Chapter- III

The Kukis: Its earlier political dimension
CHAPTER - III
THE KUKIS: ITS EARLIER POLITICAL DIMENSION

1. THE CHASSADS AND THEIR CHIEFDOM

A. Early history:

As noted earlier, the Kukis are concentrated in the surrounding hills of Manipur valley. The term Chassad¹ Kuki is used to refer to the head of Haokip clan.² The Haokips are a branch of the Kukis settled in Manipur. They are the most numerous amongst the sub-clans. They are settled in the southern and eastern hills of Manipur. While the Chassads are the head of the Haokip clan, there are also many other major Chieftains amongst them. They are settled at places like Lonpi, Longya, Henglep, Goboh, Phoilen, Teising, Khomun, Laijang, Loibol, Saitu, Tingkai, Sita, Molnom, Phaisat, Maokot and others³ (See Map-II). Being the head-clan Chief, the Chassad-Kukis exercised enormous power, authority and influence. The Chiefdom of the Chassad was the largest, unlike the other Chiefs, who also have vast tracts of land under their control (See Map-III).

The Kuki Chiefs in general, and the Chassads in particular evolved a special political system, where brutality, savagery and opportunism lay side by side with heroism, discipline and dignity. The Chassad Chief ruled his Chiefdom with the aid and advice of customary officials. During their heyday, the Chassad Chiefdom extended over the central and southern part of the present Ukhrul district and all other areas bordering Manipur and Upper Chindwin of Burma.⁴ Being the clan-head, the Chassad Chief was the highest court of appeal among the Haokips. The Chief had advisors and

1. Chassad derived its name from the word Chah + sat, wherein ‘chah’ means ‘pine tree’ and ‘sat’ means ‘cut’. It means a place for ‘cutting’ or ‘felling’ pine trees. The Chassads were senior in lineal descent among the Haokip clans. They were sometimes better known as Chassad-pa (pa=masculine ending with a sense of protection) rather than by their personal name.

2. According to a tradition, as narrated by K.S. Hemmang Thadou, Haokip and Kipgen were the twin brothers of Elmoom. Their grand father was THADOU. But this version of genealogy was highly objected by some sections of Haokips. There is, however, no written record to prove that they are not the descendants of Thadou as such. They themselves later became the progenitors of the Kipgen and Haokip clans. As per the tradition, the younger brother Haokip performed his mother’s funeral when Kipgen failed to perform his elderly responsibilities. Consequently as it is said, Haokip got the blessings and his descendants multiplied in great number by which they subsequently became the most numerous among the Thadou-Kukis.

3. There are many old villages in Ukhrul and other neighbouring districts some of which were either deserted or uprooted due to Naga insurgency. Besides, the name of some villages have also been changed, such as: CHASSAD into KAMJONG, PHAISAT into PHUNGYAR, LONPI as (MOMBEE) etc. LAUANG was also changed into TAMENLONG by the British as a mark of their displeasure to the Kukis for having rebelled against them.

4. P.S. Haokip, op. cit. p. 44
Map - II

LOCATION OF SOME MAJOR VILLAGES
OF HAOKIP CHIEFS

Map not to scale

- State Capital
- District Headquarters
- Major Haokip Villages
ministers called Semang-Puchang who helped him in exercising his authority within the Chiefdom.

**Genealogy of the Haokips:** The series of the succeeding heads chiefs of the Haokips from the generation of its progenitor HAOKIP till the line of the contemporary chief MANGKHOLET is given. (See Chart)

To illustrate the point, it is found that among the Haokips the eldest son always inherited the clan chieftainship. It is the social structure of the Thadou-Kukis to strictly regularize the senior male-lineal descent by following the laws of primogeniture. It was strictly adhered to. Only when the Chief was issueless the clan chieftainship went to the eldest descendant of the next of the kin. While counting the heads of their genealogical tree, the younger branches of Haokip clans such as Telling, Choaungphuit, Telvum, Teinoh, Maangyung and Shiuungyung must on no account be sidelined. Tonglhu had no male offspring. He was succeeded by his nephew Lhukhomsang (Pache). Unfortunately, Pache had also no male issue and therefore, the right of succession went to Tongkhothang as he was the eldest male descendant of the next of the kin. The legal rules of descent and inheritance was thus applied as in the earlier case. Customary laws are seldom defied.

There is no doubt that there was some discrepancy in the genealogy descent as a result of which the chieftainship devolved on the next of the kin. It, however, does not reflect any doubt to the legitimacy of succession. It cannot be also considered a deviation from the rule of primogeniture.

---

5. The genealogy is based on the information supplied by Pache, chief of Chassad on 20th June 1926 in Ukhrul to L.L. Peter, first sub-divisional officer. Govt. of Manipur. Quoted in T.S. Gangte's "Structure of Thadou Society". *Imphal Free Press* on 31st Jan 2003. Imphal. See also History and Genealogy of Thadou-Kuki by Jonah T. Sillou 2001 Assam pp. 31-32.

6. According to WGK Cole Political Agent, Manipur Vide his letter dated March 17th 1917, Pache succeeded his uncle Tonglhu as the chief of Chassad in 1915. Besides, according to J.C. Higgins I.C.S. Political Agent (Manipur, vide his letter no. 725 Ms dated 24/25-11-1917), the name of Pache's father was Sempu alias Lambhotothang, chief of Thangbu village, located in the Unadministered Territory, south of Sonara Tract and was head of all the Chassad Haokips across the border.

7. Information about Lhukhomsang (Pache) having no male issue is collected from Mrs. Nenglam Haokip aged 80 years. She is the wife of Chunglet Haokip, an INA pensioner who has almost crossed one hundred years. They were born and brought up in Chassad. Chunglet is now the present chief of Kingkim village located in the outskirts of North-West Churachandpur town. The information was collected in Oct. 2002.

8. There is a difference in the chronological order of the chiefs from the main House of the Haokips with that of Chassad chiefs. This is due to the fact that the Mi-Tpa (Senior man/ Elder) of the main branch or house did not necessarily become the Chassad chief. Another reason is that they might have settled either somewhere or left without any issue as in the case of Pache's father Sempu who became the chief of Thangbu village. Thus, though Chassads are considered to be the head or the senior most of all the Haokips, it suffers from this sort of discrepancy.
GENEEOLOGY OF THE HAOKIPS

HALOKIP

THANGTEL   TUNZOU

TUNGING   SINGSEI   KIPLUN   KIPCHUONG

TELTHANG

GINGPHUNG

THANGLUN   TELSUONG   SANLUT   SANCHONG   TELSIENG

PHUNGDOU   PHUNGSONG

LHOLLHA   LUNSHUONG   LUNKHEL

DOUNGUL   SONGTHAT   HANGVUH

LHOLNGOH   KHELSUNG   KHELNGOH

NGULLENG

NGOKHUP   KHUPMANG   THANGPAO

THANGKHUP

HUONGTHANG

KHUPZAM

NEHLAM

TONGLU (TONGHOO)   JAMKHOTINTHANG

LHUHKOMANG(PACHE)

TONGKHOTHANG

MANGKHOLET

COURTESY: JONAH T. Sitilou
A study on their genealogy leads one back to the progenitor of the whole community of Haokips. The same principle is equally relevant and valid even in the present times. The Chassad chiefs' right from the father of TONGLHU is given below:

| NEHLAM | TONGLHU (TONGOO) | LIU KHOMANG (PACHE) | TONGKHOTHANG | MANGKHOLET |

Table: Chronological sequence of CHASSAD chiefs

Considering the Chassad chiefs in succession and the period of their rule, their initial settlement at the present Chassad took place in the early part of the 19th century. In this connection it is to be noted that the forefathers of Nehlam had settled and established themselves previously at Chassad Kholui (old village) located in the Thingbung Ranges* of South Manipur. This suggests that before they established their foothold in the present Chassad village, they appear to have been already settled in Manipur. This hypothesis takes us to the theory that the settlement of some sections of the Kukis, the Haokips in particular, in North East India would go back to remote past. This shows that their history extends beyond those accounts written by British officials, which begin only from the 18th century. Johnstone also acknowledged the fact that they (Kukis) have been living since a long time in Manipur.

The Chassad chiefs levied tax on the people irrespective of their being Kukis or Tangkhuls living within their domain. The chiefs also received payment of animal and rice tax from his people. The mode of collection of such tributary privileges enjoyed by the Chief was left to the councillors.

---

9. Information about the last three Chiefs in succession was collected from Mrs. LHAIKHOTIN wife of TONGKHOTHINTHANG. She is 80 (eighty) years of age. Her son MANGKHOLET is now the present Chief.
10. Counting from NEHLAM up to the present chief MANGKHOLET, at least, there has already been five (5) generations. Each Chief is normally ruling 40 years or so. TONGKHOTHANG died in 1995 after living for 90 years of age. Their initial settlement at Chassad took place in the early part of 19th century.
11. CHASSAD KHOLUI: The term 'KHOLUI' means old village. This old village of the Chassads is located in the South of Manipur’s Churachandpur district, Singhat sub-division. In establishing a new village the name Chassad is retained since they are the head-clan of all the Haokips. Despite being very few in terms of houses and numbers of population, it still survives.
*THINGBUNG: From time immemorial THINGBUNG and KOUBRU hill range is well known to the Kukis. While the former is a hill range lying in Manipur’s South district of Churachandpur (Lamka) adjacent to South-East district of Chandel, the latter is in the Manipur’s north of Senapati district whereby along the foothills runs National Highway 39. Many legendary stories were also associated with the two.
12. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 203
13. P.S. Haokip, op. cit. p. 45
14. Ibid.
The Chief toured the villages within his domain every year accompanied by his councillors. When he went on tour, he was carried in a 'Tollai' (palanquin) by his people from village to village. Wherever the Chief went he was accorded warm reception. A big feast was always organized in his honour. The villagers also used to give him presents eg. the best locally brewed liquor, specially kept for him. The Chief is considered as the guardian and protector of the people. For all the tributary privileges either in the form of labour or in kind, the Chief in return is expected to perform certain duties for the welfare and security of the people.

The Chassad chiefs ably solved numerous disputes among their subjects and rendered adequate justice. Normally the people living within a Chief’s domain had no other way but to yield to his authority. At the same time they did not think judiciously to risk any reprisal from such a powerful person lest there was enmity and hatred between one village and another. The state of affairs often was that there were mutual suspicion and distrust as a result of which inter-village warfare was quite frequent. The Chassad Chief on many occasion not only stopped the internecine warfare but also gave protection to the weaker and vulnerable Tangkhul villages against the attack of the stronger ones. Tangkhuls have been identified as Nagas.

B. Chassad's Militiamen: The Chassad village constituted of as many as three hundred (300) houses, considered to be one of the largest of Kuki villages in the hills. The Chief maintained a large number of able-bodied youths of the village to carry out his order. In fact, they were the Chief’s army well equipped with arms and ammunition. Though they had no formal training, in the art of warfare, they had the opportunity to be taught in the youth-dormitories (Sawin) and

15. This information was collected from three elders: Sonlet Touthang aged 75 years, Mrs. Lhaikhotui, wife of Chassad Chief Late Tongkhothang and Mrs. Nenglam Haokip aged 80 years. Stories about the powerful Chiefs carried in palanquin by Tangkhul subjects living under the jurisdictions or domain of Chassads, was told during consultation. Even Helam Haokip, the English Officer (L) Shaw Sahib, was carried in a palanquin. Mrs. Helam Haokip died only in 2002 A.D. at her residence Chassad Avenue, Imphal.
* In Sanskrit, 'Tollai is called Doh. It has some sort of similarity. The Lawangs were given the privilege of making the Dollai as per the Loiyamba Sifen.
16. Personal interview as mentioned above.
17. Source: Personal interview with the three elders as mentioned Fn. 15. See also (P.S. Haokip; p. 45)
village labour-corps organization (\textit{Lawm}). Thus, in this regard no special training was initially required for them. The Chassad Chief Pache would muster as many number of fighting men as required within his capacity to render military help or service at times of emergency.\textsuperscript{18} In hindsight this may be treated as \textit{Lallup system} \textsuperscript{19} prevalent among the Kuki tribes as it was more or less similar to that of the \textit{Lallup} system practiced by the Kings of Manipur.

The gifted artistic skills of the villagers enabled them to produce simple forms of weaponry, tools and implements for both aggressive, and defensive purposes. Consequently, the chief's fighting-men possessed guns (which had flint-locks).... They manufactured their own gun powder.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, the supply of arms and ammunition which were used in the Eastern Sector during the Anglo-Kuki War "Kuki Rebellion" of 1917-19 came mostly from the Chassads.\textsuperscript{21} Interestingly they were not totally dependent upon the British supplies of arms and ammunitions which were clandestinely made available to them. They built their own armory though of a smaller kind.

\textbf{C. Prosperity of the Chiefdom:} Being hill dwellers, the Chassads were living in the past in the midst of forest and with forest products with abundant blessings by nature as they are still found in the same region. They enjoyed these natural foods which were supplemented by agricultural products. Living in such conditions their socio-economic life was also bound to be shaped by that environment. It is interesting to note that during those days, the household of the Chassad chiefs consisted several groups of hired servants who were assigned different work\textsuperscript{22} e.g. They were the cooks, the hunting party, the fishing groups, cultivation and food-gathering.

\textsuperscript{18} Interview with three elders in fn. 15: Besides, in the Gazetteer of Manipur, E.W. Dun (1886) writes that the Chassad chief Tonghoo (Tongluh) could not muster more than 250 fighting men. During Pache's time the strength of fighting men could possibly be increased depending on the requirements.

\textsuperscript{19} A system in which the native people of Manipur had to sacrifice their labour-time for the service of the state mainly as Lalmi (Army). In other words, Lallup system was a feudal service rendered by the subjects to the King for the State, literally Lal means 'war' and Lup means 'organisation'. This system was characterized by a form of direct tax levied in terms of service. For the service they rendered to the state, no specific benefit could be demanded in return. But often adequate compensation was given in terms of concessions, grants and graces.

\textsuperscript{20} E.W. Dun, op. cit. pp. 32-35

\textsuperscript{21} P.S. Haokip, op. cit. p. 45

\textsuperscript{22} Interview with Sonlet Touthang and Lhaikhotin Haokip fn. 15.
labour corps. The works were shared between the Tangkhul and the Chassad youths. This is evident from the fact that in the kitchen of the Chassad Chief, seven hearths for cooking were used simultaneously and often continuously throughout the day.\(^{23}\) As such, the kitchen fire perhaps, seldom extinguished. The duty of the servants was to ensure that the Chief's house did not suffer for want of rice, meat, fish, local liquor etc. It is therefore, an established fact that, the Chassad Kukis were very powerful and domineering in the eastern part of Manipur so much so that they were a force to be reckoned with in the political arena, during the colonial period.

**D. Boundary dispute:** Chassad acquired centrality in the politics of Manipur's eastern frontier. The territory occupied by the Chassad Kukis became a disputed one, when the Burmese claimed it to be theirs.\(^{24}\) According to Johnstone, (Foreign and Political Dept. Poll – A Br. No. 1-26 Jan 1882)\(^{25}\) the Chassads settled down in the hills bordering on the northern side of Kubo valley in the land claimed both by Manipur and Burmans (Myanmar). Besides, in the British official letter (Foreign and Political Dept. Poll.– A Br. No. 578 Jan. 1882)\(^{26}\) it is stated, "The Chassad Kukis live now partly in the Kubo valley and partly within Manipur territory but it is clear that they claim to be subject to the Sumjok Raja* and it is probably that the Burmese will claim them as residing within Burmese territory." The younger chiefs, an element of the Chassad Kukis, were also found to be settled beyond the borders of Manipur but within the territory of the Sumjok Raja. Thus, the geographical factor on the one hand, and the easy accessibility on the other, led the Chassads and its younger branch to scatter and live in those contiguous areas of both Manipur and Burma. There was no difficulty for them

---

\(^{23}\) The story about the kitchen of Chassad chiefs has become a legend today among the Kukis. It was said that there were seven hearths for cooking in which the fire was never put off. This shows that the cooks were busy all through the day preparing food for the chief, councilors and the guests. Besides, rice liquor brewing was done continuously for use on various types of social occasions. The cooks had to do their personal work. Somlet also says that during their heyday, almost everyday one mitum was killed for community feast.

\(^{24}\) A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 203


* Sumjok is a feudatory state of Burma. It has about 500 houses or 2,500 inhabitants
in crossing the border as the Chassads inhabited the country lying between Chattik and Kongal Thana in the North and South and between Ungoching and the main portion of the Malaya Range on the East and West.\textsuperscript{27} (See Map V, VI & VII)

Though, the Chassads had been living since a long time in Manipur, they were brought into the knowledge of the British Political Agent only in the second half of the 19th century. During this period the British relationship with Manipur (a protected-state) played a significant role in the politics of the North East Frontier.

It is reported in several accounts that a series of aggressions had been committed by the fearsome Chassad-Kukis on Tangkhuls in Manipur, who had settled near Sumjok boundary.\textsuperscript{28} In such a state of affairs where savagery and barbarianism reigned supreme, even a slight provocation to the ferocious Chassads by the neighbouring villages became dangerous as they were too powerful. In this regard Dun writes, “the proximity of the defenceless Tangkhuls proved too great an attraction to their young (Kuki) warriors....”\textsuperscript{29} Even the Chief Commissioner of Assam says in his report\textsuperscript{30} that it was ‘inexpedient for Manipuri troops to remain inactive in the face of Chassad inroads’.

The question of boundary between Manipur and Burma had been raised several times. both by Manipur and Burma on account of the series of raids committed across the borders. There had always been trouble on the Eastern Frontiers of Manipur since the boundary was ill-defined, undemarcated and not clearly traceable everywhere.\textsuperscript{31} The principle that good fences made ‘good neighbours’ was never resorted to. Taking advantage of it, the Burmese utilized their possession of Kabaw valley, as a base for operations as one of the factors of constant

\textsuperscript{27} A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 211
\textsuperscript{28} Foreign & Political Department Extl. A 1889 No. 107-113
\textsuperscript{29} op. cit. pp. 32-35
\textsuperscript{30} Foreign & Political Department 1889 No. 108
\textsuperscript{31} Foreign Department. Political – A. Events connected with the raid on a Manipuri village, called Chingsow. (National Archives of India) No. 3. p. 3
annoyance to their neighbours. This was detrimental to the interest of all concerned. They used it as a pretext and as a base from where a series of wanton aggression had been made against Manipur. By the employment of the Kukis whom they had settled in the Kabaw valley, the Burmese could always seek excuses and shift the onus from themselves to the immediate responsibility of the Chassads. This was possible due to the vagueness and perplexities on the boundary line. However, the state of affairs and the position of the boundary is written about as -

"Manipur and Burma, with a traditional and well-founded hatred of each other, have between them an undefined and undemarcated boundary; in the neighbourhood of this boundary are settled wild tribes, Kukis and Lahupas, both difficult to control and (but for the fact that all the Naga tribes have a wholesome dread of the Kukis) both equally ready to raid; the bulk of the Nagas being in Manipur territory with outlying villages in Burma, the bulk of the Chassad Kukis being in Burma with a few villages in the disputed territory of Manipur."

E. Earlier Relationships/Events with British in Manipur: The King of Manipur, Raja Nar Singh had in the beginning assigned the entire management of Kukis under the direct political charge of Col. Mc Culloch, the Political Agent. With great tact, generosity and kindness, Mc Culloch, won the confidence of the Kukis. He first established his relationship with the Chassads as the new settlers of Eastern territory of Manipur bordering with the Kabo valley, which had often been claimed by Burma as noted earlier. However, the policy of the Raja Nar Singh in handing over the entire management of the Kukis to Mc Culloch aroused jealousy among the Manipuri officials. As such, efforts were made by the officials

---

32. op. cit. p. 3
33. Ibid.
34. op. cit. p. 4
35. A. Mackenzie, pp. cit. p. 211
36. Ibid.
to obstruct this new arrangement. Eventually, the Chief of the Chassads Nehlam, who came to meet Mc Culloch, by his invitation under assurance of safe conduct was treacherously murdered by a high Manipuri official, the brother-in-law of the Raja. This abominable act on the part of officials and the Raja alienated the Chassads. At the same time there was also no reaction on the part of the British authorities over the murder, since they were on the side of Meiteis. The dead body of Nehlam was not even handed over to his family. Thereafter, the Chassads were never assuaged and remained rather dissatisfied with their lot and always complained about the oppressive attitude of the Manipuris. Consequently, in the last part of 1877, the Chassads along with their tributary chiefs of Choomeyang (Chungjiang), Chungle, Moonoye (Molnoi), Koomeyang and others determined to leave Manipur at once. However, later on with the exception of Chungjiang villagers which went first and settled down in Burmese territory, the others dropped the plan and continued to settle and remain in their respective places. It was a historic decision. The earlier plan to settle in the territory of Sumjok Raja, was due to the promise made by the raja himself to give protection in case there was objection from Manipuris. Nevertheless, the Sumjok Tsaubwa exercised his influence over the Chassads and its branches in the border areas.

Supported by Sumjok Tsaubwa the Chassad Kukis began to engage in a life consonant with their decisions. Being supplied with arms and ammunition, they began to commit a series of aggression in the neighbouring villages to subdue and bring them under their control. Once again political and social destabilisation commenced as they began to strike a terror in their neighbourhood.

37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.

* Nehlam was the father of the great and powerful Chief Tonglhu (whose name was corrupted as Tonghoo). He was murdered during the time of the British Political Agent William Mc Culloch (1844-1867)
39. As told by Mrs. Lhaikhotin, wife of late Tongkhotinthang.
40. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 211
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
F. Chassad Raids: In Oct 1878, Johnstone, the Political Agent, received reports of outrages committed by the Chassads, who were attacking the Tangkhul Nagas and carrying people as slaves.\textsuperscript{43} The attack on Chingsui (Chingsow) was made on the morning of 19\textsuperscript{th} Feb 1878 in which 45 people were slain and three more carried off into captivity.\textsuperscript{44} It was said that about (50) fifty Kukis (Kookies) all armed with muskets, entered the village and slaughtered the inhabitants as they ran out of their houses.\textsuperscript{45} The Tangkhuls were the Manipuri subjects and occupied the hill territory to the East of the valley. The group of Nagas who came from the western end of the village drove out the marauding Kukis. However, they succeeded in burning half of the houses of the village and carried off a great quantity of plunder.\textsuperscript{46} Surprisingly enough, the Chassads were accompanied by five Nagas from CHATTIK,\textsuperscript{47} village which is situated to the South of Chingsui near the Chassad chiefdom. Even the villagers of Chingsui asserted that they saw several discontented Chattik Nagas among the Chassads during the raid.\textsuperscript{48}

The cause of the raid was on account of the refusal of Chingsui Nagas to comply with the order given by the Chassad chief Tonglhu. It was stated that the Chassad Kukis demanded that the Tangkhuls should pay tributes and become subject to them and to the Sumjok Raja.\textsuperscript{49} The attack was also made with a view to induce all the other Tangkhuls or Lahupas to accept the overtures of the Chassads and transfer their allegiance,\textsuperscript{50} from Manipur to Sumjok. Among the captives, a girl was said to be given to the raja of Sumjok as a present. In this raid, the Chassads and its younger branches including Chattik Nagas are believed to have acted as an instrument for the Raja of Sumjok. This shows that the Manipur's Maharaja could not protect the Tangkhuls, though they were his subjects.

\textsuperscript{43} J. Johnstone, op. cit. p. 158
\textsuperscript{44} Foreign Department, Political – A “Events connected… Chingsow” p. 2
\textsuperscript{45} A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 205
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} For. Dept. Poll. A. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
G. Chassad Expedition: After the incident the Maharaja requested the British Government to assist him for the expedition against the Chassads. The Expedition was sent with a force of 1,000 men under the command of Thangal Major and Bularam Singh Major,\(^{51}\) to punish the five men of Chassad and the other chief offenders who took part in the raid. While very few people from Chassad took part, the main participation in the raid came from the village Chungjang, Chungle and Molnoi.\(^{52}\) However, when the expeditionary force arrived Chassad the whole affair was managed in a most dilatory manner. Nothing was done to punish the offending villages except to burn the five men from Chassad who were involved in the raid. Besides, no opposition or reaction came forth from the Burmese authorities.

In this connection, the Political Agent had earlier sent a message to Tongluh right after the incident, for his submission to the authority. As he refused to come himself, he sent his brother Yangkhopao. The Political Agent told him that the Chassad Chief Tongluh should surrender the five men involved in the raid without which he would remain as hostage. Yangkhopao agreed to remain as hostage but as he was not sure whether Tongluh would fulfill the condition,\(^{53}\) the expedition was sent.

The delay and rumours of the inaction of the expedition caused great anxiety in Manipur. At last the villages of those involved were burnt after the people fled and the expeditionary party returned. It is also to note that on this occasion the Manipuri army officers fearing the Chassad Chief, entered into negotiations with him and assured that they were most devoted subjects of the Maharaja.\(^{54}\) In as far as the relationship of the Chassads and Manipur is concerned, the British colonial authorities and the Maharaja had sufficient apprehensions. As the Chassads

\(^{51}\) Ibid;

\(^{52}\) A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 206

\(^{53}\) For Deptt. Poll. A - p. 5

\(^{54}\) British, India, W. A. 1917: Ada Diary of the Maharaja of Manipur, p. 1200.
constituted a great danger to Manipur for the reason that if Tonglhu, the Chassad chief, could unite all the tribes, they could any day overrun the country - Manipur. This was clearly stated by Johnstone, the Political Agent of Manipur in a letter to the Chief Commissioner of Assam on April 28, 1880.\textsuperscript{55} It was thus inherently known that without the support of the British Agent, the kingdom of Manipur was indeed fragile and weak.

After the Chassad expedition, the Chassad Kukis consequently became loyal and faithful subjects of the Maharajah. The submission of the Chassad chiefs had eventually led to a better understanding with the Maharaja.\textsuperscript{56} Even during the disturbances of 1891, resulting in the outbreak of ‘Manipur Rebellion’, when the British spies were in search of the Regent Kulachandra, the Chassad chief was faithful enough to give asylum to him,\textsuperscript{57} and for which the Chassad Kukis had to suffer later. The sufferings were too intense and had left behind indelible marks on the psyche of the Chassad Kukis against the Meitei Kings.

Thus, the Chassad chiefs being the \textit{Piba} (Head of the clan) of the house of Haokips continued to exercise their influence not only over the twelve inhabited villages within his Chiefdom but also on those villages situated beyond the boundary of Manipur. Being the chief of the head clan, he was considered as the symbol of superior authority. He was looked upon as a person of intense devotion. He was respected by his people so much so that the younger elements were ever ready to carry out his orders even in the face of critical situations. Chieftainship thus played an important role in the life of the Kukis. This Chieftainship system brought unity among the tribes and made it a powerful force in the face of all odds. As a result, the British also found difficult to subdue the Chassads by force. Therefore, they pursued a policy of reconciliation towards them in the name of the Maharaja, which eventually brought an understanding between them. But how lasting it was will be seen later.

\textsuperscript{55} Foreign and Political Department. A. "Chassad Kukis" No. 82. p. 8
\textsuperscript{56} J. Johnstone, op. cit. p. 165
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 89
2. AFFAIRS OF THE BORDER

In February 1875, the Raja of Sumjok made allegation and complained to the Political Agent of Manipur that a party of Thadou-Kuki (Khongjais) had attacked the village of Nampee situated within Burmese territory and killed forty five men, women and children.\textsuperscript{58} While the authorities of Manipur wanted to settle the case with Burma through Aya poorel (Manipur official) some disputes occurred between his men and the inhabitants of some villages situated in the Tangkhul Naga Hills residing within the territory of Manipur. While the dispute were under settlement, the Ayapoorel and his men were attacked during the night where they had halted, in which eleven Manipuris and one Kuki were killed. The attack was believed to have been carried out by the Tangkhuls. An expedition consisting of 150 Manipuri sepoys and 700 Kukis was sent to punish the offending village.\textsuperscript{59} The forces destroyed the village, killing nine men and then returned to Kongal Thannah.

With regard to the Burmese complaints on Nampee incident, the Political Agent, Dr. Brown found no sufficient proof about the raids after investigation.\textsuperscript{60} The Maharaja was asked later that in all cases of employment of armed Kukis with Manipuri troops, they should be vigilant and take measures to avoid future complain.\textsuperscript{61}

Thus, we understand that the problems on the Manipur-Burma border was almost never ending and the ill-feeling on both sides continued to prevail much along the border. Both the countries were dissatisfied with the ill-defined boundary for many years. Consequently, the Burmese attacked Kongal Thannah on the 14\textsuperscript{th} Dec 1877 in which they killed eight Manipuris and burnt down the guard-house. In this connection, Johnstone remarked that this outrage was

\textsuperscript{58} A. Mackenzie, Op. cit. p. 193
\textsuperscript{59} op. cit. p. 196
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
the culminating act of a long series of minor offences. After this outrage the posts on the frontiers was re-inforced. The South of Manipuri border was then well-protected by Manipur Kukis themselves against raids and incursions of Burmese Kukis including the Thadous and the Suktes.

This was of course, the success of the infamous ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British. The policy in no small measure widened the gulf of difference among the groups of people living in the region during the British period. But when the British left Manipur for good, it took no time in bridging the gap. And till today there is no difficulty for the Kukis in crossing the border as blood is thicker than the boundary.

A. Aishan Kukis: During the intervening period till the outbreak of Kuki Rebellion of 1917-19, there occurred territorial disputes over the areas of Melomi and Primi between the Aishan Kukis and the British resulting in an atmosphere of tense hostility between them. This led to the expedition against the Aishan Kukis in 1910 which necessitated due to the murder of two British subjects at Melomi in 1909 both of whom belonged to Temimi (Kizare) village.

It is to be noted here that Chenglapao Doungel, the piba or head of Thadou-Kukis, is the Chief of Aishan, who exercised his authority over the region which comprised of Kanjang, Akhan and Meluri areas of the present day Nagaland (See Map-IV & V). The domain of the Aishan chief also extended up to the adjoining areas of Chassad, presently under the Chingai sub-division of Ukhrul District of Manipur. The British administration was not extended to the independent areas of Aishan Kukis which the British termed as “unadministered areas”. The importance of the Aishan Chief consists in the fact that though his village lay beyond the border of Manipur, he

62. A. Mackenzie, p. 201
63. Ibid, p. 208
64. Reid, op. cit. p. 143
65. P.S. Haokip p. 117
66. Ibid.
67. Reid, Ibid.
was capable of uniting all the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur and elsewhere to fight against a common enemy. As mentioned earlier, the institution of ‘Haosa’ as the basis of their polity, has made the senior man (Mi-upa) to wield a great deal of authority and influence over the younger chieftains.

In Major Howell’s letter, the Aishan Kukis, “belonged to a wild tract lying between eastern border of Manipur and Chinwin river, which extended to the north to a point beyond Tizu,” and while the northern part of it was occupied by the Aishan Kukis, the southern part was occupied by the Chassads separated “from the Laniar valley by a high mountain”.68

The expedition against the Aishan Kukis started in Feb. 1910 under the command of Major Bliss. They captured Chengjapao along with the chief of Kanjang and Yangnui and the expeditionary forces returned to Kohima on 5th March 1910.69 In view of the gravity of the situation and the fear for reprisal the Kukis were forced to surrender more than 116 guns.70 Further, with a view to disintegrate the Kukis and as a follow-up of their ‘divide and rule’ policy the movements of other Kukis like Komyang and the Chassads were also restricted beyond the territory South of the mountain range that separated the Laniar valley.71 It should be noted here that since the Kukis could combine and fight for a common goal, it was essential and politically expedient on the part of the British to keep the Kuki tribes divided so that they could be suppressed and brought under their control. But to what extent did their policy had been successful, we shall discuss later.

B. The Somra Tract: The question of the Somra Tract has always been of interest to Manipur. It lay on the Manipur’s North-East frontier in the direction of Burma, in the hills North of Kabaw valley covering some 800 square miles which have been inhabited by Thadou-Kukis and Tangkhul Nagas with the latter concentrated in the North-Western corner of the Tract.72 (See Map-IV)

---
68. East Bengal and Assam Secretariat, Political Agent, August 1910, Nos. 61-129. Letter No. 421-G dt. 8th June 1909.
69. Reid, op. cit. p. 144
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. R. Reid, op. cit. p. 93
Despite, their independence and dominance over the areas, the aggressive nature and ferocity of the Kukis which suppressed their neighbouring Tangkhuls and other British subjects often brought them into direct confrontation with the British. The land being unvisited and unsurveyed, the British wanted to annex it with a view to protect their subjects against the atrocious raiding habits of the Kukis. Fearing the Kukis, the Tangkhum Nagas were also anxious to be placed under British administration.

The British Government also knew that there was no sign of hope for peace in the region following the death of a powerful Kuki Chief, Komyang who used to keep a good control over his people. This has made the proposal for annexation of the Tract more indispensable and urgent as the necessity for administering the Somra Tract was very much felt there in. Subsequently, it was placed under Burma, where as the small area, hatched on the map, known as “cross hatched area” was doubtful as to whether it should properly go to Assam or Manipur. As the people in the said area considered themselves the subjects of Manipur and have been paying tax to it, the Government of India, on considering the suggestion given by the Chief Secretary, A.W. Botham, formally made over the area to Manipur in 1922-23.

3. FRONTIER PROBLEMS

A. Earlier relationship with the Meitei Kings: - Here, we shall now deal the Kukis in general in the context of their relationship with Manipur. It is a fact the Meitei (Manipuris) kings fought with the hill chiefs for several centuries and exacted tributes from the subjugated tribes. It is also a fact that the Nagas and Kukis were not always defeated. There were also a series of

73. J. Shakespear, op. cit. p. 173
74. R. Reid, op. cit. p. 163
76. Assam Secretariat Poll. A, June 1922 Nos. 3-6 (Quoted in Reid p. 163)
reprisals from them. The Meitei made the powerful and warlike Kukis weak by putting one clan against the other. 78 Instead of provoking them the Meitei kings developed friendly relations with some Kuki villages and used them against the Nagas. 79 The fierce Kukis were also employed as irregular in the Manipur Army. 80 The Meitei kings notably Charai Rongba and Gareeb Niwaz became friendly with the hill chiefs and advised their nobles to do the same. 81 To maintain friendly relations with the hill chiefs including Nagas and to collect tribute from the subjugated groups, the Meitei kings used to organize Hauchongba (tribal dance festival) in the palace. On this occasion, the Meitei King received tributes, offerings, and the King in return, offered them drinks and food. In fact the subjugated tribals in general shared the common joys and sufferings of the state with the Meitei kings through the ages. Plenty of evidence is historically available.

B. Frontier Affairs: In 1861, after the retirement of Major Mc Culloch, there was a proposal for the abolition of the post of Political Agent in Manipur. But after a prolonged consideration, the Government of India decided to continue the Agency in Manipur by appointing Mc Culloch again as the Political Agent. The circumstances, among others, leading to the retention of the Agency was that in case of withdrawal, the Nagas and Kukis, surrounding the valley of Manipur would be up in arms. Peace and security of the state would also be threatened. At the same time the Meiteis who were already divided into a dozen factions would also split against the Raja, as everybody was endeavoring to place his own man upon the throne. 82 Thus, in view of the above circumstances, the retention

---

79. Ibid.
80. J. Shingh, op. cit. p. 228
81. Ibid.
82. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 158
of the Agency was required as his service would have been of great help to both, the tribes and the Meiteis, though it was mainly a step to save the Meitei kingdom which was its protectorate.

For many years before and after the re-establishment of the Agency there has been a lot of disturbances in the frontier areas created by the Kamhows of the Sukte (Sootie) Kukis. The hills around the valley where Kukis and Nagas committed breaches of peace brought the attention of the British Political Agent and the Raja. In Manipur’s South the Sukte and Lushai Kukis were powerful and dangerous. As a protection to the South frontier of the Manipur valley, the Agent Mc Culloch and the Raja of Manipur established a Kuki village called “sepoy village”, to whom arms were given. This policy was pursued to settle Thadou-Kukis (Khongjais) mostly on the exposed frontiers to act like a buffer zone. For instance, the Kukis (Kosamei)* were used by the Manipuris to subdue the Maos of the north. In fact, the rajas of Manipur had been using the Kukis as warriors and frontier guards since long time back.

C. The Lushai-Kuki Affairs: - The Kukis of Manipur who were settled at the exposed frontiers had to face many war-like situations throughout the second half of the 19th century. It has been suspected that not a few of the raids of Lushais and other hillmen on Manipur and even on the British territory were instigated by members of the Manipur House. The policy pursued by Manipur towards Lushais during the period was to establish friendly relations and preservation of peace. Besides, all necessary steps was also taken for the protection of

83. Annual Administration report of the Manipur Agency 1873-74.
84. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 157
* In the past Kukis were known as Kosamei by the Mao Nagas of the North of Manipur.
85. N. Sanajaoba’s Manipur. p. 127
86. A. Makenzie, op. cit. p. 60
87. Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1873-74 p. 4
frontiers so as to avoid unprovoked aggressions on the part of Raja of Manipur. Of course, this was the general policy pursued by Meitei rajas towards the Thadou-Kukis vis-à-vis Lushai-Kukis. It was this 'divide and rule policy' which was resisted by the Kukis. The Kukis had realized that they were being used against each other but since they were not organized, they failed fend much for themselves.

In about 1810, the Lushai Chief Lalul (Lallula) was reported to have become “formidable to his neighbours,” and by pressing towards the frontiers was driving the dispossessed Kuki Chief into the British territory. In 1824, the first recorded encounter between the Kukis and the British subjects occurred when traders from the plains of Assam penetrated the hills along the Dhalleswari river to collect bamboo and timber. The traders were ambushed and killed by the Kukis for refusing to pay tribute for passing through to the plains. After this the Lushai-Kukis increased their raid outside Lushai Hills along the border of Chittagong, Tripura, Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur. They were at the same time at feud with the Kamhows or the Sukte Kukis, living to the South of Manipur. The ‘Kuki Levy’ was thus raised in 1850 with a view to fight for the offending Lushai chief. The British succeeded in antagonizing the different groups of Kukis who would otherwise could patch up their differences in the face of external danger.

In about November 1862, a Naga village near Adumpore had been attacked by the Lushai-Kukis. Captain Stewart collected the information that when Gnoor-Shailon (the Poitoo Kuki Chief) had married Sukpilal’s (Lushai Chief) sister and on that occasion of marriage the raid was committed. They did not know that the village belonged to the Government. About this time Sukpilal attacked some villages of Tripura. Almost simultaneously, a large party of

88. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 161
90. Carey & Tuck, op. cit. p. 14
91. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 299-327
Manipur soldiers under Kanhei Singh, a refugee prince of Manipur, assembled near the eastern frontier of Cachar to invade Manipur, while the Lushais were threatening the tea-gardens in the South. On Jan 15th 1869, the Lushais burnt the tea garden of Laharband in Cachar and attacked Manierkhoml. Then they marched towards Manipur along with Kanhei Singh. Sukpilal and Vanpilal were later supposed to be implicated in their raids.

Then in the year 1871, the Lushai-Kukis had committed a series of aggressions which compelled the British Government authorities to send an expedition. The Maharaja of Manipur also supplied a contingent of about 2000 men in the expedition. The outcome of the expedition was extremely successful. The powerful Lushai chiefs Vonpilal, Poiboi and Vonolel were reduced to submission. They entered into an agreement with the Manipuri authorities to keep peace on the border with Manipur for the future. This agreement was renewed even after wards with the visit of Manipur by the Lushais. On one occasion, when one of the Lushai Chief, Dambom and his followers visited Imphal, the Political Agent, Dr. Brown, took the opportunity to meet him. Brown expressed his desire to remain on friendly terms with Lushai people and also expressed his desire to encourage trade and free communication between the two countries. Later on, the Maharaja’s sepoys consisting of Subedar Amoo, along with twelve Manipuris and ten Kukis paid a visit to the Lushai Chief Poiboi, with the object of opening trade. However, nothing substantial came out of it and even Dambom was detained by the head of the chiefs - Poiboi, in the Lushai Country.

92. Ibid.
93. B.C. Chakravarti, British relation with the Hill Tribes of Assam since 1858, 1964. P. 54
94. Carey & Tuck, op. cit. p. 18
95. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 160
96. Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1873-74
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
In about 1877 it was again reported that Kapni (Kabui) Nagas* living in the territory of Manipur suffered severely from the repeated raids carried out by the Lushais, subject to Poiboi, Lalbura and Lengkam. The Manipuri guards were then posted at two places - Kala Naga* and Koupum* to protect the Kabui Nagas. The guards, however, suffered defeat at the hands of the Lushais. As the Maharaja wanted to keep the frontier safe, he proposed to send a deputation to Tipai Mukh to conciliate the Lushai chiefs. The Deputy Commissioner of Cachar initially disapproved of the proposal but later he allowed the deputation to meet the chiefs.\textsuperscript{99} The meeting proved successful in as much as the question of future relations was concerned.\textsuperscript{100} The Lushai chief and the Maharaja’s deputation were apparently satisfied. During the year 1877-78, they entered into a solemn agreement to preserve peace and vows of eternal friendship were exchanged.\textsuperscript{101} Polity is based upon such filial vows – when one group becomes complacent and the other pounces upon it.

In as far as the Maharaja’s relationship with the Lushai chiefs was concerned, the contribution of the Thadou-Kukis of Manipur must on no account be brushed aside. The Singsons, the sub-clans of the Thadou-Kukis occupied the southern most hills of Manipur and in the past had acted as a barrier against the incursion of the Lushais into Manipur’s territory.\textsuperscript{102} It is recorded that the Singson (ChhingeKhuan) chiefs ruled over eleven villages, in the southern portion of Manipur where they had been established over the last one-hundred fifty (150) years or so.\textsuperscript{103}

The Chongphut and Hawlthang chiefs of the Thadou-Kuki sub-clan occupied the hills west of

---

* Kapni (Kabui) Nagas were a group of Naga tribes living in the villages adjacent to the main road from Cachar to Manipur. They are vulnerable to the attack of Lushais. Kapni-Naga - Kapni could have been corrupted as Kapui. A Kaupui Naga village lies on the Manipur-Cahcar road between Mukru and Barak river of a forest clad range of western Manipur hills. All these groups of Nagas are now called ‘Zeliangrong Nagas’ mostly inhabiting the present Tamenglong district of Manipur.

99. A. Mackenzie, op.cit. p. 162
100. Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1877-78 pp.10-11
101. Ibid.
102. J. Shakespear, op. cit. p. 191
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
Manipur, to check the advances of Lushais. And when the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 broke out, which shook the whole country, the Kuki Levy was also pressed into service of the British Indian Government. In Cachar and Sylhet, the Kuki Levy were sent to suppress the rebellious Indian troops who had killed their officers. As a result, the brave Kuki leader, Mangijhao Singson was given the title ‘Kuki Raja’ by the Government.

For the protection of the western hills of Manipur, the Maharaja Chandrakirti maintained a close relationship with the powerful Thadou-Kuki villages, namely Sangnao and Khaochangbun and Chief of Joute village, Holthang Haokip. Taking advantage of the hostile relationship among the Kukis themselves, the kings of Manipur indiscriminately exploited for their own benefit. Thus, it appears that instead of antagonizing the Kukis, the Maharaja befriended them so that they could serve as frontier guards and security of the state.

**De Sukte-Kuki Affairs / Kamhau-Manipur War:** The country occupied by the Kamhau or Sukte* lies to the South of Manipur and East of the Toorool or Manipur river. (See Map-1) The Sukte tribe were often called by the name of their principal Chief Kamhau(Kamhow).* The ‘Sukte country’ was subjected to frequent attacks from both Manipur and Burma. Despite the fact that the Sukte country was independent and that neither did Manipur nor Burma claim any authority over them, the British authorities forcibly wanted them to be brought under either of the two. The Suktes being sandwiched in between Burma and Manipur often confronted with both of them resulting into raid and counter raids. Their territory lies between the Lushai hills proper and the territory of the Raja of Kule. The district of Kule lies in the Southern portion of Kabaw valley. It is to note that in the treaty of Yandaboo between the king of Burma and the

---

105 K. Kipgen, op. cit. p. 22
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 A. MacKenzie, op. cit. p. 163

* In all the British records, the Suktes are found to have been recorded or corrupted as Sonites or Sukite. They are better known by their principal Chief of the tribe KAMHAU (KAMHOWS)*
British representative. Captain Pemberton, a line was drawn through the territory inhabited by the Thadou, the Hmar and the Yo.\textsuperscript{110} And in accordance with that understanding the hilly regions of the present eastern and southern Manipur were given to Manipur. The Thadou settled in the hilly regions South of Loktak lake in Manipur which belonged to Manipur according to the treaty of Yandaboo. But the Kamhau regarded this as their region and the Thadous as their subjects.\textsuperscript{111} The Thadous were often in conflict with Guite-Kukis, who settled to the south of them. The Guites were the subjects of Kamhau and they settled at Lawmpi and Mualpi villages.\textsuperscript{112} It was from this base that the Suktes committed a series of aggressions which consequently alarmed and brought the attention of the British protected state of Manipur.

The relationship of the Kamhaus with Manipur can be traced back to as early as 1834, during Raja Nursing’s time. The Manipuris considered this tribe much more formidable than the Lushais.\textsuperscript{113} As they were repeatedly raiding into the territories considered to be within Manipur, they became a constant source of trouble. Even the Lushais held the Suktes in great dread and were falling back before them.\textsuperscript{114} The lawlessness of their raids and outrages on the border had caused a great concern for the authorities of the State.

**E. Manipur Expedition Against Kamhau – 1857:** During the time of Raja Nur Singh (1834-1850), the Suktes committed several raids upon the villages of Manipur also. They overpowered and took possession of Lonpi (Mombee) and Heeroway inhabited by the Thadou-Kukis (Khongiais).\textsuperscript{115} The raid was carried by the **Kokatung**\* section of the Suktes under the leadership of their Chief Ngokhothang who then occupied the villages. But later on the Thadou chiefs ruled over again.

\textsuperscript{110} Vumson, op. cit. p. 90
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Carey & Tuck, op. cit. p. 17
\textsuperscript{113} A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 163
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} Carey & Tuck, op. cit. p. 17

*Kokatung* were a branch or section of the Suktes. They were also called Guites or Noite. Their chief name is Ngokhothang. With regard to the whole episode of the expedition, we have no much of account.
In 1856, the Suktes committed another serious outrage on a village within Manipur’s territory. According to Vumson, interestingly the beliefs in witchcraft was the reason behind which led the Guite Chief Ngokhothang attack the Thadou villages.\textsuperscript{116} Witchcraft or black magic was widely practiced by the divergent ethnic groups for social, political and religious control.

The Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh, felt very much disturbed by the outrages and resolved to punish the Kamhaus. Then, in Jan. 1857 an expedition of 1,500 strongmen left for Tedim and the Raja who had been impressed with the importance of the success of operations accompanied the forces in person. He was carried in a palanquin.

The Sukte Chief Kamhau led the combined force of his tribesman to meet the Manipuris a few miles North of the Camp fires where they surprised the Manipuri troops by firing into their midst.\textsuperscript{117} The Camp fires was on the top of Lailun hill, where at night the Kamhaus’ army burnt the logs to make it appear that a large army was camping on the hill. According to Vumson, this was done in order to mislead the Manipuri troops.\textsuperscript{118} The Meitei had earlier sent a message to Kamhau that their witchcraft had dampened the Kamhau gun powder. But, to their surprise the Kamhau found it was not affected.\textsuperscript{119} The Meiteis in confusion gave up the fight and ran helter skelter, leaving their baggage, the Maharaja and his palaquin. In such critical situation, one Chongja of Thadou-Kuki, who was part of the Manipuri troops, took pity on the Maharaja and fired off his gun before him. Chonja shouted and said, "\textit{the Raja should not die until I, Chongja, am first killed by the raja’s enemies}".\textsuperscript{120} This shouts cheered up the Raja and later on he was brought to safety across the river by Chongja and his party by erecting a cane-suspension bridge.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{116} Vumson, op. cit. pp. 90-91
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} W. Shaw, op. cit. p. 48
\textsuperscript{121} op. cit. p. 49
After some days the Raja arrived home with only a handful of his followers. In this connection, the Political Agent, Mc Culloch believed in hindsight that sheer cowardice had been the cause of the failure of the expedition.\textsuperscript{122} After this expedition, the Maharaja established a thanah on the hills near Numfow and placed 200 sepoys including the Thadou-Kukis (Khongjais) there.\textsuperscript{123}

**F. Guite (Sukte) Agression – 1859:** After the 1857 war, the Suktes under Kamhau sent messengers to the Maharaja and Political Agent of Manipur promising “not to molest the Maharaja’s subjects”. But the quarrels which started after the Kamhau war of 1857 between the Thadous under Manipur jurisdiction and the Guites under Kamhau caused a continuous war like situation between Manipur and the independent Kamhau.\textsuperscript{124} In 1859, the enmity between the two tribes led the Guites attack the Thadou villages near Sugnu (Shoogoono) inhabited by the Haokips. Their villages were burnt down and fifteen headless trunks of human beings were found. Besides, fortyfive men, women and children were carried away into captivity along with their flocks and herds.\textsuperscript{125} It is to be noted here, that clan rivalry among the Thadou and the Sukte Kukis on the one hand and the challenge of authority of the Maharaja on the other, were the causes for the attack.

The second Guite-Sukte aggression was an attack of Saitol in which the village was burnt down and a part of their herd driven away. In this incident of attack, there was no casualty nor persons were taken into captivity.\textsuperscript{126} These attacks were made only by the Guites with no assistance from their allies. Even after the second attack the Raja of Manipur could do nothing to protect his subjects. After this incident, however, the British Indian govt. helped the Raja establish a security post for the protection of the South of the valley and to render assistance to Manipuri subjects in the event of raids.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{122} A. Mackenzie, p. 164  
\textsuperscript{123} Administration Report of Manipur Agency, 1874-75  
\textsuperscript{124} Vumson, op. cit. p. 92  
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{126} A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 164  
\textsuperscript{127} A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 164
G. Kamhau - Sukte Affairs from 1857-1871: Between the years 1857 and 1871 seven raids were recorded against the Kamhau, besides two more which were committed during the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72.\textsuperscript{128} The Suktes were at peace with the Meitei King between 1857 and 1870,\textsuperscript{129} though there were occurrences of inter-tribal feuds between the Thadous and the Kokatung* branches of the Sukte-Kukis. The Suktes were also found helpful in giving vigilance to the movement of the Lushai-Kukis which might be terms as designs against the Manipuris. Even the Suktes sent four heads of the people whom they killed to the authorities of Manipur to manifest their friendship.\textsuperscript{130} While it is clear that between 1857 and 1871, the Kamhau might not have been openly hostile to Manipur, yet there can be no denial to the fact that a series of raids had been committed by them on the borders of Manipur. It is reported \textsuperscript{131} that, -

"In 1857 Kamhau raided Chassad, killing eight men and taking some captives. In 1858, they raided SITOL but the Manipuri guards strongly defended and drove the raiders off. The same year a fight took place between the Kamhau and Manipuris at Kublook village where there were casualty on both sides. Then, in 1862, the Manipuri guards posted at Numfow and Shugnu arrested the Kamhau’s men who came to collect tributes from a Thadou village of Khenglum. In 1865 Kamhau destroyed Chengbolekhool, in which 29 men were killed. Three years after the death of Kamhau in 1868, a raid was made on Bombang, where eleven men were killed and the same number taken into captivity. Then another raid was committed again on Monkow and Khoolakpa. In 1871, two villages of Numfow were attacked by the Chief of Lonpi (Mombi) in which one man was killed and seven were carried off as

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{128} A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 165
\textsuperscript{129} Vumson, op. cit. p. 92
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1874-75 pp. 5-7
\end{flushleft}

* In some Books his name is spelled as Kakhotung.
captives. The next raid committed was upon Teebeekung, Tooyel and Ngajan in which 67 persons were carried off and eleven persons were killed."

Thus, this report evidently makes it clear that seven raids were actually committed between 1857 and 1871 and two more raids were conducted during the Lushai Expedition.132

**H. Affairs from 1872-75:** In April 1872, a Sukte deputation came to Manipur for negotiating Kokatung’s release. It is to be noted here that Kokatung and his party were treacherously captured by the Manipuri troops during the joint Lushai Expedition of 1871-72.133 The manner in which Kokatung and his party were held as captives by the Manipuris were condemned. The Deputy Commissioner of Assam Edgar went a step further to say that "he can never forgive that wonderful piece of treachery."134 Of course, some Manipuri captives were also in the hands of the Suktes. But the deputation were informed that no proposal of any kind could be entertained while a single Manipuri subject remained in the hands and that if the captives were not released, the Maharaja would punish the Suktes. Kokatung died shortly after in the Manipur Jail. The desire of the Maharaja to punish the Suktes was however, discouraged by the British Government of India.135 The initiatives of Col. Mowbray Thomson, who was officiating as Political Agent in Manipur, effected a reconciliation between Manipur and Sukte-Kukis with the resultant outcome of mutual restoration of captives.136 Hereafter, Kokatung’s son was also released and the skulls and bones of his dead father were handed over to him in March, 1873. Peace was thus negotiated and established for the time being. After these exchanges of captives, there still remained eight Kamhau’s men with the Raja of Manipur who were to be released on the restoration of ten more Manipuri captives supposed to be with the Kamhaus.137

---

132. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 165
133. Ibid. p. 166
134. Ibid.
135. Carey and Tuck, op. cit. p. 19
136. Ibid.
137. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 168
As peace did not last long, in October 1874, the Kamhaus of Lonpi (Mombee) renewed the hostility by attacking Manipuri village of Mukoong and Kumsol inhabited by Kukis of Anal Numfow tribe. Some of the inhabitants were killed and many others carried into captivity.\textsuperscript{138} Both the villages were destroyed and the survivors took refuge in Manipuri villages of Chairel and Wangoo.\textsuperscript{139} As a result of this incident, the Suktes were blamed for not keeping the peace agreement.

The importance of this raid amongst others chiefly consists of the fact that these villages were close to the valley, that several large Manipuri villages were away with a two or three hours of journey but quite open to attack.\textsuperscript{140} This was the only instance of an attack being made by the Sukte-Kukis on Anal Kukis so close to the inhabited part of the valley. It also showed how the savage tribes had become emboldened by ease with which these raids could be made and the immunity from punishment following the occurrence.

The Suktes were discontented and could not compromise themselves for what the Manipuris had done to their Chief Kokatung. As they were determined to take vengeance they continued to inflict a number of raids on the Manipuris despite efforts made by the British authorities to put a check on such outrages which affected not only the Manipuris but also the interests of the British Government.

I. Kamhau Expedition of 1875:- This is yet another expedition sent after 18 years of the first expedition way back in 1857. With the approval of the British Government of India,\textsuperscript{141} the Raja of Manipur sent the expeditionary force consisting of two thousand Manipuris and four hundred Thadou-Kukis (Khongjais) under the command of Major Sewai Jamba and Thangal.\textsuperscript{142} on 19th Feb 1875. Unlike the previous war, the Maharaja’s troops had this time made a good stand

\textsuperscript{138}  Carey & Tuck, op. cit. p. 20
\textsuperscript{139}  Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1874 -75 pp. 7-8
\textsuperscript{140}  Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1874 -75
\textsuperscript{141}  Carey & Tuck, op. cit. p. 20
\textsuperscript{142}  Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1874 -75 p. 11
and they continued to fire at the enemy until they fled. During the exchange of fire, three of the Kamhau were killed.\textsuperscript{143} The Maharajas troops reported that ‘after a skirmish’, in which they had been successful, the enemy had sued for peace.\textsuperscript{144}

Consequently, the Kamhau Chief sent a deputation to the Manipuris to settle the dispute with them. It was agreed that the Sukte tribe had to return their captives to Manipuri authorities. Accordingly the Chief of Kumsol, his wife and child, and six other captives were returned to the Meitei Majors. In this regard, the Political Agent believed that there had been no fighting with each party seeming to be afraid of the other.\textsuperscript{145} The Agent also remarked that the Suktes were not likely to be deterred from any fear of the Manipuri troops.\textsuperscript{146} This clearly shows that inspite of sending the expeditionary forces even for the second time, the Kamhau were not completely subdued and continued to pose a threat to Manipur. Subsequently, no real peace was established between the Sukte-Kukis and Manipur. An environment of distrust ensued.

**J. Further events:** The Sukte raids had been ceased for a short time after the expedition of 1875 but as there was no real peace it erupted again in 1876, 1877 and 1878. It appears that the effect of the expedition was not much felt by the Suktes and thus they became more aggressive and arrogant then ever before. The establishment of new \textit{thanas}, however, to a large extent prevented further raids, and tempered their arrogance.\textsuperscript{147}

In this connection, it is to be considered that only the Suktes should not be blamed entirely as raids on them were also committed by the Thadou-Kukis from Manipur. This is endorsed by the fact that the Thadou-Kukis namely Poomlul and Munglep (Manglet) of Lowson, stationed at Moirang frontier also brought a Kamhau head to the Manipur authorities, after killing him.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{143} A. Mackenzie, op.cit. p. 169
\textsuperscript{144} Carey & Tuck, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 170
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1875-76 p. 5
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
Therefore, as killing continued on both sides, the Political Agent was prompted to report about the state of affairs during the year 1876-77, in regard to their relationship as “most unsatisfactory state”.  

The most remarkable fact during 1877-78, connected with the Sukte Kukis is that more than 2,000 persons had migrated into Manipur territory. They had been made to settle down on lands assigned by the Maharaja near Moirang to the South West of Manipur valley. The Chief of the immigrant’s visited the Political Agent who expected the number to be increased. The Suktes, weakened by the loss of 2,000 of their population and with the prospect of losing more was hereafter, less formidable to Manipur. It would have been an advantage to the Maharaja of Manipur if they could prove to be a source of strength. They were reported to belong to Helot race living among the Suktes and their object of migration to Manipur was simply to find a place where they might live in peace and security. Their immigration was important due to the fact that they brought with them a large number of muskets and ammunition, which could be fruitfully utilized for the protection of the state. Whether this migration of people into Manipur had been at the behest of the British or the Raja is not known. But the fact that it had happened was of immense consequence to British.

During 1879 and 1880 the Sukte Kukis again committed a few raids and killed several Manipurs. It was recorded as one of the highest raids of the Sukte Kukis on the Manipuris, resulting in a situation in which not only the Maharaja but also his subjects became panicky and nervous. As a result of which they frequently sought the assistance of the British authorities in arms and ammunition though it was not always conceded to, for it was the professed policy of the British that in case of a fight between native chiefs without effecting the interest of the British the latter should maintain “absolute non-interference”.

149. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 171
150. Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1877-78, p. 11
151. Ibid.
153. Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1877-78, Ibid.
154. A. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 206
So after sometime the Suktes were gradually pushing their way towards the north-east, a route leading to Burma. It is to be noted here that the heavy influx of the Sukte-Kukis into the territories of Manipur had far reaching consequences. As the Kamhaus became less formidable they turned their attention towards the Kale and Kabaw valley of Burma and left Manipur border in peace,\textsuperscript{156} and confined themselves in their new abode.

Thus, the Sukte problem is one of long standing question, as far back as 1856. This lawlessness and frequent raids involved political question on the part of the Maharaja as it had posed a great problem to the state. Their departure was in fact a great relief to the Maharaja. This is evidently clear from the writings of Political Agent who states, in the Administration Report of Manipur (1878-79).

"I cannot but think that this move whenever it takes place, will be to the advantage of Manipur, as it will enable the Durbar more thoroughly to control these trouble some people, though it will be necessary to hold them well in check, as otherwise they will be making constant raids on the Kubo valley and thus lead the way to frequent disputes between the Burmese and the Manupris".\textsuperscript{157}

The annexation of Upper Burma and the Lushai Hills by the British had put a stop to all the troubles on the frontier. The Manipur border was then considered as safe with the faithful subjects of the Maharaja posed to guard the frontiers. The British Government helped Manipur to create a buffer zone by which the Manipur Kukis themselves were used with a view to protecting themselves and the territory of Manipur from the attack of the hostile Sukte Kukis. The Southern post of Manipur was thus strengthened to prevent the inroads of the Suktes.\textsuperscript{158}

The cessation of hostility between the Manipuris and the Sukte Kukis finally ended a period of most dreaded strife and tension in Manipur.

\textsuperscript{156} Carey & Tuck, p. 20
\textsuperscript{157} Administration Report of Manipur Agency 1878-79, p. 20
\textsuperscript{158} Carey & Tuck, Ibid.
4. EXPEDITION IN NAGA HILLS 1879

During the second half of the 19th century, the problems created by the Angami tribe in the Naga Hills became serious. In 1879, they were preparing for an armed uprising against the British. At this time, the Political Agent Johnstone asked the Maharaja to put an army of 2,000 soldiers at his disposal. On receiving information of the attack of Kohima by the neighbouring Nagas mostly of the Angamai tribe in 1879, a contingent of Manipuris and Kukis under the command of James Johnstone set out to punish the offending Nagas. The supply convoys coming from Manipur were frequently attacked on the way by the Naga tribesmen. On reaching Kohima, Johnstone came to know through spies that the Manipuri post at Phesama was about to be attacked by the people of the village. He, then immediately led a dispatch of a strong detachment of Manipuri and Kuki troops. The forces made surprise attacks and destroyed Phesama Angami village with the resultant loss of the lives of more than 200 Nagas.

The attack of Khonomah comes after the relief of Kohima by the Manipuri contingent. It was considered to be the chief centre of all troubles in the Naga hills. It was attacked in the night of Nov 1879. Despite, stout resistance, the British eventually succeeded in bringing the Khonomas to submission. In the assault on Khonoma, the expeditionary forces experienced great difficulty in which both sides also suffered casualty. On seeing the wounded Kukis, Johnstone recalls.

"... the Kuki had a dao (sword) in his hand and everynow and then he fortified himself with a deep draught of the grateful fluid, and thus strengthened made a savage cut at the body of his foe".

---

159. Lal Dena’s op. cit. p. 44
160. Shakespeare’s Assam Rifle p. 150
161. Ibid
162. Ibid, p. 153
163. Johnstone, p. 152
164. Ibid.
Thus, undoubtedly, the success of Naga Hill expedition of the British to Kohima and Khonoma was largely possible due to the assistance of the Manipuris and the Thadou-Kuki warriors who formed part of the expeditionary forces on the one hand and the army of the Maharaja on the other.

5. KUKI-NAGA AFFAIRS

A. Events of 1891:- While the acts of violence had been contained on the border, turbulence in the hills of Manipur still persisted among the Kukis and Nagas. In the north-west corner of the state of Manipur, the Thadou-Kukis raided the Kabui Naga village of Atteng and killed fifty-two persons, losing two of their own men during the raid. They also acted in the most treacherous manner towards the Nagas of Makui village near Kaithelmani. These Nagas were in charge of a state granary and on their refusing to supply the Kukis with some of the rice-paddy, three of them were attacked and killed. The Kukis expressed regret over the incident and in order to re-establish their age-old friendship, the Kabuis (Zeliangrongs) were invited to a feast. However, unfortunately it turned out to be a trap as the Kabuis were suddenly attacked while they were halfway through the meal in which seventeen people lost their lives.\(^{165}\) As a revenge to their atrocities, seven Thadou-Kukis were killed on the Kohima-Manipur road.\(^ {166}\)

B. Raid of Chingjaroi (Swemi) 1893:- The attack of Chingjaroi,\(^ {167}\) a Tangkhul Naga village situated in the extreme north-east of the state of Manipur was one of the most unfortunate moment in the history of Kuki-Naga relationship in particular and Manipur in general. In 1893, it was reported that the attack was carried out by a combination of Kukis and Tangkhuls, in which two hundred and eighty persons were

---

165 B.C. Allen, Assam District Gazetteer Vol. IX,
166 Ibid, 'Naga Hills and Manipur. Part I 1905, pp. 39-61
167 Chingjaroi is a Tangkhul Naga village in Ukhrul District. The Angami Naga called it as SWEMI and the British officials also recorded it with this name. This incident was once the very much talk about story among the elders of both Tangkhul and Thadou-Kuki community. Even I myself have heard it from several elders belonging to Thadou community.
massacred.\textsuperscript{168} The background of the story is as follows:-

"One Tukih settled down in the vicinity of Chingjaroi village. In course of time one Tangkhul widow from Chingjaroi joined the new settlement. On a certain day, the cattle of Chingjaroi villagers damaged the standing crops of the Kukis, causing quite a few damages, for which compensation was sought and the same was promised. However, in spite of several reminders, no action was taken. As a last resort, the widow’s son, Keishing was sent to remind them again of their promises. But he never returned. The widow subsequently came to know about the murder of her son and asked Tukih, the Chief of Kuki village, to take revenge for the same.\textsuperscript{169}

Thus, it was clear that the cause of the raid was due to two factors. One, was the failure of the Tangkhuls to compensate the Kuki Chief and the other was the murder of Keishing, who had acted as mediator.\textsuperscript{170} It was also said that ‘Keishing, a Tangkhul Naga was the \textit{pol} (close family friend) of Tukih’. Therefore, it can be deduced from the story that the infamous plunder committed under the leadership of Tukih Lugheng was not merely a manifestation of senseless killing. It was rather an act of vengeance necessitated by the bond of friendship between a Tangkhuls and Khongjais in those days.\textsuperscript{171} Surprisingly, none of the neighbouring Tangkhul villages reacted over Khongjais. This testifies that the Tangkhuls at large had no enmity with

\textsuperscript{168} Foreign Department, External : B June 1893, Nos. 133.
Besides, B. C. Allen and CGH Allen (1979:617) writes the story remains the same. They recorded the death toll as 286 persons including women and children. Again, in an article, \textit{INDIAN-BACKED KUKI AND THE NGA PUBLIC CLASHES} issued by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (I-M) on 18th Sept 1993: the total number of persons died in this Chingjaroi incident was 272. In any case, both these figures do not tally with that of official record.

\textsuperscript{169} Information about the raid was collected from the three elders mentioned earlier and also from a booklet titled \textit{Is the Return of Normanley in the hills of Manipur, A possibility?}, written by P. Gangte, during the time of ethnic clashes between Nagas and Kukis in the early 1990’s

\textsuperscript{170} B.C. Allen, pp. 60-61
* Jol is a ‘Thadou-Kuki’ term, which means a form of close family friendship. The culture of JOL had existed between the Kukis and other ethnic groups such as, Tangkhuls, Kabui etc. MANGAI is also such type of word used in relation to Kabui or Zeeliangrong people. The family friends helped each other in times of need and also share the common joys and sufferings. Of course, this is an age-old practice quite common amongst the tribal communities.

\textsuperscript{171} N. Sanajoba’s Manipur p. 159
the Kukis. They knew that Chingjaroi villagers were at fault. There was also no reprisal as such. This is proved by the fact that the marauders safely reached back their home even after passing through many Tangkhul villages. Besides, on the basis of British official account, one can assume that apart from Keishing’s relative there might also have been some other Tangkhuls who had enmity with Chingjaroi villagers and had joined the Kukis in the raid by taking advantage of the situation. This may be true as the one reason for the attack was to avenge the murder of a Tangkhul by Tangkhul villagers themselves.

C. An Analysis of Kuki-Naga Relationship: - The Kukis and Nagas alike have ruled their hill territory independently through the ages. Both of them had the land to rule over and to fight for the protection of their land. Conquering of new land for their settlement was also not uncommon. They occupied the land which they could claim for themselves. There had been acts of treachery, raids, outrages etc. no doubt but in spite of that they generally continued to live together for centuries together in peaceful co-existence. The history of their relationship is thus marked by a mixture of amity and enmity which nevertheless continued to play an important role in the politics of the state.

In those days of pre-Christian era, the scene in the hills of Manipur was marked by constant raids and internecine tribal feuds. The history of Manipur is silent about the existence of intra-clan rivalry. Such traditional rivalry existed among the Naga themselves, of course, the Kukis too, suffered from their own intra-tribal feuds.

Head-hunting in the Naga context was an adventure. In the past it had religious sanction. It had also economic utility, political consideration and most of all social value and some justice. To gain social recognition, prestige, power and to add to the fertility of the soil. they

172. J. Shakespeare, p. 43. See also Carey & Tuck, p. 201
did value human heads. Thus, the hunt for human heads subsequently led, to raids and counter-raids involving loss of lives. For the Nagas, the practice went on for a long time, whereby the life of the weaker Nagas became so threatening that they needed a stronger power for their security and protection.

Internecine wars among the Kabuis and Tangkhuls led the Kuki warriors to come to the rescue of certain weaker sections among the Nagas in Ukhrul and Tamenglong divisions of Manipur. In those days had there been no Kuki intervention, the magnitude of human lives toll on account of the internecine wars among the Naga tribesmen could have been much heavier than that was actually seen among Naga villages. In this connection, N. Lhunghdim writes, "One Kuki patriarch, Pu Haokhohem Haokip, who died at the age of 100 years or so in 1967, said that they (Kukis) had no desire to poke their nose in the wars among some sections of the Tangkhuls but it was only after much lobbying and cajoling that they intervened in the inter-village wars towards the end of the 19th century in Ukhrul areas".

The powerful Chassad chiefs had indeed intervened in the intra-tribal feuds of the Tangkhuls and saved many lives against the onslaught of the stronger ones. There had existed a fierce rivalry among the Nagas themselves. And with regard to the Tangkhuls it is a historical fact that they didn’t have any common language as they were consisted of diverse linguistic groups. They had inter-feuds amongst themselves paving the way for developing enmity, distrust and suspicion among themselves. The Thadou-Kukis with whom the Nagas were mostly in contact in the hills, were powerful enough to control the neighbouring Naga villages. As such the powerful Thadou-Kukis were employed occasionally by the Manipuris (Meities) to punish the

174. N. Sanajaoba, op. cit. p. 151
175. Ibid.
176. Sources of Information: Mrs. Lhaikhotin wife of Chassad chief
Naga tribes with a view to bring them to submission which the Meiteis had failed to achieve.\textsuperscript{177} Of course, in the south-west corner of the state of Manipur, the Simte-Kukis were also very very powerful as they could possibly muster 850 fighting men of which one half possessed guns.\textsuperscript{178} They acted as a deterrent against the incursion of Lushai-Kukis into the territories of Manipur.

In retrospect the Kukis had no doubt committed many acts of violence, wars and mischievous things but at the same time the many good things which they did must on no account be brushed aside. They waged wars to settle disputes among the Nagas and to a large extent stopped them from their endless practice of head-hunting. In this connection, Prim Vaiphei writes,

"In many places, Naga villages requested the Kukis to come and settle near their village for their protection. For instance, ......the Liangmeis of Kabui Naga of Thonglang village planned to attack the Thanggal Surung village. As soon as the people... discovered the plot, they requested the Kukis to come and settle near their village and protect them from harm".\textsuperscript{179}

There is one Kuki village near \textit{Thanggal Surung} known as \textit{Thangkan Thanglunga}\textsuperscript{*} which is one such living example of the subject in discussion. Besides, there are also some Kuki villages in the midst of majority-Naga villages till today.\textsuperscript{180} Thus, the Kukis are widely spread-over in all the hill areas of Manipur with the Nagas living as their neighbours. As such

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{177} J. Shakespear, p. 192
\textsuperscript{178} E.W. Dun, op. cit. p. 146
\textsuperscript{179} N. Sanajoba, (Ed.) op. cit. p. 127
\textsuperscript{*} This village is inhabited by the Telngoh, the sub-clan of the Haokips. The villages exist even today. Thanggal Surung and Thangkan Thanglunga is located in the Saikul sub-division of Senapati district. Whereas, Thonglang village is also situated in the same district but within Kangpokpi sub-division.
\textsuperscript{180} Still there are some Kuki villages situated in the interior part of Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul district of Manipur. Some of the villages situated in the northern and eastern side of Ukhrul were forced out due to the rise of Naga Nationalism. These villages were Wahong, Chahjang, Changlei, Saichang, Lakhun, Matiyang etc. The people of these villages were accommodated by their cognate clans and settled amongst them where they are majority in comparison with those of Tangkhul Naga areas.}
there is no water-tight division of their inhabited area since they were intricately mixed with
one another. Therefore, it is to note that their natural fighting capabilities and their bravery has
been fruitfully used and which had benefited not only some of their Naga neighbours but also
the British and the Maharaja of Manipur as well.

6. BRITISH'S KUKI POLICY

During the reign of Raja Nara Singh of Manipur, a large number of new Kukis* (Thadous)
had migrated to Manipur. 181 The Raja of Manipur had handed over the Superintendent of the
tribes to the then Political Agent, William Mc Culloch (1844-1862), “who settled them down
by allotting land in different places according to their numbers and where their presence would
be useful on the exposed frontiers”. 182 As the King of Manipur could not pay much attention to
the problem of heavy influx, he sought full-cooperation of Mc Culloch who settled them down
in those areas mostly on the exposed frontiers 183 with an ulterior motive. It could be mentioned
here that on the eve of the British contacts with the Kukis and their subsequent intervention in
their affairs, the scene in the Hills presents a gloomy picture. There was constant inter-tribal
feuds and mutual raids resulting in the burning of houses and desertion of villages. Inter-tribal
antagonism was at its climax. However, it was believed that the inter-tribal feud of the Thadou-
Kukis against Lushais, Kabui Nagas and Angami Nagas were not simply a manifestation of
senseless hostility but had valid political and economic reasons behind.

The British took advantage of their hostility in their frontier policy and defence. The
tribe whom the British could effectively use against the Nagas and Lushais for the purpose of
frontier defence was none other than the brave and war-like Thadou-Kukis. In this connection.

181. Lal Dena, Modern Manipur, p. 35
182. Mc Culloch's Memorandum to A. Mackenzie, in Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 147
183. Lal Dena, Ibid., p. 36
Gautam Bhadra, stated as “the policy of the officials at Manipur was to settle the warlike Kukis among the Kabuis and to use them for the maintenance of law and order”.\(^{184}\) Similarly, Jenkins also explains explicitly as “Our hopes of re-claiming this country appear to rest on these Kukis. They are already sufficiently numerous to delay the Nagas if they can be united for the purpose of defence.”\(^{185}\) The British utilized the Thadou-Kukis in such a manner as to act as a barrier against the Burmese\(^ {186}\) and as a buffer or screen between the British subjects and Angamis.\(^ {187}\) In 1880, a Kuki militia with a strength of 100 was also raised as a defensive purpose against the Angami raids.\(^ {188}\) Further, Col. Mc Culloch’s Kuki policy was to raise Kuki Levy with the object of utilizing them as defensive purpose which they apparently used against Soote (Sukte) and Lushai tribes.\(^ {189}\) For the purpose of frontier defence, Edgar said, “we should have taken the first step toward protecting our cultivated frontier from the Kukis external to it by getting a real control over the Kukis settled in our districts of Manipur and Tipperah”.\(^ {190}\)

But the British policy towards the Kukis could hardly be successful only with their infamous ‘divide and rule’ policy. They took advantage of the age-old traditional Lushai-Thadou Kuki animosity to achieve this end. Edgar classified the British policy of frontier defense under three heads:

- i) Policy of pure defence;
- ii) Policy of permanent occupation of the Lushai Hills and more or less complete subjugation of their inhabitants; and
- iii) Policy of refraining from occupation of the country or exercising any direct control over the people and to attempt to gain effectual influence over them by conciliatory means.

---

\(^ {184}\) G. Bhadra, The Kuki (?) Uprising. Its nature and causes Man in India, Vol. 55, p. 20
\(^ {185}\) Quoted from Jenkin’s Report in Gautam Bhadra. Ibid p. 48
\(^ {186}\) W. Shaw. op. cit. p. 46
\(^ {187}\) A. Mackenzie. op. cit. p. 146
\(^ {188}\) A. Mackenzie. op. cit. p. 147
\(^ {189}\) Mackenzie. op. cit. p. 441
\(^ {190}\) Ibid., p. 428
measures by doing all in their power to extend trade and other humanizing influence while making the chiefs and their followers clearly understand that they had both power and determination to inflict severe punishment for any misbehaviour on their part.\textsuperscript{191}

While the first policy was the principal objective, the second policy of the British was really a policy of divide and rule, setting one tribe against the other and to channelise the warlike Kukis for the fulfilment of the policy. The raising of the Kuki Levy in 1850 at the recommendation of General Lister, partly as a force to be used against the Lushais and partly to give employment to the Kuki youths whose love for fighting would then be legitimately gratified in defending the frontier.\textsuperscript{192} The third policy of the British authority indicated to induce the Kuki tribes to accept British policy as legitimate and use of force if the legitimacy of the colonial authority is questioned by any recalcitrant members of the tribe or chief. Such policy of threatening nature with imposatory authority structure of the colonial authority structure of the colonial authority is clearly depicted in the words of Edgar:

"I believe that by a just and prudent course of action we could bind the Kukis to us by ties so strong and lasting that the tribe instead of being a source of difficulties and danger to us, would become our strongest frontier defence. But while I think that this can be done by conciliatory measures, I am convinced that we cannot hope to succeed unless we make the tribe feel that we can and when occasion requires, shall not hesitate to punish for misbehaviours with unflinching severity. There would be no need of adopting such a policy of reprisals in order to bring this home to the minds of the hill men and nothing but absolutely necessity would justify such a policy.\textsuperscript{193}"

For the successful implementation of the frontier policy, the British authority drew the

\textsuperscript{191} A. Mackenzie op. cit. p. 428
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., p. 434
\textsuperscript{193} Edgar Note, Ibid., p. 430
support of the authoritarian Kuki chiefs. As the Chieftainship organisation was very strong in those days out of the political necessity of the tribe in course of their inter-state and local migration, the British knew that to legitimise their policy to the masses, the chief of the tribe had to be convinced first, since the voice of the Chief was the voice of the people. In this regard the centralised authority of the Kuki chief provided an effective instrument to the colonial authorities in directing the community effectively against the other tribes. Therefore, while establishing and maintaining frontier guards to check any outrage as far as possible, annual payments were made to the chiefs of the tribes.194

However, it is to be noted that under the colonial domination the Kuki chief were in dilemma whether to yield to the British policy or to face the harsh reality of reprisals.195 Yielding to the British authority, though assured the safety of their income and status in one way but it automatically weakened the chieftainship organisation. On the other hand, the chiefs did not think judicious to risk a reprisal from a powerful ruler. As such, considering heavy pressure on substance resources caused by scarcity of land, mutual attack and raids of the tribes which made them fatigued and also resulted in the loss of lives, the Kuki chiefs accepted the British policy of settlement in the uncultivated and uninhabited but sensitive hill tracts of Manipur.196 It could be mentioned here that with regard to Kuki policy, the Colonial authority did not interfere in the internal affairs nor they touched the authority – structure of the Kuki chief. The settlement policy of the British enforced the chieftainship organisation in helping the colonial administration control the people and serve their chiefs as and when needed. As such a large section of the Kukis feel that the the British should apologise to the Kuki chiefs and the people in general living today for their treatment meted out to them for settlement policies and the

194. R.G. Wood Thorpe, op. cit. p. 4
195. A.K. Ray, op. cit. p. 31
196. Ibid., p. 32
distrust shown by them which is revealed in the Administration reports of the British themselves. The North East tribes were classified by Captain Lewin into three different categories:

i) Those who paid tribute to the government and was subject to the latter’s control;

ii) Those who paid no revenue but were subject to subject to British control; and

iii) The independent tribes.197

The Kukis were in the third category. They were left independent in their internal affairs as part of the policy of ‘divide and rule’ and hence, their chiefs could enjoy their position and power relatively independent. The policy of the British towards the Kukis at this stage was a policy of non-interference and the impact of colonial authority was, therefore, indirect. Though the Thadou-Kuki chief were allowed to enjoy relatively as independent tribes in conformity with the colonial policy, the real basis of their autonomy was however, robbed off, as they were subjected to colonial domination. While the colonial masters respected the chieftainship organisation of the Kukis, they also used it as a mechanism to contain the other tribal groups like the Lushais and the Nagas and brought them under their subjugation thereby stabilising their administration in the hills.

Thus, the contribution of the Kukis in giving shape to the state of Manipur is of immense value. Their singular role has remained uncalibrated to this day. However, the political consciousness is bringing in a change of unprecedented nature among the Kuki ethnic groups of the state. The Kuki community must, therefore, address itself to the political reconstruction and share in the political power of the state.

197. B.C. Chakrabarti, British relation with the Hill Tribes of Assam since 1854, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta. 1964. p. 48