

Cultural Implication of “Chinthong Arnam” Ritual Practice and the Significance of Plants and Animals: A Case Study Among the Karbis of Assam, India

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Abstract: The use of plants and animals in the ritual is an essential part of tribal religious practices. Tribal people make sacrifices to appease or to maintain favor with a deity. Sacrifices are also made to ward off sickness, sufferings, and afflictions. The Karbis are one of the significant tribe of Northeast India with a major concentration in the hills of Karbi Anglong districts of Assam (India). The Karbis made many sacrifices to the unseen and territorial deities and animal sacrifices are an inseparable part of Karbi ritual practice. Fowl is mainly preferred for sacrifice, and other animals include hen, pig, duck, and goat. Apart from animals, egg, rice, rice powder, leaves of *Ocimum tenuiflorum* (holy basil), Areca nut and leaf etc. are the essential elements of Karbi rituals. The present paper is an attempt to study the significance of the ritual of “*Chinthong Arnam*” performed by the Karbis. “*Chinthong Arnam*” is the protective deities of the Chinthong region/province and the ritual is popularly known as “*Vo'lok ase*” (lit. Ritual of the white fowl). The paper also attempts to find out the importance of plants and animals in the ritual performances of “*Chinthong Arnam*”. For the present study, the data were collected during the ritual performances of “*Chinthong Arnam*” at Rongsamphri, Longkiri Enghi village, under Lumbajong Development Block of Karbi Anglong district of Assam (India). The fieldwork was conducted during the 1st week of January 2017. Observation and case-study methods were used for collecting the necessary information.

Keywords: Chinthong Arnam, Vo'lok Ase, Karbi, White Fowl, Sacrifice, Ritual.

I. INTRODUCTION

The religious philosophy of tribal people is based on mainly 'animism'. Animism is that 'crude' form of religion in which magic is the predominant element (Vidyarthi and Rai 1977, 237). Tribal people believe in the presence of supernatural power at the back of high mountains, flooded rivers, big trees, and epidemics. They try to please these powers by means that of various kinds of propitiations and worships. Sometimes they are worshipped even without being given whatever figure. An important type of animism is ancestral worship which is found among the tribal people. The tribal people worship deities of family and village deities. Among the tribe, there is a goddess of the crop, one of the animals and a deity presiding rain. The tribal people try to please these gods and goddesses by offering the sacrifices of different types of animals and birds before them (Sharma 2007, 226).

The Karbis are one of the significant tribe of Northeast India with a major concentration in the hills of Karbi Anglong (Formerly known as Mikir Hills) District of Assam (India). Religiously, the Karbis are animist in nature, fused with elements of Shamanist 'mysticism', ancestor worship and a good many sacrifices to the unseen and territorial deities (Teron 2011, 58). Those Karbis who still follow the traditional religious practices are known as the followers of

“*Hemphu-Mukrang-Rasinja*”, so they prefer to call themselves as “*Hemphu-Mukrang Aso*” (Son of *Hemphu* and *Mukrang*). *Arnam* is the Karbi equivalent for god and their worship or rituals are known as ‘*Se-Karkli*’. They worship the guardian spirits of each particular space called *Longri Arnam* which in Assamese is known as ‘*than*’ (Sacred Groves/place of worship). The Karbis believe that every object in this universe has its own spirit (*Arnam*), Sun, moon, star, stream, tree, hill, forest, rain, wind, fire, road, house, etc. all have their individual spirits. In every worshiped there is always an animal, preferably a fowl for sacrifice. Besides fowl, other animals sacrificed include pig, goat, duck, and pigeon. Apart from animals, hen’s egg, rice powder, and ‘*tulsi*’ leaves are also necessary to perform worship or ritual (Phangcho 2003, 57). Ritual and ancestor worship form an integral part of Karbi religious life and they make their offering through performing rituals and sacrificing the animals (Tisso and Singh, 2017)

The use of plants and animals in the ritual is an essential part of tribal religious practices. Tribal people make sacrifices to ward off sickness, sufferings, and afflictions. The animists believe that if one displeases an evil spirit either in word or action, the demon will bring affliction upon him or his family. The idea of a sacrifice is to avert such demonic affliction, ensure good health and to predict the events of the year. Propitiation of evil spirits is practically the sum and substance of their religion, whereby a sacrifice is offered to appease the angry spirit. Soothsayers require domestic animals such as fowls and piglets to be used in the propitiation of evil spirits. Though there are sacrificial rites and also sacrifices for happiness, success, and prosperity, there does not seem to be many sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins (Dukek 2008, 13).

Gumo et al. (2012) discuss that the African people have many religious associations with animals and plants, some of which are linked with concepts of God, such as the beliefs that he has absolute power over the universe. The spiritual significance of a selected animal or plant might dissent from one community to a different. For example, the Luhya of Busia District, Kenya religious practices often binding oaths or purification rites, which involves the use of certain animals. Hens and cocks could also be used as sacrifices to God or mediators between God and humanity, together with the ancestors. There are myths which tell how domestic animals originated at the same time or in the same way as the man himself. Cattle, sheep, and goats are found in sacrificial and other religious purposes and examples of this are found in most Kenyan communities (Gumo, et al. 2012, 530).

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present paper is an attempt to study the significance of the ritual of “*Chinthong Arnam*” as performed by the Karbis. The paper also tries to find out the importance of plants and animals in the ritual performances of “*Chinthong Arnam*”. In the paper, the author tries to cover up the complete process of the ritual along with the ritual incantations.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present study, the data were collected during the ritual performances of “*Chinthong Arnam*” at Rongsamphri, Longkiri Enghi village, under Lumbajong Development Block of Karbi Anglong district of Assam (India) on 1st January 2017. Observational methods were used for collecting the necessary information, along with a case-study of three respondents. Case-study was taken from the concerned priest, his assistant (helper) and another person from village Rongtharve, Ward No.8, Diphu, under Lumbajong Development Block. A detailed interpretation of ritual incantations was provided by the priest and documented accordingly in the field notes.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. About the Ritual

The finding of the present study revealed that “*Chinthong Arnam*” is the protective deities of the *Chinthong* regions/province. The ritual is popularly known as “*Vo-lok ase*” (lit. ritual of the white fowl). There is no fixed time to perform the ritual, but it is performed once every year for the prosperity, welfare, protection, and safeguarding of the family members. The ritual is divided into “*akesar*” (older) and “*ariso*” (younger). The plant of “*Chekteki*” (*Gendarussa Vulgaris*) is used by the family members associated with “*akesar*” while the plants of “*tuluhi*” (*Holy basil/Ocimum tenuiflorum*) is used by the family members associated with “*ariso*” while the other materials required for the ritual being common.

The reason behind the division is based on the story as told by Mr. Phulsing Rongpi (49 Years) of village Rongtharve, Diphu of Lumbajong Development Block of Karbi Anglong District, Assam (India). As per the story, once there was a

congregation among the thousands of gods. Accordingly, *Chinthong Sarp* sent his son to inform the other gods that he would be late for the congregation. In the congregation, the other gods asked his son to inquire about his father. In reply, his son told the other gods that his father could not be able to attend the congregation, so he sent me on his behalf. With this reply, the other gods thought that his father wouldn't be coming, thus they gave the share of honor to his son. After a while, *Chinthong Sarp* arrived at the congregation and saw that his son had already taken the share of honor that he would be getting. Seeing this *Chinthong Sarp* feels desolated, and rebukes his son for what he has done. *Chinthong Sarp* even sends off his son from the congregation. The incidents made his son feels very upset, and by the anger, he ran out of his home and established a new house for himself. From that day onwards the division between 'Akesar' (Older) and 'Ariso' (Younger) took place. The father used to fence his house with a plant of "Chekteri" (Gendarussa Vulgaris), thus whoever family is associated with "akesar" used the plant of Gendarussa Vulgaris in the ritual of "Chinthong Arnam", while the son used holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) to purify his newly established house. He even plated holy basil on the courtyard of his house, thus whoever family is associated with "ariso" used the plant of holy basil in the ritual of "Chinthong Arnam". Thus, it is a taboo to grow the plant of Gendarussa Vulgaris by the family members associated with "Ariso" and it is a taboo to grow the plant of *Ocimum Tenuiflorum* by the family members associated with "Akesar". It is also a taboo for both the family members to attend each other ritual performance of "Chinthong Arnam".

B. Material Requisite for the Ritual and its Significance:

For the ritual certain necessary items should be collected or prepared in advanced. It was observed that the material requisites for the rituals of "Chinthong Arnam" are rice beer, bottle gourd or gourd shell, rice, ground rice, areca nuts, piper betel, holy basil or *tulsi* (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*), young stem of bamboo for *methek* and *anghoi-alangthe*, resin of dhuna tree (*Canarium Bengalense* Roxb.), liquor, leaves of banana, dry fish, *sakhi*, *hanmi-hanmoi*, *arnam-hotton* and white fowl for sacrifice. Sometimes white goat was also used for sacrifice along with the white fowl, in that case, *bi-apat* were used. The purpose of the use / significance of each material items is given in Table I-

TABLE I: MATERIAL REQUISITE FOR THE RITUAL AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

SL.No.	Material Items	Purpose of use/Significance
1	Horlang or Hor-kangthir (Rice Beer)	Offer to deities; ancestral spirits
2	Bongkrok (Bottle gourd/Gourd shell)	The container of <i>horlang</i> (Rice beer)
3	Sang (Rice)	Offer to deities
4	Sang aduk (Ground Rice)	Cooked with sanctified meat; Sprinkles on the earthen altar
5	Tuluhi (Holy Basil/ <i>Ocimum Tenuiflorum</i>)	For purifying the earthen altar; the branches and leaves were plugged on the altar [believed that the son of "Chin Thong Arnam" planted the plant of holy basil in his courtyard and garden to purify his newly established household. The plugging of holy basil on the earthen altar signifies for such purposes].
6	Kove (Areca Nut)	Offer to deities
7	Hijung (Resin of Dhuna Tree/ <i>Canarium Bengalense</i> Roxb.)	For Incense purpose
8	Beng (Dry Fish)	Offer to ancestral spirits of the priest
9	Loh (Banana leaves)	Used as eating plate of the deities and ancestral spirits of the priest.
10	Vo-lok (White Fowl)	For Sacrifice
11	Bi-lok (White Goat)	For Sacrifice
12	Sakhi (Ritualistic Coin/Ring)	Used to end the ritual by beating with 'Noke' Or 'Nokek' (knife) for nine times.
13	Hor-arak (Liquor)	Offer to deities; Offer to ancestral spirits
14	Hanmi-Hanmoi (Curry prepared with alkaline)	Offer to deities
15	Arnham-Hotton (Basket meant for deities)	Used to store all the collected/prepared material items that are used in the rituals.
16	Bi-apat	If goat were used for sacrifice, then bamboo stick called <i>bi-apat</i> will be used for holding the goat.
17	Methek	A piece of bamboo used to keep burning charcoal for incense.
18	Bithi (Piper Betel)	Offer to deities

C. The Ritual Process:

Mr. Lumjong Timung (60 years) of Rongsamphri, Longkiri Enghi village told that the ritual process can be divided into two parts, i.e. “*Se-Kasadi*” (Invocation of deities) and “*Se-Karkli*” (The main ritual). He told that “*Se-kasadi*” is done on the previous night and items like bottle gourd filled with rice beer, dry fish, a bottle of liquor, *hanmoi* (curry prepared with alkaline), and a piece of banana leaf are required for invoking the deities. He begins the process of “*Se-kasadi*” by offering rice beer; dry fish and liquor to his deceased master with a piece of banana leaf and the process are known as “*Kuru-hor-chipi*”¹. After that, he instructs his assistant known as “*Borwa*” to distribute a piece of banana leaf. On the piece of banana leaf, he pours rice beer from the bottle gourd and begins to invoke the deities by the ritual incantations called “*kataram*” or “*Taram*”, followed by calling/saying the names of the deities called “*Se-amen*” or “*amen*”.

After calling/saying the names of the deities, he and his assistant drink the rice beer/liquor and thereafter his assistant throws away the distributed piece of banana leaf and the process is called “*Losen ke'oi*”. If guests were present during the invocation, then he/they got a bottle of liquor as an honor. After that, his assistant again distributes a piece of banana leaf as an eating plate to everyone present, followed by an offering of “*Hanmi-Hanmoi*” and “*Hor*” to the deities along with the incantations of “*Hanmoi Arnam kepu*”² and “*Hor Arnam Kepu*”³ respectively and the process is known as “*Thekar Kedeng*” or “*Thekar*”⁴. In this process, he instructs his assistant to hold a piece of folded banana leaf and gives a small portion of food items mainly cooked rice, “*Hanmi-hanmoi*”, and “*Hor*”. After that, he instructs his assistant to throw away the “*Thekar*” called “*Thekar kevar*”. Accordingly, his assistant throws away the “*Thekar*” by saying “*Thekar kevar lo dei.....ho*”. Thereafter, a light feast for the night begins with a curry of “*Hanmi-Hanmoi*”.

“*Se-Karkli*” is the main ritual and in the present study, it was observed that in the early morning the priest takes a bath and prepares the earthen altar by purifying it with holy basil. Before conducting the ritual the priest took permission and blessing from his ancestor/deceased master (namely Lt. Ucha Timung, Lt. Bura Timung, Lt. Thang Timung, and Lt. Kania Timung)⁵ and then offer a piece of dry fish, rice beer and liquor to his ancestor/deceased master and the process is known as “*Kuru hor chipi*”. After that, he split a piece of bamboo into two equal parts and drops it on the earthen altar until it gets upside down, the process is known as “*Anghoi Paklo*” (lit. Dropping of the seats), which is the seating arrangement made to the deities. Then on the “*Anghoi*” he places a banana leaf as an eating plate for the deities, he also placed “*alankthe*” and bottle gourd on the right side of the altar. “*Alankthe*” is a container of holy water as well as drinking water pail for the deities, and bottle gourd is a container of rice beer. It is then followed by an offering of rice, areca nut, and piper leaf to the deities. He then put the “*Sakhi*” (ritualistic ring) on the rice, along with the placing of holy basil’s branch on the altar in all directions. A piece of bamboo called “*methek*” is also placed near the altar and he again offers “*Hor*” to his ancestor master along with the invocation of deities and sprinkles rice powder on the altar. After that, he holds a white fowl and purified it with the holy water of “*alankthe*”. Then he starts the ritual incantations of “*Kataram*”, followed by “*se-ketam*”, “*kerip*” and “*Se-amen*”. After the incantations, he sacrifices the fowl and during this sacrifice, burning charcoal is placed on the “*methek*” and on the burning charcoal “*Hijung*” (Canarium bengalense Roxb.), is kept burning as incense. Then he takes out the intestine of the sacrificial fowl to see the result of the ritual called “*Vomut-Vokan kelang*”. After that the intestine is taken for boil called “*kehip*”, here the ritual stops for a while until the food and intestine get cooked. When it is cooked, he offered the piece of cooked intestine and a small portion of cooked food to the deities which are called “*Kebo-kebat*”. He then picks the bottle gourd and offered holy rice beer to the deities. He then picks the “*alangthe*” and split it into two equal parts and drop it on the altar until it gets upside down just like the dropping of “*anghoi*”. Lastly, he picks the “*Sakhi*” from the altar and beats for nine times to end the rituals; it is then followed by the ritual feast.

¹ Kuru-hor-chipi (lit. *Kuru* means master, *hor* means rice beer/liquor, and *chipi* means to give/offer). It is a process of seeking permission from the ancestral spirits/deceased master before any ritual performances. It is done by offering rice beer, liquor, and dry fish to the ancestral spirits/deceased master.

² Hanmoi Arnam kepu (ritual incantations associated with the offering of *Hanmi-hanmoi*).

³ Hor Arnam Kepu (ritual incantation associated with the offering of *Hor*).

⁴ Thekar (It is a process of offering food items to the deities before eating or drinking in any social occasion or ritual performances).

⁵ The mention names are the ancestors/deceased master of Mr. Lumjong Timung (Priest).

D. Ritual Incantations:

In the present study, it was found that the ritual incantations can be divided into *kataram*, *se-ketam*, *kerip*, and *se-amen*. The following are the incantations of “*Chinthong Arnam*” as narrated by Mr. Lumjong Timung (59 Years) of village Rongsamphri. He said that the ritual incantation may differ from the other priest because it depends from whom he has learned the ritual; however, the theme and purpose of the ritual remain the same.

Kataram:

Chingthong Sarpo Arnam-Muri Sarpo Arnam
Pedap Adap-Pedap Arni
Men Nang'taram-Mun Nang'taram
Arvi Alam Kali-Ar'eh Alam Kali
Asek Pusi-Ajang Pusi
Ningkan Vangphak-Ningkan Vangchor Aphan
La'ne Arbung Isi-Ne Arphe Esi
La Kerai Aphan-La Kekom Aphan
Thok Nanglepo-Jir Nanglepo
Kardom Nanglepo-Kardi Nanglepo
Jo Pedap Adap-Pedap Arni
Inghoi Nanglepo-Inghu Nangle Po
Sanglok Nanglepo-Sanglin Nanglepo
Banta Nanglepo-Bohot Nanglepo
Langthe Nanglepo-Langpong Nanglepo
Volok Nanglepo-Vo Sar Nanglepo
Lasi Volok Nangdeng Mesen-Vosar Nangdeng Mesen
Vomut Nangthan Mesen-Vokan Nangthan Mesen
Hem, Hem Arnam

[Gist: Chingthong the great god-Muri the great god, on this day morning, I call upon your names, for years to come, this entire household of mine, for its protection and safeguarding, there will be offering and worship, on this day morning, there will be your seats, there will be offering of rice, there will be offering of areca nut and piper leaf, there will be offering of *langthe-langpong* (water pail), there will be offering of matured white fowl, so kindly accept/receive the offering of white fowl, kindly give the good result, oh household god].

Se-Ketam:

Dei Non Ta
Non Te Nang Kepi-Non Te Nang Kepo
Jo Pedap Adap-Jo Pedap Arni
Jo Hithi Arni-Jo Borwa Arni
Men Nangtaram-Mun Nangtaram
Arvi Alam Kali-Ar'e Alam Kali
Ne Arbung Isi-Ne Arphe Isi

Amu Keplangtang An-Asang Keplangtang An
An Nangso Saide-An Nangsu Saide
Ningkan Vangphak Aphan-Ningkan Lechor Aphan
Hi'e Kebor Longle-Arnem Kebor Longle
Avur Kebor Longle-Akrem Kebor Longle
Aphuthak Anta-Aphuthak Kejo
Choklem Amo Tame-Chodam Amo Tame
Boche Amo Tame-Ingting Amo Tame
Tikuk Kedo Longle-Temang Kedo Longle
Chingkrin Kedo Longle-Chingchap Kedo Longle
Arvi Kesai Dei Nang-Ar'e Kesai Dei Nang
Kekhi Amo Tame-Kekhan Amo Tame
Bepar Amo Tame-Behat Amo Tame
Recho Chingki Tame-Montri Chingki Tame
Kethe Chingki Tame-Keding Chingki Tame
Jirpo Chingki Tame-Jirpi Chingki Tame
Asim Chingki Tame-Ahom Chingki Tame
Aso Le Chepathek-Asu Le Chepathek
Korte Le Chepathek-Muti Le Chepathek
Saru Ase Longdun-Maino Ase Longdun
Jo Pedap Adap-Jo Pedap Arni
Asek Lelo Pusi-Ajang Lelo Pusi
Kai Kethok Ateng-Kai Kejir Ateng
Phu Arni Pensi-Po Arni Pensi
Rideng Kecho Pangthim-Ripak Kecho Pangthim
Volo Ne Kevanlo-Vosar Ne Kevanlo
Volo Chodeng Mesen-Vosar Chodeng Mesen
Kardom Chodeng Mesen-Kardi Chodeng Mesen
Kerai Aphan Lepu-Kekom Aphan Lepu
Rai Unji Tangte-Kom Unji Tangte
Vomut Nethan Mesen-Vokan Nethan Mesen
Matha Nangne Jibo-Jadi Nangne Jibo
Ningri Nangne Jibo-Ninglak Nangne Jibo
An Nangmek Thekdet-An Nangno Thekdet
Langthe Nethan Mesen-Langpong Nethan Mesen
Vomut Nethan Mesen-Vokan Nethan Mesen.

[Gist: So now again, on this day morning, on this day of market, I called upon your names, nor from the left nor from the right, this entire household of mine, all the people we had, are your sons and grandsons, for the whole year and the coming years to come, protect us from evil, protect us from diseases, for the entire things, be it for works and economy, be it for a wish to established a household/family, let's there not be any hindrance.....be it for progress, be it for any trade and business, be it for talking/conversation with Kings and ministers, be it for talking/meeting with great person, be it for talking with friends, be it for talking with the other communities, lets' they feel to be their own son and grandson,

lets they feel to be their own brother, let's get the voice of Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*), so on this day morning, the time has come, like the same offering, from the time of father and grandfather,I brought you a fowl, so accept/receive the fowl, so accept/receive the worship and offering, for the protection and safeguarding, if you can guard and protect, then show us the good result through liver and intestine.....show us the good result through *langthe* and *langpong*, show us the good result thorough liver and intestine].

Kerip:

Ne Ron Lapu-Ne Bak Lapu
Ne Kangsir Lapu-Ne Kangchap Lapu
Ta Nang Arnam Sithek-Nang Arni Si Thek
Vomut Nethan Mesen-Vokan Nethan Mesen
Chokche Ason An-Lele Ason An
Ning Pare Thu-Ingthin Pare Thu
Non Dei Arnam
Puthak Men Parno-Mun Parnosi
Ning Kangsam-Ingthin Kangsam
Men Charju Non-Mun Charju Non

[Gist:but you gods knows well, so tells the good result through the liver and intestine, whatever is wrong, whatever is not reached, advise us, oh god. I recall your names, so you can feel cool/calm, so hear your names].

Se-Amen:

Muri Kethe-Moti Kethe
Murongtong Kethe-Murangsang Kethe
Mura Pat Kethe
Hat Bura Kethe-Hat Buri Kethe
Angkleng Boida Kethe-Angkleng Boidi Kethe
Ita Kethe-Ita Kethe
Oi Ronsi'im Kethe-Oi Monsi'im Kethe
Oi Ronsi'im Kangsam-Oi Monsi'im Kangsam

[Gist: Great Muri-Great Muti, Great Murongtong-Great Murangsang, Great Mura Pat, Great Hat Sarpo and Hat Sarpi, Great Angkleng Boida-Great Angkleng Boidi, Great Ita, Great Ronsi'im and Monsi'im, Oh! Ronsi'im the cool/calm ones- Oh! Monsi'im the cool/calm ones].

E. Result of the Ritual

In the present study, it was observed that there are many ways to see the result of the ritual. The first way observed was that whether the deities invited/invoked has accepted the seats offered or not and it is done through dropping a piece of bamboo called "*Anghoi paklo*". For this, a piece of bamboo is split into two equal parts and drop on the altar by some enchanting. If the split of bamboo facing either up or down, then it is believed that the deities are not answered and the process is repeated thrice until it gets upside down. According to the priest, upside down of the split bamboo signifies the acceptance and answering of the deities. The split bamboo is then placed horizontally on the altar for "*Anghoi*" (Symbolic miniature of deities' seats).

The second way observed was looking through the falling position of the sacrifice fowl which is called “*Vokan Kelang*”. For this, the sacrifice fowl is thrown towards the front direction of the earthen altar to see in which direction the sacrifice fowl was falling in the last breath. The fowl falling/facing either left or right is a good sign/result, but facing downwards or covering of head with feather is regarded as a bad sign for the concerned family. In case a white goat is used for sacrifice, then it is seen through cutting off the goat’s head. If the head of the goat is not cut in one stroke, then it is a bad sign for the concerned family, and if the head of the goat is cut off in one stroke then it is considered a good sign.

The third way observed was seeing through the liver and intestine called “*Vomut-Vokan kelang*”. For this, the priest looks at the size of the liver and intestine. If the size of the liver and intestine is found large then the concerned family will have a good economy for the whole year, and if the intestine and liver are found small or found any kind of cut mark or deformity then it is a bad sign for the concerned family.

The last way observed was through the dropping the “*lankthe*”. This process was same as the dropping of *anghoi*, but here it is done to see whether the deities are appeased with the whole offerings. If the split of bamboo face upside down then it is considered that the deities are appeased by the offerings and if the split bamboo face either up or down, then the deities is not appeased by the offerings and the process is repeated thrice until it gets upside down and if not the deities are extremely unhappy with the offerings.

F. The Role of Priest and Women in the Ritual:

Kurusar (Priest) plays an important role in the successful conduct of the ritual. In the present study, it was found that the head of the family is the priest himself (but if the head of the family could not perform or don’t know to perform the ritual, then the concerned family must call/depends on another priest. For this they have to honor the priest with areca nut and piper leaf along with a bottle of liquor). According to Mr. Doloi Sing Hanse (48 years) of village Rongsamphri, in the early morning he himself and the priest collect the material requirement of the ritual from his own garden (if the material requirement is not available on his own garden then they have to collect from the nearby jungles) such as areca nut and piper leaf, bamboo, holy basil etc. after that the collected material is stored on the “*Arnam Hotton*” (Basket meant for the deities/ritual) and both the priest and he himself go for purifying themselves by taking bath. After that, they prepare the earthen altar on the open space of the courtyard and purify it with holy basil, all the material brought is also purified it with holy basil. Then the priest seeks permission from the spirit of his master to conduct the ritual for this he offered “*beng*” (dry fish) and “*hor*” (liquor) with a piece of banana leaf to the spirit of his master called “*kuru hor chipi*”. Then the priest starts the ritual assisted by his assistant.

The priest told that he observed many taboos such as the eating of snail, crap, banana inflorescence, white gourd, Malabar spinach (*Basella alba*), leftover and re-cooked food are strictly avoided by him (priest). Moreover, he is not allowed to eat anything and have to take a bath before the conduct of ritual. Any violation of this may lead to divine punishment to the priest and the concerned family.

Though a woman is not allowed to perform the ritual, she plays a crucial role in the successful conduct of the ritual. She performs the responsibilities of pounding the rice powder, cooking, cleaning, etc. that is used for worships. She also provides a helping hand at the time of ritual feasting such as serving food.

G. The significance of the Ritual:

According to the priest, “*Chingthong arnam*” is the protective deities of Chingthong region/province; it protects the house or family members from any kind of external intrusions such as diseases, natural calamities, animals, evil spirits etc. The ritual can also be conducted for the success of whole family members as well as individuals such as applying for Jobs interview, exams (education), establishing a business or any kind of trade, for the better economy of the house, for any kind of meetings with kings, Ministers, great and powerful persons, friends and foes, as well as meetings with the other communities, the ritual can also be conducted for the success in warfare, and in many kinds of works.

H. Why Ritual of the White Fowl?

It is believed by the respondent that the deities propitiated in the ritual of “*Chinthong Arnam*” are one of the greatest, holiest, cleanest and purest deities of the Karbis. So, to propitiate the deities white fowl is used as a prime sacrificial resource since white is considered as a symbol of purity. Though sometimes, they used the white goat to propitiate the deities, the use of white fowl is a must even though they use a white goat.

V. CONCLUSION

The Karbi culture symbolizes their basic social values, norms, and views of the community and thus rites and rituals can be described as the implementation of belief systems. The sacrifice of birds (white fowl) and animals (white goat) are indispensable during the performance of ritual “*Chinthong Arnam*” among the Karbis.

The Karbis of Karbi Anglong still follow their age-old religious traditions and performed a number of rituals to appease the deities. “*Chingthong Arnam*” is one such ritual of the Karbis which is performed for prosperity, protection, and welfare of the family members. Irrespective of age and gender biases, all participate in the ritual, though the ritual is conducted by family members. The ritual symbolizes the unity and integrity of family members as the whole community. The ritual is performed for the protection and safeguarding of the family members from external intrusions such as diseases, natural calamities, animals, malevolent spirits, etc. the ritual is also performed for the success in education, business/trade, job interview, economic security, warfare, etc. In the ritual, *Kurusar* (priest) plays a very crucial role and he is the prime communicative medium with the supernatural powers. The sacrifice of white fowl is an essential part of the ritual since the deities are believed to be the holiest, cleanest and purest deities of the Karbis. Sometimes white goat is also used for sacrifice along with the white fowl. From the study, it is seen that plants and animals bear one of the prime necessities of Karbi ritual practices and that of the tribal people as a whole.

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