# Nokatung / Kokatung, Chief of Mwelpi & Kochim's Raids on Manipur

*Drawn from B. S. Carey & H. N. Tuck, The Chin Hills (Rangoon, 1896), Volumes I & II. Compiled for the Paite Heritage Archive; every claim below is quoted or closely paraphrased from the primary text, and every place the source contradicts itself is flagged rather than silently resolved.*

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## I. Two men, one name

Carey & Tuck's text describes **two different chiefs called Nokatung** (also spelled Kokatung, Nokataung), a generation and a tribe apart. The book itself does not always keep them distinct, so this account treats them separately from the outset.

## II. Nokatung I — Chief of Mwelpi (Nwite/Yo), d. 1871–73

### Background

Nokatung was chief of a frontier population the book itself classifies inconsistently — Nwite in two passages, Yo in a third, and once simply "a section of Soktes." He lived at **Mwelpi**, a village that Kantum (father of Kanhow) had destroyed while conquering the Northern Chin Hills around 1840. The site was rebuilt by the **Mangwum family of the Thado tribe** before Nwites under Nokatung occupied it in turn — the Nwites having formerly lived near the present site of Tiddim and at Lamyan before migrating, some north to Mwelpi, others west into Lushai territory under the Lushai chief Poiboi.

> **On "Guite":** the word does not appear anywhere in either volume's text. Carey & Tuck name Mwelpi's rebuilders as the "Mangwum" family, not Guite. Whatever link may exist between the historical "Nwite" and the modern Paite clan name Guite is not something this source states or supports.

### The capture, told two ways

Carey & Tuck give both a British/Manipur-derived account and their own correction, gathered directly from the family:

*Mackenzie's account* (drawn from Manipur records): during the 1871–72 Lushai expedition, a Manipur contingent fell in with a party of "Kanhows" under a chief named Kokatung, returning with 957 captives recovered from two Lushai villages. Trusting the Manipuris as allies, the party entered their camp and was seized; Kokatung and his men were taken to Manipur and placed in irons. General Bourchier called it "an act of treachery," though it was acknowledged that Kokatung had raided a Manipur village in 1871. An embassy led by a man named **Kikoul** sought his release; Manipur refused to release the captives while its own subject remained held. Kokatung died shortly after in the Manipur jail.

*Carey & Tuck's correction*, "received from Kokatung's sons and the man named Kikoul (who recovered Kokatung's bones)": his correct name was **Nokatung**; "he was a Nwite and not Kanhow." Fearing for relatives who had crossed into Lushai territory, he went north to persuade them to return to Mwelpi. On the way back the party passed what they took for a friendly Manipur encampment at Chibu (called Chivuk by the Soktes) — and were seized.

## III. Kochim's Raids on Manipur

Kochim, Kanhow's youngest son, had succeeded to the chieftainship of the Kanhow clan in 1868 and was actively assisting British forces against the Lushai chief Lalbura during the 1871–72 campaign when the arrest of Nokatung — a man under his protection — "alienated him from our cause." Manipur records confusingly call him "Khochim," and, per Carey & Tuck's footnote, "the Manipuris do not seem to have recognized that Kochim and not Yetol was Chief of the Kanhows."

### Revenge for Nokatung

After negotiating the restoration of Nokatung's bones and an exchange of prisoners, Kochim — "having nothing more to gain by negotiations" — turned to raiding and pillaging Manipur specifically to avenge "Nokatung's treacherous arrest and consequent death." This provoked an expedition Manipur sent against the Kanhows in 1875; Kochim's brother Tankapow, who met the Manipur Majors during it, maintained afterward that there had been no actual fighting between the Soktes and the Manipuris at all.

### The 1875 parley on the Manipur river

By the Sokte account, the Manipur force entered the hills along the Tapai stream and encamped on the Manipur river, north of the mouth of the Yangdum-lui — deliberately keeping their distance from Mwelpi and Lormpi. The Manipur Majors took the surrender of Yetol's sword as a token of Sokte submission; the Chins denied this, insisting the Majors never intended to fight and that the only weapon exchanged was the knife used to kill a dog in a friendship ceremony, performed by a man named Kanvie of Tiddim together with a Manipuri priest, swearing peace over the animal's blood. Negotiations ended with an exchange of captives and mutual promises of peace — promises the Soktes "did not for a moment intend to respect." The following year the Political Agent described them as "more aggressive and arrogant than before," and four new frontier posts (thanas) were built to check their raids.

### "Kill every Manipuri whom chance or design might deliver into their hands"

The Soktes explained their continued hostility by saying they had learned the Maharajah was seriously considering annexing the Sokte tract outright. Having no intention of submitting to Manipuri rule, **Kochim, in council, directed all who acknowledged his overlordship to kill every Manipuri who fell into their hands.** Acting on this policy, the Thados of Lunya (Bwankwa) persuaded the Munkot chief and his followers to enter the Chin Hills under the pretense that Manipuri captives held at Tiddim would be handed over to them. On arrival at Tiddim, **Kochim himself took part in killing the Manipuris.**

### Aftermath

Manipur sent no further expeditions against the Soktes after this. Raiding on the plains continued sporadically — some years the Maharajah's territory saw no raids at all, in others a fresh series of aggressions — but gradually diminished as the overcrowded Sokte tract drove migration north. By 1877–78, Colonel Johnstone reported some 2,000 Nwites had migrated into Manipur territory, founding their own villages and becoming, through intermarriage with the Soktes and friendly contact with Moirang and Shuganu, a buffer zone between the Soktes and Manipur more effective than McCulloch's earlier "sepoy villages" or Johnstone's thanas. Sokte raiding on the plains did not fully cease until 1892.

A stone monument at the salt wells, set up by Maharajah Chandra Kirti Singh and inscribed in Bengali-script Manipuri, commemorates the Manipur side of the 1871–72 campaign — recording tribute of "elephant tusks

and gongs" and the subjugation of 112 Hao (hill) villages. The Soktes, however, maintained that the ivory tusks referred to on the stone were in fact ransom offered for Nokatung, not tribute extracted from the Chins.

## IV. Nokatung's sons

Nokatung had three sons by one passage in the text, four by another; both agree the eldest was **Sum Kam** (also Sumkam), who later led his people from Mwelpi to the Tornglorng country and founded or settled Losow — a village of some 300 houses shared by Vaipes, Soktes, and Nwites. Sum Kam became paralyzed and died in 1893. Two of his brothers were held at Fort White for six months in 1892 for possessing Burman captives, and afterward lived at Losow, in territory that passed to Manipur under the Chin-Manipur Boundary Commission agreement of 1894.

## V. Nokatung II — Chief of the Toklaings (Siyin clan), a different man, c. 1888–93

A second, unrelated Nokatung (once spelled "Nokataung") appears much later, in the chapters covering the 1888–92 Siyin disarmament — a full generation after the first Nokatung's death. He was headman of Shark and surrendered during the disarmament; despite his part in the rebellion, he was pardoned for valuable service as a guide and spy, having located the rebel hideout at Pimpi for the Political Officer. He was afterward permitted to gather his clan — which since 1888 had lived scattered across Poiya, Shark, and Yo — and resettle them at Toklaing, their original site. When **Kamlung**, Chief of the Toklaings, died in Kindat jail (having been deported for luring the Myook Maung Tun Win to his death), **Nokatung was appointed Chief of the Toklaings** in his place, passing over Kamlung's son "on account of his father's villainy." He is recorded as having visited Rangoon.

**Discrepancies the source leaves unresolved:**

- **Death year** of Nokatung I: given as 1871 (Manipur-records passage, smallpox), 1872 (main narrative), and 1873 (footnote on his sons).
- **Tribe:** called Nwite (twice), Yo (once), and "a section of Soktes" (once).
- **Cause of death:** unspecified in most passages; "died of smallpox in the Manipur jail" per the Manipur-records passage specifically.
- **Sons:** three in one passage, four in another — both agree on Sum Kam as eldest.

**Source documents**

Carey, B. S. & Tuck, H. N. *The Chin Hills, Volume I — the history* (1896). paite.heritage.qzz.io/media/b172f6f6-249f-422b-ad28-e6fb511b1489

Carey, B. S. & Tuck, H. N. *The Chin Hills, Volume II — the village gazetteer* (1896). paite.heritage.qzz.io/media/4073bb52-3031-49e2-8704-5ef2437e15ed

See also: *Sokte / Kanhow Chiefly Genealogy*, compiled from the same source, held in this archive.

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