

CHAPTER 3

TANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The definition of Cultural Heritage given by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) Working Group '*Heritage and Society ICCROM 2005 states that Cultural Heritage is the entire corpus of material signs either artistic or symbolic handed on by the past to each culture and therefore to the whole of humankind..... include both the human and natural environment, both architectural complexes and archaeological sites, not only the rural heritage and the countryside but also the urban, technical or industrial heritage, industrial design and street furniture... The preservation of the cultural heritage now covers the non-physical cultural heritage which includes the signs and symbols passed on by oral transmission, artistic and literary forms of expression, languages, ways of life, myths, beliefs and rituals, value systems and traditional knowledge and know-how.*'³⁹

This clearly indicates that tangible and intangible are two important aspects of the cultural heritage of the people. When we look at the definition given by the UNESCO, the authority of the various aspects of culture, we see that they have also categorised Cultural Heritage into Tangible, Intangible, Natural heritage. But on closer scrutiny and study of what attributes are given to each category, it is to be seen that for Indigenous people such categorisation isn't apt because either it doesn't cover the full aspect of the Indigenous people's cultural heritage or doesn't give complete meaning to the cultural heritage of the Indigenous people.

The term 'Cultural heritage' has evolved considerably over the recent past and has at present increased the focus on the recognition of the relationship between the different communities and their cultural heritage. The Article 2 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the value of Cultural Heritage for Society defines 'Cultural Heritage' as 'a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and

³⁹ www.iccrom.org (DOA: 15th October 2021)

expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and tradition. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from interaction between people, place and through time.’⁴⁰

In A/HRC/17/30 Corr 1, Para 6 the Special Rapporteur noting that no list is exhaustive refers to cultural heritage as ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’, ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ and ‘Natural Heritage’ and added that Heritage should be understood as a resource enabling the cultural identification and development process of individuals and communities which they, implicitly or explicitly wish to transmit to future generations. It is also to be noted that Cultural Heritage is inclusive of the traditional knowledge and cultural expressions.

Understanding that the standard definition of Cultural Heritage as conceived and propounded by many conventions and organisations doesn’t completely do justice to the notion of Cultural Heritage of the Indigenous peoples, it is pertinent to understand the Cultural Heritage from their perspective. There is also increasing recognition of the relationship between communities and cultural heritage. The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the value of Cultural Heritage for Society defines Cultural Heritage as ‘a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.’ (Art.2).

According to the traditional categorisation of Cultural Heritage, the Tangible Cultural Heritage carries out the meanings while the Intangible Cultural Heritage is often embodied in specific objects which are inappropriate in the case of Indigenous peoples. Thus it should be acknowledged that it is important to adopt a holistic approach when it comes to the Cultural Heritage and this level of rigid legal regime towards the protection of Cultural Heritage would be problematic for the Indigenous peoples. And in this aspect the UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 13th Session Agenda Item 5, Page 4 provides the concept of Indigenous Peoples and the Cultural Heritage. The traditional categorization of Cultural heritage as ‘Tangible’, ‘Intangible’ and ‘Natural’ demonstrates the limitations of the concept of Cultural heritage. It

⁴⁰ UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 13th Session Agenda item 5 (A/HRC/30/53), 19th August 2015, Page 3.

states that the Indigenous Peoples' Cultural Heritage includes Tangible and Intangible manifestations of their ways of life, world views, achievements and creativity and should be considered an expression of their self determination and their spiritual and physical relationship with their lands, territories and resources. On the other hand, the notion of Heritage is said to encompass traditional practices in a broad sense including language, art, music, dance, song, stories, sports, traditional games, sacred sites, and ancestral human remains⁴¹. For the indigenous peoples, their cultural heritage is a holistic and inter-generational concept based on a common material and spiritual values influenced by the environment including bio-cultural heritage and traditional food production systems such as rotational farming, pastoralism, artisanal fisheries and other forms of access to natural sources⁴².

Taking into account the various understanding of the Culture and Cultural Heritage, the Expert Mechanism proposed the following:

'Indigenous Peoples' Cultural Heritage includes Tangible and Intangible manifestation of their ways of life, achievements and creativity and is an expression of their self-determination and of their spiritual and physical relationships with their lands, territories and resources. Indigenous culture is holistic concept based on common material and spiritual values and includes distinctive manifestations in language, spirituality, membership, arts, literature, traditional knowledge, customs, rituals, ceremonies, methods of production, festive events, music, sports and traditional games, behaviour, habits, tools, shelter, clothing, economic activities, morals, value systems, cosmo visions, laws and activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering.⁴³

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations' (UNESCO) central mandate is cultural heritage. Over the years they have been making additions to the various components of cultural heritage. More recent instruments have provide greater recognition to the

⁴¹ The Submission from the Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact as quoted in Page 4 of the UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 13th Session Agenda Item 5.

⁴² The Submission from the International Indian Treaty Council as quoted in page of the UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 13th Session Agenda Item 5.

⁴³ A/HRC/21/53, Para 52, Page 4 and 5

cultural heritage of the Indigenous people. The 2003 Convention on the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizes that ‘Communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and in some cases, individuals play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of the intangible cultural heritage’. Apart from the intangible cultural heritage, the tangible cultural heritage of the indigenous people is found to be missing.

When we specifically observe and study the tangible cultural heritage of the Indigenous people, we find that to complete the meaning of a tangible cultural heritage, its intangible elements need to be associated with it because without the knowledge and information associated with them, their significance cannot be ascertained. A tangible cultural heritage by themselves will be impoverished without the additional context of knowledge of how it was produced, history of how it came into being, ownership, etc. Associated with myths, folklores, songs, legendary stories are tangible heritage which is an interpretation of the intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, we can see that in many cases, the line between tangible and intangible is blurred as even when artifacts are considered as purely tangible, linkage to other non tangible information will be a requirement in order to give it a complete meaning. The Sümi Naga who are an indigenous group of people living in the North Eastern Indian state of India also base their history on oral sources which have been passed down from one generation to the other. When we survey the cultural heritage, we find that the tangible and intangible cultural are closely inter linked with each other especially in the absence of written historical records, the Tangible elements that have survived over the years is given voice and meaning by the intangible cultural heritage. For instance, tangible cultural heritage like the monolithic erection found in many villages in Southern Sümi region would be incomplete without the narratives and the intangible characteristics attached with it.

During the course of the field work, some tangible cultural heritage were collected and documented. Most of these survived the periods of Indian Army operation when villages were fully burned down and many tangible elements of the Sümi culture were lost and which couldn't be recovered. Some of the documented tangible heritage are given below:

3.1 BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

3.1.1 The *Morung* or The *Apuki/Iliki*:

It played a very prominent role in displaying inter-connectedness as well as the inter-dependence of the tangible on the intangible and *vice versa*. Young boys and girls were admitted into their respective *Morung* after attaining puberty and while living in the *Apuki/Iliki*, they go through various ranks till their adulthood. Women were forbidden to enter the *Apuki* while men could enter the *Iliki*. After the day's work was done, the men from the various *Apuki* would visit the *Iliki* of their choice.

According to the practise of Mishilimi, before constructing the *Apuki* (Men's *Morung*), the Awou (Chief Priest) would announce the night before that '*Thanau na apuki shini kiptimi khiumo totimi sa zü chini*' (tomorrow *apuki* will be constructed therefore no men should sleep with a woman). All the men will go and sleep that night in the vicinity of the village and as soon as it is dawn they will take bath and wash their machete and spears and after coming home it was a taboo for them to touch women. The *akiukau* (Chief) would choose a place and say that this would be the site for the *apuki* so there should be no uncleanliness and then the *apuki* would be built. The construction materials will be brought by everyone but the *Ahuchi* (King Post) will be carved to be kept in front of the *apuki*. The head of cow, women's breast, star, moon, sun, machete, and spear would be carved on the *Ahuchi* (King Post). This will be installed in the front wall of the *apuki*. The head of cow signifies – the cow gives birth in 10th month of pregnancy and women gives birth in the 9th month therefore as an indication that men and cow are from the same root. Women's breast – it is through the breast milk that life comes therefore, this is an indication of life. Moon, star, sun – gives light, without the light men cannot live in the dark, therefore they are also indicated. Machete – whatever work it is, without the machete there can be no work done – symbol of our companion in every work , spear – with hands alone men cannot fight against the enemy or animals – therefore it is a sign of the protector.⁴⁴

According to Ghoheto Zhimo, when a village is established the first house to be built is the *Apuki* because the men from the *Apuki* are warriors who protect the village from the enemies. The next

⁴⁴ Interview with Yekamu Sheqi (92 years), Mishilimi

house to be built is that of the *Kükami* (village Chief) and *Awou* (village Priest), after which the houses of the rest of the villagers are built. In order to build the *Apuki* , men from the *Apuki* would gather the thatch in the month of February and the *Apuki* would be built in the month of phushe. When the *Apuki* is being built, villagers would not go to the field. Women weren't allowed to come in the vicinity of the area where the *Apuki* was being built. After the *Apuki* is built, fermented soyabean (*Axone*), fermented fish (*akhakimüna*), leftover rice beer are all thrown away. An old warrior would take a rooster to the akimole and cut off its head which would roll down the *Apuki*. This rooster is given to the warriors who are skilled and they would cook and have its meat. After the *Apuki* is built, they would kill a male pig and the men would have a feast without women. The *Apuki* was supposed to be built with opening on both its front and end which signified not closing out the spirit of war but being able to receive it.⁴⁵

Some of the responsibilities carried out by the men of the *Apuki* are:

1. They would safeguard the life of the villagers. When the villagers go to sleep, they would go around the vicinity of the village to check the presence of the enemies and they would shout '*eu he he*' which is akin ululation.
2. They would wear the traditional attire and would go around the village and if they detect the presence of the enemies, they would inform the villagers.
3. If any wild animals come to the village and try to take away the domestic animals, the men from the *Apuki* would rescue the domestic animals from the clutches of the wild animals.
4. In case of any disaster in the village, for example outbreak of fire in the village at midnight, they would inform the villagers and put out the fire.
5. During the day time, they would take turns to guard the village.
6. Before sleeping they would engage in making basketries and all types of handicrafts. In this way they would learn from each other.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Zhimo, Ghoheto (2018) 'Sümi Tiqhetini, Achine eno Baibel Lo Kiqikulu', Kohima: SP Printers. Page 16 & 17

⁴⁶ Zhimo, Ghoheto (2018) 'Sümi Tiqhetini, Achine eno Baibel Lo Kiqikulu', Kohima: SP Printers. Page 17 & 18

When a boy reaches the age of 10, they can start sleeping at the *Apuki*. While at the *Apuki* the boys would visit the *iliki* and when the women are done with their work, they would tell the boys to go back to their *apuki* and sleep as they would also sleep. After coming back to their *Apuki*, the men would gather outside their *apuki* while everyone is asleep in the village and they would shout *ooo he he* and sing '*aliki kuhole ku*'. The song goes like this '*o Iliki ho ili ho ili o ilimi na zu uve aye ho timi qona zuhu ve ani*' and after this they would go to sleep. At the *iliki* women would sing in two groups while spinning the cotton. They would sing the '*hoye hoye ye hoye hoye apu aghau kupu cheni puto atu na veqhi tsulo hoye hoye ye hoye suwo mbabu ngu sho pulo ye hoye hoye ye hoye hoye o*' (the hornbill is flying around, so you kill it with a stone and take its feather to adorn your headgear *avabu/avabo*).

The men would construct the *Apuki* and sleep together in two lines. For the girls, they would live in *Iliki*. *Iliki* would be in the house which was in a good location as well as a house which was big. Women would clean the cotton, spin the cotton and weave. In the evening after coming back from the field, the women would bring the cotton and would clean the cotton and then some would spin it into a thread. They would make a huge fire and sit nearby and do their work. They would make thread from cotton and with this they would dye it and weave clothes using this thread. *Achepu*, *Aghuka*, *Aghupu*, *Aghini*, and *Aghipi kixi* were the tools used for weaving. *Abophi*, *Aqhumphi*, *Xenaphi*, *Amihiphi*, and *Avikiyiphhi* were the various type of shawl that were made. *Amiyiphhi* was for women. This was the costliest among women shawls. Those who were rich and had given feast would wear this. The mother would wear *Amiyiphhi* and her husband would wear *Avikiyiphhi*. Those who wear it without giving feast or having fulfilled all rituals would be eaten by worms if they wear these shawls therefore it was a taboo.⁴⁷

According to Yekamu of Mishili during his time at the *Apuki*, they would teach each other languages too. Those who knew *kholatsa* (hindi/assamese) would teach that to others, those who knew other Naga dialects would do the same.

⁴⁷ Interview with Yekamu Sheqi (92 years), Mishilimi

According to Visali Wotsa of Mishilimi Village, the girls' dormitory unlike the boys' was not a separate building. It is said that a woman's chastity needs to be protected and so the rich and well off people in the village would give a space within their house for the girls to prepare their sleeping quarter. The girls after attaining puberty would sleep together according to their age group. When they get a space to make their *Iliki* the young girls would cut down wood and each would bring a piece and this would be joined together to make their bed for sleeping. The girls would finish their chores for the day and would retire to the *Iliki* to sleep and also to carry out activities reserved for the night like spinning cotton and learning folk songs, art of weaving and duties of a woman from the elderly women who would visit them from time to time. Different batches of girls stayed at different *Iliki* according to their age and so it is said that often they would play games amongst themselves and also compete with each other in various activities. The men from the *Apuki* would visit the *Iliki* and sing songs for them and in most cases the men would visit the *Iliki* when they reach marriageable age in order to find a bride for themselves. They would woo the girl through their songs. The girls in turn would serve them rice beer. Rice beers were made by the girls in their *Iliki* by collecting rice from amongst themselves. With the coming of Christianity this practise was totally given up and at present remnants of such practices is not to be found. During the process of interview it was found that the women who stayed at the *Iliki* as a last batch had all passed away except for one or two from whom information about *Iliki* was collected. They also shared personal stories of how they were wooed and also about their escapades. Sadly their memories about most practices and activities and even the songs they used to sing while spinning cotton together at the *Iliki* were forgotten due to age and also the fact that most of their friends had passed away and with no one to sing together or share such memories, the knowledge they had had also slowly depleted with age.

The young people in the past would enter *Apuki/Iliki* in different batches according to their age group. They would leave the *Apuki/Iliki* only after getting married. The elderly women well versed in the art of weaving, folk song, folk dance, social skills, manners, etc taught the young maidens in the *Iliki* and in the same way elderly men well versed in the art of handicrafts, warfare, sports and oral tradition imparted such knowledge to the young men. The *Apuki* also served as meeting halls, guest house, guard house of the village and also an armoury for the

village. In spite of having played such an important role, with the arrival of outsiders like the British colonisers, American Missionaries and the Indian Army operation, such centres of learning slowly lost its central position. At present due to the awareness about the importance about preserving the tangible cultural heritage, in many villages in the Southern Sümi region, the villages are constructing the *Apuki* in the village in order to let the younger generation learn about the rich heritage that the forefathers passed on to them. The *Apuki* found at Lazami and Mishilimi is said to be a replica of how the *Apuki* was in the foregone days. Everything from the rough earthen floor to the beds made out of rough woods and the thatch has been made as it was in the past. The front of the *Apuki* has two planks of wood on which carvings of a man's head, Mithun's head, women's breast, machete and spear. Each has their own cultural significance and meaning. The *Apuki* is built with thatch and bamboo and tied with bamboo strings only. On the front top of the *Apuki*, two forked wooden structure is kept. Skulls of various animals and birds along with their feet and feathers are hanged above the two decorated wooden planks in the entrance of the *Apuki*. Even today women are not allowed to enter the *Apuki*.

At Lazami village, an *Apuki* has been constructed in the recent past. When Christianity came to their village, they were told not to use nor keep any cultural material connected with the animistic life at home. Therefore, thinking this to be true, many artefacts were destroyed. On 20th February 2009, at the initiative of the Department of Art and Culture, Government of Nagaland, who sanctioned Rs. 3 lakhs, they built an *Apuki* in their village. They have been renovating the *Apuki* from time to time. There was an instance where someone prophesied that the *Apuki* has to be destroyed and burnt down. But they didn't pay heed to it. Their conscious effort now is to preserve all the cultural materials that they possess and efforts are being made to produce such cultural materials on their own and not to buy from others. If possible they should be able to sell it too.

Even at Surumi, there existed *Apuki* and as far as Hekiye could remember, these were referred to as '*Rom Ki*'. Though he couldn't exactly say why it was called by that name, he is of the view that it maybe according to the Bible where the young men take rest. Even during his younger days he remembers the existence of a '*Rom Ki*' in one part of the village where young men

would sleep together (North Surumi). They would place bamboo as platform for bed and on top of that they would place hays on it and sleep.

At Natsümi too during the olden days there was the practise of men and women's dormitory called *Apuki/Iliki* but after an incident of the landslide that took away 9 men and 9 women's dormitory this practise was not there anymore. The men's dormitory used to be filled with every material used in a house, from the utensils to the traditional clothes and ornaments and clothes. According to Khakhu (89 years) of Natsumi, in his lifetime he didn't see an *Apuki* being built. *Iliki* was never built. Young unmarried women would sleep together in the house of rich people who would give out part of their house for the *Iliki*. The women would sleep in platforms built above the floor at a certain height.

Hebolimi village also had the practise of dormitory for boys and girls. According to Mighishe Swu, group of girls would sleep together and during months they would spin cotton and weave clothes. The men would woo girls from the *Iliki*.

He doesn't have much knowledge about the *Apuki* but young boys and adult male would stay together till they get married. They would put the animal's head as well as the head of animals in the *Apuki*. Women were not allowed inside the *Apuki*. They would go together to woo the women at the *Iliki*. The men would go around the village at night and would watch out for enemies. For the *Iliki*, those people who had big houses would give space in their house to let the women sleep. There was no separate building for *Iliki*. As for the rituals for building the *Apuki*, he doesn't know about it.

According to Mutshalho of Ighanumi village, he personally didn't live at the *Apuki* but it seems the *Iliki* existed according to the number of Khels therefore there existed 5 *Iliki*. As for the boys/men he doesn't remember as those existed only during his Grandfather's time. During his father's time Christianity had already come to their village. Therefore they didn't have much knowledge about it.

Even at Chisholimi village there was the practise of *Apuki/Iliki* according to Heqhezu but during his life, he didn't witness such practise. The boys/men would stay together in this house till they get married. Apart from this, he doesn't have any idea.

At Mukalimi village too there existed *Apuki/Iliki*. About the *Apuki/Iliki*, they don't remember much. According to Pekiye (79 years), he remembered his childhood where he saw women sleeping together on a long bed at their house, meaning their house was *Iliki* but he doesn't exactly remember around which year that was. They would sing together and spin cotton and weave the *Ayephi*.



Apuki at Mishilimi



(Clockwise from top left: 1. Front of *Apuki*, 2. King posts depicting the head of a man, head of Mithun, women's breast, machete holder, machete, 3. Skulls of animals either hunted or killed for rituals, 4. Interior of the *Apuki* displaying the wooden beds.)

This is the traditional thatch house that was traditionally constructed and inhabited by the Sümi people. These types of houses are no longer to be found as it has been replaced by the brick built or wooden built houses. There were various types of houses made of thatch depending on the economic status of a person.



In the olden days, the Sümi forefathers never locked their houses but used a single bamboo to close the door of the house which could be easily opened by anyone. Similar type of door closure is found in this house. The interior of the house is also void of any ornamentation. Sadly, this house has been replaced by a new building when the researcher went back to this village after two years in 2023.



A single bamboo being used to close the door



⇒ Interior of Sümi traditional house

3.2 ARTEFACTS

Agha tu



The keeper of the *Aghatu* or the charm stone isn't supposed to be shown to his wife till their son reach an age when he can go to war. He had four types of *Aghatu* in his possession namely:

Amishi gha – if this is there in the village, that village will be able to rear good amount of cows and mithun.

Aghibi ashubi gha – if this *agha* is there in the house, there will be no scarcity of grain or any type of crops and vegetables. The owner of this *Agha* will have everything, therefore will not be envious of others.

Axukushu gha – the household who own this *Agha* will have long life

Axani gha – this is the *Agha* for the vegetables and crops. The person possessing this will harvest lots of crops and vegetables. The owner of this *Agha* will possess every varieties of crops and people will buy from it.

These stones were passed on from one generation to the other. According to Asapu Tijimi of Lazami, it is a taboo to give it to someone from other village as the owner belongs to this village and the magic may get passed on to other village.

***Chine-Chini* connected with these stones:**

For the *Axani gha*, the crops are not to be sown during the period when it is moonless (*aqhi thi*). Even for harvesting also, it shouldn't be harvested on a rainy day. Only when the weather is very good, it has to be harvested.

When the owner of the *Amishi gha* take it with him while going to purchase the cow, no one can negotiate with him and will automatically agree to his price. If some people have come to their village to buy cows, they will not be able to cross the house which has the *Amishi gha* and will automatically enter the house and pay the price as posed by the owner. Even if they have crossed, they will still buy it from him. If the person of this *Agha* doesn't rear even one cow, their villagers wont be able to rear cows.

During the forefathers' days, they will kill a female piglet and they will sprinkle the blood on all the *Abi* (huge storing basket for storing the grain). In this way, the stone was worshipped. But after converting to Christianity when their granary is full they will offer prayer and then distribute some grain to the church leaders. During the olden days, these stones would give birth too.

Similar stories about the *Aghatu* was also narrated by Alu of Ighanumi village. There are stones that are called *Agha Tu*. According to him, when the thatch houses get burned, the spirit would also get burnt and it would take the form of stones which would give birth to pebbles. The narrator said that he himself saw such stones and he even played with it because it was round in shape and resembled pebbles.

Mutshalho of Ighanumi village had a grandmother named Shovili who also had 3 or 4 *Aghatu* which was round and looked wet and shiny. One day his grandmother got sick, therefore they went searching for her *Aghatu* and found that the stone had given birth to two small pebbles. Then her grandmother explained saying that the stone was giving birth that is why she got sick with fever. These types of stones are kept hidden in the granaries. They keep these stones because they believe that such stones make them rich. At present such stones are hard to find.

This *Aghatu* of his grandmother was passed on to her son Khumtsa but when their village was burnt during the Indian Army operation, the stones were also burnt along with the houses as during those days the houses were built of thatch. When the *Aghatu* got burnt, the power or the spirit of the stones which were kept hidden in the house were burnt. The stones would usually black in colour and would look wet when its spirit is there but after it got burnt, it will become dry.

***Amughusü*/thunderbolt stone**



According to Asapu of Lazami, when it is raining and thunder strikes a tree, it will enter the earth and the spot where it enters will look like something has borrowed into the earth. As soon as it is dug up, if the person says '*Hina agha*' (this is *agha*) then he gets all the fortunes/blessings but if he says '*hipa ye mughu kumo tingi he*' (this must be misfortune) then he doesn't get any blessings. Even this stone has the power. When it is put into the pocket of a person who is going to buy/sell cows, no one will be able to negotiate with him and he gets according to the price he asked for. Asapu is in possession of two of this thunderbolt. One belongs to his father and the other belongs to him. He dug it up in the year 1966. There are only few people about the secret of the thunderbolt. It is called '*Amughusu*' and it resembles an axe.

Axapi/Axipi Bo



The leaves of the *axapi* (local tobacco) is dried up, after which it is crushed into powder and is put inside this small container made of stone. This container has a small hole at the bottom. Water is mixed with the tobacco powder and is filtered through this hole. An *Ajuhu* is attached to this container and the water is collected in this. This will be used to purchase field. Those who usually drink this water cannot go to sleep or work in the field if they don't drink this. Since the filtered tobacco water can be used to purchase fields, it is believed that people who have the *Axipi*/tobacco possesses lots of fields and are very rich. This was passed on to Asapu Tijimi of Lazami by his grandfather Inatha.

3.3 MEGALITHIC ERECTIONS

Megalithic erections at Mishilimi village

1. *Tüghami jibo*

From the forefathers' time, there is a place called 'Tüghami jibo' located in the Ghabo suye (hot and dry area) of Mishilimi village. When the villagers of Mishilimi came to that area for cultivation, they saw the devils keeping their rice beer here and having rice beer in this place and therefore this place was called *Tüghami jibo* or the place where the devil keep their rice beer. The name of the evil spirit of this place was called *Lojikha*. *Lojikha* went towards *Jukotso* (Japfu mountain) in order to get a wife for himself and married the sister of the spirit of *Juko* named *Lojili* and brought her back to *Tüghami jibo* and they used to live here. One day the brother of *Lojili* went towards the Central Sümi region for headhunting but they weren't successful. Therefore on their way back they took the head of their brother in law *Lojikha* and took his head towards *Juko*. It is said that his body still remains at *Tüghami Jibo*.

2. *Awo kibidi kuta:*

This is also located at Ghabo suye near the Mount Sungato. This place was called Awo Kibidi Kuta because in this place some of the Mishilimi villagers found a big make pig stuck in between two stones. Seing this, they pierced the pig with their spears and took it home. they distributed the meat among all their clan members. But this pig turned out to be that of a devil's and this owner came calling for his pig in the Mount Sungato with her metal walking stick. When she couldn't find it is said that she shouted asking who ate her pig. The clan who ate the pig replied saying they had eaten the pig. The devil put a curse on this clan by saying that whoever ate my pig, her saliva will enter their backbone and break it and into their knees and make it impossible for them to stand when they are about to die. This clan was the Asuchelami. Till today it is said that this clan dies without being able to stand.

3. *Tüghami mqhoboki:*

This is found below the Mount Puhokito. It is believed that the devil used to prepare their weapons of war like machete and spears from this place. The devils used to make lot of noise

therefore, people used to be scared to go through this area and they used to take another path. This place is still there till today.

Megalithic erections at Chisholimi village

1. *Anga Nepa* – during the olden days, a mother had left her child to work in the field. When she came to the AXAPIKI. She couldn't find her child but she could hear her cry coming from a distance. She followed the sound and when she reached one place, she saw the child leaving a footprint with six toes on a stone and then she disappeared. This stone is still there.
2. There is also a story of a stone and tree competing with each other to see who would be the tallest. But someone from their village cut it down for timber and it seems this person died after sometime. The stone was called kutupa. Both the tree and the stone had the same height.
3. There was a big stone which was also very tall, it was called Ghothapa. It is believed that the *Ayeghu* slayed Ghothapa. There are many writings inscribed on this stone but no one can understand what language it is. It is still there in a paddy field.

Megalithic Erections/historical places At Hebolimi Village:

1. *Asu Chishi Sa*

When Hebo, Chisho and Chishi migrated to this area, Asü Chishi dug up a pond and is known till today as Asü Chishi züki. Above this is a plain area where the followers of Asü Chishi used to live.



2. *Atu Kugha:*



During the olden days, this stone used to make loud noise. Some believed that this stone came from Tseminyu side and some were of the view that it came from the *azho* side. But the area where this stone was found was called by the Hebolimi as *atu kugha-a* meaning the place where the stone shouts. As this stone was not taken care of, when fire burnt that area this stone was also burnt and it broke. The new generation brought the broken half and placed it on the path leading to the fields at the resting place (*Aghuna-a*). But this stone has stopped shouting.

3. *Ashu Loxu Wochu Kubo-a*

Ashu Loxu Chisholi lived in this place and since he didn't have wood to carve out the *aposhu*, from the stone lying outside his house, he carved out the APOSHU and used to pound his pig's food from here. It was intact till the recent past but some miscreants broke the stone into two and only one piece is remaining for now.



4. *Alayela*



The path taken by the forefathers is still there. According to the forefathers, when Ashu Hebo lived in around here, there was a big *Apuki* in this place.

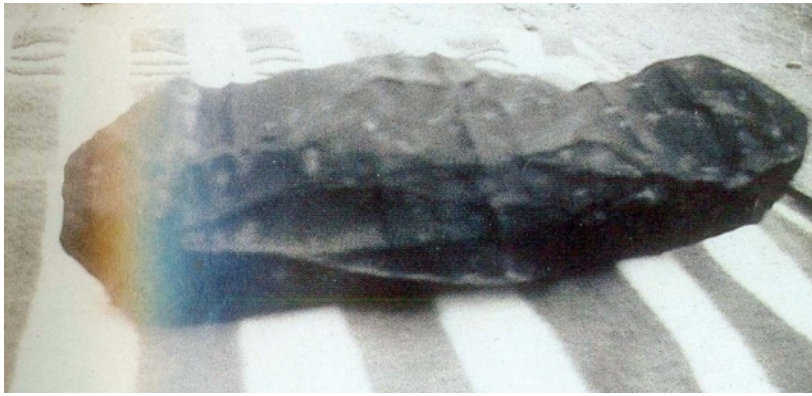
5. *Aghümi Cho*



During the headhunting days, they would slay their enemy and then chop the body into small parts. They brought the private part of the enemy and placed it in the hollow of a tree. After sometime they discovered that the private parts had turned into stones and had given birth to smaller stones. But it was a taboo to move the stones for fear of heavy rains and storms. But this tree eventually died. There were two stones male and female. The male was reddish in color and taller than the female stone. In course of time the male stone and the smaller stones got lost. The

only remaining is the female stone but it has lost its power. This is still found at Hebolimi village.

6. *Aghümi Unhe*



This is also found at Hebolimi village. During the headhunting days, they had cut off the elbow of the enemy and had brought it back to the village. This turned into a stone.

7. *Asü Chishi Zükikhe:*



This pond was dug by Asu Chishi when he along with Ashu Hebo and Ashu Chisho migrated to this area and Ashu Chishi settled at the plain area called Ashu Chishi Sá/ Ashu Chishi colony which was above this pond. In the past his followers used to carry water from here to use. After some years Ashu Chishi again migrated to the present location ie Chishilimi village and at present since it is an individual land the trees and vegetation around this pond has all been cut down due to cultivation and the water in this pond isn't as it used to be.

Megalithic Erections at Surumi Village:

At Surumi village, in the Nanga river there were two stones namely ‘Ghokikha’ and ‘Chhipa’ who were believed to be husband and wife. One was located on the banks of Nanga river and the other was located towards the mountain. No foliage grew near these stones and they were believed to have spirits, therefore people were scared to go near them and did not even practise agriculture in this area before the coming of Christianity. After the coming of Christianity in the village, it is believed that the spirits of the stone left this area. Therefore they started cultivation even in this area and in the process one stone was destroyed. The other one is still believed to be existing.

When the Surumi forefathers came to establish their village at the vicinity of the present village, they came across water coming out in between stones and making ‘Sur’ sound above the present settlement. They decided to name this river ‘Sur Ghoki’ and decided to settle here by naming their village as Surumi.

Megalithic Erections at Lazami Village

Kati zükhe:



This is located at Lazami. This pond was from the time when the kati limi used to stay and is there till today. The amazing thing about this is that the water never dries up even during the dry season.

Aza-anu tu:



This is also located at Lazami. In the past when a mother and daughter died and were buried, from their grave these two stones came up and as a result the area where this is located came to be known as Aza eno anga tu luza.

Feast of merit stone installation



During the forefather's time, men of wealth who want to gain higher status in the society would have stone pulling ceremony and then give feast of merit. Usually at Lazami village, two stones are installed representing Husband and wife.

Megalithic Erections at Ighanumi Village

Sacred rock:



Muthsalho an old man from Ighanumi village was of the view that he had heard certain stories but he couldn't remember clearly. This rock has a very peculiar significance and is found at Ighanumi village. It is said that this rock once said "I'll grow as high as to reach the zenith of the sky before the cock crowed". But ironically, before it could reach the sky, the cock crowed and it fell to the ground. This rock is still there at Ighanumi village. It is said that once in the past, the men tigers while preceding towards the peak of Terogonyu (Rengma area) from the East, assembled at this rock and from here they flew towards the peak of Terogonyu. Another version is that There were two big stones and they decided to compete with each other in order to see who will be the tallest in the morning. But when morning came and the Rooster crowed, they both fell down. This stone is still there in the village and is still above 5 feet.

At Kamuphuye (village formed by Kamu), there was an incident with an *Awoli* (male pig) belonging to the evil spirit. When some of the people of Kamuphuye went for hunting, without knowing that the pig belonged to the evil spirit, they killed it and brought it to the village. They distributed meat to the whole village but forgot to give a widow. That night, the evil spirits came carrying an iron stick and was saying '*Hile ghini keo*' (shall we pierce here?) and some would

say ‘*Mo Ta Iphi*’ (no go a little further). They kept doing this till they reached the widow’s house. When they reached her house they stopped piercing the soil and the entire village fell down the gorge except the house of the widow. Since this area is steep, till today people find it difficult to go to this place. People say that till today they can find some potsherds in this area. It has become a dense jungle and since it has rough terrain, people cannot go to this area.

Another story is about a couple who had taken their baby to the field. As the baby fell asleep, they left her to sleep under the *Thisukughubo* (resembles a banana leaf) and they resumed their work in the field. But after a while they couldn’t hear any noise from the place where they kept their baby. When they came to check, the rooster that was watching over the baby is believed to have crowed ‘*athisukughubo na nanu mululoo*’ (the *athisukughobo* has swallowed your baby). Even today when the tree is cut, blood like liquid comes out of it and it is a taboo to use the leaf of this plant for eating. This is found in the jungle.

Awoli tu



While the villagers were carrying the slaughtered pig, it is believed that it turned into stone. Presently this stone is at Ighavito village jurisdiction.

Avitsü mulo



This is believed to be the heart of the Mithun. It is round in shape and it is still found in the Ighanumi land.

Sheqimigha

There is a path and it has bamboo groves too in Ighanumi village. There were groups of people who were taking animals along this path. Among the people who took this path, one group was carrying the meat of male pig (Awoli) but it turned into stone. Another group had killed Mithun and was carrying it but the heart of the Mithun turned into stone. Along that same path, another group was carrying Mithun without head but it turned into stone. The thigh of the Mithun that they were carrying also turned into stone. In this path all these stones are found. On being asked as to how all these phenomenon occurred, they said they also have no knowledge about it.

Feast of Merit stones



At Ighanumi village there was no restriction on the number of stones a person could pull and perform the feast of merit. It was according to how much he could afford. One of the Narrator Alu said his grandfather performed the stone pulling and feast of merit thrice. These were installed at different places but at present due to the developmental work in the village, they were reinstalled in another place.

Megalithic erections at Tsaphimi village:

Poje Aqu:



This stone is found at Tsaphimi. This was actually a bird that had come from the Rengma area and was killed by the spirit of Lanki and Tula rivers after which it turned into a stone.

Poje adu:



This stone is found at Tsaphimi village and it was a pair with the Poje aqu. When it came to rescue Poje aqu, it was killed.

Avi nhethi:



According to the oral story, in the olden days there used to live two orphans. One day the sister asked her younger brother to go for an errand but the younger brother refused as a result of that, out of anger the sister beat the younger brother with her weaving blade (aghuqa) and the brother felt bad and went away and didn't return. After a while the sister found her brother but since he was

already living at a different place, his sister gave him some clothes, Dao, Spear and a mithun but he died on the way and even the Mithun turned into a stone. This is found at Tsaphimi.

Megalithic erections at Kichilimi village

Kokopu tuqho:



According to the legend, it was believed that the spirit of Tuka used to kill the spirits of the birds that turned into rocks, but this Kokopu tu was very big and strong that the spirit couldn't kill it and so till today this rock is found at Kichilimi.

Historical place of Mukalimi village



When the forefathers came to this particular area to establish their village, they saw a huge tree known as *Chighibo* (Peepal Tree) which is still there. The measurement of this tree is believed to be 59 gird in breadth. During the days of headhunting they would hang the heads of their enemies in this tree. Not only that but the *shibu shighi* (big animals like bear, tigers) since it was believed in the olden days that if one eat the head of a wild animal, worms would eat up that person therefore when they were able to hunt big animals, their heads were also placed on this tree.

Megalithic erection/significant historical places of Natsümi village:

1. The only stone installed in their village is by Ashu Khakhu who is said to have brought back the harvested grain from the field and it was dried in the sun in 6 drying mats, therefore to mark this event a stone was installed which is found till today in their village.

2. In the olden days, the Natsümi village is believed to have around 700 households and like other Sümi village, they also had this practise of men and women dormitory or *Apuki/Iliki* and at their village there were nine boys' and nine girls' dormitory. It is said that one night when a young man was going back to his dormitory, he saw a very tall man wearing *Ayephi* and hitting the ground with a stick he was saying '*Kotharu*' (meaning unknown) and as he was going about hitting the ground, landslide started occurring along the lines he had made on the ground with his stick. Seeing this, the young man ran towards girls' dormitory or *Iliki*. It is said that this young man's sister and lover stayed together at this girls' dormitory. It was the habit of his lover to sleep at the corner. But that night they had changed places and his sister was sleeping at the corner. Unknown to the young man when he reached, he found that the landslide had taken the boys' as well as girls' dormitory away and as it was rolling down the hill, whenever the boys' rolled up they would shout 'au he he' and when it brought up the girls' crying would be heard. Thinking that he was pulling out his sister, he pulled out his lover as he wasn't aware that they had changed their sleeping places that night.



Encircled area is the place where the landslide occurred

3.4 TRADITIONAL CLOTHES - MEN AND WOMEN

For the Sümi the textile plays a very important role. The work of production of textiles was confined to the domain of womenfolk though men helped in making the tools needed for the process of weaving. There are many songs, folktales, proverbs, taboos surrounding the textiles. And in all the villages whenever they recount the dormitory system they always talk about how

women would finish their day's work and while at their dormitory they would sing songs and clean the cotton and spin it in order to get it ready for weaving. One quality for an eligible and sought after women for marriage was her ability to weave beautiful clothes as this was considered to be a prized skill. So much importance was given to textile products that the status of a person in a society was displayed through his/her capability to wear certain shawls or mekhala. These pieces of clothes played the 'status conferring' roles. During the field work in Dimapur area, it was observed that many Sümi women were engaged in selling textile products and ornaments by sourcing it from Sümi women in Dimapur area as well as other Sümi regions.

Practice of Spinning Cotton and Dyeing:

At Mishilimi village, in the foregone days, the women folk would plant cotton in their fields. It is said that unlike other plants cotton seeds had to be sown by shouting lots of praises of what it would be used for when the plants grow healthy and is harvested, for example, adulations like 'grow well and you will be made into a beautiful clothe'. If this is done it was believed that the harvest of cotton was bountiful. The origin of the cotton plant is still unknown but with in depth research there are chances of finding out. After the cotton is harvested, the women would usually bring it back to their *Iliki* and start the process of making yarns out of it. The tools that were used and the process are mentioned below:

- (i) *Asüpha tu eno Asüpha kinesü* (roughly translated as cotton stone and cotton stick)



These two are actually a flat stone and a bamboo stick. The unseeded cotton is placed on this stone and with the stick the seed of the cotton is removed from the cotton. After this, the cotton is plucked into various pieces.

(ii) *Asüphapu*



This is made out of a bamboo and it is a flexible stick with a loose thread tied on both side resembling a bow. With this the plucked cottons are beaten on the thread in order to make the cotton very soft.

(iii) *Apipi*

This is a bamboo stick that is used to roll up the softened cotton. The cotton gathered looks like a long string of necklace.

(iv) *Aleghu*



This is another bamboo stick used for rolling up the yarn that is produced from the rolled up softened cotton. The string from the rolled up cotton is tied to this and threads from the cotton are rolled on the thigh and in the process the *Aleghu* keeps rolling in a small earthen container called *Ajunguku* and the thread produced from rolling the cotton on the thigh automatically gets rolled up on this stick. It has to be noted that the *Aleghu* is placed near the thigh connected to the rolled cotton and by rolling the cotton on the thigh the thread or yarn is produced.

(v) *Ayekala*



After the yarn is produced from the cotton, a stick with two protruding ends called *Ayekala* is used to roll the yarn from one end to the other making it into various bunch like the modern yarns. These bunches are then used for either weaving directly or undergo the process of dyeing in different colours before it is used for weaving in order to produce shawls and mekhalas of different designs.

(vi) **Portable backstrap loom:**

This is usually made of wood and the loom is attached to it through a pole.





The women of Mishilimi, Lazami and Natsümi had a song on the whole process from plucking cotton to the finished product. They would sing like this:

'Leli na lepoghi, akila phuli na phu, phuli na pevu ineli tsu, ineli na pe sukholi tsu, sukholi na pe tali tsu, tali na pe pitheli tsu, pitheli na pe zhuli tsu, zhuli na pe puholi tsu, puholi na pevu teli tsu, teli na pe gholi tsu, gholi na pevu chughuli tsu, chughuli na pe uli tsu, uli na khe pinheli tsu'.

This is the personification of the process of turning cotton into a shawl and how at the end after years of usage it turns into a piece of worn out cloth fit only for menial works. The personification is in the form of taking on female names for each step in the process with literal translation of the name. Leli is supposed to be the one plucking the cotton (lè meaning pluck) and bringing it home then leli gives it to phuli who dries it in the sun (phu meaning drying in the sun) who then gives it to ineli who squeeze out the seeds from the cotton (inhele – pluck it out) and then she gives it to sukholi who spreads out the cotton (in the cotton making process, the asuphapu tool is used to beat up the cotton to soften it up), after this process of spreading out the cotton in other words softening the cotton sukholi gives it to tali tsu (here the apipi is used to roll

up the softened cotton in order to make it easier to produce the yarn), then it is given to pitheli wherein the cotton is rolled and yarn is produced, then pitheli gives it to zhuli wherein the yarn is either soaked in rice water or dyed in order to get it ready for weaving, then it is given to puholi wherein the yarn is rolled up into balls, and then it is given to gholi, i.e, the yarn is used for weaving (aghi gho – weaving), after which it is given to chughuli, i.e, after the cloth is woven it is stitched together (chughu - stitching), then it is given to uli, i.e, it is given to a person to be worn and then uli gives it to pinheli, i.e, after wearing for many years it becomes old and worn out (aphinhe).

Sadly at present the Mishilimi people do not grow cotton and also the process of dyeing has also been long given up. When asked about these three plants used for dyeing there seems to be some confusion in recognising the plant especially the one used for producing black colour.

During the process of spinning cotton, various folk songs used to be sung especially connected with marriage, love, everyday life, etc. For example in the folk song recorded called '*ilomuka*', it talks about a girl who is lamenting her plight as the month for marriage had come and all her friends from the *Iliki* were to get married and she was without any such proposal and so her heart was heavy and discouraged.

At Lazami village, they follow similar practise of spinning cotton and dyeing but the only difference is that they still grow their own cotton as it was used in the past and they also have the knowledge of dyeing and is very clear about the plants that are used for dyeing. In the Central Sümi region, there are certain stories connected with the plant used for producing black colour.

In the Southern Sümi villages namely Natsümi, they still use the traditional cotton and during the olden days it is said that colours like black, red and yellow were produced using plants and roots. They could not recollect the names of the plants and roots but they were sure that these plants and roots were not to be found anywhere at present. For producing black colour, they said that a plant referred to as *Akütsübo* was used. This plant was to be boiled for a long time and then the yarn had to be immersed in this liquid. There were certain gennas associated with the production

of the black colour. It was a taboo for people to come near the place where the plant for producing black colour was being boiled. If the wife was boiling the plant, it was a taboo for her husband and children to go to the field. For producing red colour, they could not remember the name but they said it was a creeper. At Mukalimi village, they no longer use the traditional cotton.

According to Yezuqhe of Chisholimi village, the elders were of the view that before the feast of merit such knowledge of clothes and ornaments was not known to the people but they learned it when the devil's house was burned and Ashu Khumtsa's son saw the handicraft materials among the receding fire.⁴⁸ Therefore their descendants are believed to be very good and experts in producing handicrafts. It seems to be true as the narrator was also someone who knows all the handicrafts. Everything used during the folk dances were learned from the burnt house of the *tughami*.



Cotton Plant

According to Mutshalho, during the olden days, they would plant cotton in their fields which would be harvested and taken to the *Iliki* where the women would clean and turn the cotton into yarn in order to use it for weaving. The most common was the '*Asapha Phi*'.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Interview with Yezuqhe Shohe (72 years), Chisholimi Village, Date of Interview: 20th March 2021

⁴⁹ Interview with Mutshalho (82 years), Ighanumi Village, Date of Interview: 18th December 2020

Commonly used traditional Sümi women Mekhala/wraparound:

1. Abo mini:



In the olden days, this wraparound was used by women whose husband had given the feast of merit. At present, this wraparound is used by all the women without any restrictions.

2. Lahumini:

This mekhala is of two varieties, one is without motifs woven with red and black threads and the second variety is also in black and red thread but with red motifs and yellow, green and red on both the edges of the mekhala. In the olden days, women whose husband had given the feast of merit would wear this mekhala. At present, this mekhala is worn by all women.

3. Litashi Mini:

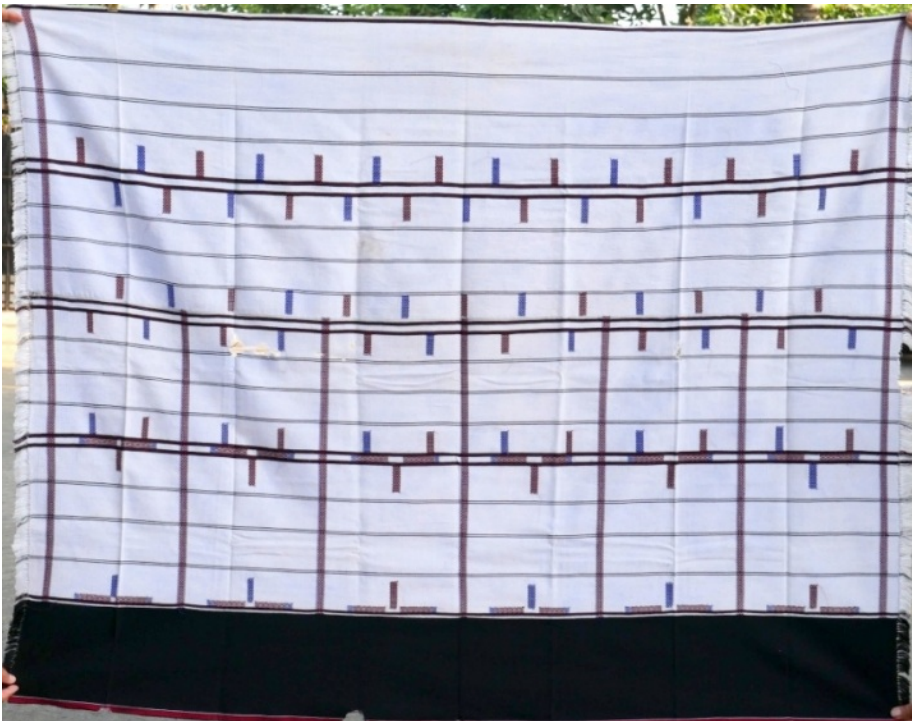
This wraparound was given to the women to wear after the engagement. This wraparound is believed to be woven by a woman from Litami village.

4. Lotosü:



In the olden days, this wraparound was used only by women whose husband/father had given the feast of merit. Originally this wrap around was worn above the knee but at present the length has been increased.

5. Pulosümini:



In the olden days, when a girl and her parents has agreed to the marriage proposal from the man's side, this mekhala was given. The word 'Pulo' means 'agree'. As a sign of her agreement to the marriage this mekhala was given and worn.

6. Tsüghü Mini:



In the olden days, this mekhala was worn by women from rich families. This mekhala was worn by using the Sümi women ornament called Akichela chi over it. The Akichela chi or the waist ornament covers the area from the waist to above the knee. At present this mekhala is worn by all the women.

Traditional Mekhalas from Pughoboto area:

Pughoboto area located in the Southern Sümi region is the ancestral Sümi area from where the Sümi migrated to different parts of Nagaland. Among the 24, 19 villages have their own traditional mekhalas.

1. Awohumi village:

They have a traditional mekhala worn by the grandmothers of their village and passed down to the present generation. This mekhala is called '*Aphuwo Mini*'. In the olden days, when they migrated to this village, the women wove this mekhala and wore as a result this mekhala

was called '*Aphuwo mini*' meaning migrating to new place mekhala. This mekhala could be worn by all the women without any distinctions.



2. Chishilimi village:

They have two mekhalas in this village. One is called the *Lahumini* which was worn by all women without any distinctions. In the olden days and even today, this is worn and the *Akichela chi/*



Sümi women waist ornament is worn over it.

The next mekhala is called *Kati Mini*. The significance of this wraparound is that in a patriarchal society, women's rights are suppressed but this mekhala is a mekhala of hope wherein it is based on the belief that one day women would also have their rights and be free to stand for their rights. This mekhala is also used commonly by all Sümi women.



3. Chisholimi:



At Chisholimi they have a wraparound called *Mighimi Mini*. The word 'Mighimi' means poor. It is said that in the olden days poor women wove this mekhala. The meaning of

the colours are namely – red stand for the war because during the olden days wars were constant and taking heads was a common affair. The colour black stands for sorrow and the white stands for the peace.

4. Ghathashi:

They also have their distinct mekhala called '*Ghathashi limi Mini*' meaning mekhala for the women of Ghathashi. In 1985 a woman called Hisheli H created this mekhala to be worn by the women of Ghathashi. It is said that in this town was established during the time when there was lots of hardships and fear. The white colour on this mekhala stands for the desire for this town to be a town of peace and love. The different motifs on the mekhala stands for the different people coming and living together here.



5. Ghokimi village:

There are two mekhalas from this village namely – *Ghile mini* which could be worn by all women during the time of harvest. This was worn mostly by teenage girls. This mekhala is the first mekhala to be worn by girls when they reach puberty. During the time of harvest, when they go back late from their fields, the girls wearing this mekhala would go first and those coming after them would be able to make out the way.



The next mekhala is called the *Ghokimi Tsughu mini*. When a girl reaches the age where she can be wooed by men, she can wear this mekhala. This mekhala is worn along with the waist ornament called *Akichela chi*.



6. Hebolimi:

According to oral tradition, it is said that one day a woman was weaving and she was wondering what designs to make on the mekhala. Just then some chicks came near her and was feeding. She saw the design on the back of the chick and decided to incorporate the same on the mekhala. At the bottom of the mekhala, motif resembling the feet of the chicken is incorporated. In the olden days when a girl child reaches the age where she has to start wearing mekhala, this is the first mekhala she is made to wear. This mekhala can be worn by everyone without any distinctions.



7. Ighanumi village:

There are two mekhalas namely *Akilije chikha* which can be worn by all the women without any distinctions.



The second is *Amighe Mini* which can also be worn by all women.



8. Iphonumi Village:

The Mekhala named '*Iphonulimi Mini*' or mekhala of Iphonumi women was woven by a grandmother named Kinigha. The two black threads found all over the mekhala indicates the husband and wife.



The motif at the top in red, blue and black indicates the different colony as suggested by Apza Kinigha though she was a woman.

9. Khughutomi:

This mekhala is called *Khughutomi Mini*. This was woven by a woman called Nitoli. This can be worn by all women. In the olden days when women were menstruating they would pluck leaves to cover their private parts.



10. Kichilimi village:

Their mekhala is called *Kichilimi mini*. Since the village is surrounded by 5 rivers, the five black bands denotes the five rivers. This wraparound can be worn by everyone without any distinctions.



11. Kitami:

The mekhala of Kitami village is called Kitami Chughu Mini. In the olden days when new grains were to be taken out of the granary, women would wear this mekhala. This mekhala was considered to be a



mekhala of blessing. One wasn't supposed to wear this mekhala while sleeping.

12. Lazami:

There are three types of *Ghile Michi Mini*. The white one was worn by young girls and signified the time for harvest.



The blue ghile mini was used by women who were engaged to be married.



The black *Ghile mini* was worn by the mothers and grandmothers. In the olden days they would use a belt of cowries but at present this mekhala has been modified by stitching cowries on the mekhala.

The next mekhala is *Amighe mini*. This was woven by a poor woman and could be worn by all the women irrespective of their status. In the olden days this was also used as shawl.

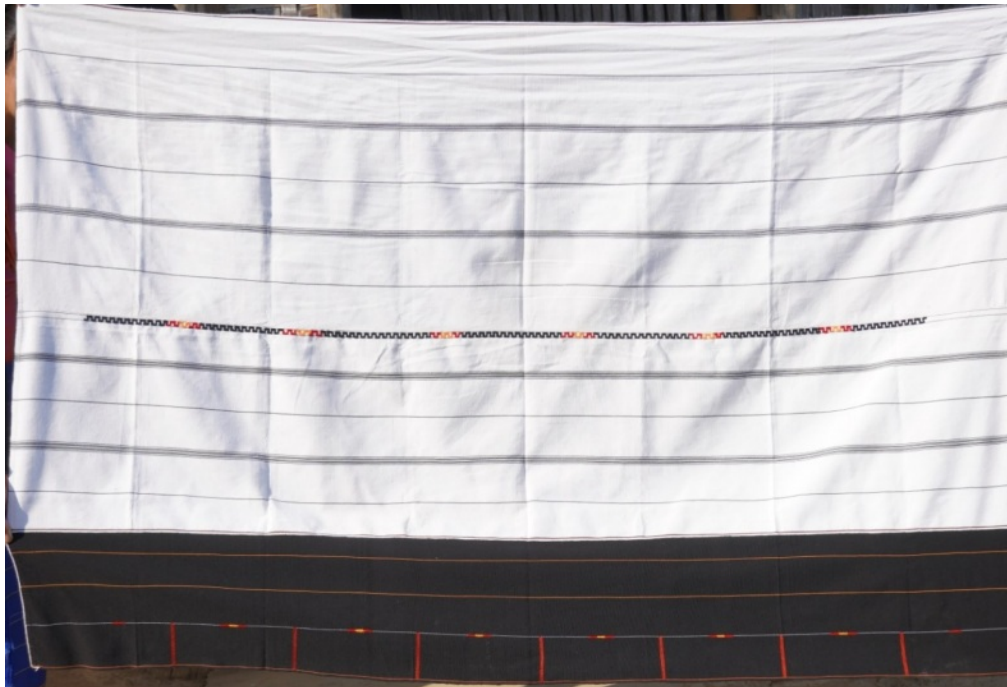


13. Mishilimi:

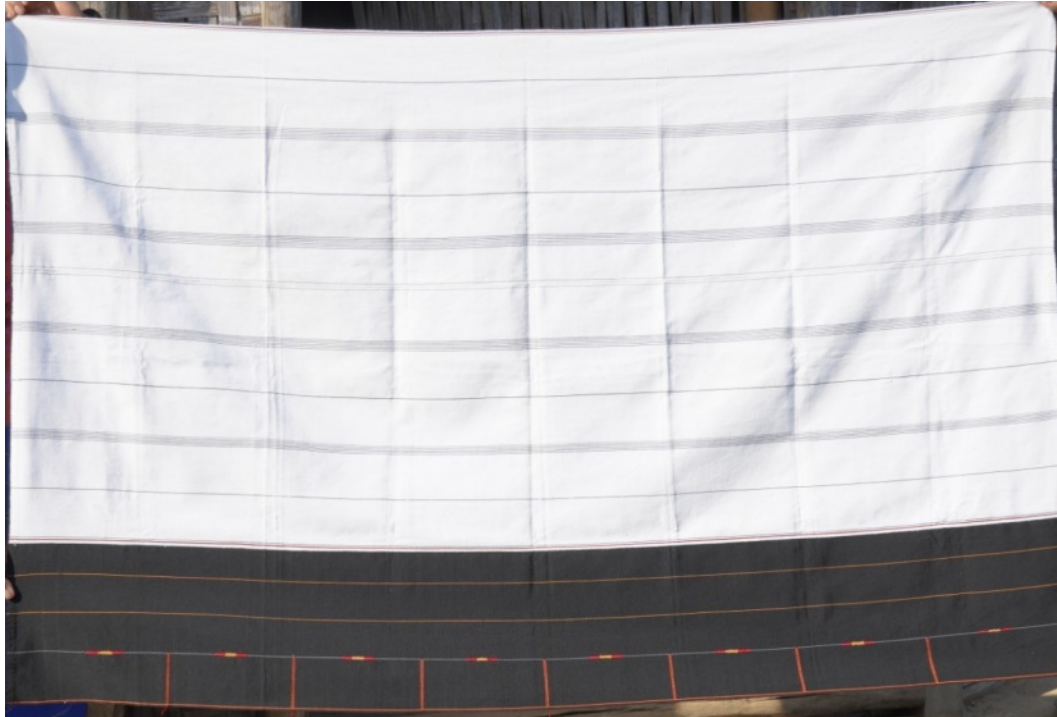
Even in Mishilimi there are various mekhalas. Among them is the *Minitughu mini*. When a girl attains an age where she becomes eligible to wear mekhala this mekhala is the first mekhala to be worn. The name means first mekhala to be worn.



There are two types of *Ayemini*. The first is called *Ayemini mini cho mini* which was worn by women whose husband/father had given the feast of merit.



The second *Ayemini* is *Ayemini xikulu kupula mini*. This could be worn by all women without restrictions.



14. Mudutsugho:

Their mekhala is called *Ayelimi Mini*. It is said that the Lahumini could be worn only by women whose husband had given the feast of merit. Therefore the black and purple band was taken from the Lahumini and was placed in the middle of the



Ayelimi mini by a grandmother named Lugholi. This mekhala can be worn by all the women.

15. Mukalimi:

They have two mekhalas namely *Apuzali Akimiye Mini* which was supposed to be worn only during the summer season and wasn't to be worn during the winter season. In the olden days this could be worn only



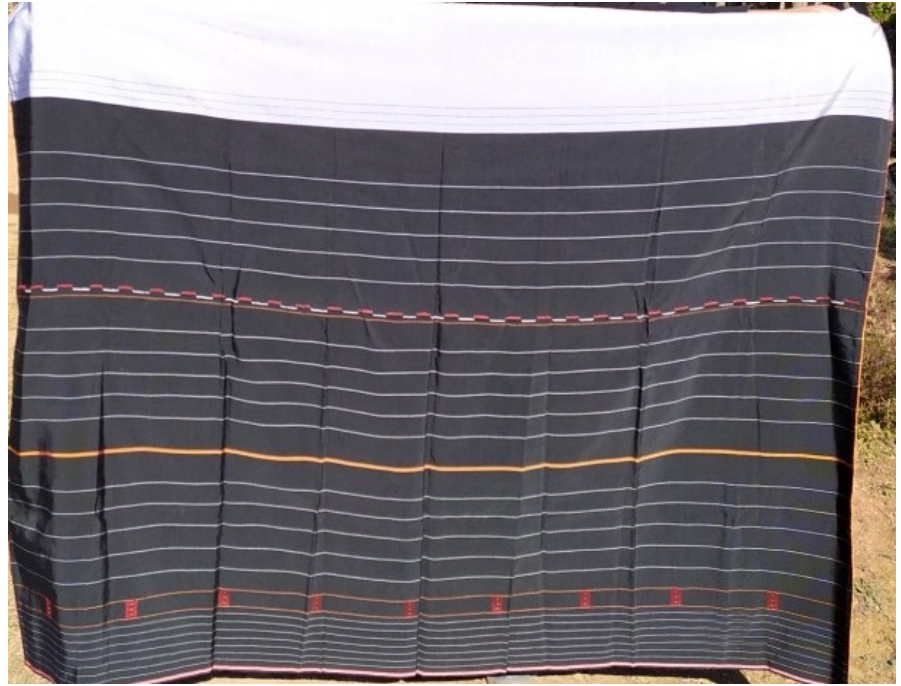
by those who had given the feast of merit. At present all the women can wear this mekhala.

The second mekhala is the *Apuzali Kutsu mini*. This mekhala was to be worn during the dry season and could be worn by all women.



16. Natsümi:

The Natsümi women also have wraparounds passed down by their mothers and grandmothers from one generation to the other. Among them is *Natsümi Tsughu Mini*. In the olden days this mekhala was worn above the knee and wrapped



from the back to the front and tied with a belt called achunachi similar to akichela chi. But at present a bigger version of this mekhala is being used. This could be worn by everyone.

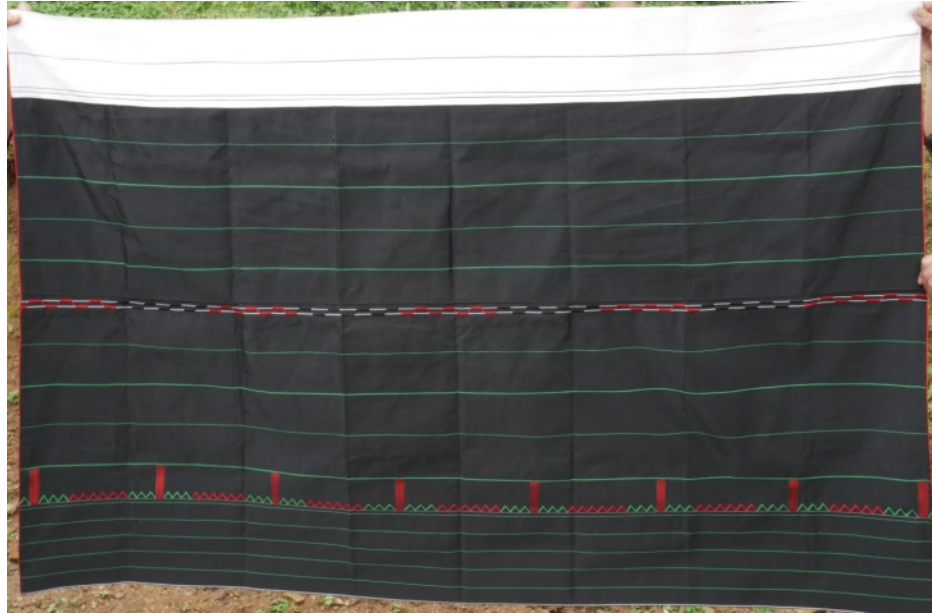
Another mekhala is called *Latashi mini*. When a daughter is about to get married, the parents who had given various feasts of merit would weave and give this mekhala to their daughter. But if she cannot live a life of prosperity like her



parents, she wouldn't weave it for her daughter. This couldn't be worn by everyone.

17. Shesulimi:

Their mekhala is called *Apüza Shesu Kütsü mini*. According to oral tradition, Apza Sheshu the founder of the village is said to have worn this mekhala. There were two



variants of this mekhala. One with red and black motif over white line was to be used only by women who were smart and intelligent. The second one without this line of motif was worn by poor women. At present both are worn by all women.

18. Tsaphimi:

They have a mekhala called *Akimithe Mini*.



Shawls: Men

1. *Avikiyphi*:

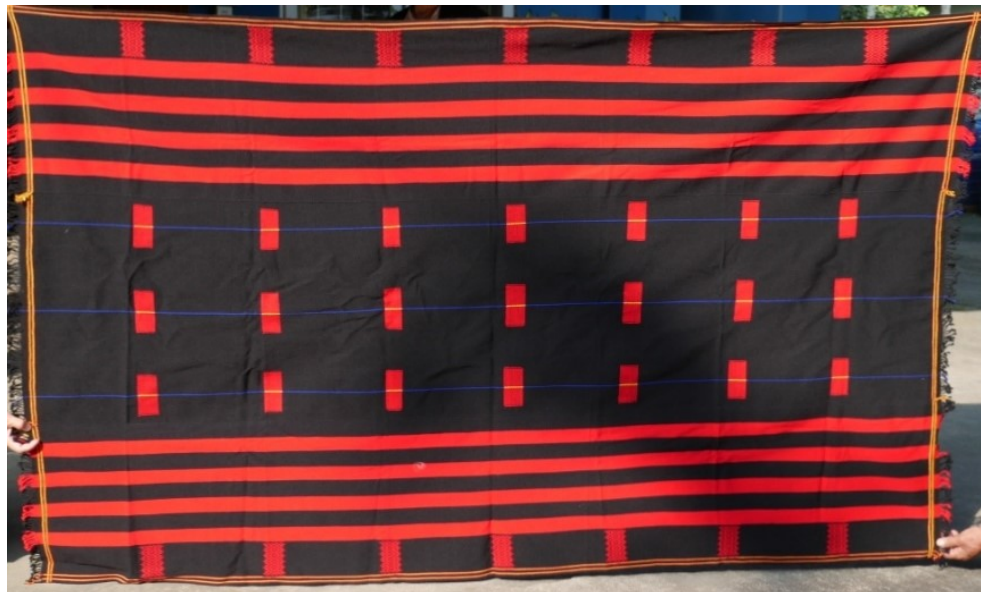
This shawl is one of the most important men's shawl for the Sümi. In the olden days this shawl was to be worn by men who had completed all rituals and had



given feast to the village by killing Mithun. It was a taboo for men who hadn't given feast by using mithun to wear this shawl. When a father had given the feast of merit, his unmarried son living with him can also wear the *Avikiyphi* as long as he is living with his father but when he gets married and start living in his own house, he won't be able to wear it anymore because he hasn't given the feast of merit by killing the Mithun.

2. *Apu-Asü Qhumi*:

This is considered to be one of the oldest men's shawl. In the olden days this shawl could be worn by men from well to do families.



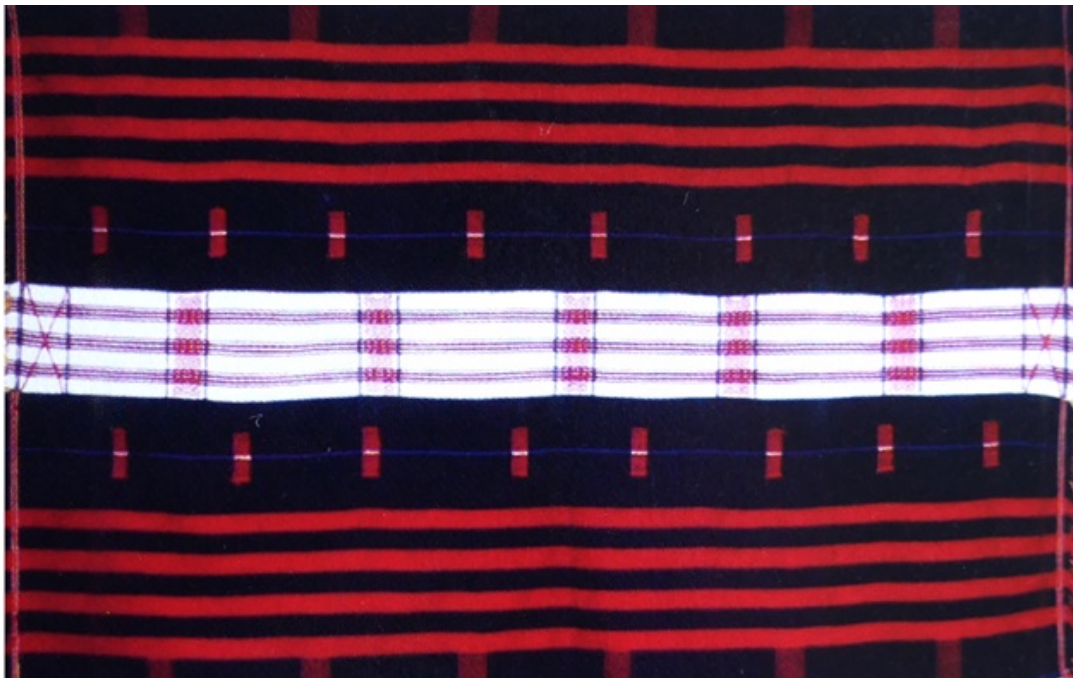
3. *Asüküda Phi*:

This is considered to be a shawl with the highest status among the men's shawl. Since the cowries are mostly used on this shawl it is known as cowry



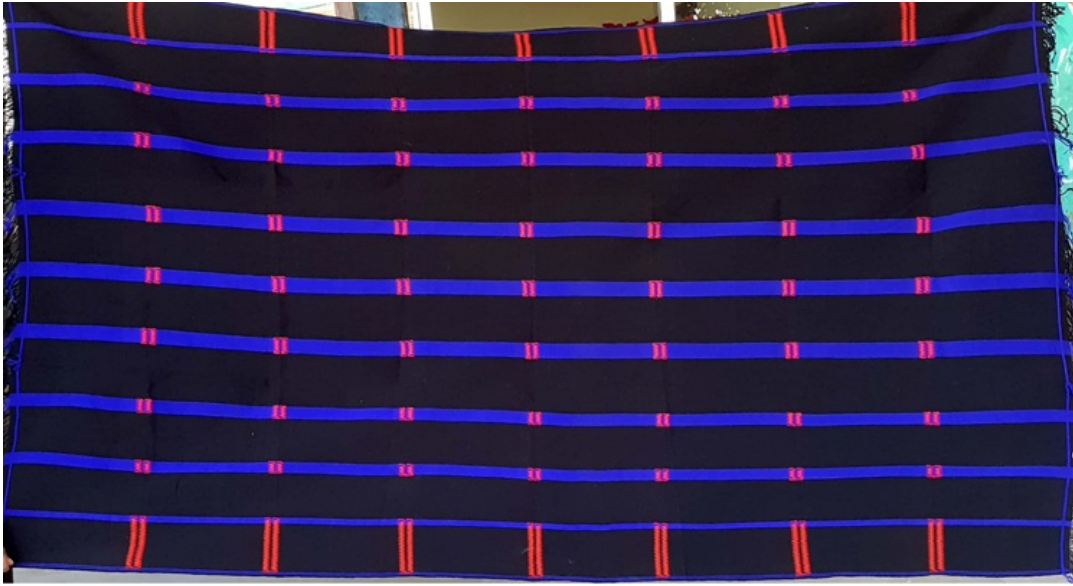
embedded shawl or *Asüküda phi*. In the olden days this shawl was to be used by warriors, those who had completed all rituals, given feasts to the villagers.

4. *Tubophi*:



This shawl is worn by young men irrespective of their status in the society.

5. *Abophi*:



This is also a men's shawl and was used by men who had who completed all rituals and not to be used by common men. The edge of this shawl is supposed to be stitched in with thread.

Shawls: Women

1. *Chekütha Qhumi/Hekütha Qhumi*:



The desire for the Sümi people to have a women's shawl similar to the Aqhumi was fulfilled with the *Chekütha/Hekütha Qhumi* which was woven for the women. This shawl was first woven by Khezveli Chishi of N_{aghuto}mi village. The *Chekütha Qhumi* is named after the horizontal red line pattern in the shawl itself which is called *Chekütha*.

2. *Toti Süküda Phi:*



This is a women's shawl and is embellished with cowry shells. Those women whose fathers/husbands had fulfilled all rituals, given feasts to the village were eligible to wear this shawl. The two lines of cowries at the bottom of the shawl signifies the giving of two feasts of merit. The circle of cowries indicates the fulfilment of all rituals and gennas. The three cowries inside the cowry circle indicate the enemy's head.

3.5. ORNAMENTS: MEN AND WOMEN

Women's ornaments:

Akichhe La Chi/Kichhe La Chi





In the olden days daughters of well to do families would wear this beads around their waist. Depending on the number of Mithun, the parents will put the beads around her waist. During the forefather's days, the rich would marry the rich because among all the animals on earth, for the Nagas the Mithun is considered to be the most revered and respected. Depending on the number of beads the girl is wearing, her bride price for Mithun would have to be given. But for some parents, since the groom would give the bride price, they would say that they don't want to be indebted to the groom, therefore they would give a house or a field to their daughter. But only few practised this.

Long time ago, there lived a girl named Mulate and her father's name was Kiyeto. She used to wear 5 strands of beads around her waist. Therefore, no one from Lazami could afford her bride price as wearing 5 strands of beads meant their status was that of 5 Mithuns, therefore she remained unmarried. But she wanted to get married, therefore she took off the strands of beads from her waist and gave it back to her parents. After this she married to a man who was very good looking but had nothing called Shexi. He didn't even have rice to prepare rice beer. But Mulate sang a song '*Shexi kila nghiu ngina tuhu likhu kuha, Shexi kila nghiu ngina thonou likhu kuha kemo pakimye*' (I want to marry Shexi but there is no food for tonight, I want to marry Shexi but there is no food for tomorrow but i love him) and she married him.

Aküsa Li

According to Asapu, the metal for making this arm band for women was formed when there was earthquake and the heaven and earth split into two and this material was formed. This was brought and was melted and put inside a container after which it



was shaped in the form of circle with a slight gap in between. This is quite heavy and is worn in pairs in both the arms. Since women are physically weaker than men, when they wear the Akusa, it gives more weight to their arms. Therefore when they carry out physical work that needs lots of strength like pounding rice in the mortar or pulling out weeds from the field, they get to work faster and with strength. During the agricultural season called *Phushe* when they have to smoothen the hard soil by beating on it, wearing this *Akusa* gives strength to their arms and makes their work easy. In all types of heavy work, this ornament helps them, therefore the rich people in order to let their children become richer would make this *Akusa* for their daughters so that they can get their work done faster than the others and this also enabled them to get extra work done. They would wear these everywhere, therefore while working in the field they would usually hit people working next to them while pulling out the weeds.

Achi Chugho:



This is a necklace given to a girl when she gets married by her parents because of her obedience. Therefore, when a young married woman is seen wearing this necklace, people would assume that the young woman has gotten married with the consent of her parents, elders and brothers. This necklace is for the rich people.

Achuna Chi



This is given by parents who are not well to do to their daughters. It was usually believed that when a girl doesn't have any necklace on her neck, the parents of the boy would say that there is nothing on her neck so who would marry her. Therefore, though they cannot afford to give their daughter costly necklace like the rich people, they would give the *Chuna Chi* to their daughter to put around her neck.

Akucho Mulu



This is an earring that is worn along with the necklace. When a young woman has been proposed by the boy and the ritual has been completed, she will start wearing this earring. If by chance, one of the earring is broken, then she isn't supposed to take off both the earring but while one is being repaired she has to wear the one which isn't broken in one ear. She isn't supposed to stay

without wearing this earring and even after getting married and moving to her husband's house she will keep wearing this till she gives birth.

Akucho Chi:



This necklace is worn by daughters of men who are not poor but also not so rich as to be categorised as rich.

Anaja Chi



This necklace looks like rice as it is white and the beads resembles rice, therefore it is called so.

Akütsü kükha and Tsükoli



Headgear and *Tsükoli* (modified)



Two versions of headgear from Pitt Rivers Museum (Accession no 1928.69.593)

In the olden days it is said that women who were engaged to be married would wear this headgear and earrings. Even the headgear found at Pitt Rivers Museum belonging to the 1920s bear the description as engaged women's headgear. At present this headgear (*Akütsü Kükha*) has been modified and worn with the earrings (*Tsükoli*) but the use isn't restricted to only engaged women rather it is used by all the women.

Origin and Significance of *Akütsü kükha*:

Though in olden days all the materials used for making akutsu kukha were used with great value, nobody tried to find out its significance from the elders therefore the information about the origin

of *Akütsü kükha* is scanty. In one *lejole* there is a mention of *Litsakupu* and when we look closely, the flowers of the *Litsakupu* and the way it blooms in circle it resembles the *akutsu kükha*. In this song, the girl asks the boy to ‘*Noye Litsakupu hipau aku yetsulo*’ so he felt that *Litsasü* (The name of flowering tree) and its flowers is connected with *Akütsü Kükha*. He doesn’t remember the full song but his villagers know this song.



Resemblance of headgear and the *Litsasü Kupu*

According to Khejeli Shikhu (77 years) there is a folk song comparing the beauty of a woman to the beauty of *Litsasu Kupu*. Also according to the Phisami village (Eastern Sümi), there was a tumumi (soothsayer) called Lukhaje Kiba and while he was in trance, the angels asked him to look back at his carrying basket and he saw a circlet placed in it by the angels which was called *Aghukutsu kükha*. This circlet was similar to the headgear used at present by the Sümi women but without any ornamentation. At present this is used by all Sümi women as a headgear with ornamentation similar to flowers.

According to Khughutomi, the Awotsula Shepau and his hunting dog went to catch the crabs and while he was trying to catch a crab, his hand got stuck between the stones. Therefore, Shepau gave his *akinisüpha* (cotton ear ornament) to the dog and asked him to take it home to his wife.



ENCIRCLED: A water hole where Awotsula Shepau man's hand got stuck while catching crab.

When the wife saw her husband's *akinisupha*, she realised that something must have happened to her husband, therefore she prepared food and went with the dog to the place where her husband was stuck. She saw her husband's hand stuck inside the burrow of the crab. The wife peed into the burrow and her husband could release his hand. When his hand was released from the burrow, he saw some designs imprinted on his wrist. This

man was a person who used to see things in his dream (*muthu-müna shichekemi*). Then he was told to create the *aukikhi* and *apukhukikhi* for men, i.e., an ornament used on the wrist and ankle by men with the same design that was imprinted on his hand. Therefore he is said to have made these two men's ornaments. Seeing this, his wife also asked him to make the *Awotsula* for her. Therefore, her husband made the *awotsula* for her. The design on the headband is the imprint that was found on the hand of the man. The *aukikhi* (wristband) and *apukhukikhi* (calf band) was used by men in the *tupe tughu* i.e. when men in their traditional attire would go in groups showcasing their might. Even women who were well known would wear this⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Kihovi Swu head GB (74 years), Phuhoqhe Swu (66 years), Yetozhe Swu GB (79 years), Khughutomi village, Date of Interview: 23rd July 2023

How Tsükoli is made:



The stem of this orchid is dried and used for making women’s headgear and earrings and also men’s calf bands. It blooms yellow flowers and also naturally produces yellow colour stems.

Hekiye of Surumi village’s father used to make tsukoli. Before starting the process, they would bring the *ayifu* and *anhemi* (white colour). The *ayifu* would be cut and will be boiled inside a *kholali* (earthen pot literally translated as pot of plain people). Then the *anhemi* will be immersed in this liquid and will turn into red colour. When the time for Tuluni comes, they would make lots of tsukoli using this *anhemi* and *ayifu*. In the olden days, there were four or five of the people in the village who used to make tsukoli. One day when he came near his father, he told him not to ever use this *Tughuna* nor make it, as for his father they could not afford buying it from others so they used to make it in order to sell it but the people who were engaged in making this tsukoli always faced shortages of food and drinks and their granary always had shortages. Therefore he shouldn’t engage in this trade.

In the past, many people from Surumi village were engaged in making this tsukoli. In the recent past, around three people were engaged in this trade but they also gave up. Among them, one person who used to make *ayifu* and sell apparently had an evil spirit living with him. The evil spirit would keep talking to him and he almost lost his sanity but sadly he passed away.

One villager named Hekiye was also very skilled in this craft. He was a Teacher too. His works were displayed at the Republic Day functions and he even won awards for this skill. In spite of this he wanted to give up making tsukoli, therefore he bought a cow worth Rs. 700 a huge sum during those days and killed it. Then he called the church members as he was also a deacon in the church and had a prayer, after which he burnt all the materials used for making tsukoli. It seems Mr Hekiye had asked him why he had given up this craft. He told Hekiye that since he was a Teacher he had enough resources and by selling tsukoli he used to get extra income too as well as recognitions in the form of awards. But while he was engaged in this craft, it brought about shortages in his resources and he even used to get bad dreams. Since he was also serving as a Deacon at his church, he was a religious man, therefore when he found out how his resources kept depleting, he decided to give up this craft. Through this encounter, the narrator was reminded of what his father had told him long ago about the drawbacks connected with this craft.

Materials used for making tsukoli were:

1. For yellow colour, the aged orchid that had stopped blooming was used i.e. the vine part which is yellow in colour. At present this has been replaced by yellow plastic.
2. *Ayifu* – a plant with vines. This is used to produce red colour and is still found in the Surumi regions.

Akütsüpi was used for producing black colour by boiling it.

The thread for weaving was brought from the Ao areas and was called '*Ashe Kipili*'. This would be turned to black colour by using the boiled *Akütsüpi*. During the olden days when someone has stomach ache, one would cover the bread with *Akütsüpi* leaf and then over it banana leaf will be used to cover the *akutsupi*. This was boiled and eaten. This apparently cured stomach ache. Some villagers still has knowledge about the *Ayifu* and *Akütsüpi*.

Men's ornaments:

Achiku



This necklace is used by those people who are very rich, has livestock (*Atsu-Aqu*); *aki alu kivimi, abi asuli pighi chekemi, asu pighimi, atu pighimi, alu pighimi, akuxu iku kemi*. Therefore it is called *Achiku* (*akuxu iku kemi*/people whose lives have gone up). If a man is seen wearing this necklace with *Avikiyiphi* in the past, people would automatically assume that he is a very rich man.

Achochhi/Asükhi



This is a wooden case used to carry the machete at the back with two straps on both the sides to tie it around the waist. This strap is usually woven and gifted to the man by his lover. Therefore young woman would sing '*nighi chhochhi kixilo na juna kughaye lasu untsu nike naghi aghiphiyi ghokeulo najuna kughaye vesu nitsulo*' meaning I will weave the straps for your wooden case so you also make the basket for carrying the materials for spinning cotton. In the

past names of places, rivers, mountains were named after the person who first set foot in that area.

According to Naghipu of Lazami village, for some years the making of wooden plates and other handicrafts lost its popularity but nowadays they are able to make wooden plates and sell them though the woods are not available in plenty as it used to be in the past. During the forefathers' time, they would cut down huge wood from the jungles and would make huge mortars out of single pieces of wood. It used to be so huge that it was used as beds too. This was used throughout their lives. However, nowadays these are no longer made or used. The four legged stool made out of single pieces of wood are also no longer in use. The machete carrier called *Asukhi/ Achochhi* is used widely by everyone in the village but it is no longer produced by their villagers and had to be bought from others. Therefore, they are of a strong view that the cultural heritage should be preserved at all cost since these cultural materials are still used and is part and parcel of everyday life. Thus, the aim should be to be self sufficient by producing for themselves and not buying from others and if they are able to produce extra, those can be sold to others too.

Avabu/Avabo



In the olden days, the real hair of the bear was used to make this headgear for men. Some men wear it without the Hornbill's feathers and some wear it with three Hornbill's feathers. The significance of using Hornbill's feathers is that it is the most revered and respected among the birds for the Nagas and the Sūmis. It lives on top of the tree and doesn't come down to the ground. Therefore the warriors who were very brave would wear its feathers with the Avabu as it was believed that the enemy might be stronger than the warrior but when he wears the Avabu with the three Hornbill feathers and attack the enemy, his enemy cannot bear the aura of the Hornbill and becomes weak.

And he easily defeats the enemy. The reason for using the hair of the bear is that the bear is believed to be very strong and even if he is hunted down, he doesn't die instantly. Their villagers believe that the bear has 9 kidneys though he isn't sure about that as he never hunted bears. After the bear is hunted down, immediately they should open his mouth wide and use sticks to keep it open in that way or else even if among his 9 kidneys even if one is still alive, the bear would wake up and take revenge. Therefore, as a sign of the warriors not getting easily slain by their enemies, the Avabu is worn by the warriors.

According to Yezuqhe of Chisholimi village, *Avabo* was used by men and is a sign of honour. It is worn by someone who has given feast of merit.

Apukhu Kükha/Au Kükha



Au Kükha (Wristband)



Apukhu Kükha (Calf band)

People who were famous, rich, etc would use it including armlets made of elephant's tusk. *Apukhu kukha* is used by tying it around the leg and *Au Kukha* is used around the hand. This is used by men.

Amüla Kukaphu /Amüla Küxa



Those who slay tigers will wear two across their shoulders like an X. This was also used only by those who had given feasts. Even while performing folk dance, those who have given feast will wear the *Aqhum* (men's shawl) by sliding it down the front and pulling it up on the other side in the shape of an X at the back and the remaining would flow down like a tail.

However, those who haven't given the feast of merit would put the shawl only on one shoulder and they would put it on one end above their thigh and make folds with the lower end hanging in the bottom. Even during performance of the folk dance or folk song, there will be difference in the wearing of the shawl, ornaments depending on the status of a person. Those who have fulfilled all rituals will wear *Apicho*.

3.6. HOUSEHOLD ARTICLES AND SIGNIFICANT MATERIALS

Natsümi

1. Ajikhi – spoon for stirring rice beer
2. The spoon used for scooping the rice was never to be washed. It was a taboo to wash this because if they wash then they wouldn't have a bountiful harvest.

3. The spoon that has been made by the father has to be used till his death. It was a taboo to wash it. It was also a taboo to wash the plates. When the time for harvest comes, then new plates and spoon will be made, even the cooking utensils also has to be new. These were made of clay and the earthen ware would be brought to their village to be sold by the Chakesangs. While cooking meat the spoon made by the father wasn't to be used, if by mistake that was used to stir the curry, then it was a taboo for women to eat that curry. Only men were to eat it. While cooking if the bottom of the pot break away then it was a taboo for men to eat, only women could eat whatever was cooked with that pot.

Mutshalho Ighanumi's house

1. Wooden plate



2. Stool – made of single piece of wood without using nails.



3. An old *Ahutsü* that was broken in half and as for the designs usually carved on it, only the head of the Mithun was remaining. This belonged to Ashu Khumtsa, the father of the Narrator.



4. *Yeghülakhü* – this looked similar to the modern mora. During the Shisho, the feast giver and his wife will sit on this. This was also carved out of single piece of wood.



5. *Atughuko* – half of it was broken but it was also made out of single piece of wood. This was apparently made before the Indian Army operation.



6. **Earthen storage container** – The side was broken so it was mended by using cement which is of recent modification. This storage container was made of clay and similar to the modern water storage containers. In the olden days they used to store water here. This was used from his father's time. The water kept in this container usually remained very cold. This was bought from the Chakesangs.



7. *Ayeghi li* – This earthen pot was of recent acquisition and is believed to have been bought from the Chakesangs. The Ighanumi used to make earthen wares but they stopped making it therefore they started buying from their neighbouring tribes.



The Collection at Ashu Khamte's House (Currently, this house is occupied by his grandson Pukhavi, 40 years old. His family who says that since his father's younger brother moved to another house, he along with his family moved it. They have stored up all the materials that was left behind by Ashu Khamte, who lived for more than 100 years. It has been more than 10 years since he died)

1. *Aposhu* (Wooden pestle and Mortar)



This was made from a single piece of wood. It has five holes which would mean five people could work at the same time. When pounding the rice for making rice beer, the normal pounding stick was not used but they would use a wooden pounding stick that looked similar to the spade but the front is longer. Two persons would pound the rice together while taking turns. The normal stick was not used in order to avoid making a mess. Even the *Aposhu* is cleaned properly before the rice is pounded. The pounding stick is usually kept under the *Aposhu*.

2. Basket for storing the pounded grain



This *Ashoghi* (basket) has four legs and has been woven so tightly that even a drop of water doesn't pass through. They will put the pounded rice powder and will mix with hot water and keep stirring it with wooden spoon. After three days, they will pour more water and yeast. After three – four days when bubble comes out, they will put it in other storage container.

3. *Ahughi* (Rice beer container) – this is big enough for two people to drink. They will carry it to their fields.



4. *Achuto* – a small basket which was used to measure the rice.
5. Another measuring basket that could store more than 1 kg of rice. This measuring basket was used when people go to other's field to earn their wage in the form of rice. One day labour in the field is paid back with rice measured with this basket.



6. *Apoxi* - this was a big storing container. Water would be stored here.
7. Small *apoxi* – this was used for scooping rice beer.



8. *Akhupu* (Spade) used for digging up the soil in the paddy field
9. *Aqichesu* – During the olden days in the absence of any sort of machine, since the machete couldn't reach the bottom, when big woods are to be carved out in order to make storage container for storing rice beer or water, they would use a long wooden stick attached at the bottom with a metal that resembles a machete but the difference here is that the cutting edge is at the bottom and not on the side as it is with the machete.
10. *Amukhu* – container for carrying water

11. Meat basket – this small basket was used for storing the cooked meat.



12. *Ana shoghi* – this basket was used for putting the cooked rice to be taken to the field.
13. Basket for storing varieties of beans and other crops,
14. *Athighasü*:



When the cultivation is done, in the areas where the soil is very hard, this is used especially by the womenfolk to break the hard cakey soil.

15. Basket for storing green chillies, dry meat, etc
16. *Akhuva/Akuwo*:



This is used by the women while working in the field to clean the unwanted sticks or other materials from the field.

17. *Amutukho* – this carrying basket has a special feature. It can be expanded as well as made smaller. The back part is left without stitching and if you want to be bigger then the bamboo ribbon can be removed. If smaller, then it can be tightened up. This is used by the menfolk.

Abi:

These are huge storage baskets made out of bamboo used for storing grains. It is still found in many homes in rural areas. There would be a separate room for keeping these baskets for storing grains





Traditional carrying baskets



Traditional way of drying paddy in the sun (Akukatou Mighishe Swu of Hebolimi).

Sümi Kitchen

Usually a Sümi kitchen would have various crops drying in various nooks and corners of the kitchen. This is especially done because in the absence of any modern means of stocking and preserving food, the smoke from the fire helps in preserving by keeping it dry and keeping the pests and insects away.



Another feature of the Sümi kitchen was, one would also find huge pieces of meat like this hanging from the roof of some people's kitchen. This was found in the kitchen of Heqhezu Zhimo (95 years) of Chisholimi village. According to him, this meat was more than 40 years old and the significance of hanging meat like this in the kitchen was to show that their family was very rich as in they are so rich that they have more than enough to eat as a result of which there is no need for them to consume everything they have. According to him, in the olden days rich people would practise this and anyone

coming to their house would automatically assume that the family was very rich by seeing the hanging piece of meat. But this isn't practised anymore.

3.7 ANALYSIS

Most of the tangible cultural heritage of the Sümi tribe underwent a period of dormancy due to the declaration by the new faith which termed the use of such cultural materials as 'Satanic' as a result of this most of the tangible elements of the cultural heritage were either destroyed or burnt to ashes. This resulted in the loss of structures like the *Morung*, beautiful carvings on the ritual posts where animals to be used for performing rites and rituals were used, the king posts placed in the houses of the feast givers who had given more than two feasts, the snail designs on house tops which was a symbol of honour given to the feast givers, ornaments and even the performance of traditional songs and dances and use of rice beer was totally prohibited. After some years this was followed by the Indian Army operation wherein villages suspected to be harbouring or feeding the Naga Nationalist workers or Undergrounds as they were called were burnt down. Some villages were burnt for days especially the granaries. The Sümi always built their granaries a little away from their home in order to avoid it from getting destroyed in case accidental fire broke out and that they would still have food to eat even if their houses gets burnt. The Indian Army would burn the granaries along with the villages and so many tangible elements were destroyed as even the ornaments and traditional attires were also destroyed in the fire. With this ongoing tension and fight between the Nagas and the Indian Army, even in the region occupied by the Sümi many people lost their lives not only as national workers but also due to starvation and many diseases because they had to hide in the jungle for fear of the Indian Army. In this way not only the tangible but also the intangible was lost as the memory of many elders passed away along with them.

During the course of the field work, many elders as well as the men and women who knew these oral history shared about certain practices but when it came to other aspects, they either forgot or could not make the connection. For instance, at Lazami village when the group of men who were believed to have knowledge of oral history were interviewed about the origin of their village, everyone could say something or the other. But when they were asked to narrate about the Tüluni

festival, they were all confused (audio recording available) and they postponed it to the next visit when they would further discuss and recollect and narrate it. The reason cited for this is that they don't get to engage in such talks regularly as when it comes to oral history, it was a taboo for one person to recite the whole thing even if he may have the knowledge and so since it was a shared memory they needed to recall what they could. One thing that was noticed very clearly was how everyone would start their speech and say that 'another person will say but it is said...' and one person would not complete the story. Even at Mishilimi Village, the only surviving woman who lived at the women's dormitory or *Iliki* was not clear about certain practices and also the songs she used to sing clearly especially while spinning cotton and used to teach also became fragmented and confused (video & audio available). She was surprised at herself for not remembering and said it was because all her peers and age group had passed away and with nobody to share the songs and memory, it was also fading away combined with her old age. The interviews conducted with two elders for the feast of merit out of interest in 2009-2010 could not be substantiated because sadly these two elders had passed away in the years since the interview was conducted. These are just few instances among many that was encountered during the course of the field work and documentation. This further substantiates the urgent need for documentation. Many young people are using either English or Nagamese to communicate and in most homes at present, the parents are also doing the same. Since it is said that language carries the history of the people especially for people who depends on oral source for deriving their history and identity, if the younger generation doesn't learn the Sümi language then there is great danger of the Sümi people losing their identity and history.

On the brighter side, while some years back many Sümi were not aware nor much into understanding the significance of the cultural heritage and traditions. Such was confined to few groups and individuals and the churches were not much into it. But in the recent past, the Churches seem to be taking the lead in reviving and preserving the cultural heritage especially the tangible aspect. Though it is without doubt that one sect of Sümi Christian still prohibits using or engaging in cultural activities. In the month of November, the Healing festival was organised by the Western Sümi Baptist Churches Association and inspite of it being a religious affair, something that was rarely seen was noticed. From the uniform of stewards to the banners

and decoration, everything displayed the rich tangible cultural heritage of the Sümi. Even the participants were all decked up in the Sümi traditional attires (photograph and video available). Like the other Naga people, the church plays a very dominant role in the life of the people and so when the churches take up such an initiative then the outcome would surely be fruitful as the church is the umbrella that embraces people from every background without discrimination.



Top: The banner of the healing festival designed (crafted) with the Sümi men’s shawl. **Bottom:** the stage decorated with bamboo, traditional women’s headgear, men’s spear, machete, banner with men’s traditional ornaments, shawls and women traditional ornaments, shawls and mekhalas, rice husks)

Another instance is in the same association’s annual session held in the first week of December 2019. The hall was decorated with various handicraft products and in the past when such programmes were held gifts in the form bouquets and others would be given but the change is that the plants were placed in traditional bamboo basket and presented along with carrying

baskets both men's and women's. For the Nagas as well as the Sümi, wedding seasons starts in the month of September and goes on till March as for Sümi it was a taboo to get married after the sowing is done and this is practised till today. In some weddings, instead of wearing the usual white gown and suit and venue of the wedding being decorated with the usual flowers and other decors, the bride and groom incorporated the traditional wear and ornaments. Even the venue and stage was decorated using the handicrafts, attires and ornaments of both men and women. This was highly appreciated by one and all. Since the Sümi give lots of importance to being unique when it comes to their lifestyle or dress, even many young people are turning towards their roots. The instagram #backtotheroots seems to be trending. Though it may not be much, such small steps and initiative would in the long run bring about positive changes and results.



(Clockwise from top left: 1. Ushers holding the traditional men and women's carrying baskets, basket and spear to be presented as gifts to the important people invited for the annual session, 2. The secretary of the programme being presented with a plant in a bamboo basket, 3. One of the Speakers being presented with a carrying basket, 4. Getting the gifts ready for the programme)

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