Lord Amherst, the Governor General of India (1823-1828), viewed the establishment of the Burmese authority in Cachar as a serious menace to the security of British territories in Bengal. In a letter written to the Court of Directors, dated January 9, 1824, he stressed the strategic importance of the possession of Cachar. "One of the easiest passes" he wrote, "from Ava in Company's possession is through Manipur and Cachar and the occupation of the latter is essential to the defence of that pass." And the occupation of Cachar, on the other hand, by the Burmese, would place the district of Sylhet entirely at their mercy. Influenced by these considerations the Governor General gave up the old policy of neutrality and forestalled the Burmese Government by recognising Govind Chandra as the protected ruler of Cachar. But the King of Burma followed his own way to replace Govind Chandra.

1. Majumdar, R.C., British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part I, p.100.
2. Ibid.
on the throne of Cachar and ordered his Commanders to arrest the three Manipuri chiefs who had ousted him. Accordingly, early in 1824 Burmese armies converged on Cachar from three directions. In these circumstances Lord Amherst declared war on Burma on 5 March, 1824.

At this critical moment the Government of Bengal desired to utilise every resource however trifling for the successful operation of the war. They felt the necessity of re-establishment of the Manipur dynasty as a bulwark against the Burmese invaders. Negotiations were, therefore, opened with Gambhir Singh to set up a strong and independent Government at Manipur so that the country could act as a buffer State between the British and the Burmese territories. They also felt that Gambhir Singh might prove a useful ally. Gambhir Singh, who was planning for inflicting a crushing defeat to the Burmese, his sworn enemy, expressed his willingness to co-operate with the British. He was, therefore, allowed to raise in 1825, a contingent known as the 'Manipur Levy', formed of five hundred Manipuris and Cacharis paid and officered by the British. Lord Amherst, however, suspected that owing to the long and intimate relation of the Burmese Kings with that

principality, the extension of British influence there would be viewed with jealousy and alarm by the Court of Ava. So he decided to settle the question of extending further British help to Manipur upon receiving a detailed report from David Scott, the man on the spot, and the then Agent to the Governor-General, North East Frontier of India. The latter pointed out to the Government of Bengal the vulnerability of the whole of the eastern frontier suggesting that the policy of non-intervention which had been so long the watchwork towards the North East Frontier should be definitely discarded and that it was highly expedient to support and encourage the Manipuris to resist and shake off the Burmese yoke. Scott's report convinced the Governor-General of the significance of establishing the independent State of Manipur to the cause of the British Government. Gambhir Singh was thus informed that his only chance of regaining the throne of Manipur depended on the degree of active assistance and co-operation offered by him to the British.

On the conclusion of the terms of agreement between Gambhir Singh and the British, Chourjit Singh wanted to be associated with the enterprise. But the mutual jealousy between these two brothers was so strong that Mr. Tucker, the Commissioner of Sylhet, proceeded to Badarpur in Cachar and assured Gambhir Singh that Manipur would be given to him if he could conquer it and that the British Government would not ask him to admit Chourjit Singh to any share in the Government.

5. Ibid., pp.341-342.
The latter being disappointed, tried to instigate Manipuri recruits against the British detachment stationed there. His endeavours failed and he was subsequently removed to Nadia and granted a pension of Rs 100 per month.

Towards the close of October 1824, the Burmese army in Cachar retired, but took up a very strong position at Dudpatli, a small town in Cachar. With the object of driving them out, Lieutenant Colonel Bonn directed his men against that position. The assault failed and the troops retreated to Jatrapur, a few miles from Dudpatli. On 27 February 1825, Colonel Innes joined the force. The Burmese, thereupon, retreated from the position at Dudpatli and fell back to Manipur. The incessant rains prevented the British troops from following up the Burmese. Nevertheless they occupied Dudpatli and Talain, a station between the frontier of Cachar and Manipur and destroyed the stockade built by the Burmese.

The plan of operation on Sylhet frontier, during the campaign of 1825, comprised of the march of a considerable force through Cachar into Manipur whence an impression might be made on the territory of Ava or at least the anxious attention of the Court be drawn to its frontier in that direction. With these views Brigadier General Shuldham was appointed to take the command in the eastern frontier. He decided to march towards Manipur. Captain Dudgeon with Sylhet Local Corps,

8. Ibid.
Gambhir Singh's Levy and a wing of Blair's horse was sent in advance to cover the pioneers. With that object in view, arrangements were made for the construction of a road from Dudpatli towards Manipur.

Shuldham arrived at Banskandi, a town near the bank of the Jiri River on February 1825. The incessant rains and the difficulties of the terrain made it impossible for him to complete the road or to advance towards Manipur. He found that "the country from Banskandy towards Manipur was a continued series of ascents and descents, the route being intersected at right angles by ridges of mountain running nearly due north and south, the base of one spring from the foot of the other with the intervention only of a mountain rivulet swollen into a deep and precipitous river after every shower .............

Frequent and heavy showers commenced early in February and continued with slight occasional intermission until the proximity of the rainy season rendered the attempt to reach Manipur hopeless." On March 11, he reported that "the state of the road is such that it is quite impossible to send supplies on to the advance either on camels, bullocks, elephants or men."

Gambhir Singh decided to take up the task which was condemned as hopeless by General Shuldham. He decided to march on Manipur with his irregulars, namely, the Manipur Levy, which were in the meantime provided with arms by the British.

12. Wilson, Historical Sketch, p.49.
13. Wilson, Documents, No.171.
Lieutenant Pemberton, a British Officer, who later became so popular in the history of the North Eastern Frontier of India, volunteered to accompany him. They left Sylhet on May 17, 1826 and failed to reach Banskandi till the 23rd, the direct road being impassable as a consequence of heavy rains which forced them to make a detour. They left for Manipur on May 25 and after a march of great difficulty and privation, chiefly owing to heavy rainfall, they crossed the borders of the valley on June 10, 1825. On their advance the Burmese left Manipur and stockaded themselves in a village called Undro, about 10 miles from the Capital. Gambhir Singh and Pemberton advanced to attack them, but soon communications arrived that the Burmese had evacuated the valley. Inclement weather together with the lack of supply rendered it extremely difficult on his part to remain at Manipur. Gambhir Singh, therefore, had no alternative but to leave the place for Sylhet leaving a small force of 300 men to guard Manipur in addition to local volunteers whom he had provided with arms. He believed that the Burmese troops stationed on the confines of Manipur would not be able to dispossess the party he had left there. Pemberton reported that the success of the enterprise was due mainly to the energy, perseverance and skill of their ally Gambhir Singh.

Provided with adequate supplies and arms and accompanied by Captain Grant and Pemberton, Gambhir Singh once again left Bamskandi for Manipur on December 4, 1825 and arrived at the town of Manipur on the 18th. On their arrival no Burmese force was found in the vicinity of the Capital but a considerable body of them was stockaded at Tamu, in the south-east corner of the valley. The Sunajok Raja of the Kabaw Valley collected a force of seven hundred men and determined to resist the advance of the Manipuri troops. Thereupon, Gambhir Singh and Captain Grant sent a detachment against them. Finding, however, that the enemy was too strong for the force sent against them, the Commander of the detachment applied for reinforcements. Gambhir Singh and Captain Grant immediately marched to his assistance with the rest of the Levy across the Maring Hills into the Burmese territory and joined him on January 18, 1826.

On the 19th, the Manipuri troops effected their advance through thick jungle and were not discovered till they had obtained command of the spots whence access to the stream from the stockade was practicable. The enemy, on perceiving them, opened heavy fire but the men being sheltered by the thicket suffered little. The Burmese made several spirited sorties to drive the Manipuri troops from their positions. But they were resisted with great spirit. Even in their

final attempt they suffered heavy casualties and, therefore, they commenced their retreat. They retired in small groups three or four at a time and had completely cleared the stockade by the night of the 22nd.  

Subsequently, a detachment of three hundred men was sent forward and succeeded in capturing a stockade on the right bank of the Mingthee River. More than two hundred Manipuris were liberated and many others rescued from captivity. Captain Grant reported: "... the activity, judgement and skill he (i.e., Gambhir Singh) has displayed on this occasion have proved the justice of the opinion previously entertained of his merits, steady gallantry which, without the usual aids of cannon could force a brave enemy to evacuate a strongly fortified position is a very satisfactory illustration of the character of his followers."  

The Anglo-Burmese War came to an end by the treaty of Yandaboo, 24 February 1826. Under Articles No. 2 of the treaty "His Majesty the King of Ava renounced all claims upon and will abstain from all future interference with the principality of Assam and its dependencies and also with the contiguous petty States of Cachar and Jyntea. With regard to Munnipore (Manipur), it is stipulated that should Gambhir Singh desire to return to that country, he shall be recognised by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof." But it was not clarified whether Gambhir Singh should be treated as the sovereign ruler of Manipur or as a vassal king. The status of Manipur,

18. Wilson Documents, No.166(B).
19. Aitchison, Treaties etc., Vol.II, pp.149-150.
therefore, engaged the anxious attention of the Government of Bengal for it was the desire of the British Government, as stated earlier, that Manipur should be treated as an independent kingdom. The existence of an independent kingdom, inhabited by a people with deep rooted antipathy to the Burmese, between Burma and the British territories, was regarded as desirable from the British point of view. It was also felt that it was not safe to allow Manipur to remain a dependency of Burma, because the existence of Burmese hold on Manipur would expose the Sylhet frontier to the danger which had precipitated the last war. It was, therefore, resolved by the Supreme Council that if the Burmese regarded Manipur, which they should not, as their dependency, the matter should be settled by negotiations and an independent status obtained, if necessary, by some concessions on the part of the British Government. The matter was referred to the Court of Directors at Home and Mr. Crawford, Resident designate for Ava, was instructed to sound the sentiments of the Burmese Court on the point at issue without broaching the subject. Mr. Crawford found that the Burmese treated Manipur as an independent country and wanted the British also to treat it as such. They even claimed that Gambhir Singh, being an independent king, should not maintain Burmese or European officers at his court. Though the problems of the presence of foreigners was not solved, the independent status of

Manipur was recognized by the Burmese. As regards the relation with British there was nothing to indicate that Gambhir Singh, who thus became ruler of Manipur, acknowledged the suzerainty of the British. In the Statistical Account of Manipur Dr. Brown recorded in 1873: "On the conclusion of the Burmese War Manipur was declared independent." Since there was no clear explanation in the said Article, the Government of Bengal began to regard Manipur as a protected State. But the latter was never aware that the status was thus interpreted. This gross misunderstanding, as will be discussed later led to the most unhappy chapter of the history of Manipur in 1891 A.D. For the time being, however, close and intimate friendly relations were established between the two governments.  

ASCENDENCY OF GAMBHIR SINGH:  

Towards the close of the Burmese War the condition of Manipur was indeed deplorable. The number of adult male population in the valley dwindled to less than three thousand. A large number of people had been killed in action or carried into captivity or had fled for safety to the Surma Valley. Colonies of Manipuri refugees grew up in different parts of Cachar, Sylhet and Tripura. Many went as far as  

22. Majumdar, R.C., op. cit., p.1028.  
Dacca for safety. Agriculture and cottage industries were completely ruined. Fields were covered with jungles. The valley presented a very desolate and gloomy appearance.

Gambhir Singh, therefore, had to begin everything from the scratch. He was as good an administrator as he was a bold soldier. In the beginning of his reign life began anew in the valley. Under his guidance, assisted by an able Senapati Nar Singh, a cousin, though of a distant branch, and a faithful Jubaraja, Jaibir Singh, a son of one of his brothers, the country also gradually returned to normalcy. Agriculture and industry were once again revived. Some of the people who had fled to other places returned. In November 1827, the image of Lord Govinda was brought back from Cachar. This enrichment in the spiritual life of the people after the ravages of the last war indicated the return to normalcy in the country. The immigration of Brahmins which was a regular feature since the 15th century and which was suspended during the troubled period of the war years also started once again from the time of Raja Gambhir Singh. The introduction of the Car Festival (Rath Yatra) and the Return Car Festival (Punar Yatra) were important examples for

25. An image of Lord Krishna.
the complete normalcy in the country. He also introduced Gosta Ashtami, which was intimately connected with the religious life of the people. Examining the topography of the land and its relative importance, he transferred his capital to Kanchipur, a place four miles to the south of Imphal, the former capital. The Headquarter of the Manipur Levy was also located there.

Gambhir Singh had to face immense difficulties within and outside the valley. There occurred an outbreak of small-pox with unprecedented severity for nearly two years and which took a heavy toll of human lives. Inoculation, the only safety measure to check this dreadful disease, was never known or practised in Manipur. He, therefore, requested Captain Grant, the Commissioner of his Levy, for the services of a doctor. Grant favourably entertained the request and referred the matter to the Government of Bengal. In recognition of the services he rendered during the last war the Government were pleased to appoint one Muhamad Nazim as the native doctor in the Levy and his pay etc. were charged under the Political Head of the Government. "Not a single death from small-pox" reported Grant, "has been brought to my notice since the arrival of the late Muhamad Nazim."  

26. P.C., 15 May, 1829, No.2.5.
27. P.C., 30 January, 1832, No.89.
After the death of Rasim, Davideal Sookul was appointed as the vaccinator in Manipur.

Formerly, the Rajas of Manipur extended their sway over the hills occupied by the Kukis and the Lahoopa Nagas. But during the period of the decadence, just before and during the Burmese war, whatever influence Manipur had was gone. Gambhir Singh with the help of the British Officers in his Levy and the arms and ammunitions he received from the British succeeded in subjugating these tribes to the north and south of the State. During that critical period an imposter, giving himself out to be Khwairakpa, an elder brother of the Raja, appeared with a few followers and actually took possession of the Raja's Palace. The Senapati collected a few sepoys and advanced towards him. The feigned Khwairakpa tried to escape but he was pursued and killed and order was restored in the valley.

Immediately after the Burmese war the authorities at Fort William realised the importance of direct communication between Assam and Manipur, since it would facilitate commercial intercourse in times of peace and also help war.

28. S.C., 15 April 1831, Nos.3-7.
29. Ibid.
efforts in times of hostilities. To undertake a survey of Assam and Manipur the Government of Bengal deputed in January 1832 Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton; and the latter two officers, accompanied by 700 Manipuri troops with 800 coolies advanced from the Manipur Valley via Paplongrei, Samagudting and the Dhunsiri to Mohong Dijua. They had literally to fight their way to the whole Kutcha and Angami Naga country. Because of the considerable difficulties, the party could not make out a communicable route between Assam and Manipur. With a view to finding out a practicable route up to Assam, Gambhir Singh in the cold season of 1832-1833, marched through to Assam by a route a few miles to the east of Jenkin's track. But this endeavour also bore no fruit.

There had been repeated occasions in which British Government had to look to Manipur for help for the defence of the Eastern Frontier. In 1832 Gambhir Singh was asked to render his assistance against the insurgent Khasis. The Raja himself proceeded with a large force and helped the British. When the defence of the Sadiya frontier was placed under consideration of the Supreme Council, the Agent to the Governor-General was even inclined to make over this part of

30. P.Progs., 5 March, 1832; 30 April 1832; 20 March 1833.
31. Ibid.
32. P.Progs., 14 January 1833; 30 March 1833; 30 May 1833.
the territory to Gambhir Singh. In the same year Gambhir Singh, accompanied by Gordon, reduced to submission the Angami Nagas who had created troubles in the British frontier. Gambhir Singh was later given a free hand over the Angamis, perhaps with the object of creating Manipur as a bulwark against their incursions.

THE JIRI FRONTIER:

The western boundary between Manipur and Cachar was not properly defined. Since early 1827, Gambhir Singh made steady penetration into the area west of the Barak River which formed the boundary between Manipur and Cachar. This region abounds in excellent timber besides valuable ivory, wax, grass and bamboos. Gambhir Singh nourished the desire of annexing that territory to Manipur and brought various Naga clans that occupied this tract under his authority.

In 1828, on a complaint lodged by Govind Chandra, the Raja of Cachar, against Gambhir Singh, Mr. Tucker, Commissioner of Sylhet, called upon the Raja of Manipur to explain his conduct. But Gambhir Singh rejected the claim that the Barak had ever formed the line of demarcation between Manipur and Cachar. He explained that he had merely brought the independent Nagas under his sphere of influence. A few months

34. Ibid., p.110.
35. Johnstone, James, My Experiences in Manipur and Naga Hills, p.34.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p.75.
later he occupied an Ilaka, known as Chandrapur, and constructed houses for the settlers from his territory. When he was asked by the Commissioner to remove the Manipuris from the Ilaka he claimed it as an inheritance. Gambhir Singh’s inability to present documentary evidence and the intervention of Mr. Scott, Agent to the Governor General, under advice from the Supreme Government together dismissed his claim on the Ilaka. The Agent wrote to the Government that Gambhir Singh could not be considered as entitled to hold the Ilaka of Chandrapur even should it be true, as he alleged, that it was granted to his father. The Agent, however, was of the opinion that it might be expedient that the Raja of Manipur should be given some other small tract of land in Cachar for the purpose of settling a few of his followers with a view to the safe custody and transport of military stores between Sylhet and Manipur. The proposal received the concurrence of the Governor-General in Council and it was observed that if necessary Gambhir Singh should be required to pay a fair and reasonable compensation either directly to Govind Chandra or through the British Government. The Raja of Cachar objected strongly to make over to Gambhir Singh any part of the territory for the purpose of erecting a magazine as suggested by the Agent. But ultimately he agreed to cede such a tract to Government for fifteen years after which it had to be renewed, if necessary.

40. Ibid.
41. S.C., 30 May, 1829, No.1.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid, No.6.
44. S.C., 31st July, 1829, No.22.
Shortly after the acquisition of the above tract Gambhir Singh set up a police establishment at Chandrapur and encouraged its Thannadar directly and indirectly to commit acts of aggression⁴⁵. He also began to interfere indirectly in the internal politics of Cachar which had naturally provoked the wrath of the Agent to the Governor-General, who in a private letter asked him to desist from such proceedings. However, these remonstrances hardly produced any change in the attitude of the Raja of Manipur⁴⁶.

In the meantime the authority of Govind Chandra had been challenged in Cachar by his formidable rival - Tularam. Although the early relations between Govind Chandra and this chief were on the whole cordial, Tularam later on shook off the allegiance of the Raja of Cachar and joined hands with his father in the hills of North Cachar. The Arzee of this chief shows that Govind Chandra had murdered his father and uncle⁴⁷ and caused some of his people to be overpowered and put in irons⁴⁷. The Raja of Cachar treated him (Tularam) as an usurper and ridiculed him as the son of a slave girl⁴⁸. Tularam on the other hand, aided by his two cousins, Govind Ram and Durga Charan, caused much alarm to the Raja⁴⁹.

The enmity of Gambhir Singh and Tularam made the position of Govind Chandra insecure. The situation was further aggravated by his oppressive measures and with the strained relations with his Cachari subjects whom he deprived of the lowves and fishes of the State. To make his administration

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⁴⁶. Ibid.
⁴⁷. S.C., 30 May, 1829, Nos.2-3.
⁴⁹. S.C., 30 May, 1829, Nos.4-5.
efficient the Raja had to employ a large number of officers from the southern part of Bengal and dismissed the greater numbers of his Cachari subjects who had offended many of his kith and kin. The later being highly dissatisfied fled to Jayantia, Comilla and Tipperah and some joined hands with Tularam.

On April 24, 1830, Govind Chandra was murdered in his Capital. On the previous night a gang of Manipuris in concert with some attendants entered the Royal apartment and killed the Raja and several members of his family and set fire to the palace. On receiving the news Mr. Furgund, the Magistrate of Sylhet, hurriedly posted a detachment to Cachar and reported the matter to the Government of Bengal. The Government appointed Lieutenant Fisher, who was by then on survey duties at Sylhet to take temporary charge of the administration in Cachar with the powers of a magistrate and collector.

It was strongly suspected that Gambhir Singh instigated the murder of the Raja of Cachar. It was also believed that Tularam had a secret hand in the murder of the Raja. Ram Govind, acting Vakeel on the part of the British Government at the Court of Raja Govind Chandra was suspected to be privy to the whole plot. Kirparam Brahman Cachari in his deposition stated that he had seen about thirty Manipuris.

51. Barpujari, H.K., op. cit., p. 82.
52. P.C., 18 June, 1830, No. 53.
53. P.C., 29 Oct., 1830, Mos. 35A-35C.
54. P.C., 4 June, 1830, Mos. 29-31.
55. Ibid.
with 'muskets and sword' which belonged to the late Raja of Cachar and the "golden necklace" of the late Raja on the neck of one of the sirdars. He further pointed out that one Suntaba, blind in one eye, a subject of Gambhir Singh, had in retaliation for some previous offence, killed Govind Chandra with a sword. The depositions of the persons who were connected with the crime established reasonably that Gambhir Singh sent his agents to Cachar to kill Govind Chandra. Evidence proved that a party of armed men from without, assisted undoubtedly by some of the Sipahis in the Rajah's own service, penetrated the interior of his dwelling and murdered him there. Lieutenant Fisher, after making a thorough and detailed study of the case, opined that the existence of domestic conspiracy was more certain than was at first supposed and that the Raja was murdered through the machination of Gambhir Singh. Though there were considerable number of Cacharis holding situation in the Raja's family about the time of his murder, there was no direct proof of their participation in the crime. Fisher further reported that though the murder was committed by the followers of Gambhir Singh and probably by his orders, yet several principal Cacharis in the Raja's family were also more or less implicated. It was even possible that the conspiracy might have been hatched among the junior officers without the direct concurrence of Gambhir Singh. However, a close examination of the evidence indicated the complicity of Gambhir Singh.

56. Ibid.
57. P.C., 18 June, 1830, No.54.
58. P.C., 29 October, 1830, Nos. 35A-35C.
59. Ibid.
The Government of Bengal wrote that the presumptive proof against Gambhir Singh as the instigator of the murder was very strong. While doing so the Government also considered the repeated disputes between the two chiefs over several matters, and only about a fortnight before the occurrence, Govind Chandra had to solicit the Agent to the Governor-General for military aid against Gambhir Singh, who was reported to have despatched a force to seize Cachar in concert with Tularam. The Agent, therefore, asked Gambhir Singh to tender his explanations for the charge made against him in connection with the murder of Govind Chandra and to surrender Heeranund, Suntaba and such others who were suspected to be involved in the crime. However, the Government did not approve of the suggestion to arrest Gambhir Singh in the event of his visit in Sylhet.

Several claimants appeared to the vacant throne of Cachar. Gambhir Singh requested the Government of Bengal to allow him to hold the country of Cachar for twenty years in return for an annual revenue of Rs 15,000. Captain Grant supported Gambhir Singh's claim. He was under the impression that the acquisition of Cachar by the latter would provide him with sufficient means to build up a stable and efficient Government so necessary for the security of the North-Eastern Frontier. If Cachar be ceded to the Raja of Manipur, Grant also believed that there were ample chances for assimilation of the two peoples in Cachar and Manipur who had been warring.

60. P.C., 18 June, 1830, No.54.
62. Ibid., No.46.
all along with each other. Cachar being separated from Manipur by a series of ranges of hills and deep rivers and its inhabitants speaking a dialect quite different from the language of the Manipuris, Capt. Jenkins and Pemberton did not support Grant's argument. They, therefore, opposed Gambhir Singh's claim on Cachar. The Government of Bengal concurred with the arguments of Jenkins and Pemberton. Moreover, on the receipt of the proceedings of the murder of the late Raja, the Supreme Government felt it impolitic to permit Gambhir Singh to profit by a crime which was suspected to have been committed at his instigation and deemed it inexpedient to transfer the country of Cachar to the Raja of Manipur. Accordingly Cachar was annexed on August 14, 1832.

Pemberton however, desired that if it were not possible to transfer the whole district of Cachar Gambhir Singh should at least be favoured with the cession of the tract east of the Jiri River between the two branches of the Barak River, over which he had already extended his influence. The Governor-General in Council entertained grave doubts as to the propriety of ceding a portion of Cachar in the face of objection raised by Capt. Jenkins. The Council, therefore, desired to have more details from the local authorities. On receipt of the expected reports from Grant and Pemberton and being convinced of their cogent and forceful arguments the Government of Bengal finally resolved to relinquish the tract on November 5, 1832 to Gambhir Singh on conditions as given below:
"(i) That he should withdraw his thapna without delay from Chandrapur; (ii) that he should not obstruct the trade between Manipur and Cachar by exaction of exorbitant duties; (iii) that the Nagas occupying the hills ceded to him should have free access to the plains for the purposes of barter and sale; (iv) that he should keep the communication from Jiri to Manipur in order for the transit of laden cattle throughout the year; (v) that he should be ready at all times to afford the assistance of a portion of the Manipur Levy and also to furnish porters and labourers whenever their services might be required by the British Government." 64

THE PROBLEM OF THE KABAW VALLEY:

The Kabaw Valley is a narrow strip of level land between the mountains which form the eastern boundary of the Manipur Valley and the Minghthee River. "The term Kubo(Kabaw)" Pemberton writes, "is employed by the people of Munepoor (Manipur) to designate not only the Shan, but the extensive race itself together with the tract on the opposite bank of the Mingthee River, extending to the Naojeeree Hills, was called by them Meithei Kubo and by the Burmese Kathe Shan, while that portion of Shan comprised between the eastern foot of the Naojeeree Hills and the right bank of the Irawathi(Irawadi) River was Ava Kubo or Mrelap Shan ..........." 65 The Valley was divided into the Sumjok, the Khambat and the Kule divisions

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64. As quoted by Barpuiari, H.K., in his book Assam in the Days of the Company, p.95.
respectively. Apart from its economic importance arising from rich teak woods, the Rajas of Manipur and Burma thought the possession of the valley indispensable for the border security of their respective countries and naturally they endeavoured to extend their sovereignty over that valley. No wonder, therefore, successive border disputes arose in that valley during the years following the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26). The necessity for demarcation of a well defined boundary was, therefore, keenly felt by both the parties and the Government of Bengal came forward as the arbitrator over the intricate problem. In fact, no mention, whatever, was made of the valley in the Treaty of Yandaboo and nothing was discussed at that time about the boundary between Manipur and Burma. The Government of Bengal felt it to be just and proper that all the places and territories in the ancient country of Manipur, which were in possession of Raja Gambhir Singh, should belong to that Raja as the authorities in Cachar, hitherto, calculated the importance of keeping Manipur as a buffer State between British India and Burma. The Sumjok and Khambat Divisions of the valley as far east of Mingthee or Kyendwin were accordingly given to Manipur on April 1826 and the Mingthee formed the boundary between the countries.

Soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Yandaboo some Burmese troops crossed the Mingthee River and entered the Valley. Instead of renewing hostilities, Gambhir Singh

67. Meckensie, Alexander, North East Frontier of Bengal, p.176.
thought it wise to leave the matter to the decision of the British. The Supreme Government, therefore, took great pains to demarcate a proper boundary between Burma and Manipur. The Burmese, on the other hand, made no friendly offers. Several attempts that had been made subsequently saw no sign of amicable settlement. In early 1828, the Government of Bengal appointed Captains Grant and Pemberton, the two British officers in Manipur, as the Commissioners to settle the dispute. In that same year the latter met the Burmese Commissioners on the bank of the Ningthee River, but the season was far advanced and the two parties decided to postpone the meeting till the following year.

In the meantime the Burmese interpreted that the Ningthee was not the Kyendwin (Chindwin). They falsely represented that it was a river flowing to the west of the Kabaw Valley and tried to back their claims by sending a map to Calcutta showing the Ningthee and the Chindwin as two different rivers. The authorities in Calcutta returned the map to the British Commissioners in Manipur to enquire into the report whether any such river shown as the Ningthee in the map existed. Grant and Pemberton proved the deception of the Burmese and their report was forwarded to the Resident at Ava.

The date for the next meeting was fixed in early 1829; but no Burmese Commissioners appeared. The Supreme Government desired the settlement in favour of Gambhir Singh and directed Grant and Pemberton to

68. Mackenzie, op. cit., p.177.
proceed to the Mingthee. The Burmese were, however, invited to meet the British Commissioners, in January 1830, pointing out to them that if they failed to come on the appointed date the boundary would be fixed in their absence permanently.

As scheduled the meeting with the Burmese Commissioners, accompanied by Major Burney, British Resident in Burma was held in January 1830 on the bank of the Mingthee River. The Burmese strongly denied the conquest of the Kabaw Valley by Gambhir Singh during the late war and rejected the boundary demarcated by Grant and Pemberton. They asserted that the Manipurs had come secretly into the valley and taken possession of the country while the boundary question was under discussion with Sir A. Campbell, the Commander of the Oversea Expedition, in the First Burmese War. But Grant and Pemberton did not agree with their argument and recommended the valley in favour of Gambhir Singh pointing out that the valley was in possession of Manipur occasionally in earlier periods as well as for twelve years during the reign of Raja Chourjit Singh (1800-1813), the then Raja of Manipur. The Burmese on the other hand claimed the valley as their own and cited that the Khambat and the Sumjok divisions of the valley, 1,300 years ago were under them. They denied the possession of the Kabaw Valley by Manipur occasionally in the ancient times as well as for a period of twelve years during the reign of Raja Chourjit Singh. They also rejected the claims of possession of the Sumjok, the Khambat etc. by Manipur before the

70. S.C., 30 April, 1830, Nos.3-4.
conclusion of the Treaty of Yandaboo. The strongest argument in support of their claims was that the Kabaw Valley was separated from the authority of the Chief of Manipur and annexed to the Burmese Empire under the Burmese Governor for a period of eleven or twelve years before the First Anglo-Burmese War. In support of their contention they produced an old inscription on a stone in the Pagoda of Kounghoohan to show that Sumjok was subject to Ava in the Burmese year 1012 or 1650 A.D. and denied that any grant of the territory eastward of the Kyendvin was ever made to Manipur by the great grandfather of the then Raja of Pong, an important and powerful Shan kingdom of Upper Burma. They challenged documents and other proofs produced by Manipur as to date and manner in which she originally came into possession of the town of Tama, Khambat etc.

The British Commissioners denied the Burmese claims and maintained that the valley belonged to Manipur and produced records from the chronicles of that State and proved that Kyamba (1467-1508), the then Raja of Manipur, with Khikhooba, the contemporary Raja of Pong, both agreed to fix a boundary between their countries and Kabaw was ceded to the former in 1485 A.D. They laid before the Burmese Commissioners a book which proved that: (1) the Pong Raja was not a tributary of Ava 400 years ago; (2) that the Khambat and the Sumjok were tributary of Pong and (3) that the Pong Raja then ceded to Raja

71. S.C., 19 November, 1830, Nos.4-11.
72. S.C., 30 April, 1830, Nos.3-4.
73. Ibid.
Kyamba all the country comprised between the Naojeeree and the Mualong Hills on the eastern side of the Mingthee River.

The Commissioners, no doubt, agreed that the Burmese had been, for twelve years, in possession of the Kabaw Valley before the last war. This transaction took place in consequence of a successful attempt through the aid of the Burmese made by Raja Marjit Singh to deprive his elder brother Raja Chourjit Singh of the Chiefship of Manipur. Kabaw, which for the preceding 15 years had belonged to Manipur, was then annexed to Ava - it was a reward for the good service rendered by the latter. They, therefore, reminded the Burmese Commissioners that the reconquest and the former possession were the only two points for the consideration and that the Mingthee River must be the boundary between Burma and Manipur. Grant and Pemberton further told them that the conquest of the Kabaw Valley by Raja Gambhir Singh before the Treaty of Yandabo was correct, because, they were present at the time of the capture of Tamu. In support of their argument they also produced printed narratives of the Burmese war - one, dated, 23 January 1826, written from Tamu and the other dated, 3 February, 1826 from Monfu, on the western bank of the Mingthee River as proofs of their statements.

The Burmese Commissioners paid little heed to the argument put forward by the British Commissioners.

74. Ibid.
75. S.P., 19 March, 1833, No.1.
76. S.C., 30 April, 1830, Nos.3–4.
77. Ibid.
In these circumstances, Major Burney, the British Resident at Ava, therefore, invited Pemberton to have a further discussion with the Burmese ministers. On his arrival at Ava, the latter found it impossible to convince the Burmese of the rightfulness of the claims of Gambhir Singh to the Valley. Major Burney brought home to the Burmese Ministers that the deputation of Captain Pemberton to Ava was itself a proof of the desire of the British Government that the question regarding the boundary of Manipur should be settled in the most amicable manner. He added that Pemberton's earlier actions had received entire approval from the Governor-General and that the officer was not empowered to renew or enter into any further discussion of the subject. The King and ministers of Burma firmly believed that if they could secure, in the same manner as Gambhir Singh had done, the aid and services of the British officers to represent their case before the Governor-General, His Lordship would not decide the question against Ava. The Burmese ministers further enquired of Major Burney if the Governor-General could remove Raja Gambhir Singh and place Marjit Singh on the throne of Manipur, for under such an arrangement they hoped to maintain friendly relations between Manipur and Burma.

Major Burney informed that the decision made by the Government in favour of Raja Gambhir Singh had already been reported to the authorities at England and as such the discussion could not be reopened. To conciliate the Ministers, he pointed out that the Government might sacrifice a part of the indemnity
(under the terms of the Peace Treaty of 1826) if there was no objection on their part to the inclusion of the Kabaw Valley in Manipur. The Ministers considered the proposal favourably, but dared not to communicate their feelings to the King, who, they knew, would burst out into a violent rage, the consequences which might be a serious one. The Burmese King, till then, bore an implacable hatred against the British and was determined on retrieving the losses which the last war had inflicted upon him. He was keen on the subject of the Kabaw; he expressed his vexation that the British not only supported the Manipuris but also desired to give them a portion of his own territory. Major Burney felt that if the matter was pressed further, it would bring another war. He remarked: "Had our determination regarding the Kabaw Valley been communicated to the Court in 1827 at the time when it sought so much to obtain some delay in the payment of the Third instalment and at the time when the King's weak mind had not taken up this subject, I think, there would then have arisen little or no difficulty. But now, there are grounds of probability that the determination of the Governor General-in-Council in favour of Munneepore may ultimately produce a collision between the British and the Burmese States."

In the meantime, a Burmese deputation went to Calcutta and waited upon the Governor-General to make an appeal against the British decision in the Kabaw Valley. Major Burney was,

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80. S.C., 21 January, 1831, Nos. 6-8.
81. S.C., 19 November, 1830, Nos. 4-11.
therefore, called upon by the Supreme Government to reach Calcutta so that he could join in the discussions. A perusal of the official records of Ava convinced Burney that the claims put forward by the Burmese could not be so lightly set aside. Apart from this, the political insignificance of Manipur as a buffer State, had led him to support the Burmese case notwithstanding vehement opposition from Grant and Pemberton. Though convinced of the right of Manipur to the Kabaw Valley, the Supreme Government concurred in the views of the Resident on the problem. It was felt that Burma being more important than Manipur it would not be expedient to uphold the right of the latter, and subsequently it was decided to accede to the request of the King of Ava that the valley should be restored to him and the eastern foot of the Maring Hills should be considered the boundary between Manipur and the Burmese territories. 82. Lord William Bentinck, in his Minute, 26 February 1833, remarked: "............................... to the humiliation to their pride and to their reduced if not extinguished power I think it will be both generous and expedient to grant them this gratification .......... and Gambhir Singh be awarded a compensation for the loss." 83 Major Burney was, therefore, directed to announce to the King that "the Supreme Government still adheres to the opinion that the Ningthee forms the proper boundary between Ava and Munseepore but that in consideration for His Majesty's (i.e. of the King of Burma) feelings and wishes and in the spirit of amity and good will

82. S.P., 16 April, 1833, No.77.
83. S.P., 19 March, 1833, No.1.
subsisting between the two countries the Supreme Government consents to the restoration of the Kukbo Valley to Ava and to the establishment of the boundary at the foot of Yoomadoung Hills.\(84\)

Grant and Pemberton persuaded Gambhir Singh to accept the new arrangements. They appealed to him in the name of friendship and assured him that the new arrangement would be found highly beneficial both to him and as well as to his country. They communicated to the Raja the final approval of the Government to the sum of Sicca Rs 500/- P.M. to be paid by half yearly instalments as compensation for the loss of the valley; and if circumstances arose by which the territory in question ever again reverted to Manipur the compensation granted would cease from the date of such restoration.\(85\) Grant and Pemberton thus handed over the valley to Burma on 9 January 1834, and a treaty was concluded on the same day between Manipur and Burma.\(87\)

Gambhir Singh expired on 9 January 1834, the very day on which the valley was transferred to Burma. The arrangement for carrying out this agreement into execution was entered into by his successor.

It will be evident, from the above, that the transfer of the valley had been decided without any reference to the Raja of Manipur. The surrender of the valley as apprehended by Sir E. Barnes, the then Commander-in-Chief, would do but little good in appeasing the wounded pride and the angry feelings of

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84. Ibid., No.2.
86. S.C., 10 January, 1834, Nos.4-6.
87. Aitchison, Treaties etc., Vol.1, pp.220-221. See Appendix D & E.
the Court of Ava and did a great deal of harm to Manipur. He felt it to be an unwise attempt to conciliate an enemy and a very probable means of converting a friend into an enemy. Sir E. Barnes, therefore, strongly desired that the Government should revise the decision. But the latter paid little attention to what the Commander-in-Chief entreated. The relations with Burma continued to be unfriendly for the Burmese Kings could neither forget nor forgive the lessons they received in the hands of the English only a few years before and determined to undo the Treaty of Yandaboo. The Burmese monarch Tharrawaddy (1837-1845) expressed: "The English beat my brother, not me. The Treaty of Yandaboo is not binding on me, for I do not make it."

Actually, within 18 years of the transfer of the valley, the Second Anglo-Burmese War broke out in the time of King Pagan (1845-52). Sir James Johnstone observed: "We had an agent Colonel Burney at Ava, and the Burmese who were not disposed to be at all friendly, constantly tried to impress on him the fact that all difficulties and disputes would be at an end if we ceded the Kabaw Valley to them - that territory belonging to our ally Gambhir Singh of Manipur. Of course, the

88. S.P., 19 March, 1833, No.11.
proposal should have been rejected with scorn and a severe snub given to the Burmese officials ............ it was not realised that a display of self confidence and strength is the best diplomacy with people like the Burmese and with a view to winning their goodwill we basely consented to deprive our gallant and loyal ally of part of his tributaries."90

90. Johnstone, Sir James, op.cit., p.86.
Appendix-C

A translation of the conditions entered into by Raja Gumbheer Singh of Munnipore, on the British Government agreeing to annex to Munnipore the two ranges of hills situated between the eastern and western bunds of the Barak—dated, the 18th April, 1833. (Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties etc. Vol.1 Part I, pp. 123-124).

The Governor-General and Supreme Council of Hindoostan declare as follows:—With regard to the two ranges of hills, the one called Kalanaga Range, and the other called the Noonjai Range which are situated between the eastern bund of the Barak and western bund of the Barak, we will give up all claim on the part of the Honourable Company thereunto, and we will make these hills over in possession to the Raja, and give him the line of the Jeeree and the western bund of the Barak as a boundary, provided that the Raja agrees to the whole of what is return in this paper, which is as follows:

1st - The Raja will, agreeably to instructions received, without delay remove his Thanna from Chandrapore, and establish it on the eastern bank of the Jeeree.

2nd - The Raja will in no way obstruct the trade carried on between the two countries by Bengali or Munnipooree merchants. He will not exact heavy duties, and he will make a monopoly of no articles of merchandise whatsoever.
3rd - The Raja will in no way prevent the Naga inhabitants of the Kalanaga and Noonjai Ranges of Hills from selling or bartering ginger, cotton, pepper, and every other article the produce of their country, in the plains of Cachar, at the Banskandee and Oodharbun Bazaars, as has been their custom.

4th - With regard to the road, commencing from the eastern bank of the Jeeree and continued via Kalanaga and Kowpooms, as far as the valley of Munnipore – after this road has been finished, the Raja will keep it in repairs, so as to enable laden bullocks to pass during the cold and dry seasons. Further, at the making of the road, if British Officers be sent to examine or superintend the same, the Raja will agree to everything these Officers may suggest.

5th - With reference to the intercourse already existing between the territories of the British Government and those of the Raja, if the intercourse be further extended it will be well in every respect and it will be highly advantageous to both the Raja and his country. In order, therefore, that this may speedily take place, the Raja at the requisition of the British Government will furnish a quota of Naga to assist at the construction of the road.

6th - In the event of war with the Burmese, if troops be sent to Munnipore, either to protect that country or to advance beyond the Mingthee, the Raja, at the requisition of the British Government will provide Hill porters to assist in transporting the ammunition and baggage of such troops.
7th - In the event of anything happening on the Eastern Frontier of the British Territories, the Raja will, when required, answer against the British Government with a portion of his troops.

8th - The Raja will be answerable for all the ammunition he received from the British Government and will, for the information of the British Government, give in every month a statement of expenditure to the British Officer attached to the levy.

As the connection of the British Government with the Annipore Levy and the supply of ammunition to the levy have ceased, this clause is inapplicable to present circumstances.

Seal

I, Shree Joot Gumbheer Sing of Annipore, agree to all that is written above in this paper sent by the Supreme Council, dated, 18th April 1833 (A True Translation).

(Signed) Geo. Gordon, Lt.
Adjutant, Gumbheer Sing's Levy
Appendix-D


First - The British Commissioners, Major Grant and Captain Pemberton, under instructions from the Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council, agree to make over to the Woondouk Mahamingyan Raja and Tsarudaugicks Myookyanthao, Commissioners appointed by the King of Ava, the towns of Fummao, Khumbat, Sunjok and all other villages in the Kubo Valley, the Ungoching Hills and the strip of valley running between the eastern foot and the western bank of the Mingthee or Kyendwen river.

Second - The British Commissioners will withdraw the Munniporee Thannas now stationed within this tract of the country, and make over immediate possession of it to the Burmese Commissioners on certain conditions.

Third - The conditions are, that they will agree to the boundaries which may be pointed out to them by the British Commissioners, and will respect and refrain from any interference, direct or indirect, with the people residing on the Munniporee side of those boundaries.

Fourth - The boundaries are as follows :-

1. The eastern foot of the chain of mountains which rise immediately from the western side of the plain of the Kuboo Valley. Within this line is included Moreh and all the country to the westward of it.
2. On the south a line extending from the eastern foot of the same hills at the point where the river, called by the Burmias Nansaweng, and by the Annipooreses Numsaaelung, enters the plain up to its source and across the hills due west down to the Kachekhyoung (Annipoores River).

3. On the North the line of the boundary will begin at the foot of the same hills at the northern extremity of the Kubo Valley and pass due north up to the first range of hills, each of that upon which stand the villages of Choeetar, Noongbree, Noonghur of the tribe called by the Annipooreses Loohoopa, and the Burmah Lagwensoung, now tributary to Annipoor.

Fifth - The Burmese Commissioners hereby promise that they will give orders to the Burmese Officers, who will remain in charge of the territory now made over to them, not in any way to interfere with the Khyens or other inhabitants living on the Annipoor side of the lines of boundary above described, and the British Commissioners also promise that the Annipooris shall be ordered not in any way to interfere with the Khyens or other inhabitants of any description living on the Burmah side of the boundaries now fixed.

(Signature) Sd/-F.J.Grant, Major
(Seal) Commissioners
(Signature) Sd/-R.B.Pemberton, Capt.

Sunnyachil Ghat, Mingthoee, 9th January, 1834.

Major Grant and Captain Pemberton, under instruction from the Right Honourable Governor-General in Council, having made over the Kubo Valley to the Burmese Commissioners deputed from Ava, are authorised to state -

1st - That it is the intention of the Supreme Government to grant a monthly stipend of five hundred Sicca Rupees to the Raja of Munnpore to commence from the 9th day of January 1834, the date at which the transfer of Kubo took place, as shown in the Agreement mutually signed by the British and Burmese Commissioners.

2nd - It is to be distinctly understood that should any circumstances hereafter arise by which the portion of territory lately made over to Ava again reverse to Munnpore, the allowance now granted by the British Government will cease from the date of such reversion.

Sd/-F.J. Grant, Major
Sd/-R. Boileau Pemberton, Capt.

Langthabal, Munnpore
January 25th, 1834.