

Tradition of Performing Ritual in Galo Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India

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Abstract

Article aims to trace out the beginning of ritual system and nature of performing various rituals in *galo* society. The society perform numbers of ritual with a view of maintaining balance with nature or to stay away from unwanted incidents and diseases. Traditionally, *nyibu* is only a person who served as a channel of communication between spiritual world and physical world. Before performing any ritual, *nyibu* used to study the nature of ritual through chicken liver exam, local grain exam, and egg yolk exam. To gather the desire information, the researcher relies on both primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Ritual, *Nyibu* (Supernatural Specialist) Performed, *Uyu* (Malevolent Deity) *Situm Jore* (Benevolent Deity).

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INTRODUCTION

In *galo* tradition initially the ritual system was started by *abo tani* (known to be first man on earth). *Jimi Abo* who is considered as precursor of all the god and goddess such as; *jiku miku* (god of sun as well as supreme benevolent deity), *benji loma* (supreme malevolent deity as well as god of ornamental wealth) *jilo kardo* (god of mediator), *takam loma*, *pote rabo* etc they all are commonly known as *situm jore* (creator of all). As per *galo* tradition in the beginning *Situm Jore* created *abo taki* (progenitor of malevolent deity) and *abo tani* (progenitor of human race) along with few numbers of rivers and mountains. *Taki* was created on the day of Wednesday, *tani* on Saturday, thus *taki* was two day older than *tani*. Both of them lived together with separate fire hearth to cook their meal. There are numbers of lore regarding how *tani-taki* betrayed one another in their course of life [1]. There is one episode which brings red flag in their relation, one day both the brothers were playing *babo* (swing). *tani's babo* was made from 'takek-tachin' (name of wild rope) while *taki's* swing was from 'beli-bedo' (two red snakes). While playing, *taki* says to *tani* that my snake swing is nice to play, you should try it. In *galo* dialect *taki* saying is translate as;

Chindo ge kek-kek ea kendo ge kek kek ea lag lag, Hage nokke attor do ngokke beli bedo ge babo ea

Teri bem Jabok gela Gadu gubok gedu, Hirga do.

By luring, inwardly *taki* wanted to do something with *tani*, because he had already kept a sharp and pointed bamboo slice at the beneath of spot earlier. As per the intention, when *tani* tried snake swing, he could not hold properly and fell down as thigh got hurt, blood was bleeding. *Taki* gave sneer smile and say that 'abo tani nok ee ea moyak kapa ea' inner meaning is *abo tani* I fell lost by your bleeding blood, while saying that *taki* rushed near *tani* and used its tongue to suck the blood. *Tani* was scared by the *taki's* activity and say that;

Hage Taki no ngok ee em Tenai

No ale ruku ma nyi, no ugu earu kunyi

Jilo ge lokke, rapen jila kaju

Inner meaning is *taki* you suck my blood, your intention is like a demon, so we are not create to live together, from today we have to live separately. When the knowledge of *tani-taki's* separation known to all the heavenly deities. Soon *situm jore* call for *kabo-rabo* (mass gathering of malevolent and benevolent deity) and

¹ Chiter Yomcha, aged about 67 years, Nyibu of Yomcha circle, West Siang district, schedule interview on 4th November, 2023 (Hereafter referred to as *CHI*)

decided to create stars, clouds and any things which is needed for human survival. In this way *tani-taki* have to select three things from every elements of environment. *Tani* decide to possess all the suitable land where agriculture and settlement can be possible along with all the beautiful flora and fauna something which are rare and unique was left for *taki*. At the end of deity's discussion, *taki* says that in future if *tani* encroached my properties then just offer something is back it might be items from cattle's [²]. After completion of all the episodes, *tani* always remain apprehension about the power of *taki* (demon). To deal with the notorious activities of demons, one day *tani* performed a ritualistic chanted on fowl and its liver was covers with dry leaves and kept on the way where the *taki* usually passes. To watch the moment '*tapen*' (bat was assigned as spy). Intention was that if chanted fowl liver will touch by foot step of *taki*, then in future human can easily trace out the reason for illness through reading fowl liver exam by *nyijik* (priest) and its assistance.

As per legend, when *tani* performed a ritual for the first time, he gave cow, hen, cock, goat, pig, dog to malevolent deity at forest, but all of them ran back to *tani*'s resident. Thus, demon demanding to sacrifice the animals and blood to be splash on ritualistic altar to please them [³].

Types of Ritual

Traditionally there are two types of ritual performed in *galo* society;

1. *Paje Pape Nam, Guji Gupe Nam* (obligation ritual)
2. Ritual for illness, accident or having a past faulty

Obligation ritual is performed without any connection with malevolent deities; purpose is to preventing from future bad circumstances or to bring fortunes in near future.

And obligation ritual is categorized into 6 types.

- i. *Pator Uyu*: Performed in the month of '*hilo-tenlo*' (June-July) because tradition believes that this month's brings numbers of diseases called '*take-tame*'. As knowledge of *take-tame* it is individually or village community performed this *uyu* as a precautionary measure.
- ii. *Pale Uyu*: It is identical to *pator uyu*, here ritual is performed when the *take-tame* is already spread in other places.
- iii. *Papin Uyu*: Performed in the month of '*pera polo*' and '*lube polo*' (October and November) and nature of sacrifices is almost identical to

above two *uyus*, with a view of driving away unwanted winter diseases.

- iv. *Pomje Kaje*: Performed by *nyigam* (hunter) who always success in their hunting expedition. Through this ritual hunter can appease the forest deity who served as a caretaker of flora and fauna. If hunters fail to comply by his tradition, he has to bear the consequences individually or any one of the family members.

Hence, hunter has to perform this ritual once in a year or as per quantities of trophies got by him. In the years 1995 my father performed this ritual, because our grandfather hunted more than 50 wild boar and other minor animals are uncountable.

Hunters can also appease the forest deity by performing minor ritual when the trophies are brought to home.

- v. *Gane Kale*: This type of ritual is performed with a view of keeping some objective, for example (I) to remain safety from anyone's ill intentions (ii) also to perform for bringing fortunes in the future.
- vi. *Togu Panam*: This is one of the biggest ritual performed in *galo* society. It takes several months or years to prepare and complete the entire process of ritual. This is directly connected with marriage ceremonies, thus main purpose of *togu panam* lies in prosperity of host family's bride and bridegroom. Numbers of chicken liver exam has to be made to authenticize the performing day. Typically ten *Jobo's* (*Bos frontalis*) are sacrifice in the name of *togu panam*, sometimes just more than two *jobo's* as per *togu uyu* chanted. But since nowadays wealthy people are sacrificing more than hundred *Jobo's* to glorify their social status in society. At the performing day all the malevolent and benevolent deities have to be made confidential for showering more blessing for the host family's bride and groom.

Ritual for illness, accident or having a past faculty: nine types of ritual are being performed under this category, all of them are naming after concern *uyu's* who is considered as source of both sorrow and happiness as per deeds of person.

- i. *Ali Ampir/ Juko Uyu*: It is performed just after the harvesting of crops, when the crops are brought to granary. Also necessary for those farmers if crops fail constantly after sowing of seeds annually thus farmers have to perform this ritual for seeking blessing from the god of agriculture.

² Lode Gadi, aged about 68 years, Nyibu of Jirgi village, Leparada district, scheduled interview on 9th May 2021 (Hereafter referred to as *LGI*)

³ Kakek Lombi, aged about 80 years, kotoki of Tirbin circle, Leparada district, scheduled interview on 5th June 2021 (Hereafter referred to as *KLI*)

- ii. *Doli Dolek*: It is naming after ‘*doli dolek*’ *uyu* itself. It can be performed if someone demised through behaving certain unwanted activities like while sleeping, he/she produces irritant sound from tooth and demised due to diseases like; cancer, corona virus, Alzheimer, schizophrenia.
- iii. *Erap Genam*: This is the most notorious ritual in *galo* tradition, because it is performed for brutally demised person or to assassinate someone by means of proper planning. *Erap* is just naming after the nature of preparing sacrifices altar thus as per its uses it can be classified as good or bad. Good *erap* can be consider if *gapu reenam uyu* is performed, while bad *erap* can be seen if *erap* is used to assassinate someone.
- iv. *Gapu Reenam*: This ritual is performed if a person kills someone without lack of intention rather by accidentally through gun fire, falling a tree or if someone dies by vehicle accident or by suicide. Accordingly, *gapu reenam* ritual is performed by the victim family with a view of giving fond farewell from mortal world and to live peaceful in the spiritual world. So that preventing victims’ soul from taking revenge or not to disturb own family members.
- v. *Jidir Dirle*: If someone felled a demon tree like; *korte*, *kole*, *jirek* and other abnormal trees or went to swampy areas. Thus controller of particulars things make ill to that encroacher. Accordingly, victim’s family performs this ritual.
- vi. *Jidir Poje*: Alike *jidir dirle uyu* makes ill to person when raw trees of demon are being encroach, but *jidir poje uyu* makes ill to the person when the decades remain of hard wood being encroach by human, accordingly victims’ family perform this ritual.
- vii. *Karu Karom*: If someone kills anyone of the big five cat or kills elephant, wild boar, wild goat, python, big owl, eagle or even causing injures to them and fails to comply by the tradition of performing ritual, in such cases guardian of the forest began to trace the individual who commits such crime. Similarly, person became a victim of malevolent deity and ritual has to be performed.
- viii. *Poru Uyu*: If a person regularly catches a fish from rivers or catch big fish from streams. Thus, *poru uyu* who is known to be guardian of fish make ill to concern person as symptoms can be noticed as red eye color, acting like as lunatic. Accordingly, ritual is made to excuse that victim from *poru uyu*.

- ix. *Yuma Uyu*: Typically it is performed if a person become ill while attending picnic, village community feast or at meal time. As per traditions believe that departed soul still living with family members. In such cases *yuma* ritual has to be performed with a view of giving farewell from home to spiritual world [4].

CONCLUSION

As a *galo* tradition believes in performing numbers of ritual as per connection with concern *uyu*’s. Alike the period of Brahmanization there was a period during 1980s to 1990s in *galo* belt particularly in tirbin circle when most of the village’s population had swept away by christian to counter the old age culture. But since now a days traditional believes are also trying to glorify own culture, for example as per souvenir released by IFCSAP (Indigenous Faith and Culture Society of Arunachal Pradesh) on 2021, total 71 numbers of ‘*Kargu Gamgi*’ is actively functioning in *galo* belt and state government also closely working in this matter by promising to pay rupees 1,000 monthly honorarium to indigenous priest.

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⁴ Kajum Lombi, age about 60 years, expert narrator of Lutak village, Leparada district, scheduled interview on 4th April, 2021 (Hereafter referred to as *KLI*)