

CHAPTER- 3

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Manipur was an ancient kingdom which had its affluent culture. The indigenous names of Manipur are *Kangleipak* or *Meitrabak* which signify that it was essentially a nation state of the Meiteis.¹ The extension of military power of the Meitei state to the surrounding hills and the conquest of Kabaw valley in upper Burma in 1471 CE made the kingdom a multiethnic state dominated by the Meiteis and their sovereigns. The repeated wars and conquests of Meitei state against the neighbouring kingdoms particularly Burma aroused a strong feeling of nationalism among the Meiteis.² The Meiteis were the ruling community of the erstwhile kingdom of Manipur which now a state of India, have mainly inhabited the valley since time immemorial. The surrounding hills areas are the abode of the tribes, such as Nagas and Kukis.³

Before the establishment of the kingdom, many immigration groups, such as Austrics, Mongoloids, Tais, Tibeto Burmans, Indo Aryans, etc., penetrated in Manipur. Therefore, the Manipur kingdom comprised a number of ethnic groups. These ethnic groups were *Haokha Lokkha*, *Haorak Konthou*, *Thanga Kambong*, *Urok Ushai*, *Khabas*, *Huirem-Khunjam*, *Manding*, *Chairen*, *Khende*, *Huirem Khunja*, *Mangang*, *Luwang*, *Khuman*, *Angom*, *Nganba*, *Sarang*, *Leisangthem*, *Angal*, *Makhel*, *Kambong*, *Lokkha*, *Haokha*, *Lera Khongnang* etc.⁴ Among these ethnic groups, there was a long continuous struggle occurred for existence and gradually the cultural affinities of various ethnic groups transformed the land into a unified state which was

fully dominated by seven principalities.⁵ These seven principalities were *Ningthouja*, *Luwang*, *Khuman*, *Angom*, *Moirang*, *Khaba-Nganba* and *Sarang-Leisangthem*. Again, a long drawn struggle turned out among the seven principalities. But ultimately, *Ningthouja* was able to subdue the rest. Therefore, the kingdom of Manipur was formed due to the amalgamation of many ethnic groups. After their assimilation, the name Meitei became the common nomenclature for all the people living in the valley.⁶ The formation of Meitei state was the result of long continuous conflicts and wars fought among the multi-ethnic groups.⁷ Thus, the confederation of Meitei nation was processed with the social, cultural and political absorption of numerous ethnic groups.

Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was the first historical king of Manipur who ruled in Manipur from 33-154 CE and the capital was at Kangla.⁸ He founded a dynasty which was known as *Ningthouja*, and the progenitor of a clan of the same name which was gradually evolved into the Meitei society, state and nation. With the foundation of the *Ningthouja* dynasty by king Pakhangba the social and political development of the Meiteis took place on the ruling dynasty.⁹ His greatest achievement was the social consolidation of the different ethnic groups under the seven clans. His reign was a strong and steady government in giving peace and harmony. He attended his royal duties and administered justice with such perfection that he was like a god.¹⁰ He was an extra ordinarily gifted ruler. It is stated that at the coronation ceremony of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, the chiefs of the three major clans, Puleiromba of *Angom* clan, Langba Langmiba of *Luwang* clan and Apanba of the *Mangangs* accepted his suzerainty over their clans. In a sense, the selection of Pakhangba as the ruler of the Meitei confederacy and *Ningthouja* dynasty was an instance of popular sanction for a king.¹¹

After the death of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, his son Khuyoi Tompok (154-264 CE) ascended the throne.¹² His reign appears to be an age of several technological developments. He was associated with a number of innovations and popularly known as a ruler who invented the drum.¹³ His greatest achievement was the innovation of the drum which was used during wartime, dance, music and other social and religious events.¹⁴ There is a significant story about the invention of drum. Regarding in this matter, he first used the deer's skin and then it sounded like the voice of a deer, then used the tiger's skin and the tone of voice was like tiger and while the cow's skin was used, the drum emitted the real sound of a drum.¹⁵ The innovation of drum was a symbol of technological development and cultural attainment. *Senbung* was also invented during his reign. Besides these weaving, dying and the printing design are also developed in his reign. He ruled a successful reign of 110 years.¹⁶

Taothing Mang (264-364 CE) was the successor of Khuyoi Tompok.¹⁷ His reign was well known for the great work of draining the marches of Manipur valley and dredging its rivers and streams. His great achievement was the dredging of Imphal and Iril River.¹⁸ The drainage basins of the Imphal and Iril river system covered practically the whole valley of Manipur including the Ningthouja kingdom. In his restoration works, he was ably assisted by his elder brother Yoimongba.¹⁹ R.K. Jhalajit observes that, "If the Manipuri's were to survive, it was of the utmost importance that the marshes should be drained. The problem of draining them was interconnected with that of dredging the rivers, for the water of the marshes had to be let off into the rivers."²⁰ While Taothing Mang was engaged in improving the drainage system, he came across a hill-village called *Lokha Haokha* in the course of his work. He conquered it without much difficulty and realizes tribute from it. However, this is the first contact between the Ningthoujas and hill-men recorded in

Cheitharol Kumbaba. The reigns of Taothing Mang's successors saw the gradual expansion of Ningthouja principality. He was undoubtedly one of the makers of Manipur who reigned a long and successful period of 100 years.²¹

Taothing Mang was succeeded by his son Khui Ningomba (364-379 CE).²² In his reigning period, he continued his father's work of dredging the river and strengthening the embankments of the rivers and stream of the kingdom.²³ Khui Ningomba is credited with the introduction of the worship of *Lal Leima* (goddess of war) in the Manipuri month of *Mera* (October) to strengthen the military power of the kingdom. His queen also participated in the *Mentongba* ceremony performed in the month of *Mera* which was known as *Mera Mentongba*.²⁴ His reign was the period of expansion of Ningthouja kingdom.

Pengsiba (37-394 CE), the son of Khui Ningomba ascended the throne of Kangla. His reign lasted for 15 years. Kaokhangba (394-411 CE) succeeded his father Pengsiba and who ruled 17 years. After Kaokhangba, Naokhamba (411-428 CE) ascended the throne of Kangla.²⁵ Naokhamba's reign of seventeen years was a period of expansion of his kingdom. Besides these, many development works were also constructed. He was represented to have constructed bunds at Yaorei khunpilok in the upper reaches of Imphal River and controlled the thickly forested northern hills of Lairowching (Maram hills). Possibly these bunds were constructed to control floods in the valley. He was a devoted king having worshipped all the gods and goddesses of the Meitei Pantheon.²⁶ Ningthourol Sheireng (an ancient text), illustrates about the introduction of addressing "*Ningthou*" to the ruler was developed during the reign of Naokhamba.²⁷

After Naokhamba, Naophangba ascended the throne in 428 CE. He ruled a long reign of 90 years, viz., from 428-518 CE.²⁸ Naophangba was succeeded by his son Sameirang (518-568 CE). His reign was remarkable for consolidation of Manipur. When the Ningthoujas established their supremacy in Imphal valley, the valley was divided into seven principalities.²⁹ R.K. Jhalajit observes that from the period of Sameirang, the Ningthoujas embarked on the policy of absorbing the principalities of other clans in their kingdom. Cheitharol Kumbaba records that he conquered the *Angoms* and killed the *Angom* chief, Kwakpa Thawanthaba in the battle.³⁰ According to Gangumei Kabui, his reign inaugurated a period of consolidation and extension of the Ningthoujas political power at the cost of other clan principalities.³¹ He introduced the custom of entertaining the nobles and warriors in a feast on the eve of wars.³²

Sameirang was succeeded by his son Urakonhouba in 568 CE. During his period, he tried to avoid hostility among the clans and this is responsible for developing peace and harmony in all the principalities of his kingdom.³³ Gangumei Kabui observes that like his father Sameirang, Urakonhouba also extended his kingdom through matrimonial alliance and military aggrandizement.³⁴ He ruled upto 658 CE. According to R.K. Jhalajit Singh, after his death, the Angom principality overran the Ningthouja kingdom for 5 years.³⁵

After five years Naothingkhong ascended the throne of the Ningthouja in 663 CE.³⁶ His coronation ceremony was held with customary rites and rituals. The dresses were *Leiruthok* (a decorative head dress), *Chariningkham* (a triangular piece of cloth with brocade hanging on the back from the waist), *Phirel Phurit* (a long and loose shirt) and *Leiren Leichao* (ornament of hair). Ch. Manihar points out that these dresses were known as *Naothingkhong Phijet* (dress of Naothingkhong).³⁷ His foreign policy contributed to the consolidation of Meitei kingdom. For the extension of his

political power, he made a number of matrimonial alliances and established cordial relations with other powers. Prior to his accession to the throne, he married Pitanga Liklu Louthibi of *Shelloi Langmai*, *Keirung hangbi* of *Khuman* and *Leima Namun Chaobi* of *Moirang*.³⁸ Cheitharol Kumbaba mentions that during the reign of Naothingkhong, the Pong king Sukanpha's brother Samlung entered Manipur after the conquest of Tripura. But the visit of Samlung denotes the establishment of diplomatic relations with Manipur and the Pongs. Such alliances had strengthened the power of the Meitei kingdom. Moreover, his reign marked the rise of power through the conquest of territories by means of war.³⁹ Ningthourol Lambuba illustrates the event of his conquest of *Mangangs* who were a tribe living in the Loijing hills. After defeating the *Mangang* chief, Naothingkhong assumed the title "*Mangang Ngamba*."⁴⁰ On his way back, he met another group known as *Thanga Kambong*, who were the prosperous communities inhabiting in the west valley of Imphal. Naothingkhong defeated them and collected huge quantities of booties like captives including *Maibas*, *Maibis* (priest and priestesses) wealthy men and women etc.⁴¹ During his reign, the military and administrative system was well organized. According to royal chronicle, he ruled 100 years.⁴²

Naothingkhong was succeeded by his son Khongtekcha (763-773 CE). He ruled a short reign of 10 years. Keirencha (784-799 CE) was the son and successor of Khongtekcha. Keirencha was succeeded by his son Yaraba (799-821 CE) and Yaraba was succeeded by his son Ayangba (821-910 CE). Ayangba was succeeded by Ningthoucheng (910-949 CE), and Chenglei Ipan Lanthaba (949-969 CE) was the successor of Ningthoucheng and Keiphaba succeeded his father Chenglei Ipan Lanthaba (969-984 CE).⁴³ The original name of *Keiphaba* was Khamlang Atonba and about the assuming of his title was a very noteworthy. It is said that, one of his servant

was assault by a *kei* (tiger), but he saved his servant by caught the *kei* (tiger). Thereafter, his name was popular as *Keiphaba*. His reign was remarkable for the introduction of embroidery work at the border of *phanek* (Manipuri women's lower garment).⁴⁴ Keiphaba was succeeded by his son Irengba (984-1074 CE). During his reign, the Moirangs were invaded by an expeditionary force of the Ningthoujas and a battle was fought at Ithai Panam Ching. But the Moirangs were defeated. He ruled a long period of 90 years.⁴⁵

Loiyamba (1074-1122 CE) was the successor of Irengba. His reign was an important period in the history of Manipur. With the accession of Loiyamba to the throne, a historical evidence to reconstruct the history of Manipur was begun in the 12th century CE. *Loiyamba Shilyen* (the royal edict), which is an important historical document for the reconstruction of the social and economic history of Manipur was constructed after the name of the king. In the consolidation of his kingdom, Loiyamba was engaged in a number of expeditions. Along with the military consolidation of the kingdom, he introduced administrative reforms.⁴⁶ For the improvement of his administration he divided the valley into six circles (*lups*). Each circle was called a *pana*— a term which was destined to survive for centuries. Each pana sent a team of workers who were to work for the state. Each team was called a lallup. Areas comprised in the circles or *panas* were changed by subsequent kings.⁴⁷ The *lallup* system was in existence in the centuries preceding Loiyamba's rule. After a successful reign of 48 years, he died in 1122 CE. He played a major role in the development of Manipur as a successful kingdom.⁴⁸

The successor of Loiyamba was Loitongba who ruled from 1122-1150 CE.⁴⁹ His reign of 28 years was marked by the development of cultural activities. During his reign, the Manipuri indoor game so called *Kang* was introduced.⁵⁰ His next successor

was Atom Yoiremba (1150-1163CE). During his reign of thirteen years his younger brother Iwanthaba raised rebellion and drove out him. Therefore, in the history of Manipur, his reign was the first time that a brother raising arms against a reigning brother. Atom Yoiremba had not been regained his kingdom. Iwanthaba (1163-1195 CE) reigned for 32 years.⁵¹ Thawanthaba (1195-1231 CE) was the son and successor of Iwanthaba. The reign of Thawanthaba is memorable for further consolidation of Manipur. He reigned 36 years.⁵² His next successor was his son Chingthang Lanthaba (1231-1242 CE). He was succeeded by Thingbai Shelongba (1242-1247 CE). Thingbai Shelongba was succeeded by Puranthaba (1247-1263 CE). Khumomba (1263-1278 CE) succeeded his brother Puranthaba. He reigned for 15 years. His next successor was Moiramba (1278-1302 CE). He was succeeded by Thangbi Lanthaba (1302-1324 CE). He died in 1324 CE after a successful reign of 22 years; Thangbi Lanthaba was succeeded by his son Kongyamba (1324-1335 CE). The reign of Kongyamba, may be noted as it saw the first invasion of Manipur from the west. His next successor was Telheiba (1335-1355 CE). Telheiba was succeeded by Tonaba (1355-1359 CE). Tonaba was succeeded by Tabungba (1359-1394 CE).⁵³ His next successor was his son Lairenba (1394-1399 CE) and he died without any heir. Therefore, there was an interregnum for 5 years. But, the interregnum came to an end in 1404 CE when Punshiba, younger brother of Lairenba came to the throne in 1404 CE.⁵⁴ He ruled 28 years. After a successful reign of 28 years, Punshiba died in the year 1432 CE.⁵⁵

After the dead of Punshiba, his son Ningthou Khomba (1432-1467 CE) ascended the throne. During his reign, he determined to expand the territorial limits of the Ningthouja kingdom by following a policy of aggression and conquered the many neighbouring areas.⁵⁶ In his Moirang expedition, he was assisted by seven nobles. In

1443 CE, the king went in a military expedition to a village called Akla. While, the king was away on his expedition to Akla, the Tangkhuls of the north-eastern hills, led by their chief, launched a massive attack against the capital. They wanted to take advantage in the absence of the king. But the queen Linthoi Ngambi was quick to rise to the occasion.⁵⁷ She put on the king's costume and every effort was made to look like her husband. Taking the airs of the king, she questioned the Tangkhul raiders, why they did not render help to the king in the Akla expedition. When they saw the king, the raiders became strained and reported that they came to have an audience with the king.⁵⁸ The queen entertained them with wine, mixed with tobacco leaves. Then, all the drunken raiders were captivated and tied at the poles of the granary and their chief Hen Puringba was captured.⁵⁹ Linthoingambi was described as the captor of Puringba. She conquered the Tangkhul villages of Sunaching, Mongba Hiyanglam, Kharam and Kabui Yangla. These are the incredible military exploits of the queen which are referred in Ningthourol Lambuba.⁶⁰ Ningthoukhomba's successful rule attracted immigrants from the east and west. During his reign, Kabaw Shans were also settled in Manipur valley and they married with Meitei women and ultimately they were also absorbed in the Meitei society. Ningthoukhomba died in 1467 CE after a successful reign of 35 years, He left Manipur as a well consolidated kingdom.⁶¹

Ningthoukhomba was succeeded by his son Kyamba (1467-1508 CE). His earlier name was Thangwai Ningthouba. Like his father, he expanded his successful military power.⁶² Therefore, the middle part of the 15th century CE was important in the history of Manipur because of the strength of the Meitei state in the military aggrandizement and territorial expansionism. The whole valley of Manipur was under the rule of the Ningthouja principality, excluding the autonomous principality of Moirang. The new king's fame and power were spread beyond the confines of his

mountain kingdom whose capital was located in the heart of the valley of Manipur. Due to the high respect for Manipur's power and influence, the king of the Shan kingdom of Pong proposed the king of Manipur Thangwai Ningthouba to participate in a joint military expedition at Kyang, a Shan principality in the Kabaw valley.⁶³ Kyamba made alliance with Pong king Chaopha Khekhomba and the allied forces invaded Kyang Kambat and conquered the territory.⁶⁴ Hence, after their successful expedition Thangwai Ningthouba assumed the title Kyamba which means the conqueror of Kyang.⁶⁵ Then, the two kings concluded a treaty of friendship which fixed the boundary between Manipur and Pong.⁶⁶ According to their treaty, the territory of Manipur was extended to the Mungkhong Mungyang in the northern side, in the east upto the Loijiri hills and to the southern side upto the hill called Muya or Miyatong. Regarding the territory of Samjok, the eastern section was intended for Pong and the western section was for Manipur. The major portion of Kabaw valley was annexed to Manipur.⁶⁷ It was the first treaty signed between Manipur and a foreign sovereign which was recorded in the royal chronicle. This was the international recognition of the kingdom of the Meiteis by a power in upper Burma.⁶⁸ In fact, it was the policy of king Kyamba that he can able to keep good relation with the neighbouring countries.⁶⁹ Thus, he strengthened the power of the Meitei kingdom. Being a great conqueror, his kingdom was extended in the west and the east. Manipur had made a power to be reckoned with by the Shan states in upper Burma.⁷⁰ Kyamba was not only a great conqueror but also a good administrator. He established two revenue or administrative districts or circles known as *Ahallup* and *Naharup panas* by appointing two persons as supervisors or *lakpas* of the *panas*.⁷¹ According to royal chronicle, king Loiyamba established six administrative circles in the early part of the 12th century CE. But, it is said that during the reign of king Kyamba, he modified the

pana system to suit the needs of his time. Therefore the *Ahallup* and *Naharup panas* established by Kyamba clearly contradict the claim made by several scholars that Nongda Lairen Pakhangba established the four *panas*.⁷²

The greatest contributions of Kyamba to the cultural tradition of Manipur was the introduction of the keeping of royal chronicle known as *Cheitharol Kumbaba* (counting of years according to *Cheithaba*) from the year 1485 CE. He also started the system of *Cheithaba* (*Chei* = stick, *Thaba* = Giving up) which was the foundation of the Meitei calendar. *Cheithaba* was developed into *Cheitharol Kumbaba*.⁷³ For the improvement of the Meitei calendar and the chronicle of the state, Kyamba took the advice of seven scholars in preparing two books, the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* and *Leithak Leikharol*, a compendium of myths, tradition and genealogies of the Meities. In Meitei society, *Cheiraoba* was the festival marking the end of the year which was announced by shouting to the people that the year had ended. *Cheiraoba* became a very important indigenous festival of the Meities.⁷⁴

Another important achievement of Kyamba's reign was the beginning of Brahmins immigrants in Manipur and their migration was recorded in a Manipuri text called *Bamon Khunthoklon* (the migration of the Brahmins). The Brahmin families who were the ancestors of the later Manipuri Brahmins came to Manipur during Kyamba's reign.⁷⁵ *Bamon Khunthoklon* records the names of the Brahmin families like *Adhikarimayum*, *Sija Guru Mayum*, *Leihaothaobam*, *Takhurchangbam*, and *Phurailatpam* came during his reign. Often, they played a major role in the socio-cultural and religious life of the Meites.⁷⁶ R.K. Jhalajit Singh observes that "The arrival of the Brahmins enriched the cultural life of the kingdom. The Brahmins brought with them knowledge of Sanskrit and some scriptures and astrology". The influence of Sanskrit on the literature of Manipur can be increasingly felt from the

reign of king Kyamba. Therefore, the arrival and permanent settlement of Brahmins continued up to the close of the 19th century CE.⁷⁷

In the history of Manipur, Kyamba's reign was a great landmark for the beginning of Vishnu worship. In fact, the beginning of Vishnu worship is associated with the political relation of Manipur and Pong kingdom. It is said that King Kyamba and Chaopha Khekhomba in their joint successful expedition over Kyang and they exchanged presents as a part of the celebration of victory.⁷⁸ But, one of the presents received from the king of Pong was a small stone image of Vishnu. After that, king Kyamba began to worship Vishnu. It is further believed that king Kyamba constructed a Vishnu temple at Bishenpur which was the capital of the kingdom for a short time.⁷⁹ P. Gunindro points out that before the installation of Vishnu, the temple was known as *Ngangom Phura*.⁸⁰ It is believed that this temple was constructed by Ngangom Chingsomba and dedicated to God in the reign of Kyamba. After that Vishnu was installed in the temple of Ngangom and the beginning of the worship of Vishnu began in Manipur. The lineage of the Brahmins who were looked after the temple came to be known as "*Phurailatpam*". Even though, the beginning of the worship of Vishnu by Brahmins, perhaps patronized by the king himself but there is no evidence to show that the king was converted into Hinduism. He was the follower of traditional religion. After a successful reign of forty years, he died in 1508 CE at the age of sixty four.⁸¹

Kyamba's successor was Koiremba (1508-1512 CE). His reign of four years was marked as a continuous conflict with the chief of *Angom* clan Loijangamba who was a noble in his court. The daughter of *Angom* chief was married to Koiremba.⁸² During a royal boat race, Koiremba insulted his young queen. The *Angom* chief was offended but kept quiet; he organized a feast for his clansmen at Langrei-pung. King

Koiremba does not allow Loijangamba to attend the royal court. The chronicle says that the *Angoms* were assassinated and Angom chief Loijangamba was killed.⁸³

Koiremba was succeeded by his brother Lam Kyamba (1512-1523 CE). In his reign, he tried to reassert the Ningthouja hegemony over the rural areas.⁸⁴ Loitang village was defeated in 1514 CE and Araichampra in 1518 CE. Sinkhong and Sairem were conquered in 1520 CE and 1522 CE respectively. He constructed a royal palatial building at kangla. According to Ningthourol Lambuba, he was entitled Senbi Tumu Nganba Huyel Thoumalphaba to commemorate his conquest of Tumu.⁸⁵

After the death of Lamkyamba, his minor son, Nong-in-Phaba ascended the throne at the age of six in 1523 CE. It was difficult for the minor king and his mother, the dowager queen to carry on the administration.⁸⁶ Therefore, for the successful and better administration, the queen dowager married to *Angom* chief Kyamba and he was the paramour of the queen dowager. The *Angom* chief Kyamba became very arrogant and started wearing “egret feathers dyed red with lac.” But, Queen Changning Phabi opposed him that it was not the custom of the *Angoms*, it was restrained for the *Ningthoujas*. Then the *Angom* chief felt insulted and killed both the mother and the son in the same year of succession to the throne. Nong-in-Phaba did not get to perform his coronation ceremony.⁸⁷

After Nong-in-Phaba, Kabomba ascended the throne in 1524 CE and ruled for 18 years. During his reigning period, he defeated the Tripuris and Kabaw Shans in 1533 and 1542 CE respectively. The royal chronicle records that, *Takhen Khong* (Tripura canal) was digging in the year 1533 CE to mark the victory over the Tripuris. For the first time in Manipur, his reign marked as the development of contact between Manipur and Ahom kingdom, known to the Meitei as Tekhao.⁸⁸ Therefore, many new

trade routes from Manipur to upper Assam were opened in the year 1536 CE. The opening of the new road to Assam facilitated cultural contact with Assam.⁸⁹ The Ahom chronicles records that “envoys were sent to the Raja of Manipur and presents were exchanged.”⁹⁰ Thus, the matrimonial relation was developed between Manipur and Assam. His reign is also marked as the development of trade and commerce and many migrants entered to this land in successive periods after the opening of this new road. Hence, Manipur began to keep contact with the neighbouring states.⁹¹

Kabomba was succeeded by his son Tangjamba in (1542-1545 CE). Tangjamba was then succeeded by Chalamba in 1545 CE.⁹² During his reign, he excavated a canal known as *Leisangkhang* in 1555 CE. He died in 1562 CE at the age of forty eight. His reign was also marked as a migration of Brahmins from the west and the beginning of their settlement in Manipur. Besides the Brahmins, some *Kshatriyas* were also came and settled in the valley of Manipur and gradually absorbed into Meitei culture. The descendants of the Kshatriyas who came in this period are now popularly known as the *Kshetrimayums*. They also adopted Manipuri as their mother tongue.⁹³

Chalamba was succeeded by his son Mungyamba and ascended the throne in 1562 CE. His original name was Thangwai Ningthem kyamba. The chronicle refers to the repeated military expeditions of Mungyamba into Kabaw valley during his long reign.⁹⁴ In 1565 CE, he attacked Mungyang, a principality lies near the Kabaw valley. After his conquest of Mungyang, he assumed the title “Mungyamba Mangsangamba”. Khamran was fixed as the boundary between Manipur and Shan states. Samjok and the Kabaw Shans were conquered in 1571 CE and 1572 CE respectively.⁹⁵ The royal chronicle records the successful military achievement of Mungyamba. In his military expedition towards the tribal villages, he raided *Lamhang* village and captured several

cultivators who were settled in the valley. He captured *Maram* chief Tamnrong, *Thangal* chief Sarangpung, *Lamhang* chief Korilong. In his expedition of south-eastern hills, he defeated *Tosen* village and raided the *Chakpa* village of *Chirong Kharopi* and captured its chief, *Marong*. During his expedition, he brought his son Khagemba to give field training in warfare.⁹⁶

Mungyamba's military expedition in the eastern hills and Kabaw valley, his wife Kainou Chingpombi also played a major role. Her exploits remind us of the similar adventures of warrior queen Linthoingambi. The Meitei kingdom had expanded their political suzerainty over Manipur valley and the surrounding hill region.⁹⁷ According to Kaomacha, the king maintained well efficient administration and there was no evidence of any offense in his reign.⁹⁸

During his reigning period, many departments were established. He established *Ametpa Loisang* (the department of medical), the queen was the head of the department.⁹⁹ Many granaries or state godowns were also established to store food grains. These granaries were known as *Kei*. Such *Keis* were established at several places including Mongsangkei and Chajing. The state would distribute the food grains to the needy people during famine or lean seasons. The communication system was also developed as many roads were also constructed during his reign. Manipur remained an independent and powerful kingdom during the second half of the sixteenth century till the death of Mungyamba in 1597 CE.¹⁰⁰

The royal chronicle shows a clear picture of traditional Meitei society in the second half of the sixteenth century. As a custom of traditional religion, the practice of *Utrong Hongba*, the celebration of the death anniversary was practice in his reign. This ceremony was celebrated by Mungyamba in honour of his father Chalamba. The

queen of Mungyamba died of an injury fallen from a wooden bridge at Mongsangei. Considering it as an unnatural death, the king performed *Shangkhu* ceremony which was later on known as the *Chup Shaba* (oath taking between the dead and the living). In his reign, the community feast was popular among the different social groups, clans and priests. The king was also participated in such occasions. On such occasions, commodities and animals were distributed among the participants. Boat race became an annual festive occasion where the king and his nobles participated. The Cheitharol kumbaba records the introduction of wax coated shirts to avoid rain. Silver crowns were also adopted during his reign.¹⁰¹

After Mungyamba, the next successor was Khagemba (1597-1652 CE). He was the most illustrious ruler whose reign was a significant epoch in the history of Meitei kingdom. His original name was Meidingu Sana Hihouhan Poirei Ningthouhanba.¹⁰² Ningthourol Lambuba stated that he assumed the name Khagemba from the event of his victory over Choupha Hongdei, chief of Khagi. Thus, he came to be known as *Khagingamba* or victor of China.¹⁰³ King Mungyamba's strong and aggrandizement policy was continued by his son Khagemba. After ascending the throne, Khagemba conquered Kabaw valley and many Shan principalities were annexed into the territory of Manipur. The major principality of Kyang was invaded by Khagemba in 1602 CE. Then, he invaded Samsok in 1607 CE. In 1628 CE, he raided the Shan principality and took booty of cattle and buffalo. His last raid to Samjok was in 1649 CE.¹⁰⁴ As a result of this annexation, Manipur had developed cultural contact with Kabaw valley. Many Shan immigrants from Kabaw valley entering into Manipur and they were gradually absorbed into the social fold of the Meiteis.¹⁰⁵

The royal chronicle reveals about the invasion of Manipur by a combined force of the Kachari and Muslim mercenaries. The invasion was a miserable minute incident at the royal palace of Manipur. Khagemba had two brothers, Chingsomba and Sanongba. There was a boat race in which his brother Chingsomba borrowed the boat of Sanongba which was broken due to collision during the boat race but Sanongba wanted the original boat. In their internal conflict, Khagemba hold up in favour of Chingsomba.¹⁰⁶ Then, Sanongba fled to Cachar along with his mother queen dowager Luwang Changbambi. He approached the Kachari king to invade Manipur and restore him to the throne of Manipur.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, the Kachari king (Sapradas Narayan) sent his general Yakharek and Bhimbal with a Kachari force in 1604 CE. In the battle field, the Meitei forces were defeated and they retreated towards the capital. Subsequently Khagemba summoned all the palace nobles and appealed them to repulse the Kachari forces. Due to the advice of palace nobles, the Meitei forces made a surprise counter attack and defeated the Kachari forces. Yakharek surrendered to Khagemba and they became allies with the king of Manipur.¹⁰⁸

After the incident, the Kachari king organized a plan to invade Manipur. Therefore he engaged a leader of the Muslim mercenaries from Habigunj in eastern Bengal. Besides these king deputed other invading forces under the command of Yakharek, Bhimbal and Prasena. The joint forces of Kachari and Muslim invaded Manipur in 1606 CE. But the joint forces were totally defeated by king Khagemba and his brother Chingsomba.¹⁰⁹ After this invasion, the impact of Muslim civilization was felt in Manipur. The Muslims prisoners were begun to settle in Manipur.¹¹⁰ Cheitharol Kumbaba mentioned about the many Muslim captives and the establishment of a department of Muslims. Another event of Khagemba's reign was

the invasion of Tripuris by several times in 1603CE and 1634 CE respectively. But, they were defeated by the Meitei king.¹¹¹

The consolidation of hill tribes was also one of the great achievements of king Khagemba. He made military campaigns against the hill tribes in order to strengthen his authority among the hill people. From 1598 to 1646 CE, Khagemba captured many hill areas, such as, *Maring* village, *Mayang Khang* and *Tarang, Thangal, Maring Khudei Kangoi, Maring Yaoton, Machi, Kharam, Laipan, Tonpung, Tompi,* and *Monthei*, etc. The hill tribes were brought under his political control. After that, the political boundary of Manipur had extended from the Gwai (Barak) to the Chindwin and Maram hills to Tuivai.¹¹² Thus, the long reign of fifty years, Khagemba successfully consolidated his kingdom from the several foreign invaders like, the Shans of Kabaw valley, Muslims, Kacharis and the Tripuris. He strengthened the internal political control over the hill tribes by frequent military expeditions in the hill areas of the kingdom.¹¹³

Khagemba was not only a great conqueror but also an innovative administrator. The socio-political and administrative systems of the Meiteis were developed. Besides these, the religious system was also grown up fully.¹¹⁴ He was the first king who celebrated the state functions with processions on palanquins. He organized royal tour programmes to the hill villages with courtiers and officials. It recognized the status and dignity of the officials and nobles.¹¹⁵ For the enhanced administration of the kingdom, the capital city was divided into four quarters, the *Yaiskul* under *Yaiskullakpa*, *Khwai* under *Khwairakpa*, *khurai* under *Khurailakpa* and *Wangkhei* under *Wangkheilakpa*. The princes were usually appointed to be the *lakpas* (head of administration) of these four quarters. Besides this, many departments or *Loisangs* were also reorganized by Khagemba, namely *Shamu Shang*, to look after the

increasing fleet of royal elephants, *Sagol Shang*, for the maintenance of the state horses. Many war captives were employed to look after the elephants and horses. The *Lanmi Yareksang* (quarter guard of the army), *Dolai Puba Loisang* (department of Palanquin riders), *Mayang Hishaba Loisang* (department of boat makers), *Pangan Shanglen* (department of Muslim), *Shinga Khongbi Loisang* (department of musician), *Pangan Phundery* (Muslim Turner), etc. His reign also marked the use of firearms, gun-powder and gun.¹¹⁶ The king established state granaries in different parts of the state to store food grains in order to meet the requirements of the people during famine, drought or other calamities. The granary was known as *Kei*. Khagemba's reign was marked by great agricultural development. The king himself was a great patron of agriculture. With the conquest of Kabaw valley, the natural resources of the kingdom had greatly increased. But in the 17th century CE, the valley of Manipur was a swampy area which required constant draining of the water from the marshes to the river systems.¹¹⁷ Khagemba took interest in providing irrigation facilities to the people. Rivers and streams were dredged and many canals were dug, such as, *Kyang Khong* (canal of Kyang), *Takhen Khong* (canal of Tripura), etc. Many bunds were constructed to control the flood. The revenue system was systematized with the improvement of agricultural production. The revenue department was put under the control of the *Lourungpurel Achouba* who supervised the work of *Pana Puren* and *Lourungba Macha*.¹¹⁸

In the reign of Khagemba, transportation and communication system were improved. Many roads, canals and bridges were constructed.¹¹⁹ He took great responsibility to establish ten bazaars. Therefore, in 1614 CE, Khagemba established ten markets namely, *Sana keithel*, *Kha keithel*, *Moirang keithel*, *Khuman keithel*, *Phaibung keithel*, *Chairen keithel*, *Awang keithel*, *Namphaon keithel*, *Konton keithel*

and *Andro keithel*.¹²⁰ These markets greatly facilitated the selling and buying of the commodities which were produced with surplus. Thus, Manipur developed her trade with neighbouring countries including Burma and China. Khagemba took initiative in establishing villages of *Wangoo*, *Nungyu*, *Sugnu*, *Langthabal*, *Pallel* and *Pumei* village of *Haochong*.¹²¹

The reign of Khagemba was marked by a number of technological changes. Brick making was attributed to the reign of Khagemba. It is said that brick making was learnt from the Chinese. The Chinese name of brick was “*chek*” which was included in Meitei vocabulary. He introduced bell metal currency in the kingdom. Housing technology was further improved during his reign. The houses of Manipur were built of wood, bamboo and thatches. The royal chronicle refers to the construction of temples for the gods and deities. Decoration on the eaves of the temples and royal house known as *Moimit Yuba* was introduced.¹²² During his reign, the pluralistic foundation of Manipuri society was further strengthened. After the Kachari-Muslim invasion of 1606 CE, many Muslims began to settle in Manipur and a separate Muslim department was also formed. Many immigrant groups, such as, Shans and the Brahmins began to migrate in Manipur and they were also gradually absorbed with the Meitei society.¹²³ The contact with the Muslims led to the introduction of tobacco smoking and pipe smoking in Manipur.¹²⁴

R.K. Jhalajit Singh quoted that “in Khagemba’s reign, the Manipuri literature came out of the rut into which it had fallen in a previous period and reached new heights. The golden age of Manipuri literature is in the future, not in the past. But the time of Khagemba like a few other times, shines brilliantly in the long and chequered history of Manipuri literature.”¹²⁵ The royal chronicle records that reading was introduced by Khagemba. Books were already in manuscripts which were the

monopoly of the scholars and royal scribes.¹²⁶ In his reign, the king was honoured with the etiquette of *khurumba* (bowed down) and addressing him as *Lainingthou* (Divine king). Thus, the divine nature of kingship was assigned to the Meitei king whose power and position rose high. Moreover, the concept of the Divine Origin of Meitei kingship was popularized. His power had extended and strengthened the power of the kingdom. Therefore, Khagemba's reign was one of the most radiant epochs in the history of Manipur.¹²⁷

Khunjaoba (1652-1666 CE) was the son and successor of king Khagemba. In his reigning period, he tried to improve the fortification and embossing works of the Kangla fort. He constructed two bunds, dug a moat before the brick wall in front of the Kangla palace and dredged Nambul river in 1665 CE.¹²⁸ In his reign, many tribal villages were consolidated under his kingdom. In 1652 CE, he raided *Machou*, *Yangoi*, *Mayangkhang* and *Karou*. Then, he annexed the Tangkhul and Kabui villages in 1653 and 1654 CE respectively. Again, he raided the villages of *Karong*, *Ngaikhong*, *Sarang*, *Phungbang*, *Wakching*, *Lengkhu*, *Lengeng Andro* and *Yairipok* in 1655 CE. In his reign, a group of kacharis migrated to Manipur, coming from Maibong of North Cachar hills. Thus, Manipur began to keep contact with Assam. Khunjaoba died issueless in 1666 CE, but the adopted son Paikhomba, became the successor.¹²⁹

Paikhomba (1666-1697 CE) was the successor of Khunjaoba. His original name was Poireikhunkhomba but he assumed the name Paikhomba, after he defeated the village of Paikhu Lamnungshi. During his reign, the military expeditions were expanded to the hill villages. The objective of the military expedition was probably to collect tributes from the villages.¹³⁰ The royal chronicle of Manipur, Cheitharol Kumbaba records that the king raided *Nungkon* in 1667 CE, *Tousen* in 1669 CE,

Khanpok in 1671 CE. In his *Samsok* expedition of 1692 CE, he captured fifteen prisoners and seized swords, guns, horses.¹³¹ Again in 1693 CE, an expedition was sent to gather paddy from *Samsok* and kept at the royal granary at Mangsha.¹³² The Burmese and the Tripuris made an attempt to invade Manipur in 1692 and 1696 CE respectively, but they were defeated by king Paikhomba and sixteen Tripuri prisoners were captured.¹³³ Therefore, the kingdom of Manipur was widely extended during his reign. The king was personally involved in development works. King Paikhomba took significant measures for the increasing of the production of growth. As a result, a large tract of swampy land covered by jungles and grasses was brought under cultivation.¹³⁴ The communication through the rivers by means of boat by dredging the river was maintained. In 1675 CE, he improved the road from Chinga to Phungsanrei. The Nambul river was dredged in 1680 CE. He took great initiatives in constructing many river bunds to prevent floods.¹³⁵

During his reign, the administrative activities were greatly increased. The four administrative divisions (*panas*) namely *Ahallup*, *Naharup*, *Laipham* and *Khabam* were given administrative responsibility. The *Ahallup* and *Naharup panas* were entrusted to carry out military expeditions. The chronicle records the improvement of trade between Manipur and the neighboring kingdoms like Tripura, Assam and Burma. The objects of such trade were mostly elephants and horses. There might have been other items of trade but they are not recorded in the royal chronicle. With the development of trade and commerce among these countries formulated the improvement of the movement of people. He continued to follow a liberal social policy which was reflected in the matrimonial alliance with the neighbouring kingdoms. After a long reign of thirty two years, Paikhomba died in 1697 CE at the age of fifty three¹³⁶

After the death of Paikhomba, Charairongba (1697-1709 CE), ascended the throne at the age of 25. He reigned for thirteen years. But, his short reign was marked as a transition period from the traditional to Hinduised Meitei society.¹³⁷ His reign was comparatively peaceful from the military point of view. The military expedition was confined to minor raids on a number of tribal villages in the surrounding hill areas. The royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumbaba* records his expeditions to *Mungba, Sakang, Lamkang, Masem, Pellan, Murao, Sugnu, Anal, Satpam, Tingtou, Purum, Tusuk, Maram, Chothe, Nungtek, Nungsai, Loutai, Sangpum* and *Thangwan* villages. Charairongba was a sensible king whose attitude towards the hill tribes was a combination of military might and friendship. In 1700 CE, he organized a big festival where the hill chiefs from the eastern hills were invited to make friendship with all the nobles of his court.¹³⁸

The king was involved in the development activities for the efficient administration of the kingdom. He inscribed the administrative decrees and edicts on stone at prominent public places like the temple.¹³⁹ Manipur had regular contact with the Burmese and Shans since the conquest of Kabaw valley in the 15th century CE and the Kabaws or the Kathe Shans of the valley were the subjects of the kingdom of Manipur. His reign was particularly remarkable for matrimonial relation with Burma, as his own daughter was given in marriage to Ava king in 1702 CE.¹⁴⁰ This resulted into constant trade contact between Manipur and Burma. Due to this development, numerous Burmese artisans were brought and engaged in the construction of several temples dedicated to gods and goddesses of the Meitei and Hindu religions. The Burmese word for temple was '*Kyoung*' and it was adopted to mean the temple structures. In Manipur, the employment of many Burmese artisans is considerable as the beginning to use brick and mortar for the construction of dwelling houses but

generally, for the purpose of construction, the Meiteis mostly used thatch, wood and bamboo. There are allusions to royal dwelling houses of three storied and temples which were the influence of Burmese architecture.¹⁴¹

During the reign of king Charairongba, Manipur had developed close contact with the neighboring states like Tripura, Assam and Burma. In the beginning, there was a fight between the Meiteis and the Tripuris in 1696 CE, but after three years in 1699 CE, they entered into alliance with the Manipuris. Then, he further moved towards the land of Ahoms and occupied it. After that, he assumed the title “*Tekhao Ngamba*” which means the conqueror of the Ahoms. This is followed by the development of close contact between Manipuri and the Ahoms. Then, he extended cordial relation with hill tribes.¹⁴² During his reign, many departments (*loisang*) were established viz, *Haomacha Loisang* (for his son Pamheiba and other hill people), and *Shangai Senba* (maintenance of royal household). Crimes were very limited because of his severe punishment.¹⁴³

The reign of Charairongba is regarded not only in the development of political relation with neighbouring states but also developed their cultural contact.¹⁴⁴ Due to the regular flow of Brahmin immigrants to Manipur, they occupied a leading position in the society. They played a significant role in the administrative and religious affairs especially in the performance of rites and rituals. Thus, they started to wield Sanskrit influence on Manipur’s court of life.¹⁴⁵ After that, the Brahmins also began to build images of Hindu deities. The visiting Brahmins used to get acquaintance with the king or the queen or other members of the royal family. The fact is that the migration of Brahmins and Hindu ascetics to Manipur at different periods recorded in royal chronicle shows that the Brahmins were well received by the king.¹⁴⁶ Charairongba was the first king of Manipur who was formally initiated to

Vaishnavism by a Brahmin named Krishnacharya in 1704 CE. Therefore, the period of Charairongba constituted a landmark in the history of Hinduism in Manipur. The school of Vaishnavism, where the king baptized was the worship of Lord Krishna as the main philosophy that was preached by the followers of Nimbarka School (Nimandi cult). He was the first Hindu king of Manipur; having adopted the Sanskrit name of Pitambar Singh.¹⁴⁷

According to the royal chronicle of Manipur, Cheitharol Kumbaba, Charairongba constructed several temples for the indigenous Meitei deities like goddess *Panthoibi*, *Sanamahi* and others. He also cast a bronze statue of *Panthoibi*. In another instance, a bronze statue of *Sanamahi* was also made.¹⁴⁸ After his conversion into Nimandi cult, the king was deeply involved in the popularization of Krishna. Therefore, he constructed a Krishna temple in 1707 CE which is still in good shape at Brahmapur Guru Aribam leikai, a Brahmin locality at Imphal.¹⁴⁹ In spite of being a devout Hindu, he continued to look after the gods and goddesses of the Meitei traditional cult. After a successful reign of 13 years, he died at the age of 37.¹⁵⁰ The reign of Charairongba is a turning point in the history of Manipur. Manipur's contact with India became greatly strengthened after his conversion into Vaishnavism. Hence, the reign of Charairongba is the narrow ridge of an important historical watershed.¹⁵¹

Charairongba was succeeded by his son Pamheiba (1709-1748 CE).¹⁵² He assumed the title Garibniwaza meaning "kind to the poor" which was given by Muslim immigrants. This title was used in the coins issued by him. Though, in some coins issued after conversion to Hinduism, he was described as *Mekleswar* or *Manipureswar*.¹⁵³ His reign was politically demonstrated as one of the most successful period in the history of Manipur.¹⁵⁴ The military expeditions were divided into three phases: the first phase was towards the hill tribes for internal consolidation

in between 1710-17 CE, the second was the wars against Burma 1728-33 CE, and in the final war against Tripura in 1745-48 CE. In his first expedition in 1710 CE, he raided Oklu village in the east of Chakpi River. In 1712 CE, he conquered Nungan Mashet village. The hill areas namely, Tokpa, Naongphow the Tangkhuls, Anals, Mahou, Maring, Taraos, and Moyan etc. were imposed upon the Meitei political suzerainty. The consolidation of these villages was a great landmark in the establishment of the Meitei political hegemony.¹⁵⁵

The last years of Garibniwaza reign, was also engaged in the affairs of the hill tribes. The significant feature of his reign was the control over the hill tribes and had political support from them. He also introduced some changes in the administration of the hill areas. In the previous reigns, the chronicles refer to the headmen of the tribal villages as chiefs (*Ningthou*). Manipur from the period of king Garibniwaza, the village chiefs were known as '*Khullakpa*' (administrator of the villages). Hence, it is evident that Garibniwaza introduced the post of *Khullakpas* of several villages. Garibniwaza was the greatest conqueror and military leader that Manipur ever produced.¹⁵⁶

However, the glorious reign of king Garibniwaza concurred with the declining days of the Toongoo dynasty of Burma. He was the contemporary of the last two kings of the Toongoo dynasty, Tanninganwe (1714-1733 CE) and Mahadhamma Yaza Dipati (1733-1752 CE). Garibniwaza's repeated invasions of Burma demonstrated the military might and gave a death blow to the Toongoo dynasty. The war with Burma was fought over three decades (1717-1748 CE).¹⁵⁷ The royal chronicle Cheitharol Kumbaba records several military expeditions to the Shan principalities in Kabaw by Garibniwaza. At the time of his accession the tributary Shan rulers of the valley were greatly disaffected due to Manipur-Ava tension. Perhaps the king of Manipur was

encouraging the Shan rulers to driven away the Burmese suzerainty. Among the Shan principalities, Samjok was the biggest and most powerful. The royal chronicle records his seven military expeditions against Samjok in 1717, 1718, 1720, 1722, 1737 and 1748 CE respectively.¹⁵⁸

In the meantime, Burma secretly made an alliance with Tripura to invade Manipur. As a plan of their join military expedition, the Tripuri forces invaded in the south west of Manipur under the command of Chatrajit Narayan. Meanwhile, Garibniwaz sent his commander to check the Tripuri invaders to the south of Moirang. Negotiation for a peace settlement was started while conducting the military campaign against Burma in the south eastern front.¹⁵⁹ But the Tripuri commander refused for negotiation. The forces of Manipur easily defeated the Burmese troops at the battle of Wangjing. Then the Tripuri forces were also defeated by king Garibniwaz and driven out of Manipur. But finally in the year 1733 CE, Tripura was invaded by king Garibniwaza.¹⁶⁰

Garibniwaza was the most successful conqueror in the history of Manipur. The success of Manipur in the wars against Burma and Tripura was due to a number of reasons. Garibniwaza and his number of predecessors had build up a strong state system based on a sound economy coupled with sufficient natural resources in Manipur and Kabaw valleys. The hill tribes gave a strong support to him. The most important factor was the well organized military organization. Manipur did not have a standing army but she was a nation at arms.¹⁶¹ With a sound economic background and a stable government, the militia was well organized through the *Lallup*. The proper administrative system of the kingdom was carried through the centuries. His court was greatly influenced by the Brahmin priests who were well knowledge about the military, administrative, religious and social.¹⁶² He was a great administrator and

successfully systematized the administrative system of the kingdom. In the court, he introduced the Hindu system of ministers known as *Mantrins*.¹⁶³

Garibniwaz was not only a great conqueror but also a good administrator. During his reign, Manipur had close contact with Assam, Pong and Cachar. Garibniwaz was also a great religious reformer of Manipur. Since the 15th century CE, Manipur had already come into contact with Hinduism in the form of the worship of Vishnu.¹⁶⁴ But the complete form of Hinduism was developed in Manipur in the 18th century CE during his reign. Therefore, his reign of forty years was marked the zenith of Manipur in all aspects viz, religious reform, military conquest, cultural and literary achievement and a sound economy. The reign of Garibniwaz was a very creative epoch in Manipur's history.¹⁶⁵ According to Gangumei Kabui, Garibniwaz was the greatest king and most successful conquer in the history of Manipur.¹⁶⁶ Jyotirmoy Roy described Garibniwaz as the mighty Vaishnava ruler and conqueror who styled himself as the refuge of the poor and his character is found the rare combination of a martial quality of a Kshatriya and the humility of a Vaishnava.¹⁶⁷

Garibniwaz was succeeded by Chit Shai (1748-1752 CE) and he was succeeded by Bharat Shai (1752-1753 CE). After Bharat Shai, Gourshyam (1753-1758 CE) ascended the throne.¹⁶⁸ In the ruling period of Gourshyam, the Burmese invaded Manipur.¹⁶⁹ The Burmese forces under the commander of Alaungpaya marched to the capital which was under their occupation for nine days in September 1758 CE. Alaungpaya took a large number of Manipuri prisoners. So, the Burmese invasion of 1758 CE was the precursor of the terrible Burmese invasion of Manipur in the second half of the 18th century and 19th century CE.¹⁷⁰ Gourshyam was seriously wounded when encounter with the Burmese forces. Therefore, he abdicated the throne in favor of his brother Jay Singh, who ascended the throne in the year 1759 CE.

Hence, he ruled in Manipur two times i.e., from 1759-1762 CE & 1763-1798 CE. In his reigning period, Jai Singh displayed exceptional force and competence in restoring the kingdom to a complete position of strength.¹⁷¹ So, he thought that the cause of the defeat of Manipur at the hands of Burmese was the adoption of British military arms by the Burmese. Therefore, Manipur had to acquire these weapons if she had to survive the onslaught of the rising Burmese.¹⁷² Then, he sought help from the British through messenger Haridas Gossain. He proposed for alliance between English and Jai Singh and consequently on 14th September 1762 CE, the provisions were settled and the treaty was signed between Haridas Gossain on behalf of Jai Singh, the king of Manipur and Hanry Verelst, Chief of Chittagong Factory on behalf of the East India Company.¹⁷³ This treaty was the first diplomatic relation between British and Manipur. According to Prof. N. Joykumar Singh, this historic event should be the first phase of modern history of Manipur.¹⁷⁴ The main term of the treaty was the British agreed to send six companies of sepoy to Manipur and instead of it they would get land of 8000 cubits in Manipur for the establishment of factory and fort. From Chittagong, six companies of sepoy under Mr. Verelst reached Khaspurr, the capital of Cachar in 1763 CE. But the English forces had to go back due to epidemic and on the other side declaration of battle against Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal.¹⁷⁵ But, the alliance with the English did not produce any favorable result for Manipur. The treaty and the protocol of 1763 CE give an idea of the economic products and external trade of Manipur.¹⁷⁶ So, Manipur became for the first time in history a foreign protectorate losing its sovereignty.¹⁷⁷

In the reigning period of King Jai Singh, he established two camps at Kakching and Heirok in order to defend his motherland from the Burmese invasion. The Kakching camp was under the leadership of Akham Madhop Ram and Heirok

was under Haobam Khelram. In the meanwhile, it is said that a Brahmin Sanyasi was killed by his servant. After receiving the news, the king was shock and stepped down from the throne.¹⁷⁸ Then, Gourshyam once again became the king of Manipur, but he died in 1763 CE, after a short reign.¹⁷⁹

Jai Singh ascended the throne of Manipur as a second time in the year 1763 CE and in the same period in Burma, Hsinbyushin, son of Alaung-Paya ascended the throne of Burma. His main objective was to conquer Manipur. In the meantime, some complexity was occurring between Jay Singh and his uncle Khelemba, administrator of Moirang.¹⁸⁰ According to R.K. Sanahal Singh, Khellemba requested Jai Singh for the cession of some territory to Moirang, which was refused by king on the advice of his minister Ananta Shai. Khellemba was disappointed and wanted to revolt with the help of the Burmese. Khelemba made a secret alliance with the Burmese and requested the Burmese to invade Manipur. The Burmese invaded Manipur in the year 1765 CE.¹⁸¹ The king himself led the Meitei's army but they were defeated by the Burmese. Then, King Jay Singh fled to Cachar. In the absence of Jai Singh, Khellemba negotiated with the Burmese, and he was now made the tributary king of Manipur under the Burmese suzerainty. King Jai Singh was taken shelter at Cachar and then he moved to Assam. Swargadeo Rajyeswar Singh was the Ahom king at that time. In 1767 CE, Jay Singh with the help of the Ahoms regained his throne by defeating the titular ruler, Khellemba.¹⁸² Jai Singh sought the help and friendship with the Ahom king and offered the hand of princess Kuranganayani, his niece and daughter of late king Gourshyam. The Ahom king Rajyeswar Singh accepted the proposal and the marriage ceremony was performed with great grandeur. This marriage alliance marked the beginning of a period of close relationship between Manipur and Assam.¹⁸³

King Jai Singh was not only a great conqueror but also a good administrator. During the repeated Burmese invasion of the kingdom, he was able to control the administration very efficiently. He revived all the administrative institutions which were introduced since the time of Loiyamba in the 12th century CE. In addition to the earlier codes and decrees, the traditional administrative provisions were systematized. The trade and commerce with the neighbouring countries were expanded widely.¹⁸⁴

Thus, the reign of his forty years was a great landmark in the history of Manipur, in the war of liberation against the Burmese and propagation of the Goudiya Vaishnavism. During his reign, Goudiya Vaishnavism was widely extended in whole over the valley of Manipur. He became a devote Hindu and his remaining period was devoted in recasting the Manipuri society on a firm religious firmament. He introduced a new dance form, which later on became a famous dance form known as Manipuri Ras dance.¹⁸⁵

After the death of Jai Singh, his son Labanyachandra (1798-1801 CE) ascended the throne of Manipur. He administered the country very efficiently. The royal chronicle records his efficient administration.¹⁸⁶ He gave great encouragement to technological development. After ascending the throne, he tried to restore and revive the important religious places in the ancient Kangla, the capital of the kingdom which was deserted for thirty five years. He constructed a royal residential building at the Kangla. Besides this, he also started the construction of the fort at the kangla. In 1799 CE, the Burmese again interfere in the Kabaw valley and then burnt down the town of Tamu which was within the territorial boundary of Manipur. But, due to his military might, he was able to drive away the invading Burmese. It was a successful campaign. However, a brisk trade and commerce was maintained between Manipur and Burma.¹⁸⁷

After Labanyachandra his younger brother Modhuchandra (1801-1804 CE) ascended the throne of Manipur. He appointed Chourajit, as Yubraj and Marjit Singh as senapati.¹⁸⁸ After a short time Yubaraj Chourajit threw off his allegiance and went to Cachar to revolt against the king. From Cachar, he returned to Manipur with a strong force, revolted against the king Madhuchandra and Marjit also joint him. Modhuchandra was defeated at the battle of Sangaithen in 1804 CE and fled to Cachar.¹⁸⁹ In the meantime, Madhuchandra had entered into an alliance with Krishna Chandra, the ruler of Cachar. According to royal chronicle, during his reign, Manipur had developed matrimonial relation with Cachar. King Modhuchandra gave his daughter Induprabha in marriage to Krishnachandra, the king of Cachar. According to royal chronicle, Induprabha while going in Cachar distributed coins in the royal market. Thus, the Meitei king made friendship alliance with the Cachar.¹⁹⁰

King Modhuchandra was succeeded by Chaurajit (1804-1813 CE). He inaugurated a vigorous reign which was displayed in his grant schemes. In 1804 CE, Modhuchandra with the military assistance from king Krishnachandra of Cachar invaded Manipur to regain the throne. The battle was fought at the village of Shamupan. Chaurajit with the help of Marjit tried to resist the invading forces. Modhuchandra was defeated by the combine forces of Chourjit and Marjit. Modhuchandra was fallen in the battle.¹⁹¹

During the reigning period of Chourajit, his younger brother Marjit revolted against him in 1805 CE. Though Chourajit was of mild disposition, he was quite firm in handling political and military issues. Taking the advantage of kind hearted nature of Chourajit, Marjit tried to capture Manipur. But after having failed in the conspiracy, Marjit escaped to Burma. Chourajit sent several emissaries to persuade Marjit to return to Manipur. After that, Marjit invaded Manipur from Tamu.¹⁹² The

invading forces were came upto the capital. Chaurajit in order to avoid bloodshed offered to partition the kingdom in such a war that Marjit might rule from Moirang. But, Marjit abandoned the offer. He personally led the attack on the capital and the royal palace which was under the command of king Chaurajit. In his first mission he was defeated. After wards, Marjit fled to Cachar and tried to get help from the king of Cachar, but the king refused for help.¹⁹³ Then, Marjit fled to Burma to get help from Emperor Bawdawpaya to dislodge his brother Chaurajit from the throne. He tried to make friendly relation with the Burmese king. So, in 1813 CE, the Burmese king sends a military expedition to Manipur. The expedition was accompanied by Marjit Singh. The Manipuri forces were defeated by the Burmese forces. King Chaurajit fled to Cachar to take refuge. Marjit was then appointed as the king of Manipur in 1813 CE under the suzerainty of Burma by ceding Kabaw valley to Burma.¹⁹⁴

In the reigning period of Chourajit, the loin like animal statue in front of the Kangla was constructed. The temples of Navaratna and Govindaji were built. Besides these, he constructed the dancing hall, royal residence, and the decorated throne of the king. His reign was remarkable for the construction of a royal residential with eighty four pillars for the members of the royal family. He also maintained trade relation with neighboring states, such as Chinese, Burmese, Assam, Cachar and Tripura.¹⁹⁵

Marjit (1813-1819 CE) was the successor of Chourjit. He was a scheming prince without having any sense of patriotism and property who bargained away the Kabaw valley and sovereignty to the Burmese king Badawpaya for making him the king of his country. The Burmese were pleased with their occupation of Kabaw valley and in the absence of his rivals in Manipur; he ruled a peaceful reign of six years. During his reign some developmental works were established, the most prominent being the construction of the brick pillared rampart of the kangla fort in 1815 CE. He

also beautified the palace by constructing two fabulous lion like animals in stone which were referred to as a dragon after such mythical animal structure in Burma. The dragon was introduced as the state emblem.¹⁹⁶

In his reigning period, the new Burmese king Bagyidaw (son of Badawpaya), summoned the king Marjit to come to Burma to pay homage to him, but king Marjit refused. Then, the Burmese king sent one of the greatest Burmese general Maha Bandula, to conquer Manipur. Marjit was defeated and fled to Cachar. The invasion of Manipur by the Burmese was a very great plan to conquest of the North East India.¹⁹⁷ The Burmese conquest of Manipur in 1819 CE was different in intention and character from their earlier invasions. This time, they meant to rule Manipur through their puppet rulers. Thus Manipur was brought under the Burmese rule for seven years (1819-26 CE), which was known as the seven years devastation in the history of Manipur. The flight of Marjit from Manipur and Burmese conquest in 1819 CE marks the end of the medieval period in the history of Manipur.¹⁹⁸ Manipur had never faced such a national devastation brought by the Burmese conquest. It was a sort of genocide of the Meiteis that had been carried by the Burmese reign of terror.¹⁹⁹

Yumjaotaba (1820 CE) became the king of Manipur in 1820 CE. Yumjaotaba was the first Manipuri prince to become the king during the period of the reign of terror under the Burmese.²⁰⁰ Gambhir Singh (1821 CE & 1825-34 CE) was the successor of Yumjaotaba, but he was dispossessed from the throne by the Burmese. Then, they appointed Joy Singh (1821-1822 CE) as the king of Manipur. Thereafter, King Joy Singh was recalled by the king of Burma and then sent Jadu Singh (1822-1823 CE) for the throne of Manipur but he died in the year 1823 CE. He was succeeded by Raghab Singh (1823-1824 CE). In his reigning period, the combined forces of Burma and Manipur under the leadership of Burmese general Pakhep

invaded Cachar but Burma lost their forces. Then, Raghab Singh went to Burma with Burmese troops. After Raghab Singh, the Burmese appointed Nongchup Lamkhaingamba as the king of Manipur in 1824 CE, but they were the puppet kings appointed by Burmese.²⁰¹

When Gambhir Singh was driven out from the throne of Manipur in the year 1821 CE, he fled to Cachar and approached the British authority to extend their co-operation for the liberation of Manipur. The British authority agreed to provide military training to the Manipuri soldier. Consequently with the help of the British, Gambhir Singh establishes a trained military force of five hundred men. This force was known as Manipur Levy. Thus, with the help of the British, he regained the throne of Manipur in 1825 CE. The coming of Gambhir Singh to the throne of Manipur was the end of seven years devastation in Manipur.²⁰² After defeating the Burmese, a treaty was signed between the British East India Company and the king of Burma known as the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 CE, whereby Gambhir Singh became king under the Treaty.²⁰³

When Gambhir Singh died in 1834 CE, his son Chandra Kirti (1834-1844 CE) ascended to the throne at the age of two. Nara Singh, the younger brother of late Maharaja Gambhir Singh became the senapati, who with the assistance of dignitaries used to administer Manipur. After reigning ten years, Chandrakirti fled to Cachar with his mother Kumudini at the age of twelve due to internal clash among the royal groups.²⁰⁴

After that Nara Singh (1844-1850 CE) ascended the throne in 1844 CE. In his reign Melei Khomba and his brother invaded Manipur from Cachar to seize the throne. But, Nar Singh's force defeated them. He died in 1850 CE after a reign of six

years. Then, he was succeeded by his younger brother Debendra in 1850 CE. He ruled a short period of three months. During the reigning period of Debendra, Chandrakirti tried to capture the throne of Manipur.²⁰⁵ Then, Chandrakirti (1850-1886 CE) marched from Cachar and occupied the throne of Manipur as second time. During his second reigning period, the British power began to interfere in the political scenario of Manipur. Chandrakirti also helped the British government on several occasions. Due to his help, British government awarded him the title of K.C.S.I. (Knight Commander and Star of India). This award was interpreted merely as a friendly gesture of the British government. After a long and eventful reign, he died in 1886 CE.²⁰⁶ Chandrakirti was succeeded by his son Surachandra (1886-1890 CE). When Surachandra ascended the throne, there were internal quarrel arose among the royal brothers and responsible for the outbreak of Palace revolt in the year 1890 CE. The political situation of Manipur was under the control of British power.²⁰⁷ After the Palace revolt, Surachandra abdicated from the throne and Kulachandra (1890-1891 CE) became the king of Manipur and Tikendrajit became the Yubaraj. During the reign of king Kulachandra, Surachandra tried to regain the throne with the help of British. From the side of the British, they decided that Kulachandra would be recognized as Maharaja and remove Yubaraj Tikendrajit from Manipur. The responsibility for materializing this plan was entrusted to Mr. Quinton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam.²⁰⁸ The British government thought that without the strong military forces they would be impossible to defeat Tikendrajit. Therefore, the British forces attacked Manipur from the three sides such as Silchar, Kohima and Tumu. At last, the two forces met at *Khongjom* on 23rd April 1891 CE. The British forces totally defeated the Meitei forces and Major Maxwell hoisted their flag at Manipur palace. He was appointed as the chief political officer of Manipur.²⁰⁹ After occupying

Manipur by British Kulachandra, Tikendrjit and Thangal General were sentenced to death and they were executed on 13th August 1891 CE.²¹⁰ Thus, the *Khongjom* war was marked as the end of independent sovereignty of Manipur. Therefore, in the history of Manipur 23rd April is observed as Khongjom day.²¹¹

After the annexation of Manipur by the British, Churachand (1891-1941 CE), the grandson of Nara Singh was appointed as the king of Manipur. During his period, common people and the Rajkumars revolted against the British rule but they were discrete by the British force. Many development works were completed like the building of *Cheirap* court, Sadar Panchayat and Dak Bunglow and many schools were also established during his reign. After a long reign of fifty years, he died at Nabawdip.²¹² After his dead his eldest son Budhachandra (1941-1955 CE) became the king of Manipur. His reign was full of interruptions. In his ruling period the influence of the great Second World War was also highlighted in Manipur. On 10th May, 1942 CE, the Japanese planes raided Manipur and Manipur was bombed in 1943 CE. In this bombing many people lost their life.²¹³ In the meanwhile, on 21st March 1944 CE, the Indian National Army came under the leadership of Subash Chandra Bose with Japanese forces. They advanced upto Maibom Lokpaching about 11 miles from south-west of Manipur. Then, the Japanese forces handed over Moirang to Indian National Army. In the meantime, the 5th Indian Division complete with equipment moved to Imphal from Arakan by air. The rigorous fighting was occurred at Bishnupur and Pallel in April 1944 CE. But in May, the Japanese began to lose. In June, the second Indian division moved towards Imphal after seizing Kohima. Soon after this, the Japanese were completely repulsed from Manipur. The Indian National army retreated with the Japanese force.²¹⁴

The people of Manipur gave full co-operation to the British in holding and repelling the Japanese. Due to the appreciation services of the Maharaja of Manipur, the annual tribute of Rs 50,000 payable to the British government was remitted in perpetuity.²¹⁵ However, in this situation, the 'Quit India Movement' was also spread whole over India. The British government was compelled to recognize the right of India to independence. A British Mission was sent to India on 1946 CE and after a prolonged discussion with the Indian leaders, India gained independence on 15th August 1947 CE.²¹⁶ With the end of British rule in India, the British government handed over the charge of Manipur to Maharaja Budhachandra. Then, Manipur was acceding to the Indian Union in 1949 CE and became a part and parcel of it.²¹⁷

Thus, the Manipuri people laid the foundation of a powerful Meitei state in Manipur and many successive kings ruled over it under the name of Ningthouja dynasty in different historical periods. The cultural affinities of various ethnic groups usually transformed the land into a unified state. The king Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was the first historical king who ruled at Kangla, the capital of Meitei kingdom in 33 CE and the ruler of his successors remained upto 20th century CE. The system of their administration was mainly based on the form of monarchy.

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