

A STUDY ON THE TRADITIONAL ORNAMENTS OF AO TRIBE OF NAGALAND

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ABSTRACT

A study on the traditional ornaments of Ao tribe of Nagaland was an attempt to find out the different traditional ornaments of the Ao tribe. The term ornament is usually applied to the adornment of the body. The Aos are very much fond of ornaments and ornaments are the indication of family background, social status and personal attributes of the wearer. The Ao women do not possess as many ornaments as her husband.

KEYWORDS: *Ao, Ornaments, Nagaland, Traditional*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

Costumes of a community or a nation are an essential aspect of its cultural heritage, a mirror of the time and the people of that particular community. The tribal costumes bring up a life-some picture of the tribe (Biswas, 1985). Few countries in the world have such an ancient and diverse culture as India. India's North-East is strikingly different compared to other parts of the country. The state of Nagaland is rich fashion center of the North-East and has rich and varied cultural heritage. Nagaland sometimes referred to as the Switzerland of the East, the land of enchanting beauty and charm with its rich diverse cultures, festivities of its various tribes and sub-tribes inhabiting the Eastern most state bordering Myanmar is endowed with rich natural flora and fauna; lush green hills and valleys, rivers, resounding echoes of music, dance and festivities make it special place in our nation of diverse cultures.

There are 16 major tribes and various other sub-tribes inhabiting the state and each tribe has its own distinct dialect and cultural features which in turn make Nagaland a land of rich diversity. The colorful and intricately designed costumes, jewellery, beads distinguish different tribes of Nagaland. The most absorbing ethnic unit which presents several characteristics not found in other Naga communities is the Ao Naga tribe. The total population of Ao Naga in Nagaland is almost 2,27,000 according to the 2011 census. Ao Nagas are found in the north-eastern part of Nagaland, mostly in the central Mokokchung District and also a few are found in the adjacent [Assam](#) state. Mokokchung, one of the districts in Nagaland, is considered as the home of the Ao Naga tribe (Wikipedia). Rich and varied artifacts, costumes and lifestyles of this tribe provide a glimpse into the rich cultural mosaic of the Nagas which is unique even among the other Naga tribes. The Aos have their own traditional dress, ornaments, festivals, folk dances, and songs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample Selection Procedure

To select representative samples for the purpose of the study a multistage, purposive cum random sampling method was adopted. Representative samples have been selected from the area whereas particular community has been found concentrated. Mokokchung district of Nagaland was selected purposively for the investigation having the Ao tribe. Three representative samples have been selected randomly such as Longchem, Longpa, and Saring from Mokokchung district. Fifty (50) respondents were selected randomly for the study.

Selection of Method

The data were collected through personal interview method as it was found to be an important and powerful tool for the data collection (Reddy, 1997). A structured interview schedule was prepared carefully to get the information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Name of Traditional Ornaments used by the Male and Female of Ao Tribe

Type of Ornament	Male	Female
Ear ornament	Rompung	Tongpang
Neck	Chirat, shipuzuk, Shari	Alik, Yiplongzuk, Aotsurzuk
Wrist	Khap, Kehen	Kisen
Upper arm	Merangpembang, Shari khampung, Lohakhampung	---
Ankle	Ali	---
Shoulder	Shizak	Tsungtong
Head and forehead	---	Lamlungus

DESCRIPTION OF DIFFERENT ORNAMENTS WORN BY THE MALE AND FEMALE OF AO TRIBE

Male

Rompung is an ear ornament which was originally made of red-dyed goat's hair but, now a day people use wool. *Chirat* is a neck ornament and worn only by the rich people which are made of a conch shell (Plate 1). *Shipuzuk* is made of boar's tusk which can be worn only by the warriors; they wear it for protecting their necks from dao cut. Now, days they use it only on the special occasions like a festival, cultural functions etc. *Shari* is another type of neck ornament which can be worn only by the warriors. It is made of bones and beads (Plate 3). *Khap* is a wrist ornament decorated with cowrie shells, which are worn only by the warriors and protect their wrist from cuts (Plate 4). *Kehen* is made of brass which is worn by the rich people (Plate 5). *Chukuis* is a waist ornament; a kind of basket used by the warrior at backside of their waist (Plate 7). *Merangpembang* is an upper arm ornament; made of boar's tusk and elephant's tusk which is worn to protect their upper arms from enemy's dao (Plate 6). *Shari khampung* is made of brass and can be worn by the man who had taken at least two heads. *Lohakhampung* is worn by the people, who have given full series of the feast of merit. *Ali* is a calf ornament made of finely plaited cane with a combination of red and yellow color and worn for protecting their calf's from dao's cut. But, now-a-days the *Ali* is made from plastic instead of cane. *Shizak* is a shoulder ornament worn at shoulder across the waist for protecting their chest and stomach and is made of woods (Plate 8).

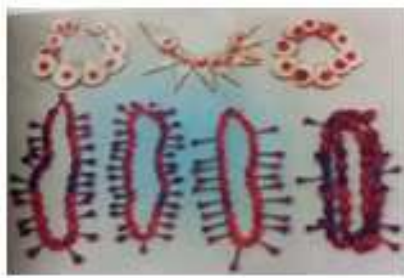


Plate 1: Chirat (Top) and Alik (Bottom)



Plate 2: Shipuzuk

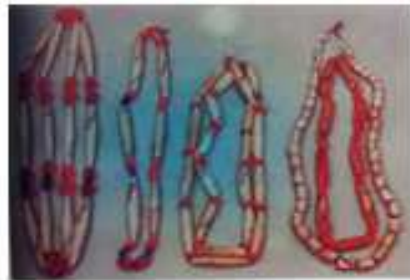


Plate 3: Shari



Plate 4: Khap



Plate 5: Kehen



Plate 6: Merangpembang



Plate 7: Chuku



Plate 8: Shizak

Female

Lamlunguis made of brass and used on their head to decorate it and worn only by rich people. *Chansu or Tong pong* is made of some crystals which were worn in the earlobes signifying rich peoples (Plate 9). *Alikis* a neck ornament; the most prominent item that is worn by the Ao females made of red colored beads, brass metals and can be worn by the warriors family only (Plate 10). *Yiptongzukisa* neck ornament made of beads; sometimes decorated with shells, worn only by the rich peoples (Plate 10). *Aotsurzuk* is a bead necklace worn by the females (Plate 9). *Kisenis* wrist ornament made of brass worn only by the rich peoples (Plate 11). *Tsungtongis* a shoulder ornament made of the number of brass bells used by the rich people during festival time and are very heavy (Plate 12).



Plate 9: Aotsurzuk (Top) Chansu or Tong Pang (Bottom)

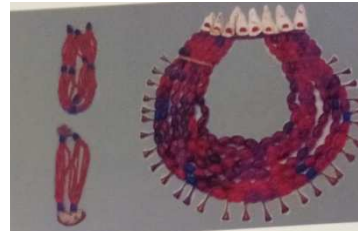


Plate 10: Yiptongzuk (Left) and Alik (Right)



Plate 11: Kisen



Plate 12: Tsungtong

CONCLUSIONS

The Aos are very much fond of ornaments and the ornaments are the indication of family background, social status and personal attributes of the wearer. The Ao women do not possess as many ornaments as her husband. Today, a great number of Nagas are neither truly Nagas nor are they absorbed in the dominant culture. The trend towards 'modernization' seems set to continue partly, but not wholly under the influence of Christianity. The market economy, urban life, education, and modern communications have together exerted an influence on Naga society. Moreover, in the process of modernization, traditional functions have often been transformed, rather than lost.

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