

## CHAPTER III

### LAND AND PEOPLE

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Tangkhuls are the Naga tribe living in Ukhrul district of Manipur. Manipur is a small state surrounded by hill ranges from all sides. Manipur lies between 23° 83'N and 25° 68' N latitude and between 93° 3 'E and 94° 78 'E longitude covering an area of 22,327 square kilometers. In the east, it touches the international border of Myanmar, to the south Mizoram, to the west Assam and to the north Nagaland. The state popularly known as the “Jewel of the East” is located strategically in the easternmost corner of India and played an important role of a buffer zone during the British rule in India. Topographically it is a hilly terrain. One third of the total area is plain and hills and jungles cover the rest. Primary jungles are still available in large parts of the hilly region. As per census of 2011, the population of the State is 2,721,756. The literacy rate is 79.85%. The climate throughout the year is temperate- quite pleasant. The maximum temperature reached up to 34.3°C (14 May, 1995) and the minimum temperature of 00.0°C (25 January, 1995). The rainy season in Manipur starts from the month of May to mid-September.

Manipur is connected with the outside world by two National Highways— National Highway NH 39 and the National Highway NH 53. Another national Highway NH 150 has been added as the third lifeline. NH 39 link-up with the railhead at Dimapur (Nagaland) and the NH 53 with the railhead at Jiribam (Manipur) and Silchar (Assam). The NH 150 has converted the old existing State Highways from

Jessami to Tipaimukh through Imphal. Most of the major roads pass through the capital city Imphal, which acts as the main centre of all economic and institutional activities. (Singh 2009)

Manipur has currently nine administrative districts.

**Table 3.1 District, Area and Headquarters of Manipur**

District	Area	Headquarters
Bishnupur	496	Bishnupur
Churachandpur	4570	Churachandpur
Chandel	3313	Chandel
Imphal East	709	Porompat
Imphal West	519	Lamphelpat
Senapati	3271	Senapati
Tamenglong	4391	Tamenglong
Thoubal	514	Thoubal
Ukhrul	4544	Ukhrul

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>

### 3.2 Ukhrul district

Ukhrul district is tucked in the northeastern state of Manipur. It lies about 84 km kilometers to the North East of Imphal, the capital city of Manipur. It covers an area of 4544 sq. kms flanked by Myanmar in the east, Nagaland in the north, Chandel and Thoubal districts in the south and Senapati and Imphal districts in the west. It has a

population of 183,115 at the 2011 Indian census. A border district stretching for about 200kms of international boundary, Ukhrul also offers great scope for border trade and serves as a gateway of India to South East Asia.

Ukhrul district is a mountainous region. In the heart of the district it is broken up length-wise into four mountain ranges and they tapered off to two mountain ranges in the north and south respectively. They are Angoching and Somra in the extreme east; Kamjong-Grihang range in the south east; Mapithel and Shiroy (Shiroy) Kashong range in the centre; and Tungou and Somdal range in the west.

Mapithel range is the watershed between Thoubal and Tuyungbi rivers. Shiroy Kashong range commands a view of the open rolling mountains. The extensive terrain on the east is dominated by Angoching. North east of the district is the Khayangphung peak at an elevation of 9352 feet, the highest in the district and second only to the highest peak of Manipur, the Teneu 9824 feet in Senapati district. But the most well known is the majestic Shiroy peak at an elevation of 8474 feet.

### **3.2.1 Rivers**

Cutting through the deep gorges and the scenic valleys are the swift flowing nine rivers- the Thoubal, Tuyungbi, Maglang, Chamu (Sanalok), Nambalok, Challou, Ihang, Iril and Laniye (Rangazak). There is another small river between Ukhrul and Chandel district border- the Taret river in the south. But the principal river of the district is Thoubal.

### **3.2.2 Lake**

About 70kms east of Ukhrul not far from the international boundary, there is a beautiful lake called Kachauphung Magi. The lake is situated in a plateau surrounded by a number of knolls known as the Achuwa magi hills. The lake is about nine acres in size and about 9 to 12 feet deep. The lake is uniquely shaped like the Indian map. There were migratory ducks in this lake. Due to the presence of floating mass of reeds, it fails to exhibit its full magnificence. Since a good amount of common carps and enurrel fishes already exist this lake has an ample scope for pisciculture too. The size of the lake can be increased by bringing water from Nily stream which is flowing nearby.

### **3.2.3 Waterfall**

There is one notable waterfall namely the Khayang Tilulu fall near the Indo-Myanmar boundary in the east of Ukhrul about 60 kms. The fall consists of three stages of cascading falls. The breath taking cascading waterfall is 227 metres high.

### **3.2.4 Geology**

Geologically, Ukhrul district is of volcanic origin, whereas the rest of state is tertiary formation. Ukhrul district comprises of three main groups of rocks viz; limestone belonging to cretaceous age (90 million years); the Disang group of rocks consisting of shale, sandstone and siltstone; and arenaceous rocks of the Tipam group. The limestone occurs as a narrow belt near Ukhrul where it attains maximum thickness of 80 M.

### 3.2.5 Flora

Ukhrul is best introduced through its famous Shiroi lily flower- the abode of which is Shiroi Kashong, located about 15 km in the east of the district capital, Ukhrul. Shiroi Kashong range stretching from north to south ranging from 4900' to 8474' above the sea level is indeed one of the most strikingly beautiful ranges in Manipur. In 1946 Mr. Kingdon Ward who came to Manipur Hills for botanical collections on behalf of the New-York Botanical Society made a sensational discovery of the famous Shiroi lily, which bagged the prestigious prize of the 1948 Royal Horticultural Society Flower Show in London. *Lilium Macklinae* Sealy is the botanical name of Shiroi lily named after the maiden name of the wife of its discoverer Kingdon F. Ward. They are seasonal flowering plants and are at their best in May and June when they bloom. The peak season of its bloom is May 15 to June 5. The height of the plant is between 1 to 3 ft. and 1 to 7 flowers per plant. In former years one could see even upto 12 flowers per plant. Native to Ukhrul, the specie belongs to the Lillian family distributed in the damped alpine areas of Shiroi peak. The flower is light pinkish in colour. Its beauty lies in its bell shape petals. It is rare and endemic species grown only on the Shiroi peak.

Besides Shiroi Lily four other Iris species are also grown in the area. They are- *Kaem ferii*, *Kumaonensis*, *Milesii*, *Wattii*. Not less than 150 herbacious flowering plants including rare orchids of various hues and crimson red rhododendrons locally known as *Kokleiwon* blooms with the advent of spring time on the grassy slopes of Shiroi Kashong. In between the second and third peaks under moss clad seven Rhododendron species including white variety viz; *R. Arboretum*, *R. Johnstoneanum*,

R.Lindleyi, R. Macabeanum, R. Manipursensis, R. Triflorum, R. Vaccinioides and various multicoloured flowering annuals littered the ground in profusions. The rare white rhododendrons thrive at high altitudes of Phangrei. Towards the end of winter season the hillsides at Shiroi and Phangrei, are a riot of colours of rhododendrons and Bauhineas blooming in succession.

Some of the most spectacular wild roses are grown in the region. They are: Rosa Gigantea, R. Involucrata, R. Longicuspis, R. Sericea. Epiphytic ferns, tree ferns, wild azaleas of several kinds and orchids are also common. Even the ground is covered with thick carpet of humus. There are hundreds of varieties of trees, barderian flowering plants, orchids of enumerable hues and kinds, epiphytic ferns, varied species of plants and shrubs. Some commonly found species of plants and trees are: Alder (*Alnus nepalensis*), *Prunus cirusirdes*, *Symingtonia*, *Acacia auriculiformis*, *Parkia javanica*, *Paraserriantes falcotaria*, *Michelia oblanga*, *Cmilina arborea*, pinus kerya, *robinea pseduoacacia* etc. Here one encounters different species of oak viz: *Querous fenistrata*, *Q. friffithii*, *Q. lamellose* and *Q. Xylocarpa*.

### **3.2.6 Forest**

Over 50% of the geographical area of Ukhrul is covered by forest which range from tropical rain forest to sub-alpine forest. They are mainly of pine, mixed with oak, chestnut, alder walnut, uningthou (*Phoecha-Hensiana*), fir and mixed evergreen forest. It covers an area of more than 1,400 sq. km and is found in different altitudes. In lower altitudes the most common species are of Oak (*Quescus-spp*) mixed with

chestnut (*castanopsis-app*). Teak is common to the slope overlooking the Kabo valley. Wild tea plant is found in Kamjong Sub-Division of Grihang, and Ningchou area.

Sadly, many areas have become barren of big trees due to deforestation viz; heavy extraction of Timber specially in Chingai Sub-Division and Jhum cultivation in Kasom Khullen, Phungyar and Kamjong Sub-Division; and Jhum cultivation in Kasom Khullen, Phungyar and Kamjong Sub-Divisions.

Only in a small area of about 300 sq. km in the Angoching, Khayangphung and Khamasom forest bordering Myanmar some dense forest is found. This area is mostly inaccessible due to difficult terrain and has, therefore, relatively remained untouched and forms a natural habitat for a large number of rare and indigenous flora and fauna.

The forests in Ukhrul District are traditionally owned by the local villages as ancestral property. Only a small area under Litan Forest Range of about 20 sq. miles and another 18.8 sq. miles known as the Yaingangpokpi Reserved Forest are declared Govt. Reserved Forest vide Govt. order no. 55/7/84- For dated 29/11/89 under section 4 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (16 of 1927) published in Manipur Gazette Dated 10/1/1990.

### **3.2.7 Fauna**

Apart from the rich diversity of the flora Ukhrul District is also rich in fauna. Situated on the border with Myanmar on the east the forest of Ukhrul District is the home of various animals and birds namely, Tiger, Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear, Jackals Sambars, Deers, Wild Bison, Hoolock, Pangolin, Porcupines, Mountain Goats,

Gibbon, the Slow Loris, Wild Boar, the stump tailed Macaque, the pig tailed Macaque etc.

Birds, by their very being, take one's imaginations on a flight. All the members phasinidae are colourful but the Mrs. Hume Barbaked pheasant and the Blyth's Tragopans found in Shiroy Kashong range are the most spectacular. On the eastern flank of the Shiroy Kashong range broad leaved forest evergreen and semi-evergreen species, shelter some of the rarest form of wild life in the country. This is the home of Mrs. Hume's Barbaked pheasant and the Blyth's Tragopan, also known as *Rikshira Khangawa* in Tangkhul. Blyth's Tragopan is one of the most endangered pheasant species declared protected under the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972. The geographical distribution of this species is confined to Shiroy Kashong range and adjoining forest areas like Zingsui Khova, Kaphu and Khayangphung.

The great Indian Hornbill, Rufous necked hornbill, Wreathed Hornbill, Indian pied or lesser pied Hornbill and the brown backed Hornbills found in Ukhrul give testimony to the riches as well as the diversity in avifauna of Ukhrul District. There were also white wing wood duck, toucan, doves hoopoe, cuckoo etc. Wild ducks migrated from the Loktak lake during winter.

Unfortunately, a great deal of games has become extinct owing to the indiscriminate hunting. The reasons for the dwindling of wild life are not far to seek. Rapid deforestations resulting in habitat destructions coupled with indiscriminate hunting of games have threatened many species with extinction.

Proposed Shiroi National Park, because of its peculiar eco-system along with rare faunal, floral, geomorphological and Zoological association of varied genetic materials constitution of a National Park covering the entire Shiroi Kashong range is considered imperative for purpose of protecting the natural environment, propagating and also developing varied genetic materials of the region. The Government of Manipur has proposed to declare the entire Shiroi Kashong range as a National Park under Sub-Section (i) of Section 35 of the Wildlife Protection Amendment Act, 1982. However, the villagers are likely to be affected.

The mountain meadows situated on the windward sides is subjected to wild fire during dry season of the year. Every year thousands of tourists visit Shiroi peak mostly during the Shiroi Lily flowering season and they often collected bulbs of *Lilium Macklineae* for plantation elsewhere has increasingly posed a threat to the survival of the species. The extraction of timber and the collection of dalchini barks by wholesale cutting down of trees has further reduced intensity of the species in the natural forest on the leeward side on the mountain range.

### **3.2.8 Climate**

Owing to the elevation which it commands, the climate of Ukhrul District is healthy and salubrious and the heat of most parts of India, during summer, is unknown. Winter is cold, but the summers are pleasant. December to February form the coldest part of the season when frost occurs. The temperature in winter goes down to 0°C. During the hottest part of the year July and August the temperature in Ukhrul town is only on the average of 15°C to 25° C. The maximum temperature recorded in 1991 at

Litan was 33°C. The autumn season, September to November is the finest part of the year. The rainfall is abundant from May to September. The average annual rainfall is 5,551.9 millimetres. As a result, the climate is humid. It is a blessing in disguise as it gives support to orchids, mushrooms and moss which blooms uninterruptedly in the moist soil. Winds are generally high during March to May. They may become strong during thunderstorms.

### **3.2.9 Tourist destination spots**

Some of the tourist destination spots are: Khayang Peak, Khangkhui Cave, Shiroy Peak, Kachouphung Lake, Ango Ching, Hundung Mangva Cave, Dilily Water Fall near Khayang Phungtha, Azoa Jenephiu Magi Lake near Kachouphung, Saline Springs, Longpi Pottery at Longpi, Phangrei, Nillai Tea Estate etc.

### **3.2.10 Sub-divisions**

The District is divided into five Sub-Divisions Ukhrul Central, Chingai, Kamjong, Phungyar and Kasom Khullen.

### **3.3 Ukhrul town**

The Ukhrul Sub-Division with Ukhrul as the Headquarters of both the District and the Sub-Division occupies the central part of the district. Ukhrul Sub-Division was established in 1919. The Sub-Division was upgraded to a District in 1969. The Deputy Commissioner, who is the head of the district administration is assisted by one Additional Deputy Commissioner and some Sub-Deputy Collectors (SDC). The Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO)- Cum Block Development Officer (BDO) is assisted by one

SDC and three Extension Officers. The Sub-Division has two SDC circles at Sanakeithel and Lungchong Maiphei.

All the District officers including the office of the Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate, the District Council, the Superintendent of Police, and the 10 Sector “B” Range Brigade Headquarters are located in Ukhrul. Besides the headquarters of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Manipur Rifles, the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion Assam Rifles and the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion Assam Rifles are located in Yikun, Somsai and Shangshak respectively under Ukhrul Sub- Division. (Muivah 1996)

Ukhrul town comprises of twenty five localities viz; Somsai, Naphang, Meizailung, Khararphung, Luyainao, Kasomtang, Awungtang, Awontang, Alungtang, Tangrei, Rayotang, Khaiyishat, Greenland, Wino, Kahumtang, Viewland, Khamphasom, Seipet, Phungreitang, Khaivaren, Mayotang, Finance, Soyatang, Hamleikhong and Dungrei. According to the Government of India 2001 census, the town has 3241 households with a total of 20156 (11514 male and 8642 female) population. There are three Christian denominations—six Baptist churches, two Catholic churches and three Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church in Ukhrul town. The table below shows the name of the Churches, denominations and strength of denominations. (Source: fieldwork)

**Table 3.2. Name of the Churches, denominations and strength of denominations**

Sl. No.	Name of the Church	Denomination	No. of Church members	% of denomination
1	Hunphun	Baptist	16,898	83.83
2	Phungyo	Baptist		
3	UBC (Union Baptist Church)	Baptist		
4	UTBC (Ukhrul Town Baptist Church)	Baptist		
5	Viewlang	Baptist		
6	Zingtoze	Baptist		
7	Mary Help of Christian	Catholic	2798	13.88
8	St. Andrew	Catholic		
9	Awontang SDA	SDA	460	2.28
10	Khararphung SDA	SDA		
11	Viewland SDA	SDA		

Source: Fieldwork

Today, the percentage of Christianity among the Tangkhuls is 99 (TBL Souvenir, 1996). According to 2011 government of India census, the percentage of literacy for the State as a whole is 79.85. In the case of Ukhrul, the percentage is around 81.87. There are 18 High Schools and a Higher Secondary School in Ukhrul town alone. One of the leading high schools is Alice Christian High School named after the wife of William Pettigrew, the first missionary to introduce Christianity to Tangkhuls. The only College at Ukhrul town is christened as Pettigrew College, which has been in existence for the last 49 years (source: fieldwork).

### **3.4 People**

#### **3.4.1 Nomenclature**

The name Tangkhuls was given the Meiteis. The northern Tangkhuls were also called the Luhupas. The name Naga was given by the Burmese (Myanmar), which, in Myanmar means people with pierced earlobes because piercing of the earlobe is a widespread practice amongst the Naga people including the Tangkhuls. (Muivah 1996) Tangkhul is one of the major tribes of Manipur. (Ruivah 1993)

#### **3.4.2 Origin**

The earliest home of the Tangkhul was the upper reaches of Huang ho and Yangtze rivers which lies in the Zingjiang province of China. Like other inhabitants of the desert areas of the world that face a lot of hardship, the Tangkhuls, dispersed from this place to different directions. One group moved towards east and southeast to become known as Chinese, another group moved south westward and came to be known as Tibetans; and still another group moved southward to become the tribes of Tibeto-Burman which included the Tangkhuls and other Naga sub tribes. That was between 10,000 B.C and 8000 B.C. This movement has continued into recent historic times. S.K Chatterjee (cited in Sanajaoba,) noted that from 2000 B.C onwards, Sino-Tibetan speaker from China pushed south and west and entered India. According to W.I Singh (cited in Muivah 1996), in his “The History of Manipur”, the Tangkhuls settled in Samjok (Thuangdut) area in Myanmar. They belong to the Yakkha tribe of China. The Tangkhuls were first noticed in Manipur in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D by Poreiton, one of the earliest kings of a principality in Manipur valley. (Kamei 1991)

The Tangkhuls as also the other Naga tribes came to Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh through Myanmar. Some of them also settled in Myanmar and did not venture further. However, their movement over Myanmar and into India spread over a period of time. They entered the present habitat in waves following one another and in some cases in close succession. The Tangkhuls came together with the Maos, Poumeis, Marams, and Thangals because all of them have references to their dispersal from Makhel a Mao village in Senapati district. They had also erected megaliths at Makhel in memory of their dispersion various directions.

The Tangkhuls point out to the association of their forefathers with the seashore. Most of the ornaments of the Tangkhuls such as *kongsang*, *huishon* etc. were made of cowrie and conch shell a prominent feature of the people who live on the shore.

By 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D the Tangkhuls were living in Samjok (Thuangdut) in Myanmar. The Tangkhuls began to disperse from Samjok after the invasion of Ko-lo-feng and his successor I-mau-shun the king of the Nan-chao in the closing part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D and beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. They were further driven towards the north west of Myanmar by the Shan people.

Thus the Tangkhuls like the other Naga tribes travelled from China to Myanmar until they finally reached the present habitat traversing though innumerable snow covered landscapes, mountains and wild forests confronting wild beasts and wild tribes. The exodus of the Tangkhuls from China to Myanmar and finally to India is indeed a heroic story of human courage and endurance. (Muivah 1996)

### **3.4.3 Village administration**

Tangkhul village is a politically organized association. Villages are generally ruled by chieftains. The Tangkhul chiefs are either elected or selected for a definite period or for a lifetime. Some of them were hereditary. The village chief is called '*Awunga*', a title equivalent in English to 'King'. The village chief is prominent at all social and religious gatherings and festivals of the village. As a token of respect for the chief and his position in the village he is honoured with a portion of meat of all animals killed during the festivals. The youth of the village help him build and repair his house as well as cultivate his field. Though the power to govern is vested in him, he rules with the aid of elected Councillors. The members of the Council are either elected or appointed. It is customary to give representation to all the clans residing in the village. A big clan may send two representatives, whereas a smaller clan may send one. It should be remembered, that the head of the clan is usually the eldest male member of the clan who is required to hold the position till his death. However on certain circumstances where the head is too old and unfit to be a functional representative, in a clan meeting, the clan members tactfully induce the old man to nominate a younger and more capable person to represent the clan on his behalf in the Village Council.

The administrative functions of the Council include the maintenance of the village water supply and footpaths; construction of new paths and bridges across streams and rivers etc. The Village Council also settles any disputes in the village. (Horam 1975)

### 3.4.4 Head hunting

The Tangkhuls practice head hunting (*mikui-kharang*) and decorate their houses with human skulls, which had a great significance, for the number of skulls reflected the degree of the owner's merit or honour (Singh 1996). In Ukhrul one can still find human skulls (numbering around 40), exhibited by the headman of Ukhrul in his house.



Plate 3.1 Human skulls exhibited by the headman of Ukhrul

Village disputes which generally led to war and headhunting arose out of breach of sexual sanctions, assault and injury, theft, failure to keep the agreement and offences of similar nature, encroachment on land etc. They strongly believed that only the righteous would attain victory. To prove their bravery, courage and honesty, heads were collected and made known to all people. "Leadership was often attained when a person was able to show his courage and prowess by counting the heads he had taken. Some people, including the colonialist writers, considered the Naga headhunters as

‘uncivilized’ or extremely ‘barbarous’. Head hunting was not a senseless killing of the enemy but a tradition connected with the tribal principles of heroism, justice, honour, pride, recognitions etc., and the victim’s head was a trophy of honour and chivalry.” (Zehol 2009)

The heads taken in a raid were placed for five days on a heap of stones. Thereafter the heads were taken to a nearby stream or river, cleaned thoroughly and the skulls were kept in the village headman’s house. The more heads, the more honorable the village was. Though headhunting was a practice there were very strict rules about killing anyone they wanted. Killing of innocent people was forbidden. (Ruivah 1993)

Head hunting was outlawed by the British administrator before the coming of Christianity but continued to exist till the Tangkhuls started converting into Christianity (i.e., till the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century). Thus it was partly a result of the new administrative measures taken by the British, and partly due to the realization of its detrimental aspects by the people. Finally under the influence of the new faith, headhunting was gradually given up. (Solo 1986)

#### **3.4.5 Relation with the people of valley**

The ancient Tangkhul history is an unrecorded past. However history of the Tangkhuls became more enlightened by the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century owing to the cultural, trade and sometimes turbulent relations which had grown up with the people in the valley. We find a reference to the Tangkhuls as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Thawanthaba (1195-1231) of Ningthouja Meitei dynasty. The chronicles

refer to the frequent raids in many tribal villages. Thawanthaba raided Chingshong Tangkhul village, which was defeated and burnt down.

There has always been some form of relationship between the Tangkhuls and the Meiteis in terms of political alliance and trade relation. Some items of Naga material-culture indicate a long history of contact between plain and hills. The 'Elephant Cloth' (*Leirumph*), for instance, resplendent with complex animal designs, worn by the Nagas of Manipur, has its origin in the wish of the ruler of Manipur in the mid-seventeenth to present his Naga allies with a special cloth. The popular Tangkhul shawl '*Changkhom*' is also known as '*Karaophi*' in Manipur. The Tangkhul dance (*pheichak*) was known as '*Chingkheiol*' in Manipur, from the fact that it came from '*Chingkhei*' (North east of Imphal).

It was during the reign of the most powerful Meitei King Pamheiba Garib Nawaz, (1709-1748) that the heartland area of the Tangkhul country was brought under the suzerainty of Manipur for the first time. In 1716, the king's forces invaded the great Tangkhul village of Hundung and sixty-eight prisoners were captured. In 1733, the king sent a military expedition to Ukhrul and was victorious. The outcome of the expeditions incurred heavy casualty on the King's forces; the royal chronicles records the death of seventy Meitei soldiers. The defeat of these two big villages situated in the heart of Tangkhul country was a landmark in the establishment of the Meitei political hegemony over the Tangkhul hills which started feeling the brunt of the Meitei power. The Ningel inscription of King Garib Nawaz refers to the Khullakpa of Ukhrul. Ukhrul was the headquarters of the Tangkhul Long (Tangkhul Assembly), as well as the Tangkhul annual fair locally called "Leih Khangapha" used

to be held at Somsai in Ukhrul. Hence the fall of Ukhrul in 1733 in the hands of the Meitei Maharaja herald the fall of the Tangkhul country.

The next significant relationship between the hills and the valley took place during the reign of Bhagyachandra (1759-1762 and 1763-1798). In 1779 king Bhagyachandra established a new capital at Langthabal about seven kilometres south east of Imphal. For the next 17 years Langthabal remained its capital. King employed many Tangkhul and Kabui Nagas in the digging of moats around the new capital of Langthabal. Of the Tangkhul Chiefs, the Khullakpa of Hundung and Ukhrul made friendship with the king. The Tangkhul chiefs of Ukhrul, Hundung and Huining came to pay respect to the king. King Bhagyachandra allotted land to the Tangkhuls for settlement of a Tangkhul village in the valley at a place called Puru pat.

Upto the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D the Tangkhul country was relatively independent and self contained. From the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the later part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Tangkhul village-states gradually lost their independence to the more organized Meitei (Manipur Valley) kingdom. During this period there was rapid growth of Meitei power and they wanted to establish their suzerainty over the hills surrounding the Manipur valley. Owing to the superiority of fire arms and being more organized the Meitei Maharaja was able to defeat the Tangkhul villages one after another. With the downfall of Ukhrul and Hundung in 1733 (the Seat of Tangkhul Long), the Tangkhuls in Manipur except the Tangkhuls in Somra Hills (now in Myanmar) lost their independence.

The chief advantage of the Meiteis over the Tangkhuls was the use of fire arms and gun powder. Otherwise the Tangkhuls were a formidable warrior race. In the words of major general, Sir James Johnstone, “The Burmese tried in vain to subdue the Tangkhools (Tangkhuls), and in one case a force of seven hundred men, that they sent against them, was entirely annihilated”. Secondly the Meiteis had well established themselves as a nation with a common king and strong, organized and trained army while the Tangkhuls like the other hill tribes were still living in their village-states. (Muivah 1996)

#### **3.4.6 Trade and commerce**

The relations between the Tangkhuls and the Meiteis during the medieval period were not only of wars and conquest but of trade and commerce as well. The Tangkhuls supplied cotton to the valley in Sanakeithel, which was the principal market in Imphal. The Tangkhuls also used Manipuri coin of bell-metal locally called ‘*sel*’ as a medium of exchange which was first introduced during the reign of Khagemba (1597-1652). (Ibid.)

In the past goods were exchanged among the villages in the form of barter system. With the introduction of monetary system, the practice of barter lost its importance. Today many Tangkhuls are engaged in trade and commerce within and outside the village or town. This aspect of economy is a new introduction that gradually picked up its pace with the improvement of transport and communication. There are three different market places in Ukhrul, viz. Wino Bazaar, Viewland Bazaar and Phungreitang Vegetable Market. The agricultural and handloom products are

ferried and sold in these markets. The imported goods like medicine, stationery items, food grains, tobacco etc. are transported from the said markets to the other villages.

### **3.4.7 Physical appearance**

According to anthropological classification, the Nagas belong to a Mongoloid stock. (Shimray 2004: 1698) The tribes of Manipur belong to Tibeto-Burman group of Indo-Mongoloid people. They are generally medium to above medium stature, mesocephalic head, every prosopic broad flat round face, broad high chick-bone, flat platyrrhine to leptorrhine nose, brownish, yellow-skin, narrow Mongoloid oblique eyes. They are strong and sturdy. The Naga tribes of Manipur have all the affinities with the Naga tribes of Nagaland and have some affinities with the tribes of South East Asian countries. (Sen 1993)

Tangkul men shave the hair on either side of the head and let it grow in short stubble down the centre of the skull like a cock's comb, a curious custom which enables them to be distinguished at a glance from other hillmen. (Allen, 2002: 59) The unmarried girls used to cut their hair straight in front across the forehead level with the eyebrows to the temple but on reaching marriageable age they grow the front hair long. The hair behind was allowed to grow and flow loose over the shoulders (Ruivah 1993)

### **3.4.8 Dress**

The dress of Tangkul men consists of a simple cloth worn round the waist and tied in a knot in front leaving the ends hanging down. These ends are fringed with straw pendants. The wrap around (*mekhala*) is made of stout cotton woven in red and blue

stripes two inches wide and horizontal. Over the body they wear in cold weather a long cloth in red and blue stripes to which in the case of chiefs custom permits the addition of handsome border. Another pattern is in white stripes with terra cotta stripes and a black and white checker pattern, the plain variety being worn by the common people and the variety with the fringed border twelve to eighteen inches deep with white orange, green and red stripes being restricted to chiefs.

On special occasions the men wear a much more elaborate costume than that described above. It consists of a handsome kilt embroidered with ornaments like sequins and the headdress with decorations of toucan feathers and tresses of hair.

The women wear small caps of blue cloth when working in the fields. Their petticoats reach from the waist to the knee and are made of cotton cloth manufactured in the weaving villages with red and white or black and white stripes two inches in width. Occasionally those who have some pretence to wealth or position wear petticoats of red with small stripes of white and black. (Hodson 1911)

Though there are common cloths for men and women, there are also some cloths exclusively meant for male and female. It is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.3 Some of the traditional clothes and wears**

<b>Exclusively for men</b>	<b>Exclusively for women</b>	<b>Mostly worn by men</b>	<b>Mostly worn by women</b>	<b>Common</b>
<i>Malao</i> (loin cloth), <i>Laokha</i> , <i>Mayarnaow ui thangkang kachon</i> etc.	<i>Seichang kashan</i> , <i>Thangkang kashan</i> , <i>Shanaowui thangkang kachon</i> , <i>Khuilang kashan</i> , <i>Kongra kashan</i> , <i>Shanphaila</i> , <i>Zingtai kashan</i> , <i>Luingamla kashan</i> , <i>Phangyai kashan</i> , <i>Kahang kashan</i> etc.	<i>Haora</i> , <i>Phorei kachon</i> , <i>Luirim</i>	<i>Chonkhom</i> , <i>Khuilang kachon</i>	<i>Raiwat kachon</i> , <i>Phingui kachon</i> , <i>Phaphir kachon</i>

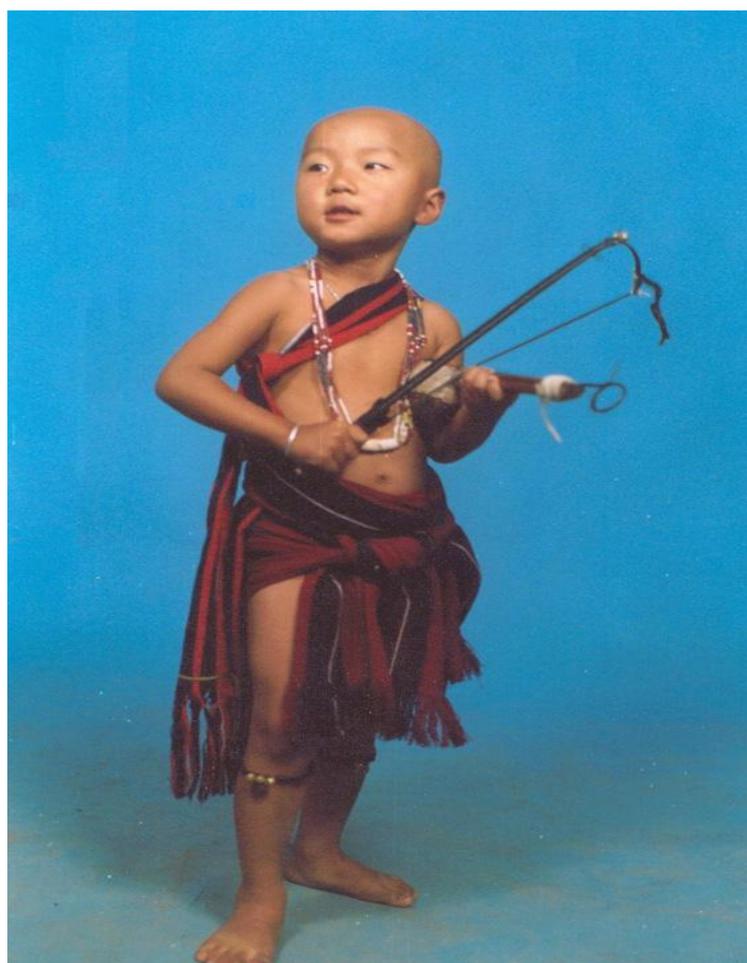


Plate 3.2 A Tangkhul boy (Saka) in his traditional attire

Today, the Tangkhuls wear both traditional and western dresses. Western dresses include jeans, skirts, tops, gown, jackets, coat etc. Traditional attires are worn mostly during church services and festivals.

### **3.4.9 Ornaments**

Among the Tangkhuls both men and women wear ornaments. The men have their ears pierced at an early age and gradually distend the holes in the lobes until they are large enough to receive rolls of cotton of considerable size or bamboo ornaments. Brass cylindrical ornaments are often inserted. The ascending cartilage of the ear is frequently bored with numerous holes, into which small skeins of black or blue cotton are introduced. They wear necklace of beads, which are often very costly, and, as a mark of distinction, a collar of red and yellow cane-work with geometrical ornamentation in cowries and three hair tails hanging down the back.

They wear heavy brass armlets on the forearm and sometimes coiled wire rings. These rings serve a useful purpose as well as being ornamental, as they employ them to deliver a downward crushing blow. They also wear cane or brass rings coiled below the knee, which are said to give support when climbing hills with loads. Similar cane rings are in use in other parts of the hills. They also wear *luhup* or headgear, an article, which is not merely decorative but also serves a very useful purpose as a war helmet. The basis of this headpiece is a conical structure of work about a foot high: over this is a layer of fur and hair black and red in colour: to the sides are stitched as wings round structures filled in with coloured seeds in rings: in front is a disc of polished brass with a button-shaped knob in the centre: slips of bamboo, feathers, etc.,

are also attached to the headpiece, and occasionally a long crescent-shaped piece of buffalo horn scraped thin is placed in front of the headgear. Warriors of distinction who have slain many people wear the hair of their victims depending from the side ornaments of the headgear in the first instance, and, as they accumulate, made into a kind of fringe, worn round the face like the mane of lion.

The ornaments worn by the women are necklaces of the polished hexagonal cornelian beads. They have the ears pierced and wear similar but smaller ear ornaments. They wear metal armlets which are coiled up on the upper arm and are made of a white metal not dissimilar to solder. (Ibid.)

**Table 3.4 Ornaments**

<b>Man's</b>	<b>Woman's</b>
<i>Mayong Pasi</i> (headgear)	<i>Huishon</i> (headgear)
<i>Vakui</i>	<i>Haar</i> (armlet)
<i>Mayongcha</i> (necklace)	<i>Kazao</i> (bangle)
<i>Pheimakhei</i> (anklet)	<i>Nakhui</i> (earring)
<i>Kangra</i>	<i>Kongsang</i> (necklace)
<i>Nakhui</i> (earring)	<i>Khomasim</i>
	<i>Mani</i>
	<i>Tansop</i> (basket)
	<i>Pheimakhei</i> (anklet)

At present, men have stopped wearing earring. Here it may be referred that the coming of Christianity has brought some significant changes with the ear piercing ceremony. Piercing of the ear is no more practiced with the boys though it is continued with the girls. Other ornaments mentioned above are worn occasionally by the Tangkhuls.

#### **3.4.10 Weapons and implements**

The weapons of offence in common use among the Tangkhuls are *Kazei* (spear), *changvei* (armour), *mala* (bow and arrow), *raikhai* (sword), *khairai* (*dao*), and *kuisikhainao* (knife). There is an addition of guns as their weapons with the introduction of modern technology.

The implements used regularly are the hoe (*tin*) and the *dao* (*khai*), which serves a variety of purposes. Women use *zeithing* (iron staff) as a drill and as a support when climbing up and down the hills. Some of the other agricultural implements include *ngaha* (axe), *zangkui* (sickle), *karphang* etc. The tools of the village blacksmith are a set of hammers of graduated weight and size, bellows and stones on which they sharpen the spears and *daos*. The bellows are made on an ingenious principle. A pair of bamboo cylinders is placed side by side with a common exhaust pipe. The pistons are fitted fairly close and are worked by hand alternately so that the air is forced down one cylinder into the fire while an exhaust is simultaneously maintained by the other cylinder and piston. (Ibid.)

#### **3.4.11 Internal social structure**

The entire Naga society as a whole is patriarchal determining descent through male lineage. The father being the supreme authority descent is reckoned on the basis of male lineage (Luikham 2009). T.C Hodson observed thus “The Naga Society is patrilineal and male ascendancy is completed with them. The essential feature of the Naga family is that its members are descended from the eldest male resident in the house, the mother being under the rule of exogamy, brought in from another clan that

is an entirely different group of families. The household is a true social unit, as is proved by the fact that the head of the family has to perform certain religious duties in reference to the House Deity or to use Meithei [Meitei] nomenclature, *Imung lai*; the area of whose influence is strictly bounded by the limits of the caves of the house and the noon day shadow.” (1911:70) The property of a Tangkhul usually consists of both movable and immovable possessions. Succession and inheritance is transmitted in the male line by following the rule of primogeniture. The best share of property is always given to the eldest son and the second best to the second and so on. The whole social system of the Tangkhul is built up around the clan system. From the Tangkhul point of view a clan- *shangnao* is an association of the people of both sexes, membership of which is determined by unilineal descent (Ruivah 1993).

#### **3.4.12 Language**

The language spoken by Tangkhul today is known by their ethnic name Tangkhul *tui* (language). The Tangkhul language belongs to the Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman subfamily. It consists of many dialects. Each village has its own dialect named after the village. The intelligibility among the village dialects varies according to the distance between them. Farther the village, the lesser is the intelligibility. Ukhrul is the district headquarters and due to its socio-economic and political importance, most of the Tangkhuls know the dialect of Ukhrul, which is also the standard dialect of the Tangkhul language. Textbooks, biblical literature, journals etc., are printed in the Ukhrul dialect. It must nevertheless be mentioned here, that there is tonal and other pronounciational variations in the speech of the non-Ukhrul speakers when they speak the Ukhrul dialect. (Arokianathan 1982)

Almost all the individuals can speak Meitei (also called Manipuri), the lingua franca of the State. The villagers speak their village *tui* with the people of their own village, and Meitei to other tribes and Meiteis. The educated ones can speak English. Some can also speak Hindi with the influence of the outsiders.

### **3.4.13 Economy**

The Tangkhuls are mainly agriculturalists. The Tangkhuls of the southern side are also good potters. Earlier the Tangkhuls used to do shifting cultivation, but these days they seem to have picked up modern farming methods. Every family has its own field and all the members of the family except the disabled and the old, work in the fields. They grow paddy along with some vegetable like cabbage, potato etc. Rice is the staple food of the Tangkhuls. Dogs, pigs, and buffaloes are their domesticated animals. Small poultries are also kept in the house. (Ibid.)

### **3.4.14 Food habit**

Every meal of a Tangkhul inevitably contains pork or beef along with a type of chilly chutney called *kasaa thei*. They eat food twice a day, once before they go to the field in the morning, around 8.00 and the other when they return from the field in the evening around 6.00. Tangkhuls drink rice beer made out of a special variety of rice known as *makrei*. A strong concoction of the rice beer is called *zam* while a mild one is called *khor*. Every house knows the preparation of these varieties of rice beer and they prepare them for their own use. Rice beer is an essential item in all rituals and ceremonies. Offering rice beer to visitors is considered to be an act of respect. Smoking from a pot is very common among the Tangkhuls. Elders still use their

traditional type of smoke pot called *kaporham*. At present, after their conversion to Christianity, many have given up the habit of drinking (ibid: xiv-xv).

### **3.4.15 Music and dance**

Tangkhuls are music lovers and their songs are soft and melodious. Apart from encoding into the music the varied seasonal and cultural ideas and philosophies, music is a medium wherein historical events are also related in the lyrics. In as much as religious fervor is incorporated and composed in the songs, the romantic nature of the people also finds its expressions in the music. There are varieties of songs, some are mood special, some are festival/seasonal special. These folksongs and folklores can be taught and sang by anybody, anytime, while some have some specific musical expressive melodies of every region or area. These folksongs and folklores can be played or accompanied by musical instruments. Some of the musical instruments are: 1. *Tingteila* (Violin), 2. *Tala* (Trumpet), 3. *Phung* (Drum), 4. *Mazo* (Woman's mouth-piece), 5. *Sipa* (Flute), 6. *Kaha Ngashingkhon* (Bamboo pipe) etc. Corresponding to the rhythmic composition of the songs, the dances of the Tangkhuls are also rhythmic, exciting and vigorous. Thrilling as they are, there are also some special occasional dances, like the *Kathi Mahon* - dance for the dead, *La Khanganui* - virgin dance during *Luir* Festival, *Rai Pheichak* - war Dance etc. (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) The Tangkhul youth are also fond of western music and dance.



Plate 3.3 Rewben Mashangva, a Tangkhul folk artiste (National Tribal Awardee) & his son with Tangkhul musical instruments.

### 3.4.16 Games and sports

The Tangkhuls are lovers of sports and games. The Tangkhul games in general involves a lot of action and therefore require physical strength. In the game called *sawthingpherkashai* played by the boys, a long log is sent, by hitting with stick from a fixed point, to a boundary. The one who sends it far away from the boundary or at least to the boundary with a minimum number of strikes, wins.

*Harwangashangkoi*, another game played by the boys, has on one side a group numbering around nine. All the members of the group hold each other around the waist and stand behind a boundary line. The leader of the line who stands in the front

is called the “mother”. The one who stands opposite to this group is called the tiger-man *khangayei*. The *khangayei* runs along the boundary to touch any member of the group; whoever is touched by the tigerman is counted as out.

The other popular games played by the girls are *lungchukla*, *lungkotla* and *sawtheila*. *Lungchukla* has nine pairs of holes in a wooden piece with five seeds in each hole. The game is played by taking the seeds from one hole and distributing them in the following holes, one by one. When the seeds are over, the seeds in the next hole are taken and again distributed in the same manner. When the player meets with an empty hole after she finishes the seeds, she takes all the seeds to the next hole. And the next player takes her turn. If she meets two empty holes in rows, she loses her turn and the other one takes it up. The game continues until a player ends up with no seeds on any of the holes in her sides.

*Lungkotla* is a game played by spreading seeds (generally beans) on the ground. Throwing one seed above, the girl picks up as many seeds as possible from the ground without disturbing the adjacent seeds and catches the seed thrown above before it reaches the ground. The one who picks up a maximum number of seeds is the winner.

*Sawtheila* is played by girls keeping a big bean on one foot and hopping with one leg to a fixed point. The bean kept on the foot, should not fall down while hopping. Wrestling hunting and fishing are the favourite pastimes of the Tangkhul (Arokianathan 1982).

### 3.4.17 Festivals

The Tangkhul have many festivals. All their festivals are largely connected with their agricultural work. Some of the important festivals are: *Luirá Phanit*- It is the New Year Festival of the Tangkhuls. It is also known as the festival of sowing seeds, or festival to begin cultivation of the year. It is the most prominent festival celebrated in the full moon of February-March of the year. It lasts for about ten to fifteen days.

After completion of transplantation, *Mangkhap* festival is observed. This falls at the end of June or beginning of July. During this festival every family kills their domestic animals like buffalo, cow, pig and chicken according to their ability. As a sign of happiness and joy every family lights up pine-wood in front of their house. This symbolically shows that from the dark gloomy hard work of busiest days they have now passed over to a brighter period of happiness and a brighter future.

To protect the standing crops from the danger of insects and pests *Kashongkahao* festival is observed in the Month of *Makha* (July). Sometimes it is celebrated in the last quarter of the month. The day is fixed by the village priest in consultation with the village council.

Before the actual harvest starts, and the crop is ripe, *Dharshat* festival is observed. In this festival the family priest bring some grains and fishes from the field to perform the rituals. After this the village observes a grand feast during which every family exchange or distributes rice beer among their friends, relatives and neighbors. This festival is observed to ensure a good harvest and to protect the crops from unforeseen dangers.

*Dharshat* festival is followed by *mahat* (harvesting) festival. Some domestic animals are killed to perform the necessary ritual.

*Chumphu* is a four day festival where women play an important role. It is the festival that marks the beginning of taking out newly harvested rice from the granary. At the time of taking out the paddy from the granary the women offer prayer to the deity, so that she and her family may have enough food for the whole year round.

*Thisham* or *Kathi Kasham* festival takes place about the end of January every year. The first thing for each family to do is to procure their buffaloes, cows, pigs, and dogs. After which headmen of the village give orders for the rice beer, weak and strong, to be prepared for fermentation. They then decide on the day the ten day feast shall commence. It is a ten-day feast. This is a feast given in honor of the departed souls of that year as the final ceremony for the deceased (Hodson 1911). This festival was celebrated in pre-Christian era.

Important festivals for e.g. like *Laira phanit* continue to be celebrated by the whole Tangkhul community although the festival is increasingly becoming secular and is seen as a marker of group identity.

The above write up is an ethnographic account of the Tangkhuls, which provides background information of the present study.