

COMPENDIUM
OF
CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS, RITUALS AND PRACTICES
OF
ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY
IN
MANIPUR

CONTENTS

Sl	Topic	Page
1.	Customs of Islam in Manipur	01-02
2.	Traditions of Islam in Manipur	03-05
3.	Rituals and Practices of Islam in Manipur	06-09
4.	Customs of Christianity in Manipur	10-11
5.	Traditions of Christianity in Manipur	12-14
6.	Rituals and Practices of Christianity in Manipur	14-16

Custom of Islam in Manipur

Islam in Manipur, primarily practiced by the Meitei Pangal (Manipuri Muslims), is an essential part of the state's rich cultural and religious diversity. Islam arrived in Manipur centuries ago and has since evolved to reflect both Islamic principles and local traditions. Below is an overview of its history, community, and practices:

1. History of Islam in Manipur:

Introduction:

Islam was introduced to Manipur during the early 17th century through interactions with Muslim traders, soldiers, and migrants from Bengal, Sylhet, Cachar, Arakan and Assam.

In 550-625 CE Arabs came by sea and established a colony in Chittagong, the married women from the natives there who were of Australoid physiognomy; the Arab in union with the Australoid by taking wives produced descendants who were of mixed heritage or '*black and white people*' (or '*Khalazi*' in Arabic terminology) as in Kerala's coastal areas. The *Khalazi* again mixed with tribal Mongoloids in marriage. With the passage of time and further human movement, their descendants came to be called "*Kalisa*" (in local parlance).

Muslim settlements in Manipur began with Sa'ibn abi Waqqas' preaching in 615 CE, the arrival of a Muslim (Arab) family between 615-624 CE, again the arrival of a *Sufi* saint in the 10th century on a silk route that passed through Manipur. Indeed Islam was initiated in Manipur. Sa'd ibn Waqqas was the maternal uncle of Prophet Muhammad. The settlement of a large group in 1606 CE, which was mainly a soldier group who married Meitei women, was followed by another big settlement in 1724 CE. Such waves of arrival continued till 1886. Today, Manipur Muslims form 8.4% of the total state population according to the 2011 Census and there are upto 66 clans given by the King Khagemba, King Chandrakirti, Mahraj Garibniwaj and Gambhir Singh in various part of Manipur valleys.

Muslim became a significant part of the Manipuri society from the early part of the 17th century during the reign of King Khagemba(1597-1652) when one thousand Muslim soldiers led by a General Muhammad Shani from Tafaf in Sylhet were captured and later settled in the valley of Manipur. These settlers married local women and formed the **Meitei Pangal** community.

Evolution:

- a). Islam spread gradually through trade, marriage, and religious teachings.
- b). The community maintained its distinct identity while integrating with Manipuri society.

2. The Meitei Pangal Community :

- a) The Meitei Pangals form the majority of the Muslim population in Manipur.
- b) They primarily speak Manipuri (Meiteilon) and follow Islamic practices, blending them with local customs.
- c) The community is known for its contributions to Manipuri culture, agriculture, trade, and education.

3. Cultural Integration :

- a) The Meitei Pangals have integrated aspects of Manipuri culture into their Islamic practices:
- b) Traditional Manipuri attire, such as the *pheijom* (dhoti) and *phanek* (sarong), is often worn, modified to align with Islamic modesty.
- c) Local Manipuri dishes, such as *singju* (salad) and *eromba* (spiced mashed vegetables), are adapted for halal dietary requirements.

4. Role of Mosques :

- a) Mosques serve as centers for worship, education, and community activities.
- b) Notable mosques include those in Imphal, which host Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*) and large gatherings during festivals.

5. Contributions of Meitei Pangals/Muslim in Manipur:

- a) Agriculture and Trade: The community has historically been involved in farming and trade, contributing significantly to Manipur's economy.
- b) Education: Madrassas and Islamic schools focus on both religious and secular education.
- c) Cultural Exchange: Meitei Pangals participate in Manipuri festivals and contribute to its multicultural identity.

6. Challenges and Social Harmony :

- a) Despite being a minority, Muslims in Manipur have maintained harmonious relations with other communities, including Hindus and Christians.
- b) Efforts are ongoing to address socio-economic challenges, including education and employment opportunities.

7. Notable Features :

- a) The blending of Islamic and Manipuri traditions makes Islam in Manipur unique.
- b) Festivals and ceremonies often include a mix of local customs and Islamic rituals, creating a rich cultural synthesis.

8. Population and Distribution :

- a) Muslims constitute about 8.4% of Manipur's population (Census 2011).
- b) They are primarily concentrated in districts like Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, and Bishnupur.

Conclusion :

Islam in Manipur is a vital part of the state's diverse cultural fabric. The Meitei Pangal community exemplifies the coexistence of Islamic faith with regional traditions, contributing to the social, economic, and cultural development of the state. Their practices highlight the harmonious integration of religion and culture, fostering unity in diversity.

Traditions of Islam in Manipur:

Islam in Manipur is an integral part of its rich cultural tapestry, with its adherents primarily belonging to the Meitei Pangal (Manipuri Muslim) community. The customs and traditions of Islam in Manipur reflect a blend of Islamic practices and local cultural influences. Here's an overview:

1. Observance of Ramadan :

- a) Key Tradition: Ramadan is observed with fasting from dawn to dusk.
- b) Practices:
- c) Iftar: Breaking the fast in the evening with dates and local delicacies like *bora* (fried snacks) and fruits.
- d) Community prayers (*Taraweeh*) are held in mosques at night.
- e) Acts of charity and distribution of food to the needy are emphasized.

4. Festivals Celebrated :

a) Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr:

- i) The holy month of fasting is observed with devotion, culminating in the joyous celebration of Eid.
- ii) Iftar gatherings and communal prayers are highlights.
- iii) Eid al-Fitr Celebrates the end of Ramadan.
- iv) Morning prayers at mosques or open grounds.

b) Eid al-Adha:

- i) Marked by the sacrifice of animals, reflecting the story of Prophet Ibrahim.
- ii) Morning prayers at mosques or open grounds.
- iii) Sacrifice of goats or other halal animals during Eid al-Adha, with the meat distributed among family, friends, and the poor.
- iv) Feasting on dishes like *biryani*, *kababs*, and local Manipuri delicacies.

5. Shab-e-Barat:

A night of prayers and forgiveness, observed with Quran recitation and acts of charity.

6. Milad-un-Nabi:

Celebrated as the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad, featuring sermons and community gatherings.

4. Nikah (Marriage Customs) :

Rituals:

- a) Islamic marriage ceremonies follow the Nikah system, presided over by an Imam or Qazi.
- b) The bride and groom consent to the marriage in the presence of witnesses.
- c) Traditional Manipuri attire is often worn, blending Islamic customs with local styles.
- d) Feasts with both traditional Manipuri and Islamic dishes are integral to the celebrations.

5. Naming Ceremony (Aqiqah) :

Tradition: After the birth of a child, an Aqiqah ceremony is held.

a) Practices:

- i) A goat or sheep is sacrificed, and the meat is distributed to the poor.
- ii) The baby's name is chosen, often with Islamic significance.
- iii) Community prayers and blessings for the child are offered.

6. Festivals Unique to Meitei Pangals :

- a) While adhering to Islamic tenets, Manipuri Muslims celebrate events with cultural uniqueness, such as:
- b) Urs: Commemorating the death anniversaries of Sufi saints.
- c) Ceremonial prayers and communal feasts are held.

7. Dietary Customs :

- a) Halal Food: Muslims in Manipur strictly follow Islamic dietary laws, consuming only halal food.
- b) Local dishes are prepared with a blend of Manipuri spices and Islamic culinary traditions.

8. Social Harmony and Brotherhood :

- a) Muslims in Manipur participate in local festivals and maintain strong social ties with other communities, fostering interfaith harmony.
- b) Traditional Manipuri hospitality is evident in their communal events and celebrations.

9. Women's Role in Traditions :

- a) Women observe Islamic modesty in clothing, often wearing hijabs along with Manipuri traditional attire.
- b) They actively participate in family and community events, especially during Eid and weddings.

10. Religious Gatherings and Festivals :

- a) Milad-un-Nabi (Prophet Muhammad's birthday): Celebrated with prayers, sermons, and community feasts.
- b) Shab-e-Barat: Observed with night-long prayers and acts of charity.

11. Architecture and Mosques :

- a) Mosques in Manipur, such as the Pangal Masjid, reflect a mix of Islamic and local architectural styles.
- b) These mosques are not only places of worship but also centers for community gatherings.

12. Unique Cultural Integration :

- a) Meitei Pangals incorporate local customs, such as wearing Manipuri traditional attire during ceremonies while adhering to Islamic guidelines.
- b) Festivals and rituals often include Manipuri music and dance alongside Islamic prayers, creating a unique cultural synthesis.

Islamic traditions in Manipur highlight a harmonious blend of religious observances and local cultural practices, reflecting the unique identity of the Meitei Pangal community. These customs emphasize faith, community bonding, and social harmony.

Rituals and practices of Islam in Manipur:

Islam in Manipur, primarily practiced by the Meitei Pangal (Manipuri Muslim) community, encompasses rituals and practices rooted in Islamic teachings while reflecting the cultural uniqueness of the region. Here's a detailed overview of their rituals and practices:

1. Key Beliefs and Practices :

- a) The Muslims of Manipur adhere to the principles of Sunni Islam, with practices rooted in the Quran and Hadith.
- b) Key practices include:
 - i) Daily prayers (*Salat*), fasting during Ramadan (*Sawm*), charity (*Zakat*), and pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*).
 - ii) Observance of Islamic festivals like Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.
 - iii) Religious education in Madrassas for learning the Quran and Islamic teachings.

2. Daily Prayers (Salat) :

- a) Core Practice: Muslims in Manipur perform the five daily prayers (Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha) as prescribed by Islamic teachings.
- b) Core Practice: Muslims in Manipur, like elsewhere, observe the five daily prayers.
- c) Rituals:
 - i) Prayers are performed individually or in congregation at mosques.
 - ii) Special care is taken for cleanliness and ablution (*Wudu*) before prayers.
 - iii) Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*) hold special significance, with sermons delivered in Manipuri or Arabic.

3. Friday Prayers (Jumu'ah) :

- a) Friday prayers are a significant weekly event where Muslims gather at mosques.
- b) Imams deliver sermons (*Khutbah*) in Manipuri or Arabic, addressing religious and social issues.

4. Ramadan and Fasting (Sawm) :

- a) Sacred Observance: The month of Ramadan is dedicated to fasting and spiritual reflection.
- b) Practices:
 - i) Fasting from dawn to dusk, followed by communal Iftar (breaking the fast).
 - ii) Mosques host *Taraweeh* prayers at night.
 - ii) Acts of charity and sharing meals with the needy are emphasized.

5. Death and Burial Rites :

Ritual :

- a) The deceased is given a ritual bath and shrouded in a white cloth (Kafan).
- b) Funeral prayers (*Salat al-Janazah*) are offered, followed by burial in accordance with Islamic practices.
- c) The community gathers to pray for the deceased and offer condolences to the family.

6. Educational and Religious Practices :

- a) Madrassas: Religious schools teach the Quran, Arabic, and Islamic principles to children.
- b) Many Manipuri Muslims actively participate in Islamic studies alongside mainstream education.

7. Marriage Rituals (Nikah) :

- a) Core Ritual: Marriage is solemnized through a Nikah ceremony.
- b) Practices:
 - i) Conducted by an Imam or Qazi in the presence of witnesses.
 - ii) The bride's consent (*Ijab-o-Qubool*) is a crucial part of the ritual.
 - iii) Celebrations include feasts and may incorporate local traditions like wearing Manipuri attire while observing Islamic guidelines.

8. Funeral Rites (Janazah) :

- a) Significance: Islamic funeral practices are observed with solemnity.
- b) Rituals:
 - i) The deceased is bathed and shrouded in a white cloth (*Kafan*).
 - ii) Funeral prayers (*Salat al-Janazah*) are held at the mosque or burial site.
 - iii) Burial is followed by communal prayers and remembrance gatherings.

9. Naming Ceremony (Aqiqah) :

- a) Ritual: Held to name a newborn child, typically on the 7th day after birth.
- b) Practices:
 - i) Sacrifice of a goat or sheep, with the meat shared with the poor and relatives.
 - ii) Special prayers and blessings for the child's well-being.

10. Observance of Shab-e-Barat :

- a) Night of Forgiveness: Muslims pray for forgiveness and the departed souls.
- b) Practices:
 - i) Night-long prayers, recitation of the Quran, and acts of charity.
 - ii) Some also distribute sweets or food to neighbors and the less fortunate.

11. Milad-un-Nabi (Prophet Muhammad's Birthday) :

- a) Celebration: Observed with prayers, sermons, and gatherings.
- b) Practices:
 - i) Recitation of the Quran and praises of the Prophet Muhammad.
 - ii) Community feasts and acts of charity are common.

12. Charity (Zakat and Sadaqah) :

- a) Significance: Giving to the poor is a central tenet of Islam.
- b) Practices:
 - i) Zakat is calculated and distributed annually, especially during Ramadan.
 - ii) Sadaqah (voluntary charity) is given during festivals and for community welfare.

13. Religious Education :

- a) Role of Madrassas: Islamic schools teach the Quran, Hadith, and Arabic.
- b) Children learn prayers and Islamic values alongside their regular education.

14. Unique Local Practices :

- a) Integration with Manipuri Culture:
 - i) Traditional Manipuri attire is often worn during ceremonies, blended with Islamic modesty standards.
 - ii) Community events may include Manipuri hospitality, with local dishes served alongside Islamic rituals.

15. Dietary Practices :

- a) Halal Food: Muslims in Manipur strictly adhere to halal dietary laws.
- b) Local cuisine, such as *singju* (a Manipuri salad), is adapted to meet Islamic dietary requirements.

16. Role of Mosques :

- a) Mosques are the center of Islamic life in Manipur, serving as places of worship, education, and community gatherings.
- b) Important mosques, such as those in Imphal, host major religious events and serve as hubs for social unity.

17. Interfaith Harmony :

Manipuri Muslims maintain harmonious relationships with other communities, participating in local festivals and sharing cultural practices while adhering to Islamic principles.

The rituals and practices of Islam in Manipur demonstrate a harmonious blend of Islamic tenets with local traditions, emphasizing faith, community, and cultural integration.

Custom of Christianity in Manipur

Christianity in Manipur is one of the major religions in the state, deeply influencing its culture, traditions, and social fabric. Its spread began with the arrival of missionaries in the late 19th century, and it has since become the predominant religion among many tribal communities, alongside Hinduism and Islam. Here's an overview:

1. History of Christianity in Manipur :

a) Arrival of Missionaries:

- i) Christianity was introduced to Manipur in the late 19th century by British missionaries and the American Baptist Mission.
- ii) William Pettigrew was the first Christian missionary to work extensively in Manipur, starting in 1894 among the Tangkhul Naga tribe in the Ukhrul district.

b) Spread of the Faith:

- i) Christianity quickly spread among the hill tribes, such as the Nagaland Naga tribes, Kukis, Tangkhuls, and Paites, as the faith resonated with their traditional values of community and spirituality.
- ii) The missionaries played a significant role in education, healthcare, and social reform, which attracted tribal communities to Christianity.

2. Christian Denominations in Manipur :

The Christian population in Manipur is diverse, encompassing several denominations:

- a) Baptists: The largest denomination, especially among the Nagas and Kukis.
- b) Catholics: Significant among various tribes and communities.
- c) Presbyterians and Evangelicals: Present in different parts of the state.
- d) Pentecostals and other independent churches: Growing in influence.

3. Key Beliefs and Practices :

Core Beliefs: Christians in Manipur follow the teachings of the Bible, emphasizing salvation through Jesus Christ, love, forgiveness, and community service.

Common Practices:

- a) Regular Sunday worship, including hymns, sermons, and prayers.
- b) Observance of Christian festivals like Christmas, Easter, and Good Friday.
- c) Baptism and Holy Communion as central sacraments.

4. Tribal Integration with Christianity :

- a) Tribal communities have integrated Christian teachings with their traditional practices:
- b) Traditional music and dance are often performed during church services.
- c) Local languages are used in sermons, hymns, and Bible translations.
- d) Festivals and rituals sometimes combine tribal customs with Christian observances.

5. Contributions to Society :

- a) Education: Christian missionaries are credited with transforming the educational landscape of Manipur, especially in the hills.
- b) Peace building: Churches often play a mediating role in conflicts between tribes or communities.
- c) Promotion of Unity: Christianity has fostered a sense of unity among diverse tribes through shared beliefs and practices.

6. Challenges :

Interfaith Relations:

- a) While Christianity has coexisted peacefully with other religions, occasional tensions arise due to cultural or land-related issues.

7. Secularism vs. Traditional Values:

The younger generation's embrace of modernity poses challenges to maintaining traditional tribal values alongside Christian faith.

8. Christian Population in Manipur :

Christians make up approximately 41% of the state's population (2011 Census). The majority of Christians reside in the hill districts, where tribal communities predominate, while the valley regions have a Meetei majority.

Conclusion :

Christianity in Manipur has played a transformative role in shaping the cultural, social, and educational development of the state. It remains a cornerstone of tribal identity, blending seamlessly with traditional customs while fostering unity and modernization. Through its emphasis on faith, service, and community, Christianity continues to be a vital force in the lives of many Manipuris.

Traditions of Christianity in Manipur

The traditions and practices of Christianity in Manipur, shaped by missionary influences and local tribal cultures, reflect both spiritual devotion and cultural harmony. Here's an overview:

1. Christmas Celebrations :

- a) Key Festival: Christmas is the most celebrated Christian holiday.
- b) Traditions:
 - i) Decoration of homes, streets, and churches with lights and stars.
 - ii) Nativity plays, carol singing, and community feasts.
 - iii) Visiting neighbors and exchanging gifts as a gesture of goodwill.

2. Easter and Good Friday :

- a) Significance: Marking the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- b) Practices:
 - i) Special church services, including sunrise worship on Easter morning.
 - ii) Fasting and prayer during Lent (40 days before Easter).
 - iii) Processions or enactments of Christ's crucifixion on Good Friday.

3. Revival Conventions :

- a) Revival movements are an integral part of Christianity in Manipur.
- b) Large gatherings are held for preaching, worship, and spiritual renewal.
- c) Emphasis on repentance, prayer, and strengthening of faith.

4. Tribal Integration in Christian Practices :

Christianity in Manipur often incorporates traditional tribal customs, such as:

- a) Wearing traditional attire during church events.
- b) Singing hymns in local languages with the use of indigenous instruments.
- c) Hosting cultural dances and performances during Christian festivals.

5. Community Feasts :

- a) Shared meals are a common practice during festivals like Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving.
- b) Feasts symbolize unity and fellowship within the community.

6. Christian Marriages :

Christian weddings in Manipur are celebrated with a mix of:

- a) Western rituals, such as exchanging vows and rings in a church.
- b) Traditional tribal customs, including cultural dances and festive gatherings.
- c) Emphasis on community involvement and prayers for the couple.

7. Missionary and Educational Work :

a) Education:

- i) Missionaries established schools and colleges, significantly improving literacy rates among the tribal population.
- ii) Institutions like St. Joseph's School and Don Bosco Schools are examples of Christian contributions to education.

b) Healthcare:

Christian missions set up hospitals and clinics in remote areas, providing essential medical services.

c) Social Reforms:

Missionaries worked to abolish practices like headhunting and brought modernization to the tribal way of life.

8. Thanksgiving Services /Harvest Festival:

- a) Annual thanksgiving events are held in churches to express gratitude for blessings and harvests.
- b) Offerings, prayers, and communal celebrations mark these occasions.

9. Choir and Music Traditions :

- a) Church choirs play a vital role in worship services and festive occasions.
- b) Traditional tribal songs and modern Christian hymns are blended, creating a unique musical tradition.

10. Social Gatherings and Fellowships :

- a) Weekly Bible study groups, youth fellowships, and women's prayer meetings are common practices.
- b) These gatherings foster spiritual growth and community bonding.

11. Observance of Holy Days :

Christians in Manipur solemnly observe:

- a) Palm Sunday: With processions and distribution of palm leaves.
- b) Ascension Day: Remembering Christ's ascension to heaven.
- c) Pentecost: Celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit.

12. Role of Churches :

- a) Churches are central to Christian life, serving as places of worship and centers for social and cultural activities.
- b) Church events often address community issues, fostering harmony and cooperation.

13. Denominations in Manipur :

Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, and Pentecostals are the major Christian denominations, each with its unique traditions and practices.

14. Cultural Influence :

Christianity in Manipur is deeply rooted in tribal culture, creating a harmonious blend of faith and tradition. Its practices emphasize community, spiritual growth, and cultural preservation, making it a vital part of Manipur's social fabric.

Rituals and practices of Christianity in Manipur

Christianity in Manipur incorporates a mix of rituals and practices drawn from Christian traditions and local cultural influences. These rituals play a vital role in spiritual life and community bonding. Here are the key rituals and practices:

1. Baptism

- a) Significance: Marks initiation into the Christian faith.
- b) Rituals:
 - i) Performed in churches or rivers, symbolizing purification and rebirth.
 - ii) Infants or adults are baptized with water, accompanied by prayers and blessings.
 - iii) Tribal hymns may be sung alongside traditional Christian liturgy.

2. Sunday Worship :

- a) Core Practice: Weekly gatherings at churches for prayer, teaching, and fellowship.
- b) Activities:
 - i) Singing hymns, scripture reading, and sermons.
 - ii) Communion (Lord's Supper) is often observed during Sunday services.
 - iii) Youth and women's choirs add a distinct local flavor with traditional music and instruments.

3. Holy Communion (Eucharist) :

- a) Significance: Commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus Christ.
- b) Rituals:
 - i) Bread and wine (or local substitutes) are shared among believers.
 - ii) This act signifies unity with Christ and within the congregation.

4. Prayer Meetings:

- a) Purpose: Daily or weekly gatherings for communal and personal prayers.
- b) Practice:
 - i) Organized in homes, churches, or community halls.
 - ii) Special emphasis on intercessory prayers for the sick, needy, and social harmony.

5. Revival Conventions :

- a) Purpose: Focus on spiritual renewal and deepening faith.
- b) Activities:
 - i) Large gatherings with sermons, healing prayers, and gospel music.
 - ii) Tribal dances and local songs are integrated into worship.

6. Christian Marriages :

- a) Rituals:
 - i) Held in churches, presided over by a pastor.
 - ii) Exchange of vows and rings, followed by blessings and prayers.
 - iii) Tribal customs like feasting, singing, and dancing complement the Christian ceremony.

7. Funeral Rites :

- a) Practices:
 - i) Church services include prayers, hymns, and sermons.
 - ii) Burial ceremonies follow Christian traditions, with communal support from the church and village.
 - iii) Some communities combine this with traditional mourning practices.

8. Bible Study and Fellowship :

- a) Rituals:
 - i) Weekly or monthly gatherings to study scripture.
 - ii) Organized by youth groups, women's societies, or elders of the church.
 - iii) Discussions often address social and ethical issues alongside religious teachings.

12. Observance of Holy Days :

- a) Key Rituals:
 - i) Palm Sunday: Processions with palm leaves, symbolizing Christ's entry into Jerusalem.
 - ii) Pentecost: Celebrates the Holy Spirit's descent with special prayers and sermons.
 - iii) Ascension Day: Reflects on Jesus' ascension with devotional hymns and scripture readings.

13. Missionary and Evangelical Work :

- a) Active missionary activities involve spreading the Gospel.
- b) Revival meetings and youth conventions often encourage evangelism.

14. Role of Music and Dance :

- a) Tribal Christians incorporate traditional dance and music into worship.
- b) Hymns in local languages, accompanied by indigenous instruments, are a unique feature.

15. Fasting and Devotion :

- a) Fasting, especially during Lent, is a common practice.
- b) Special prayers and devotions mark significant periods, such as New Year's Eve or major life events.

Christianity in Manipur is vibrant and community-oriented, blending global Christian traditions with local cultural expressions, creating unique rituals that uphold faith and social harmony.