

The evolution of hunting among the Idu, a people of Arunachal Pradesh

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction: hunting, forests and biodiversity in SE Asia	1
2. Physical environment	2
2.1 Vegetation	2
2.2 Fauna	2
2.3 Geomorphology	2
3. Idu society	3
3.1 Ethnography	3
3.2 Language	4
4. Hunting technologies	4
4.1 Traps and snares	4
4.2 Poisoned arrows and guns	5
5. Commercial and therapeutic aspects of hunting	5
6. Hunters and the world of the spirits	6
6.1 Altitude and control by deities	6
6.2 The concept of <i>mísū</i>	6
6.3 Killing animals which are not <i>mísū</i>	9
6.4 Going on a hunt	11
6.5 The trophy wall	11
7. Hunters' speech register	11
8. Conclusions	12
Appendix 1. Idu names of mammals	12
Bibliography	15

TABLES

Table 1. Vegetation zones by altitude	2
Table 1. Idu animal traps	5
Table 2. Ecozonal deities among the Idu	6
Table 3. Forbidden, <i>mísū</i> , species recognised by Idu	6
Table 4. Birds which belong to Ɗgōlō	10
Table 5. Animal names in hunters' register	12

PHOTOS

Photo 1. Idu loop trap	5
Photo 2. Idu quiver with arrows	5
Photo 3. Hunter dressed for hunting expedition, Ithili	11
Photo 4. Trophy wall in Ithili	11

MAPS

Map 1. Idu territory in India and Tibet	3
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ABSTRACT

The Idu people of Arunachal Pradesh still inhabit a rich and biodiverse environment which has been preserved from the major threats to SE Asian forests, by a fortunate combination of circumstances. Hunting remains a significant element in subsistence, especially in the more mountainous regions. The killing of animals is not simply an economic activity but has a significant spiritual component, including the concept of *mīsū*, of tabooed species. Even species which do not fall under the *mīsū* interdiction, such as the takin, require the hunter to be ritually purified. However, the introduction of the gun has increased the mortality of large species so that populations are declining, and if government plans to introduce large dams are implemented, the ecology of the region will be catastrophically affected. The Idu, and neighbouring peoples such as the Tawra and Kman, preserve the structures of social interactions with the forest which must once have been widespread throughout the region.

Keywords; Idu; hunting; Arunachal Pradesh

1. Introduction: hunting, forests and biodiversity in SE Asia

Until recent times, the tropical forests of SE Asia were characterised by a highly biodiverse fauna. The reports in recent years of unknown species being described (for example the saola antelope in Vietnam [1995] or the Laotian rock rat, *Laonastes* [2005]) suggests that even now they are only partially known. However, modern economic pressures have meant that forests are under attack almost everywhere. Industrial logging companies have accessed the forests of Cambodia and Laos by barely legal means, feeding the desire of the developed world for tropical hardwood. The indirect impact of this has been the decline of many animal species, especially large mammals, which are most easily hunted. A parallel issue has been the spread of the gun. Until the 1950s, most hunters sought their prey with traditional means, typically bows, traps, spears, crossbows and arrows, often poisoned. The shotgun now predominates in many areas and more sophisticated rifles are also spreading.

Unfortunately, while conservation areas have been declared in the various countries throughout the region, enforcement remains weak. This has combined with the growing economic power of China and the increased disposable income of the new middle classes. The desire for prestigious medicines made from animal parts (tiger-bone, rhino-horn, bear bile) has encouraged traders to seek new sources of supply. This has impacted heavily on African wildlife, and also on adjacent countries in SE Asia. Laos, with its undisturbed forests and low population density, has been particularly affected.

A region which remains well-preserved is the tropical forests of Arunachal Pradesh. There are several reasons for this, the most important of which is the highly dissected terrain. The region is cut through with deep river valleys, and mountain slopes which descend rapidly leaving very few areas of flat land to establish homesteads and settlements. At the same time, the region is subject to earthquakes, landslides and other types of geomorphological instability, leading to periodic floods. This has acted as a major deterrent to the buildup of high population densities, despite the potentially rich fauna and flora. Indigenous populations remain small and highly scattered, responding to the potential risks.

At the same time, entirely by chance, political friction between India and China and the fractious situation in Tibet has meant that the border has long been closed. A supposed Indo-China 'war' in 1960, in reality more like a border skirmish, has meant that normal commercial traffic between the two countries does not operate, although many ethnic groups have cross-border distributions. Prior to this, local populations were intermediaries in a trade connecting Tibet and the valley of the Brahmaputra in Assam. Irritating as the closure of the border must be, especially to divided peoples, it has had one beneficial effect, the preservation of wildlife from the demands of Chinese animal parts traders.

As a consequence, populations in this region live with wildlife in a fashion which has long disappeared through much of SE Asia. The elusive animals in the typical field guides, often a frustration to the ethnozoologist, are known to hunters, who can describe their habits and distribution. At the same time, hunting is far from being simply an economic activity, as it is surrounded by a complex network of ritual prohibitions and placatory ceremonies. Given that these are still 'live' to hunters in this part of Arunachal Pradesh, it seems worthwhile describing these before they give way entirely to a culture of packaged foods which seems to be rapidly enveloping other parts of India. This paper¹ describes the traditional hunting culture of the Idu, a people of the Dibang River Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, together with an account of how it is adapting to the present situation.

For comparative data on hunting practice, researchers are often required to refer to papers on Central Africa and Amazonia, because the descriptive material in SE Asia is so weak. The literature on Arunachal Pradesh is essentially that of a single author, Ambika Aiyadurai (2007, 2009, 2011), Aiyadurai et al. (2010). This approach has valuable insights, but it is ultimately oriented towards conservation. This is no bad goal in

¹ The fieldwork on which this paper is based was undertaken in Arunachal Pradesh in February-March 2015, December-January 2015-2016 and January-February 2017. I am most grateful for Dr. Mite Linggi and the Idu Language Development Committee for working with me on transcriptions and interviews. I would like to thank all the individuals for their views and information.

itself, but hunting is part of a nexus that includes attitudes to the environment and the deities which abound in it.

2. Physical environment

2.1 Vegetation

The forests in the Mishmi area are classified as Northern Tropical semi-evergreen forest and Assam sub-tropical pine forest and in the higher altitudes, East Himalayan sub-alpine birch/fir forest (Champion & Seth 1968). Table 1 shows the main named zones graded by approximate altitude and characteristic species.

Table 1. Vegetation zones by altitude

Nomenclature		Altitude	Characteristic species
Tropical Semi Ever Green		Alluvial Plains	<i>Amoora wallichii</i> , <i>Pterospermum acerifolium</i> , <i>Stereospermum chelonoides</i> , <i>Altingia excelsa</i> .
Tropical Ever Green		<610 m.	<i>Kayea assamica</i> , <i>Mesua ferrea</i> , <i>Dysoxylum procerum</i> , <i>Echnocarpus sp</i>
Tropical Wet Ever Green		Up to 900 m.	<i>Phoebe paniculata</i> , <i>Actinodaphne obovata</i> , <i>Alnus nepalensis</i> , <i>Phoebe attenuata</i> .
Sub Tropical broad leaved		Up to 900-1900 m.	<i>Bombax ceiba</i> , <i>Lagerstroemia parviflora</i> , <i>Terminalia bellirica</i> , <i>Sterculia villosa</i> .
Sub Tropical Pine		1000-1800 m.	<i>Pinus Roxburghii</i> , <i>Pinus wallichiana</i> and <i>Pinus merkusii</i> .
Wet Temperate Forests		1800-2750 m.	<i>Quercus lamellosa</i> , <i>Quercus sp.</i> <i>Castanopsis indica</i> , <i>Acer hookeri</i> .
Mixed Coniferous Forests		2300-3350 m.	<i>Abies sp.</i> <i>Tsuga dumosa</i> .
Alpine		3000-5500 m.	<i>Rhododendron</i> , <i>Primula</i> , <i>Saussaurea</i> , <i>Saxifraga</i>
Bamboo and cane brakes		Various	<i>Bambusa pallida</i> , <i>Schizostachyum polymorphum</i> , <i>Bambusa tulda</i> , <i>Dendrocalamus hamiltonii</i>

Source: Adapted from data supplied by Arunachal Forest Department

Arunachal Pradesh represents a major region of *Musa* diversity, apart from domestic species, a large variety of wild species are used by local populations. The steep descent from the Tibetan Plateau and the forceful floods following the snowmelt in spring create seasonal watercourses and significant erosion, apart from human activity.

2.2 Fauna

The fauna of northeast Arunachal Pradesh is typical of the region between Bhutan and Yunnan, and like the forests, highly diverse. However, as a variety of species bear the name ‘Mishmi’ (flying squirrel, macaque, takin) this area may well be a focus of endemic species, due to its inaccessibility. The main accounts. of the mammals are Choudhury (2013) and Menon (2014). Grewal *et al.* (2017) is a photographic field guide to Indian birds with recent high quality images. Ahmed *et al.* (2009) and Purkayastha (2013) are field guides to reptiles and amphibians. Insects are poorly covered and the nearest approach is the survey of the Kantha Tiger reserve (). The abundant species of freshwater fish are described in xx.

Notable in the Mishmi area are four major cats species, tiger, leopard, clouded leopard and snow leopard and also rare lesser feline species like the Golden Cat and marbled cat. Seven species of primates i.e. Hoolock Gibbon, Slow Loris, Assamese Macaque, stump-tailed macaque and Capped Langur also occur. All three goat antelopes, the serow, goral and takin are found. Over 500 bird species inhabit Arunachal Pradesh including some endangered and endemic ones like, white winged wood duck, Slater’s Monal, Temmincks Tragopan, black necked crane, Mishmi wren and Bengal florican.

2.3 Geomorphology

Arunachal Pradesh is shaped like a hook, curling around the valley of the Brahmaputra, and it is marked throughout by sharply dissected terrain, falling rapidly from the Tibetan Plateau to the river basin (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The snowmelt from the Plateau has carved a series of deep river valleys,

which are dry and filled with rocks for most of the year. Floods tend to come very suddenly, often carrying away even quite strongly built bridges.

The dissection of the terrain is reflected in its geomorphological instability, since the Himalayas, caused by the friction of two continental plates are continuing to form. Earthquakes are a regular occurrence throughout this region. Records of highly destructive earthquakes go back at least to 1548 (Reddy & Nagabhushanam 2009) and the Idu area was struck by an 8.6 magnitude in 1950, known as the Assam–Tibet or Medog earthquake when thousands were killed. A combination of this earthquake, the subsequent flood and the creation of the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary has caused a shift of the population to the plains and lower levels. Evidence of landslides marks the steep cliffs everywhere and these are not caused by deforestation as elsewhere.

3. Idu society

3.1 Ethnography

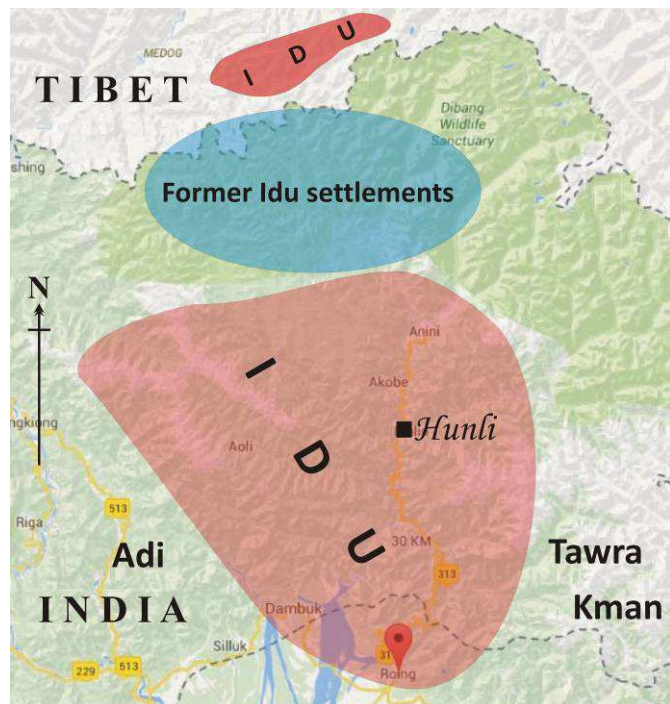
The earliest discussion of Idu social life is the brief section in Dalton (1872) which covers their social organisation, religion and ‘warlike propensities’. Two short monographs describe the social and material life of the Idu, Baruah (1960) and Bhattacharjee (1983) both of which reflect long residence in the Dibang area. Baruah is of particular interest, since although it was researched in the period after the earthquake of 1950, it reflects a period when the Idu still had very little interaction with the outside world. Both describe the Idu relation to the world of the spirits in some detail, although there are a number of errors. It may be assumed that this paper has cross-checked with both these sources and represents the findings of recent fieldwork.

Needless to say, things have moved along since these descriptions; Baruah in particular reflects the situation more than sixty years ago. Idu have increasingly moved to the plains, and have encountered other lifestyles. The proximity of the administrative centres and more recently the Border Roads Organisation workcamps have brought a mixture of Bengalis, Assamese and others to the area. Roing was also chosen for Nepali resettlement and many Idu now speak some Nepali. Idu lifestyle has been much affected by these experiences. The longhouses are gradually disappearing in favour of modern cement-block houses, and modern dress has displaced traditional dress except for festivals. Only the older generation are seen with the straight fringe haircut seen in earlier monographs, a distinctive style responsible for one of the earlier names for the Idu, Chulikata. Despite this, there is a strong argument that Idu have remained quite conservative in terms of social culture and religious adherence.

The Idu are subsistence farmers, and depend on vegetative crops such as taro, bananas and yams, as well as cereals including foxtail and finger millets, sorghum and Job’s tears. Rice is now an important part of the diet but this is relatively recent. The richness of the wild environment ensures that a significant proportion of protein still comes from wild resources and large and small mammals and fish are regularly consumed.

A social anthropologist writing in the 1930s would certainly have characterised Idu as a segmentary lineage society. Strongly acephalous, they are divided into paired clans, and these were the basis for residence and warfare, far into the colonial era. Marital partners were formerly from preferred clans, although these rules have largely broken down in favour of free choice. Polygyny was strongly preferred in the past, and was

Map 1. Idu territory in India and Tibet



Key: INDIA Nation State
Adi Ethnic group
■ Idu settlement
----- International boundary
Red Idu villages

realised in a longhouse system, where wives were provided with individual hearths and family space strung along communal corridors. Cooper (1873: 189-190) described this system quite accurately and it has not changed markedly in the past century and a half. These structures remain widespread in rural areas.

The aspect of Idu culture which persists and could accurately be described as the social glue which keeps their society coherent, is a strong respect for the practice of shamanistic religion. World religions², typically Christianity and Buddhism, still have few adherents in this area. Both for healing and the performance of the complex rituals involved propitiating *khānyū* spirits, easing the passage of the soul after death and healing the sick, requires the ministrations of the *igu*, ritual specialists. There is no evidence that the importance of these is diminishing, or that new individuals are not continuing the tradition.

3.2 Language

The Idu language is poorly known. The earliest reference is in Brown (1837). The only significant publications on Idu from the Indian side are the pre-linguistic Talukdar (1962), Jaten Pulu (1978) and Jimi Pulu (2002a,b). Idu has also been described from the Chinese side [under the name Lhoba], notably in Ouyang (1985), Sun et al. (1991), Sun (1999). A new phonology has been prepared in consultation with the Idu language committee project for a practical orthography³. In the transcriptions in this paper, phonetic characters have their IPA values, except;

j	is written as	y
h	following any consonant	aspiration
/ə/	is retracted schwa	ɘ
long vowels	are written as	doubled vowel

Idu has three level tones, marked as follows;

High-	´
Mid	-
Low	`

A macron (¯) over a vowel is thus mid-tone and not length. Nasalisation is common in Idu and marked over the vowel in combination with tone.

4. Hunting technologies

4.1 Traps and snares

The Idu have a wide range of traps and snares. Some these have now disappeared, such as the large pit traps, but others are in regular use. Aiyadurai (2007) illustrates a number of these traps. Table 2 lists the main traps used by hunters with the species they are intended to catch.

² Hinduism has a strong presence among migrants and also government support since the centrally-funded Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed Hindu shrines in many places. But Idu converts are few.

³ This was presented in Roing on the 7th January, 2018, and was followed by lengthy discussion. Several documents outlining details of the phonology are available on my academia.edu pages.

Table 2. Idu animal traps

Idu	Description	Comment
àtòkrè	baited sprung snare	smaller animals
àpàmbrá	small loop trap (Hills)	birds, porcupine, civet, jungle cat, marten
mbō	spiked pit trap	any large species. No longer in use
ākṛēmbrá	large loop trap (Plains)	slightly larger animals
kòmbrá	sprung trap	dangerous to passersby
llā	spear trap	out of use
gèrī	bowed, baited trap	rats and mice
ndēprā	deadfall trap	any size animals
àdrápō	made from two half bamboos, sprung trap	hung in trees, birds, squirrels

Photo 1 shows a typical Idu loop-trap or sprung snare, used to catch small animals. Bird-liming is known among the Tani and east of Idu, but not apparently used here.

Aiyadurai (2011) describes and illustrates some very similar traps for birds and small animals among the Meyor, west of the Idu. She notes the use of feathers for fans and other decorative purposes; this does not seem to be of great importance among the Idu.

Photo 1. Idu loop trap



Source: Author photo

4.2 Poisoned arrows and guns

Prior to the spread of the gun, the bow and arrow was the key technology of Idu hunters. Photo 2 shows a typical Idu quiver with the small arrows, poisoned with aconite, *Aconitum ferox*, *mṛāmbō*, which grows above the snowline, and its collection was partly ritualised. Older hunters can still hunt with the bow and arrow but few do so today. The appearance of the gun is remembered, rightly or wrongly as following the Indo-Chinese war in 1962. Most hunters today have shotguns and ammunition is sold in shops on the high street in larger centres such as Itanagar, which seems to contradict the hunting ban supposedly in place.

and its collection was partly ritualised. Older

Photo 2. Idu quiver with arrows



Source: Author photo

5. Commercial and therapeutic aspects of hunting

Hunters among the Idu are self-selected, and do not form a hereditary profession or a closed group. Hunting among the Idu was primarily for subsistence, and presumably it was also a certain amount of fun. The complex restrictions on hunting were a reflection of Idu relations with the unseen world. However, the Idu have always been enthusiastic traders, and a few products were and are hunted for sale.

The most important of these is the musk deer, hunted for the musk which remains much in demand in China and Tibet. The musk deer lives in the high mountains and hunters would spend as much as a month every year seeking it. Although hunters went in groups and established a collective camp, they would hunt individually, and keep their own kills. Formerly these expeditions were inter-related with the collection of aconite, *mṛāmbō*, which was an essential arrow-poison. However, the spread of the gun has caused aconite collection to tail off. Brideprice in smoked meat is not practised in Idu, in contrast to their neighbours to the west, the Tani groups, who place a high value on smoked flying squirrel. However, smoked wild meat, especially fowls, is presented during the Rē festival. The guests (relatives of the host) present, money, *àgàtè*, and in return the host presents smoked fish, *ànjākù*, or fowl, along with *èmetà*, money in return (which goes only to the relatives of mother and wife; i.e. affinal relatives).

The other significant species with a commercial value was the bear, principally the Asiatic bear, *āhū rā*. The bile from the gall bladder, *imū*, was and is much sought as a medicine in China, and hunters sold the fur and the gall to traders. This trade is in theory now forbidden. Bear fat was a common ingredient in medicines for fever and stomachache and was also applied to fresh wounds. In general, however, the Idu did not place much emphasis on animal parts for medical use, preferring herbs or the ministrations of the *īgū*. Aiyadurai (2007) in a survey of market prices for wild meat in the mid 2000s, shows that it was then cheaper than domestic animals. This is no longer the case, as more species become rarer and production of meat for the urban market more effective.

6. Hunters and the world of the spirits

6.1 Altitude and control by deities

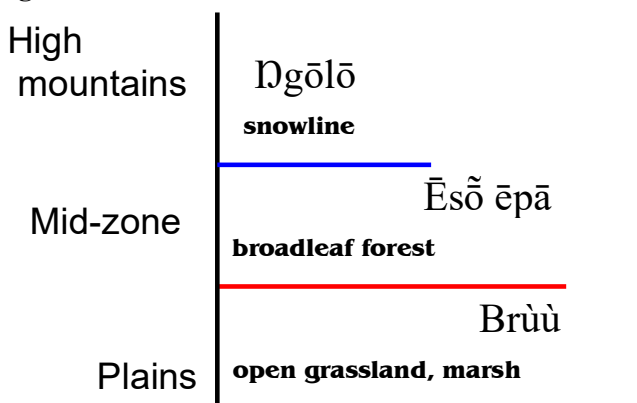
A striking aspect of the environment as experienced by the Idu is the diversity of ecozones it encompasses. Idu territory stretches from tropical rainforest to snowy peaks and the way between them is steep, quite literally a narrow road to the deep north. The different altitudes reflect both vegetation and faunal biotas and each has a responsible deity, as shown in Table 3;

Table 3. Ecozonal deities among the Idu

Deity	Responsibility
Ŋgōlō	Highlands, usually above the snowline
Ēsō ēpā	Middle levels, broadleaf forest
Brùù	Rivers and lakes, effectively plains, although also lakes in other zones

Figure 1 represents this information as a graphic, showing the importance of vertical hierarchy.

Figure 1. The vertical domains of the Idu ecozonal deities



Each zone has its particular characteristics in terms of perils which may cause fatalities, but the high mountain zone, controlled by Ŋgōlō, also determines a class of animals, *mīsū*, which it is dangerous to kill.

6.2 The concept of *mīsū*

Ŋgōlō, the deity of the upper altitudes, is said to ‘look after’ certain species, which therefore must not be killed. This concept of forbidden species is known as *mīsū*. Not all *mīsū* species are owned by a deity; the king cobra is owned by Brùù and the other snakes are outside the system. At least three animals in the list have semi-mythical characteristics, the snakes *bwèkà* and *mànù* and the bird *āmrā kūtūlūū*. An oddity of this is that the animals are not necessarily characteristic of the region of permanent snow. They include the following species shown in Table 4;

Table 4. Forbidden, *mīsū*, species recognised by Idu

English	Latin	Ídū	Comment
Mammals			

Roger Blench Hunting among the Idu Circulated for comment

English	Latin	Ídū	Comment
marble cat	<i>Pardofelis marmorata</i>	ācāṅgú	
Bengal slow loris	<i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>	álikòpā	
hoolock	<i>Hoolock leuconedys</i>	àmē ló	
hoolock	<i>Hoolock leuconedys</i>	àmē pá	
tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	āmṛā	
civet, Himalayan	<i>Paguma larvata</i>	èphá	
palm		mitsī	
? common palm	<i>Paradoxurus</i>	èphá	
civet	<i>hermaphroditus</i>	nōgōrō	
Snakes			
king cobra	<i>Ophiophagus hannah</i>	bwèká	This snake exceptionally belongs to Brùù unlike other snakes and is equally a spirit which can drag you to your death.
monocled cobra	<i>Naja kaouthia</i>	àjū	
Indian cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>	èkáyí	
McLelland's coral snake	<i>Sinomicrurus maclellandi</i>	àprū àlá	
banded krait snake sp.	<i>Bungarus fasciatus</i> Not identifiable	àprū krú mànù	possibly includes other kraits A snake with semi-mythical status living in plains areas, said to have two tails. 'It has not been seen for a long time.'

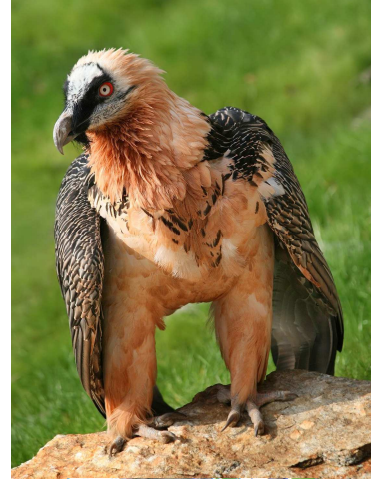
English	Latin	Ídū	Comment
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Birds

Himalayan owl	wood	<i>Strix nivicolum</i>	āmṛā kūtūlū	lit. tiger + rounded.
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bearded vulture		<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	pṛā lí	
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spot-bellied owl	eagle	<i>Bubo nipalensis</i>	īcītú	
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English	Latin	Ídū	Comment
collared scops owl	<i>Otus billetia</i>	èphōlō	
Asian barred owl	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	ēkōlō	

Mammal identifications from Choudhury (2013) and Menon (2014). Snake identifications from Purkayastha (2013). Idu bird identifications from Grewal et al. (2017) and Choudhury (2006).

Anyone killing a *misū* species brings not only himself but his household and possibly his entire clan into danger. The ritual *misū àyù* must be performed by the *īgù*. Curiously, however, not all species are equally threatening. In the case of the accidental killing of the snakes *bwèkà*, *àjū* and *mànù* a ritual called *yúróbà* is performed, which involves the scattering of *bà*, the yeast used in fermentation of local beer. However, if one of the *àprū* species is killed, it is enough to throw it in the jungle. Killing *misū* birds is not regarded as equally serious, although it can bring bad luck to the household, and the carcass must be thrown into the jungle.

A curious aspect of *misū* prohibitions is that they are public acts. If you are known to have transgressed, then performance of the purifying ceremonies is essential. However, it seems that you can ‘get away’ with ignoring these obligations if no-one else knows you have killed the animal. For example, a hunter who kills a tiger by accident⁴, has to undergo the time-consuming and expensive *tāmāmà* ceremony. However, if no-one else knows about it, he can spend five days in the forest and if it remains a secret, the dangers inherent in its *misū* status will be eliminated.

6.3 Killing animals which are not *misū*

Some animals are not *misū*, but are still dangerous if hunted and require subsequent purification. The most important of these is the takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*). The meat of this animal is appreciated but the hunter must call the *īgù* and perform *àphù*. This requires the following six steps of prayer and sacrifice (Table 5);

⁴ It might be asked how you could kill a tiger ‘by accident’, but until recently, Idu hunters set spiked pit-traps to catch large animals such as the takin. This has largely stopped because of the danger to people, but such devices could also trap tigers.

Table 5. Steps of the àphù ritual

Idu	Gloss
ācīnyī	
ākóná àphù	
īyīpá nālī	
ātālū	
ēmbrownà	
āmúnyì c ^h ù	

A set of birds which are not *mísū*, are nonetheless believed to belong to Ɖgōlō and it is a dangerous act to kill them. These are;

Table 6. Birds which belong to Ɖgōlō

Idu	English	Latin
pwēdé	peacock	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
pwétà	grey nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>
pōkō	hill partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>
cëndá	Himalayan monal	<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>

If these are killed, the hunter must undergo purification, *ènā*, which involves;

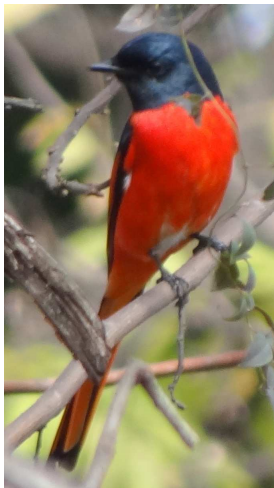
- a) Not eating certain vegetables, onions and mushrooms
- b) Not having sexual contact with women
- c) Not washing your clothes

Photo 3. Tibetan partridge, *pōkō*,



For the Tibetan partridge, *pōkō*, *Perdix hodgsoniae* (Photo 3), this is only observed in the Itu valley and only for 24 hours. However, for the other species, it is more complicated. If the event happened in the Dri valley, i.e. high up, the prohibitions must be observed for a month, in the broadleaf mid-level forests for five days, and in the plain for just 24 hours. As elsewhere, altitude constitutes the psychic geography of sacredness; the closer to the

Photo 5. *pwīshù*, the long-tailed minivet



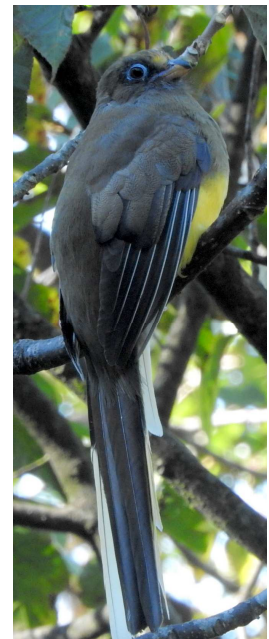
snowline, the more potentially dangerous the transgressive act.

Photo 6. *pwēkà*, the grey treepie



A slightly more folkloric prohibition attaches to two birds, *pwēkà*, the grey treepie, *Dendrocitta formosae* (Photo 6) and *prātú*, Ward's trogon, *Harpactes wardi*, which cannot be eaten by women, as they are the wives of the culture-

Photo 4. *prātú*, Ward's trogon



Another bird which should not be killed is *pwīshù*, the long-tailed minivet (Photo 5), *Pericrocotus ethologus*, as it belongs to the *khānyū*.

hero, *Ānó*, in stories.

6.4 Going on a hunt

A hunt is not undertaken lightly, because it is a potentially dangerous activity. The night before a hunter goes out, the *īgù* performs a ceremony known as *àbù trū*, which involves the sacrifice of a chicken and the use of the *èkā* leaf. The hunter must not eat mushrooms or onions, must not have sex with his wife and must not tell outsiders he is going hunting. If the hunting expedition is in the high altitude zone, hunting for musk deer, then further restrictions are imposed. Hunters must accept any food that is offered to them, and not wash their face. Most importantly, however, they must not speak in ordinary Idu, but use a special language, described in §7.

6.5 The trophy wall

An aspect of Idu, and indeed Mishmi domestic space which has struck visitors since the earliest period is the trophy wall, the long

Photo 8. Trophy wall in Ithili



Source: Author photo

reminded. Present-day hunters usually hang their own skulls in a section apart, to underline their individual prowess. The wall contains not only skulls, but also hunting gear, including traps, bows and arrows, and the bamboo tubes full of dried blood prepared as part of sacrifices. The Idu are very attached to these skulls and they are often moved to semi-modernised houses, cleaned of the soot and cobwebs and hung on rather antiseptic walls.

7. Hunters' speech register

A feature of hunting among all three Mishmi groups is the use of a special language or register, during hunting. Sun (1999) first drew attention to this among the Daruang [i.e. the Tawra] but it is used in all three groups and also the neighbouring Meyor in the Walong area. The underlying idea is that animals will be warned by the use of everyday speech (*àṅá'liyā*) and so circumlocutions are used. Among the Tawra and Kman, the terms for many everyday lexical items are replaced by special forms. This seems to be less common among the Idu, where the names of animals are the main substitutions. The following names have been recorded (Table 7);

Photo 7. Hunter dressed for hunting expedition, Ithili



Source: Author photo

corridor which connects the hearths of individual wives and which is hung with the skulls of hunted and sacrificed animals (Photo 8). These include mithuns and pigs, which are domestic, but nonetheless, a wide array of species are found there. Cooper (1873:) suggests that the skulls of tigers are hung on these walls, but this must be a mistake, since tigers are *mīsū*, and this would be prohibited. The skulls themselves may go back several centuries and the names of ancestors who hunted the animals are

Table 7. Animal names in hunters' register

English	Idu	Comment
marble cat	ācāṅgú	<i>ṅu apwə</i> (also applied to <i>ākōkó</i>)
bear, generic	āhū	<i>āmbɾè nǰòótò</i> wild huge and awkward (walks from side to side). Plains term <i>damba hū</i> (Hill term)
yellow-throated marten	ākōkó	<i>ṅu apwə</i> (also applied to <i>ācāṅgú</i>)
takin, Mishmi	ākrū	<i>āmbɾè kâci</i> animal + big
deer, Alpine musk	àlà	<i>āmbéshù</i> 'small animal'
monkey, generic but usually macaque	āmē	<i>tambre</i> i.e. 'meat'
red goral	āmí	<i>àjùshù</i> deep and high gorge small (Plains) <i>tambre mra aci, aju tambre</i> (Hills)
tiger	āmṛā	<i>āṅgócì</i> 'from the highlands' <i>āṅgó</i> montane region. (Plains) <i>aṅgo kūyi</i> (Hill)
wild pig	āmṵé	<i>enāmbòn dī</i> nose + sharp (Plains) <i>asopra</i> (Hills)
serow	māāy	<i>āmādrò</i> + split in two (because it has a divided hoof).
deer, generic but refers usually to the barking deer	mānjō	<i>āphù áci</i> from the field (deer come and eat crops in the night) (Plains) <i>manjo pi ami mweya</i> (Hills)

8. Conclusions

The Idu people of Arunachal Pradesh still inhabit a rich and biodiverse environment which has been preserved from the major threats to SE Asian forests, by a fortunate combination of circumstances. Hunting remains a significant element in subsistence, especially in the more mountainous regions. The killing of animals is not simply an economic activity but has a significant spiritual component, including the concept of *mīsū*, of tabooed species. Even species which do not fall under the *mīsū* interdiction, such as the takin, require the hunter to be ritually purified. However, the introduction of the gun has increased the mortality of large species so that populations are declining, and if government plans to introduce large dams are implemented, the ecology of the region will be catastrophically affected. The Idu, and neighbouring peoples such as the Tawra and Kman, preserve structures of social and spiritual interactions with the forest which must once have been widespread throughout the region.

Appendix 1. Idu names of mammals

The following list of identifications is based on Choudhury (2013) and Menon (2014). The entries shaded red are *mīsū* species. Identifications are of course provisional.

H. Hunters' name

P. Priests' name

Idu	English	Latin	Comment
ācāṅgú	marble cat	<i>Pardofelis marmorata</i>	H. <i>ṅu apwə</i> (also applied to <i>ākōkó</i>) P. <i>apuṅgu apolo</i> any wild cat that climbs trees Also has the epithet <i>ācāpī</i> 'thief' a metaphorical name because it steals chickens
àdà	squirrel, general		
àdàkà	squirrel, Himalayan striped	<i>Tamiops maclellandi</i>	
àdàmà	squirrel, Pallas'	<i>Callioscurus</i>	

Idu	English	Latin	Comment
àdàngò	squirrel, Himalayan	<i>erythraeus</i>	
āgrīprà	hoary-bellied flying squirrel, Gray's giant	<i>Callioscurus</i> <i>pygerythrus</i> <i>Petaurista nobilis</i>	
àgūnū	rat sp.		small, white chest, stays around house
àhōngō	pencil-tailed tree mouse [?]	<i>Chiropodomys</i> <i>gliroides</i>	white chest, long tail, found in jungle
āhū	bear, generic		H. <i>àmbrè njòtò</i> wild huge and awkward (walks from side to side). Plains term H. <i>damba hū</i> (Hill term) P. <i>hulu do lo coyi</i>
āhū lū	binturong, bearcat	<i>Arctictis binturong</i>	
āhū kolo	sloth bear		The name comes because it mainly eats the <i>kolo</i> plant Also <i>āhū aṛoka</i>
āhū rā	Asiatic black bear	<i>Ursus thibetanus</i>	
āhū trò	sun-bear	<i>Helarctos malayanus</i>	
àkēngō	rat sp.		small, white chest
àkhà	squirrel, black giant	<i>Ratufa bicolor</i>	
ākōkó	yellow-throated marten	<i>Martis flavigula</i>	H. <i>ṇu apwə</i> (also applied to <i>ācāngú</i>)
ākūrū	takin, Mishmi	<i>Budorcas taxicolor</i> <i>taxicolor</i>	H. <i>àmbrè kàci</i> animal + big P. <i>lemu dole mayi</i>
àkùsōrō	pangolin, Chinese	<i>Manis pentadactyla</i>	
àlà	deer, Alpine musk	<i>Moschus chrysogaster</i>	H. <i>ámbéshù</i> 'small animal'
ālàcí	flying squirrel, particoloured	<i>Hylopetes alboniger</i>	
ālī	porcupine, brush-tailed	<i>Atherurus macrourus</i>	
alikopa	Bengal slow loris	<i>Loris lydekkerianus</i>	Also kalikopa
àmbrē àthà	animal, generic		
āmē	monkey, generic but usually macaque		H. <i>tambre</i> i.e. 'meat'
āmē krū	monkey, small	<i>Macaca assamensis</i> <i>subsp. ?</i>	et. 'monkey + female' ?
āmē lè	? the Arunachal macaque	<i>Macaca munzala ?</i>	? the Arunachal macaque
àmē ló	hoolock	<i>Hoolock leuconedys</i>	
àmē pá	hoolock	<i>Hoolock leuconedys</i>	
āmí	red goral	<i>Naemorbedus baileyi</i>	H. <i>àjùshù</i> deep and high gorge small (Plains) H. <i>tambre mra aci, aju tambré</i> (Hills)
āmṛā	tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	H. <i>àngócì</i> 'from the highlands' <i>àngó</i> montane region. (Plains) H. <i>àngo kūyi</i> (Hill) P. <i>drūū do kàci</i> covers tigers plus leopards
āmṛā	felid sp.		in the early morning makes the noise <i>phólōlō</i>
àphùngō			
àphólō			
āmṛā āṛūlī	leopard cat	<i>Prionailurus</i> <i>bengalensis</i>	
kato	civet, small Indian	<i>Viverricula indica</i>	
āmṛā kècì	leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	et. 'tiger + xx'

Idu	English	Latin	Comment
āmṵé	wild pig	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	H. <i>enàmbòn dì</i> nose + sharp (Plains) H. <i>asopra</i> (Hills) P. <i>ati do ayayi</i>
āmṵé ālīprù	wild pig, boar, ash-coloured	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	
āmṵé ēkhōlō	wild pig, smaller	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	
āmṵé gōrō	wild pig, smaller	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	
ànūcé	squirrel, small, red	?	
āpī tūrumbú	mole, white-tailed	<i>Parascaptor leucura</i>	Also āpīmbú
āpīcī	shrew, Hodgson's brown-toothed	<i>Soriculus caudatus</i>	
āprūprú	dhole, wild dog	<i>Cuon alpinus</i>	
āpùṅgō	marble cat, golden cat	<i>Catopuma temminckii</i> ,	
āṛ`ṛṵ	otter, Asian small-clawed	<i>Aonyx cinerea</i>	small, comes in pairs
āṛ`ṛṵ gā	otter, Eurasian	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	comes in groups, bigger
āṛṵ	hoary bamboo rat, poss. bay bamboo rat	<i>Rhizomys pruinosus</i> ,	also the name of a bamboo sp.
		<i>Cannomys badius</i>	
àsā ēmāsù	rat, Indian long-tailed	<i>Vandeleuria oleracea</i>	
àsō	rat sp.		tip of tail is white, lives in jungle
āsō	porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>	
ātā	elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	P. <i>Inyi ambrume aka la baci</i> = name of clan granary fall down
ātālā	elephant, large male, tusk	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	
àyí mīnjīnī	red panda	<i>Ailurus fulgens</i>	
àyókò	rat sp.		largest rat, lives in rocky area
bāmbū	golden jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	also <i>māmbū</i> cf. Kman <i>māmbòw</i> 'fox'
cīrù	hare, Indian	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>	
d ^r rò	tiger, large male		
èphá mītsī	civet, Himalayan palm	<i>Paguma larvata</i>	
èphá nōgōrō	? common palm civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>	
ètōphá	flying squirrel, red giant	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>	
ībīcī	mountain weasel	<i>Mustela altaica</i>	
ībījù	pika, large-eared	<i>Ochotona macrotis</i>	
ìṛṅgō	yellow-bellied weasel	<i>Mustela kathiah</i>	
jāmī	yak	<i>Bos gruniens</i>	
kācīṅgō	house mouse	<i>Mus musculus</i>	
kāhō	long-tailed field mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	
kāmṵē	flying squirrel, Mishmi	<i>Petaurista mishmiensis</i>	
kāp ^h ū	bat, any		
kāp ^h ū àndró	flying fox, generic		
kātō	civet, Indian	<i>Viverra zibetha</i>	
kàcì mànū	leopard, clouded	<i>Neofelis nebulosa</i>	et. 'leopard + xx'
māy	serow	<i>Capricornis thar</i>	H. <i>àmàdrò</i> + split in two (because it has a divided hoof). P. <i>anu do ekayi serow</i> and any deer manjo
māy àdásù	serow, brownish, smaller	<i>Capricornis sp.</i>	probably just a local colour type
mācō	deer, sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>	
mācō dùmsú	deer, spotted	<i>Axis axis</i>	also <i>ràgúnā</i> < Assamese
màjì kṛáá	buffalo, wild	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>	

Idu	English	Latin	Comment
mālōyā	rhino, greater one-horned	<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>	
mānjō	deer, generic but refers usually to the barking deer		H. <i>àphù áci</i> from the field (deer come and eat crops in the night) (Plains) H. <i>manjo pi ami mweya</i> (Hills)
mānjō ākūmà	deer, barking, black	<i>Muntiacus putaoensis</i>	This is a probable resident of Arunachal Pradesh
mānjō èmàsù	deer, barking red	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	
mānjō ìmbù	deer, half-black, half red	<i>Muntiacus gongshanensis</i>	This is a probable resident of Arunachal Pradesh
sāpūú	yak	<i>Bos gruniens</i>	'mithun + lama' i.e. Tibetan mithun

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