

The Power of the Cursing Cunt: Amay Gyan and the Politics of Vindictive Clitoral Agency

Phyo Winn Latt, Aye Tun and Aung Ni Oo

Abstract

This article examines the cult of Amay Gyan, an extra-canonical Burmese nat whose authority is sustained through shrine devotion, possession, offerings, vows, obscene ritual speech, and local memory in central Myanmar. Rather than treating Amay Gyan as a folkloric survival or an eccentric female spirit, we read her cult as a vernacular tribunal: a ritual infrastructure through which devotees seek protection, expose harm, negotiate obligation, and imagine consequence where formal justice is inaccessible, unreliable, or morally compromised. Drawing on preliminary ethnographic materials from her native village, Aye Kyi Kone, interview transcripts, shrine observations, ritual offerings, possession accounts, literary representations, and Burmese nat histories, we ask what kinds of evidence feminist scholarship on Myanmar has excluded by privileging respectable, textual, Buddhist, or rights-based archives.

We develop the concept of vindictive clitoral agency to name the ritual political mechanism by which obscene female genital speech is transformed from a mark of shame into a source of authority, protection, humiliation, and moral redress. Attending closely to Amay Gyan's ritual language, most starkly in the possession utterance "Mother's clitoris is not yet dulled," and to the wider gendered field of htamein potency, cursing practices, and embodied protest, we show that obscenity is not merely expressive but operative: a technology of consequence that arms the wounded female body with jurisdictional force.

Amay Gyan, we argue, does not simply symbolize suffering; her cult activates an unruly archive of embodied power in which obscenity becomes sacred technique and the punished woman returns as a site of vernacular jurisdiction. By insisting on materials that smell of beer, chicken curry, and trouble, the article contributes to Burma Studies, feminist epistemology, the anthropology of religion, and theories of non-liberal justice, urging scholars to broaden what counts as evidence when justice itself is lived within the register of ritual consequence.