

PROCESSES OF MIGRATION AND DISTRIBUTION
OF THE HMARS IN NORTH-EAST INDIA :
A Study in Social Geography

By
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This is to certify that the dissertation submitted by Lallienvel Pakhuongte for the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M. Phil) to the Department of Geography, School of Environmental Sciences, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, entitled "Processes of Migration and Distribution of the Hmars in North-East India: A Study in Social Geography" is a bonafide study of the author to the best of my knowledge and belief. This study may now be placed before the examiner for examination.

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CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	(i)
List of Maps	(ii)
List of Tables	(iii)
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1-13
CHAPTER II PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE REGION	14-35
CHAPTER III ORIGIN AND DISPERSAL OF THE HMARS: A HISTORICAL OUTLINE	36-54
CHAPTER IV PATTERNS OF DISTRIBUTION OF HMARS: CORE AND PERIPHERIES	55-106
CHAPTER V PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENTS	107-162
CHAPTER VI SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	163-172
BIBLIOGRAPHY	173-177

LIST OF MAPS

Map	Particulars	Page
1.	North-East India: Location (Study Area)	1
2.	North-East India: Physiography	15
3.	North-East India: Drainage	24
4.	North-East India: Soil	31
5.	Probable Hmar Migration Route (Notional Map)	52
6.	Meghalaya: Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to Total Population, 1981	63
7.	Manipur: Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to Total Population, 1981	65
8.	Mizoram: Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to Total Population, 1981	66
9.	Assam: Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to Total Population, 1971	71
10.	North-East India: Proportion of Hmars to Total Population in the Districts	75
11.	North-East India: Proportion of Hmars to Total Scheduled Tribes in the Districts	82
12.	North-East India: Core and Peripheries of the Hmar Tribe	93
13.	South District Manipur: Distribution of Villages	100

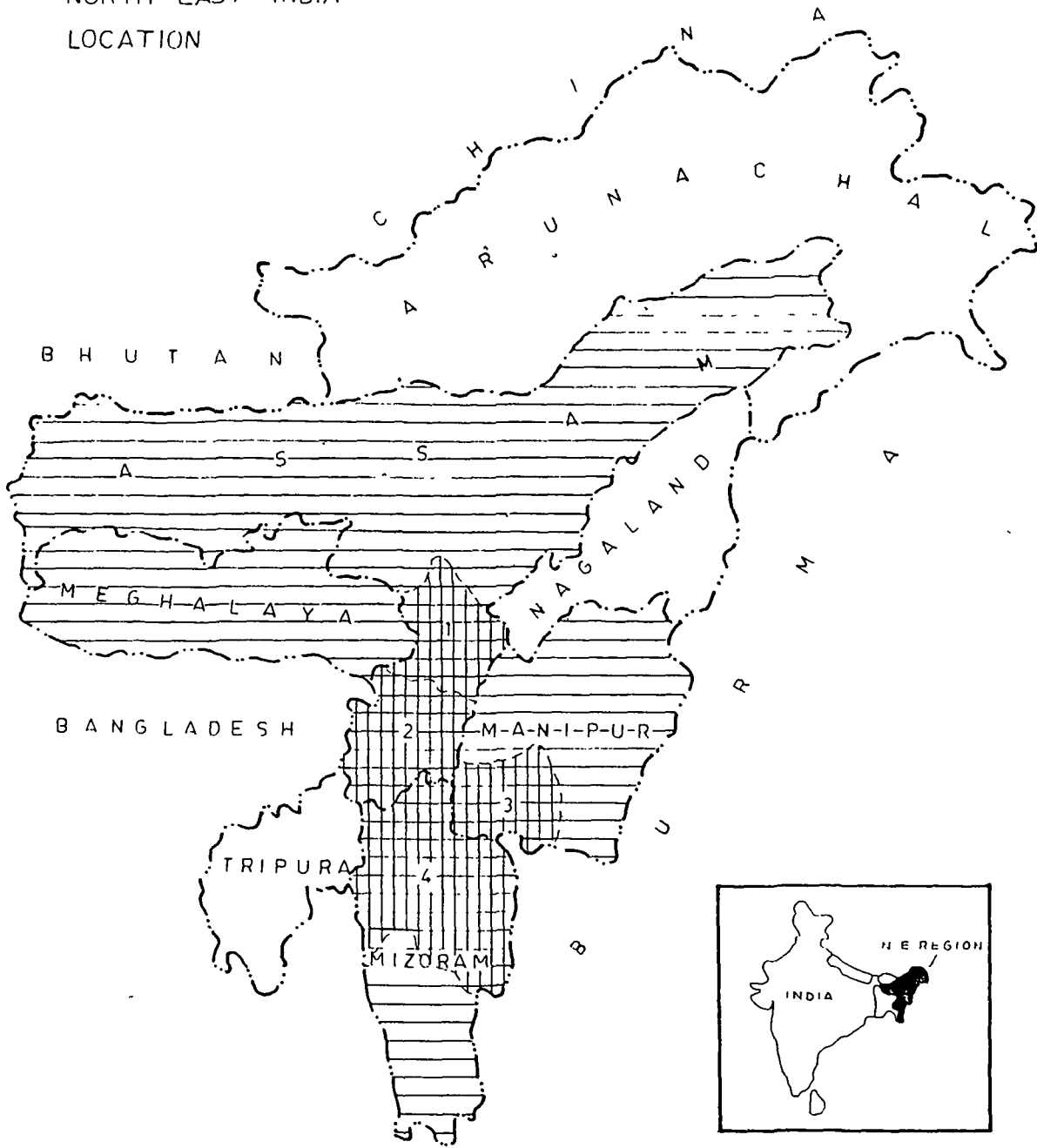
LIST OF TABLES



Table	Particulars	Page
1.	Proportion of STs to Total Population in Meghalaya, 1981	64
2.	Proportion of STs to Total Population in Manipur, 1981	68
3.	Proportion of STs to Total Population in Mizoram, 1981	69
4.	Proportion to STs to Total Population in Assam, 1971	70
5.	Proportion of Hmars to Total Population, Manipur, 1981	77
6.	Proportion of Hmars to Total Population, Meghalaya, 1981	78
7.	Proportion of Hmars to Total Population, Mizoram, 1981	79
8.	Proportion of Hmars to Total Population, Assam, 1971	80
9.	Proportion of Hmars to Total STs in Manipur, 1981	85
10.	Proportion of Hmars to Total STs in Meghalaya, 1981	86
11.	Proportion of Hmars to Total STs in Mizoram, 1981	88
12.	Proportion of Hmars to Total STs in Assam, 1971	89
13.	Index of Concentration of Hmar Population, 1981	91
14.	Number of Villages Classified by Population in the South District Manipur, 1971	96
15.	Number of Villages Classified by Population in the Tipaimukh Sub-division, 1971	97
16.	Number of Villages Classified by Population in the Churachandpur Sub-division, 1971	98

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

NORTH-EAST INDIA
LOCATION



- | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------------|
| Main Study Area |  | 1 N C HILLS DISTRICT |
| | | 2 CACHAR " |
| | | 3 SOUTH " |
| | | 4 AIZAWL " |
| General Study Area |  | |

MAP No 1

The North-Eastern region of India has an area of 255,083 square kilometres. This is about 7.76 per cent of the total land area of the country. The seven states which constitute the North East have a total combined population of 26,607,199 in 1981. This is about 3.88 per cent of India's total population.

Few areas of the world can rival the North-Eastern region of India in the rich diversity of its population. There exists a wide variety of tribal communities which display an interesting profile of the country's ethnic diversity. The tribes of India belong to different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups and have some district and unique social and economic characteristics.

According to the 1981 Census, the total Scheduled Tribe (ST) population in India was 51,628,638 (excluding Assam, as census was not held there). This indicates that the STs constitute about 7.76 per cent of India's total population. In 1971, the ST population was above 38 million and accounted for 6.94 per cent of the total population of the country. As for the North-East region, the population of the STs was 3,602,201 (excluding Assam), which works out to be about 13.53 per cent of the total population of the region. In 1971, when census was held in Assam,

the total population of the region was more than 19,582,000 and the total ST population of the North-East was 2,900,195; or 14.81 per cent were STs. It has been observed that the tribal communities of India portray a highly uneven pattern of distribution between the states due to their strong tendencies to cluster and concentrate in the hilly and forested regions of the country, not suitable for settled agriculture.

At the state level, concentration and clustering of the ST population is quite significant as there are some states where ST population constitutes more than 75 per cent of the total population of these states. However, these states with high percentages of STs have far less share in the country's total ST population. In the case of the other states, the tribal population is not very significant.

Proceeding from the state level to the district level analysis, as regards to the distribution of the ST population, the tendency of grouping and concentration becomes more apparent. But moving down to yet smaller levels such as the circle or block, the degree of tribal concentration gets further accentuated. But it is found that the greatest pattern of concentration is at the village level.

In the North-East India, which has a larger proportion of tribal population as compared to India as a whole, there are quite large tribal groups which occupy larger areas. On the other hand, there are numerous smaller tribal groups in the region. It is possible to divide the tribal groups of the region, on the basis of their size and distributional pattern, into four types.

- 1) Larger tribal groups occupying large areas (e.g. the Bodos).
- 2) Large tribal groups occupying relatively smaller areas, (e.g., the Khasis).
- 3) Smaller tribal groups occupying smaller areas (e.g., the different tribes living in Arunachal Pradesh), and
- 4) Smaller tribal groups distributed over large areas (e.g. the Hmars).

The Hmars fall into the fourth category: they are a small tribal group and are distributed over a large area. The Hmar tribe belongs to the Kuki-Chin group and is found scattered very unevenly in many states of the North-East region, especially in Manipur, Mizoram, and in the Cachar and North Cachar Hills districts of Assam. The total population of the Hmar tribe in 1981 was 48,953.

It is difficult to know about the history of the Hmars as there are no written records. Therefore, scholars who have studied them have had to rely on oral traditions only.

The Hmars claim to have come from a place called Sinlung located somewhere in China. They had to leave that place due to some socio-political reasons. Their migration led them to Kachin in Upper Burma and then to Shan where they settled for about two centuries. A severe famine broke out in Shan which compelled them to migrate in search of food, and this led them into the fertile Kabaw valley of Burma bordering south-eastern Manipur. From there, they entered into the place which is now known as Mizoram and established some villages there. Even today, some of these villages still bear the names of Hmar clans after which they were so named.

It has already been mentioned that the Hmars are distributed in a large area, however, like other scheduled tribes of India, they have a tendency to concentrate and cluster in a few packets. In this study, an attempt has been made to identify the core and periphery of the sparsely distributed Hmars. In the absence of block-level data, the core district of their concentration has been identified by using quantitative techniques. With the same technique,

peripheral districts of their concentration have been identified. The core district is that where the percentage of the total Hmar population is the most substantial, and the peripheral districts where these percentages are lower.

Although the general area of the study here is the North-East region, yet our study area gets reduced to the four states where there are sizeable Hmar population, viz., Manipur, Meghalaya, Assam, and Mizoram. Even here, our study area is further reduced and ultimately confined to the four districts, viz., South District Manipur, Aizawl District Mizoram, Cachar and North Cachar Hills Districts of Assam, with the identification of the core and periphery.

Being widely scattered over a large area, the Hmars come into contact with different communities who are living in those areas. The interaction between the Hmars and other tribal and non-tribal groups also took place. However, the level and nature of this interaction differed significantly from region to region and from community to community; at social, economic, and political levels.

Survey of Literature

Not much literature has been written on the Hmar tribe. Although there are some written by Europeans during the later part of the 19th century, yet they failed many a times to distinguish the Hmars from other similar tribes.

Some of the more useful works on the Hmars were written by people belonging to this tribe itself. Hranglien Songate's (1977) Hmar Chanchin (Hmar History) is a historical account of the Hmars which has been written in the Hmar dialect. He includes their supposed origin, ancestry, history of the clans, and the society.

Another notable work is Rochunga Pudaite's (1963) The Education of the Hmar People. Information about the tribe's history, social set up, etc., are found in this book. The main theme dealt with in this book is about the development of education of the Hmar tribe with recommendations for its future development.

Rev. Ruolneikhum Pakhuongte's (1983) The Power of the Gospel Among the Hmar Tribe also give valuable information in addition to what has been obtained from the aforementioned books. Here, the author studies how Christianity was introduced, accepted, and show this new faith grew and spread within the Hmar tribe.

Darliensung's (1987) book entitled, The Hmars is the first book on the Hmars which bears a geographical approach. It is basically an attempt to roll all the previously mentioned works into one volume.

There is also a document entitled Lungkham Bangna

(1988) written in Hmar which is interesting and useful in the study of the Hmar tribe. This is actually a minute of the Hmar Students' Association Leaders Retreat held in Haflong in 1988. In it various aspects of the tribe's dialect, identity, and other details are discussed.

Rochunga Pudaite's (1991) unpublished work entitled Formulas for Peace and Prosperity in Mizoram is a very interesting document relating to the Hmars' problems in Mizoram and the need for peace between the Hmar People's Convention and the Mizoram Government.

Lal Rinawma's (1982) article entitled Settlement Patterns of the Hmars in North East India gives a good account of the history of the movement of the Hmars to different areas from China to Mizoram.

Besides the literature mentioned above, there are useful ones written in the Mizo language. Some of them, for instance, are Hmar Chinchin by H.B. Hrangchhuana (1989), Rev. Liangkhaia's (1977) Mizo Chanchin, K. Zawla's (1964) Mizo Pipute Leh an Thlahte Chanchin, and L. Keivom's (1991) Zoram Khawvel (a travelogue).

Objectives of the Study

Some of the basic objectives of the study are:

- 1) To get an insight into the origin and the process of migration of the Hmars in the historical past.
- 2) To analyse the present pattern of distribution of the Hmars; their cores and peripheries in the region.
- 3) To study the impact of the regional variation in their distribution, and problems of their social adjustments.

Research Questions

Some of the important research questions arising out of the objectives of the study are:

- 1) What were the historical compulsions behind the migration of Hmars from one area to another at different points of time?
- 2) What are the significant characteristics of their spatial distribution?
- 3) What is the nature of their relationships with other social groups of the areas of their concentration?

Sources of Data and Methodology

For the study of the processes of migration, books

written in Hmar, Mizo and English by various authors have been consulted. The scholars have based their studies on the traditional songs and folktales of the Hmars. From what has been written by them, it has been possible to get some idea about the past history of the Hmars. From these sources, it has also been possible to draw a notional map of the probable route of migration that the Hmars took to reach their present locations.

To answer the question on the distributional pattern of the Hmars, data on the population of the Hmars has been obtained from Census populations on the various states from the Social and Cultural Tables, Special Tables for SCs and STs, as well as from the District Census Handbooks. Since the district level data was the smallest unit available, it has been used to develop the core and periphery concept of the distribution of the Hmars. For this, the index of concentration has been employed wherein percentages have been calculated from the Hmar population in a district to the total Hmar population in the North-East region. Various maps have been constructed using different cartographic techniques.

To indicate and identify the likely impacts on the regional variation of their distribution, and problems of their social adjustments arising out of their pattern

of distribution, information has been based on observations, and from experiences, as well as from church sources and visits to the core and peripheral areas.

Organization of the Study

In the first chapter, an attempt has been made to assess the need and relevance of the present study. The objectives, research questions, methods and data base and a survey of literature have also been discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter II, the physical setting of North-East India has been discussed to understand the physical conditions of the region better. In the first section, the physiography of the region is discussed. This is further divided into three sub-sections of plateaus, hills and mountains, and plains. In the second section, the drainage of the region is discussed. Five main river basins drain the North-East region of India. In the third section, the climate of North-East is described. Local influences and relief have altered this region's climate to a characteristic sub-tropical climate. In the fourth section, the various soil types of the region are discussed. The soils vary from thick clays and alluvium in the river basins and valleys to red loams and laterites in the hills and mountains.

In Chapter III, an attempt has been made to analyse the origin and dispersal of the Hmars in the historical past. In the first section, the various theories on the meaning of the word Hmar has been discussed. In the second section, the outline of the origin of the Hmars has been discussed on the basis of several opinions expressed by different scholars. In the third section, the dispersal of the Hmars from their original place is traced, and the likely reasons for the dispersal has been analysed. In the last section of this chapter, the movement of the Hmars from Shan to the Chin Hills in Burma has been described.

In Chapter IV, the present patterns of distribution of the Hmars and the cores and peripheries of Hmar distribution have been discussed. In the first section, the movement into and in north-eastern India is discussed. Also the various Hmar clans have been listed. In the second section, the settlement of the Hmars in Mizoram has been discussed. The Hmars were the first to settle in Mizoram. In the third section, the processes of the dispersal of the Hmars to the adjoining states has been described. It has been discussed how they moved to North Cachar hills, to Cachar, Tripura, etc. In the fourth section, the tribal scene in the North-East has been studied. Also the proportion of scheduled tribes to the non-scheduled tribes in the states has also been analysed. The fifth section of this

chapter studies the distributional pattern of the Hmars in North-East India. It is also analysed the proportion of Hmars to the total population, as well as the proportion of Hmars to the total scheduled tribe population. In the sixth section, the core and the periphery areas of the Hmars are separately identified and discussed in different sub-sections.

Chapter V deals with the problems of adjustment that the Hmars face while living in different areas and with different types of people. In the first section and the other following sequential sub-sections, the core area is described. First the physical structure, social, and economic structures are discussed. After this, the problems of adjustment under the headings of Social, Economic, and Political problems have been identified.

Chapter VI includes the various conclusions derived from this present study.

CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE REGION

The North-East India is made up of the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. These seven states together cover an area of about 255,036 sq.km. This Region is situated between 22°N and 29°5'N latitudes and between 89°70'E and 97°30'E longitudes.

For a better understanding of the physical condition of the North-Eastern region of India, it is necessary to discuss it under the following headings:

2.1) Physiography

2.2) Drainage

2.3) Climate

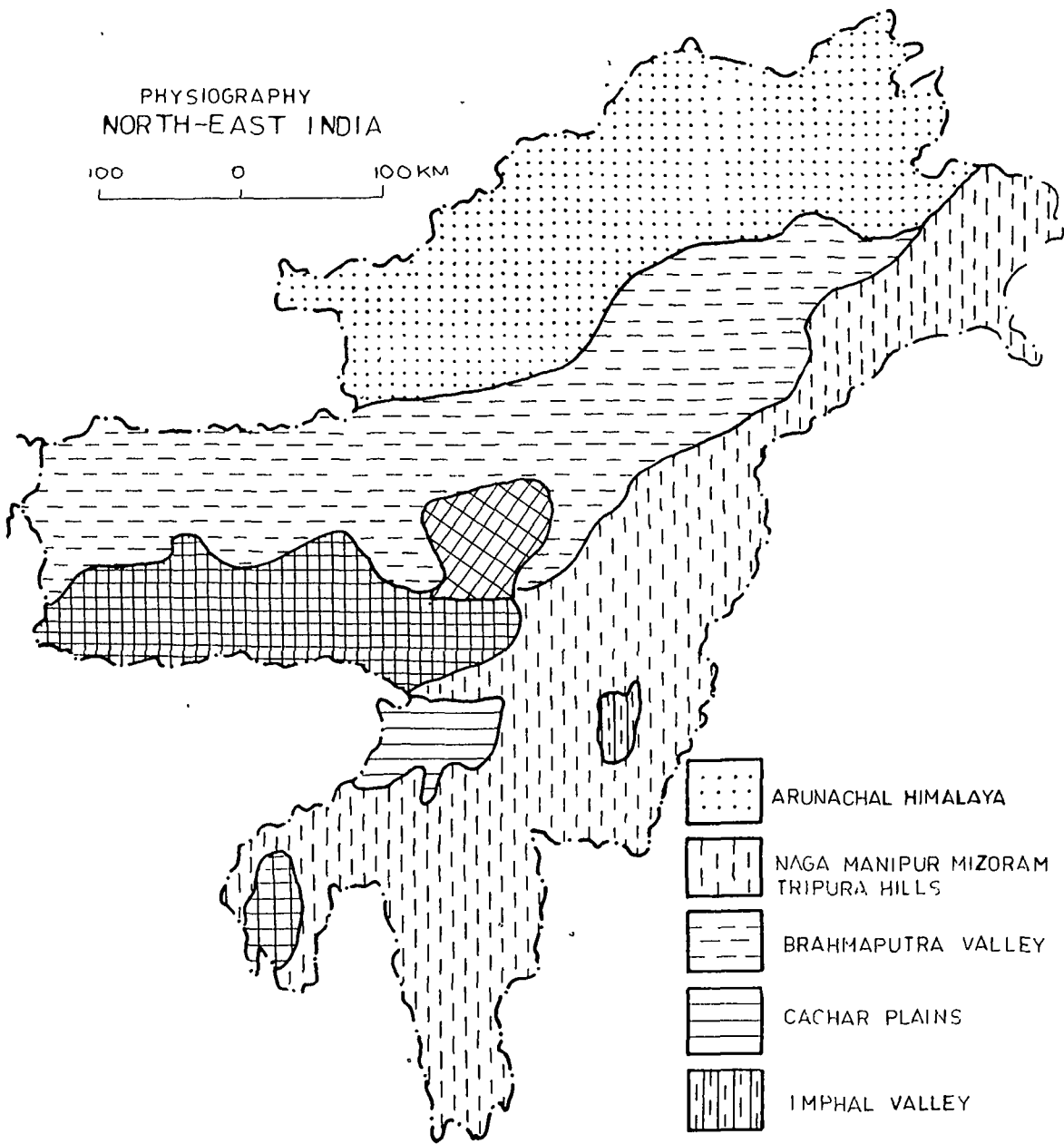
2.4) Soil.









2.1. Physiography

The three main classifications of landforms, namely the Archaean plateau, the young folded mountains of tertiary origin, and the recently built up alluvial plains, are found in the North-Eastern region of India. The plateaus are the Meghalaya-Karbi plateaus which are the separated part of the Deccan plateau of peninsular India. The young

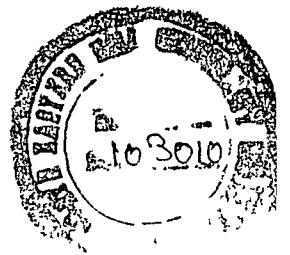
PHYSIOGRAPHY
NORTH-EAST INDIA

100 0 100 KM



-  ARUNACHAL HIMALAYA
-  NAGA MANIPUR MIZORAM
TRIPURA HILLS
-  BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY
-  CACHAR PLAINS
-  IMPHAL VALLEY
-  TRIPURA PLAINS
-  MEGHALAYA PLATEAU
-  KARBI PLATEAU

MAP No 2



folded mountains predominantly occupy this region as five states are possessing this relief feature. As regards to the alluvial plains, there are four plains of which the plain of the Brahmaputra is the most extensive. The Barak plain is the next largest. Besides these, there are also the intermontane plain of Manipur and the piedmont plain of Tripura. These denote a margin of the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta.¹

The three main classifications of landforms are used to delineate North-East India into three physiographic divisions. The characteristics of each of these divisions are discussed as follows.

2.1.1. Plateaus

The Meghalaya-Karbi plateaus cover an area of about 32,821 sq.km. Unlike the Deccan plateau, these plateaus still possess a hilly character even though they have been denuded.² In the southern part, the Meghalaya Plateau suddenly rises about 1,000 m from the level of the Sylhet plain. This portion of the plateau retains a consistent outline towards the south, apart from areas that have been dissected by south-flowing streams cascading through deep gorges and waterfalls.

1. Taher, M. 1986. "Physiographic Framework of North-East India", North-Eastern Geographer, Vol. 18, No. 1 & 2, p. 11.

2. Ibid., p. 11.

From this perimeter, the plateau rises gradually northwards to the central part where distinct ranges are aligned in an east-west configuration. In the Garo Hills, the Tura-Kylas Range attains a maximum height of 1412 m at Nokrek Peak. In the East Khasi Hills, the Shillong Range reaches its highest point of 1961 m at Shillong Peak.

From this central region of the plateau, the elevation begins to decrease as one proceeds northwards. But due to the presence of successive ranges projecting outwards in all directions, the plateau still maintains a hilly character. The western and eastern extremities of the plateau (the Garo and Jaintia Hills respectively) are more denuded and dissected and ultimately blend into the Brahmaputra Plain in the form of low isolated hills and hillocks.

The Karbi Plateau is located to the east of the Meghalaya Plateau. The former protrudes up to the bank of the Brahmaputra causing compression in the valley. Fluvial erosion by the Kopili and its tributaries separate the Karbi Plateau from Nagaland on the south-eastern side. Only in its central part is the Karbi Plateau able to reach high elevations as in Chenghehison Peak (1359 m) and Dambuko (1361 m). With its degraded boundaries and a central region having greater elevation, the Karbi Plateau has become roundish in shape.³ It has given out many streams which

3. Ibid., p. 11.

flow out radially as the Dhansiri, Kopili and the Kalang.

2.1.2. Hills and Mountains

The hills and mountains are the most predominant landform features found in North-East India. They cover roughly 1500,000 sq.km., which constitute about 60% of the total geographical area of the Region. This physiographic region can be divided into (i) the mountains, which comprise of the Arunachal Himalayas stretching from the Orkhala Range near the Bhutan-Arunachal border to the Siang-Dihang river, and (ii) the hills which comprise of the Eastern Hills made up by the Dibang-Lohit-Patkai-Naga-Manipur-Mizo Ranges.⁴

The mountains of the Arunachal Himalayas are divided into two sections: the lesser Himalayas bordering with the Brahmaputra valley are low and rise only upto about 300 m to 500 m. The second division is the greater Himalayas which have an average height of about 6500 m along the Indo-Chinese border. This region is devoid of vegetation and has rocky surfaces and high snow-capped peaks.

The Hills are composed of the eastern hills and originate from the hill mass of the Dibang-Lohit area. From there, three hill or mountain ranges are sent out:

4. Ibid., p. 11.

to the west, to the east and to the south. From Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, a series of parallel ranges and valleys stretch out in the south-west direction. These ranges culminate in the Patkai Range and stand out seemingly as a barrier between India and Burma. These ranges are arranged moving outwards to the Indian landmass. They cover wide areas yet keep their original north-east to the south-west arrangement.

Saramati (3862 m) in Nagaland is the highest point in the Patkai range. The Barail range stretches from Tuensang in the south-west direction to North Cachar Hills to the east of the Patkai range. The mean height of the Barail range is about 2000 m and reaches its highest at Mount Japvo (3016 m) in Nagaland.

The hills of Nagaland, with the inclusion of the Barail range, extend in the western direction to include the North Cachar Hills District (which is one of the districts of the study area of this present paper). The Barail range keeps up its high elevation, having a mean altitude exceeding 1600 m. To the east of Haflong town is located the Mahadeo Peak (1953) which has the highest elevation in the District.

The Barail range separates the district into two

parts.⁵ One region situated in the north comes under the catchment basin of the Brahmaputra river. The second region located to the south falls under the Barak basin. The young hills conclude at the Kopili river. To the west of this lies the Meghalaya Plateau, which has been described above. The hills of this District in the southern part of the Karbi Plateau to the central portion of the Barail range ascend to a height of 500 m. But the height drops as one heads southwards to the valley of the Barak.

The various ranges which constitute the Eastern Hills continue into Manipur. The hills of eastern Manipur act as a natural boundary between Burma and India. The average height of these hills is around 1500 m, although it attains above 1800 m in north-eastern Ukhrul.

The western ranges of Manipur continue through South District, Manipur (which is included in our study area). These hills in the South District are the southern end of the western ranges of Manipur and are separated from Mizoram, to the south by the Tuivai river. The major ranges of this district is the Len Tlang which stretches from the east of Churachandpur town cutting through the eastern parts of Singhat Sub-division and upto the Chin Hills of Burma in the south.

5. Ibid., p. 14.

The general relief characteristic of the District is that of hills and river basins. The highest point of the District is in the Kailam range south of the Churachandpur-Tipaimukh road at Kailam Tlang (2202 m).⁶ The river basins are predominantly 'V' shaped, leaving aside the lower parts of the Tuiruong, Tuithapui (Khuga) and the Imphal river valley, which are now filled up with alluvium. In general, the elevation of the hills is greater on the eastern side (1200 m) and lower on the western part (300 m - 600 m).

The western ranges of Manipur continue to form the hills of Mizoram. Through the Aizawl District (included in our study area) which borders with south-western Manipur, the hills extend in a north-south direction in a parallel alignment. In between these parallelly arranged ranges are very narrow valleys and nullahs which are usually occupied by rivers. The hills are made up of shale and slate.⁷ Having no power to retain water, deficiency of water characterizes the peaks and slopes of these hills. The height of these hills decreases from 1400 m in the east to 400 m in the western side. The Blue Mountain, which is situated in the south-eastern border of Mizoram, is the highest peak with an elevation of about 2157 m above sea level.

6. Varte, L. Khuma, op.cit., p. 52.

7. Taher, M. Op.cit., p. 14.

The characteristic range and valley topography of Mizoram continues even into Tripura but are much lower, decreasing from 700 m in the western part to 400 m in the east. Flat-bottomed valleys mainly separate these ranges.

2.1.3. Plains

The Plains of North-East India are made up of four plains. They are the Brahmaputra Plain, the Barak Plain, the Manipur Basin, and the Tripura Piedmont Plain.

The Brahmaputra Plain is by far the most extensive and covers roughly 56,480 sq.km. It is narrow and elongated having a length of 600 kilometres and an average width of 70 km. Its width is the least (50 km) at the point where the Karbi Plateau protrudes northwards.

The general gradient falls very gently south-west and west at an average rate of less than 13 cm per km.⁸ However, the northern and southern margins, which are bordered by high mountains, are steep.

The Barak Plain is the second largest plain of the North-East with an area covering approximately 6962 sq.km. The Barak Plain covers the whole of the Cachar District, which is the fourth and last district that is included in our study area. Cachar District is predominantly a flat

8. Ibid., p. 15.

area with occasional undulating hills found on its eastern and southern sides. The Barak Plain is the headward piedmont section of the Barak-Surma-Kushiyara Plain.⁹ The gradient of this district (and of the Barak plain) falls gently from east to west. The lowest section is the central part where the Barak river flows through. Here, the Barak, being over-burdened by the large volume of sediments brought in by swift-flowing tributaries, is slow and meanders widely in its course resulting in a series of ox-bow lakes and swamps along the way.

The third plain is the Manipur basin which is oval in shape and has an area of roughly 1843 sq.km. and a maximum breadth of 32 km. The plain slopes from north to south at an average gradient of 75 cm per kilometre.¹⁰ In the north, the height is about 838 m and descends to about 792.5 m in the southern part. The Loktak lake is the deepest part of the Plain.

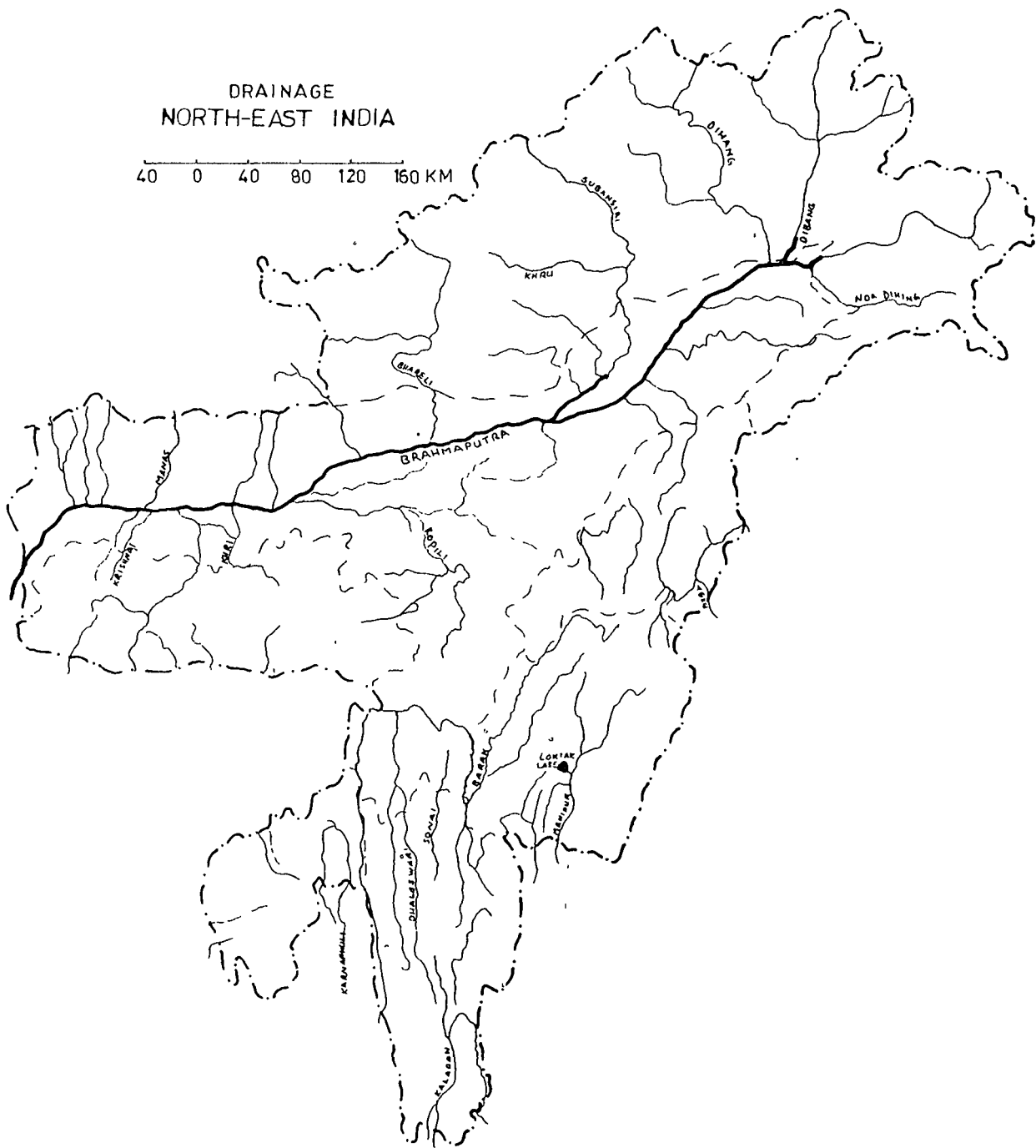
The Tripura plain is a piedmont plain and towards the western part, only low isolated hills are present. The area of this plain is about 3500 sq.km. and represents a section of the margin of the Plain of Bangladesh. The Tripura Plain possesses both erosional and depositional features.

9. Ibid., p. 17.

10. Ibid., p. 17.

DRAINAGE
NORTH-EAST INDIA

40 0 40 80 120 160 KM



MAP No 3

2.2. Drainage

North-East India is marked by the presence of five main river basins which have many tributaries. Of the river basins, the Brahmaputra basin is the largest and covers the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, the major parts of Assam, Nagaland, and Meghalaya.

The Brahmaputra originates in Tibet where it is known as the Tsangpo. In Siang, the river is known as the Dihang. At a place near Sadiya, the Dibang from the north, and the Lohit from the east join it, and from there, the three rivers flow as the great Brahmaputra.¹¹ The Brahmaputra has more than one hundred tributaries. Of them, fifteen in the north-bank and ten in the south-bank are the larger ones.¹² Some of the north-bank rivers are the Subansiri, Kameng, Bhareli, etc., which drain Arunachal Pradesh. Manas and Sonkosh are the other important rivers. Almost all the north-bank rivers take a sub-parallel course along the Brahmaputra before opening into it.

Tributaries on the south-bank are mostly the Burhi-Dihing and Dikhou. The Dhansiri and the Kopili rivers drain parts of the Karbi plateau. The Khri, Dudhnai and the

11. Singh, R.L. India a Regional Geography, National Geographic Society of India, Varanasi, p. 308.

12. Taher, M. Op.cit., p. 7.

Krishnai rivers drain the northern parts of Meghalaya and flow into the Brahmaputra.

The Barak river is second largest and occupies the southern part of Meghalaya, southern parts of North Cachar Hills south of the Barail range, the northern and western margins of Manipur, northern half of Mizoram, north-eastern parts of Tripura and Cachar districts. The origin of the Barak river is in the southern slopes of the Barail range in the Senapati district of Manipur. From here, it flows initially west but then heads southwards along the western margin of Manipur to the border of Mizoram where it takes a big U-turn to the north for a while before moving west to the Barak plain.

Aizawl district is drained by the Barak (Tuiruong), Sonai (Turial), Sorlui, and the Dhaleswari (Tlawng) to name a few. These drain into the Barak. The rest of Mizoram comes under the basin of the Burmese river Kaladan which falls into the Bay of Bengal. Some tributaries are the Chhimtuipui and Mengpui and they form parallel drainage patterns.

The northern part of Manipur (Ukhrul district) and the south-eastern portions of Nagaland have rivers that fall under the Tizu basin which in turn form a part

of the Chindwin river in Burma. The eastern border of Manipur is drained by the Khampat and its tributaries. The Manipur river flows from the region near the Loktak lake area and proceeds south and finally joins the Chindwin.

The Karnaphuli basin extends upto western Mizoram and southern parts of Tripura and the streams of this system drain these areas.

2.3. Climate

The climate of North-East India is itself a characteristic type and is incomparable to any other regions of the country. This distinct climate can be attributed to such factors as (a) location, (b) relief, (c) alternating pressure cells in the north-west and north-east and Bay of Bengal, and their periodic oscillations, (d) predominance of maritime tropical air masses, (e) local mountain and valley winds. In addition to these factors, such influences as that of easterly jet streams, upper air westerlies, the supply of large quantities of moisture from local sources, and so on, must also be taken into consideration.¹³

A major part of the North-Eastern region of India is situated in the sub-tropical belt. The Tropic of Cancer

13. Barthakur, M. "Weather and Climate of North-East India", North-Eastern Geographer, Vol. 18, No. 1 & 2, 1986, p. 22.

runs across Mizoram just south of Aizawl at a place called Thenzawl, and only these areas lie outside that belt the rest of the region lies in.

Local influences and relief have altered the climate of this region from a general tropical monsoon climate to a more particular sub-tropical or extra-tropical climate. The regional orographic structure is so varied that the weather elements are predominantly conditioned locally to produce different climatic characteristics.¹⁴ Based on the various distinctions regarding the pattern, tendency, distribution of temperature, rainfall, rainy days, fogs and thunderstorms, the climate of the North-East may be divided into the following four seasons: (a) Winter (Dec.-Feb.), (b) Pre-monsoon (March-May), (c) Monsoon (June-Sept.), (d) Retreating Monsoon (Oct.-Nov.).

In the Assam or Brahmaputra valley, Tezpur, which is located in the middle part receives about 1780 mm of rainfall in a year. Guwahati, situated in the relatively drier belt, received an average 1637 mm of rainfall annually. Except for the extreme part of the valley, the rest receive their maximum rainfall in July. Upper Brahmaputra valley receives higher⁴ rainfalls. Dibrugarh receives about 2759 mm of rain a year. In Guwahati, the hottest month is August

14. Ibid.

when it records a mean temperature of 29 degrees celsius. January is the coldest month with average temperature about 17.5 degrees centigrade.¹⁵

In the Arunachal Himalayas, the climatic conditions tend to change with short distances due to rapid changes in topographic and altitudinal aspects. Winter rains are regular features of the region. June and July are the wettest months. Snowfall is experienced at heights above 1500 m. Winter temperatures range from zero to 2 degrees centigrade in the south, to minus 7 degrees centigrade in the north.¹⁶

In the Plateau region, viz. Meghalaya, the mean July temperature in Shillong is about 21.1 degrees celsius. January records a mean temperature of about 9.6 degrees. The southern slopes receive very heavy rainfall and Cherrapunjee receives one of the highest rainfalls in the world averaging 11,418 mm a year. Shillong receives about 3362 mm of rainfall annually.

The Eastern Hills generally receive heavy rainfall with an average of about 2500 mm annually. Kohima in Nagaland receives about 1903 mm, Imphal 1473 mm, Tripura State 2117 mm

15. Singh, Gopal. A Geography of India, pp. 477-78.

16. Singh, R.L. Op.cit., pp. 483-84.

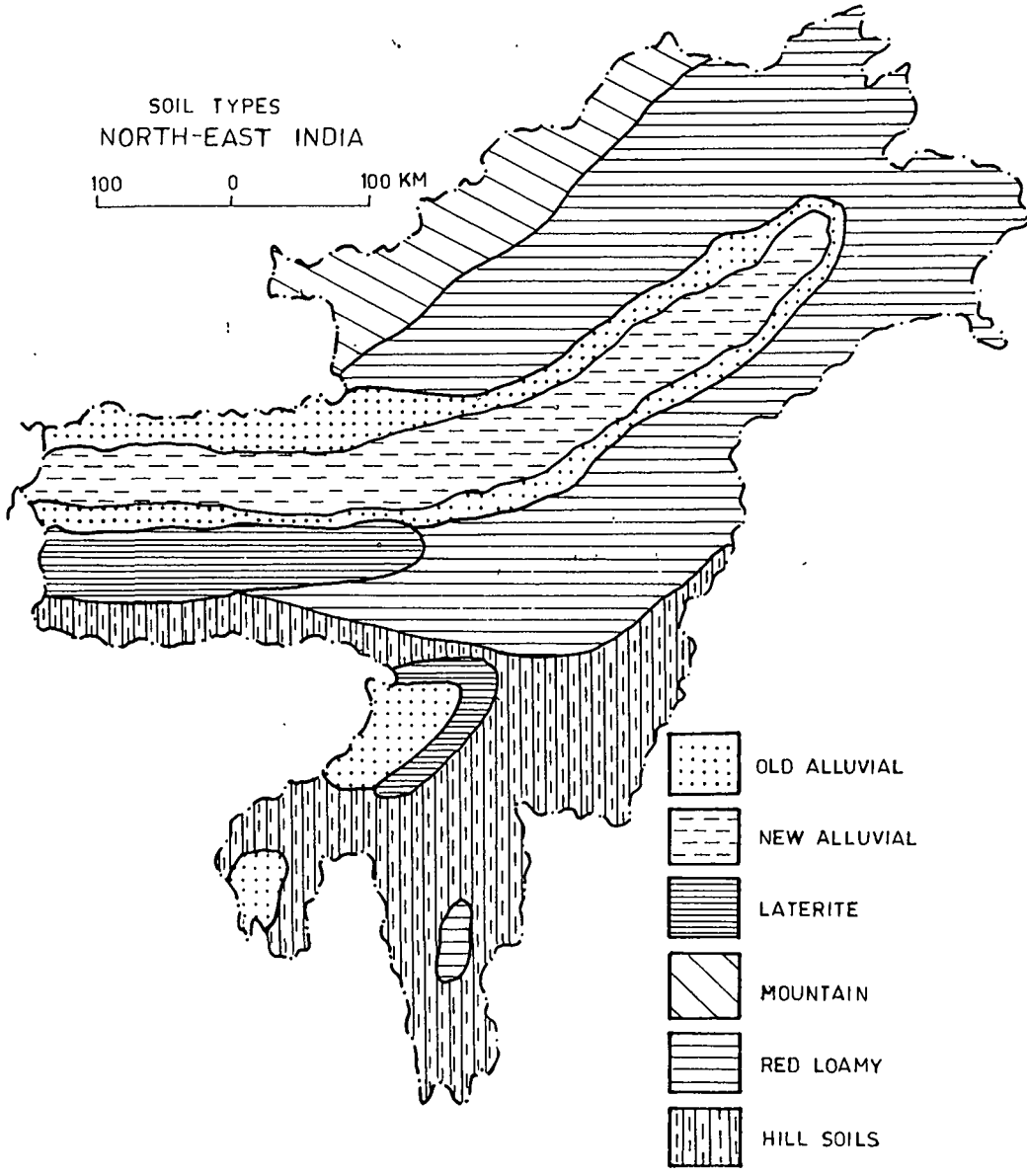
of rainfall per year. South District Manipur receives about 1497.25 mm of rainfall annually. The wettest months are June and July, while January is the driest month. It has a maximum mean temperature of 26.6°C and a minimum of 6.6°C. Lunglei in Mizoram receives about 3544 mm of rainfall annually. But the Aizawl District to the north receives an average rainfall of about 2264 mm. The maximum average in this District is 30.9°C and the minimum temperature is 6.8°C. July and August are the wettest months and November to January are the driest. North Cachar Hills District has high temperature of about 25°C (mean) and minimum mean temperature of 9°C at Haflong town. The average annually rainfall here is about 3098 mm.

Silchar, which is situated in the Plains of Cachar, records an average rainfall of about 3225 mm annually. However, the Cachar District as a whole gets a higher 3234 mm of rainfall. The mean maximum temperature in the district is 37°C and minimum 8.33°C.

The North-Eastern region of India has a climate which is influenced by the seasonal rhythm of the monsoons. Although it would appear that the whole region should experience the same weather characteristics, however, the regional variations in relief, etc. has resulted in varying natures of weather characteristics in the different states.

SOIL TYPES
NORTH-EAST INDIA

100 0 100 KM



MAP No 4

2.4. Soil

Soil is very important to support the vegetal growth in the land. Where soil cover is deep or thick, it is better suited for agricultural practices. However, soil cover is thin or shallow in the hills except in the river valleys and the foothill zones.

In the Brahmaputra valley, the soil is generally alluvial in character. The new alluvial soils are mainly to be found along the banks of the river in the valley and are exposed to yearly floods and renewal. The old alluvial soils are found above the annual flood level and are most suitable for the cultivation of tea as is the case in the Upper Assam region.¹⁷

In the Arunachal Himalayas, the soils in the foothills are alluvial in nature. These are either loams or sand loams which are mixed with pebbles brought down from higher areas by the rains. Soils in the valley are clayey alluvium and are very fertile. There are also some areas that have hill soils and red soils.

The hills of the Eastern Hills generally have thin soil cover, because of steep slopes which effect rapid run-off thereby depleting the soil cover. However, along

17. Ibid., p. 313.

the foothills or in the river valleys, soil cover is relatively thicker. The soils of the hills of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Mizoram are primarily red loams or hill soils and laterite. The central part of Manipur which is a flood plain has thick deposits of sands, clays and silts. Soils of Manipur hills, Mizo hills, and North Cachar hills have similar types of soils each possessing reddish loams.

The plains of Tripura and the Barak valley of Cachar have alluvial soil, silt, clayey soils, and heavy clay alluvium types of soils.

In the plateaus of Meghalaya and Karbi hills, red loam or hill soils occupy almost the entire region with the exception of some small tracts in the south-western Karbi hills adjoining Jaintia hills that has laterite soils.¹⁸ The laterite soils are highly leached and lack plant nutrients. Old alluvium is found in the northern fringe of the region that borders with the plains.

Based on the above study on the physical setting of the North-Eastern India, the following conclusions may be made.

(1) Physiographically, the three main classifications of landforms viz. plateaus, fold mountains, and alluvial plains, are found in the North-Eastern India.

18. Ibid., p. 684.

The plateaus are the Meghalaya-Karbi plateaus which are the separated parts of the Deccan plateau.

The mountains comprise of the Arunachal Himalayas that stretches from the Bhutan-Arunachal border in the west to the Siang-Dihing river in the east. The hills comprise of the Eastern Hills made up by the Dibang-Lohit-Patkai-Naga-Manipur-Mizo ranges.

The alluvial plains are made up of the Brahmaputra plain, Barak plain, Manipur plain, and the Tripura piedmont plain.

(2) Five main river basins drain the region. The Brahmaputra basin is the largest and covers the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, major parts of Assam, Nagaland, and Meghalaya. The Barak is the next largest river system and occupies the southern parts of Meghalaya, North Cachar hills, northern and western margins of Manipur, northern half of Mizoram and north-eastern parts of Tripura and Cachar. The Burmese Kaladan river basin drains the southern half of Mizoram. The rivers of the northern parts of Manipur and south-eastern Nagaland fall under the Tizu basin. The Karnaphuli basin with its streams drains western Mizoram and southern parts of Tripura.

(3) The climate of North-East India is very characteristic and is incomparable to any other regions of India.

Local influences and relief have contributed to make the climate of this Region into the sub-tropical or extra-tropical type. The climate has been divided into four seasons: (a) Winter (Dec.-Feb.), (b) Pre-Monsoon (March-May), (c) Monsoon (June-Sept.), (d) Retreating Monsoon (Oct.-Nov).

(4) The soils in the Brahmaputra valley are either new alluvium as found along the banks of the river, or old alluvium that are found above the annual flood level.

Soils in Arunachal Himalayas are alluvial in the foothills, clayey in the valleys and red or hill soils in the hills and higher areas.

The soil cover is thin in the Eastern Hills due to rapid run-off along the slopes. Soils here are predominantly red soils, hill soils or laterite soils in the higher areas. Soils in the plains of Tripura and Cachar are alluvial and heavy clays.

The soils in the Meghalaya-Karbi plateau region are predominantly red or hill soils except for a small area in south-western Karbi hills adjoining Jaintia hills which has laterite soils.

CHAPTER III

ORIGIN AND DISPERSAL OF HMARS:

A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

It is rather difficult to trace the history of the Hmars, as the sources of information available to us are very limited and very few scholars have attempted to study them. There is no written history of the Hmar tribe as the Hmars did not possess even any script of their dialect. In the absence of any written records, scholars have had to support their studies on folktales, poems and legends which have been handed down from generation to generation by word-of-mouth. Therefore, it is not possible to develop any fool-proof theory about the exact area of their origin and the route which Hmars had taken, in the historical past, to their present locations. Thus, it is necessary to take into consideration and incorporate all the views and theories that scholars have employed.

3.1. Who are the Hmars?

The problem of this study starts right from the name of the tribe. It is essential first to understand as to who the Hmars are before proceeding any further. According to Hranglien Songate, the Hmar historian, the original ancestor of the Hmars was named Manmasi.¹ This

1. Songate, H. Hmar Chanchin, p. 12.

is the ancestor's name. But questions arise as to the meaning of the word 'Hmar', and when it was first used to designate this tribe.

The etymological definition of the word 'Hmar' is debatable. Some scholars are of the opinion that the word had been used even before the tribe entered the North-Eastern region of India. Songate's view is that there were two groups of people who were distinguished from each other by the way their men wore their hair. The first group wore their hair with a knot on their foreheads and were called the "Pawis". All the others who wore their hair in a chignon, knotted at the back of their head, were referred to as the 'Hmarh'.² Frank Lehman wrote:

Among the Chins of the Chin and Lushai Hills of Burma and India, there is a dichotomy of Mar (variant form of Hmar) versus Pawi. The Mar, whose men wear their hair in a chignon, include the Lushais (in India) and the related Hualngo, together with the Kamhau and Siyin of the northern Chin Special Division of Burma. The Pawi, wearing their hair in a frontal topknot include a number of groups in Burma just south of the Mar.³

This has been corroborated by Grierson where he mentions that the Chin people called their neighbouring

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. Lehman in Pakhuongte's 'Power of the Gospel', pp. 2-3.

tribes, such as the Lushais and other kindred tribes, as Marh.⁴

Another view is that the word 'Hmar' means north or 'northerner'. The Hmars are said to be the first to enter present-day Mizoram.⁵ From the Champhai region they headed northwards and were thus called the Hmars (Hmar = north). Some other scholars have interpreted that the Hmars entered into Mizoram from the north from Manipur and thus were called 'Hmars' (northerner) by the Lusei tribe. But from these two views, the first seems more probable as we shall see later in subsequent chapters that the migrations took the Hmars northwards from Mizoram to adjoining areas.

Therefore, as to the meaning of the word Hmar, two theories have been established. If the chignon hair style theory is to be accepted, then it is most probably to assume that the term 'Hmar' was used to refer to this current tribe long before they had even entered India. Again, if the direction (Hmar = north) theory is to be accepted, then one can safely conclude that the term was first used not too long ago when they settled in Mizoram, initially.

4. Grierson, Linguistic Survey, Vol. 3, p.

5. Liangkhaia, Rev. Mizo Chinchin, p. 8.

From the above discussion, a question arises: if the term Hmar/Mar/Hmarh, based on the style of wearing one's hair in a knot at the back of the head, then when did the Luseis (now considered a distinctively different tribal group) who used to wear their hair in the same manner, disassociate from it (Hmar) and the term applied exclusively to those currently called Hmars?

It may have been that while 'Hmar' was a broader term initially, yet later on, especially after settling in Mizoram, it was retained to mean only those who had been pushed northwards by other tribes of that region. According to Songate, in the group termed Hmar, trouble started brewing. In fact, some of the tribes started fighting against each other. From then on, tribes like the Lusei, Sailo, Paite, Thado etc. started to recognise themselves as separate tribes.

Coincidentally, the Hmars then were living in settlements which were located geographically north of those of the Lusei chiefs and Sailo chiefs. And so, since the word Hmar also means north, the Hmars thus retained this name and were thence called Hmars.⁶ This argument seems to be logically acceptable.

6. Songate, op.cit., pp. 6-7.

In addition to the above theories on the origin of the word 'Hmar', there is another one suggested by K. Zawla. According to him, when the tribe had migrated into Burma and settled there for some time, they had maintained very large families and the Burmese called them 'Hmars'. The term 'Hmar' was used to mean 'having many off-springs; healthy bred'.⁷ It appears from this definition that the Hmars lived together in peaceful harmony in large groups and were wealthy so as to be 'healthy-bred'.

The Hmars were also known by different names by different peoples. Along with the Hmars, the Luseis of the south and the Kukis of the north were travelling close by.⁸ These tribal groups had cultural and social affinity with each other. In fact, at one point of time, this entire group was collectively known as the Kuki tribe.⁹ The term Kuki was given by the Bengalees to differentiate the savage tribesmen from the civilized settlers. These tribal groups were constantly at war with each other over their claim over possession of territories.

The Hmars were acknowledged to have proceeded a little ahead of the other two groups. The direction which

7. Zawla, K. Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin, p. 14.

8. Pudiate, R. Education of the Hmar People, p. 26.

9. Shakespear, J. Lushai-Kuki Clans, p. 147.

they took, with reference to the other two groups, must have been to their west as the Luseis and the Kukis called them 'Khawthlang', or 'westerner'. In his book entitled the Lushai-Kuki Clans, Shakespear briefly mentions the Hmars, referring to them as both 'Old Kuki' and 'Khawthlang' to differentiate them from the Luseis and those currently known as the Kukis. However, it must be mentioned that the Hmars did not like to be called 'Old Kuki' as they found that to be derogatory. Moreover, Shakespear appeared to be very ill-informed about the Hmars.

II

3.2. Origin

The Hmars claim to have originated from a place called Sinlung. They have no physical proof of their claim, however. In the study of history, the important sources of information are, for instance, coins, inscriptions on wood, stone and metals, written records, ruins, and oral traditions. But the Hmars were a primitive tribe who did not possess any script until the early Twentieth Century. Thus they did not leave behind any written records of their past history. In view of the paucity of historical information, the oral traditions in the form of legends, folktales, folklores, songs, and verses chanted by the priests have to be relied upon. Also, place names have to be taken into consideration.

The exact location of Sinlung is still not known. However, every Hmar understands and accepts that Sinlung is his ancient home from where his ancestors originated. This Sinlung tradition has been substantiated by their folksongs; one of which goes as:

Kan Siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,
 Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.
 Chawngzil ang kokir thei changsien,
 Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.

This, translated, means;

My motherland famous Sinlung,
 Home of my ancestors.
 If only it could be called back like Chawngzil*,
 Home of my ancestors.

The above song bears testimony of their claim that the Hmars once lived in Sinlung. And it appears from this song that Sinlung was a place revered and there is a note of longing for that place.

There is a controversy regarding the location and meaning of Sinlung. The scholars and historians who have attempted to absolve the problem seem to have only confused the matter even more. However, the various theories formulated upon Sinlung are nevertheless very interesting and have to be taken into consideration.

* It is not known whether Chawngzil was a name of a person or of a place.

Therefore, it becomes necessary to highlight briefly the various theories developed on Sinlung. The first view, shared by some writers, believes that Sinlung probably was the name given to a cave or cavern from where kindred tribes including the Hmars had come out.¹⁰ Their reasoning is that the word Sinlung comes from two words 'Sin' meaning 'cover' and 'lung' meaning 'stone'; and thus Sinlung implies 'covering stone'. Although this view is based only on simple literal translation, yet it is a common belief shared by other tribes like the Luseis, Gangte, Paite, Thado, and Vaiphei.¹¹ Some have discredited this theory saying that it is not possible to just 'issue forth from a cave'.¹² For example, one Hmar song says "from the city of Sinlung ..." ("Khaw Singlungah") and suggests that Sinlung was a city and not a cave.

The second theory is based on the assumption of Sinlung being a derivative from the name of Chinese rulers, from whose reign the Hmars had left. A Mizo historian, R. Vanlawma, maintains that the Hmars and other similar tribes must have come out of China during the reign of a Chinese Emperor named Chienlung. And that it is probable

10. Shakespear, J. Op.cit., p. 13.

11. Lal Rinawma, Settlement Patterns..., p. 41.

12. Zawla, K. Op.cit., p. 13.

that Sinlung could have been the name of this ruler.¹³ A Hmar scholar, Pudaite, is of the opinion that Sinlung could be a "derivative of the Ch'n dynasty of 221-207 B.C. when the people lived in a clustered city-state community".¹⁴ Those who support this view equate 'Sin' with "Ch'n" and 'lung' (rock) with 'dynasty', which is a poetical expression.

The third theory tries to locate Sinlung: Several writers and scholars have attempted to locate Sinlung somewhere in China. Songate suggests the possibility of the present-day Tailing or Silung of south-west China being misunderstood as Sinlung.¹⁵ B.K. Roy Burman also believes that the present Silung in China bordering the Shan State to be Sinlung.¹⁶ Pudaite suggests that Sinlung might be located somewhere in central China.¹⁷ Another view maintained by V.L. Siama is that the Hmars and other cognate tribes had come from north-east China.¹⁸ The chances of Sinlung retaining its name on the maps is remote, especially in China where place names are known to be altered. However,

13. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, p. 1.

14. Pudaite, R. Op.cit., p. 22.

15. Songate, op.cit., p. 17.

16. Burman, Demographic..., p. 84.

17. Pudaite, op.cit., p. 23.

18. Siama, V.L. Mizo History, p. 7.

from the above arguments, all the scholars and historians mentioned agree that Sinlung is located somewhere in China.

III

3.3. Dispersal

The exact location of Sinlung is still debatable, as has been discussed above. But we do know that the Hmars left Sinlung. One of the songs which indicates that the Hmars had left Sinlung is as follows:

Khaw Sinlung-ah
Kawt Siel ang ka zuong suok a,
Mi le nel lo tam a e;
Hriemi hraiah.

This, translated, means:

Out of Sinlung city
I jumped out like a siel,*
Innumerable were the encounters
With the children of men.¹⁹

The dispersal and the long processes of migration of the Hmars began the moment they left Sinlung. It is not quite clear under what circumstances the Hmars left Sinlung. Or were they compelled to leave? If so, then what were the compulsions which caused them to start migrating? These are some of the questions which we shall try to get an insight on.

* Siel is a gayal or mithun.

19. Pudaite, R. Op.cit., p. 21.

Pudaite has interpreted the above song where it says, "I jumped out like a siel" as indicating that they were forced out by a superior people or power.²⁰ His argument is that a siel jumps out only when it is cornered by a fiercer animal. But it may be mentioned here that the siel was an animal commonly domesticated by the Hmars. So it is probable that they used the animal, which they were most familiar with, in their song. Anyway, the song indicates that they had to 'jump' out. It could not have been a natural calamity because such event would not require them to jump out of Sinlung in a hurry. Moreover, had it been natural calamities which drove them out of Sinlung, they might not have had to migrate to such distant places. Therefore, it is most probably that political pressures was the main reason behind their need to migrate to other lands. Again, in the second part of the song, it mentions that 'innumerable' were the people that drove them out and equally 'innumerable' were the people that they met when they moved out could have been others who had also fled to escape from the pressure of the Ch'n dynasty (if considered) which tried to absorb them, for instance. "The successive waves of Chinese immigrants drove the earlier colonists to the south. The earlier colonists, such as the Shans, pushed the Miao and other tribes still further south."²¹ Other scholars have also mentioned about this

20. Ibid., p. 22.

21. William, E.T. China: Yesterday and Today, pp. 51-52.

general movement of streams of migrants. And there seems to be the possibility that the Hmars could have been moving along with these migrants.

So it appears that the Hmars left Sinlung due to the notion that the streams of Chinese immigrants as well as political or social pressures drove them away. It is not known exactly what direction they took to, but there is a possibility that they could have followed the others and also headed southwards.

From the information made available by the scholars and historians, it appears that the Hmars followed a step migration, if not a nomadic way by wandering. They did not know where or what kind of new land they would eventually be led to in the process of their migration.

Since the exact location of Sinlung is not known in the first place, the chronological or sequential order of the places they settled in and travelled through also becomes hazy. Some of the places and names of people or groups of people mentioned in the traditional Hmar songs are Kachin, Shan, Kawlphai (Kabaw valley), Chin and Mishmi, prior to their entry into the present boundaries of India's north-east region. From these, at least some idea can be developed as to the probable route they had followed.

Had the exact location of Sinlung been known, it would have been easier to conclude upon the sequential order of the places they visited. Songate's view that Sinlung was located somewhere in Tibet has caused him to follow the opinion that when the Hmars travelled south, they came across the Himalayas and so it was necessary to circumvent this mountain range. As a result, they had to move westward for some distance. It is here that they met the Mishmi tribe.²² In fact, there is a legend that one of the Hmar ancestors married a Mishmi girl.²³ The fact that the Hmars came into contact with the Mishmis suggests that the Hmars could have travelled through the present day Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. Although the area is mountainous, there are several mountain passes like the Diphuk Pass which could have assisted them to pass into and through this region.

The mention of Kachin suggests that from the Mishmi country the Hmars moved southwards into this Kachin region. Seeing that these two regions are geographically contiguous, it is, therefore, possible to assume that this was the next place that the Hmars passed through.

22. Pudaite, op.cit., p. 23.

23. Ibid., p. 24.

Now another controversy arises: Did the Hmars then go to the Kabaw valley (Kawl phai) first, or to Shan? And was the ancient Shan of the Hmars the present Shan state of Burma, or was it some other Shan, as the word Shan in Chinese is equated to 'mountain' or 'ranges'.²⁴ Darliensung is of the opinion that the Shan of the Hmars is not the Shan State of Burma but rather some other Shan.²⁵ His argument is that it is not logical for the Hmars to go all the way south to Shan State only to head due north again. In opposition to this view, it may be mentioned that in those days the Shans were also living and exercising power outside their present territorial boundaries.

It is possible, therefore, that the Hmars' Shan is the present day Shan or the area under their influence and that they settled here before proceeding to the Kabaw valley. This becomes clearer in the following lines.

3.4. Shan Settlement

The first known settlement of the Hmars after Sinlung was Shan. Their entrance into Shan was met with strong opposition by the Shans. But eventually, they fought their way into it.²⁶ There are many songs that mention

24. National Geographic Magazine, Map of China, July 1980.

25. Darliensung, The Hmars, p. 13.

26. Pudaite, op.cit., p. 24.

their Shan settlement. From their songs, it can be understood that once they were properly settled in Shan, they enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity. Furthermore, many of their great festivals were associated with their Shan civilization. Their success was so considerable that one of the poets composed the following verse:

Shan khuo thlangfa pu tling tleng e,
I do thlunglu bakin salh;
Sa sawmfa thlaw ka laimi tha,
Thal khatin lan ei de ning.

(Sons of western Shan State look lovable,
But you sounded out only war;
With our abundant harvest and men of war,
We will make of you a Springtime Festival).²⁷

The Hmars lived in Shan for a long period of time. However, the exact duration of their stay is not known, although some scholars have suggested that they lived there for some generations. Their long period of prosperity was disturbed by a very severe famine, known as the THINGPUI TAM (Tree Famine).²⁸ So severe was the famine that the Hmars could no longer sustain it and, thus, left Shan, moving to the north and westward in search of food.²⁹ One of their songs which bears testimony to the great famine are put in these words:

Shan khuo-ah lenpur a tla,
Mi raza tlan thiera e.

27. Ibid., p. 26.

28. Vanlawma, op.cit., p. 2.

(A great famine visited Shan;
People left the place).³⁰

3.5. Westward Movement

I

Their search for food led them into the Burma plain, which was most probably the Chindwin valley. This they called the 'Kawlphai' ('Kawl' = Burma/Burmese, and 'phai' = plain/level land). This region may also be the Kabaw valley which lies along the eastern foothills of the Patkai and Naga hill ranges. It is also possible that the eastern off-shoots of the Himalayan mountain ranges, which are aligned in the north-east to south-west trend, directed the subsequent movement of the Hmars along the foothills of these ranges. The Hmars were believed to have established their next settlement in Khampat, which is located in the Kabaw valley.

II

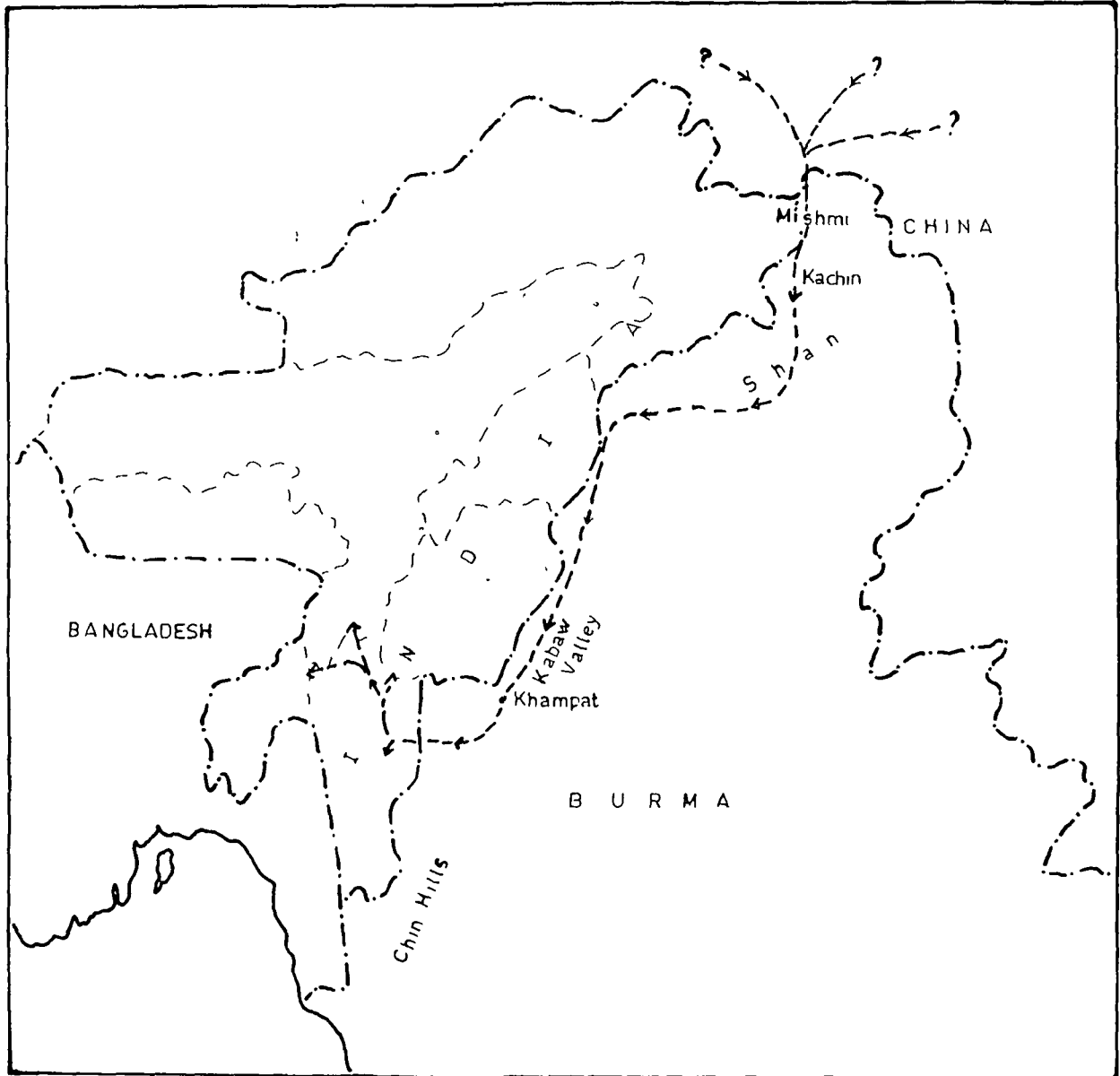
3.6. Chin Hills Settlement

Pudaite believes that the migration from Shan to the Indo-Burma border was organized according to the clans.³¹ Therefore, when they reached the Chin Hills of Burma, they must have built villages according to clans. Under such circumstances, a feeling of territoriality and ethnic identity could have easily developed. This would naturally

30. Lal Rinawma, op.cit., pp. 44-45.

31. Pudaite, op.cit., p. 26.

PROBABLE HMAR MIGRATION ROUTE*



*A notional map

MAP No. 5

lead to unhealthy relations and rivalry. And this usually caused internecine wars among themselves and the losers would have no other choice but to leave and try to settle some place else. It is believed that the Hmars organized themselves in the Chin hills; and one of their leaders planted a banyan tree at Khampat to mark that the place belonged to them. This has been substantiated by one of their songs.³²

Map 5 is a notional map showing the probable routes that the Hmars could have taken in the process of their migration from Sinlung to their present locations. It has been constructed from the limited information available on it.

Based on the above study on the historical outline of the origin and dispersal of the Hmars, the following conclusions have been derived.

(1) Different views on the meaning of the word HMAR have been found:

- i) The first view is based on the style of the men's hair. Those who wore their hair in a chignon, knotted at the back of the head were called 'Hmarh'.

32. Lal Rinawma, op.cit., p. 46.

ii) The second view is that as the word for north in Lushai and Hmar is 'Hmar', and since the Hmars' villages were situated to the north of the Luseis', they were called 'Hmar' or northerner.

iii) The third view is that when the Hmars settled in Burma, they maintained large families and so the Burmese called them 'Hmar' which means 'having large families'.

(2) Many scholars believe that Sinlung is the origin of the Hmars. However, different views exist on Sinlung being either the name of an emperor, a place, or a cave. If it is a place, its exact location is also controversial, although it is accepted that it is somewhere in central or south-west China. Socio-political disturbances appear to be the most probable cause to effect the Hmars to leave Sinlung.

(3) The sequential order of their migration from Sinlung is Kachin (in Upper Burma), Shan territory, Kabaw valley, Chin Hills, and Mizoram. Shan was the longest stay in one place but severe famine forced them to leave and search for food.

CHAPTER IV

PATTERNS OF DISTRIBUTION OF HMARS:
CORE AND PERIPHERY

This chapter begins with the entry of the Hmars into the North-Eastern region of India, and traces the patterns of their distribution in the various regions to the present situation that is found now.

4.1. Movement Into and In North-East India

In the preceding chapter it was found that the Hmars had entered upto Khampat in the Chin Hills of Burma. It is believed that from Khampat, the Hmars entered into the North-Eastern region of India. And it is from here that the real dispersal of the tribe into the different states began.

4.1.1. Hmar Clans

Before analysing in detail the dispersal of the Hmars to different areas, it becomes necessary to first of all make mention of the various clans which constitute the Hmar tribe. The clans in turn are further sub-divided into sub-clans and families. Once upon a time, these various clans had their own respective dialects. However, with the introduction of modern education through the Christian schools, a common dialect has developed among them.¹

1. Pakhuongte, R. The Power of the Gospel among the Hmar Tribe, p. 8.

The Hmar clans, with the total number of their respective sub-clans within brackets are as follows.²

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Banzang (11) | 19. Lungtau (14) |
| 2. Biete (13) | 20. Ngente (11) |
| 3. Changsan (10) | 21. Ngurte (5) |
| 4. Chawngthu (9) | 22. Pakhuong (11) |
| 5. Chawnthei/Hmar-Lusei (6) | 23. Pautu (5) |
| 6. Chawthe (10) | 24. Punte (2) |
| 7. Chiru (9) | 25. Rawite (8) |
| 8. Chorai (4) | 26. Sakachep (10) |
| 9. Darlong (3) | 27. Thiek (19) |
| 10. Darngawn (3) | 28. Tlau (4) |
| 11. Faihriem (13) | 29. Vangsie (6) |
| 12. Hrangkhawl (4) | 30. Zote/Joute (22) |
| 13. Khawbung (9) | 31. Aimuol |
| 14. Khiengte (7) | 32. Maring |
| 15. Khuolhring (10) | 33. Langrawng |
| 16. Kom (5) | 34. Kaipeng |
| 17. Lawitlang (6) | 35. Muolthuom |
| 18. Leiri (6) | 36. Lamkang |

From the above list, it is found that there are thirty-six clans and 255 sub-clans and families in the

2. Bieklien, H.L. Hmar Hnam (Hmar Clans), pp. 1-7.

whole of the Hmar tribe. It may be mentioned here that there are some common sub-clans that are shared by two or more clans. These sub-clans (with the clans in which they are found shown against them within brackets) are:

1. Fatlei (Biete & Banzang)
2. Sanate (Banzang & Ngurte)
3. Chorai (Chorai & Pakhuong)
4. Muolphei (Khawbung & Pakhuong)
5. Saivate (Faihriem & Pautu)
6. Punte (Punte & Khawbung)
7. Siersak (Khawbung & Punte)
8. Hrangchal (Darlong & Lawitlang)
9. Tlawmte (Darlong & Lawitlang)
10. Hnamte (Darlong & Thiek)
11. Hmante (Darlong & Thiek)
12. Kangbur (Darlong & Thiek).

It may be noted here that the above list of the Hmar clans and sub-clans may not be THE list of several lists prepared by various scholars. It is the most optimistic; it is thus not a dictionary of Hmar clans and is not meant to be treated as such.

4.2. Settlement in Mizoram

The Hmars were the first to enter present Mizoram.³
C.A. Soppit believes the migration from the Chin Hills

3. Liangkhaia, Rev., Mizo Chanchin, pp. 7-8.

to Mizoram to be sometime in the middle of the 16th century A.D.⁴ This view is supported by Liangkhaia who says that a section of the Hmars entered the Manipur plains near about the middle of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century A.D.⁵ The first batch of the Hmars who migrated into Mizoram included such sub-clans and clans as the Hrangkhawl, Pang, Muolthuom and Chungthang. These eventually migrated into Tripura.⁶ The Hrangchal, Ngurte, Darngawn, Lungtau, Leiri and Changsan later followed them.⁷ As each clan followed its own route and eventually made its own settlements and the villages ultimately bore the clans' names.

4.3. Dispersal to Neighbouring States

Want of jhuming land and disputes over territorial possessions had caused the Hmars and their kindred tribes to be always at war against each other. In addition to this, the offences made by the Chins in turn made the Thangur clans to move westwards driving the earlier occupants, the Hmars and other similar tribes, out of their country.⁸ Not all of them moved away, however, some stayed

4. Soppit, C.A. A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes, p. vii.

5. Liangkhaia, Rev. Op. cit., p. 31.

6. Songate, Hranglien. Hmar Chanchin, pp. 145-46.

7. Ibid.

8. Shakespear, J. Lushai-Kuki Clans, p. 3.

behind and did not mind being absorbed by the Lusei chiefs. Those who did leave moved into Manipur, Cachar, Sylhet, and Tripura.⁹ The Darlong, the Bawng, Muolthuom, Faihriem and the Hrangkhawl were some of the clans which moved to Tripura and North Cachar Hills at about 1780 A.D.¹⁰

The Biete clan, who had settled at Biete near Champhai, moved to Thingtim, Saitual, Tualbung, Phaileng, etc. in Mizoram and entered Cachar, and a branch of them migrated to North Cachar Hills and Meghalaya (Jaintia Hills).¹¹

The Thiek clan settled at Thiek in Mizoram and then migrated to Tualte, Khawzawl, and Chhawntui (all in Mizoram) and then scattered about leading some to be found now in the South District Manipur and in N.C. Hills.

A portion of the Hmar migrants who tried to head towards the N.C. Hills stayed back when they reached the southern hills of Cachar, and settled there.

Many sub-clans and clans like the Biete, Hrangkhawl, Sakachep, etc. headed for Tripura. On nearing the southern borders of modern Meghalaya, they proceeded eastwards and entered into N.C. Hills.

9. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

10. Songate, op.cit., p. 66.

11. Ibid., pp. 62-63.

It is believed that the Hmars entered into the N.C. Hills around circa 1700 A.D. The British officially annexed the N.C. Hills around 1854. Even after that the Hmars continued to come in. The British gave land to the Hmars who were already there, and those who had recently arrived, in order to check the neighbouring Naga tribes.¹²

Towards the end of the 19th century, when the British were constructing the Lumding-Badarpur railway line, the only people they found to employ in the construction were the Hmar settlers of that region.

The work was too taxing as it was too much. Moreover, the Hmars were too few. So the British gave them opium to enable them to bear the load and to be able to work harder. Eventually, and very unfortunately, the Hmars there became addicted to the opium. As a result they perished and even their future generations felt the adverse affect and their number dwindled. Instead of being the most numerous, they became one of the least.

From their settlements in and around Champhai, the Lawitlang clan were driven away by the Ralte chiefs. Some of them are now found to the south of Champhai even today. The Khawbung clan first settled at a place which

12. Bapui, V.L. Tluonga. Ngaiban Tlanga Hmarhai Chanchin, Ngaban Thlifim Special Issue, 1991, pp. 10-13.

they named Khawbung, in Mizoram. But most of them left and migrated to Parbung in the South District of Manipur.

The Hmars who left Mizoram were perhaps the victim of hostilities and aggressions committed against them by the Lusei chiefs. Although the treatment that they received was sometimes harsh and difficult, yet many of them decided to stay and be ruled by the Lusei chiefs. Thus, in course of time, some who stayed back were eventually assimilated socially and politically by the Lusei clans, and subsequently lost their own dialect, and their distinctiveness. This process of assimilation is still going on even today. This may be why some Hmars of Mizoram would call themselves Mizos but not those living outside that state as they would rather be called Hmars.

4.4.1. Tribal Scene

Before going into the present distributional pattern of the Hmars in North-East India, the tribal scenario of the region shall first be discussed.

The North-East region of India is rich in the diversity of its population. There exists a wide variety of tribal groups which display an interesting profile of the country's ethnic diversity. The tribals of India belong to different ethnic groups, they speak different languages

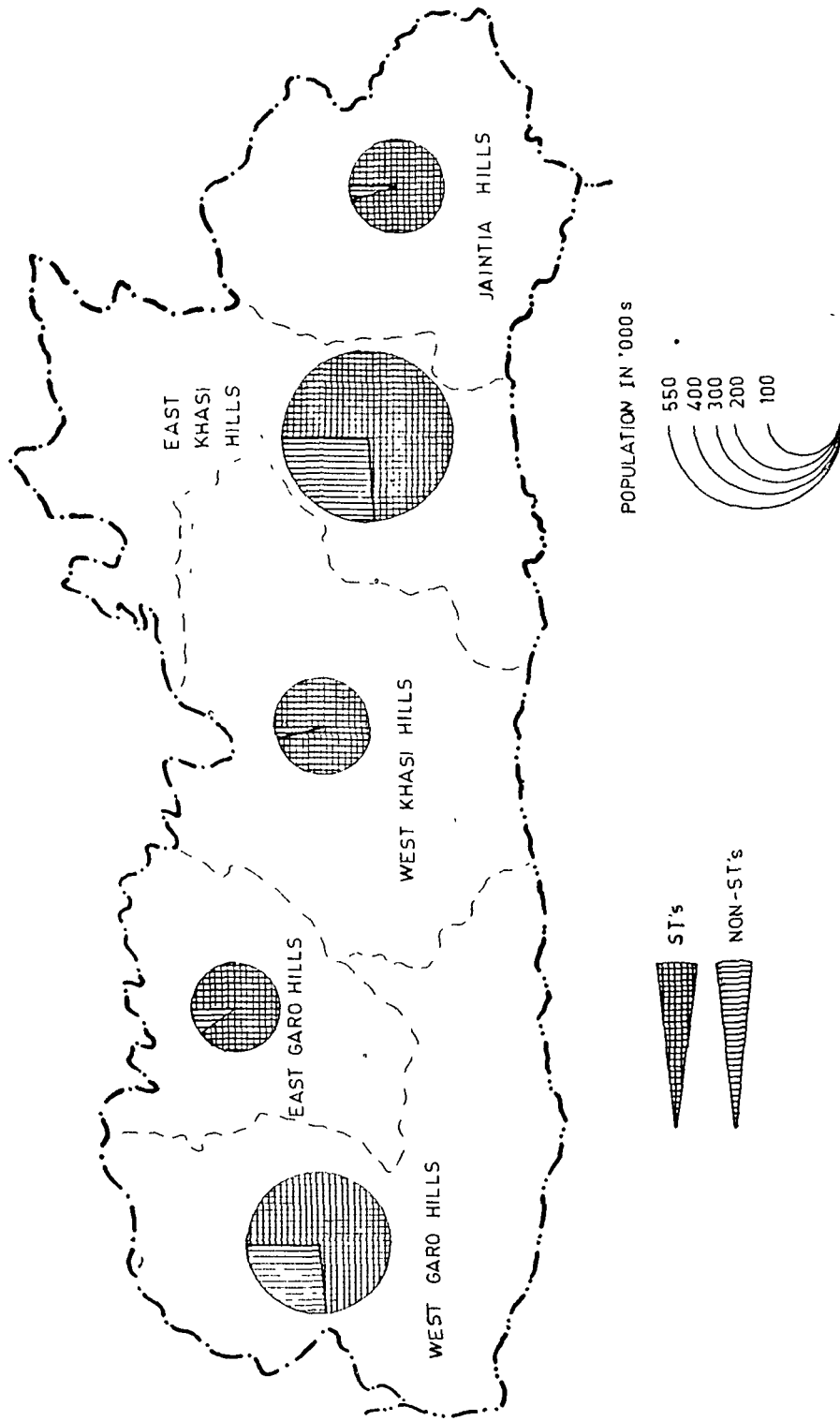
and dialects, follow different religions and beliefs, and have some distinct and unique social and economic characteristics.

According to the 1981 census, the total S.T. population in India was 51,628,638 (excluding Assam as census was not held there). This indicates that about 7.76% of India's population is made up of scheduled tribes. It has been observed that the tribal communities of India portray a highly uneven pattern of distribution between the states due to their strong tendencies to cluster and concentrate in the hilly and forested regions of the country. The Hmars are no exception to this tendency and are found generally where the percentage of the tribal population is more. This is why it is necessary to first understand the distribution of the S.Ts. in the North-East.

4.4.2. Proportion of S.Ts. and Non-S.Ts.

Map 6 shows the proportion of S.Ts. to the total population in Meghalaya (1981). About 81.02% were S.Ts. in this state. Jaintia Hills had 95.33% of its population belonging to the scheduled tribes. East Khasi Hills had 73.83% of its population made up of tribals. West Khasi Hills had the highest with 97.10%. Tribals constituted 91.61% in East Garo Hills, and 73.71% in the West Garo Hills District (Table 1).

MEGHALAYA
 PROPORTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBES TO TOTAL POPULATION
 1981



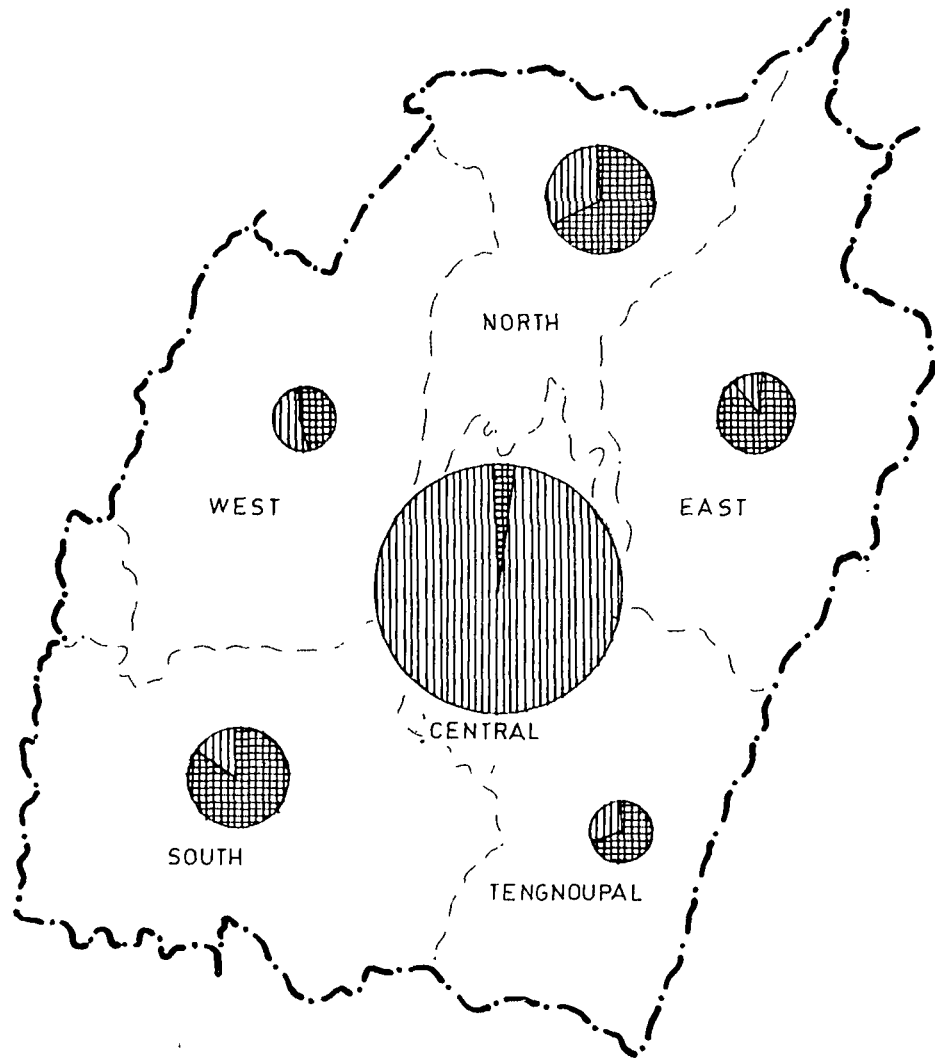
MAP No. 6

Table 1 - Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to Total Population

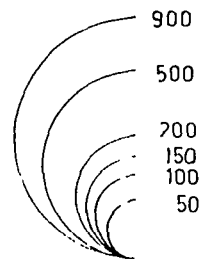
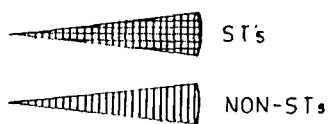
State/District	Total Population	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Percentage Scheduled Tribes
MEGHALAYA	1,328,343	1,076,345	81.02
Jaintia Hills	155,993	148,710	95.33
East Khasi Hills	506,687	374,081	73.83
West Khasi Hills	160,660	156,004	97.10
East Garo Hills	135,864	124,462	91.61
West Garo Hills	369,139	272,097	73.71

Source: Census of India, 1981, Meghalaya,
Series 14, Special Tables for SC's & ST's, Pt. IX.

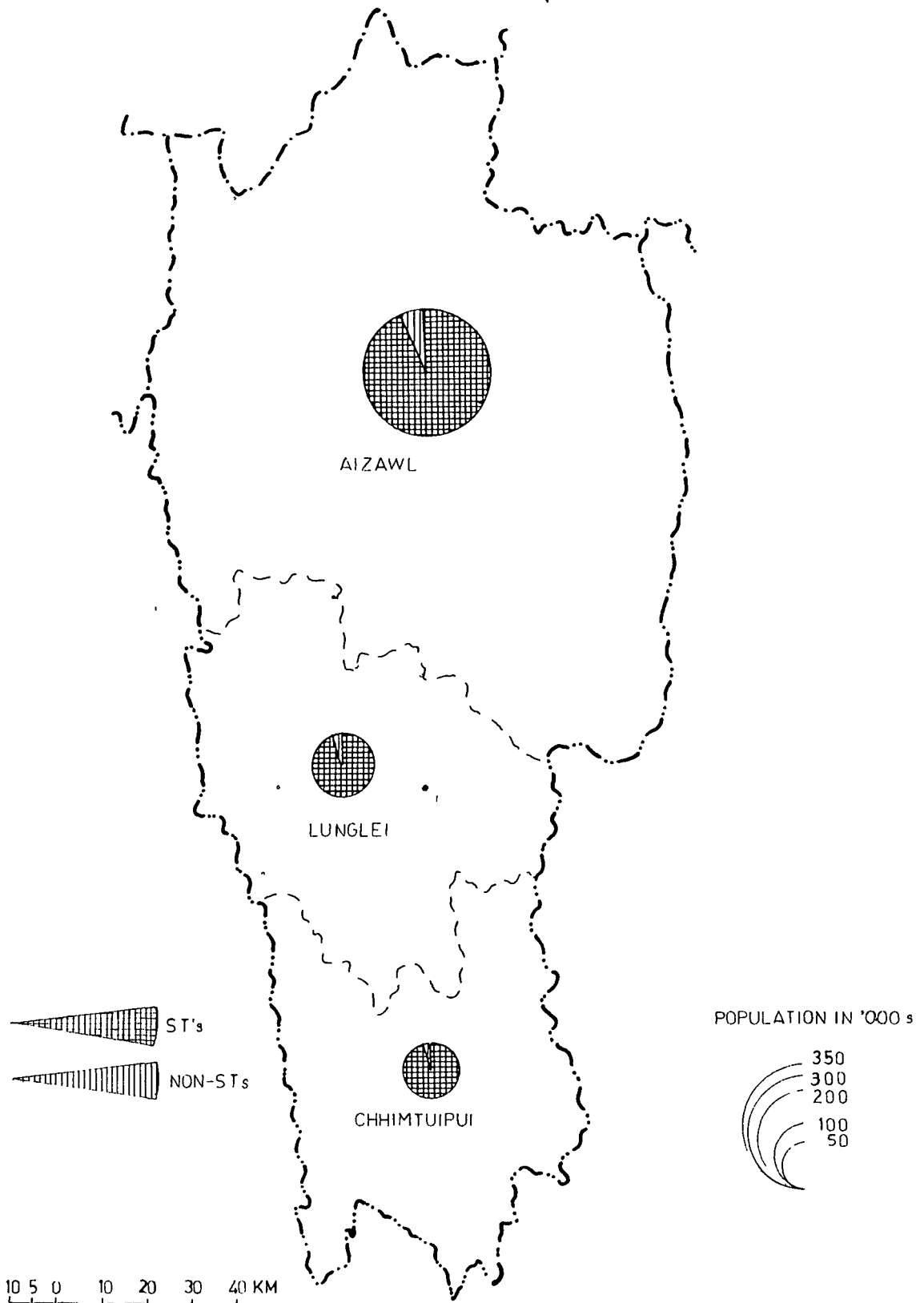
MANIPUR
 PROPORTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBES TO TOTAL POPULATION
 1981



POPULATION IN '000's



MIZORAM
 PROPORTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBES TO TOTAL POPULATION
 1981



In Manipur, Scheduled Tribes constituted about 27.49% of the population. This figure is low when comparing it with other states of the region. But at the district level, the percentages become higher (Map 7). In the North District, tribals accounted for 68.53% of the population of the district. Scheduled tribes constituted about 47.01% in the West District, 86.8% in South District, 69.43% in Tengnoupal, Central District had the lowest share of tribal population in the state with only 2.62%. Conversely, East District had the highest share of tribals in the state with 89.5% (Table 2).

In Mizoram, Scheduled tribes make up almost all of the population. This is predominantly a tribal state. Of the total population of 487,774, the total scheduled tribe population was 461,907. This works out to be about 94.7% of the population.

In Map 8 and Table 3, we can see the proportion of scheduled tribes to the total population in each district of the state. In Aizawl district, scheduled tribes accounted for about 93.93% of the total population of the district. Lunglei district had 96.39%, and Chhimtuipui district had the highest with 96.57% of its total population belonging to scheduled tribes.

Table 2 - Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to the Total Population.

State/District	Total Population	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Percentage Scheduled Tribes
MANIPUR	1,411,375	387,977	27.49
North	154,179	105,655	68.53
West	62,233	29,259	47.01
South	133,965	116,255	86.80
Tengnoupal	55,348	38,430	69.43
Central	922,681	24,141	2.62
East	82,969	74,238	89.50

Source: Census of India, 1981, Manipur
Special Tables for SC's & ST's. Pt. IX.

Table 3 - Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to the Total Population.

State/District	Total Population	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Percentage of Scheduled Tribes
MIZORAM	487,774	461,907	94.70
Aizawl	340,766	320,088	93.93
Lunglei	82,589	79,607	96.39
Chhimituipui	64,419	62,212	96.57

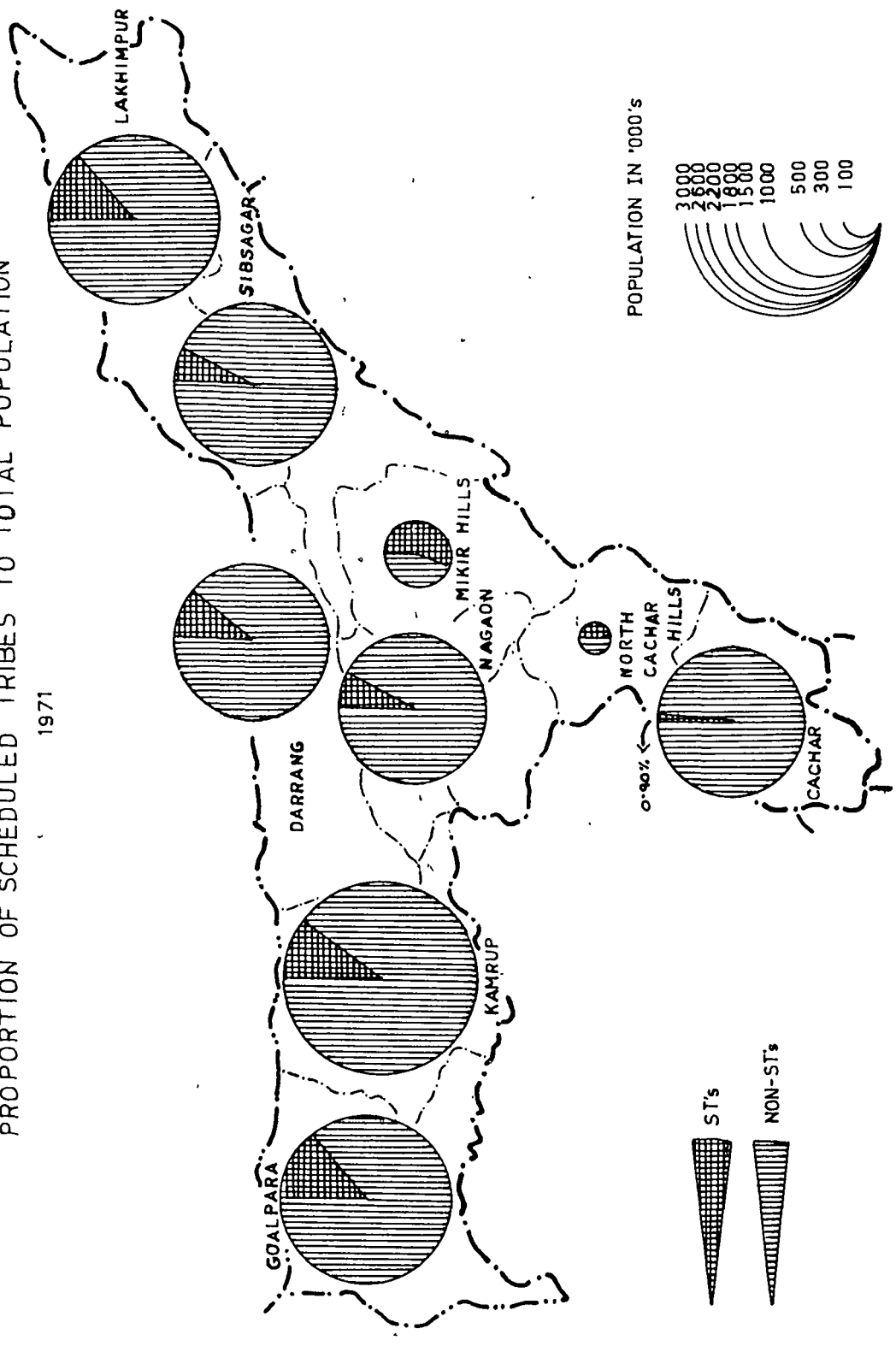
Source: Census of India, 1981, Mizoram.
 Series 31, Part IX
 Special Tables for SC's & ST's.

Table 4 - Proportion of Scheduled Tribes to the Total Population.

State/District	Total Population	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Percentage of Scheduled Tribes
ASSAM	14,625,152	1,606,648	10.98
Goalpara	2,225,103	308,287	13.68
Kamrup	2,854,183	298,090	10.44
Darrang	1,736,188	185,640	10.69
Nowgong	1,680,895	125,115	7.44
Sibsagar	1,837,389	125,311	6.82
Lakhimpur	2,122,719	286,300	13.48
Mikir Hills	379,310	210,039	55.32
North Cachar Hills	76,047	52,583	69.14
Cachar	1,713,318	15,283	0.89

Source: Census of India, 1971, Assam
 Series 3, Part II C(ii)
 Social & Cultural Tables.

ASSAM
 1971
 PROPORTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBES TO TOTAL POPULATION



As already pointed out, the figures for the state of Assam are based on the 1971 census. Assam has the lowest share of the scheduled tribe population in the north-east region. Only 10.98% of the total population were tribals. Map 9 shows the proportion of scheduled tribes to the total population in the districts of Assam. Goalpara had 13.68% of its population belonging to the scheduled tribes. Kamrup had 10.44%, Darrang 10.69%, Nagoan with 7.44%, Sibsagar 6.82%, Lakhimpur 13.48%, Mikir Hills had a high 55.32%, and North Cachar Hills had the highest with about 69.14% of its population belonging to the scheduled tribes. Cachar district had the lowest in the state with only 0.89% of its total population belonging to the scheduled tribes. Table 4 shows the numerical distribution of the population.

It must be mentioned here that only the four states viz., Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Assam have been dealt with here. This is because we are mainly concerned with them as the Hmars are found in these states only. Therefore, this makes these states our study area.

4.5. Distribution Pattern of the Hmars in North-East India

In this section we shall analyse and discuss the present distributional pattern of the Hmars in different areas of the North-East region. In the previous chapter,

it was seen that the historical process of Hmar migration from distant lands to the North-Eastern states. And towards the end of that chapter, we saw that they first settled in several villages in Mizoram. Also, it was found that their distribution there was clanwise. It has also been mentioned that they further migrated to the adjoining areas – clanwise again, more or less.

In this section, the present distribution of the Hmars in the several states where they are found widely scattered will be studied. The source of data is entirely based on material made available by the Census of India Publications. It must be noted here that it is not possible to obtain information on clanwise distribution of the Hmar tribe. Therefore, figures used are from those where only the tribe as a whole is categorically placed under 'Hmar'.

The historical outline gives the picture that the Hmar tribe was very widely scattered in the North-East region. This picture is still the same, more or less. The Hmars are very unevenly distributed in the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, and Meghalaya.

This present study is based on the 1981 Census. However, as census was not held in Assam that year, it has been necessary to resort to using the 1971 census figures

for Assam side by side with the 1981 figures for the other states.

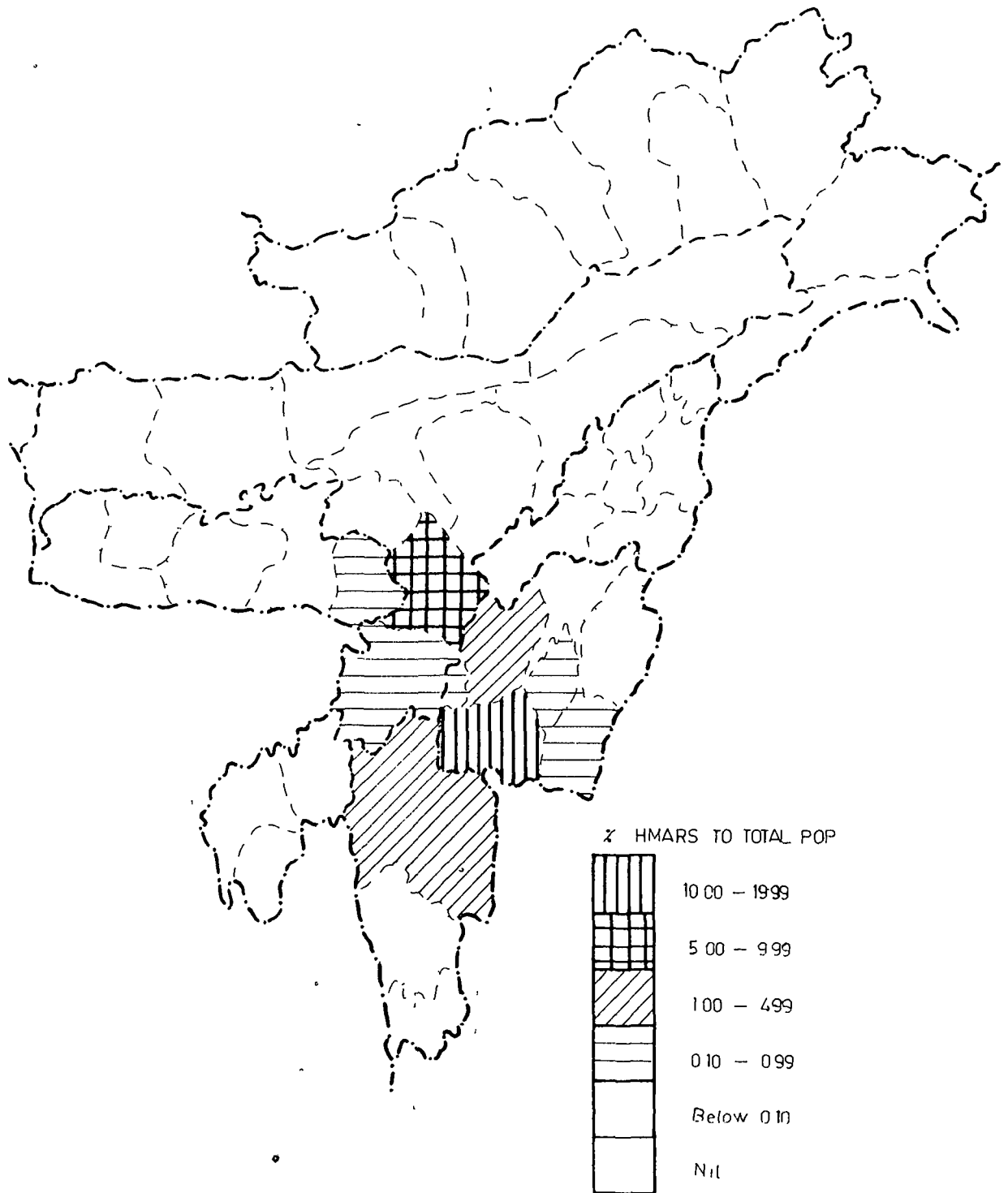
4.5.1. Proportion of Hmars to Total Population

According to the 1981 census, the total population of the Hmars in the North-Eastern region was 48,953. The statewise break-up of this population figure is: Manipur 29,216, Meghalaya 611, Mizoram 8,643, and Assam (1971) 10,487.

In the proceeding lines, the pattern of distribution of the Hmar tribe will be analysed in a step-like manner, going from the regional level, down to the state level and ultimately to the district level for each concerned states.

If the states as a unit are taken to analyse the distribution of Hmars, it is observed that the Hmar population is very insignificant as their population is low in percentages to the total population of each state. The percentages of Hmars to the total population of each state is: Manipur 2.07%, Meghalaya 0.04%, Mizoram 1.77%, and Assam 0.07%. Even if the percentages of Hmars to the total Scheduled tribe population in each state is taken, the figures are still low. Manipur was a bit higher with 7.53% of the sche-

NORTH EAST INDIA
 PROPORTION OF HMARS TO TOTAL POPULATION IN
 THE DISTRICTS
 1981*



*1971 FOR ASSAM

MAP No 10

duled tribe population being Hmars. Meghalaya was only 0.05%, Mizoram 1.87%, and Assam 0.65%.

Map 10 shows the proportion of Hmars to the total population in the states of North-East India. The states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Tripura are left blank because Hmars were not found there according to Census.

In Manipur, the percentage of Hmars to the total population in each district varies. The South (Churachandpur) District had the highest share of Hmars in the state with 19.14% of its total population being Hmars. The West District was a distant second with only 1.01% Hmars. It is followed by Tengenoupal District with 0.52%, Central District 0.27%, North district 0.09%, and East district with 0.01% or just 14 persons recorded as being Hmars (Table 5).

Of the four states of the study area, Meghalaya had the least number of Hmar population with only 611 persons. Jaintia Hills had the major portion of the Hmar population of the state with 480 or 0.31% of its total population were Hmars. East Khasi Hills had 0.02%, or 125 Hmars. The remaining districts had less than five members (Table 6).

In Mizoram, Aizawl district had about 2.53% of

Table 5 - Proportion of Hmars to the Total Population in Manipur.

State/District	Total Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentage of Hmars to total population
MANIPUR	1,411,375	29,216	2.07
North	154,179	138	0.09
West	62,233	632	1.01
South	133,965	25,650	19.14
Tengnoupal	55,348	290	0.52
Central	922,681	2,492	0.27
East	82,969	14	0.017

Source: Census of India, 1981, Manipur
Special Tables for SC's & ST's.

Table 6 - Proportion of Hmars to the Total Population in Meghalaya.

State/District	Total Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentage of Hmars to total population
MEGHALAYA	1,328,343	611	0.04
Jaintia Hills	155,871	480	0.31
East Khasi Hills	506,687	125	0.02
West Khasi Hills	160,660	1	0.00062
East Garo Hills	135,864	1	0.00073
West Garo Hills	369,139	4	0.00108

Source: Census of India, 1981, Meghalaya
 Series 14, Part IX
 Special Tables for SC's & ST's.

Table 7 - Proportion of Hmars to the Total Population in Mizoram.

State/District	Total Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentage of Hmars to total population
MIZORAM	487,774	8,643	1.77
Aizawl	340,766	8,610	2.53
Lunglei	82,589	21	0.02
Chhinctuipui	64,419	12	0.018

Source: Census of India, Mizoram, 1981
 Series 31, Part IX
 Special Tables for SC's & ST's.

Table 8 - Proportion of Hmars to Total Population in Assam.

State/District	Total Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentage of Hmars to Total Population
ASSAM	14,625,152	10,483	0.07
Goalpara	2,225,103	-	-
Kamrup	2,854,183	1	-
Darrang	1,736,188	-	-
Nowgong	1,680,895	-	-
Sibsagar	1,837,389	2	0.0001
Lakhimpur	2,122,719	1	-
Mikir Hills	379,310	10	0.0026
N.C. Hills	76,047	4,691	6.168
Cachar	1,713,318	5,778	0.337

Source: Census of India, 1971, Assam.
Special Tables for S.C's & S.T's.

its population recorded as belonging to the Hmar tribe. Lunglei and Chhimtuipui districts had low percentages of 0.02% and 0.01% Hmars, respectively (Table 7).

In Assam, although the districts of Kamrup, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Mikir Hills had ten members and below belonging to the Hmar tribe yet these had to be represented in the map as they could not be classified under the division 'Nil'. However, North Cachar District had a significant Hmar population of 6.16% to the total population of the district. Cachar district had a numerically larger Hmar population than N.C. Hills. But as its total population is much larger, the percentage of Hmars to the total of the district could not become very significant, with only 0.33% (Table 8).

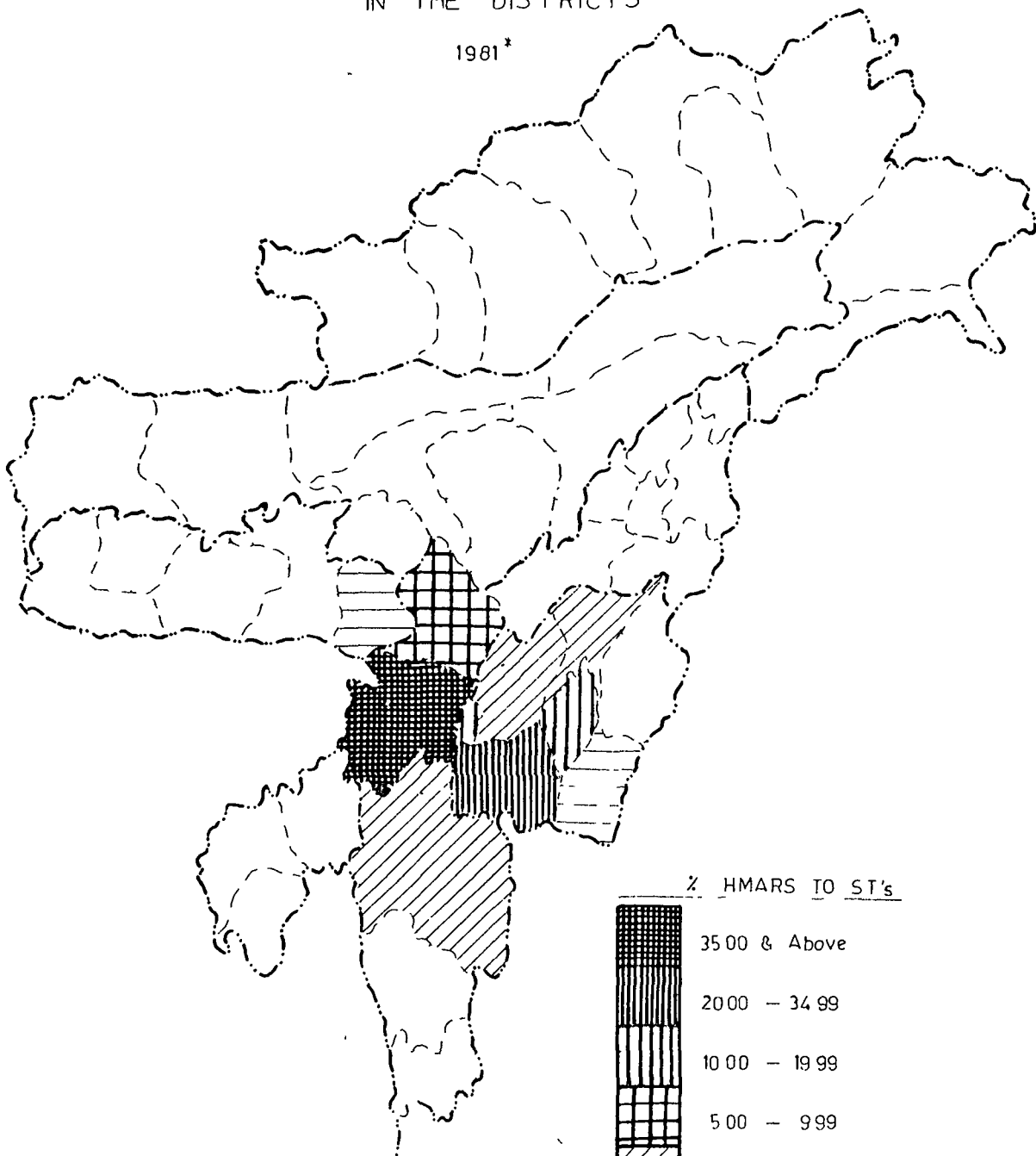
4.5.2. Proportion of Hmars to the Total Scheduled Tribes

In the preceding tables, it is found that the Hmar population is rather insignificant when taken as percentages to the total population of each district. Thus, they are a minority tribe when the total population is taken into consideration.

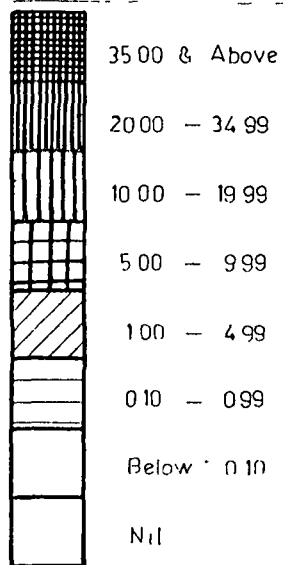
However, when the percentages of the Hmars to the total tribal population of each district is taken, their significance emerges a bit more. Map 11 shows the propor-

NORTH EAST INDIA
 PROPORTION OF HMARS TO TOTAL SCHEDULED TRIBES
 IN THE DISTRICTS

1981*



% HMARS TO ST's



*1971 for ASSAM

MAP No 11

tion of Hmars to the total scheduled tribe population at the district level for each state in the North-East. From this, it is possible to understand that the Hmars, too, like other tribes have a tendency to concentrate in a few districts. It is also possible to conclude from the map that the Hmar population is very unevenly distributed and is scattered in small and insignificant numbers over a wide spatial area.

The distribution pattern of the Hmar population as percentages to the scheduled tribe population for each state separately is discussed as follows:

Manipur had a total scheduled tribe population of 387,977 in 1981. The total Hmar population in the state then was 29,216. This works out to about 7.53% of the total scheduled tribe population of the state. Incidentally, Manipur had the largest share of the Hmar population of North-East India. It constitutes roughly 52.4% of the total Hmar population in 1981.

However, the distribution of the Hmar tribe's population in the six districts of the state is uneven. The South (Churachandpur) District had a total of 25,650 Hmars, or 22.06% of the total scheduled tribe population belonged to the Hmar tribe. It is followed by the Central (Imphal)

District with Hmars constituting about 10.32% of the tribal population. This is much higher as compared to the percentage of Hmars to the total population of this district where it is only 0.27%. Although the total population of this district is large, yet it had a low scheduled tribe percentage (2.62%). As such, the percentage of the Hmars to the total scheduled tribe population was able to appear significant.

The Hmar population to the total scheduled tribe population in the West District was only 2.16% and a very low 0.75% in the Tengenoupal district, 0.13% in the North district and 0.02% (or 14 persons) in the East district. Table 9 shows these figures in a tabular form.

In Meghalaya, there is not much change in the percentages when comparing the percentages figures between the Hmar population to the total population and Hmars to the total scheduled tribe population. This is because Meghalaya is predominantly a tribal state. In Meghalaya, there were altogether only 611 Hmars. This was only 0.05% of the total tribal population. Jaintia Hills had 0.32% (or 480) of the tribals belonging to the Hmar tribe, East Khasi Hills had 0.03%, West Khasi Hills and East Garo Hills only one person each, and West Garo Hills had only 4 Hmars (Table 10).

Table 9 - Proportion of Hmars to the Total Scheduled Tribes in Manipur.

State/District	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentages of Hmars to Scheduled Tribe
MANIPUR	387,977	29,216	7.53
North	105,655	138	0.13
West	29,259	632	2.16
South	116,255	25,650	22.06
Tengnoupal	38,430	290	0.75
Central	24,141	2,492	10.32
East	74,238	14	0.02

Source: Census of India, 1981, Manipur
Special Tables for SC's & ST's.

Table 10 - Proportion of Hmars to Total Scheduled Tribe Population in Meghalaya.

State/District	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentages of Hmars to Scheduled Tribes
MEGHALAYA	1,076,345	611	0.05
Jaintia Hills	148,710	480	0.32
East Khasi Hills	374,081	125	0.03
West Khasi Hills	156,004	1	0.00064
East Garo Hills	124,462	1	0.00080
West Garo Hills	272,097	4	0.00147

Source: Census of India, Meghalaya, 1981
 Series 14, Pt. IX.
 Special Tables for SC's & ST's.

Mizoram had a total Hmar population of 8,643 in 1981. But as scheduled tribes constitute about 94.7% of its total population, percentage of Hmars to the total scheduled tribe population remained low. The overall percentage of Hmars to the total scheduled tribes was a low 1.87% for the state of Mizoram. Aizawl district had the bulk of the Hmar population but this was only 2.53% of the total scheduled tribe population (of the district). Lunglei district had 0.03% and Chhimituipui district 0.019% Hmars to the total scheduled tribes. Table 11 shows the tabular representation of these figures.

In Assam, the Hmar population was a sizeable 10,487 in 1971. But this was only about 0.65% of the total tribal population in the state. Table 12 shows the numerical distribution of the Hmars in the districts of Assam in 1971. Here, only two districts had a significant population belonging to the Hmar tribe. North Cachar Hills District had 8.92% Hmars to the total scheduled tribes. It is in the Cachar District that the change is most apparent when comparing it to percentages derived from the total population. In this District, the total scheduled tribe population is only 0.89% of the total population of the district. And since the Hmar population was comparatively high at 5,778, the percentage of Hmars to the total scheduled tribe population becomes a high 37.8%.

Table 11 - Proportion of Hmars to Total Scheduled Tribe Population in Mizoram.

State/District	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentage of Hmars to Scheduled Tribes
MIZORAM	461,907	8,643	1.87
Aizawl	320,088	8,620	2.53
Lunglei	79,607	21	0.03
Chhimguipui	62,212	12	0.019

Source: Census of India, 1981, Mizoram
 Series 31, Pt. IX
 Special Tables for SC's & ST's.

Table 12 - Proportion of Hmars to Total Scheduled Tribe Population in Assam.

State/District	Total Scheduled Tribe Population	Total Hmar Population	Percentage of Hmars to Scheduled Tribes
ASSAM	1,606,648	10,483	0.65
Goalpara	308,287	-	-
Kamrup	298,090	1	0.00
Darrang	185,640	-	-
Nowgong	125,115	-	-
Sibsagar	125,311	2	0.0015
Lakhimpur	286,300	1	0.00
Mikir Hills	210,039	10	0.0047
N.C. Hills	52,583	4,691	8.92
Cachar	15,283	5,778	37.80

Source: Census of India, 1971, Assam. Series 3
Social & Cultural Tables, Pt. II C(ii)

4.6. Core and Periphery of Hmar Distribution

A more effective means to understand the pattern of spatial distribution of the Hmar tribe can be enhanced by identifying the core and periphery of the distribution of this tribal group with the help of the statistical method¹³ discussed below:

$$\text{Index of concentration} = \frac{\text{Total Hmar population in a district}}{\text{Total Hmars in the North-East region}} \times 100$$

The choice of this variable is based on the assumption that if the Hmar tribe has a high proportion of its total population concentrated in a certain district(s), the district(s) would definitely entitle itself to be called the core of the tribe.

When the Index of Concentration for all areas where Hmars are found are calculated (Table 13), it is then possible to identify which areas/districts are the core and periphery of the Hmar distribution. There are four main districts which have high percentages of Hmar concentration. They are the North Cachar Hills and Cachar Districts of Assam, South (Churachandpur) District of Manipur, and lastly, the Aizawl District of Mizoram.

In 1981, the total Hmar population in the North-East region of India, according to Census, was 48,953.

13. Raza, M. and Ahmad, A. Atlas of Tribal India, pp. 33-35.

Table 13 - Index of Concentration of Hmar Population (1981).

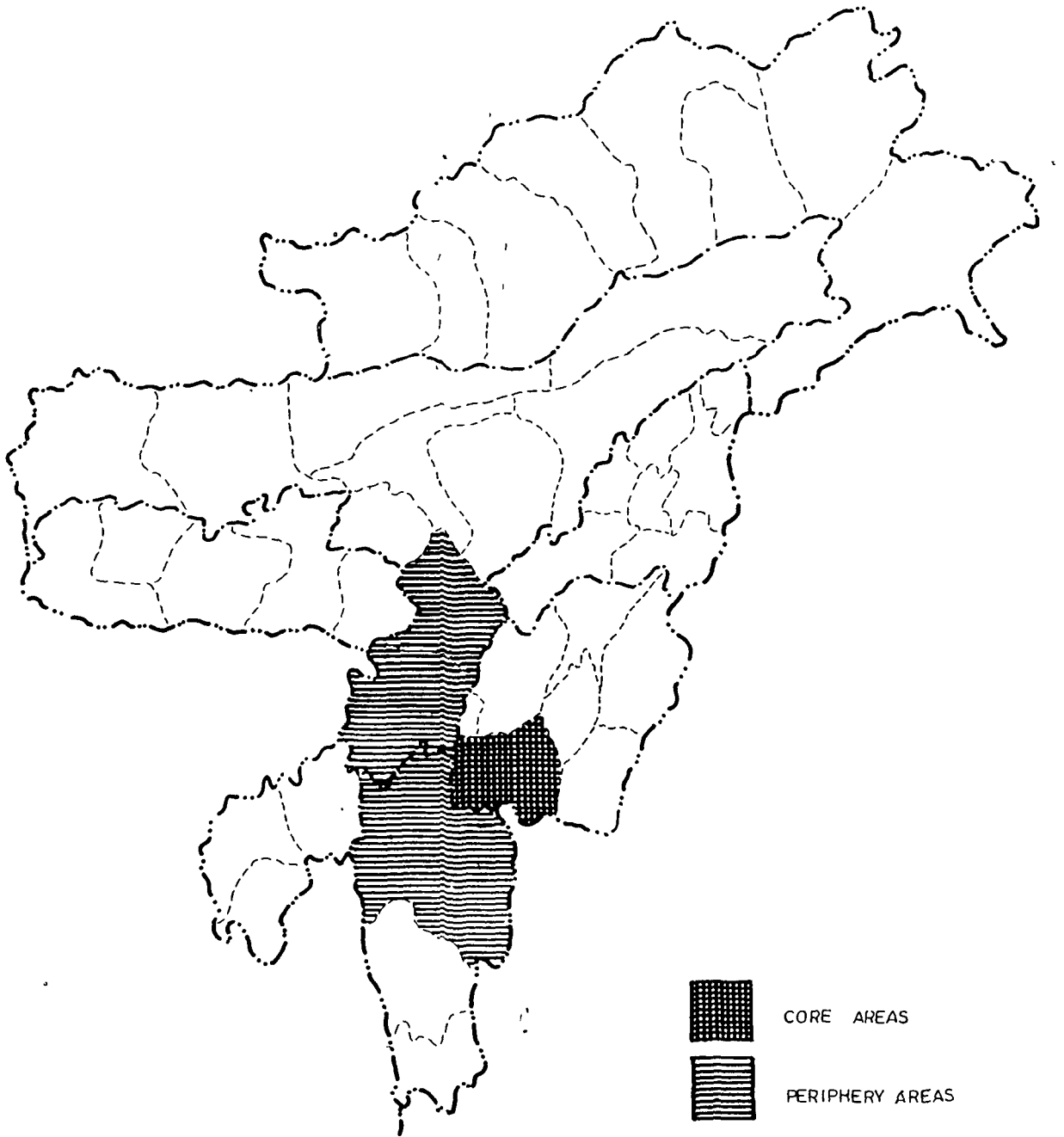
State	Districts	Hmar Population	Percentage to Total in N.E.
MANIPUR	North	138	0.28
	West	632	1.29
	South	25,650	52.39
	Tengnoupal	290	0.59
	Central	2,492	5.09
	East	14	0.03
MEGHALAYA	Jaintia Hills	480	0.99
	E. Khasi Hills	125	0.26
	W. Khasi Hills	1	0.002
	E. Garo Hills	1	0.002
	W. Garo Hills	4	0.008
MIZORAM	Aizawl	8,610	17.58
	Lunglei	21	0.043
	Chhimtuipui	12	0.025
ASSAM ('71)	Kamrup	1	0.002
	Sibsagar	2	0.004
	Lakhimpur	1	0.002
	Mikir Hills	10	0.20
	N.C. Hills	4,691	9.58
	Cachar	5,778	11.80
TOTAL		48.953	100.00

Of this, the four districts mentioned above together accounted for about 91.36%. Again, of the total, the North Cachar Hills district constituted about 9.58%, Cachar 11.8%, South District 52.39%, and Aizawl District 17.58% of the total Hmar population. As the South District of Manipur had a substantially high proportion of the total Hmar population, it has been identified as the core of the Hmar distribution, while the other three remaining districts have been categorized as the Periphery areas. These core and periphery areas have been illustrated in Map 12.

It may be argued that in 1981 no census was held in Assam and therefore, the above figures may not be very accurate. However, even if 1971 figures are incorporated, there is not much discrepancy in the percentage figures. And most importantly, the same areas remain the core and periphery. It will be proper to also mention the figures for 1971. There were altogether 41,847 Hmars in North-East India. South District of Manipur remained the core with 49.47% of the total Hmar population. The periphery areas were also the same (as in 1981) with N.C. Hills having 11.2%, Cachar 13.8%, and the Aizawl district with 18.66% of the total Hmar population.

It may be noted that as the figures for the smaller units of administration were not available, the district

NORTH EAST INDIA
CORE AND PERIPHERIES OF THE HMAR TRIBE



MAP No 12

level figures/data were employed and, thus, became the smallest unit available. And so, the core and periphery areas of Hmar distribution were represented as appearing as districts. The picture would have been a little bit different had the data at the smaller levels such as the C.D. Block, been available. However, even at the district level, it has been possible to identify the general areas of the core and periphery of the Hmar population distribution.

4.6.1. Core Area

As already mentioned, the core area of the Hmar distribution in North-East India is the South District of Manipur as it constitutes about 52.4% of the total Hmar population. In the 1981 Census, this district had a total population of 133,965, of which 86.8% were scheduled tribes. Of the 116,255 scheduled tribes, the Hmars accounted for about 25,650; or 22.06% of the total scheduled tribe population.

The Hmars are the second largest majority tribal group after the Paites in this district. According to the 1981 census, the Hmars were 25,650, the Paites 29,156, and the Thados were third with 17,196.¹⁴

14. Census of India, 1981, Series 13, Manipur Pt. IX, Special Tables for SC & ST.

One of the problems faced in this study is the non-availability of tribewise data for the smaller levels than the district level. Thus, all the population characteristics of the Hmars, especially their spatial distributional pattern, cannot be accurately shown in this study. In the South District, the Hmars are found in all the Sub-Divisions except in the Henglep Sub-Division.¹⁵ The Hmars are especially concentrated in the Tipaimukh Sub-Division, and in fact, this is known as the 'Hmar Biel' or 'Hmar Area'. All the villages in this Sub-division are Hmar villages or they are dominated by the Hmars.

Although the tribewise break up of the population of the villages is not available, it is possible to assume through observations and experiences as to which villages are Hmar-dominated and which are not. From this, it is thus possible to highlight the nature of concentration of the Hmar tribe in villages as compared to that of other communities. The table 14 gives a clear picture.

From the table 14, it can be concluded that the Hmar villages tend to be larger, populationwise, as compared to that of other communities of the same region. This indicates the tendency of the Hmars to concentrate in large groups. The largest number of Hmar villages had a population between 501-1000, whereas the other villages of non-Hmars

Table 14 - Number of Villages Classified by Population in the South District, Manipur, 1971.

Size of Population of village	Hmar-dominated villages		Non-Hmar Villages	
	No.	% to total	No.	% to total
Less than 51	0	0	34	10.4
51 - 100	2	5.88	83	25.38
101 - 200	3	8.82	98	29.97
201 - 500	11	32.35	89	27.22
501 - 1000	13	38.23	18	5.50
Above 1000	5	14.70	5	1.53
Total	34	100.00	327	100.00

Source: Series 12 Pt. XA & XB
 Manipur South District
 District Census Handbook
 Town & Village Directory and Primary Census Abstract
 1971.

were between 101-200. It was possible to identify Hmar-dominated villages in the two sub-divisions, namely Tipaimukh Sub-Division and the Churachandpur Sub-Division. The nature of the distribution pattern of the villages can be further illustrated separately preparing tables of the village distribution for the two Sub-Divisions. The table below shows the distribution of villages by population in the Tipaimukh Sub-Division in 1971.

Table 15 - Number of Villages Classified by Population in the Tipaimukh Sub-Division, 1971.

Size of Population of village	Number of villages	Percentage to total
Less than 51	0	0
51 - 100	1	4.54
101 - 200	0	0
201 - 500	8	36.36
501 - 1000	9	40.90
Above 1000	4	18.18
Total	22	100.00

As already pointed out, all the villages in the Tipaimukh Sub-division are Hmar-dominated, and in fact, most of them are wholly Hmars. The above table indicates that villages having populations between 501-1000 were

most numerous. In fact, there were four villages having population above 1000. They were Patpuihmun (1706), Parbung (1389), and Pherzawl (1022). Senvawn had the largest population with 2158.

Most of the Hmars living in the Tipaimukh Sub-Division had migrated from neighbouring Mizoram to its south. This has been discussed in the previous chapter.

Table 16 - Number of Villages Classified by Population in Churachandpur Sub-Division, 1971.

Size of population of village	Hmar-dominated villages		Non-Hmar villages	
	No.	% to total	No.	% to total
Less than 51	0	0	18	11.04
51 - 100	1	8.3	45	27.6
101 - 200	3	25.0	50	30.67
201 - 500	3	25.0	41	25.15
501 - 1000	4	33.0	7	4.30
Above 1000	1	8.30	2	1.22
TOTAL	12	100.00	163	100.00

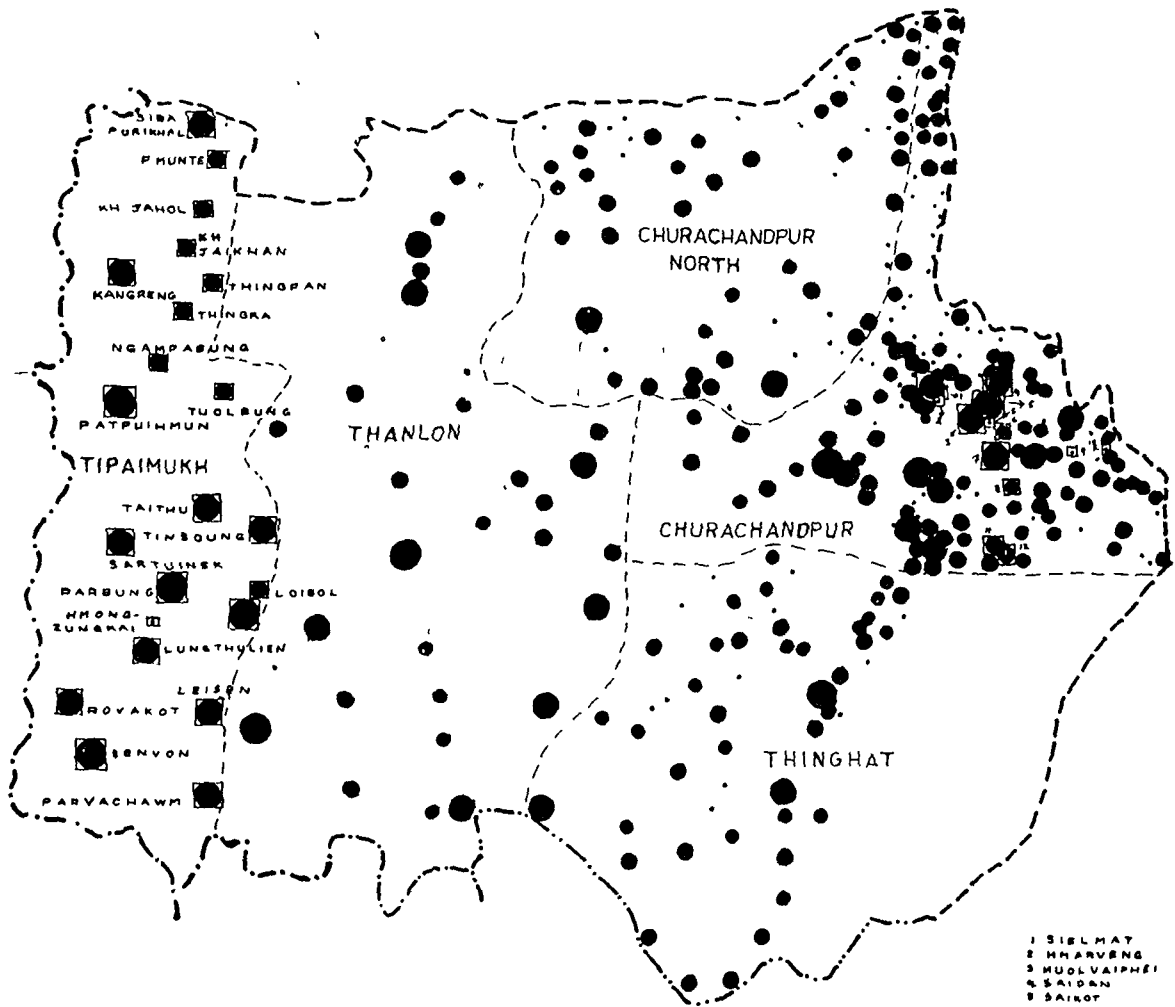
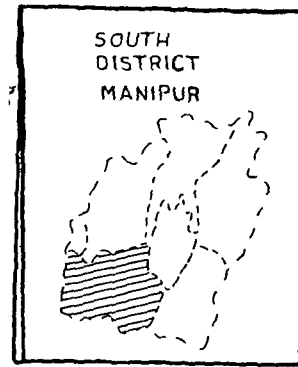
From the table above, it is again possible to indicate that Hmar-dominated villages were mostly in the range between 501-1000. But in comparison, the non-Hmar villages were largest in the range between 101-200. It must be noted

here that only 12 villages have been identified as being Hmar-dominated. There are many other areas in this sub-division where the Hmars are in large number, but not to the extent that their areas of occupation could be called 'dominated' by them. Also, such Hmar villages as Rengkai and Khawmawi had not been included in the census.

The Churachandpur sub-division has been an area of attraction not only for the Hmars but for others as well. This is due to the fact that it offers economic and other opportunities for human development. And Churachandpur town, which lies just 64 kilometres from Imphal, is the headquarters of the South District. The town offers such facilities as education, hospitals, markets, etc. It is therefore natural for people of surrounding rural areas who aspire for these facilities to be lured into moving into this area. And most Hmars have done just this. The Hmars living in the Churachandpur sub-division have mostly come from the Tipaimukh sub-division. This phenomenon has been most apparent especially during the past five decades. Tipaimukh is no longer as productive in the agricultural sense. Moreover, earning livelihood has become more and more difficult there. Leaving their jhums, people have headed for Churachandpur to find an easier means to earn a living which does not involve too much manual labour as required in the jhums.

SOUTH DISTRICT MANIPUR
DISTRIBUTION OF VILLAGES

2 0 2 4 6 8 10 KM



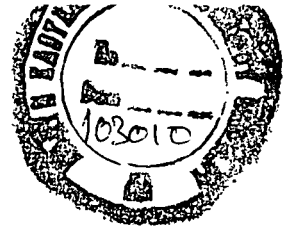
SIZE OF VILLAGES

- > 1000
- 501 1000
- 201 500
- 101 200
- 51 100
- < 51

VILLAGES DOMINATED BY:

- HMARS
- NON-HMARS

- 1 SIEL MAT
- 2 HMARVENG
- 3 MUOLVAIPHEI
- 4 SAIDAN
- 5 SAIKOT
- 6 MHUNTHA TANPAK
- 7 KHOPUBUNG
- 8 HOLEEM
- 9 THING
- 10 THIRING
- 11 NGURTE
- 12 THEMUDL



Map 13 illustrates the distribution of both Hmar and non-Hmar villages in the South District, Manipur, and is based on the preceding tables.

4.6.2. Peripheral Areas of Hmar Distribution

The peripheral areas of the Hmar distribution have been identified as those districts which have a fairly high percentage of the total Hmar population. North Cachar Hills, Cachar, and Aizawl districts together constituted roughly 39.03% of the total Hmar population of the North-East region.

4.6.2.1. North Cachar Hills District

This district had a Hmar population of about 4691 in 1971. This is about 9.58% of the total Hmar population in 1981. If the figure is to be calculated for 1971, then the percentage of the Hmars here comes to 11.20%.

The Hmars in this district are scattered widely in small villages. They are to be found in different villages in the two Police Station areas of Haflong P.S. and Maibang P.S. A list of Hmar villages falling under the Police Stations are as follows.

Haflong P.S. — Muolhoi, Fiengpui, Muolpawng, Huonveng, Lungkhawk, Mahur, Saron, Leiri, Tuolpui, Hmarlusei, Muollien, Phaipui, Boroarkap, Mauchar, Tattephai, Ramvawm,

Jinamghat, Vawngzawl, Khuongluong, Leikek, Muolkawi, Thingbung, Retzawl, Dawiheng, Boromuolkawi, Rekhaw, Dolaichuongga, Chaptuk and Harangazao-Huonveng.

The village Fiengpui is mostly inhabited by the Biete sub-clan. Muolpawng, Lungkhawk and Dolaichuongga villages are inhabited by the Hrangkhawl sub-clan mostly. Leiri and Hmarlusei are, incidentally, the names of sub-clans of the Hmars.

Maibang P.S. - Simtuiluong, Phaiphak, Muolsang, Aiaphai, Hmar-tlangmawi, Tlangsang.

4.6.2.2. Cachar District

In the Cachar district of Assam, Hmars are found mostly in the villages in the Udarbond P.S., Lakhipur P.S., Borkhola P.S., Silchar P.S. and Sonai P.S. In 1971 Census, there were about 3720 Hmars in the Lakhipur P.S. alone. The total Hmar population in the Cachar district in 1971 was 5578.

The villages identified as being Hmar villages in Cachar district are Hmarchate, Hmarkhawlien, Fulertal, Chikhur, Digar, Saisel, Diglangmukh, Hmarkhawmawi, Tuolpui, Muoltluong, Bisung, and Muoldam.

Especially in the villages of Fulertal, Chikur

and Digar, the Hmars there are mostly pineapple growers. On the other hand, Hmars of the remaining villages are mostly engaged in wet paddy, as well as jhum cultivation.

4.6.2.3. Aizawl District

In the Aizawl district of Mizoram, the total Hmar population there in 1981 Census was about 7,850. This is about 17.58% of the total Hmar population of the North-East in 1981. Thus, it has been included as being one of the three periphery areas of the Hmar distribution.

Hmars in this district are inhabiting villages located mostly near the northern and north-eastern extremities of this district. Hmars are found mostly in the Kolasib and Ngopa P.S.'s. Although data on tribewise distribution at the Police Station level is not available, it is possible through experiences to identify the Hmar villages in this region as well.

Kolasib P.S. – In the Kolasib division, the Hmar dominated or wholly Hmar villages are Vairengte, Saiphai, Saiphum, Mauchar, Sakawrdai, Zohmun, Ratu, Lungsum, Vervek, Vaitin, Tinghmun, Khawpuor, Pehlawn, Phuhlen, and Zawngin.

Ngopa P.S. – The Hmar villages in the Ngopa Police Station area are Phuoibung (Phuaibuang), Suongpuilawn (Suangpuilawn), Khawlien (Khawlian), Daido, Lamher, Vanbawng, Khawlek, and Chiahpui.

Based on the analysis above, the following conclusions on the patterns of distribution of the Hmars are derived:

(1) The Hmar tribe is divided into many clans and sub-clans and families. Some clans once had their own dialects. An optimistic view is that there are altogether 36 clans and 255 sub-clans and families in the Hmar tribe. There are also 12 sub-clans and families that are shared by (or are common to) two or more clans.

(2) Hmars were first to settle in Mizoram, as evidenced by village names in central Mizoram, which still bear names of Hmar clans after which they were so named.

(3) Want of jhuming land and other territorial possessions caused the Hmars and other tribes to be always at war against each other leading the Hmars to migrate to neighbouring areas like Cachar, Tripura, North Cachar Hills, Meghalaya and Manipur. Hmars that left Mizoram were victims of a history of hostilities and aggressions committed against them by the Lusei chiefs. Some of those that stayed back were ultimately assimilated or absorbed losing their dialect and their distinctiveness.

(4) North-East India is predominantly a tribal region, apart from Assam and Manipur which had only 10.98% and 27.49% scheduled tribes respectively.

(5) According to the 1981 Census, Hmars were found only in four states, viz., Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Assam. In that year (1971 for Assam), the total Hmar population according to Census was 48,953.

(6) Hmars have a tendency to cluster or concentrate in a few districts. In Manipur, they are found mostly in South and Central districts. In Meghalaya, they are mainly found in the Jaintia Hills district. In Mizoram, the Hmars are found mostly in the Aizawl district. In Assam, Cachar and N.C. Hills districts are the main areas where the Hmars are concentrated.

(7) South District Manipur, N.C. Hills and Cachar districts of Assam, and the Aizawl district of Mizoram together constitute about 91.36 per cent of the total Hmar population.

(8) South District of Manipur is identified in this study as the core of the Hmar distribution as about 52.5 per cent of the total Hmar population in the N.E. region are found in this district.

(9) N.C. Hills and Cachar districts of Assam and the Aizawl district of Mizoram are identified as the peripheral areas of the Hmar distribution as these together constitute about 39.03 per cent of the Hmar population in the North-East.

(10) Hmar villages tend to be larger (population-wise) than that of other tribal groups of the same region indicating their tendency to concentrate in large groups especially where they are in majority, as in the Tipaimukh subdivision of the core area.

(11) In the peripheral areas, Hmar dominated or wholly Hmar villages are identified: N.C. Hills district had 38 villages, Cachar district 12, and Aizawl district had 23 villages that were either wholly Hmars or were dominated by the Hmars.

CHAPTER V

PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENTS

In keeping with the objectives and research questions of this study, it has been attempted to indicate some of the problems of adjustments the Hmars are facing arising out of their distribution pattern over different areas.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the Hmars are concentrated mainly in four districts of the North East with the South District of Manipur being the core; and North Cachar Hills, Cachar, and Aizawl districts being the peripheral areas of the Hmar distribution.

These four districts possess diverging natural environment and also they have different social & economic set ups. Therefore, there are bound to be differences between the core and periphery areas as regards to their problems of adjustments. The nature and degree of their problems of adjustment are also not the same between two peripheral areas.

It must be noted that this attempt to highlight some of the basic problems of adjustment that the Hmars are facing is based on information gathered from experiences, observations, as well as from Church sources, and occasional

visits to the core and periphery areas. Therefore, before proper questionnaires and samples can be utilized, it is possible here only to indicate some of the problems of adjustments. Therefore, this present work should be treated as a preliminary study and not as an exhaustive one.

In order to understand the problems of adjustments which arise in the different areas that the Hmars are living in, it is necessary to mention the physical, social, and economic structure of the constituent units. These vary between core and peripheries, as well as between the peripheries. These then indicate the levels of adjustments and the problems that are associated with it. The nature of these problems under social, economic, and political headings between the core and peripheries will thus be brought about.

5.1. Core Area: South District Manipur

5.1.1. Physical Structure

The western ranges of Manipur continue through the South District of Manipur. The hills are aligned in a north-south direction. In general, the elevation is more in the eastern side (1200 m) and low in the western part (300 m - 600 m).¹ There are many rivers flowing through

1. Varte, L. Khuma, 1987. A Historical and Political Geography of the Hmar-Mizos, pp. 50-53.

this district. Therefore, it is well drained. The relief features of the district are characteristically hills and river basins.

Rainfall is abundant and well distributed throughout the region. However, it decreases in the amount as one proceeds eastwards. The average rainfall is 1497.25 mm.² June and July are the wettest months. January is the driest month of the year. Churachandpur town has recorded a mean maximum temperature of 26.6°C.³ However, temperature varies from place to place. The Tipaimukh Sub-division in the western part records the highest temperature in the entire district, especially in the valleys.

The river basins are rich in alluvium and favour wet paddy cultivation. However, the rugged hill ranges are not suitable for settled agriculture. In these areas, the shifting cultivation predominates.

5.1.2. Social Structure

South (Churachandpur) District is characterized by the presence of population classified as tribal and account for about 86.8% of the district's total population of 133,965 (in 1981). The top three tribes⁴ are the Paites

2. District Census Handbook, Churachandpur District, 1971.

3. Ibid.

4. Special Tables for SC & ST, Manipur, Pt. ix, Census of India, 1981.

(29,156), Hmars (25,654), and the Thados (17,196); and their proportion to the total population of the district are 21.76%, 19.14%, and 12.83%, respectively. The other important tribes are the Vaiphei, Zou, Mizo, Simte, Gangte, etc. The rest of the population are made up of the Meiteis, Bengalis and Nepalis.

The social structure shows that the various tribes are more or less proportionate. Even the three larger tribes, individually, are not the majority community. Therefore, in the district per se, they are not in a position to behave as a people having absolute majority. In 1981, the density of population was 29.2 persons per sq.km.⁵

5.1.3. Economic Structure

As discussed earlier, the physical relief influenced the economy of the district considerably. South district is economically backward. Of the four districts of our study area, the South District has the highest share of the working population engaged as cultivators (78.3%).⁶ This is a clear reflection of the state of the economy. The proportion of main workers to the total population was also highest with about 42.52%.

5. Ibid.

6. General and Economic Tables & Social and Cultural Tables, Census of India, 1981, Manipur.

In the hills, jhuming is the most common mode of agriculture. However, in the river basins like the Khuga, the cultivators are able to practise settled agriculture, growing mainly rice. Maize, mustard seeds and dal chini are some of the more important exports from this district.⁷ In the hills, especially in the western part in the Tipaimukh Sub-division, there are many orchards which produce good quality oranges.

The transport network of the district is inadequate. Even the metalled road, connecting the district's headquarters with Imphal, is in a very sorry state. In fact, many of the roads are only fair-weather roads.

5.2. Problems of Adjustments in the Core Area:

South District Manipur

The core area of the Hmar distribution is the South District. Some of the basic problems are discussed under broad headings in the following lines. Some of these problems are peculiar to the Hmars, while others are common for the people of the district as a whole. Furthermore, some of the problems are primarily locational in character. These facts are more or less common among the peripheral areas also. Hmars have a large share of their working population engaged in cultivation. In 1981, about 85% of the

7. Churachandpur District Census Handbook, op.cit.

main workers were cultivators.⁸ The rest of the district, as a whole, is also predominantly engaged as cultivators (78.3%) and this expresses rather clearly the backwardness of the state of the economy of the district. Hmars classified as main workers constituted about 24.6% of the District's total main workers. Also, 21.7% of the workers classified as cultivators were Hmars.⁹

The main problems of adjustments in the core area (South District) of the Hmars are identified under the following broad headings.

5.2.1. Problems of Social Adjustments

The social structure or social composition of this district is composed of many different tribes. These tribes again are more or less equal in proportion to the total population of the district. When two or more social groups with different cultures exist side by side, two sets of forces are in operation. One of these is, the awareness of dissimilarity which results in 'in-group' (us) and 'out-group' (them) attitudes. The resultant social action is

8. Special Tables for SCs and STs, Pt. ix, Series 13, Manipur, Census of India, 1981.

9. On the basis of the information obtained through experiences and observations, the author feels that the proportion of the Hmar work force engaged in various economic activities does not have much immediate affects on the problems of adjustment of the Hmars in this district.

either avoidance or conflict.¹⁰ The other set of forces emerge from common needs and problems which can be best worked out by mutual help or cooperation. Some form of accommodation is worked as a compromise between these two forces.

5.2.1.1. Competition or Confrontation

No single population sub-group is dominant in the South District. As a result, no one group is able to exercise power over the others. As such, there is competition and confrontation between the sub-groups of the same area. This competition or confrontation, in more than one way has prevented violent conflicts through culturally established restraints. Hostility between groups is reduced by the necessity to cooperate for mutual welfare. Under these conditions, a so-called balance or equilibrium, namely accommodation, is established.

With so many different tribal groups competing for space in this district, it is not surprising to find that there is an assertion of identity by the respective sub-groups. This is further accentuated by the fact that each sub-group has a very distinct language, through which they carry out their day to day dealings. This differentiation, coupled with loyalty towards one's tribe brings about

10. Bell, Earl H. 1961. Social Foundations of Human Behaviour, pp. 364-68.

much competition between various tribes. The Hmars are no exception to this and have to face a lot of competition for every aspect of economic and political relations with others, and vice versa.

Though accommodation is more of a rule than an exception, it is very easy to tilt the scales and upset this delicate balance between the various sub-groups. For example, even an insignificant issue has a potential for creating deep rift and conflict between the sub-groups (e.g., the recent incidence between the Paites and the Thados in the South District).

In Manipur, the Hmars are found concentrated in the South district where they are the second largest sub-group. In this context, it can be said that the Thados, are the most populous tribe (78,883)¹¹ in the entire state, although they are the third largest in this district. Even here, they have been able to use their numerical strength to influence the tribal relations of the district (indirectly). This is because of higher representation in the governmental services as compared to the Hmars. The present trend also suggests this. The difference of participation is due to the fact of the late start which the Hmars have

11. Tribes in Manipur at a Glance, 1981. Directorate for Development of Tribals and Backward Classes, Government of Manipur.

made in the field of education. As a result of which, the Hmar representation and participation in the economy has been very little as compared to other sub-groups in the district as well as in the state. This emerged as a prominent locational disadvantage for the Hmars.

In this regard, one can also add that the rural Hmars are deeply affected by the problems of alcoholism and drug addiction. Besides the consequences, these problems have highlighted the acute economic backwardness and consequent problems with immense social implications.

5.2.1.2. Status of Hmar Dialect

The Hmars have wanted to preserve their own dialect from being lost totally. And they tried very hard towards the achievement of this goal. As discussed earlier, the Hmars had come into Manipur from neighbouring Mizoram. There they had been, and still are, in constant social contact with the more numerous Luseis (Mizo). This created the fear among the Hmars of losing their dialect/language and, as a consequence, their identity among the majority Luseis.

During 1950-1960, there was a tendency among the various tribes of Manipur to adopt one's dialect. The Hmars, too, were no exception to this trend and the Hmars fell

back on their dialect to retain their identity. This was re-inferred by Hmar immigrants from Mizoram, (who had earlier been speaking Lushai) who reverted back to their dialect – the Hmar.

(i) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Church

So passionate was the Hmars' determination to speak and preserve their dialect that there were even problems in the Church over this issue. Some non-Hmars did not approve hymnals and sermons to be sung or preached in Hmar. The Hmars, however, emphasized the use of the Hmar dialect in the church. This ultimately led to divisions within the churches.

The two foremost churches that the Hmars of Manipur belong to are the Evangelical Free Church of India and the Independent Church of India. Besides, there are also many other small churches. The status of the Hmar dialect in these churches is absolute in the sense that Hmar is used in all these church services and activities.¹² The various tribal dialects of the district do not interfere with the usage of Hmar in the church proceedings. The population of Manipur is not homogeneous except for the Central

12. In the church, Hmars use their own Bible which had been translated into Hmar; they have their own hymns composed by Hmars besides those translated from English. Their Sunday School lesson books are also in the Hmar dialect. Therefore, the Hmars in the churches have no problem being Hmars in the South District.

District which is primarily occupied by the Meiteis. Thus, the people are left somewhat alone. In other words, the Hmars are not forced to learn the dialect of another tribe in the South District.

(ii) Status of Hmar Dialect in Schools

The teaching of the mother-tongues of the state are encouraged by the government. As such, the Hmar dialect, as a vernacular subject, has been offered as an optional subject upto class ten in the schools. Churches like the Evangelical Free Church of India in collaboration with the Partnership Mission Society have run many schools in the Hmar villages, especially in the Tipaimukh Sub-division. These schools taught in Hmar upto Class Six. This had greatly helped in providing basic educational facilities to the majority of rural Hmars. However, due to constraints largely economic in nature, most of these schools have now been closed.

(iii) Status of Hmar Dialect in Markets/Outside

The status of the Hmar dialect in the market places and outside depends upon the location in the district. In the Tipaimukh Sub-division, also known as the 'Hmar Area', Hmar is used for all communication purposes. This is because of the fact that this area is wholly dominated by the Hmar tribe.

In the South District, Hmars are found in large number again in the Churachandpur Sub-division. Due to the presence of different tribal groups in this area, and since the people understand one another's dialect, the Hmar dialect can be used by the Hmars in the markets and in public. This means that a Hmar will speak in his own dialect and the other person (a non-Hmar) will understand him, and vice versa.

(iv) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Homes

Today the language spoken in the Hmar households is Hmar. Earlier, and in some few homes, now, Hmar as well as Lushai (Mizo) was used in the Homes. (The earlier generation had used Mizo, but, as has already been mentioned above, are now using the Hmar dialect). In fact, the Hmar dialect has been gaining popularity in recent years and coincided with the political movement and awareness initiated by the Hmar People's Convention.

5.2.1.3. Education

The Hmar as a mother tongue is taught only upto class six. In Manipur, in general, schools teach the Manipuri language as a compulsory subject upto class eight in the schools. Besides being a language alien to the tribals, the Manipuri language has got its own script. This makes it more difficult to learn. With the movement

for the inclusion of Manipuri in the Eighth Schedule, the Meiteis are already attempting to make Manipuri a compulsory subject upto the Matriculation level. This imposition of Meitei will adversely affect the population sub-groups who are in relative minority in this state.

5.2.2. Problems of Economic Adjustments

5.2.2.1. Agriculture

Only along the banks of the Khuga river (also known as the Tuithapui river, locally) is permanent cultivation of rice practised. This river flows in the Churachandpur Sub-division and through the Churachandpur town. The Hmars, along with other tribes, grow rice and mustard. However, due to the absence of proper irrigational facilities, many of the farmers have to rely on the vagaries of the monsoon rains.

Very few Hmars are wealthy enough to possess power tillers or diesel pumps. Most of them are very poor and are predominantly subsistence cultivators growing grains for their own consumption. They employ draft animals to till their small holdings. Some of them do not even possess cattle to till their lands, so they do the work manually with the hoe.

In the hills of the Tipaimukh Sub-division where

the Hmars are concentrated, shifting cultivation is widely practised. The jhums are not able to provide enough for the people of these areas. On their jhums, they grow whatever they need although the production is usually very small. Rice is the staple diet of the Hmars, so this gets first priority in the jhums. Chillies are also grown. Surplus is marketed in Churachandpur.

Tipaimukh used to be noted for its oranges in the past. Even now, oranges are produced in the orchards, but not as much as before. The decline in the production of oranges may be attributed to the fact that no new orange plantations have been made and there is very little application of fertilizers to enrich the soil. As a result, the soils are exhausted. Thus, those who had earlier profited from these orchards are now not getting much from their lands.

5.2.2.2. Frequent Famines

The Tipaimukh area which is also known as the 'Hmar Biel' (Hmar Area) is frequently hit by droughts and resultant famines. There have been many years in the past that have reported series of crop failures. With primitive technology and absence of any visible finances, the Hmars could hardly produce enough for their bare sustenance. The meagre assistance and difficulties in communication has added

to their problem. Introduction of terrace cultivation and irrigation facilities along with setting up of institutions extending technical and financial assistance would effectively combat this problem.

5.2.2.3. Indebtedness

Indebtedness is another economic problem faced by many Hmars living in the South District. However, this problem is not solely a Hmar predicament as tribals of other communities are also suffering from it. Here, the problem of indebtedness is not so much deeply rooted as is the case in other tribal areas of India.

There exists much poverty in this tribal area and the tribals find it difficult to meet their day to day consumption needs. Thus, they have to borrow money. Local inflation is one of the reasons for indebtedness. Prices of edible oils and rice and other commodities have been rising constantly every year – much higher than other areas, such as Imphal. This is due more to the scarcity of food than supply of money being large. As cost of living rises, the average Hmar cannot live within his meagre earnings, and thus, he needs to borrow. As it would not be possible to easily procure a bank loan easily, he has to borrow from the money-lenders. Many money-lenders of Churachandpur are the rich tribals of that area. They give loans but

charge very high interest rates. The rates vary from 5 to 10 per cent per month – perhaps even more.¹³

5.2.2.4. Transport/Communication

It was mentioned earlier that the transport system in South District is not properly developed. The major portion of the Hmar population live in the Tipaimukh Sub-division. The road which connects this Sub-division with Churachandpur town is inadequate. It is also very narrow and winding. While the maintenance of the road was under the BRTF, the condition was somewhat satisfactory. But now, it has been put under the charge of the PWD. As a result, it has now become a fair weather road.

The road connecting Churachandpur with the Tipaimukh Sub-division extends upto Aizawl. It is in a very bad state and there are many areas blocked by landslides too.¹⁴

13. Through loans, many Hmar families purchase commodities such as clothes, handloom cloths, etc. at wholesale prices and travel to neighbouring states to sell them at marginal profits. One will find some of these people travelling to such places as Dimapur to purchase clothes to sell in Churachandpur. Some, again, buy handloom and mill cloths from Imphal and sell them in such areas as Shillong, Aizawl, etc. But many of them are not able to repay their loans, let alone the interests charged on them. As such, they end up with huge debts which sometimes require them to sell even their land and house.

14. Further, there are not enough buses to carry people to different areas of the district. When a bus does ply, it is usually very overcrowded with passengers piling up on the bus tops. The reason for the scarcity of passenger-buses plying from Churachandpur to Tipaimukh is the poor condition of the roads. Once the roads are properly repaired and maintained, it is likely that the traffic on this road will increase and this will help the people tremendously.

5.2.3. Problems of Political Adjustments

The problems of political adjustments that the Hmars of South District are facing have arisen due to the physical and social structure. The political problems are due to their interactions and inter-relationships with the neighbouring Mizos of Mizoram as also with the other tribes of the district and the state. Some of the main political problems that the Hmars are facing today are briefly discussed.

5.2.3.1. Mizo Union and Hmars

To understand the relation between the Hmars and the Mizo Union, one has to go back to nearly five decades. The activities of the Mizo Union were mostly in Mizoram (or Lushai Hills as it was known then). Yet it had a significant role in the political problems of the Hmars living in the South district in general, and the Hmars of Tipaimukh Sub-division in particular.

The Mizo Union was a political organization which was formed in Mizoram in 1946. Its main objective was to unite all Mizos in one administrative unit. The Hmars living in the south-western part of Manipur and in Cachar were very much in favour of this and supported the Mizo Union Movement whole-heartedly. The state government of Manipur did not want that it should lose any territory to Mizoram,

and it took strong measures to suppress the Hmars. Many of them were eventually arrested. This, however, did not stop the Hmars, and so, the then Chief Minister of Manipur made an unprecedented tour of the area inhabited by the Hmars and offered them autonomy of their own inside the boundaries of Manipur. "But so strong was the Hmars' desire to be united again with their kindred Mizo tribes of Lushai Hills that they rejected P.B. Singh's (the then Chief Minister) juicy offer."¹⁵

However, when India gained Independence and the Lushai Hills was granted autonomy, to the utter dismay and amazement of the Hmars, they (Hmars) were completely ignored by the Mizos and left out. In short, the Hmars were betrayed by the leaders of the Mizo Union. Problems started cropping up, with the Hmars continuously being ignored. Later, their representation to the Union Government resulted in their being included in the list of Scheduled Tribes of India. Consequently, some benefits started trickling down to the Hmars.

The loss of confidence of the Hmars on the Mizo Union resulted in the Hmars of Manipur to gradually disassociate themselves with the Mizo Union. They reasserted their Hmar identity. They based their argument on the fact

15. Pudaite, R. 1991. Formulas For Peace and Prosperity in Mizoram, p. 12.

that even in the list of Scheduled Tribes, the Mizos are categorized as "Mizo (any Lushai tribes)", and the Hmars are definitely not a Lushai tribe but, rather, separately listed as Hmars. The status of the Hmar dialect gradually gained prominence.

Although there were electoral opportunities for the Hmars to project themselves, these were diluted by the overall environment of the state. Some of the elected representatives could not effectively project the problems. As a result, the developments could not effectively take place.

5.2.3.2. Division of Hmar Areas

In the Churachandpur Sub-division, the Hmars are divided into two constituencies, thereby reducing them to a minority in both. This has subdued the political voice of the Hmar population in the state. If another Hmar could be elected from the Saikot Constituency, and with the Tipaimukh constituency being already Hmars', the Hmars of Manipur could be better heard in the policies of the Government.

Furthermore, the other tribes living in this district are politically more united as compared to the Hmars. Tribes like the Paites and the Thados have corresponding representation in the district and the state. This frequen-

tly leads to an impasse when specific interests in development are projected. This suggests that the state has to formulate a comprehensive plan for overall development that includes all population sub-groups.

5.3. Periphery Areas

1) Aizawl District, Mizoram

5.3.1. Physical Structure

The western ranges of the Manipur Hills continue southwards to form the hills of Mizoram. These hills run in a north to south direction in parallel series. The ranges are separated by deep, and sometimes, narrow valleys and gullies which are usually occupied by streams. These hill ranges are composed of shale and slate. As they do not possess the power to retain water, the hill tops and slopes are usually lacking sufficient water.¹⁶ The elevation of these hills are high in the eastern areas that gradually decrease westwards.

The characteristics of the physical structure of Aizawl district is also shared by the rest of the state of Mizoram. Aizawl district lies in the tropical region and has a moderate climate, being neither too hot nor too

16. Taher, M. "Physiographic Framework of N.E. India", North-Eastern Geographer, Vol. 18, Nos. 1 & 2, 1986, p. 14.

cold. The average maximum recorded in summer is about 30.9°C and minimum in winter, 6.8°C.¹⁷

The south-west monsoon is the main source of rainfall here. The average annual rainfall for the district is about 226.4 cm. July and August are the wettest months while the period from November to January are driest.

5.3.2: Social Structure

The total population of the district of Aizawl was roughly 340,766 in 1981. The density of population here works out to about 27 persons per square kilometre. Of the total population, 93.93% belonged to the scheduled tribes.¹⁸

Out of the different tribes of the district, Mizos constituted about 84.03% (286,349) of the total population of the district. Those classified as Kukis were next most populous with a distant 4.54% (15,487), and were followed by Hmars with 2.53% (8,612). Chakmas were fourth having 7,651 persons or 2.24% of the population.¹⁹

The above figures give a clear picture that the Mizos are the most dominant tribe of the district. The

17. Aizawl, District Census Handbook, 1981.

18. Ibid.

19. Census of India, 1981, Mizoram, Sp1. Tables for SC's & ST's.

other tribes and communities of Aizawl district are thus insignificant as the single most largest tribe (Mizo) account for more than 84% of the district's population.

The literacy rate for this district is very high. In 1981, it was 65.09%. This is much higher as compared to the all India literacy rate.

5.3.3. Economic Structure

The hilly and deep ravines of the Aizawl district in general make it difficult, if not impossible, for the permanent cultivation of rice which is the staple food of the people. As is the case in the other hilly areas, Aizawl district also has a high work participation rate of about 41.29%, indicating a poor economy based essentially on shifting cultivation. A break-up of the Main Workers shows that 69.46% were cultivators and 2.74% agricultural labourers.

Not all the areas of this district are hilly. The Champhai valley is an exception with its fertile valley that permits permanent cultivation of rice. It is sometimes known as the 'rice bowl of Mizoram'.

The economy of the District in general is poorly developed. There are no major finds of minerals worthwhile to economically exploit. There is also lack of infrastructure necessary for the development of the region.

Some of the major produces of this district are ginger, bamboo and cane works, etc. There is also a ginger dehydration plant in the district.

The alignment of the rugged hill ranges in the north-south direction and the interception by deep ravines has retarded the development of road communication. There is an airport near Aizawl town which facilitates air transport and is operated by the Vayudoot. Helicopter service is also available. A railway head has been recently introduced at Bairabi, near the northern border.

5.4. Problems of Adjustment in the Periphery Area

1) Aizawl District, Mizoram

Aizawl District of Mizoram is one of the three identified periphery areas of the Hmar distribution in the North-eastern region of India. The nature of the physical, social, and economic structure are very different from that of the South District of Manipur. As such, the problems of adjustment faced by the Hmars here in the Aizawl district are not the same as those of South district. Some of the more important problems of adjustment of the Hmars of Aizawl district are identified and discussed under the following headings.

5.4.1. Problems of Social Adjustments

The social structure of this district shows that the Mizos are the most dominant community. Hmars account for just 2.53% of the total population, yet are the third largest community. This low percentage of Hmars make them a minority tribe in the district in particular. This is despite the fact that many of the settlements, particularly in the eastern parts of the district still indicate their Hmar origin.

Some of the social adjustment problems faced by the Hmars are also shared by other minority tribes of the district. However, some problems are unique to the Hmars alone. The more pressing problems of social adjustments faced by Hmars living in the Aizawl district are analysed under the following sub-headings.

5.4.1.1. Identity

Although the Hmar tribe is separately recognized as a scheduled tribe in Mizoram, the Hmars face an identity crisis. This is due to the dominant Lusei tribe that exerted strong absorbing influences. For many generations, the Hmars have been living with the more dominant Lusei tribes. In course of time, they intermarried and have become so bio-culturally mixed with the Luseis that their distinc-

tiveness is disappearing here.²⁰

Another point is that in the scheduled tribe list of Mizoram, Hmar is listed separately and Mizo is listed as "Mizo (any Lushai tribes)". Thus, from this, it appears that the Hmars along with the Pawis, Lakher (Mara), Ralte etc. have a separate status.

5.4.1.2. Status of the Hmar Dialect

The status of the Hmar dialect in the Aizawl district is different from that of the core area. This is due to the nature of the social structure of the area. The Hmars are a very low minority group in this district and coupled with the absorption by the Luseis, Hmar as a dialect, has a low status here.

(i) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Church

Living in a land where the dominant group makes up more than 80% of the population, Hmars have a hard time

20. The Hmars have their own customs and traditions which are akin to that of the 'Lushai-Kuki group. They have their own dialect which is still spoken today. Their basic problem lies in the retention of their separate identity as Hmars. The leaders of Mizoram want that all people living in Mizoram be called 'Mizo'. The Lusei dialect is the most dominant language today but it has incorrectly been identified as the Mizo language. The result has been the alienation of other tribes who do not speak this language as a mother tongue. Hmars have their own dialect which is very much alive and is popular. When the Luseis called their language 'Mizo', this automatically left out such tribes as the Hmars from being Mizos. At the same time, the Luseis want that all the tribes of Mizoram be called and come under the name 'Mizo'.

speaking their dialect as freely as their kinsmen do in Manipur. In the church proceedings, the Hmar dialect is not used much. There are of course some Hmar villages in the Aizawl district which use the Hmar dialect in their church proceedings. However, those which use Mizo are much more. Even in the Hmar villages, there may be the dual usage of both Hmar and Mizo in the church services. This is possible because both are understood.

(ii) Status of Hmar Dialect in Schools

In Aizawl district, the only other medium in schools besides English is the Mizo language. Due to the existing atmosphere of propagating the Mizo language, other dialects are not taught. As such, Hmar is not taught in the schools. This further hampers and retards the growth of the Hmar dialect.

(iii) Status of Hmar Dialect in Markets/Outside

The usage of the Hmar dialect in markets or outside is very little. Mizo is the common language or lingua franca in the district. If some Hmars who speak Hmar dialect do meet, then they will speak to each other in Hmar. If they are not known to each other, or do not realise that the other is a fellow Hmar, they will most probably talk in Mizo. On later discovering the other is also a Hmar, then they will continue to speak in the Hmar dialect. Otherwise,

Mizo is the predominant language spoken, especially in the Aizawl town.

(iv) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Homes

In the Hmar households, some homes will be speaking in Hmar, some in Mizo, and still some using both. Many Hmar families did not wish that their dialect would be lost with the common day-to-day use of the Mizo language. Parents of Hmar families possessed foresight and made great efforts to revive their own dialect. As such, although the sons were commonly spoken to in Mizo as they had to be socially mobile, the daughters were almost always spoken to in Hmar. This is why the Hmar dialect was sometimes referred to as 'Nuhmei Ṭawng' or 'language of females'.

5.4.1.3. Elites and Alienation of Society

This phenomenon,²¹ if we may use the word, seems to be existing amongst the Hmar tribe in Mizoram. There are two sections of the Hmar population; one who live in

21. The largely egalitarian structure of tribal societies gets disrupted when a separate small class of 'elites' develop amongst them, alienating them from the others. The very disparity in their attitudes creates a gulf between the elitist section of tribals from the non-elitist ones. Some of the major reasons for developing elite sections within tribal societies are based to different way of living which is generally regarded as being superior to their own way of living.

the interior villages, and the others who live in the Aizawl town. Even among those Hmars which live in Aizawl, there exists another division between the rural and the urban. It is these urban section which form the part of the 'elite' group of the Hmars. Generally speaking, it is this section which indicated the absorbing influence of the majority group in the district.

5.4.2. Problems of Economic Adjustments

It has been already pointed out that Aizawl district is away from the main communication routes, has rugged terrain, unproductive soils, and forested hills. These characteristics make it possible to identify it as what geographers call the 'areas of isolation'.²² Having such extreme physical attributes, the region falling under Aizawl district has most of its land 'negative' for settled agriculture and is also not possible to develop transportation facilities fully owing to its rugged topography.

Hmars living here face numerous economic problems. Some of the more important ones have been identified as follows.

5.4.2.1. Jhuming

The areas falling under the administration of Aizawl district include the flat lands of the Champhai valley.

22. Ahmad, Ali. 1987. "Inter-Regional Linkages in N.W. India During the Early Mughals", (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, JNU), p. 86.

Here, settled agriculture is possible. But Hmars are not concentrated here, but, rather, in the northern parts of this district. In the areas inhabited by Hmars, the relief is rugged and the soils unproductive. Owing to this, and distance, the majority of the Hmars are solely dependent upon jhuming for their sustenance. They cultivate such crops as rice, maize, ginger, pumpkin, and chillies. Like others who engage in this age-old practice, whatever that is produced is consumed by the family itself. They do not produce enough to generate surplus to enable them to sell it in the market, if possible.

The area that the Hmars occupy is economically backward. The people are living in abject poverty, and have very limited alternatives.

5.4.2.2. Transport and Communication

The state of Mizoram in general is very much behind in the development of transportation and communication. The major means of transportation in this state as well as in the Aizawl district is by road. Although there exists roads under such categories as National Highway and State Highway, yet many areas inhabited by the majority of the Hmars are still not properly accessible by roads. Many Hmars still live in the villages located in the Ngopa and Darlawn C.D. Blocks situated in the northern part of the District.

Of the twenty villages identified as being Hmar-dominated, only three of them were accessible by pucca roads. And all of these were located in one C.D. Block (Darlawn). In the Ngopa C.D. Block, not a single village was accessible by pucca road.²³ Most Hmar villages are accessible only by jeepable roads. These roads are fair weather roads.

5.4.2.3. Electricity

Electricity is very essential for modern living. It is used for cooking, heating, lighting the homes, to power motors used in industries, and so on. Electric power generation is not yet fully developed in Mizoram. It has to import electricity from neighbouring states. To augment for the dearth in supply, diesel generator have been employed. In recent times, hydro-electric plants are now under construction. In the fifty eight villages in the two C.D. Blocks of Ngopa and Darlawn, only one village, namely Darlawn village, had electricity for domestic purpose.²⁴ The absence of electricity has discouraged the use of machines for use in household industries.

5.4.2.4. Poverty

There are some rich and well-to-do Hmar families

23. District Census Handbook, op.cit.

24. Ibid.

living in Aizawl. However, the general position of the Hmars living in the rural areas is that of poverty. Many of them are subsistence cultivators who can barely get enough to eat. The land which they occupy is getting more and more crowded. In earlier times, the duration of rotation of jhum fields was about ten to fifteen years. But nowadays, due to population pressure, this period has been reduced to about five to eight years, on an average.

As the land has to be worked more and more, its fertility deteriorates and becomes unproductive leading to poor returns from the field. As the poor farmer cannot get enough to eat from his jhum, he has to seek other gainful employment. Without other skills, he cannot readily get employment. They may want to move out to such areas as Aizawl for employment, but more often than not, they do not have enough monetary resources with which to relocate themselves.

5.4.3. Problems of Political Adjustments

The one major reason why the Hmars have problems of political adjustments is due to the fact that they are a minority tribe in the Aizawl district. But the political problems of the Hmars are not generally shared by other tribes who are also minorities, as they are peculiar to the Hmars only. Some of the basic political adjustment

problems that Hmars living in the Aizawl district are facing may be discussed as follows.

5.4.3.1. Lack of Representation

The Hmars in Aizawl district, and for the state as a whole, face the problem of lack of political representation. The situation of the Hmars is rather unusual. In the constituencies that the Hmars are inhabiting, the elected MLAs do not belong to the Hmar tribe. However, the MLAs who are Hmar have been elected from non-Hmar areas. Such being the case, those MLAs who are Hmars cannot directly help out the Hmar population who are outside their constituencies.

The conflict of identity has been discussed in the light of social adjustment problems. But this is also a political problem of the Hmars. While Hmars of Manipur and outside Mizoram call themselves as Hmars, there seems to exist mixed feelings regarding this issue among the Hmars of Mizoram. There is a tendency for some to call themselves Hmar while others call themselves as Mizos.

5.4.3.2. Hmar People's Convention and Demand for ADC

The birth of the Hmar People's Convention (HPC) in Mizoram was out of "disappointment and necessity". Pudaite has rightly pointed out that the simple bestowal of high

ranks to one or more urbanite Hmars in Mizoram is not a sufficient compensation to the diversified grievances of the Hmars who have been suffering for a long time. Feeling that the Hmars of Mizoram need political recognition and a fair share of economic development, the HPC was born.²⁵ Since then, an effort was made to demand Autonomous District Council for Hmars, in line with those granted to the Pawi, Lakher, and the Chakma in the southern parts of the state.

5.5. Periphery Areas

2) North Cachar Hills District, Assam

5.5.1. Physical Structure

The Barail Range, including the Naga Hills, extend westward into the North Cachar Hills district. The Barail range remains high with an average elevation exceeding 1600 m. This range separates the district into two. One part in the north comes under the catchment basin of the Brahmaputra, and the second part in the south falls under the Barak basin. The hills of this district in the southern part of the Karbi plateau to the central Barail range rise to about 500 m but then descend towards the Barak valley to the south.²⁶

25. Pudaite, op.cit.

26. Taher, op.cit., p. 14.

In general, the topography of the N.C. Hills district is hilly with rugged terrain. This hampers the economic development of the region. The climate of this district is warm and humid in the summer months and moderate in the winter. It is influenced by the south-west monsoon. The average mean annual rainfall recorded at Haflong is about 3098 mm.²⁷ A warm and humid climate coupled with abundant rainfall has favoured the luxuriant growth of forests, especially bamboos.

5.5.2. Social Structure

The North Cachar Hills district had a population of about 76,047 persons in 1971. The density of population then was about 16 persons per square kilometre. The literacy rate was not high and it was only about 27.2%. This district has numerous groups of people belonging to different communities and tribes. There were about 69.14% of its population belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in the same census year. The non-tribal population was comprised by the Bengalis (14.4%) and Nepalis (6.12%) and Assamese (2.8%).

The district is dominated by the Dimasas who account for about 30.54% of the total population of the district. Therefore, they are the major tribe and community of this

27. N.C. Hills District Census Handbook, 1971.

district. The next most numerous tribe is the Hmar tribe who come a distant second with their population accounting for about 6.17% of the district's total. The Karbis are third with 5.15% and are followed by the Nagas (mostly Zemis) with 3.02%. There are also some Thados or Kukis and Khasis.²⁸

5.5.3. Economic Structure

Assam is, in general, a plain area as more than 75% of its area is plain land. About 21.27% of the area is hilly and are formed by the North Cachar Hills and Karbi Hills.²⁹

Many areas of the N.C. Hills cannot have permanent agriculture owing to its topographic characteristics. While the rest of the state of Assam engages in settled rice cultivation (wet paddy), the people of N.C. Hills resort to the cultivation of upland rice and jhuming.

N.C. Hills has the highest work participation rate in the whole of Assam with about 41.91%.³⁰ A high work participation rate in the hilly areas indicates that the economy is poorly developed and is based primarily on shifting cultivation (jhuming). And with such type of economy

28. Census of India, 1971, N.C. Hills, Soc. & Cul. Tables, Pt. II C(ii).

29. Taher, op.cit.

30. District Census Handbook, op.cit.

and unproductive agricultural practices, sometimes little surplus is and has to be generated, requiring the whole family to work together in the fields. This district has a very high percentage of cultivators (69.01%).

With a hilly relief, and other constraints, the people in N.C. Hills are predominantly engaged in shifting cultivation. In fact, 70% of the total cultivated land was under jhuming.³¹

The climate is favourable for the growth and cultivation of such fruits as oranges and pineapples. The vast forested tracts have numerous bamboo thickets, and these are exported to neighbouring paper mills outside this district. Ginger, oranges, and bamboo canes are also exported in small amounts from this district.³²

5.6. Problem of Adjustments in Periphery Areas 2.

North Cachar Hills District, Assam

The nature of the relief and climate, the social composition, and economic characteristics of the North Cachar Hills District (N.C. Hills) is different from the other areas that have been so far mentioned. As a result, the nature of the problems of adjustments of the Hmars living in this district is different. How different these

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

problems are, will be dealt with in the following lines under different headings.

5.6.1. Problems of Social Adjustments

While discussing the social structure of this district, it has been found that the Hmars are living among other tribes who are not akin to them in language or traditions. Therefore, there are some difficulties or problems arising out of this. Some of the more important social adjustment problems faced by the Hmars of this district have been identified as follows.

5.6.1.1. Status of Hmar ~~District~~ ^{Dialect}

The Hmar dialect has a different status here in the N.C. Hills district. The difference in the social structure of the area will alter the status of the dialect and this will not be the same as that of the status in other Hmar areas.

(i) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Church

Almost all the Hmars of this district are Christians. Where the Hmars are dominant, especially in the villages, Hmar is used in the Church services. This is specially true with the church services of the Evangelical Free Church of India which is predominantly administered by Hmars. However, such churches as the Prebyterians conduct their

services in Mizo. In this church, it is peculiar because different communities attend the churches. However, whether the person can speak Mizo properly or not, be he a Hmar, Mizo, Kuki etc., they all speak in Mizo in the church proceedings. However, in the Hmar dominant churches, a non-Hmar will use his mother tongue and the people will not mind, because they understand him.

(ii) Status of Hmar Dialect in Schools

In N.C. Hills district, schools are allowed to offer Hmar as a vernacular subject upto class seven as per the Government of Assam provisions. However, there are no schools teaching Hmar.

(iii) Status of Hmar Dialect in Markets/Outside

There, like the areas described above, the status of the Hmar dialect in the market or outside depends upon the location in the district. In the Hmar villages, Hmar is the most common dialect spoken. But in other areas, the dominant dialect is normally used. But among villages such as the Hrangkhawl or Biete villages, although their respective dialects are used, the Hmar will speak only in Hmar and the other person will understand what he says and will reply in his own dialect which is understood by the Hmar. This is due to the fact that these dialects are closely related. In fact, it has been pointed out while

discussing about the clans of the Hmar tribe, that Hrang-khawls and the Bietes are the name of Hmar clans and these clans still speak in their own dialects even today.

While speaking with such communities as the Dimasas and the Zemi Nagas etc., Hmars will have to use Hindi which is quite common especially in and around Haflong town.

(iv) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Homes

In the Hmar homes, Hmar is commonly used. There are stray cases of Mizo being used while conversing with immediate relatives of the family in the house. But such cases are not many. Those who do use Mizo have come from Mizoram mostly.

N.C. Hills is unique as compared to other Hmar dominated areas so far as dialects are concerned. What is meant here is that in this district, some Hmars still predominantly use the dialect of a Hmar clan, namely Ṭhiek. The Ṭhiek Sub-dialect is understood by many Hmars of this district.

5.6.1.2. Preservation of Culture

This is not so much a problem but rather the ability of preserving the Hmar culture here. It is said that the Hmar culture is best preserved here. The people still retain their distinct ways and language. One reason

for this could be the existing social structure. The relative absence of similar tribes in this area where the Hmars live made it possible for the Hmars to keep their culture from being diluted. In Mizoram, the Mizo culture and language was very close to that of the Hmar's resulting in the erosion of the minority's (Hmar) culture. Here in the N.C. Hills, the dominant Dimasas are very different from the Hmars when one compares their cultural traditions and languages. This fact may have helped in the Hmars keeping their culture relatively original.

Another reason could be that the Hmars here took a different route to reach this place, or have proceeded the furthest as compared to other streams of Hmar immigrants from Mizoram. While studying the peopling of India, it has been understood that the first or earliest arrivals are now in the interior-most areas of the country while the latest arrivals are found to be located in the fringe areas of outer borders of the country.

Similarly, it is possible that the Hmars living in N.C. Hills were the first to have left Mizoram and are now furthest away from that place. It could have also been that these Hmars did not stay long with the Lushais to have their language or customs eroded or influenced by the dominant Lusei tribe.

Some have speculated that the Hmars living in this region did not pass through Mizoram but went straight through possibly Manipur or Nagaland to reach this region. There are some sections of the Hmar population living in this district that speak a very different variant of the Hmar dialect. It is said that this dialect is not a variant form of other tribes' dialect, but rather a pure form of the Hmar dialect that was spoken by their ancestors.

5.6.2. Problems of Economic Adjustments

It was noted earlier that the N.C. Hills is an area composed mostly of hilly, and that permanent agriculture is unfavourable. It has also been seen that this district had the highest work participation rate in the whole of Assam. Under these circumstances, there are bound to be economic problem of adjustment faced by the Hmar population living there. Some of these are as follows:

5.6.2.1. Jhuming

The district has a poorly developed economy. In fact, as permanent agriculture is not favourable, about 70% of the total cultivated land was under jhuming. The section of the Hmars who live far away from Haflong and other administrative headquarters are predominantly engaged in shifting cultivation.

The population density is low and there is not so much the problem of pressure of the population on the land. Therefore, for the farmer, he is able to keep the fallowing period long enough.

Everyone knows that jhuming is detrimental to the forest wealth and soil of the land, and is uneconomical in the long run. However, the poor farmers have to make-do with this one and only system of agriculture they understand to produce enough crops to support the family. Until other opportunities are made available to him, he is not very likely to abandon his jhum.

5.6.2.2. Government Jobs

Unlike other areas of Hmar concentration, the N.C. Hills district has a sizeable number of Hmars employed in Government jobs. These jobs are not, in general, high ranking posts, but nevertheless, they are secured means of earning a livelihood. This adds considerably to the economic welfare of the Hmars there. Government jobs are coveted as the pays are good and regular with appropriate increments in course of time.

Hmars living especially in and around the Haflong town (the headquarters of the district) usually have one member of the family employed by the government. The jobs

range from peons to clerks to teachers. Some also are in the higher ranking posts.

The reason for many Hmars getting government jobs may be due to the dominant Dimasas not being as educated as the Hmars. Or it may be because the district is under an A.D.C. which makes it possible and more favourable for a large section of the indigenous tribes to be employed.

5.6.2.3. Small-time Businesses

Those who do not have jhums and do not get government are usually engaged in a number of different small-time business activities. There are several Hmar families who run shops selling clothes and essential commodities. Others run government fair price shops. There are also those who have more skill and possess more money than the average Hmar and are engaged in handling or executing government contract for the construction of buildings, bridges, roads etc. Women also have an effective participation.

5.6.3. Problems of Political Adjustments

The political problems of adjustment that the Hmar population is facing in the N.C. Hills district is the desire to be better heard. It is due primarily to the Hmars living in different areas coupled with the dominance of the other more populous groups. Some of the political adjust-

ments of the Hmars are identified as follows.

5.6.3.1. One Member in the A.D.C.

The Hmars have one Executive Member in the N.C. Hills Autonomous District Council. Since the inception of this Council, there has always been elected one Hmar candidate as Executive Member from the Jinam Constituency which is located on the eastern part of the district near the Jiri river.

Their representative of the Hmars can be the voice of those Hmars that live in this area. Although this constituency has traditionally belonged to the Hmars, they must not take it for granted and must be careful and should work together unitedly to retain this seat. Therefore, the elected Executive Member from this constituency must put the welfare of his people foremost and not fall victim to the myopic vision that some party policies possess. These people must also make themselves easily accessible to their subjects to hear their grievances and other needs.

5.7. Periphery Areas 3.

Cachar District, Assam

5.7.1. Physical Structure

Cachar district is essentially a plain area with few undulating hills on its eastern and southern sides.

This region is made up of the Barak plain, which is the headward piedmont section of the Barak-Surma-Kushiyara plain. The gradient of this district slopes down rather gently from east to west. The middle region is the lowest part and through here the Barak flows. There are numerous swamps, marshes, and ox-bow lakes in this section.³³

Cachar has a humid monsoonal climate. Rainfall is also heavy averaging about 3,234 mm annually. Rainfall decreases from west to east and also towards the south. Temperatures are high in summer and the mean temperature during these months is about 37 degrees Celsius. Winters are moderate with mean temperature averaging about 8.33 degrees Celsius.³⁴

5.7.2. Social Structure

Cachar district had a population of about 1,713,318 during the 1971 Census. The density of population then was about 246/Sq.Km.³⁵ This district also has numerous types of people belonging to different communities and tribes. However, unlike the other three districts of the study area, Cachar has a high non-tribal population. In fact, only about 0.89% of its population belonged to the scheduled tribes.

33. Tacher, op.cit., p. 17.

34. District Census Handbook, Cachar, 1971.

35. Ibid.

The population structure is predominantly composed of the Bengali speakers who accounted for about 78% of the district's total population. Meiteis were the next most numerous group with 72,290 (or 4.21%). Of the scheduled tribes, there were about 10,540 Dimasa speakers and 10,390 who returned Khasi as their mother tongue. Hmars were next with 5778 persons.³⁶

5.7.3. Economic Structure

Cachar district is more or less a flat plain with some hills in its eastern side. The Barak river, with its extensive alluvial plain is very suitable for rice cultivation. The level land and fertile soil allows for permanent rice cultivation in this district.

About 28.8% of the total population of this district are classified as workers. Of the total workers, about 46.73% were cultivators. Agricultural labourers accounted for 19.93% of the total working population.³⁷ This, incidentally, is the highest in Assam.

Besides the cultivation of rice, tea is an important produce coming from this low foothills. In Assam, Cachar had the highest percentage of workers engaged in the tea plantations (12.28%).

36. Ibid.

37. District Census Handbook, op.cit.

Other important produces from Cachar are eggs, bamboo, bamboo mats, cane furniture, cotton, jute, and handloom cloth.

Cachar has good rail, air and road communication with other parts of the region. Besides this, there are also navigable rivers like the Barak, Katakhal, and Kushiara.

5.8. Problem of Adjustments in Periphery Areas 3.

Cachar District, Assam.

The Cachar district of Assam is an area of attraction having good communication facilities, economic activities and a resultant large population. The social structure indicates the dominance of the Bengalis over all the other communities inhabiting this region. Therefore, there are some problems of adjustments that the Hmar population is facing while living in this region. Some of these problems are described under the following headings.

5.8.1. Social Problems of Adjustment

The social structure of Cachar District is very different from the core and two periphery areas of Hmar concentration that have already been mentioned. Unlike these areas, Cachar is an area of attraction. Population is very high and tribals make up only a measely, 89% of the total population. The social structure of this district

indicates clearly that there is the single one-sided dominance of the Bengalis. Living under such condition, some adjustment problems arise. Some of the social problems of adjustment of the Hmars of this district have been identified as follows.

The sheer dominance by the Bengalis make the Hmars feel that they are being 'swamped' by this community. While there were more than 78% Bengali speakers, only 0.33% were Hmars. Hmars here are very conscious of their status as a minority in the district. They have to work extra hard to keep their culture and society from being influenced too much by the plains people. The Hmars there may not be aware of it but slowly their everyday life will and is altered as they pick up some minor characteristics of the Bengalis.

5.8.1.1. Status of Hmar Dialect

(i) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Church

In the Hmar church services, the Hmar dialect is the main language spoken and used if not the sole one. Thus, Hmar have no problem of using their dialect for church proceedings.

(ii) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Schools

It has been mentioned that the Government of Assam

provides for the teaching of the mother tongues of the state. As Hmar is included, it is, therefore, included in the optional vernacular subjects upto class seven. This is taught in few villages in schools run by churches like the Evangelical Free Church of India and Independent Church of India. The fact that this mother tongue is taught is important, bearing in mind the minority status the Hmars have in this district. Living amongst scores of people belonging to different communities speaking different languages, Hmars may lose their dialect even. But as it is taught in some schools, those who do take up the subject will learn to appreciate it and this will help towards the development of the mother tongue and keep it from being lost or deteriorated.

(iii) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Market/Outside

The Bengalis are the major group in the Cachar district. And as their population is much higher than that of any other community living in this district, when one goes to the market or other public places, Bengali is used to communicate. Thus, the Hmars who live especially in the Lakhipur area will have to know at least a little bit of Bengali to get by. Therefore, Hmar dialect gets a low status here.

By and large, the language spoken by the most dominant community is used in markets and other similar places,

if that major community's population is considerably higher than the others. So while Bengali is used where they are in a dominant position, Hmar is used in the Hmar villages situated in the hills. There are many cases of Bengalis speaking in Hmar. This is because they have been in prolonged social contact with the Hmars and even live amongst them. In fact, some even intermarry with the Hmars.

(iv) Status of Hmar Dialect in the Homes

It would appear that the Hmars would even use Bengali in their homes as the latter are so much in number and domineering in the district. But that is not the case. It may be due to the two being very unlike the other in many ways. Or it may be due to the Bengali language not being able to influence the speech pattern in the intimacy of the family in the homes.

Therefore, in the Hmar homes, the family members use Hmar while speaking to each other. This shows to a small extent, the ability of the Hmars to deter the erosion of their tradition and culture. Moreover, Hmars live close by each other in the plains even and not only in the hills. Thus, in their neighbourhood, there are still some scope to speak in Hmar with others even outside their homes. But this liberty diminishes once one leaves his immediate neighbourhood and enters into the market areas.

5.8.1.3. Categorization as Plains Tribe

In Assam, the tribes are classified as either being plains tribes or as hill tribes. While in all other areas of the North-East, the Hmars are known as tribes from the hills. Even in N.C. Hills, Hmars are notified as Hill tribes. But in the Cachar district, Hmars are categorised as belonging to the 'plains tribes'.³⁸

5.8.2. Problems of Economic Adjustments

Although the economic structure of the Cachar district would indicate that economic development is rather better as compared to the other areas of our study, yet the Hmars here have a number of economic problems. Some of the more important ones are identified under the following heads.

5.8.2.1. Abject Poverty

This is the main characteristic of the condition of the Hmars in general. There are some who are economically better off, by there are much more who are under abject

38. This fact will not be so much a problem for the Hmar in the district per se. But when he has to seek employment in other areas of the state of Assam, then the difficulties and problems come to the fore. Being classified as a 'plains tribe', and the tribe certificate in his possession will bear testimony to this, the Hmar from Cachar has to compete with the numerically more plain tribals as compared to the relatively less hill tribals. This fact will hinder and lessen the chance of getting employment when the job is given or allotted in a competitive nature.

poverty. The pressure of the population on the land is heavy, and the Hmars find it difficult to acquire good arable land to practice permanent agriculture. As a result, many live in the hilly areas and work on their jhums. The people are so poor that they have no other means to find and earn a living to support their family, other than the practice of shifting cultivation. The poverty coupled with the high temperatures and high humidity makes life even harder as one becomes lethargic and unenthusiastic to look for other employment opportunities.

5.8.2.2. Pineapple Cultivation

A sizeable number of the Hmar population in Cachar are engaged in the cultivation of pineapples. Pineapples grow very well and Hmars produce good quality pineapples. Most make a living in the sale of this crop.

However, there are not enough entrepreneurs who can take up such projects as fruit crushing plants etc. In order that the Hmar society can benefit best in the production of pineapple, there has to emerge from this community some able persons with financial and managerial skills to look after the development and operation of such projects.

There are some crushing plants in existence and

are run by cooperative groups. But these have not contributed very much to the welfare of the Hmar pineapple growers.

5.8.2.3. Role of Middlemen

The local middlemen play a large role for the slow economic development of the general Hmar population who grow and are engaged in pineapples. While the climate is suitable for the excellent growth of this crop, the growers are at the mercy of the unscrupulous middlemen who take advantage of the illiterate and ignorant Hmar farmer. The middlemen do not give them correct prices commensurate so their production. The price with which the middlemen buy the pineapples are at very low rates and considerably disadvantageous for the pineapple growers.³⁹

5.8.3. Problems of Political Adjustments

The major factor for the political adjustment problems of the Hmars to arise is the social structure of the district. Being in great minority here, the Hmars are faced with some political problems.

39. What the Hmars need is some form of organization to market their produce in the market at good returns. If this is possible, the farmers will be able to get more from their fields. Also, if the Hmars have a pineapple crushing plant for the whole community, not only will they benefit from the direct sale of the products, but they will benefit from the sale of the raw material and can even earn money in such activities as peeling the pineapples and work in the plant.

5.8.3.1. Mizo Union and Hmars of Cachar

While dealing on the problems of Hmars in the core area, it was discussed the relation of the Hmars with the Mizo Union of Mizoram. The Hmars of the Lakhipur area, especially, wanted that they be united administratively, with their fellow people of Manipur and the then Lushai Hills. They also supported the Movement of the Mizo Union for the creation of a single unit which would include all Mizo inhabited areas. However, as is the case with the Hmars of Manipur, the Hmars of this area were excluded and forgotten. Therefore, they have to now live within the dominance of the plains people.

5.8.3.2. Village or Block Administration

In the Lakhipur area, the Hmars have representation even though it is small. In one Gaon Panchayat, a Hmar has been elected. Here, this person may be able to help his people to a small degree in the village administration. However, even this small position of having a fellow tribesman in the gaon panchayat is not permanent and there is the likely chance that this may be lost to other communities in the future.

5.9. Conclusions

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that the various problems of adjustment of the Hmars are

different in different areas due generally to the distribution of the tribe in these areas. Some of the main conclusions may be pointed out as follows.

(1) The main problems of social adjustments of the Hmars is primarily due to the social structure of the districts. Where the Hmars are in large numbers, the status of their dialect is high, as is the case in the South district of Manipur. But, again, this status was low in the areas dominated by non-Hmars, as in the Cachar and Aizawl districts. Only in the Aizawl district of Mizoram do the Hmars face an identity problem; everywhere else, Hmars have been able to assert their own identity as Hmars.

(2) So far as the economic position of the Hmars is concerned, North Cachar Hills district seems to be where the Hmars are better off on an average to the total Hmars there. Age-old jhuming is practised in all the areas. Transport and communication are major problems particularly in the South District of Manipur and in the Aizawl district of Mizoram. Indebtedness is a major problem of Hmars living in the core area. Poverty is acute in Cachar and Aizawl districts. Aizawl district seems to be the most neglected area of Hmar distribution.

(3) Moving on to the problems of political adjustments, Hmars felt they needed adequate representation in the districts of Aizawl and in Cachar. In the South District and in the N.C. Hills, the Hmars need more representation than the existing one. In the South District, the Hmar population has been divided into two constituencies making a minority in both. In N.C. Hills district, areas inhabited by Hmars can be further divided into two more constituencies that can become Hmar constituencies. In the Aizawl district, the Hmars are demanding an Autonomous District Council.

Besides the above points and what has already been discussed in the problems of adjustments, there is another point that can be mentioned. There is one major factor which has divided the Hmars. This is the division of the Hmars into churches. There are numerous church organizations in the Hmar areas that one finds that they are divided very much on church feelings and sentiments. This greatly affects the development of the tribe in general as they are thus a divided lot. If the Hmars can become united as one consolidated front, they would be more developed.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary and Conclusions

In this study, an attempt has been made to understand and analyse the processes of migration and distribution of the Hmar tribe in North-East India. The nature, origin, and the processes of migration of the tribe in the historical past has been discussed. The present patterns of distribution of the Hmars have been analysed, and their core and periphery identified. As a result of which, some of the problems of adjustment that the Hmars are facing in different regions has also been discussed.

The major conclusions derived from this present study are as follows:

(1) Physiographically, the three main classifications of landforms, viz., plateaus, fold mountains, and alluvial plains, are found in the North-East Region. The plateaus are the Meghalaya-Karbi plateaus which are the separated parts of the Deccan plateau. The mountains comprise of the Arunachal Himalayas that stretch from the Bhutan-Arunachal border in the west to the Siang-Dihing river in the east. The hills comprise of the Eastern Hills which are made up by the Dibang-Lohit-Patkai-Naga-Manipur-Mizo ranges.

The alluvial plains are made up of the Brahmaputra plain, Barak plain, Manipur plain, and the Tripura piedmont plain.

(2) The Brahmaputra basin covers the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, major parts of Assam, Nagaland, and Meghalaya. The Barak occupies the southern parts of Meghalaya, North Cachar Hills, northern and western margins of Manipur, northern half of Mizoram and north-eastern parts of Tripura; and Cachar. The Kaladan river basin drains the southern half of Mizoram. The northern parts of Manipur and south-eastern Nagaland have rivers that fall under the Tizu basin. The Karnaphuli basin, drains the western parts of Mizoram and southern parts of Tripura.

(3) The climate of North-East India is very characteristic and is incomparable to any other regions of India. Local influences and relief have contributed to make the climate of this region into the sub-tropical or extra-tropical type. The climate has been divided into four seasons: Winter (Dec.-Feb.), Pre-Monsoon (March-May), Monsoon (June-Sept.), and Retreating Monsoon (Oct.-Nov.).

(4) The soils of the Region are alluvium and clays in the plains, foothills and river valleys. Red soils, hill soils and lateritic soils are more common in the hills and plateaus. The soils in the hills and mountainous areas

are usually thin and are thus unproductive in the agricultural sense. The steep slopes contribute greatly to the soil run-off with the accompaniment of heavy rains. Plateau areas have more soil cover than the hills and mountains.

(5) Different views on the meaning of the word HMAR have been found:

(i) The first view is based on the style of the men's hair. Those who wore their hair in a chignon, knotted at the back of the head, were called 'Hmarh'. (ii) The second view is that, as the word for north in Lushai and Hmar is 'hmar', and since the Hmars' villages were situated to the north of the Luseis', they were called 'Hmar', or northerner. (iii) The third view is that when the Hmars settled in Burma, they maintained large families and so the Burmese called them 'Hmar' which means 'having large families'.

(6) Many scholars believe that Sinlung is the place of origin of the Hmars. However, different views exist on Sinlung being either the name of an emperor, a place, or a cave. If it is a place, its exact location is also controversial, although it is accepted that it is somewhere in central or south-west China. Socio-political disturbances appear to be the most probable cause to effect the Hmars to leave Sinlung.

(7) The sequential order of the places they visited or settled in on their migration from Sinlung is Kachin (in Upper Burma), Shan territory, Kabaw valley, Chin Hills, and present Mizoram. Shan was their longest stay in one place but severe famine forced them to leave and search for food.

(8) The Hmar tribe is divided into many clans and sub-clans and families. Some clans once had their own dialects. an optimistic view is that there are altogether 36 clans and 255 sub-clans and families in the Hmar tribe. There are also 12 sub-clans and families that are shared by (or are common to) two or more clans.

(9) Hmars were the first to settle in Mizoram, as evidenced by village names in eastern Mizoram which still bear names of Hmar clans after which they were so named. However, want of jhuming land and territorial disputes caused the Hmars to migrate to neighbouring areas like Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, and North Cachar. Hmars who left Mizoram were perhaps the victims of hostilities and aggressions committed against them by the Lusei chiefs. Some of those who stayed back were ultimately assimilated or absorbed, losing their dialect and their distinctiveness.

(10) According to the 1981 census, Hmars were found

only in four states, viz. Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Assam. In that year (1971 for Assam), the total Hmar population, according to census, was 48,953. Even in these states, the Hmars have a tendency to cluster and concentrate in a few districts. In Manipur, they are found mostly in South and Central districts. In Meghalaya, they are mainly found in the Jaintia Hills. In Mizoram, the Hmars are found mainly in the Aizawl district. Cachar and N.C. Hills are the main districts where the Hmars are concentrated in Assam. South District Manipur, N.C. Hills and Cachar districts of Assam, and the Aizawl district of Mizoram together constitute 91.36% of the total Hmar population.

(11) For this study, South District Manipur has been identified as the core of the Hmar concentration as 52.5% of the total Hmar population of the North-East is found in this district, although Hmars constitute less than 20% of the total population of the district.

(12) N.C. Hills and Cachar Districts of Assam and the Aizawl district of Mizoram are identified as the peripheral areas of the Hmar distribution as these together constitute 39.03% of the Hmar population in the North-East. The percentage of the Hmar population in the N.C. Hills district was 6.16%, in Cachar district 0.33%, and 2.53% in Aizawl district.

(13) Hmar villages tend to be larger (population-wise) than that of other tribal groups of the same region indicating their (Hmars) tendency to concentrate in large groups especially where they are in majority, as in the Tipaimukh sub-division of the core area.

(14) In the peripheral areas, Hmar-dominated or wholly Hmar villages are identified: N.C. Hills district had 38 villages, Cachar district 12, and Aizawl district had 23 villages that were either wholly Hmars or were dominated by the Hmars.

(15) Problems of social adjustments faced by the Hmars is mainly due to the nature of the social composition of the districts. The status of the Hmar dialect is quite high in the Core area (South District). But the status of the dialect was low in the districts of Aizawl and Cachar, as these areas were dominated by non-Hmars. Only in the Aizawl district of Mizoram do the Hmars face an identity crisis. Everywhere else, Hmars are able to assert their own identity.

(16) Taking the general economic position of the Hmar population in each district the North Cachar Hills district seems to be better as compared to other areas. The problems of transport and communication appears to be acute in the

South District of Manipur and in the Aizawl district of Mizoram. Indebtedness is a major problem of Hmars living in the Core area. Poverty is a big problem among the Hmars living in Cachar and Aizawl districts. Aizawl district seems to be the most neglected area of Hmar distribution.

(17) Hmars felt they needed adequate representation in the districts of Aizawl and Cachar. In the South District, and in the N.C. Hills district, the Hmars need more representation than that already exist now. In the Aizawl district, the Hmars People's Convention is struggling for an Autonomous District Council for Hmars in the line with those of the Pawis, Lakhers, and the Chakmas.

(18) The Hmars are divided on the basis of churches. Numerous church organizations exist in the Hmar areas. This has become a handicap in projecting a consolidated front. This has indirectly influenced the pace of development of the Hmar people in general.

One may conclude from this study that the physical setting of the region had a large impact upon the migration and settlement pattern of the Hmars in the North-East region of India. It is not difficult to visualize that the physical environment of the region allowed only a particular type of economic development as the technology used by the

Hmars was quite primitive in nature. The Hmars perhaps found that these areas were suitable for their way of life. Prior to their entry into the North-East, they must have been practising primitive jhum cultivation. And when they entered the North-east, they opted for the hilly and forested tracts of the Region which offered them scope to practise jhuming which was the only way they knew to cultivate the land. Had they possessed the technology of settled agriculture, they may have even advanced as far as to the Brahmaputra valley. Another reason of Hmar's settlement to these hilly regions as these areas were less settled as compared to the valley regions. After occupying these negative region it was not possible for the Hmars to modify the physical environment according to their needs and requirements, they had to adjust to their physical environment.

It is found that the migration and settlement pattern of the Hmars was influenced by the physical conditions of the region. This migration and settlement pattern, in turn, had significant impact on the present distribution pattern of the Hmars. When entering into the North-East region, the Hmars migrated first into Mizoram where they were the first to settle there. But as they needed more jhuming lands and as they were having territorial disputed

with other population groups living in the same area, the Hmars migrated to neighbouring areas, namely Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, and the North Cachar Hills, where they are found now. This historical process is reflected in the present distribution pattern of the Hmars.

This present distribution pattern of the Hmars is responsible for the problems of adjustments that they are facing in the areas that they inhabit. It is observed that the problems of adjustments vary from district to district. Problems of social adjustments due to the social composition of the district. Where the Hmars were in majority, such factors as the status; of their dialect was high, and they are able to retain their identity. But in the peripheral areas where they were in minority, the status of their dialect and the scope of asserting their own identity as a tribe were low. The problem of adjustments of the Hmars has also given rise to political unrests as in the demand for a Hmar Autonomous District in northern Mizoram by the Hmar People's Convention.

Lastly, it must be mentioned that this study has its obvious shortcomings and since it has been necessary to resort to generalizations sometimes, this fact will have its own limitations. To clearly understand the actual core and peripheries of the Hmars, such data as pertaining

to the tribe's distribution at the smaller units like the C.D. Blocks, or even villages, would have been invaluable. However, such data and information is not available which has necessitated the use of the district level data only.

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