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An Overview of the Food Drink Clothing Traditional Attire Songs and Dances of the Tipra People of Tripura

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Abstract-- This study explores the rich cultural identity of the Borok (Tripuri) people within the geographic and social landscape of Tripura, Northeast India. Tripura, nestled amidst hills and forests, is home to 19 distinct indigenous tribes, their identity inextricably linked to their environment and heritage. The study focuses on the primary pillars of Tiprasa life: Chamung-Nwngmung (traditional cuisine), Kannmung-Chumung (ethnic attire), and Rwchaphmung-Mwsamung (folk music and dance). These elements, alongside the Kokborok language and the Hoda (social system), serve as the vital markers of their history and communal distinction. By examining these cultural expressions, the text illustrates how traditional practices define the Borok people and continue to preserve the unique aesthetic and historical legacy of the state.

Keywords-- Kokborok, Borok Dophra, Tripura Heritage, Tiprasa Culture, Chamung-Nwngmung, Kannmung-Chumung, Mwsamung, Northeast India.

I. INTRODUCTION

Located in the vibrant landscape of Northeast India, the state of Tripura stands as a testament to the harmonious coexistence of nature and ancient heritage. Characterized by its undulating hills, winding rivers, and lush green forests, this "land of beauty" provides the vital backdrop for a rich tapestry of human history. Within this geographic cradle, the Borok (Tripuri) community has flourished for centuries, evolving into a society defined by both its resilience and its artistic depth.

The identity of the Borok people is not a singular monolith but a diverse collective consisting of 19 indigenous tribes (dophas). Despite their internal diversity, they are unified by the Kokborok language and a shared cultural soul. To understand the Borok—often referred to as Tiprasa—one must look beyond historical dates and political boundaries, focusing instead on the lived experiences of their daily life. Their identity is fundamentally anchored in their Hoda (traditional social systems) and the Raida-Kaida (customary laws and ethics) that have been passed down through generations of oral tradition.

Central to this cultural preservation are the tangible and intangible markers of their civilization. Chamung-Nwngmung (their traditional cuisine) reflects an intimate knowledge of the local land, while Kannmung-Chumung (their ethnic attire) showcases intricate weaving skills that serve as a visual language of tribal affiliation.

Furthermore, the rhythmic pulse of the community is found in Rwchaphmung-Mwsamung (songs and dances), which are not merely performances but vital rituals that celebrate the cycles of nature, agriculture, and life.

As Tripura continues to modernize, the preservation of these traditional pillars remains crucial. They are the mirrors through which the Borok people view their past and the foundation upon which they build their future. By examining the synergy between their food, dress, and arts, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how the Tiprasa identity continues to beautify and define the spirit of Tripura today.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To study the food, drink, clothing, traditional attire, songs, and dances of the Tipra people of Tripura.

III. METHODOLOGY

Primary data was collected from the field using stratified random sampling.

IV. DISCUSSION

Tripura is a beautiful, small state located in the northeastern region of India. It is beautifully adorned with natural landscapes—hills, mountains, rivers, streams, and dense forests—and is teeming with diverse flora and fauna. Many different ethnic groups live in this land, and among them, the Kokborok-speaking people comprise 19 distinct tribes (dopha).

The Borok people possess their own unique culture, heritage, and social systems. To truly understand and identify the Borok or Tiprasa people, one must look at their traditional clothing and attire, their food and drink, and their songs and dances. These elements together preserve and showcase the beautiful history and identity of the land of Tripura.

Explore the food and drink, clothing and attire, and the songs and dances of the Borok people (Tiprasa).

1. Food and Drink (Chamung – Nwngmung)

In this world, all living beings—birds, animals, trees, insects, and humans—survive by consuming their own specific types of food. If we look at the most essential needs in a human's life, there are three main requirements: (i) Shelter (tongthai), (ii) Clothing (richum), and (iii) Food (chamung).

Among these, food is the most vital, because without it, life would quickly perish. While many different communities live together in this world and their cuisines differ, the indigenous Borok people, who have lived in Tripura since ancient times, have a distinct culinary tradition known as "Chamung Borok" (Borok Cuisine).

1.1. Traditional Dishes of the Borok People

To eat rice (mai), one must have a side dish (mui); without a side dish, the rice is not tasty. Even when eating snacks or rice cakes (awang), a side dish or a spicy chutney (mosodeng) is often required. Therefore, the side dish is an essential part of the meal.

Names of traditional side dishes (Mui):

- a) Chakhwi (a signature dish made with baking soda/alkali)
- b) Chatang
- c) Muitru
- d) Mosodeng (Chutney—such as pork chutney, egg chutney, chicken chutney, etc.)
- e) Pengmani
- f) Berma Bwtwi (fermented fish broth)
- g) Igmani
- h) Murmani
- i) Awandru (rice flour-based gravy)
- j) Guduk (vegetables cooked in bamboo)
- k) Chakhwtwkwthwng
- l) Hontali
- m) Hangwi
- n) Yopra
- o) Iribak
- p) Sermani

2. Traditional Rice Cakes (Awang):

Awang is a specific type of food item of the Borok people. We prepare awang using various types of rice like Guriya, Mami, and Maswi. Most commonly, however, Guriya (sticky rice) is used to make these traditional cakes.

Names of different types of Awang (Rice Cakes):

- **Awang Belep** (flat rice cake)
- **Awang Bangwi** (rice cake wrapped in *Lairu* leaves/highly popular)
- **Awang Sokorang**
- **Awang Twipek**
- **Awang Laithol**
- **Awang Bati**

- **Awang Peng**
- **Awang Lopho**
- **Awang Khipai**
- **Awang Kosoi** (rice cake made with beans)

3. Traditional Drinks of the Borok People:

Since time immemorial, the Borok community has been accustomed to various traditional drinks. However, it should be noted that the primary traditional drinks are those that have an intoxicating or fermented quality. These include Chuwak, Gora, and Bwtwk.

3.1. Chuwak (fermented liquor)

Chuwak is a type of traditional fermented liquor. In ancient times, the Borok people would drink Chuwak to find relief from exhaustion after a long day of hard labor. However, it is an indispensable part of religious rituals; it is offered during the worship of gods and deities (Mwtai-Atai) and used during traditional purification ceremonies (Sema Swngmung).

Chuwak is distilled or prepared from rice. Specifically, Maimi (sticky rice) is used to make rice cakes (Awang) and is also fermented to produce Bwtwk (rice beer). It is believed that drinking Bwtwk made from Maimi rice has medicinal properties, helping to cure ailments such as dizziness (khenkhokkhmani), blood-related issues, and water retention problems. Thus, it also serves a purpose in traditional herbal healing.

4. Traditional Clothing and Attire of the Borok People

In ancient times, many of our Borok people lived in the hills and practiced Huk (shifting/Jhum cultivation). While working in the Jhum fields, they grew cotton alongside their crops. They would then use this cotton to weave their own clothing by hand. Using a traditional tool called a 'Chakha' (spinning wheel), they spun the cotton into thread to weave their garments. Within these weaving traditions, they incorporated various intricate patterns and designs known as Poderopod, Bwthai, and Bumul into items like the Rignai, Risa, and Takphuru.

Clothing that is hand-woven by the Borok people using these traditional looms is known as Ri Borok. Our traditional attire is widely recognized and identified as Kamborok-Chumborok.

4.1. The traditional garments worn and wrapped by the Borok people include:

- a) *Rignai*: (The traditional lower garment for women)
- b) *Risa*: (A small traditional cloth used as a breast-wrap)
- c) *Duti Borok*: (Traditional hand-woven loincloth/dhoti for men)
- d) *Kamchwlwi Borok*: (Traditional hand-woven shirt/waistcoat)

a) Rignai:

The traditional lower garment worn by the women of our Borok community is called a *Rignai*. There are many different types and patterns of *Rignai*, which are listed below:

- **ChamathwiRignai** (traditional pattern often inspired by nature)
- **Muiphraithai** (A distinct pattern featuring red and black colors)
- **Khakaithu**
- **Khamjang**
- **Rignai Sada**
- **Nagpaliya**
- **RignaiMereng or Mugli**

b) Risa:

The *Risa* is a smaller piece of traditional hand-woven cloth. In our Borok community, women wrap it around their chest, while men use it as a head-wrap (turban) or a muffler around the neck. Let us now look at the different types of *Risa* below:

- **Risa Kosompali** (Black-bordered/themed Risa)
- **Risa Kwchakpali** (red-bordered/themed Risa)
- **Risa Kuphurpali** (White-bordered/themed Risa)
- **Risa Batamui**
- **Risa Bwrwichwak**

Traditional Patterns (Bumul) of the Risa:

These refer to the specific intricate designs woven into the fabric:

- **Takhumtwi** (specific geometric pattern)
- **Bokulbar** (Bakul flower design)
- **Kuwaichu** (Betel nut pattern)
- **Sairungkhu**
- **Kwplwasa**
- **Maitangsa** (grain of rice pattern)
- **AmingYapai** (cat's paw print pattern)
- **Banchai**
- **Khumtai** (flower bud pattern)

c) Traditional Ornaments and Jewellery of Borok Women:

The women of the Borok community wear various types of traditional jewellery to adorn themselves. These include:

- **Surang:** Hairpins used to secure and decorate the hair bun (**khaju**).

- **Wakhum and Toya:** Traditional earrings worn in the ears (**khunju**).
- **Koli, Lulu, Lolai, and Balik:** Ornaments worn on the nose (**bukung**).
- **Mathiya, Baju, and Bauti:** Different types of bangles and armlets worn on the hands/arms (**yago**).
- **Rangbwatang and Ganth:** Traditional necklaces made of coins or beads worn around the neck (**totwra**).
- **Kharuk:** Anklets worn on the feet/ankles (**yakung**).
- **Puichang:** An ornament worn around the waist (**bwchango**).

5. Songs and Dances of the Borok People

Tipra communities possess their own traditions of music and dance, the Borok community is also deeply enriched by its own *Rwchapmung* (songs) and *Mwsamung* (dances). Since ancient times, the Borok people have been intimately connected to these arts. Historically, because the Borok people were primarily engaged in *Huk* (Jhum/shifting cultivation), their songs and dances are profoundly influenced by their labor, their environment, and the rhythms of their daily work.

5.1. Songs (Rwchapmung)

Traditional Kokborok folk songs are often referred to as *Tipra Barot* or *Jaduni*. *Jaduni* is the quintessential folk song of the *Tiprasa* people. These songs are not traditionally written down; they have been preserved orally, passed from mouth to mouth through the generations since time immemorial. The *Jaduni* style is divided into many different branches or melodies (*Rangini*), including

- **Utor Rangini**
- **Dokhin Rangini**
- **Duna Rangini**
- **Daspa Rangini**
- **Mayoni Rangini**
- **ResiyarKhagra**
- **Waying Khilimung** (Lullabies)

Beyond these, there are many other categories of songs performed within the *Tipra* social system (*Hoda*). These vary based on the occasion, such as

- **Work Songs:** Songs sung while performing working.
- **Agricultural Songs:** Songs about farming and livelihood.

- *Chuwak Panda Songs*: Songs performed during traditional drinking gatherings or festivals.
- *Social & Customary Songs*: Songs that follow the specific rules and traditions of the community's heritage.

5.2. Dances of the Borok people

We do our work for the development of our Borok community. Our work includes many things, such as old customs, traditions, and practices. Our work has reached all of Tripura. We have achieved many things and opened the doors to our community. We are also working on our traditional clothes and other things. However, we have reached our destination. And we have come across many different works for our community. Our work is to live together with our community and continue our work.

- Tongbiti
- Lebang
- Mamita
- Gorla
- MosokSulmani
- Hojagiri.

V. RESULT AND FINDINGS

- The text lists several traditional folk dances that are significant to the Borok indigenous communities.
- The names provided are Tongbiti, Lebang, Mamita, Gorla, Mosok Sulmani, and Hojagiri.
- Many of these dances are closely linked to agricultural practices, such as the *jhum* cultivation cycle and the harvest festivals.
- The dances often depict daily life and rituals, including hunting (Mosok Sulmani) and gathering insects (LebangBumani).
- Hojagiri is an internationally recognized and unique folk dance performed by young women balancing on earthen pots.

VI. CONCLUSION

The dynamic interplay between tradition and the pressures of modernity and demographic shifts. The study is a past where traditional foods (*chamung*), clothing (*kanmeeng*, *cheenmeng*, and *owchapmang*), and the labor-intensive *chum* cultivation were commonplace and vital aspects of daily life and identity, similar to other indigenous groups in the region who traditionally weave their own clothes.

However, noting that traditional weaving styles are less frequently seen today, and modern entertainment has replaced some traditional communal activities like music and dance. This reflects a broader trend among the indigenous communities of Tripura, where external influences, urbanization, and the dominance of other cultures have threatened traditional practices and language.

Despite these challenges, there is a clear resilience in the culture. The importance of these traditions to the community's identity has sparked efforts toward preservation and revitalization, often leveraging modern tools like digital media and community initiatives to ensure the heritage survives for future generations. The community is actively navigating a balance between maintaining its unique cultural roots and adapting to a modern, globalized world.

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