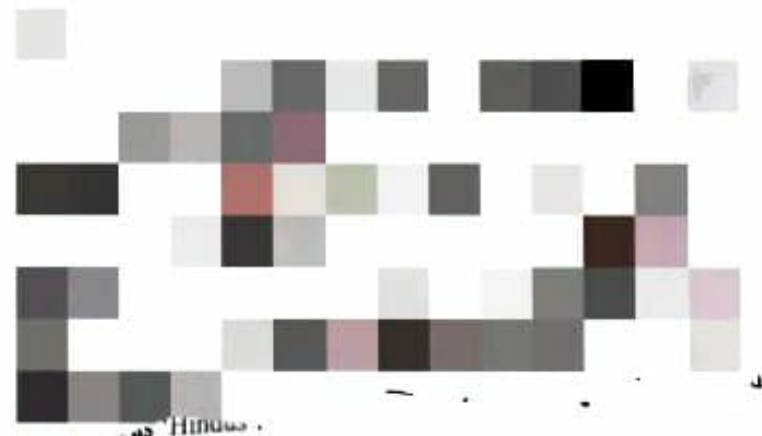




DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY

The distribution of population in north-east India is very much uneven this is mainly because of various physical and socio-economic causes operating in the region. About 72 percent of the area of the region is covered by mountains, hills and plateaus, where the distribution of population is sparse. It is only the remaining 28 percent of the area covered by plains, that supports the bulk of the population of the region. The hills and mountains being agriculturally less productive, cannot support a dense population. In the plains again population distribution is sparse on the immediate flood-plains of the Brahmaputra (except in the western part where immigrant peasants have settled in the last several decades) and in the foot-hills where thick forest and unproductive gritty soils restrict traditional agricultural activities. Besides the lines of transport and communication have also influenced the human settlement pattern.

Both in the plains and hills, population settlements including urban settlement are dense along the roads and railways. The lines of transport and communication also influence the growth of industries and trade and commerce, which in their turn, influence human habitation.

(It has been found in 2011 that, Assam with its extensive Brahmaputra and Barak Plains support 31169272 that is more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total population of the region. Next comes Tripura which supports

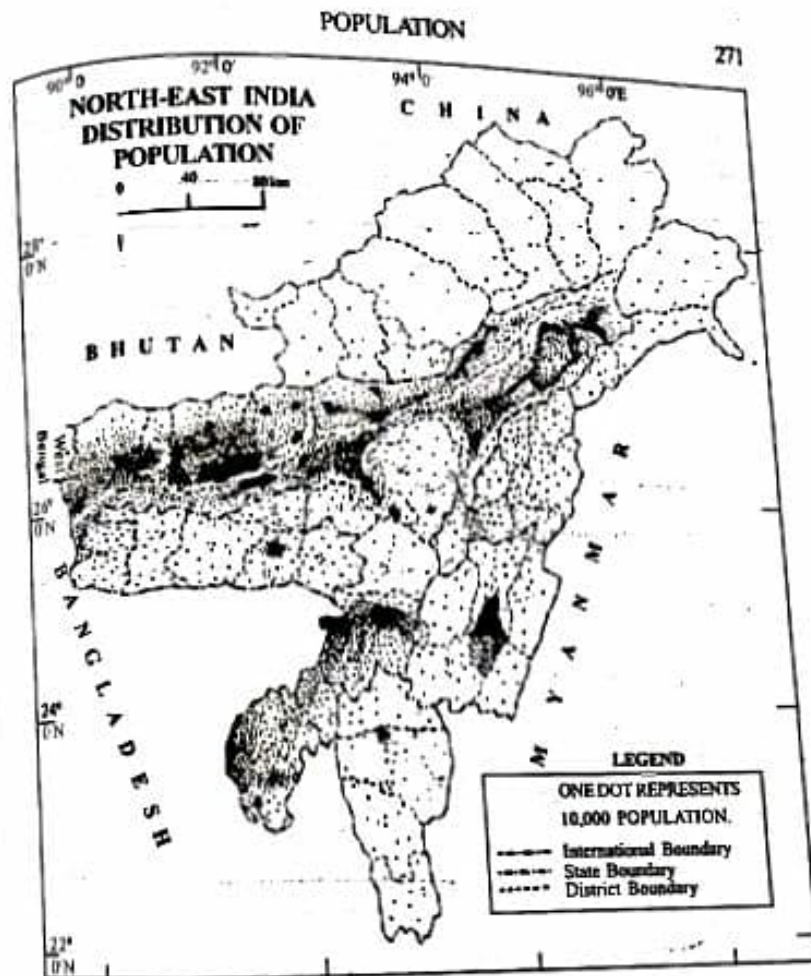


Fig. 21

1724619 i.e. more than half of the states population (3671032) in its relatively plain west Tripura District. The Manipur Basin, though small in area (2265 km²) compare to is hilly region (20107km²) supports about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total population of the state. Thus it is found that Assam is the most densely populated state with an average density of 392 persons per square km (India 382) in north east India, followed by Tripura (370), Meghalaya (132), Manipur (122), Nagaland (119), Mizoram (52) and Arunachal Pradesh (17).

Even within each state there is a variation in population distribution pattern for reasons stated above. As per the census of 2011 in Assam, the Kamrup Metropolitan district with 2010 persons per square km is the most densely populated district not only in Assam, but also in the whole of north-east India. It is followed by Dhubri district bordering Bangladesh with a density of 1171/km², Nalbari (763/km²) and Nagaon (711/km²). The hill district of Dima Hasao has the lowest density of 44 persons per sq. Km.

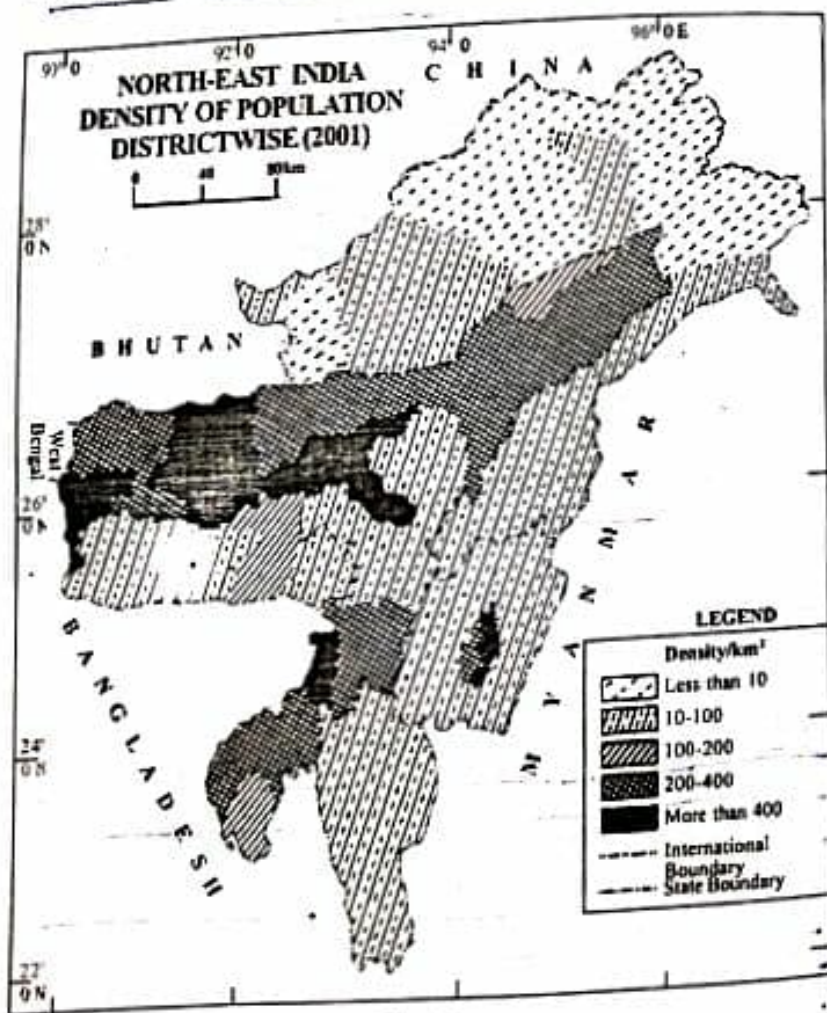


Fig. 22

The Imphal west district in the Manipur plain records the highest population density of 820/km² in 2011 followed by Thoubal district (777/km²) and Imphal East (754/km²). The hilly Tamenglong district records the lowest density of 32/km².

No district of Arunachal Pradesh with high Himalayan hills has a density of more than 62/km². It is the Papum Pare district containing the state capital of Itanagar that has the highest population density of 61/km², followed by Lohit (61/km²) and Tirap (42/km²) districts. It may be noted that the largely inaccessible and far flung district of Dibang Valley (00.87/km²) and Upper Siang (6/km²) bordering China and Anjaw (3/km²) bordering both Myanmar and China have very low density.

In Nagaland Dimapur, Kohima and peren recorded a density of 184 persons per sq. km. It may be noted that the contiguous territory supporting these three districts was a large chunk of plainland and two very large towns, namely Kohima and Dimapur in it. These three districts are followed in density by Mon (140/km²) and Mukokchung (120/km²). The hill territory comprising the district of Longleng, Tuensang and Kiphire (latter two bordering Myanmar) has an average density of only 76/km², which is the least in the state.

Mizoram, where steep hills and deep gorges provide hindrance to development of agriculture and transport network, has an average density of 52/km². Its three northern districts of Aizawl, Kolasib and Mamit have an average density of 125.88 persons per square km. These three district border the Barak Valley plains of Assam and have relatively easy geographical accessibility. Then the three southern most districts of Lunglei, Saiha and Lunglei having less steep and relatively low hills have an average density of 45.36 persons per square kilometer. The relatively high north-eastern part of the state covering the districts of Champhai and Sarchip bordering Myanmar have an average density of 39.57 persons per square kilometre. It may be noted that this area is very high and alteration of steep hills and deep gorges is frequent. Hence agricultural facilities are restricted resulting in sparse distribution of population.

Tripura, following Assam is the most densely populated state in

North-East India. The state has an average density of 350.08 persons per km² as per 2011 census. Within the state the district of West-Tripura, containing Agartala, the state capital and a greater proportion of plain land has the highest density of 486.63 persons per sq.km², followed by the districts of Dhalai (353.20) and North Tripura (353.20) and South Tripura (223.88).

Meghalaya has, according to the census of 2011 an average density of 132.15 persons per km². The district of East Khasi Hills with the state capital Shillong in it is the most densely populated with 208.32 person per km². Ri Bhoi district, which was a part of the East Khasi Hill has the same record. They are followed by East Garo Hills and South Garo Hill (176.79), West Garo Hills (115.55). The last named district is covered with residual soil lacking fertility. Moreover, its ground is often found to be stoney and soil gritty.

Rural Urban Distribution : India itself is a country of villages, wherein live about 83.4 crores of people accounting for 68.84% of the total population of the country (2011 census). It is more so in case of North-East India, where 81.73% of the total population is rural. This is a slight improvement over the situation in 2001 when rural population of the region accounted for 84.49%. There are 44544 villages. About 90% of the rural settlements are small, having less than 1000 population in each. Arunachal Pradesh has 5589 villages and 27 towns. The villages in this state are generally small each consists of less than 20 households. There are only about 100 rural settlements having a population more than 1000 in each. The villages are isolated from one another and the roads linking them are infrequent. The towns are also small. The states rural population accounts for 77.53% of the total.

Assam has 26,395 villages with 85.92% of the total population of the state living in there. The villages in the plains are of medium size and not as much isolated as in the two hill districts of the state. The villages in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao are often found to be shifting following 'jhum' (shifting) cycle. Because of this habit the agricultural prosperity is often hampered in the rural areas of the hill districts. Many villages in both the Brahmaputra and Barak plains on

the other hand suffer from flooding and sever river bank erosion during the rainy season. However the pressure of population in the plains of the state is still high leading to the growth of some large villages having a population of more than 2000 in each.

Nagaland had in 2011 as many as 1428 villages, unlike several other hill states Nagaland has several very large villages like Kohima (not the town), Khonoma etc. However the state has 330 small villages (with a population of less than 200 in each) especially in the districts of Mon, Tuensang, Kiphire and Phek. There are about 500 villages in the state with a population of 200-500 in each, about 290 villages with a population of 500-1000 in each. Rest of the villages are large with more than 1000 population in each. The largest ones have even more than 10,000 population in each.

Mizoram has according to the census of 2011 as many as 975 villages and 23 towns. Most of these villages are small and located on isolated hill-tops. In fact before the M.N.E. agitation in the last part of the twentieth century the villages were still smaller inaccessible and isolated. The government made efforts to regroup the settlement leading to shifting of some isolated villages, making some of them accessible and growth of service centres and small towns. Mizoram now has 51.51 percent of the total population living in the villages.

Manipur has in 2011 a rural population of 18,99,624, accounting for 69.79 percent of the total of the state. The villages are small and isolated in the five hill districts of Manipur. There are in the state 2588 villages and 28 towns. The villages in the plains are crowded especially around the towns.

Tripura's rural population accounts for 73.82% of the states total. There are 875 villages and 26 towns in Tripura as per the census of 2011. The state has relatively a greater number of larger villages. Out of 875 rural settlement units, 276 are small with a population of less than 200 in each. 530 are of medium size (200-500) 61 of large size (500-1000) and 8 are of very large size (population more than 1000 in each).

Meghalaya has comparatively large rural population with 79.92% of its population living in the villages as per the census of 2011. There

are 6839 villages and 12 towns in the state. Its villages especially in the districts of East Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills are small.

North East India with extensive hilly topography has as stated above, a very large proportion of small and isolated villages. This has obviously affected the socio-economic condition of the rural areas. When the villages are small isolated and farflung it becomes difficult to set up a school a post-office a health centre a bank or any other service establishment, let alone providing such civic amenities as water-supply, power supply, sanitation etc. This is because of lack of threshold population in the individual settlement unit and undeveloped transport and communication to the isolated locations.