

ARTICLE : THE PANG SYSTEM OF THE OLLO COMMUNITY OF TIRAP DISTRICT, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Ollo community of Arunachal Pradesh are found in the heart of Laju circle of Tirap district. The Ollo community is also known as the Ollo Laju or Ollo Naga. The Ollo community is sub-tribes of Noctes and sub-group of the Naga tribes. This ethnographic study explores the Paang system, a traditional institution and integral to the Ollo community in Tirap district, Arunachal Pradesh. This ancient institution has adapted to the changing times while retaining its essence, playing a vital role in the Ollo society. This communal living arrangement brings together unmarried boys and the elder members of the Ollo society. The Paang system serves as a communal, living space, fostering social cohesion, cultural preservation, and community governance. At its core is the Raatey system, a gender-inclusive, grouping mechanism promoting collective responsibility and participation. The number of Raatey groups or the Paangs are correlates with village population size. This research investigate the Paang system's composition, characteristic, and cultural significance. The study reveals the Paang system's importance in Ollo community communal living arrangement with shared responsibility with cooperations. The Paang system plays a vital role shaping Ollo identity, promoting social unity, and maintaining cultural heritage. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of indigenous institutions and their significance in Arunachal Pradesh. By documenting the Paang system, this study offers valuable insights in indigenous cultures and heritage. The research underscores the importance of preserving traditional institutions in the face of modernization.

KEYWORDS: Ollo community, Paang system and Raatey system

INTRODUCTION

Tirap District is an arch like south-eastern and south-western prolongation of Arunachal Pradesh adjoining Burma, and it is the only district of the Pradesh which lies entirely to the south by Brahmaputra. Bounded on the north by Dibrugarh District of Assam and the Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh, on the south by Burma, on the east by Burma and on the west by Sibsagar and Dibrugarh District of Assam and the Mon District of Nagaland, the district lies between the latitude 26° 40'N and 27° 40'N and the longitudes 95° 10'E (Choudhury,1980,p.1). The Noctes lives in Tirap district, within patkai range on the north-eastern border of the country. The territory is situated at the altitude ranging from 150 to 1500 metres

approximately (Lowang,2006,p.1) .The Noctes , about 35000 live in 63 villages , occupying half of the Tirap district . The other half of the district , beyond the river Tissa is the home of the Wanchos. There are many Nocte villages across the Myanmar border also. In the absence of any recorded history or authentic reference , it is difficult to ascertain the exact ethnic origin about the Noctes (Lowang,2006,p.3). Very little account of the Noctes is available in the old literatures . They are included in the general term ‘Nagas’ which however includes all the Naga tribes now inhabiting the Nagaland. The Nagas of the eastern region who inhabited the interior areas were generally called Abori Nagas. Abori is an assamese term meaning ‘independent’ . Those tribe who were in the border adjacent to the plains of Assam , and came down frequently to the plains were called Bori (Civilized) Nagas. The Abori Nagas were kept from access to the plains by the Bori Nagas . Most of the tribes included in the term ‘Naga’ were described by the old writers as independent , vigorous , head-hunters , verile , and so on . In the old administrative reports also the Noctes have been mentioned as ‘Nagas of the eastern region’ or some time as Namsangia , Borduria , Paniduaria , Kolagongia , Mokrongia and khuragongia Nagas by which name they are popularly known in the plains of Aassam (Dutta,1978,p.7). There is hardly any villages where the intermixing of races didn’t take place . It is difficult to ascertain ,as to who were the first comers to the present habitat . There were some Noctes , even before the Ahoms came to Assam , whereas some other Noctes came to the hibatat afterwards . The Noctes may now be classified into five groups on the basis of dialects being spoken by them i.e. Hawakhun , Photung, Oloh, Jaro, and Khapa(Dutta,2006,p.9). The Ollo community, an indigenous community in Arunachal pradesh, has rich cultural heritage rooted in traditional institutions. One such institution is the PAANG SYSTEM or Dormitory system. Through ethnographic research and community engagement, this article seeks to document and analyze the Paang system, shedding light on its enduring relevance and significance within the Ollo community.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to preserve and documented the Paang system of the Ollo community of Tirap district, Arunachal Pradesh. To address the knowledge gap that there is no exclusive work on the Paang system of the Ollo community, the following objectives are proposed:

1. To provide an overview of the Ollo community
2. To analyze the structure and document the Paang system of Ollo community
3. To study the Raatey system

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study was mixed-method approach, combining participant observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation and a thorough review of existing literature to explore the purpose of this article. Field research was conducted in Ollo villages, Data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews with Ollo community members, including chief, elders, and ,leaders etc.,

OLLO COMMUNITY

Term 'Ollo' itself originated from the traditional stories of the Ollo community , which was passed down from one generation to next generations , according to the sources , in the past , Head-hunting was very common among the tribal people's with their neighboring villages . Although Ollo people are very friendly in nature but whenever aliens warriors tried to attack or raid the village , they were always prepared to face the enemies , so in the past when it comes to save their community they can be very territorial . Their particular territory consists of rivers , hills and forest . To pass through or to enter the Ollo territory , they used to have a 'secret code word' which was only used by the Ollo community . If anyone wants to enter their territory , to avoid any conflict or to recognize their own people's , before entering the area they used to use that secret code word which is called ' Ollo' . The secret code word was to ensure that the ones approaching were one of their own. The code word 'Ollo' was to identify their own people(Koocha).

The tribal societies of the district are organized on the basis of clan or village, and the social relations are determined by the kinship and locality. Despite social and cultural difference, there are some aspects common to all the tribe. Generally, as a matter of rule, each tribe is endogamous, and is divided into a number of clans which are exogamous that is to say marriage is legitimate within the tribe but not the clan.(Osik)

The Ollo community operates under a complex social structure, divided into Clans, Raatey, Paang or Dormitory system. This system provides the foundation for the community's organization and governance. The Ollo society is led by the Lowang, a highly respected chief who plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and upholding traditional practices. Each village has its own Lowang, who commands authority and influence due to their wisdom and experience. Kinship ties are highly valued in the Ollo society, with a strong emphasis on patriarchal and patrilineal traditions. Family relationships are traced through male line, and inheritance and succession follow patrilineal principles. As a result, men hold significant authority and decision making power. Despite sharing similarities with the Nocte tribes, as Ollo is the sub-tribe of the

Noctes, the Ollo society has distinct customs, regulations, and historical narratives. The community places great importance on tradition and cultural heritage, with strong focus on clan identity and community cohesion(Kimong,kekho,Chowang).

PAANG : DORMITORY SYSTEM

In Ollo society the Dormitory system is served as multifaceted community hub, facilitating various activities such as meeting, discussion, festivals, and more. The Dormitory in Ollo society is known as ‘‘Paang’’. Each Paang possesses its own unique log drum, in Ollo dialect this log drum is known as ‘‘KHAMKHONG/KHOMKHAM’’, which plays a vital role in communication. The Paang serves as vital community hub in Ollo society. Every Ollo villages has its own Paang, moreover, the Paang in every Ollo village is depend upon the size of the population of each villages. One Paang is for the Ollo chief Lowang and the other Paang is for Ngongpa who is also very respected person of the Ollo society. In Ollo society, the Paang is sacred space exclusively reserved for men and boys, where they gather to socialize, share stories, and participate in cultural, political and social activities. Women on the other hand are restricted from entering the Paang, except to serve food and drinks. Within the Paang, men and boys engage in traditional singing, dancing and chanting, honoring their ancestors and heritage. Historically, the Paang played a significant role in headhunting rituals where victorious warriors, known as ‘‘KAHANG’’, were celebrated with ceremonies and rituals upon their return with the head of the enemy. During times of conflict, the Paang served as the village’s central command center. Men would guard the Paang, armed and ready to defend their villages. The Paang’s strategic importance stemmed from its symbolic unity and strength to safeguard their villages. This collectively defense was more effective than individualized protection of homes. In essence, the Paang respresented:

1. Cultural identity
2. Community unity and strength.
3. Defense and protection.
4. Ritual and celebration.
5. Male socialization and bonding.
6. For socio-cultural and relious(Mangyut,Mophuk,03-08-2023).

The Paang’s signifies underscores the Ollo people’s deep emphasis on communal solidarity, cultural preservation, and collective resilience. In Ollo society, the Paang dormitory is an inclusive space to all men

and boys of the Ollo society, with no formal membership requirement and no rituals for entering the Paang. A boy is considered ready to enter Paang when he is physically able and old well to hold and use the weapons, marking his manhood. This rite of passage signifies a boy's coming of age, working with the members of the Paang and integration into male community. Upon entering the Paang, young men join the village's collective defense and cultural preservation efforts. The Paang's inclusive nature fosters Ollo community cohesion, shared responsibility, and cultural continuity. Historically, during the era of headhunting, Ollo paangs were constructed from bamboo and wood symbolizing strength and resilience. These communal spaces were adorned with spears, darts, various other war weapons which were made by the Ollo people themselves and instruments as well as animals' heads and skins. Notably, after victorious battles, Ollo elders would boil the head of the enemy and preserve the skull with celebration, displaying them in Paang as a symbol of triumph and testaments to their bravery. The skulls served as warning to potential foes, and the Paang become repositories for communal history and sanctuaries for cultural heritage. Even today, Ollo Paangs remain an integral part of the Ollo society, connecting past and present, and honoring the community's ancestors and heritage. (Mangyut, Mophuk, 03-08-2023)

RAATEY SYSTEM

In Ollo society, the Raatey system holds immense significance, serving as a vital component of community life. The term "RAATEY" itself translates to a group of people, encompassing individuals from both genders. This inclusive structure is woven into the fabric of Ollo culture, fostering unity and cooperation. The number of Raateys in a village directly corresponds to its population size. Larger villages typically have five to ten Raateys. As the population grows, existing Raatey can be divided into smaller units, ensuring effective management and participation. Laju village, for instance, has 10 Raateys while comparing to the other Ollo villages, the Laju village has a higher number of Raateys, most prominent Raatey of the Laju village is called Chonnyu Raatey, which stands as the Lowang or the chief's Raatey, representing the village's leadership and authority. Hopa Raatey, on the other hand, is reserved for Ngongpa. What sets the Raatey system apart is its colony-based membership structure rather than family ties. This unique approach encourages collective responsibility, transcending individual family interest. Members of Raatey work together, share resources, and participate in various socio-cultural activities. The Raatey system facilitates a wide range of activities, including cleaning fields, forests, and villages. Members also engage in cultural events, socio-political and cultural discussions, and decision-making processes. This comprehensive approach ensures that every aspect of community life is addressed, promoting harmony and cooperation. Responsibility is

distributed among Raatey members, ensuring everyone contributes to the collective well-being. This shared ownership has been a cornerstone of Ollo society for generations, fostering a deep sense of community and social unity. The Raatey system's significance extends beyond practical applications; it preserves cultural and heritage and traditions. Participating in Raatey is very important which signifies cooperation among the Ollo community. Raatey membership honors their ancestors and reinforce social bonds. This time-tested system has allowed Ollo society to thrive, navigating challenges and celebrating successes as a cohesive unit. Through the Raatey system, Ollo society embodies its core value; collective responsibility, community engagement, and social harmony. As a testament to its enduring importance, the Raatey remains an integral part of the Ollo society, shaping lives of its members and ensuring a bright future for generations to come.

Paang refers to the physical communal space or dormitory, whereas Raatey signifies ther group of people associated with that Paang. In essence, each Raatey is tied to a specific Paang, comprising individuals from same colony. The Raatey is responsible for managing their corresponding Paang, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. While Paang provides roof and the Raatey represents social structure and human connection. Together, Paang and Raatey form a robust framework for the Ollo community's life. Promoting harmony, cooperation, and cultural continuity. Here are the key parallels between Paang and Raatey;

1. Community focus
2. Collective responsibility
3. Social unity
4. Cultural preservation(Rumsu,Rukhiiet,Rangsong,Rangsong, 13-06-2024)

Here are the names of the Raatey or the Paang of the Laju village;

RALOM RAATEY
CHONTSA RAATEY
THAIMKHO RAATEY
CHONNYU RAATEY
PATSA RAATEY
HOPA RAATEY
RUKHJET RAATEY
TANGNYU RAATEY
TANGTSA RAATEY
THAIMLOM RAATEY

Sources; Extraction from interview with Temen Rumsu, Kijen Rukhiet, Kijen Rangsong, Ngona Rangsong, Laju village, 13-06-2024

FINDINGS

1. Universal participation: all the Ollo community members are the part of Paang system.
2. Comprehensive socialization: Paang dormitories serves as hubs for socialization, cultural preservation, and community governance
3. Ollo community are divided into Raatey and each Raatey has their own Paang.
4. Paang and Raatey systems are interconnected, promoting social unity and cultural preservation.

CONCLUSION

The Paangs are divided into no. of Raatey group, which plays a vital role in maintaining social harmony, cultural preservation, and community togetherness within the Ollo society. This traditional system ensures inclusive representation, equitable participation, and collective decision-making. Despite modernization, the Paang system remains essential component of the Ollo identity and social fabric.

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