CHAPTER VIII

GEO-ECONOMIC REGIONS

The economic life of the two regions i.e. the hill and the plain of Manipur, is governed by the natural resources, particularly the type of terrain. These generate the attitudes among people which determine the manner of the utilisation of available resources and opportunities. Resources, attitudes and opportunities vary from place to place and hence, the regional diversity.¹

During the last two decades, the state has been making rapid progress. In the central plain, progress in the field of agriculture, industry, education and health services is considerable. In the case of hill region, emphasis has been laid more on the development of roads than anything else. A large percentage of the amount of Five-Year Plans is spent on road development alone. Most of the roads have been constructed in the hill region.

The data with respect to outlay and expenditure of the first three Five-Year Plans on different major heads have been presented in Table VIII. During the first Plan, out of a total outlay of rupees 154.8 lakh, rupees 91.89 lakh was meant for transport and communication alone. This means that first priority was given to this aspect. The same thing was repeated during second and third Plan with amount enhanced. Out of a total capital outlay of rupees

¹V. C. Bhutani, "Is there an Indian Culture?", Quest No. 77, July-August 1972, V. V. John, G. D. Parikh editors (Bombay : Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, 1972), p. 49.
625.11 lakh during second Plan and 1287.56 lakh during third Plan, rupees 74.17 lakh and 441.00 lakh respectively, was meant for development of transport and communication only.

TABLE VIII

FIVE YEAR PLANS OUTLAY AND EXPENDITURE

(Rupees in lakhs)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head of Development</th>
<th>First Five-Year Plan</th>
<th>Second Five-Year Plan</th>
<th>Third Five-Year Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlay</td>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>Outlay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Agricultural Programme</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>38.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Co-operation and community development</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>82.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Irrigation and Power</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Industry and Mining</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>13.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Transport and Communication</td>
<td>91.89</td>
<td>74.17</td>
<td>215.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social Service</td>
<td>43.70</td>
<td>19.06</td>
<td>222.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>154.30</td>
<td>102.56</td>
<td>625.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* one lakh = 100,000

A close scrutiny of the apportionment of funds shows increasing amount spent on social services, part of which is spent
in the hill area. As a result of Five-Year Plans, the state as a whole has been heading towards prosperity, as will be evident from the increase in per capita income, presented in Figure 10, for the period from 1960-61 to 1970-71. This very well compares with the economic progress of India in general. If a visitor goes from the plain to the hill he forms the impression that there is still much left to be done to narrow the economic gap between the two regions. The hill tribes have not yet been fully integrated into the mainstream of national life.

Long before the Plans were introduced, the Christian missionaries had reached every nook and corner in the hill and served the neglected communities. Within their limited resources they have done yeoman's job. One feels impressed to see at least a church, a school and a dispensary catering for a group of villages within walkable distance. The Christian Mission has brought them out of their dark isolation and bestowed on them some benefits of modern civilization.

Notwithstanding the economic development of the state during over the last two decades, there is variation in the level of economic development from place to place, both in the central plain and the hill region. On the basis of physical features, natural resources, economic development and culture the state may be divided into a number of geo-economic regions.
MANIPUR
PER CAPITA INCOME
1960-61 TO 1970-71

FIG. 10
The central plain may be divided into two economic regions: (1) the northern plain, and (2) the southern plain. The hill region may be divided into six economic regions: (1) northern hill, (2) north-eastern hill, (3) south-eastern hill, (4) south-western hill, (5) north-western hill, and (6) Jiribam. Thus the whole state may be divided into eight geo-economic regions (Map 18).

I. NORTHERN PLAIN

The northern plain comprises the sub-divisions of Imphal West and Imphal East of Manipur Central district. On the north, east and west this region extends up to the foothills of the Sadar Hills overlooking the central plain. On the south, there is no natural boundary and the region extends up to the administrative limit of Imphal West and Imphal East sub-divisions. This is a well drained plain. In respect of cultivation, industry, business, education and transport and communication this region is far ahead of any other region.

The maximum concentration of the population of the state is found here. This region is served by National Highway No. 59, and a number of State Highways radiating from Imphal. As regards inter-village communication, there is a network of roads reaching up to the interior of the village. This is an important factor influencing the

MANIPUR
GEO-ECONOMIC REGIONS

NORTHERN HILL
(CATTLE REARING AND FOREST RESOURCES)

NORTH-WESTERN HILL
(VERY HEAVY RAINFALL, FOREST RESOURCES ESPECIALLY BAMBOO AND HORTICULTURE)

JIRIBAM
(AGRICULTURE)

NORTHERN PLAIN
(AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY)

SOUTHERN PLAIN
(AGRICULTURE AND PISCICULTURE)

SOUTHWESTERN HILL
(FOREST RESOURCES ESPECIALLY CANE AND HORTICULTURE)

SOUTHEASTERN HILL
(MINERAL POTENTIALITY AND FOREST RESOURCES ESPECIALLY TEAK)
economic life of the villagers. In addition to it, electric power has also reached many villages.

The urban centre of Imphal is naturally, the hub of economic activities. The whole area is so closely linked with Imphal town that it could be included in greater Imphal. It is interesting to see crowded buses plying between Imphal and the surrounding villages. City buses owned by Manipur State Transport, run on many routes and serve most of the villages. The bus service is cheap, convenient and quick.

The economic pursuits in the town cover a wide range of activities, mostly commercial in nature. Most of the registered factories like rice, flour and oil mills are here to serve the people. Many people are engaged in small scale industries using power. They are engaged in servicing and repairing of motor vehicles and cycles, printing, leather work, chemical work etc. Most of the business of the state is carried on at Imphal. It is the collecting and distributing centre. Being the capital of the state, most of the offices and institutions are located here, and as such it provides many avenues of employment.

People in the villages depend on agriculture for their livelihood. A major portion of their income comes from the sale of field produce specially rice, garden fruits and vegetables. Livestock is another important economic resource. Cattle play a major part in the economy of the village because without them agriculture is unthinkable.
TABLE IX

DISTRIBUTION OF LIVE-STOCK, SEKMAI, 1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live-stock</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Number of animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cows</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullocks</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowls</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data with respect to the distribution of live-stock in village Sekmai in the year 1961 are presented in Table IX. There are 40 households possessing 90 cows. This means that these households own on the average more than 2 cows. This is not a very satisfactory position from the point of view of possessing milch cows. However, there are 97 households having 241 bullocks, which means more than two bullocks per household. People attach more significance to bullocks than to any other cattle on agricultural and economic ground. If a cultivating household does not own a pair of bullocks at least, it has to give the land to share croppers. A pair of bullocks is the backbone of agricultural activity, can hardly be over emphasised. Then, to supplement the family income there are cows, pigs, fowls etc. In an agricultural economy, keeping a few other animals in addition
to bullocks is felt very desirable. It will not be out of place to mention in this connection that more or less a similar situation obtains in different villages.

A supplementary source of income is the household industry specially weaving. A number of small scale industries like carpentry, bell metal work, gold smithy, garment making, bamboo and cane work, silk weaving etc. are sources of income for many people. Fishing is a leisure time activity.

If the words export and import are very loosely applied to mean surplus and deficit in certain commodities, signifying a movement of commodities out of the region and towards it, then it can be said that this region exports vegetables, earthen pots, handloom fabrics, mustard seeds, chilli etc. The items of import include salt, sugar, mustard oil, mill yarn, ready-made dresses, kerosene, paper, medicine, footwear, utensils, cement, agricultural implements, luxury goods etc.

II. SOUTHERN PLAIN

This region covers the subdivisions of Thoubal and Bishenpur of Manipur Central district. On the east, south and west it is bounded with the foothills of Tengnoupal Autonomous district and Manipur South Autonomous district. On the north it extends up to the administrative boundary of Imphal west and Imphal East subdivisions.
In general, this area has a rural appearance. The land is subject to floods. This annual inundation adds to the fertility of the soil. The highest per acre yield of paddy, sugar cane, jute etc. is found in this region. There are large patches of swampy land which are being reclaimed for agricultural purposes. The yield of pineapple, grown on the hillocks and the bordering hill slopes is high. This region is served by the National Highway No.39 and many State Highways, but the inter village roads are not many. Only a few important places have had the benefit of electrification.

Agriculture forms the backbone of the economy. The main source of income is the field produce like paddy, sugar cane, garden fruits and vegetables. The second source of income is the household industry. The third is fishing. Because of the Loktak lake and swamps, fishing is a profitable occupation.

The existent industries mostly manually operated, are weaving, carpentry, tailoring, bamboo and cane work, salt making, gur making, pottery, oil crushing, stone work, bee keeping, poultry farming, sericulture etc. Stone work deserves special mention because it is done only at one place that is Bishempur. It is based on the local sandstone. For salt making the water of brine spring is collected and evaporated. Salt making at one time was a profitable industry, but due to high cost of firewood in the present time, it is no longer as much profitable. The industry is still surviving because people ascribe medicinal value to the local salt. Another notable thing is that the writer visited some sites of brine springs where salt is manufactured by evaporating water in 1972.
Muslims are mainly engaged in poultry farming. They are the suppliers of chicken and eggs. This is a very paying profession. They virtually enjoy monopoly in this field.

The Loktak Project, currently underway is located in this region. When completed, it will provide cheap hydroelectricity to the people. Besides, the land reclamation scheme will provide more cultivable land to the people. The irrigation scheme will convert the single cropped land to double cropped one. Therefore this region is likely to derive benefit from the Loktak Project. More than half of the tourist attractions of Manipur are located in this region namely Bishenpur temple, Moirang, Loktak lake, Keibul Lamjao Game Sanctuary etc.

At present in the matters of transport and communication, health services, education, employment etc., this region is far behind the Northern Plain.

This region exports fish, poultry products, vegetables, sugar cane, gur, earthenware, stoneware, handloom fabrics mustard seeds, groundnut, chilli etc. Among commodities of import are salt, kerosene, sugar, mustard oil, mill yarn, ready-made dresses, paper, medicine, footwear, utensils, agricultural implements etc.

III. NORTHERN HILL

This region covers the two Autonomous districts of Manipur namely Manipur North Autonomous district and Sadar Hills Autonomous
district. The whole area is mountainous. The density of population is 50 persons to the square kilometre. The catchment area of Barak and Irlil rivers lies in this region.

In this forest-clad mountain country the inhabitants lead a precarious life on subsistence farming. The mountains are high enough, about 2000 metres, to provide an exhilarating cool climate all the year round. Both, terrace and jhoom cultivation are practised, with emphasis on the former.

In addition to paddy and maize, a number of vegetables are grown all round the year. The region supplies winter vegetables to the central plain during summer; much to the advantage of the growers. In this region pumpkin grows in abundance. Chilli of an extremely pungent quality also grows here.

Of late, horticulture has become popular with the cultivators. Many fruits like apple, pear, plum, apricot, lemon, orange etc. grow in this climate very well. They are incredibly cheap in the growing season. Pine-apple is grown in plenty. Even when plucked, the fruit lasts long in the local climate and the grower gets enough time to dispose it of.

In the Sadar Hills area there are many Nepalis engaged in rearing cows. They earn their livelihood by supplying dairy products. This is the only community which has spearheaded the rearing of animals on an organised scale. Animal rearing, however, is a small source of income for the original inhabitants. They rear pigs and poultry birds.
The animals including cattle are more for home consumption than for sale. The animals are a source of protein in local diet, so essentially required in this climate.

People supplement their income by exploiting the forest resources. The dry wood is collected for sale. Sometimes it is sold in the form of charcoal. One comes across stacks of fire wood and heaps of charcoal by the side of the National Highway No.59, meant for sale. In near future a paper mill based on local pine is going to be established in this region at Karong, already stated in chapter VII.

The National Highway No.59 connecting Dimapur with Imphal is the life-line of this region. The villages are situated either on the roadside or in its vicinity. New settlements are coming up by the roadside to derive maximum advantage from road transport. Another new road from Tadubi to Kharasom has opened this region to important places in Manipur East Autonomous district. The Sadar Hills Autonomous district has the unique advantage of overlooking the central plain. It is most convenient for the inhabitants to come down to the plain for trade and barter.

The region has exportable surplus of maize, potato, fruits etc., which, being bulky commodities need cheap and efficient road transport. The villages, far flung from the road are adversely affected. Hence, the economic activity and growth of this region are closely related to road development.
The household industries, besides loin-loom weaving, include carpentry, black smithy, bamboo and cane work, bee keeping etc. The recent notable trend is that improved handloom weaving (fly shuttle), tailoring and fruit preservation are being started.

This region imports salt, kerosene, mustard oil, mill yarn, garment, handloom fabrics, paper, soap, medicine, agricultural implements, utensils, footwear etc.

IV. NORTH-EASTERN HILL

This region includes the present Manipur East Autonomous district. Starting from the administrative boundary of Manipur North Autonomous district and Sadar Hills Autonomous district, it extends eastward up to Burma border. On the north, this region extends up to Nagaland border and on the south up to the administrative limit of Tengnoupal Autonomous district. In this mountain region lie the sources of Chingai and Thoubal rivers. It is a thinly populated region, with a density of 14 persons per square kilometre.

This area, as already stated in chapter II, has undergone serpentine intrusion and contact metamorphism. And, as such, there occur various minerals of economic importance. Being close to the jade belt of Burma, precious stones are found in this region. Another significant aspect of the natural resource of this region is that the forests here bear softwood trees.
The region is inhabited mostly by Tangkhul Nagas who have the reputation of making careful utilisation of cultivable land. They practise terrace cultivation and maintain soil fertility by regular use of manures. There are, of course, some Kuki group of people, who practise shifting cultivation, but constitute a very small component.

This region, for its border location has received special attention so far as road development is concerned. The road development is quantitatively far ahead of any other hill region. The region is served by a number of State Highways, inspite of that many villages are still far from jeepable road.

The most important road is the Imphal-Ukhrul road. This road further extends to Kharasom and Jessami. This is the life-line of this region. Others are Sangsak-Chassad-Humine road, Sangsak-Phungyar road, Chingmeikhullen-Tolloi road, Moreh-Humine road, Tengnoupal-Sangsak road and Chassad-Maokot road.\(^4\)

As a result, this region is better poised for economic development. The Tangkhuls are very enterprising people. The spread of Christianity, education, and urban influence is fast changing their outlook. These circumstances favour the region with a faster economic development compared to other regions.

Pending the organised exploration of mineral resources, the economy rests on cultivation of land and exploitation of forest resources. Paddy is cultivated in the terraced fields and high yield,

one of the highest in the hill, is maintained with labour, care and
manure. For providing irrigation, water from springs and mountain
brooks is diverted to the fields through long narrow channels. Other
crops include maize, pine-apple, fruits, potato, vegetables, cotton
etc. Of late, people have derived profit from horticulture and apple,
plum, pear, lemon etc. are being increasingly grown. There is immense
scope of increasing the area under horticulture at higher slopes,
without affecting the area already under cultivation. The higher
slopes are ideally suitable for temperate fruits.

The softwood forests offer immense scope for paper, pulp,
plywood, match and furniture making industries. Cheap hydro-electricity
could be generated by harnessing the rivers. This would pave the way
of establishing forest based industries.

The limestone of superior quality found near Ukhrul is going
to be utilised for running a cement factory at Litan. This factory will
be a matter of prestige for this region, because elsewhere the chances
of establishing mineral based industry are bleak. Outside forest and
mineral based industries there are chances of fruit preservation
industry in near future. Also, the prospects of tourist industry in
this region are high.

There are a few traditional household industries like loin-
loom weaving, carpentry, bamboo and cane work etc. to meet the house-
hold needs. The loin-loom products cannot have a market outside
because the cloth prepared is very limited in quantity and variety.
They are invariably very thick, heavy and of small breadth. For bringing about improvement in this regard the lein-looms have to be replaced by fly shuttle looms, semi automatic and automatic looms.

The animals reared are pigs, some cattle and buffaloes and poultry birds. Cattle and buffaloes graze in the forest and get fattened. They are meant for ceremonial sacrifices and feasts, and seldom for sale. But this contributes to the self sufficiency of this region, as it produces most of its requirements.

This region exports timber, potato, maize, fruit, cotton, turpentine, groundnut, pig hair etc. It imports salt, kerosene, sugar, paper, garment, medicine, footwear, mustard oil, agricultural implements, chemical fertilizers, cement etc.

V. SOUTH-EASTERN HILL

This region includes Tengnoupal Autonomous district. The foothills overlooking the central plain and the Manipur river in its hill course south of Sugnu, form the western boundary of this region. On the south and east the region extends up to Burma border. On the north it extends up to the boundary of Manipur East Autonomous district. This is one of the most thinly populated regions with a density of 11 persons to the square kilometre.

This region is served by a number of roads. As the region is situated on the Indo-Burma border, road development is of special strategic significance. The most important road is National Highway
No. 39 or Indo-Burma road, also called Burma road, connecting Palel on the edge of the central plain and Moreh on Burma border. Tengnoupal, the headquarters of the district, is situated, midway between Palel and Moreh. This is the lifeline of this region. The other important roads are Sugnu-Chakpikarong-Mombi road, the Palel-Chakpikarong road passing through Chandel, and Ukhrul-Churachandpur road connecting Ukhrul-Kasom Khullen-Tengnoupal-Mombi-Chakpikarong-Sugnu-Churachandpur. This road is almost complete. It connects the headquarters of three Autonomous districts. Still, large parts of this region are far from jeepable roads and thus isolated. Among the hill regions this is economically very backward. The natural resources have not been properly utilised.

Among the minerals, limestone, copper ore, iron ore and precious stones are reported from this region. These stones are collected by the hill people and sold at Imphal at a cheap rate from where they are sent to Calcutta. There should be some standard institution to valuate the gemstones to save the hill man from exploitation.

This region is very rich in forest resources, which are not properly utilised for want of transport facilities. There are rich teak forests along the Burma border. Pockets of pine forest exist in higher hills. The forests abound in bamboo, reed and thatching grass. In addition, a few spices grow in the forests among which bay leaf and cinnamon deserve special mention. People collect them and sell in the markets of the central plain. A kind of tree, called Agor

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5Ibid.
(Aquilaria agallocha), is found in the forests. This is a scented wood, slightly inferior to sandalwood. These are collected at Imphal for being exported outside the state.

As this region has the reputation of supplying the best timber of the state, timber seasoning, saw milling and furniture making industries could be established. At present timber is transported down to the saw mills and carpentry establishments in the central plain.

The most important source of livelihood is subsistence farming. Both jhoom and terrace cultivation are practised. The agricultural products include paddy, maize, vegetables, potato, sweet potato, groundnut, pine-apple, chilli, green lemon, cotton etc. Rearing of pigs and poultry fowls is very popular. Some goats too are reared. The household industries include loin-loom weaving, carpentry, bamboo work, extraction of turpentine etc.

This region exports timber, bamboo, bay leaf, cinnamon, agor, pine-apple, groundnut, turpentine, leather, bamboo sprout etc. The articles imported are salt, kerosene, mustard oil, sugar, soap, mill yarn, medicine, dresses, cosmetic etc.

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VI. SOUTH-WESTERN HILL

This region comprises the present Manipur South Autonomous district, which includes the former Churachandpur subdivision and roughly the southern half of former jiribam subdivision. It lies between the Manipur river on the east and the Barak river on the west. On the north it stretches to the administrative boundary of Manipur West Autonomous district, whereas on the south it extends up to the border of Union Territory of Mizoram, and Burma. The density of population is 21 persons per square kilometre.

This region is served by two roads namely Imphal-Tiddim road and Churachandpur-Tipaimukh road. The former connects important places like Imphal-Bishenpur-Moirang-Churachandpur-Thinghat-Tiddim, the last named being situated on the Burma border. The other road branches out from Churachandpur and extends westward through Thanlon up to Tipaimukh, on the bank of the Barak river.

The western part of this region has the advantage of water transport through Barak river. This part is accessible from the Cachar plain, with which the people have the economic tie of trade and barter. Many parts of this region, however, are still far from a jeepable road. From economic point of view, such parts are adversely affected since their surplus products cannot be brought to markets for sale.

Pending a detailed geological exploration, little is known about the mineral deposits here. However, as a result of heavy rainfall the region has rich forest wealth. The forests contain structural timber
of tropical hard wood variety. There are pockets of pine wood too. Besides, bamboo and cane of superior quality grow in abundance.

People are engaged in subsistence farming, utilization of forest resources, household industries and rearing of animals. Jhoom cultivation is widely practised, terrace cultivation too is not absent from the agricultural landscape. Agricultural products include rice, maize, cotton, potato, groundnut, pulses, mustard, chilli, ginger, turmeric etc. Chilli, ginger and orange are cash crops.

Horticulture is gaining popularity in this region. Pineapple, orange, banana and jack fruit are widely grown. Orange grown in the western part of this region is sold in the Gachar plain. Recently, fruit cultivation has received much encouragement. New fruit trees like apple, peach, pear, lemon, plum etc., have recently been introduced. In this way the abandoned jhoom lands are being profitably reclaimed. At places betel leaf is also grown for sale outside. A kind of fruit locally called Heikru (Emblic myrobalan) grows wild and is collected for sale. Bay leaf too is collected from the forest.

Live-stock includes cows, buffaloes, pigs, sheep and chicken. Cattle are reared for milk and meat. Data with regard to rearing of animals from Khothar, a hamlet of village Phersawl, in A.D. 1961 are presented in Table X. A close examination of the data indicates that, rearing of animals is of considerable importance in the economy of the households.
TABLE X

LIVE-STOCK POSITION IN KHOTHAR 1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items of live-stock</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Total number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cows</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffaloes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowls</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the table it is clear that cattle occupy the first position followed by pigs and sheep. Cattle and buffaloes cannot be used for ploughing the hill slopes. They, however, can be easily reared since there is no dearth of grazing land. As regards fowls, it is striking to note that 24 households owned 1205 fowls, which comes to about 50 fowls per household on the average. The fact that the fowls are mostly for domestic consumption indicates that a hill man's diet consists of appreciable quantity of meat and egg.

The household industries include loin-loom weaving for domestic requirements. As cotton is grown in this region, the entire work of ginning, spinning, and weaving is performed at home. Carpentry is another household industry. A good number of people are engaged in
bamboo and cane work. This too is to meet the demand of household furniture.

Churachandpur is a fast developing township of this region. It is a symbol of Christian and urban influence. It is functioning as a collection and distribution centre. The level of education and enlightenment is comparatively much higher than that in other hill regions.

The region exports rice, cotton, oil seeds, ginger, maize, chilli, orange, pineapple, bay leaf, betel leaf, timber, pig hair etc. It imports kerosene, mustard oil, sugar, salt, soap, fine mill yarn, ready-made dresses, paper, medicine, footwear, utensils, luxury goods etc.  

VII. NORTH-WESTERN HILL

This region covers the entire Manipur West Autonomous district. It extends on the north up to the boundary of Nagaland. On the west it is bounded by Jiri river. On the east it stretches to Sadar Hills Autonomous district. On the south it extends up to the boundary of Manipur South Autonomous district. The whole region is one of sharp slopes and dense forest. The density of population is 10 persons per square kilometre. This is the least populated, least developed and most isolated region of Manipur.

It is a pity that till to-day there is no direct road from Imphal to Tamenglong, the headquarters of the Autonomous district.

7Ibid.
The existing road to Tamenglong branches out from the National Highway No.39, at Kangpokpi. From Kangpokpi the road is suitable for mini buses up to almost half the way. Thereafter only jeeps can ply conveniently up to Tamenglong.

The Old Cachar road passes through the southern part of this region. It branches out in the central plain at Bishenpur from where it passes through Khoupum valley and Nungba and goes up to Jirighat, on the edge of Cachar plain. The New Cachar road is a direct road from Imphal to Jirighat through Nungba. It is constructed farther north of the Old Cachar road. Anyway, the two roads meet at Nungba.

There is a direct fair-weather road from Imphal to Tamenglong through Kangchupkhul. The repair and maintenance of roads in this region of heavy rain and soft rocks, where cases of landslide are so frequent, proves to be a very costly affair. The Tamenglong-Nungba-Thanlon road, when completed, will act as a radial road to connect various villages in the interior with the main roads connecting Imphal-Jirighat and Churachandpur-Tipaimukh. At present large parts of this region are completely isolated.

The region forms the catchment area of rivers like Barak, Makra, Leimatak, Irang etc. They have high gradient and fed by heavy rains, discharge considerable volume of water. They could be harnessed for generating hydroelectricity. Little is known about the mineral resources of this region.
This region, however, is rich in forest resources which have yet to be utilised for economic development. The other natural advantage is that logs of wood could be floated down the rivers, specially Barak river, and brought to the saw mills with minimal transport cost. The structural timber will get a good market in Cachar as well as in the central plain of Manipur. Because cane of superior variety grows here, a bamboo and cane industry stands fair chances of development. The decision of the Government to establish a paper mill at Jirighat, is praiseworthy. Part of the raw material for the factory will be supplied from this region. The only new development affecting the economic life of the villagers is the bus services recently introduced, consequent upon the construction of roads. This has led to the expansion of marketing facility and to the induction of urban influence.

The household industries include loin-loom weaving, carpentry, bamboo and cane work etc. Every household has a loom where the ladies weave loin cloth and shawl (scarf) for home needs. Poultry keeping and pig rearing is practised in every house. Cattle and buffaloes are also reared. Piggery and poultry have fair scope of development.

Tamenglong is famous for oranges. It is a major cash crop for this region. Agriculture Department has taken keen interest in promoting horticulture. New improved varieties of tropical, subtropical and temperate fruits are being introduced. Fruits like pear, peach, plum, apricot, papaya, guava, walnut, orange, lime, lemon etc. are being successfully grown.

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This is to be mentioned that tea and betel leaf grow wild in this region. Of course, some persons have taken to cultivating betel leaf for sale. The Government of Manipur is keen on promoting plantation farming. The aim is to have a cash crop for the state. It is intended to introduce tea plantation on the lower hill slopes in Tamenglong. The climatic and edaphic conditions are suitable for this venture. In this connection a delegation of Tea Board visited Tamenglong in January 1972. The Adviser, Tea Board Eastern Region has given feasibility report in favour of tea plantation on a commercial scale. Tea plantation is very likely to be introduced in near future. What economic benefit it will bring has yet to be seen. The writer, however, feels inclined for orange plantation on a commercial scale in this area. The proposed extension of railway up to Jirighat during the Fifth Plan period will open this region to the outside world.

This region exports timber, orange, pineapple, charcoal, banana, chilli, betel leaf etc. It imports salt, kerosene, soap, sugar, mill yarn, ready-made dresses, paper, medicine etc.

VIII. JIRIBAM

This region lies on the western border of the state. It is bounded on the east and west by Barak river. On the north it is bounded by Manipur West Autonomous district, whereas to the south it

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9 The writer had a discussion on this point with Mr. Hashmi, Agriculture officer, Tamenglong State Agricultural Farm in July 1972.
is bounded by Manipur South Autonomous district. It is a small region of plain land and low hills. Prior to the reorganisation of administrative units, Jiribam was one of the ten subdivisions of Manipur. At that time it was twice its present size. The present Jiribam is a subdivision of Manipur Central district. This region is separated from the Central district by a distance of about 150 kilometres. It covers an area of 277 square kilometres and as already stated in chapter IV, has a density of population of 84 persons per square kilometre.

From the point of view of economy it is a separate region. Notwithstanding a few hills here and there, it is a continuation of Cachar plain. Like the Cachar plain this region is very rainy, and being at a low elevation, has a hot humid climate. The economy of this region is more closely linked with that of Cachar plain, specially in matters of trade and barter.

People follow diverse occupations. The main occupation, however, is cultivation. It is followed by industry fishing and trade. The fertile plain is intensively cultivated. In the hill jhoom cultivation is practised and upland paddy is grown. Many varieties of paddy are grown in the lowland. One variety called Saheban deserves special mention. It is a very delicious rice and is in high demand. Among other crops vegetables, jute, mustard, sugar cane, cotton and fruits may be mentioned. Here mulberry plant grows in abundance and so sericulture has a bright future.
Coconut, areca nut, orange, jack fruit and mango are plentiful. It is the only region in the state where coconut and areca nut are grown. Betel leaf is cultivated for home consumption. Cashew nut and almond have been tried in Government Agricultural Farm and successfully grown. Cashew nut cultivation has a bright future and deserves special attention.

The household industries include handloom weaving, mat making, cane work etc. The handloom cloth made here can be compared to that of the central plain. In the hills, however, loin-loom is in vogue and its products are rough and of limited variety. Mat making is done by a section of Bengali population. The product is fine and very durable. The best quality of cane of the state comes from this region. The cane furniture made here is very fine.

Because of the presence of big rivers like Barak and Jiri, many people are engaged in fishing. Brisk trade is transacted in this commodity with Cachar plain.

This region exports charcoal, banana, jack fruit, oil seeds, sugar cane, cotton, gram, fish, vegetables, mats, bamboo and cane products, jute, handloom fabrics, betel leaves, maize, chilli etc. The items of import are salt, kerosene, sugar, paper, mustard oil, clothes, footwear, medicine, cosmetic etc.10

10Industrial Survey of Manipur, op. cit., pp. 68-75.