



Indigenous Hunting Practices of the Tagin Tribe: Cultural Wisdom and Changing Practices

Tamar Badi*

Department of Anthropology
Rajiv Gandhi University, Doimukh
Arunachal Pradesh, India
tamarbadi7@gmail.com

Abstract - Indigenous wildlife hunting and trapping have been practiced since the time of Abo Tanyi, revered as the ancestral patriarch of the Tagin tribe and other Tani clans of Arunachal Pradesh. The Tagin, one of the major tribes of the state, have traditionally relied on forests and agriculture to sustain their lives and livelihoods. Hunting, passed down through generations, is not merely a means of procuring meat for the family; it also plays a significant role in supporting the local economy and preserving cultural heritage. However, with the modern tools such as firearms, such traditional practices are leading to a rapid decline within the region. This paper explores the diverse indigenous methods of wildlife hunting and trapping used by the Tagin tribe in the Upper Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. It also highlights the tribe's deep-rooted socio-cultural relationship with animals and their environment. This documentation, both descriptive and visual, serves not only as a tribute to the ecological wisdom of the Tagin people but also as a treasured repository for coming age group considering the traditional hunting traps and tools as a dying culture.

Keywords - Indigenous Hunting, Trapping Practices, Tagin Tribe, Arunachal Pradesh, Changes

1. Introduction

For forest-dependent communities, wild animals and birds have long been an important resource, providing food, supplemental income, cultural value, and even leisure. Currently, though, the absenteeism of sustainable livelihood and adequate financial prospects possibilities lingers to fix various villagers to the jungle, where dependence on hunting wildlife and swidden farming remains a means of subsistence (Aiyadurai, 2022). Wildlife Hunting, a long-standing exercise, practiced out by individuals for innumerable generations. For ethnic communities, in Northeast India, hunting is considered not only as a way of survival or commercial backing but then again it also embraces profound cultural implication (Aiyadurai, 2011).

Traditional hunting methods, across the globe have established in close connotation with the cultural selves of diverse cultural sets. Ethnic groups, too, in Arunachal Pradesh continue to profoundly associated to their surrounding forests and rivers that withstand them. Hunting and the utilization of bushmeat, for numerous groups are not simply foundations of existence but essential facets of their socio-cultural backgrounds. Hunting is considered as a source of life, strictly knotted to Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and a generational transmitted cultural tradition. Often such practices include the utilization of eco-friendly as well as naturally degradable tools, shimmering a close caring of the setting. Through their existed

anecdotes, hunters, become expert spectators of flora and fauna, representing a system of knowledge that balances existence, ethos, and ecosystem. (Dutta et al., 2025).

In Northeast India, all ethnic groups employ a diversity of hunting tools and apply varied approaches to capture their target. Animal traps were traditionally made from resources accessible from the surroundings like tree branches, leaves and bamboo. However, the growing utilization of handguns has progressively substituted these aboriginal approaches (Jugli et al., 2020; Imchen & Joglekar, 2015). Modifications in hunting applies are designed by varied enthusiasms, extending from survival desires to financial quests (Longchar et al., 2025; Nana, 2023).

For the people of Arunachal Pradesh, hunting still grasps a vital room exclusively among the communities of Eastern Arunachal. Hunting has been intertwined by a hunter-gatherer mode of life, creating a fundamental portion of shifting cultivation and its allied backgrounds for the longest time (Mazumdar et al., 2014).

This paper is an attempt to document the indigenous hunting tools and practices of the Tagin tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, as it is one of the dying cultures due to numerous reasons, and to highlight the changing practices of the tribe.

2. Methodology

For the present study, the researcher employed purposive and snowball sampling methods to identify indigenous hunters and elderly knowledge holders who possess traditional expertise regarding the tribe's hunting traps and tools. In-depth interviews by means of a semi-structured interview schedule data were gathered, individually lasted more than an hour. Most of the interviews were carried out in the native verbal which was documented with a recorder to ensure precision and ability to remember. Each recording was cautiously translated and transcribed later with the help of a local translator from the community. A total of 76 traditional knowledge holders were interviewed with prior consent forms signed, out of which 36 were male informants and 20 were female informants of the group, extending from 50 years to 85 years. Though, additional 20 individuals of the age group 16 to 45 were interviewed to supplement the current research. Moreover, a photographic camera was carried to capture pictures of the different hunting traps and tools. This portion was crucial since the traditional data and practices linked to these tools are rapidly disappearing due to the growing dependence on modern hunting machineries like handguns.

2.1 Field Area

The current research was carried among the Tagin tribe of Daporijo, which comes under the Upper Sunbansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh. Tagin is one of the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and has a population of over 83,448 with a geographical area of 7,032.00 sq.km as per the report released by Census India 2011. The District Upper Subansiri grasps calculated topographical importance, sharing boundary with Tibet on the northern part. The district is bordered by Kurung Kumey and Kra-Dadi districts to the northwest, Lower Subansiri districts to the southwest, and West Siang district to the east. The district headquarters i.e., Daporijo, is located at an elevation of about 777.50 feet above mean sea level. The district is opulently bestowed

with dense forest cover and varied flora and fauna, contributory to its biological implication. (Neba, 2019).

The region is rich in flora and fauna, which vary along with different altitudes. In the lower area, the trees of different species and sizes, cane, and different varieties of bamboo are found abundantly. While in the upper area, alpine forests in the Taksing area, fine trees are found abundantly. In the Taksing and Maja areas, Yak and Takin are common animals. While Tiger, Leopard, bear, monkey, etc. are found in the lower region (Riddi, 2006).

The current focus villages, namely Giba Headquarters and Leya, come under Giba Block/Circle, Dasi village under Chetam Block/Circle, Sippi, Karda, and Dulom village come under Daporijo Block. All the current studied villages lie under the 24th Daporijo Constituency of Upper Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Traditional Hunting Tools (*Lakmu*)

The Tagins craft a variety of hunting implements from bamboo, cane, wood, and stone; each suited for different prey that are sustainable and eco-friendly in nature:

- *Gojang Pvnam* - made from bamboo and cane for trapping squirrels and rats.
- *Gotak*: for trapping birds, which is installed on the tree.
- *Tachar Hwnam*: *Tachar* is a tree that, when cooked inside a bamboo, becomes sticky like gum, which will be stuck around slim sticks similar to incense sticks and, in those sticky sticks, some eateries will be stuck to attract birds. This sticky stick will be kept above the tree to trap the birds.
- *Taarung Penam*: for trapping birds that nested inside dried trees.
- *Vrwng*¹A pit will be dug on the upper surface of the land, and pointed sticks or wooden logs will be kept in an upright position, and it will be covered with trees and grasses so that animals may fall into the pit.
- *Lepam Garnam* - *Porsin* and *Pvrwk* and for birds strolling on the ground (Trap), now they use *Karso* (utilised in fishing) and *wri* (local thread) for making traps
- *Gokchik* for trapping *Svdum* (deer).
- *Koma* (made from wood into a bow and arrow structure) - designed for trapping large animals such as *Svdum* (Deer), *Srvv* (Wild Boar), placed in the way of animals. Once *wri* (strong thread of cane) is touched by an animal, the pointed wooden will attack the animal.
- *Svgum* - same as that of *Koma*, but the pointed wooden, which is like an arrow, will fall from the upper area/above, placed in a semi-aerial position. It is for *svdum*.
- *Taado Odv* - insect will be placed for the birds (falling stone method)
- *Mishap Odv* - Two entry gates will be made with small fencing on a particular area where millets will be placed. As soon as the rats touched the millet, stones would fall on the rats.
- *Svkam* - for trapping frogs.

¹ The letter 'V' may be read as 'E' and the letter 'W' as 'I'. The modification has been made by Tagin Language research & Development Society under the aegis of Tagin Cultural Society (TCS), the apex body of Tagin community. These modifications/adaptations of the letters follow the sound of the word.

- *Vchar* - It is utilised during *Lvngpam* (a method to attract the fish by building blocks of stones inside the river) to block the fish from running away.
- *Tasum Rajung* - for trapping/catching prawns.
- *Dvsap/Doriyap Odv* - traps for birds.
- *Poto* - trapping birds through their neck
- *Vdvr, Dvrchap Giyadung* -Traditional Fishing Traps
- *Umi* (Poisonous seeds): Formerly used to coat arrow tips, effective enough to incapacitate both animals and humans. This practice is not in vogue. It is highly poisonous and may kill or make anyone unconscious within a stroke. In such cases, it is supposed that the affected individual must drink water in which a woman's menstrual cloth has been soaked, as a traditional remedy.



Figure 1: *Gojung*
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 2: *Lvpam*
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 3: *Mishap Odv*
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 4: *Taado Odv*
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 5: Vrwng (miniature)
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 6: Poto (miniature)
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 7: Vchar, Vdvr, Tasum Rajung and Svkam. Photos were taken during the 50th Si-Donyi Golden Jubilee Celebration at Daporijo. Source: Fieldwork



Figure 8: Koma and Gokchik/Hokchik. Miniature/demonstration at 50th Si-Donyi Golden Jubilee Celebration at Daporijo. Source: Fieldwork



Figure 9: Tachar Hynam and Taarung Penam (miniatures)
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 10: Svgum (miniature)
Source: Fieldwork



Figure 11: Gotak
 Source: Fieldwork



*Figure 12: Bogi/Bukshi (machete cover),
 Nara/Rakuk (Traditional Bag for men),
 Nvngbung (Spear), Opok Wri (Bow and
 Arrow).*
 Source: Fieldwork



Figure 13: Traditional catapult
 Source: Fieldwork

3.2 Community and Seasonal Hunting

Kirok Ola/Kiru Kudung (Community hunting): The traditional wild boar hunt was conducted annually, typically in *Lwbv Para* (October) and *Polo Para* (November). Hunters, equipped with spears (*Nvngbung*) and bows and arrows (*Opuk Erw*), would set out in teams, often accompanied by strong hunting dogs trained to track and attack wild animals. The hunting progression typically activated with recognizing areas showing fresh footprints or other signs of wild animal presence to ensure a successful chase.

3.3 Ecological and Conservation Ethics

Hunting is generally avoided during May to July, a period considered critical for the breeding of birds and gestation of wild animals. This seasonal restraint is rooted in the community's ecological understanding that killing a mother animal throughout this period can lead to the death of her offspring, thereby threatening the species' survival. Villagers, through their lived experience, have observed numerous nests and nesting behaviors, such as birds carrying materials to build nests, during these months, and advise others to refrain from hunting to protect vulnerable young animals.



Figure 14: Bird Nest observed in the month of May.

Source: Fieldwork

Nevertheless, exclusions are made for predatory species such as foxes and eagles, which are known to attack domesticated animals like chickens and Mithuns. These predators are considered a threat to livestock and are therefore not spared even during the breeding season.

In addition, there is a deep cultural respect for certain sacred species, such as the tiger. Tigers are believed to avoid human settlements because of the sound of gunfire, and harming them is strongly discouraged, reflecting a spiritual reverence for the natural world. Killing a tiger is believed to bring severe misfortune to the hunter,

including the possibility of death or permanent mental impairment. Although the tribe has not witnessed tigers for many decades.

3.4 Changing Practices and Concerns

The transition from traditional hunting tools like *Lakmu* (traditional hunting tools) to modern firearms is gradually eroding the cultural values and ethical practices historically associated with hunting in the tribe. This shift, driven in part by economic hardship, has led some individuals to engage in unsustainable hunting practices or, in extreme cases, to resort to risky and unlawful activities, such as theft or militancy, to survive. 'With the rapid growth of human populations, improved access to remote forest areas, and the widespread use of modern hunting technologies such as firearms, hunting pressures have intensified significantly. In many regions, exploitation of wildlife kind is at levels far beyond sustainable limits, largely driven by the growing market call for wild meat (Aiyadurai et al., 2010).'

Elders within the community emphasize the importance of parental guidance in preserving and transmitting ethical hunting traditions to the younger generation. For the Tagin people, hunting is not merely a recreational activity or a means of sustenance; it is also a livelihood strategy. Larger animals, when hunted, are often sold in the market, while smaller ones are consumed within the household. In recent years, the meat of wild animals and birds has become a highly valued commodity, driven by growing demand in local markets. This economic incentive compels many to hunt, especially those with limited or no alternative sources of income.

For some, hunting is a matter of survival, for nourishing their people as well as to generate income for essentials such as education and basic needs. In the absence of livelihood options, individuals may feel forced to enter the forest to hunt, as a last resort to avoid falling into criminal or extremist paths. Thus, hunting remains a critical, though increasingly complex, aspect of both cultural identity and economic survival for many in the community.

4. Conclusions

The hunting practices of the Tagin tribe reflect a deep interplay between subsistence needs, cultural traditions, ecological wisdom, and changing socio-economic realities. Customarily, the community's resourceful practice of eco-friendly gears crafted from cane, wood, stone and bamboo reflects equally resourcefulness and sustainability. Their communal hunting practices, cyclical boundaries, and cultural prohibitions, like abstaining from killing throughout breeding periods or regarding holy kinds like the tiger, demonstrate a rooted conservation ethos engrained in lived understanding and spiritual belief.

Nevertheless, these traditions are undertaking hasty alteration. The introduction of contemporary handguns, attached with commercial adversities and restricted living substitutions, has faded ancient hunting morals and conservation-oriented exercise. Hunting, once assured by cultural limitation and environmental poise, is progressively obsessed by market call and subsistence burdens.

This alteration highlights the crucial need for involvements that equipoise cultural protection with biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihood

opportunities. Supporting the transmission of traditional ecological knowledge, expanding revenue prospects, and solidification of community-based conservation representations can aid preserve the Tagin's cultural distinctiveness though warranting that hunting culture endure sustainable in the aspect of contemporary challenges.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge the studied tribe and all the informants for their contribution in completing the paper. Additionally, the author would like to acknowledge Ambika Aiyadurai for inspiring the researcher through her work among the Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author/researcher declared no potential conflicts of interest for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author/researcher received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- [1] Aiyadurai, A. (2011). Wildlife Hunting and Conservation in Northeast India: A Need for an Interdisciplinary Understanding. *International Journal of Galliformes Conservation*, 2, 61-73.
- [2] Aiyadurai, A. (2022). *Indigenous Wildlife Hunting and Trapping Practices among the Mishmi (Kaman) of Arunachal Pradesh*. Claire Smith (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Indigenous Archaeologies*.
- [3] Aiyadurai, A., Singh, N. J., & Milner-Gulland, E. J. (2010). Wildlife hunting by indigenous tribes: a case study from Arunachal Pradesh, north-east India. *Oryx*, 44(4), 564–572.
- [4] Dutta, H., Riba, T. & Saikia, S. (2025). Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Sustainable Practices in Indigenous Hunting Among the Galo Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. *International Journal of Sustainable Development Research*, 11(3), 138-151.
- [5] Imchen, A, & Joglekar P. P. (2015). Traditional Animal Hunting Practices among the Ao Nagas: A Case Study of Mangmetong Village, Nagaland. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology*, 3, 507-525.
- [6] Jugli, S., Chakravorty, J., & Meyer-Rochow, V. B. (2020). Tangsa and Wancho of North-East India Use Animals not only as Food and Medicine but also as Additional Cultural Attributes. *Foods (Basel, Switzerland)*, 9(4), 528, 1-29.
- [7] Longchar, S., Roy, M., Qureshi, Q., & Hayward, M. W. (2025). Hunting strategies, wild meat preferences and perceptions of wildlife conservation in Nagaland, India. *Oryx*, 59(2), 245–255.
- [8] Mazumdar, K. Samal, P. K. & Gupta, A. (2014). Hunting of avifauna in the proposed Tsangyang Gyatso Biosphere Reserve, Western Arunachal Pradesh. *ZOO's PRINT*, 29(\$), 1-7.

- [9] Nana, N. (2023). Traditional Technology on Hunting, Fishing and Foraging of Eastern Himalayan: Study of Nyishi of Arunachal Pradesh. *Research Guru: Online Journal of Multidisciplinary Subjects*, 17(1), 51-67.
- [10] Neba, G. (2019). *Customary Laws of the Tagin tribe of Arunachal Pradesh: Continuity and Change* (1st Edition). Abhijeet Publication, New Delhi.
- [11] Riddi, A. (2006). *The Tagins of Arunachal Pradesh* (2nd Edition). Abhijeet Publication, Delhi.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

