

**Name of the Element:** Khamba Thoibi, Meitei Folk Dance  
**Domain 2:** Performing Arts  
**Name of Inventory:** Pilot Inventory 1  
**Serial No:** P1-D2-003

**Brief Description:** Khamba Thoibi dance is a duet of male and female partners, a dance of dedication to the sylvan deity, Thangjing of Moirang. Khamba and Thoibi are actually two mythological characters who have become immortal in Manipuri folklore. This, with the "Maibi" dance (Priestess dance), the "Leima Jagoi" etc. form the "Laiharaoba" dance. The "Laiharaoba" dance, in many ways, is the fountainhead of the modern Manipuri dance form. This dance is a part and parcel of Moirang Lai-Haraoba. It is believed that the legendary hero - Khamba and heroine - Thoibi danced together before the Lord Thangjing, a celebrated deity of Moirang for peace and prosperity of the land. The 'Lai Haraoba' which literally translates as 'Festivity of the Gods' is a native festival of the 'Meiteis', the majority ethnic group of Manipur, a state in the northeastern most corner of India. Predominantly Hindu Vaishnavites after their forcible conversion in 18th Century during the reign of King Pamheiba (also known by the Hindu name Garibniwaz), the Meiteis originally had its own traditional religion which worshipped 'Shidaba Mapu' or 'Atiya Shidaba' as the supreme God, the creator. Sanamahi, Pakhangba, Nongpok Ningthou, Leimarel and Panthoibi are some of the major household deities and about 364 Umang Lais (Jungle deities) are worshiped by the Meiteis. The Lai Haraoba is the festivity or the merry-making of these Gods which according to mythical belief was first held at 'Koubru Ching', a hill situated in the northern end of Manipur (along NH 39). The festival is a celebration of the creation of the universe on the will of Atiya Sidaba and the recollection of the evolution of plants, animals and human beings which were enacted by the deities. The same has been followed down the ages by the human beings so that they never forget the origin of the universe. Lai Haraoba is one of the most important festival of the State of Manipur.

The most enchanting part of the festival is the colourful and exceptionally beautiful traditional dances performed by young and old, from near and far, as seen here in the photographs. The festivity is also replete with dance drama, enactment of Khamba and Thoibi, the hero and the heroine of a popular folklore and interestingly an evening outing by the deity in which it is carried around in a palanquin around the locality in full frenzy. Here I give you a glimpse of the festival.

**Region:** In the Districts of Sylhet Division in the North East of Bangladesh.  
**Photographs:Video: Consent:**

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