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## Weapons As Ritual Symbols: The Role Of Tools And Arms In *Lai Haraoba*

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### Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of *Thaang-Taa*, the martial tradition of the Meiteis, and *Lai Haraoba*, the ritual festival that enacts cosmological creation, cultural memory, and social practices of the community. While *Thaang-Taa* is often studied in terms of its martial discipline, this article highlights its ritual embodiment within *Lai Haraoba*, where tools and weapons such as swords, knives, spears, scissors, and agricultural implements appear not materially but symbolically through codified gestures and movements. Episodes like *Nungnao Jagoi*, *Phisarol*, *Yumsharol*, and *Uyanlon* reveal how martial and agricultural traditions are preserved in ritual performance. The study argues that the human body serves as the primary site where the spiritual, martial, and cultural converge, transforming material absence into symbolic presence. Drawing on performance studies and cultural analysis, this article demonstrates how *Lai Haraoba* sustains intangible heritage and positions *Thaang-Taa* as a living archive of Meitei identity, aesthetics, and philosophy.

**Index Terms** - *Lai Haraoba*, *Thaang-Taa*, Ritual Performance, Cultural Memory, Intangible Heritage

### INTRODUCTION

The cultural landscape of Manipur is deeply rooted in ritual, performance, and martial traditions that are inseparable from everyday life. Among these, *Lai Haraoba*, the ritual festival dedicated to the *Umang Lai* (forest deities), serves as a matrix through which cosmological narratives, agricultural practices, social values, and artistic forms are enacted and transmitted across generations. Performed annually with elaborate rituals, dances, and hymns, *Lai Haraoba* dramatizes the creation of the universe, the birth of human beings, and the rhythm of agrarian life, thereby embodying both spiritual reverence and cultural continuity.

Within this context, the martial discipline of *Thaang-Taa* traditionally understood as a system of combat using swords (*Thaang*) and spears (*Taa*) emerges not merely as a practice of warfare but as a symbolic and performative language. Its presence in *Lai Haraoba* is revealed through stylized bodily movements, footwork patterns, hand gestures, and ritual enactments, where weapons are imagined rather than physically present. The sword, spear, and agricultural tools become signs of purification, protection, and creative labour, situating martial practice within the sacred sphere.

Episodes such as *Nungnao Jagoi* (birth rituals), *Yumsharol* (house construction), *Pamyallon* (cotton plantation), and *Phisarol* (cloth-making) highlight how tools, weapons, and agricultural implements are evoked through performance. The imagined presence of these instruments reinforces the inseparability of martial and ritual traditions, transforming ordinary gestures into sacred enactments.

This paper positions the study of *Thaang-Taa* and *Lai Haraoba* within the framework of performance studies and cultural memory, arguing that their interrelation exemplifies how intangible heritage functions as both a site of communal identity and a vehicle of non-violent symbolism. Through this lens, the body emerges as the central medium, where martial sharpness and ritual grace combine to preserve and reimagine the cultural and philosophical foundations of the Meitei community.

## Research Gap

While *Lai Haraoba* has been studied extensively as a ritual festival of the Meitei community, existing research has primarily emphasized its religious symbolism, mythological narratives, and performative elements. The specific role of tools and weapons such as swords, spears, bows, knives, and agrarian implements has received limited scholarly attention. Their functions as ritual symbols, protective devices, and markers of martial and agrarian heritage remain underexplored. Furthermore, the close interrelationship between *Lai Haraoba* and *Thaang-Taa* martial traditions, particularly in bodily movements, symbolism, and ritual choreography, has not been critically examined in depth.

## Objectives

1. To examine the symbolic incorporation of *Thaang-Taa* weapons and tools within the ritual performances of *Lai Haraoba*.
2. To analyze how body movements, gestures, and postures act as the primary medium linking martial discipline and ritual dance.
3. To investigate the cultural, spiritual, and philosophical meanings embedded in episodes like *Nungnao Jagoi*, *Yumsharol*, *Pamyallon*, and *Phisarol*.
4. To situate the relationship between *Thaang-Taa* and *Lai Haraoba* within the broader framework of performance studies, cultural memory, and intangible heritage preservation.

## Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology. Primary data will be collected through ethnographic observation of *Lai Haraoba* rituals, interviews with *Maibis* (priestesses), cultural practitioners, and *Thaang-Taa* experts. Video recordings and live observations of performances will provide material for analyzing bodily movements and symbolic gestures. Secondary data will be drawn from scholarly writings, oral histories, archival records, and translations of ritual hymns. Analytical frameworks from performance studies, semiotics, and cultural memory will be applied to interpret the interconnections between martial practices and ritual enactments. This combined approach allows for a holistic understanding of *Thaang-Taa*'s role in *Lai Haraoba*.

## Significance

This study addresses these gaps by analyzing the cultural and ritual significance of tools and weapons in *Lai Haraoba*. It demonstrates how these implements embody protection, fertility, memory, and continuity, linking agrarian practices, martial heritage, and cosmological beliefs. By foregrounding this dimension, the research contributes to performance studies, cultural anthropology, and Meitei heritage studies, offering new perspectives on the festival's enduring relevance.

## Use of Tools and Weapons in *Lai Haraoba*

The *Lai Haraoba* festival embodies the ritual, cultural, and performative traditions of the Meitei community, where tools and weapons play a central role. From its opening rites to the concluding ceremonies, implements such as swords, spears, bows, and arrows are employed not merely as ritual objects but as potent symbols of memory, continuity, and protection. Their presence bridges agrarian life, martial traditions, and cosmological beliefs, reinforcing the sacred link between humans, deities, and ancestral spirits.

## ***Lai Ekouba***

On the first day, the ritual of *Lai Ekouba* is performed. During the procession from the village courtyard to the *Lai Ekoupham* the site of ancestral invocation two chosen men carry *Lai Thaang* (traditional swords). In some traditions, the ritual of *Taa khoushaba*, involving spear-handling practices, is also performed, reflecting martial heritage alongside ritual sanctity.

## ***Thaang Jagoi***

One of the most significant performances is *Thaang Jagoi*, centred on the symbolic use of two swords to represent the creation of the human body. Fires are lit at the four directions to honour guardian deities namely, *Thaangjing*, *Marjing*, *Wangbren*, and *Koubu* remaining until the completion of the performance. The *Amaibi* (priestess) enacts *Hakchaang Saba* (the shaping of the human body) with the swords, accompanied by *Khongjong* movements. The performance concludes with *Khujeng Leibi*, offerings of reverence to the deities, while an imaginative boundary is ritually marked. According to Pukhrambam Dhanajit Singh, a Manipur State Kala Academy Awardee, the significance of *Thaang Jagoi* lies in its role as a protective ritual against *Saaro* *Ngaaro* (malevolent forces) that threaten community well-being.

## ***Loutarol***

Another key episode, *Loutarol*, exists in multiple forms namely *Nongmai Loutarol*, *Phouoibi Loutarol*, *Akongjamba Loutarol*, *Shoubol Laimaremma Loutarol*, and *Poireiton Loutarol*. Usually enacted on the final day of the festival, its variations reflect regional practices. In this performance, the *Nurabi* carries a *Sam* (basket) and a spade, accompanied by seven companions, *Khalung Taret*. The *Tangkhol* character wields a bow, arrow, and spear, symbolically ploughing the earth with the *Nurabi* while exchanging ritual songs. Here, martial and agricultural tools converge, symbolizing fertility, sustenance, and the interconnectedness of agrarian and ritual life.

## ***Saro* *Khangba***

The *Saro* *Khangba* ritual is among the most sacred of *Lai Haraoba*, integrating *Thang-Taa* elements with protective functions. Performed on the 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, the penultimate, and the second day of the festival, it safeguards the community and consecrates the festival ground. Offerings are made to maintain harmony among deities believed to be present. On the final day, the ritual specifically honours the *Lai Saroi*, deities presiding over localities. A crucial act is the drawing of a boundary with a knife or *Thaanggol* (ritual tool), symbolically ensuring that supernatural forces return to their realms, preserving balance between humans and spirits.

## **Performances Following the *Paphal* Pattern**

Within *Lai Haraoba*, several ritual dances are executed according to the *Paphal* pattern. These sequences share structural similarities with *Thang-Taa* martial traditions and *Taa Khousarol*. Such performances demand precision, where errors, verbal utterances, and unnecessary movements are strictly avoided to preserve ritual sanctity. Among these dances are the *Patol Jagoi*, *Phibul Jagoi*, and *Yumjao Paphal* (*Lairen Matek*), all of which parallel the physical discipline of *Khongjong* (martial footwork).

## ***Patol Jagoi***

Performed by the *Amaibis* (priestesses) after the *Laibou* rituals, *Patol Jagoi* begins with the dancers facing the temple. The right foot strikes the ground and moves forward, accompanied by two claps, followed by the left foot striking the ground and stepping back, with both hands facing downward. This sequence is repeated three times before the priestesses continue their performance in *Nachal Khongchat*. The *Pena Asheiba* provides musical accompaniment, playing *Lamyin* at a rapid tempo along with other instruments.

*Phibul Jagoi* follows *Patol Jagoi*. In this sequence, three banana leaves are thrown southward, and four *Phijang* (ritual cloth frames) are raised on the shoulders of *Chong* bearers. Two priestesses then place *Phibul* (cloth balls representing *Lainingthou* and *Laimaremma*) upon the *Phijang*. The *Amaibi* performs the *Phibul Jagoi* beneath the white cloth with short, quick steps, ritually embodying the divine presence.

#### *Yumjao Paphal (Lairen Mathek)*

Among the 364 *Paphal* dances, *Yumjao Paphal* also called *Khunjao Leichao Paphal* holds special significance. Here, the servers of *Lainingthou* and *Laimaremma* line up separately, with the female line leading, followed by the male. Guided by the *Amaiba*, the ritual proceeds with dance sequences such as *Lamkoi Yaangbi*, *Phibul Jagoi*, and the *Leirou Dance of Paphal*. The gestures of *Phibul Yetpa* and *Phibul Litpa*, along with movements resembling the swaying of *Thang-Taa* swords (*Chongkhong Koiba*), reveal a striking continuity between ritual dance and martial traditions.

Scholars have emphasized the integration of *thang-ta* elements in *Lai Haraoba*. Thounaojam Ruhichand, in *Lai Haraoba and Mioiba Khunnai*, argues that the festival, as a repository of Meitei traditions, is also a site where martial elements are preserved. He notes that sword symbolism is especially pronounced in the Chakpa community's practice of *Lai Haraoba*, suggesting that valley-based *Kanglei Lai Haraoba* too may once have contained abundant *thang-ta* components.

Similarly, Pebam Tiken, *Pena Pana Sanglakpa* of the *Pandit Loishang*, asserts that *thang-ta* is present from the very beginning of *Lai Haraoba* to the day after its conclusion. From the *Lai Ekouba* procession, where sword bearers lead the ritual, to *Saroi Khangba* and other key episodes, the sword is a consistent presence. He further explains that in the cosmology of *Lai Haraoba*, the sword represents the mother, while the spear represents the father.

This symbolism reflects the Meitei creation myth, which requires both *Paa* (father) and *Pee* (mother). Yet, the nurturing role of the mother is emphasized the mother (sword) continually strives to create and sustain life. Thus, in *Lai Haraoba*, the sword assumes a maternal role, embodying protection, creativity, and continuity. The sword is offered first to Lord Thangjing, the eternal soul, from whom the joyous spirit of the festival originates. The sword dance itself is believed to protect the unborn child from malevolent forces. Even in *Saroi Khangba*, the sword is regarded as the mother, reaffirming its central role in the nurturing and safeguarding of life.

In *Thaang-Taa*, ritual and reverence are deeply woven into ceremonies such as *Thenggou Chongba*, *Pana Khoushaba*, *Eru Laison*, *Pureiromba*, *Naheirarol*, *Anam Athou Kokpa*, and *Atai Laison*. These rituals make use of a fairly consistent set of elements, including a banana leaf, a *khudei*, grains of rice, an odd number of bananas, and three twigs of *Laangthrei*.

According to Oja Maniton, Guest Faculty at the Manipur University of Culture, the sword used in the Tangkhul segment of *Lai Haraoba* is known as *Khangning Taa*, while the sword itself is called *Tor Thaang*. Alongside it, the bow also forms an essential part of the ritual set. Within this context, the Nurabi plays a vital role, carrying a knife known as *Heijrang*. This knife is not meant simply as a weapon, but as a symbol of protection, enabling the Nurabi to assert her strength and safeguard herself from any misconduct by her Tangkhul counterpart. By wielding it, she publicly declares her ability to defend herself.

If, during the enactment, the Nurabi uses the knife in self-defense and the Tangkhul is wounded, causing blood to spill, it is seen as a bad omen or sign of misfortune for the Tangkhul. On the other hand, if the Tangkhul manages to disarm her, seize the knife, and push her down in an aggressive stance, it symbolizes the loss of her ritual power and protective role. In this way, the *Heijrang* goes beyond being a physical object it becomes a ritual symbol of the Nurabi's strength, serving as both a protective tool and a safeguard against harmful or negative forces within the ceremony



*Thaang Jagoi*

In *Thaang Jagoi*, the sword is intentionally placed on key points of the body, signifying that the human body like the sword should possess sharpness, precision, and strength. The act of rubbing the sword during the ritual is seen as a symbolic act of purification, meant to cleanse and drive away evil and negative forces from society

*Saroi Khaangba*

In the *Saroi Khaangba* ritual, a special knife called the *Thaangol* is used, notable for its 108 edges. These numerous edges are believed to represent immense power, with the idea that evil forces are frightened by this weapon, which is imagined as having 108 sharp fangs.

**Ekouba and Serving the Deities**

During the *Lai Ekouba* ceremony, two sword bearers lead the ritual procession. Their role is symbolic, they clear the path of harmful forces, which are thought to fear the protective power of the swords. In the hymns of *Lai Haraoba*, particularly in the *Atai Laishon*, a verse states: “*Oithaang o Yetthaang o Liri Liphangbi Nang Taiga.*” This line suggests that *Yetthaang* and *Oithaang* have existed since the time of *Leishemba*. Such references highlight that within the rituals of *Lai Haraoba*, the martial tradition of *Thaang-Taa* has long held an established and meaningful place.

The different types of *Thaang-Taa* in *Lai Haraoba*

1. *Laithang* was initially known as *Thaang khoubumba*
2. *Thaangol* is used in *Saroi Khaangba*
3. *Tor Thaang* is used by Tangkhul
4. In the *Pamhairol*, *Thaangjou Chindumbi* is used. *Yompaak*, *Hamei*, *Thaanggol*, etc are not just used in *Pamhairol* but also in *Yumsharol*
5. *Kabaak thaang*, *Thaangjou*, *Chindubi* are used in *Nungnao Jagoi*.
6. *Shingjang Thaang* is used in *Uyanlon*.
7. Spear and bow are used by the Tangkhul.
8. *Heijrang* is used by Nurabi
9. Scissor is used in *Phisarol*

In the words of Sanahal Singh:

*Leishemlol thenggourolshing ashigi hou thenggoui nongdon jagoi, nonghou jagoi, singkaklon jagoi, nongdai jagoi amadi leihou jagoi ashinachingba ashi thokkhi haibasini. Leitai thenggoudagi leitai jagoi, leichai jagoi, leishem jagoi ashi thokkhi, aduga leinet thenggoudagi louduna leinet jagoi, leiroy jagoi amadi paring laangkhang jagoi ashi thokkhi haina erammi.* (Singh 8)

From the *Leishemlol Thenggourol*, dances such as *Hou Thenggou's Nongdon Jagoi*, *Nonghou Jagoi*, *Singkaklon Jagoi*, *Nongdai Jagoi*, and *Leihou Jagoi* emerged. Similarly, from the *Leitai Thenggou*, dances like *Leitai Jagoi*, *Cheilai Jagoi*, and *Leishem Jagoi* were developed. From the *Leinet Thenggou*, performances such as *Leinet Jagoi*, *Leiroy Jagoi*, and *Paring Laangkhang Jagoi* were created. (Translation by Naoshekpam Daina Chanu)

In understanding and interpreting *Lai Haraoba*, bodily movement plays a central role. The performances of both *Thaang-Taa* and *Lai Haraoba* are inseparable from the body's ability to move. Without the body's active participation, the martial discipline of *Thaang-Taa* and the ritual dances of *Lai Haraoba* lose their meaning. The human body with its expressive tools like facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, postures, footwork, and hand movements becomes the main medium through which these traditions come alive. If these movements are ignored or absent, the essence of performance is lost, leaving both *Thaang-Ta* and *Lai Haraoba* incomplete.

## ***Khongchat Khongthaang***

In Manipuri dance as well as *Thaang-Taa*, footwork and walking styles hold special significance. These are just as essential in *Lai Haraoba* and its related dance traditions. Proper mastery of footwork not only maintains the authenticity of performance but also provides the basis for growth and refinement in both traditions. The repertoire includes a wide range of movements such as *Chumna Thaangba*, *Chepna Thaangba*, *Pheina Thaangba*, *Karan Thaangba*, *Sittuna Chatpa*, *Khong Sikna Chatpa*, *Pheina Chongba*, *Leina Chongba*, and *Chongna Chatpa*, each bringing its own rhythm and distinctive energy to the performance tradition.

### ***Chumna Thaangba***

This is the basic forward walking step in *Thaang-Taa*, where both the left and right legs move in coordination. In the *Thaangbi Yaanba* sequence, it is performed in its simplest and most direct form.

### ***Chepna Thaangba***

In this step, the leg in its normal position shifts slightly to one side with a gentle bend, and the body also tilts in the same direction. This movement is seen in the *Leiching Jagoi* of *Lai Haraoba* and in the *Fenga Nungdum Saba Chatpa* of *Thaang-Taa*.

### ***Pheina Thaangba***

There are different variations of the *Feina Thaangba* footstep. Some examples include *Mangda Feina Thaangba*, *Chumna Feina Chatpa*, and *Maningda Pheina Hanba*. These types of steps are commonly used in *Thougal* dance.

### ***Karan Thaangba***

In this step, one leg is placed in front while the other remains crossed behind. It is commonly used in *Thaang Karan Chanlaga Thaangbi Yaanba*, *Taa Khousaba gi Porei Hanba*, and in the *Panthoibi* dance.

### ***Sittuna Chatpa***

Here, one leg is kept forward while the leg at the back slides along the floor. There are two main variations of this step: *Feina Sittuna Chatpa* and *Chumna Sittuna Chatpa*. It is performed in *Maibi Leiching Jagoi*, *Thougal Jagoi*, *Sha Thatpa*, and *Leitai Nongdai Khurumba*.

### ***Feina Chongba***

This step involves jumping with both legs while inclining to one side. It is used in dances such as *Ta Khousaba*, *Leihotpa*, *Lalkoiba*, *Chukkhong Koiba*, and *Thaangbi Yaanba*. It is mainly performed in male dances.

### ***Leina Chatpa***

In this movement, both the right and left leg, along with the body, shift direction together. It is performed in *Ta Khousaba*, *Thang Haiba*, *Thougal Jagoi*, *Maibi dance*, *Pamyaron*, *Yumsarol*, and *Fisharol*.

### ***Chongna Chatpa***

This step involves jumping with both legs together or with one leg at a time. It is seen in *Leitai Nongdai* (Salami), *Chumthang Nongthangpai*, *Kanglei Thokpa*, and is often performed in male dances.

**Khong Thinba**

In this step, the toes of both feet press firmly on the ground while the heels are slightly lifted. It is used at the beginning of *Thang-Ta*, as well as in *Thougal Jagoi*, *Maibi Jagoi*, *Kanglei Thokpa*, *Pamyalon*, *Fibul Jagoi*, *Yumsarol*, and other dances.

**Khutlon**

*Khutlon* plays a vital role in both *Thang-Ta* and dance, as it is used to express emotions. Without *Khutlon*, neither *Thang-Ta* nor *Lai Haraoba* dance is considered complete. During every *Kanglon* of *Thang-Ta*, *Khujeng Leiba* is performed at both the beginning and ending. In *Thang-Ta*, *Khujeng Leiba* is done with a weapon (*Thang*), while in dance it is performed with bare hands.

In *Thang Haiba*, both wrists are used. This form is known as *Khujeng Leisanbi* and *Handokpi* in the language of *Thang-Ta*. In dances, however, the right wrist is predominantly used. Important variations include *Khujeng Nouba* and *Khujeng Fajaba* (beautiful wrist movements). Apart from these, there are other types of *Khutlon* such as front-hand *Khutlon*, uplifted-hand *Khutlon*, and side-hand *Khutlon*, which are used in both *Thang-Ta* and dance.

**Phibham /Phidup & Sathek Sawong**

These techniques are essential in *Thang-Ta* and dance, as they add grace, rhythm, and beauty. Proper posture and precise steps leave the audience captivated. Examples of such techniques include the *Phirep Phidup*, *Phirep Phidup*, and *Phibam Phidup*.

**1st Phidup (Posture)**

In this posture, the toes of both feet are spread apart while the heels remain slightly separated without touching each other. The chest is pushed a little forward, creating a balanced stance known as the *First Phidup*. It is used in *Thang Haiba* and in the *First Phirep* of *Thangbi*. It also appears at the beginning of *Ta Chongba*. In dance, this posture is seen at the start of *Thougal Jagoi* and *Khunjao Leichao* dance. It is regarded as one of the simplest *Phirep* positions.

**2nd Phidup**

The *second Phidup* (posture) requires a stance with a width equal to one *Khongfei* (approximately the width of a shoulder). This posture is also called *Nongsa Phirep* or *Thongkhong Saba Phirep*. It is widely used in many steps of *Thang-Ta* such as *Salami*, *Lairen Mathek*, *Thangbi Yaanba*, and *Shou Kaiba*. In dance, it is performed in *Maibi Jagoi*, *Thougal Jagoi*, and *Panthoibi Jagoi*.

**3rd Phidup**

The *Third Phidup* has a width of two *Khongfei*. It is also known as *Samu Phirep*. The length of this stance corresponds to the distance from the knee to the tip of the toes, making it a broader and stronger posture. In *Thang-Ta*, it is used in *Leihotpa*, *Shou Kaiba*, and *Sha Thatpa Khu-u Leitabi*. In dance, it is seen in *Kanglei Jagoi*, *Thokpa Jagoi*, and *Panthoibi Jagoi*.

**Relation of Thaang-Taa with Jagoi (Dance)**

*Khunjao Leichaoba*, one of the nine *Khousarol*, is performed to ensure the prosperity of the village, to maintain peace and harmony, to secure abundant food resources, to bless the king with a long life, and to bring plentiful agricultural produce. The term *Khunjao Leichaoba*, used in *Lai Haraoba*, also refers to a dance episode by the same name. Both carry the purpose of invoking prosperity, well-being of the community, and agricultural abundance.

During *Khousaba*, powerful and heroic movements are displayed with the use of weapons, while in the dance form, the same idea is expressed through gentler, graceful gestures. In the training and practice of

*Thaang-Ta*, the episode of *Paphal* holds special importance. This episode is not only revered but also regarded with awe and fear by the people.

### Relation of *Thang-Ta* and *Jagoi* in Terms of Number

9 *Thengourol*, *Taa Khousarol* 9, *Yumjao Kayat* 9, *Shatra Mathol* 9, likewise *Lai Haraoba* has 9 *Seisak* (singing style)

The name of 9 *Ta Khousarol* are:

- (1) *Kabui Khousarol*
- (2) *Maram Nungsetpa Khousa*
- (3) *Maram Macha Lukhrabi Khousa*
- (4) *Maram Achouba Khousa*
- (5) *Athou Tangkhul Khousa*
- (6) *Thel Khousa*
- (7) *Paning Panmang Khousa*
- (8) *Khunjao leitakpa Khousa*
- (9) *Khuntak Leitakpa Khousa*

The name of 9 *Thengourol* are :

- (1) *Akao thengou*
- (2) *Leifal Thengou*
- (3) *Nongfal Thengou*
- (4) *Leichai/Achai Thengou*
- (5) *Leinet Thengou*
- (6) *Leikak/Langkak/Anik/Leinik Thengou*
- (7) *Atan/Leitan Thengou*
- (8) *Leikhom/Akhom Thengou*
- (9) *Akham Thengou ni*

The name of 9 *Thangbi* are:

- (1) *Ngak oi*
- (2) *Ngak yet*
- (3) *Khwang oi*
- (4) *Khwang yet*
- (5) *Sega oi*
- (6) *Sega yet*
- (7) *Lengjum oi*
- (8) *Lengjum yet*
- (9) *Thinba*

The name of *Lai Haraoba*'s 9 singing style are:

- (1) *Nongthangleima Seisak*
  - (2) *Leimarel Seisak*
  - (3) *Ayangleima Seisak*
  - (4) *Lamin Seisak*
  - (5) *Panthoibi Seisak*
  - (6) *Kalen*
  - 7) *Shikaplon Seisak*
  - 8) *Hepli Thanyei Seisak*
  - 9) *Hepli Pabot Seisak*
- Pena and Hou Laoba*

### Conclusion

The study of tools and weapons in the ritual framework of *Lai Haraoba* reveals their profound symbolic, performative, and socio-cultural dimensions. Far from being mere implements, swords, spears, bows, arrows, and agrarian tools operate as cultural signifiers that embody collective memory, cosmological order, and ritual efficacy. Their ritual deployment in episodes such as *Lai Ekouba*, *Thaang Jagoi*, *Loutarol*, and *Saroi Khangba* demonstrates the interweaving of martial heritage with agrarian symbolism, reflecting the Meitei worldview where protection, fertility, and harmony coexist. The performative enactments, mediated by the *Amaibi* and ritual participants, illustrate how tools function as extensions of the sacred body, constructing boundaries, dispelling malevolent forces, and reaffirming community identity. This analysis underscores that *Lai Haraoba*



is not only a festival of remembrance but also a dynamic site of cultural continuity, where ritualized tools and weapons articulate indigenous epistemologies and sustain the relationship between humans, deities, and ancestral spirits.

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