



Practice Of Totemic Rituals In *Meitei* Culture

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Abstract

In the beginning, the *Meitei* were a vibrant people who thought that all natural objects held a soul substance or life force. This theoretical perception gives rise to the widespread animistic conviction that all things, whether big and little, are alive with spirits or souls. In keeping with this animistic idea, nature's totems are elevated to the status of guardian spirits, while goblins—a supernatural belief in nature's malevolent intent—also emerge from a fear of the enigmatic events that give rise to stories. The concept of the distinct soul, which originated from visions and dreams and was then attributed to godhead, may have contributed to the creation of various deities, such as those worshipped in totemic or fetishistic contexts or through idolatry. In an effort to satiate the two natural desires that are ingrained in every human being—the need to "know" and "to worship"—they then pursue matter, force, and thought to their highest potential.

Keywords: Totemism, *Umanglai*, *Saroi-Ngaroi*, *Hingchabi*, *Meitei*, *Tinmu-Laimu*, *Helloi*, *Cheiraoba*.

The term totemism has been used to characterize a cluster of traits in the religion and in the social organization of many peoples. Totemism can be defined as a system of religion where human beings are religiously connected to totems. A totem is an object possessing sacred values or values equivalent to religious significance.

The ancient people believed that the sun, moon, fire, air, water, earth, and sky were all representations of gods. The legend of the beginnings of ceremonial rituals in *Meitei* culture can be traced back to man's ever-increasing desires and will, which leads to his eventual arrogance. The Ultimate Lord summoned all the gods and goddesses, including "Lairembi" (the demigod), "Saroi Ngaroi" (the supernatural beings that accompany the Supreme Lord), "Tinmu Laimu Phataba" (the ghost and demon), and spirits like "Lumleima Sampubi" (fairies), in order to subdue the supremacy of man.

On the day of *Cheiraoba* celebration, *Meitei*'s New Year the *Saroi Ngaroi* rite is carried out. These are the old women in the community who perform this. Protecting against disease and death is the primary goal of this *Saroi Ngaroi*. *Saroi Ngarois* are not wicked.

The Helloi, who are gorgeous feminine forms that entice foolish men into desolate regions and then vanish, leaving their victims without reason, and *Hingchabis*, or witches, are described by J. Shakespear as "evil spirits which are always on the lookout to injure human beings" (421).

This leads us to Manipur's pre-Hinduism religion, which Shakespear describes as "the ancient religion of the country, the worship of the *Umanglais*, or Forest gods, and other lesser supernatural beings, such as the *Saroi-ngaroi*, evil spirits which are always on the lookout to injure human beings; the *Helloi*, beautiful female forms which lure foolish men into waste places and then disappear, leaving their victims bereft of reason; and *Hingchabis*, or witches." Although this is significantly less biased than what other colonial historians have called, it can still be accused of having an orientalist bias (409-455). *Hellois*, or nymph sirens, entice humans and drag them away into a wasteland devoid of all life on Earth. Among the most prevalent female spirits in *Meitei* mythology and folklore are *hellois*. The strongest feminine spirits are called *hellois*. They might disseminate illnesses, particularly sexually transmitted infections. Men are attacked by *hellois*, which lead to mental disorders. These are *Sana Changningkhombi*, *Sana Lengkombi*, *Sana Lenglengkombi*, *Sana Manikkombi*, *Sana Tharungkombi*, *Sana Yoirengkombi*, and *Chingnung Ngangbi Sananu*, the seven daughters of *Soura Laihatpa Thouba* (J.C. Higgins 29). They are even more stunning than the dancers for the all-powerful Lord *Sorarel*. The youngest is thought to be the most dangerous and beautiful. About life, they enquire of their parents. Afterward, their father informs them that everyone who encounters them will become insane, and that after that, they will be forced to survive in the garbage by consuming the sacrifices made in

an attempt to heal their victims. The *Maiba* cures the crazy with a sevenfold offering. Purchases included plantains, *kabok* (pop rice), a scarf, pan, *heiruk* (fruits arranged attractively), and betel nuts from seven individual marketplaces. A man is said to be safe from the *Hellois* if he wears a *nogun*, or sacred thread.

The *Hingchabis* (female devil) were formerly numbered seven, but they have since increased throughout time. These *Hingchabis* are more evil than the problems mentioned above. Its nature is to infiltrate the body of the impacted person. It's stated that if a *Hingchabi* looks at food they are eating, they will. *Hingchabi Changba* is the term for when the spirit of a *Hingchabi* enters a human being. The *Hingchabi* (spirit) causes great mental and bodily suffering in the person it enters, and it has complete control over the victim's body. There are numerous mantras that anyone can utilize as a precaution, especially *Maibas*. By the Mantras' recitation, the victim/patient calms down and stops talking.

Everybody retains the idea that "humanism," the fundamental tenet of old *Meitei* philosophy, may be used to address difficult issues by offering the suggestion that prayer to God can help resolve human and global struggles. For example, during the proper ceremony for the dead, a story about the deceased's journey to the afterlife is told so that the deceased can use the story to help him reach his destination. Boyer states that people are afraid of dying, and religion gives them the impression that life goes on. However, this is insufficient, as the human mind is unable to create enough consoling illusions to protect against stress or dread in all circumstances. Any organism that was prone to these kinds of delusions would not last very long. As much as some religious ideas can help people feel less anxious, our challenge is figuring out how they can become credible enough to serve this function. While it might seem easy enough to indulge a soothing fantasy, acting upon it demands that it be understood as more than a figment of one's imagination. The degree of trust required could not be achieved solely by comfort (21). Therefore, the *Meitei* society developed rituals to balance all aspects of human existence and activity with the cosmic powers that ruled heaven and earth. These rituals also represent an effort to manage the unpredictable aspects of the human experience. The way that these traditions and rites are observed varies greatly throughout religious congregations, groupings, and geographical areas. They frequently have their own set of traditions and customs, even among split families. The majority of rituals occur during various seasons, holidays, and other times in a person's life cycle. Even

the ceremonies practiced by the various religions are comparable. However, when the presence of a Supreme Being was accepted, everyone else submitted to Him.

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