

SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG THE NAGAS

(TANGKHUL)

KHASHIM RUIVAH



This book is a record of an intensive and sustained field investigation among Tangkhul NAGAS.

The author has discussed the factors bringing about socio-cultural change as well as the dynamics of change. Background information about the Tangkhuls, their society, culture and value system have been recorded alongwith a discussion on the various aspects of their socio-political institutions followed by a lucid analysis of the emergent changes and their reflection on the modern Tangkhul Socio-Political scenarios, particularly after its contacts with the Missionary and modern civilization.

This book is a distinctive contribution to the advancement of our knowledge about the Tangkhuls and their socio-cultural institutions. It gains added significance by the fact that the ethnographer is well acquainted with the local dialects, a knowledge of which is most essential in order to go deep into the socio-cultural ethos of the people, besides fully understanding the intricacies of the ever changing society.

The ethnographer has well achieved his objective as evidenced by the richness of the data and the critical analysis of the materials at disposal.

The author being himself a Tangkhul has never lost sight of the problems and aspirations of the Tangkhuls themselves. This makes the discussion more life like and real. It appears that this insiders approach has added dignity and life to the rich ethnographic data hitherto unknown to the social scientists.

About the Author

Dr. Khashim Ruivah graduated from St. Edmund's College, Shillong, with honours in Political Science. He did his M.A. in Political Science from Gauhati University, B.T. from P.G.T. College, Imphal (Gauhati University) and Ph.D. from Gauhati University.

After getting his Masters Degree in 1968 he joined as a Lecturer in Political Science, Pettigrew College, Ukhrul, Manipur and currently he is working as a Deputy Registrar, Manipur University, since 1988.

Dr. Khashim Ruivah attended many seminars and conferences and has contributed several articles to many leading Journals and Books. As an academician he is heavily engaged in many academic programmes, particularly in the matter of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes of the North Eastern Region, and as an academic administrator he is engaged in the University Administration of the Manipur University.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS SERIES

Culture, Structure and Change in North-East India

The North-Eastern region of India has provided a most fascinating challenge to scholars of various disciplines. Some of the distinguished scholarly works in anthropology in India pertain to this region. But that cover a very small segment of the vast changing canvass that is provided by the social, cultural, political and ethnic mosaic of the North-Eastern societies. For this reason, a large number of scholars are engaged in studying this region and some their work is available in the printed form. But, unfortunately a vast portion of its remain confined to a very limited audience due to lack of easy availability or it never gets published. However, there is a great deal of interest in the North-east and more scholarly works on various facets of the North-east need to be presented.

The series "**Culture, Structure and Change in the North-Eastern India**" has been envisaged to bring together the works, both published and unpublished, of various scholars through a series of volumes. The series will endeavour to bring out the literature that will present the social, cultural and changing perspective of the life of the people. This will be done by publishing monographic studies as well as edited volumes of the region by distinguished scholars.

We firmly believe that the series would fill in a much felt need and would provide a forum to the scholars interested in the North-Eastern region of India to help in better understanding of the region.

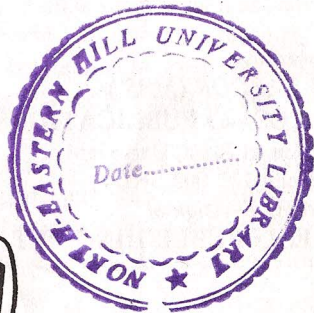
We do hope that the series will fill in a much needed gap in published materials on the North-East and be of help towards facilitating further research and lead to a better understanding of this region.

Publishers

SOCIAL CHANGES AMONG THE NAGAS (TANGKHUL)

By
KHASHIM RUIVAH

Forward by
Professor C. Von Furer - Haimendorf



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Foreward

The book, "Social changes among the Nagas (Tangkhul)" is a comprehensive ethnographic account of the Tangkhul, one of the Naga tribes of Manipur. Apart from the writings of T.C. Hodson, first published in the 1920s, there exists only a very scanty literature devoted to the Tangkhul, and the author has earned the gratitude of the anthropological community by producing this detailed and well informed description of the socio-economic life of this important ethnic group. As a member of the tribe he is ideally placed to analyse the traditional Tangkhul culture and social system which are now rapidly vanishing under the impact of modernization and conversion to Christianity. Soon it will be impossible to discern and depict the true traditional lifestyle, and this book has thus the character of a salvage operation, by which an account of this complex tribal culture has been preserved for scholarship and for future generations of Tangkhul. It is very doubtful whether even today any anthropologist approaching the Tangkhul as an outsider could reconstruct their original customs and social systems with such accuracy and vividness.

The book demonstrates that Mr. Khashim Ruivah is well acquainted with modern anthropological methods and the extensive bibliography shows that he has made every effort to supplement his own observations with data contained in earlier documents relating to Tangkhul and related tribes.

In the last chapter the author discusses the changes brought about by the imposition of an alien political system, technological advance, and above all proselitization by Christian missionaries which has transformed the Tangkhul value system. This book is a detailed documentation of traditional Tangkhul society and ideology.

As this study is—to my knowledge—the only existing full and authentic account of the Tangkhul Tribe, I consider its publication not only desirable but of very importance for Indian anthropology.

Professor C. Von Furer-Haimendorf

Acknowledgement

The materials presented in the body of the book were collected through participant observation method. For this purpose I had to visit several villages where I contacted knowledgeable village elders who possessed first hand experiences of living in the traditional ways of life and who also later shared the modern innovations in the tradition ridden Tangkhul society and culture. A transition from the past to the present is written large on their personal and collective Tangkhul life of modern days. They share the modern innovations although they were brought up in the old fashion of Tangkhul life. By birth and upbringing I am one of the people, the subject matter of this study. This autoethnography, however, presents materials on Tangkhul society and culture, most of which were collected from original sources. As no vigorous investigations had been launched to discover those facts of the past and the present, many elderly persons who actually participated in and contributed to the traditional Tangkhul society and many other eminent persons were also consulted besides the meagre published books available so far. This work could not have been written without the whole-hearted cooperation and support of a great many persons. It is, however, not possible to name all the people who helped me in carrying out the field investigations. I am deeply indebted to all of them and to many scholars, officers, and friends who ungrudgingly and liberally assisted me in collecting data and other materials and helped me for this study.

I owe all my intellectual debts of Professor M.C. Goswami, former Head of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University and Dr. D.N. Majumdar of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University for their cheerful, patient and inspiring guidance throughout the work. They patiently bore with me in my effort to bring home the importance of intensive analytical study of the social phenomena and problems for my work. Besides direct guidance and constant supervision in my field work their critical assessment of my work gave a new dimension to my work and further enriched by new ideas. For their whole-hearted sympathy, sacrificing spirit, their bountiful generosity and love,

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I gratefully acknowledge my gratitude and indebtedness to them. Indeed, my gratitude for all the help they have given me can hardly be expressed in words. Let the light that is kindled in my mind remain as a searchlight amidst the encircling glooms.

I gratefully express my thanks to Professor B.M. Das, M.Sc., Ph.D., D.Sc., Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University for kindly allowing me to do my research work in the Department of Anthropology by giving me his ungrudging help to solve whatever problems I faced. His helpful guidance and affectionate attitude were a constant source of inspiration to me in my most trying moments.

I am thankful to Dr. H. Kamkhenthang for introducing me to my present guide, Professor M.C. Goswami (Retired) and Dr. D.N. Majumdar, my Co-guide of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University for this project.

I must also express my thanks to all the respected teachers of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, and also to Dr. Temsu Jamir, and Shri Ksh. Chetan Singh, U.G.C. Teacher Fellow, for their kind help and for evincing a deep understanding of my research project.

I also owe my thankfulness to the Government of Manipur for giving me all kinds of facilities to enable me to complete this project.

I am obliged to Shri Kalicharan Das of the Department of Geography, Gauhati University for all the secretarial assistance he rendered in getting the manuscript typed.

I am indebted to Mr. K.S. Ambrose Lurstep, Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology, Delhi University, without whose trouble and pain the book would not have seen the light of day so early.

Lastly, I am thankful to my wife, Smti. Akham for her patient understanding and moral encouragement which I received in ample measure and also for shouldering the responsibility of the home front while I was engrossed in the preparation of this book.

KHASHIM RUIVAH

List of Maps, Diagrams etc.

MAPS

1. Index Map of the Area of Study
2. Sketch Map showing the Location of the Three Sample Villages of the Study 11
3. Map of Ukhrul District 13

DIAGRAMS ETC.

1. Diagram to show the Position of the Members of a Family 24
2. Composition of the Tangkhul Families 29
3. Position and Status of Yorla 58

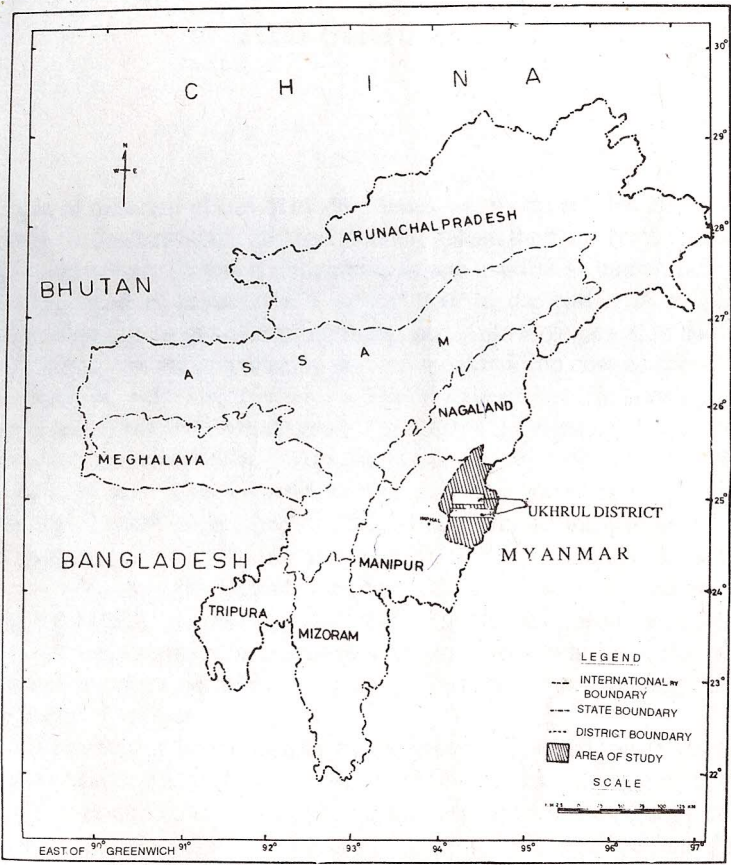
TABLE

1. Temperature Rainfall and Humidity (1978) 16

Contents

<i>Foreward</i>	v
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	vii
<i>List of Maps, Plates and Diagrams etc.</i>	viii
CHAPTER I: Introduction	1
CHAPTER II: Social Institutions	23
Section A : Family	23
Section B : Ownership of Property, Succession and Inheritance	34
Section C : Clan Organization	39
Section D : Kinship System	46
Section E : Annual Cycle and Agriculture Ritual	69
Section F : Life Cycle	87
(a) Pregnancy and Birth	87
(b) Long shim (Dormitory)	92
(c) Marriage	108
(d) Death and Disposal of the Dead	132
CHAPTER III: Political Institutions	140
Section A : The Village	140
Section B : Long Organization	172
Section C : War and Head-Hunting	179
Section D : Inter-Village Relations	200
CHAPTER IV: Summary and Discussion	211
<i>Glossary</i>	227
<i>Bibliography</i>	236
<i>Index</i>	243

INDEX MAP OF THE AREA OF STUDY



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

People of different places in modern times widely accept that all human beings are fundamentally alike and that they share the same basic interests and have certain common obligations to one another as human beings. But this kind of conception was not there in the earlier days when differences arising out of varying faiths, political ideologies, skin colour, caste affiliation etc. remarkably divided mankind into compartments of superior or inferior, higher or lower categories. In those days communications and contacts among peoples of different races or classes were very limited. Today things are outstandingly different. The wide world seems to have become smaller due to revolutionary scientific inventions which developed closer contacts among the people of all the nations, irrespective of geographical barriers. Though it is not harmonious or well ordered, members of the whole world became a single community, primarily due to the highly developed technology and communications system, as human beings whose social and cultural activities became an important concern for anthropological or sociological studies.

To develop a better insight in the sphere of social activities and human relations a good number of social scientists are investigating the social lives and cultural background of the peoples. Many books have been written on different aspects of social and cultural life including people with advanced technologies. In order to get a clear cut picture of our society we need to study it in the living context, in as much as our social life is not like those of the technologically advanced countries. While trying for its accuracy from the remote past intensive field work was conducted to trace the way of lives of the people of the past through the existing practices and available informations from the knowledgeable people. Here in this study an attempt has been made to know the living human community of the Tangkhul and the way in

which they have developed, in the changed circumstances, to be what they are today.

The general aim of this study is to describe the Tangkhul society as faithfully as possible. As such it deals with the present. But in dealing with the present we cannot ignore the past, because the present Tangkhul society is the result of a series of changes in the past Tangkhul society. This brings us to the implication of change in a society. From the early days of anthropology scholars attention has been drawn towards change. Nineteenth century anthropologists tried to find a general pattern of development of human civilization through the stages 'savagery', 'barbarism' and 'civilization'. The theory of social evolution has been criticized from different view points. Whatever may be the credibility of the theory it can be said that the evolutionary theories discuss about the temporal sequence of culture or civilization as a whole and not about the changes in a particular culture. Side by side with this general interest in human culture is general, in the later part of the nineteenth century there were studies of particular cultures in the Americas, Africa, Asia and the South Pacific from the point of view of their contact with western civilization. The difference between the scholars who wrote generally about human culture and those who wrote about change in particular cultures is that while the former depended on works of earlier scholars, the latter had to depend solely on their own field work. In the opening part of the present century there is a clear indication about the emphasis on fieldwork, particularly scientifically modelled field work. Though the early part of the present century was characterized by 'historical studies' yet the emphasis on study of the growth of particular cultures also, as evidenced by the following words of the great anthropologist Franz Boas (Boas 1927).

'Each culture can be understood only as an historical growth determined by the social and geographic environment in which each people is placed and by the way in which it develops the cultural material that comes into possession from the outside or through its own creativeness'.

Some Indian scholars came forward in this period to study culture change in this country (Mitra, 1911, Singh, 1911, Chakravarty, 1912). In the middle of the century the appearance of Malinowski in the arena caused a decline of other theories in favour of functionalism, which aimed at studying culture—each culture—as a whole, as a whole with interdependently functional parts. But the phenomena of change could not remain obliterated for long, as when Malinowski had first hand

experience of the African situation, he also started to think about the dynamic aspect (Malinowski, 1945). Radcliffe Brown, the second great scholar of British functionalism closely followed Malinowski in stressing the need for studying whole cultures to find out the function in relation to structure (Radcliffe Brown, 1935). However, he goes a step further than Malinowski by trying to examine change in relation to structure and function. He laid stress on studies of society as an 'adaptive system', ranging in particular cases from being well integrated to the other extreme of having its survival threatened or undermined through 'dysfunction'. He devised the two concepts 'eunomia' and 'dysnomia' to indicate healthy integration and malfunctioning, respectively of the social structure. A few years later the Wilsons (1945) tried to show, basing on their African data, how dysfunction in a part of the structure causes social change, bringing the structure again to the condition of eunomia.

Another variant of holistic studies, the configuration or pattern studies are par excellence studies of cultures in their static aspect (Benedict, 1934). Though Benedict, the chief proponent of the configurational theory remained mostly unconcerned with the dynamic aspect, still it could not completely remain out of her mind (Benedict, 1942, Benedict, 1943).

Contemporaneously with the Second Great War studies of culture change have come out of their theoretical cocoon and started stressing the applied aspect as evidenced by Brown's (1944) study of missionaries and cultural diffusion, Elkin's (1944) study of Australian territories, Grigson's (1944) study of the aboriginals of India, Lester's (1944) study of the effects of war on Fijian society and William's (1944) study of the missionaries influences on a Papuan group. The most important contribution among post-war studies, however, is Benedict's (1947) study on Japanese culture and personality, with special reference to the problem of stability and change. As years passed by more theoretically oriented culture change studies started coming (for example Eisenstadt, 1948, French 1948, Goldschmidt 1948, Hoebel 1949, Leighton 1949, Hogbin 1951).

There may be two approaches of studying change in a society, first change as a juxtaposition of circumstances unique for each culture, second change as a regular phenomenon in each society having some regularity in the pattern of change. The second approach is delineated by Gillin (1948: 568-69) in the following words.

'If we know the conditions under which a culture operates and the lines of its internal integration and coordination, we are able to predict within certain limits what form and direction cultural changes will take.

As we perfect our knowledge and our techniques for specifying the conditions of compatibility and consistency, our predictions become possible, so control and manipulation of changes are possible'.

In studying culture change it is necessary to take into consideration the value system as the value system of a community and change interact with each other. However, anthropological literature on the theoretical implication of value system in the study of social change is very scanty.

In considering social change we have also to keep in view whether the change is even in all the aspects of the society or change is rapid in some aspects and slow in some other aspect or aspects. This is important because even if change is there it is less likely to cause any disharmony due to change. The fundamental work in this aspect has been done by Keesing (1949). He tabulated the data presented in a number of acculturation studies under two categories of items, items which persisted and items showing the trend of mobility. He showed that persistence is the tendency in the items like basic survival, security, integrity, value, problem-solving and that mobility is the tendency in items like tools, etiquette, military tactics, voluntary elements of taste and self-expression achieved status system etc.

As has already been pointed out, dynamic condition may be a force for reintegration. But there is another possibility, the dynamic condition may cause irreparable disorganization in the society, causing what is usually called 'decay of the will to life'. On the other hand, social disorganization may cause reintegration at some other level resulting in some sort of revivalistic movements as described by Linton (1943). The situation may be neither disorganization nor reorganization but intermediary between the two for some time as stated by Gillin (1948: 562-63).

'For every society undergoing acculturation there would seem to be an inevitable period characterized by some confusion and lack of stability in behaviour, a period during which (1) old customs unadapted to new conditions are being extinguished and new customs are being tried out and developed with corresponding patterns, (2) new patterns once worked out, are being integrated and (3) the new patterns in the new integration are being learned and practised as activity. Will a new culture, exhibited in adapted and predictable behaviour result? This depends on whether or not the situation, once changed remains relatively stable. Rapidly receiving, capricious and disorderly alterations of conditions will result in random behaviour, social and cultural disorganization, apathy, or withdrawal. It is quite possible for the dominant society in an acculturative

situation to manipulate factors, either by accident or intent in such ways that the foreign cultural component never remain stable'.

Culture is only an average adjustment to different personalities in a culture and there is no culture in the world which is so well adjusted that there is no tension. But social changes if not well integrated in the society will naturally cause more tension as has been shown by Benedict (1938), Fenton (1941), Hallowell (1940), Henry (1940) and Sapir (1938), Moore (1974: 11-12).

Modernization has been defined by Moore (1974) as 'total' transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into the types of technology and associated social organization that characterize the 'advanced' economically prosperous and relatively politically stable nations of the western world'. At the present time modernization has become a world wide phenomenon. All communities of the world have become absorbed in this world wide process of modernization and the present day culture change situation all over the world has become the process of advancement of modernization in the process of which all cultures of the world are fast moving towards uniformity.

The above theoretical background only gives an indication about the ramifications of culture change studies. The author of this work was not inclined towards any of the schools of thought before embarking on this venture. The author participated in the Tangkhul culture since his childhood and in retrospect he perceived the changes and felt the urge to bring the society to close observation and to examine the change, particularly in the socio-political institutions. Though the main aim of this work is not to prove or disprove any theory about social change, in the last chapter there will be occasion to see how far the material presented in the subsequent chapters have any bearing on the theories discussed above.

PROBLEM

Before the Britishers came to this region the people remained almost segregated. There was little scope for mixing together with other people of the country. The other people were also not interested in their problems and aspirations. During the rule of Meitei Maharajas there seems to be some sort of relationship with the hill people of Manipur, the details of which need further studies by interested scholars. The rajas in the early days followed 'a policy of live and let live' except when it was a question of guarding the life and property of the inhabitants of the

adjoining villages. In such cases, occasionally the Meitei raja used to send his contingent into the heart of the hills, but it did not mean annexation of the territories of the hill tribes. As such, in the early days people 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 socio-political activities.

Later on the picture become quite different after the coming of the Britishers and more so after independence. All the hill tribes formed an important part of the Indian Union. The hill people living in the mountainous region, very often cut off from each other, have their own ways of life, which certainly add to the beauty and variety of Indian culture. To preserve such a valued cultures and to throw more light in the history of human civilization a detail study of the socio-political lives of the Tangkhul will be of much value and also it will give us a peep into the inner social and political structure of this distinct ethnocultural group.

Indeed, India is a vast country where many people live in the rural areas, preserving their own identity with its rich cultural heritage from time immemorial. The self-sufficient independent social unit—the village, headed by the village headman, who is also the leader and the chief spokesman of the people, is a matter of interest to all the scholars and draw their attention to throw more light in the field of social science research. We all know it well that our village community is not a static, timeless and changeless one. It also changes along with the changing pattern of modern civilization, the social structure, socio-political organization and ethos of the communities. For a proper understanding of the socio-political structure as well as their problems, it is necessary to trace them out into a clearly distinguishable way.

To crystallize the subject matter of study the socio-political life of the Tangkhul we need to study a series of village community life from different angles covering the many divergent patterns of organization and ethos. Until this is done our picture of social and political systems of the Tangkhuls will remain vague and inadequate.

With the advent of modern system of government the indigenous system of government and administration lost their moorings. Since late fifty of this 20th century special emphasis is laid in the Hill areas of Manipur on the nationally accepted principle of introducing local self-government through the indigenous political authorities with some modification in implementing the policies and programmes of the administration. In the modern system an attempt is made to invest the

traditional Tangkhul headmen, formally, with administrative and judicial powers. Accordingly, the village headmen are provided with court warrants and authorised to enforce government regulations. The result is now chaotic. The village headmen and the councillors have no idea about what they are expected to do, for the notion of government regulations were completely foreign to them, and many people are not prepared to take orders in all sorts of matters from men whom they have known all their lives not as territorial authorities, but simply as co-villagers. Under such circumstances the state government need to look into the matter and introduce appropriate rules that are suitable to meet the fast changing need of the Tangkhul society.

Today it is a common complaint by the elderly people of the Tangkhul that the young people no longer respect their traditional customs. This they say, are responsible for the chaotic state of affairs. To them in the days of yore village elders were trusted, honoured and respected. This made the elders happy and contented. But today matters became contrary. To cite an example, general people complaint that the village headman no longer provided feasts for the villagers as they used to do in the past. In fact, they cannot since the villagers no longer bring them food and rice bear to do it with as they did it in the early days. So also the village councillors are not respected as it was done before, for they are neither responsible to the clan nor do they receive any thing from the people as a remuneration for being members of the village council. They are simply responsible to the general public and every body's business became nobody's business. Under such circumstances the actual state of affairs need to be studied as an academician or as a social science researcher. Here it is not the intention of the author to suggest that people should go back to their former ways of life, but to lay bare the actual facts about their ways of life and to usher in an effective system of administration, adequate to cope with modern conditions. In this context different stages of political evolution need to be studied closely in order to bridge the gap.

To get the exact informations and to see the exact working of the socio-political organization, it is necessary to examine the entire social and political aspects of the Tangkhul. The main aim of the study is to analytically study the social and political institutions of the Tangkhul its different aspects and characteristic features, and as to how it manifests itself in its different social and political aspects. Further, it is our intention to go deep into the imperically observed socio-political situations and as to how a series of social changes came into existence as we find it

in their day-to-day life and so on. And here lies the important methodological point on which some stress must be laid. Since it is about the institutions of the Tangkhul, all its peculiarities and characteristic features embraced by the term must be examined minutely. In other words, we have to look for the facts of social life and the general social structure and shall take account of all the available data to effectively deal with the present in the changed circumstances.

By presenting in such a way a correct description and definition of the given institutions of the Tangkhul may be crystallized. As an example the vital institution of 'marriage' may be considered. It is legal act enforced on the one hand by the civil authority according to the prevailing customs or by the law of the state with all its complicated social workings, on the other hand, for the Christian community the authority of the Church, which exercises a profound moral pressure in relation to this institution is equally important and vital. It has its own legal validity and its social sanction. It is not an act of mere fancy, but it has a specific legal character, found in the general Tangkhul social structure. Without knowing exactly and minutely about all the features and characters of the said institution, we may not be able to know as to whether they are so deeply rooted and connected with the social life of the whole Tangkhul social and political organization. Such special and concrete description of a given social phenomenon in a given ethnic area, as the one which is intended to be discussed here in the context of Tangkhul social and political institutions may elaborately be constructed. As stated above, a general discussion on these institutions may be in order at the outset of our investigations.

It is a known fact that any social organization implies a series of norms which extend over the whole social life and regulate more or less strictly all the social relations. Breach of such norms or rules, found in the Tangkhul society, has an inevitable consequence. To cite an example, marriage of a girl from the same clan would bring evil consequences not only to the couple, but also to the whole village community. As such they should not be allowed to live in the village, but exiled. Likewise if a junior calls his senior by name, he would stumble on his way. Again, if any member of a clan avoided paying his due share to be given at the time of marriage or death, the person so behaving is believed to receive the same pattern of treatment in future and so on and so forth. So such norms and rules are observed because any departure from them would bring general contempt and ridicule upon the wrong doer. Here our intention is to show that different types of social norms

have different kinds of collective sanction. We can thus classify the norms and regulations according to the kind of sanction they enforce. As such proper classification of different institutions is made according to their nature. It is from such generalization that different social and political institutions could properly be arranged according to their well determined functions. Also while describing the important features of these institutions the author tries to sift out each one of them and wonders if it could have any social bearing on the present situation. There are some institutions like war and head hunting which exist no more today; yet these furnished some very useful influences. However, for the sake of a better understanding of these social institutions detailed evidences of the past are cited to bring home the lessons of the past and to show the influences of the past on the current attitudes of the people. Since present is the product of the past an attempt is made to highlight the traditional ways of life and the changing pattern in the Tangkhul society so that other people may very well understand the people under discussion. The author hopefully believes that this study must have its due share in contributing, however meagre it might be, to an appreciation of the world civilization, of which Tangkhul land is also an integral part.

Having discussed the scope of the present study and indicated the general lines on which this work is being carried out, it is appropriate to state that emphasis has been given to the method of dealing with the evidence. The investigations were carried out intensively among the Tangkhul of selected villages and the first hand informations were collected by the author in the course of several visits to those localities. We have placed those materials which are relevant to the object of our research—the social and political aspect of the Tangkhul. It is in order to say that this work is an outcome of auto ethnography, in doing which the author tried to be as objective as possible by eliminating the subjective elements.

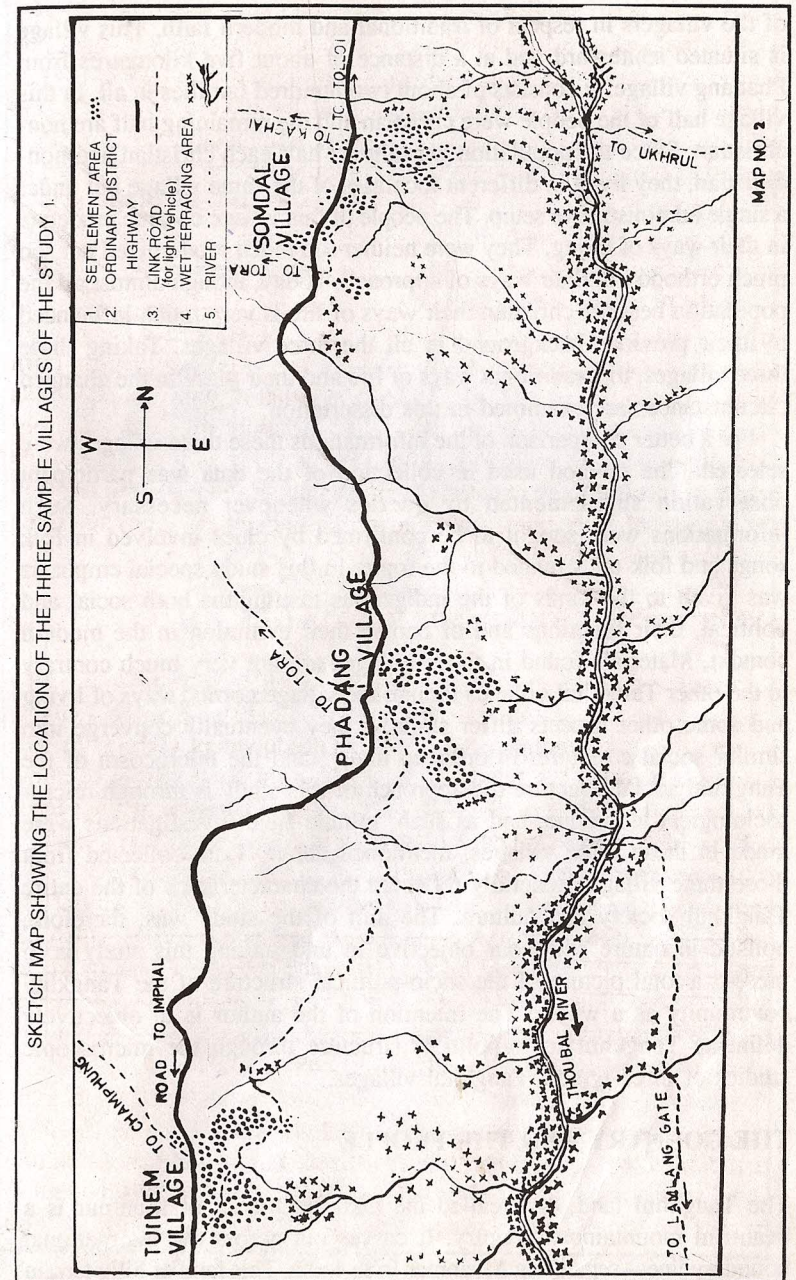
METHODOLOGY

There is no particular prescribed methodology for the study of a number of institutions in a society in their totality and the changes coming into those institutions. Naturally 'participant observation method' is the best method for such a study. So far as the synchronic aspect is concerned no other method can compete with this method. The author is a member of the society which he studied, so his participation in the society is different in nature and degree from the participation of an anthropological

investigator in a foreign culture. There is no doubt about the fact that when a member of a society studies his or her own society it cannot be as objective as when an anthropological investigator from outside studies an alien society. This disadvantage cannot be avoided even by those anthropological investigators who become emotionally involved in a society as a result of their long stay. The author of the present work has taken ample precautions about this. The present day conditions which have been recorded here from the author's experience have been checked and rechecked in as many varying situations as practicable. The facts about the past were recorded from persons of the older generation, who actually participated in the institutions concerned. Such statements were again checked and rechecked from similarly placed old persons from other areas also. It is necessary to note here that the conventional tools of social research—interview schedules, questionnaires etc. were not used often for making investigations for this study as it is more of the nature of recording the experiences of the author and his compatriots in the society of their own, rather than eliciting informations on some unknown institutions.

SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE VILLAGES

For exactness and clearness of the study three villages, Somdal, Phadang and Tuinem have been selected for intensive field study. Somdal village is about twenty kilometres from the district headquarters, Ukhrul, towards the western part. This is one of the leading christian village of about two hundred families in all. With the coming of christianity the people of this village converted into christianity in a very rapid way—under a strong and able leadership of Mr. R.S. Ruichumhao, a committed native christian leader. With this new faith they accepted the new way of life and changed their lives style most rapidly and as a result of which the people of this village could hardly follow the traditional way of life as it was before. The second village, Phadang, is about four kilometres south of Somdal village and there are about two hundred forty families in all. Christianity came into this village as early as it was introduced at Somdal. But the growth of christianity was very slow and at the same time their acceptance with the outside culture was comparatively slow. It is this village from where the fossilized relic of indigenous culture could be gathered in abundance. This sample village retained some of its original social and cultural traits. The third village, Tuinem is also another village taken as a sample village for its duality in composition

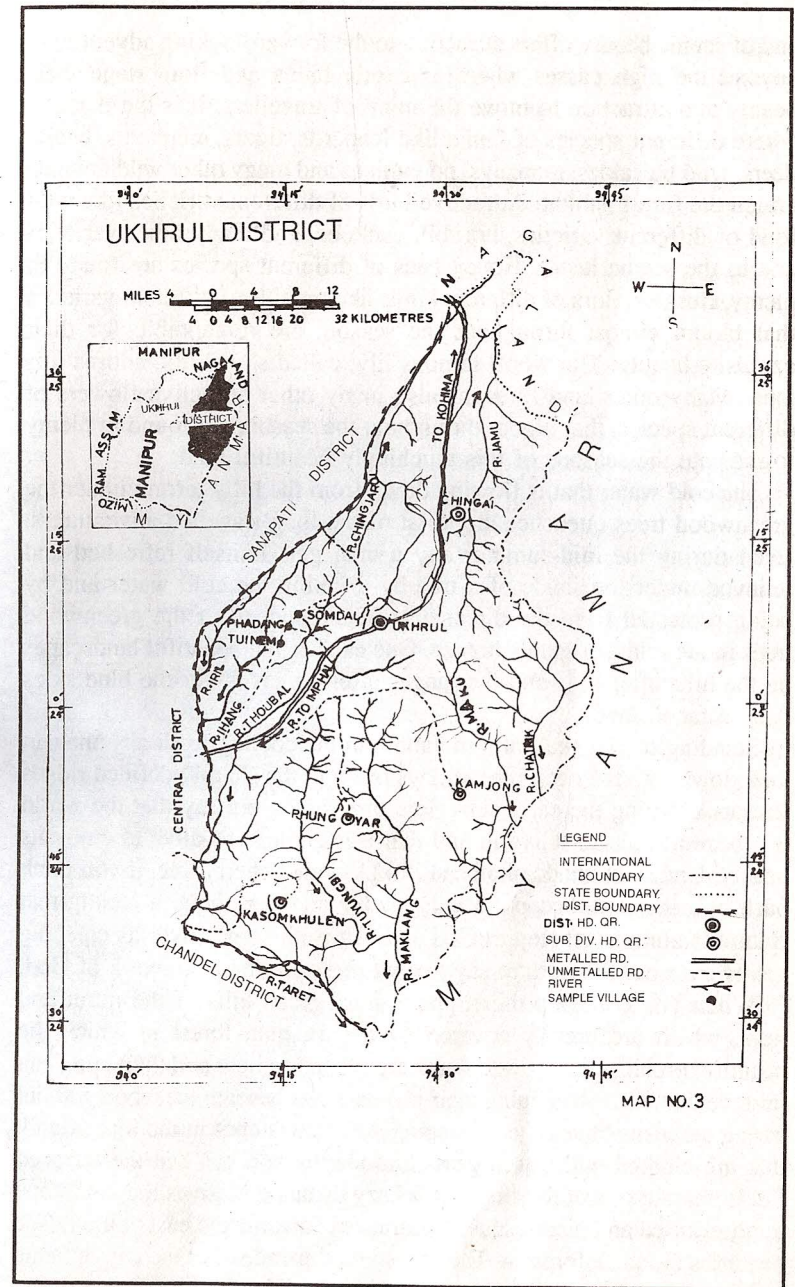


of the villagers in respect of traditional and modern faith. This village is situated southward and at a distance of about five kilometres from Phadang village. It consists of about two hundred families in all. In this village half of the people were christian and the remaining half are non-christian. Since the population was almost half each christian and non-christian, they lived in different localities of the same village but under a single administrative setup. The people of this village became moderate in their ways of living. They were neither too much modernized nor too much orthodox in their ways of approach. Today, though almost all the population become christian their ways of life is very much influenced by their previous background in all the three villages. Taking these three villages, the traditional ways of life and their place in the changed circumstances are examined in this dissertation.

For a better comparison of the informations these three villages were selected. The method used in collection of the data was participant observation supplemented by queries whenever necessary. Such informations were sought to be confirmed by clues involved in folk songs and folk tales related to the topic. In this study special emphasis was given to the kinds of the indigenous institutions both social and political, their functions and of course their evolution in the modern context. Materials found in those villages are not very much contrary to the other Tangkhul villages though the village norms, ways of living and some other aspects differ slightly, they eventually converge into similar social structure. In order to understand the microcosm of the Tangkhul social structure the approach of this study is through micro-sociological technique, and as such, minute field investigations were made in those three villages, mentioned above. Data collected from those three villages generally reflected the characteristics of the entire Tangkhul society and culture. The aim of the study was, therefore, holistic in nature since our objective in undertaking this study is to present a total picture of the socio-political structure of the Tangkhul community as a whole. The intention of the author is to objectively delineate Tangkhul socio-political structure through the microscopic studies of three typical Tangkhul villages.

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

The Tangkhul land, now called the Ukhrul District of Manipur is a beautiful mountainous country. It curves out across the international boundary line—separating Myanmar from India. This land of hilly terrain



and of scenic beauty offers attraction to the forwardlooking adventurers beyond the high passes where as exotic fauna and flora stage their beauty and attraction to move the mind of travellers. It is the place—where different species of fauna like leopards, tigers, elephants, bears, deers, wild buffaloes, monkeys, porcupines and many other wild animals enrich the forest habitat. Attractive birds of different varieties like wild fowl of different varieties, hornbil, cuckoos, and many other varieties add to the scenic lustre. Honey bees of different species are found in plenty. Besides, flora of different kinds like orchids of different varieties that bloom almost throughout the season, are remarkable for their exquisite beauty. The world famous lily, called shirui lily, adorns this land. Many other land lilies, as also many other attractive flowers of different species, that bloom throughout the season, are found in plenty to indicate the seasons of this touchingly beautiful land.

The cold water that is flowing down from the hilly terrain under the greenwood trees quenches the thirst of the long travelled adventurers. Even during the mid-summer day a man gets himself refreshed and relieved under the shade of a tree by drinking the cold water and by being protected from the direct heat of the sun under the greenwood trees in the midst of gentle breeze. One can see the beautiful landscapes on the hills after hills and the ranges after ranges under the blue skies from a far distance.

Standing on the peak of a mountain in the cooling fresh air, one can look down into the deep blue valleys or up to the sharply defined ridges that are catching the early sun. Here one cannot but say that the world is a beautiful place to live in and that it is good to be alive to enjoy its beauty. Under the shade of a beautiful blooming cherry tree, if you think back, life seems to become a very simple and true thing, a feeling that Nature is our nearest step to God and that truth comes over us creeping gently over our thoughts to say that all these are the handiwork of God.

When you climb up the slippery grass green hills of the north and west, which are prettily covered by a dark pine forest in which the beautiful orchids of various colours are blooming here and there, you can observe that birds are singing their joyous songs beneath the wood without caring the visits of strangers. Peeping down the slopes in the foreground, that are clothed with green grass and shrubs you can see the terraced fields and the peaceful villages in a hazy distance. It gives the landscape a more varied and picturesque appearance. Towards the east you will see centuries old thick forests—The undisturbed paradise for the native fauna and flora that stand in deep blue, touching the pale blue sky. Towards the



southern side you can see the tall teak forest and the bushy jungle that covers the soil with short brown grass. Below the slopes little lines of terraced fields mark out the ground like the contours of a map on all sides of the area. As the sun begins to fall all the hilly terrains cast in deep-blue shadow as if to cover their nakedness from the setting sun.

Indeed from a distance these beautiful ridges, standing up against the sky line, look like one backbone, but they are not so in reality: for when you get closer to them you find them to be detached groups—often a great distance apart and the broken ravine each contained a mountain stream.

All the river valley of the north, west, central and north-eastern sides of this country are well wooded with immense slopes—suitable for wet terrace cultivation and the higher tops of the slopes of the hills are used for jhumming. Of course in the southern side all the slopes of the hills are being used for shifting cultivation as there is little scope for terrace cultivation due to the steepness of the ridges.

Living in a peaceful fertile land of excellent climate, they have an abundance of natural gifts to satisfy their needs and requirements from time to time. So also it is the natural beauty of the land that moves the mind of the inhabitants to live in tune with the changing seasons in the joyous way. With the changes of seasons, the Tangkhul perform their different activities from time to time. Feasts and festivals which will, however, be discussed in details elsewhere in this book. It should, however, be noted that the concept of ecological system has a great deal to do with the people. There is concurrent regularity of man and nature. A man may adjust his activities according to the situation in the ecological system. Redfield (1969:30) thus says that ecology effects social group to a great extent. Under social system a man should live in a village or in group to get the cooperation of his fellow villagers and as a member of his group to fight against the ecological enemies. Even Pritchard (1940) thus tried to show as to how the Nuer faced the ecological problems in their own land and its effect in their ways of life. In the Tangkhul society performance of any kind of feast and their love for festivities depend upon the ecological conditions. Here it should be noted that events of social function will be only perfunctory if the soil and rain are insufficient to produce abundant harvest.

Out of the total area of 22356 sq. km of Manipur the hills area comprises 20126 sq. km and out of which 4409 sq. km is inhabited by the Tangkhul, a Naga tribe of mongoloid stock, who speak Tibeto-Burman dialect. The immediate neighbours of this tribe are the Mao,

Maram and the Thangal on the west, the Chakesang, the Angami and the Rengma Nagas of Nagaland on the north and north-west. The tribal inhabitants of upper Myanmar (upper Chindwin district) and the Somra Nagas of Myanmar guard the eastern frontiers, whereas, the Maring, Anal and the Mayon-Monsang Nagas dwell on the south-eastern border. The Manipur valley—inhabited by the Meitei stand on the south.

Ukhrul district—the main land of the Tangkhul, experiences a cold winter and a mild summer. The climatic condition is, however, not the same in all places. Climatically and comparatively the southern side is hotter than the central and northern side of this district. However, the coldest area of the district is the central area of the district. The average maximum temperature recorded at Ukhrul is 29°C while the average minimum temperature is 3°C. The lowest temperature is experienced in January when the minimum temperature is below 4°C. On many days during winter the minimum temperature drops below freezing point in many parts of the district. As per Statistical Hand Book of the Government of Manipur for Ukhrul District frosting days during December to February range between 20 to 70. The rainy season starts generally from May and continues up to November. 1455 mm is the average rainfall and the average rainy days are around 124 days in a year. Maximum average humidity is recorded at 50 to 90 per cent. The temperature, rainfall and humidity recorded in the year 1978 are as follows:

Table 1 Temperature, Rainfall and Humidity (1978)
as Recorded from D.A.O. Ukhrul.

Months	Temperature		Rainfall in mm	No. of Rainy Days	Humidity in Per cent.	
	Maximum	Minimum			Max.	Min.
January	15.0	3.0	—	—	97	32
February	14.6	6.0	—	—	95	51
March	20.6	8.4	26.3	3	100	40
April	22.0	11.9	46.6	7	95	50
May	22.0	13.8	140.7	20	100	62
June	26.0	15.7	363.6	25	100	82
July	25.0	14.0	224.2	23	100	86
August	25.0	14.0	248.8	19	100	71
September	21.8	13.5	296.8	21	100	82
October	24.0	11.0	69.0	9	100	73
November	18.0	9.0	38.9	6	100	69
December	16.0	5.0	—	—	95	60

The hilly terrain of this district is well drained by the following important rivers, viz., Iril, Ihang, Thoubal, Chingjaroi, Chingai, Chamu, Maklang, Taret, Tuyungbi, Chatrik and Maku etc. These rivers flow toward the south all along the slopes except Chamu, Chingai and Chingjaroi rivers which flow towards the north-eastern direction. All the rivers and also the streams are rainfed. As the rivers are very near to the catchment areas, these are generally shallow and meandering in nature. These rivers swell rapidly when it rains heavily but the fall of water level is also as sudden as the rise. Water of these rivers is muddy during the rainy season and clear starting from later Autumn to spring. The rivers in the district are not navigable but very good for fishing, particularly most of the fish supply of this district is provided by the river Iril, Chatrik and Chamu.

The Tangkhul are one of the major Naga tribes, who inhabit the north-eastern part of Manipur. The origin of this Tibeto-Burman dialect speaking tribe, Tangkhul, has been discussed by different writers, advancing several hypotheses, mainly based on traditional lore of the Tangkhul—the detail of which might be left to the other scholar for further study. Here just to throw some light on their origin, migration and their settlement in the present habitat we may mention a few lines. According to their legend, they came out of a cave, at a place called Samsok, somewhere in Myanmar. They tried to vacate the cave, but a big tiger that was on a watch devoured them one after another. Seeing no other means, the leader of the cave made an effigy of a man and the same was thrown out of the cave. The tiger ran after the effigy. In the meanwhile all the cave dwellers escaped out of it. At this the tiger was frightened and fled away for life. The cave dweller then moved towards the north-western direction and entered into the present Manipur valley. According to this legend when they entered into the Manipur valley, it was nothing but a swampy place full of water and the climate was extremely hot. It was because of the heat and unbearable mosquito's bite and because of the constant occurrences of epidemic diseases like malaria and cholera that they moved again towards the north-eastern foothills and entered into the present habitat via Shokvao. This group seems to be the biggest and the first group that entered into this present habitat. Again, another group moved toward the northern side and later on entered into this present district via Khongdei. This group seems to be the second biggest group that entered into this place. Later on another group from Layi and Phaiphung of the Manipur north district entered into this district. So also another group entered from Chakesang area,

and from the Manipur plain toward the extreme southern part of this district, in the later years. Though they came from different directions after their coming into this area they settled together and formed a homogeneous Tangkhul society at this present habitat.

In appearance, the Tangkhul look fair and yellowish in colour. His stature is about five and half feet to six feet. Physically they are strong and stout. Flat nose, round face and black straight hair are their characteristic features. Hair does not grow freely on the face, beards and moustaches are seldom seen. In the days of yore, the Tangkhul cut their hair back at the sides leaving a point in front, giving a sort of cocks-comb style. The girls used to cut their hair straight in front across the forehead level with the eyebrows to the temple, thence on each side it was left for a space somewhat longer so as to cover the ear. Behind the hair was allowed to grow and flow loose over the shoulders. If a girl became a little bit old, say over marriageable age, she might keep some longer hair just in the middle of the forehead and remain in the girls dormitory. Today, however, such formalities and norms are not there. Everybody is adopting the modern style, and there is no distinguishing mark to indicate the age.

Of the neighbouring tribes, the Mao and Maram Nagas on the north-western side, though speak a different language, is closely akin to the Tangkhul in culture and appearance. On the north the Angamis, the Chakesangs and the Rangmas are apparently derived from the same racial stock as the Tangkhul. Their socio-cultural lives and physical features etc., resemble in many respects, but each tribe speak a different dialect. In the case of the Meiteis it is said that they are the descendants of the younger brother of the original ancestor of the Tangkhul. However, such hypothesis needs further study from different angles and as such we leave it to the enterprising researcher for further details.

The highland group, the Tangkhul, have expertise knowledge in different selected handicrafts, products of which are sold or exchanged with other artisan groups of this region. As they live in different regions they also follow different life-style and have different peculiarities of their respective regions. Under such situations, to identify such division some people divide the whole area of 4409 sq. kms of the Tangkhul land into 9 broad divisions, viz. (1) North—Raphei, (2) North-east—Somra, (3) East—Rem, (4) South-east—Veikhang, (5) South—Kamo, (6) West—Kharao, (7) South-west—Khaorui, (8) North-west—Kharao-Raora and (9) Middle south—Kathur. This is nothing but an imaginary and notional division without any basic criteria for such somewhat

arbitrary division. This division is neither rejected nor accepted by the people of the whole area and at the same time it has no definite demarcated area popularly known to the people. As an example if you ask any person as to why the western people are called Kharao, no one will be able to give a concrete answer to it. On the other hand, they give their own explanation according to their own notion of understanding it. But when we trace out the possible origin of this name it might be a corrupted form of 'Khoirao'—a group of people, who happen to be the neighbours of western Tangkhul. 'The Khoirao Nagas inhabit the northern hills of Manipur state. They are flanked by the Kukis on the west and the Tangkhul on the east' (Grierson G.A. *Linguistic Survey of India*—Vol. III, Part II). As stated earlier, a group of Tangkhul entered into this Tangkhul land from the Khoirao inhabited area of Manipur north via. Khongdei. When they entered into this land they settled down at Phungcham, Nunghar, Hunpun and Hundung etc., and then they spread into different parts of this district. From this group a good number of people entered into the western area of this district and settled there. From this point of view some people might have given this name 'Kharao' to the inhabitants of this western area. But this does not appear to be accurate because most of the main villages settled down at the centre and on the northern area of the Raphei group. However, it is very likely that this name might be given to the inhabitants of the western side because they live towards the Khoirao inhabited area. Mention may be made here that some people from other parts of this land called western people as Kharao whereas to the people inhabiting the western part of this land, Kharao means the inhabitants of the north-eastern section of the Manipur north district, close to the western part of the Ukhrul District. The name Kharao thus came into existence in the midst of confusion. Whatever might be the case, let us not go into deep details about this. For our purposes it is essential to know it definitely that the highland groups distributed over different regions have different expertise knowledge in different trades and this serves as an identifying marks for themselves in different regions. According to this identity mark the western people are known to be expert weavers, the people of the north are the expert potters and salt-makers whereas the people of the south are expert in cane and bamboo works. From the point of view of agriculture the people of the south depend for their livelihood on the shifting cultivation whereas the remaining people depend on wet terrace cultivation.

The Tangkhul lived in the traditional days in a well defended and

well defined territory of its own. They generally live on the top of a hill spur or on the slopes of a hill which can easily be free from the enemies' attack. The selected habitat must also have perennial source of water supply throughout the year. In the early days each village was politically an independent unit headed by a village headman or chief with a council of elders. At the same time it was completely isolated not only from the rest of the world but also from its neighbouring villages. In the days of yore they could move from one village to another as freely as they do today. But with the coming of British administration and christianity into this remote corner, their ways of life became completely changed. Today, though they live in different villages, they form themselves into a distinct ethnic group and live like a member of the 'same family' as it were. All together there are about 130 Tangkhul villages in the east district and many more villages are scattered here and there in Manipur as well as in other states.

The first British Missionary, Rev. William Pettigrew came into this remote corner in the year 1896 and set up a small temporary house to run a school at Ukhrul in the same year. But the response of the native people was very poor. In the meanwhile the state Superintendent requested the village chief to send their children to the school. On receiving such information from the state authority urging the people to send their children to attend the school, the village chiefs consulted Rev. William Pettigrew as to how they should implement the circular. When the village chiefs asked their villagers to send their wards to attend the school, the latter straight away asked the village chief also to do the same. Under such circumstances the village chiefs were also bound to send their children to attend the school. Out of fear 'when Major Maxwell, the State Superintendent, came to Hunphun on his way to Somra, he warned the elders that if they themselves were found absent from school on his return he would have them severely caned or sent to jail'. (Luikham T.A. *Short History of the Manipur Baptist Christian Golden Jubilee*, 1948). They attended the school not that they would learn something from the school, but attended the school for fear of being punished if they failed to do the same. Here it may be interesting to quote extensively to indicate the then prevailing circumstances and the far-reaching effects it produced in the long run. 'These students attended school with big heavy brass bangles dangling from both wrists. These are dangerous weapons, in fact so heavy that one blow with one of them often produced fatal results. And often as the slates were struck by these in the course of the work they were broken by the weight. In

this stage of development students were depending far more on their bangles than on the mightier power that lay in the small pencil which in years to come would give a fatal blow to ignorance and illiteracy'.

'The student's behaviour was wild. Some sat quietly some lay on benches, some read, some wrestled, some sang their national song, some came late and some went home at will. With great patience the Apostle teacher gradually induced them to the proper behaviour' (Luikham T.). Under such circumstances the seed of knowledge on education was sown over this remote soil by the patient missionary and lit up the light in the midst of darkness.

The school continued to grow without hindrance. The little light that was kindled like a tiny dot at Ukhrul burnt and spread like a wild fire in the entire district. Today there is one college and about 25 full-fledged high schools, about 50 junior high schools and many lower schools—at least one L.P. school in each and every villages of this highland district. From heavy brass bangles dangling on the wrists of five odd students, today a good number of people of this soil is shining in different spheres of activities including higher white color jobs, professional ones and prestigious political-cum-administrative positions because of their sterling merits. Tangkhul land produced a good number of leaders up to the rank of Ambassador, Chief Ministers, Chief Secretaries, Commissioners, Social Scientists, Engineers, Doctors, Missionaries and many other important persons.

With the conquest of Manipur by the Britisher in the year 1891, Manipur became one of the native states of the British India under the princes who were controlled by the British. By that time Tangkhul land was known as Ukhrul Division and recognized as an administrative unit under the direct supervision of the state Superintendent and for the first time Rev. W. Pettigrew was kept there as the officiating state officer (Luikham, p. 18) for all matters affecting the day to day administration of the hills. In October 1945 Manipur was integrated as a part 'C' state of the Indian Union. Under the states Reorganization Act of 1956, Manipur became a Union territory and on the 21st January 1972 the Government of India granted full statehood to Manipur. The north-eastern hill region, known as Ukhrul Sub-division, then became a full-fledged district called Ukhrul District with its headquarters at Ukhrul, 83 kms north-east from Imphal. It is situated at about 2020 metres above the sea level and is the highest hill station of Manipur.

Ukhrul is the only town in the district. It is linked with the capital of Manipur—Imphal, by the district high way known as Ukhrul—Imphal

Road. It enters the district from the south-western corner of this district. The other road enters from Kohima via Phek—Jessami on the extreme north of the district. These two roads—Imphal—Ukhrul road and Ukhrul—Jessami road, are the only all—weather metalled roads. Besides these, there is also another road from Tatubi which enters into the middle of the western side of the district via Phaipung—Huimi and runs up to Ukhrul, the district headquarters.

ADMINISTRATIVE SETUP

Ukhrul District has now been divided into five sub-divisions, namely, Ukhrul central, Chingai, Kasom-Khuppen, Phungyar and Kamjong. These sub-divisions are also considered as development blocks, and as such each sub-division is now being controlled by the Sub-Divisional Officer-Cum-Block Development Officer. All Sub-Divisional headquarters are now connected with the district headquarters Ukhrul by district roads.

At the district level, the Deputy Commissioner is the administrative head of the district, assisted by the District Planning Officer and the five Sub-Divisional Officer-Cum-Block Development Officers and the Sub-Deputy Collectors. It is through these agencies that the Deputy Commissioner is looking into all the problems of the district.

Besides this, there is an Autonomous District Council called the Ukhrul Autonomous District Council with its official headquarter at Ukhrul. This council have the jurisdiction overall the villages of this district. The members of the council are elected from amongst the villagers by means of universal adult franchise and one member is nominated by the government. Members of the council elect one of its member to be the Chairman of the council from among themselves. To maintain the administration of the council one senior civil service administrator called the Chief Executive Officer is nominated by the state government. The council provides its assistance for the development programmes like primary education, rural health, rural water supply, agriculture, veterinary, construction of inter village roads and bridges, and many other programmes of the district concerned.