CHAPTER III
PERFORMING STAGES OF SWORDS PLAY
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(I)

After having a complete knowledge and expertise in the items of free hand exercises discussed in chapter II the trainees are now required to learn the specific forms of Thang-Ta postures, stances and movement patterns, which are used by the various institutions of Thang-Ta in preparing an artist in the field of Swords play. The most important advice made by the Gurus of the respective institutions to the trainees were to practice regularly so as to enable their legs and hands to 'function like a brain'\(^1\) when combating.

A. Specific Forms of Thang-Ta:

(i) **Khong Lap** (Initial stance):  
The trainee should keep apart his toes slightly from the attention position. Then bring the heels at line of the respective toes. This is the exact cubit length of the individual or the stride may be measured as a shoulder length apart. Standing the two feet stride at a cubit width is the most standardised and perfect stance for any
Thang-Ta movement. This has to be practiced repeatedly for speedy and quick action.

(Fig. - 1 illustrates Khong Lap)

(ii) Thanggi Phirep (Stances of swordsplay):

From the initial stance the trainee should turn to the left side. The forward leg is slightly bent, knee thrust forward, body inclined forward, back leg stretched and the toes a supporting instant. The forward position of the knee and the toes should be in a vertical line. The heel of the forward leg should be in line with the centre of the ankle-joint of the back leg planted laterally. The forward big toe should be pressed upon the floor. Body weight on the front foot. Place left hand open ahead, slightly bending at elbow and right hand open bending at elbow in line with left elbow. Torso or trunk should be straight along with the head inclined at 45°. The trainee has to perform this practice by turning at left and right without breaking the original stance. If the trainee is practicing with a sword or a sword with shield the tip of the sword should be pointed towards the point in between the throat and forehead.

(Fig. - 2 illustrates Thanggi Phirep)
Fig. - 1 illustration of the *Khong Lap*
Fig. - 2 illustration of the *Thanggi Phirep*
(iii) Mityeng (Alertness of eye):

The eye sight should be fixed straight in between the two eyebrows of the opponent so that the posture could give a complete vision of the opponent by encompassing his whole body. Also if the eye-sight is fixed in an eye to eye contact position with the opponent, one can easily anticipate all moves of the opponent. So this specific form of training has been treated as a very important part of exercise by the eminent Guru of Thang-Ta in Manipur.

(Fig. - 3 illustrates Mityeng)

(iv) Khongthang (Foot work):

During the course of practice or training, for any movement when the leg is lifted, the toes should be hyper extended. The heel of the lifted leg is gesture should reach above the knee of the planted leg. The lifted knee should reach the position of the chest. When the lifted leg is down for the first step, the frontal portion of the sole should touch the floor or ground first and not by the heel. Right technique facilitates movement, turns, changes in body position etc. To enable this technique refer to free hand exercises.

(Fig. - 4 illustrates Khongthang)
Fig. – 3 illustration of the *Mityeng*
Fig. - 4 illustration of the *Khongthang*
B. Basic systems of combative sword play:

Like the existing systems of many other Olympic games such as Football, Hockey, Volleyball, Kabaddi etc. there are various systems of combative sword play. Some of them are in Phunga Nungdum Saba Khongpham, Tha-Machet Saba Khongpham Ahum, Khongpham Hatnabi, Pallandabi Khongpham Manga etc. But only two important systems are discussed as follows:-

(i) Phunga Nungdum Saba Khongpham
(Rounded Stance Triangular three point system):

(a) In this system the trainee should stand erect with feet slightly apart. From this position he should take one step forward in such a way that the stepping leg is half bent while the rear left foot is kept straight. Simultaneously the right hand is raised and bent at elbow with the palm clenched in a fist and position near the forehead. Meantime, the left hand is bent at elbow with the palm clenched in a fist and position at the left side of the body.

(b) As a second step he should turn his body to the left side at an angle of 45 degree. He then takes one step forward by raising the left knee up.
(c) In the third step of the system the trainee should turn back his body and take the right leg to the original place where he stood in the first step. The hands perform a reverse action of the second step.

(Fig. - 4a is enclosed for ready references)

(ii) Tha-machet Saba Khongpham Ahum
(Semi circular three steps):

(a) From the position of Thangi Phirep as illustrated in Fig. no. 2 the trainee first move right leg half a step back at the point A, is shown in Fig. no. 4b.

(b) Bring left foot one step back at the point B.

(c) Thirdly the trainee take another step forward by the right foot at the point C without moving the left foot. Here comes to a right stance position of Thangi Phirep.

For performing a reverse action of the system the trainee begins by moving the left foot first. All the earlier actions would be in reverse order.

(Fig.- 4b indicates the movement patterns as foot work)
Fig. – 4a illustration of the *Phunga Nungdum Saba Khongpham*
Fig. 4b illustration of the *Tha-machet Saba Khongpham Ahum*
(iii) **Khutlon** (Wrist Movement):

The system of Manipuri martial arts demands a flexibility of the whole body particularly the wrist in swords play. The possessor of the flexible wrist (*Khujeng Nouba*) often gets on top in combat practices. A flexible wrist is best exemplified in decorative sword play as well as in execution of stroke. To attain this end a number of exercises like *Khujeng Leibi* (rotation of wrist), *Meibul Haibi* (fire ball swinging), *Cheitup Haibi* (heavy club swinging) and *Cheisang Haibi* (long staff swinging) are practiced.

(iv) **Khujeng Leibi** (Rotation of Wrist):

For the rotation of wrist a special technique is required. The two hands, with one hyper-extended and other flexed (the right hand up facing down and left hand down facing up), in opposite direction, begin circling to form like clockwise and anticlockwise movements are synchronised in between the two hands. Both palms should be at the positioned height of the heart. While the right palm is facing downward, the left palm is upward facing, and the two wrists are nearly joined together. The upward facing palm turns to come on top while the other goes down. The reverse action of this pattern called *Khujeng Leibi Ahanbi* which is used in sword dance alone and not in other dances. Only the first sequence is used in dances. The *Khujeng Leibi* exercise gradually expands to engulf
(swallow up) the whole body in defence and also while in delivering strokes on the enemy.

(v) **Khonglon** (Footwork):

Along with the *Khujeng Leibi* exercise simultaneous foot work should be organised. The right arm action in the wrist rotation should have simultaneous rising and folding of the right leg and vice versa. The hand is brought down at the same time with the lowering of the leg. The two basic systems of steps — *Phunga Nungdum Saba* and *Tha Machet Saba* are preliminary steps to be synchronised along with the *Khujeng Leibi* exercises.

(II)

**PERFORMING WAY OF THE SWORD (THANG):**

There are broadly two forms of swords play. They are :-

(i) **Leiteng Thang** (decorative sword play) (ii) **Yanaba Thang** (swords play for real combat actions). Both are practiced in the traditional Manipuri Martial Arts.

i) **Leiteng Thang**:

The *Leiten Thang* was mainly used for exhibition before the king and nobles of the court on special occasions like 'Kwak Tanba', 'Lai Haraoba'. For *Leiteng Thang* two swords or a sword
and a shield could be wielded in such a way that the entire body is protected from all sides. Also the foot work should be a fixed order. To get proficiency in *Leiteng Thang*, supple wrist work is a necessity. The Meiteis have traditional methods of handling the sword along with specific foot work pattern. *Yet-Thang-Oi-Thang* (right hand and left hand sword techniques) is a significant blade handling methods of *Leiteng Thang*.

There should be solid effective stances and postures all the time. Both in cases of attack and defence positions, stances and body postures should be firmly maintained, to enable protection of the body in defence and making effective counter attack as well. The most important thing is that each sword cut or thrust should have a co-ordinating body position along with a keen eye-sight. This means that footwork, handwork and position of the eyes should have effective co-ordination. To attain this end various forms or systems of basic training are given to the beginners in order to develop agility, flexibility, balance and co-ordination of the body. *Meibul Haibi* (fireball swing), *Cheitup Haibi* (club-swinging) etc. are to be practiced. One important feature of *Leiteng Thang* is that the two swords wielded by the performer should not clash at all.
Some of the orders of the Leiteng Thang is that of the fixed stepping systems. A number of steppings are used in the process of Leiteng Thang. The Phunga Nungdum Saba (tringular stepping), the Tha Machet (semi-circle stepping), Khongpham Manga (5 steps), Pallandabi (a star shaped stepping motif attributed with psychic power) etc. are some of the fixed order of stepping used in Leiteng Thang. Here the movements of the hand should simultaneously co-ordinate with the movements of the legs, which is a typical feature of Manipuri Martial Arts. The 'Thang-Khaon' (swinging the sword in the crossed curvilinear pattern on all sides of the body), the 'Hangmei Kokthong Onba' (front roll), 'Leiba' (turn), 'Chongba' (jump) etc. are different patterns used in Leiteng Thang.

Another typical feature of Leiteng Thang is the demonstrable duels like 'Thang-Yannaba' (sword fight) and 'Thang-Ta Chainaba' (sword and spear fight) etc. based on basic movement pattern in a pre-arranged form. These forms of dramatic and electrifyng show, coupled with sparks flying out from clashing swords and spears have begun to attract National and International interest since the early part of 1960's.
Leiteng Thang is not only useful for exhibition alone but also it helps a martial artist to ensure a correct postural pattern and in developing reflex action. There are also highly advanced esoteric spiritual system like Leikak Thang (Diagonal downward cut) and Lankak Thang (slash diagonally at the neck) with spells to the imaginary figure of the enemy to bring hazard or death on him.

The teaching of actual fighting system is always kept secret, for open methods had a way of providing anticipatory knowledge to an expert of the foot work, handling styles and sword pattern of the teachers. Possibility of working out a counter attacking system based on the immediately received knowledge was always there. So entire methods and techniques had to be kept under mutually enforced secret system.

ii) Yannaba Thang:

Yannaba Thang is infact the real combat actions. It has the free style combat technique. There are two important things to be noted for this combat system:—

a) The first technique should be always protecting oneself from all modes of attack from the enemy, defending the body from whatever angles of cut, thrust or blows.
b) The second technique is that the person should have the ability to make a counter attack i.e. effective cuts or thrusts to the enemy the moment he so chooses. In brief, 'not get oneself hurt, but hurt the opponent at will' is the motto of a successful swordsman.

COMBATIVE SWORDS FIGHTING SYSTEM

The practice of Yannathang is learnt through rigorous repeated learning of basics of wielding sword, which is known as 'Thangbi Taranithoi' (Twelve count system of striking formulae). The meaning of Thangbi is very vast and complex in the sense that our traditional martial Gurus had the knowledge of the vulnerable portion of human body which should be attacked in order to hurt or kill the opponent and created vocabulary to protect or defend oneself from sword strokes from different angles. Thangbi, in brief, is the technique of delivering hits, cuts or thrusts by the swordsman to the vital spot of his adversary along with the use of foot work. Thangbi may be divided into two:

a) Yanbagi Thangbi (attacking formulae).

b) Ngakpagi Thangbi (defensive formulae).
There are more than 18 vital spots in the human body where sword hits or cuts or thrust may be applied to inflict a sudden death to a person. The points are:


For an effective control of the sword and exact delivery of cuts or thrust to the said vital parts, the Thangbi are organised in a numerical series of 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 count system which will be discussed subsequently. The special emphasis on learning the Thangbi is that each stroke by the hand or the sword should simultaneously co-ordinate in a fixed pattern with the use of the legs or steps. Each Thanglon or art of the sword therefore, should simultaneously proceed with the Khutlon (movement of the hand) and Khonglon (movement of the foot).
(1) **Thanglon** (Sword alphabets):  

The first learning system for beginners in sword exercise is the six (6) count system. Under this an artist strikes the opponent's (i) Neck from the left (*Oi Ngak*), (ii) then Neck from the right (*Yet Ngak*), (iii) Left waist (*Oi Khwang*), (iv) Right waist (*Yet Khwang*), (v) and finally strike at the head (*Kok*) and (vi) Thrust at the heart (*Thinba*). After leaning/having a thorough knowledge of the above six count system additional strokes may further be made as (vii) Strike at the opponent's right shoulder (*Yet Lengjum*), (viii) Counter attack by the opponent at my right shoulder (*yet Lengjum Hanba*), (ix) Strike the opponents left shoulder (*Oi Lengjum*) and (x) Counter attack by the opponent at my left shoulder (*Oi Lengjum Hanba*). These striking system is now known as 10 count system. Along with these strokes a number of foot works for attack and defence are also practiced, which are known as *Yanbagi Khonglon* and *Ngakpak Khonglon*. In these foot works, advancing steps in attack and backward retreating steps in defence as well as the Tha *Machet Saba Khongpham Ahum* (semi circular) three steps are mainly used. Individual teachers add further variations in these formulaeas (*Thanglong*). As for instance the 'ATHARO LAKRI' of Paona Brajabasi, a series starting from two counts to eighteen counts
and 'Maharaj Ishwagi Thangbi Tara' starting from four counts to ten counts may be mentioned.

In the early 19th Century, there were some basic systems of Thanglon involved in most of the movements of Manipuri Thang specially used by the respected Guru Shri Ningthoukhongjam Poila popularly known as Shilottaba. In Manipur this system is known as Shilottabagi Paring and some section of people called it Shilottabagi Gharana (system). This system were taught in the home school. In fact, these conventional system were learnt by Shri Irengbam Ningthoujao from Ningthoukhongjam Poila and then by Saikhom Chaoba from Irengbam Ningthoujao. Shri Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh also got the chance to learn this conventional system from the gurus who are closely associated with the above - Gurus sometimes in the middle of 19th Century.

The systems are as follows:

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Beside the above systems *Paonam Nolsing* better known as Paona Brajabashi, hero of the Anglo Manipuri War, 1891 also used this type of conventional system of *Thanglon*. The systems which were used by Brajabashi was commonly known as 'Brajabashigi Thanglon' by the Manipuries. Genealogically this conventional systems were learnt by Paonam Tonsana Singh directly from his father Paona Brajabashi then by Paonam Phunindro Singh from his father Paonam Tonsana Singh and then Jugindra Singh from his father Paonam Phunindro Singh. Moreover, Paona Brajabashi had a good student namely Kalasana Singh (Sagol honjaba) who took a major role in the Anglo Manipuri War, 1891 then by Pheijaosana Singh son of Kalasana Singh. Pheijaosana had two favourite students one is his own son Achousana and other is

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Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh regarded as living archive of Manipur.

The systems are:

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The above systems are very much similar with the ancient soldier's training systems of India⁵. In ancient Indian times swords, daggers, bows, arrows etc. were the only war weapons. Soldiers were trained specially in the use of these weapons so as to enable themselves to get the benefit in the actual warfare. Then the training was continued as their daily routine even in the peace time so that the people in general might get the benefit of it. Practice in
Dagger-fight is one of such exercises useful to soldiers. This exercise helped the trainee to develop the limbs of the body as well as improved the skill and efficiency in various movements. Moreover, the ancient Indian army performed the constant practice in Lathee-fight in order to develop dash, courage, stamina and quickness in the soldiers.


Some of the important moves in Lathee fight are as follows:— (1) Sheer, (2) Tamacha, (3) Janoee, (4) Modha, (5) Bhadara, (6) Kamar, (7) Palat, (8) Kadak, (9) Pokar, (10) Modha and (11) Bahera.'

In practicing Yana Thang (Actual fight system) we used a kind of weapon generally known as Gadaga a cane stick covered
with leather for striking the opponent and Chungoi (Buckler) for defending oneself. Usually the right hand holds Gadaga and the left hand Chungoi.

(II) *Thanglon* (Movement of Sword):

In the movement of the sword the perfect co-ordination of the *Khutlon* and *Khonglon* must be observed. The *Khutlon* is the system of the hand to understand the vulnerability of vital parts of the body. In other words, the utility of the blade of the sword as the back edge of the tip portion of the sword in cuts or thrust with minimum use of the arms, wrists and shoulder muscles of the sword wielder are included in *thanglon*. One rare speciality of the Manipur swordsmanship is the ability to deliver multiple strokes in a single foot step and another specialty is the cut-pull principle of the sword, that is a flick with the tip of the sword simultaneously with the cut.

There are more than 40 lessons or formulae in the Manipur martial arts system. These are standardised formulae created by different Gurus throughout the ages of which one must learn at least 10 to 20 lessons during the course of his training.
(III) **Thangbi**\(^7\) (Striking Formula of Sword):

The six count system of striking the opponent listed below should be performed at a sequence without any break in between any of them.

i) Strike on the left neck (*Oi-Ngak*).

ii) Then on the right (*Yet-Ngak*).

iii) Then on the left waist (*Oi-Khwang*).

iv) Then on right waist (*Yet-Khwang*).

v) Then strike at the head (*Kok*) and

vi) Thrust at the heart (*Thinba*).

Similarly in the ten count system in a sequential form (*Thangbi-Tara*) striking the opponent:

i) Strike on the left neck (*Oi-Ngak*).

ii) Strike on the right neck (*Yet-Ngak*).

iii) Strike on the right wrist (*Yet Khujeng*).

iv) Strike on the ankle (*Kongjeng*).

v) Strike on the head (*Kok*).

vi) Thrust on the heart (*Thinba*).

vii) Strike on the right shoulder (*Yet Lengjum*).

viii) Strike again on the right shoulder as counter attack (*Yet Lengjum Hanba*).
ix) Strike on the left shoulder (Oi Lengjum).

x) Strike again on the left shoulder as counter attack (Oi Lengjum Hanba).

After completion of six count and ten count system of Thangbi the next lesson (12) twelve count system known as Thangbi Taranithoi would be introduced. There are various form in the twelve count system most popular and common form is given below:

a) Two spots in one stroke i.e. 1 left neck and 2 left side or back part of the head (Oi-Ngak + Oi-Narum) = (1+2)

b) Two spots in one stroke i.e. 3 Right side of the waist and 4 right side or back part the head (Yet Khwang + Yet-Narum) = (3+4)

c) Strike on the Right shoulder (Yet Lengjum) = 5

d) Strike on the Left shoulder (Oi Lengjum) = 6

e) Strike on the Head (Kok) = 7

f) Thrust on the Heart (Thinba) = 8

g) Two spots in one stroke i.e. Left hip joint and Left arm-pit (Oi-Phiru + Oi-Sega) = (9+10)
h) Two spots in one stroke i.e. Right hip joint and Right arm-pit

\[(Yet \ Phiru + Yet \ Sega) = (11+12)\]

There are some other series of Thangbi (formula of sword) better known as 'Maharaja Ishworgi Thangbi'. These are also formulated in count system. They are:

(a)  
  i) Strike on the Left neck (Oi-Ngak).
  ii) Strike on the Right waist (Yet Khwang).
  iii) Strike on the Head (Kok).
  iv) Thrust on the Heart (Thajinda Thinba)

(b)  
  i) Strike on the Right Ankle (Yet Khongjeng).
  ii) Strike on the Left Neck (Oi-Ngak).
  iii) Strike on the Right Waist (Yet Khwang).
  iv) Strike on the Head (Kok).
  v) Thrust on the Heart (Thinba).

(c)  
  i) Strike on the Wrist (Khujeng).
  ii) Strike on the Right arm-pit (Yet Sega).
  iii) Strike on the Left neck (Oi-Ngak).
  iv) Strike on the Right waist (Yet Khwang).
v) Strike on the Head (*Kok*).

vi) Strike on the top of the Head (*Lempu*).

(d) i) Strike on the Left Neck (*Oi-Ngak*).

ii) Strike on the Ankle (*Khongjeng*).

iii) Strike on the Left waist (*Oi Khwang*).

iv) Strike on the Right waist (*Yet Khwang*).

v) Strike on the Arm-pit (*Sega*).

vi) Strike on the Head (*Kok*).

vii) Thrust on the Heart (*Thinba*).

Over and above the formulae of the sword, the trainee attains proficiency in the use of the shield by the left hand. Simultaneously offensive and defensive strokes are also organised among the two practitioners which is known as 'Chungoi Marol'. This formula is also applied in the series of count system. They are: one, two, three and four.

At the count one the shield should protect the left neck (*Oi-Ngak*). In the second count it protects the right neck (*Yet-Ngak*). In the third count it should protect the head (*Kok*) and in the fourth count it protects from the thrusting on the heart (*Thinba*).
Along with these strokes a number of foot works for attack as well as defence are also practiced, which are known as *Yanbagi Khonglon* (way of the foot) while attacking and *Ngakpagi Khonglon* (way of foot while defending). In these foot works, forward advancing steps in attack and backward retreating steps in defence with simultaneous application of *Phunga Nungdum Saba* as well as *Tha-Machet* (Semi circular) stances are mainly used.

The art of foot work is the most important part of the training in *Thang-Ta*. Lightness of feet balancing and rapid shuffles etc. are all intricate basic ingredients which the martial artist must master. The essence of foot work is the carrying of the body in action in a proper balance in order to enable the practitioner to strike the opponent, from the least possible angle, or to avoid blows and counter blows with ease. The proper foot work enable a graceful posture of the body in movement and action. The development of quick foot reflexes should have the imagery of the treading on the burning charcoal. The sensation of a burning heat, which the Meitei traditionally termed as *'Meitan Araba Netpa'*. Individual teacher add further variations in these alphabetical orders to Thanglon and foot work. As for instance, the *'Khutlon Taranipal'* of Paona Brajabasi, a

(IV) **Foot Works:**

Along with these strokes a number of foot works for attack as well as defence are also practiced, which are known as *Yanbagi Khonglon* (way of the foot) while attacking and *Ngakpagi Khonglon* (way of foot while defending). In these foot works, forward advancing steps in attack and backward retreating steps in defence with simultaneous application of *Phunga Nungdum Saba* as well as *Tha-Machet* (Semi circular) stances are mainly used.

The art of foot work is the most important part of the training in *Thang-Ta*. Lightness of feet balancing and rapid shuffles etc. are all intricate basic ingredients which the martial artist must master. The essence of foot work is the carrying of the body in action in a proper balance in order to enable the practitioner to strike the opponent, from the least possible angle, or to avoid blows and counter blows with ease. The proper foot work enable a graceful posture of the body in movement and action. The development of quick foot reflexes should have the imagery of the treading on the burning charcoal. The sensation of a burning heat, which the Meitei traditionally termed as *'Meitan Araba Netpa'*. Individual teacher add further variations in these alphabetical orders to Thanglon and foot work. As for instance, the *'Khutlon Taranipal'* of Paona Brajabasi, a
series of Thangbi starting from a two counts system and ending at an eighteen counts system is worth to be mentioned here.

Learning by heart systems of Thangbi alone will not help one to become a martial artist. What is important is that at the learning of delivering strokes, thrust, cuts and counter plays, the swordsman must have the ability to improvise their inborn qualities in wielding of the sword, to be able to have speed, rhythm and control. At the same time in a fighting system one does not fight through systems alone, but with the ability of the swordsman to discover weakness in the opponent, to strike from areas which were not anticipated and to make sudden inroads into the system of the opponent, through his own initiative. Here absolute co-ordination of the body and mind to have better control of his weapon, the extra sensitivity, strength, skill and speed and above all spontaneity are vital to the development of a true martial artist.

CHEIBI PHUNABA (TRAINING WITH CLUB):

To attain the above skill a free fighting system known as Cheibi Phunaba is introduced in the Manipur Martial Art (Thang-Ta). Cheibi is a short cane stick split into four sections unto the middle of its length and further wrapped up with a sewn soft leather bloated on the portion of its tip. Cheibi is used for striking
the opponent and Chungoi (Buckler) for defending the blows from the opponent. Usually the right hand holds Cheibi and left hand Chungoi. There are also fixed orders for holding the Cheibi or sword and the Chungoi. In delivering blows or strokes the right fist holding the weapon should never protrude beyond the buckler lest the opponent grabs the opportunity to slash the exposed limb. The left arm including the elbow should also be concealed within the buckler. There are some individual variations among the teachers according to their own adaptability.
Foot Notes

1. (a) 'Acting Reconsidered' Ed. by Phillip B.Jarrilli (1995) pp.150:

   Grotowski says that 'the body itself functions like a brain, it can record and later recall movement patterns and emotion in a seemingly instinctive way, when stimuli are given. Grotoski discouraged learning through verbal explanation, perhaps because the brain does not record the emotional quality of an action when learned through mental process only. Learning kinesthetically, on the other hand incorporates both the physical precession and the emotional quality of the action.

   (b) Essentials of Exercise Physiology: Larry G. Shaver, India, 1982, p.110

2. Kwak Tanba : The tenth day of the Manipuri month of Mera is called Kwak Tanba numit or Kwak Yatra. The Hindu called this day Vijaya Dasmi. Food is laid over a particular open place for the crows to eat, seven or eight days ahead of the festival. On the particular day of the festival, while the crows are picking their food, they are driven away. The way on which the crows take off and the direction they fly away are minutely observed. In accordance with the direction of the crows' flight, the good and evil omen of the coming year is determined. Not very far from this particular place where the ritual takes places, sheds are erected for the king and the nobles where display of Thang-Ta is made as an indispensable main item of events of this festival as the king awaits the report of the ritual. The festival is still in prevalence.

   Regarding specific training form of Thang-Ta Shri S.Devabrata Singh SNA, Founder Principal HULLA SINDAMANG SANG tells us that the agility and alertness of the eye and hands and legs are the farmost in Thang-Ta. He also mentions
the old saying of Manipuri that 'Nakhong Adu Meital Araba Natpagum Tougadabani' and Nakhong-Nakhutta Mit Pangadabani (your hand and feet should be very alert such that it should behave as if it has eyes). Further, he mentions about the speed of Khong-Khut that the reaction should made before the action of the opponent about to start i.e. 'reaction before action'.

3. *Lai Haraoba*: 'The Lai Haraoba mirrors the entire culture of the Manipuri people. It reveals its strengths and weaknesses, the beliefs and superstitious and perhaps also the charm and happiness of the Manipuri people. It reflects the people at their intense methods. The festival affords the opportunity for young children to learn the dances during the preliminaries to the daily rituals, while professional dance schools, both public and private, pass on the tradition more formally.

4. Shri N.Khelchandra Singh, Padmashree says that the motto of *Thang-Ta* is not to get himself hurt, but hurt the opponent at will is the motto of a successful swordsmen.

5. *Encyclopedia of Indian Physical Culture* Dr. R.C. Majumdar; India, 1950 PP 208,247.

6. ibid pp. 55-56

7. *Thangbi*: There are different opinion of our traditional Guru about the Thangbi, commonly known as sword alphabet. According to G.Gourkishor Sharma, SNA, there are many kinds of Thangbirol such as *Thangbi* based on six steps, eight, nine, ten, twelve eighteen and twenty four them up to 108 thangbi.

   According to Shri S.Devabrata Singh, SONA, former Principal of HULLA our traditional Guru attempted to cut, hit,
thrust to the particular 18 vital spots of human body while combating with sword.

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For an effective control of the sword and exact delivery of cuts or thrusts to the vital parts of the opponent, the Thangbis are organised in a numerical series of 4,6,8,10,12 count systems. Individual teachers add further variations in these numerical orders of Thangbi. As for instance, the 'Khutlon Taranipal' of Paona Brajabasi a series of Thangbi starting from a two counts system and ending at an eighteen counts system in worth to be mentioned here. There are more than 50 lessons of Thangbi in the Manipuri Martial Arts system. There are standardised vocabularies created by different Gurus through the ages.

Along with those Thangbi a number foot-works for attack as well as defence are also practised.

8. Cheibi Phunaba :

a) Paonam Naol Singh better known as Paona Brajabashi was the valiant hero of the Anglo Manipuri War of 1891. He and two other valiant swordsmen viz. Ningthoukhongjam Poila and Loukrakpam Sana Mityeng, were said to have visited the then Indian main land for a cultural renaissance and comparative assimilation of forms and techniques with other Indian system during the reign of Maharaja Chandrakhriti (1850-1886). They introduced some alien vocabularies in the teaching of sword alphabets like Tameicha, Kamar, Krak, Palak, Seer, Shoot, Dierat, Beirat, etc.
b) *A Memorable Incident of Cheibi Phunaba*:

During the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh, there was a sword fighting competition between Paona Brajabashi a Champion of the Art, and a man from Lahore, who came to Manipur with the sole intention of teaching the Maharaja himself in the art of swordsmanship. The man from Lahore was a giant of a man, tall and muscular. So, every onlooker thought that Brajabashi must suffer defeat at his hands but just at the beginning of the fight, Brajabashi struck the right arm of the man with his Cheibi with such a force that the Cheibi held by the adversary, fell down on the ground. When the man wanted to have a second bout, Brajabashi said that it should be taken for granted that if he had used an extual sword he might have chopped off the right arm of the man and therefore, if a second fight is to take place the man must used his left hand only. At this the man left Manipur for good in utter shame and disgust without having any reply to what Brajabashi said. When the news of Brajabashi's victory over the man reached the Maharaja, he at once appointed Brajabashi, teacher of his son Surchandra, Kullachandra, Tikendrajit etc.