The objective of my research on ‘Historical Geography of Ukhrul and its adjoining areas’ aims to analyse the forces of geography and history which have shaped the Ukhrul region of Manipur. Ukhrul and its adjoining areas are dominated by different ethnic tribes with rich common traditions and geographical parameters. It attempts to study the region with history. Without geography, history is considered to be rather incomplete for it lacks a vital substance and loses focus in the absence of space. It is important to study and understand geography and particularly environment that influenced the growth of history in this part of Manipur’s landscape-cultures which can be better understood if all of its influences through history were taken into account: physical, cultural, economic, religious, social, political and environmental. Our basic objective has been to understand the varying parameters mentioned above and the forces generated there of which acted as catalysts of social change in this region. It is true that yesterday’s politics is today’s history but when we look into the existing geographical parameters for our analysis, the politics gets reduced and cumulative factors give rise to understand what was happening behind the scene in terms of geo-politics.
The territories of the Ukhrul people, the Tangkhuls include places, rivers, mountains and hills, fauna and flora and the various activities of man. The history of man in several civilisations has flourished in the hills and also along the rivers in the world which they have attributed to their emergence and destruction. So history and geography goes hand in hand as the people without territory and territory without people should not be imagined. Since both are interrelated, the concept of region is one of the most fundamental concepts in geo-historical studies. The attempt to enshrine regions as concrete individual objects has been part of the general endeavour to understand the personality of a region.

The Ukhrul region came to prominence way back in 1919. It was carved out as a Sub-division by the British. In 1969 it was upgraded to full fledged district of Manipur. It is bounded by Myanmar in the east, Chandel and Imphal East District in the south, Senapati District in the west and Nagaland State in the north. The terrain of the region is hilly with varying heights of 913m to 3114m above the mean sea level (MSL).

Ukhrul region has a population of 1,40,946 person (census 2001) and it constitutes 6.02% of the total population of the state. According to the latest population its density is 23 per Sq.Km.
This region is occupied by the Tangkhuls, Kukis and Nepalis. The Tangkhuls have occupied the place since time immemorial. The Kukis came perhaps later. There emerged a constant feud between them to invade each other and witnessed naked raids in the region in the later part of the 19th century. The Nepalis came after India’s independence. Different communities lived together without any problem till recently, but when the Kuki-Naga clashes broke out in the 1990s social parameters changed. To some extent ethnic cleansing was in the minds of the perpetrators of the crime.

The mountain, rivers and their geographical distribution plays their part in shaping the history of the region, apart from the people. Role of the people is immense. The mountain ranges that stretch in the eastern Ukhrul and the Mapithel range of the southern Ukhrul lays emphasis on the history of the region. The Shirui hills have the rare flower of Lily grow which have different stories to tell about its nature, and the myths related with the Tangkhul History. The geographical location provided by these natural products and their socio-economic and political ramifications have imparted the very foundation of the people in the region.

Most of the Ukhrul Rivers, the Chindwin river, the Iril, the Nungshangkong (Thoubal River), the Sanalok, the Tretlok, Maklang,
Rangazak, Challou rivers drain in the Chindwin River. These rivers provide irrigation to the paddy fields of the inhabitants. The Thoubal Dam which is under construction on the river Nungshangkong. It is a multi-purpose project which will enhance the economic activities in both the hills and the valley of Manipur. Useful fauna and flora are found abundantly in Ukhrul and its adjoining areas. It is also rich in herbal and medicinal plants. In general the local medicine man use the herbs available to treat common diseases and sometimes

The Nagas of Manipur trace their origin and history to South East Asia. The migration to the present habitation seems to have been taken place a long way back. The affinity of their old beliefs systems, customary laws, etc. influence in many ways even today. Their mature phase of civilisation too acquire influences from the South East Asia people and the region. The Tangkhul Nagas also have their migration traced to the same route. The take off stage in this case nay be different. However, it needs critical research.

The Nagas possibly had their origin at the same location, as has been made out at Makhel. Their culture, customs and tradition are also alike. Their unity of strength manifested in battles tells an intense history of their interactions and unique culture. The Tangkhuls being a part of the
Nagas are no exception and they had been in war with their enemies at all fronts. They protected their land from the time of their migration and settlement and did not allow intruders. The Mao, the Maram, the Pomei, the Chakhasang, the Phuzuris, the Chin Kuki, the Meiteis, the Maring, the Lamkang, was their neighbours. They claimed to have the same progenitor and the common descendents about their origin from Makhel and in South East Asia.

The Tangkhul villages settled down at different intervals. The oldest settlement has been at Phungcham village as we are informed by the elders in the village traditions. After that the late migratory can be seen in people who went to search out new places and began to settle down in different parts of the Ukhrul region. There are more than 260 Tangkhul villages in Ukhrul. We visited almost 80 percent of the villages and talked to the village elders (see the table on villages and their meanings). The Tangkhul villages have different names and carry different meanings. The village names and border villages are discussed in the IIInd chapter. The important aspects of these villages are that they enjoy freedom. They are by and large freedom loving people. With the coming of the Britishers they were suppressed and subdued and put under one administration. This was a later development. However, the chief remained as the leader of the village
and he had the sole authority to have control over the village. He normally ruled over the village independently, although village councils had existed. His functions and his activities are discussed in Chapter III.

During the course of our survey we found that when the chief under his command won battles, he never conquered other’s territory or subdued them under their control. In the ancient times, there were few or no disputes or wars over the territory. Therefore, the territory of a chief or village had no clear demarcation. The village territory extended up to whatever the villager could make use of the land. The invaders or their forces might be larger than those of the defenders but they fought to their last to save their small independent villages. The external invading forces were strongly protested till death. They loved their independence and did whatever they could to honour and save it for their community. This trait is still a part of the Naga personality. In shaping these qualities the geographical features had played an important role as there exists territories bounded by natural landmarks within which freedom and independence of the tribe grew.

The village lands were under the control of the chiefs. Village sites were properly chosen and village boundaries were well maintained. The Tangkhuls who came to the present area had migrated in different periods
and times. The social information in Ukhrul has been not so recent development as the Tangkhuls have been living in these areas since time immemorial. The Tangkhuls are nature worshippers. They called their god as Ameoa. They believed in His well being, so that He could guard them against danger. They believed their future was foretold or revealed through Kapa Khayang. An oracle in which bamboo was split and its shape and sounds were used to predict whether their omen for the day or for sowing the seed was good or bad. They had full faith in it. They also worshipped big trees and still we can see some of their plantation of trees. They call the tree in the name of person or personal names. Personification of trees as gods, as protectors, was practical. Similar traits can be observed in other adjoining communities eg. Kukis in the Chassad villages but among the Tangkhuls it was more emphatically embodied.

The historical emphasis on geographical aspects or vice versa created more understanding in the study of history in the region. The history is related with the sites and events that took place at the spot. The evolving nature of human civilisation brought changes at different stages in different locations which made it necessary to locate how and where the event happened. The neighbouring villages played an important role in shaping good relationship among the villagers. On the other hand the relationship between the neighbours of villages or regions was found to be
more cordial if there were clear demarcation of boundaries between villages as we found in several areas.

During the course of our field survey we found that the intensity of goodwill depended upon clarity of thoughts and clean steps taken to protect the village people from the onslaught of enemies and animals. The villagers always emphasised on growing trust between villages and also men. The spoken words were more meaningful and were always meant to be honoured and kept by the families, individual and chief alike.

Though the region has mostly hills and the areas between the foothills we find plain alluvial soil which is suitable for cultivation of paddy. It is not exactly known how the cultivation had begun in the beginning. Some historians share their opinion that the art of cultivation was brought from the Khagi (China) or the South East Asia. It is conjectured that even iron implements such as spears, spades, axes, Dao’s etc were an indigenous product. Since there is no trace of extraction of iron in the present habitation is found, it is probable that the iron tools and implement had been brought from other places. Use of iron in Manipur has been a later phenomenon.

Jhumming and terrace cultivation have been discussed in detail in the chapter VI. It is important occupation of Tangkhuls. The Tangkhul of
East, west, north, and south had their different mode of cultivation according to their geographical location. Different professions are also discussed in the same chapter. Aspects such as basketry, blacksmithy, pottery, carpentry, sivermithy and weaving techniques and products are also discussed.

Skirmishes that ensued between several rival groups were often lead to crimes committed by one group or the other. The British also found different villages including villages of the same tribe living in a constant state of feud. Alliances were formed among groups and several anti-people acts were perpetrated which very often led to revenge and even avenging the criminal acts. People never shied from taking revenges as it personified self gory, so the societies were in perpetual tensions.

The social conflicts in the region are discussed in chapter V. Kuki villages of the Chassads and the Tangkhuls villages in the Kamjong area waging waged wars since the 19th century. The Meiteis and the Tangkhuls also did not save themselves from conflicts in the region. Thus the chapter deals with the conflict in the region. The Second World War that broke out did have an effect on the region of Ukhrul. Many soldiers were killed and maimed and many more had suffered. The places where the Second World War was fought between the Elite forces and entente forces in Ukhrul
region are mentioned in several sources. It has a recorded history. In it we find the role of the land features which were actively used for guerrilla warfare.

Some of the locals itself are confused about historical background of their long back existing village and now deserted. It makes the matter worse for there exist lack of materials for writing the geographical history of the deserted villages. The location maps of various villages settled and the deserted villages make it more difficult to sketch out as technically unable to provide. But their history carries different meaning of their existence long back. The deserted villages of the east, west, north and south of Tangkhul villages have a bizarre nature for the families and people left their villages one after another for different purposes. They left the villages for searching a new venture or on account of natural calamities and some for easy accesses to their field.

- Our objective and aim has been to look into the following aspects of adjoining Ukhrull and its areas.
- To explore the geographical locations in relation to history of the people living in Ukhrul and adjoining areas,
- To investigate their Settlement pattern and origin,
• Socio-economic condition of the people, trade relationship and centres of its location.

• Agriculture development and their regional practices in the region.

• To assess the social conflict and assess the regional response to the Second World War.

Apart from these aims and objectives since man’s relations are infinitely more numerous and complex than those of the most highly organised groups there occurs in every problem of history two main factors, variously stated as heredity and environment, man and his geographic conditions, the internal forces of society and the external forces of habitat. Here, we agree that the geographic conditions or elements in the long history of human development have been operating strongly, effectively and persistently. It is in the above content that we also like to assess the truth in statements wherein we find a close association of the Meiteis with the Tangkhuls eg. The Tangkhuls are the elders’ brother of the Meiteis or when it is said “it is believed that the Meiteis, occupying barely 1700sq miles of Manipur valley, all surrounded by hill are the descendents of either Makhalian or Tangkhul Nagas” is justifiable. The Meitei relationship with the Ao Naga is another vexing problem. Our attempt has been to look at such statements with deeper concern and see its existence in
terms of historical interpretation and analysis within a geographic mould or that of historical geography. History and geography manifest the problems of society in many ways. The need is to group the inter and intra relationships of such facts in order to bring out the truth as far as logically is possible. On account of politics and political overviews over a long period in a region the truth gets draped in various myths and legends and gradually becomes obscured. Let us not forget the axiom ‘as with geographical remoteness, so it is with geographical proximity’.

We strongly believe that as the surface of the earth in this region present obstacle, so it offers channels for the easy movement of humanity, grooves whose direction determines the destination of aimless, unplanned migration and whose termini become, therefore regions of historical importance. Along these nature made highways and river valleys history repeats itself. The region of Ukhrul and the history of the manipur’s valley has been one of warring throngs of shifting political frontiers and assimilated races. As a river is a great natural highway every neighbouring group wants to front upon it and strives to secure it as a boundary so do people urge to annex geographical territories which lie as no man’s zone. History and geography are both complimentary and supplementary to each other. That has been our experience during the field survey carried out for our research.
Literature review:

There exists paucity of literary sources, literature on the Ukhrul region. Archeology too has not been able to throw up more materials from the region as such our sources for historical geography in the field of literature or archeology is lacking. However some literature reveals several aspect of this region. Some of them we have reviewed here.

R. Luikham’s *Tangkhul traditional land use system and related custom*, (Published by UDCRMS, 2006) deals with the land system, profession and agriculture of the Tangkhuls. R.B.Pemberton in his work *The Eastern Frontier of India*. (Mittal Publications. New Delhi) writes on the people of Manipur and its geographical aspect and drainage system of the region. Again M.T.Laiba.in his work *The Geography of Manipur*, (Public Book Store, 1992) deals with the minerals and resources of Manipur. Similarly, in T.C. Hudson’s *the Naga tribes of Manipur*. (Low Price Publications. Delhi. 1996) the social culture of the hill tribes of Manipur is dealt with. P.Peter, *Wung Hau Tangkhul* Customary Law, 2004, has dealt with the origins of the Tangkhuls and its topography. Gangmumei Kabui in his *Ethnicity and Social Change*, discusses about the origin of different tribes of Manipur and social changes. Y.L. Roland Shimmi, in his *Comparative History of the Nagas from ancient period*
to 1826, (Inter Milan Publications, New Delhi, 1988) has discussed the social and culture life of the region. Similarly R.R. Shimray, in his *Origin and Culture of Nagas*, 1985 deals with the origin and social culture of the Nagas in general and Tangkhuls in particular.

O.K. Singh. has through his excavations at Khangkhui cave in 1969 highlighted Khangkhui caves. Several myths have been associated with the Tangkhuls and the Meiteis alike about their origin from the caves of Ukhrul. M. Horam, in his *Naga Polity*, (Low Price Publication, reprinted 1992) deals with the social and political aspects of the Nagas with a political approach. William Nepuni, in his *Socio-Culture History of Shupfomei Naga Tribe*, (A Mittal Publication, 2010) discuss about the dispersal of the Naga tribes from Makhel. Similarly T. Luikham, *Wung (Tangkhul) Naga Okhot Mayonza.* (1961) deals with the Origin of the Tangkhuls and their culture. Ninghorla Zimik, in her work *The Tangkhul: A Socio-Political Study.* (M.Phil. Desertation 1988) deals with the social and political aspects of the Tangkhuls. Alexander Makanzie, his work *The North East Frontier of Bengal.* (Mittal Publications, Delhi) writes on the conflict of the region and about the social conflict of the people of the district. Similarly, Sothing WA. Shimrei in his work *The Tangkhuls* (2000) deals with the references on the Social and Political History of the Tangkhuls and their social background, economic life of the people as well.
N. Lokendra Singh, in *The land use system in Manipur Hills* and M.L. Gupta, (Rajesh Publications 2004) deal with the land system and the villages of the district. Khashim Ruivah, in his *Social changes among the Nagas*, gives details on the social changes and relevantly describes the society of the Tangkhuls. Keithellakpam Indramani Singh, in his *Political and Economic changes in the hill areas of Manipur*, has unravelled several factors for the economic and political growth in the region. Stephen Angkang, in his *Hau (Tangkhul) Customary Law*, gives details on the customary aspect of laws of the Tangkhuls. Z.V. Freepaothing, *Social change among the Tangkhul Nagas*, 1999, discusses on the different aspects of the people, migration and society of the region. N.G. Mataisang’s *The Tangkhul society and religion a historical study*, reveal the mystery of the social class and beliefs of the Tangkhuls. A.W.Pamleihor, her work the *Political Socialization in Ukhrul District*. (Case Study of Tangkhul Tribe 1947-1990), discusses the socio-political life and the women involvement in the society.

There are several other minor work which have thrown light on the Ukhrul region related with our topic. Administrative reports have also helped us on regional matter.