

## CHAPTER 4

### INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SÜMI NAGA

Cultural Heritage has often been associated with materials that can be traced from the cultural activities (natural to manmade elements) of the past. The Cultural Heritage is categorised into two namely – Tangible cultural heritage (physical heritage in the natural and built environment) and Intangible cultural heritage. In March 2001, the UNESCO carried out various surveys directed to the National Commission of Member States and Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in relation to the range of terminologies applied in the field of Intangible Cultural Heritage working definition. Consequently, UNESCO Committee for safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted by the general conference in October 2003 and came into force in April 2006.

The UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defined Intangible Cultural Heritage as

*'The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities and groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This Intangible Cultural heritage transmitted from generation is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity and thus promoting respect cultural diversity and human creativity'.<sup>51</sup>*

The Convention further proposes five broad 'domains' in which Intangible Cultural Heritage is manifested – Oral Traditions and expression, including language as a vehicle of the Intangible

---

<sup>51</sup> Isar, Raj (2004), 'Tangible and Intangible Heritage: Are they really castor and pollux?', New Delhi, pg 2

cultural heritage, Performing arts, Social practices, rituals and festive events, Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and Traditional craftsmanship<sup>52</sup> .

The convention is also of the view that Intangible Cultural Heritage domains mentioned above are inclusive and not necessarily meant to be complete and so the member states were free to use a different system of domains. This is because there are already a wide range of variations and so UNESCO suggests that the member states may add further domains or new sub categories under the existing domains which includes sub domains already in use in countries where the Intangible Cultural heritage is recognized including ‘traditional play and games’ ‘culinary traditions’ ‘animal husbandry’ ‘places of pilgrimage’ or ‘places of memory’.

For the Sümi Naga who doesn't have any written record and has been relying on oral source for tracing their history and cultural practices and tradition, the intangible cultural heritage aspect of the cultural heritage fits like a glove. The main source of deriving their history is from memory which has been passed on from generation to generation.

#### **4.1 ORAL TRADITION AND EXPRESSION**

According to UNESCO 2003 Convention, oral tradition and expression encompasses variety of spoken forms namely – proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, dramatic performances and more. Accordingly, the Sümi oral tradition and expression are mentioned below:

##### **4.1.1 Origin Of Village Formation:**

When a new village is to be set up, those setting out would leave the village by a path not usually taken for daily use. A hole is made into the house at the parent village to allow the spirit of the house to escape. After crossing the village area, they would kill a pig as a sacrifice and also sprinkle liquor along their path. The next day, the parent village would also kill a pig at the village gate and sprinkle liquor along the regular path of the village. This was done in order to

---

<sup>52</sup> UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage handbook ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage Domains’ pg 1

avoid the spirits of the village leaving with those setting out for the establishment of a new village. And for those setting out, sacrificing pig and sprinkling the liquor was done in order to their spirits leave with them to the new village. Young men of the parent village wouldn't eat the food of the new village until some old men from the parent village had eaten at the new village.

Before setting up a new village a ritual known as "*Aphuwo Chine*" is observed. This is observed before setting out for the place where the new village is to be set up and also after reaching the new village. The *Awou* (Chief priest) act as the leader when a new village is to be set up. Almost all the important rituals and rites are conducted by him. Before the digging starts, all the villagers are called and gathered first and then whoever is *Lapu – u* will pierce his spear into the earth, and then cut the tree and make a fire, after this water will be brought only after which they will sing a war song (*aghule*).

After all these have been observed, animals are killed. But even after the food has been prepared the food was not to be taken just like that. The *Awou* has to taste first and unless he does that, it was a taboo to eat. Then a fire is made but only the dead wood should be used for making the fire. The following has to be observed when killing an animal for this ritual:

1. A pig should be killed only by piercing
2. The following parts has to be given to the *Lapuu*:
  - a. Snout of a pig
  - b. Buttock
  - c. Ears
  - d. Liver and fats in the stomach
  - e. Intestines

The village is usually named after the chief leader of the group that went for a new settlement. He was the principal symbol of the village, therefore held the ultimate authority over the village. Sometimes the name of the village changes when the Chief is succeeded by his son when he grows old but quite often the name of the village becomes fixed retaining the name of its founder. In some places local features or certain incidents have given names to the villages.

Another type of forming a village is through the occupation of a village that has been conquered. A village is also named from some historical connection such as “*Phuyemi*” which means “the old village” from which many other colonies went out.

When a new house is built in the new village, three days genna is observed by the person responsible for building the house. During these three days, he will not speak or give food to anyone who has slept outside the village during that period. In case of a newly married couple occupying a newly built house, the groom would kill a chicken and hang it on the roof. The building of the houses is done either between the harvest and sowing or between the sowing and the genna performed at the third clearing of the fields. The chief leader of the village assigns works to his subordinates e.g. someone would be given the task of preparing the village well, while some other would be given the task of clearing the site for the first house, which normally would be for the Priest.

The Sümi villages were usually quite small when compared with that of the Angami villages. The cultivated lands were nearer to the village. The village was usually bounded by a fence and a ditch as security measures to protect itself from raids and enemies. The path leading to the village would always be over the land consisting largely of open jhums and in part by very thick jungle. The communication between the Sümi villages were more open and the pattern of constructing the houses were looser i.e. enough spaces between each house. There were separate houses for storing grains which were constructed some distance away from the main house. The reason behind this was to secure the granary even if a fire breaks out and ravages the main house. Another important feature of the Sümi villages was the large bamboo plantations that surround the village. The houses of the Chiefs and the rich men in the village were surrounded with massive carved forked posts to which a Mithun would be tied when it is to be slaughtered at the time of festivals. The houses of the Chief were usually large supported by four lines of posts. The cattles were usually kept outside the village as a result of which the Sümi villages were comparatively cleaner.

#### **4.1.2 Sümi Traditional Village Political System:**

Though it is not possible to say with full probability what the full authority of the chief leader was, from the practices of the people from generation to generation, we can glean the village administration as it was practiced. The Chief was the most important official of the Village. The right of the Chief to exact work in his fields existed in varying degrees from village to village. Every grown men of the village including the Chief's own brothers was expected to do certain amount of work for which the Chief would give some nominal payment of a salt or a small piece of meat to each person who had worked for him. The Chief is succeeded by his eldest son. The clan was another important factor that pervaded the life of an ordinary Sümi from his/her birth determining and influencing his choice of food, wives, friends and enemies and it was also the strong feeling of clanship that caused war.

1. *Akukau* (Chief):

He was the head administrator and guardian of law. The ordinance pronounced by him became the law of the village. He announces gennas for clearing the path for cultivation and also war and peace.

2. *Awou* (Chief Priest):

He was the religious head of the village. He strictly observed the religious rituals and ceremonies and enforced them. The things he termed as taboo (*chini*) was to be followed very strictly. Violators would fall under various great curses. As a result what he deemed as taboo was considered as a great law and no one would dare go against it. The *Awou* also counted the days and months for festivals and gennas attached to them.

Each household paid a yearly tribute (tax) to *Awou* according to their social and economic status. It was believed that if the *Awou* made a mistake while performing the rituals, the fields would be destroyed by pests or natural calamities. In the same way, when he performed the rituals and ceremonies properly, the village would have a bountiful harvest and become prosperous.

Traditionally, the *Awou* was chosen from within the village as it was a taboo to appoint an outsider to be the *Awou* or the Chief Priest of the village. He was assisted by some subordinate priests namely:

- a. *Atiqü – u* was in charge of agricultural activities. When the time for sowing comes, no villager was allowed to sow the seeds unless he has completed the ritual called “*ghixuni*”. On this day, the *Atiqü – u* alone will go to the field in place of all the villagers and sow the first seed.
- b. *Amthau* was in charge of the harvest and was called “the First Reaper”. His duty was to start the cutting of each crop and on that day every house in the village gives him a measure of paddy. But the work of *Amthau* was very dangerous because if he makes any mistake in conducting ceremonies especially the “*asukuchu*”, it would result in his death. During the duration of the harvest, the *Amthau* doesn’t take the meat of any animal killed or wounded by a wild beast. It was a taboo for any villager to take the meat of a bamboo rat and dog’s meat.

Some of the gennas strictly followed by the Priests were:

- a. *Apetha chine*
  - b. *Atiqü chine*
  - c. *Amtha chine*
  - d. *Ahuna chine*
3. *Lapu*

He is the burier of the death in the village. As mentioned earlier only the *Lapu* could dig the grave and bury the dead, and nobody else would assist him in burying the dead. Apart from burying the dead, he also performed certain rituals for healing the sick, for e.g. he performs the “*Awukhu pheve*” wherein he comes to the sick man or woman’s house carrying two eggs in his right hand and he waves it 5 times for the woman and 6 times around his/her face and after this he asks the sick man or woman to spit on the eggs. After this is done, the *Lapu* would take the eggs and chanting certain words of casting the disease out of the man or woman throws one egg

towards the east and the other towards the west. When this is being done, someone from the sick man or woman's house takes out a piece of burning wood from the fireplace and throws it outside the door. The door is shut and it is not opened till morning.

It was the duty of the *Lapu* to make the first cut when a mithun or cattle is being sacrificed during the “*aphikusa*”/ feast of merit. He has to make the first dig when a new village is being set up.

#### 4. *Ashiphu*:

The duty of the *Ashiphu* was to make the first cut when any animal is being killed for ceremonies of social status namely “*shisho*” and “*Yiicho*”. The *Shisho* genna is done by a man after his marriage in order to gain social status through the observance of a series of ceremonies. The *Lapu* has to stay in the house of the man observing *Shisho* for thirty days and he cannot eat rice, pork and a certain type of bean. He can drink only those liquors brewed without *Atsunakhi* (great millet).

Another important factor in the village political system was the system of *Aloji*/gangs of men and women who organized themselves in the cultivation work. They generally consist of people belonging to the same age group. A young boy or girl joins the *aloji* after attaining a certain age. For women, they leave their *aloji* after their marriage and join the *alozhi* of the married women and widows. Even the son of the Chief is not exempted from joining the *aloji* and he obeys the leader of the *aloji* like all the others. Every member is entitled to get his/her cultivation work done by the members of the *aloji*. The work in the field was accompanied by singing which is different for each season. The significance behind the singing is possibly the act of frightening away the evil spirits.

### **4.1.3 Folktales**

As emphasized in UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), folktales play an invaluable role, along with other cultural traditions, in bringing people closer together and “ensuring exchange and understanding among them.” Folktales reflect the culture, values, and beliefs of the people. Folktales transcend the generations of people who passed on these stories and has been transmitted orally from one storyteller to the other. Among

the Sümi, folktales have been playing an important role in letting the present generation know about the name of places, types of vegetation, animals, etc that existed during the period of origin of such tales. There are different varieties of folktale among the Sümi namely tales about animals, relationship between animal and men, certain practices for example the practice of lycanthropy which is still in existence, supernatural beings, relationship of men especially tales of love, the tales of mistreatment of the stepsons and daughters by a stepmother, the tales of the poor, stones, tricksters, etc. Apart from these, each Sümi village has their own folktales and legendary stories. For this semester only seven folktales could be collected out of hundreds that are in existence. Each tale ends with a moral lesson or the continuing practice that was told in a folktale.

### **Anishe Xamunu (Anishe Flower)**

Once upon a time, there lived a *Sülimi* (Sümi girl) named Nisheli, who was from a very rich family. In that particular village, there lived a young man named Pheo who was from a very poor family. Pheo and Nisheli were childhood friends and when they grew older, they fell in love with each other. But Pheo knew that since he was from a very poor family, Nisheli's parents would never agree to his proposal and he used to be very scared of Nisheli's parents. One night Pheo called Nisheli to a deserted place and was talking to her. Unknown to them, a man named Kutupa was listening to their conversation. Pheo told Nisheli that he would come to her house late that night and knock at the place where she slept and they would go away together. Nisheli agreed to do so. Old Kutupa heard everything they said to each other. That night, before Pheo could come, old Kutupa dressed himself like Pheo and went to Nisheli's house and knocked at the place where she slept. He did not say a word and waved his hand at Nisheli to hurry. Nisheli thought it was Pheo and just followed him without any question. As they were walking, Nisheli got very tired and wanted to rest but old Kutupa told her that they would not rest till they had crossed their village boundary. Hearing his voice, Nisheli got some doubt and felt a little sad. When they had crossed their village boundary and reached the forest and the sun had risen, old Kutupa took hold of Nisheli and asked her to follow him wherever he took her. To this, Nisheli was shocked and started crying. Old Kutupa failed to convince Nisheli, as a result of this, he tied



Nisheli to a tree and killed her with his Dao. Old Kutupa went back to the village. Nisheli's blood flowed around the tree and from the blood, a flower grew.

One day, Pheo went with his villagers for hunting. While they were hunting and chasing their prey, they entered the forest where Nisheli was killed. When they entered this forest, it started raining very heavily. Pheo was standing near the tree where Nisheli was killed. The flower that had grown from Nisheli's blood shielded him from the rain. His friends seeing this, chased Pheo and wanted to stand under the protection of the flower from the rain. But wherever Pheo went, the flowers shielded him from the rain. To this, Pheo was amazed and when he was going home, he plucked one flower with his spear and put the flower behind his ear. That night, in his dream, Pheo saw Nisheli who told him about old Kutupa and how she was killed. She told Pheo that even among so many people, she protected him from the rain but he had hurt her with his spear. She then told Pheo to look at his spear.

When Pheo woke up in the morning, he saw blood on his ear and his spear. Seeing this, Pheo became very sad and cried saying "*ilomi* (my darling) Nisheli! Even after your death, you are still thinking of me!" After sometime, even Pheo died of heartbreak.

The flower that grew out of Nisheli's blood came to be known as "*Anishe xamunu*" (anise's flower). Even to this day, this flower is found in the forest of the Sümi region.

### **Atsüsa (The Dog's Share)**

Once upon a time, a dog had given birth to two puppies and in order to feed her children, she went to hunt in the jungle. She came to a hole where she saw a squirrel nibbling at something, a crab was nearby and suspecting the squirrel to be his enemy, the crab bit the squirrel. The squirrel felt so scared that in his rush to save himself, he hit against the Sambhar. The sambhar without checking what had hit him started running in fright and stepped on the dog and the dog died on the spot.

The puppies were waiting for their mother to come back, as they were very hungry. But she didn't come back. They thought that either she had lost her way or some other animal had killed her. Since she didn't come back, they went to the man and told him about their mother. The man in turn told them that their mother was killed by the sambhar. Now the puppies wanted to take revenge for their mother's death. They went to God and asked him "who is the mightiest between the heaven and earth?" God told them that the tiger was the mightiest. The puppies then went to the tiger and told him about their mother and asked the tiger to help them. The tiger agreed and after some food and rice beer, told them to sleep at his house. That night, in order to test the might of the tiger, they started screaming. The tiger came and told them "please stop screaming because the elephant is mightier than me". Hearing this, the puppies went to the elephant and the elephant told them that the devil was mightier than him. When they came to the devil, they were told that the man was mightier than the devil.

The next day, the puppies went in search of the man. By evening, they found the man's house and they narrated everything to him. The man agreed and he prepared food for them and asked them to sleep. That night as usual, the two puppies started screaming when the wind started blowing. The man came and told them "don't be afraid!" and they went back to sleep. The next morning after having their food, they set out to search for the animal that had killed the puppies' mother. They were studying the tracks of various animals. The man pointed out an elephant's track and asked if it was the animal but the puppies said no. they passed by the track of various game and at last they came upon the sambhar's track. The man told them to drive the deer along. Saying this man went to wait for them in the riverbed. The puppies drove the sambhar and started barking louder and louder. At some point, it seemed as if the sambhar would trample them but they were not scared and kept barking at him as if they would bite him. They even forgot about their tiredness, when they thought about their mother's death and relentlessly and kept driving the sambhar towards the riverbed. When they reached the riverbed, the man pierced the sambhar with his spear and killed him. Then the man gave each puppy the leg of the sambhar and for himself, he took the sambhar's head. The rest of the sambhar's meat was distributed among the villager.

After this the man and the puppies started living together. As the puppies' mother was killed by the sambhar, they went to get justice from God. God said that they could trap the squirrel in a snare and catch it. As for the crab, he told them to ask the huluk. The huluk went to grope for the crab. The crab suddenly bit the huluk's hand. As a result, the huluk caught the crab and threw it at the rock. Though the crab died, it had laid its eggs in the river and as a result of this, her children filled all the rivers. As a result of this, even today, people go to the river to catch crabs. From the ancient times, we the Sūmi s always give the dog its share when a hunt is successful. Even to this day, it is practiced and it is something that should never be forgotten, as told by the elders.

### **Tsuipu And Khaulipu**

Once upon a time, there lived a young man named Tsuipu. He was physically very fit and brave. He wanted to marry a girl from another village named Khaulipu, who was very beautiful. When Tsuipu went to ask for her hand in marriage, Khaulipu's parents told him to make a basket from bamboo plant, so that he could carry her to his village and that he should not keep the basket on the ground till he reached his village. Tsuipu did as he was told but on the way back to his village, he was very tired and wanted to take rest. He kept the basket on the ground and rested for sometime. Later when he tried to carry it again, he couldn't. He went to his village to call his older brother to come and help him carry Khaulipu. When Tsuipu left for the village, Muchupule came and killed Khaulipu. She put on Khaulipu's clothes and sat in the basket. When Tsuipu's brother came and saw Muchupule, he said, "you want to live with someone like this, my brother?" and he went back to the village without helping Tsuipu. When Tsuipu saw Muchupule, he got confused. To this, Muchupule said "when I strained my eyes to see you, it became very big! When I was about to talk to you, my mouth became very sharp, when I tried to sit down, my legs broke." To this, Tsuipu thought it was really Khaulipu and took her to his village and they started living together. In the place where Khaulipu's body was dumped by Muchupule, a bamboo plant grew. One day, when Tsuipu went to collect bamboo shoots, without knowing he took the one from Khaulipu's grave. When Muchupule was cooking the bamboo shoot, it started gurgling "*muchupule nhapithi, muchupule ghekucho*". Hearing this, she told Tsuipu about it. Hearing this, Tsuipu told Muchupule to throw away the curry if she was telling the truth.

Muchupule threw out the curry and in the place where she had thrown the curry, an orange tree sprang up. It bore lots of fruits and Tsuipu plucked the fruits and distributed it to the entire village except for an old widowed lady. The old woman came and told Tsuipu “please give me one orange”. Tsuipu said that there was only one orange left and he plucked the lone orange on the tree top and gave it to her. The old woman took it home and kept it in a bamboo basket. Unknown to the old woman, this orange used to turn into Khaulipu and whenever she left for her field, Khaulipu would do all the household chores muttering, “my mother is coming back”. The old woman was amazed at the way her house was always neat and clean and the food cooked whenever she returned from her field. As a result of this, she used to ask her neighbors, “Whoever does all my household works should let me know because I am so grateful that even if I don’t eat or drink, I would give it to you”. One day, the old lady pretended as if she was going to her field and then came back to catch whoever was doing her work. As soon as the old lady left, as usual the orange turned into Khaulipu and started working. The old lady came from behind and caught hold of Khaulipu to which Khaulipu said, “I am someone who has been reborn so please don’t touch me so hard.”

After that Khaulipu stopped turning into an orange and started living with the old lady. But the old lady never allowed her to go outside and she used to work inside the house.

One day, Tsuipu was playing *akhetsu* (spinning top) with the children near Khaulipu’s house. At that time Khaulipu was weaving inside the house. Whenever the children’s *khetsu* came dropped inside the house, she would ask them to come and fetch it but when Tsuipu’s *khetsu* dropped into the house she would throw it out for him. But it so happened that a thread from the cloth that she was weaving broke and while she was fixing it, Tsuipu came in to take it. Seeing Khaulipu, Tsuipu went to the old lady and told her, “this girl looks like my former wife Khaulipu, I want to marry her so what would you like me to give you in return?” To this the old lady told him go to cold region and bring her a wooden mortar and pestle made of Shohusü tree. Tsuipu complied.

Tsuipu married Khaulipu and started living with both Khaulipu and Muchupule. One day, when Khaulipu and Muchupule returned home after gathering firewood from the forest, Tsuipu

intending to kill Khaulipu asked her to come inside the house facing backwards. Knowing Tsuipu's intention, Khaulipu told Muchupule not to do so but Muchupule said she would not listen to the words of a woman and she did as Tsuipu had told her to do. As a result, Tsuipu killed Muchupule with his Dao. From Muchupule's grave, a Russ tree grew. Tsuipu cut down the Russ tree and made a ladder for his granary out of it. He then warned Khaulipu never to enter the granary in his absence.

One day, Tsuipu was coming from war as a victor. All the villagers went to Khaulipu and told her to prepare rice beer for him by taking new grains from the granary. With the persistence of the villagers, when Khaulipu climbed the ladder to get into the granary, the ladder broke and Khaulipu fell to her dead. When Tsuipu returned, he asked the old lady, "I told Khaulipu never to enter the granary in my absence. Why did you allow her?" The old woman replied "hearing your return from the war, all the villagers told her to wait for you by preparing rice beer. And to prepare it, she climbed into the granary and the ladder gave way as a result of which she fell and died."

After many days had passed, one day Tsuipu came to the old widowed lady's house. To his surprise, he saw Khaulipu and he asked for her hand again. But the old woman refused. After sometime, Tsuipu convinced her but the old lady warned him not to send Khaulipu out of the house for seven days.

One day, when Tsuipu was working outside, Khaulipu told him that even she wanted to come outside and see the sun. When she came out, the sun shone on her and she melted. As Tsuipu was watching the pool of water in shock and amazement, a flower grew from it. And this flower came to be known as "*lapu xamunu*" or lapu flower which is found even to this day.

### *Litsapa*

Once upon a time, there lived two orphaned sisters with their brother and his wife. Though he loved them both equally, his wife didn't like the elder sister and she told him that she wouldn't live with him if he didn't kill the elder sister.

One day, he took the older sister to the forest but he couldn't kill her, and so he planned to bury her alive. After digging the earth, with the help of the ladder he entered the hole and called out to his sister and asked if she could hear what he was saying. When she said that she couldn't hear what he was saying, he came out and put her in the basket and buried her.

When he came back home, his younger sister started asking where her older sister had gone. But the brother refused to say anything to her. Then the little girl understood.

One day she asked her brother and sister in law, "my dear brother and sister in law, what kind of people possess a pair each of shawls and mekhalas, necklaces, armlets and bangles?". To this the sister in law replied, "*my dear girl, we are no different from other people, so we'll surely get you everything you've asked for.*"

One day when her brother and sister in law had gone out, the younger girl killed a chicken and prepared food. Packing all the clothes, she went in search of her sister. On the way, she met a tiger and asked him about her sister. The tiger took her to the place where her sister was buried. When the younger sister dug up the earth, she found her elder sister on the verge of death. She took her elder sister and after having changed her clothes, she gave her some soup and after sometime slowly fed her the food and meat. After her sister had regained her strength, they started living in the forest.

One day when they were roaming in the forest, they saw lots of ripe wild chillies growing. Seeing this, they wanted to find out if it was edible and the older sister told that since she was the eldest she would taste it. After eating the chillies, she started rolling on the ground due to the effect of the chillies. After sometime, she recovered and told her younger sister that it was edible. While they were roaming, they reached one village and they decided to live in that village.

One day a wizard named Litsapa came to that village in the guise of an ugly, lepered old man. He went around asking for shelter but nobody welcomed him. At last he came to the corner of

the village where the two sisters lived and when he asked them if he could stay with them. The two sisters told him that though they had nothing to eat, he was welcome to stay with them. Litsapa told them that he was carrying rice and meat and so they needn't worry about it. When the time to make dinner came, Litsapa told them to bring the cooking pot and poured rice through the gaps in his fingers and then he produced meat from his elbow and knees. This pattern followed for as long as Litsapa was with them. One day, Litsapa told the sisters that when the time for harvest comes, they shouldn't leave anything in the field and store everything in their granary. After saying this, he left.

When the harvest time came, the rest of the villagers gathered in their harvest of grains. But since the sisters cultivated only vegetables, they had a rich harvest of pumpkins. While they were carrying it home, the younger sister found it too heavy to carry, so she left one small pumpkin on the wayside. As soon as they had brought everything to the granary, Litsapa again came visiting that village and visited every granary. At last Litsapa came to the sisters' house and after looking into their granary, he asked if they were sure about bringing everything to the granary. To this, the younger sister said that she had left a small pumpkin on the way. Litsapa told her to go and get the pumpkin. As soon as she had brought the pumpkin and placed it in the granary, it burst and said "I am *atuku*"(a grain variety) and after that the rest of the pumpkins burst and formed different grain variety and filled the granary. As a result of this, it is believed that *atuku*, the grain which was the first to burst is found mixed with other grains even to this day.

### **The War of the Birds and Creeping Creatures**

Once upon a time, the lizard and the tailor bird lived together as very good friends. One day, when they went to gather firewood, the tailor bird stepped on a twig and fell on the lizard and hurt his stomach. This angered the lizard and he said "if this is how you treat me, I will gather every creature that crawls on earth and attack you". In retaliation, the tailor bird said that even she would gather together all the birds of the air and attack him.

They fixed a day for war. On the appointed day, the creeping creatures gathered together with the Python as their leader, and the birds of the air came with the Eagle and the Hornbill as their leaders. The Eagle said to the Hornbill “you are the biggest among us, so you go down and bring up the python.” The Hornbill refused saying “the Python is bigger than me, so I won’t be able to fight with him.” Then the Eagle told the Hornbill to go and fight with the King Cobra but the Hornbill refused saying “the King Cobra is bigger than me so I can’t fight with him.” Then the Eagle swooped down and started fighting with the King Cobra. Whenever the Eagle was winning the birds of the air would cheer happily, but whenever the King Cobra was getting the upper hand, they would cry out in dismay. At last the Eagle suppressed the King Cobra and took it up to the sky where the birds of the air were gathered. They divided the flesh among themselves. The crow rubbed himself in the gall and that is why it is said that he is black in color. In the same way, the Minivet rubbed herself in the blood that is why it is said that the Minivet became red in color. The Ruby Throat arrived after they had finished dividing all the meat and there was nothing left for her except for some blood, so the Ruby Throat took the blood and smeared it on her throat that is why the Ruby Throat till today has a red smear on his Throat.

### **The Village of the People who turn into Tiger (*Angushuu Kughulhomi Ghami*)**

Once upon a time there lived two orphaned brothers. The elder brother got married and the younger brother lived with him and his wife. One day when the two brothers were constructing a granary (ale), the elder brother told the younger brother to go and bring akikhi (strings made out of bamboo used for tying). When he came to the house, he told his sister – in – law, “my brother is asking for that!” Since he didn’t mention what his brother was asking, his sister – in – law kept asking him what he meant by “that”. Then she took out all the things and asked which one he wanted but the younger brother refused to tell her, as a result she felt very bad. That night when her husband returned she told him, “if you want your brother to stay with us, I will not live with you”.

As a result of this, the elder brother listening to his wife decided not to let his younger brother stay at his house. Therefore he decided to take his brother to the jungle and leave him on the



mountain which he didn't know about. He took his brother and pointing to a mountain asked his younger brother whether he knew it, the younger brother replied, "That is the mountain where I and my father went". In this way he kept pointing at various mountains, at last his brother told him that he didn't know a particular mountain. Hearing this, the elder brother took him to that mountain and opening their food packs, told the younger brother to eat his food. When the younger brother told him to have his food, the elder brother told him that he wouldn't eat. The elder brother was silently shedding tears thinking that there was only his younger brother and him but he was going to leave him in the unknown mountain and go back to his wife. The younger brother seeing this asked him why he was crying. He told his younger brother that he was just crying without any reason. After his brother had finished eating, the elder brother brought some leaves and laid it on the ground and told his brother to take rest. After his brother had slept, he took a lice and placing it on a tree branch told him to talk to his younger brother when he got up and then he went back home. After a long time, when the younger brother woke up he couldn't find his elder brother. He saw that while he was sleeping the white ants (Alhaqu) had eaten up the wooden handle of his Dao and Spear. When he called out for his brother, the lice replied "o - wu" but the boy replied "te, te, imuno le kumo, te, te, ipuno le kumo, te, te, izano le kumo" (te, te, that's not my brother's song, te, te, that's not my father's song, te, te, that's not my mother's song).

He called out two, three times but the lice kept responding, at last he came to know that his elder brother had left him and he started staying alone in the jungle. While he was hiding, he came across a tree that was called, "angushuu xathibo" (fruit tree of the tiger). While he was eating the fruits of this tree, a tiger came with Dao and Spear and said "who has climbed my fruit tree and eating its fruit?". The boy replied "my grandfather some other people were plucking fruits from your tree, so I scolded them and I am guarding your fruit tree". Then he told the tiger that he would pluck the fruit for him so he should give him his Spear. Then the boy threw the Spear at the Tiger but missed him. To this the Tiger asked why he was trying to kill him. The boy just said "isu ngupa mudali". Then he told the Tiger that the fruits were heavy so he should give him the Spear so that it would be easy for him to pluck it for him. The Tiger gave him the Spear. Then the boy told the Tiger, "open your mouth and close your eyes." When the Tiger did as he

was told, the boy again said to the Tiger, “my grandfather isn’t able to open his mouth wide”. Hearing this, the Tiger opened his mouth wider and closed his eyes harder. Seeing this, the boy threw the Spear into the Tiger’s mouth and killed him. Then the boy out of fear stayed on the tree for a while, and after sometime when he was trying to leave, he fell down next to the Tiger. Thinking that the Tiger was still alive, he said, “my grandfather! It wasn’t me who killed you”. But since the Tiger was already dead, he didn’t get any response. Then the boy took the Spear and Dao of the Tiger and went to a village named “khola – awou”.

He took the Tiger’s spear and blocked the passageway of the pond of the Khola- Awou’ village and hid himself in the jungle. When the Khola Awou’s villagers came to fetch water from the pond, they saw that there was no water in the pond. They went and told the whole village about it, and they came and tried to pull out the Spear but they couldn’t succeed. Then the boy told the villagers from his hiding place they wouldn’t succeed in pulling his Spear out. Then Khola Awou told him, “I’ll give you whatever you ask if you pull out the Spear”. The villagers tried to find him but they couldn’t succeed. Then again they tried to pull out the Spear but they didn’t succeed. The boy repeated what he had said earlier. Then the King of the Village told the boy, “I have two daughters so I’ll let you marry whichever you like if you pull out the Spear”. Hearing this, the boy came out from his hiding place and pulled out the Spear.

Now since the King had to keep his word, he made his servant girl wear all the fineries of his daughter and dressed his daughter as a servant as he didn’t want his daughter to marry the poor boy. After this, he asked the boy to choose whoever he liked. The boy said he was poor and so he would marry the servant and got married to the real daughter of the King. Then the King told him that he would be his son-in-law.

Whenever the girl’s parents gave him any work, his wife would tell him what to do. His wife told him “if my parents tell you to kill a pig for them, it won’t be a pig but a wild boar, so take the smallest among the Daos and kill it. If they tell you to kill a dog for them, it will be a bear so kill it with the smallest Dao. If they ask you to kill a chicken for them, it will be a Hornbill so take an *asukiba* (pole with a V shaped head) and block it and with the smallest Dao, you kill it”.

Just as his wife had told him, not long after this, his parents-in-law called him to come and kill the pig for them. As soon as he came, they placed many sharp Daos in front of him and asked him to pick the best Dao and kill the Pig for them. But the son-in-law picked the smallest Dao. His parents in law told him that it was a pig but instead he saw that it was a wild boar. He killed the wild boar with the Dao. Seeing this, they said, “You are fit to be our son-in-law”. Then as predicted by his wife, they called him to kill the dog and chicken for them which turned out to be a bear and a Hornbill. He killed all for them. Seeing this, his father in law told him again, “you are fit to be my son-in-law”.

One day, all the Khola Awou’s villagers were building a house for the King. His father-in-law told him to go to the *Asaqhi li* (thorn bushes) and bring plantain leaves without tearing it and to make fire as a sign of his coming back. The son-in-law got the plantain leaves and since he wanted to know what was going on, he was prying on them without making the fire. To his surprise, he saw that all the villagers had turned into tigers and was making the house. Seeing this, he ran back to the forest and made fire as was directed by his father-in-law. When he reached the village, everyone had turned back into their old selves except for one old man who wasn’t able to hide his tail. The son-in-law saw it but didn’t say anything. To this the King said, “You have insulted my son-in-law” and then he killed the old man. The son-in-law had brought only one bunch of leaves so the King was telling him that it would not be enough for the entire village. So the son-in-law told his father-in-law to tell the villagers to come and take the leaves from him. As soon as the villagers came, he went up to the roof of the house and opened the bunch of leaves for the villagers which turned out to be more than enough for the villagers. Seeing this King told him, “You are fit to be my son-in-law”.

After that, unknown to the son-in-law, his parents in law being Tigerman used to kill human and whenever they did that, they used to send fingers and toes to their daughter. And his wife used to eat it without telling him. One day when he went to visit his parents-in-law, they packed the fingers and toes in a plantain leaves and sent it to their daughter and before he left, they told him not to open it. But while on the way, his curiosity got the better of him and he opened the

package. He saw human fingers and toes in it and without saying anything; he gave it to his wife. Taking the package from her husband, she ate it saying, “*Ipu na gholi ghumghui, izano gholi ghumghui*”(my father gave and its crispy crispy, my mother gave and itscrispy crispy). When he came to know about all this, he asked his wife to turn into a tiger and show him. But his wife refused. But her husband kept on insisting, so she told him to bring a basket of shohusu and Russ tree’s branch. But her husband did the opposite and brought one shohusu branch and a basket of Russ tree branches. Then she told her husband to go up the *amqha* (platform below the roof of the house where the drying mat, carrying baskets, etc are usually kept)when she turns into a tiger and when she jumps down he was to block her with the stick. And then he had to feed her with ginger and only after that he had to throw a chick into her mouth. But her husband didn’t listen to her and he first fed her the chicken and then the ginger. After having the chicken, the tiger wanted to eat more meat as a result she killed her husband and ate him. After that she returned to her parents’ home.

#### 4.1.4 **Legends**

##### **Mukalimi village**

##### **Narrative of the Banyan tree (*Chighisubo* at Mukalimi)**



The establishment of the village is centred around the narrative of a tree called *Chighibo*. It is said that when the village was to be established, they found this big tree *Chighibo* and so seeing the majestic tree they decided to establish their village near this tree. This tree is still there at Mukalimi village. During the headhunting days, they used to put the heads of their enemies on this tree. In the olden days, it was believed that if they ate the heads of animals like bear, tiger and amini, worms would eat up their body and so whenever such animals was hunted they would put their heads on this tree. It is said that hornets would build their nest in the barks of this tree but they believed that if they eat the hornets from this tree they would get toothache and so till today nobody touches or take anything from this tree. This might be the reason why this tree has survived through the ages outliving generations of people of this village as nothing has been done to destroy or mar this tree. It has been as it was from the very beginning. The tree measures 59 feet in breadth.

### **Natsümi Village**

- i. At Natsümi village, there is believed to be six *Akipi* (pounding stand) of the *Tughami* (devil) located at a watering hole between Katimi and Natsümi . It is believed that these six stones resembling *Akipi* was brought to this place by the *Tughami* (devil). This *Tughami* (devil) is said to have brought this at night and left it at Lasughuto. It is found here till today.
- ii. Another legend is that the *Tughami* (devil) came from Lazami village and thinking that it was a stag, the hunters followed it but on reaching Natsümi territory they discovered that it was a *Tughami* (devil) and it had taken the form of a stone. The Natsümi villagers found this stone at their field but they were scared to go anywhere near it as they were scared of the spirit (*Aghau*) of the stone. Therefore, they decided to cut firewood and make fire on the stone so that it would break. After they made a fire, the stone broke into two equal pieces. This stone is found till today at Pishiqa in the Natsümi territory.
- iii. It is said that one man went to the field with his child and leaving him under a wild yam called *Awochobo/tsuzukughubo*, he went to work in the field. When he came back to see his child he couldn't find it anywhere and so he searched for his child everywhere, in the jungle and even in the village but couldn't find his child. While doing so, one rooster crowed and told him that the

*Awochobo* had eaten up his child. Therefore, the man went back to the place where he had first kept his child and on cutting open the *Awochobo* found his child dead and very fair. It is believed that since it ate a man's child this tree causes itchiness.

- iv. It is said that in the olden days there lived a man who was very slow and couldn't catch up with his villagers in any field. Since their village had around 700 houses it was very hard for him since he was a slowpoke. Therefore, he wanted to find out the ritual to decrease the population. He was told that if he mix *Apoxisu*, *ayeshu*, *saluba* (chicken poop) and *Amghasu* and bury it on the footpath where people always pass through then it would be possible to decrease the population of the village as people would start dying. And so it is believed that because of this man's action, the Natsümi population came down.
- v. *Atupughali* is a waterhole in the Tsuyi river. The crabs, sand and stone from this place is white in colour and till today it is there.
- vi. There once lived a very cruel man at Natsümi whose name was Mixeni. The word used to refer to cruel was *Ayikusa*. One Thoshipumi man came with a chicken (olden days chicken was called *Ayi*) to exchange with *Ayi* (metal). In a jest, the villager said Mixeni sells *Ayi* so they would take him to his house. On reaching Mixeni's house the Thoshipumi asked Mixeni if he is selling *Ayi* (*metal*) and to this Mixeni replied that he indeed was selling *Ayi* and to wait for him to come out. While waiting the Villagers told the Thoshipumi that Mixeni was a cruel man or *Ayikusa* so he would not sell metal to him but would beat him up so to run away and they did so.
- vii. During the Tuluni when they go to pay their respect to the field, they would take an egg or chicken and they would insert three ayeghu on the ground and then the awu *khogho* on it after which they will put the egg or chicken on it. After doing this, they would say 'o nge akila unkokhu ashishi aji shipe umula ngi chini onipa mini iqho ato phi unkhumo qi iqi aju she aghine' (o at home I will cut meat and make rice beer and worship you therefore let your leaves grow and reach the mountain top and let your roots reach the water under the soil). They would say this to the grain stalks and then go back home and observe the Tuluni.

### **Lazami Village:**

Long time, there was an old man whose name was Ashu Mudo. He had come from Mikhal and had 12 wives. The first wife was Chakesang, the second was Angami, third was Sümi and 4<sup>th</sup>

was Rengma. When Ashu Mudo grew older, he told his sons that the grandfather of the Chakesangs was Tsuvai, that of the Angamis were Jadai, the Sümi 's were Rozu but since he was the third one he was also called Su and his descendants came to be known as Sümi . During those days, there were lots of tigers, therefore Ashu Mudo told his sons that a Tiger was coming so what should they do. But the Chakesangs' grandfather Tsuvai and the Angami's grandfather Jadai turned away and hid behind the stone and wood but the grandfather of the Sümi Rozu/Su said '*Iu lo mo angushuu sasu shini, iulomu akuha sasu shini*' meaning even if it is with my bare hands, I will fight against the Tiger, even if it is with my bare hands, I will fight against the Elephant. Therefore, Apu Mudo told him that he has the real heart of a man and that his heart was different therefore like his private parts, he should cut his hair by shaving it in round shape (*onhemugha toi okutsu hotha pulo*) and even his cloth for covering his private part let it move around like his private part and the Sümi started wearing the Asholha mini (a square shaped cloth that covers only the front part of the men). The Chakesang and Angami Grandfathers were cowards therefore, Ashu Mudo told them to tie their hair like that of the women and to cover not only their private part but also their buttocks with cloth. The youngest one – Rengma also wanted his father to demarcate for him and rebelled. Therefore, Ashu Mudo thought that the youngest was also as brave as his third son. Therefore, he told him to shave his head and keep the hair only in the top part but above the length of the Sümi. This hairstyle came to be called as *Mujutsuqa*. The Sümi couldn't cut his own hair as it had to be shaved in circular shape, that's why it came to be called as '*Chungumi kutsu*'.

When Ashu Mudo grew older he thought what would happen to his children after their death. Therefore, he asked them to go for hunting and bring the hunted animals to him. The Sümi hunted in the mountain region and brought the animal that lived in cold area to him. The Chakesang and Angami hunted in the cold area and brought animals that lived in cold area. Ashu Mudo didn't eat these but kept it aside. Then he again asked them the next day to bring wild edible leaves from the jungle. The Sümi once again brought back edible leaves that were found in warm areas. The Chakesang and Angami on the other hand brought back edible leaves that were found in cold areas. Whatever was brought back by his children, Ashu Mudo placed it on a basket and thought to himself that when he die, his children would separate and go in different

paths. Thinking of this, he sang ‘*Mudo sata khani ko poni ko chewe tete koni ko jewa tete koni ko hai*’ (when I Mudo die, my children will go in different paths).

### **Chisholimi Village**

1. Hebo, Chisho, Chishi are believed to have killed a dog and divided the tongue. Hebo being the eldest is said to have taken the inner part of the tongue, Chisho took the middle part and Chishi took the tip of the tongue. Therefore the dialect of Hebo is ‘Tishilachi Ishilacho Ishikughu’ while that of Chisho is ‘tishileghuli, ishileghuli’ and Chishi is ‘Tishiyi ishiyi’. This seems to be true.

2. Kichighu luqa – footprint having 6 toes was found on a stone. This is believed to belong to their clan. A woman who went to the field with her baby girl is said to have lost her child. Including Ali, two from their clan disappeared therefore their clan doesn’t have many people.

### **4.1.5. Aholetsa (Proverbs/Wise Sayings):**

1. *Imu no pi sujo sujo lau kighi sujo*

*Imu no pi sujo sujo lau kighi xuchelo*

This is believed to have been said by an elder brother to his younger siblings to live entwined together always like the entada scanders/ African dream herb.

2. One old man from Surumi village from the Achumi clan is believed to have told this proverb. He was someone who was very good at proverbs. One day he was calling one of his son to come to him in order to send him on an errand but that son was busy laying out the bamboo ribbons to make a basket for storing rice. The father kept calling the son and atlast the son responded by asking his father what he wanted. The father without saying anything kept scratching on the basket of the boy and told him to go. His son could not understand what this meant by this. His father told him that when he die, even if his son keep scratching on the earth and keep calling for him, he wouldn’t be able to wake him up. Therefore when he is still alive he is asking him to listen to what he says.



3. At Suruhuto, one man was building a house but couldn't complete it (maybe due to shortage of funds) and for one year this building was soaked in the rain. An old man was going towards Yehemi and looking at the incomplete building is believed to have said 'shulo ghuve pu ikholo ve kena oi' meaning the owner of this building had huge plans but his plans did not match with his resources and his plan was not fulfilled.
4. '*Hesho ghoki na ighamphi, aghi akunghu qimphi*' literally translated as the water from Hesho river hasn't roared, the root of the grains has not appeared/ shot out. This proverb is from NatSümi village. The meaning of this proverb is that it is only when the waters appear in the rivers and the sound of the river roars that the root of the sown grains would appear.
5. *Amchi mu pho iku amqha tomo* (the smoke from the hearth cannot even reach the roof). This proverb is a despise directed towards the poor people indicating that they don't even have food to cook.
6. *Amini no alu chupu wuveke laye achuyi kichi chichhitsü* (the wild boar ate the crops but the antelope's mouth was punched at). This means the innocent got the blame for someone's bad deed.
7. *Angushuu ghi khani loye aniba muxocheni* (even the tiger at times siphons the mud). This means that though the tiger is the king of the jungle, sometimes when he cannot catch a prey he ends up siphoning the mud, likewise it isn't possible for people to always have good food and sometimes one has to be satisfied with food which aren't tasty.
8. *Awoqu no atsütsü ithulu* (the pig saw the sky). Once in a person's lifetime when fortune strikes.
9. *Akithi kho pele akeshi* (like dropping the basket of job's tears). Losing everything that one possesses at once.
10. *Achi kipili shi shiva* (like the stringing of the beads for the necklace). everything working out according to plan or everything happening according to what one has thought/planned.
11. *Achuwo nhethi kiyi kha müla keshi* (like the inability to close the eyes of the crab). The inability to suppress something, if one tries to stop from one side, the problem erupts from the other side and vice versa.

12. *Awudu no awuti sakeshi* (like the rooster taking care of the chicks). When he loves he gives food and drink but when he doesn't like he beats them up and treats them unkindly.
13. *Aghacho ayeghi lo iqighi ani* (the great hornbill has come down to ground). For the Sümi, the great hornbill is very important and is usually compared to the rich and the famous. The Great Hornbill lives atop the trees and live on the best fruits. But during winter time when all the fruits fall from the trees, even the great hornbill has to come down to the ground to feed on the fallen fruits. Likewise even in men's life even the rich people sometimes go through periods of scarcity.
14. *Aqhoqho no michi yithi khe* (the owl waiting for the ). The michithi is a fruit that never ripens therefore this indicates waiting for something that never happens.
15. *Awu thotsü puchopüzü pemighi a no khetsünhe zükujo ye asüta mighipesü khetsünhe kulolau pathiu vesü* (even the hen after pecking at the earth the whole day, for the feeling of embarrassment towards the sun, it picks the piece of stick and throws it behind her towards the west). Men are supposed to work and eat because if even animals can do so then men must know this value.
16. *Azü loye nishichu ato loye nimüsa* (while in water you eat our meat but while on the mountain you are scared of us). Being there during the good times but leaving behind during the bad times and instead of being supportive, talking ill about them.
17. *Nimishi ghi angushuu müqü ithi ani* (even our cow knows the tricks of the tiger). When someone try to trick a person, this proverb is told.
18. *Khani lo angushu shokulu toi* (like meeting a tiger once in a while). Meeting once in a while only like meeting the tiger.
19. *Tsüni ake lono au phuluve lo* (dry your paddy while the sun is still shining). Times will not always be good therefore one should always find a way while one still can.
20. *Imipi kitila kemu ikütsüqa kije ghütsülo* (my stature maybe short but leave a bigger portion of hair on my head). In the olden days, the Sümi men would cut their hair according to their social standing. For men who were skilled and brave and well known they would cut their

hair two fingers above the ears but for men who weren't brave or well known they would just have a tuft of hair on their head. Therefore this proverb means that the man maybe short in stature but his hair should be that of a brave and well known man.

#### **4.1.6. Folk Poetry:**

During the olden days, they would say words of wisdom in the form of songs. For this reason it can be named 'Intonated Poetry'. In Sümi these are called *Leshele*. Also in the past it was referred to as *Lechole*. Following are some *Lejole*

1. *Niye itiji akumulo ji, akuqa ji,*

*Ipu niye akisheqhou ilonishimo*

*Iwu axeu na ghili kumsupe wo ashe puhhalho*

*O kumloji ilokusu jiye*

*O axeu asutsa kughukho ghili kumsuwo ashe puha lhoje*

(O tonight is the night of sorrow and regret, I have buried my wife and how do I go back inside our house. Thinking about her is endless and there is no end to it.)

2. During the season of the feast of merit, when the parents were about to give the feast, unfortunately their son and daughter passed away and so this *Lechole* was about the irony of how while some were burying the death, some were observing the feast of merit/celebration.

*Ishi jimo pu lana abothu la tomphe ye*

*Thikughiye pana suye, kuwo tsuna qheda wosu*

*Pana abi ayi yikhi suqhe*

*Kumzupo tsuqi kuhu kulu shikeu*

*Alana ninu kuhozu hosulumi peli okujono tusho lakhi lana*

*Kumtsasa akithi la povetsuye*

*O Apu Asu ninu salutsuni*

*O sachile wo nitsulaye pinamu amoughili kughani thana*

*Atsuu ye kushive tsu mulai*

(We can tell our forefathers to bring back our children to us but it is only in dream and in reality we don't know what to do)

3. During the time when men and women were wooing each other for marriage, there was a man who was also wooing a girl to marry. One day they went to the jungle together and while coming back, they had to cross a river, the water was flowing swiftly and so he went first and was holding his fiancée's hands. During the olden days, women would wear bangles. Therefore, since her bangles was in his hands, he thought he was holding on to her hands while crossing the river, but when he reached the river bank and looked back, he saw that there was only her bangles in his hands and his fiancée was nowhere to be found. While crossing the river, unknown to him, the river swept away his fiancée and so out of sorrow he sang the following –

*O timina kishi axeu shi alaye*

*Axeu ikujo kuno che pi aye (ngi tughulo che)*

*Chepe asu kuqo sholui*

*O axeu no sukiniye kumlapu iulo iloghi*

*O aghau no shitsu laye axeu na*

*Chebide su axusa kivilo sathaighi shi she lo*

*Axeu pa za ye sholulole*

*Ghuthu khiphi qholo seye ye*

Since he was ashamed to see his fiancée's mother, he didn't go home for three days and slept in the jungle.

#### **4.2 FESTIVALS**

It is difficult to completely separate rituals from festivals because for every festival, it is celebrated only after completion of certain rites and rituals or observance of gennas. Some important ones are:

**i. *Susheni:***

This is celebrated as a sign of completing a year's work and entering a new year. It was usually observed at the end of the year. This is celebrated after the completion of harvest.

**ii. *Suquni:***

This is observed in the month of January (*Luuqhi*) in order to call on the blessings on the children. On two separate days, good rituals are conducted on the boy child and the girl child. On

*suquni*, the entire male child competes among themselves to be the first one to go to the pond and get baptism or *azuve*.

According to the Mishilimi, *Suquni* is observed at the beginning of the year. The day before this day, all the male of the village will sleep in the jungle and the next morning, before anyone wakes up they will take bath in the river. Even young boys also participate in this ritual. They are taken by their fathers and brothers and given bath by them. Before taking bath, they will beat their shawl and say ‘ *Ikusu kini kumtsu aghoki ti ba uva, nge axushuni, alhoshuni, kughuza kugha kumtsu povelu* ’ (let all my sickness and pain go down the river, I will live a long life, all the injuries and misfortune get away from me). After reaching home, they will drink rice beer by mixing it with ginger (two types – *Aku* and *Avusu*). Then the ginger is cut into small pieces and a thread is inserted and young boys are made to wear this as a sign of purity and the foundation of the new year. Women do not go along with the men nor do they participate in this ritual.

**iii. *Asaqhini:***

This is observed in the month of *suphuqhi*. This is signified by cast of lot. On this day, at dawn, a bachelor of clean and unblemished character is directed to fetch clean water from the village well. This water is used in order to wash the hands of the omen seeker. The traditional casting of lot is done at the main gate of the village at the time when most of the villagers would be asleep.

The omen is sought in three areas:

- a. To win/fail in war
- b. Agriculture and farming
- c. Huntings.

**iv. *Ami qhaqha eno tughu kukhu:***

This is observed after the *awuphe pine*. It is mainly observed to make peace between the fire and men as when a new field is cultivated especially for *jhum* cultivation, the whole area is set on fire, as a result it was believed that the fire and men should share good relationship so that there are no destruction. As for the *tughakukhu* day nobody should take bath or wash their clothes. On this day, *mishino* will catch the pig. This pig will be killed and the meat would be distributed. The meat will be cut into small pieces and divided into 6,5 and 4 and placed on three plantain

leaves and then kept at a place where no children could reach. The next day it will be given to the children to eat.

**v. Ghixuni:**

On this occasion, the *Atiqu – u* will go in place of all the villagers to the field and sow the first seed. While coming back to the village, on the way he will take the leaves of an Oak tree and after reaching home, he would place it on top of the house. On this day, the entire village will stay at home. After some days, *mishi tuqu shinani*. And then, everyone will go to their own fields and take all the seeds together and bury it under the tree and then return to their respective homes.

**vi. Tuluni:**

This is one of the most important festivals. This festival is celebrated even to this day. This is observed after the sowing period is over so that the insects or worms wouldn't eat up the seeds and the rituals are performed so that there will be a rich and bountiful harvest.

According to the climatic conditions in the past, there were variations in the celebration of this festival. For people living in the hot climatic region (*Ghabo*), usually their crops would grow faster and so their harvest would also be early compared to those living in the colder climatic region (*Azho*). And so according to their climatic condition, this festival was celebrated in the bygone days. In order to let the Sümi people have a uniform day of celebration of this festival, in 1966, the Sema Tribal Council declared that the Sümis irrespective of their climatic region would celebrate *Tuluni* on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

In spite of this declaration, though the day of *Tuluni* is celebrated on this day too, some villages in the Southern Sümi region still follows the traditional method of calculating the day for observing this festival even to this day. For instance, the Mishilimi and Lazami villages celebrated *Tuluni* on different dates.

According to the Mishilimi elders, the month of the year and the rites and rituals to be conducted each month were very specific. The month of *Tuluni* falls in the fourth month after the sowing. According to them, the forefathers watched the moon and the sun and accordingly the date was

set for this festival. Each year the month would remain the same but the date would differ. The day of the festival usually fell on the 17<sup>th</sup> day after the appearance of the moon. This festival was celebrated for six days. The significance of this festival was two-fold. Firstly, it was a festival of garnering unity between the elderly and the youngsters, the in laws, the friends, neighbours, etc. Secondly, this festival was for the blessings sought upon the produce of the field where rituals were performed to safeguard the rice and vegetables from the pests and animals.

Even at Hebolimi village, during their forefather's time, the Tuluni was observed only after the end of the *Moza*. Tuluni was considered to be the *Amtani* (middle ritual). During this ritual, those who are planning to get married will give feast to each other. In the olden days, they would say that 'during this Ani, let no one get sick, let everyone be happy and reach the harvest time. The Ani is held in the middle of the month. During the Jishomi days, they will count the cycle of moon to observe this Ani. For their village, they stopped practising it and started celebrating on the official 8<sup>th</sup> July. It has to be noted that there are slight variations in the observance of this festival even between the different villages.



(Clockwise from top left: 1. Lazami women displaying the cotton spinning during the Tuluni festival, 2. Men from Lazami displaying how men in the forefathers' days used to dress up while performing the dance and songs. 3&4. The Tuluni feast being served in the traditional wooden and bamboo utensils at Nito Mount, Zünheboto (Photo 3&4: Social media).

### **History behind the origin of Tuluni Festival:**

There are many versions regarding the origin of this festival. According to one version, many years back in on village, there lived two brothers namely 'Tu' and 'Lu'. Both of them were very hospitable and they used to welcome travellers and visitors to their homes. One day they had a discussion wherein they spoke about how both of them were both hospitable and how the visitors and travellers would keep coming to their homes and so they decided to see from then on in whose house the visitors would be more and accordingly whoever got the highest would observe a ritual. Accordingly it was observed that the number of visitors was higher in Tu's house and so they observed a ritual with both their names which came to be known as *Tuluni*.

Some say that the meaning of '*Ani*' means the ritual observed so that the crops in the field would grow bountifully. Still some say that *Tuluni* is the festival where the god of wealth 'Litsapa' is beseeched so that the rice, trees, vegetables and all the crops in the field would grow healthily without being harmed by the insects, parasites, hails, storms and that the roots of the crops would go deep into the earth and its leaves and branches would grow bountifully.

Another version is that in the past there were two brothers named 'Tulu' and 'Swu'. It is said that when they observed a festival with their villagers, majority of the villagers gifted meat to 'Tulu' and very less people gifted 'Swu'. The people who gifted meat to Tulu decided to henceforth name this festival as '*Tulu*'. Swu also decided to observe a separate festival along with those who supported him and named it as '*Swu Pinye*' or *Ani* and started observing it. But in the later years, the Sümi decided to observe these two festival together and named it as '*Tuluni*' a combination of '*Tulu*' and '*Ani*'.

According to Kivixe of Chisholimi village, it is believed that the important ritual of the Sümi called Tuluni which is celebrated at present as a festival started from this village. Tulu had many children therefore he killed a pig and introduced his ritual to his children that is why it is called Tuluni.

*Tuluni* is one of the most important festival of the Sümi because it falls during the season of starvation. In the olden days, the art of cultivation was not properly known by the people and so the previous year's harvest usually never lasted till the next year's harvest. As a result of this,



many people used to starve but when the month of *Tuluni* came, people would rejoice especially the poor and needy because from this month onwards, the edible leaves and the vegetables and varieties of beans would grow and their hunger would be relived even if there was no rice.

In order to declare the festival, the *Akukau* would call his *Chochou* and feed him rice, meat and drinks. After this is done, the observance of this festival is declared. Before the start of this festival, everyone was supposed to clean up their house, site and surrounding areas.

In the past, the villagers especially the young and able bodied would organise themselves into groups called *Aloji* and they would go to work in each other's field. No wage was given or taken but their labour had to be repaid with labour. Before the start of festivals, they would earn wages and keep it for purchasing animals to be killed during the festival.

On the day of the festival, the poor people also get to eat meat given either by the *Aloji* or by the *Kukami*.

**a. *Asuzani (Monday):***

This is the first day of the celebration. The meaning of this day stands for “*asu tsala*”. On this day, the village, travellers' path, village pond, surrounding areas of the village is cleaned.

**b. *Aghizani (Tuesday):***

This is the second day of the festival. This day is “*Aghi tsala*” or the day of the grain. On this day, whatever work was left unfinished for the festival is completed like the collection of firewood, water and whatever is to be used for the festival.

**c. *Ashigheni (Wednesday):***

This is the third day of the festival and this day is “*Ashi kuphu tsala*” which means the day when the animals would be killed for the festival. And on this day the *Aloji/ gang* who engage themselves into groups for agricultural work would collect all that they have earned and sometimes they would kill the pig that they were rearing for their *Aloji* and divide the meat amongst them. If whatever they have earned isn't enough, they would collect amongst themselves again and they would purchase a Mithun, Cow and Pig and kill it at the house of the “*Aloji Papuh*” (father of the *Aloji*) house and divide it equally among themselves without any

distinction on the basis of sex. The head of the animals are given to the Aloi Papu. The meat for the Anighini or the day of the feast is set apart and kept aside.

**d. Anighini (Thursday):**

This is the day of the feast. The meaning of this day is “*Ani tsala akijeu*” the most important day of the festival. On this day, every Aloi/gang in the village would collect materials for cooking amongst them and gather at their respective Aloi Papuh’s house and prepare feast and have it together. Amongst the different Aloi of the boys they would compete in various games like *Angu Kupusu*, *Apukhu Kiti*, *Asü ilheche*, *Ayiku tikuxu*, *Angu chekuxu*. Even among the Aloi of the girls they compete in a game called *Puxa kuxu*, competition of reciting poems and singing folk songs and *Alu kumlale* (songs sung while working in the field).

After all these competitions, they would gather at their respective Aloi Papuh’s house and have a feast. The *Alojimi* would invite the *Kukami*, the poor and the needy to join them in their feast. On this day, the parents whose children had reached the age of joining the Aloi or gang would request the Aloitou or the leader of the Aloi to allow their son or daughter to join their Aloi. This is also the day when all the married people in order to let their crops bear good harvest place their offerings on the *Atsükucholo* and pray to *Litsapa* (the god of wealth) so that he would bless the crops in the field.

On this day, the young people who are marrying each other and has completed the *Atsa Xakutha* (equivalent to modern day engagement) would give feast to each other. The boy’s parents would kill a pig and gift half of the pig along with its head to the girl’s parents. The girl’s parents on their part would call the boy home for a feast. The boy would go to the girl’s house with one of his companion. It was the custom to cook all the parts of the pig and offer it to the boy irrespective of whether he can finish it or not. In this feast the date for the marriage would be fixed and the girl’s parents would inform the boy’s parents about the bride price they are expecting. The girl’s parents would also gift the boy’s parents with half of the pig along with packets of food and meat when the boy leaves for his home after the feast. The boy would also be gifted with the leg and thigh of the pig. Even the girl’s parents would also invite the girl to their home for a feast. After this exchange of feast, it is said that the engagement should not be

broken. If in case the engagement is broken then whoever is responsible has to pay back everything including the gifts that were given by the other family. The decision for marriage was supposed to be decided before *Tuluni*. After the exchange of meat and the feast, the girl's parents would start calling the boy as 'Son-in-law' and the boy's parents would call the girl as 'Daughter-in-law' even though the marriage was yet to take place.

*Tuluni* is not only the day of feasting and sharing joy with the villagers but it is also the time when relatives from far and near meet each other and share their joy. Either on the night of the *Ashigheni* or the morning of the *Anighini*, food is prepared and taken to relatives staying in some other village. During the *Tuluni* festival the meat is prepared and given to the person who carries the baby and takes care of the baby while the mother works in the field. During this festival, the people who have adoptive parents and whose field they cultivate for themselves prepare food and give to their adoptive parents. It is during this festival that the thigh of the pig is exchanged between the families who are intending to get into a matrimonial alliance. Whether it's the father in law or the son in law, they would rear a pig and then it would be killed during the *Tuluni* and they would exchange the thigh of the pig. The son in law is invited to the girl's house where a big piece of meat is especially cooked for him. If they are from the same village, then even the boy's family invites the girl home for food.

*e. Mucholani (Friday):*

This is the next day of the *Ani* and the villagers would clean up and also remake the path leading to the field. On this day, a drink called "*ajicho*" is taken along with egg and some clean meat towards the field. On the way before reaching the field, they will take the *ajicho* and blow on it and then the clean meat is cleaned and it is left along with the lunch pack and at the *Alapukilo* and they would go to their the field. After reaching their own field, they would make fire at the *Alheki* or the resting hut in the field and then again they would blow on the *ajicho* and clean the meat again and then the egg is taken up a "*Aqobo*" and saying "*Hei*" they would speak to the crops saying "*Okuhu no quilo azulo hessu, onika no iko iqho ato helo*" (let your root go deep and reach the water underneath, and let your leaves grow as to reach the mountain). Then the branch of Russ tree is taken and then splitting it into four halves, the egg is placed in between. After this

they would start clearing the path of their fields and on reaching the main path, they would clear it together as they move back towards home and in the “*Alapuki*” they would each open their lunch pack and then have their food and the leftover meat is left at that place by stringing it up. On their way back, when they come across a river or water hole, they would clear it up and construct a pond so that it can be used as a source of water for when they are on their way to the field and on their way back. From their field they would uproot some crops and plant it at this spot.

**f. *Tupulani (Saturday):***

This is the sixth day of the festival and it is the day of games and fun for the young men and women. On this day the young men (*Tupumi*) and the young women (*Ilimi*) would take the cleared paths leading to their fields and gather the vegetables and leaves because the next day was a day restricted from going anywhere. On this day, if there were any fights or misunderstanding between the young men and women, they would resolve it by inviting each other home for feast. In this way, they would forgive each other and as a symbol of this, they would offer food to each other and also packets of meat. As a sign of respect to the *Alojitou*, some meat is gifted to him. Cooked meat packets are exchanged between the married women and unmarried women. In this way, peace is garnered between the young men and women, between the *Alojimi*.

On this day too, various games are played for example, *Akhetsü tsükuxu*, *Akhetsü kukakile*, *Angu chepuu kuxu*, *Ayiku tikuxu*. The young men would visit girl’s home and sing songs for the girl’s parents. And the parents in return would prepare good food for them.

**g. *Tüghakhani (Sunday):***

This is the last day of the festival and as it was on the first day, on this day too, the villagers are not allowed to venture out. According to the elders during the six days of the *Tuluni*, if they had failed to complete any ritual or rite for the evil spirits (*Tüghami*), they would complete everything on this day. On this day, not only does the people stay at home but they do not even venture out to pluck a leaf because they feared that the evil one would kill them. They also

feared that if they go to the forest or field, they would either get injured or their spirit would be captured by the evil spirit.

**Significance:**

This festival was a time for rejoicing for people from all walks of life because stepping into this month signified their freedom from hunger. In the bygone days, the rich and well off took it upon themselves the responsibility to share what they have with the poor and the needy and so during such festivals, the poor and needy also got the opportunity to eat meat and share in the joy.

It was also a time of rejoicing for the young girls who carried babies for the mothers in the field. In the past, it is said that after one week of giving birth, the mother would arrange a young girl to carry the baby to the field and take care of the baby while she worked at the field. Since throughout the year, the young girl carries and take care of the baby, the parents of the baby would tell her that if she kept taking good care of the baby then they would take good care of her during the *Tuluni*. This would make the young girl very happy and she would eagerly wait for the *Tuluni* to come. When the time comes for this festival, true to their words, the parents of the baby would remember the young girl. They would give her a chicken tied with a rope to its leg for her to play and in the evening she would be sent home with this. They would also cook a huge feast for her and ask her to eat as much as she wanted. After she had her fill, they would again pack the rice and meat for her to carry to her home. For those families who were well to do, they would even gift the young girl with raw meat. Because of this good deed of the parents, the young girl would happily take good care of the baby.

*Tuluni* enables the young people and children to not only eat as much as they wanted but also gave them an opportunity to play all kinds of games enabling them to relax and enjoy. This festival also enables the members of the family whether near or far to make peace with each other. Even if it was not possible to feast together, they would exchange packets of meat and rice. In this way, more love grew between the members of the family. The bonds of friendship are also strengthened during this festival through exchange of meat and food packets.

### **Celebration of Tuluni at present:**

In order to understand how this festival is celebrated at present and also get an idea about the position of this festival, the celebration of this festival at Lazami and Mishilimi was documented.

Lazami village is located around 8kms away from Pughoboto town and 60kms away from Kohima. It is considered as one of the ancestral village and as per their claim they consider themselves as the first Sümi village though as per the oral tradition and traditionally another village called Ighanumi is considered as the first Sümi village. These claims are challenging as these are as per oral traditions and without any scientific dating and so in the years to come if such dating methods are applied, the result may or may not be same. When this Researcher interviewed the elderly and people who have knowledge of oral history and traditions, they mostly dwelled on the story of migration of the village insinuating their village to be older than the other village. One notable feature of this village is that they are culturally very conscious about the traditional life and practices and on their part they are trying their best to document and preserve what they can, for instance they have erected a model *Apuki/ Morung* (men's dormitory) in their village with all the traditional carvings and structure as it was during the forefathers' days. The carvings on wood that has been placed in the *Apuki* has been made by the craftsmen in the village but since the month of July is not the season to undertake this art, the details and the documentation for this craft has been left for the next visit as such craftsmen are very rare among the Sümi tribe.

The person of Lazami also follows the traditional method of counting the day for the celebration of *Tuluni* and so as per their counting they celebrated this festival on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. This village has four khels and so for this *Tuluni* celebration, two khels joined together and observed this festival. The celebration of *Tuluni* in this village has been documented in order to bring to light as to how this festival is celebrated at present. One unusual finding during the course of the celebration was the use of muzzle loading gun while performing traditional songs and dance as traditionally in other Sümi villages inspite of possessing guns, they are not used during the performance of folk songs and folk dances.

Apart from the general Sümi traditional clothes, like the other villages of the *Aphuyemi* area, they also have their unique village shawl for the men and wraparounds for the women. These

were used during the performance of the folk songs and dances. The womenfolk performed the traditional cotton spinning song wherein the course of singing they were involved in displaying different stages of spinning the yarn from the cotton. Another group of women performed a song carrying a spade signifying the stage in the agricultural work wherein after the area for cultivation is burned down and the area is completely cleaned up, this small spade is used for sowing the seed and the process is called *Hango* and the song is called '*Hango le*'. The men folk in all their traditional finery also performed a song. In the process of performing the song it was noticed that the groups of young men who had joined the middle aged and elderly men could not sing and so the old men would go in between them and around them and teach them the way the particular song was sung. This made the festival significant for the Researcher from the point of view of passing on traditional knowledge from the elders to the youngsters and it was a wonderful experience to actually see the exchange happening right in front of one's eyes because such exchange at present rarely takes place because for the elderly they learned it by living in the *Apuki* but at present youngsters whether they are living in the remote villages or in the towns and cities are glued to their smart phones and are more influenced by western culture and most recently by the Korean wave more popularly known as K-Pop and so festivals such as this where everyone happily joins with much fervour seems to be just the right platform to pass on the cultural memories. After the celebration was done, all the people joined in a big feast.

After all these were over, the elderly and people who had knowledge of the culture and traditions were interviewed. Sadly in the process of interview, most of the old men had forgotten many traditional knowledge for example when they were asked about how the day for the *Tuluni* was counted, there was great confusion. They had very clear memory of the story of migration of their village but certain traditional practices could not be gathered from them. With no option left, such discussion was left for the next visit when they would recollect and discuss and provide the information as it is a collective memory.

One positive practise of this village as mentioned earlier is the maintenance of a small museum though not upto the standard of the literal 'Museum' that one is used to. This is in a rugged form where in their small way whenever anyone visits their village, they want them to see the original

ornaments of their womenfolk, potteries, rice beer storing pot, traditional games, shields made of bamboo and cane, weapons like spears and machete and even the original cotton. Noticing the original cotton in the museum and with further enquiry, it was found that they still plant the cotton and whatever cotton they use while singing the cotton spinning song was the original cotton unlike other villages where at present they use store bought cotton for such purpose. They also practise the traditional dyeing process using different plants.

Even at Mishilimi village, though this festival is to be celebrated for seven days, at present in spite of observing the day by following the traditional method of counting, the traditional practice of observing all the days is not practised. Four or five days are observed by conducting football or volleyball matches between different khels or group of young men and women. Exchange of meat amongst families, friends and neighbours are practised and animals especially pigs are extensively killed for feast as well as for gifting purpose. Traditional songs and dances are performed but only when a formal programme is organised with a Chief Guest.

One positive aspect of this festival is that the unity and love that should exist between families, neighbours and friends are greatly encouraged and displayed through sharing of packets of meat and limbs of animals and also invitation for food in each other's homes. During the month of this festival everyone irrespective of gender or age are encouraged to wear atleast one piece of traditional cloth or ornaments to show that the Sümi are observing their festival and also as a sign of respect to the tradition and culture and also to inculcate the value of the culture among the youngsters.

**vii. *Tixini:***

This is observed after the Tuluni festival. The following days are observed during this festival: *Anih jiza, Shokile, Mishi xaki, Mishi laghe, Kumove and Ahniju*. During this festival, both young and old would go to the field and dig up the path and after completing it, they will have a feast at the *aghuna – a* (the rest house that are constructed on the way to the fields where one can take rest). It was a taboo to take back the leftover of this feast to the house. As a result, they would keep it lined and say it's the share of the forest and then go back to the village.



**viii. Amutha:**

This is observed after Tixini and is observed for 8 days. But within this period, on some days people can go to the field. This is observed just before the harvest. This is observed so that the birds of the air and the insects won't spoil the grain before it is harvested. The ritual curses the amutu. In the Sümi calendar this month is known as *Amthaqhi*.

**ix. Ghileni:**

In this festival, either the *Amthau* or *Awou* will be the first to reap. The next day the villagers would observe the rituals for harvest. And in this connection, within the *Ghileni*, another festival called *Aghi Lukupusa* would be observed which is usually observed after the end of the harvest, but some observe it even before the end of the harvest. As it is said that, sometimes the harvest is much more bountiful after the observance of *Aghi Lukupusa*. If anything is to be sold, it has to be taken out beforehand. When the time comes for the harvest, the mother of the family would observe the *Aghashu*.

**x. Abichhi (Ahuna):**

There are many versions regarding the meaning of the word *Ahuna* and why this festival is so called. The *Ahuna* is celebrated when the harvest is completed. The *Abi* or huge grain storage baskets are filled to the brim with the new paddy and so the top part of the paddy is gathered and is pounded to remove the husk after which the new rice is cooked in a hollow shaft of bamboo from where the name of this festival is derived ie *Ahu* – shaft of bamboo and *na/ana* ie rice. When the paddy is being collected it is said that one has to be very careful while entering the storage basket and also while coming out and while collecting the rice, one is supposed to say “*chumpa shompamo no chupu shopu peniu*”<sup>53</sup> meaning .Two versions of the meaning of the name of this festival is gleaned from the above deliberation –

- a. *Ahu* which stands for top and *Na* which means cooked rice
- b. *Ahu* which stands for the shallow shaft of bamboo and *Na* meaning cooked rice.

When all the crops and paddy from the field is harvested, gathered and brought and stored in the house, preparation for observing *Ahuna* begins. The first ritual conducted is called '*Vatsavala Pinye*

---

<sup>53</sup> Hekhevi Achumi, *Sutsah Kutho*, S.P. Printers, Kohima, pg 56

*Chini*<sup>54</sup> where the ritual is observed in the village without plucking even a leaf and defiling self. The next ritual before the start of this festival a ritual called *Ahuvu*. The male members of the house would take an *Ayephu* (huge mat made of bamboo which is usually used for drying the paddy before it is pounded to remove the husk) and make an enclosure with it at the porch of their house. They would take everything they would need for two to three days. Women are not allowed to enter this enclosure. While observing this ritual, they would make all the utensils, bamboo water carriers as only fresh and undefiled water is to be used, wrappers for *Ahuna* and materials that they would be using during this festival as in this celebration, only new utensils are to be used. After this is over, they were supposed empty everything they had taken with them into the enclosure while coming out from the enclosure. After this is over, all the male members in the house would eat the *Akipichi* which is the uprooted root of a young tree and kept with a drink called *Ajicho* ie the unfiltered rice beer and a type of bean called *Akixi*. The drink is held on the right hand and while looking up they would say ‘*ino akipichi chu akeu hipau mipelo asiye kithe yehuni kelo kumghapu shipeniu akithi mithiu*’<sup>55</sup> (the year that I am eating this *akipichi* when we go to new agricultural area let it be a blessed one the one who hates death). After having done this he would shout ‘*eu he he*’ and taking a machete he would take the path and cut off the leaves and weeds which would cover his path. While coming back he would again yodel ‘*eu he he*’ and jump over the mound of leaves and weeds he had cut and covered his path. While jumping over it, if even a piece of leaf, weed or twig touch him, then the omen was said to be bad and so after coming back to the village, sanctification has to be performed the next day. But if nothing touches him while jumping over the mound, then it was considered to be a good omen. On the day of the *Ahuna*, the undiluted water has to be brought from the pond in a water carrying jar made of bamboo culms. The shaft of bamboo to be used for cooking the new rice has to be thoroughly cleaned. Only two types of leaves are to be used for cooking the *Ahuna* – either *tsuzukughu* (phrynium marantaceae) or *Saphaye* (*Aspidistra elatior*). The *tsuzukughu* was preferred over the *saphaye* as it grew faster and it seems its shoots also multiplies rapidly and so it was believed that in the same way, whoever uses this leaf would also grow and multiply. It is believed that only men should cook the *Ahuna* and the cooking has to be completed before the sun rises. The fire to be used was not to be from the hearth of the house but a new one has to be made and new fire has to be made using the fire making technique called *Ami kulla*. The materials used for this are dried sticks of *Rhus*, pliant bamboo which is used as thong, bamboo shavings for tinder. The *rhus*

---

<sup>54</sup> Ghoheto Zhimo, *Sümi Tiqhetini, Achine eno Baibel lo Kiqilu, self published, pg 44*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

stick is split and a small stone is placed in order to maintain the space between the two splits, in this the shavings is placed. The pliant bamboo is placed around the dry rhus and is pulled to and fro putting lots of pressure on it. Because of this pressure, heat is generated which when blown lights up the bamboo shavings and fire is produced. Only wood which are without blemish and straight has to be used. The *tsuzukughu* is rolled and placed inside the bamboo shaft and then a palm full of rice is poured into the bamboo shaft, after which water is poured into it. This is then placed in the hearth and cooked according to the number of males in the house and an extra for the spirit. When the rice is cooked, it is taken out from the bamboo shaft and cut into pieces and eaten. After the rice is taken, a big feast is held where animals are killed as well as the animals that were brought back from the hunt is also used. It is said that if there is any children in the house who is sick and the parents suspect that it is because some members of the family has been hurt due to any of their action, the parents would keep balls of rice on a plate by naming each rice ball taking the names of brother, sister, aunty, uncle, etc from both the parents' side. But the naming is done in their heart and not said openly. Then the sick child is asked to pick any ball of rice. Depending on which was picked, the parents would go to that person with some gifts and ask for forgiveness.

After all these are done, the empty bamboo shaft where the rice was cooked is taken and cut into two pieces in order to check the omen. The father would look towards the east and calling out any of the child's name for whom they want to see the omen, he would throw it up saying '*Akithi mithiu*'. If the bamboo falls with both the split sides facing the ground, it was considered to be a bad omen and so immediately the sanctification ritual had to be performed. But if the split bamboo falls with one split end facing the top and the other facing the ground then it was considered to be a good omen.

The next day after the *Ahuna* festival, they would go to the *Aghuno-a* (the resting place built in the best spot on the path leading to the fields from where the whole area of the cultivated fields are visible) and in the area being prepared for the new cultivation, a small clearing will be made in the area where the paddy was stored. A small bamboo will be cut and will be placed in the bamboo cup after which rice beer will be poured into it, this bamboo will be cut into two pieces. Taking the two split bamboo it will be thrown up saying '*khashi süye kuhulo akithi mithiu*' and if the split bamboo falls with one side facing the ground and one side facing the top, then it was a

sign that the year's cultivation would be bountiful but if it was the other way round ie both sides facing the top, then it was a sign that there would be scarcity and famine. Therefore, they would take a white dog and white rooster and go towards the area where the cultivation for that year is to be undertaken and perform the ritual for Litsapa the god of wealth. Another omen that is checked is when they cut open the shaft of bamboo and find pieces of coal, then it was believed that in the coming year when they go for cultivation there would be sicknesses but if nothing was found, it was believed that there would be no sicknesses.

Depending on the region and village, the *Ahuna* ritual varies. In some areas, only male members would cook the new rice but in some places the father would take the male child and cook the new rice and eat it along with the animals killed from the hunt and a bean called *akixi*.

This festival is observed in the month when the harvest is completed and in order to start using the new rice. During this festival, water from the field is collected in a banana leaf and brought home, then the leaves of the Oak tree is used to sprinkle the water on all the *Abi* in the house.

### **Ahuna festival today**

*Ahuna* is a festival rooted very deeply in the agricultural practices. It not only marks the start of utilising the new rice procured from the harvest and also performing rites and rituals for the next year's cultivation so that if the omen was bad then they could take precautionary measures in order to avoid such bad things from happening.

At present with most of the people giving up agricultural practices and also with the adoption of Christianity, the celebration is continued albeit the rituals and rites connected with it. In the olden days, this festival was male dominated wherein women did not have much to do with it but at present it is seen that the cooking of *Ahuna* which in the past was only concentrated among the male folks has shifted where women have become equal participants as observed during the festival at Suhoi village and others. Women help the men by cleaning the bamboo shafts, inserting the leaves inside the shaft and also the rice and water. They also take part in cooking

the feast. The *Ahuna* is celebrated with much pomp and gaiety wherein both men and women participate in the folk songs and dances and young people also take part in various games.



(Raw materials used for preparing the *Ahuna* (bamboo shaft, either *tsüzüküghü*/phrynium marantaceae or *Saphaye*/Aspidistra elatior, the *Ahuna* being cooked, the cooked *Ahuna* and food packets)

---

**xi. *Aphi kimitheni*:**

This is observed after the end of the harvest. During this festival, all the males whether young or old would go to the forest and sleep. The next day, they would get up very early and wash their face, clean the cotton that they put in their ear (*akinisüpha*), wash their clothes, wash the rope of

the Dao holder (*asükhi kixi*), and after taking bath they would shout “*hilau, hilau*” (here, here) and seek the blessing. After this, they would return to the village.

All these festivals and rituals and observance of Gennas were practiced depending on the village and some wouldn't observe all that has been mentioned.

### **Month of the Year According to Mishilimi Village**

1. *Shikushoqhi* (January) – this is the month for making rice beer and also for cutting meat. The rice beer called *Aboji* is drunk during this month. During this month if there is any sickness in the family and that has not received healing then they will find out the cause by checking whether it is the curse of the relatives alive or death. They will declare that they would conduct the following rituals and worship the spirit so that the sickness will be healed.

- a. *Aphisani* – feast of merit
- b. *Shishoni* – a feast which involves using rice beer
- c. *Awonigha*

By performing these rituals they would get healed of their sickness

2. *Aphuqhi* (February) – Aphilo kuwo qhi

This month is also known as performing folk dance month because in this month people who declared in the month of *Shikushoqhi* will give feast of merit and other rites and rituals. The person performing such a ritual will give a mithun to the villager which will be tied to the *Aqhethabo* and it will be killed and its meat will be distributed among the villagers.

3. *Phusheqhi* (March) – month of marriage/ *kula kuwoqhi*

This is the month for marriage. In the context of agriculture and farming this is called *phushe thesho* and in this month one uses the hoe to dig up the rough blocks of soil from the ground. Marriages take place in this month.

4. *Athiquqhi* (April) – the month for the first sowing of seeds in the field. According to the ritual, three elderly men along with two young boys would go to the forested area of the village and sow the first seeds. They would lift the seed of rice which means that in that year they would have bountiful harvest.

5. *Ghixuqhi* (May) –

This is the month of sowing seeds in the field. Before sowing the seed they would say this ‘*Hepho, Hepho, Hele, Hele*’ meaning ‘break, break, spill, spill’.

6. *Mozaqhi* (June) – *Achinebo qhi*

In this month they perform the ritual for the devil and during the course of the ritual they would stay at home for one day and go to the field the next day for 7 days. After this is done they start the process for the moza thishe mula wocheni.

7. *Tuluni Qhi* (July) – *Alukipe qhi/ alupekikili qhi*

Tuluni is the period of making peace with everyone and a time of rejoicing. This is also the time for the conducting of rituals for the crops in the field, for instance rituals are conducted for the root of the grains to reach deep into the earth to be able to get access to water, the leaves of the crops to grow healthy and bountifully so to bear bountiful harvest, the stalk of grain to bear the grains and the insects and worms to stay away from the crops.

According to the season the forefathers would observe this ritual in the seventh month but the day on which this is observed wouldn't be the same but according to the geographical condition which play an important in the seasons of the growth of the crops, different places would have different days to observe this ritual. When the grain stalks starts growing, in the fourth month and 17<sup>th</sup> day they would observe the ritual called *itimiji zasu* meaning preparing the rice beer for children and then the ritual for tuluni starts. Therefore, the tuluni is observed according to the time of the growth of the rice stalk that is why sometimes it is observed early and sometimes late. They would observe the cycle of the moon and then starting on the 17<sup>th</sup> day they would start the ritual which would last for 6 days.

- a. *Asüzani (Itimiji kuzani)* – this is the first day of tuluni ritual and on this day new rice would be taken and soaked to prepare the children’s rice beer. On this day the surroundings of the village is also cleaned.
- b. *Aghizani (Kichimiji kuzani)* – this is the second day of tuluni and this is the day for performing the ritual to have a bountiful harvest they would make the rice beer for the elders. On this day they also get ready for killing animals to be used during the ritual and they also forage for clean and big leaves to be used while killing the animals.
- c. *Ashi gheni* – this is the third day of the ritual and is the day for killing the animals which occurs throughout the village. There would be competition between colonies and Aloji groups as in who would kill the largest number of animals. On this day they would take a leaves called ayila and insert it into their door posts which means to stop the evil spirit from entering the house.
- d. *Alukipe ni/ Ani gheni* – this is the fourth day of the ritual and on this day everyone would feast and this is also the day when they would gift each other with rice beer and meat packets between families and relatives. The Aloji group would also feast together and those young men and women who would want to get married would also exchange meat with each other. .
- e. *Mucholani/ Alukipe tsala akiniu* - on this day, those in the village who are pure and without blemish, who knows about the movement of the sun and moon, who have knowledge about the rites and rituals would take clean rice beer and meat and would go to the field and would perform ritual in order for their villagers to have bountiful. They would talk to the grains and crops in the field in this way:  
*‘Oh! Okunghu no qu vulu ajulo hesu, Onipa no iko voxoto helo, anipa na mini boboi vopaghi, athina pofupolei vopaghilo, aghashu voghilo’* (O let your root reach the water under the earth, let your leaves grow and reach till my neck, let your leaves grow healthy and let the grain grow heavily on the rice stalk, let blessings come). They would say this and blow the rice beer which signifies the blocking off of the evil spirit from bringing death and misfortune. On this day those who have given feast of merit are honoured



- f. *Tughakhani* – this was the seventh day of the ritual. On this day everyone would take rest because they had completed all the rites and rituals.

8. *Kimine qhi* (August) – *tuxatini jumine keu qhi*

This is the month when all the crops in the field would grow and everyone would look with deep yearning at it.

During this month the following rituals are conducted for the worms and the insects in order to make sure they don't destroy the crops.

- a. *Amuthu ninga pini* – ritual against flies and worms so that they don't cover up the crops and destroy it.
- b. *Atukha pini* – ritual against insects so that they don't eat up the crops
- c. *Chijivekiqhi pini* – ritual against the rice stalk turning red and unhealthy.

After these rituals are completed they start clearing the rice stalks.

9. *Amutha qhi* (September) – *aghi lukiphe qhi*

This is the month when new grains are harvested. A woman from the village is chosen and she would perform the ritual of harvesting the first grains but before she does that the following works are done for her:

- a. Her firewood is cut
- b. Bambooshoot is foraged for her
- c. New thatch is brought and is replaced with her old one on her house.

After all these works are completed for her, she would go and harvest the first grain after which the entire village starts the process of harvesting.

10. *Ghileqhi* (October) – *ghileboqhi*

This is the month for harvesting a type of rice called *Khathaghi*. When harvest is to be done, one was supposed to go only to the field of the person from whose house one had taken food and rice beer. It was a genna to go to other people's field. During the harvest it was a genna to enter other

people's resting house in the field and also to set foot in others field. If one does any of these they wouldn't have a bountiful harvest.

11. *Ghughuniqhi* (November) – *iqho iqi chekeu qhi*

When all the grains have been brought home, a ritual called *Ghughuni* is performed. According to this ritual all the adult male in the villages would go around the village and sing a song.

12. *Suquni qhi* (December) – *alu yekiphe qhi/asuye kithe qhi*

During this month all the adult male members of the village would sleep in the forested area of the village. The next morning they would wake up early and take bath and clean themselves. While going home they would pluck the branches of a tree called Ajunene and with this the father would perform ritual to see the fortune of all his children for the entire year<sup>56</sup>

### **4.3. PERFORMING ARTS**

#### **4.3.1 Folk songs**

##### **Mukalimi village**

When it came to the folk songs, there are very few people who know how to sing as during olden days it was at the Aloji that they would gather together and sing together while working in the field.

The song sung

*Totimi Amikuchomi le*

*Lojilimi kivimi za timi pulo sutsa sache kupu ye*

*She nge tsala kipe tsuna sahu sawona che*

*Sahu sawona sache ye (forgot the rest)*

---

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Mrs Visali Wotsa, Mr Wokha Wotsa, Mr Mishe Wotsa and Mr Salumo Wotsa, Mishilimi Yepaqa Village, 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2020

The next song was sung for the Aloji limi by the Aloji pumi during the days when Aloji was practised in Moza le

*Oh Oh Oh o hishe lojilimi kidimi za timi*

*Oh Oh Oh o hishe timi pulana she sutsa sheche*

*Oh Oh Oh o she sutsa sache kupuni hishe ngi tsala*

*Oh Oh Oh o hishe ngi tsala kipe tsu na hishe ngino*

*Oh Oh Oh o hishe ngino sahu sawo na isache*

*Oh Oh o wona isache aye ozana oku*

*Oh Oh Oh O zana na okuputsalumo niye alu*

*Oh Oh Oh O hishe alu mughuna sa kiyi ani*

*Oh Oh Oh O hishe ngina hi ku atsuke la axa*

*Oh Oh Oh O hishe axa ithi ishe kini kimi*

*Oh Oh Oh O she kini kimi ni shini lojilimi mi*

*Oh Oh Oh O lojilimi ngi huni xe ushe loye*

*Oh Oh Oh O ha haye ni alosumo aza khi-u alosuni alo uwa*

*Oh oh*

(The *Aloji pumi* loved an *aloji limi* very much and while on the way to the field and back from the field he used to accompany the girl. But the girl's mother would scold the girl telling her to ask not to follow her. Therefore the girl asked him to stop accompanying her and so he sang this song saying that it was like wanting a fruit so much but not being able to pluck it)

### **Folk songs from Chisholimi**

There are two types of song sung during the performance of the folk dance, namely:

1. *Aphi le* – this is sung without using any words – ‘*Ha ... o ....Hoi*
2. *Akuza le* – this is sung by using lots of words.

*'imoroi himoroi remo retashoi* (this is the first word, it says that the elder brother you read out the lyrics and Asu Chella told Asu Shitu to start the song). But Asu Shitu didn't as they sang in praise of the sun and moon. There was also a song in praise of Rotokhi. Khumtsa the son of Rotokhi gave the feast for the Kungumi but the Kungumi sang in praise of Khumtsa's father Rotokhi. *'Ahoy le moi kiche le moi Rotokha..'*

1. ***Aphi le*** – sung without using any words. They will join hands together and jump around.

*'Hao.... aho....hoi...oooo*

This is *chetakeu le*

2. ***Akuza le*** – this is sung with words.

1<sup>st</sup> group ..... *'hie....hi'*

2<sup>nd</sup> group .... *'hiee .... hiee*

1<sup>st</sup> group ..... *hi morai hi morai hemo rota shoi*

2<sup>nd</sup> group .... *hi morai hi morai hemo reta shoi*

1<sup>st</sup> group ... *ho ... mi ....hoi... mi ... ho ...hoi*

2<sup>nd</sup> group .... *ho... mi ... hoi...mi...ho...oi*

(in praise of fire)... *ho..ma..hi..mi....hoi*

(in praise of rain) ... *ho...tu..yai....tuya...o...tuyai*

(in praise of Avabo) 1<sup>st</sup> group ..... *ho...pekhui...khuno..wuni...hesu..oi*

2<sup>nd</sup> group .. *ho....pekhui....khuno...o...wuni...heso...oi*

(in praise of Rotokhi)...*ahoi...le moi... kiche...lemoi...rotokhi...hi...e*

The narrator said he knows around 10-20 lejoles. But according to him, lejole is different from *thishole*. In *thishole* when it is being sung about Lojipumi and Lojilimi, it would go like this

*O...hoi...ilokeu....ho...puto...suni...ye...uju...cheni..hiyo...o....hoi*

*Ho...hoi...ilokeu...ho..ghunga....shini...ye..uju...cheni*

*Hiyo...o...hoi*

*O... hoi...ilokeu... shoinapumi...shini shimo..*

*Hiyo...o...hoi*

(I don't want to be a person who has to marry someone from another place but my father's will was this, my mother's will was this)

### ***Lejole***

*Ye....ilokeu....ngi...lokemi....aye...ngi                      kiloi...ngi                      kiloi...ha                      iloghi...kujo*  
*kepu....kumoyi...kujo...kujo...kujokepu...kumoye...ni*  
*kiloi...ni...kiloi...ha..iloghilo....kimili...pu...kumoye..*

(if you really want to get married to me, come inside my house, you don't have to feel ashamed)

He learned all these songs when he joined the elders in their aloji. During the Christmas time too, the elders would sing.

*Alula kuhu le /* songs sung in the field has different starting

### ***Letisa Le***

*Ha au...ipu na he....na ...he..i.. (ho ho)*

*Hocho (soprano)*

*Hai*

*Ashe La Le (bass type) – Ho...a...ipu...na...hi...na...hi*

### ***Lubha Le***

*Wonilu*

*O she aghapu likhi*

*O ghapu likhi wona nasu...u*

*O she asu aghile-i*

*O su aghila lai li kukumo o*

*O she kumuzu kivi*  
*O muzu kivi hi limi na ye o*  
*O she tusho kutau-u o*  
*O sa kutau lo hi she ye ku ani o*  
*O she ye kupu hi mihi o*  
*O kupu hi michi mula kighi o*  
*O she kighi shi ye hau o*  
*O hishi aghalimi na sa o*  
*O she asa kivi li o*  
*O sakivi la ye kuzu aye o*  
*O she ale lo kili o*  
*O ye la timi shipili mona o*  
*O she axamunu xoi o*  
*O xamunu xo olokughu o*  
*O she kughu hi cheli o*  
*O hichela ye ishi kumhu o*  
*O she kumha ale i o*  
*O ghuna a la nijeku ala o*  
*O ipuna he na he o*  
*O iza na he na he o*  
*O she hana hawa le o*  
*O na hawo le nilosu na hishe nil au aye oi*

***Mozale***

*Ashela le – ho...hoi...o..o..o..o..o..o..o..a..ishe...o..i*

*Ale kughu*

*O hoi she o hi she ghapu a likhi*

*Ghapu likhi wunasasu ghili*

*Wunanasu asu saghili*

*Sa aghila a hai kokumu*

*A hai kukumuzu kivi*

*Muzu kivi ihi ililimi*

*Ilimi na ye hoi shitu*

*O ishi tusho sho kutau lo*

*Tsa kutau lo huishe yeku*

*O hishi yeku yekupu himi*

*Kepu himi tichi mula keghi*

*Ti mula kighi kighishi agha*

*Ishi aghalimi na sa*

*Ghalimi asa sakiviu li*

*Tsakiviu li yekuzu le*

*Yekuzu aye hoishe khape*

*O ishi kape pe kuwotsu*

*Pe kuwotsu no hoishe agha*

*O hoishe axa xamunu xoi*

*Xamunu xo oholokughu*

*Oholokughu kughiu chilli*

*O hi chili nijeku alu*

*Nijeku alu hoishe*

*O ho ishe o hole ho*

*O ho la ihe oi*

### ***Phushele***

*Ho..a..ha..oi...o..au...o..hoi...she nisuna o hi asu yeghi asu ye na kutsu oi*

When Ashu Chisho established his village in this present location, there were 700 houses and they didn't have any close neighbours. On one side was the Yetsümi and on the other side was the Soshemi. When they went to attack the Soshemi, they saw that they were dying due to diarrhoea which was bloody. They slayed everyone including a man who was on his dead bed. They brought their heads and kept it on the *Aghukutsu Kughubo A* (place where the heads are kept). After a while, the heads started singing like this

*Aqhipe niyilo ayepe niyelo shoshemi na shoshemi pe niyelo.*

Another song was

*Aqeo pepe ayeo pepe nikujo li na a hila kighilou khiuna no na niki khe aghi tsumo na nanu pulana noki khe aghitsu pepe ninu azu na pe ula*

*Ninu na ami na kuqhili la*

Asu Kuhozu was a very rich man and during those days, rich people used to give feasts to each other. Ashu Vikhepu from Mishilimi village was also invited to the feast given by Ashu Kuhozu. He came with his entourage which consisted of speakers, singers and people expert in all fields. After the feast, the Chisholimi and Mishilimi kept singing to see who would win. Every type of song was sung but they were equal in everything. Therefore one old man of Chisholimi named Ashu Thachelo (the first Christian convert from this village) put his hand on his chin and was composing song in his heart and he started singing –



*Ashi kuha ani thono*

*Ashi kuha ani thono*

*Atsa na mu ni lokemi*

*Vishepu na putsa puwo ni thana.* (even if meat or rice isn't there, even if it is mere words alone, we will speak nicely to someone we like Vishepu and send him off.)

Because of this, the Chisholimi is believed to have won over the Mishilimi. Since Thachelo was responsible for this win, Ashu Kuhozu favoured him a lot it seems. Asu kuhozu is believed to have killed 80 mithuns in one day. He distributed one Mithun thigh to each house in his village.

### **Folk songs from Mishilimi**

#### ***Ayeküzü le***

This song was sung while spinning cotton by the women. This is a song about how a young girl sang a farewell song to her parents and got married. It talks about how she was living with her parents but the time for her to get married came and she has to bid farewell to her parents.

*“Yehoye – hoye (2 times)*

*Ye wolo – wolono ilili wolo*

*Yehoye – hoye*

*Ye zula zulano ilili zula*

*Yehoye – hoye*

*Ye timi no khashino ishe asu*

*Yehoye – hoye*

*Ye asu yeku niki ghungu yeku*

*Ye yeku – hu lono*

*Ye yeku hu lono no ishe ipu*

*Yehoye – hoye*

*Ye ipuno ipulo ishe loji*

*Yehoye – hoye*

*Ye loji kithe lo hulou ipi...*

*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye pi itino niza ishe ilho*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye ilhono iqhemi gholo sache*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye sache moni Ili ishe loji*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*She loji pumi noghi ishe ilu*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye ilu kulu laza cheqi alu*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye ilu abekutha lono losu*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*She losu loshi ishe aghau ku*  
*Yehoye - hoye*  
*She akujole pewoxono ipu*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*She ipu piye ishe iza piye*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ipuno iloji kusa ishi*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye loji kusa ishino kha aye*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye wola wola no ilili wolo*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Ye zula zulano ilili zula*  
*Yehoye – hoye*  
*Yehoye – hoye”*

1. *Ilomuka shelo*

The meaning of this song is as follows. A young man and a girl was planning to get married and during that time the boy used to visit the “iliki” (girls’ dormitory) and the girl sings this song expressing her desire to let the boy keep staying at the “iliki” with her and wishing he wouldn’t go.

*“Huwa – huwa  
Huwa wola wolano...huwo  
Huwa huwa ilili wola....huwa  
Huwa zula zula no....huwa  
Huwa ilili zu la ...huwa huwa  
Huwa ilomuka shelo huwa...huwa  
Huwa ilomuka niqhe huwa...Huwa  
Huwa Ni qhelimi kula...huwa huwa  
Huwa kula kuwoqhi...Huwa huwa  
Huqhi paghi uaye...Huwa huwa  
Huwa qhiwo kulu – uno huwa huwa  
Huwa suni alo nili...huwa huwa  
Ho nili kilo alo...huwa huwa  
Huwo huwo wola wola no huwo  
Huwo ilili wola...huwo  
Huwo zula zulano...huwo  
Huwo ilili zula ...huwo”*

2. *Thighale:*

This is a song sung by the womenfolk while working in the field. They would work behind the men folk just before the paddy is sown. The soil is beaten so that it becomes very fine and suitable for sowing.

*“Oho he achholeu  
Oh ishio ahe, oh ho ohe oi  
Hiyelo ho ahe*

*Oh achholiu – I ah lothaliu oh he*  
*Oh kupuli sutsa, oh navilo pinha*  
*Oh pinaliu ingui*  
*Oh sache la – I, nakulu Lu sahe*  
*Ishe chehu lapa, oh lap aghuna lo*  
*Oh Alosu sutsa, oh navilo pinha*  
*Oh lojilimi Ni, oh kujona kiu*  
*Oh kiu dolono, oh kimine Lu hie*  
*Oh Na ishe asa, oh asakukholo*  
*Oh kimine luche, oh atampui, oh na*  
*Ishe umhi*  
*Oh kuchopi saxo, oh na ishe aju*  
*Oh ajuhu lono, oh na ishe ale*  
*Oh aleu nanu, oh mugha shi tsulo*  
*Oh ishe o oho, oh ho oho o I*  
*Hiyelo ohe ahe”*

### **Folk Songs from Natsümi**

1. *Cheho ashe la le:*

When their villagers are to start sowing, they would sing:

*Ooo che o che ho ooo ishe*

2. *Zukuhu chi le*

This is a song in contemplation of a girl who was washed away by the waters of the Doyang river or Tapu.

*Ho o o ho che ha ishe na Aju hu fute sho imulo na qo kighi pe qhomla la ye ashi kusa*  
*aghu kusa*

(The water came from the top and I couldn't catch hold of you and it washed you away and if it was the animals then I would have taken revenge for you but it is the water of the river so I am unable to do anything about it). This is sung by men.

Women will sing Thaghale which is *o ho o ho o o o o* (sung when the men had dug up and cleared the field and women would take an agricultural tool called 'Athughasu' and beat on the hard soil to smoothen it in order to make it suitable for sowing the seed.

They would sing this when they are cleaning the field of the weeds for the first time

*o ho o hiye lo o a o a hiye lo*

during the olden days when they practised Aloji even if they belonged to the same Aloji, men and women would sing different songs while working in the field.

### **Folk song from Hebolimi village**

One song sung and passed down from the forefathers was about Shikhuli and Hotose. They loved each other very much and wanted to marry each other. But Hotose might have been from a poor family, therefore Shikhuli's brothers did not agree to the marriage proposal of Hotose. During those days, it was the aim of most parents to marry off their daughter to well off families. After this, Hotose is believed to have gone towards Roto-Phili area. The Narrator isn't sure where Hotose settled, whether it is at Rotomi or Philimi. He had enquired from Philimi about Hotose and his descendants but he was told that there were no descendants of Hotose. As for Rotomi, he couldn't make any queries as he didn't know anyone from that village. It is said that Shikhuli had very long hair and it reached below her ankle. Therefore, Hotose who had gone to Roto-Phili area gathered his friends and told them that he is very frustrated therefore he wants to go and slay Shikhuli and atleast bring her hair to keep near his pillow. He along with his friends went to Hebolimi. On reaching, he told his friends to wait for him near the garden and he would go first and check if it is safe for them to come as he knew where all the *Aghupua* was. When he reached Shikhuli's house, he saw her spinning cotton (even today this village practise the cultivation of indigenous cotton and weaving cotton cloth) and singing the '*Xeshole*' remembering Hotose. Hearing this song, Hotose thought to himself that though he has left her and gone away she was still remembering him and singing in memory of him so why would he slay her. Then he went

back to his friends and told them that there were men everywhere therefore it was not safe for them to go and slay her so they should go back.

### **Folk Song from Surumi**

Mr Hekiye said that he knows lejole and his villagers knew many songs but there were not many singers because most of the people who knew the songs were old and the young people on their part doesn't know such songs. There are times he feels that even if the young people doesn't know how to sing, the older people like him on their part should write down the lyrics of these songs because these were songs dedicated to one another and were very poignant. In his younger days, he would also sing lejole. On requesting him to sing lejole and also relay the meaning of the song, he was doubtful because he said that he could not remember many of the songs that he used to sing. One song he sung was

*'Axeoo iku kaju no ileni akiu akithina ku khoni ileni kughau*

*Kugha izuni izuni qhelimi tsayeo tsaye nishou ilhou ayeo'*

Axeo refers to husband and wife, one such couple used to tell each other that they would not part from each other while alive and only in death would they part. But the husband started seeing another lady and married her and left his first wife. But one day he remembered the promise that he and his first wife made to each other and sang this song remembering his first wife.

The moral of this song is that in people's life there are people who doesn't stick with their first husband/wife and remarries but according to elders whoever one may marry, one always look back and remember their first wife or husband.

To the query as to how many songs he could remember - lyrics, tune, etc, he was of the view that he had forgotten almost all the songs. One reason he left singing the folk songs was because these songs were usually sung for a boy or a girl or in honour of some important people and not in praise of God. Therefore when he joined the revival church, he came to know that God was not in favour of singing such songs. In the olden days, the elderly people and the Teachers of NCRC and the Angami believers also came to their village and told them about what God had

directed them to do or not to do. Apu Rusovi (Angami) and others told them that singing folk songs were not favoured by God as it made him unhappy as these songs were not sung in praise of God but people praising and singing for each other, therefore they should not sing these folk songs. Even singing Christian songs in the tune of the folk songs displeased God is what they were told, therefore they even stopped putting Christian lyrics in folk tunes and singing it at the church because God says that we should praise Him with all our breath but when we sing folk songs we start praising rich people, rulers, boys, girls, etc and not praising God. Therefore, this displeased God. Therefore they were told to stop singing folk songs and so they decided to stop singing folk songs. It has been 36 years since he joined the revival church, therefore 36 years since he stopped singing which has resulted in him forgetting the folk songs.

#### **4.4. SOCIAL PRACTICES, RITES AND RITUALS**

These are said to be habitual events that structure the lives of communities and groups and are shared and relevant to many of the members of the community. They reaffirm the identity of those who practise them. These events help to mark the passing of the seasons, events in agriculture or the stages of a person's life. These practices shape the everyday life of the people. For the Sümi Naga, rites and rituals and taboos marked their everyday life and it can be said that their lives revolved around these social practices, rituals and festive events. In order to understand this, the social practices, rituals and events have been categorised below:

##### **4.4.1. Rites and Rituals**

###### **Rites and Rituals at Natsümi village:**

The rites and rituals that were documented at Natsümi village are mentioned below:

###### **Sowing ritual:**

When it was time to sow seed, it was a taboo to burn chillies and dried fish in the kitchen hearth as it was feared that the seed sown wouldn't grow. Since dried fish isn't commonly produced in

the Sümi region even today when they were asked as to where they procured dried fish, they couldn't trace from where their forefathers got it.

It was a taboo to eat the meat of animals like chicken, cow, dog during the sowing season. Only pork could be eaten. The consumption of the meat restricted during sowing was restricted even during the harvest. The last person to complete the sowing would throw his spade across the area where sowing hasn't been completed to show that he has completed sowing in order to eat the meats. Unless he did so, he couldn't eat the restricted meats.

### ***Tsutsuqi-Pughuqihi***

During the *Tsutsuqi* ritual, women were not supposed to wash their hair. If they did so, it was believed that heavy storm would come and destroy the crops. The Narrator said that he remembers an instance when their village was conducting this ritual. He said that one woman whose name he could not exactly remember washed her hair which resulted in the onset of heavy wind which destroyed their crops as well as their neighbouring village Awohumi's crops too. Therefore, one man from Awohumi named Apu Mixeni jestingly said that these NatSümi people did not conduct the *Tsutsuqi* ritual properly due to which even our crops also got destroyed. The reason why even hairs could not be washed was because the day for conducting this ritual was to be a pure day of offering prayers to the 'One' and activity like washing hair defiled the purity and holiness of this day.

Men were prohibited from going to the forest during this ritual as if they did so, storms would come and destroy the crops.

### **Harvest ritual**

When harvest is about to start, they would take some mounds of meat and making a container out of the giant bamboo (*Dendrocalamus Giganteus Munro*) or *Aphobo*, they would place the meat mixed with salt in this container. As the harvest starts, everyday a piece of meat from this container would be taken and put into the curry. If the meat was about to get over before the completion of harvest, a piece of meat would be left in this container. After the harvest is



completed and the grain is brought home, the mother of the house would take a handful of rice from all the grain storing baskets in the house and would cook the rice, crabs would be brought from the river and would be cooked along with the last piece of meat from the container. Only after consuming this, the new rice can be eaten.

Before the harvest starts, the *Kukami* (chief) would kill a pig and cut the meat into pieces and would distribute it to all the houses in the village. They would take five small pieces of meat and wrap it in banana leaf (*Akughu*). Taking this, they would climb to the top of house and they would shout ‘*O! Sumghusuna sumghusunamu O! Khungkhu kuza kuha kuha vo chulo*’. This was a call for blessing as harvest was to start. After this, the *Amthau* would go to his field and even if the grains are not ripe enough to be harvested, he would pluck some leaves and put it in his carrying basket and heave as if he is carrying a heavy load and say ‘*this grain is so heavy*’ and go home. This was done so that the villagers would have a bountiful harvest. This ritual is called ‘*Amtha*’. After this is done, the *Kukami* would go to the *Amthau*’s field and even if the grains are not yet ripe, they would pluck the rice off its stalk and fill one basket full of grain, it is to be noted that the stalk of grain is not cut down. Only after the *Kukami* perform this act can the harvest start. Even if the *Amthau* completes the *Amtha* ritual without the *Kukami* performing this act, the harvest cannot start. All these rituals are performed at dawn before people get up as it was a taboo to speak or meet anyone while these rituals are to be performed.

### **Significance of Tuluni festival and pre Tuluni ritual**

Tuluni was not just a festival but a very important ritual as without this ritual, it wouldn’t be possible to determine the day of sowing, *Amtha* and harvest. And without these rituals, they could not eat as without being able to determine such important events in the absence of calendars and without knowledge about seasons, it would not be possible to determine when to sow or reap. They would count the day for Tuluni by reading the cycle of the moon (needs further research).

Before celebrating Tuluni, a ritual called ‘*Alu Kini*’ is performed where either an egg or a chick is taken to the field. Three *ayeghu* is cut and placed on the ground in a three pronged position

and *awu khogho* (basket made of bamboo for keeping chicken) is placed on this and inside this chicken basket the chick/egg would be placed and the person would shout ‘*O! Nge akila unguphu ashi shi aji shipe unmula ngi chini unropa mini ixo ato bi ungakumhu qi iq i azhu she ishe aghi nei*’ roughly translated as ‘*I will go home and kill animals so you let your leaves grow and touch the mountain top and let your roots grow and touch the waters. This was told to the stalks of grain*’. After this ritual is performed they would go back home and celebrate Tuluni.

### **Rites and rituals from Mishilimi**

According to the Mishilimi, after the Tuluni is observed/celebrated will be the *Kimne qhi* meaning the month where there will be no old crops or new crops to eat as whatever old crops were there would be sown and the new ones wouldn’t be ready to be eaten. Therefore people would usually be craving for things to eat.

This is followed by the *atsala kusu pini*. During the observation of this ritual, no one is allowed to laugh nor play around. They are supposed to quietly gather together and drink rice beer. If children are seen playing together they are reprimanded for that. It is believed that people who play around on this day will have their rice stalks wilting away and for those who observe this ritual diligently, their rice stalks will be very healthy and strong.

#### *1. Tughami ni pini*

This is observed for the second time

#### *2. The atsala kusu pini is also observed for the second time*

When *Amtha Qhi* starts, it is a taboo to pluck even leaves from another person’s field. One can take from one’s own field but it is a taboo to take anything from another person’s field. This is because the person in whose field someone else has plucked will be prevented from having a bountiful harvest. Such person can also be fined.

During the time of harvest, if someone ventures into another person’s field by mistake where harvest is taking place, that person will not be able to leave that field for that day. He/she will have to stay but in the border of the field and not within the field. Only at the end of the day, when harvest is done for the day and the grains to be taken home are filled up in the carrying

baskets, that person will be called and he/she can also go home. In the case the person entered someone's field which is being harvested but leaves without staying back, the next day he has to stay at home without eating or drinking and without venturing out anywhere else till the person whose field he entered comes back from his field. This is done in order to prevent the other person from not having a bountiful harvest.

During the harvest, when grains are being brought home, they won't even drink rice beer. While entering the house, the wife with her carrying basket strapped on her head will enter from her back saying '*Chi Chi Chi*'. This is meant to signify trampling on the rat and killing it so that the rat doesn't eat up the grain in the storage baskets.

After the husband and wife eat their food, the people who went to work at their field will come and drink rice beer.

After the harvest, the *Ghoghoni* is observed. After this is observed, an old man will take a carrying basket and a basket called *Kusuvu* on one hand and *Alhajehu* (an empty tin used for storing oil) and will go around the village. Depending on the area which was cultivated in that particular year, the colony in that vicinity will take on the responsibility of clearing the path leading to the field and in case the area has never been cultivated they will construct a new path towards the field. Therefore this old man will go around the village and except the area who cleared the path, other people will all give rice to the old man. This rice will be collected and will be sold. With the money, they will buy an animal which will be cut and its meat would be called '*Alaghe shi*'. This meat is given to each male member and those families with many male members will get more meat but even if there is only one male in a family and he gets his share of meat, he will cut it up and even if it is as small as a finger, it will be distributed to all the relatives to taste. Nowadays there is no longer the practise of *Alaghe* nor the practise of collecting rice for *Alaghe* as people are no longer honest. Not everyone would come for the *Alaghe* but when it is time for the meat, everyone would turn up.

During the *Liphi*, *Atiqulu* is kept aside and they will make rice beer and keep it to be used at the Iliki. The women will be spinning cotton at the Iliki and the men from Apuki will come and stay with them and will drink rice beer.

Then comes the *Ghixuni*. Before this ritual starts, all the women will wash their hair. After the ritual starts women are not allowed to wash their hair nor comb their hair till the ritual ends. If they wash or comb their hair, it is believed that the water formed from the rain will flow into the field and will destroy the field making lines like the teeth of the comb.

While throwing seed in the field, they would say ‘*asu ngu lho, atu ngu lho, amu lo lhopiqhe, apu lhotichi*’ meaning let the rice grow even on the wood and stone but for the weeds let it not grow anywhere.

They would eat *Ashuu* when there was scarcity of rice especially among those who didn’t have enough to eat.

### **Rites and rituals of Ighanumi village**

After the end of the *Suquni*, they will start building the thatch house. After this, they will search for a chicken that is without any blemish. On finding it, they will take it to the Awou’s house and keep it there for the night. The next morning, they will release the chicken on the path that leads to the field. They will study all the action of the chicken and make predictions accordingly. If the chicken pass stool above the path then it will be a sign of bountiful harvest in that part and if the chicken pass stool below the path, then the areas below the path will have bountiful harvest. If the chicken digs up the earth then it is a sign that there will be lots of weeds in the field that year. If the chicken turns his head here and there, it would indicate the fear of bad weather or bad season. If the chicken pecks on sticks, then it means their village will have *Ashisho* – lots of meat. If the chicken cleans its feather then it means that *Apine Munoche*. This action is similar to taking bath and cleaning the body.

After this ritual is completed, the villagers would give 'Avusa' (chicken's share) whether it is hunted meat or the meat killed for other purpose. The meat will be huge chunks. Similar meat is also given to the Awou. After completing these rituals, they will burn the area that has been cleared up for cultivation. This will be followed by a ritual called *Aghipine* and *Apitiqu Chine*. After these, they will sow the seeds in the field followed by *Aghiashupine*. When the sowing is over, they will observe the *Ghixuni*. They are always busy throughout the year. Once the rice stalks have grown, they will go for the first *Moza*. When the time comes for the second *Moza*, it will be the time for the Tuluni. He was not sure whether it was during the Tuluni or Tixini but during that time, the men living at the Apuki would carry very clean water from the village pond. On that day, before any villager gets up, they will make sure to be the first one to carry the water from the pond. They will not take it to their respective homes but will keep it in one place. That evening they will stay in the forested area near the village by burning the bamboo leaves. The next morning they will go in search of *Asaqhimi* who would come and wash his hands using the clean water that was brought from the pond the previous day by the men. The *Asaqhimi* will check the fortune of the mountains, fields, etc.

On the day of *Alu Chine*, the feast giver will take a *Ayeghubo* and will pierce it into the ground. Taking a clean banana leaf, the *Ayeghubo* will be sliced into two halves and the banana leaf will be placed in between. After this, they will take rice beer and blow over it. This ritual is performed so that the rats, insects, birds, etc will not destroy the crops. After completing this, they would shout saying '*Chou nge qeti nge woluchaketi*' (*Chou* I am just, I am goind inside) and hearing this, those who are not *Lomomi* would also erect this type of stick with leaf. After completing this ritual, they would leave the field without doing any other work.

### ***Amtha Pine***

This is the last pine and once the Asheshuu declare the *Amtha Pine*, no villager is supposed to make any loud announcements or loud noises in the village. It was a taboo. Throughout the harvest season this will be the norm.

When they reach the *Asu Tuqu*, it signifies the coming of new year. There were lots of *apine* (ritual days) in a year, so numerous that it was difficult to keep a pace with it. But there were elders in the village who would study the cycle of the moon and count the days and decide which *apine* (ritualistic day) falls on which day.

According to Alu, he couldn't ascertain how the counting is done, therefore he had asked some other men who had knowledge about these to sit together and discuss it but they couldn't sit together till today. Therefore on being told that when they are no more, no one would have such knowledge, therefore he was requested to share what he could recollect. For the entire Sümi, the official Tuluni is celebrated on 8<sup>th</sup> July but their village like most of the Sümi Aphuyemi villages doesn't celebrate it on this day. Instead they rely on traditional counting method and celebrate it on that day which falls somewhere after the 20<sup>th</sup> of July.

There was only one person in the village whose job was to bury their death. Since no other person would do this job, he would be given a piece of land.

***Atiquü:*** this person is responsible for starting the sowing. He will conduct rituals before the sowing starts. He would near any fruit bearing tree and would bury some grains. A fence would be made around it so that nothing can destroy it. The next day, all the villagers will go and sow the seeds in their field. They would cook beans (*akixi*) without salt and have it. This was done for fear of insects, birds and other s eating up the seed.

### **Rites and rituals of Mukalimi village:**

*Atiqu* – this means ritual before sowing the seed. Before the seed is sown, this ritual is performed. No one except the Atiquu is allowed to go out of the village. Because it was believed that if anyone ventures out of their homes and go to the field or jungle, it affects the process of sowing and growth of the rice.

*Amtha* – this is the ritual performed before the harvest. The place where the first seed was sown by the Atiqu is the spot where the rice from the stalk will be gathered and will put it in the

carrying basket. Though it is just a stalk of rice, the Amthau will carry it like he is carrying a basket full of rice and carry it home. Even if he meet people on the way, he isn't supposed to talk to anyone. It was a taboo for the Atiqu and Amthau to eat anything made with chilli and salt.

*Alosu/Alhaqu/Amutu/Ami Pine* – when these rituals are performed, no one is allowed to go to the field.

### **Rites and rituals from Chisholimi**

The narrator's (Kivixe) father was engaged in performing rites and rituals, therefore he also have knowledge of some of them namely *aghixu chine*, *Luhukiphre Chine*, *Akichine ji* were done as he used to perform the *Amtha*. It means when sowing is to be done the next day, that night *Aghunasu*, *Aghipiti* would be put in *Asutiqhe* and would leave in the middle of the night. He doesn't know where exactly it was buried but it was buried in the area where their villagers were cultivating in that particular year. After this, the villagers will sow the seed.

### ***Asüyekiphe***

Before the start of the *Luu*, they would cut down all the *Ayeghu* but before doing that the *Amthau* would inform the *Kukami* to announce to the villagers whether everyone have completed the harvest. When it has been confirmed that everyone have completed the harvest, they will cut all the *Ayeghu* and bring it home. After that the men will go to the *Aghuno-a* and perform the *Luu* and they will make a fire, if the smoke goes towards the direction of the village, then it will be a sign that in that particular year, their villagers would have bountiful harvest. If the smoke goes towards the direction of the field or jungle then it would be a sign that the villagers wouldn't have a bountiful harvest.

### ***Akichine Ji***

In the area below the house (*Akisqueho*) they will make a small makeshift area to prepare the rice beer. Women were not allowed to come here. Men would drink rice beer here.

### *Aluhula Ghe/Tixilaghe*

The male from all the aloji would go according to their aloji to the main path and will each kill a male pig and have a feast. Women weren't allowed to come to this. The meat of the pig wasn't supposed to be carried home nor given to women. Whatever leftover meat they have was supposed to be burned and they were supposed to go back home empty handed.

The *Lapuu (Asheshuu)* would utter various chants while performing rituals. A piglet would be brought specifically for the *Lapuu*. After the rites and rituals is done, they would drop meat and rice for the devils to eat.

Whatever wild animals are hunted during this period wouldn't be eaten but the meat will be dried and will be consumed only after the *Luu* is over.

The Narrator Kivixe's father used to be the *Amthau*. The villagers would give him a piglet for performing the *Amtha chine*. He would take it inside his house and will close the door. None of his children will be allowed to go outside till the completion of this ritual. The children will not be allowed to eat the meat or food till the father completes the ritual inside the house. He will take pieces of liver and throw it on the *Amqha*, east and west and in the *Alu Kughu* pieces of meat will be wrapped and will be tied to the *Aki Katsu* and on the sides of the house.

According to Heqhezu of the same village, In order to start the *Ghixu* (sowing of seed) one elderly man will take some of the seeds that will be sown (every variety of crop seeds that will be calculated that year). He will take all these and go to the area that is to be cultivated that year and crossing the *Aghuno-a* (resting place on the way to the fields), he will bury it. After this, one elderly man will sow the first seed in the field after which the whole village start sowing.

When the grains are ripe and ready to be harvested, the *Awou* or someone rich in the village will be the first to harvest. After this, all the *Alojis* will also start harvesting. During the olden days, the *Kukami* would make announcements and they will observe *Ghixuni*, *Tuluni* and they would also indicate which area is to be cultivated and anyone cultivating beyond the demarcated area



will be cursed saying ‘*veche ipevekeu ye shipemoni, paye aghina, asuna pithi pemo, mini pemo*’ (the one who comes beyond the demarcated area will not be able to bear good harvest of rice and millets).

During the olden days, there were some areas which were infested with evil spirit who would kill people too. There was an old man named asu Kuhozu who wanted to cultivate this area. It is said that he took the villagers here and sang the ‘*Luule*’ (to sing this song, all the men will dress up in the complete traditional attire and will make fire at the Aghuno-a and they will sing the *Luule* and go to their respective field and then go back home. After singing the *Luule* he didn’t cultivate this field but cultivated another field. Next year when this area was cultivated, it is said that there was no more sickness or death as it was believed that the evil spirit was fooled.

When a new area is to be cultivated, they would go and sing the *Luule* and make a fire at the Aghuno-a and check their respective area to be cultivated. No one was supposed to go beyond the demarcated area marked out for that year’s cultivation. There would be *Ghixu*, 3 times *Moza* and then harvest.

When they are going to any place that is considered to be an evil place where the evil spirit are believed to even kill humans, all the male would go to this place. During those days they wore a piece of cloth covering only the front of their private part called ‘*Asholha mini*’, they would move it towards the back and would display their private parts to the evil spirits. It was believed that while the evil spirits were laughing at them, they would harvest the crops and leave.

### **Rites and rituals from Hebolimi village**

According to Mighishe Swu, their forefathers were the followers of *Tugha Chine*. After the harvest is done, *Susheni* is observed. The forefathers believed and used to say that those who were going to die next year - their spirit would leave for the land of dead during the *Susheni*.

After this comes the *Ahuna* as it is generally known. Their village call it as *Abichipine* (*Abi* is the huge storage baskets for storing grains) after the harvest is done all the *Abis* are filled to the

brim, therefore they will conduct a ritual in order to scoop out grain from the Abi. For this ritual, new rice beer is prepared and along with rice, this is placed in the Abi. A piglet is also killed on this occasion.

After this is the *Ashupitiqu* – new rice beer is prepared and two young men will go to the field and do the *Apitiqu* and when they come back home, the elders will join and they will drink the newly prepared rice beer together.

After this, *Auphe* – one which is blemish free/ pure rooster will be taken and they will take it along the path of the field in the *Aghuna-A* (resting shade along the path leading to the field) where they will first clear the area before releasing the rooster. There will be a *Akuhukututau* and *Athumsu Kimcheu*, two person will prepare rice beer and there will be an old man who will release the rooster. Before releasing, he will say this ‘*hai nighami hipa tola yehu akeula khashi aghipiti, aghibo pivi, aghipivi, athipivi, anika ikopivi tishi puzu atsala kivi nitsu tishiana nighami pulana amu kulu shipeni. Khashi mpela ashi yilikeu kumghakeu shilupeni. Kithi kuha shichini, ghuzha ghugha shichini, ashu puha, angu puhana aghami pelana mughakeu shipeni.*’ (this year as our village is cultivating on this mountain, let the seed of grains, stalk of rice, let the leaves grow healthy, and give us good days so that our village can have bountiful harvest. This years let our villager get blessings in hunting. Taboo to have death, taboo to have injuries, and let the villagers have ablessed year). After this, he will release the rooster. If the rooster straightaway catches any insect, then it is believed that in that year the villagers will have good hunting. If the rooster lifts its head and look here and there then that is the sign of the fear of enemies. If the rooster pecks his own feet, then that is the fear of people getting injured. If the rooster raises its head and starts crowing, then that year there will be immoral activities among the young people in the village.

*Atiquni* - When the grain is ripe, there will be *Amutha*. The Amuthau will do the ritual and then he will scrap some grain from the stalk and carry it home. On reaching home, he will close his door and place the grain in the Abi. It was a taboo for him to talk to anyone. He will prepare new rice beer and while drinking he will say ‘hai, let my village have bountiful harvest, *Aqhapivi*,

*Anipivi* and let the villagers be blessed, let no one get injured and let everyone be happy and prosperous. Let the storage basket (*Abi*) be filled.’

After this is done, he will eat food and come out of his house the next day. On the day of *Atiquni/Amutha*, no one will venture out of their homes.

During the monsoon season, *Amutu* (insect that eats up the rice stalk) comes and destroy the grain, therefore a ritual called *Amutupine*. All the male of the village will go to the *Aghuna-a* and will shout out which in Sümi is called *Huti sünani*. The eldest among them will say

‘*ishi tsalalo timi khiuna tugha kichela kapeu ni keno papula mugha chini, wo thui*’

‘*Ishi tsalalo timi khumu nginga ngigha bumula imu ishi tsala vechewono aluzalo amutu pithe nginga hipaqo aghi kithi sasu thi aghi kusa sasu ha ishipuzu ngi luzala amutu pithe nginga hipaqo papulana ngi ghibo kulhu chini*’

(On this day, whoever ventures out to the field or forest, it is a taboo for him to get any blessings and they will be cursed.

On this day, nobody should touch the worms or insects but through this day, in our area, the worms, *Amutu*, on this moonless night, let it die with the death of the moon, let it disappear with the disappearance of the moon since this is observed on moonless nights and it is taboo for the *Amutu* to destroy the grains in our fields)

In the olden days during the *Aphuwo* (ritual of establishing new village), the forefathers would wear complete war attire and ornaments. Before going to the new proposed village site, they would stay in the nearby jungle where water is available and they would perform all the rituals here. After this the *Awou* who is in charge of performing all the rites and rituals in the village and the *Atiqumthau* who will perform the *Apitiqu* and *Atha* rituals will complete all the rituals. After this is done, they will go to the new village in their full traditional attire (*Aghunanu*) and will surround the site and while shouting war cries, they will sing the *Aghule* (war song) and shout ‘*eo he he*’ and will enact their actions during the war. When Hebo village was established, they followed all the rituals or the *Aphuwo chine*. Since they had all migrated together from

Khezhakeno, Chisho, Chishi were also there with their whole clan members. The first site where the Hebolimi established their village was Phuyeqa. When Aphuwo Chine was to be conducted for setting up Hebolimi village, Hebo was the Awou, Chishi was given the responsibility of carving out a pond and Chisho was to dig the *Adaho* (a path prepared out of fear of enemy). After this Chisho went and established the Chisholimi village, from there Chishi went a little further and established Chishilimi village. From Chishilimi village, some migrated and went and established Sukomi and Matizumi.

#### **4.4.2 Social Practices - Feast of Merit (*Aphikusa*):**

##### **Origin of the Feast of Merit (Natsümi version):**

The first *Tüghami Phikusa* occurred at Chisholimi village. A young boy names Khumtsa disappeared from the village and was believed to have been living with the devils. In the ninth year of his disappearance, one night there was a knock on his parents door and the parents heard someone saying ‘Father! Mother! I have come home today’. During the olden days the people were very scared of the devils and so no one would venture out or open their doors at night. So even though the parents heard the knocking and someone calling them they thought that it was a devil and so did not open the door. But the knocking continued and the person kept saying ‘I am your son Khumtsa and I have come home today’. Hearing this, the parents spoke to each other and said ‘our son Khumtsa disappeared for 9 years and this person is saying he is our son Khumtsa and he sounds exactly like our son and he is even calling us by our names so let us open the door’. Saying this, they opened the door and were surprised to see their son Khumtsa standing at their door. They immediately asked him where he had been for the last nine years and he told them that he had been living with the devils. Khumtsa then asked his parents to give the feast of merit or the *Tughami Phikusa*. But his parents told him that they have nothing like animals, grain or money to perform such a huge feast. Khumtsa told his parents that he would arrange everything so they shouldn’t worry and just give their consent. His parents were not immediately convinced and they asked him how when he was lost for the last nine years could he be in a capacity to provide all the materials needed for the feast. But Khumtsa brought everything needed for the feast like grain, animals because he was living with the devils and he

got it from them. On the day of the feast when animals were to be killed, Khumtsa asked his parents to take each animal separately and kill it in the backyard. But the people who were given the charge of killing the animals for the feast killed it amidst the herd and so all the animals ran away. When his parents reported this to Khumtsa he reprimanded them for not listening to his advice but he told them not to worry and he went and brought back all the animals. This time around they heeded his instruction and the feast was underway. After the food and wine were ready even the devils came to join in the feast. Khumtsa told his parents not to go or look outside and his parents could hear lots of noises but no one was visible. Leaving the door half open they sent out rice, meat and wine and every time there would be yelling and shouts and the food items would disappear into thin air. After eating the food, the devils started singing and it is called the first song for feast of merit '*O! male tasho hike aghuzaqhalo ho Khakhu nasa*' meaning in the house of Khakhu, the feast of merit was given. After this, they went towards Mudutsugho and while they were climbing the mountain, Khumtsa asked his parents to look at them donned in the full traditional attire and his parents were amazed to see the wonderful sight. From then on, the feast of merit began.

**Origin of Feast of merit as narrated by Yezughe (Ashu Rotokhi clan member) from Chisholimi village:**

Before Asu Hebo, Chisho and Chishi, he doesn't know how the rites and rituals. Ashu Chisho along with Ashu Rotokhi came and settled here at Chisholimi. Ashu Rotokhi's son was Khumtsa and his son was Ali. Some Eastern Sümi are claiming that Ali was a girl but that isn't true. According to the forefathers, Ashu Khumtsa took his son Ali for hunting (from here itself, it is clear that Ali was a boy as from olden times till today, girls were never taken for hunting). When they reached the place where they were to set their traps, they were separated by a big wood, therefore Khumtsa told Ali to set the trap and come out. He kept waiting for his son but he didn't come, therefore he turned towards the place where he last saw his son Ali but he couldn't see him. Therefore he kept calling out for his son but he didn't get any response and so Ashu Khumtsa was heartbroken and he cried and went back home without his son. That night when Ashu Khumtsa fell asleep, he met Ali in his dreams who told him '*O Ipu (O my father) I was standing just next to you but the Kungumi told me not to speak to you, therefore I didn't speak to*

you. Then the *Kungumi* asked me to stay with them, so I am going to live with them from now onwards and I won't be coming back anymore.' After this, Ali started living with the *Kungumi*. In the third year, one night in the middle of the night, Ali came calling his parents outside their house. He kept asking them to open the door but his parents weren't sure whether it was Ali or not though it sounded like him as it wasn't a matter of one or two years since Ali disappeared. Though very hesitant, since the voice was that of their son Ali, they opened the door and was surprised to see Ali outside their door. They let him inside the house and Ali told him 'ee Ipu the *Kungumi* are asking you to give the feast of merit for them.' His father replied saying that he can give but he doesn't know how it was supposed to be given. The *Kungumi* sent back Ali to his father to tell him '*Ghulo lakhi na aji za, Ghulo lakhi na asho za ipu tishina atsala kuthu thikhauna aza tipau shosupu tilehino ninguno ighi nanike.*'

For preparing the '*Akimithe Ji*' while the grain was being dried, they shouldn't let the chickens also come near it and it shouldn't eat even one grain of rice that is being dried for preparing the '*Akimithe ji*'. It should be very pure and without any blemish. '*Aji be pesu he akela tilehi khilemu atsu awo pela, itimi pela xine shisupekevalo*' (when the rice beer is being prepared, in that place dogs and pigs and children shouldn't create rubbish around it).

In this way, the first pure rice beer for the feast of merit ritual and was used as the first holy drink for the ritual. After this was prepared, Khumtsa told his son Ali that everything was ready. Ali went back to the *Kungumi* and told them that everything was ready. Then Ali came back again to his father and told him to keep all the prepared food and drinks outside their house and told them to close their doors and not to come outside. The Leaves to cover the ALU was kept along with the food and drink and so when they were distributing the ALU they were saying 'Alu alu alu' and when they were distributing rice and meat, they were saying '*suwo tova mo qawo tova mo*' (has the food reached everyone).

After they completed eating, they started dancing (*Aphila wo*). But they didn't show themselves to Ali's family. When they seemed to be dancing in the front, they were actually dancing at the

back and when they were dancing at the back of the house, they were actually dancing at the front.

There are two types of song sung during the performance of the folk dance, namely:

*Aphi le* – this is sung without using any words – ‘*Ha ... o ....Hoi*

*Akuza le* – this is sung by using lots of words.

‘*imoroi himoroi remo retashoi* (this is the first word, it says that ‘the elder brother you read out the lyrics’ and Asu Chella told Asu Shitu to start the song). But Asu Shitu didn’t as they sang in praise of the sun and moon. There was also a song in praise of Rotokhi. Khumtsa the son of Rotokhi gave the feast for the Kungumi but the Kungumi sang in praise of Khumtsa’s father Rotokhi. ‘*Ahoy le moi kiche le moi Rotokhi..*’

On that day of the feast of merit, it was drizzling and the sky wasn’t clear. Therefore Ali told his parents to look towards *Khucho Hu* (landslide below Mudutsugho) when the sun appears and when they looked towards this place as Ali had instructed they saw a line of people in full traditional attire entering the *Khucho Hu*. This place was so called because it is believed that the *Kungumi /tughami* or evil spirit went together towards this area (*kucho ilovekeu ghenguno*). Before this, there was no such thing as ‘*Aphi kusa*’ or feast of merit or the observance of the rites and rituals connected with this. It was only after the *Kungumi* came to Ashu Khumtsa’s house and performed the dance and taught them all the rituals that these were carried forward.

The *Kungumi* again sent Ali to his father to tell him that they would provide meat, therefore he was to place the wood outside their house (*ghai qhipaghilo*). Therefore, Ashu Khumtsa placed the wood as instructed. The next day when he woke up, from his sleep he saw animals tied with one fold of thread outside his house. Ali came and told his father that he was supposed to kill one at a time by taking it away to another place and he wasn’t supposed to kill them together. But Khumtsa didn’t pay heed to the instruction and he tried to kill them together, therefore all the animals ran away. Khumtsa informed Ali that all the animals had run away and Ali in turn told the *Kungumi* about it. The *Kungumi* replied by saying that it was the reason why he was asked

to take one each and kill it but he didn't do that, now it was difficult to gather the animals back again. In order to chase the animals the *Kungumi* sent *Atungu*. Khumtsa took the *Atungu* and went chasing the animals that had ran away but the *Atungu* ran so fast that he couldn't keep up with them, therefore he climbed a tree and shouted after them that when they are able to hunt down the animal, they can eat whatever they want but the legs and thighs they should bring it and leave it for him on the side of the paths and the *Aghuno-a* (resting shades) for him. The others went far away but the last one heard it but this one was partially deaf. Therefore he told his friends that their father had told them to hunt the animals and eat it up and come out and shit all over the path and the *Aghuno-a*. Therefore, till today this animal is believed to practise this. Khumtsa again told his son Ali and Ali in turn went to the *Kungumi* and narrated the incident to them. Then the *Kungumi* sent a dog to Khumtsa. Since he didn't know the art of hunting with the dog, it went by himself after the animals and after hunting down the animal, he brought back the leg. Therefore, till today when a person rears the hunting dogs and some other hunters take it for hunting, if the hunt is successful, they will always give the dog's share to the owner of the dog. Since Asu was the first person to do this, he was given the name *Shithu*.

There were two brothers, the older had given the feast of merit and the younger was also getting ready to give the feast of merit, therefore he went to his older brother's house and asked him to come to his house for the feast. The older brother said he would come but after he had finished one round of designs on the carrying basket that he was making. Then he went up on the *Amqha*. The younger brother kept waiting but his elder brother didn't come to his house, therefore he came back to his elder brother's house but found only his sister in law at home as he wasn't aware that his older brother was in the *Amqha*. He raped his sister in law. The elder brother saw all this but he didn't make a sound. One day they went for hunting deer (*Aqhu*) with their villagers. When they hunted the deer and were busy fighting for the intestines, the older brother cut off the private part of the younger brother and he fell on the people who were busy trying to get their hands on the intestines of the deer. He quickly put the private part in the *Wotsami Phitsa*. Then all the hunters stopped touching the deer and also they didn't touch the body of the dead man and they declared 'the person in whose *Kutsa* this man's private part is found will no longer live in our village'. They started searching all the *Akutsa* and found it in the *Wotsami*



*Kutsa* therefore the Wotsami and the Shohemi started fighting amongst themselves and both the clans stopped living in Chisholimi village. Ashu Shithu went to *Azho* and Chela clan went towards the Tapu (doyang river) side.

Some Sümi have written the story of Ashu Rotokhi and misinterpreted it, therefore though this story has been passed on for many years, since it took place in this village and since it has been passed down from their forefathers, they are repeating the same story and for those who have written the wrong story, it isn't the true story. They also must have heard the story from their village and reinterpreted it according to their understanding but in reality he is of a strong opinion that the clan of Ashu Rotokhi who is still living at Chisholimi should be the one writing about it.

Ashu Rotokhi belonged to the Shohe clan. The narrator's son has been named after him.

#### **Origin of feast of Merit (version of Kivixe, 85 years of Chisholimi)**

Khumtsa Rotokhi's feast of merit started from this village. Khumtsa Rotokhi took his son for hunting. While setting traps, they came across a big log of wood. Khumtsa could jump over it but when he looked back he couldn't find his son. The father searched everywhere for his son but he couldn't find him and he went back home. That night, his son is said to have said to him that he was standing next to him but he isn't able to see him. The next day too, Khumtsa went to search for his son but he couldn't find him. Khumtsa gave up. Then his son told him that people have surrounded him therefore only when he conduct the feast of merit, he will be able to see him. The father then asked him what would he need to give the feast of merit. His son told him that he would provide the animal for the feast. True to his word, the next day, Khumtsa found two *Achuyi* tied outside his house. Khumtsa thus killed the animals and prepared food and drinks for the feast. When it was all ready, the Devils came and started eating the food and drinks. After this, they started singing and dancing. Khumtsa wanted to see them so when it sounded like they were at the front and he looked at the front of his house, they were at the back and vice versa and he was unable to see them. After the dancing and singing was over, his son asked him to look towards the *Azhoqhe* and he would see them making a fire producing smoke. When his father

looked towards the direction, he saw smoke and then line of people in red going into the *Kuchohu*. After this they are believed to have disappeared.

### **Feast of Merit of Natsümi Village:**

Before the feast of merit begins, three rituals have to be performed mostly connected with killing of an animal. The first instance is the killing of a cow and the meat of this cow is called *Asa* and the ritual is called *Tiye*. The meat of this *Asa* is to be given only to the families that have given feast of merit and well off families (*Shisho*). The second ritual was called *Tii* which entailed killing of cow and the third was called *Ayii* which also engaged in killing of a cow.

When a Mithun is to be killed for the feast of merit, a person would be given the charge of killing it but for killing this particular Mithun, many people would gather around the Mithun and wait for the in charge to kill the Mithun and cut a small opening in the stomach which will be big enough to let the people put their hands and take out the innards. The people waiting around are waiting to compete to get the innards of the Mithun. This was a sort of a competition of who would get the biggest share of the innards of the Mithun.

Before the feast of merit begins the Natsumi follows a ritual where a cow called *Ayichi* is tied and taken around the whole village by strong and able bodied young men. This is done so that young boys who are yet to gain bodily strength would either kick the cow or take a stick *Ayeghubo kushu* and hit the cow. This was done as it was believed that by doing this the young boys would become strong. After they have rounded up the whole village, this cow is killed.

During the feast of merit one animal without any spot or blemish would be selected and killed. This animal would represent the purity of all other animals to be killed during the feast even if they are with blemishes. The animals with blemishes here meant those whose tails were shorter than normal, twisted horns or legs. The people who gave or gives the feast of merit would be recognized by the King post called *Angutsu* and a *tunhaqu* on top of their house. The King post was a wooden post with designs in a particular order (top to bottom) namely *Asukhi*, *Asafu/Asabu*, *Asaye leqhe*, *Ilimi Kichi*, *Amishi Kibo*. This King post was installed in a feast

giver's house but only if the feast was given twice or more. It was a taboo for those who had given less than two feasts to install this post in their house. In the olden days, only those who had given feast of merit would wear the men's shawl called *Avikiyphi*. The Narrator was of the view nowadays without even killing a small animal and giving the meat to their parents as a sign of completing the ritual to wear this particular shawl, it is being commonly worn by all the men.

### **Feast of Merit According to Ighanumi Village**

In this village, before the actual stone pulling event takes place, the feast giver will give feast twice to the villagers called *Shisho*. They also have to give *Aphisa*/ feast of merit twice (in their dialect it is called *Apuchi*). In the first *Aphisa*, they will make figures of men and erect Aghuza posts depending on the number of Mithuns being killed.

The second *Aphisa*, they will build a thatch house and they will make an *Achihu* (King post) and put it up on the front wall of the house. The *Achihu* will have the following designs – *Asukhe* (men's machete holder), *Avikutsu* (the wealthy people will give feast by killing a Mithun, therefore the head of the Mithun signified wealth), *Ilimi Kichi* (women's breast which signifies that their land is bountiful).

After these four ritual is completed, the stone pulling ceremony will take place. If they are able to pull four stones , then they are considered to have completed the *Azhu/wage*.

Only two people at Ighanumi is believed to have pulled the stone four times namely Ashu Nekha and Ashu Nhangi. Others could hardly pull two and there were some who pulled only one.

### **Rituals of Stone Pulling and the Feast of Merit of Ighanumi (Muthsalho 82 years)**

The *Akukhakhimi* (warrior in their dialect) or *Aghutomi* (common Sümi dialect) will wear their war attire and ornaments and will perform rituals. The stone to be pulled will not be pulled out on the day of the pulling but this will be kept ready before the pulling day by the warriors. The night before the stone pulling, they will dream and get the name of the stone. On the day of the stone pulling, two warriors will be in the front and two will be at the back. All the male members

of the of the village will even the small boys. All of them will put on the traditional attire. The small boys will pull towards the back and the capable ones will pull in the front.

On the day of the stone pulling, they will take one male chick and the person worshipping the stone will beat the stone with *Apipi* so that the stone will be as light as the *Apipi* when it is being pulled. The chick will be sacrificed. The person worshipping the stone will go home after completing the rituals before the stone pullers. On his way home, he will not speak to anybody because it was a taboo for him to do so. He will go to the place where the stone is going to be erected and will dig the hole for installing the stone.

Regarding the selection of stone, they will just choose as there is no procedure.

There was a stone that was seen in dream which was pulled by Ashu Shikhu. The stone was very tall and was called Jesheli and was pulled for two days. Usually the stones are pulled in one day but because this stone was very big and long, it took them two days. This stone is found till today on the way to Ghathashi.

In the beginning, only one stone was pulled but later two stones were pulled. Whenever any change was to be brought about in the cultural practise, it is discussed during the building of the Awou's house.

There is no restriction as to how many animals should be killed while pulling the stone. Whoever has more will kill more. But the male pig to be killed should be 2 years or more. Usually two such pigs and one male Mithun is more than sufficient. Rice beer is an important component and it has to be prepared and made available in plenty. Only meat and rice beer is served. It was usually served in bamboo plate as during those days there were no other materials. Even cups were made from bamboo nodes. Plates were also made from wood.

#### **Stone pulling ritual of Ighanumi village (Alu's version):**

After all the grains and everything in the field was harvested and brought home and the storing baskets called *Abi* (huge baskets) are filled to the brim with grain, they would take three four

grain from each Abi and will perform a ritual called '*Akive kutsu chine*' – the ritual for the passing of the year. The mother will eat separately and the father along with their children will eat separately. They will also go to the river and catch fish, crabs etc and have it. After the end of this ritual, a ritual for the coming of the New Year called *Tighini (Atughiuni)* – the first ritual of the new year is observed. During this ritual wealthy person (some years only one family and in some years two to three families) will give feast to the entire village. They also distribute meat and at the end of this ritual, the villagers will cut the thatch and clean the field, after which another ritual called *Suquni* will be observed. During this ritual they will erect stones in the village. The wealthy people in order to gain name and fame will give feast to the villagers and they will pull stone. There are many stones in this village, some have been shifted from their original place in order to give way to construction of road but the positive aspect is that they haven't been destroyed as is the case in other villages. Alu said that there was no restriction to the number of stones that a person could pull, it depended on his economic status because he has to feed the whole village. Alu said that even his grandfather also performed the stone pulling ritual three times and erected it. (Alu kept mentioning that he is just shortening everything because there were just too many and it isn't possible to retell everything in detail. Therefore on being asked whether he remembers everything in detail, he said that he could just remember here and there).

Before pulling the stone, they will choose a person who is not brave and he will go to the place where the stone is going to be pulled. He will worship the stone on behalf of everyone and release one chick. After this he will go home before the stone pullers. The last person to reach the stone pulling site will be the Asheshuu. The stone pullers would make rallying sound and ululate as they pull the stone. On the day of the stone pulling, the feast giver's family will keep one shawl spread out near the main gate of the village early in the morning before people start leaving for the stone pulling site. Only the male members will pull the stone. It was a taboo for women to touch the stone. While leaving for the stone pulling site, each person will leave a small stick on the shawl. After everyone has left, the family of the feast giver will collect the shawl and they will count the number of sticks. Accordingly they will prepare meat chunks consisting of both beef and pork. When the stone pullers reach their house after bringing the stone, they will

be singing and ululating the traditional war cry around their house and the feast giver will give each one this meat chunks. They will take it to their home and half of it will be given to the women of the house who will cook and eat it by themselves and the rest will be taken by the men of the family back to the feast giver's house where they will cook it together with other men and have a feast in the evening. That night, the feast giver will cook the innards of the animals they killed and will give feast to them again. The next morning i.e. second day is the *Kiti Suqutsala*.

The feast giver's family usually cut firewood and keep, therefore on this day the entire village will go and carry the firewood and bring it home to the feast giver's house. The first group will be the men who will make various yoodling sounds as they carry back the firewood to the feast giver's house. They will be given a feast and then after they leave, the next group to carry the firewood will be the womenfolk and will do the same. On the third day, the villagers will again feast on the heads of the animals that were killed by the feast giver's family for the stone pulling ritual. They will in turn return this favour by working at the field of the feast giver for a day i.e. a day's labour in exchange for the feasting on the animals' heads.

### **Feast of Merit (Hebolimi Village)**

*Thumu* which means distributing meat in Chakesang. In their dialect i.e. Hebolimi village they call the *Shisho* as *Thumuza*. There will be two shishos. During the *Shisho*, all the villagers will feast together. After completing two shishos, the feast of merit will take place. There were certain criteria that needed to be fulfilled before someone could give a feast:

1. He should have hunted atleast one animal in his lifetime.
2. It is not something shameful or made up but the feast giver should be someone who had girlfriends/ Ilimi Samasa without which he cannot give feast.

During the feast of merit, when a feast is ready, all the men will wear men's attire. They will go around the feast giver's house singing and dancing.

First feast they will eat and drink seven times in a day (little rice beer and meat) and 7 times they will perform folk dance.

When they enter the feast giver's house, they will take the burning wood and throw it at the Lapuu (the last person among the dancers), if he is unable to jump over it and gets hit, it is considered to be a sign of misfortune.

In the olden days, even in their village, they used to pull stone but he isn't sure about the procedure.

#### **4.4.3. Aloji**

During the forefathers' days, the people depended on agriculture for their livelihood. In the absence of any sophisticated tools, the whole cycle of agricultural work depended on the might of the people. In order to ease each other of the hard labour at the field, they would form themselves into groups/gangs and would exchange labour. These groups were divided into men, women, young people or mixed. Even if it is an all males group, they would still include two three women who would serve them food and rice beer. It is said that rice beer was the most important component of their diet and they would drink it rather than water as through their toils in the field it was only the rice beer which gave them energy and quench their thirst.

At Mishilimi village, the Aloji was divided according to the khel like yepaqa loji, atomi loji, etc. Men and women loji would be different but for men's aloji they would take three women with them in order to serve the men food and drinks.

*Axeu nikujo akithi launo kukho woni thana*

*akuxu lau no kukho moni li kugha izu naye*

*lojilimi sutsa kighini lau*

*ghulo kuthu akila womoye*

*o aqhina kungu kutucho zuna*

*o akujo zuna*

The husband and wife had decided that they would part ways only in death and not while alive. But the husband left the wife and spends three days with his lover. The husband after doing this felt remorse when he saw his wife sad and sang this song and stayed with his wife.

At Surumi village, there were two types of Aloji:

1. *Anoghi loji*
2. *Amusa loji*

The *Anoghi loji* was composed of 40 to 50 people who were divided into two equal sections which was called *Amusa loji*. These groups would go to each other's field and once in a while the two groups would come together once a week and there will be an *Anoghi loji* where in all of them would go together one of the group member's field for agricultural work i.e. usually the person's field is very big and it was not enough for one group to complete the agricultural work. Therefore they would go for the *Anoghi loji*. During the olden days, at Surumi village there were lots of songs namely *Imulo le*, *lejole*, *Aqhu ashe le*. Singing these songs, they would happily work in each other's field. Whether boy or girl, they would refer to each other as '*Aloji limi*' '*Aloji Pumi*' and they enjoyed each other's company and camaraderie so much that they never tire of working at the agricultural field. The '*Aloji Pumi*' at the end of the day would cut firewood to fill the carrying baskets of the *Aloji limi* to carry back home. Sometimes they would even carry home their carrying basket home for them. This was not done because they were wooing them but it was a social practise/etiquette/chivalry. During the olden days young people had high morality. They were chaste and upright and had no moral issues.

A grandmother recalling her days at her *Aloji* narrated that as soon as she was old enough, she joined the *Aloji*. There were different groups of *Aloji* namely – *Muchomi loji* (married men's aloji), *topumi loji* (married women's aloji), *apumi loji* (young men's aloji), *ilimi loji* (young women's aloji), *aloji* of people who smoked and drank. Life in the *Aloji* was very happy. During lunch they would exchange meat pieces or give to each other. They enjoyed and forgot all their sadness and would often say that when they are working at the field with the *Aloji*, they would be so happy but when they go back home they are always filled with sadness as their husband ill



treated them. For young men and women whose parents didn't treat them well at home, they would say they want to stay with their *aloji* rather than going home.

According to Alu of Ighanumi village, during his younger days, he joined the *Itimi Loji* (children's *aloji*). Different groups of boys, girls, men and women from different age groups come together and form this work force called *Aloji* where they exchange each other's labour to work in the field. He didn't want to join the *Aloji* but all his age group had joined different *Aloji*, therefore he also decided to join and work with all his strength. The leader of the *Aloji* would always be very busy. He has to have knowledge of all the *Apine* and *Ani* in his memory or else the rice beer prepared will go to waste due to not being able to make proper calculation of the *Ani* or *Apine*. If such incidents occur, then the members of the *Aloji* would be angry with him and they would raise their voice against him. Apart from what he knows, whenever he wasn't sure or clear, he would ask the elders in the village who has the knowledge as well as who keep a count of the moon cycle and calculate the days for important events. There are days when two three *Aloji* members fight over a particular day to let the *Aloji* work in his/her field. In such scenarios it is the duty of the *Aloji* leader to give a fair decision. According to *Ani* and *Apine*, he will inform the *Aloji* members when to prepare rice beer and when not to prepare. When the *Aloji* members are fighting over a particular day, he would give his decision depending on the type and location of the field, for example, he would say that a particular field is on the far side so let the *Aloji* work there first or he would say that a particular person is alone and doesn't have any relatives to help him/her so the *Aloji* should work in his/her field first. He will divide the days in this way and make a fair decision for the members of *Aloji*. But some get jealous or angry with him. Those days were full of hardships as they would go to the field every day. There will be one or two women in every *Aloji* who will be in charge of food and drinks. If there is shortage of food and drinks, they would inform the *Aloji* leader. On saying that they will go and bring more, the *Aloji* leader would say that to do that will be embarrassing so to adjust as much as possible and then finish the day's work. Among the *Aloji* members there were some strong men who would work more than the others. These men will never be hungry whether they are on their way to the field, in the field or while coming back because they will always be served by the *Aloji limi* (female members of *Aloji*). The *aloji limi* will always fill up the drinking cup of the *Aloji*

*pumi* and also serve them with food. Till the end of the day they will be served with rice beer at every appointed time. Their food and drink will always be available but their hardship of working in the field is incomparable as it is double of that. When some *Aloji* members are not able to complete the work and if they cannot reach the top part of the field (since agricultural work in the mountainous area always start from bottom known as *Abe* to the top *Akutsu*), they will finish the work for them. The leader of the *Aloji* is responsible for gathering the members of *Aloji* while going to the field as well as coming back. If there are any problems arising among the members of *Aloji*, he will solve it. Since different *Alojis* works side by side in different fields, if they eat earlier than them (since they will eat their food only after completing the work covering half of the field), it is a matter of great embarrassment for them, therefore they will speed up their work and work very hard to make sure that they don't lag behind the other *Aloji*.

#### **4.4.4 Marriage**

According to Mighishe of Hebolimi village, during the olden days, it would take 4-5 years for a marriage to take place after proposing a girl. For the narrator, it seems he got married within 2 years of placing a proposal to his present wife. It would take this many years because though the parents of the girl may not agree wanting to marry her off to someone richer but the boy would keep convincing and pressuring the girl's family. The more he try to convince them, the more they will increase the bride price. But when finally, the girl's family agree, those settling the bride price will balance it.

In pre Christian times, when a marriage takes place, they would prepare new rice beer. There would be no feast.

If after the *Atsa Xakutha*, the boy decides not to marry the girl, then whatever was spent so far has to be repaid to the girl.

If this is the case with the girl, then she has to repay everything including giving back the gift given to her by the boy's parents.

If the man divorces his wife, then everything will be shared equally among them including property.

If a woman leaves her husband then she will get nothing except her clothes. She won't get her children also.

In their village when divorce takes place the girl child will go to the wife and the boy child will go to the husband.

There was no practice of polygamy. According to the Narrator it was hard to take care of even one wife so keeping more than one wasn't wise.

According to the history of Surumi village, in the olden days, the Sümi practised bride price. When a boy and girl is in love, the boy would inform his family about it and they would go to the girl's house and ask for her hand in marriage citing that they were in love. After some months or year the groom's family and relatives would go to the bride's house for *atsa kughuta* or *atsa xakutha*. This is to discuss the bride price in order to let the marriage happen. After the proposal is made, the boy's family starts getting ready for the arrangement of the bride price that would be required from them for the marriage to take place. When they feel that they are ready to fulfil the bride price demand of the girl's family, they would go with their relatives to the girl's parents for *atsa xakutha*. The bride's family would ask for a particular field and also ask for a specific number of Mithun, cows according to the status of the family. The groom's family would retaliate by asking to reduce the number of Mithun or Cow and sometimes this would result in huge arguments. If the bride's family are not satisfied, they would refuse to marry off their daughter to that particular family. Sometimes the groom's family would come back to discuss the bride price again and marriage takes place. But some would end the marriage process. After finalising the bride price, they would mark the field and animals that are being given as bride price and would be taken by the bride's family. Only after the bride price is finalised, a pig set aside for '*Azanujula*' would be killed. This marks the final sealing of the marriage. After this pig is killed, there can be no break ups as the decision to marry has been made. The marriage in the olden days would be conducted at night. Even with the coming of Christianity, marriages were held at night at the church. In the pre Christian era as well as for those who were not Christians, the

parents of the bride would give one rooster to the bride and she would carry it till the groom's house as *Akipixi*. The bride's relatives would drop the bride at the husband's house and go back home. For the Christians too, they would take the vow at the church in the evening and the church members along with the relatives would drop the bride at the groom's house. During the olden days, there would be no drinking and eating at the bride's house but the groom's family would prepare food and drink for everyone and after dropping the bride, they would eat and go back home.

On the girl's part it was not compulsory but the boy's family sometimes would say 'you have asked mithun from us so you need to give us the *Avi na*'. This is when a girl being married with Mithun as her bride price, her parents should give '*Avi na*' to the groom's family or else misfortune befall on the girl for example early death. Avina consists of two drying mat (*ayephu*), two carrying baskets, two pairs of baskets of every type, clothes, ornaments, implements, all in pairs. Even necklaces was to have two strands and in pair. For those marriage without Mithun it was not compulsory to give in pairs but everything that is used to start a family is given. Even paddy is also given in terms of *Asuli* (storage baskets for grain).

### **Practise of Bride price**

In order to understand the practise of bride price of the Sümi Naga, it is pertinent to firstly understand their system of marriage. According to oral tradition of the Sümi Naga, marriage should always be initiated by the boy. When a boy reaches a marriageable age, the parents would start making arrangements to initiate marriage proposal. They would first enquire about the prospective bride from the same village or another village and the person who was sent for making such enquiries was known as *Anisuu*. Usually preference for an intending bride would be someone whose status is similar to that of the boy's family as the bride price was mostly asked according to the status of the family. When such queries are made and the intending bride agrees to the proposal of marriage, the *Anisuu* would fill the *Ahughiti* (a small container used for carrying rice beer) with the rice beer from the groom's parents' house and give it to the bride to be. Then the bride to be would pour this rice beer into a cup and with her right hand she would offer this to the *Anisuu*. The *Anisuu* would drink the rice beer and give his/her blessings. The

message of the completion of this ritual is given to the groom's family after which the day for the '*Atsa Kughuta*' (engagement) is set.

On this day both the families would come together and an animal is killed and on this occasion, the groom and bride would be given an oath in front of their families and all present. The bride price is discussed on this day, after which everyone would know that the couple is set to be married. After the bride price is decided, the bride's parents would sharpen a bamboo stick and pierce the pig intended for the *Azanujula wo* (a pig given by the groom's parents to bride's parents in lieu of the mother raising her daughter) and kill it<sup>57</sup>. The mother of the groom would take the stomach of the pig killed for *Azanujula wo* saying it is for the stomach pain she went through during the childbirth (*Aza po küsu lame*). The meat of this pig is distributed among the mother's family equally and they in turn would collect baskets of grain and give it to the bride when she leaves for her husband's place. The reason behind this is that the mother of the bride wants her daughter to let these grains be the foundation in the grain storage baskets of her new home, so that she too would be prosperous like her<sup>58</sup>. It was a genna to ask more bride price after the *Azanujula wo* is killed.

If either the bride or the groom breaks this promise, the defaulter was supposed to pay back everything including gifts that was utilised or exchanged during and after the engagement. As a sign of this agreement between the groom and bride and their families, an elderly man would take either *aphemi miti* or *amitiqo* (chunk of salt) along with a rice beer carrying jar and pierce it above the house of the bride.

After the *atsa xakütha* literally translated as 'word decision' (engagement), the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be would exchange gifts. The groom-to-be would present a walking stick engraved with designs and two types of carrying baskets and carrying strap to his bride-to-be. The bride-to-be on her part would weave *asholha mini* (a piece of cloth which covers only the front –

---

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Yekamu Sheqi (90 years), GB, Pughoboto , 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019

<sup>58</sup> *ibid*

length is below the waist and above the knees), *akiche kükha* (waist band) and *akiyesa kixi* and present it to her groom-to-be.

During the major Sümi festival like *Tuluni*, it was the practise of the bride-to-be's family to invite the groom-to-be home for a small feast. The families gift each other with thighs of cow or pig. The bride to be would also be invited by the groom to be's parents' for food. It is said that inviting the son in law to be home for a feast was done sometimes to ascertain whether the son in law to be was truly a capable and smart man. This is the reason why it was always deemed necessary for a young man to very cautious while visiting the parents of his bride to be.<sup>59</sup>

According to Sümi marriage custom, there are four types of *Ame* and depending on which category the groom-to-be's position is, the bride price is asked or given. Without fixing the bride price, a marriage cannot take place. According to the customs of the Sümi, by taking or giving the bride price, the price of life and death is shared. The four types of bride price are as follows:

*Aminikimiji xe:*

This is the highest form of bride price. The *Aminikimiji* is a Sümi women's traditional wrap-around which is decorated in the middle with the strings of beads from all the traditional *Sülimi's* (Sümi women) necklaces. During the olden days, this *axe* could be performed only for the daughters of the mother of the bride-to-be who had performed all the gennas associated with this *axe*.

The *aphiathome* (price equivalent to the price of the body)<sup>60</sup> is given by the bride's parents according to the value of the bride to be. In this *axe*, the groom-to-be is expected to provide 16 to 30 mithuns along with other animals like cow and pig to the bride's family. The bride's parents on their part would provide every traditional ornament from head to toe for their daughter to take with her to her new home like different varieties of necklaces (*Achiikula*, *Achipula*,

---

<sup>59</sup> Hekhevi Achumi. 2005. Pg 13

<sup>60</sup> Jimo, Lovitoli. *Marriage Prestations and "Ame" Bridewealth in the Sümi Naga Society*. Indian Anthropologists, Vol 38, No 2 (July – Dec 2008), page 50

*Achixathikutsa, Zuchuyi, Achikuhu*) and the ornaments for the hip and waist like *Achizula, Anihla* and *Shequnihla*. Apart from these, a pair of every type of traditional wraparounds and shawls is prepared for the bride. Other gifts include agricultural tools and implements and every material that is used in a household. All these are to be given in pairs.

The *Aminikimiji* speaks about the status of the family. This *axe* is a very difficult one as it was believed that if all the rituals are not performed properly then misfortune would befall on the couple. If all the rituals were performed according to tradition, then the couple would enjoy a life of prosperity and plenty.

In this *axe*, before the bride leaves her parents' home, a ritual called "*Kichini*" is performed, only after which she leaves for her husband's place. In this ritual, she will put on the *Aminikimiji* and all the ornaments gifted by her parents and the *Anisuu* would pour the rice beer (made without using water) on her knees and if the water runs straight down her feet, then it was a sign of long life and holy marriage. The next day, the marriage is held.<sup>61</sup>

*Ashoghixe:*

This is similar to *aminikimiji xe* but here the *aminikimiji* is not used. The bride's parents prepare the traditional wraparounds, shawls, ornaments and depending on that, the bride price is asked. The bride price would be between 10 to 16 mithuns.

*Lathaxe:*

In this *axe* the bride price is asked according to the capability of the family. Here usually mithun is not used as this *axe* is practiced by families who are not very well to do and cannot afford the purchase or use of mithun which is a sign of wealth and prestige. The bride price asked is usually between 1 to 5 cows.

---

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Zukiye (75 years), 13<sup>th</sup> July 2010

*Topunashoxe:*

This *axe* is for women who are marrying for the second time and there is no such thing as bride price but the *aphiathome* (price of the person that she is) only.

Depending on the type of bride price asked, the day of marriage is fixed. The bride does not leave for her husband's place before the sunset. Only when it becomes dark, she will leave for her husband's place because it was feared that she would get too shy to leave. She was to walk slowly because it was considered a *genna* to miss a step while walking towards her husband's house. Even if it was a moonless night, it was considered to be a *genna* to take an *akulu* (torch made out of cane).

According to the Sümi tradition, when the bride leaves for her husband's place, it was a *genna* for her father to take her. He would stay back at home. This is practiced even to this day. When the bride leaves for her husband's place, the *Akhaukipeu* would be behind her and the *Anisuu* would go in front of her. Before she steps out of the door of her parents' home, she would put her left leg on the Machete held by the *Anisuu* and he would pray like this, "*susuchini ninichini. Axupushu peni, Thalaxuti kughuko, Chuwoti kughuko shi peni*" (*genna* to get sick, let long life be yours, let your children multiply and grow like the spider's and the crab's children). After this, she would step out of the house with her right leg first.

When she reaches her husband's home, the *Anisuu* would let her enter her husband's house by stepping in with her right leg. Then the *Anisuu* would take the *Akuputsuji* (rice beer made without using water) and pour it into a cup and say "*kinikulu kibo, chupu shopu, qole qole peni. Tipitigha eno pichepighi jeli kukumugha kibo shi peni*" (let this family be a prosperous family, let there be abundance of food and drink and let the livestock be blessed). Saying this, he would blow at the rice beer from the cup and drink it. After this is done, the rice beer would be distributed to everyone who had come to drop the bride and then they would all go to the groom's parents' home and have a feast.



The next day, the bride would take out everything she had received from her parents and show it to the villagers. After this whoever had come to drop the bride at her husband's place would go back. That same night, the groom's parents would kill a home grown rooster. If the rooster dies with its right leg over the left, it signified that the husband's aura (*angu*) was stronger than his wife's. But if it dies with its left leg over the right, then the wife's aura was said to be more than her husband's. This rooster is cooked and it is given to the bride and groom which would be their first meal together as husband and wife. After this, the new family is counted as one among the village. In some region of the Sümi, the bride is given a rooster by her parents when she leaves for her Husband's house, she was to hold this in her hands. After reaching, that same night, they would kill the rooster and have their first meal as husband and wife.

#### **4.5. BELIEF AND RELIGION**

In the past, there was no knowledge of god as we do at present and the Sümi believed in spirits. There were different categories of the Spirits which are mentioned below:

- a. *Timilhou* – it was believed to be a supreme god who did not interfere in the affairs of men.
- b. *Kungumi /Kungulimi* – they were the spirits of the sky and consisted of both men and women. According to the legend, they used to visit earth and there were even instances of inter marriage between the spirit of the sky and the people. There are folktales about such love stories.
- c. *Tüghami* – they were evil spirits who lived on earth and were considered to be malicious in nature, destructive and evil. There were different types of *Tüghami* and *Litsapa* was considered to be the most important as he was connected with fruitfulness of the crops cultivation. *Müzamüza* or an echo is an evil spirit of the woods who lure men into the deep forests and they either disappear sometimes or go temporarily mad after returning home. There were also *kithimi ghungu* or the spirits of the dead and it is believed that sometimes the spirits of the dead men come to fetch the living and these type of spirits were considered to be bad. It is out of fear of *tüghami* that strictness was maintained when observing certain rituals as lapses would result in angering the spirit and ultimately spell destruction for the entire village or individual.

d. *Aghau* – they were harmless spirits and were the spirits of the house, individuals, villages and certain places.

According to Heqhezu of Chisholimi Village, when they are going to any place that is considered to be an evil place where the evil spirit are believed to even kill humans, all the male would go to this place. during those days they wore a piece of cloth covering only the front of their private part called ‘Asholha mini’, they would move it towards the back and would display their private parts to the evil spirits. It was believed that while the evil spirits were laughing at them, they would harvest the crops and leave.

#### **4.5.1 Death Rituals and Customs**

According to the Sümi tradition, when a person breathes his/her last, relatives would be called from everywhere. And after they have all arrived, a memorial service is held and then the death is buried. Death to the Sümi in the pre Christian era was a fearful event which can be gleaned from the rituals and customs connected with death. The Sümi believe that when a person dies, the body dies but the spirit still lives. Till the death body is placed in the grave, the spirit hovers over the death body not knowing that his body is dead. When the body is being placed in the grave and the people start shouting oo hehe and says ‘*o musa tivilo khiumu pula unpuna chemo*’ (o don’t be afraid, we won’t let anyone trouble you), only then the soul realizes that he is dead and falls into the grave.

#### **Eschatology:**

The theory of Eschatology as believed by the Sümi is that after the death of a person his/her soul escapes to a mountain towards Wokha (district headquarter of the Lotha tribe) side which is known as *Kithila to* or the mountain of death. The Sümi believe that the spirit of the death move into another world from this mountain. When burying the death, it was the practise of the Sümi to bury his/her worldly possessions along with the death body or they would keep such materials on the grave as they believed that the soul continues to live in the next world in the same way as he/she used to live on earth. The Sümi believe that before reaching the land of death, the spirit has to cross the devourer of the soul named *Litsowo* who would lie in wait to devour the unwary, weak and foolish souls.

In the pre Christian era, the death was buried according to the status. When rich people die, a male pig would be killed as *Api*. The meat was to be consumed within three days.

When great warriors and hunters die, a dog is killed and buried along with him. It is believed that while the dog is barking, the soul can go without any disturbance and reach the land of death. On top of the head, a hole will be dug where food and rice beer will be placed. The machete will be placed on the left and the spear is placed on the right. It is believed that the spirit first look for the machete. Over the grave, cotton is placed and whatever materials he used during his lifetime is placed here.

When a man while alive was engaged in a lot of hunting as well as fighting with the tigers, bears when he dies, the spirit of the tiger or animals called lakhawou would wait on their path in order to kill the spirit. So when a person who had fought or hunted tigers, bears and other big animals, before being buried a small dog would be brought and tied and would be beaten and it would cry and will be taken around the grave and then they would say ‘ *o atsu pula unsavu sucheni atsu pula unju wu cheni*’ (o we will let the dog the drop you, we will let the dog go ahead of you). This dog will be killed and then this would be given to the *akiqho kishiu* and he would eat the meat, it was a taboo for other people to eat this. When the spirit is on the way to the *kithilato* and hears the dog barking, he would see the animal and as in how he killed the animal while alive, he would kill the animal blocking the way and go peacefully to the *kithilato* (an abode for the dead).

According to Yekamu Sheqi of Mishilimi village, in the olden days both men and women’s ears were pierced. It was believed that when a person dies without the ears being pierced, the death people would say that he/she isn’t a human but a tughami so wdnt allow in the land of the death and would send him back from the land of death and so his spirit would be stuck in between during which the tughami kills his spirit and those alive also wdnt even see such spirits in their dreams. If people stop dreaming about the death, then it was believed that that particular spirit is lost.

For those whose ears were pierced, they would be welcomed in the land of the death and would be asked to come and stay with their father, grandparents, etc and would live with them in the land of death. That is why when a child is born their ears were always pierced.

When a man dies, a small machete, spear and *aghasu* is placed on his left side and then buried. For the woman, her walking stick is placed on her left. These are done so that when their soul gets up to go to the land of death, they will be able to take these stuff as they would when they were alive. When they cannot find their walking stick it was believed that the soul feels bad on the ones who are alive and they get cursed.

When a rich man dies especially when a feast giver dies, on that particular day, the villagers wouldn't go outside the village. On this day, a Mithun or cow is killed and the meat is distributed among the villagers, as a result, the villagers would go to the riverside and pull a stone to erect it on the grave in his memory.

When a poor person dies, only the neighbours and the clan would stay at home and give him/ her farewell. According to their capability, an animal is killed and shared among the family.

It was a taboo to cook the meat from the death ceremony in the kitchen and it was to be cooked only in the corridor. And before consuming the meat, "*ishi nguno akithi ighikevilo, ishino kithi kuha ashekha shini thono*" (from today onwards let there be no death, let today be the last). And saying this they would eat the meat.

When a Warrior head dies, on his grave an Athigho or a wooden statue would be erected with all the traditional attire. The complete traditional attire with every ornament from the head gear to the anklet would be worn by the wooden statue as well as around the *akhache* (a platform erected out of bamboo and wood). All these would be displayed for nine days after which it will be taken back by the family again.

In the past, it was the ritual to appoint one person for digging the grave. No other people would help him in digging the grave.

People dying of unnatural death like drowning, killed by animal, war, etc would not be brought inside the village gate but would be buried outside as it was believed to be contagious and that it should not spread amongst others.

When a woman dies at childbirth, her death body should be taken out from the back door. It should never be taken out of the house from the front door. She should be buried on a rugged mountainside or at the areas where people don't go. All her clothes and ornaments should be buried along with her. Only her husband will dig her grave.

The material goods of persons who die while fighting a war or at childbirth were to be burnt even if it includes precious materials like ornaments.

There would be a feast only in the death of a feast giver, rich person, a famous warrior, someone expert at hunting, etc. On the grave of a warrior who had brought many heads and had exchanged meats after the victory, "*suliti*" would be kept on a bamboo and erected on the grave. When a warrior who had captured the enemy's cattles dies, an old bamboo is erected on the grave. And for someone who openly pursued women in his lifetime, when he dies a woman's walking stick would be erected on his grave.

The elders used to say "*timi ye ausholho keghi akuxu ashekha lo akithi kivi momu akithi kusa no pa momu li she pe shi cheni*".

In the past, when relatives come from far off places, while going back home, they should never look back; it was a taboo as the spirit of the death may follow them back home. There was no particular cemetery where the deaths were buried.

### **Types of death:**

There are nine types of death. It is believed that with the growth of different types of people, different lifestyles also came up, as a result of this, according to how a person had lived his/her life, death comes to him/her. The following are the different types of death as believed by the Sümi:

- a. *Alhoaye kithi* (habitual/natural death): Dying at home due to sickness or old age.
- b. *Ghuyi lo kuwo kithi* (dying in a fight or war): When a person is killed by a Tiger or by an enemy.

- c. *Aghusu no kughakulu kithi* (captured by an enemy): When the enemy captures a person and if he dies of torture.
- d. *Musumumu lokuwo kithi* (accident): When a person dies in an accident.
- e. *Asula lo kuwo/nhapithi* (dying at childbirth): When a woman dies at childbirth and if she dies before the completion of 10 days and among some Sümi region 30 days of the birth, it is also counted as nhapithi.
- f. *Tukunni kithi*: People dying due to the accumulation of water in the stomach and swelling.
- g. *Kukha kithi* (suicide): Person killing himself/ herself.
- h. *Akhuava – kithi* (starvation): Dying of starvation due to famine or shortage of food and drink.
- i. *Yengu kithi* : A person who is killed by the devil. Usually these people won't have any scar or bruises on their body.

The people who died a natural death were buried outside the house while those dying an unnatural death like childbirth, war, and drowning, killed by animal, etc would all be buried outside the village gate for it was believed to be contagious.

### **Types of burial:**

There were two types of burials:

#### **1. Süu Chiqho**

Under this system of burial, they will dig up the earth to a certain level and then will dig a tunnel type on one side where the dead body will be inserted and then soil will be used to fill up the grave. In olden days they would cover the dead body with cloth and they will put it on a wooden plank and will put it inside the grave.

## 2. Tuku Chiqho

This is the normal burial of digging up the earth and burying the dead.

### Rites of passage:

There were two gennas for the death namely *akulu chine* and *amibo chine*. The *akulu chine* is a very complicated ritual. When a husband or wife dies, for a year the one who survives would maintain a strict diet for one year and after completing certain ritual, he/she can resume with the normal diet. If the rituals aren't followed properly, then he/she would go mad after being attacked by a mithun.

Aniboloye on the other hand is the genna where after the burial a fresh fire would be made through *Amikula* (traditional method of making fire) and fresh water is used to clean the whole house.

It was a taboo to cook the meat from the death ceremony in the kitchen and it was to be cooked only in the corridor. And before consuming the meat, "*ishi nguno akithi ighikevilo, ishino kithi kuha ashekha shini thono*" (from today onwards let there be no death, let today be the last). And saying this they would eat the meat.

When a man dies, a small machete, spear is placed on his left side and then buried. For the woman, her walking stick is placed on her left. These are done so that when their soul get up to go to the land of death, they will be able to take these stuff as they would when they were alive. When they cannot find their walking stick it was believed that the soul feels bad on the ones who are alive and they get cursed.

### Sümi Ritual of severance – Akukho:

Firth noted that many funeral rites were associated with "ideas of completeness of sequence in human affairs" analogous to ceremonies of farewell<sup>62</sup>. Here society takes formal notice of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Firth, Raymond. The Fate Of Soul in *Anthropology of Folk Religion*. Page 317

termination of social relations. For the Sümis too, there were rituals and customs connected with the separation between the death and the living 2 days after the burial called *Akukho*.

On the day of the *Akukho*, a piece of meat and some rice would be kept in a bowl and placed in his/her favourite place inside the house.

On this day, the family members have to eat their food early and before the sunset all the household utensils have to be washed because without all these being done, the spirit wouldnt leave for the place of death. And if the spirit leaves when it is already dark there is fear of it being killed by the enemy.

When an animal is killed for *akukho*, if it is male then more meat will be given to his relatives and if it is a female more meat will be given to her relatives. This is so because this is the last time meat will be distributed to their respective relatives in their name.

#### **4.5.2. Gennas, Taboos and Customary Laws:**

1. Birds like eagle, *Abagha* (Blue Whisting Thrush), *Aqhoqho* (Owl), *Chilichepu* (Short Billed Minivet) are not supposed to be eaten by young people because the *Abagha*'s (Blue Whistling Thrush) feather is white, so if young people eats this bird, then their hair will also turn grey very early. Owls are believed to be very slow and stupid by nature therefore eating the owl would make that person also stupid. Since eagle eats the flesh of other animals, one is not supposed to eat this bird as it makes one very antsy (*mighe*).
2. During the olden days the Tuluni festival was known as '*Ani*' as in if one finds a very healthy or beautiful flower and plants that is unlike any other, one would comment saying 'this plant or flower is very ani'. Anything that looks bountiful and first fruit would be called *ani/amusu*. In olden days there was something called '*Kichibohu*'. On a banana leaf, girls would be given 5 meat pieces wherein first meat piece would be placed on the banana leaf over which rice would be placed and then the remaining four pieces would be kept on the rice. This would be given to the girls and for boys 6 pieces of meat would be given. During the ani everything would be bountifully used.



3. In the olden days, it was a taboo for women to eat chicken and only men would eat it. But this was put to an end as there were questions as to why only men has to eat tasty food.
4. It was believed that Hebo was the oldest, second was Chisho and the third was Chishi. The dialect of the Heboli people would be '*Tishila Cho, Ishila cho*', Chisholi people would say '*Tishilula, Ishilula*' (middle tongue) and the Chishili people would say '*Tishiyi, Ishiyi*' (*Amili Akumutsuu*).
5. When someone dies in the house, the rice beer and the fermented soyabean (*axone*) even if it has been freshly prepared has to be thrown away and new one has to be prepared.
6. *Akha khauke lo jupu akijeupe khiu no akichiushi aghike no patsüche ipu ishi piche 'okükümgha ghenguno ale luke*' (When men go for fishing, when the time for distributing comes, they would give the biggest fish to the eldest among them and say 'because of your blessings, we could catch the fishes).
7. *Mikini kütthü aliche momu aghau lelu shiuke lo aghau gholo khiu no akijeu keno tipaupe panongu gholo ayitiu tsunami eno ishi pinani 'nono müghakena hithiughi o sasü wuni*' (when two three people for setting trap or hunting for birds, they would give the biggest bird to the youngest among them and say to him 'you are a blessed one therefore next time too we would take you along with us)
8. *Achiku, achipu eno amekusho chi jeliqo amu lo kighide lono apikhi lo süpu kubove tishive aye khiu chike no tipau ye nhapithive cheni ipiche* (If necklaces like Achiku, Achipu or any other costly necklaces are put into the apikhi and broken out of anger, it is believed that the person to whom these necklaces belongs would die at child birth).
9. *Aghau lelu ngo azü lelu kumtsa shiküqhamo no cheghi tishi aye alelu müghamoe ipi* (In the olden days one would not go for hunting for birds and fishing together because it was believed that the hunting wouldn't be successful).
10. *Aküha vilo aküha ipi aye paxu ideo axapiki xalevetsü eno alu kütsaveke ghenguno ashi akijeu ipi kuchen*i (If an elephant was called by its name it was believed that it destroys the resting house in the field and the field out of anger therefore one was supposed to refer to it as *Ashi akijeu* or biggest among animals).
11. *Akuu ngo ghümsü chu kipishe kütami tsü aye kümssü kimxe kimthi kile ishicheni* (It was believed that if one gives a half eaten chilli or ginger to another person then they would

end up hating each other therefore one wasn't supposed to share such half eaten food with others).

12. *Alimi alagha dolo apuh assü mheghi momu aki alu kijeveni ipi atüghüü shi piphe chemo eno kije akelo ye ino hihhi luni ipi pükha chemo tishi aye alho ikhoveche* (one was not supposed to be the first one to say that one's clan should divide the ancestor's land or inheritance nor say one would like to have a particular land/property when it is being divided).
13. *Alughi tu shou iqano ati, anuli alibe tsü aye akipichi shicheni ipie* (if one sits on the stones lying on the boundary line and give food to one's children it is said that they turn out to be very lazy).
14. *Ame pimekeu mishi, avi, atsü aqu haocheke lo amishi avi no ajeu küdau paha alache aye küla puu no müghacheni ikemu piyiu püha alache aye atotiu no müghacheni ipi küghache* (when one goes to get the mithun or cow for the bride price if the mithun/cow walks more towards the right, it was believed that the groom to be would be blessed but if the cow/mithun walks more towards the left, it was believed that the bride to be would be blessed).
15. *Anekine momu atuxu lo atu kulusü nike lo atüghushi choe atu illuqi cheni choe ipi kütüghü paghi cheni eno tishi movepu kulusüve no tüghaminga veqhive aye tüghami no amükhü lunani ipiche* (in the landslide area or cliff, before one drops stone, one was supposed to say the stone is rolling down because if one fails to say so and the stone rolls down and kills the devil's child, the devil would take revenge).
16. *Angushuu ye khije khijehi cheghimu anepa lakhi likhi kiu ghengu anepa nekükhau no ashekhashi nekha chenike ghenguno* (no matter how great the number of tiger roam together, there would always be only one paw print because the one who goes last would cover the paw prints of all others).
17. *Aphu ayina lo timi kithiküha shiveke lo tipaniye alu lo kapechemo akumo yeghi no xevepu axabo alomove nasake ipipu* (when someone dies in the village, no one was supposed to go to the field because it was believed that if one ventures out to the field the death soil would defile the crops and it would get damaged).

18. *Apu Assü tsa kichimi zü nathaghi pichemo momu pano züu no kuchu kusho shive aye tüghapu chini ipiche* (one was not supposed to speak about stories of the forefathers ahead of the elders nor eat ahead of them because if one does so then one would incur curse on himself).
19. *Khaghi ye kughouno akhaw no pithi thu venike no püqü miye ighi nani ipiche* (in the olden days when mass flowering of bamboo occurs, it was believed that famine would occur)
20. *Khaghi loye anekine züpuki loye azü kikhe khemo no cheghi, kiughengu aphu tipau lo chumpa, shompa abi, ale chimo nasake ipipu* (in the olden days, one wasn't supposed to create pond out of the water flowing out in the landslide area for fear that the food and drink would dwindle in that village)
21. *Khaghi ye kiutoi amulo kümtha kile aghimu ashi mütssa ighike lo ashi süchile chemo tsütsala ashi süchileve aye tile pipuku küsükini shinani eno tipau jeku tumimi süsüpu xachileve kethiu no vinani* (in the olden days no matter how great a conflict/misunderstanding between two person, when meat is shared, it wasn't supposed to be returned because the one who returns it would get sick and only with the help of tumimi/spiritual healer one would get healed. In another version it is said that the worms of the meat would eat up the person who returns the meat).
22. *Kibe kulho shi akelo alias icheve aye tipau libeye kipitimi ye chuchemo kiughengu ashi aghü halo alisa no apo püta nasake itaghi anali sübo tishipheve keu ye Totimi ye tile no shikeu libeye chuchemo aula vimopie* (it was said that while cooking food, if the wooden spoon breaks, men weren't supposed to eat that food because while being chased by the enemy, he would feel as if the spoon is stuck in his stomach and trouble him. In the same manner, a woman wasn't supposed to eat food cooked from a pot with holes because it was believed that her luck would be bad.
23. *Kithi küha küsa kusho akibo lo sholuke lo ghakuthi, mushuthi, khetsüithi, aghane eno khalakithi, akuka hipaço ye chupe mono cheghi kiu ghengu axabo hipaço toi timi kixü mlalei ghailove nosakehu* (when one is being faced with the misfortune of death and sickness in the family, one wasn't supposed to eat foods and fruits like ..., lemon, beans, mustard leaves, maize, cucumber in the family because these crops dies very early

therefore it was feared that by using these crops even the life of men might end very soon).

24. *Kiu toi keu khi liu pimu anhemügha kumsümave aye akiniu idehu luchemo kiu ghengu idehu luu kelo no mügha mokemi ye ghüyi lo wovenani ipipu* (no matter what type of bees, one goes to hunt, even if one leaves something behind, one wasn't supposed to go back to retrieve it because if one does so it was feared that such person would meet an unfortunate death).
25. *Sümi kügha kichelo tsütsalo awuqu no awudu ghügha igha ipeghi aye aphu lo topumi no püka salha ipeghicheni. Itaghi awu ali no awudu ghügha shi aye tiye ilimi no salha ipeghi cheni ipiche.* (according to Sümi oral tradition, if a hen crows like a rooster then it was believed that in that village married women would steal and engage in immoral activities and when a pullet crows like a rooster it was believed that the young women of the village would be involved in immoral activities)
26. *Timi no züa kelono asa gholuve tsü aye aghü kiyi phiveche* (when a person's hair is cut off and taken while he/she is asleep, it was considered equivalent to their head being taken)
27. *Totimi no aphu ghochekeu ghüqa pesü kipitimi he aye aphu lo kipitimi kumtsü shipünha anike ghengu no Totimi khiu no hekeno aphu lono haveche* (if a woman uses the weaving blade to hit a man, it was considered to be an insult to all the men in the village therefore the woman who committed this was expelled from the village).
28. *Pikha chini, pimo chini* (it was a taboo to incompletely narrate the stories passed down from the forefathers and it was also a taboo not to narrate it. If one does so one would have a short life).
29. *Ghile huqhive kethiuno külakupu shicheni. Atusho müta loye külakupu shi chemo* (it was a taboo to get married before the harvest is done, if one does so it was believed that the harvest wouldn't be bountiful).
30. *Ayeghi ala mingé chemo* (one wasn't supposed to be greedy about lands, if one does so, when he is on his deathbed he would vomit earth and die).

When they are going to any place that is considered to be an evil place where the evil spirit are believed to even kill humans, all the male would go to this place. during those days they wore a piece of cloth covering only the front of their private part called ‘Asholha mini’, they would move it towards the back and would display their private parts to the evil spirits. It was believed that while the evil spirits were laughing at them, they would harvest the crops and leave.

#### **4.6. KUDUULHO AND NODILHO**

In the Sümi the phenomenon of men’s soul turning into an animal is known by two names, namely “*Kuduulho*” and “*Nodilho*”. They have different meanings. The meaning of “*kuduu*” is that when an animal turns into another animal, it can change itself back into its old self, but when it turns into a stone or wood, it cannot regain its old self. On the other hand, “*nodiu*” means if a person or animal changes itself into another, it cannot change back into its old self.

In the Sümi language the term “*ashuu*”, “*ashupu*”, and “*angushuu*” (tiger) is commonly used all over. There are a variety of Tiger species that are differentiated according to their appearance and character. The term “*angushuu*” is used to denote the spirit of man turning into a tiger (*kudulho*) and since it is the spirit of man, when somebody shoots at it or try to pierce it with a spear, it doesn’t touch the tiger because of the power of the spirit as a result it is called “*angushuu*”

According to the legends of the Sümi forefathers, it is believed that men have 11 spirits with him and the first, second and third spirit turns into a tiger or a python. And when the spirit turns into either of these two, the human body also knows where the soul is and what he is doing. And whatever the fourth, fifth and sixth spirit changes into, the body comes to know about the activities of the soul through the dream. And for the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth spirits, even in the dreams, it isn’t known clearly as to what the soul is up to when it takes possession. When the spirit has turned into a Tiger or Python and it is either attacked or surrounded to be hunted by the people, if the eleventh spirit fails to come, then he wouldn’t be able to change himself (*kuduu*) into another animal, stone or wood and he would be killed. When the body realizes that the spirit has been killed, it also dies. But if the body first dies, then the spirit that has taken

possession of an animal would also disappear slowly. There are two types of tigers: one is the tiger born naturally by its mother tiger and the other is the spirit of man taking possession. The one formed by the spirit of man won't be formed properly unless it consumes “*amikhizu*” and many of them lose their way. Some people are Tigerman by birth. Some people are believed to have acquired it from the person who is a Tigerman by sleeping in the same bed, eating from the same plate and constantly being with him for two or more months. The spirit usually enters the body of the animal when the human body is asleep and until the spirit returns to the human body, it can continue with the usual routine but to some extent it won't be as active as when it was normal. When the spirit returns to the human body, it usually experiences pains and tiredness arising due to the constant movements of the animal it had taken possession of. Some people are Tigerman from birth and it's not easy to trace them but for those who became Tigerman through contact, it can be easily detected.

**Shikuto Yeptho (Phuve Old), 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020:**



Shikuto is a practising Tigerman who believes his soul turns into a Tiger. Apparently he inherited this charm from his great grandmother from Krintomi village. This charm was passed on to his grandfather but his own father did not get this charm though his sisters got this charm though it stopped after a while. Without understanding how it started, he developed this charm.

Though he sought prayers to end this practise, he was not successful. Instead of ending, this charm became clearer after praying. He even went to the Non Nagas who were believed to have the ability to remove but it proved unsuccessful. They told him that he didn't acquire this charm on his own but it has been passed down from generation, therefore instead of removing it, they told him to be careful instead. Ever since then, this charm has been with him for almost 40 years now. This charm came from his grandfather who instead of removing it passed it on to him. ‘*Ashi kughulhomi*’ – people whose spirit turns into animal would first ask permission from god before consuming an animal. First they would do *asaqhi* and then permission is sought from god. According to him since god made animals to eat each other, he makes it look edible in the spirit's eyes (*pinivetsukeu*). With naked eyes it will be an actual animal but in the eyes of the

'*Ashi Kughulhou*' the animal will look like it has been cooked and he will enjoy eating it irrespective of the type of animal that has been hunted. Due to the increase in the number of hunters in Nagaland, most of the Tigerman mostly stays in Assam and Burma. Even he himself stays at Burma and except visiting the village area or passing through sometime, he doesn't stay in India.

His charm was not only for turning into animal but also he could turn into butterfly too. When encountering an enemy, he would sometimes turn into a serpent too. He could turn into various animals. Whenever faced with danger, he would call on to god and he could turn into other animals and insects. This is practised by all the Tigmans.

While hunting in herds, if they are able to kill an animal and by chance if a female tiger jumps over it, they will not eat it as they consider it to be defiled.

In the 30/40 years of being a Tigerman he has come across people asking him to take revenge on other people on their behalf but knowing that such practise is not the will of god, he has never done that. There were instances where sometimes they would throw stones along someone's path to scare them but many a times he reprimanded his friends for doing that saying that it will scare the person so much that he will end up losing his soul (*aghungu kichi puha*). Therefore, they should just cross the path and not scare someone in that way. Those Tigerman leading a restless and careless life would often die by gunfire or other similar incidents but for him, he has been saved from all that.

According to him, his spirit maybe far away but when someone comes seeking for help while trying to trace a theft or something else, the spirit of the thief is seen by him and he can tell exactly who and how the theft took place, from which side the thief came and where it left. His spirit whispers in his ears about everything.

In the beginning, he would dream of his spirit in the form of a jungle cat and would see himself hunting. Then he approached Asu Hokiye who used to turn into a huge tiger (the only surviving

one in his village) and told him about his dream and he confessed that he didn't know what to do about it. This old man told him that he would check whether he was straying away. After a while he told him that *'you are about to get the aura (angu) of your grandfather. If it was procured by contact with someone, I would have done something about it but this is from your bloodline, so you have to be brave and take the Amikhizu'*. According to his guess the *Amikhizu* must be located somewhere in Burma. At the bottom of a cliff, there was a lake and he was asked to bring water from this lake. He thought to himself that if he was to bring out the water from the lake, it would fall from the side and the centre. Then he saw one old man wearing *Asholha Mini* on the crevices along with three others. They told him that if he is able to bring the water out of the lake, then he would have the charm without any problem but if he fails to bring out the water then there were others at his back who were ready to kill him. Then he asked god to help him to get the water from the lake from his heart, after which he dived into the water and when he emerged, everyone shouted with joy. Then someone pointed at a banana plant and asked him to grasp the banana. He did that, after which he didn't look back and went his way. After this incident, he would often find himself roaming in herds with other tigers in his dream. He went again to Asu Hokiye and asked him to remove this charm but he replied saying that when he saw him straying away, he tried to hit him with his stick but he kept moving away. Therefore, now all he can do is live wisely, not creating problems, keeping away from people's livestock and not to listen to everyone but learn to choose wisely.

Since Asü Hokiye also carried this charm, the stick he carried was powerful, therefore when he hit him with this stick, the charm would disappear from his body but he couldn't do it. He was told that at Dimapur, there were Kholami who were well known for removing such charms so he went to them but unfortunately they told him that since this charm came to him through his family and not from somewhere else, it was very hard to remove it. Originally this charm was from his great Grandmother who belonged to Krimtomi village who instead of passing it to her maternal family passed it on to his grandfather. She was a very different woman (*Timi Shixi*).

In his 30-40 years of being a Tigerman, he was hunted with guns twice. One time, he was hit on the hips and though it was his spirit that got hit, even his real body was also hurt and his wife and



kids wondered what had happened. When he was young, along with his spirit, even his real body would also jump up and down. Even on his bed, he would sometimes jump out along with his spirit. There were times when people would hunt him and when his friends and family comes to know about it, they would try to hide his physical body by covering it and his spirit in turn would get hidden. He went to Jiqua where unfortunately his friend was killed but he escaped by borrowing through the earth.

### **Types of *Agha***

According to him, *Agha* is given by god to the spirit of a person. It stays with the person and stays with him at his house but it stays hidden. For the python charm, it stays on his forehead and when it is killed by human the charm goes down to his throat so that others cannot take away the charm and it eventually disappears. When the *agha* is placed on the palm and the spirit animal puts its spit on it and moves it around, when a person who is not brave comes across this, this charm will move around and the spit will resemble sparks but if someone brave comes across this, then the charm will look like a round object.

Among the *Agha*, the python has its charm on its forehead. He will keep it in his throat while slithering around and when he needs to hunt, he will place the charm in a good spot and this will emit light which will attract the prey to the serpent and it will easily hunt down its food. Even for the tiger, he will keep his *agha* in his tail. When he wants to hunt for birds, he would raise his tail and the birds would get attracted and come flying and he would catch them with his claws and eat them. All the tigers have *agha* in their tails and all pythons have it in their forehead.

The Tigerman Tiger and real Tiger can be differentiated very easily according to Shikuto. For the Tigers that is the spirit of man, among the Sümi the stripes will be in vertical lines across his body. Other tribes would have round shapes on their body. The Phoms and Changs would have flower type *Avekha* around their neck.

The Tiger that is spirit tiger will give birth and leave their cubs since the mother is the spirit of a human. She will feed the cubs right after giving birth but since she is just a spirit, she will leave them and go back to her human form.

According to him, there are two types of real tiger – black and tiger that has hair only on one side but it seems these types doesn't come to our region. The real tiger and the spirit tiger doesn't pass each other and usually hide from each other because if they meet, the real tiger would kill the spirit tiger.

For the spirit tigers, both male and female are there, therefore they will become lovers and sometimes the female tiger gets pregnant. When the time comes for her to give birth, the real person i.e. the woman whose spirit tiger is going through birth pain will also experience the birth pain. In real life, they tell their husbands and wives about their spirit lovers. For the females, when the time comes for her spirit tiger to give birth, she would tell her real husband about her pregnancy and her birth pain for which even her human form is also going through the same pain. For husbands who are not happy about it, they would not take care of their wives and will neglect them during such pain. For those who are understanding and accepting of their wives' condition, they would take care of them similarly to the time when the human form gives birth to kids.

The cubs of the spirit tigers become real tigers and they will go their way. Since they weren't taken care of by their mother, some of them die and some survive by hunting for themselves. It is believed that usually the spirit tigers' size is according to the human physical stature.

On the question of whether they come home, i.e. in their spirit form to visit their family, he was of the view that they do not practise that. But on one occasion he had come in his spirit form while he was travelling. He had come from the back of the house. Sensing his presence, his wife who he said is a brave woman shouted at him saying *'don't know where you are but as if you have come to bring something, even if we are sick, what can you bring us?'* after that he left. This is just a rare incident and when he gets back to his human self, his wife would ask him what he was doing. Apart from that he doesn't come home and scare his wife or kids. Those who turn to python would come home too and in the process sometimes they get killed.

There was an incident where once another tiger spirit Xukiye who usually did not travel in herd was seen by him sleeping on the branch of Litshusu tree after finishing a meal of deer. When Xukiye came to his house one Sunday, he told Xukiye *'Since you don't have a herd of your own, after eating your fill, you climbed up the Litshusu and were relaxing. If we were humans, I would have asked you for hind legs but what to do?'* they joked around that way and had their fill of laughter. Then Xukiye asked him how and where he saw him. He would often come to his house. But there was this one time when Xukiye committed a witchcraft on his wife and his wife started getting weird dreams. Therefore, he decided to follow his wife's spirit and when he did that, he saw her loitering around Akuhaito, Roto-Phili area along with Xukiye and saw them killing a pig and having it under a tree. After discovering that, he told Xukiye that he has found out about what he did to his wife, therefore he should undo it or he might do the same to Xukiye's wife. After this, his wife stopped having weird dreams.

In another incident Ghoshito from Litsami while joking with his wife had a light squabble and he may have felt bad and he started saying that he could see Shikuto's wife in the form of Monkey and ASUYI. This person's spirit used to turn into monkey and python. When he was in his spirit form of python and had consumed a deer, he was killed by people due to his inability to move. For Shikuto when he is in the form of tiger spirit and is attacked by an enemy, he ask god to help him and he turns into other animals and escape. When they are hungry, they will ask permission from god to hunt other animal but if they don't get the permission then they will eat only fruits and other stuffs.

The Tigerman without the knowledge of the other person would put his saliva into the food of the person he intends to turn into a Tigerman.

The soul of the Tigerman would sense his spirit coming and suddenly his physical body would start feeling very sleepy. This happens during anytime of the day or night. His spirit maybe staying in any part of the world but as soon as he thinks of going to a particular place, he wouldn't walk but fly to the place in no time and then he would realise that he is home or whichever place he thought of going. When his spirit in the form of tiger roams around and come

across certain place or people, he could easily make out which village or region he is roaming around. The spirit tiger doesn't stay in one place alone. It is not every day that his spirit comes and there are times when he isn't able to discern the arrival of his spirit. But during the moonless nights he can clearly see where his spirit is and also during that period when people come to him seeking information about theft or any other issue, he can clearly see who did what and where it happened. This applies to everyone whose spirit turns to tiger, python or other animals.

There are some people whose spirit doesn't clearly take one form and keeps changing from one to the other (kuduu). Some even change into dirt. Among them also are varieties – the spirit who has human forms hide when they come across people but the evil spirit encounter people and scare them and disturb them.

These evil spirits and the Tigerman don't cross each other. The Tigerman would know which path they take and also where they roam. Therefore they would warn people not to take certain path or to be careful in some places.

He was of the view that his spirit lives in Burma. Therefore when he was asked as to how he was sure that he was in Burma, he said that from the first time that his spirit became tiger he must have taken water from the lake in Burma. He pointed to one of the main river in their region called Tizu river and said how this river would flow down and in Burma joins with Chindwin. In Burma this water flows down a cliff into a lake. This is the place of the spirits. Here the Tigerman gather and also the spirits live according to ranks. They don't gather food but someone else bring their food. In this place there are spirits who can erase the names of people whose spirit takes the form of animals. He is of the view that he removed many person's name. The people whose name have been cut off are those who didn't become Tigerman due to bloodline or out of their will but unknown to them some people had turned them into one. For such people their name can be removed but for those who come through bloodline it is next to impossible to do so.

The spirits are like army and go together to different places as they never stay in one place. In Kohima side there are places where people cannot enter but they can. They also stay at Assam. There are some who roam alone and in Nagaland , since there are many hunters, they get killed.

There are times when friends come to visit and the Tigerman would tell them that on their way back, they may hear certain sound but they shouldn't be afraid because it is only the Tigerman. He would drop and then when the friend reach his destination, they will go back. While doing so the physical body may not be asleep but when he falls asleep he can clearly see what his spirit was upto.

He cannot talk to his spirit nor give direction but what he thinks in his mind will be known by his spirit. For instance, if he says that certain person has done him wrong and he want to take revenge, then his spirit will carry out the work.

Though the Tigerman maybe from different regions, in the spirit world they all speak only one language.

Among the Sümi , the Eastern Sümi are majority when it comes to Tigerman. For non Nagas, they take the form of fox, wild dogs. Tigerman are not supposed to eat meat of squirrel, rat, eggs, *Achighi* as they cannot see clearly nor discern their spirit and during such time they get injured or killed. When they perform *Asaqhi* they cannot clearly do it.

For him, he wants this charm to end with him and not go to his kids. During olden days this kind of charm were very precious and valuable but with the coming of Christianity this kind of practices are not acceptable. He wants this to end with him.

According to him charms are not good. The evils of the earth leaves it with people. For example love charm makes boy and girl inseparable but in reality they don't truly love one another so this type of relationship would not last. This type of charm stays in a person's toe nails and finger nails.

Different charms are:

1. Stealing charm
2. Cheating charm (boy and girl)

3. Cat charm (the person will steal but would not have any recollection)
4. Poison charm – it is a round stone and it is covered and kept. The people who has this charm talks to it and this charm gives birth too. During the festival time and time of harvest, they will take pork fat and smear it. This is kept hidden.

When people are given charm and they go to remove it, it is believed that it comes out in the form of hair though the victim isn't aware about it. The charm giver usually puts such hair in the food and drinks of the victim but the victim will not see it and will consume it. Therefore this will enter the body and will get stuck in the victim's throat and once it pierces the flesh, it will suck all the blood.

When people come to enquire about anything, he would know beforehand. He will be told that certain people would be coming so he should tell them what it is or give them the answers that they are seeking. He himself tells god to show him clearly else he wouldn't be able to bear the burden of not telling clearly.

Incidents:

1. When someone steals or someone is lost and they come to enquire about it, he prays from his heart and he gets the direction as well as the location.
2. In case someone comes to him seeking to find someone, he would tell the person that he would only reveal to him if he doesn't have any evil intention in his heart with plans of beating up or starting a fight with the person. Only after the person agrees will he pray and reveal what is shown to him.
3. At Surumi village, there was a theft of tsukoli and the owner came to him asking to trace the thief. But he sensed that the owner was not happy, therefore only when the person agreed that he would cause no harm to the thief did he pray and revealed to him. He told him that the thief had come from down side and when he left he stepped on the *Axapi Bo* and he was just somewhere near. The owner went back and got the tsukoli. After some days the thief came with materials for tea and thanked him but asked him how he saw

him committing the crime. Later this person became chowkidar of a church. He said he changed his life because of him.

Due to this, there are people who want to take revenge on him for revealing and so there were times when he thought he wouldn't reveal but when he denied people, he started facing problems, he would feel pain in his body and would feel sick. Even sicknesses are also revealed to him and he said there are sicknesses due to curse from forefather's time, due to stealing, etc. Some sickness is caused due to encounter with evil spirit.

Once there was a husband and wife in his village who had lived near and then moved. One day he could get a strong smell and he thought someone had brought home hunted animal. He went in search of the smell then he saw the wife was bleeding but the husband was not aware about it. When the wife saw him, she came running to him and she looks as pale as paper as she had bled too much and she told him that she was about to die but her husband wasn't aware about it. Then he asked her where her husband was and he went and brought him home. When Shikuto said that he must have committed some mistake, the husband told him that since the day his mother birthed him, he has never committed any wrongdoing. But he told him that there was a buffalo at their door. Then he said that long back when he was young, at Qhehoi village, some people asked him to kill a Buffalo and he tried by piercing it at its waist. Then he asked them to pray and they did and got healed.

For Shikuto he tried his best to remove this charm and he even worked as Deacon at their church but it didn't go away. He doesn't know if it is god's will or not but till what time god has prepared his life on earth he will continue to live this way. When his physical body dies even his spirit will also die. For those whose spirit have been killed, their physical body will feel pain and wont be clear about the whereabouts of his spirit though he isn't aware about the death of his spirit. Once the news reach him, he can see the person who killed his spirit and then his physical body also dies.

### Xukiye Katy, Phuye Old (76 Years)



In olden days, there lived an old man named Asu Zuyilho who used to be a Tigerman. His spirit would take the form of a huge tiger. He was also part of the Labour Corps who went to Germany. During that period, while he was crossing a huge jungle in Assam, he was entrapped in a jail and was kept at Gauhati Zoo for more than 10 years. So Shokhuyi and his son in law went to Gauhati around 1966/67 and took meat and fed the tigers at the Gauhati Zoo. During such time, Asu Zuyilho asked where did Tichiphami Shokhuyi go and when he was told that he went to Gauhati, he did some rituals with some Tigerman who turned to Tigers and Snakes and putting some charm on the net, Zuyilho was brought back to the village. After this, Zuyilho lived in the village and even lost his eyesight. His son got married and had one son and one daughter after which he passed away. The Agha or the charm which makes it possible for the holder's soul to turn into a Tiger or Python was usually created from the milk of the Tiger or Python. For the Python charm, the milk would be brought and placed in a small container and Xekiye was also given this charm and he was told that no matter where this charm was kept, nothing would happen to it. After he came into possession of this charm, slowly he started feeling changes. This occurred when he was around 57/58 years old. According to Xukiye, people whose spirit turn into Tigers would sometimes turn into devil too. They would also turn into serpent sometimes. People whose spirit turn into Tiger would climb hills and rugged paths and would go and drink water from a place called 'Amkhiyizu'. Those who are able to drink from this lake by overcoming all the obstacles would fully turn into tiger i.e. spirit. It is believed that many spirits died while trying to drink the water from this lake. Even for Xukiye, he went to this lake and successfully drank water from this lake. While going back home, in the Kiphire area, in a place called Suruli (unsure) he remembered killing a cow and sharing with other spirit tigers/ Tigerman. Slowly, he was able to understand the ways of his spirit. Zuyilho's grandson Shikuto who was from the line of Tigerman through bloodline was a complete tiger, i.e. his spirit. But for Xukiye who was not from a bloodline of Tigerman could not completely



turn into a tiger and could not trace much about the activities of his spirit. But his wife hid the charm after which the little activities of his spirit that could be traced could also not be established. For nearly 10 years he remembers incidents of his spirit turning into a tiger.

### **Beginning:**

One day he heard himself shouting to guard the Awotsakili pathway in a place called '*Azuta Kichighi-a*' and then his spirit as a Tiger kicked on the sands and drank water as he was very thirsty. Though he was never aware about the existence of that particular place in his physical life, he remembered clearly being under a '*Chho Chho bo*'. Therefore, in reality, he went to check for himself if such an area was there and to his surprise he really found the place where his soul drank water. At Awotsakilimi village there were two hunting dogs that in the eyes of the spirit tigers looked like men. While Xekiye was constructing a house at Khitsakita, he heard people discussing about these two dogs. Therefore, he asked Shikuto whether it was a dream or reality about their involvement with the dogs. Then Shikuto started laughing and told him that when the first hunting dog came up, Xukiye had told Shikuto to kill it and that the second hunting dog would be killed by Xukiye because he would not be able to kill it, therefore they ended up killing the two hunting dogs. On this day, Shikuto declared that Xukiye's spirit also turned into a Tiger, therefore after that day Xukiye also could somehow trace the activities of his spirit. According to Xukiye, from Changki village there was a path that led up straight to Apukito. One day while Xukiye as a tiger was carrying his hunt and from Apukito a devil came running. He thought to himself that unless he was turning into a devil himself, how was it possible that he would be at Changki side and as soon as he thought of going home, he would be at Apukito.

He remembered the hunting dogs and how while they were hunting, when their masters blow their guns, they would say to each other that their master has killed an animal and was calling them to go home.

### ***Agha***

*Agha* or charm can be seen with our own eyes. When a Python drops her milk on the ground and when a Tiger while feeding her cubs drops some milk or when the cubs are unable to finish drinking the mother's milk and it falls on the ground, such droplets can be found as big as one's

finger on the ground and can be recognised easily by people who have knowledge of such. Even if the area is burnt, the place where such droppings fall would look very different in the eyes of the people who have such knowledge. In a container around 1 inch in height and with cork, such droppings would be kept by covering it with cotton and again covering that with cloth and the person carrying this would be termed as someone carrying charm. When Xukiye came to be in possession of such a charm, he could also see some changes in himself. Asu Zuyilho was the younger brother of Xekiye's mother, therefore though from the women's side, this charm was given to Xukiye.

According to Xukiye, there were different types of Agha among the Sümi namely:

1. *Ami gha* (fire charm)
2. *Ashi gha* (animal charm)
3. *Aghau gha* (birds charm)
4. *Totimi gha* (women charm)
5. *Ana gha* (rice charm for bountiful harvest)
6. *Atsu-aqu gha* (domestic animals charm) – this charm will have horn

These charms would all look like marbles. Xukiye witnessed an incident of *Amigha* being possessed by an Akukau of Satami village. When they were constructing his house, Xukiye was able to sense that this Akukau possessed the *Amigha*. Therefore, they kept insisting the Akukau to show his charm to them but he kept denying that he did not possess any charm. But while tying the Akhetsu with bamboo straps, they could see fire here and there. When they completed constructing the house and came to construct the Amqha, they came to know that the Akukau's house was burnt down. It was believed that since the new house was fully constructed using nails, the fire charm had no corners to hide itself and the house got burned down. Since such charms would be kept hidden in corners and places where people cannot easily see or notice, while the Akukau was trying to hide the fire charm, it burnt down his house. It was believed that if such charms are not hidden properly, people would steal it. For the fire charm, usually it is

found in the forest by people who can sense such phenomena. It apparently looks exactly like a marble (similar to the one used by the kids for playing). But for the animal charm, it would be slightly pointed similar to a horn.

It seems Xukiye used to keep the charm hidden from his wife. One day his wife went to visit Xukiye's grandmother and gifted her a rooster and cooked fish and meat. Grandmother told her that she was going to tell her something that was a secret. It seems that the charm possessed by her husband was something that everyone was scared of as everyone is usually scared of python and tigers, therefore their family would be lucky in everything because of the charm but the man who possess this charm would also keep many women apart from his wife. Unfortunately during that particular year, one woman who got pregnant with her younger brother's child, fearing people started trying to put the blame on Xukiye. Apparently the more he joked around with her, the more she started getting attracted to Xukiye. Due to this incident, Xukiye's wife threw away this charm and though he searched everywhere he couldn't find it.

For someone whose spirit takes the form of Tiger or Python, whenever such phenomena were to take place, the person would start feeling sleepy. If one starts feeling sleepy, they should sleep immediately. Once they fall asleep they will see everything that their spirit is doing. The physical body would be asleep but the spirit would take another form and would be engaged in various activities. During the day time, they would tease people in the field by plucking rice stalk and throwing in different directions and they would put their heads under the Ayikusu and change themselves into other animals (*kuduu*) in order to disappear. But when such things occur, even the people would realise that this wasn't normal and would try to find out the Tigerman from which village was causing such situations. In certain scenarios, when a Lycanthrophist is surrounded by people, except for fish, they can change themselves into other animals and birds in order to escape.

There were times when Xukiye would see his spirit tiger killing a deer and eating it and sometimes a wild boar. When the spirit hunts and eat, sometimes the physical body would also find feathers and hairs stuck in between their teeth and feel fullness in one's stomach. But in reality too, he would eat food because that is just his spirit having his fill.

When it comes to food restrictions when one of them from the group kills an animal and points to his herd about it, the other herd would not touch it. Such meat are not supposed to be eaten by people because if such meat is eaten at home he wouldn't be allowed to join his herd.

The Tigerman were few among the Lothas and Aos. Majority were from Eastern Nagas referred to as Yechumi. They usually use Avekha so it was easy to recognise them.

Once while going to Dimapur with his friend Vikuto who usually travelled a lot while Xukiye on the other hand was not used to travelling much. Before reaching Wokha, Xukiye told Vikuto that they were about to reach a place where once when Xukiye's tiger spirit got injured and took refuge. This place was where people used to keep their pigs and nearby there was an anepho (crag) so when Xukiye's spirit tiger got injured, his friends brought him to this place so that he could recover without being noticed by others. The members of his herd would bring food for him. Xukiye got injured when without knowing that something resembling a rope was an electric wire, he tried to swing to the other side and got electrocuted. He was taken care by his friends for nearly 5 months. In real life, nothing was affected but he could feel slight weakness. He also didn't tell his wife and children that his spirit tiger was injured due to electrocution. But whenever he slept, he could see that his friends were feeding him with fish and meat and taking care of him.

Since the spirits doesn't talk to each other, they would recognise each other because they would look like their human face to each other. They would see each other this way but to others seeing them, they would appear in the animal form. It is believed that if they notice even their own tail, they would stop turning into their spirit animal.

Whenever they moved in herds, the leader or the strongest among them would hide their trail by covering their paw prints left on the ground with sand and make it look like only one tiger had crossed this area.

When the spirit tiger is hunted down by people, the physical form wouldn't die immediately but he would die only after the news reach him. During moonless nights (*Aqhishema/Aqhisüma*) one would find one's spirit climbing trees. For some unfortunate people when they eat the leftover of people who practise lycanthropy, they also start becoming one. The smell of tiger is similar to that of a goat.

## REFERENCE

### PRIMARY SOURCE:

Alu (82 years), Ighanumi Village, date of interview: 18th December 2020  
Mutshalho (82 years), Ighanumi Village, Date of Interview: 18th December 2020  
Pukhavi (40 years), Ighanumi Village, Date of Interview: 18th December 2020  
Jerimo (62 years), Ighanumi Village, Date of Interview: 18th December 2020  
Khutoli (38 years), Ighanumi Village, Date of Interview: 18th December 2020  
Mighishe Swu, (85 years), Hebolimi Village, Date of Interview: 19th March 2021  
Inushe (48 years), Hebolimi Village, Date of Interview: 19th March 2021  
Heqhezu Zhimomi (95 years), Chisholimi Village, Date of Interview: 20th March 2021  
Kivixe, (85 years), Chisholimi Village, Date of Interview: 20th March 2021  
Yezuqhe (72 years), Chisholimi Village, Date of Interview: 20th March 2021  
Asapu Tijimi (76 years), Lazami Village, Date of Interview: 21st March 2021  
Mixeni (74 years), Lazami Village, Date of Interview: 21st March 2021  
Naghipu (75 years), Lazami Village, Date of Interview: 21st March 2021  
Yekamu Sheqi (93 years), Pughoboto town, Date of Interview: 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021  
Yikishe Sema (64 years), Pughoboto town, Date of Interview: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021  
Visali Wotsa (85 years), Mishilimi village, Date of Interview: 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021  
Hekiye Awomi, (86 years), Surumi village, Date of interview: 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
Yekheto Shikhu (81 years), Awotsakili village, Date of Interview: 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2019, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November 2019, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020  
Kiyeli Shikhu (75 years), Awotsakili village, Date of interview: 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2022  
Pekiye (74 years), Mukalimi Village, Date of Interview: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020  
Sali (70 years), Mukalimi Village, Date of interview: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020  
Toshiho (50 years), Mukalimi Village, Date of interview: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020  
Khakhu (85 years), NatSümi Village, Date of interview: 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019  
Shikuto (60 years), Phuye Old, Date of Interview: 16<sup>th</sup> Dcember 2020  
Xukiye Katy (76 years), Phuye Old, Date of Interview: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## **SECONDARY SOURCE**

Achumi, K L. (2012). *Sümi Lhoyezah (Sümi Customary Practices and Usages)*. New A V Printing Press, Dimapur

Aye, N Khashito. (2000). *The Sümi Nagas*. S P Press, Dimapur

Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict, Hague. (1954). Retrived on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000082464>

Firth, Raymond. (1960). The Fate of the Soul. *Anthropology of Folk Religion*. Vintage books, New York. Pp 301-332

Hutton, J H. (1921). *The Sema Nagas*. Mac Millan and Co, London

Nicolucci, Franco. (2007). *Digital Application for Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (Report on the State of the Union Policies, Practises and Developments in Europe)* Vol 2, Budapest: Archaeolingua Nison, Tomas et al (2018), “*Cultural Heritage Preservation: the Past and the Present*”, Halmstad University Press

Isar, Raj. (2004). *Tangible and Intangible Heritage: Are they really castor and pollux?*. INTACH, New Delhi

Jimo, Lovitoli. (2008). Marriage Prestations and “Ame” Bridewealth in the Sümi Naga Society. *Indian Anthropologists*, Vol 38, No 2 (July – Dec 2008), pp 44-60

Shohe, Sukhalu., Pukhaxu, Inaho G Swu, Kiyeto G Sema, Vitoshe Wotsa, Sukhavi Sümi, Nishena Nekha, P Zuvito Wotsa, Y Vikheho Swu. (2004). *Sümi Christian Centenary 1904-2004 SABAK, Xulhe*. Bhabani Press and Publications, Guwahati

Shikhu, Inato Yekheto. (2007). *A Rediscovery and Rebuilding of Naga Cultural Values*.

Regency Publication, New Delhi

Swu, Gen Zuheto K. (2003). *Sümi Xü Ghili*. Self Published, Satakha Hillboto

“*The Interdependency of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*”, Inaugural Key note Address by the Assistant Director General for Culture, UNESCO at the ICOMOS 14th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium.

Kati, Shiwoto. (2014). *Aghau Jeli Julho*. Kushe Humanity Foundation, Dimapur

UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural heritage adopted by the General Conference at its 17th Session Paris, 16th November 1972.

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Paris, 17th October 2003.

UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 13th Session, 19th August 2015, Agenda Item 5, “*Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with respect to their Cultural Heritage*”, study by the Expert Mechanism on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Zhimo, Ghoheto. (2018). *Sümi No Pheche keu Lejole*. S P Printers, Dimapur

Zhimo, Ghoheto. (2018). *Sümi Tiqhetini, Achine eno Baibel Lo Kiqikulu*. S P Printers, Dimapur