Bricolage as a High-Cultural Construction: Print, Power and the Reconstitution of Manipuri Literary Culture

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Abstract
This article intends to review the periodic history of Manipur literature focusing on the prisms of Cultural studies and Postcolonial artefacts. Based on the connotation of cultural bricolage, it examines that Manipuri literature has emerges to reconstructs the lineage of public sphere, displacements of identity, negotiated culture through contested site of memories. The main objective of this research tends to observe on the cultural rupture which were moulded through memory vis-à-vis documentation, relooking the destruction of Manipuri ancestral manuscript via replacement of Bengali script. It highlights the manipulation of collective imaginaries through documentation of folklore such as Lai Haraoba.

Keywords: Bricolage, Context, Print-capitalism, Memory and Culture.

Introduction
Literature, Authority, and Cultural Mediation
Literature represents the spirit of the age through its depictions of culture and civilization. Epic, poetry, novels, drama, and autobiography are tools for disseminating concepts of justice and contextualizing them, with an emphasis on conciseness and societal guidance. In truth, literature is necessary for a variety of reasons, whether figurative or to expand the succession of stress. The etymology of "Literature" is derived from the Greek word "Littera," which is commonly interpreted as "Letter of the alphabet," and if used in plural form, would refer to forms of the alphabet that require authoritative and intelligible work. Reflections of diverse mindsets or perspectives have shaped every aspect of this planet. These societal trends or notions would be represented in literature as emerging vis-à-vis reputations that have climbed to a level and then plummeted as fresh research arises. Frank Kermode's autobiography, *Not Entitled: A Memoir*, discusses how past literature becomes authoritative in the study of ideas, issues, and difficulties while constructing the literary text, as well as how intelligible it would be to interpret as subjects or arts and humanities in analogous ways. He mesmerises this philosophy as:

On beautiful summer lawns, young people lay together all night, recovering from their daytime exertions and listening to a troupe of Balinese musicians. Under their blankets or their sleeping bags, they would chat drowsily about the gurus of the time. What they repeated was largely hearsay; hence my lunchtime suggestion, quite impromptu, for a series of short, very cheap books offering authoritative but intelligible introductions to such figures. (Kermode 126).

Kermode's philosophy could be used as framework as research methodology herein. For instance, the juxtaposition of authoritative and understandable figurative metaphors can take the form of novel approaches and difficult concepts. Considering new contexts or theories, the conclusion could be of new issues, new hypotheses, or different results. To avoid floating into space, for instance, one could deduce that literature of any particular community could offer new ideas, patterns, since literature of any language group is the mirror of that language community

Postcolonial Fragmentation and Cultural Bricolage:
The concept of cultural bricolage could be presumed as assemblage of cultural meanings from the resemblance of constitute fragments and surviving archives. Interestingly it offers a constructive framed for analyzing Manipuri periodic literary histories. Nonetheless, the Context (cultural bricolage) shouldn't be simply privy as the developments of evolution, reimagination or reconditioning under certain circumstances. This is why there is research dedicated to analyzing literary trends, genres, and literary history for any imagined communities. However, it is important to remember that any pattern, new concept, or new development has an authoritative point of intersection with theorizing the metaphysics of critical think tanks. Rather, they are hypothetically related to the understandable figurative metaphor of the processes that occur in such communities or societies in general.

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Though available in print form, the movements and social trends mirrored in all media of representation, rather than the literature, require revisiting and reanalysis. To be sure, any critical reading of any kind of culture appears innocent, underdeveloped, and virginal at first glance, but political forms are occasionally quietly filled with meaning. This approaches the challenges that Manipuri literature experienced between 1930 and 1970 in the same way that the long abstract, theoretical events, happenings, and close frame above do. The purpose of such technique was to provide readers with a 'overview mapping' or 'accessibility' to problems such as: Are Manipur's social upheavals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mirrored in the existing literature from that era? Perhaps it's the thought or feeling of not knowing where to start. It could also be used to empower or motivate readers of this to make their own informed opinions.

Periodisation of Manipuri Literary History

Consider the history of Manipuri literature, which could be divided into four periods: ancient, mediaeval, pre-independence, and post-independence. However, N. Khelchandra Singh, O. Bhogeswar Singh, Ch. Manihar Singh, and many experts believe that the history of Manipuri literature should be divided into the following periods:

i). **The Ancient Period, also known as the Early Period:** The Pre-Hindu Manipuri Literature that was written up until the seventeenth century is considered to be part of the Traditional Period.

ii). **Mediaeval Period:** The turn of the century coincided with the rise of Hinduism, which occurred during the Mediaeval Period, which lasted from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

iii). **Modern Period:** The taste of literature after the colonial invasion 1891, Anglo-Manipur war (an armed conflict between the British Empire and the Kingdom of Manipur) till present (contemporary) is considered Modern Period in the history of Manipuri Literature. (Manihar 12)

A literary genre could be composed of various literary techniques, tone, content, and relatively stable type of social issues, in fact, if and only if there is stable use of language. The nature and forms of human activity reflected through communication is by means of utterance. Utterance could be categorically framed or deduced as daily dialogue, which basically be oral or written. Since literary genres studies becomes an integral part of emerging discipline like cultural studies, an inquiry on how the branch of sociology of literature like: conversation, situation, everyday narration, preparing of documents and orders formed the feature of rhetorical genres in literature, would be interesting.

Ancient Period: Orality, Script, and Sacred Authority

According to Ch Manihar, *A History of Manipuri Literature*, the Ancient Manipuri Literature composed to account with the Meitei Mayek (the Manipuri alphabet) in the forms of literary articulations like ritual songs, hymns, trail of heroism, chronicles of kings and religious works. The early period of Manipuri literature was of oral form, not completely of extraliterary in primary and secondary genres, but rather in the form of epic poetry, religious texts, mythology, hymns and Psalms, historical literature, folklore and oral tradition, drama and performance, and philosophical texts. Similarly, the Ancient Manipuri literature couldn't be accounted with

the arrangements of literature or genres per se through thematic content, style, and compositional structure exclusively, rather contend with various religious and scientific documents, royal law and orders (edicts), royal declarations, stories of heroism of ancestors, and others forms of utterance, written or oral, ravaged or survived through times. In short, the experimentation or trail of discourse on individualism, individual style, individual personality as forms of conducive artistic genres, like romance, socio-economical critique, literary foundations of theory and criticism, came as lately as the twentieth century. The written forms of literature in its own script were prevalent and developed after the twelve century. Much of the works produced in the Ancient period cover no date and are anonymously made available for scanty readers, without the help and influence of any other language or literature, both in verse and prose. In fact, most of which were presented for pleasing their rulers and patrons. Moreover, before the advent of dramatic improvement of Gutenberg printing press (around 1440), the surviving forms of writings were recorded mostly in stoned tablets, palm or beetle leaves, metal inscribing and questionable quality of papers etc., oral literature survived in fragments with elements and ingredients of modification, sometimes with due question of authenticity. There is an absence of chronological bindings in order of the Ancient Manipuri Literature. However, the technique of Dr Grierson's concept on 'guild' (works, craftsmanship or professionals which were carried out in the names of institution of writers and scholars) is followed through the guild principles like:

a) The degree of archaism of the language,
b) Comparative antiquity of the theme,
c) Absence of alien/loan words, and
d) The style of composition.

In substance to all these, rituals songs and hymns were believed to have ushered towards the dawn of ancient Manipuri Poetry, hence could be traced with much effort, despite the literature ravaged during the advent of eighteenth century Hinduism.

Print Capitalism, Script Replacement and Cultural Rupture

The roots of culture and the Ancient Literature in pre-print state were an arresting emblem in terms of cultural politics in modern dialectics of nationalism. "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist." (Geller 169) Certain symbols and memorials that the writers of the Classical Literature either consciously or unaccountably assigned gained respect as holy objects with historical significance in artwork. Would all schools of nationalism have an avoidable sense of ridiculousness if those 'puranic texts' were destroyed or ravaged for an imagined community? The quick response could be the result of a void caused by the incoherence and poverty of philosophy. The pathology of developmental history and cultural identity for the growth of national belongingness as inescapable neurosis malfunctioned destroying the medium of sacred script in eighteen century Manipur by the Hindu missionaries. This can be better understood by Benedict Anderson's quote:

> The great sacral cultures (and for our purposes here it may be permissible to include 'Confucianism') incorporated conceptions of immense communities. But Christendom, the Islamic Ummah, and even the Middle Kingdom-

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which, though we think of it today as Chinese, imagined itself not as Chinese, but as central- were imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script. Take only the example of Islam: if Maguindanao met Berbers in Mecca, knowing nothing of each other's languages, incapable of communicating orally, they nonetheless understood each other's ideographs, because the sacred texts they shared existed only in classical Arabic. (Anderson, 70)

The imagining of community as classical community over imagined community is established by linking sacredness of language and script in modern nation-state formation.
However, the primordial script of Manipuri was completely replaced by Bengali script towards the binding of "religious community". Gangmumei Kamei thoroughly cited the mass burning of ancient text of Manipur 1729, as such,

The first reference to the burning of books (popularly known as Puran Meithaba) was made by Khumanthem Kaomacha who was a ballad singer turned historian in his "Manipur lttibritti" (1934) and the names of 123 books in manuscripts which were burnt are listed in this work. This is collaborated by the great Brahminical scholar Panditraj Atombapu Shanna in his Pakhangba (1952). He writes, "the Guru (Shanta Das) burnt all the religious books of the Meiteis to destroy the Meitei religion. There he said that just like the burning of the books, the Meiteis had to cremate the dead." Since the burning of the dead was introduced in 1725 (February Phairel), the burning of books must be around this time. The books which were burnt at Uttra Kangla were the following: Taoroinai Yangbi, Pakhangba Yangbi, Pakhangba Naoyom, Sanamahi Nauyom, Sanamahi Laihul, Taoroinai Picha, Pakhangba,…Tha Kencbonglon, Thawan Mincbak Khenchonglon, Taoma Hiyang Kollona. (Kamei 237)

With the virtual growth of "Print capitalism", the discourse on "vernacular" increased with maximised circulation. In fact, moving out from the realm of arcane and scarce script Meitei Mayek (Manipuri script) to Bengali script through long use, with multiple replacement, reproducibility and dissemination in eighteenth and nineteenth century. It has been profoundly noted in Benjamin's reputed worked "age of mechanical reproduction" claiming that to a minimum of 20,000,000 books had already been in print form, globally, after the arrival of printing press in 1500. The print had changed the oral literature, such as, folk's songs, hymns, and folklore to an extend of 'their own convenience', if once in print form. For example, the ancient oral folklore commonly known as *Lai Haroaba* (it is one of the oldest articulation of art in Manipur):

Folklore, Documentation, and the Politics of Representation: *Lai Haraoba*
Lai Haraoba (the "al appeasing of the God and Goddesses, correlating the deities of Sanamahism), is one of the ritual festivals of Manipur which perpetuates the "oral ancient social base folklore" of Manipur, enacting the creation of the universe by the gods and goddesses.

Fig 1: Images of Lai Haraoba

According to various Maichou (Pandits), '*Lai Haraoba'* (Lai=god, Haraoba=happiness) the term itself is corrupted and transcends gradually from *Lai Hoi Laoba* (Lai/god, Hoi/consent, and Laoba/voicing, like in chorus). This ritual has unique "al dance and music art as forms of visual art" performing the cosmology of the Universe. It does reflect the appeasing of ancestral worship. The ritual portrays an enactment of how the people of Manipur grow culturally in an ancient period like the civilization of cultivation, health awareness, cleaning of the drainage system, development of earthen wares, for instance, potteries, etc. This ritual binds the bonding of brotherhood to both the people living in the hills and valley by didactic inclusion of Tangkhul Nurabi''s performance, of a Tangkhul tribe in Manipur.
With the growth of "publication" and circulations, the underlying concept of nation building is requestion linking to ground the importance of culture, literature, and scholarship of folklore in twenty-first century cultural politics. For instance, Lai Haraoba has harnessed different etymological meanings from various scholars in the reprint form of Lai Haraoba. E. Nilakanta Singh posits the visual art, *Lai Haraoba*, as Merrymaking of gods and goddesses. While Saroj Nalini Parratt contrasted that, it's pleasing of the God. In line with the observations made by the Maichous (Pandits), the current study tries to conjecture that *Lai Hoi Laoba/Lai* Haraoba could be understood as a way for different gods to express their 'consent' during the cosmogonic process.
The core argument wouldn't be on the literal meaning and its transcendence from the actual connotations, rather on 'private and sponsored' publication of documented folklore. Either creative or scholarly text, every documented folklore has few radical sorts of questions, say, do the government undertake

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any initiative to peer review, under state publication board? If yes to it, the question of how are the subsidies section from Manipur State Kala Akademi utilized? Though the anthropology of research while documenting the texts of Lai Haraoba, vividly carries the nature of Pre-Vishnavite phase of Manipuri culture and myths of Meiteis, the quest of overlapping materials falling with the famous dance Rasleelala,

Fig 2: A unique form of Rasleela Dance in Manipur.

along with Lai Haraoba dance is not solved in any of the documented texts on Lai Haraoba. In the importance of publication, publishing house and subsidies, E Nilakanta says,

Unless some radical change is made in the publishing scene in Manipur, Manipuri Literature has no particular future. The growth of literature is very much linked with the nature of publication in that particular language.

The factors for misinterpretation in the scholarly realm while documenting the folklore derive largely from the lack of explicit field study and honorarium. Moreover, unfortunately through the unwelcoming attitude of local book-stalls, due to delayed procedures on selling the text form. Or through the result, accounting to number of Manipuri Language speakers, say hardly two million in and out of Manipur, moreover the literacy rate and convenience in understanding the importance of language and folklore, which meanwhile became a major factor in the publication of such creative work. Only a few would play the dice of taking a risk. Nearly half the population of Meitei secularly follows Hinduism, which might have the scale, the degradation of interest on such folklores.

Conclusion
It can be concluded that the literary culture of Manipur emerges as bricolage from the cultural emblem collaborating fragments, archives, manuscript and capitalism in print. This emergence could be seen in the forms of literature not just being as repository however through dynamic site of negotiation when the print culture paves its way to public sphere. To understand this epistemic process, the literary scholarship in broader debates via cultural connotation were observed in the folklore like *Lai Haraoba* after the rise of print capitalism in Manipur.

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