THE COURT CHRONICLE OF THE KINGS OF MANIPUR
THE CHEITHARON KUMPAPA

Original text, translation and notes
VOL. 1, 33 – 1763 CE

Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt

Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details
THE COURT CHRONICLE OF THE KINGS OF MANIPUR: THE CHEITHARON KUMPAPA

The Cheitharon Kumpapa is the court chronicle of the kings of Manipur, a small formerly independent state situated on the Indian border with Myanmar. The Cheitharon Kumpapa is a court account of the state, which claims to record events from the founding of the ruling dynasty in 33 CE. This dynasty continued until the abolition of the monarchy after the merger of the state with India in 1949. The document is thus probably the oldest chronicle in the region, written on handmade Meetei (Manipuri) paper made from tree bark in locally made ink with a quill or a bamboo pen. All in all it comprises more than 1,000 leaves. This volume contains a copy of the original text of the Cheitharon Kumpapa, authorised by the Palace, and the English translation from the original composed in archaic Manipuri script (Meetei Mayek). Explanatory notes and a glossary complement this interesting source of information. Scholars working on East and South Asia will find this volume enlightening, and the text will be useful for those readers engaged in social anthropology, religious history, archaeology, human geography and linguistics.

Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt is a Manipuri born in Imphal, Manipur. She obtained her doctorate from the Australian National University under the supervision of the renowned Indologist the late A.L.Basham. She has lectured at several universities in Africa and has been visiting professor at the University of Manipur. She is an Honorary Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Research in Arts and Social Sciences, University of Birmingham. She has written extensively on Manipur’s history and culture in articles that have been published in international journals and is the author of several books.
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY BOOKS

The Royal Asiatic Society was founded in 1823 ‘for the investigation of subjects connected with, and for the encouragement of science, literature and the arts in relation to, Asia’. Informed by these goals, the policy of the Society’s Editorial Board is to make available in appropriate formats the results of original research in the humanities and social sciences having to do with Asia, defined in the broadest geographical and cultural sense and up to the present day.

THE MAN IN THE PANTHER’S SKIN
Shota Rustaveli
Translated from the Georgian by M.S. Wardrop
New Foreword by Donald Rayfield

WOMEN, RELIGION AND CULTURE IN IRAN
Edited by Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin

SOCIETY, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN MAZANDARAN, IRAN 1848–1914
Mohammad Ali Kazembeyki

THE ZEN ARTS
Rupert Cox

STUDIES IN TURKIC AND MONGOLIC LINGUISTICS
Gerard Clauson
New Introduction by C.Edmund Bosworth

THE HISTORY OF THE MOHAMMEDAN DYNASTIES IN SPAIN
Ahmed ibn Mohammed al-Makkari
Translated from the Arabic by Pascual de Gayangos
New Introduction by Michael Brett
THE COURTS OF PRE-COLONIAL SOUTH INDIA
Jennifer Howes

PERSIAN LITERATURE: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY
Volume V: Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period
François de Blois

MUSLIMS IN INDIA SINCE 1947
Islamic perspectives on inter-faith relations
Yoginder Sikand

THE ORIGINS OF HIMALAYAN STUDIES
Brian Houghton Hodgson in Nepal and Darjeeling 1820–1858
Edited by David M Waterhouse

THE COURT CHRONICLE OF THE KINGS OF MANIPUR: THE CHEITHARON
KUMPAPA
Original text, translation and notes Vol. 1, 33–1763 CE
Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt
Endpaper illustration  Map of the eastern frontier of British India, with the adjacent countries extending to Yunan in China, by Captain R. Boileau Pemberton (Calcutta, 1838). Courtesy of the British Library.

First published 2005 by Routledge  2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge 270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group
“ To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/.”

© 2005 Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data A catalog record for this book has been requested


TO THE MAICHOUS OF THE PUNDIT LOISANG
CONTENTS

Preface ix
Abbreviations xi

PART ONE

Introduction 2
List of kings 19
Manipuri lunar months 21

PART TWO

The Cheitharon Kumpapa: English translation 23
Glossary of Manipuri words 175

PART THREE

Meetei Mayek or Meetei script 187
The manuscript text of the Cheitharon Kumpapa in Meetei Mayek 190
PREFACE

Over a decade ago Professor N.N. Acharya, the noted historian of India’s north-eastern region, commented: ‘About the written account of Manipur it may be suggested that not only in the local languages of Manipur but also in English these chronicles must be published. [Together with Rajmala of Tripura] these valuable works deserve further study and research on scientific lines.’ (Proceedings of the North East India Historical Association, Third session, Introduction, Jagirod 1991.) This volume is an attempt to move this important task forward.

The Manipur state chronicle, the Cheitharon Kumpapa, is one of a number of such chronicles that originated in an area which is the land bridge between South Asia, South East Asia and China. It has never before been available in English, and it is hoped that this translation will be of material use to historians and other scholars of these regions. I hope also that the publication of the original and official Ms in Meetei Mayek (old Manipuri script) will be of interest to linguists and palaeographers, and that it will help to stimulate the growing study of this script in Manipur and elsewhere.

The existence of Cheitharon Kumpapa came to the knowledge of the people of Manipur only in the late 1960s in spite of its existence for many centuries. It was protected and kept in the custody of a few court scholars. The official copy was kept in the Manipur Royal Palace but was overseen by the Pundit Loisang, the Institute of Manipuri Maichous (Meetei traditional scholars). After the enforced merger of Manipur with India in 1949 the Cheitharon Kumpapa continued to be kept unofficially, recording the Meetei lunar calendar, ritual and religious rites, and the role of the descendants of the last king of Manipur, Meetingu Bodhchandra. The general public in Manipur did not have access to the recorded history of their own land and people until the first limited edition of the transliterated copy into the Bengali script was published in the 1940s. But the Ms copies in Meetei Mayek remained closely guarded by their custodians. It was only in the late 1970s that some portions of the chronicle began to be used in a scholarly and critical manner.

Without the help of many friends and colleagues this publication would not have been possible. My especial thanks go to Kulachandra Ngariyanbam, the Head Maichou of the Pundit Loisang, who preserved the official copy of this Cheitharon Kumpapa after the cessation of the kingship. Had he not taken such care of the Ms copy, it would most probably have disappeared along with the rest of the private and court documents. I regard myself as extremely honoured that he has allowed me to copy this very precious historical material. Bhubon Haobam, chairman of the National Research Centre, Manipur, encouraged two of his staff, Irabanta Nameirakpam and Sopen Kshetrimayum, to assist me. They kindly travelled with me, and arranged for copying the Ms in the very difficult circumstances caused by shortage of fuel and particularly severe and disruptive army and paramilitary activity. Irabanta, together with Khomva Ngariyanbam, carried out the arduous task of photocopying the bulky Ms. My thanks are also due to Tony
Nongmeikapam for the free use of his motor cycle when no other transport was available. I must also acknowledge colleagues at Manipur University whose assistance was invaluable: the Chief Librarian, Radheshyam Chingakham, and his staff for providing me with books and giving practical help in innumerable ways; Dr Tejmani Sharma of the computer centre; Purnachandra Thoudam, the former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and most importantly Professor Tombi Hijam the former Vice-Chancellor of Manipur University; Rajen Sanasam, in charge of the Manipur University guest house, for facilitating a very happy stay in the university guest house, which became a second home in Manipur for me. I also thank my former philosophy student Premkanta Waikhom Mangang for his advice concerning the Meetei Mayek script; Maichou Rajen Phura Hongba Thounaojamb, who supplied the key for deciphering scribal conventions; Professor Kangjiya Ngariyanbam for information on the archaic Manipuri writing material; Dr Khomba Khuman, private secretary/adviser to the titular king of Manipur; Khelachandra Ningthoukhongjamb, former Keeper of Records in the Manipur State Secretariat Library, and Khomva Ngariyanbam for their discussion on the meaning of some of the archaic Manipuri terms; and especially Professor Gunindra Paonam of the Manipuri Department, who during my three visits to Manipur spent so much time sharing with me his knowledge of Manipuri language and customs. I must also mention my young Manipuri friends Tikendra Maisanamb, Gune Mayanglambam, and my two sons, Chris and Tim, whose computer skills kept me going during some trying days. Tiken also scanned the whole of the Ms text contained in this volume, and Gune supplied the Meetei Mayek font. My former colleague in the University of Botswana, Dr Bruce Bennett, provided me with a number of very helpful insights into historical methodology. My husband, Professor John Parratt, and our daughter, Dr Rachel Parratt, gave me great encouragement to persevere with the completion of this difficult task and especially John for commenting with his wide and deep knowledge of textual critical approach and of the history of Manipur while the work was in progress, as well as for reading and commenting on the final version several times. My sisters Sabita, Mema and Rebecca and their families gave me valuable support during my several lengthy visits to Manipur.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the Royal Asiatic Society, particularly to Andrea Belloli, for funding the publication of this work.

It is my hope that this English version of the Cheitharon Kumpapa will provide new historical material for non-Manipuri scholars. Equally that the publication for the first time of the original Meetei Mayek text will enable Manipuris to study the text of the chronicle for themselves, and will thus encourage further critical exploration of Manipur’s language, script, culture and history.

Saroj N.Arambam Parratt
Carlisle
June 2003
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ch.K.</td>
<td><em>Cheitharon Kumpapa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Ms</td>
<td>Official palace manuscript of <em>Ch.K.</em> in the custody of Pundit Ngariyanbam Kulachandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhab Ms</td>
<td><em>P. Ms</em> copied by Thongangam Madhab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Din. Ms</td>
<td>Manuscript of <em>Ch.K.</em> copied by Nameirakpam Dinachandra which was in his custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deva M</td>
<td>Manuscript of <em>Ch.K.</em> copied by Kharaibam Deva which was in his custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI. &amp; NK. Ch.K. (i)</td>
<td><em>Ch.K.</em> transliterated into Bengali script and edited by Lairenmayum Ibungohal and Ningthoukhongjam Khelachandra, published by Manipur Sahitya Parishad in 1967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART ONE
INTRODUCTION

The written history of Manipur

Manipur is situated in north-east India on the border with Myanmar. The area of the state is about 8,500 square miles, comprising a central valley, the traditional home of the Meeteis (Meiteis), which is surrounded by ranges of hills inhabited by tribal peoples. These consist of many disparate groups, which later observers classified under the two general tribes of Naga and Kuki. The current population is about 2 million, two-thirds of whom are Meeteis and a third tribal. The Meeteis were a confederacy of seven (originally nine) yeks or clans. These subsequently came together under the dominance of the Meetei Ningthouja yek, which also gave its name to the whole nation. The yeks had their own divinities (lai), some of which may have been deified ancestors. There was a supreme deity, Sanamahi, who was also known by other titles reflecting His attributes. The autochthonous Chakpa people may have been matriarchal and worshipped a Mother Goddess, Leimaren. The reverence of all these lai continues to play an important role in Meetei society today despite the advances of Hinduism beginning in the eighteenth century (Parratt 1980; Parratt and Parratt 1997).

The Cheitharon Kumpapa (or Cheitharol Kumbaba, henceforth referred to as Ch.K.) records events concerning the kings and the state up until the end of the kingship in 1955. It claims to trace the history back to 33 CE, though as we shall see the earlier part is problematic. Comparatively little has been written about the early history of Manipur, and what there is, is often inaccurate. The British established a political agency in Manipur in 1835. In 1891 they invaded Manipur, but did not annex the state, though they retained a certain amount of political control. Manipur regained its complete independence in August 1947 and, together with Travancore, became the first state on the Indian subcontinent to hold elections by full adult franchise. An elected assembly was set up with the king as constitutional ruler. In October 1949 Manipur was taken over by India.

Written records exist from the beginning of the British period. Some of these are quite crucial (especially Pemberton 1835; McCulloch 1859; Brown 1874). But the information they contain on the earlier period is necessarily second-hand and not especially accurate. For the pre-British period the Ch.K. is the only source we have which is of any substantial historical value. Histories written by Manipuris themselves began to emerge in the twentieth century. There were broadly two trends, both with clear ideological agendas. An earlier one, which is still influential in some circles, is associated especially with a court brahmin, Phurailatpam Atombapu Sharma. His voluminous writings all have the same agenda of reading back the influence of brahmanical Hinduism (which became especially strong during the 1920s and 1930s) into the earliest period of Manipur’s history. For this theory there is no evidence. Hinduism, but in its Chaitanyite Vaishnavite form, began to appear in Manipur only around 1700 (Parratt 1980:135–66). Atombapu and his disciples in fact rewrote the early history of Manipur, including Hinduising
sections of the *Ch.K.*, to support their own thesis, and in doing so put back the serious study of Manipuri history for a whole generation. In the 1950s, soon after the merger of Manipur with India, a different approach arose, but which still retained many elements of Atombapu’s theories. These writers\(^1\) were fundamentally apologists for the integration of Manipur into the Indian mainstream. They were, by and large, Congress supporters who reinterpreted early Manipuri history to support their contention that the state had always shared in the culture of the Indian subcontinent. This is not correct. In language, ethnicity, culture, and in its history Manipur (like most of the North East Region) has been quite distinct from India proper. A careful examination by Gangumei Kabui appeared in 1991 which has made creative use of oral myths and legends in trying to reconstruct aspects of the early history. For the modern period there are several substantial scholarly works by Manipuris. It is important to note, however, that none of these writers used the *P. Ms* version of the *Ch.K.* in the archaic Manipuri script, *Meetei Mayek*. All were dependent upon a transliteration of the chronicle into Bengali script which we shall discuss below. This has led to problematic interpretations, especially for the pre-British period.

The nature of the *Cheitharon Kumpapa*

The title of the chronicle, *Cheitharon Kumpapa*, reflects the Meetei manner of counting and recording. *Chei* means ‘a stick’, *thapa (thaba) ‘to place, put down’. Counting in ancient Manipur was done by placing sticks, which represented the base number. *Cheithapa* therefore means placing stick(s) to aid counting. *Kum* means a period of time, and the verb *paba* to read or reckon. (The text actually reads *kumpapu*, the final suffix *pu* indicating the object). The title of the chronicle thus implies ‘placing of sticks or using a base as a means of reckoning the period of time, the years’.

The *Cheitharon Kumpapa* falls into the category of national chronicles which are not uncommon in South East Asia, though are rare in India itself. The chronicle itself indicates that in the year 1485 CE King Kyampa began to keep the court chronicle in accurate detail, with the *cheithapa* method of dating\(^2\) after a meeting with the king of Pong, an ancient kingdom in what is now upper Myanmar. (The text, however, does not imply that the keeping of the *Ch.K.* was actually begun only at that time.) The chronicle of the kings of Pong seems no longer to be in existence, but it is quoted at length in Pemberton’s book on the north-eastern frontier of India, published in 1835. The Pongs were almost certainly migrants from southern China, and the ancient kingdom of Pong was situated between the border with Yunnan and the hills overlooking the Kabaw valley. There is compelling evidence that the Meeteis also migrated into their present land from the same direction, probably before the Christian era. Chinese historiography is well attested and it is possible that the practice of keeping such chronicles ultimately owes its origins to the Chinese. We find similar chronicles among Manipur’s neighbours. The Ahom *Buranjis* are perhaps among the most important documents of similar genre. The Ahoms already had their own script when they entered Assam in the thirteenth century CE. There are numerous *Buranjis*: some are family histories but the more important were compiled, no doubt from earlier records, at the command of the kings.\(^3\) In Burma the *Glass Palace Chronicle* is a similar royal chronicle,\(^4\) while Tripura has the *Rajmala*. 
The Ch.K., the court history of the kings of Manipur, claims to trace the history of the Meetei kingdom back to 33 CE, and it ends with the last king, Bodhchandra, in 1955. As we shall show below, the earlier part of the chronicle is problematic both as regards dating and historicity, though the information it contains is still useful in reconstructing Manipur’s early history. In this part the land over which the kings ruled is not called Manipur. The use of the term ‘Meetingu’ (lit. lord of the Meeteis) for ‘king’ indicates that the chronicle is essentially the repository of the Meetei writing of history. It reflects the Meetei viewpoint over against that of the other yeks or clan groups, as well as of other peoples. Some of these were probably pre-Meetei autochthones (like the Chakpa and the Loi), others are today classified as ‘tribal’ (such as the Maram and Tangkhuls). In the course of time the Meetei yek subjugated the other yeks into a confederacy, for which they provided the monarch. They hence came to be known as ‘Ningthoucha’ (Ningthouja), i.e. royal, and the name Meetei became applied to the whole confederate nation. The Ch.K. is essentially the story of the expansion of the Meeteis across the valley and hills of Manipur, and of the gradual assimilation of the yeks and tribes into their kingdom. It is therefore, like most royal chronicles, selective in the events it records, focusing especially on the birth and death of kings, and on their major exploits which contributed to the development of the state.

The cheithapa system of dating introduced by King Kyampa (Sak. 1389–1430/1467–1508 CE) enabled accurate dating by naming each year after an individual, to whom the name cheithapa was given. The cheithapa system was begun in Sak. 1407/1485 CE and from then on the Ch.K. records not only the year by name of the cheithapa, but also the month and the day of the month of each event. From this time onwards, the essential historicity of the chronicle seems assured.

It seems that the earlier section of the chronicle, that is the events before Kyampa’s accession, was reconstructed at a later time, during the reign of Chingthangkhompa (alias Bhagyachandra or Jai Singh). A note within the text, situated at the end of King Punsipa’s reign and before the reign of Ningthoukompa (Sak. 1354/1432 CE), indicates that in the year of Takhen Ramcharan (Sak. 1702/1780 CE) Bhagyachandra commissioned a recompiling of the part of the Ch.K. ‘which had been lost’. The insertion of the note at this point suggests that during the troubled reign of Bhagyachandra, when Manipur was attacked and occupied several times by the Burmese, the keeping of the chronicle was disrupted and the earlier leaves of it were either lost or destroyed. A more sceptical view would be that this portion never existed in a written form and was actually composed at the time, though this is unlikely. Whatever the facts, it is clear that Bhagyachandra’s scribes had the task of writing or reconstructing the proto-history of Manipur, presumably from oral sources and memory, and perhaps also from scattered written records. As one would expect in such circumstances the material in this section of the Ch.K. is extremely sketchy. The dating given for the reign of all of these kings cannot be taken seriously for historical purposes. Some are assigned excessively long reigns of 90 to 100 years or more (perhaps meant simply to indicate a long reign), and there are some gaps in the chronology. Nor, furthermore, is it all clear that we are dealing only with one dynasty, or even with Ningthouchas only, since the names of the fathers are not often given and those of mothers are omitted entirely. We should probably conclude that
this section of the Ch.K. provides a convenient framework, a kind of historical construct, into which the writers have fitted the names of remembered kings and the exploits attributed to them. Possibly these are legendary figures, taken from the traditions of all the yeks which eventually made up the Meetei confederacy. Stories of conquest predominate, presumably with the purpose of giving an historical basis to the claims of the Meetei kings over the other yeks and peoples of the Manipur valley and hills as well as some of their neighbouring countries. Seen from this point of view this portion gives us clues as to the manner of the gradual expansion of Meetei suzerainty. Unfortunately several of the conquered groups and others with whom the Meeteis came into contact are not now identifiable with certainty in our present state of research.

The section translated here, 33–1763 CE (the date when the first contact with the British East India Company was made through one of the foreigners from India who was the king’s adviser), deals also to some extent with the Meeteis’ relations with the neighbouring countries, Mayang (Cachar, Bangla Desh), Kapo (Kabaw), Khamaran, Kakyen (Khakyen, a Shan state in Upper Burma), Pong (another Shan state), Aawa (Ava), Khaki (southern China), Takhen (Tripura), Tekhao (Ahom) and others. The settlement of many migrant groups of various ethnic origins from both the east and the west, the subdivision of the land for administrative purposes, the formation of a constitution, the decentralising of administration, and the enforced conversion of the people to Hinduism by royal pressure, also find a place. It is clear that every able-bodied man took part in the defence and service of the country and that the king himself did not hesitate to join them. Economy was in the hands of women, while men were engaged in defence and warfare, and in the absence of men women even defended the land. The writers of the chronicle were also conscious of the environment. Forest management, protection of many groves and of wild life, drainage and dredging of rivers, digging of new canals, improvement in the irrigation of paddy fields, regular maintenance of existing roads and making of new ones, and so on, are a regular feature of the entries in the earlier section. The people were warlike, brave, outdoor-loving and sportive. Recreation in the form of picnics is a regular feature in the entries, as well as sports such as hunting, boat racing, polo, hockey and even sports for the disabled. They were an agricultural as well as a boat people. Entries concerning the introduction of different patterns of embroidery and weaving also indicate the industrial and creative nature of the women. The people were egalitarian in that the king and his household, including the ladies, as well as the common people are recorded as having worked together for the good of the land. There is also a negative side of the picture, in the entries about mistrust and envy between brothers by different mothers in the royal household who were desirous of the throne, a phenomenon which is not uncommon in the ancient histories of other peoples or nations. There was no rule of primogeniture in succession to the throne.

Methods of dating within the Cheitharon Kumpapa

One of the most intractable problems is the dating of the events in the chronicle. One must assume that if there was any original yearly dating in the earlier reconstructed part, then (as in most other ancient civilisations) it must have been by the year of the reign of each king, though no trace of this remains in the Ch.K. Before the introduction of the
cheithapa dating, events are recorded only within the broad framework of each king’s reign. Only after the cheithapa dating was introduced were events recorded with dates, days and months. Even if there were no events to record, yearly cheithapa names are always indicated. After the annexation of Manipur by India the cheithapa names were still recorded and this practice still continues. They became part of a calendar and the years bore the cheithapa persons’ names.

It is not clear when dating by means of the Sakabda era, which was commonly used in India, was inserted into the Ch.K. After the introduction of the Sakabda era, each reign was given a Sakabda dating. It has been suggested (Manihar 1996:71) that the Sakabda dating came in during the reign of Kyampa (Sak. 1389–1430/1467–1508 CE), the same king who introduced the cheithapa dating. This seems unlikely. Kyampa’s cheithapa dating system is so meticulous that it would have been quite superfluous to have introduced a second system of dating (i.e. Sakabda) alongside it. It seems much more likely that the Sakabda dating was later, and it could have come in only after exposure to the dating used in wider India. This may well have been during the time of the Hinduising king Mayampa, alias Garibniwaz (Sak. 1631–1670/1709–1748 CE). There is evidence that he used this dating for coins issued in his reign, and it may be he also introduced it into the chronicles at the same time. An alternative would be to argue that it was introduced in the time of Bhagychandra when the first part of the chronicle (the part which has apparently been lost) was reconstructed in Sak. 1702/1780 CE. This is perhaps doubtful, though, since this king, Bhagychandra, during his alternating regency with his elder brother Meetingu Marampa, introduced yet another system, this time a local, apparently Bengali, Chandrabda dating and also a new era, the Kangleipak era, to coincide with it. This was in Sak. 1682/1760 CE, and Chandrabda 971. The Chandrabda era was subsequently abandoned, since it was not able to stretch far enough back in the history of Manipur to Pakhangpa in 33 CE. Sakabda was thus reinstated, but the double dating (that is, Sakabda plus the traditional cheithapa) continues throughout. The Sakabda dates, whenever they were inserted by the editors, must have been arrived at by calculating backwards by the number of cheithapas, and they are not original. For the period before the cheithapa system was in use (broadly the part reconstructed in Bhagychandra’s reign) the dating must be highly speculative. Indeed, some Manipuri scholars have argued (as does Gangumei) that a date of 33 CE for the founder king, Pakhangpa, is much too early. Why the scribes should have fastened on the peculiar date of 33 CE for Pakhangpa is unknown. Indeed, it caused them a further problem in that 33 CE is prior to the beginning of the Sakabda era (hence they had to insert another date for Pakhangpa, that of 3135 Kalyabda era, equal to forty-five years before the beginning of Sakabda). The suggestion that the date 33 CE may have been arrived at by astrological calculations rather than historical memory seems quite plausible (Gangumei 1991:91). There is no clear comparative dating evidence from elsewhere to assign likely dates in the pre-Kyampa era. The only event during this period for which we have any outside evidence is a visit to Manipur by Samlong, a prince of the kingdom of Pong, dated in the Ch.K. as 678 CE and by the Pong chronicle referred to by Pemberton as 777 CE. We have no means of knowing which source (if either) is correct. A further complication is that as the Manipuri year is a lunar year, like Sakabda, it would not in any case correspond exactly to the Western calendar. For the period after King Khagempa (Sak. 1519–1574/1597–1652 CE) the research of Paonam Gunindro on stone inscriptions in
Manipur (Mutua Bahadur and P.Gunindro Singh 1986) has corroborated some dates given in the Ch.K.

The text of the Cheitharon Kumpapa

As Kunstadter has pointed out, north-east India contains many minorities who speak languages closely related to those of South East Asia, rather than those of India proper. Meeteiron (Meiteron) or Manipuri, as it is more commonly called, is no exception to this. It is a language widespread among non-Meeteis as well as Meeteis, and with English is the state’s official language. Little serious work has been carried out on the classification of Meeteiron since Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India (1903). Grierson in fact incorrectly used the spelling ‘Meithei’ and his comments on the old script (based on the early work of Damant and Pettigrew) are somewhat inaccurate. However, his assertion that the language falls into the wider classification of the Tibeto-Burman family is well founded. He classed it as belonging to the Kuki-Chin (or ‘Meithei-Chin’) subgroup. Its relationship with Naga languages is more distant (Marrison 1967). Luce (1985) classified the dialects of Andro and Sekmai (Chakpa-Loi, probably proto-Meetei autochthones) as part of the Tibeto-Burman Sak group.

The Ch.K. is written in Meetei Mayek, the archaic Meetei script. This began to be displaced by the Bengali script from the time of Garibniwaz, but continued in use for both religious and secular purposes. It was only with the introduction of Western education from the end of the nineteenth century that the use of Meetei Mayek declined (Manihar 1996) and became the prerogative of the maichous (scribes). Manipuris of the diaspora, trained in Bengali, also introduced Bengali script for the earliest printed books in the Manipuri language (from 1900). Meetei Mayek never fell out of use, though the rise of printing meant that all Manipuri material after 1900 came to be produced in the Bengali script. In fact Bengali script is a poor medium for writing Manipuri. Not all the Bengali letters are used, and some of those which are do not correspond exactly to the sounds of spoken Meeteiron. The archaic script is making a recovery today, both in schools and in public signs. There is a need for a written literature in this script, and hopefully the publication of the original text along with an English translation of the Ch.K. will contribute to this.

The recording of the Ch.K. was done by the palace maichous, who were the official scribes in the Loisang or Institute of Scribes. It was probably, after Kyampa’s time, written up soon after the events it describes. Entries in the Kumpapa are made for each year after the introduction of the cheithapa by name. There is no break between one year and the next, except a large round spot indicating that another yearly entry has begun. Even where no event is recorded as having taken place within a particular year the cheithapa’s name is still recorded. The official copy was always kept in the palace.

The ‘paper’ used was made of bark, and the ink of traditional materials. Meetei paper is made from the bark of an indigenous tree (su) which grows about 10 ft in height. After cutting the tree into small logs they are soaked and the bark is peeled off. The bark is pounded by hand, using a big wooden mortar and a heavy long pestle, into a thick pulp. While pounding, nungsil (an indigenous alum-like substance, blue in colour, which has the property of gum) is added. This pulp is mixed with water in a large wooden basin and
then spread out very thinly, using a wooden spoon shaped like a human hand, and kept in an airless room for about forty-five minutes to one and half hours. After all the water has been drained off, the flattened pulp is lifted up with the aid of a flat wooden spoon and laid out for drying. It is then placed on a wooden board and cut into small pieces. The size of the leaves of the Ch.K. Mss are approximately 5–5½ in.×14½ in. each. Finally it is smoothed on both sides by rubbing with a small round indigenous seed called *kangkhin*, the size of a large marble, the skin of which is like that of horse chestnut. There are seven varieties of indigenous ink with a range of ten to fourteen different colours. The most common ink is made by pounding tree bark and adding blackened rice powder, soot and gum. If mercury is added to it, it also becomes permanent, and the writing is preserved even if placed in water. These skills are still preserved by the experts. The pen was made from either quill or bamboo.

The origins of the archaic *Meetei Mayek* script are altogether obscure. Little helpful research has been carried out on it since Grierson’s *Linguistic Survey*, though Gunindro has traced the evolution of the forms of the letters since the end of the sixteenth century from inscriptions (Mutua Bahadur and P.Gunindro Singh 1986). It bears no similarity to the Devanagari alphabet which is used for Sanskrit and its derivatives, or the Brahmi script (used in the inscriptions of Asoka). The text is written in uncialis, and there is no distinction between capitals and small letters, though there are some final letter forms. The letters are separated. There are no spaces between the words, but double parallel lines indicate the end of a sentence or sometimes a phrase which carries the meaning of a sentence in a very cryptic style. There is no paragraphing, and some shorthand conventions are used.

Vowel sounds may be represented by full letters at the beginning or end of a word. Within words vowels are represented in most cases by signs which are placed above and under, as well as before and after, the consonants, and in some cases full letters are also used as vowels. The vowel signs seem to be a later development. The scribes use numerous devices to abbreviate words. For example, one consonant may be written with two or more vowel signs, in which case the consonant is understood to be repeated. This represents either two distinct words or a repetition of the last syllable. For example, *mapau* will be read as *mapa* (father) (and) *mapu* (grandfather), and not as *mapau*. Again, *Kumpau* represents *Kumpapapu*; here the suffix *pu* is used for the genitive case (meaning ‘of the Kumpapa’) and the name *Kumpapa* is also abbreviated.

The officially recognised Meetei script (known as *Meetei Mayek*) has twenty-seven letters, and the correct spelling of the name by which the script is called is ‘Meetei’ (*Manipur Gazette*, 16 April 1980, No. 1/2/78-SS/E, and 24 April 1980, No. 2/2/78/-SS/E). However, the original *Meetei Mayek* (alphabet) consisted of only eighteen letters, each of which is believed to represent one single part of the human anatomy, the formation of the embryo and the birth of the child. These letters are, in order, k (*kok* head), s (*sam* hair), l (*lai* for *laipak* forehead), m (*mit* eyes), p (*pa* eyelash), n (*na* for ears), ch (*chil* lips), t (*til* saliva or life), kh (*khou* palate), ng (*ngou* larynx), th (*thou* ribcage), w (*wai* embryo or sperm), y (*yang* spine), h (*huk* for *hakchang* body or the human being), u (*uun* skin), ee, i, ei (*ee* blood), ph (*pham* womb), a (*atiya* sky, implying birth). In the evolution of the language these original letters were further developed in order to provide new sounds. These are: g, jh, r, b, j, d, gh, dh, bh. This was presumably a result of the Meeteis coming into contact with peoples of different language groups. With
these nine additional letters, the Meetei Mayek script now has a total of twenty-seven letters. Except in the case of loan words one can read the Ch.K. Ms in Meetei Mayek up to the portion translated in this edition, with the original eighteen letters.

The text reproduced here is the official palace version, now in the keeping of Maichou Ngariyanbam Kulachandra, Pundit Achouba (Head Pundit) of Manipur State Pundit Loisang and referred to henceforth as the P. Ms. It bears the palace seal and must be regarded as the authentic text. The Ch.K. itself records that in 1954 Maharajah Bodhchandra ordered the recopying of several leaves of the chronicle which were disintegrating. The following year, shortly before his death, he had the complete Ms read through to him, and authorised this version as the only definitive and authoritative one, pronouncing all other copies then existing outside the palace as unacceptable. He subsequently, according to the Ch.K., put his royal seal upon each page of the Palace version in the presence of three high officials. This text in Meetei Mayek is being made publicly available for the first time. Snahal (1991:76, 78) lists four extant manuscripts of the Ch.K. in Meetei Mayek in his catalogue, but he was apparently unaware of the Palace Ms in the custody of Kulachandra. Only one of those he lists (in the custody of the Manipur Kala State Academy) is on Meetei paper. The others, on Bengali paper, were in the keeping of Ningthoukhongjam Khelachandra, Oinam Bhogeshwar and Kharaibam Deva (the latter is referred to below as the Deva Ms). All are listed as incomplete.

The introduction to the second edition of Lairenmayum Ibungohal and Ningthoukhongjam Khelachandra’s transliteration of the Ch.K. lists four Mss as having been consulted in the production of that version. They include the Deva Ms (as above) and another in the keeping of Nameirakpam Dinachandra (referred to henceforth as the Din. Ms). Both of these were available to me. The others were the Mss in the keeping of Thongam Madhab (see below) and Moirangthem Chandra. It is not indicated what kind of paper these are written on or whether they contain the complete text.

I have used the Palace Ms (P. Ms), which bears the palace seal, for this edition and translation. It seems likely that the Madhab Ms (Mad. Ms) is a copy of the P. Ms which was available to me. The other Mss which were also available to me as indicated above were those of Deva and Dinachandra. The former is incomplete, and in places quite badly copied. As this translation is not intended to be a critical edition I have alluded to variant readings only in a few crucial places where they differ significantly from the P. Ms.

### Bengali script and English versions

About 1925, during the reign of Churachand (1907–1941), one of the royal scribes, Thongam Madhab, was commissioned to make a transliteration of the Ch.K. into Bengali script (Atombapu n.d.:2). This was subsequently published by the Visvabharati Mandir in Imphal in the 1940s. This edition appeared just after the war, probably in 1945–1946, and presumably did not include the account of the reign of the last king, Bodhchandra (1941–1955). This edition seems subsequently to have gone out of print and become unavailable. It would seem that Lairenmayum Ibungohal Singh tried to reprint this transliterated version of the Ch.K., and the publication was subsequently taken up by the Manipur Sahitya Parishad. It eventually appeared after Ibungohal’s death as Cheitharol Kumbaba, edited by L.Ibungohal Singh and N.Khelachandra Singh (Imphal, 1967,
henceforth referred to as *LI. & NK. Ch.K. (i)*). This edition does not acknowledge the role of Madhab as the transliterator, nor that of Atombapu Sharma as the original *Vishwavarati Mandir* publisher. From a careful examination of the text given here, it seems clear that Madhab generally followed what we have called the official *P. Ms* version, printed in this present volume. The 1967 Bengali script transliterated publication may therefore be regarded as a generally accurate rendition and a substantial contribution to historical scholarship. However, there are a few places where alterations have been made by Ibungohal and Khelachandra. *LI & NK. Ch.K. (i)* ends with the death of Bodhchandra in 1955.

Unfortunately after this first edition edited by Ibungohal and Khelachandra was allowed to go out of print, it was replaced by a second edition in which the surviving editor, Ningthoukhongjam Khelachandra, made very substantial alterations (*Cheitharol Kumbaba*, Imphal, 1989, henceforth *LI. & NK. Ch.K. (ii)*). According to the introductory comments in this volume, these alterations and additions to the first Bengali script edition (*LI. & NK. Ch.K. (i)*) are the result of a comparison of the text with other extant copies of the *Ch.K.* in *Meetei Mayek*. Khelachandra did not, however, produce a critical edition, so it is wholly unclear which Ms texts he is following in specific places, nor does he argue why alternative textual readings should be more reliable than the *P. Ms* text, which Madhab seems to have used throughout. Much more seriously, however, Khelachandra’s second edition has incorporated into the text numerous additional details taken, not from the variant texts of the *Ch.K.* itself, but from the large number of other Mss in *Meetei Mayek* script (sometimes called *Puyas*) on various historical, cultural and mythical themes. Had Khelachandra printed these additions as footnotes with full references to his sources it would have been an extremely useful compendium for historians and textual critics. But by inserting these additions within the text, without any explanation or source referencing, parts of the text have been altered beyond recognition and have thus become corrupt. This second edition in the Bengali script cannot therefore claim to be in any sense a straightforward accurate rendering of the *Ch.K.* It is an amalgam of the basic text of the *Ch.K.* transliterated by Madhab, expanded by a random selection of insertions from other sources, many of which have little historical worth. As such it is not only of little material value to the scholar, but is at many points positively misleading. Hopefully the publication of the Palace *Meetei Mayek* text will help to clear up the confusion caused by the second edition of the *Ch.K.* into Bengali script (*LI. & NK. Ch.K. (ii)*).

A word here is perhaps necessary about the *Meetei Mayek Puyas*. There are a great number of these of varying length. Those which purport to deal with history by and large fall into three categories. First are those which seem to be fictionalised elaborations of events mentioned in the *Ch.K.* and therefore have no historical value. Second, there are a few Mss, dealing with the later kings, which do seem to be broadly contemporaneous with the events they describe. These contain useful material, which might provide additional information to historians seeking to reconstruct Manipuri history. Finally there are those accounts which are drawn from group or family memories and traditions. Some of these may contain useful historical data, but they need to be treated critically. However, none of the *Puyas* is dated, all are anonymous, and no serious textual-critical work has as yet been carried out on them. Until this is done they cannot be regarded as reliable sources or assigned to a particular historical period. Furthermore very few have, as far as I am aware, been published in the original *Meetei Mayek* (as opposed to Bengali
transliteration). Thus there is no way that the researcher can properly assess their historical worth. A number of the more important of these Mss (e.g. Ninghourol Lambuba, Bamon Khunthok, Poireiteon Khunthok) have been used by Manipuri writers as though they were reliable sources. This is not justified. In our present state of knowledge the *Meetei Mayek* Mss have to be used with extreme care and with healthy scepticism. None possesses the kind of authentic characteristics which we meet in the *Ch.K.* A full critical and historical examination of these Mss is a very urgent task facing Manipuri scholars.

After the defeat of Manipur in 1891 the British administrator, Maxwell, instructed the court to provide him with an English version of the *Ch.K.* This task was undertaken not by a Meetei but by a Bengali clerk, Bamacharan. The translation was subsequently published by L.Joychandra Singh as his own compilation under the title *The Lost Kingdom* (1995). Even a cursory glance at the contents makes it clear that this version is unreliable. It shows pronounced signs of Hinduising, it lacks large sections of the *P. Ms* version and substantially alters others, and it has some curious additions which were probably meant to please the British. The *maichous* no doubt deliberately released to Bamacharan only enough to satisfy Maxwell, and preserved the authentic chronicle for themselves. Nor could they have checked his translation, since they knew no English. This version is of very limited value to the historian.

An English version projected in the 1950s by Wahengbam Yumjao Singh (best known for his work on the spurious copper plates: see Parratt 1980:104–9) seems not to have come to fruition (Yumjao 1966:ii–iii). This would have included the *Meetei Mayek* text transcribed into Latin characters, an English translation and a Bengali transliteration. It is not clear whether the latter was to have been Madhab’s version.

**Translation issues**

Meeteiron (Manipuri) is spoken by all the people in Manipur as well as those Manipuris of the diaspora who had taken domicile in an earlier stage in other parts of India, Myanmar and Bangla Desh. Meeteiron in its earlier form is reflected in the language used in the earlier section of the *Ch.K.* and in the ancient oral religious lyrics which are still used in the *Lai Haraoba* festival, as well as in the hymns to *Sanamahi*. The language used in the Kumpapa after Hinduisation in the reign of Garibniwaz (Sak. 1631–1670/1709–1748 CE and especially from Sak. 1659/1737 CE) has a few loan words from Bengali and Sanskrit. But the text in this volume generally represents a purer form of Meeteiron largely uninfluenced by the languages of the surrounding peoples.

A translation of the *Ch.K.* into English is a task which is fraught with many difficulties, occasioned both by the nature of the Mss and by the language used by the writers. The language problems affect especially the earlier part of the *Ch.K.*, where archaisms are frequent. Because of the way in which the Meetei script is written—absence of subjects or objects in some sentences, lacking spacing between words, capital letters, punctuation within sentences, paragraphing and headings—it is not always easy to get a sense of the structure of the sentences. The numerals used to indicate the Sakabda year (written in Bengali), and the convention in the *P. Ms* and other Mss of indicating the end of a year by a bold dot with pairs of vertical lines on either side, are of some
assistance. In some cases these double vertical lines also appear at the end of a word or a phrase, in which case the phrase has to be understood as a complete sentence.

The style of the language is also problematic. Sentences are often very short, cryptic and enigmatic. The formation of verbal forms also causes translation difficulties. There is, for example, no distinction between active and passive forms of the verb, or between singular and plural, or gender forms. On the other hand, inflections of the verb, which subtly change its basic meaning, are frequent. Very often sentences have no subject and may contain just two words. For example  

掸 engineered ‘was victorious (in the battle)’ or  

掸 phai ‘captured in battle’. In these two examples it is left to the translator to determine whether the verb is active or passive, and thus to decide who exactly defeated or captured whom. Only the context—itself also usually very cryptic—can give a clue to the meaning. Furthermore ‘prepositions’ in Meeteiron are technically ‘postpositions’ and take the form of suffixes, and the meanings of some words are determined by the suffix. Most of the records in the earlier section are written as spoken, rather than in a literary style.

Several frequently used words have more than one meaning, and either meaning could be correct in the context, e.g.  

掸 thokye could be translated either as ‘taking a stroll’ or ‘taking part in and presiding over a ceremonial procession’. When the verb is used only with a proper name, either translation could be correct. Another problem concerns the ambiguity of some letters which are also used as vowels. Confusingly, the same vowel-letter may be read in more than one way, giving possible readings of two quite different words. Because of complexities such as these the translator has no choice but to take the most likely reading within the context. I have given alternative translations in the notes where appropriate.

As with most languages, many words have no exact English equivalent. For example,  

掸 pye means ‘to throw up and down as when one winnows rice after husking’. When used in the context of a village which has been invaded the implication of the word is that ‘the people were shaken like grains being cleansed in a winnowing basket.’ But this is to put a whole sentence in place of one word, and thus fails accurately to reflect the cryptic nature of the original. A few words are so archaic that the meaning is irrecoverable. In such cases I have indicated a probable translation. These are, of course, common problems for translators of archaic texts. In the case of Meeteiron (Manipuri) the difficulties are exacerbated by the lack of reliable lexical aids.

What is the value of the Cheitharon Kumpapa as history?

An English version of the Ch.K. is of importance not only for research into the history of Manipur but also for that of India and South East Asia as a whole. There is not only important information in it about present-day Myanmar, Assam, Tripura, Bengal and Bangla Desh, but also mention of Chinese and Muslim movements, and references to kingdoms (like that of Pong and other Shan states) which no longer exist.

The Ch.K. is, of course, an official royal history and its main purpose is to record the events of state and the actions of the kings. In that sense it is (like all historical writing) biased in its selection of material and in the way it records that material. However, on the whole there is no attempt to praise the kings, and in fact the recording is very flat and
factual. The possibility of a later editing of events by rival successors cannot be excluded, but seems to me unlikely. There is no attempt to write previous kings out of history. However, (with the exception of Garibniwaz) the manner of death of the kings is not given.

The earlier part of the material before the reign of Ningthoukhompa—roughly the part reconstructed in the time of Bhagyachandra (from 33 CE to Sak. 1354/1432 CE)—contains material which must be regarded as legendary. The borderline between history and myth is of course scarcely as sharp in ancient and some Eastern civilisations as in Western historiography. Some of this early material consists of aetiological legends—constructed narratives which give the supposed origins of place or personal names. While this is not historical in the strict sense, it does give an insight into the world-view of the writers and may contain clues to real events. In this respect the opening passage regarding Pakhangpa, the ancestor-founder of the Meeteis, is especially interesting. This seems to be a kind of structural-historical myth, the purpose of which is to reinforce the supremacy of the Pakhangpa group over a rival group led by one Poireiton. Poireiton most likely represents the autochthonous people of the land (perhaps the present-day Chakpa). There is some evidence that these people, whom one might term ‘proto-Meetei’, may have had a matriarchal system. According to the Ch.K. Pakhangpa married Laisna, Poireiton’s sister, and this probably reflects an alliance between the incoming conquerors (the Pakhangpa group) and the subjugated original inhabitants of the land (the Poireiton group). In an obscure passage Laisna requests that she may become a lai (divinity) like Pakhangpa, but is refused. Presumably this is meant as a statement of the supremacy of the Pakhangpa group. Social order is established by mythical history.

According to Ningthourol Lambuba, a much later and much less structured chronicle, the name of the land which is now called Manipur was Poirei Lamtam (Land of Poirei) and later it came to be called Poirei Meetei Lamtam (Land of Poirei Meetei). Meetei is very likely the name given to the incomers by the Poireiton group, who by then had become the autochthones of the land. There is no clear evidence when the name Manipur was given to the land, but it is almost certainly a name given to the country by Indians, not a self-designation.

After the time of Kyampa the material becomes more straightforward, and there are detailed statements about political and religious events, immigrations, and other notable events of state, as well as astrological events such as eclipses and the appearances of comets. From the period when we begin to have British records (the 1830s) the accuracy of the Ch.K. is substantially confirmed. The Ch.K. is thus not only the main source for reconstructing Manipur’s history, but is also a substantially reliable one.

This volume comprises the first part of the chronicle, that is, from 33 CE to 1763 CE, from the beginning of the Meetei dynasty up to the first contact with the British East India Company. It is hoped that the remainder will be published in due course.

A note on the translation

No translation can adequately convey the complete richness of a language, but I have tried as far as possible to reflect the style of the language of the original in translation, especially where it is cryptic and compressed.
Some entries show that the recording was done after the events, e.g. ‘Shicha Soukaicham ongpi pokye’, ‘Sicha who was (later) married into the Soukaicham family was born.’

Where they have become part of place names, some Meeteiron terms such as ching (hill), khong (canal), thong (bridge), pan (barricade), pung (mound) and so on have been retained along with their English equivalents. Some other untranslatable technical terms and names of e.g. pung, yuthak (measures of time) have also been kept. (See further the note on time measurement p. 154.) Kangla has been retained to denote the palace complex.

The Meetei lunar months have no exact equivalent in the Western calendar, but I have added the nearest equivalents.

No diacritical marks have been used.

Spellings of all proper nouns including names of places, positions and titles have followed the spelling as found in the P. Ms text even where these are not consistent and do not correspond to modern usage. This will also illustrate how the language evolved and new sounds were adopted.

Meetei names for posts and titles have been retained (see glossary).

I have inserted headings in bold type indicating the name of the king and period of his reign. The cheithapa name and the lunar months are also set out in bold.

The explanatory notes are situated at the end of each regnal year for ease of reference.

Notes
2 See below.
3 Acharya (1966). The most accessible translated Buranjis are Golap Chandra Barua (1930) and Bhuyan (1968).
4 Pe Maung Tin and Luce (1923).
5 The only exception is a reference to ‘Manipur Kangleipak’ in the reign of Taothingnang (Sak. 186/264 CE), which must be a later editorial insertion. ‘Kangla’ was dedicated only in Sak. 1444 (1522 CE) and ‘Manipur’ is not used at all until the British period. The earlier British sources use ‘Meckley’ rather than Manipur.
6 According to the entry for Sak. 440/518 CE Thamanglang was the originator of the Ningthoucha family name or Ningthoucha yimnak: Thamanglang, though a prince, did not become king, but his family name became Ningthoucha, meaning ‘child of the king’ or ‘descendant of the king’. This family name was later expanded and given even to those who had only distant royal connections and were not necessarily direct descendants of kings.
7 We also find two exact dates in the reign of Kyampa’s father, Ningthoukhompa. These dates are the birth of Kyampa, which coincided with the invasion of the land by the Tangkhul Hao (probably the present Tangkhuls), and the death of the king. These were dates which would have been remembered in Kyampa’s time. These are the only dates recorded prior to the institution of the cheithapa. The Sakabda dates for the pre-Kyampa period are clearly a later editorial addition.
8 The Sakabda era derives from the Shakas or Scythians, who originated in Bactria and established themselves in India in the first century CE. The usual understanding is that the beginning of the Sak. era, 78 CE, marked the first year of Kanishka’s rule. In fact Kanishka was not a Hindu but a Buddhist.
9 The Ch.K. entry reads: ‘The year of Nanteipa Lokhon, Sak. 1682 (1760 CE) 12 Thursday Hiyangkei (October/November) as Maharaja Jai Singh (another name for Bhagyachandra)
along with Bhagabati Thakur, Kabo Khunbongmayum Cha Muniram Singh and Sidananda, these three who were the servants of the king, after having consulted with their lord, (the king) established an era of the land of Meetei Kangleipak. After having established the era they also introduced a new almanac (Chandrabda). The year of (the new era) was taken to be 971 of the (Kangleipak) era.’

10 This Chandrabda era alone was used in the recording for twenty-eight years in the Ch.K. from Chandrabda 1018–1046 (Sak. 1728–1756/1806–1834 CE).

11 There is a tradition, not contained in the Ch.K., which has it that during the reign of Garibniwaz his guru Shanti Das burnt all the Mss in the archaic Meetei script in the interests of his Hinduising programme in 1732 CE. See note 19 (Sak. 1654) for the textual evidence for this, which was presumably fabricated to support the tradition. However, it is clear many Mss must have survived, and Meetei Mayek continued to be used (notably for the Ch.K.).

12 The same kind of body symbolism is applied to the geography of the valley and in the traditional dance rituals of the Lai Haraoba festival (Parratt and Parratt 1997:100).

13 ‘Sak. 1876 (1954 CE) in the year of Aoinam Aamujao, Yingen (June/July), 8 Friday as the royal command was given to copy leaf page 553 and leaf pages 762 to 798 of the Ch.K. as they were disintegrating, the task were carried out by Tanachandra (Dinachandra) pandit (pundit). Sak. 1877 (1955 CE): in the year of Aamom (Aangom) Aangangthonjao, 2 Langpan (August/September) Friday, Srijut Bodhchandra Maharajah, who is also titled Huyen Keiren Lanta Thoupa (the chief of the soldiers and the commoners, the brave one), after having listened to all the chronicle which had been read (to him), he also checked it and declared it to be correct. He also had declared the words in the (copies) of Kumpapa which are then in the housing areas should not be accepted as authoritative. He declared that the Cheitharon Kumpapa which is housed in the royal palace alone is the only definitive chronicle and only the words written in it will be accepted as authoritative. Saying this Srijut put the royal seal with his own royal hands on each page of the chronicle. Those who were on royal duty on that occasion were Waikhom Chaoba Singh, member (of the palace court), who was the Political Secretary to the king. Thoitangcham Gouramani the Senlungpa, who was also the Personal Attendant to the king, and Thongam Madhab Singh, the Palace Pandit. These three persons were given the royal order to be on duty on that occasion. They were on duty and they were involved (in putting the royal seal).’ The writing on the seal, ‘His Highness the Maharajah Manipur’, is legible on the leaves of the original Ms.


15 ‘According to the royal command of the late Meeteingu Sir Churachand Singh, KCSI, CBE (the Cheitharol Kumbaba) which was in the royal palace and written in the Meetei Mayek (script) was transliterated into Bengali script by Thongam Shri Madhab Singh pundit and was presented to the king. We have printed it ourselves and are responsible for any mistakes. The late king had met all the cost.’

16 It must have been later than 1941, since it was published after Churachand’s death, but before 1964, since Atombapu Sharma, known for his aggressive sanskritisation of Meetei traditions, published a short pamphlet on the Ch.K. before he died in 1964 in which he acknowledged he had published Madhab’s transliteration. (See previous note.)

17 A previous political agent, Christopher Gimson, had left funding for publication but the bank deposit seems to have gone missing.

18 A lawyer and author of one of the earliest books in English on Manipur by a Meetei, Introduction to Manipur (1963).

19 Some random examples of such insertions in the L.I. & NK. Ch.K. (ii) which are not in P. Ms nor in L.I. & NK. Ch.K. (i) will illustrate the problem:

Sak. 1436. Inserts ‘Govindachandra the scribe arrived from Takhen’.
Sak. 1438. Inserts ‘one Bamon (brahmin) arrived from Tekhao’.
Sak. 1439. Inserts ‘Astrologer Vakirot arrived’.
(All these insertions seek to push back the advent of Hinduism in Manipur earlier than evidence warrants.)

Sak. 1440. Inserts ‘Mayang who wanted to own a village arrived’.

Sak. 1536. Inserts two extra markets, viz. Awang keithen and Sekta keithen are inserted in the list of the markets which were inaugurated in this year.

Sak. 1543. An alteration of text in LI. & NK. Ch.K. (ii) which is incomprehensible: in place of ‘the playing of hockey (kangchei) by the Meeteis began at that period’ it reads ‘the playing of kang by the Meetei household (meetei yumpumna) by striking it (kangyeina) began at that period’.

Sak. 1550. Inserts ‘(the jogi and his wife) were settled in Yairipok’.

Sak. 1550. Changes the phrase mathan hamme to hangamye. 
Hangamye could give the meaning that those who found the masks also found them empty, whereas mathan hamme implies that the masks were emptied and washed of the contents, the skulls. Probably the gold and silver masks were brought as a booty.

Sak. 1552. ‘ningkham phurit leiren leichao’: leichao added in the text without using a bracket, in describing the ningkham shirt.

Sak. 1623. The month of Thawan has a fuller entry.

Sak. 1638, 4 Phairen. inserts ‘(the people of) Tekhao went back.’

Sak. 1654, 17 Langpan. Altered Leima to Lairik. The sentence Meetei Leima manghanye has been altered to Meetei Lairik manghanye. By changing one word, leima (queen) to lairk (books), LI. & NK. Ch.K. (ii) gives textual support for the tradition of the burning of Meetei books. LI. & NK. Ch.K. (i), P. Ms and Din. Ms all have Leima.

Sak. 1659. LI. & NK. Ch.K. (ii) has ‘3,000 people took the sacred thread’ against 300 in P. Ms and LI. & NK. Ch.K. (i).

Sak. 1661. LI & NK. Ch.K. (ii) inserts extra material beginning from sentence 1 p. 101 to sentence 11 p. 102, a total of fourteen sentences. The language of the inserted portion is not of the same style as the entries of the Ch.K. on the whole. It is more poetic and very near to
the style of the *Ningthourol Lambuba* (a later chronicle), though a quotation from this chronicle is also in the footnote.


20 There have been spectacular forgeries, e.g. *Govinda Sangeet Leela Vilasa*: a Ms written in Sanskrit and falsely passed off as the work of Maharaja Bhaigyachandra. (See N. Kerani Singh, ed., *Govinda Sangeet Leela Vilasa: A Concoction*, Imphal, 1972.)

21 British Library O & IOC Ms EUR D485. This copy apparently fell into the hands of Hodson (a previous president of the Manipur State Durbar), who donated it to the British Museum in 1946. The title page reads ‘State diary of Manipur, typewritten at the State Office by Nithon Nath Banerjee 1904’. According to the entry for 10 Yinga (May/June) 1891 CE in this translated version ‘Babu Bama Charan Mukherjee commenced translating the state chronicle into English. Taoriah Hidang Pandit and Sarang Panjee Laloupchingba interpreted the chronicle.’ We must assume this is not translation in the strict sense, since Mukherjee would not have been able to read the original, but rather an oral rendering (suitably modified) by the pundits, which Mukherjee then drafted into (somewhat defective) English. Mukherjee was the secretary to Maharaja Kulachandra, who was deposed in 1891. The corresponding entry in the *P. Ms* reads: ‘Sak. 1813 (1891 CE), 17 Monday *Kalen* (April/May), (Maxwell) ordered the pandits of the Maiba Institute to bring back the *Ch.K.* and it was brought back and kept in Kangla (i.e. palace). *Yinga* (May/June) 8 Monday, they began to write the *Ch.K.* sitting in Kangla. Twelve people from the Maiba (scribes) and Panji (astrologers) Institutes copied the *Ch.K.* into Bangla (Bengali script). 24 Monday, most of the books which were housed originally in the Ras Mandal (in the Kangla complex), and which had been taken to the housing areas, were collected by Khuraijamba the *Lalup Chingba* and they were brought back. 9 *Yingen* (June/July) Wednesday, the *Maiba* and the *Panji*, these two groups completed the writing (the copying into Bengali script) of the Puran (*Ch.K.*). 10 Thursday, the Sankranti of the month began. There was an earthquake on that day and on the same day Bamacharan Babu began to copy (translate) the *Ch.K.* into English. Taoriya the *Hitang* and Sarang *Panchi* the astrologer, these two were given permission to join the work. But the rest were suspended and were forbidden to join the work.’

22 E.g. ‘Quinton’s tombstone arrived. It was beautiful to look at.’ Quinton was a former Chief Commissioner of Assam who had been put to death during the conflict in 1891.

23 *Ngamye* and *phai* are in the present indicative, which is here equivalent to the present historic in Greek.

24 Only three Manipuri to English dictionaries exist, by Gordon (1837) and Ningthoukhongjam Khelachandra (1964, 1978). All have limited vocabulary.

25 Earlier names include Kangleipak and Meeteileipak (*pak/bak* for land). Even in the mid-nineteenth century the inhabitants did not use Manipur to designate the country. A letter written in Meetei script to the Viceroy of India in May 1868 by Maharajah Chandra Kriti of Manipur is dated ‘1790 (Sakabda) Mahe 11 Kalen’. ‘Mahe’ is here the name of the country. Pemberton, writing in 1835, noted the country was variously called Kathe, Moglei, Meklee or Cassay.
References

Atombapu Phurialatpam Sharma (n.d.) *Cheitharol Kumbabagi Asamba Byakha*, Manipuri
Bishwabharati Literary Series, No. 90, Imphal.
References

INTRODUCTION


Atombapu Phurailatpam Sharma (n.d.) Cheitharol Kumbabagi Asamba Byakha, Manipuri Bishwabharati Literary Series, No. 90, Imphal.


Kunstadter, P., ed. (1967) Southeast Asian Tribes,
Minorities and Nations, Princeton, NJ.


