CHAPTER-I
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
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1.1. Administrative System of Manipur Before 1947

In early Manipur, ‘monarchy’ was the form of government. The king had administered his country in pursuance of a system called ‘Lallups’. For this system, the earlier Meitei population was divided into ‘Pannas’. The Pannas are like districts or subdivisions in a modern state. Each Panna consisted of a number of families and tribes. The head of each family or tribe would select from his family or tribe the man not below the age of 17 years, who can render service (Lallup) to the king for and on behalf of the Panna to which they belonged ‘Lallup’ covered all the state works social, economic, military.

The heads of the ‘Pannas’ were the appointees from amongst the favourites of the king. Their offices were established in and around the palace. Besides, there was also branch of ‘Lallup’ called ‘Khundin’ the duty of which was to see that men liable to ‘Lallup’ performed their work well.\(^\text{15}\)

For the efficient working of the Lallup the Panna was minutely divided. The total number of divisions was 107.\(^\text{16}\)

During the time of Sir Churachand on 29th September, 1892 A.D., the ‘Lallup’ system was abolished. But there was ‘Yunnak Mashin’ (household)

\(^{15}\) Ibohal, M., The Study in Local-Self-Government in Manipur, p.1.

\(^{16}\) Jhaljit, R.K. Short History of Manipur, pp.297-298.
of each of the seven Salais* had its own ‘Mashin’ (work). Thus, ‘Yumnak Mashin’ was the work done by each ‘Yumnak’ and name of the ‘Yumnak’ was given according to the work that the person had been doing.

Later on, the process of decentralisation started in Manipur. On 14th Hiyangei (October – November) 1892 A.D., Village Panchayats were established; later on, on 30th Hiyangei 1903 A.D., Panchayats were set up in the villages of Kakching Khullen, Sekmai, Khumbi, Shikhong, Ningen. In each of the Village Panchayat 5 (five) members sat; all were elected by open ballot. Two of the members were to retire every two years by rotation. Subsequently, they after election sat permanently. But the functions of these panchayats were mainly adjudicatory rather than administrative.

During the British period the Valley was divided into four (4) circles, in each of which there was a Panchayati Court. It was in 1891. These courts tried civil suits in which the subject matter in dispute did not exceed Rs.50 and criminal offences of minor degree i.e. simple hurt, assault, trespass, adultery and minor thefts.

The name of the four courts are given below:

1) The Town Panchayat has the jurisdiction in Imphal. It tries minor criminal and civil cases and has power to fine up to Rs.100. the Court was instituted on 15th Nov. 1981. the Town Panchayat could

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17 Cheitharol Kumbaba, (ed.) by L. Iboongohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh, p.104
18 ibid., p.531.
20 Rules and Management of Manipur Administration (12892-1907), pp.3,4
impose fines up to Rs.100 and could decide civil and criminal cases. The Rural Panchayats have powers of imposing up to Rs.50 or less in value.\textsuperscript{21}

2) Rural Panchayat were opened at Sekmai, Maklong, Foiching, Moirang, Wangoi, Kakching, Chairel, Nignai and Bamon Kampus. The members of these Panchayats were paid by a grant of one Pari of Riction free of revenue while in office.\textsuperscript{22}

3) The Mahamadan Panchayat was a special court at Lilong for the trial of cases between the Muslims and the Manipuri or for the trial of cases of Muslim subjects of the state. It consisted of five Musalman gentlemen with the powers of Rural Panchayats. An appeal from the Mahamadan Panchayat lies in the Cheirap Court.

4) Choukidari System: The Panchayat Circle for police purposes had been found useful. An officer called a rural choukidar has been found appointed for every 100 houses and he reports daily to Panchayat of his circle. According to 1921 – 22 reports, the number of choukidars was 202.\textsuperscript{23}

Appeals from all these circles could be filled in the Cheirap Court. Each member of the Rural Panchayat was given remuneration of one Pari (2½) acres of rent, free paddy land during the tenure of his office. But the members of the Town Panchayat received not less than 25 Paries.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibobi, N. The Manipur Administration (1976).p.196.
\textsuperscript{22} ibid.p.196
\textsuperscript{23} Administrative Reports of Manipur State (1921-1922). pp.7-11.
In 1906, a cash payment of Rs.15 per month for each of the four Panchayat members was sanctioned in addition to the free grant of land.

Besides the Panchayats there were three higher courts at the capital viz.24

Pacha
Military
Chirap

The Pacha tried cases connected with females. It existed since the time of Pakhangba. It was customary that the wife of Raja was the President at the Court of Pacha. During that time the strength of Pacha was 12 including the president. During the reign of Garibaniwas the Pacha was placed under the officer Pacha Hanba. At that time the strength of the court was reduced to 6. It was 7 including Pachha Hanba. President was also appointed. The president was the male instead of female.

The court had jurisdiction over all cases of family disputes in which women were concerned – beating of wife, adultery and divorce. The punishment fine was up to Rs.50/- it had no power for punishment of imprisonment or death. It was used to decide cases, which were beyond the jurisdiction of the Panchayat.25

The Senapati was the President of the court. During the reign of Sir Chandrakriti, Top Garod was established. The strength of the court consisted

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of the 4 sons of Maharaja including Jubraj and 4 big officials from among civil and military officers. The court was the highest court of appeal.\textsuperscript{26}

The military court was used to try cases involving the soldiers. Cheirap was the highest court of Manipur. It was both the Court of appeal as well as the court for serious cases only. Angom Ningthou was the President of Cheirap. At first there were 15 judges in that court, later on the number was reduced to 5 each of them used to receive 125 paris of cultivable land.

The maximum strength of the Cheirap was sixty-four. But the actual strength varied from time to time and was determined by the Raja.\textsuperscript{27} Normally the Cheirap consisted of 30 members.\textsuperscript{28} Since 1892, the strength of the Cheirap was very greatly reduced. The court composed of five magistrates, which sat in Imphal.\textsuperscript{29} Since 1906 a cash payment of Rs.25 per member was sanctioned in addition to free grant of land.

The Panchayat functioning in the valley areas in Manipur during the British Period was Satish Panchayat. According to 1891 – 1892 report, the villages in the interior of the valley had been classed into circles containing as possible 1,000 houses and in each circle, a Panchayat of five members had been appointed.\textsuperscript{30} With authority to try offence of inflicting punishment not exceeding Rs.50/- These Panchayats also had civil suits, which did not exceed Rs.50/- in value.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} The Raja could prevent any member from sitting in the Cheirap if certain fault was found on his part.
\textsuperscript{28} Dun. E.W. Gazetteer of Manipur. p.67.
\textsuperscript{29} Allen, B.C. Assam District Gazetteers. Vol.IX Naga Hills and Manipur. p.123
\textsuperscript{30} Administrative Report for the year 1891-92. p.9-10.
In 1902-03 there were 8 Rural Panchayats, but some three or four were going to be opened, 14 such panchayats were functioning from 1903. They were wound up in the year 1955.\textsuperscript{31}

According to the administrative reports of 1921 – 1922, there was no change in the number of constitution of the courts either in the valley or in the hills. The Cheirap and Sadar Panchayat court had six members and Rural Panchayats five members.

After the Anglo-Manipuri War 1891 A.D. the State of Manipur was taken over by the Government of India; minor Churachand Singh was appointed the Chief of Manipur. As he was of minor age, the administration was looked after by the Political Agent and Superintendent of the State. He was given the powers to adopt such measures as were beneficial to the people, but with instructions to regard the existing customs and traditions and the institutions. After the attainment of maturity Churachand Singh administered the State with the advice of the Durbar. Each Durbar member was responsible for the department for which he was in-charge.

According to the administrative report of 1943-1944 there was some disturbances in the working of Panchayats because of material loss to the

\textsuperscript{31} A Note on Panchayati Raj in Manipur Government of Directorate of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in Manipur (Panchayati Raj Wing).
departments owing to materials damage and certain situations. Details are
given below:\[32\]

1. Sawombung Panchayat were closed from about 18-4-44 and
reopened on 7-7-44. It lost nearly all the records and furniture
as the courtroom was suddenly occupied by the military. The
courtroom was considerably damaged.

2. Bishenpur Panchayat, remained closed 20-4-44 and reopened
on 7-8-44 due to Japanese action in World War II and lost all
the furniture, official records and the courthouse was destroyed.
It was working temporarily in shed covered with turpentine.

3. Moirang Panchayat, closed on 21-4-44 and reopened on 1-7-44.
It lost everything except the courthouse, which was also
damaged.

4. Nambol Panchayat also lost all the furniture and official
records.

5. Wangjing Panchayat, due to the courthouse being occupied by
the military, its furniture and some of the official records were
lost. It had been running in private houses.

6. Mahamadan Panchayat was to function in private houses as the
courthouse was occupied by the Military. Some records and
furniture were lost.

\[32\] Administrative Report for the year 1943-44, p.13. It is held that such provisions of this
Constitution will continue to remain in force as are not repugnant to the provisions of the
Indian Constitution under Article 372 of the latter. Henam Baruniton Singh, petitioner
Vs. Thockchom Ningol Heisnam Ongbi Bhani Devi and other, AIR 1959 Manipur
20(V56c11). also Ram Manohar Lohia Vs. Sundaram, (s) AIR 1955. Manipur 41.
In 1944-45 the foreigners Panchayat at Kangpokpi did not function after it had stopped work in consequence to the 2nd World War.

In the year 1945-46 from the 1st of June 1946 the Cheirap Court and the Sadar Panchayat court were split up so that there were two Cheiraps and two Sardar Panchayat courts.

Mahamadan Panchayat also carried on their work in a private house till 17-4-46 and since then, Panchayat settings were held in the Mahamadan L.P. School at Lilong with permission granted by the E.M. Sanction P.M.S.D.

In 1947 a form of responsible government was established in Manipur under the Manipur State Constitution. There was a council of six Ministers who were elected by the Manipur Stated Assembly comprising representatives elected, on adult franchise and on the principle of joint electorate from general, hill and Mahamadan constituencies at the ratio 30:18:3 with additional two seats for the representatives of educational and commercial interests. The Ministers were in charge of their own portfolios. But the Chief Minister* was appointed by the Maharaja. So, there was no full-fledged democracy in Manipur under the Manipur State Constitution.

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33 An old experienced petition – writer, N. Brajamani Singh of Jiribam Babupara, Jiribam Sub-Division gives the authors a very interesting account of the Moujadar period in this Sub-Division. from his own personal experience: Moujadar was regarded almost like a King he could do everything police, sanitation and health. forest. trial of cases both civil and criminal. revenue collection. primary education, public works, such as construction of bridges and village roads, reliefs, works in case of natural calamities, were all entrusted to him. He was the favourite of the Maharaja of Manipur.

* M.K. Priyobrata Singh, younger brother of Budhachandra, the Maharaja, held the office of the Chief Minister.
But the constitution did not operate long as the Manipur State was merged with the Indian Dominion on 15th October 1949 under the Merger Agreement.

After the Anglo-Manipuri War, 1891 A.D. ‘Lakpas’ and ‘Moujadars’ were officers entrusted with administration on the spot. Their functions were mainly revenue collection. At the same time they were given administrative powers and functions. Practically they were all-in-all in the administration of the areas of which they were in charge. They were first under the control of the political Agent and Superintendent of the State, and then under the control of the Maharajah assisted by the Manipur State Durbar.

1.1.1. Traditional Panchayat

From the very ancient days, the traditional form of Panchayat had been existing in the hill areas of Manipur particularly among the Nagas, Kukis and other tribals of Manipur. Traditional Panchayat were known by different names, e.g. “HANGNGA” was used among the Tangkhul Nagas. This is the system in which the members, are the chiefs (WUNGA) of the different classes and the headman “AWANNGA” was the ex-officio chairman. The office of the chairman is hereditary.34

Every village had its own “HANGNGA” each member had its own portfolio, “PEI” is the Panchayat of the Kabui village in which the members are the elders of village, Khullakpa (NAMPAI) is the headman. He is the ex-

34 A note on Panchayati Raj in Manipur Govt. of Manipur Directorate of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Manipur (Panchayati Raj Wing). p.2.
officio chairman of PEI and "KHUNBU" (NAHMPOU) was the Deputy Chairman.35

The numbers of the Panchayat were generally five for which selection is based on age-cum-merit.

"KOTSIMEI" is the Panchayat system of the Nagas. The head "KOTSIMEI" is the headman (MOVUO) of the village and the office is hereditary. There is no limit of the number of members, however, the number was generally restricted to 6/7 according to the number of class in the village. The basis of selection is age cum merit.

"KHO SAVING INTUPNA" is the system of Panchayat among Kom Nagas Khulakpa was the headman of the Panchayat. The office s hereditary. There was no fixed numbers for the Panchayat. Every class is represented in the Panchayat.

"KUKISSEMANG PACHONG" is the system of village administration with chief as the head and which was said to be called "SEMANG PACHONG". The members were the village elders and the number of members was fixed by the villagers themselves, as agreed upon among themselves.36

The internal organization of pannas is no less complicated. The four principal pannas were divided into two departments, Sanglen and Sangguba

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35 ibid., pp.3,4.
36 Ibid.
to each of which were attached officials whose titles are given in the following lists:\(^37\)

### Sanglen

- Laipham Lakpa — Naharakpa
- Dewa — Phammi Ahal
- Sanglen Lakpa — Phammi Naha
- Sanggoiba Hidang — Singsuba Ahal, 4
- Sanggoiba Hidang — Singsuba Naha, 4
- Pakhang Lakpa — Kwarangba, 4.

### Sangguba

- Lairen Lakpa — Naharakpa
- Sangguba — Sangguba Ahal, 2
- Sangguba Hidang — Sangguba Naha, 2
- Pakhang Lakpa

The officers in the department of Sanglen were in the service of the Raja, while Sangguba officials worked for the Rani.

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\(^37\) Hudson, T.C. The Meitheis (1908), p.67.
All villages were organised on the well-known system with village officials possessing titles as:

1) Khullakpa,
2) Lalakpa,
3) Khunjahanba (elders of the village),
4) Yuplakapa (Manager of Yu or beer),
5) Pakhanglakpa (Lakpa of the unmarried man),
6) Naharapa (Ruler of the lads),
7) Tellai Hanjaba and Hidang,
8) Hiruba,
9) Hinaoba (Responsible or making and repairing oats)
10) Lawn Lakpa (Responsible for cultivating of fields).³⁸

All the village officials possessing titles were functioning, discharging their own duties strictly. The major cases were in the Cheirap court.

There were three organisations in the village-Keirup, Shinglups and Leirup. All the villages were members of these organisations. Keirup was a military organisation. The Shinglup helped the bereaved family with wood, money and labour ³⁹ and the Leirup was in charge of development functions.

Every village or Leikai had judicial village organisation with two persons called Gopal Hanjaba and Gopal Hidang as the heads. They tried petty cases viz. divorce, other petty money suits and simple hurt cases. In the

³⁹ Sharma, Nandalal Meirabak (1960). p.16
criminal cases they even decided cases of levying fines up to Rs.50. they
decided cases of social and religious nature also.\textsuperscript{40}

1.1.2. Local Self-Government From 1947

The system of local self-government was introduced in Manipur only
in 1947. From this year the responsibility for administration in the Hills was
vested in the Maharaja in “Council and powers were exercised in accordance
with the Manipur State Constitution and the provision of the Manipur State
Hill People Administration Regulation, 1947”.\textsuperscript{41}

Under this Regulation the Minister of the State Council for the Hill
Administration was responsible for the administration of the Hill people.\textsuperscript{42}
Under this control and supervision, the concerned Sub-Divisional Officer
was the administration officer on the spot.\textsuperscript{43}

1.1.3. Local Authorities Under the Manipur State Hill Peoples
(Administration) Regulation, 1947:

For the purpose of administration all villages to which the Regulation
was applied was grouped into circles and sub-divisions.\textsuperscript{44} In each village of
20 tax paying houses or over there was nominated in pursuance of the
custom of the village a chief of Khullakpa of the village with his council of
elders. The concerned S.D.O. had to formally recognize a Village Authority
so nominated. The S.D.O. was the final authority in matters concerning the

\textsuperscript{40} Rao, V.V. A Century of Tribal Politics, pp.146,147.
\textsuperscript{41} The Manipur State Hill People (Administration) Regulation 1947, Section-3.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid Section 10
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid Section 8
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid Section 5
appointment and constitution of a village Authority; but appeal could lie to the Minister-in-charge of Hill Administration against the S.D.O.’s decision.45

In each Circle (consisting of a number of villages) there was constituted a Circle Authority, which comprised a Circle Officer and a Council of five members elected by Village Authorities falling within the Circle. The concerned S.D.O. had formally to recognize a Circle Authority so constituted, but an appeal could lie in the Minister in-charge of Hill Administration against his decision.46

The following presentation shall clearly show the organization of local authorities under this Regulation:

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Minister-in-charge of the Hill Administration
↑
Sub-Divisional Office
↑
Circle Authority/Authorities *
↑
Village Authorities **
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Here the ‘arrow mark’ is used to denote that, first, Village Authority/Authorities was/were constituted, then Circle Authority/Authorities

45 Ibid Section 6
46 Ibid Section 7
* As per the schedule to this Regulation, there were three general circles, namely Sardar Circle, Ukhrul Circle, Tamenglong circle, the first three circles, the third also three circles.
** A Village Authority was formed where there were no less than twenty tax paying houses, A Circle Authority could comprise more than one Village Authority.
was/were constituted and that the concerned S.D.O. supervised them under the control of the Minister in charge of the Hill Administration.

Subject to the provisions of this Regulation, the Circle Authorities had to discharge these power and functions, such as, administration of Lower and Primary education, public works – construction and maintenance of all bridle paths and bridges other than iron bridges, public buildings of katcha type or semi-katcha type and pucca buildings, sanitation and health, forest, agriculture, preparation and maintenance of land records and tax-collection. Besides a circle Authority could exercise such power as was vested in it by the Regulation.

The Circle Authorities were also responsible for maintenance of Law and Order within their Circles. But ordinary duties of the police in respect of crime were discharged by the Village Authorities. They had reported to the Circle Officer regarding the committing of any heinous offence within their jurisdiction.

The Circle Authorities also discharged judicial functions. They were given the powers of the Magistrate of the First Class under the Code of Criminal Procedure. They heard appeals filed against the decisions of the Village Authorities, both in criminal and civil cases.

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47 Chapter III (The Manipur State Hill People (Administration) Regulation Act 1947).
48 Ibid Sec.14.
49 Ibid Sec.15.
50 Ibid Sec.16.
51 Ibid Sec.31 and 42.
Besides the police functions, the Village Authorities could also try these criminal cases, such as, theft including theft in a building, mischief except mischief by fire or any explosive substance, cattle theft and illegal slaughter of cattle, simple hurt, assault or using criminal forces etc. They also could try civil cases of the value of not more than Rs. 500/-.

But many changes were brought in with the coming of the Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act 1956.

The Act of 1956 instills democratic elements into the constitution of the Village Authorities. Under the earlier Regulation, the Village Authorities were nominated. But under the Act they are to be elected.

Unlike the earlier Regulation, the present Act gives statutory the constitution of the Village Authority. A Village Authority has to consist of—

1. Five members where the numbers of tax paying houses in the village is not less than 20 but not more than 60;

2. Seven members where the number of such houses is more than 60 but not exceeding 100;

52 Ibid. Sec., 24.
53 Ibid. Sec. 39 & 40.
54 The Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act 1956 (80 of 1956). Sec.2.
(c) Ten members where the members of such houses are above 100 but not exceeding 150:

(d) Twelve members where the number of such houses is more than 150.

1.1.4. Constitution of Village Authority Under the Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956

The Chief Commissioner (now State Government) may, in the general interests of the local people, declare by notification in Official Gazette that a village having twenty or more tax paying houses shall have an elected Village Authority, where there is no such notification, the Village Authority shall be nominated. The Chief or Khulakpa of that village shall be ex-officio chairman of the village Authority of that Village. If there is no such chief or Khulakpa, the Chairman of that village Authority shall be elected by the members there of from amongst themselves.\(^57\)

A person shall not be qualified for being chosen as a member of a Village Authority unless he

(a) is a citizen of India;

(b) in the case of membership of an elected Village Authority, is registered in the electoral roll as a voter for the election of a member of the Village Authority.

A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as and for being a member of Village Authority:

\(^{57}\) Ibid Sec.3.
a. if he is a member of any other Village Authority;
b. if he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent authority.\textsuperscript{58}

The term of office members of a Village Authority is three years from the date appointed from its first meeting.\textsuperscript{59}

The election of members of the Village Authority is on the basis of adult suffrage, that is to say, every person who is a citizen of India and who is ordinarily resident in the village and is not less than 21 years of on such date as a prescribed by rules made under this Act, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election.\textsuperscript{60}

The concerned Deputy Commissioner may also remove a member of the Village Authority from his office on any of these grounds, such as, conviction of a non-bailable offence, refusal or incapacity to act, insolvency, absence from meetings six times consecutively, misconduct in the discharge of duty etc.\textsuperscript{61} A member may also resign his office by writing under his hand addressed to the Chairman of the Authority.\textsuperscript{62}

Every Village Authority within the local limits of its jurisdiction, perform these functions.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid Sec.5.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid Sec.3.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid Sec.4.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid Sec.8.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid Sec.9
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid Sec.16
(i) Maintenance of law and order, such powers and functions as conferred on the police by or under the Police Act, 1861;

(ii) Arrest of suspected accused persons;

(iii) Arrest of an accomplice in a heinous offence;

(iv) Arrest of any person for whose arrest a requisition has been received from the police;

(v) Arrest of any person designing to commit or heinous offence;

(vi) Arrest of any person obstructing the Village Authority in the performance of its duty or police officer while in execution of his duty;

(vii) Arrest of any person who has escaped or attempts to escape from lawful custody subject to the general superintendence and control of the Deputy Commissioner, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate shall have control over the Village Authorities.\(^{64}\)

Besides the above enumerated, a Village Authority can also function as a court.

Besides the above enumerated, a Village Authority can also function as a court. The State Government may be notification in the official Gazette appoint any two or more of the members of the term of office as a member of the Village Authority.\(^{65}\) The Village Court, so constructed, shall have jurisdiction/ concurrent with that of the criminal court within whose local jurisdiction it is situated, for the trial of the offences, under section 24, 26 and 27 of the Cattle Trespass Act, 1871; offices under enactments (except

\(^{64}\) Ibid Sec.15.

\(^{65}\) Ibid Sec.19.
Indian Penal Code and this Act) punishable with fine up to Rs. 200:-; offences under section 34 of the Police Act: 1961; offences under 160, 178, 179, 269, 277, 289, 290, 294, 323, 334, 341, 352, 358, 426, 447, 448, 504, and 510; Sections 379 and 411 where the value of the property involved is not over Rs. 200.  

1.1.5. **Village Court Under the Manipur (Village Authorities In Hill Areas) Act, 1956:**

A Village Court can also try civil cases (concurrent with the Civil Court, within whose local jurisdiction it is situated), such as suits for money due on contracts; suits for recovery of movable property or value of such property; suits for compensation for wrongfully taking or injuring movable property; suits for damages by cattle trespass; when the value of the suit does not exceed Rs.500/-.

In the year 1971 the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act. 1971 was also passed for the establishment of District Councils in the Hill Areas of Manipur. Now, there are six such councils in Manipur.

1.2. **Analysis**

According to the Regulation of 1947, there were three general circles – Sadar circle, Ukhrul circle and Tamenglong circle. A circle Authority with a circle officer and a council of five members was constituted for each circle according to this Regulation of 1947. The question of election of five members by the Village Authority to the circle council was itself an action of

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66 Ibid., Sec. 20.
67 Ibid., Sec. 30.
sowing the seed of democracy in the administration of the hill areas of Manipur according to this Manipur State Hill Peoples Regulation of 1947. Even though the Village authorities were nominated by the concerned S.D.O. of the Government of Manipur, the Village Authorities were allowed to function in the interests of the concerned society by giving them the chance of election of five members to the council. That was a good beginning for democratic decentralization in the hill areas of Manipur, though the whole process was in a small scale.

And the Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act of 1956 brought a sudden change in the making of the Village Authorities. The Village Authorities were to be formed through election. After analysis of this Act of 1956, it is found that the real step towards democratic decentralization in the hills of Manipur was taken up by the Government in the State of Manipur. The State Government through the Chief Commissioner declaring by notification that a village having twenty or more tax paying houses shall have an elected Village Authority was the action of paving the way for democratic decentralization in the hills of Manipur. Of course, nomination of the Village Authority still remained when there was no notification for certain an area. Earlier according to the Regulation of 1947, there was complete nomination of Village Authorities and by the Act of 1956 election was introduced in connection with the making of the Village Authorities for certain areas. Even though the Village Authorities were not very powerful as elected bodies by that time, it was quite certain that democratic decentralization ad its roots from 1956 according to the Act of 1956. Subsequent Act and Regulations were all to strengthen the process of democratic decentralization in the hills areas and plain areas of Manipur State.
In the village of Manipur Gram Panchayats, Gram Sabhas and Nyaya Panchayats were established under the United Provinces Raj Act. 1947. Later on, the Government of Manipur enacted the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act 1975. This Act replaces the U. P. Panchayati Raj Act 1947 and envisages a three-tier-system, Gram Sabha and Panchayat at the village level; Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zila Parishad at the District level.

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that there have been a sound system of local bodies in the Hill Areas of Manipur, from the year 1947. But in the valley local bodies—Gram Sabhas and Nyaya Panchayats—were introduced under the U. P. Panchayati Raj Act, 1947 when the Act was extended to Manipur in the year 1960. The first general election to Gram panchayats was held under this Act and rules framed there under and accordingly 227 Gram Panchayats, 43 Nyaya Panchayats were established in 1964.  

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68 Ibid., Sec. 249 of the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1975.
69 A Note on Panchayati Raj in Manipur Govt. of Manipur, Directorate of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Wing, p.5.