

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MANAU FESTIVAL

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Abstract

People of Myanmar, like all other people in the world, celebrate special occasions and functions according to the races and traditions they belong to. The traditions and customs that come through the generations from those occasions and functions. Are of great importance in early years of the world, is was believed that the *Manau* festival was celebrated only by celestial spirits such as *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and other of spirits (*nats*). At that time, human beings were incapable of celebrating *Manau* dances. *Manau* festival is a great religious ceremony and *Nat* dance which may be given by shaman who propitiates the *Madai Nat*- the *nat* of riches. The specific objectives are to explore the significances of processes in *Manau* festival, and to describe the interrelationships between socio-economic life and *Manau* festival. The study was conducted with qualitative methods. Key informants interview, undertake, direct observation and indirect observation, focus group discussion, and informal interview were conducted to collect data. The *Manau* festival is the largest and the most magnificent festival. Study their traditional ceremonies show that they are important events for *Zaiwa (Azi)* national's socio-economic life, and socio-political life. Therefore, it can be said that *Manau* festival, despite being a religious functions, are important for the people's socio-economic life and socio-political life. Spirit (*nat*) worship practice remains in the past while Christianity has taken its place. This makes some changes in *Zaiwa (Azi)* National's culture, customs, beliefs, value standard, and ethnicity. *Manau* festival is the most spectacular and they form the occasions for many people region wide to have intimacy and to strengthen their ties and unity. Just as these festivals can give them a chance to meet old mates and friends, they can find new friends and acquaintances too.

Keywords: Manau festival, Madai Nat (Spirit), ritual, ceremony

Introduction

Ritual is a cultural phenomenon and can be found in all societies. It can be defined as a set of acts that follow a sequence established by tradition. Throughout the world, rituals reflects the fundamental cultural beliefs and values of society by giving order to important activities and particular life crises like death and birth. However, mundane rituals are performed unconsciously daily (Miner, 1956). People of Myanmar, like all other people in the world, celebrate special occasions and functions according to the races and traditions they belong to. The traditions and rituals that come through the generations from those occasions and functions are of much importance. Appearances, dressing styles, customs, cultural practices, beliefs, literature and languages of the ethnic groups and races are different from each other as they are originated and practiced in different regions and belong to different races. The study of the rituals within an organization or group exposes the nature of cultural integration. The rituals include the perspectives of blood-relation, as well as economic, religious, political and aesthetic ideas. Culture and religion are important for every ethnic group. Much of the anthropological study of ritual has dealt with its function, the extent to which ritual sustains and reproduces the social order (Barfield, T (ed.), 1997). According to Rosman (1995), the relations, connections and peculiar features that express the characteristic of the group are called the social structure of the group. The idea of social structure can be explained with the idea of social organization. Structural description includes the description of the relation that exists among the units. The

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work is linked to how the structure works, what it does, what it aims at and what it means. The study of rituals ceremonies within an organization or group exposes the nature of cultural integration. The Zaiwa (Azi) National has festivals, sacrificial system and the belief in Supreme Being. Most of Zaiwa (Azi) in Myanmar have converted to Christianity but there are still a few who worship the Nats. All ethnic groups in Myanmar have their traditions of seasonal festivals. Zaiwa (Azi) National also usually celebrates the seasonal festivals which follow the customs of their traditions. Among them, Manau festival is the largest and the most magnificent. They are *Sut Manau, Ju Manau, Padang Manau, Kumran Manau, Shadip Hpaw Manau, Ninghtan Manau, Htingram Manau and Hting Htang Manau*. According to Islam et al. (2006), rituals are structured to promote both stability and change, and more specifically, to allow individuals or groups to transition between organizational roles, to maintain organizational status, or to build solidarity within the organization, depending on the specific ritual involved. These outcomes are achieved with varying degrees of success, and are based on the ability to construct social meanings, values and attitudes out of an otherwise ambiguous flux of experiences with the organization. Like the studies of those scholars, present studies were made to find out how *Manau* festivals of *Zaiwa (Azi)* national help them build up the unity among the members of their society.

Methodology

This study was conducted according to the descriptive study design. The data were collected and prepared by using qualitative methods. Data for this study was generated through direct observation, indirect observation, participant observation, key informant interview, group discussions and informal interviews. In research theory the researcher is primary because ethnographic data are obtained primarily through the human senses, observing the natives' daily life, patterns of interrelation with each other, and behavioral types of embedded meaning for the people in it. Since ethnography is concerned with change overtime and across situations, past events may require analysis to determine their influence on current traditional rituals and ceremonies.

In order to assure trustworthiness of findings, the several strategies were employed consisting of member checking of findings with the help of key informants by discussion about the interviewed data, triangulation of data gained from interviews with fields notes jotted down from the findings of observation and participant observation about the significances of the processes throughout their ceremonies, and prolonged and persistent engagement with the natives community.

The Legends of *Manau* Festival

In the early years of the world, *Manau* festival was celebrated only by celestial spirits such as *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and other of spirits (*nats*). At that time, human beings were incapable of celebrating *Manau* dances. It has been said that *Manau* festivals only can be celebrated by spirits(*nats*). However, after many generations the son-in-law (*Dama*) of *Madai* spirit (*nat*) had a chance to learn to celebrate *Manau* festivals.

According to *Zaiwa (Azi)* nationals, in the beginning years of the world, there was a creator whose name was *Ning-Gawn-Chyanun* and who was the source of man and all other things, living or non-living. He had a son named *Ning-Gawn-Magan*. Just before *Ning-Gawn-*

Chyanun died, he called for his son to organize a funeral ceremony for his body. He also gave his son detailed instructions for the funeral. Moreover, *Ning-Gawn-Chyanun* ordered that human beings, when they learn to live in families and their families start to live in settled places, must celebrate *Manau* festivals that were meant to make offerings to *Madai* spirit (*nat*), and they have to learn *Manau* dances imitating the behaviors of birds, butterflies, and fish (Min Naing, 1961).

Manau festivals are dedicated to the *Madai* spirit (*nat*). The fifth son and the sixth daughter of *Ning-Gawn-Chyanun* got married, and they had two children- a son and a daughter. It was confusing to say who the children were and name them. Thus mother *Ning-Gawn-Chyanun* asked her son, *Hpan-Ningsan-Chye-Ningchyang*, who knew everything and was good at giving names. He said that the son, who was born first, should be named *Lamu-Madai*/sky spirit (*master of heaven nat*), and the daughter, who was born later, should be named *Shadip* spirit (*nat*) or guardian spirit (*nat*) of the earth. He also said that *Lamu-Madai* and *Shadip* spirit (*nat*) would be worshiped by the rich so their wealth would increase; they would have good harvests, and they would be healthy, and the poor would also take refuge in them hoping that they could do offerings just like the rich were doing.

The *Madai* spirit (*nat*) was the God who gave human beings life and wealth. For that reason, *Zaiwa (Azi)* national worship *Madai* spirit (*nat*). As the mother *Ning-Gawn-Chyuan* ordered, they celebrate *Manau* festivals dedicated to *Madai* spirit (*nat*).

As mentioned above, the *Manau* festivals and dances were inherited by human beings from *Madai* spirit (*nat*), but they did not know how to celebrate festivals, nor could they dance. One day, a man called *Mardin-yaun* saw some birds enjoying the ripe fruit on a banyan tree (see in figure-1).



Figure 1 Birds enjoying the ripe fruit on banyan tree

He imitated the movements of the birds and created the technique of *Manau* celebrations. Since then, it is said that, people have known how to celebrate *Manau* festivals. A man called *Sut-madu*, once suffered from having a distended stomach. He used the astrological method called *Shabawad* in *Zaiwa (Azi)* language and came to know that he must organize a *Manau* festival.

In his *Manau* festival, *Mar-dinyaun* took the position of the spirit-medium. Since then, it is said that, *Zaiwa (Azi)* national have celebrated *Manau* festival through generations as their mother *Ning-Gawn-Chyanun* ordered them.

Oral history

Some *Zaiwa (Azi)* elders said that human beings learned the *Manau* dance from the birds. The reason for such early learning was they sometimes took part in the dancing group when the *Manau* festivals were held by *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and others. One day, these birds discussed how to take ripe fruits of the banyan tree they were living in. Then one bird called *Npring-Pri* said that it would be better for all of them to take all the ripe fruits at the same time by them. But one silly bird called *Nnyeng-Nyet* gave advice to take all the fruits while other birds were away. After long discussion, finally, a king crow bird proposed that they all should hold a *Manau* festival and happily eat all the ripe fruits of the banyan tree because they had, at that time, already learned about the *Manau* festival. Agreed by all, they held it and the king crow became the leader of the dancing group.

With reference to this, all the leaders of the dancing groups for the festival have worn hats with feathers of the king crow and other birds to this day. In the *Manau* festival sponsored by birds, horn-bill (*Ouk-chin*) bird was the leader of the festival and one bird called *Bawk Hkyen* acted as the master of ceremony; and the one who prepared foods for the spirits (*nats*) was a bird called *Kaka-La* or *U-Kala* (uunv ol [wí tlmv) which had a long tail. Among the bird guests that were the brothers of the birds took their place on the branches of the tree that protruding to the east and they ate the fruits. The dancing form was called *Wasis-naud* /Oqphem which is performed by the lineage of brothers-in-law (called brothers /nitpuls). Similarly, the lineage of the son-in-law (called *Dama* /orufd) took the southern branches as their place where they ate fruits happily and performed a dancing form called *Phaw-set* /azitquf. The lineage of the parents-in-law (called *Mayu'a*, mupd) took the northern branches and happily ate the fruits and performed a dance called *Madan-ga-rin* /r'ef&if.

Kinds of *Manau*

According to the interview, among the seasonal, festivals, the *Manau* festival is the most popular and most grandly held one. Though musical instruments are similar to one another, but based on the aim of holding such a festival, the names of the festivals differ from one another. There are altogether eight kinds of *Manau* festivals of the *Zaiwa (Azi)* national. They are *Sut Manau*, *Ju Manau*, *Padang Manau*, *Kumran Manau*, *Shadip Hpaw Manau*, *Ninghtan Manau*, *Htingram Manau* and *Hthing Htang Manau*.

(1) *Sut Manau*

It refers to the kind of festival celebrated by *Zaiwa (Azi)* national to become wealthy and prosperous, and able to make donation to others. It also aims to obtain new friends and life partners.

(2) Ju Manau

This is a kind of festival held after the funeral ceremonies for age-old *Zaiwa (Azi)* and grand-parents. They believe by holding such a festival, all the rests who are still alive will have long life until the hair on heads turn white. Another aim for holding this is for getting kids who will inherit them.

(3) Padang Manau

This is the kind of *Manau* festival held after defeating enemies to commemorate victory. In this festival, larger numbers of spirits (*nats*) than in other *Manau* festivals are invited to be worshipped and offered foods.

(4) Kumra Manau

This *Manau* festival is held when one of the household members who have traditionally worshipped *Madai spirit (nat)* has left the family to live separately or to move to another village. This is to say the householder has to announce that he is going to pay worship these spirits (*nats*) as a separate family in future.

(5) Shadip Hpaw Manau

This is the kind of *Manau* festival held after setting up in a village and when *Madai spirit (nat)* and *Shadip spirit (nat)* have been invited to his new place to show them the place and to plead with them for protection away from all evil spirits (*nats*).

(6) Ninghtan Manau

This is the kind of *Manau* held at a time when about to wage a war, and so in dancing, the participants must hold such weapons as swords, guns and others to arouse the national spirit. This is called a *Manau* festival to mobilize the force or to declare war over enemies.

(7) Htingram Manau

This is the kind of *Manau* festival that is held when there is misunderstanding and conflict between groups of the lineage of brothers, son-in-law, and parents-in-law. This festival is meant to free suspicion and to form a good relationship between the two groups. After this festival, is usually followed by a ceremony of engagement of a young man and woman from two sides.

(8) Hthing Htang Manau

This *Manau* festival is significant for lengthy duration of the festival. It usually takes eight days to be completed while others take only four days each. Among the *Manau* festivals mentioned above, *Sut Manau*, *Ju Manau*, *Padang Manau*, *Kumran Manau* and *Shadip Phaw Manau* are the most important ones.

Preparations for a Manau festival

According to the interview, traditional festivals and ceremonies of the *Zaiwa (Azi)* national such as wedding ceremony, house-warming ceremony and food offering ceremony for traditional spirits (*nats*) with the exception of the *Manau* festival are only celebrated at a village or a household or a lineage level or by a group of relatives so they are private in nature. If a household celebrates a *Manau* festival, the holder is the household head or the couple. But a

village, the holder is the administrator / *Duwa* of the village. The duration of each ceremony also does not exceed one to two days. But a *Manau* festival is meant for all the people residing in the whole region and so it takes four to eight days and is the most grandly held festival at an expense of a lot of money.

To be grand and spectacular, preparations have to be made many months ahead because many guests are coming from several places of the whole region and they have to be properly received and provided with accommodation and several kinds of food such as cooked rice, liquor, intoxicating brew (*khaung-ye*), etc.. Thus the holders of this festival have to collect rice, fish, meat, oil, salt, chilly, vegetables, fruits etc since months ago. The holders also build a shrine for the Madai spirit (*nat*) and his wife to stay. The sacrificial animals are usually buffalo, bull, chicken, pig etc. and they have to collect them. To feed the guests and to offer the spirits (*nats*) liquors and *khaung-ye* have to be made one year ahead. When these things have been collected, they have to consult the spirit medium called *Jaiwa* (saga teller; a high-priest) and *Dumsa* (a kind of priest) for choosing a date and how to do plan at the site.

Liquor and *khaung-ye*

Liquor and *khaung-ye* compulsory offerings for entertaining guest in *Zaiwa* (*Azi*) society. It is used to serve guests coming to the *Manau* festival. These two, liquor and *khaung-ye*, are called *Chyanun-Chyu*/ဇိုင်နုတ်; and it is according to traditional belief, it is the milk of their mother *Ning-Gawn-Chyanun* who told her sons, just before she died, that they should drink these two when they miss her.

The *Manau* festival is a kind of festival that calls for the use of these two more than on any other occasion. They have to prepare them in advance many months before the festival comes. Another thing they have to make in advance and collect are utensils for these drinks during the festival such as bamboo tubes and cups neatly made of bamboo too. Every bamboo tube has two handles, one on each side made of bamboo strips, and it is covered with leaves of a plant called water lily/*Hpawgoi* (*Taung-zin*), neatly tied with thin bamboo strips (see in figure-2).

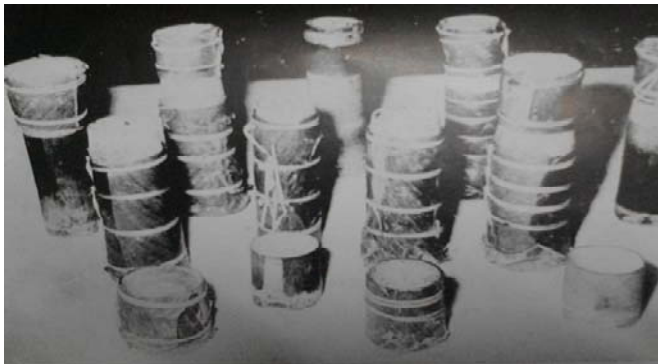


Figure 2 *khaung-ye* tube

There are two kinds of bamboo tubes; one with a lid and another is without lid. The guests coming to the festival are treated with liquor and *khaung-ye*. Even the most respectable person is given liquor or *khaung-ye* in this bamboo tube wrapped up with water lily/*Hpawgoi* (*Taung-zin*) leaves the edge of which is made to look like the tail of a king crow. Along with *khung-ye*, some meat put in a parcel is also given to be taken as appetizer.

Rituals of the *Manau* festival

A *Manau* festival lasts only four days except the one called *Hting-Htang-Manau* which lasts eight days. If a *Manau* festival lasts only four days, the first two days are devoted to the rituals of offering animals as sacrifice to the spirits (*nats*) (see in figure-3).



Figure 3 Sacrifice to the spirits (*nats*)

During the festival days of *Manau*, the *Madai* spirit (*nat*) is the main spirit to be propitiated, but other spirits (*nat*) are worshipped by the *Zaiwa* (*Azi*) people. They have traditional the belief that among all these spirits (*nats*) propitiated during the days of the *Manau* festival, *Lamu Madai* spirit (*nat*), *Gyan* spirit (*nat*), *Shatar* spirit (*nat*), *Sinlat* spirit (*nat*), *Mu* spirit (*nat*), *Mushi* spirit (*nat*), *Shin-lin-shintawn* spirit (*nat*), *Gwan Gun Gun Phine* spirit (*nat*) are celestial beings of higher abodes who can give them wealth and blessings. But they also include such spirits (*nats*) as *Gyahton*, *Saun*, *Sawa*, *Philamon*, *Kyaga*, *Maraw Masar*, *Gyun Gyanto* to be propitiated on these days because they are evil spirits (*nats*); they believe unless these spirits (*nats*) are propitiated they can cause many obstacles and trouble.

All the *Zaiwa* (*Azi*) nationals worship these spirits (*nats*) because they regard them as the most important spirits (*nats*) of all the sub-ethnic groups: *Laphi*, *Lahtaw*, *Maran*, *Marip* and *Nkhum*. These spirits (*nats*) are in reality concerned with the sub-ethnic group called *Htin-gaw*. When the festival begins they first make offerings to the traditional spirit (*nat*), *Gwan-gun-gun-phineas* grandfather spirit, with chicken, pig etc. as sacrifices.

Propitiation of *Madai* spirit (*nat*)

Only after paying worship to the most important spirits (*nats*), they make offering to *Madai* spirit (*nat*) who is believed to be the guardian spirit (*nat*) of the sky. In inviting the *Madai* spirit (*nat*), the spirit medium of *Jaiwa* and his assistants themselves have to take the leading role because they alone can speak the language these spirits (*nats*) understand so that their spirit can go to the celestial abode where *Madai* spirit (*nat*) is living. The spirit medium called *Jaiwa* and his assistants leave the *Madai* spirit (*nat*) at the banyan tree near the entrance to the village and they alone come back to the house. When they get back, the holders of the *Manau* festival slaughter a big pig that has been castrated and wash it and carry it to the banyan tree. They have to offer this pig to the *Madai* spirit (*nat*) who is temporarily living there.

In offering the pig, the spirit medium *Jaiwa* has to make marks on the two halves of the dead body of pig. The right side half is meant for the *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and the left side one is for his wife. In doing the markings, the spirit medium uses the powder of grain and makes four marks each on the two halves. The place for the *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and his wife as the queen has been prepared at the house of the host of the *Manau* festival. The spirit medium asks those spirits (*nats*) in the banyan tree to stay in the shrine of the householder.

Then they offer liquor and *khaung-ye* to these spirits (*nats*) in two bamboo tubes filled with liquor, one for *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and another for the queen. They have to fill the bamboo tubes with liquor from time to time, again and again. When they fill these tubes with liquor, they take great care not to make any noise in pouring because any noise is regarded as a sign of displeasure of these spirits (*nats*).

The young buffalo that is going to be used as sacrifice for *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and his queen is tied to a post at the centre of the festival ground. When they have to choose it, it is the size of over which a man can easily jump. It is a custom for them to jump over such a sacrifice before slaughtering.

Propitiation of the sun spirit (*Gyannat*), moon spirit (*Shatar nat*) and guardian spirit (*Shadipnat*)

To offering a sacrifice to the sun spirit (*nat*) called *Gyannat*, they make a sacrificial altar near the *Manau* pillars at the Centre of the *Manau* ground. *Shatar* spirit (*nat*) who is the female spirit of the moon is also offered sacrifices at the same time. The spirit medium is the leader in offering a little pig as sacrifice to them. In killing the little pig for *Gyan* spirit (*nat*), a daughter of the holder of the festival or his one of the close relative must take charge of that duty by wearing jewelry such as gold, silver and pearls best dresses.

The sacrificial altar is made of four pillars and the height is the same as those of the *Manau* pillars. The altar has two platforms, the lower one being for *Shatar* spirit (*nat*) and the higher for *Gyan* spirit (*nat*). On these platforms, they place offertories for each of them. There are also figures of sun and moon, figures of flowers, scale, violin, cross-bow and catapult. All of these are made of bamboo and hung from the altar (see in figure-4).



Figure 4 Altar for *sun* spirit (*Gyannat*) & *moon* spirit (*Shatarnat*)

In offering sacrifice to the guardian spirit, *Shadip nat*, a little pig young enough not to know anything about worldly affairs must be washed with water to be clean before being slaughtered. The place of the slaughtering of the little pig is at the centre of the festival. The blood of the little pig is spilled across the field to clean it and its well-cleaned meat is wrapped up with leaves of the plant called *Hpawgoi* (water lily) /*Taung-zin* and it is cooked and sacrificed to the spirit (*nat*).

After offering this to the spirit (*nat*), the spirit medium *Jaiwa* and his assistant bury it at the centre of the field. The meaning is that the guardian spirit has been propitiated. In burying it, no one must be present there except the spirit medium and his assistant because they are the leaders of *Manau* festival. Then they place the meat where is buried covered with a stone that has no blemish and flaw for purification. This process is called *Nawra-sha-did* in their language.

Propitiation *Saline-maraw* spirit (*nat*)

The altar for *Saline-maraw* spirit (*nat*) is made of a branch of a tree. Its length is about 15 feet and it must be in the form of a bird-trap. The off-shoots from the top portion of the branch are left intact, and it has to be set up on the ground. Then a small altar made of bamboo is hung on the top portion of the branch. The top of the branch is tied with creepers to one of the front posts of the house. This altar is called *Sinline-phun-gun* (see in figure-5).



Figure 5 Altar of *Sinline-phun-gun*

When Manau festival are hold, except for the *Madai* spirit (*nat*), the Guardian spirit/ *Shadip nat* and the sun spirit / *Gyannat*, and the rest of spirits (*nats*) are offered foods with separate altars outside the field of *Manau*. The sacrificial posts where animals are for sacrifice are set up one at each place for each spirit (*nat*).

Dancing in *Manau* festival

The next day, in the morning, the holder of the festival has to invite spirit medium and his assistant to his or her house with great respect when the time approaches to begin the rites of offering foods and paying homage to the spirits. A sling basker, (*nats*). Magun Lit is to supply food at the *manau* festival; steamed sticky rice, sticky wine, steamed cocks boild eggs, spices are put in the sling basket (Magun Lit), as well as presents. Unleavened bread or steamed sticky rice, tea or coffee, steamed cocks, boiled eggs, spices are put in magun lit together with other presents (see in figure-6) is a signature of welcome and the people drink and eat together for fellowship and communion and also for agreement, peace and grace and development. When *Jaiwa* master is at his proper place, another important matter for the holder and his family is to invite the executive members of the festival called *Sut-gan-shawn-ine* to the house.



Figure 6 Offering foods and paying homage to the spirits (*nats*)

After that *Jaiwa* master and his assistant *Gwi-nin-ga-rang* take their respective places they invite *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and his queen to the house and plead with them to act as the donors or holders of the *Manau* festival.

Then the holder and his wife of the festival have to lead these respectable people and step gently into the *Manu* chamber. Once they are in the chamber, they have to go round the shrine for *Madai* spirit (*nat*) four times, clockwise, before taking their respective seats that are previously fixed. The executive members of the festival are *Jaiwa* (saga-teller: who is the high priests of animism) master, *Dumsa* (priest) masters, *Myihtoi* (prophet), *Ningwawt* (diviner), *Hkinjawng* (preparing for altar and spirit (*nat*) foods), *Hpunglun* that is the man who takes charge of preparing spirit (*nat*) foods and the leaders /*Kwandaw-wa* of the *Manau* dancing group /*Gwi-nin-ga-rang*.

The *Manau* festival begins when the two leaders of dancing group, the holder of the festival with his wife accompanied by others, walk out of the chamber to the field of the festival, called *Nawra /aeni & m* (*Manau* dancing ground), they enter gently dancing. Once they all are in the dancing ground previously marked off with stakes, they approach the *manau* posts, keeping their faces in the direction of the posts, move forward and backward dancing, from four to eight times, in the form of paying respect to them (see in figure-7).



Figure 7 *Manau* dancing patterns

After that, they move round the ground four to eight times, surrounding fencing it. This first item of the dance denotes the declaration of the opening of the festival and it is called *Naw-baw-ine / aenabntif*. Once it has been opened, anyone who likes to participate in the dancing group is welcome. Nowadays, there are some changes in dress; people wear creative designs in performing the dances. It is possible that, by wearing such these dresses, they are trying to identify themselves as Kachin, as a unique tribe of Myanmar. This kind of change are made by general consensus of the tribe. They make changes in symbols that they like best (see in figure-8). Regarding the case, a 60 year old *Zaiwa* (*Azi*) woman said;

“Today costumes are more modernizing than in the oldern day”



Figure 8 Maiden's Manau dances

Traditionally, the dances are performed only in day time and in the evening; it is never done in the late hours because late hours is the time for spirits (nats) to dance and not for men. In performing the *Manau* dance, the dancers have to move and shake their bodies and legs in correct timing of the *Manau* drum, big gong, oboe and flute that are placed in the middle of the ground (see in figure-9).



Figure 9 Dancing in *Manau* festival

The dancing group is led two men who are experts in this. These two leaders wear cane hats called *Gwat-du-ru* / **Gwf &k* stuck with feathers of peacock, horn bill bird, king crow, tusks of wild boar on their heads and wear *Manau* dresses that have figures of mythical serpents or dragons (*Nagas*) as prescribed in oral history (see in figure-10).



Figure 10 Dressing style of *Manau* Leaders



Figure 11 Holding *Manau* festival

The dancing movements or choreography for a particular type of dance led by these two leaders are based on the patterns round the *Manau* posts set up in the ground (see in figure-11). Through the dancing patterns, the two leaders describe the rituals of the propitiating ceremonies for the spirits (*nats*). If a group of dancer wants to make their own dancing forms, and not follow the steps of the two leaders, they can do so separately. This separate dancing is called *Naw-par-par-ine* **၂၀၂၂၂၂၂၂**. Whether one is under the leadership of the two leading masters or in separate group, one must make movements in correct timing of the big drums and gongs. One of the leading masters of the dance holds a sword because as protection from enemies. The other leader usually holds a triangular shaped wooden stick like a four edged dagger of a Myanmar King, but nowadays, this shape has changed. The followers of these two masters usually hold fans and shawls as the dances are meant to receive the blessings poured down by the (spirits) *nats* (see in figure-12).



Figure 12 Dancing with fans, knife and wooden bow

Since the duration of the festival is traditionally four days, on the third day, some guests from faraway places go back home. According to tradition, on the third day, the relatives of the lineage of parents-in-laws participate in the *Manau* dance called *Madan-ga-rin* which is a session in which those relatives give a little banyan tree (called *die-lut-gat-gu*) to the relatives of son-in-law's lineage as present. This little banyan tree is planted by the holder of the festival or the one who prepares food for spirits (*nats*) and the elders of the village at a place near the entrance to the village after the festival. This banyan tree is meant for use as ladder (*die-lun-phun*) for propitiating *Madine* spirit (*nat*) when they are invited to the human abode. Sometimes during the dance of *Madam-ga-rin* they plant these bamboo and *Hpawgoi /Taung-zin*(water lily) leaves called 'wasu' and 'phaw-su' for later use in the ceremonies of propitiating *Madai* spirit (*nat*).

On the last day of the festival, the descendants of the lineage of the son-in-law perform *Phaw-set Manau /azitquraem* dance to entertain guests. During this dance, the participants hold water lily (*Taung-zin*) leaves in their hands that are to be cut by knives into pieces to cover the whole ground (see in figure-13). This is an act of showing that the festival has come to an end and the dancing ground called *Nawra* is now closed.



Figure 13 *Manau* dance with water lily leaves

After these two lineages, the brother lineage of the holder perform a closing dance called *Wa-sid-naud /Og:qpaem* where each participant has to hold a bamboo tube filled with water while dancing, and they hit the ground with those bamboo tubes again and again until all the water

pours out to the ground. This acts as a symbolism that the ground has now been washed and no one must make dance there any more.

After washing the ground with water from bamboo tubes, as the festival has come to an end, *Jaiwa* master cut off the creeper that is tied to the sacrificial altar for *Saline-maraw* spirit (*nat*) (also called *Sin-line-phu-gun*) that was made in the form of a bird trap, at the centre of the ground. The creeper is cut off the *Manau* Festival which has been held after month-long preparation has come to the end.

The spirit mediums called *Jaiwa* and his assistant have to escort back *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and his queen to their celestial abode by accompanying them. Apart from these *Madai* spirit the (*nat*), other spirits (*nats*) sent back; just telling them where their abodes are and how to get there is enough.

The guests to the festival are relatives and friends of the holder of the festival. They go there from several places because the *Manau* festival is very important for all the national races living in the whole region (see in figure-14). It is a great occasion for them to have a wonderful time at such a festival most grandly held, and they dress themselves well with beautiful clothes and jewellery.



Figure 14 Guests from several places

Symbolic meaning regarding *Manau* festival

***Manau* post**

Manau post is the inevitable item in a *Manau* festival. A *Manau* post must be straight and clean without blemish or flaw. In olden days, choosing wood to be used as the posts, they must first consult an astrologer. The species of wood used for this purpose is usually cedar (*Latsai* /*vpli* / *Taung-ta-mar* / *awmi bor*). The leaders of the dancing groups at a *Manau* festival perform dancing patterns that are carved on the *Manau* posts.



Figure 15 *Manau* posts

The number of *Manau* posts set up in the ground for the festival is usually four to ten (see in figure-15). The whole structure of *Manau* pillars appear in such a way that each particular of single pole and pillar has significant value and meaning as in the following. The two pillars in the middle of the set represent the idea of feminine gender and called “*Dung Yi / 'ḙf, ḙ* female pillar and the other two pillars beside each of the female pillars represent masculine gender and called “*Dung La / 'ḙv*” male pillar. The rest of the shorter pillars that stand around the feminine and the masculine pillars are called “*Dung Noi*” hanging pillars. At the foundation of those *Manau* pillars there is a long plank fixed across the pillars from side to side called “*Dung Bye / 'ḙbil*” or “*Dung Tawn / 'ḙvmi*” Each post is in shape not at all unlike a sword, with a squared tip, and not pointed. The posts are fixed in the ground with the “hilt” lowermost and the tip pointed skywards. One end of this plank is carved into the shape of the head of the hornbill and the other end its tail. The shape of the hornbill has become a significant emblem to mark the leadership of hornbill of the birds during the first celebration of *Manau* around the banyan tree. In drawing designs on the *Manau* posts several colors such as red, black, green, purple, white etc. are used and so they are very distinct. The dancing systems around the posts are depicted by such designs as triangle and rectangular shaped figures. But there are also some figures that have the designs of a coil, wavy lines like the letters “S” prolonged or the alphabet *da-yin-gawk* (!) of Myanmar language, with diamond shaped designs continue down the length of each post (see in figure-16).

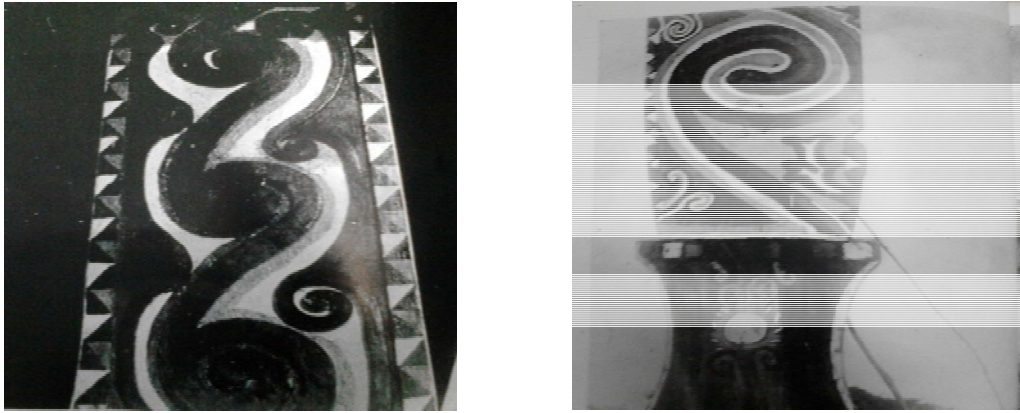


Figure 16 Design from Manau post and Manau design depicting the sun

The straight lines used in depicting figures represent the characteristics of mother *Ning-Gawn-Chyanun* and curved lines are referred to as her finger-prints. These designs partly reveal the arts of drawing and carving wood of the *Zaiwa (Azi)* national. Though one might think that these figures carved and drawn are haphazardly done, actually, there is a good workmanship.

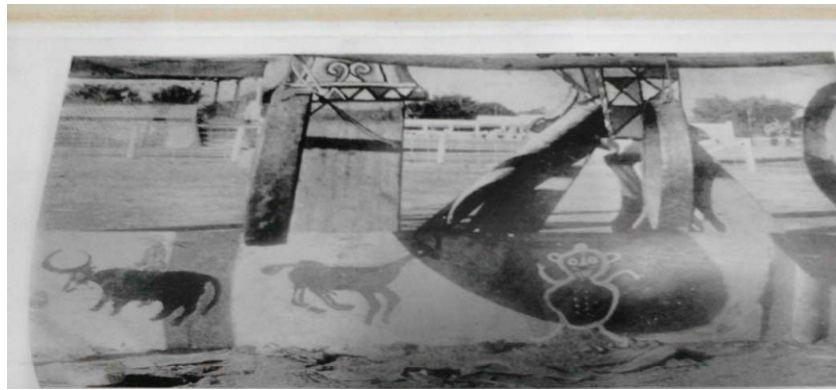


Figure 17 Manau designs depicting the animals

Apart from the carved figure of 'horn bill /*Ouk-chin*' on the horizontal post, there are also such figures as gibbon, dragon, fowl and other animals beautifully drawn (see in figure-17).



Figure 18 Manau Post Design in olden day and recent Manau Post Design

Manau pole is more colourful than before and the number of *Manau* pillars is six and it represent Kachin tribes of [*Jinghpaw*, *Maru (lawngwaw)*, *Rawang*, *Lisu*, *Lashi (lachit)*, *Zaiwa (Azi)*](see in figure 18). In setting-up the *Manau* Posts, there are two methods are used. The sub-ethnic groups of *Inkhun* apply the method called *Dung Yan* / 'ef, ef while the others use the method of *Dung Ban* / 'efef. The *Dung Ban* method calls for setting up of all the posts in line with the *Manau* house while *Dung Yan* has the tradition of setting them up face to face with the *Manau* house. *Dung Ban* was firstly used by the great grandfather of the sub-ethnic groups of *Marip* called *Marit-wakwan-gya-ma-gun* and *Dung Yan* was firstly introduced by the great grandfather of *Inkhun* ethnic group called *Masaw-wa-zin-khun*. They used to replace old *Manau* poles with ones in ancient times, but nowadays when foreigners come they tend to show *Manau* pole as symbol so that they modify and use it.

Manaudrum

Manau drum is specially made for *Manau* festivals only (see in figure-19). The length of this drum is about six feet to seven and half feet while the radius of its circular surface is about one and half feet. In carving this, the kind of wood to be used as well as the date to begin the work is chosen only by consulting an astrologer (In ancient times). The person who is skillful in carving cuts down the tree according to the astrologer's prediction. But in some regions, the person who carves the wood is not given to one person only; several wood carvers have to contribute their labor with good workmanship, according to tradition.



Figure 19 *Manau* drum

The *Manau* drum plays an important part by being a thing that can reveal the woodcarving craftsmanship of the *Zaiwa (Azi)* national. The pillar that supports the drum has many animal figures, like the broad band added as exterior trim to conceal floor edges and joists of a house. When carved, this drum has hooks to hang the fangs of a gibbon, toe nails of a tiger and bronze gongs. Pins and feathers are also put in the drum. The reason for hanging the fangs of the gibbon and the bronze gongs lies in their belief that the sound of this animal and these gongs can rise up to the celestial abode of the guardian spirit (*nat*) of the sun, passing through the domain of the human abode. They believe that, by putting these things in it, the *Manau* drum can also gain the capacity of making a great sound that can go right up to the celestial abode of the guardian spirit (*nat*) of the sun, after covering the whole world with great sound. *Manau* drum is placed in the *Manau* chamber yet nowadays it is in national museum for public viewing.



Figure 20 Traditional Spirit (*nat*) House and *Manau* House in Sitapu

The *Manau* drum is played while they are offering foods to propitiate *Madai* spirit (*nat*) in the *Manau* chamber or house (see in figure-20), and after that it is hung side by side with the *Manau* posts to be played during the time of the *Manau* dance. During the dancing session, to gain higher pitch of the music big gongs also join in (see in figure-21).



Figure 21 Big gongs at *Manau* festival

Generally, three big gongs, the circumference of the surface of each having the measurement of 15 feet, are played along with that *Manau* drum. Thus, the sound of these musical instruments can go even to far-off places, vibrating all along the way. As these two instruments are also accompanied by oboes made of buffalo antler and flutes the sounds produced by them are quite pleasant to the ear. At present, they are using more big gongs than before, and include more musical instruments such as the organs in *Manau* festival nowadays.

Manau dance

The *Manau* dance is led by two leaders called *Naw-Shaung/aen&fi f* and *Kun-Daw-Wa /Ueh':0*, in the ground marked off by stakes to be used as the site for the festival called *Nawra Manau* dancing ground. The movements of the legs and bodies of the performers have to be made in correct timing of the *Manau* drum and gongs which are played slowly and quickly in turn.



Figure 22 Obeisance to *Manau* posts and *Manau* house

The dancing patterns are just simple ones. The two leaders first pay respect and make obeisance to *Madai* spirit (*nat*) by going round the *Manau* posts four times set up at the centre of the ground, just as they begin dancing (see in figure-22). Then they go round the whole dancing ground four times as an act of fencing it in. The patterns of movement for the dance are according to the ones carved on the *Manau* posts (see in figure-23). The traditional duty of the two leaders is to lead the group round the *Manau* posts as an act of obeisance to *Madai* spirit (*nat*), to dance round the *Manau* ground as an act of fencing it, to make dancing patterns to enliven the *Manau* drums and to bring several blessings for prosperity and all. Apart from the group under the leadership of those two leaders, as there are also other groups following their own dancing patterns, each group has its own leader. But all the groups have to dance only in the festival ground marked off for them and all of their movements must be in correct timing of the *Manau* drum and big gongs. This dancing of separate groups is called *Naw-pa-pa-ine*.



Figure 23 Dancing pattern in *Manau* festival

Drums, gongs, and cymbals, and sometimes a reed clarion make very noisy and harsh music. While each dancer is behind the other in Indian file, the evolution is something like that of the letter “S” - a winding in and out. The dancers proceed in slow step, first throwing the weight on one leg and then the other and shuffling along as they move forward. Suddenly the leader decides to change from Indian file to line.

The movement is then in the shape of a semi-circle, the end dancers marking time and opening out, while those in the centre of the half circle advance into line. The whole then recede into semi-circle. When advancing, the head is thrown backward and the body forward, the women who all hold open fans in their right hands throwing their arms upwards and jerking the fans with their wrists. When receding, the head is bowed, the body bent, and fans brought down with the arms making a sweeping movement across the body. Men who have fans use them;

others the Lagoi (bulrush) leaf if the dance is the Lagoi dance. The fans and grass used by the girls and men during the dance are meant to receive the blessings poured down by the nats. There is no singing or talking but from time to time someone sets up a yell in which all the others join. The dance goes on for hours and continues far into the night. It is performed nightly and during the day also if there is sufficient energy for the period set for the *manau*. Sometimes, there are only a small number of dancers following the two leaders, and they usually hold fans and shawls. A stranger might think that dancing patterns are so simple that he or she can learn it easily, but *Manau* dance has to be performed by dragging the legs sideward or forwards very gently so there are only a few who are experts in this. Thus it is a kind of dance one can well perform only with training and experience. Anyone who takes interest in this *Manau* dance can become a member in the dancing group irrespective of race or religion, and there is also no limitation regarding the number of participants in the dancing group; it can be as many as the number the dancing ground can hold it.

According to traditional belief, the *Manau* dance is the imitations of the movement patterns of birds, butterflies and fish when they make such movement in delights. Some movements of a dancer with both hands spread out resembles the flying of a bird while some movements going round and round resemble the movements of fish. In the same way, some movements are just like the ones made by butterflies moving here and there (see in figure-24)



Figure 24 Several dancing patterns in *Manau* festival

Among the *Manau* dances *Butterfly-Manau* dance called *Khin-Du-Tet* / **cifwuf** *Manau* is one of the famous dances, and it is an imitation of a small butterfly making delighted movements. *Manau* drum and big gongs are intermittently played and so the movements in correct timing of them are also intermittent. But it is a kind of dance rarely to be seen nowadays because skilled dancers are very rare among them.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to Beals & Hoijer (1965) a ceremony involves a number of interconnected and related rituals, performed at a given time. A ritual on the other hand, may best be defined, perhaps, as a prescribed way of performing religious acts—that is, of praying, singing sacred songs, dancing to the gods, making sacrifices, or preparing offerings. Likewise, *Zaiwa (Azi)* national have public celebrations and individual celebrations. *Manau* festival is a ceremony that is publicly celebrated, and they are formed with religious acts such as praying, singing sacred songs, dancing to the gods, and making sacrifices. There are also rituals belonging to the *Manau* festival ceremony such as choosing a place for the ceremony, making offerings to the guardian spirit of the earth when they look for a tree to make *Manau* pole and *Manau* drum. There are also other rituals such as offerings to the family spirit (*nat*), inviting *Madai* spirit (*nat*) to bless at the *Manau* festival, offering pork, alcoholic drinks and *Khaung-ye* to *Madai* spirit (*nat*) and his wife, making offerings to the sun- spirit (*nat*) and the moon- spirit (*nat*), dancing at the beginning of the ceremony where the dance is led by the host family and two leaders, and dance-performances of the relatives of the host family. In *Manau* ceremonies, people sometimes listen to the history of *Zaiwa (Azi)* national and watch the plays with the songs of their historical background. It seems that *Zaiwa (Azi)* national want people of other tribes and their younger generations to learn about their history.

Rituals are also performed to influence events for the sake of human beings. It differs from other sorts of behavior in three important ways: it is symbolically meaningful; There are three main roles of ritual in religion: (1) to unite a community emotionally; (2) to portray or act out important aspects of a religion's myths and cosmology; and (3) to influence the spiritual world and thereby the natural world for human beings or, conversely, to help human beings adjust to the conditions of the natural and spiritual realms. Wallace contends that ritual is performed to bring about or to prevent changes in human beings or in nature (Crapo, 2002). Like Crapo did, present studies were made to find out whether or not the festivals of *Zaiwa (Azi)* national, especially *Manau* festivals, express the history of their people, whether or not the unity of all the Kachin tribe can be seen in *Manau* festivals, and whether or not they believe in *Madai* spirit (*nat*) as a god who can grant them happiness and wealth.

R L. Stein and P L. Stein (2011) also state that rituals are often based on and are sanctioned in myths that articulate the underlying worldview of a culture, and these tenets are embedded in the rituals that are performed by a society. Ritual activities symbolize the particular beliefs and values of that community. A ritual is the vehicle by which basic ideas, such as the definition of good and evil and the proper nature of social relationships are imparted to the group. These rituals involve the manipulation of religious symbols such as prayers, offerings, and readings of sacred literature. They pointed out that the audience has an active role in religious ritual.

Ritual is a cultural phenomenon. Ritual can be found in all societies. It can be defined as a set of acts that follow a sequence established by tradition. Throughout the world, rituals reflect the fundamental cultural beliefs and values of society by giving order to important activities and particular life crises like death and birth (Miner, 1956). Besides, present studies focus on whether or not the traditional festivals of *Zaiwa (Azi)* national are performed in accordance with their standard of belief, value and characteristics.

Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) said that symbols are objects which represent organizations such as organizational dress. However, *actions* may also be considered to have symbolic functions; behaviours sets of behaviours, and occasions for behavior can act as symbols when they occur in the proper social contexts (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952 & Bandura, 1997). Islam et al. (2006) said that rituals are a form of symbolic expression that takes places in organizations.

The beliefs and rituals of a particular religion symbolically express the kinds of stresses and anxieties that are common among the members of that society. A more comprehensive, current definition says that religion consists of beliefs and behavior related to supernatural beings and forces (Miller, 2011). Here, discussions will be made on Literature review of Miller (2011) concerning festivals and these discussions will highlight the facts acquired in this study. *Zaiwa (Azi)* national have celebrations which are basically of two kinds – sacred rituals and secular rituals. *Manau* festivals are sacred rituals, and there are legendary stories concerning these celebrations. Dances, songs and talks at these celebrations depict the history behind them. As a matter of fact, they can be considered as the combination of sacred rituals and secular rituals. It is because, these festivals are not only meant to celebrate for religious purpose, but also for secular purposes. They are in a way meeting of the members of the tribe to discuss the economic, political, and social matters. Miller (2011) said that secular rituals have nothing to do with the supernatural realm.

Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) said that symbols are objects which represent organizations. Islam et al. (2006) said that rituals are a form of symbolic expression that takes places in organizations. This symbolic character plays an important role in maintaining and reinforcing social structures and incorporating individuals into a larger social entity (Trice, Belasco, & Alutto, 1969). Actions may also be considered to have symbolic functions; behaviours sets of behaviours, and occasions for behavior can act as symbols when they occur in the proper social contexts (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952 & Bandura, 1997). Crapo (2002) said that rituals provide definitions to symbols and they are yearly events. Haviland et al. (2011) also said that ritual involves religious activity. As Durkheim (1964) and (1961) mentioned in Literature, present studies observe that festivals of *Zaiwa (Azi)* national become more and more colourful. Especially, *Manau* pole, the symbol of *Manau* festival is more colourful than before. Moreover, there are some changes in dress. People now wear designers' dresses in dances. It is possible that, with these dresses, they are trying to identify themselves as Kachin, a unique tribe of Myanmar. This kind of change belongs to general consensus of the tribe. They are making changes in symbols that they adore. Symbols can be defined, in other words, symbols of a tribe represent the tribe itself. Every tribe has their unique symbol. This is seen in accordance with Durkheim's statement.

Present studies have found out that festivals of *Zaiwa (Azi)* national, especially *Manau* festivals, have dances and songs that depict the history of all Kachin tribes. People meet at the festivals and discuss social, economic, and political matters. Working together help to solve problems well and strengthens the unity among all the Kachin tribes. *Zaiwa (Azi)* national make offerings to Madai spirit (*nat*) at the *Manau* festival that takes place every year since this is the spirit (*nat*) that grants them prosperity and happiness. These findings agree with what Crapo (2009) said in Literature. It can be seen that festivals of every tribe and race include religious symbols.

In conclusion, *Manau* Festival is in fact a religious ritual to offer foods to “nats” to propitiate them; yet it is the most grandly held traditional festival and the most significant one. The essence of *Manau* Festival is the traditional belief of all the Zaiwa (Azi) National that “nats” can rule over all animate and inanimate beings and they can give them prosperity, good yield of crops, freedom from all dangers and diseases, security for the whole region, victory etc. To have blessings from the “nats” they revere and rely on for these desires, *Manau* Festivals of several kinds are held from time to time. It consists of songs, dances, offerings and sacrifices derived from beliefs, norms and values. These elements again relate to myths, folklore, and oral history. Each ritual plays a number of important functions and these functions are held by spirit medium, and audience including relatives, visitors, neighbours and friends. Spirit mediums perform rituals by leading the people in worship while the people have roles as followers in the ceremonies. Yet these festivals are the most spectacular and they form the occasions for many people region wide to meet and have a wonderful time. So it is also an occasion to enliven their love for one another, to have intimacy and to strengthen their ties and unity. Just as these festivals can give them a chance to meet old mates and friends, they can find new friends and acquaintances too.

As it is the most holy festival of all, the narrations and the preaching’s made by Zaiwa masters are the most valuable things for Zaiwa (Azi) National, young and old. So it is a place from which to get the most valuable knowledge. The *Manau* Festival that has originated in religious belief is held on such auspicious day as the Day of Kachin State by State authorities, and hence it is the act of preserving part of the tradition and propagating it. In other words, this is also an act to make these traditions permeate through the public. The *Manau* festivals and Zaiwa (Azi) National are intrinsically connected. All of their socio cultural factors such as ethnic identity, economy, unity, political etc. are related to the celebration of *Manau* festival. Almost all Zaiwa (Azi) National changed their traditional religion to Christianity, but the practices rely on the animistic ancestor worship found within all Kachin community. *Manau* festival is still popular and it stands as one of the important identity symbols of Zaiwa (Azi) National until now.

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