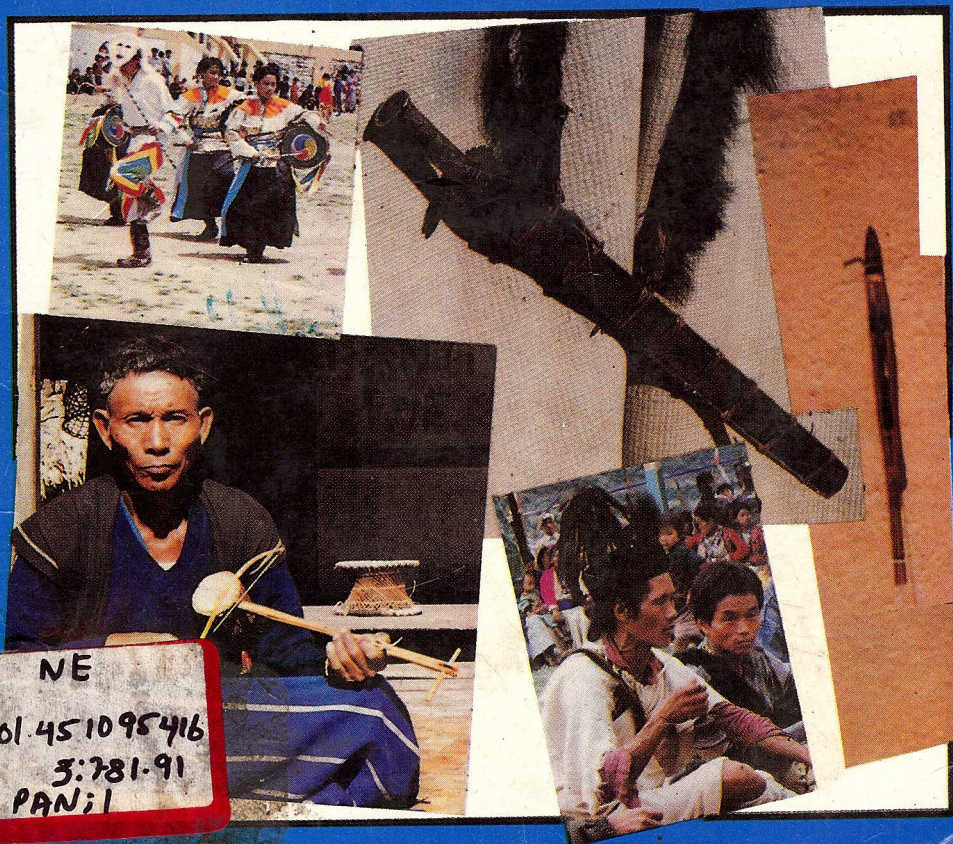


Musical Instruments OF Arunachal Pradesh (ADIS)



B.B. PANDEY

Predominantly inhabited by more than 25 major tribes, Arunachal Pradesh, enjoyed full autonomy in channelising the modes of life as ably as the climatic and geographical conditions.

The credit during musical performances go inevitably to the performers, importance of the instruments seem not justified to be neglected.

The book is the outcome of a long field work and detail study on the musical instruments of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. It has been brought out at the most appropriate time, before it is degenerated with the invasion of the modern instruments into the socio-cultural life of the people.

This book has covered the indigenous instrument of all tribes in general with special reference of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh.

Rs. 50

Dr. B.B. Pandey, the author of this book has spent almost his entire active life among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. He has been studying the different aspects of the tribal life in the field.

At present, he is working as District Research Officer in the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. He has many books, reports, articles etc. presented and published, at his credit. Some of his major books are mentioned at the back of the jacket.

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Musical Instruments
OF
Arunachal Pradesh
(Adis)



DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH
GOVERNMENT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH
ITANAGAR
1994

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To
Pandit G.S. Pandey
Freedom Fighter
A True Gandhian
&
Pita Ram Pandey

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FOREWORD

The small compass of our awareness on one hand and the still smaller curiosity we cherish to delve deep into a matter demanding seriousness on the other, in a way, cripple us whenever exploration into untrodden fields beyond ordinarily known bounds of knowledge is deemed due. Again our age has given birth to such stubbornness that, many clamour to speak, dress or gold God alone knows that, while least prepared to listen and listen with patience and attention to attest what iota of truth may be in the other speaker's words.

Against such an unelitistic or pseudoelitistic backdrop the musicians try to load each corner of our hearts with sound measured to explode at regulated degrees. Now full seeming silence, now full organised storm in sounds and now a curious compound of silence and sound is all what we may call *Music*. Every beyond the accepted division of classical and western we should prepare ourselves to see how away our of the fold of this division also music has flourished in the course of time in the later discovered tribal societies.

Of the many theories forwarded regarding the reaction in the universe *Nada Tattva* (the hypothesis of sound) is quite well accepted on both religious grounds and scientific Big Bang hypothesis. Again of the five different elements of the body, *Akash* (the space) represents the sound. The cosmos being born out of chaos is a Christian theological assumption. The storm to be followed by the calm is a normal expectation. The slow soft breeze, the murmur of the falling leaves, the chuck-

les and gurgles of the splashing water in a stream, the thunder rolling over a brief spell of time are a few powerful examples of the symphony in the world of nature. The crescendo and the human society and manifested, in the music world created by man for purpose of relief from a perennial perturbation of an inexplicable psychological character. Thus since the dawn of the human civilization, music has continued to hold an important position in man's life. Shakespeare called music the 'Food' of love, Keats valued melody as the remedy to odds and ills of the eternally suffering humanity. Baal and Pan in Roman mythology, Bacchus in Greek mythology are given the honour of musician gods. World civilization boasts of heights achieved in the musical world by gifted and meritorious artists like Nero, Beethoven, Menuhin and the medievalist Tansen. A typical psychedellic effect is a promised sweet dish by any musical performance. The wonder-achievement of Orpheus is a tale celebrating the power and glory of music at its best.

To children musical sessions prove equally absorbing like the story telling sessions. An astonishing sense of symmetry develops unconsciously in a child while gradually the child matures into an adult. A unique aptitude for aesthetic appreciation accompanies an accumulating attitude towards rhythm, rhyme, tune and rising and falling pyramidal structure of sounds. The volume, the frequency and the decency-claims of musical recitals appeal the audience strongly and aesthetically. The tall, the *laya*, the '*tibra madhyam mandra*' order ascribe to music its rarest qualities to captivate, to possess, and to move the hearts of many.

When at almost all times, the talent of the performing artist constitutes the central point of concentrated

appreciation, when the agent is glorified, silence reigning the subject of the musical instruments seems grossly unjustified. Of course, when the human factor deserves all due kudos for excellence and expertise, the musical instruments have got to be given their share of praise, or rather at least their first innovators deserve mention.

Under such circumstances, when comparison between the traditional and the modern gains prominence, it would not be quite irrelevant to discuss the present work of Dr. B.B. Pandey, DRO, Bomdila. "The Musical Instruments of Arunachal Pradesh (ADIS)" with some flexibility in approach to the book because the book deals with an almost maiden field of study, so far as research in socio-cultural and economic development of Arunachal Pradesh is concerned. Of all the North-Eastern States, Arunachal Pradesh alone offers a very interesting subject for religio-socio-cultural study.

Predominantly inhabited by more than 22 major tribal groups and about 70 sub-groups and for a sufficiently long period cut-off from the modernizing impacts of an ever refined civilization, this part of the Indian sub-continent enjoyed full autonomy in channelling the modes of life as ably as the climatic conditions and seasonal changes demanded and determined. Indigenously developed and unpolluted by the interfering external influences (in the absence of the latter) the tribal societies while geographically growing in isolation and linguistically maintaining independent identity gave rise to a sort of permanence claiming social tradition based on religious beliefs and ritualistic rigidities. Cultural life in those traditional tribal societies expanded irrespective of the size of the societies. What remains as rich heritage today is only the work accumulated over the ages adding colour to the social life of the tribes. In

the religious life of the people entertainments have always got very high place. And in the entertainment sessions the role played by the music has also been unexaggeratedly high. While the credit during musical performances go inevitably to the performers, importance of the kind and quality of the instruments seem not justified to be neglected. This argument has initiated in the author a mission to study hard into the way the traditional musical instruments developed into being main sources of public recreation and also the way those started degenerating with invasion of the modern instruments into the socio-cultural life of the people. The study has been kept confined to the Adi society of the central part of Arunachal Pradesh which has a long historical tradition so far religion and culture may be concerned. The instruments talked of in the chapters in the books can be found in the District Museum, Along.

I had the occasion to go through the manuscript at its initial stage and I was spell-bound by the discovery of our traditional Adi musical instruments in the pages of Dr. Pandey's book. In his long career as a Research Scholar for more than 24 years, the present book on the musical instruments of Adis is an invaluable gift to the younger generations of Adis who are blissfully ignorant of the existence of such musical instruments among our Adi society. His contribution towards immortalisation of a small facet of Adi society will be remembered whoever happens to go through the pages of this book.

I wish Dr. Pandey and the publication of the book all the success and I recommend all my young generation friends to read the book at least once.

Itanagar
January 9, 1994

TABOM BAM
Commissioner
Government of Arunachal Pradesh

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This age is the history of scientific development in every sphere of the society whether local, National or International. It started almost about the middle of the eighteenth century and expected to continue its speed much beyond 20th century.

The modern development is a continuous process of change from a traditional society to a modern society. But one may remember that the development has never been static or uniform. It takes its course with the kind of requirements of age and environments of that particular period.

The culture too does not remain unaffected, cultural material gets changed. Somewhere it is seen immediately and somewhere a smooth change gradually creeps in. Culture may be divided in three categories to understand its progressive aspects related to philosophical and ethical value:

1. The culture giving emphasis on the present situation in the society, e.g. a society controlled or dominated by Confucianism. A system of philosophy and ethics pronounced by the Chinese Philosopher.
2. The second one, which is forward looking is like Protestantism (Religious doctrines and principle of Protestantism).

3. The third on which is backward looking is like society which is strictly dominated by Buddhism.

Every society whether comparatively traditional or most modern, either has become complex society or entering in the complex process of change in the modern age.

Any instrument related to human service in his control is becoming more his ends rather than his means. So, in the modern society, people consider itself the master of his own destiny, with his view at the end and not the means. They try to shape and reshape even the social environment as per requirements of the age dealing with the social and physical problems.

Modernization involves institutional change. In the life of a culture institution is a significant element. It regulates pattern of behaviours, which is sanctioned, accepted and widely tolerated in the society. So the technological innovation and change in institutions support each other.

Modernisation progressive behaviour of the Arunachal tribal society, one has to think with the broader prospective in the cultural material. Here the material is indicative of the cultural aesthetic value of the musical instruments of a tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh. The culture has been taken here in a simple meaning of the terminology prevalent among the people and not in its strict scientific approach.

Some culture is such that it tends to borrow and grow wherever and whenever some scope provides itself. Culture may go for borrowing cultural material from other societies : (1) When it grows to a pitch and finds no scope of further development to suit to the people and

starts comparing with others. (2) When culture suffers a complete decadence and finds it difficult to complete with the neighbouring culture, the former tends to borrow items from other cultures add to the beauty of that culture and provides avenue for further growth.

In respect of Indian musical instruments and songs we have seen the example of the former Indian musical instruments and songs, at one stage reached the pinnacle glory. That stage can be realised when we listen to Indian music of some 50 years ago. It has cadence and lilt – not the jungling and excited western music. Yet in the western musical items there are certain items like Guitar, Accordion, etc. which may add beauty to the family of Indian music. If borrowed these items may enhance the beauty of music. In the broader Indian context it may safely be said that the modern musical instruments coming from other cultures might have supplemented the Indian musical instruments in producing better cohesion without losing the basic traits of Indian music. But in choosing and using the borrowed items the society always be cautioned pedestal. Otherwise whole system and local value may be destroyed which has happened in respect of African music. The traits of African music have been lost in the inroads of western music.

In the context of Arunachal Pradesh musical instrument one should be very very cautious. For the purpose of studying the musical instruments of Arunachal Pradesh, the indigenous habitants of the State may be divided into three groups :

- (1) The Central group which may also be called a Tani group, comprises of the Adi, Nishi or Nishing,

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- Apatani, Tagin, Hill Miri;
- (2) The Buddhist group namely Monpa, Sherdukpen, Memba, Khamba, Khamti, Shingho and Zakhrins; and
- (3) The third group comprises of Aka, Miji, Khowa, (Bugun), Mishmis, Tangsa, Nocte and Wancho.

The musical instruments of the Central group is almost similar among all the tribes known by different names. Whatever musical instruments have been discussed among the Adis, more or less same type of instruments are seen among the Nishis or Nishang, Hill Miri, Apatani. And it is very interesting to note that the drum instruments of any type is missing among the central tribes. Nishi, Apatani, Hill Miri, Sulung, Tagin, etc. play jewharp of many type. Tal (metal plate), Gungang, Tapyung (paddy slat) are few important items even now.

The Monpa, Sherdukpen, Memba, Khamba and Zakhrins use mostly their traditional musical instruments like Dungchen (Trumpet), one pair, ling metal pipe, Jaling (bloneer) comparatively smaller in size, NGAH (set of drums), Bupchep (set of Cymbal) etc. normally played on religious and some special occasions. On secular occasions some more items are added to these. The Khamti who migrated from Burma side in the last part of 18th century use medium size of drum and cymbals and as many other instruments. The Singhos use cymbal and gong on their festive and religious occasions.

The Noctes, the Wanchos and the Tangsas, the cognate tribes, have more or less the similar musical instruments of which the hollow long drum, another medium sized drum and long bamboo flutes are of

significance. These instruments are used for both religious and secular purposes.

To write a book on such a technical and sophisticated topic like musical instruments of a State in general and of a tribe in particular is not that easy. In such a work help in the form of inspiration, encouragement, material help in the shape of information, guidance, practical display are highly essential. In all these respects I really feel proud of being encouraged, inspired, helped and guided by so many people in so many different ways. And not to acknowledge such inspiration, help, guidance will be a simple ingratitude.

First of all I got a flow of inspiration to write on the topic in view of the fact that many of the old and aboriginal musical instruments are on their way to disappearance or some are already dead and have disappeared. Keeping in view the need of preservation, I was inspired to search for such things by Mr. H.S. Dubey, the then Lieutenant Governor of Arunachal Pradesh. Mr. P.K. Thungen, the then Chief Minister (presently a minister in Centre) and Mr. Gegong Apang, present Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, gave stress on preserving, and on promotions wherever possible, the aboriginal items of culture, thus inspiring me to go in search of the musical instruments of the State in general and of the Adis in particular. In addition to the high ranking personalities in administration and politics there was a spirit in the academic field itself, Mr. B. Sasthri and Furer Von Haimndorf who were the inner inspiration for going into such sophisticated topic. To all of them I am indebted.

Next come a group of personalities in the department itself who really came to my help directly and indirectly.

Mr. H.A. Arfi, the then Secretary (Research) and his successor and present Secretary Mr. Ashok Bakshi have always been a source of inspiration in the shape of giving approval to my study and bringing it out in a book form. In this sphere the names of Dr. P.C. Dutta, Mr. N. Sarkar, Mr. Aduk Tayeng and Dr. D.K. Duarah come prominent in their personal and official capacity. I must acknowledge with gratitude to all of them.

In the field of actual information and display of the instruments there come a lot of names who helped me at different stages. It is not humanly possible to mention all of them by name. But I must mention some of the names e.g. Mr. Boken Ete, Late Legin Banjin, Late Digong Tatak, Mr. Talom Rukbo, Shri K. Tayeng, DRO, who helped me with actual information in the field. My gratitudes are due to them.

My unstinted gratitude should also be to Mr. T. Bam, Commissioner, for his taking all the pains to go through the manuscript and to write the Foreword to this humble book.

So far as the preparation of the manuscript making it ready for sending to the press, I must acknowledge with thanks the help of Mr. B.N. Jha, Mr. K.C. Mishra and Dr. J. Nath for going through the manuscript and making necessary suggestion.

I thank Shri D.N. Saikia, ARO, Mrs. Sheeja George, the typist, Mritunjya, Dharmendra, Kedar and Vinod for their help in the work. I also thank M/s Printing Express and M/s Nav Gian Offset Printers and Dr. B.N. Pandey for their help.

During the collection of materials and preparation of manuscript my wife Mrs. B. Pandey and my daughter Meera suffered silently. For them also my gratitude is

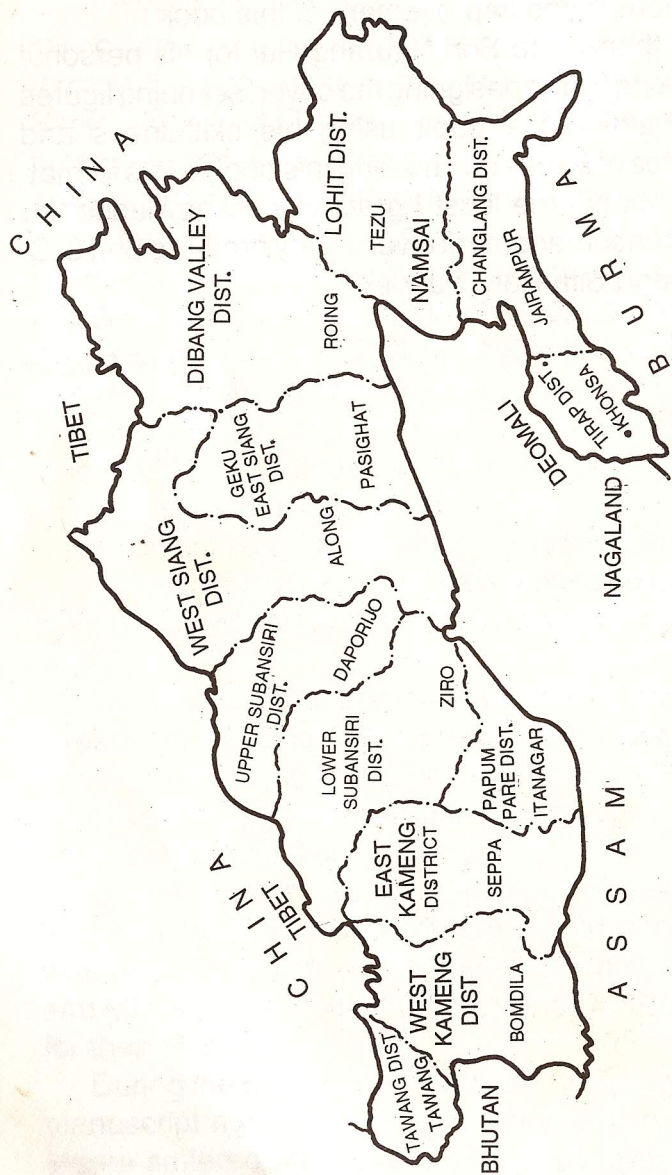
due.

I am indebted to Shri Karanl Singh IPS, for his suggestions in the improvement of this book.

I am thankful to Shri Naurang Rai for his personal pains-taking for the designing the cover, scanning figures and formatting the book using his skilfulness and experience of 25 years in making this book in this format.

Last but not the least I gratefully acknowledge the help and encouragement given by my brothers Shri G.S. Pandey and Sita Ram Pandey.

B.B. PANDEY



MAP OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

1

INTRODUCTION

Musical instruments and music have been intimately bound up with human history since time immemorial and are an integral part of the human society. The moment one begins to see the musical instruments, he is taken beyond the purely technical side of the instruments into the realm of imagination and fantasy.

Whatever musical instruments we see, whether sophisticated or simple, they have got their root in the initial folk instruments which are vanishing very fast from the main platform of the modern life.

There have been many views and thoughts on the definition of musical instruments. But the basic fact accepted by all on the matter is that any article or object which helps produce music may be called a musical instrument. Those objects may include stone, wood, stick, leaf or even a part of human body. In ancient time the human body was called *Gartra vina* (the body *vina*) and *Daivee Veena* (God given *vina*) etc. in India.

Many of the musical instruments have dual or multiple functions. *Sankh* (conch shell), gong, drum, etc. serve social, religious and cultural purposes. They please both man and the deities. Man feels entertained while his purpose of pleasing the deities simultaneously by playing on the instruments is also fulfilled.

The world of the folk music and musical instruments is very vast and it is difficult to generalise or make

groups, but one may try to study them as string instruments, wind instruments, key board instruments and modern instruments.

In all string instruments the length of chord, thread of any kind (whether wire, silk, nylon, etc.) plays an important role with the help of a sound box without which it is difficult to play it properly. Some of the important string instruments are harp, violin, guitars, mandolins, bows and pyres etc.

There are different types of wind instruments in the various parts of the world. All have one basic character in that they are sounded by blowing air into them and different sounds are produced at different vibrations. Pipe is one of the oldest of such instruments. The Horn-pipes and Bag-pipes are different from the Reed pipes. There are many other types of wind instruments like accordions, (a small reed pipe), shawms, flutes, oboe, clarion, saxophones and cornets, etc.

Percussion musical instruments are normally played in the modern orchestra. The instruments belong to the old tradition and they are hit or struck when required. They are both melodious and non-melodious. Drum instruments have undergone a lot of changes and refinements since old days. Earlier they were made of hollow wooden pieces covered with skin, etc. Now they are made with different materials in different regions.

Drums have been very popular in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, Japan, North America and Myanmar. The Arabic word *Naggarab* became *Nakers* in English, in French it became *Nacaires*, in Italian *Nacchero*, though these drums are of different sizes, styles and shapes in different countries. However, the basic conditions and principles in all cases remain more

or less the same.

The melodious instruments are many in types and kinds and it is difficult to put them under one group. All the sub-tribes, however, have bells, gongs, xylophones, vibraphones, tabular bells, rattles and clappers, etc. in common.

Key-board instruments were once most popular and accessible in the past, but now there have become less important in many countries. Key-board instruments include Piano, Organ, Harmonium, Accordion and Glockenspiel.

There are numerous musical instruments made of different materials and played in different manners and they have been divided into different groups in the different countries. Earlier in India these instruments were divided into three groups according to their use and utility :

1. *Geetanuga* : Meant to accompany singing group.
2. *Nrytanuga* : Those used in dancing.
3. *Suska* : Solo instruments.

Four classifications were given in Chinese divisions depending on the materials of construction: *chu* (bamboo), *T'u* (Earth), *Kin* (metal) and *che* (stone).

Musical instruments in the western countries were divided into four categories such as :

- a. Autophones — Bells, Rods, Gongs,
- b. Strings,
- c. Wind instruments, and
- d. Drums

In ancient India, *Vadya* has been used as a general term for musical instruments. Classifications have been referred by Bharats, who lived some time between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. He grouped musical instruments into four categories. The same is now followed even in some of the western countries :

1. Solid (*ghana*) or indiphones.
2. Covered vessels (*avanadda*) or drums.
3. Hollow (*sushria*) or wind instruments.
4. Stretched (*tat*) or stringed instruments.

These four major groups have, however, been further sub-divided into many sub-groups in the modern age.

"Among the commonly accepted main classes of instruments, namely the string, the wind and the percussion, the last mentioned has the earliest origin."¹

The simplest accompaniment of the dances of primitive man was provided by the dancers themselves. They marked time by stamping their feet and clapping their hands in simple rhythms.

Gradually rattles came into use. They were probably first made out of nutshells, seeds and stones strung together or placed in a hollow gourd, and either suspended from the waist of the dancer or tied to the ankles, so that they sounded sharply in response to each movement. Such early beginnings resulted in the use of cymbals, gongs, bells, ankle-bells (*ghunguru*), *Kartal* and so on.

Another rhythmic instrument used by primitive man was the stamping pit. In earlier days people used to dig

1. Krishnaswami, *Musical Instruments of India*, 1977, p.1.

hole in the ground and cover it with bark. On striking the sticks against the pit covered with bark a kind of music was produced. But, later instead of covering the pit with bark, it was covered with hide and people used long stout sticks to beat against the pit. That acted like a 'drum'. Such a drum is called *Bhoomi dundubhi* (the earthen drum).

A casual banging on a hollow gourd or a human skull might have suggested to primitive man that sound could be amplified by the use of hollowed-out materials. Without doubt, it must have been a little later that barrel shaped wooden drums covered with skin on both sides came into use.

One of the earliest wind instruments to develop was the flute, called by many popular names like *bansuri*, *venu* and *murali*. The next stage was the invention of 'stops' of finger-holes in flutes so that the player could produce both high and low notes. The art of producing sound from a double reed is as old as the discovery of the bamboo.

The first stringed instrument invented by man was the Hunter's bow. When the hunter pulled the bowstring and released it to shoot the arrow he must have noted that a pleasant humming sound was produced.

"Stringed instruments with short necks appear in the early history of music. These were first made out of the single blocks of wood. The top was flat and the back convex. The body tapered towards the short neck. Early examples of this type are found in Gandhara relics where the neck with the pegs is slightly extended, the body is pearshaped, and the instrument is played with plectrums. Another device was to rest the end on a hollow gourd. Out of this state emerged a stringed

instrument consisting of a small half gourd or coconut with a skin table or cover through which a bamboo stick passed longitudinally."²

Coming to the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh one is charmed with the colourful scenery and attracted to the rhymes and rhythms of the people with their folk songs and indigenous musical instruments.

The indigenous musical instruments as they are seen do not appear to mean much physically. But a sustained and zealous analysis of the artistic and cultural aspects of these instruments becomes quite interesting and informative. These instruments represent the flora and fauna of the region where the instruments are made. The design and workmanship etc. indicate the artistic, rhythmic, even the commercial and cultural aspects of the society, because these aspects reflect the art, craft and creative imagination of the maker and also availability of the materials in the region.

The folk music and indigenous musical instruments even narrate the beginning and evolution of a particular society because the make and material of the musical instruments indicate the stage of a society and the performing artists playing on the instruments while at the same time it also narrates the glorious past of the individual societies. The similarities of the instruments found in different neighbouring States and societies transcend barriers of the societies and geographical boundaries and thus help in producing an integrating effect. This also reveals the cultural trade contacts between the various groups or societies.

2. S. Krishnaswami, *Op. cit.*, 1977, p. 5.



KIRING



GAMDU TAAKOP

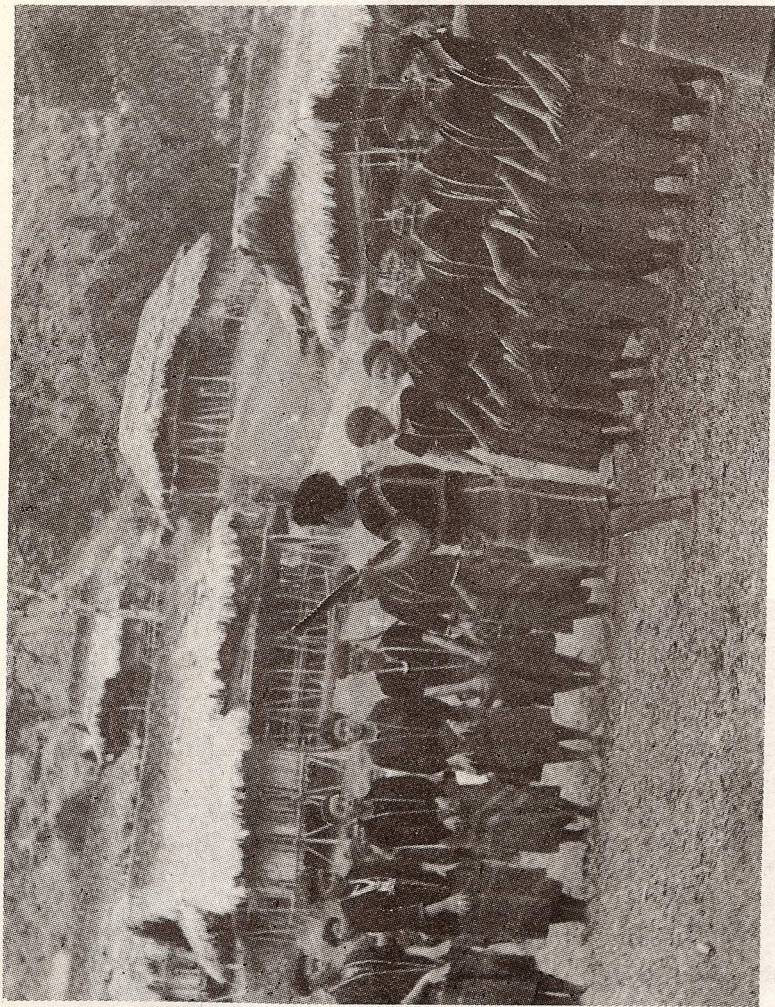
On September 13, 1993 visited Kumbo village. Almost all elders and elites of the village discussed but could not decide the name of this instrument, at last they named it GAMDU TAAKOP



MIR/NIGRE MILANG



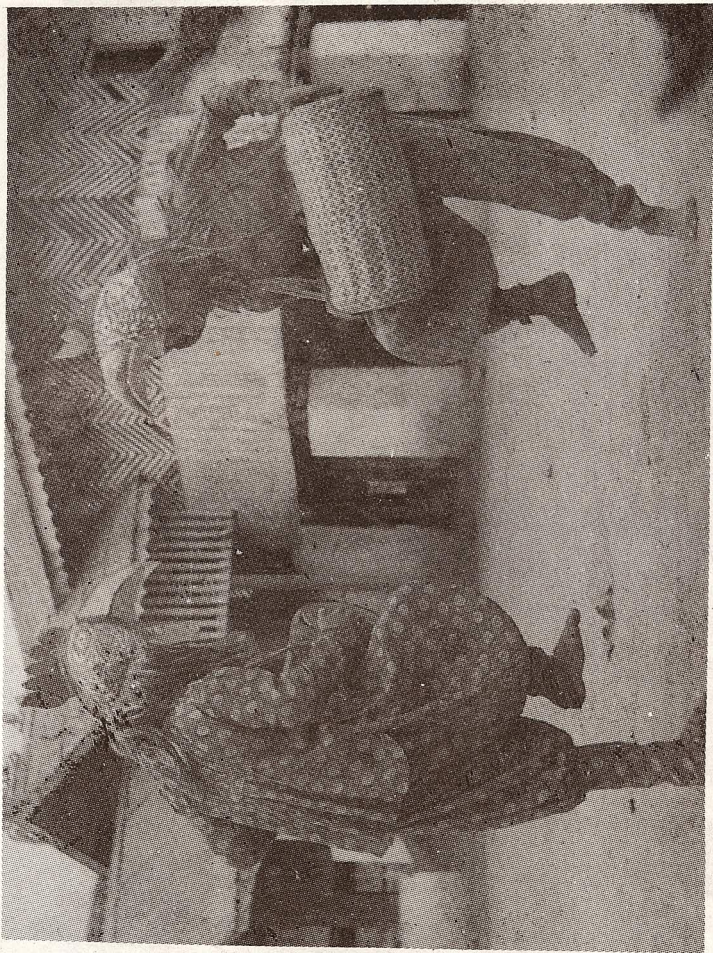
MISHMI DRUM



YOKSA (IN ACTION)



LONG WOODEN LOG DRUM PLAYED ON COMMUNITY OCCASIONS



COCK FIGHT DANCE (KHAMTI) WITH INSTRUMENTS (LOHIT)



A GROUP OF IDU DANCERS WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (LOHIT)



A PONUNG DANCE (SIANG)



GIRL WITH HER GONG (MISHMI)



GIRL WITH HER GONG (MIRMI)

AKA MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS



OTHER BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

1. *The Hill Miris,*
2. *Festivals of Subansiri*
3. *Arunachal Pradesh ke Parva-
Tyohar (Hindi)*
4. *Siang*
5. *Leadership Pattern in a Tribal
Society*
6. *Patterns of Change and Potential
for Development in Arunachal
Pradesh*
7. *Customary Laws of Arunachal
Pradesh (Co-author)*
8. *Identity of a Tribe,
Bugun (Khowa)
Arunachal Pradesh*
9. *Musical Instruments of Arunachal
Pradesh*