



THE MYTHS OF ORIGIN OF THE ADI TRIBE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Dr. Odol Pertin

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Author Details:

Principal I/C cum Associate Professor in Geography, Jomin Tayeng Govt. Model Degree College, Jemi Notko, Roing, Arunachal Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Odol Pertin

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Abstract

The Adi Tribe is one of the major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. Adi tribe does not have written history, as like other tribes of Tani group of Arunachal Pradesh. They speak Tibeto-Burmese language. They have their own oral literature in the midst of tradition and myths. They possess a rich oral history in the form of legends, myths, folklores and folktales that has been transmitted from generation to generations. The Adi has a keen sense of history and many of them are able to recite interminable genealogies tracing their race back to the beginning of the world. Consequently, all these traditional oral sources could be profitably used as sources to re-construct the early history of origin of the tribes. Thus, the present work is a humble attempt to authenticate the origin of Adi tribe.

Keywords: *Myths, Origin, Generation, Transformation*

Introduction

The Adi tribe is one of the major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh and believed to be the descendent of 'Abo Tani' -the first man and common ancestor of the Tani groups of tribes. The Tani tribe comprised of the Adi, Galo, Tagin, Hill Miri, Apatani, and Nyishi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They have common language and common religion and many other similarities in their socio-cultural and political life. They speak Tibeto-Burmese language, a branch of the Sino-Tibetan family as per the Linguistic Survey of India. Based on dialectal and vocal tune differences, the Adi tribe is categorised into 14 sub-groups, such as Paadam, Minyong, Pasi, Panggi, Shimong, Millang, Komkar, Karko, Ashing, Pailibo, Bori, Ramo, Bokar and Tangam.

Adi tribe does not have written history, as like other tribes of Tani group of Arunachal Pradesh. They have their own oral literature in the midst of tradition and mythology. They possess a rich oral history in the form of legends, myths, folklores and folktales that has been transmitted from generation to generations. The Adi has a keen sense of history and many of them are able to recite interminable genealogies tracing their race back to the beginning of the world. Their oral literature is both, religious and secular. *Aabang* (the ballads of rhapsodies), the religious literature which literally coded by rhapsodies is the main source of literature elucidating the myths of origin and migration of the tribe. *Abe* (the preludes pronounced by the orators during kebang) the secular literature recounts the migration of the tribe. Consequently all these traditional oral sources could be profitably used as sources to re-construct the early history of origin of the tribes. Thus, the present work is a humble attempt to authenticate the origin of Adi tribe.

The Myths of Origin

According to Adi mythology regarding the origin of universe, earth and life, initially there was emptiness 'Keyum-Kero' which was shapeless and size less. Through cosmic vibration, *Keyum-Kero* got transformed into various stages. Finally, into solid form and *Sedi Melo* (Earth and Sky) was born after seventh generations. Again after thirteen generations *Pedong-Nane* (Mother Rain-ancestral mother of mankind) was created. These are narrated by Shamans/priests during ritual performances and folklorist in their rhapsodies (*Aabang*).

Keyum is ascribed as the line of creation of the universe which denotes nothing of the nothingness, referred to the period of emptiness and complete void, shapeless and sizeless. The *Sedi Melo* is kept in the central theme, because Adi believes *Sedi-Melo* as the creator of life system in the universe. The *Aabang* begins with the common prelude which is the genealogy of *Keyum-Kero*. The *Keyum-Kero* had no shape and size, no parents and hence self existed. It transformed through various stages of cosmic vibration. Through the evolution processes, the *Keyum-Kero* evolved to a concrete solid form which had life. This stage of living solid form is called as *Sedi-Melo*. The *Sedi-Melo* is the Supreme Being manifested in the physical form and is the origin and creator of the universe in the *Adi* beliefs. The various stages of transformation from *Keyum-Kero* to the *Sedi Melo* are as follows;

1. Keyum-Kero (nothingness) → 2. Yumkang (darkness) →
- 3. Kasi (light began) → 4. Siang (rays developed) →
- 5. Aabo (thin layers of smoke) → 6. Bomuk (cloud formed) →
- 7. Mukseng (solid stage formed) → 8. Sedi- Melo (Earth and Sky)

From *Sedi-Melo* all the living and non living things on the universe evolved. *Sedi-Melo* after taking the form of living being gave birth to several offsprings. The immortal *Sedi*, the sole being, had got creative, recreative and destructive power in her. After completion of the process of evolution earth, *Sedi-Melo* created several progenies as many as given below;

Sedi - Melo

- ↳ *Sedi Digir* → *Irmang* → *Irgong* (Creator of spiritual world)
- ↳ *Sedi Digir* → *Irping* → *Piyang* → *Yidum Bote* (Husband of *Pedong Nane*)
- ↳ *Sedi Digir* → *Irkong Koojum* → *Koje* (Goddess of seasonal rotation)
- ↳ *Sedi Digir* → *Irimi* → *Miki* → *KineNane* (Goddess of wealth and prosperity)
- ↳ *Sedi Didong* → *Doying Bote* (The Divine protector and God of wisdom)
- ↳ *Sedi Ditung* → *Tumi Lonmo* (Protector of land)
- ↳ *Sedi Ditung* → *Tungi Tabe* (Great Shaman)
- ↳ *Sedi Sengor* → *Orne* (The Sun)
- ↳ *Sedi Sepi Yokmo* (A great architect)
- ↳ *Sedi Diling* (Progenitor of human being)
- ↳ *Diling Litung*
- ↳ *Diling Limang* → *Tuye* → *Yepe* → *Pedong Nane* (ancestral mother of man)

It is believed that due to the union of *Litung* and *Limang*, *Tuye* was born. *Tuye* had a progeny called *Yepe* who, gave birth to *Pedong Nane*. B. S. Guha (1946), then Director, Department of Anthropology, Govt. of India, stated on myths of *Adi* that, "In the beginning there was no shape nor form but only darkness everywhere and *Melo* (the Sky) and *Sedi* (the Earth) lay close together and not as now far apart. Out of the union, things were born: light emerged, the landscape with mountain, plain, valley and water and all life came into being. *Pedong Nane* who was descended from *Sedi-Melo*, was married to *Yidum bote* and out of this union was born *Doni Aaji*, the first man".

The *Adi* believed that *Pedong Nane* was married to *Yidum Bote*. And with the union of *Yidum Bote* and *Pedong Nane*, gave birth to all the living beings. "*Pedong Nane* gave birth to countless Gods and Goddesses, spirits, and animals including *Doni Aaji* or *Abo Tani*, her last or youngest issue". The various spirits and animals including *Pedong Doding Dimu Taya* (spirits of hills), *Pedong Dolang Ladang Layo* (spirits of water), *Pedong Domi Minur* (smiths), *Pedong Domi Mili Minam* (spirits of diseases), *Pedong Dorot Rotmang Masi Sibe* (monkeys) and *Pedong Doro Robo* (evil spirits) etc. were born besides the first man i.e. *Doni Aaji* (*Abo Tani*) who was her last child. According to them, the offsprings of the *Yidum Bote* and *Pedong Nane* are as follows;

Pedong Nane

- ↳ *Doban Bangi Banmang* (first child - destructive evil spirits)
- ↳ *Doding Dimu Taya* (second child - spirits of high mountains)
- ↳ *Domi Minur* (God of brass bowl)
- ↳ *Dolo Lomang* (God of beads)
- ↳ *Dodi Dibi Bisi Yada* (God of metal smith)
- ↳ *Dolang Ladang Layo* (spirits of water-big snake)
- ↳ *Domi Mili Minam* (spirits of diseases)
- ↳ *Doni Ngisi* (evil spirits of female)
- ↳ *Doni Ngite* (evil spirits of forest)
- ↳ *Donom Nomgu Nomnang* (God of wild animals)
- ↳ *Donam Namkir* (God of black smith)
- ↳ *Dodang Dadi Bote* (God of domestic animals)
- ↳ *Doro Robo* (*Epom* - evil spirits)
- ↳ *Dorot Rotmang Masi Sibeng* (monkey)
- ↳ *Donggong Gopu Puduk* (frogs)
- ↳ *Doni Aaji* (last child, *Abo Tani/Tani* - the first man)

Pedong Nane became very weak and old when she delivered her last issue, *Doni Aaji*. After giving birth to *Doni Aaji* she disappeared suddenly and so, *Doni Aaji* became orphan, weak and helpless. Seeing the pathetic conditions of *Doni Aaji*, *Gumin Soyin* (God of house) felt pity on him and taught him to be strong and skill in various field. Accordingly, *Doni Aaji* turned into a very strong being and overpowered all the evil spirits and deities under the guidance of the Gods and Goddesses. So, till today, we the descendants of *Doni Aaji* do pray *Gumin Soyin*, *Kine Nane* and other Gods and Goddesses for protection and bestow with good health and prosperity.

The guardians (*Gumin Soyin*, *Doying Bote* and other Gods and Goddesses) bestowed their maximum love and care to *Doni Aaji* after the sudden disappearance of *Pedong Nane*. *Doni Aaji* was the youngest and weakest child of *Pedong Nane*. *Pedong Doro Robo*, who was elder to *Doni Aaji*, was tall, stout and strong but lacking in intelligence. So, naturally *Robo* was jealous of *Doni*

Aaji, who was a good learner and became the master of all the arts, craft as well as use of weapons. Ultimately disputes arose between two brothers regarding sharing of the land and properties. They decided that an archery competition would be held between the two and the winner would get all fertile land and other properties of his choice. *Doni Aaji* emerged as winner and got the fertile land and valuable properties. *Robo* was given unproductive barren and rocky hills. Even in hunting and fishing, *Doni Aaji* superceeded *Robo*. In due course of time, *Doni Aaji* under the guidance of *Doying Bote* became rich and prosperous which made *Robo* and others more jealous of him. Others began to instigate *Robo* that *Doni Aaji* had cheated him of his rightful shares. The simple *Robo* believed their words and his hatred against *Doni Aaji* increased and attempted by various means to get back his share. But everytime, *Doni Aaji* was found to be more clever and luckier than *Robo*.

Doni Aaji became alone and friendless, because all others were jealous of him and took the side of *Robo*. The supporters of *Robo* including *Mili Minam* (spirits of Diseases) and *Ladang Layo* (spirits of Water) always made an attempt to attack *Doni Aaji* from all sides. *Doying Bote* and *Doying Yingue Ute Poro* (the deity of fortunes), seeing the helpless situation of *Doni Aaji*, came to help him. Meantime *Doni Aaji* hide himself covering with *ekkam* (bijao leaves), so that he is not seen by other enemies. It is believed that from that day onward, two brothers got separated and could not see each other. Then *Doni Aaji* was advised by *Doying Bote* to build a *Musup* (dormitory) where he would be able to live under his protection as well as protection of other deities called *Ute Poro* and *Gumin Soyin* and where the evil spirits would not be able to do him any harms. Accordingly, dormitory was built and that was the moment when *Doni Aaji* (*Abotani*) started to live secured life and thereafter, its population started to increase. Adi people still believed that *Robo* remains in the forest and trees as *Epom* (evil spirits). Thus, the Adi are the descendants of *Doni Aaji*- (*the Abotani*). The genealogy of Author, who belongs to Adi tribe, is shown below as an example;

Pedong (1)→ Doni Aaji (Abotani) (2)→ Nibo (3)→ Bomi (4) → Midong (5) → Dolo (6) →Lonung (7)→ Nuda (8)→ Dayi (9)→ Yike (10) → Kepang (11) → Paaper (12) → Pertin (13) → Tinrang (14) → Rapul (15) → Pultin (16)→ Tinjong (17) → →Jotan(18) → Tanki (19)→ Kiko(20) → Kobuyung (21) → Buropong (22) →Rolut(23) →Lutju (24) → Judol (Odol Pertin- Author) (25) → Doken (son -26 Generations)

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