

**POPULATION – DYNAMICS AND DISTRIBUTION AND ITS IMPACT
ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

A CASE STUDY OF ASSAM

By

JATIN CHANDRA DARABDHARA

A DISSERTATION

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY**

SHILLONG-793 014

MEGHALAYA



Phone :
Grams : NEHU

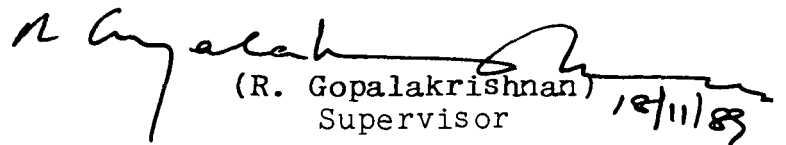
North - Eastern Hill University

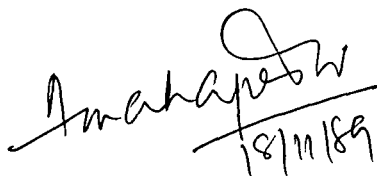
Mayurbhanj Complex
Nongthymmai, Shillong - 793014 (Meghalaya)

Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan
Reader

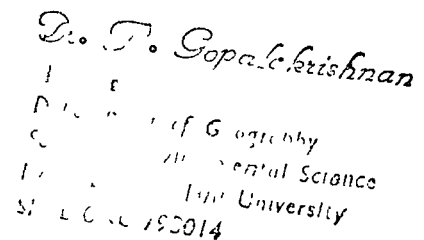
This is to certify that Sri Jatin Chandra Darabdhara has carried research work for his dissertation entitled Population Dynamics and Distribution and Its Impact on Political Participation: A Case Study of Assam, under my guidance. He fulfilled all the requirements laid down in the Regulation of M. Phil Programme. The dissertation is the result of his own investigation and neither the dissertation as whole nor any part of it was submitted to any other University/Educational Institute for any research degree or diploma.

SHILLONG
THE 18th NOVEMBER 1989.


(R. Gopalakrishnan)
Supervisor 18/11/89


18/11/89

HEAD
Department of Geography
North-Eastern Hill University
Shillong- 793014.


Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan
Department of Geography
Faculty of Social Science
North-Eastern Hill University
Shillong- 793014

See

NEHU Library 102418
Acc. No. ~~102418~~
Acc. b. ~~241197~~
Date ~~12/21/92~~
Classified by ~~---~~
Su ~~---~~
Contributed by ~~---~~

DS
910.1301320954162
DAR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan, Head, Department of Geography, North-Eastern Hill University, for his guidance and sanctioned inspiration in completing this work.

I am grateful to Mr. S. Rajkhowa, Principal, DCB Grils' College, Jorhat, who allowed me to do my M.Phil Course in NEHU. I am also grateful to my colleagues of DCB Girls' College, Jorhat, because of their inspiration and suggestion.

In this research work I received enormous encouragement from Dr. S. Sarma, Department of Geography, NEHU, and D.K. Das to whom I would like to acknowledge my gratitude.

Many of my friends rendered valuable service in the preparation of this dissertation. I am grateful to them. In this regard, I shall fail in my duties if I do not mention the name of Sri Prasanna Bora and Miss Anjali Bora who gave me immense service.

Lastly, I offer my sincere thanks to Mr. Joseph F. Khongbuh, who with great patience has excellently typed out the final draft of this dissertation.


(JATIN CHANDRA DARABDHARA)

SHILLONG

THE 17th NOVEMBER 1989.

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Acknowledgements ...	(i)
List of Tables ...	(ii)
CHAPTER - I : INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ASSAM ...	1 - 28
CHAPTER - II : GEOGRAPHY OF ASSAM AND ITS IMPACT ON TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENTS ...	29 - 45
CHAPTER - III : POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS, CONTENT AND COMPOSITION ...	46 - 99
CHAPTER - IV : ECONOMY OF THE STATE ...	100 - 116
CHAPTER - V : POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT (A) ...	117 - 135
CHAPTER - VI : POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT (B) ...	136 - 186
CHAPTER - VII : CONCLUSION AND GENERALIZATIONS ...	187 - 200
BIBLIOGRAPHY ...	201 - 205
APPENDIX ...	206 - 209

LIST OF TABLES

			Page No.
II.1	Centrewise Climatic Data	...	39
III.1	Racial Origin of the People of Assam	...	49
III.2	Growth of Population	...	57
III.3	Density, Decennial Growth and Sex Ratio in N. E. Region	...	58
III.4	Birth and Death Rate of the States and All India	...	60
III.5	Number of Immigrants in Assam	...	68
III.6	Density of Population of Assam	...	71
III.7	Population of the Districts of Assam	...	73
III.8	Districtwise Sex Ratio of Assam	...	74
III.9	Age Structure of Population in Assam	...	75
III.10	Age-Sex Distribution of Assam	...	77
III.11	Percentage of Literates to the Total Population in Assam and All India	...	78
III.12	Districtwise Percentage of Literacy in Assam	...	80
III.13	Percentage of Rural and Urban Population of Assam and All India.	...	81
III.14	Total Number of Villages in Assam	...	82
III.15	Districtwise Urban Intensity Index of Assam	...	85
III.16	Population by Religion in Assam	...	87
III.17	Districtwise Religion in Assam	...	88
III.18	Distribution of Major Languages in Assam	...	90

		Page No.
III.19	Castewise Scheduled Caste Population in Assam	94
III.20	Location Quotient Map for SC, ST Population	96
III.21	Castewise Scheduled Tribe Population in Assam	97
III.22	Working Population of Assam	99
IV.1	State Income on Industrialised Base at Current Prices	101
IV.2	Distribution of Forest Area	103
IV.3	Yield Rate of Some Selected Crops of India and Assam	105
IV.4	Districtwise Yield Rate of Crops	107
IV.5	Production of Some Important Industries	109
VI.1	Development Situation of Assam	153
VI.2	Development Situation of Assam	155
VI.3	Actual Expenditure by Sector During Five Year Plans in Assam	157
VI.4	Central Assistance	158
VI.5	Voter Turn Out	163
VI.6	Seats Won by Different Parties and Gains and Losses Since 1978	167
VI.7	Degree of Success of Different Parties Since 1978	168
VI.8	Occupational Pattern	177

CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION
AND
HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ASSAM

INTRODUCTION

Population dynamics (or the pattern of growth and change in the composition of population) had continuously exerted pressure on the socio-economic and political development in Assam. As a result, the socio-political responses of the inhabitants as well as the disparities in the levels of economic development and participation have become important elements in the state's landscape. The study and analysis of the population dynamics, therefore, provides the operational background to the process that are weak in the region.

The State of Assam is composed of multicaste, multi-linguistic and multiregion elements in its population (that like other areas in the regions and the country, is composed of broadly tribal and non-tribal elements). Many of the population groups and subgroups had entered the state at various times in history. So that with the passage of time they were able to acquire definite territorial characteristics. In this set up, the politico-administrative evolution and consequences had an important role.

Be that as it may, the State of Assam has one of the highest growth rate of population (both natural and artificial) in the country. This growth is both natural and artificial. The growth of population through migration, particularly after the turn of the century, had assumed socio-

economic dimensions as well. Politico-administrative consolidation and opening up of the region by the British encouraged the immigration. Changes in the political scenario of the subcontinent particularly after 1947, had important consequences for the region in general and the state in particular - i.e. Inter-inflow of migrants into the State.

Over the time, the immigration had substantial participation in the economic, social and political spheres of activity in the State. This made its impact an already divided (though latent in the initial stage) society. It also introduced elements that compelled the inhabitants to compete and confront each other at every stage of development.

Though the socio-economic cleavages existed within the geographical environments of the state, the political activity of the nativists was directed against the immigrants. These were strengthened by the fears of cultural imperialism and consequent loss of identity and means of substance. Later, the inherent differences and cleavages between the various groups and subgroups constituting the population of the State, surfaced with persistent regularity. Among others, this factor to a large extent encouraged responses that were responsible for the politico-administrative reorganisation of the post 1947 Assam. And today, have become the dominant centrifugal tendency in the State. However, it can be safely assumed

that the complex interaction of social, economic and political process have necessitated the need to have a proper perspective and background. Among the important parameters that revealed the complex interactions was the electoral behaviour and political participation of various population groups and subgroups in the State. Hence the present study.

I.A.1. Review of Relevant Literature and Allied Works

Population geography has recently emerged as a separate discipline of study and research. It is concerned mainly with the spatial analysis of population. Accordingly, "the essence of population geography lay in the understanding of regional differences in the earth's covering the people".¹ There has been considerable work done in this field. However, some of the more important one have been given below.

In the book, Population Problem, the Thompson and Lewis (1953) study the population characteristics mainly from three viewpoints — size, composition, and distribution. In the part of composition, the authors dealt with age, sex ratio, race, colour, mother tongue, natural increase, migration, economic and educational composition, rural and urban etc.

1. Trewartha Green, T. A Case for Population Geography: A Reader, New York, 1970, p. 17.

Population Geography by John I. Clarke (1965) is the first comprehensive book of this kind, published in English. In this book, the author gives an idea of meaning and scope of population geography. According to him, "Population Geography is concerned with demonstrating how spatial variations in the distribution, migration and growth of population are related to spatial variation in the nature of places. Population Geography endeavours to unravel the complex interrelationship between physical and human environments on the one hand, and population on the other."²

In India, the study of Population Geography and Electoral Geography have been started quite late. 'Distribution of population in Coimbatore District' by Krishnaswami was the earliest work in India (1930).³ Since then there have been many articles and books dealing with various topics regarding population problems have been published in India.

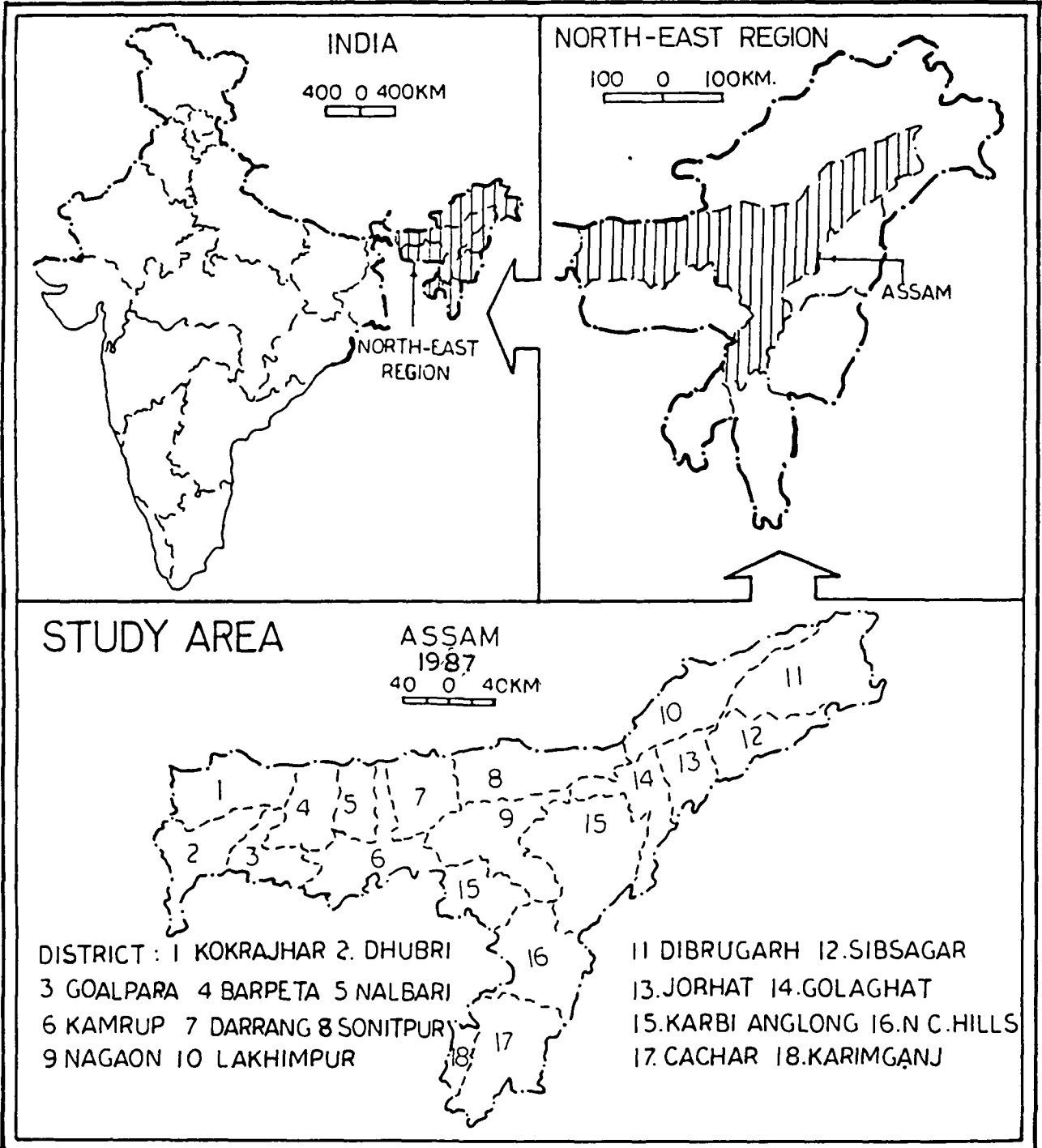
'Fundamental of Population Geography' by B.N. Ghosh (1985) is a recent work where the author has dealt with the aspects such as distribution, migration and other relative phenomena of population studies. In this book, the author gives a generalised idea of population studies.

-
1. Clarke John, I. Population Geography, Pergamon Press Ltd., Oxford, 1965, p.2.
 2. Barua, G.L. Population Geography of Assam, Mital Publishing House, New Delhi.

'Population Geography of India' (1978) by A. Bhattacharya is another important work, where the author clearly shows the relationship between population quantum and social bearing of the people. However, the work on Indian population has been carried out by the Census of India, whose endeavours and publications have provided the base for analysis and research.

The study of population geography remains in infancy in Assam. 'Tribal Population of Kamrup District' by Miss D. Das; 'Immigrant Population in Assam: An Analytico-Synthetic Study' by M.C. Bhuyan; and 'Population Geography of Assam' by G.L. Baruah are the three doctoral theses embodying research findings on the population of Assam. Besides these, there are other works such as 'Tribal Population of N.E. India: A Diagnostic Survey in Spatial Pattern in N.E.India'.⁴ 'Clustering and Concentration of Tribal Population in Assam'⁵ 'Geographical Aspects of Crisis in Brahmaputra Valley (Assam)',⁶ 'Voting Pattern in Assam: A Study in Political

-
4. Taher, M. "The North Eastern Geography", Journal of the North East India Geography Society, Vol. IX No. 1 & 2, Gauhati.
 5. Sarma, B. "Clustering and Concentration of Tribal Population in Assam", Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, Department of Geography, CRB, JNU, 1978.
 6. Gopalakrishnan, R. "Geographical Aspects of a Crisis in Brahmaputra Valley (Assam)", Indian Journal of Political Science, Volume XLVII, No. 3, 1986.



Geography',⁷ 'Assam Election 1946',⁸ 'The 1978 Assembly Elections in Assam: An Analysis of Poll Verdicts',⁹ 'The State Assembly Election of Assam 1983',¹⁰ 'Public Consciousness and Participation in Election: A Case Study of Shillong',¹¹ have been published, and provide suitable background for the present study.

I.A.2. Study Area

The present study region covers the State of Assam situated in the North Eastern part of India. It extends from 24°8' N to 27°56' N latitude and 89°42' E to 92°0' E longitude. It is surrounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh in the North; Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland in the East and South-East; Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya on the South and West Bengal on the West. The State of Assam have an international boundaries with two foreign countries - Bhutan and Bangladesh. This State along other States of North-

-
7. Das, M.M. "Voting Pattern in Assam: A Study in Political Geography", The North Eastern Geographer, Vol. XI, No. 1 & 2, Guwahati.
 8. Kar, M. "Assam Election 1946", Electoral Politics in North Eastern India, Edited by P.S. Dutta.
 9. Dutta, N.L. "The 1978 Assembly Elections in Assam: An Analysis of Poll Verdicts", Electoral Politics in North Eastern India, Edited by P.S. Dutta.
 10. Mathur Krishna Mohan, "The State Assembly Election of Assam 1983", Electoral Politics in North Eastern India, Edited by P.S. Dutta.
 11. Das, Jyoti Varkar, "Public Consciousness and Participation in Election: A Case Study of Shillong", Electoral Politics in North Eastern India, Edited by P.S. Dutta.

Eastern region linked with the rest of India by a narrow strip of submontane region of Northern parts of West Bengal. it has an area of 78,523 km² and a population of 198.96 lakhs in 1981 (projected_ with a density of 254 persons per sq.km. The State has been divided into eighteen administrative districts, sixteen in the two plains - Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley and two in the hills.

I.A.3. Objective of the Study

Much of the State is in the midst of major development crisis. This is reflected in investment or actual decline or stagnation in industrial and agricultural productivity. Besides, the problem has been computed by large number of immigrants as well as by tribal and non-tribal classification of population. The poor performance of the state agriculture and industry has been explained solely in terms of regional and national themes which imply backwardness or stasis in economic relations. Using the Assam as a case study, the present analysis argues that the crisis in the state has different origin and throughout the socio-economic changes along with political aspects were diverse and rapid.

The present effort attempts to demonstrate that -

- 1) Poor performance in economic character may be a result of different political action and responses.
- 2) The State directed economy may be advancing simultaneously along different fronts.

- 3) Economic development of the State should be understood in terms of multiple political action associated with specific character of the State.

I.A.4. Data Base

To examine the above developed aims and objectives a set of data is required. The data has been secondary in nature. Various sources from which data have been collected shown as below:

1. Census of India (Decennial Reports).
2. Directorate of Census, Assam.
3. Statistical Handbook, Assam Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.
4. Economic Survey of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.
5. Election Reports, Chief Electoral Office, Government of Assam and District Election Offices.

Since the Census of 1981 was not completed in Assam, Census data of 1971 with a projected population figure for 1981 have been used in this study. Besides these, relevant literature pertaining to the subject has been collected from the books, journals, newspapers etc. available in various libraries (see bibliography).

I.A.5. Methodology

To achieve the above objective various data relating to population growth, language composition and other economic base data collected and processed by various methodological frame, important cartographic and statistical methods. To study the political participation of the state used areal structural approach and traditional or the cartographic approach. The areal-structural approach concentrates upon the identification of electoral and political regions mainly by the use of Maps. Maps are prepared for different electoral variables, such as party victories, voter turn out, percentage votes polled by different parties etc. and accordingly electoral regions are delineated.

The traditional approach in this study of elections and participation, were primarily concerned with the relationships between the total complex of physical and social environment of a region on the one hand, and voting behaviour on the other. The selection of these parties whether national, regional or ruling should be influenced by the aspects of the social and economic milieu most likely to influence the voting decision and was then able to trace these aspects of physical environment.

This way most of the parameters have been analysed and presented with the help of suitable diagrams and other cartographic aids.

I.A.6. Topical Organisation

Briefly, this work is divided into seven chapters. First chapter is introductory and includes^d the objective, data base and methodology of the study, a brief historical evolution of the state is given in its second section. The second chapter is intended to provide a geographical background and its impact on territorial settlement of the State. In the third and fourth chapter we have discussed population, composition and its distribution and economy of the State respectively. In the Fifth and Sixth chapters we have discussed Politics and Development A, and Politics and Development B, respectively. The Seventh Chapter embodies the summary and generalisations of our study.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ASSAM

Geographically, the state of Assam is one of the frontier states. "Assam is a very ancient land with a distinct culture and civilization of its own, which if properly studied and understood will be an object of amazement and admiration."¹² The geo-political location of the state also played a crucial role in the development of much of the state's political and socio-economic condition. Here the term geo-political location is constructed to mean, not only the actual location of the state in the narrow geographical sense, but its cultural, ethnic, political and economic relationship of the state and neighbour. The population of the state has long been characterised by diversity. Successive waves of migration created plural features. The present chapter, therefore, attempts to trace out the evolution of the state and its impact if any on the present form of population of Assam.

"The modern name Assam is of comparatively recent origin. Opinions differ regarding how the origin of this name 'Assam'. A group of Shan invaders entered the Brahmaputra Valley in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The local people referred to them as the 'Asama' which means 'unequalled' or 'peerless'. In course of time they came to be known as the Ahoms, the modern name of these Shan people, and the

12. Bhuyan, S.K. Studies in the History of Assam, Guwahati, Assam, p. 2.

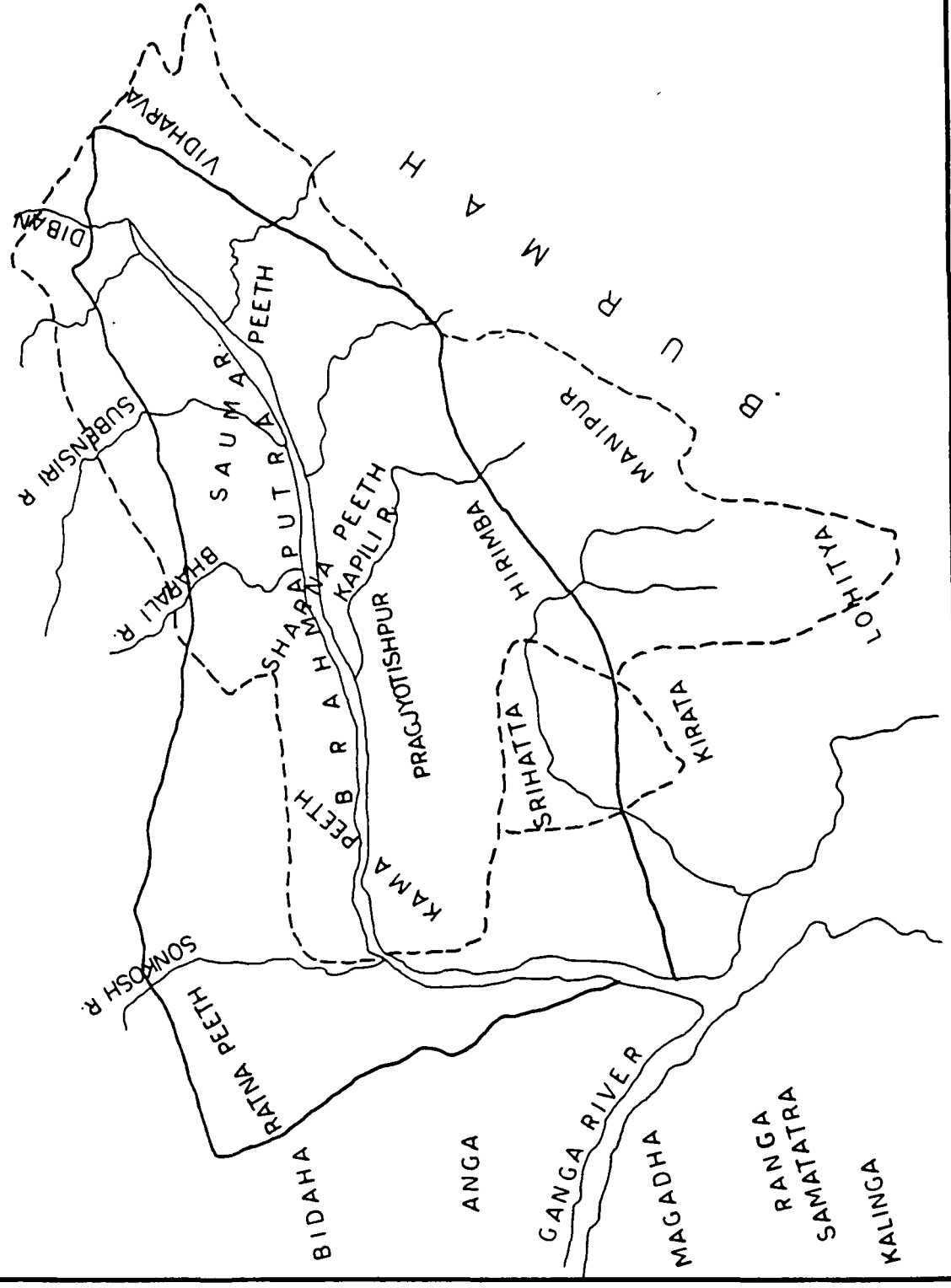
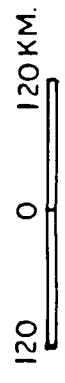
country was called Assam after the name of the people. Another opinion is that in 'Tai' language 'Cham' means to be 'defeated'. With the addition of an Assamese prefix 'a', it became Acham, which means 'undefeated', 'conquerors'. Asama, peerless, may be sanskritization of the earlier form Acham. Again, following another authority the term Asama may be derived from 'Ha-Cham', which is Boro language means the low or level country. Thus, in this case the name of the people is after the country where they lived. The modern name Assam is an Anglicised form of the Assamese name Asom."¹³

I.B.1. Early History

In ancient times Assam constituted a part of the country known as 'Pragjyotisha' (and/or Kamrupa). Mention of Pragjyotishpur is found in the great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayan and also in some of the Puranas indicating antiquity of the country. In the Mahabharata it is mentioned that the boundary of Pragjyotish extended upto the Bay of Bengal in the South and Karatowa River in the West. Some parts of Nepal and Bhutan were also included within the territory of ancient Pragjyotisha King Narakasura and his son Bhagadutta were famous rulers in the Mahabharata period circa 1000 B.C. the Varman Dynasty was recorded in 355 A.D. The

13. Das, B.M. The Peoples of Assam, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 3.

ANCIENT KINGDOM OF KAMRUPA

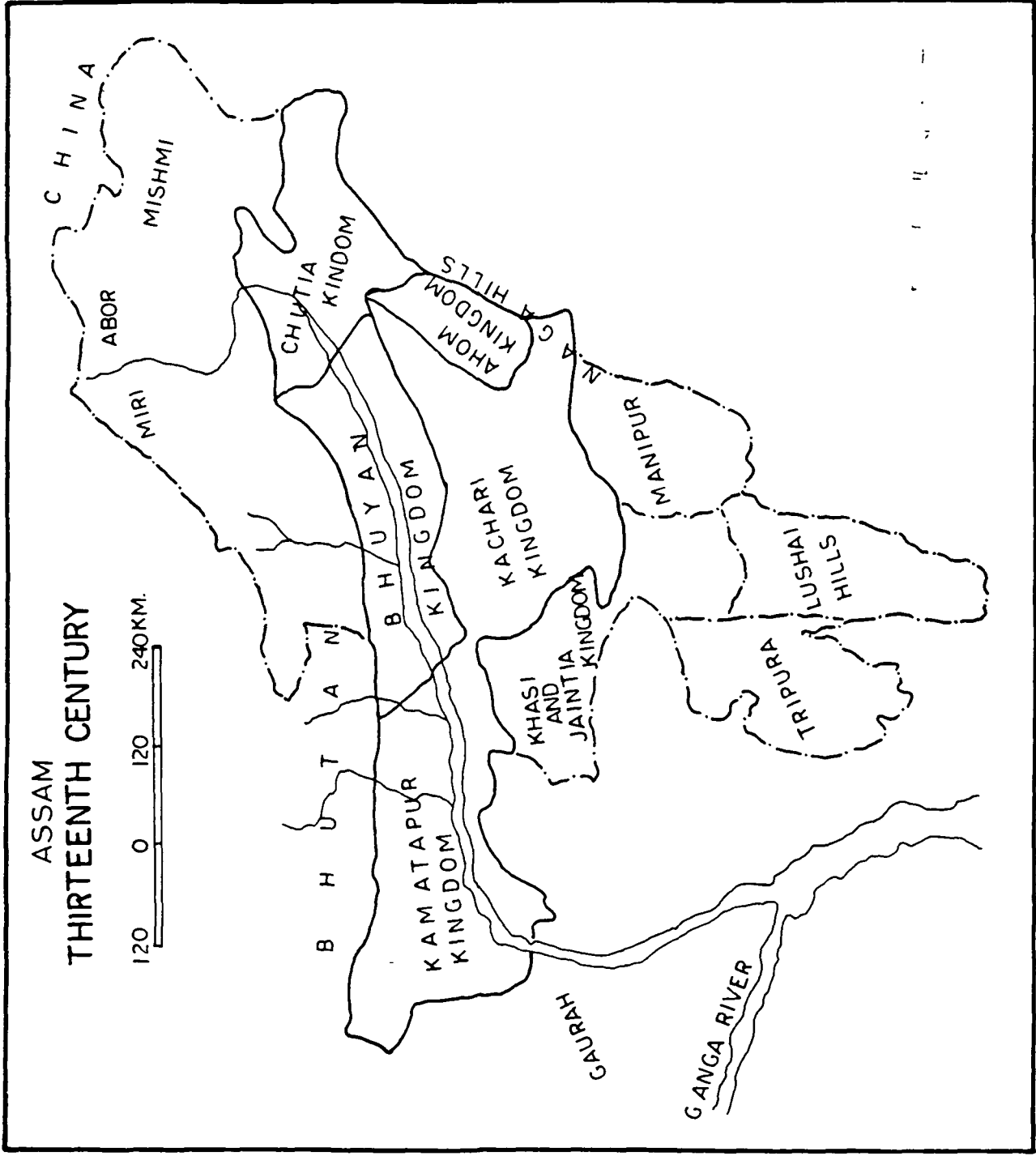


SOURCE : BARUAH S. ASAMAR SAMU ITHAS.
PUBLISHED BY DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY.

Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, visited this area around 640 A.D. by invitation of its ruler Bhaskara Varman. Hiuen Tsang left a descriptive account of Assam. From the accounts of Hiuen Tsang the Kamrupa (with capital Pragjyotishpur) was about 1700 miles in circuit and included the Brahmaputra Valley, Rangpur and Rangamati, a portion of Mymensingh and Sylhet districts (now Bangladesh) and Coch Bihar (West Bengal) and extended up to Kasi river in Bihar. Thus, perhaps it can be said that till the twelfth century A.D., both the names Kamrupa and Pragjyotisha were used interchangeably to refer to almost the same country. But it must be kept in mind that the political boundary of ancient Pragjyotisha as well as Kamrupa was changed during different periods. In the Fig. I.1 shows the boundary and the administrative division of Kamrupa.

In twelfth century A.D. there were four separate kingdoms in the present Assam viz. the Kamatapur in the extreme West, the Chutia kingdom in the extreme East, the Bhuyan kingdom in the central parts of Assam and the Kachari kingdom in the South of Bhuyan kingdom. In the Fig. I.2 shows their boundaries.

In 1236 A.d., the Ahoms, a Shan tribes of Mongolian origin from Thailand crossed the Patkai Range through Burma and conquered the Chutias kingdom of Upper Assam. Sukhapha



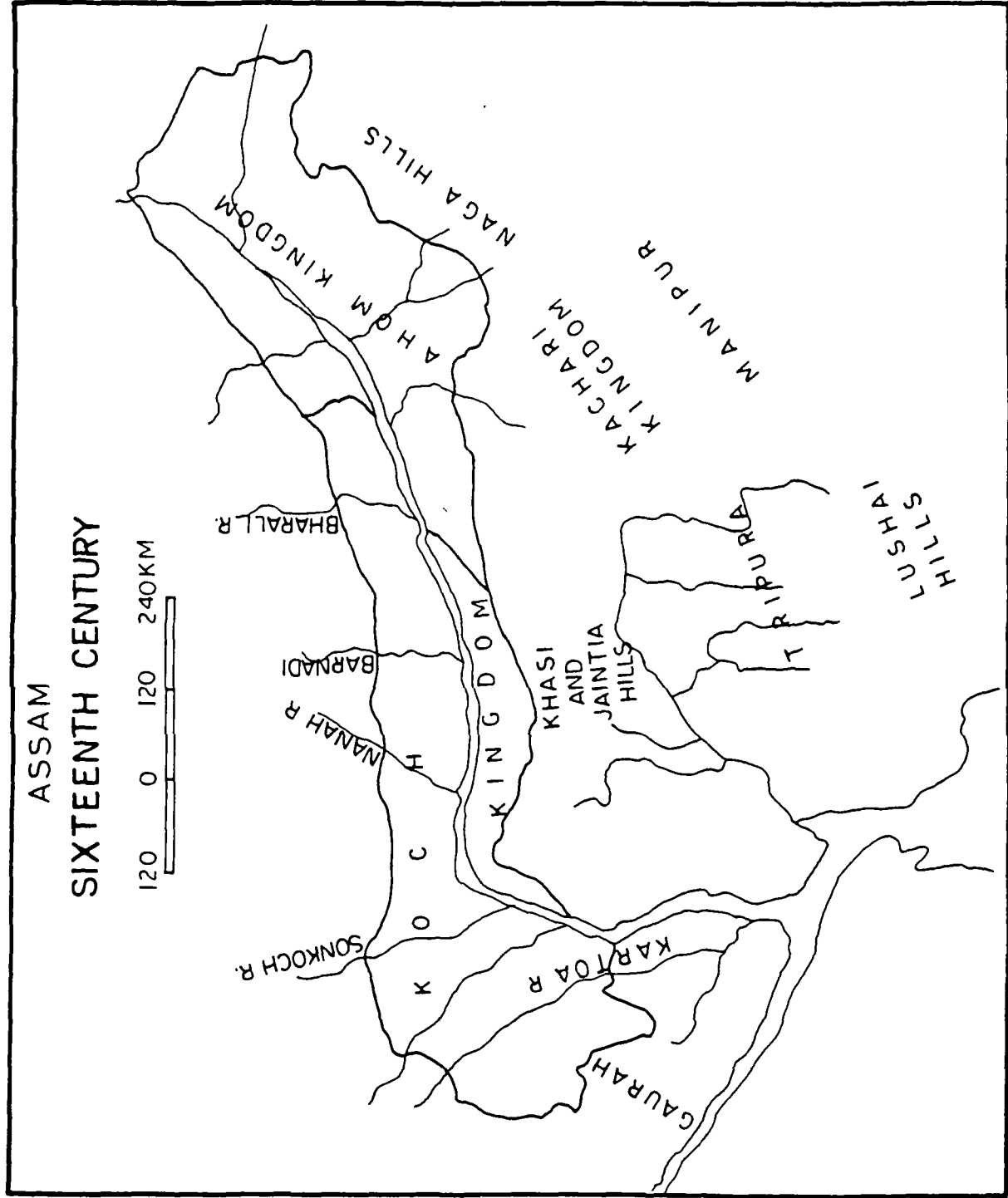
SOURCE : BARUAH S. ASAMAR SAMU ITIHAS.
 PUBLISHED BY DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY.

FIG 12

was the leader of the body of Shans who laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom in Assam. He came into Assam valley with his army and nearly 9000 men, women and children.¹⁴ It was at that time inhabited by Petty tribes of Bodo affinities (Moran and Borahis), who were easily subdued by Ahoms. Moreover, the country round Sadiya the northern part of the headquarters subdivision of Lakhimpur and north eastern part of Sibsagar as far as the Disang river, which had previously been governed by a line of Pal kings, were under the rule of Chutias, who had established a kingdom of considerable power were transferred to Ahoms rules. Thus in 1539 the Chutias were completely defeated by Ahoms and many of them departed to Tezpur area. Meanwhile, there had been numerous expeditions against various Naga tribes by Ahoms, which were generally successful and in 1440, the first war with the Kacharies by whom the Ahoms were defeated on the banks of the Dikhow river. The power of the Ahoms continued to grow and their dominions to expand and there was almost constant warfare between them and one or other of their neighbours - Naras, Nagas, Kacharies and Koch. They were nearly always successful. Thus in the prior to British rule in Assam, Ahoms had an excellent administrative system in the political history of Assam.

During the period of 11th and 17th centuries the Mughals invaded Assam seventeen times. About 1198 A.D. Muhammad

14. Gait Edward, A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1933, Rept. 1967, p. 79.



ASSAM
SIXTEENTH CENTURY

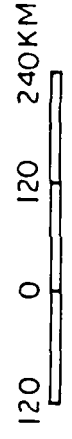


FIG.13

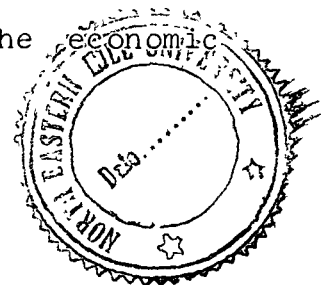
SOURCE: BARUAH S. ASAMAR SAMU ITIHAS
PUBLISHED BY DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY

Bakhtyar Khiliji marched to Brahmaputra Valley, to the countries inhabited by the Koch, Mech and Tharu Tribes. It was the first invasion of Muhammadian king but they did not succeed. In 1384 A.D. they invaded for the second time and had conquered and annexed Sylhet, excluding submontane tracts in the North and South. Thus, they invaded the Assam Valley for several times. The Assamese people succeeded in resisting the Mughal invaders.

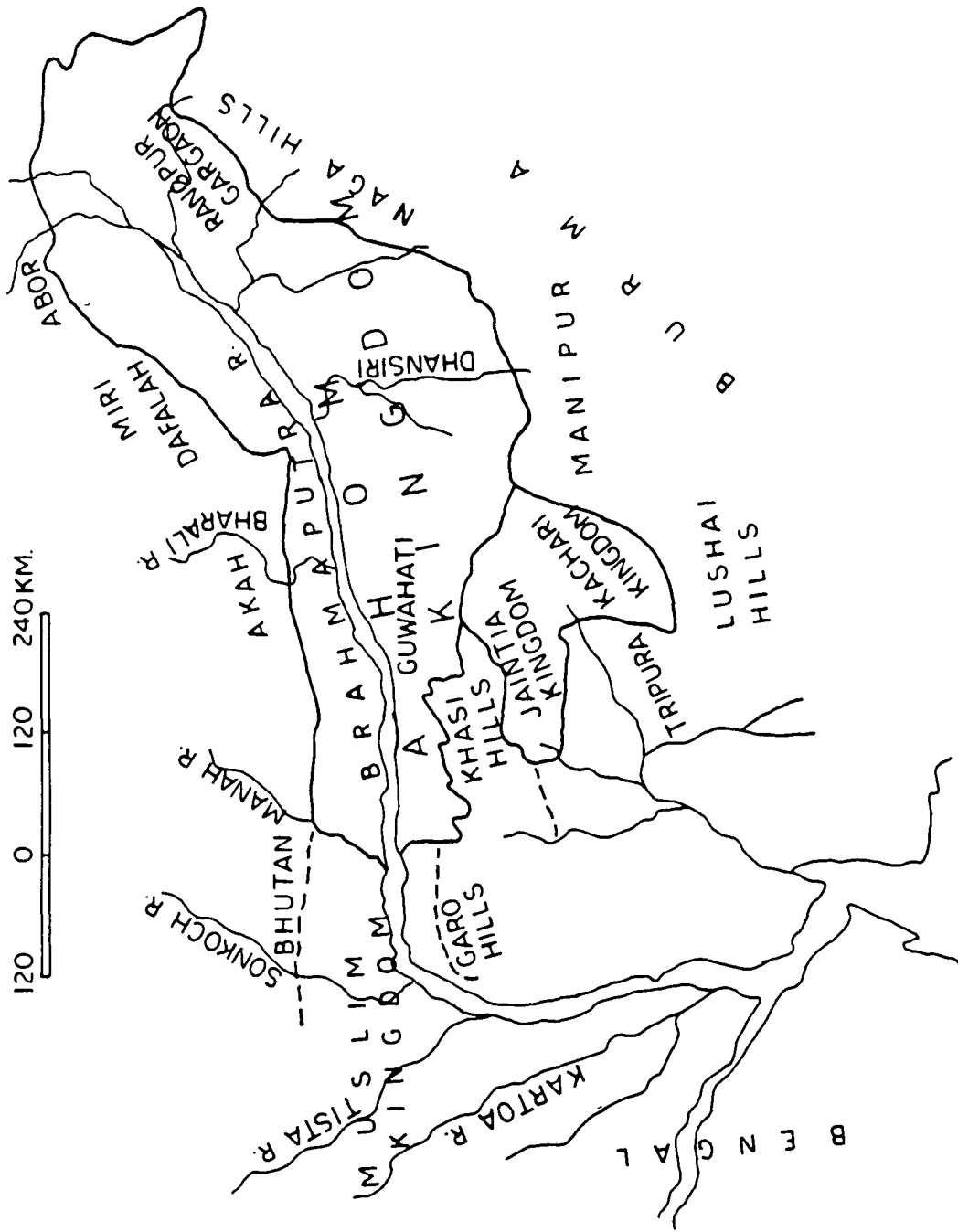
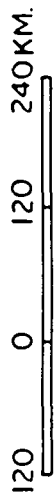
In the Fig. I.3 and I.4 shows the boundary of Assam and their kingdoms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The socio-economic condition of people of that periods is one of the important aspects of political and historical geography of Assam. There were different tribes such as Bara-his, Mech, Kacharies etc. who lived in the Assam Valley formed a intermixing society. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people of Assam of that period. Industry was highly developed in the Ahom period. Weaving, spinning, goldsmith, pottery, workers in ivory works, wood, bamboo and cane were important industries of the periods. Towns were few in number. Gargaon was the capital of Ahoms kingdom was the only capital town of Brahmaputra Valley. Guwahati was another important town of that period.

The people belonging to the upper strata in the society occupied an advantageous position in the

1024/8



ASSAM
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



SOURCE : BARUAH S. ASAMAR SAMU ITHAS /
PUBLISHED BY DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY .
FIG-1.4

life of the country; the life of poor was also not very distressing. Those in acute poverty could count upon the help of their covillagers in the shape of doles of paddy or facilities for cultivation.¹⁵

In the later part of sixteenth century a religious movement, took place throughout the whole of Brahmaputra Valley under the great Hindu Sage Sri Sri Sankardeva, when Muslim influence was at its zenith elsewhere in India. Sankardeva was a great social reformer. He wrote most of the religious books regarding Vaishnavism.

I.B.2. British Period

Towards the last part of 18th century, the internal quarrel among the Ahom princes weakened their administration. Princes Gaurinath Sing wanted help from the British in 1792 to rescue the country from the invasion of Krishna Narayan (a Matak King of East). The British came and restored peace and returned. After that the rival Borphukan (Governor) Badan Chandra, invited the Burmese to fight against the King 1816-17. In the same time an army of 8000 men¹⁶ was despatched from Burma, and having crossed the Patkai and gained fresh adherents among the hill chiefs, entered Assam, occupied

15. Gait Edward, A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1933, Rept. 1967, p. 270.

16. Provincial Gazetteer of Assam, Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, p. 19.

the whole country as far as Jorhat and reinstated their native rule and came back. The Burmese swept over the country three times bringing destruction and misery. At the request of the King Purandar Singh the British drove out the Burmese invaders.

By the treaty of Yandobo on 24th February 1826, the Burmese ceded Assam to the East India Company and Mr. Scott, the Commissioner of Rangpur, was appointed to administer the country. The Sadiya and Dibrugarh tracts were ruled by Moamaria and later by Sadiakhwa and followed by local Khamti Chiefs, later brought under the British control in 1842. In Cachar the lawful Raja was replaced on the throne, but was soon forced to relinquish the northern portion of his domains to a rebel named Tularam. The Raja was assassinated in 1830 and in the absence of any lawful heir, the Cachar plains were annexed to British territory. The northern hills of Cachar plain in 1839 and 1854 Manipur became a dependency and controlled the Western Naga group for the British. In 1838, Assam was incorporated into the Bengal Presidency. By 1842, the entire Assam Valley, penetrated the Khasi and Garo Hills in 1833 and 1835. North of the valley along the borders of Assam with Bhutan the Duars were incorporated with Assam and Bengal in 1863.¹⁷

17. Gopalakrishnan, R. Working paper on Territorial Structuring and Aspects of Geoadministration in the North Eastern Region of India.

THE PROVINCE OF ASSAM
 UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE CHIEF
 COMMISSIONER 1875

40 0 40 80 MILES

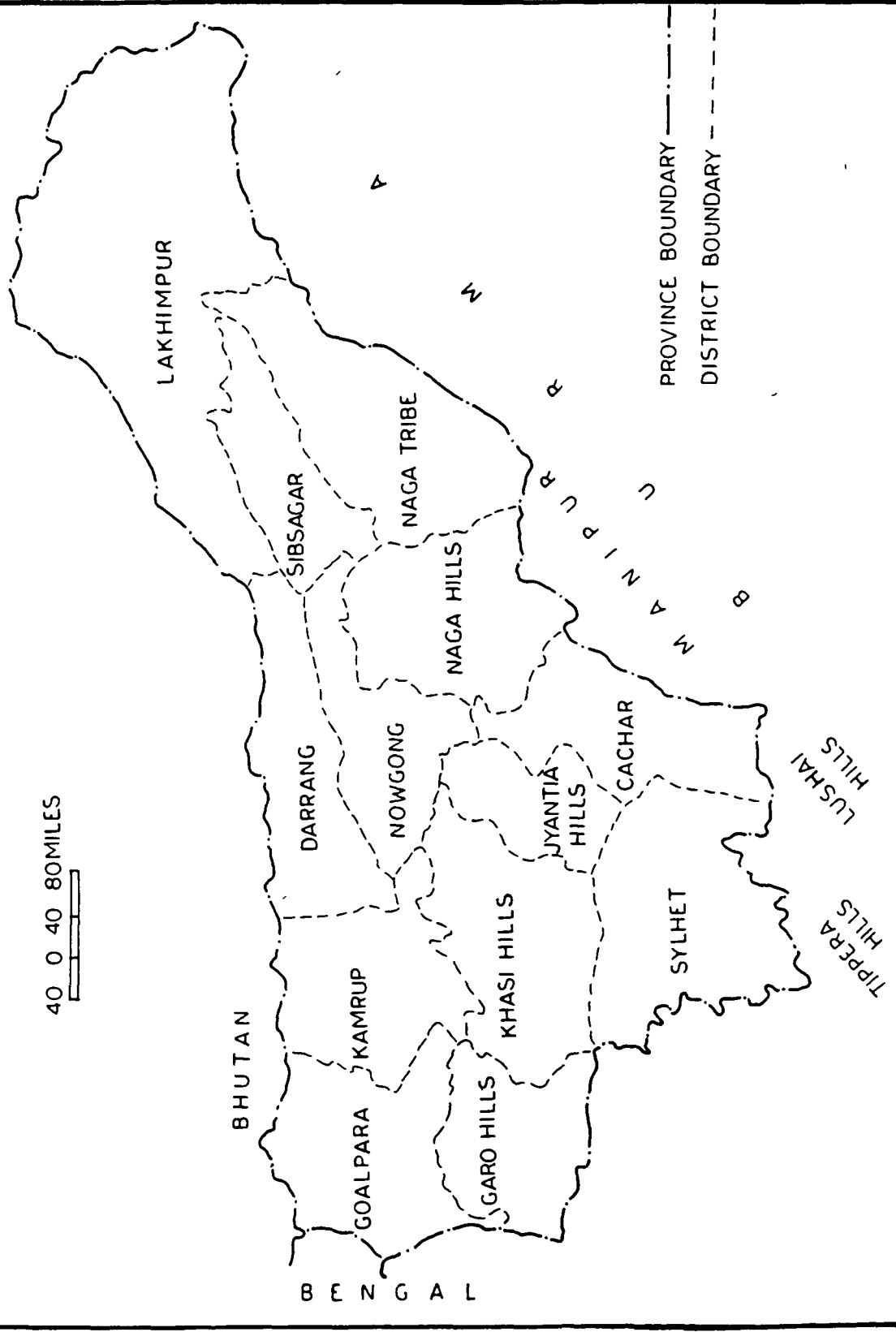
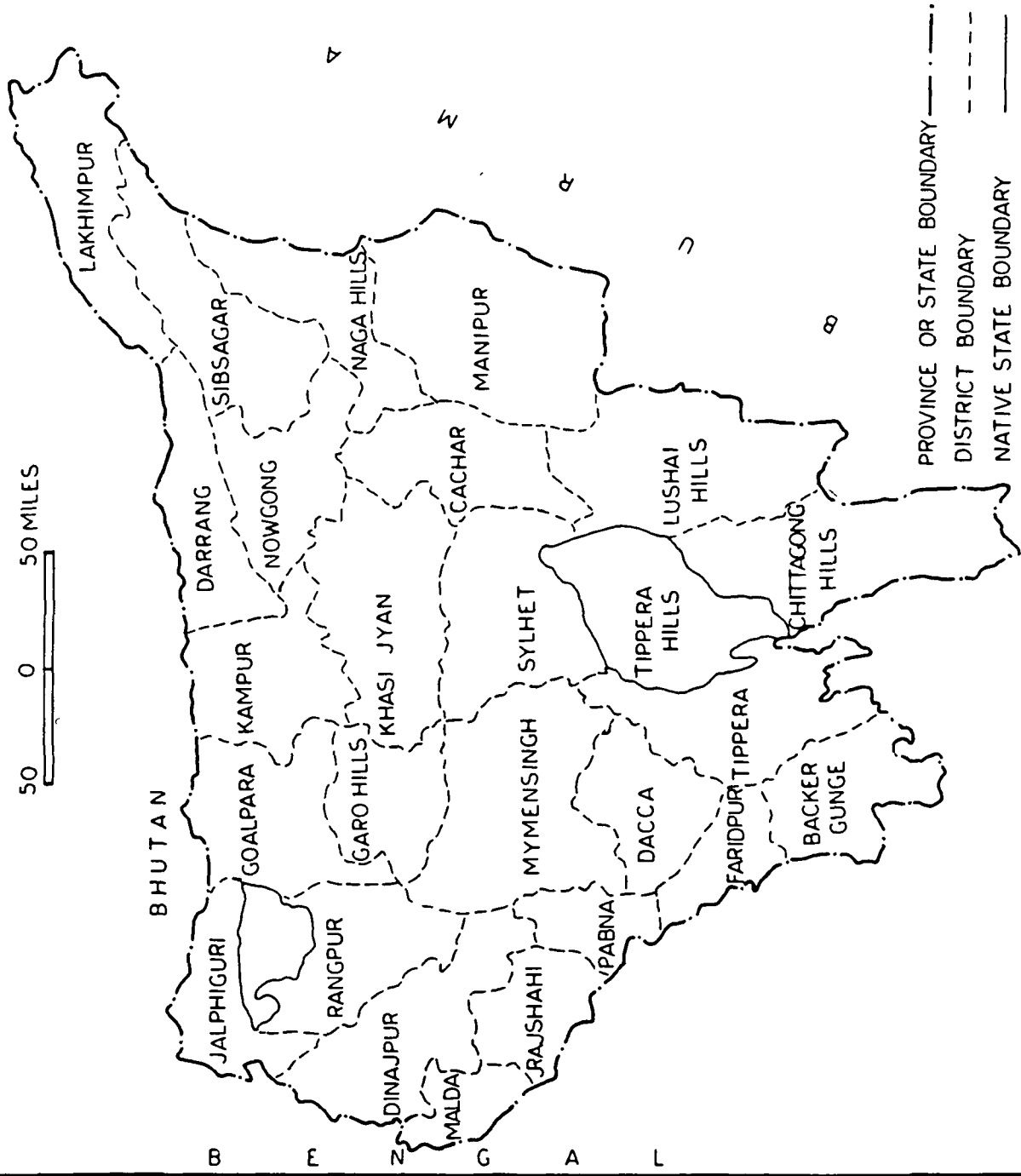


FIG. 15

In 1874, a separate province of Assam including the Sylhet district (now in Bangladesh) and the Cachar district were created and administered by a Chief Commissioner with its capital at Shillong (1863). In 1905 after the partition of Bengal, it became a Lieutenant Governor's Province of "East Bengal and Assam". In 1912, it was separated and converted to a Chief Commissioner province. In 1921, it was given the status of Governor's Province.

By 1878, steps were taken by British towards expanding into the Naga Hills, where the administrative centres were pushed as far as Kohima in the Angami country. In 1875, the country of Lotha Nagas, was annexed to British India. In 1889, the 'Ao' country was also incorporated, with the full concurrences of the people, who had claimed protection against the onslaughts of the more warlike tribes across the Dikhou river. The local officers showed a tendency to extend their control to the trans Dikhou tribes and to repress the system head hunting. The entire Naga Hills area was converted to British district in 1881. On the 1st April 1898, both North and South Lusai Hills district merged together and form the Lusai Hills district and brought under the jurisdiction of the Province of Assam. Simultaneously, the tribal people of North of Assam Valley viz. the Akas, Daflas, Apatanis, Miris, Abors, Mishimis, Khamtis and Singphos were annexed within the British territory. In the Fig. I.5 and I.6 shows the administrative division of Assam under British rule.

EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM 1906



PROVINCE OR STATE BOUNDARY — · —
 DISTRICT BOUNDARY - - -
 NATIVE STATE BOUNDARY —

FIG 16

Thus, starting from 1826, the Britishers were able to bring all the areas that fell within the modern North-Eastern Region of India, under their effective control by 1898. Time to time they passed series of regulations that restricted the inflow of people to these hilly peripheries, for example, Inner Line Regulation was passed in 1873. For better administration they reorganised the province of Assam into different administrative divisions.

During the British control the Bengali language was imposed in Assam from 1831 to 1872. The first Assamese monthly 'Orunodoi' was published in January 1846 under the guidance of Dr. Miles Brown. Chief Commissioner Sir Henry Cotton, established Cotton College in 1901 (Guwahati). In 1886 passed the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, which had been brought into force in all the plain districts of the province.

For the development of transport system they constructed different roads and railways in different parts of Assam. A regular Public Works Department was established for the development of roads system in the year of 1868 and in 1880 Local Boards were created for the management of affairs of local interest and were placed incharge of all roads of purely local importance.¹⁸

18. Gait Edward, A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1933. Rept. 1967, p. 284.

In 1847, a steamer service on the Brahmaputra river was established by Government, but the boats ran only at uncertain intervals and they did not proceed beyond Guwahati. In 1883, two private companies established a service of daily steamers on the Brahmaputra river. A similar service was established on the Surma river in 1887.

About 1885 two small state railways were constructed, one in the Jorhat Sub-division and the other between Theria-ghat and Companygany. Dibru-Sadiya railway line was constructed in Lakhimpur District. This was followed in 1895 by a small private railway from Tezpur to Balipara. The principal railway in the province, the Assam Bengal State Railway was opened for traffic in 1905. Ultimately, the whole southern part of the valley was connected by railway in the early part of twenty century.

From the commercial point of view tea was the most important crop raised in Assam. The first discovery of tea plant growing wild in Upper Assam, 1821, is generally assigned to Mr. Robert Bruce who had proceeded thither on a mercantile exploration. In 1835, the first tea garden was opened at Lakhimpur. In 1854, tea gardens were opened in Darrang and Kamrupa and 1855 the plant was discovered growing wild in Cachar. In 1900, the total production of tea was 141 million pounds. In 1903, the output was exceeded 145 million pounds.

The most important tea Districts and their area under the plant in 1903 were Sibsagar 78,500 acres, Sylhet 73,500 acres, Lakhimpur 69,300 acres, and Cachar 60,000 acres.¹⁹

At first Petroleum was discovered in the Makum fields in Lakhimpur. As early as 1868 a considerable amount of oil was extracted, but no attempt was made to convert the raw product till a small experimental refinery was erected in 1893 at Digboi. In April 1899, the Assam Oil Company was formed with a capital of £310,000 and a large refinery was established at Digboi which in 1903 gave employment to 10 Europeans and 569 natives.²⁰

Besides tea and petroleum, coal was another important mineral mined during tea British period. There are five separate fields, from east to west, named the Makum, Jaipur, Nazira, Jhanji, Disai. Next in importance to coal is the vast reserves of limestone which exist on the southern face of Khasi and Jayantia Hills.

The first Assam Legislative Council comprising the member of British, Bengalis and Assamese had its first sitting on 2nd January 1913. It served as advisory body. At that time political parties were divided along the lines of religion. In 1935, under the leadership of Sadullah, the self-governing power was given to Assam.

19. Ibid., p. 285.

20. Ibid.

I.B.3. Assam - Post Independence Period

On 15th August 1947, India got her independence from British Kingdom. At the time of independence India was divided into two separate sovereign states, viz. India and Pakistan. M.A. Jinnah the founder leader of Pakistan demanded that Assam should be included in Pakistan. The Cabinet Mission Plan included Assam and Bengal in the same group. Thus, at the time of partition Assam was almost to be included with Pakistan. Assamese leader, Gopinath Bordoloi, who became the Chief Minister of Assam, decided not to merge Assam with Bengal. Mahatma Gandhi was also opposed to this decision. He wrote in 'Harijan' regarding the right of provincial autonomy of Assam and the economic and cultural identity of Assam.²¹

Assam and other North Eastern States remained isolated from the rest of India for two and half years, immediately after independence. All communication systems were connected to Assam and other states of India through the Rangpur district which was transferred to Pakistan. In 1950, Assam was connected to the other states of India by rail and roadways through West Bengal.

At the time of partition of India and Pakistan the Hindu refugees from East Pakistan moved to Assam, Tripura

21. Das, A.K. Assam Agony.

and West Bengal. As per the 1951 Census the number of Hindu refugees in Assam was 2,74,455.²² In the period between 1951-58²³ the number of Hindu refugees who came into Assam stood at 4,87,000 which rose to 6,00,000 in 1961.

Since the beginning of this century the influx of Muslim from East Bengal (Bangladesh) continued to Assam, and they used to settle down in the 'Char' lands of Brahmaputra Valley. According to Mr. R.V. Vaghaiwalla, the Superintendent of 1951 Census operation in Assam estimated that between 1931 and 1951 the total number of Muslim immigrants from East Bengal was about 4,30,000.²⁴

During the Bangladesh war of 1971-72 the Hindus and Muslims came to India especially in Assam as refugees, numbering more than 10,000,000.²⁵ This migrated people created major problems to Assam and the neighbouring states. Due to heavy inflow of this immigrant population to Assam, the local indigenous peoples, their cultural identity was endangered. Based on previous experience, the Assamese people were unhappy but the Government of Assam settled these immigrated people against their wishes. According to M.V. Kamath, "There

22. Census of India, 1951, Vol. XII, Part I-A.

23. India 1958, Publication Division, Government of India, p. 152.

24. Goswami, P.C. The Economic Development of Assam, p. 27.

25. Choudhuri, T. Demographic Trend in Assam, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, p. 41.

are other events that the Assamese have not forgotten such a demand to incorporate the district of Goalpara in West Bengal and to carve out a new state from Assam by the name of Pubanchal made before the States Reorganisation Commission (1953-55) or efforts to convert Assam into a bilingual State in 1960, at the time of adopting Assamese as the State language of Assam. The Assamese believed that these demands would not have become possible if they were politically strong and economically viable."²⁶

The Assamese people repeatedly requested the Central Government to defend this illegal immigrants to Assam and as a result a popular movement was started in 1979 against the colonization by foreigners from Bangladesh and Nepal.

After independence, Assam retained its status as a fullfledged state in the Indian Union. It was a state, full of diversity and heterogeneity in terms of race, religion and language. There were different tribal groups inhabited in old Assam. The Naga Hills district occupied by twelve different Naga tribes. They were Negroid in origin. The North East Frontier Agency was occupied by 23 different groups of tribals who were Mongoloid in origin. The Lusai and Mizo people lived in Mizo and Lusai Hills district. The Khasi

26. Kamath, M.V. "Neglected Assam", The Illustrated Weekly of India, Bombay, January 20, 1980.

and Jayantia people lived in Khasi and Jayantia district and Garos lived in Garo Hill district. The Karbi and Dimasas Kasari people lived in Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hill district of Assam. Moreover, there were more than 20 major plain tribes who lived in the Brahmaputra Valley.

These different tribal and non-tribal population of Assam could not coalesce together to form a cohesive identity and within a few years Assam underwent a process of reorganisation. Large tracts dominated and inhabited by different tribal groups were amputated from the original state to form separate political identities. Assam's real area shrank from 223,590 square miles to 78,523 square miles in 1972. The original Naga Hills district was carved out of Assam to create a separate State named as Nagaland in 1963. Meghalaya came into existence in 1972. The Union Territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (now both are full-fledged State) were formed in 21st January 1972. (Figure I.7)

There were many causes for this partition of Assam into different States. The Assamese people instead of trying to integrate these tribal peoples or the minority groups, they imposed their Assamese language and culture on them. Immediately the tribal people became alert to keep their own culture and heritage.

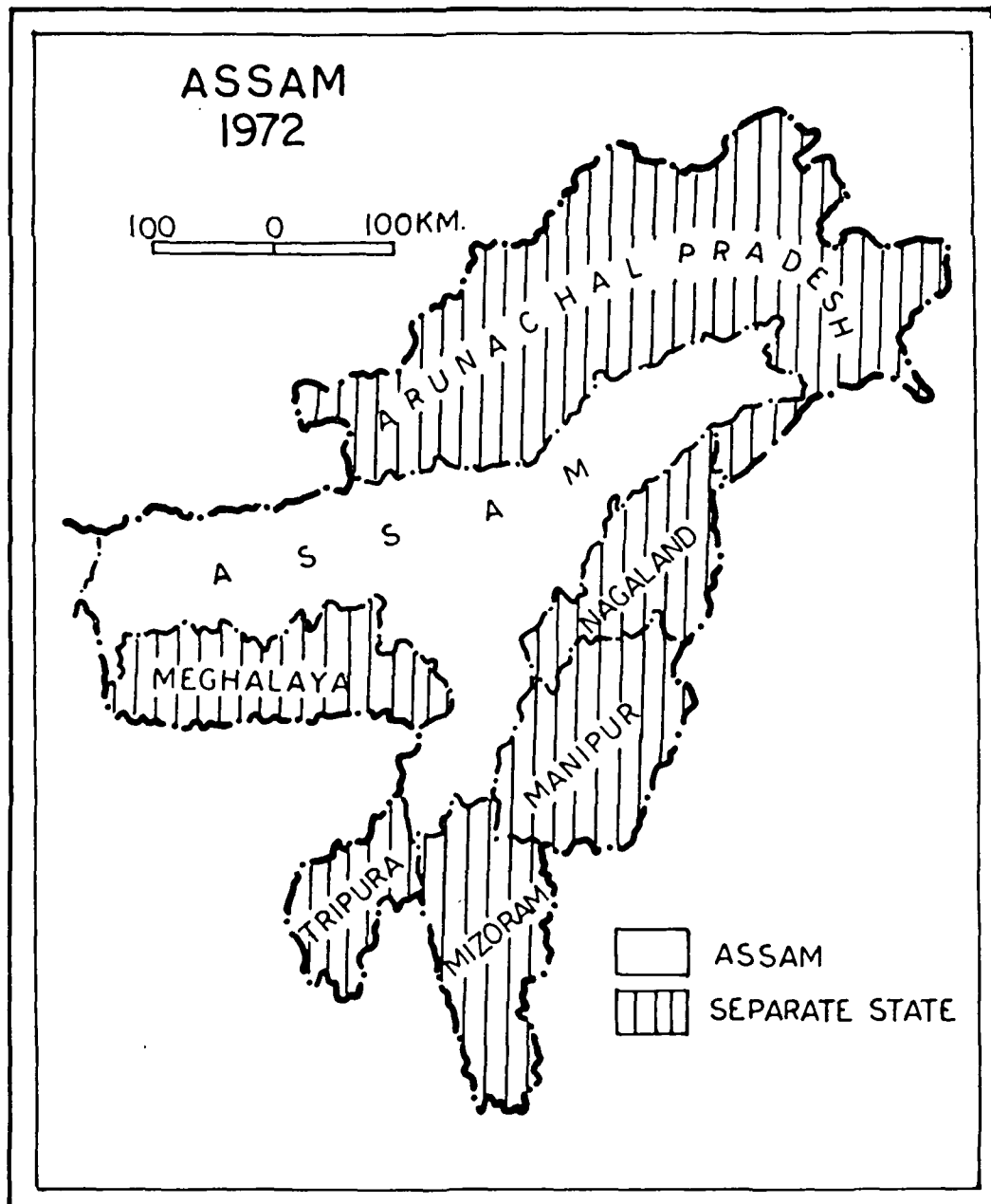


FIG. 17

During the last 70 or 80 years many foreign Christian missionaries have been working in North Eastern parts of India. Most of the tribal people accepted the Christian religion, and most of them educated after conversion.

Moreover, the political consciousness has been aroused recently among the tribal people. The idea of Separate Hill State was first advocated by Professor Coupland in 1943. He said that the inhabitants of the tribal area are not Indian or Burmese but are of Mongoloid stock.²⁷ This created an awareness among the people to have their own separate state corresponding to their culture. During post independence India these gigantic problems created by the hill people's grievances.²⁸

Recently the plain tribal population of Assam may be one of determining factors for changing the present political colour of the state. They demanded a separate 'tribal land' within the present boundary of Assam.

In summing up it can be stated that, there is a definite link between political activities and the economic development of the region. A change in the administration or

27. Bhattacharyya, B.K. "Separate Assam Hill State. What Does It Mean?", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 2, No.9, March 4, 1967, p. 491.

28. Sukhwai, B.L. Modern Political Geography of India, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, p. 56.

territorial boundary included a corresponding change in the policies of development.

During the Ahom rule, the core of their power, i.e. the Brahmaputra Valley, were surrounded practically on all sides by hills, accessible only through the numerous but difficult passes and river routes. The ahom rulers policy towards the hilly periphery was essentially that non-interference, motivated may be the fact that: "Possession of extensive unintegrated or economically neglected areas may result in a drain on state resources from the cost of administration and communication construction."²⁹

Since, the sphere of jurisdiction was confined to the long alluvial valley of the Brahmaputra, homogeneous in terms of physiography and economy which was described as a non-monetary, and in culture, it enable the Ahoms to administer the region efficiently and effectively in all spheres.

The British interest on the other hand, was more of economic exploitation, particularly since the discovery of tea and feasibility of jute cultivation in the region. They amalgamated the surrounding hill aeas to safeguard their interest in the region. They adopted their policies only for their benefit not to the indigenous societies.

29. Muir, R. 1975. Modern Political Geography, London, p.52.

Independence brought about a tremendous change in the existing landscape. Partition had resulted in the loss of territory whereby the state lost most of its jute producing areas to Bangladesh (Pakistan). Influx of a sizable number of refugees created problems to the state. In addition, the government had to abandon the policy of non-interference towards the hill areas. This was in a way responsible for the growing feeling of alienation amongst the hill people, and consequently their demands for autonomous state. Thus, the state had to face the problems dissident population, that ultimately set in the process of re-organisation that continued till the early seventies.

CHAPTER - II

**GEOGRAPHY OF ASSAM AND ITS IMPACT ON
TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENTS**

**GEOGRAPHY OF ASSAM AND ITS IMPACT ON
TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENTS**

II.1. Physiography

This region is important not only physiographically but also structurally. Physiographically, Assam is not a homogeneous unit, it consists of variety of physiographic elements, such as flood plain, foothills, isolated hillocks, ancient plateaus, tertiary mountain ranges and small and big river valleys. Structurally, Assam may be divided into two major divisions, viz. the rigid massif of the Karbi plateaus (which is a part of Peninsula Gondwana land) and the narrow foreland (or rift valley) that formed the Brahmaputra Valley region. The Karbi plateau is composed of highly metamorphosed crystalline rocks of Pre-Cambrian origin. The Brahmaputra Valley was developed on the foredeep between Tethys sea and the projection of Deccan plateau (Karbi plateau in Assam). Geological evidences shows that the foredeep was under the sea upto sub-recent period and contained deposits ranging from Tertiary to Quaternary Ages. This foredeep was filled by different deposits such as Jaintia group (Eocene) followed by Barail Series (Oligocene), Surma and Tipam Series (Miocene) and lastly by Dihing Series (Pliocene). Towards the close of the Pleistocene period alluvium began to be deposited in the form of sand, pebble, gravel and boulder along the northern foothills of the Brahmaputra Valley. These are identified as older alluvium. These older alluvium covering

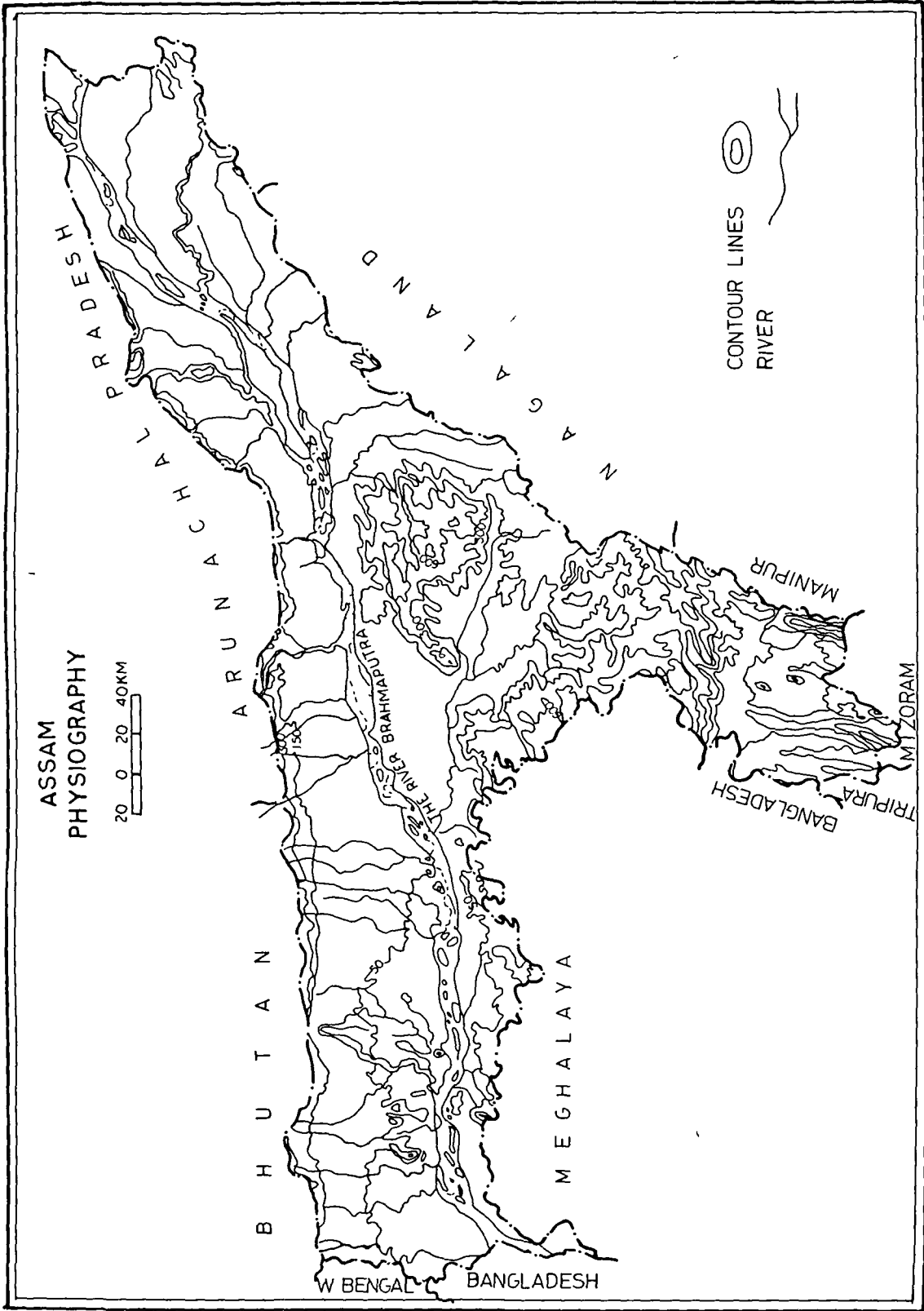


FIG 21

by a thick layer of newer alluvium containing sand silt and clay, which were spread out by numerous rivers that come down from the rising Himalayas and Naga and Patkai Ranges and the Plateaus in the South.

Physiographically, Assam may be divided into three physiographic divisions. These are, (a) The Brahmaputra river plain comprising the fourteen districts, (b) The Barak river plain comprising the two districts. (c) The hill areas consisting of the Karbi-Anglong district and North Cachar Hill district.

Both of these plain cover an area of 63,301 Km² i.e. 81 per cent of the total area of the State, the hills cover of an area of 15,222 Km² i.e. 19 per cent of the State. The Brahmaputra Valley alone covers 72 per cent of the total area of Assam, while the Barak Valley or Cachar plain consists of only 9 per cent of the State's total area. The figure 2.1 shows clearly the physiography of Assam.

II.1.a. The Brahmaputra Valley

The Brahmaputra Valley is an important physiographic unit of the State. It is a long narrow valley lying in the East-West direction in between Himalayan ranges comprising Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh towards North and East and Nagaland Hills and Meghalaya plateau towards the South. It is formed by new and old alluvium deposited by the Brahmaputra

river and its innumerable tributaries (both in North and South bank). There are a good number of beels and residual hillocks found in the valley.

The general gradient of the valley is from North to South in the North bank plain and from South to North in the South bank plain. Moreover, the valley as a whole gently slopes from North-East to South-West, from Sadiya to Dhubri. As the slope of the river is very negligible from east to west the innumerable 'Chaparries' or 'Chars' are formed by the deposition of the river Brahmaputra. Most of the 'Chaparries' are washed away by the floods every year and creating alternate 'Chaparries'.

The average breadth of the river is about six kilometers and within this breadth its course is divided into many meandering channels. Lateral erosion is the major erosional process in this course. Innumerable tributaries meet the Brahmaputra from both North and South forming a well-knit network of drainage system. The major North bank tributaries from East to West are the Subansiri, Bharali, Barnadi, Pagladia, Manas, Ai and Sonkosh. The North bank tributaries are big in size and they have a greater divides. Because of heavy rainfall, they create menacing floods every year in the summer season. Moreover, the melting of snow in the Himalayas supplies enormous volume of water to these water channels.

ASSAM PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIVISION

40 20 0 20 40 60 KMS

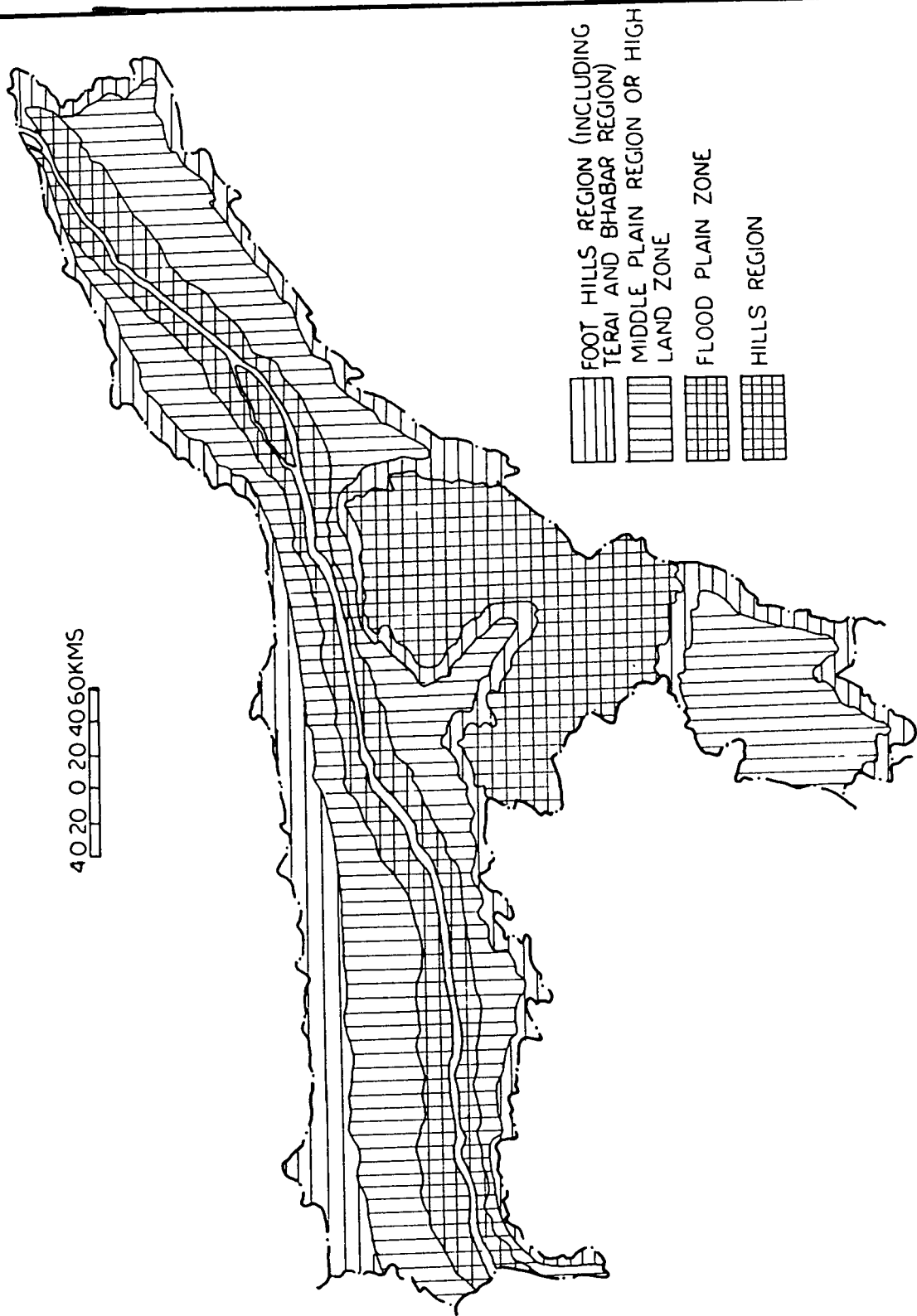
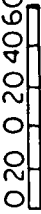


FIG 22

The most important South bank tributaries are Burhi-Dihing, Dissang, Dikhow, Jhanji, Dhansiri, Kopili, Digaru, Kulsi, Dudhnoi, Krishnai and Jinjiram. These rivers originate in the Naga Hills and Meghalaya Hills, as they are low lying in character, the gradient of these tributaries is very low and the intensity of floods is very less.

Based on the aggradational and degradational processes, the valley region may be divided into following five district physiographic zones running parallel or sub-parallel to the Brahmaputra river.¹ (Fig. 2.2). These are:

- i) The northern foothill zone of the lesser Himalayas.
- ii) The middle plain of the north bank.
- iii) The active flood plain and 'Char lands'.
- iv) The middle plain of the south bank.
- v) The southern foothill zone.

i) The northern foothill zone: This zone is composed of two sub-region viz. 'Bhabar' zone of north and Terai zone of South. The important characteristics of this region is that the rivers come down to the valley, and immediately they percolate to underneath and reappear after few kilometres

1. Taher, M. 1975. "Regional Basis of Agricultural Planning in the Brahmaputra Valley", Jr. of the NEIGS, Vol. 8, Nos. 1 & 2.

back. This region is wider in the western part and narrow in the eastern part. The foothill zone is rich in forest resources and home of wild life. Here 'Human Settlement' is very sparse.

ii) The middle plain of the North Bank: Between Bhabar and Terai to the north and flood plain and charland to the South lying an extensive plain parallel to the river Brahmaputra. The agriculture is very rich in this region and this is the most densely populated zone of the north bank.

iii) The active flood plain and charland: In the South of the middle plain of the north bank there lies an extensive flood plain of the Brahmaputra on its both banks. The charlands within the river course may also be included in this zone. This zone is swampy and contains numerous beels and water logged areas. The extensive flood plains are found in Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Nowgong, Borpeta, Goalpara, Darrang and Sonitpur districts.

The flood plain zone contains rich jute growing areas of Assam, particularly in Nawgaon, Darrang, Sonitpur and Borpeta districts. Moreover, Ahu and Bao rice fields are available throughout the whole valley. Rabi crops like brinjal, potato, onion, tomato, mustard, peas and other important vegetables may be abundantly grown on the silt deposited areas of this zone.

iv) The middle plain of the South: This is one of the most important zones of the southern part of the valley. It is wider in the districts of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Nawgaon. Due to location of Karbi Anglong plateau in the middle part of Assam, this plain is divided into two major zones consisting of Upper Brahmaputra Valley and Lower Brahmaputra Valley. This zone is rich in rice cultivation of Assam. A good number of tea gardens are located in Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Golaghat districts.

v) The southern foothill zone: The foothill zone consists of innumerable high grounds and isolated hillocks interspersed with plain embankments entering into the Naga Hills in Dibrugarh and Sibsagar districts. This area composed of lateritic soils are covered are covered with either tea gardens or dense forests. In Nagaon, Kamrup and Goalpara districts the foothill zone of the Meghalaya plateau is composed of numerous isolated monadnocks interspersed with erosional plain along the tributaries of the Brahmaputra, beels and swamps. Most of the regions are covered with forests.

II.1.b. The Barak Valley

The Barak is another important river of the southern part of Assam. It covers an area of 6962 Km² mainly in Cachar and Karimganj districts. This plain is created by both aggradational and degradational activities of the river Barak

and its tributaries, such as Jiri, Chiri, Jatinga, Madhura, Sonai, Longaikkowni. It is a saucer shaped area because this plain is closed by ranges of hills on three sides - the Meghalaya plateau and Barail range of North Cachar Hills district on the north, Manipur Hills on the east and the Mizo Hills on the south. The western side of this plain is open to the plains of Bangladesh. The gradient of the Barak plain is very low and consequently, the plain is covered with a network of sluggish streams.² As the gradient of slope is very low, it is another flood affected area of Assam.

II.1.c. The Hills Region of Assam

It is another important physiographic region of Assam. This region consists of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hill districts. The Karbi Anglong Hills are geologically a part of the Meghalaya plateau which is covered by old rocks.

On the south of the Karbi Anglong plateau the North Cachar Hill ranges are located, these are of Tertiary origin. These hill ranges are low towards the Cachar plain or Barak plain. The Hills are the home of major tribal population of Assam. The Karbi, Dimasa Kachari, Hmar and Zeliang are the major tribes of this region.

2. Administrative Report of Assam, 1911-12, Part II, p. 5.

II.2. Drainage System of Assam

In the drainage system of Assam the Brahmaputra has the most dominant control offering a unique example when considered along with the other large rivers of India.³ In the Fig. 2.3, it is seen that the master stream Brahmaputra is controlling the drainage system of the Brahmaputra Valley and the Barak controls that of the Barak Valley. Besides the mighty river Brahmaputra and the Barak river, there are innumerable tributaries and sub-tributaries, beels and swamps in Assam. From the distribution of river and water bodies in Assam, it is clear that Assam is a riverine state where it found frequent flood and mass movement. There are more than 40 major tributaries of the Brahmaputra and the Barak river taken together. Among the right bank tributaries of Brahmaputra river, the Subansiri, Bharali, Barnadi, Pagladia, Manas and the Sonkosh are the main. All these tributaries, the Lohit, Dihang, Noa-Dihing, Burhi-Dihing, Disang, Dikhow, Jhanji, Dhansiri, Kopili, Digaru, Kulsi, Jinjiram, Dudhnoi and Krishnai are the most important. Many of these tributaries like the main river itself, have carved out magnificent gorges, particularly through their Himalayan courses. Some of the right bank tributaries are also changing their courses. Among the left bank tributaries, the Lohit, the Disang, the Dhansiri

3. Das, H.P. "The Brahmaputra Drainage System", Jl. of NEIGS, 1 (1969) 20.

DRAINAGE SYSTEM

40 0 40 80 1:25000

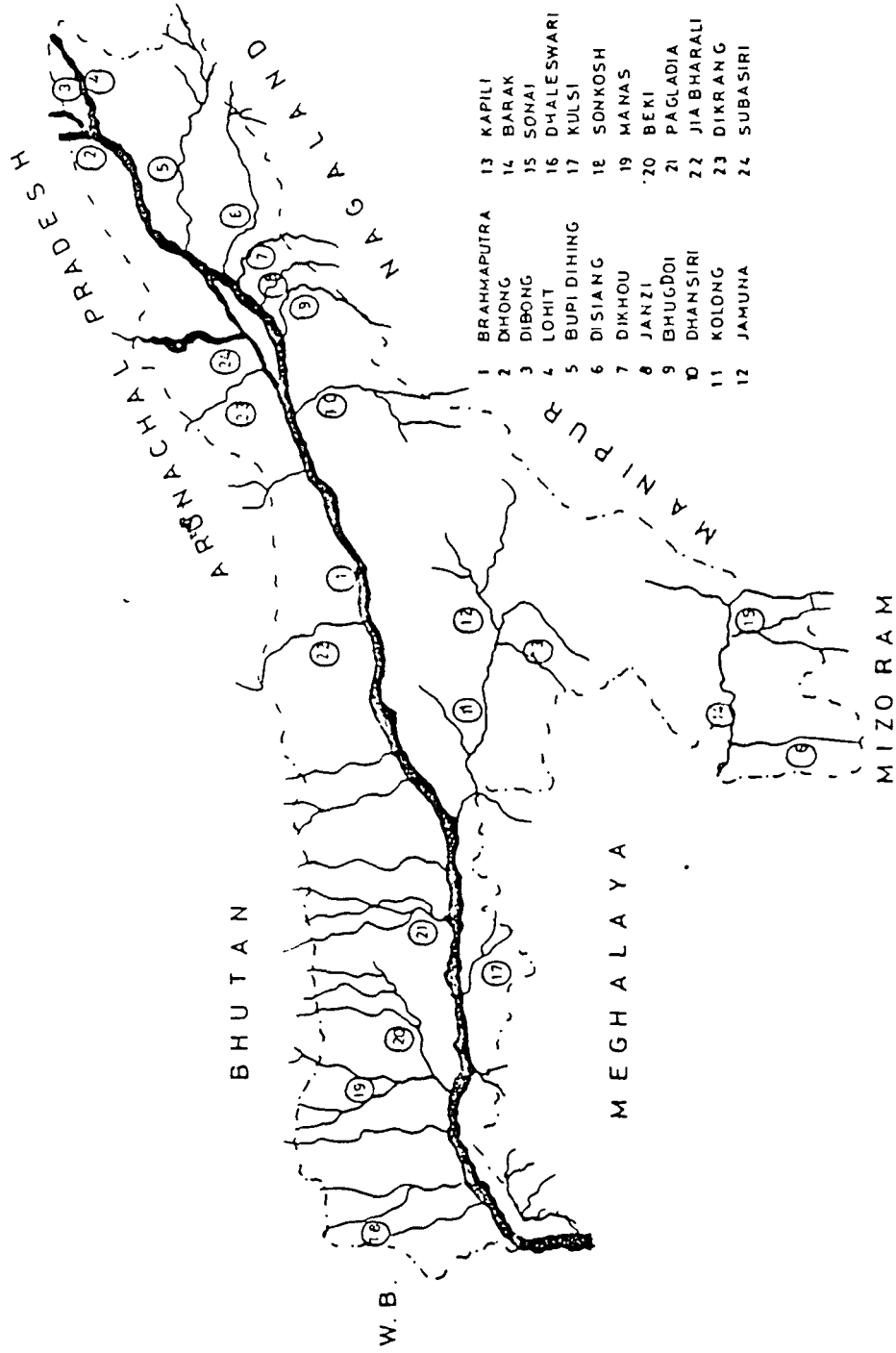


FIG 23

and the Kopili are the most important. All these tributaries are typical monsoon streams and follow less meandering courses; but the Dhansiri is the highly meandering tributary of India. All the south bank tributaries originate in the Naga Hills and Meghalaya plateau.

On the south of the Karbi Anglong the Barak river system has formed a saucer shaped valley in between the Karbi Anglong plateau and Mizoram and Manipur Hills. The Barak river system originated in the same hills where rainfall is maximum. Besides these there are more than 1200 beels and swamps in Assam distributed over the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys. Some of them are perennial and other non-perennial. The economy of Assam is highly developed on these drainage system from different aspects.

II.3. Climatic condition of Assam

Climate is the another physical factor which affects the distribution of population in different regions. Climatic conditions limit the habitable area of the earth.⁴ The climate of Assam is of the tropical monsoonal type. It is characterised by coolness and extreme humidity and heat. Basically the climate of Assam is controlled by the following factors:

4. Blumenstock and Thornthwate, Climate and the World Pattern, 1941, p. 98.

- i) Location.
- ii) Physiography.
- iii) The alternating pressure cells in north-west and north-east and Bay of Bengal and their periodic oscillations.
- iv) The pre-dominance of maritime tropical air masses (mt).
- v) The local mountain and valley winds.

Besides these factors, the Himalayan mountain ranges of north protect Assam Valley from the cold climate of Tibet plateau in winter season and in summer season these mountain ranges act as a barrier for south-west monsoon wind. Location in the sub-tropical belt, with protective relief and higher altitudes towards north and east, having diversified physiographic character, the weather and climate of Assam, assume regional characters which may not be compared with places lying in the same latitude in west of the subcontinent. In general, the climate of Assam is characterised by relative coolness, extreme humidity and heavy rainfall in summer and dry winter. The mean annual temperature was 24°C , the mean relative humidity was 77 per cent and the average annual rainfall nearly 290 cm during the year of 1982. The table II.1 showing the centrewise average humidity, mean temperature and annual total rainfall in different stations.

Table - II.1: Centrewise Climatic Data (1980-82)
(Average for 3 years)

Centre	Average Humidity in percentage	Average Maximum and Minimum Temperature in °C		Annual Total Rainfall in mm
		Max.	Min.	
1. Goalpara	82	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
2. Dhubri	88	36	18.0	1165
3. Guwahati	82	36	16.0	1447
4. Rangia	79	36	17.0	1546
5. Tangla	84	37	19	1137
6. Majbat	79	36	15	1354
7. Tezpur	80	35	12	1451
8. Gahpur	88	36	18	1798
9. Chaparmukh	83	37	16	1563
10. Lumdung	83	37	16	971
11. Sibsagar	85	34	19	N.A.
12. Jorhat	88	35	18	2057
13. Dibrugarh	79	36	16	2060
14. North Lakhimpur	82	36	15	2449
15. Silchar	79	34	18	2200
16. Halflong	85	34	15	1042

Source: Meteorological Centre, Toklai Tea Experimental Centre, Jorhat.

Rainfall is nearly uniform per year in plain districts except in the southern part of Nagaon district, because this area falls under rain shadow belt of Meghalaya plateau. From the table II.1 it shows that in the places of Upper Brahmaputra Valley rainfall is heavier than the places of Lower Brahmaputra Valley.

Seasonal Characteristics of the Climate of Assam

On the basis of variations of temperature, rainfall and winds, the year in Assam may be divided into four distinct seasons:

- a) Pre-Monsoon.
- b) Monsoon.
- c) Retreating Monsoon.
- d) Winter Season.

a) Pre-Monsoon Season

The month of March, April and May constitute the Pre-Monsoon season of Assam. In this season temperature begins to rise from the month of March. The early part of this season upto the month of April is affected by a very strong wind with excessive evaporation including dust storms create a peculiar type of climatic phenomena. From the month of May due to the migration of depression over Bay of Bengal, the entire region gets overcasted and the frequency of storms increases nor'wester locally called 'Bordoi Chilla' start during this period.⁵ Rainfall ranges between 25 cm to 30 cm and temperature ranges between 19°C to 28°C.

b) Monsoon

The south-west monsoon winds normally start from the middle of June. This season is characterised by heavy cloudy

5. Singh, R.L. India: A Regional Geography, p. 312.

weather, maximum humidity, maximum temperature and heavy rainfall. The temperature is lower due to heavy rainfall and its ranges between 20°C and 29°C. Rainfall varies according to the orographic situations. The average rainfall during monsoon season is 185 cm. The total amount of rainfall during this period accounts for nearly 85 per cent of the annual average.

c) Retreating Monsoon

The monsoon withdraws from Assam in the last week of September or in the first week of October. This season is characterised by very fair weather, low intensity of rainfall and morning fogs towards the end of November. Rainfall ranges between 20 cm to 25 cm. Sometimes it experiences occasional thundery weather in the early part of November.

d) Winter Season

The months of December, January and February constitute the winter season. The weather of this is controlled by the subtropical jet-streams and development of Asiatic High pressure centres. The season is characterised by cool weather and frequent morning fogs. Temperature remains well above 12.8°C the average diurnal range seldom exceeding 5.5°C. January is the coldest month of this season. The total amount of rainfall in this season seldom exceeds 11.4 cm. However, the pleasant weather is interrupted casually by showers

associated with eastern disturbances, which lower the temperature and bring cold spells.⁶

In order to identify the regional climates of Assam on the basis of their characteristics, it may be identified as follows. CWB — Sub-tropical monsoon, mild winter, partially dry winter, warm and humid summer (this region includes whole Brahmaputra and Barak Valley regions). CWA — Sub-tropical monsoon mild and dry winter (this region includes the northern and southern foothills area of Assam).⁷

II.4. Soils of Assam

Soil is one of the principal factors of physical environment. The density of population in mountains and plains are also influenced by the composition of soil, which affects the agriculture of any place. Soil is composed of mineral matter, organic matter, which gives it some distinctive attributes, together with air and water.

Soil of Assam are acidic in character. Soils of hilly region is more acidic than the alluvial soils of plains. Soils of hilly region are less fertile than the plains. The density of population is higher in both the plains of Brahmaputra and the Barak river. The Karbi Anglong plateau and

6. Borthakur, M. "Some Aspects of Weather in the Brahmaputra Valley", Jr. of Assam Science Society, Vol. XI, 1968.

7. Borthakur, M. "Weather and Climatic of North East India", Jr. of NEIGS, Vol. 18, No. 182, 1986.

ASSAM SOIL ZONES

40 20 0 20 40KMS

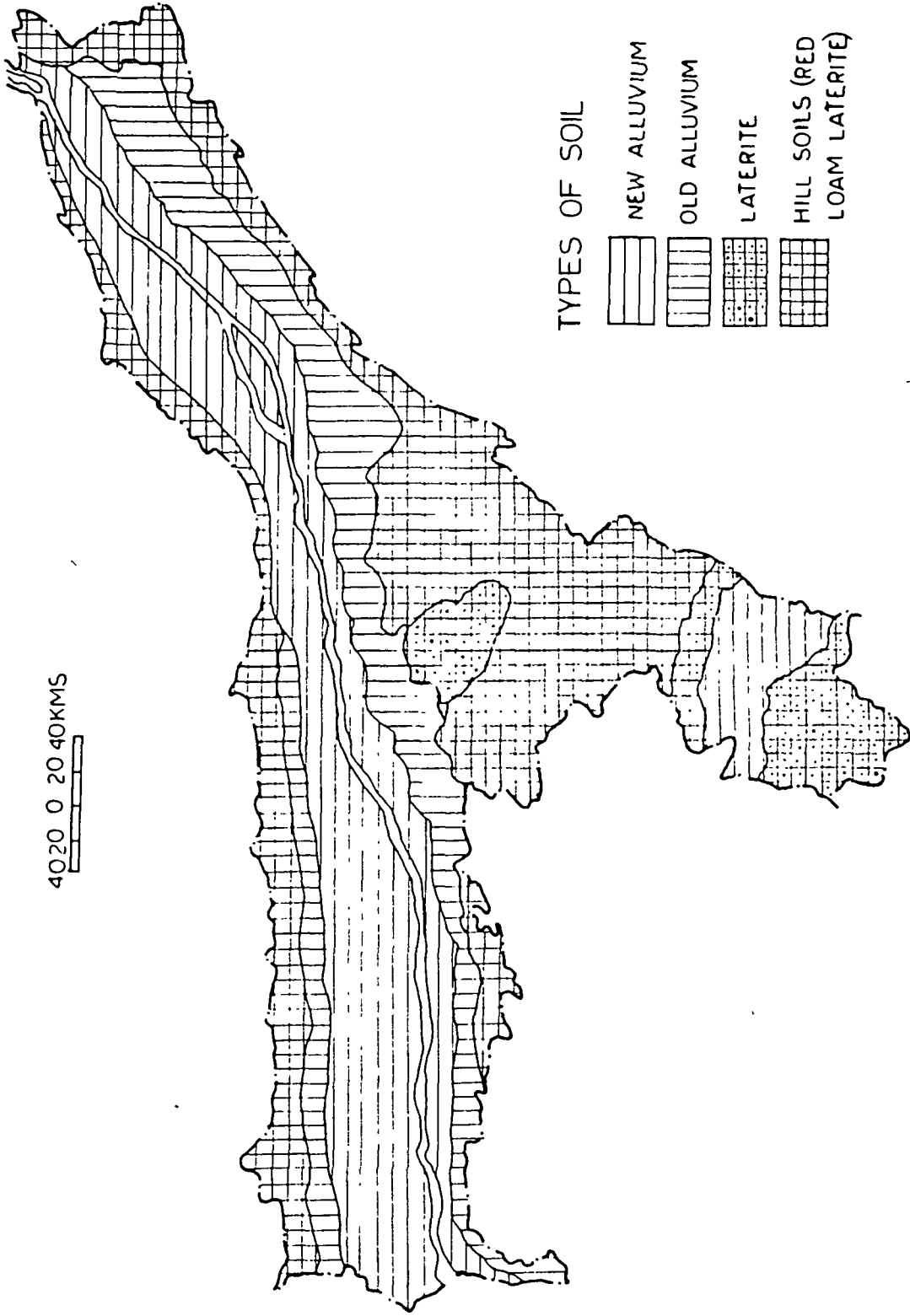


FIG 24

the foothills region of north and south regions of Assam, is less populated area. The alluvial soils of Assam are rich in agricultural production. They are rich in 'available phosphate', Potash and exchangeable calcium. In texture they are usually sandy, silty or clayey loam. The percentage of nitrogen and organic matter are satisfactory for agricultural purposes and are particularly high in lowlying areas.⁸

Soils of Assam may be classified into the following categories:

1. New Alluvial Soils.
2. Old Alluvial Soils.
3. Laterite Soils.
4. Red Soils or Hill Soils.

1. New Alluvial Soils

This zone is located in the active flood plain of the river Brahmaputra on both the north and south bank. They are suitable for the cultivation of rice, jute, pulses, mustard, potato and vegetables (Fig. 2.4).

2. Old Alluvial Soils

In between active flood plain and foothill region of the north bank, a smaller area of Kokrajhar, Borpeta,

8. Barua, J.N. "Assam Soils", Agricultural Research Station, Borbhetta, Jorhat, 1964. (Unpublished thesis).

Nalbari and Darrang District, the old alluvial soil is to be found. Another region of the south bank in between active flood plain and foothill areas, the entire Brahmaputra river valley is covered by older alluvium soils. This is also another agricultural potential area of Assam. Rice, sugarcane, jute, oil seeds, tobacco and different vegetables are grown in this region.

3. Laterite Soils

The hill slopes of Barak Valley and a few places of Karbi Anglong district and southern part of Nagaon district covered by the laterite types of soils. This type of soil is characterised by the deficiency of nitrogen, potash, phosphoric acid and lime. Rice, sugarcane, banana, cotton, coffee and tea are the primary crops of this zone.

4. Hill Soils

The soils of the Hill region of Assam, mainly in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hill districts are composed of red loams and laterite soils. This region is rich in growing potato, sugarcane, cotton, tea and coffee.

II.5. Some Observations

The people of Assam and their way of life have been influenced very much by the physiography. The landforms likely to play a significant role in the distribution of population of Assam. Density of population is maximum in the plains

of Brahmaputra and Barak rivers. The indigenous tribal population of Assam live in the foothills and hilly region of Assam. Muslim immigrant population most of them agriculturists, came to Assam and settled down in the clear lands of Brahmaputra mainly in Kamrup, Goalpara and Nagaon districts.

Roadways and railways are developed in the plain region. Two National Highways and Railways are located in the both sides of Brahmaputra plain. The economic condition of the people of plains are more well developed than that of the people of hill areas. All the cash crops growing areas are located in the plain areas. Tea gardens are generally located in the foothills region of Assam. Major foodgrains of Assam grow largely on the fertile soils of Assam.

In the development situation of Assam is highly affected by the physiographic factors. All the hills region and plains region are not equally developed. Roads and communication of the hills region are not well developed. Roads of plain region damaged immediately due to the composition of soft alluvial soils.

This unequal development of the region is related to political situation of the state. Specific groups and subgroups of the region have been conscious of their own culture and development of their society and hence identity. These physiographic factors also help to understand the separatist tendencies among these population.

CHAPTER - III

POPULATION CHARACTERISTIC, CONTENT AND COMPOSITION

POPULATION CHARACTERISTIC, CONTENT AND COMPOSITION

III.1. The population of Assam is composed of various racial elements. Since time immemorial, there has been a concentration of different groups of people in Assam. All the groups and tribes who came into the state got assimilated and each of them contributed highly towards the composition of the settlement of Assam.

The source material of early settlers of Assam is not distinctly available till the early part of the 13th Century A.D. Prior to this century the history of the people living in the state may be available in the mythological ground. The epic like the Mahabharata, the Puranas, rock inscriptions, archaeological remains and accounts of Huien Tsang were the source materials of the early period. These sources reveals that during the first century A.D. or little earlier, the present state was a part of the kingdom of 'Pragjyotishpura' and its people were known as 'Kiratas'. According to S.K. Chatterjee, "in the early Christian era, the 'Kiratas' were known as a group of people whose original home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the east in Assam particularly."¹

The 'Kiratas' belonged to the great Bodo group of the Tibeto Chinese family. They were speaking the languages

1. Chatterjee, S.K. Kirata Janakriti, Gauhati, 1974, p. 35.

of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family and racillay belonged to Mongoloid stock. It is very difficult to know when these people entered into Assam. The present day Bodos, Kacharies, Chutias, Karbis, Deories and Mishings belong to this stock. They were considered the early settlers of Assam and these groups of people have considered presently as scheduled tribes of Indian Constitution.

In Thirteenth Century A.D. the Ahoms, a Shan tribe of Bodo origin came into Assam through Patkai Range and settled in the Brahmaputra Valley.

The Aryans population, who included mostly the caste Hindus had come to this area from pre-historic times and which has expanded by fresh influxes from western India through the progress of the centuries. The socio-religious customs of the Aryans have been influenced by the habits and manners of their non-Aryan neighbours.² The culture of Assam has developed in a manner which makes the intimacy and contact of both Aryan and Non-Aryan people.

The Muslim settlement in Assam can be traced to 1206 A.D. when the Turks were defeated in their attack on Kamrup. From 1206 A.D. to late 17th Century A.D. the Muslim peoples came to Assam successively and settled in Brahmaputra Valley.

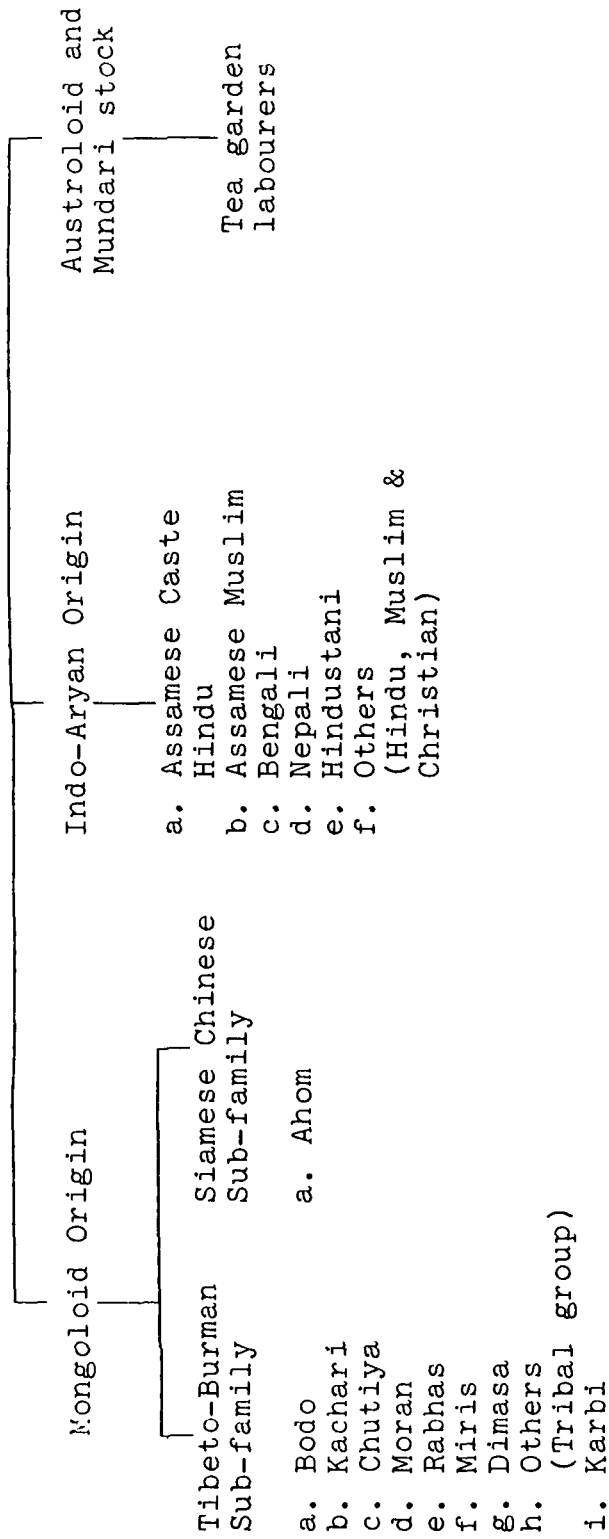
2. Chaudhury, P.C. History of Civilization of Assam, Gauhati, p. 311.

After the treaty of Yandobo in 1826, the British entered Assam and ruled the country. At the time of British rule in Assam, the socio-economic status of the state changed largely. Tea was planted commercially, from 1835 A.D. The British tea planters initially tried plantation by employing the local indigenous labours. But later on they started bringing in labourers in large numbers from outside Assam, especially from Chotonagpur and its adjoining tribal areas indentured labourers. These people belong to Austroloid races and as many as ninety seven sub-tribes.

Development of tea industry, coal mining, petroleum mining, forest based industries and other industries towards the later part of nineteenth century in the State, necessitated bringing in more labourers from other parts of India like Bengal, Bihar, Central Province and States of Western India and Nepal. Towards the middle part of twentieth century a large immigrants took place from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

To study the present population of Assam , their origin, racial, linguistic and socio-economical structure have to be considered. From early period to the present time the population of Assam has been divided into the following racial categories viz. Mongoloid, Indo-Aryan group, Austroloid group, and Mundari (Table III.1).

Table - III.1: Racial Origin of the People of Assam



Source: Das, B.M. The Peoples of Assam, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.

Mongoloid Population of Assam

Mongoloid population of Assam is broadly divided into two groups such as Tibeto-Burman sub-family and Siamese sub-family. In general the tribes of Assam are Mongoloid origin. They came to this part of the country in successive waves of different times from different routes — north, north-east and south-east. Some groups became confined to certain small geographical areas, while others were distributed over larger regions. Some of them were more or less in complete isolation preserving their ethno-biological identity, while some had got admixed with non-Mongoloid population in varying extents. The Mongoloid population are referred to as the Indo-Mongoloids.

Tibeto-Burman Sub-family

The earliest inhabitants of Assam were probably the various offshoots of the great Tibeto-Burman group or Indo-Chinese origin, whose headquarters are said to have been on the upper courses of Yangtse-Kiang and Hoang-Ho. This group includes the following present races of Assam like Bodo or Plain Kachari, Chutias, Dimasa or Hill Kachari, Mech, Rabhas, Garos, Khasis, Miris, Abors, Mishimis, Moran, Borahi and other tribal population of Assam. They are not equally distributed over Assam. Bodos, Mech and Rabhas are majority in Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Dhubri, and northern parts of Kamrup district of Assam. Chutias, Mishimis, Miris and Deoris are

majority in the districts of Upper Assam. Chutias and Moran are majority in Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Lakhimpur Districts. Miris and Deories are majority in the new alluvial soil area of Brahmaputra Valley (mainly in Upper Assam). The Dimasa Kachari and Karbi peoples are in majority in the North Cachar and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. Besides other small tribes are distributed in different parts of Assam.

Siamese Sub-family

Another division of the Indo-Chinese inhabitants is a branch of great Tai race which belongs to Siamese and Shans of Upper Burma. It includes the Ahoms, who have now become Hindu and several small colonies of Shans who have migrated into Assam comparatively in recent time. They entered Brahmaputra Valley in 13th Century and ruled upto 19th Century till the annexation by the British following the Treaty of Yandobo (1826 A.D.). Ahoms were majority in Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat districts. The other small groups of Shan tribes inhabited the foothill areas of Nagaland.

Indo-Aryan Group

From the source material like mythological books, Puranas, Yoginitantra, we have an idea, that a group of people who entered Assam in the pre-historic period, lived in the western parts of Assam belongs to the Aryan group. Moreover,

in medieval age, the local kings of Assam imported an intellectual group of people from northern India. This Assamese caste Hindu people of Assam includes mainly the Brahmins, Ganaks, Kayasthas, Kalitas and Koches. The written records reveal that the Indo-Aryan groups of people enjoyed privilege position under the patronage of the rulers of Assam.³ In the field of education, this group enjoyed a leading position. At present they are settled on both the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys.

In twelfth century, another group of people entered Assam who belong to the Indo-Aryan group. Majority of this population was muslim community. Muslim population slowly increased in Assam with the captives craftsmen etc. from the successive invasions launched by the Muslim Kings and Generals from the west particularly Bengal. The captives were settled by the kings of Assam and allowed to marry locally. Thus, the Muslim settlements grew up in different parts of Assam. By the end of Seventeenth Century A.D. Islam as a distinct religion and Muslim as a separate community emerged in Assam.⁴

At the time of British rule in Assam thousands of people entered into Assam from Bengal and other parts of

3. Choudhury, P.C. History of Civilization of Assam, Gauhati, p. 312.

4. Census of India 1891, Assam Report, p. 47.

India and Nepal. They were also of Indo-Aryan family. In the post-independence period also, Assam received thousand of people of Indo-Aryan stock who settled permanently in Assam, majority of these people lived in the urban and semi-urban centres of Assam.

Austroloid and Mundari Stock of People

With the discovery and starting of tea plantation in Assam by Britishers, thousand of labourers were brought into Assam for cultivation of tea, from the central parts of India specially Chotanagpur area. The labourers were the tribals speaking Austro-Asiatic and Drabidian language belongs to Mundas, Orans, Bhumij, Chamars and Gond etc. Recently they were converted to Christianity and Hinduism. Now they are permanent inhabitants of Assam State.

III.2. Demographic Structure

The population structure of Assam is a composite one, having been built up by the indigenous and non-indigenous population in one hand, and the tribal and non-tribal population on the other. The growth, pattern, density, distribution, age structure and other demographic attributes of the population of the state makes an interesting study and one of important factor for the politico-geographical evolution of the state.

III.2.a. Growth

The population profile of Assam presents some unique characteristics in its composition and growth. There has been phenomenal growth of population since the beginning of enumeration. The first regular census was taken in 1872 in Assam and disclosed a total population of 4,150,769.⁵ Manipur and the Mizo Hills were not included in this figure. In 1881, the population including Manipur was 5,128,862⁶ and in the plains alone there was an increase of over 18 per cent. In 1891, Manipur again dropped out from the census report and Mizo Hills appeared for the first time and the population was returned at 5,477,302.⁷ The population of the plains increased by nearly 11 per cent.

In the last inter-census period the increase was 649,041 or 12 per cent but this was largely due to inclusion of figures for Manipur and South Mizo Hills and in the plains increase was less than 6 per cent. The year 1897 was very unhealthy and in central and lower Assam an abnormal mortality was confined to that year alone. The population of Kamrup decreased by over 7 per cent and though there was an increase in Darrang, it was entirely due to immigration. The lowest depth

5. Provincial Gazetteer of Assam, p. 25.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

was, however, reached in Nagaon, where the people were more than decimated by a peculiarly malignant form of malarial fever known as 'Kala-azar'.⁸ The population of the district as a whole fell by nearly one-fourth, and it was calculated that the indigenous inhabitants had decreased by over 30 per cent. In Upper Assam there was a satisfactory growth of the indigenous population and an enormous increase of immigration during the decade. The population of Sibsagar increased by nearly one-fourth and that of Lakhimpur by almost a half. The best indication of the natural growth of the people, is however, obtained by excluding the figures for Manipur and the Mizo Hills, and comparing the figures for those born and enumerated in the Province in 1891 and 1901. Among this class it appears that the increase during the last intercensus period was only a little more than one per cent.

There was, however, a rapid growth of immigrant population, which increased by more than one-half and in 1901 exceeded three-quarters of a million, or nearly 13 per cent of the total population of the province.⁹ The majority of these outsiders were coolies brought up for the tea industry, though a certain amount of movement take place across the

8. Ibid., p. 26.

9. Ibid.

frontier where Assam marches with Bengal. More than half a million people came from that province, a quarter of million of whom were born in the Chotanagpur area. About 1,09,000 persons came from united provinces and 84,000 from Central provinces. Most of these peoples who settled in Lakhimpur, where they formed 41 per cent of the whole, Darrang and Sibsagar (25 per cent), Cachar (plains) nearly 24 per cent.¹⁰

The Table III.2 gives an overall growth of population of the state since 1901 as compared to national data. It reveals that the population of Assam increased from 32.89 lakhs in 1901 to 198.96 lakhs in 1981 (projected population). From 1901 to 1951 the growth rate of population of Assam was a considerable one. In 1941-51, the growth of decadal variation of India's population was 13.31 per cent and in Assam 19.93 per cent. During 1951-61, the decadal growth rate of Assam is higher than the national rate, it was 34.98 per cent in Assam whereas in India as a whole it was 21.60 per cent. In general from the decades 50's to 80's the decennial percentage of growth rate is higher than the national growth rate.

Table III.3 shows the decennial growth rate of population in North-Eastern States. It is clear from the table that the growth rate of population of Assam was higher than

10. Ibid., p. 28.

Table - III.2: Growth of Population

Year	Total Persons in India	Total Persons in Assam	Percentage decade variation in India	Percentage decade variation in Assam	Assam		Percentage of India's population
					Males	Females	
1901	238,396,327	3,289,680	-	-	1,714,316	1,575,364	1.38
1911	252,093,390	3,848,617	+ 5.75	+16.99	2,010,211	1,838,406	1.52
1921	251,321,213	4,636,980	- 0.31	+20.48	2,445,300	2,191,680	1.85
1931	278,977,238	5,560,371	+11.00	+19.91	2,966,568	2,593,803	1.99
1941	318,660,580	6,694,790	+14.00	+20.40	3,569,762	3,125,028	2.10
1951	361,088,090	8,028,856	+13.31	+19.93	4,298,733	3,730,083	2.22
1961	439,234,711	10,837,329	+21.51	+34.98	5,798,376	5,038,953	2.67
1971	548,159,652	14,625,152	+24.80	+34.96	7,714,240	6,910,912	2.67
1981	685,184,692	19,896,843*	+25.00	+36.05	10,467,461	9,429,382	2.90

* Projected population

Source: Census of India for respective years.

Table - III.3: Density, Decennial Growth and Sex Ratio in North Eastern Region (1981)

State	Area in sq.km.	Total Population (in thousand)	Density	Decennial growth rate (1971-81)	Sex ratio (Female per 1000 males)
Assam*	78,523	1,990	254	36.09	900
Manipur	22,356	1,411	63	31.57	972
Meghalaya	22,489	1,328	59	31.30	955
Nagaland	16,527	773	47	49.73	867
Tripura	10,477	2,047	195	31.55	948
Arunachal Pradesh	83,578	628	17	34.34	870
Mizoram	21,087	487	23	46.75	936
Total	255,087	26,579	104	35.73	909

* Projected population.

Source: Basic Statistics of North-Eastern Region 1982, NEC, Shillong.

other North-Eastern States excluding the State of Tripura. Population explosion in the proper sense, has however occurred in recent daces. As there is no reason to assume that fertility rate of the people of Assam or the natural rate of increase (excess of birth over death rate) in the state is higher than the all India average rate, it is clear that a large number of people from outside the State and neighbouring countries have migrated to Assam.¹¹

11. Goswami, P.C. 1984. Foreign Immigration into Assam, North East Region: Problem and Prospects of Development, Centre of Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh.

Assuming the natural growth rate of population in Assam to be the same as that all India rate, a rough conclusion can be arrived at the estimate of immigrated population of Assam. By using the national annual growth rate of 2.16 per cent during 1961-71, for Assam the estimated population should be 99 lakhs in 1961 and 127 lakhs in 1971. But actual census figures for two respective years reveal as 108 lakhs and 146 lakhs. The difference between the estimated (based on all India rate) and the reason for the enumerated census population may be due to immigrants. Fig. 3.1 showing the population trend in Assam.

III.2.b. Birth and Death Rate

If we consider the birth and death rate of population in Assam it is clear to us that the birth rate was higher than the death rate. The Assam's birth rates which was 46.7, 49.3, 48.4 and 41.1 per (projected) 1000 population in 1941-51, 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-81 respectively were highest among all the States of India and much above the All India birth rate in all the three decades. The death rate in Assam was the highest in 1951-61, second highest in 1941-51 and quite high 1961-71. (Table III.4).

The growth of population created problems and opportunities in the social and economic life. State like Assam where economic development is poor, the population growth create additional problems than opportunities.

DECADAL GROWTH OF POPULATION

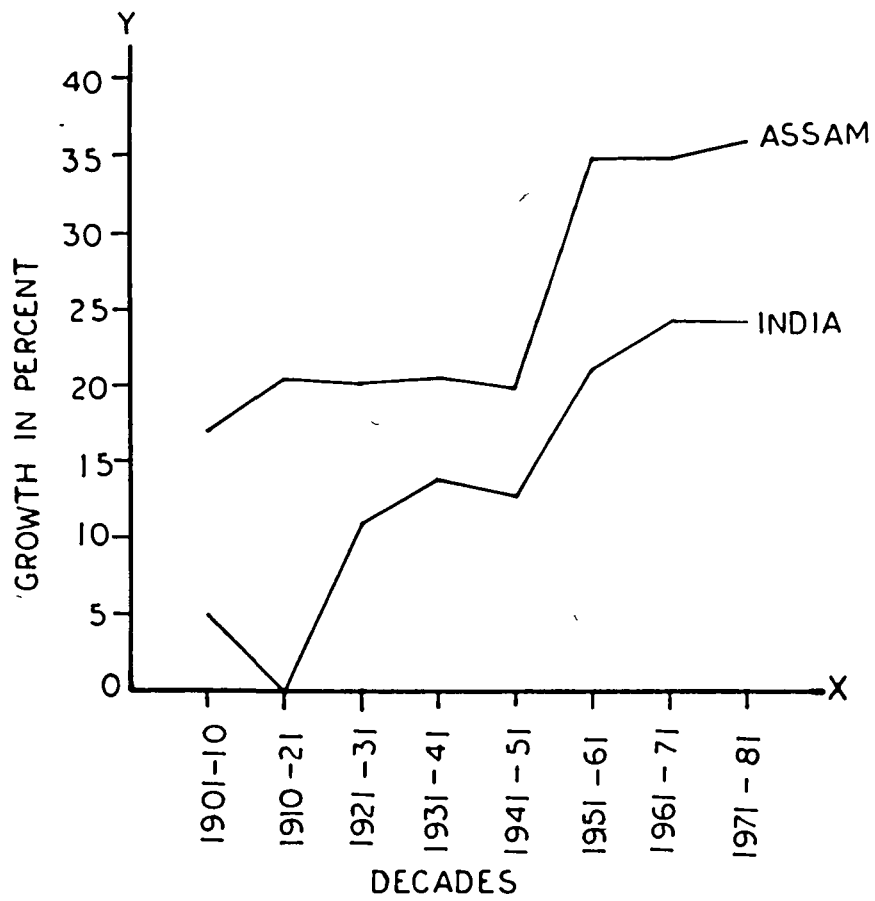


FIG. 3.1

Table - III.4: Birth and Death Rates of the States and All India (1941-1971)

(Per 1000 population)

States	1941-51		1951-61		1961-71	
	Birth rates	Death rates	Birth rates	Death rates	Birth rates	Death rates
All India	39.9	27.4	41.7	22.8	41.2	19.2
Assam	46.7	31.8	49.3	26.9	48.4	19.0
Andhra Pradesh	43.1	29.5	39.7	25.2	39.2	20.0
Tamilnadu	35.1	22.8	34.9	22.5	36.8	16.0
Uttar Pradesh	38.6	27.2	41.5	24.9	42.5	24.2
Bihar	39.0	26.6	43.2	26.2	46.6	21.5
Madhya Pradesh	46.1	38.5	43.2	23.2	46.6	23.3
Orissa	37.2	29.9	40.4	22.9	41.3	20.5
Gujrat	42.2	24.9	45.7	23.5	41.6	16.8
Kerala	37.4	18.0	38.9	16.1	37.5	13.7
Rajasthan	42.5	27.2	42.7	19.4	42.7	18.7
Maharashtra	41.0	24.9	41.2	19.8	41.0	16.9
Karnataka	36.9	18.9	41.6	22.2	39.9	17.4
Punjab	41.2	26.3	44.7	18.9	36.9	17.4
West Bengal	35.4	28.4	42.9	20.00	44.3	18.5
Haryana	-	-	-	-	44.5	16.8

Source: Census of India 1961, Paper No. 1 of 1962.
1961-71 figures worked out by Reverse Survival Method from 1971 Census data.

III.2.c. Immigration and Its Impact on Assam Population

The population problem of Assam is quite different from that of the rest of the country. This was mainly due to large scale immigration of foreign nationals and heavy in flow of people from other states. Though the problem of

immigration in Assam started as early as in the beginning of the century, it has been causing large scale effects since independence and reached its peak in the recent past.

The population in the Brahmaputra Valley had long been characterised by diversity. Successive waves of migration created plural features. There was a definite lack of fusion between the various populations that consisted of both the tribal and non-tribal elements. The area exhibited a cellular character of society consisting of several cultural, linguistic, ethnic and economic groups living their separate existence in different parts of the region. They are classified socially within their groups.¹²

Assam's population increased from 3,289,680 in 1901 to 14,625,153 in 1971 and 19,896,843 in 1981 (projected) representing a higher rate of growth. If the population of Assam increased at national rate, it would stand at 7,632,051 in 1971. The actual population of Assam in 1971, therefore includes an excess of 6,993,095 representing 47.82 per cent of its 1971 population. This gives a rough estimate of the magnitude of migration into Assam started from the middle of the 19th century, it was highly accountable from the beginning of this century.

12. Gopalakrishnan, R. Geographical Aspects of a Crisis in Brahmaputra Valley (Assam). Published by the Indian Political Science Association.

In early period the people moved to this resource - potential area from East Asia and central India and mainly from the Gangetic Valley. This process of migration was co-related to the local indigenous people. Ultimately the society of this region transformed itself into a multilingual tribe-caste society. In this way the societal hierchy was formed in the valley. Thus the initial immigrants along with the indigenous people laid the foundation of the Assamese Society and culture.

The emigrated population of Assam can be divided into the following categories:

- i) Labourers in the tea gardens from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.
- ii) Muslim settlers on agricultural and from erst-while East Bengal and subsequently East Pakistan or Bangladesh.
- iii) Hindu refugees from East Pakistan.
- iv) Nepali graziers.
- v) Immigration from other parts of the country.

Discussion of these factors of immigration in Assam may be taken up one by one.

i) Labourers in the Tea Gardens

Of the five large scale streams of migrants, the

first consisted of tea garden labourers from Bihar, Chotanagpur, Central Provinces (Present M.P.), Orissa and Andhra Pradesh etc. consequent upon the development of the plantation industry by British capitalists. Although the industry started as early as in 1853, migration of tea garden labourers on a large scale took place from the seventies of that century. It continued till 1937, the number falling low after 1931, by which time tea garden labourers numbered just under 10 lakhs in Assam.¹³ The importation of people to work in the tea gardens from densely populated low wage areas became necessary, not because of the general indolence of the indigenous people as is alleged by some writers, including the Census Superintendents, but because of a number of factors, such as de-population of Assam, caused by the civil wars and the Burmese insurrections during the later part of 18th and the early part of the 19th Century, the non-existence of a class of land less cultivators, self-sufficiency and lack of demand for cash, the inhuman treatment meted out to the garden labourers by the planters.¹⁴ As per 1931 Census, "... there were about 1.4 million persons falling into the 'coolie' class in Assam. Of these approximately 0.9 million

13. Census of India 1961, Assam General Report, p. 134.

14. Goswami Hameswar, "Population Growth in the Brahmaputra Valley 1881-1931", Assam Economic Journal, Vol. I, March 1975.

were employed in the gardens and 0.5 million were living outside the gardens and earning their livelihood in some other way."¹⁵ If the annual growth rates of this people assumed to be of 1.5 per cent or an average during the period of 1931-71, which may come to conclude that by 1971 this class of immigrants amounted to 2,240,000 (1,400,000 and 840,000) or at least 20,000,000 in Assam. These imported tea garden labourers, whose number, along with their descendents, is nearly 20 lakhs at present, have completely identified themselves with the indigenous population of the state and they constitute an inseparable part of a composite Assamese society and culture.

ii) Muslim Settlers on Agricultural Land from East Bengal

The fertile land of Assam attracted the muslim agriculturist population from the adjoining state like Bengal (both East and West). The Census Report of 1911¹⁶ for the first time mentioned about the immigrant farm labourers from the East Bengal districts of Mymensingh Pabna, Bogra, and Rangpur to Assam who settled down in the 'Char' lands of Goalpara, Kamrup and Nagaon districts. According to 1931 Census Report, the total number of Muslim settlers from East Bengal amounted to 575,000.¹⁷ The impact of this immigration

15. Census of India 1931, Vol. 3, Part I, pp. 222-224.

16. Census of India 1951, Vol. XII, Part IA, p. 71.

17. Census of India 1931, Vol. III.

was felt alarmingly at this time. Mr. Mullan, the Census Commissioner in 1931 wrote in the Census Report, "This inflow of immigrants is likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than the Burmese invaders of 1820 the structure of Assamese culture and civilizations." He observed further, that during the decades of 1921 and 1931, immigration army "has almost completed the conquest of Nowgong, the Borpeta subdivision of Kamrup has fallen to their attack and Darrang is being invaded Sibsagar has so far escaped completely, but the few thousand of Mymunsinghias in North Lakhimpur are an outpost which may, during the next decade, prove to be a valuable basis of major operations wheresoever the carcass there the vultures be gathered together. Where there is a wasteland thither flock the Mymunsinghias. It is said by no means improbably that another thirty years Sibsagar district will be the only part of Assam in which an Assamese will find himself at home."¹⁸ In 1951, the immigrant Muslim population amounted to one-sixth of total population of Assam which was 88,30,732 only then. This Muslim infiltrators continued to enter Assam though restrained by international border. In 1971 Census report, the total number of Muslim population in Assam was 35.94 lakhs. According to Kingsley Devis¹⁹ the original Muslim population in Assam rose by 109 per cent in between 1891 and

18. Census Report 1931, Vol. III, Part I, p. 49.

19. Kingsley Devis, The Population of India and Pakistan, p. 118.

1931. That the increase in Muslim population in Assam has not been the result of conversion or natural increase but of migration is an accepted fact. From 35.94 lakhs of Muslim population in Assam in 1971 we can safely assume the number of original Assamese Muslim population to be about 6 lakhs and the immigrant population to be nearly 29.94 lakhs. These Muslim infiltrators work an agricultural field and produce cash crops like jute, and contribute more to the Assam economy.

iii) Hindu Refugees From Bangladesh (East Pakistan)

Since the partition of India the influx of refugees from East Pakistan continued unabated to India, mainly to West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. According to 1951 Census Report, the number of Hindu refugees in Assam was 274,455 and in 1961 it was 600,000. The coming of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan was continuous up to 1971. But, during the Bangladesh war of 1971-72 nearly one million Bangladeshi moved into Assam, some of them returned to Bangladesh and then came back to Assam. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Hindu population migrated to Assam from erstwhile Bangladesh (East Pakistan) amounted more than 1,500,000 taking into account their natural increase rate by 1971. Most of the Hindu refugees belong to the middle class Bengali speaking Hindu Community. They were generally urban minded and fairly educated and as such about one-third of total Bengali Hindu refugees have settled near the town or in the towns. The

Hindu refugees who have settled in the town periphery have taken to small trading such as the business of grocery shops, stationery shops, etc. They spread over all the districts of Assam but majority in Cachar, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nagaon districts.

iv) Nepali Graziers

Another stream of migrants into Assam, which went more or less unnoticed, consisted of Nepali graziers, who since the beginning of the current century have been settling in the periphery of urban areas, uncultivated and unowned hill slopes as most of them depend on livestock farming. In the Hill districts of Assam, particularly in Karbi Anglong district and plain tribal areas of Assam like Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh the Nepali immigrants were larger in number compared to other areas.

v) Immigrants from Other Parts of India

A large inflow of migrants from other parts of India, seeking economic opportunities in trading, construction works and white colour jobs also contribute to population of Assam. They came particularly from Rajasthan, Bihar, Punjab and other states of India. It also plays a significant rate in the population growth of Assam. The total number of these population in Assam is nearly 12.39 lakhs and 10.72 lakhs in 1951-61 and 1961-71²⁰ respectively. Table III.5 shows clearly the immigrated population of Assam.

20. Statistical Handbook of Assam, 1984, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

Table - III.5: Number of Immigrants Category-wise Settled in Assam (1971)

Immigrated tea garden labour	Immigrant Muslim settlers from erstwhile East Bengal now Bangladesh		Hindu Refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan		Immigrants from Nepal		Immigrants from other parts of the country		Total		
	Population	Percentage to total population	Population	Percentage to total population	Population	Percentage to total population	Population	Percentage to total population	Population	Percentage to total population	
2,000,000	13.42	3,000,000	20.13	1,500,000	10.03	353,673	2.3	1,072,000	6.8	7,905,673	52.68

Source: Figures computed from Census and discussion in the Chapters.

111.2.d. Impact of Immigration

Assam is a backward state in comparison to the other states of India. The per capita income of Assam was Rs.538.6 in 1970-71 and Rs. 533.5 in 1980-81 whereas Rs. 633.1 of nation's in 1970-71. In production of food index in 1950-51 was 18.39 in 1980-81 it was 140.0. The average size of landholding in Assam was 1.47 in 1970-71²¹ and per capita cultivable land of Assam 0.19 whereas 2.30 and 0.32 of nation in respectively in 1970-71. Due to influx of population from outside, the economic burden of the state definitely increased.

The immigrants were landless agricultural labourers. After entering Assam they obtain Assam's land for agriculture. In this way added to existing pressure on limited cultivable land. Moreover, they depressed the economy by increasing the pressure on a primary occupation, which is already predominant in Assam. Assam has been suffering food shortage since 1957. The cultivable land has not increased but the population has doubled.

Due to influx of millions of Bangladeshi and Nepali peoples has created a chronic unemployment and underemployment in Assam. The employment exchange office in Assam recorded

21. Economic Survey of Assam 1982-83, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

250,000 persons in January 1980. It is another economic burden of the state government.

Most of the Muslim immigrants came into Assam and used the 'Char' land and ultimately sought permanently settlement in forest land, tribal belt, government fallow land and land from indigenous people through encroachment and purchase. Forest land in India as a whole increased from 15 per cent in 1950 to 22 per cent in 1973 and government had urged to increase forest land upto 33 per cent. But in Assam, it has been reduced from 38.07 per cent to 28.07 per cent during the same period. In this way Assam losing her ecological balance. This ecological disturbance has already brought unfavourable meteorological changes such as uncharacteristics draught in Assam.

Due to influx of outsiders the indigenous people are in minority. The non-Indians now constitute about one-third of the total population. The languages is in the major problem in post independence period. In the political field of Assam, these immigrants people roled actively in the last few elections. Practically, the immigrated areas of Assam considered as a 'Vote Bank' for the local and national politicians.

III.2.e. Distribution and Density of Population

Population density gives an idea of the pattern of human habitation in different parts of the state. Distribution

ASSAM
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION
1971

20 0 20 40 60KMS

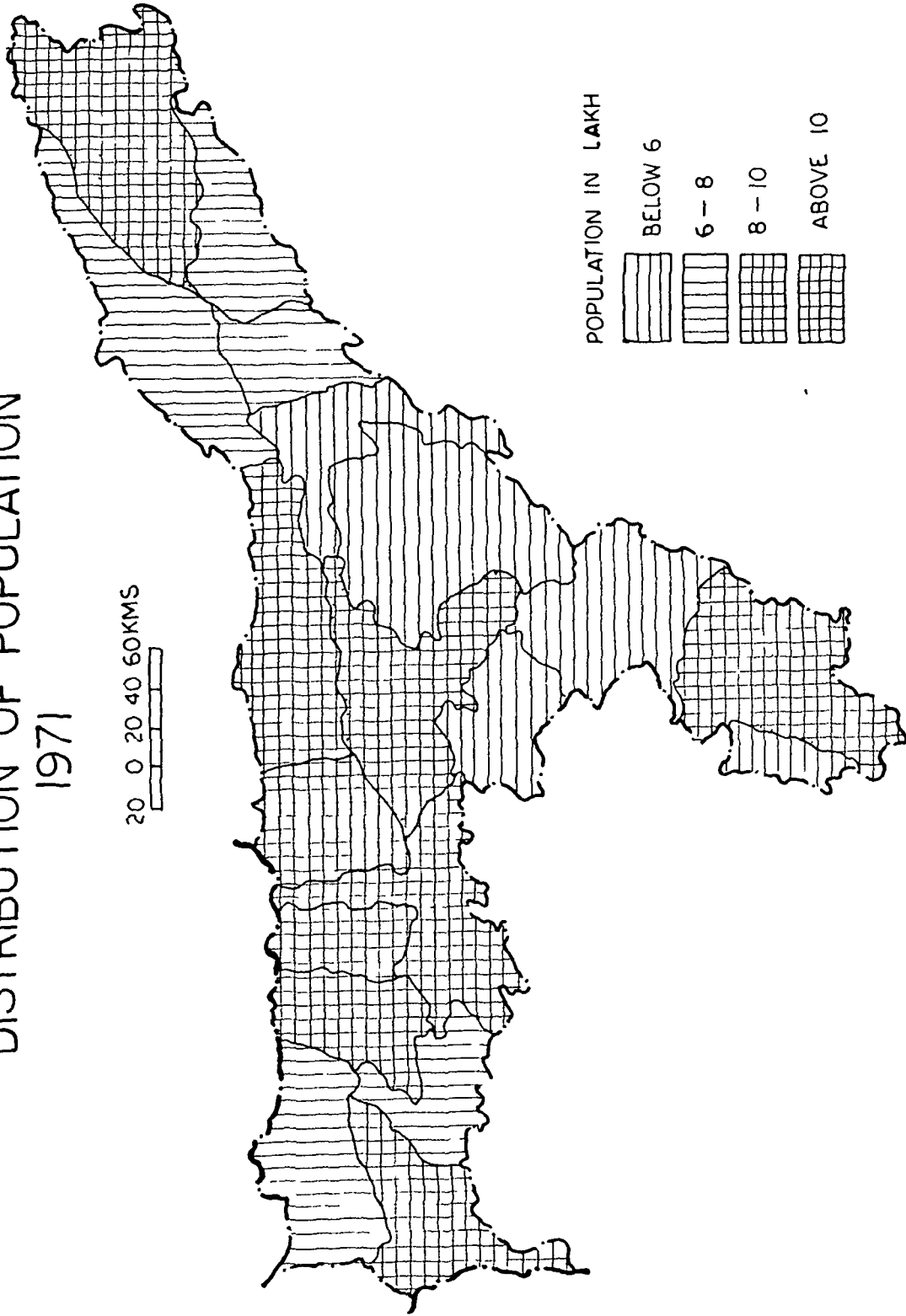


FIG 32

of human habitation is not even throughout the state. It varies from place to place according to the physiographic condition and economic possibilities. Moreover, the distribution of population by their different ethnic character influence the development of political and regional economy of the state. Density of population on Assam can be compared to the nation per sq.km. during 1901 to 1981 from the following Table No. III.6.

Table - III.6: Density of Population of Assam and India per Sq. Km. 1901-1981.

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Assam	42	49	59	71	85	102	138	186	254*
All India	77	82	81	90	103	117	142	177	216

* The density has been worked out on comparable data. The data is estimated for 1981.

Source: Census of India (in respective years).

It is clear from the table that by 1981 the density of population was 254 per sq.km. and India's density of population was 216 per sq.km. or much higher than Indian's density. During last seventy years 1901 to 1971 density of population in Assam rose from 42 to 186 per sq. km. whereas that of India rose from 77 to 177 per sq. km. The density of population of Assam is higher (in 1971 and 1981) than the density of Indian population.

ASSAM
DENSITY OF POPULATION
1971

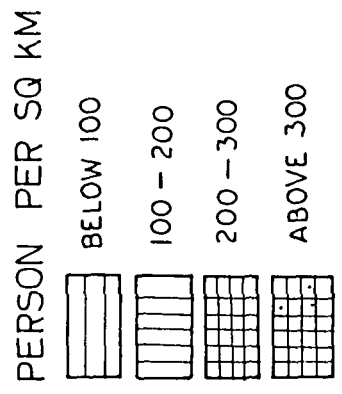
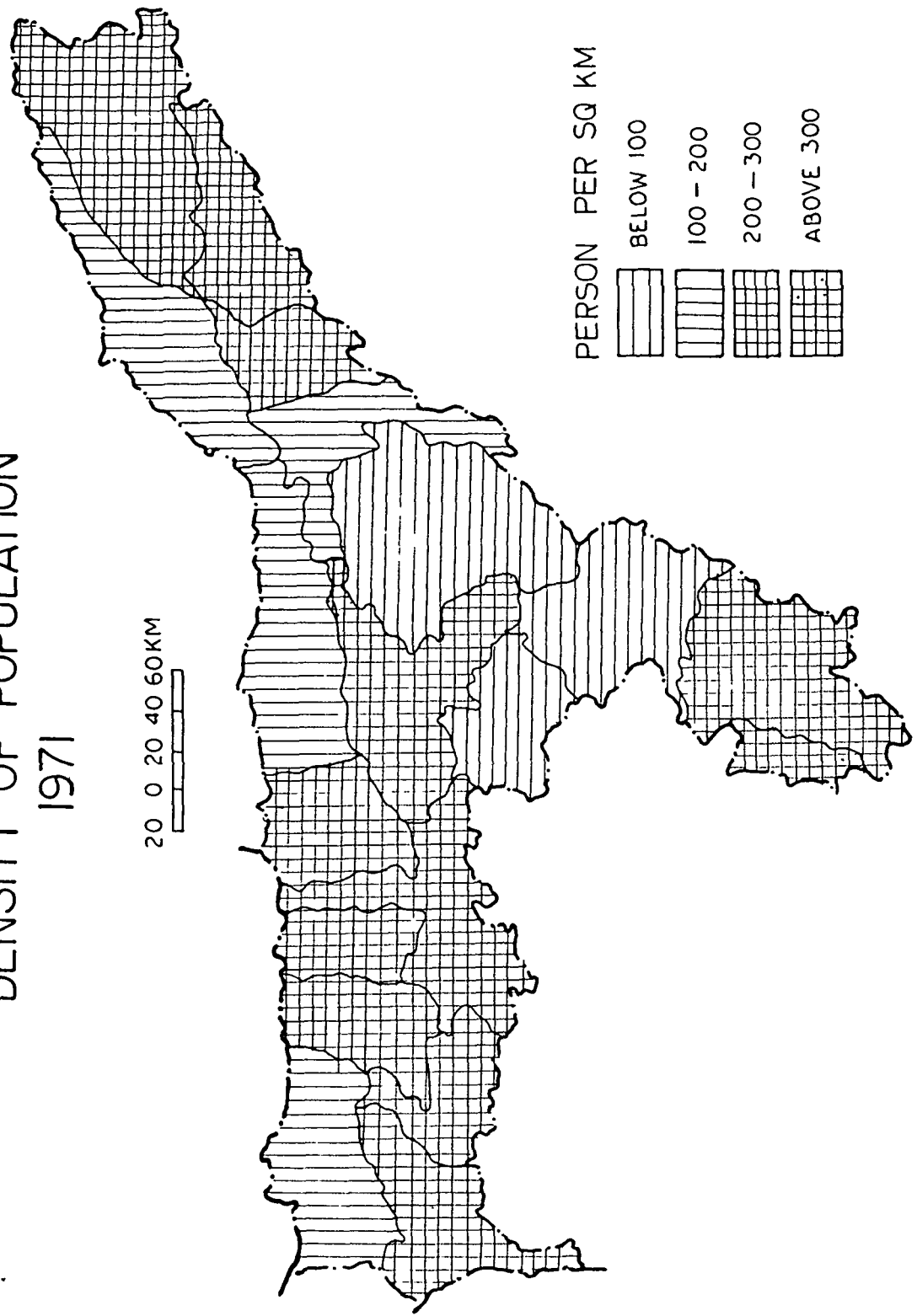
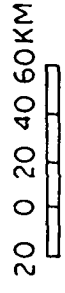


FIG. 33

Table III.3 shows the density of population among the North Eastern States of India in 1981. It is clear from the table that the density of population is maximum in Assam than the other North Eastern States of India.

The Hills and plains, marshy and agricultural lands of Assam are the another characteristics features, which played a major role in the density of population of Assam. From the Table III.7 shows distinctively that the districts of plain region, the population density is higher than the districts of hill area. The plains of Assam had attracted more people specially immigrants because of their fertile land than the hills. Districtwise density of population of Assam, Karimganj district recorded the highest density i.e. 316 (in 1971) per sq.km. and the North Cachar Hills district recorded the lowest density i.e. 16 per sq.km. In Brahmaputra Valley, Dhubri District recorded the highest density among the other districts of the valley. In Fig. 3.2 showing the distribution of population by districtwise and Fig. 3.3 showing the density of population of Assam in 1971.

III.2.f. Sex Ratio

Sex ratio signifies the number of females per thousand males. An inverse enunciation of the ratio (i.e. the number of males per thousand females) is also given sometimes. Sex ratio generally influences the form and tempt of life

Table - III.7: Population of the Districts of Assam (1971)

Sl. No.	Districts	Total Population (in thousands)	Total Area (in sq.km.)	Density (Per sq.km)
1.	Dhubri	8,510	2,745.5	310
2.	Goalpara	663	2,843.8	233
3.	Kokrajhar	710	4,716.5	150
4.	Kamrup	1,182	4,625.9	256
5.	Borpeta	971	3,307.3	294
6.	Nalbari	699	2,022.8	346
7.	Sonitpur	901	5,255.2	172
8.	Darrang	834	3,465.3	241
9.	Lakhimpur	711	5,646.4	126
10.	Dibrugarh	1,141	7,023.9	201
11.	Sibsagar	654	2,602.9	251
12.	Jorhat	646	2,859.3	226
13.	Golaghat	536	3,540.7	152
14.	Naogaon	1,251	5,561.0	302
15.	Cachar	1,131	5,102.2	221
16.	Karimganj	582	1,839.0	316
17.	Karbi Anglong	379	10,332.0	37
18.	North Cachar	76	4,890.0	16

Source: Statistical Handbook, Assam, 1980, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

in any country.²² The balance between the sexes is an important aspect of population structure. It also affects the labour supply through marriage and fecundity. If the proportion of males is higher than that of females more workers will be available. Sex-ratio also affected by fertility,

22. Ghosh, B.N. Fundamental of Population Geography, New Delhi, p. 97.

mortality and migration. It plays an important role in determining birth and death rates in a community.

The sex ratio of Assam was 869 in 1961; 857 in 1971 and 900 in 1981 (estimated) where the national ratio was 945, 930 and 933 respectively. In spatial distribution the North Cachar Hills district recorded the lowest sex ratio of 845 and Karimganj and Dhubri districts recorded the highest ratio of 930 (Table III.8). This lower sex ratio results due to immigration of male population from Bangladesh, Nepal and other states of India for seasonal labourers and permanent settlement.

Table - III.8: Districtwise Sex Ratio of Assam, 1971
(Female per 1000 males)

Sl. No.	Districts	Male population in 000	Female Population in 000	Sex Ratio
1.	Dhubri	440	410	930
2.	Goalpara	343	320	931
3.	Kokrajhar	369	340	921
4.	Kamrup	638	544	853
5.	Barpeta	508	463	912
6.	Nalbari	363	335	923
7.	Sonitpur	481	419	871
8.	Darrang	437	396	906
9.	Lakhimpur	376	334	882
10.	Dibrugarh	759	652	859
11.	Jorhat	342	333	886
12.	Golaghat	284	251	884
13.	Sibsagar	346	307	887
14.	Nowgaon	661	590	899
15.	Cachar	589	342	920
16.	Karimganj	301	281	930
17.	North Cachar	41	35	841
18.	Karbi Anglong	202	197	874

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam 1980, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati.

III.2.g. Age Composition

Age is an important demographic factor in studying the population composition. The changes in age structure over time have the important effect on fertility, mortality migration and economic activities of the population. The changes are generally studied by comparing the differences of age structure of the population and drawing the population pyramid in different point of time.

**Table - III.9: Age Structure of Population in Assam
(in percentage)**

Age Group	1961			1971		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
All Ages	100	100	100	100	100	100
0 - 14	42	43	48	47	46	50
15 - 59	52	53	47	49	49	46
69 +	6	4	5	4	5	4

Source: Calculated from respective census report (1961 and 1971)

In the above table III.9 shows that there has been increased in the percentage population in the age group 0-14 years, proved increasing the dependency burden for decades 1971.

On the other hand, percentage of population of age group of 15-59 years just decreased in 1971. In case of old persons in 1961, 48 per cent of population had depend for

Table - III.10: Distribution of Assam for 1961 and 1971 (Percentage)

Age Group	Persons		1961		1971	
	1961	1971	Male	Female	Male	Female
All Ages	100	100	100	100	100	100
0 - 4	17.20	17.07	15.77	18.85	16.11	18.15
5 - 9	16.55	16.63	15.55	17.70	15.79	17.57
10 - 14	11.30	13.24	11.48	11.11	13.04	13.47
15 - 19	8.33	8.48	7.93	8.78	8.35	8.61
20 - 24	8.28	7.55	7.74	8.91	7.33	7.79
25 - 29	8.59	7.57	8.72	8.44	7.42	7.74
30 - 34	6.85	6.12	7.21	6.44	6.32	5.89
35 - 39	5.59	5.73	4.98	4.81	6.13	5.30
40 - 44	4.48	4.44	-	3.89	4.82	4.02
45 - 49	3.45	3.48	4.00	2.81	3.99	2.91
50 - 54	3.21	3.04	3.60	2.76	3.36	2.69
55 - 59	1.86	1.92	2.16	1.52	2.21	1.60
60 - 64	2.01	1.91	2.13	1.86	2.06	1.74
65 - 70	0.74	0.94	0.81	0.66	1.06	0.81
70 +	1.49	1.84	1.58	1.39	2.00	1.69
ANS	0.07	0.02	0.08	0.06	0.01	0.02

Source: Census of India, Series 3, Assam Part I-A, General Report, Table V.9, P. 77.

POPULATION PYRAMID FOR ASSAM 1961

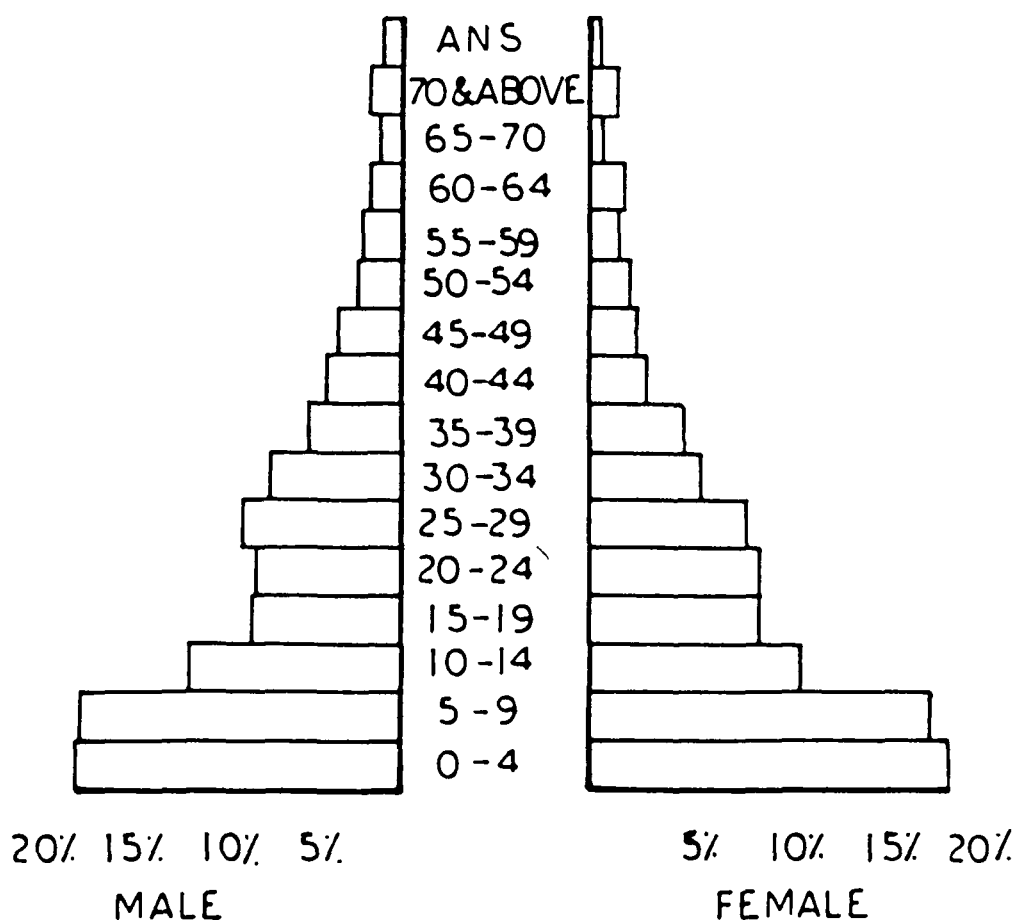


FIG. 3.4

POPULATION PYRAMID FOR ASSAM 1971

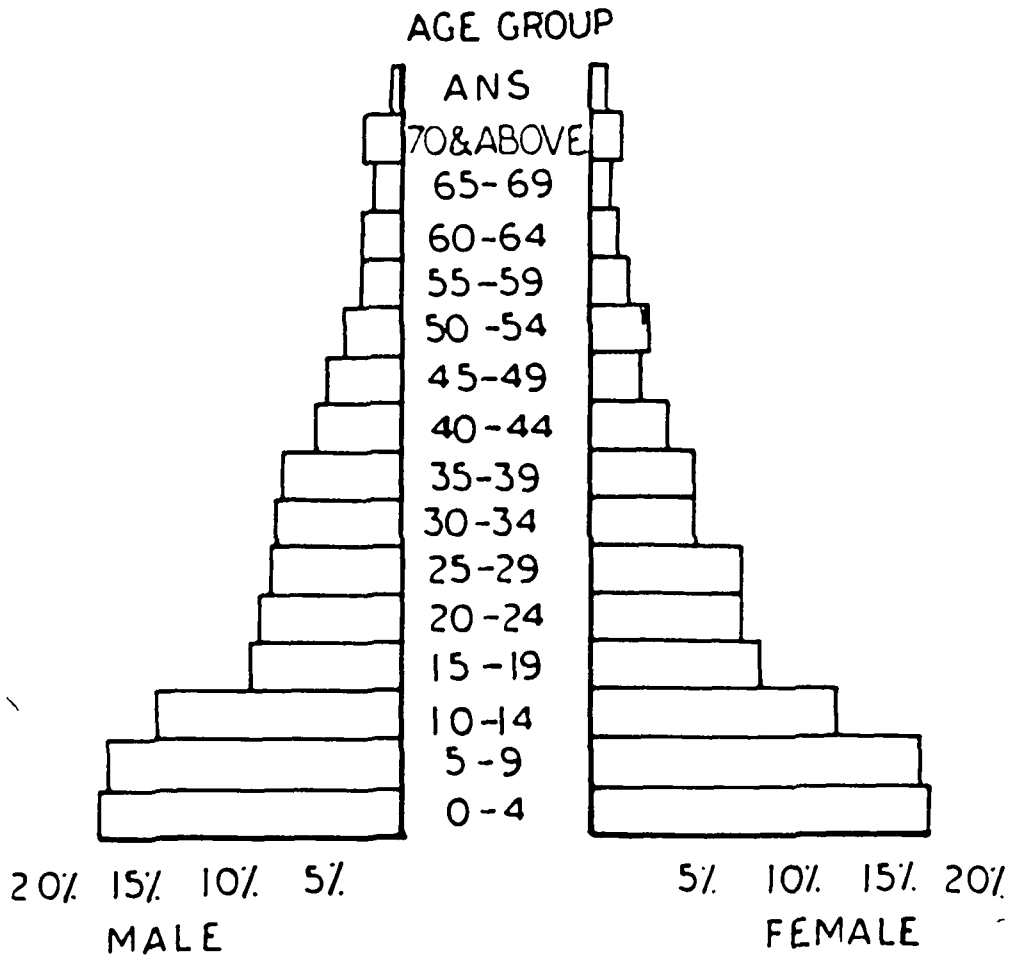


FIG.3.4

their livelihood on 52 per cent of active population. In 1971, 51 per cent of population had to depend solely for their livelihood on 49 per cent of population, i.e. this 49 per cent of population bear the burden of 51 per cent of young and old population. The dependency ratio²³ was 92.30 in 1961 and in 1971 it was 104.08. This ratio shows that in 1971, a high dependency ratio leads to an increase in consumption and reduction in savings and investments. Fig. 3.4 shows the population pyramid of 1961 and 1971. These pyramids also show the same situation of age composition. This unbalanced age composition is marked of an undeveloped economy of the region. (Table III. 10).

III.2.h. Literacy

Literacy level is an important characteristics of population. It has been defined in the census as the ability to both read and write in any language. It is one of the major features responsible for political economy of the region. Population of Assam is a heterogeneous one. Rate of literates varies among the different groups of people. Table III.11 shows the literacy rate of Assam and all India rate for 1951-71.

$$23. \text{ Dependency Ratio} = \frac{\text{Population (0-14) and (60+) ages}}{\text{Population (15-59) age}} \times 100$$

Choudhury, D.C. "Changes of Age Pattern of Assam's Population During 1961-71 and Its Impact on Economic Activities", Seminar Paper on Pattern and Problems of Population in N.E. India, Organised by NEIC, Shillong.

Table - III.11: Percentage of Literates to the Total Population in Assam and All India (1951-1971)

States	1951		1961		1971				
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female			
India	16.1	24.9	7.3	24.0	34.4	13.0	29.5	39.5	18.7
Assam	18.3	27.4	7.9	27.4	37.3	16.0	28.8	37.0	19.6

Source: Census of India 1951, 1961 and 1971.
Social and Cultural Table.

Table - III.12: Districtwise Percentage of Literacy in Assam

Sl. No.	Districts	Percentage of literacy to the total population				
		Total	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
1.	Dhubri	20.0	28.1	11.3	16.6	47.4
2.	Goalpara	25.3	33.5	16.4	22.6	55.1
3.	Kokrakhar	21.3	29.8	12.0	20.1	54.8
4.	Kamrup	24.1	43.7	22.7	27.1	60.4
5.	Barpeta	23.3	31.5	14.3	21.0	52.1
6.	Nalbari	27.5	37.9	16.2	26.8	54.1
7.	Sonitpur	25.3	32.5	17.2	22.5	58.3
8.	Darrang	20.0	27.8	11.3	18.7	52.5
9.	Lakhimpur	28.9	39.0	17.5	27.9	57.3
10.	Dibrugarh	30.5	38.1	21.6	24.9	59.2
11.	Jorhat	37.0	45.1	27.8	33.2	61.2
12.	Sibsagar	39.1	47.0	30.2	37.7	60.1
13.	Golaghat	33.2	40.2	25.3	31.6	61.0
14.	Nowgaon	28.9	37.0	20.0	26.6	59.1
15.	Karimganj	19.2	26.9	10.3	26.2	42.0
16.	Cachar	29.8	38.7	20.2	27.8	60.6
17.	Karbi Anglong	19.2	26.9	10.3	18.0	62.2
18.	North Cachar	27.2	35.5	17.5	24.5	65.5

Source: Statistical Handbook Assam 1980, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati.

The percentage of literates in Assam was 29.5 per cent in 1971 as against the national rate 29.5 per cent in the same year. In 1981, the rate of literates in Assam was 29 per cent (Provisional) whereas the national rate of 36.29 per cent in India. It shows that the rate of literacy in Assam is lower than that of national rate. In 1971, the urban literacy in Assam was 58.3 per cent and in rural areas it was only 25.2 per cent. The female literacy also higher in urban areas i.e. 50.35 per cent as against the 15.89 per cent in rural areas. In the district wise variation of literacy rate, the Sibsagar district recorded the highest percentage of literates (39.1 per cent) and the Karimganj district recorded the lowest rate of percentage (19.2 per cent). Table III.12 shows the district-wise percentage of literacy of Assam in 1971.

The literacy among the tribal population also important aspect for the political economy of the state. In 1971, there are 20.67 per cent of literates tribal population in urban areas of Assam. In 1988, it was increased upto 230 per cent (Provisional).

III.2.i. Rural and Urban Population

Assam is a region of villages where more than 85 per cent of population lived in the villages. According to 1971 Census, the number of rural population is 133.3 lakhs comprising

91.13 per cent to the total population of Assam. In 1981, it was estimated that 178.0 lakhs of population lived in the rural areas (89.69 per cent). Table III.13 depicts the percentage of rural and urban population to the total population of Assam during 1921-81.

Table - III.13: Percentage of Rural and Urban Population of Assam and All India (1911-81)

Year	Assam		India	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1911	-	-	-	-
1921	97.20	2.80	88.82	11.18
1931	96.94	3.06	88.01	11.99
1941	96.67	3.33	86.14	13.86
1951	95.35	4.65	82.71	17.29
1961	92.31	7.69	82.03	17.97
1971	90.77	9.23	80.09	19.91
1981*	89.71	10.29	76.69	23.31

* Estimated.

Source: Census of India.

It is clear from the table that percentage of rural population in Assam is maximum than the all India rate. Urbanisation is very low in Assam than the other states of India.

There are 21,995 inhabited villages in Assam. On the basis of population size, the villages of Assam are

classified into six orders (Table III.14). The lowest order of settlement having less than 200 population is mostly distributed in the marshy tract of the plains or forest cover areas of hills. The next higher grade having population 200-499 are well distributed in the entire state. The medium villages with population 500-999 form the third categories and they are well distributed in all the administrative units of the state. The next villages having 1000-1999 are not uniformly distributed. Such villages are mostly distributed in the Brahmaputra Valley and they are rich in agriculture and productivity of soil is very high. The next order i.e. 2000-4999 are very low in the region. Most of the largest villages may be regarded urban centres because they perform central activities like transport trade, social services, small scale industries and agriculture.²⁴

Table - III.14: Number of Inhabited Villages Classified by Population and P.C. of Rural Population of Assam in These Villages (1971)

Population Size	No. of Villages	Population	Percentage of population
Less than 200	5,579	574,945	4.3
200 - 499	6,694	2,281,524	17.1
500 - 999	5,950	422,941	31.1
1000 - 1999	3,012	4,085,714	30.6
2000 - 4999	734	1,993,066	15.0
5000 - Above	27	171,270	1.3

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 1984, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati.

24. Bhattacharyya, N.N. "Settlements in North East India, Some Perspectives", Jr. of the North Eastern Geographers, Vol. 18, No. 1 & 2, 1986.

Urban Population

Urbanisation is the process by which villages turn into towns, and towns develop into cities. However, there is no unversally accepted definition of urbanisation. Different countries adopt different criteria for defining urbanisation or urban settlement. In case of India 1961 Census, an uniform and somewhat rigid test was applied throughout India for an area to be recognised as an urban unit. the definition adopted in the year for an urban area was also followed in 1971 and 1981. This is spelt out as follows:

- (a) All places with a Municipal Corporation or a Municipality or a Town Committee or a Contonment.
- (b) All other places which have,
 - i) A minimum population of 5000.
 - ii) At least 75 per cent of the male working population is non-agricultural.
 - iii) A density of population at least 400 persons per square kilometre.

There were 3949 urban settlement in India in the year of 1981. India is one of the most unurbanised countries and 23.37 per cent of its inhabitant live in cities and towns (1981 Census). In comparison to India, Assam is predominantly a rural population where 9.23 per cent of total population lived in 79 towns and cities in 1971.

Prior to the British period there was a little urban development. At the beginning of this country (1901) urban population was extremely low which accounted for only 2 per cent to the total population of the region. There were only 10 urban centres located in different parts of the state. The number of towns increased to 30 in 1951 and 54 in 1961 and 78 in 1971 and 79 in 1981.

Guwahati is the only Class I town having population of 123,783 (1971 Census). There are only 5 towns having a population more than 50,000. Besides these all other towns having a population of below 50,000.

In order to find out the degree of urbanisation in Assam , Urban Intensity Index has been worked out by the formula,²⁵

$$U.I. = \frac{a + b}{2}$$

Table III.15 shows the districtwise urban intensity index of assam in 1971. The Dibrugarh district recorded the highest intensity index i.e. 14.98 and followed by Kamrup District i.e. 12.40. Major industries were established in these two districts of Assam. (Fig. 3.5).

25. Sharma, N. 1978. "Measurement of Unevenness in the Distribution of Urban Population in Bihar: An Approach to Regionalism", The North Eastern Geographers, Vol. X (1 & 2), pp. 23-32.

ASSAM
DEGREE OF URBAN INTENSITY
1971

20 0 20 40 60KM

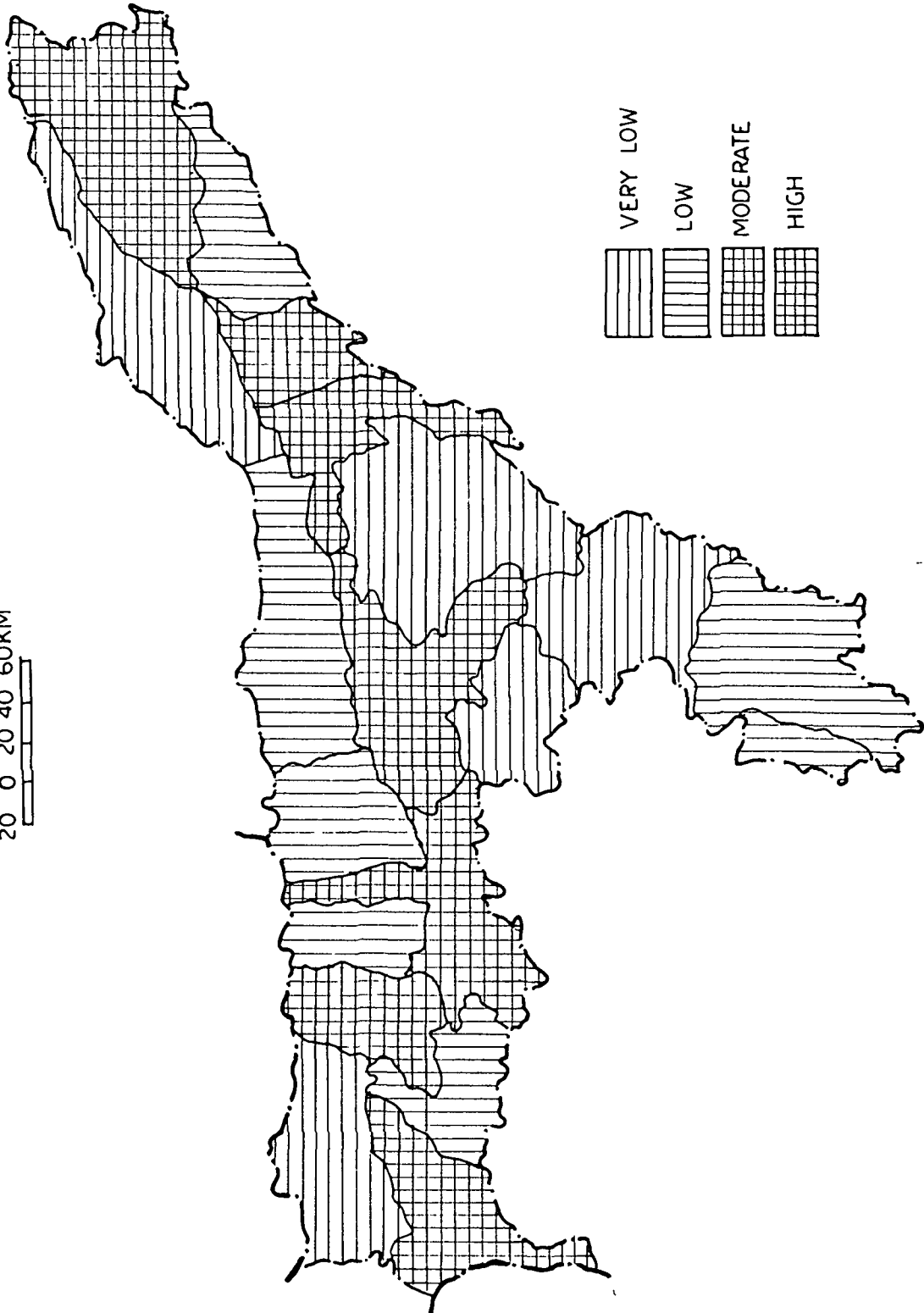


FIG. 35

Table - III.15: Districtwise Urban Intensity Index of Assam (1971)

Sl. No.	District	Urban Intensity	Degree of Urban Intensity
1.	Dhubri	6.75	Moderate
2.	Kokrajhar	2.15	Very low
3.	Goalpara	5.9	Low
4.	Borpeta	6.22	Moderate
5.	Nalbari	4.1	Low
6.	Kamrup	12.40	High
7.	Darrang	3.0	Low
8.	Sonitpur	5.45	Low
9.	Lakhimpur	2.88	Very low
10.	Dibrugarh	14.98	High
11.	Sibsagar	4.15	Low
12.	Jorhat	6.13	Moderate
13.	Golaghat		
14.	Nowgaon	6.8	Moderate
15.	Karimganj	4.69	Low
16.	Karbi Anglong	0.84	Very low
17.	North Cachar	0.35	Very low
18.	Cachar	5.34	Low

Urban Intensity Index

$$U.I. = \frac{a + b}{2}, \text{ where}$$

$$a = \frac{\text{No. of towns in a district}}{\text{No. of towns in a state}} \times 100$$

$$b = \frac{\text{Urban Population of district}}{\text{Total Urban Population of the State}} \times 100$$

III.2.j. Religious Composition

Religious is one of the basic cultural characteristics of the Assam population. History furnishes instances of the religion of a population functioning as a motivated force. Religion is concerned mainly with the well being of mankind on earth. Religion have engaged peoples in ruinous functional fights and political intrigues. All religion have left an important on the customs, art, literature, architecture, food habits, politics and culture of mankind. It has been a divisive as well as a unifying forces.

From time immemorial, several religions have been flourishing in Assam. All major religious communities of the world found in Assam. The Hindu is the predominant group of Assam, accounting for 72.51 per cent of the total population of Assam in 1971 as against 82.64 per cent of all India rate. The next predominant group in the Muslim (24.56 per cent). The remaining 2.93 per cent constituted by other religious groups such as Christians, Sikhs and others. Table III.16 shows the religious composition of the state since 1951 and their decadal variation in percentage.

The districtwise variation of the different religious groups showing on the Table III.17. It is clear from the table that the Jorhat district recorded the highest number of Hindu population (92.85 per cent). The second highest

Table - III.16: Population by Religion in Assam 1951-1971

Sl. No.	Religion	Population			Decadal variation (P.C.) between 1951-61	Decadal variation (P.C.) between 1961-71
		1951	1961	1971		
1.	Hindu	5,781,974 (71.2)	7,730,698 (70.8)	10,604,618 (72.51)	+ 33.70	+ 37.18
2.	Muslims	1,981,859 (23.7)	2,742,287 (24.84)	3,592,124 (24.56)	+ 38.37	+ 30.99
3.	Christians	162,932 (1.90)	263,132 (1.93)	381,010 (2.61)	+ 61.50	+ 44.80
4.	Buddhists	9,854 (.09)	16,782 (1.4)	22,565 (1.5)	+ 70.31	+ 34.46
5.	Jains	4,121 (.04)	9,310 (.08)	12,914 (.08)	+125.92	+ 38.71
6.	Sikhs	2,983 (.02)	8,345 (.09)	11,920 (.09)	+179.75	+ 42.84
7.	Tribal Religion	76,819 (.70)	52,234 (.46)	-	- 32.00	-
8.	Others	8,314 (.08)	14,541 (.14)	-	+ 74.09	-
		8,028,856	10,837,329	14,625,152	+ 34.98	+ 34.95

Source: Census of India 1951, 1961 & 1971.

Table - III.17: Religious Structure of Population, Assam, 1971 (in per cent)

District	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists	Jains
Dhubri	34.80	64.46	0.38	0.01	0.00	0.35
Kokrajhar	76.97	17.34	5.58	0.01	0.05	0.05
Goalpara	53.76	40.42	5.58	0.11	0.03	0.10
Borpeta	51.08	48.69	0.17	0.01	0.01	0.04
Kamrup	79.63	18.80	1.25	0.13	0.06	0.13
Pragjyotishpur	80.41	17.58	1.10	0.57	0.10	0.24
Darrang	70.31	23.92	5.58	0.01	0.11	0.07
Sonitpur	85.98	9.04	4.58	0.10	0.22	0.08
Lakhimpur	89.56	7.54	2.61	0.03	0.22	0.04
Dibrugarh	92.41	3.09	3.51	0.20	0.70	0.09
Sibsagar	91.08	6.65	1.82	0.07	0.33	0.05
Jorhat	92.85	4.50	2.25	0.15	0.19	0.06
Nagaon	59.70	39.39	0.71	0.11	0.01	0.08
Cachar	60.55	37.65	1.73	0.01	0.02	0.04
Karimganj	55.14	44.24	0.54	0.00	0.02	0.06
Karbi Anglong	90.27	1.30	7.99	0.08	0.35	0.01
N.C. Hills	77.03	0.86	21.87	0.04	0.20	0.00
All Assam	72.51	24.56	2.61	0.08	0.15	0.09

Source: Directorate of Census Operation, Assam, Gauhati.

Hindu concentrated district was the Dibrugarh district (92.41 per cent) and followed by Sibsaagar (91.08 per cent) and Lakhimpur district (89.56 per cent). The Muslim is the second highest religious groups of the state. The Dhubri district recorded the highest number of Muslim population (64.46 per

cent) followed by Barpeta (48.69 per cent), Karimganj (44.24 per cent), Nagaon (39.39 per cent) and Cachar districts (37.65 per cent).

Among the religious composition, Christians was the major religion of North Cachar Hills district (21.87 per cent) followed by Karbi Anglong district (7.99 per cent). Besides these, all other religion is very numerous in the districts of Assam.

III.2.k. Linguistic Composition

Like racial composition, linguistic composition of the state of Assam also presents a complex picture as it has been made the home of and place of work by different groups of people belong to Non-Aryan and Aryan linguistic origin. Out of major linguistic groups of India i.e. Austro Asiatic; Tibeto-Chinese; Dravidian and Indo-Aryan. The state record shows that the predominance of the people speaking the tongues of Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Chinese and Indo-Aryan linguistic origin, yet the Darvidian stock of language found some places Assam primarily in tea gardens of Brahmaputra Valley.

The Assamese is the major language of Assam, recognised by the Constitution of India. This Assamese language had developed as early as in the 7th Century A.D. and attained stability between 1200 and 1800 A.D. under the patronage

of local kings and leaders. According to S.K. Chatterjee, "Some 450 years of efficient administration under the Ahoms, brought to the people of Assam some sort of a centralised, peaceful and orderly rule, which enable various tribes to fuse into a single Assamese speaking nation of medieval India under the cultural leadership of Brahmins and later of the Vaishnavas."²⁶ As a result of the mixing of the Bodo and Tai speaking groups with the Indo-Aryan groups to create a single group of Assamese language. From, 18th Century some Kachari, Ahoms, Koch, Chutias, the caste Hindus and the local Muslims took to speaking Assamese language.

At the time of British rule in Assam, the Bengali, Nepali, Rajasthani and Central Indian's came to Assam for administrative jobs, trade and business and labourer for tea gardens. Immediately, various Austro-Asiatic languages influenced the Assamese language apart from local indigenous Assamese and local tribal language. Table III.18 shows the distribution of major languages in Assam and their decadal growth of variation. Assamese speaking population was 61.32 per cent in 1951 and it decreased to 60.89 per cent in 1971. In case of Bengali speaking population of Assam was 20.96 per cent in 1951, and in 1971 it was 19.71 per cent. This Bengali speaking population decreased in Assam because a large section of Bangladeshi people (particularly muslim

26. Chatterjee, S.K. The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India, Guwahati, 1970, p. 35.

immigrants) claimed Assamese as their mother tongue so as to consolidate their claim to be Indian citizen. Because of this reason, Assamese speaking population increased at the rate of 37.26 per cent decadal variation during 1951-61 and 31.78 per cent during 1961-71 although the actual rate of increased of indigenous Assamese speaking population is much lower. During 1961-71, Bengali speaking population increased by 43.17 per cent as against 19.36 per cent in 1951-61. This heavier growth of percentage of Bengali population happen due to the immigrants from Bangladesh and Nepal.

The spatial distribution of languages (Appendix table) in different districts of Assam shows that the Assamese speaking people are majority in the districts of Brahmaputra Valley, then the Kokrjhar, Goalpara, Dhubri, Borpeta, Nalbari and northern parts of Darrang and Sonitpur districts predominated by local tribal language.

The Barak Valley districts i.e. Cachar and Karimganj predominated by Bengali people and they demanded their language as official language. The hill districts of Assam i.e. Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts predominated by local tribal language though Assamese is the official language.

Language is one of the major aspects of the political development of the State. Regionalism may grow up on the basis of this languages. As for examples, Karbi people demanded a separate hill state, and Bengali peoples of Barak

Valley demanded 'Purbanchal' and the plain tribal peoples of Brahmaputra Valley demanded a separate tribal homeland within the present frame of Assam.

III.2.1. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Population

Assam's population is composed of heterogeneous elements. Tribal population and scheduled caste population form a very important part of the State's population especially upto the separation of Meghalaya Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, their importance is highly considerable in the field of political development of Assam. These two groups of population are to be listed and declared by the President of India by a public notification under Article 341 (1 & 2) of the Constitution of India.

Scheduled Castes Population

The persons belonging to the scheduled castes population accounting 6.7 per cent to the total population of Assam in 1961 and 6.24 per cent in 1971 as against 14.6 per cent of the nation in 1971. According to 1971 Census, Assam has 1.14 per cent of the nation's Scheduled Castes Population.

Scheduled Castes population of Assam's belong to lower category of Hindu community. They are socially or economically backward. Many of them belongs to occupational castes and they followed their traditional livelihood. Their primary occupation is non-agriculture though they practised

agriculture also. As their background is non-agriculture they are mostly landless. There are sixteen castes, recognised in Assam, according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Notification Order 1956 (Table III.19).

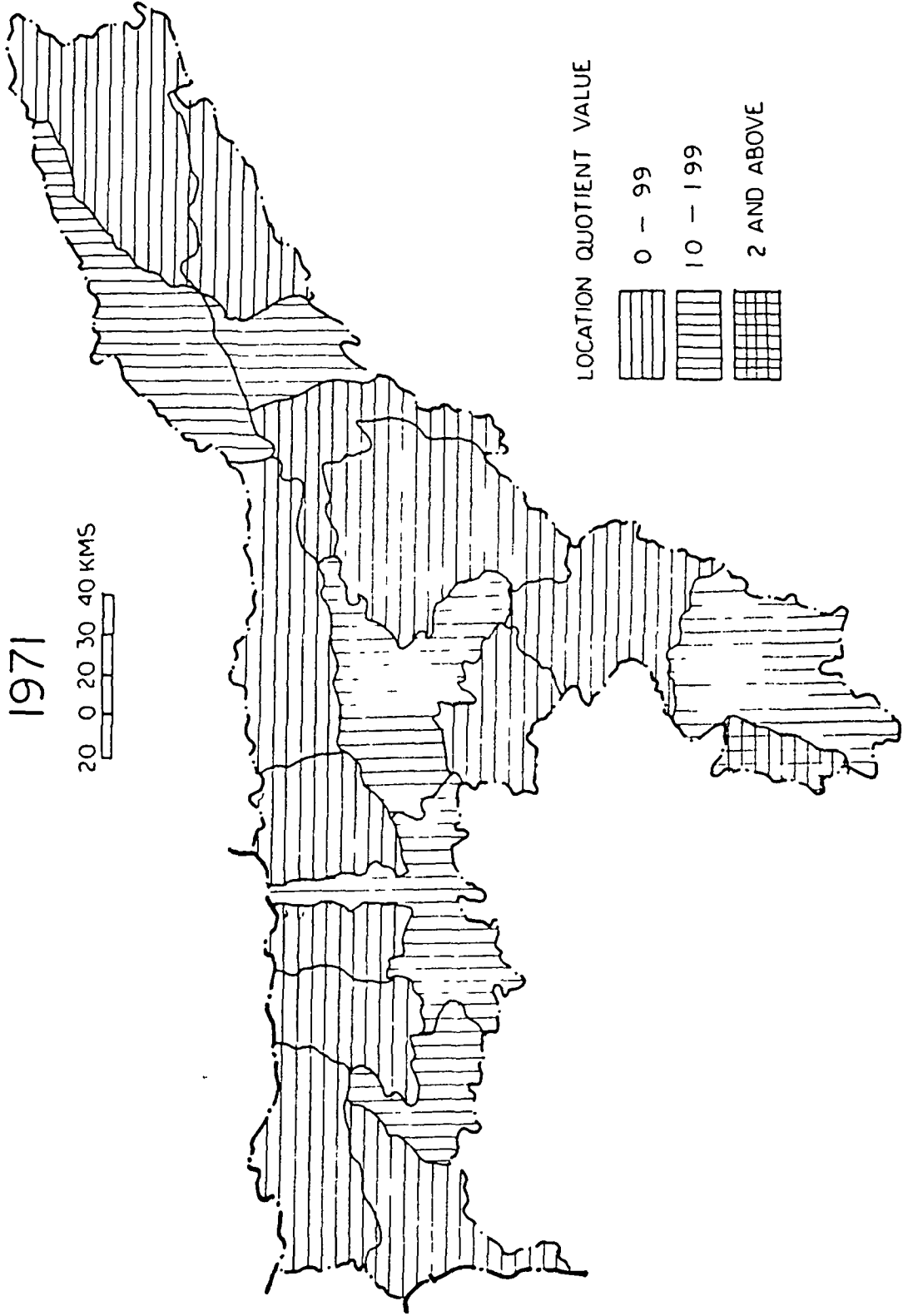
Table - III.19: Caste-wise Scheduled Caste Population in Assam 1971

Caste	Total Persons
1. Bansphor	9,093
2. Bhuinmalior Mali	22,175
3. Brittial-Baina or Bania	28,097
4. Dhopi or Dhobi	20,735
5. Dugla or Dholi	4,011
6. Hira	32,622
7. Jalkeot	2,537
8. Jhalo, Malo or Jhalo-Malo	32,988
9. Kaibartta or Jaliya	2,94,819
10. Lalbegi	45
11. Mahara	895
12. Mehtar or Bhangri	7,296
13. Munchi or Rishi	40,778
14. Nama Sudra	3,00,842
15. Patni	85,910
16. Sutradhar	32,713
Total	9,12,557

Source: Statistical Handbook Assam, 1984, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam.

ASSAM
SPATIAL CONCENTRATION OF S.C. POPULATION
1971

20 0 20 30 40 KMS



LOCATION QUOTIENT VALUE

0 - 99

10 - 199

2 AND ABOVE

FIG 36

In the spatial distribution of Scheduled Caste population in Assam shows that the Karimganj district was the major concentrating area of Scheduled Castes population and followed by Nagaon, Goalpara and Lakhimpur districts. Table III.20 showing the distribution of Scheduled Caste population of Assam. Fig. 3.6 shows their spatial concentration by location quotient method.²⁷

Scheduled Tribes Population

The population which belong to Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution of India is the indigenous origin. These people also economically and socially backward and can be considered as the weaker section of the society. The scheduled tribes population who lives in the plain areas of Assam are either Hindu or in the way of Hinduisation. But most of the hill tribes are animist and now they have converted to the Christianity. The process of religious mentality among the tribal population of Assam, both plain and hill areas influenced in the political economy and development.

The persons belonging to the scheduled tribe population accounting 9.8 per cent to the total population of Assam in 1961 and 10.98 per cent in 1971 as against 6.9 per cent to the total population of the nation in the same year. There are 20 tribes recognised in Assam according to Scheduled Tribe Modification Order in 1956. The Table III.21 shows the major scheduled tribes population of Assam.

27. Mahmood, Aslam, Statistical Methods in Geographical Studies, Rejesh Publications, New Delhi, 1977, p. 105.

Table - III.20: Districtwise Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Population

District	S.C. Population	Percentage of S.C. population to the total population	Location quotient of S.C. population	S.T. Population	Percentage of S.T. population to the total population	Location quotient of S.T. population
1. Goalpara	49,509	7.14	1.1	84,139	12.67	1.0
2. Dhubri	35,627	4.19	0.66	20,601	2.42	0.27
3. Kokrajhar	34,870	4.91	0.66	203,547	28.67	2.7
4. Barpeta	51,452	5.29	0.83	77,451	7.97	0.72
5. Kamrup	65,175	6.02	1.0	110,064	11.34	1.80
6. Nalbari	41,581	5.02	0.62	97,616	12.74	0.98
7. Darrang	35,020	5.07	0.66	19,816	4.93	0.18
8. Sonitpur	42,084	4.67	0.60	57,146	6.34	0.54
9. Lakhimpur	41,089	5.77	1.0	204,811	28.78	2.7
10. Dibrugarh	36,700	2.60	0.33	81,489	5.77	0.45
11. Jorhat	40,467	6.60	1.10	62,726	10.00	0.90
12. Golaghat	25,697	4.79	0.80	39,626	7.38	0.63
13. Sibsagar	18,956	2.90	0.50	22,959	3.51	0.36
14. Nawaon	165,206	9.86	1.60	124,490	7.43	0.65
15. Cachar	128,076	11.32	1.83	14,725	1.30	0.10
16. Karimganj	80,791	13.80	2.33	558	0.10	0.01
17. Karbi Anglong	9,820	2.50	0.50	210,039	55.37	4.5
18. N.C. Hills	826	1.90	0.16	52,583	69.14	7.2

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 1984, Directorate of Economics and Statistics
Government of Assam.

**Table - III.21: Tribewise Scheduled Tribe Population
in Assam 1971**

Sl. No.	Tribe	Total persons
1.	Boro-Boro Kachari	610,459
2.	Miri	259,551
3.	Kachari including Sonowal	198,619
4.	Dimasa (Kachari)	39,342
5.	Deori	23,080
6.	Lalung	95,609
7.	Any Kuki Tribes	13,524
8.	Rabha	138,630
9.	Barman in Cachar	13,210
10.	Garo	9,139
11.	Any Naga Tribes	8,481
12.	Khasi or Jaiyantia	6,487
13.	Hmar	5,380
14.	Man (Tai speaking)	964
15.	Hajong	386
16.	Chakma	396
17.	Mikir	177,194
18.	Hojai	2,298
19.	Mech	2,570
20.	Others	1,329

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics.

The spatial distributional pattern of Scheduled Tribes population shows that the hill districts are the major concentrating areas of Assam. Karbi-Anglong district and North Cachar district recorded 55.37 per cent and 69.14 per cent of scheduled tribes population respectively. Among the plain

ASSAM
SPATIAL CONCENTRATION OF S.T. POPULATION
1971

20 0 20 40 60KM

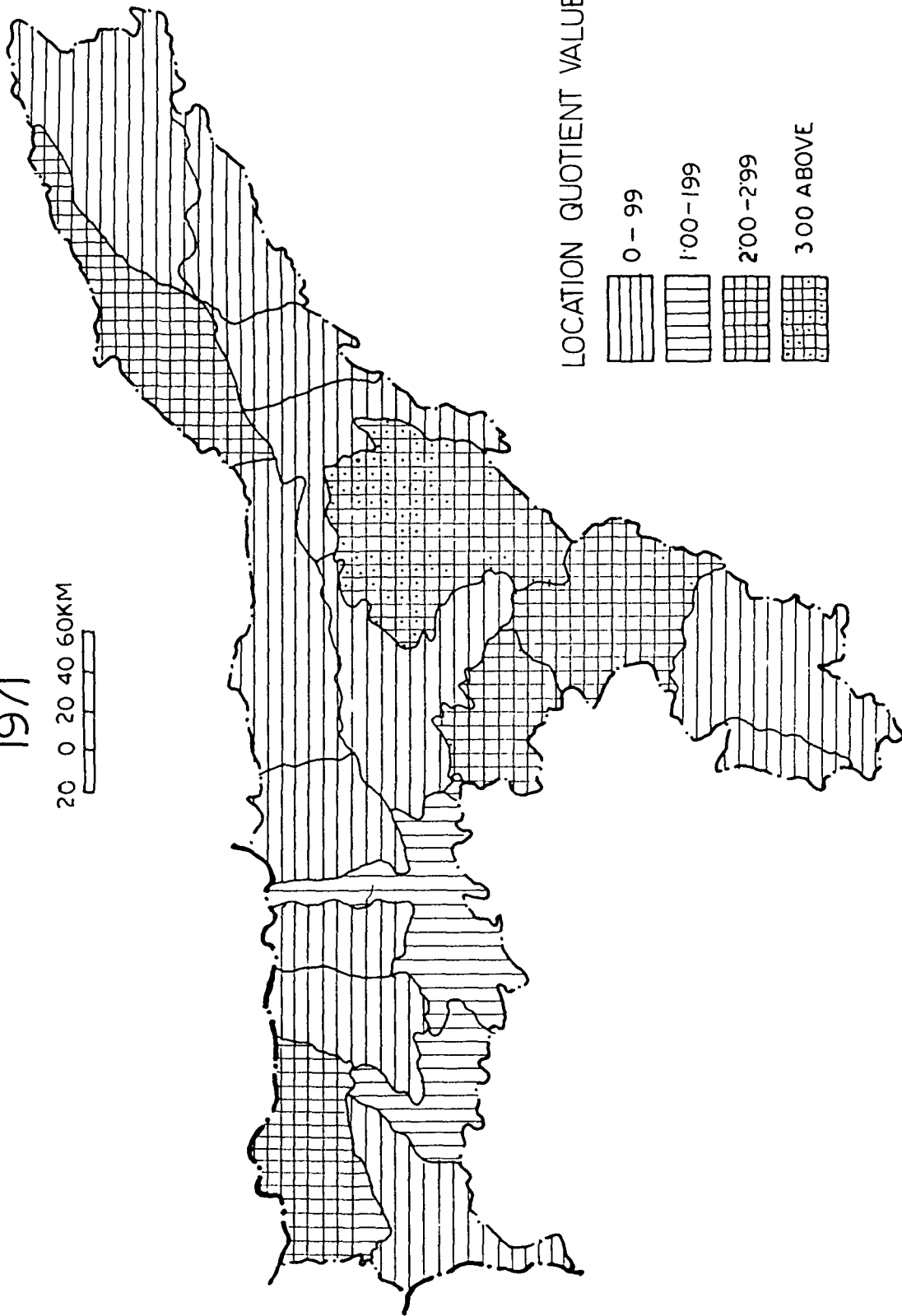
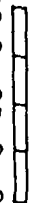


FIG. 37

districts, Lakhimpur (28.78 per cent), Kokrajhar (28.67 per cent), Goalpara (12.67 per cent), Kamrup (12.74 per cent) and Jorhat (10.00 per cent) were recorded as the major scheduled tribes concentrated area of Assam. Fig. 3.7 showing the spatial concentration of scheduled tribes population of Assam (1971) by location quotient method (Table III.20).

III.3. Occupational Structure

It is one of the important phenomena of population study. As it has cleared that the major population of Assam lived in rural areas so that their economy might be influenced by primary sector. According to 1971 Census, the total workers in Assam was 40.88 lakhs. The number of workers in 1961 was 46.09 lakhs. The percentage of total workers to total population was 27.9 in 1971 as against 42.5 per cent in 1961. The step fall in the rate of work participation during the decade is mostly attributed to the adaption of more restricted definition of workers in 1971 Census than that used during the 1961 Census. The workers in India as a whole constitute 32.9 per cent of the total population of the country as revealed by 1971 Census.

In 1982, the workers in Assam 85.9 lakhs (42.0 per cent) to the total population has to support another 58 per cent of non-working population of the state. The category-wise working population shown in Table III. 22.

Table - III.22: Working Population of Assam

Sl. No.	Categories	No. of workers in 1971 (in lakhs)	No. of workers in 1982 (in lakhs)
1.	Agriculture, forestry, plantation etc.	31.34	45.87
2.	Mining and quarrying	0.14	1.80
3.	Manufacturing processing etc.	0.56	3.30
4.	Electricity, gas and water	1.20	1.50
5.	Construction	0.32	3.30
6.	Wholesale and retail trade and restuarants etc.	0.50	0.60
7.	Transport storage and communication	1.02	6.70
8.	Financing insurance real estate and business services	0.98	1.20
9.	Community Social and personal services	3.80	21.2
Total		40.88	85.9

Source: Directorate of Employment and Craftsman Training, Assam.

The table indicates a poor economic development of the state. The maximum of population engaged in agricultural sector. The minimum number of worker is another secondary sector or tertiary sector indicates economic backwardness of the state. It is happened due to lack of industrialization of the state economy.

CHAPTER - IV

ECONOMY OF THE STATE

ECONOMY OF THE STATE

IV.1. Growth in national output and in turn rise in per capita output is the sign of economic development. It depended on three resources viz., national resources, human resources, produced resources or capital. The existence or absence of favourable natural resources can, no doubt, facilitate or retard the process of economic development but location of the country, her accessibility to raw materials and markets in other countries, the present state of knowledge about resources, growth of technique, the attitude of people to material things, willingness to save and invest productivity all play an important role in the economic advancement.¹

Economically, Assam is one of the backward states in India. The total state income at current prices, as estimated by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, stood at Rs. 816 crores in 1971-72; Rs.1318.5 crores in 1975-76; Rs. 2406 crores in 1980-81 and Rs.3813.8 crores in 1983-84. At constant prices with the base year 1970-71 the state income was Rs. 808.8 crores in 1971-72 and Rs.1253 crores in 1983-84.

The per capita income at current prices in 1970-71 was estimated Rs. 538.60 and in 1984-84 it was Rs.1762. At

1. Agarwal, A.K. Economic Problems and Planning in N E India, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, p.1.

constant prices the per capita income in 1970-71 was Rs.538.60 and in 1983-84 it was Rs. 579.00. The Table IV.1 shows the state income from different sector.

Table - IV.1: State Income on Industrialised
(Base at Current Prices in Crores)

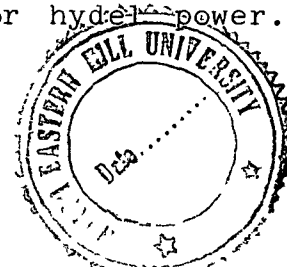
Sl. No.	Categories	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82
1.	Agriculture and others	1,045.5 (56.3)	1,141.1 (56.4)	1,438.7 (60.0)	1,686.3 (60.2)
2.	Construction, Industries etc.	341.7 (18.4)	381.3 (18.9)	409.2 (17.1)	495.9 (17.7)
3.	Transport and Communication	270.4 (14.6)	267.2 (13.2)	291.4 (12.1)	317.2 (11.4)
4.	Finance etc.	40.0 (2.2)	43.2 (2.1)	46.2 (1.8)	50.2 (1.8)
5.	Other Government Services	158.5 (8.5)	190.2 (9.4)	212.5 (8.9)	248.4 (8.9)

(Percentage of total income shows in brackets)

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam, 1983-84.

The region is endowed with an infinite variety of resources including petroleum on the one hand, and extensive flora fauna on the other. More than half a dozen major river besides the mighty river Brahmaputra and its tributaries made the soil of this region fertile, besides providing this region with one of the largest reservoirs for hydro-power.

102418



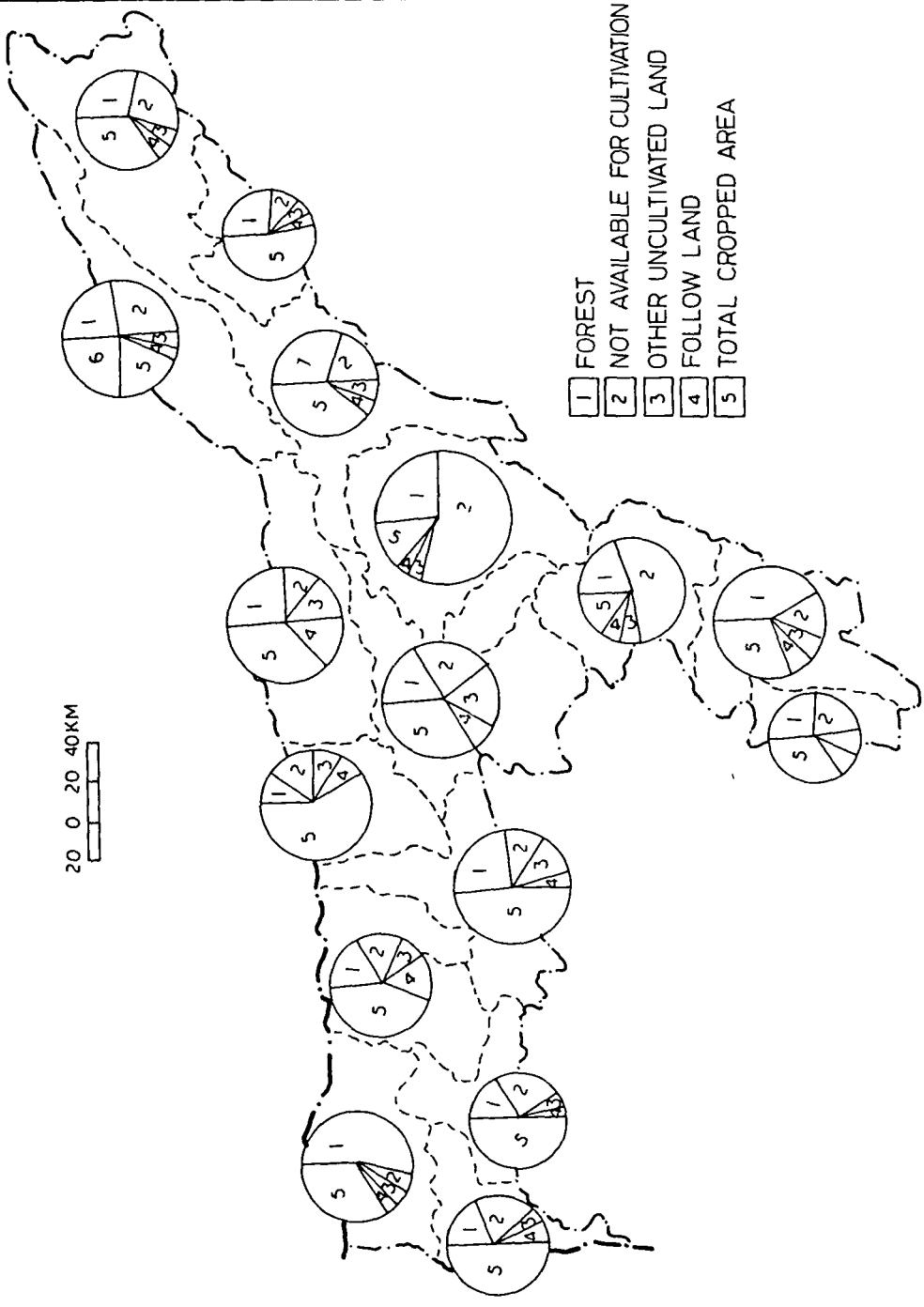
Land, a renewable resources, is in a fundamental sense the most important endowment of the nature. Land is put to various uses: production of food, fat, fibre and fodder; forest and related products etc. besides the non-agricultural uses of land like construction of building, laying of railways and roads etc. Hence, the total geographical area available to the state are of immense importance for the people.

The land use figure of the region shows that Assam had 32 per cent of total geographical area under cultivation and 27 per cent under forest. At present about 30 per cent of the land is not available for cultivation due to physical handicaps, particularly the vast area under water, and large area of swamps and marshes. About 11 per cent of the land available for cultivation but it is not proper used for cultivation as it is under miscellaneous trees and current fallow and permanent fallow including pastures. Figure 4.1 shows the land use pattern of Assam.

Forests are recognised as a renewable natural resource. It is very important for the economic development of the state. Forests constitute a powerful ecological unit having vital environmental significance. They influence local and regional climate of the state. Not only that they have a moderating influence against erosion, provide raw materials

ASSAM LAND USE 1980-81

20 0 20 40KM



- 1 FOREST
- 2 NOT AVAILABLE FOR CULTIVATION
- 3 OTHER UNCULTIVATED LAND
- 4 FOLLOW LAND
- 5 TOTAL CROPPED AREA

FIG 4 I

to industries of Assam. Table IV.2 shows the distribution of forest by legal status in 1980-81.

**Table - IV.2: Forest Resource of Assam 1980-81
(Percentage of Forest Area)**

State	Reserved	Protected	Others
Assam	58.4	41.5	0.1

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Assam.

Of all the natural resources, water is the most important resource of the state. Water and land together are the basis for agriculture which is the main occupation of the people of the State. The meteorological, topographical and hydrological phenomena combine to make the state a store house of fantastic hydro electric potential.

The value of minerals in Assam has improved from Rs. 42.2 to Rs. 361.4 crores during 1971-1981. Assam is the only state which contributed 10 per cent of the all India total in 1981, of which the share of fuel group is the largest. The major contribution about 85 per cent, comes from petroleum industry in the region.

IV.2. Agriculture

Agriculture is the main occupation and primary resource-base of the region, the per capita net sown area is

as low as 0.5 acre since 34 per cent of the land is under crops. In 1981-82, agriculture contributes 60.2 per cent to the total state income.

Out of the total cropped area (3020 thousand hectares) in the region, food crops occupy an overwhelming proportion (2341 thousand hectares) while oil seed comprise 328.7 thousand hectares, cotton, jute, mesta occupy 266.7 thousand hectares and sugarcane, tobacco, potato and cloths occupied 83 thousand hectares.

Rice is the principal crop throughout the region occupying more than two-third (83 per cent) of the total food crops area of the region. The distribution of other crops is rather uneven. Next to rice, comes tea which occupies nearly 23 per cent of the cropped area. More than four-fifth of the tea plantation area are concentrated in the districts of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Darrang, while the rest is distributed in the other districts of the region. Jute is another important cash crop of Assam, comprising 30 per cent of net sown area having a high economic value. Heavy concentration of jute crop is in the lower Assam valley. Sugarcane occupies 13 per cent of the total net sown area is a high value cash crop in the state. Sugarcane grows mainly in the Sibsagar and Nowgong and other districts of Upper Assam. Oilseed is another important crop of Assam. Most of

the area under oilseeds mainly rape and mustard are in the districts of Goalpara, Dhubri, Barpeta, Kamrup, Nalbari, Darrang, Sonitpur, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Lakhimpur Districts.

Average yield of foodgrains in Assam is poor as compared to the nation. The yield rate of rice per hectare (1977-78) was 1042 kg as against 1317 kg to the nation. The yield rate of various crops of Assam is below the all India level. Table IV.3 shows the yield rate of production of some selected crops of Assam.

Table - IV.3: Yield Rate of Some Selected Crops of India and Assam (per hectare)

Crops	1973-74		1975-76		1977-78	
	Assam	India	Assam	India	Assam	India
Rice	1,145	1,151	1,038	1,255	1,042	1,317
Wheat	1,141	1,972	1,200	1,410	1,154	1,477
Pulse	356	528	509	707	470	661
Jute	1,178	1,424	1,385	1,367	958	1,209
Tea	1,364	1,311	1,393	1,391	1,541	1,519
Sugarcane	39,855	51,163	36,849	50,903	31,489	56,412

Source: Economic Survey of Assam 1978-79, Government of Assam.

ASSAM
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY 1985
(RANKING METHOD)

40 20 0 20 40 KM.

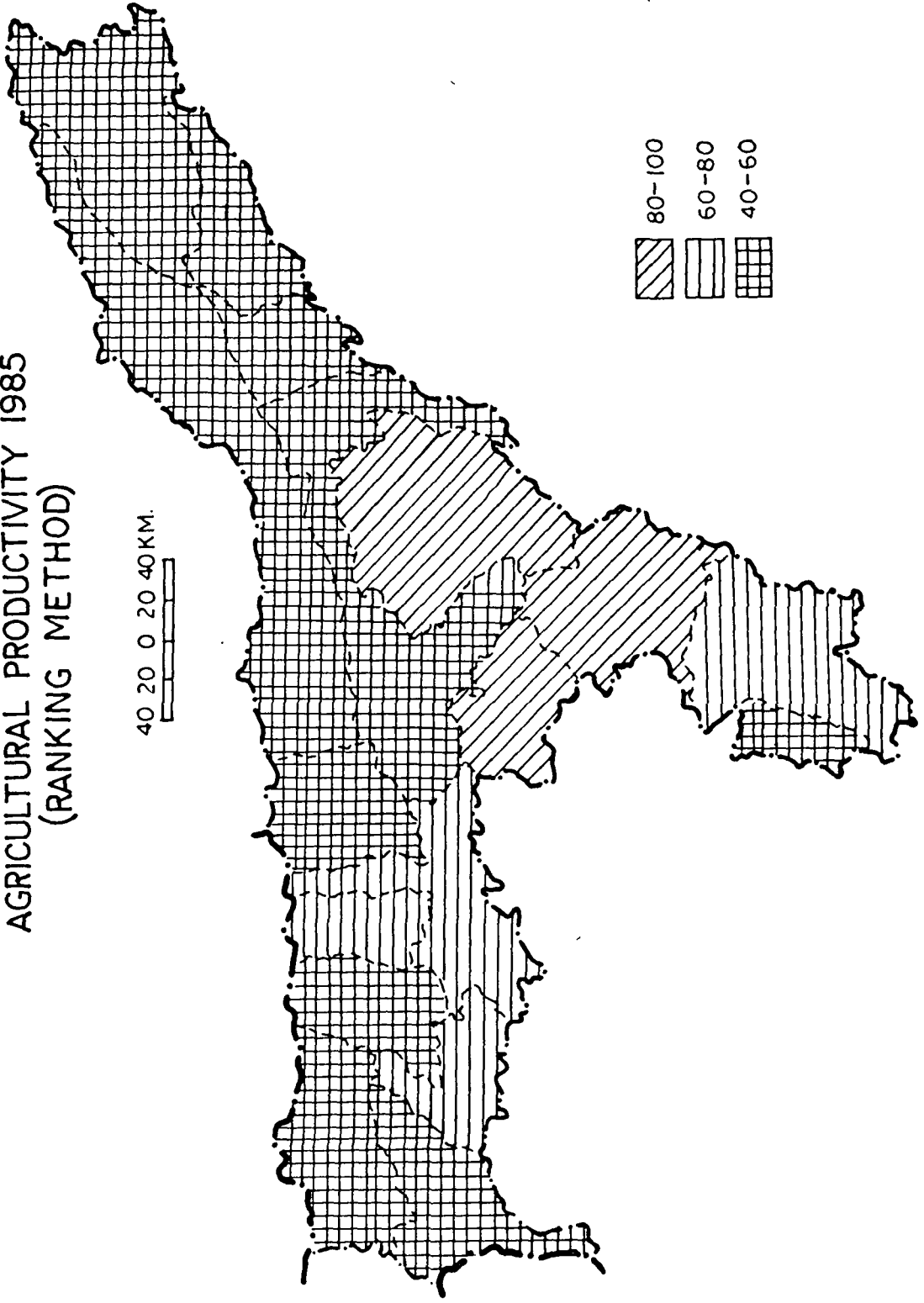
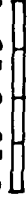


FIG. 4'2

Fig. 4.2 showing the agricultural efficiency of Assam using the M.G. Kendall's Method.*² According to this Jorhat is the agriculturally productive district because the value of its composite score is the least. Nagaon is the next agriculturally productive district followed by Dhubri and Sibsagar districts and so on. The least agriculturally productive district according to its productivity is the only six major crops given on the table IV.4 is North Cachar Hills district whose composite score is the highest.

IV.3. Industry

Assam is one of the important states for the industrial economy with a large potential of resources. But in industrial map of India it is depicted only tea and petroleum industries. The region is potentially rich in industrial raw materials, but their economic exploitation has been hindered by several factors like location of state, poor transport and communication, lack of capital, very small market,

* M.G. Kendall's Method

$$I_j = \sum_{i=1}^n R_{ij}$$

Where, R_{ij} is the rank of the i th crop in the j th area, its composite index of agricultural efficiency = I_j . n is the number of selected crops.

2. Kendal, M.G. "The Geographical Distribution of Crop Productivity in England", Journal of Royal Statistical Society 102, 21 (1939).

Table - IV.4: Districtwise Yield Rate of Some Crops in Assam
(Yield in Kg per hectare)

Districts	Rice	Rank	Wheat	Rank	Sugarcane	Rank	Jute	Rank	Pulses	Rank	Tea	Rank	Composite Ranks
Dhubri	1,230	2	1,080	14	36,500	8	1,385	2	393	2	1,334	16.5	44
Kokrajhar	1,225	3	1,150	11.5	35,500	13	1,300	8	390	3.5	1,334	16.5	53.5
Goalpara	1,190	12.5	1,160	10	35,440	14	1,350	6	395	1	1,334	16.5	60
Borpeta	1,200	8	1,200	4.5	36,000	10.5	1,390	1	335	16	1,334	16.5	56.5
Nalbari	1,190	12.5	1,250	2	34,000	17	1,380	4	340	14.5	1,334	16.5	66.5
Kamrup	1,038	16	1,200	4.5	32,000	18	1,100	11.5	355	9	1,335	10	69
Darrang	1,193	11	1,190	7	34,080	16	1,358	5	361	8	1,345	8	55
Sonitpur	1,210	5	1,170	9	35,550	6.5	1,200	10	382	5	1,340	9	44.5
Lakhimpur	1,224	4	1,150	11.5	36,000	10.5	1,100	11.5	351	10	1,390	4	51.5
Dibrugarh	1,198	9	1,205	3	36,550	6.5	1,000	14	342	13	1,393	2	47.5
Sibsagar	1,204	7	1,195	6	37,000	3	1,090	13	308	17	1,395	1	47
Jorhat	1,238	1	1,180	8	37,500	1	990	15	350	11	1,389	5	41
Golaghat	1,195	10	1,080	14	37,400	2	980	16	390	3.5	1,392	3	48.5
Nowgaon	1,205	6	1,280	1	36,400	9	1,382	3	345	12	1,300	11	42
Karimganj	1,100	14	1,080	14	36,800	4	1,330	7	375	6	1,350	7	52
Cachar	1,080	15	1,050	16	36,700	5	1,230	9	340	14.5	1,380	6	65.5
Karbi Anglong	990	17	980	17	34,800	15	700	17	372	7	1,334	16.5	89.5
N. Cachar	980	18	950	18	35,700	12	750	18	300	18	1,334	16.5	100

Source: Agro-Economic Research Centre, Jorhat.

shortage of labourers and entrepreneurs. The industrial landscape of the region is limited to small pockets around Guwahati and around Dibrugarh district. A minimum share comes from industrial income (18.4 per cent in 1978-79 and 17.7 per cent in 1981-82) to the total income of State. Nearly 10 per cent of active workers earn their livelihood from industries. There are 1604 registered factories in 1971 (factories registered under the Factories Act) and it increased to 1897 in 1980 and then to 2,090 in 1981. Tea factories account for about one-fourth of the total registered factories in the State. The existing industries of the region may be classified under the following categories, (a) Agrobased, (b) Mineral based, (c) Forest based, (d) Miscellaneous.

(a) Agrobased

The agrobased industries can be included food processing sugar, tea processing and textiles. The food processing consist of rice and flour mills, fruit canning, bakeries etc. These types of industries distributed all districts of Assam. The sugar factories located in Dergaon, Kamrup and Silchar only.

The important agrobased industry of the region is the tea industry. There are 777 tea gardens (1981) in Assam, most of them located in the Upper Assam districts. The region produces 45 per cent the total Indian tea and contributing about 15 per cent of the State income of Assam.

The textile industry is perhaps the least developed having only one jute mill at Silghat and one spinning mill at Jagiroad. Recently a power loom unit have been established at Guwahati, Texpur and Golaghat. Another important cottage industry of Assamese indigenous people are Eri, Mug and Pat. Most of the village people were engaged in such type of industry.

Table - IV.5: Production of Some Important Industries in Assam

Item	Unit	1975	1979	1980	1981	1982
1. Tea	Million Kg.	263	278	301	305	303
2. Sugar	000 M.T.	7	8	7	6	12
3. Jute textile	" "	4	4	5	6	3
4. Fertiliser	" "	141	274	55	208	284
5. Refinery Products	" "	1,295	1,390	943	1,566	1,764
6. Plywood	Million Sq.metre	23	25	16	31	31
7. Match	Million gross boxes	4	6	5	5	6
8. Cement	000 M.T.	-	152	129	197	175
9. Paper	" "	-	12	11	14	5

Source: ASI Summary Results for Factory Sector (CSO).

(b) Mineral Based

The important mineral based industries in Assam are coal mining, oil and gas production and limestone. The oil fields located in the Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Cachar districts produce nearly 43.9 lakh ton crude oil (1981) and 869 million cubic metre gas (1981). There are three oil refineries within the state produces 1,566 thousand ton oil in 1981.

Based on the local natural gas, a chemical fertilizer plant and thermal power generating and a petrochemical plants have been established in Namrup. Another petrochemical plants were established in Bongaigaon. Limestone is deposited on the Karbi Anglong district. The Bokajan Cement Factory is based on this limestone.

(b) Forest Based

The rich forest wealth of the state has helped in this field. The important forest based industries are saw milling, plywood furniture, cane works, match factory and hardboard factory. Agar oil factory is another important forest based industry of Assam. Saw mills are located throughout all important places of Assam. The plywood factories are located at Margherita, Mariani and Tinsukia. Another important forest based industry is paper industry, which is located in Jogighopa and Jagiroad.

Besides these industries the miscellaneous industries of the region comprise different types of minor industrial units as printing press, ice manufacturing, distilleries, electric lights and power, and miscellaneous repairing works. These are distributed in all urban centres.

IV.3. Transport and Communication

A well developed system of transport and communication not only subserve the social needs but also provide necessary infrastructure for rapid economic growth. Unfortunately, Assam the central state of the North Eastern Region hardly enjoy a creditable position in this respect. The State still continues to suffer from inadequate transport and communication due to the existence of numerous rivers and streams which were shifting their courses sometimes and floods.

The existing means of transport consist of railways, roads, waterways and airways. Railways serve as the main communication link between Assam and the rest of India. During 1982, the State had a total railway route length of 2178.55 kilometres (315.22 kilometres under broad gauge, 1863.33 kilometres under metre gauge) which constituted nearly 4 per cent of the total railway route length of the country (61,230 kilometres). However, the position of the state in respect of broad gauge route length was very much negligible, it accounted only below 1 per cent. So far as electrified

is concerned, there is none in Assam as well as in the N.F. Railway section. Among the important steps under the implementation for improvement of railway facilities of the State, the notable one is the work of extension of broad gauge line from Guwahati to Dibrugarh via Nowgong and Jorhat. Further, the Railway Ministry has passed a proposal for construction of a rail-cum-road bridge across the river Brahmaputra connecting Jogighopa and Pancharatna in the Dhubri district along with connecting rail link on the south bank from Jogighopa to Guwahati (136 Kms). If it is completed, it will be more helpful for economy of Assam. In the railway map of Assam recorded nearly 30 Km railway route length per 1000 Km² of the area in 1980.

The road system played an important role in the economic development of Assam. Moreover it provided the link of the neighbouring states with the rest of the country. But the development of roads in the state is not adequate. During 1980-81, the state had a total of 20,693 kilometres of P.W.D. road length including 1,339 kilometres of National Highways as against 20,225 kilometres in 1978-79 and 17,030 kilometres in 1970-71. Out of the 20,693 kilometres of PWD road length in 1980-81, 4,777 kilometres (or nearly 23 percent) were surfaced roads and the rest 15,916 Kms were unsurfaced roads. There are 132 Km PWD road length per lakh population and 246 Km of PWD road length per thousand Km² in Assam.

However, the condition of most of the roads in Assam is not satisfactory and requires frequent repair due to ravages caused by nature's wrath, particularly during the rainy season. Moreover, many of the roads being small in width with narrow and weak bridges/culverts, needs widening and upgradation.

Both the public and private sectors are providing road transport services in Assam. In the public sector there is only one organisation viz. the Assam State Road Transport Corporation (ASRTC) which provide both goods and passenger traffic in selected roads. In 1981-82, the corporation covered a total route length of 5,889 kilometres. The total fleet strength of the Corporation stood at 776 in 1981-82 which included 712 buses, 27 trucks and 24 cars. On an average nearly 82 thousand passengers travelled daily through the fleet of ASTC in 1981-82. The road transport services under private sector had also played a crucial role in the movement of passengers and goods traffic in the state. The total number of motor vehicles on road in the state was 87,644 in 1981.

Inland Water Transport

Assam possesses an extensive navigable waterways. Two public sector organisation viz. the State Directorate of Inland Water Transport and the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation are presently providing navigational facilities in the State on commercial basis. The State Directorate

IV.4. Some Observations

From the above study it is clear that the state is rich in natural resources an overwhelming part of which lies untapped. There is a need to develop these resources in an integrated manner and in the context of social needs.

In the agricultural field of Assam, traditional technique of production continue to be practised on a large scale. The farmers of Assam use primitive and simple agricultural implements which require human and animal labour for their operation. As against this, in advanced countries of the West and even in certain selected pockets of India the farmers use most upto date farm machinery which has been helped to increase the agricultural production.

In the north-east, there is a heavy pressure of population on land particularly in Assam. The use of primitive agricultural tools, the wooden plough in particular, is one of the manifold inefficiencies of agriculture in Assam.

It is assuming that the traditional techniques are now outdated. Because of the low productivity that accompanies this technique, farmers are trying to leave it as and when feasible. It requires appropriate technology which may help in increasing agricultural output and demand for labour without accentuating economic inequalities. Viewing from this angle, it would be better to concentrate on expanding irrigation facilities and increasing supply of fertilisers and high yielding varieties of seed farmers.

In case of food problem of the state it is essential to increase the foodgrains production. Steps should be taken to minimise the destruction of crops from insects etc. Proper storage facilities will be helpful in minimising such losses. Further, an efficient public distribution system is the most essential requirement for the solution of food problems of the State. The distribution of surplus land (taken over under ceiling on land) in favour of the rural poor will help in raising their earning capacity.

The industrial development is the key to an overall economic progress of the state. During the pre-independence era the region lagged behind the rest of the country in respect of developmental activities. There were some tea gardens and a small quantity of oil was explored from the oil field in Assam. Agriculture was the mainstay for livelihood of the people. Even though industrialisation in the state started soon after independence, in a real sense it was the Fourth Plan when a planning was made to set up industries in different parts of the state.

The problems relating to industrial growth are many, varied and serious. There is an urgent need to overcome the constraints so that the programme of industrialisation may generate sufficient growth potential. An appropriate technology suited to the local needs and available resources and the manpower are to be adopted which ultimately get a key position in any meaningful programme of industrialisation.

CHAPTER - V

POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT (1826-1947) (A)

POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT (1826-1947) (A)

The year 1826 stands out as landmark in the historical development of Assam. This year marked the beginning of British occupation of Assam. The advent of the British brought a spatially widespread socio-economic transformation of the state's society and economy. The introduction of British administrative and economic policies not only made Assam a part of the colonial economy, but more importantly, it totally disrupted the traditional hierarchy and gave way to new socio-economic forces relationships which had a lasting impact on the processes of development of the state.

Six centuries before the coming of the British to the power in Assam, the Ahoms established their rule in the early thirteenth century. The Ahoms, "an offshoot of the Tai or the great Shan stock of South-east Asia,"¹ were only about a few thousand in number when they first entered Assam from east through the Patkai mountains. They implanted many of the customs and practices of the people with whom they came into contact and also intermarried with the local people of the region. This was in order to increase their own numbers.² Ahoms brought about a total changes in relation of

-
1. Borpuzari, H.K. Political History of Assam, Vol.I, p.2.
 2. Bhuyan, S.K. A History of Assam (1681-1826), Guwahati, 1968.

production and development. The Moamaria rebellion and the Burmese invasions changed the courses of the history of Assam in a manner that stunted the possibilities of a natural growth of economy of the State. Thus after the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, the old order of Assam was shattered. This process was aided by the British who on the ruins of old established the new order in Assam.

The arrival of the British not only heralded the growth of new forces of Assamese society, but it also arrested the process of a normal transition from a semi-tribal economy to feudal economy (which was very difficult in the Ahom economic order). The pre-colonial Assamese economy was basically tribal with under developed markets. Therefore, Assam was not ready to face the world capitalist order into whose folds it was drawn inevitably with the British occupation.

The British Government annexed initially only the lower Assam (i.e. the district of Kamrup and a part of present Darrang upto Biswanath) which "yielded a revenue of upwards of three lakhs"³ was annexed and Upper Assam (the centre of Moamaria rebellion and the Ahom State) whose revenue scarcely reached, until 1828, a lakh of rupees⁴ was restored to a scion of the Ahom family for both financial and strate-

3. Assam in the Days of the Company, p. 19.

4. Ibid., pp. 216-228.

gical reasons. By 1834, the Tea Committee was set up Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General found that the tea plant was indigenous to Assam.⁵ This report coupled with the other information gathered on the natural potentials of Assam, changed the whole attitude of British towards Assam and in 1838 Upper Assam too was annexed to the British dominions. The prime interest of the British in annexing the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nagaon, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur was the extraction of *maximum* revenue possible from these areas. David Scott, the agent to the Governor General in N.E. Frontier, at first tried to retain the organisation of the Khel system and the British revenue policies through the Paik system that had operated successfully in the Ahom rule. In Upper Assam the Khels were therefore retained intact, but the revenue was demanded in cash instead of in kind or personal services as under the Ahom Rule.⁶ But the demands of a monetised economy and organisation of a semi tribal order could not go hand in hand.

Scott's hope of collecting a good revenue from Upper Assam were not fulfilled. After the period of experimenting with restoring Upper Assam to the Ahom Kings, in 1838 British administration adopted like in the rest of India was introduced in Upper Assam also.

5. Ibid.

6. Borpuzari, H.K. Political History of Assam, p. ii.

The administrative system, despite the early attempts made by David Scott to retain assemblance of the pre-colonial set-up was "in structure and function as well as name Anglo-Mughal"⁷ rather than Anglo Ahom. The system was totally foreign in Assam and the old Ahom administrative machinery was ill-equipped to deal with this system. For the proper functioning of the system a completely new machinery was needed. The designation of many posts - Shunarnavis or Registrar; Khazanchi or treasurer; or Tehsildar or district revenue Collector were unfamiliar to the Assamese.⁸ The entire system and its officer were so unfamiliar to the Ahom tradition that the old Ahom officials and nobility became redundant in the new socio-economic order. It was therefore, inevitable that they proud themselves to be incompetent in the new jobs entrusted to them and consequently their very presence caused a great labour and trouble to the European functionaries.⁹ It was therefore, not difficult to overthrow the Ahom officers who had been directly linked with the Ahom administration, like Khelders and heads of various Khels, with the overthrow of these officers the Paik system finally came to an end. The rest of the Ahom aristocracy had begun to decline and disintegrate from the mid-eighteenth century when civil war began.

7. Borpuzari, H.K. Assam in the Days of the Company, Ch. I.

8. Baruah, N. A Study in British Paternalism, pp. 133-134.

9. Borpuzari, H.K. A Political History of Assam, p. 18.

With the annexation of Upper Assam it was clear that the British Government had come to stay and the people of Assam begun to react to that reality at various levels. On the one hand, there was a certain amount of dissatisfaction and rebelliousness on the other hand, there was definite trend towards accepting the inevitable and adjusting to British rule.

It was this second trend which was to create new forces in Assamese society. In the initial period of British rule in Assam, when local people could not be employed in the administrative machinery, it was inevitable that the British should find less expensive way out and the administrative post began to be filled with people from the neighbouring state of Bengal where British administration had already created a group of trained administrator and clerks. Therefore, during the first few decades of British rule in Assam the clerical and bureaucratic posts in the administration were by and large monopolised by people from Bengal, the highest posts being of course always in the hands of British officers. But throughout this period the Assamese people were aware that for their own economic existence and survival they must adopt themselves to the new conditions. The primary qualification for entering the new administrative machinery was the acquisition of at least the preliminaries of western education as imported by the British. So gradually Assamese youngman

begun to emerge with the basic qualification for entering the new administration. The process was however slow because the spread of English education in Assam was not keeping pace with the constant growth of the administrative machinery. The development of this new order and the new forces, with their new norms and values was a positive aspect of British occupation of Assam. But the impact of the introduction of a new economic system into the semi-tribal bases of Assamese economy was not a very healthy one for the growth and development of the Assamese economy.

For the development situation of Assam in the early British days in different sectors, thousands of Bengali peoples recruited from various districts of Bengal and soon all the principles officers of the Government were filled up by Bengalis as they were found to be efficient and competent as colonial functionaries.¹⁰ T.C. Robertson, who succeeded Scott's Policy of recruiting Bengalis in important offices of the Government of Assam. Later, Francis Jenkins arrived as the Commissioner (1834) almost every department of the government was filled up by the Bengalis.¹¹ The former administrator policy of importing Bengalis into Assam created

10. A S R, R P Letters issued to the Govt. of India, Letter No. 256. Jenkins to William Grey dated 7 December 1854, Vol. 7.

11. Ibid.

a condition where Bengali language had to be introduced as the official language of Assam as the important functionaries did not understand any language than Bengali.¹² Bengali was therefore introduced as the court language of Assam in 1831 by the Government of Bengal. This introduction created more jobs facilities for Bengalis. So Bengali was the only language known to the functionaries.

Economic Development of Assam

Tea Industry

Tea was the first plantation crops of Assam which has been played a major role in the economic development of Assam in the British period. From the commercial point of view tea is the most important crop raised in Assam. The first, discovery of the tea-plant growing well in Upper Assam, in 1821, was taken up for experimental cultivation in 1830. In 1835, the first tea garden was opened at Lakhimpur in 1838 the first twelve chests of tea was exported from Assam to England. Mercantile Associations for the planting and manufacture of tea in Assam began to be formed in 1839 and in 1840 the government made over its experimental establishment to the Assam Tea Company. In 1851, the crop of this Company was estimated at 280,000 pounds. The cultivation spread all over Assam. In 1871, the total population of tea

12. Ibid.

was 11 million pounds, for 1881 the figures were 37 million pounds for 1891, 90 million pounds and for 1900, 141 million pounds. In 1903, the output exceeded 145 million pounds. There were in that year 764 gardens which gave employment to 846 Europeans and 409,000 natives. The capital invested in tea is probably about £ 30 for every acre under cultivation, and as 338,000 acres were planted out in 1903. Some four-fifths of the capital employed by companies is owned by companies whose headquarters offices are situated in England.¹³ The want of labour has always been one of the most serious obstacles to the development of tea industry. Therefore, the labour force were imported from the Bihar, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. In 1903, the total number of labour were 543,800 persons who engaged in tea cultivation.

The benefits which the tea industry has conferred on the province have been many and great. The gardens provide on employments for different categories such as coolies, clerical and medical. At that time the existence of the tea industry has been a potent factor in the improvement of communications by rail, river and road. In the report on the Census of 1921 it was estimated that the total number of immigrants to tea gardens a million on a third, or one-sixth of the total population of the province.¹⁴

13. Gait, Edward. A History of Assam, p. 413.

14. Ibid., p. 414.

Communication was the prime factor for the developments of the state. At the time of the British advent of Assam the difficulty of transport was the most serious obstacle to her development. Country boats were the primary source of communication in the time of British advent to Assam. The steamer service in the Brahmaputra between Calcutta and Guwahati (960 Kilometres) was established by the Government in 1847. In 1856, the government steamer service was extended from Guwahati to Dibrugarh. From 1861 a British private company took over the monopoly of the steamer and it became more efficient. It is interesting to note that around 1882 river transport helped the railway construction in Assam in a big way.¹⁵

Before the British come into the power of Assam all the roads became useless owing to lack of maintenance except Dhodor Ali and Gosain Kamala Ali in Upper Assam. All the roads were built by the Ahom Kings. As in the case of waterways, it was the tea industry which is greatly responsible for the development of roadways. By 1859, the Public Works Department of the Government started for construction of roads in different places. The first important work done by the government was the construction of Assam Trunk Road

15. Report on the Administration of Assam Valley Districts 1881-82, p. 61.

in 1866. With the establishment of the Public Works Department in 1868 the Government started giving more attention to the main roads. But it was after the establishment of the Local Boards in Assam in 1880 that real progress was made.¹⁶

Due to the importance of tea industry the Chief Commissioner of Assam put special emphasis on the development of roadways. As a result nearly Rs.41 lakhs were sanctioned for the construction of roads in Assam.¹⁷ It was only in 1922 that the first passenger bus service started between Jorhat and Jhanji in Upper Assam.

During the second war, road construction was accorded top priority to meet defence needs. In this period, the roads were constructed by a private enterprise to maintaining the vehicles for defence purpose. After three years of war, Assam Transport Organisation was established under the Government of Assam and it was remodelled the name as State Transport, Assam in 1948.¹⁸

With the importance of tea industry in Assam under British Government, the railway transport system play another important role in the development of Assam. In the initial stage the railway transport system in Assam was nothing like

16. Medhi, S.B. Transport System and Economic Development of Assam, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

17. Ibid., p. 42.

18. Ibid., p. 43.

feeder to the river transport. In 1885, the Dibru Sadia Railway (meter gauge) were constructed in Assam by Assam Railways and Trading Company (1882) and Jorhat Provincial Railway (two feet gauge) opened in 1883. These railways connecting the district tea gardens with the Brahmaputra river.¹⁹ In 1895, the impact of railways in Assam was increased, as it was opening of the Assam Bengal Railways, which were connecting the Assam with the outside world. In addition to these, there were many garden tramways (ranging from 18 inch gauge to meter gauge) whose role was very useful in the tea garden areas. In comparison to the other transport systems in Assam, the importance of railways was very negligible in the later parts of nineteenth century. As regards to the development of railway extension in Assam it shows that the following lengths were opened during various periods: 1882-99, 381 kilometres, 1901-10, 757 kilometres, 1911-20, 53 kilometres, 1921-30, 228 kilometres, 1931-40, 80 kilometres, 1941-43, 20 kilometres.²⁰ The one of the important point was that in the first decade of this century (by 1904) when Assam had about 150 miles of metalled roads²¹ the railway length was many times to this figure. To the economic development

19. Medhi, S.B. Transport System and Economic Development in Assam, Publication Board of Assam.

20. Ministry of Railways, Supplement to the History of Indian Railways, 1968, pp. 122-148.

21. Imperial Gezetteer of India, (1908), Vol. VI, p. 80.

of Assam the contribution of railways was very significant to the British period and even today also.

The non-agricultural sector economy was also modernised in the British period. Coal and oil fields were also found out by British investment of British capitals. The output of coal increased from 50 tons in 1872 to more than 277,000 tons by 1905-06. Petroleum is only worked on the Makum fields in Lakhimpur in 1868. The extraction of oil was made by commercial basis in 1889 and the total annual product of crude oil was 888,000 gallons in 1900-01, to 2,733,000 gallons in 1905-06.²²

Agriculture was then transformed in the name of modernisation. The traditional subsistence economy of the Assamese did not bring any profit for the British. Hence, agriculture was commercialised and cash crop cultivation encouraged so as to increase the paying as well as the purchasing capacity of the peasants. Major Jenkins, attempted to give the people a commercial and industrial bias, firstly, by encouraging increased cultivation of such crops as were easily marketable; and secondly, by creating a class of speculators to exploit the natural resources of Assam.²³ He clearly expressed in 1836, his desire to convert, these wastes and

22. East Bengal and Assam Administrative Reports 1905-6, Shillong, p. 148.

23. Borpuzari, H.K. In the Days of Company, Guwahati, 1863, p. 215.

haunts of wild beasts into fruitful fields, sugarcane, mustard, mulberry, lac, tobacco and vegetable.²⁴ The result was a considerable one. Commodities like mustard, silk, lac were exported in larger quantities from several districts of Assam. Jute was soon recognised as the most important commercial crop in Assam. It was revealed that the local agriculturists were not interested for commercial agriculture. Due to absence of an indigenous peasantry who were neither skilled nor willing, the British were successfully in creating an additional non-plantation labour force and placing them in those sector in which British finance capital could be profitably invested. From 500 acre in 1901 the area under jute cultivation increased to over 6000 acre in 1911.²⁵ Better communication and the introduction of jute as the commercial cash crop within the years uplifted the agrarian economy of Assam. Improved communication had linked it with the big market resulting in the expansion of local commerce. The drain of local resources thus was intensified.

The profitability of the agrarian sector was soon confirmed, as a result more and more waste land of Assam were brought under cultivation by speculators as well as by the indigenous upper classes. The progress of tea and

24. Bengal Revenue Consultation, 1838.

25. Ibid.

jute cultivation and its ancillary industries, the development of the means and communication, the growth of administrative and commercial township all contributed to an emerging situation where traders, merchants, shopkeepers could thrive in. While the Rajasthani penetrated into the interior parts of Assam as merchants and speculator, the Bengalis mostly from Eastern Bengal, entered as petty businessmen and shopkeepers.²⁶ Rajasthani traders were found in almost every important market centres and important villages. They kept supplies of salt, cotton twist and others utensils, undrained sugar etc. and exchanged these goods for money but more generally for paddy, rice, mustard and silk.²⁷

On the other hand, the indigenous economy was completely destroyed. Subsistence agrarian base uprooted. A ruthless revenue organisation was entrusted to conduct the perpetual plunder on behalf of the British. The people who worked in this revenue and the administrative machinery were mostly Bengalis. They were also the people who as colonial functionaries, carried through the task of destroying the indigenous industries to make way for the British market. Above all there was the emerging change in the demography of Assam composed of a small indigenous population, the

26. Guha, A. "Assamese Society in the Late 19th Century, Roots Structure and Trend," Indian Social and Economic History Review, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, January-March 1980.

Assamese demographic structure was broken down as a result of the economic transformation.²⁸ A continuous inflow of immigrants severally affected the homogeneous of the exclusive society of the Assamese. It was clear that the Assamese local people failed to take the advantage of the changing situation in their native land while the outsiders took immense benefit out of transforming economy of that period.

As we know that after the addition of territorial adjustment, there had been a continuous flow of non-Assamese Indians into Assam ever since the British occupation. In fact, in order to run the imperialist administration smoothly, clerks and other administrator familiar with the system of company administration were brought by the British from outside the province. Moreover, a large number of working people brought into Assam to fit the various demands of colonial economic development. The Marwaries and few Biharies came to fill the necessities of trade and business, created by the opportunities of economic expansion under the British rule. The colonial economic development necessitated the immigrant population to the province. At any rate, as a result of immigration, gradually there developed small townships, mostly people by middle class element from outside the province, to cater to the growing need of administration and trade.²⁹ Since the late nineteenth century the local Assamese

28. J.M. Mills, Report on the Province of Assam, Calcutta, 1854, p. 27.

29. The Census of India (Assam), 1931.

people were unhappy with all these developments and felt anxiety for this unrestricted large scale immigration. Since the beginning of the current century, there developed hatred and ill feeling among the Assamese local people towards the outsiders. This situation became more critical because of the penetration into Assam by the immigrants from Bengal, particularly from the district of Mymensingh. These immigrants came mainly to settle on agricultural land. It was the first census report of 1911 where Muslim immigrants were recorded. After 1911, the immigrant settlers spread beyond Goalpara to other parts of the Brahmaputra valley. The British Census Commission C.S. Mullan, described this process of immigration as an invasion of Mymensinghias over the Assamese and remarked by way of warning.

Probably the most important event in the province during the last twenty five years, an event moreover, which seems likely alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than the Burmese invaders of 1820. The whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization has been the invasion of a vast horde of land hungry Bengali immigrants mostly Muslims, from the districts of Eastern Bengal and in particular from the Mymensingh. It is sad but by no means impossible that in another thirty years Sibsagar

district will be the only part of Assam in which an Assamese will find himself at home.³⁰

Since the early decades of twentieth century the Assamese elite, however, became afraid of being swamped by the Muslim immigrants from East Bengal. On the other hand, most of the Assamese people advocated the immigration of Bihari Hindus into Assam to counter the influx of Muslims. Thus, it is evident that what was initially an economic issue was turned into a communal one, not only by the Muslim League, but also by some eminent Congress leaders. With the increase of Muslim population in the province gave an edge to the Muslim League to demand for inclusion of in Jinnah's proposed East Pakistan. But it was opposed by the local leaders of Assam like Gopinath Bordoloi.

The Assamese people were alert and they joined the freedom movement under the power of Congress party for different time. In 1947, India got her independence from British people. After independence Assam faced some new problems within her political boundary.

With the onset of British administration of the area, newer elements were added to the plurality i.e. by inducting

30. Guha Amalendu. Immigrants and Autochihones in a plural society. Their Interrelation in the Brahmaputra Valley in Historical Perspective: North East India. A Sociological Study, Ed. S.M. Duby, Concept Publishing House.

labour into the region from other parts of the country for their commercial activities. This was become quite often recruitment of local labour for new agricultural systems like plantation proved difficult. In reality, the British began to explore the possibilities of expanding their commercial activities in the region.

Moreover, organisational problem went further than the agricultural sector. It was found that under the colonial conditions the traditional Ahom administration system broke down, the British began to introduce administrative reforms at par with their possession in India. This and the commercial activities (particularly exploitation timber and introduction of plantation) necessitated movement of population that was more familiar with the British administration. Moreover, the province was found to be underpopulated and had the capacity to absorb more population. This induced population movement from the populous Bengal province, who began to fill up the vacancies created by the British commercial activity and extension of transportation and communication facilities in the region. Moreover, this created complexities in the plural society of the valley where different groups were lying with each other for space and occupation. This later proved to be the bone of contention and a forerunner of the immigrant issue in the valley.

CHAPTER - VI

POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT (B)

POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT (B)

VI.1. With independence granted, Assam stood as a full-fledged state in the Indian Union. It was however, a state full of diversity and heterogeneity in terms of physiography, races, religion and language. "As different races and their culture could not coalesce together to form a cohesive identity and soon Assam underwent a process of phased separation resulting in its areal shrinkage."¹ The post independent period witnessed a significant change in the relationship between the hills and the Assam Valley. Independence led the government to totally abandon the policy of non-interference in the hill regions, due to their strategic location along the borders with China, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Burma. Thus there was concerned efforts on the part of the government to bring these regions within the main stream of the country. This resulted in bringing about a growing feeling of alienation among the hill units of Assam. In this context it is fair to state the "dissidence will normally occur amongst a section of the population which regards itself as being distinctive in some way such as language, religion, tribal origin and commercial interest."² Assamese themselves

1. Singh, Bhabani. Politics of Alienation in Assam, Ajanta Publication, Jawaha Nagar, New Delhi, p. 54.

2. Prestoll, J.R.V. 1968. The Geography of State Politics, London, p. 59.

are neither a tribe nor are they hills people. They are plains people and the numerous tribes resented the imposition of Assamese language and culture. "The Assamese did not realise that people, however primitive, resent the imposition of an alien culture. As so one by one the hill districts broke away from the present state".³ The Assamese who once thought of presiding over a big albeit plural state, found their hopes completely dashed. Far from not regaining administrative control of the hills, Assam lost even the symbolic control that it had exercised during the British era. One by one, the hill districts were exercised from the parent body of Assam and constituted separate states or union territories. Assam was left a shadow of her former self.⁴ At present Assam is a much smaller state. No matter however, pressing the circumstances were when the central government decided to divide Assam into several states and union territories, the average Assamese "suffers from a sense of deep hurt that the Centre has been primarily responsible for her humiliating reduction to the status of a mini state, one amongst many under shared Governors. Today each state of the region have their own governors, and that's too not *primus inter pares* but a mere equal."⁵ Now the Assamese people found themselves

3. Rustomji, Imperilled Frontiers, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p. 1.

4. Ibid., p. 11.

5. Ibid., p. 12.

to be a minority within the State. It has been faced with the threat of cultural absorption. The immigrants from across the Bangladesh border has assumed menacing proportions, with possibilities of losing its majority status in the state itself. Assam has more contribution to the unity of the nation. In the words of N.N. Archarya, "Assam with her interestingly chequered history, has not failed to contribute her share in evolving the civilization of her country. As a matter of fact, at certain periods in the past she was found to have enriched the civilization of India in numerous ways. The land of Assam is a great reservoir of many Mongoloid races in India. Since the Vedic periods, these have been the fourth (the other three being the Austrics, the Dravidians and the Aryans) basic element in the formation of Indian people".⁶

Each of the tribal units wanted to identify with their own cultures. The Assamese, instead of trying to integrate themselves, imposed their own culture and language over the hill peoples. "The Assam Official Language Act, 1960, generated an agitation in the Hill Areas against Assamese being declared as the State language".⁷ This was

6. Acharya, N.N. Assam and Neighbouring States: Historical Documents, Omson Publication, New Delhi, 1983, p. viii.

7. Rao V. Venkata. A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India (1874-1974), S. Chand & Co. Ltd., New Delhi, p. 220.

not acceptable to diverse races of Assam. This gave rise to various fears and suspicions in the minds of the tribal population of the state, who finding the situations getting tighter, decided to extricate themselves through their demands for autonomous and separate statehood.

"Isolation, due to lack of well developed transportation network complicated by linguistic and political gulf existing between the various population groups of the Brahmaputra valley and the various tribes in the adjoining hills contribute to separatist feeling."⁸ "Moreover, because of its isolated location in the national context, it has remained a socio-economic back-water in the body-politic of the country. Modern changes and economic advancements are still slower in its hills fraught with notoriously absent transport facilities and resource planning."⁹

Sir Reginald Coupland proposed that the tribal areas of India and Burma should be condominium.¹⁰ He told that the inhabitants of the tribal areas were not Indian or Burman but are of Mongol stock. This was the another source of

8. Sukhwai, B.L. Modern Political Geography of India, New Delhi, 1985, p. 54.

9. Taher, M. Tribes of North-East India: A Diagnostic Survey of Spatial Patterns, Gauhati University.

10. Bhattacharyya, B.K. "Separate Assam Hill State, What Does it Mean?" Economic and Political Weekly, March 4, 1967, p. 491.

inspiration for the separatist feeling to the hills people of Assam.

The distinct ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity of the hill areas might have fostered to secede from the Assam Valley and to form an autonomous state of their own. Due to their location in a sensitive and strategic region, it was not possible for the Government of India to ignore disenchantment of the dissidence population. The ultimate result was the reorganisation that took place and left Assam a shadow of her former self.

In the process, the first to breakway from the threshold of Assam was the Naga people with the creation of a new state known as Nagaland, on 1st December 1963, enjoying full representative of Government. It consists of entire district of the former Naga Hills of Assam and a part of Tuensang, a former territory of NEFA. This served as a catalyst for the other hill tribal areas of Assam to seek their own state. The Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya was separated from Assam almost around the same time. Mizoram as a Union Territory covering an area of nearly 21,087 sq.km. was separated from Assam on 21st January 1972. The other areas to be separated from Assam's administrative influence was NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency). In 1972, under the provisions of the North East Frontier Areas (Reorganisation)

Act (1971), NEFA covering an area of 83,578 sq.km. was declared a Union Territory and came to be known as Arunachal Pradesh. Both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh acquired their statehood in 1987. (Fig. 1.7).

Finally, Meghalaya with an area of about 22,500 sq.km. which was conferred the status of Autonomous State within the State of Assam on 2nd April, 1970, became a full-fledged state on January 21st, 1972, comprising of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills. Since then there had been no changes in the external boundaries of the state. Now has an area of 78,523 sq.km. and a population of 198 lakh persons as per the 1981 Census (estimated). The state has been divided into eighteen administrative districts, sixteen in the two plains - Brahmaputra valley and Barak valley and two in the hills. At present, number of districts has been increased to nineteen in the Brahmaputra valley viz. Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat, Jorhat, Nagaon, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Marigaon and Dhemaji. Karimganj and Silchar constitute the two districts of the Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong and North Cachar are the two hill districts of Assam.

VI.2. Immigration and Political Development: A Background

In the initial stage of development many countries welcome immigration to get cheap skilled labour. From the

middle of the last century (around 1850) till 1931, a large number of tea garden labourers came into Assam from various parts of India. They contributed greatly to the development and expansion of tea industry in Assam under British capital. Those tea garden labourers, many of whom have since given up that occupation, are now assimilated in Assamese society and form an important segment of the Assamese community.

The movement of peasant population from East Bengal to Assam took place effectively in a large scale after 1906. These agrarian colonisers along with the plantation labourers began to colonise in large numbers. The composition of the migrants was both Hindus and Muslims. At the initial stage, settlement in the waste land increased the total agricultural production in the state, expanded the area under multiple cropping and encouraged the adoption of improved agricultural technology and thereby strengthened the economy of Assam, the new entrants, particularly after the mid-thirties, created acute economic problems for the future generation, more so for the farming community. The influx of Nepali graziers have continued unnoticed as they settled only in hill slopes which are not demanded either by the indigenous Assamese farmers or immigrants from East Bengal.

According to 1971 Census, 72.5 per cent were Hindus, 24.56 per cent were Muslims, 2.61 per cent were Christians

and other 0.62 per cent. Linguistically, 60.9 per cent of the population retained their mother tongue as Assamese, 10.9 per cent as Bengali and 5 per cent as Hindi. One of the significant issues was the ascertaining the mother tongue, where in many of the immigrant communities, with the passage of time, returned Assamese as their mother tongue. This gave a new twist to the already complex problem. The genesis can be traced back to 1836 when the suggestion of the immigrants to introduce Bengali as the official language was accepted by the administration. The resultant opposition by the native Assamese population culminated in 1874 when the Assamese was reintroduced as the official language. With this beginning, after independence, the language issue became the focus of the problem that was interpreted in as many ways as its dimensions suggested. These were also translated in practical ways and was evident in the following periods.

- 1) Linguistic problem during the 1951 Census.
- 2) Linguistic problem during the 1961 Census.
- 3) Linguistic problem during the 1971 Census.
- 4) Linguistic problem during the 1981 Census which started in 1979 and culminated in 1985 as the foreigners movement.

The disturbances started with the initiation of the process of Census enumeration in 1951; the second with

the Assamese Language Act of 1960 and the third with the introduction of Assamese as the medium of instruction with the assistance of English in Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University. These problems were generally related to immigrants. Ultimately, these problems created some new social problems, as a result of these, foreigners movement started in 1979.

The Assam problem (foreigner movement) is unique both for what it is and also the magnitude of the problems for which it seeks a solution. As a movement of mass participation it is unparalleled in the countries history since independence. "Unlike most other movement of our times, Assam movement is not the brain child of any one leader or even an elite group. Leadership is provided by a state-wide students' organization, the AASU (All Assam Students Union) and several other state wide political and non-political organisation under the common banner of the AAGSP (All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad) which incidently formed at the instance of the AASU".¹¹ It is remarkable that a leadership, which is shared by such diverse elements, should remain so long and so strong despite the many stresses and strains of the movement and the machination of man in authority.¹²

11. Bora Nibaran, "Assamese Problem", The Mirror, July 1980, p. 43.

12. Reddi, P.S. "Genesis of the Assam Movement", N.E. Region Problems & Prospects of Development, Ed. B.L. Abbi, Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, p. 257.

The movement was started due to the revision of the voters list for the Mangaldai Constituency (Parliamentary) became controversial and ignited the fuse of what later turned out to be a full scale movement against the immigrants or the foreigners in Assam. The basic objective of the movement included detection, deletion and deportation of the aliens/foreigners/illegal immigrants.

This movement in Assam, origin directly from immigration. In essence, it is linguistic and ethnic, but some people are trying to impart it a religious hue also. Due to large number of migration, the Assamese developed genuine fear of being swamped by them and eventually reduced to a linguistic minority in their own homeland like the Tripuris in Tripura, which is now Bengali dominated. Hence, the cry in favour of the 'sons of the soil'.

Some of these organisations which joined AASU in the initial stage were Jatiyatabadi Dal, Purbanchal Lok Parishad, and the Asom Sahitya Sabha. Thus, reinforced, the AASU began to formulate mass programme to educate the native population about the objective of the problems.

On 27th August 1979, AASU and Purbanchal Lok Parishad merged to form the All Assam Gana Sangram parishad at Jorhat. In this common banner, joined the other associations and organisations to form a united front. These were:

- a) Asom Jatiyatabadi Dal
- b) Asom Sahitya Sabha
- c) Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parisada
- d) Asom Yuva Samaj
- e) Young Lowers^y Forum
- f) Bodo Sahitya Sabha
- g) All Assam Tribal Sangha
- h) Progressive Plain Tribal Council of Assam

Collectively under the banner of AAGSP and AASU this movement gradually spread all over the State and all politically conscious people of the State gave their moral support. They launched the programme of movement like Bandhs; Agitations, Rail Roka and Rasta Roko, Gheraos and Boycott; Blockade of movement of goods; and other forms which were exploited by fanatical elements to the discredit the movements.

By the end of 1984, after the General Election that the prospects of settlement frightened when the AASU and AAGSP was called for resuming the negotiations. This culminated in the signing of the Assam Accord in August 1985. Through this provision the AAGSP was able to have state elections. It was renamed as Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). Due to the support of the people AGP was able to secure a majority in the State Assembly Election 1985. It was able to achieve unity against the background of common problem that was never possible to do earlier.

In the meanwhile, the region is once again confronted by agitation from remaining hill districts of, who want their own administrative unit. In Assam, the tribal peoples are distributed all over the State. They are partly scattered and partly concentrated in certain pockets of different districts of Assam.

The prominent tribal groups agitating for separate states are the PTCA (Plain Tribal Council of Assam) whose initial demand for an autonomous region for plain tribals of Assam, and later they upgraded their demands for 'Udayachal' a union territory by January 1973. In 1984, a new political party called the United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNCF) was formed. Their demand was to achieve Union Territory along the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, and facilities for the sixth schedule for North Cachar and Karbi Anglong districts. Likewise the ABSU (All Bodo Students Union) too are agitating with demands for a separate homeland for Bodos. They demanded a separate Bodo land within the State of Assam. Recently they launched different programmes for agitation like Bandhs, Public Curfew, Rail Roko etc.

Such demands for separate states from the hill peoples and the plain tribal peoples of Assam are indeed unfortunate. One cannot think of the Assamese society without the tribals of Assam. Unequal development and cultural exploitation are main causes for demanding the separate tribal

land. Now it is a debatable question whether the separate state may be economically viable or not. Moreover, as long as a society progress and more interaction take place, the minorities are likely to feel insecure of losing identity, thereby there would always probability of wearing such cries for self preservation. Therefore, the forces which influences the operation of such separation must be brought to an end. On the other hand, administrator should implement the plans and programmes for the equal development of the region and these problems may be solved within the Constitution of India.

VI.3. Development Situation of Assam

Assam, which is the gateway to the north-eastern region, is linked with the rest of the country, after partition, only through a narrow corridor. Partition increased the physical distance between Assam and the rest of the country, necessitating linking of the state by a long and circuitous route. The development of the north-eastern states, in a big way, depends on the development of Assam.

Assam is rich in natural resources, such as fertile soil, crude oil and natural gas, coal and limestone, and water and forest resources. But its economy is characterised by near stagnancy. As for example, the per capita income of the State increased by only 6.2 per cent, from Rs.538.6 in 1970-71 to Rs. 573 in 1979-80.¹³ In a sense, the diffe-

13. Economic Survey of Assam, 1982-83.

rence, in the three year average of per capita state income and the per capita national income, which was only Rs.2.4 in 1961-64 rose to Rs. 235 in 1977-80. In other words, the per capita state income lagged behind the per capita national income by 0.72 per cent in 1961-64 and by 27.56 per cent in 1977-80.¹⁴

The lower economic development of Assam is due to the abnormal increase in population and the predominance and stagnation of agriculture. The population growth rate is higher than in the country as a whole. For example, during the decades 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-81, the population of the state increased by 34.98 per cent, 34.95 per cent and 46.05 per cent as against 21.52 per cent; 24.82 per cent and 25.00 per cent respectively, for the country as a whole.

The high growth of population was accompanied by a low growth in agriculture. The primary sector accounted for 63.9 per cent of state income at current prices in 1970-71 and 57.60 per cent in 1978-79 and 56.5 per cent in 1981-82. During the corresponding years, while the secondary sector contributed 14 per cent, 15 per cent and 15.59 per cent respectively to the state income at current prices. While the tertiary sector's contribution increased marginally from

14. Ibid.

22.1 per cent in 1970-71 to 27.3 per cent in 1978-79 and 28.9 per cent in 1981-82.¹⁵ Similarly, according to the 1971 Census, 76.69 per cent of the workers were engaged in the primary sector and in 1981, it was 75.59 per cent (estimated). This clearly gives an idea of agrarian character of the state economy.

In the table VI.1 shows that per capita agricultural income was Rs. 81.34 in 1951 and it was increased Rs. 138 in 1981. In case of per capita investment in Rs.0.60 in 1951 and it was increased to Rs. 3.70 in 1971 and again it has declined to Rs. 2.2 in 1981. Population ratio of per hectare of cultivable land was 2.97 in 1951; 4.01 in 1961; 5.40 in 1971 and 7.37 in 1981. On the other hand, agricultural production was not higher. Only three per cent of the gross cultivated area is irrigated and the fertilizer consumption stands at 3 Kg per hectare. Assam's agriculture is also characterized by relatively small holding and low crop intensity. According to the 1976-77 Agricultural Census, 82 per cent of the holdings and 43 per cent of the cropped area are covered by holding below two hectares each, and the crop intensity is about 123.5 per cent.¹⁶ It follows that a well worked programme for raising the agricultural productivity has to

15. Ibid.

16. Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics, April 1980.

form a prior strategy for achieving economic development in Assam. The implements of modern techniques, use of HYV and chemical fertilizer, providing irrigation facilities and the control of rivers by multipurpose projects are the elements in the strategy for agricultural development in Assam.

The contribution from the industrial economy to the development of Assam is very poor. Table VI.1 shows that the per capita industrial production of Assam is Rs.113.9 in 1961; Rs.157.3 in 1971, and Rs.151.5 in 1981. It was increased in 1971 and again decreased in 1981 due to the Assam agitation during that period. On the other hand, the per capita industrial investment was in Rs.0.92 in 1951 and Rs. 8.42 in 1971 and in 1981 it was Rs. 2 only. Industrialization of Assam and the north-eastern region poses a number of problems. These problems are the lack of entrepreneurship, poor infrastructure and high transport cost, lack of capitals and small markets.

Infrastructural facilities in Assam are inadequate. For example, the road length in 1951 was estimated .15 Kms per 1000 population, and in 1971 it was .13 and in 1981 it was .13 Kms per 1000 population in Assam whereas .23 Kms of road per 1000 population in 1981 as a whole nation, and 27 Kms per 100 sq.kms for the state as against 48 Kms for

the country. In case of use of power resources, the per capita consumption of electricity was only about 37 units as on March 31, 1981 as compared to 132 units for the country as a whole. The number of bank offices per one lakh of population in the state was only two as on March 30, 1981, which was

Table - VI.1: Development Situation of Assam

Assam	1951	1961	1971	1981
1. Per capita industrial production (in Rs.)	-	113.9	157.3	151.5
2. Per Capital Agricultural Income (in Rs.)	81.39	101.86	114.1	138.0
3. Per capita industrial investment (in Rs.)	.0.92	2.8	8.41	2.0
4. Per capita agricultural investment (in Rs.)	0.60	4.6	3.70	2.2
5. Per capita income (in Rs.)	290	336	538.6	1302.0
6. Road per 1000 population (in Km.) (PWD) (National & State)	0.15	0.18	0.13	0.13
7. Population per hectare of cultivable land	2.97	4.01	5.40	7.37
8. Person per Bank Financial Institution	165,000	154,000	188,000	43,000
9. Bureaucracy per population	-	-	.0076	.0022
10. Trade per thousand population	-	-	1.69	2.29
11. M.L.A. per thousand population	15.69	11.62	8.61	6.33
12. M.P. per thousand population	1.74	1.29	0.95	0.70

Source: 1. Economic Survey of Assam.

2. Statistical Handbook of Assam, 1984, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati.

the lowest among the major states in India. Similarly, the per capita bank credit, as on June 30, 1980, stood at only Rs.38 which was also the second lowest among the major states, the highest being Rs.450/-.

The ratio of bureaucracy per population in Assam was .0076 in 1971 and .0022 in 1981. The ratio of trade per thousand of population was 1.69 in 1971 and 2.29 in 1981 (all the figures show in the table).

Table VI.2 showing that person per small scale industry is higher in Sonitpur and Karbi Anglong districts. In case of large scale industry the position of Dibrugarh district is higher i.e. 39 persons per large scale industry, and it follows by Sibsagar, Jorhat and Kamrup districts.

In case of social institution of the state shows a minimum development and poses a number of problems. The same table showing that the number of persons per school 689 in Sonitpur district and it followed by Dhubri, Nagaon and Darrang Districts. The ratio of the above number is generally higher, which mark the poor standard of the state.

In case of health facilities, shows in the table that a health unit provided the facilities maximum of 13,312 population (in Dibrugarh district) in plain region and 2172 - 5926 persons in hills region (Karbi Anglong and North Cachar

Table - VI.2: Developments Situation of Assam (1984-85)

Sl. No.	Districts	Persons per Agril. crop	Persons per small scale industry	Persons per large scale industry	Persons per school	Persons per health unit	Persons per Km. road
1.	Dhubri	3,857	4	25	626	9,671	1,662
2.	Kokrajhar	4,514	8	25	518	7,802	585
3.	Goalpara	5,928	6	29	504	7,139	485
4.	Barpeta	3,571	5	27	556	9,434	812
5.	Kamrup	7,428	5	30	586	7,730	717
6.	Nalbari	3,857	5	26	412	7,214	583
7.	Darrang	5,200	7	27	606	8,182	623
8.	Sonitpur	5,428	9	25	689	8,271	585
9.	Lakhimpur	6,000	5	27	363	8,895	490
10.	Dibrugarh	5,485	3	39	622	13,312	672
11.	Sibsagar	3,914	8	37	457	11,090	433
12.	Jorhat	6,857	5	30	430	8,080	505
13.	Golaghat	-	4	25	495	8,943	447
14.	Nagaon	8,342	3	27	609	12,638	622
15.	Cachar	5,142	4	29	501	10,283	927
16.	Karimganj	2,714	5	25	438	7,186	1,200
17.	Karbi Anglong	3,000	9	29	372	5,926	235
18.	N. Cachar Hills	7,425	8	27	249	2,172	104

Source: 1. Economic Survey of Assam, 1982-83.

2. Statistical Handbook, Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati.

3. Economic Survey of Assam, 1984-85.

districts). This ratio of health facilities is also a poor for the state of Assam.

Assam has been in the mainstream of national planning process right from the First Plan. In the Table VI.3 showing the actual expenditure by sector during the Five Year Plan in Assam. With the help of five year plans initiating the process of economic developments of Assam. Priority has been given in the agriculture and industrialization of the state in the planning period. The fifth five year plan of Assam was started with a view to meet the national objectives of removal of poverty, generation of maximum employment and progressive attainment of self reliance. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) of Assam has been formulated in the light of the national objectives as adopted by NDC. The basic objectives of the Sixth Plan are gradual removal of incidence of poverty, unemployment, a progressive reduction in inequalities, increase of production etc.

For the development of the state economy should be utilized the natural resources through better planning, sincere efforts for implementation of plan and active cooperation from the public. Central assistance also another factor for the economy of the state. In the Table VI.4 showing the central assistance by grant in aid and loan. In 1977-78, grant in aid was Rs.10,429 lakhs and Rs.5,682 lakhs as a

Table - VI.3: Actual Expenditure by Sector During Five Year Plans in Assam

(Rs. in Crores)

Sector	I Plan		II Plan		III Plan		IV Plan		V Plan		VI Plan	
	Total Rs.	% to total	Total Rs.	% to total	Total Rs.	% to total	Total	% to total	Total	% to total	Total	% to total
1. Agricultural programme	3.62	17.69	7.37	13.54	12.01	9.26	39.80	20.05	57.04	20.52	26.91	17.86
2. Cooperation and Community	1.22	5.98	7.63	14.02	9.77	7.54	4.35	2.19	6.71	2.42	4.59	3.04
3. Irrigation and Power	4.60	22.45	6.82	12.53	54.47	42.01	71.16	35.87	113.55	40.84	65.07	43.19
4. Industry and Mining	0.09	0.47	4.37	8.03	8.12	6.26	16.93	8.54	1.51	5.46	4.19	2.78
5. Transport and Communication	3.49	17.03	6.55	12.03	8.30	6.40	25.98	13.10	29.65	10.67	18.80	12.48
6. Social Services	7.46	36.39	20.17	37.03	35.69	27.52	3.77	18.99	54.02	19.43	27.27	18.10
7. Miscellaneous	-	-	1.53	2.82	1.30	1.01	3.41	1.59	4.35	2.61	6.75	0.84
Total	20.5	100.00	54.48	100.00	129.69	100.00	198.39	100.00	277.97	100.00	150.66	100.00

Source; Planning and Development Department, Govt. of Assam.

loan granted to state from the centre. In 1984-85, it was increased to Rs.27,549 lakhs and 28,730 lakhs respectively. From the table it is clear that loan increased to the government of Assam year by year. It marks the lower economic development of the state.

Table - VI.4: Central Assistance

State	Year	Grants in Aid (Rs. in lakhs)	Loan (Rs. in lakhs)
Assam	1977-78	10,429	5,682
	1978-79	12,330	8,647
	1979-80	6,313	8,988
	1980-81	6,963	9,314
	1981-82	9,072	17,101
	1982-83	13,511	18,388
	1983-84	19,969	26,237
	1984-85	27,549	28,730

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 1986, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati.

VI.4. Population, Their Impact on Political Participation

Political participation is one of the major components of any political system. Election is an important process associated with different political phenomena and studies the relationship between population and political process i.e. participation in a region. The study on political participation in election is related with such as political authority, legitimacy, political parties, and political

participations and alienation.¹⁷ Participation in election also may be taken up by analysing the voting behaviour into psychological categories or different agents of political socialisation, like the influence of the family, of social environments, of communication media, of personality identification etc.

Due to plural social base composition of the people of Assam, politically react diversely in different areas of the region in the hills and plains. Changing pattern of political parties and electoral structure such as voting behaviour of the region are important aspects for the present study. The state with peripheral location, plays a major role in the national politics as well as the ruling parties of the State.¹⁸ Assam is a politically dynamic state with a high voter's participation in spite of widespread illiteracy.

Stages of economic development pattern of communication, accessibility and nature of process are the factors of which had made the analysis of political participation of individual, groups in the state resulting as a complex issue. The population of Assam has long been characterised

17. Datta, P.S. Electoral Politics in North East India, Omson Publications, New Delhi, p. 1.

18. Dikshit, R.D. Political Geography: A Contemporary Perspective, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi, p. 238.

by diverse society as it has consisted by several cultural, linguistic and economic groups living in different parts of the state maintaining their individual status.¹⁹

The present study of political participation is based on geographical phenomena like the relationship between the total complex of physical and social environment of the state on the one hand, and voting pattern on the other. The selection of the parties whether national, regional or ruling should be influenced by the aspects of social and economic milieu most likely to underlie the voting decision and was then able to trace those aspects of physical environment.

Assam is a state which is passing through electoral upheaval during 1983 and 1985 election (Legislative Assembly Election), which needs or which has attracted the worldwide attention in recent past, deserves to be paid an intimate attention to understand its nature thoroughly and the present study of electoral geography in relation to population may help in identifying the degree of political participation of the region.

19. Das, M.M. "Voting pattern in Assam: A Study in Political Geography", The North Eastern Geographers, Vol. XI.

VI.4.a. Emergence of Political Parties in Assam

To understand the political spectrum of Assam it is quite natural to know about the existing political parties with their aims and objectives.

The Congress Party as an all India Party occupies a unique position in the Indian political system. The Indian National Congress from its very birth in 1885 was emphasized secularism and has been guided by faith in democracy with the advent of Gandhi era in Congress. It claimed to be the sole representative of entire Indian nation.

The Asom Gana Parishad (regional party) formed in 1985 is one of those major political parties in Assam which are diametrically opposed to the Congress party in one or the other way. Their major interest lies in the increasing prosperity of the Assamese community. The UMF is the another regional party representing the minority people of Assam which is formed in 1985.

The Janata Party in Assam largely consisted of the rank and file of the erstwhile Jana Sangha. The other constituents like Congress - U, Socialists, the CFD have not been very important in Assam politics. Among the other political parties in Assam, the PTCA, CPI and CPI(M) are also important. A few other parties are the SSP and RSP parties, but they have not been very important in Assam politics and may not contribute significantly to the study taken up.

VI.4.b. Voter Turn Out

The analysis of election has to start with voter turn out. Voter turn out is the number of electorate who cast their vote to total electorate. It is this indicator which gives credibility to the electoral system and is one of the major elements in the electoral system providing impetus to the system in its operation. A high voter turn out indicates greater participation by the electorate, meaning thereby that a high percentage of electorate queue up behind the election result leading to the formation of a popular government and ultimately may lead to the conclusion that the electoral system itself is functioning well. A low voter turn out indicates that a large number of electorate have stayed away from the election, which may reflect that the election result does not carry the popular mandate. It may also imply that the electoral system is not working well. In any case a low voter turn out clearly indicates the need to understand why a large number of electorate stayed away from the election.

Table VI.5 reveals that there has been an increase in the voter turn out over the elections. In the first two election in 1952-1957, the voter turn out was between 48.61 to 47.70 per cent. In the subsequent four elections in 1962, 1967, 1972 and 1978 a voter turn out recorded a sharp increase of about 5 to 10 per cent and voter turn out in 1978 reached

Table - VI.5: Voter Turn Out (Percentage of Voter Polled)

Year	Assam Assembly Election	Parliamentary election in India
1952	48.61	45.67
1957	47.70	47.74
1962	52.77	55.42
1967	61.89	61.33
1971/72*	61.14	55.22
1977/78*	66.77	60.54
1980	-	57.26
1983	32.76	-
1984/85*	79.38	64.10

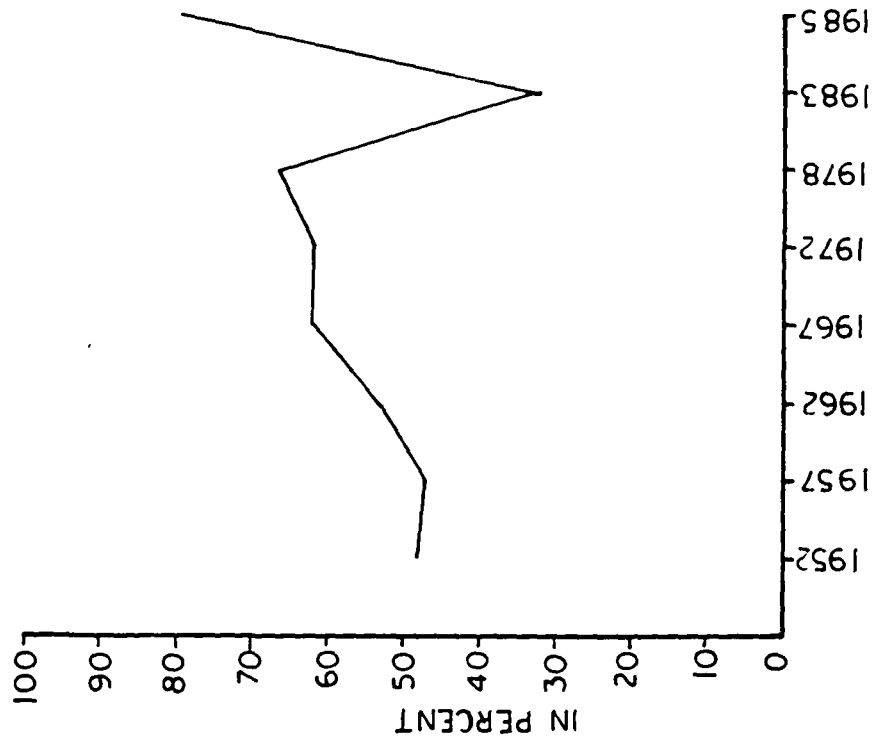
*The parliamentary election in India took place in 1971, 1977 and 1984 whereas the Assam Assembly Election took place in 1972, 1978, 1983, and 1985.

Source: Chief Electoral Office, Assam.

to 66.77 per cent. After 1978 it was decreased almost 30 per cent in 1983 due to the partial voting of only a section of the population and the complete boycott by the Assamese people. In 1985 election, the turn out increased upto 79.38 per cent. This is happened due to the influence of Assam Accord in 1985.

If a comparison of the voter turn out in the State of Assam with the voter turn out at the national level in parliamentary election is made, one finds that the trend is almost similar. The voter turn out kept on increasing

ASSAM
VOTER TURNOUT
(ASSEMBLY ELECTION)



INDIA
VOTER TURNOUT
(PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION)

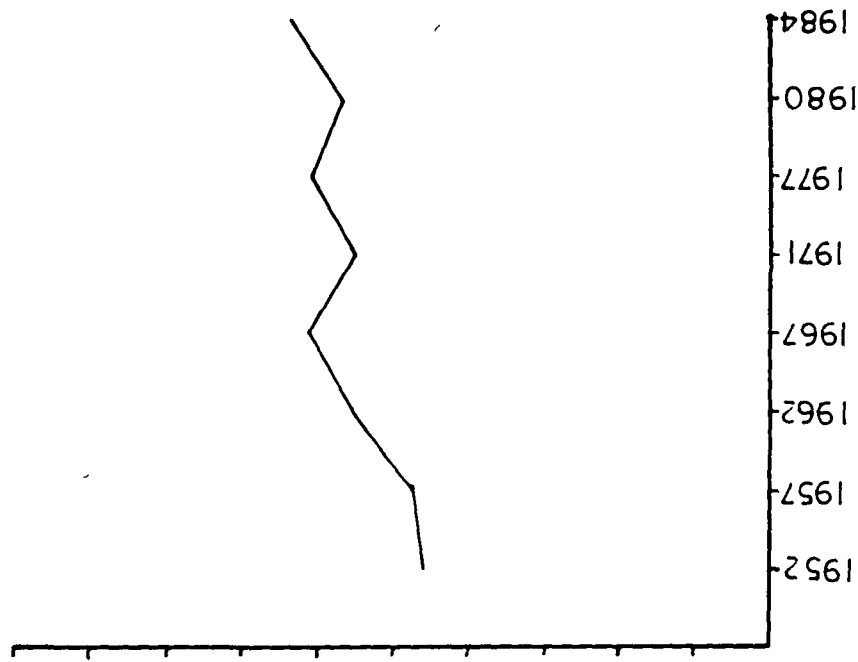


FIG. 6.1

with every subsequent election. From 45.67 per cent in 1952 it reached to a maximum of 61.33 per cent in 1967. In 1972, parliamentary election in India voter turn out decreased to 55.22 per cent from 61.33 per cent in 1967. Again it was increased upto 64 per cent in 1984 (Fig. 6.10).

One of the interesting aspects of the voter turn out in the state of Assam is also the marked spatial variation in the voter turn out in the two geo-political regions of Assam - Brahmaputra valley and Barak valley regions. In Brahmaputra valley region, voter turn out in 1983 assembly election was maximum 20 per cent and in minimum 3 per cent whereas in Barak valley region, voter turn out was more than 70 per cent. In 1985 election, the voter turn out was maximum in the Brahmaputra valley, it reached upto 90 per cent in few constituencies of Sibsagar, Nagaon and Jorhat districts and in Barak valley it ranges from 60 per cent to 70 per cent. The reason for such a marked variation in the voter turn out in the two regions is that the population of these two regions is not similar. The Brahmaputra valley region occupied by the majority of Assamese language speaking population and the Barak valley region pre-dominated Bengali speaking population. Their political ideology is vastly different.

VI.4.c. Party Performance - The Seat Share and Degree of Success

The seat share of the political parties denotes

their respective strength in the legislative and determines which party will form the government. The degree of success of a political party is taken as the proportion of seats won to total seats contested.

In 1983 election, the Congress I Party won a majority of seats. It won 90 out of the total 126 seats in assembly, and thus it was able to win 82.90 per cent of the assembly seats in Assam (Table VI.6). There is no any leading party secured the major seats in assembly election in 1983 except Congress I. In 1985 assembly election in Assam, Congress I lost their majority. The AGP (Asom Gana Parishad) won a comfortable majority of seats. It won 64 out of the total 126 seats in the Assembly, and thus it was able to win 51.20 per cent of assembly seats in Assam Congress I came up as the second largest party but it could win only 25 seats. The UMF secured 17 seats. Congress S secured 4 seats, PTCA, CPM and independence and other secured 3; 2 and 11 respectively.

The degree of success of political parties since 1978 has been given in Table VI.7. The degree of success of the Congress Party has been poor in 1978 and in 1985 election. It could win only 26 seats out of the 126 seats it contested, giving the success percentage of 20.63 in 1977. In 1985, it won 25 seats out of 125 seats contested

with a success of 20.00 per cent. But in 1983 election, the degree of success of Congress I Party was very high to the extent of 71.42 per cent. The degree of success of Janata Party 45.29 per cent in 1978 and in 1985 it was 0 and in 1983 election boycott by Janata Party.

The degree of success of CPI was 14.28 per cent in 1978 election and it decreased up to 7.14 per cent in 1983. The degree of success of CPM was 4.74 in 1978 election and again it also decreased upto 7.14 per cent in 1983 election and again it decreased upto 5.12 per cent in 1985 election.

The degree of success of PTCA was 44.44 per cent in 1978 election and also decreased 11.11 per cent in 1983 and 14.28 per cent in 1985 election.

The degree of success of Independent candidates was 3.09 per cent in 1978 and 3.55 per cent in 1983 election. The degree of success of RCPI was 40 per cent in 1978 election and it was negligible in 1983 and 1985 election.

In 1985 election, the local regional party, AGP got highest degree of success i.e. 59.25 per cent and the degree of success of UMF was 28.81 in 1985 election. The degree of success of Congress S was 5.71 in 1985 election.

Table - VI.6: Seats Won by Different Parties and Gains and Losses Since 1978

Party	No. of seats won in 1985	Percentage	No. of seats won in 1983	Percentage	Gain/Loss 1983-85	No. of seats won in 1978	Percentage	Gain/Loss 1978-85
1. AGP	64	51.20	-	-	-	--	-	-
2. Congress I	25	20.00	90	82.90	-65	8	6.35	+17
3. UMF	17	13.60	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Congress S	4	3.20	2	1.94	+ 2	26	20.63	-22
5. CPI	-	-	1	1.02	- 1	5	3.98	- 5
6. CPM	2	1.60	2	1.94	0	11	8.73	- 9
7. Janata	-	-	-	-	-	53	42.06	-53
8. Independent and other	11	9.60	10	9.34	+ 1	15	11.09	- 4
9. PTCA	3	2.40	3	2.86	0	4	3.18	- 1
10. RCPI	-	-	-	-	-	4	3.18	- 4
Total	126	100	108	100		126	100	

Table - VI.7: Degree of Success of Different Parties Since 1978

Party	1985			1983			1978		
	Seats contested	Seats won	Percentage of success	Seat contested	Seats won	Percentage of success	Seats contested	Seats won	Percentage of success
1. Congress I	125	25	20.05	126	90	71.42	126	26	20.63
2. AGP	108	64	59.25	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. UMF	59	17	28.81	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Congress S	70	4	5.71	37	2	5.40	-	-	-
5. CPI	21	-	-	28	2	7.14	35	5	14.28
6. CPM	39	2	5.12	28	2	7.14	27	11	40.74
7. Janata	85	-	-	-	-	-	117	53	45.29
8. Independent and others	-	11	-	281	10	3.55	485	15	3.09
9. PTCA	21	3	14.28	27	3	11.11	9	4	44.44
10. RCPI	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	4	40.00
Total	528			527			809		

Overall, the degree of success of Congress I was low except in 1983 election. The degree of success of Janata Party was very high in 1978 election, but when the party splitted into various constituents its degree of success became low. The degree of success of parties which contested on limited seats, such as CPI, CPM and PTCA was significantly high.

VI.4.d. Gain and Losses of Political Parties

Whereas the number of seats won by a political party reflects its strength in the legislature at a particular time, the gains and losses of seats by political parties over election reflects the direction in which a political party is moving, i.e. whether the party is consolidating its position, losing its position or is maintaining it.

Table VI.6 gives the gains and losses of political parties since 1978. Congress I lost heavily in 1985, it lost 65 seats in 1985 from 1983. Congress S gained two seats in 1985 from 1983.

Janata party also lost heavily in 1985. It lost 53 seats in 1985. CPI also lost their position in 1985 election. CPM also lost 9 seats in 1985 from 1978. CPM secured 11 seats in 1978 but in 1985 it was only 2 seats.

Independent also lost 4 seats in 1985 from 1978, but gained 1 seat in 1985 from 1983. PTCA also lost 1 seat

in 1985 from 1978 but could maintain their position in comparison to 1983 election.

VI.4.e. Areal Representation of Parties

The elected candidates in the election represent their respective electorate and de jure territorial segments, i.e. Assembly constituencies. The assembly constituency has a well defined boundary and the elected candidates from the respective constituencies has to look after the interest of their respective territorial unit and the electorate within that territorial unit. The election results give a geographical pattern of areal representation of political parties and sometimes these patterns play a vital role in the political process. The first thing is that one could make out from such patterns is whether a party represents the whole state, or is limited to a part of the state. Their victory only in a part of the state would mean that they do not represent the state as a whole but their representation is regional. It became more important if a party with such a regional support is able to form the government which leads to intense political activity, specially from the region which is not represented by that party. This was the situation with Janata Party in 1977 Parliamentary election of India, when its victory was limited to Hindi speaking belt of North India, the region which has been referred as 'Heartland'.²⁰

20. Singh, C.P. "The Seventh Parliamentary Election in India: A Geographical Analysis", Unpublished ICSSR Project Report, Delhi, 1986, pp. 4-5.

ASSAM
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY
1983

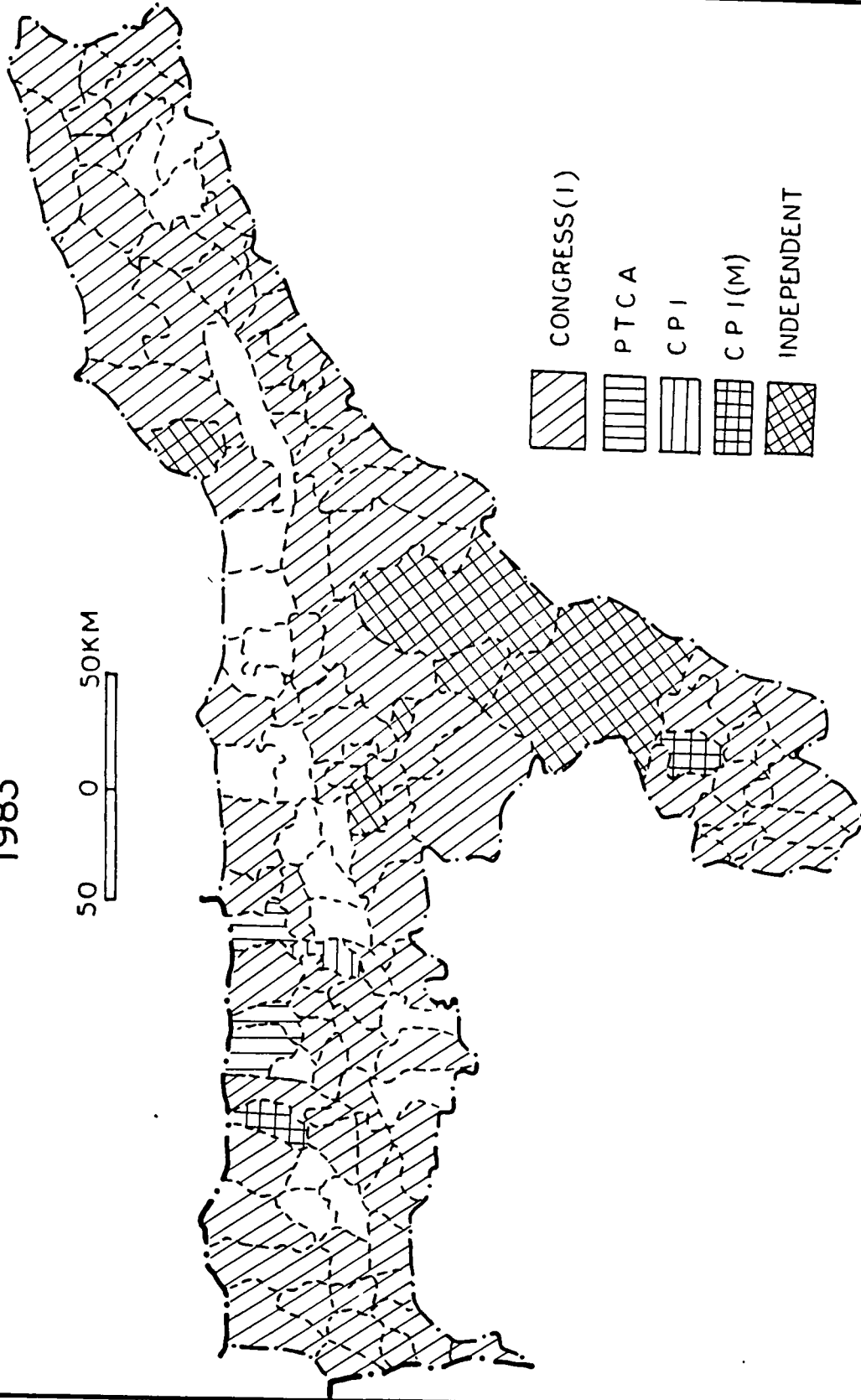
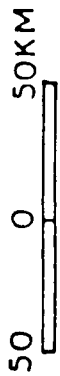


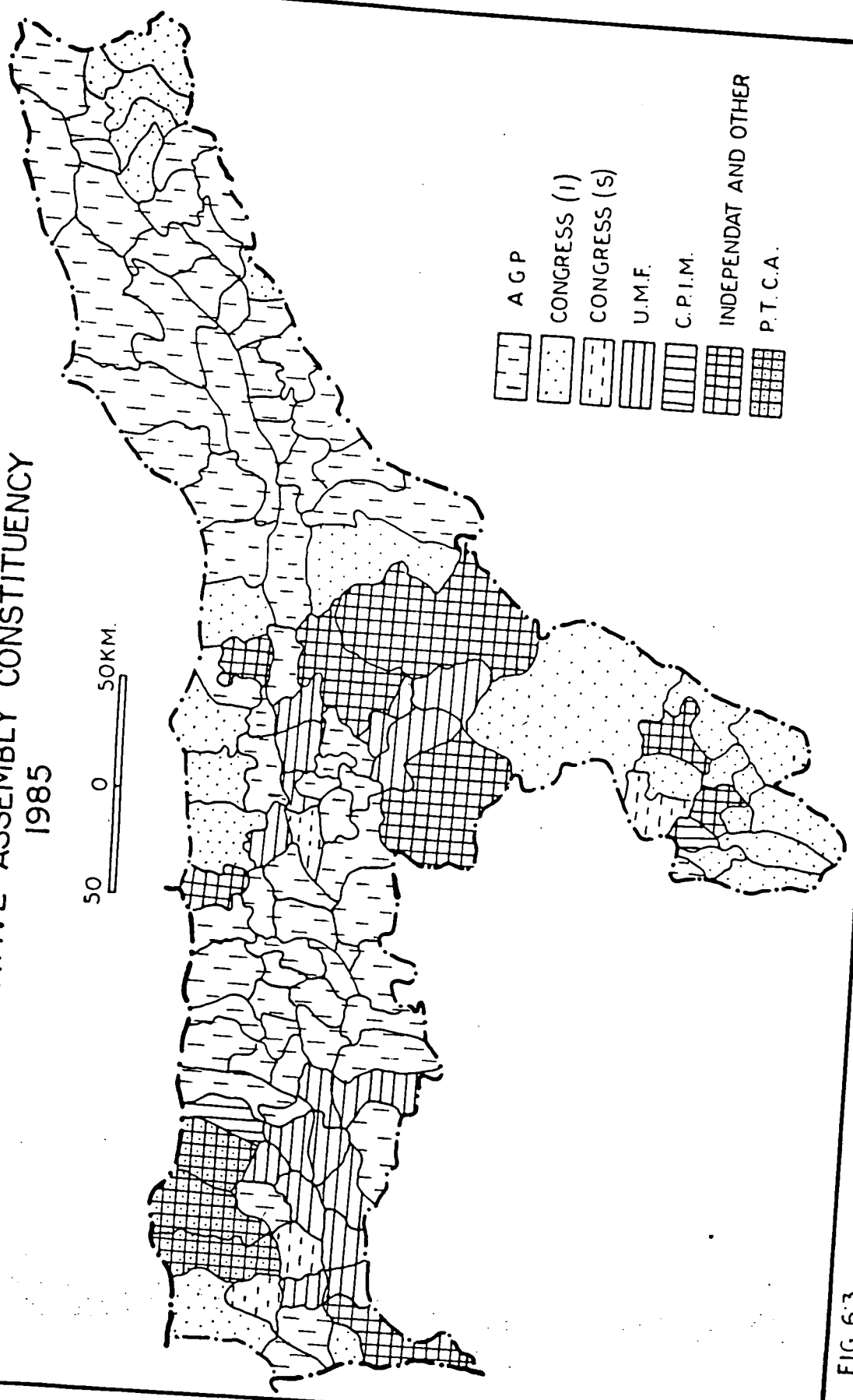
FIG 6 2

In 1983 Assam Assembly Election, Congress I Party was the most successful party which 90 seats out of the total 126 seats. Its victory was extensive throughout the state excluding few constituencies of Kamrup, Darrang and Karbi Anglong districts. CPI won Kamalpur constituency of Kamrup district, CPI(M) won Sorbhog constituency of Kamrup and another one from Cachar district. PTCA won from Barama, Chapanguri and Odalguri constituencies. Independent candidates won from Naobaicha, Marigaon, Jamunamukh, Luming, Diphu and Halflong constituencies (Fig. 6.2).

Areal representation of political parties completely changed in 1985 election as compared to 1983 election (Fig. 6.3). AGP was the most successful party in the 1985 election. This is a regional party formed in 1985 after Assam Accord. It secured 64 seats out of the total 126 seats in Assam Assembly. Though the AGP won majority in 1985 election, its victory was not homogeneous. Its victory is only concentrated in Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, few constituencies of Dibrugarh, Kamrup districts; and few constituencies of Nagaon district.

The UMF was another important regional party, won 17 seats in Assam Assembly. Their victory was concentrated in the pockets of minority people mainly immigrated region of Assam. They returned from the few constituencies of Bar-

ASSAM
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY
1985



- A.G.P.
- CONGRESS (I)
- CONGRESS (S)
- U.M.F.
- C.P.I.M.
- INDEPENDAT AND OTHER
- P.T.C.A.

FIG. 6'3

peta, Kamrup, Goalpara, Dhubri and Nagaon districts.

Congress I was the second most important party which won 25 seats. The pockets of Congress I party are scatteredly patched in character. They won six constituencies from Dibrugarh district, one from Karbi Anglong, one from N.C. Hills, ten from Cachar district, four from Darrang district and two from Goalpara district.

PTCA won from Kokrajhar, Sidly and Bijni constituencies from Goalpara district (old Goalpara). CPI(M)) won from Sarbhog and Badarpur constituencies. Congress S won from Bilashipar (East), Kokrajhar west, Laharighat and one from Cachar districts.

A comparison of Figs. 6.2 and 6.3 reveals that Congress I won majority of seats in Cachar district in 1985 and 1983 election. Besides Cachar district, Congress I lost their position in entire Brahmaputra valley region. AGP and UMF secured majority of seats in Brahmaputra valley though they were newly formed in 1985 as a regional party. In 1985 election, Independent candidates won from the constituencies of Karbi Anglong districts.

VI.4.f. Electoral Participation

Electoral participation denotes such activities by which the electorate participate in choosing the govern-

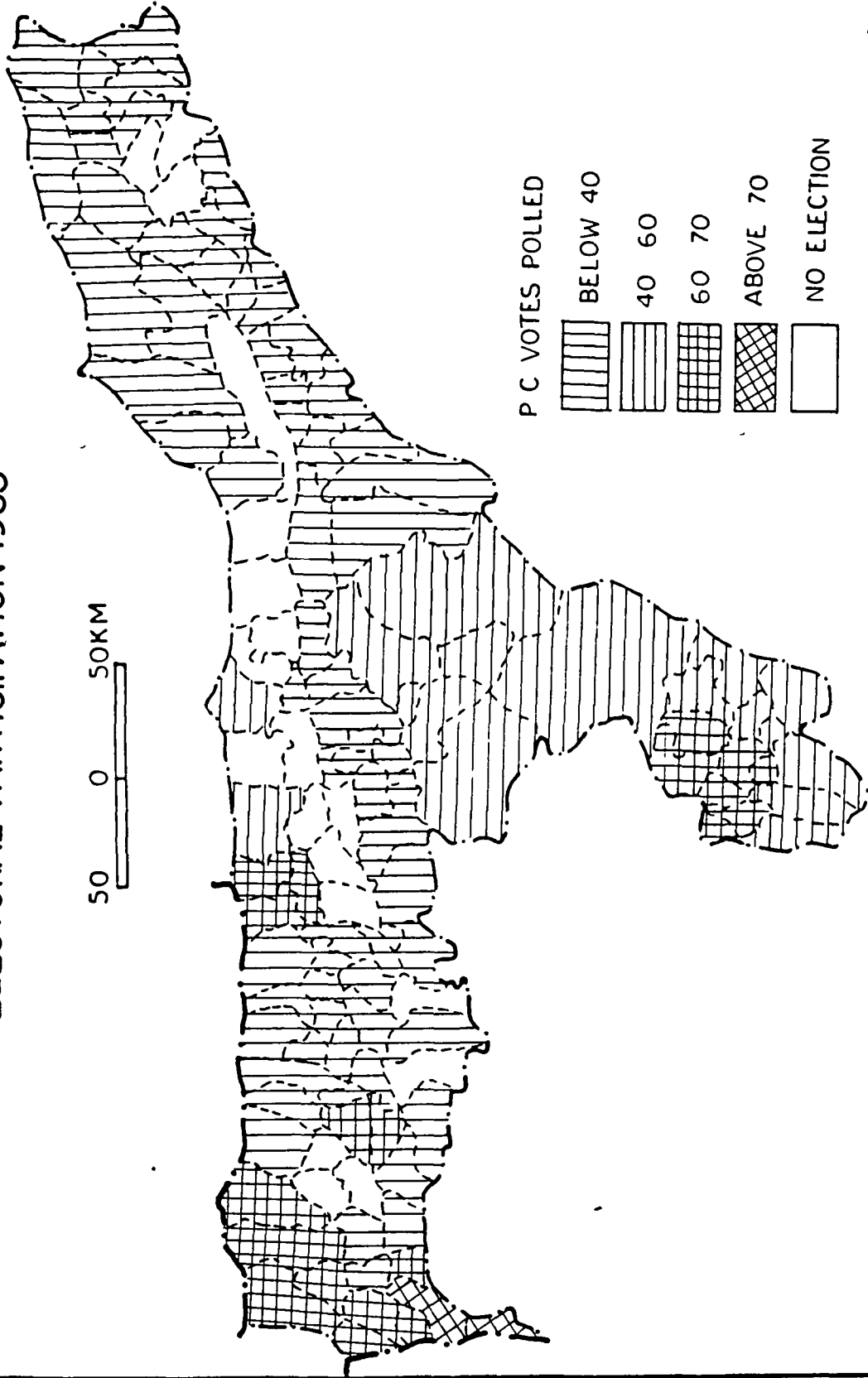
ment, and directly or indirectly in the functioning of government. It is a process through which the electorate gives the responsibility to a party to govern the state. On the other hand, it is a process by which peoples are directly or indirectly related to political activities of the state. To know the spatial variation in the electoral participation in the state, one can easily mark out the regions of high, moderate or low participation, one can then also possibly look into the reasons for the existence of such regions. Specially, one has to focus on low voter turn out regions and should seek to understand what are the causes of such low participation.

Voter turn out has been divided into four categories. These are very high voter turn out region (voter turn out more than 70 per cent) high voter turn out region (voter turn out between 60-70 per cent), moderate voter turn out region (between 40 to 60 per cent) and low voter turn out region (below 40 per cent of voter turn out). The regional distribution of these categories in 1983 election were as follows.

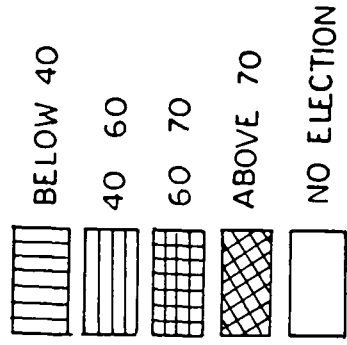
Very high voter turn out (more than 70 per cent turn out) was recorded on in three constituencies namely, Mancachar, South Salmara and Kokrajhar (West).

ASSAM
ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION 1983

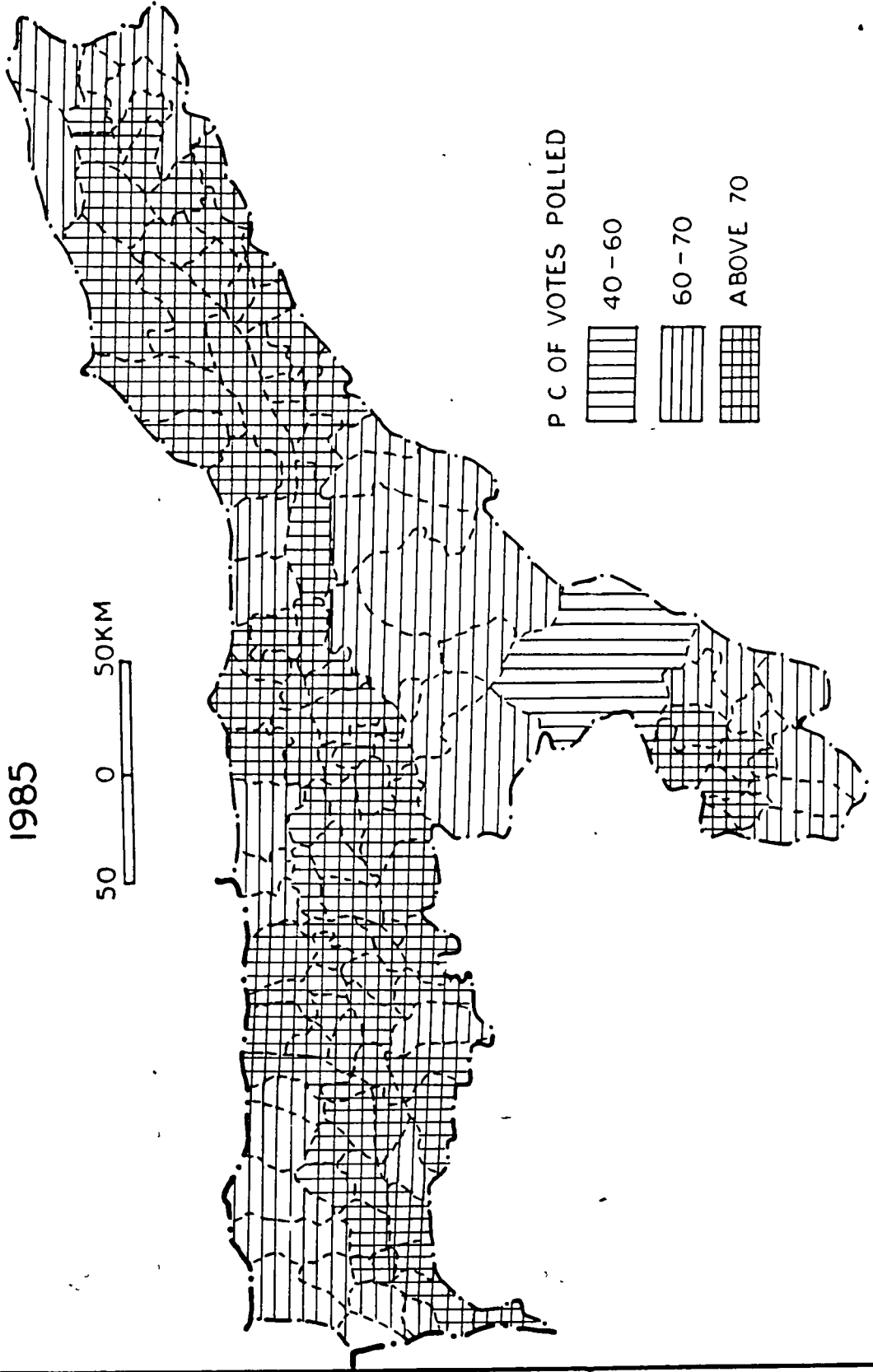
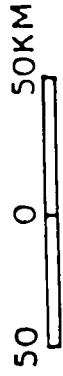
50 0 50KM



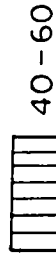
P.C. VOTES POLLED



ASSAM
ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION
1985



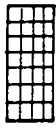
P C OF VOTES POLLED



40 - 60



60 - 70



ABOVE 70

pattern. It plays an important role in making people democratically conscious and thus may have significant influence upon the voting pattern. If we consider the spatial distribution of percentage of literacy in districts level of Assam we have seen that the percentage of literacy was maximum in Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Golaghat, Nagaon and Kamrup districts. Minimum percentage was recorded in Karbi Anglong district. If we correlated the spatial distribution map of literacy and electoral participation we found that the higher participation recorded in the region of higher literacy areas (Fig. 6.6).

Fig. 6.7 a and b shows the spatial distribution of Hindu and Muslim population of Assam in districtwise (constituency wise data was not available). If we compare these map with electoral participation we find that the electoral participation was higher in both Hindu and Muslim concentrated areas. Fig. 6.8. a and b shows the spatial distribution of Assamese speaking and Bengali speaking population of the state. If we compare these maps with the electoral participation map of Assam in 1983 and 1985 we find that in 1983 election the percentage of participation was higher in Bengali speaking areas. In Assamese speaking areas it was very negligible because the majority of Assamese people boycott the election.

ASSAM
HINDU POPULATION
1971

40 20 0 20 40 KM

P. C. OF POPULATION

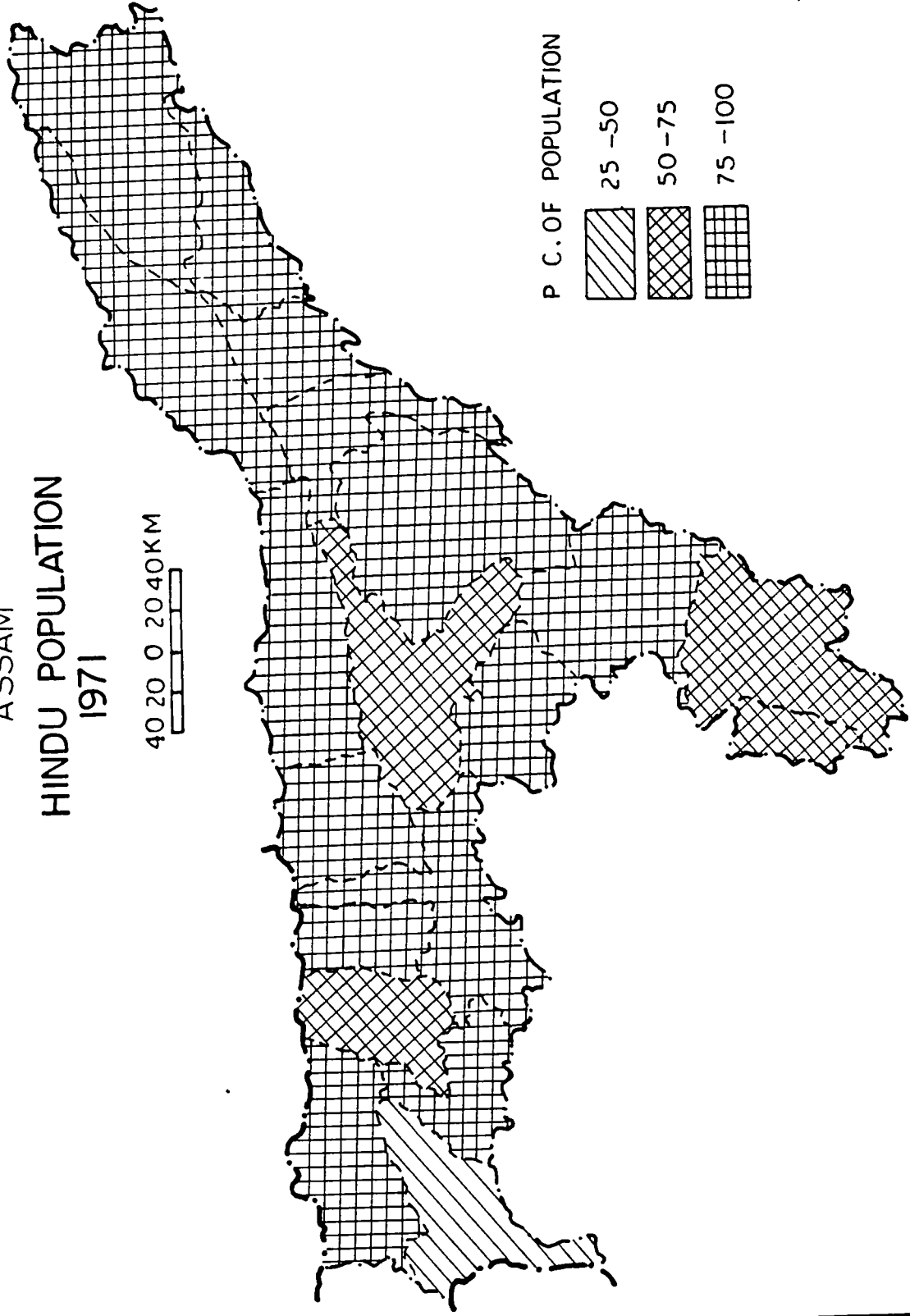
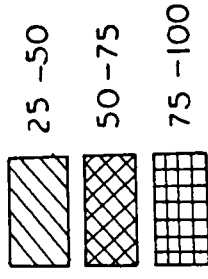


FIG 6.7 A

ASSAM
MUSLIM POPULATION
1971

40 20 0 20 40 KM

P. C. OF POPULATION

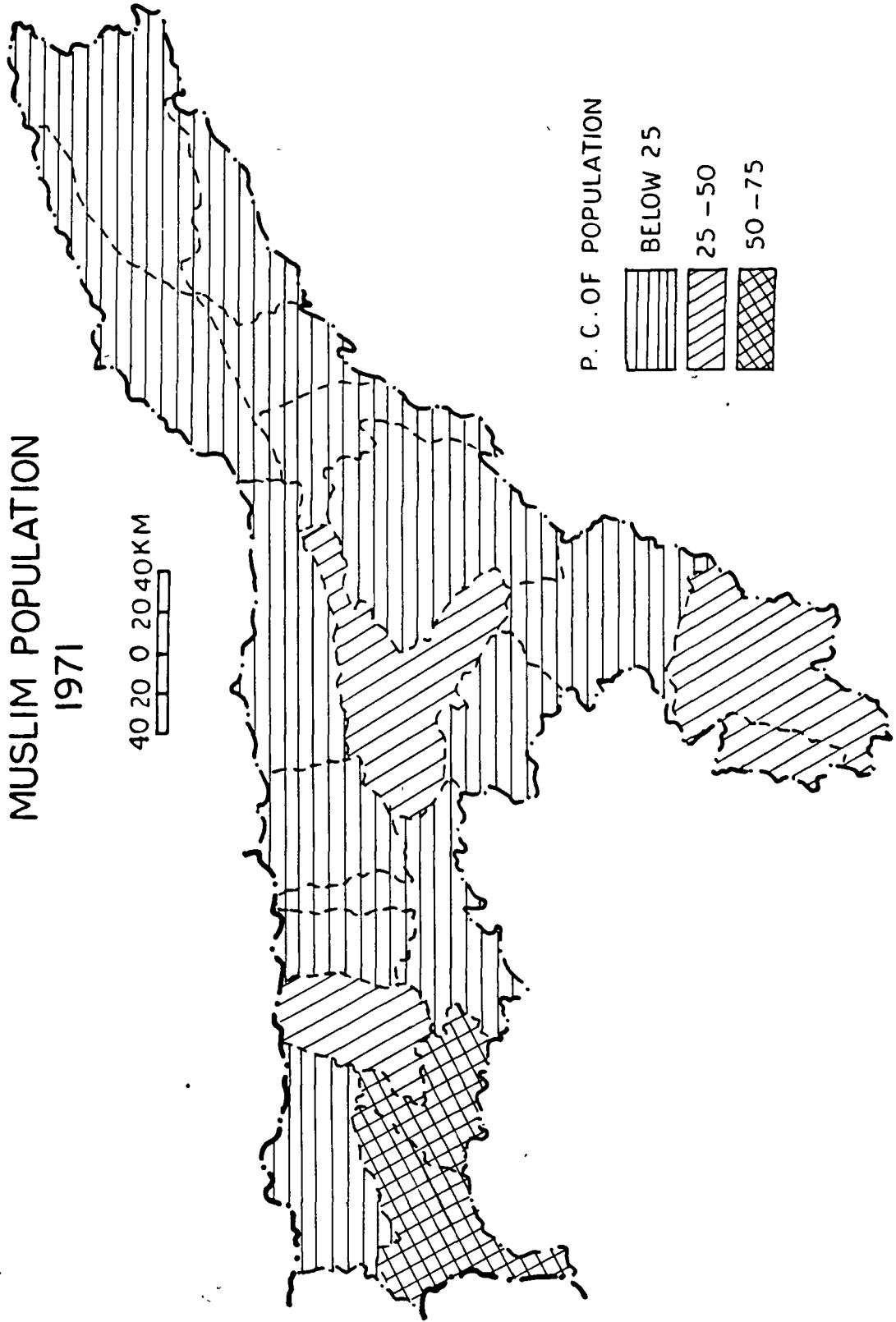
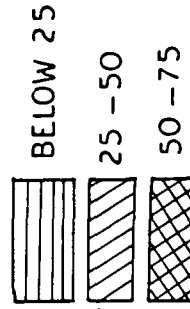


FIG 6.7 B

ASSAM
ASSAMESE SPEAKING POPULATION
1971

40 20 0 20 40 KM

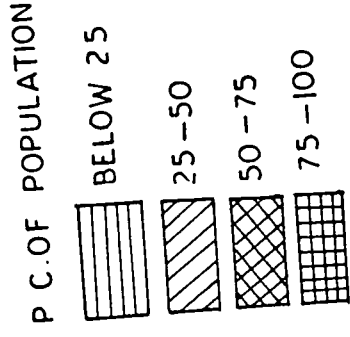


FIG. 6-8 A

ASSAM
BENGALI SPEAKING POPULATION
1971

40 20 0 20 40KM

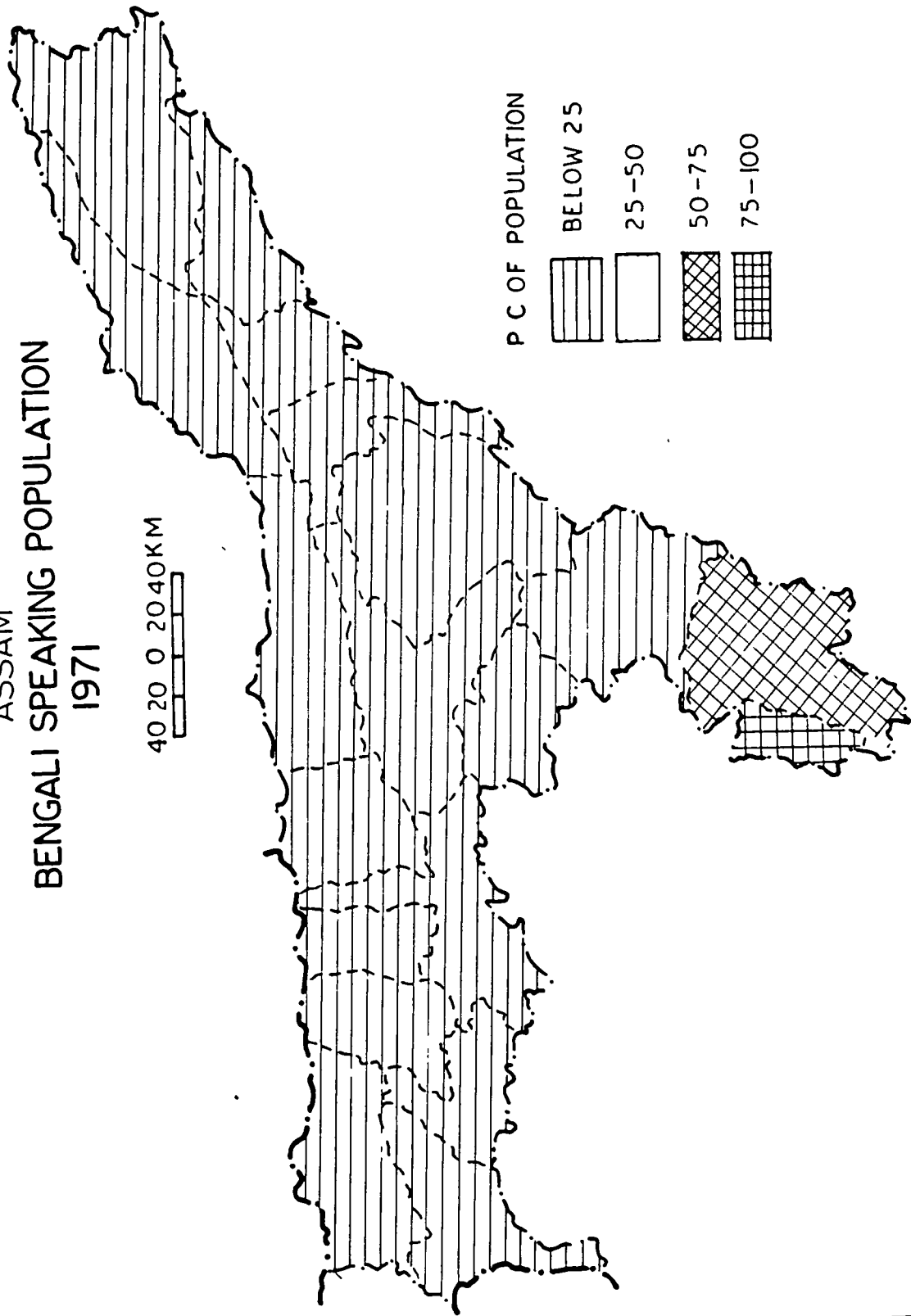
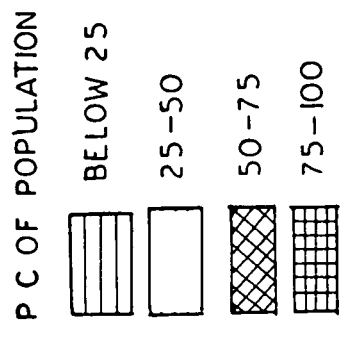


FIG.6.8 B

In case of 1985 assembly election, it was clear that the participation was maximum in both Assamese and Bengali dominating areas. In case of tribal dominating areas the percentage of participation was recorded from 40 to 60 in 1983 and from 40 to 70 in 1985 assembly election. The percentage of electoral participation may also influenced by the level of development of a constituency. The political consciousness of the people is expected to awaken with socio-economic development. Therefore, the proportion of votes polled is likely to be high in relatively prosperous regions. In the absence of data (at the constituency level) some other suitable indicators, like percentage of primary occupation, percentage of secondary and tertiary occupation have been selected as a measure of development of the region in the study.

From the table VI.8, it is clear that the percentage of secondary occupation is very negligible in the districts of Assam. Dibrugarh and Kamrup districts recorded the highest percentage of secondary occupation i.e. 4.98 and 4.70 per cent. If we compare this data to the degree of urban intensity the same districts recorded the higher urban intensity index. We have not got a satisfactory result if we compare these data with the electoral participation of the state. Generally, higher participation recorded in the higher urbanized areas.

Table - VI.8: Occupational Pattern of Assam, 1971

District	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1. Goalpara			
2. Dhubri	84.35	3.49	12.26
3. Kokrajhar			
4. Barpeta			
5. Nalbari	84.89	4.70	10.41
6. Kamrup			
7. Nagaon	86.39	2.48	11.13
8. Sibsagar			
9. Jorhat	83.15	3.53	13.24
10. Golaghat			
11. Lakhimpur	83.66	2.87	13.47
12. Dibrugarh	81.50	4.98	13.52
13. N.C. Hills	77.50	1.34	21.16
14. Cachar			
15. Karimganj	84.33	3.80	11.73
16. Karbi Anglong	88.53	1.52	19.95

Social backwardness is another factor which can influence the voting pattern. Scheduled tribes population and scheduled castes population are main socially backward groups in Assam. Fig. 3.6 and 3.7 show the spatial concentration of S.T. and S.C. population of Assam. The areas where S.T. population is maximum the electoral participation was lower. The Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hill district was recorded a lower percentage of electoral participation in both 1983

ASSAM
IMMIGRANT POPULATION

40 20 0 20 40 KM

P C. OF POPULATION

BELOW 15

15 -30

30-45

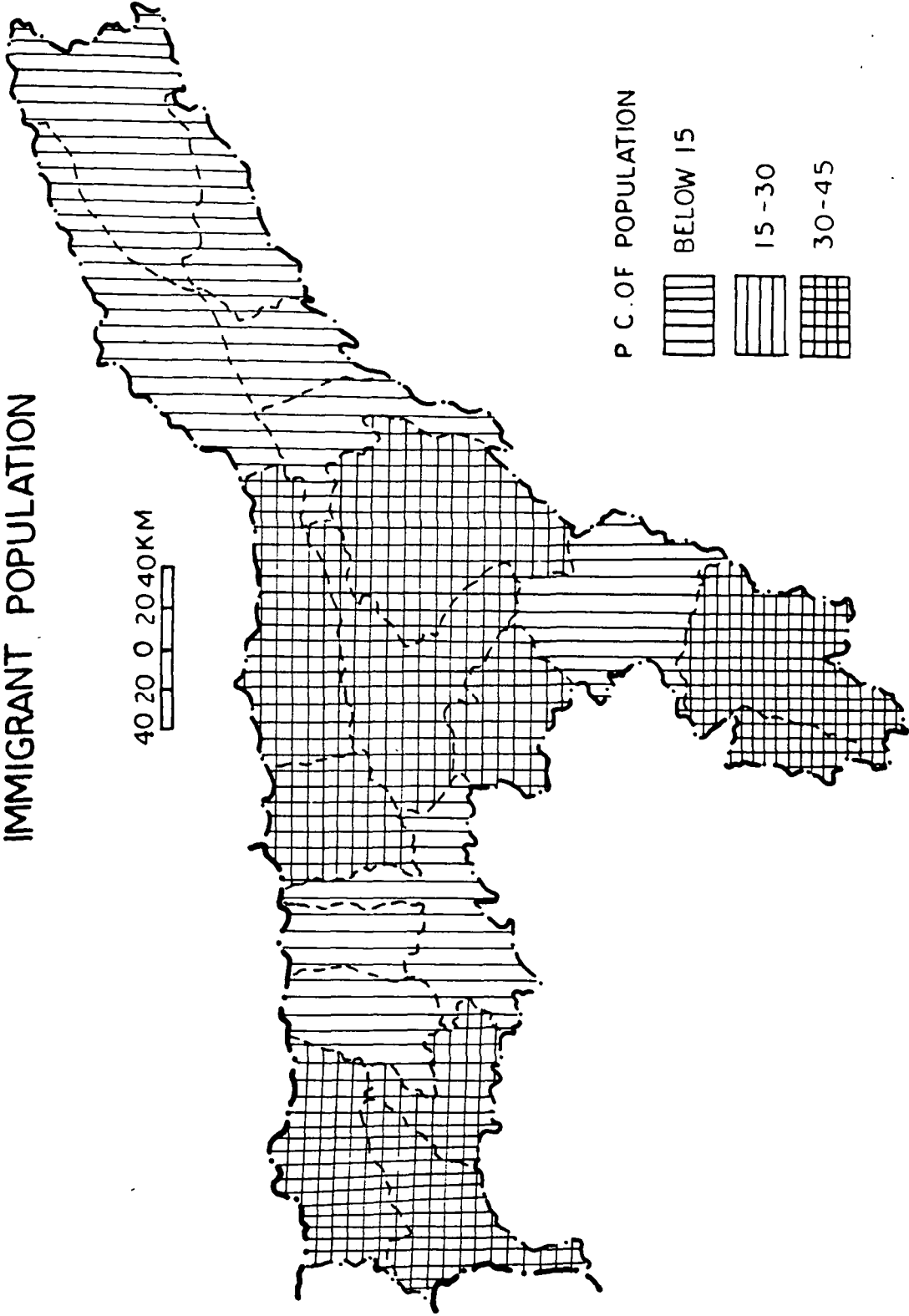


FIG. 69

and 1985 assembly election. Constituencies with greater proportion of S.C. population are likely to show a higher participation than S.T. population concentrated areas.

Immigration is another important factors which can influence the electoral participation of Assam. Fig. 6.9 shows the spatial distribution of immigration population of Assam in district wise. Maximum immigrated population was found in Nagaon, Barpeta, Mangaldai, Dhubri, Goalpara, Cachar and Karimganj districts. If we correlate this map with the electoral participation map of 1983 and 1985, we have noticed that in 1983 assembly election, the percentage of electoral participation was higher in immigrated settled areas than others. But in 1985, the percentage of electoral participation was the same with other areas.

Fig. 6.10a shows the per capita industrial income, per capita agricultural income and per capita income (in current prices). It is clear from the graph that the per capita income was higher than the per capita agricultural and industrial income. The per capita agricultural and industrial income curve gradually upward. In Fig. 6.10b, showing the per capita investment in agriculture and industry. Industrial investment was maximum in 1971 in comparison to agricultural investment. But in 1981, the investment was lower in both sector. In Fig. 6.10c shows that the person per

PER CAPITA INCOME OF ASSAM

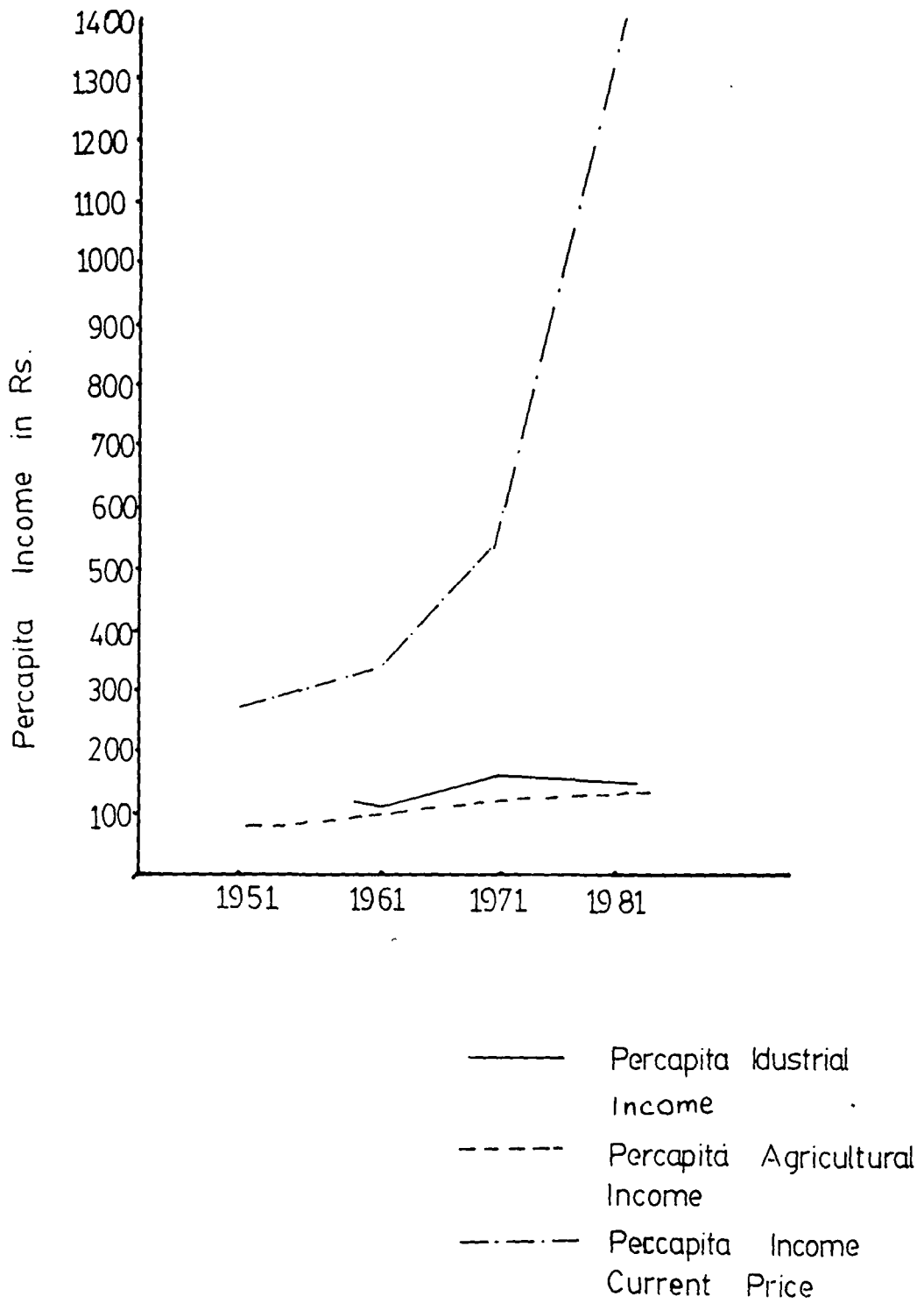


FIG. 6.10 A

PER CAPITA INVESTMENT OF ASSAM

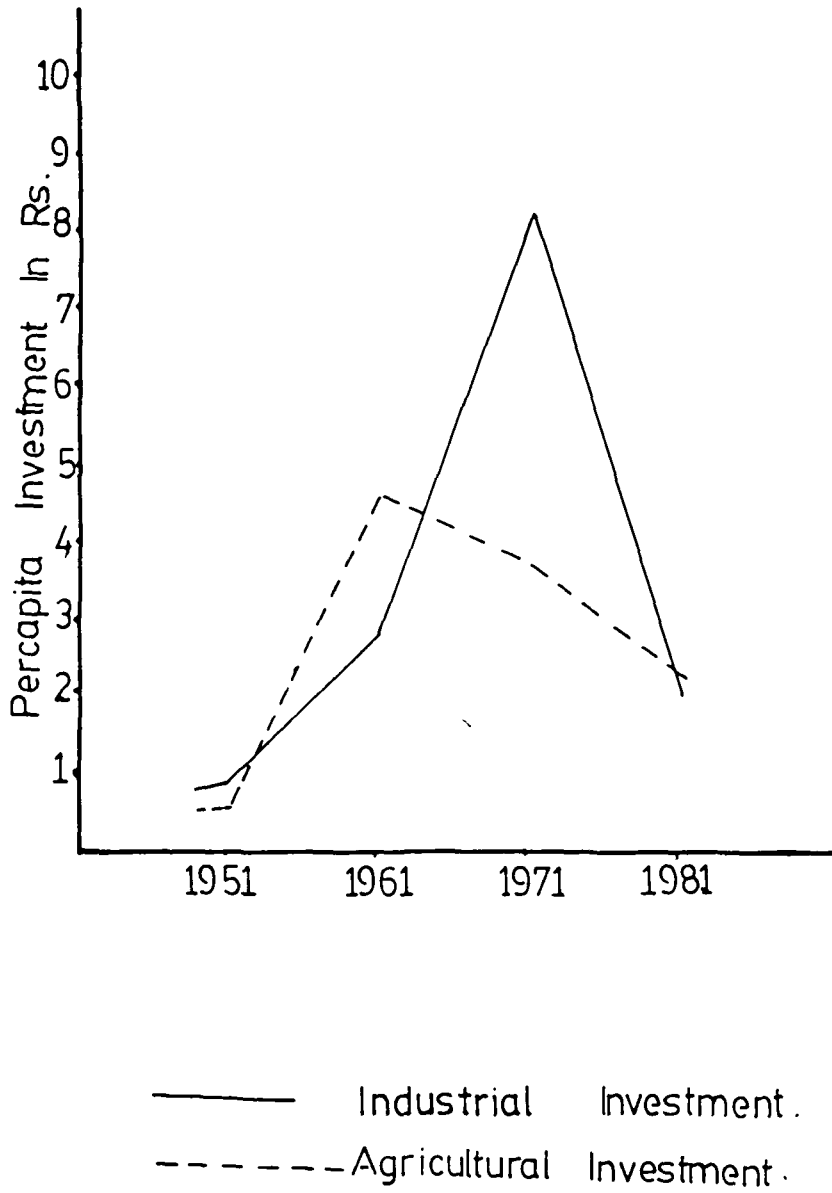


FIG. 6'10B

DEVELOPMENT SITUATION OF ASSAM

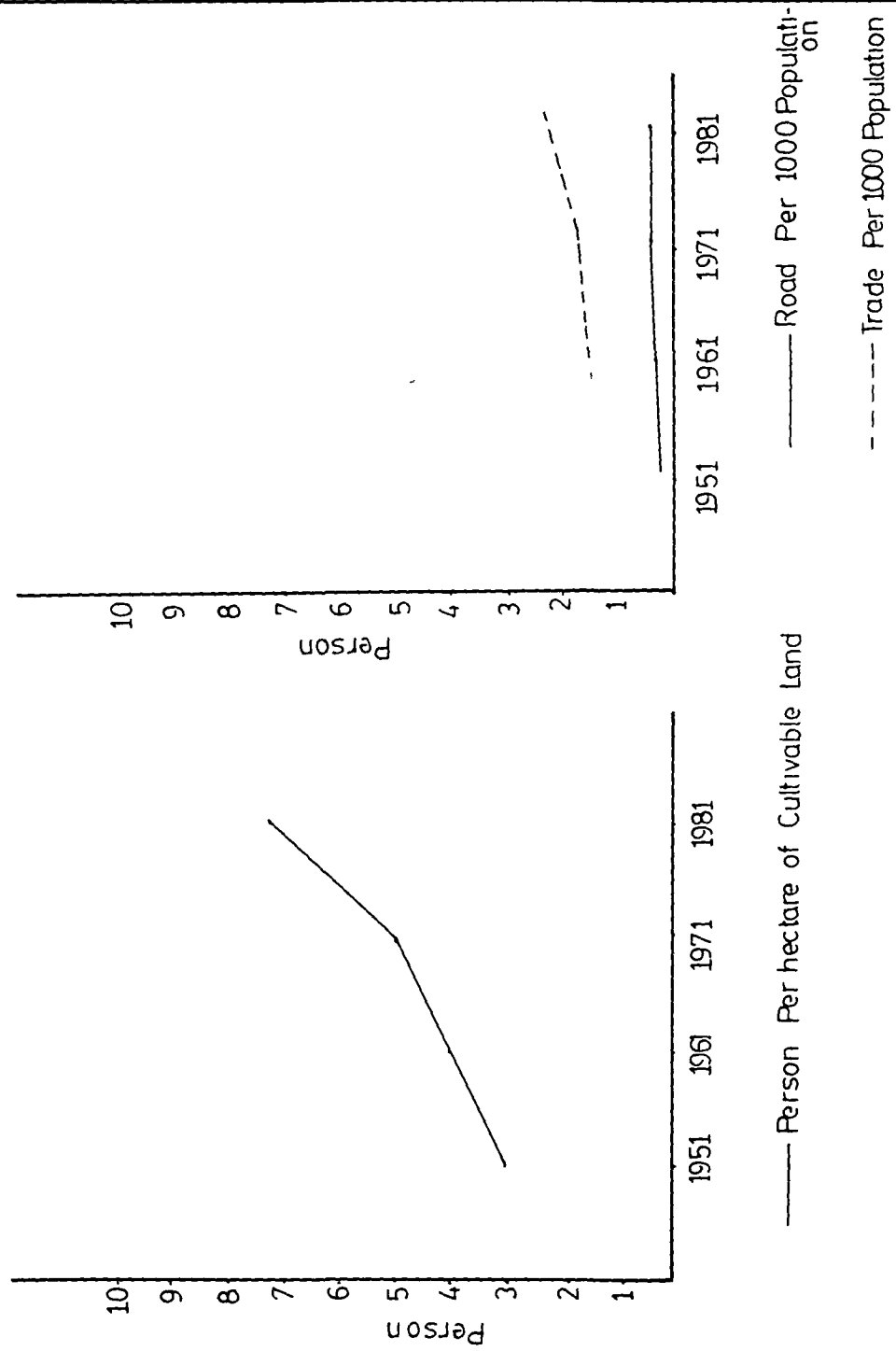


FIG 6 10 C

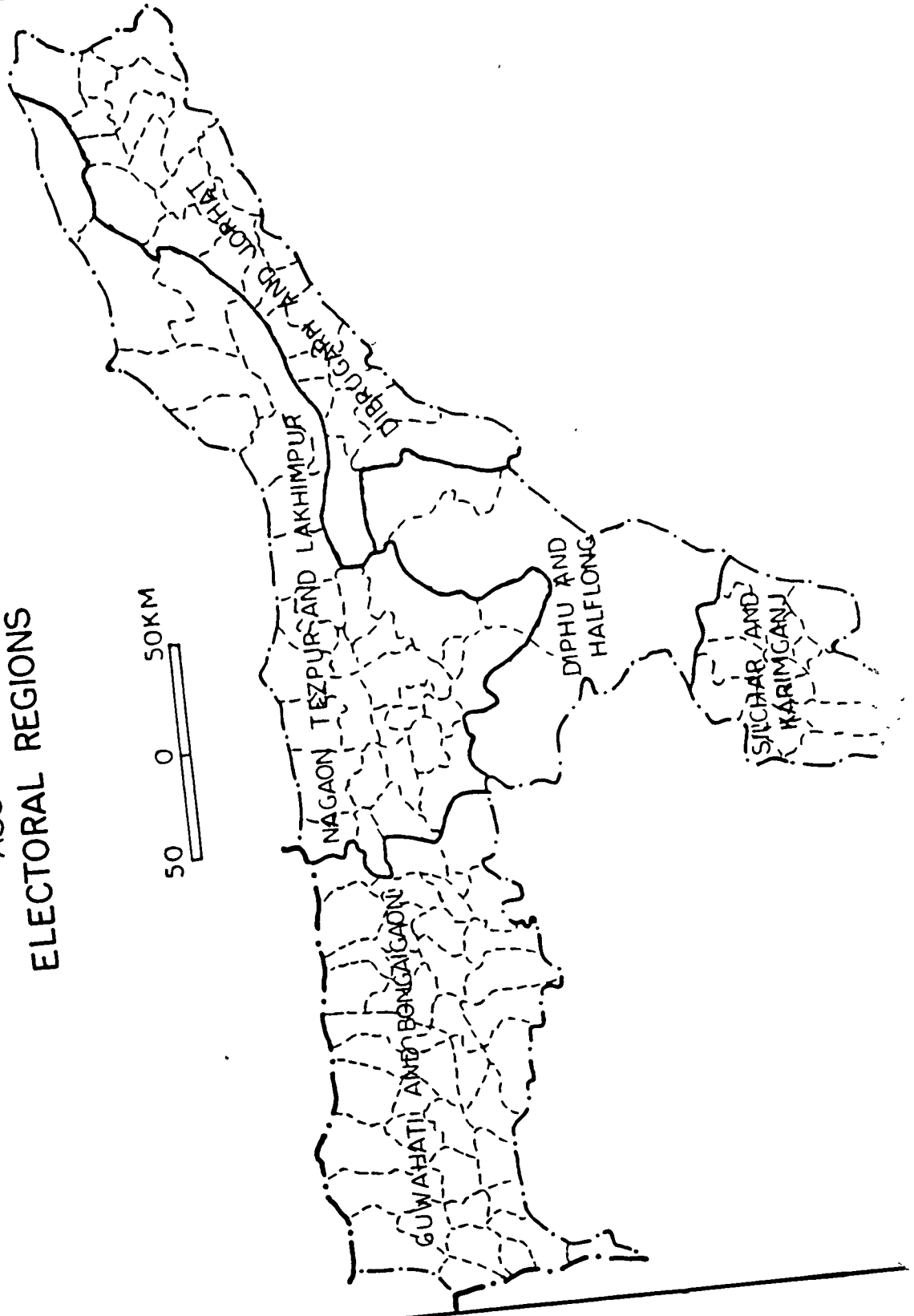
hectare of cultivable land was increased in 1981 in comparison to 1951. The road per thousand of population was not increased in 1981 in comparison to 1951. The trades per thousand of population gradually increased in 1981 in comparison to 1961 and 1971.

From the above analysis it is clear to us that the economic condition of the state is not developed. This poor economic development is another important factor for the political participation of people in the state. Regionalism may be developed due to this lower unequal development of the state. Moreover, this unequal development influenced in the electoral behaviour of the state.

On the basis of these correlation between electoral participation and socio-economic factors, Assam may be divided into the following electoral regions. These regions are: (i) Guwahati and Bongaigaon region, (ii) Nagaon, Tezpur and Lakhimpur region, (iii) Dibrugarh and Jorhat region, (iv) Diphu and Halflong region, and (v) Silchar and Karimganj region.

The population composition and economic characteristics of each of the region and their nature of electoral participation given below (Fig. 6.11).

ASSAM
ELECTORAL REGIONS



i) Guwahati and Bongaigaon Region

This region includes Kamrup, Barpeta, Nalbari, Dhubri, Goalpara, and Kokrajhar districts. It includes 48 constituencies (assembly) out of the total 126 constituencies of Assam. Agriculture is the main economy of the region. Industrial economy and trade and commerce are also considerable in this region. Besides these, the distribution of population composition is another important factor of this region. Muslim immigrated population is maximum in Barpeta, Dhubri, and a smaller areas in Kamrup district. Tribal population are also found in Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Barpeta and Nalbari districts. In 1983 assembly election, the voter turn out was recorded from 40-60 per cent in 12 constituencies of Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts. Besides these, the rest of the constituencies recorded below 40 per cent of electoral participation. In 1985 assembly election, voter turn out recorded from moderate to very high categories. Congress I party won majority seats in 1983 election. In 1985 assembly election, Congress I lost their seats, they won only two seats i.e. Gosaigaon and Dhubri constituencies. AGP won from the constituencies viz. Bongaigaon, Bhabanipur, Patasarkusi, Barpeta, Sarukheti, Saigaon, Palasbari, Jalukbari, Dispur, Guwahati (East), Guwahati (West), Hazo, Kamalpur, Rangia, Tamulpur, Nalbari, Barkheti, Dharampur, Barama and Sapaguri. PTCA won from Kokrajhar (East), Sidli and Bijni

constituencies. Congress S won from ten constituencies. CPI(M) won only from Sarbhog constituency.

ii) Nagaon, Tejpur and Lakhimpur Region

This region includes the Nagaon, Sonitpur, Darrang and Lakhimpur districts. It includes the 33 assembly constituencies of Assam. Agriculture is the main economy of the region. The population composition of this region is one of the basic criteria for electoral participation. Immigrated population is maximum in Nagaon and Mangaldai region particularly in low land areas. Bengali speaking population are also found in southern part of Nagaon district. From religious point of view, the percentage of Muslim population is also a considerable in Nagaon and Mangaldai districts. Towards the Lakhimpur and Tezpur region, the percentage of tribal population and tea garden population are maximum than others. A considerable number of tribal population is also found in western part of the Darrang district.

In 1983 assembly election, voter turn out was maximum in immigrated areas of Nagaon and Mangaldai region. They were supported the Congress I Party. In 1985 election, the Congress I lost their position, the areas of minority population and Bengali speaking areas, supported the UMF party.

In Lakhimpur and Tezpur areas the percentage of voter turn out was very low in 1983 assembly election. The

Congress I was the winning party from these areas. In 1985 assembly election voter turn out was recorded from moderate to very high categories. Congress I lost their position in 1985 election. Asom Gana Parishad was the winning party from this region.

iii) Dibrugarh and Jorhat Region

This region includes the Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat districts. It includes 26 constituencies out of the total 126 constituencies of Assam.

Agriculture is the main economy of this region. But few large scale industries are located in Dibrugarh district. Besides these, a large number of tea gardens are located in these areas. The population composition is one of the important factors for the political participation of this region. Indigenous Assamese people are found in Sibsagar, Jorhat, and Golaghat districts. The tea garden people are largely concentrated in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat region. Smaller pockets of Bengali speaking population are also found in Tinsukia and Mariani region.

In 1983 assembly election, voter turn out was lower in this region i.e. below 40 per cent. But in tea garden areas, voter turn out was above 40 per cent. Congress I was the gaining party in this region.

In 1985 assembly election, voter turn out was very high (above 70 per cent) in a few number of constituencies, located in urban centres. Besides these, voter turn out was recorded from moderate to high categories. Congress I lost their position in Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar regions. Congress I won from 5 constituencies located in Dibrugarh district. Asom Gana Parishad won 21 seats in this region.

iv) Diphu and Haflong Region

This region includes Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills district. This is a tribal concentrating areas of Assam. The economy of this region is primarily agriculture. Transport and Communication are also not developed. Voter turn out was lower in last two assembly election i.e. 1983, 1985. In 1983 assembly election, Independent candidate was returned from this region. In 1985 assembly election, Congress I won from two constituencies and Independent won from another two constituencies.

v) Silchar and Karimganj Region

This region includes the Cachar and Karimganj districts of Barak valley. It includes 15 assembly constituencies of the state. Agriculture is the main economy of this region. The percentage of Bengali speaking population is also higher in this region. Voter turn out was recorded from 60 to 70 per cent in 1983 assembly election. In 1985

assembly election, it was recorded from moderate to very high categories of voter turn out.

The analysis of electoral participation in the state assembly election reveals several factors which have directly influenced the electoral participation of the region. Assam is a rural agrarian state where a vast majority of the people about 91 per cent of the total lived in rural areas were misguided by the political leaders.

The role of two major religion - Hinduism and Islam are also important factors for voting behaviour of the region. Among the Hindus they are divided into different castes at the time of decision making on political grounds. Muslims are also not free from communal bias. It is seen that the Muslims were supported their own communities irrespective of the political parties. In 1983 Assam Legislative Assembly election, 25 per cent of the nominations filed were by Muslim candidates against 18 per cent in 1978. In 1985 assembly election, it was 22 per cent. From the time of 1938 (assembly election) Gopinath Bordoloi had included 3 Muslims in the Ministry out of 4 Muslim supporters.²¹ Since 1938 to the present Ministry of Assam their representation is considerable one.

21. Lahiri, D.K. Assam Muslim Politics & Cohesion, Mital Publication, New Delhi, p. 167.

Among the immigrated people the decision took completely on political ground. They supported mainly the ruling party of the nation for their safeguard, but in the last election they formed their own regional party under the banner of UMF.

In Assam, the tea garden labourers constitute a sizeable number of immigrants but their presence created no social tension because they did not emerge as competitors to the indigenous Assamese in the economic field. It may be noted that a considerable amount of land was settled with the tea garden people in Assam without any protest from any quarters. These tea garden labourers of Assam were used as a vote bank areas by the National Party since independence. But in the last 1985 election majority of them supported the local regional party.

Lastly, the role of tribal population and scheduled caste population is another important criteria for the electoral process. Totally, there are 7 constituencies reserved for scheduled caste and 16 constituencies reserved for scheduled tribes population. In these constituencies the contested candidates should be SC and ST population.

In general the level of political participation is conditioned by caste system, personal contact rather than commitment to ideology. From this it can be concluded

that voters in assembly election in the State with heterogeneous population exercise their voting choice on the basis of political parties of the candidates. In such a circumstances personal qualities of the candidates rank below the party consideration in voting.

CHAPTER - VII

SUMMARY AND GENERALIZATIONS

SUMMARY AND GENERALIZATIONS

One of the major objectives of this work is towards an understanding the dynamics aspect of spatial distribution of population and their possible impact on political behaviour of different groups in the State. The present population structure of the State has evolved through the passage of time in relationship with the process of operating through distribution and utilization of resources in the state.

The present effort is to summarise the analysis and highlight the principal points of generalisation that emerge as conclusions of our study.

Chapter I was primarily introductory in nature and hence it embodied the objective of our study. We have also explained in this chapter the methodology and sources of data used by us. This is followed by brief indication of topical organisation of the dissertation. A brief historical evolution of the state has been attempted. Assam has its own history from early historical period to the modern times. It has its own significant history which contributed to evolution of the state and composition of various diverse population. There is a definite link between political activities and economic development of the region from early days to the present.

Chapter II deals with the geographical background and their impact to population distribution of the region. Physiographically, Assam has been divided into three physiographic units:

- i) The Brahmaputra river plain comprising the fourteen districts.
- ii) The Barak plain comprising the two districts.
- iii) The hill areas consisting of the Karbi Anglong district and North Cachar Hills district.

The climate of Assam is of the tropical monsoonal type. It is characterised by coolness and extreme humidity and heat. The mean annual temperature was 24°C , the mean relative humidity was 77 per cent and the average annual rainfall nearly 300 cm. Soils of Assam are acidic in character. Soils of hilly region are less fertile than the plains. In general, alluvial soils of Assam are rich in agricultural production due to availability of phosphate.

The people of Assam and their way of living have been influenced very much by the physiography. Population density is maximum in the plain areas of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. The indigenous tribal population of Assam live in the foothills and hilly regions of Assam. All the hills region and plain regions are not equally developed. In general, the development situation of Assam is highly

affected by the physiographic factors. Moreover, it helps to understand the separatist tendencies among population.

Population, its structure, composition and distribution has been discussed in the third chapter. The population of Assam is composed of various racial groups viz. Mongoloid, Indo-Aryan, Austroloid and Mundari groups.

The population structure of Assam is a composite one, having been built up the indigenous and non-indigenous population is on one hand, the tribal population and non-tribal population on the other. The growth pattern density and distribution are the important demographic phenomena for the politico-geographical evolution of the State. The population of Assam increased from 33 lakhs in 1901 to 199 lakhs in 1981 (projected population). The population problem of Assam is quite different from the rest of the country mainly due to large scale immigration of foreign national and heavy inflow of population from the neighbouring states. The immigrated population of Assam can be divided into the following categories.

- i) Labourers of tea gardens.
- ii) Immigrant Muslim settlers engaged in agriculture.
- iii) Hindu refugees from East Pakistan.
- iv) Nepali graziers.
- v) Immigration from other parts of the country.

These immigrated population created so many problems to the Assam economy. From the details one may note that migration into Assam and Tripura is in a considerable scale within a short span of time especially after Independence. The actual number of foreign nationals is difficult to establish with certainty. However, the influx is large and perhaps very large to cause serious economic and social problems and pose a grave threat to the cultural identity of the region. In the initial stage of development many countries welcome immigration to get skilled labour. As we notice in case of Assam that a large number of tea garden labourers came to the state from various parts of the country. With the increase of population pressure created by immigrants the availability of needs of life naturally reduced. The direct result of the increasing pressure of population was in terms of absolute decline in the area under forests in the region because of conversion of forest land into agricultural land. It has serious implications for ecological balance of the region.

With the rising pressure of population on land in Assam the average size of holding has reduced from 1.47 hectares to 1.37 hectares during 1970-71 to 1976-77.

It may be added here that the state is highly deficit in respect of food production, though it is predominantly

agricultural. Another interesting feature is that the land kept under fallow and cultivable waste as proportion of total land available for cultivation is very small in Assam.

In an ideally organised set up, various subnationalistic i.e. various social segments making the whole, are in harmonious adjustments. We can say that there is functional balance between various elements of the total structure. Disequilibrium between, as well as, within groups arises when people are dissatisfied. It may concern languages, customs, institutions, faiths, hereditary, and traditional socio-economic privileges etc.

The problem of finding job for the unemployed and the underemployed has become acute. Growing unemployment and extreme poverty of the masses characterise the economic problem of the region. Further, economic development in this region is not only inadequate but unbalanced also, relying mainly on the exploitation of resources. Most of the trade and commerce, tea estates, plywood factories, transport etc. are controlled by migrants who have skills, strong financial support and business links outside the region.

It suggests an integrated strategy for promoting rural and industrial development that ensures people's active participation in the decision making and implementing process.

To bring about accelerated rate of growth of such a backward region with a high rate of growth there is also an urgent need to check the population growth and the structural imbalances of the region has to be corrected. This can be done by developing the infrastructure and industries so that a growing proportion of the force can be diverted from agriculture to industries and transport and communication etc. Efforts are also needed to check further influx of immigrants from the neighbouring countries to avoid the economic, social and political implications in the state.

The economic base of the state has been analysed in the fourth chapter. Economically, Assam is one of the backward state of India. The economic activities of the people are commuted with peasant cultivation, tea cultivation, processing of forest products, mining, manufacturing, trade and commerce, communication and construction.

In the fifth chapter, political activities and their relation to the socio-economic activities of people under British have been discussed. The social activities of people under British period and their role in political movement and economic development of Assam (Roads and Railways, tea industry, exploitation of resources) summarised in details. It was found that under the colonial conditions the traditional Ahom administration system broke down, the British

Socio-economic factor like literacy, language, religion, immigration, tea garden labourers, agricultural and industrial development are some of the most important factors that had influenced the electoral bias in the State. Generally, high levels of participation coincided with the areas of relatively high economic development. In different electoral regions, we have seen that each of the regions have characterised by different socio-economic factors like population composition, distribution and levels of development.

From the above findings based on population distribution and political participation in the State of Assam presents the following generalised facts.

- 1) The heterogeneous character of population and unequal economic development in the region are the major centrifugal factors in the region.
- 2) The population structure of Assam is composed of various racial elements and multilingual basis. In this respect the state differs largely from the other states of India. The rate of growth of population is higher than the other states of India. Birth and death rates of population of Assam are higher and it is also clear that the birth rate is higher than the death rate.
- 3) The population problem of Assam is quite different from the rest of the country. This is mainly due to large

scale immigration of foreign nationals and heavy inflow of population from the neighbouring states. This has created complex problems in Assam, and it is feared that the social and cultural identity of the local people will be jeopardy.

In the economic fields, especially trade and commerce the local people could not withstand competition from outsiders. The hard working immigrant settlers from Bangladesh and Nepal, with abilities in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry, have attained a much better economic position than the autochthonous in the rural areas. The poor section of the original inhabitants have gradually become poorer because of their dependence on agriculture. Fragmentation of landholding is another problem that hindered the agriculture and economic development of Assam.

Another with economic implication problem, the state was lack of assimilation. This was largely due to the fact that language, economy and culture, became points of confrontation between the immigrants, natives and the tribal population. Each majority group attempted to enforce its own ideas and values in rest of the population.

4) Assam is endowed with rich resources. Yet its economy is characterised by stagnancy. The slow growth of economy of Assam can be traced largely to an abnormal increase in population and stagnation of agriculture.

5) The growth of foodstuffs declined in the seventies as compared to sixties, and increased by small percentage in the eighties. The modern techniques should be used in agricultural development of the state.

Industrialization posed a number of problems. These problems are market, transport and communication, lack of entrepreneurship and poor infrastructure of the State. Decentralization of the industries is necessary for equal development of the region.

6) In electoral participation, voter turn out in the State has been fairly high since 1962 to 1972 (between 52.77 to 66.77 per cent). But 1985 assembly election voter turn out was 79.38 per cent. The voter turn out in the State of Assam with national level was almost same.

7) In terms of spatial strength of political parties representation the national parties had comparatively stronger support base. However, the inability to effectually tackle the socio-economic and political problems, and other extraneous factors eroded the credibility of these parties. This enabled the regional parties to emerge. The regional parties focussed their efforts to highlight the problems and possible means to resolve them. These were theoretically not stable yet, it indicated the common process of selecting a regional party to administer the state. This is clearly evident in

Assam which like other states in the country exhibited the impact of natural processes. Failure to tackle the regional issues enabled the regional parties to gradually dominate the state. Thus, support base of AGP was expanded throughout the state. Congress I had better support base in Dibrugarh, Silchar and Mangaldai region, whereas, AGP had better support base in Jorhat, Sibsagar, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Nalbari, Guwahati and Nagaon region. The performance of UMF was comparatively better than CPI(M), CPI, Janata, Congress S and PTCA.

8) The degree of relationship between socio-economic factors and political participation was fairly high in the State of Assam.

9) The tribal population are one of the determining factor for transforming the present socio-political pattern of the State strengthening of the infrastructural requirements of circulation and movement in the State, has encouraged greater participation. It had also heightened the political consciousness and awareness among the different population groups. As a result there is greater demand for representation in matter of political decision-making apparatus of the state today in Assam.

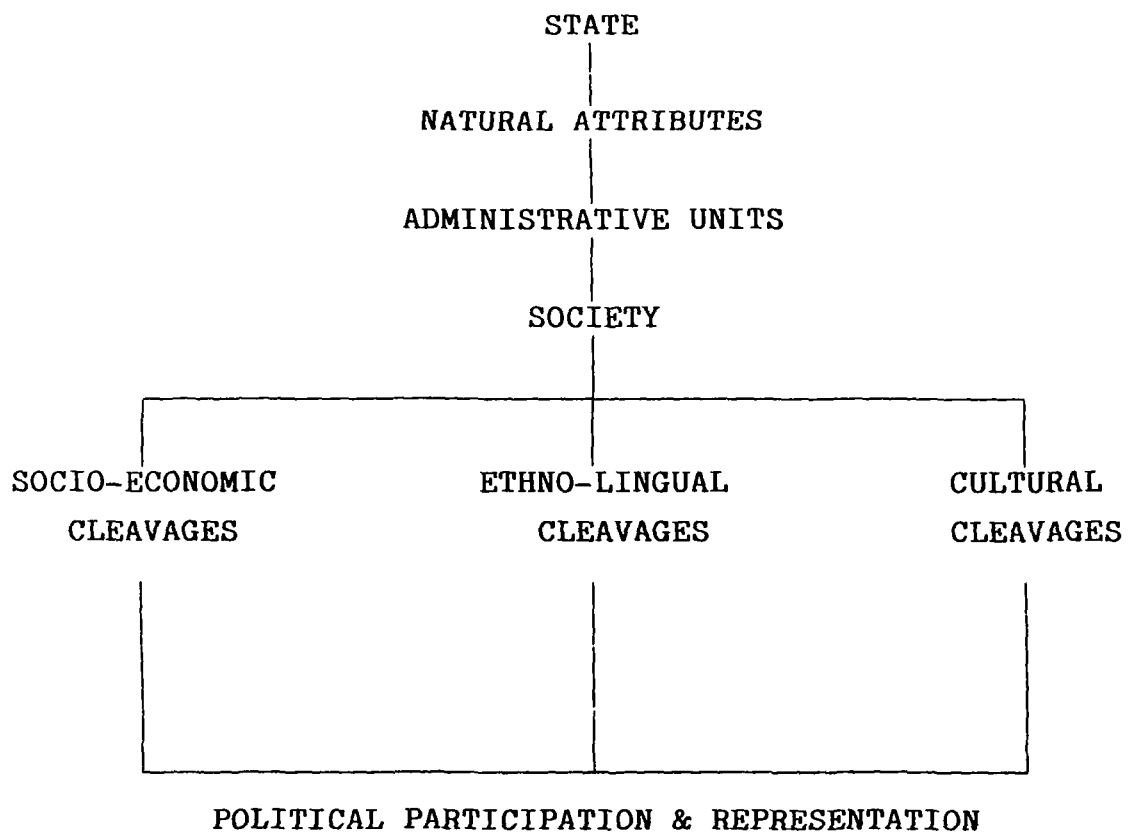
Thus, it is clear that further studies are necessary to go upto an indepth analysis of the growth of population and their impact on the society and economy of the state.

Thus, the stability of the societies in the region were, therefore, considered to be threatened by source factors that were external to the concerned population groups and sub-groups in the state. This perception led these groups to voice their protests. Thus, one can argue that the sources of instability in the mid-1970's and early 1980's was through inter and intra unit differences and disputes as well by the presence of the demands for local autonomy (within the existing administrative units). This was because the traditional balance between the various section of the society was eroded by sustained movements in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Thus, it is clearly discernable that apathy was replaced by the desire for active participation within and between the different units in the State. Cleavages that were believed to have been either non-existent or faded away, emerged to an extent that was not predicted. Earlier, it was believed that modernization and development would have meant that ethnic and other cultural cleavages would continue to remain in low profile (dormant) as a source of conflict because the social groups - (the societies) - of the state would be concerned with economic theme or with functional orientations of their respective units. But, what became reality in practical terms was the subsequent events that challenged the political parties and the political systems by the resurrection of the traditional

loyalties - thereby the need for the analysis of cleavages - of ethnic and other cultural differences.

Thus, what is required is the understanding of the basic fact that the State has is a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious geographical entity. All the Units, in varying degrees and proportion, reflected this primary characteristics in their functions. Resolutions to conflicts and tension parameters lay in the mutuality. Fundamental to this mutuality solution to the crisis in the state is the recognition of territory's multiple identity and the need for proportionate sharing and readjustments within the existing politico-administrative hierarchy along with the required devolution of political and financial powers.

Such themes as have been identified in the present study needs to be analysed at a greater depth. This will go a long way in highlighting the hidden dimensions of these problems. It can also be added here that such an effort will overtly in covertly explain the phenomenon of change or population dynamics. In order to carry out such a study, the following scheme has been presented.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbi, B.L. North East Region - Problems and Prospects of Development, Published by Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, 1984.
- Acharyya, N.N. Assam and Neighbouring States - Historical Documents, Omson Publication, New Delhi, 1983.
- _____. History of Medieval Assam, Dutta Baruah and Company, Gauhati.
- Allen, B.C. and Gait Edward. Gazetteer of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1906, (Rept. 1979), Mittal Publishers, New Delhi.
- Alexander, M. History of the Relations of the Government with Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1883.
- Barooah, K.L. Studies in the History of Assam, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1973.
- Baruah, G.L. Population Geography of Assam, Mittal Publishers, Delhi.
- Bhattacharyya, A. Population Geography of India, Shree Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978.
- Bhuyan, M.C. "Trends in Population Growth in Assam 1872-1971", Jr. NEIGS, Vol. V, Gauhati 1973.
- Bhuyan, S.K. Anglo-Assamese Relation, Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati, 1949-50.

- Bhuyan, S.K. Studies in the History of Assam, Published by L. Bhuyan & Company, Bagaon Road, Guwahati, 1965.
- Bhuyan, A.C.; Goswami, D.K.; Mukherjee, K.N. and Medhi, R.S. Political History of Assam, Vol. II, Published by the Government of Assam, Dispur.
- _____. Political History of Assam, Vol. III, Published by the Government of Assam, Dispur.
- Borpuzari, H.K. Assam in the Days of the Company (1826-1858), Gauhati, 1963.
- Borpuzari, H.K. and Bhuyan, A.C. Political History of Assam, Vol. I, Published by the Government of Assam, Dispur.
- Chakravarti, S. The Upheaval Years in North East India (1960-1983), N.R.P.J.B. Correspondence released.
- Chatterjee, S.K. The Place of Assam in History and Civilization of India, Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1970.
- Chowdhury, P.C. "History of Civilization of Assam", Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati, 1966.
- Cosh, John M. Topography of Assam, Sanskaram Prakashan, Delhi.
- Das, H.P. Geography of Assam, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1970.
- _____. "The Brahmaputra Drainage System", Jr. NEIGS, Vol. I, Nos. 1 and 2, Gauhati, 1969.
- Das, S.K. "Immigration and Demographic Transformation of Assam", Economic and Political Weekly, May 10, 1980.

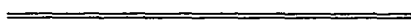
- Dikshit, R.D. The Political Geography of Federation, The Macmillan Co. of India Ltd., Delhi, 1975.
- Dutta, P.S. Electoral Politics in NE India, Omsons Publication, Guwahati, 1986.
- Gait, Edward. A History of Assam, Thacker Spink and Company Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1905 (Rept. 1967).
- Gohain Baruah, P. Assam Buranji, Publication Board, Gauhati, 1976.
- Gopalakrishnan, R. "Geographical Aspects of a Crisis in Brahmaputra Valley (Assam)", The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. XLVII, No. 3, 1986.
- Gosal, G.S. Population Geography of India, Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., Bombay, 1972.
- Goswami, H. Population Trends in the Brahmaputra Valley, Mittal Publication, Delhi.
- Goswami, P.C. The Economic Development of Assam, Asia Publishing House, Calcutta, 1963.
- Hamilton, F. An Account of Assam, Calcutta 1840, 2nd edn. DHAR Gauhati.
- Hunter, W.W. Statistical Account of Assam, Vol.2, London, 1879.
- Mahanta, P.K. The Tussle Between the Citizens and Foreigners in Assam, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Mahmood Aslam. Statistical Methods in Geographical Studies, Rajesh Publication, New Delhi, 1977.

- Medhi, s.B. Transport System and Economic Development in Assam, Publication Board, Assam.
- Mills, A.J.M. Report on Assamese, Calcutta, 1854, 2nd Edn. Mittal Publication, 1980.
- Moodie, A.E. Geography Behind Politics, B.I. Publication, 1974.
- Neufville, J.B. "On the Geography and Population of Assam", Asiatic Researchers, Vol. XVI, Calcutta, 1828.
- Pound, N.J.G. Political Geography, McGraw Hill, New York, 1972.
- Powel, B.H. The Land System of British India, Oriental Publication, New Delhi.
- Rabinson, W.A. Descriptive Account of Assam, Calcutta 1841, 2nd Edn. Sanskaram Prakash, New Delhi, 1975.
- Rao V. Venkata. Local Self Government in Assam (1860-1960), Bani Prakash Mandir, Gauhati.
- _____. A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India (1874-1974), S. Chand and Company Ltd., 1976, New Delhi.
- Singh, Bhabani. Politics of Alineation in Assam, Ajanta Publication, New Delhi.
- Srivastava, S. Demographic Profile of N E India, Mittal Publication, New Delhi.
- Sukhwal, B.L. Modern Political Geography of India, Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi.

- Taher, M. "Fluvial Process in the Brahmaputra Valley", Geographical Review of India, Vol. 36, No.1, Calcutta, 1974.
- Wade, J.P. An Account of Assam, Assam Jyoti Sewagpur, Gauhati.
- Wadia, D.N. Geology of India, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1976.
- Winer, M. "Assam and its Migrants", Demography India, Vol.II, Delhi, 1975.

Government Reports and Other Publications

- Bez, K. "Spatial Economic Planning", Seminar on Planning in North East India, Retrospective and Perspective, 21-23 April, Shillong 1983, NEICSSR.
- Bhattacharjee, N.N. "Impact of Land Reforms in Assam", Seminar on Impact of Land Reform in North East India, Shillong, 24-25 April, 1987, NEICSSR.
- Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Statistical Handbook 1980, 1984.
- _____. Economic Survey of Assam 1982-83.
- Census of India, 1951, 1961, 1971.
- Department of Planning and Development, Govt. of Assam, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Plan Report.
- _____. Twenty Point Programme in Assam, 1981, Guwahati.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX - A

SPEAKERS OF LANGUAGES IN ASSAM, 1971

(in thousand)

Sl. No.	District	Assamese	Bengali	Hindi	Nepali	Other Indian languages	Tribal languages
1.	Dhubri	682.3	109.2	30.2	1.3	0.6	17.4
2.	Kokrajhar	261.5	130.5	27.9	19.5	8.5	191.0
3.	Goalpara	473.6	87.2	14.4	2.6	1.0	69.0
4.	Borpeta	748.8	162.5	9.4	2.5	0.2	46.5
5.	Kamrup	1438.6	189.7	68.5	40.1	9.8	109.8
6.	Darrang	529.0	122.8	44.4	-	13.7	63.0
7.	Sonitpur	561.8	108.3	60.5	26.8	31.5	93.7
8.	Lakhimpur	435.2	42.3	27.2	75.2	59.9	28.7
9.	Dibrugarh	900.1	155.9	159.1	32.06	18.5	3.7
10.	Sibsagar	567.7	25.5	23.3	76.7	13.3	5.1
11.	Jorhat	1008.1	43.0	42.1	6.1	9.7	3.6
12.	Nagaon	1239.1	324.4	59.4	20.9	9.6	21.0
13.	Cachar	5.1	849.9	137.9	11.6	9.9	40.4
14.	Karimganj	1.7	483.1	55.3	3.5	7.5	22.2
15.	Karbi Anglong	51.6	37.0	28.8	0.6	3.8	48.4
16.	N. Cachar Hills	2.1	10.9	3.3	4.6	0.2	36.3

Source: Census of India, 1971.

APPENDIX - B

LIST OF ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION CONSTITUENCY,
1978ST = Reserved Seat for
Scheduled TribeSC = Reserved Seat for
Scheduled Caste**Goalpara District (19)**

1. Mankachar
2. South Salmara
3. Dhubri
4. Gauripur
5. Golokganj
6. Bilasipara West
7. Bilasipara East
8. Gosaigaon
9. Kokrajhar West (ST)
10. Kokrajhar East (ST)
11. Sidli (ST)
12. Bongaigaon
13. Bijni
14. Abhayapuri North
15. Abhayapuri North
16. Abhayapuri South (SC)
17. Goalpara West
18. Goalpara East
19. Dudhnai (ST)

Kamrup District (24)

20. Sorbhog
21. Bhawanipur
22. Patacharkuchi
23. Barpeta

24. Jania
25. Baghbar
26. Chenga
27. Sarukhetri
28. Boko (SC)
29. Chaygaon
30. Palasbari
31. Jalukbari
32. Dispur
33. Gauhati East
34. Gauhati West
35. Hajo
36. Kamalpur
37. Rangia
38. Tamulpur
39. Nalbari
40. Borkhetri
41. Dharmapur
42. Barama (ST)
43. Chapaguri (ST)

Darrang District (15)

44. Paneri
45. Kalaigaon
46. Sipajhar
47. Mangaldai (SC)

- 48. Dalgaon
- 49. Udalguri (ST)
- 50. Mazbat
- 51. Dhekiajuli
- 52. Barchalla
- 53. Tezpur
- 54. Rangapara
- 55. Chatia
- 56. Biswanath
- 57. Behali
- 58. Gohpur

Nowgong District (14)

- 59. Jagiroad (SC)
- 60. Marigaon
- 61. Raha (SC)
- 62. Dhing
- 63. Batadrava
- 64. Rupahihat
- 65. Laharighat
- 66. Nowgong
- 67. Barhampur
- 68. Samaguri
- 69. Kaliabor
- 70. Jamunamukh
- 71. Hojai
- 72. Lumding

Sibsagar District (16)

- 73. Bokakhat
- 74. Sarupathar
- 75. Golaghat
- 76. Khumtai
- 77. Dergaon (SC)

- 78. Jorhat
- 79. Majuli (ST)
- 80. Titabar
- 81. Mariani
- 82. Teok
- 83. Amguri
- 84. Nazira
- 85. Mohmora
- 86. Sonari
- 87. Thowra
- 88. Sibsagar

Lakhimpur District (6)

- 89. Bihpuria
- 90. Naoboicha
- 91. Lakhimpur
- 92. Dhakuakhana (ST)
- 93. Dhemaji (ST)
- 94. Jonai (ST)

Dibrugarh District (12)

- 95. Moran
- 96. Dibrugarh
- 97. Lahowal
- 98. Chabua

- 99. Tinkhong
- 100. Naharkatia
- 101. Duliajan
- 102. Tinsukia
- 103. Digboi
- 104. Margherita
- 105. Doom Dooma
- 106. Sadiya

Karbi Anglong District (4)

- 107. Bokajan (ST)
- 108. Howraghat (ST)
- 109. Diphu (ST)
- 110. Baithalangso (ST)

North Cachar Hills District (1)

- 111. Haflong (ST)

Cachar District (15)

- 112. Ratabari
- 113. Patharkandi
- 114. Karimganj North
- 115. Karimganj South
- 116. Badarpur
- 117. Hailakandi
- 118. Katlicherra
- 119. Alagapur
- 120. Silchar
- 121. Sonai
- 122. Dholai (SC)
- 123. Udarbond
- 124. Lakhipur
- 125. Borkhola
- 126. Katigora

NEHU Library 102418
 Acc. No.
 Acc. by
 Date 24.11.92
 by
 by
 by
 by