



## Folklore with Special Reference to Origin of Apatani Beads

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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to depict how the *Apatani* believes; that bead which is considered as most valuable cultural object was come into existence. The *Apatani* is one of the major tribe in a state of Arunachal Pradesh are living at Ziro, headquarter of Lower Subansiri commonly called as the *Apatani* Valley. They are very rich in traditional ornaments which are very costly and important culturally; among the ornaments beads are regard as multifarious and the most precious one which is called as *Tashang*. *Apatani* people are having their own oral literature on various aspect of life. In absence of written records, they depict their past happenings through *Miji* (oral literature related to historical events) and *Migun* (oral sacred literature related to rituals and rites) that passed down by older generations. Oral literature has been a part of human culture, many stories and tales are created and at the same time many of them get extinct too, depending on geographical boundaries personal intelligent and communication different folklores are current in different areas. Some folklore are regarded as important and as such believe to be happened truly in gone days which society think to preserve and further passed on to the next generations.

The study of folklore in various aspects of human life: success and failure, tradition, custom, art and craft, song and dance can educate the to-days educated youths to develop an attitude to respect their cultural heritage. In tribal societies, where languages have not yet been reduced to writings or not developed, oral traditions continue to hold the key in preserving their rich heritage and it links the past to the present (Mibang: 2019-20:10).

Regarding the origin of bead the *Apatani* society has different version for different beads.

Received : 4 September 2021

Revised : 24 September 2021

Accepted : 18 October 2021

Published : 30 December 2021

### TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Perme, A. 2021. Folklore with Special Referece to Origin of Apatani Beads, *Skylines of Anthropology*, 1: 2, pp. 124-130.

## Origin of Beads

### Abo Loma as a Maker of Beads<sup>1</sup>

*Abo Tani*, the fore father of *Apatani* was very clever and sharp person with some miraculous power. At very young age, he had married many animate and inanimate things. Later, for the first the time he married to a woman called *Bulung Binyi*. As a token of love the mother of *Bulung Binyi* presented him some divine powers. *Lidu Pimi* the divine claws, to fight the enemies and *Koga Miri* the divine eyes to see the spirits and demons. With these two characteristics he became more powerful.

Later, *Abo Tani* married many and could not keep up the relations for longer time. One day *Abo Tani* saw a beautiful girl named *Ayo Dilyang*, working in paddy field very honest and hard working by nature. With her *Abo Tani* became very happy and had a prosperous life. Seeing the couple happy a girl named *Tini Rungya* felt jealous, she started making plans to separate them and finally convinced *Abo Tani* to be on her side. Following this *Ayo Dilyang* divorced him and took back all the wealth.

Now *Abo Tani* had started living with *Tini Rungya* but very soon he discovered her dishonesty and laziness, they could not make their living became very poor. And finally *Abo Tani* abandoned her and left for hunting in the forest. While wandering in the wild forest *Abo Tani* again met a girl named *Donyi Yayi Chiji*. In a course of time *Donyi Yayi Chiji* became pregnant and gave birth to a male child named Loma or *Abo Loma*. After giving birth to a handsome boy there were many claimants like *Dingya*, *Turbo*, *Lyabo* and *Sii* (demons) over the baby as their son, but *Abotani* did not gave up as he was the rightfull father. So in order to find out the legitimate father the claimants organized a test like arrow shooting, stone throwing and identification test and *Abotani* agreed to participate in the test. Following this firstly arrow shooting test was conducted. A *Talo*, traditional metallic plate was kept at some distance and whosoever stuck the arrow on it will win the test was the condition. The arrows of the demons strike the plate but did not stick on it. Now it was *Abotani's* turn, *Dolyang Chanja*, sister of *Abotani* played a trick, she secretly put an adhesive called *Payu* on the arrow, *Abotani* took the arrow and shoot and it stuck on the *Talo* and *Abotani* won the test.

Another test of stone throwing was conducted. All the demons had thrown the stone around 60 to 100 meters. Here again, the sister *Dolyang Chanja* caught an insect called *Turo* that could fly straight for longer time, *Abotani* took it and threw that flew far away and make him winner again.

But the demons did not accept the victory, following this they conducted final test. Here, baby himself would identify the father all the claimants will sit around the baby and to whom baby comes would be the father. Here also *Abotani's* sister played a trick, she quickly prepared a maize powder which emits pleasant smell and asked *Abotani* to put it on body. The baby sensed the pleasant smell and came to *Abotani* as such *Abotani* won all test and became rightful father. Demons were so jealous and got annoyed with *Abotani* therefore they damaged the nerve and bone of the baby. Thus *Loma* later became paralysis he could not even walk for a little. *Abo Tani* and his wife had done whatever possibilities they could have done to make their son physically fit but in vain. Therefore, one day they were discussing secretly either to throw away the baby in the river or in forest. As there was no options left for them to think of. *Loma* heard the whispered discussion of his parents. He asked parents not to throw him on river or forest but to take him to distant place called *Iji Dirung*. Parents could not deny his request, as such *Abotani* asked his relatives to help him to take *Loma* to distant place. On the way to the forest *Loma* felt sleep and dreamt a beautiful girl came to him and took him to a many beautiful places. They continued their journey and finally reached the place and kept *Loma* there.

At *Iji Dirung*, *Loma* was all alone. One day he saw a girl coming to him, the same girl who had taken him to the many places in a dream. She was very gentle and helpful and promised to take care of him. She fed him food, medicines and gave massage for many years. Now finally *Loma* gained a good health and sound mind, he could walk and started working with the girl. In a course of time the girl taught him arts of making many things like *Shah Loma* arts of making priestly Sword), *Maku Loma* (art of making bell), *Hiri Loma* (art of metallic work) and finally the *Sangku Loma* the art of making beads (*Santer*, *Pilya Papu*, *Hiku*, *Lelung* and *Sanje* beads). As per the narration of *Takey Napa*, priest, *Habung Tayu*, priest and *Duyu Halyang*, priest beads were made from bone of *Mithun* and as narrated by *Duyu Otung*, bead expert and priest beads were made of *Monkey's* bone. *Abo Loma* learnt sincerely and completed the course of making all the ornaments successfully.

Later, the girl asked him to go back to his native place but *Loma* denied doing so, somehow she could convinced him and took him back to the place where his parents lives. After meeting the parents in the village the girl narrated the story of *Loma's* health and art of making ornaments. On hearing those miracles story *Abotani* proposed the girl to be a wife of his son *Loma*. The girl denied the proposal and revealed herself that, I am *Lilyi Binyi* from a heaven. I am not a

human and came on earth only to help *Loma* as he was very weak and helpless. Saying these she disappeared.

### ***Story of Tabu Lebu***<sup>2</sup>

The story of *Tabu Lebu* is all about a particular female bead called *Lebu*. The word *Tabu* means snake. The narration as follows:

There was a poor couple named *Koki Yamii* and *Neha Tayu* living with their children. One day the women got an invitation from her sister to attend a ritual conducting at their house. On her call she happily went to attend the same, reaching there she noticed *Mithun* also being sacrificed. She then imagined and expecting to take some meats back home for her family. Whole day she was helping them cooking and serving foods to others happily. By the time she ready for meal her sister gave her a food on a small plate that was being used to feed dog. She felt very humiliated and also did not get a piece of meat for her children who were looking for their mother to be back with food at home. So finally she left for home empty handed thinking of starving children. On the way to home she saw and killed a snake and brought it to home only to feed her starving children. The snake was chopped into pieces and the snake head was taken out and buried nearby. The remaining pieces had been put on a pot for cooking. After a while water started boiling, while come back she found beads falling out of the pot. She was shocked seeing the beads and there was no snake pieces left on the pot to serve her children. Then she quickly went out to take the buried snake head but surprisingly she noticed the head was already been transformed into *Maji* (ornaments). This happenings had rescued the family from poverty and led them happy life.

### ***Story of Ami Dori; The necklace tree***<sup>3</sup>

There was a girl named *Ami Dori*. She was known by her perfection in the society. She never even had a bad word with others, did no wrong to other, she was also a very beautiful, a girl of good thought and actions and being loved by all.

Seeing her perfection her brother's wife felt jealous and started treating her badly. She began to slander her of having illicit sex with *Tadu* and *Bume* (personified as snake sometime turn back to human). When her brother heard all this bad things about *Ami Dori* he too believed and supports his wife statement and started speaking ill of her. And when her parents heard what brother said they also started to call her bad. And hearing what parents said the society began to talk ill of her.

When *Ami Dori* learnt all that was said of her in the family and the society she felt very bad. With full of sorrow and pain she had left her parents' house and went to a forest and there she made a tree as her parent.

She could not forget the allegation and humiliation. Then she asked to the God, 'God you know everything, since my birth and until this present day I have done nothing wrong, never ever harm anyone. I did nothing wrong with the snake and it is wrong to blame me of having sex with the snake'. Later with these sad words she tied a rope to a branch of the tree and committed suicide and left this earth forever.

After her death her maternal uncle and her brother visited there, the maternal uncle scolded her brother that, *Ami Dori* was a good woman how could you and society speak bad of her? She felt humiliated and killed herself. Later her body was buried then the maternal uncle said to her, if you are good and not an evil, if you think you are right and led a good life then show us a sign as proof of your righteousness.

On the next day, her family and relatives went to her grave and saw a small shoot growing out of her grave. Many days passed on the shoot growing bigger and bigger and finally became a big tree. Different colors of flowers started blooming on the tree and later different colors of beads found hung from those branches. From this she showed that she really had committed no wrong. Everybody now knew that she was a good woman. Her maternal uncle started selling the beads to show the society that she was an innocent. (As per *Duyu Halyang* and *Duyu Otung*: the tree started bearing fruits, people passing through nearby the tree used to notice the fruits daily to their surprise none of the birds came to that tree to eat fruits. Later, suspiciously they plucked and taste the fruits, it was very distasteful. Thinking it of no use they plucked down all the fruits and thrown it to a stream, as soon as the fruits touches the water of the stream it turn into a beads of different colors, which are *Buke Ripu*, *Tado*, *Perung*, *Ami*, *ZiZi*, *Bhimpu*. From there, people collected the beads and make necklaces out of it).

## Conclusion

The *Apatani* people are rich in oral literature in absence of written record they depict their past happenings through oral literature as passed down by their gone generations, as such today also they are adhere to long established culture and practices. They believe beads as a heavenly artifact; but it is not certain when exactly it was made. In the foregoing stories of *Abo Loma*, *Abo Tani* as an intelligent man; who was trapped by several girls to be on their sides, and

he abandoned his wife's one after another, and finally a disabled boy named *Abo Loma* was born. *Abo Tani* and his wife wanted to kill the disabled child, but the child heard their conversation and as per his request, they abandoned him in the forest, and finally a Goddess from heaven in human form came to him, gifted him good health and taught him the art of making beads. In this folklore also, the concept of heavenly object and involvement of Goddess has been reflected. *Abo Loma* did not make beads out of his own thoughts and imaginations she was guided and taught by the Goddess *Lilyi Binyi* herself.

In the stories of *Tabu Lebu* and *Ami Dori* the grace of God upon the good doers and innocent, luck and destiny of the person are reflected. A poor lady humiliated by her own sister received a mystifying love from God which ultimately led them a good life. In the story of *Ami Dori* concept of zoophilia is described, a concept found to be sexual disorder or pervert act, thought to be new, but it is seen that such concept of pervert acts are there in the minds of evil minded people, who keep accuse other people of such issues, though it may not be true. In such case, *Ami Dori*, despite being a good girl was accused by her sister in law of zoophilia, jealousy of women in households, which lead to committing suicide are reflected in this story. From that point of view, finally the girl committed suicide and eventually from her grave turned out the necklace tree shows that these beads are the results of some fossilization of animals. Or we can say that after listening to her prayer and seeing her innocent God as a sign of *Ami Dori* turned the necklace tree.

So, these stories acknowledged the peoples believe on beads as heavenly artifact as there is an involvement of some Goddess in every story and though from heaven involvement of lady in making beads is reflecting the relationship between beads and women and bead as female object has been proved by seeing the attachment that women have today with beads as an ornamentation.

## Notes

1. This story is narrated by Habung Tayu a priest from Reru village on 12/9/20, Hage Hanya a priest from Hari on 13/9/20, Takey Napa a priest from Hong/ Naharlagun on 15/11/20, Duyu Otung a folklore and bead expert from Reru, Duyu Halyang a priest from Reru on 7/11/20, Habung Talo a priest and Habung Tani from Biila Village on 8/11/20, Nani Sambyo and Kimey Tajo from old Ziro on 7/5/17, Michi Tade from Bamin Michi on 12/5/17 and Tage Tadu a priest, G-sector Naharlagun on 5/11/20.
2. This story has been collected from Duyu Halyang a priest and Duyu Yami from Reru on 7/11/20, Duyu Otung beads and folklore expert and Nani Yasu bead business women from Reru village on 6/11/20, Nani Julyang a bead bussines women at Emporium, Ziro on 9/5/17, Hage Apey a bead business women at Hapoli on 7/11/20, Dusu Yazaa

bead businesswomen, Papu Hills Naharlagun on 24/9/20, Habung Tani, Biila on 8/11/20, Habung Shah and Habung Yabi bead expert from Biila on 7/11/20 and Takey Napa a priest from Hong on 5/11/20 and Kime Akang from F&G Sector, Itanagar on 22/3/21.

3. This story has been collected from Duyu Halyang a priest and Duyu Yami on 17/11/20, Duyu Otung beads and folklore expert and Nani Yasu bead business women from Reru village on 6/11/20, Nani Julyang a bead business women at Emporium on 9/5/17, Hage Apey a bead business women at Hapoli on 7/11/20, Habung Tani, Biila on 8/11/20, Habung Shah and Habung Yabi bead expert from Biila on 7/11/20.

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