CHAPTER - III

BIRTH OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN MANIPUR
(1938-1948 AD)
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The growth of political consciousness among the people was followed by the establishment of political organizations. For the first time, the people of Manipur began to experience the working of political party from the year 1938. Indeed, this year was a great landmark in the history of the political movement in the state because from this particular year the people of Manipur were able to witness the political activities of the political organizations which rendered a great contribution in the process of the ongoing political activities in the state.

Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha (1938):

The birth of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha in the year 1938 as a political party was a positive development to the growth of political consciousness among the people. Such type of development brought a new shape in the whole political movements of the state. The birth of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha as a political party was an outcome of the social and cultural activities of Nikhil Hindu Manipur Mahasabha which was established in 1934 under the Presidentship of the Maharaja Churachand Singh of Manipur. The main objective of this organization was to promote and foster the social and cultural life of the Manipuri people which was scattered in different parts of the neighboring states like Burma and Assam.

The first session of the Mahasabha was held at Rajmandol of Royal Palace Imphal on May 30, 1934. The session passed 22 resolutions. The second session was held on 30th January, 1936 at Silchar under the presidency of Maharaja
Churachand Singh with 15 resolutions. The third session was held on 2nd and 3rd March, 1937 at Mandalay, Burma with Hijam Irabot Singh as the president. The session passed 15 resolutions. The session discussed on various issues of socio-economic and religious cultural problems faced by the Manipur particularly in Burma and those of Manipur and other places in general. After having a very good experience of the activities of three years there was a strong tendency among the members to do some kind of political actions in order to establish a distinctive identity of Manipur state. They thought that it would be materialized only when there was a political organization in the state. Shri Hijam Irabot Singh was the leader of this group. And they were waiting for an opportune time. Their political ambition was materialized on the 4th Session of the organization. This session was significant in the political history of Manipur. It was held on December 29 and 30th of 1938 at Chinga at Imphal. That is why this was also known as Chinga Session of 1938. The resolutions of the first three sessions confined only on social and religious issues. On the other hand, the Maharaja Churachand Singh also had a strong desire to bring all the educated elites within his fold and he also had a tendency to project himself as the cultural leader of Manipuri community in Burma, Assam, Tripura and East Bengal. Therefore he had no intention to encourage any kind of political activities in the state.

The fourth Annual session which was held under the Presidentship of Hijam Irabot took a very significant political resolution defying the existing authority in Manipur. 1 This session brought a new shape in the process of the

1. N. Lokendra Singh ‘The Unquiet Valley’ p. 133
growth of political consciousness in Manipur. It gave a foundation for the growth of meaningful idea of democracy and social justice to the public.\(^2\) To change the name from Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha to Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha was a significant step of this session. Apart from this, the session also demanded for the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur regarding the administration of hills and valleys of Manipur. Resolution 10 of the session reads as follows: “That Manipur State comprises hills and valleys, the hills being eleven twelfths and Valleys one twelfth of the whole area of the state. If the hill areas are excluded, the valleys are no greater than a Sub-division. Moreover, the hill men and we, the Meeteis have never been separated and cannot be separated in language, in culture and in commerce. The separation of the hills from the state is a great loss to the hill men as well as to the Meiteis. So this Mahasabha lodges its strong protest against the separation of the hills The India Government be approached for keeping the hills under the state administration.” It indicated the change in the complexion of the organization by dropping the communal nomenclature ‘Hindu’. Among other things the Mahasabha passed a resolution demanding the creation of a legislative body which itself was the first political demand from the side of the people of Manipur.\(^3\) The resolution also advocated for the immediate release of Rani Gaidinliu. This show certain degree of maturity on the political consciousness of the party. Full Text may be seen in Appendix A.

\(^2\) Karam Manimohon Singh: Hijam Irabot Political Movement in Manipur 1989 Delhi, p. 74

\(^3\) Ibid., p.78
Just after the end of the session i.e. on 8th February 1939, Chingakham Pishak Singh newly appointed General Secretary of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha forwarded a copy of the resolution passed on the 30th December 1939 to the Durbar for consideration and necessary actions. The Manipur State Durbar, after examining the text of the resolution, had fully convinced that the Mahasabha changed its character as a political organization. Accordingly by the Durbar vide resolution No. 5 held on the 15th Feb., 1939 declared that the Mahasabha had become part of a political movement and the persons who were in the Government service were not allowed to take part in it. By an official Notification of the Government, all the employees of the state government were not allowed to be a member of the Mahasabha. Immediately an emergency secret meeting of the party was held at the residence of Kojjam Amubi Singh, the leader like Hijam Irabot Singh, Rajkumar Maipaksana, Loitam Yaima, Laishram Khulabidhu and Mongjam Iboton were present. In the meeting Hijam Irabot Singh and Elangbam Tompok Singh decided to resign from their respective official position of the Government’s service. On the otherhand, the Government also began to check any sort of political movement of the Mahasabha and also passed order to restrict their movement against the state.  

While this was the situation many political leaders from outside Manipur made an attempt to come to Manipur in order to establish political link. Two organizers of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee had visited Manipur without formal permission of the State. At that time there was a resolution of

4. Ibid., p. 85
the Durbar in which no foreign Congress Organizers or foreign political agitators were allowed to enter in the State.  

On 3rd March 1939, Mr. C. Gimson, the British Political Agent in Manipur issued a prohibitory order to organize political procession and public meetings inside the British reserved areas without the permission from the office of the Political Agent. But this order did not apply to religious procession. The resignation from the service of the State by Irabot Singh was a bold decision. He burnt all his clothes manufactured and produced by the industry and his wife also responded to the call of Swadeshi movement. He began to wear Khadi clothes and made a call to emulate him in this. All members of the Mahasabha put on Khadi clothes. Irabot wanted to build up a Pan Manipuri movement on a broader scale and so he toured Bengal, Assam, Burma (Myanmar) and established contact with the Manipur People in these places.

As a part of the political activities, the Mahasabha submitted representations with demands for constitutional change in the State. As there were no response from the authority the Mahasabha again submitted another memorandum vide memo No. 124 NNM dt. 2.11.1939. The Mahasabha demanded to establish a unicameral legislative body of 100 members and out of which eighty member should be elected and twenty members to be nominated.

5. Manipur State Darbar Resolution No. 1 of 22nd February 1939
6. Standing order signed by C. Gimson Political Agent Manipur at Imphal the 3rd March, 1939
by the King. The memorandum also demanded for the introduction of election by secret ballot with tax paying status or literary or both to be the criterion of the voting right. Full text may be seen in Appendix B. After giving a final shape in the working of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, Irabot with an idea to spread the objective of the party to the other people outside Manipur went to Cachar from 12th November to 14th December 1930. On the evening of 14th December 1939, he received a telegram about the agitation in Manipur against the export of rice. Immediately he cancelled all his programmes and left Cachar on the 15th December 1939 and reached Imphal on 16th December, 1939. The agitators who had been waiting for Irabot received him at Chingmeirong where he addressed the women and expressed his solidarity with the movements.

Manipur Praja Sanmeloni:

Then, the Working Committee meeting of the Nikhil Manipur Mahasabha was held on 7th January 1940 at the residence of Khwairakpam Magha Singh of Nagamapal Singjubung Leirak. In the meeting Irabot expressed his desire to extend both physical and moral support to the cause of the movement. But the proposal was strongly opposed by other members. Immediately Irabot formed a new party called Praja Sanmeloni. The political activities of the party was started with an Executive Committee of twenty six members Hijam Irabot was the President, Elangbam Tompok the General Secretary and Longjam Bijoy the

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Treasurer. On 7th January 1940 a public meeting was organised at the Police Bazar. He whipped up the mass emotion by saying that “remember the telegraphic office incident. We begged rice and in return received bayonet wounds and wounds from buts of the gun. For one handful of rice we paid two handfuls of blood. Had we not paid this blood we should not have succeeded in stopping the export of rice. The export of rice has been stopped and the rice mills closed at the loss of the blood of Brahmani. Womenfolk have shed their blood for the sake of food and the men folk should no longer remain silent through fear of arrest and going to jail. Be determined, it is not right to be afraid of jail walls. See what the condition of Japan and Russia was. Rise up and be united. The women’s work is finished and now has come the time for the men, let us take revenge for the split blood of the Brahmani. 11 On 8th January 1940 the party organised a public meeting with Aribam Kunjabihari as Chairman. But just before the start of the meeting, the police arrested Laisram Kullabidhu Singh of Segalambi. Then the government by an order prohibited all types of meetings and processions inside the British Reserved Area and promulgated section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code prohibiting assembly of five or more persons. For his strong word, Irabot was arrested from his house on the 9th January, 1940 and sentenced to 3 years imprisonment on 21st March, 1940. His arrest led to a lot of angry and frustration among the agitators particularly his supporters.

The Darbar maintained that his speech was a gross misrepresentation of fact and it would be highly successful in bringing into hatred and exciting

11. Criminal Case No.4 of 1940, Manipur State -Vs- H. Irabot Singh
dissatisfaction towards the authority of the State. He was in Manipur Jail for the first year and the remaining two years were in Sylhet Jail. While he was in jail the smoke of the Second World War also reached Imphal. He came out of the Jail on 20th March 1943.\textsuperscript{12} The Government tried to stop any type of political activities by issuing a prohibitory order. The volunteers of the Manipur Praja Sanmeloni tried to defy the Government’s prohibitory orders. As a result of this, a clash broke out between the members of the Manipur Praja Sanmeloni and Police.\textsuperscript{13} Thus Praja Sanmeloni started political activities in the state. On 11th January 1940 a public meeting and procession was organized at Lamphelpat under the Presidentship of Thokchom Angou Singh. But by an order of the Raja, the procession was stopped by the police. It was led by L.Kanhai Singh who held a tri-colour flag but all of them were arrested. They were detained inside the palace compound; some of them were beaten by the police. At sunset all were released except Karam Bidur Singh, Takhellambam Amuselung and Potsangbam Tomba Singh. These three persons were handed over to the police. Next day they were released on bail.\textsuperscript{14}

While Irabot was in jail, the party’s work was carried on by Thokchom Angou Singh as the President and Longjam Bijoy Singh as the General Secretary. The colonial officials believed that Manipur Praja Sanmeloni had linked with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his INA. They had a strong suspicion that this party might have a plan for a large scale mass movement. Just after

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, also see Select Documents of Jananeta Hijam Irabot p.22, Naorem Joykumar Singh Op. cit. p. 153
\item\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.153
\item\textsuperscript{14} Laikhuram Ibobi Singh, “Manipur Praja Sanmeloni amashung Anishuba nupilal” Imphal 1987, pp. 75-765
\end{enumerate}
hearing about the broadcast through radio they confirmed that they had a good link between Indian National Army and this party. So the Government arrested many members of the Praja Sanmeloni and kept in the Langthabal Military Jail.\textsuperscript{15}

Irabot was released from jail on 20th March, 1943 and with a permission from the state government he entered Manipur in March 1946. He organized meeting of the Working Committee of the Manipur Praja Sanmeloni on 4th August 1946 at the residence of Takhellambam Ibotombi Singh at Hodam Leirak. The meeting adopted two important resolutions i.e. establishment of Legislative Assembly in Manipur and Marwaries who fled from Manipur during the Second World War should not be allowed to come back to Manipur.\textsuperscript{16}

**Manipur Praja Mandal:**

The formation of Manipur Praja Mandal as political party was also another important landmark. After coming back from Cachar Irabot covered a meeting of the some like minded people at the residence of Karam Bidhur Singh of Wangkhei Yonglan Leirak on 6th March 1946 at 3 p.m. The meeting discussed in detail about the growing political and economic situation of the state which was developed just after the end of Second World War. Irabot strongly opposed the inclusion of Manipur into the areas of the proposed North Eastern Frontier Province. The participants expressed their concern about the grievances of the common people due to the non-availability of the essential goods. They also

\textsuperscript{15} Karam Manimohon Singh Op.cit. p.158
\textsuperscript{16} Karam Manimohon Singh Op. cit. p. 177
demanded adequate compensation for the war affected subjects of Manipur and urged the authority to solve these problems within a short period of time.

They also felt that their demands would be fulfilled only when there was a political party. Accordingly they established a new party called Manipur Praja Mandal. A Working Committee of twelve members was constituted and Shri Irabot Singh was made President, Shri Laikhuran Ibobi Singh was made the General Secretary and Laishram Mera Singh Vice-President. The other members were Laikhuram Khongendrajit Singh, Karam Bidur Singh, Takhellambam Amuselung Singh, Chongtham Meramacha, Wangkheimayum Gulamjat Singh, R.K Bhubansana Singh, Ayekpam Ango Singh, Ahoubam Gouramani Sharma and Khaidem Pramodini Devi. And on 5th April 1946, a joint conference of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur praja Mandal was conducted at the residence of Wangkheimayum Gulamjat Singh Imphal Wangkhei Ayangpalli under the presidentship of Rajkumar Bhubonsana Singh. From the side of the Mahasabha the following members were present:-

1. Lalit Madhob Sharma - President
2. Laishram Jogeshwor Singh - General Secretary
3. Keisham Kunjabihari Singh - Asst. General Secretary
4. Hijam Irabot Singh - Member Working Committee
5. Bankar Bihari Sharma - Member Working Committee

6. Elangbam Tompok Singh - Member Working Committee
7. Khwairakpam Magha Singh. - Member Working Committee

From the Manipur Praja Mandal all the twelve Working Committee members were present. They discussed in detail about the printing of text books, reduction of land revenue, cycle tax, protection of interest of the Peasants, Trade and Commerce, relationship between Manipur and her neighboring Country Burma and increase of the amount for exchange on all Treasury working days, issue of essential goods for ceremonies like marriage, Sradhas and other religious festivals. The conference also strongly opposed inclusion of Manipur in the proposed scheme of the North Eastern Frontier Province. 18

Manipur Praja Sangha:

The Manipur Praja Sangha was another prominent political party established in the year 1946. This political party was a product of the combination of two political parties i.e. Manipur Praja Sanmeloni and Manipur Praja Mandal, which were established under the Presidentship of Hijam Irabot Singh. So the leaders of the parties felt the immediate need of having a single party. Accordingly on 21st April 1946, a joint meeting of Manipur Praja Sanmeloni and Manipur Praja Mandal was held at the mandop of Shri Gouramani Sharma of Kwakeithel under the presidency of Bhubansana Rajkumar. The meeting was opened by Hijam Irabot Singh the President, Manipur Praja Sanmeloni and in his opening remark he pointed out various aspects of the undesirable political social and economic condition in Manipur. He also

stressed for the establishment of responsible government in Manipur. The meeting agreed to form another political party and thus Manipur Praja Sangha was found.

The following persons were appointed as the members of the Working Committee of the new party:

1) M. Madhumangol Singh
2) P. Kulabidhu Singh
3) P. Tomal Singh
4) L. Ibochouba Singh
5) Amuselung Singh
6) K. Bidhur Singh
7) Meramacha Singh
8) K. Chaoton Singh
9) Bhubonsana Rajkumar
10) Laleta Madhop Sharma
13) L. Kanhai Singh
14) T. Ibotombi Singh
15) Gouramani Sharma
They also selected Bhubonsana Rajkuamr Singh as President, Gouramani Sharma Vice President, Irabot Singh General Secretary, Ibotombi Singh as Joint Secretary, Gouramani Singh as Joint Secretary and Pratap Singh as Cashier. In one of their meetings held on the 1st September 1946, the Manipur Praja Sangha, for the first time set forth its views on the political situations of Manipur. The meeting was conducted at the Mandop of Damudar Singh of Keishamthong with Rajkumr Bhubonsana in the Chair. The meeting strongly demanded that His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur should make an announcement for the establishment of a legislature and formation of a Council of Ministry in Manipur.19

In the meantime S. Somorendro Singh, Jail member of the State Darbar issued a notice on 24th December 1946 regarding the nature of the framing of the new Constitution Making Committee. The Committee was to be constituted

by the representatives, one each from every tahsil. The persons should not be government servants. The notice asked the intended persons to submit their names to the office of jail member through their respective tahsildars on or before January 5, 1947. Manipur Praja Sangha by its Working Committee resolution of 28th December 1946 expressed that the time given by the notice was very short and it would not be possible on the part of the people to decide within a short time. Accordingly they appealed to the President, Manipur State Darbar for the extension of the last date of submitting application by one month. 

In response, Somorendro, the Jail member issued another notice on the 30th December 1946 in which he made some changes from the previous notice. It was mentioned that any person who had a landed property in the tahsil would have the right to be a representative of the said Tahsil. The new rule was treated by the party as a means to facilitate the rich and educated Congress Candidates from Imphal. The procedure and method of election was however still unexplained to the people as a whole. The Manipur Praja Sangha was not happy with such a policy of government. Therefore as a mark of protest against the hasty and ambiguous terms in which the people had been informed by the Jail member about the formation of the ‘Constitution Working Committee’, the Manipur Praja Sangha organized public meetings at various places like Khurai, Irilbung, Kongba, Wangkhei, Nambol, Moirang from 1st to 11th January 1947. The resolutions of the various meetings were submitted to the Government but no response was received by the party. Thus on 12th January 1947 another

20. Working Committee resolution of Praja Sangha dated 28.12.46
meeting was organized by the party. The meeting was attended by people of both the hills and plain areas. It discussed thoroughly the election issues which were full of confusion and ambiguities conditions.

The Manipur Praja Sangha, therefore, demanded the following points to pay immediate attention of the state authorities:

1) To constitute a committee to frame the constitution introducing legislative assembly.

2) To introduce universal adult franchise (in the formation of the committee) instead of indirect election.

3) To include representatives from the hills through election.

4) To include representatives of the people of Jiribam.

5) To allow the Chairman of the Constitution Making Committee to be elected by the committee.

But since the Government paid no attention to the demand Irabot Singh immediately send a telegram to the Secretary of the Governor of Assam. The wording runs like this.

MANIPUR PRAJA SAHGA TOTALLY BOYCOTTED UNCONSTITUTIONAL CONSTITUTION MAKING COMMITTEE FOR NEW ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS (.) OUT OF FIFTY FIVE GOVERNMENT SIDE, FIVE HILL REPRESENTATIVES NOT ELECTED, VALLEY FIVE INDIRECTLY ELECTED, CHAIRMAN ALREADY APPOINTED, NO JIRIBAM REPRESENTATIVES, NO MINORITY QUESTION, ELECTION TWENTY EIGHT JANUARY (.) PEOPLE PRAY EXTENDING; ELECTION DETAILS FOLLOW (.)

In this meeting the Manipur Praja Sangha strongly protested the undemocratic actions committed by the Chief Minister of the Manipur State Council, Captain Francis F. Pearson. They regarded the policy of formation of Interim Government was an act of conspiracy on their part. Therefore they demanded to hold election for the formation of Interim Government.\(^22\)

On 22\(^{nd}\) July 1947, another meeting of the party was held at 5 pm at the Manipur Dramatic Union hall under the presidency of Takhellambam Ibotombi Singh, to discuss about the proposed formation of an interim government in Manipur. Irabot humbly requested all the political parties of the Manipur to stand against the policy of the Government and to form a United Front.\(^23\)

On 30\(^{th}\) November 1947, the Manipur Praja Sangha had invited representatives and members of other political parties from the hills and the valley of Manipur for a joint conference at MDU hall. Mr. M.K Shimray, Chairman of Tangkhul Long had presided over the function. Members and representatives of hills i.e. Tangkhul Long, Kuki National Assembly, Kabui Association, Khulmi Union, Mizo Union and from the valley such as the Manipur Praja Sangha, Meitei Marup and Nongpok Apunba Marup had participated the conference. In the meeting Irabot gave a clear picture about the political situation in the state and demanded for the establishment of a responsible government. After having a long discussion the meeting unanimously agreed to form an organizing committee with following person as members.

\(^{22}\) A resolution of the Working Committee meeting of Manipur Praja Sangha held on 20.2.1947 and see Karam Manimohon Op.cit. p. 248

The following party representatives are selected members of the committee:-

a) Mr. MK Shimray Tangkhul Long
b) Mr. Lunneh Kuki National Assembly
c) Mr. Kakhangai Kabui Association
d) Mr. Teba Khulmi Union
e) Mr. Dena Mizo Union
f) Srijut Lanphel Singh Meitei Marup
g) Srijut Ibomcha Singh Manipur Krishak Sabha
h) Srijut Ibongahal Nongpok Apunba Marup
i) Srijut Irabot Singh Manipur Praja Sangha
j) Mr. Shulei Mitra Yairipok

Srijut Irabot Singh and Mr. M.K. Shimray were appointed chairman and secretary respectively of the committee respectively.

**Manipur Krishak Sabha:**

The Manipur Krishak Sabha was another political organization which rendered a very valuable contribution to the growth of a new political idea among the people particularly among the rural poor of Manipur. It was a peasant based organization. Before it became a political party its original name was the Manipur
Krishi Sanameli. It was established in the year 1936 at Nambol about 10 km south of him Imphal under the president ship of S. Herananda Singh. The activities of the Manipur Krishi Sanmelloni was launched under Maimom Modhumangol Singh and Shri Okram Ibomcha Kabiraj as the General Secretary and Treasurer of organization. They emphasized mainly for the establishment of Gram Panchayats in rural areas, to establish schools in villages, to introduce free education up to the primary level, to provide medical and post office facilities, to reduce the amount of tax etc.

On 16th May 1946, the second conference of Manipur Krishi Sanmelloni was held at Nambol. The Sanmelloni discussed extensively the problem of the peasants in the given socio-economic and political situations so in order to give more effective participation the name of parent organizations was changed to Krishak Sabha and Irabot Singh was elected as its President and O. Ibomcha become the General Secretary. The main objective of the new setup was to promote the idea of a democratic peasant movement for the security of the poor and landless peasant of the country. It also strongly demanded for the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur. They also demanded for the introduction of adult universal franchise. The conference also demanded to set up panchayats in the villages, immediate payments of the war compensation, reduction of the land revenue from Rs.9/- per pari to Rs.6/- non-encroachment over the traditional communal sources of livelihood like “Forest” and “Fisheries” and compulsory ownership right for the tiller of the land.24

Thus after this Nambol Session, Manipur Krishak Sabha had emerged as one of the most powerful left oriented political organization. Its headquarters was also shifted from Nambol to Imphal. Between March and June 1947, Manipur Krishak Sabha carried on an intensive mass mobilization programme. The Manipur Krishak Sabha organized a meeting for two days on 11th and 12th March 1947 at Sagolmang. It was attended by about 500 delegates from nearby villages. In his speech, Irabot extensively discussed the emerging political trends in Assam and India. He impressed upon the delegates the role of peasants in the existing political situation in Manipur. The third conference of the party was held at Pungdongbam on 23rd and 24th March 1947 with Irabot as the Chairman. It was attended by about 500 peasants from different area of the State. It reflected the tremendous expansion of Manipur Krishak Sabha membership. The volunteers from Nambol walked all the way to Pungdongbam by carrying krishak flag and raising anti landlord and anti Government slogans. In the morning of the 2nd day, the volunteers organized parades and marches round the neighboring villages by carrying krishak flags and shouting slogans. The conference resolved to depute some delegates to meet the Raja and the Governor of Assam to discuss issues relating to the reduction of land tax and the removal of the various restrictions which the government had imposed on the export of agricultural products by the Manipuri farmers. The conference concluded with a colorful entertainment programme put up by the peasants of the Napet village. The songs and plays put up by the volunteers dealt mostly with the themes on Kishan problem.  

25. Ibid., p. 201
On 6th April 1947, Manipur Krishak Sabha organized a public meeting at Nambol. The meeting was attended by a huge crowd of about four thousand people and there were thorough discussions on the prevailing socio-economic problems of the place. 26 On 26th May 1947, a joint meeting of all branch Committees of Manipur Krishak Sabha was held at Pungdongbam village under the Chairmanship of Kanhaimacha, a popular Kishan leader. The meeting resolved to demand an immediate payment of war compensation and rationalization of the government policy of encroaching upon the fishing and forest rights of the people. 27

Just to give awareness to the peasants a series of meeting was held by the party. On 4th June 1947 the villages like Awang Khunou, Yurembam Salam and Kiyam held a joint meeting at Sagoltongba under the Chairmanship of Shri Ningthou Sharma. In this meeting three important leaders of the Krishak Sabha, Budhachandra, Kanhai and Amuselung had participated. Budhachandra convincingly argued the crucial role of the Manipur peasants in the then existing socio-political situations. On 4th July 1947 five members of Manipur Praja Sangha and Manipur Krishak Sabha viz Irabot Singh, M. Madhumangol Singh, T. Bokul Singh, L.Kanhai Singh M. Meghachandra Singh met Mr. Pearson, PMSD to discuss, issues relating to the changing constitutional and political situations in Manipur. 28

26. Anouba Yug Imphal 13, 1947 April, p.6
In the meantime i.e., on 26th Sept. 1947, the Maharaja Bodhochandra Singh declared that within eight months from this date, the government would try to introduce the prepared draft Constitution of the state. The Manipur Krishak Sabha reacted critically to the declaration of the Maharaja. They organised a meeting on 29th September at Manipur Dramatic Union to discuss the issue. The meeting was chaired by Irabot Singh and they discussed extensively the issues and demanded for the formation of a Council of Minister in a more democratic way. In early part of 1948 the party organized meeting at Hojai in which Irabot and T. Bokhul Singh had attended.

The election of the Manipur State Assembly was fixed on 11th June 1948 and continued upto 27th July 1948. Out of 53 seats, 30 seats were for the valley, 18 seats for the hills, 3 seats to the Muslims and 2 seats for the professional groups. The Manipur Krishak Sabha also participated the election under the banner of an officially allowed symbol. “House” was the symbol of the party. In the election, Manipur Krishak Sabha won 5 seats. The names of the candidates and constituencies of the winner were:-

1. Takhellambam Bokul from Pangei constituency
2. Maimom Madhumangol from Sawongbung constituency
3. Thokchom Shyamo Singh from Kakeching Khullen constituency
4. Hijam Irabot Singh from Utlou constituency
5. Ayekpam Anganghal Singh from Nambol constituency
In the coalition ministry led by Praja Santi Sabha, they also joined as a partner and T. Bokul was made the Deputy Speaker of the House. The only objective of the party was to make an attempt to improve economic position of the Peasants. At the same time, they also wanted to establish a classless society based on the principle of socialism. The government always kept a strong vigil to the political activities of this party. They thought that the political activities of this party had become subversive to law and order situation of the state. They felt that in order to maintain law and order situation, the political action of Manipur Krishak Sabha should be stopped. On 3rd September 1948, the Manipur State council had passed a special resolution as follows:-

"Whereas in the opinion of the Council, Manipur State, the activities of the organization known as Krishak Sabha (Communist) in the State are now becoming subversive of law and order, it is in the interest of the public security and maintenance of public order that such activities be prohibited.

It is hereby ordered that under section 6(1) of Act V of 1947, I.C the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act 1947 adopted by the Council Special Resolution No. 1 of 4th May 1948, that the holding of processions, meetings or assemblies by the organization known as Krishaks Sabha and its members are prohibited unless a written permission is procured from the S.P. prior to holding of such procession etc. It is further ordered under section 7(1) of the same Act that the said organization and its members prohibited from the holding of camps of any kind, performance of drill or parade with or without arms or any articles, weapon or implements capable of being used as arms. Any contravention of the
above orders directly or indirectly shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to two years or fine upto Rs. 1000 or with both”.29 Manipur Krishi Sabha stood firmly for a distinctive identity of Manipur. At that period, there was a strong move for the establishment of Purbanchal State which was to be constituted by Manipur, Cachar, Tripura and Lushai hills. They were not in favour of this new idea of Purbanchal. So, after getting a prior permission from the government, they organized a large meeting at M.D.U. (Manipur Dramatic Union) on the 21st September 1948. A large number of party workers from different areas came to attend the meeting in the form of procession. They met two truck loads of arms police procession led by K. Naran Singh, Sub-inspector of police to stop them. As a result of this, a clash broke out and Keisham Naran Babu Singh O.C. Imphal police was killed. The government alleged that police O.C was shot dead by one Lairenlakpam Anganghal Singh from Lamlai village and a member of Manipur Krishak Sabha. The allegation of the government was not accepted by the Manipur Krishak Sabha. They strongly asserted that the crowd which was coming to attend the meeting of the Manipur Krishak Sabha had not carried any arms. It was the police who came with, pistols and sticks.

As the news of the death of police officer reached Imphal the meeting was cancelled. Irabot and many other workers of Manipur Krishak Sabha immediately left the place in order to avoid arrests.30 The Manipur State Council in an emergency meeting held on 21st Sept. 1948 itself passed an order banning

29. Minute of the special meeting of Manipur State Council held on 3.9.1948
Praja Sangha and Manipur Krishak Sabha. Many members of the Manipur Praja Sangha and Manipur Krishak sabha were arrested and tortured in jail. Warrant was issued for the arrest of Irabot Singh by Manipur State Council vide Resolution No.3 of 21st 1948. It reads: “Whereas the Manipur State Council is of opinion that the associations called the Krishak Sabha and Praja Sangha organized under the Presidentship and Secretaryship of Shreejut Hijam Irabot Singh and Srijut Maimom Modhumangol Singh respectively, interfere and have for its object interference with the administration of law and with the maintenance of law and order to constitute a danger to the public peace, the Manipur State Council declares the above associations to be unlawful under section 16 of the Manipur State criminal law amendment Act 1948. Action will be taken by the S.P in anticipation of its His Highness approval.” Reward for arrest of Shri Hijam Irabot singh was fixed at Rs. 200 initially but it was raised to Rs 1000/- on 13th July, 1949. Manipur State Council Resolution No. 26 of 13/7/1949. reads as follows:

“To consider Hon’ble Dewan’s remark dated 6-7-49 about the arrest of Srijut Irabot Singh Reward for arrest of Srijut Irabot Singh is raised from Rs. 200 to Rs. 1000 in suppression of previous council resolution”. Anyone harboring Sri Hijam Irabot Singh obstructing or attempting to obstruct his arrest will be prosecuted under appropriate provisions of law.”

31. Minutes of a Special emergency meeting of the Manipur State Council held on 21st Sept. 1948
32. The Manipur State Council resolution No. 26 of 13.7.1948. It was published in the ‘Ngashi”daily newspaper edited by Keisham Kunjabihari
Thus Manipur Krishak Sabha rendered a valuable contribution to the growth of political awareness among the people. One of their greatest political achievements was that they had successfully planted the idea of socialism among the minds of the people and took up many welfare programme for the peasants.

**Manipur State Congress:**

The Manipur State Congress Party was born on the 4th October 1946 at the Aryan Theatre Hall. The establishment of the political party was a great noteworthy development in the history of the political parties in Manipur. That the objective and the ideology of this party gave a new political direction in the political outlook of the people of Manipur State.

The formation of this political organization was an indirect outcome of the existing political development in the State. At that time everybody felt that the days of the colonial rule would come to an end for people to get freedom from the colonial administration. Therefore some people were of the view that it was a high time for the formation of a common platform so that it would be able to represent the desire and general feeling of the masses. This idea was welcomed by the leaders of the political parties. Accordingly a joint meeting of all the representatives of the political parties was held on the 18th September 1946 at the Aryan Theatre Hall. 33

Although the non-political agitations had started in Manipur as early as 1904, the internal autonomy of the Maharaja and his authorisation on many

33. M. Ritichandra ‘Miyamgi Luchigba Irabot’ p. 49. Also see Naorem Joykumar Singh ‘Colonialism to Democracy of history of Manipur 1819-1972’, p. 160
social aspects were never questioned until the last part of the 1930s. The uprisings which marked the awakening of a social consciousness as well as the determination of the people to get their grievances redressed had certainly brought about a change in the society. The movements were political and economic in character as was evident during the bazaar boycott of 1920, the water and vehicle tax agitation etc. Unfortunately in Manipur, the people who had hardly any previous political experience led the movements and yet, these people resorted to civil disobedience movement as in the case of the pothang agitation and the bazaar boycott of the early 1920s. While the representatives of all the organizations were accepted, Irabot Singh who was selected both by the Krishak Sabha as well as the Praja Sangha as one of their representative was arbitrarily rejected by a section of the delegates in the conference. These members argued that since Irabot was a member of the Communists Party, he should not be allowed to join the newly formed party. As the Chairman of the conference also refused to accept Irabot’s candidature and the remaining members including R.K. Bhubansana of the Sangha, formed the Manipur State Congress with R.K. Bhubansana himself as the President and Mr. Khoimacha Singh as the Secretary.

Some of the leading architects of Manipur state congress were Sinam Krishnamachan Singh, R.K. Priyogopalsana Singh, Dr. Leiren Singh, Laishram Jugeshwor Singh, Rajkumar Bhubansana Singh, Dwijamani Dev Sharma and Yumnam Khoimacha Singh.

At the initial stage the Manipur state congress had no direct relation with the Indian national congress, but it was recognized by All Indian State Peoples’
Conference. It was a sister organization of the Indian National Congress. The ever first and separate political demand of the Manipur State Congress was submitted on 7th November 1946 to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur with a copy of resolution no. 5 of the Manipur State Congress Working Committee meeting held on 1st November 1946. An extract copy of the resolution was held as follows:- Prior to the formation of the Manipur State Congress by merging all the political parties in Manipur there had been requests to his Highness the Maharaja of Manipur about the introduction of a legislative assembly in Manipur. In the meantime, we have seen in many Indian states the establishment of popular assemblies. It is, therefore, resolved to request his highness to kindly make a declaration as soon as possible regarding the establishment of the eagerly awaited legislative assembly of peoples’ representative in Manipur also.  

As a part of their political activities the Manipur State Congress organized public meeting at Moirang and Bishnupur on 21st and 22nd December 1946. Dr. N. Golapchand Singh was the chairman of both meeting. The meeting extensively discussed a number of socio-political issues of the state including the nature of the formation of the Constitution Making Committee. Between February and March 1947 Manipur State Congress organized meetings at Heirok, Salungpham, Yairipok, Tentha, Khongjam, Thoubal. The daily paper ‘The Ngashi’ is replete with news items relating to the numerous congress meetings on this side.  

34. Resolution No.5 of the Manipur State Congress Working Committee Meeting dt. 1st November, 1946  
36. Ibid.
An important contribution of the Manipur State Congress in the process of the political development of the state was their participation in the Constitutional Making Committee. According to the proposal of the government the Constitutional Making Committee was to be constituted by 16 members on the following basis i.e., 3 (three) members from the Manipur State Darbar including the President, 2(two) nominees of the King 1(one) representative of the Chief Court, 5 representatives from the 5 Tahsils of the valley areas and 5 leaders from 5 Hill areas. The Manipur Congress Party participated in it and they fielded 5 candidates. The Congress could secure four seats. They were:-

1. Dr. Leiren Singh from Imphal east

2. Shri Sinam Krishnamohan Singh from Imphal west

3. Shri Dwijamani Dev Sharma from Bishnupur and

4. Laishram Jugeshwor Singh from Thoubal

Shri Irom Mera ( Mera Jatra Singh) an independent candidate was elected from Mayang Imphal Tahsil defeating the Congress Candidate Yumnam Khoimacha Singh. 37

The policy of the formation of ‘Interim Council’ was highly reacted by the political parties and the inclusions of two Congress nominees in the Interim Council was also highly criticized not only by the other parties but also by a large section of the congress members. The two members of the Congress in

the Council were 1) R.K. Bhubansana and 2) Sinam Krishnamohan. The Working Committee of the Manipur State Congress in its meeting held on 21st July 1947 by a majority in the voting endorsed the joining of the Interim Council. As a result of it, the Manipur State Congress Party was split into two. The section led by Elangbam Tompok declared the removal of the President and General Secretary and some leaders of the Working Committee on 22nd July 1947. But the claim of Elangbam Tompok was not recognized by F.F. Pearson. Thus the issue of joining in the interim council Manipur State Congress was divided in to Tompok Congress and Tomal Congress.38

The participation in the election of 1948 and support to the creation of Purbanchal state was also another noteworthy political activity of the Manipur state congress. The date of election was fixed on the 11th January 1948 and continued up to 27th July. The two Congress were again united to fight this election. The Manipur State Congress party participated with an election symbol of bullock cart. In the election, the Congress Party got 14 seats with the joining of one independent MLA. However the government was formed by Manipur Praja Shanti which won 12 seats with the support of Krishak Sabha (5 seates) independents. Hill men (18 seats) formed a coalition government. Such a development was a great set back to the members of the Congress. So in order to regain their lost prestige, they began to open their political game with the establishment of a relationship with All India Congress Committee.39

38. Ibid., p. 163
39. Ibid., p. 164
At that time, there was a move to amalgate the four areas of Manipur, Tripura, Cachar and Lushai hills to form a separate province. On the other hand, Indian National Congress could get a foot hold in Manipur. It also paved the way for the integration of Manipur into India. In the Working Committee meeting held on the 29th April 1949 the Congress Party took a resolution in favour of the integration of Manipur with India. Three basic reasons were cited for such a move. First, the inability of the government of Manipur to maintain law and order, Second, the communist revolt could be suppressed after integration and lastly the integration would bring peace and prosperity in the state. The Congress therefore shouted the slogan that Maharaja Bodhachandra should abdicate the throne.

**The Praja Santi Sabha:**

The Praja Santi Sabha was another political party established in 1948. At the beginning it was known as ‘Praja Party’ and it was formed on 10th November 1947 by one Kh.Ibetombi Singh, an Ex-Sub Inspector of Police. But its objective was not very clear. But in 1948 the Praja Party was changed as the Praja Santi Sabha. Another interesting part of the party was that it had good relationship and support from the royalists section of the society. And with the help of the King, he tried to make the party a very popular one among the people. To give a solid support to the party Mr. S.Gourahari Singh wrote to the Chief Minister to make 14th January 1948 a half holiday for all the schools and offices so that a public meeting of the Praja Santi Sabha organised on that day could be made a

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41. The Ngashidt. 26.7.49
great success. The Maharaja wanted the Praja Santi Sabha to win the election at any cost. In the election, Praja Santi Sabha won 12 seats. As no party could gain absolute majority, Praja Santi Sabha was invitee to form a coalition with the support of the Krishak Sabha and independent members from the hill area.

The most important outstanding political activities of this party was their stand against integration of Manipur into India. In a memorandum submitted to the Governor of Assam on the 23rd March 1949, Nongthombam Ibomcha Singh, General Secretary of the Praja Santi Sabha requested him to allow Manipur to retain its existing political status. He argued that since Manipur was culturally and linguistically different from the rest of the country, it would be unwise to integrate it into India. It was also pointed out that as Manipur economically backward the integration would lead to exploitation of the place by the richer states. Nongthombam Ibomcha Singh, the General Secretary of the Praja Santi Sabha had organized a meeting on the 10th July 1949 at the Yairipok Bazar under the presidentship of Khamanthem Ibomcha Singh. The meeting was attended by about 200 people form 20 villages of the Yairipok area. Members of Sabha had strongly expressed their support to the Maharaja of Manipur.

Then the MLAs of the Praja Shanti Sabha including the independent member for hills held a meeting on 25th August 1948 under the presidentship of Kh. Iboton Singh. It decided to send N. Ibomcha Singh

42. N. Lokendra Singh ‘The Unquiet Valley’ p. 217
43. Memorandum dt. 23.3.1949 to the Governor of Assam by Nongthonbam Ibomcha Singh General Secretary, Praja Shanti Sabha. (Resistance August 21, 1979) quoted by N. Joykumar Singh, p. 168 to the Governor of Assam
General Secretary of Praja Santi Sabha and S.L. Lunneh, Kuki leader to convince the Government of India to respect the aspirations of Manipuri people. The meeting also resolved to request the Government of India to impress upon the Government of India that good and cordial relation between India and the Manipur under the instrument of accession should be continued for some years and Manipur should be allowed to be run by the local people and a democratic Constitution, so that the socio-economic and political development could take place.  

The Manipur Socialist Party:

The Manipur Socialist Party was established in 1948 as a branch of the Assam Socialist Party. Therefore in every aspect of their political programme they were guided by the political objective of the Assam Socialist Party. The only objective of the leaders of the Assam Socialist Party was to make Manipur a part of Assam province. On this line, the Manipur Socialist Party also launched the movement in the year 1948. The Manipur Socialist Party also participated in the general election under the symbol of 'tree'.

L. Achou Singh was the Secretary of this party. He was a member of the Manipur Legislative Assembly of 1948. The Manipur Socialist Party secured 3 seats in the election of 1948. The Manipur Socialist Party was against the formation of Purbachal Pradesh. In his speech on the day of the Celebration of

45. Resolution of a meeting of 26 MLA of Praja Shanti Party & its allies independent of hill held on 25.8.1949. Also see N. Lokendra Singh Op. cit. p. 228

the Indian Independence Day (1948), L. Achou Singh spoke against the policy of the creation of purbanchal State. Rather, he was in favour of the integration of Manipur into Assam. He felt that if Manipur become part of Assam, they would be able to enjoy all the facilities which were available in Assam. On 5th June 1949, the Manipur State Socialist Party adopted a resolution in favour of the integration of Manipur in Assam. Under the Presidentship of Th. Angou Singh.47 Main points of Demands lodged by the Manipur socialist party are in Annexure E. On 8th August 1948, the Manipuris in Cachar asked all the political organizations in Manipur to unite against the sinister move of Purbanchal. The party also viewed with deep concern the general inefficiency of the Manipur Government and their failure in dealing with Communist menaces. In addition to this they also demand for the abolition of the inner line permit system in Manipur. Under this system people from outside Manipur were not allowed to enter into Manipur without official permission. And even though they entered into Manipur with formal permission, they had to stay not more than one week. If any foreign desired to live further, they had to pay the foreign tax of Rs.5 (Rupees five) only. The thirteen socialist leaders from outside Manipur made an attempt to enter into Manipur to violate this existing permit system. The matter became very serious. 48

The Communist party of Manipur:

The establishment of the Communist Party in Manipur was closely related with the political activities of Hijam Irabot who became a member of the

Communist Party of India in 1943. The Communist Party of Manipur was established on 23rd August 1948 at the level of District Organizing Committee (DOC). On that day a meeting was held at the residence of Takhellambam Ibotombi Singh at Hodam Leirak in which one District Organizing Committee of 8 members was constituted. Takhellambam Bokul Singh was selected as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Manipur. The eight members were:

1) Comrade Hijam Irabot Singh
2) Takhellambam Bokul Singh
3) Takhellambam Ibotombi Singh
4) Longjam Bijoy Singh
5) Laishram Kanhai Singh
6) Thokchom Boro Singh
7) Takhellambam Amushelung
8) Takhellambam (O) Juboti Devi

The party started with 28 full fledged members but by the end of December 1948 the member increased to 115. There were many sympathizers among the farmers and traders. Among the young educated members mentioned may be

49. CPI Manipur Itihas (Ahanba Saruk) published by Manipur State Council CPI publication 23rd August 2003, p. 42
made of Nongthombam Bodhachandra, Lamabam Ibotombi, Moirangthem Meghachandra, Ningthoujam Binoy, Moirangthem Ibohal, Ngangom Mohendro and Thokchom Bira etc. 50

After the incident of Pungdongbam the party began to work as an underground movement. The active participants of movements were Moirangthem Ibohal Singh, Keisham Tolen Singh, Arambam Nipamacha Singh, Ningthoujam Ajit, Longjam Gyanendro, Maibam Bansantakumar and Thongam Babu.51 The party also opened cell in various places in order to activate their work. The members were constituted at least by three persons. The party also formed a militia group called the ‘Red Guard’. Th Boro was the Commander of the Red Guard. To launch violent type of armed movement was a great contribution to the ongoing history of Manipur. It made a room for the growth of the idea of self determination among the younger generation of the State.

The Naga National League:

The Naga national league headed by A. Daiho as president was established on September 1946. Its main objective was to consolidate Naga of Manipur state. The members of working committee of Naga National league consisted of:-

1. A.Daiho - President
2. Ng. Thaiso – Vice President

51. Ibid., p. 326
This party strongly asserted for the establishment of a unity among the Naga People in Manipur. A Daiho, the President of Naga National league issued a statement to this effect on 5th September 1946. In this statement he gave various reasons for the separation of hills from valley inhabited by the Meiteis. He stressed for the performance of one of the two options - the first being all the hill areas of Manipur should form a separate district under Assam. The other option being breaking up of hill areas and being merged into the Naga hills, Lushai hills, Cachar hills and Somra. In March 1948, a public meeting was held at Sangsong, Punanamei, Talubi, and Tunjoi simultaneously under the arrangement of the Naga National league. In one of the resolutions adopted unanimously, the Nagas of Manipur had first shown their defiance against the political autocracy of the Manipur Government on the Hill people. In the meeting they decided to boycott the preparation of electoral roll and election to the first Manipur State Legislature Assembly. Athiko Daiho as a member of constitution making committee proposed that there should be a provision for

separation of hill area of Manipur after 5 years. The Naga National league put forthward the demand of separation of hills from Manipur. No tax campaign was launched on August 27, 1948. On this fatefull 27th August 1948 people from this circle gathered at Mao-Gate Bunglow. The majority of them posted themselves along the National Highway 39 openly ready to counter the 4th Assam Rifles. The Assam Rifles resorted to firing killing four persons on the spot:-

Modo Kholi, Student of Kalinamai

Mahrili Lohrii Student of Kaliyamai

Assisii Hepuni of Punanumai (Village elder)

Daikho Hesho of Chowainanai (Village elder)

Mr. Obo Ashihrii and Kasii Mathibo of Punanamai were seriously injured and many other innocent villagers were badly injured. All the counted leaders. Athikho Daiho, Ng. Modoe, Athikho Shibo and Kaikho Daili were arrested and imprisoned at Imphal Jail and the former two were shifted to Calcutta Jail. As a result, it was put down and normalcy returned.

55. ‘The Shepoumaramth in the Naga National Movement’ p.93 published Shepoumaramth Region

56. Asoso Yonuo: Nagas Struggle against British Rule under Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu 1925-1947, p. 149
**Manipur Mizo Union:**

Manipur Mizo Union was established in 1946 as a branch of Mizo Union. Mr. Tawna was the President of the Mizo Union. He had started a movement for union of Parbung and Tipaimukh areas of Manipur to Lushai Hills District of Assam on ethnic, linguistic and culture group. On March, 6, 1948, Manipur Mizo Union demanded for right of self determination. They also decided to boycott the election of 1948. 57

In order to deal with the uprising, PB Singh, the Chief Minister and Major R.Khathing went Senvon, Parbung and Tipaimukh on foot. Mr. T.C. Tiankham another tribal Minister in the interim council also helped them since he was from Churachandpur area. The three Ministers were able to persuade Mr. Tawna to give up his confrontationist attitude and instead, accept a government job. Once in govt. service, Mr. Tawna’s mouth and activities were sealed. There upon the movement died its natural death. 58

**Kabui Naga Association 1946:**

On March 7th 1934 Kabui Samiti was established. The Maharaja of Manipur gave encouragement to the Samiti leader who extended their loyalty to the state. Eventually the Kabui Samiti became the highest body on Kabui Customs and at the same time provided the form for the unification of the three tribes of Manipur namely Zemei, Liagnmei and Rongmei (Kabui) The Kabui Samiti could not function properly during the 2nd World War. And in 1946 just after the war,

58. Lieutenant Colonel H. Bhubon Singh; Major Bob Khathing, pp.20 - 21
its name was changed to the Kabui Naga Association. There was a great upsurge among the tribes of the North Eastern India. The people entertained a great anxiety about their future in the eventual withdrawal of the British from India. The leaders of the Kabui Naga Association were fully aware of these political developments and they felt the importance of creating a solidarity among the three tribes. This conference was a landmark in the history of Zeliongrong Movement and its resolutions concretised the aspirations of the Zeliongrong people. One of the resolutions coined the name ‘ZELIONGRONG’.

A historic conference was held at Keishamthong village at Imphal on 15th February 1947. It was attended by the representative of all Rongmeis, Laingmeis and Zemis of Manipur State and Naga Hills.

Hill Union:

On 30 September 1947 an association known as Hill Union was formed. It consisted of Tangkhul Long, Kabui Naga Association, Mizo Union and Kuki National Assembly.

A meeting of the Executive Committee members was held on October 1, 1947. It resolved to take action to safeguard the interest of the hill people, not to abolish permit system for entry into the hills and to establish hill bench in the Interim period. Upto the merger of Manipur to Indian Union in 1949, the Hill Union played a major role in the administration of the state.

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59. 6th Anniversary Kabui Samiti 7-8-2001 at Keishamthong Kabui, Secretary Report p.1, Five years of Zeiliangrong Movement 1927, p. 7
60. Ibid P-8
62. Ibid.