

Name of the Element: Lai Haraoba- The Festival of Manipuri Meitei
Domain 3: Social practices, rituals and festive events
Name of Inventory: Pilot Inventory 1
Serial No: P1-D3-004

Brief Description

The Laiharaoba festival is a celebration of the natural deities of the ancient Manipuri religion which are known as the *Umang-Lai*. It is said that during the summer season all the gods descend to the earth to be among the mortals and to bring peace and prosperity to mankind. Before the festival, shrines are created in honour of the deities who have descended to earth. The festival is overseen by a *Maibi* (priestess) or a *Maiba* (priest) and consists of many unique dances of the Haraoba festival. The form of the ritual dances also follow the traditional Manipuri style of dance-drama and are divided into many distinct parts. One of the more famous ones is called the *Khamba-Thoibi* which speaks of two star-crossed lovers. The Lai Haraoba has a series of specific rituals which involves purifying the environment by inducing the spirit of the deities into images and other sacred objects.

State of the element: As it is intrinsic to the Meitei culture, the practice is strong in Manipur and thus also in Meitei communities in Bangladesh.

Region: Meitei Villages in Moulavibazar, Sylhet Sadar, Sunamgonj and Habigonj districts.

Photographs: Video: Consent:

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