

ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE APATANIS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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The present study is an attempt to document the heritages, tangible as well as intangible aspects of the Apatanis, one of the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Hopefully, this study of the Apatani ethnic community will provide a deal of scope for further ethnographic and scientific research by integrating the anthropological data in one ethnographic frame and understanding the history of the same. Information was taken mostly from the elder members of the family. Stratified random sampling and Convenience sampling methods were applied to selecting the interviewees. The intensive observation was a prerequisite method though the interview method was the key tool for the collection of data. The present study indicates that few scientific types of research are carried out among the Apatanis. The reason could be the lack of written history and the late arrival of civilization in the region. It is crucial that the vast complex cultural aspects of the ethnic community need proper documentation before they totally disappear.

Keywords: Apatanis, Ziro, ethnic community, ethnography

Introduction

Ethnography is considered the most appropriate qualitative research that deals with a particular group of community in order to discover and describe the history of the same (Sharma & Sarkar, 2019; Dingwall, 1980; Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001). Besides, an ethnographic finding has been the core tool for understanding the cultural remains,

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environmental conditions, and economic practices of the people. Therefore, the various ethnographic aspects such as religion, oral history, material culture, social structure, subsistence pattern, as well as intangible aspects of the same have been taken into consideration with the motive to extract the link between the past and the ongoing culture. One of the great attempts at the study of the cultural landscape of the Apatanis is that carried out by Dr. Christopher Haimendorf in March 1994. As an anthropologist and ethnographer, Haimendorf has left a huge account of anthropological and ethnographical literature about the Apatanis. Another remarkable exploration of this tribal community is that of Lt. Col. Frederick Nicholson Betts and Ursula Graham Bower, who has reported on the social, educational, and economic facet of the Apatanis (Kani, 2012).

The present study is an attempt to document the heritages, tangible as well as intangible aspects of the Apatani tribe of Ziro valley, following an ethnographic approach. It is hoped that this exploration of the present ethnic community will provide a great deal of scope for further ethnographic and scientific research. The present paper also covers the cultural heritage, including physical artifacts and intangible attributes as well as natural heritages of the Apatani people.

Land and People

Arunachal Pradesh, one of the states of Northeast India, is inhabited by a number of major and minor tribal communities. It is the largest state of northeast India in terms of geography, covering 60% of the entire northeast region with an area of 83,743 sq. km (Sundriyal & Dolo, 2013). It is the 12th mega biodiversity region of the world (Kala, 2005). The major tribes and sub-tribes of the state show distinct socio-economic and socio-cultural elements with several dialects and identities. The Apatani is a major close-knit tribal community that inhabits the Ziro -I (26°55' to 28°21' N latitude and 92°40' to 94°21' E longitude) of Lower Subansiri district in the central western part of the state of Arunachal Pradesh (Sundriyal & Dollo, 2013). According to the census of India (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, 2011), their population is 43,777 persons. The Apatanis are known for their unique and traditional practice of paddy cum fish cultivation which presents a remarkable example of man-ecology relation (Hana, 2019). They are also known for their constant indigenous, systematic, and judicious utilization of natural resour-

es, for which their cultural landscape has been nominated in India's tentative list of World Heritage sites in 2014 for bearing the feature of exceptional Universal Outstanding Value (Farooqy, 2017).

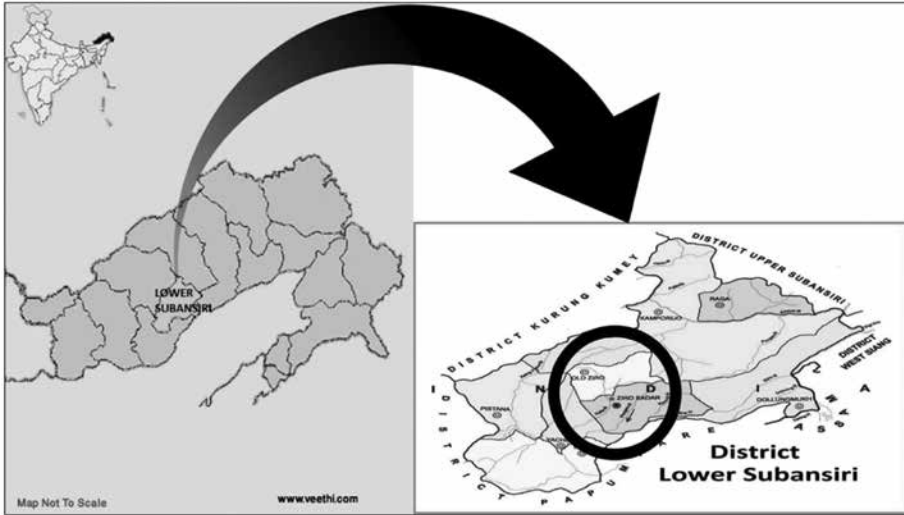
Topography and Landscape

The topographic feature of Apatani valley comprises the agricultural zone, grove zone, forest zone, and house dwelling zone (Kani, 2012). Ziro valley, the land of the Apatanis, has an area of 1058 sq. km, of which 32 sq. km is under agriculture and the remaining under forests plantations and settlements (Patnaik, 2017). A small river called *Kiile* runs longitudinally in a north-south direction through the midst of the valley and divides the entire region into two sections. This stream, *Kiile*, is a main source of water for the agriculture fields. Ziro valley lies at an altitude of 1744 meters (Kani, 2012). There are seven main villages and two towns, Old Ziro and Hapoli, which lie at 7 km (Hana, 2019) in the opposite northern and southern parts of the valley. The seven main villages are Bulla, Hari, Hong, Bamin-Michi, Mudang-Tage, Dutta, and Hija, of which Bulla, Hari, and Hong villages are located in the eastern part, whereas Hija, Dutta, Mudang-Tage, and Bamin-Michi are located at the western part of the Valley (Hana, 2019). About 70% of the population of the Ziro valley depends on agriculture, while the rest of the population is involved in ecotourism, plantation of commercial crops, and timber (Farooqy, 2017). The overall landscape of Apatani valley presents infinite beauty. In the words of Mr. Ursula Gharam Bower (early visitor), "The valley is serene as an Italian garden, they (Apatanis) struck the keynote of the valley for everything in it was tidy, was trimmed, ordered and cares for turned to the use of man."

Climate

The climate of Ziro valley exhibits a sub-tropical type. The maximum and minimum temperature during summer is 6.3°C and 28.1°C, and that of winter is 1.0°C and 18.4°C respectively (Nimachow, Rawat, & Loder, 2010). The climate is largely influenced by the terrain condition and altitude. Generally, four seasons of climate have been recorded in Ziro valley: from December to February – cold weather/winter season; March to May – pre-monsoon season of thunderstorms; June to mid-October – the southwest monsoon season and from the second half of October to November – post-monsoon period (Ministry of Water Resources, Guwahati).

Image 1: Map of Arunachal Pradesh and Lower Subansiri District



Source: <https://www.bing.com/image>

Table 1: Demographic profile of the Apatanis

Year	Population	
	Ziro, Apatani	Arunachal Pradesh
1961	10, 793	3, 36, 588
1971	12, 888	4, 68, 511
1981	16, 580	6, 31, 839
1991	22, 526	8, 64, 558
2001	24, 608	10, 91, 117

Source: Census of India 2011 (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, 2011)

Archaeology

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is considered ‘terra incognita’ by historians due to the paucity of written documents and lack of script (Dutta & Tripathy, 2008). History can be traced to prehistoric times. Prehistoric investigations in Arunachal Pradesh were carried out in the later part of the 19th century (Tada, Dutta, & Deori, 2012). It has been reported that the first discovery of Stone Age artifacts was reported by John Lubbock in 1870. Subsequently, several British officials reported several prehistoric findings in the following years. R. D Bannerjee was the first Indian scholar who studied the prehistoric remains of Arunachal Pradesh and described stone adze found

from the left bank of river Bihong of the Mebo area during 1924-25 (Tada et al., 2012). However, the first scientific survey of prehistoric remains was undertaken by B.P Bopardikar of the Archaeological Survey of India with the assistance of the Geological Survey of India in 1969-1970. Exploration was carried out in the Daphabum area of the Lohit district to trace the habitation sites of primitive man (Tada et al., 2012). Expedition revealed choppers, hand-axes, scrapers, flakes, points, and core. It is said that these findings represent the first impression of the pre-Neolithic phase of Stone Age culture in the state. These tools are now kept in the office of the Prehistory branch of the Archaeological Survey of India, Nagpur.

As far as the scientific excavation in the state is concerned, Parsi-Parlo, located on the northern slope of the terrace of river *Kamla* in the Kuru Kumey district, is the only excavated site in the state. The excavation revealed three single-cultural deposits viz., Phase I- Aceramic Neolithic; Phase II- Ceramic Neolithic; and Phase III- Ferrolithic stage.

Ashraf (1990) conducted an archaeological exploration of the foothill region of the Lower Subansiri District in the later part of the 20th century. The exploration was conducted in two phases: October-November, 1983 and January-February, 1984. Geologically, the area is composed of Tertiary and Pleistocene Sediments, i.e., grey sandstones, siltstones, and boulder beds with carbonized and silicified fossil wood (Ashraf, 1990). As per the excavation report, the tool industry discovered in Lower Subansiri District during exploration in 1983 and 1984 has been defined as “unifacial” by looking at the untouched pebble surface. However, except for the excavated remains of Parsi-Parlo, all the Neolithic stone tools found in the state are of surface collection without any stratigraphy.

With regards to the historical period, the post-10th century witnessed the prevalence of Brahmaputra valley culture in the foothills of the state, which was attested by a number of Brahmanical remains such as the temple ruins at Malinithan, Tamreswari at Sadiya, forts, and fortification at Bhismaknagar, Rukmininagar (near Tezu), Bhalukpong, etc. revealed cultural interaction of the hill people with their neighboring plain culture (Dutta & Tripathy, 2008). The site of Malinithan in the foothills of West Siang District is strewn with the ruins of a stone temple like stone sculptures, pillars, lintels, curved blocks, etc., inferring evidence of the extant ancient period (Sharma, 2014).

During the Medieval period, Arunachal Pradesh witnessed the migration of Buddhists from Tibet and Burma (Dutta & Tripathy, 2008). They also brought two sects of Buddhism, Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhist tribe, i.e., Monpas, migrated to their present settlement in the western part of the state sometime in the 7th century A.D. The Theravada Buddhist tribes, like the Khamptis, the Singphos, etc., came to their present settlement area from upper Burma in the 18th century. Then, the state faced the coming of the British in the modern period.

Physical features and Language

In physical appearance, the Apatanis possess the racial features of Mongoloid people, comprised of stout and well-built people of short to medium height, and show a close affinity with other neighboring tribes of the state (Kani, 2012). The Linguistic Survey of India believed that the language of the Apatanis, along with other Tani groups (tribal communities of the state), is of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. But due to the adaptation to different habitations and topographic and geographic factors, they developed a slightly different form of dialect based on geographical position.

Methodology

An ethnographic study was carried out at Hong village and Hapoli area of Ziro valley from December 2020 to January 2021. A total of 24 households were covered, of which 17 are from Hong village and 7 from the Hapoli area. Information was taken mostly from the elder members of the family. Stratified random sampling and Convenience sampling methods were applied to selecting the interviewees. According to Sharma and Sarkar (2019), observation is the main tool used to gather information regarding cultural features such as language, marriage, family life, child-rearing practice, social relation, rule of conduct, religious beliefs, and practices. In order to get first-hand, in-depth, and detailed information on the cultural events of the studied community, the author has employed intensive observation as a prerequisite method. However, the interview method was the key tool for the collection of data. Since the aim of the research is to gain a deep understanding of the behavior of their culture, the data is highly exploratory in nature.

Findings, reports, and existing works done in the area were collected from different sources. Secondary information was collected from articles,

documentary videos, museum visits, and library visits. Informal conversation with the natives has been a supportive tool that provides insight into the rudimentary nature of Apatanis. Documentation is thus based on opinions provided by the people, observations in the field, and the ethnographic information of the Apatani people.

Discussion

The Apatani tribe of Lower Subansiri District is less explored, and still, there is only a handful of information available with regard to their vast cultural and survival aspects. An astounding work by Mr. Takhe Kani, *“The Heritage of Hong Village”* had been a key tool to acquire information with regard to their history and overall developmental phases. Besides, *“Archaeological Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh”* by Dr. Tage Tada, Mr. Jagat C. Dutta, and Mr. Nabjit Deori is thoroughly reviewed, which provided innumerable data about the lavish heritage of not only Ziro valley but also of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. With regards to the research articles on this tribe, mention should be made of *“Sustainable Ethnic Tourism: A Study of the Apatani tribe of Ziro Lower Subansiri District in Arunachal Pradesh”* by Dr. Barnali Patowary; *“Symbiosis Between Nature and Culture: A Case Study of the Apatani Cultural Landscape, India”* by Persis Farooqy; *“Pottery Making among the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh, India”* by Tailyang Bai; *“Colonial Contact in the ‘hidden land’: Oral history among the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh”* by Stuart Blackburn, etc. Accordingly, the cross-check of data in the present chore was made with the help of existing literature and the finds from the field.

Migration according to Oral Tradition

The written history of the Apatani people is not available, just like almost all other major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The history of the Apatanis is, however, recorded and remembered through oral traditions and material as well as their cultural practices. Apatani’s oral representations of the past are diverse and complex. Their oral practice is traditionally known as *‘Miji’* and *‘Migung,’* which gives extensive knowledge about the past (Blackburn, 2003). *Miji* is primarily a chant performed by priests to accompany the different rituals. It is mostly used in performing mithuns, pigs, chicken, and cows sacrifices. On the other hand, *Migung* is more historical, explains the history and origin of the Apatani people and genealogical link with other tribes of the state, as well as a few legends of the past. *Migung* is generally narrated in prose.

According to oral history, the earliest mythical known place of the Apatanis is believed to be located somewhere in the China belt (Kani, 2012). From there, they migrated toward the present Tang Tsangso valley of Tibet and finally reached at present valley came crossing the river Kuru and Kiime of Kamla valley. It is believed that before settling at the present site, i.e., Ziro valley, they first arrived at the Talley Valley, which is 30 km east of Ziro township (Tada et al., 2012). Talley Valley was found not suitable for habitation as well as for carrying out agricultural operations due to the unfavorable climate condition. Thus they migrated to their present habitat at Ziro. This theory of migration patterns has been supported by archaeological evidence as well as topological evidence. The Archaeological Department of Arunachal Pradesh has discovered some Neolithic tools in these two river valleys, which most probably belong to the Apatanis and other *Tani* groups of the region who might have left these residues there in the course of their migration. The present valley (Ziro) was fertile, secure, and prosperous, and thus the Apatanis settled here permanently. The fertile valley enabled the inhabitants to develop their irrigated agricultural fields naturally, and over the years, they became self-sufficient and grew a surplus of agricultural produce. The Apatanis remained secluded timeless, and tranquil throughout the generation and finally intruded with the modern administration in 1946 (Kani, 2012).

Subsistence Strategy

Wet Paddy-cum-Fish Cultivation

The Apatani Community is unique in its sociocultural setting, traditional wisdom, and management of various natural resources (Haimendorf, 1962). About 70% of the population of the Ziro valley depends on agriculture, whereas the rest of the population is involved in ecotourism, plantation of commercial crops, and timber (Farooqy, 2017). They have a very unique and traditional way of practicing paddy-cum fish cultivation. The idea of rearing fish in the paddy field was incepted in the 1960s (Hana, 2019). The cultivation of crops involves intensive labor without the aid of animals or plows. The entire process of the agricultural cycle, from the sowing of seed, weeding, and plantation to the harvesting of the crops, is completed manually by the households (Kala, 2005). Rice is cultivated and harvested once a year. The rest of the time, people engage themselves in the maintenance of their agricultural fields. Their crops are fertilizer free except for organic manure.

On each plot, there are human-made channels for the flow of water. There is a provision of inlets and outlets for water irrigation. The basic agricultural equipment is made from locale-available resources. Modern iron agricultural equipment, such as iron spades, sickles, etc., are also used in the present day. Fish are reared for around 3 to 4 months in the field. The dried lands which are not suitable for wet rice cultivation are further used for cultivating millet and other green vegetables (Farooqy, 2017; Kani, 2012; Hana, 2019). The agricultural fields are well-demarcated with elevated boundaries where millet is cultivated (Addanki, 2015). Because of their constant indigenous systematic and judicious utilization of natural resources, there has been a continuous flow of self-sufficient economy in their community throughout the years. Despite the recent tide of rapid acculturation and technological development, the traditional culture and customs of the Apatanis retain an important stance among them.

Art and Craft

Apart from agriculture, the Apatanis are skilled craftsmen and sportsmen. The Apatani craftsmen make varieties of baskets and other household equipment, as well as hunting weapons from the locale-available natural resources (Addanki, 2015). Bamboo is not only utilized for construction purposes but is also an integral part of their livelihood. The optimal harvesting of natural resources from the forest represents their effective conservation and is an example of the sustainable management of natural resources (Farooqy, 2017). In fact, the management of natural resources in this region, besides the other North Eastern states, is largely vested in the local communities, unlike the rest of the country, where large tracts of forests are under government control (Pant, 2001). Their immediate dependence on nature had developed knowledge reflected in their traditional culture, religion, local belief, folklore, taboos, language, and dialect.

The Apatanis are knowledgeable about using traditional medicinal plant species growing in and around their settlements to cure various diseases (Kala, 2005). They also employed different traditional methods and techniques for curing such ailments. According to the report of Kala (2005) on ethnomedicinal botany carried out in North East India, the Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh have 158 medicinal plant species used for curing various kinds of diseases.

Houses and Settlement Pattern

The entire settlement pattern of Apatani valley is uniform, and the structure follows a linear design (Kani, 2012). The compact clustered settlement was initially meant for safety and security purposes. Adversely, it has turned out to be a vulnerable effect over the years in the case of fire accidents and communicable diseases. The granaries are built a little isolated from the actual settlement houses in order to avoid fire accidents. Their houses are situated at elevation and built on wooden piles consisting mainly of bamboo. The houses are constructed chiefly from the material or resources available from nearby forests. Wooden piles are raised more than one meter above the ground over which the entire structure is built. Bamboos play a pivotal role in the construction of the house. Wooden steps lead up to the front porch or the veranda. At the frontal part of the house, there is a sort of antechamber that is used as a chicken coop. Inside at the right, the area is meant for a latrine and rooms for sleeping. Presently, the traditional thatch roof has been replaced by a series of a tin roofs. Their houses are constructed in such a way that a fire hearth is placed at the center and a core element where members of the family can gather and sit around. Generally, this section of the house is the sitting room for social gatherings. The houses show homogeneity with that of the houses in central Arunachal Pradesh. At present, the houses and granaries pattern of the Apatani community is modified with modern construction materials of cement, metals, stones, tiles, etc.

Community Platform and Wooden Planks

A community platform, also locally known as *Lapang*, is a place where people assemble to discuss community-related issues and is considered highly sacred (Addanki, 2015). It is a part of their social life to have such a public assembly in the villages. This space is traditionally made out of pine wood. Since it is made from wood equipment, regular maintenance is required every three years. Nowadays, such assembly platform is RCC based and tin aluminum roofs in order to serve the purpose of endurance. The community platform is accompanied by the T-shaped wooden plank, locally known as *Babo*, erected on one side of the *Lapang*. It is a ceremonial plank that is made out of pine wood.

Society and Culture

Apatanis are generally known for their vigorous participation in their social-cultural life. One of the splendid features of the social structure of Ap-

atani is their strong ties among kinship and friendship within their villages as well as with people from other villages/communities. This friendship bond is maintained astonishingly in order to withstand times of social and economic crises. The principal festivals or celebrations of Apatani consist of Murung, Myoko, and Dree (Addanki, 2015; Bamin, Gajural, & Paul, 2017; Kani, 2012). Dree, an agriculture fair, is usually celebrated in July every year. A few rituals are performed to appease the Gods and Goddesses of agriculture to ensure the well-being of the community and the bumper yield of the crop in the year. The divinities are worshipped or pleased by offering sacrifices of fowls, mithuns, cows, chickens, etc. Murung is an individual family festival celebrated in January every year, intended to bring prosperity, abundance, and wealth. It is a three-week-long festival with a central focus on fertility. Myoko is a community festival associated with the general well-being of the whole Apatani society, celebrated every year in March rotation-wise among the villages divided into three groups.

The division of labor among men and women in the field of occupation, recreation, education, household affairs, and participation in various political and social institutions is equally considered. However, the Apatanis follow a patrilineal form of society in which kinship and lineage are traced from the male side. This means that the child acquires his/her fathers' genealogy (Kani, 2012). The eldest son inherits the ancestral properties of the parent, and the eldest daughter acquires the mother's possession in the form of ornaments and jewelry. Marriage is considered sacred, and there is no complex procedure involved in it. However, consensual acceptance from both the party is required to complete the ceremony. Formalities are very simple and straightforward. Apatani generally is a monogamous society, but the practice of polygamy is also prevalent. Levirate and Sororate marriages are found to be uncommon.

The Apatani villages are governed by a traditional village council called *Bulyang*, which is an autonomous body that supervises and has legal oversight over the village issues. The *Bulyang* controls the administration of social, political, religious, and judicial matters under the guidance of an unwritten code of customary and traditional laws (Kala, 2005). There are three categories of *Bulyang*: *Akha Bulyang*, *Yapa Bulyang*, and *Ajang Bulyang*. According to Sohkhlet and Lalyang (2013), "political organisation in North East India may

be defined as the part of a culture which functions explicitly to direct activities of the members of a society towards community goals or public affairs.” This traditional village institute exists till the present time; however, the power and functions have been diluted by modern government administrations such as the Gaon Buras and Panchayati Raj institutions.

Religion

Originally, the Apatanis were animists, i.e., ancestor and nature worshippers. Animal sacrifice plays a crucial role in their socio-religious attributes (Pant, 2001). They believe in the existence of invisible beings which are capable of affecting their welfare. This group of nature worshippers believes in *Donyi-Poloism*, an ancient form of animistic religion where the sun and moon are worshipped as gods (Farooqy, 2017). They are conscious of environmental hazards, which occur when nature or their foregone ancestor is disrupted. They believe that every misfortune occurring in their surrounding is caused by certain evil spirits, and there is a need to appease the same by performing several rites and rituals through animal sacrifices such as chickens, cows, and other domestic beings. It is also said by the locals that due to their traditional customs and practices, they are able to maintain their landscape in an efficient and sustainable way. The traditional animistic faith in natural objects like stone, trees, and on foregone ancestors can be seen in some of the existing sacred stone, which is considered of high veneration and worshipped by Apatani while observing specific rituals and festivals with the help of Priest are *Gano Pede Bo*, *Gano Lyide Bo*, *Rantii Hirun Bo*, *Nenchan Dulyan*, *Yapung Yaper*, *Nenker Charnii*, *Tiiru Depeh*, etc. (Tada *et al.*, 2012). However, the idea of institutionalizing their faith into a proper form of religion was incepted only in the later 1970s when all the indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh belonging to the *Tani* clan decided to shape their belief system into a recognized religion which came to be known as *Donyi-Polo* (Addanki, 2015). Perhaps it was initiated in response to the rising widespread popularity of Christianity because of their subsequent interaction with the outside world and Christian missionaries.

Food Habits

The Apatanis generally consume the items available around them. Rice is the staple food which is cultivated by these people in their paddy fields

(Addanki, 2015). Besides rice, they also consume fish which is yield in their agriculture field. Bamboo shoot is their unique traditional food item. A locally prepared beer from fermented rice is an important beverage of the Apatani, which they prefer to consume in various social gatherings. Besides, a number of wild, edible fruits and vegetables are also collected by Apatani. Some common vegetables, including spinach, potato, pumpkin, cucumber, etc., are grown in their private plot. Another interesting food habit of these people is the consumption of black salt, locally known as *tapyo*, prepared from hydro-plant (Kani, 2012). This black salt is not only a food item but is considered highly valued and used in various auspices ceremonies.

Tattooing

Another interesting fact about the Apatanis is the tradition of facial tattooing. The custom of facial tattooing delineates the identification mark was prevalent until the 1970s (Bharadwaj & Boruah, 2020). Among women, there are two sets of tattoos, one running from the forehead to the tip of the nose and another is a series of five vertical lines on the chin. Besides, they were also involved in the custom of nose plugging, called *yaping hurlo*, in the local language. A man has a less elaborate one on the chin in the shape of the letter 'T.' However, this traditional practice of tattooing and nose plugging is no longer practiced since many young modern youths have started revolting against this tradition.

Pottery

Ceramics recovered from the site carries significant information in order to reconstruct the human behavior of the past and thus is one of the most crucial approaches of ethnography. According to Davalika (1999), the potsherd is not only an archaeological object but is the end product of the interactions of raw material, culture, and technology and hence is the most useful material remains for scholars to identify the resident culture and determine the chronology of the stratum. The earlier surveys in this field reveal that the Apatanis did have knowledge of the art of pottery-making technology in the past. Still, only a handful of groups of people were engaged in this field. However, the art of basketry making is well known to them; thus, they didn't engage themselves much in pottery. Studies suggest that the pottery of the Apatanis was coarse and handmade, and the use of wheels was not known to

them (Bai, 2016). A larger part of the people of Ziro valley is involved in basketry making, and only a few families devoted themselves to the art of making pots. The pottery profession was basically carried out on a household basis, and there was an absence of painting and burnishing in their pottery because of the lack of scientific and technical comprehension.

Nevertheless, the art of making pottery is no longer practiced among the Apatanis in lieu of the various social and religious beliefs. However, the leading factor of the failure of the pottery profession is due to the onslaught of modernity and development configurations witnessed by Ziro valley during the post-independence period. Most people acquire cheaper, finer, and more durable modern materials which could be used in place of ceramics, thus resulting in the degeneration of the same.

Natural Heritage

Tai Lampii

The historic cave known as *Tai Lampii* is situated at the site called *Paki Halying* in *Reru* village of Ziro valley. It is a site of naturally formed rocks that look like a cave where a series of huge boulders are set in such a pattern giving it a cave-like structure. The Apatanis are conscious about health and hygiene; thus, the people affected by communicable diseases such as leprosy, etc., were sheltered at this site in the olden days. A team of researchers from the Directorate of Research, Arunachal Pradesh, arrived at the site in March 2010 and unearthed a few potsherds, bones and remains of a hearth (Tada et al., 2012).

Siva Linga

A natural rock mass giving the shape of *Linga*, religiously dedicated to *Lord Siva*, has been found at the place called *Kardo* in Ziro valley. The *Siva Linga* is situated at an altitude of about 5600 ft. at a distance of 5 km northeast of Ziro (Tada et al., 2012). It was discovered in 2004 by local villagers during a normal forest visit; since then, hundreds of pilgrims or visitors across the country and abroad of different religious faiths have visited the site with religious faith. As per religious belief, the discovery of the *Linga* in this Himalayan region has great significance since *Kailash* in the Himalayas is considered an abode of *Lord Siva* and *Parvati*, both Hindu Gods.

Conclusion

The present study indicates that few scientific types of research are carried out among the Apatanis. The reason could be two folded. Firstly, it may be attributed to the lack of written history, which is the key tool for gathering preliminary information in any scientific discipline. Secondly, the late arrival of civilization in the region and the entire North Eastern region could be another reason. Even the most rudimentary information on the history of Arunachal Pradesh is lacking. However, the recent phenomena of rapid material, social, and educational development are gradually visible among the Apatanis. There is also a gradual emergence of young researchers and scholars not only from the state of Arunachal Pradesh but also from outside who started taking a keen interest in research-related activities. Although the state of Arunachal Pradesh needs to be explored properly and more scientific, multidisciplinary studies have to be undertaken to comprehensively understand the past cultures of the region. Besides, the process of urbanization and acculturation are steadily underlying among the Apatani people (Hana, 2019). As a matter of fact, every development brings forth its merit as well as demerit changes along with it. Many of the cultural practices of the Apatanis are on the verge of extinction or losing their values. Although the Apatanis have incorporated many ways of the modern world, the traditional culture and customs must retain importance despite considerable fast-paced technological development and rapidly increasing contact with the modern world. Thus, it is crucial that the vast complex cultural aspects of any ethnic community need proper documentation before they totally disappear.

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