



MIZO HISTORY ASSOCIATION

(Regd. No.SR-1 of 1981 under Act XXI of 1860)

Aizawl : Mizoram

No. MHA 2020/2

4th June, 2020

To,

The Director General
Archaeological Survey of India, ,
New Delhi

Subj: Appeal against the Chibu Stone Inscription, Manipur.

Sir,

Greetings from Mizo History Association.

The Mizo History Association would like to draw your attention with regards to Chibu Stone Inscription in Manipur. This inscription is recognised as an important historical monument by the Manipur government which has given protection to the site in 1990. Following this, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has also included in the list of epigraphy in India in one of their publications *Indian Archaeology 1987-88: A Review* (1993) edited by its former Director M.C. Joshi (p.120).

This stone inscription bears record about the Lushai (Mizo) chiefs. We, Mizo History Association, have conducted our own study (a brief report is attached here) and the historical record in the inscription is found to be erroneous after checking from various sources. Since the significance of the monument lies in the credibility of the message it bears, and since this inscription is based on false claim, we believe that the Chibu stone inscription could not be recognised as a historical monument.

We raise this point because the Chibu inscription, as it is a recognised monument of historical importance by the Archaeological Survey of India, now stands as an authentic historical source for any interested persons; academic writing or any other form of action may be undertaken based on this monument. As such, it could lead to hurting the sentiment of the

concerned people. Above all, it could result into wrong representation of the past which would fail the objective of both History and Archaeology as an academic discipline.

The Mizo History Association believe that unsubstantiated claim such as found in the Chibu inscription could not be accepted by such a reputed body as the Archaeological Survey of India; it could even harm the reputation of the institution.

We, therefore, request you to kindly reconsider the said issue, and if possible, reinvestigate the value that the Chibu Stone Inscription claims to represent, and rectify the wrong. We attach here the points raised by the Mizo History Association for your kind perusal. We request your prompt action and we assure you our utmost support, if you require any, for further study on the subject.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours Sincerely,

SD/-
(Prof. SANGKIMA)
President

SD/-
(Dr. BENJAMIN RALTE)
Secretary

Mizo History Association: Aizawl, Mizoram

Copy to:

1. Director, Archaeological Survey of India, Aizawl Branch, Aizawl, Mizoram
2. President, INTACH Mizoram Chapter, Aizawl.
3. Director, Dept. of Art & Culture, Govt. of Mizoram, Aizawl.
4. Director, Archaeological Survey of India, Gwahati Branch, Assam
5. President, Mizo Archeological Society, Aizawl

Sd/-
(Dr. Benjamin Ralte)
Secretary

MIZO HISTORY ASSOCIATION'S APPEAL TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (ASI) CONCERNING DISTORTED HISTORICAL RECORD OF LUSHAI CHIEFS AT THE CHIBU(CHIVU) STONE INSCRIPTION, MANIPUR

The Government of Manipur is developing Chandrakirti Memorial Park at Chibu (Chivu for the local people) in the locality of Tonjang village of Churachandpur District in Manipur where Chibu Stone Inscription of Chandrakirti Singh, king of Manipur (1831-1886) was found. The inscription attracts the attention of activists and historians because of the doubtful interpretation given to the inscription and its significance attached to it.

The Inscription bears a Manipur language in Bengali script that says:

His Highness endowed with the five qualities, Lord of Manipur, Snake King of the Meithees, born to the throne, Ruler of the sky, the Maharajah Chandra Kirti Singh, on Saturday, 3rd Wakching of the year [1793](#) of the Sakabda 'era' when Laisrabra Purma Singh was Chaithapa reduced to subjection the Lushais towards the south. The two servants of His Highness who attended (him) were San Kaichamba Balaram Singh, Steward of Ahalup, Major of the Tuhihal Regiment, and Thangal, born of the Kangbam caste, Steward of Laifam, Major of the Tulinaha Regiment, with whom were General Nuthall, [130](#) officers, and [2,000](#) muskets.

They took as tribute elephant tusks and gongs and dedicated this brine spring and carved here these foot-prints of his Highness.

They subdued the following Hao villages: Poiboi, Lengkham, Dambam, Bum hang &co, in all [112](#) villages, and including Thankalet, the Lushai, they captured four Chiefs and one village.

Written by Nong Chamba Dhormeshwar, Wahengba, Sijjamocha, Pratap Singh and Gokul Chundra, chief salt agent (Carey & Tuck 1895, 123).

With regards to this inscription, the Mizo History Association (MHA) would like to raise the following points:

1. The Chibu (Chivu) Stone Inscription was raised after the Lushai Expedition 1871-72. Carey and Tuck say that it was made to "commemorate the part which the Manipuris played in the Lushai Expedition" (Carey & Tuck 1895, p.123). In this Expedition, a Manipur contingent of about 2000 men participated "to assist in the operations on the Lushai country, which acted under the command of Major-General Nuthall, who was then Officiating Political Agent at Manipur" (Mackenzie 1884, p. 166). While the expedition was neither initiated nor commanded by the Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh, the Chibu Inscription gave the credit to Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh and states that in reducing the Lushais towards the south into subjection, he was assisted by two majors such as San Kaichamba Balaram Singh and Thangal of Tuhihal and Tulinaha regiments respectively of his army "with whom were General Nuthall, 130 officers and 2000 muskets" (Chibu Stone Inscription as found in Carey & Tuck 1875, p.123).

In Lushai Expedition 1871-1872, however, one of the concerns of colonial authorities was that the then called Kamhow (prominent tribe of Zo ethnic groups in the south of Manipur and Chin Hill, Myanmar) might join Lushais in resisting and attacking the Left Column of the British force. The Manipur Contingent was conceived to watch the activity of Kamhow as seen in the letter of Brigadier General George Bouchier, Commanding Officer of Cachar Column of the Lushai Expedition 1871-1872 to Major General WF Nuthall, Political Agent, Manipur who commanded the Manipur Contingent:

I have to request that you take steps for occupying strongly a line of posts along the southern frontier of Munnipoor, and keeping in the valley near Moirang a small compact force capable of supporting itself to act against the most eastern tribes (Kamhow's) should information reach you that they have been tempted to join Lalboora, Tangdoong, and others against whom the column I command will advance (Major General Nuthall's letter to CU Aitchinson, Secy. to Govt. of India, Foreign Deptt. No. 59, dated Munnipoor, dated 12th April, 1872).

In another letter, Brigadier General Bouchier said:

It is obvious that the eastern tribes will require watching and this will be the special duty of the Contingent, and will be one of a delicate nature. Kamhow's present hostile attitude towards the other tribes might be turned by us to immense advantage, and it is to be hoped this state of things will continue, but, on the other hand, should he undoubtedly have east in his lot with the other tribes, 'you' will be in a position to attack him (No. 1112C dated 11th November, 1871).

The idea behind the Manipur Contingent is also seen in Brig. General Bouchier's letter to Colonel P. S. Lumsden, Quarter Master General of Indian Army, Headquarters, Calcutta that says:

I recommended that a strong line of outposts should be posted along the southern frontier of Munnipoor, and a handy force of about 500 men be held in readiness near Moirang to watch Kamhow (No. 1232, dated 20th April 1872).

But Major General W. F. Nuthall moved up to Chibu without the approval from Brig. General Bouchier, Commander of the Left Column of the expedition as seen in the latter's letter to Colonel P. S. Lumsden that says that "he was not ordered to go to Cheebo, which is beyond the frontier, but only to Tsek-la-pi (No. 1232, dated 20th April 1872).

Major Gen. Nuthall, then, have to justify his action saying:

Early in November before the force took the field, I requested the Maharaja to send a few men to cut the jungle which had sprung up during the rains, and open a road from Moirang down to the frontier south of that place; I then did not know that Seeboo [Chivu] was on the frontier, and was claimed by the Maharaja, and I gave no specific orders as to the distance the party should go, but merely general instructions to make a road in case I should find it necessary to advance against Kamhow (Major General Nuthall's letter to C. U. Aitchinson, Secy. to Govt. of India, Foreign Deptt. No. 59, dated Munnipoor, dated 12th April, 1872).

It is surprising that the British Political Agent in Manipur in this letter claimed not to know the location of a point of Chivu and that in his report, he claimed not to know that Chivu was claimed by the Manipur king though his desire for the Manipur Contingent to occupy it was very clear in his previous correspondences with the Commander of Cachar Column, Brig. General G. Bouchier in his letter (No. 134, dated 3rd November, 1871) where he even suggested that the headquarters of the Munnipoor Contingent to be moved to Seeboo (Chibu) and said:

It was never my intention that the Officer Commanding should be tied down to Moirung, but that it should be moved to the south of the Munnipoor valley, but not further than the point marked Tseklapi in your map (spelt Yolpee by Colonel McCulloch), and which is about 'the southern frontier of Munnipoor (No. 1125, dated 23rd November 1871).

The Manipur Contingent which put up a camp at Chivu was part of the Lushai Expedition and was accountable to the authority of the Expedition, and the Commander Major General Nuthall was also compelled to give an explanation. Yet, they committed 'treacherous' action in the opinion of the higher authority (see point 3 below) and still made unfounded and exaggerated claim of success in the inscription.

Thus, it is obvious that the Chibu Stone Inscription itself is founded on half-truth and manipulated facts which is not in tune with the records and purpose of the authority that launched the Lushai Expedition 1871-72 in which the Manipur contingent only formed a part of it. Carey and Tuck even remarks, "It will be noticed that the Manipuris claim to have done more conquering than our records credit them with." (Carey & Tuck 1895, p. 123).

2. The Chivu Stone Inscription claims that Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh "subdued the following Hao villages: Poiboi, Lengkham, Dambam, Bumhang, & c., in all 112 villages, and including Thankalet, the Lushai, they captured four chiefs and one village" (Chivu Inscription as found in Carey & Tuck 1875, p. 123). 'Hao' is a general Manipuri term for all hillmen (Carey & Tuck 1985, p. 123) but in this case, since the event is connected with the Lushai Expedition, this may be considered as pointing to the Lushais.

In this regard, it is difficult to imagine 112 Lushai villages to have existed around the area where the Manipur Contingent encamped. When the British established their rule in Mizoram in 1890, there were altogether about 60 chiefs in the whole of the Lushai Hills (Chatterjee 1995, p.1), (the number of chiefs more or less corresponds to the number of villages as each chief were sovereign independent rulers in their respective villages). If the Manipur king subdued 112 chiefs, that would amount to conquering the whole of the Lushai Hills and more, which never happened. In fact, there is no record of him or the Manipur contingent crossing the Lushai hills in colonial or native sources. From historical records, no Manipuri king had never ever conducted any successful operation against any Lushai chief and no Lushai chief was ever captured by a Manipuri king.

Even the Lushai Expeditionary Force of 1871-72, which advanced to the interior part of the Lushai Hills to recover Mary Winchester, the white girl captured by the Mizos, did not claim any subjugation towards the Lushai chiefs. There was no record of

capture of Lushai chief in the Lushai Expedition 1871-1872, neither was it intended by the expedition.

3. The event that remains fresh in the local memory of their interaction with the Manipur raja was the capture of the Kamhow chief. The Manipur Contingent, when they were on their return to Manipur, in the absence of the commander Major General WF Nuthall, captured the Kamhow chief Kokatung (Goukthoang) and his party. According to the local memory, Kokatung was a powerful chief of Guite clan, a relative clan of Kamhau/Sukte, according to local narratives he was on his way home from paying a visit to his father in law at Tothemunpi (Chothemunpi, Henglep Sub-Division, Churachandpur District. He, in fact, intended to take his father-in-law to his village and went there with a large number of people to help them in carrying their goods as well as to provide security on road. However, his father-in-law refused to follow him saying that he was in good term with the Manipuri king (Zamzachin 2006, p. 108; ___ 2008, p. 365). When Goukthoang was at Chivu, he was invited into the camp of the Manipur Contingent and got him into familiar conversation, then, 'treacherously' captured along with his sons and his other men of more than 50 and their muskets. The chief subsequently died while on being detained as a captive at the court of Manipur king in 1873 in spite of ransom being alluded by his family and relative Kamhow chiefs. The act was described 'treacherous' and a 'coup' by the top officials of the Lushai Expedition (Major General Nuthall's letter to C. U. Aitchinson, Secy. to Govt. of India, Foreign Deptt. No. 59, dated Munnipoor, dated 12th April, 1872; Brig. General Bouchier,'s letter to Colonel P. S. Lumsden (No. 1232, dated 20th April 1872; letter from Edgar to Brigadier-General Bouchier, 21 March 1872) that necessitated Major General Nuthall to justify the act in his letter to the Secretary, Govt. of India:

The loss to that tribe so many musketeers and muskets will tend to cripple its power for harm and restraints preying upon the Looshais at this time for their weakness and the advantages of this fortunate incident for the peace of the whole country cannot in mind be over-estimated. I do not say this merely to give eclât to the Munnipooree "Coup," but from a solemn and honest conviction, the soundness of which time will confirm Providence alone has interposed to arrest Kamhow's career of devastation. He was gathering power, and his prestige was already great, and had he succeeded in this one instance, it is impossible to contemplate, in my opinion, the extent to which the hill tracts would have been overrun, or where his rapacity would have ended. Indeed, so impressed was I of the expediency of bringing this Chief and his tribe (the only one from whom we have to apprehend any disturbance) to entire submission, that I strenuously urged the Maharaja to follow up his success if it were possible to provide carriage and supplies, and not to break up his force before doing so, but his resources for such a purpose were exhausted (Major General Nuthall's letter to C. U. Aitchinson, Secy. to Govt. of India, Foreign Deptt. No. 59, dated Munnipoor, dated 12th April, 1872).

Interestingly, the inscription is silent on this event which seemed to be the greatest achievement of the contingent as the agreement signed by the five Lushai chiefs found in the colonial records was rather an indirect result of the operation of the Cachar Column in which they took part of. At that time, the eastern Lushais were under pressure from the main Cachar Column and the Manipur Contingent already occupied Chivu which was their source of procuring salt; and this might have made the eastern Lushai chiefs to open up for some peace terms with the Manipur Contingent. As found in the report of Major

General W. F. Nuthall, Commander of the Manipur Contingent, an agreement was reached between five Lushais, who were chiefs or their representatives and the Contingent on behalf the king of Manipur. But this agreement does not seem to imply any act of subjugation but rather an agreement between two equal parties as it was meant for mutual friendship with promises of good behaviour from both sides (Major General Nuthall's letter to C. U. Aitchinson, Secy. to Govt. of India, Foreign Deptt. No. 59, dated Munnipoor, dated 12th April, 1872).

4. When colonial sources are doubted for its one-sided perspective, the local narratives and oral tradition are often approached to authenticate it. In the present case, the colonial sources and local memory do not support the Chibu (Chivu) Inscription while both are in agreement with each other. Therefore, the Chibu (Chivu) Inscription could not be taken as authentic representative of historical fact. Constructing a historical past out of such unsubstantiated inscription would only produce concocted history for vested interest that directly undermines the value and purpose of history.

5. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in one of its publications titled *Indian Archaeology 1987-88: A Review* (1993) edited by its former Director M.C. Joshi has included the Chibu (Chivu) Stone Inscription in the list of epigraphy in India (p.120). The Manipur government in 1990 has given protection to the site in Chivu as one of the 49 protected monuments under the Manipur Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1976, which probably led the ASI to recognise the monument without checking the authenticity of the claim.

6. The Mizo History Association (MHA) therefore, feels that recognition of Chibu (Chivu) Stone Inscription is based on distorted facts which needs to be re-examined. The MHA urges the Archaeological Survey of India to reinvestigate and verify the historical claim of the stone inscription with authentic sources because it is the content of the inscription that makes the monument significant. If appropriate step is not taken up by the ASI, the controversial historical record found in the Chibu (Chivu) inscription will put the prestige of the ASI at stake. Hence, the ASI is hereby requested to initiate necessary steps for reinvestigation and clarification of the controversial Chibu (Chivu) Stone Inscription.

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