



An Ethnographic Account On The Folk Musical Instruments Among Chiru Tribe Of Manipur

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Abstract: The folk song and folk musical instruments are important subject for anthropologist because it is a form of creativity illustrated by its spontaneous performance and disseminations. Folk music is a valuable form of the oral traditions that enables any cultures to emphasise their identities. The Chiru tribes are very proud of their rich cultural traditions including unique traditions, languages, and folklores such as folk songs, folk dances, folk music, folk tale, and customs which they inherited from their forefather generation to generation. The study aims to investigate and documentation of folk musical instrument used by Chiru tribes in Manipur. There are many musical instruments belonging to the Chiru tribe. Once these instruments become a part of the living but now at this point of time, it is very rarely available in the community. The present study documented three folk musical instruments of Chiru tribe.

Keywords: Chiru, folk music, Folk Instruments, *Dangdok*, *Shaarangdar*, *Rashem*

I. Introduction:

The folk is a product of social and cultural elements, and it is influenced by a society, customs and traditions of a particular community. The folk song is created within the framework of reality and the dominant culture, which makes it a subject for anthropological study. In order to study folk songs from an anthropological perspective. The scholars must consider some important topics related to social and cultural aspects; folk song helps to promote integration when individuals gather together to achieve a social or cultural objectives, it is an important means of expressing an individual's emotions, knowledge, concepts and ideas, it is a form of recreation and entertainment in several societies.

The Chiru tribe is very rich in folk music and their instruments. Folk music is a genre of music that is created, sung, and handed down from one generation to another. It is a product of social and cultural elements, and it is influenced by customs and traditions of particular society. Syiem opines folk music is therefore handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. In the process, no formal learning or training is involved. (Syiem 2005) Festivals are one of the most important cultural elements of every community of the world. Like others tribes, Chiru also celebrates many festivals, and each traditional and cultural festival of Chiru tribe involves rites, rituals, custom, food, dance, song, etc. that imitate every aspect of their culture. There are six major festivals of Chiru tribe that have been handed down from the ancestors since time immemorial. They are *Phoibei Moroi* festival, *Derkai Rohoi*, *Reiinreii Lamvaka*, *Sangroukou*, *Shangbouk* and *Loipuishak Rathakoui* festival. (Zatung Chiru, 2012)

II . Statement of the problem

The Chiru is a tribe rich in folk tradition specially folk music, dance, story, riddles and instruments etc. Once these instruments become an integral part of the community but now at this point of time, it is very rarely available in the community. There is no written documentation of the Chiru folk cultures. The elders are using their language very sparingly so that it affects to the younger generations in accepting the culture. Besides with the process of globalization, modernity, mingling with domain neighbouring communities and majorly with the acceptance of Christian religion, the younger generations instead of taking initiative to learn their language, culture and beliefs, are fashionably opting other cultures. Thus with due reason the aesthetics values of these rich cultures are diminishing. At the same time, these processes lead to gradual decline in the use of their folk music and instruments in every aspect. As a result, the extinction of a large cultural treasure is forcibly foretold.

III. Research Objectives

To investigate and documentation of Folk instruments of Chiru tribe

To analyse the accessibility and uses of their instruments.

IV. Literature Review

Anthropologists have been deeply aware of music and folk instruments from the beginning, both as a site for the exploration of world cultural heritage and as a point of entry for understanding particular human societies from an intimate, local perspective. (Sean O Neill, 2017) Franz Boas an eminent Anthropologist and one of the pioneers in music, expressed a keen attention in music throughout his career, overwhelmingly shaping the direction of the profession by cultivating a strong interest in music among his students. In one of his earliest contributions to the profession, Boas advised new generations of scholars to pay close attention to the verbal arts and vocal, saying, “Anthropologists are well acquainted with the fact that there is no people and no tribe that has not some kind of poetry and music but the study of this branch of aboriginal literature has hardly been begun” (Boas 1887:383). Now the present day, over a century later, this work of documenting the poetry and music, instruments of different communities of the world continues, much of it being conducted under the name of ethnomusicology as well as its close subject, linguistic and cultural anthropology. (Sean O Neill, 2017)

By the mid-twentieth century, the ethnomusicology emerged as a distinct sub discipline within the larger profession of Anthropology. As the name suggests, this new academic field was devoted to the study of ethnic music. George Herzog, who inaugurated this new intellectual discipline, carrying this holistic vision of ethnomusicology forward to many future generations of scholars. Mantle Hood (1918 -2005), a well-known ethnomusicologist, for instance, claimed that bi-musicality, in the musical traditions of at least two cultures, potentially sets epistemological stage for understanding these traditions from an insider’s point of view. (Sean O Neil, 2017)

The scholarly investigation of the folk music of every community and every land is one of the important tasks of the international Folk Music Council. In 1992, Erick Stockmann took the initiative to founded the Study Group on Folk Musical Instruments. Its plan and conception, supported by Erik Dal, Laurence Picken, and Willard Rhodes, received the approval of the executive Board of the Council during the fifteenth Conference of the IFMC in Gottwaldov. Erick Stockmann appointed as the first Chairman of the study Group. The general mission of the Study Group was to increase the flow of information and exchange of experience between the specialists, to seek the solution of certain specific research problems together. It also works to collaborate in carrying out special research projects and to establish a forum for the discussion of the current and acute research questions and research methods. (Erick Stockmann, 1976)

V. Materials and Methods

The methods of data collection are (i) the in-depth interview (ii) the method of observation and (iii) video and audio recordings, and transcription and translation of the cultural texts, cultural songs, folklore and tales as per requirements of the oral literatures. The methods of interview/interviewing key informants were the major preferences, while participate observation method of certain cultural activities and performances like participation in community gatherings, dance performances, religious activities, and group activities like agricultural works, church gatherings etc

Field area: The data were collected from two villages, namely, Nungshai Chiru Village, T.D Block, Sadar Hills Senapati District, Manipur.

Chirus are one of the indigenous tribes found only in India. They confined only in two small states namely Manipur and Assam, where maximum of them is living in Manipur. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman ethnic group. The Chiru population numbers approximately eight thousand. The nomenclature or the term '*Chiru*' is derived from the historical settlement sites "*Chibu*" most probably a place or region somewhere in China. Another name of this tribe is *Reim* in local dialects. Its literal meaning is "simple man" referring to a person of this tribe who has his own distinct peculiarity of innocence and holiness. (Zatung Chiru, 2012)

VI. Results and Discussion:

A folk instrument is a musical instrument that developed among common people/ great-great grandfather and usually does not have a known inventors. It can be made from wood, cane, bamboo, animal product (bone, teeth, hair, fur etc), metal or other material. Such an instruments are played in performances of folk music and dances. Folk instruments vary widely across culture and environment, viz stringed instrument (such as guitar, mandolin, fiddles), wind instruments (such as flute, bagpipes) and percussion instruments (like tambourine and drums). Song and music are very common and un-dividable with Chiru tribes. Men and women both share their feeling and joyful expression in same level without any bias. Chiru community have a rich of folk instruments, they have different instrument for male and female folk. The instruments like *Rashem* and *Sharangdar* are usually played by male and *Dangdok* is played by woman only. These three instruments are regarded as important folk instrument among Chiru tribe in Manipur.

1. *Shaarangdar*:

Shaarangdar is a stringed folk instrument played by Chiru tribe in Manipur. In early days, many male folks of the chiru tribe played this instrument. The Chiru people believe that, there was a story behind this instrument. once upon a time there was a family man which have three sons. Father constructed/invented this instrument for his three sons as a gift.

Chiru *Shaarangdar* is a traditional bowed and stringed musical instrument. This instrument is look like a simple form of Indian *Sarangi* (Punjabi, Rajasthani, Sindhi sarangi) and very akin to Nepali *sarangi*.

Body parts and its name:

Rowongthing or Wang: A wooden body having a neck and holloed out body. The neck is fretless and the string is tied upon and tuned with the tuning *iriki* (pegs).

Akamdar: A bamboo or wooden small stick to handle the string

Miri shok: string made from a leave of pine tree. There are three strings used in this instrument.

Iriki: a small piece of wooden or bamboo stick to hold the string from the top of the instrument

Choksham/ shamkak: it a bow like instrument, made up of bamboo and a very hard string made from a harden thread glued by *Khoi not* (a glue extracted from a small type bee hive).



Picture 1: *Shaarangdar*,
Chiru tribe in Manipur



Picture 2: *Rashem*,
Chiru tribe in Manipur



Picture 3: *Dangdok*,
Chiru tribe in Manipur.

2. *Rashem*

A Folk wind instrument owned by Chiru tribe of Manipur. This instrument is played by man folk only. This is also a mouth blowing instrument with different tune. There are six different air pipe for different tune, viz, three for bass and another three for other tune. Some other communities around the globe are also used *rashem* like instruments viz, Gourd resonated mouth organ by *Xa Pho* people of Vietnam; *Roglai Kupuot* mouth organ of Roglai people; *Bugan* mouth organ by Bugan community of South China (but size is bigger) etc.

Instruments body parts:

Arm: Bird Feathers

Bul-lu: round and hollow made from gourd.

Natum meiri rejo-ut : pipe made from a kind of bamboo called *mobi-wa*.

Natum meiri shaan: thread to bind all these *natum meiri rejo-ut*, made from strong thread and fixed with adhesive call *khoinot* (a glue extracted from a small type bee hive)

Natum oont: round and hollow made from gourd (three small round part at the top of the instrument, black in colour)

Natum meiri Aujout: blowing pipe made from a kind of bamboo called *mobi-wa*.

Korithar : It is small piece of size like thumb nail to make sound. Its made from stone found in Myanmar.

3. *Dangdok*

Dangdok is a very important mouth harp musical instrument use by womenfolk of the Chiru tribe. This instrument is made of a well shave and clean bamboo with a thread made by fine jute. In early days, this is very common and all women have ability to handle and play this instrument. All the married women and well grown girl have this instrument personally. In every village occasion or festival or get together, womenfolk carry this instrument and playing in group when there is song and joyful moments. Unfortunately, the present generation or people of chiru have less knowledge, even they don't know about this instrument too. Only few old womenfolk have knowledge how to play this instrument.

The present study found that, the *Dangdok* is very similar with *Kuriding*. *Kuriding* is a folk harp instruments used by a number of ethnic groups in south Kalimantan, Southern province of Indonesia. But the difference, *Kuriding* is play by any gender but among Chiru tribe, only women are played *Dangdok*

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