

Interim Report

**Title of the Project: Documentation of Performative Traditions Associated with
Funerals of Idu Mishimi Tribe in Arunachal Pradesh**

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Submitted by

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Introduction

Idu Mishimis are one of the significant indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh domiciled in the districts of Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit and few pockets in the vicinity of East Siang and Upper Siang. The funeral traditions of Idu Mishimis are very unique in nature. Generally the funeral rituals are performed 3 to 5 days and it depends upon the nature of death. The Idu Mishimis believe that there is a continuation of life after death. It is believed that after death life is transformed from the materialistic world to the divine world i.e., the land of soul which is locally known as *muduasialoko*. *Igu*, the shaman, plays an important role in funeral rituals. He performs a number of rituals, dance and music, and offerings in the house of the dead continuously for days and nights together without sleeping and the people who are mourning in the house should not leave the house without the permission of the *Igu*. After the ritual performances in the house of the dead, the *Igu* performs several rituals in *broacha*, the graveyard, and accompanying the soul from the house of the dead (*aatiyakong*) to the land of the souls (*asialoklo*).

The present study documents the performative traditions, customs, practices, taboos, beliefs, rituals and narratives associated with death among the Idu Mishimis.

Methodology

Documenting funeral rites and rituals is a challenging task. This documentation is being carried out in Lower Dibang Valley (Roing) region in Arunachal Pradesh. Empirical data is collected through extensive fieldwork in the natural socio-cultural context by following Anthropological/Folkloristic research methodology and supplemented by photo documentation.

Excerpts of Documentation carried out under this project

I. Origin Myth associated with death

Thousands of years ago, a person known as Sineru went to a village where he was summoned to stop the prevailing epidemic. Sineru was not confident that he would come back alive. Therefore he planted an *egambo* tree in his yard and asked his mother, wife and children to look after the plant. He also left *ishuru* - a bird to communicate between him and the family. One day *ishuru* brought a message of death of his child. But Sineru thought it would be better to serve the people because a child can be obtained later on. Next time the bird brought the message of his wife's death and Sineru preferred to stay and thought he can remarry later.

Again one day *ishuru* brought the message of death of his mother. Sineru's heart was broken, since he could not get back another mother in his life again. He returned back to his place and went to *Athuka* - a place through which every soul passes and he tried to locate if his mother's soul was passing through or not. After reaching home he hired Iruliru for chanting *anja* at *Athupopu*, to call back his mother's soul. But Iruliru was unsuccessful in the attempt. Therefore, Sineru himself holding *kalinta tothobra* (herb) in his hand, chanted *yah* continuously for five days. Thus, by virtue of his chants, his mother came back. But instead of earring in her ears she carried earthworm (signifying the grave). Sineru's second wife could not accept the form in which his mother came back. She drove her away with *aabripa* (a loom stick). Sineru worried about this. Then an owl came and sought to keep the mother under his (owl's) care.

Some days later when Sineru came and enquired about his mother, the owl replied that she might have fallen in the mountain. Sineru enquired of this to other birds but they replied that they had never heard any sound of falling down. Sineru then saw the remaining hairs in the mouth of the owl and a housefly came out flying. The housefly began doing all the activities which Sineru's mother did during her life time. Then he confirmed that, it was the owl that had eaten his mother. He became depressed since his mother could not come back in human form. He started chanting and wished that if his mother came back, the fish would begin climbing the trees and rats would grow long teeth like tiger. Since all these were impossible, his mother never came back from the land of soul. Since then, the *igus* (Shaman) chant all that words which had been recited by Sineru to avoid the coming back of human soul. From then, there is a belief that soul never comes back to the land of living.

II. *Igu* - The Shaman

The *Igu* plays an important role among Idu Mishmis during all the life cycle ceremonies, religious rituals and festivals. The institution of *igu* is not hereditary. During rituals, the *igu* wears traditional sacred dress and ornaments and these sacred objects, after the life of the *igu* are owned by his family or sometimes the costumes are buried along with *igu*.

Photo 1: An Igu in full attire



Following are the dress and ornaments worn by the *Igu*.

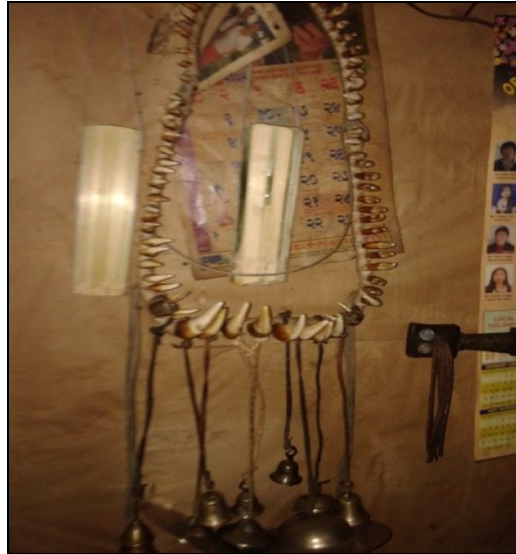
(i) Eto-ti:

Photo 2: Eto-ti



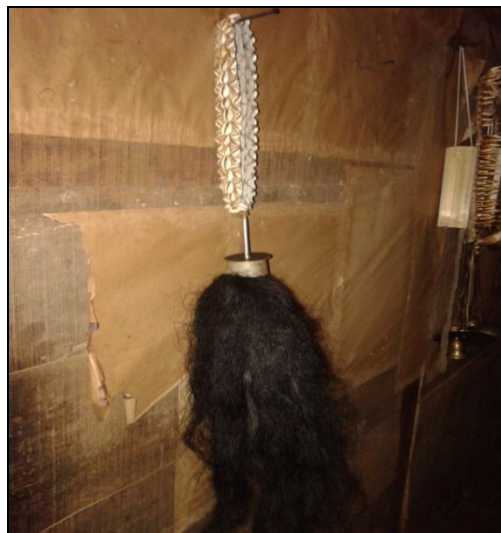
(ii) Amrala: It is made of the teeth of deer and wild boar and used to wear around the shoulder. The jaw of a tiger is attached to it along with the bones of a bear. Brass bells are tied at the bottom which gives music while dancing. These metals were brought from Tibet.

Photo 3: Amrala



(iii) Aweto: *Aweto* is the head gear of *Igu* and it should be worn while performing the rituals. It is made of sea shells and yak's hair.

Photo 4: Aweto



III. Performative Traditions associated with Funerals

The following are some of the performative traditions associated with funerals.

(i) Musical Instruments

(a) Reapu: Reapu is made from the root of bamboo and the skin of a big lizard. These instruments are used by Igu during funeral rituals.

Photo 5: Reapu



(b) Ajuru: It is a blowing instrument made of horns of buffalo and mithun.

Photo 6: Ajuru



(c) Gerambu: Gerambu is made of the root of bamboo.

Photo 7: Gerambu



(ii) *Aanja* – *The mourning song*: Mourning (*Aanja*) is an important part of the death ritual ceremony. During death, people perform *aanja* in front of dead body. Here, individuals sit in front of the dead body and mourn in the form of chantings, whose words are not decipherable. Not everyone can perform the *aanja*, only few old people who have mastered this art. However, it is not something that can be taught or learned, it comes naturally to some people. Both males and females can mourn in front of dead body alone or in a group. They perform the *aanja* to convey the following message to the soul – “You are no more in this world and you are dead, so you have to go to the world of the dead. You cannot keep any connection with the living anymore, so go properly to the other world”.

Ni nga keba apo shilo row mivechi

Ela nga keba midi mo aayi mivechi

Atu imiyu imili anaga ipi thuta guta api jabine

Ipi thuta rukhi bru mavimi chibe laga mo thuju ja.

Ngama bu mo ipu thuta bru jiyela chisu atato hive ipuri thuta bru jiyela mo anuja irina.

English Translation

We (Idus) were immortal and were not performing Anja

Earlier we were immortal, but now we are dying
The enemies (spirit) have done this to us.
Dead bodies are buried everyday, the elders say
Earlier we were immortal, but we performed Anja for the dead rat, so the enemies have
cursed us. They are enjoying seeing dead bodies in our place.

(iii)*Broacha na* (Graveyard dance): *Broacha na* is performed by *Igu* in the graveyard after burying the death body. Relatives especially girls prepare tea, local rice beer and bring to the graveyard when they perform the graveyard dance. Priest tells the dead soul that you are not anymore alive that's why I am giving you food from this graveyard. While saying this words priest will give food to the dead soul that time from sword they will tear the food which was packed in the green leaf.

The priest tells the soul not to come back to the world of the living. He offers local rice beer to the *megra* (soul), stating that it may come back to the human world when stone will rot and when bamboo reaches the cloud. This is the priest's way of asking the soul never to return to the world of the living. There is a plant called *Ewina* whose leaves have two different colours, that is, white at the front and green on the other side of the leaf. The Priest also lays down the condition that the *megra* (soul) may return to this world only when the white colour disappears from the leaves. There is also a bird called *ewuoo* which cannot fly very high, and lives on the ground.

The priest cuts off one claw of the *ewuoo* and buries it on the ground and tells that the soul may return when this bird is able to fly above the big- big trees in the forest. He warns the soul that even if he tries to come back in the form of a rat, he will be eaten up by the house ghosts *asu, andro, eru, anda*. He also warns the soul against trying to appear in the form of even a small bird called *ejikru*, and also against trying to interact with any member of the family. He further states that the soul may come back only when the tiger stops roaring.

(iv)*Yah*: The basic aim of *yah* and *broacha na* rituals is to guide the soul to its original place. The difference between them accounts on the duration of chants. In *yah* the chants continue for three nights and in the case of *Broacha*, it is only two nights. In the death ritual, the *Igu* guides the soul from *Aatiyakong* (entrance of the house).It is fed with

food and water for the onwards journey. The journey has many hills and stops (*mabra*). Usually the burial takes a few days after the death. This is for the convenience of the relatives living away from the village to come and attend the funeral. The dead body is bathed and new cloths are put on. Money is place in the palm of the dead body to buy water on the way (journey of the soul). It is believed that route to the land of soul does not have enough water. Pigs and fowls are buried along with the body for use in next world. In the land of soul, they enjoy the same status and feel they want for material things they owned here.

Photo 8: Yah



Therefore, after the burial, the Igu in the silence of the hall, over a special erected structure (*Amungo*) covered with *evena* leaves (wild plant) narrates what the soul was complaining about or mentioning about. The *igu* then sits near the *Amungo*

and continues his dialogue with the spirit. He narrates in vivid details the numerous journeys undertaken by the person before death to the world of spirits and whom he encountered, when and where. He then calls upon all the spirits telling them how to come, which path to follow, where steps have been laid. Ladders have been fixed or bridges have been made spanning the rivers and streams. In the course of his dialogue he strikes his sword on the *Amungo*. Then the special broom (*Ayuto*), made of *evena* leaves is struck at the *amungo*.

The soul is guided beyond the *andomo*, where a river is crossed by a boat. The Igu bargains with the boatman to carry the soul across. After they cross the river, the Igu returns (in chants) to the living world. After crossing the *andomo*, the soul can rest on any of the place in the vast expanse of territory of the netherworld.

Here one person has to act as a boatman by putting an Assamese towel in his forehead and another person has to tell the boatman that one person is going with this much luggage and animals. The person who is explaining about the things should be very careful while answering the boatman's question. Suppose if he says this much is going and two persons are coming unknowingly then in reality also after a few days someone else will die or he himself will die that is truth. The person has to bargain with the boatman for the boat fares like 'I will pay only this much but the boatman will say no I want this much in Assamese language. In Idu Mishmi it is believed that they will send the soul across the river. And that person is not allowed to act the same thing in other death ritual ceremonies. In one year only he can act one time, if he keeps on acting again and again in one year then he himself will die. Here there will be a bunch of *ewina* leaves which will be kept in one bamboo tightly. And lots of *ewina* leaves will be tied in a single branch and kept on one side.

IV. Illustrative presentation of Idu Burrial

The burial place of Idu Mishmi is called *Brocha* or *Brokocha*. It is a custom to bury the deceased in a very protected place with all due respect. They construct the grave like a house and burry all the necessary things along with the corpse. It is believed that all these things are required for the better life of the deceased in the land of soul. All the relatives and family members of the deceased offer new cloths, ornaments, crockery, bed, fan, Money, TV etc and buried along with deceased person. The following visuals explain the burial practice of Idu Mishmis.

Photo 9 - 18:

Preparation of *Brokocha*: The new burial room- Offering of things- Burial of a corpse





Since it is just a beginning of the project, a detailed illustrative report of these funeral traditions will be submitted at the end of the project.

Principal Investigator: Dr.S.Simon John

Research Assistant: Maya Pulu

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I

INTRODUCTION

Ritual practices are one of the most important aspects of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Edmund Leach (1968) suggested that the term ritual should be applied to all “culturally defined sets of behaviour,” that is, to the symbolical dimension of human behaviour as such, regardless of its explicit religious, social, or other content. For Leach, such behaviour should be regarded as a form of social communication or code of information and analyzed in terms of its “grammar.” Ritual is treated as a cognitive category. Eliade (1987) mentioned that “ritual” are those conscious and voluntary, repetitious and stylized symbolic bodily actions that are centred on cosmic structures and /or sacred presences. Verbal behaviour such as chant, song and prayer are included in the category of bodily actions. Even more fundamentally, ritual is intentional bodily engagements in the paradigmatic forms and relationships of reality. As such, ritual brings not only the body but also that body’s social and cultural identity to the encounter with the transcendental realm. By conforming to models or paradigms that refer to the primordial past and that can be shared by many people, ritual also enables each person to transcend the individual self, and thus it can link many people together into enduring and true forms of community. Rituals draw into itself every aspects of human life, and almost every discipline of the social sciences and humanities has something to say about it. The body is evidently more important in religious experience than is often thought. Rituals play a significant role in life cycle ceremonies, folk religious practices and agriculture.

Rituals are orally transmitted from generation to generation and play a significant role in tribal culture. Generally most of the rituals are associated with religion, life cycle ceremonies and agriculture. Funeral rituals, the last rite of human beings, play a significant role in the life cycle ceremonies of every culture. Among all the life cycle rituals, the funeral rites are significant because it deals with afterlife of the deceased person and well being of the survivors. Almost all the traditional societies in the world follow a set of practices, customs and beliefs associated with death and funerals. These funeral rites and customs are concerned not only with the mourning, preparation and disposal of the body, but also with the well-being of the survivors and with the persistence of the spirit or memory of the deceased. The various methods used for disposal of the body are linked to religious beliefs, climate and geography and social status. Burial is associated with ancestor worship or beliefs about the afterlife; cremation is sometimes viewed as liberating the spirit of the deceased. Almost in all traditional societies, the corpse is prepared in some prescribed way before it is finally laid to rest. The funeral practices and rituals vary between cultures, and between religious affiliations within those cultures. A number of customs, beliefs, rituals, mourning, lamentations, narratives, chanting, and performances are closely associated with funeral rites. The customs, beliefs, practices, observances, taboos, performances associated with death are deeply associated with particular religious beliefs and also have important psychological, sociological functions for the deceased as well as for the survivors.

Arnold van Gennep (1960) in his classic book *The Rites of Passage* discussed different kinds of life cycle ceremonies and the significance of those rituals. He pointed out that, when the activities associated with such ceremonies were examined in terms of their order and content, it can be distinguished into three major phases: Separation, transition, and incorporation. He said that

“regeneration” is a law of life and of the universe: the energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals in the social world through the rites of passage. He also explained in detail about the funeral rites and stated that funeral rites vary widely among different peoples and that further variations depend on the sex, age, and social position of the deceased.

Smith (1974) stated that the funeral is only the first of a series of mortuary rites conducted on behalf of the spirit of the deceased. Although the funeral has taken place, the spirit is still an unstable, dangerous, and polluted being that needs to be appeased and purified by a further series of rituals because the purification is a gradual process that ought to be accompanied by a regular series of rituals over a certain period of time. Namihira Emiko (1985) has stated that mortuary rituals function as devices to eliminate or diminish the pollution of death and finally recover a state of purity. According to Namihira the pollution of death may be diminished by both the passage of time and the series of rituals, but the series of rituals is more important than the time taken to purify the pollution of death because pollution cannot be fully purified only by the passage of time. He further states that many factors have a bearing on the mortuary ritual: the religion of the deceased or of their family; the age at which the person died; their gender; their social status; the family's economic circumstances; and whether the death was a suicide, a miscarriage, an abortion, an accidental death, or even a violent death. With this brief understanding, this present study is an attempt to study and document the performative traditions associated with funeral of the Idu Mishimi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

1.1: Background of the Study

This present study was carried out among the Idu Mishmis tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. They inhabit the districts of Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit

district and few pockets in the vicinity of East Siang and Upper Siang district. The funeral ritual practices of Idu Mishmis are very unique in nature and it is generally performed for 3 to 5 days depending upon the nature of death. The Idu Mishmis believe in after life and that after death life is transformed from the materialistic world to the divine world i.e., the land of soul which is referred to as *Asialõko*. Igu - the shaman plays an important role in funeral rituals and performs a number of rituals, dance and music, and offerings in the house of deceased continuously for days and nights together and several customs, practices, taboos, beliefs, offerings, oral narratives, dance and music are associated with this funeral ritual. In the modern socio-cultural context due to religious conversion, modern education and urbanisation the funeral tradition of Idu Mishmis has undergone serious changes and therefore this present study is an attempt to study and document the funeral rituals of Idu Mishmis.



Figure 1: Idu woman with a child



Figure 2: Idu womenfolk

1.2: Objectives of the Study

The present study is an attempt to study and document the performative traditions, customs, practices, taboos, beliefs, rituals and narratives associated with death among the Idu Mishimi tribe domiciled in Arunachal Pradesh. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (i) To document the performative traditions, customs, rituals and practices associated with funerals,
- (ii) To document the oral narratives associated with funerals,
- (iii) To understand the symbolic meaning of ritual practices, and
- (iv) To understand the philosophy of death among the Idu Mishmis.

1.3: Methodology

This study was carried out among the Idu Mishmis tribe of Arunachal Pradesh living in the districts of Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit district and

few pockets in the vicinity of East Siang and Upper Siang district. Empirical data is collected through fieldwork by following the triangulation research methodology i.e. observation, interview and audio-visual documentation. Since this study deals with funeral practices, it is a time-taking process to witness and document the practices in the natural socio-cultural context. The researchers, literally, during the course of fieldwork, were waiting for death to take place to carry out the documentation. Documenting funeral practices involves emotion of the respondents and the society at large. For this research, we were able to carry out few case studies in its natural context and detailed interviews were conducted with the *igus* (priests), and other elders who are knowledgeable in ritual practices. Both structured and unstructured interview method are followed to collect empirical data. The recorded data was subsequently transcribed, translated for the purpose of the present study.

II

SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE IDU MISHMIS

Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the north-eastern part of India. It is 83,743 sq km in area and has a long international border with Bhutan to the west (160 km), China to the north and north-east (1,080 km) and Myanmar to the east (440 km). It stretches from snow-capped mountains in the north to the plains of Brahmaputra valley in the south. Arunachal is the largest state area wise in the north-eastern region and it is a land of lush green forests, deep river valleys and beautiful plateaus. Arunachal Pradesh is the homeland of more than twenty five indigenous tribal communities belonging to Indo-Mongoloid racial stock with distinct and varied socio-cultural pattern.

The State was known as NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) till 1972 and in a process it has attained the status of a State in 1987. The State of present Arunachal Pradesh consists of sixteen districts i.e. Tawang, West Kameng, East Kameng, Upper Subansiri, Lower Subansiri, Papum Pare, Kurung Kurme, East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang, Lohit, Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Anjaw, Tirap and Changlang. According to 2011 census, the total population of the State is 13,82,611 of which male 7,20,232 and female 6,62,379 with the density of 17 person per square km.

Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by more than twenty five tribal communities, and thus presents an interesting cultural mosaic. The distribution of the tribal population are as follows: The Monpas, Sherdukpens, Akas or Hursso, Khowas or Bugun, Mijis, Nyshi and Sulungs or Puroik of Tawang, East and West Kameng districts. The Nyshi, Apatani, Hill Miris, Tagins and Nah of Lower and

Upper Subansiri, Papum Pare and Kurung Kume districts. The Adi, Galo, Membas and Khambas of East, west Siang and Upper Siang districts. The Mishmis groups, Khamtis, Singphos, Meyors of Lohit and Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley and Anjaw districts. The Noctes, Wanchos, Tangsas and Lisus of Changlang and Tirap districts. All these tribal communities have preserved their distinct language, knowledge systems, oral narratives, rituals, customary laws, performing traditions, food habits, customs and practices, fairs and festivals, arts and crafts etc.



Figure 3: Paddy Fields in an Idu Mishmis village

The twenty five major tribal groups with their sub-groups speak sixty to seventy dialects which is independent of each other and all belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. None of the tribal languages has any script for their languages except Khamti which belongs to Siamese-Chinese language branch. The Monpas use Tibetan script for their religious scriptures. The rich cultural heritage is orally transmitted from generation to generation and has

always drawn attention of social scientists from various parts of the world to Arunachal. However in the modern socio-cultural context, there is a vital need to have a detailed ethnographic account and documentation of the intangible cultural heritage of these indigenous communities.



Figure 4: Idu Girls in Traditional Attires

The tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh may be divided into three cultural groups on the basis of their socio-political religious affinities. The first group consists of Monpas, Sherdukpens, Membas, Khambas, Khamtis and Singphos which profess Buddhism and this group is also known as Bodic group. The second group consists of Akas, Khowas, Mijis, Sulungs, Nyshis, Apatanis, Hill Miris, Tagin, Galo, Adi, Mishmis and Tangsas which practices a form of magico-religious beliefs and practices. The third group consists of Wanchos and Noctes because of their association with the practice of head-hunting and institution of Chieftainship .



Figure 5: An Idu Girl

2.1: The Idu Mishmis

The Idu Mishmis tribe of Arunachal Pradesh inhabits the districts of Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit district and few pockets in the vicinity of East Siang and Upper Siang district. The total population of Lower Dibang Valley as per 2011 census report is 54,080(fifty four thousand eighty).Total population of males is 28,053(twenty eight thousand fifty three).Total population of females is 26,027(twenty six thousand twenty seven).Total literate population is 31,849 (thirty one thousand eight hundred forty nine).Total population of illiterate is 22,231(twenty two thousand two hundred thirty one). Total literate male population is 18,087 (eighteen thousand eighty seven). Total literate female population is 13,762(thirteen thousand seven hundred sixty two).Total illiterate male population is 9,962(nine thousand nine hundred sixty six).Total illiterate female population is 12,265(twelve thousand two hundred sixty five).And total schedule tribe male population is twelve 12,649 (twelve thousand six hundred fourty nine). Total Schedule tribe female population of lower Dibang valley is

13,325(thirteen thousand three hundred twenty five). The whole Dibang valley is covered with chain of hills, the northern part has mountain covered with snow.

The following are the brief ethnographic account of Idu Mishmi tribe.

2.1.1: Language

Idu language falls under the eastern group of the Tibeto-Burman language on of North Eastern group of greater Sino-Tibetan Group of languages. There is a slight variation in the language among Idu Mishmis which is known as *midu*, *mithu*, and *mindri*. The dialect of Idu Mishmis settled in Anini area is known as *Mindri*, the dialect of Idu Mishmis domiciled in Ithun as known as *Mithu* and the dialect of Idu Mishmis who are settled in Abali, Abango, and Koronu etc is known as *Midu*. Though there are slight variations in languages they are able to understand each other's language. Nasal sound and tone plays important role in Idu language. One word has many different meaning depending on the tone and nasal sound. In the present context, Idu Mishmis language is at the verge of extinction. There are many reasons like modern education, migration, inter tribe marriage etc. for the declining of the Idu Mishmis language.

2.1.2: Dress and Ornaments



Figure 6 & 7: Idu Girl with ornaments (*Ajibru.A~taru*)

Idu Mishmis is popularly known as the ‘*Chulikata Mishmis*’ because of their distinct hair style, this nomenclature being given by the people of the plains with whom Idus had trade relations. Even hair style of Idu Mishmis is very different from the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The front part of hair is cut till the end of the ear and remaining part of the hair behind is tied up tightly. Idu Mishmis dress is one of the richest in Arunachal Pradesh. It has varieties of colors with intricate design and attractive colors and unalloyed costumes and artistic patterns embedded on their cloths.



Figure 8 & 9: *Ana- tubu* and *Eto- Dre*

Among them, war coat is known as *Eto- Drẽ*. Colour of *Eto-Drẽ* is white and black with beautiful designs. War coat is made of fibre extracted from a plant called *Atra*. The bark of *Njabo* is also used to weave the coat. Threads are made out of the trees called *Malu* and *Nabre* and *Maka* leaves are used for preparing Black dye. This is made by women folk for male members in order protect them from the Sharp weapons. In modern days this dress becomes a traditional attire. So now days they wear this war coat in festivals, marriages and in some cultural programs. Today, they make this dress with modern threads and it costs around Rs. 5000.



Figure 10: An Idu woman weaver

Ana-tubu is one of the oldest traditional dresses of Idu Mishmis. A plant called *Ero-na* is used for preparing black and green colour dye. *Illikhu* was used with *Atru-bo* for preparing red dye and *A-Ron* (b. *coptis teeta*) roots was used for preparing yellow dye. Earlier this dress is worn especially by old men and women during social occasion. But nowadays young boys and girls wear this *Ana-tubu* coat in the form of half jacket or full jacket and price of *Ana-tubu* is around Rs. 6000.

Eto-ko-jo is a jacket meant for menfolk. Different colors of threads are used to weave this jacket and normally the colours are black, white, red, orange, pink and yellow and different kinds of designs are used in it. Earlier they used threads made of a wild plant which is called *Athrali* or *Atra*. *Etowe-polo* is another kind of dress with attractive designs and this dress is meant for women folk which is used to wear as a top. *Thuma* is the traditional dress of women folk which they wrap

around their waist along with *Etowe-polo*. It has lots of designs on the front side and simple designs on the back side.



Figure 11, 12, & 13: *Arulo, Lekepo, and A~po~tolo Juhi*

Idu Mishmis wear different kinds of ornaments. *Lekepo* is the name of a necklace which is in white color with beautiful varieties of red beads which is used by both male and female. *Arulo* it is another kind of the necklace which is made of elephant teeth and in the end of the necklace red beads and old coins are embodied. It is used by both male and female. *Akhokhri* is the name of earring, which is made of silver and it is used by women. Bangles are used by women and it is known as *Ajibru*. *A~taru* is a hair clip which is made of elephant teeth and used by women. *A~po~tolo Juhi* is a traditional hat of Idu Mishmis which is made of bamboo and cane.

2.1.3: Clan (*Eba*) and Kinship (*Anasi*)

Idu Mishmis are divided into a number of clans like, *Pulu, Mendo, Mega, Mepo, Melo Linggi, Meto, Umbrey, Mili, Aprawe, Miso, Elapra*, etc. Clans play an important role in their social life. Whenever some problem occurs they join together and help each other. The clan members also help their fellow members in constructing house, agricultural activities, performing rituals and ceremonies like Reh etc. In case, the person concerned is conducting Reh festival, then all his clansman help him by contributing various items like fish, mithuns, pigs, etc. to him.

Kinship also plays important role in Idu Mishmi society. Among Idus kinship terms are classificatory in nature since the same term is used for addressing the lineal as well as collateral relatives. For example *ena* is applied to the wife of one's elder brother as well as the wife of one's younger brother. There are other similar kinds of terms which are applied to both lineal and collateral relatives, which are highlighted in the terms of reference and terms of addresses, below. But whether a particular relative is lineal or collateral, Idu gives respect to them and always is polite towards them. The older people address the younger relatives by their names but, younger people always addresses the elder relatives by kinship terms. From the very childhood itself, an Idu child is taught how to behave towards their kins and learn the kinship terminologies. Kinship enforces rules, rights and duties to the members, even when any stranger belongs to Idu tribe from other places comes, the Idu people start enquiring about his kinship relations in order to find out their relationship with that person.

2.1.4: *Abela* – The Village Council

Abela plays an important role in Idu Mishmi society. This is a council of elder person popularly called "*Abela*" which is responsible for maintaining peace and

harmony among the Idu Mishmis society and also empowered to settle dispute of any sort with help of their customary laws. Both the party usually honors the verdict given by the Abela. The principle behind the Idu Mishmis' sense of justice is that a person who has not committed any mistake or crime should not be punished and he should get an opportunity in front of the council to prove that he has not done any mistake. Murder, robbery and mutilation are considered to be serious offences. *Abela* is derived from two words *Abe* and *laa*. *Abe* means between and *laa* means say. Thus it means 'go between' or 'negotiator'. In this way *Abela* refers to council of elders who negotiate in case of any dispute. The entire judicial process among the Idu Mishmis is based on the decision made by *Abela* who are interested in maintaining order and stability in the society.

Abela originated in the form of a political institution in the remote past. There was absence of any written record which adds to the problems of tracing how and when it was created. In all probability *Abela* was a later creation, society being the first one. Prior to the formation of Idu society, the people acted in their own way and according to their own wishes. But gradually they began to live together, thus forming a society. *Abela* was created subsequently, for two reasons. First is to protect the villages from outside attack and secondly to control the people's behavior through exercising judicial supervision on them.

2.1.5: House

The traditional Idu Mishmi house is made of bamboo and leaves of cane (*lakana*) or sun-grass (*ako*) is used for construction of roof. *Andaku* is known as veranda which is semi-circle in shape and each room has a hearth and is used for both cooking and sleeping. The room which is meant for male members is known as *allonga* which is considered sacred. The wall of *allonga* is decorated with the skull of wild animals such as wild boar, bear, monkey, deer and buffalo and also the

skull of mithun and pig which are sacrificed during the festivals and rituals. All the rituals related to hunting are performed in this room. Female members are not allowed to sleep in this room. *Apino* is the room meant for female members.



Figure 14: *Allonga*

2.1.6: Agriculture and Economy

Among the Idu Mishmis the land is owned individually and communally. Mostly Idu Mishmis follows *jhumkheti* cultivation which is subsistence in nature. Those who have settled in the plains follow wet land cultivation. Idu Mishmis cultivate ginger and other cash crops like orange, *elaichi*, rubber, tea, chili/inchi mebu, tomato etc. They are also engaged in livestock as well. They domesticate or semi-domesticate mithun (*sha*), buffalo (*maji*), pigs (*ili*) and chicken (*eko*). Some have started domesticating goats also. Mithun is greatly valued in the Idu Mishmi community. Each household in the hilly areas keep mithun because it plays a major role in all social occasions. The Idu men are experts in basketry and women

are experts in weaving. The traditional method of agriculture is slowly changing in the modern context. Nowadays Idu Mishmis are using tractors and other modern equipments for agriculture.



Figure 15: Paddy field

Rice, maize and millet are the staple food of the Idu Mishmis. Besides these, they also grow crops like sweet potato (*gena-geza*) and different vegetables like *tuna*, *etona*, *ahona*, *ekana*, *elompra*, *dina*. Like other tribes, Idu Mishmis are very fond of hunting and fishing. They also use various weapons like bow, arrows and spear etc. For fishing purpose they use various traps made of bamboo, cane and fishing net. They are fond of fish and meat. They preserve food by drying over the fire place. The home brewed rice beer (*yu*) is quite popular among them.

2.1.7: *Igu* - The Shaman

In Idu community, *Igu* or shaman enjoys high social status. They are said to have spiritual powers and master of all supernatural spirits. The *Igu* plays an important role in all the life cycle ceremonies, religious festivals and in all the important discussions and decision. The institution of *Igu* is not hereditary.



Figure 16: *Igu*, the shaman

Igus are of two types. The first is highly experienced and officiates in rituals like *Yah, Reh, Amra-sey* etc., in which they need to be in full costumes. The junior *Igus* acts as medicine men and perform rituals like *Ayi, Atare, Alluthru* etc. Sacred dress and ornaments are part of *Igu* and they use costumes like *Amrala, Re~pu, A~we~to*, etc. in various ceremonies. Without the costumes the *Igus* are considered incomplete. The costumes are kept with great care by the *Igu* in their houses in *Apito*. Among them, the principles of leading a better life exists in the form of sacred chants and hymns, mythology, rituals, customs and practices,

origin narratives etc. The hymns and the chanting are sacred, and a member of the community is expected to abide by it from birth to death. The chanting of the hymns vividly describes the great relationship of man with nature. The survival of the tribe till today is due to their understanding and belief of spiritual connection with Mother Nature. These chantings and rituals are performed by the *Igu* and he is considered master of all supernatural sprits. In Idu Mishmi community, both male and female can become *Igu* and they both play important role in the society. Certain important rituals like *Amar-se*, *Bro~cha na* i.e, graveyard dance, *ya* and *bro~fri* rituals are performed by elderly *Igus*.

2.1.8: Festivals

Reh is the harvest festival of the Idu Mishmi celebrated in the month of February. There are two types of *Reh* festival, one is personal, and the other is common. Personal *Reh* Festival is celebrated by any married male member. Normally, an eligible person after his marriage is encouraged by friends and elders to celebrate personal *Reh* and to start the process of *Ada*. As soon as a person who want to celebrate personal *Reh* starts the process of *Ada*. In *Ada*, people offer cash and kinds to a person who is going to perform *Reh*. They offer things like *sha* (mithun), *ili* (pig), *yu* (local rice beer), *anga saa~* (dry fish), dry rat, rice, millet, *pra~* (salt) and *inchi* (chilly). The offerings received are registered immediately by *Agiro-Thrayiga* on behalf of *Menga*. *Ada-gi*, i.e, each and every item of the donations received is recorded in detail. For instance, in case of measurement of dry fish, wild dry rat, and rice beer (*yu*) is based on the size of the basket and for rice and millet, the numbers and the size of the container is taken into account. The donated mithuns and pigs are measured in terms of its size and age.

Personal *Reh* festival is celebrated for five days. First day of the *Reh* celebration is called *Andropu* as *Igu* starts the *puja* with ritual items like

laroli, meye-aji, andropu, andro-nya etc. On this day *Igu* arrives first and starts the rituals for the well being of all guest, traditionally called *Meye-bo* in chorus for 2-3 times. Guests initially climb the bamboo *chang* before entering the house and they are offered rice beer in bamboo. In the evening, all guests are hosted with a feast and in the late night, a dance competition is held where everyone takes part and enjoys. Second day of the *Reh* is called *Eyanli*. All mithuns are sacrificed on this day in the early morning. Before sacrificing the mithun there is a ritual for purifying the animals by *Igu* which is called *sha-aji* and one mithun is kept separately for *Aru-ba* i.e., feasting for the villagers only.

On the third day of *Reh* celebration is called *Einyi*. On this day the entire village arrives in the early morning in the *Reh-ko* to prepare food and meat as most of the *meye* or *karu* (guests) will depart on this day. As a mark of respect, the *menga*, in return offers gifts to them in the form of bundles of dry fish and dry rat called *Agiro*. *Lli-ru-muni* or *Aro-go* is the fourth day of the festival. On this day one mithun is kept separately to be sacrificed to entertain the villagers only. Fifth day of *Reh* celebration is known as *Etonu-che* it is the concluding day of the festival. Fowls are sacrificed in the morning. The main reason behind the ritual of *Etonu* is to appease the god *Appessa* to bestow a bumper crop. *Igu* also departs on this day. With this, the Personal *Reh* celebration comes to an end. After that, 5-10 days taboo is observed by *menga* and his entire family members.

The community *Reh festival* is celebrated for two or three days in the month of February (1st to 3rd). During this festival every Idu village celebrates *Reh* in their respective villages. On 1st February everybody comes to the central *Reh* house in Roing to celebrate *Reh*. This festival consists of dance, songs, fashion show cultural program, debate competition, quiz competition, essay writing, extempore speech etc. Food courts and craft stalls are take place in this festival. The community *Reh* festival started in the year of 1968 at Roing and Anini.

III

FUNERAL TRADITIONS OF IDU MISHMIS

Funeral practices of Idu Mishmis are unique and a number of oral narratives, rituals, performances, beliefs, taboos, offerings etc are associated with it. This chapter will document all those practices in detail.

3.1: Origin Myth associated with Death

Time immemorial, a man known as Sineru went to a village where he was summoned to stop the prevailing epidemic. Sineru was not confident that he would come back alive. Therefore he planted an *egambo* tree in his yard and asked his mother, wife and children to look after the plant. He also left *ishuru* - a bird to communicate between him and the family. One day *ishuru* brought a message of death of his child. But Sineru thought it would be better to serve the people because a child can be obtained later on. Next time the bird brought the message of his wife's death and Sineru preferred to stay and thought he can remarry later. Again one day *ishuru* brought the message of the death of his mother. Sineru's heart was broken, since he cannot get back a mother in his life again. He returned back to his place and went to Athuka, a place through which every soul passed and he tried to locate if his mother's soul was passing through it or not. After reaching home he hired Iruliru for chanting *Anja* at *Athupopu*, to call back his mother's soul. But Iruliru was unsuccessful in the attempt. Therefore, Sineru himself holding *kalinta tothobra* (herb) in his hand, chanted Yah continuously for five days.

By virtue of his chants, his mother came back. But instead of earring in her ears she carried earth worm (signifying the grave). Sineru's second wife could not accept the form in which his mother came back. She drove her away with *Aabripa* (a loom stick). Sineru was worried about this. Then an owl came and sought to keep the mother under his (owl's) care.

Some days later when Sineru came and enquired about the mother, the owl replied that she might have fallen in the mountain. Sineru enquired about this to other birds but they replied that they had never heard such sound of falling down. Sineru then saw the remaining hairs of the mouth of owl and a housefly came out flying. The housefly began doing all the activities which Sineru's mother did during her life time. Then he confirmed that, it was the owl that had eaten his mother. He became depressed since his mother could not come back in human form. He started chanting and wished that if his mother came back, the fish would begin climbing the trees and rats would grow long teeth like tiger. Since all these were impossible, his mother never came back from the land of soul. Since then, the *Igus* (shaman) chant all that words which had been recited by Sineru to avoid coming back of human soul. From then, there is a belief that the souls never come back to the land of living.

3.2. Invitation to *Igu*

Whenever a death occurs in the village, the relatives of the deceased go to the *Igu's* house and informs him about the death and requests him to come and perform the rituals. As soon as the priest gets information, at night, he starts chanting from *Andaku*, the drawing room of his house in order to find out the cause of the death. He tries to find out which evil spirit has killed this man, which evil spirit or ghost (*khinu*) has crossed the boundary (*la~ro~*) and has eaten up this person. After knowing the cause of the death, he sleeps at night in his house and

the next morning he gets ready to go to the deceased house to perform the rituals. The *Igu* wears his traditional sacred dress and ornaments and takes several sacred objects and musical instruments along with him when he goes to perform funeral rituals.



Figure17: Igu in his sacred dress

3.3. Sacred Objects of *Igu*

A number of sacred objects are used by *Igu* while performing rituals. They are:

- *Eto-ti*- a coat with many linear designs. The cloth is made of *Athrali* (wild plant). The fiber is obtained from the wild plant and weaved into coat and skirt.
- *Amrala* is made of the teeth of deer and wild boar and used to be worn around the shoulder. The jaw of a Tiger is attached to it along with the bones of bear. Brass bells are tied in the bottom which gives music while dancing. These metals were brought from the Tibet.



Figure 18 & 19: *Amrala* and *Eto-ti*

There is an oral narrative associated with *Amrala* which is as follows:

“Once upon a time there was a huge fire called *Inyila Phri* which destroyed everything in the world and only a man named *Ekamo* and his daughter *Erraye* were alive. They were very sad and *Ekamo*- the father was thinking how to populate the human beings and finally he decided to marry *Erraye*, his daughter in order to populate the human race. They started living together and as a result the first child born to them was a tiger! The tiger went away to the jungle soon after its birth. The parents recognized through the foot prints that the child born to them was a tiger. They were shocked and after some time *Erraye* gave birth to a male child. He was growing as a man and one day when he was in the forest he met the tiger and both the tiger and the man started hunting together. When they were hunting together they realized that they had many differences. After hunting, the man wanted to cook the meat and eat but the tiger ate the raw meat. One day when they hunted a deer, the tiger ate all the meat while the man was busy searching for firewood. They started quarrelling and the man asked the tiger how could he eat the meat when he was

searching for firewood? The man said, since you eat raw meat, one day you will eat me and my parents too. The tiger replied, yes if I want I can eat you and the parents as well. The man was shocked and returned home and informed his parents.

Ekamo and *Erraye* were concerned about the life of their human son. The tiger brother became a threat for man. One day *Ekamo* and *Erraye* were discussing with their son how to get rid of the tiger. Then they decided to call the tiger for a challenge. The winner of the challenge would have to kill the loser. The challenge was that the man had to cross the river in a twig and the tiger had to cross the river by swimming. The tiger also accepted the challenge. During the competition, the man lagged behind and the tiger went ahead. *Erraye* felt so sad and she brought some ants in *achifru* (small container made of bamboo) and let the ants on the tiger. The ants started biting the tiger and the tiger was not able to concentrate on swimming. Finally the man reached the shore and won the competition. Then he shot the tiger with a poisonous arrow and killed the tiger. The dead body of the tiger was carried away by the river and it reached a place called '*Inni Dingume, Silli Dingume*' and '*Eto Dingume* (the place of water spirit). The spirits collected the bones of the tiger and they created many tigers out of these bones. From there all the species of the tiger family like cat, leopard, panther, cheetah etc. emerged and went away to the forest and started living separately”



Figure 20 & 21: *Aweto* and *Gerambu*

- *A~we~to*: *A~we~to* is a headgear of *Igu* and it ought to be worn while performing the rituals. It is made of sea shells and yak's hair.
- *Re~pu* is made from the bamboo root and the skin of a big reptile lizard. These instruments are used by *Igu* during ritual performance and in dead ritual ceremony.
- *Ajuru* is a blowing instrument made out of the horns of Buffalo and Mithun.
- *Gerambu*: *Gerambu* is made from *Egambo tree*.

Before leaving his house, the *Igu* performs a chant and invokes the chief of the evil spirits and invites the spirit to accompany him. It is believed that the other spirits may attack his house when he goes to perform the funeral rituals. Therefore he chants, cuts a *Tothro* plant (bamboo), blows the horn and locks the house and leaves the house. After invoking the spirits, he should not go back to his house and if violated, it is believed that the spirits will destroy his house.



Figure 22 & 23: *Ajiru* and *Repu*

Normally two persons assist *Igu* in rituals. Therefore *Igu* chants for the assistants also in order to protect them from the evil spirits. Then they leave for the death house. These assistants help the *Igu* to meet the requirements and the most important thing is that they will have to assure that women having menstruation period should not touch the things belonging to *igu* and they should not prepare any food for the *Igu*. If it is violated, it is believed that the *igu* will not be able to perform his rituals properly.

3.4: *Igu Thrõ*

Igu thrõ refers to hosting the *Igu* in a special way. They depute few persons to look after all the needs of the *Igu* during the funeral ceremony and take care of his special food and exclude menstruating women in the preparation of food to *Igu*.

Close relatives of the deceased person plays active role in funeral ceremony. When they hear about the death, they bring pig (*ili*), hen (*ato*) and local rice beer (*yu*) to the deceased house and if relatives are rich they bring mithun (*sha*) also. They take up many responsibilities in the funeral ceremony. They prepare food, young girls or women takes active part in serving local rice beer and

cool drinks to the guest; some young male or female or women or old man takes



Figure 24: Relatives assembled in the house of death

active role in serving food. Some guests may not like to eat food in the death house so the relatives of the deceased person requests the neighbouring houses to prepare food. A special space is made for the people who do not eat food inside the death house. It is known as *lãrõ* made of bamboo. It is a semi-circle shape situated little far from the house. The person who is serving food should serve from this *lãrõ* and they should not cross this *lãrõ* and should not touch the guest too. Believing that if you touch the person while serving who came from funeral ceremony, even that person has to attend the death ritual ceremony. That is why they are very careful while serving the food.

3.5: *Broĩto* – Construction of Grave

Broĩto refers to the construction of new grave for the deceased person. *Broĩto* is generally done by relatives and neighbors' or family members out of love.

Sometimes they give some money to the person who digs the grave. Normally the size of the grave is about 6 feet and the depth of the grave is about five meters. After digging the grave, walls are made of bricks on the four sides and flooring is done with cement. Finally it looks like a well constructed furnished room with bed, wardrobe etc and sometimes the interior is also decorated with wall papers.



Figure 25: Offering of things inside the grave

As soon as a person dies, the corpse is washed and clothed with new traditional clothes. The body is kept in a posture by folding his palm and keeping both the hand across the chest. Dead bodies are kept in *ālonṅa* or *edriku*, the entrance of the house. Before putting the dead body in the *ālonṅa* they arrange the place to keep the dead body in a carpet; on top of that they put two or three large bed sheets or mattress of the dead person. The direction for keeping the dead body is according to the direction of the house. Normally the dead body is kept opposite to the place called *edriku* where the heads of the skeletons and bones of animals are displayed.



Figure 26 & 27: Offering of piglet and hen inside the grave



Figure 28 & 29: Relatives with offerings placed inside the grave

Coins and paper currencies are placed in the palm of the deceased person. It is believed that the deceased person will buy water in *ālōchiko* – the world of dead. *ālōānini* – the owner of *ālōchiko* will not give water unless he is paid money and therefore the relatives offer money to the deceased person.

They also offer bamboo leaves to the deceased person to use in the world of the dead in order to chase away the flies and insects. If the dead person was a hunter or murderer or if that dead person had a gun during his life, after his death one old person or middle age person first fires the gun in the air through a window (which is *āsoḱata* in local term). Because it is believed that the dead person has

killed many people and animals during his life time so their soul might be waiting on the way to take revenge on this dead person. Main reason for shooting in the air is to warn the enemies that I have a gun and believing that they will give the way to that dead person.



Figure 30 & 31: The deceased placed in the grave, and the grave being closed

If the dead person is poor then they will just throw an arrow in the air and then they shoot the gun in the air outside the veranda before carrying the dead body to the graveyard. They fire the gun in the air in the graveyard also.

3.6: Rituals performed by the *Igu*

If it is normal death, first of all the *Igu* comes with his *tothro* plant, chants and puts that *tothro* plant in *andaku* or veranda of the house of the deceased. Before entering the house the *Igu* goes to a small hut which is called *Atita Ako~pra* to perform the rituals for whole night.

This small hut is made outside the house separately for the *Igu* to perform the rituals along with his assistants. The assistants accompany the *Igu* and perform *Gerambu* i.e. a small drum and *Ajiru* i.e. horn. The host also gives certain amount of cash to the *Igu* to perform the rituals. The *Igu* chants and performs the

rituals for whole night without sleeping. During the rituals, the *Igu* communicates with *mrega* - the soul and the time of this communication depends upon the *Igu*. It may be in the early morning or mid night, before burying the corpse. In local term this is called *Abri~gi~*. Some *Igus* perform this conversation with *mrega* or soul after burying the dead body and also before going to perform *Bro~ch na* i.e. the graveyard dance in grave.



Figure 32: *Igu* performing funeral ritual

3.6.1: *Abri~gi~*

Abri~gi~ is performed before burying the dead body. When priest perform this *Abri~gi~* one of the assistants sit behind the *Igu* and play the flat gong which is called *ka~li~to*. This gong cannot be performed continuously and it has to be played with regular interval. Everybody should maintain silence when the *Igu* performs *Abri~gi~*. Otherwise it is believed that hearing the noise, *Mrega* won't have proper conversation with the priest. During *Abri~gi~* aged men and woman

who knows the language of *Igu* sit near by the priest and listens to the communication very carefully. Many people do not understand the priestly language; however they sit and listen to the conversation.

3.6.2: *Alimbro*

When *Igu* performs *ka~li~to*, after burying the dead body then it is called *Alimbro*. Here also the same thing is done like how it is performed in *Abri~gi*, everybody should maintain pin drop silence. There should not be any noise when priest is having conversation with *Mrega* or Soul. Otherwise it is believed that hearing the noise *Mrega* won't have proper conversation with priest. At that time aged man and woman who knows the word of priest they will sit near by the priest and listen very carefully to the conversation. Some people don't understand the conversation of the priest but still they sit and listen to the conversation.

The time of burial depends upon the family members. If the relatives are coming from far away places to attend the funerals, then the burial time is based on the arrival of them. Before they take the dead body to the grave, all the belongings of the deceased person will be taken to the graveyard and arranged in the newly constructed grave. Then the corpse is carried away along with a mattress to the graveyard. Those who are carrying the corpse make a peculiar sound like hooooo and hearing the sound others will give proper space to carry the corpse. The relatives of the deceased person also give certain amount to the persons who carry the corpse. The relatives and others follow the corpse to the graveyard and keep the corpse inside the newly constructed graveyard. Generally the corpse is kept in lying position on the new bed, from east to west direction in the graveyard and all the new things like crockery's, wardrobe etc are kept inside the graveyard. After this they close the top of the graveyard with concrete or wooden platforms.

After burying the dead body, all the relatives come back to the house of the deceased and then the *Igu* performs *Alluthru* to everyone who are present in the house. This ritual is primarily to purify the persons from the evil spirits. Whoever enters the dead person's house cannot go back without doing *Alluthru*. *Alluthru* is done by the main priest at the end of the death ritual after burying the dead body. In the ritual of *Alluthru* the priest chants and touches the person's body or head with bamboo leaves to drive away the evil spirits. Everyone has to stay in the house till the priest performs final *Alluthru* in the house.



Figure 33: *Alluthru*

3.6.3: *Amra se* and *Alibrula*

After *Alluthru*, the *Igu* performs *Amra se* in order to protect family members from the evils. Generally it is performed throughout the night. In the ritual of *Ali brula* the *Igu* invokes the souls of all the family members and he checks who is in

danger from evil spirit, also checks what bad things will happen to them. Even the priest asks the soul about his problem and also *Igu* comes to know who is going to die natural or unnatural death in that family or in village itself or in the neighboring village.

3.6.4: *Mraba Khusu*

After *Ali brula*, *Igu* performs *Mraba khusu* in the house. In the ritual of *Mraba khusu* the *Igu* wears all the ornaments and accompanied with musical instrument, he chants all the history of idu priests' and tells the story of *Sineru* and invokes the supernatural spirits. After performing *Mraba khusu* the priest takes the *tothro* plant with him, chants for the protection of his assistants and musical performers who is going to perform *Bro~cha na* – the graveyard dance in the grave itself. *Bro~cha na* or graveyard dance is performed for almost three hours.



Figure 34: *Mraba khusu*

3.6.5: *Brõcha na*

Brõcha na is performed by the *Igu* in graveyard *after* burying the death body. During this ritual, the *Igu* gives food to *Mrega*- the soul of the deceased and tells that he is not anymore alive that is why he is giving food from the graveyard. .The *Igu* tells the soul not to come back to the world of the living. Then he offers local rice beer to the *Mrega* and says that he may come back to the human world when stone will be rotten and when bamboo reaches the cloud. It refers that the soul should never to return to the world of the living. There is a plant called *Ewina* whose leaves have two different colours, that is, white at the front and green on the other side of the leaf. The *Igu* also lays down the condition that the *Mrega* (soul) may return to this world only when the white color disappears from the leaves. There is also a bird called *Ewuoo* which cannot fly very high, and lives on the ground. The Priest cuts off one claw of the *Ewuoo bird* and buries it on the ground and tells the soul that you may return to this world when this bird is able to fly above the big- big trees in the forest. He warns the soul that if he tries to come back in the form of a rat, or a small bird *Ejikru*, he will be eaten up by the house ghosts *Aasu, Andro, Eru, Anda*. He further states that the soul may come back only when the tiger stops roaring. This ritual of *Brõcha na* is generally performed for more than three hours.

3.6.6: *Ya*

Ya ritual is performed in the deceased house by the priest. *Ya* ritual is perform to guide the soul to the supernatural world. The primary difference between *ya* and *brõcha na* is mainly the difference in the duration of chants. In *ya* the chants continue for three nights and in the case of *Brõcha*, it is only two nights. It depends on the family member to do only *Brõch na* or to perform yah in death ritual in their house. In the death ritual, the *Igu* feeds the soul and guides the

journey of the soul from entrance of the house through several mountains which is called *Mabra*. Priest narrates a number of places on the journey of the soul and guides the soul properly to reach its place. During this journey where ever hills occur he provides ladder to climb and where ever rivers occur he provides bridges to cross the rivers. The igu guides every step of the journey of the soul till the soul reaches.



Figure 35: *Igu* performing *Ya* ritual

There are certain restrictions for *Igu* who perform *Ya* ritual. Restrictions for those days are that the *Igu* should not eat any kind of mushroom, onion, garlic; He should not go near the weaving areas not allowed to wash cloths; He should not take the food prepared by women who is having menstruation period; he should stay away from sexual relationship; If a *Igu* performs *Ya* for the first time in his priestly service then he has to follow the restrictions for ten days in his house. If it is second time then he has to follow the restrictions for nine days. If it is third time then he has to follow the restrictions for eight days. If it is fourth time then he has to follow the restrictions for seven days. If it is fifth time then he has to follow the restrictions for six days. For sixth he has to follow the restrictions for five days.

3.6.7: *Ayukhishu*

In the ritual of *Ayukhishu* the *igu* narrates many stories about different types of bamboos like, *Aruto* (big size bamboo), *Abrato* (small size bamboo), story of *Ewena* leaf and story of *Ayumbra*, *Angro ashothrula* etc.. After this, the priest performs *Mraba yo*, in which he narrates the history of *idus* and he guides the soul to the death world crossing different types of *Mabra* mountain and gives food to soul whenever they reach different type of *Mabra* mountain.

3.6.8: *Nathru tamro Mrayawete*

In the ritual of *Nathru tamro Mrayawete* the *igu* chants for people who helped in funeral ceremony like cooking, serving, digging the grave, who offered things to the deceased person etc. In order to protect them from the spirits. It is believed that sometimes the spirit will go along with these people and therefore this ritual is performed to protect them.

3.6.9: *lomi na*

In *lomi na* the *Igu* chants in order to send away all the bacteria's or bad diseases like cancer, leprosy from the house by calling all the supernatural powers. This would protect the family members from all bad diseases.

3.6.10: *Andomo ro~to*

In *Andomo ro~to* ritual, the soul is guided by the *Igu* beyond the *Andomo*, and on the way a river has to be crossed with the help of a boat. As an enactment, the *Igu* bargains with a boatman in order to carry the soul across the river. After they cross the river, the *Igu* through his chants returns to the living world. After crossing the *Andomo*, the soul can rest at any of the place in the vast expanse of territory of the after world. In this ritual, the soul of the deceased are to be symbolically sent across the river therefore one person acts as a boat man by wearing an Assamese towel in his forehead and another person acts tells the boat man that 'one person is going with lot of luggage and animals'. Person who tells the boatman should be very cautious while explaining and answering the boatman's questions because it refers to the dead person's soul. Suppose by mistake, if he says that 'many people are going or two people is coming unknowingly then it is believed that some more death will occur in reality and therefore the person who is giving information should be careful while describing the details. For instance, he should clearly state that one aged male is coming or aged female is coming or young boy or young girl, or baby girl or baby boy. If unknowingly he says one young boy is coming instead of young girl then within that week one young boy's death will happen in that village. So he should be very careful while informing the correct details of the deceased person.

One Idu person acts as if he is bargaining with the boatman about the charges for the boat and the boatman replies in Assamese because here all the

boatmen are Assamese. It is very important to note that the person who acts as bargainer should not act the same role in other death ritual for a year. If he violates, it is believed that he will die.

3.6.11: Ashotho~.

In this ritual the whole family members sit in a line and *Igu* will suck each individual's forehead or stomach of family member by putting *ka~li~ta* (herbal plant root) in his mouth and the *Igu* also putt *Etola* – i.e. feather of a male cock on the hair of family members. This is performed to purify the members of the deceased family.

3.6.12: Asa ji

Asa ji's performed in the end of the death ritual ceremony. Here the *Igu* carries *Aweto* i.e. the headgear in his mouth or sometimes he carries a live *Etola* i.e. cock in his mouth *ekobo* and holds a sword in his hand and drives away the evil spirits from that place. And this ritual is performed in *Alonga* or *Edriku* of the house. After chasing away the evil spirits, the *Igu* priest goes outside the house and kills the *Etola* with his mouth and drinks the raw blood and takes out the liver of the *Etola*. On the next morning, the priest throws the *Tothro* plant from where he had cut that plant. He throws the plant where no one can touch it and he leaves the house the next morning to his own house. The family members of the deceased offer local rice beer, *Aku*, *Eto la* or cock and other meat to the *Igu*. By taking all those things the *Igu* leaves for his house and on the way, far from the house of deceased, he makes *la~ro~* (boundary made of bamboo) and invokes all the powerful spirits, whom he invoked earlier to come along with him to the house of deceased. There he offers them food, local rice bear, *Etola*, and *Aku* and he request

all the spirits not to come along with him to his house and sends them to their own place and he returns to his house.



Figure 36: *apo'tolo*

3.7: Different kinds of death

The above mentioned ritual practices are generally performed during normal/natural death. However there are some minor differences in rituals in certain kinds of death.

When a baby dies inside the mother's womb or within ten days of birth then the father or the mother takes the deceased infant in a traditional small basket called *Agra* and keeps the corpse in the basket and hangs it on a tree which is situated little far away from the village. Generally, they do this secretly without informing to anyone in the village. During this kind of death both the mother and the father maintains certain restrictions for five months. It is believed that when a child dies, the soul lingers on the earth for a certain period, roaming aimlessly and feeding on the sap or little trees and bushes, to satisfy the hunger and thirst. After

some time, it dissolves into the air. But if a baby dies in ten days time, then they perform the death rituals similar to adults. However young girls, boys and unmarried are not allowed to attend the funerals because it is believed that the same kind of death may also happen to them in future.

When a husband or wife dies then the surviving spouse should follow certain restrictions. They should not eat banana, sugarcane, squirrel, Bird like *pidi* (peacock) and *peba*, fish and any other big animals like tiger, bear, deer, and monkey. Even garlic, onion, and sweet potatoes are not allowed to be eaten.

When a priest dies, first they close the eyes, and mouth and wash the dead body of the priest. They shake the priests' *amraġa*, blow the horn (*ajiru*) of buffalo, play the musical instrument *re~pu* and someone screams *hooooooo* aloud and someone plays *gerambu* i.e. small drum. After doing this, they perform the rituals by calling other priest in the deceased house.

In every unnatural death, the *Igu* uses the *Ashowuu* (small branch of tree) in every chant and even in *Anja*. It is a branch of a tree which holds by the priest and performed. The *Igu* holds *Ashowuu* in hand or hangs the branch in a rope while performing their chant. Different types of unnatural death rituals are found in Idu Mishmis tribe example suicide, murder, fire accident, and death in water or murdered by someone, etc. If dead person is female, then dead ritual performance is done for four days. And *Alluthru* is done in the end of the rituals. So on fourth night everybody has to spend one night in the jungle. In the same way on the death of a male in the 5th night they have to stay in the forest. Boundary protection is made by the priest with bamboo which is called *la~ro~*. For this, they make a *la~ro~* out of *Apito* which is found only in hilly area or from *Aruto* (bamboo) which is available nearby river or end of the village. They sacrifice raw eggs and the people have to put small pieces of bamboo in the egg cell or by breaking the egg cell and cross under the *la~ro~* or pick up one stone and throw the stone in the *la~ro~* and cross

the *lãõõ*. But female who are having monthly menstruation period cannot cross the *lãõõ*. They just have to go aside the *lãõõ* by throwing the stone or by throwing the piece of bamboo. This is done in order to protect them from evil spirits. In unnatural death ritual ceremony *Alluthru* is not performed before the end of the rituals. But in normal dead *Alluthru* is performed before the end of the dead rituals. Whoever wants to go home, they can go back by doing *Alluthru* from the priest. And return back in the deceased house whenever they want. But this thing is not possible in unnatural dead ritual ceremony. Once they come in deceased house, everybody they have to stay till end of the rituals.

In the death of a murderer, before closing the eyes, mouth and washing the dead body, they blow the horn (*ajiru*) of buffalo, play the musical instrument *repu* and someone screams *hoooooooo* on the ears of the deceased, some other people play *gerambu* i.e small drum. On the dead body they sacrifice the bear (*ãõõ*) and burn it. Even in the graveyard they practice the same. There are some restrictions in offering the things while burying in the grave. When a woman dies, weaving loom or (*Abripa*) is not allowed to bury along with the corpse. It is believed that if you burry this *abipra* then the deceased person will cut the survivors and therefore they don't bury this weaving Loom along with the corpse. If a male person dies, then they don't burry *Elebe* but they burn it. *Elebe* is made of *Ele* tree or bõ. It is a local rain coat used by men, when ever they go to town or forest or for hunting or visiting far villages. Another important thing is that before burying the hat (*apõtolo*) of the deceased, they make a hole on it and it is believed that in the death world there will be rain all the time where he or she goes. It will create a problem if the *apotolo* is put into the grave while cultivation and it will spoil all the grains of the death world.

3.8: *A~we~to~*

When an *Igu* dies, they don't bury the *a~we~to~* (headgear) along with the deceased if he don't have the power to fly. Which is called *A~rosiya*. It is believed that if they burry the head gear when he don't have the power to fly then, with head gear he cant able to walk in *a~lo~ombo~*- the underworld. Then *alo~nini*- the underworld's dangerous soldier will catch the igu and imprison him and make him slave. It becomes very easy to catch the priest when they are not able to fly. . But if the priest has the power to fly i.e. *A~rosiyato* , then they can bury the *a~we~to~* because he can fly and escape from the attacks by the underworld soldiers.

3.9: *Adege* – The Confession centre of the souls

Confession centre of the dead soul is known as *Adege* As soon as the souls of the deceased person reached *Adege*, they confess whatever he or she has done during in her lifetime and how he or she has lived on the earth. . *Different places are there in Adege* for different kinds of persons to confess. Suppose if the person has performed *Reh* festival in his life time then the soul will go to *Remo Adeanuli Adege* to confess, *If* a person has committed murder then his or her soul will go towards *Athuro~ echachi- Metro~aya~mko Adege*, *If* a person was a hunter then the soul will go to *Aru~go~Adepo~lo~*. In this way the souls confess everything whatever he or she has done in their living world. After their confession in *Adege* every soul goes towards the death world which is known as *Mudu-a~lo~ko~*. After this they go to the real death world which is known as *Asia~ lo~ko~*. *The* Poor or the rich or the murderer or the rapist, their souls go towards the death world called *Asia~ lo~ko~*. But the servant has a different death world and name which is called *Etadi-aichi Adepothu~*. Here the servant's soul confesses everything what they have done in their life. Those who had sexual relationship with servants, after

their death their soul will also go to servant's death world in *Etadi-aichi Adepothu*.

3.10: *Brõfri*

Brõfri is a ritual which is performed within one year after death ritual ceremony. In the ritual of *Brõfri*, the family members perform the same rituals which they performed during the funeral ceremony. They make a same kind of grave and bury local rice bear, different types of seeds *Apri*, rice seeds *kepri*, cloths *Andruhũ*, vegetables *Anapara*, bamboo basket *Agra* and *Asinu*. All the close relatives of the deceased and the members of the community take part in this ritual and the host feast all the people with food and drinks.

IV

ANJA - THE MOURNING SONGS

Mourning songs are an integral part of funeral tradition. Van Gennep (1960) stated that the living mourners and the deceased constitute a special group, situated between the world of the living and the world of the dead, and how soon living individuals leave that group depends on the closeness of their relationship with the dead person. Mourning requirements are based on degrees of kinship and are systematized by each people according to their special way of calculating kinship (patrilineal, matrilineal, bilaterally, etc.). The rites which lift all the regulations (such as special dress) and prohibitions of mourning should be considered rites of reintegration into the life of society as a whole or of a restricted group: they are of the same order as the rites of reintegration for a novice. It is a transitional period for the survivors, and they enter it through rites of separation and emerge from it through rites of reintegration into society (rites of the lifting of mourning).

Among Idu Mishmis, *Anja* - the mourning songs are performed during the funerals before burying the corpse. Generally it is performed by elderly people - both men and women sit in front of the deceased person and perform *anja*. It is believed that the deceased person cannot hear the words if we talk normally but he will understand if we communicate through *anja*. Therefore *Anja* is also an important ritual in funerals. It is very difficult to understand the words and the meaning of *Anja* and it is performed by very few people. *Anja* can be performed as a group or alone also. *Anja* cannot be taught or learned, it comes naturally to some people.



Figure 37: The deceased man



Figure 38: Some people performing *Anja*

Normally through *anja*, they convey to the soul that you are dead, you are no more in this world, so you have to go to the world of the dead and you cannot keep any

connection with the living human world anymore. The wordings and pronunciation of *Anja* is very difficult to understand and it is not possible to document during the natural context. Therefore, few *Anja* songs have been collected in an artificial context through interview and translated in this chapter. Among Idu Mishmis, it is believed that *Anja* should not be performed in artificial context and it is considered inauspicious. The following are some of the *Anja* songs:

4.1: *Anja* 1 performed in natural death

Nume etani nga go gũchi yũlawe sida wilakum chida

Nume ngachelaw sida wiya kumchida

Aime nume adetani numi guchi yui chi buda

Nani me ela hũdrãgã mãhõmã

Naba me epõo tuga mãhõmã

Nuchi adetani nadane ĩyũ esagala

Ayame etani nabuda

Numu busa me ayane nuchi da lane, andru- malõhõ,atho –malõhõ nuchi ãchõ

dane bribri adugaha

Busa nuchi angro dalane ayagãha, nu ãdõ,athõmalõ grihũ prawe, amẽ asone hũ prawe

Jinu ahũthro iphilo me ayame ũchi buda lane athõmalõ hũ yikhai lide

ayã mẽrũ mama me ahuthro aya merũ. Ayame bribri agrijabuda lane ayine thõmaluba khalide.

Nuhe apũ lĩlu elõdõã,ãliyamahoma,nu wo authrõ mini merũ mesa me ayame tando nabuda nu ali anemo aya ãwsa sida,agra awsida

Apõlilu elõdõã alidoma, ili metatho irina ãwã tãrõkha elene

Nuhe zinu aya go numu busago isũuma lõhõ api mi

Izi asõla anami

*Nuhe bigene siba hune aṗeyā chichu meproto ajigene, nu goḷō ga echā ma
enodowḏane egeyo iwubriyi me nu suṭoynawe
Nuhe sineru me arusīyane miprime
Nuhe arumepo malochi aṗīya ikhayga iri naba, aṃēya aya arumepo me ada mēme
malachi aya emai yiga ebra naba
inu padu inihu bake choro gahiwkumda
Shariya ilubake, ayike awala anahiwkumi
Aduna rōhiwkumi, lañacha atahiwkumi
sineu me aruwa sinego zinu aya go aya thonju lake tona
Nuchi goḷō enori numu busa aḏō me
akuwa aḷōṛṅanaba, akī ashisagara ba, aroḃminita asa mesha ja
a maḥō ne aḥuñe nychi goḷō ri awa saga naba
Baḥā meta huthro iphilo tāro meru amuma ali ane mina lane
Agra ya loña lane athuwo malō gri aroña, amē aḥsone atana
Añi aḷōli ne chibane amra asīwi ayabawe
Awu roni ashoprachi aḷōña
Aneya pēgu prachi chi angaña
Awu roni ashoprachi aḷōña
Anē pēgu aso luwe ajaña
Nu chihim mababu iguhe aruwa sinerugo thonjuna
Ameya sowagego lakena
Nu echama numu busa zinu ayama echa goḷō ayama,
Nu isu maloṽoinjumi
Iji asoḷa eḷēḃ
Goḷō enodogeyo iḃbiyi me aṗēya chichu mreṗo tageyo ajigebu iḃbriyi me
sutoyowe.
Aṗōya chichu mreṗotome goḷō eño dogeyo iḃbriyi me sutoyowe
Amē chichu mēme sane inabu amraḃbeka kiyayo we
Aloḃbrilona asoḃeloḃala*

4.1.1: Translation and Meaning of *Anja* 1

Never thought that one day you will leave me and go away from me.

Never thought that you will never see me again and leave me.

But today you are leaving; today is your date to leave that's why you are leaving.

When mother was pregnant for ten months.

When father was plucking the plant *Epoño* to show that this son.

That time itself sign was made when your death will be.

So today is the date of your death.

That's why your parents have given you many things to you like clothes and other valuable things to you to take it to the dead world where you are going to live.

That's why even your relatives have given you many things. You have to carry all those things where you are going to live your life.

In the world of the dead your things will be snatched away by other souls by saying this is my things, my relatives has given me this things to me or by saying this is mine. So many old human souls will come to you to snatch your things.

When they are snatching the things from you by saying this is mine that time you will be in unconscious stage. You won't know what's happening. Everything will be cloudy- cloudy and not clear.

In that situation don't be weak, be strong and show your power

Don't try to come in the form of small bird and make a sound

Now once you are dead, so do not try to come home in the form of rat. If you come also home ghost will eat you up and tear you into many pieces.

If you want to come back then you have to accept the *sineru*'s challenge given to you. If you are able to finish *sineru*'s challenge then only you can come back to your home otherwise don't come back. Now you are related to *sineru*'s challenge, what all he will say you have to do that. You cannot live with living people.

After ten years also we cannot meet each other.

After eight years also it's not possible to meet each other.

It's not possible to meet each other in this life. We can't meet in this life.

Today is the last day of your life. Next day what all you want to say or share your feelings to your family you tell to *sineru*. Through *sineru* your family member will know what you said.

You are dead that's why your brother, sister and your relatives they are making a grave for you in the end of the village where cultivation is not possible and where only graves are there and where there is only ghosts.

If you get confused on the way while reaching the world of the dead, ask help from your soul relatives to guide you.

When you are on the way to death world ask for the golden boat for yourself. So that your self will be safe and your things and to reach properly to the death world. Make sure you ask for the good boat for the long journey towards that world.

If you are not able to walk ask help from the *sineru* to help you to walk.

Do not dare to appear in the form of bird *pjipu* otherwise you will be eaten up by the ghost. Don't ever try to show yourself or appear in the house.

Now once you are dead, so do not try to come home in the form of rat. If you come also one old home ghost who always stays in the underground *amra* *beka* will eat you up and tear you into many pieces. So do not come back in the house.

Buy water in the death world and drink.

4.2: Anja 2 performed in the death of an educated person

Nuhe ajo *lopoyo size bada wi gai chi da, Ana londo gro baw sida wi gai chi da*

iri *siziw sida wigaichi, ebra hoza sida wigaichi*

ini meta thoi baw sida, awa *tao khai baw sida wiy chida*

zinu so *kutimba*

aya so *wisimba*

numu so *kutimba*

busa so *wisimba*

alu miniyi, ashiwa meshadu, apu *lilune ela do* *ane*

nu gu

nu ngai

4.2.1: Translation and Meaning of Anja 2

We thought you will study well and become very big person with good facilities and help the society people for the good development.

We thought your family will become very good. We thought if root itself is strong and good then for future generation it will good for the family member and for the clan.

We thought you will become very big person and give your lectures to the different places for the development of the society.

When you are not able to realize this is your mother,

When you are not able to realize this is your father,

When you are not able to realize this are your elders,

When you are not able to realize this is your sister or juniors,

When person is about to die at that moment they will hear wave sound and heavy wind sound. You are not going to be alive that's why you have been hearing all those sound. That's why now you are dead and you have to go to the death world.

4.3: Anja 3 performed in the death of a sister

Irĩ siziga alõ irili ache bachi da

Iyi mīya ebra hozaga, linggi ebra ngabada wiy chi da

Alõ irili pisuda linggi ebra ga lubra da

Ana londo gro baw sida wi gai chi da

4.3.1: Translation and Meaning of Anja 3

We have sent you in a very good family where there were will be good facilities for you. And we have sent you in a very rich family.

It became very lost by leaving you in husband's house by doing all the marriage formalities.

We thought we will have grandson and granddaughter in family.

This above written Anja is perform by girls parents to his or her own daughter death or brother and sister does the same anja.

4.4: Anja 4 related to the death of a young boy

Gołõchama ibri kēpa nuhãnawe, awa echama aĩa kēpa braha nawe

Amu siichi throiga

Nãmu ligruge khēge bunnga(kutimi)

Busa ayoge wisami

Ekõłõyãkoiga

Busa athoge wisami

Îrũeno druñawe

Enda lawa rãnawe

Ichitu khepa khranawe, mrameũkhepa granawe

4.4.1: Translation and Meaning of Anja 4

If there is no home then there will be living only ghost and only plants will be growing in the home.

In your birth place, after your death, brother nobody will be in this house. This house will be just empty.

What will happen to this house after you where there is made of stone boundary.

In this house there won't be any god or gods blessing. There won't be any law and rule regulation of the house after your death.

Only ichitu bird will be making noise in this house and only mrameũbird will be screaming in this empty house.(Ichitu bird is the messenger of the ghost).

In generally this Anja is used in both natural and unnatural death:

Ngamo nume etani ipiya thuĩa brui sida wiyakumi

Eli mēũw sida wiyakumi

Never thought you will die and your body will be kept in a death posture.

4.5: Anja 5 performed in the death of a baby boy

Meta pihwji iy tarõ mēhiwji wiyachi

Abu epõõ sulu ba

Aĩa eronge lubra nabuda

4.5.1: Translation and Meaning of Anja 5

We thought you will live long life, It became just lost by plucking the epõõ plant to show that baby is born in our house and proving that this is my baby. Plucking ãrothropa plant also became just lost by proving baby born is mine.

4.6: Anja 6 performed in the death of both girl and boy

Kai chi haw ne nu guĩ

Zinu nõndi alilane nu guĩ chi buda,

Edõ pēlo pihw ji

Ala rome mēhiwji

Akuku ambruti chi

Awi wiya wo anoy chi

Zinu ngamo awo eposu pesuda

alã erũlu lubrada

Zinu aũthro nume ngachi iri edo guĩ buda lane ali anemi atha hãna

Abri ethrosu arohaña

Elo mēũ baha ngaĩga ayama nga

Ebra iỹ, iy ngay buda

Agra aya loña

Ane alã erolu lana

4.6.1: Translation and Meaning of Anja 6

You are too young to die what you will eat in death world.

Thought you will live long life that's why I used to give you lots of love and care to you.

Nine month I just got a pain carrying you in my stomach. It is just a waste of having pain.

While going to the death world you request to master of soul to show the way. Wait for him on the way.

And take help from your old relatives to reach the death world.

4.7: Anja 7 performed in unnatural death

Nani zinu mili

Naba aya mẽta, Zinu mẽ abiya eĩthroĩsugado

Aya mahõma nuhe

Iliĩa apolo aya bane Zinu ethroĩti ne mĩrũla

Aya me ade etani naybu

Iliĩa apoli ema abralõ aya yowe

Epõ alõli rũdi

Mabra aĩsowi rũhreĩ

Ama aliya anichi bawe, ayama mado mẽ mẽ

Ayama agra aĩa bawe anana

Epõwa rũndi anechi abremida, mabra rathre aya akhemi

Aruĩwa sĩne ayago nuya apĩ amey ga go

Mabra rather aya akhemi

Aruĩwa sĩne ayago nuya apĩ amey ga go

Nuyage amẽ sowage

Ataygo piliĩthonzuna lakena

piliĩyathina

Aruĩwa siyane ameyã sowageĩ

4.7.1: Translation and Meaning of *Anja 7*

Pregnant time itself in mother's womb your death was decided by the god. That's why today your death date line has come that's why you are dead. .Person who does suicide their way to death world becomes very bad and tough. Plants will be full of thorn and it becomes very difficult. There won't be any shade area for the person who does suicide. Person who does suicide they have to go to cross the high hills mountain to mountain and they won't find any plain mountain. They won't find any plant how they use to find in the alive time. They will find only small grass plant called *ĩtimu*. Death person have to go in *Itimu* mountain, no shade will be found. It will be too hot sunny in that area. You get yourself ready to go to such place

If your soul comes then get ready to go to that place. By walking in too sunny weather if you are not able to walk. If it became too difficult then ask help from priest who is going to perform death rituals in your home. While performing the *ya* priest will help you to move from one mountain to another mountain. So it will be easier for you to move. These mourning songs are differs from death to death and it depends upon the different kinds of death i.e. natural or unnatural, age of the deceased person, related to the kinship with the mourners etc.

V

CONCLUSION

All the above described beliefs, ritual practices and narratives clearly reflect the traditional world view of death among the Idu Mishmis. These funeral rites and customs are concerned not only with the mourning, preparation and disposal of the body, but also with afterlife of the deceased person, the well-being of the survivors and with the persistence of the spirit or memory of the deceased. Idu Mishmis strongly believe that there is a life for human beings after death and therefore they bury the deceased person in a well constructed room and offered all the required things like bed, blankets, crockery, fan, TV, grains, piglets, hen, money, dress, umbrella, ornaments etc to the deceased person believing that these things are required for the afterlife. The funeral practices of Idu Mishmis are not only deals with burial and afterlife of the deceased person but also the well being of the survivors. The main function of the *Igu*- the ritual master is to perform rituals in order to direct and drive the deceased soul to the above /under world and make sure that the spirit will not stay or come back to the living world. These rituals involve chanting, music, dance, offerings etc. The shaman also performs rituals like *Alluthru* to purify the survivors/people who took part in the funeral ceremony. It shows that the spirit of the deceased person may affects the survivor and therefore they believe that they have to get purify through rituals. These belief systems, rituals and narratives are orally transmitted from generation to generation.

However, in the modern social cultural context these practices and belief systems are gradually losing its values due to several reasons. One of the major reasons is religious conversion. A considerable amount of religious conversion takes place among the Idu Mishmis tribe particularly from indigenous faith to Christianity. Those who converted do not follow the traditional practices associated with festivals, agriculture, lifecycle ceremonies including funeral ceremony. In Christian funerals, the church priest

plays an important role, and not the *igu*. The priest prays and sprinkles holy water to everyone in the name of Jesus and prays for the soul to rest in peace and also for the well being of the survivors. *Anja* is an integral part of funeral ceremony and it can't be performed by everyone. Now a days only a very few elderly people knows how to perform *anja* in funerals. The present generation is not aware of *anja* and the functioning of *Anja*.

There is a change in the construction of the grave also. Earlier they dig the grave and covered with wood which can be used for agriculture after certain period but now a day they build the grave with cement and bricks which become a permanent structure. As a result the agricultural land is also reduced. In modern days there is a huge demand for *Igu* to perform the rituals. However very less number of *Igus* are exists in Idu society. The younger generations are not interested to become an *Igu* because of the modern education and employment, and there is no formal institution to learn the knowledge of *Igu*. The death ratio of the existing *Igus* is also very high due to alcohol and health issues. As a result, the knowledge of performing rituals and its functions are slowly disappearing from the society. Traditionally the family who host the rituals offer *Etola* (*cock*) or some special portion of the sacrificed pigs or Mithuns to the *Igu* as a remuneration for his service. Now a days, instead of giving all those things, they are giving cash to the priest and the amount of the cash depends upon the financial status of the person. Sometimes they used to get twenty thousand or more. Therefore the poor people are not able to afford the expenses to perform the required rituals. It is believed by Idu Mishmis that the changes occurred in traditional belief systems, rituals and practices harm the society and as a result several unnatural deaths are happening in Idu Mishmis society.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

Sl.No	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Tribe	Place
1.	Gora Mimi	32	Male	Igu	Idu	Injonu
2.	Nane Linggi	62	Female	Juniour Igu	Idu	Injonu
3.	Mupi Pulu	59	Female	community member of bio-diversity	Idu	Koronu
4.	Mreho Keche	59	Male	Farmer	Idu	Koronu
5.	Punjab Lego	60	Male	Farmer	Adi	Yibuk village (Roing)
6.	Malokong Lego	30	Male	ASM of Yibuk village	Adi	Yibuk village (Roing)
7.	Golo Saring	59	Male	Former president of district congress	Adi	Yibuk village (Roing)
8.	Chagang Khoiyang	25	Male	P.A	Nocte	Khona town- village lapnan(changlang district)
9.	Michael Mosang	24	Male	Student	Mizu Mishmis	Warti village- Anzaw District
10.	Chipa Miuli	40	Female	Business woman	Idu Mishmis	Koronu

