

History & Culture of
THE ADIS

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Arunachal Pradesh is a land of various tribal groups, who have different traditions and culture of their own. The Adis, who were formerly known as the Abors, constitute a major tribe of the state. They are divided into two main groups, viz., the Padam Minyong group, comprising the sub-tribes — the Padams, Minyong, Pasis, Panggis, Shimongs, Karkos, Milangs, Tangams, Ashings and the Boris, and the Galo group comprising of the sub-tribes—the Galos, Pailibos, Ramos and the Bokars.

Till now no study on detailed and complete history of any tribe of Arunachal Pradesh has ever been attempted. There is also no attempt to study the Adis as a single tribe in all their aspects. Hence this work is an attempt to study their history and all aspects of their traditional life and indigenous culture to fill a long-felt gap of knowledge in this respect.

In the absence of historical evidence, like most peoples, early history of the tribe is shrouded in myths and legends. During the medieval period, particularly since the 17th century we find mention of the Adis(Abors) in the Ahom Chronicles. During the British period, particularly from 1848 onwards the troubles between the Adis and the English started. Their relation reached its climax in 1911 when Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya was murdered by the Adis. This resulted in the Abor Expedition (1911-12). This event is the turning point in the administrative history of Arunachal Pradesh.

This book is divided into Eight Chapters. The First Four Chapters deal with the people and their land and their history. The remaining Four Chapters are devoted to all aspects of the life and system of the Adis viz. their socio-cultural aspects. The author being himself an Adi has clarified many of the misconceptions of the early writers on the tribe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Tai Nyori was born at Rilu village in West siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. He got his school education from Daring and Along Schools securing the first position in NEFA (Present Arunachal Pradesh) in the M.E. Final Examination in 1959 and obtaining the highest mark among Arunachalee (NEFA) candidates in Matriculation Examination in 1963. For these performances he got merit scholarships. He passed his B.A. (Honours) in History from St. Edmund's College, Shillong in 1968. He obtained his degrees of M.A. in History and of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from Gauhati University in 1970 and 1988 respectively. He is the first Arunachalee to qualify B.A. (Hons.) M.A. and Ph.D. Degrees in the discipline of History. He has published a number of research papers in several journals and presented such papers to seminars/conferences.

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History & Culture of **THE ADIS**



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Preface

This work is a study of the people and culture of the Adirumchal Pradakh from the prehistoric to the present with special emphasis on their traditional life and culture. The study is divided into eight chapters with the following subjects:

Chapter I deals with the origin of the Adirumchal people, their distribution, features, the character of their life, the geographical features of their present land, the activities of the people, the mineral deposits. Here and there in Chapter II, the origin of the Adirumchal people and migration, based on myths, legends and various other sources, is also mentioned. Chapter III gives an historical study of the relations with their neighbours, such as with the Ahom, the Assamese and during the colonial period the Malaya, the Telugus, the Tamils and the

Bill Miris. The Chapter IV deals with their contacts and relations with the English from the first half of the nineteenth century up to the attainment of India's independence in 1947. Chapter V deals with the traditional life and culture of the Adirumchal people.

To

**MRS. YIGAM NYORI — WIFE
MASTER IDAR NYORI — SON
MISS IGE NYORI — DAUGHTER**

Who inspired the author to accomplish this work.

At the completion of my work, I feel the privilege to acknowledge my gratitude to my parents and my late father, Mr. Phukan, Head of Post-graduate Department of History, Gauhati University for his able supervision and encouragement. I also feel timely mention again my regretful absence from Gauhati for the Government of Assam Pradakh, for giving me leave and other leaves for which I could thank the Government of Gauhati University Grants Commission for their financial assistance to me for the period. My Principal and colleagues of the Department of History, Gauhati University, Government College, Pasighat for their help and understanding in allowing me to avail myself of leaves to finish this work.

Preface

This work is a study of the history and culture of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh from the earliest time to the present day with special emphasis on their traditional life and culture. The study is divided into Eight Chapters with a number of sub-chapters.

Chapter I deals with the origin of the name of the tribe, their distribution, location, the character of the tribe, the geographical features of their present land, the nature of its soil, its climate, the mineral deposits, flora and fauna. In Chapter II the origin of the Adis their early home and migrations based on myths, legends and various other sources and accounts have been examined. Chapter III gives an historical study of the relations with their neighbours, such as with the Ahom Government during the medieval period, the Mishmis, the Tibetans, the Tagins and the Hill Miris. The Chapter IV deals with their contacts and relations with the English from the first half of the nineteenth century upto the attainment of India's Independence in 1947. Chapter V deals with the traditional administration, the legal and judicial practices, the feuds defence and warfares of the tribe. Chapter VI contains the discussion on the economic life of the tribe, such as hunting, fishing, traditional agriculture (Jhum cultivation), weaving and other crafts, the live-stock, trade and some other economic activities. The Adi social life and institutions, languages, arts, and crafts have been discussed in Chapter VII. Chapter VIII contains the discussion on the Adi religious faiths, beliefs and practices.

At the completion of this work, I take the privilege to acknowledge my gratitude and indebtedness to professor. J. N. Phukan, Head of post-graduate Department of History, Gauhati University for his able supervision, encouragement, help and timely caution against my negligence. I extend my gratitude to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh for granting me study leave and other leaves for which I could finish this work in time, to the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, for its timely financial assistance to me for the same, to Principal and colleagues of the Department of History, Jawaharlal Nehru Government College, Pasighat for their help and understanding in allowing me to avail myself of leaves to finish this work.

I am grateful to the authorities and staff of the Assam State Archives, Dispur, the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati and of all libraries from where I collected data for this work. I express my gratitude to Shri B.D. Shastri, the retired Director of Research, A.P. and the Honorary Director of Adi Folk Literature Centre, Along for his help and encouragement to me, particularly in the beginning of this pursuit, to Shri Bijan Behari De, Reader, Department of History, Gauhati University, who was kind to extend his valuable opinion on some important points while the work was in progress.

I am also grateful to Dr. H.N. Bora, M.Sc., Lecturer, Dr. P.C. Panda, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., Lecturer, for helping me in preparing maps and sketches, Shri P.C. Deka, Laboratory Assistant, J.N. College, and Sri L. Panyang, Teacher, for helping me in typing some of my papers, Sri R. Deori, M.Sc., M.Phil., Lecturer, Sibsagar College, Assam, for helping me in the final touch to this work. I extend my gratefulness to all those priests (Nyibos), village headmen (Gams), students and other well-experienced persons who helped me during the collection of data for this work.

TAI NYORI

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Abbreviations

AFLRC,	Adi Folk Literature Research Centre, Along.
A.P.O.,	Assistant Political Officer.
ARFT,	Annual Reports on the Frontier Tribes of Eastern Bengal and Assam.
ARNFT,	Annual Reports of the Native States and Frontier Tribes of Assam.
AS,	Assam Secretariat Records or Files or Proceedings.
BJP,	Bengal Judicial Proceedings.
C.C.,	Chief Commissioner.
D.C.,	Deputy Commissioner.
Democracy,	Elwin, Verrier, Democracy in NEFA, Shillong, 1959.
DIPR,	Director of Information and Public Relations, Arunachal.
FEA,	Foreign External - A.
FPA,	Foreign Political Proceedings - A.
FPB,	Foreign Political Proceedings - B.
Frontier and Overseas,	Army Intelligence Branch, Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India, Vol. III, Official Account of Abor Expedition, (1911-12), 1983.
Hill Tribes, I,	Barpujari, H.K., Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier, Vol. I, (1822-42), Gauhati, 1970.
Hill Tribes, II	- do - Vol. II, (1843-72).
Hill Tribes, III	- do - Vol. III, (1873-1962). Calcutta, 1981.
India's North East Frontier,	Elwin, Verrier, India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century, Bombay, 1959.
JASB,	Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal.
Myths,	Elwin, Verrier, Myths of North-East Frontier, Agency, Shillong, 1958.
NEFA,	North-East Frontier Agency.
N.E. Tribes,	Army Intelligence Branch, North-Eastern Tribes of India, 1983.
Philosophy,	Elwin, Verrier, A Philosophy for NEFA, Shillong, (1957).
The Shimongs,	Bhattacharjee, T.K., the Myths of The Shimongs of the Upper Siang, Shillong, 1965.
The Tangams,	Bhattacharjee, T.K., The Tangams, Shillong, 1975.

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Introduction

The present work is a study on the history and culture of the Adis, a tribe formerly known as the Abors, who constitute one of the major tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. Till now no detail and complete history of any tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, has ever been attempted. Monographs, accounts and narratives of the early writers deal only with some socio-anthropological aspects of some tribes and sub-tribes. Thus, so far there is no attempt to study the Adis as a single tribe in all their aspects. The indigenous legends, myths and traditions and other sources in which they are rich and which contain their unrecorded history and culture have not been critically examined and evaluated so far. Hence the present work is an attempt to study the history and culture of the Adis and to fill in a long-felt gap of knowledge in this respect. It will help the administrators and planners of development to have a correct insight into the things that will help them in adopting projects suitable to the local condition and aptitude. This work will also pave the way for such studies on other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

Geographically, the present study covers the areas inhabited by the Adis in both the East and West Siang Districts, the south-western portion of the Dibang Valley and the eastern fringe of the Upper Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh, which lie roughly speaking, between the Subansiri river on the west and the Dibang Valley on the east, Tibet on the north, parts of the districts of Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh of Assam in the South.

Ethnically, our study covers all the groups of the Adis viz., the Padam-Minyong group, comprising the Padams, Minyongs, Pasis, Panggis, Shimongs, Karkos, Tangams, Ashings and the Boris, and the Galo group, comprising the Galos, Pailibos, Ramos and the Bokars. Chronologically, our present study starts with the earliest period to which any information can be traced, however faintly. The presentation in this work is a study of their history and all aspects of the traditional life and indigenous culture of the Adis. The work is divided into Eight Chapters dealing with their land and their divisions in different areas, origin and

migration, relations with neighbours, with the English, traditional administration, economic life, socio-cultural life and religious life. But the developmental and administrative activities in their area since 1947 which are common to all tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and which have no specific bearings on the Adi traditional life and culture have not been included in this study.

Our method of approach to the problem is historical, supplemented by inductive field works, tracing origin and development from the earliest time to the present day and descriptive as far it is relevant to the main purpose of the study on the history and culture of the tribe. In doing so all the available data — myths, legends, oral history, old records, social institutions, religious beliefs and practices, customs, manner and other traditions have been examined. All approaches and methods found useful have been utilised in our study. The various sources of this work may be put as follow :

(a) Myths, legends and oral history have been collected mostly from field works. For this purpose a number of villages in the Adi area have been visited. They include, in the Pasighat area— Balek, Rasam, Roing, Mirku, Mirbuk, Takiralung, Ledum, Korang, Rani, Sile, Ruksin, Ngorlung, Rayang, Debing, Depi, Name Nari, Deka, Pam and Seren. In the Mebo Circle, they include villages of Mebo, Kiyit and Borguli. We have also visited villages on the banks of the Siang river like Renging, Pangin, Geku and Yingkiang and all the main centres of the Adis in Along-Kamba area, such as Kamba, Kerang, Karbak, Nomuk, Kato, Kamki, Kabu, Pakam, Jini, Darka, Kombo, Bagra and Angu.

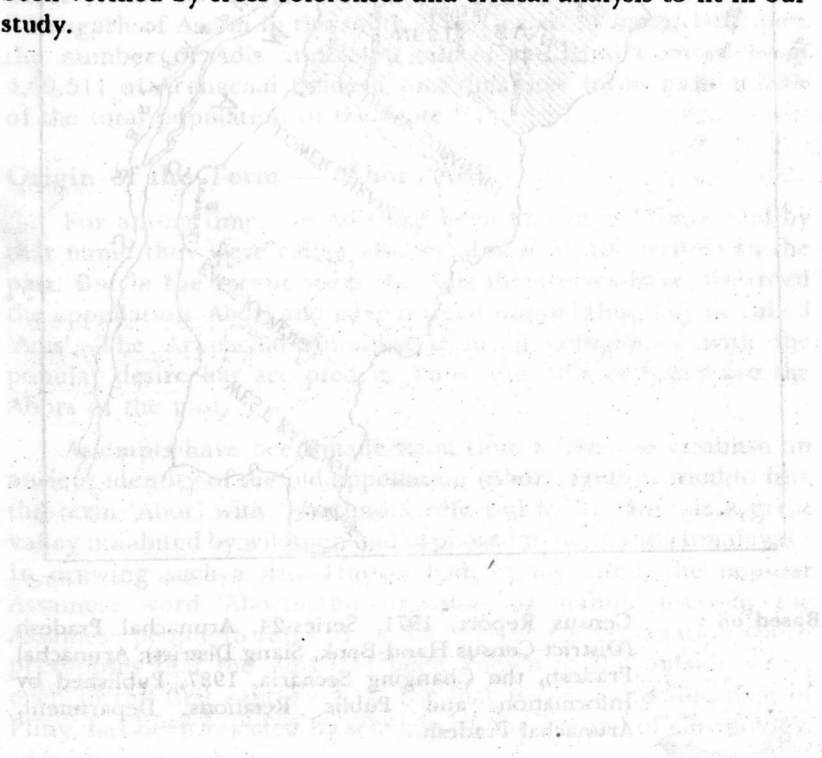
We also visited Bame, Nyigam, Regi, Pagi, Disi, Padi, Dali, Rilu, Daring (Dari) in the Basar area and Garu, Gensi, Ilisiru, Lika, Bali, Sili, Pale, Dipa villages in the Gensi-Likabali area. From all these places myths, legends, oral history and other information have been collected through personal interviews with priests (*nyibos*), village headman (*gams*), and other well-experienced men (*nyikoks* or *milums*), i.e., all the persons who were considered to be the custodians of the Adi traditions. We collected such informations of the areas, which could not be visited also from the students and other informants.

(b) We have consulted the materials available on the Adis which are kept in the government archives, institutions and libraries, such as the Krishna Kanta Handique Library of the Gauhati University, the Department of Historical and Antiquarian

Studies, Gauhati, Assam State Library, Gauhati, Library of the Directorate of Research, Arunachal Pradesh, Shillong (now at Itanagar), Arunachal State Library, Itanagar, Library of Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat, District Library, Pasighat and District Library, Along. The unpublished records preserved in the Assam State Archive, Dispur, have also been searched.

(c) We have also collected records, reports and brochures, from all departments of the Administration, particularly from the offices of the Deputy Commissioners at Pasighat and Along. We have visited Adi Cultural and Literary Society, Pasighat and Adi Folk Literature Research Centre, Along and have collected all necessary literature from there.

Thus, we have made all possible attempts to collect data from all sources. No fixed framework or schedule of the field works involved was worked out but every care has been taken to collect various important and relevant data for historical reconstruction and study on the culture of the tribe. Data, thus collected have been verified by cross references and critical analysis to fit in our study.



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