Chapter – I

GEO-HISTORICAL SCENERIO OF

UKHRUL

The geo-historical development in Ukhrul region has been one of the oldest in Manipur. It has caves and rock shelters which reveal that settlement of people can be traced to an early period. There exists a symbiotic relationship even today between the caves and the villages which got established in its vicinity. One can very easily discern the old relationships of the people and the new dimensions in the belief system of the existing villagers in land, forests, and natural resources. The people and the region have always thrown up new challenges and responses that have emerged thus far and have remained enigmatic. Our attempt here is to understand that development. A peculiarity of our Manipuri geographical traditions has been its lack of interest in historical processes and sequences, even the outright rejection thereof. One finds an attempt to slough off vital characteristics and undermine existing interpretations or old analytical
viewpoints. However, our research unravels the fact that in several matters old views have continued to stay, unchanged. A little change, and one invites severe criticism. To overcome this attitude of the people educated or otherwise, has been a difficult exercise. Quite often we have had to over ride other’s views in our reasearched data on the basis of reasonings, interpretations and analysis.

It is alleged by the Tangkhul villager and some chiefs that the word ‘Ukhrul’ is derived from the Meitei word ‘Ukrong khun’ meaning “genna post village”. According to oral tradition, in the olden days, when the Meiteis visited Tangkhul villages, particularly ‘Hunphun’ the present Ukhrul District Headquarter, they witnessed a large number of Genna posts as erected in the villages. Hence, they called ‘Ukrong Khun’ which later got corrupted and became ‘Ukhrul’.

Another theory is that when Pettigrew came to Ukhrul, he asked what they called the container of the wine which was commonly used by the villagers and they said ‘Yougi khrung’. From this he called the place ‘Ukhrung’ as it was found in plenty. Later the word changed into Ukhrul. However, the words from which Ukhrul has been derived have different connotations and meanings.
There is no consensus on the origin of the word. However, there is a reference to Sawa mi- kha- rol, which means the people from the khu tribe emanating from Sawa (perhaps an earlier form of Kabaw) valley. Mi-khu-rol could have given rise to the word Ukhrul in the past. We believe that the waves of migrants passing through the region, eg. the Aos, the Angamis, the Tangkhuls, the Leihao and the Mahous must have made their own contributions to allow evolution of the culture of the region especially the erection of genna posts as a cultural factor. The Leihao and the Mahous have been considered as the cognate groups of the Tangkhuls who had settled down in the region and subsequently in the adjoining territories. The Ao appear to be a phonetic variant of Hou. Leihao and Mahou which may easily be changed to Lei-ao and Ma-ao (Mao) respectively. Here Hou changes to Ao. It is therefore that we look upon the Aos, The Maos, the Leihao and the Mahous as belonging to one cultural group – the Tangkhuls, who had been and are the present occupants of the Ukhrul region. So the word Ukhrul might have originated from their linguistics base. It also gives rise to the fact that since both the Tangkhuls and the Porei’s had lived together at a common place, the Kabaw valley, as cognate groups of the Yakkha or the Sykya clan, it is obvious that these groups had common progenitors. W. Ibohal Singh in ‘The History of Manipur’, (p. 110) states that ‘Pakhangba actually belonged to the Sakya
tribe and was born of a Leihou mother.¹ The meiteis themselves claim to belong to the same Sakya clan group. (for details see the History of Manipur, p. 84,ff; 110 ff). So, the two ethnic communities seem to have a common origin. At the same time there exists a common saying that the two communities had emerged from the Khangkhui cave and lived together for some generations before their separation on the banks of the Loktak lake. It is strongly believed that the Angoms, one of the constituents of the Meitei confederated principalities of the Imphal Valley, has its origin in Ukhrul, the Khangkhui caves. They have been also associated with the Angoching at Ukhrul. (See pg. 17)

Prior to the coming of the British to Ukhrul there was no such compact area as the present Ukhrul region or district. Ukhrul as a region of the land of Tangkhuls was first carved out as a sub-division in 1919 by the British. But by 1894 this region had already been organized and demarcated for administrative purposes. This district was created in November 1969 from the erstwhile Tengnoubal district bearing the nomenclature of Manipur East District². In 1993 Manipur East District was divided into two districts Chandel and Ukhrul

The land:

¹ W. Ibohal Singh, The History of Manipur,
Manipur is one of the easternmost states of India (see map Fig. 1). There are nine districts in Manipur i.e. **Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Churachanpur, Chandel, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Senapati** (see map fig.2 & Table 1). The hill area of Manipur is 20,126 sq.km. which constitutes 90 percent of the total area of the state. The density of the population of the hill district of Manipur is 24 per Sq.km. These hill areas are populated by the tribal people particularly the Nagas and Kukis and the central valley region is inhabited by the Meitei communities and their cognate groups.

The area of our study Ukhrul lies between **24.15- 24.45 North latitude** and **48.8-94.45 East longitude**. It has an area of **4,554 Sq.km**. It is located in the East of Manipur, bordering Myanmar in the East and Nagaland state in the North, Chandel in the South, Senapati in the West and Imphal valley in the South West.

It has a population of 1,40,946 (according to 2001 census) which constitutes 6.02% of the total population of the state. The population density in Ukhrul district is 31 person per sq.Km. At present there are six blocks viz. **Ukhrul**.

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Fig. 1. Shows the location of Manipur.
Fig. 2 Shows the map of Manipur
Fig. 3 Shows the map of Ukhrul
Table 1

Area, population, density, sex ratio & Literacy rate in the districts of Manipur and Sub-Division of Ukhrul district, 2001 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>State / District/ sub-division</th>
<th>Area (Sq.Km)</th>
<th>Villages inhabited (in No.)</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Density (in Sq.Km)</th>
<th>Sex ratio</th>
<th>Literacy rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>22,327</td>
<td>2,315</td>
<td>22,93,896</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ukhrul North</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25,151</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ukhrul central</td>
<td>1,525</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>79,191</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Kamjong Chassad</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12,937</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Phungyar Phaishat</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13,293</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ukhrul South</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10,206</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(headquarter), Kamjong (East), Phungyar (South East), Kasom (south), Lungchung Maiphai (West) and Chingai (North). (see map fig.3).

These blocks were created according to the needs and growth of population in the region to foster focused development. In fact there was no such district or block before the advent of the British and the Indian government in Manipur. The Central, the East, the West, the North and the South districts were created when Manipur attained statehood in 1971.
The region of Ukhrul has a mixed population of different communities including the Tangkhuls, the Kukis, the Mayangs and the Nepalis. The Tangkhuls were the first settlers in Ukhrul and in its adjoining areas and thus form the bulk of the population. They are likely to be one of the earliest tribes inhabiting Manipur. They probably had settled in the upper Chindwin Ningthou valley, the Kabaw valley) and only later migrate to the present habitat in the Ukhrul region. The Kuki’s who are inhabited in some pockets of the Ukhrul District perhaps came later and established themselves in several areas in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century. In the bordering areas along Myanmar, there are some villages like Chasad which have been existing since long time back. The Chassads are early Kuki settlements in the area. There were a number of such settlements of the Kukis but those villages on account of geo-politics got deserted gradually. The Mayangs and the Meiteis mostly settled in the urban areas are engaged in business activity. The Nepalis came only after India got independence. It is said that they were brought by those who domesticated cow in this region but later they subsequently established themselves in small pockets. At present few villages of the Nepalis are well settled in this region. So we find a conglomeration of different tribes and ethnic communities in this part of Manipur.
Climate Rainfall and temperature

Ukhrul lies at high altitude (6000 mt above the Mean Sea Level) and witnesses one of the coldest winter in Manipur with an average temperature below 0 degree Celcius to 19 degree Celcius in the winter season. During summer season, Ukhrul has a varying temperature of 5 degree Celcius to 34 degree Celcius. The average annual temperature is maximum 30 degree C and minimum 3 degree C. Ukhrul is situated about 6000 ft (above the sea Level) and is the highest hill station of Manipur. Chilly winter begin from November and continues till the end of February. Occasional snow fall is seen at the Shirui peak during this period. During the month of March and April heavy wind blows in the region and has moisture in abundance. Through out the year it is foggy.

Ukhrul has a sub-tropical type of climate (i.e. wet and mild summer, dry and cold winter). The whole district has monsoon type of climate. During summer season, the district witnesses heavy rainfall between June and September. Since the district is on high hills it is very cold through out the year. Ukhrul is the second rainiest place in Manipur after Tamenglong. Its annual rainfall is 1.763.7 mm. The temperature of the region usually varies between minimum and maximum degrees of 3 c to 33 c. The rainy season begins from June till the beginning of October. (see map fig.4)

5 Designed and developed and hosted by NIC, Manipur State Centre, information provided by Department of Horticulture & soil Conservation. Manipur –tm@ mail. Nic.in
6 Information received from Agriculture Department of Ukhrul on 28, July, 2009.
Fig. 4: Shows the annual rainfall in India in different regions. Manipur has relatively in higher intensity of rainfall.
Soil

Ukhrul region has different types of soils due to its varied ecosystem. The different types of soils that are found in Ukhrul region can be identified as alluvium soil, lateritic soil, Black regur soil and red soil (See map fig.5). Alluvium soils are mostly found on the river banks where rice are abundantly cultivated. Clay soil, black regur soils are found in the forest region.

Fig. 5: Shows Manipur’s geological parameters

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7 Designed and developed and hosted by NIC, Manipur State Centre, information provided by Department of Horticulture & soil Conservation. Manipur –tm@ mail. Nic.in
Geographical features

The land of Manipur has two main relief features i.e. the valley and the hills. The hills of Manipur surround the valley. They cover more than 90% of its land. Ukhrul and the adjoining lands are mountainous, uneven with hilly terrain. In general, the northern and middle regions are higher in altitude while the winding southern portion is lower and more rugged.\(^8\) The rivers rise from the mountain ranges and few lakes are on the top of the mountain which add to its beauty.

Mountain Ranges

The Great Himalayan arms reached Manipur in the form of the mountain ranges known as the **Patkai Range** in Nagaland. These mountain ranges are identified as the lower Himalayas. The highest peak in Nagaland is **Saramati**. It stretches up to Shirui Mountains, Ukhrul, where the branches of eastern mountain ranges spread. The region has forest cover of 288330.98 hectares.

The Mountain ranges in Ukhrul can be broken up length wise into four ranges. Viz. Kachouphung (3114mt), Shirui Kashung (2,835mt), Zingjui matha (2342mt), The Highest peak is the **Khayangphung**

\(^8\) R. Luikham, *Tangkhul traditional land use system and related custom*, Published by Ukhrul district community resource management society (UDCRMS) 2006, p.2
Shirui peak is the highest peak in Ukhrul region. The other notable peak of the area is the Kachouphung Peak (3500mt).

Shirui Hill lies on the east of Ukhrul which can be viewed from the central parts of Ukhrul. This range extends from the Himalayas up to the Shirui hills from where its elevation decreases. The different names given to the mountains and the hills are recognized to which the hills have belonged. Shirui hill is known as ‘Shirui Kashong’ in Tangkhul dialogue. Shirui is a name of the village; ‘Kashong’ means ‘the highest’ or ‘touching heaven’. Apart from its scenic beauty and serenity, Shirui hill is endowed with Shirui Lily which is also the state flower of Manipur. The Shirui peak and Shirui Lily is attributed with many folklores and tales and pride of the Tangkhul community. (see fig. 7)
Fig. 6: shows the famous Shirui Lily Flower

Fig. 7: Shows Shirui Hill
Angoching is derived after the local bird’s name Ango. The Tangkhuls as per their tradition hunt birds and animals. They used to catch lots of Ango birds at this mountain. so they called this mountain as Angoching (‘Ching’ means ‘hill’ in Meitei dialect). Another theory is that the mountain range is called Ango because the Angom tribe occupied the region for sometime and later migrated to the valley. This led to the naming of the range as Angoching. It lies between the boundary of Indo-Mayanmar at the eastern and the southern part of Ukhrul. It is one of the biggest and longest mountain ranges in Ukhrul.

Mapithel range lies in the southern part of Ukhrul touching the Imphal valley. The Mapithel range runs parallel to the Thoubal River on the west and Tayungpi in the east. On this range many Tangkhul villages settled. For example, Lungphu, Shingta, Marao, Shingkap, Tangkhul Hundung, Itham, etc. This range provides immense materials for economic purposes. The exploitation of natural resources have led to the development in Ukhrul and its adjoining areas.

Khayangphung extend to the border of Myanmar. On the north of Khayangphung lies Shirui hills and on the south it runs parallel to the Angoching Range. Locally it is known by the name Khayangphung where in Khayang is the name of the village and ‘Phung’ means hill or

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9 Langzar Zimik elder of Chammu village.
mountain. The area of the land belongs to the Khayang village. Therefore, the name of the hills came to be known by the name Khayangphung. It lies in the easternmost part of Ukhrul District border ranging with Burma.

Zingjui Matha extends to the extreme northern hill that runs towards the Jessami Village, parallel to Rangazak River, on the western side of the hills. Zingjui Matha is derived from the word ‘Zing’ which means sky ‘Jui’ means high, ‘Matha’ means hill, or the top of the hill. So literally it means ‘sky high hill’. The hill lies on the west of the Zingjui village. It stands high when it is looked from the village. The sun sets in the hills of Zingjui Matha. Therefore, the hill is known as sky high where the sun sets.’ Matha,’ also means a monastery, which is generally accepted as a residence of community usually of monks living secluded under religious vows. If this meaning is associated with Zingjui matha it will drastically change our perception and history of the surrounding area because then we will be able to visualize a close connection with early Buddhism of the Somra tract being extended to the region of Manipur, especially Ukhrul. This idea needs to be further researched with the help of archaeology. So far no material evidence is available but a strong myth persists that in the cave shelters of this region Buddhist monks had lived and practiced their religion. Not so long ago several Buddhist idols which
had been stolen from the cave shelters were found on sale in Imphal. Therefore, there remains a need for further enquiry.

**Lamlang Kaphung** lies at the western side near Ukhrul proper. One can see vividly the range of Lamlang Kaphung from Ukhrul. ‘Lamlang’ is name of a village and ‘Kaphung’ means hill. The hill is named after the village.

The most appreciated plateau of Tangkhul is the Sihai Phangrei which stretches from Shirui hill towards the north. It is one of the famous locals spots. One finds many people at Phangrei throughout the year as it has a good network of communication especially transportation. It is around 25 km from Ukhrul on the way to Jassami. The name ‘Sihai Phangrei’ is derived from the name of the village ‘Sihai’ and ‘Phangrei’ means ‘big branch’. The branch sprung out from the Shirui hills so it is named as Sihai Phangrei as it looks like a branch of the Shirui hills.

The naming of hills, rivers and different places carry a significant meaning for the Tangkhuls. It indicates the hills or the places to which it belongs. If a hill belongs to Kachouphung, it is known as Kachouphung hill. Likewise, the Shirui hills indicate that the hills belong to Shirui village. Similarly, many names of hills, valleys or areas of the villages were named after their village and they carry a great significance. It also
tells us how the village came into existence and how it was named. The name was given when those villagers made certain contributions and if the hills, lands or the area belonged to them. It has been found that the Kachouphung villagers will not call it as Kachouphung hill, but as our hills. But the name Kachouphung was given by different villagers of the surrounding areas. Likewise, in other areas, land and hills including village names were given by outsiders when they had learnt that the land or hills belonged to certain villages. Again the villagers divided the area of the hills into different names. This made them locate the exact place in the vast area of the hills. But these names were given when the people came into contact with or when an event happened at the place. The people fragmented large mountain ranges and called them by different names. These have acquired historical significance subsequently.

The hills and the mountains provided the precious resources for the people especially the Tangkhuls. The villagers could go to the hills for their needs such as hunting, gathering wild vegetables, wood for building houses and fuels, honey, fruits, medicinal plants etc. In fact mountains and hills provided security and met the needs of the Tangkhuls and the other people in the region. The hills, the animals, the birds, insects or the trees, all had a symbiotic relationship. Each tried to help the other in as in many ways as possible. Their survival depended upon various factors including
the symbiotic relationships that they maintained with the natural ecology in
and around Ukhrul region.

**Lakes**

Lakes in Ukhrul are rare as the region is covered with hilly-terrain. One would hardly find a lake in the region. But spring streams are plenty. In all the hills of Ukhrul one will find stream flowing down the river. This makes the people of Ukhrul survive with not much difficulty. Though the water sources are plenty the absence of plains in the region remains the factor for the less number of peoples existence. There are three lakes in the district namely, **Achau Maki, Khamtak Ngayi** and **Kachawui**. These lakes are associated with different folk stories.

The most famous lake in the region is **Achau Maki** that lies in **Kachouphung Mountain range**. It is wonder for many, as the water never dries up throughout the year although it is situated at a high altitude. The water does not flow out from the lake nor it is seen how the spring water erupts into the lake. It remains silent. Only the silence, sound of the nature can be heard in and around this lake. The lake is six (6) hectare in area and about fifteen (15) feet deep. Wild ducks live in this lake. The weeds of this lake are eaten by stags. Moreover, varieties of migratory birds come to visit this lake from time to time. Trapabinosa grows here. From the top of the
Kachouphung mountain the rivers of Chindwin in Burma can be seen. On the western side of the lake there is famous Khayang water-fall which attracts many people despite transport difficulties. Only jeepable road reaches the village which is about forty six (46) miles from the Ukhrul town. To reach the surrounding villages it takes two to three days on foot. This area has remained neglected since a long time, even to this day the people face the same problems that they had faced in the early days of their settlement. It is pathetic since no government has ever taken note of the plight of the people and their villages in this part of Ukhrul region.

**Khamtak Ngayi** is situated at the slope of the Halang village settlement which is about 12 Km from the epicenter, Ukhrul. According to folklore, it is said that there was no such lake in the surrounding in the early period of their existence in the village. A small pond for drinking water for the passersby was there and the strangers’ enroute Ukhrul proper used to drink water from this pond. But the pond began to expand and gradually turned into a lake. It is believed by the villagers that there existed a Kameo (god) and the lake was his creation. Literally, ‘Khamtak’ means ‘cover’ and ‘Ngayi’ means ‘deep water’. The source of water remained in the lake itself. During our visit we observed that through out the year the volume of water remains the same, even today.
On the mountain range, which is on the boundary of Nagaland and Manipur, a lake known as ‘Kachawui’ exists. It is a word of Tasom dialect. ‘Kachawui’ means ‘pond of big snake’ (python). There is folk story that there lay a big snake which made the lake never dry up. Incidentally ‘Kachawa’ means ‘tortoise’ in the mainland dialects. It seems there is a swapping of meanings associated with the lake.

The Rivers

The hills of Manipur are associated with rivers. They flow through at different intervals of hill ranges. We find big and small rivers in the hills. Barak is the biggest river which rises at Mao in Senapati and the Iril the longest river in Manipur which rises from Kachai region of Ukhrul. R.B. Pemberton said that in the cold and dry months of the year they dwindle to mere flow; but when swollen by rain, they become most formidable torrents, and render the difficulty of traversing the country through which they are precipitated… 10 The rivers largely depend on the rainfall as its source. The streams begin to dry from the month of December towards April, but during the rainy season the rivers exert great force on the flowing water. With the increase in volume of water which rushes down with speed it makes crossing over for travelers very difficult when there is no bridge. The rivers flow down with great force and cut through the deep

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natural gorges of the hills. The eastern drainage system of Manipur discharges its water mostly in Myanmar.

The hills, rivers and valleys of Ukhrul region are full of beauty and bring more interest to its topography. The Tangkhuls have different names for its rivers, valleys and hills. The names which are given to various rivers are meaningful. In Tangkhul dialect ‘Kong’ means ‘river’. The most important rivers in Ukhrul region are Iril, Nungshang, (Thoubal River), Challou, Rangazak, Maklang and Sanalok Kongs. (See fig.8)
Different rivers strip through different mountain ranges. **Somrah** and **Angoching** ranges is striped by the flows of **Sanalok** and **Namba Lok** river, **Shangshak** and **Phungyar** range is being striped by **Tuyungbi** river, **Kachai** and **Hoome- Tampak Ngashan** (Mahadev) range is striped by the Tributeries of Thoubal river in Eastern side and of Irl river on the Western side.

**Ihang River** flows toward **Sanakeithel** village. It is one of the important rivers of western Tangkhul region. The river has agricultural importance as it supplies water to the vast agricultural paddy fields. The word **Ihang** is derived from Meitei word ‘Ihang’ which means ‘empty’. The place had no soul living around the area in the olden days. It looked empty and deserted, thus the river was named ‘Empty River’. It rises from **Kachai** and flows toward south and joins **Imphal River** in the valley.

**Shirui hills** have plenty of water sources. Many important rivers of Ukhrul rise from this hill viz. **Challou, Rangazak and Lungshang Kong**. **Challou** and **Rangazak Kong** flow toward the North of Tangkhul and get joined in Melori of Phek District, Nagaland. **Lungshang Kong** rises from the Shirui hills and flows in to the valley in the Thoubal district. It is known as **Thoubal River** in the valley. The name of the river is ‘Lungshang Kong’ because before reaching **Nungshang village** there are
many tributaries which join together at different intervals and thus become a big river in Nungshang village area. Therefore, it is called Lungshang Kong. It joins Imphal River in the valley and drains in Loktak. (see fig. 9).

Fig. 9: Shows Lungshang Kong(River)
Sanalok, Tayungpi and Maklang Kong are important rivers of eastern and Southern Tangkhuls. It flows towards the south and drains in the Chindwin River in Myanmar. It passes several villages of Tangkhuls where it becomes a source of fishing for many people living in the area. It meets the economic needs of the Tangkhul people.

Tayungpi rises between Lambui and Shangshak and flows towards the south and joins the Maklang Kong at Khonglo. It passes through many Southern Tangkhul villages such as Lungpha, Shingta, Marao, Shingkap and Khonglo on the western side of the river and Sorde, Sorbung, Phalang, Khambi, Leishi, Leiting, Alang and Kangkum on the east. After these rivers pass through villages they flow eastward and drain in to the Chindwin River. The villagers respect this river for its contribution in the agricultural practices.

Sanalok Kong rises from the Sihai and Khamasom hills which lie in the north east of Ukhrul. The rivers pass through the villages of Chamu, Khayang, Phungtha, Kachouphung, Kashung, Chatric etc. It flows towards the south- east and enters Myanmar where it joins the Ningthi River.

During rainy season both, Maklang and Sanalok kongs have a depth of water sufficient for a boat to float but their streams are
accompanied with such an extreme velocity that navigation becomes considerably risky. Boats do, however, pass into Kabow valley during the rainy season of the year.\textsuperscript{11} When the volume of water rises boats can pass through these rivers but during the winter season water decreases and its water volume is less so the boats cannot float on account of less water. And so navigation suffers.

Rangazak and Challou Kong rises from the Shirui Hill. Rangazak is derived from ‘Ra’ which means ‘meeting place’. So it means ‘meeting place’ or confluence of river. Here the two tributaries of Khaivar, coming from the western side and Layaonao coming from the Shirui hills meet at Rangazak (see map). It flows towards the northern Tangkhul villages and enters Nagaland. The river passes by Rangazak, Halang, Phungcham, Paorei and Peh which lie on the west of the river and Lunghar, Longpi, Kalhang, Kuirei, Ngahui, Luireishimphung, Marem, Marengphung, Namrei, Razai, Zingjui, Kharasom which lie to the east.

The Challou River also flows towards the north of Ukhrul (see map). The river also arises from north east of Shirui hills. It is named after Chalou, which means the village which has settled. These rivers which the Tangkhul people so called pass through the Challou village and finally enter Nagaland state. This river supplies a large part of water to the paddy

\textsuperscript{11} R.B.Pemberton, op cit p.10
fields lying in the northern area. The Challou and Ranagzak are the lifeline of northern Ukhrul. The people are very proud of these rivers.

**Flora and Fauna**

The hills of Ukhrul are rich in flora and fauna. This area is enormously rich in endemic species. It has at least more than 1,000 endemic species. Rare and beautiful birds as *Tragopan bythii* in Shirui and Khayangphung hill are found. Different species of birds and animals thickly populate the forests of Khayangphung and Angoching ranges. Various types of animals that are found in the Tangkhul hills are tigers, wildbears, leopards, elephants, bears, Sambars, porcupines, stags, deers, monkeys, boars, black cats, wild cats, wild buffaloes, antelopes, wild pigs, hares, squirrels, turtles, crabs, frogs, chameleons, lizards, pythons and various kinds of poisonous and non poisonous snakes.

Bees are found in many places in Ukhrul region. There are two main species of bees that give honey, Mikza and Kaha. Honey is used as a medicine for cough, indigestion, etc. Different types of hornets are also found in Ukhrul. They are khuirei, mazam, khuipi, khuikhan, khuichihui, mayar, lapuinao, kaha, etc. The biggest hornet in Ukhrul is

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Khuirei. These hornets differ in colour and size. Big types of hornets live in land and make hives by digging out the land. They remain in their hives from the month of April till November. After that hives perish and once again these are made the next year when the hornets will make another to begin again. Some hornets live on the branches of trees and hang like balls. Some live inside the trunks of trees. Small types of hornets live in their hive for more than two to three years. Hornets are considered good dishes by the Tangkhuls as well as the other Nagas. The sting of hornets is so severe that once bitten it can pain for longer duration. The Tangkhul farmers are experts in raising quite a number of sharp stinging hornets in the premises of their homes.

Phung is also considered as the most precious food item for the Tangkhuls. It lives inside the tree trunk. One can find this insect at the market sometimes, and when sold, the price is very high.

Forest covers an area of 15,154sq. km in Manipur. It is 67.78 percent of the total geographical area of the state. The forest runs across the border line of Ukhrul and Burma. It spreads along the international boundary. It is both, an evergreen forest and a semi-evergreen forest.

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13 Black in colour bee whose sting is so painful that it leads to fever. Death may occur if the sting is very severe.
14 R. Luikham, op cit p.149
Along this boundary various timber producing trees are found such as oak, pine, teak, leihao, wang, etc. The Angoching forest is covered with sal, teak and keo trees and many different varieties of bamboos\textsuperscript{15}.

**Timber** is one of the most important forest products that is found here. Leihao, Wang and Pines are mostly found in the forests of Ukhrul. These are exported to other states. Pine trees are found all over the Ukhrul region. Due to over exploitation of forest products particularly timber, the forest cover is continuously decreasing. These create ecological problems in the region.

Different species of canes and bamboos are also abundantly found in Ukhrul hills. These are the most useful materials for making baskets, mats, boxes and in construction of houses and other essential needs in daily life. **Bamboo shoots** are also one of the major foods for the people. It is nutritious and healthy.

Plants of various kinds are found in Ukhrul including Orchids and numerous flowers which bloom throughout the year. It enriches the world of the Tangkhuls. Flowers are found in their natural habitat growing in soil or on trees and shrubs. There are more than 300 varieties of orchids which grow in this region. It has been a source for enhancing economic benefits for the villagers.

\textsuperscript{15} R.B.Pemberton, op cit p.57.
One can find varieties of flowers in Ukhrul. During March and April, Kokluiwon, Saharwon and Kapaiwon bloom around the hills of Ukhrul. The youthful life in this season is associated with one of the popular festivals known as Yarra Phanit which is celebrated in the month of April.

Minerals

Salt:

Salt is manufactured largely in the northern part of the Tangkhul settlements. The major salt production areas among the Tangkhul villages are Marem, Challou, Namrei, Marengphung, Peh, Kharasom and Razai. Even today, many of their products are preferred by the local people. The salt products which are local are considered as good for health. It is also taken as a medicine in several cases of diseases. These local salts are sold in the market but the amounts produced, are very less on account of the gross negligence of the people, in the absence of initiatives. Salt manufacture has been in practice since the ancient times. The process of making salt is very simple but the labour that the families put in is very tiresome. Since the salt is prepared from the brine spring water, its water and moisture contents are to be dried up by keeping the brine boiling in a container over a burning fire the whole night and day which consumes a lot
of firewood. When the water evaporates the dried salt becomes available, which is ready for consumption. The brine springs that are found in Ukhrul region are about 20 to 30 feet deep. Salt is one of the main sources of income for the people of the surrounding villages which have brine spring or brine well.

**Sandstone:**

Sandstone is mostly found in Hungpung. These are also found at Shokvao, Kasom, Lambui, Halang (see map fig. 8). On the side of Manipur bordering Burma different varieties of sandstone, more or less compact in structure, are found. These are used for construction of buildings. These are better than the sand that is found at the river bank. It is one of the main resources for the livelihood in Hungpung villages.

Stones of various other kinds are also found in the region. During the ancient days the Tangkhuls did not construct their houses with stones and so, early stone buildings are unknown. But, after the advent of modern techniques, working in stone has become easier. It can be extracted near the village. Today, it has become one of the most important resources in the hills. Now it is exploited everywhere in Ukhrul area.

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16 R.B. Pemberton, op cit. 12.
Limestone:

Limestones are found in many villages eg. Hungpung, Ramva, Shokvao, Khangkhui, Kasom, Peh, Paorei, Phungcham, Halang, Lungphu, Mawai, Singda, Marao, Shingkap, Shangshak, Koso, Leishi, Nongou, Phalang, Goda, Kangoi, Sirarakhong, Kamjon and Huime. A cement factory was established at Hungpung in the 1980s. However, it could not survive for long due to many factors including attention from the government as well as from the public. It existed not more than eight years and suddenly came to halt in the 1990’s. it perhaps happened on account of embezzlement of funds that’s what the villagers believe. No concerted effort has been made by the people to revive it for the sake of their economy. Gradually it has become nobody’s venture. The exploitation of the regional resources are ongoing process but there is no direct benefit accruing to the people. As such the tribes of the region have become restless and are often volatile. Economic measures need to be taken up rapidly.

Nickel and Chromite:

Nickel associated with the serpentine rocks has been found located at Nambashi and Kwath on the border of Burma.^{17} Chromites are found

^{17} Laishram Vijaykumar Singh, Historical Geography of Manipur through Ages p. 64.
in Sihai Phangrei, Nongou, Shirui hills and Chatric Khunou, Gamnom, Pushing, Halang, Shingza, and Nongou. Chromite mines could not be fully utilized due to lack of industry in the region. ‘It is in Phungyar block of Ukhrul district that the Burmese exploited the forests of Manipur and chromite deposits at Chatrik-Khunou’\textsuperscript{18}. Many industrialists try to exploit the resources by investing their wealth. But due to uncertainty of social elements there could not be steady development and exploitation of the resources came to halt. Chromite is very useful material and is in demand in industrial products especially in the manufacturing process of good stainless steel.

**The geographical distribution of Tangkhuls**

There are large numbers of tribes and sub tribes occupying the state of Manipur. The Kuki and Nagas are the two main Tribes who share lots of common things between themselves. They live in Manipur hills for the last many centuries. The valley is inhabited by Meitei community. They do not divide themselves on the point of their religion or customary practices. The Nagas of Manipur and Nagaland have their origin traced to Makhel and South East Asia. They believe that they had migrated via Samsok in Burma. The Nagas settled in the four district i.e Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel,

\textsuperscript{18} M.T.Laiba. The geography of Manipur, Public book store. 1992 p. 87.
Tamenglong and a few places in Churachanpur. The Kuki’s settled not only in the British dominated areas of the Nagas Hills but also far away on the North–east frontier areas of the Manipur state. The area of Churanchandpur is wholly occupied by the Kuki. Only few villages of Nagas are settled which lie adjacent to Imphal valley and in the border areas of Tamenglong.

The Tangkhuls have occupied Ukhrul region and its adjoining areas. This region is sub-divided into traditional names according to their topography. They are called Raphei or Luhupa (north) and they occupy the northern side of the Ukhrul. ‘Ra’ means ‘wine’; ‘phei’ means ‘foot’. It means the place of plenty of rice beer. They are so called as there was plenty of rice production and they made rice beer in plenty. Besides these, people were self sufficient economically and in various economic commodities. These villages include Halang, Phungcham, Peh, Langdang, Shirui, Sihai. From these villages including the whole of northern villages are Raphei.

The easterners among Tangkhul are known as Ram Khayang. They were so called because they were the victims of bigger villages. Ram means ‘village’, often in these areas people were slaughtered by the

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Kathur villages that had settled around the central region of Ukhrul. Ram Khayang villages include Khayan, Phungtha, Chamu, Matiyang, Roni, Kashung and Kachouphung.

The north Easterners were known as ‘Sampu’. This name was given by the Meiteis. ‘Sam’ means ‘hair’ and ‘Pu’ means ‘carrying hair’. It means ‘people who kept long hair’. The Sampu villages are Zingsui, Mapum, Pushing, Shingza, Maku, Changa, Nungou, Langli, Chatric, Apong, Ronshak, Seihomphung and Lakhen.

The central Ukhrul is known as Kathur which means ‘Salty’ in Tangkhul dialogue. Salt was found in plenty at Somsai near proper Ukhrul. Therefore, these villages established around the Hungpung were known as Kathur. They are villages of Shangshak, Lungshang, Hungpung, Tushar, Ramva and Hatha.

The western Ukhrul villages were known as Kharao. Its meaning is viewed differently by different writers and thinkers. Literally the meaning of Kharao according to the Tangkhul dialogue is ‘Kha’ means ‘village’ and ‘Rao’ means ‘servant’. According to this concept, at the time of British these villages were forced to carry loads. Thus they were known by the Tangkhuls as the villages who carried loads. M.Horam thinks that the
name ‘Kharao’ is a name of clan. At the time of migration Kharaonao occupied the present western region of Ukhrul so the zone came to be known as Kharao. Kharao villages include Talla, Ngaimu, Somdal, Phalee, Sirarakhong, Tora, Leisan, Teinem, Champhung Ringui, Pharung, etc.

The inhabitants of the region south to Ukhrul are known as ‘Kamo’. But sometimes the term refers to the jhuming cultivators as it also was applied to the eastern settlers. They were given the name because they lived mainly by clearing the forests and burning them for cultivation in the absence of wet or terrace cultivation\(^\text{20}\). Another term ‘kamo’ is applied to Koba, Tiba, Thomba, Tinu, Sangnu and Pinu villages. Here the inhabitants called their elder brother ‘Koba’ and eldest sister, Tinu. When people such as Raphei, Raikahang, Veikhang, Kharao, were about to visit the south country they uttered ‘Koba ram vaura’ which means they were going to Koba country. The word Koba, and Tinu were combined together and later it got corrupted into a word known as Kamo which came to be identified as the south east Tangkhuls.\(^\text{21}\)

Raikhang is sub-divided into Veikhang and Raizan. Raikhang is a Tangkhul dialogue term in which ‘Rai’ means ‘war’ and ‘Khang’ means

\(^{21}\) Interview taken from the chief of Khambi. L. Solomon on 23\(^{\text{rd}}\) Nov. 2009.
‘shielding’. These villages shielded their mother village Hungpung and some other other villages from the enemies who came from the Myanmar side. These villages also depended for their safety on the bigger village Hungpung. If the enemies came to attack the weaker villages they informed Hungpung and the Hungpung villagers came for their rescue, prepared to face any eventuality. The alliances with the bigger villages were entered into to save smaller villages from the enemy’s attack.

Veikhang is around the central region of Ukhrul. It includes the villages of Lungshang, Lungshong, Choithar, Khangkhui, Langdang, Shirui, Yentem, Shangching, Nungou, Shingza, etc. Veikhang derived from the word ‘Ngavei kakhang’ which means ‘shielding the gate’. These villages were the gateway for entering into their mother village Hungpung. They protected the village of Hungpung and provided information to them. Several such mechanisms can be seen in the contracts entered into by the villagers of small or big villages.

Raizan derived from the word ‘Rai’ means ‘war’, zan means ‘after’. Most of the war came from the Myanmar and these villages were always the first to face the impact of war from the intruders as they were the frontier villages. So the real wars began only after attacking these villages. These villages include Langli, Ningchou, Grihang, Bungba, Ningthi, Nambisha, etc.
Among the Tangkhuls there are some villages where condemned individuals and couples could go for shelter once they were ostracized or punished socially for their unacceptable acts for the rest of their lives. Under such circumstances the couple lost their kin relationship in the society for it happened to be the highest punishment in the Tangkhul society. These villages were called ‘Azing khaorui’. This village lies in the westernmost part of Ukhrul region. During the course of our interaction with the villages we found that although capital punishment in the Tangkhul society is absent, this type of exile is the worst punishment that could be inflicted on the wrong doers. The people of this village were treated rather badly especially as load bearers. These have similarities with the Loi groups of the peripheral areas found near the foot hills around the valley.

These inter division in the region did not deter relationship between the north, the south, the west and the east. It is rather an identification of the people amongst their culture in their vicinity. Not only the cultures but the location of the area has also made them group themselves as Raphei, Kharao, Kathur, Kamo etc. Through their division they tried to show competency and efficiency. The Tangkhuls revealed their supremacy in the inter village wars. These made them allies of their neighbouring villages which created fear in the minds of the people. The Tangkhuls fought
Khanai rai and cut the head of the vanquished. They believed in Head-hunting. Fighting was part and parcel of their lives. But they were generous to those who submitted to them. These also created division in different areas and within groups. They did not interfere in other’s camp and remained peaceful when there was peace in the land. Any kind of interference was not appreciated by the Tangkhul villagers who preferred to stay in isolation rather than be in a hostile other’s group and lose peace. Their world view was different as they were shaped by the geo-historical forces and materials available in the region. Life depended upon nature and natural products. Normally, to such influences man is a passive subject, especially in the earlier stages of his development. But these are more important influences emanating from his geo-environment which effected him as an active agent, challenge his will by furnishing the motives for its exercise, give purpose to his activities and determine the direction which they would take. These moulded the Tangkhul’s mind and character basically through his economic and social life. Natural parameters are significant because they determine the size of the social group and other ramifications.