Chapter 4

BOUNDARY MAKING:
KABAW VALLEY AND THE POLITICS OF COLONIAL MEDIATION

On the first of January 1826 at two o’clock, the Burmese and the British officials met for a conference in the middle of the Irawadi river, on a large accommodation-boat about four miles below Melloone, to negotiate the peace treaty between the two. The two commissioners from both the sides entered almost simultaneously from respective sides of the river. Kolein Mengi was heading the Burmese delegation accompanied by Kee Wongee as joint commissioner and various other nobles. The British side was headed by Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell. The conference began with the discussion of the British demand for one crore of rupees as war indemnity. Then it moved on to the issue of cession of territory from the Court of Ava to the Company. With regard to the cession of Arakan, Kolein Mengi was reported to have said, “We are stingy of parting with Arracan, not for its value, but because the honour of the nation is, in some measure, concerned in its retention.”

The retention of Arakan was a matter of pride for the glorious history of the Burmese conquest. The cession of the territory would rob the forefathers of their fame and glory. For these reasons, the Burmese officials expressed their desire to keep the province, and would rather that the British asked for something else instead.

On the issue of the restoration of Manipur to the ‘legitimate king’, Major Snodgrass, who was the Military Secretary to the Commander of the Expedition, and Assistant Political Agent in Ava, quoted Kolein Mengi’s words,

With regard to Cassay, it is a barren desert, and of little use to us: our King sent troops into the country, at the request of the proper Rajah, who solicited protection, as a vassal, against a faction that was formed against him: our troops expelled the refractory chiefs from

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1 Major Snodgrass, Narrative of the Burmese War, detailing the Operations of Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell's Army, from its landing at Rangoon in May 1824, to the Conclusion of a Treaty of Peace at Yandaboo in February 1826, London: John Murray, 1827, p. 264
Munnipoore, and the Rajah now resides at Ava: he, and not Gumbheer Sing, is the legitimate Prince of Cassay; he prefers living at our court; but if you wish his country to be independent, he is the person who should be appointed king.²

As clearly visible, the Burmese officials made a few points with regard to Manipur, which would have an enormous impact on its later history. First, in comparison to the prized possession of the Arakan, which the Burmese monarch was unwilling to part with, there was no direct interest of the Burmese in possessing Manipur. Second, the Burmese had taken possession of Manipur on being solicited by the ‘proper Raja’, who offered to become a vassal in order to fight his contender to the throne. Third, Gambhir Singh, who had already thrown out the Burmese from Manipur with his own followers, was not the ‘legitimate’ king. Fourth, if the British were interested in making Manipur independent, the ‘legitimate’ king was the one who had asked for Burmese protection, and who was living in the court of Ava by then. Fifth, while the Burmese were opposing the cession of Arakan, they were ready to part with Manipur, but on the condition of it being an independent territory.

Finally, on the 24th of February the treaty of Yandabo between the British and the Burmese was ratified. In the treaty, the Court of Ava renounced all claims to the territories of Assam, Cachar, and Jaintia. And they finally agreed to recognise Gambhir Singh as Raja. Arakan was also ceded to the British but the third article anticipated the problem of boundary between the two empires, and thus, mentioned the recognised boundaries at the time of the treaty to clear any problem later along with future course of action in case of boundary disputes. But with regard to Manipur, or other parts in which a cession of territory from the Burmese to the British was not mentioned in the treaty, the subject of boundary did not arise.³

² Snodgrass, Narrative of the Burmese war, p. 265
³ 'Treaty of Peace concluded at Yandabo', reproduced in John Crawfurd, Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General of India to the Court of Ava, in the year 1827, Appendix, No. III, London: Henry Colburn, 1829. The term boundary has been used to mean both the modern notion of a well-demarcated and mapped line on the territory as well as the limits of political authorities on the territories in the ‘pre-colonial’ societies. It is, in fact, the argument of the chapter that the claim over Kabaw valley began with the conflation of the two and the subsequent movement from the latter to the former by all the parties culminated the process of boundary making.
As discussed in the previous chapter, colonisation of the north-east frontier of Bengal had to take into consideration the Burmese 'threat'. But, in one particular case their involvement became more direct. In the context of Manipur, the Burmese were already involving themselves even as the negotiation for the treaty was going on. If indeed the Burmese thought Manipur to be a barren desert and of little use to them, it is difficult to ascertain why they insisted on being involved in the matters of Manipur. As soon as the treaty of Yandabo was signed between the two, the Court of Ava would demand that large tracts of land should fall within the Burmese territory. This would evolve into a demand for a whole valley known as the Kabaw valley. This chapter looks at the different issues that were involved in the contestations over this valley and the demarcation of boundary between Manipur and Burma. There were various strategies being deployed by both the parties to stake their territorial claims. Interestingly, even though the territorial dispute was between the Burmese and Manipur, the latter was represented in the negotiations by the British. In this regard, the chapter also tries to address the role of the British in the negotiations over Kabaw valley and the larger politics of their political and economic presence.

**QUESTIONS OF TERRITORY AND THE COLONIAL PRESENCE**

Soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Yandabo, a British envoy was sent to Burma led by John Crawfurd, who was the Civil Commissioner at Rangoon after the war. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Chester as assistant to the Envoy. Apart from him there were Dr. Steward, Medical Officer, Lieutenant Cox, commanding the escort, Lieutenant de Montmorency, Mr. Judson, of the American Missionary Society as translator and interpreter. Along with the officials, Dr. Wallich, Superintendent of the Government Botanical Garden at Calcutta, was also deputed to accompany them for the purpose of examining and reporting upon the resources of the forests of Pegu and Ava, as well as those of the recently annexed possessions to the south of the Salween river. Lieutenant Campbell was later attached as escort and temporary assistant during the mission. There were primarily two main objectives of the envoy. First, it was to conclude commercial dealings with the Burmese "on terms of

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equal and reciprocal advantage”. The envoy was informed that they should not press upon this issue. Second, “the settlement of the line of demarcation”, which was considered to be “one of great importance”, which Crawfurd had been told, was “one of the most delicate and difficult discussions with the Court of Ava.” It was felt that with regard to Assam, the Governor General did not anticipate any objections on the part of the Court of Ava, in G. Swinton words, “since, when once excluded from Assam itself, the Burmese Government can have little interest in maintaining any authority over the rude tribes of the adjoining country, who are too poor to hold out any inducement to the Burmans to establish themselves in that quarter.”

Despite this optimism, the envoy could not be furnished with any precise information on the boundaries of eastern Assam, except the copies of the latest correspondence with David Scott, the Agent to the Governor-General on the north-east frontier. The envoy was instructed to follow the discussions on the subjects according to the line that had been laid down by Scot. But they were told to consent to any further local inquiry that might be found necessary, and to refer the point to the Government for its orders.

Similarly, the envoy was supplied with copies of the recent correspondence with Tucker, the Commissioner in Sylhet regarding Manipur, which had the views and sentiments of the Government with respect to Raja Gambhir Singh. The envoy was informed that the Burmese had retreated from the Kabaw valley during the war, and retired beyond the Ningthee. Crawfurd was told, “[Y]ou will succeed in establishing that river as the boundary.”

Evincing the optimism of the government, the envoy was instructed,

It is obvious that we possess in the remaining instalments more than an equivalent to obtain the satisfactory adjustment of all disputed points regarding the boundaries of Assam and Munnipore, as well as those to the southward; but his Lordship in Council would not wish that any thing definitive should be settled, without farther reference to your Government,

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5 ‘Envoy’s Public Instructions’, from George Swinton, Secretary to the Government, to J. Crawfurd, Civil Commissioner, Rangoon, 30th June, 1826, in Crawfurd, Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General, Appendix I, p. 5. However, in the negotiations, which followed between the envoy and the Burmese, the envoy informed the Burmese officials that the object of the ‘friendly visit’ was to present a friendly letter to the king and to make a convention for regulating the commerce of the two countries upon the terms of reciprocal advantage in agreement with the Treaty of Yandabo.

since in the interval we may expect to obtain more correct information from Mr. Scott and Mr. Tucker.  

This clearly shows the hope of the British authority in Bengal that if there was any dispute, the Court of Ava could be quietened by giving them allowances from the war indemnity. By mentioning the remaining instalment, the Burmese would be, one, reminded that they had not yet paid the instalment in time, two, show the possibility that the British might consider the relinquishment of these instalments if they were willing to forgo any claim on these territories. In case the Burmese did not concede, the plan was to say that the commissioner needed to consult a higher authority, which would give the British time to survey the areas. The envoy was also informed of the possibility of the transfer of land:

It is to be borne also, that we may have equivalents in land (as well as in the remaining money due to us) to offer for the adjustment of a well-defined boundary on the Assam and Munnipore frontier; since our permanent occupation of all the territory ceded to us on the Martaban and Tennasserim coast is by no means finally settled, but contingent on the decision of the Authorities in England.

With regard to any discussion on Gambhir Singh, it was to be maintained that the views and wishes of the Raja were still not certain. The envoy was also informed that regarding the boundaries of Arakan, no serious difficulties were found to exist since the range of mountains already referred and ratified in the Treaty of Yandabo extended to the very southern extremity at Negrais. However, if the envoy found any appearance of a just claim of the Burmese, the matter was to be finally adjusted by commissioners, as provided by the fourth article of the treaty. Though the British already identified the significant locations, it was not to make any propositions for further cessions of territory, except in case of offers from the Court of Ava for mutual exchanges. The envoy was further instructed that “on all doubtful points connected with the boundaries of the ceded territories, the Governor-General

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7 Ibid, pp. 5 – 6.
8 Ibid, p. 6.
in Council would lay it down, as a rule for your guidance, that the Burmese should have the benefit of the most liberal construction of the Treaty."\(^9\)

The optimistic view expressed by the Governor-General at this time was based on a few considerations. First, it was the belief that the offer of the relinquishment of a part or the whole of the two remaining instalment from the war indemnity would adjust the question of boundary negotiation. But this was with the supposition that the British would retain the territories of Martaban and Tennasserim coast, which was ceded to the British after the war. Secondly, if the British decided to withdraw from the whole or the greater portion of these territories, it was hoped that "many of the questions relating to boundaries in other quarters will be of comparatively easy adjustment" as the British "shall then have so much to offer in exchange".\(^{10}\) In the particular context of Manipur, it could also be related with the expressed disinterest of the Burmese, as noted above, in holding the territories of Manipur during the negotiations for the Treaty of Yandabo.

The British envoy managed to successfully conclude a Commercial Treaty with the Burmese.\(^11\) However, the optimism of the British with regard to the territorial and boundary question would soon dissipate as the negotiations proceeded. On the question of the eastern frontier of the British, the Burmese officials reiterated their acknowledgement of the independence of Assam and Cachar. Crawfurd also informed that the same was the case with regard to Manipur. "This result has arisen", according to him, "from the fortunate circumstance of the article of the Treaty of Yandabo, which refers to this particular subject, being more distinctly and fully worded in the Burman than in the English version, as will be observed from the literal translation of that document". As far as Manipur was concerned, in the Burmese translation of the treaty "superadded to the English version", was the "strong expression" that "Gumbheer Sing shall not be molested in the Government of his Principality by the King of Ava". This was interpreted by the Burmese Government, according to Crawfurd, "to amount to an exclusion from all interference whatsoever on its part." From the

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\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^{10}\) Ibid, p. 7.

\(^{11}\) "Envoy's report of his mission", from J. Crawfurd, Envoy, to George Swinton, Secretary to the Government, Political Department, dated 22\(^{nd}\) February 1827, in Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General*, Appendix II, p. 8.
proceedings, Crawfurd concluded, "[T]he independence of Munnipore upon the Court of Ava may be considered as a point clearly determined." However, he informed that the "limits of the two countries", still continued unsettled and that this question must become the subject of further negotiation since he believed that the claims of the two parties were difficult to reconcile at the moment. Commenting on the Burmese position, he wrote, "As far as I am able to form a judgment from the few facts which have come to my knowledge, those of the Burmese Government are so extravagant, that, could they be substantiated, Gumbheer Singh would be deprived of the larger portion of what he considers, and I suspect, justly the proper principality of Munnipore." As a result, he stated that the "legitimate boundaries of the two countries can only be ascertained and fixed by local enquiry and investigation, instituted by British Agents, and through the mediation of the British Government". Though the territorial claims were between the countries of Manipur and Burma, Crawfurd justified his opinion for investigations to be conducted by British agents and the mediation of its government. He wrote, "to leave so delicate and difficult a matter to be adjusted between the parties themselves in the present state of their feelings, would inevitably produce such a collision of interests, as must end in hostilities between them."12

On the 3rd of November, the Burmese made two propositions. The second proposition reads as follows:

According to the Second Article of the Treaty of Yandabo, which requires, that if Gumbheer Singh desire to return and remain at Munnipore, he shall do so. Gumbheer Singh shall remain quietly and happily at Munnipore. But let him not trespass on the city of Mwe-ren, and other cities and villages west of the Kyen-dwen river, which are Burmese territory. Let not officers and soldiers appointed by the Burmese Government by stationed at Munnipore, nor officers and soldiers appointed by the English Government, let Gumbheer Singh remain quietly, and take care of his own country as he will.13

12 'Extract from a letter from the Envoy to the Court of Ava', dated 21st February 1827, Letters received by the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, Manipur State Archives (MSA). The Envoy was J. Crawfurd.
13 Crawfurd, Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General, p. 182.
The British delegation responded by reiterating that by the treaty of Yandabo, Manipur was independent, and that it would remain so with Gambhir Singh as well as his heirs “according to the laws and usages” of the Manipuri people. It was asserted that whatever territory belonged to Manipur “before it was subjugated by the Burmans or became tributary to them, will in justice belong to it now.” If the Burmese were in actual possession of any portion of such territory, they would relinquish it and the same principle would follow in case of Gambhir Singh as well. The British envoy also said that the Burmese government was bound by the “treaty not to interfere with Gumbheer Singh, or his kingdom.” But the British Government were “not so bound; but they have no desire to interfere, and will not do so”. It was also informed that the matter could not be settled between the commissioners since it would be the final decision of the Governor-General and that in order to maintain peace and harmony between Manipur and Ava, and eventually between the latter and the British, “a well-defined boundary should be established between the Burmese and Cassay territories.”

The British envoy showed his willingness to discuss any plan that the Burmese officials might have in this regard, or to propose one himself, should it be preferred by the Burmese.

After taking notes by the Burmese, a conversation ensued. As the British referred to the treaty of Yandabo for all their conducts and demands, the Burmese delegation were reported to have said, “In conformity with the Treaty of Yandabo, we have withdrawn from all interference with Akobat (Cachar) and We-tha-li (Assam). We think also that you ought to withdraw your officers from Cassay.”

After learning that the British envoy did not have the authority, they stated that they were happy that the matter would be discussed in Bengal. However, they enquired about what was to be done in the meantime, as they claimed that the two parties were in actual collision. Upon this assertion, they were asked whether they meant that actual hostilities ensued in the frontier between the Burmese and the Manipuris. The Burmese officials clarified that they did not mean to say that there was actual fighting but that the Burmese subjects had been so much harassed that they retired to prevent hostilities. The British envoy informed them that at the conclusion of the war Gambhir Singh had been directed to refrain from all hostilities.

towards the Burmese and that if any dispute respecting boundaries existed, the natural course
to pursue was that each party should maintain what was in actual possession of at the
termination of the war, until the respective limits of these territories should be defined by an
amicable arrangement. Upon being told that despite the lack of authority, he was willing to
discuss “any fair arrangement”, which the Burmese officials might propose for adjusting the
frontier between Burma and Manipur, the British envoy was asked to give orders to Gambhir
Singh to “refrain from all aggressions” upon the Burmese territory, until they had “an
opportunity of representing the matter” by means of their ambassador in Bengal.16

From the foregoing discussion between the negotiators on both sides, it seems that the
Burmese were trying to ascertain the role of the British vis-à-vis Manipur. If indeed Manipur
had been considered independent as the British insisted, the natural course would have been
for Manipur and Burma to negotiate the territorial dispute. Thus, the Burmese envoy was
refraining from discussing the matter. But by insisting that the matter would be decided only
by the Governor-General, it was clear that the British would act as mediators on behalf of
Manipur. On learning this, the Burmese then asked the British envoy to give orders to
Gambhir Singh to refrain from hostilities.

On condition “that any dispute shall be settled by the Supreme Government” through
Burmese ambassadors, Crawfurd offered, “I will write immediately to the British
Commissioner at Sylhet by way of Munnipore and request him to give Gumbheer Sing
positive orders to remain quiet in his own possessions, pending a reference to the Governor
General.”17 This is quite evidently contradictory and inconsistent with the earlier statements
being made that the British considered Manipur as independent. Now that the Burmese had
confirmed their suspicion that Manipur was not considered independent by the British and
dependent on their orders, they asked the envoy to write directly to Gambhir Singh as well as
to the Commissioner in Manipur. This demand was promptly accepted by the British envoy.
The Burmese, then, demanded that since their troops were “not permitted to occupy any part
of the kingdom of Munnipore”, the British troops and officers “should also be removed

16 ‘Extract from a Journal by the Envoy to the Court of Ava dated the 22nd February 1827’, Letters received by
the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, MSA.
17 Ibid.
according to the Treaty of Yandaboo." The envoy responded, "You state that by the Treaty of Yandabo British officers and troops are not to remain at Munnipore. I ask by what article of the Treaty they are precluded from doing so." The Burmese were reported to have answered, "Is it in the Treaty that they shall stay there?" The British envoy replied,

It is not in the Treaty that they shall stay, neither is it in the Treaty that officers and troops shall occupy Cachar and Assam or any other country not dependent on the Burman Government but still they may do so without any infringement of the Treaty. It is specified in the Treaty that you shall not interfere in the affairs of Munnipore, but such is not the case with us. You must therefore state your requests upon some other grounds, as you have no claims by the Treaty of Yandabo.\textsuperscript{18}

The Burmese officials responded by merely saying that if the British officers were present with Gambhir Singh, they would make him presumptuous and that he would appear to be countenanced by the British. This was rejected by the British envoy as a different matter and reminded them that they could not assert their demand for removing the British troops. The British envoy then clarified that the troops to which the Burmese were alluding to were not British troops, but that they belonged to Gambhir Singh, that "during the war the British Government paid him subsidy for maintaining the troops in question and lent him two British officers to discipline them since the conclusion of peace Gumbheer Sing has been informed that the subsidy is to be discontinued, and that he must carry on the affairs of his Government at his own expense and risk." Upon this clarification, the Burmese officials reiterated their demand with a veiled threat in case of a negative response from the British, "That Gumbheer Sing may not presume on the support of the British Government and conduct himself with insolence towards us, we wish that the officers in question may be recalled, lest another war should be occasioned by it. The king will induce a good deal from the English, but not from Gumbheer Sing or any Black Kula." They were then informed that the British Government had "no intention whatever of occupying Munnipore themselves, and they will certainly not give assistance in men, money or advice to Gumbheer Sing"\textsuperscript{19} to the prejudice of the Burmese. The envoy expressed that he could not order the removal of the British officers

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
from Manipur but that he would request the Governor General to recall them. Moreover, he also stated that on the one hand, Gambhir Singh had complained that certain portions of his country were now occupied by the Burmese, and on the other, the Burmese were complaining that large tracts belonging to the Burmese had been forcibly taken by him. He asked the Burmese envoy if they wished "that an arbitration should be made by the Governor General, or that the matter be decided by Commissioners" nominated by the British and the Court of Ava. The Burmese officials expressed their desire that both parties should refrain from aggressions and that the affair should be settled by their ambassadors in Bengal.20

The British envoy said that his explanations with regard to Manipur were with a view to removing the fears of the Burmese Government and hoped that the Governor-General would approve of his proceedings. He considered himself "warranted in making the assurance that the British Government had no intention of occupying Munnipore, and that Gumbheer Sing should not be aided, either in men, money or advice to the prejudice of the Burmese Government."21 This explanation, he contended, was grounded on the admission made by the British Commissioner at Yandabo in the conference of the 23rd February 1826, when it was conceded that the British had no intention of occupying Manipur themselves. He wrote,

By the strict letter of the Treaty of Yandaboo, it does not appear that we are precluded from occupying the Munnipore territory or from admitting Gumbheer Sing into the number of our tributaries... Munnipore was virtually considered as an ally of the British Government, and in the event of the principality being endangered by the hostility of the Burmans, we shall become necessarily guarantees for the security of the state, the independency of which we have ourselves established by treaty and the safety of which will probably be found a condition necessary to the Preservation of Peace, and the integrity of our Frontier at a point where it is unquestionably the weakest.22

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20 Ibid.
21 "Extract from a letter from the Envoy to the Court of Ava', dated 21st February 1827, Letters received by the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, MSA.
22 "Extract from a letter from the Envoy to the Court of Ava dated 21st February 1827' Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
This clearly shows that though the envoy insisted upon the independency of Manipur and that the Court of Ava ought to recognise it as such according to the treaty of Yandabo, he at the same time felt the need for British ‘protection’ of Manipur. Or, in other words, Manipur was not considered ‘fully’ independent in his opinion even though he conducted his negotiations by assuming on that principle.

The motive of the Burmese in agreeing to an independent Manipur was clearly stated in the treaty of Yandabo. But the Burmese insistence on Manipur’s independent status is puzzling. There seems to be an overriding desire to keep it as a separate political entity albeit inferior political power rather than having to give it away to the British. Though Crawfurd justified his position for British intervention and mediation in a fight between two independent countries on the grounds of a possible war between the two, there was an underlying reason for his opinion. He believed, “It is the probability of our being their immediate neighbours at Munnipore, which has chiefly alarmed the Burmese Government.”

He informed that the Burmese were aware that if this was the case then their capital and the heart of their dominions were open to invasion either by land or water. This apprehension on the part of the Burmese was expressed by the Burmese negotiators on the 3rd of November but more fully in the conferences of the 5th and 10th of the same month. It is to deflect this anxiety of the Burmese that Crawfurd made the point about the British not wishing to occupy Manipur and insisted upon its independence.

The British indecisiveness with regard to the nature of the relationship with Manipur was visible in the negotiations for the treaty of Yandabo. In contrast to the confusing and multiple interpretations of Manipur and other areas on the north, the question towards Arakan was easier to be settled with the Burmese. Crawfurd wrote: “In reference to the Arakan frontier, I have much satisfaction in reporting, that no question whatever has arisen. The Burmese version of the Treaty of Yandabo is so full and clear upon this point, as to have fortunately

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23 ‘Extract from a letter from the Envoy to the Court of Ava’, dated 21st February 1827, Letters received by the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, MSA.
precluded the possibility of any exception being made on the part of the Burmese Government.\textsuperscript{24}

**IMAGINING THE PRE-COLONIAL AND THE POLITICS OF SURVEYING AND MAPPING**

In the discussion on the 6\textsuperscript{th} of November, the matter of Manipur was brought up by the British delegation. However, the Burmese negotiators proposed to postpone the subject, as they could not produce the map which they had promised. On the 10\textsuperscript{th} of November the conference was renewed at one o’clock with the question of Manipur. The Burmese negotiators laid a map exhibiting the frontier between Manipur and the Burmese territory “according to their own views” as Crawfurd wrote. There were other maps of Mergui, Tavoy, Ye, and Martaban, which were also produced. According to Crawfurd there was a difference between the two sets of maps: “The maps of the southern provinces were all old, but that of the Munnipore frontier had every appearance of being recently prepared”. Questioning the authenticity of the map, he wrote, “I have little doubt, [the map] was fabricated to answer the particular object they had in view, that of claiming a large portion of the principality of Munnipore.” The documents made the Burmese territorial possession extend “nearly to the walls of the Cassay capital.”\textsuperscript{25} The Burmese negotiators then went on to state that Gambhir Singh had, since the termination of the war, appropriated certain areas belonging to the Burmese and that British officers were present at Manipur. This was followed by a very long paper giving a mythological account of the origin of the Burman Empire, and proving by divine right, according to Crawfurd, “the claims of the King of Ava to certain Townships on the Munnipore frontier.”\textsuperscript{26} The Burmese were then requested to furnish them with all the copies of the paper, map, as well as any other documents connected with their claims to be laid before the Governor General. The Burmese officials promised to do so.

The envoy following the instructions did not conclude any agreement decisively with regard to the territorial dispute concerning Manipur. Instead by expressing and making the Burmese

\textsuperscript{24} From J. Crawfurd, Envoy, to George Swinton, Secretary to the Government, dated 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 1827, in Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General*, Appendix II, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{25} ‘Extract from a Journal by the Envoy to the Court of Ava dated the 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 1827’, Letters received by the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, MSA.

\textsuperscript{26} Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General*, p. 208.
agree that the matter be resolved between the Burmese envoy in Bengal and the Governor-General, he postponed any further discussion. During this time, the plan was to gather as much ‘local information’ as possible in the disputed territories. In the conference of the 10th November, as seen above, when the British envoy was asked to write directly to Gambhir Singh, he agreed to do so. On being asked, what he meant when Crawfurd said that he would communicate with Gambhir Singh – whether he meant to send these letters through the British or the Burmese, Crawfurd replied, “I will send letter by an officer of our party, if you choose, after he has executed his commission, he will proceed to Bengal through Akobah and Assam.” 27 The plan was not merely to stop any form of hostilities between Burma and Gambhir Singh. But the real reason is visible in a letter that he wrote to the Government in Bengal.

The Government will observe from the minutes of the conference of the 10th November, that I was anxious to send a British officer across to Munnipore for the purpose of collecting information, chiefly on the subject of the frontier between that State and Ava, and the Burman negotiators appeared at first to give their assent to this measure. After the conference in question, however, neither this point nor any other respecting Munnipore, was brought forward by the Burman authorities and on my part I carefully abstained from renewing the subject in any shape, for fear of exciting the well known jealousy of the Burmese Court on all such points as well as because I was satisfied that the negotiations in this respect had already been productive of all the results contemplated by the Government in my Instructions. 28

Having been thwarted in the plan to send a British officer through the territories of Burma to Manipur, the survey of the Manipuri areas towards the Burmese side was very soon carried out in the form of a revenue survey. Though the major focus of the survey was towards the Burmese frontier, other route information towards Manipur from Cachar and then to Burma was collected. The western side of the Ningthee in the Kabaw valley was surveyed. On the other side were the Burmese stockaded villages of Gendah and every effort was made to go from the Ningthee to Amarapura but it was “firmly though respectfully refused”. The British

27 ‘Extract from a Journal by the Envoy to the Court of Ava dated the 22nd February 1827’, Letters received by the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, MSA.
28 Extract from a letter from the Envoy to the Court of Ava dated 21st February 1827’ Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
Resident at the Capital of Burma was asked to exert his influence to obtain the necessary sanction. The revenue surveyor informed that the valley of Kabaw "with the exception of the southern part possessed by the Kalwee Rajah" was wholly depopulated and that all the inhabitants of the villages on the eastern bank of the Ningthee were completely under the influence of the Burmese. There was no prospect of making enquiries in that direction without the prior permission of the Government of Ava. Compounded by the want of provisions, he was forced to retire into the northern hills within Manipur. He managed to make barometrical measurements and established the latitude of all places of important observations of the mountains and through the chronometer the approximate longitude "with some degree of confidence".29

After the completion of the second survey by the revenue surveyor, Tucker, the Commissioner in Sylhet directed Captain Grant, who was attached to Rajah Gambhir Singh's Levy, to visit the eastern and south-eastern boundary of Manipur "in pursuance of the orders of the Supreme Government in letter dated 15th September 1826." Captain Grant's report contained his remarks and observations on the state of Manipur generally its ancient boundaries, present state and future prospects. In the private journal, Tucker noted, there was "much interesting information on the products of the country and the feelings and manners of the inhabitants not to be found in his official report." This is important to show that even before the envoy to Burma was sent the British had already planned to survey the areas of the Kabaw valley, to ascertain its boundary and gather other information. Since the demonstrations by the Burmese were not made at this time regarding Kabaw valley, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly drove the British to decide on such an endeavour. However, "the subject of the boundary question" had already been conveyed to the Commissioner in Sylhet in a letter of the 1st December 1826. Forwarding Grant's report, Tucker wrote, "It appears evident to me from the conduct of the Burmese local authorities in confining the population strictly to the eastern bank of the Ningthee that the court of Ava place the same construction on the treaty as we do for it is to the feature in their character to relinquish spontaneously what they deem themselves entitled to, or even to be backward in

29 Letter from Revenue Surveyor on duty to Major Hodgson, Surveyor General of India, camp in the Kubboo valley, dated 4th February 1827, Letters received by the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, MSA.
advancing a doubtful claim.” Tucker interpreted this to mean that the Court of Ava had decided the boundary between Manipur and Burma to be the Ningthee river. He further noted that if there was doubt at the Court of Ava “regarding the extent of Raja Gumbheer Sing’s rights under the treaty, those doubts must perceive strength from the delay which has occurred in the adoption of any decided measure on the part of the Rajah to work his possession of the country up to the western bank of the Ningthee.” This ‘failure’ on the part of Gambhir Singh, he believed had “arisen solely . . . in a desire on the part of Gumbheer Singh to adhere to the instructions communicated to him” through Tucker “which were not in any manner to invalue himself in a dispute with the Burmese authorities but whatever might happen to refer the matter for the consideration of Government.”

In consequence of Gambhir Singh’s ‘delay’ in adopting a decided measure for the possession of the western side of Ningthee, Tucker informed that Kubaw “which was lately one of the most populous flourishing district of Munnipore” was now “an uninhabited desert and which it must remain unless measures be adopted to encourage the inhabitants to return”. He asserted that Gambhir Singh should be permitted to establish thannahs or posts with detachments “for the protection of such of the inhabitants as may be induced to return and the court of Ava might be persuaded to refrain from exercising any restraint over such of the Munnipoorees at present in the Burman dominions who may be desirous of returning to their own country.” He also expressed that the continuance at Manipur of the European officers would “tend greatly to confirm the returning confidence of the people and to encourage absentees to return” since the residence of these officers at the capital of Manipur checked “the naturally arbitrary measures of their own rulers”. This measure of continuing the residence of European officers in Manipur was thought to impress the neighbouring states, especially Burma, “with the idea that the country is under British management and protection,” an idea in Tucker’s words, “I need hardly add is of considerable importance to the interests of the Munnipoorees and which Gumbheer Singh is therefore desirous to encourage.” There was another reason for which the stationing of these officers benefited the

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30 Letter from Tucker, Commissioner in Sylhet to G. W. Swinton, Secretary to Government in the Secret and Political Department, dated 13th March 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
British, as “it is absolutely necessary to have the means of procuring speedy and accurate intelligence of passing events in that direction [towards Burma]”.  

Captain Grant visited the western bank of the Ningthee opposite Kingnoo or Gendah, which according to him, was the south-eastern limit of Gambhir Singh’s re-conquest in the Kabaw valley. There he managed to have a meeting with the Burmese local authorities. But before this meeting, when he was within a short distance of the Ningthee, he received a verbal request from Kumbatwool to halt. He did not oblige to this request and instead immediately advanced and reached the river. On reaching the banks, he was met by a deputation of the principal Burmese local officials in Gendah. These officials asked a variety of questions, concerning the reason for his visit, the person who had sent him, and the reason why he advanced after having been requested by them to halt. In his report, Captain Grant informs that to the last question he replied, “[A]s the country on the side of the river belonged to the Rajah of Munnipore I did not conceive that they had any right to interfere and that I therefore paid no attention to their request.” This was followed by a response on the part of the Burmese officials that since “they had heard nothing to that effect from the king of Ava, they must consider the country theirs until desired by him to resign their claim.” However they informed Grant that they had refrained from establishing or keeping any armed force on the western side of the river.

Grant interpreted this statement to mean that the Burmese had “some idea of recovering Kubboo”, but “as their hope of doing so appears but small” he anticipated there would be “no great difficulty in getting them to resign their claim.” He substantiated his opinion, “The facts of their having recalled the Kubboos, who had returned and settled on this side of the river and their taking the most effectual means to keep them in Ava proper are strong argument in favour of the little hope they have of again recovering their influence in this country.” After this meeting, he wrote a letter to the Kumbatwool to prevent all misapprehensions as to the reasons for his coming. In the letter he informed that he had received orders from Calcutta to

31 Ibid.
32 Letter from Captain Grant, Gumbheer Sing’s Levy to Tucker, Commissioner, Sylhet, dated 5th February 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
visit the boundary. He also wrote that the country as far as the Ningthee had been the property of the Raja of Manipur since his re-conquest and that since the Court of Ava had no authority whatsoever on this side of the river, the Kumbatwool had no right to interfere. Grant informed the Commissioner in Sylhet that he had been treated with great hospitality by sending provisions for all his troops, and the Burmese officials behaved with a degree of respect, but he did not get any reply. Hoping that this should be interpreted as a measure of future diplomacy, he wrote, “As an approval of the good conduct of Kumbat wool towards us from the king of Ava might tend greatly to facilitate a friendly intercourse as well as to forward researches in this quarter, I respectfully beg to suggest that the resident at Ava may mention to the king the satisfaction of our Government at Kumbat wool’s hospitality.”

Grant intended to go to the Manipur river, according to him, “the ancient boundary to the south”, but he was requested not to enter that at present. As a result, he refrained from “exciting their jealousy by making a further attempt . . . in that direction.” Gambhir Singh’s re-conquest did not extend so far and Grant informed that “there can be no certainty of that part of the country being made over to him.” Thus, he put the Manipur river to be the southern limits of Manipur’s boundary whereas the Ningthee was the eastern limit. Having considered these territorial boundaries, he suggested the various frontier posts that could be developed in these areas. However, he refrained from entering into a detail plan on account of the “unsettled state of the country . . . until the boundaries are fixed”. But until the settlement of boundary took place as a result of the difficulty of keeping up a supply of provisions and the likelihood of producing disagreement, he stated that it was dangerous to push a detachment as far as the banks of the Ningthee.

Grant also reported that the few inhabitants of the Kabaw valley, who had returned from the eastern side, expressed great apprehension of their fate if they were made over to the Burmese again. According to him, they said that the whole population “if not prevented would retain, if most certain that the country were insured to the Munnipore Rajah.” Evincing the optimism that Ningthee would be settled speedily as the boundary, he wrote,

33 Letter from Captain Grant, Gumbheer Sing’s Levy to Tucker, Commissioner, Sylhet, dated 5th February 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
34 Ibid.
I should strongly recommend that the cession of the country should be made as favorably and with as much publicity as possible, as the Burmahs who wish to retain the population on their side of the river would otherwise endeavour to keep them as much in the dark on this subject as possible. With this view I should suggest that a deputation from both Governments should examine the boundary and that in their presence small thannahs should be fixed along the Munnipore side of the frontier. This would tend greatly to give confidence to the people who are all anxious to return.35

Convinced that such a course of action would follow soon, Grant charted out the future plans. He suggested that though stationing of a European officer for sometime on the frontier of Manipur might excite the jealousy of the Burmese officials, it would give both confidence to the people as well as prevent any disagreement, which was likely to occur between the two countries. He formed the last opinion on his understanding that the people of Manipur and Ava looked at each other with hatred and feelings of jealousy and mistrust. Calling for the necessary role of the British, he wrote, “I feel assured that it would require . . . little excitement to create a misunderstanding . . . might lead to the loss of all the advantages we have created for ourselves on this frontier.” Grant further informed that during the period of Burmese influence, Kabaw was ruled by three different Governors. The northern part was under the Raja of Samjok, a native Kabaw and “descendent of the Rajah’s who from time immemorial have been dependant on Munnipore.” The Raja returned sometime ago offering his submission to Gumbhir Singh but has recently, with all his people, returned to the Burmese territories. The central part was governed by Kumbatwool, a Burmese who commanded in Tamu during the seizure of that place and on its evacuation fled across the Ningthee where he then exercised his authority along the whole eastern bank of that river. In the third and southern division the Raja of Kabaw remained ruler till then. He, like Samjok Raja, was an inhabitant and descendant of the ancient Raja of the place and his mother who was still alive was a native of Manipur. His territory was then, according to Grant, the only inhabited part of Kabaw, and was “said always to have been the most populous”. Giving a historical account of Manipur, Grant wrote that previous to the great extension of territory acquired by the Burmese from their priority in the use of fire arms, “the Rajahs of Munnipore

35 Ibid.
and Bhong [Pong] (between whom a close alliance long subsisted) were the most powerful in this part of the world and the territories of the former are said then to have extended much beyond the natural limits." However, according to Pemberton, the Kumbatwool by then was nominated in charge of the whole territory on the eastern bank of the Ningthee river. On the question of the Samjok Raja, Pemberton corroborated Grant’s account. Pemberton informed that in the vicinity of Heirok river, the Samjok Raja was killed in 1812 with the whole of his division by Pitambar Singh when the latter aided the Burmese in their attempts to subjugate Manipur.

Grant also informed the strategic significance of the area in case of another war with Burma. The roads through the plains of Kabaw were good as to be perfectly passable for guns. If tranquillity prevailed in Manipur for a few years, it was expected that it would produce abundant supplies and the Rajah’s extended influence in the hills would command the services of several thousand porters, who could transport grain from Manipur to the stockaded position at Moreh where the British planned to make a large depot. From this spot the supplies could advance as far as required into the Burmese territories. In Grant’s opinion even if regular troops were not sent, the Manipuris would be able to cease a considerable diversion of the Burmese if they were attacked from another quarter. He calculated the number of “fighting men” in Manipur at upwards of three thousand. And if there were a favourable crop, a number of them who were currently settled in Bengal and Cachar would also return, doubling the number. If the Burmese authority could be advanced to allow the wish of the Manipuri captives in Ava to return to their houses, many thousand of fighting men would leave that country to reinforce Manipur. These captives, he said, would exceed the whole remainder of the scattered population. Even if this was not the case, arming and disciplining the remaining population “would be more than sufficient to command the

36 Ibid. According E. W. Dunn, “The Shan kingdom of Pong was formerly bounded on the north by the range of hills dividing Burma from Assam; south it extended to Khampat; west to the Yoma range; east to the Yunan. The capital was Mogoung. After varying fortunes, it was annexed to Burma in 1752.” Captain E. W. Dunn, Gazetteer of Manipur, 1886, p. 188.


38 Letter from Captain Grant, Gumbheer Sing’s Levy to Tucker, Commissioner, Sylhet, dated 5th February 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
chains of strong positions which ran the whole way from Munnipore to Kubboo against an enemy however numerous so wanting in enterprise as the Burmese.” He corroborated his point by making a historical comparison. When the Burmese invaded Manipur in 1819, it was after an engagement, which lasted eleven days, but the former were successful owing to a great superiority in numbers and arms enabled them “after sustaining a severe loss to enter the villages when the Munnipoorees had scarcely a single musket to oppose to them.”

As a part of the survey operations in Manipur, Lieutenant Pemberton, Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General and Surveyor, was sent to Manipur, especially on its frontier towards Burma. He made a sketch of the Kabaw valley in order to, in his words, “remove the obscurity that has hitherto enveloped the countries on our Eastern Frontier.” The sketch included the portions of the Maring hills, which separated it from Manipur on the west and Ningthee bounding it on the east. On the northern side it reached till the foot of the mountains that formed an unbroken chain of mountains from Ningthee to the Garo Hills and on the south till the Manipur river. This sketch was based on his own surveys. But in the process of making this, he had included those portions that he had not yet visited. For the later portion, he derived from two men, one inhabitant of Tamu in Kabaw, who, according to Pemberton, was carried off by the Burmese in 1826, and the other was a Manipuri who had recently succeeded in escaping from Gendah, which was in Burmese territory. He informed that both were intimately acquainted with the territory. He had already made a survey in 1826, but he was prevented from extending his surveys beyond Tamu, as the southern limit of his researches, because of the continuation of the hostilities between Manipur and Burma. In the second attempt he went up to Gendah on the eastern bank of Ningthee. He also found the place to be abundant in sal, teak and keos trees along with various other varieties. In his opinion there was an extensive formation of coal in the area and reported that at various places, which had been cultivated in the past, the inhabitants had deserted, though at certain

39 Ibid. Apart from the strategic importance of Kabaw, he also noted the resources and trade of the valley. Sal and teak timbers were produced in abundance apart from varnish, beeswax, elephants’ teeth and cloths. The valley was annually visited by the Chinese merchants in the cold season with velvets, woolen, gongs, etc. Productive salt springs, abundance of coal, and gold dust was found in the sands of the Ningthee according to him.

places the inhabitants were returning.\textsuperscript{41} He reported the cultural significance with which Ningthee was maintained by the Manipuris. The water of Ningthee were employed “for the purer purpose of washing from their implements of war the strains of blood by which they had been polluted in their previous contests.”\textsuperscript{42}

In Pemberton’s historical account of the Kabaw valley, it originally formed a portion of the Pong Raja’s country. According to him, the Pong king possessed a territory “which extended from China to Munnipore and from the eastern borders of Assam to within eight days journey of Umeereeporria”. The decline in his power had been a result of the rise of the Burmese which reached its power till Manipur, Pegu and Arakan. Though he once had a massive territory reaching the western frontier of China, he was by then under the “constrained submission to the Court of Ava”. Pemberton claims that a large part of this extensive territory was inhabited by the Shans “the aborigines of the soil who differ in language and appearance both from the Burmahs and Munniopoorees”.\textsuperscript{43} He informed that the Shans considered themselves the ancient subjects of the Pong Rajas from the earliest periods. On the relationship between the Pongs and Manipur, he wrote, “So intimate a friendship has existed between the princes of Pong and Munnipoor as to have occasioned the expressive figure of their resembling two kingdoms without an intermediate boundary.” This alliance continued until the time of the Manipur king Kiyamba\textsuperscript{44}, in whose reign the great grand father of the then Raja of Pong was said to have reached Manipur where he was entertained with marked distinction and hospitality by his friend. Use of pan and betel nut was supposed to have been introduced into Manipur for the first time on this visit by the Pong king. Pemberton also claimed that Kiyamba was presented with a golden pan box, which was in the possession of Chourjit. He also stated that it was probable that the previous intercourse of the Pong king with Chourjit enabled him to give the Manipuris more valuable information in

\textsuperscript{41} Letter from R. B. Pemberton, Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General and Surveyor to Major Hodgson, Surveyor General of India, dated February 25th 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.

\textsuperscript{42} Letter from R. B. Pemberton, Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General and Surveyor, to Major Hodgson, Surveyor General of India, dated February 25th 1827, Letters received by the Government, Vol. V, 1827, R-1/S-D/302, MSA.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{44} King Kiyamba reigned from 1467 to 1508 AD (or Sakabda 1389-1430). It is believed that the system of dating was introduced during his time. Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt, The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur: The Cheitharon Kumpapa, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 4.
the art of manufacturing the celebrated Manipuri cloths and scarves. The two kings were said to have left Manipur and returned together by the same route to Tamu, from whence they proceeded south to the extremity of Kabaw, giving to most of the villages in the route the names they bore. The Mithi river, flowing from the Maring hills to the Manipur river was said to have been a channel of communication between the kings. And the Nosiri hills were by mutual agreement considered the boundary of Manipur country in that direction. Pemberton informed “[F]or what equivalent this extensive cession of territory was made or whether it was dictated by the generous impulse of disinterested friendship I have not been able to ascertain but whatever be the probable motive of the fact I can feel no doubt from the circumstantial clearness with which the events are told.” Proceeding along the western base of the hills they reached the spot where they intended to separate on their return to their respective countries. Pemberton further narrated that before the kings separated, as they were enjoying some fruit, “the Pong Raja proposed that they should plant a mango tree from which might serve to perpetuate their long tried friendship.” This particular tree was said to be in existence during Pemberton’s surveys and “to have caused the name of Hynohoonem to be given to the spot where the circumstances occurred.”

Pemberton further informed that at this period the valley of Kabaw was divided into three principalities and governed by an equal number of chieftains who though independent of each other, acknowledged no supremacy but that of their appointed king, the king of Manipur. Of these, the Samjok king occupied the northern division extending to Mungsha, Tamu, the intermediate portion from Mungsha to Kumbat. The Kuleh Raja was said to have occupied the area from the hills between Yajgo and Kumbat to the Mutheree and Nurrinjeerah river. The Kuleh Rajah from the superiority of his family, according to Pemberton, “appeared to have enjoyed the greatest share of consideration and from the character given of him seems to have strengthened this adventitious advantage by the exhibition of many esteem able qualities”. His residence was at the spot called Kuleh and subordinate to him was another Raja living at Keregyan near the junction of the Meeth and Nurrinjeerah rivers. After the death of Kuleh Raja around 1815, there was no degree of

relationship between them and was succeeded in his title and offices by the Kingyam Rajah who soon after established himself with the sanction of the Burmese Government at Yajgo where he then resided.\textsuperscript{46} Of the impact of the contestations between the Burmese and the Manipuri kings on these Rajas, Pemberton wrote,

In the subsequent struggles for independence and conquest which have so long existed between the Munnipoorees and Burmahs Kubboo has frequently changed its masters. The Rajahs feeling themselves unable to cope with either power were glad to ensure their personal safety by a ready submission to the victor and on the part of the Shumjok Rajah this versatility of faith is said to have been accompanied with such extreme duplicity as to have acquired for him his present appellation of a doubled faced.\textsuperscript{47}

Pemberton reported that a few not unimportant consequences resulted from this information as conclusions. According to him, it was evident that the country in question originally belonged neither to the Rajas of Manipur nor the sovereigns of Ava but to those of Pong “who uniformly held possession of it from the earliest period”. Secondly, Kukambah, “while undisputed sovereign of the country” had made a formal resignation of the valley to his friend the Raja of Manipur. Since at that period Kuleh was considered the southern portion of the Kubboo valley, “by right of conquest alone could the Burmahs ever advance a claim to the territory”. He further contends, “if the strength of that argument be admitted it with equal justice be enforced in establishing the superior claim of the present Rajah of Munnipore who regained it by conquest during the last year.” During this event, Kombatwool, the Burmese representative at Gendah and the supreme authority in Kabaw was driven from it and fled to the opposite bank of the Ningthee. According to Pemberton, “he had never returned to resume his former office.”\textsuperscript{48} He justified the veracity of these historical accounts by observing the geographical features of the valley. But by the time Pemberton was making his surveys, there were obstacles that he had to face from the Burmese to go on a journey to Ava, until a reference was made to the Court of Ava. As a result, he retraced his journey to Tamu because of want of provisions, and could not proceed to the northern parts of the valley of

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Kabaw. He had no alternative but to return to Manipur for a fresh supply of provisions in order to continue his enquiries in that direction. After his unsuccessful attempts to reach Ava and having been forced to return, he surveyed the southern portion of the Manipur valley and from there to the Naga hills.

Captain Grant sent another letter reporting the developments in Manipur and the Kabaw valley with the news of the return of an envoy sent by Gambhir Singh to the Kaleh (or Kuleh) Raja. He clarified that the rumour of two members of the envoy of Gambhir Singh being killed was not correct but they were received and treated badly. He informed that after they reached Kaleh, they were put in irons with ropes round their necks and kept till orders were received from the Court of Ava to which the Kaleh Raja had reported of what he had done. They were then sent with the ropes still round their necks to Kumbatwool late Governor of Tamu, and the Governor on the opposite side of the Ningthee, who treated them with kindness and hospitality, and immediately released and allowed them to return to Manipur. They did not bring any answer either verbal or written to Gambhir Singh’s letter. As a result of this, he informed that Gambhir Singh was “greatly and justly incensed at the insult offered him . . . and his own feelings prompt him to immediate vengeance on the perpetration of the Kale Rajah”. But as the latter still continued to consider himself a vassal of Ava, and as it was not yet clear to whom that country would eventually belong, Grant counselled Gambhir Singh to “sacrifice personal feelings rather than take any steps which might probably lead to a breach with the Burmahs.” Along with the report of these proceedings, he forwarded “some notices regarding the ancient boundaries of Munnipoor” from Gambhir Singh. These were extracted from the Ningthourol or History of the Raja’s, a chronicle of events, which “has been kept up by the Rajahs of Munnipoor”, in Grant’s opinion, “from remote antiquity”. At the end of each year the events are said to have been written down. Though Gambhir Singh had sent this document, he had “no wish to extend his territory beyond its natural boundaries, the Ningthee and Nareemjeera, nor would it,” in Grant’s opinion, “be advisable that he should”. The principal object of sending the historical account was to oppose the “more extravagant and unreasonable claims of the Court of Ava.” Along with this, Grant forwarded translations of two letters received in June 1827 from the Samjok Raja, which according to him, proved the “actual possession of that country, at the time it
was written by the Munnipore Rajah, and the admission of the Rajah of its former
dependence on Munnipoor." 49

The historical account, which Grant translated, gives a narrative of the cession of Kabaw to
Manipur. According to it, in the year 1638 during the reign of Garib Niwaz (or Pamheiba),50
the Burmese Raja, Mungtara, sent a letter saying that since he was already the son-in-law, he
wished the Manipur king to give him another of his daughters. Having given one princess,
who was then residing in Ava and now with the demand for another, Garib Niwaz considered
it an insult and was angry at the proposal. He made a figure of cloth in the appearance of a
beautiful woman and sent it to the Ningthee, where with a golden, boat the arrival of the
princess was awaited. Pretending to take the princess to the boat, the Manipuris then seized
the Burmese officials and destroyed the boat. The Burmese king on hearing this said the
Manipuris were false, and then he invaded Manipur. However, he was defeated by Garib
Niwaz. Afterwards in the year 1657 Garib Niwaz advanced beyond the Noeejeera Hills, six
days' journey due east, and conquered the Raja of a country called Metoo and took that
country, and in the year 1661 advanced to the banks of the Irawaddi to a country called
Cheeking which he conquered and destroyed. Grant quoted a line, which in his narrative, the
Burmese king had spoken, "formerly we were great friends, I am your son-in-law, do not
continue your anger". After this, Garib Niwaz reconciled with the Burmese king and sent
another princess. But reaching Metoo on his return, the Burmese king informed him that two
of his villages to the north of the Irawaddi, were mutinous and requested to conquer them for
him. Garib Niwaz conquered both the villages. During his journey, an incident was reported.
While fighting, Garib Niwaz at Kongmuda Phoorada made a cut in the temple with his sword
which, according to Grant, was well known to the Burmese as the ruins of the temple and the
mark of the cut, he informed, remained. In this narrative, the Manipur thannahs were situated
on the east bank of the Ningthee at the villages of Bhunda, Keeyas Moorek, Tompling and
Mengking. These thannahs were stationed for the protection of the navigation of that river

49 From Captain F. J. Grant, Gumbheer Sing's Levy, To C. Tucker, Commissioner, Sylhet, dated 18 April 1827,
Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-
B/140, MSA.
50 The year given here is in Sakabda era, which begins from 78 AD. Garibniwaz ruled from Sak. 1631-1670 or
1709-1748 AD. But it has not been clearly founded as yet when the dating system of Sakabda was introduced
in Manipur. Parratt, The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur, p. 6.
and collecting the toll. The friendship between the two countries continued for the period of 282 years afterwards. 51

In this account, during the time of Bhaigyachandra(or Jai Singh), (the father of Gambhir Singh), his eldest brother Gour Shyam was the king, and the former was Jubarak. There was another request for a Manipuri princess, which was rejected by Gour Shyam. This time, Manipur was invaded and devastated because of the introduction of muskets in Ava by the Europeans. After this Gour Shyam died and Bhaigyachandra became the king. After two more invasions and destructions of the villages, the Manipuris were unable to attend to the possessions on the opposite side of the Ningthee. It also informs that there was no king of Kaleh, Kabaw or Samjok and that the whole valley belonged to Manipur. After Chourjit became the king, Marjit quarrelled with him and the latter fled to Ava. With the help of the Burmese, Marjit was made the king of Manipur and Chourjit and Gambhir flew to Cachar. It was during this period that the Burmese took possession of the Kabaw valley and separated it from Manipur. And having re-conquered the portions of the Kabaw valley as stated above by Gambhir Singh, the account concluded that he still held those territories. 52

Along with this historical account, Grant translated two recent letters from the Samjok king to Gambhir Singh. According to the first, the Samjok Raja informed that “being situated between the two countries, [of Ava and Manipur],” from time to time his villages had been devastated. On this account, he had sent messengers to the king of Ava and asked for permission to be friends with the Manipur king. In reply, he was permitted to establish trade and friendly intercourse. In agreement with these, he was stated to have sent this letter with his friendly wishes. In the second, which was received around the same time, the Samjok Raja, wrote, “I am prevented by the presence of the Burmah who remains with me to call myself your servant as were he to inform the Ava Rajah I would certainly be put to death. We from time immemorial till lately our fathers and fore-fathers beyond remembrance, were your servants. On that account allow me again to establish our villages. Should you be

51 Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S- B/140, MSA..
52 Ibid. There was another translation of an account, which specified the exact boundaries at the time of Kiyamba and is very similar to the account above given of the relationship with the Pong king.
pleased to send letters send one to be read before the Burmah, and a separate one for your
servant." Forwarding these letters to the government, Tucker was of the opinion that
Grant's translation of the ancient history of the chronicle of events of the kings of Manipur
did not appear "to throw any light on the subject, with reference to which alone it might be
useful at the present moment. I mean the first occupation of the district of Kalee by the
Burmese." He reported that from this document it would appear that all the possessions
formerly held by the kings of Manipur to the east of the Ningthee river were "wrested from
them upto the year 1692 of the era current in that country corresponding nearly with 1770 A.
D. or about 57 years ago."54

FROM TERRITORY TO BOUNDARY: SETTING UP THE STAGE

After Grant's historical accounts dealing with the boundary of Manipur, Pemberton sent a
map of the whole territory of Manipur. This was based on his surveys and he managed to
cover a greater portion of Manipur than his earlier sketch. Along with Manipur, the map also
included the portions of the Kabaw valley called the Kaleh "extending from Kunbhat to the
junction of the Munnipore River with the Narinjeera." This last tract in his map was "merely
copied from the sketch" he had already sent of Kabaw but his subsequent enquiries gave him
the accuracy of his information. But since he had not been able to make direct surveys, he
based his information on the people of Manipur who had travelled to these areas. And he
found that some of the information was contradictory. On the southern limit of the Kabaw
valley, which was to form the boundary between Manipur and Ava, he suspected that
because of the lapse in time since its conquest by the Burmese, they would strenuously
oppose any attempt to restore it to Manipur though he contended that this area originally
belonged to Manipur. He informed that during the war, a detachment of the troops of Gamhir
Singh crossed Anal hills and expelled the Burmese from Kabaw as far south as Khampat.
After capturing Tamu, the Raja also marched to Samjok and Moufoo and continued to
possess the territory between these two points of Moufoo and Khampat. However, the

53 Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/5-
B/140, MSA.
54 From C. Tucker, Commissioner, Sylhet to G. Swinton, Secretary to the Govt. in the Secret and Political
Department, Fort William, 1st May 1827. Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General
on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/5-B/140, MSA.

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Burmese had occasionally crossed the Ningthee and cultivated the strip of valley along the eastern bank of the Ungoching hills. Gendah, he informed, was then the principal post held by the Burmese on the east bank of the Ningthee and by conquest they had obtained possession of the whole country extending north to the foot of the Singboo mountains, which separated the dominions of Pong from Assam. Their influence had also prevailed among the "tribes", in Pemberton's words, "inhabiting the hills north of Moufoo but it must be confined to such villages as are but little removed from the River, the fierce and war-like character of these hardy mountaineers having frequently enabled them not only to resist the Burmah's but to dictate terms to the Sumyook Rajah one of their tributaries who now resides at a village opposite Moufoo on the left bank of the Ningthee." On the necessity of drawing a well-defined boundary he wrote, "As there is but little probability of Kuleh reverting to Muneepore, some other boundary must be sought sufficiently well defined to obviate the chance of future understanding and with our present imperfect knowledge of the country the following appear the most advisable limits." He went to mark out such a possible boundary line. But while making these boundary lines, there was a consideration of extending the territory to be included within Manipur, so as to connect it with Assam. He stressed the urgency of settling the matter as soon as possible:

Should it be determined to make a final adjustment of the boundary between Muneepore and Ava during the ensuing season it appears desirable that nothing should be wanting to give the measure its due weight and importance in the minds of the parties principally interested and unless some decisive steps are immediately taken it is highly probable that the Burmahs who have never renounced their claim will again endeavour to re-establish themselves in Kubo, any attempt to effect which will of course be opposed by the Rajah of Munnipoor and must in its consequences lead to a renewal of those scenes of bloodshed and devastation the remembrance of which still rankling in the bosom of every Munnipooree renders him peculiarly prompt to avail himself of every plausible opportunity for avenging the wrongs inflicted by a merciless foe.55

55 Letter from Lieutenant R. B. Pemberton, Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General to Major Hodgson, Surveyor General of India, dated July 8th 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
George Swinton, Acting Chief Secretary to the Government informed Tucker, Commissioner in Sylhet that the Governor-General expressed "his high approbation of the firmness, judgment and temper displayed by Captain Grant in all his proceedings and correspondence with the local Burmese officers on the Munnipore frontier". Apart from Grant, Pemberton's "persevering and meritorious exertion" were also solicited. In consequence of their works, Captain Grant and Lieutenant Pemberton were directed to prepare to act as the British Commissioners to meet the Burmese authorities who were expected to be deputed by the Court of Ava to settle the frontier between Burma and Manipur. For the choice of these two officers, Swinton wrote, "in the selection of Captain Grant and Lieutenant Pemberton His Lordship in Council entertained a confident persuasion that their former services afford the fullest assurance that the duty now assigned to them will be ably and satisfactorily performed."56

A copy of the sketch made by Lieutenant Pemberton along with the information collected by the two officers had already been transmitted to Major General Sir Archibald Campbell to negotiate the boundaries of Manipur with the Burmese in addition to the correspondence with the Commissioner in Sylhet. Of the decisions, Campbell was informed,

His Excellency in Council is decidedly of opinion that the right of Gumbheer Singh should be maintained to the northern and middle portions of the Kubbo valley (bounded by the Ningthee to the Eastward) and with regard to Kale or the southern portion of the valley, you will not have failed to observe that the acquisition of that portion would secure the marked and desirable boundary of the Narinjjerah river. The claim to this portion of the valley however His Lordship in Council is satisfied, we could not reasonably expect to be ceded by the Burmese, and the annexation of it to Gumbheer Singh's dominions must therefore become a subject of negotiation, to which further allusion will be made in the sequel of this letter.57

56 Letter from G. Swinton, Acting Chief Secretary to the Government to C. Tucker, Commissioner in Sylhet, dated 23rd November 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
57 'Extract from the Instructions to Major General Sir Archibald Campbell dated 15th June 1827', Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
The two newly appointed British Commissioners were to regulate their proceedings in the spirit of the Instructions to Campbell and to prepare to act in conformity with any intimation they might get from Campbell. As a preliminary measure they were instructed to suggest to Raja Gambhir Singh "to fix his posts on such line to the southward as will include the Northern and Central districts of the Kubboo valley, regarding his right to which, by actual re-conquest, no discussion must be allowed." They were also informed that the annexation of the Lower portions was made contingent on negotiations with the court of Ava, of which they were to be apprized by Campbell. With regard to the portions of Kale they were informed of the desirability of surveying the suggested line of boundary formed by the Manipur river, and to ascertain whether that portion could be ultimately annexed to the dominions of Raja Gambhir Singh or not. This indecisiveness on the part of the Governor-General had been occasioned by the lack of information of the territory in that portion but the advantages of the river being the boundary had already been assumed. They were also to estimate "with more precision the amount of pecuniary sacrifice which it might be expedient to incur by a remission of some portion of the fourth Instalment, with a view to induce the Burmese Court to acquiesce in the arrangement." However, the Commissioners were instructed that they would abstain from "any step which might excite the alarm or jealousy of the local Burmese authorities, and will not assume the office of commissioner until they are actually met by the commissioner deputed from Ava and bearing a letter from Major General Sir Archibald Cambell, or written by his authority, apprizing them that the parties are those appointed by His Burmese Majesty to treat with them." They were also instructed to be cautious while writing if any occasion arose to the British authorities via Ava. They were informed, "Such letters should contain simple statements of facts, unaccompanied by any opinions which it might not be desirable the court of Ava should know." They were to adopt the precaution of sending duplicates through the Commissioner, to be forwarded from Bengal. In order to facilitate Captain Grant in his discussions with the Burmese Commissioners, he was allowed to employ a Burmese interpreter. For the aid afforded to Lieutenant Pemberton for his survey

58 Letter from G. Swinton, Acting Chief Secretary to the Government to C. Tucker, Commissioner in Sylhet, dated 23rd November 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
of Manipur, Gambhir Singh was presented a Gun in addition to a “suitable letter” conveying the acknowledgement of the Governor-General.59

On the same day that the intimations were sent to the Commissioner in Sylhet, instructions were also sent to Major General Sir Archibald Campbell. His readdressing the Burmese officials on the subject of the Manipur boundary was approved. He was also informed that if he was not aware of any objection, he was authorized to declare to the Burmese authorities that Captain Grant and Lieutenant Pemberton, who were in Manipur, were prepared to meet and settle the issue of Manipur boundary on the principle adverted to in the Instructions of the 15th June 1827 (discussed above). He was also informed to maintain the right of Gambhir Singh to the northern and central portions of Kabaw valley, with the Ningthee for the eastern boundary but reserving the question of the annexation of Kaleh, the southern division of that valley to Gambhir Singh’s dominions, as a point to be adjusted between their respective Governments. On the southern boundary of Manipur, he was instructed not to press on the Government of Ava, if he saw reason to think that the extension of a territory, in which the British influence was known to prevail, and in which British officers were employed, “would create serious jealousy and alarm”. He was also informed that the Raja of Kaleh would not willingly submit to Gambhir Singh’s authority and “his constrained subjection therefore might lead to disturbances in that quarter and to intrigues on his part to engage the Burmese in his support.” 60

Before this instruction, Campbell had already communicated to the Burmese officials on the question of the Kabaw valley. In reply to another letter that he had been sent on the question of the Manipur boundary and the release of prisoners of various countries taken in war by the Burmese, the letter had stated that after the rains, officers should be appointed on both sides to settle the boundary question. It also informed of a petition to the king of Ava for a royal order prohibiting Burmese soldiers bearing arms from passing the Ningthee river until the

59 Letter from Acting Chief Secy to Government to R. Tucker, Commissioner in Sylhet, dated 23rd November 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.

60 ‘Extract from the Instructions to Major General Sir Archibald Campbell dated 23rd November 1827’, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
Manipur boundary was definitely settled. After he got the instructions from the Government he announced the appointment of Captain Grant and Pemberton as Commissioners from the British side and informed that they would arrive on the Meng-the to the Burmese authorities residing at Gendah probably by the last week in December 1827 or 1st January and hoped that the Burmese Commissioners would meet them on time. On the nature of the proceedings to be expected, he wrote,

> Upon this important duty I earnestly beg and trust your commissioners may be instructed to meet the British unshackled from all illiberal orders or prejudices and that they will be guided in their decisions coolly and dispassionately by the truths to be elucidated from the evidence for to which their enquiries may be directed, a principle which I pledge myself the British commissioners will make the rule of their conduct.

However, because of the failure in transmitting the dispatches of the above letter written on the 28th of October, Campbell had postponed the arrangement of the meeting of the commissioners on the Ningthee. It was now fixed for the first week in February 1828. And he stated that the intervening time should be used for “making the necessary communications to Captain Grant and Pemberton.” In a letter he wrote on the 9th of December 1827, before intimating the Government of the change in schedule, to the Woonghee and Generalismo Maha-men-klah Rajah, Campbell gave the following reason, “from the reported unsettled state of the weather in that country [Manipur] at so early a period together with other circumstances, the English general wishes, the said meeting of commissioners to be postponed to the first week in February next.”

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61 The English General to the Generalissimo and Woonghee Mon-gyee-Maha-men-klah rajah, dated 27th October 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.

62 Letter from Major General A. Campbell, to the Generalissimo and Woonghee Men-gyee-maha-men-klah-rajah, dated 28th October 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.

63 Letter from A. Campbell to George Swinton, Secretary to Government, Secret and Political department, dated 12th December 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.

64 Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
Adding an omission in his dispatch of the 12th of December, Campbell informed that the Court of Ava had not made any remark on the communication he made as to the British views of what ought to form the boundary line between the kingdom of Ava and Manipur in the Kabaw valley. In his opinion, since the communication to the court of Ava was made with Pemberton’s sketch, the Burmese commissioners would at once prepare into a discussion with the British Commissioners. He also informed that since the mode of conveyance from Rangoon to Ava was “so very uncertain (being by water) and the period fixed for the meeting of the commissioners being the first week in February”, he requested Grant and Pemberton, instead of being left to depend on him for his instructions, they might be furnished with information and instructions directly from Bengal. He also intimated that he could send an officer to Ava, who, he was promised by the Burmese, would be allowed to proceed from thence to join the British commissioners. He believed that the appearance of this officer at the capital would tend, “in the first place, to impress the court with the importance” that the British attached “to the settlement of the business in question”. Secondly, it would also enable the British “to obtain much useful information on the state of the country between the Burmese capital and the Valley of Kubbo.”

In reply to the above letter, Campbell was informed of the decision to depute Lieutenant Raulinson to Ava. He was informed that the officer would also be the bearer of any letters which Campbell might “think proper to address to the British commissioners, captain Grant and Lieutenant Pemberton apprising them of the basis”, on which he would inform the Burmese Government, the settlement of the Manipur boundary was to be made. On the same day, Tucker, the Commissioner in Sylhet was also informed on the subject of the Manipur boundary along with the copies of the correspondence with Campbell. He was asked to inform Grant and Pemberton to prepare to meet the Burmese Commissioners in the first week of February. He was informed that it was uncertain whether the Court of Ava would give its consent to the deputation of a British officer as the bearer of letter to the British

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65 Letter from Major General, A. Campbell, to George Swinton, Secretary to Government, Secret and Political department, 26th December 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
66 Ibid.
67 Extract from a letter from G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, to Major General Sir Archibald Campbell, dated 28th December 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
Commissioners from Campbell or would itself depute a special commissioner from the capital to meet those officers. Nevertheless he was instructed of the procedures that the British Commissioners were to take:

[W]hether our commissioners shall have to treat with the Burmese Local authorities with whom Captain Grant has already been in communication or with a commissioner specially deputed from Ava, they will be careful to ascertain in the first place that the party with whom they may treat is duly accredited by His Burmese Majesty, and aware of the basis on which Major General Sir A. Campbell will have apprized the Burmese Government that the question of the Boundary is to be adjusted, namely the Ningtee to the eastward and a convenient line of demarcation to the southward of the central district of the Kubbbo valley.68

With respect to the Ningthee as the boundary to the eastward and the retention by Gambhir Singh of the northern and middle portions of Kabaw, which had been reconquered from the Burmese and occupied by his troops since the war, those points were to be assumed as “matters about which no dispute is to be admitted.” The British Commissioners were to meet any attempt on the part of the Burmese to question Gambhir Singh’s right to such reconquests by a declaration that

the basis in question is that on which alone they can proceed to an adjustment with a view to the refutation of the claims which it is probable the Burmese Deputies will be instructed to prefer to the greater portion of the Munnipore country as belonging to Ava or its tributary states, but the British commissioners will be prepared distinctly to declare that provided that the Burmese Government readily consents to fix the boundary as may be proposed by us, we have no wish or intention to claim for Gumbheer Sing any territory beyond the Ningtee, Eastward, or to extend his dominions further to the southward than the Munnipore and Narinjeerah Rivers whatever other territories may appear to have once belonged to Munnipore.69

68 Letter from G. Swinton, to C. Tucker, Commissioner in Sylhet, dated 28th December 1827, Correspondence Letters between Fort William & Governor General on the North East Frontier, 1827, R-1/S-B/140, MSA.
69 Ibid.
The decided instructions from the Governor-General to John Crawfurd, the Civil Commissioner sent to Burma after the conclusion of the war laid out the framework of negotiating between the two empires. Despite the success of the British in the war, they were not willing to risk another confrontation but rather the policy was to put tactful manoeuvre, negotiation, and to build up a pool of information taking advantage of the contentions in various places over demarcation of territory.

The seventh article of the Treaty of Yandabo reads as follows:

In order to cultivate and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two Governments, it is agreed that accredited Ministers, retaining an escort or safe-guard of fifty men, from each shall reside at the Durbar of the other, who shall be permitted to purchase or to build a suitable place of residence of permanent materials, and a Commercial Treaty upon principles of reciprocal advantage will be entered into by the two high contracting Powers.  

In agreement with this article on the 31st of December 1828, Major Burney was appointed resident at the court of Ava. On the 23rd of November 1826 a commercial treaty had already been concluded between the Burmese and the British. However, the question of the boundary settlement was not yet over and it was highly contested by both the parties.

Commenting on the diplomatic intrigues and manoeuvres during the negotiations, Burney wrote, “I discovered that he[Lanciago] had been commissioned by the King to endeavour to extract from me, what chance his Majesty has of recovering possession of the Tennasserim Provinces.” Burney informed that the Court was “extremely anxious on this point but that the Ministers are waiting to find some good and auspicious opportunity for making an overture to me on this subject and that their pride debars them from declaring their wishes to me at once.” He recorded that the Siamese and the Malay states had already shown enthusiasm of exchanging these territories with theirs. Upon this, Lanciago was reported to have said that if this territory was ceded to the Siamese, the Burmese would wrest it back from them and that

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any arrangement on the part of the British to guarantee this territory to the Siamese would lead to another war. Burney was also told by Lanciago that the Burmese officials believed that one of the principal objects of his visit was "to negotiate the retrocession of the Tennasserim territory and that they are surprised that I have not yet said any thing on this subject."71

The Burmese according to Burney tried to amuse him by declaring, "if the English and Burmese were only united in a sincere friendship they could conquer the whole world!" On this, Burney wrote, "The speech has been so often made to me by the other Ministers as well as by a Moung yeet that I really think they believe the truth of it." He partly blamed the earlier British negotiator for this demeanour on the part of the Burmese. He wrote,

I think some of our negotiators by talking to them about "the two great countries" and treating their officers with profound respect handing them to chairs and reasoning with them have prevented their forming notions of their own rank and station in civilized society. . . . I know no better mode of checking their desire of again measuring their strength with us than by letting them see that we consider them as an ignorant and semi-barbarous race a little better than the natives of the Andamans of whom they have heard.72

This, in some sense, gives a view of the character, and the outlook of Burney, who would become a very crucial personality in the negotiations for the Kabaw valley, vis-à-vis the Burmese.

Though earlier efforts of Pemberton to reach Ava from Manipur had been thwarted, he was finally permitted to do so once the negotiations for the Kabaw valley had started. He left Manipur on the 14th of July 1830 to join the Resident in Ava. Burney in his journal wrote that the Burmese Ministers "felt some anxiety at hearing that Lieutenant Pemberton was coming with a large party of Cassayers and Sepoys". Accordingly, he was asked to write to Pemberton to leave a portion of his troops, which he followed by asking Pemberton to leave

71 Journal entry for July 23rd 1830 by Major H. Burney Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 5, National Archives of India (NAI).
72 Journal entry for August 5th 1830 by Major H. Burney Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 5, NAI.
a portion of his followers two or three day’s journey in the rear, and not to come to the capital with a larger party than what might be "absolutely necessary". 73

Before this the Burmese officials had already pointed out the role of the British officers in Manipur in advancing the claims of Manipur. In a letter written by the Burmese Ministers on the 25th of June 1830, they had stated that though the affairs of Manipur had not been settled, the English officers at Manipur had fixed flags and placed guards. They also informed that when they were "on the point of sending notice of this, the Resident Major Burney arrived and the whole of this business from the commencement was related to him." They further wrote, "Living and substantial witnesses can prove it (the territory in dispute on the Western side of the Ningthe) to be within the Burmese Empire, and not to belong to Munipore District and for the satisfactory hearing of the English chief, we have written all the particulars”. In the letter they wrote that having heard of the developments they informed of the role of the English officers in Manipur to "prevent quarrels and disputes on the frontier”. The decision to call one of the officers from Manipur was taken after this. It also mentioned that the "Khyaung-ma-gyee or Nan-twee should be pointed out in order that it may be known whether it exists or not." For this purpose people had been sent, and the English officer was asked to be accompanied by "some of his own men" to "accompany the people who were sent for the purpose of calling the English officer and at the same time of seeing the Khyaung-ma-gyee.” 74

THE NEGOTIATION

While the British were surveying to find out the exact locations of the boundaries and territories that it possessed, the Burmese were employing their own method of locating their territory and boundary. An examination was made by the Burmese from the account of the Burmese governors to ascertain the territories governed by each, with its extent and boundary in the Burmese year 1126 and 1145 and later on deposited in the Royal Treasury. A portion

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73 Journal entry for July 30th 1830 by Major H. Burney Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 5, NAI.
74 Translation of a letter addressed by the Ministers of the King of Ava to George Swinton Chief Secretary to Government on the 25th June 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 6, NAI.
of the English translation of the account reads as follows: “In the year 1145 on the 4th of the waning of the moon . . . examined state: That to the Southwest at a distance of 12 Tains, the Khyen village of Malunhwotte on the range of the Yoma mountains forms the boundary. On the other side the territory of the Munipooreean Khyen meets it. To the Northwest, it extends 8 tains to the Yoma mountains, and on the other side, the territory of the wild Khyens meets it.” Another person gave the following account:

In the year 1145 on the 5th of the waxing of the moon Tagoo, Nga thau-bain, the zemindar of the village of Panyoo, born on a Friday aged 30 being examined declared. My great, great grandfather, great great father, grand father, and father successively governed the old city of Khanbat and the districts attached. To the southwest it extends as far as the Tharabhee Khyens on the Yoma mountains. To the west a distance of upwards of 200 tas, it extends as far as the Zaleeya Khyens in the Yoma mountains. To the northwest, following the windings of the Yoma mountains, is the river Nan twee called (by the Burmese) the Khyoung ma gyee. On the other side the Kupalem Khyen hills and the Munipore territory meet it.75

In a record of the discussion which took place on the third day of the increasing moon Wazo, in the year 1192 (22nd June 1830), the Burmese officials noted in the discussion that took place in 1190: the “English officers in Cathay” charged the Burmese officials with “broken faith, and have also denied the existence of the little river.” They also announced that the map that the English officers had could not be subscribed to by the Burmese. On the question of the British officers in Manipur putting up flags it recorded, “After the English officers placed the flags etc. they returned. To this act we did not agree but we considered that if we drove away the people who were posted in these towns or pulled out the flags it would be the means through little people of bringing great men and great countries into difficulty. We therefore recalled the Woondouk and Than dau zen.”76 Claiming the territorial possessions of the Burmese in the disputed boundary by means of using maps as well as historical claims, the officials’ statement continues: “In the map the little river is drawn large and the large

75 Translation of a paper enclosed in the letter addressed by the Burmese Ministers to the Chief Secretary to Government on the 25th June 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 6, NAI.
76 Translation of a paper delivered to Major Burney by the Burmese Ministers on the 25th June 1830 and a copy of which paper was enclosed in the letter of the same date to Mr. Chief Secretary Swinton. Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 6, NAI.
river small but that the little river is there is true.” They asserted that all the Burmese officers had passed through this little river, while going from Ava to Manipur. They wrote, “The Shans call it Nan and the Khyens call it Twee. The Burmans call it Khyoung ma gyee.” It also stated that on the other side of this little river was a range of mountains called the Yoma mountains and that they extended northward to Arracan and beyond and to the southward after passing the towns of Young zeen yo kha rain, Ysee dougta Bhaain etc fall into the sea. It further noted, “Now the towns of Tamoo, Khan-bat, Thoung thwat etc which are now said to belong to Munipore are on the east side of these mountains. On the west side of them are the towns and villages belonging to Cathay and Mwe yen (Muring).”77 In order to substantiate the point they claimed that they were in possession of all the official documents connected with these areas.

Quite comparable to the historical claims of the Manipuri document, which Grant produced, the Burmese also used both ‘ancient’ records as well as records from the more recent past. They also made reference to the Treaty of Yandabo to substantiate their position:

In the year of 1186 and 7 when at war with the English, in the moons of the Pyatho and Tabodwe, we heard that the English forces had arrived and were distressing Tamoo and Thoung thwat and Khanbat. We sent the General of the Northern Division, . . . who arrived at Nat Kywon Aoung mye (Gendu) and the English forces encamped at Tamoo mouk Kwontoung. In the same year of 1187 on the 4th day of the waning of the moon Taboung we and the English general came to terms at Yandaboo, and made a Treaty. At that time it was agreed that each party should withdraw their forces which was done with good faith. The English General retired from Yandaboo. This Yreaty of Yandaboo is in existence. At that time no mention was made of taking the towns of Tamoo, Thoung thevat, Khanbat etc. from us.78

77 Translation of a paper delivered to Major Burney by the Burmese Ministers on the 25th June 1830 and a copy of which paper was enclosed in the letter of the same date to Mr. Chief Secretary Swinton. Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 6, NAI.
78 Ibid.
The Burmese gave a contradictory account to the claims of Manipur's account of the fight between Chourjit and Marjit and the subsequent wresting away of these territories form Manipur to Burma.

The translation of the record of the discussion which took place in regard to the boundary of Manipur between the Burmese and the English officers at Mee gyouong dwen on the 10th of the waxing moon Photho in the Burmese year 1191 gives us an interesting insight into the ways in which negotiation took place on the disputed sites. The dialogue between the two parties is reproduced below:

The English officers say: The map sent by the Burmese Commissioners is an incorrect one; we will shew that it is so and we will explain in order that it may be made correct.

The Woondouk and Thandauzen say: The territory has always been subject to us, and the map we have prepared of it is a correct one.

The English officers say: We will now go with the Burmese and see if the map is correct or not. We can go on foot from the village of Moreh to Munipore, without crossing any river.

The Woondouk and Thandauzen say: Every man who goes that road has to cross that stream, and it is true that there is such a stream.

The English officers say: In order to prove that the map of the Burmese Chiefs is incorrect, we can now go with the Woondouk to Munipore without crossing any water. They ask, is this Khyoung me gyoo as large as the Than la wa tee?

The Woondouk and Thandauzen say: This Khyoung ma gyee is the largest stream on the road. Sometimes men cannot cross it. When it can be crossed it is crossed.

The English officers ask where does this stream come from?

The Woondouk and Thandauzen say: It comes from between the hills to the eastward of Munipore. It passes Eye-mwon, then Tswot poun and comes to Tamoo.
The English officers say: The map of the Burmese Chiefs is so drawn that from the place in which we now are we cannot go to Munipore on foot without crossing a river.

The Woondouk and Thandauzen say: That map was prepared for consideration only. When the officers came how many streams did they meet with from Then ban to this place? From Then ban to this there are five streams. The officers sent a map with a red line marked in it. Have they a copy of it with them? 79

The conference between the two parties ended with an uncertainty of whether or not the negotiation would continue. In order to counter the Burmese maps, it was very urgent and important for the British to produce maps for these contested territories. For this purpose, the British officials were producing new maps as well as relying on the older maps that were produced earlier. Gibson’s map of the Dominion of Burma, for instance, was requisitioned by the Resident in Ava in the beginning of 1831. 80

It was remarkable how each party tried to put forth the arguments in the conference. At one point, a Burmese official said that Captain Pemberton on his way from Manipur to Kendat had crossed the disputed river marked by the Burmese in their map. Pemberton agreed that he indeed had crossed a stream but it was a mountain torrent and that it corresponded in no respect with the large and broad river marked in the map as running along the whole length of Manipur and Kabaw territory. He also informed the Burmese officials that he could have passed from Manipur to Kendat without crossing this mountain torrent. He asserted the authenticity of his statement by pointing out that he had stopped on the banks of the mountain torrent with the Burmese messengers, who had gone with him on their way from Manipur. And the stream they had crossed and the river marked on the Burmese were in no respect the same. 81

79 Translation of the Record of the discussions which took place in regard to the Boundary of Munipore, between Woondouk Maha Men-gyan yaza and Thandau zen Maha Men-the ze ye thoo and the English officers at Mee young dwen on the 10th of the waxing moon Photho, in the Burmese year 1191, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 6, NAI.
80 Foreign Department Political Proceedings 1831 March 11 No. 82, NAI.
81 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI.
The ‘confusion’ or the disagreement between the two rivers, one on the Burmese map and the other river that Pemberton referred to was at the centre of the conflict over the boundary dispute in the Kabaw valley. The Burmese claimed that Ningthee and Chindwin was not the same river whereas the British and the Manipuri claim was that they referred to the same river in two different languages. The Burmese claimed that the Ningthee river was the Manipuri name for Nantwee river, the small mountain torrent near the Manipur river Lokchao, which Pemberton crossed. The Burmese officials claimed that when the British used Ningthee the Burmese understood it as the Nantwee. In fact, the Burmese had all along been maintaining the ignorance of the Manipuri name for Chindwin, and that Ningthee was an English corruption of Nantwee being composed of the Shan and Chin names for water. In a very skilful manner, the Burmese had managed to deploy the use of maps for territorial representations and claims. As Burney informs,

After some discussion I saw clearly that there are two little streams one called by the Burmese the Khyoung ma-gyee and by the Munipoorean Lok-chao, running towards Tumoo from the northwest and the other which is still small called by the Shans Nan-twe, running from the westward and south ward and joining the former (the Lok-chao) but that in the Burmese map those two small streams are made into one large and extensive river the lower part of which is noted down as Nantwee and the upper part as Khyoung ma-gyee.82

With the aid of Captain Pemberton, the Resident brought out the “inaccuracy or untruth of several assertions”, which the Burmese had advanced. The British officers argued that Chindwin river was called by the Manipuris Ningthee, “a pure Munipoorean word”, signifying beautiful, and not a corruption of Nan-twee, as the Burmese Ministers had asserted. Burney informed that there was no such large river as that marked to the westward of the Chindwin in the two maps sent to Bengal by the Ministers. But, he reported the Burmese technique, “it appears that two small mountain streams, one called by the Burmese Khyoung ma-gyee and by the Munipooreeans Lok Chas, flowing from the northwest, and the other

82 Journal entry for the 18th of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI. In a letter from R. Boileau Pemberton, Commissioner and Surveyor to Eastern Frontier to the Chief Secretary to the Government, written on the 9th of November 1830, he claimed that according to local sources the Kabaw name for the Lokchao river was Numloong different from the other river Nantwee. Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 16, NAI.

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called by the Khyens Rem tine and probably by the Shans Nan twee, flowing from the southward and westward and joining the first have been removed from their proper situation and direction and converted into the broad and extensive river marked in the Burmese maps.” It was also pointed out that Major General A. Campbell who was heading the British in the Treaty of Yandabo “never admitted the Burmese right to the valley of Kubo, nor ordered our officers to quit it at the close of the war, nor have Gumbheer Sing’s garrisons, down to this date, retired from the principal towns in that territory, as the Burmese Ministers had maintained.” The British officers gave ‘proofs of the facts’, “that Manipur did hold Kubo valley occasionally in ancient times, as well as for a period of twelve years during the reign of Choorjeet Sing and his elder brothers, and that Gumbheer Sing and his followers did not retake possession of all the towns in that territory, between Sumgok and Khanbat, before the conclusion of the Treaty of Yandabo.” This was denied by the Burmese. To counter these ‘proofs of other facts’ the Burmese also produced their counter-proofs in the form of historical annals and traced back “their rights and claims to Kubo valley to an ancient date”. Burney noted that these Burmese counter-proofs traced back ‘their rights and claims’ “not only [to] that principal town in Kubo valley Thoung thwat as well as Kule was subject to Ava in the years 1599, 1647 and 1650, but that the country of Mogoung, called by the Munipooreeans Pong, and by a king of which Kubo valley is shewn to have been originally ceded to Munipore in the year 1475, was 32 years anterior to date, conquered by Ava.”

Burney also claimed that the extracts from the examination lodged in the Royal archives of the Burmese proved that all the principal towns in Kabaw valley were subjected to Ava in the years 1764 and 1783. What convinced Burney, he tells us, was the unusual manner in which the Ministers of Burma in a ‘confiding unreservedness’ showed him the old historical books and inscriptions, the authenticity of which records he did not doubt. “But the strongest argument in support of the Burmese claims is”, in Burney’s opinion, “the fact that Kubo valley was separated from authority of the Chief of Munipore and annexed to the Burmese Empire, under distinct Burmese Governors, for a period of eleven or twelve years before the late war.”

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83 Letter from Major H. Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 11th September 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 7, NAI.
84 Ibid.
The Burmese produced extracts, which they professed, were made from their historical records and annals, to prove their claim. From one of the records that were shown to Burney and Pemberton, it appeared that in the Burmese year 751, (1389 A.D.), a king of Mau named Tho-Ngan Chwa, sent a daughter to a Burmese king named Kyee-zewa Tsan Ke. Another record showed that in the Burmese year 804, (1442 A.D.), a brother-in-law of a Burmese king named Nara Padee, conquered the country of Mogoung, and sent down to him a king of Mau named Tho Ngan Chwa, who was described as being a grandson of Tho Khen Chwa, and holding dominion over several countries (given as twenty one umbrellas) among which Kathe or Manipur was enumerated. The Burmese officials insisted that Mau was another name for Mogoung and that the fact of the chief of that country sending a daughter to the Burmese was an acknowledged token of subjection and homage. At this point, Pemberton observed that the Manipuris traced back the first conquest of Pong (Mogoung) and Thoung Thwant by the Burmese to the reign of a king of Pong called Soo pengpha, which name approached in sound to the name of the Burmese chronicle's Tho Khen Chwa but that it was in a preceding reign in that of his father that the valley of Kabaw was given to Manipur by Pong. Burmese officials having become aware of the British modality of negotiation urged Pemberton to mention dates and it then appeared, Burney informed, that upon comparing the Burmese with the Manipuri chronological calculations, the cession of the valley of Kabaw appeared to have taken place in the Burmese year 837, (1475 A.D.) or 33 years subsequent to the date of the alleged conquest of Pong by the Burmese. 85 The Burmese officials showed an extract from another inscription on a stone in Ava in which it was written that in the Burmese year 965, (1613 A.D.), a chief of Manipur acknowledged subjection to the king of Ava. 86

85 Journal entry for the 21st of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI.
86 Journal entry for the 1st of September 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI. This claim of stone inscription has a different version according to Pemberton. He was told by the Ningthee Ngakpa (or Governor of Khanbat, according to the Burmese) on the 29th of July 1830 that the a stone had been lately dug out of the temple near Ava on which the ancient boundaries established between Ava and Manipur in the time of Garib Niwaz, the king of Manipur, were defined, and that in the inscription Nantwee Khyoung was mentioned as the limit of the Manipuri possession. Pemberton was also told that this tablet had been shown to Major Burney who had been convinced of the truth of the Burmese statements by producing this ancient testimony and that it was now certain that Kabaw must be restored to the Burmese. Pemberton informs that the temple in question is an object of considerable importance as the Manipuris asserted that when Garib Niwaz invaded Ava and conquered up to Zahain the then capital, he cut deeply with his sword into a corner of this temple, which still existed. It was also confirmed, he continues, that Garib Niwaz repeatedly crossed the Ningthee or Chindwin river and conquered villages on the eastern bank among which is mentioned one called Nathee. According to
However, Pemberton contended some of the major historical claims of the Burmese by using another historical source. By basing himself on an old Shan book, he contended that Pong (or Mogoung) was invaded by a Burmese army for the first time in the reign of the king Soo peng-pha between the year 1515 and 1568 A.D. According to this book the settlement of the boundary between Pong and Manipur was made in 1475 A.D. during the reign of Soophen-pha’s father.87

The question of authenticity, however, was not merely in terms of territorial claims. In the very process of producing these claims and counter-claims over territoriality, various intrigues and manoeuvres were deployed. The following account is very revealing of the nature of the negotiations between the two parties. The Burmese produced a text regarding the Manipur boundary, a Burmese copy of which was purported to be a quotation from Mr. Swinton, Chief Secretary’s reply to the letter of the Burmese officials. Burney, being doubtful of the accuracy of a quotation produced the English and Burmese copies of the letter referred to. On a closer look, Burney realised that the Burmese official had deployed, in his words, a “smart trick of adding to the end of one paragraph of the Burmese translation of Swinton’s letter, part only of a sentence from a succeeding paragraph which refers to another subject.” But the effect of this manoeuvre, as Burney points out, was that “when thus added to the other paragraph, [it] might be taken as a pledge on the part of the British Government, not to enter into any quarrel with Ava on account of Munipore.” On being found out, the Burmese official changed track, “[H]ow advantageous it would be for both countries if we would leave the Munipooreans alone, and let the Burmese and that people settle their own quarrel by themselves.” Burney claimed that such a line of action could not be carried out since “British honour was now engaged to support its ally Gumbheer Sing and that any proposition on the part of the Burmese for us to desert him would be treated as a gross insult”. Upon hearing this the Burmese officials presented that they would be “as ready and

Pemberton, if such an agreement as the one mentioned above on the inscription existed, it appears probably that the Burmese had artfully shifted the position from Nathee to the small and insignificant stream Nantwee flowing into the Lokchao. Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 16, NAI.  
87 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 16, NAI. Texts or historical records seem to have already played a significant role in the pre-colonial period as well. Pemberton stated that in all the invasions of Manipur by the Burmese, the most rigid search had always been instituted for books which the Burmese were accustomed to pile up in heaps and then destroy by fire.
willing” as the British were “to aid and befriend the Muniporeans if that people would not claim and encroach upon Burmese territory.”

The question of translation and the Burmese assertion of ownership to the territory of Kabaw show a complex history. In an English translation of a letter from the Burmese Ministers to G. Swinton, dated 10th September 1830, the remarks of Burney had been quoted as,

[T]he whole has been correctly extracted from the History of Kings stone inscriptions, records, old writings, examinations lodged in the royal archives, and the old Cossay Book. In consequence of the English Chief not being fully aware of all these records, he has decided according to the statements made to him by the officers in Munipore. I will send Captain Pemberton to the English Chief, with a letter and all the statements delivered to me from the old writing and records . . . upon seeing these papers the English Chief will determine according to truth and justice, and I will solicit him to do so.

Burney, while writing to the officials in Bengal does not go into the merits of the case but would rather insist on the future course of action or decisions to be taken by the British. The claims to the ‘truth’ of the assertions was left to the British officers in Manipur and the Burmese officials in Ava. In this Burmese interpretation, he is no longer a party to the negotiations but a facilitator. In spite of the fact that the negotiations were still going on, the Burmese presented in this narrative as if the Resident had already seen the truthfulness of the Burmese claim, thus, attempting to influence the decision of the Governor General using a British official’s opinion.

When the inaccuracy of the various claims was exposed, the Burmese resorted to yet another form of argument. Now, they produced the Burmese Myo Thoogyee (thannedar) from Tamu, who described himself as the son of the Shwegya, who rebelled in the Burmese year 1161 and fled to Manipur. He declared that Tamu had been under the Burmese for nine generations

88 Journal entry for the 18th of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI.
89 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 11, NAI.
before the year 1160, by which he meant nine succession of Myo Thoogyees as Thannadars. But he could not tell how long each Myo Thoogyee might have been in office.  

Burney noticed that the Burmese had scores of schemes and plans related to the question of Kabaw valley but which may not directly relate to it. He was asked at one point whether the Governor-General could not remove Gambhir Singh and place Marjit Singh, his brother, who the Burmese had supported and fallen out before the war, again, on the throne of Manipur. Snubbing the agreement between the British and the Burmese in the treaty of Yandaboo, it was pointed out that by this arrangement so much better understanding could be maintained and secured between the Burmese and the Manipuris. Apart from this the Burmese requested the Resident to write and ask Captain Grant not to molest any subjects of Ava, who might be cultivating in the valley of Kabaw. The issue of molestation was raised after a complaint by a lower ranking Burmese officer, nephew of the Governor of Khanbat (or Ningthee Ngakpa, according to the Manipuris). Through this protestation the Burmese officials at the Court of Ava wanted the British not to consider the right of Gambhir Singh to the valley of Kabaw as definitively settled and at the same time allow the Burmese subjects to move from the eastern side of the Chindwin and cultivate in the western bank. Grant and Pemberton had prohibited the Burmese subjects from this seasonal movement to the other side since this would amount to considering Kabaw valley as belonging to the King of Ava and the Governor General, in turn, had approved of the decision. The Burmese were informed that the cultivators might go over and cultivate but if they did, they would be considered as subjects of Manipur.  

While the high politics of political negotiation over the possession of Kabaw valley was still going on, there were various processes, which were unfolding at the site of conflict. The thannas that were put up under the authority of Manipur king on the western bank of the

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90 Journal entry for the 18th of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI.

91 Journal entry for the 25th of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI. The movement of people across Ningthee or Chindwin has been a very long historical phenomenon. One of the obvious reasons for this mobility has been for cultivation. But apart from that depending on the political situation of the time people have chosen to move from one side to the other either to flee a regime or tender their submission. In addition to this the soldiers of various political formations, the Shans, the Manipuris and the Burmese have moved across this river on their various battles.
Chindwin continued to exercise undisturbed authority over the northern and central Divisions of Kabaw. Moreover, peoples on both sides of the river still managed to exercise, however limited, their agency by choosing their allegiance of one authority over another. In the month of October 1830 the headmen of nine villages from the eastern side of the river came to the western side to tender their submission to the king of Manipur. In the month of December several of the Burmese officers on the areas bordering the disputed territory with Manipur sent down complaints to the king of Ava against the subjects of Gambhir Singh, which in the words of Burney, were “calculated to alarm the pride and fears of His Majesty”. To calm down the temper of the Ministers and keep the king quiet, Burney sent Dr. Richardson to Kendat or Gendu by the land route. In the process, he also thought that Richardson’s party would be able to obtain some knowledge of the land route between Ava and the Manipur frontier. From the reports that reached Ava it appeared that several slaves or servants of the Governor of Kendat having fled over to the western side of the Chindwin or Ningthee with some property belonging to him, “he in a moment of passion pursued them with a party of upwards of 100 men to that side of the river, seized them there, and having brought them back to Ken-dat, executed them.” Of his conversation with the Ministers of Ava, Burney reported, “it would be considered by my Government as an act of aggression and outrage” on the part of the Governor. He reported on the reactions of the Burmese officials,

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92 Letter from Captain Grant, Superintendent, Manipur, to G. Swinton, Principal Secretary to Government, 21st October 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 15, NAI.
93 The Burmese officials attempted to send Dr. Richardson by water instead of the land route, perhaps, aware of the secret intention of the British official’s aims. Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 March 18, No. 16, NAI.
94 One of the many instructions and the expectations which Dr. Richardson, the Assistant Surgeon, was expected to perform was to ascertain at Kendat and in the neighbourhood the state of feeling among the people in general on the Burmese side towards Gambhir Singh and the Manipuris and their sentiments as to the probability of the valley of Kabaw being permanently annexed to Manipur. It was also to be found out whether in such an event, any portion of the Kabaws or Shans now residing on the Burmese side of the Chindwin would be likely to go over and settle in Kabab under Gambhir Singh. Richardson was supposed to note the spots where these Kabaws had been accustomed to cultivate on the western side of the Chindwin and the amount of their crops and ascertain if no land fit for such cultivation could be found on the eastern side. He was also to make notes on the areas between Ava and Kendat by marking down the nature of the road, appearance and size of the villages and towns, extent and nature of cultivation, number of population, and description of cattle, means of subsistence, etc. He was instructed to return by a route different from that by which he went to Kendat. Letter from Burney to Richardson dated 19th January 1831, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 March 18, No. 14, NAI.
95 Letter from Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 19th January 1831, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 March 18, No. 12, NAI.
The Ministers disavowed the act of their Governor and assured me that he should be punished if necessary. I had an opportunity also of pressing my sense of the misconduct of the Governor of Kendat upon the mind of the king . . . I told His Majesty that there is no stipulation in the Yandaboo Treaty for the mutual surrender of fugitives or felons, and that the conduct of his Governor was not only unjustifiable, but that it would lead to the most serious consequences, by encouraging our officers in Arracan and on the Taluum to pursue and seize, in the same manner, persons escaping from us into the Burmese territories. His Majesty distinctly disavowed the act of his Governor, and told me that it was an act for which it would be His Majesty’s duty to punish him if necessary.96

Meanwhile, the Resident informs Captain Grant in Manipur in a letter written on the 4th of January 1831 that “no arguments or means of persuasion . . . will induce His Majesty to acquiesce in the settlement of the Khyen dwen as the boundary”. He noted that “nothing except a decided answer” from the British government, “can possibly check the bad feelings entertained” by the Burmese on this question. At the same time he asked Grant “to the propriety of keeping matters quiet on the frontier until a reply is received to the appeal which the Court of Ava has made to the Governor General.”97 Furthermore, Grant was also informed of the various complaints to the king of Ava from the frontier. According to one complaint, a party of Manipuris had seized all the grains, which the Burmese subjects of Thoung-thwot had sown on the same spots where they had always been accustomed to plant. The other from the Governor of Kendat complained that a party of 80 Manipuris bearing 40 muskets embarked in a boat and ascended the Khwen-dwen or Ningthee, insisting upon going to Pagen-dwen in the Burmese territories, for the purposes of trade, contrary to his remonstrance, and objections against so large an armed party travelling in that direction. A third complaint stated that a party of 500 Manipuris had come and settled at Mwon-zen and seized all the cattle belonging to 30 Chin villages. Grant was also informed that Burney had told the Ministers that the people of Thoung-thwot had no right to cross the river and plant their grain on the western banks of the river, after the Governor of Kendat had received the notification sent to him on the 15th of May the previous year (1830).98

96 Ibid.
97 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 March 18, No. 13, NAI.
98 Ibid.
According to the journal entry for the 20th of December 1830 by Burney, Gambhir Singh had demanded a duty of 40 percent from the cultivators of the eastern bank of the Ningthee river who wanted to cultivate on the western side. Burney also informs that he along with Captain Pemberton had ‘distinctly refused’ permission on the 25th of August 1830 to a request by the Burmese officials to allow cultivators to cross from the eastern side to the western, unless they wanted to become subjects of Manipur. He says that if the “Shans have gone into Kubo, they have done so at their own risk”. However, the Resident suggested the Ministers to order the cultivators to pay the duty demanded by Gambhir Singh, upon his guarantee that if the question regarding Kabaw valley be decided in favour of Ava, the whole of the duty paid by the cultivators would be refunded. The Burmese officials most vehemently objected the Burmese subjects paying, “on any account, and duty or revenue to Gumbheer Sing, a person who they arrogantly said, was until latterly a slave of the king of Ava.”

Considering the tense atmosphere in the Kabaw valley, the British Resident at Ava suggested to the Chief Secretary to Government whether in the event of the Chindwin or Ningthee being permanently fixed as the boundary, it might not be more advisable for one of the British officers stationed in Manipur to reside permanently on the western bank of the river, in the immediate vicinity of the Burmese garrison of Kendat. Such a measure was meant to prevent any differences between the Burmese and Manipuris, and in Burney’s words, “to save the former race from temptations to encroach or commit aggressions on the territory or inhabitants of Kubo.”

The Burmese officials, however, continued to press their case. In a letter written by the Burmese vaqueel at Bengal to George Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government on the 10th of March 1831, there was a Burmese interpretation of the Treaty of Yandabo. According to the letter, it is in the second article of the treaty that the Burmese king is not to molest Gambhir Singh, “if he come[s] and remains[s] in his own town or village”. And it was alleged that Gambhir Singh “has not resided peaceably there, as he has excited disturbance.

99 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 March 18, No. 16, NAI.
100 Letter of the 4th February 1831, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 March 18, No. 15, NAI.
101 The Burmese interpretation of the treaty of Yandaboo in contrast to the British understanding was visible throughout. Letter from Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 15th December 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 January 21, No. 6, NAI.
with the Thoungdoot prince, by fixing flags and posting thanas in the [Burmese] king’s countries of Thoungdoot, Tummoo, and Khampat”. The fixing of flags and posting of thanas, it was claimed, caused enmity. The letter goes on to complain that though Major Burney “in order to preserve peace, dispatched the Kathe officer Pemberton, with a letter to the Governor General”, there was no answer. The letter also asked the Chief Secretary to explain the silence on the part of the British. Since the Governor General was absent at the time, the Burmese officials insisted to discuss the ‘Kathe affair’ with ‘any one possessing sufficient power’. Pending the discussion of the issue, the representative of the king of Ava asked the Chief Secretary to “write to those under your authority to remove the flags and thanas from the country of Thoungdoot”. Failing to act upon these lines, the Burmese official declared, “I apprehend there will be wars between them. Hence ill will and enmity will be increased!” The letter ends with the following lines: “The Burmese representative has thus intimated the above ... points, as the two great countries are in sincere friendship, and it is to be wished an answer may be returned to this letter.”

Burney thought that the “king and the officials firmly believed that if the Burmese could secure in the same manner as Gumbheer Sing has done, the aid and services of British officers to state their case and lay their complaint properly before the Governor General His Lordship would not decide the question against Ava.” The Burmese believed that Captain Pemberton and Captain Grant had been made over by the Governor General from the Company’s service and were now in the service of Gambhir Singh. The Burmese Court were also of the opinion that both the officials were “partisans of Gumbheer Sing and desirous not that right and justice might be done in this dispute but that Munipore might be benefited.”

102 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 April 8, No. 8, NAI. Emphasis added. It is noticeable that though the Burmese official expressed the possibility of war if the matter was not resolved, he does not say that the two parties in such a possible war would be the British and the Burmese, but rather between the Thoungdoot prince and Manipur. On the contrary, Major Burney, the British Resident at Ava, continuously sends an alarming possibility of the British and Burmese going to war if the Burmese do not get possession of the Kabaw valley.

103 Journal entry for the 18th of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI.
While Major Burney was writing in his journal about the suspicious and unfavourable opinions of the Court of Ava towards Captain Grant and Pemberton on the 18th of August 1830, Captain Pemberton on his part noted one day later in his journal as follows:

With such rational grounds of evidence how strange it appears that the Burmahs should up to this moment not have furnished Government with something like proof, but have indulged in such glaring falsehood as those the Woondouk was guilty of at the Ningthee. One circumstance is as yet perfectly incomprehensible. If Kubo did originally belong to the king of Ava how did it happen that they should have permitted Choorjeet of Munepoor to continue to hold uninterrupted possession of it so long for the Burmese Ministers themselves now admit that he did so? Surely the king of Ava did not want the means, ability or inclination to expect him had he been an intruder?104

On being asked about this, Burney was informed by the Burmese that during those 15 years, when Chourjit regain the territory, Ava was much disturbed by robbers, and unable to send a force to drive the Manipuris out of Kabaw. On again saying that this was not satisfactory, the Ministers replied that during that period, the inhabitants of Ava were much engaged in throwing up embankments around some lake, which had over flown the country.105

**The Transfer of Kabaw Valley**

Despite the ongoing negotiation, in a dispatch written by Major H. Burney, Resident at Ava, to the Chief Secretary, on the 24th of June 1830, he was already of the opinion that “no friendly means or agreement which we could use, would ever be successful in persuading the king of Ava to acknowledge Gumbheer Sing’s right to the valley of Kubo.” But notwithstanding the opinion of the Governor General in Council who had entirely approved of the proceedings of the British Commissioners in Manipur, Burney found it necessary that Captain Pemberton who arrived from Manipur on the 13th of August, 1830, should resume the discussion regarding the disputed territory. According to Burney, the main purpose was

104 Journal entry for the 19th of August 1830 by Captain Pemberton, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 16, NAI.
105 Journal entry for the 18th of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI.
that if he had "refused to hear any one of the arguments or witnesses which they desired to produce in support of their claim" it would have destroyed all the confidence and goodwill, which he was gradually establishing. Moreover, he felt that it "would have excited such unpleasant feeling" against him on the part of the king. Such a situation would have deprived, writes Burney, "of all chance of ever being useful here to my Government. At the same time I know that my refusal would not have precluded the Ministers from further troubling my Government, in a matter, . . . [which the] King has taken much to heart, and about which he has during the last eight months, as a spoiled child after some toy." 106

After apprising the Court of Ava regarding the Governor General's opinion on the conduct of the Commissioners in Manipur, Burney tried to make amends to restore 'all the confidence and goodwill' that the Burmese King had accorded on him. As a part of that measure, he submitted his "views of the conduct to be pursued towards the Court of Ava":

The Governor General in Council cannot maintain too high and firm a tone in all his communications and proceedings. But the British Resident here must affect to be kindly disposed towards the king and Court, and to be willing, on all occasions, to act as a kind of mediation and pacification between them and his Lordship in Council. He should be always ready to hear and forward their complaints and representations, to advise, offer explanations, and appear anxious to conciliate and soften his own Government, and often little boons and favours from it for the Burmese. 107

Burney noted that the negotiations regarding the possession of the Kabaw valley had left him in an unfavourable position with the king since he had managed to render the Governor General an arbiter in the dispute between the Burmese and the Manipuris. He informed that the "king's pride is mortified at the idea of his having to submit his claim to the decision of the Governor General." 108

106 Letter from Major H. Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 11th September 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 7, NAI.
107 Ibid.
108 Journal entry for the 23rd of August 1830 by Major H. Burney, Resident at the Court of Ava, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 8, NAI.
Despite the resumption of talks, the Resident with the aid even of Captain Pemberton could not effect any change in the sentiments of the Burmese Ministers. As Burney put it: “the question remains as it did before for the final decision of the Governor General in Council.” By this time Burney was already aware of the Governor-General’s decision in support of Gambhir Singh. Seeing the possibility of the valley being given to Manipur, he wrote, “I am certainly not prepared to predict confidently, what course so ignorant and arrogant a Monarch as this will pursue, when the decision of the Governor General in support of Gumbheer Sing is made known.” In a very tactful manner, he warned, though put in the form of an observation:

I hope that the lessons of the last war are not yet quite forgotten . . . I am convinced that all the Burmese Ministers are sincerely desirous of averting another war. Although they dare not contradict the King, or give up any point upon which he may have set his heart, and I see that the personal safety and comfort of these poor creatures will be endangered by the unsuccessful issue of the negotiations, which they have had to conduct with me respecting the territory of Kubo. It is difficult to describe, and equally so not to sympathize in their extreme anxiety on this subject.

Burney further stated that if the British had communicated their opinion regarding Kabaw valley to the Court of Ava in 1827, “at a time when it sought so much to obtain some delay in the payment of the 3rd instalment, and at a time when the King’s weak mind has not taken up this subject, I think there would then have arisen little or no difficulty.” Almost challenging the opinion of the Governor-General, he goes on to state, “But now . . . there are some grounds of probability, that the determination of the Governor General in Council in favour of Munipore, may ultimately produce a collision between the British and Burmese states.”

It is not known whether the Burmese would have been desirous of going to war if they did not get Kabaw valley. Whether or not the Burmese king behaved as ‘a spoiled child after some toy’ with regard to the valley is difficult to know. But Burney definitely thought that

109 Letter from Major H. Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 11th September 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 7, NAI.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
the king was "very keen on the subject of Kubo," and was said to have expressed his vexation against the British for wanting to "not only emancipate his slaves the Munipooreeans but desire to give them a portion of his territory." He presented the seriousness of the matter in the following words: "I must not also conceal from Government, that both Mr. Lane and Mr. Lanciago have often expressed their fears to me although I have always ridiculed the idea that the loss of Kubo may urge the king to order measures that may lead to war, an event which they maintain would certainly have occurred in the beginning of this year, but for my expected arrival here." It is also difficult to ascertain the relationship between the Manipuris and the Burmese at this point. But Burney was convinced that the "feelings of the king and Court are already rancorous against Gumbheer Sing and his followers, and those feelings will be still more exasperated." 112

The danger of another war maintained by Burney becomes interesting in the context of the request by the Burmese to be allowed to purchase arms from the British. While being asked his opinion on the policy of supplying the Burmese with superior arms by the British, Burney hoped that "His Excellency in Council will be pleased to comply with the Woongyee's application". In order to substantiate his position, he referred to Swinton's dispatch to Major General A. Campbell of the 22nd of June 1827 as well as Macnaghten's letter to him of the 26th of March 1833. These letters, he claimed, had led him to believe that the "Supreme Government had already decided that no mischievous consequence were likely to ensue from the Burmese being supplied with fire arms." Since June 1827, the Burmese had been abundantly provided by British traders, so well indeed, that an American vessel, which came to Burma in the month of December 1834 could not sell 800 stands of serviceable muskets, despite offering them at a cheap rate. At the same time, he cautioned that the British Government could not afford to prevent the Burmese from obtaining as many arms as they might require by means of American and other foreign traders. He seems to suggest that the possession of superior arms by the Burmese was a blessing in disguise. As he put it,

the possession of muskets will in all probability had the Burmese in any future war to relinquish their own native system of warfare and to issue from their stockades and jungles to

112 Ibid.
meet our troops in the open plains by which proceeding the Burmese force will become more tangible and the quantities of discipline and steadiness, in which our troops must always be superior to theirs, will have a better field for display and a better chance of soon bringing the contest to a close.\(^{113}\)

Given such a situation, it is unclear as to why Burney used such an alarming tone going to the extent of envisaging a possible war if the Kabaw valley was not given to the Burmese.\(^{114}\)

But there seems to be a material reason for the Burmese Court’s insistence. The land on the east bank of the Ningthee or Chindwin river was inferior to the west side. Because of the political trouble, the inhabitants of the west bank had taken temporary settlement on the opposite side but it was clear that they would move back. This movement of the people created trouble for the Burmese officials. Moreover, since the western bank was way more fertile than the eastern, if the Burmese officials had agreed to the division of the river as the boundary between the two kingdoms, they would lose a great amount of revenue. This potential reduction in the revenue was resented by the local Burmese officials and therefore put up all attempts to claim both sides of the bank so that the fertile territory could also be included on the Burmese side. The boundary, therefore, was needed for the Burmese to be further west if they were to get possession of the fertile land.\(^{115}\)

\(^{113}\) Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Burney, Resident at Ava to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to the Government of India, Political Department, 30\(^{\text{th}}\) December 1834, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 11, No. 20, NAI. The British Government finally decided to supply arms as a present to the Woongyee of Rangoon. Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 11, No. 21, NAI.

\(^{114}\) Whether impelled by the alarming tone of Burney’s statements or the reports of ‘invasions’ on the frontier of Upper Assam, by the beginning of the next year Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton were deployed to survey duty in the Arakan. Arakan was not the only place in which they should focus. After the completion of their work in Arakan they were required to proceed from Chittagong via Sylhet and Cachar into Manipur and from thence into Upper Assam. If possible, they were to retrace from Upper Assam to Sylhet and after crossing the Khasi Hills via Chira Punji return to Upper Assam. Or, in other words, they were to survey the whole length of the mountainous tracts lying on the eastern frontier of the British Indian Empire. Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 February 11, No. 1, NAI. The decision to survey the eastern frontier was taken to obtain information after the Secret Committee in a letter of the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) October 1829 drew the attention to future security of the provinces in Arakan and its nearby islands, which had been annexed to British territory after the agreement of the 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) article of the Treaty of Yandao. Furthermore, it was also important for the means of carrying on military operations from thence in the event of another war with Ava. See the ‘Minute by the Governor General’, Foreign S C 1831 January 14 No. 1, NAI. Captain Jenkins’ opinion of the aid to be calculated from Gambhir Singh’s Levy and the country of Manipur in general in the event of a war with the Burmese differed from that of Captain Grant. Foreign Department Secret, 1832 May 28, Nos. 14-15, A, NAI.

\(^{115}\) Letter from Major H. Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 11\(^{\text{th}}\) September 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 7, NAI.
Within the British camp, there was a conflict of opinions between the Commissioners in Manipur, the Resident in Ava, and those in Calcutta.\(^{116}\) The British officers in Manipur had clearly stated that possession of the Kabaw valley was essential to the security of the kingdom. Manipur, being an ally and also considering the strategic importance for the British, made the Resident look for various solutions to the difficult situation. Burney sounded the Ministers of Burma on the possibility of “whether this dispute regarding Kubo might not be compromised, by . . . granting some compensation to Ava.” But the Ministers, as Burney informed, declined to enter into any discussion of this nature until they received the decision from Bengal. Burney suggested that once the decision of the Governor-General was made known to the Burmese, they could be appeased with the concession of the favour to defer the completion of the fourth instalment of the money that the Burmese had to pay in accordance with the treaty of Yandabo. The real fear for the British in losing the Kabaw valley or yielding to more concessions “unaccompanied by any conditions” was that it would “encourage it to make fresh demands, and the great danger of yielding this point, and allowing the Burmese to occupy Kubo would be that we should next have to resist their claims to Pulo Poon, or to some other territory.” If it was not for this apprehension or the opinion of the British officers in Manipur, Burney stated that he would have been “disposed to press upon the consideration of the Governor General in Council, that our relinquishing to Ava this barren and unprofitable tract of territory would add much to our character for justice and liberality, would encourage this Court to give us more of its confidence and good feeling, and would tend more than any thing I am aware of to improve for a time the situation and influence of the British Resident here.”\(^{117}\) Caught between the two opposing positions, Burney thought of a last option:

Presuming however, that no deviation can now be made from the policy, which requires us to support and aggrandize the petty state of Munipore, and believing that no persuasions of diplomacy will ever induce the King of Ava to admit Gumbheer Sing’s right to the valley of

\(^{116}\) The acceptance by Major Burney of Titles from the Court of Ava did not go well with the Governor General. This episode, the Governor General felt, was in dissonance with the practice in Europe in which no British officer can accept any mark of honour from a foreign sovereign. Moreover, the Governor General was not happy with Burney’s conducts on the matter of the Tenasserim provinces. Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 February 25, No. 3, NAI.

\(^{117}\) Letter from Major H. Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 11\(^{th}\) September 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 November 19, No. 7, NAI.
Kubo, I can now only repeat the opinion . . . that the only chance of establishing the line of frontier selected by us, is for our Government to support, with a high hand and a decided tone, Gumbheer Sing’s right to the whole of the territory in dispute. Perhaps the best mode of directing the King’s mind, and assisting me to soothe and reconcile this Court to our determination would be to send to his Majesty what he is extremely anxious to possess a small steam engine for a boat and to authorize me to distribute some handsome presents or a little secret service money among those of his Ministers and officers who exercise most influence over his Majesty.¹¹⁸

Caught in such a difficult situation, Burney advised Pemberton, who was with him in Ava, to proceed to Calcutta, in order that the Governor-General might have an opportunity by personal communication of obtaining any further explanation regarding the dispute. Pemberton was expected to present not only the local information of Manipur and the Kabaw valley but also the sentiments of the Court of Ava and how far Burney was gradually succeeding in placing himself to ensure his ‘being useful’ to the British Government. Apart from this, he listed all his achievements vis-à-vis the Burmese court on the Arakanese side.

Burney realised that the Burmese would not be able to pay the 4th instalment of the war reparation by the stipulated time period. Taking this opportunity, he availed himself the “opportunity of adjusting the disputed boundary question between Ava and Munnipore, upon the principle often before adverted to by Government . . . that is, by offering to sacrifice a portion of the money due to us for the purpose of fixing the Khyendwen river as the boundary.”¹¹⁹ Burney informed that he took great care to show that the offer which he was making was unauthorised by his Government, and that it emanated solely from his sincere desire of settling the dispute in a manner satisfactory to both parties. The Resident, further, reported that the Burmese Ministers appreciated his motives, and even seemed disposed to consider the suggestion as advantageous to Ava. But the real obstacle was that the Ministers “dared not embrace it, nor even hint it to the king.” Burney informed that the king of Burma would feel and consider “as a personal loss – as a diminution of his own consequence and

¹¹⁸ Ibid.
¹¹⁹ Letter from Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 15th December 1830, Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 January 21, No. 6, NAI.
power", if a small portion of his kingdom were to diminish. The Ministers, however, still led Burney to hope that if an answer unfavourable to the Burmese should arrive from Bengal, they might be persuaded to embrace the suggestion. He puts his suggestion directly to the Governor General:

If then His Lordship in Council should be of opinion that when the Khyendwen river is established as a boundary between Ava and Munnipore, the granting to the former state some compensation will be more likely to remove the seeds of future dispute and collision, I would beg to recommend, that advantage should be taken of the failure of Ava to complete the 4th instalment within the stipulated period of February, and that we should sacrifice whatever balance may be then due, and expression determination to hear no more of this disputes. Such an arrangement may for a time, be highly offensive to the king, but I think his Ministers will see the necessity of reconciling his mind to it, and of showing to him its real advantages. 120

In response to the suggestion by Burney, the Governor General proposed that by relinquishment of some part of the amount demandable under the Treaty of Yandabo from the Burmese, the frontier dispute towards Manipur could be adjusted in principle. Nevertheless, he was anxious that allowing such a concession would lead to the "advancement of new claims, producing irritation and infinite trouble . . . increasing the arrogance and self conceit which are the foundation of the existing evil dispositions and of the desire for the renewal of the contest." The Governor General was convinced that until a belief "both at the Court [of Ava] and throughout the country [was achieved] that there is no hope from a second appeal to arms, every conferred, or point conceded, would be liable to be attributed to other motives, than liberality and the fruit would be increased presumption and not gratitude or good will." 121

Why the Burmese were adamant upon Kabaw valley while other territories could be negotiated is not known. But the claim for Kubow valley by Manipur and Burma was caught up, or at least represented to be so, in the high drama for the maintenance of relations between the two empires after the imperial war. Having voiced the opinion of a possible war

120 Ibid.
121 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1831 February 25, No. 3, NAI.
between the court of Ava and the British on the event of the Burmese losing possession of
the Kabaw valley, Burney explained the grounds upon which he had formed such an opinion.
He goes on to add that in the history of the Burmese, their loss and disasters in their wars
with Shans and Peguers were much greater and more severe than what they experienced in
their contest with the British. Despite those disasters in the past, they rose again and
recovered their power. According to Burney, the Burmese believed that they would rise again
from the current reduced condition in the same manner as in many occasions in the past and
the British troops were spoken of with contempt. 122

Finally, after a prolonged discussion, claims and counter-claims, with the talk of a possible
war between the two powers, the authorities in Bengal changed their position vis-a-vis the
relationship of British with Manipur. And the valley of Kabaw on the western side of the
Ningthee was handed over to the Burmese on the 9th of January 1834. In a reversal of their
earlier proposition to give monetary compensation to the Burmese from the war indemnity in
lieu of the territory, the Supreme Government in Bengal decided to give Manipur Rupees
five hundred as compensation. Within a week's time Gambhir Singh died and the throne was
occupied by an infant, under political regency. The transfer of the Kabaw valley from
Manipur to Burma was recorded in Cheitharol Kumpapa, the royal chronicle of Manipur as
follows:

On the 13th Tuesday [of Poinu month] the borsahebs in Calcutta pleaded much that the
inhabitants on the banks of the river do not have land for cultivation. Because of that, the
Rajasahbeb [referring to the English officer] of Manipur [asked the king to allow] the Awas to
cultivate in the Kabaw valley. Upon stating that the price for that would be annual payment of
Rupees 6000, the Maharaja agreed and the three [officers] Giron kaptan saheb, Pembton Saheb
[Captain Pemberton], Achiton Saheb went to give land to Awa. 123

However, the issue of Kabaw valley did not die down, though there was no immediate
reaction from Manipur. In the course of the nineteenth century, especially beginning in the

122 Letter from Burney, Resident at Ava to the Chief Secretary to Government, 15th December 1830, Foreign
Department Secret Consultation, 1831 January 21, No. 6, NAI.

123 Cheitharol Kumbaba, eds. Lairenmayum Ibungohal Singh and Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh,
Imphal: Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, 1967, p. 244. The translation is mine.
1870s the issue would come up again. The Burma-Manipur boundary was surveyed in 1881 by Major W.F. Badgley along with Colonel Johnstone, the Resident in Manipur, Dr. Watt, Mr. Oldham, and other British officers. Lieutenant Dun of the Intelligence Department surveyed the passes between Manipur and the Kabaw valley. The demarcation of the boundary was necessitated by the frequent raids and quarrels between Burma and Manipur. The line was laid down by Johnstone and Badgley "with the special object of keeping the two nationalities apart." Most of the boundary line was made keeping in mind that it passed through "the bases of the hills or streams in deep gorges, which are parts of the country avoided by both people [Manipur and the Burmese]." 124

CONCLUSION

The linkage between modern states and fixed territorial boundaries is very clear. A mid-nineteenth century writer announced: "It is of great importance to nations that desire to live in peace, that their territorial limits should be fixed and certain." 125 This desire to have a 'fixed and certain' territorial limit is directly linked to maps. From this it becomes "necessary and desirable for every state to have boundaries that can be represented by lines drawn on maps." And these boundaries drawn on maps are supposed to correspond to the actual terrain so that they could be "codified in treaties and sanctioned by law." It is commonly accepted that in the pre-colonial societies there were no stable or demarcated boundaries. In fact, Robert L. Solomon argues that "the concept of a boundary line was alien to the Southeast Asian experience." 126 Moreover, legal and cartographic technologies of boundary making were not present.

126 Robert L. Solomon, 'Boundary Concepts and Practices in Southeast Asia', World Politics, Vol. 23, No. 1, October 1970, pp. 1-3. This shift could also be seen in the transformation of the idea of sovereignty from the pre-colonial to the colonial in South Asia. Robert Travers argues that a strong emphasis on unitary sovereignty arose with the Company state which "contrasted sharply with the fluid pattern of shared sovereignty which characterized the Mughal empire and other pre-colonial states in South Asia." This process of transformation "tended to delegitimize forms of dispute resolution and legal authority that were not directly attached to the central state, as well as to redefine numerous little kingdoms with Bengal as private landed estates." Robert Travers, Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 22-3.
It is difficult to comment with certainty on the question of the boundary between Manipur and Burma prior to the first Anglo-Burmese war both for the lack of sources and the possibility of a differently conceptualised geo-political spatial organisation. But some of the English sources give a hint. Colonel Symes, who went on a British mission to the Court of Ava in 1795, noted that Chindwin divided the “country of Cassay from that of Ava.” 127 Symes reported that the most distant town in the possession of the Burmese empire on the Chindwin was named Nakioung and that the first Shan town was called Thangdat. But the term Shan does not seem to mean exactly the same as it is used now. Symes noted that Shan was a “very comprehensive term given to different nations, some independent, others the subjects of the great states.” 128 There were frequent references being made by the Burmese of the Melap-Shan or Shans subjected to the Burmese, the Yoodra-Shan, subjected to the Siamese, the Cassay-Shan who were under Manipur. The source of information that he gathered was, as he mentioned, from an ‘intelligent’ man but without much corroboration. It seems to suggest an organisation of subjection to a political formation as well as the form of the boundary maintained at the time. It indicates the reorganization of a river as a form of ‘natural’ boundary between the two polities, where members of the same ‘ethnic’ group could inhabit in different spheres of these neighbouring polities, with different appellations and obligations. But the question of whether or not rivers formed a good ‘natural’ boundary between two polities was a hotly debated topic from the nineteenth century. John Finch felt that in the early stages of human evolution, a river was a true boundary. In the modern period they are used primarily because it affords a definite line. 129 Curzon had an opposite view. According to him, rivers were not ‘natural’ boundaries in the ‘primitive days’ but rather a means of access. And it was only because of the need for artificial boundaries that rivers were made into boundaries. 130 According to C.N. Fawcett, in the old civilizations rivers did not form boundaries but river as boundary was common in the new areas that the Europeans had colonised. 131

128 Ibid.
In the context of the claims and counter-claims over the Kabaw valley, we see the possibility of different ways of organising the territoriality and sovereignty. In Solomon’s words, “Though the essence of sovereignty was of great importance, the territorial aspect of sovereignty was in fact negotiable.” Thongchai Winichakul’s study of the Siamese in particular, and the Southeast Asian polities in general, argues that there was a movement from a more ambiguous relationship between territory and sovereignty to a more mapped and marked, singularly sovereign territory by the end of the nineteenth century. He talks about how the territory in these areas changed from a ‘boundaryless’ (in the modern sense of a well-demarcated line) space to a bounded sovereignty. He argues that in the last two decades of the nineteenth century there was a “shift from the traditional hierarchical relationships of rulers to the new administration on a territorial basis.” And for him, mapping was central in this shift. However, in the case of the demands over the Kabaw valley the Burmese court seems to be already familiar with some forms of the modern geographical notions of territoriality. Moreover, it is difficult to say the kinds of maps that they produced for specific territorial claims but they did exist. At the same time, it cannot be doubted that the British mediation in the conflict over Kabaw valley introduced a new way of associating with territorial boundaries.

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133 Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994, p. 120.