Memories of Migration:
Notes on legends and beads in Arunachal Pradesh, India[1]

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No one knows, with any certainty, when or by what route the people of Arunachal Pradesh came to their current homelands.[2] Isolated on the southern flank of the eastern Himalayas, outside the control and beyond the interest of the civilisations and empires surrounding them, these Tibeto-Burman tribes are nonetheless central to an understanding of the cultural and linguistic history of Asia. The first attempt to write down the history of Arunachal Pradesh, William Robinson's account of 1841, referred to the "dark veil which conceals the origin of the tribes" and the several histories written during the succeeding 150 years have not yet dispelled that obscurity.[3] A major problem is the scarcity of written records: before British records began in the early nineteenth century, only two sets of sources refer to the hill tribes of Arunachal.[4] First, we have Tibetan texts that mention contact, beginning in the fifteenth century, between Tibetans and tribes along the northern border of present-day Arunachal Pradesh. The other documents are Ahom chronicles, which again refer to conflicts with tribes, this time along the southern border with Assam from the seventeenth century. Two other possible sources, Sanskrit texts and archaeology, contain little useful information.[5] The tribes themselves have no indigenous writing.[6]

The initial motivation behind this essay was to shed some light on the history of the people of Arunachal; and as a folklorist, I naturally turned to oral traditions, to the legends that describe the migrations of the various tribes of the state. Fortunately, oral legends from almost all tribes have been recorded by researchers since about 1900; unfortunately, most of these sources provide only summaries, although a few recent studies do include genealogies and maps. Another limitation is that, as far as I know, there are no published descriptions of the performance or other social use of these oral legends; indeed, my own fieldwork and the available information suggest that, in contrast to oral traditions elsewhere in India, migration legends are not often or regularly recited. Rather, in Arunachal oral performance is dominated by ritual texts, which refer to ancestors and mention early history but do not tell a history of migration. Still, memories of migration are strong, and most people have a clear sense that they are not native to the region, that they arrived from "somewhere else."

European Bulletin of Himalayan Research 25/26: 15-60 (2003/2004)

Memories of the past, as we know, are transmitted not only by oral tradition but also by material culture, and so this essay also considers beads. As lightweight, high-value objects, beads travel well and often over the same routes that people travel. With this in mind, I first wondered what memories these mobile beads might carry, and what relations might exist between them and migration legends in Arunachal. If I was lucky, I thought, I might find legends in which beads are dropped along the path, as an *aide-mémoire*, to mark the route, like Hänsel and Gretel dropping stones in the forest, or Sita dropping Rama's ring while being carried away over the sea. What follows, in fact, is first a summary of what we know about migration to Arunachal, especially a debate regarding points of origin, and then a discussion of the trade and use of beads in Arunachal. I wish to emphasise that this is a preliminary report, emerging from an ongoing research project.[7]

Migration legends: Overview

Although legends are one of the three major genres of oral storytelling, in comparison with the folktale and myth, they are not well studied. With the exception of the saints' legend, and more recently the urban legend, most other types have attracted little interest; migration legends have been studied by some historians, but there is virtually no comparative scholarship on them. Following Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1816-1818, folklorists usually define the legend as a narrative about historical events or personal experiences, even illusions, which are believed to be true.[8] However, because oral genres are culture-specific categories, and because notions of the "past" and "truth" are notoriously vague within any culture, legends are not easily separated from other oral narratives. Because they speak of the past, legends cannot be neatly separated from myth; because they tell what is believed to be true, they partake of history; because they go back to origins, they resemble genealogies; and because they include the fantastic, they sometime appear like folktales.

Despite this ambiguity, I think we can distinguish legends from other forms of oral narrative. Most cultures make a distinction between true and not-true stories, and within true stories, those with the greatest degree of chronological, historical and geographical specificity may be identified as legends. Migration legends are the most specific, with an emphasis on named events, places and people or groups; indeed, this named specificity is what distinguishes legends other true stories about the past, or myths. The most important distinction, however, is that legends are not regularly performed. For this reason, they lack certain conventions, such as an opening formula ("Once upon a time"), as well as the parallelism that characterises so much oral performance. Instead, legends are usually told, or just referred to, as part of an ongoing conversation, in fragments, as an anecdote of oral history.

Unlike myths, or other oral historical narratives, migration legends are not typically recited as part of a ritual performance; although migration is very often referred to in ritual and myth, the story of migration is not usually performed in a ritual context.[9]

All this, especially non-ritual performance, is certainly true of migration legends in Arunachal Pradesh. Memories of migration there are not recited or otherwise expressed in song, dance or festival among the central tribes of Arunachal.[10] The long, complex chants which accompany the ritual sacrifices and feasts and healing ceremonies will speak of ancestors and origins but do not narrate the story of migration. That kind of historical knowledge is not stored as song or chant but rather in simple prose. Ironically, for people without writing, such as the central Arunachal tribes, oral legends function less like performances and more like books, not to be read from cover to cover, but to be taken off the shelf for reference, for verification, for consultation, and for reflection. In sum, migration legends are less like orally transmitted narratives and more like memorised historical records.

Legends, however, only record events and experiences that are thought significant by the group. And the range of those events and experiences is surprisingly limited. Legends tend to record cataclysmic events, such as battles and natural disasters, explain local landmarks, such as bridges and mountains, extol wondrous individuals, such as miracle-working saints, and narrate personal experiences of the supernatural, like encountering vampires and the return of the dead. Migration fits none of these categories exactly, yet when Jan Vansina drew up his short list of events remembered in oral histories, he began with "origins, migration, descent..."[11] Reviewing legends across the world, it is clear that Vansina was right: migration is among the small number of events significant enough to generate and transmit oral legends over a considerable period of time.[12]

The underlying reason for this, I believe, is that legends link the past with the present in a unique fashion. Although other oral texts, especially ritual texts such as myths, re-enact past events in the present, migration legends connect past and present by literally mapping the space between them.[13] If ritual texts linguistically create parallel worlds of past and present, migration legends conflate the two by telescoping history into local reality. Time also operates differently in myths and migration legends. One reason that no Arunachal migration legend describes beads dropped along the path of migration is that these kinds of stories do not contain return journeys. Returns are essential to myths, to many folktales and to some legends whose heroes are expelled from their place of birth, wander and suffer but return to claim their rightful place in the family or on the throne (such as Hänsel and Gretel, Romulus and Remus, Oedipus, Hercules, Krishna and Rama, to name only a few).[14] Return journeys, however, are not part of the logic of migration legends, in which the plot is unilinear, leading from a place of origin to a present- day settlement.

There is no return journey in migration legends because they have no heroes. Many types of stories – legends, myths and epics – narrate the origins and historical movements of people, but most focus upon the adventures of a hero. When, on the other hand, the movement of a people itself is the emphasis, we have a migration legend. Legends have no epic figure whose story defines the identity of a group or region (as with oral epics in India); they have no monument, fort or temple, whose story encapsulates the history of a caste or region (as with temple legends, *sthalapurāṇa*s, in India). Instead, migration legends are filled with names– place names, names of ancestors, names of groups and sub-groups, tribes and clans. This is one of the striking features of migration legends across the world and in Arunachal: not through heroes but through geographical and genealogical naming, migration legends help to locate a people's place in the world.

Migration to Arunachal: An overview

This essay focuses on the tribes of central Arunachal because most of the published translations of migration legends, as well as my own field collection, comes from them; [15] they are also less well-documented in written records than are the migration histories of some of the Buddhist (or buddhicised) tribes.[16] The central group (including Nyishis, Tagins, Hill Miris, Adis, Apatanis; the Mishmis further east are anomalous) is known locally as the "Tani" group", from their common mythical ancestor Abo-Tani, who figures prominently in their oral traditions. Linguistically, too, the Tani languages form a discrete group within the Tibeto-Burman family.[17]

Arunachal Pradesh: Tribal areas

If the Tibetan[18] and Ahom[19] sources are at all accurate, these central tribes have been in the Arunachal mountains from at least the fifteenth century, and probably much earlier. From British colonial records and oral histories, we also know something of the movements of the central tribes within Arunachal during the past two hundred years. Dunbar, perhaps the most authoritative source until the 1960s, traces a mysterious migration route from "central Asia" across the mountains, and then provides some evidence for a dispersal, mainly down rivers, into present-day settlements (Dunbar 1916: 12-15). He also describes several examples of internal migration southward in the form of establishing satellite villages; similar movements were noted for the Nyishis and Hill Miris by Fürer-Haimendorf in the 1940s. The main reason for this internal migration has been the need for more forest area and the powerful magnetic pull of trade in the plains of Assam. There is also the "push factor" of Tibetan groups moving into areas occupied by Arunachal tribes: in the eighteenth century, for example, the Tangams, the northern-most group of Adis, were reportedly forced south from Pemako, across the now-international border, into Arunachal; in the early twentieth century, floods in Yigrong valley in eastern Tibet pushed Tibetan groups into Idu Mishmi country; again in the twentieth century, Membas moved down the Siang and drove the Adis southward.[20] A southern drift has also brought sections of Adis all the way to the plains of Assam, where they settled centuries ago.[21]

While this essay will describe a debate on "origins" and will thereby pursue long-term movement, it is important to emphasise that the migration of central Arunachal tribes has probably not been a single, fixed and long-distance event. It is far more likely that they have moved in a series of short journeys, over a long period of time, eventually arriving in present-day Arunachal, where they continued to migrate, down river systems and over highlands, until they reached the areas where they are settled today. As recently as 1950, clans of some tribes were still moving southward within their settlement area; and even today, we can see a micro-migration down from isolated hills toward the roads that link all parts of the state with Assam, and the rest of India. Finally, movement across the international border has greatly decreased but has not stopped altogether.[22]

Disputed Origins: Tibet or Burma?

Nevertheless, all the tribes have traditions that claim origins outside Arunachal, and if we know little about when they arrived, we can be more certain about where they came from.[23] With one exception, all the tribes of the region speak a Tibeto-Burman language, which suggests that their origins lie either north of the Himalayas, or east, beyond the Patkai Hills which separate Arunachal from Burma.[24] These two possibilities have long divided scholars writing about the history of Arunachal, especially central Arunachal, into two camps: one holds that the homeland is to the north, in

Tibet, while a second argues that it lies east, where northern Burma touches southwest China. I will refer to these two positions as the "Tibetan" and the "Burma/China" hypotheses.[25]

The Burma/China hypothesis, which is the older and dominant position, is largely derived from the writings of early scholars on Tibeto-Burman languages and peoples but has also received support from new ethnolinguistic research. By the late eighteenth century British scholars in Calcutta assumed the "cradle of the Indo-Chinese races", or Tibeto-Burman peoples, to be northeast Tibet, from where waves of migration flowed over Asia, including the Assam valley (van Driem 2001:408). The first modern study of Tibeto-Burman, by Sten Konow in 1902, claimed that the homeland of the languages of central Arunachal was in northern Burma, "the country about the headwaters of the Irawaddy [sic] and Chindwin rivers... from where they [tribes] crossed the Brahmaputra and wandered to their present habitat".[26] According to Konow, this was the region where the "different branches of the Tibeto-Burman family were in mutual contact" and would thus account for the position of these languages, midway between the Tibetan and Burmese branches.[27] This reasoning, apparently, was accepted by Grierson a few years later for his Linguistic Survey of India, in which he paraphrased Konow to the effect that the languages of central Arunachal showed evidence of "various waves of Tibeto-Burman migrations".[28] Greater geographical detail was added a few decades later by R.A. Stein, who claimed that their ancestral homeland was in northeast Tibet, from where a loose confederation of people, known as the Q'iang (or Ch'iang or Kyang), migrated south and southwest.[29] Van Driem's speculative reconstruction of Tibeto-Burman identifies Sichuan (and possibly Yunnan) as its "geographical centre of gravity"; according to him, speakers of the languages of central Arunachal left that homeland some time before the seventh millennium BC and spread along the Brahmaputra valley and into the surrounding hills (van Driem 2001: 410, 447). However, the only systematic study of the Tani languages (= of the central tribes) concluded that they are "relatively recent" arrivals in Arunachal (Sun 1993: 12-14). Nevertheless, and despite this uncertainty about chronology and geography, there is broad consensus that the homeland of Tibeto-Burman is somewhere in that famous region where northern Burma meets southwest China and four major rivers (Yangtze, Mekong, Salween, Irrawaddy) run side by side from north to south.[30]

This Burma/China hypothesis has also been, until recently at least, the favoured position among scholars of Arunachal, some of whom support the idea that Tibeto-Burman peoples originated from northeast Tibet and are related to the Qi'ang (Chi'ang).[31] Irrespective of the ultimate origin of the people of central Arunachal, most historians have argued that they did once live in the riverine corridor and then moved west, crossed the Patkai hills, entered the Brahmaputra valley and then moved into the hills north of the

river; other tribes, such as the Bodos, it is claimed, remained in the valley, while others, such as the Garos, went into the hills south of the river.[32] Chowdhury presents this origin and migration as a consensus, but it can be faulted, based as it is on the specious anthropometrics, imprecise geography, speculative linguistics and limited ethnographic data from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nevertheless, in its broad outlines, the Burma/China hypothesis is supported by most scholars of Arunachal.

The Tibetan hypothesis, on the other hand, is that the present inhabitants of central Arunachal crossed not the Patkai hills but the Himalayas. The argument is that most migration occurred at points where two rivers (the upper Subansiri River in the Tsari region and the upper Siang [Tsangpo]) cut through the Himalayas into Arunachal Pradesh. In other words, ancestors of the present people in central Arunachal may have moved eastward but never as far east as the northern Burma/southwest China border; that is, they never "turned the corner" southward and into the famous river corridor. The proto-homeland in this Tibetan hypothesis remains vague, somewhere north of the Himalayas; some oral histories even locate it in what these sources referred to as "Mongolia".

Before discussing these two hypotheses, we should consider two alternatives. First, might not the mixture of Tibetan and Burmese linguistic features in the Tani languages suggest that their speakers migrated through both Tibet and Burma? This is the opinion of Frank Kingdon Ward, the famous botanist who spent many years in the 1920s and 1930s exploring southeast Tibet and the route of the Tsangpo River. Noting the migration of several Tibeto-Burman tribes in the Pemako region of the upper Siang (south of the watershed, near the bend of the Tsangpo), he concluded that the general movement of Tibeto-Burman people had been southeast from Lhasa along the river valley toward the eastern end of the Himalayas (Kingdon Ward 2001 [1926]: 303, passim); from there, he claimed, they "turned the corner" and moved in a series of migrations down the river corridor, across the Patkai hills and into the Brahmaputra valley. Unable to settle in that fertile (and already occupied?) valley, they were forced north into the mountains, as high up as the upper Siang, where he found them. Such a circuitous route seems highly unlikely.

But there is second alternative: could the people of central Arunachal (whatever their original homeland in Tibet) have migrated westward from northern Burma/Yunnan, across the northern flank of the eastern Himalayas and then down the river systems, through the mountains and into Arunachal? In other words, could they have entered Arunachal from Burma by a northern route and not by crossing the Patkai hills to the south? Not likely, according to Robert and Betty Morse (1966:198, passim), since the snowcap in northern Burma would drive any migration attempts south and east into the Salween and Mekong valleys. Any migration, they say, had to go either east or west of this snowcap; and having descended into the

Salween valley, it would have been very difficult to head eastward across the high mountains.

Most writers, then, have argued for either a Tibetan or a Burmese origin for the central tribes; and most of the published scholarship refers to the Adis, one of the largest tribes in the state. Although they were slow to trade at the "fairs" established by the British in the early nineteenth century, Adis had the earliest contact with modern education (in 1920 the first school and in 1964 the first college in Arunachal were established in Adi country, at Pasighat); as a result, many leading scholars of Arunachal are either Adis themselves and/or write about Adi history. The current debate began with the publication in 1960 of what is one the very best ethnographic studies in Arunachal. Its author, Sachin Roy, acknowledged that Adi oral traditions claim origins from Tibet, but he dismissed these as unreliable and instead argued that Adis migrated from a region south of the Himalayas (Roy 1997 [1960]).

Roy's argument is premised on the idea of a cultural watershed that runs "a few miles south of the Himalays [sic] and parallel to it".[33] Above this line is the Tibetan cultural region; south of it lies another cultural region, to which, in Roy's view, the Adis and all tribes of the central group belong. This southern region Roy called the "trans-Brahmaputra" cultural area, which linked the tribes in the hills south of the river (that is, the Burmese- and Naga-related groups, and indeed parts of southeast Asia) with those north of the river (Adis and other central tribes). The evidence for placing Adis in the southern cultural region, Roy argues, comes from religion and art but especially from material culture: for example, Adis wear a cotton, sleeveless open-fronted jacket (not the padded, wool jacket and long trousers worn by Tibetan groups); Adis do not wear shoes or felt hats; girls wear a girdle of cane or brass loops (*beyop*) unknown in the Tibetan area; Adis build houses of bamboo, not stone or wood; Adis had a system of dormitories; they sacrifice mithuns and have no permanent religious structures. As for linguistic affinities, Roy defers judgement. On the basis of this evidence from material culture, Roy is confident that the Adis and other tribes of central Arunachal belong to the southern, trans-Brahmaputra cultural area and not to the northern, Tibetan region. "It is too early to assert that the Adi culture moved northwards," he concludes, "but this direction of movement is more likely than the opposite one" (Roy 1960:259).

Roy's view has been supported by others, including J.N. Chowdhury (1990:15), who underlines the argument that the material culture of Arunachal tribes does not match that of Tibetan cultures; he reiterates Roy's argument that the Adi jacket, which is common in central Arunachal, could not have originated in the cold, northern climate on the Tibetan side of the Himalayas, and is word by groups in northern Burma and southeast China. Another scholar has extended Roy's thesis, locating the Adis' homeland in Yunnan by citing similar cultural practices, such as the reading of egg omens

and certain (unspecified) dress and hair styles (Bhattacharya 1965; Bhattacharjee 1975; Bhattacharjee 1977). He also claims that Adis moved from Yunnan to Pemako, stayed there for 200 years and then crossed the Patkai hills, followed the course of the Lohit River and came to their present location.[34]

More recently, however, the Burma/China origin generally, and Roy's arguments specifically, have been challenged by an Adi historian. Writing in 1993, and drawing on oral histories, T. Nyori dismissed Roy's reasoning – that a lack of Tibetan cultural traits among Arunachal tribes rules out a Tibetan origin – as illogical (Nyori 1993:43-45). Nyori advances two principal arguments. First, he claims that the absence of Buddhist practices and beliefs among Adis may be attributable to the fact that they left Tibet before Buddhism took hold in Tibet in the 7th century; equally, Adis might have left from areas which were not fully buddhicised or they might been driven out of those areas by buddhicisation. Second, Nyori argues that the similarities between Adi and southeast Asian cultures (Roy's "trans-Brahmaputra culture") can be explained by the fact that migrants assimilate the material culture of their new location; in other words, Adis build their houses of bamboo and cane not because they came from a bamboo-cane culture but because those are the available materials in the present habitation. In support of this, Nyori cites the Misings, a branch of the Adis who live in the plains and have adopted the material culture of their Assamese neighbours. Another example would be the Bokars, an Adi tribe close to the Tibetan border, who seem to have a hybrid culture: they wear long, woollen coats in the Tibetan style, and they use both bamboo and wood for building houses (Banerjee 1999: 172). [35]

The impressive core of Nyori's study, however, is a body of oral traditions about migration, many of which he collected. Whereas Roy dismissed such oral legends, Nyori believes that their internal consistency is proof of their reliability (Nyori 1993: 44). Considering migration legends from thirteen separate Adi groups, Nyori concedes that they do not always agree (sub-groups of a single clan claim they came from different places, and some places are unidentifiable), but they are consistent in tracing origins from north to south, directly across the Himalayas into the present settlements. Furthermore, the oral accounts contain "no story of the migration of the tribe from the south to the north" (Nyori 1993: 43). He adds that the oral legends among other tribes in the central group similarly trace their migration from the north and that there is no tradition anywhere of a migration from the south. These oral histories also reveal, as noted above, that migration occurred over time and in small groups, not as a large, single movement.

Nyori's research is summarised in a (poorly-drawn) map, which shows the thirteen migration routes traced in oral legends. They add up to the inescapable conclusion that the Adis came from the north, that is,

"somewhere in Tibet" (Nyori 1993: 60), and then moved down several river valleys, principally the Siang and the Siyom. Although he does not cite it, Nyori's conclusion was, in fact, arrived at nearly 80 years before him, by a British official who wrote that "[t]he migration of the Abors in a southerly direction, down the [Siang] valley, may be considered as fairly well-established" (Dunbar 1916:14).

The Tibetan hypothesis has been supported more recently by another historian in Arunachal. J. Nath builds on Nyori's arguments and undermines the Burma hypothesis by pointing out that it is, in part, based on poor geographical knowledge: he refers to a belief, begun in the early nineteenth century, that the Tsangpo flowed into northern Burma and came into Assam as the Lohit river, whereas now we know that the Tsangpo flows into the Siang, a fact which shifts the migration route to the west and supports the Tibetan hypothesis. Again like Nyori, Nath provides details from oral histories (*abe*), which contain place-names identifiable with those in Tibet and the upper Siang; no place-names, he notes, are identifiable with any in either Burma or Assam (Nath 2000: 23ff).

One of the most detailed oral histories, cited by both Nath and Nyori, was provided by Ano Perme, who wrote down his version of the migration of Adis in 1968 (Perme 1968). In print it covers only five pages, but it takes the history back to Mongolia and then mentions a series of places, forming a chain that leads south toward Lhasa and then eastward to two bridges: at this point one branch of ancestors (Bhutias & Monpas) crossed a bridge that took them west, while the rest took the second bridge and continued east along the bank of the Tsangpo. Later, at another place, they again separated: the Mishmis went further east, and the rest followed the Tsangpo, eventually through the mountains and into Arunachal. This account of the Adis' migration and dispersal also includes a genealogy, describing how, at a certain place, the first ancestors gave birth to four sons, from whom Adis are descended.

Even if these oral traditions consistently point toward Tibet, is there any other evidence that would also situate the homeland of central Arunachal tribes north of the Himalayas? As already mentioned, the historical linguistics of the area is still far from certain, but what about religion? Even if we accept the Tibetan hypothesis and assume that the migrants adopted the material culture of their new environment, what about more enduring cultural practices such as ritual? After all, if the central tribes did originate in Tibet, then their religious practices and beliefs should show some similarities to those in Tibet before the advent of Buddhism in the seventh century AD. This issue is addressed by Nath, who expands on Nyori's evidence from material culture by adducing what he believes are similarities between what he calls "Bon religion" and the religion of central Arunachal tribes.[36] Even ignoring the fact that the history and nature of Bon practices are a matter of dispute, his arguments are unconvincing by themselves.

Nath traces central Arunachal tribes to earlier Bonpos in Tibet, claiming "that some batches of such banished Bonpo are the present Tani groups of tribes living in Arunachal Pradesh" (Nath 2000: 15). Nath also attempts to pinpoint the time that these proto-Adis left Tibet, but again his reasoning is far from convincing. He argues, for example, that because Adis do not have a calendar or writing they must have left before they were introduced to Tibet in the seventh century. Similarly, Nath claims that Adis are fiercely democratic and thus would have chaffed at the despotism of Srong btsan sgam po, the king who supposedly spread Buddhism and drove Bon out during the second half of the seventh century. It may be true that what some choose to call "Bon" specialists migrated from Tibet to others areas during the period between 800-1000 AD, but there is no evidence to suggest that any "banned Bonpos" were the ancestors of present-day people in central Arunachal.[37] The simple fact is that what is referred to as Bon "religion" (a legendary founder, textual authority, formalised theology, contemplative practices and monasteries) has no parallel in Adi practices and beliefs. They may share the practice of animal sacrifice, but that practice is hardly unique to them.

What all this demonstrates is a need for better ethnographic and folklore research in order to determine the histories of the Tibeto-Burman-speaking cultures. Published literature and current research do hint at similarities in ritual practice, especially between the Na-khi and the tribes of central Arunachal.[38] On the other hand, comparative mythology reveals some intruiging parallels that link the Tani group to Siberia.[39]

While we are unlikely ever to positively identify the ancestors of central Arunachal tribes with any people in Tibet, we do know that some members of some of those tribes have historically been in contact with Tibetans as traders, seasonal labourers, slaves and participants in ritual exchanges. [40] Tibetan sources, from as early as the eleventh century, refer to these non-Buddhist people who straddle the international border, and sometimes cross it, as "Klopa" [pronounced and sometimes written as "Lopa"], a Tibetan word for "barbarian" which is loosely applied to any "tribal" people in the Tibetan cultural zone.[41] From the early twentieth century, we have first-hand reports and even photographs of central Arunachal people in southeast Tibet and adjacent areas. Dunbar's 1916 memoir lists the Adi villages he visited in Pemako (Dunbar 1916:93-6), and although the writings of Kingdon Ward and Cawdor, a few years later, lack ethnographic detail they contain enough to confirm that some of the people they encountered in Kongpo (probably seasonal labourers or slaves) and Pemako are related to the Adis of the upper Siang (Kingdon Ward 1926: 146, 238; Cawdor 1926: 268-274). In one anecdote, for example, we learn that Adis travelled twenty-five marches to the market town of Pe (in Pemako) in order to barter rice for salt, which they would then haul across the 13,000 ft. Doshong La into the upper Siang (Kingdon Ward 1926: 194).

Similarly, there is no doubt that the Klopas of the upper Subansiri are closely related to the central Arunachal tribes living in the high ranges and river systems close to the Tibetan border (Tagins, Nyishis and Hill Miris). Reports from the Tsari region, in the upper Subansiri, in the early twentieth century referred to the wild tribes there as "Loteus, a clan of the Loba tribe", and described them as wearing their hair as some central Arunachal tribes do today; they also had poisoned arrows in bamboo cases, as was common for the central tribes (Dunbar 1916: 3-6; Dunbar 1932:184-5). More evidence for this identification comes from G. Sherriff's photographs and descriptions from the Tsari region in the 1930s; after seeing those photographs, Fürer-Haimendorf confirmed that the people there were virtually indistinguishable from the people he had seen farther south (Fürer-Haimendorf 1983: 216). In addition, we now have confirmation from another source: pilgrims to the Tsari region interviewed by Huber in the 1990s.[42] In all these reports, specific details – the skewers worn in the hair, the long piece of cloth, hornbill feather head-dress and strings of blue porcelain beads – identify these people as the tribes who now live in the upper Subansiri; and from a recent essay, we learn that they were Tagins.[43]

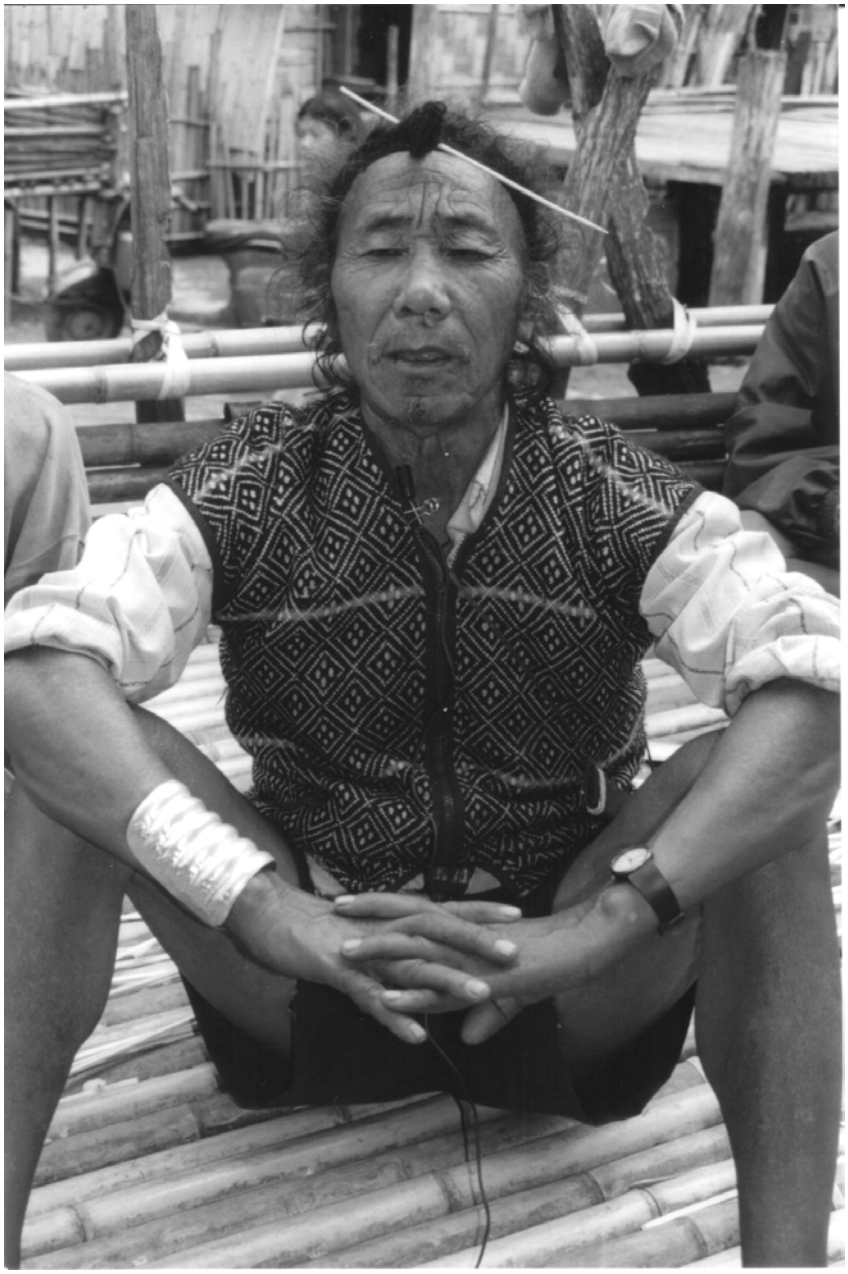
Apatani migration legends

No migration legend (to my knowledge) for Nyishis, Hill Miris or Tagins is yet available in print, but I have collected a few examples from the Apatanis, who are closely related to them.[44] Apatani oral traditions are divided into two categories: *miji* and *migung*. The chief distinction is performative: *miji* are recited in ritual performance, whereas *migung* are not. *Miji* are largely myths, including origin myths and stories about the mythic ancestor Abo-Tani, as well as healing chants; *migung* also include stories of Abo-Tani (when told outside ritual contexts), as well as a few tales and many more stories about "historical" events, such as the coming of the British in 1897, village raids and migration. As remarked above about migration legends in general, they are not regularly or publicly performed and are not narrativised; rather Apatanis hold them in social memory and speak of them, from time to time, as part of a conversation.

Most Apatani accounts of migration are like anecdotes, which state that they and other tribes of central Arunachal were originally one people who split up and settled in different places. Some oral accounts, however, are more detailed and trace the migration of the common stock of all central tribes, describing a series of dispersals and divisions, which resulted in the present distribution of the tribes. Like the Adi legend referred to earlier, the Apatani legends all begin north of the Himalayas;[45] and like that Adi example, they describe an ancestral migration route defined by a series of places. Apatanis call these stopping place *supung* [or *lemba*]: the route leads from Wi Supung, to Nyime ("Tibet")[46] Supung, to Hising Supung (the source of the

Tsangpo River), to Shango Supung, along the bank of the river, to Miido Supung, still in the Tsangpo valley.

Mudan Pai, an Apatani nyibo *(priest) chanting at an animal sacrifice, January 2003.*



Padi Kago, an Apatani man, singing a ayu *(ritual chant) on request, February 2002.*

From there the ancestores continued east, crossed the mountains, forded rivers (two of which, the Kamla and Khru, are identifiable) and came to Ziro, or Shwlo Supung, which is the valley at 5000ft where the Apatanis live today.[47] Here is one telling, from a 70-year old man, recorded in 2003[48]:

Kolyun Lemba

Kolyun Lemba is the earliest place of origin. All our ancestors, elders and cultural life originates from there. This place was created by Nguntii

Anii. When she created this place, life flourished there. The first man of Kolyun Lemba was Ato Tajung.

Iipyo Lemba

Iipyo Lemba was similar to Kolyun Lemba because all our ancestors and life was there. But it is important because the first *dree* festival was celebrated there, after hailstorms destroyed the crops.[49] The cause of the storm was that a woman, named Ami Lulu Bunyi, came to the fields, despite a prohibition. Other celebrations, like *murung, myoko* and *subu*, were also celebrated for the first time in this place.[50] The first *myoko* was performed by Ato Diyu, the first *murung* by Ato Hape, the first *subu* by Ato Mipu, the first *emo huniin* by Ato Piisan.

The life of our ancestors flourished there for many generations. But some of the ancestors decided to migrate elsewhere to start a new kind of life. So they did a ritual, called *turi tunii* on a *lapang* in order to decide where to go, in which direction.[51] The ritual was conducted by an old woman, Tuki Soki, and an old man, Tubi Tabe-Tok Piiro. This way they determined their direction and route of migration. They set out on the *landu* and *lacho leyu* path, on the *chilan* and *kiipu pingo* path.[52]

When they left Iipyo Lemba, on these path, they met many obstacles. First they came up against an obstacle– maybe it was a large boulder– on the path. In the end, a woman, Manu Landu, and a man, Libo Sah, helped them to cross it and continue on the path.

Nyime [Tibet]

On the way to Nyime, the people met another huge boulder, which blocked the way. But they had to cross it , so they did. Later they went to a place called Kari Lemba, where many people were trapped and died. But again they had to move on and they did. Then *dundu lamin* blocked the path to Nyime, but they circled around it and continued on the path.[53]

They reached Nyime, where many of the ancestors assimilated to the local life. In Nyime, women wore ornaments and beads made from river grasses. In Nyime there were two groups: the original people were Nikun Nyime; the other were Necho Nyime, who married separately. The Nikun people are from Tupe Nyime; whereas the Necho people were from the Hikun.Payan Radhe Nyime, the local king, married Pukun Puri of Hintii and they had six daughters:[54] Yaya married Iipyo Jeng; Yaya [a second one] married Miido Talying; Yaya [a third] married Supung Talying. But we are descended from the children of marriages of the other three daughters: people in the [Apatani] villages of Hari and Bela descend from marriage of Ane Haya and Aba Tayu;

people from the villages of Diibo, Hija and Duta descend from marriage of Ane Bendi and Taso Darbo; and the people from the village of Hong come from Loli Yari and Babin Hiipa.[55]

Crossing the Kru River

Then they met the mighty Kru River, whose deep currents make a loud sound like gurgling water.[56] The river was so powerful that the people couldn"t cross it for the next 20 generations. They were stranded, helpless, until a small boy, named Nyibo Ruchi, who was a skilled swimmer, used a boat and helped everyone to cross the river.

They continued along their desired route until they came to a huge mountain, blanketed in thick fog. Then two men, Chilan Tagyan and Kiipu Tapin, sacrificed two mithuns, named chayen tapin and nyokin taku, and then they were able to cross the mountain.

Miido Lemba/Doding Lemba

After crossing the Chilan mountain, they came to Miido Chilan, which was the nearer side of Miido Lemba. Then, further along, somewhere near Miido Lemba, they came to Doding Lemba, where many the ancestors lost their lives. The cause was a monkey and an eagle, who blocked the path. A woman, Ama Pucha, killed the monkey and the eagle by putting poisoned breast-milk into water. This opened the path for the people to move further ahead.

While in Doding Lemba [Miido Lemba], the people split into different groups, to follow different routes. Those people who preferred rice seed became the Apatanis, those who liked millet become Nyishis; and those who liked betel nut became the *halyang* [outsiders]. Before the groups separated, however, they held a big feast and sacrificed mithuns, named *doding dindo* and *taso sibo*. Then they set out on their different paths [which took them to the present-day villages in the Apatani Valley]: the people of Hong village took a path along the lower part of the river, a path called Sickhe. The people of Diibo, Hija, Dutta and Reru went along the path called the Chilan Rego. Finally, our people of Hari and Bela, went along the upper part, a route called Silo.

As illustrated here, Apatani legends trace migration along a series of stopping places, at each of which an important event occurs: the performance of a major ritual, a natural disaster or overcoming an obstacle.[57] A major event in all versions is the subdivision of the original stock of people, when at some point the ancestors divide and go separate ways. Details vary, but the typical division is tripartite: *tani* (Apatani), *misan* (other central tribes) and *halyang* (outsiders, all non-tribals,

including Indians).[58] Most versions agree that the separation occurred at Miido Supung, in the Tsangpo valley, just before crossing the mountains; and this division at this point is consistent with other credible information: that Adis followed the course of the Tsangpo down the Siang and that other tribes (Apatanis, Nyishis, Hill Miris and Tagins) crossed at the headwaters of the Subansiri River in the Tsari region.

Beads: Trade and use

We know that these migration legends are not publicly performed, but we also know that history is transmitted by memory as well as by words. This social memory is often lodged in significant objects, such as the beads that have travelled along the same migration routes as the tribes of Arunachal. I said above that beads are not dropped in migration legends because return journeys are not part of the logic of these stories without heroes; but there is another, very simple reason: beads are far too valuable to be dropped – a single bead might be worth 1000 rupees (£13) and a necklace might be worth 1 lakh rupees (£1300); among the Apatani, the *sampo*, large, chunky white beads (conch shell), for instance, are worth about 13-15,000 rupees (£200) but in London would probably be sold for about £50, or even less.

Types of necklaces and their usages vary from tribe to tribe in the central group, but there are commonalities: they are worn by women in all tribes, of all ages, but rarely by unmarried girls; in some tribes, men also wear necklaces (and other ornaments), but these are usually single-strand, less expensive and less spectacular than those worn by women. In most central tribes, beads are the only form of wealth controlled by women; handed down from mother to (usually oldest) daughter, they are sometimes buried with a woman's corpse. Beads are popular and valuable among all the tribes in the central area, but the largest and most elaborate sets of necklaces are worn by Nyishis, Apatanis, Hill Miris and Tagins.

The geographical location of Arunachal Pradesh, between Tibet on the north, Burma on the east and the plains of Assam on the south, meant that these beads passed through the region as part of a vast network of trade routes linking South Asia with the rest of the world, not only its neighbours Tibet and China, but also Egypt, Mesopotamia, Europe, Africa, East Asia. We know, for example, that beads made in the Indus Valley between the second and first millenia BC were traded into central Asia and western China (Xinjiang).[59] When beads reached northeast India, they entered the regional section of this international trade network, which was once based on fairs and pilgrimages and is now part of global capitalism; this regional network moved goods back and forth across the Himalayas, largely through Bhutan but also through Arunachal, as well as along an east-west axis. Most scholarship about the southern side of this trans-Himalayan trade focuses on Nagaland. Dubin, for instance, has found that carnelian, shell and glass

beads began to move from Calcutta up to Nagaland about 1700; and Untrach has documented a brisk trade in beads and other body ornaments between Calcutta and Nagaland in the early nineteenth century.

Apatani women in ceremonial dress and beads at a feast, January 2003.

Many of these were glass beads, imported from Venice, Bohemia, Germany, China and the UK, and reworked by Indian craftsmen; indeed the first good description of beads in Arunachal, in the 1820s, noted large necklaces of blue beads that looked like turquoises, but upon closer examination were clearly fired glass.[60] By the mid-nineteenth century, when

India had shifted from being a producer to a consumer of goods, the import of glass beads into India greatly increased.[61] A large percentage of foreign-made beads came into India on the Cambay coast of Gujarat and was traded onto the northeast by a network of Marwari merchants. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was reported that beads traded to Arunachal people by Tibetan pilgrims at Tsari were manufactured in Birmingham and Germany, and that they found their way to southern Tibet by way of Calcutta, Darjeeling and Lhasa (Dunbar 1932: 218-19). By this date, however, India's domestic manufacture of beads had revived and begun to supply glass beads to the northeast.

This bead trade in northeast India was only one part of a complex trans-Himalayan trade, which was largely conducted through trade fairs (*duars* or "doors") from at least the early 1600s. To these annual trade fairs, set up by the Ahom rulers at several locations in the plains of Assam close to the hills, came Tibetans, Bhutanese and Indian traders, for whom Arunachal tribesmen acted as middlemen and porters.[62] The items traded, which varied according to the specific location along the Assam valley, were numerous and exchanged in large quantities. Down from the hills and to Assam came Tibetan ponies, woollen blankets, pipes, yaks' tails, lac, gold, Chinese silk, rubber, cowries and beads (of conch shell, porcelain and glass); these goods were bartered for Assamese "silk" (endi silk), other glass beads, deer antlers, deer musk (used for medicinal uses), iron implements, brass vessels and utensils, salt and paddy. One vivid report from the early nineteenth century describes the two-month journey required for the large caravans, which carried one lakh of silver bullion and nearly that amount in gold, to go from Lhasa to the fair at Udalgiri in Assam, where "[t]raders from all parts of Thibet, from Lassa and places east, west, and even north of it are present in crowds, some of them clad in Chinese dresses, using Chinese implements...Many have their families with them" (quoted in Elwin 1959: 10-11).

The fairs ceased temporarily during the turmoil in the Ahom dynasty in late eighteenth century and the Burmese invasion of early nineteenth; they flourished again under British control after the 1820s, and by the turn of the century a large volume of goods flowed up and down the hills and back and forth across the Himalayas. Beyond this regulated trade, overseen by the colonial government, individual traders, mostly Marwaris and later British entrepreneurs, also bought and sold goods by setting up shops in the major towns in Assam. By the early twentieth century, these increasingly professionalised capitalists, who had succeeded in displacing the state-regulated fairs, continued the old practice of trading beads in the tribal northeast. The other major development which contributed to the rise of private bead traders in Assam was a general southern drift of trans-Himalayan trade. Arunachal tribes began to trade more and more in the market towns of Assam and less and less across the mountains; even

adventuresome Tibetan traders, from Nepal, expanded into Assam and from there into Arunachal (van Spengen 2000: 182). Although this southern drift toward Assam was certainly encouraged by British colonial policy and propelled by the disruption caused by the Chinese expansion into Tibet after 1950, this "southern orientation" was a long-term development in response to the advantages of trade in Assam, such as rail lines, roads, modern commercial practices and a stable political situation (van Spengen 2000: 143).

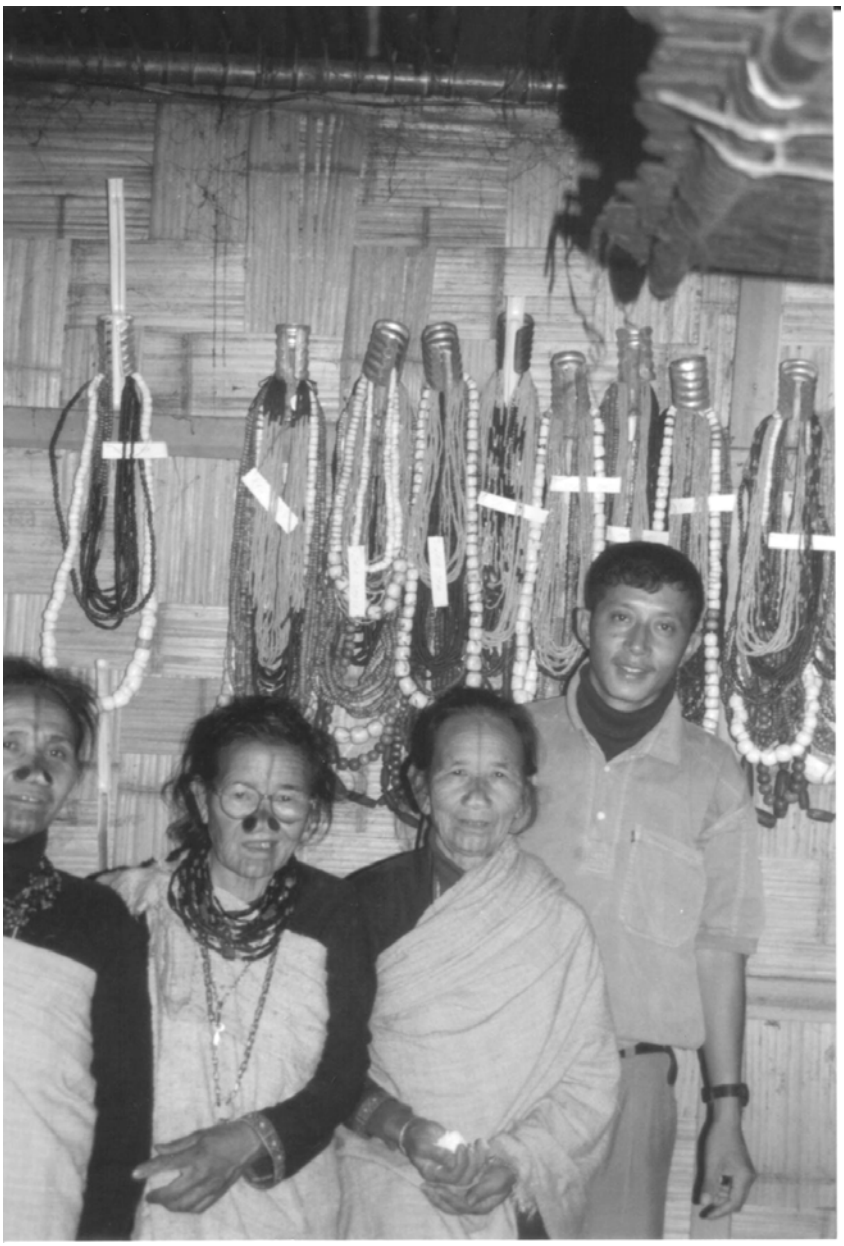
Relatively less is known about the northern side of this trans-Himalayan trade, but van Spengen has shown that it was part of a network linking monasteries and fairs and that it involved essential commodities, such as rice and salt, as well as low-weight, high-value items such as herbs, deer musk and gems (van Spengen 2000). Although only one of van Spengen's reconstructed trans-Himalayan routes leads into Arunachal, to the Tibetan Buddhist monastery at Tawang, near the border with Bhutan (van Spengen 2000: fig. 4, p. 83), we know that Arunachal tribes traded directly with Tibet at many points in the eastern Himalayas.[63] Goods from Assam were traded and bartered up and down routes that led into the hills, and then traded by the tribesmen along the river systems and over the Himalayas: on the upper Dibang River, for example, Tibetans, Chinese and Mishmi traders constantly crossed the Mishmi hills; on the upper Siang and Siyom rivers, Membas, Boris and Bokars acted as middlemen for most of the Adi area; and on the upper Subansiri, Tagins were go-betweens for Nyishi, Hill Miris and Apatanis further south across the Kamla River. Cross-Himalayan trade on the upper Subansiri in the mid-twentieth century is clearly described in Huber's book, with valuable details on bamboo and cane goods (Huber 1999: 210-13). It also appears that traders did not travel long distances (as they did in Nepal) because of frequent and unpredictable feuds; nor were there professional traders (like the Bhotias in Nepal). Instead, small groups of tribesmen would travel for 3-6 days and trade their skins for salt, which another group, further north, might have bought in Tibet (Fürer-Haimendorf 1983: 215). In brief, from the Arunachal traders the Tibetans got mainly deer antlers and musk, animal skins, rice, high-grade cane, Assamese-made daos and other implements, red madder, chillies and woven textiles; from Tibetan or other middlemen, Arunachal tribes acquired woollens, swords, bells, brass plates and beads. Some of the items traded down from the north were the same as those traded at the fairs in Assam, such as woollen blankets, horses and gold; but for the people living above the "salt line", Tibet was the source for this essential commodity.

Another nexus of trans-Himalayan trade were pilgrimage sites; from one particular location we have evidence that Tibetan swords, bells, plates and beads were obtained by Arunachal tribes since at least the seventeenth century. On the upper reaches of the Subansiri river, Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims paid these goods as tribute in exchange for which they obtained

what they valued even more highly: access to sacred landscape. As Huber's research shows, the Tsari region was the location of the most important pilgrimage for Tibetan Buddhists; every twelve years, from the early seventeenth century until 1956 (when the ritual ceased following the Chinese takeover), approximately 15-20,000 pilgrims gathered to circumambulate the "Pure Crystal" mountain. The lower slopes of this mountain, far from Lhasa or any major Tibetan cultural centre, were the domain of Tibeto-Burman-speaking tribes. In return for permitting the pilgrims safe access to the sacred slopes, the Tagins exacted tribute in an exchange ceremony, known as *dapo* ('peace treaty'), where they received, among other items, large quantities of Tibetan swords, bells and "large quantities of coloured beads for women"s jewelry".[64]

Tibetan swords, bells, brass plates and beads have been the items most desired by Arunachal tribes. Today beads are the most public and most numerous of these valuables, and although a great variety of colours and styles were and are worn, it is interesting to note a consistent preference for a light blue bead, probably made of porcelain or glass.[65] Large necklaces of these blue beads were noted in the very first report on beads in Arunachal, among the Adis in the 1820s, and in subsequent reports right up to the 1950s.[66] In 1845, for example, Dalton wrote that men and women in the Subansiri region "wear around their necks an enormous quantity of beads, mostly of blue, like turquoise, but also of agate, cornelian, and onyx and glass beads of all colours" (Dalton 1845:261). Fifty years later, the first Briton to visit the Apatani valley was careful to take blue beads with him to give as presents (Crowe 1890, quoted in Elwin 1959: 192). Dunbar's account in the early twentieth century also mentions "blue and green porcelain" beads, from both Tibet and Assam, among the Adis and Galos (Dunbar 1916:30) These same blue beads from the plains were apparently still the fashion among Apatani women in the 1940s and 50s (Fürer-Haimendorf 1950: 37; 1962: 56-60).[67]

More important, the tribes in central Arunachal make a sharp division between beads believed to come from the plains and those believed to come from Tibet. Although these beads (including some varieties of the famous dZi beads) "come from Tibet", Tibetans are traders and not makers of beads. Among the Apatanis, beads are classified into two categories: the most valuable are called "original" (or "ours"), which are those thought to be the oldest and to come from Tibet; other beads are called "duplicate" (or "outside"), which are thought to come from Assam and are less valuable because they have been unstrung, rearranged or tampered with. Given the high market and cultural value of these objects, there is a strong incentive to claim a Tibetan origin.



Apatani beads on display inside a feast sponsor's house, January 2003.

The perceived origin of beads determines not only their relative worth but also their use, which has not changed much since the 1940s.[68] Again among Apatanis, beads from the plains are generally worn everyday, as part of a woman's ordinary dress and often in a mixture of small, brightly coloured yellow, blue and red beads (*chamer*); they are part of everyday use, although younger and educated women wear them less and less. "Tibetan beads", including the light blue ones, on the other hand, are reserved for ceremonial wear, at major festivals, feasts and other public occasions. There are no formal rules, but the general practice is that only married women (and widows) wear beads of either type; at the festivals, it is especially the

young wives, the daughters-in-law of the clan, who wear large, heavy and expensive strings of beads as they perform their duties, smearing rice powder and rice beer on the-soon-to-be sacrificed animals, serving the beer and powder to onlookers, giving and receiving donations of rice and millet. At some festivals (*murung* and *miida*), after the sacrifices, these spectacular sets of necklaces are hung on a wall inside the sponsor's house, for everyone to see. Tibetan beads (or those thought to come from Tibet), which enhance female beauty, are thus a public display of the sponsor's wealth and his clan's fertility.[69]

Stories about beads

The history and social meanings of beads are also reflected in oral traditions among the central tribes of Arunachal. First, there are many references to beads as items of trade, and all these references speak of beads from Tibet, never from Assam.[70] Second, in all the stories (eleven in total) in which beads are the narrative focus they appear as sources of wealth. In some Adi stories, one set of brothers is deprived by another set of brothers, or are abandoned by their mother, but later acquire beads; in a few stories, beads are made from the fingers, knee-caps or toes of spirits (*wi*), or dead men, and presented to a girl, who then becomes rich.

In other stories, characters acquire beads because they perform a funeral for a rich woman (the person who performs the funeral is entitled to the assets of the dead) or simply because whenever they laugh, beads fall from their mouth. Third, in nearly all of these stories beads come from either the spirit world (the *wi*s) or the natural world, of trees and animals; beads are not given a supernatural or magical explanation, they are not gifted by the gods. Instead, beads are made from bones or from a dog's heart, while their holes are created by a woodpecker. Curiously, a snake is very often brought into the explanation: it bites the beads, which explains their markings; it spits on them, which is the reason for their colouring; and in one Apatani story, a snake, cut into pieces and boiled in a pot, becomes a heap of expensive beads, which rescues a poor couple from poverty.[71]

In two stories, the connection between beads, the connection between the natural world and wealth is made explicit through the image of a necklace-tree. In an Adi story, the first ancestor, Abo Tani, acquires a mithun and tethers it to a necklace-tree (*gimse rine*) from which strings of beads hang like fruit. When the mithun eats the necklace-fruits, the tree falls on it and transfers its soul to the animal, which is why the mithun is so costly today (Bhattacharya 1965: 12-13). A similar necklace-tree also appears in an Apatani story, where the beads symbolise not only wealth but womanhood, as well (see Appendix). An unmarried girl, Ami Dori, is falsely accused of having sex with two snakes; she says she is innocent, but first her sisters-in-law, then her brothers, parents and finally the whole village rejects

her. She kills herself by hanging from the fruit tree, and she is buried. Later, her maternal uncle arrives; he is the person given the task of investigating unnatural deaths in Apatani society, so he keeps an open mind and makes a public declaration: "Ami Dori, you said you were innocent; if that is true, then give us a sign of your innocence, here at your grave." The next day, a small shoot appears, no larger than a snake's fang, and it grows day by day. Soon it becomes a tall tree, called the "Dori tree," and from its branches hang the many necklaces worn by Apatanis – dark blue, light blue, red, red-brown, green, yellow and white[72]. In this well-known story, as in festivals, beads among the Apatani are symbols of both wealth and female identity.

Both social practice and oral narrative reveal that, in central Arunachal, beads symbolise wealth and identity. The representation of wealth is more or less explicit, but identity is a more elusive quality; we can, nevertheless, distinguish two kinds of identity marked by beads. First, they symbolise womanhood; although small, usually single-cord necklaces are worn by men in some tribes, the large, valuable beads are worn only by women, chiefly by married women, and especially at festivals and feasts. As one woman said, when asked how she could wear such heavy necklaces, "If a woman cannot wear them, she is not a woman".[73] Second, beads are a visible display of a pan- tribal, non-Indian identity. The migration legends among the tribes in central Arunachal preserve a shared history and common ancestry, a sense of cultural identity, but cultural identity is often defined over against others – the outsiders, foreigners, those who are not us.[74] Central Arunachal is no exception: most of the languages in the Tani group make a sharp distinction between "us" and "outsiders", that is, non-tribals.[75] Non-tribals – Assamese, Indians, foreigners – do not as a rule wear beads, and the jewellery they do wear is nothing like that worn by the tribes. By stark contrast, all tribes wear necklaces, and they wear spectacular ones at public occasions.

These cultural meanings of beads in central Arunachal are not unusual; research in Africa, for instance, has also found that beads mark wealth, womanhood and cultural identity, and sometimes affirm continuity with the past.[76] Within central Arunachal, however, beads are the only items of material culture that mark both wealth and cultural identity. Other objects, such as Tibetan bells and plates, and now cars, are also expensive, but they are not displayed as markers of identity. Similarly, although textiles mark cultural identity (of specific tribes and increasingly a pan-Arunachal identity), they are not symbols of wealth because (unlike beads, bells and plates) they are made locally. Since beads come from outside, they appear to resemble what Marshall Sahlins called "commodity indigenisation", in which objects are stripped of their meaning and uses and are given new ones. Examples of this process include the Venetian rosaries accepted as heirlooms and used for bride-wealth payments in west Africa, Rajasthani jewellery held to be "traditional" for the Gonds in central India, and brass

boxes with an image of a Hindu goddess adapted by Nagas to hold hunted heads (Trivellato 1998: 64; Gell 1986:131; Untrach 1997: 60).

Something like this commodity indigenisation has occurred in central Arunachal for the Tibetan prayer bells, which are without handle or clapper (tongue) or any ritual function but are extremely valuable and are sometimes used in payments. "Tibetan" beads, however, are different. They are highly valued and publicly displayed because they are associated with the prestige and wealth of Tibet and because they claim an historical link with Tibet; but they cannot be stripped of any original meaning or use because the beads traded to Arunachal from Tibet are neither made nor worn by Tibetans. Rather than "stripping away", the borrowing culture has invested the objects with a new history, imagining it to have the same meanings and uses in the source culture which it has acquired in the borrowing culture.

This process of meaning-making in Arunachal is actually closer to what Mary Helms has described in her study of acquisition and power: objects acquired from sources outside a culture, she argues, are invariably "associated with primordial places of origin or with ancestral heroes or original creative events" (Helms 1993: 96, passim). As a result, she continues, these distant places, events and people, and the objects associated with them, are vested with authority, authenticity and power. These two observations bring us full circle in a search for relations between legends and material culture in Arunachal. First, the beads that central Arunachal tribes get from Tibet are by that very fact linked to origins and ancestors; second, the display of these "ancient" and valuable objects is a display of power.

Conclusions

The history of the approximately twenty-five tribes living in Arunachal Pradesh is not well documented in writing: from Tibetan sources we know that the tribes of central Arunachal were in the Himalayan borderlands in the fifteenth century, and Ahom chronicles report their presence on the southern border with Assam from the early seventeenth century. They probably came to Arunachal well before these dates, but as yet we have no other reliable evidence. This uncertainty regarding the original homeland of these tribes has divided scholars into two camps: one claiming Tibet, the other Burma/China. Since the study of Tibeto-Burman languages began in the late eighteenth century, most scholars have believed that the central tribes came from the east, across the Patkai Hills in northern Burma/southwest China; and this view has largely held sway in modern scholarship. Some recent studies, however, have called attention to migration legends, which uniformly point toward the north, and to the fact that migrants adopt the material culture of their new environment. The

trade in beads also leads across the Himalayas, and oral stories and local beliefs about beads demonstrate that the central tribes trace their migration from Tibet.

However much they agree on a homeland, the oral traditions and material culture of the tribes of central Arunachal Pradesh do not transmit memories of migration in the same way. The legends, which describe long journeys, genealogies and shared ancestry, are not publicly performed; they are held quietly in storage and referred to when necessary to substantiate an opinion. The necklaces, on the other hand, tell no stories, but they are very public displays. Beads thus nicely illustrate the argument that social memory is passed on not only, or even primarily, by texts; Paul Connerton, for example, persuades us that social memory is primarily transmitted by "bodily practices", such as ritual performances and commemorations.[77] When we then consider the associations between the acquisition of distant objects, origins and power described by Helms, we realise why Tibetan beads are chosen as the objects of such memory displays.

Both beads and migration legends are acquiring even greater significance amid the rapid and sometimes fundamental cultural change underway in today's Arunachal Pradesh. Festivals are now centralised and celebrated on a fixed date; Christianity has become a major force; neo-traditional religions are emerging; tribes are changing their names and writing their histories. In this emerging public arena of cultural politics, stories of origins and migration have a special authority, and beads help to mark the thick line drawn between tribal and non-tribal. We still do not know conclusively whence or when the tribes of central Arunachal came to the region, but we do know where the legends and the beads point. And even if these oral traditions and beliefs about beads are not historically accurate, they still occupy a prominent place in contemporary culture. Invented or not, migration legends and beads continue to shape perceptions of the past as well as construct current identities by placing the tribes of central Arunachal in relation to each other, and to the people in the plains.

Appendix

The Story of Ami Dori

There was a young girl called Ami Dori. She was an extremely good person, who spoke kindly and never ever had a bad word for anyone. She was also very beautiful, of incomparable beauty. She was as lovely as the rising sun and the shining moon, a girl of good speech, thought and action. Because she was so perfect she was considered the elder sister of the god *iipyo wi*.

But her brother's wife became jealous of her perfection and began to slander her. "Everyone says that your sister, Ami Dori, is good but she's not. She's evil. Do you know what she's done? She had illicit sex with Tadu and with Bume – that's what they say, she's done bad things with them." When he heard all this about Ami Dori, her brother believed his wife and then he, too, began to speak ill of her. And when their parents heard what the brother had to say, they also started to call her names. Hearing what the parents said, others outside the family began to talk ill of Ami Dori.

When she heard all that was said about her, all this horrible talk, Ami Dori felt terrible, very bad inside, and said to herself: "At first everyone praised me and said I was a good person, but now they say I'm bad." That's how she felt. "I am the sister of *iipyo wi* and so I've never had a bad thought in my heart, never done a bad thing. Not in the past, not even in childhood, not in the present and not in the future would I ever do anything bad. I never had and never will even entertain bad thoughts. You [her family] have prevented me from living my life as I wished."

Full of sorrow and pain, Ami Dori left her parents' house then went to a grove where she made the *takun* tree her mother and the *sangko bacho* tree her father. Why did she do that? You might ask. Well, her sister-in-law had slandered her, her brother had slandered her, her mother and father had slandered her, the whole village had slandered her. She was devastated and began to think: "If my mother doesn't act like a mother, and if I can't consider her my mother; if she can't think of me as her daughter, if my father can't think of me as his daughter, if my brother can't think of me as his sister, if my sister-in-law can't treat me as a sister-in-law, if everyone calls me an evil person, then I don't know how I can live on this earth."

Then she said to the creator god, "Since my birth, until this very day, I have done nothing wrong. I did nothing with Biilyi Tado and Bume Tah; I never even looked at them. To say I had illicit sex with them is idle gossip. God, you know everything – the stars, sun and moon, all the gods, souls, including the malevolent *giirii wi*; you created all the creatures, from spirits

to humans and animals, all the insects and reptiles, the flora and fauna, trees, everything little and big. Everything and everyone is your creation. So you know me, what I've done and what I've said and who I am. I also know and because I know I can no longer live among people. I'm going to leave this earth. They say that I had sex with Biilyi Tado and Bume Tah and I am humiliated/disgraced."

With these sad words and thoughts, she tied a cane-rope to a branch of the *takun* tree and then around her neck and committed suicide. There, in that *takun* grove, she took her own life and left this earth. After her death, her maternal uncle [and his brothers ?] came and said, "Ami Dori was always a good person. How could you speak about such a good person in such a terrible way? Because she felt disgraced, she killed herself." [They thought that she died because she felt disgraced?]

Ami Dori's family replied, "We all believed what the others said, that she was bad. We believed what her sister-in-law said about her, what her own brother and her own parents said. Asking more and more questions, the maternal uncle found out that her brother and his wife had first said that she was bad, that she had sex with Biilyi Tadu and Bume Tah. He also learned that they were not humans, but snakes, who became humans who turned back into snakes. Ami Dori had played with those snakes. They explained this to the maternal uncle and his brothers. [When they heard all this] the maternal uncle and his relatives spoke directly to Ami Dori, "You are sister of *iipyo wi*, the good Ami Dori, but they said that you were bad. But we, in our hearts, do not believe them. All those people accused you of doing evil, but you have said that you did nothing wrong with Biilyi Tado and Bume Tah, that you have been wronged, that you are blameless. But instead of taking revenge, we will bury you. Then you must show us that you are pure and not evil; give us a sign from your grave that you led a good life."

On the next day, in the early morning, her family and her sister-in-law's family [?] went to her grave and saw a small shoot growing, no taller than a snake's fang. On the second morning it was the size of a lizard's leg. And on the third day a full tree had grown over her grave mound, a big, thick tree with many branches. From her grave, through the power of god, spiritual power, she showed that she really had committed no evil. Different flowers blossomed on the many branches of that tree – a red flower, a white flower, a green flower and a dark flower [this is in *nyibo* language]. And the tree was called the "Dori" tree and the necklace tree because different coloured necklaces hung from those branches – the *domin*, *doku*, *rite*, *tado*, *sampyo, santer*, *ahing paming*, and *lebu* – all these necklaces grew on the tree.

"One person watches and one makes a hole [in the bead]; one person rolls the thread and one puts it through the hole; and plucks the beads from the tree." [In the same way ?] everyone now knew that Ami Dori was a good woman, that she had done no wrong; that god had made her a pure being. They knew that she had done nothing wrong with Biilyi Tadu and Bume Tah,

that everyone had unjustly slandered her. The necklace tree appeared to show this to everyone. When the tree had demonstrated Ami Dori's goodness to the maternal uncle, the others – her brother and sister-in-law, and her parents stood accused.

In order to show the rest of the world that she was innocent, her uncles took the necklaces [from the tree?] and set out to sell them. This is said to have been the "first business". In our *miji* language we have the saying: "Tado must go and sell; Haley must go and sell". [Tado-Haley refers to a generic trader] These two men set out to sell these necklaces, which were created by the creator of all we see [the stars, sun, moon, etc.] They went to sell those necklaces to show the world that Ami Dori was innocent.

They went to the house of Nyime Payang Radhe [a ruler from Tibet?], to try to sell them to his daughters. But they rejected them, saying they weren't up to the mark. So the uncles took the necklaces and wandered from place to place, trying to sell them, explaining that they were expensive because they were the ornaments of Ami Dori. North and south they went, here and there and everywhere, until they reached the house of Pan Pachi Tari [some kind of title]; to his women folk they said, "Here are fine necklaces; look at them and see how nice they are." Then Pan Pachi Tari bought them for his daughters, saying, "I'll buy them with my lands." And so it was that because Ami Dori was a virtuous person, of excellent character, kind thoughts and gentle speech – because she was the best person on earth her sister-in-law, her brother and her parents spoke ill of her, and others did until the whole world slandered her. God made her pure and through the power of *meping wi,* the necklace tree grew and showed the world [that she was innocent].

NOTES

[1] My thanks to Toni Huber, Richard Blurton, Martin Gaenszle and Mark Kenoyer, whose comments on earlier drafts enabled me to revise this essay.

[2] "Our knowledge about the early history of the people of Arunachal Pradesh is extremely vague and no connected account of the events that took place in later times is available" (Tamo Mibang 2000: 45). The compendium volume published by the Anthropological Survey India begins by stating that the history of Arunachal Pradesh is "shrouded in myths and legends" (Dutta and Ahmad 1995: 10).

[3] Robinson 1841: 335. For recent histories, see Bose 1977; Barpujari 1981; Chowdhury 1990; Osik 1999.

[4] Hsuan Tsang, the famous seventh century Chinese Buddhist traveller, mentions that Assam borders a region of "barbarians of the south-west (of China)" but makes no mention of tribes within Assam or on the southern flank of the Himalayas (Beal 1906: 198-99).

[5] Sanskrit sources, dated before both the Tibetan and Ahom sources, refer to the Kiratas in Kamarupa (lower Assam), who are assumed to be a yellow-skinned (Mongoloid) people in the "high hills"; we cannot, however, use these vague references to identify the Kiratas with any present-day inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh. Archaeological research has reported neolithic tools in the region but not who might have made or used them (Ashraf 1990); the earliest such evidence is an inscription on a stone pillar of the early sixteenth century, which refers to an annual exchange of goods between the Mishmis and an Ahom king (Phukan 2002: 145, fn 8).

[6] The only tribe in the state with its own script (related to Shan and Burmese scripts) are the Khamptis, a Buddhist group who migrated from the Shan area of northern Burma in the mid-eighteenth century. Among Buddhist tribes on the border with Tibet, Monpas use

the Tibetan script, while the Membas use the Hikor and the Khambas the Hingna script, both derived from the Tibetan. Assamese has been widely used in Arunachal for centuries and Hindi since the second world war, while English has become popular since the 1960s. Experiments with roman scripts for tribal languages began in the 1960s but have enjoyed only limited success.

[7] Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK, "Tribal Transitions" is a five-year study of cultural change in Arunachal Pradesh, with emphases on ritual life, material culture and oral traditions. Website at: tribaltransitions.soas.ac.uk.

[8] Volume two of the Grimms' anthology of *Sagen* contains the "historical" legends, including some about battles in Roman times, attacks by Attila the Hun, plus stories about the coming of the Saxons, Angles, and Picts, among others.

[9] For references to migration routes in ritual performances in Tibeto-Burman cultures, see note 57 below.

[10] Little description is published on the use of migration legends in Arunachal. The *abe* in Adi, which contains details of clan history and migration, appears to have been public oratory (Nath 2000: 23; Roy 1997 [1960]: 47). In Apatani, details about migrations are found in chants called *ayu* and in other non-ritual, "historical" texts.

[11] Vansina 1985: 120.

[12] On oral tradition and migration generally, see Vansina 1985: 17, 32, 118-120. For representative studies of migration legends in specific groups, see Gatschet 1969 [1884], for the Creek Indians; Vom 1993, for the Badeng of Sarawak; Mukherjee 1943, for the Santals of eastern India.

[13] See Gaenszle 2002 (37-44) for a discussion of "ancestral voices" which link past and present in Tibeto-Burman cultures in Nepal.

[14] On the cycle of return in myth, see Eliade 1954; on the "expulsion and return" pattern in oral literature, first described by von Hahn in 1876, see Nutt 1881.

[15] It is convenient to divide the tribes in Arunachal into four groups, based on their material culture, religion and probable homeland; these groups largely but not entirely correspond to linguistic groupings. Moving from west to east, as Verrier Elwin did when he first suggested this kind of division:

1. Tibetan-Buddhist groups (whose religious system is mixed with animism) in the northwest near Bhutan and along the Chinese border (Monpas, Sherdukpens, Membas, Khambas). [In between the Tibetan-Buddhist and the central groups are the Aka, Miji, Sulung, Bugun and Bangru, whose languages are unclassified and whose cultures are hybrid.]
2. Central, or the Tani group.
3. Burmese-Buddhist groups (whose religious system is mixed with animism) in the east, near Burma (Khamptis, Singphos).
4. Naga-related groups (Noctes, Wanchos, Tangsas) also in the east, near Burma and Nagaland.

[16] Information about the Tibetan-Buddhist groups in the northwest, as gleaned from Tibetan records, suggests that these groups had long been caught up in dynastic and sectarian rivalries between powers in Tibet and Bhutan; the Monpas appear to have come under direct Tibetan rule and adopted Gelukpa Buddhism by the 17th century, when it is believed that the monastery was built at Tawang (Aris 1980; Sarkar 1980: 11). We also know, largely from a combination of Ahom and British records, that other tribes arrived in Arunachal during the past two centuries:

1. The Membas, a Nyingma Tibetan-Buddhist group, were driven out of the Tawang area during the expansion of Gelukpa domination during the 17th or 18th century and settled hundreds of miles to the east, in Menchuka and the Upper Siang, by about 1800 (Dutta and Ahmad 1995: 195; Dunbar 1916: 93). Tibetan records (Billorey 2000: 2, 5) and oral tradition (P. Dutta 2000) among the Membas, however, claim origins directly north in Tibet. However, the fact that Membas speak a Tshangla dialect places their early history in the Tawang/Bhutan region to the west (van Driem 2001: 872). This view, however, has been challenged by Toni Huber (personal communication, June 2003), who believes that the Menchuka Membas have more complex origins, incorporating different Tibetan populations.

2. The Khamptis, a Tai-speaking group, migrated across the Patkai hills in the mid-18th century. Dalton (1872: 7) mentions that in 1850, three to four hundred new settlers arrived in the area, while Sarkar (1987: 2-10) provides an origin myth, and details of migration and of contact with the British.

3. The Singphos, who also crossed the Patkai hills and who are directly related to the Kachins/Jinghpaws in northern Burma, arrived in the late eighteenth century.

4. The Yobins [Lisus], apparently arrived in the early 20th century, again via the Patkai hills (Mibang 2000: 49), while the Chakmas arrived in the 1940s from the Chittagong Hill tracts (Chowdhury 1990: 10).

[17] Sun 1993; Weidert 1987; van Driem 2001.

[18] In early Tibetan historical sources the area of Arunachal Pradesh is known variously as Klo yul, Klo bo or Klo bkra (these names exist in a number of variant forms: Glo yul, Slos bo, Slos kra, etc.). The first reference to these non-Tibetan people living in the borderlands between India and Tibet appears in a geographical text attributed to the eighth century but which probably dates from the twelfth century (e.g., Vimalamitra. *Kun tu bzang po klong drug rgyud kyi 'grel ba*. 1988, Delhi: Samdrup Tsering, p.237); several thirteenth-century references are mentioned in later historical works.

A Tibetan text from the sixteenth century describes conflicts (from a century earlier) between Tibetans in Kongpo and adjacent Klopa tribes to the south, in what is today eastern Arunachal (the famous history by dPa' bo gTsug lag Phreng ba (1504-1566), written in 1565 (*Dam pa'i chos kyi 'khor lo bsgyur ba rnams kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, 2 vols. 1989, Beijing: *Mi rigs dPe skrun khang*, vol.2, p.1047). Another sixteenth-century text provides more detailed accounts of the lives and appearance of people in north central Arunachal, adjacent to the Tsa ri district; the text is based on encounters which must have occurred in the early decades of the fifteenth century, when the Tibetan lama Thang stong rgyal po (b.1361) had contact during a two-year period with the tribes living adjacent to the Tsa ri district (see the biography by Lo chen 'Gyur med bde chen (1540-1615), *Dpal grub pa'i dbang phyug brtson 'grus bzang po'i rnam par thar pa kun gsal nor bu'i me long*. 1982, Beijing: *Mi rigs dPe skrun khang*, pp. 142, 136, 138, 142- 148, 150-152.) The information in this note was kindly supplied by Toni Huber.

See also Aris 1980 for a translation of the 5th Dalai Lama's edict of 1680, which claims Tibetan authority over the western region of Arunachal, and Murty 1986, who refers chiefly to the *Biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*.

[19] The Ahom chronicles, serially compiled during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also contain numerous but brief references to central Arunachal tribes (Gait [1926: 3] lists six chronicles in Ahom and eleven in Assamese). Written in either Ahom (a Tai language) or Assamese, these chronicles, or *buranji*, cover the period from the early thirteenth century, with the invasion of the Ahoms from the Shan states in northern Burma, until the early nineteenth century, when the long Ahom dynasty came to an end (Barua 1930). The most complete history is contained in the *Ahom Buranji*, written in the Ahom language and Ahom script (related to other Tai/Daic scripts of northern Burma [personal communication, Dr. J. Watkins, March 2003]). This chronicle begins with the creation of world and then narrates major events of the Ahom dynasty, internecine struggles, coronations and battles with outsiders (mainly the Mughals in the seventeenth century); it

concludes with the intrigues that led to the fall of the Ahom kings, the entry of the British in the late eighteenth century and the assumption of British control in the early nineteenth. The earliest reference to a central Arunachal tribe appears to be in 1615, when the chronicle mentions a raid by "Miris [Hill Miris?, Misings?] and Daflas [Nyishis]" that forced the Ahom army to retreat (Gait 1926: 120). Contact and conflict with other tribes, especially Nagas and Mishmis, were also frequent throughout the seventeenth century; and in the eighteenth century we find another cluster of references to Nagas, Mishmis and Miris, plus the Abars [Abors/Adis?], who joined with the Khamptis in opposing the Ahom rulers. "Nagas" are mentioned in the mid-sixteenth century (Barua 1930: 75); "Miris" in the 1650s (p. 135); "Daflas" [Nyishis] in the 1670s (p. 218-20); "Misimis" [Mishmis] in the 1670s (p. 231-2); in the 1790s' the Abars [Abors/Adis?] joined the Khamptis, Nagas, Miris and "Misimis" in a battle against the Ahoms (p. 364). Nyori (1993:30, 66) says a nineteenth-century Ahom chronicle contains the first mention of Adis: they are reported to have received *posa* or tribute rights in a few villages in the early seventeenth century. Finally, according to Mibang, the Ahom chronicles record the presence of Noctes in Arunachal as early as the thirteenth century (Mibang 2000: 48).

[20] Dunbar 1916: 17, fn. 1; Jackson 1999: 12; Tarun Bhattacharjee 1983: 32-33; Dunbar 1916: 93.

[21] These are the Mising (or Miri) people.

[22] People from Arunachal, albeit in small numbers, live today in southwest Tibet (Sun 1993: 23-24 on Na Bengni and Bokars; Toni Huber, personal communication, June 2003, on Bokars; Jomoh Miri Mishimbu, personal communication, February 2003, on Idu Mishmis).

[23] Some tribes (the Akas, for example; Dutta and Ahmad 1995: 13) claim that they moved from the Assam plains up into the hills, but this movement may have occurred after having first arrived from somewhere north or east of the mountains.

[24] The exception, Khampti, belongs to the Tai group, which is considered by some linguists to be part of the larger Sino-Tibetan family and by others to be a separate family.

[25] There is a parallel debate about the place of the languages of central Arunachal within the Tibeto-Burman family. They were first placed in the "North Assam Group" by Grierson in 1909, and later scholars have continuously reclassified and renamed the group to which these languages belong (for summaries of this debate, see Sun 1993: 363-73; van Driem 2001: 388-408, 481-96). Despite this confusion, the integrity of the Tani group and its constituent languages is not in doubt (Sun 1993: 372).

[26] Konow 1902: 136.

[27] Konow 1902: 136.

[28] Grierson 1909: 572.

[29] The Q'iang [Ch'iang] have also been linked to the Na-khi-Moso, a Tibeto-Burman people in northern Yunnan by Rock (1947 vol. 2: 358), a view endorsed by McKann (1998: 28-30), but not Jackson (1979: 276-290).

[30] McKann, for instance, argues that Tibeto-Burmans, coming from northeast Tibet, settled in this riverine corridor more than two thousand years ago (McKann 1998: 28-29).

[31] Nath identifies the Chi'ang as the ancestors of the central tribes of Arunachal (Nath 2000:12). However, translations of ancient texts, some of which are assumed to be specimens of early Chi'ang oral literature, show little similarity with oral texts from Arunachal (Thomas 1957).

[32] Chowdhury 1990: 13-18; Nath 2000.

[33] Roy 1997 [1960]: 255, passim.

[34] See also Bhattacharya 1965, for details of other migration routes.

[35] Nyori (Nyori 1993: 45). Also rejects Bhattacharjee's claim (Bhattacharjee 1977) that Adis originated in northern Burma/Yunnan, drawing attention to the fact that Bhattacharya has misidentified place-names in the oral legends: for example, Nyulum Siang is not, according to Nyori, the Zayul river, and it is not a tributary of the Lohit (Bhattacharjee 1975: 41).

[36] A similar link between Tibetan and Arunachal conceptual systems was suggested also by Ramirez 1989.

[37] On the history of Bon, see Karmay 1972; the disputed narrative of Bonpos driven out by Buddhists is discussed by Snellgrove (1987: 399-407, 426-28).

[38] The priest in central Arunachal is called *nyibo*, or some variation of that word (*nyibu*, *nibu*); the meaning of *nyi* is unknown and is not used by itself, but *bo* is the pronominal suffix in many central Arunachal languages (e.g., *ini* + *bo* = 'one who went' in Apatani). Thus *nyibo*, the term for priest, means 'he who does or is *nyi*'. In Na-khi religion, one term for the original ritual specialist is *ssan-nyi* (Rock 1959: 777; Jackson 1979: 57), where *nyi* means 'to heal', 'to cure'. [He is also called *llu-bu*; and there is another category of specialist who reads texts, but they arrived later, apparently with Bon influence.] Thus, in central Arunachal *nyi* + *bo/bu* would translate as 'one who heals', which is just what they do. The Na-khi priest is also similar to the Arunachal specialist in that neither, unlike much shamanistic practice in Asia, goes into trance or becomes possessed (Rock 1959: 806).

There are also similarities between Na-khi ritual practices and those of central Arunachal: during the *muan-bpo*, the important feast of the Na-khi, pigs are sacrificed, chicken blood sprinkled on altars, wine made, and an egg placed in a split stick--all of which occurs also in major festivals in Arunachal (Jackson 1979: 106-09; Rock 1998: 180-185). The ritual altars constructed by the Mo-So, a group closely related to the Na-khi, also resemble those built in central Arunachal (Rock 1959: plate 2). Finally, the story behind the ritual – that the pig sacrifice is performed to appease the anger of one party whose daughter was unlawfully married by a second party – is close to the story behind the *myoko* ritual among Apatanis (Rock 1998: 185).

[39] For example, the only reported parallel to the defining myth of central Arunachal, the story of the origin of death (with female sun and male moon) has been reported among the

Buriats (Holmberg 1927: 424). This distinctive gender pairing in the Arunachal story – a female sun deity and a male moon deity – is found only among Nagas and among "most peoples of Turkish origin living in Siberia" (Holmberg 1927: 422).

[40] A fundamental problem in any possible identification is that a lack of good ethnographic data has spawned a confusing array of terms: "Tibetan", "Tibetanised", "semi-Tibetan" and "Tibetan-influenced", plus "Lopa", "Mon", "Loteus", to name only a few.

[41] Other terms are/were also used (Ramble 1997; Huber 199: 133-34, 180; Huber personal communication, July 2003).

[42] Huber's informants describe the Klopas they saw at Tsari in the 1950s wearing the long pins [= skewers] in their hair; Sherriff's photos (in Ludlow 1937; Ludlow 1938) show them with these skewers, swords, long cloth dresses and hornbill feather head-dresses, and fibre raincoats.

[43] According to Riddi 2002, the exchange at the Tsari pilgrimage site was between Tibetans and the *mra* clan of Tagins.

[44] Mitkong et al. 1999 provides a detailed creation myth among Tagins, which describes the distribution of all central Arunachal tribes, but does not speak of origins or migrations. About the Hill Miris, Dalton (1845 p. 261) says that "[r]egarding their migrations they have no traditions" and believe they always lived in their present area. Kumar (1979: 10-18) describes the migration of Boris (an Adi group) from north to south and southwest, along the banks of Siyom, Siang and Siyu rivers.

[45] Two versions of a story (told by Mudan Donny, in Hapoli on 1.02.01 and 25.03.02), like the Adi legend noted earlier, locates the origins of the Tani group in "Mongolia." See also Kani 1993: 33-40.

[46] *Nyime* is the Apatani word for 'Tibet'.

[47] Fürer-Haimendorf (1955: 187) noted that a high peak, Pij Cholo, is also mentioned in Apatani legends of migration.

[48] Told by Hage Tapa, Hari village, 28.02.03; collected and partially translated by Hage Komo.

[49] *Dree*, which occurs in the summer, is celebrated as an all-Apatani festival.

[50] *Myoko* (March-April), *murung* (January) and *subu* (January or February) are feasts sponsored by individual families or clans or villages.

[51] A *lapang* is a large wooden, raised platform in open space.

[52] These paths have not been identified with known geographical places; some of these path names recur as personal names of ancestors.

[53] *Dundu lamin* is unknown to Apatanis today; some suggested that it was a "large stone."

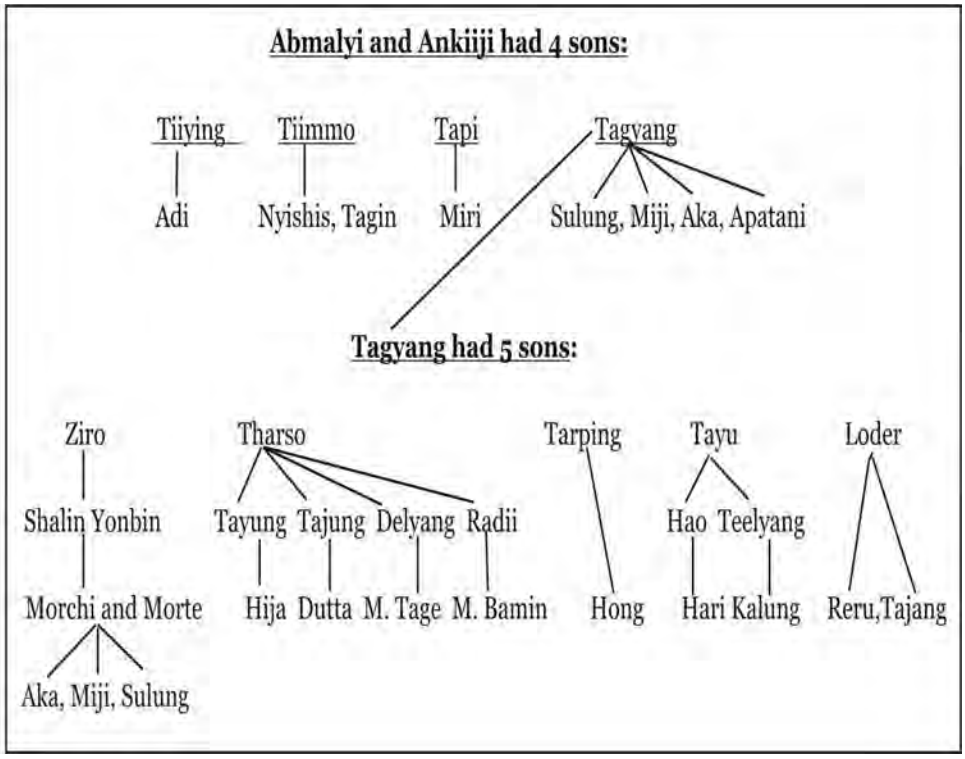
[54] *"Hintii"* has not been identified, but a possible translation is 'a place from below'.

[55] The villages named in this paragraph are those found today in the Apatani valley.

[56] The Kru River is a tributary of the Kamla, which flows into the Subansiri River.

[57] A strong parallel between Apatani and other Tibeto-Burman cultures is the centrality of a concept of the "path", which is reported in ritual texts of Tibeto-Burman tribes in northern Burma (Jinghpaw, see Sadan forthcoming; Rawang, see Morse 1966), southwest China (Naxi-Moso, Yi, Lisu, Permi, Dulung, see McKann 1998), Nepal (Rai, see Gaenszele 2000, 2002; Gurung, see Pettigrew 1999; Magar, see Oppitz 1999; Tamang, Höfer 1999)and central Arunachal (Apatani and the anomalous Mishmi, Blackburn, field notes 2001-2003). In most of these cases, ritual chants describe a route that takes the souls of the dead back to the tribal homeland or the land of the dead or the place of creation of mankind. In some cases, the ritual paths are procession or pilgrimage routes.

[58] The following genealogy was given by Mudan Donny on 1.02.01 in Hapoli. These genealogical groups roughly correspond to the language groups constructed by linguists, with the major exception that linguists place Sulung, Miji and Aka in a group outside the Tani group (van Driem 2001: 473-496; Sun 1993: 242, 281-86).



Note: Hija, Dutta, M. Tage, M. Bamin, Hong, Hari, Kalung, Tajang and Reru are names of Apatani villages.

[59] Ming 1974. Ongoing studies of stone beads by Mark Kenoyer indicate that some carnelian beads from the Indus Valley were traded into northern and central China and buried in tombs of the Western Zhou period (Mark Kenoyer, personal communication, 2003). Other agate and carnelian beads that may have been made in either the Indus

Valley or central Asia appear to have been traded as far as the Korean peninsula by the 3rd century BC (Glover 1990). Excavation in Thailand and in Burma have turned up a number of bead types that appear to have been made in the Gangetic region, the Deccan Plateau or even Sri Lanka. It is not improbable that some of these beads were also traded into the highlands of northern Assam and Arunachal (Mark Kenoyer, personal communication, 2003).

[60] Wilcox 1832: 403.

[61] Francis 2002.

[62] Moving from west to east: there were five duars collectively known as the "Eastern duars"; five called the Kamrup duars; three known as the Darrang [Dirang] duars; four called the Charduar; nine called the Naduar; and finally six known as the Choiduar (Phukan 2002: 141-42). The duars in the western end of the Assam valley were controlled by Bhutan (Gait 1926: 311-12).

[63] Riddi (2002) lists fourteen trade routes linking central Arunachal and Tibet, and Phukan (2002) identifies twenty-six "passes". See also Showren 2002, who mentions that Nyishis bartered animal skins and a special red dye for Tibetan valuables (bells, swords, plates and beads).

[64] Huber 1999: 138. See also Riddi 2002; Krishnatry 1997. These ritualised payments in the Himalayas resemble what we know of the tributes paid annually to tribes in the Brahmaputra valley, at the foothills; the *posa* system operated by the Ahom kings, and then inherited by the British in the early nineteenth century.

[65] Apatanis have two such beads: *sambyu* (larger) and *sampyu* (smaller).

[66] Wilcox 1832: 403.

[67] Fürer-Haimendorf (1962: 56-60) also mentions that women also wore other larger and darker blue beads, probably from Tibet, as well as "crudely cut cylindrical glass beads of dark blue colour" which had lost their market value. See also Dunbar 1916: 3-4; Roy 1960: 84-85.

[68] Fürer-Haimendorf's description of bead use in the 1940s (1962: 57-60) corresponds in almost every detail with what I know from 2000-2003.

[69] Sciama (1998: 15-16) believes that beads "symbolically represent the eye as well as female genitalia; she cites the ancient Mediterranean where eye-shaped beads were used as amulets for healing and Africa where beads are associated with fertility. Apatani "eye" (*ami*) beads are popular and valuable but are not thought to have healing powers.

[70] See, for example, Elwin 1958; 1970: 91, 96.

[71] Cf. origin tales told about beads in Tibet (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1952) in which insects, mountains and spirits are often cited.

[72] The Ami Dori story is similar to the international folktale known to folklorists as "The Singing Bone" (Aa-Th 780), in which a bone or bush or flower or tree grows above the grave of a murdered person and reveals the identity of the murderer. Later, the necklaces

are taken by her uncle, who tries to sell them to show the world that she is innocent. But they are too expensive and no one can buy them. A (Tibetan?) king, Nyime Radhe, rejects them as sub-standard; finally, Pan Pachi Tari, a merchant in Assam, buys them for his daughters.

[73] Nyishi woman at Nyokum, Doi Mukh, February 2002.

[74] On the dynamics of oppositional identities, see Thomas 1997: chap. 8.

[75] The Apatani have a tripartite division between "us", other tribals in the Tani group, and outsiders.

[76] On Africa and Latin America, see the essays in Sciama and Eicher 1998; and Sciama 1998: 16-18.

[77] Connerton 1989.

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