

## **Chapter V**

### **Marriage as diplomacy between Manipur and Burma states (15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century)**

Burma commonly recognized as Myanmar is a Southeast Asian country bordered with countries like Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand. As a neighbour of India, Burma shares international border with four North Eastern states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur. In regard to relation between Burma with the small state Manipur of India is not a new development. Their connection can be trace centuries back. In the pre-colonial years both had maintained their relationship as two princely independent states. As compared to territorial size of the kingdom of Burma, the principality of Manipur was of no comparison but the rule of strong and efficient Rajas in Manipur necessitated the countries to uphold good relationship. The relation composed of exchange of trade, abode of war captives, aggressions, counters and re-counters, mutual friendship supplemented by numerous matrimonial alliances between the two kingdoms. The kingdom of Burma being too large in size was difficult for the ruling sovereigns to have full control all over the kingdom in most years. They kept their feudatory states to rule at their own without interference in their internal administration. Therefore, there were many Shan principalities which remained independent in course of time unless

there emerged strong Raja to have control of whole the kingdom of Burma. It was thus with the immediate neighbouring Shan principalities of Burma with whom the Rajas of Manipur began to establish their relationship. The state chronicle of Manipur "*Cheitharol Kumbaba*" has recorded for the first time about development of good relationship between King of Manipur with the King of Pong,<sup>1</sup> a Shan principality of Upper Burma during 15<sup>th</sup> century. In context to Manipur-Burma relation the sources are quite clumsy and cloaked until the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century where find numerous detailing with clarity.

In the history of aggressions and invasions between the two kingdoms, it was as per the prevailing political situations of the countries that decided their victory or loss. During the reign of Meitei King Pamheiba (1709-1748 A.D.), Burmese were severely defeated and even succeeded to capture their capital 'Sagaing'. But, the worst was to come in future years for the Manipuris. During the first quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century Manipur was devastated by the strong Burmese forces for seven years (1819-1825 A.D.). This led to collapse of the long years of Ningthouja rule in Manipur. The country became almost deserted having only few subjects settled. Manipur remained for these long years under the subjugation of the Burmese until the interference of the British in the matter. However, in the midst of such heinous orders, like many other monarchies the kingdoms of Burma and Manipur maintained the tradition of wed-lock between them. It is noteworthy that the Meitei Rajas developed such marriage alliances not only with the powerful dynasties that

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<sup>1</sup> Pong was a Shan Kingdom located at Upper Burma. The land stood as separating area between Kabo valley and Manipur. Its capital was at Mogaung as called by the Burmans and Mongmaorong by the Shans. Pong Kingdom was founded in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. The land was occupied by the Siamese and the people of Lowa Shan speaking the same language. According to R. B. Pemberton the Kingdom continued to maintain its independence till its complete devastation by the Burmese dynasty of Mooksoo in 1752 A.D.

controlled whole of Burma but also with small princely Shan principalities of Burma who were basically settled at the bordering areas of Manipur. Before giving an account of the Manipur-Burma diplomatic matrimonial alliances between 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries a brief understanding of the history of Burma is provided hereafter. As regard to Manipur, its history has already been discussed earlier.

### **History of Burma**

Burma (Myanmar) is a vast land of numerous ethnic tribes. Like many Indian princely states Burma had also maintained their independent status until the inception of British interference during 19<sup>th</sup> century leading to three (3) Anglo-Burmese war, i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> Anglo-Burmese war from 1824-1826 A.D., 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Burmese war in 1852 A.D. and 3<sup>rd</sup> Anglo-Burmese war in 1885 A.D. Since ancient times Burma was a land of medley tribes who engaged themselves in the war of overpowering one another. According to G.E Harvey, the earliest inhabitants of Burma were Indonesians and later they were displaced by Mongolian tribes.<sup>2</sup> The Mongolian tribes were the Mons or Talaings and the Tibeto-Burman tribes comprised of Pyu, Kanran and Thet. The three Tibeto-Burman tribes later adopted the name of Brahma or Mramma.<sup>3</sup> Lieut. General Sir Arthur P. Phayre has recorded that the Indian settlers in Burma gave to settlers of Burma and adopted themselves the name Brahma which means first inhabitants of the world as per the Buddhist sacred book. It was generally written Mramma and pronounced as Bama.<sup>4</sup> The other remaining tribes by 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Harvey, G.E., "*Outline of Burmese History*", Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-1

<sup>3</sup> Socks, S.W., "*A short History of Burma*", Macmillan and Co. Limited, St. Martin's Street, London, 1919, p- 9

<sup>4</sup> Phayre. Lieut. General Sir Arthur P., "*History of Burma, from the Earliest time to the end of the first war with British India*", Trubner and Co. Ludgate Hill, London, 1883, p- 2

century became united and adopted the language of the Mramma.<sup>5</sup> The name Burma was thus later derivation of the term Mramma. The early tradition of Burma indicates that the Aryans of India entered Burma as process of their possessions of power and fertile land. Indians were also recorded to have established kingdoms in places of Burma like Taguang, Pagan, Thaton, Prome, Pegu, Rangoon etc.<sup>6</sup> As there is no authenticated records of the history of Burma until it enters 11<sup>th</sup> century, therefore a discussion will be made from this century wherefrom reliable sources are available though in few. Despite such fact, it is revealed from the earlier sources that Burma was a land of various ethnic tribes and the game of politics was confined among certain few striving men and in small villages. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Burma was said to be a country of 18 states and nine walled towns. All acknowledging the suzerainty of the Pyu whose capital was at Prome.<sup>7</sup> After the fall of Prome in 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Pyu prince Pyinbya shifted and established his capital at Pagan.

With the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> century the kingdom of Pagan rose to a powerful dynastic empire under great kingship of Anawrahta (1044-77 A.D.). This King believed in the concept of united Burma to be ruled by one King. He conquered the kingdom of Thaton (Lower Burma) and also the Northern Arakan. Anawrahta also carried his expedition in the Nanchao kingdom but he had in his credit only submission of some of the Shan tribes. But, among the Kings of the Burma Anawrahta was the initiator in the earliest to try for unification of Burma and he is regarded as the 'first Maker of Burma'.<sup>8</sup> The present form of Buddhism was first established by him in Pagan. At the time

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<sup>5</sup> Phayre. Lieut. General Sir Arthur P., "*History of Burma, from the Earliest time to the end of the first war with British India*", Trubner and Co. Ludgate Hill, London, 1883, p-5

<sup>6</sup> Desai, W.S., "*A Pageant of Burmese History*", Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-2

<sup>7</sup> Desai, W.S., "*A Pageant of Burmese History*", Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-7

<sup>8</sup> Desai, W.S., "*A Pageant of Burmese History*", Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-16

of Anawrahta's death the kingdom of Pagan included all Burma west of 97<sup>0</sup> longitudes, and in addition almost the whole of the Tenasserin region, but not including southern Arakan. This would mean an area of about 1,60,000 sq. miles.<sup>9</sup> The next King noteworthy was Kyanzittha who ruled from 1084 to 1112 A.D. He was installed to the throne of Pagan on the will of the people as the subjects were dissatisfied with their ruling King Sawlu (1077-1084 A.D.). His military ability and able leadership convinced the people of Pagan to choose him as their overlord. Pagan became an important Buddhist religious place from the time of his reign. During his lifetime Kyanzittha had to lose some land in the Northern Arakan which was however reoccupied during the reign of his grandson, King Alaungsithu (1112-1167 A.D.). Various administrative reforms were introduced by the King, viz. uniform weight and measurement, law etc. Being a man of religious nature he built numerous pagodas in places like Minbu, Thayetmyo, Shwebo, Mandalay etc. He is also said to have renovated the Buddhist temple at Gaya in India. Alaungsithu was murdered at the age of 81 in 1167 A.D. by his second son Narathu who was impatient to assume the throne. The last days of the Pagan empire was ruled by three "Naras" namely – Narathu (1167-1170 A.D.), Naratheinhka (1170-1173 A.D.) and Narapatisithu (1173-1210 A.D.). These Kings did not possess the efficiency and ability of a King therefore they were not liked by their subjects. Their cruelty was incomparable. Narathu killed many nobles and favourite people of his father. The Pagan kingdom began to weaken simultaneously with the proceeding years. However, the final blow of Pagan

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<sup>9</sup> Desai, W.S., "*A Pageant of Burmese History*", Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-15

kingdom took place during the reign of last Pagan King Narathihapate (1252-1287 A.D.).

In 13<sup>th</sup> century the Tartars who hailed from Mesopotamia swept away many countries in their process of military expansion. In 1241 A.D. they annexed cities of Poland and Russia and by 1253 Yunan were wiped out. The Tartars who gained great power in the century now became immediate neighbour of Burma. At the initial years of Burma-Tartar contacts the Mongols did not plan for direct annexation of Burma. Therefore, in 1271 A.D. the Tartar Emperor Kubla/Kublai Khan demanded the Burmese to accept his over lordship and to give tribute. But, the Pagan King disobeyed to surrender and even killed some Tartar envoys that ultimately paved for an obvious war with the Tartars. The matter became much grave when Narathihapate attacked the Prince of Kannagai for having paid tribute to Peking. Immediate action took place by the Tartars at such act of the Burmese King. Burmese prepared a huge army to fight his Chinese enemies under the command of Anantapyissi. Thus, in 1277 A.D. the two royal forces confronted each other at the battleground of Ngasaunggyan. The Burmese had some 40,000 men, the Tartars only 12,000.<sup>10</sup> Though little in strength, the experienced and efficient Tartar army easily crushed down the huge royal Burmese army. But, the Tartars did not capture Pagan. Though the Burmese had to suffer great loss in man and money in this war they failed to realize the supreme power of the Mongols. As such another war between the two took place in 1283 A.D. This time again, the deadly Tartar army made their raids and completely slaughtered the Burmese forces. The Burmese King

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<sup>10</sup> Harvey, G.E., "*Outline of Burmese History*", Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-52

Narathihapate had to flee from his kingdom leaving his people in confusion and chaos. He took shelter at Prome where he was killed by his own son by poisoning. On the other hand disorder prevailed in Pagan and simultaneously perished by 1287 A.D. With the fall of Pagan many local states and Shans declared their independence. As a result Burma again became land of many petty kingdoms that were always in constant conflict with one another for supremacy. The emerging Shans in upper Burma began to extend all over Burma having their main centers at Hsenwi, Mohnyin, Myinsaing, Pinya, Sagaing, Ava, Pegu, and Marbatan. These states acknowledged or not-acknowledge the suzerainty of China as per their convenience.<sup>11</sup> But, unlike the Kings of Pagan, the Shans failed to form politically United Burma. The political history of Burma from 1287 A.D. to 1531 A.D. was of all these Shans. In between these years most notable conflict occurred was of the King of Ava with the King of Pegu. The city of Ava as capital was founded in 1365 A.D. by Shan prince Thadominbya. Ava basically became the capital of Burma for the next five centuries and for the Shans the King of Burma was to the last “The Lord of the Golden palace at Ava.”<sup>12</sup> The Ava-Pegu conflict started in 1406 A.D. during the reign of Ava King Minhkaung and the Pegu King Razadarit when the Pegu chief forced the Avas to accept their suzerainty. This rivalry continued more than a decade. In order to bring political understanding between the two kingdoms matrimonial alliance was also organized but turned unfruitful in the attempt. However, in 1417 A.D., Razadarit succeeded to defeat the Avas and killed Minkyawswa (son of King Minhkaung) at the battle. This led to an end of the ongoing war. In later years

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<sup>11</sup> Desai, W.S., “*A Pageant of Burmese History*”, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-37

<sup>12</sup> Harvey, G.E., “*Outline of Burmese History*”, Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-61

the Ava-Pegu conflict did not continue as many other petty kingdoms began to gain their power and often independence.

However, when Shan inundated in most part of Burma, the Burmese people had to escape to places like Toungoo where they could reside along with their races. The Toungoos became most powerful in Burma during 16<sup>th</sup> century as the Burmese population in the state began to increase. During 13<sup>th</sup> century Toungoo was mere a small village where chieftainship followed with minimal population. The Toungoos had severe enmity with the King of Avas. During the reign of Toungoo King Pyanchi (1368-1377 A.D.) the Ava King Minkyiswasawke killed his son. Long years later, to bring cordial relationship between the two kingdoms the Toungoo King Minkyinyo (1486-1531 A.D.) married an Ava princess in 1503 A.D.<sup>13</sup> Minkyinyo, a man of great military ability succeeded to subdue the Arakanese, Talaings and the Pegus who tried to crush the emerging Toungoos. Thus, thereafter firm foundation of the Toungoo dynasty in Burma was established. The territory of Toungoos expanded during the reign of next Toungoo King Tabinshweti (1531-1548 A.D.). In the history of Burma the King who stood as ‘Second maker of United Burma’ was King Bayinnaung (1551-1581 A.D.). He believed the tradition of Burma to be one country and its representative should be from Burmese race.<sup>14</sup> Bayinnaung established single over lordship over whole of Burma. It is believed that the area of his empire was larger than modern Burma, excluding Arakan.<sup>15</sup> G.E. Harvey’s record of King Bayinnaung states that the King annexed Ava in 1555 and by 1559 the whole of Upper Burma,

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<sup>13</sup> Harvey, G.E., “*Outline of Burmese History*”, Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-78

<sup>14</sup> Desai, W.S., “*A Pageant of Burmese History*”, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-67

<sup>15</sup> Desai, W.S., “*A Pageant of Burmese History*”, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, pp-67,68



the present Shan States, Manipur, Chiengmai and Viengchang.<sup>16</sup> But with the death of Bayinnaung the Toungoo kingdom began to collapse leading to various revolts and chaos in the kingdom. The later Toungoo Kings were unlike their predecessors and failed to hold off the power and dignity of the dynasty. The Burmese power after Bayinnaung remained almost nominal sovereign until the establishment of Konbaung dynasty by Alaungpaya in 1752 A.D. Meanwhile, Tenasserin part of Burma was captured by the Siamese and at Syriam or Thanlying the Portuguese established their rule. However, with the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Burmese Kings succeeded to defeat the Siamese and Portuguese one after another. They re-established Burmese kingdom including that of Lower Burma, Upper Burma, Shan states, Lan Na and Upper Tenasserin. But, the new territorial extend of Toungoo kingdom was quite smaller in size as compared to that established by Bayinnaung. But, this did not end the awful days of the Toungoos. In the first quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century Burma was raided repeatedly by its neighbour Manipur. The ruling King of Manipur was Pamheiba alias Garib Niwaz (1709-1748 A.D.). Under his leadership Manipuris raided the Burmese forces and penetrated deep into the kingdom. This followed till the death of the Meitei King. They created terror with their harsh attacks comprising loot, burning of houses, killing and imprisonment of Burmese people. They carried away huge bunch of wealth and people from Burma in their numerous raids. In one of the invasion led himself by the Meitei King Pamheiba in 1738 A.D., the Manipuri King stormed even Ava, the Burmese capital. On his way to destroy the Kaunghmudaw pagoda, Pamheiba hacked with his sword at one

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<sup>16</sup> Harvey, G.E., "*Outline of Burmese History*", Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-104

of the entrance door of the Pagoda and the cut mark of which still is visible.<sup>17</sup> The Meiteis under King Pamheiba succeeded to sack the Burmese forces. The raids and over-raids of the Manipuris created hatred in the mind of the people of Burma for the invaders. Immediate action against the invaders was not possible as the Burmese position was too weak at the time. However, the days to take revenge from the Meiteis soon approached with the establishment of a powerful Konbuang kingdom under the kingship of Alaungpaya (1752-1760 A.D.). He reunited all of Burma after many years of its breakdown. Alaungpaya has in his credit various military achievements both internal and external. In December 1753 A.D. he entered Ava and defeated the Talaings and compelled to abandon the city. With this the city of Ava became part of Konbuang dynasty. But, the victory was short lived and Ava was again reoccupied by the Talaings. But, the invaders were expelled from the city by May 1754 A.D. In his expedition down the Irrawadi valley Alaungpaya captured Lunnghay, the place was renamed as Myanaung or "speedy victory". He also took possessions of Henzada, Danubyu and Dagon. Dagon was a river port and it was marked out a site for a new city, and to show his own success called it Rangoon "the end of strife."<sup>18</sup> Thus the city of Rangoon was founded in 1755 A.D. which stands as present capital of Myanmar. The Britishers and French people who were loitering for opportunity in Burma were expelled by Alaungpaya at the beginning of 1756 A.D. in between his invasion of destroying Syriam. After some months of defeat of the British and the French forces Alaungpaya captured Syriam. Finally, the military

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<sup>17</sup> Harvey, G.E., "*Outline of Burmese History*", Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-123

<sup>18</sup> Socks, S.W., "*A short History of Burma*", Macmillan and Co. Limited, St. Martin's Street, London, 1919, p-65

expedition in upper Burma completed with seize of Pegu in 1757 A.D. Turning back to his mission of overpowering his neighbour Manipur who massacred Burma in the earlier years, Alaungpaya sent two invasions in Manipur in 1755 A.D. and 1758 A.D. These raids are called by the Manipuris as “The First Devastation” of Manipur by Burma. They remarked the act of the Burmese King as unspeakably cruel.<sup>19</sup> The devastation of Manipur was later followed by the future Burmese Kings. King Hsinbyushin (1763-76 A.D.) raided Manipur severely and took away many Meitei captives and gave settlement at Ava.

One of the most successful monarchs of Konbuang dynasty was Bodawpaya (1782-1819 A.D.). He extended the territory of Burma remarkably vast. Bodawpaya changed his capital that lay at north east from Ava and named the city as Amarapura.<sup>20</sup> The territory of Arakan was invaded from four directions in 1758 A.D. and conquered it. But, with this conquest Burma came in direct contact with the Indian territory of British East India Company. The most unsuccessful policy of Bodawpaya’s military invasion was that of his mission to conquer Siam. Beginning from 1755 A.D. up to the middle of next year huge Burmese soldiers and wealth were utilized in these raids but his entire attempt proved useless. The result was loss of Burmese men and bankrupt of the treasury of his kingdom. Though Bodawpaya succeeded to annex Tenasserin and Tavoy but he was always surrounded by various revolts by the petty chiefs. However, all these rebellions were crushed down vigorously. His military expedition also included the invasion of Assam

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<sup>19</sup> Harvey, G.E., “*Outline of Burmese History*”, Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-133

<sup>20</sup> Phayre. Lieut. General Sir Arthur P., “*History of Burma, from the Earliest time to the end of the first war with British India*”, Trubner and Co. Ludgate Hill, London, 1883, p-211

and subdued them to a tributary kingdom in 1816 A.D. In the history of Burma Bodawpaya is considered as the grand monarch and the power of Burma reached its height during his reign. A whole round development of the kingdom was made by the King. After bringing up the kingdom of Burma at its highest peak Bodawpaya died in 1819 A.D. He was succeeded by his grandson Bagyidaw (1819-1837 A.D.). The reign of Bagyidaw is mixture of both military achievements and also decline of long rule of the Konbuang dynasty. After the accession Bagyidaw sent his army to raid the neighbour Manipur. On the other hand Manipur was in the state of chaos and confusions due to break out of war of successions among the sons of Raja Bhagyachandra alias Jai Singha (1759–1761 and 1763–1798 A.D.). In 1813 A.D. prince Marjit Singha, a son of Bhagyachandra was placed at the throne of Manipur by Burmese but by 1818 A.D. he split away from the Burmese. Thus, the invasion of Bagyidaw in 1819 A.D. was obvious to happen. Marjit Singha was inefficient to face such a strong force and fled to Cachar. The Burmese forces acted cruelly and whole the kingdom of Manipur was overrun. Atrocities were numerous including killing, burning of houses, destroying of palace and capture of many Manipuris as slave. The atrocities of the Burmese forces continued for seven years (1819-1825 A.D.). Huge numbers of war captives were taken to Burma and the population of the kingdom of Manipur went to very minimal after the devastation. These incidents that occurred in Manipur due to Burmese invasions brought the British East India Company in direct contact with the Burmese. Again, the growing Burmese power by conquering its neighbours like Assam, Arakan, Siam etc. held the Burmese to consider themselves as unconquerable. During

the time of previous Burmese King, they demanded some British owned territories and Bengal that has already disheartened the British authorities against the Burman. When in 1819 A.D., Burma conquered most of its neighbours the British East India Company was bound to interfere in the middle. In 1823 A.D., the Burmese forces entered Cachar who have accepted the British protectorate. This brought to direct conflict between the Burmese and the Britishers. Thus, in March 1824 A.D. the first Anglo-Burmese war was declared and it continued for two years. However, in February 24, 1826 A.D. the treaty of Yandaboo was signed and war was brought to an end. By the terms of the treaty Burma had to pay a huge war indemnity along with surrender of many territories to the Britishers. After the war, Bagyidaw became mad and he was succeeded by his brother Tharrawady (1837-1846 A.D.). He disobeyed the terms of the treaty on the plea that the treaty was not signed by him. The Britishers settled and traded in Burma were much harassed during the reign of Tharrawady's son Pagan (1846-1853 A.D.). So much so that the English had to send troops in Burma on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1852 A.D. After few months of clash English took control of Pegu in December 1852 A.D. Thus, whole of Lower Burma was seized to the Britishers. This war is known in history as Second Anglo-Burmese war. The next Burmese King Mindon (1853-1878 A.D.) kept good relationship with the Britishers. In order to abstain from further British encroachment Mindon even ceded territories to Britishers in 1875 A.D. But, despite various attempts by the Burmese Kings to avoid war with Britishers, the Third Anglo-Burmese war broke out in 1885 A.D. British forces occupied the remaining part of Burma by the end of the war and the Burmese Raja Thibaw (1878-1885 A.D.) surrendered to the

British authorities on November 28, 1885 A.D. Thus, with this the long years of Konbuang rule in Burma came to an end finally leading to complete annexation of Burma by the Britishers.

### **Manipuri-Burma matrimonial alliances (15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century)**

In the light of the above description of the history of Burma, it is clear that Burma and Manipur were neighbours of each other since antiquity. The princely state of Manipur was incomparable in size and population with that of the huge kingdom of Burma/Ava. Despite such differences both the kingdoms had strong hold in their own respective regions. Being neighbours incursions and counter incursions between the two for political dominance was natural. Many Shan states near Manipur like Akla, Kyang, Kabaw were defeated and subdued by the Meitei Rajas in numerous occasions. Politico-Socio-Economic and cultural correspondence and assimilation was a common phenomenon between the two and with immediate Shans states in particular. Lieut. General Sir Arthur P. Phayre has recorded that traditions speaks of Indian Kshatriya princes entered Burma through Manipur which lies within the basin of the Irrawadi<sup>21</sup> even before the formation of Burma. If was so then Manipur has been a connecting route of international importance. References speak of trade communication between Burma and Manipur during 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. where traders from Manipur visited not only Burma but also China on horseback.<sup>22</sup> In later years Manipuris used to import elephants from Burma and Burmese architect were brought for purpose of constructing important buildings like temples in Manipur. The Burma-Manipur

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<sup>21</sup> Phayre. Lieut. General Sir Arthur P., "*History of Burma, from the Earliest time to the end of the first war with British India*", Trubner and Co. Ludgate Hill, London, 1883, p-4

<sup>22</sup> Sanajaoba, Naorem., (ed.) "*Manipur Past and Present, The Ordeals and Heritage of a Civilization, Vol-IV, Pan-Manipuris in Asia and Autochthones*", Mittal publications, New Delhi, 2005, p-XI

relationship was further geared up with organization of numerous matrimonial alliances between the royal houses of the kingdoms. Though scanty of material kept shrouded the earlier history of Manipuri-Burmese relation but the history from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are well available comprising bloodshed wars and complex relationship which was a mixture of mutual and dreadful. In the midst of continuous war fares, like many other monarchies of the time marriage alliances between the two royalties were also common. In similarity with other monarchies diplomatic marriage alliances were important mechanism as for their foreign policy. In connection to this W.S Desai has mentioned that in Burma it was a tradition that in occurrence of any war between kingdoms the victorious prince claimed as wife a daughter of the vanquished opponent. The Burmese Kings even in later years of 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. maintained the tradition that the eldest daughter of the King must remain unmarried, as she could be offered as a matrimonial propitiation to the victorious foe in case of their defeat.<sup>23</sup> Marriage alliances within and beyond the border of Burma were recorded in various sources. The first unifier of Burma King Anawrahta (1044-77 A.D.) sent envoys to the Raja of Vaishali (India) with a proposal to marry his daughter. Thus, the marriage was organized and the princess was escorted to Burma through Arakan.<sup>24</sup> The Vaishali princess is recorded as Panchkalyani who gave birth to Kyanzittha, the King who ruled at Pagan from 1084 to 1112 A.D. Again after the fall of Pagan dynasty, serious conflict started between King of Ava and King of Pegu. In order to bring peace, at the initiation of the King of Pegu a matrimonial alliance was organized. He gave his sister in marriage to

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<sup>23</sup> Desai, W.S., "*A Pageant of Burmese History*", Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, pp-5,6

<sup>24</sup> Phayre. Lieut. General Sir Arthur P., "*History of Burma, from the Earliest time to the end of the first war with British India*", Trubner and Co. Ludgate Hill, London, 1883, p-22

Razadarit, the Ava King. Thus, the policy of diplomatic marriage alliance was common in the Burmese monarchy. Likewise, there are many instances where Manipuri princesses were sent to royal houses of its neighbours like Ahom, Tripura, Kacharis etc. and vice versa. These mentioned matrimonial alliances have already been discussed in previous chapters. It is however important to note that the kingdom of Burma having too huge area was difficult on the part of the Kings to maintain its unification all the time. As a result the far off chieftains had ruled independently merely giving tribute to their sovereign. As such, the correspondence of Manipuris was not confined only with the main or central Burma but also with many other small Shan states of Burma who were at the nearby border of Manipur.

As the name 'Manipur' is a new nomenclature, therefore in the early years the kingdom of Manipur was known to its neighbours with different names. R.B Pemberton has stated that the Burmahs called the Manipuris as Kathe and by the Shans, or those who inhabit the country east of the Ningthee or Khyendwen river, it is known as Cassay, of which the term the Burmese word Kathe is a corruption.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, to the Manipuris the kingdom of Burma was known as Ava or Awa or Aawaa. The royal chronicle of Manipur "*Cheitharol Kumbaba*" also used the name Ava/Awa for Burma from 1637 A.D.<sup>26</sup> G.E Harvey also said that after the foundation of Ava by Thadominbya in 1365 A.D., Ava was usually the Burmese capital for the next five centuries. Therefore, the English, the Chinese referred to Burma as Ava."<sup>27</sup> Thus, it

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<sup>25</sup> Pemberton, R.B., "*The Eastern Frontier of India*", Mittal publications, New Delhi, 2000, pp-19,20

<sup>26</sup> Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., "*Cheitharol Kumbaba*", Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, p-39

<sup>27</sup> Harvey, G.E., "*Outline of Burmese History*", Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-61



generally implies that the kingdom was called as Ava in the name of its capital. It is stated by R.K Jhalajit that prior to the year mentioned the royal chronicle of Manipur refers to Burma as Khamran, a name of uncertain derivation at present.<sup>28</sup> Again to the Arakanese and the Chinese until 13<sup>th</sup> century the Burmese were known as the Pyu.<sup>29</sup>

In regard to marriage alliances between Manipur and Burma, it is important to cite that Manipuri Kings summoned matrimonial alliances not only with central Burma but also with that of nearby Burmese Shan states. Reference to first instance of such marriage is mentioned to have organized during 11<sup>th</sup> century. It was the century when a strong Pagan kingdom was established in Upper Burma. Mutua Bahadur, an eminent Meitei scholar of Manipur has recorded that the Pagan King Kyan Sit Thar had a Manipuri princess as his wife.<sup>30</sup> It is very difficult to trace the authenticity of this event as history of the countries by the century was not written appropriately with validity. Besides, lack of references in the correlated sources of the states disabled to draw a clear detailing on the said Burmese King marrying the Meitei princess. However, the mention of Burmese King 'Kyan Sit Thar' by Mutua Bahadur perhaps mean to identify him with King Kyanzittha (1084-1112 A.D.) of Burma though little different in spelling. On considering this, the contemporary ruler of Manipur by the time was Meidingu Loiyumba (1073-1121 A.D.). He was first ruler of Manipur who introduced six (6) administrative divisions in the kingdom and ruled successfully for 48 years. King Kyanzittha on the other hand was beloved monarch of Burma with high

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<sup>28</sup> Singh, R.K., Jhalajit., "*A short history of Manipur*", Imphal, 1992, p-115

<sup>29</sup> Harvey, G.E., "*Outline of Burmese History*", Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-10

<sup>30</sup> Bahadur, Mutua., "*Manipuri Costumes through Ages, (India, Bangladesh and Myanmar)*", Mutua Museum, Imphal, 2011, p-11

military valour and achievements. He had large tract of land under his domain. In course of their reign if any marriage alliance was organized between the two kingdoms than their motive must have been to develop a good relationship. No definite detailing is possible due to unavailability of proper sources.

Within the concern period of this research work i.e. from 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, the history of wed-lock tradition between the two kingdoms, one of the most remarkable marriage alliances is recorded to take place during 15<sup>th</sup> century. But, the marriage was organized not directly with the Raja of Burma but with the King of Pong (a tributary Shan state of Upper Burma). The Shans of Upper Burma or the Shan states proper were generally known to the Meiteis as Pongs.<sup>31</sup> In reference to the Manipuri-Pong relation R.B. Pemberton in his article in the edited book *“Manipur Past and Present, The Ordeals and Heritage of a Civilization, Vol-IV, Pan-Manipuris in Asia and Autochthones”* recorded that “Soohoongkhum, in the year 1474 A.D., sent an embassy, headed by a Shan nobleman called Chowlanghiee, to Kyamba, the reigning prince of Muneepoor, requesting a daughter in marriage, which was acceded to; and in the following year, the princess left Muneepoor for Pong, escorted by Chowlanghiee.”<sup>32</sup> The two Rajas not only solemnized the marriage but also helped each other in raiding nearby Shan state Kyang. The state chronicle of Manipur *“Cheitharol Kumbaba”* recorded about the friendship developed between the Raja of Pong and Manipur but the chronicle did not mention about the event of Meitei princess being married to the Pong

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<sup>31</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., *“History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period”*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-195

<sup>32</sup> Sanajaoba, Naorem., (ed.) *“Manipur Past and Present, The Ordeals and Heritage of a Civilization, Vol-IV, Pan-Manipuris in Asia and Autochthones”*, Mittal publications, New Delhi, 2005, p-35

King. It is documented as “Meidingu Kyamba and Pong Ningthou, Choufa Khekhomba became intimate friends to each other, they built a bridge 100 Mapheilam wide over Ningthi river (Chindwin) with gold and silver and crossed it...They invaded Kabo Kyang Khampat jointly and conquered it. In the expedition, 4 captives were brought including Takhel Mungsung, Khamshetsung, Khamkhaisung, Hokhamshung...The boundaries of the two kingdoms were demarcated in the presence of Mahouwangbi Sumba of Meitei and Chapak Te Te of Kabo.”<sup>33</sup> R.B. Pemberton has again added another new fact about the friendship and the marriage organized. The Meitei Princess who was escorted to Pong kingdom when reached Sekmoo, the cavalcade was attacked and the princess carried off by the Rajah of Khumbat.<sup>34</sup> Later for such scrupulous act the Raja of Khumbat was attacked by the joined forces of Pong and Meiteis and finally captured Kyang Khumbat which situated in the midst of Kabo valley. It was not the end, as cited above the two Rajas also fixed a common boundary between the two kingdoms. The boundary was demarcated as; the boundary on the north was Mungkhong-mung, to the east, Loijiri Hills, to the south, the hill called Miya Tong. Regarding Samjok (Thaungdoot), the eastern portion fell in the share of Pong and the western portion, in the share of Manipur. Manipuri thus got a very large part of the Kabaw valley.<sup>35</sup> With this the boundary of Manipur extended up to the Ningthi or Chindwin river. The conquered region of

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<sup>33</sup> Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-39

\*Kabo valley was under Burmese control till the early part of 18<sup>th</sup> century and later the valley was occupied by the Meiteis. Again, during second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century the valley was recovered by the Burmese under the Konbuang dynasty.

<sup>34</sup> Sanajaoba, Naorem., (ed.) “*Manipur Past and Present, The Ordeals and Heritage of a Civilization, Vol-IV, Pan-Manipuris in Asia and Autochthones*”, Mittal publications, New Delhi, 2005, p-35

<sup>35</sup> Singh, R.K., Jhalajit., “*A short history of Manipur*”, Imphal, 1992, p-90

Kyang Khumbat also fell in the share of Manipur. From the referred records it is obvious that the ruling Raja of Manipur during the time was Meidingu Kyamba (1467-1508 A.D.) but the name of the Pong King is recorded differently, R.B. Pemberton mentioned the name of the Pong King as 'Soohoongkhum' whereas the royal chronicle of Manipur has recorded as 'Choufa Khekhomba'. The difference of the name in the sources might be due to their respective habit of local pronunciations and dialect. However, inspite of such controversies, sources of both the states revealed the same story of developing a good relationship between the two kingdoms. The friendship of the two Rajas perhaps was further esteemed by the marriage organized. Since then Manipur and Pong had maintained a good relationship. But, the future course of details about the princess while her stay at royal house of Pong is lost in darkness due to lack of related sources.

The mention of next marriage alliances is found to have occurred during the reign of Meitei King Mungyamba (1562-1597 A.D.). Like the previous, the Manipur King did not give their princess to the Raja of Burma instead was sent to the royal house of Kabo Chief. The kingdom of Kabo was a Shan state and has important place in the history of both Manipur and Burma. To the Manipuris, the Shans of the Chindwin basin were known as Kabos/Kabaws. Kabaw was the name of the ethnic group and the valley inhabited by them.<sup>36</sup> Since early period Kabo valley was the bordering region between the kingdoms of Burma and Manipur. Prior to the over lordship of the Toungoo dynasty in Burma the Kabos maintained their independent status after which they came under the suzerainty of the Ava royalty. On the other

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<sup>36</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., "*History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period*", National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-195

hand the Rajas of Manipur and the Kabo chiefs raided and over raided upon each other followed by mutual relation. History tells about conquest and annexation of Kabo valley by Manipuris in the reign of many Meitei Kings for its high resources and to overpower the state. The land of Kabo was annexed by Meitei King Khumomba (1263-1278 A.D.), King Ningthoukhomba (1432-1467 A.D.), and finally the capture of Kabo valley by Kyamba as has been described earlier. But, this was not a permanent capture of the land. In course of history depending on the political conditions of the time it remained sometimes as independent principality or sometimes under the suzerainty of the Ava Kings or of the Meitei Kings. Though small in area the Kabo valley has remained as princely state ruled by their Kings. Thus, likewise in the process of its foreign policy matrimonial alliances with its neighbouring kingdoms must have been common phenomenon. The first mention of matrimonial alliances between the kingdom of Kabo and Meitei according to "*Cheitharol Kumbaba*" took place during the reign of Meidingu Mungyamba (1562-1597 A.D.). In 1569 A.D./1491 saka, a lot of elephants were presented as the bride price of Kabo Reima Sana Langmeirembi...In 1492 saka, the year of Tari Heirangkhong, Kabo Reima Sana Langmeirembi (the wife of the Chief of Kabo) left for her country.<sup>37</sup> This record reveals that the Kabo Chief sent his envoys to ask the hand of a Meitei princess with the bride price in 1569 A.D. It was a tradition for the royalties to offer bride price in such marriage proposals. After around gap of one year the Kabo Reima/queen is said to have left for Kabo royal house in 1570 A.D. Like the above recorded marriages the details of this marriage alliance is also available

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<sup>37</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), "*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-46

in limited form. But, an assumption can be made about the course of the marriage by analyzing the ongoing political circumstances of the time. King Mungyamba has in his credit numerous military achievements not only within his territory but also his military raids included an invasion of two Burmese cities of Mungkhong and Mungyang in 1563 A.D. The twin cities lie beyond the Ningthi or Irrawadi river. The King assumed his name Mungyamba after the conquest of Mungyang, which means ‘the conqueror of Mungyang’.<sup>38</sup> Besides Mungyamba also succeeded to attack the Kobo valley and subdued them in 1585 A.D. In such situation, in order to make peace with its superior power the Kobo chief might have requested to handover a princess in marriage. Prof. Gangmumei Kabui gave the exact total of the elephants sent for the Meitei princess to be 7 (seven).<sup>39</sup> Thus, on the acceptance of the proposal a friendly diplomatic matrimonial alliance was organized and after the marriage the princess was sent to the royal palace of Kobo. During the reign of same Meitei King an event of matrimonial alliance with the Chief of Kyang is mentioned in “*Ningthourol Lambuba*”. Kyang is the Shan state that was defeated by the joined forces of Meitei and Pong during the reign of Meidingu Kyamba. However, the cited book recorded that “in the east lies the Kobo valley and to its immediate neighbour a daughter of Meidingu Thangwai Ningthou Kyamba (Mungyamba) called Tampha Wangamlon Ayangphabi was given in marriage to the Kyang Chief.”<sup>40</sup> Prof. Gangmumei Kabui has opined that princess Ayangphabi was the sister of Meidingu Khagemba. Perhaps the Kyang Chief ill-treated his Meitei queen that led to

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<sup>38</sup> Singh, R.K., Jhalajit., “*A Short history of Manipur*”, Imphal, 1992, p-106

<sup>39</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., “*History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period*”, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-207

<sup>40</sup> Singha, Oinam Bhogeswar., (edited) “*Ningthourol Lambuba, vol-I, A Detailed History of the Kings of Manipur*”, Imphal, 1967, p-281

Manipuri invasion of Kyang.<sup>41</sup> Khagemba raided the Kyang villages and destroyed the principality totally leading to capture of Kyang Chief Chou Seng and his queen Chou Soi.<sup>42</sup> This was not the end, Kyang was reinvaded by the same King in later years too. This event of marriage organized has an important place in itself. It is for the first time that ill-treatment of Meitei princess by the ruling Chief of a neighbour, who is her husband is mentioned. Such type of treatment must be the result of either internal court intrigues or deteriorated relation with the paternal house of the queen. However, the immediate attack and devastation of Kyang by the Meitei King indicates that there were bad relations between the two kingdoms. So, it showed that a relation arranged for upliftment of friendship between two kingdoms turned out to have had bitter consequence.

The same chronicle briefly mentioned of another Meitei princess sent to the royal house of Kabo in 1574 A.D. It is recorded that “In 1496 saka, Kabo Leima Sanahekpi, the wife of King of Kabo left for her country.”<sup>43</sup> The year mentioned clarifies that this marriage also occurred during the rule of previous cited Meitei King Mungyamba but the name of the King of Kabo is not mentioned in the sources. Similarly, details of the marriages are also unavailable which troubled to go through deep into the events on the issues of why, when and how the marriage was organized? In the upcoming years during the reign of next King of Manipur Meidingu Khagemba (1597-1652 A.D.), we find mention of two Meitei princesses who were given in marriage

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<sup>41</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., “*History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period*”, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-213

<sup>42</sup> Singha, Oinam Bhogeswar., (edited) “*Ningthourol-Lambuba, vol-I, A Detailed History of the Kings of Manipur*”, Imphal, 1967, p-282

<sup>43</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-47

to King of Kabo in 1601 A.D. and 1610 A.D. respectively. The event is simply mentioned that “In 1523 saka or 1601 A.D. Kabo Leima Sana Hekpi went to her country.”<sup>44</sup> The other Meitei queen who was sent to the Kabo palace is recorded as Kabo Leima Sanapubi. The “*Cheitharol Kumbaba*” merely wrote that “In 1532 saka (1610 A.D.), the year Khoipung Lokpam Mayang, Kabo Leima Sanapubi left for her country.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, the chronicle did not give detailing about the marriages except for the mini information of leaving Manipur by the two Kabo Leimas for the kingdom of Kabo. An analysis of Khagemba’s rule in Manipur signifies that Manipur reached the height of its power and glory during his reign. His military achievements also include annexation of a big Chinese village, defeated the Tripuris and the Kacharis also. The Kabo chief must be aware of the power and strength of the Meitei King therefore the Kabo Chief with the motive of developing peaceful relation with Manipur must have sent envoys to ask for hand of a princess for marriage. In both the occasions Khagemba have accepted the proposal and as such the marriages were organized. Despite this assumption it is very difficult to draw a clear history of the marriages organized in the absence of proper references.

The accounting of matrimonial alliances between Manipur and Central Burma or Ava, the first reference of Manipuri-Burma marriage began with shifting of Burmese capital to Ava by the Burmese King Thanlun (1629-1648 A.D.). The contemporary Meitei King was Meidingu Khagemba who ruled the kingdom from 1597 to 1652 A.D. Though the marriage alliances

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<sup>44</sup>Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., “*Cheitharol Kumbaba*”, Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, p-32

<sup>45</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-52



between the two monarchies began late but they were in contact with each other directly or indirectly. Scholars like G.E. Harvey and W.S. Desai mentioned that during the reign of Burmese King Bayinnaung (1551-1581 A.D.), Manipur was brought to submission and Raja of Manipur accepted suzerainty of the Burmese King by 1559 A.D. If we consider the year in which Manipur was subdued by the Burmese according to the above statement then the event took place during the reign of Meitei King Chalamba (1545-1562 A.D.). The events recorded in the state chronicle of Manipur that occurred during the reign of the said King do not provide any information on such invasion and subjugation of Manipur by the Burmese King Bayinnaung. Therefore, it remains quite doubtful as to authenticity of Burmese overlordship upon Manipur. Eminent Manipuri scholar R.K. Jhalajit also rejects the view of Burmese King subduing Manipur. He pointed out that Bayinnaung built a new city at Pegu and each of the twenty gates of the city was named after the vassal who built it. Thus, we find the Prome gate, Chiengmai Gate, Toungoo Gate etc. But Manipur had nothing to do with the building of the new city or any of the Gates. Burmese used to count the pagodas as proofs of their conquest. If this was the case than there was no pagoda built in Manipur.<sup>46</sup>

As already mentioned that raids and over raids between monarchies were common phenomenon thus it was similar in the case of Manipur and Burma too. However, in the midst of such military aggrandizements arrangements of wed-lock between the two monarchies were also continued. About the earliest matrimonial alliance occurred between the two the

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<sup>46</sup> Singh, R.K., Jhalajit., *"A short history of Manipur"*, Imphal, 1992, p-108

“*Cheitharol Kumbaba*” recorded that “In 1559 saka (1637 A.D. /C.E) Tourangbi, the wife of King of Ava left for her country.”<sup>47</sup> This is for the first time that the royal chronicle of Manipur has mentioned the kingdom of Burma as ‘Ava’. The marriage was organized during the reign of Meitei King Khagemba (1597-1652 A.D.). Glimpse of King Khagemba’s reign signify a supreme overlord with full of military achievements. In respect to the reference about the marriage occurred, though the chronicle did not mention the name of the Burmese King but year of the marriage falls within the ruling period of Ava King Thanlun. TheToungoo King Thanlun was a peaceful ruler. He was busy organizing his scattered kingdom due to shifting of capital at Ava (Upper Burma) as well as of forming a stable administration. At such time he must be aware of the power and pride of Manipur by the time under the able kingship of Khagemba. Therefore, in order to avoid any probable clash with Manipur Thanlun adopted the policy of marriage alliances for a peaceful relationship between the two monarchies. On the other hand, Meidingu Khagemba was also well acquainted with the fact that keeping enmity with Ava was not a good policy and incase of his attempt to annex the kingdom would not be a permanent success. It is however unknown that who initiated for the organization of the marriage and how it took place? Thus, at such circumstances the two royalties might have organized the marriage in order to develop a mutual relationship among them. But, inspite of such peaceful act it did not end the Manipuri-Burmese raids and over-raids against each other. W.S. Desai wrote that “In 1638, while Thanlun was King, the

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<sup>47</sup> Bihari, Nephram., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-56

Manipuris entered Thaungdut on the Chindwin, and retired with booty”.<sup>48</sup> But, this invasion is not mentioned in any of the Meitei sources. In fact, there are references of two attacks made in 1648 A.D. and 1651 A.D. respectively. In both the raids made by the Avas, the Meitei forces succeeded to repulse them. In the encounter of 1648 A.D. Prince Mungyamba took the lead and defeated the invaders. Since these years we find many instances of frequent and direct Manipuri-Burmese contact either in the form of war, trade, domicile etc. The beginning of regular Manipuri-Burmese contact did not end the relationship between Manipur and other Burmese Shan states.

The Kabo valley, an important territory for the Meiteis had always kept in touch with the state through annexation and ties of matrimonial alliances. As such, we find that during reign of Meitei King Paikhomba (1666-1697 A.D.), occasion of marriage engagement was found with that of the Kabo Chief. The event is recorded as “In 1610 saka (1688 A.D. /C.E), the first day of Thawan (August) was Wednesday. Ningthoujam Chanu Thoibi was engaged to marry Mangsa Rakpa (Chief of Kabo) on Tuesday, the 14<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>49</sup> However, besides the above lines there is no mention of further details whether the marriage alliance took place or not? Analysis can be made that in cases of withdrawing marriages there may be reasons like, either the bride price was not satisfactory or sudden development of strained relationship between the kingdoms.

In the history of matrimonial alliances between Manipur with that of Burma or Ava, the most impactful marriage took place in the beginning of

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<sup>48</sup> Desai, W.S., “*A Pageant of Burmese History*”, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-109

<sup>49</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-68

18<sup>th</sup> century. The most complicated period of Manipur-Burma relation also started at that century. The history of the countries began to fill with belligerence connection having numerous atrocities done upon one another. The authenticity of the events can be counted with more confirmation by way of the availability of large number of sources. The first instance of marriage arrangement between Manipur and Ava of the century is found in 1702 A.D. Mention is made of sending envoys from the Ava royal house with a marriage proposal to the King of Manipur. In this regard the state chronicle of Manipur "*Cheitharol Kumbaba*" recorded that "The month of Wakching (January) and Phairen (February), began on Wednesday and Thursday respectively. The ambassador of Ava arrived to ask for the hand of a Meitei princess in marriage on the first day of the month Phairen (February), Thursday."<sup>50</sup> Thus, it is clear that the Ava King sent his ambassadors in the month of February 1702 A.D. but the chronicle remains silent about the immediate response of the proposal. Likewise, whether the marriage proposal of the Ava King was instantly accepted or not is not clear. It was a period when Manipur was under the powerful rule of Meidingu Charairongba (1697-1709 A.D.). A glimpse of the contemporary Manipur-Burmese relation shows that there was a peaceful contact comprising trade exchange and regular correspondence with each other. However, Lieut. General Sir Arthur P. Phyre has mentioned about Manipuris attacking and conquering the Kabo valley and its nearby boundaries of Burma.

In concentrating to the response of the cited marriage proposal, after two years in the month of April 1704 A.D., there is again mention of arriving

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<sup>50</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), "*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-77

Ava envoys with elephants. It is recorded as “Potshangba Hanjaba Moirengjamba brought 2 elephants from Ava, one female and another male on Tuesday, the 11<sup>th</sup>. The ambassadors from Ava were welcomed by the King on Thursday, the 20<sup>th</sup>. 22 persons including Gosain Muni (mendicant) wahaiba (one who speaks or teaches) arrived.<sup>51</sup> The said elephants might be the bride price sent by the Ava King. Though no immediate acceptance was made by the Meitei, simultaneously he decided to give one of the Manipuri princesses in marriage to the King of Ava. Thus, few months later in the month of December the marriage was organized. Though the details of the marriage is not recorded in the chronicle of Manipur, it simply mentioned that “Lourembam Chanu, the wife of the King of Ava, left for her country on Friday, the 23<sup>rd</sup>.”<sup>52</sup> In many of the Meitei sources the name of the Meitei princess is mentioned as Chakpa Makhao Ngambi. Lourembam Chanu and Champabati were other names of Chakpa Makhao Ngambi. Though the royal chronicle of Manipur did not record the name of the Burmese King, W.S. Desai has recorded the name of the Burmese King as Sane.<sup>53</sup> If we go through the chronology of the ruling monarchs of Burma, King Sane ruled Burma from 1698 to 1714 A.D. He was thus contemporary of the two ruling Rajas of Manipur, i.e. Meidingu Charairongba (1697-1709 A.D.) and Meidingu Pamheiba alias Garib Niwaz (1709 - 1748 A.D.). In the light of the marriage alliance organized the most important information remained unexplained is what were the circumstances that led to the development of such matrimonial

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<sup>51</sup>Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-78

<sup>52</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-78

\*Tuongoo is also written as Toongoo

<sup>53</sup> Desai, W.S., “*A Pageant of Burmese History*”, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-109

alliance between the two monarchies? An assumptive answer can be build up by analyzing the enduring political situation of the two dominions and about their relationship. Manipur during the last years of 17<sup>th</sup> and by the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century was at the height of its power and glory both politically and culturally. Meidingu Charairongba for the first time in the history of Manipur succeeded to bring united the hills and the plain people sharing their responsibility. This naturally shows of strong internal administrative hold by the King. Besides, there was no incursion of the kingdom by external forces. Thus, the King could rule peacefully without internal and external disturbances. On the other hand, in contrast to Meidingu Charairongba, his contemporary Burmese King Sane or Hsengpyu Sheng ruled a kingdom which was at the verge of its decay. King Sane was one of the last rulers of Toungoo dynasty. Unlike his predecessors he could not hold off the power and glory of the dynasty. The country of Burma was politically scattered into many principalities with full of rebellions and disorder. Even the kingship of Sane was challenged by his uncle and rose in rebellion though it was suppressed. Historians generally claim the reign of the Burmese King Sane to be uneventful years in the history of Burma. A comparison of the two indicates that the political condition of Manipur was much more strong and stable than that of the Burma under King Sane. As regard to Manipur-Burma relationship of the time mention has already been made of mutual correspondence. Lieut. General Sir Arthur P. Phyre however give details about an event where the Burmese forces that were sent for Zimme expedition were defeated by the Meitei army at its frontier and the forces had to retreat. In connection to this matter about the causes and result of the

marriage organized an 18<sup>th</sup> century Manipuri chronicle called "*Manipur Itihas Meitei Puran Bijoy Panchali, Garib Niwaz Charit*" provided huge detailing. The chronicle has narrated that the King of Ava sent two of his envoys named Mahangat (mayangkok) and Tungalabya (Tunglacha) to ask the hand of a Meitei princess. Other Avas who accompanied them brought various colourful cloths, copper, coins, gold, plates etc. as bride price. Thereafter, the envoys asked for the hand of the beautiful sister named Champabati (Chakpa Makhao Ngambi) of Meidingu Charairongba to give in marriage to the Ava King. They also requested that in case of acceptance of the proposal the princess be sent to the royal palace of Ava where the marriage ceremony will be organized. At this the Meitei King did not take the decision immediately. After discussion with his ministers, Meidingu Charairongba decided to accept the marriage proposal but only on the condition that the Avas return back the seven villages namely – Chirang, Tingngitsa, Pungpul, Kamu, Moru, Kondong, Tarao. The Ava envoys were sent back with all the bride prices brought and a letter addressed to the King of Ava. The Ava King without much delay accepted all the conditions of the Meiteis and also promised to make Chakpa Makhao Ngambi as his Chief queen. After this mutual agreement the Meitei princess Champabati was sent to the royal palace of Ava along with many of her servants and huge amount of dowry. On an auspicious day the marriage was solemnized and soon they were blessed with a prince named Kendujit/ Mandra Kengtung Ngamba. But, suddenly within a few time the Meitei queen was dethroned from the status of Chief queen. The reason mentioned is that the Meitei princess was accompanied by eleven (11) beautiful girls as her personal attendants. The

King wanted to marry with the girls but it was rejected by the attendants of the Meitei queen. At this situation, the Ava King blamed Chakpa Makhao Ngambi for their rejection and dethroned her from the status of the Chief queen as well as driven her out. Messenger was sent to the Manipur court with the message that princess Chakpa Makhao Ngambi to be a disobedient wife. The Burmese King also asked for another princess which angered the Meitei King for such ill-treatment towards his sister. Meidingu Charairongba immediately decided to take revenge against the King of Ava for such ill-treatment and insult towards the Meitei princess. But, unfortunately his sudden death led to drop the invasion.<sup>54</sup>

Assumption on why the marriage proposal was sent by the Burmese King, it can be said that the Burmese King was well aware of the power and strength of the Meiteis and of his position too. Therefore, in order to avoid conflict with Manipur decided to adopt the policy of developing an appeasement by arranging marriage alliance. Therefore, when marriage conditions were made by the Meitei King he easily accepted without delay. Knowing well of the fact that organization of such marriage with the Meiteis would naturally lessen the probability of invasion from Manipur and this will help the Burmese Raja to concentrate more on handling his kingdom which was at declining position. Thus, with this motive he might have sent his ambassadors with a marriage proposal for himself. On the other hand the Meitei King who was busy in settling the permanent administration of the country did not prefer to have any awful relationship with any of his neighbours. Looking back to history, Manipur and Burma had always been

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<sup>54</sup> Singh, Mangi Laishram & Longjam Mani Singha., "*Manipur Itihas Meitei Puran, Bijoy Panchali, Garib Niwaz Charit*", Bhakti Shastriya Samaj, Imphal, 1966, p-35



raiding and over raiding upon each other with huge loss of men and economy. Therefore, Meidingu Charairongba accepted the marriage proposal sent by the Burmese King. Here, it cannot be neglected that the proposal was not immediately accepted by the Meiteis and it took two years to give a final response to the proposal. It may be that going through earlier years of conflicts between the two kingdoms Meidingu Charairongba had to think over the decision as to how a princess of an enemy would be treated. However, being convinced at the end, the Meitei princess Champabati alias Chakpa Makhao Ngambi was sent to the royal palace of Ava after two years.

Loitongbam Sanajaobi Devi in her dissertation "*A Study In History and Culture of Manipur (1597-1709)*" tried to give maximum details on the marriage. She has written that the Manipuri Puyas/chronicles and other traditions maintain that King Charairongba laid certain conditions on the proposed marriage that the bride should be appointed Chief queen of the Burmese King. Having agreed upon to the condition by the King of Burma, Charairongba married his sister, Chakpa Makhao Ngambi to the Burmese King, Taminganwa in 1704 A.D.<sup>55</sup> Relating the same event eminent scholar of Manipur Gangmumei Kabui has written that "In 1702, the King of Toongoo\* dynasty of Ava sent emissaries asking for the hand of the Manipuri princess. The outcome of the mission is not recorded. But later events showed that Charairongba gave his daughter Chakpa Makhao Ngambi in marriage to the Burmese King."<sup>56</sup> This statement creates two important confusions, of which the first is - was Chakpa Makhao Ngambi daughter or sister of King

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<sup>55</sup> Devi, Loitongbam Sanajaobi., "*A Study In History and Culture of Manipur (1597-1709)*", (unpublished), Dept. of History, Manipur University, Canchipur, Imphal, 1988, p-90

<sup>56</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., "*History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period*", National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011. p-236

Charairongba? And the second is, who was the King of Burma with whom the Meitei princess was given in marriage? To clarify the first confusion, when we count the age of King Charairongba in 1704 A.D., we find that he was only 31 years and it is difficult to assume that at such age Charairongba had any daughter of marriageable age. Again in the footnote of the royal chronicle of Manipur names of the childrens of Charairongba are jotted down where no mention of Chakpa Makhao Ngambi is found. Charairongba had 5 (five) sons from his three queens – Shatpam Chanu Nungthinchaibi Makak Loikhombi, Hijam Nongthonbam Chanu Shengoirembi, Thangjam Chanu Thaba Ngambi. Shatpam Chanu Nungthinchaibi Makak Loikhombi gave birth to Garib Niwaz Mayangngamba and Loiyamba Sana Keithel Taba. Hijam Chanu Shengoirembi gave birth to a son named Khampamba (Kongyamba) Akoijam Taba and Thangjam Chanu Thabangambi also gave birth to two princes, they were Khamlangpamshaba Wangkheirakpa and Mungyamba Khurairakpa.<sup>57</sup> The above facts show that Chakpa Makhao Ngambi was not the daughter of Meidingu Charairongba instead she was sister of the Meitei King. Giving a study to the second question raised there is definite answer that the chronology of Kings of Burma confirms that it was Burmese King Sane who was ruling Burma during the years when the marriage was organized. The name of the Burmese King recorded as Taminganwa ruled Burma from 1714 A.D. to 1733 A.D. after the death of King Sane.

Thus, an account of the Ava-Manipuri matrimonial alliances during the first part of 18<sup>th</sup> century reveals that it did not prove to be a successful one. The two kingdoms maintained mutual and friendly relationship at the initial

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<sup>57</sup>Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., “*Cheitharol Kumbaba*”, Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, P-61

years of the marriage but soon the relation deteriorated and it went to low ebb. As stated earlier that Meidingu Charairongba on being ill-treated towards his sister by the Ava King prepared his army to take revenge by invading Burma which remained inactive due to his sudden death. However, on his death bed Meidingu Charairongba bestowed the responsibly of invading Burma to his son and successor Meidingu Pamheiba alias Garib Niwaz who succeeded to the throne of Ningthouja dynasty at Manipur in 1709 A.D. and ruled till 1748 A.D. With the years ahead of Pamheiba's rule Manipur rose to the pick of its glory and power. He may be credited as the greatest King of Manipur. Along with his brutal raids over the Hills of Manipur, Kacharis and Tripura, his raids against Burma were remarkable. Since the last years of Meidingu Charairongba's reign Manipur-Burma relation was strained. Ningthee or Irrawadi river yet remained the boundary between the two kingdoms. The north and the south boundary of Manipur stood the Shan kingdoms and the Mons or the Talaings.<sup>58</sup> In one hand Manipur became much more politically united and strong whereas Burma still remained as the scattered kingdom. In dealing with the Burmese Kings of the Toungoo dynasty Garib Niwaz did not face much difficulty as their political and military hold was weak. The contemporary Burmese rulers of Meidingu Pamheiba were - King Sane (1698-1714 A.D.), Taininganwe (1714-1733 A.D.) and Mahadammayaza-Dipati (1733-1752 A.D.). The Manipuri-Burma contact was revived with the accession of Burmese King Taininganwe. Meidingu Pamheiba was waiting for an opportunity to revenge the insult meted out to his aunt by the previous Burmese King. Meanwhile Burmese

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<sup>58</sup> Singh, R.K., Jhalajit., "*A short history of Manipur*", Imphal, 1992, p-145

King Taininganwe with the ambition to revive a good relationship with Manipur in 1716 A.D. sent his ambassadors to the royal court of Manipur to ask the hand of one of the Meitei princess for him. The state chronicle of Manipur recorded that “In 1716 A.D./1638 saka, the month of wakching (January) was Monday. An ambassador came from Ava including 6 Somsoks, in all 156 persons to ask for the hand of the Meitei princess on Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>59</sup> The Burmese envoys were received gracefully at the royal house of Manipur. The marriage proposal was immediately accepted by the Meitei King. It was considered as the most fortunate opportunity which was long awaited by Meidingu Pamheiba for revenging against the Avas. Conspiracy was hatched by the Meiteis that the Burmese were to crush down when they arrive for receiving the Meitei bride with heavy hand. Therefore, the Meitei King laid certain conditions for the marriage. He conveyed the Ava emissaries that the Meitei princess will be sent to Burmese land in next year but directed that the princess have to be received at the confluence of the River Ru and the river Ningthee on the appointed day or Chindwin river.<sup>60</sup> The Ava envoys informed their King about the reply propelled by the Meitei King. The Ava King accepted all the conditions of the Meitei and decided to receive the Meitei princess from the said location. As such at the stipulated time and date the Burmese King sent bride receiving Burmese party that consisted of 300 nobles, women, soldiers and servants.<sup>61</sup> On the other side Meitei soldiers of Pamheiba who were well prepared to attack the Burmese came to the decided location fully armed. The people of two parties met at the

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<sup>59</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-85

<sup>60</sup> Singh, R.K., Jhalajit., “*A short history of Manipur*”, Imphal, 1992, p-148

<sup>61</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., “*History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period*”, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-244

determined river spot. Beyond the expectation of the Burmese people they did not find any Meitei princess being brought by the forces of Manipur. Instead they were attacked severely by the heavily armed Meitei forces under the leadership of Usham Koren Keirungba. This astonishing attack led many Burmese to lose their life and many were captured by the Meitei forces. It is recorded that Unungta Khullakpa (chief) was captured along with 90 (ninety) men and 11 women alive.<sup>62</sup> After destroying the bride receiving Burmese people the Meitei forces moved towards the direction of Sansok/Samjok<sup>63</sup> area (a tributary state of Manipur). Other reason for such act by the Meitei King was that when the marriage proposal was sent by the Burmese King, they considered it to be an insult as the Burmese have already failed to treat well with Meitei princess Chakpa Makhao Ngambi in previous years.

This betrayal of the Meiteis had serious shock on the Burmese. In retaliation to such act of brutality, the Burmese forces in few months led an invasion to Manipur. In this encounter the Burmese forces were again defeated by the royal army of the Meiteis. The raiding forces were defended by the Meitei forces under the leadership of Meidingu Pamheiba himself. The strong Manipuri cavalry destroyed the Ava forces and defeated them. Many were killed and many captured by the victorious army. In this battle the Meitei forces captured 157 soldiers, 160 muskets and 10 horses.<sup>64</sup> Beside this another chronicle of Manipur "*Ningthourol Lambuba*" recorded that the

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<sup>62</sup> Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), "*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-86

<sup>63</sup> The territory of Samjok and Mangsa are two dependents states of Manipur. Even then, the chief of Samjok attacked the Mangsa territory which angered the Meiteis. Therefore, it was a planned mission for the Meitei King crush the forces of Samjok after crushing down the bride receiving Avas

<sup>64</sup> Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., "*Cheitharol Kumbaba*", Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, P-79

Meitei force captivated a Buddhist pagoda, 1000 boats, 10 horse saddles, 200 muskets, Chinese carpets and swords.<sup>65</sup>

A look into the reasons why the Burmese wanted to renew the wed-lock with the Meitei though aware of the fact that the relation with the Meitei were seriously at strained position. As already discussed on the political conditions of the Burma and Manipur of the time, analyzing the situation Burmese King or Taminganwa (1714-1733 A.D.) opted it better to freshen up a mutual relationship between the two kingdoms. An enmity with the powerful Meitei King Pamheiba was dangerous for exacerbate political power of Burma. On the contrary to their effort of developing friendship the relation became much more strained. The counter and re-counter between Manipur and Burma became frequent and aggressive with the passing years. The next event of Manipur-Burma encounter is recorded to have taken place in 1723 A.D. which continued up to 1725 A.D. Manipur had to face simultaneous invasions by the royal forces of Tripura in south west and Burmese forces in the east side of Manipur. The Burmese forces were commanded by Prince Mandra Kengtung Ngamba, son of Meitei queen Chakpa Makhao Ngambi. The colluded attack of the enemies led the Meitei in grave danger. A serious war strategy was made to defend the combined forces. Many Meitei nobles proposed the Manipuri Raja to settle the battle with Burmese forces by adopting matrimonial alliance. But Meidingu Pamheiba decided to fight the invading Burmese army. Meitei forces were sent to disperse the Avas under the leadership of Kopeng Keirunghanba, Gaibhram Huidromba and Brahmin

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<sup>65</sup> Singha, Oinam Bhogeswar., (edited) "*Ningthourol-Lambuba, vol-I, A Detailed History of the Kings of Manipur*", Imphal, 1967, pp-350,351

Chakravartin Sidhanta.<sup>66</sup> In the encounter the Burmese forces outnumbered the Meiteis therefore the Meiteis were easily defeated. At the news of the defeat of Meitei soldiers huge re-enforcement with deadly arms were sent to confront the invading Ava soldiers. Meidingu Garib Niwaz himself went to fight hand in hand with the Avas at Wangjing. In the encounter the enemies were severely defeated and many were captivated that included three elephants, 2000 men (both death and alive).<sup>67</sup> This victory of Meitei was followed by another victory against the invading Tripuris. However, this was not the end of conflict with the Avas, the Manipuri-Ava conflict renewed in December 1724 A.D. and ended with the beginning of 1725 A.D. The invading Ava forces were again defeated and repulsed back to their kingdom. The Meitei forces even succeeded to cross the Ningthee river. The record of frightful Burmese invasion by the Meiteis generally began from 1735 A.D., a decade after the previous encounter. They crossed the Chindwin river entered the territory of the Avas and devastated many Burmese villages. Their major expedition was capture of the village Myedoo near Moo river. In retaliation to this serious attack of the Meiteis, the Burmese invaded Manipur in 1737 A.D. but the royal Burmese armies faced serious defeat. An expedition of Ava was continued in the same year by the Meitei forces and their army included the eldest son of Garib Niwaz, Shyam Sai and his religious Guru Shantidas. They returned back to Manipur after making a successful invasion of Ava carrying along with them 20 captives and 327 persons death.<sup>68</sup> The repeated raids of

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<sup>66</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., “*History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period*”, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-245

<sup>67</sup> Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., “*Cheitharol Kumbaba*”, Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, P-84

<sup>68</sup> Bihari, Nepam., (edited & translated), “*The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*”, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-99

Ava country by Manipur when their political hold was at the verge of slip they decided it wise to sue for peace. Soon after the Ava King requested for peace negotiation with the Meiteis but it proved to be of no use. In contrast Meidingu Garib Niwaz conducted the most brutal expedition of Burma in 1738 A.D. Gangmumei Kabui recorded that Meidingu Pamheiba moved towards Burma crossing Chindwin with 20,000 man and cavalry.<sup>69</sup> This invasion of Ava by Pamheiba was assisted by his son Shyam Sai. The Burmese King had already made preparations of his army to face the invading Meitei forces. About this invasion and atrocities of Meitei forces G.E Harvey has stated that the Meitei forces burnt every house and monastery under the walls of Ava and stormed the stockade built to protect the Kaunghmudaw pagoda, slaughtering the garrison like cattle in a pen and killing a minister of the Hluttaw Council, the old-door leaves of the pagoda's eastern gateway show a gash made by the sword of Garib Niwaz when he was forcing the entrance.<sup>70</sup> Mention is made of another Manipuri invasion of Burma in 1740 A.D. in which the Avas were again defeated and captivated many of them.

A turning point in the history of Manipur-Ava relation took place in 1741 A.D. The long years of enmity and raids upon the territory of each other came to an end for few years. A peaceful relation was developed between the two kingdoms by adopting the policy of matrimonial alliances. In order to end the continuous war fares between the two kingdoms which led to damage of many lives and economy in both sides, the ruling Ava King Mahadammayaza-Dipati (1733-1752 A.D.) sent emissaries in the court of

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<sup>69</sup> Kabui, Gangmumei., “*History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period*”, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-247

<sup>70</sup> Harvey, G.E., “*Outline of Burmese History*”, Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, (reprint) 1954, p-123



Manipur with a proposal to offer one of Meitei princess for the Ava King. He thought of developing the relationship with royal house of Manipur with the hope that if kinship be developed then there will be less danger of raids over Ava by the Meiteis. The initiative of Ava King as described in one of the Meitei chronicle "*Ningthourol Lambuba*" is, the Ava King expressed that since long years Manipur and Ava had the tradition of wed-lock. Thus, to renew the tradition I request you to give in marriage your daughter Nongleima and I myself will approach to receive the princess.<sup>71</sup> In supplement to this it is further narrated in "*Manipur Itihas Meitei Puran Bijoy Panchali, Garib Niwaz Charit*" that Garib Niwaz after listening to the proposal of the Ava King was satisfied and agreed to give a Meitei princess but only on the condition that they adopt Hindu religion and worship Rama. He also clarified that as he does not have any daughter he can sent his brother's daughter as to be the queen of Ava.<sup>72</sup> As peace was emergent need of the circumstances the Ava King accepted the conditions laid by the Meitei King and agreed to marry the said princess. Garib Niwaz being well aware of past strained relationship with Burma, advanced himself with large forces along with his brother Wangkheirakpa's daughter princess Nongleima alias Satyamala to be offered in marriage to the Burmese King. The Meiteis crossed the Irrawadi river and reached at the stipulated place and time. The Ava King also prepared for the event and the people of two countries met at Shangku port. The marriage ceremony was organized at the said place and the Meitei King went back to his kingdom. On his way back to Manipur, Garib

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<sup>71</sup> Singha, Oinam Bhogeswar., (edited) "*Ningthourol-Lambuba, vol-I, A Detailed History of the Kings of Manipur*", Imphal, 1967, p-374

<sup>72</sup> Singh, Mangi Laishram & Longjam Mani Singha., "*Manipur Itihas Meitei Puran, Bijoy Panchali, Garib Niwaz Charit*", Bhakti Shastriya Samaj, Imphal, 1966, p-126

Niwaz and his army defeated a rebellious tribe Koi on the request of the Burmese King.<sup>73</sup> In little contrast to this detailing of the marriage, W.S Desai has written about sending of envoys by the Meitei King with a dress for the princess Chakpa Makhao Ngambi who was married to the Ava King in 1704 A.D. The present was also brought for the Burmese King too.<sup>74</sup> The raids and counter-raids between the two countries remained stagnant for few years. However, peace was maintained only for a short period. W.S Desai again mentioned about raid of Burma by Manipur in 1749 A.D. On finding the huge Burmese army who were prepared for defense of the kingdom retired from Burma after presenting a young daughter to the Ava King.<sup>75</sup> In similarity with W.S Desai, the state chronicle of Manipur recorded that in 1749 A.D., during the reign of Meidingu Chitshai, in the month of November the former Meitei King Pamheiba escorted the daughter of his younger brother Wangkheirakpa, the Ava Leima to her country.<sup>76</sup> But chronicle does not mention anything about encounter between the two countries in that year. An assumption can be made that the Meitei princess was escorted by Pamheiba after the Ava Raja sent the proposal. In order to end the long years of enmity and bloodshed both the monarchs thought it wise to develop a fresh mutual association between them. In the history of matrimonial alliances between Burma and Manipur this was the last mention of wed-lock between the royal houses in the available sources. In future history of Manipuri-Burma

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<sup>73</sup>Singha, Oinam Bhogeswar., (edited) *“Ningthourol-Lambuba, vol-I, A Detailed History of the Kings of Manipur”*, Imphal, 1967, p-376

<sup>74</sup> Desai, W.S., *“A Pageant of Burmese History”*, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-110

<sup>75</sup> Desai, W.S., *“A Pageant of Burmese History”*, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p-110

<sup>76</sup> Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), *“The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur”*, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2012, p-113

relation is overflowed with treacherous Burmese raids over Manipur and its devastation.

In the history of Burma, it is however a fact that the Toungoo dynasty of Burma faced death blow due to rapid invasions of Manipur under its King Garib Niwaz at the first half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. But, the fortune of the kingdom of Manipur was soon to doom away with the foundation of the Konbuang dynasty by King Alaungpaya (1752-1885 A.D.) during second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The kingdom of Ava became one of the strongest military powers by the time that succeeded to expand his territory by conquering many nearby kingdoms. On the other hand, the political condition of Manipur began to break down after the death of Garib Niwaz. The continuous war of successions for the throne among his sons and grand-sons failed to keep the political stability of the kingdom leading to chaos and disorder in the country. On the other hand, the new Burmese King Alaungpaya was fully prepared to avenge its enemy Manipur for their cruel raids and atrocities done in preceding years. Manipur faced its first devastation by Burma in 1755 A.D. King Alaungpaya attacked the country of Manipur and defeated the Meiteis badly which bound the Meitei King to flee from his kingdom. Many were captivated by the Burmese and thousands were massacred. The next major invasion of Manipur by the Burmese forces occurred during the reign of Meitei King Bhagyachandra alias Jay Singha in 1764 A.D. The Burmese forces under their able King Hsinbyushin massacred the kingdom of Manipur again and Meiteis in large numbers were taken as captive to populate the kingdom of Burma. The invasions of Burma over Manipur were always an act of huge bloodshed and brutality. The most striking and treacherous Burmese

raids of Manipur took place in 1819 A.D. The Burmese forces devastated the country of Manipur for seven years from 1819 to 1825 A.D. which led to destruction of Manipur kingdom and its population. However, it was only after the conclusion of Anglo-Burmese war and signing of the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 A.D. that Burmese interference in the kingdom of Manipur came to an end.

In the study of relationship between the kingdom of Manipur and Burma though incomparable in size and population were always in contact with each since antiquity. Being neighbours of each other in their form of monarchical government the relation was mixture of both strained and friendly as per the requirement of the circumstances. It was common that the monarchs of both the dominions adopted both force and diplomacy in order to deal with each other. Like in many monarchies the initiation of matrimonial alliances between the two countries played an important role in changing their relationship. In particular to history of Manipur-Burma matrimonial alliances the reference of first marriage recorded in 11<sup>th</sup> century shows that marriage alliances between the monarchies had root centuries back which continued up to 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, in context to period of concern between 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century there is mention of few marriage alliances numbering around four (4/5) that occurred between the royal houses of Burma and Manipur. Beside these, the number of such marriages is added with arrangements of wed-lock between Manipur and other small Shan states of Burma like Pong, Kabo, Kyang etc. In regard to developments of Manipur-Ava marriages the causes has always been diplomatic for gearing up good relationship or to abstain from serious clash. In contrast to such situations marriages in some cases

brought about more hatred between the kingdoms as found in the case of Meitei princess Chakpa Makhao Ngambi. Cases of ill-treatment with princess are also recorded, in such instances as retaliation war between the two kingdoms became inevitable for the purpose which finally led to continuous counter and re-counters. Royal princesses were regarded to be pride and prestige of a royalty, if any King fails to treat properly with such princess than it was also regarded as insult and disrespect of the kingdom by the paternal house of the princesses. Thus, there followed the period of bloodshed and war fares that led the subjects of the kingdoms to develop hatred for each other. The repeated devastations of Manipur by Burmese in later years were one of the most important reasons for the downfall of the kingdom of Manipur. However, it is also a fact that organization of marriage alliances also helped to stem many uncontrollable and suspicious act between them. The unique feature of Ava-Manipur matrimonial alliance was that no any record describing about any Ava princess given in marriage to members of royal house of Manipur is mentioned. The records of all the marriages described only of sending royal princesses of Manipur to be the wives of Ava Kings. Thought the Burmese since centuries back had the tradition of presenting princess to their opponent in cases of their defeats against the enemy but despite their defeat at the hand of the Meiteis in numerous occasions they never presented any of their princesses to Meitei Kings. It may be because the Meitei Rajas who were staunch followers of Vaishnavism did not desire to accept any royal ladies who followed different religion and had different culture. But, at the same time, the sending of Meitei princess in the royal palace of Ava does not imply of such inference. In all the marriages

took place there is record of sending emissaries to the royal court of Manipur by the Ava King along with bride price for asking the hand of a princess. Therefore, it does not show any indication of the Meiteis being subordinate to the Burmese. On the other hand, the Burmese regarded as their pride to get married to any of the royal princesses of Manipur as by 18<sup>th</sup> century Manipur was at the height of its power and glory. It is again observed that from 18<sup>th</sup> century every marriage alliances that occurred between the two royalties were diplomatic policy of the kingdoms. It was decided as per the political requirements of the time. Thus, there find various marriage proposals accepted by the royalties and some rejected depending on the political scenario. In the process of such marriage alliances the retinues of the Meitei princesses were given settlement by the Burmese Kings at Ava and other places of Burma. The Meitei settlement in Burma also consists of people who were taken as war captives and engaged them in different work of their proficiency.