CHAPTER II

THE MINYONG

2.1 Prelude

The Minyong is numerically a major sub-tribes of the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, which now - a-days tries to identify as a tribe instead of a sub-tribe. The Adi is a principal tribe of Arunachal Pradesh composed of good number of sub-tribes living in the same territory and having more or less similar culture. Till to the recent past Arunachal Pradesh was known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), and only in the year 1987 it was given the status of a state adorning with the name Arunachal Pradesh. Popularly known as ‘the land of rising sun’ Arunachal Pradesh with varied topography and enchanting landscapes, is the home of heterogeneous tribes. It is the northern most state of the northeastern frontier India. The whole state is covered with the eastern Himalaya with international borders China and Tibet on the north, Assam and Nagaland in the south, Bhutan on the west and Burma on east. The area of the state is 83,743 sq km and 68.8% per cent of the population of it is of scheduled tribes (census of 2011). The state is the abode of 26 major tribes and more than 100 minor tribes, among which the Adi tribes is a conspicuous one.

Siang valley of Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by a number of tribes of which the Adi form the most dominant group. The term ‘Adi’ literally means ‘hill man’. The Adis are concentrated in the Siang valley and distributed over East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Siang (newly formed in 2015) districts
of Arunachal Pradesh. The Siang valley, which now comprises of East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Siang district with their own headquarters at Pasighat, Along, Yingkiong and Pangin, respectively, occupies the central part of Arunachal Pradesh, on the extreme north-eastern tip of India and is the homeland of different sub-tribes of the Adis. It is a mountainous region covering an area of approximately 23,723 sq. km., laying between 93°35' E to 95°11' E longitudes and 27°20' N to 29°20' N latitudes is the homeland of different sub-tribes of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh (Borgohain, 1995). According to Waddell (1901:13), ‘Siang is almost entirely populated by the Adis. The other tribes are the Membas and Khambas, who inhabited only parts of Mechuka and Singa circles and the area around Gelling to the far north. The Mishings (Miri) live in the foothill areas. A Small number of the Idus live in the extreme north-east corner of Siang’. Linguistically, Arunachal is a rich and diverse state and possibly as many as fifty distinct languages in addition to innumerable dialects and sub-dialects are found there. Most of the people are native to or living in Arunachal Pradesh are of Tibeto-Burman origin.

The Siang valley is criss-crossed by countless rivers and streams, the mightiest of them is the Siang. It is the principal river of this region. Sing (1991:15) writes, ‘Among Adis, Siang is the name of the river which is known as Brahmaputra in the plains of Assam and in the Indian religious tradition’. It enters West Siang district through the main Himalayan and flows southward direction through the entire length of East Siang district until it reaches the plains
of Assam, where it meets the Dibang and Lohit and finally flows into the Brahmaputra. Throughout the course it is fed by many tributaries of which Nigong, Ringgong, Siyom, Sigong, and Yamne are the main. The Siyom is the second large river of Arunachal Pradesh and it finally merges with the Siang near Pangin and Yamne flows from the north to the south throughout the valley. The Simang, another tributary of the Siang, meets the Siang on the right bank near Dosing. The Sigong and the Rigong are two other tributaries of the Siang which flows through Tuting area. The Nigong, another important tributary of the Siang flowing north-west meets the Siang in the upper course. They are also found in the south western part of Dibang valley, the eastern fringe of upper Subansiri and in a few pockets of the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Adi is a recognized scheduled tribe of the state, which is a blanket term for many sub-tribes principally inhabiting in the Siang valley. The valley derives its name from the Siang river which is known as Tsangpo in Tibet and Dihang/Dihing in Assam. These districts are bounded by Tibet on the north and Dhemaji district of Assam, on the south and Dibang Valley district on the east and Upper Subansiri district and the Papumpare district on the west. The Census of India, 2011, put the number of Adis at 250,000 (approx.) out of the total population of 1,382,611 of Arunachal Pradesh, and thus they formed about 14.39% of the total population of the state.

Dutta Choudhury (1994:31) writes, ‘The Adis of Siang area have a keen sense of history and many of them have excellent power of memory, ‘Being able
to recite interminable genealogies tracing their race back to the being of the world’. According to an Adi myth, Tani (also called Abutani) is the father of mankind. It is significant to note in this context that besides the Adis some other renowned tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, such as the Nishis, Tagin, Apatani, Galo and Mishing, also trace their descendents from a common mythical ancestor known as Abutani, and therefore, all their tribes are grouped as ‘Tani Group’. All these tribes including the Adis live in the central part of Arunachal Pradesh and they form the largest group of people of this territory. Even now, all the Adis trace their genealogy to Tani and the word Tani is still indicate the Adi race. It may be surmized that the tribes who identify themselves as descendants of Tani were distantly related to the Tani group on the basis of their belief that they are the descendents of the ancestral father or the first man on the Earth, Abutani (abu means Father, tani means human). Today the name Tani recalls a bond of ethnic unity and fraternal relationship among them. In the Adi language, ‘Abu’ mean ‘father’, Tani is considered the name of that common father; thus Abutani.

Earlier, the Adis were known as ‘Abor’ to their Assamese neighbours of Assam. Dalton (1885:151) writes, ‘The term ‘Abor’ is an Assamese word signifying ‘barbarous’, ‘rude’, ‘independent’ and is applied very indefinitely to all the independent hill clan on both the side of river Brahmaputra valley’. After India gain independence in 1947, these people gradually came to be known as the Adi. The term Adi comprises a large number of tribal groups. United by a language that inspite of dialect variations is fundamentally everywhere the same,
and by a similar culture. Thus, the Adis of today are the Abors of past. The word Abor is generally believed to be of Assamese origin, and is a compound of two Assamese words - ‘A’ and ‘Bori’, ‘A’ is a negative particle means ‘not’, while ‘Bori’ means ‘submitted’ or ‘subjected’ and together they form ‘Abori’ or ‘Abor’, which means ‘one who does not submit or one who does not owe to any allegiance to anybody’, and is thus an independent (Nyori, 1993). Hore (1913:21) comments, ‘The Abors are kind hearted people and children and animals are invariably treated well’. Siang district is inhabited by a number of tribes of which the Adi form the most dominant group united through language and a similar culture. According to Cosh (1837:142) the Adis are, ‘a hospitable and even a social race’. The Adi tribe is composed of fifteen sub-tribes, viz., Ashing, Bori, Bokar, Gallong or Galo, Karko, Komkar, Milang, Minyong, Padam, Pailibor, Panggi, Pasi, Ramo, Shimong, and Tangom. Krick (1853:249) writes an Adi is, ‘Lover of freedom and independent, generous, noble hearted, plain spoken, more honest than the average oriental’. The inhabitants of the whole country between 95°41’ and 92° parallels of east longitude must be considered as one population because they trace their descendent from Abutani group. This includes all people generally known as the Abor, Aka, Dapla/Duffla or Daphala and the Hill Miri. It is also acknowledged that, although the boundaries of the different tribes had not been given, there were distinct mountain barriers which generally separated the tribes from one another (Michell, 1973).
Dutta Choudhury (1994:70) writes, ‘The Adi is broadly divided into two sections on the basis of some differences in material culture, hair style, dress and social institutions – the Padam Minyong group and the Galo group’. The Ashing, Bori, Karko, Komkar, Milang, Padam, Pasi, Panggi, Shimong, and Tangom including Minyong are in one section comprized of eleven sub tribes. The second group comprized of four, viz., Bokar, Galo, Pailibor and the Ramo. According to Srivastava, ‘Of all these, the Minyong are the largest group (cited in Roy, 1960:12). According to Dunbar (1913:17),‘The Adis divided into two groups - the Abors and the Gallongs. He also opines that there are some differences between the Galos Adis and the other groups of the tribe’. The two groups occupy almost two equal halves of the total Adi area. The river Sido and Siyom form the dividing line between the two groups, the Adi and Galo, leaving the first group on the eastern and the second group on the western halves. Thus, on the basis of distribution and the location, the Adis can be again called the ‘eastern Adis’ and ‘western Adis’ (Nyori, 1993). Each sub - tribe has a mother village and it comprises a number of villages. Most of the sub - tribes of the Adi have their distinct languages and cultures. The Adi people also have many commonalities in their culture. The Adis by nature are democratic and have an unique sense of history.

2.2 The Minyong

The Minyong, one of the major sub - tribe within the broader framework of the Adi tribe, sometimes identifies as a major tribe, occupy the area on the
right bank of the Siang and a part of the valley between the Siang and the
Yamne. The Minyongs also inhabited in different parts of the central and south-
eastern Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Minyong land is lying
approximately between 27°43' and 29°20', north Latitude and 94°42', and
93°35', East Latitude. As per 2011 census the Minyong population constitute of
71,579 persons, out of which 51% per cent are male, and 49 % per cent are
more conspicuous among the Adi tribe, are strong and courageous people
mentioned frequently in the history of British Adi relations and known today as
one of the most progressive tribes of Arunachal Pradesh having a great village
solidarity’. Mibang (1994:47) writes,‘In Minyong dialects the words ‘Mi’ mean
‘human’ and ‘Ayong’ mean ‘less’. The two words signify the ‘less people’. The
Minyong belong to the Mongoloid racial stock. In the Gerrison’s survey, ‘All the
dialect of Arunachal Pradesh except that of the Khamtis, a Buddhist tribe of
Mahayana sect, have classified under the North Assam or Assam – Burma group
of the Tibeto – Burman branch of Sino Tibetan family of languages’ (cited in
Dasgupta, 1977:25). As such, the dialect spoken by the Minyong also came under
the broad group of Tibeto - Burman branch. There are, however, some linguistic
variation among the Minyongs according to their geographical locations. The
Minyong language has no script. Hindi and Assamese are often used to serve as
the medium of language between the different tribal groups and between
themselves and other groups of the people. Hindi in the present day has become much popular and this language is often used by them in their household also.

2.3 History and Migration

It has been already stated that among the Adis, the Minyongs are the most progressive group …………….This tribe is mostly concentrated in the district of East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Siang was curved out from parts of East Siang and West Siang districts. The land of the Padam - Minyong and allied groups covers over 8,000 sq/miles, and their habitations are concentrated on both banks of the Siang and the Yamne rivers, extending in the north up to the border of India and Tibet, and extending in the Pasighat and few miles below in the south (Roy, 1960). Srivastava (1990:4), however, stated that ‘In spite of the two broad theories of migration of the Minyong from the Indo - Tibetan borders or the Brahmaputra valley to their present habitat, it seems less likely that the Minyong either migrated from the north or from the south’. According to a version collected by Roy, ‘the ancestors of the Minyongs used to live on some snow - ranges near about Telilidung. In their southward migration, they did not follow the course of the Siang. Instead, they came down the Angong valley to Manipere and crossed the Takek Adi near Dibok and finally settled at Riga past Pangkang’ (cited in Nyori, 1993:48). Latter they managed to cross the Siang near Tayek - Puigo near about Riu and spread over the area from Kebang, Yemsing and Pangin as far as Ledum, Mirem and other villages.
Roy (1960:16) observed, ‘The Minyongs occupy the right bank of the lower Siang valley and a part of the land between the Siang and the Yamne rivers’. Their settlements spread all over Siyom valley, particularly up to the Bori area in the north, west area are the Galo settlements, south is bounded by Jonai sub - division of the Dhemaji district of Assam. The villages are situated in the valleys and on the bank of big rivers like the Siang, Siyom, Simang and their tributaries. Among the principal Minyong villages are Kebang, Renging, Pangin, Komsing, and Rotung are situated in the Pangin Circle and Riga in the Dosing Circle of the Pasighat sub - division. The important Minyong settlement in the form of villages in the Siang valley from south to north are Boleng, Doring, Jamlo, Kebang, Komsing, Ledum, Lorging, Malous, Mirem, Moput, Rengin, Ramgong, Riga, Riu, Sido, Sitang, Yagrung, Pangin, Parong, Pelling, Ponkang, Yemsing, Yeksin and Yebuk. The northern most Minyong settlement is Pankang and the southernmost is the Renging village. There are, however, a few small settlements of the same group, such as Pankang, Dosing, Jorsing and Yambang (Roy, 1960).

2.4 Population

According to the 2011 census the total population of East Siang district is 99,214. Barring the single town Pasighat, the entire area of East Siang district is rural. The density of the population per square km is 28 in the East Siang district. The number of household and population are highest in East Siang district having smallest area of 3603.00 sq kms. The number of scheduled tribe
population is also highest in East Siang district with 70.5 per cent of the total population out of this 69.1% are Minyong.

2.5 Physical Features

In general physical appearance, the Minyongs show all the characteristics of the Mongoloid stock. The conspicuous physical features of the Minyong are light yellowish and fair skin colour, sinky eyelits, flattened forehead and scanty body hair and short to medium stature. Roy (1960:71), ‘The Minyongs are physically well built and have the capacity to undertake any strenuous work. They are rather short - statured with ‘inverted oval face and medium thick lips’. Majority of them have straight medium - opening eyelits with a trace of the mongoloid fold in case of men. However, in women, the Mongoloid fold is a little more pronounced. The skin colour varies from dark brown to brown with a gradual tendency towards the lighter shades. According to Borgohain (1995:5), ‘The somatometric measurement and somatoscopic observation of the different groups of Adis agree with the characters of Guha’s classification of ‘the Dolichocephalic Mongoloid type’.

2.6 Material Culture

(a) Village

Selection of a village site by the Minyongs depend mainly near a river for easy access to drinking water sources and facilities for washing and fishing, security and availability of agriculture land in abundance. Hamilton writes in his book In Abor Jungle of North - East India ‘An Abor village is never without its
cordon of chutes formed of huge boulders, which are so hidden that they are related by the enemy himself as he advances along a jungle path, or through some defile leading to the village. He is, of course, crushed to death. Surrounded with bamboo plalisades, or protected by a stockede of tree tracks with all approaches carefully, ‘panjeeed’ and flanked by chates, the villages present very formidable positions to an attacking party’ (cited in Mibang, 1994:44). The Minyong villages are distributed along the course of the three main rivers the Siang, the Yamne and the Siyom and their tributaries is an indication of the immigration. Their villages are generally small with an average of about 50 households. According to Roy (1960:49), ‘They preferred rather the nearest tops of the hills with declivities towards the rivers and steep unnegotiable fall on the opposite side’. The village is almost invariably found in a compact area, as the small number and size of houses and their proximity to each other do not require much space. A village is generally approached from one side only, high hills or deep ravines preventing approach from the other three sides. The villages were purposely built, so in order to prevent the entry of enemies during the days of inter-tribal feuds. Isolated hills with sloping descents to the water points perpendicular and precipitous on the other sides were considered the best. The Minyong in case where such isolated hills were not available, extremities of spars were selected as village sites. In a preferred place where the Minyong settled their village constructed their residential units in a linear fashion by both the sides of the village path.
(b) House Type

The Minyong build permanent houses which require major repairs only after five or seven years. Their houses are bamboo structures, strengthened with wood and secured with cane strings. The house is built on wooden piles at a height of one to ten feet from the ground. Sometimes, thick and long wood or bamboo poles are used to protect the side wall panels or to support the house, which extends its life. One can enter to and exist from the house through a notched log (bhali) which is like a ladder. The floor (tahud) and the walls (tarja) of the house are made of matting of split bamboo and the roof (mulong) is thatched made of toku (Livistona jenkinsiana Griff) leaves. Generally, a priest (miri) is called to select the site before building a new house. Through divination, the priest selects the suitable site. The kins, friends and co-villagers help in the construction of the house. Whatever may be the size of the house, it does not take more than four to five days to complete the construction. The helpers for the house construction are served with rice, meet curry and rice beer (apong).

There are only two doors (aiyap), one in the front (rising aiyup) and another in the back (kodang aiyup) in a Minyong house. Windows are not found in a traditional Minyongs house. It is feared that if there is a window spirits would enter the house and may cause trouble to the family members. There is no partition (tatan) within the house which is a simple large hall. There is only one hall (kurung) which serves as the purposes of bed room, dining room, drawing room, kitchen, etc. Fire place (merom) is in the middle of the house constructed
by fixing wooden trays in gaps in the matting of the floor and covering them with earth, where food is cooked and which the inmates of the house sleep. All the house member do not sleep together. Approximately, two meters above the hearth, a three tier square size bamboo tray is hung from the roof. Different parts of this tray is used for different purposes which are used to dry meat, fish and fuel. The lower one (ramik) is used to dry up food grains, meat, fish, etc.; the middle one (parup) and the upper one (borang) are used to store fire wood and bamboo and cane implements. In the side walls of the house, a few bamboo racks (pabong) are constructed to store household utensils.

In one corner of the house, skeletal remains of the hunted animals are displayed. In another corner, horns of the sacrificed mithuns are kept which are generally smeared with a fluid of rice powder, millet beer and ginger paste. Pigs are kept in the pigsty (regum), which is attached to the side of the main house and in front is an open platform where work, which cannot be performed inside the house due to intense darkness, are performed (Roy, 1960). Poultry are kept in platform back side the kodang (the rear part of the house). The fire place which is built in the middle of the house, divides the house into two parts: rising and kodang. As one enter the house the former is on the left hand side and the latter on the right hand side. The left side of the rising is reserved for the guests and visitors. Women are not allowed to sit there. The right side and the front portion is to sleep for the married men and women, the back side is for unmarried boys and girls. Similarly, kodang is also divided into four parts - the first is used for
keeping vegetables and feed for pigs, second is for keeping utensils, in third place the rice beer is brewed and the fourth place is reserved for offering sacrifices to gods and spirits and for keeping ritual objects (Srivastava, 1990).

Some changes are found in the house pattern of the Minyongs. The tradition of long houses is slowly becoming uncommon especially among the town dwellers. The pile granary stores are built in the corner of the village separately away from the dwelling house in order to prevent from village fire. It is much smaller than the dwelling house but the pattern is same and rectangular in size. If a man has more than one wife, then he constructs more granaries according to the number of wives in order to maintain peace between the wives. Generally, paddy and millet are kept in the granary. In the present days the granary are found to be constructed near the house.

(c) Food Habit

Rice is the staple food of the Minyongs. Along with the rice rice beer (apong) and rice cake (etting) which is supplemented by maize and millet, are taken by them. Good numbers of wild leafy vegetables are taken in large quantities. Roots and tubers and fruits as well as potato, pumpkin, brinjal, ginger, onion, bamboo shoot, chilli, etc., are included in their diet. The people are fond of fish and meat. Meats are frequently roasted. These are often dried up and preserved for future consumption. The Minyongs believe that food like rice, maize, millet, vegetable, fish and meat possesses high nutritive value and a person should take these items in everyday’s menu. Traditional food of the
Minyongs is devoid of oil and spices. Their vegetables are also boiled with chilli, salt and sometimes with meat and fish. Meat and fish are also boiled with *iku* and *iyup*, two preparations made of bamboo shoot. Expectant mother is not provided with any special diet during the time of pregnancy, expect home prepared fermented rice. Mother milk is only preferred for the new born.

Meat and fish are integral part of their diet with some prohibition. Meat of tiger (*patte*), wolf (*sucho*), cat (*mundari*), jungle cat (*sarch*), dog (*ekte*), leopard (*karte*), etc. are tabooed for the Minyongs. Moreover, female members are restricted from eating monkey (*sibi*), bat (*sajo*), snow cat (*sokongponang*), etc. All the Minyongs irrespective of age and sex take country liquor at any time of day and night. It is taken on all social, economic, political and religious occasions. There are two types of *apong* - *nyogin* and *poro apong*. The *nyogin apong* is white and the *poro apong* is black in colour. Foreign liquor becomes much popular in the present decade among the Minyongs. Tea is another drink of the Minyongs and they do not take it with milk and sugar. It is just boiled and sipped. They are accustomed to chewing locally available tobacco and opium. It is both chewed and smoked in pipes. The Minyongs now smoked bidi and cigarettes also. They also chew betel nut and betel vine leaf.

(d) Household Implements and Utensils

Traditionally the Minyong have less number of household utensils and most of those are made of bamboo, cane, wood, gourd shell and clay. It should be mentioned here that the overwsheming majority of the bamboo implements
outnumbered the implements made from other objects. In a good number of bamboo implements cane - work is also added. In the pristine Minyong society cooking was done in different clay pots, which are now replaced by the pots made from various metals. The Minyong males have expertise in the bamboo work; however, women are also not tabooed to conduct this skill. The Minyong cut the bamboo into pieces and the tubes (aidung) are used to carry water, store country liquor and so on. The kaksur is another container made from bamboo tubes which are invariably used to store country liquor.

A big bamboo basket (ambin dupu) is used by the Minyongs made from bamboo splits to store food grain. This meticulously woven basket possesses a lid to protect the crop from the insects and rodents. A lidless bamboo basket (ambin tirkak) is used for measuring paddy. For carrying and storing water they use a long lidless basket (asi dupu). For storing salt, which was a precious commodity among them in past, they use a small bamboo container (alo ladu) meticulously made of bamboo strips. For cleaning paddy they use a winnowing fan (appo), the close end of which is raised and narrow, while the open end is broad and flat. The Minyong women and damsels carry fuel, vegetables, etc., in a carrying basket (abar) made of finely striped cane. The egin is another kind of carrying basket in which paddy and other agricultural products are carried from the jhum field to the respective households. A bamboo and cane made big basket (adum) with a circular lid is used for keeping clothes. A big basket (ashi ebar/ginjung) is used by the Minyong women and girls to carry bamboo tubes from house to the
water source and after filling up the tubes with water to bring those to the residential units. A similar type of bamboo basket (*baling ebar*) is used for carrying fruits from the jungle to the house. A bamboo basket (*ape*) is used by the Minyongs to keep fermented ingredients of country liquor covering its inner side with leaves (*kamro ekkam*); a kind of conical bamboo and cane basket (*patok*) is used for distillation of country liquor.

The *ebong* is a parasol made of fine bamboo and cane strips which is used by the Minyong as head gear to protect themselves from strong sun ray and rain. Both the males and females used haversack, although the size of it differs according to the gender of the wearer. A haversack is made by thin cane strips in twill pattern, which is invariably rectangular in shape. The haversack used by the male is known as *tali*, which is competively bigger in size and covers by the bark of the tree to make it waterproof. It is slungged on the back of the wearer by the strips over the shoulders and the armpits. The haversack for women (*sakiap*) is smaller in size.

In the past the Minyong used some articles made of wood, gourd shell and clay. At present the use of such articles among them is seanty. Traditionally the Minyong eat their staple food, i.e., boiled rice, in wooden plate (*eshing ekung*). This oval shaped dish is scooped out from the wooden plank through the indigenous technique. They use a triangular wooden morter (*kipar*) for husking paddy. The pestle (*egi*) is also made from a long and strong piece of wood. The earthenware (*kedi - peking*) is a broad and spherical vessel with a conspicuous
neckland and a wide mouth. It is used for cooking food. Traditionally the Minyongs used some of the receptacles made from different gourd shells. They produce bottle gourd (*Legernaria siceraria*) in their jhum field and prepared many receptacles from their shells. For keeping country liquor they used a big gourd shell (*epum*). A smaller container with a long neck (*giri*) made from the gourd shell is used to carry country liquor and water in a journey. The Minyong also made ladle (*ujuk*) from the shell of gourd.

**(e) Dress and Ornaments**

Dunbar (1913:14) writes, ‘The dress of two sexes (of the Adis) is dissimilar and especially as regards men, costume differs considerably. The cloth is either coloured and worked into patterns of bands and lines or in plain white. The coloured cloths are designed, none of which is distinctive of any particular community’. He adds, ‘The Minyong and southern Gallong cloths are usually red with blue lines running through the material. Among the Pasial or Pasi, yellow and black, white and red or red and green are not in frequent combinations of colour’. Elwin (1959:112) wrote, ‘Adi art is almost entirely confined to the decoration of their own persons, that is to say it is expressed in the weaving of fabrics, the making of hats and the forging ornaments. The Adis have an extraordinary interest in cloth… they are very sensitive to fashions and quickly adopt new ones…’. Wilcox (1832:314) writes, ‘Among every men had some article of woolen dress, varying from a rudely made blanket waistcoat to a comfortably and tolerably well - shaped cloak’. The Adi coat (*galuk*) is used as
the upper garment by the male. Adi coat are of several designs and are open in the front with laces in the middle. Minyongs women of the lower region wear full-sleeved black blouse with yellow bands of border designs as their upper garments. The *gales*, which are lower unsewn garment of female, are woven into two pieces and sewn together. *Gales* are with free ends, either pinkish red, with a number of yellow horizontal lines or yellow with black horizontal lines running across the middle. According to Mibang (1994) in the gale, there is vertical ornamentation in zigzag and triangular patterns also in the centre by bands embroidered across the breadth of the cloth at right angles to the horizontal woven pattern in yellow, green and red wool. Now – a-days Minyong girls are using both of velvet and mill-made clothes, and tailored in the styles obtaining in the plains which are full-sleeved or short sleeved blouses.

According to Wilcox, ‘They wear large necklaces of blue beads, which they esteem very highly, and they profess that they are not procurable now’ (cited in Roy, 1960:83). Although some variations are noticeable in the personal decorations and ornaments of the tribes from area to area, their ear rings, necklaces, cane belt, leather belt, metal discs (*beyop*), bracelets, anulets, etc., are all common. Both men and women wear one piece coloured stone ear ring which pass through bamboo tube plugs stuck in slits in the lobe of the ear. The man’s ear rings are simple. The women wear ear rings which are known as *kentu*. It is an ear ornament decorated with silver plugs in front and resembles a flower and screwing fence to hold it in position at the back. Both men and women wear most
of the ornaments in their necks hanging down over their chests. The beads (tadok) are of different size and colours like yellow, blue, etc., which are old and variable. On special occasions such as festivals men wear them. The Minyongs girls also wear a few more neck ornaments called golpatang, tompilang, maduli, pason, nok, etc. These are traditional ornaments before the advents of the modernization. Now they have abandoned many of these ornaments with the influences of outsiders, and now Minyong men discarded most of the ornaments and women and girls are wearing various ornament, of various designs, made of gold, silver or other metals.

(f) Weapons of War and Chase

The traditional weapons of the Minyongs are shield, war helmet, sword, machete, small knife, spear, spike wristlet, gun, bow and arrow, etc., some of such implements are described below:

(i) Sword

The sword (yoksa) used by the Minyong is straight and one edged. The other end of the blade is narrow, blunt and curved. The grip of the sword is carefully plaited with cane strips. The swords are always carried in wooden scabbards, and are kept in position with the help of a transverse band of cane strips. The Minyongs manufacture swords by themselves.

(ii) Spear

A Minyong spear (nyiding) consists of three parts, the head, the shaft and the butt. It has a socket into which the shaft of the spear is fitted. The shaft is

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pointed and is rammed into the socket. The socket, shank and the blade are made from iron. The socket, from the open end narrows down to the shank, which again spreads into the blade, which has a laurel - leaf shape. At the shank, there is no marked projection. The butt - end whole, from the socket to the spike, is circular in cross - section. They also use the spear for thrusting.

(iii) Machete

The Minyongs do not posses any special machete (ayok) for war purposes. The same machete serves domestic as well as martial purposes. The blade of the machete is narrow towards the shaft and broad towards the tip. The blade has a tang which is inserted into a wooden handle which is occasionally plaited with cane strips. A machete always carried in wooden case, one end of which is open.

(iv) Bow and Arrow

The Minyong’s bows (ie) are simple, and are made of a single piece of split bamboo. A straight bamboo piece is allowed to dry a little over fire, when the stave is shaved down to the required thickness and shaped with the help of locally made knives. The central portion of the stave is broad and almost flat. In section, the bow is markedly convex on the outer side and concave on the inner side. The thong is mounted on the stave only during use, so that the strength and elasticity is maintained. Arrows are made from straight bamboo splits or reed and on their tips sharp and pointed arrow heads made of bamboo or iron are fitted. Through their age old indigenous knowledge poison extracted from floral parts are added to the iron arrow head tips. Hamilton (1912:27) writes, ‘The actions of
the poison is very rapid, some - times less than one hour, and rarely more than six hours. Violent convulsions are set up, and tetanus supervenes’.

The arrows (*upuk*) are generally of two kinds:

(i) Bamboo Shaft with a Bamboo Head

In bamboo shaft with a bamboo head a thin piece of bamboo is clean shaved; one end of this is pointed and hardened over the fire. The other end of the arrow is feathered by means of two strips of thin leaves. There is a concave notch at the butt - end of the arrow for fitting it on the bow - string properly. These arrows are meant to kill birds

(ii) Reed Shaft with Poisoned Iron Head

The shaft is made of reed and feather is fixed as before but the head is made of iron. The iron head of the arrow is pointed and small. It is, however, barbed on two sides at the shanks ending in a sharp point. Poison is added on the shank of the arrow and for about two cm. on the shaft. The whole portion of the arrow head is added with poison, a simple cut is enough to cause death to the enemy.

(v) Shield

Shield (*sotam*) are generally made of a species of bamboo with interlaced cane strips. A shield is rectangular in shape, concave inside and convex on the outer side. There is a horizontal handle fixed to the inner side. The shields are never decorated and are used against the attacks of arrows and swords of the enemies.
(vi) War Helmet

The Minyongs possess two types of helmets (*rai dumyup baling*): one for everyday use and the other specially for war purposes. The second one is usually decorated in front with two boar tusk placed crosswise, while the top is occasionally decorated with bear skin or a tuft of hair of the yak, dyed scarlet, beaks of birds, especially the hornbill.

(vii) Knife

The Minyongs always carry a knife (*yokshik*) which is pointed, one-edged, sharp and thin blade fitted to a small wooden handle. It is invariably carried in a bag made of bamboo strip finely plaited. The blade is fixed to the handle by a tang at an obtuse angle. The knife is used even in war.

(viii) Spike Wristlet

Wristlets (*tamta*) are locally made from brass with strong sharp spikes on the outer side. It is generally used by the Minyong during a hand–to-hand fight. Variations of this implement with less sharp spikes are used now–a-days as ornament by the men and women. Typical Minyong wristlets are now a days obsolete.

(ix) Gun

Traditionally the wealthy Minyongs used muzzled guns (*abuk*) for hunting and war. Such guns are now–a-days replaced by modern guns available in the market. Over and above these locally made weapons, almost all the Minyong villages possesses muzzle-loading guns of Tibetan make.
2.7 Economy

The Minyongs were economically not so advanced in early days. Land and agriculture was the backbone of their economy. Their main efforts were only to save own and community lives and to possess land, food stock, live stocks, weapons, ornaments, etc. They worked hard to produce food from land through cultivation and to earn certain amount of cash money by selling pigs, folws, mithuns, cloths, basketry items, vegetable, fire wood, etc. The changes in modern times have driven some of the Minyongs to urban life. Some of them conducted various urban occupations. Still, the majority of the population live in villages where they primarily depend on shifting cultivation. Some of them are also found to be engaged as government servants, contractors, traders, labourers and in various business. In the village they make use of domestication of animals. Beside, in the quest of food the utilization of such food gathering pursuits like hunting, fishing, gathering, etc., are also noted.

(a) Gathering

Gathering is an indispensable pursuit of Minyong life. According to the traditional division of labour women are engaged and men are dedarred from this task. Through gathering the Minyong women principally collect dry wood and etables from jungle. A hearth is always burning in the Minyong residencial unit for which continuous adding of fuel is required. Generally women collect fuel in the form of dry wood from the forests. They also collect different leafy vegetables, roots, tubers, fruits, insects, aquatic products, etc., to give dimensions
to their daily food. Generally the Minyong women collect such objects at the returning venture from the jhum field. They pack their food in the *ekkam* (*Phrynium pubinerve* B I) leaves, the leaves of which plant resembles to turmeric, they also collect this leaves from the jungle.

(b) Hunting

Hunting (*kiruk*) is the traditional practice and one of the earliest occupations among the Minyongs as a means of livelihood. Even with the settlement of the tribe as agricultural community, hunting remained as a necessity in their society. In the Adi habitats jungles are abound with wild animals, birds, reptiles, etc. Although hunting is no longer an important vocation, it still forms a significant aspect of their economic life, as meat is considered as integral parts of their daily meal. With the change of society and with the progress of the domestication of animals, hunting gradually changed from a means of livelihood into a form of entertainment. The favourite meat of the tribe is of dear, wild boar, squirrel, rat, samber, monkey and variety of birds. Hunting remained as a necessity in the Minyong society.

Among the Minyongs, hunting is organized in two forms: one individual and the other collective hunting. In case of individual hunting, a man goes out to the jungle towards any direction and the killed animals belong to the hunter. He is not required to give any share to anyone in the village. Collective hunting is discussed, planned and organized in the dormitory. In the Minyong society hunting is a men’s work. In the collective hunting all the young male members of
the village take part. They have no regular training in hunting but it is learnt through the process of socialization. The hunters wear a cane hat and a black fiber cloak (subir tali) on the back. The main weapons for hunting are bows and arrows. Poison (amo) is added to the arrow tips. Before going for collective hunting, the guardian spirit of the war and chase, i.e., Ampi, is worshipped by the men folk at male dormitory (dere). Roy (1960:141) writes, ‘At the same time they sing ampi bari, or accounts giving the origin of the hunting’. Normally such hunting is undertaken after harvesting in the dry season. They spend three days in the jungle and whenever they succeed in killing any animals, it is equally distributed among themselves. All catches in the hunting called ampi kiruk are deposited in the dormitory or distributed among the old men of the village. Presently gun is used for hunting. They take the meat of almost all animals except a few which are traditionally tabooed. Dorung kiruk is a hunting festival of the Minyongs. 

(c) Fishing

Fishing (engo) has its importance in the economic life of the Minyongs which is done either by the community as a whole or by individual throughout the year on the fishing sites. Unlike in hunting, in fishing both the sexes take part. Some good fishing sites are owned by particular families. Of several types of collective fishing, one is the raise of dam over a river and diverting its water which they called sibok penam. Another type is the blocking and diverting fish to a corner which is called sile - monam. All catches made in a collective fishing are
put at one place and then distributed among those who take part in the fishing (Nyori, 1993). In individual fishing, fishing by cast net is very popular. In some cases they construct a fence in the stream with bamboo, stone, etc. leaving some gaps it is called *rango monam*. In the gaps they set automatic fishing trap (*subjung*) made of bamboo with single and multiple valve. *Edil* is a cylindrical valved fish trap in one side of it there is a valve, and the other end is closed but can be opened when required. *Porang* valve less fish trap, is also used by them. Fish is taken on all occasions with rice and rice beer. Any surplus catch is smoked and dried and are taken in the lean period.

(d) Domestication of Animals

The Minyong know the skill of domestication of animals and birds from time immemorial. Rukbo (1982:18) has remarked, ‘The Engo - Takar people, who were the ancestors of the Adis, got the mithun (Bos frontalis) from Dadi - Somi, the owner of the animals. As the descendent of the people of Engo - Takar, the Minyong still posses this animal’. Among the animals which the Minyong domesticated include cow, goat, mithun, pig, cat, dog, and among the birds, the fowls. Dogs and cats are not eaten by them. There is a legend related to domestication of animals among them.

Mithun (*eso*) is a semi - domesticated animal which roam unattended in the surrounding jungle of the village with identity marks of the owner on the ears. Only occasionally it is brought from jungle or it comes to the owners house by itself, when it is given salt. The possession of mithun is the wealthy mark in
the society. Mithun are sacrificed in the community rituals. It is indispensable for sacrifice in many festivals of the society like Aran, Solung, Etor and Mopin. The price of a mithun at present varies from Rs 30,000 to Rs 50,000. The importance of pig is next to mithun in religious and social functions. Some pigs (ekk) are kept in the pigsty (regum), which is attached to the main house of the owner. Others are left free in the village, in the morning and the evening they are fetched home and fed. Pig is sacrificed in many religious functions like Solung, Etor, Marriage and others. They are given as bride - price, sacrificed in rituals, killed in big social gathering and also entertainment of guests. Cattle are not pristine domesticated animals of the Minyong. With the adoptions of wet cultivation they are compelled to domesticate cattle. The bullocks are used in ploughing field. The domesticated cows are allowed to roam in the outskirt of the village. The Minyong keep the dog (ekki) usually for guarding houses and helping the master in hunting. Cats (mundari) are of kept for killing rats which often destroy grains and other household objects. Fowls (perok) are kept by almost all the Minyong families. These are sacrificed in religious ceremonies, and killed in any social function. The eggs and livers of the chicken are used for the divinations. Now a days fowls and eggs are sold, and thus, extra income come to the family.

(e) Agriculture

The purpose and method of cultivation and the nature of crops raised determine the character of agriculture. The Minyongs are known as agricultural community. Agriculture is not merely a source of their livelihood but is more
than that. It is their way of life and gives an expression to their socio-biological existence. Agriculture is the most important means of earning livelihood among them. The economy of the Minyong is based mainly on agriculture. The agricultural activities are generally managed by the member of each individual family. If outside help is required, several persons work by turn in each other’s field in co-operation is called *engul*. A small temporary house (*poyup*) is constructed in the field where they keep their belongings and take rest and sometimes even spend nights during strenuous working season. Almost the entire population is remain engaged in cultivation. Shifting cultivation by slash and burn method (*mopi arik*) is the type of agriculture practiced by them. Jhuming is an age old indigenous method of agriculture done with simple tools, such as machete, hoe and pointed wooden or bamboo digging stick. They raise a mixed crop in their jhum field. In the same plot, they grow paddy, maize, millet, arum, potato, chilli, gourd, ginger, leafy vegetable, etc. If the cultivated plants are attacked by pests, they consult a priest to find out spirit responsible for it and the essential sacrifice is conducted required for its appeasement. As per the advice of the priest, the spirit is propitiated with necessary rites.

(i) **Jhuming**

The nature of the habitat has compelled the Minyongs to follow jhum cultivation. It is a long process starting from taking decision as to which site should be selected for cultivation. It is interspersed with various socio-magical rites and ceremonies. The entire land falling under the jurisdiction of the village
is grouped into three different categories - (a) land for residential purpose, (b) land for games and hunting, and (c) land for the agriculture, including grazing land. Shifting cultivation by slash and burn method is called jhum is the type of agriculture practiced by them. Jhuming is an age old indigenous mode of agriculture done with the help of a *dingi - amsut bangen* - or with a machete. The land for agriculture called *rigman* (over all area) is divided among villages by the natural boundaries such as mountain ridges, rivers, rivulets, big trees, or stones etc. In jhum cultivation a hillock is selected and cleared during the month of January – April by cutting down the jungle. The land assigned for jhuming are divided into a number of patches called *patat/rigmang*. Each *patat* is divided among the families of the village. A plot of land under jhum is used periodically. They cultivate the *patat* for one to three years which they shift to another patch leaving the earlier patch fallow and after that take a new patch for cultivation and left the plot to allow the natural recuperation of soil fertility, so as to use it again after a lapse of 3 - 4 years. They raised a mixed crop in their jhum field. In the same plot they produce crops like different varities of paddy, maize, millet, arum, beans, chilli, pumkin, groud, ginger, tobacco, etc. This method of agriculture engaged both men and women throughout the year.

**(ii) Permanent Cultivation**

Permanent cultivation is also done in the more gentle slopes of hills where irrigation facilities exist. This cultivation is practiced mainly in the valleys and in suitable areas. Demarcations between plots are made by raising earth, stone
(eling), fencing, stone pillars or by some other means. It has been found that a good number of non-tribal families work in the agricultural fields on sharing cropping basis called *rigot innam*. The wet land is owned by individual families and not by clan or village. Because of high yield of wet rice the Minyongs attach great importance to wetland. The Minyongs have the right to transfer their land but they cannot sell their land to another non-tribal, even to another tribal man. The Minyongs have practice of having tenant system and such person cultivate their land year after year.

(iii) Division of Labour

The Minyong society is not stratified in various social classes and there are no social groups, divisions of labour on the basis of social position has no meaning (Srivastava, 1990). The main field of occupation for them is the home and the cultivation field. Nobody feels ashamed of doing any particular job. Both men and women do the clearing of jungle. But the felling trees, fencing and setting fire to the field are entirely of men’s works, but clearing of the debris after burning is done by both. The sowing, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and winnowing are done by both but mostly by women. There are some jobs like ginning of cotton, spinning and weaving which are exclusively done by women. In social and religious affairs only men take part. All killings of animals for offering sacrifices have to be done by men. Women are excluded from religious activities. The women do cleaning, washing, cooking, weaving, rearing, etc., which are not done by males. With the introduction of permanent wet rice
cultivation there has been a little change in the respective occupations of men and women.

(iv) Integral Implement

The traditional agricultural implements of the Minyongs are few in numbers. These implements include machete \((ayok)\), iron axes \((eging)\), \(danki\)
\(bading\) made of wood, \(pakur\) (spade), \(eik\) made of bamboo used to clean bush. Knife \((yoksik)\) is used to cut paddy. The machete is used for clearing jungles and long pointed pole made of wood \((danki)\) are used for digging. During weeding wooden handles with iron \((tiik)\) and scrapers made of bamboo \((eek)\) are commonly used. Headgear \((abong)\) made of bamboo and taku leaves adding cane strips is worn on the head to protect themselves from heat and rain. A conical basket \((egin)\) of the Minyong which is made of bamboo and cane are used during harvesting. The threshing is done by human beings on bamboo mats \((appu)\) are bought home and a big bamboo basket \((papur)\) is used for storing paddy in granary. Winnowing fans \((oppo)\) are used for winnowing paddy. Both men and women carry paddy in conical baskets \((egin)\) on their back from the field to the granary.

(v) Horticulture

Horticulture plays a great role in the economy of the Minyongs. Besides agriculture, the bulk of the economy of the people is connected directly or indirectly with forest and forest produce. A large number of horticulture farms come up where the soil is suitable for plantation. Pine - apple, orange, etc., are
grown mostly in Pasighat area. Jack fruit, mosombi, guava, pear, litchi, mango, star fruit, lemon, sugarcane, etc., are produced in the horticultural gardens by the Minyongs.

(vi) Weaving

Elwin in *A Philosophy for NEFA* observed that ‘The chief art of NEFA is weaving, and it is on the handloom that the greatest progress has been achieved’ (cited in Baishya 2009:50). It is not known when the art of weaving was learnt by the Minyongs. The loom is a family heirloom and it is an inheritable property for the girls. The Minyong loom is small, simple and portable. According to Elwin (1959:35), ‘The women used the single heddle, tension or lion loom of a pattern common in Indonesia, which has a warp of some six yards by eighteen inches. There is no reed; a wooden sword is used to beat up the weft; and the actual weaving is done with a bamboo - tube throw shuttle’. Weaving is an integral part of Minyong life and culture since earliest time. Weaving is confined to women. The women are good weavers and they have their own colour choice and artistic designs of their own. They weave different types of cloth such as sleeveless coat (*galuk*), loin cloth (*ugon*) for male and skirt (*gale*), scarfs, etc., for females. In the early days they wove war - coats of different size and style out of coarse cotton yarns; they now produce cotton rug (*gadu*) which is also called Adi *jim*. The weaving has now become an economic pursuit of the Minyongs because the weavers sell their cloths and make money. There are centres for weaving training cum production at Pasighat, Dipa and other places of East Siang district.
(vii) Other Skills

The Minyongs are expert in basketry and make baskets through two techniques. The two types of basket making technique are: (a) coiling or sewing, and (b) weaving or twiling (Nyori, 1993). Almost all these baskets are of twilled variety with different patterns and designs. Baskets are used for different purposes, therefore, durability and strength of these baskets are more important.

Blacksmithy (yongmo) is another traditional craft practiced by the Minyongs. They have considerable proficiency and preserve their age old knowledge and skills on this craft. They also manufacture most of their weapons themselves. The Adi blacksmiths are expert makers of iron tool like dao, knives, sword, etc.

Dhasmana writes,‘Wood works are not known to the Minyongs of the traditional society (cited in Nyori 1993: 257).

2.8 Social Structure

(a) Moiety, Clan and Sub - clan

The Minyong tribe is bisected into two moieties (pinpong) known as Kuming and Kuri, which further sub divided into smaller clans among which endogamy was strictly forbidden (Roy, 1960). Each moiety later on divided into several clans. Kuming has 15 clans and Kuri consists of 16 clans. These clans are again sub - divided into sub - clans and families. Srivastava (1990: 163) writes, ‘Many of the clans which had sprung from one man formed a group of their own and, since the member were related by blood; the group came to be established as a larger exogamous group. When two or more clans coalesced together in order
to forge a clan brotherhood the group thus formed also functioned as the real clan – *pinro* - and in most cases it regulated marriage’. The Minyong tribe is divided into a number of clans (*opin*) each of which is again divided into a number of sub clans. Each clan and its sub-clan normally trace their descent from one common ancestor. Burghoin (1995:9) writes, ‘The clan continue for a period of seven generation or more and spilt up into more collateral lines’. However, there are some clans who do not have separate common ancestors, but claim their descent directly from Abu Tani. Each clan functions as an exogamous unit. The structure of the Minyong clans is rather complicated and there are various groups and sub-groups. These two are the original and earliest sub divisions of the Minyongs (Srivastava, 1990).

As a clan is an ever increasing unit, in course of time it assumes large proportions and gets itself divided into smaller groups, or sub-clans. The Minyong refer them as *pinmik*. Though these *pinmik* become larger groups after sometime, they retain the basic characteristics of clans. Beresford (1881:164) observed, ‘When they become larger groups they again get sub divided into smaller units known as *erang* which may be termed as lineage and ultimately each lineage is divided into several families - ‘*ramik*’. This process of division of bigger groups into smaller ones is continuous and goes on endlessly. The clans are not totemistic. The clans are fairly widely spread and no clan has any monopolistic rights over any particular village.
(b) Lineage

The sub-clans in course of time, get themselves divided into lineages, which are also strictly exogamous. The Minyong clans are ramified with passage of time and splits into several lineages, which are patrilineal and exogamous in nature. They used common term *opin* for both clan and lineage. All the families under a lineage consider themselves as descendant of a single man. The density of cohesion is stronger in lineage than in clan. It is the duty of a person to help fellow members of his/her lineage in crisis and distress. A clan is named after an ancestor who was renowned for some reason or the other. The sub-clans are strictly exogamous even till today (Srivastava, 1990).

(c) Family

The family is the basic smallest social unit of the Minyongs. The children are reared and brought up under the joint supervision of the parents. Commonly the Minyong have nuclear family. Mibang (1994:36) writes, ‘The joint family system was totally absent among them’. The man who starts a family after marriage is the head of the family and is called *abu*. The father is the sole authority of the family, with all familial power vested in him. However, when he becomes too old, his eldest son may take charge as the head, if he is capable to shoulder the responsibilities of the family although he consults his aged father in matters of decision making. During his life time, he is fully responsible for any misdeed or offence committed by his children. In the family the head does not
interfere or suppress his adult sons or brothers unless the behaviour of the latter compels him to do so.

Among the Minyongs, the bride does not come to her husband’s house immediately after marriage. She remains in her parents’ house for five to six years. Within this period of stay, the husband visits the wife’s house, which is known as *magboginam*. This type of families is known as matri-patrilocal family. The limited accommodation in the house, having only one hearth, causes inconvenience to the married couple to start a new family. So the main family starts to break up into several families. Gradually his other married brothers also establish their respective houses within the village estate. The father provides all help to his sons for establishing neolocal residences, constructs a granary and allotting a plot for cultivation. As a rule, sons cannot claim any share of the property during the lifetime of their father. The youngest son generally lives with his aged parents. Though the sons live in different houses in the same village, even after separations it does not affect their relationships. The Minyong society is patrilineal and the family property passes through the male line. The daughters are debarred from getting any share of land and house. A father may gift away a plot to a married daughter out of love. In the traditional Minyong family, the husband and wife jointly share the economic responsibilities. Each member has special spheres of activities clearly assigned on the basis of age and sex. The men engage themselves in heavier works. On the other hand, women have more
responsibilities in day – to - day household chores. In the performance of rituals
and festivals, the Minyongs observe a number of taboos and the taboos.

(d) Kinship

The Minyongs have an intricate kinship network. Some of the kinship
terms to refer different kins among them are son (aw), daughter (ome), father
(abu), mother (ane), younger brother (biro), younger sister (birme), father’s
brother (payi), mother sister (moyi), elder sister (mem), elder brother
(bibing), father’s sister (nani), mother’s brother (kaki), etc.,. They recognize two
types of kins: (i) kins related through blood (adung erang) and (ii) kins related
through marriage (ajung ajon erang); both the consanguineal and affinal kins
have specific places in the kinship network. A Minyong use a wide variety of
terms for his patrilineal and matrilineal kins. As the Minyong society is
patrilineal, he, naturally, gives more respect and consideration to his kins in his
patrilineage than to those in his matrilineage. In his matrilineage also he
recognizes, though not as many kins as in his patrilineage, quite a few near ones.
Srivastava (1990:135) writes, ‘The most important is his mother’s brother who
exercise a great deal of influence on him and when his eye or any other limb is
injured by someone, the fine that is realized from the culprit goes to the mother’s
brother as ‘the eyes belong to the mother’s brother’’. A Minyong thus functions
as a link between the members of the two lineages. There is a wide range of
kinship terminologies used by the Minyongs, though a number of there are
classificatory. One particular kinship term is thus used for a wide variety of relationships. The term son (aw) and daughter (ome) have the widest coverage.

(e) Marriage

It is through marriage that the unbroken line of family descent is maintained, so the Minyongs consider marriage as an important institution meant for the continuity of the lineage and culture. For the Minyongs, marriage does not mean a mere relationship of a man and a woman; rather it is a relationship between two families in particular and clans in general. The Minyong society is endogamous, and strictly follows the rule of clan exogamy. Marriage within the same clan is rigidly prohibited. According to Roy (1960:208), ‘The Minyongs are traditionally monogamous, but among the rich polygyny was also practiced. Polyandry was absolutely unknown’. Mibang (1994:41) opines, ‘Polygyny is permissible under certain unavoidable circumstances. For instance, if a married woman happens to be barren, the husband can go for second marriage’. According to their custom, if there is a widow who is young enough, the brother of the deceased, whether married or unmarried, has the right to marry her and this result in polygyny. As the Minyong society is basically an agricultural society, marriage to a number of women means economic utility of the women as agriculture workers.
(i) Marriage Type

There are different types of marriage prevalent among the Minyongs. Social sanction is the key factor of a valid marriage. The different types of marriage among the Minyongs are:

(a) Marriage by Negotiation

Marriage by negotiation (*nyamdang monam*) is preferred in Minyong society. All the clan relatives are invited for consultation. The parents generally settle the marriage in consultation with the children without ignoring their likes and dislikes. Nowadays, the parents negotiate a marriage after taking the consent of their son and daughter. In arranged marriage, the parents of the boy send a marriage proposal to the girl’s parents through a middle man or woman (*gundo*). If the proposal is accepted, they perform the *kepel* (betrothal) ceremony to formalize the marriage proposal.

(b) Marriage by Love and Elopement

Love marriages (*mibang minsinam*) are common among the Minyong. The boys and the girls have enough freedom in marriage, but they should honour the prohibited degrees of relationship. After knowing about an affair between a boy and a girl, the parents negotiate the marriage. So love marriage also is formalized as a negotiated marriage. Marriage by elopement (*mibang dukbo minsinam*), though rare, is in vogue among the Minyongs. When the parents do not give consent but the boy and the girl are adamant to marry, they elope to some other village and live like husband and wife. According to the Minyong custom, unless
the marriage is socially approved the couple is not considered as husband and
wife and the children born out of such union are considered illegitimate. Usually,
after a period of time when the wrath of the parents subsides they return to the
village. The parents then legalized the marriage through performance of kepel
(betrothal). In most of the elopement cases the parents of either the boy or the
girl refuse to give consent initially because of economic status in consideration of
the other party. A rich family always wants to establish a marital relationship
with another rich family considering not only richness, but also family dignity
and integrity.

(c) Marriage by Exchange

Marriage by exchange \((\text{birme apeng})\) is possible and permitted in the
Minyong society. In this type of marriage, two men exchange their sisters.
Marriage by exchange takes place between two families belonging to two
different clans. Kepel at the initial stage is to be given. In this type of marriage, a
man cannot marry someone’s sister and gave him his brother’s daughter in
exchange. The partners must belong to the same generation. On the other hand, if
a man gives his sister to someone and does not take the other man’s sister, he will
ask someone of his clan members to take the girl if he so desires, which is not
binding.

(ii) Age at Marriage

Attainment of puberty by a girl signifies that she has reached the
minimum age for marriage. For a boy, the age of marriage depends on his
capacity, whether he can maintain a family independently or not. A boy may marry after he attains sixteen years. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the age of marriage, it varies from individual to individual in the Minyong society.

(iii) Bride Price

A girl is a precious economic asset in the Minyong society who conducts many tasks in household and in agricultural field. After her marriage the girl leaves her parent’s home depriving the family of a girl by taking her away in marriage. This is a loss to the girls family, which has to be compensated by a payment befitting the status of the family so the bride price (ome are), it is a token of gift and presents to the girl’s house from the groom’s family. When the marriage is finalized as far as practicable, presents are given in two pairs indicating the union of two souls (Barooah, 2007). Meat presents are thus given are distributed among the clan members of the girl. The son in law (magboo) is required to sacrifice a pig in the yeeling ceremony, performed after marriage. According to the custom, the portion between the neck and the legs of the sacrificed mithun and little smoked meat and dried fish are given to his parents – in - law. On the other fore leg of the sacrificed pig is given to the sister of the bridegroom and the heart, liver and intestine to the clan members. The presentation of gift to the parents – in - law by the son – in - law continues till the death of his wife. Whenever any sacrifice is made in the house, it is customary among the Minyongs is to send a large portion of the meat to the parent – in - laws’ house. Similarly, in community festivals like Solung, Dorung, etc., the son
– in-law is required to send presents, i.e., the meat of pigs, fowls, squirrels, mithuns, or meat of the any hunted animals with the foreleg to his parent-in-laws’ house.

At the time of departure of a married daughter to her husband’s house, she is given traditional garbs and ornaments, costly beads and necklaces, by her parents. The ornaments, beads and necklaces received from the parents become her absolute property, nobody has the right to dispose these items without her consent. Moreover, her mother also gives her livestock and seeds of different vegetables and paddy to start a new family of their own. Unlike bride price, the clan members of the boy do not get any share of these items.

(iv) Incest

In the Minyong society some taboos are imposed on the kins in so far as their marital relation. The most important of these is the rule of incest (*mipak*). Incest is dreaded from the days of Kojum Koje, the ancestor of the Minyong, who suffered stomach trouble by eating the baby born out of the incestuous relation between Karpung and Karduk, who lived in the same land (Srivastava, 1990). The main reason for prohibiting incestuous relations as given by the Minyong is their horror of sex relations with people ‘having the same blood’. Sexual relations between members of the same clan are also treated as incest. It is not restricted to blood relatives only, but the Minyong forbids sex relations between father-in-law and daughter-in-law, mother-in-law and son-in-law, mother’s brother’s wife and husband’s sister’s son and a few others near
kins who obviously are not related by ‘ties of blood’. Thought the incidence of such cases of incest and clan incest is rare, it is by no means altogether absent. Srivastava (1990:152) noted, ‘A Minyong does it without intention. It just happens. An offender is not at fault because he does not commit such an offence when he is in his senses. ‘It is the desire of Donyi - Polo’, or else, ‘some evil spirits drive him to commit it’. It is believed that the man who indulges in such a sex relation cannot be held responsible and so no fines are realized or any punishment imposed on him. The children born out of such union have no social handicaps except that in general public they are sometimes ridiculed and they are referred to as ‘one born out of an illegitimate union’.

(f) **Property and Inheritance**

The Minyongs society is patriarchal and patrilineal. Descent is always agnatic and the sons inherit the property of the family. Property can be divided into two types, immovable and movable. Immovable property consists of land, house, grazing land, orchards, hunting areas, fishing areas, etc.; movable property consists of valuable beads, necklaces, metal bowls, metal plates, guns, etc. The children take the title of the father. Each married son established a new house building. If the father dies, the property is looked after by the mother provided she does not marry again. The wife acquires a right over the property after her husband’s death. Generally, the youngest son, by of his being the last to remain with him and to look after him become the inheritor after his father’s death. In the Minyong society ultimogeniture is practiced and the youngest son
gets the lion share of the both movable and landed property. Daughters have no right to claim parental property. They get only some personal property of their mother. The widow cannot inherit any property but she can use it as long as she alive and stayed with the family (Borgohain, 1995).

(g) Village Organization

The village organization (kebang) is a popular word and it is the court of justice for the Minyongs. It has been the custodian of the customary law which governs the social conduct. The kebang is so important in the Minyong society that practically no aspect of their life is beyond its preview. Kebang are organized in dormitory. Ering (1978:25) writes, ‘Traditionally all male members of the village are counted as members of the village kebang…..A man who does not participate and ventilate his thought in the kebang is ridiculed by his friends as ‘eunuch’. Any interested person of the concerned village can attend and listen to the discussion over any case. All male members of a village are its general members. The village head man (gams) are chosen from within the village on the basis of their personal merit, ability and knowledge of the traditional lore. It was also agreed that all disputes and claims of the human beings should be submitted to the kebang. The findings, decisions and directions of the kebang must be accepted and observed by all (Bomjen, 1977).

(h) Dormitory

Roy’s (1960) comprehensive report on the Adis (Padam - Minyongs) of Arunachal Pradesh establishes the vital roles played by youth dormitories. The
dormitory is usually constructed in the centre of the village. It was also used as the place where the unmarried young men of the village slept, and from where different approaches to it can be watched and guarded. The Minyong society has mainly three types of dormitories – for the boys it is called dere and for girls it is called rasheng and retek for the old persons. The bachelors’ dormitory is a very important institution in Minyong society. It is not only a training centre for all practical purposes but also the centre and upholder of cultural traits. The dormitory is also used for extra ordinary gathering convoked to deal with a sudden emergency, such as arrival of important person to the village and during rainy season, it is turn into a rendezvous of gossip and handi work. These social institutions play an important role in developing the youth to responsible human beings by teaching them about discipline, co-operation, culture and customs. Dormitory is used as a sleeping house by all young men from the age of 10 till they take wives to their homes. The dormitory is also used for holding different types of feasts, festivals and meetings, especially those of the kebang.

2.9 Religion

A complex system of faith in the spiritual world and side by side, the concept of supreme being are the two important factors which characterize religious aspects of the Minyong. Their religious outlook has been to a great extent coloured by their environment. They predominantly believe in the existence of invisible spirits (uyus), who are not sympathetic to man. Besides spiritism and animism they believe in a hierarchy of powerful deities responsible
for the creation and sustenance of the moral order of things. They believe in a
high god known as Donyipolo (the sun and the moon). Donyipolo god is the
nearest approximation to the supreme deity. They reign unchallenged in the
heavens and are the ‘eyes of the world’. They watch everything and the witness.
They are endowed with light that illuminates the world and lifts the cover of
darkness and are favoured with a position high above in the sky to overlook all.
They are extremely regular in their courses across the heavenly expanse.

The Minyong believe in both benevolent and malevolent spirits. The evil
spirits are believed to be capable of causing diseases, miseries and misfortunes to
human beings on man in both of his earthly life and after life. Propitiation of the
evil spirits is an important religious aspect of the Minyongs. Beside Donyipolo,
other essentially benevolent spirits though lower in the hierarchy, are Doying
Bote, Dadi Bote, Kongki Komang, Kine Nane and Gumin Soying. In various
ways they look after the welfare of men and are actually guardian family spirits.
They are not prone to take offence easily, but once displeased, may causes mortal
injury to those incurring their wrath by some serious transgressions. It is believed
by the Minyongs that different spirits are responsible for causing different
diseases. They also believe that Kongki Komang decides the destiny of a new
born child. He is supposed to write in the heart (ape) of each child its destiny.

Religious practices of the Minyongs are mainly shamanistic. Supernatural
belief, superstition, etc. still play a dominiant role in the Minyong society.
Malignant spirits preponderate over the good ones, and receive attention most.
Propitiation of these spirits seems to be the main concern of their religious practices. The Minyongs strongly believe if the malevolent spirits are not propitiated regularly, they may bring disease and distress to the people.

(a) High God

The Minyong believe in the existences of many spirits (uyus), benevolent as well as malevolent. Apart from the uyus, it is however, significant that starting from magico-religious beliefs, they have attained to a conception of high god regarded as the Supreme creator, who is just, benevolent and good (Borgohain, 1995). They consider Donyipolo, as the supreme god or high god. They do not offer any sacrifice to this god but offer different items to the uyus. A complex system of faith in the spiritual world and side by side the concept of supreme being are the two important factors, which characterize the Minyong religion. They believe in the high god high Donyipolo, Donyi (the sun) and Polo (the moon). According to the Minyongs, Donyi (sun) is female and Polo (moon) is male. Besides their literal meaning, the combine word Donyipolo refers to a divine force operating from heaven. Naturally Donyipolo is looked upon as the custodian of law and truth. The Minyongs are invoking Donyipolo in the beginning of the kebangs while settling the disputes, to reveal the truth and to expose the falsehood. Traditional administration of justice is conducted in the name of Donyipolo. Donyipolo refers to a divine force who is invisible, powerful, omnipotent and Almighty operating from heaven. Apart from Donyipolo, there are other benevolent group of gods and goddesses who are
nearer to Donyipolo according to their genealogy of creation and beliefs. Donyipolo occupies a place in the centre, while other gods and goddesses who are lower in hierarchy.

(b) Gods and Deities

The Minyong have many gods and deities, both benevolent and malevolent, whom they consider to be responsible for their prosperity and misery. These gods and deities are believed to have a direct influence on human lives, and hence propitiation of them is an important aspect in their ritualistic practices. Sacrifices and offerings are made to appease them. According to Ering (1983:8), ‘Among the benevolent gods and goddesses of the Minyongs, Doying - Bote, Yidum Bote, Pedong Nane, Kongki - Bote, Boki - Mone, Bomong - Mone, Kine - Nane, Dadi Bote are prominent’. Each deity is associated with certain tasks and act as a protector and guardian of various aspects related to nature which revolves around their daily life. This included the food crops, houses, animals, etc. Doying Bote (god of wisdom and knowledge) is manifested for imparting knowledge, Kine Nane (goddess of grain) for good harvesting and prosperity, Dadi Bote (god of domestic animal) for the health and prosperity of animals, Gumin Soyin (god of household and protection) for keeping and protection of mankind and Kongki Komang (god who designs physical form of man) determine human status. They are very kind to human being but stop blessing when one deviates from the principle of Donyipolo and abstain from performing periodical offering through the festivals. Different evil spirits take
advantage of this unresponsive period and cause all types of sufferings and misfortunes to human being. Some malevolent deities also tuned to hostile spirits when people violet the rules of conduct. The man could get back their mercy and pardon only by atonement in the form of offering acceptable to them (Choudhury, 1971). In various ways, they look after the welfare of men and actually they are the guardian family deities.

(i) Benevolent Deities

Chakma writes, ‘Epom, Kili and Togong and others who directly cause diseases and death though they themselves are ‘subordinate agents’ of Benji Banma, a benevolent spirit, and controller of men’s destiny, are also aying uyus (cited in Roy, 1960:235). There are other hostile spirits like Kine - nana Ute - Poro (goddess of wealth and prosperity), Togungyogam (god of protection), but in most cases little is known about them beyond mere names.

(ii) Malevolent Deities

Chakma seems to think, ‘Of another group or class of evil spirits when he describes Sitkeng Kedeng and Nipo - Nite as low - land evil spirits (aying uyu). The latter he declares to be the commonest and most malevolent spirit harming people of all sexes and age’s (cited in Roy, 1960:235). Malevolent spirits are more active than benevolent. Among the malevolent spirits – Urom (spirits of dead person), Nipa Porak (common evil spirits), Asi - Among Uyu (spirits of jungles), Epom (spirit of the jungle), Banji - Batmang (wicked spirit) et al., are mostly feared by the Minyongs. The Minyongs are more concern with the hostile
spirits than the friendly one. That is why their religion, as practiced in their daily life, appears to an observer from outside to be a chain of appeasements of outraged spirits. But beyond the external coating of malignity the Minyongs do not fail to recognize a favourable attitude in nature and to realize that all the necessities of their life, and all that they deem covetable and desirable come ultimately from her. She, however, is a hard housekeeper and keeps her treasures under the strict guardianship of spirits who permit access to the store only on scrupulous observance of a number of rules of conduct (Roy, 1960). No infringement of these rules - however slight or unintentional is tolerated and mercy and pardon may be purchased only by atonement in form of offerings acceptable to them. A spring dries up all of a sudden; bamboo groves wither and die; crops fail; fishes disappear from the stream; etc., the Minyong believe, such natural calamities are indications of the wrath of these spirits.

(c) Crisis Rites

(i) Birth

Birth in the Minyong society is a general feature of the life taken as the boon of god. The family life goes on as usual, without much disturbances and there are no religious rites to encumber the normal process (Roy, 1960). The Minyong believe that women conceive only by the blessing of god and pregnancy is considered as a natural phenomenon. Srivastava (1990:68) noted that, ‘The birth of a child takes place at the expectant mother’s parents house’. They are not interested in having regular checkup and taking modern medicines
during pregnancy. A parturient mother does all the household works till she does not feel any physical problems. No special food is given to her. Such women are to be observed a series of taboos. Generally child birth takes places inside the house in the corner of the living room, where elderly women take part. No children and male members are permitted there. If the labour is difficult, pigs, fowls, etc., are sacrifices to Nipong. The sacrificed fowls are not eaten but thrown away in the jungle (Roy, 1960). Umbilical cord is cut with the help of a bamboo split. After child birth till the falling of umbilical cord, the mother is restricted to go out from the house, and she takes food separately. There are some specific taboos imposed on food for the mother. During that period, if the newborn baby suffers from any physical problem, they believe that it is due to the breach of taboo by some consanguineal or affinal kin of the child or due to the action of malignant spirit. In this case, local priest through divination identifies the responsible spirit and necessary propitiation and sacrifices are done. A thread or a bangle may be tied to the wrists of the child so that the spirits around may recognized him as a human child and may not carry him away to the spirit world under any wrong impression of the child being a spirit itself.

(ii) Puberty

Among the Minyongs, generally the girls attainment of puberty or adolescence is determined by the swelling of breasts and the onset of first menstrual flow, and growth of beard and moustache and change of voice in case of boys. No taboo is imposed on a menstruating girl either in the matter of food
or actions. There is no customary rule for a girl to take bath after the expiry of her period. The first menstrual flow of a girl goes unattended by any ceremony. As there is no special initiation ceremony for marking the occasion, a girl passes into womanhood almost imperceptibly.

(iii) Death

The Minyongs believe that after death of a person the soul goes to heaven or hell according to the nature of life the deceased has lived in this world. Normal death is believed to be the cause of old age. But death on sickness, accident, etc., are believed to be the warth of the spirits. The Minyongs, make a clear distinction between the natural death and premature death due to disease and accident. Death sometimes comes suddenly or prematurely. Propitiatory and expiatory rites are performed to keep the evil of premature death away. A baby born death receives aerial burial (Srivastava, 1990). The dead body is packed in a covered gourd shell and hung high from a tree. Accidental deaths whether in infancy or in the wilds or by drowning in a river evoke a sense of awe, and longer taboo period (genna) observed. The dead are buried. The burial customs of the Minyongs are very primitive indeed. Roy (1960:251) writes, ‘Usually the burial takes place a few days after the death. This gap is perhaps due to the idea of allowing relatives living away from the village to come and be present at the funeral’. Roy (ibid: 252) added, ‘The body is wrapped in a sheet of cloth and is made to lie on one side with its knees touching the chin. In that position, it is laid down in the grave. The grave is lined in the inside with leaves and branches and
the floor is covered with a low bamboo platform. Over the body are placed planks so as to cover it and then the hole is filled up with earth. A grave cloth, porcelain necklaces, and a brass plate or pot are buried for the use of the deceased in his life in the after world’.

A little hut is built over the grave, possibly for the protection of the dismembered soul from rain and sun. Rice and rice beer are offered on the grave for five to six days, but rice is left for a year. A fire is lit over the grave which remains there for a 20 days or a year. As long as the fire is kept burning, the hut is also kept in repair. The dead man’s helmet, weapons of war and the chase, the trophies he had taken in his life, etc., are hung up by the grave till they rot (Roy, 1960). From the date of the death, a few days are observed as taboo. During these days, they abstain from certain items of food. It depends on the financial ability of the heir as to what should be offered as sacrifice. A portion of the sacrificed animals is offered to the soul of the dead man to whom the soul of the sacrificed animal is requested to go.

2.10 Fairs and Festivals

The Minyongs are festival loving people. They observed a variety of festivals throughout the year in accordance with their religious belief and customary rites. Festivals form an inevitable aspect of the socio - cultural and religious life of the Minyongs, which give them ample opportunity to enjoy, dance, eat and to drink. The people in the community basis do arrangement of the festivals where the priests perform the ritual part of each festival. As the date of
festival approach all the Minyongs engage themselves in preparatory work such as, making of local beer, collocation of mithun, pig, goat, fowl, etc. Each festival has a distinct purpose for which it is celebrated. The festival of the Minyong is seasonal corresponding to different agricultural production or connected with fertility rites, marry making and religious in character irrespective of their observance by individuals, families or community as a whole. The most popular festivals of the Minyong are - Aran, Droung, Etor and Solung. The main items of sacrifices made in these festivals are mithun, pig, fowl, egg, etc.

(i) Aran/Unying

Aran/Unying festival is celebrated in 7th March to mark the change of season and the beginning of the seasonal jhum cultivation. It is the first festival of Minyong new year. Yakjong dance is performed in this festival by men and women. Boys and girls enjoy themselves on the occasion irrespective of their age, where the dancers carry sticks with designs created by removing the barks in certain patterns. Again in Aran the tapu dance, a kind of war dance is perform, the dancers vigorously re - enact the actions of war, its glory details and the triumphant cries of the warriors. These dances have led to certain forms of dancing which jointly narrate a story.

(ii) Dorung

Dorung is the hunting festival and is celebrated by the Minyongs in 13th January before harvesting. This is a festival for organized hunting where the hunters go to jungle and spend three nights and come back with the prey which is
kept in the dormitory for one night and the following day the meat is distributed among the villagers. The main hunter gets little more flesh of the prey. He also gets the head of the killed animal which becomes a trophy for him. The Dorung festival in this days is not celebrated by the Minyong because the grown up people are against the animal hunting.

(iii) Etor

Etor festival is celebrated in 15\textsuperscript{th} May each year. ‘Etor’ means ‘fencing’ in Adi - Minyong language. It is agriculture based festival. The festival marks the beginning of the annual agriculture cycle. The Minyong come up together to repair and put up new fences around the villages.

(iv) Mopun

Mopun festival is celebrated during April or May to offer prayers to goddess Kine Nane for blessing the people with healthy crops. Ponung dance is performed during this festival. The themes of the ponung dance are connected with mythological stories.

(v) Solung

Solung festival is celebrated annually in the first week of the month of September. According to Rukbo (1986:2), ‘Literally, the word ‘Solung’ denotes combination of two words – Eso (mithun) and Alung (a flock). To combine these two words into one, the first syllabi of two words is dropped, then it comes as ESO + ALUNG = SOLUNG’. It is celebrated for five days with feasting and dancing. It is a harvest festival performed after the sowing of seeds and
transplantation, to seek for future bumper crops. *Ponung* dance is part and parcel of Solung festival. During the festival mithun is sacrificed. In this festival girls dance round the priest who recites *abang*, i.e; (religious literature represented mainly by rhapsodies), narrating the creation of the animals, especially mithun and pig, and also the story of introduction of crops. At the last day of the Solung, thron and indigenous weaponry are displayed along the passage of the houses, they believe that the objects would protect people from evil spirits.