

asheiba institutions (loishangs) and loishang codes. Lower-level institutions of villages or clans assist the functionaries in enforcing the loishang codes.

The Pena is known by various names among other tribes of Manipur: it is called Labum by the Kabuis and Tingtelia by the Tangkhuls. The Pena was an essential part of all rituals and religious ceremonies prior to the advent of Hinduism in Manipur and the subsequent introduction of Hindu art forms in religious ceremonies and rituals.

Research Problems

There is dearth of knowledge amongst the Meitei youth about the importance of their indigenous arts. The rituals of the indigenous festivals like the Lai Haraoba, where the Pena instrument occupies significance are becoming tainted socially, politically and spiritually in the fast-shifting Meitei society. This can lead to loss of identity, disorientation and social breakdown. Indeed, tracing the history and understanding the importance of the Lai Haraoba festival and its associated indigenous art forms will go a long way in understanding the Meitei culture. The aim of the present study is to investigate the significance of the Pena in the Meitei society, especially during the cultural rituals.

Objectives of The Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To examine the Pena's components and their significance;
- To explore the evolution of the usage of Pena;
- To study the types and significance of the costumes worn by Pena artists; and
- To assess the attitudes of youths toward the Pena.

Relevance of The Study

The Pena art as described earlier originated from the royal court and codes were prescribed to establish norms and authority. Over time, it has become an integral part of the Meitei culture. It is crucial for youth to understand the significance of the Pena to preserve its linkage to our cultural heritage. The present study will instil the youth with the cultural values of the Pena in all its complex attributes, and analyze the social and political context in which the musical instrument manifests itself in the culture.

Materials and Methods

The current study is a historical, descriptive and qualitative research. It draws information from

published works, historical documents, field surveys, and interviews. The investigators focus on historical and existing conditions and practices, beliefs or attitudes, ongoing processes, current effects, and emerging trends. This study also employs interpretive analysis through naturalistic inquiry in a non-manipulative manner.

The investigators interviewed members of the Pena asheiba Loishangs after establishing rapport. These interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee and transcribed to ensure accuracy, and the audio recordings were deleted afterward. Some of the participants were pupils of renowned Pena Gurus: Padma Shri Khangembam Mangi, Padma Shri R.K. Achoubi Sana, State Kala Academy Awardee Leimapokpam Yaima, State Kala Academy Awardee Thokchom Ningthemjao.

Results and Discussion

Components of the Pena

The Meiteis regard the Pena as one of the oldest instruments. This musical instrument has two main components: Maroo (resonator) and Cheijing (fiddle bow) (Figure 1). Several materials are used to make a Pena: coconut shells, wood, brass bells, specific threads, ornamental cloths, bamboo pipes, iron bars, horse tail hairs, leather, etc. These materials are carefully arranged and assembled in sequence to create the instrument (Singh, 42-47). According to Meitei mythology, the Pena symbolizes the father and the mother. The Cheijing, held in the right hand, represents the Lainingthou (Father-God), while the Maroo, held against the chest of the Pena player, represents the Lairembi (Mother-Goddess). The melodious sound generated from the resonator due to the vibration of the string of the Maroo and caused by the friction of the strings of Cheijing and the Maroo, symbolizes creation and fertility for all living beings (Singh, 181-185).



Figure 1: Structure of Pena

Maroo– the female principle

The Maroo (resonator) is the larger component of the Pena (Figure 2). It has nine parts. The sound-box (main maroo), shaped like a bowl, is crafted from dry coconut shell cut into half and covered with leather on the top. A hole is also drilled below for acoustic purposes. The top part of the sound-box is called Pungmai. Adjacent to the sound-box is the Uyek, the wooden base of the neck carved into alternate circular coves and beads. The Utong is a hollow bamboo pipe that forms the upper part of the neck. The Khongding shamei is the string of the resonator and is made up of 120–150 horsetail hairs. The Khongding shamei is bound to the Utong at the centre by a thread called the Nura-khangset. The movement of the fingers along the Utong is confined to the upper portion from the Nura-khangset. An ornamental cloth piece with red knitted thrums called the Samai hangs from the free end of the Utong with Chambuli-lang, a thread knot. The bridge of the sound-box called Tenkhal, is made of bamboo.

Pena asheiba correspond to different moods for various occasions or events.



Figure 2: Pena Maroo (Resonator)

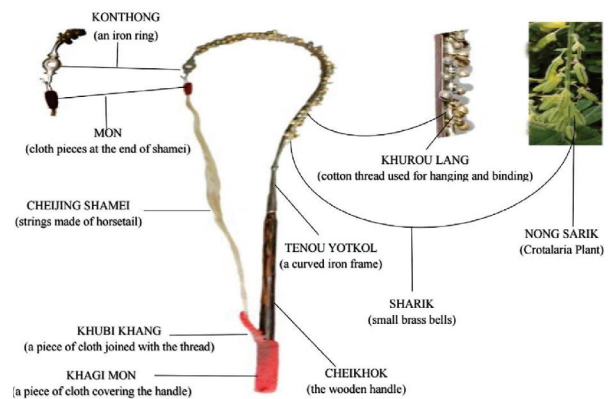


Figure 3: Pena Cheijing (fiddle bow)

Cheijing– the male principle

The Cheijing is the fiddle bow of the Pena (Figure 3). It has ten components. The Tenou-yotkol, in the shape of a bow made with iron bars is the main frame of the Cheijing. The upper portion of Tenou-yotkol is decorated with small brass bells called Sharik. Initially bells made from the dry fruits of a plant called Nong Sarik (Crotalaria plant) were used. The bells are hung to the Tenou-yotkol through a main cotton thread called Khuro lang. The Konthang is an iron ring attached to the Tenou-yotkol to hold the string of the fiddle bow. The Cheijing shamei is the string of the fiddle bow and is also made up of horsetail hairs. These hairs are held together by pieces of cloth at the ends called Mon. The Cheikhok is the wooden handle below the Tenou-yotkol. The Khagi mon is the cotton thread that provides grip to the Khulum (handle) of the fiddle bow. The Khubi khang is a piece of cloth adjacent to the handle used to provide tension to the string. Marek, an oily piece of pine wood is used to smoothen and straightened the strings of Maroo and Cheijing.

During the Lai Haraoba (pleasing of Gods and Goddesses) festival, the Pena plays a vital role. Each morning, the Lais (deities) are awakened with an aubade called Yakairol, and in the evenings, they are lulled to sleep with a lullaby called Naosum, both performed by the Pena asheiba. The Laibou is a significant dance ritual performed daily by the Amaibis (priestesses) during Lai Haraoba stimulating the deities' life cycle and processes during their earthly abode: depicting part-by-part sculpting of the human body in the mother's womb (hakchangshaba), childbirth, house construction, agricultural activities, fishing, and weaving. The Pena asheiba sings Hoirou Haya with the Amaibis while dancing. Hoirou represents the Lainingthou (father principle), while Haya represents the Lairembi (mother principle). After Hoirou Haya, the Pena asheiba sings the Anoirol during the hakchangshaba and childbirth dance (Rajkumar).

Usage of Pena

Even though the Pena was first employed at the Royal Court, it eventually became popular among ordinary people. The Pena is intricately connected to many aspects of the Meitei cultural legacy, including dance, sports, martial arts, ceremonies, and folk arts. The tonal variations of the music of Pena and the song of

Different types of Pena music with unique lyrics and scales to express various moods are prescribed during the Lai Haraoba festivals. For instance, in Kanglei

Haraoba, the following Pena music types with unique lyrics are performed: leimaren (slow rhythm), panthoibi (medium rhythm), Ayangleima (very slow rhythm), nongthangleima (slow to fast rhythm), hepli-thangyei (medium rhythm), hepli-pabot (fast rhythm), shikaplon (slow rhythm), kalen sheijing (medium rhythm) and lam-in (Singh 181-185).

The Pena is believed to be a celestial instrument with hypnotizing music, originally intended purely for mythological purposes. For example, the Panthoibi dance illustrates the search for the grown-up adult for a spouse for love and procreation. The Pena asheiba and the Amaibis recreate the romance between God Nongpok Ningthou and Goddess Panthoibi through songs about their love and yearnings. Here is an illustration of Panthoibi lyrics and rhythm performed by the Pena asheiba (Devi 17-20):

(Beat-8+8)

|| Re Hi — — || Ru Ru Ru — || (Numi dang wai gina)

|| Hei — Ri — || Ya — — — || (Matamda.....)

Traditionally, the Pena was played at royal events and was considered a symbol of opulent living. The Pena asheiba performs Yakairol to wake up the king in the morning. He would accompany the King and Queen on journeys, performing Pena lam-in. Through narratives, the Pena asheiba would describe the locations during the tour.

Before the advent of Hinduism in Manipur, the Pena was integral to the rites of passage (Figure 4). On the sixth day of a child's birth, prayers were held accompanied with Pena music to propitiate the deities for the child's long life, good health, and protection from evil spirits. At weddings, Pena music invoked the blessings of the Almighty Lord, recounting stories about the creation of the earth, the emergence of humanity, and the ideals of marriage. During death ceremonies, the Pena asheibas perform Nongarol, a song symbolizing the soul's separation from the body.

Khunung Esei (folk songs) are often accompanied with the Pena. The melody of every Manipuri folk song is said to have originated from this indigenous musical instrument. The Puya (holy script of Meiteis) is read in public with Pena music. Traditionally, the Meiteis organized Pena recitals to celebrate the completion of the harvest. In these entertainment events, the Pena asheiba sings the myths and tales of the creation of universe, great warriors, and kings in antiquated dialects. As a large section of the Meitei Hindus reverts to their

traditional religion, the usage of the Pena is gradually becoming popular (Kshetrimayum). Some female Pena artists have also emerged. Among them, Mangka Mayanglambam is a notable and popular female Pena artist. There are two modes of Pena performances:



Figure 4: Pena performance during birth, wedding and death ceremonies

Pena Phamshak: This is a form of entertainment where the Pena asheibas perform in seating position. It is typically performed at the Mangol (front veranda) of Yumjao (main house) or Sangoi (out house). In early days, it started from the evening and may continue till the wee hours (Andrew).

Pena Pala: This type of performance is usually held during death and marriage ceremonies. Traditional Pena Pala is performed at the courtyard. The number of performers ranges from 3 to 12. The male audience sits on the right side, while the female audience sits on the left. The adherence to this seating discipline is observed in all religious and cultural ceremonies of the Manipuri society.

Costumes and Ornaments of Pena artist

A normal Pena asheiba wears a white cotton pheijom (dhoti), phurit (pyjamas), inaphee (shawl), and kokyet (turban). The inaphee is draped over the shoulder, hanging over the front and rear of the body. A white khwangset (sash) is tied around the waist. In recognition of their contributions to the profession, the Pena asheibas are conferred specific costumes and ornaments intrinsic to their art by a royal decree. A normal Pena asheiba cannot wear this specific costumes and ornaments

(Figure 5). Some of the costumes and ornaments conferred by Royal decree include:



Figure 5: Pena Players' Costume and Ornaments

Resham Phurit (shirt): A traditional upper garment made from Resham cloth.

Khamen Chatpa Pheijom (dhoti): This dhoti features vibrant purple or maroon Pakhangba mayek (pattern) against a white background.

Kokyet (turban): A head gear made by folding and winding white cotton cloths with golden Jhari (borders) and ends.

Khuji (bangle): An old-fashioned brass wristband worn around the wrist.

Tan (armlet): A brass armlet embossed with Pakhangba mayek on a rectangular form. It is secured with thread on either side of the upper arm lengthwise for tightening.

The unique costumes and ornaments worn by the Pena asheiba are conferred in a hierarchal manner. The Resham Phurit and the Khamen Chatpa Pheijom are first conferred when the Pena asheiba completes three dedicated years in the profession. They are followed by the Khuji, Tan and Kokyet respectively (Andrew). The unique costumes are a reckoner of the artist's status and position in his institution.

Attitude of Youths towards the Pena

The investigators enquired to the members of the Pena institutions and the students about the attitude of the youths towards the Pena. The Pena is slowly becoming popular among the youth due to growing exposure worldwide. There is a rising sense of love for their cultural traditions and heritage. This indigenous musical instrument has also been made popular from the works of renowned artists in the field. However, the profession of Pena asheiba is still at risk and there are only about eight hundred artists and students engaged in the field (Andrew). There is also concern that the Pena may be used as a trend without proper understanding

of its spiritual and religious significance. Therefore, there is the need to learn about the Pena by inclusion in school curriculum. Additionally, the income from the profession is low due to its seasonal orientation.

Conclusions

The Pena holds a significant place in the traditional music of the Meiteis. The retention of the Pena's original structure and form is a testament to its enduring cultural legacy. Today, the Pena is also played by women, marking a departure from past practices. Its presence in concerts, movies, and other modern musical settings signifies its growing popularity. However, the potential immersion of the Pena into contemporary music poses a major challenge. Many youths view the age-old culture and traditions associated with the Pena as outdated. The music and songs of the Pena are often blended with modern pop and fusion styles. Despite its widespread use in Manipur, there is a scarcity of books and guidebooks about the Pena. Therefore, further research is urgently needed. As changes continue to emerge, establishing a suitable musical notation system is crucial for the teaching and learning process of aspiring Pena artists. This will contribute to the preservation and growth of this art form.

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