

# Products and Technique of Textile in Idu Mishmi Tribe

Dr. Fames Linggi<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Rajen Miwu<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Riko Mihu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Economics, IGG College, Tezu

<sup>2,3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, IGG College, Tezu

## Abstract

This article is an attempt to study the various types of textile production and its technique in Idu Mishmi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The textile production in this tribe is done manually by using simple tools and implements of bamboo and wood. It also discuss about various types of garments being produced by weavers for both male and female, challenges being faced by them in terms of revenue and cost of production.

**Keywords:** Textile, Implements, Weavers, Cost Of Production

## Introduction

The earliest beginning of weaving in Idu Mishmi Tribe is shrouded in mystery as the people traced it in mythological world, which is not acceptable in real world. However, the tradition of weaving by women to fulfil the needs of clothing existed from the time immemorial as it can be transcended from the reports of earliest explorer in Mishmi Hills. In 1855, Edward Tuite Dalton quoted that,

they were probably the first people on this side of the Himalayas to discover the valuable properties of Rhea nivea, and many others of the nettle tribe; with the fibre of one of these nettles they weave a cloth so strong and stiff that made into jackets, it is used by themselves and by the Abors as a sort of armour. They supply themselves and the Abors with clothing, and their textile fabrics of all kinds always sold well at the Saikwah market.

In 1873, A. Hamilton quoted that

It comprises a short, sleeveless Tibetan jacket and an attenuated skirt made from the Rhea Nivea, which with other jungle nettles is made into a rough, tough, and very fibrous cloth.

The extensive survey on Idu Mishmi Inhabitant area was carried out in 1912-13 from the strategic point of view. According to the report of Captain G.A. Nevill, Political Officer of Dibong Survey,

The women do not carry and can only be made to do so when subjected to great pressure. Amongst the midus the women do little work except weave cloth and look after the children and house, even in the fields men do the bulk of the work.

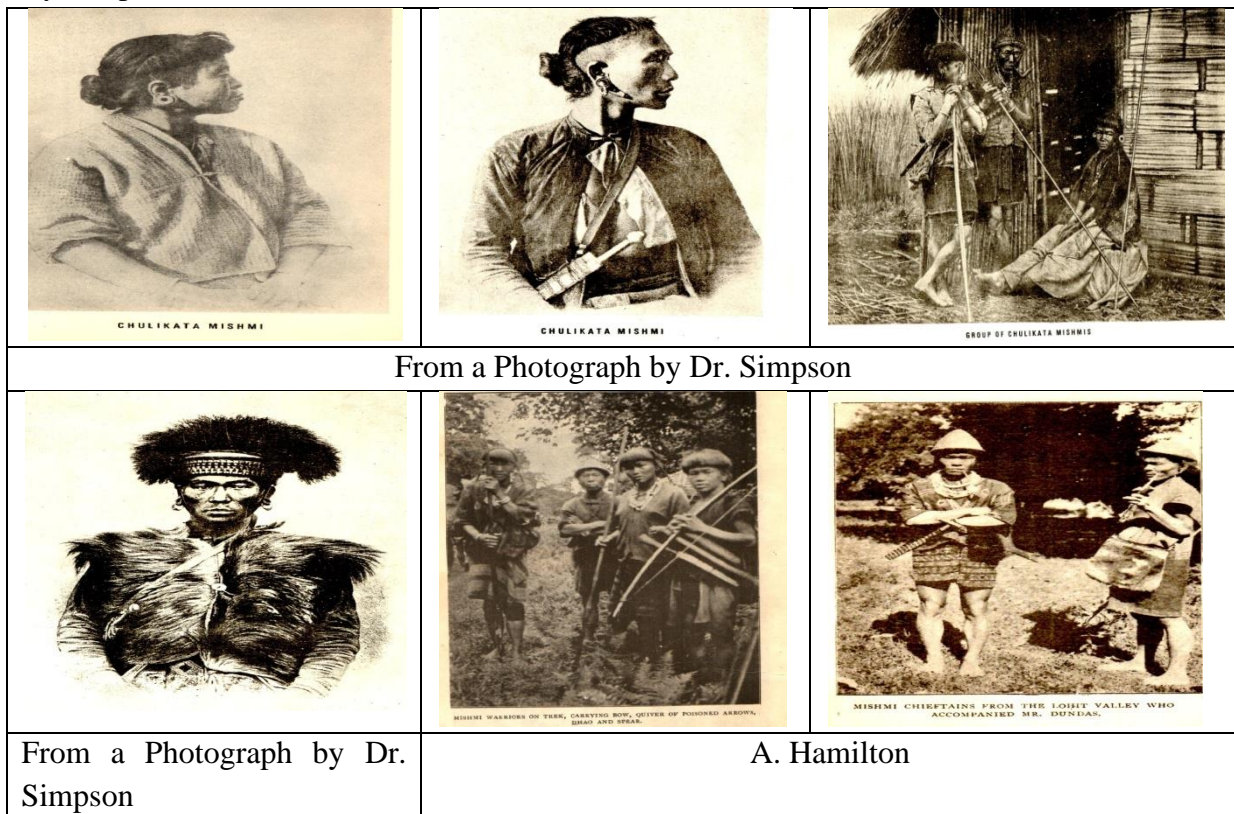
From all these reports, it can be summed up that the Idu Mishmi tribe never depended on other for their basic clothing requirements. They have ingeniously developed the knowledge of procuring yarn and dyes from the natural resources abundantly available to their neighbouring areas and hence fulfilled their basic requirement of clothing.

**Organisation of Production**

As quoted by Captain G.A. Nevill that Idu women do little work except weaving and looking after household in the above preceding page, however, the process of weaving itself is time consuming and require long time from procurement of raw materials to upto finished products. The stage wise process of manufacturing of yarn in early days is as:-

- Stage 1: Collection of barks of Nahpre, Mallu and Ahje (nettle fibre) plant from the forest.
- Stage 2: The collected barks were splitted into thin pieces as per the required size.
- Stage 3: Splitted thin pieces size barks were buried along with ash in the hearth for four or five days.
- Stage 4: Buried barks were kept out and dried it in sunlight.
- Stage 5: Barks were further splitted into thin sizes and joined to make a skein.
- Stage 6: These skeins were boiled along with wild creeper (Ely) to dye it a red colour or leaves of Makalu plant to dye it black colour.

Another source of yarn is raw cotton, which was either farm or directly collected from the forest. This was spun into thread with the help of spinning. Subsequently, as per the requirements, the yarn or woollen bowl were prepared. In early days, whole this process of procuring finished yarn required engagement collection of raw materials and processed throughout the year. The below picture were taken by Simpson and Hamilton in 1855 and 1873.





In all these photographs, the attires are made from the yarn manufactured by barks of the nettle fibre plants after going through the stages as mentioned above. The below picture is the recent one which was taken in 2006.



After the completion of collection of yarn, then preparation for the loom set starts. At the time of loom set preparation, one person is required for the weft insertion. A person has to hold the other end of the loom and another person has to sit at the other end, pass the woolen bowl from horizontal pole, and

give it back at the other end and so on. This procedure continues until it completes the required size of the loom and size of the loom depends on the type of the products. Generally, the loom of the skirt is longer than the coat. The helper for loom set preparation is engaged from any female from the family members or hired on mutual reciprocity.

Once the loom set completed, the weaving starts. The completion of weaving depends upon design and motifs. The more motifs and design, the more embroidery works and longer the weaving time.



Loom Set of Coat (Etoma)



Loom Set of Skirt (Thuwe)



Loom Set of Coat (Anatubru)



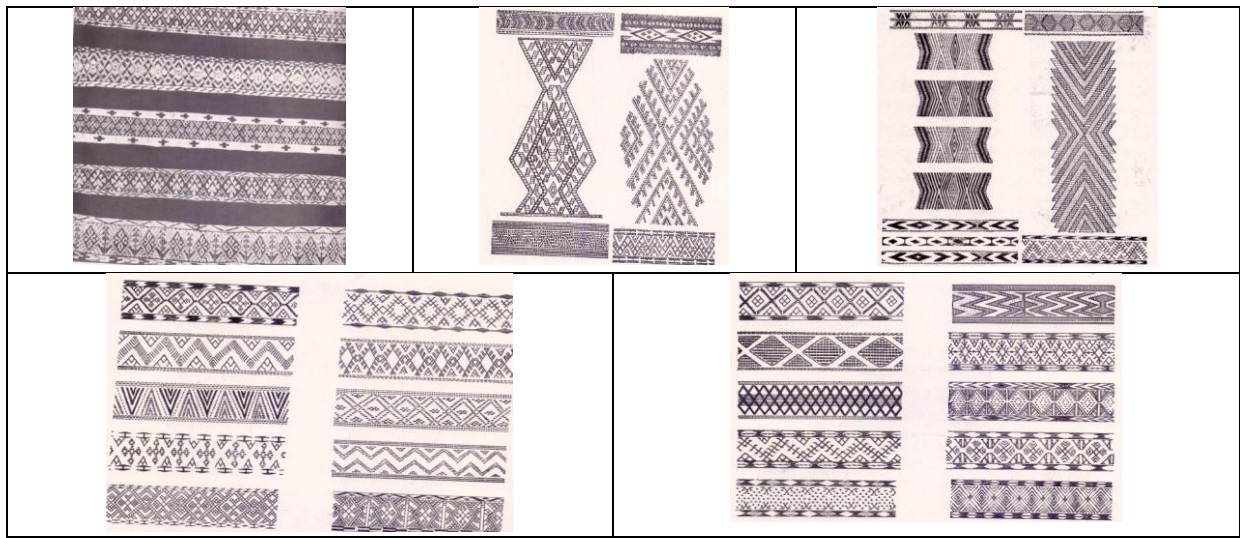
Loom Set of Warrior Coat (Etondre)



Loom Set of Loin Loom (Lappu)






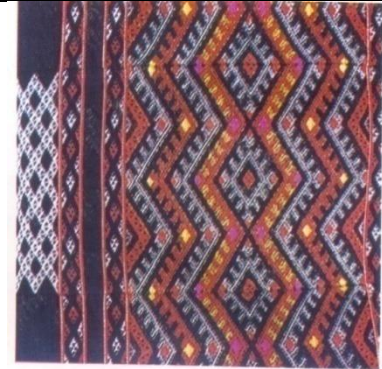
Loom Set for Skirt (Thuwe)

The diversity of motifs and designs of Idu Mishmi coat are presented in the subsequent picture.



Designs on Idu Mishmi Coat (Adapted from The Art of The North-East Frontier of India, by Verrier Elwin, 1988)

The evidence of expertise and dexterity of Idu Mishmi women in weaving can be observed in the production of various types and design of cloths. The status of the person can be identified from the cloths which he or she is wearing. For example, Black and White Coat (Tipha-Lopha) was the coat of those people who never had conducted a Reh festival or symbolism of poor people. Whereas other coat like Etoma and Annatubru coats meant only for rich or renown person those who had conducted Reh Festival. Some of the cloths are presented in the below picture along with caption.

		
<p>Female Coat (Etopolo)</p>	<p>Male Coat (Etoma)</p>	<p>Warrior Coat (Etondre)</p>
		
<p>Male &amp; Female Coat (Annatubru)</p>	<p>Black and White Coat (Tipha-Lopha)</p>	<p>Highly Embroidered Skirt (Thuma)</p>

		
Highly Embroidered Skirt (Thuma)	Mild Embroidered Skirt (Thuwe)	Simple Embroidered Skirt (Thuwe)
		
Loin Loom (Lappu)	Loin Loom (Lama)	Blanket (Badu)
		
Front view of Priest Skirt	Back view of Priest Skirt	Priest Coat

The price of the products depends upon the labour cost involved in producing it. Further, the design and motifs in the cloth determine the labour cost. Generally, for simple cloth without any motifs can be completed within three or four days and fifteen to twenty days for heavy motifs and design cloth. Depending upon the motifs and its design, the price of the cloth ranges from rupees twelve hundred to five thousand five hundred.

### EMERGING SCENARIO

With the expansion of the market in the present era, the weavers need not required to manufacture yarn and woollen by themselves. They can procure all the raw materials from the market as

per the requirement as well as these facilitates with multicolour choice. Intricate embroidery works and attractive motif in the cloth Idu Mishmi textile products is popular among the other tribes also. Recently, in December 2019, GI for textile products has been done by Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society (an apex organisation of Idu Mishmi Tribe) to promote the products in global market.

The impact of emergence of market to local people can be assessed in terms of substitution of many products by the market. The loin loom and local blanket are totally replaced by the market products i.e. half pant, long pant and market blanket. Skirts and coats are also losing their utility in comparison to earlier days. Comparatively, the cost of local coats and skirts are higher than the same utility of coat and skirts available in the market. So, people particularly the younger generation prefer to wear the bazaar products than the local products. Only few transactions taking place for local products which is meant to meet the occasional purposes of the local people.

The enormity and dexterity of handloom products in Idu Mishmi tribe reflects the ingenuity and expertise of women in weaving activities. However, in the present globalisation era, the question is not to embrace the beauty of handloom products but to sustain its production amidst the competition from the bazaar products. In fact, the price of the local product is costlier than the bazaar products but when it is assessed with the labour cost than the weaver are getting meagre amount from it. Despite non profitability position, constant weaving poses eyesight weaknesses, pain in shoulder and waist due to maximum sitting and concentration during embroidery works in loom set. If the society wants to develop this sector at the global level, then priority should be accorded to the technique of productions. For this integrated efforts needed from the community based organisations, government and intellectuals specialised in textile to innovate tools and equipment to replace the old back strap loom.

## CONCLUSION

From the above pictures of various types of cloth weaved by the Idu Mishmi women by using back strap loom, it can be inferred that the Idu Mishmi community never dependent on other tribe for their clothing requirements. It was compulsory for the women to have the knowledge of weaving to fulfil the clothing needs of their family members or solely dependent on women folk for clothing requirements. However, priest coat and skirt are weaved only by few expertise women and can be worn only by priest in religious ceremony.

## REFERENCES

1. Baruah, T. K.M., (1960) : The Idu Mishmi, Directorate of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.
2. Bhattacharjee, T., (1983) : Idus of Mathu and Dri Valley, Directorate of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.
3. Cooper, T.T. (1873): The Mishmee Hills, Mittal Publications, New Delhi-110059 (India).
4. Dalton, E. T. (1872): Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing.
5. Devi, Laxmi (1968): Ahom-Tribal Relations (A Political Study), Published by Shri K.N. Dutta Baruah, Lawyer's Book Stall, Panbazar, Guwahati, Assam.
6. Elwin, V., (1957): A Philosophy of NEFA, Directorate Of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.



7. Elwin, V., (1988) : The Art Of The North-East Frontier Of India, Directorate Of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.
8. Hamilton, A. (1983): In Abor Jungles of North-East India, Mittal Publications, Delhi
9. Mackenzie, Alexander (1979): The North-East Frontier of India, Prefatory Introduction by Prof. B.K. Roy Burman, Mittal Publications, New Delhi (India)
10. Mills, A.J. Moffat ((1984): Report of the Province of Assam, Publication Board, Assam
11. Nevill, G.A (1913): Report on the Dibong Survey and Exploration Expedition 1912-13, Printed at the Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1913.
12. Reid, Sir Robert (1942): History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, Assam Government Press, Shillong.