

Name of the Element: Bar Silkorani- The Costume Making Traditions of Manipuri Master-weavers

Domain 3: Social practices, rituals and festive events

Name of Inventory: Pilot Inventory 1

Serial No: P1-D3-006

Brief Description

One of the most enduring practices of both Meitei and Bishnupriya Manipuri communities is the production of unique costumes for each of their rituals, religious events and Ras's (dance-dramas). Throughout the year, the Manipuri community has numerous festivals. These include but are not limited to, *Goshtholeela, Nobokirtan, Dhrumel, Joydebpala, Maharas, Basanta-Ras, Beni-Ras, Devi-Ras etc.* All these festivals and performances have an element of dramatization in them and so the concept of costumes is integral to the faith of the Manipuri communities. These costumes are designed by master weavers and, during festivals such as the Maha-Rasleela, are handed out among the performers via a ceremony known as the *Bar Silkorani*. The master-weavers are trained in tradition knowledge of the Ras and are Ras-ustaads whose job it is to create these costumes. Some of the costumes designed for men are- *khabal, dhuti, peacock feathers, gunja, caps, kaknam and ghungur*. Similarly the women also have specially designed costumes such as- *lahing, pollei, chaksabi, aahing, udni, gunja etc.* The tradition of the costume-making is integral to the whole festival and thus numerous hours are spent creating new outfits every year.

State of the element: It is becoming increasingly difficult for master-weavers to subsist solely via the creation of festival costumes. At the same time, due to economic constraints, many of the newer generation are not following in the footsteps of existing designers. As a result, the complex and rich history of costume making stands to be lost in case resources are not allocated for the cultural safekeeping of the practice and the also the individuals who are carrying out the whole process.

Region: Moulvibazar, Sunamgonj and Habigonj districts.

Photographs: Video: Consent:

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