



Land System of Manipur in Pre & Post-1891

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Manipur was an independent princely state before the Anglo-Manipur War in 1891. The princely kingdom lost the war to the British and saw a shift from monarchical rule to British rule. This transition brought about significant changes to Manipur, including the land system. The paper aims to examine the structure and changes in the land system, particularly in terms of ownership, distribution, and taxation, before and after 1891. Secondary data, including colonial records, royal chronicle (Cheitharol Kumbaba), and other published literature, were used. During the monarchical rule, the land belonged to the King. The king, as per his wishes and desire, allocated land to his family members, officials, brahmins, and citizens. Taxation for cultivated land was paid to the King through offerings of harvested products and also by providing services to him in the lallup system as labour. The land system depicts the political, social, and economic fabric of Manipur. However, after 1891, the British started introducing the house tax and replaced the lallup system. They introduced a cash-based taxation system and initiated a cadastral survey, during which patta and dag chitta were issued to provide landholding security. The study finds that the land system administration and taxation underwent changes after 1891; however, the social fabric and culture associated with the land remained intact.

Introduction

Manipur was an Independent princely monarch kingdom ruled by the Ningthouja dynasty. The Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 brought the kingdom under British control and shifted the system of administration and governance. These changes were also evident in Manipur's land system. Land and its systems represent the Kingdom's political, economic, and social fabric, passed down from generation to generation. Land belongs to the king, and he allocated land to his family members, officials, brahmins for their loyalty and services. The common man was also allotted land for cultivation and repaid to their King in the form of kind and services. This system was altered after Manipur came under British control, marking the beginning of a new era in Manipur. This transition is important in understanding the evolving agrarian economy of Manipur and the shift in governance. The paper aims to examine the structure and changes in the land system of Manipur before and after 1891, particularly the patterns of ownership, allocation, and taxation, using secondary sources from colonial records, royal chronicles, and various published literature.

Land System & Administration

The Institution of 'Kei-roi' and its product utilization system, as the state remuneration, signifies that its production has been the main source of the state revenue. The cadastral survey, allocation, distribution, and partitioning arrangement of Kei-land, as well as its production process, have been intricately related to the landholding system of the state and the palace. As Dr. Brown (1873) observed on land tenure in Manipur before 1891, by saying that

"The whole land system of the valley starts with the assumption that all the land belongs to the raja, and it is he who gives away or retains as he pleases. Under the raja is an official named the *Phunan Selungba*¹, whose duty it is to superintend all matters connected with land cultivation; he looks after the measurement, receives the rent in kind, and transacts all business matters connected with land on behalf of the raja. The land is subdivided into villages and their surroundings: the headman of each division or village looks after the

¹Selungba= Royal Treasurer

cultivation, and is responsible for the realization of the tax payable in kind by each cultivator; he holds no interest in the land, and is merely an agent of the raja.”

“Besides the land thus directly, as it were, cultivated for the Raja, grants of land are given to officials and favourites, sometimes for their own lives only, or for a specified time, sometimes for themselves and descendants. These hold their lands on payment of the usual tax in kind. Connections of the Raja, Brahmins, and Sepoys pay no rent or tax on a fixed proportion of land regulated in each case, but on any increase in the land cultivated above that proportion, rent is paid.

“The proportion of land cultivated under what may be called the direct system on account of the Raja is about a third, or rather more than a third, is in the possession of members of the ruling family, Brahmins and Sepoys; the remainder is in the hands of the headmen, officials, etc., who hold it by favour from the Raja. Each individual liable for *Lalloop* or forced labour for the State is entitled to cultivate for his support one *Parris* of land, equivalent to about three English acres, subject to the payment of the regular tax in kind.

“The average yield per *Parris*, or three acres, is about 150 baskets annually: each basket contains about 60 pounds.” (Hodson, 1908)

On the subject of the cultivation of land, etc., Colonel McCulloch, in his report to Government, dated February 28, 1867, writes: “The Raja is the absolute proprietor of the soil, and can dispose of it as he likes. No one is prohibited from cultivating, but rather the contrary, for every male who comes on duty is entitled to cultivate one *purree* of land, paying a rent for the same. The State rent is nominally 2 baskets of rice in the husks, the basketful weighing 50 or 60 pounds; but usually 12 or 13 baskets are taken. Considering, however, that the worst *purree* of land yields 100 baskets and the best from 160 to 200, the 13 baskets are not a high rent; but so long as the rent taken by the State is given out as two, every basket over this is an exaction, and may be made a matter of grievance, as it is now. But this grievance can only be one as long as the *purree* of the cultivator is of the standard measure, which is very seldom the case—indeed, it has sometimes been found nearer two, and until a survey has been made, neither the Raja nor the people can be satisfied. Seeing the necessity for a survey, the Raja has commenced one, but it is much disliked, and, I fear, though several persons connected with it have been punished for taking bribes, that they will still be taken, and that the measurement will not be honestly done, even if the people employed were qualified to do it, which I doubt.

“The land under cultivation yields sufficient for the wants of the people, but the action of the *Keiroi-thau* is against the extension of cultivation, and unless steadily looked to, would lead to its diminution. The latter result might be disastrous and though I cannot report any real improvement in the *Keiroi-thau*² I am glad to say that for some time past attention has been directed to it, and I hope, as the Raja is anxious to bring more land into cultivation, for which purpose water courses are to be dug, he will see clearly the necessity of so reforming this *thau* as to make the people willing to take up the land which will be thus rendered fit for cultivation.”

These quotations serve to make it clear that the theory of the vestment of absolute rights over the land in the Raja had firmly established itself in the minds of the officers who represented the Government of India in the State some thirty years ago, but the closer acquaintance with the people, which has been not the least important of the results of the occupation of the State by British officers, renders it no less clear that the people themselves are far from accepting this theory in the blunt and unqualified manner in which it is stated by the native authorities, most of whom were interested witnesses. The system is one of severalty, as is to be expected in a country where permanent settlement is possible, but the number and importance of the protests which have from time to time been made against the unrestricted alienation of land by Manipuries to Muham-medans and other persons of alien descent, the vigorous denunciation of the speculative tricksters, who took out leases for the waste lauds near outlying villages and charged exorbitant rent for grazing or grass cutting, and the strength of the village system, afford evidence that the real nature of the tenure of non-arable land was communal and joint, while cultivated fields were held in severalty, a sure proof that we have to deal with a state of affairs halfway between absolute joint tenure and perfect severalty” (Hodson, 1908).

The author further argues that of the condition on the hills, “Land is held in several ownership, but no alienation outside the clan is permitted, and in cases where attempts have been made to dispose of the land to persons who were not only not members of the clan but not even members of the village public opinion has dealt very severely with the offender. As has been pointed out above, each village possesses a well-defined area, which is sometimes demarcated with regular boundary stones, and within which the villagers possess paramount rights of hunting, fishing (if a river is included), and development of cultivation, either by making new terraces or by *Jhuming*. So far as my information goes, the right of fishing extends to the middle of the stream only, and if they catch fish in the territorial waters of another village, a small share of the “take” is given to the “Riparian owners.” In the case of villages that possessed terraced fields, we find a mass of customs relating to the equitable distribution of water throughout the terraces. The details of these easements vary from village to village, but the underlying principle remains the same, and any villager who evades the rules lays himself open to much trouble (Hodson, 2007).

² Keiroi-thau individual labour of Keis

Land Ownership Classification

A modest attempt has been made to analyze the mode of allocation, cultivation, and cropping patterns, as well as state initiatives to increase the acreage of agricultural land in Manipur before the British occupation, based on several manuscripts. The existing land ownership pattern in Manipur at the time, under the Institution Lourung Loishang and his subordinate officer, Phourungba, was accounted for on the request of the state in 1891 CE, as reported by A.A. Howell, Assistant Political Officer in the Manipur Political Agency, 1891. His category of land ownership classification was listed within the bracket of the subheadings.

1. Ningthem Lou (a. Royal Family Land, b. Maharani Lou, c. Raja Lou);

Paddy fields pertaining to Royalty, himself or land owned by his sons & Grandchildren, any within the king's family members. The paddy land possessed by the monarch was termed as *Ningthem Lou* next and possessed by Manao Ebumma (Rani/queen consort), owned by the Royal Duke or sibling of the chieftain (King) or land registered under the name of royal princes, one's endowed by royal princess as a marriage gift were exempted from royalty or tax. It was usual to offer 25 Parries of land to a princess of the reigning king and that of the demised king's, on their daughter's marriage. The paddy lands gifted by the bride's parent on their daughter's marriage to the prince were also exempted from royal tax, but all these lands were registered with detailed accounts and a history of transfer ownership. There were 101 royal families' households with a population of 505 persons (Brown, 1874).

2. Lugun Lou; (Brahmin Lou)

As a consequence of imbibing Baishnavism as the state religion at a later period of history, Brahmins who were assigned as pujari in the temple were privileged with the provision of paddy land with exemption from tax. This category is termed as 'Lugun Lou' of the Brahmin; as and when a Brahmin was invested with sacred threads, he was obliged to be gifted a Parris (2.48 acres) of tax-exempt paddy field, which was non-saleable to any individual thereafter. Thereafter, on expiry of the Brahmin, the king has to re-tract the possession of the land ownership, leaving one Lourak (1.75 acres), one half of a Parris, for the widow of the Brahmin and the male offspring of the former for sustenance. There were 308 households with 1540 persons in the Imphal Valley alone (Brown, 1874).

3. Siphai (Sepoy Lou).

Security personnel were not offered cash remuneration, but were provided with land for cultivation. Similar to the Brahmin's situation upon the death of the security officer, leaving one Lourak (1.75 acres) for the sons of the deceased officer, and the excess land was taken back by the palace. The size or areas of paddy field provided in lieu of state salary were

- a. Major- receives a number of Parries (2.48acres) multiplied by the number of companies under his command.
- b. Poina receives 6 Parries
- c. Subedar receives 4 Parries
- d. Jamadar receives 3 Parries
- e. Kut receives 2.5 Parries (Parris Ani Marak i.e. $2.48 \times 2 + 1.75 = 6.71$ acres.)
- f. Havildar got 2 Parries.
- g. Amondar receives 1 to 2 Parries
- h. Kothodar got above 1.25 Parries
- i. Siphai got less than 1.25 Parries

There were 6624 commanded by 250 officers (Dun, 1887).

4. ManaLou; (Awarded Land)

Paddy field awarded for merit or to a valiant soldier of the battle, by the state. The land awarded by the King for exemplary deeds is termed 'Manarou'. These fields are exempt from paying land tax. The king has to repossess the ownership of the land on the sudden demise of the awardee owner, but there was on condition that his heir (sons) can continue to cultivate the field for their sustenance by contributing liable tax @ of 12 phoupot (12 X 60 Kg=720kg) per Parris (2.48 acre) unit of cultivable land with maximum ownership limit of 12 pot per Parries only and not beyond that ceiling.

5. Pangal Lou

It is another variant of an Award in the form of cultivable land. Those valiant warriors who exhibited exemplary deeds on the battlefield were awarded this Paddy Land as a prestigious prize. For such a prized field, the successor can inherit the possession of land as the rightful owner of the deceased parent of the awardee. The king need not forfeit the land ownership to continue.

6. Lai rou (Temple Lou)

Paddyfiels recorded in ownership or possession by various deities of a sacred temple. There are numerous areas of cultivable land in various localities and villages, dedicated by the king to a particular deity, which are called

Lai-rou (Paddies of Divine). These lands were exempted from paying tax in kind or cash, but These Paddy lands can be leased to a subtenant (sublet) to other cultivators on condition of offering a part of the production. Beyond this list, as mentioned above, the remaining other possessor has to pay khajana (tax) in kind to the office of Phourungba controlled by Lourungba for the royalty.

Taxable Land

There were three kinds of taxable Land in the possession of the citizens.

1. Pham Lou: - Those paddy fields provided from the palace as annual remuneration as land for the officials and courtiers. The owner official has to contribute as rent one phoupot (60 Kg) per Parris of land that has been offered to him as his annual remuneration. It has been the payment pattern for official work in the lower court of Cheirap. There were 187 officials (Dun, 1887).

2. Touna Lou: - (Newly developed paddy field) It is reclaimed land for cultivation from previously wooded forest and undulating slopes of uncultivated meadows and thicket. One individual must make a request to the relevant office. If the king is pleased to grant a permit to claim the land, he has cut and leveled the space and begun cultivating paddies, exempt from royalties for the next three consecutive years. Even the King (government) was not obliged to forfeit the farmer from his newly erected paddy fields without compensation payment of the existing value of the land area and labour on the condition that the palace has to repossess the particular newly established land. The developer has the right to sell or sublet the property to others at his discretion. Upon the expiry of the three-year tax-exempt period, the developer must pay a royalty to the government at the rate of 6 chengkoks of husked rice per parris of cultivated areas. If defaulted beyond 12 months of extended periods.

3. Sarkari Lou: - The King possesses other paddy fields which had been leased as sub-tenants to near and dear servants of choice.

All categories of possession of cultivable land are taxable in kind, a fixed amount of unhusked and husked rice, except for that of Touna-Lou in the first three years of starting. The Phourungba oversees the collection of these royalties from small-scale farmers. His senior officer, Lourungba, is responsible for measuring, surveying, advancing, and receiving land ownerships and estates, and thereby maintains 10 records that are registered. Four records of the ten belong to the land possession of the armies and security personnel. Four other books were those of the land records of the four panna divisions. One exclusive register records royal lands in the King's own possession. The last and the tenth book records the entire above total in one register. In all these registers, it documents the name of the land owner, the name of the village where the agricultural plot is located, the Number of paddy fields, and the nature and history of possession of a particular land asset. Another copy of the same record was maintained in the office, enabling village authorities and villagers to see the ownership and acreage details. All details of land donated or acquired are duly recorded.

All collected paddy collected as tax from cultivators are kept at the Kei (Royal Granary).

Sanjabung (Village-specific Pastures)

In Sanjabung, or the meadows, there was no taxation as a source of revenue for the state. If any individuals had physically encroached upon the Specific or Community pasture, violating the law of the land, the villager would have to appeal to the Lourungba, the revenue officer. If it remains unsatisfactory, the villager has to approach the king for his rightful judgment.

The land holding data as provided by N. Khelchandra (1979) before the British annexation in 1891 in the valley amounts to 26,500 (around 66,250 acres) parris of cultivable paddy fields. But these lands were mostly owned by the Raja, his family and his relatives, and Brahmins. Land could be counted in different categories, and the distribution of land on those heads can be enumerated in the following manner

Table 1: Distribution of Land

Sl.	Category	Unit in Parris
1	<i>Siphai Lou</i> (Land given to the militia)-	9000
2	<i>Touna Lou</i> (Land purchased or reclaimed)	5000
3	<i>Mana Lou</i> (State awarded Land)	3000
4	<i>Luqun Lou'</i> (Land for Brahmins)	2500
5	<i>Pham Lou</i> (Service Land)	1200
6	<i>LaigiLou</i> (Land for the deities)	500
7	<i>Maharanigi Lou</i> (Land for the queen)	600
8	<i>Ninqthougi Imunq Manungi Lou</i> (Land for the Raja's family)	1000
9	<i>Ningthou Maranaigi Lou</i> (Raja's personal)	3700
10	Total Land under cultivation	26,500

So, till 1892, it appears that there was no well-defined system of land tenure. However, in this year, a major change occurred in Manipur's system of land tenure. On 29th April 1892, the then Political Agent, Major Maxwell, announced the termination of the Lallup system (Forced labour) and the institution of a house-tax in its place, at Rs. 2/- per house per annum. The introduction of a uniform annual land revenue rate of Rs. 5/- per parri was also made known to the people (Singh 1979).

Pemberton (2023) and Brown (1874) estimated that approximately one-fourth of the valley was cultivated; however, they lack statistical figures to support this estimate, making it difficult to assess the accuracy of their assessment. The only surviving statistical data that provided a more reliable estimate comes from a manuscript by Howell in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Howell's data suggest that the total land under cultivation in different tenures of land holdings at that time was approximately 26,500 parries or 66,250 acres (Howell, 1907).

The sluggish growth in food grain production, coupled with moderate levels of variability, and that too depending largely on the expansion of area, with a marginal contribution from yield, is a subject of great concern for policymakers. On the other hand, the state has made significant progress in the production of horticultural crops, particularly in the cultivation of vegetables, fruits, and spices, with greater stability compared to food grains and oilseeds. The outstanding improvement in production of high-value horticultural crops, though mainly through expansion in area in cases of vegetables, and in the case of fruits, is due to the rate of rise in both area and yield, whereas acceleration in spices production is primarily due to an increase in yield growth (Singh & Bera, 2017). Later, with the onset of British administration, Maxwell's measures introduced a break from the past, as they did away with the assumption that all land belonged to the ruler. The cultivators now held land directly under the state, paying land revenue in cash. Although land tenure was not regulated by any codified law, cultivators, in effect, held land as tenants of the State and had rights of occupancy, inheritance, and transfer, subject to the payment of land revenue to the State (Census, 1961).

This leads to the introduction of the cadastral exercise and issuance of the present Dag Chitha and Patta system. To ensure the above rights of tenants, the government also charted a plan to introduce the Patta system, providing them with information on the exact quantity of land in their possession. A land register had also been opened, and in this register, the transfer of land had to be recorded. However, the transfer would have to be permitted only with the sanction of the officer supervising this department of the State. Relinquishment of holdings would be granted on application. Along with the assessment of land revenue in cash in the valley in 1892, in the hill tracts, a uniform rate of Rs. 3/- a house per annum was assessed (GOI, 1895).

At the close of the year 1893, it was estimated, based on the late Darbar's records, that the cultivated land in the valley covered an area of 26,708 parris. Of this area, about 1,700 had been assigned for the support of Raja's various officials and the sepoys of the newly raised police force, leaving 25,000 parris for which patta had to be issued. It was expected that 24,000 pattas would be granted, and 14,000 had actually been issued. All this work had to be performed with an untrained staff. About one-fourth of the land for which pattas had been issued was held by Brahmins, Rajkumars, and State Officials who sublet it to the actual cultivators. The introduction of the patta system served as an incentive for peasants, encouraging them to expand their cultivable lands. As a result, there were applications for new settlements which covered an area of 1000 parris, and it showed that cash rent and certainty of 8 undisturbed possessions were appreciated by the people (Shakespeare, 1907).

The greater part of service lands and about 25 per cent of the lands held under ordinary patta, were cultivated by the Raiyots/Landlords who paid rent (usually in kind) to the officer holding land or to the patta holder. The rent was, by custom, fixed at 12 pots of unhusked rice or 50 seers per parri (Administrative Report 1894). It was observed from the above incident that the traditional institution of the land ownership system was in strength and remains embedded within the agrarian structure itself. All the British efforts to modify it were futile, and the traditional ownership remains intact, but the introduction of the patta system emboldened and legalized the land ownership pattern of the Manipuri subjects.

Tempted by the wish to harvest revenue, a portion of land on the east bank of the Jiri river (Jiri, a small valley in the western end of the Manipur hills bordering the Cachar district of Assam) was opened for settlement, and the terms were ryotwari. In the first year, the land was to be rented free, and then revenue was assessed at the full rate, five 10 annas per bigha (Administrative Report 1907). Initially, the new settlers, mostly from Manipur, were reluctant to settle due to the foreigners' tax and the amount of labor required for clearing the jungles. However, the number of settlers gradually increased, and by 1911, the settled lands had expanded to 6,583 bighas (Administrative Report, 1910). From the above experience, the British administration had to comply with the old system, being unable to enact a new law to safeguard the interests of tenants, except at the time of eviction, when the tenant was unable to pay the *Lousal* (paddy land rent).

There were three groups of land owners of the cultivable paddy fields: 1. Persons holding the non-taxable land as directly provided by the state by virtue of royal lineage, state officials, Brahmins, or awarded as a prize. And taxable land as a reimbursement or salary in kind for security personnel, state employees. 2. Persons cultivating the land on annual rent offered in products or kind to the land holder known as *Khorposh* and *Tolop Lou*. *Khorposh* lands were allotted for state administrative maintenance, often granted to close political aides of the royal relatives. To reform the existing system, which had inherited uneconomic and defective royalties, a new system of patta certificates with provisions for land occupancy rights was introduced from 1892 onward. The pattas were not issued in the State office in Imphal, but the authorities personally inspected the villages and

issued pattas to the villagers. In the month of August 1892, the then Political Agent, Major Maxwell, personally supervised the patta distribution with Bamacharan Babu, Ebungsi Ngangba of the royal lineage, who was the then **Lourungpurel** (Head of Survey & Settlement office) in a village named Nambol Foiing covering up to Moirang, about sixteen to forty kilometres from Imphal (Singh & Singh, 2012). There was a drastic increase in the cultivable land after the British occupation, as accounted in the administrative report, as "In 1892, the total area of cultivated land within the Manipur valley, according to the information collected from the Darbar officials and records, amounted to 30708 parris. Out of these, pattas of 25,000 parris had to be issued. In all, it was anticipated that 24,000 pattas would be granted, and out of these, 14,000 had already been distributed to the ryots and landlords, in a simple form, a counterfoil of which was kept in the State office. The patta, which was in English, merely stated the amount of land, the revenue thereon, and the instalments in which to be paid. Almost one-fourth of the lands for which pattas had been granted were held by persons other than the cultivating Ryots. These were lands which were confirmed in possession of Brahmins, Rajkumars, State officials, and others, and were, therefore, practically by Zamindars (Administrative Report, 1893)."

The introduction of the patta system provided an additional boost to the cultivators, and subsequently, the demand for new land increased. Since 1st January, 1893, applications had been received for close upon 1000 parris of new land, and during the year pattas were already issued for 684 parris of unoccupied waste lands (Administrative Report, 1893).

The average size of a holding, as determined from the Table 1 collected up to 1894, amounts to about 2 3/4 acres. But the whole settlement, which was in force, was based on the figures obtained from the records of the village affairs, dating from before the revolt of 1891, and no re-measurement had yet been attempted, and no patta contained the boundaries of each holding. They were merely occupancy permits, the amount of revenue due, and the supposed area entered. As a result, numerous boundary disputes arose due to the absence of any land survey. In order to resolve such land disputes, the then Political Agent advised making an 18 regular cadastral survey of the entire land of the valley (Administrative Report, 1894).

Later, more areas were put under cultivation, even in the border areas of Assam, in Jirighat village of Manipur. It was recorded in the Manipur State Royal Chronicle that a portion of the forest land on the eastern bank of the Jiri River, flowing to confluence with the Barak at the peripheral boundary areas of the Manipur hills bordering the Cachar district of Assam, was made to settle under a village chieftain (Singh & Singh, 2012). In the first year (1907), the land was to be rented free, and in the following year, their revenue was assessed, and collection began. The following communities, including Brahmins, Meitei, Pangal (Manipuri Muslims), Namsudra, Patli, Deswali, Muchi, and others, were permitted to settle in this newly cleared land.

Land Rent System of Manipuri Kingdom

Land Royalty under the Manipuri system, the rates varied from the crushing impost of 40 pots³ (50 maunds) of paddy per parri to as low as one pot, the value of the pot in cash being 33 about Rs. 3/-. The land revenue of 1891 - 93 was assessed on the basis of this old Manipuri system. Subsequent to the following of this old system, in the revenue collection of 1891 - 93, the rates practically varied from Rs. 4/- per parri as a minimum to Rs. 34/-, or its equivalent, on the most heavily taxed lands as a maximum. From the latter class of land, even this rate was not actually realised, but on the whole, the total collection amounted nevertheless to Rs. 148 119/- as against Rs. 125,000/- estimated to be the yield of the new assessment (GOI, 1895).

Further, mention of the then prevailing complication in the revenue management as "The mode of procuring the dhan (paddy) was very defective and half the amount paid failed to reach the State granaries. And the entire amount received was required for the support of the Maharaj and his followers within the Pat or royal enclosure. Besides giving the pay by free grants of land, all public works were carried out by the Lalup (Corvee system), by which every adult had to work for ten days in every forty for the Raja. The people of Manipur were tempted to pay the land revenue, and on the 19th January, 1892, the then Political Agent recorded: 'I propose leaving 20,000 maunds of dhan in the State granaries and realizing the rest of the revenue in cash. The Manipuris appear to have a lot of surplus 35 cash and are anxious to pay some of the revenue in money (Shakespeare, 1907). To address these institutional maladies in the collection and procurement of food stocks, several steps were taken, which are outlined in the following sections. The investiture of minor Raja Churachand with a Sanad took place on 29th April, 1892. On the occasion, Major Maxwell, the then Political Agent, announced that the future land revenue would be paid in cash at a uniform rate of Rs 5/- a parri (2.38 acres). Along with this, the Lalup system was also abolished and replaced by a house tax of Rs. 2 per house per annum. The house tax was extended to the hill areas also at the rate Rs. 3/- per house. However, the house tax in the valley was abolished in 1899 - 1900 (GOI, 1893)

In the year 1892, Major Maxwell opened a register, and in it he noted the exact quantity of land in possession of each person. And on the basis of the above information, he began issuing pattas to the landowners. The land would remain in the owner's occupancy as long as he paid the rent punctually. Transfer of land was also registered, and transference was possible only on the sanction of the officer supervising this granted department of the State. Relinquishments of holding were also on application. Maxwell personally supervised the distribution of pattas, which was prepared on the spot with the aid of local village heads and the village

³ Pot (0.08) cubic metre = 2 sangbai (Manipuri standard rice basket volume)

register. So the pattas were not issued in the State office. The issuing of pattas commenced on 26 July, 1892 (GOM, 1892).

Thus, few revolutionary changes were made by the newly inducted British Administration. A few of the old maladies were rectified to enhance the revenue collection in the state coffers. A few more steps were taken as follows. According to the village registers, from which all information for the new assessment was obtained, the total area of cultivated land in the valley in 1893 amounted to 30708 parris. Of this total, it was found that something like 4000 parris were lying waste, some 1500 parris more had been set apart free of revenue as service lands to police sepoys and revenue officials; the balance of about 25,000 parris only were therefore assessable. About one-fourth of the land for which patta had been issued was held by Brahmins, Rajkumars, and State Officials who sublet it to the actual cultivators. There were, however, applications for new settlements which covered an area of 1000 parris. The British officials considered it an expression of appreciation for the new settlement by the cultivators of Manipur (Shakespeare, 1907). Despite all these steps taken, additional problems were caused by older formal and informal institutional practices. In the report of Shakespeare (1907), it is said that "But the new settlement created a problem of realising all the revenue in cash. At the close of the year 1893, there remained outstanding just over Rs. 100000/- out of a total demand, current, and arrears of Rs. 223,000/-. The following year, out of a demand of Rs. 136,659/- only Rs. 45,682/ 41 could be realised." In 1892 - 93, the gross demand on account of hill house tax, which was originally put at Rs. 60,000/-, was reduced to Rs. 50,000/-. This was on account of the heavy overassessment found to exist in the Tangkhul area of the Manipur hills (Administrative Report 1894).

In the year 1894 - 95, to avoid accumulating arrears and the much consequent trouble and for the purpose of collecting land revenue, the entire valley of Manipur was divided into four divisions. They were called Pannahs over each of which a Lakpa was placed. Their duties were similar to those performed by Mauzadar in the plains of India, but they accepted no responsibility for full collection of the dues of their respective pannahs. Still, this new system improved the position of collection (Administrative Report 1895).

The British administration has to resort to a commission-based royalty collection. The Lakpas were paid commission at the rate of 10 p.c. on Rs. 6000/- collected and at 5 p.c. on the remaining collection before the end of the year. The revenue collection began improving. The revenue system introduced after the British occupation remained unchanged until 1906. The p.c. of collection continued to increase, but during the year 1902 - 03, Major Bloods tried to collect the revenue without sending out the Lakpas. It resulted in the fall of the collection. So the next year, Major Maxwell resorted to the former system. It showed the collection upto 92.7% which had been received till that year. The British Government discussed Wood's experiment and came to the conclusion to introduce it. So during the year 1905 - 06 it was tried again and special measures were taken to ensure its success (Meetei, 1992).

Brown (1874) mentioned that the vegetables and fruits were primarily grown in homestead gardens. A wide variety of vegetables were cultivated, including potatoes, ginger, brinjal (eggplant), gourd, bitter gourd, sponge gourd, pumpkin, taro, pulses, peas, cabbage, sweet potato, cassava, yam, turmeric, onion, garlic, cowpea, cauliflowers, cucumber, and chilies. Among the pulses, *Mung*, *Kesari*, *Mugngul (Mangal)*, *Sagol Hawaii*, *Hawai Mairongbi*, and *Hwai Tuchombi* were the main varieties cultivated. Hodson (1908) reported that fruits were also an essential part of agriculture. Pineapples, apricots, raspberries, strawberries, oranges, limes, pomegranates, guavas, mangoes, jackfruit, and papaya were among the essential fruits grown. There were traditions in which the king and his royal household would go out during their leisure time to feast on various kinds of fruits at different locations (Parratt, 2005). As mentioned above, a few villages were categorized as Hei-roi that maintain orchards to supply fruits as kei tributes. Rice has been the main cropping food crop in Manipur Valley, but a diverse variety of crops, vegetables, and fruits have been cultivated in homestead gardens all over the hills and plains. The royal chronicle Cheitharol Kumpaba records that there were ample crops and vegetables as well as tree species that were gifted by the neighbouring kings in historical time, to cite as an example, Guava is called a 'Pong's Heiton' (pong's Fruit), and Mango as Hei-nou (New Fruit). Kwatha, near Moreh on the border with Burma, has been a Meitei settlement cultivating betel nuts (Areca catechu) and Panna manna (Piper betle) for the palace since the time of King Kiyamba, in the 15th century CE (Singh & Singh, 2012).

Conclusion

The land system in pre-colonial Manipur was closely tied to its political, social, and economic life. The land belongs to the king and is distributed to his officials, nobles, Brahmins, and soldiers, as visible in the classification of lands as Ningthem Lou, Lugun Lou, Siphai Lou, Mana Lou, and Lai Lou. This demonstrates how land was tied to the social hierarchy of the ancient Manipur kingdom. The Lallup system was a form of taxation, with the revenue in kind and labour being offered to the King. Land was not only a source of livelihood but also symbolised loyalty, service, and social position. However, after 1891, the British replaced the lallup system with a house tax and introduced taxation in the form of cash payments. Patta and Dag Chitta were introduced, changing the traditional institution and governance, bringing legal rights over land to the people. This transformation brought a sense of security, and a new settlement was encouraged. The British also introduced Cadastral steps to make land management systematic and convenient to collect revenue.

The transformation in the land system after 1891 changes the administration, but it does not distort the old social fabric that existed prior to 1891. Most of the land remained in the hands of the upper class, while the cultivators worked as tenants. This indicates that the traditional social fabric coexists with the new administrative system. Thus, the land system of Manipur after 1891 is not only about change; it also shows how history, social, and cultural influences shape the lives of the people and their relationship to the land.

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