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### 3. **Origin Myth and the Making of Shaman: A Case Study of the Idu Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh\***

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#### **Abstract**

*In a tribal society, there are always some persons who are moderators between the individuals and supernatural beings. They possess special characteristics, personality, and training, by which they are proficient in making contact with or propitiating and influencing them. They are shamans who play a vital role in society, and their advice is sought on almost all occasions. They are characteristically a reservoir and custodian of indigenous knowledge system, of the folklore, specialists of sacred hymns, spiritual healers, disease specialists, teachers, oral historians, philosophers and leaders. For this dynamic nature and the role they play in society, this paper attempts to explore and document the origin myths and making of a shaman and other associates in the Idu Mishmi society. Following a qualitative research approach, the paper found shamanism is a vibrant institution and they remain significant in present-day Idu Mishmi culture. However, this fascinating and fast vanishing Intangible Cultural Heritage is under great threat of change and even extinction. The fascinating version of the origin myths of shamans and other associates provides us*

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*with an understanding of the tribal worldview and their relation to nature and environment. If these oral treasures are not documented and disseminated, it will have a severe impact in the future, resulting in the vanishing of the ancient sacred oral narratives, related folklore, and vast shamanic traditional knowledge system of the community.*

**Key Words:** Shaman, Oral narratives, Origin Myth, Idu Mishmi

### Introduction

In the available literature, a shaman is defined as, 'a person in some religions and societies who is believed to be able to contact good and evil spirits and cure people of illness' (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2000: 1176). He is 'a practitioner who has developed the mastery of ;a. accessing altered states of consciousness, controlling themselves while moving in those states, and returning to an ordinary state of consciousness at will, b. mediating between the needs of the spirit world and those of the physical world in a way that can be understood by the community, and whose mastery of the above is used, c. to serve the needs of the community that cannot be met by practitioners of other disciplines such as physicians, psychiatrists, priests, and leaders' (Pratt, 2007: xxii). Shamanism can be defined as a religious belief system in which the shaman is the specialist in knowledge. The shaman knows the spirit world and human soul through ecstasy, the power of an altered state of consciousness, or trance, which is used to make a connection to the world of the spirits to bring about benefits to the community (Walter and Fridman 2004: xi).

Thus, shamanism can be understood as power possessed by some person who mediates, control, and manipulates supernatural or spiritual forces for human ends. However, there is visible discontent and overlapping usage of terms in defining the concept of shaman such as ecstatic behavior, initiatory crisis, religio-magical, psychopomp, medicine man, healers, etc. As with other concepts, the construct of shamanism in academics is not in isolation from various contested voices. This can be marked following Eliade (1964: 3) who said, "If the word shaman is taken to mean any magician, sorcerer, medicine man, or ecstatic found throughout the history of religions and religious ethnology, we arrive at a notion at once extremely complex and extremely vague." For Eliade, a shaman is also a medicine man, a magician, a psychopomp, a priest, mystic, or poet (ibid: 4). For him, shamanism is a religious

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phenomenon that originated in Siberia and Central Asia, and the very word is derived from Russian Tunguiscsaman (ibid:4).

Similar to Eliade, Ränk (1967) held that “the existent major comparative research consists mainly in the attempt to seek a shortcut straight to the meaning and origin of shamanism. By concentrating on the origin, scholars have lost their way in it, and wish at any price to achieve a solution. But the results attained so far in that direction cannot lay claim to any objectivity. If similar mistakes are to be avoided in the future, it is necessary to undertake a large number of detailed historico-cultural investigations, which cover both terminology the shaman's equipment, different sides of the shaman's activity and related religious ideas”. Versnel (1990) also claims that any definition is tentative which requires continuous realignment and new interpretations. To Walter and Fridman (2004: xxi) shamanism is any kind of ecstatic behavior, spirit possession, witchcraft, and even cannibalism. For such dynamic nature, they saw shamanism as a living and vital phenomenon, engaging a wide range of people in the field (Walter and Fridman, 2004). Witzel (2011) also notes the problem in defining the terms shaman and shamanism. To him, such are blanket terms covering a wide range of beliefs and rituals, which keep transforming with new realities and changing societies. Now, as an area of academic interest, its scope is wide-ranging which includes, but is not limited to, conceptual and theoretical perspectives, spirituality and worldview, folklore, rites and rituals, healing practices, sacred oral texts, material culture, indigenous knowledge system, performing arts, gender dimension, among many others. The institution of the shaman is undoubtedly an important Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) or ‘living heritage’ of the tribal communities across the globe; they remain significant in present-day cultures. They provide these communities with a sense of identity and continuity while adding an immense understanding of the sustainable way of life and many other cultural-specific phenomena.

One of the main important factors constituting a shaman is the societal approval of their special skills in divinity which empowers them to conduct rituals on behalf of the community. They possess peculiar mechanisms of leadership, their employment of various devices like through mannerisms, gestures, and voice to stimulate and evoke emotions to capture the audience. Their invoking songs or chants treat the patients psychologically. Thus, they are a reservoir of indigenous knowledge, spiritual

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healers, disease specialist, teachers, and leaders.

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is predominantly tribal and being exposed to the outside world very lately, the institution of shaman plays a very significant role in the lives of tribe people, though the impact of a greater religion, such as Christianity and Hinduism, is visible. There are more than thirty tribes in the state, each having its nomenclature for their religious specialists, such as tribes like Nyishi, Galo, Tagin, etc calls them *Nyibu* or *Nyib*, the Taroan Mishmis call them *Goak* and the Kaman Mishmis as *Kambren*. The Idu Mishmis, the subject of the present paper, call their shaman *Igu* and they occupy an exalted position in the society.

This paper is an attempt to explore and document the folklore relating to the origin myths, and the making of the shaman and other associates in the Idu Mishmi society. The paper follows a qualitative approach and methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

#### **The Idu Mishmis and their Shaman: A Brief Note**

The Idu Mishmis<sup>i</sup> are a scheduled tribe of India with a population of around 14000 (approximately), is spread in as many as 250 villages primarily inhabit two districts, i.e. the Lower Dibang Valley and the Dibang Valley districts, and a few populations in Lohit, East Siang and Upper Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Linguistically, an endangered tribe, they are one of the three subgroups of the Mishmi tribe and the other two subgroups are Taroan (Digaru) and Kaman (Miju) Mishmis. Though the terms 'Idu' and 'Mishmi' have pre-colonial origin; they call themselves *Keraa-a*, meaning children of *Keraa*, a remote ancestor as they assume. The tribe was popularly known as the *Chulikata Mishmis* during colonial and post-colonial periods because of their distinct hairstyle (Cropped hair) which is said to be a nomenclature given by the people of the Assam plains with whom they had trade relations (Bhattacharjee, 1983).

They are Mongoloid in physical appearance and speak the Tibeto-Burman family language (Simon, 1976/Blench, 2019). They are patrilineal, patrilocal, and patriarchal as authoritative power goes to the father or married male of the family. The basic rule of marriage is clan exogamy and for establishing a matrimonial relationship, persons involved should not have any blood relationship either from the patrilineal or matrilineal line of descendant. The religious worldview of the Idu Mishmi is largely

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animistic and they believe in several spirits called *khinu*; both benevolent and malevolent whom they appease from time to time involving scores of animal and bird sacrifices. These man-spirit relationships are well communicated by the community shaman *Igu* through various rites and rituals.

The literal meaning of *Igu* is “shield” - the one which protects from the rain, heat, calamities, diseases, etc. In a strict sense, the *Igus* are full-time religious practitioners, though in their free time they may engage themselves in other day-to-day activities such as cultivation work. They play a significant role in the religious life of the tribal groups and their advice is sought in almost every important occasion such as the building of a house, marriage, sowing in the field, before undertaking a long journey, before a hunting expedition, and so on. It is generally believed that only the shamans have knowledge of divination and, therefore, they are summoned in case of sickness, temporal distress, etc. They are representatives of the people to communicate their sufferings and grievances to the spirits and seek redress. They are considered sacred specialists, a medicine man, a healer, a traditional philosopher, oral historians, and the methods employed by them is unique to them. He specializes in the trance state and goes out of his body to the sky or the land of the netherworld. It is believed that they control their tutorial spirits thereby making them their instrument to meet the desired purpose.

The *Igus* are in a loose sense classified into *Iguni*, *Ashati*, *Igu-aa*, and *Achasi* (Bhattacharjee, 1983:121). However, the major classification on a functional basis is a junior *Igu*- performing in smaller rituals with lesser durations and senior *Igu* attending to bigger rituals with longer durations. The senior *Igus* perform in *Yah*, *Reh*, *Amrasey*, etc., which need the costumes and are of longer duration and needs animal sacrifice. On the other hand, the junior *Igus* is confined to rituals *Aanyongo*, *Ayi*, etc., mostly as a local healer. Their status in the profession depends on the proficiency and knowledge they developed by themselves with their consistent effort. Their reputation also depends on the number of invitations they received and rituals they performed, especially the number of *Yah* and *Reh* rituals.

There are instances where the categorization of *Igus* depended on the possession of the costumes. The costumes, being costly and rare is hardly affordable by a poor *Igu*. There are many *Igus* who have been performing for a decade and qualified to take on as senior *Igu*. But the non-availability of the

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costumes prevents them to do so. Some manage to hire, others buy the costumes. There are some *Igus* who after their retirement due to old age, disease, etc. pass the costumes to the younger *Igus* as gifts or even sell them. Lt. Aprolo Mega had got his costumes from Poke Mili by paying Rs.150/- for *Amrala* (40 years ago). The dress was weaved by his grandmother.<sup>ii</sup>

### Origin myths of the Shaman (Igu)

The textualised myths relating to the origin of the Igu among the Idu Mishmis varies enormously which is reflected in various writings.<sup>iii</sup> The oral literature as passed from generation to generation by the *Igu*, reveal that the institution of *Igu* is as old as the universe itself. On the origin of the shaman, Verrier Elwin (1958) provides a version as follows:

There was a woman who had a child every year but they always died because the *Atu* (Spirit) devoured them. The spirit used to kill the children. The poor woman started weeping. Feeling pity the creator appeared and enquired about the matter. After listening to her, the creator gave her a sword and said, "When you put your child to sleep in its basket (*Aweno*), lay the knife above it". Subsequently, the next time the woman gave birth to a boy, she laid him in a basket and placed the sword above him. Then when late at night, the *Atu* spirit came to devour him, the mother cut him into pieces with the sword. The name of the child was *Atungi-Ara*. When he grew up he married and had a son called Aru-pe, who became an *Igu*. Aru-pe became famous *Igu* and visited the place where the children were born. Aru-pe used to go with his sword whenever he was summoned and would sit by the child until the *Atu* spirit came. Then he would spring up and kill him with many blows.

(Elwin, 1958:263)

Another myth reveals the necessity of *Igus* for curing diseases and warding off evils when the earth once came under a great fire (*Inyila Phri*). The myth reveals how the restoration was in the process and new *Igus* were being produced. According to the myth, the great fire engulfed the world. There were visible signals of this catastrophe. The wise men had predicted it saying-

*'etoni yala yophri nawe buda laga,*  
*ahi mimu ajome ana me laga,*  
*abu buiyine dodeya done, beya ikhu imbiche liba,*

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*ekoche gaye yiga done, poyon yimbi tseba buda,  
abe aru achunu gando, aru assisi mando yaba...'*

**English translation:**

The world is going to burn, so said the people from the east. Unusual things have started happening where the children's hair started greying, thus making them look old. The flowers have started blooming much before their normal time. Thereafter, the rats and snakes came out of their refuge from the ground and destroyed the standing crops.

The great fire destroyed everything, the villages, and the crops- all got burnt down. This devastation was followed by the great flood which submerged everything. Only the mountain tops were visible. Then came the great wind which blew away all people; rich, poor, children, animals, etc. This led to the material destruction of the world. There was danger of survival of humankind. The question thus, emerged- How to renew the world? To this question, Sipa Melo, a male shaman, age around 55 of Alinye village, Dibang valley district, chants- '*Alo yunpu simabru nawe goha, aro anjome duthryim*', meaning- in the *Igu* narratives of the chants, *Inyila phri taju*, the great burning story, is followed by the origin stories- *Yunpu taju*.<sup>iv</sup>

Another version provides information on the origin myth of the *Igu* as following:

A lady named Arume Mili was very much concerned about this human loss. She thought- "Now to save mankind I need to have a husband and bear children". One day she was sleeping near the window (*Ashoka*). A wave of wind came and it through her thighs. In this way, she was conceived by the wind. But Arume Mili thought- "though I do not have a husband I am pregnant. I wonder who must be the father of this child". Then a spirit named Asime Liru declared- "Since I have made efforts to have a child from Arume Mili, the child is mine". In this way, Arume Mili gave birth to many sons. All of them were *Igus* and the eldest was Sineru.<sup>v</sup>

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An important mention can here be made of Sineru. He is the celebrated *Igu* who gets mention in all the chants of the *Igus*. He was the first *Igu* who performed a death ritual called *Yah*. He took along the souls of the dead and guided them to their original place, thus making the world ghost-free. The other brothers of Sineru performed one ritual or the other. Andi Jiru started performing at the Reh festival, Lumeru Mili performed the *Anja* (the dirge song), Aru-Liru performed ritual at places where one was murdered. Ambe Biru performed at a place where one died in an accident or unnatural way.<sup>vi</sup>

There is another myth relating to Sineru and the origin myth of *Igus* as follows:

Sineru was once engaged in a ritual ceremony away from his home. His ailing mother whom he loved was at home. When he reached Athupopu (origin of Taloh/Dibangriver), he got the news of his first wife's death from a bird. He did not bother about it. Again his son's death was informed by another bird. He ignored the matter. But one day Ishuru (a bird) informed him of the death of his mother. With a deep shock, he could not believe the news. He was heartbroken. As he reasoned, the wife and children can be re-arranged but the mother could not be brought again. He began asking the rocks, trees, mountains, and animals about the news. Later it was confirmed from Alunjuru (another bird). When he reached home, he found that the soul of his mother would come back in various forms. One day it came, in the form of an owl. The owl had a disgusting smell and bore an earthworm around its nose (signifying the grave). Sineru's second wife, who was weaving, saw it sitting near the pig-stay. The wife drove away the bird with a loom-stick (*aabripa*). To stop the frequent visit of mother's ghost Sineru hired his brother Lumeru Mili for performing *Anja*-the dirge chant. But it was not successful. The soul could not be properly guided. Thereafter, Sineru himself went to the Athupopu and started weeping sitting on a huge stone lying there. He then guided the soul to its original place. There he performed *Anja* for many days and his tears and print of the palm made a permanent mark on the stone.<sup>vii</sup>

The above versions reveal different aspects of the origin of the *Igu*. During the study, the Sineru part of the myth was found more popular, with minor variations here and there. For instance, Lt. Loda Meto, a shaman from Mayu village, Roing declared Anjoru was the first *Igu* and Sineru was his son



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who later on became Sineru and his *Igu* brothers like Andijiru. Sometimes, the emphasis is laid upon the importance of a mother. It is pronounced that a mother is more important than a wife or son who can be procured in the future also. This is emphasized in Sineru's myth.

It is interesting to note that an expedition to the Athupopu was organized by the Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society in September 2000. The 22-day expedition followed Dibang (*Taloh*) river course and reached the Keya Pass on the Indo-China border at 12,000 ft. The Sineru rock and the cultivated field of the souls (*Megra-Mra*) were found as mentioned in the chants of the *Igus*.

Among the other *Igu* brothers of Sineru, Andi Jiru presided in the Reh festival ritual, Iumeru Mili specialized in dirge mourning song and Aru Liru in funerals relating to unnatural deaths such as murder, suicide, accidents, all rituals have their originator *Igus*. This accounts for the division of rituals and insistence on their correct observance. The line of the shaman is called- *Rhu*. In summary, the progenitor shamans were *Si-ne-rhu*, *Asi-zu-rhu*, *Ambrim-br-rhu*, *Ato-li-rhu*, *Epeh-li-rhu*, *Elokhro-rhu*, *Azi-ji-rhu*, *Alun-zu-rhu*, *Anjo-rhu*, *Ahe-li-rhu*, *Asso-rhu*, *Ming-nga-rhu*, who had mastery over various rituals associated with birth, death, disease and illness, taboos, festival, etc.

### **The making of *Igu*; Ordination, Signs, Symbols, and Training**

On the making of a shaman among the Idu Mishmis, Chaudhuri states:

“No one can become an *Igu* by virtue of a wish. Such spiritual power is transmitted as a spiritual gift, which may be reflected by some symptoms; mostly through abnormal activities. Hence, it was not necessary that a son or daughter of an *Igu* became an *Igu*. On the other hand, a son of a non-*Igu* (*minga*) may become a powerful *Igu* by spiritual manifestation. The hymns which an *Igu* chant cannot be understood by common Idus except for a few elderly people, as well as those who assist *Igus* for a long period of time while dancing or performing other rituals. Idus believe that if any *Igu* tries to teach such sacred hymns to his or her offspring against the wish of spirits to make him or her an *Igu*, then the trainee may even die”.

Chaudhuri (2008: 88)

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Thus, among Idu Mishmis there is no hereditary dimension in the institution of *Igu*. The eligibility for *Igu* is the spiritual aptitude manifested itself through signs. A person from an *Igu* family has more advantage of experiencing the institution closer than from the commoners. One can master the chants by constantly practising to become an *Igu*. For instance, Lt. Rano Mihu (aged 90 years) of Mihundo village, Anini, started listening to *Igus* in his childhood days and repeatedly chanted them. This made his friends encourage him to become an *Igu*. This form of apprenticeship often helps the individual in acquiring the exact knowledge. Encouragement from family and friends also contributes to the making of an *Igu*. Tina Mega, aged 55 years is a shaman from Intaya village in Roing. Late Naputi Misu, a friend of Tina Mega, narrates how they encouraged him:

Tina Mega was very different from the group. He had deep shining eyes. His father Songe Mega was an *Igu*. He could recite and chant the hymns with perfection. Everybody in the village would ask Tina to become an *Igu*. But none invited him for the rituals. His friends Noroh Pulu and Naputi Misu himself were very concerned for him and thought it to be a mockery and people loved making fun of Tina. So, Noroh Pulu invited Tina Mega for the *Arey-bi* ritual. The whole night he chanted. In the morning when he completed, he was given remuneration in the form of 8 pairs of tongs and Rs.5/- in coins. Thereafter, people recognized him as a full-time *Igu* and began inviting him.<sup>viii</sup>

It is believed that a mother comes to know whether her child would become an *Igu* or not. If a child is born with an umbilical cord around the neck, then it is a positive sign. The birth of a child in this fashion resembles the *Igu* wearing an *Amrala* (*Igu* costume) for dance. Dreams in most cases encourage the person to opt for *Igu*. Lt. Loda Meto had such a dream. He was an *Igu* from Mayu village, Roing. He migrated from Mihundo to the Desali area. In his younger days, he dreamt of planting *kali* (herb carried by *Igu* for healing) and *egambo* (cactus) in front of his house. The dream would repeat again and again. At the same time, unusual things began to happen with him. His nails would come off easily and new nails would reappear within two or three days. He fell ill for 7-8 months. Thereafter, he became an *Igu*. The cactus tree (*egambo*) is symbolic of the *Igu* since every *Igu* house has a cactus tree in front of it. The *Igus* have a tutelary deity called *dron* who is said to assist them in rituals. In the symbolic form the stone or rock (*Echa*), representing them, are located

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nearby *Igu*'s house. The *Igus* visit and invoke them before going to perform any rituals. There are dreams of bamboo twigs (*Tothro*) which is also symbolic of *Igu*.<sup>ix</sup> Another *Igu*, Lt. Pachu Dele, aged 55 years, of Abali village, saw an *egambo* tree and got inspired. There were similar cases of Molla Mili a shaman of Ashali village, Roing and Aprolo Mega of Arenli village.<sup>x</sup> Sometimes the mother gets the prediction of her child becoming an *Igu*. If a pregnant woman sees the cactus tree in which the child is hung in a basket in dreams, then her child is bound to become an *Igu*. So does a woman, who dreams of the bird *pra erru* making its nest on the roof of the house (Baruah, 1960:74).

One sign of becoming an *Igu* is that the person falls into trance frequently and attains the state of lunacy (*Alomo*). A brief case study of Lt. Iritu Mendo is given below:

Iritu Mendo was a Shaman of Mayu village. His great grandfather was an *Igu*. He started *Igu* in the year 1972. In his youth days, he used to fall in trance frequently. His soul would start living with the spirits. He used to go to the forest and began living there. His family members were very much worried. He used to come back to the village and indulge in unusual activities like eating charcoal, the human excreta, or mud. Human excreta appeared to him as delicious food and ordinary cooked food seemed to him as human excreta. He fled to the jungle and stayed there for months together. Very often he wanted to tear open his stomach and throw out the intestine. Very often he thought that he could pierce his chest with a dao. His soul stayed with the spirits and learned the knowledge of the chants. When he returned, he performed a sacrifice and became competent to officiate as an *Igu*. There was news everywhere of the emergence of a new *Igu*. He claims of curing epilepsy.<sup>xi</sup>

The office of the *Igu* is not restricted to males only. Females can also become *Igu* if they possess a spiritual bent of mind. However, there are lesser female *Igu* as compared with the males. A case of a female *Igu* on how she entered the profession is given below:

Lt. Ashi Pulu, wife of Pila Mega lived in Cheta village. From childhood itself, she had a divinely bent of mind. She would see spirits, in the houses and jungles. She used to listen carefully to the *Igus* and chant with them in rituals as assistants (*Tamro*). She would chant even during working in the field. Her husband encouraged her. Her father-in-law

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presented her with a *Ripung*. She performed *Brocha* as the first ritual. At a later date due to her old age, she was unable to perform.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Sacred Paraphernalia: Shamanic Dress and Costumes**

The *Igus* in ordinary times put on normal dresses. But on rituals like *Yah* and *Reh*, the *Igus* put on full costumes. These costumes hold the attention of the audience with awe and appreciation. These costumes help the *Igu* in propitiation of the spirits. Their dresses and ornaments are so sacred that a common man cannot put on himself. This may enrage the tutelary spirit. As examined, the institution of *Igu* is not hereditary but the costumes are passed on by the *Igus* to his family. If anyone in the family becomes an *Igu* the person inherits it, otherwise, it is sold according to the wishes of the family. As the costumes are expensive and rare, they become an asset for the family.

The shamanic costumes are the same for the male and female *Igus*. The dress and ornaments items are *Aweto*: a headgear around which small sea shells are woven and a yak tail (*Keya Kembo Kimi*) is attached at the back; *Ripung*: a small drums; *Amrala*: a chain worn around the shoulder, tied with tiger teeth, bones and jaw. The medium-sized brass bells (*Khondo*) and gongs are tied in the bottom; *Eto-ti*: a jacket with many linear designs; *Athu-mabra*: a skirt with many loops worn around the waist; *Aa-ambo*: a cylindrical drum bigger than *Ripung*; *Ajuru*: a bugle made of buffalo horn; *Ahu-Kochi*: A long sling bag made of bearskin; *Ambrepa* and *Iruta*: Two types of knives; *To-thobra*: Bamboo twig. These costumes are kept in the basket in the corner of the house. It is seldom touched. The *Igu* carries it only when they are invited. Some *Igus* prefer to hang it in the verandah of the house.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Conclusions**

Shamanism is a vibrant institution among the Idu Mishmis and it functions in such a way that it controls both individual behaviours as well as the collective life of the tribe. They are inevitable for their role cut across the institutional boundaries, be it the economy, or the socio-religious and cultural life. Their status is of a philosopher, a sacred specialist, a healer, a doctor, an oral historian, and a custodian of the indigenous knowledge system.

Today, the institution of the shaman of the Idu Mishmis is in transition. Certain traits of

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modernization are found in the institution of shaman and this has resulted in change, reflecting in the overall outlook of the tribe. Factors may be attributed to changing tribal way of life through modern education, new forms of economic activities, interaction with other cultures, to mention a few. This fascinating and fast vanishing intangible cultural heritage is under great threat of change and even extinction and there is a declining trend and very few new entrants of shamans in the Idu Mishmi community is reported. However, this study found that shamanic practices remain significant in present-day Idu Mishmi cultures and provide an understanding of the culture-specific phenomenon and knowledge system. On the origin myth of the shaman, we find various versions as reports by previous scholars as well as found by the current research. All these versions carry the same narration with the core elements intake. These fascinating versions provide us with an understanding of the Idu Mishmi worldview and their relation with nature and the environment. Their shamanic oral narratives speak volumes of their past, present and future, of the people, events and places, their lived experiences, and most importantly the shamanic interventions help develop an individual's social and emotional abilities, instils in one the norms and value system, ingrains skills and strength to overcome any challenges in life and motivate people to move forward. This shamanic treasure, that is why, needs to be documented and disseminated; otherwise, losing these will have a severe impact in the future, resulting in the vanishing of the ancient sacred oral narratives, related folklore, and vast shamanic traditional knowledge system of the community. The situation needs urgent remedial measures and the Idu Mishmi tribe is dealing with the situation in all possible manners, both at the individual and institutional levels.

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#### End Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Both the terminology “Idu” and “Mishmi” have no concrete and specific meaning in Idu language. Baruah (1960, p 98) mentioned that “the word Idu,...., is most probably a distortion of the word Midu which means inhabitant of Idu valley and is the name for only one section of the people”. It is here to mention that Idus may be categorized into three groups as per their dialectic variation and in few word meaning which are *Mindri*, *Mithu* and *Midu*. Most of the *Mindri* speaking Idus inhabits the present Upper Dibang Valley District around Dri and Mathu river valley. The *Mithu* inhabits on both side of the Ithun river valley. The *Midu* speaking Idus are mainly found in lower foot hills and lower valleys of Mishmi Hills. So most probably, Midu speaking Idus of lower foot hills and valleys first came

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in contact with outsiders and only from their dialectic nomenclature “Midu” the term ‘Idu’ was coined to designate the tribe. As I put it Mithu speaking Idu inhabits Ithun Valley, Baruah (ibid, p 11) designated the same Idu of Ithun valley as *Bebejiyas*, again the term which has no concrete meaning and origin in Idu language. And for the term ‘Mishmi’, Bhattacharjee (1983,p 13) suggested that there is no clarity of origin of the term though largely believed that it has been coined by the people of plains of Assam to designate the tribe. Further, one may find that Idu refer themselves as *Kera-A*. Here *Kera* is believed to be a name of ancestral forefather and *A* stands for children and thereby meaning children of Kera.

<sup>2</sup> Apadu Mega, Male aged 50 of Desali village. Date of interview: 20.07. 2020.

<sup>3</sup> See writing of Elwin (1958), Baruah (1960), Bhattacharjee (1983), Miso (2004), Dele (20) etc

<sup>4</sup> Informant: Sipa Melo, Male shaman, 55+ of Alinye village, Dibang valley. Date of Interview: 16.06.2020

<sup>5</sup> Informant: Lt. Jaru Dele, Male, 60+, male shaman, Ezengo village, Roing. Date of Interview: 28.06.2019

<sup>6</sup> Informant: Romine Mega, female shaman, 55+ of Bhismaknagar village. Date of Interview: 26.06.2020

<sup>7</sup> Informant: Lt. Jaru Dele, Male, 60+, male shaman, Ezengo village, Roing. Date of Interview: 28.06.2019

<sup>8</sup> Informant: Lt. Naputi Misu, Male, 55+ of Hunli village. Date of Interview: 23.08.2019

<sup>9</sup> Informant: Yene Meto, Male, 55 of Keraa village, Roing. Date of Interview: 27.08.2019

<sup>10</sup> Informant: Pima Meto, Male, 55 of Ashalia village, Roing. Date of Interview: 27.08.2019

<sup>11</sup> Informant: Late Iritu Mendo, Male shaman of Mayu village, Roing. Date of Interview: 03.08.2019

<sup>12</sup> Informant: Songe Mega, Male, 60+ of Cheta village. Date of Interview: 07.08.2019.

<sup>13</sup> Informant: Aprolo Mega, Male shaman of Arenli-Desali village. Date of Interview: 12.02.2020