The British occupation of India, as claimed officially, was to produce order and promote the development of the system of the Native Governments in India. In 1867, Lord Craneborne even ventured to institute a comparison between the British and the Native system of governments in India. Confidential circulars were issued inviting opinions to point out defects in the British system as against the Native ones. Findings of the British political officers in the various states differed on the matter. For instance, Captain R.A.Cole, the Superintendent of Coorg, observed that with the exception of the Brahmins and the people about His Highness's Court at Mysore, the great masses of people considered themselves far better, happier and safer under the British rule. He further viewed that the British interference and predominance in India had led to more contentment and prosperity among the general public, save for the high officials. However, Lieutenant Colonel Henery Hopkinson, the Agent to the Governor-General in the North East and Commissioner of Assam, on the contrary, denounced British rule in Assam. He boldly expressed the view that the imposition of the British rules and codes on the Native population had produced a negative effect. The Commissioner also held that the traditional people of Assam were "a happy population and a character for plenty and prosperity, and there is enough evidence to show that the people were in many ways capable and intelligent in those days."
Manipur, by that time, was an independent state. Therefore, the British ways of administration had not been tested. The people of Manipur could have such an experience only after the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891 and the subsequent British conquest of Manipur. Often enough in popular parlance a remark is made that the Britishers, except for the idea of domination, were better administrators compared with their Indian counterparts in the post-independence era. Such comments suggest to mean that the common people in general were better off during the days of the British rule than in the post-British era.

Is there any truth in such an assessment? It was primarily this which led me to undertake this study. My work, however, is confined to the British period. An attempt has been made in this work to dig out the administrative system in Manipur during the period from 1891 to 1947 representing the years of the beginning and the end of the British rule in Manipur. During these years the supreme authority of administration of the state was in the hands of the British Government of India with a nominal Maharaja on the throne of the state.

Some people are of the view that it would be misleading to call the administration of Manipur during the period, British administration as the administration of the state was transferred to the Native Raja since 1891. However, the following facts are to be taken into account:
(a) The British Government was controlling the entire policy of the state. All administrative rules of the state were adopted with the prior approval of the British Government. (b) The state budget was passed only with the final approval of the Government of India. (c) The Manipur State Darbar was debarred from enjoying any power in matters of hill administration; while the Maharaja was given only nominal powers which was, in its turn, controlled by the Political Agent in Manipur. (d) A major chunk of the Imphal town, the capital of the state, was declared as the British Reserve.

In the light of the above facts the then administration of Manipur deserves to be called British administration.

There are scores of scholarly works on Manipur in the form of books, reports, etc., written by scholars from India and abroad. These works in general have dealt with the historical and social aspects; and very few have taken pains to give details of the political system of the state. This work is an earnest attempt in this direction from an analytical angle. An earlier research work by Dr. L. Chandramani Singh related to Anglo-Manipuri relations between 1824 and 1891. The present work, therefore, is devoted to the period thereafter.

The present problem is discussed in seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the historical background of the Anglo-Manipuri relation during the period 1826-1891.
The second chapter discusses the administrative system in Manipur since the beginning of the British administration in 1891. Right at the start it was a military regime. Later on, the civil authority took over. During the minority of the Raja, The British Regent to the Raja administered the state till 1907; and this period is taken to be a period of temporary annexation.

In 1907, on attaining majority, the Raja was entrusted with the administration of the state assisted by a Darbar. The administration was strictly supervised and controlled by the British Agents in Manipur. The restrictions on the powers of the Raja and the Darbar under the new Manipur Administration Rules and its subsequent revisions are discussed in chapter 3 of the work.

The fourth chapter deals with the administration of the hills over which the Darbar and the Raja virtually had no jurisdiction. The Vice-President of the Darbar, a British officer in state employ, was given the sole charge of the administration of the hill areas under the supervision of the Political Agent in Manipur. Manipuri and tribal officials called Lambus were appointed to assist the Vice-President (later President) of the Darbar at lower levels.

The fifth chapter is aimed at giving a complete picture about the popular movements in the state, and the subsequent changes in the administrative system following the movements. A peculiar feature of some of the movements was that they
were launched by women alone with men at the background; and as such, they were termed 'Nupi-Lan' (Women's War). Mainly the armed revolts were from the hill tribes. During the period of our study, there was no armed revolt by the Manipuris (Meiteis) in the plains area. The role of Manipur State in the first and the second World Wars is also touched upon in this chapter.

The sixth chapter deals with the dawn of political and constitutional consciousness in the minds of the Manipuris, both the Meiteis and the hill tribes. There were demands for constitutional reforms in Manipur in line with their counterparts in other parts of India. The Chamber of Princes played a very important role in introducing constitutional and responsible governments in the Native States in India. Manipur was fortunate to reap the fruits of the same, though comparatively late. The Indian National Congress also turned its attention towards this issue in spite of its indifference at the beginning.

In response to popular demands, a Constitutional Committee was formed; and drafting of a new constitution for the State started in 1947, after about six years' turmoil of the second World War. The first peoples' representative government in Manipur was established in 1948 under the new constitution. The operation of the new constitution was, however, short-lived due to taking over of the state administration by the Government of India in 1949.
Chapter seven records our findings in a summary form.

The whole scope of the administration cannot be covered with justice in this work as each of the administrative departments deserves a separate work by itself. Therefore, only some departments like Finance, Land Revenue, Police, Education, Judicial administration, etc. have been selected for study in this work.

Every attempt has been made to base the study on primary sources like government files, documents, archival records, etc. These are being supplemented by secondary sources like books, reports, gazetteers and other relevant records.

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