CHAPTER-I

1.1 Introduction

Geographers have long been accustomed to study the change of landscape wrought by nature itself and indiscriminate use of nature due to biotic pressure. However, there is a general tendency among geographers to treat tribes as homogenous category under such broad terms as ‘Scheduled Tribes’. Numerically small tribes, often lesser known, are often neglected ignoring vital aspects of their demographic, social and economic problems. This is true in the North-Eastern region of India, particularly in the state of Manipur; which has a legion of numerically small tribes. These smaller and lesser-known groups, no doubt, contribute to the building up of a culture complex. But their contribution often goes unnoticed and un-acknowledged. Unfortunately, many such groups, by virtue of their subordinate position, face a variety of problems ranging from the preservation of their socio-cultural identity and adjustment to economic ones. All these problems are reflected in their demographic structure and behavior.

The organization use and meaning of space is a product of social transformation, translation and experience. Organization of space is a social product. It arises from purposeful social practice (Soja,1980). Space and spatial organization are concepts that are basic to geography. Spatial organization is the sum total and result of spatial process and structure. Structure and process are cartulary causal and result in the evolution of particular spatial organization. People generate spatial processes in order to satisfy their needs and desires and these processes create spatial structures, which in turn influence and modify spatial processes. Activities of the people generated by different processes interact with each other depending on the different attributes of places and distance is the key determining factor in the generation of such processes and evolution and spread of activities in space. (Raza & Ahmad, 1977).
The organization of space in tribal regions may, thus, be seen as a manifestation of the ways of adaptation to the environmental setting. These are determined by the historical process of peopling of the traditional habitats by homogenous clan and kinship groups. As a result of their initial occupancy of the habitats, clusters tribal hamlets acquired the character of a monolithic tribal core region. A hill range served as a boundary separating the core region of one tribal group from the other (Mackenzie, 1988). The placement of tribes in spatial segments may be an outcome of a social history of contact, confrontation and contestation between the ethnically differentiated tribes and between them and the peasant groups, who hastened the process of their displacement from the river valleys. Any understanding of social change remains incomplete without a proper conceptualization of its spatial parameters.

It is a common place of understanding that the nature, direction and pace of social change are never uniform in its spatial coverage. The organized and socially concretized space provides friction to a uniform spread of social change; thereby making social transformation spatially fragmented response. The geographical distribution of different social categories differentiates the impact of social change as diverse categories have different capacities to respond to the changes affecting them (Chandra, 1991). Thus, the rate of social change may be phenomenal in areas which have experienced large scale agrarian development historically, whereas, the dominantly tribal areas have been only marginally exposed to such changes. However, a geographical variation in social transformation depends to a great extent on the policy measures in developmental interventions. But these changes have neither been uniform in social coverage nor in spatial extent. The pace and direction of social change would be determined to a great extent by the limits imposed by the nature or human freedom and the capacity of man to overcome such constraints through his own creativity and dynamism.
1.2 Concept of Social Change

Change and uncertainty are characteristics of human society, and various forces are at work to make change inevitable. The tempo and extent of change vary from society to society and from country to country. Some parts of India have experienced speedy transformation due to industrialization while some rural areas have change very slowly. Some of the tribal societies in Africa and some Pacific islands have remained relatively static for centuries. There are changes in human composition in society, institutional structures and functions undergo transformation, and their technological and ideological perspective changes. Social change is the development of new meanings and values, or the substitution of new ones for old, and thus it involves changes in the characteristic behavioural patterns in society. Social change is a fairly large-scale transformation in a number of related meaning and values affecting the behaviour of most people in a society. In a sense it involves a large number of persons engaged in activities which differ from what they were doing before, or what their parents used to do. Social change is essentially a change of social structure like the population changes and changes in the relationship of the components of the social structure. Individual in a society occupy different position of play different roles over a period of times. The position and role, which the individual has also, change over a period of time. In static society, the status and role of the individual do not undergo noticeable change from generation to generation. However, such static societies are rare in the modern world. A dynamic society is one where basic social changes occur. Structural aspects like status and role are measurable to a certain degree, and aspect like employment, place of residence, educational attainments, income, marital status; numbers of children are taken into account.

Social change is often associated with progress, but this is not widely accepted as change can be either for good or for bad, and hence this is to be treated as neutral. Progress
means change in as positive valuation. In the post-independence era, India has undergone rapid social changes, most of which are planned changes. Similarly, Western Europe and North America have undergone tremendous social changes since the Industrial Revolution. Rapid industrialization, improved means of transport and other means of communication, industrialized agriculture and urbanization have created tremendous changes. Cities develop distinctive social climates. As urbanization increase this social climate diffuses until the ideas and practices radiate throughout the society.

The study of social change in modern India is vast and complex which has not only a fathomless historical depth and plurality of traditions but is also engulfed in a movement of nationalistic aspiration under which concepts of change and modernization are loaded with ideological meaning and an adequate understanding of it will require the collaboration, for many years, of a number of scholar in such divers fields as economic, social, politics, education, geography and sociology.

Associate with Sankritization are Srinivas concepts of ‘Westernization’ and ‘Secularization’. Srinivas (1962:55) used the term “Westernization” to characterize the ‘changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels…technology, institutions, ideology and values’. Thus, westernization refers to all cultural changes and institutional innovation in India as this country came into political and cultural contacts with the Western nations.

‘Change’ is an event that occurs when something passes from one state or phase to another. It is a rational difference between states; especially between states before and after some event. Change, in a geographical perspective, can be defined as become different in essence, losing one’s original nature partly or wholly. In other words, become different in some particular way, without permanently losing former characteristics or essence.
Geographer perspective of ‘change’ is seen over space i.e. spatial variation. Any meaningful understanding of social change, therefore, is not possible without an insight into the very nature of changing human-environment relationship in its correct perspective. Change in the social system and structure inevitably brings about transformation in the very nature of the man-environment relationship. Any change in a society has to take place, at least, initially in close correspondence and co-operation with the natural environment. The natural factors may contribute to the first order of social differentiation; but with the progress of mankind, the grip of natural constraints gradually loosens, while the grip of social constraints gradually hardens. The pace and direction of social change would be determined to a great extend by the limits imposed by the nature or human freedom and the capacity of man to overcome such constraints through his own creativity and dynamism.

The process of social change within the tribal societies have consequently operated at a low key, perpetuating the older mode far too long and thus leading to a socio-economic stagnation of a high order. The rigorous environment acted as a constraint and fostered physical and social isolation for ages. The tribal communities have been by and large brought under the influence of exogenetic forces only marginally (Ansari, 1991). Thus, over time the tribal communities seems to have developed a mode of living generically linked to the ecological conditions in the enclaves which have provided them with a resources base and have favoured the survival of their way of life with marginal modifications. It is in these enclaves that the tribes have shown its strong tendency of clustering and concentration.

The purpose of the study is to examine the changing social pattern of Vaiphei society in Manipur, from their early days to the present day, which had developed slowly with the pace of colonial administration and in particular, with the introduction of Christianity in the year 1910. Here mentioned may be made that Christianity per se did not bring change to the Vaiphei directly; but it brings along a formal or western education that paved the way for the
tribe to change for the better. The changes are visible in the educational, political social and economic life of the people. The objective of examining these changes is to ascertain how far the dimension of changes had an impact on the Vaiphei people and the role of space and environment in it. The aspects of change studied here are both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The qualitative change includes changes in the tools and artifacts; modes of socialization, in their language (writing) and in their moral concepts. The quantitative changes are the changes in population, educational and recreational organizations, occupational structure, birth-rate and sex ratio. To crystallize the subject matter of the study, the traditional social structure such as family, religious, political, economic and the overall social institutions of the Vaiphei, as it existed during the pre-Christian era, is studied in their village community level. As a matter of fact, in dealing with the present, we cannot ignore the past, because the present Vaiphei community is the result of a series of change in the history of the Vaiphei community. Unless this is done, the focus of the present study will remain vague and inadequate.

1.3 Review of Literature

Among the geographers, the study of social change is relatively recent development. Although some aspects of social change and economic development were done by sociologists and economists earlier but the spatial context was missing. Most of the works are of very general nature and lack in depth study of any particular area. Relevant literatures have been reviewed here to have a better comprehension of the research problem. The important scholars in the field of social change includes Lapiere(1965), Moore(1987), Singh(1986), Kuppuswamy(1990) and Srinivas(1972).

Ahmad (1999), states that the origin of the socio-cultural diversity in India lies in the physico-geographical framework of the sub-continent. Societies have been undergoing wide ranging changes throughout history, although the pace of change has not been uniform in all
regions or among all sections of our society. Processes, such as education, urbanization, penetration of market forces, expansion of administration, spread of political institutions, particularly since independence have all induced the society towards change.

Ansari (1991) gives tribal demography of Manipur as a whole. He emphasized right from the in-migration of the tribes into the state, the growth of each tribe, their habitat economy and society. He examines such information as death, birth, actual rate of growth, areal distribution, and classification according to their occupations and also literacy and about socio-economic conditions of the different tribes. Ansari pointed out that the two most important factors, which effected changes in tribal life, is conversion to Christianity and spread of education. These changes have raised the tribal communities to a higher social pedestal. Apart from these two factors, the Five Year Plans also greatly contributed to the advancement in the socio-economic of the tribes.

Breese (1969) observed that developing countries are experiencing rapid population explosion resulting in large-scale unemployment in the rural country side. This has generated incessant swing of migration from one region to another or from rural to urban and industrial centre in search of job opportunities. Rural-urban migration has special significance for the developing countries, as this constitutes a major component of the process of urbanization taking place in those parts of the world.

Casette (1979) examined the spatial temporal dynamics of out migrations, economic development and population growth in Europe during the war period. The massive movement occurred as Europe went through social and economic changes similar to the ones currently in the less developed countries.

Das (1985) unfolds the richness of social anthropological data in Manipur and seeks to examine the relationship between the various tribes and the Meiteis, who dominate the scene. By virtue of their dominant position, the Meiteis probably influenced the course of
the tribal history in Manipur more than the tribes themselves did. But, however successful they might in exerting political influence, it could not affect the core of tribal cultures. If culture simply means ‘a distinctive way of life’, the tribes were definitely not without it. He also emphasized on the trends of change among the tribes of Manipur.

Green (1974) in a study of temporal model of migration in Nigeria postulated that the principal population movement took place from more developed areas to less developed areas of an agricultural country possessing vast and virtually uninhabited parts of virgin land.

Harbison and Myers (1963) have identified three methods of human resource development for socio-economic change: (i) by formal education, beginning with primary and ending with university education, (ii) by on-the-job through systematic or informal training programmes in employing institutions, (iii) by self development as individual seeks to acquire greater knowledge, skills or capacities through preparation on their own initiative by taking formal courses by reading or by learning from others in informal contacts.

H. Ian Hogbin (1958) gives a very lucid and illustrative treaty on social change. He explains different aspects of social change indicating in detail the approach to the study of change, voluntary acceptance of change, enforced change and chain reactions and changing institutions. Hogbin (1958), in his descriptive study of the village of Busama, North-eastern New Guinea, also described the changes brought about by war and the enforced changes on the natives of Busama as soon as the foreign rulers ruled the country. There was change in money economy, in the status and leadership due to the impact of government machinery and changes in the religious beliefs as the natives took to Christianity.

Captain K.A. Khupzathang (2000) unfolds the origin and classification of the Vaiphei into different sub clans in the mid 17th Century A.D. Kaihau Vaiphei (1999) emphasis on the early settlement sites of the tribe in Manipur and their probable route of
migration from the east, i.e. Chin Hills in Myanmar. He also highlights the post migration of the tribes within the North-Eastern Region in the early 20th Century. Khaitingen (2001) throw lights on the probable route of migration of the tribe has taken in the historical past. He also stressed some information about the customs of the tribe.

In ‘Social Change’, Lapiere (1965), described that social change are not in any sense a product of the society per se or a consequence of some universal or unvarying law of social life. It is something different from the changes that take place in individual organism. An organic change invariably takes place in all organisms as an essential law and follows a particular pattern of birth, growth, maturity and death. But social change occurs as a result of social life itself- emanating from the common way of living. There is no inherent invisible principle or law that causes social change. Of course, social change is not a direct product of society, as society is essentially a system that attempts to maintain its own structure and is generally resistant to change.

Mibang (1994), present the fundamental features of the social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Adi Minyong people and the influence of various factors responsible for socio-economic change. He mentioned that social change is brought about to a great extent by changes in economy. The change in the system of cultivations has brought in a world of changes in the socio-economic life of the people. The advancement of technology is affecting the tribal societies in various directions. One of the most impressive features is the attainment of greater efficiency and speed. Due to advance technology, productivity has greatly increased. This has made the people adjust themselves to the new tempo of life. Villagers are now losing their attachment to their villages, and are moving large numbers to the cities in quest of a better life. They are sending to schools hoping that they could move up in the socio-economic scale.
Milton S. Sangma (1987) described the works of Christian missionaries in the region that drastically change the socio-economic conditions of the people. When the missionaries open preach in the streets, bazaars, and in the villages timing millions of people failed to bear any fruits, they switched on to other methods such as opening of schools, publication of religious texts and opening of dispensaries and other humanitarian works. He described the history of education, literature, medical care and other humanitarian works as organized and run by the missionaries as adjuncts to their basic objective of evangelization.

According to Moore (1987), social change is unpredictable and yet it involves some elements for predictability. New orders or patterns ripen within the old order and thereby sustains some of its elements. Change is neither a break-point nor a destruction-point. Through the process, the older order gets transformed to new ones, retaining some of its earlier elements in some form or the other. Some other elements of future are predictable because the changes will be the product of plans or deliberate intent and action.

Prothero (1969) in his study of West Africa, observed that economic opportunities in relatively developed areas offer an incentive for migration, but this is possible only when conditions are not favourable in areas of origin for stimulating the people to take up the employment opportunities offered elsewhere. Bartle (1980) examined the patterns of rural-urban migration in Ghana and emphasized the role of socio-economic motivation.

Sanajaoba (1995) gives ethnographic accounts of the Hill tribes of Manipur, who together with the Meiteis constitute the indigenous people of Manipur. In this compilation, various authors have highlighted the social and cultural life of the different tribes of Manipur. One of the authors, by name Doliand Capvung, described the social institution of the Vaiphei tribe in their traditional form. Sen (1992), attempts to provide a brief description of the state of Manipur, its districts and also brief ethnological accounts of the different tribes of the state. The Vaiphei are traditionally independent and male dominated society.
Vaiphei (1975) described the historical, social and economic background of the Vaiphei as well as their traditional religion. He also gives a brief account on the impact of Christianity upon the social, cultural and religious life of the tribe. Christianity, through which literacy has been introduced by the missionaries, was the driving force of changing Vaiphei society.

Vander Camp (1968) observed that unemployment played an important role and substantial impact on the overall rate of geographical mobility in Canada and particularly in the spatial pattern of migration to such areas in which migration adds to their population. Inter regional mobility is closely related to differential provincial incomes and negatively related to distance, received impressive and empirical support in Canada.

Verma,(1990) present a glimpse into the historical perspective of Indian tribes, their demography, constitutional provisions relating to their protection and development as well as problems and challenges of tribal development. He pointed out that the economy of the tribes is mainly based on agriculture and forests. Due to unauthorized alienation of tribal land and deprivation of their forest rights, the tribal economy has been seriously affected. The main causes of their backwardness are exploitation and illiteracy.

Vumson Suantak gives comprehensive analysis of the people mostly known as Chin-Kuki-Mizo. It analyses how these people migrated from Western China-Myanmar to different states of the North-East and why they migrated to the rugged hill areas they occupy now. He also emphasizes on the sub tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo and their historical backgrounds.

Zelinsky (1971) has studied the migration component of population in a completely different perspective. He applied the principle of spatial innovations to the laws of migration in his hypothesis of the transition mobility.
Zelinsky’s idea spatial innovation has also been supported by Lee (1969) who emphasized the need of restrictions to control the volume and rate of migrations as they tend to increase with time. There is a definite pattern of empirical regularity in the growth of personal mobility through space-time during recent history and these irregularities are associated with the modernization process.

1.4 Statement of the problem

The process of social change, historically, has not operated at the same pace uniformly over space and their manifestations have been determined to a great extent by the exigencies of geographical considerations. The geographical space as it is organized and translated by human practice provides a friction to the uniform spread of socio-economic change. It is in this context that the problem of social change among the tribal population assumes considerable significance. Historically speaking, the tribal population has suffered diverse degrees of isolation as they are in hilly and geographically negative areas and away from the main foci of human civilization and progress, which experienced unprecedented changes in their society and economy. Difficult environment permitted marginal agricultural development only in a few favoured parts of the valley bottom. The hilly area also witnessed a unique survival of the primitive modes of economies like gathering and shifting cultivation. Under such conditions, the process of change operated at a low key and only marginally integrated with developed economies of the plains. Large agrarian surplus production in the plain areas produced unprecedented changes in the socio-economic sphere leading to social changes of a very high order; lack of such a surplus generation in the hilly and tribal areas experienced such changes only at a low key.

Before the advent of the colonial power to this region, the tribal communication remained almost segregated. There was little scope for mixing together with other people of the country. As such, in the early days, tribal communities in the hill areas were left alone to
lead a life according to their own ways of life, following their own customary laws in all matters of their activities. But the situation changed considerably with the contacts with the colonial economy (Gori, 1984). The British interest in the resource base exposed the tribes to modern developments and process of change. So, the year 1891 forms a significant landmark in the history of the hill tribes of Manipur, for in that year the English had come to the state and established their political domination. During the next sixty years till 1947, which marks the end of the British colonial rule in India, far-reaching changes had been introduced into the tribal society transforming them in many ways. Again, with the advent of Christianity in 1910, the tribes of Churachandpur, specially the Vaiphei, were obliged to break their age-old isolation. The most spectacular achievement of the Christian missionaries was the introduction of western education or spread of literacy and exposing the tribes to a variety of modernizing influences. However, the presence of negative aspects of changes in their society also cannot be denied. Despite all these changes, there are also some traditional aspects which are still continuing; if not, transformed into different style according to time.

The purpose of the study is to examine the changing social pattern of Vaiphei society in Manipur, from their earlier times to the present day. The society has developed slowly with the pace of colonial administration and in particular, with the introduction of Christianity in the year 1910. The aspects of change to be studied here will be both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The qualitative change will includes changes in the tools and artifacts; modes of socialization, in their language (writing) and in their moral concepts. The quantitative changes are the changes in population, educational and recreational organizations, occupational structure, birth-rate and death-rates. The early history of the Vaiphei is based on legends, traditions, customs and beliefs. There is a common belief that their ancestor emigrated from a place called ‘Khul’, somewhere in
Southern China; more particularly from the Tan Valley in Kanshu province. Some researchers claimed that the Vaiphei are one of the tribes settled in the Tibetan foothills after their exodus from China. Due to some socio-political and economic reasons, they gradually move down along the Chindwin valley and spread in Kachin and Shan states of the then Burma at about 996 A.D. It is a well-known fact that people with low socio-economic status are more mobile as they have little landed property to tie them to their native or original place (Vaiphei, 1975). Moreover, insecurity was the order of the day during the early history of the Vaiphei. During those days, there were no fixed boundary and frontiers of kingdoms. Each ethnic group would like to have complete authority on the land of their occupation and would preserve their land from any interference from any other groups. But smaller or weaker groups would be overpowered and driven away by the more powerful ones. Thus, inter-tribal or even inter-clan feuds were common. So the perpetual fear of attack by other social groups compelled the Vaiphei to move to safer and defensible location in the interior. Most of their migrations were happening under the threat of subjugation. They also move to new places for better and adequate land for cultivation. The areas, which have acute population pressure upon their limited cultivable land resources, thus, generate out migration. Apart from all these, nomadism was prevalent among the Vaiphei and this migratory spirit scattered them. Even in the few areas they occupied some decades back, they have been either outnumbered or overshadowed by other ethnic groups. All these compelled the Vaiphei people to break and scatter resulting in dispersion over different areas. In this study, attempt will be made to identity the area of concentration and areas of dispersions of the Vaiphei settlements after all those waves of migration.

The tribe is at desperate stage of their social evolution and practices diverse modes of economies taking advantages of the rich natural resource base of their habitation. With the advance of time, they have been developing new attitudes, new ideas and institutions so
as to make their society richer and vigorous through the process of cultural assimilation. Given the historical and social complexities of development in tribal areas, the present study aims to evaluate the degree and nature of such changing social pattern of the Vaiphei society of Manipur.

1.5 Objective

In the light of the above discussion, the present study examined the level of social change in the Vaiphei community to the new situation from the old, which had developed slowly with the pace of colonial administration and in particular, with the introduction of Christianity in the year 1910. Thus, the basic objectives of the study are:

1. to trace the origin and the process of migration of the Vaiphei in the past.
2. to reconstruct the traditional structure of Vaiphei community as it existed before the introduction of Christianity and to identify the geographical space of the Vaiphei settlements; and
3. to examine the salient social changes and its impacts in Vaiphei society.

1.6 Research Issues

Given the spatial dichotomy in the distribution of social categories in Manipur, it will be interesting to study the pattern of social change through the ages of the social composition of the tribal segment of the population. It is true that a lot of changes take place in the hill districts of Manipur in the past few decades. Education as an agent of bringing all round change has been greatly influenced by historical, social and environmental factors in the study area. It is a very useful attribute for measuring the level of change in a society and its attainments are essential to gear up backward society towards an enlightened one. Here too, education, along with Christianity is both the main cause as well as the main consequence of social change in Vaiphei society. Therefore, in the proposed study, attempt
will be made to carry out a rational analysis on literacy level and it may be worthwhile to test the following research issues:

1. The geographical setting influences the processes of migration, distribution and the general pattern of change in Vaiphei society.

2. The physical mobility of the Vaiphei community brings it into contact with other communities and leads to change in their socio-economic organization.

3. Literacy not only enlightened the individual, but also brings a definite impact on the existing social and cultural spheres of the community as a whole.

1.7 Study Area

Manipur is a small state in the periphery of North Eastern Region covering an area of 22,372 Sq.Km. which constitutes only 0.7% of the total land surface of India, with a population of 23,88,634 (2001 census). The State is divided into nine districts of which five districts are in the hills. Manipur is lying between 23°80’N to 25°68’N latitudes and longitudes of 93°03’E to 94°78’E; bounded on the north by Nagaland on the west by North Cachar hills and Cachar districts of Assam, on the east by Myanmar and on the southwest by Mizoram. Manipur has a boundary line of 854 Kilometres; out of which 353 Kilometres is an international boundary shared by Myanmar. Location of Manipur is of considerable geo-political importance (Dun, 1992). It is the melting point of the South-East Asia, not only in geographical sense, but also in historical and cultural sense too. Mountain ranges of about 20,089 Sq. Km lengths surround the ovals shaped valley of 2,238 Sq. Km. looking like a flat-alluvial lake. In geographic classification, it may be simply divided into a valley at the centre and the hills surrounding it. The two regions set the geographic limits for two types of cultural phenomena. From the geological point of view, the valley is of recent origin. It is believed to have form out of ‘a large lake which has been gradually filled up by deposits from the surrounding heights’. [W.McCulloch]
Manipur is facing an enormous growth of population from 2,84,465 in 1901 to 23,88,634 persons in 2001. Out of the total increase, more than two-third has been added during the last three decades; and at present, the increase is taking place at a rate of 41,620 persons per year (Laiba, 1992). An interesting paradox about Manipur is that whereas nine-tenth of its territory is constituted by hills and only one-tenth by the valley; only about one-third of the population lives in the hills and two-third in the valley.

The tribal people of Manipur are multi-lingual and pluralistic group of people. There are as many as 29 scheduled tribes in the state. According to 2001 Census, the tribal population is nearly 34% of the state’s total population. Though the tribe under study is distributed unevenly in almost all the districts of the state, their main concentration is in Churachandpur district. In order to get a clear picture of their changing society, six villages have been selected for a case study; three villages in their area of concentration and another three villages in their area of dispersion, which will be described in the latter chapter.

District Churachandpur is located in the Southern part of Manipur between the Manipur river in the East and the Barak river in the West; covering an area of 4,570 Square Kilometres. It lies within the latitudes of 24ºN to 24º40’N and the longitudes 93ºE to 94ºE. Churachandpur district assumes an isolated entity not only in its geographical settings but also in peopling by virtue of the land. The whole of Churachandpur district is hilly and is covered with rough and uneven terrain that has a narrow scope for rapid economic development. Due to the economic disadvantage, the region is thinly inhabited by several tribal groups whose main occupation is Jhum agriculture, which depends solely on the vagaries of the Monsoon.

Senapati district was earlier known as Manipur north district. On November, 14th 1969 Manipur North district was formed out of the erstwhile Manipur district and was inaugurated on 16 November of the same year. It was renamed Senapati district on 15th July
183. The district borders Nagaland on the North, Thoubal and Bishenpur district with Imphal from the southern boundary line, Ukhrul district on the east and Tamenglong district in the west. Senapati district is mainly a hilly region varying in altitude from 1061 to 1788 metres generally. The total area of this district is 3771 square kilometers. It is made up of three constituent sub-divisions namely; Mao-Maram, Sadar Hills East and Sadar Hills West. The total population of the district according to 1991 census was 2,08,406 persons, and in 2001 it increases to 379,214 persons. The district is essentially rural in terms of its population composition the scheduled tribe population in the district as per 1991 census is enumerated at 175206 persons i.e. constituting about 9.5 percent of the total tribal population of the state.

1.8 Data Base and Methodology

In geographical studies, it is quite possible that necessary spatial data will be made available from different sources. The basic data for this study is collected from various documentary sources; published and unpublished. The study is based upon data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data is based on a comprehensive field observations seeking information about occupations, educations, social and cultural aspects; and also discussions with eminent elders and household questionnaires. Field data is especially collected pertaining to migration, size of family, literacy level, age-group, occupational structure and changes in their society. For intensive study, four villages have been studied in order to have a clearer picture of the changes undergone by the Vaiphei as a whole and also the present scenario of the socio-economic condition of the tribe. The total sample comprises of 279 households with a total population of 1,473 persons in four villages. The methods for collecting data specifically for this study are:

i) Experiences and Observation,

ii) Interviews, and
iii) Filling in household census schedules for each family.

The secondary data, on the other hand, includes census reports and statistical handbooks, published and unpublished literatures, journals, magazines and newspapers. For the study of the historical background and process of migration, books and seminar papers written in Vaiphei and other regional dialects as well as English by various authors are consulted. Based on this information, a map of their route of migration is prepared. The study area being agriculturally backward, traditional aspects of economic life are more prominent here. Therefore, the following variables are studied for assessing the changing social pattern of the Vaiphei society:

(i) occupational structure, (ii) distribution, (iii) literacy,
(iv) sex ratio, (v) percentage of main workers, (vi) family size,
(vii) dependency ratio, (viii) health, infrastructural facilities, etc.

Materials for reconstructing early Vaiphei history and their migration are extremely difficult to obtain due to lack of written records. As such, the task of reconstruction of their history and migration has been done mostly relying on informal interview with older persons having profound knowledge of early Vaiphei history i.e. oral tradition. To analyze the distributional pattern of the Vaiphei population, various census handbooks are used. Apart from these, information is based on observations, experiences, church sources and visits to the core and peripheries of the Vaiphei settlements. In order to understand present distributions, maps are prepared by using suitable cartographic methods whenever it is found necessary and applicable. The present social status of the tribe is analyzed by graphical representation of their occupational structures and literacy levels of the four study villages. The study is conducted with a time frame since the coming of Christian missionaries, who inculcate western education system in the area till recent time, during which the change is examined and analyzed. Attempt is also made to understand and compare the living
conditions of the people based on family size and occupational structures. The core district of their concentration and their peripheral areas are identified by using quantitative techniques. The core district is the area where the percentage of the Vaiphei population is most substantial while the peripheral areas are those areas where there is a sizeable population of the Vaiphei.

1.9 Chapterisation

The thesis is incorporated into six chapters as below:-

Chapter I: Introduction: the introductory chapter attempts to conceptualize the needs and relevance of the present study such as statement of the problem, objectives, selection of the study area, hypothesis, data-base and methodology adopted in the study and review of literature.

Chapter II: The second chapter offered a general description of the physical setting of the study area. The physiographic, climate, drainages, soil types of the state will be discuss in order to understand the role of the physical conditions of the study area on the people better. Attempt is also made to analyze the social and demographic composition of the study area; and also the relationship between the geographical setting and process of migration and distribution of Vaiphei in the study area.

Chapter III: This chapter highlighted the traditional institutions of the Vaiphei society of Manipur viz. the society, marriage, village, dormitory, dress, customs, status of women etc. side by side with their economy; so as to understand the changes they have gone through. It also elucidates their myth of origin, the dispersal from their original place and the process of migration in the historical past, based on different views, to understand their historical and cultural background. It also deals with the present pattern of distribution of the Vaiphei, and in the process, the core and peripheries of their settlement areas are identified.
Chapter IV: This chapter analyzed the changes in social economy of the Vaiphei tribe on various social dynamics of human life; as it existed on the eve of British occupation the hill areas of Manipur towards the end of the 19th century A.D, and in particular, before the advent of Christianity in 1910 to the present. This chapter attempts to take up the methodological approach of the study. Attempt is also made to highlight the factors that led to the socio-economic changes in their society.

Chapter V: This chapter assessed the impact of the major factors of change in their society through the ages i.e. Christianity with education, in terms of literacy and health standards of the tribe. Attempt is also made to explain the responses to this change to their traditional social order.

Chapter VI: The Villages of Study: this chapter deals with the four study villages in terms of their family size, house type, occupational structure, dependency ratio, age and sex composition, sex-ratio, and literacy level. This chapter, not only examine the present scenario of the socio-economic condition of the Vaiphei, but also the aspects in which it has maintained the continuity.

Chapter VII: Summary and Conclusion is a summary of all the five chapters and conclusion of the thesis.