CHAPTER 5: Political Development among the Poumais

5.1. Concept and meaning of Political Development

The concept of Political Development has been widely discussed in the literature of political science over the past decades, particularly in connection with the study of the politics of rapidly modernizing third-world states. In spite of this the term "political development lacks a precise and standard definition and there is still considerable ambiguity and imprecision in the use of the term".¹

Various social scientists have given diverse views and definitions of political development. Political development, according to Alfred Diamant (1964), is a process by which a political system acquires an increased capacity to sustain successfully and continuously new types of goals and demands and the creation of new type of organization.² He also asserted, Political development as a capability to solve the problems arising from modernization. It aims at a particular political condition which creates an institutional framework for solving an ever-widening range of social problems.³ Myron Weiner, in his ‘Political Integration and Political Development’, defined political development as “the process that brings about: 1) the expansion of the functions of the Political system, 2) the new level of political integration required because of this expansion and 3) the capacity of the political system to cope with these new problems of integration.”⁴ According to James Coleman, "Political Development refers to the increasing capability of a political system to adapt, to change, to cope with new problems and demands, and to select and

⁴ Myron Weiner, Political Integration and Political Development,” Annals 358 : 52-64 Welch, Claude E., Jr. 1965, P. 533.
attain collective goals.” He further said that “As a normative standard, political development refers to the increasing control that individuals or groups achieve over their futures – it refers to an increasing capacity for choice and an increasing range of choice.” Political development also means not just institutional reform but changes in attitudes and political culture. A more common view is that it is progress towards liberal democracy, involving accountable government, and opportunities for participation, through the exercise of freedoms of association and expression. Deutsch (1961) equated political development with political mobilization and considers social mobilization as the general condition of political mobilization. For him social mobilization is “the process in which major cluster of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new pattern of socialization and behaviour”. His meaning is essentially political and results from deliberate efforts to convert parochial people into active participants, mobilized by an ideological motivation, a mass party, and charismatic leaders. However, according to Pye, this meaning is insufficient and that political development, besides mass mobilization and participation, requires the establishment and preservation of public order. According to most views, political development does entail some degree of expanded popular participation. This process of mass participation meant a diffusion of decision-making. Some preferred to use the term ‘political modernization’ in place of ‘political development’. However, though the two terms are closely related they have different connotations. Political Modernization as asserted by V.D. Mahajan, is a narrow term and a neutral concept, which provides both the

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6 Ibid., P. 11.
7 http://www.answers.com/topic/political-development.
possibilities of development as well as decay. It is open ended, value free and emphasizes the spread of secular world culture and democratization of political institutions. Political Development, on the other hand is a broad term. The concept of political development submerged the concept of political modernization. It implies movement forward to some higher goal or preferred political order and is value-oriented. It emphasizes the overall socio-economic development.\textsuperscript{12} According to E. David Apter (1965), modernization is essentially an increase in the rationality and liberty of the decision making process, with the correlated adjustment of structures and procedures. Development is a broader concept and implies an integrated quantitative and qualitative structural growth. He considers development as resulting mainly from the proliferation and integration of functional roles in a community. Modernization, on the other hand, is a particular case of development which involves the increase of three main features: 1) innovation without disruption, 2) differentiation and flexibilisation of social structures and 3) a social framework for providing skills.\textsuperscript{13} Eisenstadt (1964) considers the political modernization as 1) the development of highly differentiated political structures, 2) the growing extension of central government activities and 3) the weakening of traditional elites.\textsuperscript{14} C.H. Dodd wrote: "Certainly, modernization does not seem to be so vague as development when the latter is used to denote little more than a process of change."\textsuperscript{15}

Lucian Pye is regarded as the leading light of the earliest batch of writers to "analyze the concept of development in-depth, and has kept on evolving his ideas on the subject, and has left an abiding impression on the entire literature of political development".\textsuperscript{16} Before giving his own

\textsuperscript{13} Helio Jaguaribe, op. cit., P. 205.
\textsuperscript{14} S.N. Eisenstadt, 'Breakdown of Modernization', Economic development and cultural Change, July, 12, 1964, Pp. 345-367.
\textsuperscript{16} S.P. Varma, Modern Political Theory, Delhi : Vikas, 1975, P. 270.
interpretation and definition on political development Lucian Pye discussed various definitions of political development which he presents in a quite elaborate form in his ‘Aspects of political development’. After critically reviewing the diverse definitions and views given by various social scientists, Lucian Pye gave the meaning of the concept of political development that bears three characteristics, namely, equality, capacity and differentiation. The first characteristic is a general spirit or attitude towards mass participation and involvement in political activities. Participation may be either democratic or a form of totalitarian mobilization, but the key consideration is that subjects should become active citizens. Finally, it means that recruitment to political offices “should reflect achievement standards of performance and not the ascriptive considerations of a traditional social system”. Capacity refers to the capability of a political system by which it can give ‘out puts’ and the extent to which it can affect the rest of the society and economy. It also means effectiveness and efficiency in the execution of public policy. The last characteristic implies diffusion and specialization of structure. The political offices and agencies tend to have their distinct and limited functions. It also involves the integration of complex structures and processes. Thus differentiation “is not fragmentation and the isolation of the different parts of the political system but specialization based on an ultimate sense of integration.” This view is supported by Almond and others, though they defined political development somewhat narrowly as increased differentiation and specialization of political structures and increased secularization of political culture.

Analytically, political development follows a succession of four main stages: 1) state building, corresponding to an increase in the penetration and integration of the system, 2) nation building, bringing about an increasing

18 Ibid., Pp. 46-47.
19 Ibid., P. 47.
loyalty and commitment to the system, 3) participation enlargement, increasing and widening the inclusiveness of members in the system and 4) distribution expansion, leading to the relocation of resources and their more even distribution.21

5.2. Administrative and Political Development during the British period

Like any other Naga village, prior to the British period the Poumai villages were independent units. They did not consider themselves as one tribe and there was a lack of the sense of common belongingness among the Nagas. The villages pursued independent policies of their own and had their own defense system. They enjoyed absolute rights to make war and peace. Though small, the villages were in enmity with one another and war between the different villages was the perpetual feature of the time. J.P. Mills wrote: “Each village is an independent unit in the tribe … in the days when villages were at war, each village was ruled by a Chief assisted by an informal Council of Elders”.22

With the first-ever British exploration of the Naga territory led by Captain Jenkins and Pemberton in January 1832 to establish a link between Assam and Manipur, the British conducted a number of expeditions to the Naga areas. Opposing the expeditions, the British teams were fiercely attacked by the Nagas and frequent raids on the British subject were made. This led the British to adopt a policy of non-interference in 1851. It was followed by the creation of the first Naga Hills District in 1866 with its headquarters at Samagudting, whose administrative jurisdiction covered the Angami villages and the watershed of the Doyang. The new district did not include the Nagas which were tagged with Sibsagar and Nowgong districts, the Naga Hills

of Manipur and North Cachar and Mikir hills whereas the Naga area of northeastern frontier and Burma were not explored even so far.23

In 1873, the Government passed the Inner Line Regulation under which no British Subjects or specified classes or foreign residents could go beyond a certain frontier that was drawn along the foothills of the northern, eastern and south-eastern borders of the Brahmaputra valley inhabited by the hill tribes, without a pass or license issued by the Deputy Commissioner. (It was revised and extended in 1884, 1928, 1929, 1934 and by the Govt. of India in 1959).24 The main purposes of the Inner Line Regulation were as follows:

i. To overcome the tension between the British Subjects and the tribals;

ii. To treat the tribals as political subjects only; and

iii. To use the tribals as a buffer zone from the eastern enemies.25

5.3. Hill Administration during the British period

After the defeat of Manipur at the hands of the British in 1891 (Anglo Manipur war), Manipur came under the British Paramountcy. By a proclamation dated 21st August, 1891 and a notification dated 18th September, 1891, native rule was established in Manipur.26 His Excellency, the Governor General in Council, selected Churachand Singh, a minor of five years of age and son of Chaobi Yaima and great grandson of Raja Nar Singh of Manipur to be the Raja of Manipur.27 During his minority, Major Maxwell, the then Political Agent, took the responsibility of the administration as the Superintendent of the state.

23 Ibid., P-90.
24 Ibid., p-94.
The period of British Superintendency in Manipur came to an end on 15 May 1907 when the Raja, Churachand Singh assumed the charge of administration of the state. He was formally installed to the gaddi of Manipur on 16 February 1908, by Sir Lancelet Hare, Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam. However, his authority was subject to the scheme for the administration of the state drafted by the British government. The newly drafted scheme provided reconstruction of a Durbar composed of the President, the Vice-President and other six members. The President was the Raja himself assisted by the Durbar and the Vice-President was an English Indian Civil Service Officer lent to the state. The Vice-President was entrusted with the Hill tribes, finance and revenue of all sorts. One of the most surprising parts of the scheme was that it excluded all the matters connected with the hill tribes from the Raja’s authority.28 Inclusion of the hill districts in the reformed scheme was strongly opposed by the British officials. They argued that the interest of the hill tribes would not be served best by their inclusion in the scheme of the constitutional reforms. They would rather suffer by joining as they would be in contact with the people of an irreconcilable culture in an unnatural union which would ultimately harm both the parties.29 Thus, the administration and control of the hill tribes was laid in the hands of the Vice-President. However, in the administration and control of the hill tribes, the Vice-President was to exercise his power in accordance with the rules that were approved by the government of Assam and the Raja was to be consulted.30

The Durbar was also the highest criminal court in the state. The Vice-President of the Durbar had special powers both in civil and criminal cases. In so far as criminal cases were concerned, the Vice-President of the Manipur Durbar exercised the powers equivalent to those of a First Class Magistrate

under the Indian Criminal Procedure Code 1898. However, cases relating to
the hill tribes were tried independently by the political agent.

In 1913, the amendment of the Durbar’s rules removed the Maharaja
from the post of President and an ICS officer as selected by the government of
Assam was appointed as the President. Following this the President took over
the administration of the hill areas. For the convenience of administration, the
hill areas were divided into 5 (five) divisions called Lams viz., the Mao Lam in
the north of the state, the Tangkhul Lam in the north-east of the valley, the
Fannu Lam in the south of the Tangkhul country, the Moirang Lam in the south
west of the state and the Kabui Lam to the north of the Moirang Lam. Each
Lam was placed under the Supervision of a Lam Subedar who was assisted by
seven Lambus or hill peons. Altogether there were 36 Lambus.

This Lambu system was introduced by the colonial administration in
1892. The Lambus enjoyed a position of trust and dignity. Their main functions
were to act as interpreters to the Hill courts in Imphal and officers of the hill
administration. As there was no police force for the hill areas Lambus carried
out the duties of police. They investigated all cases within their respective
areas. They also acted as the messengers of the state and carried out other
government orders. In 1922-23, there were 47 Lambus of which, 26 were
Kukis, 7 Meiteis, 3 Kabuis, 5 Mao Nagas, 2 Maram Nagas and 4 Tangkhuls.
In the beginning Lambus were unpaid. As a result, they resorted to extortion
from the tribals by professing to exempt the villagers from coolie-work, which
was like a boon for the latter. It was an open secret in those days; the Lambus

31 Foreign Department, Ext. (A) Progs, April 1908, No. 2-5, P. 3 (quoted in Devi, Dr. Sorojini,
Ibid., p. 68.
33 B.C. Allen, Assam District Gazettes, Vol. IX, Calcutta, 1905, P. 120.
34 J. Shakespeare, The Political Agent of Manipur, (Manipur under British Management, 1891–
1907).
35 Administration Report of Manipur State, 1922-23, P. 8. (quoted in Singh, Dr. L. Gouragopal,
Local Self Government in Manipur, (1891 – 1981) Published by Karan Manmohan Singh,
1990, P. 45.
Oppressed the innocent hill peoples in order to extract money from them. Under the existing system, there was little or no scope for the development of personal relations between the rulers and the ruled.

The President was already overburdened with his duties and could not directly look into the details of the administration of the hill areas. The lambus were the only officers who came into direct contact with the hill people. The result was the lack of control and indifferent attitude of the British government towards the administrative problems of the hill areas. Robert Reid was of the view that the lack of good administration in the hill areas was partly responsible for the Kuki rebellion 1917-1919. He wrote, even after 1891, there were no proper administration of the hill tribes and no proper provision for them in the budget. The expenditure on them was only one quarter of the amount they paid in taxes. Neglect of their interests and lack of touch between them and administration came to a head in the Kuki Rebellion of 1918. After the rebellion had been quelled, proposal for the future administration of Manipur state including the dependent hill tribes were submitted to the government of India. Under the Rules approved in the Government of India letter No. 4326 dated the 1st October 1919, the Political Agent and the President of Manipur State Durbar were given the control over the hill tribes. His Excellency, after careful consideration, has reached the conclusion that the present control should in no way be lessened.

After the Kuki rebellion, there were some changes in the administrative structure in the hill areas. For an intensive administration, on 16 October 1919 the Chief Commissioner, Sir Nicholas Beaton Bell, proposed a new administrative structure. The proposal was accepted and four sub-divisions were established - one in the valley and three sub-divisions in the hill areas of Manipur. Each hill sub-division was put under the control of one British officer.

who was responsible to the President and the Political Agent. The sub-divisions were 1) the South-West Sub-Division inhabited by the Chin-Kuki (Zomi group of people) with headquarters at Churachandpur and was under the charge of B.C. Gasper; 2) the North-West Sub-Division with the headquarters at Tamenglong and was under William Shaw; and 3) North-East Sub-Division with headquarters at Ukhrul and was under L.L. Peter. To assist the state and to meet the expenses of the new arrangement, the British government in India raised a sum of Rs. 50,000/- on condition that the amount would be spent on the hill areas. This proposal gave a great satisfaction to the Christian Missionaries and the British Officials who were working among the tribals.

Under the new arrangement, a large area in the North and in the South-east continued to be administered directly from Imphal by the President of the Durbar. The President had the power equivalent to those of a district magistrate and the sub-divisional officers had power equivalent to those of sub-divisional magistrate who were also magistrate of first class under the Indian Criminal Procedure Code 1898. Appeals in civil and criminal cases against the order of an SDO when admissible lay with the President and appeals against the Order of the President in criminal cases lay with Political Agent. So far as the civil cases were concerned, the President’s order was unquestionable. However, due to the non-availability of Anglo-Indian officers to man the sub-divisions, the headquarters were shifted to Imphal in 1930. The whole Hill areas were bifurcated into two sub-divisions and placed under the President of Manipur state Durbar (PMSD) assisted by two sub-divisional officers - one for the North and other for the South. With the outbreak and suppression of the rebellion of Haipu Jadonang, a Rongmai Naga of Tamenglong, and her cousin sister ‘Rani’ Gaidinliu, the British once again decided to reopen the headquarters of the sub-

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38 Home Political Department, Manipur Affairs, Part-B, Proceeding No. 14, October, 1919, Government of Manipur.
39 Lal Dena, Hill Administration during the Colonial Period, Sangai Express, 18th May, 2002, P. 3.
divisions at Tamenglong and Ukhrul. In addition, Sadar sub-division was created in place of Churachandpur which was amalgamated with the Tamenglong sub-division. With these, a new rule for the management of hill tribes was also adopted.

After the Second World War, an Interim Government of India took office on 2 September 1946. The Maharaja of Manipur, Bodhachandra Singh dissolved the Manipur State Durbar on 30 June 1947 and the post of the President, Manipur State Durbar (PMSD) was also abolished, in its place came into existence the Manipur State Council on 1 July 1947. With it, Mr. F.F. Pearson, IPS (Indian Political Service) became the first Chief Minister. During the early part of 1947, a Constitution Making Committee was set up vide Palace Order 30 P, 1946. Accordingly, under the Chairmanship of F.F. Pearson, the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 was drafted. On 29 March 1947, the Constitution Making Committee formed the Hill Local Self Government Regulation Sub-Committee consisting of Mr. F.F. Pearson (Chairman), Shri A. Daiho, Shri Suisa Runsgung, Shri Ziangkham, Shri Teba Kilong, Dr. Leiren Singh and Shri A Ibotombi Singh alias Maniketon Singh. The Sub-Committee drafted the Hill People’s Regulation Act, 1947. The reports of the Sub-Committee were duly approved by the Constitution Making Committee and finally sanctioned by the His Highness, Maharaja-in-Council of Manipur and later on by the Interim Government of India.

Two days before India’s independence the Maharaja dissolved the Manipur State Council on 13 August 1947 and another Interim Council was brought into existence on 14 August 1947. Shri M.K. Priyobrata, the

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40 M. Horam, (Ed.), op. cit., P. 64.
41 Lal Dena, op.cit. P. 3.
42 H. Bhubon, Major Bob Khathing, A Profile of nationalist Manipur Naga, Published by Pratam Haobam, Imphal, 1992, P.16.
43 H. Bhubon, Singh The Merger of Manipur, P. 60.
45 Dr. L. Gouragopal Singh, op. cit., P. 46.
Maharaja’s younger brother, was appointed as the Chief Minister. Thus the existing Manipur State Durbar was converted into an Interim Council of Ministers. The Interim Council of Ministers was constituted by means of nomination by the Maharaja of Manipur. In the Interim Council of Ministers, there were two ministers representing the hill tribes viz., Major R. Khathing, a Tangkhul in-charge of Hill Affairs and Mr. T.C. Tiankham representing the Chin-Mizo group, with the charge of Forest, Agriculture and Veterinary. This was the first in the annals of Manipur that the tribals of Manipur were included in the administration.

5.4. Administrative and Political Changes in Manipur after India Independence

With the attainment of India’s Independence on 15 August 1947, the British rule over Manipur lapsed and Manipur became a constitutional monarchy. Under the Manipur Constitution Act 1947, the first ever Assembly Election was conducted in 1948. The Act provided three categories of constituencies viz., General, Hill and Mohammedan with the seats ratio of 30:18:3 respectively and two additional seats for the representatives of Education and commercial interest. There were 29 constituencies in the valley and 18 constituencies for the whole hill areas. The Assembly was a unicameral legislature and the members were elected by the people on adult franchise and on the principle of joint electorate. Shri M.K. Priyobrata Singh, younger brother of Maharaja assumed the office of Chief Minister.

However, the monarchy established in 1948 did not last long. On 21 September 1949 the Maharaja, signed the Merger agreement and Manipur was amalgamated with the Union of India on 15 October 1949 which resulted in the

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46 H. Bhubon, op. cit., P. 16.
dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. Later Manipur became a Part ‘C’ state of the Union of India and later on a Union territory of it. On 26 January 1950, Manipur was made one district territory with a Chief Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner and sub-divisions as noted below were created.\footnote{M. Horam, (Ed.), op. cit., P.. 65.}

1. Sadar Sub-Division:
   a) whole of Imphal West Tehsil
   b) Whole of Imphal East Tehsil
   c) 18 villages of Thoubal Tehsil
   d) Ahallup circle No. I and Ahallup circle No. IV of Mayang Imphal.
   e) Whole of Sadar hill circle except 23 villages.

2. Thoubal:
   a) Whole of Thoubal Tehsil except 18 villages
   b) Whole of Bishenpur Tehsil
   c) Whole of Mayang Imphal except Ahallup circle No. I and IV
   d) 28 villages of the hill Sadar circle

3. Ukhrul: Circle of Ukhrul and Phaisat
4. Churachandpur: Circle of Churachandpur and Thanlon
5. Tamenglong: Circles of Tamenglong and Aimol
6. Mao: Mao Circle
7. Tengnoupal: Tenoupal Circle

After the creation of Hill Sub-Divisions, the hill bench was abolished and on 31 August 1950 the Mao Sub-Division was amalgamated with the Sadar Sub-Division.

With the re-organization of states in 1956, the part ‘C’ status of Manipur ceased to exist and Territorial Council was established in Manipur under the Territorial Council Act, 1956. Accordingly the election of 30 members to the
Territorial Council was held in 1957 with a Chairman as the Chief functionary in the Territorial Council. In addition to the 30 elected members, two women-members were nominated.\textsuperscript{51} With the enactment of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, Territorial Council was replaced by a Legislative Assembly consisting of 30 elected members, having a 3 member Council of Ministers. The state was however continued to be administered by the President through a Chief Commissioner appointed by him.\textsuperscript{52}

In November, 1969 Manipur was again divided into five districts, viz.,

1. Manipur Central
2. Manipur West
3. Manipur North District with 3 administrative units
   i) Sadar Hills
   ii) Mao West
   iii) Mao East with 305 villages
4. Manipur East
5. Manipur South.

Out of the Central district two more districts, Thoubal and Bishenpur districts were carved out on 29 October 1970.\textsuperscript{53}

In 1971, the Parliament in its winter (December) session passed the North Eastern Areas (Re-Organisation) Act, 1971. The Act provided statehood status to Manipur and on 21 January 1972 the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi inaugurated Manipur as a full fledged state of India. With this the strength of the state Legislative Assembly was fixed at 60 members. After the attainment of statehood, further modifications were made affecting the subdivisions of Manipur North District with headquarters at Karong which were as follows:

\textsuperscript{51} Koireng, A Brief Account of different System of Government in Manipur since 1891, op.cit. P. 44.
\textsuperscript{52} Jyotirmoy Roy, op. cit., P. 15.
\textsuperscript{53} M. Horam, (Ed.), op. cit., P. 66.
i) Mao Maram Sub-Division consisting of 95 villages with headquarters at Tadubi.

ii) Sadar Hills East Sub-Division consisting of 175 villages with headquarters at Saikul.

iii) Sadar Hill West Sub-Division consisting of 147 villages with headquarters at Kangpokpi.

On 15 July 1983, the names of the districts were changed to the following:

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<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Old Name</th>
<th>New Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manipur North District</td>
<td>Senapati District</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bishnupur District</td>
<td>Bishenpur District (now Bishnupur District)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tengnoupal District</td>
<td>Chandel District</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Manipur East District</td>
<td>Ukhrul District</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Manipur South District</td>
<td>Churachandpur District</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Manipur West District</td>
<td>Tamenglong District</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Central District</td>
<td>Imphal District</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thoubal District</td>
<td>Thoubal District.(^{54})</td>
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Later, the Imphal District is bifurcated into two Districts viz., Imphal East and Imphal West Districts, making the total number of Districts at present nine. With the renaming of Manipur North District to Senapati District the Head Quarters of the District had shifted to Senapati and more Sub-divisions had been created in the District making the total number of Sub-Divisions in the District six. The Sub-Divisions are:

1. Mao-Maram Sub-Division,
2. Paomata Sub-division,
3. Purul Sub-division,

\(^{54}\) Ibid., Pp. 66-67.
4. Sadar Hills Sub-Division,
5. Saitu Gamphazol Sub-Division and
6. Phaibung Sub-Division.

Out of these six Sub-Divisions, the Pounais are mainly found in Paomata, Purul, Phaibung and Mao-Maram Sub-Divisions.

5.5. Administrative and Political Changes in the Hill areas of Manipur

With the attainment of India’s independence various Acts relating to administrative and political development of the hill areas of Manipur were enacted by the Government. The Acts are briefly discussed as under:

5.5.1. Manipur State Hill People’s (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947

The Manipur State Hill People’s (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947 came into existence on 10 August 1947 as corollary of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947. The Regulation was introduced exclusively for the good governance of the Hill areas of Manipur. Under the Regulation, the responsibility for the Hill areas administration was vested in the Maharaja in Council and he was to exercise his authority in accordance with the Constitution of the state and the provisions of the Regulation as amended from time to time. The appointment of executive members in the Hill administration was done as per the Rules laid down by the Manipur State Appointment Board excepting where specific provisions were made for such appointment in the Regulation.\(^\text{55}\)

For better governance and administration the Regulation provided a two-tier system of local self-governing bodies for the hill areas. Accordingly, the hill villages were grouped into 3 sub-divisions and these were again subdivided into 9 circles.\(^\text{56}\) Under this system, each Village Authority consisting of

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the Chief or Khullakpa with his council of elders was constituted in every village having a number of 20 or more tax paying houses. The members of Village Authority were nominated as per the custom of the concerned village. The Village Authority so nominated was formally recognized by the subdivisional officer who was the final authority in all matters relating to appointment and constitution of a Village Authority.  

The main functions of the Village Authority were to maintain law and order within their jurisdiction. It was empowered to discharge the ordinary duties of the police in respect of crime. The Village Authority was authorized to arrest certain offenders and criminals without any order from a magistrate and without a warrant and hand him over to the circle officer with a report on crime. It was also responsible for reporting to the circle officer on all crimes, violent deaths, serious accidents and other suspicious criminal activities. The court of a Village Authority was competent to try the cases involving -

a) theft including theft in a building,
b) mischief not being mischief by fire or any explosive substance,
c) cattle theft and illegal slaughter of cattle,
d) simple hurt and
e) assault or using criminal forces.

In dealing with cases it was empowered to try suits up to a value which does not exceed Rs. 500/- and has the power to impose a fine not exceeding Rs. 200/-. It was also authorized to award payment in restitution or compensation to the extent of the injury sustained. The Village Authority was also responsible for settling disputes regarding the ownership of land or the right of cultivation over land within its jurisdiction.

Above the Village Authority, the Regulation also provided for a Circle Authority in each Circle, comprising a Circle Officer and a Council of five

59 Ibid., P. 394.
members. The members of the Council were elected by the Village Authorities falling within the Circle. The allotment of voting rights for the election was based on the number of tax paying houses which was recorded as follows:

For every 20 – 50 tax paying houses – one vote

51 – 100 tax paying houses – two votes

101 – 200 tax paying houses – three votes and

one additional vote for every 100 tax paying houses in addition to the above 200 houses.

This principle of electing Council Authority is a fundamental deviation from the traditional tribal method of constituting Village Council. And it was for the first time the modern democratic system of election was introduced in the hill areas of Manipur.

Administratively speaking, the Circle Authorities hand in glove with the Village Authorities maintained law and order within their Circle’s jurisdiction. Where there is no Village Authority or when the Village Authority came to its wits end, Circle Authority discharged the responsibilities of Village Authority.

Judicially, in both civil and criminal cases the Circle Authority had both original as well as appellate jurisdictions. In criminal side, the court of Circle Authority exercised the powers of a first class Magistrate as defined in the Criminal Procedure Code. It heard appeals from the Village Authorities. The Circle Authority was also competent to try suits of which value does not exceed Rs.1000/-.60

Moreover, subject to the specific provision of this Regulation, the Circle Authority was empowered to exercise the following functions:

a) To administer Lower and Upper Primary Education within the circle;

b) To construct and maintain bridle paths, bridges, public buildings, etc.;

60 Dr. L. Gouragopal Singh, op. cit., P. 48.
c) To undertake measures for betterment of public health, control of diseases, encourage personal hygiene and provide drinking water supplies;

d) To assist the State Forest Department in the administration of all State Reserved Forests. It was also responsible for the preservation of timber in the open reserves, checking wasteful and unnecessary firing of the Hill sides and to reduce the area under Jhum cultivation to the minimum;

e) To encourage better means of agriculture, introduce improved seeds and encourage wet rice and terrace cultivation with a consequent reduction of Jhuming and to ensure that Jhum land once relinquished shall not in any circumstances revert to Jhum cultivation; and

f) To maintain land records and collect taxes on land or other immovable property as may be levied from time to time.\textsuperscript{61}

The Hill Bench at Imphal and the Chief Court of the Manipur state were also constituted for the trial of hill cases under the Manipur State Court Act, 1947. The Hill Bench at Imphal exercised the powers of a Session Court under the Criminal Procedure Code. It comprised a Judge of the Chief Court as Chairman and two hill men as Judges.

The Hill Bench heard appeals from the order passed by the Circle Authority provided the fine imposed was not less than Rs. 100/-. It also considered the case that involved a whole community and could impose a fine not exceeding Rs. 5000/- on the community. The Bench also could order compensation to be paid to any person in a criminal case out of the fines imposed in the case.

In civil cases, any person aggrieved by the decision of the Hill Bench could appeal the Chief Court of the state provided the value of the suit was not

less than Rs. 1000/- 62 While dealing with criminal cases, the Chief Court of the state heard the appeal laid from a sentence of the Hill Bench imposing imprisonment for any term exceeding one year, or a fine exceeding Rs. 500/- or from an order imposing a sentence of death or transportation of life. 63 This administrative system in the hills continued to remain in force even after Manipur got merged into India on 15 October 1949. 64 With her merger, the state had to be administered by the Central Government through a Chief Commissioner. Under the state Merger Order 1950, the Manipur (Courts) Act, 1953 was enacted and the Act made the Cr. P.C., I.P.C. and Indian Evidence Act applicable to the tribal areas of Manipur. Hence, the Circle Bench, the Hill Bench and Chief Court under the Hill People’s Regulation Act, 1947 were replaced by Courts like that of the Court of S.D.C., the Session Judge and the Judicial Commissioner. 65

5.5.2. Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act 1956

In the year 1956, the Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act 1956, was passed by the Parliament of India for the administration of the hill areas of Manipur. This Act came into force on 11 April 1957. Under Section 58 of this Act the Manipur State Hill People’s (Administration) Regulation 1947 was repealed. The Act however allowed the village chief to remain as the ex-officio Chairman of the Village Authority. 66 The Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956 infused democratic elements in the constitution of the Village Authority by introducing election system in the selection of Authority members. Sections 3 to 18 of the Act dealt with the constitution and functions of Village Authorities and Sections 19 to 56 dealt with the administration of

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62 Ibid., P. 392.
63 Ibid., P. 389.
64 Dr. L. Gouragopal Singh, op. cit., P. 49.
66 The Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, Section 3,(4) in the Manipur Code Part – II.
justice by Village Authorities. Altogether 567 village Authorities were constituted initially under the Act in the seven areas of the Manipur hills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Division/Circle</th>
<th>No. of village Authorities</th>
<th>No. of elected Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sadar Hills</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tengnoupal Sub-Division</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tengnoupal Circle</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mao</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jiribam</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>567</td>
<td>3060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Act provided that for every village having twenty or more tax paying houses, there shall be a Village Authority consisting of the following members:

a) Five members, where the number of tax paying houses in the village is not less than twenty but is not more than sixty;

b) Seven members, where the number of tax paying houses in the village is more than sixty but is not more than one hundred;

c) Ten members, where the number of tax paying houses in the village is more than one hundred but is not more than one hundred fifty;

d) Twelve members, where the number of tax paying houses in the village is more than one hundred and fifty.\(^6^8\)

The members of the Village Authority of a village were to be elected on the basis of adult suffrage for a three years term which later got extended to five years term.\(^6^9\)

\(^{67}\) Dr. L., Gouragopal Singh, op. cit., P. 50.
\(^{68}\) Handbook of Manipur Hills Village Authority, Govt. Press, Manipur, Imphal, P. 1.
\(^{69}\) Daniel Ramsan, Commentaries on the Manipur (Village Authorities In Hill Areas) Act, 1956.
to be used for the elections of the Village Authority.\textsuperscript{70} The Chief or Khulakpa in a village remained the ex-officio Chairman of the Village Authority of that village and where there is no such Chief or Khulakpa in the village, the Chairman of the Village Authority of that village were to be elected by the members of the Village Authority from among themselves.

About the qualifications for membership of Village Authority, a person shall not be qualified to be chosen as a member of a Village Authority unless he:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] is a citizen of India;
  \item[b)] is not less than twenty five years of age; and
  \item[c)] 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.
\end{itemize}

A person shall be disqualified from being chosen as, and from being a member of a Village Authority -

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] if he is a member of any other Village Authority;
  \item[b)] if he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent authority.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{itemize}

The Act not only created the Village Authority but also empowered the Deputy Commissioner to remove any member of a Village Authority from his office if he happens to be someone -

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] who is convicted of any non-bailable offence, or
  \item[b)] who refuses to act, or becomes incapable of acting, or declare to be insolvent; or
  \item[c)] who has been declared by notification to be disqualified for employment in the public service; or
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{70} No. 5(1) of the Rules Under the Manipur (Village Authorities In Hill Areas) Act, Imphal, the 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 1957.

\textsuperscript{71} Handbook of Manipur Hill Village Authority, op. cit., P. 109.
d) who, without an excuse sufficient in the opinion of the Deputy Commissioner, absents himself from six consecutive meetings of the Village Authority; or

e) who has been guilty of misconduct in the discharge of his duties, or of any disgraceful conduct, if two-thirds of the total number of members of the Village Authority at a meeting recommend his removal.

No person who has been removed from his office under the above removal clause (a) or (c) of sub-section (1) shall be eligible for re-nomination or re-election except with the prior permission of the Chief Commissioner obtained by such person in the prescribed manner.\(^{72}\)

The main function of the Village Authority thus constituted under this Act is to maintain law and order within the local limits of its jurisdiction. Within the limits of its jurisdiction, the Village Authority could arrest any person on certain offence without any order or warrant from a magistrate. The offences that specifically attract arrest of the offender are any criminal who commits a heinous crime or any suspicious person in connection with the committed crime, any person for whose arrest a requisition has been received from a police office, any person designing to commit any heinous offence, any person who obstructs the Village Authority in the performance of its functions under this Act, and any person who has escaped or attempts to escape from lawful custody.\(^{73}\)

According to the Act, whenever a Village Authority has been instituted for any village, the Chief Commissioner may, by notification in the official Gazette, appoint two or more members of the Village Authority to be a court during their term of office as members of the Village Authority.\(^{74}\) The village

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\(^{72}\) Ibid., p. 110.

\(^{73}\) Manipur (Village Authorities In Hill Areas) Act, 1956, (Act No. 80 of 1956) Section 16 (b) -- (d).

\(^{74}\) Manipur (Village Authorities In Hill Areas) Act, 1956, Section 19, in The Manipur Code Part-I (Law Deptt., Govt. of Manipur), 1963, P. 114.
Court had jurisdiction both in criminal and civil cases as specified in the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898 and the Code of Civil Procedure of 1908. The village Court thus constituted was to be presided over by the Chief if he was a member of the court, but if not the court was empowered to elect its own President. Further, as per this Act, a village Court could sentence a criminal convicted by it to pay a fine not exceeding two hundred rupees or in default to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month. In the civil side, it has jurisdiction to try suits whose value does not exceed Rs. 500/.

After Manipur's merger into India, the Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956 was introduced in the hills Manipur. The Act was an important step forward towards the introduction of democratic elements in the village administration of the tribes. For the first time it gave the opportunity to the people to elect their own representatives who will be responsible for the management of their local affairs. Of course, the villages' Chiefs were made the ex-Officio Chairmen of the Village Authorities. Otherwise, all the other members were to be elected. In other words, the Act was a major step towards the introduction of elements of democratic constitutionalism in the administration of the villages in the hills from which all the people there benefited. The benefit was all the more in case of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of people as their traditional village Chiefs were more autocratic than their Naga counterparts.

It may however be noted that there are people who believed that traditional system of representation in the Village Councils on the basis of clans was more suitable to the people. Because they believe that the present representation through election leads to domination of the smaller clans by the bigger ones as latter have better chances of winning the Village Authority elections. Though elections under this Act were held in 1958 and 1961 people

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75 M. Horam, (Ed.), op. cit., P. 165.
76 Ibid., P. 177.
77 The Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, Section 26 and 31.
were not very enthusiastic about it and the third election which was due to be held in 1964 was held only in 1971.

Among the Poumaids, though Village Authorities are constituted in every village, elections are conducted only to elect the village Chairman and Secretary and other Authority members are nominated in the line of establishing the traditional Elders' Council by sending equal representatives from every clan. They also believe that this helps every clan to equally represent and participate in the governance of the village without any discrimination.

As against the rules laid down under the Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, each village court is composed of the whole members of the concerned Village Authority. The court took up both civil and criminal cases and settled them according to their unwritten customary laws. The power of the court in awarding sentence to offender is purely based on their customary laws that give unlimited powers to the court to impose a sentence to an offender or fix the extent of deportation of him from the village or even give capital punishment. The present limit of fine not exceeding Rs. 200/- and the value of suit that not exceeding Rs. 500/- as prescribed by the Act has no practical utility in the Poumai community.

5.5.3. Manipur Hills Areas (Acquisition of Chief Rights) Act, 1967

The Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief Rights) Act, 1967 was an attempt to abolish the Chieftainship in the hill areas of Manipur by paying compensation. The Act authorized the government to acquire the rights, title and interest of Chiefs in and over land in the hill areas of Manipur. There was a strong opposition by the Hill Areas Committee of the State Assembly against several provisions of the bill. However, in spite of the opposition, the Assembly passed the bill on 14 June 1967. The bill got assent of the Governor and became an Act. Yet, the Act has not been implemented so far and it
remains only in paper. As a result the Chieftainship continues to exist in the hill areas of Manipur as before.\textsuperscript{78}

5.5.4. The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971

The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 was enacted in the year 1971 by the Parliament, which granted autonomous status to the hill districts of Manipur on the pattern of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.\textsuperscript{79} The Act authorized the Administrator (Governor) to determine the administrative area of a District Council, to unite two or more autonomous districts or parts thereof so as to form one autonomous district and alter the name of any autonomous district.\textsuperscript{80}

The Hill Areas of Manipur are divided into six autonomous Districts. In every autonomous District, a District Council each was constituted with not more than 18 councilors directly elected on adult suffrage from territorial constituencies. The areas of constituencies are determined by the Administrator for the purpose of election of each single councilor. The Administrator was also authorized to nominate two councilors who are not in government service to each District Council. The councilors serve their office for a term of five years.\textsuperscript{81}

The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 has been amended in 2008. As per the amendment made, the number of councilors to be directly elected from a District Council has been increased to 24 councilors from the previous 18 councilors. The six autonomous District Councils in Manipur with their respective headquarters and voters at present are as follows:

\textsuperscript{78} M. Horam, (Ed.), op. cit., P. 177.
\textsuperscript{79} G.K. Gori, op. cit., P. 12.
\textsuperscript{81} The Administrative Report of Autonomous District Council in Hill Areas of Manipur, 1975-76.
Name of the ADCs | Headquarters | Population
---|---|---
1. Manipur North (Senapati) ADC | Senapati | 1,28,544
2. Ukhrul ADC | Ukhrul | 1,00,117
3. Tamenglong ADC | Tamenglong | 76,151
4. Sadar Hills ADC | Kangpokpi | 1,18,680
5. Chandel ADC | Chandel | 90,569
6. Churachandpur ADC | Churachandpur | 1,74,640.82

*Though there were only 5 revenue districts in the Hill Areas, there were six ADCs because, the North revenue District consists of two ADCs viz., North ADC and Sadar Hill ADC.*

a) Qualification of Membership

A person to be chosen as a member of District Council must be an elector for any District Council constituency in that Autonomous District Council. He shall be disqualified for being chosen as a member if he is for the time being disqualified for being chosen as a member of either House of Parliament or holds any office of profit under any District Council.83 For franchise, the electoral roll of the election of members of Lok Sabha relating to the area is used to elect the members of District Council. Every person whose name is registered and enrolled in the electoral roll is entitled to vote at the election of the members of District Council.84

b) Chairman and Vice Chairman

Every District Council has a Chairman and a Vice Chairman elected by the members of the District Council among themselves. The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971 empowered the Administrator to nominate the first Chairman for a period of not exceeding one year. The Chairman of the

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82 Manipur Gazette, Extraordinary, Published by Authority, Government of Manipur, Secretariat Hills Department, September 22, 2009.
83 Ibid., P. 187.
84 Ibid., P. 187.
Council had to act as a whole time functionary and was entitled to salary and allowances.\textsuperscript{85}

The Council had the power to remove the Chairman of a District Council at any time by a resolution passed not less than two-thirds majority of the total membership of the Council. He can also be removed by an order of the Administrator in writing when such a resolution passed by the Council is less than two-thirds but not less than half of the total strength of the Council. However, such resolution for removing the chairman shall not be brought before the District Council within one year from the date of the Chairman’s election.\textsuperscript{86}

The Chairman is empowered to nominate a panel of not more than two Deputy Chairman, one of them may preside over the Council in the absence of both the Chairman and Vice-chairman.\textsuperscript{87}

c) Powers and Functions of District Council

The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 empowered the District Council with the following powers and functions:

i) Executive Powers

Under the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971, the District Council is responsible for the following:

1. to maintain and manage both moveable and immoveable properties and institutions transferred to it by the Administrator;
2. to construct and repair roads, bridges, channels and buildings as may be transferred to the Council by the Administrator;
3. to establish, maintain and manage Primary Schools;
4. to establish, maintain and manage Dispensaries;
5. to establish, maintain and manage markets and fairs;

\textsuperscript{85} The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971 (Govt. of Manipur, Planning and Development Department) Section – 23(1) & (4) P. 7.
\textsuperscript{86} The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Rules, 1972, Section-6 and 8, P. 2.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., Section – 5(1), P. 2.
6. to store, supply, and prevent water from pollution for drinking, cooking and bathing purposes;

7. to undertake embankment and storage, supply and control of water for agricultural purposes;

8. to take up necessary steps for preservation and reclamation of soil;

9. to prevent live stocks and animals' diseases;

10. to maintain public health and sanitation;

11. to maintain and manage proper ferries;

12. to initiate inspection and taking care of relief works;

13. to deal with allotment, occupation or use of setting apart of land;

14. to manage any forest which is not being reserved;

15. to regulate the practice of jhum and other form of shifting cultivation;

16. to deal with any other matter which the Administrator may, in consultation with the Hill Areas Committee, entrust the District Council.  

ii) Legislative Powers

The District Council Act, 1971 did not give any Legislative power to District Council. Therefore, it is incompetent to make any law except to recommend legislation on certain matters concerning Scheduled Tribes. The matters that a District Council may recommend included the following:

1. Appointment or succession of Chief;

2. Inheritance of property;

3. Marriage and divorce;

4. Social customs.

It can also make rules and regulations or bye-laws in relation to maintenance and management of schools, stipends and scholarships of students, construction, repair, control and management of Dispensaries.

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including supply of medicines and protection from pollution of water for tanks, springs, wells, parts of rivers, streams, channels and water sources for drinking purposes.\textsuperscript{89}

iii) Judicial Powers

Contrary to the establishment of District Councils under the Six Schedule of the constitution of India, no judicial power is given to the District Councils in Manipur. All the judicial powers for administration of the District lies solely in the hands of the government and all cases are decided by the District Courts.\textsuperscript{90}

iv) Financial Powers

Financially, the District Council is authorized to levy all or any of the following taxes within the Autonomous District:

1. Taxes on professions, trades, calling and employment;
2. Taxes on animals, vehicles (other than mechanically propelled vehicles) and boats;
3. Taxes on entry of goods into a market for sale therein; and tolls on passengers and goods carried on ferries;
4. Taxes on maintenance of schools, dispensaries or roads;
5. Any other taxes falling under the list II of the Seventh Schedule to the constitution which the legislature of the Union Territory of Manipur may, by law, empower the District Council to levy.\textsuperscript{91}

For proper management of money received every District Council has its own fund called ‘Council Fund’. All the money received by or on behalf of the Council under the provisions of the Act is credited to this Fund. The Council Fund is mainly utilized for construction and maintenance of public buildings and public roads, maintenance of all land and other property

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., Section 29, P. 9.
\textsuperscript{90} M. Horam, (Ed.), op. cit., P. 180.
transferred to the District Council by the Administrator by way of gift or otherwise for public purposes.\textsuperscript{92}

d) Control over the District Council

The Deputy Commissioner as the head of District exercises control over the District Council to whom the Chairman of the District Council shall furnish a copy of the proceedings of the Council’s meetings. The Deputy Commissioner shall give directions to the District Council. He may, by order, suspend the execution of any resolution or prohibit the doing of any Act, if it leads to the breach of peace.\textsuperscript{93} On receipt of report from the Deputy Commissioner the Administrator may, with a statement of proper reason, suspend the District Council for a period of not exceeding one year. The period of suspension may be extended for any further period not exceeding six months at a time in consultation with the Hill Areas Committee. During such period all the powers and duties of the District Council shall be exercised by such officer or authority as the Administrator may appoint on this behalf. Election or nomination of members for the reconstitution of the Council shall be held before the expiry of the suspension.\textsuperscript{94}

i) Committee system

Every Council has its finance Committee consisting of seven members headed by the Council’s Chairman. The Council also can constitute as many Committees as necessary with the prior sanction of the Governor.\textsuperscript{95}

ii) Working of the District Council

The working of the District Council in Manipur is divided into six sections, namely, i) General, ii) Education, iii) Medical, iv) Veterinary, v) Agriculture and vi) PWD. The Hill Commissioner is the head at the Secretariat


\textsuperscript{93} Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils (Second Amendment) Act, 2006 (Manipur Act No. 10 of 2006), Manipur Gazette, Extraordinary, Published by Authority, April 18, 2006, P. 14.

\textsuperscript{94} Dr. L. Gouragopal Singh, op. cit., P. 190.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., P. 191.
level and the Chairman is the head of administration of the Council. There is a Chief Executive Officer who headed the office administration assisted by a number of executive officers, namely, one Medical Officer, one Assistant Engineer, one Deputy Inspector of Schools, one Agricultural Officer and one Account Officer for each District Council.

e) Review of the District Council

The District Council of Manipur is criticized by many with regard to its autonomy and functions. To quote L. Gouragopal, “The old is obviated; but the new also is nebulous. The quantum of autonomy bestowed on the District Council of Manipur is questionable. Unlike other District Councils of the North-East India, it envisages no judicial powers and no legislative powers. The Council turns to be territorial council type. Only some executive powers and financial powers are entrusted to them. … Government grant is the only source of income.” In addition to this, the District Councils, as pointed out by V. Venkata Rao, they did not levy all the taxes which they were authorized to levy and collect. The collection of taxes was very poor; rather there was no collection at all. They depended mainly on grant in aid from the government. This spoon-feeding type with meager government grant resulted to inability of District Council to run the Districts. The fund allocated for Education is quite inadequate to meet the requirements for the maintenance of schools and pay school teachers’ and staff’s salaries.

The philosophy of the provision for nomination of members into the District Council is to enable the minority groups to represent and have a say in the Council. Yet, it is being criticized that, members from the majority groups who have already been represented in the Council were often nominated by negating minority representation. There is also no provision to co-ordinate the

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96 Ibid., P. 191.
activities of District Councils and the state government. As a result, the District Councils are working more or less independently of state government. However, at the secretariat level the Hill Commissioner is the head. No doubt, "the District Council in Manipur is deranged District Council. The District Council exists in a badly battered and bruised shape. It is only a pale shadow of the original; in other words, merely the shell without the substance. Notwithstanding all its gimmicks of glamour, therefore, the District Council fails to outwit the simmering discontent of the tribal people". 98

5.6. Political Development among the Poumai

The ancient Poumais had no written records. Therefore, how the democratic system of village administration was first evolved and developed in the remote past of the Poumai society is obscure. Even then, certain records of their past socio-political life have passed down and survived through songs, oral traditions, stories, legends, signs and symbols, etc. There is also the continuance of the past democratic administrative and political systems at present. Since time immemorial every Poumai village has been a self-governing and independent unit. Each village was ruled by the Chief and his Council of Elders. The Council of Elders was represented by every lineage in a democratic way. The Chief and his Council of Elders were the real administrators, lawmakers and the chief judges. However, there was absence of organized administrative and political systems of the Poumai Community as a whole and no common ruler as well. With the attainment of India’s Independence, a great deal of changes have been taken place in the administrative and political system of the Poumai villages as well as community. Today, the Poumai villages no longer exist on their own rights as independent units. With the introduction of modern democratic system of governance, the Poumais have not only been exercising their franchise but are

98 Ibid., P. 194.
also participating in the District and the State electoral politics. The participation of the Poumais in the State electoral politics is briefly discussed as under:

5.6.1. The first State Assembly Elections – 1948

The first Manipur State Assembly Elections held in 1948 under the Manipur State Constitution Act of 1947 was based on adult franchise. The former Capt. Priyobarta Singh became the Chief Minister and T.C. Tiankham was elected as the speaker of the first Manipur Legislative Assembly.\(^9\)

However, there was no election in Mao Assembly Constituency during the elections as election in this constituency got deferred.

5.6.2. The first Territorial Council Elections – 1957

Under the Territorial Council Act, 1950 Manipur became a Union Territory of India and the first Territorial Council Elections of Manipur was held in 1957. It was to elect 30 members of Territorial Council. Out of the 30 Territorial Council Constituencies 20 were in the valley and 10 in the hills. The elections were contested by four parties, viz., Congress, Socialist, Communist and the Praja Socialist along with a large number of the Independent candidates.\(^10\) In the elections Shri Ngaono Thaiso from Liyai village of Poumai community was elected as the first Territorial Council member from among the Poumais.

5.6.3. The second Territorial Council Elections – 1962

In 1962, Territorial Council Elections was held for the second time to elect 30 Territorial Council members. In the Elections, 50 percent of the seats (i.e. 15 seats) were won by the Congress party, 5 seats went to the Socialist

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\(^9\) List of Members of Manipur (both MPs & MLAs) Since 1947 (Manipur Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Imphal, 1985, Pp. 4-5.

party and the rest 10 seats were secured by the Independent candidates.\textsuperscript{101} Shri Ngaono Thaiso of Liyai village, the former Territorial Council member was once again, elected as the Territorial Council member for the second time.

With the enactment of the Government of Union Territories Act 1963, Manipur got a Legislative Assembly having 30 elected members. A Council of Ministers consisting of 3 members was also formed. The state was however continued to be administered by the President through a Chief Commissioner appointed by him.\textsuperscript{102}

5.6.4. Territorial Assembly Elections – 1967

In the early part of 1967 the first Territorial Assembly Election was conducted. As per the 1967 Census, Assembly constituencies were re-adjusted. However, the total number of Constituencies remains unchanged as 20 constituencies in the valley and 10 constituencies in the hills.\textsuperscript{103} In the election Shri Soso Lorho from Tunggam village of Poumai community contested, however it was very unfortunate that he lost the elections and there was no Poumai representative to the Assembly.\textsuperscript{104}

5.6.5. The first State Assembly Elections – 1972

With the attainment of Manipur Statehood on the 21 January 1972, the Territorial Assembly ceased to exist. To constitute a new State Legislative Assembly, the Governor of Manipur, on the 1\textsuperscript{st} February, 1972 issued a notification for a General Election to elect 60 members of Legislative Assembly. Out of the 60 members 19 seats were reserved for the Scheduled Tribes, 1 seat for Scheduled Caste and the rest is for general. Accordingly, the people of Manipur went to poll to elect their representatives from their respective constituencies. Among the 60 elected members, Shri R. Vio of Purul

\textsuperscript{101} P. Bharat Singh, Election in Manipur, Imphal, 1997, P. 10.
\textsuperscript{103} R.P. Singh, op. cit., P. 42.
\textsuperscript{104} http://www.iec.gov.in/StatisticalReports/ElectionStatistics.asp.
from 47/Saikul (ST), IND and S.P. Henry of Phaibung from 48/Liyai (ST), IND were elected to the first State Legislative Assembly. Under the Ministry of Md. Alimuddin, the Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri R. Vio held the in-charge of Deputy Minister (Co-operation) and Veterinary from 20/3/1972 – 28/3/1973 and Shri S. P. Henry headed the Hill Areas Committee as Chairman during from 1972 –1973.\(^{106}\)

5.6.6. The second State Assembly Elections – 1974

The Ministry led by Md. Alimuddin could not last long and it collapsed soon. Therefore, the second General Assembly Elections were conducted in the year 1974 to elect 60 new members for a new Legislative Assembly of the state. People went to poll to elect their representatives from the 60 constituencies. In the elections Shri K.S. Benjamin Banee of Oinam Hill, from 47/Karong (ST) Assembly constituency, IND and R.K. Thekho of Tungjoy, from 48/Mao (ST) Assembly constituency, MHU were elected from among the Poumai to the second State Legislative Assembly.\(^{107}\) During the tenure, Shri K.S. Benjamin Banee took the Chairmanship of Hill Areas Committee from 19/4/1974 – 3/1/1977. Shri R.K. Thekho held the charge of work Department for three consecutive times as the Minister of state. From 10/7/1974 – 5/12/1974 he was the in-charge of work Department under the Chief Minister, Yangmasho Shaiza. Then when R.K. Dorendra Singh became the Chief Minister, he held the charge of PWD as a Minister of State from 23/7/1975 – 13/5/1977. Later, when Yangmasho Shaiza returned to Chief Ministership he once again held the same portfolio for the third time as a Minister of state from 29/6/1977 – 14/11/1979.\(^{108}\)

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\(^{106}\) List of Members of Manipur (both MPs & MLAs) Since 1947, Published by Manipur Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Imphal, 1985, Pp. 10-11.


\(^{108}\) List of Members of Manipur (Both MPs & MLAs), op. cit., Pp. 12-13.
5.6.7. The third State Assembly Elections – 1980

The Third General Elections to Manipur Legislative Assembly were held in 1980. In the elections three Poumai was elected from three different constituencies. They were Shri R. Vio, IND elected from 47/Karong (ST) Assembly constituency, Shri Soso Lorho, INC(I) from 48/Mao (ST) Assembly constituency and Shri L. S. John, IND from 51/Saitu (ST) Assembly constituency. Among them, Soso Lorho was given the Minister of Electricity (Cabinet) from 14/1/1980 – 26/11/1980, Power Minister (Cabinet) from 27/11/1980 – 28/2/1981, and from 19/6/1981 – 4/1/1985 he was the P.H.E. Minister (Cabinet). Shri R. Vio held the charge of Parliamentary Secretary (Manipur) from 1/6/1980 – 23/6/1980 and from 10/2/1981 – 23/2/1981. Shri L.S. John was the Chairman, Hill Areas Committee.

5.6.8. The fourth State Assembly Elections - 1984

The Fourth Manipur Legislative Assembly Elections were held in 1984. In the Elections two Poumai, namely, Shri K.S. Benjamin Banee, IND from 47/Karong (ST) Assembly constituency and Shri Soso Lorho, INC from 48/Mao (ST) Assembly constituency were elected to the 4th Legislative Assembly. In the Assembly, Shri Soso Lorho held the charge of Agriculture as a Cabinet Minister from 4/1/1985 – 12/8/1986 under the Chief Minister of Rishang Keishing. However, Shri K.S. Benjamin Banee did not hold any ministerial berth.

5.6.9. The fifth State Assembly Elections – 1990

With the term of the 4th Manipur Legislative Assembly coming to the end on February 17, 1990, the Election Commission issued a notification dated

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110 List of Members of Manipur (Both MPs & MLAs), op. cit., Pp. 8-10.
112 List of Members of Manipur (Both MPs & MLAs), Ibid., P. 9.
12 January 1990 to elect new members to the Manipur Legislative Assembly and elections were held on 12th February, 1990. In the elections, Shri K.S. Benjamin Banee, INC, Shri Soso Lorho, INC and Shri L.S. John, JD were once again elected from 47/Karong (ST), 48/Mao (ST) and 50/Kangpokpi (ST) Assembly constituencies respectively. In the newly formed government Shri L.S. John took the charge of MAHUD (Manipur Housing and Urban Development), Labor and MI (Minor Irrigation).

5.6.10. The sixth State Assembly Elections – 1995

The term of the 5th Legislative Assembly of Manipur expired on the 1 March 1995. To elect new members, the 6th Legislative Assembly elections were held in two phases one on 16 February 1995 and the other on 19 February 1995. In the elections Shri L. Jonathan, of Phuba village of Poumai community was elected with the ticket of Samata Party from 47/Karong (ST) Assembly constituency. He was the only Poumai elected to the sixth Manipur Legislative Assembly. During the tenure, he held the charge of Sericulture (Cabinet).

5.6.11. The seventh State Assembly Elections – 2000

With the completion of tenure of the 6th Legislative Assembly, the Seventh Manipur Legislative Assembly elections were conducted in 2000. In the elections eight Poumai candidates were in the fray from two Assembly constituencies. For the 47/Karong (ST) Assembly constituency, L. Jonathan (INC), P.S. Henry (FPM), D.D. Thaisii (SP), R. Yuh Jonathan Tao (MSCP), R.V. Shirang (BJP) and Solomon Veino (NCP) were in the fray. Among them L. Jonathan was once again elected with a vote of 11,210 casted for him and he was given the portfolio of Horticulture (Cabinet). Shri Soso Lorho (MSCP) and Asoso Yunuo were contested from 48/Mao (ST) Assembly constituency.

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However, they could not secure the seat and lost to M. Thohrii (INC) of Mao community.\footnote{DIPR, Results of 7th State Assembly Election, 2000.}

5.6.12. The eight State Assembly Elections – 2002

The 7th Legislative Assembly of the state did not last long. As such, the 8th Legislative Assembly elections were conducted in 2002 to constitute a Legislature. The elections were conducted into two phases. The first phase was held on 14th February, 2002. In the elections six Poumai candidates contested for the seat of 47/Karong Assembly constituency and the seat was taken by P.S. Henry Paotei of Purul. Shri Soso Lorho and Shri R. K. Thekho of Poumai were among the candidates contesting for the seat of 48/Mao (ST) Assembly constituency and the seat was won by Shri R.K. Thekho with INC ticket.\footnote{DIPR, 8th Manipur Legislative Assembly Election 2002, Results, Reference Hand Book Vol. III, Published by DIPR, Govt. of Manipur, Pp. 24-25.}

5.6.13. The ninth State Assembly Elections – 2007

The 9th Manipur Legislative Assembly Elections was held in February, 2007. In the elections twelve Poumai candidates were in the fray for the seats of three Assembly constituencies. Six candidates were nominated for the seat of 47/Karong (ST) Assembly constituency, four for 48/Mao (ST) Assembly constituency and two for 50/Kangpokpi (ST) Assembly constituency. Among them Shri D.D. Thaisii with INC ticket secured the seat of 47/Karong (ST) Assembly constituency. However, the Poumai candidates could not capture the seats of the other two Assembly constituencies.\footnote{DIPR, Results, 9th Manipur State Assembly Elections, 2007, Published by DIPR, Govt. of Manipur, in Thakhaigi Chephong, 21/4/2007, P. 17.} On 27 June 2007 Shri D.D. Thaisii sworn as a Cabinet Minister and on 2 July 2007 he was blessed with the portfolios of Tribal Development, District Council, Veterinary and Animal Husbandry. He has been holding the above portfolios till date.
5.7. Some of the prominent Poumai Socio-Political Organizations

With the passage of time, the secluded village life of the Poumais has been exposed to the outside world and their traditional socio-political life that confined within their village boundaries has been broken down. Their traditional intra and inter-village politics are neither relevant nor applicable to the changing world. This paved the way for emergence of various tribal and inter-tribal socio-political organizations with a view to protect and safeguard their people, identity, land, rights, etc. and promote all-round development of the land and the people. The main socio-political organizations of the Poumais are 1) Poumai Masou Me (PMM), 2) Poumai Tsiidoumai Me (PTM) and 3) Poumai Naotoumai Me (PNM).

5.7.1. Poumai Masou Me (PMM)

The Poumai Masou Me (PMM) also known as the Poumai Naga Union is the apex socio-political organization of the Poumai Community. It was founded in April 1957 with the name 'Poumai Progressive Union' (PPU) with Mr. Sani Dahrri of Tungjoy and Mr. Kh. Thaikho of Purul as the President and General Secretary of the organization respectively. Later, the PPU was rechristened as Poumai Masou Me (PMM). This organization is constituted with 78 strong village units and the Chairmen and Secretaries or the headmen of the unit villages formed the General Assembly of the PMM. The main aims and objectives for which the PMM was constituted are:

1. To promote peace and harmony;
2. To foster sense of oneness;
3. To foster solidarity and fraternity;
4. To up-lift social, cultural, economic, moral and educational life, and
5. To link ourselves with the world around for peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{117} Yezhabo of Poumai Masou Me, Published by PMM, P. 1.
To pursue and realize these aims and objectives, three different departments viz., i) The Poumai Lariitsiimai Me (Poumai Literature Committee), ii) The Poumai Cultural Research Committee and iii) The Poumai Judicial Committee have been created within the PMM. Besides, under the PMM there are a number of subordinate organizations actively involved for the welfare and overall development of the Poumai community. Some of the subordinate organizations are:

- Poumai Tsiidoumai Me, (PTM), Poumai Students’ organization;
- Poumai Naotoumai Me, (PNM), Poumai Women’s organization;
- Chilevai Naga Union, (CNU), North Eastern Poumai organization;
- Lepaona Naga Union, (LNU), Southern Poumai organization;
- Paomata Council, (PC), Western Poumai organization;
- Razeba Public Organization, (RPO), Northern Poumai organization in Nagaland.\(^{118}\)

5.7.2. Poumai Tsiidoumai Me (PTM)

The Poumai Tsiidoumai Me (PTM) is the apex Students’ body of the Poumai Tribe. It was formed on 17 September 1976 with the name Poumai Naga Students’ Union (PNSU) in a joint meeting of politicians, public leaders, intellectuals and students of the Poumai community held at Sendra (Loktak) under the Convenor of Mr. P. Ngaopuni of Maiba. Mr. Haba Pao and K.T. Heni became the first President and General Secretary of the PNSU respectively. The PNSU was later renamed as Poumai Tsii Doume (PTD). Once again, in the year 1996 during the Federal Assembly of PTD held at Phaibung Khullen, it was re-christened as the Poumai Tsiidoumai Me (PTM) which is the official nomenclature of the Union till today.\(^{119}\) It is constituted with three circle


\(^{119}\) Ibid., P. 43.
students’ unions, one each for Lepaona, Paomata and Chilervai Circles. The PTM was established with the following objectives:

- To promote both physical as well as mental development through education and sports;
- To promote education and its system in the Poumai region;
- To preserve and promote the culture;
- To pursue for recognition of the Poumai identity; etc.

5.7.3. Poumai Naotoumai Me (PNM)

The history of formation of the Poumai Naotoumai Me (PNM) goes back to the dreaded incident ‘Operation Blue Bird’, launched by the Indian armed forces at Oinam Hill village and its surrounding regions in the year 1987. It was the sword of this operation that pierced so deep into the hearts of the Poumai women folks as they witnessed the Assam Rifles pouring their ravage, shooting down the village leaders mercilessly, raping and molesting the helpless women, torturing the innocent villagers by hanging upside down on trees, burying alive, administering chili powder into eyes, nostrils, anus and private parts, forcing baby to deliver in open ground in front of public, dismantling and burning down houses and so many unbearable inhuman ill treatment meted to the villagers.

In spite of facing all such unimaginable inhuman and barbaric acts, none came to their rescue from the jaws of Assam Rifles. The horrible atrocities ignited the women folks of the Poumai to come forward and do something for their people. Consequently, as the flame of the operation was still burning their hearts, a general meeting of the Poumai women was convened on the 17th November 1994 where the Poumai Naotoumai Me (PNM) also known as the Poumai Naga Women Association (PNWA) was formally organized with Ms. Ng. Paosei Pao as President and Ms. D. Reihiirou as General Secretary. The main objectives of this women’s organization are as follows:
- To secure equal rights, status and privileges in all aspects of social, political and economic life with men;
- To cultivate the cultural and traditional values;
- To endeavour for the upliftment of religion, education, culture and socio-economic life of the people in the area;
- To endeavor programmes for development of women and children;
- To promote health care and bring faster social changes.\textsuperscript{120}

Besides the above mentioned socio-political organizations of the Poumais, there also exists a number of well founded religious organizations, viz., The Poumai Naga Baptist Association (PNBA) established in 1978\textsuperscript{121} and The Poumai Naga Catholic Me (PNCM)\textsuperscript{122} with their extended subordinate bodies and a number of member churches which are not only responsible for the religious development and well being but are also playing very important socio-political roles among the people.

Further, the Poumais have also been actively involving in the socio political activities of the Nagas at large. About their involvement in the underground movement for a unified political unit for the Nagas, The Shepoumaramth in the Naga National Movements (1995) says: “Since the formation of Naga National Council 1946, and Naga Youngmen Progressive Movement League, 1947, the political history reveals that our people have been struggling and participating from the very beginning of the resistance movement.”\textsuperscript{123} As per the data recorded in the book, some of the first Poumais who joined the Naga National movements were Sanyi Dahrii of Tungjoy and L.M. Shahni of the same village. They joined the movement on 14 February 1949. Th. Sow of Purul Akutpa joined it in 1949 whereas Sgt. Th. Panii of Tungam and Pte. V. Siisii of Tungam joined in 1951 and 1952 respectively.\textsuperscript{124} As the years passed, number of Poumais joining the movement has increased. During their service many of

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., P. 44.
\textsuperscript{121} Souvenir, Poumai Naga Baptist Association, Silver Jubilee Celebration, December, 2003, P.72.
\textsuperscript{122} Directory 2005 – 2006, Published by Poumai Naga Catholic Me.
\textsuperscript{123} The Shepoumaramth in the Naga National Movements, published by Shepoumaramth Region, Govt. of the People’s Republic of Nagaland, 1995, P.209.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., Pp. 102, 120 & 122.
the cadres have been arrested and many of them have sacrificed their lives for the cause of the Nagas. The innocent and poor tribal people have faced intolerable torture and inhuman treatment in the hands of the Indian armed forces. In spite of all the sufferings, the zeal of fighting for their rights has never been lost on the hearts of the people. Instead, the sufferings they faced have boosted up their spirit of fighting for their rights. Today some of the young and dynamic Poumai leaders are in the top echelons of decision making body of the NSCN (IM) and other Naga insurgent outfits.

Moreover, many educated and enthusiastic Poumas have emerged out as social activists, politicians and religious leaders, holding various responsibilities in different organizations. Some of them are holding the top ranking positions in the United Naga Council (UNC), an apex body of the whole Naga community; some in the Naga Peoples’ Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), an apex human rights organization of all the Nagas; some in the Naga Peoples’ Organization (NPO), an apex Naga organization in Manipur; some in the All Tribal Students’ Union, Manipur (ATSUM), the apex Tribal Students’ body of Manipur; some in the All Naga Students’ Association, Manipur (ANSAM), an apex Students’ body of all the Nagas in Manipur, etc.

5.8. Conclusion

It was mainly during the last century that the Poumais got exposed to new patterns of life brought about by the changing times. New ways of life have slowly but steadily replaced the traditional socio-political life of the people. With the extension of democratic experiments under the provisions of the India Constitution, the traditional administrative system has been replaced by new agencies of local self government like the Village Authority. People have come to have greater say in the management of their local affairs. Power got decentralized from hereditary Village Chiefs and their Councilors to the representatives of the people. Besides, people are increasingly coming out to participate in the electoral politics of the state, both for the state legislative
assembly and Lok Sabha elections. The people have also started organizing themselves in significant ways for defending not only their rights and liberties but also for the promotion of their overall socio-political interests. In spite of all these developments, the process of political development among the people is slow. Low literacy level among the people, non-reservation of seats for women in the village and district level local self governing bodies, failure to hold District Council elections for the last more than 20 years, etc. are some of the important responsible factors that hinder the progress of political development among the people.