

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

AND

CONCLUSION

Chapter VI

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The world is passing through a period of serious ethnic turbulence. There has been a pronounced and sudden increase in tendencies among ethnoses world over to insist on the significance of their group distinctiveness and identity and new rights that derive from this group character. In India, the live example is of Arunachal Pradesh, where the ethnoses, officially designated as tribes, who were only 11 as per the Presidential Order 1956, were enumerated as 80 in 1961 census and record breaking 110 and 1971 census. No where in the world, we have so many officially designated tribes within such a small population (only 4,67,511 as per 1971 census).

Any serious thinker on this subject will start with a question mark on the legitimacy of these numbers. Doubts are magnified further when one finds that even a single man (in six cases) has been designated a 'tribe'. Not only this, single groups of people have been identified more than twice e.g., Gallong counted under four different names : Adi, Abor, Adi-Gallong and Gallong, while certain tribe-names have not been included at all just because, they have not been rightly identified. These names and numbers are recorded at the will of either the enumerators or the people themselves, who are not necessarily qualified to define a tribe correctly;

and far complicated is the ethnic process involved in identity establishment.

This study of the Aka, Miji and their kindred was taken up to discover the anomalies in the situation and also to provide a basic framework for future investigation. These ethnoses were stated to be having close socio-cultural relations, long close contact and frequent intermarriages amongst them. These tribes are officially recognised as 'Scheduled Tribes'. Scheduled tribes in India have been identified generally from the attributes of backwardness, primitive traits, geographical isolation, distinctive culture, and shyness of contact. On evaluation of the application of these attributes to Arunachal tribes in general, it was found that these were the differentiating attributes between a tribal from a non-tribal and not between two tribes. In most of the researches on tribes the world over, common name, territory, culture, kinship, and language in various mixes are accepted to be the differentiating attributes for a tribes hence, these latter attributes were accepted for the present study too.

Related literature on the topic being negligible, major stress was laid on the field work, and a comparative method was adopted for differentiation of these ethnoses. Common name, territory and culture were combined in one chapter (Chapter III) while kinship and language were found to be

more distinctive during field work; hence these were presented in two different chapters i.e., chapter IV and V respectively.

From the detailed analysis of various attributes, following could be safely inferred :-

1. Aka is a group name for two ethnoses i.e., Hrusso and Pichang (Miri-Aka).
2. Both these groups call themselves Aka outside their own area or before the outsiders because the Aka exoethnonym given to Hrusso has been used as a cover by Pichang as well, though they are different from Akas.
3. Pichangs are the only kindred who differentiate themselves from Akas. Mijis do not have such kindred who identify differently.
4. The exoethnonyms of the three ethnoses are then Aka, Miri-Aka and Miji while endoethnonyms are Hrusso, Pichang and Dhammai, the names which these people prefer. In future, they are likely to demand to be called by endoethnonyms, as is apparent from their behaviour.
5. The various differentiating attributes generally based on subjective assessment as per their priority of distinction are given in table 6.1, below :-

Table 6.1 : Priorities of attributes providing distinctions within these three ethnoses

	Aka/Miri-Aka	Aka/Miji	Miri-Aka/Miji
1.	Language	Language	Language
2.	Kinship	Name	Kinship
3.	Territory	Kinship	Territory
4.	Culture	Territory	Name
5.	Name	Culture	Culture

6. Various aspects of these attributes which distinguished these ethnoses are given out in table 6.2 below :-

Table 6.2 : Priorities of aspects of attributes providing distinctions

Priority	Aka/Miri-Aka	Aka/Miji	Miji/Miri-Aka
1.	Phonology (language)	Phonology (language)	Phonology (language)
2.	Morphology (language)	Morphology (language)	Morphology (language)
3.	Semantics (language)	Semantics (language)	Semantics (language)
4.	Endogamy (kinship)	Terminology (kinship)	Endogamy (kinship)
5.	Terminology (kinship)	Endoethnonym (name)	Terminology (kinship)
6.	Present-settlement-concentrations (territory)	Present-settlement-concentrations (territory)	Present-settlement-concentrations (territory)

contd ...

Table 6.2 contd ...

7.	Syntax (language)	Syntax (language)	Syntax (language)
8.	Endoethnonym (name)	Exoethnonym (name)	Endoethnonym (name)
9.	Geographical- boundaries (territory)	Geographical- boundaries (territory)	Geographical- boundaries (territory)
10.	Administrative- boundaries (territory)	Administrative- boundaries (territory)	Administrative- boundaries (territory)
11.	Migrations (territory)	Migrations (territory)	Migrations (territory)
12.	Names of festivals, fairs rites, rituals, ceremonies etc.	Names of fairs festivals, rites, rituals, ceremonies etc.	Names of fairs festivals, rites, rituals, ceremonies etc.
13.	Local exoethno- nym (name)	legendry (kinship)	Local exoethnonym (name)
14.	Behaviour (culture)	Behaviour (culture)	

7. These attributes and aspects are able to clearly differentiate between these three ethnoses. The differences have been measured on a five point scale in phonology and morphology aspects of language where their affinities have been found to be poor while their differences are very high.
8. Linguistically all the three languages fall under North-Assam Group of Tibeto-Burman Branch of Sino-Tibetan family. They are however, clearly different

from all the languages of the region. All three languages have marginal affinity with Mishmi. In addition, Akas have very marginal affinity with Lolo-Moso and Palaung-Wa groups, which shows some minor contact between these languages in the past. Within these ethnoses, the Akas are closer to Mijis than to Miri-Akas.

9. The priorities of distinctions have been changing over from situation to situation and time to time. Examples of these are given below :-

- (a) The most probable reason of Miri-Akas having been enumerated or known under the name of Aka seems to be their small population which though now is about 300, was much less, i.e., around one third in 1961, the time of their first enumeration. Having enumerated so once, they did not assert their identity in 1971, but now as is apparent from their mood and from their viable numbers, they will assert for separate enumeration and a separate identity.

- (b) All the ethnoses have passed a sequence of migrations, most probably in the form of waves. They sometimes came close to each other and sometimes separated. It is most likely that, after original separation they came close to each other.

in Mishmi country as is apparent from their marginal linguistic similarities with Mishmi language. The separation of one group of Aka took place probably after Mishmi country wherefrom this group moved through Assam while the other group through lower Arunachal. The other group of the Akas and the Mijis had least contact with Miri-Akas probably till their departure from Chayangtajo area, where-from they are stated to have migrated together. This period of migrations does not seem to be very old.

(c) Miri-Akas accepted domination of Akas probably at their present place of settlement where they are sandwiched between three dominant tribes i.e., Mijis, Bangnis and Akas. They chose to align with the Akas possibly because the Akas were the most dominating in the area.

(d) The socio-cultural and inter-marital relationships between these three tribes is indicative that proximity as well as regular and sustained contact are two important factors in determining close relationships. The recent marriages of two Miri-Aka girls with Bangnis and employment of a Bangni priest in Aka/Miri-Aka wedding are pointers to this. Also the break in contact between Akas and Miri-Akas due

to internal feuds, has brought to a temporary halt, their social, cultural and marital relationships with each other. This alienation seems to be the reason why the Miri-Akas assert themselves to be different from Akas more vigorously as the dependency of Miri-Akas is no more on Akas.

(e) The impact of Miri-Aka area having been separated from Aka area administratively has reduced the contact of Akas with Miri-Akas but it has led to an increase in contact of the Miri-Akas with Bangnis.

10. Two other attributes which came up during the study are 'the political organisation' and 'the we-feelings'. It was found that Akas had been organised under a Raja/Rani while other ethnoses had their clan chiefs or even band-chiefs. Now village councils have taken over the reins of the local administration, while the higher democratic organisation controls these village councils. The differences in this field exist no more, as now the same system is prevalent amongst all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, hence the differences in organisations are not being discussed further. The other factor i.e., 'We-feeling' or 'Solidarity within the tribe' is found again to be differentiating but at rare occasions only. This point however, gains importance in the light of remarks of Barth i.e., 'ethnic groups

are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves'. They accept a group of people in their 'we feeling' when they have certain common bond, feeling or interest. The ethnoses have generally the 'we feeling' based on consanguinity. It has been found that, even though, these tribes have affinal kinship, yet they do not include the other two in these 'we feelings'. Here consanguine kinship takes priority over others. Hence, common name, territory, culture, kinship and language turn out to be the most distinguishing attributes, their importance however, changes from situation to situation and time to time. This proves the hypothesis.

We have now to consider the applicability of these attributes to 'a tribe' as a society vis-a-vis the attributes required to define 'a tribe' as a 'stage of evolution'. In chapter I, we find the attributes of a tribe mentioned in both the cases. The attributes describing 'a tribe' as a stage of evolution have been described as backwardness, primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographic isolation and shyness of contact with community at large. If we apply these attributes for determining identity of these tribes; we will not be able to differentiate any of these from each other, or for that matter from any of the neighbouring tribes, as these attributes apply generally to 70% population of the

area which is tribal. These attributes can at the best be applied to call all of them as 'tribals'. To distinguish them as individual tribes, we have to apply the other set as required to distinguish one society from another. Even L.H. Morgan who was the chief exponent of 'a tribe' as a 'stage of evolution' defined tribe as a "completely organised society".¹

If we study the attributes required to define a tribe as a society, we will find that all these ethnoses identify themselves with different names i.e., Hrusso, Dhammai and Pichang, when they are in close contact with each other. Pichangs however, have been enumerated under the name Aka; the exoethnonym given to both Hrussos and Pichangs. The name Aka hence does not represent one ethnos but two in this sense, as is apparent from the way they both accept this common exoethnonym while away from their concentrations as also during enumeration. Hence Hrusso, Dhammai and Pichang can be considered as the actual names for their separate identity and not the officially recognised names Aka and Mijis, which are exoethnonyms. We therefore can safely say that the endoethnonyms determine their identity and not the exoethnonyms.

All the three ethnoses have generally distinct territories based on their concentrations. The intermix and overlap of populations exist but to a limited level. Considering Barth's point of view that, 'overflow of personnel

does not affect territorial identity', we can say that territory too, is a distinguishing attribute.

Their culture however, due to prolonged contact, has mixed up and does not mark clear boundaries, though a few differences exist. On the basis of culture, we cannot determine their different identity.

In marriage and kinship, we find that their frequent intermarriages have nearly eliminated the differences in the marriage system, only the linguistic terms differ. In kinship too, we cannot differentiate them on the basis of affinal kinship. Consanguinal kinship genealogies as well as the kinship terms are clearly distinctive of all the three ethnoses.

Language attribute has been found to be the most distinguishing attribute and the clear differences in phonology, morphology and semantics not only amongst each other but also with any other tribes of the region are clearly differentiating.

When we consider these attributes for determining the identities of three ethnoses as tribes, we have to consider whether the name, territory, culture, kinship and language demarcate the same boundary or not. Works of Fried, Dell Hymes, John Gumprez, Paul Friedrich, C. Voeglin, Driver, Naroll etc., show that linguistic, cultural and tribal unity are not always the same things.²

Let us consider these remarks in the present context. We found that these tribes generally have distinguishing geographical and administrative territories, with marginal overlaps in the form of inter-mixing of population in a few villages. These overlaps are likely to increase with demographic and situational changes over a period of time, but presently, the overlaps are of a limited scale and do not affect distinguishing capability of territory seriously. The name too, has been a cause of confusion specially between Hrussos and Pichangs, who together were enumerated under a common name Aka and describe themselves so even now outside their own zone, because they consider Aka to be a common name for both the ethnoses given by the outsiders. This is so probably because of the prolonged domination of Akas over them affected their suzerainty. They are now gradually getting enlightened and have started asserting their identity as 'Pichang'. The cultural boundaries have spread all over the combined geographical limit of all the three ethnoses. It has thus ceased to be noticeably differentiating. There is a special reason for it. All the three tribes have prolonged socio-cultural relations and frequent intermarriages due to which the cultural differences got gradually reduced to a limit of non-distinction.

Similarly the kinship has been affected by these close socio-cultural contacts and frequent inter-marriages. We find virtually no differences in their marriage systems

except the language element, which strangely enough, still stands out. This linguistic element in the kinship terms, is clearly distinctive of the three ethnoses. Another clear difference is that the clan exogamy is being strictly followed among Akas and Mijis while Pichangs allow marriages even within the clan, and this aspect assists in boundary marking of Pichangs, which generally appears to be the same as geographical boundaries in their case.

The kinship terms are however, affected by the contact; and kinship boundaries of Akas and Mijis are not the same as territorial boundaries. The only matching boundaries with their geographical boundaries are the language boundaries. They are so clearly distinguishing that one can say without doubt that their linguistic boundaries are the true determinant of their ethnic boundaries. All the aspects of the language describe these three ethnoses to be different.

From the above discussion we find that the boundaries provided by most of the aspects of culture and kinship are not the same as geographical boundaries distinguishing them, but there are some aspects like myths and legends as well as the linguistic elements of culture and endogamy and kinship terms which provide some boundaries which more or less confirm to the geographical boundaries. Boundaries provided by these attributes are confirmed by endoethnonym to be nearly the same, while language attribute leaves no doubt about

these boundaries to be the same. The languages have so clearly marked distinctions that, even the inter-marriages have not reduced the linguistic differences. How do their marital relations survive despite of these language differences then? is an interesting question, and is dealt with next.

All these tribes have maximum bilinguals and multilinguals specially at understanding level. Language does not become a bar between a husband and wife belonging to different linguistic groups, because they both understand each other's language and learn these languages through exposure. The researcher came across a family where the Aka husband had six wives, two each from Akas, Miri-Akas and Mijis. They all lived very well with each other and according to them they found 'no difficulty in communicating' due to multilingualism.

Another aspect in maintaining boundaries which needs consideration at this stage is the overall impact of continuous counter-action between close intermarital and socio-cultural relationship on one side and linguistic differences on the other. Will these ethnoses come closer or maintain their differences? We have seen various ethnic processes in chapter I. The process they will follow, depends upon time and situation, however, if the present close relationship continues, then time is not far when the linguistic

differences will decrease further and socio-cultural and marital relationship will increase. The continuous overflow of people may reduce the territorial distinctions. This can be considered as the process of ethno-genic inter-ethnic consolidation, which may ultimately lead to assimilation. The enumeration of Pichang (Miri-Aka) with Hrussos may be considered as a case of inter-ethnic integration, leading towards assimilation. Their common cultural tradition may mould them to a common 'ethnic union' or 'ethnic reserve'.

Hence, presently, based on at least four attributes i.e., language, kinship, territory and name we can safely say that all three ethnoses are different tribes however, it is likely that in future, the situation may not be the same specially in case of Hrussos and Pichang. The culture attribute is not found distinguishing because of close socio-cultural relations, inter-tribal marriages and prolonged contact, but this does not negate the distinguishing capability of culture. For example, if we compare any of these ethnoses with their Bodic neighbours, we will find the culture too, is a clearly distinguishing attribute. It will be then wise to say that the distinguishing capability of this attribute has varied according to the situation.

An important point emerges at this stage that Akas and Mijis have numerous clans while Pichangs have only one clan. Can only one clan form a tribe? Morgan describing

clans as gens, states, "A gens --- is a body of consanguineal descended from the same common ancestor, distinguished by a gentila name, and bounded together by affinities of blood".³ Here the main attributes of a clan are given as consanguine relationship between members, descent from a common ancestor, a common name and blood relationship among the members.

The most prominent difference between a tribe and a clan is that "the tribe is an endogamous group while the clan is an exogamous".⁴ Also, a clan is stated to be having no exclusive territory or language. Pichangs have an exclusive territory and language and does not fall in the exclusive category of a clan. Though it has only one clan name, yet it does not meet the other requirements for being called a clan. It is not exogamous. It has its exclusive territory and language. Hence it will be more appropriate to call it a tribe than clan.

More detailed study on this aspect will certainly be able to clear, if there is still any doubt. For the present, we can safely proceed with the finding of 'Pichang' to be a different tribe as are Mijis and Akas. We can hence designate them as three different tribes.

The term 'tribe' however, is considered derogatory due to its colonial linkage. We have used two sets of attributes to designate them; one set based on 'tribe as a stage of evolution' and the second set based on 'tribe as a society'.

The first set has a colonial history while the second set has a glorious past. In India, the term has been further modified which now designates them as 'Scheduled Tribes' on the basis of their having been 'included in the list of Scheduled Tribes'. It means that those tribes which have been included in this list will only be having the privileges and preferences meant for 'Schedule-tribe' and not those who have not been listed. It is clear from this that Pichang or Miri-Akas if they assert independent identities from Akas cannot get any benefit meant for Scheduled Tribes until they are included in the Scheduled Tribe List, while other people enumerated under the names of Haisa-Tangsa, Hotang-Tangsa, Katin-Tangsa, Korang-Tangsa, Langkai-Tangsa, Lowang-Tangsa, Sanke-Tangsa or Nonang with a population of only ONE, or for that matter 28 tribes having a population less than 15 will be getting all the benefits; but because they have been included in the Scheduled Tribes List. Similarly the Nah/Nga/Na, Rau, Rishi-Mora, Pa-Ta-Phea etc., who have not been included in the Scheduled Tribe list can get no benefits if they declare their independent identity, but those who have been included in the list under more than one tribe-names e.g., Gallongs as Adis, Abors, Adi-Gallong and Gallong, are authorised to avail the benefits. Are these people then rightly identified? They certainly are not. This clearly proves the inadequacies of the Scheduled Tribe list on the basis of which those people can avail privileges, preferences

and benefits. Names appear to have been included or excluded indiscriminately in the Scheduled Tribes list based on the census list where the names are recorded under the head "tribe" by the enumerators who had no knowledge of the attributes of 'a tribe' and wrote as such because they felt so, or were told so by those who even did not understand what 'a tribe' is. The problem was further magnified by the communication problem due to language differences between the enumerators and the people. This inaccuracy of the list is clearly brought out by this research-work where, while studying the identity of only two officially listed tribes, we found three from amongst the same people. It is unimaginable at this stage as to what will be the out-come if the detailed study of the officially listed 110 tribes is conducted, as from mere figurative assessment in chapter II, we found numerous anomalies.

To give right privileges and right preferences to the right people is the aim of preparing these lists, but they have not been able to achieve their aim as is clear from the presented study. Hence it is very important that instead of maintaining the lists based on census returns or modifying them based on better or changed results of these census, a team of experts and dedicated research-workers in this field are employed who determine the correct identities studying their attributes defining 'a tribe as a society'. The name 'Scheduled Tribe' also may be reconsidered due to its

derogatory connotation and replaced by a name which is respectable and acceptable. Names like 'Adivasi', 'Vanayjati' etc. have been considered but have not yet been found acceptable. Pathy suggests the term 'ethnic minority'⁵ for a tribe, while this researcher feels that any names analogous to 'a minority community' will be more appropriate. The acceptance of the final name however, can be made only after due research and with the concurrence of the people themselves lest this appears another derogatory attempt on their dignities. Till a suitable name is found, the name 'Scheduled Tribe' may be continued, however its definition has to be modified to state that, "a scheduled tribe is a geographically isolated, undeveloped, primitive and contact-shy kindred-group with a common name, territory, culture, kinship and language".

The need for identifying these people correctly is urgent because they are getting enlightened and claim their privileges and preferences more vigorously now. If due to lack of their correct identity they do not get the officially authorised benefits, or their benefits go to the people who do not have correct identities; they will certainly object, agitate and even may get violent.

We have nothing to worry, if the step towards ethnic identification is taken in right direction at a right time, because, the increasing assertion of tribal identity is a part of the overall forces of social change and modernisation.

This pace of change has been rapid, particularly since independence due to intensified modernisation and development. This process has also increased the need for a secured place and identity on the part of the communities in the new scheme of things. They are becoming conscious of the fact that in order to acquire the benefit of modern civilisation they need to be viable in human resources. As a consequence, small and distinct local groups combine to form a larger group as is the case of grouping and regrouping of Adis, Mishmis, Tangsas, Monpas, Nishis etc., to form a larger group and adopt a common appellation. The various processes of ethnographic groups i.e., forming ethnic unions, ethnic reserves or ethnic dyads is in full force in Arunachal in determining new identities. Such redefinition and expansion of identity may be viewed as an adoptive mechanism to the changed social, cultural and political circumstances. Such widening of identity is a development, having positive potentials for effective integration of the separate tribal groups in our country. The situation can only be favourable if we are awake and visualise the changes in ethnic processes in right perspective.

References

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