



NEZINOO – A SOCIO RELIGIOUS CEREMONY OF AKAS

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

The Aka tribe inhabits in the west Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh since time immemorial. The area of Akas are located in between 27° 00' N and 27° 0'30' N latitudes and 92° 035' E and 92° 0'55' E longitudes. Their territory is surrounded by Mijis on North Assam in South Nyishis in East and Mompas on the West. The name aka has been given by the people of plains of Assam and the British Officials, which meant a painted, denoting their tattoos on forehead, nose and chin. The community is divided into two sub tribes called Hrusso and Korou and further divided into numerous exogamous clans. The present paper highlights about the origin, socio religious ceremony and modalities performed and myths associated with the AKA Tribe.

Keywords: Akas, Nezinoo, Tribe

Introduction

North-East India is the eastern-most region of India. The North-Eastern region of the country comprises the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Arunachal Pradesh – the land of rising sun is situated in the north eastern corner of India. The state of Arunachal Pradesh, practically the gateway of the Indian Union from the east, came up in its present administrative and territorial form in 1957 when the *Tuensang* division was excluded and merged with the present Nagaland state. In ancient times, it was known as “*Seres*” or “*Serica*” (Upper Assam) of the kingdom of “*Pragjyotisha*” or Kamrupa (Assam). In the medieval times, it was known as “*Saucer*” (Upper Assam) or “*Uttarkul*” (North Assam). Hence, during the British period, it was known as “a hidden land”. Later on, by 1913, Arunachal Pradesh was known as North East Frontier and by 1953, it was known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). It was on 10th January, 1972 that the Government of India renamed the erstwhile NEFA to Arunachal Pradesh and was given a Union Territory status. Later on with the changing socio-economic and political development in the country, Arunachal Pradesh was declared as a full-fledged state on 20th February, 1987 by the Government of India having its capital at Itanagar in the Papumpare district.

Racially the ethnic groups of the state belong to the Mongoloid stock. The Khaptis, the Mishmi, the Singphos, the Tangsas, the Noctes etc. belong to Palaeo-Mongoloid branch whereas the Adis, Nyishis, the Galos, the Akas, the Apatanis, the Monpas, etc. belong to Tibeto-Mongoloid branches. Further, the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have a rich cultural heritage. On the basis of socio-cultural heritages, they may be put into two broad cultural groups. The first group consists of tribes such as Sherdukpen, Monpa, Khowa, Memba, Khamba, Khapti and Singpho who profess Buddhism. The second group consists of Nyishi, Adi, Galo, Apatani, Mishmi, Tangsa, Nocte and Wancho who profess animism or nature worship (Donyi-Polo). Besides some tribes are converted and accepted professing Christianity with the changing society of Arunachal Pradesh.

Genesis of AKA Tribe

The Aka tribe inhabits in the west Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh since time immemorial. The area of Akas are located in between 27° 00' N and 27° 0'30' N latitudes and 92° 035' E and 92° 0'55' E longitudes. Their territory is surrounded by Mijis on North Assam in South Nyishis in East and Mompas on the West. The name aka has been given by the people of plains of Assam and the British Officials, which meant a painted, denoting their tattoos on forehead, nose and chin. The community is divided into two sub tribes called Hrusso and Korou and further divided into numerous exogamous clans. Their language is affiliated to Tibeto-Burman family of language. The ancestors of the tribe for the sake of tranquil settlement had evolved with numerous customs and traditions to maintain the stability of the Aka society. For them *Nezinoo* is considered as one of the most prominent socio-religious ceremony that guides their life. Today, this ceremony is solemnized on the fixed date between 10th to 12th January every year.

Socio Religious Ceremony

The term *Nezino* is composed of two words; *Nezi* and *Noo* where *Nezi* meant sky and *Noo* meant earth. In fact, *Nezino* is the embodiment of five elements i.e. the Sun, Earth, Plants, Air and Water which are envisaged with supernatural power for wellbeing of the *Akas* in particular and mankind in general. The rich myths and mythology in the form of folklore traces the creation of the universe and domain of spirits and deities in the faith, beliefs and practices of the *Akas*. Its creation further led to the evolution of sacred rituals and ceremonies like *Nezino* to appease and propitiate these supernatural entities.

The popular Aka myths considers that clusters of deity comprising of *Mutebo Suahugo*, *Mugabo Suahugo*, *Papumbo*, *Killibo Suahugo*, *Siiksibo Suahugo*, *Dinyii Suahugo*, *Ketebo Suahugo*, *Khelongbo Suahugo*, *Sunada Suahugo*, *Ubanada Suahugo*, *Toboporam* and *Gebrusoram* created the celestial planets of our universe. During these creations, it was found that none of the planet could accommodate lives on them due non availability essential five elements. Therefore, after prolong discussions the creator unanimously agreed to create a unique planet called earth that could accommodate lives due to the presence of these five elements.

In the initial phase, the earth was not a single entity rather it was created into two halves both in cylindrical shape. The first half was called as *Nezi*, male in gender and the second half was *Noo*, female in gender. The physical bounding of both halves due to mythical love led to the unification in the form of present earth with its environments and living organism.

The unification process starts with the female half of the earth unfolded her cylindrical surface into a flat surface to provide the physical space for physical union with the male half. In anticipation, the male half also unfolded his surface to fix himself over the female surface. However, they were unable to have a perfect union since the surface area of the female was over sized than the male counterpart. Therefore, in order to match the surface, the male half compressed the size of the female half to suit his size. In the process of compression, some plain surface got wrinkled. Despite the wrinkles, both halves were fixed together for a union. These wrinkles later became the mountains, hills, peaks and rest became the plains on the present earth. However, the soils of the infant earth still remained loosening for which stones were created to fix the soil firmly on the surface of the earth. Thereafter, the stars were created.

However, a life on the earth was still not feasible due to complete darkness since its creation. Hence, sun and moon was created to light the earth on the rotational basis. Subsequently, the plants were created. But the growth of the plants was hindered due to the excessive heating of the sun. In order to address the problem the supreme creator created clouds that could cover the sunrays to normalize its heat. It was followed with the creation of Air, Rain, Lighting Thunder, Insects and other Biodiversities.

Mythological Beliefs

The mythical two halves of the earth were also called as *Zpero Achung* (Male) and *Norbam Allim* (Female). Both of them had created the first evil spirit couple namely *Chiigram Aou* (Male) and *Negzi Anyi* (Female). They gave birth to the poisonous living organism like reptiles (snakes), poisonous insects and aquatic organism (crocodile, tortoise etc.).

It was followed with the creation of first human couple called *Bushulu Aou* (Male) and *Nehzi Anii* (female) by almighty creator. This human couple gave birth to numbers of human being and animals. As the population grew the human couple sought blessing from the creator for up bringing their large family. The blessing sought by the couples comprised of material prosperity from their investments, enhancement of their asset's value and to protect them from greediness and jealousy towards others possessions. The almighty creator being pleased with their dedication and commitments was willing to concede all the blessing they sought.

However, before the human couple was blessed, the five important divine elements responsible for sustaining lives on the earth demanded their due shares from the sought blessings for their services rendered. The divine elements demanded the due shares for their following services; stone for providing seat, the plants for providing food, the sun for providing light, the water as life saver for flora and faunas, the earth for giving space to living and non living things. Each of the elements was equally necessary and they are all interdependent. Deficient in the composition of any one of them could destroy the biotic diversity of the earth. Therefore, the first human couple abandoned the seeking of blessings from the almighty, rather sought the blessings from these five elements that had the potential to provide every essential commodities for the survival of living organisms. Besides, the couple also requested the five divine elements to be omnipresent as and when desired and called for. In anticipation to the request, the five divine elements consented to be present once in every year. This day of the year is observed as *Nezino Khrugru* (*Nezino*), a socio-religious ritual to appease and propitiate the divine five elements who is believed to be present on the day for the prosperity and welfare of the *Akas* in particular and mankind in general.

Conclusion

On the particular day of ritual, the divine five elements are evoked and appeased with the chanting of hymns by the priest in their praise and it is accompanied by the sacrifices of animals and fowls for their customary community feast. The *Akas* believes that the appeasement and propitiation of the five divine elements on the day of *Nezino Khrugru* brings bumper harvest of the agriculture, minimizes the mortality rate, maximizes the population growth, brings overall prosperity, enlighten the human thinking and immune the society from diseases and epidemics. Based on this tradition, the socio-religious ceremony of *Negzido* had its origin and is continued till the day.

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