

Laiharaoba- A Sacred Festival Of Manipur

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ABSTRACT

Laiharaoba reflects the old history and culture of Meitei population of Manipur state. The dress code for this festival is the traditional dress for Meitei community. Complicated and lengthy rituals, traditional dances and songs are performed in front of Umanglai (God of Forest) in Laiharaoba festival. People pray various Umanglais per their communities; different community (leikais) is having different Umanglai. Celebration of Laiharaoba belonging to different leikais is conducted in different months. This festival must perform once in a year for every Umanglai in their shrine. Individuals involved in the association for conducting the festival collect donations from each and every family of that particular community. This festival is normally performed for 1 or 3 or 5 or 7 days.

The present paper highlights about few rituals of Laiharaoba festival. Different months for the celebration of Laiharaoba regarding to various Umanglai are shown.

Keywords: Laiharaoba, Umanglai, culture and community.

INTRODUCTION

Laiharaoba is comprised of two words “Lai” and “Haraoba”. Lai means God and Goddess & Haraoba means merry-making. Laiharaoba is very prestigious and sanctified socio-religious festival of Manipur. This festival exists since two thousand years before. It is the way of worship and celebration by the Meiteis living in the valley of Manipur. People perform the festival to please the God, local language is Umanglai. Umanglai can be termed as God of Forest. During the festival Maiba, Maibi, Pena Khongba and the local population perform complicated rituals, songs, dances and prayers. Large number of difficult steps is mandatory in this festival and executed by Maiba, Maibi and Pena Khongba. Such ancient culture of Meitei is still remembered through carrying out Laiharaoba festival.

RITUALS, GODS AND GODESSES OF LAIHARAOPA

RITUALS OF LAIHARAOPA

In Laiharaoba festival Maiba, Maibi and Pena Khongba call up the spirits from the rivers or ponds and placed to the deities of the shrine at Lai Loukhatpa function which happen at the first day of the festival. It can be performed from Mera (October) to Inga (June) in a year. It is compulsion to celebrate the festival for Umanglai once in a year. It can last for

1or 3 or 5 or 7 or 15 or 30 days. Nowadays MoirangLaiharaoba is celebrating for 15 days, previously 30 days of festival was performed. Normally in every locality the festival is performed for 3 or 5 or 7 days. From second day onwards there is LaibouChongba, in this ritual Maiba, Maibi and Pena Khongba tell the full story about every human part. It also narrated about the different stages of human life, from born to death. There is also Lai mapanthokpa, God and Goddess will take away to a nearby open field. In that open field songs and dances are organized. In 5 days Laiharaoba Lai mapanthokpa will held on 3rd day and in case of 7 days Laiharaoba Lai mapanthokpa will perform on 5th day. There will be no Lai mapanthokpa function on 1dayor 3 daysLaiharaoba. We call Kumchanba if there is Laiharaoba of 1 day.

UMANGLAI (GODS AND GODESSES) AND CONDUCT OF LAIHARAOPA FESTIVAL

There is different time period/ different months of performing Laiharaoba of our Umanglai. Different Umanglai is having different month for conducting Laiharaoba festival. The locality must arrange the festival once in a year.

GODS and GODDESSES

Month of Laiharaoba

Lainingthou Ahanba, Khurai, Imphal East (May)	Kalen
Ibudhou Thangjing, Moirang, Bishenpur District	Kalen
Lainingthou Buri Buraba, Kongpal Khaidem Leikai, Imphal East	Kalen
LainingthouBuriBuraba, Ningthoubung, Imphal East	Kalen
Ibudhou Wangbren, Sugnu, Kakching District (November)	Hiyangei
Lainingthou Puthiba, Khurai Puthiba, Imphal East	Inga (June)
Nongpok Ningthou Panthoibi, Takhel, Imphal East	Inga
ImaIbemma Khutlembi, Imphal East	Inga
Ima Ibemma Chingjoibi, Khurai Chaithabi Leirak, Imphal East	Inga
Chingkhei Guru, Moirangkampu, Imphal East	Inga
Lainingthou Yangon Ningthou, Imphal East	Inga
HeibokNingthou, HeibokChing, Imphal West District	Kalen
WaroiNingthou, Leimaram, Bishenpur District	Kalen
PanamNingthou, Andro (Handro), Imphal East	Kalen
ImaKalika, Napet, Imphal East	Kalen

IbudhouKhoiriphaba, Nambol, Bishenpur District	Kalen
IbudhouKorouhanba, Moidangpok, Imphal West	Kalen
IbudhouPureiromba, Nongada, Imphal East District	Kalen
NongpokNingthouPanthoibiHaoreimaSambubi, Chingnungkok, Imphal East	Kalen
NongpokNingthou, NongpokSekmai, Imphal East	Kalen
IbudhouSanamahi, Wangoi, Imphal West	Kalen
HiyangthangLairembi, Hiyangthang, Imphal West	Meraginip anip anba (October)
IbudhouMarjing, Heingang, Imphal East	Kalen
KonthoujamLairembi, Konthoujam, Imphal West	Kalen

CONCLUSION

Laiharaoba is an old culture of Meitei population of Manipur state. It is the style of worshipping Umanglai. It is very complex and important ritual of Meitei people. Maiba, Maibi and Pena Khongba perform the complicated rituals of Laiharaoba. This festival can perform for 1 or 3 or 5 or 7 or 15 or 30 days.

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