PART I

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ECONOMY OF MANIPUR.
Introductory

Manipur is situated between 93°03' E and 94°78' E, and 23°83' N and 25°68' N.¹ It is an isolated hill-girt Union Territory which constitutes a distinct geographical entity in the north-eastern frontier of India. The border hills, with altitudes varying from 2500 ft. to 10,000 ft. above the sea-level, constitute themselves into parallel folds running from north to south; and the hill areas constitute about 90 percent of the total area of the State. The State has an area of 8,623 sq. miles.² The Territory is bounded on the north by Nagaland, on the east by the Somra tract and the Upper Chindwin districts of Burma, on the south by the Chin hills (Burma) and Mizo district (Assam) and on the west by Cachar district of Assam.

The Territory is divided into three natural divisions

(1) The Central Valley of Manipur consisting of Imphal town and four plain sub-divisions viz. Imphal West, Imphal East, Bishenpur and Thoubal; (II) the Hills Regions comprising five hill-subdivisions viz. Mao-Sadar Hill, Ukhrul, Tengnoupal, Churachandpur and Tamenglong and (III) the small Valley of Jiribam subdivision lying between the western hill regions of Manipur and

Cachar district of Assam. Socio-economically, there is a vast difference between the Valley and hill areas. The Valley is mainly inhabited by the Meiteis who are fairly advanced in their economic conditions, education and social habits, while the hills are inhabited by various tribes who are relatively backward in their social and living conditions.

Topographically, Jiribam is a plain sub-division and the economic life of the people therein is much akin to that of the people in the Central Valley. However, for administrative purposes, it is treated as a hill sub-division, and as such official data relating to the economic life of the sub-division are grouped together with those of hill sub-divisions. Accordingly, in our study of the economic problems of Manipur, Jiribam is treated as a hill sub-division.

The drainage of the State is from north to south. There are two main rivers, eight small ones and numerous streamlets in the State. The two main rivers - the Imphal and the Borak are perennial and have economic importance. The former irrigates the Central Valley of Manipur and then escapes into the Burmese territory through a gorge locally known as Chingmunghut and finally falls into the Chindwin river of Burma; the latter serves as the only means of communication for the inaccessible regions of Tamenglong and Jiribam sub-divisions. But it does not benefit the main valley as it passes through the western hill regions of Manipur and then follows through Cachar and Burma valleys to
Join the Brahmaputra. Both these rivers are said to be suitable for the installation of hydel power stations. The other rivers and streamlets help in maintaining and restoring the fertility of the rice fields in the Valley by an annual silt of rich alluvium over the fields. However, the rivers flood often times and cause havoc.

Situated between 23.83° N and 25.68° N, the State has sub-tropical to temperate climate, depending upon elevation; weather report for ten years (1953-62) shows the maximum temperature varied between 30° C (1955) and 40° C (1962) at Imphal, between 26.10° C (1956) and 37.77° C (1958) at Ukhrul and between 38.33° C (1958) and 47.77° C (1960) at Wangbal. During the same period the minimum temperature varied between 0.0° C and 4.44° C, 0.0° C and 3.89° C, and 0° C and 2.22° C at the three centres respectively. So also rainfall varied between 42.33 inches and 61.23 inches at Imphal, 52.90 inches and 66.81 inches at Ukhrul and between 92.67 inches and 149.96 inches at Jiribam.

The State is mainly composed of tertiary rock, and the soil is mostly clay to clayey loam. In Ukhrul subdivision there are igneous rocks which contain quartz, limestone, sandstone and black clay. Near Burma border sandy loams are available and at places laterite soils are found. In the western hills of Manipur, a light and friable sandstone of a brown colour and a red ferruginous clay are found to prevail on the

lower heights. On reaching more lofty elevations, these are succeeded by slate of so soft and friable a nature. In the north of Manipur the rock becomes more solid and compact. The valley of Manipur, where the soil is mainly clay and clayey loam, is very fertile and ideally suitable for cultivation of rice and various types of vegetables. The hill slopes are found to be suitable for horticulture.

In this part of the thesis, it is proposed to study the existing structure of the economy of the State with specific reference to its resources, infrastructure and sector-wise problems (i.e., problems relating to the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy) with a view to understanding in a better way the problems of the development of the economy of the State.