Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh

Baiju.D., Ph.D. Research Scholar
Eldho Joy E., Ph.D. Research Scholar
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Abstract

In this paper the authors describe the linguistic and cultural specialities of a minority tribal community named **Aka Koro** or **Koro** in the East and West Kameng districts of the western end of Arunachal Pradesh, India. The Koro belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages and this article explores Aka Koro's mythological concept about the Creation of the Universe. Here the researchers describe some of the most powerful beliefs and myths related to this indigenous community. The study also shows that the Koro language has some minor lexical similarities with Miji and Hrusso languages which are found in the local language history of Arunachal Pradesh.

Key Words: Aka Koro, Mythology, Concepts, Universe, nyecu in Aka, kannagon nyechu (Genesis beginning of evolution), kannagong nyecho (Creation of universe both living and nonliving)

Introduction

The Aka Koro is an indigenous minority tribe living in Pichang, Kajung, Chichang, Kichang, Kandeya, Sapung, Pochung, and New Sapung in the East Kameng District and Palizi in the West Kameng District in the North Eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh. Most of these villages are situated in the distant and deep forest and mountain ridges with fresh air and snowy climate. These people live in their own huts. In earlier times most people were uneducated and were living with their own traditional way with agriculture, hunting, collecting forest products and fishing, etc. But now they have adopted modern ways of living. The Koro tribe has their own

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Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   18

language, culture, customs, traditions and beliefs in their way of life. Unfortunately Koro's native's language is at the edge of extinction due to globalization and language shifts. Their population is nearly 800 to 1200. They are proud of their unique language, culture, belief, and tradition. The study explains some of the mythological concepts of Aka Koro community and their beliefs in the creation of the world. Aka Koro people believe in the origin of the universe through mythical heroes in several stages.

Review of Literature

In October 6th 2010, a linguistic group of David Harrison, Gregory Anderson, and Ganesh Murmu[1] from the Institute for Endangered Languages in America identified a language which is different from Hrusso Aka named 'Aka Koro'. It is also acknowledged that this is entirely different from all other languages of Arunachal Pradesh linguistically and culturally. Consequently, the *National Geographic* Daily News published an article based on their discovery in 5th October 2010[2.] In 2009 also Lewis M. Paul (2009) mentioned about Hruso languages, which was quoted in Ethnologue[3]. The Ako people have only spoken language.

Methodology

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Authors of this article gathered data directly from field visits and also from publications such as books, magazines and journals and different web pages. The present study goes through different steps. The primary data was collected directly from a very old grandmother who belongs to Aka Koro community in the settlement of Kichang village in the Bana circle of East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. Data was collected through face to face communication and was recorded using an audio device with the help of a bilingual mediator.

This article also examines some of the mythological concepts of the creation of Universe of the indigenous people of the Kichang village of Arunachal Pradesh. In a deeper analysis, one can observe that there exists some mythical concepts related to the origin of Universe in ancient Roman and Hindu Vedic cosmologys about loka or lokas (world).

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **17:11 November 2017**
Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   19

General Mythological Concept of Creation of the Universe

What is Mythology?

Mythology has been discussed differently as the collected myths of a group of people or the study of such myths. Myths are the stories people tell to explain nature, history, and customs. The myth is a feature of every culture. Creation myths are the most common form of myths, usually developing first in oral traditions, and are found throughout human culture, although not necessarily in a historical or literal sense. When identifying the types of myths, it always is presented under divine, nature, afterlife, origin, prestige, etc. Myths are often stories told by a particular people such as Indians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and others. They are especially linked to religious beliefs and rituals. People believe that myths would help to achieve prosperity or to make choices and promote stability in the land.

Many sources for myths have been proposed ranging from a personification of nature or personification of natural phenomena, to truthful or hyperbolic accounts of historical events to explanations of existing rituals. The study of myth began in ancient history.

Indian Mythology of the Universe

World's religions have innumerable thoughts and convictions about the starting point of the universe, including individuals and creatures. Typically these appear as creation accounts in the holy books of the religions concerned. Indian (Hindu) mythological stories include the Samudra Manthan in Sanskrit literature, where it means churning of the ocean and Vishnu Avatar stories from Vedas and Puranas wherein Lord Brahma created the world and how Samudra Manthan formed some important universal things like the moon, wealth, the poison, plants, medicines, animals, etc., and how Lord Vishnu along with Lord Shiva helped in this process.

Mythology of the Creation of Universe

The Aka Koro possesses an entirely different but unique concept about the creation of the Universe, with no mythological comparison in other religions or communities. As per the Aka

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **17:11 November 2017**
Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   20

legend or mythological history, the evolution or the creation of the universe, both living and nonliving come under the following stages:

Six Stages of Evolution

According to the Ako koro, there are six stages of evolution which they call 'miiŋgkhu fece faya'. All the six stages of evolution come in the first and second parts which are named kannagōŋ nyecu and muragōŋ nyecu. The word 'nyecu' in Ako means 'resting stone'. The six stages are listed below for further explanation.

Stage 1: (a) kannagōŋ nyecu → Genesis /beginning of evolution

(b) kannagōŋ nyecu → Creation of universe both living and non-living.

Stage 2: muragōŋ nyecu → Introduction of human being with the universe,

(Complete creation of universe both living and non-living)

Stage 3: dudaru nyecu → Men dominates over the living bird

Stage 4: baipə nyecu →Stage where men dominate over the living herbivorous

-animals

Stage 5: kikoro nyecu → Stage where men dominate over the living carnivorous

animals

Stage 6: uwugo talego → Division of human beings as various tribes and races etc.

Stage 1: kannagōŋ nyecu

In this stage of the creation myth we see that the 'kannagōŋ nyecu', in its beginning was a vast empty vacuum without any shape and size. There was no light and singleness was the only object hovering over darkness. From here it animated an invisible spirit called 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' which was vested with omnipotent invisible power which embodied itself over the dark universe. The 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' is a possessor of all the superpower over the Universe. He first began to create the 'mūŋ muje' which means 'Dark sky' without a shape. Second, he created 'ku-kuje' which means the unshaped Earth. Third, he created "ku -kulapɭam" meaning Earth as – mass body; and fourth, 'mūŋ - muŋlapɭam' (the shape of the sky). Fifth, 'obu' (a rock) was created.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:11 November 2017**
Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   21

Sixth, it was 'ku- kugroŋ' (uneven laud over the mass laud). Seventh, it was mūŋ -muŋroŋ (unsighted part of the sky). Eighth, 'mūŋ muŋnoni' (the greenish part of the sky). Ninth, 'ku – kunoni'(the soil over the rocks).Tenth, 'mūŋ muse' (the sky as a clean sight). Eleventh 'ku. Kuse' (the fertile soil over the earth surface) and Twelfth, 'mene āla' (sun and moon).

After creating this 'mene aala' the light begun to shine over the Universe. The 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' gave the name day part as 'uwugōŋ' or "menebu" and the dark part as 'talegōŋ' or 'mepa' which means 'night'. But still 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' felt unsatisfactory over what he has created. So in the thirteenth step he created four practitioners or deities for judgment over his created Universe – they are:

- muŋ kicāŋ

  For heaven as male

- muŋ kucāŋ

- ku kicāŋ

  For earth for female

- ku kucāŋ

Now with the combination of the above four spirits, 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' created one creature, a huge bird called 'cuṇḍōm puŋgum' or "mete" to divide the earth and sky as a separate object. So it was separated accordingly by the above creature. In the fifteenth step of creation he made the pole star to illuminate the sky.

After this 'sas.lōŋ', all the above mentioned deities commanded upon the earth and sky to expand as much as they can, but they saw that the sky could not expand as much as the earth has expanded. Hence the earth has to pull back or retrench its length equivalent to the sky, resulting in the earth surface becoming unequal everywhere. From here they formed the mountain, hills, plains, valleys and gorge as part of the Earth. In the sixteenth step, 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' created the

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:11 November 2017**
Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   22

mist, called 'supe' from a combination of the rock and soil and so mist was formed and water began to accumulate. Thus water was formed and river stream began to flow.

After completing all these, 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' with animation of the above-created spirits or deities assumed position as 'seʉ. togōŋ' the great benevolent of the Universe. After; 'seʉ. togōŋ', he again created another benevolent protector which is a spirit or deity called 'jōɴki' followed by another spirit called 'inri rād˙ʰ' (evil spirit) and many other Gods and Goddesses.
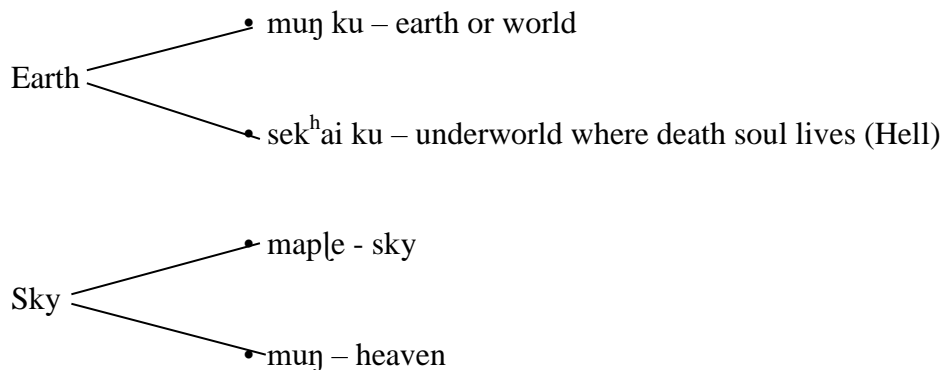
Then he created 'habāŋ' and 'nangraŋ' or (nanu funu), i.e., various living plants. At last the animals, birds, and insects, fishes, etc., were created.

Then 'seʉ. togōŋ' and 'mūŋ.sas.lōŋ' together created the seasons in the following four categories as per the changes of the sun and its temperatures.

They are:

1. sijuŋ yiŋ = uajai ju,gibi → Winter season
2. lelōŋ yiŋ = sujumuku → Spring season
3. jugugam →kale →Summer season
4. sama gam → uku alla →Autumn season

After creating these four seasons, 'seʉ. togōŋ' divided the Earth and sky into two parts:

Earth
- muŋ ku – earth or world
- sekʰai ku – underworld where death soul lives (Hell)

Sky
- mapļe - sky
- muŋ – heaven

Stage 2:- **muragōŋ nyecu**

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Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh 23

In the second stage of 'muragōŋ nyecu' comes the Creation of 'ma' or Woman. After the complete creation of the Universe, 'seu togong', the deities gathered at the place called 'mung rulum'/ Khu rulum, to discuss the creation of human being which will be an extraordinary creature on the Earth. In the first instance, they evoked their power of the spirit upon a seed called "sokoya bem", and sowed the seed on the above-accumulated water (lake) by enchanting the following Mantra:

ciŋgum kannagōŋ

narbāŋ kannagōŋ

ko seʉ de togōŋ de

jōŋkorelo sukugāŋ bem

dem lelo ruŋde

jira miji pipe fomo, ti sokuyāŋ

bem nu cinoro , aganoro

bemu de ce dem gedelo

jira sas.lōŋ , mijji basḷa puŋde

It was believed that if there was possibility of creating a human being the above 'sokuga bem' seed would sprout and would be well germinated. That would indicate the possibility of existence on Earth by chanting the Mantra. At that time 'seu togōŋ' they sowed the seed on the 'muŋ rulum' the place; the 'seu togōŋ' and all the deities attentively watching over the seed sown. When they saw that, the very seed began to sprout and start germinating for slow growth.

Now 'seu togōŋ' was quite happy on seeing the growing plant. Then with the help of the grown plant 'seu togōŋ' created the first 'sokōŋ sas.lōŋ' which was soulless. The 'sokōŋ sas.lōŋ' was incomplete human being. So in the 2nd instance they again created 'mōRu sas.lōŋ', but that too was not fully formed.

In the 3rd instance 'seu togōŋ' created 'jiRa sas.lōŋ' as a man with soul in it. In the 4th, they created 'mijji sas.lōŋ' as last stage of man, with soul and mind which could act on their own.

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Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   24

As 'miɟɟi sas.lōŋ' was alone, 'seʉ' togōŋ' with the help of soil they created a female body called 'basla' and they united the both creatures as a husband and wife. When 'sas.lōŋ' married 'basla' they were the only living human beings on Earth. They gave birth to two children one female and one male. They were 'palia mōcco'(girl) and 'lugia seʉ' (boy).

When both grew up there was no human being on the Earth to marry her or him. At last, when they grew up and got educated, both elder sister and younger brother got married. It is said that while 'legia seʉ' was catching fish in the river his elder sister 'p ālā mōcco' also followed. When her brother gave his fishes to 'pālia mōcco' (elder sister), unexpectedly his finger fell over the breast of his elder sister. The touching of his finger over the breast had given much excitement to both, resulting in the sexual relationship of the two. After this, both had to marry each other but they had to take permission from their parents. Subsequently, both 'sasloŋ' and basla' called all the benevolent Gods to discuss the subject and found that since there is no human being on the Earth, they can be married peacefully. Thus both were allowed to live as husband and wife. After this, it is said that 'sasloŋ' and 'basla' gave birth to two children as 'masa' the male child and 'mege' the female.

These stories concentrate more on the mythical concepts of creation of the universe, but the traditional myths of Aka Koro are significant in terms of creation of man and woman and the expansion of humanity.

Conclusion

In this article, the authors made an attempt to find out the existing mythological concepts that Aka Koro believe in. These stories explain their concept of creation and evolution of the universe including mankind and their different stages. The study also gives us an idea about their language and linguistic contents. One can observe that the endangered cultural artefacts and linguistic variations remain significant with regard to oral histories, customary melodies, verses and other fine arts. As Steiner observes, 'when a people's language dies their world also dies'. Therefore it is important to understand and acknowledge the oral tradition, cultural values and folktales of the indigenous people and their world.

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Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   25

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Baiju. D.
Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of Linguistics
University of Kerala
Karyavattom Campus
Trivandrum 695581
Kerala
India
baijudkadakkal@gmil.com

Mr. Eldho Joy E.
Ph.D. Research Scholar

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Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh   26

Department of Library and Information Science
University of Kerala
Karyavattom Campus
Trivandrum 695581
Kerala
India
eldhoj@gmail.com

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 17:11 November 2017**
Baiju.D, Ph.D. Research Scholar and Eldho Joy E. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Myths and Beliefs of the Aka Koro Community of Arunachal Pradesh　　　　27