

# Polity, Policy, and the Economy of Salt in Manipur circa 1826–1947

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While the traditional production of spherical flat salt chunks through the evaporation of saline water from salt wells dates back to the ancient history of Manipur, notions of salt monopolies and salt as a revenue source evolved during the colonial period in Manipur. The British became involved in local politics and took control of the fiscal policy of the state. Under them, the quantum of salt produced reduced, and salt production itself became more expensive. This paper studies how British business practices, and, later on, an uninterested state government, caused the self-reliant salt economy to become a dependent one.

The traditional production of circular, flat salt chunks dates back to the ancient history of Manipur. Saline water from salt wells was evaporated to manufacture spherical salt slabs. Some salt was kept for domestic consumption, and the remainder, surplus amount was sold in local markets.

In Manipur, salt was scarce but a necessity. It had a high barter rate and so was a highly valued commodity. It is still used for medicinal purposes and for social and religious occasions. In addition to agricultural land and royal cloths, a salt cake was one of the three honourable gifts or rewards that the king of Manipur offered a person for their distinguished performance. Traditionally, menstruating women and royal family members were barred from visiting salt wells as it was considered unlucky. So, kings always sent their subordinate officials and nobles to the salt wells (Haokip 2019: 248, 250).

Information about salt wells in the precolonial period can primarily be found in the *Cheitharon Kumpapa*,<sup>1</sup> a court chronicle of the kings of Manipur. It mentions a guru who dug salt wells, superstitious beliefs about salt wells, gifts of salt cakes or lands with salt wells presented by the king, the location of salt wells, etc. In the colonial period, details on manufacturing methods, production, revenue, and state policies on salt can be found in British reports and diaries that became available after the Yandabo Treaty of 1826. In these records, the valley salt wells were documented than those located in the hills, for reasons that will be explained further in this paper.

## The Political History of the Salt Economy

The economy of a nation state revolves around its internal and external political affairs. The concept of salt monopolies, and of salt as a prime source of revenue for the state treasury, evolved during colonial times. Political unrest, internal quarrels in the royal family, and foreign hostility provided the British with the opportunity to take over and control Manipur's salt economy. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the political background of the salt economy during the colonial period. The history of Manipur can be traced back to around 33 CE with the ascension of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, the founder and first ruler of Manipur. The indirect rule of the British in Manipur started partially with the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824–26) and worsened in 1835 with the first appointment of the political agent. It reached its height after the Palace Revolution of 1890, which broke out as a result of the dissension, mistrust, and rivalry among the princes. Manipur was completely subordinated under the British as per the

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*sanad* (deed or treaty) of 18 September 1891, which included the provision that “the Chiefship of the Manipur state and the title and salute” will remain hereditary in the royal family (qtd in Aitchison 1909: 269). In 1891, the administration of the state was entrusted to a superintendent and political agent with full autonomy to reform policies with due regard for the traditions and customs of the state. The raja, Churachandra Singh, being a six year old, Major H St P Maxwell<sup>2</sup> took that dual charge (Goswami 2017: 135–38).

Maxwell initiated different innovative policies during his tenure to improve the salt industry in Manipur and to raise the revenues from that sector. First, he introduced a new system of leasing out certain salt wells to local agents to increase the salt revenue. The salt wells in the valleys were regulated, but those in the hills were almost unregulated by the British. Second, to redress the scarcity of firewood required for the salt-making process, for instance in Waikhong village, Maxwell prohibited the nearby villagers from collecting firewood from forests around the salt wells. Thus, he reserved the forest areas to supply adequate firewood to the salt wells (Haokip 2019: 256–57). Third, to improve the technology of salt production, Maxwell introduced the use of cooking or boiling iron pots called *kerai* in place of the previously used earthen pots. He offered these *kerais* on rent. Of course, that policy could not continue as the *kerais* were imported from England and due to heavy transportation costs, it was considered as cost-ineffective and unprofitable.

### Traditional Method of Manufacturing Salt

In the Meitei dialect, *thum* or *chi* means salt, *thum khong* means a salt well or reservoir, *meitei thumpak* implies a circular salt piece,<sup>3</sup> and *thum lairembi* is the goddess of salt. *Thum shung shang* is a shed or cottage in which salt is prepared, which has three bamboo or wood walls and an A-shaped thatched roof. The hearths or kilns where salt cakes were manufactured from salt water are called *thum leirang*. These are rectangular and raised structures made of earthen clay. They have an opening on each end: the mouth at the front is called *chamang* and the one at the rear is called *chaning*. The *chamang* is 1.5 ft wide and 1 ft high. Lit firewood is added from this side. The ash of the burnt firewood is collected and removed from the *chaning*. There are circular holes of different sizes called *kamit* on the hearth in which pans are placed. The big holes are used for boiling salt water, and the small ones are used for shaping the salt into circular cakes (Singh and Basa nd: 4–5).

An artificial evaporation method is used for boiling saline water on the hearth.

The water is evaporated in small earthenware dishes, shallow and saucer-shaped ... The pans, about 100 in number in each shed, are placed over little holes, and underneath is the fire, which is stoked at one end, the fuel used ... The attendants are constantly on the move supplying the pans with water, emptying, and filling them again. (Allen 1905: 93)

The crystalline, concentrated salt is collected in an earthen plate called *kambi*. Then, the salt is given a circular shape with the help of circular iron trays called *tei*, which are placed upon

the smaller holes in the hearth. The salt manufactured by artificial evaporation is subsequently purified. Thus, the quantity of salt obtained is about one-twentieth of the weight of the water. That amount is nearly double the quantity obtained when solar evaporation was used on sea water at Newcastle in the 1830s (Pemberton 1835: 29).

In general, women are engaged in manufacturing salt, while men collect firewood and plantain leaves (Singh and Basa nd: 6–7). As per the Census of India 1961, as high as 61.74% of the population was engaged in agriculture, followed by 27.82% in salt-making, 08.70% in business, and the remaining 01.74% were teachers in Ningel village in Manipur. Out of the total 32 workers engaged in salt-making, 31 were female and only one was male (Census of India 1970: 22).

### Hotspots of Salt or Brine Wells

There were four principal brine wells in Manipur—Ningel (Nigail), Chandrakhong (Chundrakong), Sikhong (Seekhong or Seekong), and Waikhong (Waikong) (Allen 1905: 92). All four are located in present-day Thoubal district of Manipur. Among them, Ningel had three wells,<sup>4</sup> Chandrakhong had two, Seekong had four, and Waikhong had five (Allen 1905: 93–94). Of the four, Ningel is the only village where the tradition of salt-making is still operational. It has two wells that are concrete and a third one which is a wooden structure where saline water is kept in a hollowed-out tree trunk that is 54.5 ft in length. It is said that the wooden well was constructed by King Rajshree Bhagyachandra in the 18th century (Singh and Basa nd: 5). The salt produced in Ningel was used across the kingdom. Salt manufactured in Chandrakhong was sufficient for consumption by local inhabitants. The surplus was bartered with neighbouring tribes for tobacco, ginger, cloth, and cotton (Pemberton 1835: 29). Waikhong gave the best-quality salt (Allen 1905a: 94) that was also used by the royal family (Pemberton 1835: 29). According to colonial accounts, “all [four salt wells] lie closed together, and are surrounded by villages wherein reside those engaged in the salt manufacture.” In addition, “the spots containing these springs are ... covered by a very subtle vapour, which is always found hovering over them at an early hour of the morning.” They also describe the process of creating these remarkable wells: once the site is ascertained, the well is erected as follows.

[A] shaft is sunk down to the spring, and cylinders, formed of the hollowed trunks of large trees, let perpendicularly into the opening, are preserved in an erect position, by ramming earth between them and the sides of the well; the diameter of the cylinders is seldom more than six feet, and the depth varies from forty to sixty feet. (Pemberton 1835: 29)<sup>5</sup>

Other salt wells mentioned in the British reports are Challao (RAPA 1891–92: 9), Kongal (RAPA 1992–93, Chapter I: 5), Chibu (RAPA 1893–94, Chapter I: 7), and Panlen (probably present-day Pale) (Parratt 2005: 144). The Challao wells, situated in the hills, were worked by the Nagas under the supervision of Manipuris (RAPA 1891–92: 9; RAPA 1893–94, Chapter I: 11).

There were variations in the age (new or old), location (hilly or valley), production (high yielding or unproductive), and

condition (working or dried) of salt wells. For instance, Ningel is the oldest well that is still working and yields the most salt even today. There are many other small salt wells in other parts of Manipur, but they are either unproductive or have dried up (Brown 1874: 9).<sup>6</sup> In 1891–92, the turnover of the wells in the valley of Manipur was estimated at 4,596 *maunds*.<sup>7</sup> In many cases, when there was unrest in the country, the wells were not operated (RAPA 1891–92: 9).

In the last decades of the 19th century, production of salt in the state became more expensive and decreased owing to the paucity of low-cost, hard-working labourers. The lack of labour was caused by caste prejudice, the abolition of slavery, and the *lallup*<sup>8</sup> system. Other causes were inadequacy of capital in the form of investment and machineries, the lack of an organised sector, and inefficient management. This inefficiency necessitated a “cheaper method of working” (RAPA 1892–93, Part II B: 9) in salt wells. The state considered the salt industry a loss-making business and so did not invest in the management of salt wells to rejuvenate the salt industry. The availability of cheaper, imported salt was the prime cause for declining production in the salt industry (RAPA 1895–96: 11). “Improved communications” resulted “in the locally manufactured article being eventually displaced by Liverpool salt” (RAPA 1896–97: 13). In the beginning, Liverpool salt was imported into Manipur by way of *tammu* (road) (RAPA 1892–93, Part II B: 7). The monetisation of the market<sup>9</sup> was also a catalyst that helped increase the demand and supply of Liverpool salt in Manipur.

### Caste, Convicts, Lallup, and Hill-men

In the precolonial period, only a high-caste guru dug or supervised the salt well<sup>10</sup> and practised rituals for manufacturing salt (Parratt 2005: 145, 146, 155). But, in the colonial period, convicts, hill-men<sup>11</sup> (such as Nagas), and Loi (a low-caste community) were used to dig salt wells and make salt cakes (Hodson 1908: 36). This was because there was a rumour that those who worked in salt wells looked yellow and that the work shortened their lifespans (Haokip 2019: 252). Besides, there was the prevailing *lallup* system of salt production. This was done with the aim of increasing salt production while reducing costs. It is noteworthy that out of 3,042 industrial workers, Manipur had 1,163 salt makers, 410 potters, 326 silk weavers, and 110 carpenters in 1881 (Singh 1998: 24).

### Technology and New Way of Revenue Collection

Traditionally, in Manipur, earthen pots were used to boil the saline water from which salt was extracted. With a view to improve the production technology and collect more revenue, the state administration supplied iron trays or *kerai* (or *karai*) to the workers of salt wells in valleys and hills for a royalty of ₹1 per *kerai* per month (RAPA 1891–92: 9; RAPA 1893–94, Chapter 1: 11). As the *kerai* was supplied on rent for 10 months at the rate of ₹1 per month, one had to pay ₹10 for each *kerai* used (RAPA 1897–98: 13; RAPA 1899–1900: 7). Iron *kerais* were supplied both in cash and kind. For instance,

at *Challao* the State supplies *Kerai* gratis, and charges ₹1 per month for the use of them, while at *Chandrakong* in the valley and at the

other brine springs payment is made in kind, the salt received being sold retail from the State godowns. (RAPA 1892–93, Part II B: 9)

For several years, no *kerais* were provided in the hills because the hill people expressed their reluctance to hire and pay for *kerais*. As a result of this, they had to make salt using the traditional process without using the new improved technology of using *kerais* (RAPA 1897–98: 13). So, though there was no difficulty in collecting salt revenue from the valley wells, there were challenges in the case of the hill wells (RAPA 1897–98: 13). In 1897–98, “provisions were been made for the purchase of *Karais* to prevent a further shrinkage of revenue” (RAPA 1897–98: 13).

Salt revenue was collected in two ways: one by leasing out the salt wells, and two by renting out iron *kerais*. “The original estimate of salt revenue for the year (1892–93) was ₹20,000; but, owing to delay in the arrival of *Karais* for the *Challao* salt springs, this estimate has been reduced to ₹15,000” (RAPA 1892–93, Part II B: 9). This means that the British earned ₹15,000 supplying iron *kerais* on rent to native salt producers. Salt revenue was realised partly in the current year and partly in the succeeding year as arrears. Local persons were appointed to collect salt revenue from the salt wells. The British administration was very strict in collecting salt revenue. For example, a hill-man called Lambus who collected revenue in the hills once misappropriated the money. Later on, he was prosecuted and the money was realised accordingly (RAPA 1901–02: 82).

Initially, the use of *kerais* in place of traditional earthen pots led to an increase in the production of local salt. But gradually, production started to decline due to the non-cooperation of the hill salt workers in using *kerais* in addition to other economic and non-economic factors.

### Source of Revenue and State Monopoly

As stated earlier, in addition to supplying iron *kerais* on rent, salt wells were leased to individuals for three years, and this was a source of government revenue. Accordingly, the British started the privatisation of the salt industry in Manipur. In general, leases commenced on 1 April every year and ended on 31 March three years later. Salt wells were considered a royal quasi-monopoly during the precolonial age of Manipur. But the salt monopoly or the state’s control over salt (joint efforts of the Manipur royal family and the British) began after the first Anglo–Burmese War (1824–26). The state monopoly became stronger with the appointment of a political agent in Manipur in 1835 and eventually reached its full phase in 1891.

The king of Manipur was the sole owner of brine wells on which he levied a tax of one-fifth the quantity of water drawn.

From the remainder the wages of the manufacturers are defrayed, each of whom receives per mensem [per month] two baskets of salt containing one hundred circular pieces each, amounting in weight to about 12.5 *seers*, the *Bazar* price of which varies from three to four rupees. (Pemberton 1835: 29)

Following the growing state control over salt wells, the king received 30% tax on the total quantity of salt produced in 1873, whereas the remaining 70% was distributed among the salt

workers. Salt was produced largely in the cold season. On average, 150 maunds of salt were produced every month (Brown 1874: 10). Following the import and abundance of salt from outside Manipur, salt tax revenues realised by the government declined. For example, the salt tax revenue collected by the Government of Manipur was ₹13,265 in 1892–93. It reduced to ₹11,874, ₹9,601, and ₹8,855 in 1893–94, 1894–95, and 1895–96, respectively. Though the figure rose to ₹11,112 in 1896–97, it declined substantially to ₹7,150 and ₹5,254 in 1897–98 and 1898–99, respectively (Table 1).

The British East India Company used the “Mughal fiscal institution” in Northern East Bengal in the 1820s “as a means by which to access revenue and to control; the fiscal relationship based primarily on land ownership became the link of communication between ruler and subject” (Cederlöf 2009: 515). As this system did not exist in Manipur, the British followed the existing salt tax policy exercised by the preceding kings of Manipur so as to establish a “ruler–subject relationship.”

In addition to the local production of salt, “A small quantity is occasionally imported in times of scarcity from *Burma* [Burma] and *Kachar* [Cachar]” (Brown 1874: 9). The price of salt escalated due to tax hikes in 1835–1873. In 1835, the market price of salt was ₹3–₹4, and the tax on salt was one-fifth. But the price of salt rose to ₹6 with an increase in the salt tax to 30% (Pemberton 1835: 29; Brown 1874: 10). It is evident that salt wells became a state monopoly due to fiscal requirements and the control of the British. “The whole of the salt wells belong to the raja, and are worked for his benefit” (Brown 1874: 10). It signifies one form of “Oriental despotism” and state monopoly.

T C Hodson, assistant political agent in Manipur and superintendent of the state, tried to regulate the management of salt wells in Manipur. He noted that “the wells are under the charge of [the] Dewan [an officer] who resides in the capital and visits the wells occasionally” (Hodson 1908: 36). Under him, there were four *thumjao rungba* (overseers) of the salt wells who “investigated all cases arising out of the salt revenue.” One of them was a village officer, while the other three remained in Imphal and only visited the salt wells occasionally. Nearly all the divisions possessed an office known as the *lallup chingba* (puller of the lallup), who seems to have been the active intermediary between the officers at the capital and the men in the villages (Hodson 1908: 60).

Table 1 exhibits the revenue collected by leasing out the salt wells in the valleys and hills of Manipur from 1891 to 1901–02. It reveals that the total revenue earned differed from the estimated value. For instance, the collected salt revenue accounted for 50.16% of the estimated amount in 1891–92. Similarly, the authority procured 88.43%, 65.97%, and 83.59% in 1892–93, 1893–94, and 1896–97, respectively. The total revenue was as high as ₹13,265 in 1892–93, but it decreased by 10.49% (₹11,874), 19.14% (₹9,601), and 7.77% (₹8,855) in the succeeding years (1893–94, 1894–95, and 1895–96), respectively.

In 1896–97, the total salt revenue procured from the salt wells of the valleys and hills increased by 25.49% to ₹11,112 as compared to the previous year. During that year, the salt

revenue collected from the valley salt wells came to ₹4,328. But the realised revenue stood at ₹4,162, and the remaining was left as arrears to be realised in the next year. Similarly, of the total ₹8,966, the collected revenue from the hill wells was ₹6,950 with a balance of ₹2,016. It is apparent from the data that the administration could not realise the whole revenue in the current year. The balance of revenue to be collected as arrear in the succeeding year was higher in the hills wells as compared to the valley wells. For instance, current receipts of salt revenue in 1896–97 and 1897–98 from the valley wells were 96.16% and 92.62% but for the hill wells it was 77.51%

**Table 1: Revenue from the Leasing of Salt Wells in the Valley and Hills of Manipur**

Year	Total Revenue (₹)	Salt Revenue from the Valley Salt Wells (₹)	Salt Revenue from Hill Salt Wells (₹)
1891–92	₹10,245 (Estimated revenue was ₹20,424)	₹7,881 (Out of ₹8,915, the realised revenue was ₹7,881)	₹2,364
1892–93	₹13,265 (The original budget was ₹20,000; the revised estimate was ₹15,000 based on ascertained effective demand) No arrear		
1893–94	₹11,874 (The budget estimate was ₹18,000, of which the estimated arrear was ₹1,000 and current receipt was ₹17,000). No arrear		
1894–95	₹9,601		
1895–96	₹8,855	₹4,160	₹4,695
1896–97	₹11,112 (The expected income was ₹13,294)	₹4,162 (Out of ₹4,328, the current receipt was ₹4,162, and the balance of ₹166 was realised after the close of the year)	₹6,950 (Of ₹8,966, collected revenue was ₹6,950, and the balance was ₹2,016)
1897–98	₹7,150 = ₹4,182 (revenue from valley wells) + ₹2,801 (revenue from hill wells) + ₹167 (arrear)	₹4,182 (Out of ₹4,515, the current realised amount was ₹4,182)	₹2,801 (Current revenue was ₹4,110 and ₹2,801 could be realised)
1898–99	₹5,254 = ₹4,258 (revenue from valley wells) + ₹996 (arrear)	₹4,258 (Arrear collected was ₹996)	
1899–1900	₹8,318 = ₹4,258 (revenue from valley wells) + ₹100 (arrear)	₹4,258	₹3,960 (Supplying of 396 kerais at the rate of ₹1 keraï per month for 10 months)
1900–01	₹6,976	₹4,408	₹2,568 (Collected ₹2,568 out of ₹3,960 with balance arrear of ₹1,392)
1901–02	₹8,539 = ₹4,083 (revenue from valley wells) + ₹3,064 (revenue from hill wells) + ₹1,392 (arrear)	₹4,083 (Leased for ₹4,408, of which ₹4,083 were collected)	₹3,064

Sources: RAPA 1891–92: 9; RAPA 1892–93 (Part B II): 9,14; RAPA 1893–94 (Part II B): 18; RAPA 1895–96: 11; RAPA 1896–97: 10,13; RAPA 1897–98: 10; RAPA 1898–99: 5; RAPA 1899–00: 127; RAPA 1900–01: 3; RAPA 1901–02: 82.

and 68.15%. This was due to lack of communication and authorities' control over the hill's wells.

Overall, revenue collected from leasing out valley wells almost remained the same at around ₹4,000. But fluctuations were observed in the revenue collected from the hill wells. Thus, the revenue from hill wells were a determining factor in the aggregate salt revenue from valley and hill wells.

The revenue procured from salt wells started to decrease gradually in the last part of the colonial period, especially in the early decades of the 20th century due to the availability of imported, cheaper white salt in Manipur markets.

**External Trade of Salt<sup>12</sup>**

Manipur state was self-sufficient in salt production in the pre-colonial period. The state neither exported nor imported salt. But, just after 1891, the self-reliant salt economy of Manipur grew dependent on neighbouring kingdoms like Assam. The chief reasons were the availability of cheap, high-quality Liverpool salt, the apathetic attitude of the British government when it came to improving of the local salt industry scientifically and strategically, social unrest and political uncertainty in the state, privatisation of salt wells, monetisation of markets, and changes in the tastes and preferences of consumers.

As per the treaty signed on 18 April 1833 between Gambhir Singh and the British government, "The Rajah will in no way obstruct the trade carried on between the two countries by *Bengali or Munipooree* (Manipuri) merchants. He will not exact heavy duties and he will make a monopoly of no articles of merchandise whatsoever" (Aitchison 1909: 267). In that way,

power over the salt industry and fiscal management transferred to the British.

The scale of production could not cope with the growing size of the salt market. The tastes of consumers had changed. They revealed their preference for imported salt over local salt. Improvement in transportation following the Palace Rebellion in 1891 was one determining factor that resulted in an increase in the import of Liverpool white salt. The hill tribes purchased and consumed the imported salt without any hesitation, but the valley people, who held onto caste prejudices, took it with suspicion (Haokip 2019: 259). The cost of imported salt declined with improved transportation, but the cost of local salt increased because of the scarcity of labour and fuel.

After 1891, with the complete subordination of the Manipur state by the British as per the sanad of 1891, a considerable quantity and value of salt was exported from Assam into Manipur. Prior to that, from 1876-77 to 1881-82, the export and import of salt between Assam and Manipur was zero, except in 1877-78 and 1890-91, when Assam exported salt at ₹3 and ₹4, respectively, to Manipur (RAPA 1877-78: xcv-69; RAPA 1892-93: cxi-81). In total, 237 maunds of salt valued at ₹1,087 was imported by Manipur in 1892-93. In 1893-94, the quantity of salt declined to 51 maunds valued at ₹248. As stated above, a small quantity of salt was irregularly imported in times of scarcity from Burma and Cachar of Assam (Brown 1874: 9). But, in the 1880s, "the major portion of the transactions in connection with the trade between this Province and Manipur [took] place at the annual fair held at Silchar" (RAPA 1876-77: 84).

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Thus, Manipur, which was previously a self-reliant economy in salt production, turned into the needy economy.

## Conclusions

After the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824–26), political restlessness, internal conflict inside the royal family, and the interference of the Burmese and the British weakened the authority and administration of the kings of Manipur state. Considering it an opportunity, the British applied new fiscal reforms to raise government revenues, penetrate the administration, and control state resources.

The salt industry that was a quasi-monopoly of the monarch of Manipur became a complete state monopoly or joint venture of the British and Manipur royals after the arrival of the British.

As salt-making was the prime occupation of the natives in the industrial sector, the British made it a primary source of revenue and regulated the commercial segment strategically. The East India Company exercised a salt monopoly both in Manipur and outside the kingdom, that is, in Bengal, from where Liverpool salt was imported into the state. Due to the lack of protectionist policies, the labour-intensive, infant indigenous salt industry of Manipur could not fight the giant, capital-intensive Liverpool salt industry. The British neither reinvested salt revenues to foster infrastructure in the sector nor subsidised salt producers. Consequently, salt-making proved to be a loss-making business and salt wells became unoperative. Such strategic deindustrialisation caused an adverse occupational transition from industry to agriculture, hindering the state's economic development.

## NOTES

- In the *Cheitharon Kumpapa*, a reference to a salt well was found for the first time in 1693 CE. The text mentions that from Phairen (January/February) to Sachiphu (March/April), salt water is drawn from the salt wells (Parratt 2005: 105). For details, see Parratt (2005, 2009).
- Henry St Patrick Maxwell was the 10th political agent in Manipur under British India. He was in that position during (i) 27 April to 30 November 1891 (Major H St P Maxwell), (ii) 1 December 1891 to 1892–93 (Lt Col H St P Maxwell), (iii) 1895–96 (Lt Col H St P Maxwell, ICS, CSI) and 1899–1902 (Lt Col H St P Maxwell, ICS, CSI). Retrieved from Singh (nd).
- The *Cheitharon Kumpapa* mentioned *charoi thumpa* in 1746 CE. *Thumpa*, a shortened form of *thumpak*, means flat salt cake (*thum* – salt, *pak* – flat) (Parratt 2005: 166). Thus, *Charoi thumpa* implies a winnowing basket for flat salt cakes (*charoi* is a large flat winnowing basket made of woven bamboo strips and is used mainly for drying salt cakes, paddy, or any edible object in the sun) (Parratt 2005: 165–166).
- According to Census of India (1961), there were four brine wells in Ningel, namely Polangkong, Uyungkhong, Khongnou/Khonglen, and Chingthang-Khong. In 1961, only Khonglen was operational. The other three remained unused as they had dried up (Census of India 1970: 8).
- See also McCulloch (1859). Major W McCulloch was the second political agent of Manipur during the British period in 1844–62 and 1863–67.
- R Brown, FRCSE, was the fifth political agent in Manipur from 1867 to 1875.
- The maund, sometimes written as *man* or *mann* or *mun*, is a traditional unit of mass used in British India. The measurement or mass of the maund varies in different locations and different times. As per the Standards of Weights and Measures Act (No 89 of 1956, amended in 1960 and 1964), the maund is defined as exactly 37.3242 kilograms.
- "The general system of lallup is based on the assumption that it is the duty of every male between the ages of 17 and 60 to place his services at the disposal of the state, without remuneration, for a certain number of days in each year (...) The number of days thus placed (...) is ten days in every forty. This ten days service is so arranged that a man works his ten days and has his interval of thirty with regularity all the year round (...) he is entitled to cultivate for his support one *purree* (pura) of land, subject to

the payment in kind of the tax to the raja" (Brown 1874: 83).

- During the medieval period, the people of the north-eastern states of India considered a royal insignia their indigenous currency. When the British extended their power and control to the north-eastern region of India, they issued their imperial currency to demonetise the indigenous royal currencies and to establish their sovereignty.
- For instance, in the *Cheitharon Kumpapa*, there was a mention of a guru who dug salt wells in 1735 CE during the month of Lamta (February/March), in 1736 CE during the month of Wakching (December/January), in 1742 CE and so on (Parratt 2005: 145, 146, 155).
- For example, it was referred that "The *Challao* wells are worked by Nagas under supervision of *Manipuris*" (RAPA 1891–92: 9) or "In the hills, at *Challao*, the principal salt-making station, the hill-men supply labour" (RAPA 1893–94, Chap I: 11).
- In general, the commodity most exported from Assam to Manipur was betel nuts followed by metals, European cotton piece-goods, miscellaneous native goods, and cattle. Similarly, the most imported goods from Manipur into Assam were ponies followed by native cotton stuffs and wax (RAPA 1876–77: 84).

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