* to prevent the insects and pests from eating up the crops. For this purpose, the *gorras* collected donation from each household. Here the *gorras* are alluded to in the *don* age. A divination was performed by chanting and by examining the omen through eggs and chicken liver. Following the divination finally the agricultural rituals called '*chandi-metii*' was performed by invoking the god *supuñ-yachu*⁵¹.

After three nights, new leaves appeared on the plants and they started growing. After a gap of about month, the plants expressed their desire they should be either married off in the form of transplantation to their respective fields. They also expressed their desire of wearing *biañ* (a sort of thread used to tie the skirt among the Apatanis). When

⁴⁹ See note 47.

⁵⁰ *Don Kharee* is said to be most prominent priest of *don* age. He along with the *gorras* performed first ever agricultural ritual.

⁵¹ See note 47.

it was inquired as to what sort of *biañ* they desired, they insisted on the *mima* (a long slender plant after used for tying bundles of paddy and millet seedling or *zebriuns*) from *siko-lyiyo*⁵².

Mima was brought, millet and paddy seedling too were tied-up in bundles, and taken from the nurseries for transplantation. This entire process is symbolic of the marriage of plants. The millet and paddy seedling were planted in *aje* (agricultural field), *aje aager* (edge of agricultural field) and *lyipyo* (dry lands)⁵³.

After a while the crops millet, rice, chilly and tobacco drew attention to their ailment as they have acquired a pale palour. Once again they were afflicted disease and pestilence caused by insects and pests, and urged for e immediate intervention. *Gorras* performed the ritual called '*tamu*', in order to kill the insects and pests. Following this ritual, the crops began to grow and in course of time, they became pregnant. To protect these crops from goddess of hunger known as '*pyodi yarrih*' the '*dree*' ritual was performed by the *gorras*. When these crops finally matured awaiting harvest, people encountered natural calamities like heavy rain and thunderbolt. Therefore, they performed the ritual called '*yapuñ*' to appease the gods and goddess of sky, so that the crops are not destroyed⁵⁴. Details of these agricultural rituals are shown in fig. 3.4.

⁵² Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 24 to 25th March, 2008.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See note 47.

Even today these agricultural rituals are organized by *gorras* of the village for the entire village. This involves sacrifice of animals like pig, dog, hen, egg and fowls. These rituals are seasonal rituals, which are performed annually. For an in-depth understanding, I shall discuss each of these rituals separately.

3.4. Agricultural Rituals: Genesis and Performance:

3.4.1. *Myokuñ*:

The literary meaning of *myokuñ* is gathering. It is the first agricultural ritual of the year, which is observed in the month of March, known as *Myoko Pillo* among the Apatanis. As the term '*myokuñ*' denotes gathering, during this ritual all the gods and goddess are invoked together and sacrifices are offered to them. This actually symbolizes the feast for gods and goddesses⁵⁵. This ritual is also commonly known as – "*kiido urgula* or *kiidi miini*"⁵⁶, which signifies warming of soil to enable it to retain its fertility. This ritual is performed after the seeds are sown in the nursery beds. Prior to the observance of this ritual the *gorras* make elaborate preparations for the event. They collect donation from each household in the village, which is called *myokuñ-mihen*, meaning donation for the *myokuñ* ritual. From this donation they prepare '*O*'⁵⁷ (sacrificial

⁵⁵ Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 28th and 29th March, 2008.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ '*O*' is a rice beer, which is made from rice and millet. It is of two types known as *alha* and *poreh*. *Alha* is a sacrificial drink, purely made from rice, while *poreh* is a ceremonial drink used in festivals and other occasion. It is made of a combination of rice and millet.

drink) and also purchase the animals to be sacrificed at the ritual altar. For a fuller understand of this ritual, a case study is being presented here based on the data collected through field research by me from *Tajang* village.

Fig. 3.4

List of the Agricultural Rituals of the Apatanis

Name of ritual	Nature	Season
Myokuñ	To appease gods and goddess of earth to refrain the fertility of soil.	Myoko Pillo or March
Chandi-Metii	It is performed when the crops turn unhealthy in the nursery before the transplantation to respective fields.	Enda Pillo or April
Tamu	It is observed when a crop does not grow healthy in the field or in the gardens.	Hailiñ Pillo or May
Dree	It is observed to prevent the pests and insects from eating roots and tissues of plants in the field or to appease the goddess of hunger.	Dree Pillo or July
Yapuñ	To appease the gods and goddess of sky from damaging matured crops or to prevent hailstorm and other natural calamities.	Bunchi Pillo or September

Source: Based on the field data and observation.

In *Tajang* village, altar for this ritual is located place called 'Rantii'. They (people of *Tajang* village) sacrifice two pigs, one each for *nami* and *nako* (sectoral division of the village) and four eggs. When I inquired about specifics of this sacrifice, the *gorras* and priest, replied that the two pigs are for appeasing general gods and goddesses. The four eggs are sacrificed for the god of forests signifying north-south and east-west⁵⁸. The priest and his assistants chant the hymns for long three hours. In course of these chantings, the priest recurringly pours the 'O' (sacrificial drink) and *yatañ* (sacrificial powder made of local rice) on the pigs. The priests chant goes thus:

*diiti-lotii aya lyitoh pee, punchi punti, myochi-myoko jmti aya kineh lyitoh pee*⁵⁹.

It is an appeal to the gods and goddess of forests that land should not retain barren and also to continue sustaining the rivers, the mountains and the fertility of gardens and affiliated land at a distance. The *gorra* in the role of a ritual specialist is engaged in an act of interpretation and representation.

Taboos accompany these rituals which are observed for *ehinhe*, three nights. During these three days, the people abstain from working on the fields and going to the forests. It is the duty of the *gorras* to ensure that one should not violate the taboos of this ritual. Therefore, they keep a strict vigil on the movement of the villagers to ensure that

⁵⁸ Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 20th March, 2008.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

they do not violate the taboos. If anyone violates these taboos they impose a fine. The ritual is performed again as the *gorras* considered the ritual to be ineffective on account of the violation of its taboos.

3.4.2. *Chandi-Metii*:

The *chandi-metii* is the second agricultural ritual that the *gorras* organize in an agricultural cycle. It is observed in *Enda pillo* (May). Here the *chandi-metii* means the twin god of agriculture. This ritual is organized when the seedlings turn unhealthy in their nurseries, prior to transplantation to the fields. The priest chants: “*Kiidi baru, muddo ronya mi Kapa mapa*”⁶⁰.

It is an appeal to the spirits that the soil and the weather should refrain from causing harm to the seedlings. Gist of the chanting is as follows:

*Noh chandi-metii, tasu hiimi do hiido kilye, tase haro do hiido kilye. Tasu-tamii hi sarse-ahendi me nehrudo hiido kilye, tachañ-tiyo hi nehmedo hiido kilye. Noh chandi-dosi, metii dorgu tachañ-tiyo mi dinyihe-mimyihe lyitoo. Muhku-tera ka libañ mi tiyophodo hiido kilye. Noh siimi kinyihe lyito pee*⁶¹.

The chanting invokes the *Chandi-metti* informing them that insects and pests are once again becoming active and are destroying the crops. They are destroying millet, paddy seeds, tobacco and chilly

⁶⁰ Field data collected from Dutta village on 21 to 26th May 2007.

⁶¹ Ibid.



Ranuh-akhii, a comb shaped sacred metallic piece tied in traditional hat. Priest wear this hat during the dree ritual.

Priest pouring 'O' (local beer of ceremonial drinks) at pig before sacrificing during *myokuñ*.



by eating into the bone marrow and knee of these crops. In the invocation the spirits are entreated thus: "you protector of agriculture *chandi-dosi* and *metii-dorgu* kill all these insects to enable the crops to grow healthy".

Taboos or *anyodu* of this ritual are for three nights, *ehinhe*. During this period people are prevented from visiting fields, forests and asked to refrain from washing clothes in the rivers⁶². The spirits which are active during this period should not be disturbed. These restraints symbolizes that the people have great regard for surrounding environment and intend to maintain a peaceful relation with the later.

3.4.3. *Tamu*:

Chandi-metti ritual is followed by *tamu* ritual, which is bserved in the *Empi-pillo* (June). Here, *tamu* is a male benevolent god. This ritual can be observed at individual initiative in their respective houses, seeking protection from the evil spirit or enemies. But the *gorras* perform this ritual when the crops are not healthy in the field. This ritual is performed after transplanting seedlings to the fields and gardens. In this ritual, sacrifices are offered to god *tamu* and he is asked to kill insects, which are destroying the crops in the fields⁶³.

⁶² See note 60.

⁶³ See note 58.



Myokuñ alter of the Tajang village at *tapo-sukuñ*.

Millo Hinda, a *gorra* and priest of the *Tajang* village chanting the hymns during the *chandi-metii* ritual.



Chanting hymns for this ritual also lasts for more than three hours. Here the priest is assisted by one assistant, while chanting the hymns. The assistant repeats the chantings of the priest, which is traditionally known as *uhi-barinii*. The taboos of this ritual are *engohe*, or for five nights⁶⁴. During this period people abstain from working in their field and visiting the forests.

3.4.4. *Dree*:

It had been already noted that agriculture is the primary occupation of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Hence, their festivals are mostly related to the agricultural cycle. Among the Apatanis, '*Dree*' is the major agricultural festival, which is celebrated between 4th and 6th July, in *Diiri pillo*. It is imperative to mention here that *Dree* is actually an agricultural ritual and each village of the Apatanis observes this ritual separately. This is prior to the collective celebration of this festival of *Dree* ground at *Hija* village in 1974. *Dree* as an agricultural ritual is exclusively organized by *gorras* of their respective villages.

Even today the *gorras* collect donations for carrying out ritual for which, every household has to contribute a *kiiche* (mug) or rice or millet to the *gorra* for preparation of rice beer known as '*O*' few days before performing of the ritual⁶⁵. This donation is known as *Dree*

⁶⁴ Field data collected from *Hija* and *Dutta* village on 21 to 26th May, 2007.

⁶⁵ Souvenir '*Taiii Dituñ*', major festivals of Apatanis, Central *Dree* Festival Committee, Itanagar, 2006, p.31.



Tage Hassang, the *gorra* of the *Tajang* village. He has been serving in this job for last thirty-two years.

Tamu alter of the *Tajang* village at Tage lempia lapañ.



Mihiñ. In the newly established modern villages of the Apatanis, such contributions are being made in form of cash⁶⁶.

Here the word *Dree* is derived from the local word, '*Diiri*' which means purchasing or borrowing of the food items in times of scarcity or to add to the existing stock in anticipation of shortage.⁶⁷ To quote Takhe Kani (1996), "the literary meaning of *Dree* is one who borrows or purchase food grains from others in order to meet out the shortage of addition to one's old and new stock of food grains"⁶⁸. Thus, the etymology does not carry any direct ritualistic meaning pertaining to the name of the festival.

There is an elaborate legend on the origin of *Dree* among the Apatanis. According to one popular belief prevailing in *Tajang* village, *Dree* ritual is performed in order to prevent the '*pyodi-yariih*' (goddess of hunger) from eating up crops. In case of not pre-empting such a scenario, appeals and made to the goddess of hunger to ensure that there will be shortage of food grains and people will remain in hunger and starvation⁶⁹.

Another legend says that in a particular mythical age crops had failed miserably for two consecutive years because of harmful pests and insects resulting in a famine. *Aba Libo* and *Anii Donii* advised

⁶⁶ Souvenir '*Taiii Dituñ*', op.cit p.31.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Takhe Kani, *Socio-Religious Ceremonies of the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh*, Purbadesh Mudrak Publication, Guwahati, 1996; p.190. (Henceforth as SRCAAP).

⁶⁹ I owe this information from Misso Rambo, a renowned priest of *Tajang* village

Abotani to perform *Dree* ritual in order to ward off harmful pests and insects. The prominent priests *Changu Mitu* and *Dogu Misu* were believed to have been selected by *Abotani* for this ritual. They in turn propitiated *Diiri Paro* and *Yarii Aki* pleading them to eat up all the harmful pests and insects. *Diirii paro* and *Yarii Aki*, however, could not do so as some pests and insects remained underground. For this reason, the priests requested sky god (*yapuñ uhi*) for rain so that the pests which go underground would come out to be destroyed. Yet some pests survived underground. Finally, *tamu* god came to the rescue of *Abotani* by killing all the remaining pests and insects. The result was healthy growth of paddy and other plants. Thereafter, *Dree* is performed by the Apatanis every year⁷⁰.

Taboo for this ritual is also *engohe* or five nights. During this period the entire community abstains from only manual labour both in their gardens or fields. Sacrifice of animals is an essential part of this ritual, which however differs from village to village. Besides, the *gorra* use one long blade of grass locally known as *khempu pelo* or *peji-pelo*⁷¹. The priest and *gorras* place this sacred plant at the entrance of the village so that goddess of hunger does not enter in the village⁷².

⁷⁰ Souvenir, *Tanii Dituñ*, major festivals of the Apatani, op.cit., pp.31-32.

⁷¹ *Khempu-pelo* or *peji-pelo* refers to a sacred plant harbinger of the Apatani ritual altar. It was first said to have introduced by *Ato Pussang* during *emo* ritual.

⁷² Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 4th July, 2008.



Dree ritual alter of the Tajang village at *Boko-Siigo*.

Peji-pelo, a sacred plant harbinger used at goddesses hunger called *pyodi-yariih* from entering into village. The *gorras* placed this plant at entrance of the of the village so that goddesses of hunger could not enter the village.



3.4.5. *Yapuñ*:

Yapuñ is the last of the agricultural ritual of the year. Chronologically, the *yapuñ* was the first agricultural ritual of the Apatanis and the institution of *gorra* had been constituted for first time to organize this ritual. I have discussed in detail about the origin of this ritual, while dealing with the origin of the institution of *gorra* in Chapter II. Yet an attempt is being made here to discuss the *yapuñ* in the context of the role of sacrifice within this ritual.

The literary meaning of the *yapuñ* is sky. The ritual, therefore, directed to appease the god of sky. The earliest instance of performance of this ritual was during Apatani settlement at *iipyo-lembyang*, conjectured as somewhere in Mongolia when *iipyo-pamiñ-myolyañ* was destroyed by thunderbolt and hailstorm. Since then, this is an annual ritual of the Apatanis. Today this ritual is observed at the end of *Bunchi Pillo*⁷³ (end of September). By this period, the crops are fully matured in the field. However, there remains a possibility of damage of the matured crops by thunderbolt and hailstorms. This is a period coincides with the retreating monsoon in the Himalayan belt. In case of such an eventuality the community would have to bear loss in terms of agricultural production for that year. Therefore, the *gorras* perform this ritual for the entire village, appealing to the god of sky to prevent thunderbolt and hailstorms from damaging the matured crops. Regarding this ritual, A.K. Singh writes:

⁷³ Based on field research and data collected from *Mudang Tage* and *Bamin Michi* on 15 to 20th September, 2008.

The whole of agricultural calendar revolve round the forest free (sic) days available to them. After October when forest becomes reverse (sic) no agriculture is done in Apatanis' land. Besides, the storm, hailstorms and lightning also damage the paddy crops. The Apatanis are helpless in this regard and they try to cope with this situation by offering *puja* (sic) known as *yapuñ*⁷⁴.

The *yapuñ* ritual is most dreaded of all agricultural rituals of the Apatanis. Therefore, one *gorras* strictly ensures that the taboos of this ritual are not violated for seven nights, *ekkanuhe*. In case of violation of taboos, the *gorras* impose a fine on the violator and the ritual is repeated⁷⁵. However, there is no fixed date for performing this ritual. The *gorras* of each village observe this ritual either of beginning or end of the September month, according to their convenience. Likewise, the sacrifices of animals in this ritual differ from village to village. In some villages like *Tajang*, *Dutta* and *Hija* eggs and hens were sacrificed, while in Hong village dog is sacrificed during this ritual⁷⁶. These sacrifices were made to god of sky on *gorra's* initiative, but it can be understood as a collective offering from villagers appealing to the gods of sky for peaceful co-existence.

⁷⁴ A.K. Singh, 'Traditional Agricultural System of the Apatanis', in M.C. Behera & N.C. Roy's ed. *Agrarian Structure in the Hills of North East India*, op.cit., p.273.

⁷⁵ Data based on field observation in *Tajang*, *Dutta*, *Hija* and *Hong* village during ritual performance.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

3.5. Geographical Setting and Ritual Linkages:

The Apatanis are noted for their advancement in wet rice cultivation with indigenously evolved techniques. But their traditional agricultural system is riddled with many environment risks and uncertainties⁷⁷. Though not adequately supported by the available data, it is clearly borne out by their belief systems and practices. There is predominant reference to many gods and goddesses who control the environment and natural calamities.

Geographically, the intensively utilized land for agriculture including groves in the vicinity of the village is about thirty-eight square kilometers⁷⁸. The uninhabited forest, which are considered ancestral community property, stretches to hundred of square kilometres running upto the forest of their neighbouring tribes, the Nyishis. It means that cultivable lands in proportion to the total land are substantially little. Out of the 38 sq.miles, one third of the area is covered with bamboo groves while the rest is divided among seven villages. The geographical constraints has made it imperative on the Apatanis to treasure their land resource, and ensure that the natural calamities like drought, flood, hails do not impact. There remains a constant dread of agricultural resources being affected by the vagaries of nature.

⁷⁷ A.K. Singh, *op.cit.*, p.272.

⁷⁸ Takhe Kani, TAAAP, *op. cit.*, p.2.



Gorras are performing *Chandi-Metii* ritual at *Boliñ-Siigo*.

Dree ritual altar at *Boko-Siigo*.



Among the climatological uncertainties, the Apatanis are very much concerned about the heavy rains which lash the Apatanis land from June to October⁷⁹. Heavy rainfalls frequently results in flooding and damage of the crops. Apart from this, due to heavy rainfall the main rivulets and their sub- channels discharge silt in large quantity along with the water. In fig. 3.5, the actual rainfall of Ziro valley has been shown.

Fig. 3.5
Annual Rainfall of Ziro Valley

Months	Rainfall in cm
January	25.00
February	24.00
March	70.00
April	106.00
May	99.00
June	183.20
July	125.30
August	105.30
September	80.70
October	133.00
November	11.40
December	4.20
Total	968.69 cm

Source: Report of Soil Conservation Department, Ziro, 2007.

⁷⁹ A.K. Singh, op.cit., p.272.

The annual rainfall measures 968.69 cm with an average annual rainfall of 80.72 cm, which is very high. Because of this heavy rainfall, the silt gets accumulated in the agricultural field. This reduces the fertility of the land and thus hampers the production of paddy. All these constraints have made the Apatanis pay a great deal of attention towards natural phenomenon. This may be a primary reason for their worshipping sky god and observation of *yapuñ* ritual, in which they conceptualize rectification of other than human persons and exemplify a world view in which natural-supernatural dichotomy has no place. The objects of nature are given a mythical personage and even human attributes are assigned to them.

Besides, the Apatanis also recognize that there are some insects which do extensive damage to the crops. They are stem borer, rice-bug and pests. However, they refrain from using pesticides to kill these insects⁸⁰. Rather they carry out various agricultural rituals for the betterment of the crops appealing to the various related gods and goddesses to kill these insects and pests.

3.6. Conclusion:

The physical geography, surrounding environment and resources greatly influence the cultural component, social organization, economic pattern and religious belief of the Apatanis. The environmental risks, climatological uncertainties together with their belief system force them to observe a series of agricultural ritual

⁸⁰ Field data collected from *Hija* village on 5 to 10th August, 2007.

in a year. They also establish relationships with the other geographical formations through libations and other offerings in a cosmology in which places are 'experienced as animate, powerful, and imbued with consciousness – a parallel society of Earth persons with whom one is in constant interaction'⁸¹.

All these agricultural rituals are seasonal, they are organized by *gorras*. In order to meet the expenditure of all these rituals, the *gorras* collected a cup and husked rice or millet or eggs from each household of the village. They call this donation as *mihñ*. Out of this collected donation the *gorras* purchase the requirements a particular ritual and carry out the ritual.

The *gorras* erect a temporary alters depicting the gods and goddesses in the specified place with wood and bamboo. The priest, who are also members of *gorra* invoke the gods and goddesses, and sacrifices are made to them. The blood of the sacrificial animals and hens, feathers of hens, eggshell are sprinkled and hung over alter. The local beer call 'O' is poured over the alter and rice powder is also pasted into alter.

The Apatanis firmly believe that without these agricultural rituals, the bumper harvest and economic prosperity of the community cannot be expected⁸². Their existence is more or less determined by

⁸¹ Allen, Catherine, The Hold Life Has: Coca and Cultural Identity in an Andean Community, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1988, p.24

⁸² See note 80.

these rituals and that is why they maintain this tradition despite many changes occurring in their cultural practices. So here lies the importance of institutions of *gorra*, which is solely responsible for organizing these rituals and the continuance of this age old tradition even in the contemporary modernized scenario.

The *gorras* by regulating the rituals connected to the primary occupation control the collective 'sacred space' in society which is 'unanimous, socially undesirable and un-negotiable. The *gorras* are a unifying force and strengthen social bonds which is visible in the experience of 'collective effervescence'.

The *gorra* through the performative aspect of the rituals approach the 'other than human persons' in a personal, friendly and immediate way. The primary agricultural rituals which are central ceremonial affairs of the Apatanis, through its celebration help the community to sustain its identity.

CHAPTER – IV

GORRAS IN NON-AGRICULTURAL RITUALS

4.1. Introduction:

Religion is a means by which the fundamental values system or idea system of the society can be given cultural form to which symbolic value can attach (sic), at the same time that the event system, which lies behind important economic, political and families activities, can be made more precise and secure¹. The word, religion has been derived from the root word 'religio', which means 'to bind together'².

One of the earliest definitions of religion was by E.B. Tylor in his most recognised book *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871. While categorizing the religion in simple, pre-literate societies as 'primitive' he defined religion as 'a belief in supernatural beings.' According to him, animism was the early form of religion based on the belief that detached and detachable vital forces make up a suprahuman realm of reality which is just as real as the physical world of rocks, trees, and plants. Tylor saw primitive religion as characterized preeminently by a belief in magic and unseen forces or powers.

¹ Paul Bohannan, *Social Anthropology*, Surjeet Publication, London, 2003, p.338.

² Makhan Jha, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Vikas Publication, Noida, 2009, p.149.

According to him as souls were numerous, it gave rise to polytheism (belief in many spirits), but at a latter stage, it was believed that all spirits are manifestation of the same. As a result of which, the monotheism came into existence. Thus, according to him, religion has passed through three successive stages of development namely, animism, polytheism and monotheism³. Sir James Frazer⁴ in his *The Golden Bough*, too looked at religion among the primitives through the prism of its magical practices. Viewing such practices through the rationality debate he *considers* magical practices of the 'primitives' as rational and representative of being a primitive science. In this way he attempts to understand religion through the lenses of his own cultural constructs.

An opposing interpretation of primitive religion comes from an experiential and psychological approach to the data. R H Codrington's study *The Melanesians* argues that primitive religion is rooted in the experience by primitive peoples of the dynamic power of nature. The most prominent interpreter of this point of view was the English anthropologist Robert R Marett. Variations of this theory may be seen in the works of Lucien Levy - Bruhl, who distinguished between a logical and prelogical mentality in analyzing the kind of thinking that takes place through this mode of experience, and the writings of

³ V.S. Upadhyay & Gaya Pandey, History of Anthropological Thought, Concept Publication, New Delhi, 1997, p. 71.

⁴ Jason A. Springs, What Cultural Theorists of Religion Have to Learn from Wittgenstein; Or, How to Read Geertz as a Practice Theorist, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, December 2008, Vol. 76, No. 4, p. 963.

Rudolf Otto, who described the specific religious meaning of this mode of human consciousness⁵.

Another rationalist approach to primitive religion is exemplified by Emile Durkheim, published in 1912 his monumental work on religion in "*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. He saw religion as the deification of society and its structures. The symbols of religion arise as "collective representations" of the social sphere, and rituals function to unite the individual with society. Indeed, religion is important or essential part of the social machinery as are morality and law, part of the complex system by which human beings are enabled to live together in an orderly arrangement of social relation⁶.

Claude Levi-Strauss moved beyond Durkheim in an attempt to articulate the way in which the structures of society are exemplified in myths and symbols. Starting from the structural ideas of contemporary linguistics, he argued that there is one universal form of human logic and that the difference between the thinking of primitive and modern people cannot be based on different modes of thought or logic but rather on differences in the data on which logic operates⁷.

⁵ Charles Long, *Primitive Religion*, is at <http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/txo/primitiv.htm>

⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, George Allen Ltd., London, Seventh Impression, 1971, p.48.

⁷ Charles Long, *op.cit.*

Clifford Geertz though essentially anti-definition, also provides a thoughtful overview of what religion is in that it has a 'formative impact upon common sense, the way in which, by questioning the unquestionable, it shapes our apprehension of the quotidian world of "what there is"⁸.

Etymologically, religion can be interpreted in two ways, on the objective side, it involves a recurring performance of certain activities, but on the subjective side, it indicates the hidden experience of psychic life⁹. In this sense, religion provides the essential cosmology of a people and the ways in which they conceptualize the world and their place within it¹⁰. However, epistemologically the religion can be described as a system of beliefs and practices adhered to and followed by different types of societies¹¹. It shows variety in terms of beliefs, rituals, spiritualism and symbolic imagery.

Religion as an institution is neither a static nor a unitary phenomenon and the widespread institution as it characterized by a number of 'dimensions' and 'attributes'¹². These dimensions and attributes includes the ritual practices; ethical code; a body of doctrines, beliefs, scriptures, or oral traditions; patterns of social

⁸ Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge, Fontana Press, New York

⁹ Premalata Devi, Social and Religious Institution of Bodos, Geophil Publication, Guwahati, 2004, p. 134ff.

¹⁰ S.M. Chauna, International Encyclopedia of Tribal Religion, (Vol. V) Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 2000, pp. IV-Vff.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Brain Morris, Religion and Anthropology, A Critical Introduction, Cambridge University Press, London, 1969, p.2.

relations focused around a ritual congregation, church, or moral community; a hierarchy of ritual specialists; a tendency to create a dichotomy between the sacred and profane; and finally, an ethos that gives scope for emotional or mystical experience¹³.

On the basis of these dimensions and attributes, the religion that exists in human societies can be categorized into three forms. They are the ethical religion, which ascribes sacredness to moral principles rather than to a deity such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, etc.; the theistic religion, which is known as believers' worship of one or several gods, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and others; and animistic religion, in which followers believe that spirit can help or harm people but can be manipulated to serve human needs¹⁴.

4.2. Tribal Religion and Its Nature:

No doubt the religion is a universal phenomenon, but the debate over the term 'religion' in the history, anthropology and sociology remains unresolved generally because of non-universality of its form. In fact there is no dearth of literature, which deals with the origin, and the functional implications of such a pervasive system in terms of social cohesiveness, cognitive values and persistence social inequalities. 'Primitive' religion is a term used to define the religious beliefs and practices of those traditional, often isolated, preliterate

¹³ Brain Morris, *op.cit.*, p.2.

¹⁴ N.K. Das, *An Outline of Syncretism in Culture, Religion and Philosophy*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2003, pp. 11-15ff.

cultures. Theories of primitive religion as visible from the earlier discussion moved between the binaries of rational and intellectual to psychological and irrational. The term indigenous religion is currently used in American academia as they grapple to understand the belief systems of 'native' communities. The new construct is an attempt to counter the hegemonistic Western tendency of considering theology as the crux of religion¹⁵.

The early definitions of primitive religion sought to explain the negotiations of the human and non-human world through the lense of Christian theology in terms of, 'sacred' and 'profane'. By 'sacred' Durkheim meant a quality of "superior dignity and power" added to ordinary things, such as people, places, time, etc, that calls for respect. It means the sacred things are those which are 'wholly collective', unanimous, socially undeniable and un-negotiable, which is concern with entire community. The profane, according to Durkheim are those individual and personal things that fail to be wholly collective such as activities, concern etc., which are not shared by the group because they are smaller in scale and confined to a more limited context or are simply accidental¹⁶.

Therefore going by such constructs the sacred elements of the tribal religion include the myths, dogmas and legends which are

¹⁵ It was in the 1970's that American scholar Andrew Wells drawing upon his experiences of faith in Africa launched *The Journal of Religion in Africa*. This initiated debates about the category and nature of indigenous religions.

¹⁶ Jeffrey Carter ed. *Emile Durkheim: From The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* in *Understanding of Religious Sacrifice*, Continuum Publications, London, 2003, p.127.

are either considered as presentation or system of representation which express the nature of sacred things. And profane are those things of virtues and powers which are attributed to these beliefs of myths, dogmas and legends.

Durkhiem's student R.R. Marett in his book *The Threshold of Religion* introduces the concept of a 'soul' which guides human interactions with natural objects. The core of the faith he perceives is the "belief in the existence of living soul power in all beings, objects and natural phenomenon and supernatural forces, in and around human habitats"¹⁷. Here the concept of the soul too is visualized through the lense of his Christian values.

S.M. Chauna in his book *International Encyclopedia of Tribal Religion* perceives 'tribal religion essentially consists of those belief system that originated by an evolutionary process from primordial status of human society'. He posits it in within the precept of linear progression of human society. Further he writes, that the adherents of traditional religion "do not trace their origin from any prophet or single sources"¹⁸. Rather the tribal religion is circumscribed by social system, economic patterns and environment surrounding.

¹⁷ A.C. Bhagabati, 'Indigenous Faiths and Custom: Some Observation', in M.C. Behera and S.K. Chaudhuri's eds. *Indigenous Faith and Practices of the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh*, Himalayan Publication, Itanagar, 1998, p. 3.

¹⁸ S.M. Chauna, op.cit. pp. iv-v.

Central to indigenous traditions is an awareness of the integral and whole relationship of symbolic and material life¹⁹. Ritual practices and the cosmological ideas which undergird society cannot be separated out as an institutionalized religion from the daily round of subsistence practices. Therefore tribal system of beliefs and ritual practices are not segregate from their subsistence patterns, kinship, law, governance structures and the surrounding ecologies. the web of human activities are interwoven with the spirit world within the local bioregions. The kinship patterns in human interactions and the interactive spirits in the environment.

4.3. Tribal Religion and its Rituals:

In tribal religion their world view differs from other cultures. Claude Levi-Strauss attributes a sense of rationality and intelligence to their thoughts, but says they vary in their forms of expression. This is visible in their different way of relating to the objects and experiences of the everyday world. This form of thinking, he says, expresses itself in myth, rituals, and kinship systems.

Mircea Eliade expressed a similar position. For him, primitive cultures are more open to the world of natural forms. This openness allows them to experience the world as a sacred reality. Anything in the world can reveal some aspect and dimension of sacredness to the

¹⁹John A. Grim, *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology*, Yale University, Courtesy of the Harvard University Center for the Environment, Copyright © 2004 Forum on Religion and Ecology.

person in primitive cultures. This mode of revelation is called a hierophany. In Eliade's theory, the revealing of the sacred is a total experience.

One of the most pervasive forms of religious behavior in primitive cultures is expressed by rituals and ritualistic actions. The forms and functions of rituals are diverse. In most, but not all, cases an etiological myth provides the basis for the ritual in a divine act or injunction. 'Rituals' are regarded as the dogmatic and socially sanctioned representation of myths, while the 'rites' are the regulated symbolic expressions of certain sentiments.

The classical study of rites and rituals was first made by Arnold Van Gennep, a French Scholar, who published his momentous work - *'The Rites of Passage'* in 1908. He proposed the theory of the tripartite of rites - separation, transition and incorporation. To him, "rites and rituals refer to some special way of acting with implicitly or explicitly (sic) associated with a belief in supernatural power"²⁰. Later on this view was reinforced by scholars like Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown.

Durkheim while discussing the role of religious rites and rituals in society writes, "It is the common action through which the society becomes self-aware". He further writes, "It is the collective feelings

²⁰ David Pocock, *Understanding Social Anthropology*, The Athlone Press, London, 1999, pp.170-175.

and ideas that determine society's unity (sic) and character that maintained and confirmed at regular interval"²¹. Radcliffe-Brown, while making studies on '*The Andaman Islander*', writes that "religious rites and rituals are the ceremonial customs of a society by which the 'sentiments' in question are given collective expression on appropriate occasion"²². This means, the rites and ritual are those religious activities which actualize the social interaction. "It is a social process that suggest order, continuity, and predictability, it emphasis repetition, propriety (a sense of 'ought') and intentionality and is concern with meaning, reality, and values"²³. Rituals are performed are intended to appease supernatural forces or divine beings who might be the cause of the event, or to discover what divine power is causing the event and why. Rites are embedded into a ritual action.

Tribal deities are distinguished according to domains such as earth, sky, water and forest. Animals and plants, rivers and mountain are no exception to this rule²⁴. This is how certain trees in the forest are never cut and certain forest patches are to be left undisturbed because these are the abode of gods and spirits²⁵. The tribal has maintained its system of beliefs and practices including propitiation of spirit, and reliance on its priesthood and its calendar of fair and festivals which reinforce the tribals' sense of solidarity²⁶. Their beliefs

²¹ A.C. Bhagabati, op.cit., p.3.

²² Ibid.

²³ K.S. Singh, '*Hinduism and Tribal Religion*' in N.K. Das's eds. *An Outline of Syncretism in Culture, Religion and Philosophy*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2003, pp.98-99.

²⁴ Quoted in Jeffrey Carter ed. *Understanding of Religious Sacrifice*, Continuum Publication, London, 2003, p.225.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jeffrey Carter, op.cit., p. 326.

and practices consist of a perception regarding the supernatural. Most widespread manifestation of this attitude is in the shape of belief and rituals which form the basis of their religion.

They perceive that the material, social and spiritual realms work through overlapping cycles of giving and receiving. Rituals are therefore a medium through which tribal people establishes linkage between the mysterious world and human kind and are intricately woven in the fabric of the tribal culture and religion. This is the result of historical experience manifest in the mythologies evolved by their forefathers. According to Durkheim, each religion composes of intellectual concepts and ritual practices. In principle, the cult is derived from beliefs yet revets upon them. The myth is frequently modelled after rites and rituals to account for it, especially when its sense is no longer apparent, on the other hand, there a beliefs which are clearly manifested only through the rites and rituals which express them. Thus the rites and rituals are the most pervasive form of the religious behaviour in tribal culture, which is performed to ensure the favour of the divine, to ward off evil, or to mark a change in cultural status.

4.4. Belief and Practices of the Apatanis:

Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religious Act, 1978, recognized three forms of religious practices as indigenous faith of the Arunachalee. They are- (i) Buddhism (*Mahayana* amongs the *Monpas*, the *Sherdukpens*, the *Khambas*, the *Membas*, and *Hinayana*

amongst the *Khampti* and the *Singphos*); (ii) Vaishnavism (amongst the *Noctes*, the *Tangsas*, the *Wanchos*, the *Akas*); and (iii) the nature worshipper including worship of Donyi-Polo as prevalent among other indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh.²⁷ Here the term 'other indigenous communities' signifies the '*Tani* group'²⁸ of Central belt Arunachal Pradesh which include the tribes like the Adis, the Nyishis, the Galo, the Tagin, the Hill Miris, etc.

As per this categorization, the Apatanis of Lower Subansiri district come under the third category. Their religion can be best termed as 'animism' though the term had been replaced with 'indigenous religion'. The Apatanis believe that spirits and divinity reside in every object, controlling its existence of every objects and influencing a human and events in the natural world. To quote Nani Bath:

For the Apatani nature was the dominant of miracles, horror and terror (sic). Therefore, the terrorized mind of men surrender itself to the world of nature making himself naturalistic. It was out of reverence and out of dependency that man starting (sic) worshipping to the great power of nature²⁹.

²⁷ Tamo Mibang, Introductory note on the seminar proceeding in M.C. Behera and S.K. Chaudhuri's ed. *Indigenous Faith and Practices of the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh*, Himalayan Publication, Itanagar, 1998, p. VII.

²⁸ *Tani* group, which comprises of above tribes is said to be resided together in the remote past. Hence cultural traits have close affinities. Also see page no. 3-4.

²⁹ Nani Bath, '*Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Apatanis in Transition*' in Tamo Mibang & S.K. Chaudhuri's eds. *Understanding Tribal Religion*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2004, p.200.

The Apatanis perceive that human's lives are constantly subjected to the supernatural forces. These forces are believed to preside and influence over every stage of life. Thus, their religious belief provides rationale for their existence and making it intelligible and acceptable the world within which they derive sustenance of their socio-economic spheres. The theme of kinship draws attention to a key worldview value repeatedly found among indigenous societies emphasizing the integrity of all reality as well as the intimate relations maintained with the natural world. The origin of the religious beliefs of the Apatanis too is represented in numerous myths and legends, which is as old as the tribes itself.

The use of kinship terms for natural objects is reinforced by various oral narratives or mythic cycles. The role of objects of nature in the creation process is brought through the cosmological stories. Through this environmental knowledge becomes the recurring force during the maturing process of individuals. For this reason, they organized their society into a number of socio-religious institutions including the *gorra*. Haimendorf, a prominent anthropologist who has worked extensively among the Apatanis also writes:

The Apatanis feels himself surrounded by invisible beings capable of affecting his welfare and health, beings that are accessible to the approaches of men. He thinks of these beings as similar to human in some of their reactions to request, offering, promises, and threat, but as different in substance and

indefinitely superior to all men in the power to influence nature events³⁰.

In most, but not all, cases an etiological myth provides the basis for the ritual in a divine act or injunction. Apatanis believe in a multitude of spirits. Such beings are known as *uhi* (god or spirit), is divided into three categories, viz. (i) *Tiigo—uhi*, the god or spirit connected with happiness and prosperity; (ii) *Gyunyañ* or *chiching uhi*, the god or spirit connected with unfortunate events, such as illness or accidental fires; and (iii) *yalu-uhi*, mostly malevolent or evil spirit that is concerned with dispute and wars³¹. In order to propitiate these beings or *uhis*, the Apatanis observe significant numbers of religious rituals. A popular dictum goes thus; "*gyungyañ-tiigo uhi mi ralyañ makoda, miyu sanko nyima*"³². It means that if we do not perform religious rites and rituals, there is no way for human survival. They make offerings and sacrifice both individually and collectively to the *uhis* to ensure the collective welfare and health. Such is their reverence that a series of rituals reinforcing their deep connection on the power of the spirit are performed.

Priests amongst the Apatanis could be often seen approaching gods or spirit on behalf of an individual for a personal crisis or an

³⁰ C.V.F. Haimendorf, *The Apatanis and Their Neighbours*, Free Press of Glencoe, London, 1962, p.92. (Henceforth as TATN).

³¹ C.V.F. Haimendorf, *A Himalayan Tribe-From Cattle to Cash* (henceforth as AHTFCC), Vikash Publication, New Delhi, 1980, pp.169-170.

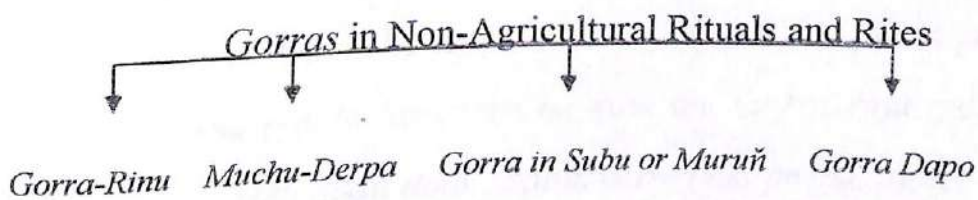
³² Takhe Kani, *Socio-Religious Ceremonies of the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh*, Purbadesh Mudran Publication, Guwahati, 1996, p.58. (Henceforth as SRCAAP).

illness. But here I will not discuss all the religious activities rituals of the Apatanis. Rather I will try to examine the process and essence of those rituals arranged at an individual's initiative in which *gorras* directly or indirectly involved.

4.5. *Gorras* in Religious Rituals:

Apart from agricultural rituals which I have discussed in previous chapter, *gorras* also involved in certain individually initiated rituals. These are in relation to *gyunyañ* or *chiching uhi* and *tiigo-uhi*. These rituals are performed for ensuing social harmony, and apart from agricultural rituals which I have discussed in previous chapter, the *gorras* also organize certain rituals for the welfare of the villagers and also get preventing the spread epidemic and diseases in the villages. But unlike agricultural ritual, those are not seasonal and could be performed only when the situation demands. List of the non-agriculture ritual and rites in which *gorras* directly or indirectly involved are shown in fig. 4.1.

Fig. 4.1



4.5.1. Gorra-Rinu:

The literal meaning of the word '*rinu*' is a feast. Consequently, the word '*gorra-rinu*' means a feast to the *gorras* of the villages. This is undertaken at individual initiative, for receiving blessings of the

gorras and to ward off the *gyunyañ* or *chiching uhi*. This rite is performed only when person is inflicted with spells of *gyunyañ* or *chiching uhi*, suffering from long illness and could not be cured by any other traditional rites and rituals. In such cases, the *gorras* of the village are invited and served with a feast, consisting of food, meat and ceremonial drinks, especially prepared for this rite.

The cosmology behind this rite is that the *gyunyañ uhi* or spirit, which has been the cause of prolonged illness of a person, would leave the place following the presence of the *gorras* in same house. This would in turn help person to be cured³³. It is also believed that malevolent spirits are afraid of the *gorras* because as elders of the society they possess divine power which enables them to drive out the evil spirits from the village. Hence, instead of a sacrifice being offered to malevolent spirits, a feast is offered to the *gorras* seeking their intervention. However, it is imperative to note here that an individual who opted for this rite has to take care in offering the sort of food and meat should be served to the *gorras*. The elders of the village state thus:

Miyu achic-ayhe yola ka dunne hi, phaiñ-papu miika miikha palala ho gorra mi rinu du. Gorra rinu lyiho, nii yoh hoke peeh dikiñ doni. Siidiñ-Siire hoki peeha, ngiye-tasiñ hoki peeha. Hiimi tareh hiira pa phaiñ-papu miika durañ, yasi

³³ Field data collected from the Dutta village on 23rd March, 2007.

aanii Hoki peeha, siili-doli miinii hoki peeha, ma dumiñ yoh hoki peeha, diiju-dimyo mi phaiñ-papu miika miikha palala ho gorra mi gyodu. Ho phaiñ-papu ka lenda ho gorra mi bidu-keđu³⁴.

It means when person suffers from long illness and other ritual are not effective in curing the illness then only people opt for *gorra-rinu* rite. When the person opts for this rites, first they have to properly examine chick liver to ascertain sort of meat is should be offered to the *gorras*. It could be either of dear, wild boar, fish, nymph or meat used in daily consumption. It also has to be ascertained whether the meat to be used should be of an animal which has died by water or diseases and pestilence. Finally after ascertaining all aspects, the *gorras* are invited and feast is offered to them.

In some village like *Hija*, similar feast is also offered to the *builañ*. Regarding the feast offered to the *builañ* Pura Tado writes:

When a family suffers too much from illness, affecting every member very frequently which neither responds to traditional *Puja* nor to modern medications, then the *builañ* are invited. They are feasted with food and meat along with 'O' (Ceremonial drink). The belief behind feastings of *builañ* is that the blessing of *builañ* will ward off the effects of evil spirits because of which the family suffered³⁵.

³⁴ I owed this information from Misso Rambo, a renowned priest of the *Tajang* village.

³⁵ Pura Tado, *Political Transition Among the Arunachal Tribes: A Case Study of the Apatanis*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Arunachal University, Itanagar, 2001, p.92.

However, in absence of only written record, it is very difficult to trace the origin of this rite among the Apatanis. But the elders of the village state that the observance of this religious rite in racial memory is as old as the Apatani themselves. Earlier in absence of any modern medicine system, the ritual of *gorra-rinu* was considered as sort of last ritual in case of long drawn illness³⁶. However; presently this religious rite is very rarely put to practice. It has been said that such one ritual of *gorra-rinu* was observed in the Tajang village prior to ten to twelve years³⁷. People are now giving-up the tradition of these religious ritual taboos because of modernization and intervention of modern medicine system.

4.5.2. *Gorra* in the *Muchu* Ritual:

Ethno-linguistically the 'muchu' means fire accident. This is very frequent occurrence within the Apatani settlements, devastating the villages. In November, 2008, also there had been two fire accidents devastating two villages of *Kalung* and *Hong*. After such an accident the rite which is performed is known as the 'muchu darpa'. This rite is also concern with *gyunyañ* or *chiching uhi*³⁸ and here also the *gorra* play an important role.

Fire accidents both major and minor are a recurring phenomenon in Apatanis settlements, especially during the winter

³⁶ Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 28 to 31st November 2008.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

months when the hearth becomes the centre of all activity. The reason for this frequent fire accidents is because the pattern of settlements area which overlap each other. Here the temperatures especially during the winter season fall below the minus degree Celsius. This compels the people to use fire day and night to keep themselves warm. As the construction techniques and the structure of the settlement clusters fail to take care in terms of prevention, fire accident is a recurring feature. Their houses are closely situated and often their roof touches each other. In the event of a fire accident occurs in one house, the entire village is engulfed by the same. Unlike the Wanchos,³⁹ the Apatanis perceive it as a mere accident⁴⁰.

However, the underlying myth about such occurrences of fire accidents is because of presence of malevolent spirit within the village. It is to this *gyunyañ* spirit that traditionally is ascribed the root cause of disasters and misfortunes. In the event of an accident the rebuilding of the houses in the village is taken as a collective exercise in which the community and kin participate⁴¹. After completion of rebuilding process, finally a ritual *muchu darpa* is performed by an individual owner of the house where the fire accident started. In this

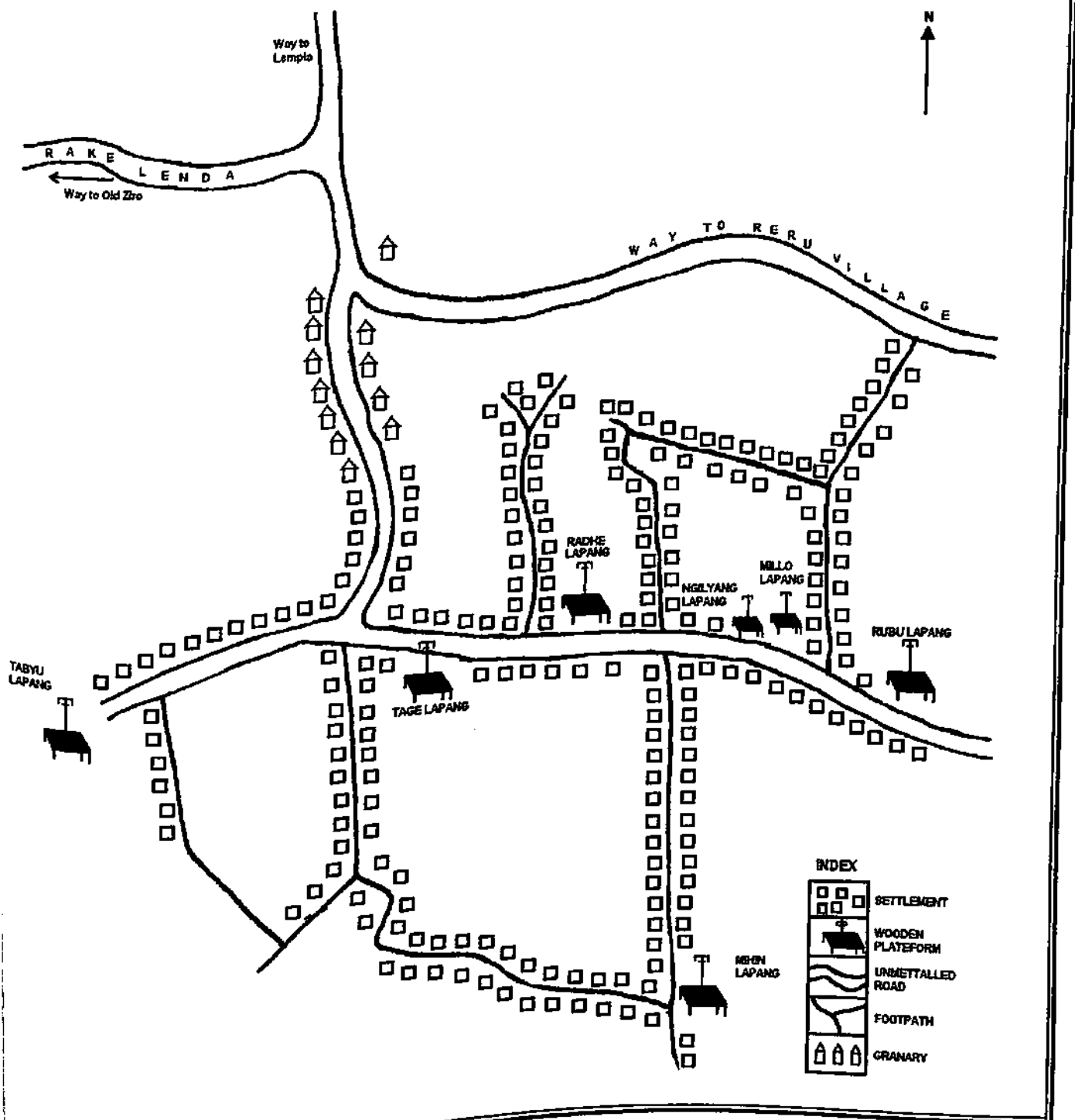
³⁹ Among the Wanchos if some was found guilty of causing and accidental fire he had to be brutally killed by the outraged neighbours. Sometime such offenders were tied to a post and put to death.

⁴⁰ H.G. Joshi, *Arunachal Pradesh: Past and Present*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005, p.132.

⁴¹ In the collective exercise of rebuilding houses after fire accident in the village' the Christian converted people refuse to participate as they considered this as part of the traditional practices of the tribal people. They generally participate in such disasters only when their fellow Christian are affected.

Model Map of the Village Settlement (*Tajang Village*)

SKETCH MAP OF TAJANG VILLAGE



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rite, the *gorras* and the priest collectively drive out the evil or malevolent spirits which caused the disaster and hence brought misfortune⁴².

The rite of *muchu darpa* is not only significant for an individual household where the fire accident began, but for entire village. This is because a belief exists that if rite is not performed in the prescribed manner the villagers may repeatedly come under the spells of the malevolent spirit. This may bring further disaster and misfortune⁴³. Therefore, the *gorras* and the priest perform this ritual in the prescribed manner.

While performing this ritual the *gorras* first prepare an objectified representation of the malevolent spirit and put it into the basket which is especially prepared for this ritual. When the process of preparation is completed, one of the *gorra* carries the basket containing the representation of the malevolent spirit to discard it into the *Kile* (river). The *nyibu* or priest and other *gorras* carries alter and animals to be sacrifice to the bank river known as *Kile Silyo*. On reaching the bank river, they perform the remaining rituals and finally the *gorras* discard the basket into the river so that the evil spirit does not return to same village. Therefore, the *gorras* is also known as "*kacho piro bapa nii*,"⁴⁴ which means 'those who carry-off the dirty basket'.

⁴² Field data collected from *Kalung* village on 1 to 4th December, 2008.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ I owed this information from *Katung Ganbo*, a *gorra* of *Kalung* village.

Previously this ritual was conducted by a Nyishi priest⁴⁵ who was called from a neighbouring Nyishi village. In the event of unavailability of a Nyishi priest, the ritual was performed an Apatani priest. The occurrence of this ritual has been also confirmed by Haimendorf. He writes:

.....this rites should preferably to be performed by a Nyishi priest, who is called from a neighbouring village, but if no such (sic) is available an Apatani *Nyibu* (priest) may act⁴⁶.

Even in the event of the rituals is performed by a Nyishi priest, the *gorras* generally assists them. But presently this ritual is the sole preserve of an Apatani priest with the assistance of the *gorras*. This may because inviting priest from amongst the Nyishis is a costly affair. Besides, sometime a Nyishi priest is not available at the precise time. For all these reasons, now this ritual is performed by the Apatani priests and the role of *gorras* in this rite becomes prominent.

The '*muchu darpa*' rituals have a secret aspect and hence are performed at midnight. This makes it impossible to record the intricate aspects of the ritual. The *gorras* and the priest on completion of all necessary rituals which includes the preparation of an alter, leave the house of the person for whom ritual is conducted at midnight

⁴⁵ Most of the rituals and rites that performed after the fire accident is considered as most the dreaded, therefore, such rituals and rites are preferably performed by non-Apatanis priest. As the *muchu* rites also came under the accidental category this rite was preferably by a Nyishi priest.

⁴⁶ C.V.F. Haimendorf, AHTFCC, op.cit., p.164.

to discard the basket containing the malevolent spirit into river and also make other sacrifices on the river bank. They deliberately perform this ritual at midnight so that they meet no one on the way to river. It is believed that if anyone sees them on the way to the river misfortune would strike the concerned persons family, clan and even the entire village⁴⁷.

After performing this ritual the *gorras* and the priest do not return to their houses for one or two days. The logic behind this practice lies in the belief that the evil spirit which has been discarded would remain with the *gorras* and priest. In which case it would lead to recurrence of fire accident.. In order to mislead the evil spirits they generally spend a two or three days in the forest. Currently, the *gorras* and the priest who perform this ritual instead of staying away in the forests, generally stay at the government circuit house or in private hotels⁴⁸.

Previously when this ritual was performed by a *Nyishi* priest, he was not allowed to enter other village for the following two to three days. If he does violate the norms, he is heavily fined⁴⁹. Within the village, where the rituals are performed the negative ritual or taboo restrict movement in and out of the village. Presently, such strict adherence is not demanded and movements are not restricted⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ See note 43.

⁴⁸ Field data collected from the *Dutta* village on 8 to 10th December, 2008.

⁴⁹ See note 42 and also refer to note 41.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

The *muchu darpa* rite involves the sacrifice of *aki* (dog) and *pachu-paro* (fowls) to the *gyunyañ-uhi*, a congregation of deities propitiated on the event of disasters and misfortune. This happens at the advent of a serious illness. These sacrifices are made both at the house of the initiator of the ritual and on the river bank. However, the historical origin of this rite remains shrouded in mystery. Despite of my best attempts to explore the historical evolution of this ritual no concrete conclusion could be drawn. Notwithstanding of obscurity of origins of this ritual, the *gorra* nevertheless play a crucial role in this ritual to help ward off misfortune from engulfing the entire village.

4.5.3. *Gorras* in the *Subu* and the *Muruñ* Rituals:

The *subu* and *muruañ* are assigned pivotal position in the hierarchy of rituals performed at individual initiative. In these rituals, a group of deities represented by the *tiigo-uhi* is propitiated to ensure happiness and prosperity⁵¹. These deities are *pinsañ gyutii* and *gyuro*. A sacrifice of cow and *mithun* (*bosfrontalis*) is offered to these deities, and strict adherence to customs is a hallmark of this ritual. These rituals are seasonal rites, and are observed in two different months. The *muruañ* ritual is observed in the *muruañ pillo*. The indigenous name for the month of January derives its name from the ritual of *muruañ*. The *subu* ritual is performed in either *muruañ pillo* or in *myoko pillo* or **March**.

⁵¹ Koj Yabyang. *A Study on the Muruañ Festival of the Apatanis*. Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, 2006, p.22.

No doubt the literary meaning of the *murun* coincides with the name of month (January) and the *subu* stands for mithun (*bosfrontalis*). These terminologies are specifying a ritual which derives an important connotation in the vocabulary wherein it is associated with *bosfrontalis* or *Subu* which is widely sacrificed. Due to the absence of any written history its precise etymology cannot be ascertained. I have been unable to trace the derivations of these terminologies in ethno-linguistic and religious content despite my best efforts.

It has been already discussed in Chapter II, that the traditional cultural practices of the Apatanis including extensive rituals and festivals such as *myoko*, etc. which are deemed to have originated in *iipyo-age*. Similarly, the *subu* and the *murun* rites are perceived to have originated in the same mythical age. However, it is imperative to mention here that *murun* rituals has two variations viz., the *ronser* and *rontii*⁵². There prevails two different oral tradition regarding the origin of these rituals amongst the priests and folklorists. But the content and concept of narration is almost same in both cases. The first tradition reveals that the *ronser murun* is the oldest of *murun* rites. It is said to have been first initiated by *siido Takung* and *Nyado Tanyang*. Both are believed to be husband and wife⁵³. They are said to

⁵²In hierarchy of individual rites, the *rontii murun* is than greater *ronser murun* both in terms of solemnizing process i.e., duration of the ritual and expenditure. In *rontii murun* deity called *pinsaŋ gyutii* is propitiated, while in *ronser murun* which is lesser in expenses and duration, and here *gyuro uhi* is propitiated.

⁵³Hage Naku, *Belief and Practices of the Apatanis: Study in Continuity and change*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Rajiv Gandhi University, 2006, p.189.

have suffered from various ailments under the spell of evil spirits and deities. Moreover, they neither remained childless for a long period following their marriage nor did they achieve prosperity. Therefore, they performed numbers of rituals propitiating *gyungaň-uhis* but all was in vain. Thereafter they sought the advice from the supreme adviser of humankind, presumably *iipyo popi*. It is believed that the couple was advised to perform the *muruhn* ritual to propitiate *tiigo-uhi* but primarily to appease *gyuro uhi*. Therefore, they initiated the *muruhn ronser* propitiating the *gyuro uhi* who blessed them with an heir and ensured prosperity⁵⁴.

Another tradition on the origin of these rituals state thus:

In *iipyo lembyaň* there was a descendent of Abotani named *iipyo Toh*. He had four sons⁵⁵ viz., *sanya*, *hape*, *mipu* and *nayda*. Therefore, he divided the four major religious rituals, viz., *myoko*, *muruhn*, *subu* and *emo* among them⁵⁶. Of the four sons, *Hape* the second was the richest. He, however, was childless for which he had carried out a series of religious rituals which failed to yield the desired result. Finally, the elders and the priest of the village advised him to initiate the *muruhn* ritual. He was also advised to invite all the *builaň* and *gorras* of the village and offer gifts as a token of love. Further he

⁵² Hage Naku, op.cit., p. 189.

⁵⁴ In some villages like *Hari*, the priests and elders of the villages says that *iipyo* had seven sons but they accept the theory that *Hape* was the first who initiated *rontii muruhn* rite.

⁵⁶ I owe this information to Mihin Talling, a renowned priest of *Tajang* village.

was urged upon to solicit their blessings so that he may beget (sic) a son⁵⁷. Hence accepting the advise, *Hape* initiated the *rontii muruñ* ritual to propitiate the *gyutii uhi*. Similarly, *Mipu*, the third son of *Iipyo Toh* said to have first performed the *subu* for the happiness and prosperity of his family⁵⁸ at *iipyo lembyang* and *Aba Nibo* was the first priest who said to have performed the *subu* rite⁵⁹.

Haimendorf had termed the *murun* rite as 'feast of merit' which wealthy men undertake to enhance their social status. This may be true to be a certain extent as a rich man who could not observe the *murun* ritual once in lifetime is termed as wiser by the society. Even today the rites of *subu* and *murun* are mainly initiated to securing divine blessing and perfection.

The priest and elders of society ascribe the following circumstances under which one could initiate the *subu* and *murun* rites. They are:

1. If the married couple is childless for long period of time and other traditional rituals have failed to beget them a child.
2. If family members are mentally and physically challenged at birth.
3. If domestic animals or fowls are deformed at birth.

⁵⁷ See note 56

⁵⁸ Hage Naku, op.cit., p.189.

⁵⁹ Koj Yabyang, op.cit., pp.21-22.

4. If bees, reptiles or other insects enter either the house or the granary.
5. If mushrooms grow in hearth, locally known as *alyi-durgu*.
6. If sick members of family was not cured by deities of *gyunyañ uhi*.
7. If growth of wild banana in the house or granary appears a dream.
8. If an aged *mithun* is available in case of wealthy men⁶⁰.

On occasions when the individual ritual of the *subu* and *muruañ* are performed the *gorras* of the village are provided with an elaborate feast and gifts are offered. The feasting coincides with the day on which the animal sacrifice is made. The initiator of the rites believe that along side benevolent spirits, certain malevolent spirits have made an abode in their house. A feast of merit for the *gorras* and the *builañ* who are upholders experience and wisdom within the society is intended to ward off the evil spirits. It is also to ensure that the family of the initiator of the rite is not impacted during observance.

Regarding the participation and importance of *gorras* in the *subu-muruañ* rituals the priests and village elders' state thus:

Subu-muruañ milye ho aya uhi ka aghagiñ ho aya manne uhi tareh ahadu. Ho hiika aya manne uhi atañ mi niirii niihpa

⁶⁰ Information based on *Tanii Dituñ*. Major Festivals of the Apatanis, Capital Complex Dree Festival Committee, Itanagar, 2006, p.13.

*gorra mi gyodu. Ho aya manne uhi mika biisti-kesii niih mi gorra atañ mi bidu*⁶¹.

It signifies that when *subu-muruñ* rites are observed malevolent spirits accompany benevolent spirit in their movements. To counter these evil spirits, the *gorras* are invited and served with a feast and provided with gifts symbolic of propitiating the evil spirits.

When the *gorras* are invited to the *subu-muruñ* rituals, they are welcomed with the traditional balladic hymns call *ayu*. Through this balladic hymn they announce the *gorras* arrival to the realm of evil spirits. As the *gorras* are seated, they are served with 'O' (ceremonial drink) and *tapyo* (local salt made of ash). They are then served with *taki kazie* (ginger salad) and *yoh kazie* (meat salad). Consequently, the *gorras* also respond to the welcoming balladic hymns by singing. Later, amongst them is distributed piece of raw meat of cow and hard larder meat of pig known as *yoh-asso*. The *gorras* cut hard larder meat into pieces and distribute it amongst themselves. Initiator of the *subu-muruñ* is offered Rs. 50/- as a gift, which is known as *gorra-amañ*⁶².

When I enquired about the utility of the money offered to the *gorras*, I was told that since they currently have a corpus fund it is deposited there. The *gorras* maintain the corpus fund for utilization in rituals organized in the event of an epidemic and natural disasters.

⁶¹ I owe this information from Misso Rambo, a renowned priest of the *Tajang* village.

⁶² Researcher witnessed the whole process of *gorras* involvement in *subu* rite during 2006 when Tage Tade of *Tajang* village initiated the *subu* ritual.

The presence of the *gorra* in *subu-muruñ* rite is important on two counts. Firstly, their presence is considered as blessing for the entire family members of the initiator of the rites. Secondly, the *gorras* ward of the evil spirits from harming and entering the house of the rite initiator. Thus their presence is highly valuable and anticipated.

4.4.4. *Gorra and Uhi-Dapo:*

Literally and ethno-linguistically the term '*dapo*' can be defined as treaty or pact. However, the connotation moves beyond the surface explanation conveying four distinct interpretations. Firstly, it is meant as a process of execution of justice against habitual thieves or when disputes arose among certain groups or individuals within the society. The action initiated against the individuals or groups, is known as '*dapo-luniñ*'⁶³. Secondly, it can be understand it terms of a peaceful mass procession to combat any situation which disturbs the peace of the society. It can be due to counter a community feud or inter-village conflicts. Such peaceful mass procession is known as '*dapo-sonii*'⁶⁴. Thirdly, it is a ritual process seeks to prevent the occurrence of wrong deeds⁶⁵ and also intends to ward off the evil spirits at the time of '*doli-sariñ*' (epidemic and famine). Lastly, the deeper meaning of word '*dapo*' signifies an agreement among the individuals or whole society to maintain peace⁶⁶.

⁶³ Punyo Yarang, *Dapo: Social Control Mechanism of the Apatanis*. Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Rajiv Gandhi University, 2006, p. 41.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.



Gorras in subu rite served with feast.



Unlike any other traditional practice of the Apatanis, the 'dapo' is said to have originated at the mythical age of *kolyuñ-kolo*⁶⁷ or *kolyuñ lembyañ*. The prevailing oral traditions of the Apatanis says that at *kolyuñ lembyañ* all the evil spirits, viz., *Hiiri*, *Tahi*, *Yachu*, *Koya*, *Giiri*, *Gyopu*, etc. turned against the earth and the sky. These evil spirits were responsible for spreading disease and pestilence. They are said to have conspired against the birth of the earth. As a result, the *chantii* (earth) and *dotii* (sky) became formless and suffered a lot⁶⁸. In order to arrest the activities of the evil spirits the more powerful *uhis* (gods and goddesses) such as *Liiri*, *Piilang*, *Chindu*, *Gyai*, *Metu*, *Mettii*, etc. came into being to save the earth and the sky. These *uhis* were said to have organized the 'dapo' and succeeded as combating the conspiracy of evil spirits⁶⁹. Since then 'dapo-uhi' (god of justice) came into being exist. This *dapo* against the conspiracy of evil spirits was 'uhi-dapo'.

Later on the task of organizing *uhi-dapo* was entrusted to the *gorras* after human settlement at *iipyo-supuñ*,⁷⁰ as *gorras* they comprise of the priest and society elders. Nevertheless, the first *miyu-dapo* (human *dapo*) was believed to have been imposed on *kiire* (kind of animal) at *Kolyuñ-lembyañ*⁷¹. *Kiire* is said to have disfigured the earth, therefore, *dapo* was imposed on him by breaking his hands.

⁶⁷ *Kolyuñ-kolo* was the age when the universe was originated. Also see the note 40 of chapter II.

⁶⁸ Puiyo Yarang, op.cit., pp. 41-43.

⁶⁹ Field data collected from the *Hong* village on 23rd June, 2008.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Puiyo Yarang, op.cit., p.41.

This may one example of *gorras* imposition of *dapo* based on oral tradition and ironically, still the hands of *kiire* are not in a normal position and thus deformed. This tends us to in the myth of *gorras* authority in organization of *dapo*.

Even today the *dapo* is performed under three distinct circumstances⁷². Firstly, when any individual violates the societal norms; secondly, whenever the *doli-piili* (epidemic and plague) spread in the village; and finally to settle the disputes between an individual and groups. Similarly, the *dapo* are of two types, viz., the *miyu-dapo* and the *uhi-dapo*⁷³. Since *miyu-dapo* is the exclusive domain of the material world and, is dealt with by the *builañ*. Hence it falls outside the purview of this study. The *uhi-dapo*, on the other hand related to matters of the 'spiritual world' and is performed by the *gorras*. Therefore, here an attempt has been made to understand *uhi-dapo*, which is exclusively the domain of the *gorras*.

The *uhi-dapo* can be understood as a religious imposition by the *gorras* on malevolent spirits who constantly strive to upset the balance within society. During the entire process the *gorras* organize rituals to propitiate the *dapo-uhi* (god of justice) so that evil spirit can be warded off. The *gorras* basically organize the *uhi-dapo* on two different occasions. In the event of disease which appears in the village and assumes epidemic proportions, the *dapo* is performed.

⁷² Punyo Yarang, *op.cit.*, p.41

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Secondly, in case the disease has spread beyond physical boundaries of the village and with the likelihood of spreading into other villages.

The *uhi-dapo* is usually performed by sacrificing a fowl or animals, especially a dog on the *dapo* alter, locally known as *dapo-pogyañ*, erected at the entrance of the village known as *layu*⁷⁴ (junction). The *dapo* ritual is performed as a preventive measure to ensure the disease does not enter and spread within the village. The *uhi-dapo* assumes a dreadful connotation if performed to drive out disease from the village. In such cases the physical movements in and out of the village are stopped for three days⁷⁵. Any person who disobeys such injunctions is heavily fined. They thus ensure strict adherence to demands of the ritual.

In case the *gorra* performed *uhi-dapo* to drive out the disease from the village, they prepare the basket in which the symbolic representation of the malevolent spirit is to be enclosed. They visit each household of the village and ask them to put in the basket a symbol of the malevolent spirit presumed to be the cause of such disease⁷⁶. The *gorras* carry the basket to the forest and bury the basket. Thereafter they perform the ritual which involves sacrifices. In such ritual *gorras* and priest do not return to their respective houses for five to six days⁷⁷. The last recorded ritual of such a nature is said to have observed by the Apatanis way back in 1969, when small pox,

⁷⁴ Field data collected from *Tajang* village on 28th June, 2008.

⁷⁵ See note 69.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

locally known as *tabuñ-doli* broke out. This deadly disease is said to have affected the four villages of *Hong, Kalung, Reru* and *Tajang*⁷⁸.

When the *gorras* perform such a ritual, they assume grotesque forms by painting their faces with *chinyu* (soot) and wear their traditional war gear. This is done so that malevolent spirit does not recognize them. It is believed that if malevolent spirit recognizes them then the same would enter their houses impacting them and their family members⁷⁹.

4.5. Conclusion:

Discussion in this chapter reveals that *gorras* render a yeomen service to the society. Their role is highly valuable for social existence. They act as mediators between human and supernatural domains. They control the realm of the magico-religious administration in society. Their presence in the society provides a sort of security from all kind of negative interventions of the spirits. Their presence in the rites initiated by a individual not only to wards off the evil spirit but also serve as blessing for the family members. Thus by risking their own lives in intervening into domain of malevolent and benevolent spirits the *gorras* serve the society with dedication. Therefore, they have been rightly addressed as *kacho manne, biiso manne*,⁸⁰ means, 'those who are neither fearful nor feel dirty of anything'.

⁷⁸ Takhe Kani, SRCAAP, op.cit., p.40.

⁷⁹ Takhe Kani, op.cit., p.40

⁸⁰ See note 74.

CHAPTER – V

IMPACT OF MODERN INSTITUTIONS ON THE *GORRA* SYSTEM

5.1. Introduction:

No human society can remain static for a considerable period of time as the change itself is the unchangeable law of nature. This change has taken an accelerative speed in the present age because of globalization and has become characteristic of the present era. The devastating effects of the powerful tide of change are so far reaching, and startling that it becomes necessary to “look at it closely, not merely from the grand perspectives of history, but also from the vantage point of living, breathing individuals who experience it”¹. Realizing such facts, the social scientists of the modern age have attempted to reflect upon the socio-cultural change among the tribal people across the world with both theoretical and empirical perspectives. In a similar manner, the present chapter seeks to understand the process of ‘cultural change’ among the Apatanis through the institution of *gorra*.

5.2. Concept of Cultural Change:

E.B. Tylor, in his book *Primitive Culture*,² defined culture as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral,

¹ D.N. Jena & V.K. Mohapatra, *Social Change, Themes and Perspectives*, Kalyanji Publications, Delhi; 2003, p. V.

² V.S. Upadhyay & Gaya Pandey, *History of Anthropological Thought*, Concept Publication, New Delhi; 1997, p. 466.

law, custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.' This definition of Tylor implies that culture is a social heritage which is given by society to its individual³. Malinowski on the other, is of view that, 'culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values.' According to him, 'culture is total way of life and it includes the entire mental, social and physical means which make life run its course.' It means culture is a system of derived needs and an organized system of purposeful activities⁴. In view of Malinowski, culture has got two aspects – material and non-material. The former comprises of house, means of communication (bus, train, cycle, bullock cart, etc.). The latter comprises of knowledge, belief, value, customs, traditions, law, etc.

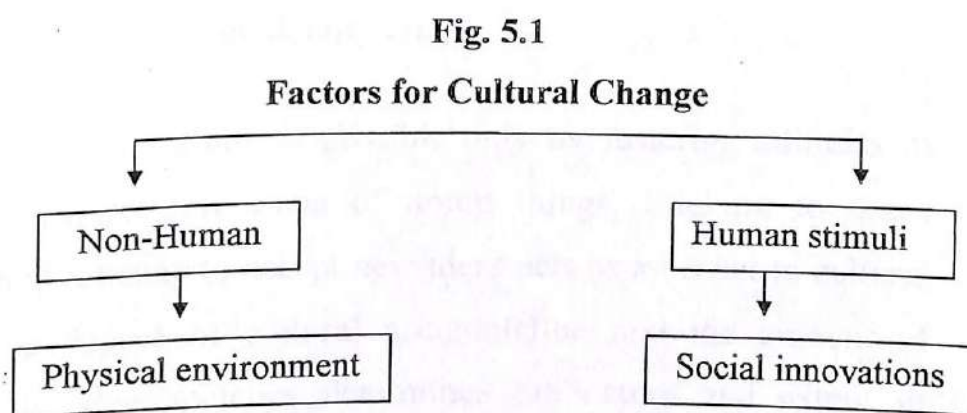
These definitions and explanation tend us to understand that "Culture by nature is social, shared (sic), transmissive, continuous, cumulative and adaptive"⁵. These elements and its very nature of culture make it dynamic. The terms like continuous, cumulative, adaptive, transmissive etc. signify the elements of dynamism within the culture. Any changes that takes place in the realm or elements of culture can be precisely define as cultural change. There may be both internal as well as external variables which cause changes within culture.

³ V.S. Upadhyay & Gaya Pandey, op.cit., p.466.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ D.N. Jena & V.K. Mohapatra, op.cit., pp.91-92.

The changes in the realm of culture could be divided into two categories: "first, those which concern the substantive structure of culture and its relationship with social institutions; secondly, those which refer to the processes of change in culture especially engendered by the forces of globalization, telecommunication revolution and the emergence of market economy in a qualitatively new form"⁶. These changes in traditional cultural practices and institutions are closely related to the processes of urbanization, introduction of new political and economic structures and rapid pace of growth and expansion of information network. Nevertheless, the sociologists like Debendranath Jena & Umakanta Mohapatra attributed two factors for cultural change and they are shown in Fig. 5.1.



The non-human stimuli that greatly accelerated cultural change in society mostly came from the physical environment. The

⁶ Yogendra Singh, Cultural Change in India: Identity and Globalisation, Rawat Publication, New Delhi; 2000, pp.18-19.

environmental causes like climate, rainfall and others, causes changes in the culture. Such culture changes are more viable in terms of dresses and food habit. The history of human civilization is full of with many such evidences⁷. The human stimuli on the other hand, come mostly from the forces of social innovation. These include the variations, invention, cultural borrowing and cultural diffusion.

5.3. Tribal Culture and the Modernization Process:

The tribal society of present day can be best described as one in transition. With onslaught of economic changes and modern value system a change in the traditional practices and belief system has become inevitable. The modernization and confluence of outside culture has brought tremendous changes in traditional practices of tribal people leading to an identity crisis.

Change in a culture is possible only by fostering attitudes of receptivity toward new ways of doing things. Sticking to one's traditions and refusing to accept new ideas acts as a barrier to cultural change. The degree of cultural accumulation and the amount of contact with other societies determines the nature and extent of cultural change within a society. The sociologists considered the 'modernization' as most potent agency of cultural change among the tribal people. They defined modernity as 'cluster of new social, economic, political, religious and intellectual system, which is totally

⁷ D.N. Jena & U.K. Mohapatra, *op.cit.*, pp.91-92.

different from traditional system,⁸ which is a set of socio-cultural practices that seek to inculcate certain behavioural norms and values implying continuity with the past⁹. It means the tradition usually associated with widely accepted rituals and other forms of symbolic behaviour, while the modernity represents substantial break with this norm.

In absence of an organized writing system or literature on the history of tribal society in Arunachal, the myths of origin, the invocations used at the time of rituals and other traditional practices survive only in the oral forms. That too it is very precariously in the hands of few elderly persons of the society. Because of this substantial break with traditions, the new generations are gradually getting unfamiliar with their rich traditions and customs. It may be call an irony of fate that the present generations are leaving aside their traditional cultural practices and getting attracted towards the western culture. Consequently, many traditional institutions both the primary and secondary are radically changed. Changes in the cultural sphere while on one hand leads to a dying out of traditions, on the other transform the tradition which continues to survive in altered forms. This process of cultural change among the tribal societies has been accelerated with greater speed with the process of globalization. Under such circumstances, it is very obvious that the institution of *gorra* of the Apatanis could not remain without being impacted.

⁸ Ram Ahuja, *Society in India*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p.480.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.479.

Therefore, this chapter seeks to highlight the impact of modern institutions on the *gorra* system of the Apatanis so that process of cultural change among the Apatanis could be reflected. But before restricting ourselves to this discussion, it will be imperative for us to have a conceptual idea of cultural change and process of cultural change among the Apatanis.

5.4. Cultural Changes among the Apatanis:

In recent years, there have been tremendous change in socio-religious practices of the Apatanis and many of old features have practically have undergone major transformation. These socio-religious changes are clearly noticeable in their present day family life, social customs, in their attitudes towards religious belief, dress, food-habits, economic activities, etc. Details of these changes cannot be described in a few pages. Therefore, we will examine only few of importance visible changes.

Traditionally a typical Apatani male could be seen with hair knotted above the forehead with a brass pin struck horizontally across it. His face was tattooed in the chin in the shape of a large 'T'. He had a decorated red tail locally known as *ahu-yari*, an extension of a thick belt made of many strands of special cane, dyed in vivid red and running down over the buttocks and thighs within a few inches of the hollow of the knee¹⁰. The female, on the other hand, had her hairs

¹⁰ Taru Talu, *A Glimpse of Ziro in Transition*, Dree Souvenir, Central Dree Committee, Itanagar: 2003, pp. 19-26.

bundled behind the head just above the neck. Their face was tattooed black all over the chin with vertical lines and a cross bar above these line just below the lower lip. Their nose was punctured and the punctured hole was made large by wearing wooden plugs with periodical replacement. She wore heavy jewelries made of beads of various colours¹¹. All these adornments were given-up with the onset of modernization. The present generation no longer adorn themselves in traditional attire along modernization and westernization, and now an Apatani can hardly be distinguished from other people of the state in terms of their attire.

The old custom of strictly maintaining of tribe endogamy in marriages has to a large extent diminished and inter-tribe marriages are becoming rampant in the society. Inheritance of ancestral properties by daughters is also taking place¹². Their traditional dresses such as *bilañ abi*, *jikhe tarii*, and *piisa-lenda* have been replaced by modern dresses of T-shirts, jeans, salwar- kameez and trousers. Now these traditional dresses are worn occasionally during festivals and special occasions.

The traditional economy of the Apatanis is one that of 'subsistence level' without being market oriented. Their traditional way of cultivation, forest activities, animal husbandry and other handicrafts work had never been motivated by the market forces.

¹¹ Taru Talu, op.cit., p.7.

¹² In many villages like *Hari* and *Tajang*, now ancestral properties are inherited to the daughters.

However, this notion is rapidly changing now. The new generations are no longer keen on following agricultural pursuits, forest activities or other artisanal works. Instead they aspire for the government jobs or else they engage themselves in business enterprise. Even those who are still engaged in the cluster of traditional economic activities are highly motivated by the 'profit sense'. This may be the reason why they have given-up the cultivation of some traditional crops such as *mukuh* (tobacco), *ingi-inge* (a kind of arum) and *hula* (a kind of root crops). Instead they are cultivating the market oriented crops such as potato, tomato, cabbage, etc. Method of tillage, though it was archaic type as alluded to by Haimendorf, still produced enough for support of population. It is evident that rice cultivation is on the decline and cultivation for non-traditional crops is gaining more importance. Today people have to depend on Government foodgrain supply through the Public Distribution System. As result, there is always a shortage of food grains in the area. On account of these changes, their traditional institutions of gang labour '*patañ*' is slowly and steadily disappearing.

Apart from these, their traditional religious practice and belief system has undergone tremendous change. We are already aware from the earlier discourse that traditionally the Apatanis were followers of indigenous religions in which, objectifying nature with anthropomorphic characterisation and animal sacrifice was prominent. But today, the other religious belief such as Christianity and strong influences of Hinduism can be notice among the Apatanis.

Under such circumstances, it is very obvious that the traditional socio-religious institution – ‘gorra’ is also impacted in multifarious ways. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explore the impact of modern institutions on the *gorra* system so that the process of cultural change among the Apatanis could be understood. For this purpose, this chapter has been divided into four sections. Details of these can be discussed under following heads.

5.5. Impact of Modern Educational Institution:

The educational institutions have been universally accepted as major agent of cultural change. “It has been the most viable agent for socio-cultural, economic, political and religious changes.”¹³ In fact, the educational institutions are always conceived as a panacea for removing ills from the society. In case of Apatanis too, the modern educational institutions is the first and foremost important factor, which brought about the changes in traditional socio-cultural practices. Ironically, this also led to disappearing or diminishing importance of the traditional institutions of the Apatanis such as *builañ*, *patañ*, *gorra*, etc. Due to modern education, the tribal people across the world are now more conscious about themselves. The traditional customs which under the influence of Indian and Western value systems are being increasingly adapted in favour of discarding customs and traditions. It is true that the growth of modern educational institutions among the Apatanis is of later day

¹³ N.T. Rikam, Emerging Religious Identities of Arunachal Pradesh: A Study of Nyishi Tribe, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005, p.58.

phenomenon. But the way in which it is making progress is indeed remarkable and astonishing. Unlike, in Adi populated area of Arunachal Pradesh, where the modern education had started in 1918,¹⁴ the modern educational institutions among the Apatanis started only in 1953. In 1953, the first lower primary school was established at Ziro which was upgraded to middle school in 1954. In same year (1953) four lower primary schools were established at *Hong, Hari, Bulla* and *Hija* village¹⁵. Today there are as many as twelve Governments educational institutions are there. List of these institutions has been shown in Fig. 5.1 and 5.2.

Till eighties of the 20th century the educational institutions were purely run and maintained by the Government. However, in the eighties, a private initiative started running the educational institutions in the Valley. And within the short span of time the Apatanis Valley was flooded with a large number of educational institutions which were run by both Government and private enterprise. Today some of the best private schools of the state can be found in the Apatani Valley.

¹⁴ N.T. Rikam, op.cit., p.58.

¹⁵ Field data collected from *Ziro* on 14th December, 2008.

Fig. 5.1

List of the Government Educational Institutions

Sl. No.	Name of the Institutions	Year of Establishment
1	Government Higher Secondary School, Ziro	1953
2	Government Secondary School, Hapoli	1964
3	Government Higher Secondary School, Hija	1965
4	Government Secondary School, Tajang	1972
5	Government Middle School, Hari	1953
6	Government Middle School, Bulla	1953
7	Government Middle School, Hong	1953
8	Government Middle School, Dutta	1974
9	Government Middle School, Old Ziro	1979
10	Government Middle School, TPD	1966
11	Government Primary School, Hapoli	1974
12	Government Primary School, Ziro	1977
13	Government Primary School, Hill Top	1989

Sources: Field Data collected from *Ziro*.

Fig. 5.2

List of the Private Educational Institutions

Sl. No.	Name of the Institutions	Year of Establishment
1	Frontier School, Hapoli	1992
2	Abotani Vidya Bhawan, Pai Gate	1992
3	L.B.S. Primary School, Hapoli	1972
4	Padi Lailang Memorial School, Hapoli	1989
5	Woodland School, Hapoli	1997
6	Blue Pine Residential English School, Hapoli	1995
7	Abotani Vidya Niketan, Old Ziro	1995

8	Plateau Model School, Hapoli	2000
9	Don Bosco School, Pai Gate	1999
10	Midland School, Pahpii	1999
11	Ayo Damiy School, Neychayglya	2001
12	Nime Ashram, Suluya	1997
13	Hiimi Miji School, Suluya	1999
14	Vidya Academy, Bulla	2000
15	Hutho Kendra Vidyalaya, Hari	2001
16	Vivekananda Vidhaya, Dobi	2000
17	Punyo Tayer Memorial School, Hong	2001
18	Arunachal Academy, Haji	2000
19	Ziro Valley School, Lempia	2002
20	Willow Residential School	2003
21	Blue Mouth School, A.P.	2004
22	Skylark Public School	-
23	Love Dale School, Hapoli	2004
24	Arunachal Public School, Hapoli	2007
25	Himalayan Heritage School, Suluya	2008

Sources: Field Data collected from *Ziro*.

This rapid growth of modern educational institutions produced educated youths among the Apatanis who initiated measures to bring many changes in socio-cultural practices of the Apatanis. In 1967, the Apatanis students studying at Jawarharlal Nehru College (JNC), Pasighat like Lod Kojee, Gyati Challa, Rubu Koyang, Michi Tatum, Khoda Pussang, Tailang Koyang and others¹⁶ exchanged their view of

¹⁶ Lod Kojee, 'Dree and Its Modifications' in *Anii-Supung Ziro* (Dree Souvenir) vol-I, 2003, p.6.

having a centrally organized festival whereby the entire community could participate. The Apatanis had many rituals and ceremonies which could be performed individually and collectively at village level. But the festival for entire community as such was not there till then. Therefore, these educated youth decided to modify the *Dree* ritual and the 5th July and 6th July was fixed for celebrations of the *Dree* festival¹⁷.

This conversion of *Dree* festival into community festival adversely affected the *gorra* institution. As we have already discussed that earlier *Dree* ritual was organized by *gorras* at village level. But now this ritual programme was transformed to a festival where the *gorras* hardly had any role to play. It is true that the priests who chanted the hymns of *Dree* ritual were invited to the general specified ground for the *Dree* festival. However, all the *gorras* socially and religious are accorded with the same respect. It is only because of educated elite that *gorras* who perform the *dree* ritual has been given due weightage because the *dree* had been converted into a community festival.

The emergence of the newly educated social group has further accelerated changes in the society. In early 1970's the young and enthusiastic students, realizing the need of youth organization for modernization of the Apatani society, they organized themselves under the banner of AYA (Apatani Youth Association). The Apatani

¹⁷ Lod Kojee, op.cit., pp.6-7.

Youth Association had passed a series of resolutions to give-up old traditions, irrelevant in the present day context, including discontinuation of tattooing of the face¹⁸. Thus, as result of introduction of modern education system; the Apatani society was rapidly transformed. But unfortunately, in this transformation process we have lost some of the most important traditional institutions specially as its structure and functioning is not documented for being a pre-literate society.

5.4. Impact of Modern Political Institutions:

Modern day political institutions are apparatus of the government machinery and its instruments of democracy in the form of political parties. The modern nation state is all encompassing and its citizens perform are expected to adhere to a set of norms and goals to regulate and administer the society. The presence of the colonial state in Arunachal Pradesh has been minimal remaining active on its fringes. In pre-independence period colonial rule¹⁹ isolated the people of this region by the enactment of Inner Line. Its objective was to keep outside the realm colonial administration. All tracts inhabited by the various indigenous communities and to regulate their free intercourse with the people of the plains.²⁰ Thereafter, the

¹⁸ H.G.Joshi, *Arunachal Pradesh: Past and Present*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p.208.

¹⁹ The colonial masters had considered the tribal, especially Arunachal as too backward and unrewarding for extending any civil administration; hence they avoided the direct administration to area. After independence the Government of India followed the same policy though their prespective was different. Development of modern political institutions among the indigenous community of Arunachal is a post 1962 phenomenon.

²⁰ R.K. Mandal, "How to Develop Arunachal Pradesh", in *Arunachal Review*, Vol-VIII, No.18, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar; 2006, p. 1.

colonial rule created 'excluded' and 'partly excluded' areas²¹ and put the administrative system area under the control of Governor of Assam. Overall they followed the policy of 'exclusion' and 'isolation' towards the tribal area of this region. The only contacts were through the survey missions and the various expeditions. A semblance of administration was introduced in the Adi inhabited areas after 1913.

Initially, the Government of independent India followed the same policy, retaining the structures of colonial administration with certain modifications. It also retained the policy of isolation and exclusion in name of preserving and protecting tribal people from exploitation by the more advanced and sophisticated community of the plain.²² The government continued with the Inner Line, which prevented the free entry of outsiders in the area. Consequently, the socio-political life of the tribal people therefore remained untouched by any modernizing influence. Moreover, Nehru-Elwin Policy for tribal development, better known as 'Panchseel' across the country was never intended to integrate the people of this region (Arunachal Pradesh) with mainstream. Rather, it was based on the 'revivalist-protectionist' approach, which had an inherent 'isolationist' overtone that stood between indigenous and non-indigenous as well as hills and plains²³. But this rapidly changed after the Chinese

²¹ L.P. Vidyarthi & B.K. Rai, The Tribal Culture of India, Concept Publication, New Delhi, 1985, p.421.

²² H.G. Joshi, *op.cit.*, p.2.

²³ Gurudas Das, "The Nehru-Elwin policy of Tribal Development: Genesis, growth and Renunciation" in 14th session of NEIHA Proceeding, Jorhat; 1993, p.290.

aggression of 1962²⁴. The event of 1962 opened up the eye of Indian Government and they started recognizing the strategic importance of this region. It was realized now that a time had come for a greater level of interaction with the people for fostering larger and wider political consciousness²⁵. As a result, a Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of late Dying Ering to study the possibility of introducing the modern Panchayati Raj institution like grassroot democratic institutions introduced in the rest of the country²⁶. On the recommendations of this committee the Panchayati Raj Regulation was enacted in 1967, which was finally introduced in 1969²⁷.

Introduction of Panchayati Raj institution in Arunachal Pradesh had shown tremendous impact. It is true that the traditional indigenous socio-political institutions were allowed to function side by side but they too have undergone significant changes under the impact of this modern political institution²⁸. The leadership of these traditional institutions was greatly impacted. As a result of introduction of Panchayati Raj young and educated leaders emerged in the society.

²⁴ The Chinese aggression of 1962 was turning point in history of Sino-Indian friendship and foreign policy. Root cause of this was the demarcation of Macmohan Line in 1914 which the Chinese authority had never accepted. This line passes along the northern stretches of Arunachal Pradesh.

²⁵ A.C. Talukdar, "Political Evolution of Arunachal Pradesh" in 7th session of NEIHA Proceeding, Pasighat, 1987, pp.133-136.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Prior introduction of Panchayati Raj institution in this area there functioned five types of traditional village council among the people. They are – The Adi republican type; Chieftainship system of the Nocte and Wancho; the Mishmi individualistic type; the Monpa theocratic type and the Apatani oligarchic type.

In view of Ashan Riddi "With newly acquired power and position, they at times comes (sic) in conflict with the traditional village authority to the point of defiance and confrontation"²⁹. Consequently, the traditional authority of many institutions has been altered and its independent status has been shattered.

Similarly, prior to introduction of Panchayati Raj institution among the Apatanis, the members of *builañ* and *gorra* had been held in high esteem and greatly respected in the society. Practically the members of *builañ* considered as one who are the custodian of the materialistic administration of the society while the members of *gorra*, were considered as the ones who looked after the spiritual domain of the society. Overall they had been considered as one who could protect the society from all adversities. But after the introduction of modern political institution this notion greatly changed. New leaders emerged in society because of introduction of modern political institutions breaking the traditional and societal hierarchy. New tendencies emerged in the Apatani society is that the villagers look towards these leaders for welfare activities. This greatly affected the role of *gorras* and their status in the society. Thus when the agricultural ritual *Dree* was converted into community festival, the members of *gorra* had not been given any importance. Instead newly emerged democratic leaders started playing an important role in organizing the community festivals. Thus, the introduction of modern

²⁹ Ashan Riddi, Traditional Institutions of the Tagins: Change and Continuity. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Arunachal University, 2003, p.254.

political institutions among the Apatanis greatly affected the traditional institution of *gorra*.

5.7. Impact of New Religious Institutions:

The Apatanis of Ziro valley had limited interaction with their neighbouring communities and hence was relatively secluded. There is no historical account of the Apatanis relation with the Ahoms of Assam. Even during the British rule in North East India,³⁰ the Apatanis hardly had any relation with the former in terms of political and economic activities³¹. The limited level of interaction beyond their immediate neighbourhood provided an exclusive space for the society to develop on traditional lines. Consequently, they kept on maintaining their age-old religious traditions since their settlement at the valley. Haimendorf who revisited the Apatani valley for second time in 1971, also observed that "there is as yet no sign of any spread of Christian or indeed Buddhist or Hindu ideas....."³²

However, with the introduction of modern education in the valley, things have rapidly altered and the Apatani valley witnessed

³⁰No doubt that the impact of the British rule could be felt among the many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Especially the Adis of the Siang District had an intimate relation with the British authority. But amongst the Apatanis this did not happened. The first ever administrative centre for the Apatanis was established by the British authority in 1944-45 at *Paapii* and C.V. Haimendorf was appointed as a Special Officer. This was only first instance of the Apatanis political relation with British.

³¹In 1911-12, the British authority organized the *Miri* Mission to explore the tribal area between *Siang* river and Bhutan. The mission was headed by Mr. Kerwood, the then Sub-Divisional Officer of North Lakhimpur. While referring back to Lakhimpur the British troops reached the Apatani valley.

³²C.V.F. Haimendorf, *Himalayan Tribe: From Cattle to Case*, (henceforth as HTFCC). Vikash Publication, Ghaziabad, 1980, p.177.

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³²C.V.F. Haimendorf, *Himalayan Tribe: From Cattle to Case*, (henceforth as HTFCC). Vikash Publication, Ghaziabad, 1980, p.177.

visible changes opening a pandoras box for inflow of the modernity and cultural change. The traditional religious outlook of the people changed, which again resulted in emergence of new religious institutions including the Christianity and Hinduism in the valley. Details of these emergences of new religious institutions among the Apatanis and its impact on the *gorra* institution can be discussed under following points.

5.7.1. Christianity and Its Impact:

Christianity has always been an important factor of cultural change among the indigenous people since the British rule. By Charter Act of 1813, the Christian missionaries are formally permitted to preach the Gospel in India.³³ Consequently, the first impact of proselytization in the indigenous area was felt by Khasi hill. In March, 1813, K.C. Pal evangelized many of the Khasi refugees who had been converted to Christianity in order to escape inter-tribe feuds³⁴.

The spread of Christianity among the indigenous communities of Arunachal, however, began with the foundation of mission centres / schools along the borders³⁵. With the opening of a Baptist mission centre with schooling facilities at Tezpur in 1934, there was a spurt in missionary activities and it also added a thrust to open and develop new mission stations in other parts³⁶. Nevertheless, the process gained

³³ N.T. Rikam, *op.cit.*, pp.80-81.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

momentum after the foundation of a Mission school at Harmuty near *Doimukh* in 1977³⁷.

From the seventies of the 20th century, many of the Apatanis also started sending their children to mission schools in Assam as well as to Shillong realizing the importance of education. The students who studied in missionary schools came under the influence of Christianity who later on converted into Christianity. The first Apatani to convert into Christianity was Habung Tago, a retired Subedar of the Assam Rifles. He is said to be baptized in 1952 at Siajuli³⁸. In 1963, many of the Apatani youths like Tage Tatung, Tage Joseph Moda, Leegang Doilyang and others got baptized at Don Bosco School Tezpur³⁹. But the real beginning of Christian missionary among the Apatanis started only in 1984, when the first Baptist Church in the valley called Town Baptist Church was established at Pai-Gate. Thereafter, there is rapid growth of Christianity among the Apatanis. Today many of the Apatanis had been converted into Christianity and many new churches have been also established, which have been shown in Fig. 5.8.

No doubt, the Christianity has functioned as a force for modernizing indigenous society by removing many odd practices from society. At the same time, it has also functioned as the force of

³⁷N.T. Rikam, *op.cit.*, pp.80-81.

³⁸Hage Naku, *Beliefs and Practices of the Apatanis: Study in Continuity and Change*, Ph.D. Dissertation (unpublished), RGU;2005, pp.280-289.

³⁹Ibid.

Fission in disintegrating the indigenous institutions and organizations⁴⁰. The populations converted to Christianity generally have abandoned the age-old traditional practices. The indigenous institutions of the Apatanis, their religious rites and rituals, and traditional values have all been adversely affected. They have declined under the impact of new ideas, ethical values and in general has emerged a new style of life which is endorsed by Christianity. As it has been discussed in the earlier chapters that *gorra* were basically ritual organizers of the village. They collected donations from every household in the village for organizing the village rituals. But the new converts refuse to give any donation to the *gorras* considering themselves as segregate cultural entities. They no longer show proper respect to the *gorras*. This has impacted the role and status of the *gorras*.

5.7.2. Impact of Hinduism:

The indigenous communities across the country have been influenced by certain traditions of the communities around them. The Hindus being the largest community in the country also influenced the neighbouring communities since pre-colonial period. But the extent of these influences varied from one society to the other. Similarly, these influences are also not one way influence. Sometimes, the Hindus had also been influenced by the cultural traditions to the indigenous communities. Nevertheless, the nature and extent of Hindu influence

⁴⁰ L.P. Vidyarthi & B.K. Rai, op.cit., p.459.

Fig. 5.8

List of the Baptist and other Christian Church in the Ziro Valley

Sl.No.	Name of the Church	Location	Year of Establishment
1	Town Baptist Church	Pai - Gate	1984
2	Grace Baptist Church	Old Ziro	1995
3	Immanuel Baptist Church	Abulya	1997
4	Bethel Baptist Church	Maniipolyang	1999
5	Union Baptist Church	Yadi	2003
6	Hari Baptist Church	Pigee- Deep	2003
7	Nenchalya Baptist Church	Nenchalya	2003
8	Don Bosco Catholic Church	Hapoli	1997
9	Catholic Church	Mudang-Tage	1999
10	Nenchaliya Catholic Church	Nemchaliya	2000
11	St. Claret Catholic Church	Salaliya	2002
12	Revival Church	Hapoli	2000
13	Revival Church	Old Ziro	2002
14	Pentecostal Church SSB	Abulya	2002
15	Church of Jesus Christ	Nemchaliya	2002

Sources: Field Data collected from Ziro.

on the indigenous communities of Arunachal is quite different⁴¹. The State of Arunachal Pradesh had been outside of ambit of cultural influences from the mainstream in the pre-colonial period and colonial period. However, the foothill area had some sort of relation with the plain people of Assam. Consequently, the influence of Hinduism is quite evident in this areas⁴².

⁴¹ N.T. Rikam, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

⁴² In foot hill areas especially in Tirap, Changlang and Lohit District, many Hindu temples and Hindu pilgrimage can be seen. This clearly shows that these areas had an intimate relation with the plain people.

Even during the initial years after independence, the Government of India followed the policy of 'revivalist-protectionist'⁴³ in which they followed the policy of religious neutrality towards the indigenous religion of NEFA. However, after the India debacle in the Sino-India War in 1962, the policy of 'revivalist-protectionist' as perceived by Verrier Elwin was replaced by one of 'progressive integration'.⁴⁴ With this the government also changed its religious policy and the Hindu based missionary organization were allowed to work among the indigenous communities of NEFA⁴⁵. As a result, the Ramakrishna Mission established its first missionary school at *Along* (now *Aalo*) in 1966⁴⁶.

The influence of Hinduism on the Apatanis started at both official and unofficial level. Particularly, after the events of 1962, the Government of India intensified the construction of road communication across the state. For this purpose, the task force of Border Road Organisation established its headquarter's at Pine Grove, 4 km away from Ziro town. People belonging to this organization have started constructing temples and celebrating the Hindu festivals such as *Viswakarma Puja*, *Kali Puja*, *Holi*, *Deepawali*, etc. This has attracted a large number of local people and marked the beginning of Hindu influence on the Apatanis.

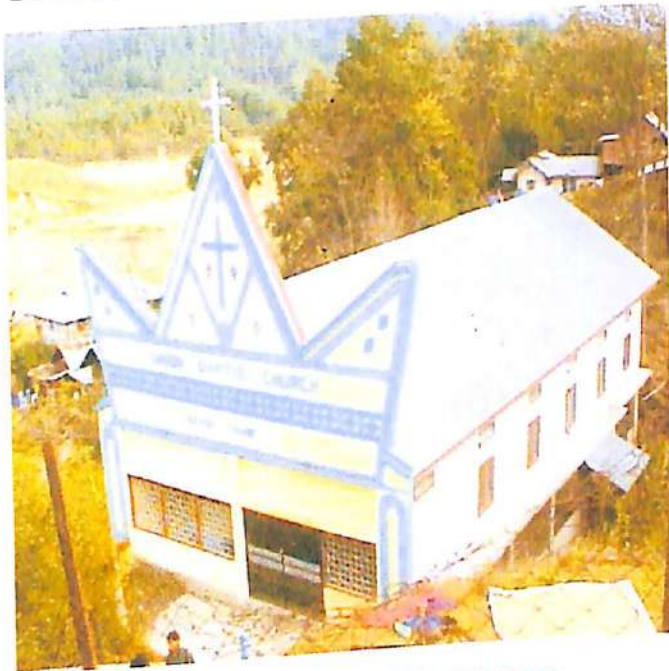
⁴³ N.T. Rikam, *op.cit.*, pp.136-138 ff.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

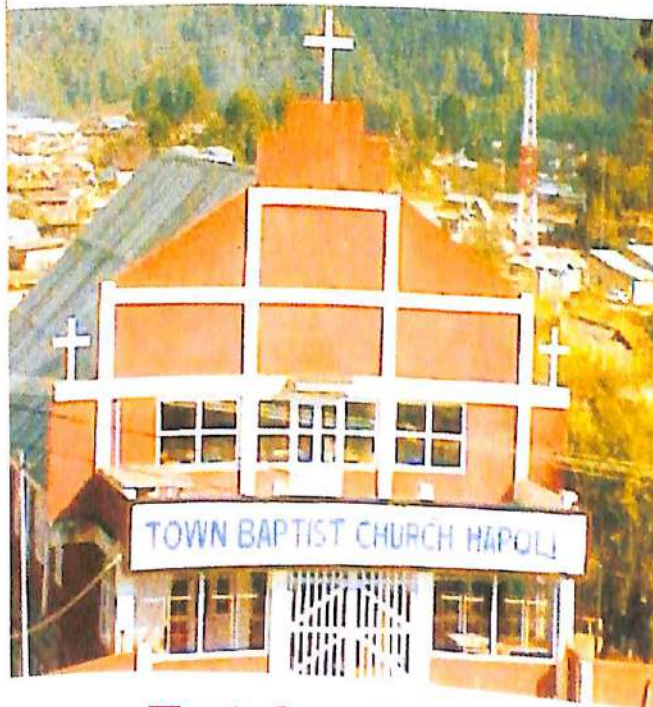
UNION BAPTIST CHURCH, Yadi



Baptish church at
Ziro Valley.

Estd : 2003

TOWN BAPTIST CHURCH, Pai-Gate



Estd : 1984

It is true that the Hindus unlike the Christians do not go for formal or mass conversion among the Apatanis; instead they try to assimilate some aspects of the Hindu faith and belief into the indigenous religious fold⁴⁷. They also project themselves as the upholders of traditional faith and culture. Today there are many active Hindu organizations that are working among the Apatanis. These organizations include –‘Arunachal Vikas Parishad’; ‘Arun Jyoti’; ‘Rashtriya Seva Sangh’; ‘Ramakrishna Mission and Vivekananda Mission’; etc. These organizations are operating in the Apatani valley in the name of promoting and preserving indigenous culture and religion. And it has been said that the main objective of these organizations is to contain the act of Christianization rather than to propagate their own religious belief and practices⁴⁸. They project Christianity as an alien religion⁴⁹. List of the Hindu temples in the Apatani Valley are shown in fig. 5.9.

But the Hinduism is no less alien religion to me because their way of worshipping the gods and goddesses is quite different from the nature worshipping of the indigenous people. Nor their activities is really encouraging the promotion and preservation of indigenous culture. Because of their activities many of younger generation and educated elites particularly whose educational background belong to

⁴⁷ N.T. Rikam, op.cit., pp.136-138.

⁴⁸ Nani Bath, ‘*Religious Belief and Practices of the Apatanis in Transition*’ in Tamo Mibang and S.K.Choudhuri’s ed. *Understanding Tribal Religion*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2004, p.205.

⁴⁹ N.T. Rikam, op.cit., pp.136-138.



Shideswar Nath Linga at *Kardo*, 4 km. away from Hapoli Pai-Gate.



This 'shiva linga' was discovered in 2004 at *kardo* and later on a Hindu temple was established here which is known as Shideswar Nath Temple. Now Hindu devotees from across the country come here to pay attribute.

5.8.3. Emerging Religious Institutions:

In the contestation between the Hinduism and Christianity for spreading their religious ideology cultural values among the indigenous people, there emerge a new religious institution called '*Donyi-Poloism*' among the indigenous people of this region. This new religious institution of the indigenous people is said to be based on the traditional religious belief of the Tani group⁵¹. The *Tani* groups which include the tribes like the Nyishis, the Apatani, the Adis, the Hill Miris, the Tagins and the Mishing are traditionally believers of the Donyi-Polo (sun and moon). But *Donyi-Poloism* had not been in an institutionalized form, as they do not have any place of worship⁵².

In the name of stemming the tide of cultural and religious influences from outside and to preserve the old traditional cultural and religious practices, a new religious movement started among the indigenous people of Arunachal⁵³. This new religious movement, which is known as *Donyi-Poloism*, is said to be based on the principle of traditions and belief system of indigenous people. Initially, the effort for institutionalizing the *Donyi-Poloism* had been started by Talom Rukbo in late 1980's in the Pasighat area⁵⁴ and is now rapidly spreading to the areas inhabited by the Tani group in the central belt

⁵⁰ The Nyishis, Apatanis, Hill Miris, Tagins, Adis, Galo and Mishing constitute the *Tani* group of the tribes in Arunachal. These tribes is said to be the descendent of same ancestor called '*Abotanis*'.

⁵¹ Bath, Nani, op.cit., pp.201-202.

⁵² Ashan Riddi, op.cit., p.254.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

of Arunachal. This new religious movement among the indigenous people of Tani group can be understand as reinterpretation and redefining of the traditional practices to tune it with the changing reality of life. Talom Rukbo, the founder father of *Donyi-Poloism* said:

Now the society needs a new testament of faith and practices and to achieve it we need a revolutionary type of reformative act on with modification, rectification and reorganization to dig out the vital things. To do it the society needs practice of spiritual aspiration for salvation. We have to give-up unnecessary practices like animal sacrifice, taboo and worship to evil spirit. In these, there is no purification of heart, but full and dark (sic) and superstitions. To bring peace, confidence and strength in our mind we need a system of direct communication to *Donyi-Polo*⁵⁵.

In order to promote and propagate the indigenous culture and belief system, non-government organization called – ‘Indigenous Faith and Culture Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP) was formed in December, 1999⁵⁶. The objective of this organization is to conglomerate of all the faiths and cultures, which are indigenous in nature in accordance with the Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Faith Act of 1978⁵⁷. This organization (IFCSAP) played an active role in

⁵⁵ Talom Rukbo, ‘*Donyi Polo faith and Practice of the Adis*’ in *Indigenous Faith and Practices of the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh*, ed. M.C. Behera & S.K. Choudhury, Himalayan Publication, Itanagar, 1998, pp.71-72.

⁵⁶ N.T. Rikam, *op.cit.*, p.134.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

propagating the new religious ideology of *Donyi-Poloism* among the *Tani* group with the catchy slogan of 'loss of culture is loss identity.'

Based on the concept and principles of *Donyi-Poloism* as conceived by Talom Rukbo, the Apatanis today constructed many temples called '*medder nelo*' in their villages. In this regard, some of the Hindu organizations such as 'Arunachal Vikas Parishad', 'Arun Jyoti' and 'Rashtriya Seva Sangh' play an important role. They not only encourage the indigenous people to preserve their old customs and traditions but also give financial support for construction of temples in the villages. Consequently, Hindu influence is clearly visible in worship of *Donyi-Poloism*. Believers gather at *Donyi-Polo* temple (*medder nelo*) and prayers are offered at every Sunday. Ringing of bells, offerings and burning of incense sticks, and drinking of the holy water clearly resemble the rites and rituals in any Hindu temples. List of the *Donyi-Polo* mandirs which had been constructed with support of Hindu organization in the valley are shown in fig. 5.9.

After assessing the activities at the *medder nelo*, I feel that *Donyi-Poloism* is not meant for the promotion or preservation of traditional religious belief system of the indigenous people. Followers of *Donyi-Poloism* like that of Christianity, also discard the religious rites and rituals without which the indigenous religion has no meaning. Close observation of *Donyi-Poloism* and its activities reflect that consciously or unconsciously the core of indigenous religious practices is being diluted by the Hindu fold. On the whole, the

Fig. 5.9

List of the *Donyi-Polo* Mandir or *Medder Nelo* in the Ziro Valley

Sl. No.	Name	Location	Year of Establishment
1	Medder Nelo	Kalung	2006
2	Medder Nelo	Ruru	2006
3	Medder Nelo	Tajang	2005
4	Medder Nelo	Old Ziro	2005
5	Medder Nelo	Hija / Dutta Pahpti Meder Nelo	2008
6	Medder Nelo	Sibe / Solang	2008
7	Medder Nelo	Spuñ Mender Nalo, Hapoli	2006
8	Medder Nelo	Siuro	2007
9	Medder Nelo	Hong	2008
10	Medder Nelo	Hari	2006

Sources: Field Data collected from Ziro.

activities of *Donyi-Poloism* also contributed towards the decline of the traditional socio-religious institutions of the Apatanis such as the *nyibu* and *gorra*. These two are main pillars of Apatanis religious practices. Without rites and rituals, the existence of these two traditional institutions has no meaning.

5.8. Conclusion:

The Apatani society as a whole is rapidly changing with onslaught of modernity, introduction of modern education, government initiative and cultural influence from outside. This rapid change in cultural practices has not only brought about the

development of new socio-economic and political institutions but it has also created a space for the development of new religious institutions in the society. The emergence or development of modern institutions again undermines the age-old traditional institutions of the society. As a result, the traditional institutions which once played a prominent role in the society are now on the verge of declining. However, it is undeniable fact that modern institutions will naturally take time to stabilize in the way of indigenous life and to be accepted by the local people. It will be disastrous, if the age-old institutions are deliberately overlooked and left to decline.⁵⁸ Because of the sheer perseverance of the *gorra* member, their devotion and hard work this age-old traditional institution has been able to sustain its position in the society. But how long it will be able to maintain its position and identify amidst modernization and change? And what will happen to the Apatani society if this institution disappears? Will the modern institutions be able to replace the role of *gorra* institution in the society? These are few questions that one needs to ponder upon before we immerse ourselves into modernization and change of the traditional custom and cultural practices.

⁵⁸ Ashan Riddi, op. cit., p.254.

CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

Material culture is a product of man's action upon nature. This is marked in tribal societies as they are environmentally circumscribed. There is an intertwining of the social, economic and polity facets. The social structures are interrogated by their experiences derived from day-to-day activities. The belief system too reflects the awe of elements of nature and the surrounding environment. Specific ecological niches help create society's distinctive cultural identity. Culture which earlier read into physical manifestations is now looked upon as a composite value system which emerges in a society. Society is sustained on the edifice of institutions which cater to the material well being of all its members. The traditional institutions are a means of maintaining equilibrium in the society both on the spiritual and temporal plane. A study of individual institutions helps us unearth the various facets of tribal life ways and culture.

One of the salient features of the Apatani culture is the indigenous form of religious complex which is marked by a set of elaborate rites, rituals and animal sacrifices. Sedentary agriculture, supplemented by fishing and hunting is the primary economic activity of the Apatanis. Having lived in a valley sequestered by hills, they have evolved an indigenous model of cultivation without advanced agricultural implements. This has provided them a unique position in

the mountainous region where communities are still practitioners of shifting cultivation known as 'jhum'. Therefore, among the Apatanis evolved elaborate sets of rituals to appease all elements of nature.

Unlike the Western concept of the differentiating in binaries between the sacred and profane domains, the indigenous communities make little distinction between these domains. Religious beliefs and its embedded rituals are manifest in their patterns of kinship, linguistic patterns, aspects of governance and visions of the landscape. For organizing these rituals and maintain a link between the material and spiritual domains certain custodians were identified. The society is divided on the basis of certain lineage based markers into four stratas. Of these, the *jogyih* or *nyibu* (priest) and *buliang-gorra* assume prominent status on account of their responsibilities towards integration all reality between the human and natural world. These entities are interwoven and not considered segregate of each other. Personhood is assigned to manifestations of nature. By exploring the structure of these institutions and their role in society a reconstruction of the cultural history of the Apatanis is attempted.

Though the institution of *gorra* is an essential component of the Apatani society the institution has failed to draw the attention of the earlier scholars. This institution is conjectured to be as old as the history of the Apatanis themselves. The institution took roots at a mythical abode *iipyo supun* in order to deal with the nature phenomenon of 'thunderbolt and hailstorm' which they encountered for the first time. It had destroyed the *iipyo pamiñ-molyañ*. With

complex requirements of sedentary cultivation the existing priestly class was perceived to be inadequate in dealing with events of such magnitude. A broad based organization to deal with these hitherto unknown elements of nature was formed. This was to ensure that the mainstay of their livelihood – agriculture – is protected from the wrath of the supernatural forces by their intervention. This indicates that the institution of the *gorra* existed among the Apatanis much before they migrated to their present habitat to practice sedentary agriculture.

The crucial role of the *gorras* has been outlined in Chapter III and IV. Through the various cosmological narratives they rationalize their significance as interventionists. Through the myths they seek to rationalize symbolically their universe and how the *gorras* are crucial in bringing orderliness to society. The *gorras* through the prescription of rituals and myths that are stated and performed is for the purpose of maintaining some sense of order between peoples, and between peoples and the other part of the environment, and between peoples and gods. Myths and rituals provide a means of enacting or reenacting and thus codify rules whereby people understand what behaviours are required of them, or disallowed and helps to maintain a sense of belonging to their own culture. Apart from organizing rituals for the entire village they also involved in certain individual rituals and rites to bless and intervene on behalf of the individual and save him from the spells of evil spirits.

If we examine the role of *gorra* from the point view of sustenance practices, they influence the entire production process too. A somewhat more complex religious culture is found in early agricultural societies. It is commonly accepted that the earliest form of agriculture was both a feminine rite and a female right. Agricultural rituals became a powerful symbolic language that spoke of gestation, birth, nurture, and death.

By organizing agricultural rituals, as discussed in Chapter III, on one hand, the *gorras* ensure the continuity of the fertility of the soil, which is essential for agricultural subsistence. On the other hand, they protect the crops from insects, pests and natural calamities like hailstorm and thunderbolt. As mentioned earlier that the Apatani valley comes under the heavy rainfall zone. Besides this, in humid environmental condition also some insects and pests like steam borer, rice bug and blast etc., considerably damage the crops. It is of interest to note that based on the community memory their crops had never failed under any circumstances. This is perhaps as the Apatanis take great pains in controlling the fertility of soil with the help of an elaborate indigenous water management and land tilling system. These efforts are supported by cropping pattern most suited to their environment. The societal perception is that, the success of subsistence lies in the agricultural rituals organized by the *gorras*. The members of *gorra* too claim that through their spiritual interventions that insects, pests and natural calamities are prevented. It means that a bountiful harvest is credited to the intervention of the *gorras*. In fact,

in course of my study I myself have witnessed that pale and wilting crops turn healthy after *gorras* performed the agricultural rituals. Thus, the *gorras* claim of their constructive role in agricultural activities of the Apatanis does not seem to be in vain.

The social harmony and peaceful co-existence of the Apatanis too, is largely mediated by the role of *gorra*. We have seen in Chapter IV that *gorras*, apart from agricultural rituals also organized certain rituals such as *gorra-dapo* and *muchu-dapala* for social harmony, to prevent the epidemic and diseases from spreading to surrounding villages. Though these rituals are not seasonal and are performed only when situation demanded but they are equally important for society. Therefore they serve as effective instruments of negotiation with the non-human aspects to make society free from disease and pestilence.

Religion being universal phenomena always regulates the socio-cultural behaviour of people in any society. Their concept of religion is based on belief and faith related to mysterious supernatural world and comprises of their efforts to smoothly negotiate without segregating both the realms. They show great respect and concern towards soul and spirits, which though, invisible but their presence is felt all around. Apart from belief in spirits they also believe in the existence of a 'supreme being' or 'high god', a powerful creator and protector, omniscient and omnipresent. If the High God is ever invoked, it is only under the most extreme of circumstances, and there

is no great expectation by anyone that such a prayer will be heard or reacted to.

The life of an individual Apatani is perceived to be influenced by the actions of these spirits. Sickness, misfortunes and accident are believed to be caused by these spirits, for having violated the norms of orderliness prescribed. All these spirits, gods, goddesses and deities that are appeased during the rites and rituals. They are believed to be the source of sustenance of socio-economic and cultural life of the Apatanis. In this sense, the *gorra* can be interpreted as institution sustaining itself on the faith, belief and fear of spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. The rituals which the *gorras* perform either for agricultural purpose or social harmony are nothing but collective apprehension of or curiosity towards supernatural world. Hence, the institution of *gorra* plays an important role in the religious life of the Apatanis by providing them a platform for collective worship and sacrifices.

As the rituals organized by *gorras* is meant for village as a whole, they raise resources which ensures redistribution of wealth. They also put some restrictions on the movement and activities of the villagers for certain days after the ritual is performed. During the period of restriction or taboos, people abstain from their work in the agricultural fields, gardens and forests. The objective of these taboos is to restrict an individual to adhere to the societal norms and securing peace with the environment. Implementation of these taboos is so rigid that no one dares to violate it at any cost. And if anyone

violates it intentionally or unintentionally, the persons would have to bear imposed fine by *gorras*. Whenever *gorras* imposes a fine for the violation of taboos of rituals performed by them, no one dares to intervene. This clearly explains that *gorras* have an independent and unchallenged authority so far the village rituals and implementation of its taboos are concerned. Again by collecting donation from each household for village ritual and implementing the taboos of the rituals, the *gorras* create an inter-personal relationship and deepen the sense of belonging. Through the developed ritual practices they seek to instill the collective memories of the people and their homeland in individual bodies and minds. This helps in sustaining unity among the villagers in particular and the community in general.

Hence, the relevance and significance of *gorra* institution can be gleaned from the flourishing sedentary agriculture based economy of the Apatani society. To this is attributed their levels of advancement on the social scale. The members of this institution can therefore be called as socio-religious volunteers of the Apatanis. By dealing with the threat of the spiritual domain the *gorras* provide a sense of security to the villagers and community at large from all kind of adversities.

Nevertheless, the system and institution embedded in the ideas of a specific religion and practices is necessarily a product of time and space. As group advances in time or moves forward with development and progress, it necessarily undergoes changes. Today the institution of *gorra* is also on the threshold of extinction. Presently no one

aspires to become a member of this institution. The *gorra* no longer is considered a dignified office as the rewards that the member gets for their service to society is not commensurate to their labour. As we have seen in Chapter II and IV, the *gorras* does not get any reward for their services towards society except for *amañ*, a contribution made by the initiator of the *subu* and *muiruñ* rites. Nor do they enjoy any special privilege or position in the society. In their daily life, they lead a life of an ordinary man in the society; except for the time when they organize village rituals and oversee its taboos. The conversion of a ritual into a community festival has also diminished their importance.

Again a fear psychosis is also instilled in the minds of the *gorras* that the evil spirits whom they have eradicated from the village may avenge, after their death. This is because the Apatanis believe in life after death. This is the reason why the *gorras* paint their faces with *chinyu* (soot) while driving out the evil spirits from the village, so that evil spirits cannot identify them. Coupled with other reasons now-a-days people generally do not opt for the membership of the *gorra* institution. As a result, this traditional institution of the Apatanis is in the verge of decline.

Another reason for the diminishing importance of the *gorra* may be attributed to the development activities in the economic sphere which brought in concomitant changes in socio-cultural sphere. In addition factors like introduction of institutions of governance, spread in the reach of Christianity, influence of Hindu culture and western culture. The appeal of the traditional belief and practices of the

Apatanis is fast losing its ground among the younger generation. Exposure to a variety of culture, modernization of social norms and globalization has weaned them away from their cultural values. The festivals of other faiths like *Durga Puja*, *Deepawali*, *Holi*, *Christmas*, etc. arouse interest among the youth. The exogamous factors are striking at the root of the cultural edifice of the society. This is however not to say that all institutions are vanishing. Given the dynamism of society the old value system is absorbing the external influences, and modifying the traditional institutions which results in the emergence of new traditions.

Education has been one of the major accelerators of social change. Its visible positive impact has been in terms of creation of awareness on redundant and superstitious social practices. It is true that modern institution like educational institutions played an important role in modernization of the tribal people. It is playing a very significant role not only in bringing about a series of changes in the society and creates awareness among the Apatanis to shed away the superstitious practice of the society. But at the same time, the educational institutions also give birth to new social class as 'educated elites' among the Apatanis. This new social group generally maintains certain exclusiveness from the traditional cultural practices of the society.

Similarly, the religious denominations such as Christians and Hindus also rendered a great service to the Apatani society. They have provided a medical care and quality education to the people. But their

apparent philanthropic activities have in no way created scope for the promotion and preservation of the indigenous culture in its true essence. Especially, Christianity openly denounces the ritualistic activities of the indigenous people as it involves animal sacrifices. The people converted to Christianity desist from associating or joining social functions including the indigenous festivals and construction of houses by clan members. They termed the religious activities of the indigenous people as *satanic* and sinful, and hence they openly discard, denounce and disassociate themselves from such practices. In nutshell the advent of Christianity is a crucial factor in erosion of the cultural and socio-religious fabric of the Apatanis. Their activities has often functioned as a force of fission in disintegrating the indigenous institution and organization in terms of emergence of caste like groups, viz., Christian and non-Christian among the tribal people. This fissure has permeated into the basic structure of village life where all community activities have been hampered even the residential segregation is visible in the villages on religious faultlines.

But activities of the Hindu organizations are of concern to me. Their activities are also not encouraging the promotion or preservation of age-old cultural practices of the tribal people. It is true that Hinduism does not go for direct conversion but tacitly influences the tribal people so as to assimilate the tribal or indigenous religious belief to the Hindu fold. This is the reason that the Hindu organizations are funding the Apatanis to construct the *Donyi-Polo* temples and as I mentioned earlier, the activities in this temples have great resemblance to activities in the Hindu temples. Apart from this,

the Hindu organizations also started naming the Hindu temples with indigenous terminology such as *Donyi-Polo* Shiv Mandir. This clearly explains that their prime motive is not to encourage the tribal culture but to assimilate them into the Hindu fold.

It is true that every age has its own value system and what was considered as laudable by the previous may acquire a new dimensions and perspective by the next. The cultural values itself is very dynamic and selective, which always flow with progressive continuity. The cultural traditions and its values always march with the human comforts and progressive spirit, and have got a transformative tendency. But such changes should evolve from within the society, and not at the instance of the out-side initiative or forces. We have seen in Chapter V, how Christianity has repudiated the cultural practices of the Apatanis considering it as *satanic* and sinful. At the instance of their religious masters, the converted Apatanis abandoned their traditional cultural practices in totality. They even refused to participate in the village activities in any form. This attitude is incapable of bringing in progressive reform in the society but on the contrary will consume the socio-cultural fabric of the tribal people. Besides, it leads to the disintegration of traditional institutions as it happening with the institution of *gorra*.

Similarly at the instance of some Hindu organization, attempt has made to institutionalize the indigenous religion in form of *Donyi-Poloism*. But it does not resolve the question of continuity of tribal cultural and religious practices. Rather it is diluting the entire gamut

of religious practices making it identifiable with of Hinduism. It is pertinent to bear in the mind that the indigenous religion of the Apatanis does not have the concept of gods and goddesses. Rather it is an expression of their everyday experience. Their encounter with the vagaries of nature has helped in shaping the agricultural rituals. It helps ensure perpetuity and prosperity in their dominant means of livelihood to negotiate with the spirits that populate the unknown realm the *gorra* was constituted. The intricacies of the relationship between the spritual and temporal plane is mediated by the *gorras* will loose its dynamism fixed into structures of established religion. Institutionalizing indigenous faith which rooted in the social fabric would destroy the Apatani religion.

The Apatani's cultural history of the past shows a strong thread of unity, which runs through the infinite multiplicity of their life. The situation in the midst of immense pressures is transformation but all is however not absolutely dreary and lost. In the wake of rapid modernization too, some of the socio-religious practices survive due the immeasurable efforts of the *popi-sarmi* (elderly and knowledgeable persons), *nyibu* (priest) and *gorras* (socio-religious volunteer). However, this is despite the fact that social cohesion has diminished. The societal outlook is marked by accommodation of cultural diversity which appears superficial to me. The schism in society is marked in terms of the divide on religious line viz., Christianity and indigenous religion. Questions of identity for these two groups assume different meaning. In future issues of who is the

real custodian of the Apatani society is likely to be assume a central place is debate.

Despite of all these development and changes, the elderly people in the society including the women urge for the continuity of the *gorra* in the society. Unlike educated youths, converted Christians or influenced by Hinduism, these elderly sections experienced the need of such institution and appreciate the role of *gorra* in the society. They still believe that their social existence and economic prosperity is largely determined by the *gorras*. They also expressed their apprehension that if *gorra* declines and disappears, it will affect the society in form of disaster and misfortune. But I am afraid as to how long they will be able to sustain these institutions in the wake of the religio-cultural onslaught. Will the elders as custodians of tradition be able insulate themselves from the fast and furious pace on incoming religious like Christianity and influences of Hinduism on traditional structures? These are questions to which cannot be addressed with the present state of my knowledge and available data.

Therefore, the documentation of such traditional institutions is all more important means to preserve the rich traditions and cultural heritage that are embodied in such institution. We must document such traditional institutions before it ceases to exist under clouds of modernity, progress and grips of outside culture. If we do not vitalize and document vital aspects of the traditional institution like *gorra* with added emphasis on the role to bind the community common

ground it may really perish and in the process, the rich traditions and cultural heritage embodied in such institution may lost forever.

Considering these aspects, I have undertaken the issue of a study the *gorra*. I consider it still to be partial study and beginning towards the documentation of this traditional institution. I hope that this partial study will draw the attention of many scholars and helpful for those who want to make further studies in this regard as this institution failed to get any attention of the earlier scholars.

GLOSSARY

<i>Agre</i>	Bound of the agricultural field
<i>Ahali</i>	Buried or dumped
<i>Ajie</i>	Paddy field
<i>Akha</i>	Old
<i>Akie</i>	Dog
<i>Ali-Alo</i>	Seed and crops
<i>Alo-ayo</i>	Day night
<i>Alyi-durgu</i>	Fire hearth
<i>Allyu</i>	Lost of something
<i>Amañ</i>	Reward of gorra
<i>Anyañ</i>	Year
<i>Apiñ</i>	Rice
<i>Anyodu</i>	Taboos, period of ritual abstention from work
<i>Ayukonia</i>	Since time immemorial
<i>Ayu</i>	Balladic hymns
<i>Barju</i>	Cane basket used by women to carry firewood
<i>Bagi</i>	Carrying
<i>Balu</i>	Kitchen garden
<i>Biañ</i>	Tread used to tie skirt
<i>Bielo</i>	Earlier or past
<i>Bihlyo</i>	Yesterday
<i>Bogo</i>	An artificial irrigation channel
<i>Biiju-keju</i>	Way of giving
<i>Builañ</i>	Village council

<i>Bunchi Piillo</i>	Month of September
<i>Chandi-Metii</i>	Twin gods of agriculture
<i>Chiibilye</i>	To take possession of something
<i>Chinyu</i>	soot
<i>Dapo - Pogyañ</i>	<i>Dapo</i> alter
<i>Damu</i>	Wooden stick with a pointed to make hole for putting grain/ seed in the field
<i>Deepe</i>	Spade
<i>Diiro</i>	Medicine
<i>Doji</i>	Deities
<i>Doli-sariñ</i>	Diseases and epidemic
<i>Dree</i>	Meeting the shortage buying from others
<i>Dree Pillo</i>	July month
<i>Emo</i>	Paddy
<i>Empi Piillo</i>	June month
<i>Enda Piillo</i>	Month of July
<i>Ganda</i>	Land or country
<i>Giiju-giimyi</i>	Traditional custom
<i>Gorra</i>	Village ritual organizer
<i>Gyunyañ Uhi</i>	A group of deities
<i>Huta</i>	Wooden bat used for preparing paddy field
<i>Hula</i>	A kind of root crops
<i>Ilyo</i>	Sword
<i>Ingi-Inge</i>	A kind of arum
<i>Kacho</i>	Dirty
<i>Kele</i>	Split bamboo stick used in weeding

<i>Kile</i>	River
<i>Kile-Silyo</i>	River bank
<i>Kiire</i>	Kind of animal
<i>Lapañ</i>	Clan assembly wooden platform
<i>Layu</i>	Village junction
<i>Lemba</i>	Village
<i>Lyipyo</i>	Dry land for millet cultivation
<i>Medder nello</i>	Doni-Poloism temple
<i>Miji-Miiguñ</i>	Classic balladic myths sing in rites like <i>Subu</i> , <i>Muruñ</i> , etc.
<i>Miyu</i>	Human being
<i>Muchu</i>	Fire accident
<i>Mukuh</i>	Tobacco
<i>muddo</i>	Rain
<i>Muruñ</i>	An individual rite observed in winter season (December or January)
<i>Myoko</i>	Spring festival performed in each village once in three year
<i>Myoko Pillo</i>	March month
<i>Myokuñ</i>	Name of agricultural ritual given to gathering of deities
<i>Nyibu</i>	Priest
<i>Nami</i>	Upper sector
<i>Nako</i>	Lower sector
<i>Ngiiyi</i>	Fish
<i>Nii-pabo</i>	General public

<i>O</i>	Rice beer used as ceremonial drink and sacrifice drink
<i>Palii</i>	Split bamboo with on edge sharpened for weeding
<i>Piipiñ</i>	A bamboo mat on which rice is dried
<i>patañ</i>	Agricultural gang labour
<i>Popi Sarmiñ</i>	Elderly knowledgeable person of the society
<i>Pahiñ</i>	Liver
<i>putu</i>	mountain
<i>Sampya</i>	Wooden try used agricultural activities
<i>sanii</i>	trees
<i>Sarse – Andi</i>	Millet and paddy crops
<i>Subu</i>	Bosfrontalis/ individual religious rites
<i>Tabuñ-Doli</i>	Epidemic of small pox
<i>Tachañ – Tiyo</i>	Pests and insects
<i>Tagi</i>	Sickle for cutting paddy and millet crops
<i>Taki-Kazie</i>	Ginger salad
<i>Tari</i>	Hailstone
<i>Takoo</i>	Cucumber
<i>Tasañ</i>	Beads
<i>Tasiñ</i>	Nymph
<i>Tanyi</i>	Maize
<i>Tero</i>	Chilly
<i>tiipe</i>	Tattoo mark
<i>Yadiñ</i>	Bamboo and cane basket made for keeping good cloth and other valuable iteams
<i>Yagi</i>	Basket of cane and bamboo for carrying paddy
<i>Yapio</i>	A flat cane devise used for winnowing chaff

<i>yasie</i>	water
<i>yatii</i>	Rain shield
<i>Yoh-aso</i>	Bacon
<i>Yoh-Kazie</i>	Meat salad
<i>Yoh-Sankho</i>	Dry meat

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Appendix – I

Gorra : A Socio-Religious Institution of the Apatanis

Interview Schedule

Part-I (A)

Personal Information of Informant

1. Name :
2. Status :
3. Village and clan :
4. Age and Sex :
5. Marital status :
6. Religion :
7. Nature of family :
8. Size of family :
9. Education :
10. Occupation :
11. Annual income :
 - a) Respondent
 - b) Family's
12. Property :
13. Any other valuables :

Appendix - II

Part-II

For members of Gorra

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 1. | Do you know the institution of <i>gorra</i> ? | : | Yes / No |
| 2. | If yes, what is <i>gorra</i> ? Or <i>gorra</i> institution | : | 1. Social organization
2. Interest group
3. Pressure group
4. Addition Notes |
| 3. | What is the role that performed by <i>gorra</i> ? | : | 1. Social
2. Economic
3. Religions
4. Political |
| 4. | What is the response of converted people toward you? | : | 1.
2.
3. |
| 5. | Does the <i>gorra</i> still exist among the Apatanis? | : | Yes / No |
| 6. | How many types of <i>gorra</i> are there? | : | 1. One
2. Two
3. Three or more |
| 7. | How many types of rituals are organized by the <i>Gorra</i> ? | : | 1. One
2. Two
3. More than two |
| 8. | What are the rituals organized by <i>Gorra</i> ? | : | 1.
2.
3. |
| 9. | Dose the <i>gorra</i> differ from the <i>builañ</i> and priest? | : | Yes / No |
| 10. | What are the qualifications required to be the members of <i>gorra</i> ? | : | 1. Traditional
2. Economic
3. Other than these |

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 11. | Who among your predecessors as a <i>gorra</i> ? | : | Name :
Relation: |
| 12. | Have you ever been taken any action against anybody as a <i>gorra</i> ? | : | Additional notes |
| 13. | What you get in return of your services? | : | 1.
2.
3.
4. Nothing
Yes / No |
| 14. | Do you receive any help from Government or NGOs? | : | Yes / No |
| 15. | Who will be your successor | : | 1. Your son
2. Other elders of clan
3. Don't know |

Appendix - III

Part-III

For the priest and other elderly person

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 1. | Do you know the <i>gorra</i> ? | : | Yes / No |
| 2. | If yes, what is <i>gorra</i> ? | | 1. Social organization
2. Interest group
3. Pressure group
4. Other than those |
| 3. | How <i>gorra</i> did was originated? Description | : | 1.
2.
3. |
| 4. | Is there any oral tradition on <i>gorra</i> ? If yes | : | Yes / No
1.
2.
3. |
| 5. | What is the role performed by <i>gorra</i> ? | : | 1.
2.
3. |
| 6. | Does <i>gorra</i> still exist in society? | : | Yes / No |
| 7. | Is <i>gorra</i> really essential for the society? | : | Yes / No |
| 8. | Can <i>gorra</i> be called as an assistant of priest? | : | Yes / No |
| 9. | What will happen if there is no <i>gorra</i> in society? | : | 1.
2.
3. |
| 10. | What sort of reward does <i>gorra</i> receive in return of their service? | : | 1.
2.
3. |
| 11. | How one can become a member of <i>gorra</i> ? | : | 1.
2.
3. |

Appendix – IV

Part-IV

For educated youths and converted people

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Do you know the <i>gorra</i> ? Or institution of <i>gorra</i> ? | : | Yes / No |
| 2. If yes, what is <i>Gorra</i> ? | : | 1. Social organization
2. Interest group
3. Pressure group
4. Other than those |
| 3. Dose the <i>gorra</i> still exist among the Apatanis? | : | Yes / No / Don't know |
| 4. Is <i>gorra</i> really essential for the society? | : | Yes / No / Don't know |
| 5. What is the role performed by <i>gorra</i> ? | : | 1.
2.
3.
4. Don't know |
| 6. What will happen if there is no <i>gorra</i> in society? | : | 1.
2.
3.
4. Don't know |
| 7. Do you give donation when <i>gorra</i> ask to do so? | : | Yes / No |
| 8. Do you follow the taboos of rituals organized by <i>gorra</i> ? | : | Yes / No |
| 9. Have you ever been witnessed ritual organized by <i>gorra</i> ? | : | Yes / No |

Appendix - V

Part-V

For women only

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 1. | Have you heard of <i>gorra</i> institution? | : | Yes / No |
| 2. | If yes, what is <i>Gorra</i> ? | : | 1. Social organization
2. Interest group
3. Pressure group
4. Other than those |
| 3. | What is sort of role <i>gorra</i> performs in the society? | : | 1. Social
2. Political
3. Economic
4. Religions |
| 4. | How many types of rituals <i>Gorra</i> organized? | : | 1. One
2. Two
3. More than two |
| 5. | Are rituals organized by <i>gorra</i> really effective for agriculture? | : | Yes / No |
| 6. | Have you ever complaint <i>gorra</i> to organized rituals related to agriculture? | : | Yes / No |
| 7. | Do you think <i>gorra</i> is essential institution? | : | Yes / No |
| 8. | What will happen to agriculture if there is no <i>gorra</i> ? Description | : | 1.
2.
3. |
| 9. | Have you ever violated the taboos of ritual organized by <i>Gorra</i> ? | : | Yes / No |
| 10. | What you give <i>Gorra</i> in return of their services? | : | 1.
2.
3. |