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Meitei Diaspora and the Identity Politics

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ABSTRACT The Meitei is the dominant group in Manipur, the eastern-most state of India. They formed their state in the early part of first century and played a role as an international actor in the Indo-Burma region. Their state was transformed to the state of Manipur in due course of history. The society became a Hindu society in 18th century, by synthesizing their traditional religion with the Hinduism. In the early 19th century, Manipur suffered seven year devastation (1817-1826), locally called *Chahi taret khundakpaa*, at the hands of the Burmese. Due to this devastation, there was a Meitei Diaspora. It caused a large scale migration of the Meitei to many places in Myanmar, Bangladesh and other Indian states of Assam and Tripura. Today, there are a number of Meitei villages in these states and countries. The paper tries to examine the people's percepts of their identity, relationship between Homeland (Manipur) politics and Diaspora communities in other states. Identity politics is not all homogenous throughout the Meitei world. The local socio-political settings and their immediate historical conditions shape the nature of politics. The homeland is in their cultural mappings but its politics is not part of the Diaspora communities' realities.