CHAPTER IV
PERFORMING STAGES OF SPEAR USE AND SPEAR PLAY (7A)
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PERFORMING STAGE OF
SPEAR USE AND SPEAR PLAY (TA)

To get proficiency in the use and handling of spear, the Manipuri martial artists generally practice a kind of somatic exercise popularly known as 'Ta-Khousaba'. Ta-Khousaba in fact is a specific preset inviolable movement of the body and foot work using the shield/buckler and the spear, and it has developed over the ages and historical epochs. This form of psychosomatic exercise aims at attaining the utmost dexterity of hands and legs. It is also meant to develop pose, strengthen the lower extremities of the body in order to secure balance, develop endurance, control, agility and sturdy physique through mainly muscular movements involving all parts of the body. In performing Ta-Khousaba (spear dance), the right hand usually holds the spear and the left hand Chung (buckler), after wearing its long strap around the neck of the performer.

Origin Of Ta-Khousaba:

It is difficult to trace the origin of Ta-Khousaba, the systematic wielding of spear. But Pandit Late Shri Khumanlambam
Yaima Singh stated that during the reign of King Khagemba (1597-1652) the king in consultation with the experts of his time called up the brave men of both the hills and the plain. They were taught the different forms of sword and spear exercises being adopted from the different foot work patterns of *Thengourols*\(^2\). Since the hill tribes had dexterity in the use of spear, they were also taught each different forms of *Khousarols*.\(^3\) Further, he also claimed that, he possessed ample referable documents about his statement.

The same version is given by R.K.Sanahal Guneswor Singh in his book *'Meitrabakki Thang-Tagi Marol'*\(^4\). Further, Late Shri Irom Amubi Singh, Pandit, wrote that during the reign of King Khagemba different ethnic groups of people of both the hills and the plain were taught the use of different arms, with an intention of bringing about unity and good relations among the diversified inhabitants of his kingdom. Some of the *Khousarols* of the Meiteis were also taught to the hill tribes. The *Khousarols* were even named after the particular tribes to whom they were taught. A particular *Khousarol* taught to the Kabui tribe, it was called *'Kabui Khousaba'* whereas another *Khousarol* taught to the Tangkhul tribe, came to be known as *'Tangkhul Khousaba'* The one which was taught to the Maram Tribes was known as *'Maram Khousa'* These particular
Khousarols are still in practice in the Manipuri martial arts system. From the above statements made by the three eminent scholars, we may infer that Ta-Khousaba, in its systematic forms started during the reign of King Khagemba, 1597-1652 and it had evolved in the present form during the last 300 years.

Ta-Khousaba has many essential sequences, which are preset and inviolable in each and every Khousarol. They are:- (1) Salami (salutation), (2) Hotpa (gesture of scratching the ground), (3) Setpa (gesture of setting apart), (4) Sou-Kaiba (gesture of removing stakes), (5) Lan-Yengba (gesture of looking around in search of enemy), (6) Lan-Koiba (gesture of encircling the enemy), (7) Sha-Thatpa (gesture of blocking of animal or foe), (8) Sha-Thinba (method of thrusting an imaginary beast or enemy) and (9) Aroiba Salami (salutation), etc.

Salami: Salami means giving a formal salutation to the assemblage with the weapons in a particular way. In Manipuri Martial Art system, formal salutation is always given just at the beginning of an item, like sword dance, spear dance and even before starting and actual combat between the two combatants.

Hotpa: It is a bodily gesture of expressing a scratch over the ground by imitating a hen or something like that.
Setpa or Urok Makha Setpa: It is another sequence of Khousaba. In this Khousaba the two legs set apart in the air as the performer jumps up.

Sou-Kaiba: The meaning of Sou-Kaiba is the removing of stakes. Pointed bamboo pieces are struck over the ground at the entrance of village gates on the hills, to hamper the enemy from entering into the village easily. The mode of removing these stakes by using gestures of the leg and foot while performing spear dance is termed as Sou-Kaiba.

Lan-Yengba: It is another gesticular movement expressing the mode of searching the enemy by jumping up in the air.

Lan-Koiba or Chenba: The mode of encircling the enemy in the field, to keep him at bay, is termed as Lan-Koiba or Chenba.

Sha-Thatpa: Gesticulative technique of blocking the animal or foe from running away is called Sha-Thatpa.

Sha-Thinba: The gestures, showing the methods of thrusting an imaginary beast or enemy. During the act of spear dance it is termed as Sha-Thinba.
Aroiba Salami : Salutation is also given at the end of each and every item.

KHOUSAROL PAPHAL (Diagrammatic Pattern of Khousarol)

The basic principles of Ta-Khoussaba, involving different sequences of body movements and footwork techniques is based on a diagrammatic patterns known as 'Paphal' (Fig. I Indicates the diagram of Paphal) and such a system is strictly adhered to in an act of Ta-Khoussaba. As for an instance, let us take up a particular Khousarol known as 'Meitei Khousaba' by reflecting on its diagrammatic/paphal, to establish the above statement. In performing this particular Khousarol, a performer should, at the beginning, stand in the middle of the Paphal, at the point indicating by position A. He should stand there facing the south-western corner. After giving a particular salutation there, he should start jumping by the left leg, eleven steps forward towards Thangjing, lord of south-west direction indicating by the Position B. After getting there he should perform the particular sequence of this specific Khousarol. After completing the first sequences, at the point B he should turn anti-clockwise, and face towards Koubru, the lord of north-western corner, representing by position C. As before he should jump another eleven steps upto position C. After getting
there, he should perform another sequences of the Khousarol. In this manner he should perform the different moves at Marjing, the lord of north-eastern corner indicating by Fig. D. And the last one at Wangbren, the lord of south indicating by Fig. E.

In this way, the Khousarols have their fixed orders of foot steps, directions to be faced, etc. which are preset in the form of diagrammatic patterns. But in an actual presentation of the particular Khousarol, the diagrams are not to be drawn over the ground. The performer should bear all these patterns in his mind and then act accordingly.

Viewed from the above facts the Ta-Khousaba comprises of many stages involving the performer's different body movements, gestures and by speaking how he removes the stakes, how he searches the enemy, how he blocks his opponent from running away and than how he pounces upon and thrust the victim, etc. It will not be an exaggeration to say that it is not merely a form of physical exercise but also a kind of dance, drama, a pantomime which indicates different activities of men's active life through bodily gestures.
Fig. 1 *Meitei Kousa Paphal*
FORMS OF KHOUSABA

Normally nine principal forms of Khousaba are recognised in the traditional martial arts system. The nine forms are:

1. Maram Nungsetpa Khousaba,
2. Maram Achouba Khousaba,
3. Maram Macha Khousaba,
4. Kabui Khousaba,
5. Tangkhul Khousaba,
6. Meitei Khousaba,
7. Athou Khousaba,
8. Atan Khousaba,

It has been indicated elsewhere that all these nine forms were based on the traditional practices of the different ethnic groups in Manipur. The following is an example of the nine forms as most of them are similar in the context of the different components as well as in style. However, whenever there are differences, those will be subsequently highlighted. It should further be noted that there are certain other forms of Khousaba which were meant only for rare ritualistic occasions.

MARAM NUNGSETPA KHOUSABA AND ITS BASIC SEQUENCES

Salami: From a normal standing position by holding the spear in the right hand and buckler in the left, give a formal salutation at the beginning.

Thel Chongba: Put the right foot a little forward extending outward, the toes hyperextended, and then the left leg. Right hip forward and again left forward with both the feet carried
together. Leap forward with alternate kicking of the right leg in front and backward kick of the left leg and then step down by the right foot with a simultaneous kicking down of the left foot. Step backwards three times along with simultaneous thrusting of the spear in and out of the buckler.

**Hotpa** : With a resounding stamp of the feet over the ground, along with a simultaneous lowering down of the hip by bending over the knee, jump and raise the right leg side long with a spring action to the right alighting on the left foot three times and then alight the right leg side way by the left foot, with a simultaneous hitting of the buttock by the left foot and then returns to the former position and vice versa.

**Setpa** : Jump up high in the air as far as one could setting apart the two legs by the knee joints and thrusting out the right toe extended forward and the left leg behind then alight on the ground by both leg, repeat the same action again, with alternate position of the legs.

**Sou-Kaiba** : Jump a little side way to the left, alighting only by the left foot and raising the right thigh as high as possible and close to the body and then by lowering down the rising right leg, kick out imaginary stakes with the insteps of the right leg along
with a twisting turn of the whole body to the right, pivoting on the left foot. Repeat this gesticulation three times.

**Lan-Yengba**: Leap up high, as if to see things cross a wall at a distance in the meantime, while jumping up, hit the buttock by the two heels. The entire body should turn to the left direction while in the air. This is to be repeated four times to all the four directions. The turn should be anticlockwise.

**Lan-Chenba or Lan-Koiba**: Make a circular anticlockwise run with specific movement, of the body and legs, in the mode of encircling an imaginary foe or animal. The movement involved are varied and rather minute, and as such are mastered by the very few initiated.

**Sa-Thatpa**: An act of blocking an animal or a foe from running away, by stepping sideways, the spear poised ready to thrust an imaginary foe or animal, first to the right side and then to the left. Jump back side ways to the right for the next move.

**Sa-Thinba**: Stamp the feet on the ground and pounce upon and thrust the spear out of the buckler nearest to the ground, as if thrusting an animal or the like, and then step back with another thrusting of the spear within the buckler. Then jumps back again to
the former position again pounce upon for the second time, without stamping of the feet, and yell 'Ha' and then thrust in the same manner as before.

**Aroiba Salami** : Perform another ending salutation with the arms. In this way each and every *Khousarol* comprises of different stages numbering at least from eight to ten sequences along with vigorous movements involving the whole part of the body and limbs. There shall be no stoppage in between these sequences. The sub-divided parts must be combined into a single series of continuous movements in an act of *Ta-Khousaba*.

However, as stated earlier some *Khousarols* are different from others in sequences of movement steps, gestures and in the mode of thrusting, etc. As for an instance, in *Sou-Kaiba* (the removal of stakes), different techniques and steps are used in different forms of *Khousarols*. These different techniques have different terms/names. For example, in *Maram-Nungsetpa* the term is *Sou-Kaiba* meaning the driving out of stakes and in *Maram-Achouba* the term is *Sou-Kaiba* meaning the kicking away of the stakes, in *Athou-Khousaba* it is known *Sou-Kaiba*, as the swinging away of the stakes. In *Kabui-Khouса* there is *Sou-Kanba*, meaning the skipping over the stakes etc. Esoterical as the exercises are, they
call for graphic precision, and perfection in the execution. It is rather tragic that liberties are being taken in performing Khousarol, thereby polluting the sanctity (sacredness) of this psycho-somatic exercise.

Besides these nine Khousarols, cited above, there are some more Khousarols which they have a slightly different connotations. They are believed to cast either benevolent or valevolent future to the individual performer or the community concerned. Mention may be made of these Khousarols:

i) Khuntak-Leitak (which may bring destruction).

ii) Khunjao-Leichao (which may bring prosperity).

iii) Panning-Panmang, (which may bring success), etc.

The Khunjao Leichao: A perfect performance of this form of spear dance is believed to bring about the expansion of the domain under control in length and breadth, and prosperity to its people. The performance of Khuntak-Leitak is believed to bring about the devastation of the land and the villages. The Panning-Panmang, was used to be performed in the battle field, first behind the troop and again before the troop with the belief that the troop of soldiers may not be easily dispersed by the enemy. The details of the
structures and segments of these Khousarol are not known to the Gurus.  

There are also a few other ritualistic Khousarols associated with the different schedule castes of Manipur who are known as 'Chakpas'. Of this, the Leikoi Khou of North Sekmai, the Yen-Pha-Khousa of Phayeng and the Chongphang-Thengou of Leimaram are worth studying. These Khousarols attached to some of the communities of Manipur were inevitably performed in the event of the death of a member of the particular community and still are performed in the Umang-Lai-Haroba of the particular villages.

Little wonder that there was a touch of mythology about these ritualistic Khousarols. The 'Leikoi-Khou' as was narrated by late Pandit Angom Prashuram Singh (Amairemba) of Awang Sekmai, was believed to have been performed by Ashiba (Lainingthou Sanamahi) himself to test the stability of the earth, he had created. Again the 'Yen-Pha-Khousa' of Phayeng village is so much ritualistic and indigenous that it has been performed at the 'Lai-Haraoba' of the said village as a compulsory item of the ceremony since time immemorial. As has been told to us by Angom Mera Singh, the present Khul-Lakpa of Phayeng, after sacrificing a
cock or a hen, known as *Saren Chanba* to the reigning deity of the village, at the 'Haraoba' festival, this particular *Khousarol* is compulsorily presented before the deity as a daily rite till the end of the 'Haraoba' festival. This form of Khousaba, Shri Mera Singh, further said, was in the belief of bringing about abundance and prosperity in their village. Even the term 'Yen-Pha-Khousa' was properly named after the characteristic of the ritual itself, since 'Yen' means cock or hen or 'Pha' the shortened form of Manipur word 'Phaba' meaning capturing. Hence 'Yen-Pha-Khousa' means capturing and sacrificing of a cock or hen. This itself proves the indigenous character of this *Khousarol*.

The 'Yen-Pha-Khousa' is also performed in the event of death of a member of this particular village *Phayeng*. The performer should compulsorily be the son-in-law of the deceased person. He should lead the funeral procession up to the pyre by performing this particular *Khousarol* at intervals by holding *Chung* and *Ta* (shield & spear). Shri Mera Singh also claims that this ritual of *Khousaba* in the funeral procession is termed as 'Lai-Tanba' meaning, the driving away of evil spirits and has been in vogue since time immemorial among this community.
Ta-Khousaba was not only performed in the Kwak-Tanba12 festival but also on occasions and before distinguished visitors who visited Manipur. There were also instances of Meiteis Kings themselves having performed Ta-Khousaba. 'Takhel Ngamba' carries the story of how King Garibniwaz performed a terrific spear and sword dance before the Burmese army, in the battle field at Wangjing, when the later invaded Manipur in 1723 A.D. The same book also records that different groups of hill men, armed with spears and shields, belonging to the Tangkhul, the Kabui, the Maring, the Koireng, the Thangal etc. after performing a furious spear dance and giving a formal salutation to the king, offered themselves to join the army of Garibaniwaz to fight the Burmese invaders. The battle was won by the combine force of Garabaniwaz13
Sir James Johnstone describing an event of Ta-Khousaba he had witnessed wrote 'Manipuri is a great place for athletics, and fine wrestling. . . . At the conclusion at the exhibition of strength four Manipuries dressed in Naga costume executed a Naga war dance (with spear). This, I always thought the most interesting part of the performance, showing as in many other cases, the tacit acknowledgement of a connection with hill tribes surrounding them.'14
In the *Kwak-Tanba Festival* of the Meiteis on the 10th day of Manipuri month of *Mera* (October), *Pana Khousaba* the systematic performance of spear play by the different *Panas* (division) of the Meitei is still traditionally in vogue as an essential item of events since time immemorial. Before a large assemblage graced by the presence of the king and the generals with other court nobles in their best attires the four selected representatives from each *Pana* used to perform four different systems of *Khousarol* one after another. The person representing the *Laipham Pana* should perform first. He is to be followed by one belonging to *Khabam*, then *Ahallup* and last of all by one representing the *Naharup Pana*. After giving a formal salutitation with the spear and shield which he wields, each of the representative should declare the name of pana he belongs to. This act is known as 'Pana Laoba' it is as 'Heo Meidingu Maharaj; Lai-bu-Thoiba, Chat-la-basu Nungsit Kumba, Pham-la-basu Nung Gumba, Lupa-thangum Mangan-Naiba, Sana thangum-Mangan-Naiba, Naha-de Lai-pham Pana Machade etc. The meaning of it may be translated as follows:— 'Oh king ye who excel the Gods, ye who can move as fast as the wind, ye who can remain settled as firm as the stone, ye as bright as silver, ye who glitter as golden sword. I, a youth of the *Lai-Pana*. In this way the other
representatives of each pana must also indicate the Panas they belong to.

After the act of Pana-Laoba, Ta-Khousaba will proceed. A particular system of Khousarol that was already performed by a representative of a Pana should not be performed by another belonging to another Pana. But in the later period during the reign of Maharaj Sir Churachand Singh, K.C.S.I.C.B.E.(1891-1941), a specific systems of Khousarols to be displayed at the Kwak-Tanba festival by the four Panas had been fixed and allotted to each Pana.

(a) Laipham Pana - Maram Achouba Khousaba.

(b) Khabam Pana - Kabui Khousaba.

(c) Ahallup Pana - Maram Macha or Maram Nungshetpa Khousa.

(d) Naharup Pana - Athou Khousaba.

Further, the representatives of the four Panas used to wear different costumes of varied colours during the old days. The costumes used to be worn by the four Panas were as follows:—

(a) Laipham Pana - Red silken dhoti; red Khaon and red turban.
(b) *Khabam Pana* - Dhoti and turban of orange colours and Khaon of black colour.

(c) *Ahallup Pana* - Dhoti and Turban of yellow colour and black Khaon.

(d) *Naharup Pana* - Dhoti and Turban of light gold colour and Khaon of black colour.

The performer in the presence of the king, compulsorily faced the king. But during the act of *Khousaba* if any sequence like thrusting of the spear or kicking etc. are involved, according to the theme of the *khousarol*, the performer, for the sake of courtesy, should slightly change the direction of thrusting or kicking, particularly on his left side. The performer should also never make any mistake in movements, steps and sequences during the act of *Pana Khousaba*. It was believed that any mistake committed during the course of *Khousaba*, in this particular occasion i.e. *Kwak-Tanba*, would result in the premature death of the king or suffering of the people. Even at the end of the *Khousaba*, after giving another salutation, the performer holding the spear under his right armpit and the shield held before him, should stand in such a manner by
lowering down his body slightly and two feet together and the toes clasping the earth. Such an act is called 'Leitai Nong-daiba' which was believed to bring about peace and tranquility of the land. A performer who did not act in this manner at the end of the Khousaba, it is believed, had been imprisoned on the charges of trying of bring about devastation and turmoil in the land. Thus, Ta-Khousaba is not only a mere form of physical exercise or a pantomime indicating man's active life through bodily gestures, but also it has been an indispensable ritual associated with Manipuri life and culture since a very long time.

OTHER FORMS OF SPEAR USE

Attaining proficiency in Ta-Khousaba alone does not make one a perfect all rounder in using spear. There are a lot of methodical lessons to be learnt to acquire an all round perfection in handling spear for killing ferocious wild animals like tiger etc. as well as for combats with the adversaries. For a combat practice the spear is gripped tight, usually by the right hand, its shaft tucked under the armpit. The majority of spear that have survived have shafts between 7 & 9 feet in length. While the longer and bigger spears were certainly used for killing wild animals the shorter verities were used by the calvary as well as by the foot soldiers. The chief techniques were based on thrusts and cuts made from oblique
angles, with both the tips on each end of the spear, the primary
target areas were the groin or stomach and the chest or throat
regions.

The use of spear has been one major system of warrior's
art since time immemorial in Manipur. Before the formation of
Meitei state Manipur was divided into various principalities each
ruled by kings. They are Meiteis Moirang, Khuman, Heirem Khunja,
Khende and Chairen. During this period, the ancient book
Chainarol\textsuperscript{16} records that it was common for heroes to engage in
mutual bouts using weapons. There are various instances of duels
among the ancient heroes who fought with spears and shields or
bows and arrows as their weapons which act is known as 'Chainaba'
(duel/fight). Chainaba involves a duel with specific code of chivalry
invoking primordial powers to deliver divine justice. When two
persons bore enmity between themselves they entered into a bout as
an ordeal of God. The book 'Chainarol' gives a good number of
episodes about such duels. Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle
of Manipur records an incident of group engagement of a duel
between the prominent hill tribes. 'The Luhuppa tribes engaged in a
hand to hand clash with the Thangan tribe at the field of Waiton on
Monday, the 16th of Langban, 1622 Sk.Era'. This corresponded with
the month of September, 1700 A.D. during the reign of
Charairongba (1697-1709), Meitei king of Manipur. The detailed account of the clash also given in the old manuscript of 'Thangmairon' writes that the village of Luhuppa Tangkhuls was not cordial with the trouble some warrior tribes of 'Thangan'. Each laid ambush against the other till they defied each other ultimately they decides to fight it out on the plains of Waiton, some 30 Km. towards the north-east from Imphal. Tangkhul Khunba Loushingba, the Tangkhul Chieftain, purpose to report the matter to Tubi Charairongba (1697-1709). He took the report himself and besought the sovereign to preside over the engagement. The monarch agreed to grace the occasion in person. He was too concerned to entrust the issue with any noble of his court. His personal presence was all important in case any party needed protection in case of massacre of the vanquished tribe. Pleased with the arrangement, Charairongba proceeded towards, Waiton with a well attended retinue of gallant warriors. Enthroned on the lofty dais erected exclusively for the purpose, the king witnessed the fight.

The Luhuppa spearmen carried bull-hide shields adorned with plums of 'Ingelleithet'. The drunken Thangan warriors on the other hand wielded bear-skin shields. The Luhuppa Chief fought shoulder to shoulder among his warriors while the Thangan Chief also countered the attack. The fight ensued with the clash of
spears and shields. The *Thangans* stood their ground firm at the outset. But soon enough, the *Luhuppas* had the upper hand and started slaughtering their feeling foes.

The *Thangan* Chief, thereupon, requested King Charairongba, for his to intervention. The sovereign, then bid Meitei warriors to hold the *Luhuppa* onslaught. The *Luhuppa Thangkhuls*, thereafter, checked their fury and submitted to the royal will of their overlord. The incident while amply illustrating the cordial bond of allegiance, loyalty and concern between hills tribes and Meitei rulers of Manipur, do signify importance of such duels in the solid-political system of the time.

There are again various historical evidences which highlighted the uses of *Ta* (spear) and *Ta Khousaba* (spare dance) by the Manipuries in magico-religious purposes. The most important evidence which may be mentioned is the *Athou Khousa* (a form of spear dance) performed by Manipuri king *Meidingu Chingthangkhomba* popularly known as *Bhagyachandra*¹⁸ (1759). Bhagyachandra had a very short reign of three years as his elder brother Gourashyam abdicated the throne in favour of him. During the period of three years of his short reign, Bhagyachandra displayed exceptional vigour and competence in restoring the
kingdom to normalcy and to a position of strength. In 1764 Bhagyachandra fled to Assam due to Burmese invasion. The country was devastated by the occupation forces. During his stay at Assam he always remembered the people of Manipur as well as his motherland. Thus he wanted to test the love the people had for him. For this he came down at Lammangdong Bazar (30 km apart from Imphal town towards the southern side) dressed with the Naga custom and acting as a pumpkin seller. After confirmation of his test he performed the Athou Khousa of Manipuri spear dance at the top of Khebu Ching (Khebu hill) over a stone slab in order to see whether he would regain the throne of Manipur or not. All these was happened when the king took shelter at the Chothe Khul situated at the western side of Bishenpur (Lammangdong Bazar).

Further instances of Ta Khousaba (spear dance) as a demonstration sports and the practical use of Ta (spear) in day to day life of the people of Manipur are recorded in the writings of Sir James Johnstone K.C.S.I. He recorded two very interesting episodes he wrote:

Manipur is a great place for athletics, and some fine wrestling is to be seen there. Athletic sports are regularly held at stated periods, sometimes for
Manipuris, at other times for Nagas. At the last there are races run by men, carrying heavy weights on their backs. At the conclusion of these exhibitions of strength and skill, four Manipuries, dressed in Naga costume, executed a *Naga war dance*\(^{19}\) (with spears). This I always thought the most interesting part of the performance.

And in the second episode he narrates an incident in which men with heavy and long spears killed a tiger and two cubs. He noted :-

“I took my sister and the two boys with me, to watch the killing of tiger. The tiger had, according to Manipuri custom, been first enclosed by a long net, about eight feet high, and outside this a bamboo palisading had been erected, on which the platforms were built for the spectators. The space enclosed was eighty to a hundred yards in diameter, and contained grass and scrub jungle, and a log of wood tied to strong ropes was arranged, so that it might be dragged up and down to drive the tiger out of the covert. As soon as we were all in our places this rope was vigorously pulled, with the result that a tigress, followed by two cubs,
sprang out with a loud roar. The Jubraj was present, and took command of the proceedings, courteously asking me from time to time what I wished done. After the first charge, the tiger was not very lively, and this being the case, several Manipuris, contrary to orders, jumped down into the arena with long and heavy spears in the right hand, and a small forked stick in the left. With the latter they help up a portion of the net, which had been allowed to fall on the ground to shield their faces, if necessary, and with the right hand poised the spear, shouting to irritate the tiger, whom others in the stockade tried to drive out by throwing stones.

Roused by this, the infuriated brute charged in earnest at one of the men on foot, the latter awaited her with the utmost coolness, and, as she approached, struck her with the spear; the tiger, however, made good her charge, but the net stopped her, and she rolled over, and when released, she retreated. This was repeated, both by the tigress and the cubs, and after a shot or two, the men on the foot attacked them with spears and finished them off.
The whole scene was very exciting one and a very fine display of courage and coolness on the part of the Manipuris."

Another instance of exhibitions of Meitei indigenous games and sports as recorded in Cheitharol Kumbaba occurred during Sir Churachand Maharaja's time. On 26th Sept., 1901 Churachand Maharaja came back to Manipur from Calcutta. He then went to Leimatak to receive Lat Shaheb (Lord Curzon), the viceroy of India on 12th Nov., 1901. On Friday, Lat Shaheb arrived at around 11 a.m. with 13 other Shahebs. They were received with pomp and grandeur. After presentations were exchanged the British Officers were treated with exhibition of Polo, Meitei wrestling, races and Ta khousaba (spear dance). The Lat Shaheb was very pleased to witness the performance by the Manipuries. And again such performances were demonstrated for the king of Takhen and his troop when they visited Manipur. They were treated with dance and traditional Khubak Ishei, boat race, polo and Ta khousaba (spear dance). Thus, we can assume that Ta Khousaba became a part and parcel of Manipuri traditional culture along with all the forms of traditional dance, games and other entertainments.
Foot Notes

1. 10 Days workshop on Thang-Ta: The Martial of Manipur, G. Gourakishore Sharma (SNA), Founder Principal, Huyen Laong Manipur Thang-Ta Cultural Association

*Ta-Khousaba*: To get proficiency in handling Ta, the Manipuries still practice a king of somatic exercise by holding Chung and Ta. Popularly known as 'Ta-Khousaba'. This special form of exercise aims at attaining the utmost dexterity of hands and legs and study physic through mainly muscular movement involving all parts of the body. *Ta-Khousaba* is said to have nine principal verities with specific name for each (i) Maram Nungsetpa, (ii) Maram Achoub, (iii) Maram Macha, (iv) Kabui, (v) Athou, (vi) Tangkhul, (vii) Yangbi, (viii) Thel and (ix) Aton. There are many thematic stages in every system of Khousaba, such as, Then Chongba. Then Hotpa, Sou Kaiba, Sami Lami Netpa, Lan-Yengba, Lan-Kaiba, Sa-Thatpa, Sa-Thinba, etc.

In the Kwak-Tanba ritual of the Manipuris, on the tenth day of the Manipuri month of Mera, *Pana* Khousaba is still traditionally in practice as an essential item of events since a very long time. Before a large assemblage graced by the presence of the king and nobles, the representative of the four *Panas*, the Laipham, the Khabam, the Ahallup and Naharup used to perform four ritualistic *Khousarols* are by one in succession after declaring the name of *Pana*. They represent, which act is known as *Pana* Laoba.

There are also many *Khousarols* specially performed by groups of people such as Chakpas. Of these the Leikai Khou of the north Sekmai, the Ipa-Ipu Khoua of the Phayen are worth mentioning. All these *Khousarols* attached to the respective castes are still inevitably performed in the event of Umang Lai-Haraoba of the respective castes.
Thus Thang & Ta besides being weapons of the war are closely related with the cultural and spiritual life of the Manipuris.


3. *Ta-Khousarol* (the art of spear): As in the case of Thengou there are nine kinds of *Khousarol*. This is originated from Thengou movements. The only difference is a little more secular and more agile. The names of the *Khousarol* are: Kabui, Maram Nungsetpa, Maram Achouba, Maram Macha Lukhrabi, Athou Amashung Tangkhul, Thel Khousaba, Khunjao Leichao, Khuntak Leitak and Paning Panmang. Maram is the name of place of the Hill and Tangkhul and Kabui belong to Naga tribes. There are different opinions regarding the name of the *Khousarol*. It is also believed that the Meiteis played Maram Khousa while they were returning after capturing the Maram tribes. Kabui Khousa was performed by Khoubbru, the guardian deity of North-west direction. From them on wards the guardian deities of direction was named as Hao. They predicted the nature of season for the year to come. In every *Khousarol* Leetai Nongdai Khurumba (salutation of the God of Earth and Sky) is compulsory. In every kinds of salutation the spear head, would be covered by the Chung (long shield) failing which it should treated as lack of discipline and having challenging motive to the audience.

There are different steps of *Khousarol*.

(i) Prayer of Atiya Guru Sidaba first next to mother Goddess Thongarel. Holding the spear up and down.

(ii) Pakhangba Yangbi Kangba with citation of *Pana*.

(iii) Parei Hanba.

(iv) Tuthung Haidokpa.

(v) Leihotpa.

(vi) Shou-Kaiba.
(vii) Leishetpa.
(viii) Maikei Yengba.
(ix) Lalkoiba.
(x) Sha-Thatpa.
(xi) Sha-Phaba.

Conclusion with salutation. The Chung to be used in Ta-Khousarol is made of unam Pheeroi or Lathen with painting of dangerous poses of dragon etc.


5. Founder Principal of Meitei Huyen Lanlong Association.

6. a) Chakpa: The indigenous people who have not been converted into Hinduism are known as Chakpa in Manipuri. These groups of people are now settled in different villages of Manipur, like Awang Sekmai, Phayeng, Leimram, Khurkhul, Andro, etc. They are still observing the rites and customs of the pre-Hindu period.

b) Chakpa: The indigenous people who have not been converted into Hinduism are known as Chakpa in Manipuri. These groups of people are now settled in different villages of Manipur, like Awang Sekmai, Phayeng, Leimram, Khurkhul, Andro, etc. They are still observing the rites and customs of the pre-Hindu period. E.Nilakanta Singh, in his Fragments of Manipuri Culture says that 9(nine) and 7(seven) are sacred numbers to the Manipuris. As in the case of 9 Thengourols, the art of spear dance admits of 9 kinds and share the same myths and symbols with Thengourol. The only difference is that Ta Khousarol is a little more secular, agile, supplementary to Thengourol. The names of Thengourols are Maram Nungshitpa, Maram Achouba, Maram Macha, Maram Ningjaoa, Kabui, Athou Chumthang, Athou Mach, Tangkhul, Athou Achouba and Thel. Maram is the name of an ethnic group of the hills and Thangkhul and Kabui belong to Naga tribes. It is likely that these art
forms have something to do with the tribals and hills of Manipur. There are other types of *Khousarol* which are compared by various experts and handed down from generation to generation. There are used in Kwak-Tanba festival (Dusschera) and Lai-Haraoba before large audience and in the open area. Every *Khousarol* has fixed sequence and demands great skill and agility on the part of the performer. These are also solo or duet items done as a part of the ritual and prayer for prosperity. Unlike, Thengourol it is still in active form and practiced by the Gurus and priests. An analysis of the sequences of a particular *Khousarol* would reveal the different stages in the matter of hunting and catching the wild animals through artistic jumps and thrusts of spear.

7. *Leikoi-Khou*: It is a ritualistic *Khousarol* associated with the schedule caste of Manipur particularly Awang Sekmai known as Chakpa. This particular *Khousarol* was performed in the event of death of a member who belongs to this particular caste and also performed in the Umang-Lai-Haraoba of the village.

8. *Yen-Pha-Khosa*: Yen-Pha-Khousa was also a ritualistic and indigenous *Khousarol* of Phayeng village like Leikai-Khou it is still performed at the death of a person of the village compulsorily. It was belief that it will bring the prosperity in the village.

9. Phayeng Village, It is a place or village situated in the western side of Imphal.


Laiharaoba:

Laiharaoba means 'Pleasing the Gods' and the essence of the ritual is that it is performed to call up the Lais and carry out rituals which give them pleasure. The
essence of the festival is to please the Lais in order to gain their favour.

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The day Ashiba (Sanamahi) completed the creation of earth, he became confused. The Guru opened his mouth and showed the image of his creation. Ashiba then claimed 'Lai-Hai-Laoba' Lai Haraoba is the imitation of this. In Lai Haraoba people ask for prosperity of the earth. We believe that if this ritual is not done properly. There will be destruction of our land.


(a) Kwak Tanba Festival: The festival is used to perform on the tenth day of the Manipuri month of Mera on which the crows which had been provided foods for seven or eight days ahead of the festival, are driven away. In accordance with the direction of the crows flight, the good and evil omen of the coming year is determined. The special functions of the festival are doing ritual and showing of Thang-Ta.

The Manipuries were not only proficient in handling swords but also they were very skillful in using Ta(spear). Ta or spear may be featured as a weapon having a long handle or hard wood or bamboo tipped with different shapes of pointed iron pieces on both ends. In short it is a weapon which can advantageously be used in thrusting man or animal alike with either end. Its handle is quite long and its shape and size are different according to the use. There are different kinds of spear. Thougal Ta(spear used for attending to the king) Sagol-Ta(spear used for the cavalry). Lumbu (spar used in hunting tiger), Khangning Ta(hunting spear with
hook and string) Langsoi (spear for hunting elephants) are some of the varieties. In the battle field the Meitei cavalry used to be equipped with two types of spar. Hakthang Ta and Tarol Ta(spears one for instant used and the other carried as spear).

Just as the swords man used Chungoi(buckler) to protect himself from the opponents' cuts, blows and thrust, the man wielding the spear also used Chung, an elongated short of shield of thick animal skin to protect himself while combating in duels with his opponents.

There are slight variation in handling Ta with swordsmanship in posture and stances etc. There are many thematic stages in the very system of Ta-Khousaba. They are Then Chongba, Then Hotpa, Setpa, Sou-Haiba, Sou-Hotpa, Sou-Kaoba, Sou-Kanba, Sami Lanmi Netpa, Uchek Khongba, Hanna Lan Yengba, Lan Kaiba, Sa-Thatpa, Sa Thinba etc.

Ta Khousarol are of nine principal varieties with special name of each (i) Marom Nungsetpa, (ii) Maram Achouba, (iii) Maram Macha, (iv) Kabui, (v) Athou, (vi) Tangkhul, (vii) Yangbi, (viii) Thel and (ix) Atan etc. Each Khousarol has specific movements, gestures, and in the mode of Sou-Kaiba (removal of stakes) and Sou-Thinba (thrusting) etc.

In the Kwak-Tanba festival of the Manipuris, the Pana Khousaba (the performance of systematic wielding of the spear by the four administrative units) is still traditionally practiced as an essential item of invents since time immemorial.

(b) Kwak-Tanba: The tenth day of the Manipur month of Mera is called Kwak Tanba or Kwak Yatra. The Hindu called this day Vijaya Dashmi. Pana Ta Khousaba was performed in this festival.


15. *Pana Laoba*: There were four divisions in Manipur. Each division is known as *Pana*. The representative of each *Pana* declared the name of the *Pana* before the systematic performance of Khousaba. It is a 'Heo Meidingu Maharaj: Lai-bu-Thoiba Chat-La-basu Nungsit Kumba, Pham-la-basu Nung-Gumba, Lupa Thangum-Mangan-Naiba, Sana Thangum-Mangan Naiba Naha-de-Lai-Pham *Pana* Machade.


This book treats of dual bouts between heroes figuring prominently from amongst the commoners by dint of their valour and powers. They used bow and arrow or spear in the bouts with a code of strict rules, the violation of which was considered as a sin for which they breaker had to atone by Gods' decree.

17. *Thangmairon*: undated and unpublished manuscript.
