Chapter II

Marriage as diplomacy between Manipur and Ahom states (15th to 19th century)

Manipur and Assam are two of the most important states of North East India. During the pre-colonial years the states emerged as two most powerful princely states which were glorified by their adequate rulers. The geographical boundaries kept Assam and Manipur quite in distant from one another as the Naga Hills stands in between them. As a result, they never initiated any conflict over border disputes. The princely states of Assam and Manipur were ruled by their independent dynasties till they became a part of British protectorate. The non-interference nature of the kingdoms reasonably avoided development of conflict or any regular diplomatic correspondence between them. It was only during the reign of Ahom King Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D.) that first correspondence was established. However, in most of the cases the contact was of mutual co-operation and aid to each other. Since the establishment of Ahom-Manipur contact the princely states never fought against each other. The diplomatic correspondence was however boosted up by conduct of matrimonial alliances. The technique of marriage alliances within the royal families of the neighbouring kingdoms were an important feature of external policy of both the Ahoms and Manipuris. It was a diplomatic policy adopted by both the monarchists to maintain cordial relationship and to avoid contemporary and

speculative political turmoil. Again, such kind of marriages perks up their power and prestige. It also helped to carry peaceful domicile, trade and diplomatic correspondence between the kingdoms. A coin of Swargadeo Pramatha Singh dated 1746 A.D. is unearthed in Manipur which indicates of commercial relation with Assam.[1] As such, during the Seven Years Devastation of Manipur (1819-1825 A.D.) due to frightful invasion of Burmese forces many Manipuris migrated and settled in different parts of Assam. In regard to the marriage alliances the responsibility to develop and retain the cordial relationship was mutually depended on both the princess and the King or prince. Besides, the princesses in order to preserve the prestige and honour of their kingdoms were always prepared to perform their respective duties i.e. either to marry a King/Prince of neighbouring kingdom or to maintain the relationship. Because, successful marriage led to better development of pleasant relationship as well as lessen the probability of hostilities.

The occurrence of the first Ahom-Manipuri political and marriage relationship is recorded in first half of 16th century which continued till last part of 18th century though in intervals. During the span of the centuries the two royal houses were always close to each other. Before we discuss about the history of the matrimonial alliances between Ahoms and Manipur during 15th to 19th century A.D. a brief summary of the history of Ahom rule in Assam and Manipur are discussed hereafter.

History of Manipur from 33-1891 A.D.

Manipur is situated in the North Eastern part of India comprising both hilly ranges and plain areas. The hills in the state are the offshoots from the

[1] Goswami, Dr. Dwijendra Narayan., *"Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra"*, Akkhar Publications, Agartala, 2002, p-34

Himalayas roofed with gracious diversity of forest. Manipur is bounded by Nagaland in the North, Mizoram in the South, Cachar district of Assam in the West and Burma in the East. The state has long glorious history of its own until it became a British protectorate princely state only after the battle of Anglo-Manipuri war or the 'Khongjom war' of 1891 A.D. Finally, it was in 1949, after two years of Indian independence that Manipur was merged to Republic of India.

Manipur had different names during the early period such as, Meitrabak, Kangleipak or Meitei Leipak, Poireipak as well as by more than twenty other names. The present name Manipur is a new nomenclature which was adopted during the reign of Meitei King Garib Niwaz alias Pamheiba in 18th century. Manipur and its people were known by different names to its neighbour, the Shans or Pongs called the Manipuris as Cassay, the Burmese Kathe (a corrupted version of Cassay), the Assamese Meklee/Mekheli/Magalu, the Kacharis called as Muglie etc. In the first treaty between the British East India Company and Meidingu Chingthangkhomba alias Bhagyachandra signed in 1762 A.D., the kingdom was recorded as 'Meckley'.[2] The societal system of Meitei was based on kinship and lineage. The kingdom of Manipur was developed after a struggle of conflicts between various ethnic tribes and clans or Salais in the valley. From remote period of history Manipur was occupied by several ethnic groups like the Angom, Luwang, Mangang (Ningthouja), Khaba, Ngamba, Sarangthem, Chenglei, Haorok Konthou, Manting-Mara, Lela Khongnang, Chakpas, Khem, Heirem Khunjan, Moirang, Thanga-Kambong,

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[2] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period"*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-268

Urok Usai, Lokkha-Houkkha.[3] With the span of time, some of them became more powerful and subdued the other tribes. These groups were later amalgamated and brought under the political sovereignty of seven leading clans namely Ningthouja (Mangang), Luwang, Angom, Khuman, Moirang, Kha Ngamba and Sarang Leisangthem or (Chenglei). These clans were powerful at some point of time but by the first half of 15th century the Ningthoujas or Meiteis succeeded to overpower all the other clans. Thus, with this the other clans or social groups were later brought within the social structure of this dynasty under the common ethnonym 'Meitei'.

According to the state chronicle of Manipur the *"Cheitharol Kumbaba"* Pakhangba was coroneted as the first Meitei ruler of Kangla in 33 A.D after defeating his rivals Khabas and Poireiton. Poireiton is said to have entered Manipur in search of land for settlement from West. According to the book *"Poireiton Khunthok" or "Migration of Poireiton"* describes the colonization of the valley by a band of people from the land of Death under Poireiton.[4] Pakhangba also succeeded in occupying the territories of Mangang, Angom, Luwang, Khabas, Ngambas and Sarang Leisangthem which came under the fold of Meitei confederacy. The Khuman and Moirang clans were still outside the Meitei confederacy. After a successful rule of 120 years King Pakhangba was assassinated by a Khaba rebel named Huitao Tington Khaba Tousuba[5] in 154 A.D. After the death of Pakhangba, among his successors the reign of Meidingu Naothingkhong (663-763 A.D.) has immense importance for his

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[3] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-70

[4] Singh, W. Yumjao., "*Report on the Archaeological Studies in Manipur Bulletin No. 1",* Imphal, 1935, pp-18-19

[5] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-90

military skill and diplomacy. The most important military confrontation of Naothingkhong was with Shamlung, the younger brother of the Raja of Pong. The Pong prince defeated the Meiteis and conquered Pasha. He lived at Meitei Leipak (Land of Meiteis) for ten years.[6] Another remarkable event of Naothingkhong's reign was his marriage with Mayang princess 'Chingkhurembi' (hyperbole as graceful as the goddess). A Manipuri local historian W. Ibohal Singh mentioned that Chingkhurembi was a Bengal princess whose principality was at Lamnangdong at the time of marriage which the Poireis (other name of Meitei) took as Mayang principality and she was a daughter of a Sena princess of the Senas of Bengal.[7] The marriage was an important diplomatic step of Naothingkhong in order to maintain cordial relation with the far off kingdom. After his death the reign of Iwanthaba (1163 – 1195A.D) and his successor Thawanthaba (1195 – 1231 AD.) has important place in the history of state formation in the Meitei Leipak. During the reign of these Kings the principality of Khuman was brought to subordinate status under the Meiteis. Despite several attempts by Meidingu Iwanthaba they could not completely subdue the Khumans. However, Meidingu Thawanthaba gave final blow to the Khumans and compelled them to accept the suzerainty of the Meiteis. At this moment, it was only the Moirang clan who remained outside the fold of Meitei confederacy enjoying the status of an independent principality. But, in short span of time the Meitei King Ningthou Khomba (1432-1467 A.D.) finally brought Moirang under the Ningthoujas. For the purpose Meidingu Ningthou Khomba made a conspiracy. He invaded Tamu

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[6] Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), *"The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur",* Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2012, p-33

[7] Singha, W. Ibohal., *" A history of Manipur, an early period",* Manipur Commercial Co. Imphal, 1986, pp-307,308

and massacred the settlers for which the blame was put upon Moirang. The plan of Ningthou Khomba succeeded and the Tamu Chief decided to help the Meiteis in any expedition against Moirang as revenge. When the stage was set Meidingu Ningthou Khomba attacked the principality of Moirang in 1432 A.D. The Shans of Tamu came to join the expedition. Moirang was finally defeated by the Meiteis but they were not totally destroyed and the principality was rendered autonomous power on the payment of an annual tribute to the Meitei Raja. Thus, with the defeat of Moirangs in 1432 A.D., the Ningthoujas succeeded to establish a single administrative structure under their sovereignty. In the word of Gangmumei Kabui "The Meitei state was completely formed despite the autonomy of Moirang. The Ningthouja kingdom had become a completely feudal state."[8]

After the death of Meidingu Ningthou Khomba in 1467A.D. the reign of Thangwai Ningthoukhomba alias Kyamba (1467-1508 A.D.) is remarkable for military expansion and for the art of keeping the royal chronicle which made the history of Manipur more reliable and authentic. In 1470 A.D., he along with the King Choufa Khekhomba of Pong invaded the Kyang principality of the Kabaw valley and succeeded in conquering Pong. This victory was celebrated by renaming King Thangwai Ningthoukhomba as 'Kyamba'. The two Kings then concluded a treaty of friendship and built a bridge over Ningthi river (Chindwin) with gold and silver.[9] They also fixed the boundary between Manipur and Pong kingdom. Kyamba also defeated the Mayang invaders in 1504 A.D. According to a local scholar of Manipur Nepram Bihari the battle

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[8] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-141

[9] Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), *"The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur",* Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2012, p-39

took place at 'Western Cachar'.[10] Beside the military achievements, the most remarkable contribution of Kyamba was the Chronicle of Manipur *"Cheitharol Kumbaba"* (Kumbaba = counting of years according to Cheithaba, Chei= Stick, Thaba=beating up). In saka 1407 (1485 A.D.), Hiyangloina for the first time initiated the process of record keeping under the patronage of Meidingu Kyamba.[11]

The history of military expansion of the Meiteis began to raise its height with the accession of Kings like Mungyamba (1562–1597 A.D) and Khagemba (1597–1652 A.D). The rule of Mungyamba is remarkable for establishing Meitei suzerainty over both hill regions and valley of Manipur. The reign of King Mungyamba witnessed the availability of gun for the first time in Manipur which was brought as war booties from the Shans.[12] The next Meitei King was Sana Hihouhan Poirei Ningthouhanba alias Khagemba (1597–1652 A.D) who was regarded as the Nation builder of Manipur. According to one of the Manipuri chronicle *"Ningthourol Lambuba"*, Khagemba along with his able ministers attacked the South territory and captured their chief Chaopha Hongdei of Khagi (China). From this time he was called as Khagi-Ngamba. (Khagi-China, Ngamba-Conqueror).[13] However, R.K. Jhalajit Singh gives the details about the event as thus, the Manipuri King invaded a Chinese town or a big Chinese village. The Manipuri King attacked it in 1631 and conquered it taking its chief prisoner. We believe that this did not result in permanent

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[10] Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated) *"The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The royal chronicle of Manipur",* Spectrum Publications, Delhi, 2012, p-40

[11] Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., *"Cheitharol Kumbaba",* Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, p-20

[12] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-209

[13]Singha, Oinam Bhogeswar., (edited) *"Ningthourol-Lambuba, vol-I, A Detailed History of the Kings of Manipur",* Imphal, 1967, p-280

conquest of the Chinese town or big village.[14] In 1606 A.D. Khagemba also defeated the Muslim invaders who were led by his brother Sanongba who was expelled by King Khagemba as punishment for his mischievous act with his brothers. Meidingu Khagemba could also defeat the Burmese forces in 1648 and 1651 A.D. Khagemba is regarded as a 'Nation Builder' because of his tactful administration and reforms. He introduced bell metal currency in Manipur.[15] After the death of Khagemba his son Paikhomba obtained immense credit for defeating the Tripuris in large scale in 1692 and 1696 A.D. However, it was during the reign of Meidingu Charairongba (1697-1709 A.D.) the relation between Manipur and Burma went to worse which made inevitable for hostilities between the kingdoms. The situation arose when a Manipuri princess in the Burmese court was ill-treated. It further deteriorated when the Burmese authorities detained the Tarao hill people who were subjects of Manipur. Charairongba along with his ministers decided to invade the country of Burma but unfortunately in the midst of the plan the King died in 1709 A.D. Thus, the responsibility to take revenge from the Burmans lay in the soldier of his son Pamheiba alias Garib Niwaz.

With the accession of Pamheiba alias Garib Niwaz (1709-1748 A.D.), Manipur experienced the Zenith of its glory in the field of military, religion, culture and literature. Jyotirmoy Roy stated that Garib Niwaz was a "mighty Vaishnava ruler and conqueror who styled himself as the refuge of the poor and in whose character is found the rare combination of a martial quality of a

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[14] Singh, R.K., Jhalajit., *"A short history of Manipur",* Imphal, 1992, p-114

[15] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur,Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-220

Kshatriya and the humility of a Vaishnava".[16] To Garib Niwaz the opportunity to take revenge against the Burmese came in 1717 A.D. when the than Burmese King seeked the hand of a Manipuri princess for marriage at which Garib Niwaz immediately accepted the proposal. He informed the emissaries that the Burmese should come to receive the princess at the Chindwin or Ru (Yu) river after one year. At the appointed time and date the Manipuris suddenly attacked the bride receiving party and many of them were killed and captured. As retaliation to this disgrace and insult just after one year the Burmese invaded Manipur in 1718 A.D. but they were badly defeated. Very soon in 1723 A.D. Garib Niwaz had to face a big war waged by the Burmese and Tripura forces from the south west and east directions of the kingdom. Garib Niwaz defended the invasion of the Burmese and routed their army. At this midst of war with Burma the Manipuri King tried to negotiate with the Tripuris. But, the attacking Tripuri commander Chhatrajit Narayan refused to make any settlement.[17] The result was King Garib Niwaz took the leadership for the fight himself and severely defeated the enemy. To commemorate this victory of Garib Niwaz a book named "Takhel Ngamba" or "Conqueror of Tripura" was written. In 1738 A.D, Garib Niwaz carried the most successful invasion of Ava and even entered their capital 'Sagaing' and conquered it. The Burmese King then sued for peace by seeking the hand of a Meitei Princess which Garib Niwaz accepted. The King also conducted various successful conquests in the hills and plains of Manipur.

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[16] Roy, Jyotirmoy.,*"A History of Manipur",* Firma KLM private ltd., Calcutta, (2nd ed.), 1973, p-30

[17] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-249

Beside the military achievements, the most remarkable reform of Garib Niwaz was the Sanskritisation of Manipur under the initiative of Shanta Das Gosain, a Brahmin from Bengal. About the acceptance of Hinduism by Garib Niwaz the chronicle recorded that in 1717 A.D. "The King and the party performed a religious ceremony of receiving spiritual instruction (Hinduism) from Guru Gopal Das".[18] Hinduism was declared as the state religion and bestowed upon his subjects. The influence of Hinduism in Manipur during the time was so powerful that it led to the creation of new history of Manipur and the Manipuris. Many Brahmanical scholars like Atombapu Sharma of the time with support from the royalties gave reference about identification of Manipur with that of the epic "Mahabharata". Aryan connection to the origin of the Meiteis was written in large numbers after conversion to Hinduism. It is referred that the kingdom Manipur of the great Indian epic Mahabharata is identical with that of the kingdom of Manipur located in North East part of India. The Pandava putra Arjuna during his adventure in the territory of Manipur married a Manipuri princess named Chitrangada. They had a son named Babhruvahana who later became the King of Manipur. As such Manipuris are regarded as descendants of the hero Arjuna. But, this view of earlier Manipuri scholars has been declined by the modern Meitei scholars with the opinion that the state of Manipur cannot be identified with Manipur of the epic Mahabharata. Eminent scholar Gangmumei Kabui has opined that Manipur's connection with the Aryans is as an aspect of Sanskritization and it was an attempt to gain respectability in the Hindu world, especially among the royal families of India which was the normal practice of all converted ruling

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[18] Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), *"The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur",* Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2012, p-85

families either Hindus or Buddhists, in North East India and South East Asia.[19] Besides many Indian and English scholars also did not support the view but located Manipur of the epic in or around Kalinga in Orissa.[20]

The administrative policy of Garib Niwaz was combination of aggrandizement and matrimonial alliance. Despite such enormous achievements the last days of Garib Niwaz spent in exile and repudiation and finally assassination by his own son in 1748 A.D

The death of Garib Niwaz brought an end to the episode of commanding rulers in Manipur. Since the year 1748 to 1891 A.D. Manipur was ruled by sons and grandsons of Garib Niwaz who were too weak to hold the status of a powerful kingdom. In the meantime, the new Burmese King Alaungpaya in order to avenge the earlier aggressions attacked Manipur in 1758 A.D. and occupied its capital. The state chronicle recorded that the capital was under Burmese occupation for nine (9) days.[21] Just after the Burmese attack Meidingu Bhagyachandra alias Jai Singha (1759–1761 and 1763–1798 A.D.) ascended the throne of Manipur. Bhagyachandra in order to prevent and protect his kingdom from external aggressions and internal revolts signed an Anglo-Manipuri Treaty. Gangmumei Kabui recorded that 'the treaty was concluded on 14th September, 1762 between Haridas Gosain, on behalf of Jai Singh, the Raja of Meckley (Manipur) and Henry Verelst, the chief of Chittagong Factory. The treaty was approved by the Bengal Government on 4th

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[19] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-3

[20] Majumdar, R.C., "*Expansion of Aryan culture in East India",* Atombapu Memorial Lecture, imphal, 1966, p-16

[21] Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., *"Cheitharol Kumbaba",* Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, p-122

October, 1762'.[22] But, the Manipuris failed to maintain the terms of the treaty that led to failure of the Anglo-Manipuri Treaty. After two years in 1764 A.D., the Burmese army invaded Manipur which compelled the Manipuri Raja Bhagyachandra and most of his subjects to flee from its native land. However, in 1768 A.D. Bhagyachandra succeeded in liberating Manipur from the yoke of enemy and to regain his lost throne with the help of the than Ahom King Rajeswar Singh. The death of Meidingu Bhagyachandra alias Jai Singha in 1799 A.D. fabricated conflict among his sons for succession to the throne. The sons of Bhagyachandra could not rule the kingdom peacefully and mutually. This situation led to political instability which ultimately gave the way to Burmese reoccupation of the kingdom. The war of succession was among the five sons out of eight sons of Bhagyachandra namely – Labanyachandra, Madhuchandra, Chourjit, Marjit and Gambhir Singha. Being the eldest Labanyachandra became the King of Manipur in 1798 A.D. but his power loving brother Gambhir Singha by a conspiracy assassinated the King in 1800 A.D. The news of the death of King led Madhuchandra to ascend the throne immediately but shortly in 1803 A.D. Juvaraja Chourjit along with the Kachari army invaded Manipur and succeeded in acquiring the throne. Madhuchandra escaped and took shelter at Cachar. In June 1804 A.D. he tried to recapture but Madhuchandra was defeated and killed in the battle by the royal armies. But soon in 1806 A.D. Marjit conspired against his brother to capture the power but the plan was detected which bound him to escape to Burma. Several attempts were primed by Marjit to snatch the throne of Manipur. In an invasion made in 1808 A.D., being defeated by the Manipuri royal army Marjit took flight to

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[22] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-268

Cachar. But, in Cachar inspite of extending help the two Kachari princes Krishnachandra and Gobindachandra Narayan insulted and humiliated the act of Marjit. At such situation Marjit moved to Burma to seek asylum and to dethrone his brother Chourjit. Ultimately, in 1813 A.D. Marjit helped by the Burmese soldiers succeeded in defeating the Meiteis which led both Chourjit and Gambhir Singha to take refuge at Cachar. Thus, Marjit was installed as the King of Manipur in 1814 A.D. under the suzerainty of the Burmese King. The rule of Marjit did not last long and he soon came in conflict with the Burmese when Marjit gradually asserted himself to be an independent ruler. Being furious at such act the Burmese King along with his large forces invaded Manipur in 1819 A.D. The Meitei army could not contest the Burmese troops and terminated the encounter by fleeing precipitately towards Cachar and many other took shelter in the nearby forests, hills and kingdoms. According to state chronicle of Manipur "On Sunday the 2nd (December), on hearing the advance of Ava, Meidingu Nongpok Wairang Pamheiba with the troops to the country went to invade Ava from Khurai Khunpham and a strong fighting ensued on Tuesday, the 5th. The Maharaja failed to defend his troops and the country on Tuesday, the 12th and fled to Mayang.[23] The Burmese devastated the country, destroyed and burnt down many villages, shattered the royal palace and despoiled the temples and holy shrines. Numerous were killed, women and children were cruelly butchered and infants were treacherously slaughtered. Many young men and women were carried away to Ava as slaves. Their rule was a period of reign of terror which is known as "Seven Years Devastations"

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[23] Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), *"The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur",* Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2012, p-170

or "Chahi Taret Khuntakpa" (1819 – 1825 A.D) in the history of Manipur. According to Dr. N. Birchandra "after the devastation only 2016 souls constituted the population of Manipur. Prior to the episode there was population of about nine lakhs in Manipur."[24]

The fugitive Marjit in Cachar bagged pardon from his brothers and the three brothers reconciled for some years. R.B Pemberton has recorded that "Marjeet, on reaching Cachar, was kindly received by his brother Choorjeet, to whom he made a formal resignation of the regal authority, by giving into his charge the sacred images of Govinduh and Burnamchundruh, which he had brought away with him from Muneepoor."[25] In 1819 A.D., the three brothers occupied Cachar and drove out Gobindachandra who took shelter in the British territory of Sylhet. The kingdom of Cachar was divided among the three Manipuri brothers. However, the mutual understanding and co-operation among the Manipuri brothers did not last long and the princes began to fight among themselves.

However, the aggressive policy of Burma towards Cachar changed the course of history of the region. Gobindachandra pleaded for help to the British authority to regain his lost throne but the request was turned down. Gobindachandra therefore requested the Burmese for help who readily accepted the proposal. Thus, in 1823 A.D. the Burmese under its King Bagyidaw invaded and captured Manipur, Assam and were approaching at the border of the British India. Now, it became unavoidable for Britishers to abandon their policy of non-interference and declared war against Burma on 5th

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[24] N. Birachandra, Dr., *"Seven Years' Devastation (1819-1826)",* P.S Publication, Manipur, 2009, p-1

[25] Pemberton, R.B., *"The Eastern Frontier of India",* Mittal publications, New Delhi, 2000, p-46

March 1824 A.D. Thus, the First Anglo-Burmese war broke out in which the Burmese forces were severely defeated and driven back to Manipur by the British. During the encounter Prince Gambhir Singha negotiated and actively co-operated with the British troops in expelling the Burmese. By 1826 A.D. the combined forces of Britishers and the Manipuris succeeded to liberate Manipur from the repression of Burmese forces. On the other side, the Anglo-Burmese war also reached the climax of its end with the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo on 24th February 1826 A.D. According to terms of the treaty Manipur was recognized as princely independent state and Gambhir Singha was restored to the throne of Manipur. He ruled the country for eight years and died on 9 January 1834 A.D. Maharaja Gambhir Singha was succeeded by his infant son Chandrakirti alias Ningthem Pishak or Child (1834–1844 and 1851-1866 A.D.) therefore the administration of the kingdom was run under the supervision of Gambhir Singh's second cousin Nara Singha. The British government of India decided to keep a Political Agent in Manipur. Thus, in 1835 Lieutenant Gordon was appointed the first Political Agent at a consolidated salary of Rs. 1,000/- per month.[26]

After the death of Maharaja Chandrakirti, war of succession among his sons provided ample opportunity to the Britishers to interfere in the administration of the kingdom and to bring it under the British sovereign. However, after the death of Maharaja Chandrakirti, his son Prince Surchandra succeeded the throne of Manipur in 1886 A.D. In a little while, on 21 September 1890 A.D. Prince Zila Ngamba and Angousana with the support of Senapati Tikendrajit revolted against Surchandra who relinquished and fled

[26] Singh, R.K Jhalajit., *"A short history of Manipur",* Imphal, 1992, p-261

to the British residency under their protection. After which prince Kulachandra Dhaja ascended the throne at Kangla in 1890 A.D. and Tikendrajit was appointed as the Yuvaraja and Angousana as Senapati. Surchandra requested the British government to reinstate him on the throne but the British turned down his request and decided to recognize Kulachandra as King of Meitrabak. It was also decided by the British government of India to arrest Yuvaraja Tikendrajit to normalize the situation at Manipur. But the Meitei King declined the decision and refused to hand over Yuvaraja Tikendrajit. At this the Chief Commissioner of Assam James Wallace Quinton ordered his officers to capture the Yuvaraja forcefully. This act angered the Manipuri mob and they beheaded the British officers Mr. Grimwood, Quinton, Colonel Skene, Mr. Cossins, Lieutenant Simpson and Bulger in front of the Kangla Sha (at royal gate). This event thus led to the beginning of Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 A.D. Several battles were fought between the royal army and the British forces but the most disastrous battle took place at Khongjom in the month of 25th April 1891 A.D. where almost all the Manipuris were killed. A number of brave Meitei soldiers sacrificed their lives on the battlefield in defense of their motherland. Thus, British became the master of the land. Later Manipur was specified the status of a protectorate of British Govt. on 27 April 1891 A.D.

History of Ahom Rule in Assam

Assam, the land of various ethnic tribes is situated in the North Eastern part of India. Assam is bordered in the North and East by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, along the South it is bounded by Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. To the South-West lies the Meghalaya, Bengal and bordered by Bangladesh to her West. The geographical feature of the state is divided into

three principal regions. They are: - in the North the Brahmaputra Valley, the Barak Plain in the south and the Karbi Anglong and Cachar Hills. The natural beauty of Assam earns her the name of "Queen of Nature".[27] Assam is bounded by ranges of hills inhabited by various tribal groups with distinctive cultural identities and languages.

The name 'Assam' is of current origin. In the ancient times Assam was known by different names as Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa, of which the capital was at Pragjyotisha (City of Eastern Light). The name Assam came in use during 13th century when the Ahoms began their rule in this region. The word 'Assam' has derived from the word 'Asama' which means uneven describing the geographical condition of the region. The Morans and the Borahis first used the words 'Assam' (peerless) in referring to Sukapha and his Shan followers.[28] The Ahoms were the offshoot of the great Tai[29] race settled in South-East Asia. The branch of Tai which the Ahoms were the offshoots occupied the northern and eastern hill track of Upper Burma and Western Yunan and their kingdom was known as Mong Mao. Sukapha, the founder of Ahom rule in Assam was the brother of the King of Mong Mao. He is said to have left Maulung (capital of Mong Mao) in 1215 A.D. with a following of eight nobles and 9000 men, women and children.[30] After leaving Mong Mao, Sukapha wondered for thirteen years at the Patkai hills and finally arrived at Khamjang at Assam in 1228 A.D. Some of the Nagas tried to resist the advance of Sukapha, but he defeated the enemies and many were captured. Sukapha caused many of them

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[27] Acharyya, N.N., *"A Brief History of Assam",* Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p-1
[28] Acharyya, N.N., *"A Brief History of Assam",* Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p-73
[29] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-7
[30] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-78

to be killed and roasted, and compelled their relatives to eat their flesh.[31] This act of Sukapha created widespread terror in the neighbouring territories and many gave their submission to the Ahom King. Sukapha then brought the two tribes Moran and Borahis situated north of Ahoms under its suzerainty. Their chiefs and tribes were engaged with the duty of a fuel suppliers, wood-cutters, poultry-keepers, cooks and as medicine men.[32] Sukapha finally moved to a hill where he built a town called Che Tam-Doi well known as Charaideo.[33] After establishing a strong and powerful Ahom rule in Assam Sukapha died in 1268 A.D.

The history of Ahoms from 1268 A.D. to accession of Suhungmung in 1497 A.D. reflects only some important events of annexation and expansion. Suteupha (1268-1281 A.D.) extended the Ahom territory towards West up to the Namdang river by defeating the Kacharis through diplomacy. For the next two hundred years, the river appears to have formed the Western boundary of the Ahom kingdom.[34] During the reign of Suhenpha (1488-1493 A.D), Ahoms were rigorously defeated by the Kacharis in 1490 A.D. which was solved by adopting the policy of matrimonial alliance. The political history of the Ahoms entered a new arena with the succession of Suhungmung alias Dihingia Raja in 1497 A.D. He expanded the Ahom kingdom in the direction of East and West. In 1513 A.D. the Ahom-Chutiyas conflict began for the first time. The Chutiya King Dhitnarayan made a hostile march against the Ahoms but the Chutiyas were deficiently defeated by the Ahom army led by the King himself. The

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[31] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, pp-78,79

[32] Barpujari, H.K., *"A Comprehensive History of Assam",* vol-II, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2007, p-54

[33] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint), 1985, p-47

[34] Devi, Lakshmi., *"Ahom-Tribal Relations, A Political Study",* Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1992, p-8

hostility finally ended in the encounter of 1523 A.D., the Chutiyas King fell dead and his son was slained. The whole of Chutiya kingdom was now annexed to the Ahom territory and a new officer called the 'Sadiya Khowa Gohain' was appointed to administer the area.[35] In 1531 A.D. the old Ahom-Kachari clash renewed. In the series of encounters the Kachari King and his forces were badly defeated and their army routed by the Ahoms. The Ahom army succeeded to pursue up to the Kachari capital at Dimapur. A Kachari prince Detsung was installed at the throne of Dimapur. From this period the Kacharis came to be looked upon by the Ahom Kings as 'Thapita-Sanchita' or 'established and preserved' by them.[36] Again, a fresh encounter took place in 1536 A.D., in which the Kacharis were defeated and they were bound to escape as far as North Cachar Hill and built a new capital at Maibong. The territorial expansion of the Ahoms made them the master of Dhansiri valley and whole of the Kachari possessions north-east of the Kalang river in Nagaon.[37]

The Ahoms under Suhungmung faced the first invasion of the mighty Muhammadans in 1527 A.D. Sir Edward Gait mentioned the name of the Muhammadan who commanded the army as the great 'Vazir'.[38] Ahoms succeeded to defeat the invaders and pursue the attackers. However, in 1532 A.D. the Muhammadans under the headship of Turbak Khan intruded so deep in the Western front of the Ahom kingdom comprising Kaliabar and the Kapili valley in Nagaon, the Dikrai and Bharali valleys of the present sub-division of

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[35] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-89
[36] Devi, Lakshmi., *"Ahom-Tribal Relations, A Political Study",* Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1992, p-100
[37] Devi, Lakshmi., *"Ahom-Tribal Relations, A Political Study",* Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1992, p-101
[38] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-91

Tezpur and the Brahmaputra in between them.[39] It took three years for the Ahoms to drive out the enemies from Kamrup and Kamata. But, soon Turbak Khan was reinforced by the Bengal army under the General Hussain Shah. A series of fierce battles continued in which Turbak Khan and his forces were defeated by Ahom army. General Hussain Shah was caught and put to death. The Ahom army moved further and reached near Bengal or Gaur. Being frightened, the Sultan of Bengal sued for peace with the Ahom King by offering two of his daughters to Swargadeo Suhungmung with five eastern parganas as dowries.[40] Hence, the Ahoms under the innovative and capable ruler Suhungmung became master of a vast land. After a successful rule of 42 years, Suhungmung was killed on the instigation of his son Suklengmung by a Kachari man named Ratiman in January 1539 A.D.[41]

During the reign of the next Ahom King Suklengmung Ahoms came in conflict with the Koches for the first time. The contemporary ruler of Suklengmung was Koch King Nar Narayan (1540-84 A.D.). The process of territorial expansion by the kingdoms brought them in series of confrontations between them. Among many series of wars the Koches under their mighty Commander Chilarai, brother of the Koch King in 1562 A.D., even succeeded to enter the Ahom capital Garhgaon and the Ahoms were compelled to litigate for peace. But, soon in 1564 A.D., Chilarai was taken as prisoner by the Nawab of Gaur which led the Koch King Nara Narayan to seek friendship with the Ahoms but without any success. However, after the death of Chilarai in 1581 A.D. Ahom-Koch relation improved. Thereafter, the Koch kingdom was

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[39] Acharyya, N.N., *"A Brief History of Assam",* Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p-116
[40] Acharyya, N.N., *"A Brief History of Assam",* Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p-118
[41] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-98

divided into two parts, i.e. Koch Hajo and Koch Behar. Suklengmung ruled for some more years and died in 1603 A.D.

The next Ahom King was Susengpha or Pratap Singh. The reign of Pratap Singh signifies crucial period of Ahoms because of Mughal infiltration in the Ahom territory. Above this, the Ahom-Kachari conflicts renewed during his reign. The plot for the hostility was created by the Jayantia King Jasamanik who was in bad terms with the Kachari Raja. He offered his daughter to the Ahom King on the condition that he fetched her by a route which led through the Kachari country. Ahom King sent envoys to the Kachari King for the passage but was refused which led Pratap Singh to pass through the Kachari territory even by force.[42] Thus, ultimately plump for the Ahom-Kachari conflict in 1606 A.D. at Raha where the Kachari troops were overpowered by the Ahom forces. But, in the meantime some inattention prevailed among the Ahom officers which gave the Kacharis an opportunity to attack them. The Ahom garrison was attacked and many of them were killed by the Kacharis. At this Pratap Singh was greatly enraged and wanted to invade the Kachari kingdom. But, the idea was abandoned as there was feasible Muslim incursion in near future and was disinclined to deplete his resources.

As expected, in 1615 A.D. the Mughal army of Bengal made an attack and occupied Koch-Hajo. They annexed the territory on the West of the Barnadi, Pandu and Guwahati. But, an immediate surprise attack by the Ahoms both by land and water totally sacked the Mughals. But, it was not the end and the Ahom-Mughal conflict continued for long years with counter and re-counters during which Ahoms ceded many territories to the Mughals, such as,

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[42] Acharyya, N.N., *"A Brief History of Assam",* Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p-127

Kamrup, Bharali, Gauhati etc. In 1638 A.D., Pratap Singh had to face the powerful joint attack of the Muhammadans along with Pran Narayan, the Raja of Koch Behar. However, in 1639 A.D. a treaty was concluded whereby the boundary between Ahoms and Mughals were fixed. By the terms of the treaty, Bar Nadi, on the North bank of the Brahmaputra and the Asurar Ali on the South was fixed as the boundary of the Ahom and the Muhammadan territories.[43] After this treaty peace was maintained between the two for the next twenty years.

However, during the reign of Jayadhvaj Singh (1648-1663 A.D.) the Ahom-Mughal hostilities renewed. In the year 1639 to 1659 A.D. Jayadhvaj Singh could reoccupy the territories of Guwahati, Pandu and Saraighat from the Mughals. But, in few time by 1661 A.D., the than Mughal King Aurangzeb sent his army under the command of Mir Jumla, the Mughal Subedar of Bengal to invade Assam and regain its lost territory. Mir Jumla easily reoccupied Koch Behar, Guwahati, Pandu, Saraighat and the Ahom capital Garhgaon by 1662 A.D. with a heavy amount of wealth. However, with the approach of rainy season heavy rain caused serious flood in Upper Assam which cut off all the communications for the Mughals at Garhgaon and made them handicapped. Famine soon spread in the Mughal camp and many of its soldiers died from Cholera and dysentery. Along with his army, Mir Jumla seriously fell ill. The Ahom local inhabitants also conducted surprise attacks in Mughal camps killing several of them. Under such condition Mir Jumla had no other option but only to sue for peace with the Ahoms. Accordingly, a treaty was signed between Mir Jumla and Jayadhvaj Singh on 23rd January 1663 A.D. According

[43] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-121

to Ahom Buranji the heavenly King made peace by offering a princess, silver, gold and elephants.[44] N.N. Acharyya has mentioned that the name of the Ahom princess who was sent to the Mughal country was "Ramani Gabhuru".[45]

The next Ahom King was Chakradhvaj Singh who ruled from 1663 to 1670 A.D. During his reign of about seven years Chakradhvaj was always disturbed by the Mughal incursions. In 1665 A.D. the country faced with rigorous famine and drought. During such situation the thanadar of Guwahati, Syed Firuz Khan sent an uncompromising letter to the Ahom King for payment of the dues. Being enraged, in 1667 A.D. Chakradhvaj dispatched huge army under the command of the illustrious General Lachit Barphukan to capture Guwahati from the Mughals. Lachit Barphukan succeeded in his mission and the Mughals were defeated in several encounters. At this the Mughal emperor immediately sent one Ram Singh joined by the previous thanadar of Guwahati, Rashid Khan to invade the Ahom territory. A disastrous battle took place at Alaboi on August 1669 A.D. It was total massacre of the Ahom army by the Mughals. After this on the request of the Ahom King a peace negotiation was organized. But the treaty did not last long and a fresh hostility between the two forces renewed when the Mughal General Ram Singh again demanded Guwahati, on refuse of which the Mughal army re-marched towards Guwahati. As a result, the famous battle of Saraighat took place on March 1671 A.D. In this battle the Mughals were harshly defeated and many officers and indefinite soldiers of both the sides lost their life. With this victory the territory of Ahom expanded beyond the Western Frontier at Manas river.

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[44] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, p-185

[45] Acharyya, N.N., *"A Brief History of Assam",* Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p-142

However, the climax of Ahom rule in Assam began with the reign of King Gadadhar Singh (1681-1714 A.D). The first ambition of Gadadhar was to oust the Muhammadans from Assam. Therefore, he organized a huge equipped army and leading the forces himself pursued up to Manas. Hereafter, Manas was set as the boundary between the Ahoms and the Muhammadans and brought a permanent conclusion of the Ahom-Muhammadan conflicts which was continuing for many years. Another important event of the reign of Gadadhar Singh was his treatment towards the new religious sect. He disfavoured the growing influence of Vaishnavism among his subjects. Therefore, he led many Gosains, the preachers of the new sect to torture and death and confiscated their property. In February 1696 A.D. Gadadhar Singh died and was succeeded by his son Rudra Singh (1696-1714 A.D.). Rudra Singh adopted a reversed policy of his father in the treatment of the Vaishnava Gosains. He kept them free from torture and persecutions. Rudra Singh turned his attention towards the Kacharis who under Raja Tamradhvaj had asserted their independence. The matter turned much critical when Tamradhvaj wrote his name above the name of Rudra Singh. At this act Rudra Singh became furious and in 1706 A.D., a huge Ahom army launched an invasion against the Kacharis. The Kacharis were defeated and the Ahom army succeeded even in capturing the capital which was already deserted. The Kachari King Tamradhvaj had by now fled to Khaspur. Meanwhile, the fleeing Kachari King was taken prisoner by the Jayantia King Ram Singh and was kept as prisoner. Tamradhvaj having no other way managed to send message to the Ahom King accepting his over lordship and begged forgiveness for past deeds and seeked deliverance from his captor. Rudra Singh at once sent message to Ram Singh

for immediate release of the Kachari King. But, Ram Singh refused to do so which ultimately led the Ahoms to attack the kingdom of Jayantia in 1707 A.D. Both Ram Singh and the Kachari Raja were captured and taken to the Ahom court. The Kachari King was pardoned and sent back to Kachari capital on the condition of giving annual tribute to the Ahom King, whereas, the Jayantia Raja Ram Singh died of dysentery. A few years later Rudra Singh wanted to expand his imperialist design against the Muhammadans. But, unfortunately Rudra Singh fell ill and died on August 1714 A.D.

The subsequent Ahom King was Sib Singh whose reign sows the seeds for the political turmoil of Ahom kingdom in near future. Both Sib Singh and his chief queen Phuleswari was staunch follower of Saktism and the queen was much more fanatic than her husband. The queen in order to teach a lesson to the Vaishnava Mahantas who were against the Sakta religion invited all the Mahantas including the Sudra Moamaria Mahanta on the occasion of Durga Puja. In order to dishonour and insult the Mahantas queen Phuleswari smeared the blood of the sacrificed animals to the foreheads of the Mahantas. Such insult of the queen wounded deeply the hearts of the Mahantas and also the insult of the Moamaria Mahantas affected the whole Moamaria community. The revenge for the insult of their spiritual leader led the Moamaria to revolt against the Ahom monarchy which later became the major reason for the downfall of the mighty Ahoms.

Among the successors of Rudra Singh the reign of Rajeswar Singh (1751-1769 A.D.) had immense importance. Besides suppressing many small revolts of the tribes Rajeswar Singh made a severe blow to the Kacharis. The Kachari King Sandhikari was increasing his power by the time. But, in 1765

A.D. Rajeswar Singh brought them under the Ahom suzerainty along with the payment of annual tribute. Meanwhile, Rajeswar Singh also helped the deposed King of Manipur Jai Singha to regain his throne by driving out the Burmese forces from Manipur. In the meantime, the Barbarua, Kirti Chandra Gandhela by his act insulted and irritated the Moamaria Gosains. This instigated the Moamaria Gasains and his followers to prepare for avenging those insults. Rajeswar Singh tactfully followed the policy of 'divide and rule'. He divided the Vaishnava Gosains into two groups and weakened the strength of the Moamarias which led them to cancel the rebellion against the Ahoms. After the death of Rajeswar Singh, the Moamarias made their first ever revolt against the Ahom monarchy during the reign of Lakshmi Singh (1769-1780 A.D.). A huge regular Moamaria army under the Generalship of Mahanta's son Bangan attacked the mighty Ahoms. However, the leadership of the rebellers was later taken by Raghab Neog. The Ahom King Lakshmi Singh was captured and kept confined in the Jaysagar temple and his wives i.e. the Manipuri queen (Kuranganayani) and daughters of many Phukans and the Baruas were taken as his wives.[46] Soon the new Moamaria King Ramakanta declared for general massacre of all the Ahom nobles along with the deposed King Lakshmi Singh. At this the Ahom nobles united themselves and by making a conspiracy with the Manipuri queen killed the Moamaria Raghab easily. Thus, the first Moamaria rebellion was suppressed with heavy hand by the Ahom monarchy. But, the Moamarias soon made their next attack during the reign of Gaurinath Singh in 1782 A.D. at the Ahom capital, Garhgaon. In an ongoing war the Moamarias defeated all the forces of the monarchist. The Ahom King fled to

[46] Bhuyan, Dr. S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-70

Guwahati and Purnananda Buragohain retreated and built a strong fort at Jorhat. King Gaurinath Singh at Guwahati was also not free from conspiracy led by the Darrang Raja Hangsa Narayan, but, the conspirators were soon killed by the King. He installed one Bishnunarayan as the new King of Darrang and this disheartened the son of the late King Krishnanarayan. The course of Ahom history turned a new dimension when the Moamarias in alliance with Krishnanarayan attacked the Ahom King which he could suppress only with the help of British East India Company. The then Governor-General of India Lord Cornwallis thereafter sent in 1792 A.D., six companies of sixty sepoys under the command of Captain Welsh to Goalpara.[47] By the time, the situation at Guwahati turned worst when the 'Doms', a group of fishermen attacked the Ahom Raja. However, Captain Welsh easily defeated the revolting 'Doms' and the Darrang Raja. Next, on February 1794 A.D. Captain Welsh along with King Gaurinath advanced toward Upper Assam and defeated the revolting Moamarias at Rangpur and the city was straightforwardly captured. However, it was during the reign of Ahom King Kamaleshwar Singh (1795-1810 A.D.) that a permanent quelling of the Moamarias succeeded. As a result of long political dislocation of the Ahom monarchy there aroused dissatisfied elements in the kingdom. The result was the growth of various revolts against the Ahom authority.

The first rebellion occurred in Kamrup led by two brothers Har Datta and Bir Datta with secret aid from the Rajas of Koch Bihar and Bijni and declared themselves independent. North Kamrup was also captured without much

[47] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-206

difficulty by them. They were nicknamed as 'Dumdumiyas'.[48] Meanwhile, the Moamaria who were nearly crushed down by the monarchy changed their policy and took the help of the Burmese. But, the clever Ahom Buragohain tactfully succeeded to bribe the Burmese and sent them back home. Next, the Buragohain calmed the rebel chiefs by giving the title of 'Bar Senapati' and also the tract of land between the Brahmaputra and the Buridihing to administer.[49] With this the power of the Moamarias were permanently crushed down. Though the revolts of the Moamarias were permanently trodden but the monarchy could not attain their power completely. After the death of Kamaleswar Singh the Buragohain nominated Chandrakanta Singh (1810-1818 A.D.) as the new Ahom monarch. But the King when grew up became a bosom friend of one Satram. On the instigation of Satram, King Chandrakanta made a conspiracy to assassinate the Buragohain. But, the plot was soon discovered by the Buragohain and all the conspirators were put to death except Satram whose life was spared on the request of the King. In the interim, the situation at Guwahati turned worst when Badan Chandra became the new Barphukan who was engaged in treacherous pranks activities which reached the air of Buragohain. At the same time the Barphukan was suspected as one of the conspirator against the Buragohain. Immediately, the Buragohain sent some Ahom officers to arrest Badan Chandra. But, the Barphukan got the scent of the plot and fled to Calcutta with the aim to seek help from the British Government. But, being failed in his attempt the Barphukan searched help from the Burmese King. He misrepresented the administrative system of the Ahom kingdom and blamed that the Buragohain was a tyrant who grabbed the power

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[48] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-224
[49] Acharyya, N.N., *"A Brief History of Assam",* Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p-198

of the King and the kingdom was under the maladministration of the Buragohain. The Burmese King at once agreed to help the Barphukan. In 1817 A.D. the Burmese army invaded the Ahom territory and the soldiers of the Ahom Buragohain were severely defeated. At this critical stage the Buragohain died and some say, committed suicide by swallowing diamonds.[50] At the advance of the Burmese troops, the new Buragohain escaped to Guwahati leaving behind his King Chandrakanta Singh at Jorhat who refused to join him. Again, the Buragohain refused the kingship of Chandrakanta and Purandar Singh was installed as the new Ahom King in 1818 A.D. At this Chandrakanta with aid from Burma in 1819 .A.D. attacked the Ahom territory and captured the city of Jorhat. The fugitive Chandrakanta was formally reinstated as the new Ahom King but he remained as a puppet King under the Burmese from 1819 to 1824 A.D. Meanwhile, in 1821 A.D. the relation between Chandrakanta Singh and the Burmese strained and he fled first to Guwahati and then to British territory. The Burmese now became the de-facto ruler of Assam. The Burmese sent ultimatums to the British authority demanding the extradition of Chandrakanta Singh and Purandar Singh but in return they received provocation. In course of time, the Burmese invaded the British frontier provinces and created disaster by burning and prowling several of the villages. The British Government who until followed the policy of non-intervention decided to punish the notorious Burmese forces. At the same time the danger of Burmese encroachments from the three directions of Assam, Cachar and Arakan compelled the British authority to declare for hostilities with the Burmese. Thus, the then Governor General Lord Amherst declared

[50] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-231

formal war against Burma on March 5, 1824 A.D.[51] By the end of January 1825 A.D. Colonel Richards and Lieutenant Brooke succeeded to drive out the Burmese from Rangpur. On the other side, the Burmese had retreated from Cachar into Manipur but again by January 1826 A.D. Burmese had to make complete evacuation from Manipur. It was now no longer capable on the part of the Burmese troops to resist the Britishers and surrendered for acceptance of any kind of terms. Thus, by Article 2 of the Treaty of Yandaboo signed on 24th February 1826 A.D. the King of Burma 'renounced all claims' upon, and agreed to 'abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies'.[52] After the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam there arose a political vacuum in the Ahom kingdom. The British government took the responsibility to fill up the vacuum. The office of British political Agent in Assam was established for the first time and David Scott was appointed as the first Agent to the Governor General. In 1833 A.D. Purandar Singh was made the master of whole Upper Assam, except Sadiya and Matak on the condition of paying an annual tribute of Rs. 50,000/- to the British. But, Purandar Singh failed to pay the specific amount and his territories were brought under the direct control of the British administration on October 1833 A.D. Thus, with this the long 600 years of Ahom rule in Assam came to an end.

Manipuri – Ahom Matrimonial Alliances (15th to 19th century)

The ruling kingdoms of pre-colonial North East India like other monarchical states adopted the policy of diplomacy and force for territorial expansion and to avoid conflicts with its neighbours. Peace treaty and marriage alliances were

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[51] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-214

[52] Barpujari, H.K., *"A Comprehensive History of Assam",* vol-II, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, (3rd edition), 2007, p-363

important weapon to stem uncontrollable situation. The history of Ahom rule in Assam comprised of several inter-dynastic marriage alliances with the tribes like the Kacharis, Koches, Chutiyas, Nagas, Manipuris etc. that started from very beginning of Ahom rule in Assam and continued till last years of their rule. They married many tribal princesses to occupy the territory through peaceful means or to develop friendly relation. As mentioned in Ahom sources Sukapha, the founder of Ahom rule in Assam tactfully brought into submission the Moran and Borahis by peaceful means where he married their princesses as form of developing kinship with them. Mrs. Lakshmi Devi has written in reference of the book *"Ahom-Tribal Relations (A Political Study)"* that Sukapha married the daughter of Borahi Raja only. The Borahi Raja was invited to dine with him by Sukapha. After taking the meal the Borahi Raja declared that the food was not well cooked. Sukapha on hearing this immediately appointed of the Borahis as the cooks of the King.[53] The system of inter-dynastic marriage was not confined only with the tribes of nearby kingdoms but also with far off kingdoms like Gaur and the Mughals. History of Mughal invasions in Assam is filled with numerous war fares and atrocities. In the midst of all the events the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla has immense significance. At the end of his invasion a dictated peace treaty called the treaty of Gilajharighat was signed on 23rd January 1663 A.D. By one of the terms of the treaty the Ahom Raja of the time Jayadhvaj Singh had to send his only minor daughter named Ramani Gabhuru in the Mughal court. However, after five years the little princess was married to Prince Muhammad

[53] Devi, Lakshmi., *"Ahom-Tribal Relations, A Political Study",* Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1992, p-68

Azam alias Azamtara, son of Emperor Aurangzeb.[54] Similarly, the Manipuri Rajas in Manipur also summoned several marriage alliances within and beyond its kingdom to escape from internal and external troubles and aggressions. Many Meitei princesses were sent to kingdom of Ava (Burma), Pong, Kyang, Kabo, Tripura, Kachari, Ahom etc. and vice versa. The tradition begins itself with the first historically recorded Raja of Manipur Meidingu Pakhangba. He married Meitei Leima Laisna, sister of his competitor to the throne of Kangla (Manipur) Poireiton. Princess Laisna was offered to the Meitei King by her elder brother Thongaren repenting on the act Poireiton.[55] As a result the enmity between them came to an end. In the process of state formation in Manipur valley, the Meitei Rajas had conducted numerous marriage alliances with the other principalities like the Khumans, Angoms etc. Such marriages in some occasions revealed the subordinate status of a kingdom.

Manipur was known to the Ahoms as Mekheli/ Magalu/Keshe and the Manipuris called the Ahoms as 'Tekhao'. The Meitei ladies who were married to the Ahom Kings were known as 'Tekhao Leima' (Ahom queen). The kingdoms of Manipur and Ahom since 15th century had maintained cordial relationship. However, history reveals a few evidences of the diplomatic relations transpire between the two. The cause of such limited evidences may perhaps be due to its geographical location which keeps away the two lands little far away from each other. However the first instance of contact is recorded in the early years of 15th century. The Assamese Govinda Manik and six families entered Manipur from Assam during the reign of Meitei King

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[54] Barpujari, H.K., *"The Comprehensive History of Assam"* Vol-II, Publication Board Assam, (3rd edition), 2007, p-188

[55] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-84

Ningthou Khomba or "Conqueror of Kings" (1432-67).[56] This was followed by entry of a group of Brahmins from Assam in Manipur during the reign of Meitei King Kyamba (1467-1505).[57] The reference of the contact made by Ahoms with that of Manipur is recorded in the chronicles of both the states *"Ahom Buranji"* and *"Chietharol Kumbaba"*. Thus, there find that the kingdom of Ahom and Manipur had rare contact with each other. The first attempt to establish a close relationship between the two royalties is recorded to be in the first half of 16th century. The Buranjis of Assam and that of the chronicles of Manipur recorded the development of diplomatic correspondence and matrimonial alliances between the kingdoms. The marriage association was established during the reign of Ahom King Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D.) and the Meitei King Kabomba (1524–1542 A.D.). The *"Ahom Buranji"* recorded that in 1537 A.D., "Chaopha Shuhum offered a girl of Lanmakhru family, named Khukdang to the Raja of Keshe (Manipur). The Raja Chaomen sent the Katakis Khrungdengkang and Nanangpalam with a princess as a return offer to King Shuhumpha. Chaopha Shuhum informed his three queens of the matter. They did not like it. The princess was received with honour. One thousand elephants with howdas, a large quantity of silver and gold and many other things were sent with the princess. On their return, the Katakis were given fifteen horses, two elephant pads, a quantity of gold and a letter."[58] However, the content of the said letter is unavailable thus no extensive

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[56] 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-275

[57] 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-275

[58] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, p-78

informations can be obtained. Regarding the identical relation the state chronicle of Manipur *"Cheitharol Kumbaba"* recorded that in 1536 A.D., during the reign of Meitei King Meidingu Kabomba (1524–1542 A.D.), "a road to Tekhao was constructed. Khongnambi, the wife of the King of Tekhao (Assam) left for her country. Elephant, Tekhao Ngamba was brought and Tekhao Lu (A kind of fish trap made of bamboo) was made."[59] But, the chronicle did not mention about sending of Ahom girl to the Raja of Manipur. Despite the absence of the information the fact of sending Ahom girl to the Raja cannot be ignored as the evidence is supported by the state chronicle of Assam. The construction of road for connecting the two kingdoms indicates that they were keen to develop a regular correspondence as well as trading relationship. In respect to the marriage organized, it is however in dark as the chronicles provides no clear information about the objective of such matrimonial development. However, the general observance reveals that perhaps both the ruling Kings of the time were concerned much on the subject of maintaining cordial and friendly relationship with each other in order to avoid probable political turmoil. The Ahom King was deeply engaged in the process of expanding and re-settling the kingdom which was interrupted by repeated rebellion by the tribes in his kingdom. Besides, the Muhammadan invasion was new experience to the King which he had to deal with heavy hand. Therefore, in such circumstances the King might not have wanted to increase his enemy. On the other hand, the Meitei King Kabomba was also not free from military engagement within and beyond the kingdom either for suppression of revolts or defending the kingdom from external aggressions

[59] Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., *"Cheitharol Kumbaba",* Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, p-24

like that of Tripuris invasion of Manipur in 1533 A.D. In such situations a development of mutual relationship between the two emerging kingdoms must have been credit to both. It is observed that the chronicles have recorded the event of marriage in two different years i.e. in 1537 A.D. and 1536 A.D. respectively. Added, the name of the Meitei King recorded in Ahom Buranji of the event is 'Chaomen' whereas the Meitei chronicle recorded the name of the Raja as Meidingu Kabomba. It can be assumed that the differences in records may be due to divergence in use of dissimilar eras by the people of the kingdoms and the differences in the name of the Kings and princes may be corruption of the Meitei names by the Ahoms due to their local habit of dialect and vice versa. The records mentioned in Ahom chronicles pointed an interesting fact that other three queens of Suhungmung did not like the entry of Meitei princess in the Ahom palace. It was perhaps because of natural jealousy towards a new queen or might be they were not acquainted with the Manipuris prior to this therefore it was obvious to have opposition with the absorption of an alien women in their palace. The Ahom rulers basically had maintained matrimonial alliances with the tribes settling in the hills and plains of nearby its kingdoms like Kacharis, Jayantias, Morans, Borahis etc. There are also further references that the Manipuris also had close contacts with other royalties of Assam like Meitei Kings Chalamba (1544-61A.D.) and Mungyamba (1561-79 A.D.) are said to have married Kamrupi princesses.[60] Findings of such references show that Manipuris had maintained marriage alliances extensively with many kingdoms of pre-colonial North East India. But, unfortunately the

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[60] 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- 276

details about the marriages are absent in the chronicles of the states. However, it can be seen that maintaining cordial relationships with neighbouring countries were not a new practice for the Manipuri Rajas.

The organization of matrimonial association between the two royal houses of Ahom and Manipur was not followed by additional regular diplomatic contact for many years. They remained themselves engaged in expanding their own territories and dealing with immediate nearby kingdoms that included occasional external invasions and internal disturbances. However, after long durations, the diplomatic and matrimonial alliances between the two were renewed during the reign of Ahom King Rajeswar Singh (1751–1769 A.D.) and the Manipuri Raja Chingthangkhomba alias Bhagyachandra or Jai Singha (1759–1761 and 1763–1798 A.D.). In preceding years as the kingdoms settled far apart from each other they were engaged in the maintenance and development of its power in their respective territories. Simultaneously, the Rajas who ruled prior to 1764 A.D. did not feel the necessity to redevelop the relationship between the two as the kingdoms have never stood as barrier against their policy of territorial expansion. It was therefore only because of the decisive political instability in the kingdom of Manipur which necessitated the Manipuri King to renew the old relation with the Ahoms. At the same time the Ahoms were readily happy to re-establish the age old relationship which was once maintained by their predecessors. The political condition in Manipur during 1760's was threatened by the repeated invasions of the Burmese. In the year 1764 A.D., the Burmese King Hsinbyusin (1760–1773 A.D.) invaded Manipur. The Manipuri King along with its forces was severely defeated by the Burmese. Whole the country was shattered and devastated, the Manipuri Raja

Bhagyachandra and his troops were unable to stand before the enemy and were bound to retreat. The Burmese created havoc in the kingdom leading to rigorous atrocities and killings. At the instance, the Meitei King was helpless to take aid from the Britishers due to failure of Anglo-British Treaty of 1762 A.D. At these circumstances the Meitei King and his subjects had no other option but to flee from their native state. Along with his nobles Bhagyachandra then fled to Kachari kingdom and further to the Ahom country. The majority of the people took shelter at Moirang.[61] In 1765 A.D. Jai Singha was joined by his Maharani and son at the Kachari country. The whole country of Meitei Leipak was devastated by the Burmese who carried a large number of prisoners on their return. The Ahom chronicles *"Tungkhungia Buranji"* and *"Ahom Buranji"* provides a detail account about the event and diplomatic move of Bhagyachandra. After taking shelter at Kachari Kingdom Raja Jai Singha ask for help to the than Kachari Raja Sandhikari to drive out the Burmese forces from Manipur. But, the Kachari Raja who was under the Ahom's suzerainty expressed his inability to help as his forces were too weak to fight any enemy, instead gave an advice to the Manipuri Raja to procure help from the than Ahom Raja Rajeswar Singh who was a powerful King of the era. Therefore, an envoy was sent by the Rajas of Manipur and Kachari for their willingness to meet the Ahom King Rajeswar Singh. By the order of Rajeswar Singh, the Meitei Raja Jai Singha and the Kachari King Sandhikari were escorted to the Ahom court by the Ahom Barbarua. They were granted an audience at Ahom capital Rangpur and gave warm reception. Both the Kings offered a variety of presents to the Ahom King. According to *"Ahom Buranji"*, 'The Kachari Raja

[61] Singh, Lairenmayum Ibungohal & Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh., *"Cheitharol Kumbaba",* Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 1989, p- 124

offered four tusks, eight elephants, two cloths, and many other things as tribute, to our King. The deposed Raja Jaysing, offered Chaopha Shurem, a long plate of gold and two gold Maihangs'.[62] Raja Jai Singha then without delay requested the Ahom Raja for help to expel the Burmese from the land of Manipur. He also said that 'if I be places again in my old territory after driving away the Mantaras (Burmese), your fame will last forever and I, your slave, will be a vassal of yours and pay annual tribute'.[63] According to some Manipuri traditions, the Ahom Raja suspected the originality of the Meitei King. In this regard, a popular tradition in Manipur states that while Jai Singha was at the Ahom court, the tributary King of Manipur Khellemba sent a letter to the Swargadeo nastily telling him that Jai Singha was not a King of Manipur. Rajeswar Singh in order to test the veracity of this information asked Jai Singha to catch a wild elephant single handed which was an impossible task. But, due to divine interjection, the wild elephant was caught by him and Rajeswar Singh realized his mistake.[64] Dr. Suryakumar Bhuyan in his book *"Studies In the History of Assam"* stated about the event that Jai Singha was successful in passing through the elephant ordeal instituted by the Assam monarch to ascertain whether the fugitive was a real Raja or an imposter.[65] In a while, the Ahom King convened serious consultation with his ministers and agreed to give aid to the Manipuri Raja. At the advice of the King a force was collected and all provisions for an expedition were made. But, many officers

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[62] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, p-287

[63] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, p-287

[64] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-273

[65] Bhuyan, Suryakumar., "*Studies in the History of Assam",* Omsons publications, New Delhi, 1985, p-28

refused to take charge to command the army on the plea of ill health. All those officers were dismissed from their post and deprived from their property. At last, one Haranath Senapati Phukan was appointed as the commander and he was given the task to re-establish Jai Singha on his lost throne.[66] The army consisted of nearly 40,000 men which also included Gargaon and Gauhati recruits. To each assortment of soldiers the King attached the respective Dualia Phukans and Rajkhowas.[67] In 1767 A.D. they decided to march to Manipur directly through the jungles by cutting and clearing the jungles. They entered into a deep dense forest in the middle of the Charaideo hill where they confounded the way. They could not find out any way to Manipur. Many of Ahom soldiers died of blood dysentery, fever, bites of snakes and spiders etc. They also had to undergo great destitution due to lack of food. At the same time, the Nagas refused passageway to them and killed many of them by rolling down stones from hill-tops. This incident or expedition was termed as Lata-Kata Ran or Creeper cutting expedition.[68] Thus, the first expedition to Manipur commanded by Haranath Senapati Phukan failed and had to retreat to Ahom country with the few remaining Ahom soldiers.

Thought the first expedition proved to be a failure the Ahom King did not discourage himself and his people. At the last part of the year another expedition to Manipur was launched by the King along with Raja Jai Singha. This time the Ahom army led by Khangia Phukan along with the Rajkhowas, the Hazarikas and the Saikias and eighty thousand soldiers proceeded to

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[66] Devi, Lakshmi., *"Ahom-Tribal Relations, A Political Study",* Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1992, p-191

[67] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S., Guwahati, 1990, p-57

[68] Devi, Lakshmi., *"Ahom-Tribal Relations, A Political Study",* Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1992, p-192

Manipur. Realizing the previous mistakes of taking the erroneous pathway, the new Ahom soldiers and the Manipuri Raja decided to go through Raha and the Kachari kingdom. In January 1768 A.D. they arrived at Raha and put a camp there. Raja Jai Singha was keeping close contact with the people of Manipur mostly with the Kabuis and Nagas. Raja Jai Singha raised a force of his army from Manipur specially Nagas and along with the Ahom army advanced to Manipur. The deposed King was warmly welcomed by many of his pro-supporters. The *"Cheitharol Kumbaba"* has recorded that 'On hearing the news that Chingthangkhomba Maharaja started from Tekhao (Assam) with 80,000 troops to regain his kingdom of Manipur, Bhabananda, his uncle Senapati, Khwairakpa and Moirang Masemba etc. left for Sangaithem to receive the Maharaja'.[69] Jai Singha with a strong army attacked his enemy far and side in order to recapture the throne at Manipur. But, the Burmese on the news of the arrival of the Ahom army in Manipur left for their native. Jai Singha after reaching Manipur drove out the usurper Khellemba, who had been placed on the Manipur throne by the Burmese. However, the Ahom chronicles mentioned the name of usurper as Bairang.[70] Raja Jai Singha captured the titular King Khellemba and killed him along with many other who were against him. The success of the Manipuri Raja was informed by the Khangia Phukan to Rajeswar Singh. When the news of success was revealed to the Swargadeo, he ordered the Khangia Phukan to dispatch some katakis to Raja Jai Singha in order to look after the act of the Manipuri Raja. Accordingly, one Naga Bara with two hundred men entered the palace of Manipur where they were warmly

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[69] Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), *"The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur",* Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2012, p-117

[70] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, p-289

welcomed by the eminent nobles of the Raja. The Naga Bara intimated the message of Ahom King Rajeswar Singh to Raja Jai Singha of Manipur. The Raja replied thus 'I have regained my dominion through your King's favour. I cannot forget him as long as I live. I shall remain faithful to him and send annual tribute without failure. I have collected men to take my tribute to the heavenly King as a sign of gratitude. I wish to offer my daughter to your King and intend to send her with you.'[71] As such, Jai Singha offered the hand of princess Kuranganayani, his nice and daughter of his late elder brother Gaurashyam. The state chronicle of Manipur recorded in this regard that 'Phongdalokpi, (Meitei name of Kuranganayani) the daughter of the Maharaja and wife of the King of Tekhao (Assam) was escorted to her country by Birmani, the son of Khwairakpa and Haobam Bishnuram Loktongba Heirungba'.[72] The *"Ahom Buranji"* has given detailed accounts of the marriage solemnized between princess Kuranganayani with the Ahom King Rajeswar Singh. In 1768 A.D., "in the month of Magh King Chao-Shurempha alias Rajeswar Singh proceeded to Sonari nagar from Rangpur. In the later part of the month of Magh, Raja Joysing sent two respectable Katakis, namely Hiramani and Nanang with his daughter, Kuranganayani (fawn eyed), to the heavenly King with great pomp. Raja Joysing offered one elephant, one horse, two hundred male and female slaves and many other things as dowry. Our Manmath Bara was to accompany the princess. They arrived at Tengabari. The King heard the news. He ordered the three Dangarias and the Barbarua to go in advance and escort the princess to Sonarinagar. They were further ordered to

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[71] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, pp-289,290

[72] Bihari, Nepram., (edited & translated), *"The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur",* Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2012, p-117

build some houses near the river Tilao, for the residence of the princess. Accordingly, the three Dangarias and the Barbarua did as was desired by the King. Then in the month of Dinshi (Falgun), the females were ordered to fetch water from the river Tilao to wash the body of the princess but the King did not observed the ceremony himself. The princess' body was rubbed with turmeric and washed for seven days. On the day, Mungkeu, the princess was made to ascend the Holong and created Barkuari (Chief queen). Then in the middle of the month of Dinshi (Falgun) on the day Khutmit, one Hiramoni offered the princess in marriage to the King." [73]

However, it is noteworthy that another Ahom chronicle *"Tungkhungia Buranji"* have revealed different version about the circumstances and conduct of the marriage. According to the cited chronicle, the deposed Manipuri Raja Bhagyachandra took shelter at Kachari capital due to Burmese invasion of Manipur in 1764 A.D. After being failed to convince for assistance from the Kachari Raja, the deposed Manipuri King decided to seek the help of the powerful Ahom King Rajeswar Singh. Therefore, message was sent to the Ahom King asking help to drive out the usurpers from Manipur and to recover his lost throne. The message was communicated to the Ahom Raja by the Barbarua. The Barbarua placed the matter before the King 'The Kachari Raja as well as the Manipuri Raja intends to come here to take shelter at the feet of Your Majesty. They have sent words to us accordingly, so I have informed Your Majesty. If Your Majesty orders me, I, your servant, expect to fetch the two chiefs and cause them to pay obeisance with the help of the divine prowess of Your Majesty. Besides, the Kachari and Manipuri Rajas have said that I,

[73] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, p-290

your servant, should go and bring them in person, and so I have informed Your Majesty."[74] On hearing this Ahom King commanded the Barbarua to escort the Rajas in the Ahom court. Thus, the Barbarua brought the Rajas in the court of the Ahom King. They were warmly welcomed in the Ahom court by the King and his ministers. The Rajas were also entertained by musical programmes at which they were outstandingly delighted. Meanwhile, the Barbarua informed the Swargadeo that the Manipuri Raja has a beautiful daughter whom the Ahom Raja can marry. The recommendation of the Barbarua was recorded as 'The chief of Manipur has a daughter named Kuranganayani. The Manipuri Raja was descended of old from Babruvahan. He is a Kshatriya, and there is no doubt about it. I hope, Your Majesty will marry the princess.'[75] Rajeswar Singh agreed the proposal of the Barbarua to marry the Manipuri princess Kuranganayani. Further, the same chronicle recorded that 'The Barbarua then dispatched Khangia Phukan, and Ghumuria Dualia Phukan of the Dihingia family to bring the Manipuri Raja's daughter, mother, brother and son from the Kachari kingdom. They were brought and stationed at Gaurisagar. The Swargadeo then married the princess at the Sonari river by performing the Chaklang ceremony. The Barbarua served as the bride's father and supplied all the necessary articles of marriage. Golden ornaments, dowry and other provisions for food were all supplied from the Barbarua's house.[76] Prof. Gangmumei Kabui opined a similar view that since Jai Singha was a fugitive King, he could not bear the expenses of the royal marriage. Kirtichandra

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[74] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-53

[75] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-55

[76] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-55

Barbarua acted as the bride's father and met all the expenses.[77] After the performance of the marriage the Barbarua informed the Swargadeo about the condition and request of the Manipuri Raja seeking aid for driving out the Burmese from Manipur. The proposal submitted by the Barbarua to the Swargadeo is recorded as 'This chief of Manipur has taken refuge with Your Majesty being driven from his kingdom by the Burman King. The Sastras have said that a fugitive should not be denied protection; so, if Your Majesty can contrive to reinstate the Manipuri Raja in his own kingdom, the act will bring into Your Majesty both fame and piety.'[78] After which the history about providing aid to the Raja of Manipur is recorded similarly in the Buranjis. The Manipuris accompanying princess Kuranganayani were made an establishment at the village Manaimaji in the Sarucharai forest lower down the Dichoi.[79] It is regarded as the first Manipuri settlement in the Brahmaputra valley. The place where the Manipuris settled came to be called as Magalukhat or 'the Manipuri Market'. But, unfortunately, in the present day no trace of Meitei settlement is found in the place. A tank was also excavated in the name of the Manipuri princess Kuranganayani in this place which came to be known as "Magalu Jiyekar Pukhuri" or "tank of the Magalu princess".[80] The tank was located at the bank of the Dichoi river. According to Dr. Bikash Kumar Bora during the long span of time due to the change of river course of the Dichoi the tank has

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[77] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-IV, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-272

[78] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-55

[79] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-55

[80] Sanajaoba, Naorem., (ed.) *"Manipur Past and Present, The Ordeals and Heritage of a Civilization, Vol-IV, Pan-Manipuris in Asia and Autochthones",* Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p-276

eroded and flowed with the river. Therefore, at present we do not find any remains of the tank which enabled the preservation of the historical tank. Further, it is observed and found that there is another tank located at the premise of Dikhow College in the area of Gaurisagar, Sivsagar. The information publicized by the Dept. Of History of the cited college identifies the tank to be excavated in the name of the Manipuri princess Kuranganayani. The general inhabitance of the area also expressed the similar opinion. This definitely creates a doubt about the originality of the tank which was in reality excavated in relation to the queen. However, in this regard it can be assumed that both the tanks are related with the stated period and the queen because in the later years the Manipuris were also allowed their settlement at the nearby areas of the Ahom capital, Rangpur. So, another tank was perhaps excavated in the name of the Manipuri queen at the Dikhow area. Again, when the Ahom capital was shifted from Jorhat to Garhgaon, the Manipuris were resettled in places like Garhgaon, Kujiwali, Hanghchara and Singhadowar. A plot of land was also granted by the Ahom King Rajeswar Singh to the Manipuri settlers for production of their survival which was to the West of Magalu Khat. In the present date the area is called as 'Malou Pathar'. Some of the local inhabitants describe the meaning behind the name specified to the place. As narrated, in the early time the place was called as 'Ima Lou' (Ima-mother identifying the Meitei queen and Lou-crop which implies the cultivable field) by the Manipuris. In later years, 'Ima Lou' came to be known as 'Malou' or 'Mallou' pathar.[81]

[81] Bora, Dr. Bikash Kumar., *"Maloupatharaor Itihas",* Sandhani Prokash, Jorhat, 2005, p-123

The history of the marriage alliance which took place between Ahom Raja Rajeswar Singh with Manipuri princess Kuranganayani is recorded in various Buranjis of Assam as stated above. But, the Buranjis provides un-similar information about the event of the marriage which creates various confusions. However, the noteworthy about the sources is the fact that the marriage was solemnized without fail. In considering the informations provided by '*Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.'* it can be said that the bond developed was in one hand dictated by the Ahoms. The Manipuri Raja was helpless at that hour and was not in a position to deny any proposal or order of the Ahom King. Well aware with the fact that rejection of any proposals of the Ahoms may lead to bitter relationship with them from whom the Manipuri Raja had to seek aid. Therefore, understanding well the situation the marriage was wisely organized. On the other hand, the Ahoms who were under pervasive influence of Hinduism felt more prestigious to come in close contact with the royalties like Manipuris who were linked with the 'Pandavas' of the 'Mahabharata'. Thus, this matrimonial alliance proved to be of high advantage for both the kingdoms. It was in true sense a diplomatic marriage alliance that enhances the power and protection of both the kingdoms from external aggression as well as to maintain a friendly relation. Unlike the previous contact this marriage has helped the kingdom to maintain a long lasting friendly relationship followed by diplomatic correspondence. In later years, during the reign of Ahom King Lakshmi Singh (1769-1780 A.D.) Kuranganayani played an imperative role in liberating the Ahom monarchy from the grip of the Moamaria rebellers. Again, according to Sarbananda Rajkumar, a local Assamese historian, Ahom King Rajeswar Singh also married two more Manipuri ladies named

Bhubeneswari and Rupavatee.[82] But, about the event the available literary sources of the states did not provide any information. However, speculation may be made that perhaps the ladies did not belong to any royal family therefore no mention is made of such occurrence in the chronicles. Unavailability of related sources thus creates problem in detailing about events of such importance.

The Ahom-Manipuri friendship went on in continuation even during the reign of next Ahom King Lakshmi Singh. The bond of friendship was again heightened by following the policy of wed-lock with the Manipuri princesses. Lakshmi Singh was at his advance age on the eve of his accession to the throne. He at first remarried Manipuri princess Kuranganayani, the widow of his elder brother. The reign of Lakshmi Singh was a period of misfortune and disaster due to the lethal revolt of the Moamaria who were in the motive of destroying the mighty Ahoms. The strong rule of Ahom monarchy was shaken by the Moamaria rebellers which started for the first time in 1769 A.D. In October 1769 A.D., a Moran named Ragha, who styled himself Barbarua attacked the Ahom army and defeated them in various engagements. Ragha now made an advance way to Rangpur. The old Ahom King was greatly alarmed of the situation and made consultation with his ministers. On the advice of the council of ministers Lakshmi Singh left Rangpur and made flight to Guwahati. But, on his way at Sonarinagar Lakshmi Singh was caught by the men of Ragha and brought back to Rangpur. The deposed Raja was kept confined in the temple of Jaysagar. The capture of Ahom King by the Morans is recorded as the Moamaria leader Ragha Moran with his army entered the city at midnight on the fourth Danda. Their entry was signalized by a salvo of gun-

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[82] Rajkumar, Sarbananda., *"Itihahase Hnuowara Chhashta Bachhar, Ahom Yugor Asom Buranji (1228-1826)",* Banalata, Dbrugarh, 2000, p-101

fire. In that very night Ragha sent 400 Baratias or adherents who surrounded and captured the King and his followers at the Sonari camp in the early part of the day.'[83] Most of the Ahom officials including the powerful Kirti Chandra Barbarua were put to death by the Morans. All the Phukans and Rajkhowas who had offered their submission to the Morans were now brought with them. Ragha brought into his harem the wives of the deposed King and the widow of his predecessor Rajeswar, including the Manipuri princess who had been the wife of both brothers in turn.[84] Dr. S.K Bhuyan has recorded that 'Ragha Barbarua then said that he would take one hundred wives. Thus saying he brought in the queen, who was the daughter of the Manipuri Raja, as well as the daughters of the Phukans and the Baruas.'[85] The Ahom nobles who were defeated by Ragha determined to overpower the Morans and capture their leader Ragha who titled himself as Barbarua. For the act the charge was taken by one Ram Krishna. He succeeded in making secret conspiracy with the Manipuri princess who readily agreed to punish the notorious enemy. A burly plan was hatched by Ram Krishna in order to execute the enemy without fail. The plot was brought in effect on April 1770 A.D. in which the Manipuri queen Kuranganayani played the vital role in killing the Moran leader Ragha Moran. The deliberation of the conspiracy is recorded as 'Ram-Krishnai who was charged with the task of capturing Ragha conspired with the Magalu princess and she promised to do away with Ragha. Then Ram-Krishnai hatched a plan with some Magalus and other men. On the Sankranti of the month of

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[83] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-69

[84] Gait, Sir Edward., *"A History of Assam",* Surjeet Publications, Delhi, (reprint) 2008, p-196

[85] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-70

Baisakha, preceded and stopped at the inner entrance. Having received this news Ragha surmised that Govinda Gaonburha Senapati of Sagunmuri had come with his Chekani-kobowa soldiers, and accordingly he came out to escort them with a sarai with betel-nuts and leaves. The Magalu princess with a sword in her hand followed him with other ladies each armed with dao. There was not a single male. Ram-Krishnai then gave the hint by uttering a few words. The Magalu princess, recognizing the voice, struck Ragha with a sword just below the calf. Ragha fell down with his face towards the ground. Then Ram-Krishnai who was also there severed his head.'[86] Thereafter, the forces of Ragha were killed one by one by the Ahom royalist. The Ahom King Lakshmi Singh was released from the captivity and re-instated to the Ahom throne again. The general massacre of the Moamaria by the royalist led to slaughter of large number of Moamarias. In the task of suppressing the Morans the Manipuri soldiers also extended their help. Thus, it was only with the bravery step taken by the Magalu queen Kuranganayani that the vicious Maomaria leader Ragha was assassinated. The death of Ragha enabled the Ahoms to suppress the Maomarias and peace was brought in the kingdom for few years.

Some years later, in order to improve the cordial relationship an Ahom-Manipuri matrimonial alliance was organized during the reign of same ruler. The then King of Manipur Jai Singha in order to uphold the long-standing gracious association with the Ahoms proposed to give his son's daughter in marriage to Chao Shungeupha ngammung. She was the daughter of the elder

[86] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-73

brother of Kuranganayani.[87] King Lakshmi Singh who received exceptional help from the Manipuris during his crucial political situation happily accepted the proposal and married the princess. She was also given land for her residence along with her attendants. This was perhaps the second large settlement of Manipuris in Brahmaputra valley. But, no exact information is known as to which part of land was offered to the Manipuri settlers by the Ahom Raja. At the same time, no further detail about the marriage is available in any of the sources. But it is clear that the marriage was a continuous development of wed-lock tradition between the two royalties with the motive to prolong their amity. It can also be said that the marriage was a peaceful diplomatic step by Raja Jai Singha thinking that the mighty Ahoms would soon rehold their strong position. The establishment of such pleasant connection between the two kingdoms continued for many years with reciprocal exchanges of envoys and aid in times of war and peace.

After this there is no further record inscribed about the policy of wedlock between the Ahoms with that of Manipuris in any sources. It was because of the changing political scenario in both the monarchies. But, the practice of diplomatic correspondence continued in proceeding years. It may be noted that during the reign of next Ahom King Gaurinath Singh, in 1786 A.D. the Moamarias waged a powerful rebellion against the Ahoms which ultimately led to civil war in the kingdom. By, 1788 A.D. Gaurinath had to flee as far as Guwahati. In order to suppress the Moamarias he sent messages to many of his tributary Rajas along with the Manipuri Raja for assistance. On his appeal, the Manipuri Raja remembering the earlier help rendered by the Ahom in 1760's

[87] Barua, Rai Sahib Golap Chandra., (translated and edited) *"Ahom Buranji, from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule*", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, (reprint) 1985, p-314

as well as to maintain their friendship sent a Manipuri force under Dharmadhi, the spiritual preceptor of the Manipuri Raja with the Ahom envoy Bishnuram Babharia to fight against the Moamarias.[88] But, the Manipuri army failed in their objective and returned back to Manipur. After two years in 1790 A.D. the Ahom King immediately sent another urgent message and asked the Meitei Raja to render help. Mrs. Lakshmi Devi has recorded the message in the following manner, "The Moamarias have caused disturbances in our country. The Manipuri Raja should come to help us in recollection of old friendship; if not, he should send some warlike men". Subsequently, realizing the situation the Manipuri Raja Jai Singha and his son Madhuchandra accompanied by Meitei forces comprising of 500 horse soldiers and 800[89] foot soldiers moved towards Assam for suppressing the revolting Moamarias and to help the Ahoms. According to *"Tungkhungia Buranji"* the numerical strength of the Meitei army consisted of four hundred men with horses, and another four hundred with guns; while the carriers and labourers would come up to few thousands.[90] Raja Jai Singha meanwhile refused to assist the Ahom army as he was dictated to start the fight without having a discussion with the Ahom swargadeo. Therefore, an interview was organized between the two Rajas after which the Manipuri soldiers under its Chief chased the Moamarias and halted them some distance down the Gaurisagar. Prince Madhuchandra followed by his father proceeded towards Rangpur but this time the Moamarias severely defeated the Manipuris. The furious Moamarias after taking secure positions

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[88] Devi, Lakshmi., *"Ahom-Tribal Relations, A Political Study",* Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1992, p-194

[89] Kabui, Gangmumei., *"History of Manipur, Vol-I, Pre-Colonial Period",* National Publishing House, New Delhi, 2011, p-275

[90] Bhuyan, Dr.S.K., *"Tungkhungia Buranji or History of Assam from 1681-1826 A.D.,"* (translated), D. H.A.S, Guwahati, 1990, p-127

were waiting along the road concealing themselves in the wood. Finally, the encounter took place where the Meitei armies were ambushed by the Moamarias leading to slaughter of many Manipuri soldiers. The Meiteis could not stand long against the attackers. At last the old Manipuri Raja quickly retreated and rushed back to his country as there were disturbances created by the Burmese forces leaving behind one thousand Manipuri forces with the Ahom Buragohain. After the detachment of the Meitei Raja the Ahoms were attacked by the Moamarias in the side of Dichoi. The remaining Manipuri forces were sent by the Ahom Buragohain to fight the enemy. But, they instead left for their native Manipur without proper information to the Buragohain. The Meitei King annoyed with act of his forces punished its soldiers for the unauthorized return from Assam. There is a common belief that the Manipuri inhabitants of the villages Borkola, Hnaghchara and Singhadowar never drink the water of Namdang river. According to the tradition, the Manipuri Raja Bhagyachandra on the request of Ahom King Gourinath Singh arrived along with his forces to fight against the Morans in 1790 A.D. A fierce battle took place between the Manipuris and the Morans, unfortunately most of the Manipuris were massacred by the river. Even the water of the Namdang river was believed to have been coloured by the blood of the Manipuris.[91] This was the last record of Ahom-Manipuri correspondence of any form. After this event references displaying any further Ahom-Manipuri diplomatic correspondence are found. With the span of time the contact began to loosen in every aspect between the two monarchies.

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[91] Bahadur, Mutua., *"Manipuri Costumes Through the Ages",* Mutua Museum, Imphal, 2011, p-138

From the above information provided by the State chronicles and various sources it can be concluded that during the period between 15th to 19th century there were few number of marriage alliances solemnized between Ahoms and the Manipuris. The instance of the marriages began during the first part of 16th century and concluded by last half of 18th century. It can be noted that the reference of first marriage was a reciprocal event which clearly indicated of having equal status of the kingdoms where gifts were also exchanged between the two. It may be regarded as a peaceful diplomatic move by the monarchies in order to avoid speculative conflicts that might arise in the process of their expansionist policy. However, in later years such traditions are found absent. In regard to the marriage of Princess Kuranganayani, if considering the information provided by 'Tungkhungia Buranji' the helplessness of Raja Jai Singha at that political juncture, the marriage of princess to the Ahom King was a compulsion of the time. But, it however turned out to be benefitted for both the monarchies. The immediate beneficiary was the Manipuris whereas of the Ahoms in later years. Again, when the marriage proposal of Kuranganayani was offered to the Ahom King Rajeswar Singh, the Ahom Barbarua clearly stated that the Manipuris were 'Kshatriyas' and the descendants of 'Babruvahan'. It implied that the Hindu Royalist were always eager to indulge in contacts with other Hindu royalist which adds dignity to their kingdom. Therefore, as the Manipuris were Kshatriyas which signify high origin the Ahom Kings were always prepared for such marriages. It was perhaps one of the important reasons for the marriage alliances. It is observed that numerous sources provided different versions and time of marriages but it seems more adequate that the princess Kuranganayani was

married to the Ahom King Rajeswar Singh during the exiled years of Manipuris at Kachari kingdom. Solemnization of this marriage and formation of new Ahom-Manipuri kinship might have led to quick positive response by the Ahoms. Though the tradition of wed-lock between the two monarchies continued in later years but the sources available are unable to provide detailed account of the later marriages.

During the years of monarchies as organization of inter-dynastic marriage was common phenomenon, the royal ladies of ruling families of Ahom and Manipur were well acquainted with such traditions. However, at the beginning of the reference of first Ahom-Manipuri matrimonial alliance mention has been made of expressing disappointment by the queens of Ahom King Suhungmung when a new Manipuri queen was added in the royal palace but in later years such incident are absent as they became acquainted with the tradition. Thus, generally in such type of marriages the princesses were not offered the opportunity to express their willingness as well as they did not opt for any opposition. In a way, they were used like diplomatic tools which fulfilled the political requirement of the time. These marriage alliances were thus not less than any diplomatic alliances which strengthened the bond of friendship among the kingdoms.