Every civilization, of any people, is derived from the environment that exists in its surroundings. The people who live in the hills and the plains have their own distinct livelihood, and mode of cultivation according to the climatic conditions and especially depends upon the nature of the soil and availability of water in the region. The land around Ukhrul and its adjoining areas are surrounded by hills, rivers, streams, vegetations, etc. which in a cumulative way had shared in shaping and moulding the life of its inhabitants. So, there developed geo historical forces which the people in the region felt enormously. Economic structure plays an important part in the life of a community. It is the main factor for raising the sound cultural and political consciousness of the people. The region of Ukhrul traditionally has been a land of tribes who are today assimilated into the fold of the Nagas. Tangkhuls being one of the oldest groups in the
region had largely contributed towards the stabilization of economic forces in the region.

We, as human beings, are engaged in various kinds of activities that pertain to production, exchange or distribution and consumption of goods and services. With the evolution of every human society and in its changes, the nature of economic activities also changed which gradually become more and more complex. Ukhrul region is not an exception to these changes in evolution. However, the agriculture activity has as ever remained the primary activity of the population although the land available for it was scarce. Besides agriculture, their economy pertains to domestication of animals, craftsmen, artisans and others who carried out economic activities like trading, crafting, sculpting in wood and stones, carpentry, gold and silver smithy, weaving in cotton, silk, woolen fabrics, salt-making, peasantry, etc.

Land is believed to be more important to the tribes inhabiting this region. It is the bedrock of tribal economy in the hills, and it is the mainstay of their subsistence. On land they grow their food and rear their herds of animals, and from the forests around their villages they gather their housing materials like timber, bamboo, medicinal plants, collect their
firewood, fuel and go for hunting. Since the tribes live on hill tops and hillsides they look for secured areas. Normally they avoid hillsides for the simple reason that on account of erosion and fast blowing winds with rains it may become dangerous to live on the slopes. Therefore, importance of settlement on plain or plateau land is keenly felt in the hills.

In the region of Ukhrul indiscriminate slashing and burning of forests, popularly known as jhum, in order to obtain cultivable land for a short period and repetition of the same action has led to frightening soil erosion. We have noted, during our visits to villages that the population is supported mainly by agriculture in some parts of Ukhrul and its adjoining areas.

Agriculture depends on climate and soil. It is the top soil, a few centimeters in thickness that supports the crops. If the same is eroded, raising of crops becomes difficult. Hence, the people in this region have a great stake in the presence of soil and its maintenance. People are aware of the negative impact of jhum cultivation upon the region yet it is practised even today.

In nature, long periods are required for soil formation while soil erosion takes place because of misuse and unplanned preservation of natural resources. Soil preservation has to be consciously effected for it
does incalculable harm to economy of the village and the land. Accelerated soil erosion leads to the formation of rills, gullies, ravines and ultimately to bad land. In Ukhrul region soil erosion of serious proportion is going on. But what has it to do with historical understanding?

In our historical understanding of any civilization, we have always attempted to understand the nature of the causes of evolution or decline or its subsequent rise and dissipation of its culture, migration of people or establishment of new settlement areas. Behind all this we try to find out the man made causes and its natural causes as well. Anything worth historical recording needs explanation and a thorough understanding of all parameters that might have caused the progress or decay. Study of soils and its erosion allows us the opportunity to understand a village or adjoining territories for production of crops and survival of the various species of life in the region. Any change in soil composition leads to variable changes in its ecology.

Soil erosion as such means the loosening and removal of soil from its previous resting place by the action of water, wind etc. It has rendered large tracts unproductive and even larger tracts are threatened. Soil is the end product of weathering of rocks which is a continuous process in nature as much as the decay of vegetation leaves, stem or grasses of various kinds
decay to make humus soil. The depth of soil varies from place to place depending upon a number of factors—slopes of the land, temperature, rainfall and vegetative cover. It is well known fact that the soils are very thin in the mountains as all the exposed slopes are susceptible to serious sheet wash or gulling.

In the region of Ukhrul there are two types of soil: a) soil found at the place of formation and b) the secondary deposit of soil which is transported away from the original place by rivers, wind and heavy rainfall especially from along the slopes on the hill side. When the rivers reach the plain the stream flow slackens and the load is dropped and gets deposited in their beds\(^1\). This increases the flood danger and induces shifting of course. The top soil in case of steep slopes is very thin, which in case of plains especially flood plains and deltas are very thick. Even the deltas are one of considerable thickness\(^2\). In areas of limestone, basalt and serpentine which are comparatively harder as in case of khangkhui, Hungpung and Shirui hill region\(^3\). The slopes are the steepest. The topography, in this part consists of steep convergent and divergent slopes. This is because of the

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1 S.A. Ansari, some aspect of the geography of Manipur, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1985. p. 5
2 Ibid p. 52
3 Ibid p.52
fact that the mountains in the eastern sector of Manipur are young tertiary folds, composed of unconsolidated sandstones, shale, slate, etc\textsuperscript{4}.

In general the hills are separated by deep narrow valleys. The higher ridges exceed seven to eight thousand feet (2133.6 to 2438.4 mts) above mean sea level\textsuperscript{.} Almost all the forest land is in the mountains. The forest areas are relatively protected against soil erosion in spite of the steep slopes. The foliage of trees and the grasses that grow underneath protect the land from erosion and absorb water and reduce the carrying capacity of the running rain water.

The economy of Ukhrul, in the hills is primarily based on agriculture, wet terrace and shifting cultivation. Deforestation followed by erosion of soil affects all the three types of cultivation. Further, it leads to soil exhaustion and loss of fertility in the hills and occurrence of flood in the plain. Heavy deposits of sand and silt in river beds of Irlil, Imphal and Thoubal have been noticed in the past to have caused a rise in flood levels. The hill- rivers, therefore, are a potential danger to agricultural lands, e.g. the Thoubal river\textsuperscript{5}.

\textsuperscript{4} E. Amhad. Soil erosion in Indian (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1973.p.17

\textsuperscript{5} It originates in the high ranges near Ukhrul, has a course of 105 kilometres and a drainage basin of 1050 sq. Km. it has a steep gradient and brings huge load of sediments to imphal river and is also responsible for causing devastating floods.
It is to be noted that in this background the men in the hills depend exclusively on the exploitation of what the environment offers to them from the land or the forests. The return that he gets after hard labor in the fields hardly justifies the labor that he puts in, for instance, slash and burn involves hard labor. Hundreds of trees are to be cut to clear a hectare of land. This he does with axes and daos. The timber could not be transported to other places for sale in the absence of a good transport system. Hence, people used it for whatever they could make and the left over were simply burnt. Trees of high timber value were thus destroyed. For months together when we stayed in the hills for data collection, we observed that cultivators remained very busy preparing the land, loosening the soil, making furrows and drilling holes for laying seeds. Heavy rain washed the soil down, sometimes along with seeds or standing crops. Then there were oil creeps and landslides. The land in Ukhrul is subject to such sheet wash and gully erosion that in spite of ones best efforts to keep the soil intact by plugging the gullies or keeping logs along the path customs to arrest sheet wash, the soil is lost in two to three years. Even if the peasants succeed in retaining part of the soil, it loses its fertility and productivity. This land therefore remains no more fit for cultivation. Hence, the need arises to search for newer land for sustenance.
In case of terrace cultivation there are certain compulsions as it is very difficult to terrace the field. The land must have gentle slope and soil should be deep. There should be some source for irrigation, either from some natural spring or mountain brook from where water source can be diverted to the narrow elongated terraced fields. Repairing of bunds and maintenance of soil fertility is no less a problem. It is convenient to prepare terrace fields in wide river valleys along the gentle slopes where plots of bigger size could be carved out and draft animals could be used. Such types can be seen enroute Khangkhui cave in some villages along the road. Some of the best type of terracing can be seen in Ukhrul and its adjoining areas.

In Ukhrul, we have found enough evidence of the fact that in the not so remote past this region had experienced strong glaciations in and around the region of the Shirui hill. Evidence of geological expressions can be seen in the narrow riverine valleys making a ‘V’ formation and the collection of boulders, pebbles and moraine type stones at some places. The valley form becoming wider upward contradicts the form developing under normal erosion in operation. The presence of features like horn, arête, corrie U-shaped valley, hanging valley and serrated ridge at higher elevations in Shirui region lead but to one conclusion that there existed glaciers in this part. Even today, on queries being asked to the villagers
about snow or frost formation in this part, they informed us that in the months of December, January and February one can see thick frost getting accumulated on the surface before melting away in mid or late February. Shirui peak shines like snow in winter. As such the region must have experienced cold climate and glaciations in the past. The region must have become habitable much after the period of glaciations.

There are three types of ownership of land found in this part of the region. The land use is for economic activities which in turn makes the society prosperous. In this background we see the three different types of ownership – personal land, the land which is utilized by different villages of a particular clan for burial or grazing purposes is clan land and the land on the fringes of villages where there are forests providing the villagers with firewood, roots and herbs as also hunting and fishing is the village land property. The Tangkhuls, the Nepalese and the Kukis all have great affinity for their land especially their personal lands. The individual’s status in society is determined by his possession of land. While the burial grounds and the pasture are in all cases the property of the clan or the tribe, the forests on the periphery of each village is the property of the village. The tribes in Ukhrul and its adjoining areas who practice jhumming hold

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6 It originates in the high ranges near Ukhrul, has course of 105 kilometres and a drainage basin of 1050 sq. km. it has a steep gradient and brings huge load of sediments to Imphal river and is also responsible for causing devastating floods.
the agricultural land in common and the village council allocates to each individual family a plot of land for its use in each clearing. The family enjoys it as a private property till it moves away or declines to use it for a fresh site. It is in this background that the use of land can be understood within the Tangkhul society. The basic need of the society was to regulate land use for better economic productivity. It is in this context that we analyse the Ukhrul society and the practices of the people. Above all we have to remember that the village remained always as a unit, and in case of the Tangkhuls every village was ruled by Awunga, the chief or the King.

The economy of the Ukhrul people is mainly based on agriculture. It is the main source of their livelihood. Since time memorial, we know, that rice is the staple food of the people in this region “in it wealth is reckoned and from it he obtains his food and his desire”\(^7\).

**Agriculture**

The expanse of cultivable land on the hill slopes in the form of terrace cultivation against the course of nature can be understood in the struggle of the hill people of Manipur which was carried out for thousands of years. Forest and waste land have been retreated, recovered and again retreated, in endless cycles, before his hoe. For the Tangkhuls agriculture

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\(^7\) J P Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1973 p.107
profession is a tradition. The virgin land was made for the purpose of 
production as permanently cultivable as well as for shifting cultivation. 
Thus they made the virgin land into terraces and paddy was cultivated. On 
the other hand, shifting cultivation too, had its tradition being followed 
from the time of their early ancestors. Much of the land under cultivation is 
cropped once in the summer monsoon as the agricultural operations are 
oriented to the seasonal rhythm as is found all over the country. The 
cultivators took the advantage of such rains and got ready for cultivation 
practicing the traditional methods.

It is not known when Jhumming and paddy cultivation was started 
here but it is believed that the people might have learnt the process at the 
time of their migration or when they had settled down as we have the 
evidence of equipments used for agriculture at the site of Samsok. The 
equipments speak volumes about their agricultural practices in the region.

The agricultural method of the Tangkhuls is of two types – Terrace 
and Jhum cultivation (shifting cultivation). Terrace cultivation is mainly 
practiced in the north western and central part and the jhumming or shifting 
cultivation is extensively practiced in the south eastern region of the 
Ukhrul area. For Tangkhul’s, the cultivation of any crops or paddy is
always preceded by various rites, rituals and offering of sacrifices. They see omen about the coming years for the cultivation of crops. Their belief was that if their Ameoa\(^8\) (gods) didn’t bless them their cultivation would be futile. Therefore, from the beginning of cultivation till the harvest, at every stage they offered and sacrificed rice cakes, rice beer and animals to their god Ameoa to appease him. Festivals were observed during cultivation and even after completion of harvest, they praised their Ameoa for pouring blessings on their crops. They further appeased the Ameoa to guide them in the days to come ahead.

In Manipur several tribes like the Maring, Anal, Lamkang, Kabui, Thadou Kuki, Mao, Maram, Poumei, Thangal and Tangkhul also follow terrace and Jhuming cultivation. Terrace cultivation is built up with great difficulties as in this form the people cut down the slope into the same level. It needs much practical strength and energy. The people build the terrace field in rows on slopes of the hills which can be seen while we travel across the Mao and Maram areas. We can have a vivid view of this terrace field. It is cultivated every year. In the valley almost all the land are plains, so the valley people could easily cultivate the land unlike the tribes who had to do much labor to make the terrace-fields.

\(^8\) Ameoa is the gods whom the Tangkhuls believe.
The Tangkhuls were fighters and warriors since the ancient times. However, women and children couldn’t go alone to the fields without being guarded by men for fear of unwanted happenings in the past. A legendary folktale tells us that a brave and skillful warrior, Saram of Halang told his mother not to go to the paddy field as he was about to go for hunting but without heeding to her son’s advice she went to mow the field. When Saram returned from the jungle he saw Lunghar villager going ho…ho…ing an act of belligerence. He was suspicious and ran towards his field where he found his mother’s body lying in the field. He himself was inconsolable and with great agony he carried home the dead body. He took revenge by slaying the Lunghar villagers. It was the tradition of Tangkhuls to kill and cut the head of humans in the face of Khanai rai\(^9\). He cut the head of more than ten men and brought to his village. Therefore, usually they guarded the women and children if they were to go to field. Thus, the Tangkhul villagers guarded their fields all round the year.\(^{10}\)

Every village in Ukhrul region is dominated by agricultural form of occupation. Ukhrul and its adjoining areas is a fertile place for cultivation of crops. It is fertile to grow different types of crops and some parts of their

\(^9\) Head hunting war
\(^{10}\) Y.L Rolland Shimmi. op cit p. 133.
lands are like the plain portion of Manipur valley.\textsuperscript{11} Terrace farming is practiced in the northern, western and central part of Ukhrul region. The eastern and southern parts of Ukhrul practice shifting cultivation. It was because of unavailability of low plain areas and the fact that it is covered with hilly terrains. In such setting, people of such regions, have always practiced jhumming.

During the course of our investigations we found that among the Naga people the Angamis and the Aos apart from the Tangkhuls practised terrace cultivation. They grow transplanted rice. it is said that the sides of the hills are cut out into succession of terraces built up with stone retaining walls, over which the water from the hill stream is distributed through small irrigation channels. It is from the Tangkhuls that the Angamis had learnt the art of terracing the hillsides, we are informed so.

The method of preparing land for wet cultivation is to dig and build the side of the hill into terraces from 20 to 200 feet broad and sometimes even more than that if the ground was found to be enough for further leveling and extension. The stones taken out from the field while leveling the soil are used to back up the walls of the terraces. In case of lack of

\textsuperscript{11} R.R. Shimray, op cit p. 4
stones the people could back up the terraces from the stones brought up from the river beds.

The terrace farming in Ukhrul largely depends on the seasonal monsoon wind that occurs in the month of May, June and July every year. Cultivation begins to operate during January till the crops are harvested in November. Paddy cultivation depends on the supply of water. Thus irrigation and monsoon both form the backbone of agriculture. The water coming from the small rivers and streams is used for irrigation. Any shortage of water after plantation would affect the harvest return. Therefore, water was properly supplied to the crops till harvested. ‘In the case of villages which possessed terraced fields, we find a mass of customs relating to the equitable distribution of water through-out the terraces. The more powerful villages in the interior of the hills have a large area for cultivation on terraces which are cut out of the hillside and carefully irrigated. Some of the terraces go up the hillsides to a great height, and show considerable skill in their formation. On the lowland which is very productive rice is grown.12

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For manures the Tangkhuls used animal waste, rice husk, dead leaves and plants for maintaining the soil fertility. They also dug up small ponds for keeping fish in the paddy fields.

On the other hand the eastern and southern Tangkhul’s practice shifting cultivation. In this type of cultivation they fell the trees during the months of December, March and April. The dried up trees are burnt down. After that the field is cleaned for sowing seeds. The process is carried out till the crops are harvested in the months of October and November. On the same area cultivation could be carried out for two- three years. After that it would remain fallow for not less than fifteen years to allow regain its fertility. The system of Jhum cultivation has many drawbacks. The crop is entirely dependent on the rainfall for moisture. Much time and trouble has to be expended in the clearing of jhum-lands and the amount of land required is very large\textsuperscript{13}. But unlike terrace cultivation, shifting cultivation has advantages of cultivating different types of crops like ginger, maize, pumpkin, and other vegetables, millet, garlic, onions, potatoes, cucumbers, gourds, etc.

It has been observed by the elders that jhumming and paddy cultivation has its beginning in the earliest times and it is learnt that the

\textsuperscript{13} A. Mema Devi. Socio-economic History of Manipur 1709-1826. P. 129
paddy cultivator and shifting practitioners are from the same family. However, they have different modes of cultivation. The geographical locations and their topographies generally reveal the people’s habits of cultivation. Later, the shifting cultivator also took to paddy cultivation though with much complexities. Those who practiced paddy cultivation saw shifting cultivation as of wanderers without any permanent settlement. Thus both groups of communities preferred their own way of living and occupation. However, we could see some disadvantages in those communities where jhumming had been practiced. Large portions of deforestation of hill tops and slopes contributed to undesirable ecological changes. These in turn caused drying up of water resources and destruction of tree saplings which were young even animals and birds perished on account of fire.

**Irrigation:**

Irrigation system has been a tradition ever since the cultivation of paddy began. They did terrace cultivation near the river or stream to have an easy access to water.\(^{14}\) There were some paddy fields that depended on rain water. These were cultivated at the time when it rained. Without

\(^{14}\) A. Mema Devi, op cit p.130.
proper Irrigation system the paddy crops could not grow well, and the yields were less.

The water from the river is taken out by blocking it with wood, rock, and mud which is known as **Raka Kashao**\(^{15}\). There are some places where it is easy to take out water from the river or stream while there are some others where it is difficult to take out. It depends on the level of the height and the level canal with the river. The water is brought through canal to the paddy fields and it continues till the harvest is done.

The terraces are watered and irrigated through channels which bring water from distant places even nearby streams and rivers. Most of the terrace fields may not have their own channel so the neighbouring terrace owners also dig and clean the channels for running water smoothly without diverting the water from the paddy fields. The idea was to get water from the terraces above and allow the water to irrigate the field below. Step wise the water flow was regulated from the top till the bottom ones were also integrated into the process of sharing water which had been stored in terraced fields above – terrace being so carefully graduated that the water may flow from terrace to terrace round the whole spur.” Often water was

\(^{15}\) Blocking the river water to make access to canal.
also carried from one terrace through a hallow bamboo passing over other terraces and channel in between.

**Tools and weapons**

Today in the light of the excavations carried out in the Khangkhui cave, we know that the people were food gatherers in the past. However, hunting cultures often co-existed and interacted with other cultures especially the agricultural communities. These patterns of interactions are discernable which had continued throughout the prehistoric period and continued also into the historic period. In the later period agriculture was practiced. Many tools were invented which were need based. Sharp edged crude stone tools have been discovered and even today they remain as important tools being used in this region.

The tools and weapons used by the people were very primitive in the early days. They used more or less the same weapons which had been brought by them at the time of their migration. Spades, axes, daos made of iron were used extensively. It is mentioned in the oral stories that the Tangkhuls during their journey belonging to first group cut down **banana** and **Polar trees**\(^{16}\) so that the followers could recognize the way that they had taken. It is believed that iron was brought from the Chinese territories. Many tools and weapons were discovered from the site of

\(^{16}\)Information received from Phanitphang Zimk, elder of Matiyang village on 20. Oct. 2009.
Samsok by Khaiyar of Lunghar village. The finds have included spears, knifes, bangles, necklaces, etc. The tools used for cultivation were not only made of iron but also probably of hard and strong wood and animal bones. The scarcity of iron was faced till about 1900 AD as is told by Yarho17. Since agriculture and head hunting were the main practices among the Tangkhuls in Ukhrul, weapons and tools were made of good quality. But after their migration to the present place there was no invention of new weapons. The Musket was used by the Kukis but the Tangkhuls had no knowledge about the musket.

In face of these difficulties the people of Ukhrul region practised the art of making their own agriculture tools and implements which were simple and required less skill in making them. e.g. they made rake (karphang), plough (langon), sledge (kangpot), axe (ngaha), smooth arrows (mala), the toothed arrow, sickle (changkui), fans for winnowing the chaff out, threshing mats, and spades of various types.

**Important Crops**

Paddy is the important food crop for the people living in Ukhrul. It is the staple food of the people since the early times. The rice of the valley is sticky and soft. The hill people cultivated varieties of rice which also

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17 Interview taken with the elder of Halang village on 11. June. 2006.
included the best rice, **Utaipi**. Rice is grown in almost all the parts where Tangkhuls dwell and reside. Most of the villages have paddy fields in the region and these are cultivated every year. (see figure 13)

The important crop next to rice is Maize. In every Jhumingly-cultivated land one will find Maize cultivation. It is one of the best suited land for cultivation. It is grown everywhere. Maize production is high in the region. Besides maize, wheat, pulses pea, beans of various kinds, grams, soya bean oilseeds, linseed, mustard seed, tobacco and cotton is grown.

Important crops like, millets, cotton, ginger, chilies, Umarok, potatoes, cabbages, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, spices, tomato, yam, cucumber and other varieties of vegetables and fruits are also grown. Some of the fruits produced in Ukhrul are mentioned in the table 2.

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18 Soft rice cultivate in the hills of Manipur
Table 2

Area and production of fruits in Ukhrul for the years

2004-05 to 2006-07

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<td>Area in</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pine apple</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>1,435</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>1,546</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Papaya</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Peach/Pear/Plum 98</td>
<td>6,125</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Guava</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jack fruit</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lime/Lemon</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>3,226</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>4,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>1,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Passion fruit</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>3,039</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>5,482</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>6,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Other fruits</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>1,380</td>
<td>1,132</td>
<td>2,604</td>
<td>1,132</td>
<td>4,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different varieties of fruits like Pear, Mango, Lemon, Gooseberry, Strawberry, Jerry, Mulberry, Fig, Groundnut, Walnut, Banana, Papaya, Peach, etc. are cultivated in this region.’

In every Tangkhul village banana is cultivated and grown. During our field work we found it being grown in all the villages, for example, in
Nungo Ato, Nungo Aze, Changa, Apong, Hangkaw, Leiting, H Godah, L Khunthak, Alang, Loushing, Khonial, East Tusom, Patpung, Grihang, Patpung, Kumram Nongman, etc. Probably, the Tangkhul inhabited area has one of the most suited environments for banana. (see table 2)

Orange is found in, Ningthi, Kamjong, Kongkan Lakhan, H Thana, Grihang, East Tusom, RamPchoi, Ningchou, Meiti, Kangpat Khunou, Choro, skipe, Kangpat Khullen, Khonglo Manthouram, Khamlang, Mawai, R Khunthak, Reisangphung, Tarong, Nambashi, Kashung, Kangkum, Wanglee, Ashang khullen, Nongman, Khampat Grihang, Bungba, villages.

Passion fruit is cultivated in Kaziphung, T. Chanhong, Tashar, khambi, Phalang, Maileng, Shakok and almost all over Ukhrul we find these fruits. (see table 2)

Lemons are found in Kachai, Hoome, Chamu, Matiyang, Nungou, Nongman, Khayang, Phungha, etc. Now-a-days Every year Lemon festivals are organized at Kachai village. (see table 2)

Mango fruit is found in Nongman, Maileng, New Canaan, Wunghon, Leiyaram, Mayophung, Riha, Thawai, chadong, Lamla, Nongdam, Laingangching, Risophung, Maileng, Sorde, Sorbung, Kumram, Nungdam Lophung, Leishiphung, Thangchingpokpi, etc.
Pear is found in Halang, Phungcham, Hunphun, Shiroi, Nungbi, Talu, Ngainga, etc.

Guava is found almost everywhere in Ukhrul region. It is cultivated throughout the region. (see table 2).

Peach is found in plenty in Ukhrul. In most of the paddy fields we find these fruits. Even, it is abundantly found in some parts of forest. It therefore, reveals a queer mixed farming tendency among the Tangkhuls-vegetables and fruits along with paddy are cultivated on the terraces. Even fishes are reared in small aquariums and also by digging out small ditches/wells within the paddy fields. Paddy and fish were grown or cultured together because some people had terrace wet rice fields with perennial source of water supply. Paddy cum pisciculture therefore, flourished. The farmers earned their money to meet their daily expenses by selling their cash crops like potato, maize, soya beans, cow beans, cabbage and other vegetables. The fruits also backed up their income especially the different types of citrus fruits including papayas, oranges and lemons.

**Trade route and commerce**

Since the ancient times Ukhrul has had a trade relation with other countries and neighboring areas. It is being alleged that the iron, sea shells
and goods were imported from South East Asia via Burma. The Tangkhuls did not have the knowledge of extraction of iron from the ore. We believe that the iron was imported from other countries with which the ancient Tangkhuls had trade contacts. ‘The traders in the valley from whom the crude metal was purchased were obtained by them either from the Kakching- people or from the plain areas’¹⁹. Besides, sea shells were commonly used by the Tangkhuls indicating that the Tangkhuls had trade with other neighbouring countries especially some who had sea shores.

The goods and weapons were brought from Samsok. The mode of payment in the early days was exchange through barter system. It is also mentioned by the Greek historian that the region had trade relations with other countries and it exported goods to them.²⁰

There was an organization for the well being of the neighbouring villages to carry out trade which also made rules and regulations for the villages. These organizations played an important role in the socio-political and economic lives of the people. ‘It is notable that there is no evidence of any tribal organization or of combination except among the Luhupas or Tangkhuls’²¹.

¹⁹ T.C.Hodson, op cit p.48.
²¹ T.C.Hodson, op cit p.113
This organization fixed marketing day once in a year at Somsai. On these days various kinds of goods were brought and exchanged for other commodities. Every village was represented by one member each to discuss issues that arose within the villages. They formed the executive members of the organization. They tried to solve every problem amicably. The rules and regulations laid down were strictly maintained and violators were severely punished. The members representing villages at present in such organizations are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tengyung</td>
<td>Halang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Raikha</td>
<td>Phungcham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Manori</td>
<td>Shirui</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Khaoka</td>
<td>Lunghar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maringthei</td>
<td>Longpi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hamsham</td>
<td>Paoyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Shangren</td>
<td>Kalhang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Thuishi</td>
<td>Ngahui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ngumsan</td>
<td>Marem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These villages are located in the northern part of Ukhrul and are still in existence. All neighboring villages met at the centre of Somsai for meeting and trade activities. It is a few kilometers away from the main
town of Ukhrul. Villagers brought their goods, handicrafts and domesticated animals to these market places and exchanged them according to their needs. These villages accepted rules and regulation made by the members of these organization. Coercion was unknown for any transaction. It was based on the acceptance of both the owners of goods. All the transaction was made through barter system. On the day of marketing head hunting was strictly prohibited. Thus the people were free to move on that particular day.

There was no such specific class as traders. All those who were able to make essential goods were considered as traders. In other words, those people who could make or produce more than their needs had some surplus which they could sell or exchange. For instance, the Kamo were fine workmen of canes and bamboos. Raphei produced salt and Kharao produced cloth. In the olden days barter system was the only mode of exchange among the Tangkhul\textsuperscript{22}. Thus, trading was a necessity rather than meant for gaining profit.

We know that in their early days life was very insecure, there was always a fear of losing head in their paddy fields, in the forest, on the way, in short everywhere. In fact, the head hunting practice prevalent among the

\textsuperscript{22} Z.V. Freepaothing. Social change among the Tangkhul Nagas. P. 31.
Tangkhuls and its neighboring people had been a great hindrance in the way of their living economic life, for there could be no’ free movement anywhere outside the village gate for earning livelihood.\textsuperscript{23} However, The inter village wars didn’t deter the villages from carrying out trade relations among their neighboring villages. Through proper understanding and tolerance for each other trade relations could be established although items for trading were meager.

In our research we have gathered many facts about the Tangkhuls and about the difficulties they had in traveling to Imphal valley continuously, sometimes even for two days on foot carrying their loads from the central region of Ukhrul. Some other remote areas would take more than three days of journey. Their main trade was based on their basic needs and survival food items such as agriculture products, Nungbi pottery for cooking, salt and handicraft products for varieties of purposes. They bought or exchanged their products for cloth and iron- agriculture tools and salt at Imphal.

The trade route that was used by the Tangkhuls depended on their relation and familiarity of the place. There was as such war with every unknown inhabitant of the villages surrounding them. Their acquaintances

\textsuperscript{23} N.G. Mataisang, op cit p. 32.
with the other people hugely depended for their safety and survival. The trade relation was built up according to their relationship. During the course of interaction with the village chiefs we learnt that the Tangkhuls didn’t travel long distances for their trade and commerce. They had trade relations with only few villages in their vicinity. They mostly remained confined to intra-village trade though Inter village trade was also practiced.

The trade routes of ancient times in Tangkhul areas were Samsok route in bordering areas of Myanmar. After settling in new areas the trade routes were developed as interconnections between different parts of the region. People from Chamu and Khayang, the easternmost parts of Ukhrul, had to cross the Angoching Range to enter Myanmar. After the arrival of the British, roads were made which went through the villages of Gamnom-Pushing-Mapum,-Zingshui-Ronshak-Sahamphung-Roni-Matiyang-Chamu-Kachauphung (border) and after crossing the boundary enter Myanmar which was known as Homilan. These border villages had long association as the residents were brothers and/or sisters at the time of their origin. Quite interestingly, we mention here that the secession of Tangkhul Somra Tract to Myanmar never kept the two brothers apart from commercial interactions and intermarriages.24 The relation existed among the border area before and after the British arrived.

24 P. Peter, op cit p. 205.
in this area. The Southern Tangkhuls had close relations with the Meiteis because of the location and ties in trade and other activities. No doubt the Tangkhuls had close affinity with the Meiteis in political, social and economic fields as they were in proximity and had maintained matrimonial relationships since the past. History has recorded the fact that the Tangkhuls and the Poireis lived together in good relations and had social interactions till the time of the Poirei king Tabungba (c.1403-1415 AD). Since the death of Tabungba a wedge between the Poireis and the Tangkhuls had developed and they began to live in isolation. Thus, the social intercourse between the two, was on the wane till Garibniwaz, when a complete prohibition on inter Meitei-Tangkhul marriages was proclaimed.

**Soraphung, Wahong, Tusom, Challou, Poi, Huishu, Khamason** and **Sihai** were the border villages with Myanmar in the north of Ukhrul. The border villages had trade relations with the border villages of Myanmar **Somra, Somra Phungtrat, Layi, Panshat, Mayarlung, Kongkailong, Leishi, Ngachan** and **Hangkok**. Again these villages had trade with the interior part of Myanmar which might have led to interactions with the Chinese in the Myanmar region.
The relation between the Tangkhuls and the Meiteis is quite old since closeness has existed since the time of their migration. These villagers had migrated from **Tasom** whose village draws their migration from **Phungcham**, the oldest village in Ukhrul. The **Somra** people migrated with them and carried the Tangkhul (Luhupa) custom, culture and tradition of the occupied land for generations. The **Tasom** of the northernmost part of Tangkhul, had good relations with the Somra Khullen and Phungtret of Mayanmar villages. Therefore, these villages are known as Tangkhul Somra Tract. They established trade relationships.

In the olden days the trade was only with the neighbouring villages due to difficult terrains and lack of proper transport system. Since the terrain was rugged and the people who desired to sell their products had to carry loads of their goods on their back or on beasts of burden, it was rather tedious and wearisome. The producers of goods had no incentives as such they did not produce more than what they needed. Moreover, after passing through rugged hills, rivers and uphill paths carrying their goods the traders and merchants in fact got more discouraged when their profit was found to be meager, they had every reason to give up and so the economy never gained momentum. In fact, when the goods brought to the market remained unsold then the traders in order to lessen their load while

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25 P. Peter, op cit p.205.
returning, way back home, sold them even at lower prices and thus suffered loss. This also became a de-motivating factor. The Tangkhul economy therefore, remained at a rudimentary stage. Ukhrul region therefore, suffered and could not take off like the Imphal Valley.

**The Market**

The Market sites were known as ‘Leingapha’ in Tangkhul dialect. There was no permanent site for marketing but common sites were opened for exchange of goods. In the middle of the 19th century, copper coins were in use among the southern villages who were settled near the foothills of Manipur valley\(^{26}\). The size of the coin was smaller than the size of the present coins of rupee. In the upper Iril river basin, there is a market place, which the Tangkhuls and Meiteis respectively called Sinakeithel /Sanakeithen.\(^{27}\)

**Professions**

The most important profession among the Tangkhuls was cultivation. They were adept in cultivation of various types of crops that their fore fathers had brought with them at the time of their migration. Other than cultivation they also knew the art of weaving and other

\(^{26}\) Ibid. P.72.
\(^{27}\) Y. L. Roland Shimmi, op cit p. 87
handicrafts such as making baskets, hao-plates, cups made of bamboo for drinking water, wine etc. They had expertise in handicrafts. All these products were made of wood and bamboo. There were blacksmith, potters, basket makers, etc. Hunting was part and parcel of Tangkhul’s lives. Apart from these that reflect upon the activities of the people in this region we found that for economic needs they also practiced forestry, dairy (rearing of animals), fishery, procuring wool, cotton threads, dyeing and weaving clothes, making shawls.

There were some people who were adept in their own fields. They were given preference according to their efficiency. The people who were smoother in handling axe or daos were given preference when they had to make use of it. The shape and size of the basket or the products that they made was exact, executed with finesse, if the people who were adept in that work were involved. Thus the people attained efficiency in their own fields and established higher standards in their profession.

In the region of Ukhrul and its adjoining areas forest products had great economic value and so it formed a principal source of revenue. The forests provided firewood, building materials, barks and leaves for being used as drugs and dyes. Barks and leaves were also used as colors in dyeing threads and in other handicraft products made especially of canes.
and bamboos for making them colorful. During the course of our visits to the forests in the eastern parts and our talks with the villagers, we found that the people valued the forest products not only for the meat of animals but also for the tusks, horns, plumes and feathers, hides and skins for decorative purposes. The people earned by exporting or bartering agor, teak, uningthou, timber, sal, firewood, etc. because of the fact that the forests generated lot of income. Some people got engaged exclusively in timber and forest products. Forest has always been considered as wealth-generators and so it was preserved properly. There were zones in the forests which were declared as protected forests or sacred forests. For the preservation of forests a special law called “Meiyan” was enforced in which any person who set fire to the jungle would be fined in accordance with the Tangkhul customary laws. Deforestation was strictly prohibited as the trees in the forests had much economic value.

During the course of our interactions with the chiefs and common villagers we could see the importance of canes and bamboos as source materials. We could see baskets of varying sizes, range and numbers. They were used for containers of crops and other household goods and were also used as packages for carrying luggage and merchandise- husk rice, clothes, firewood, food, etc. The basket especially for carrying firewood is called “sopkai” in Tangkhul dialect. These are rather loose baskets with a broad
bottom and more broad at the top. Some baskets which were meant to be carried daily were made neatly with colourful designs. Some baskets were made in an “open lozenge shape or hexagonal crossed, warped and turned at the top and at the bottom”. The Tangkhuls made baskets and containers in different sizes and designs for storing rice, pulses, seeds, etc. Some are very large with covers which are generally kept inside the house. These large containers could keep 10-60 tins of paddy. Smaller baskets which are used for storing rice are called “Luk”. These are woven in the twill, check or wick pattern and stand with their printed lids or even without lids. Some baskets of twill pattern are used for storing and mixing and straining rice beer or other kinds of liquids. Baskets were therefore, of great use in the Tangkhul economy and society. The Tangkhuls made a special type of container which served as their boxes for keeping their clothes, ornaments and other articles. It is made of cane and woven neatly. It had lids which could not be opened easily. Every family, we are told, had 2 to 5 such boxes. As such there was good demand for such boxes. These boxes and containers are called ‘changkhong’ in Tangkhul. It is a little smaller at the bottom and wider and larger at the top. It normally, stands with the help of lids. Other types of containers were made for keeping fish, dry meat, dry fish, etc. A special kind of container was also used by women who kept their yarn or needles for stitching purposes. These were called “Lankhao”.
At the time of marriage a special box for carrying goods, was made which were water and airtight, twilled patterned baskets were made of cane. Various types of mats for different purposes were also made of canes for drying paddy, chillies etc. and for thrashing paddy after harvesting. These baskets and mats were often made of canes and split bamboos in the twilled pattern. These were also woven finely. Plaited headband (kashai) for carrying loads are usually made in check pattern from finely shredded bamboo thongs\textsuperscript{28}. Bracelets, necklace, armlets and leggings were also woven from dyed cane or bamboo. One also finds decoratively designed tables of canes called “Liphan” which were used as dining tables for the family.

In the past, as nowadays, bamboo and cane handicrafts were a flourishing professional materials used widely by the people of Ukhrul. The villages were known for their specialised finished products. The people, especially the cane and bamboo workers, had artistic taste and revealed technical knowhow of a superior kind. Cane and bamboo mats with different designs and motifs were made and sold in local markets or villages. But due to lack of modern technical knowledge the village industry could not improve much, but the designs made revealed lots of artistic values.

\textsuperscript{28} Ninghorla Zimik, op cit p. 96.
We have already stated earlier that the forest products were much in demand, especially timber which was used in the past as now, as pillars, poles, cross beams and walls for house construction. Fencing too, was carried out with timber planks. We also learnt from the villagers that the timber of good quality was used to make exquisite dishes, saucers, plates, cups, husking or pounding tables called “shimkhur”, liquor vats, bamboo cups and other useful utensils. The carvings on wood are usually of conventional designs. The best wood-carvings were seen on the village gates, in the “Morung” and in the front of the house of a rich man or warrior. The instruments with which the artisans or the carpenters worked with were daos, chisels, axes and edges. The Tangkhuls carved out human heads, mithun, buffalo heads etc. which symbolized acts of bravery. Rich and poor, all decorated their house with designs and carved-out figures. However, the designs of the rich men differed from those of the poor and common villagers. We observed during the course of our field data collection that the rich men’s houses were decorated with mithun and buffalo- heads and sometimes, human heads as well. Sometimes heads of bulls were also displayed. In the past, this art of decorating pillars at homes was very popular but its practice gradually declined. Villagers pointed out to us that one of the reasons for such a decline was the suppression of the primitive culture of head hunting and Christianity, which did not allow such acts.
Besides these, we also found that the Tangkhuls had worked upon materials like ivory, horn and bones of animals. These were practiced at a small domestic level. The people made bracelet, wristlets and even anklets which had designs. They also made musical instruments from bamboos, wood, animal horns and dried gourds. Thus we find that in the Ukhrul region people were versatile and carried out their professions keeping in mind the use of natural products which were found in their area.

‘The village blacksmith was an institution throughout this area, and he forged the spears and daoos which his people required. The manufacturing of spear was a specialized industry which was carried on from beyond the boundary’\(^\text{29}\). Warfare- weapons were also made by the blacksmith. It is mentioned that in the Southern part of Ukhrul, the Tangkhuls used poisoned arrows\(^\text{30}\) for its lethality and effectiveness.

We found that among the villagers blacksmithy is popular. Iron object like spade, knife, hooks, daoos, sickles, spearheads, etc. were produced at the village level. This enhanced the utility of the village smith who contributed towards the self sufficiency of the villages. With the passage of time cheaper agricultural tools might have reduced the viability of the village-economies but the fact remains that various tools and

\(^{29}\) T.C.Hodson, op cit p.11.  
\(^{30}\) Ibid p. 36.
implements manufactured by the village blacksmith must have improved the quality of life of the villagers, warlords and chiefs in their surroundings.

The potters, like the village smith, must have also contributed enormously in the economy of the Ukhrul region at the village level. The art of pot making in the region of Ukhrul was confined to some villages like Longree, etc. which is situated North of Ukhrul. Pots of different sizes and shapes were made for various purposes - e.g. for preparing rice beer, water containers, cooking pots of several shapes and designs, cups, bowls and other containers.

There were some groups of people who were engaged in making pot. ‘Three clan of Hundung and the village of Nungbi made earthen pots from beds of clay close to the village’.31 The site where the Hungpung villagers made pots was at the place where the Mini-secretariat building has been built at Ukhrul. It is known by the name ‘Hamleikhong’. The name was given to the place crushing stones as the materials for making pot. The same artifacts for crushing the stones for making cooking pots are found near the Tourist house of Ukhrul. Even today, some the stones can be seen still lying at the site. Thus, we know that the Tangkhuls knew how

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31 T.C.Hodson, op cit p.47.
to make pots by themselves since the early times and they evolved as expert potters.

**Nungbi** was also one of the centers for making pots in the Tangkhul area. The pottery-making was one of the most important professions for the people of Nungbi. They supplied cooking pots not only to the Tangkhul region but also to the regions outside Ukhrul. Pots made at Nungbi reveal an age old tradition (see fig 14) as these were used for cooking curry, preparation of wine, storing of water, etc. But nowadays they make it in various types according to the demand and attractions that prevail in the markets. It is made up of **Leishon** (serpentinine rock) and **Leikon** (reddish colour clay). It is found at Leikok, Kaphangran and Sarasen. It lies at the northern side four kilometers from the village. The villagers brought the materials and dried them in the sun or on fire. When it dried up they used mortar to pound them and bind the materials with **Shimkhur** before making it into powder. The powdered clay and rocks were mixed by putting water. Then it was shaped according to the type that the potters wanted to adopt. When the pot attained a desired shape it was burnt with fire. When the pots were red hot, the potter rubbed it with leaves of the **Shahi- Kuhi** tree to give them a shining luster. This made the

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32 Mortar for grinding paddy.
33 Keisham shantibala Devi. Collection of Museum artifacts. P. 48
pots hard and gave them a glittering look after which it was ready for sale. The potters made pots like **Hampai** for cooking meat, **Zamsham** for making rice wine. These were and are in great demand even today.

![Image of pottery making](image)

*Fig. 14: Shows the Making of Nungbi Pottery*

In the ancient days, **Marem, Razai and Challou** would go to other villages for exchange of rice for salt. They had ponds of salt. So they manufactured salt from the brine- spring water which was exchanged for other items as per the needs of the people. ‘The process of salt making provided employment to a number of villagers in the North East of the Tangkhul area. The brine wells were close to the beds of rivers which were of considerable depth. Their existence was determined by watching the movement of the cattle whose fondness for salt was well known. The cattle
normally licked the raw salt which existed in its natural form. The raw salt was refined through a process and exchanged. Thus, the salt wells were also a meeting place for traders, especially men from the Naga Hills’\textsuperscript{34} in the adjoining areas of Ukhrul.

Weaving was and still is one of the main professions of the Tangkhul women since the ancient times. The art of weaving is one of the important occupations which come next to agriculture in any Tangkhul society\textsuperscript{35}. It was mainly practiced in the western part of Ukhrul in settlements such as Shongran, Phalee, Talui, Teinam etc. In the art of weaving as practised by the Tangkhuls one finds that the thread which they used in the past was coarse, perhaps of jute which was found in the jungles. They also made yarn from the barks of tree. During the period of head hunting collecting jute yarn or fibre from the jungle was a risky job and many people had lost their lives while doing so. They made jute fibres into yarns by using some primitive tools and sometimes, they pressed it and rolled it on their thighs to make it finer and stronger than balls of finished yarn which were made and used later on the looms. Sometimes they dyed the yarns with colors which they had prepared from leaves, black mud and other jungle fibres. We are informed that when their field works were over,\

\textsuperscript{34} T.C.Hodson, op cit p.48. \\
\textsuperscript{35} A.W.Pamleihor. Political socialization in Ukhrul District. (case study on Tangkhul Tribe 1947-1990). P.8
people from ‘Kharao village went to buy raw cotton from Khaorui people. Later on the Kharaos started growing cotton on the hill slopes. It diversified their activities. Cotton balls were dried in the sun. Seeding out cotton seeds was called ‘Sanglei’. Later a sitting device called ‘vatak’ was used- it was a wooden machine like a mangle. “Now a days a little seeding machine consisting of two wooden rollers geared to revolve in opposite directions and turn into a crank is being used.”

We learnt from different sources that the art of weaving was solely carried on by the women in the society. A girl is laughed at and considered unfit if she did not know the art of weaving. In the past when barter was practiced the shawls or skirts woven were exchanged with foodstuff or other materials. The villagers of Talloi, Somdal, Ngainga, Phalee, Teinem, etc, are known for quality weaving and their products are still in great demand.

The various types of products that they made have been identified as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Local names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Shawls for men</td>
<td>(i) Thangkang kachon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Luiram Kachon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Haora Kachon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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36 J.H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas, Mc Millan co- ltd, London 1921, p.60
B. Shawls for ladies

(i) Khuileng Kachon

(ii) Luiram Kachon

(iii) Chonkhom Kachon

(iv) Pheiphir Kachon

(v) Raivat kachon

C. Skirts for women

(i) Phangyai Kashan

(ii) Seichang Kashan

(iii) Zingtai Kashan

(iv) Thangkang Kashan

(v) Chonphor Kashan

As in the past so even now, weaving has great economic value for the people. The Tangkhuls earned their livelihood by selling or bartering their woven shawls and skirts (kashan). It boosted their domestic income. Weaving and other forms of handicrafts at the home front were of great value to the village economy. When there were less work in the fields the villagers got engaged in handicraft works and weaving. While weaving was female dominated act handicraft was the area for the male members of the
society. Thus, there appears a division of labor. Rarely did women engage themselves in handicraft-business. One can see the expertise that men had developed in the finished products. Similarly, the art initiated by women in their woven-products was of higher level. Mainly bamboo and cane were used in basketry. Baskets were made for a variety of uses. It remained restricted to man’s domain.

The Tangkhul young men and women during their early days used to gather in a big house/dormitory known as Morung. This is called ‘champo’ among the Lothas, Arichu among the Aos, ‘Dekha Chang’ among the Sema nagas, ‘Kichuki’ among the Angami Nagas and ‘Longshim among the Tangkhuls. This dormitory- culture was an integral part of the people in the adjoining areas of Ukhrul. Here, they learnt how to weave and other arts which could provide them opportunities for pursuing occupations, later. Weavings of various kinds, embroidery and design work and the handicraft works were taught in the dormitories at night. They were well skilled in embroidery works and were also well acquainted with the cloths for both men and women. Here, men learnt the art of wielding weapons to fight their enemies and discipline themselves. It was the institution of education for both, men and women. Various professional trainings were also imparted. Both, the boys and girls learnt

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37 R.R. Shimray, op cit p.199.
various techniques so that they could become self sufficient and self-dependent one day. We were also informed by several villagers that in morungs normally women were not allowed to enter as that act may bring bad luck to the clan in general and the village in particular. The villagers were categorical in stating that the morungs were organized on the clan system. What is important here is that the morungs are also known as the ‘Batchelor’s House’ and are commonly found among the Kukis, Chins, Mishmis, Mikirs, Lushais, Abors, Garos, Singphos tribes of this northeast region. It therefore, strengthens our opinion that there exists many common bonds amongst the people of this region and that they got diversified on grounds of searching for political identities of their own. Assessments made through factors of historical geography to great extent not only support our views but also give credence to it.

Hunting was not only a game but also part of their life. They were fond of meat therefore, they hunted throughout the year. Since, by and large, the people were experts in hunting, after their works or during the break they went for hunting animals or birds in the nearby woods and so it became a part of their daily routine in games and profession as well.

Domestication of animals was practiced from the very early days. Their dearest and most precious animal was buffalo. Rearing of animals is
also another important source for generating income from cattle, pigs, poultry, dogs, cats, etc. In the past the best of the stock were killed during sacrificial rituals and festivals.\(^{38}\) The people lived together with their animals and birds in one house. The first room was for the domesticated animals. These animals were sold subsequently when they were of age or consumed at home if the situation was compelling. It occupied the centre stage for trading.

Maintaining livestock or rearing of animals was an important economic activity among the Tangkhuls and the other people residing in this region. Moreover, since the climate was good and congenial for good grazing grounds and pastures, keeping cattle was profitable. Cows and buffaloes were kept in plenty. In the past, man’s richness was counted not by money but by animal-wealth, paddy and property. Sometimes, these animals were used as ‘money’, as commodities of exchange in barter mechanism. Even when fines were to be paid and/or certain disputes needed to be settled animals were used, especially mithuns or the buffaloes.

We also observed that during the slack agricultural seasons cattle are let loose. The buffaloes and mithuns are kept in a protected jungle, in herds, in a semi wild condition. This indeed was a vedic practice. They are alternately fenced and the owners checked the groups of cattle. The cows

\(^{38}\) Ninghorla Zimik, op cit p.88.
and the bulls were also domesticated by the inhabitants of this area. Even the poor reared poultry, and piggery, for their economic values. Buffaloes and bulls are counted as strong animals for pulling carts and even dragging timbers from the jungle or for ploughing the fields. The cows too, were used for providing milk and beef. Besides these, cats, dogs, hens, ducks, etc were reared at home. Dogs were used as house-guards and hunting. Sometimes they provided meat also to the family. Normally, a hunter was accompanied by his dog when he went hunting. The dog that hunted animals was known as **Safa**. The dog would chase the hunted animal and when the animal couldn’t run, he would bite the animal to death and retrieve it for his master. In some cases when the animals were chased out from the deep forests the hunters would kill those animals that run out from the forest. Here the dogs played a crucial role and customs provide for them a share of the quarry. These dogs were cared for by their owners and were considered very precious.

We were also informed that in the past often bull fights were arranged by rich people in the region. The owner of the winning animal felt supreme over his rival. If the animal got killed during the fight there was no compensation, it was all for honor and prestige. Even cock fights were arranged to entertain people.

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39 A dog that hunts wild animals is known as safā
The practice of pisiculture is very old and in the past fish was for home consumption only as they could not get enough surplus fish for sale. The economy of the local people got a boost whenever, they had surplus fish to sell. It is said that the people in the valley thronged to buy the fishes which had been brought from the hill areas as they were tastier. However, since the people used poisoning of fish in the water of the streams, many small and young varieties got decimated. Fish eggs were also destroyed as such this method was uneconomical and unethical.

**Labor**

The Tangkhuls were and still are hard working people. They did not depend on others for their survival. Economically they were self sufficient as they produced varieties of crops for their own survival. There was an absence of forced labor from the ancient times. They were conspicuous by the absence of laborers. The Tangkhuls never took a war captive from the defeated villages, but accepted their submission. They left only with the heads of those killed and the booty that was collected from the vanquished. Thus, we learn that the Tangkhuls labored by themselves for their own and clans survival and didn’t depend on others, for help.

They used animals for ploughing the fields. Buffaloes extended tremendous help to the people during cultivation in rainy season. The
Tangkhuls used to carry loads and fire wood on their person. The labor of many people could be done by one buffalo at once (See fig.15) because of its raw strength that is why the animal was well looked after by their owners and preserved.

![Buffalos with load carrying device.](image)

*Fig 15: Buffalos with load carrying device.*

Tangkhuls of the same age usually form a society, Yarthot, wherein the members come together to act as a member of the labor-force in the fields. They would do the work the whole day, till evening. While coming back they would chat, joke and laugh together on the way which may lessen their tiredness. It was a joy for them to go to field together and work vigorously. Including boys and girls no one wanted to be at home while all their Yarthot went to field. It was the duty of every young man to help his
parents in their fields. Much preparatory work had to be done before the seeds were sown. The hillsides had to be Jhumed, i.e. burnt down, the earth dug up and the soil turned and made even. The father, mother, son, if grown up, and a couple of little children, if any, in other words, virtually the whole family, would have to work on the fields for days. To get the work done quickly, all Morung members worked in turn on the field of one of them at a time. This practice is prevalent even today.\(^{40}\)

Among the Tangkhuls certain economic tasks are chalked exclusively for men while others are meant for women. The men perform usually labor intensive jobs. Women did light work patiently. Women looked after the kitchen, fetched water, in the fields she transplanted paddy, practiced weaving, cooking, etc. ‘The delicacy of women and their biological traits does not usually permit women to perform like men in many cases. This was well understood by the men in the Tangkhul society. And so apart from household activities, sowing and any fertility rituals were the main concerns of women’.\(^{41}\) While men were in charge of the heavy work, like warring against the enemies, extending protection from the wild animals, and works that needed more strength. The small girls at their young age would look after the smaller children, cook food,

\(^{40}\) M.Horam. op cit p. 71.
\(^{41}\) Sothing, W.A. shimray, op cit p. 87.
fetch water, and guard the house when the elders would have gone to the field during the day.

With the coming of the British the modern roads took shape. The roads constructed in the interior part of the hills were undertaken at the time of First and Second World Wars. Here, the British had persuaded the village chiefs and the work was carried out with the help of the villagers. Against some villages force was used when the people refused to obey the orders. From the Labor corps organized with the help of William Pettigrew in Tangkhul region many Tangkhuls went to France as luggage carriers of the British. At first the villagers refused to obey the order of the British as they had the impression and misconception that the place where they would be going was a land of no return. Therefore, William Pettigrew had to work upon them with great effort and persuade the village chiefs and ultimately many of them went to France. The party was led by R. Ruichumhao and S. Kanrei from the Tangkhul side. They agreed to send their villagers provided the Christian leaders should take care of them. Thus a Labor Corps was raised to 1000. The British were helped at the most difficult time. Many people died on the way to France and also while returning. But in return the laborers didn’t receive any kind of assistance neither for their service nor for their kith and kin of those who had died on

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42 Forty years in Manipur Assam, on account of the work of Rev. & Mrs. William Pettigrew prepared by William Pettigrew, editors Jonah & K. Mahangthei. 2000
the way. Thus, they were only remembered by the family members who told their sorrowful stories that their brother and/or grandfather had gone to France during the 2nd world war. The people of the Ukhrul region had thus suffered under the British.

House construction was another field which boosted economic activities as materials had to be brought from different far off regions, in case of constructing the chiefs’ house. The Tangkhul houses were made up of wooden planks. The roofs were covered mostly with thatch. In some cases the rich and well to do family covered the roof of their houses with wooden planks. The roof covered with wooden planks is known as **Langchengshim** and the roof covered with thatch is known as **Ngashishim**. The floors were made with mud without putting any cover. **Lengchengshim** were the most complicated. It needed considerable labour to complete one house. **Lengchengshim** were built by rich men and noble families among the villagers. The front post of the house was engraved with heads of buffaloes, spears, birds, human heads, etc. ‘The occupant of Lengchingshim are from noble origin viz. amei-achon. The distinguishable features of Lengchingshim are the arch thick plank protruding above like a horn known as Lengchengkui and broad wooden front posts’. The Tangkhul’s house- carvings with different motifs on the crossed wooden

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43 Sothing W.A. Shimray, op cit p.65
projection - stand for signifying achievements in their society. In making this type of house all the villagers took part, unitedly, and the owner of the house had to provide food and wine.

The Tangkhuls made houses for themselves as well as for their domestic animals, storeroom and granary. There was only one door in front and the members went inside from the first room. The first room was occupied by the domestic animals and was called **Yamkhup**. It was also used for husking the paddy and keeping the domestic animals like pigs, fowls, etc. which took rest in the night. Here, the paddy mortar known as **Shimkhur** was kept and it was used for pounding the paddy. They also kept skull of men, and animals in this room. The second room was meant for the kitchen. It had the hearth and cooking was done in this room. The hearth consists of three stones erected at an angle with a space to place a pot on the top. Between the three stones, firewood was inserted, fire was made and food was cooked. They also slept near this hearth for warmth of the fire. All the family lived and slept together in this room. Bed was made out of one big tree and placed on the side of this room. This bed is known as **Bedkhok** \(^44\) (see fig. 16). They used firewood for cooking and the bed for sleeping or resting as the case may be.

\(^{44}\) It is a bed carve out from one tree.
During those early days wood were found in plenty as they lived in the jungle. In the kitchen smoke chimney was unknown, nonetheless the rooms were not smoky as innumerable holes in the walls and the thatch roof easily allowed the escape route. Fire was kept burning day and night. It kept them away from cold and kept them warm. On the top of the hearth they made Phungshar to dry the rice and other items like chilly, meat, etc. It was made with bamboo and cane like mat. Pongrum is the third room and is meant for storeroom. Here they keep wine and rice bear. They also treat this room as a granary with big baskets for storing grains.

Fig. 16: Shows Tangkhul Bedkhok (bed)

45 Sothing W.A. Shimray, op cit p. 65
Medicinal plant

The region of Ukhrul is well known for herbs and medicinal plants. From several areas these medicinal plants used to be collected by the village medicinal practitioners, Maibas and Maibis for treating common illnesses of the commoners.

We are aware of the facts that in every society the treatment of illnesses was fully developed from the ancient times. They, the medicine-men, knew how to treat different diseases in times of need. From the ancient times they had fully developed traditional ways of diagnosing and cure. The diagnosing of illnesses had a dual determination in natural and supernatural perspectives. The external diseases are attributed to the presence of hot, wet and dry state, etc. These diseases are treated with the indigenous medicine mainly from plants. These indigenous medicines were effective in curing a number of diseases.

In the olden days people believed in the presence of supernatural forces and the evil spirits, sorcery and the concept of an evil eye. The information about the use of these plants was collected from local healers and later their acclaimed efficacy was adjudged by means of experimental studies carried out in animal and men model. These types of illness were treated

treated by the Khunong (Maiba). The treatment is performed through different ritual processes, propitiation, appeasement, etc. The treatment is accompanied by medicine from plant and added magical remedies to cure the illness. The hands of Khunong is so sensitive that their touch can relieve the nature of internal disorder – muscular stiffness, pain in stomach, indigestion, constipation, flatulence etc. the impact of Khunong on the patient was often exaggeratedly pronounced.

To protect from diseases travelers would put their head, customarily, on the ground or soil at the gate of any village if they were about to enter. It was their belief that they were protected in the land from infections of any disease if they did so and paid their reverence to the village deities.

The culture of indigenous medicine was practiced by the local Khunong from the earliest times. The finding of its effect is the same as chemicals used by the modern biomedicines. The need of health maintenance was a necessity for human beings. The young and the old alike, could be infected by disease. Therefore, from the early days the people tried to heal the sickness that attacked the humans in terms of diseases. Thus they practiced medicine to cure and heal the patient in a way that they had learnt through their experiences over the generations.

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47 Interview taken from Ngathaili Khunong of Halang village.
Medicinal treatments were learnt in house through hereditarily acquired knowledge. In the past it was considered an ethical family profession.

Medicinal plants that are found in Ukhrul and are often used by the tribes are discussed below:

**Ginseng plant (Genus Panax):**

Ginsengs are found in plenty in Ukhrul region. It is used for treating many diseases, e.g. Cancer, blood pressure, etc. (Fig. 17)

![Ginseng plant (Genus Panax)](image17)

**Mahorna (Artemisia ambrosifolia):**

After crushing the leaves it is applied on the wounds of the body. The smashed leaves are also applied to abdomen and head to relieve abdominal pain, fever, dysentery, etc. (Fig. 18)

![Mahorna (Artemisia ambrosifolia)](image18)
**Japan Khawo:**

After crushing the leaves the liquid coming out from the leaves are put on the wounds of the body. It is also ground and applied on any cut or wound to stop bleeding. It is also used in treating diarrhea. (Fig. 19)

**Yaingang** (*Curcuma domestica)*:

The stem of this plant is crushed and the juice mixed with honey is taken. These medicines are taken regularly for curing Anemia, Asthma, Paralysis, etc. (Fig. 20)
Hankha (*Adhatoda vasica*):

The gravy of the boiled plant is taken which is good for cough, dysentery, bleeding etc. It is also used as ointment in healing wounds. (Fig. 21)

![Fig. 21: Hankha (*Adhatoda vasica*)](image)

Nana rong (*Musa sapiantun*):

Banana tree is cut off and the juice is used for depoisoning and detoxification of the body. (Fig. 22)

![Fig. 22: Nana rong (*Musa sapiantun*)](image)
Heinou (Mangifera indica):

Mango is used to increase appetite and also in case of pain in abdomen. (Fig. 23)

Champra (Citrus-aurantifolia):

Champra is used for preventing bleeding and cure pimplles and sunburn. (Fig. 24)
**Khamaithei (cucurbita maxima):**

Pumkin seeds when taken orally could kill fluke worm inside the intestine and other organs. (Fig. 25)

**Hanvathan (plantago manjus):**

It is used for treating boils. The leaves were gently warmed by two hands and when it got softened and the leaves released oil after that the leaves were gently patched on the inflamed part.

**Sitapolna (helianthus annus):**

Passion fruit plant is used in treating blood pressure. The leaves are boiled and the gravy mixed with honey is taken. (Fig. 26)
Awathabi (*carpipee papaya*):

The juice of papaya is taken at night for the effective treatment of constipation. (Fig. 27)

Kongreihan (*Centeila asiatic*):

This plant is used for the treatment of diarrhea and dysentery. It is boiled five minutes and the liquid is taken orally with the gravy.

Chanam (*Allium sativum*):

Garlic is used for the treatment of cold, indigestion and skin problem. The raw garlic is crushed into powder and mixed with oil in a spoon and taken. (Fig. 28)
Shiruihan (Menthe viridis):

The leaves are taken orally for curing indigestion.

Touch me not (Mimosha pudica):

It is used for treating piles. The roots of touch me not is boiled and the gravy is put in a basin and the patient is allowed to sit in the hot/warm water. (Fig. 29)

Hui (Ginger officinal):

To get remedy from morning sickness raw ginger is taken adequately. It also prevents from dizziness while travelling. (Fig. 30)
Aloevaera (Aloe barbadensis):

The jelly of the shrub is mixed with salt and it is taken orally to cure ulcer. (Fig. 31)

Wodharla (Eclipta prostrate):

The leave of wodharla is warmly rubbed and it is pasted on the affected wound which stops the blood from coming out from the wound- part. (Fig. 32)

It is not that these plants are exclusively found in Ukhrul only. The idea is that these were abundantly used in families for they were found easily all over the region. These medicinal plants and their curative powers were known to the people through the maibas and the maibis or the Khunongs
Finally, the Tangkhul tribes in this part of Manipur are practical people. They have a distinct attitude towards their economy and life and are geared for producing crops and goods which will secure their future. They worked hard in developing their region for their acute understanding of the region and its geographical parameters. Even the attitude to religion, it appears might originally have been influenced by the sense of awe and reverence, but is now based on the system of barter and purchase which they have imbibed on account of their spatial experiences. So the sacrifices performed by them, as it appears to us, are mostly performed for worldly gains. The agricultural ceremonies and sacrifices are performed with a view to ensuring good growth of healthy crops, preventing disease and failure of crops. Other rites are performed to keep away the evil spirits or to bring prosperity. This strong phenomenon is based upon economic parameters in geographical settings which the Tangkhuls had developed for overcoming the natural barriers in their region.