



Significance Of Ginger In Murung Ritual: A Journey Through Apatani Cultural Narratives Of Arunachal Pradesh, India

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Abstract

Tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh are rich in oral tradition and each of them has their own way of preserving their cultures and traditions; which is orally transmitted over generations. The Apatani tribe is one of the major tribal communities domiciled in the Lower Subansiri region and ginger plays a symbolic role in their traditional ritual observations and healing practices. Several ritual practices, oral narratives and taboos are also associated with Ginger. Therefore, this paper attempts to understand the socio-cultural significance of Ginger among the Apatani tribe, focusing on the Murung ritual. The primary data for this paper was collected through fieldwork in the natural socio-cultural context using anthropological research tools and methods.

Keywords: *Murung, Ginger, Ritual Practices, Symbolism, traditional practice*

Introduction

Rituals have been an integral part of human societies across the globe, serving as conduits for expressing and preserving cultural, religious, and social values. These complex, structured ceremonies often involve a series of actions performed in a set sequence, imbued with symbolic meanings that transcend the mundane aspects of daily life. Myths and ritual objects, deeply embedded within these practices, play pivotal roles in maintaining the continuity and coherence of the cultural narratives they support.

Mythology, as a narrative framework, provides the foundational stories that articulate the cosmology, ethics, and existential beliefs of a culture. These myths often explain the origins of rituals, imbuing them with sacred significance and offering insights into the human condition, the divine, and the natural world. Myths not only inform the structure and meaning of rituals but also ensure their perpetuation by embedding them in a larger, cohesive worldview.

Ritual objects, on the other hand, are tangible representations of the intangible, serving as focal points for the expression of the sacred. These objects, ranging from simple tools to elaborate artefacts, are often believed to possess intrinsic power or spiritual significance. They function as mediators between the human and the divine, the material and the spiritual, anchoring the abstract aspects of ritual practice in physical form. The selection, preparation, and use of these objects are governed by strict cultural norms, underscoring their importance in the ritual process.

This research paper explores the intricate relationship between ritual, myth, and ritual objects, with a particular focus on the socio-cultural and religious contexts in which they operate. By examining specific case studies, including the Murung ritual among the Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, India, this study aims to elucidate how myths and ritual objects contribute to the overall meaning and efficacy of ritual practices. Through a comprehensive analysis of these elements, the paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of rituals in shaping and sustaining cultural identities, beliefs, and social structures.

In doing so, this study will draw upon a range of interdisciplinary perspectives, including anthropology, religious studies, and cultural history. It will employ both primary and secondary sources, including ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with practitioners, and the examination of ritual artifacts. By integrating these diverse approaches, the research aims to provide a nuanced and holistic view of the interplay between ritual, myth, and ritual objects, highlighting their enduring significance in human societies.

The Apatani community, residing in the Ziro-I circle of the Lower Subansiri district, represents one of the significant tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They are part of the Tibeto-Mongoloid ethnic group. The term "Apatani" originates from "Apa" and "Tani" (T. Kani 1993:8). "Apa" is a prefix denoting respect or affection before a name, while "Tani" refers to man or human, tracing back to their legendary ancestor Abotani or Tani.

The oral history or Migung of Apatani is extensive. Their oral history traces back to twenty generations after the tribe migrated from mythological *Wi* and *Wiipyo supun*, via *Miido supun* to *Silo supun*, the present habitation bringing with them seeds of pine, bamboo, and mustard. The Apatanis are said to have settled down in Tally valley before they have migrated to Ziro and settled in Ziro since then. The Ziro Valley was initially a swampy wasteland inhabited by prehistoric reptile called *buru*, the last of which were killed by a kind of brass plate (*myamya talo*) which are being preserved even to this day. The development of the valley to the present situation is the result of pure hard work and continued human struggle for survival against the infinite force of nature.

Apatani celebrates several festivals and ceremonies every year. The festival of *Myoko* is celebrated to mark the significance of friendship, *Dree* is celebrated as a harvest festival and *Murung* is celebrated for the prosperity of the family as well as the community. For every successful beginning and ending of these festivals, Apatani people consult with the *Nyibu* (priest) to observe various omen reading through chicken liver examination or through eggs. Rituals of Apatani are broadly divided into two categories *Tigo*²*Uyi*³ and *Chiching*⁴*Uyi*. *Tigo Uyi* is a collection of rituals, mostly performed to invoke the benevolent spirits by the people to seek their blessing for the good health and prosperity of human civilization, such rituals include *Subu*, *Murung*, *Myoko*, *Danyi*, *Ayo Asi*, *Myokung* and so. During these rituals, people share their happiness with their family, relatives, friends and well-wisher and celebrates together with a grand feast. Apatani also believed in the existence of evil spirits and sometime such spirits enter the human world in order to harm or cause trouble to human life. *Chiching* rituals are usually performed when some disturbance or unfortunate incident occurs, generally for the vicious spirits or to drive away the evilness. Such spirits bring hardship, misfortune, chaos with them, therefore, Apatani people performs *Chiching Uyi* to negotiate with the evil spirit and to send them back to their supernatural world. During the negotiation the priest performs various sacrifices and chants.

Background

Ginger has its associated belief dated centuries back, Ginger has been used as food preservative early humans believed to have noticed the extraordinary property of ginger while preparing food with ginger lasted longer than usual thus, they began to consider ginger root to be magical.⁵ The word “ginger” which has an English origin comes from the mid-14th century English word ‘*Gingifer*’, which came from the ancient Sanskrit word ‘*Srngaveram*’ meaning ‘horned body’ based on the shape of ginger. The term ‘Horned body’ is considered as a sacred word given to a root. However, Ginger is undeniably sacred and it is believed to be used by ancient priests and priestesses to invoke the power of fire. Ginger is considered a medium to acquire the power of fire (Bode & Dong, 2011). Ginger has also been associated with the forces of fire and the sun. It is used as a magical means to achieve things quickly. It is mostly used as a tool to attract prosperity and to evict poverty. It is believed that when ginger is chewed, drank, or eaten helps to lift more magical energy. Ginger is also used in various magical hacks to conjure the fiery qualities of ginger.

Ginger has been used for centuries around the world. Recently some scholars have been found that ginger is considered as well-established medicinal plant and it is being used for manufacturing lots of allopathic medicine. One cannot deny the significant role of ginger in various social and cultural aspects of tribal people. Ginger has been in use since the very beginning in their traditional perception, without even understanding its medicinal significance in modern sense. Ginger has significant role in health, social-

²*Tigo* ritual is collection of rituals specially performed to appease the benevolent spirit.

³In Apatani dialect it is very common that one can find various meanings for the single word. For example, the term ‘*Uyi*’ refers to a ‘spirit’, the same word has another meaning as well example ‘*Uyi*’ also mean ‘ritual’. Likewise, there are numbers of words which has different meanings, mostly depend on what sentence it is being used.

⁴ Rituals performed for malevolent spirits.

⁵<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/309270699405629380>

cultural and religious life of people. However, the setback is that one could find several pieces of literature for the use of ginger as a daily food item and for its ethno-medicinal use. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to understand ginger in context with the Socio-cultural domain with a case study of Murung ritual celebration of the Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

In the context of Arunachal Pradesh there are few literatures available where ginger is briefly mentioned as a part of ritual process and none of which emphasizes the significant role of ginger in a social and religious ceremonies as a sacred entity. In spite of the socio-religious significance of ginger among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, so far, there is no in dept study has been done on ginger. Therefore, keeping the research objectives in mind, the present paper discusses the relevant traditional myths of ginger and its significance in *Murung* ritual among Apatani and this research is to shed light on the use of an ordinary items as ginger can have super attribution when its being used in ritual practice and how a myth plays a major role in justifying the belief system. Main focus is to understand the role of a ginger in both religious and cultural aspects of tribal life and their world view.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to delve into the multifaceted role of ginger within the socio-cultural domain of the Apatani tribe. Firstly, the study aims to analyze the importance of ginger in the Murung ritual practice, a cornerstone of Apatani cultural and religious life. By examining the specific ways in which ginger is used in the context of the Murung ritual, the research aims to uncover its symbolic significance within this ritual framework.

Secondly, the study aims to uncover the role of ginger in the origin myths of the Apatani people, exploring how this humble root is intertwined with the very fabric of their creation narratives and early cultural practices. By understanding this aspect, the research seeks to shed light on the foundational beliefs and mythological underpinnings that have shaped Apatani culture over generations. This involves understanding how ginger is not just a physical ingredient but a symbolic tool used to invoke spirits, attract prosperity, and facilitate communication with the supernatural realms. Through this analysis, the study seeks to deepen our understanding of the nuanced symbolic aspects of ginger within Apatani culture, illuminating its broader cultural and spiritual significance.

Methodology

The study is an ethnographic description to explore the socio-cultural significance of ginger in the Murung ritual among the Apatani tribe. The empirical survey, conducted between 2019 and early 2020, focuses on Hari and Bulla villages of Apatani, Ziro.

Primary data collection involved in-depth interviews with 11 Nyibu (priests) from both villages. Additionally, the researcher observed the preparation and execution of the ritual and consulted elderly members of the society to gather diverse perspectives.

The use of audiovisual tools, such as photography and recording, was crucial for capturing the essence of the ritual. Scenes were photographed to visually document the process, while interviews were recorded with prior consent to ensure accurate representation of the informants' narratives. Further, relevant secondary sources were sought, providing a broader understanding of the interrelationship of myth, ritual and ritual objects. Overall, the methodology employed in this study combines qualitative data collection methods with a deep engagement with the cultural context, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of ginger as a ritual object in the Murung ritual among the Apatani tribe.

Findings

The Murung Ritual

The Murung ritual is performed for various reasons, including the general well-being of the human population and livelihood. Some people perform the ritual to heal from a disease or to sacrifice old Mithun (*Bos-Frontalis*). It is believed that Mithun who have survived for many years are controlled by the god Gyuth-Gyaro, and thus, sacrificing such Mithun appeases the god. Additionally, some perform the ritual to earn a name and reputation within society.

Although Murung is considered an individual ritual, organizing it requires a significant amount of manpower for preparations. Consequently, the active participation of the entire clan of the host is involved.

Types of Murung

The Murung ritual comprises two distinct types: Rontii and Ronser. The choice between performing Rontii or Ronser is exclusively determined by the divine will. To ascertain the gods' intentions, the chief priest conducts a ritual known as 'Pahin Konii' (chicken liver examination). This process involves the priest chanting and reciting incantations over a chicken, after which the liver is meticulously extracted and examined by the priest and other experts. The interpretation of signs manifested in the chicken liver dictates the type of Murung ceremony to be performed. A liver indicating a Ronser Murung requires lesser expenditure. Conversely, a liver indicating a Rontii Murung necessitates substantial expenditure, requiring the sacrifice of a greater number of mithun and cows at the altar known as Subu Sikha.

Preparatory stage.

A successful execution of ritual necessitates meticulous preparation. The Murung ceremony encompasses a series of intricate activities that span an entire month. Consequently, the preparatory phase for this ritual must commence a month in advance to ensure all components are adequately fulfilled.

Pahin Khonii or Papu Kanin: The initial step in the Murung ritual involves the host consulting with the priest to express his desire to conduct the ceremony. Subsequently, the priest seeks an omen by performing either Pahin Khonii (chicken liver examination) or Papu Kanin (egg examination). Based on the

results, the priest provides guidance to the host regarding the will of the deity and the specific rituals that need to be performed.

O Khining: Following the initial ritual of Pahin Khonin, the womenfolk commence the preparation of fermenting local wine. Fermented rice beer, known as 'O' among the Apatani, holds significant socio-religious importance within the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh. The preparation of 'O' for the Murung ritual begins a month in advance, undertaken meticulously by the womenfolk. During the Murung ritual, 'O' is not only served to the guests but also utilized as a sacred offering to the deity.

Mithun gathering: The Gathering of Mithun from the forest holds profound cultural significance among the Apatani. This semi-domesticated bovine is not just an animal but a vital part of their socio-cultural fabric. As part of ritual preparations, men folk venture into the forest to gather Mithun, a process imbued with deep ceremonial importance.

In the preceding discussion, elaboration on the preparations undertaken a month prior to the Murung ritual, highlighting their significance in the overall ceremonial process. Now, we turn our attention to the final stages of preparation, which occur in the days leading up to the ritual day. These preparations are crucial as they culminate in the actualization of the ritual, infusing it with the desired sanctity and efficacy.

Construction of Altar: The construction of the altar for the Murung ritual is a detailed and communal process involving primarily the male members of the Apatani community. Bamboo, locally known as Bijje, is the primary material used. The men gather at the host's house to begin the preparation, which starts with collecting the right type and amount of bamboo. This bamboo is then processed by cutting, shaping, and sometimes splitting it to meet the specific requirements of the altar structure. Traditional tools and techniques are employed, ensuring the bamboo is prepared correctly for the task at hand.

The construction process begins with laying a sturdy foundation, followed by creating a main framework using the processed bamboo. This framework includes vertical and horizontal supports that define the altar's shape and size. The altar is then decorated with additional bamboo elements and cultural artifacts specific to the Murung ritual. The final assembly is meticulous, ensuring all parts fit perfectly and the structure is stable.

Tajjar making: The preparation of Tajjar takes place on the evening of the first day of the Murung ritual. Given its sacred significance, the handiwork of Tajjar is carried out by the Nyibus (priests) and their assistants, accompanied by some elderly male members of the clan.

Tajjar, the ritual object, is crafted by splitting a cane, known as Tajjar, halfway into four sections resembling the prongs of a fork. In each prong, a slice of ginger is carefully pierced. Once the slices of ginger are in place, the prongs are bound together using red and black threads, symbolizing various cultural significances.

Preparation of Yatang: The collected rice is soaked overnight in large buckets. The following day, family members and clan women gather to drain the soaked rice before pounding it. Some women also voluntarily help with peeling and slicing ginger into small pieces. The soaked rice is then pounded with a

generous amount of ginger and some salt in a traditional wooden mortar. The resulting powder is stored in baskets for later use.

Kaji: *Kaji* is a traditional dish of the Apatani people. To prepare *Kaji*, start by boiling meat and reserving the leftover broth. Then, cook rice in this flavorful broth, adding grated or sliced ginger for an aromatic and sharp taste. Finally, season with salt to enhance the flavors. *Kaji* is a special dish, particularly prepared during festivals and served to guests.

Ritual day

The ritual begins very early in the morning from 2 am till noon at the *Lapang*. The priest chants ritual verses whole day and gather all the benevolent spirits near the *Lapang*. On this day, all the clan members get dressed in beautiful attires and gather near the *Lapang* where they perform *Supung* (purification) for the animals. The *Babo* (T-shaped altar) is adorn with *Yatang* and some ‘O’. Soon after the *Supung*, *Yatang* and ‘O’ are served first to the *Ada*⁶ couple and then distributed among the villagers. Animals are taken near the house for sacrifice. The spirits are then guided toward the house where they are offered food, meat and rice beer.

Rituals in *Murung* are very complex and requires at least three priests and an assistant to accomplish. Each priest specializes in different tasks, the main ritual is performed by chief priest while the other two priests assist with various tasks simultaneously. The chief priest continues chanting as animals are brought toward the altar for sacrifice. Before the sacrificial act, *Yatang* is once again spread over the *Murung* altar and animals.

The individual who will swing the axe over the animal is chosen the day prior, with the help of an omen observed in the liver of chicken. This person has a significant role because if the animal screams, it is believed to bring a bad omen for both the individual and the host of the ritual. to prevent the animal from screaming, men put a lot of *Yatang* in the animal’s mouth

On the following day, the priest chants near the *Murung* altar which was prepared the day before, one altar is placed in front of the house (*Byago*) and another is at the back side of the house (*Uko*). Ritual alters are made with bamboo, where two or more pieces of wood are slightly split with an *Illyo*(sword). A piece of the skull is inserted in the wood, covered with some *O Pona*, and then wrapped with *Niji Yanii*⁷. Finally, a *Tajjer* (sacred object) is inserted in the *Yaju*⁸ and placed beside the altar, tied with *Tajjer* (variety of cane). After placing the *Tajjer* in the alter, a winnowing basket is prepared to hold the skulls of the animal (Mithun or cow). An axe is placed in the middle of the skull (foramen magnum) and a chicken is placed near the altar.

⁶*Ada* refers to a couple who fulfills certain criteria, such as a couple should have one marriage, both have to live together, and be alive.

⁷Sacred leave

⁸Bottle gourd

The married women of the family perform *Supung* by spreading some *Yatang* and *O*. The priest then begins chanting for the safe voyage for the spirits of the sacrificed animals toward the *Neli*⁹.

Meping: Purification Ritual: After the completion of the ritual and the guests have returned to their respective homes, the priest prepares a mixture of *O* and *Yatang*, which is then spread over the house and household articles for purification.

Ritual Taboo

After the successful completion of *Murung* ritual, the members of the host family have to observe *Anyo* (ritual taboo), during which the family members are restricted to eat beans (*Perun*), Pumpkin (*Tape*), Pumpkin leaves (*Tape Hamang*), meat of sacrificed animal from the house where someone died (*Simah Yoh*), and Rat (*Kubu*).

The divine legacy of Hint Anii.

In the mythological narrative of Epyo Lembya, Hinke Tran, also known as the Mother Goddess, is a revered deity associated with soil, rain, and sky. She united with Uyi Risang, resulting in the birth of Hint, who is venerated as the supreme goddess Hint Anii. Later, Hinke Tran united with Uyi Rilley and gave birth to Hirr, characterized by his masculine traits and interest in metalworking. Hirr appointed the skilled blacksmith Neya Loma to create various metal implements.

Hint Anii, believed to be the origin of *sinyi* (mithun) and *binyi* (humans), transformed parts of her body into essential elements to meet human needs. For example, her head became *pinta*, her palm turned into *Oyaju*, and her toe produced ginger (*litlimii*). These transformations underscore the interconnectedness between the spiritual and physical worlds in Apatani culture. The people honour Hint Anii through prayers and rituals, reflecting a deep respect for their mythological heritage.

This narratives from Millo Nyime and Millo Hinda of Bulla village, offering insights into the rich mythology of Epyo Lembya and its cultural significance. The myths of Hinke Tran, Hint Anii, and Hirr continue to shape the spiritual and cultural identity of the Apatani people.

Origin Myth of Subu-Murung Ritual

Version 1

Once upon a time, there lived Mipu and Hape, two brothers believed to be the first to perform the Murung ritual and sacrifice a Mithun (*sinyi*) to appease the *Muruñuyi*. They approached Aba Nibo for a solution. Aba Nibo, considered the first and most well-known priest of his time, suggested the brothers perform the Murung ritual, as they suffered great loss and numerous difficulties. So, they began preparing for the ritual to resolve their problems and alleviate their misery. For the ritual, Aba Nibo instructed them to

⁹dead world

bring a Mithun for the offering, along with ginger and pussang yasang (pine tree). As it is believed that benevolent spirits are more attracted to the scent of ginger and pine trees, the inclusion of these items is mandatory for every tigo ritual. Mipu and Hape followed Aba Nibo's advice and went to Hint Anii to procure the ginger for the ritual. After successfully completing the ritual, peace, stability, and harmony returned to their lives, and they lived happily. Thus, from then onward, the Apatani people have carried out the tradition of performing the Murung ritual.

Version 2

During the time of *EpyoLembya* (spiritual phase), Subu ritual was performed after the marriage and for the children. The first Subu ritual was performed by Yama Doni after getting married to Nyime Jaji. However, the purpose of performing the Subu ritual changed through time and in *SupungLembya* (present phase) the Subu ritual is mostly performed for the wellbeing of one's family member or sometime for village as a whole and some for the good health.

Chicken liver examination is performed before the actual ritual of Subu. It is performed to seek the consents of gods and also it helps to determine the number of animals one has to sacrifice in the ritual. One *shii* (cow) and a *subu* (mithun) are the minimum requirement for Subu Tath ritual and two of each is the maximum requirement for the said. (Narrated by Millo Hinda (Male, 87years), Bulla village.)

Version 3

According to Apatani oral tradition, Yama Doni and Nyime Jaji are revered as the pioneers of the Murung Padu ritual, a ceremony deeply rooted in their culture. This ritual, performed to ensure good health and ward off unusual occurrences like the sudden growth of peculiar mushrooms or the appearance of bee hives near homes or granaries, holds significant importance among the Apatani.

During the Epyo Lembya, Yama Doni and Nyime Jaji faced disturbances caused by malevolent spirits. Frustrated by these unnatural intrusions, they turned to the Murung god for assistance.

To decipher the intentions of the deity, the priest initiates a process involving the examination of chicken liver or, alternatively, an egg analysis, known respectively as "pahin konu" and "papu kani." These rituals serve as pivotal moments, guiding the interpretation of omens to discern the divine will, a prerequisite for all Apatani rituals.

Though the number of sacrificial animals may vary, a single Mithun is the minimum requirement for the Murung Padu rite, symbolizing appeasement to the Murung spirits for their beneficial influence. Throughout the ceremonial chants, the priest negotiates with the spirits, potentially increasing the sacrificial count during the main Murung ritual if the spirits agree to enhance future health prospects.

After the successful conclusion of the Murung Padu observance, the priest conducts a subsequent ritual to divine whether the Murung celebration should continue in the future, once again using the chicken liver examination method. A favorable outcome in this examination signals the commencement of the actual Murung festivities.

This narrative, conveyed by Millo Nyime of Bulla village, provides insight into the intricate rituals and spiritual negotiations that underscore the Apatani people's deep respect for tradition and their unwavering commitment to seeking divine guidance.

Discussion

Symbolic Significance

In Apatani cosmology, ginger is more than a culinary spice; it holds deep symbolic meanings resonant with their cultural and spiritual beliefs. The use of ginger in the Murung ritual is rooted in a mythical narrative involving Mipu, Hape, and Aba Nibo, the first priest. In this story, ginger was prescribed as a key element to resolve the brothers' problems, highlighting its revered status in Apatani tradition.

Mythological and Cultural Context

The significance of ginger in the Murung ritual is deeply embedded in Apatani mythology and oral traditions. According to folklore, ginger was one of the gifts given by the mother goddess Hint Anii to Aba Nibo, who taught the community the proper ways to perform rituals and ceremonies. This mythological connection grants ginger a sacred status, making it indispensable in ritual contexts.

Spiritual and Ritual Significance

The Murung ritual, celebrated to invoke blessings for prosperity and well-being, features ginger as a primary ritual object. The Nyibu (priests) of the Apatani community utilize ginger during various ceremonial processes, attributing to it the power to evoke the Murung deity and spirits of ancestors, and to cleanse the environment by mixing ginger with rice. The aromatic and sharp properties of ginger are believed to have purifying effects, essential in rituals aimed at spiritual cleansing and protection.

During the Murung ritual, ginger is often placed at altars and offered to deities and spirits. It is also used in the preparation of sacred offerings. The symbolism of ginger in this context is profound, representing not only physical purification but also spiritual renewal and protection against malevolent forces.

Social and Cultural Context

The Murung ritual, being a community event, also highlights the social significance of ginger. These rituals strengthen communal ties and reinforce the collective identity of the Apatani people. The use of ginger in Kaji, communal feasts and offerings, symbolizes unity and shared cultural heritage. Its role in such

significant cultural events ensures the transmission of traditional knowledge and practices to future generations, preserving the cultural fabric of Apatani society.

Significance of Mithun

The Mithun, a type of large bovine, is often used for sacrifices in various rituals, symbolizing prosperity, honor, and spiritual offerings to deities. This practice underscores the deep bond between the Apatani and their natural environment, reflecting a harmonious coexistence and reverence for the life-sustaining resources of their homeland. During the Murung ceremony, the number of cows and mithuns to be sacrificed determines the number of Tajjer to be prepared. Each Tajjer represents a specific cow or mithun, and the priest holds one Tajjer for each animal during the ritual chanting, marking the sacred process of the ceremony.

Ginger as a Ritual Object

Ginger, known locally as "Taki," holds a prominent place in the socio-religious life of the Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly within the context of the Murung ritual. This ritual, deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual life of the Apatani, highlights ginger as a crucial ritual object, symbolizing purity, protection, and the connection between the human and spiritual realms. Ginger serves multiple symbolic and functional roles in this ceremonial landscape.

Ritual Offerings: In the Murung ritual, offerings are made to various deities and ancestral spirits to seek their blessings and protection. Ginger, often combined with other ritual items like rice, rice beer, and animal sacrifices, is placed at altars and sacred spots to seek divine blessings. The presence of ginger in these offerings underscores its importance in appeasing and honoring spiritual entities. The aromatic quality of ginger is thought to attract benevolent spirits and please the deities.

Sacred Invocations: The Nyibu incorporate ginger in Tajjer during their invocations and prayers. It is used in conjunction with other sacred items like rice beer and animal sacrifices to enhance the potency of their chants and rituals. Offering ginger to the deities is a symbolic gesture of respect and devotion to Hint Anii.

Communal Bonding: Ginger is also used in the preparation of Yatang and Kaji traditional dishes, which are shared among community members. Sharing these dishes not only honors the gods and ancestors but also reinforces social bonds and community cohesion.

Conclusion

Empirical surveys conducted in Hari and Bulla villages of Apatani, Ziro, reveal the intricate ways ginger is integrated into the Murung ritual. Interviews with Nyibu and elderly community members emphasize the continuity of these traditions and the reverence for ginger as a potent ritual object.

Observations of the ritual process underscore the meticulous preparation and the symbolic acts involving ginger, reflecting its enduring cultural importance.

Ginger as a ritual object among the Apatani of Arunachal Pradesh exemplifies the intricate relationship between natural elements and cultural practices. Its significance in the Murung ritual encapsulates the spiritual, medicinal, and social dimensions of Apatani life, making it a cornerstone of their cultural and religious identity. Through the integration of ginger in their rituals, the Apatani honor their ancestral traditions, ensuring the continuity of their cultural heritage.

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