UNDERSTANDING NAMING PATTERNS AND KIN TERMS OF THE GALO TRIBE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

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Abstract:
The naming patterns and different kin terms of the Galo tribe are interesting and vital in manifesting their distinct socio-cultural identity. The naming pattern follows a patrilineal method, which is generally disyllabic,, comprise of two syllables only. The last syllable of the father's name is used as the first syllable of child's name. Accordingly the names of all Galos conform to this age-old genealogical tradition. However, some child's name is also kept from the last syllable of a paternal uncle (father's brother) and not from the biological father. It is done only to show love and respect towards the brother concerned. In recent times, the naming of child after their paternal aunt has also started which is a kind of change in the naming pattern. There is also a practice of naming the child based on their physical appearances, the relative positions of the child in family, and attitudes of parents towards the child. However, these names are also suffixed with the last syllable of father's name. These distinctive attributes of the naming pattern are equally found in the names of some human body parts, animals, birds, things, and objects as well. Another interesting practice among the Galo is that of using different kin terms for addressing the members of family and relatives, which is not so common and conspicuous among other tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh.

1.0. Introduction

The Galo tribe is one of the prominent indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, and they belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of Mongoloid stock of people. The Galos believe that they have descended from the *Jimi*, the creator, better known as *Jimi Ane* (mother *Jimi*). According to Galo myth of origin, *Jimi* created *Medo* (the sky) and *Sichi* or *Sisi* (the Earth), and from their union, the human race started. The first child was *Sibuk* succeeded by *Buksin*, *Buksin* was succeeded by *Sintu*; *Sintu* was succeeded by *Turi,* and *Turi* was succeeded by *Rini*

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or *Tani* (Abo Tani), the father of human race[1]. There are also other versions of the origin of the Galo. Earlier, they were one of the major sub-tribes of *Adi* tribe like many of its other sub-tribes such as *Minyong, Padam, Pasi, Karko, Shimong, Bori, Bokar, Milang, Ashing, Pailibo, Panggi* and *Ramo*. During the course of contact between these hill tribes and the people of Assam, mainly the Ahom called them "*Abor*" in general. In the pre-independent era, the Galo was also called *Doba-Abor, Gallong Abor* etc. by the British. These terms *Abor, Doba-Abor* and *Gallong Abor* were considered as derogatory by the *Adis* in general and the Galo in particular. So, after India's independence, the term *Abor, Doba-Abor* and *Gallong Abor* were changed to *Adi* which simply means "Hillman" (Nyori 1993). As such, all sub-tribes of the *Adi* tribe were called *Adi-Gallong, Adi-Minyong, Adi-Padam, Adi-Bori* etc. But, in recent years the Galo leaders and elites have separated themselves from the parent *Adi* tribe because the Galo was constitutionally recognised and enlisted as a separate tribe in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 (Part XVIII – Rules and Orders under the Constitution) in Sl. 2 (b) entry 5 as "Galong" [2] out of only 12 major tribes recognized in the then North-East Frontier Tract (NEFT), now Arunachal Pradesh. But the term "Galong" was an exonym or a distorted version of the original word "Galo". Subsequently, the term 'Galong' was replaced with 'Galo' in The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Act, 2011, (No. 2 of 2012) dated 8th January, 2012.[3] As one of the major tribes, almost one-third of the Galo dwells in four districts of Arunachal Pradesh such as Lower Siang, Leppa Rada, West Siang and Upper Subansiri.

The naming pattern is an important component of the socio-cultural traditions of the Galo tribe. It gives them a separate identity. Such a unique tradition also acts as one of their identity markers and gives them their individuality among the myriad of tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. This specific naming pattern is neither borrowed and imitated nor similar to any other naming patterns of the world. Rather it is a novel tradition exclusively used by them since the beginning of their civilization. It throws immense light on their genealogical tradition. Basically, a name has no meaning for the Galos but it needs to be derived from the name of father i.e., from the last syllable of father's name. For this reason they can not only trace their genealogy from Abo Tani whom they consider as their first man on Earth but also helps them to remember as well as recollect the names of their ancestors from Abo Tani up to their own generation. Through this paper, the author tries to underscore the value and significance of genealogical tradition and the systematic manner of assigning names to human beings, animals and objects around them by the Galos. Documentation and preservation of such socio-cultural traditions and practices of a lesser-known tribe is significant before it is lost forever. Unfortunately, our governments and think tanks do not bother and leave it to its own destiny. There are no discussions and debates on such issues in the modern technology ridden world, but even if it is discussed, no pragmatic steps are taken to preserve and promote it in true sense.

The importance of the naming pattern of the tribe is immense from the standpoint of Arunachal Pradesh and India as well. The paper will provide the continuity of hitherto preserved cultural traditions of a tribal society. The Galo folk culture is part and parcel of the Mongoloid culture and it has also influenced to

some extent the other cultures of India and vice-versa. Moreover, there is no research work which specifically deals with the naming pattern of the tribe. Only a few minor ethnographic works have been done so far. Thus, it is a maiden attempt to write the paper on this theme. On the whole, the present paper has an interdisciplinary perspective and will enhance the knowledge of the folklorist, sociologist, anthropologist and researchers of cultural studies.

2.0. Literature Review

Though works on Galo naming pattern are almost scanty, a few thematic reviews have been done on Galo naming pattern and kin terms. A few ethnographic works on the tribe have been studied thoroughly, but different aspects of the naming pattern and kin terms of the Galos are not available in these pieces of literature.

L.R.N. Srivastava, in his book, '*The Gallongs*' (1988) has tried to bring out the background of the organization of the clans of the Galos tribe based on the myth of origin of the Earth. He states that the Gallongs (Now Galo) believe that they have descended from 'Sisi' – the Mother Earth. Some generations after their origin, when the population increased, the whole tribe got itself divided into many groups, which we may, for the present call sub-tribes. This division was strictly based on the genealogies, and not on any political or economic factor. Each sub-tribe was patrilineal and was named after the earliest ancestor from whom it was supposed to have descended.[4]

Tai Nyori, a scholar who himself belongs to Galo tribe has made a more in-depth study and gives a better amplification on the mythological creation of the Universe in his book "*History and Culture of the Adis*" (1993) as in the Galo mythology *Jimi* is the creator.

Further, Nyori in '*The Uniqueness among the Galos, such as of counting genealogy*' (2011) which was recently published in the Souvenir of Galo Welfare Society marking the VIII-Galo Baane Keba has written that the Galos have some uniqueness in their system, such as the naming pattern, different term for addressing members of the family and relatives, counting of their genealogies, clothing, hair style, social and cultural practices, style of the construction of the houses etc.

Tomo Riba, in his book *The Tribals and Their Changing Environment: A Case Study of Galos of West Siang District* (2003) has described the relationship between human and the environment, particularly of the Southern part of *Galo* concentrated area of West Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. He has written about the *Galos* and their changing belief systems. In his introductory chapter, he had written in brief about the origin of Rini or better known as Abo Tani (the first man on Earth according to Galo myth), Rinyo (tiger) and Rite (elephant) from genealogical tradition. Thereby, he discussed the naming pattern of Galo from this genealogical tradition.[5]

Only a few references of the naming system and kin terms have been found that again lack detailed analysis of these themes under discussion. Hence, it may be well said that no exhaustive research on this topic has been done so far.

3.0. Methodology

The methodology used for this study is primarily based on the empirical method. However, the main source of this study is the primary source, which is the oral source. The researcher has done extensive fieldwork in selective Galo areas of West Siang, Leppa Rada, Lower Siang and Upper Subansiri districts of Arunachal Pradesh since they are domiciled in these districts. With regard to tools and techniques of data collection, several renowned persons of the community, especially a cross-section of *Nyibo* (Priest), *Nyikok* (Orator)[6] and educated and intellectual Galos from different sections of the community were exclusively interview through purposive or judgmental sample design using interview schedule (see Appendix) to generate data related to the topic. Besides, the researcher had also observed some childbirths and the naming of their children at native village. A few available secondary sources by the self published books like Kirki Ori's *The Genealogy of Galos* and Sentum Yomcha's *A Genealogy Book of Lodu-Karka Galos* were also consulted carefully to draw the data relevant to this study.

4.0. Naming Patterns and Kin Terms

The Galos have some distinctiveness in their socio-cultural system such as the naming pattern, use of different kin terms to address the members of the family and relatives, counting of genealogies, design and construction of the houses, various social and cultural practices, etc. Among the uniqueness, the naming pattern and different kin terms used by them are very interesting and need proper documentation.
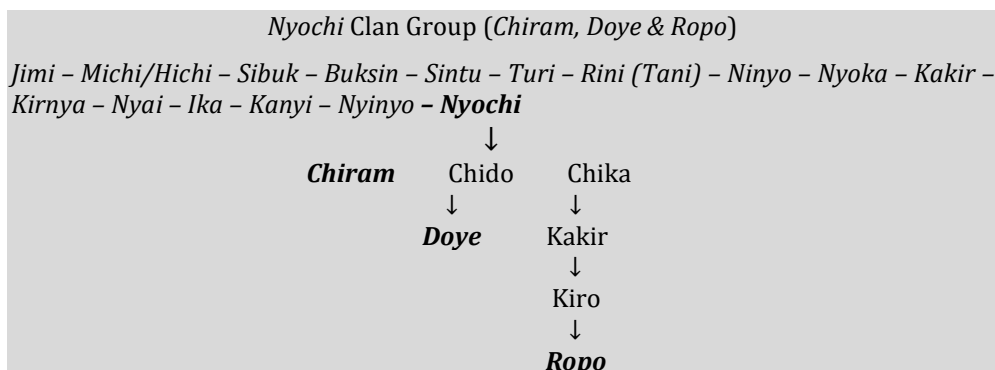
Name is the most essential identity of a person, and it becomes a significant part of one's existence. Unlike other cultures, generally, the Galo name does not have any literal denotation, but it is based on their age-old genealogical tradition. According to Galo belief system, the family member or relative has to take parental ownership of a child immediately after its birth and the newly born child has to be assigned a name as soon as possible. But it is interesting to note that there is no practice of naming ceremony although there is a tradition of conducting a *Layap*[7] (a ritual performed to bless the child) for the child after a few months and it is attended by all village folks and those who assisted during the delivery are mandatorily invited.[8]

The Galos follow a patrilineal method to name their children. Generally, all names are disyllabic, comprising two syllables only. The last syllable of the father's name is used as the first syllable of the child's name. Mark Post called the first syllable as patri-syllable and the second one as auto-syllable (Post 2007). So if father's name is *Eli*, the name of his child will start from '*Li*' like *Lizom*, *Lito*, *Limo*, *Ligo*, so on which are the combination of *Li + Zom, Li + To, Li + Mo, Li + Go* i.e., '*Li*' is the patrisyllable and *Zom, To, Mo* and *Go* are the auto-syllables. The names of all Galo children thus conform to this tradition. However, some Galo children's name are also derived from the last syllable of his paternal uncle, not from his/her

father, which is done just to show love and respect towards the brother concerned. In fact, in recent years, the Pugo section of Galo has started naming their child after their sister (paternal aunt), too, although such practice is conspicuously absent among the Lare and Lodu-Karka sections of Galo. Since this tribal community has no written language of their own, this method of naming pattern helps them in remembering and also recording their genealogical origins right from the beginning especially from *Abo Tani* up to their own generation. This naming pattern of the Galo has its genesis and basis on their genealogical tradition, which is as follows:

- *Sichi – Sibuk – Buksin – Sintu – Turi – Rini (Tani)*
- *Hichi – Chidum – Dumde – Dee – Elo – Lohin – Hintu – Tur – Rini (Tani)*
- *Jimi – Miku – Kuchek – Chekrum – Rumbuk – Bukhin – Hintu – Turi – Rini (Tani),*
- *Medo – Doje – Jemi – Michi – Chiji – Jimi – Michep – Cheptu – Turr – Rini (Tani)*[9]
- *Hichi – Chio – Obuk – Bukhin – Hintu – Tur – Rini (Tani)*
- *Hichi – Chio – Ore – Reni (Tani)*[10]
- *Hichi – Chiji – Jimi – Mibuk – Buksin – Sintu – Turi – Rini (Tani)*[11]
- *Jimi – Mibuk – Buksin – Sintu – Turi – Rini (Tani)* [12]
- *Korum – Rumku – Kujik – Jigne – Nyo – Opo – Poma – Majik – Jimi – Mipu – Pusi – Sisi/Hisi/Hichi – Sibuk – Buksin – Sintu – Turi – Rini (Tani),*[13] etc.

As a result, all Galo clans or every Galo individual can trace their origin by counting their genealogies. As an instance, the genealogical origin of Nyochi Clan Group[14] is shown below:

Nyochi Clan Group (*Chiram, Doye & Ropo*)
Jimi – Michi/Hichi – Sibuk – Buksin – Sintu – Turi – Rini (Tani) – Ninyo – Nyoka – Kakir – Kirnya – Nyai – Ika – Kanyi – Nyinyo **– Nyochi** ↓ **Chiram**   Chido   Chika ↓   ↓ **Doye**   Kakir ↓ Kiro ↓ **Ropo**

(Source: The Genealogy Book of Nyochi Ao Welfare Society, 2017) [14]

Another very interesting practice among the tribe is that of using different kin terms for addressing the members of family and relatives which is not obvious and conspicuous among many other tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh. For instance, father and mother are addressed with separate kin terms by the members of the family and relatives.

They are called *Abo* and *Ane* by their children, *Ato* and *Ayo* by their paternal and maternal grandchildren but among Pugo Galo it is *Iji* and *Ikam* by both paternal and maternal grandchild. Among Lare and Lodu-Karka Galo, father's sister is called *Abo Nyijir* but the same is called *Pate* by the *Pugo* Galo. Again father's brothers are separately addressed as *Abo Kayi* (for eldest), *Abo Aya* (for second), *Nyanya Kayi* (for third), *Nyanya* (for fourth) and *Abo Oi/Oyi* (for last or youngest). Similarly, mother's

father and mother are called *Iji* and *Ikam* by the Pugo Galo but *Ato* and *Ayo* by other Galos. Eldest maternal uncle (mother's brothers) is called *Kite*, second maternal uncle is called *Kiro*, third maternal uncle is called *Kidi* and last and youngest maternal uncle is called *Ki/Kiyi*. Likewise, eldest maternal aunt (mother's sisters) is called *Mote*, second maternal aunt is called *Moro* and the last and youngest maternal aunt is called *Moi*. Brother-in-law is called *Yigo* by Pugo Galo and *Rigo* by other Galos while sister-in-law is called *Yigne* by Pugo Galo and *Rigne* by others. Lare Galo used separate terms for addressing son-in-law and his brothers. It is called *Makte* for elder sister's husband, *Magi* for the brothers' of elder sister's husband and *Magbo* for younger sisters' and daughters' husband. But son-in-law and his brothers are commonly called *Magi* by the Lodu-Karkas and *Nyobo* by the Pugos. Again the in-laws and elders used to address the daughters-in-law and younger brother's wife with various terms such as *Nyamte* for first or eldest son, *Nyamro* for second son, *Nyamde* for third one, *Nyamko* for fourth one and *Nyami* for last or youngest son. There is also a provision for repetition of the terms from *Nyamte* onwards if a family has more than five sons. The husband's younger brothers and sisters will use the same terms but with slight variations like *Nete* for first and eldest brother, *Nero* for second, *Nede* for third, *Neko* for fourth one and *Neyi* for youngest and last brother. If there are more than five sons, then there will be the repetition of these terms from *Nyamte* or *Nete* onwards.

Apart from this, there is also tradition of naming the child based on physical appearances, the relative positions of child in the family and the attitudes of the parents towards the child, nevertheless these names are also suffixed with the last syllable of the father as a convention.

Usually, the firstborn male child is named as – *Tali, Tato, Talo, Taba, Tado, Takom, Tamo, Takar, Tamar, Tadak, Tabi, Tako,* etc. and *Yabi, Yajum, Yage*, etc. for the female child. The middle born children's names are generally *Tabom* and *Tape* for males and *Yabom* and *Yape* for females and all other names not used for first and last children. The names of last-child are *Tai*, *Tater* and *Tanya* for the male and *Yai*, *Yater* and *Yanya* for the female.[15] Generally, '*Ta*' syllable is prefixed with all males' names like *Tazom* (Ta + Zom) for *Lizom* as a nickname, and '*Ya*' is prefixed with all females' names like *Yape* (Ya + Pe) for *Nipe*.

5.0. Other Naming Patterns

Similarly, most of the names like that of human being, body parts, animals, birds, things, etc. also follow the same naming patterns in that the last syllable is prefixed or used in it.

5.1. Names of Human beings

Nyi is the common term for a human being.

- From *Nyi,* it is *Nyilo* (husband)*, Nyim* (wife)*, Nyibo* (priest)*, Nyikok* (orator), *Nyigam* (hunter)*, Nyiga* (warrior)*, Nyite* (rich)*, Nyima* (poor) and *Nyili-Hodo* (wicked/criminal), etc.
- From *Nyibo* (priest), it is *Nyibo* – *Bote* (renowned priest) and *Bo* (Assistant).
- From *Nyikok* (orator), it is *Nyikok* – *Kokte* (renowned orator) and *Kokya* (junior orator).
- From *Nyigam* (hunter), it is *Nyigam* – *Gamte* (bravest hunter) and *Gamya* (junior hunter).
- From *Nyite* (rich), it is *Nyite* – *Tebrup* (richest) and from *Nyima* (poor), it is *Nyima* – *Madir* (poorest of the poor).

5.2. Names of body parts

When names of body parts are taken into consideration, it may be said that almost all body parts start with 'a' syllable such as:

- *Aiye* (body), *Apin* (skin), *Akke* (chest), *Apuk* (heart), *Aki* (stomach), *Adum* (hair), Aer (sweat), *Anyik* (eye), *Alle* (leg), *Alak* (hand), *Ayi* (teeth) and *Arro* (tongue), etc.
- Again, from <u>*Anyik*</u> (eye) – <u>*Nyikche*</u> (blind/closed eye), <u>*Nyikpo*</u> (open eye), <u>*Nyikme*</u> (eyebrow/eyelash), <u>*Nyiksum*</u> (slightly closed eye), <u>*Nyikbum*</u> (unfolded eyelid), <u>*Nyikyir*</u> (rounded eye), <u>*Nyikpin*</u> (eyelid), <u>*Nyikre*</u> (dirt fell in the eye), <u>*Nyikjipayek*</u> (white dirt of eye) and <u>*Nyikshi-Nyigla*</u> (tears).
- From <u>*Alak*</u> (hand) – <u>*Lakbek*</u> (right hand), <u>*Lakchi*</u> (left hand), <u>*Laktam/Lakbor*</u> (palm), <u>*Laktum*</u> (fist), <u>*Lakche*</u> (fingers), <u>*Laksin*</u> (nail), <u>*Lakpu*</u> (bangle) and <u>*Lakchup*</u> (ring).
- From <u>*Alle*</u> (leg) – <u>*Lebek*</u> (right leg), <u>*Lechi*</u> (left leg), <u>*Lebi*</u> (knee), <u>*Lepa*</u> (shin), <u>*Lete*</u> (calf), <u>*Ledo*</u> (heel), <u>*Lebor*</u> (sole), <u>*Letam*</u> (foot), <u>*Leche*</u> (toe) and <u>*Leshin*</u> (toenail).

5.3. Names of animals and birds

Most of the names of animals start with '*Ho*' syllable. So it is:

Hob/Hobbe (mithun), *Ho* (cattle), *Hobin* (goat), *Hote* (elephant), *Homen* (lion), *Honyo* (tiger), *Hottum* (bear), *Hor* (boar), *Hodum* (deer), Hocher (bigger deer), *Hobey* (monkey), *Hoin* (wild animal), *Hocha* (wolf), *Hosh-Bobi* (percupine) and *Horkek* (wild lizard), etc.

Most of the names of birds start with '*Pe*' syllable. The common term for the bird is <u>*Peta*</u>. Some other names of birds are:

<u>*Peko*</u> (peacock), <u>*Pejap*</u> (duck), <u>*Pebey*</u> (parrot), <u>*Pemum-Kotu*</u> (small bird) and <u>*Pegi-Pea*</u> (seasonal bird), etc. The nest is called <u>*Petir*</u>. Domestic fowls are commonly known as *Porok*. Thus, it is *Po<u>rok</u>* – <u>*Rokpo*</u> (cock), <u>*Rokne*</u> (hen), <u>*Rokpo-Podi*</u> (young cock), <u>*Rokne-Rogir*</u> (young hen) and *Ro* (chicks).

5.4. Names of things and objects

Some things or objects used by Galos have also used certain syllables in their names. Like the '*Tadok*' which is a common term for all types of beads.

- From *Ta<u>dok</u>* – <u>*Dokne*</u> (costliest beads), <u>*Doklu*</u>, <u>*Dokpin*</u> and <u>*Dokmin*</u> (other varieties of beads). Again from <u>*Dokne*</u> – *Nepe* (rounded edge) and *Nelap* (flattened edge).
- *Orok* is a generic term for all kinds of machete. From <u>*Orok*</u> – <u>*Roksh/Rokshi*</u> (traditional sword or machete), <u>*Rokshik*</u> (knife) and <u>*Rokgi*</u> (wooden handle of machete).
- From <u>*Igin*</u> (rice bag) – <u>*Ginchi*</u> (small rice bag) and from <u>*Ebar*</u> (vegetable bag) – <u>*Barka*</u> (small vegetable bag).
- From <u>*Eme*</u> (fire) – <u>Me</u>ro (burning firewood), <u>Me</u>chi (spark), <u>Me</u>rre (charcoal) and <u>Me</u>i (ashes).
- From *Opo* (unbrewed rice beer) – <u>*Poka*</u> (brewed rice beer), <u>*Poda*</u> (best variety of *Poka*), <u>*Pori*</u> (inferior variety of *Poka*), <u>*Pobor*</u> (huge quantity of *Opo*) and <u>*Poge-Polak*</u> (post for *Poka* preparation) and <u>*Popir*</u> (basket for *Opo*).

6.0. Naming Pattern and Customary laws

Generally, the term 'customary law' as it applies to Galo tribe refers to the body of traditions, mores, social conventions and rules that, through prolonged usage and widespread acceptance, direct and govern traditional Galo society. All

customary laws prevalent in Arunachal Pradesh as a whole are not written and codified but memorized out of knowledge and experience and the customary laws of the Galo tribe is not an exception to this. It is through these customary laws, law and order is maintained, cohesion and unity is preserved in the society. But there is no established customary laws meant for the naming pattern used by the tribe. The reason being that the naming pattern is integrated with the customs and traditions of the tribe; therefore, it becomes one of their age-old conventions. Hence, there is no separate customary law with regard to the naming pattern of the tribe under study.

7.0 Conclusions

The Galo tribe has naming pattern and kin terms which have been inherited and continued since time immemorial. These are interesting, easy to understand, and learn by others as well.

This paper presents a study on distinctive attributes of naming pattern and kin terms used by the Galo tribe. It attempted to make a comprehensive understanding of the traditional practices which are continuing up to the present time. One of the interesting conclusions is that the tribe despite having a few sectional diversities owing to their varying regional settlements and dialectal variations, shows uniformity in their naming pattern and kin terms. However, a few changes are noticed among some Galos who kept the names of their child prefixing the last syllable of their brother's name and among some Pugo Galos who started keeping the name of child using the last syllable of their sister's name as a mark of love and affection towards their sister. Another important point to be noted is that the Galos never deviate and keep Hindi and English names for their kids irrespective of their different religious beliefs and practice, and even if it is done, it is in consonance with the established traditions. Such adherence to their traditions makes it easier for them to trace their genealogical origins and history. Besides, they have a set of systematized kin terms for their family members and relatives, which are not just calling terms but have social relevance too.

In addition to these, as explained in the previous page, there are other naming patterns related to human body parts, animals, birds, things, etc. that are also based on the pattern of their genealogical traditions.

In conclusion, it may well be said that the naming pattern and kin terms of the Galos are uniquely original, innovative, and interesting. It stands to remain as an identity marker of tribe besides giving them a separate individual identity from the rest of the tribal society of the world.

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6. Nyibo means priest and Nyikok means orator. These two groups of people are very important people in the Galo society as they are the storehouse or carrier of Galo folklores and other oral traditions.

7. Layap is a ritual performs by parents to bless the newly born child. Secondly, it also refers to a ritualistic process conducted by groom's family for final acceptance of bride as their daughter-in-law by giving social recognition to her as the wife of their son.
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Appendix

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name of Respondent: _____

Designation: Nyibo/Nyikok/Nyite/Nyigam/Others specify (_____)

Address: _____.

Date of interview: _____

1.   Different naming pattern of the Galo tribe:

2.   Time of assigning name to a child:

3.   Naming ceremony, if any:

4.   Different types of names used for human beings and their meanings:

5.   Common pet names used by the Galo:

6.   Different kin and calling terms used to address family members:

7.   Different types of names used for animals and birds and their meanings:

8.   Different types of names used for things/objects and their meanings:

9.   Genealogical Origin and history of Galo tribe:

10. Myths relating to naming pattern:

11. Naming pattern and changes, if any, noticed:

12. Galo belief system vis-a-vis naming pattern:

13. Changes in naming pattern, if any: