Chapter II

POLITICAL HISTORY OF MANIPUR IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

Charāirongbā and Garibniwāz

We made a brief survey of the political history of Manipur preceding the 18th century in Chapter I. Charāirongbā succeeded Pālkhombā as the king of Manipur in 1698. Under him, trade and cultural relationship flourished between Manipur and Burma. He gave his daughter, Chakpā Makhāo Ngambi in marriage to Taninganwe, the ruler of Burma. He also improved the relation between the hill people and nobles of the court by convening a council in 1700.\(^1\) He fought many a battle against the hill tribes of the present Indo-Burma Border. He defeated the Tushuk Nagas on March 7, 1709.\(^2\) He expired on Sunday the 7th Ingel (June-July, 1709). From his time onwards personal names of the kings became very popular in Manipur.

Pāmheiba became the king of Manipur after the death of Charāirongbā. He was also known as Mayāmbā - a name which is mentioned in the chronicle (Chaithārol Kumbbā). He assumed the title of Garibniwāz. He was not on good terms with the king of Burma and attacked Burma many times. The Manipuris

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1. CK, p.58.
extended their sway to the walls of Ava capital by storming the gates and stockades. In 1749 Garibniwaz made a last plan to conquer Ava but had to return to Manipur owing to the "alarm wrought in his suspicious mind by the fall of his standard in a gale."

A Manipuri manuscript Takhal Ngamba gives us an account of the invasion of the Tripuris and their defeat at the hands of Garibniwaz.

He had nineteen sons by two Rānis. He nominated Ajit Sai as his successor in fulfilment of his promise. Syām Sai, the eldest son was not given the crown by the king. Yet Ajit Sai, under the influence of his mother, expelled Garibniwaz and Syām Sai from Manipur. They finally went to Burma. Ajit Sai made a conspiracy with some of his men to kill his father and eldest brother in their return journey from Burma. The ex-king and nineteen retinues were killed at Tongphāhithāten by Tolentomba, an emissary of Ajit Sai. Intrigues, plots and attempts for the throne were very common events of the time. The patricide was compelled to vacate the throne by his younger brother, Bharat Sai who ruled Manipur for one year. The throne then passed into the hand of Goursyām, the eldest


4. Loc. cit.

5. Takhal Ngamba MS, Kh. Kaomacha Singh, Manipur Itivrtta, pp. 56-68.

son of Syām Śi through the selection by 22 nobles in 1753. He arrived at an agreement with his younger brother Jayasimha also known as Bhāgyachandra that each must reign for five years alternately. The joint rulership lasted until Gourasyām's death in 1759. Then Jayasimha became the sole authority of Manipur.  

Jayasimha - Anglo-Manipuri Alliance

Ajit Śi who was expelled from Manipur approached the East India Company through the king of Tripura for regaining the throne of Manipur. The British did not take up his case when they knew the circumstances leading to his expulsion from Manipur. They decided in favour of Jayasimha, the reigning king of Manipur against him.  

At this time, a great military leader named Alaungpaya alias Alompra succeeded in defeating the Mons. He proclaimed himself as the emperor of Burma. After consolidating his position in Burma he embarked on the conquest of Siam and Manipur. In 1756 he sent an army under the command of a distant relative to chastise the Cassayers (Manipuris). A pitched battle was fought at Tamu. The Burmese overran the country. The Manipuris called it Khuntak Ahanba (the first of the great devastations). The Burmese account says that the king of Manipur concluded a

peace treaty under which the king had surrendered a young man and a young woman of his kindred as hostages to the king of Burma. The Burmese got a part of Manipur as a price of victory. The Manipuri account says that the king retreated up to Kakching and summoned another detachment. He defeated the Burmese and repulsed them from the country by capturing some fire arms.9

In July, 1757, Alongpaya got some symptoms of dissatisfaction raised by the Manipuris on the Western Bank of the Ningthee. In 1758-59 he led an expedition against Manipur by the Khambat route. Then he entered the Manipur Valley through the Aimol Pass and defeated the Manipuris at the battle of Pallel. He seized Imphal and cruelly murdered the people. The Manipuris deserted the Valley rather than be caught by the Burmese. Alongpaya spent two weeks in Imphal. Getting the Pегuers in his country he left Imphal for suppressing them.

According to Burmese source, he carried with him thousands of Manipuris, men and women of all castes. Among them were Manipuri Brāhmans, silk workers and silver-smiths.

In 1759, Jayasimha became king of Manipur in accordance with the terms of joint rule. He became frightened at the better weapons of the Burmese. Fortunately, the Burmese were at bad relations with the British.10 Alongpaya destroyed

the British factory at Negrais, an Island at the mouth of Irrawady according to the advice of the French. By this time the power of the French had fallen. The English became master of India and established a factory at Chittagong. So Jaya-Simha sought the help of the British through his confidential messenger, Haridas Gosāi. Gosāi proposed nine articles as the basis of alliance between the English and Jaya-Simha. On the 14th September, 1762 the terms were settled. The Central term was that the British agreed to send six companies of sepoys to Jaya-Simha in return for which they would get a rent-free land of 8,000 cubits in Manipur for installing a factory and a fort. 11 It was duly approved by the Board. From Chittagong came six companies of sepoys under Mr. Verelest to Manipur. Thus the English first came in touch with Manipur. 12

The troops went back to Chittagong on account of rain and pestilence. Further, owing to war with Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal, the English asked the troops to come back from Khaspur, the capital of Cachar.

In October, 1763, a second term of alliance was concluded between Manipur and the English at Chittagong. The Mahārāja could not bear all the expenses incurred by the British troops. But he agreed to refund the expenses already incurred by them in moving up to Khaspur and charges for future military

assistance. They would be repaid in the product of the state worth Rs.56,800. He made an immediate offer of 500 Manipuri gold rupees to be valued at twelve British Indian rupees each. He further agreed to pay within one month after the arrival of the English troops at Raung Roong articles worth Rs.26,050. This was not paid since the British did not keep the negotiation.  

With the offer of 500 Manipuri gold rupees, all transactions between Manipur and the British seem to be ceased.

Jaya Simha's relation with Assam

From 1764 to 1793 Jaya Simha lost and regained the throne at least three times. In 1765 the Burmese king Hsinbyushin (Lord of the white elephant), became the successor of Alongpaya. He invaded Manipur with a big force. The Manipuris were defeated. Jaya Simha fled to Cachar. In Cachar he made an attempt through prince Rāmachandra and Kirtichandra Barbarua to get the help of Swargadeva Rajeshwar Singh (1751-1769), the Ahom king of Assam. Both Jaya Simha and Sandhikari visited Gargaon, the capital of the Ahom king of Assam. They were warmly welcomed at Rangpur. The request for Military aid

was accompanied by the offer of Kuranganayani (daughter of king Gourashyam) whom the king of Assam married and raised to the status of a principal consort. Jaya Simha collected a huge force in Assam, with the help of Swarga-deva Rajeswar Singh. The first expedition had to return having lost its way in the jungle. A second expedition succeeded in reinstalling Jaya Simha at the throne. The nobles of Manipur welcomed him as their king. The puppet ruler set up by Burma was unpopular among the Manipuri people. Jaya Simha defeated him with the help of the Ahom king and the hill people.16

The marriage of Kuranganayani to Rajeshwar Singh took place at Sonai Nai. A section of her attendants settled in the villages near Sibasagar. A tank excavated near Gourinath was named as "Maugalu-Jiyekar Pukhuri", tank of Maguli prince. She later played a heroic role in the history of Assam.17

King Gourinath, the Ahom king was driven out of the capital by the Moamarias, a Vaisnava sect of Assam. He appealed to King Jaya Simha for help to suppress the revolt in 1799. Jaya Simha sent a small force under his priest.18 Later, the rebels occupied Kamarupa and Darrang. Gourinath was compelled to flee to Nowgong. In July 1790, he sent a fresh request to Jaya Simha

16. Tungkhungia Buranji, pp.52-60; Ahom Buranji, pp.286-289. The Manipuri Chronical, i.e., Cheitharol Kumbaba supports this fact.
18. Tungkhungia Buranji, p.121.
for military assistance. On receiving the information Jayasimha left Manipur with 500 horse and 4000 foot. He was accompanied by his son, Madhuchandra in the campaign. The Manipuri help was not effective and could not restore him to the throne. Afterwards, the Ahom king took the assistance of the British and regained the throne in March, 1794.19

The king improved salt mines and established new capitals in Manipur. Following the systems prevailing in Assam, he introduced land survey, excavated large-sized tanks and engaged smithies for manufacturing muskets and cannon. So he had some fire arms with him.20

The political picture of Manipur after Jayasimha alias Bhagyaachandra

Jayasimha handed over the charge of administration to Labanya Chandra and left Manipur for Brindaban on Wakching 20, 1798 (about January 1798). He died in October 1798 on the way to Bhagawangola in Murshidabad district. Labanya Chandra ascended the throne in 1799. Jayasimha had eight princes. They are Sanahal, Labanya Chandra, Madhuchandra, Tulsijit, Chourajit, Marjit, Daoji and Gambhir Singh. Sanahal predeceased Jayasimha. The death of Jayasimha brought about a political confusion in

Manipur interposed by disgusting treachery and conspiracy between the surviving sons who in a contest for supremacy divided the unhappy people into numerous fraction hostile of each other. Daoji alias Khongjai Ngamba and Gambhir Singh with the help of some influential people got Labanykhandra assassinated while he was riding home after a Polo play. He was succeeded by Madhuchandra, the second son of Jayasimha. The remaining sons of Jayasimha tried to snatch away the throne from him. The king tried to maintain his position by appointing them to the most covetable posts in the state. Chourajit and Marjit were respectively made Yubaraja (heir-apparent) and Senapati (chief of the army). It is an irony of fate that Chourajit threw of his allegiance and left for Nabadwip after an abortive attempt to capture the throne. He soon returned and Marjit joined him. The combined forces defeated Madhuchandra at the battle of Sangaithel in 1805. Madhuchandra fled to Cachar and in alliance with Krishnachandra, the ruler of Cachar he invaded Manipur. He was defeated and killed at Bishenpur. Chourajit, the third son of Jayasimha ascended the throne and Marjit, the fourth son of Jayasimha made two successive attempts for the throne. Being unsuccessful in his attempts he fled to Cachar. He was not on

22. Vide a paper read by Principal Th. Nilamani Singh at the U.G.C. Seminar held at Imphal from March 3 to 8, 1968. I was present in the discussion.
good terms with the king of Cachar. He then sought the help of the Burmese on the condition that he would be a vassal of Burma if he was made the ruler of Manipur. The king of Burma invaded Manipur in 1812 A.D. The Manipuris were defeated and put to flight. Chourajit fled to Cachar with his younger brother Gambhir Singh. Marjit became the king of Manipur with Burmese help. After reaching Cachar, Chourajit sent his uncle Vadra Singh with a letter to the Governor General for British help. He promised to lend the services of Naga and Kuki forces to them in case the British agreed to restore his authority in Manipur. Soon after this, he left Cachar for Jaintia because of some misunderstanding with the new king of Cachar. Marjit never forgot the attitude of Govinda Chandra while he was a fugitive in Cachar in 1818. He led an army against Cachar, with no better excuse than the desire to conquer it. Govinda Chandra made an appeal to Chourajit and Gambhir Singh in order to resist the invader. The two Manipuri princes came to his aid. The alliance upset Marjit's plan. Marjit found that he would be unsuccessful in his attempt. Then he retreated to Manipur in time. Chourajit became the master of a portion of Cachar after this event.

26. Ibid., p.61.
Marjit began to assert himself against the Burmese. He allowed his people to collect timber in the Kabaw Valley without any permission from the Burmese authority. This was resented by Bodaw-paya, the ruler of Burma. When the latter died, the new Burmese king, Bagyidaw (1819-1837) began to quarrel with Marjit. He ordered Marjit to come to Burmese court to pay homage to him on the occasion of his coronation. Marjit refused to comply with this order. A Burmese force was sent against Marjit under Maha Bandula. The Burmese overran Manipur. They established themselves in the country by appointing several Manipur princes to continue their conquest and bring the country under subjection. The seven years of Burmese rule was known to the Manipuris as "Chahi Taret Khuntakpā" which means seven years' devastation (1819-1826). Marjit fled to Cachar and became reconciled to his brothers, Chourajit and Gambhir Singh. The three Manipuri princes formed an alliance against Govinda Chandra and drove him away from Cachar. They divided the whole of Cachar among themselves. Soon, Cachar became the cockpit of power race for Manipuri princes and there was no unity among them against their common enemy, the Burmese.

Govinda Chandra, the ruler of Cachar sought the British aid but getting no response from them he carried on negotiation with the Burmese Government. The Burmese army who had

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overthrew Manipur invading Cachar with a Manipuri Ruler to help them with local knowledge. They were defeated by Gambhir Singh. The British became uneasy with the menace of Burmese power. So they decided to make Cachar a protected state and started negotiation with the princes of Manipur in conducting their operation against the Burmese. 

Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26)

When the first Indo-Burmese war broke out in 1824 Gambhir Singh was helped by the British in his attempt to recover Manipur from the Burmese. Gambhir Singh proposed to enter into Manipur with his Manipur Levy which consisted of 500 Manipuris armed by the British. The permission was granted. The Manipur Levy marched for Manipur from Sylhet on May 17, 1825. B. R. Pemberton, a British officer accompanied Gambhir Singh. Gambhir Singh has succeeded in his attempt of occupying not only Manipur but also Kabaw Valley lying on the East of Manipur. In all his activities, he was ably helped by Nara Singh. The war was brought to a close by the treaty of Yandabo signed on February 24, 1826. By it, Gambhir Singh was recognised as an independent ruler of Manipur both by the Burmese and the English Governments. 

the Supreme Government. The fundamental features of the whole treaty were the economic and military alliances between them and trading privileges assigned to the British. It also defined the boundary lines between Manipur and Cachar. Under the terms of this treaty, the Jiri and the western bank of the Barāk became the western boundary of Manipur. Another treaty was concluded between English and Gambhir Singh on the 25th January, 1834 by which Gambhir Singh handed over the Kabaw Valley to the king of Burma. The English Government agreed to pay Rs.500 (Sikka) per month to the Rājā of Manipur as a compensation for the loss. The treaty of Yandabo and other treaties governed the relation of Manipur with the British Government till the out-break of Manipuri War of 1891. From the analysis of them we presume that the sovereignty of Manipur was not curtailed. The status of Manipur was higher than other native states of India. In this connection, R. Brown in his Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur observes, "on the conclusion of the Burmese War by the treaty of Yandabo in 1826 Manipur was declared independent." Gambhir Singh ruled Manipur for six years and devoted his talent and time to the restoration of peace and progress of the Valley of Manipur within these years. Many hill tribes who asserted independence during the war were brought under his control. He extended his conquest northwards upto Kohima which was known as Thibomei to


33. See fn. 32; Alexander Mackenzie, North-East Frontier of Bengal, p.154.
the Meitheis. To commemorate his conquest of the Naga Hills he kept a stone slab bearing his foot-print at Kohima. It is still to be found.\footnote{34} The Nagas looked upon Manipur as a great power till the British Naga Hills campaign, 1878-80. In January, 1832 Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton, escorted by 700 Manipuri troops, forced a passage through the Naga Hills in order to construct a route to Assam. Gambhir Singh improved the routes connecting Manipur with Sylhet. He continued to be on the most friendly terms with the English who faced difficulties in putting down the Khasi insurrection. With his help, the English suppressed the rebellion. Sir Charles Metcafe, the then Acting Governor-General of India suggested that Sadiya region should be made over to him if the rulers of Sadiya could not defend it.\footnote{35}

After the death of Gambhir Singh on the 9th January, 1834 at the Längthabal palace, his infant son, Chandrakirti Singh became the king of Manipur. The infant Raja and his widow mother were committed to the care of Nara Singh, the Senapati of the departed king. Many princes made attempts to overthrow the boy king by force of arms. The regent suppressed all the risings and saved the throne from their attacks. Most of them died in the attempt.\footnote{36}

\footnote{34} J. Roy, op.cit., pp.79-80; R. K. Jhalajit Singh, op.cit., pp.204-207.
\footnote{35} CK, p.229; Dr S. K. Bhuyan, \textit{Studies in the History of Assam}, p.54; Khānī Ngambā MS.
\footnote{36} R. Brown, op.cit., p.66; M. Jhulon Singh, op.cit., pp.123-124. In them we find the following persons who rose in rebellion: (1) Tarang Khomba, the eldest son of Labanya Chandra (1837), Jogindro Singh, the eldest son of Marjit, (3) Tribhubanjit and Ram Singh the two sons of Chourajit. The chronical confirms them.
The function of Manipur Levy ended with the consolidation of the British power in Cachar, Assam and some parts of Burma. The officer of the Levy was Major Grant who handed over the charge of the levy to the Manipur Government. The Government of India opened the office of the Political Agent at Imphal since 1835 in order to preserve the terms of the Yandabo treaty. Its object is manifold. Lord William Bentink, the then Governor-General of India summed up it as "the preservation of a friendly intercourse, and as a medium of communication with the Manipur Government, and as occasion may require, with the Burmese Authorities on that frontier, and more specially to prevent border feuds and disturbances which might lead to hostilities between the Manipuris and the Burmese". The Political Agent used to deal with matters relating to the Government of India on the issue of Manipur. The function of the Political Agent was similar to that of an ambassador. The Office was constituted from time to time and continued up to 1891 with changed functions.

Nara Singh conducted the affairs of the state with great ability. But Maharani Kumudini Devi, the mother of Chandrakirti apprehended that the Regent might usurp the throne. Nara Singh's administration was a great disappointment to her. Debendra Singh, a younger brother of Nara Singh was jealous of the power of Nara Singh and poisoned the ears of the dowager queen against the Regent in collusion with the nobles.

convinced the queen that Nara Singh would either banish or kill them for the throne. The queen-mother had some false knowledge about the Regent. She consulted the nobles of the court to save her son from usurpation. She hatched a plot with one Nobin Singh to kill the Regent. Outwardly, Debendra seemed to have no part in the plot. His idea was that if Nobin killed Nara Singh he could assume the throne by driving away Chandrakirti. But if the conspiracy failed, Chandrakirti along with his mother would be exiled. In the latter case, he would be safe and would get the throne after the death of Nara Singh. He was playing the double role. The dowager queen could not imagine the plan of Debendra who wanted to take the life of Chandrakirti after first killing Nara Singh. One day while Nara Singh was protesting before the image of Govindaj in his usual prayer, the rough Nobin stabbed him on the arm. Thanks to good luck, Nara Singh could escape death though severely injured. Nara Singh's bodyguards coming to know of the plot arrested and killed the assailant then and there.39

When the plot failed, Maharani Kumudini Devī along with her son and nobles fled to Cachar by an unknown route. By this time the Political Agent and his Assistant were on tour to inspect the newly constructed Cachar Road. They did not know the actual happening of the palace. The fugitives reached Cachar and sought the protection of the British. The British authority provided a guard of some sepoys for their protection. They also

39. See fn. 38.
released a sum of Rs.100 per month for them from the Kabaw Valley compensation. The dowager queen made many representations to the Government of India to gain the throne of Manipur but the British remained silent as they did not like to interfere in the internal affairs of Manipur.

Nara Singh ascended the throne in 1844 with the concurrence of the British Government and the people of Manipur. He changed the capital from Lāngthabāl to Imphal where his successors lived up to 1891. In his reign three brothers, namely, Chibā, Meleikhombā and Koijamtābā, invaded Manipur from Cachar to get the throne. Chibā was killed in the battle and Meleikhombā was captured along with his men. He was killed in a peculiar way. The wandering race whom the Meitheis called the Kukis came to Manipur in 1845. W. McCulloch, the Political Agent of Manipur gave some money to them and allowed them to settle in the exposed frontiers. His work was a model to Cachar. The Kukis had become a good subject of Manipur in course of a few years.

After the death of Nara Singh in 1850 the Kingdom went to the hand of Devendra Singh. Chandrakirti had by this time, reached the age of nineteen years and made a bold attempt to go to Manipur. The report of the Political Agent of Manipur reached the British Authority which issued an order to arrest him at once.

40. CK, p.262; Sir James Johnstone, op.cit., p.88.
He was indeed arrested; but he eluded his guards. Within a few days Nara Singh's sons fled to Cachar and joined Chandrakirti. By this time McCulloch, the Political Agent did not recognise Devendra Singh as the king of Manipur. The cause of Chandrakirti was rapidly gaining ground. He, in alliance, with the three sons of Nara Singh advanced towards Manipur from Cachar. The people of Manipur remembered how Gambhir Singh won back Manipur from the hands of the Burmese. His force was reinforced by more recruits in Jirighat. Devendra Singh, deserted by his followers, was unable to encounter the advancing troops. After a small fighting, Chandrakirti occupied the capital built by his father. Devendra was attacked by his own troops. He fled to Cachar after a period of three months. The people of Manipur hailed Chandrakirti as the rightful king of Manipur.

Chandrakirti, on assuming kingship tried to consolidate his position by appointing Bhuban Singh, a son of Nara Singh as a Yubaraja and Setu Singh, another son as the Senapati (Chief of the army). The British Government did not recognise Chandrakirti as the king of Manipur. The Political Agent was of the opinion that the sons of Nara Singh would not be long in their new offices under Chandrakirti. He wrote a report describing the temporary alliance between Chandrakirti and the sons of Nara Singh to the Government of India. One of the brothers of

43. A. Mackenzie, op.cit., p.154; R. Brown, op.cit., pp.67-68; The opinion of McCulloch confirmed by R. Brown, and the Ballads current in Manipur give details about the incident.
Nara Singh entered into alliance with the Yubaraja and Senapati attacked the capital but they could not defeat Chandrakirti so easily. Devendra Singh proceeded towards Manipur from Cachar with a large force. A battle was fought between the force of Chandrakirti and invaders. Devendra Singh fled away. Again he tried to attack Manipur from Cachar. The British Government wanted to put an end to the practice of using Cachar as a base for fighting for the throne of Manipur. They issued orders for the arrest of Devendra. The border force took him into custody and kept in Dacca jail till death released him in 1871. He was given an allowance of Rs.70 per month from the Kabaw Valley compensation money. The people used to call him as Dhākā Tābā which means one who settled at Dacca.

The authority of Chandrakirti was not recognised by the British Government in these circumstances. He had to spend his time in putting down the refractory princes. Rājakumār Leimaram Tābā and Khunjao Sana collected a large force from Cachar and invaded Manipur. They were killed in the battle. There was a difference between the attempts of Devendra and other princes. The British did not spare their troops for Chandrakirti against Devendra but they did so against other princes. After 1851, the Government of India undertook to punish all persons connected with the throne of Manipur.

45. See fn. 44; R. K. Sanahal Singh, Glimpse of Manipur, p.31.
46. Nandalal Sarma, Meitrabāk, pp.18-37.
The early attitude of the British to Chandrakīrti was marked with hostility. The British remained silent when he applied to them for getting the throne of Manipur. He occupied the throne without their help. The British withheld the Kabaw Valley compensation and hesitated to recognise him as the king of Manipur. This act infuriated the king who sent arms and troops to the Nagas hostile to the British in 1850. When this news reached the Government of India, they complained that Manipur existed only by the sufferance of the Government of India. Dr R. Brown observed that after this note the Mahārāja gave up his hostile attitude to the British.\(^{47}\)

In February 1851, the Government of India recognised him as the king of Manipur. This was followed by a special guarantee which stated that the guarantee of Rajāship must be extended to him and his descendants. The British were determined to prevent, by force of arms if necessary, any attempt by any prince to dislodge him.\(^{48}\)

The British Government regarded Manipur as an independent Asiatic power in alliance with them. It was in pursuance of the general policy of the Government of India to keep the native states under close surveillance that the Political Agent assumed increasing authority. After the special guarantee, the Government of India served Chandrakīrti in good stead in his

\(^{47}\) R. Brown, op.cit., pp.67-68.

attempt to suppress the rebellions. They put an end to the practice of using Cachar as a place for preparation against him. The princes were warned not to invade Manipur. But the political situation of India as well as that of Manipur was surcharged with fear and anarchy. In 1851 Bhuban Singh, son of Nara Singh attacked Manipur. Similar attempts were made by Maipāk, a descendant of Garibniwāz in 1859 and 1862, Kānhāi Singh, a son of Mārjit in 1864 and Gokul Singh, a son of Devendra Singh in 1866. Dreadful battles were fought and in the end Chandrakīrti emerged victorious through British help. The British took suitable steps against the princes staying in British territory but guilty of attacking Manipur. Keiphāsanā who helped Maipāk Sana in a revolt was convicted under section 125 of I.P.C. Kānhāi Singh was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for the offence.49

In 1857, some mutineers proceeded towards Manipur through Cachar and Sylhet. Sanā Chahi Ahum alias Narendrajit, a son of Chourajit took advantage of the Sepoy Mutiny, 1857. He was regarded as the leader of the 1857 movement in Manipur. At this time, McCulloch requested Chandrakīrti to send a force to the border to prevent the mutineers from entering Manipur.50

The Maharāja despatched four-hundred troops under the command of two Majors to help the British. The uprising was


50. Colonel L. W. Shakespeare, History of the Assam Rifles, pp.63-64; also information collected by me.
quelled. Most of the mutineers fell into the hands of the Manipuri soldiers. Some of them perished in the jungles of Manipur and the Kuki Hills. Narendrajit and some mutineers were captured. They were handed over to the British by the king at the persuasion of his mother. A British court tried them and exiled them to Andaman after the trial. 51

The British Government highly appreciated Maharaja Chandrakirti's service and in 1859, on the suggestion of the Political Agent, the Government of India presented a dress of honour, a sword and a belt to the king. Eight of his officers received khilat or robe of honour. The mutiny medal was awarded to Roma Singh, one of the Majors. 52

Chandrakirti Singh helped the British with his troops in the Lushai expedition of 1871-72. The Akamhao (Suktes) committed raids on the eastern border of Manipur a number of times. The Maharaja waged incessant fightings with them. He undertook a number of expeditions to their land in association with the British. He captured their land and finally conquered them in 1888-93. 54 He also suppressed the movement of the Chasad Kukis under Tonghoo and carried out his task most successfully with an iron hand. He ruthlessly killed some of the Kukis who entered into alliance with the Sumjok Rajah. Soon after this,

51. See fn. 50; CK, pp.335-336.
52. See fn. 51.
53. L. Ibungohal Singh, op.cit., p.142; Ch.I, Section 1 (Boundary of Manipur).
the relation of the Chasad Kukis with the king remained faithful up to 1891. He settled about 2000 Kuki refugees near Moirang in 1777-78.

The Angami Nagas were the source of terror to the British in this time. In 1877, they rose in revolts at Mazama against the British. It was put down by the British with the help of the Manipuris. In 1879 a war was raised between the English and the Nagas. Preparation for the struggle started on both the sides. The latter displayed courage and killed Mr Damant, the Political Agent in Naga Hills. Hearing this news, James Johnstone, the Political Agent of Manipur requested the Maharaja for armed assistance. Chandrakirti sent 2000 Manipuri troops under prince Surachandra, prince Tikendrajit and Thangal Major. The Nagas were defeated and they promised to obey the British authority. The British people were saved and their prestige was maintained by the military success of James Johnstone and Tikendrajit. In appreciation of the Maharaja's service the British gave him 2000 guns and 4 mountain guns. The sepoyos got one gold medal and Rs.100 each.

Durbar in Cachar (Jīlā Durbar)

Lord Northbrook, the viceroy of India visited Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1874. Arrangement for the Maharaja of

56. A.A.M.A., 1877-78.
Manipur to meet the Viceroy in a Durbar was made by the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar. In response to the invitation of the Viceroy, the Mahārāja with two sons and several nobles left Imphal for Cachar on July 30. The Durbar was held on board the Viceroy's yacht on the Barāk river. Gifts were exchanged. The king and his attendants began the return journey on the 14th August of the same year. 58

Award of K.C.S.I. to Mahārāja Chandrakīrti

Mahārāja Chandrakīrti participated in several battles fought by the British against the Nagas and the Mutineers of 1857. In recognition of his helps he was decorated with K.C.S.I. in 1780. In January 1880, at the request of Johnstone the Mahārāja sent 200 Manipuri soldiers to help the British in suppressing the Merma tribes in Cachar. After a fight the revolt was put down. This was highly esteemed by Sir Stuart Bayley, the chief commissioner of Assam. He paid a visit to Manipur in February 1880 to confer the badge of the "Star of India" on the Mahārāja. The Mahārāja received him with high honour. He accepted the honour in a meeting of the Durbar. After witnessing the game of Polo and dances for some days the chief commissioner returned to Assam. 59

The Mahārāja was rewarded with many gifts from the Viceroy and his Royal Highness, the prince of Walls in February

58. R. K. Jhalajit Singh, op.cit., p.109; M. Jhulon, op.cit., pp.132-33; CK, pp.42-45; also the ballad Khongjom Parba. The male or female singer used to sing the king's journey to Cachar with a Dholok in a sweet tone.
In 1878-79, the Viceroy presented one hundred muskets to the Maharaja.  

Anglo-Burmese War

In 1885, the Anglo-Burmese War known as the third Burmese war broke out, between the English and the Burmese. The Maharaja sent 900 troops under Balarām Singh, Awā-Purel (the minister in-charge of Burmese affairs) to help James Johnstone. As the troops were insufficient to occupy Kendat province of Burma, Johnstone asked him to send 1500 more troops. With the aid of the Maharaja the province was conquered. The whole of Burma passed into the hands of the British after this war. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy appreciated him much for this. The Maharaja improved the administrative, economic and cultural condition of the state. His measures brought about the development of the trade and commerce and he proved himself to be one of the greatest statesmen of Manipur. The state became up-to-date under him.

Manipur in 1890-91

Maharaja Chandrakirti died in 1886 leaving behind him eight queens and ten sons. The names of the sons were Surachandra,

60. A.A.R.M.A. 1875-76 & 76-77.
63. Under Chandrakirti, Manipur made a great progress in many ways. Post offices, telegraph wires and factories have been established in proper places. Other aspects will be described in (Cont'd)
During his lifetime he desired that Surachandra should be his successor with the consent of the Government of India. He also desired that his sons should be kings by turns contrary to the law of primogeniture. This arrangement led to much anarchy in Manipur. Surachandra became the Maharaja of Manipur in 1886. Barāchāobā and Mākjīn, the two sons of Nara Singh raised the standard of rebellion for regaining their father's throne. The attempt was curbed by Tikendrajit, the fourth son of Chandrakirti. After the death of Jhalakīrti, Tikendrajit became the General of the army. Barāchāobā again invaded Manipur to capture the throne. Tikendrajit routed his forces and forced him to flee away with the help of the Political Agent. The British kept the two brothers at Hazaribagh with monthly pensions. After one year Wāngkheirākpā, son of the former minister, Bhubon Singh made an attempt for the throne with a large force. He was a very strong man himself and the king grew nervous. The British did not help the king at this critical time. So the king was very much displeased with the Political Agent. Tikendrajit and Gopālsanā were sent against them. At first the soldiers on the king's side perished in the battle. Later, Wāngkheirākpā himself was killed in the battle with four of his sons.

64. R. K. Sanahal Singh, op.cit., p.113.
In 1887 the Kukis under their leader Tamahu rose in rebellion. The uprising was suppressed by Tikendrajit. In 1888 Jogendro Singh one of the princes advanced towards Manipur with 500 men. On the way he was checked by the English. Thus Manipur was free from external dangers.

Pākāsanā, alias Bhairabjit one of the king's brothers was jealous of the honours achieved by Senapati Tikendrajit. He was also not in good relation with Yubarāja Kulachandra. He led a party against both the Crown Prince and General in the country. The king, following his advice, took away the judicial power from Kulachandra Singh and put it under the charge of Pākāsanā. The king humiliated Angousana and Zillāngamba by unseating them in the Durbar. Tikendrajit was mortified at these acts. Pākāsanā was kindled with fire which was to destroy the whole of Manipur. Another hitch similar to these is the rivalry between Tikendrajit and Pakasana for the hand of a beautiful girl, Mālpākpi.

The eight sons of Chandrakirti were broken into rival factions. Mahārāja Surachandra and his three uterine brothers, Mahīrāja Surachandra, Phaijāo Sana and Gopal Sana formed the first group. The second group consisted of Kulachandra, Tikendrajit, Angousana and Zillāngamba. The Mahārāja was unable to stop the quarrels.

68. Mrs B&el Grimwood, op.cit.,pp.139, 131-133.
between the two factions. At the midnight of September 21, 1890 Angousanā and Zillāṅgamba attacked King Surachandra with the support of Tikendrajit. The king fled to the Residency for protection. He was joined by Pakāsanā with eighty men, Thangal General, loyal soldiers and subjects came to the Residency to bid him farewell. Surachandra expressed his desire to go to Vṛndāvana, and to abdicate the throne in favour of Kulachandra. The Political Agent made arrangements for his journey to Vṛndāvana. Three brothers accompanied him with some retainers and thirty-five Gurkha soldiers. Following his wish, Kulachandra came to the throne with the consent of Manipur Durbar and Tikendrajit was made Jubarāja of Manipur. When Surachandra reached Silchar he knew from the Political Agent’s pass about his abdication. He sent a telegram to the Chief Commissioner of Assam denying his abdication. Then he went to Calcutta and applied to the Government of India for help to get the throne. The Government of India wanted to make Kulachandra king in place of Surachandra and also to exile Jubarāja Tikendrajit because of his conduct towards the British. The responsibility for materialising this plan was entrusted to Mr Quinton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

69. C. F. Mukunda Chandra Ray Chowdhury, Manipur Itihas, vide document No.11.
70. Mrs E. Grimwood, op.cit., pp.140-145; Letter from the Political Agent of Manipur to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, No.288, 25th September, 1890.
72. Correspondences relating to Manipur, 1891, p.8; Govt. order, February, 1851.
73. Letter No.360 of February 21, 1891.
The Chief Commissioner and his party reached Imphal on March 22, 1871. He (chief commissioner) announced that a Durbar would be held in the British Residency in the afternoon. Tikendrajit did not attend the Durbar. Another Durbar was arranged on the following morning. No one turned up in it. The Chief Commissioner sent Mr Grimwood, the Political Agent and Lieutenant W. H. Simpson to inform Tikendrajit the order of the Government of India. Political negotiations were of no use to them. The Chief Commissioner sent a force under Captain Butcher of 43 gurkha light Infantry to occupy Tikendrajit's palace. In the battle the Manipuris defeated the British Army. Lieutenant Brackenbury was wounded. There was talk of peace from the British side.

The Chief Commissioner of Assam accompanied by four European officers entered the royal palace at 8 p.m. in the evening to discuss the matter. Tikendrajit had a conference with them for half an hour. The Chief Commissioner expressed his desire to have another meeting in the following morning. While they were leaving they were attacked by the excited people. A certain Kajao struck Mr Grimwood with his spear and the wound proved fatal. The four sahibs and a gurkha bugler were imprisoned by order of Thangal General. The general made them over to a public executioner, Sagolsemba Dhana Singh who cut off their

74. Mrs E. Grimwood, op.cit., pp.174-175, 182-183, 186.
heads with a dao called tadantane (Tendong Thāng), at a place wherein were kept two images of the dragons. The people fancied that the act of killing the Sāhibs had the sanction of the holy scriptures of Manipur.  

Mrs E. Grimwood, some British officers and 200 gurkha soldiers left Imphal for Cachar on March 25. They reached Cachar on March 31. Kulachandra sent the news to the Viceroy explaining the circumstances leading to the death of five British officers. The British got information about the tragedy from Cachar, Tamu and Kohima. Mr Grant proceeded to Manipur with his eighty men. He vindicated the prestige of the English by defeating the Manipuris at the battle of Pallel and Thoubāl Athokpam (a little to the south of Thoubal College). Grant got the order to retire. The British Government immediately sent three columns to attack Manipur from three sides, i.e., Cachar, Kohima and Burma. General Collet was the leader of the forces sent out to Manipur. The Burma column under General Graham was strongly resisted by the Manipuris. A decisive battle was fought at Khongjom on the 25th April. Many noble sons of Manipur like Pāonā Urajabāsi and Wangkhei Meirābā fell down fighting bravely. The English succeeded in routing Manipuri forces. The other columns entered Manipur without any resistance.  

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77. Evidence of P.W. 10 S. Dhana Sing, the executioner.  
78. Mrs. E. Grimwood, op. cit., pp.239-257; R. C. Majumdar and others, op. cit., pp.726-727.  
79. Col. Shakeshpeare, op. cit., pp.178-180; Mrs E. Grimwood, op. cit., p.295 (Grant’s narrative).  
away from the capital. The English forces occupied the capital all at a time. Manipur was declared forfeited to the crown. General Collet declared that the English were the ruler of Manipur and they would offer a reward of Rs.5,000 each for the arrest of Kulachandra and Tikendrajit and Rs.2,000 for Thangāl General, and Rs.1,000 for each of the generals and subedars. Tedious search was extended to the lands of Magas, China and Siam. Ultimately, they were arrested by the British with the help of some Manipuri people. For the trial of these men a martial court was constituted. The judges appointed for the trial were St. John Michell, A. W. Davis and R. K. Ridgeway. The accused were sentenced to death by the court. An appeal was preferred to the Viceroy on behalf of the princes. Queen Victoria wanted to save Tikendrajit as she thought that the conduct of the British gave him an "excuse" to resist. The Queen in her cypher telegram asked the Viceroy to commute his sentence to imprisonment for life. But the Governor-General took a different view. The death sentence of Tikendrajit was upheld as he was found guilty of waging war against the Queen and of abetment of murder. Thangāl General was convicted of murder and his death sentence was confirmed. The Government found Kulachandra to be guilty of waging war against the Queen but they commuted the sentence on him to life imprisonment on grounds of prerogative of mercy. Other persons connected with

the revolution were sentenced to life imprisonment.84 Tikendrajit and Thangal General were brought out before the public at the Polo ground. Thousands of people including Naga and Kuki women came to have a last sight of them. They were hanged on Thursday, the 13th of August, 1891 at 5 p.m. at Keithel Achouba.85 Other convicts were sent up to the Andaman Island which was chosen as the place of their confinement.

New arrangement and selection
Rājā Churachand Singh

There was a debate on the issue of Manipur and its future settlement in the British parliament. In the House of Lords, Lord Northbrook, Lord Ripon and Sir John Gorst participated in the debate and pleaded that Manipur need not be annexed to British India.86 As a result of this debate, the Queen issued a proclamation on August 21, 1891. It stated that although Manipur was liable to the penalty of annexation, Her Majesty made a regrant of it as an act of mercy. Native rule was established in Manipur.87

Selection of Rājā Churachand Singh

The throne of Manipur was given to Churachand Singh, son of Chaobi-Yaimā on September 18, 1891. He was a descendant

84. Ibid., pp.728-729.
of Nara Singh. He was then 5 years old. A sanad was given to him. It provided that

In his capacity as the Raja he would get a salute of 11 guns in British India. Only the king's eldest son will be entitled to the throne. This is subject to the approval of the British Government. The Raja and his successors would pay an annual tribute of Rs.50,000 to the British Government. The Raja as well as his successors must always give his consent to acts of the British Government regarding the administration of the state, the hill tribes, the armed forces of the state and any other matter in which the British Government might be "pleased to intervene." In return of his loyalty to the British Government, he and his successors would get the protection and favour of British Government. These conditions were emphasised by the Government of India in their letter dated 21st September, 1891 to the Chief Commissioner of Assam. For the attack on the Britishers, a fine of Rs.250,000 was imposed.

Investiture Ceremony

The investiture ceremony was conducted by Major Maxual, the then Political Agent in April, 1892. All persons who attended it were required to be loyal to the new Raja.

88. Vide H. M. Durand Secy. to the Govt. of India's letter dt. the 18th September, 1891 Simla.
It did no more than register his derivation of power from the British. In this ceremony it was announced that slavery and lāllup were abolished. Rates of tax for a house per year were publicly informed by the Political Agent.

The Political Agent was given more powers in the administration during the minority of the Rāja. The Rāja took over the administration from the Political Agent on the 15th May, 1907.  
