CHAPTER-II

THE TANGKHUL NAGAS
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The Tangkhuls belong to the Naga-tribe. There are more than 52 Naga tribes who are concentrated in the state of Nagaland, Manipur, Asam, Arunachal Pradesh of India and Myanmar. The Naga tribes in Nagaland are, Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha, Rengma, Chakeshang, Konyak, Chang, Sangtam, Phom, Zeme, Liangmei, Rongmei (Zeliangrong) Kheimunganj, etc. The Manipur Naga tribal are Anal, maring, Mayon, Mongsang, Lamkang, Chothe, Tangkhul, Mao, Paomei, Koireng, Tarao, Kharam, etc. Tangsha, Wancho, Nocte, etc. are the Naga tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. In Assam Zeme, Rongmei and Rengma, etc. are the Naga tribes and in Myanmar, there are Konyak, Tangkhul, Phom, Yimuchunger, Rekkop, Kayo, Khaklak/Hkaklak, Kengu, Nolang, Namsik, Pakang, Phango, Pangmi, Phankem, Pangu, Para, Rangpan, Rasit, Sira, Somi, etc.

The Nagas belong to the Mongolian racial group. They are generally well built, tall, slim, reddish in complexion. They are simple, sincere, honest, industrious, humorous, cheerful, courteous, straightforward and truthful. They have a free and open society. No family pays tax to the other, no landlord harasses the labourers, no tenant pays rent. Theft, cheating and murder are unknown. They have a well organised society. Society is above every other things. The Nagas present a picture of unity in diversity. Every

tribe has an unique political organisation of their own, ranging from the pure
democracy of the Angami to the autocratic rule of the Ang of Konyaks, from
the gerontocracy (Tartar) of the Aos to the semi republics of the
Zeliangrongs. In their manner and customs, there are great outward varieties.
In their racial make up and physical features, there are elements ranging
from the Mongoloid to which the majority belongs to the Aryan and Negrito.
They have diverse religious beliefs and customs. Despite these diversities,
there is a strong fundamental unity, a feeling of ethnic and emotional and
belongingness.\(^3\)

The megalithic culture found throughout the island of South East Asia
(the Indonesian culture area) bore similar culture with the Nagas. Its
characteristics are the erection of large stone monuments and forked wooden
posts both to commemorate the dead and as part of status enhancing Feasts
of Merit, and a set of beliefs about ritual prohibition or taboo and about a
powerful soul substance or virtue residing in the human head.\(^4\)

"In terms of culture and social organisation, a great number of
parallel can be suggested between Indonesian, Oceanic Societies and some
of the Nagas, though not enbloc. In technology, this would include the

\(^3\) Kabui Gagumumeci, *Genesis of the Ethnoses of Nagas and
Kuki-Chin*, Published by Naga Students' Federation, 1993 P.6.

\(^4\) Julian Jacobs, *Hill People of North East India* –
Indonesian (backstrap) loom, the vertical double cylinder bellows and making fire with a flexible thong, in economy both slash and burn and terraced cultivation . . . the youth dormitories, and in miscellaneous practices, such diverse traits as tattooing, head taking . . . are found amongst people in the Philippines, Melanesia and Borneo.”

The origin of the Naga is in obscurity as there is no authentic written record. We depend our studies on songs, stories, legends, etc. which are passed down from generation to generation through oral traditions. “Ethnologists and the anthropologists agree that the Nagas have been formed by a mingling of peoples, and that the dominant element is represented in two or three permanent types – one Chinese –Tai blood, Tibeto-Burman race and the Aborigines of present Assam. Indo-Austria elements are known to exist in the population of certain tribes and there appears to have been certain infusion of Phillipino–Borneo blood.” It is also said that physically the Nagas are predominantly Mongoloid. They have straight black hair, black eyes, epicanthic eye fold and other features of the huge spread of Mongoloid people who now inhabit areas as far as China and Amazonia. The general expansion of the Mangoloid peoples throughout South East including North East India, may have begun as much as 1000 or 1200 years ago, possibly from a region of North China.” According to Myanmar’s census report, successive invasion of Tibeto-Burman people came from the region of western China between the source of Yangtse – kiang and Hoang-Ho Rivers.

5. Ibid., P. 27.
The land of the Nagas exhibit racial intermixtures in great range. It forms a meeting centre of the Himalayan, Burmese, Japanese, Thai, Malaysian, Filipinos, Polynesian, Indonesian and Malaysian cultures, its history preserves instances of assimilations and fusion of blood and race among the varied tribes.  

Most of the scholars believe that originally the Naga people came from Central Asia and these people were known as the non-Chinese Chinang tribes. They first came to north-west border of China many centuries before the Christian era and later on these tribes spread over to China, Indonesia, Philippines, Bhutan, Burma, other south-east Asian countries and to the present Naga Hills.

According to W. Robinson, a number of the Naga tribes have immigrated from the north-east borders of China probably during the sanguinary conflicts for supremacy, which took place between the different members of the Chinese and Tartar dynasties in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.  

Though Nagas are grouped as Indo-Mongoloids, the Naga tribes are not typical Mongols, the Caucasian elements is present among them in a remarkable degree as a result of the age old contact between the Mongols and the Caucasian people. “No Naga tribe is of pure blood. Each tribe has

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9. W. Robinson – Descriptive Account of Assam, S. Prakash, Delhi, 1891, P. 382.
combined elements due to immigration from, at any rate, three directions: north-east, north-west and south, the people having been pushed up from the plains of Assam and Burma.”

Nagas are not composite people. They differ widely among themselves in various aspects. However, we should note in mind that similarities are more than dissimilarities except in language. Their food habits are more or less the same. Over and above this, many similar characteristics and elements are traced in their life styles, religious practices and customary laws. The Nagas speak different languages but according to G.A. Grierson, all the languages of the Nagas belong to the Tibeto-Burman group. It also signifies their affinities in the remote past.

The Tangkhuls:

The Tangkhul tribe is also one of the largest tribes among the Nagas. “In both education and area-wise, the Tangkhuls are second among the Naga tribes, the Aos leading in the field of education and the Konyaks occupying the largest area. Population wise, the Tangkhuls are third on the list, with the Konyak and the Angami Nagas placed first and second respectively” The Tangkhuls are more or less of Mongolian stock but the Aryans features are also traced among them “... Tangkhuls have sharp features like Aryans with slight Mongoloid touch, having complexion like pure Aryan groups,

e.g. Iranians, Afghans or Kashmiris."\textsuperscript{12} From the above facts, we can guess that during ancient days a pure Aryan wave might have passed through Tangkhul belt causing a new tribe bringing about a mixture of Aryan and Mongoloid.

The Tangkhul mostly settled in the Ukhrul district of Manipur and in some neighbouring districts like Senapati, Thoubal and Chandel. A good number of Tangkhuls are also settled in Nagaland and across the border in the Somra Tract of Myanmar. \textit{"The Tangkhul habitats spread beyond the Indian border into upper Burma in Somra Tract and Naga Hills of Burma."}\textsuperscript{13} The people of Somra Tract were Tangkhuls by blood but unluckily a large tract of Tangkhul inhabited areas were demarcated into Myanmar boundary. \textit{"... the Somra group of villages which is outside the territory of the state of Manipur is of Tangkhul origin."}\textsuperscript{14} So when India and Burma attained national independence, the Tangkhuls found themselves totally dismembered belonging to two countries. In the southern part also, a large tract of land both hills and valley have been taken away.

The Tangkhul land is situated in the eastern most corner of the country bordering Myanmar on the East, Nagaland in the North, Chandel and Thoubal district in the south and Senapati and Imphal valley in the west. It covers an area of 4544 sq. kms. with a population of 1,40,446 according to

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} G.K. Gosh \textsuperscript{---} Tribals and their culture – Manipur and Nagaland, Vol. 3, Ashis Pub. House, N.Delhi, 1992, P. 108.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Gangmumei Kabui \textsuperscript{---} N.S.F. Op. cit., P.2
\item \textsuperscript{14} T.C. Hodson \textsuperscript{---} Naga Tribes of Manipur, Low Price pub., N. Delhi, 1911, P.2.
\end{itemize}
2001 census. A border district stretching for about 200 kms. Of International boundary, Ukhrul also offers great scope for border trade and serves as a gateway of India to south East Asia.\textsuperscript{15}

Regarding mineral wealth, the geological survey of India has undertaken surveys in Ukhrul district and discovered a good quality and quantity deposits of valuable minerals, such as chromites, limestone, serpentine, salt copper, nickel, coal, asbestos, evaporate, magnesium and precious stone such as jade.

The geological survey found deposits of chromites at Phangrei, and Shiroi Kashung containing partly metallurgical grade ore that is of very limited occurrence in the country as a whole. Limestone is mainly available in Ukhrul, Hundung, Khangkhui, Lambui (Ramva) Shokvao, T.M. Kasom, all are located in Ukhrul central sub-division. Nearly the whole of Shiroi Kashong and Phangrei range near Ukhrul, Hangkou peak, Zingsui Peak are composed of serpentine rocks. The brine springs are located at Maremphung, Razai, Chalau, Kharasom, etc. From this brine wells, salt is manufactured locally in the indigenous way. The survey also found the availability of copper at Kongal Thana, Huimie and Ningthi area bordering Myanmar. The Geological Survey of India has recently located minor occurrences of magnesium in Kuingai area of Chingai sub-division. Other minerals like asbestos, coal, jade and evaporate have so far been known in

\textsuperscript{15} R. Muivah - \textit{An Introduction to Ukhrul}, T.B.L. Centenary Celebration Souvenir, 1996., P. 8.
the eastern part of the district and it calls for detailed survey. Sir James Johnstone saw coal cropping out of Angoching hillside during his tour in the area.\textsuperscript{16}

The beauty and splendour of Ukhrul district can hardly be expressed in words unless one physically visits the place. The magnificent mountain ranges and hills are decked with evergreen lushful forest, rich in rare flora and fauna. "The scenic beauty of the country, the productivity of its soil, the healthy and bracing climate of the region has been testified by many who have visited this part of our country."\textsuperscript{17} Innumerable medicinal plants, rare orchids and varied wild flowers and fruits are grown in abundance. There is nothing wrong in terming Ukhrul district as the natural botanical garden of the Eastern border. "Tucked in the eastern corner of India along the country's international border with Myanmar, resplendent in mountain grandeur, rich in rare flora and fauna, lies a little known replica of Shangrila. That is Ukhrul in Manipur."\textsuperscript{18}

Ukhrul is 1900 metres above the sea level and is the highest hill station of Manipur. It is practically as high as and cold as Simla. It is the centre of warrior and colourful tribe Tangkhul Nagas and a well developed hilly place.\textsuperscript{19} The road connecting Ukhrul with Imphal is the life-line of this region. From Ukhrul a road extends up to Jessami on the border of

\textsuperscript{16} T.C. Hodson – Naga Tribes of Manipur, Low Price Pub., N. Delhi, 1911, P.2.
\textsuperscript{19} Aluwalia, B.K. and Aluwalia Shashe – Social change in Manipur, Cultural Publication, Delhi 1984, P. 23.
Nagaland. As Ukhrul district is bordering Myanmar in the easternmost corner of India, it has a great scope for border trade and serves as a gateway of India to south East Asia. There is a great potential to turn this district into a busies natural centerpiece of the country and it may not be too much an exaggeration in terming Ukhrul as a hidden Eden of the East. As one travels along the serpentine road among the lushful green forests and amidst the varied hills and colours of jungle flowers during spring seasons, one forgets how he has reached the hill town. Ukhrul is endowed with seasonal flowers throughout the year. It is a land of roses and varied seasonal flowers bloom in profusion throughout the year.

The district is broken lengthwise into four mountain ranges in the north and south respectively. They are Angoching and Somra Tract in the extreme east, Mapithel and Shiroy Kasung ranges in the center and Tungou and Somdal ranges in the west. The topography of Ukhrul district varies from place to place and from range to range. Some places are steep and rugged, meadowy and plain. There is also a large tract of dense and dark forests. The important rivers flowing in this land are the Thoubal, Tuyungbi, Maglang, Chamu (Sanalok) Nambalok, Challou, Ihang Iril and Laniye (Rangazak). Other than these rivers, there are innumerable streams and rivers thriving with varieties of delicious local fishes. There is a vast stretch of valley between Angoching ranges which extends up to Tamu, the border town in the south. Due to hot climatic condition, no one dared to cultivate or settle as people are prone to attack by malarial diseases.

"Over 50% of the geographical area of Ukhrul is covered by the forest which range from tropical rain forest to sub-alpine forest. They are
mainly of pine, mixed with oak, chestnut, alder walnut, uningthou (Phoecha – Hinsiana) fix and mixed evergreen forest. Teak is common to the slope overlooking the Kabo valley (Myanmar) and wild tea plant is found in kamjong sub-division and Ningchou area.²⁰

Ukhrul is a home of various animals and birds including big cats namely, Tiger, Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear, Jackals, Sambars, Deers, Wild Bison, Hoolock, Pangolin, Porcupines, Mountain Coats, Gibbon, the Slow Loris, Wild Boar, the Stump Tailed Macaque, the Pig Tailed Macaque, etc.

Some of the notable birds found in the district are Mrs. Hume Barbaked Pheasant, Blyth’s Traqopans, the Great Indian Hornbill, Rufour Necked Hornbill, Wreathed Hornbill, Indian Pied or Lesser Pied Hornbill Brown Backed Hornbills etc. There are also White Wing Wood Duck, Toucan, Dows Hooper Cuckoo etc. During winter, Wild Ducks from Loktak Lake in the valley also migrated to this land and many rare species are also found. Unfortunately, a great numbers of games have become extinct and many more are on the verge of extinction due to indiscriminate hunting and rapid deforestation. Thousands of beautiful birds are also killed by using a sticky object made from jungle plants called Nei in Tangkhul. People of this region enjoy birds as one of the best dishes not concerned about the extinction of these beautiful rare birds. It is a matter of urgency to conserve the wild life and educate the people of the region.

Shiroi lily has already been declared a state flower. Orchids of various hues and crimson red *Rhododendron* locally called Kokliwon and cherry blossoms are plenty. White *Rhodendrons* are rare and thrive at high altitudes of Phangrei, Shiroy and Khayang-Phung. Wild roses are also grown in this region. Places like Sihai Phangrei, Shirui Kashung, Khangkhui Mangsor, Khayang fall, Kachouphung lake, Harva Khangai, etc.; are some of the interesting places for excursion. “It is a hidden paradise a shangrila beckoning to be explored” Some of the important places which attracts tourists are introduced in brief. They are as follows – Shirui Kashung:

Shirui lily is grown on the mountain ranges of Shirui Kashung only. The fame mountain is associated with many ancestral legendary stories. The Tangkhul ancestors for ages revered this mountain as a sacred mountain. It is their belief that all the dead souls passed through this very mountain ranges and in the midnight, they could see a line of procession lighting pine torches moving towards the land of the dead. The “Tangkhul people look upon this mountain with respect, fear and wonder.”

Shirui Kashung is located about 15 km. in the east of the district capital and is one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in Ukhrul district. “After the World War II, Kingdomwards, a plant hunter by profession was assigned by the American Service Chief to locate the aircrafts that crashed among the deep hills between Assam and Myanmar. From Ukhrul, he could

see an aircraft spread eagled (in his own words) like a dead goose against the steep face of a ridge it had failed to clear. At the end of the ridge, rose the rounded hump of Shiroi Kashong on crossing over the ridge; he found the other aircraft the next day. The grisly relics he had discovered from the wreckage were quickly packed off to Ukhrul for onward journey to New York.”

It was Kingdomwård again who discovered the Shiroy lily on his second assignment to Ukhrul for Botanical Society. He presented the rarest flower in the flower-show conducted by the Royal Horticulture Society and bagged the coveted award of merit in England in 1950. The botanical name of Shiroy lily is Lilium mackliniae Sealy which is named after his wife. It is a seasonal flower and its peak season of blooming is from May 15 to June 6. The flower after minute examination is found to exhibit the rainbow colours. The flower is pinkish in colour and its beauty lies in its bell shape petals in bowing position like a modest girl. The height of the plant is between 1 to 3 ft. and blooms 2 to 7 flowers per plant. It is a rare and endemic species grown only on the Shiroy peak in the world.

Shiroi Kashong is clad with various kinds of flowers throughout the year. More than 150 herbaceous flowering plants including rare orchids and rhododendrons bloom around the year on the grassy slopes of Shirui Kashung. In between the second and third peaks under mass clad seven rhododendrons species including white variety and various multicoloured flowering annuals littered the ground in profusion. Another unique feature of

23. Ibid., P. 27.
the peak is the thriving of thousands of shadeless white flowers locally known as Horamwon (snow flower) cover the peak as a snow peak. It is also popularly called summer flower as it usually blooms from the beginning of June to July.\textsuperscript{24} Other than these, wild roses, epiphytic ferns, tree ferns, wild azaleas of several kinds and orchids are also common. Even the ground is covered with thick carpet of humus.

The Government of Manipur has proposed the entire Shiroi Kashong range as a National Park under Sub-Section (i) of Section 35 of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act 1982, because of its peculiar eco-system along with rare fauna, floral, geomorphological and zoological association of varied genetic materials of a National Park.\textsuperscript{25} Though it has been declared as a National Park, no drastic developmental programme has been taken up. Of course, a rough jeelpable road has been extended up to the lower slopes of the first peak but no one dares to travel, as it is constructed poorly. In spite of all these uninviting situations, scores of visitors are thronging and coming in succession during the peak seasons of its bloom.

**Khangkhui Mangsor Cave:**

Khangkhui Mangsor cave is located at Khangkhui Phungcham village at a distance of eleven kilometers south east of Ukhrul bordering upper Myanmar. The road is linked with Ukhrul by a rough jeelpable road which was constructed by the villagers. It is also being repaired by the poor


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., P. 14.
villagers from time to time to enable the visitors who are coming to see the cave. In 1999, a handful of villager employees raised rupees one lakh for major repairing and widening. The village has about 100 houses with a population of about 600 people. Such a huge rock resting on the slope of the mountain with natural tunnels are really a wonder which words fail to express has been neglected and unceasing appeals of the villagers unheeded.

The cave is associated with many legends and stories. The real structure and its magnificent construction cannot be expressed to others unless one physically goes and witnesses it. Broadly, the cave comprises of 2 big chambers and 4 tunnels. According to the village legend, the first chamber belongs to the first wife, the princess of Shirui lily. She had no issue and lived in a single room. The first chamber is like an igloo house looks as if chistled out below the huge rock and from it the biggest and the longest tunnel starts. The first chamber is artistically roofed and constructed. The hard rock walls are decorated with animal skulls of various kinds ranging from small birds to big animals. There was also a large bed made of a flat stone lying on the ground. Nowadays, most of these articles are lost and only a few remnants are visible on the rock wall. It is said by the villagers that during the Second World War, the villagers kept all their cattle inside the cave. The animals trampled over and spoilt everything that was lying intact for centuries. The second chamber is called Anmphowa in local dialect which means second wife’s chamber. She is the princess of Koubru Hills. Her chamber is wider and more spacious with many smaller rooms as she had many children. The second chamber is unroofed. The roof extends up to the top of the rock like a big chimney hole which when looks down from the top of the rock, ones whole nerves thrill from head to toe.
The other four tunnels are – (1) Siratra, (2) Ngakhumva, (3) Luireng takhavai, (4) Ngathumvai, etc. Other than these, there are many other smaller and shorter tunnels, “Legends also say that the tunnels were the passage and routes of Mangsor deity for visiting various places including Imphal valley”  

O. Kumar Singh, an anthropologist was the first to do excavation on scientific line. It is a limestone cave. “O.K. Singh’s excavation found out stone, bone tools and animal remains which are sufficient evidences of habitation of Stone Age man in the caves.” On the basis of cultural materials consisting of stone and bone tools in addition to faunal remains, it can be argued that Khangkhui cave yielded evidence of upper or late Paleolithic Period. The first evidence of the Pleistocene man in Manipur dating back to about 30,000 B.C.”

The findings of Khangkhui cave have been compared with the kurnool findings and of this comparison of the above tentative dating has been made. 


**Khayang Fall:**

Khayang fall is one of the main tributaries of Sanalok river which is about 90 kms. East of Ukhrul located in Khayang village near the Indo-Myanmar border. The Khayang fall is a sort of amphitheatre surrounded by steep rocky walls on three sides. The fall consisted of three stages of cascading water falls which is 227 mts. high and is probably the highest and most beautiful fall in this part of the world.\(^{30}\)

**Kachaophung Lake:**

Kachaophung natural lake is located about 125 kms. South east of Khayang fall. The lake is situated in a hill slope of Achiwa Magi Hills which is surrounded by a number of knolls. The lake is about nine acres in size but due to the presence of two big floating masses of reed, it cannot exhibit its full size. There are also a good number of common carps and various fishes which provide for an ample scope for pisciculture. There were migratory Siberian ducks in this lake. The size of the lake can still be increased by bringing water from river which is flowing nearby. With little improvement, this lake can easily be turned into haven for the tourists.\(^{31}\)

**Angoching:**

Angoching is bounded by Sanalok (chamu) river in the west, Myanmar in the east, Khayangphung in the north and Chatric in the south.

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about 90 kms. East of Ukhrul. The area is mostly inaccessible due to difficult terrain and has therefore, been untrodden and remained a virgin forest and thus forms a natural habitat for a number of rare indigenous flora and fauna. Above thousand of species of flowering plants and trees including herbs and over 150 varieties of orchids and “Khayang lily”, closely related to Shiroi lily are grow in this area. Apart from the rich diversity of flora, the area is also rich in fauna, Elephants, Tigers, Sambars, Barking Deer, Wild Buffalo, Wild Bison (gaur) Hoolock, Black Bear Leopard, Wild Cat, Horn Bills Pangolin, Peacock, Jungle Fowl, Tragopan, Mountain Goats, ‘kitre’ (local name) having red and bluish silken plume and “Yaoha” having the body and head of a bear and limbs of a dog native to this area. It is hoped that Angoching may also be declared as National park.  

Had all these places been located in other parts of India, it might have become a haven for the tourists and every year through out the whole seasons, there would have been perennial flow of tourists.

**Origin and Migration of the Tangkhuls:**

Anthropologists divide human race inhabiting the earth into three major groups and some into four. They are the Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Negroid and Australoid. They further say that human habitation started in three zones of the earth. They were northern China, Central Asia and Central Africa.

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During the paleolithic and Neolithic period, there were no International boundaries and frontiers to prevent migration. Moving to a new land was a matter of necessity or convenience. People could not be prevented from occupying a part of the forest or vacant land. It is only in the modern times that nation states have imposed restrictions on migration. It is said that migration was undertaken due to calamities affecting food supply in the ancient past.

According to Marshall, the Mongoloid distributed themselves from the upper Riches of Yellow River of China in three groups. One westward (Tibetans) the second southward (the early Indo-China tribes) and the third south-East (Chinese). The Nagas and other tribals are presumed to follow the south-ward movements towards Indo-China. S.N. Ansari wrote that “the mongoloid race reached North-East India following two routes, one route passed through Tibet and the other through Yunan Province of China. Those from Tibet site came across the Himalayas and settled in Arunachal Pradesh, Brahmaputra, North-western Burma and almost northern half of Manipur.” The Tangkhul oral traditions say that they came from the far yonder east believed to be somewhere in the upper Riches of Huang Ho and Yangtze Kiang rivers.

34. Ibid., P. 10.
S.N. Barua also mentioned that the immigration of the people took place through the eastern hill ranges on the Indo-Burma and Sino-Indian border. Some of the routes to India from China across Yunan and Burma were laid through even before the Han dynasty of China.  

North-East was a trade route between the Greek world and the South-Eastern Asia long before the birth of Christ. These trade routes opened for human migration into this region from different directions. It is believed that most probably the Nagas had migrated towards their present homes across the barren mountain possibly following overland treks extensively used by the Chinese traders and embassies between China and India, as well as by embassies from Rome in the last century B.C. and the beginning of Christian era. There was continuous migrating movement from southern China of Yunan Province through upper Burma to this side.

The Tangkhuls are also believed to follow the same route as other Nagas. According to W. Ibohal Singh, the Leihous were Tangkhuls who belonged to the Yakka tribe. The ancestral home of the Yakka tribe is supposed to be on the south-eastern side of Tibet somewhere near Sakya Compa from where they migrated. Many scholars including European Scholars observe that among the Tangkhuls, they found people looking like classic Aryans. It is said that the tribe to which Gautama Buddha belonged used to perforate the ears like that of the Tangkhul culture. If this theory

holds true, then the Tangkhuls belonged to a cognate tribe of the Moranga. Gautama belonged to Moranga clan of the Himalayan tribe. Names with the suffix - 'la' or 'ra' are very common among the Tangkhuls like Larala, Shimthingla, etc. The name of the sons of Emporer Asoka and others are also found to have similar suffixes namely Trivara, Anula, Kanala, etc. Asoka also belonged to the Himalayan tribe called Sakya. It is also said that Lord Shiva, the god of the Sub-Himalayan tribe was a good dancer and the tribe to which he belonged were also a good dancer. The Manipuri accounts and tradition indicate that the Leihous were good dancers besides the dance performance of Tangkhu. The Tangkhuls probably belonged to a Sub-Himalayan or Neo-Tibetan tribe which was a cognate tribe of the Sakya. They first moved to the plains of Northern India and then to the Kabow valley via. Arakan in the second century B.C. or they moved towards the east. Anyway they are found in the trijunction of Tibet, Burma and Assam before their entry into present Manipur.37

He further mentioned and presumed that the Ao Nagas of Nagaland appear to be a cognate tribe of the Tangkhuls and perhaps a cognate tribe of Leihou and Mahou which later assumed the new appellation Tangkhul. The prefixes Lei and Man in Lei-hou and Ma-hou appear to be the place names to where the Hou tribe inhabited in Leinung area. Leihou and Mahou may easily be changed to Lei-ao and Ma-ao respectively, where Hou changes to Ao. It is most likely that the Ao first settled in the upper Iril valley at Mokokching a little north-west of Sagolmang and then they moved to

Nagaland and settled in the Ong-Pangkong range. The precise date of their leaving Manipur territory is not known but not earlier than the closing part of the 11th century A.D. 38 It may be assumed that the Tangkhuls like other South-East Asian people, migrated from somewhere in the highlands of China in pre-historic times. Then they moved along the riverbeds avoiding the high mountains, until they reached the Myanmar’s plains. They then settled in Thuangdut 39 in Myanmar. For sometime they settled in Samsok (Thuangdut) but due to some unfavourable conditions or reasons, they left Samsok again. The reason of leaving is not clearly known but it is presumed that it might be due to extreme climate or mosquitoes as it is said by old people. According to the story, some stayed back and some moved to other parts of India. This theory is believed to be true as there are various Naga tribes still living in Myanmar. It is said that there is still the stone walls erected by the Tangkhuls in Samsok.

The story that the Tangkhuls took their last migration from “Tuangdut” (Samsok) is supported by a popular Tangkhul folk songs. The song runs as:

“Oh! milung kathui kaleida thuithoi
Oh! Samsok marok leida thuithoi
Sokvao – a leida shok ngavao,
Meichai lungli mei shok ngayar,
Rungatak leida mei unga yar;

38. Ibid., Pp.89-91.
39. Thuangdut – Previously known as Hswangsup and pronounced as Samsok in Tangkhul.
English version –

_Oh! Whence cometh thou originally?_
_Oh! We originate from Samsok in Myanmar_
_We call and gather all over kindreds at Sokvao_
_We make fire at Meichailung_
_We distribute at Rungatak._

After a long tedious walk, they reached a high mountain from where they could see a vast lake. According to the story, the advance party at the sight of the huge lake in the valley had division among themselves as to whether they should go back or proceed further, avoiding the lake. The lake referred here is believed to be the Loktak Lake which was perhaps much bigger than it is to-day. Another version current among the Mayon Monsang Nagas indicates that Manipur was full of water. Prof. N. Tombi Singh also writes that “the Manipur legends have it that in the ancient days, the valley of Manipur which today stands at an altitude of 2,600 ft. above the sea level was completely under water unfit for human habitation.”

It is also said that after leaving Samsok, the Tangkhuls are believed to have migrated to the Manipur valley from the south-east i.e., the area now forming Chandel district. By that time, Manipur was full of water. It is proved by the fact that there is still a river named ‘Tangkhul’ in Chandel district. There are also evidences of Tangkhul Naga settlement in the valley of Manipur. Shri Ibungohal also says that “the original inhabitants of Manipur were the

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Kiratas (some tribes of Nagas, by that time, Manipur valley was full of water) W. Ibohal Singh says that “the Tangkhuls are likely to be one of the earliest tribes inhabiting the ancient kingdom of Manipur.

The period of migration did not take place at the same time; some earlier and some later. According to the story and folk songs the advanced party divided themselves into two groups, one to the right and one to the left. The eastward bound party cut down banana trees for the latter to follow but the plant shot up quickly leaving no trace of the route, the eldest brother had gone. After a long tedious journey, they reached a hill called “Sokva” (Tangkhul village name) and shouted at the top of their voice and then proceeded to Hunphun. At Hunphun Mavailung they made fire and divided themselves and settled in different hills.

The other party who had moved towards north-west, grouped together at Makhel and from there they dispersed to various directions. Every Naga tribe agreed and traced back their origin of dispersion to Makhel. From Makhel, they moved to different directions and some groups came to the present Tangkhul hills. Many Tangkhuls, especially of the North-East and west claimed their origin to Makhel. The southern Tangkhul Nagas are believed to belong to the groups who moved towards the east but one should keep in mind that all these waves of Tangkhul migration were from Samsok or Tuangdut.

Oral traditions say that the Tangkhuls settled for sometimes in the valley of Manipur. They strongly believed that the stone that still lies near the Gauhati High Court in Imphal might be a proof of Tangkhul settlement in the valley in course of their migration. There is also a stone monolith in front of the old palace of the Maharaja of Manipur, i.e. Kangla. It is claimed by all the Nagas that these stone monoliths were erected by the Nagas to prove their settlement in the valley. Various Tangkhul elders narrated the same stories and said that the Tangkhuls could not settle in the valley forever as they could not endure the swampy climate of the valley which was infested with malarial mosquitoes.\footnote{Interviewed with various Tangkhul elders and leaders.}

The Nagas naturally erect stone wherever they go in order to mark their sojourn and settlement. Basing on these views, songs and stories narrated by old people, they believed that their settlement for some period in the valley is acceptable.

**Naming of the Tangkhul Tribe:**

According to T. Luikham in his book “Wung Tangkhul Okthot Mayonza,” he said that in Manipur Puran, the Tangkhuls were known by the name Thusukla. L. Ragui in a seminar paper stated that the Tangkhuls and the Meiteis were brothers. During the migration period, the elder brother went up to the hills where as the younger brother stayed back in the valley of Manipur. The younger brother (Meitei) called his elder brother’s land as ‘Tadaki Khul’ and as the time rolls by the word Tadaki khul changed into Tangkhul.\footnote{L. Ragui – Seminar paper on “Tangkhul Mingpho kala Tangkhul Tui Haokaphok” sponsored by Tangkhul Intellectual Forum, 10-8-85, Pp.1-2.}
There are various theories regarding the naming of Tangkhul. Firstly, one group of Meitei say that ‘Tadadu Tamna Leikhare’, means elder brother lives far away. So in course of time, his land or khul came to be known as Tangkhul. The second theory says that when the Meitei king visited the Tangkhuls, they could not give according to what he demanded due to language intelligibility. The Meitei thus remarked as “Lamsidi tangkhareda’ means the commodities are scarce in this land. From this very word tangkhareda came the corrupted word ‘Tangkhul’. The third theory says that the people of this land were fond of using spears. On this context, the Meitei named this very particular tribe as Takhul and in course of time Takhul changes into Tangkhul.47

Y.K. Shimray wrote that in between Ukhrul and Somra, there is a high hill range called Nongpok Thong by the Meitei. At Nongpokthong village, there was a born artist named Tangkhu. His dances were very famous in those days that even the Maharaja of Manipur invited him and made him one of the dance masters in his kingdom. Tangkhu’s dance was known as ‘chingkheirol’ from the fact that he came from (Chingkhei means north east of Imphal). Pandit Atombabu Sharma in his book says, “From the very ancient times the devotees in Manipur have been practicing the chingkheirol dance in initiation of Usha. The brief fine dance of Manipur originated from that. The founder of this original dance ‘Chingkheirol’ was no other than Tangkhu and the children of his community came to be known as ‘Tangkhul’ after him.48

47. Ibid.
Another version of Tangkhul says that they were originally called Hao. The Tangkhuls always say hao-hao while dancing, singing, working or pulling heavy things and later on this very tribe came to be known as Hao.

There is also a story that the Hao people were living in the Zing Zing valley in China. But after some years, they were overpowered by some other tribes and since they did not want to be under the control of other community they made war with them and came out from the area. Ronra was their leader and they passed through the deep gorges of the Himalaya Mountains and after a long sojourn they reached Myanmar valley and all the seven clans of Haoyur settled in Samsok. From Samsok, they migrated to the present land. The land covered by Hao people were called Haorei. Before 1000 A.D., the Haorei Long (assembly) was called Haolong but the then chief of Hunphun (Ukhrul) changed Haolong to Somkong long. It is also said that there was also a busy Hao market in Somsai near Hunphun. Even the Meitei King visited the market to purchase Hao Salt. In those bygone days, Challou machi (salt) was very popular since it was of a higher quality compared to other types of salt available in those days. The Meitei king proposed to open a market. Accordingly, Meitei Maharaj and Hao Champhungwo made an agreement and set up a salt market at Challou.\footnote{Aja - November 16, 1995.}

According to K. Envey a Tangkhul elder, the original name of the Tangkhul is supposed to be Hao. He justified his opinion by citing some examples which we still called to-day. We still differentiate the different
varieties of buffaloes as Hao sie not Tangkhul sei (buffalo) Meitei sei, Kabo sei (Meitei buffalo and Kabo Buffalo or Burma). Indigenous Tangkhul agricultural tools are called haotin (spade), hao khāi (knife), Hao ngaha (axe), etc. Other than these we call hao shimsak (house building) hao kasathei (chilli) haokhai (fish) hao kuiret (Hao hair cutting) styles.  

We never termed as Tangkhul kuiret (Tangkhul hair styles) even in songs and in naming any living or non living objects etc., we didn’t find any reference to Tangkhul. It is a new appellation and the name is believed to be a modern innovation. Meiteis still call all tribals as Hao but in my opinion, Hao cannot be referred to all. According to the oral traditions and stories, songs, etc., it is referred to Tangkhul and to some allied Naga tribes.

The third theory is given by T. Luikham. According to him the correct name of Tangkhul is wung. In support of his theory he has given reference to some old original songs. The song runs as –

Meitei lava sitmahui
(Meitei lady worries)

Wungram kasangla leishiya
(wungland riches and wealth love to leave)  

According to the story, during the war between the Meiteis and Ava (Myanmar) the later at one time defeated the Meiteis and many Meiteis ran up to Wungram (Tangkhul land) for shelter and hiding. During their stay,

they worked for the Tangkhuls to earn their daily food. They stayed in the land of wung for two to three years and many young people started making love. It is told that some Meitei young girls married to the Tangkhuls and some returned back to the valley. The above song is a reference of their heart rending departure.\textsuperscript{52} The second song runs thus:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Paoyi Shongphung ngashan saya,}
\textit{Longva kharangshung,}
\textit{Kharangshung kharangshung}
\textit{Phungcham Paoyi ngazekka;}
\textit{Ngazek, ngazek wunram vapaiya”}\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

**English version** –

\begin{quote}
\textit{Paoyi shongphung famous for riches}
\textit{Gave feast to people, erect stone monolith}
\textit{Erect erect stone monolith of fame}
\textit{Phung cham Paoyi talked about}
\textit{Talk, talk of him till Wung ram’s corners.}
\end{quote}

In the early days, the northern Tangkhuls were called the Luhupsas by the Meiteis for being incessantly engaged in feuds and for wearing a peculiar helmet. On the other hand, the south eastern Tangkhuls are known by the name ‘Tongkhul’ which means people living on the hill tops and on elevated land.\textsuperscript{54} The Tangkhuls in the south are diminutive race who wear the hair

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\textsuperscript{52.} Ibid, P. 19.
\textsuperscript{53.} Interviewed with Stephen Angkang, Ex-Tangkhul Long President and Social Worker, Lungpha Village (Ukhrul) Dated 6-4-1996.
long behind and on the sides. The Luhupas on the other hand cut off all the
hair except a band across the head from the brow to the neck about two
inches in breadth, in which the hair is left about an inch and a half highly
and so trained as to stand on end. This gives them a wild expression which
their more stately form greatly enhances.  

The Myanmarese name of the Tangkhul is ‘Akhangba.’ This is
especially referred to the south-eastern people who settled in the areas
bordering Myanmar. The word ‘Akhang or Akhangba’ means people who
practice Jhumming or shifting cultivation. The south-eastern people do not
have wet terrace cultivation like the northern Tangkhuls. The Myanmarese
till date called Tangkhul Akhangba (south-eastern-Tangkhul).

As discussed earlier, no one has yet been able to give the correct and
acceptable theory of the origin of the name Tangkhul as no authentic written
record is available. However, basing on the rich folk songs, stories, legends
etc. the modern Tangkhuls are trying to find out the correct theory of the
origin of the word Tangkhul.

**Tangkhul Language:**

According to Sir, G.A. Greirson and some linguistic experts, all the
languages of the Nagas belongs to the Tibeto-Burman groups. “*The Tibeto-
Burman family comprises a long series of dialects spoken from Tibet in the
north to Burma, in the south and from Balkistan in the west to the Chinese
province of Szechuan and Yunan in the east*”

55. Verrier Elwin – *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* – Oxford University

Gian Publishing House, Delhi, 1903, P. 165.
William Pettigrew, the first missionary to the Tangkhuls and the first to write Tangkhul Grammer and Dictionary confirmed Sir, G.A. Grierson's view that Tangkhul language is a part of the Tibeto-Burman group. The dialects of the Tangkhul village differ from village to village. There are about 250 villages in Ukhrul district and according to that we can confirm that there are more than 200 Tangkhul dialects. We can develop a standard language by using all the appropriate words and uses. Though the dialects differ from village to village, the neighbouring villages can converse in their own local dialects with a slight change in tone and accent.

According to the Tangkhul legends and story narrated by old people, the Tangkhul too had their own script as claimed by all the Naga tribes. The Tangkhul script was written on the animal skin but the script got lost. It is said that the script was eaten by dogs or might have lost during their long sojourn of migration or might have been spoilt by nature. This theory is supported by the fact that in one of the three stones erected in Makhel called Tamaratu (stone of dispersal of the Nagas). "The two centurians in Makhel related to me that there was some writing too, but nothing is now visible having been washed away by nature."\(^{57}\)

Taking the evidence of the writing on the stone of Makhel, we can support the popular beliefs of the Tangkhuls that they once had their own script. Secondly, if the Tangkhul history holds true that they come from the Far East, they might be having their own script.

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So far, the Tangkhuls have no script of their own. However, an old Tangkhul man called Ph. Maiwung, a Senior Pastor innovated a script of 48 letters and 10 numbers based on the Tangkhul culture and forwarded his proposal to the Tangkhul Literature Society and to the public to recognise as Naga Script. According to him, it took 25 years (1962-1987) to complete his work. So far, no tribe or society has come forward to own the new script as their own.58

The letters and their sound of the Naga scripts are given below:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{H} & \text{O} & \text{A} & \text{B} & \sqrt{59} \\
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10
\end{array}
\]


59. Ibid., P. 153.
Religious Beliefs:

The Tangkhuls had their own religious beliefs but it was somewhat in the form of animism. They also believed in the existence of a supreme Being as the creator of this universe. They called Him ‘Kasa Akhava’ or ‘varivara’ in Tangkhul. “Traditionally Nagas were described as animists; that is, they believed in the existence of spiritual beings inhabiting the natural world. In fact, this is only half true because they also believed in gods. The spirits and gods have a particular relationship to the Naga concept of ‘fertility’”60 The Tangkhuls also believed in other spirits which they found to be lurking in almost all the places. The majority of the spirits were believed to be malignant. There are spirits in the forest, in the streams, in the bushes, in the fields and of course in the village itself. They can ruin crops, bring disease, famine, cattle epidemics, death of infants and expectant mothers and other such misfortunes.61 In order to prevent from such evil occurances, they tried to appease the spirits by offering animal sacrifices and by performing certain rituals. They also believed in the existence of individual household deities who helped in the welfare of the family and individual lives. The paddy fields deities protect and bless the crops. To appease those spirits, they often did sacrifices during the time of seed sowing, harvesting and in any festivals for crop productivity and for granting good fortunes.

**Kind of Gods:**

The gods worshipped by the Tangkhuls are: (1) Phunghui Philava (goddess of crops and wealth), (ii) Shimlu Kameo (god of family wealth and property), (iii) kokto (god of the land of dead). The last one is considered as the most dreadful god by the Tangkhuls.

Every Tangkhul family had their own sacrificial altars called ‘Hanphut’ in Tangkhul. At these altars, they made all their sacrificial offerings. No one was allowed to touch and defile it. As such, no one dared to defile or trespass it for fear of any evil consequences upon him. At this altar, they offered food, drinks and sprinkled chicken’s blood for protection from any danger and to bring peace and prosperity to the family. “*It was this God rearing quality and their faithfulness and obedience to the revelations of God through natural omens that made the Nagas good citizens of the old village states.*”

The Tangkhuls had strong belief in the existence of life after death. They called this ‘Kazeiram’ (land of the dead). Here Kokto is the king of the dead. They believed that in that land of the dead there is an exact repetition of the life in this world. So, after death the soul goes to Kazeiram. According to their beliefs life after death, they presented gifts and many material things to the deceased person which she or he will be meeting in the next world, Kazeiram. When a relative is dead, a present was brought to the dead person to give it to his family member who died earlier and was already in the land of the dead. This theory was proved by the unfulfilled

love story of Maitonphy and Shimreishang. There was a strong belief among the Tangkhuls that the two young lovers were united in the land of the dead. The union of their lives in the next world was seen through the performance of a magical device called ‘Khongtheng Khayang’. The village priest took a huge wooden basin and filled with sanctified ritual water and after performing certain rites, the family members or friends were allowed to watch the water inside the basin. To their surprise, they could see the two lovers being together in the land of the dead.

There is another process of visiting the land of dead by the spirit of a living man known as Kazeikazang(Necromancy). This “Necromancy helped the village priest or the witch to travel in spirit to the land of the dead and meet those who had died”63 This mysterious visit to the land of the dead is called “Kazeikazang”. Till date, it is rarely practised by some non-Christians.

The Tangkhuls strictly observed and followed taboos, gennas and traditions. They also believed in omens, dreams and signs shown by performing certain rituals like Harkho Khayang, Kappa Khayang, Chiklen Khangana, etc. They also believed the Supreme Being called Kasa Akhava as the sustainer and judging God. It is the common practice among the Tangkhuls that whenever a critical case or dispute arises, the case is settled by swearing in the name of the Supreme Being.

However, all these practices and beliefs are totally stopped and abandoned after Christianisation. The new faith brought total change and transformation in all spheres of Tangkhul lives.